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ZIG ZAG:

'CULTURES IN COMMON' AND THE POETRY OF CHARLES CAUSLEY

Doctor of Philosophy: University of Kent

Revised April 2020

Rosemary Anne Walters (Student ID: 15909337)

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Abstract:

In studying the work of the poet Charles Causley (1917-2003) and interpreting his poetics through Raymond Williams's ideas of 'cultures in common', this thesis is an original perspective on Causley's work. There is very little academic study of his poetry and none which views it specifically through the lens of Williams's cultural theory. This thesis achieves both of these aims through a reading of Causley's poetry as the product of his life in various cultures: childhood, adolescence, service in the Navy in World War Two and his employment as a primary school teacher in Launceston. It proposes an additional 'culture in common' of the community of his readers. In analysing these stages of Causley's life and work, the thesis adds to the body of scholarship on Causley's poetry, sadly neglected academically by those suspicious of his distinctive popular contribution to post-war poetics.

Unless otherwise stated all poems are taken from

Charles Causley, *Collected Poems* (London: Picador, 2000)

Other major works by Causley are referred to in the text thus

FAW *Farewell, Aggie Weston* (Aldington: The Hand and Flower Press, 1951)

SL *Survivor's Leave* (Aldington: The Hand and Flower Press, 1953)

US *Union Street* (London: Rupert Hart-Davis, 1960)

JL *Johnny Alleluia* (London: Rupert Hart-Davis, 1961)

UTW *Underneath the Water* (London: Macmillan, 1968)

SD *Secret Destinations* (London, Macmillan, 1984)

AFV *A Field of Vision* (London: Macmillan, 1988)

CPC *Collected Poems for Children* (London: Macmillan, 2000)

Introduction

'A Marginal Curiosity': Causley and his Critics

This thesis is a comprehensive critical study which examines and analyses the poetry of Charles Causley (1917-2003). It claims that his poetry provides a convincing and significant example of the application of literary and cultural theory originating in Raymond Williams's proposition that 'culture is ordinary'.¹ Williams critiqued the elitist and manipulative definition of culture which excluded the experiences and creativity of working class communities. Causley's poetry constitutes an important example of the persistence of literary production foregrounding the life of such communities in the second half of the twentieth century. This persistence is evident in his inclusion on the school curriculum, the endorsement by a major publisher, Macmillan, and his popularity in literary magazines such as *The Listener* and arts programmes on the radio. It challenged the encroaching effects of mass media which, along with previous assumptions of the elitist concept of culture, neglected the inclusion of authentic expressions of everyday working-class life in cultural activity.

Appreciative reviews of Causley's work do exist, many of which were written towards the end of his life and in obituaries, when a more definitive conclusion could be reached

¹ Raymond Williams, 'Culture is Ordinary' in *Resources of Hope: Culture, Democracy, Socialism*, ed. by Robin Gable (London: Verso, 1989), pp. 92-100.

reflecting his varied use of poetic form and the emphasis on everyday experience and relationships in much of his content. Sebastian Barker accounted for Causley's persistent popular appeal by praising it in these terms:

For poems about childhood, ordinary people, and one's own family, he is the best of guides. In fact, his solidarity with the generality of persons is exemplary: he can show up Auden in this respect.²

Nevertheless, Causley's contemporary and posthumous reputation in academic contexts as predominantly a writer of ballads and lyric poetry, conventional in stanzaic formula and employing discernible patterns of rhyme and metre, remains a persistent judgement. Causley's response to the post-war world and the legacy of modernism in poetry from the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, appeared to academic and literary circles to be an attempt to revalidate past forms and ignore post-war disintegration in society and culture. The critic and poet R. S. Gwynn, writing a review of the American edition of Causley's *Selected Poems 1977-1988*, remarked that reviewers in American magazines criticised Causley for writing as though Pound and Eliot had not existed.³

² Sebastian Barker, 'The Genuine Miracle of a Talismatic Celt: Charles Causley: Collected Poems 1951-2000' *Thumbscrew* 17, Winter 2000/1 <poetrymagazines.org.uk/magazine/recordddd04.html?id=12133> [accessed 5 March 2020].

³ R. S. Gwynn, 'Secret Destinations: Selected Poems 1977-1988' *Eratosphere Blogg*, 12 March 2003 <www.ablemuse.com/erato/showthread.php?t=474> [accessed 18 March 2020].

Simon Rae felt that behind much of Causley's adherence to traditional forms was the desire to escape, not confront, time.⁴

The critic Christopher Ricks was scathing regarding both the task of returning to previous poetic tradition and Causley's ability to mould past conventions into any degree of meaning for the second half of the twentieth century. Such assessment relegates Causley to an insignificant poet within a fast disappearing dominant and inherited canon.

...his poetry embarks upon a task which is beyond its talents [...] 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.⁵

The prevalent critical verdict on Causley can be summed up in David Mason's rather less blunt appraisal of him as a 'marginal curiosity rather than a writer of significant importance.'⁶ These judgements, exemplifying critical approaches to Causley, do not sufficiently affirm either the development of his poetic diversity or the significance of his publications in the cultural debates of the sixties, seventies and eighties. The thesis will

⁴ Simon Rae, 'Escaping Time', *The Times Literary Supplement*, 26 April 1985, p. 470.

⁵ Christopher Ricks, 'Charles Causley: Collected Poems 1971-1975', *The New York Times Book Review*, 11 January 1976, p. BR2.

⁶ David Mason, 'Causley's Wild Faith' <www.ablemuse.net/v7/essay/david-mason/causleys-wild-faith> [accessed 5 March 2020].

substantiate the claim that both development and significance can be found in reading Causley alongside the affirmation of cultural diversity emphasised by post-war cultural studies. It will demonstrate the authenticity with which he communicates working-class consciousness. There is a dearth of commentary on this aspect of Causley's work during his life and posthumously. This has led to a neglect of his skilful use of both established forms and the flexibility of free verse in evocations of everyday life. The emphasis of critics is too often on Causley's conformity to previous poetic forms rather than an appreciation of his interactions with his contemporary culture.

Causley continued to publish poems which place his personal experiences within the meanings and values of the various cultures of his daily life. He used colloquial language and accessible imagery combined with poetic forms which sprang from the traditions he inherited in the early twentieth century. His achievement was to use these traditions to by-pass the reactionary positions of culture as an elite manifestation of artistic creativity and to ignore the opposite, the dissolution of this exclusivity in the experimental poetic diversity of the post-war. He was successful in this independence on both counts and attracted a substantial readership, if not critical academic acclaim, in a career of over fifty years.

Choosing a Context: Williams and Cultural Theory

The claim of this thesis, that Causley's poetry justifies recognition as a major contribution to the analysis of critical and cultural theory in the second half of the

twentieth century, is substantiated through identifying and describing specific examples of his work which relate to Williams's concepts of 'culture as ordinary' and 'common culture'. Latterly Williams preferred the term 'cultures in common', feeling that 'common culture' might still imply an invitation to share the hierarchical imposition of an idea of culture from outside actual lived experience.⁷ The Leavisite inheritance was one of culture as produced, enjoyed and accessible to an elite few. T. S. Eliot saw the potential for accessibility beyond the elite but with limited comprehension of 'art' of any sort outside narrow academic circles.⁸ Williams acknowledged in *Keywords* that the noun 'culture' had three possible interpretations; what he described as 'a general process of intellectual, spiritual and aesthetic development', 'a particular way of life' and 'intellectual and artistic activity'.⁹ Focusing on the second of these, Williams argued for culture as ordinary because it implied a process of production where 'people as a whole participate in the articulation of meanings and values and decisions.'¹⁰ The ordinariness of culture for Williams was in common meanings and personal and social experience.¹¹ This argument, that culture is a variety of lived experiences and a creative activity giving voice to these experiences from a plurality of ordinary sources, concurs exactly with Causley's own statement that:

⁷ Raymond Williams, 'The Idea of a Common Culture', in *Resources of Hope*: ed. by Robin Gable p. 34.

⁸ Ibid.

⁹ Raymond Williams, *Keywords: A Vocabulary of Culture and Society* 2nd edn (London: Fontana, 1976), p. 90.

¹⁰ Williams, 'The Idea of a Common Culture' in *Resources of Hope*: ed. by Robin Gable, p. 36.

¹¹ Ibid., p. 8.

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.¹²

In the publication *Politics and Letters*, Raymond Williams explained that he wrote *Culture and Society* in the late 1950s 'to counter the appropriation of a long line of thinking about culture to what were by now decisively reactionary positions.'¹³ Williams also commented of *Culture and Society* that 'it allowed me to refute the increasing contemporary use of the concept of culture against democracy, socialism, the working-class or popular education.'¹⁴ It is this appreciation of the aesthetic within everyday life that explains why Williams's formulation of 'cultures in common' is such a powerful tool with which to assess Causley's place in any account of the diverse strands which made up the history and impact of poetic activity in the fifty years after World War Two. In the interaction of the poetry and Williams's concepts, the Zig Zag of the title, (and the title of one of Causley's poems), lies the value of the study which follows. Zig Zag is a path down the steep quarry in Causley's hometown of Launceston in Cornwall. It is where his grandfather, Richard Bartlett, who worked in the quarry, was killed in an accident in 1881. This fatality points to the contextualisation of Causley's poetry. Such working-class

¹² Clive Wilmer, 'Charles Causley in Conversation', *PN Review*, 79: 17 5 (1991), 52-55 (p. 54).

¹³ Raymond Williams, *Politics and Letters* (London: NLB, 1979), p. 97.

¹⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 98.

roots were central to both Causley's and Williams's background and Williams's conviction that 'culture is ordinary'. Inspired by Williams, the focus of cultural studies from the fifties and beyond, brought a new emphasis to the perception of what constituted culture and it is this aspect of Causley's work which this thesis explores.

It is crucial to this exploration that in Causley's poetry culture is seen as the aesthetic expression of a particular group of people or a particular society at any one time and this includes literary expression by and for all its members. Causley's primary school teaching convinced him that his working-class children should be given the opportunity to write and publish poetry reflecting their own imaginative creativity and the ability to verbalise it in speech and/or text. His own poetic output and his anthologies affirmed the value of childhood experience in the literary expression of cultures as it did of the working-class life which surrounded him in his life's work as a teacher. The life of children, as of adults, is reflected in this articulation of all the circumstances of their worlds as part of this aesthetic, whatever their place in the social stratification of the dominant hegemony. This hegemony, as Williams noted in his comments on Antonio Gramsci in 'Base and Superstructure';

...even constitutes the limits of common sense for most people under its sway [...] it corresponds to the reality of social experience very much more clearly than any notions derived from base and superstructure.¹⁵

¹⁵ Raymond Williams, 'Base and Superstructure in Marxist Cultural Theory', *New Left Review*, 0: 82 (1973), 3-16, (p. 8).

Causley's anthologies formed a part of his profile as a poet who understood this common sense, the practicalities of popular appeal through poetry accessible to the preferences and discernment of a substantial readership. This readership was complemented by listeners to his contribution to long running radio programmes such as 'Poetry Please'.¹⁶ Causley himself was a guest on 'Desert Island Discs' in December 1979.¹⁷ Presence on the media indicated that Causley's influence within popular culture brought an enthusiasm for poetry and poetry readings beyond the textual. The growth and influence of the media was an important feature of debates in cultural studies into the effect of culture as an industry. Causley's popularity makes him a relevant figure in Williams's cultural analysis and indicates similarities with Gramsci's definition of an 'organic intellectual'.¹⁸ The thesis details how he entered the profession of teacher but remained in the society of, and identified with, the working class of his background. His concern for those whose life he shared was to reveal and celebrate that life in his poetry rather than unite its members for any political agitation. The recognition of that life in his poems; for adults, for children and on the radio, illustrate cultural empowerment deriving from the ordinary.

Mapping the Context: The Central Concepts

¹⁶See *Poetry Please: 100 Popular Poems from the BBC Radio 4 Programme*, forward by Charles Causley (London: Phoenix, 1999).

¹⁷ This can be heard at < <https://genome.ch.bbc.co.uk/42bd81bde8234e89b22404ecd7bd9a5e>> [accessed 5 March 2020].

¹⁸ Steve Jones, *Antonio Gramsci* (Abingdon: Routledge, 2006), pp. 81-85.

In his 1973 article in *New Left Review*, 'Base and Superstructure in Marxist Cultural Theory', Williams insisted that any cultural theory relating to the Marxist model of base and superstructure must view the base as a productive force in process rather than 'fixed properties for subsequent deduction to the variable processes of the superstructure.'¹⁹ The implications for this view of the variable and dynamic forces which lie at the heart of societies and their cultures can also be seen in his analysis in *Marxism and Literature*.²⁰ It is the specific analysis from this and Williams's writings on 'cultures in common' and 'culture as ordinary', viewed within the premise of active structural relationships and activities, that Causley's work can be interpreted. Such a hermeneutic is not an artificial manipulation of the nature of Causley's poetry to fit the theory. A study of the poetry demonstrates that Williams's concepts arise from within form and content.

Williams did not deny that there are certain intentions behind the organisations and structures of society '[...] by which we define the society, intentions which in all our experiences have been the rule of a particular class.'²¹ There are clear indications in Causley's work of prevailing injustices of material poverty and educational privilege which blighted the lives and formed the responses of those struggling within the rules set down by an economic system which favoured the affluent and established. But alongside chronicling the material and emotional consequences of these struggles, Causley celebrates the vibrancy, value and dignity of everyday lives amidst these conditions. In

¹⁹ Williams, 'Base and Superstructure', p. 5.

²⁰ Raymond Williams, *Marxism and Literature* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1977).

²¹ Williams, 'Base and Superstructure', p. 7.

this enterprise key concepts from Williams are especially relevant and are developed in the thesis. These are: the concepts of 'knowable communities' and 'structures of feeling' (Chapters One and Two), 'working-class consciousness' (Chapter Three), 'equality of being' and the 'traditional popular' (Chapter Four), 'residual' and 'emergent' forces within the dominant culture (Chapter Five), culture as an expression of the life of the whole community including children' (Chapter Six), and 'selective tradition' (Chapter Seven).

In *The Country and the City* Williams referred to 'knowable communities' in which relationships and communication relate to commonly understood values and meanings expressed in a common understanding of the possibilities of language.²² Causley's location in rural Cornwall was isolated and confined, especially so in his childhood. He was rooted in such a 'knowable community'. The prevalence of memory and childhood in his poetry exhibit the characteristics of Williams's 'structures of feeling' within these communities. Chapters One and Two examine in detail the structures of family, church, education and naval service which nurtured and influenced Causley's feelings of security, aspiration and oppression. In these structures can be found the origins of his love of language and literature, and the survivor's guilt which haunted his post-war sensibility.

The description of 'residual' and 'emergent' cultures in Williams is another example of how Causley's work has a close and convincing affinity with cultural theory. The 'residual' form of culture which Williams defined as experiences, meanings and values lived

²² Raymond Williams, *The Country and the City* (St Albans: Palladin, 1975), p. 110.

outside the dominant expressions of culture, is, as Williams pointed out, found in the cultures of the rural past and often in the survival of religious values.²³ Both these elements are explored in Chapters One and Two as characteristics of Causley's poetry whilst Chapters Three and Four relate the community of Causley's readers to contemporary examples of lyric within modernism and the survival of the traditional popular. The detailed analysis in these chapters places the content and form of his poetry within what Williams described as a

...reaching back to those meanings and values which were created in real societies in the past , and which still seem to have some significance because they represent areas of human experience , aspiration and achievement which the dominant culture undervalues or opposes, or even cannot recognise.²⁴

Less so, but still in evidence in Causley, is the articulation of the reality of 'emergent' forms of culture, the effects of the upheavals in economic and social conditions which emerged, even in his isolated hometown, in the rapid changes in everyday life in the second half of the twentieth century. Williams describes such upheavals as 'new meanings and values, new practices , new significances and experiences'.²⁵ Causley

²³ Williams, 'Base and Superstructure', p. 10. *Marxism and Literature*, p. 122.

²⁴ Williams, 'Base and Superstructure', p. 12.

²⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 11.

could see how that, in incorporating a new, limited prosperity which did away with much, but not all, of the obvious and drastic poverty of his childhood, the dominant culture was neutralising forces such as self-help, collectivism and independence in working-class culture. Williams's concept of 'equality of being', in Causley's case the value which he saw in the celebration of the everyday life of the people around him, discussed in Chapter Four, was being eroded into even more economic dependence in the lives of the working class.

Referring to William Empson's discussion of the nature of 'pastoral' and 'proletarian' literature and Williams's definition of 'alternative' and 'oppositional' practices, Chapter Five assesses the potential for Causley's poetry to express retrospection and/or advocate change.²⁶ Williams commented:

There is a simple theoretical distinction between alternative and oppositional, that is to say between someone who simply finds a different way to live and wishes to be left alone with it, and someone who finds a different way to live and wants to change the society in its light.²⁷

²⁶ William Empson, *Some Versions of Pastoral* (London: Chatto and Windus, 1950). Williams, 'Base and Superstructure' p. 11.

²⁷ Williams, 'Base and Superstructure', p. 11.

Causley certainly wrote an alternative type of poetry from the prevailing experimental and informal fashions of the sixties and beyond. He was content to be left alone with his life in Cornwall. Yet he was also oppositional in a specific way. It is central to the argument of this thesis that Causley contributed to the continuing existence and publication of proletarian poetry, not in advocating protest, but in the sense of the value of an artistic expression and production which challenged the hegemony of both middle-class literary academia, neglectful of his particular 'common culture', and challenged the pre-packaged, mass media conventions promoted by the economic base of capitalism. Causley's contribution to revolution was in the struggle to change an understanding of culture from elitist art to one of including the experience, articulation and language of a plurality of lived contexts. The concept of authenticity as a genuine representation of identity through immersion is central here. Causley's representation of the inner dynamics of situations and people was directed towards culture as the expression of material existence and psychological being within given situations and often working-class individuals, at a precise moment in time.

Two specific elements of Causley's poetic activity are explored in Chapters Six and Seven. Causley was teaching in an education system based on celebrating and replicating previous expectations of poetry in rhyme and metre which were handed down to his pupils. He wanted to share the alternative view of culture as lived experience from his own and his pupils' childhoods and beyond. Chapter Six is a critical evaluation of his own

poetry marketed for children and witnesses to his enthusiasm for poetry written by children. Chapter Seven is an analysis of the rationale behind his selection of poems for his anthologies. The rationale behind these varied opportunities to share his selections of poetry in print and on air, reveals an alignment with Williams's analysis of the nature of 'selective tradition'. The chapter questions how far Causley's choices can be seen as validating aesthetic judgements of the past in the context of Williams's judgement that selection reinforces emphasis and exclusion in the interests of the dominance of a particular class, ratifying existing power and influence.²⁸

A New Approach: Causley and Cultural Studies

Critical reaction to Causley's work has hitherto consisted of comparisons with other poets or chapters and articles which are fragmentary commentaries from particular perspectives. The originality of this thesis is twofold. Firstly, the thesis is original in its focus on the entire body of Causley's poetry, including the poetry marketed for children, and on his philosophy of selection as an anthologist. Secondly, in making this substantial review of Causley's work within the framework of Williams's common cultures of the everyday, the thesis locates his identity as a poet with a particular relevance to the discipline of cultural studies. Williams argued that the 'true crisis in cultural theory in our own time, is between the view of the work of art as object and the alternative view of art

²⁸ Williams, *Marxism and Literature*, pp. 115, 116.

as a practice'. He commented further that a work of art 'is indeed an activity and a it is still only accessible through active perception and interpretation.'²⁹

In its perception and interpretation of Causley's work within Williams's analysis, this thesis contributes to the body of knowledge relative to Causley and to the practical outworking of a central concern of cultural theory. The interface of these two constituents has not been attempted in this way before. This thesis is therefore a valuable and original study and progresses scholarship in both domains.

²⁹ Williams, 'Base and Superstructure', p. 15.

Chapter One:

'Structures of Feeling' in Childhood and Community

Throughout his life and after his death, the poet Charles Causley was invariably associated both in critical reviews and in popular reputation with his identity as a Cornishman rooted in his geographical origins. This chapter claims that in the poems recollecting his family and childhood in North Cornwall he revealed the early 'structures of feeling', as defined in Williams's cultural theory. Williams described such 'structures of feeling' as constructs of material existence arising from lived experience. They are 'changes, meanings and values as lived and felt', as distinct from, but in tension with, ideological and class determinations.¹ Terry Eagleton summarized the dual nature of Williams's structures as 'a kind of oxymoron deliberately holding in tension the necessary impersonality and objectivity of 'structure' with the more elusive impalpable stress of 'feeling'.'² For Causley, these 'structures' were location, family and home life, and social and religious influences experienced through the 'feelings' experienced in the loss of his father and the poverty and struggles of his mother. This combination of structure and feeling permeated the tone, form, content and language of his poetry and can be traced back to his childhood through poems mediated through the recollection of adulthood.

Causley's environment in childhood and adolescence included historic examples of oppression, a working-class family, a childhood deeply scarred by poverty and the legacy

¹ Williams, *Marxism and Literature*, p. 132.

² Terry Eagleton, 'Raymond Williams, Communities and Universities' <<https://raymondwilliamssociety.files.wordpress.com/2017/09/williamscommunitiesuniversities.pdf>> [accessed 3 May 2019].

of two world wars. Like Williams, Causley had a working-class and small rural town upbringing. In his analysis of Williams's theories Mervyn Gable noted that these variables of class and location contribute to the routine exclusion of those in these situations from the normative exercise of cultural power by an academic and socially prestigious group.³

The social and material contexts of place, family, education and community were catalysts in Causley's work. They form the origins of the aesthetic of his poetry, the outward expression of inner meanings and values. The literary and educational influences of Causley's childhood and adolescence were dominated by a prescribed and elitist philosophical and academic definition of both education and culture. His linguistic heritage reflected these definitions. At school in Cornwall in the early decades of the twentieth century he was exposed to a variety of sources assumed to be appropriate for primary and secondary school education by the prevailing academic and religious establishment. This chapter will demonstrate that these were Biblical and liturgical texts from the Anglican church and the 'respectable' dissent of Methodism, poetry and literature from the canon typified by Francis Turner Palgrave's *Golden Treasury*, and a sanitized exposure to traditional folk song.⁴

Williams located 'structures of feeling' within the lived experience of 'knowable communities' with their shared meanings and values. He regarded them as a vital ingredient in the diverse fabric of the plurality of 'common cultures'.⁵ The hierarchical implications of F. R. Leavis's 'organic community' are in contrast to the common concerns

³ See Mervyn Gable, 'Raymond Williams Revisited: Culture, Community and Modern Welsh Identity', *The Oxford Left Review*, 29 June 2015 < <http://www.oxfordleftreview.com/merlin-gable-raymond-williams-revisited-culture-community-and-modern-welsh-identity/> > [accessed 1 November 2018].

⁴ Francis Turner Palgrave, *The Golden Treasury of the Best Song and Lyrical Poems in the English Language* (London: Macmillan and Co, 1861).

⁵ See Gable, 'Raymond Williams Revisited: Culture, Community and Modern Welsh Identity'.

and collective aspirations of this concept of a 'knowable community', with its closeness, rootedness and sense of identity.⁶ Williams's concept of a 'knowable community' relies heavily on instinctive connections and authentic communication between experience, description and representation in the common language of that community. Discourse is the prime constituent of integration and sense of identity. Causley's 'knowable community', and the subject of much of his poetic discourse, comprised the 'structures' of lived contexts of place, family and education and the less tangible 'felt' experiences over time of social relationships and community.

These reference points of 'structures of feeling' and a 'knowable community' can be applied to Causley's poetry but Causley does not address the emancipatory potential of poetry to challenge ideological and class determinations. Causley wrote much of the poetry which communicates these structures looking back at childhood from old age. Williams warned against the tendency of equating 'structures of feeling' solely with past experience, neglecting present consciousness.⁷ There is a danger that affirming only past experience will reinforce a static assumption of artistic value conferred by an elite with access to a classical education and the economic and social power which accompanies this. As Williams recognized, the expression of past experience can obstruct the perspective of a specific culture as a dynamic and challenging process. Causley's later poetry focuses on memories of childhood which do describe the reality of poverty, but exhibit a nostalgia which converts the past into an escape and an emotional security for his present. The retrospective perspective on childhood in his poetry illustrates the

⁶ F. R. Leavis and Denys Thomson, *Culture and Environment: The Training of Cultural Awareness* (London: Chatto and Windus, 1933), p. 91. Raymond Williams, *Culture and Society: Coleridge to Orwell* new edn (London: Hogarth, 1987), p. 260.

⁷ Williams, *Marxism and Literature*, p. 132.

wisdom of Williams's concern to focus predominantly on present rather than past experience.

Place as Security, Place as Oppression

Causley's resistance to change is seen in his lifelong attachment to his home town, physical location being one of the most powerful of those 'structures of feeling' which influenced him. Launceston, Causley explained in an article in *The Listener* in 1977, was 'isolated from England, a community within a community.'⁸ For him the town was a place of both security and oppression. Remoteness reinforced a sense of security and collective identity. In contrast, the natural materials of slate and granite and the dramatic landscape of steep hills, valleys and rivers created a sense of isolation, expressing physically the relentless indifference to the poverty and struggle which characterized his early life. The motte and bailey of a Norman Castle overlooked the immediate settlements and the surrounding countryside in the eleventh century as it did in Causley's life and still does. Its history included imprisonment and execution in the part of its grounds known as the pastorally sounding 'Castle Green'.⁹ In 1577, a recusant Catholic priest, Cuthbert Maine, was hanged, drawn and quartered there. The nickname 'Doomsdale' for the prison cell where both Cuthbert Maine and later in 1656 the Quaker George Fox were incarcerated, would have been familiar to Causley and his contemporaries. The aura of cruelty and oppression, physically present in the continuous

⁸ Charles Causley, 'In the Angle of the Waters', *The Listener*, 9: 2527 (1977), 368-370 (p. 368).

⁹ Detail on the history of Launceston can be found in Arthur Bate Venning, *The Book of Launceston: A Portrait of the Town* (Chesham: Barracuda Books, 1976), for which Causley wrote a Preface.

shadow of the castle over the town, was a dominant element in the consciousness of the community.

Causley never moved away from Launceston, apart from a year in Peterborough and his time in the Navy, and these harsh elements remained part of his story. They appear in childhood memory as the context for his poems, the sensibility of the place which provided the location for his entire life.¹⁰ Despite the bleakness, his sense of emotional security came from the familiarity of the town and community culture which had nourished his childhood and to which he returned after the displacements of naval service in World War Two. Wherever he travelled on holiday or after retirement, Launceston was always 'home' to Causley in the reassurance that, despite the horrors and upheaval of war, there was continuity from his recollections of the past to life in the present. There is no evidence that he contemplated living anywhere else.

The retreat to the familiar and avoidance of the unfamiliar and displaced, a confining factor in his creative life, provides a clue to the restraint and lack of formal experimentation in Causley's poetry. He voiced a sense of a new perspective on the familiar but not in new and potentially threatening ways which would somehow invalidate all that he clung to for the affirmation of his identity. This affection for his home town does not mean that Causley was naïve in matters relating to his location. Commenting on his 1968 collection aptly titled *Underneath the Water*, where his affection for the town cannot overcome his lurking sense of fear of what is outside his control, Causley remarked that he was 'concerned to examine, and re-imagine, the mythology of my own town, whose stones I sometimes think I know too well for

¹⁰ For a detailed analysis of the influence of the town of Launceston in Causley's work see Rosemary Walters, *On the Border: Charles Causley In 20th Century British Poetics* (unpublished M. A. by Research, University of Kent, 2015), pp. 59-77.

comfort.¹¹ As he explained when describing the slums in the Launceston of his youth, there are some things that he avoided looking at as a child:

You know, we had one or two — thank God they've all vanished now — sort of slum areas in Launceston. They were swept away after the war, I suppose. People who lived there when I was a child had a very hard time of it. But they didn't talk about it much, they just put up with it and got on with it. I think life was pretty tough but I preferred, as a child, to not look too closely at that sort of thing for fear of what I might find.¹²

The 'fear of what he might find' led Causley to avoid the unruly and disordered slum dwellers and their lives in his childhood encounters with his home town. It suggests timidity, expressed in his poetic output in the restraint and formality of his tone and the essentially cautious reliance in content on familiar resonances in place, family, war and even travel.

Causley was aware from an early age that there was poverty and hardship in the place where he lived and amongst the community within which he dwelt. Speaking later in life he recalled that it 'wasn't a country paradise by any means; life was real, life was earnest in those days if you were working-class and hadn't got much money coming in.'¹³ His own family had experienced the fear and threat of poverty when his grandfather was killed in an accident in the quarry where he worked. Richard Bartlett left a widow and seven

¹¹ Clare Brown and Don Paterson, eds., *Don't Ask Me What I Mean: Poets in Their Own Words* (London: Picador, 2003), p. 30.

¹² Simon Parker, ed., *A Certain Man: Charles Causley In His Own Words* (scryfa.co.uk, 2017), p. 15.

¹³ *Ibid.*, p. 15.

children, orphaned in this industrial accident. If they could not survive independently in Launceston in the late nineteenth century they were faced with the disgrace of the parish workhouse. Causley visited the still surviving workhouse as an adolescent. He expressed this disgrace and the despair he found there in a poem recollecting a visit to the local Workhouse concert in 1931. He described the inmates as having '[t]he eyes of those in a defeated country' in 'When I Was 14' (p. 401). Causley explained how, in his own childhood, the 'Lodging House (like the local Workhouse) occupied a position of terror in the mythology of the "respectable" working-class that just, but often only just, clung on to solvency.'¹⁴ The Workhouse cast a shadow of fear over Causley's childhood, linked to the aspirational working-class dread of loss of respectability. In physical, emotional and material respects, Launceston was a place of both security and oppression.

The Structures of Working-Class Life: Self-help and Collectivism

In the 1984 poem 'Richard Bartlett' (p. 279), Causley expressed the lived experiences of self-help, collective concern and proud independence which formed part of the ethos which he inherited from his family background.

REDACTED: See 'Richard Bartlett', *Collected Poems*, p. 278, v. 1.

¹⁴ Charles Causley, 'Kitchen in the Morning', in *Causley at 70*, ed. by Harry Chambers, pp. 94-104 (p. 98).

Richard Bartlett was at work one morning in what Causley described as the ‘rather sinister and now disused quarry, below a steep path called Zig Zag.’¹⁵ A piece of falling slate sliced his grandfather’s skull. He was taken to the local dispensary but the fatal outcome was inevitable.¹⁶ The narrator voices a flow of thought articulating personal reflections on his grandfather’s accident and the effect it had on his family. Throughout the poem Causley skillfully recreates a tone of recollection which appears spontaneous, with his characteristic careful attention to alliteration as in ‘where the workhouse was’, ‘split a stone’, ‘Shrugs off a quiet sting of slate’, ‘leper’s life’, and a meticulous attention to description, the ‘singed paper’ he is reading, the ‘thunder of hymns and prayers’ at the funeral. When Richard Bartlett died, ‘the family nudged nearer / The pit where the Workhouse was, and a leper’s life / In the Parish.’ Perceptions of the boundaries of respectability came early to Causley. The mythology of childhood in his small community included knowledge of the lepers who were allowed to come to the chapel of the long dissolved Priory adjacent to his birthplace, to “watch” the service and receive the sacraments, using only their own leper window at the bottom of the tower.¹⁷

The wish to avoid ostracism by their working-class peer group and be perceived as ‘respectable’ through self-help, gave some dignity to the struggle with poverty in the lives of influential women in the family before and during Causley’s childhood. This philosophy of self-help and respectability was passed on to his mother from his grandmother, Richard’s widow. ‘Grannie’ Bartlett was determined not to consign her family to the workhouse but took a cottage next to her sister, wore herself out with

¹⁵ Charles Causley, ‘So Slowly to Harbour’, in *Causley at 70*, ed. by Harry Chambers, pp. 106-111 (p. 109).

¹⁶ Laurence Green, *All Cornwall Thunders at My Door: A Biography of Charles Causley* (Sheffield: Cornovia, 2013), p. 19.

¹⁷ Arthur Wills and Terry Faull, *Launceston Priory: Education* <<https://launcestonpriory.org.uk/education/>> [accessed 3 April 2019].

washing, cleaning and sewing and died in the year of Causley's birth, at the age of 64. Following Richard Bartlett's death 'in my grandmother / Was lit a sober dip of fear, unresting / Till her death in the year of the Revolution.' 'Grannie' Bartlett's attitude to poverty came from a particular Victorian perspective. Any revolution had come too late for her.

This perspective, filtered down to the community through the strict moral code of west-country Methodism, was articulated in Samuel Smiles's 1859 classic *Self-help with Illustrations of Conduct and Perseverance*. Smiles argued that 'The spirit of self-help is the root of all genuine growth in the individual.'¹⁸ That philosophy of self-help, still influencing Causley's working-class background through the chapels in his home town in the late nineteenth and early twentieth century, typified the outlook of his mother and grandmother. Smiles's 'Self-help' reflected the spirit and values of mid-Victorian England and stood alongside the Bible in its influence on the psyche of the 'deserving' poor.¹⁹ Bartlett was

REDACTED: See 'Richard Bartlett', *Collected Poems*, p. 278, v. 1.

The succinct description of Richard Bartlett's faith and the italicised quotation which Causley included in the poem, describing Bartlett's reputation, provide other clues to the 'structures of feeling' in Causley's background. A rigid Biblically based Christian faith, a life of discipline in which indulgence was neither practically possible nor morally

¹⁸ Samuel Smiles, *Self-help: With Illustrations of Conduct and Perseverance*, new edn/popular edn (London: John Murray, 1905), p. 1.

¹⁹ Tom Bowden-Butler, 'Self-Help (1859) Samuel Smiles', in *Self-Help Classics* <www.butler-bowdon.com/samuel-smiles---self-help.html> [accessed 18 March 2016].

acceptable, and the confinement of an intelligent mind to the sphere of an isolated local community combined with fundamentalist Christian teachings, were characteristics embedded in Causley's childhood context.

Tom Bowden-Butler, commenting on Smiles's theory regarding the lives of artists, illustrates the nature of Causley's struggles to gain recognition for his poetry:

...is their singular industry and never-say-die application to the task, almost equal to their artistic talent. In showing that many of the methods they pioneered were the result of years of trial and error, he explodes the belief that the most famous artists have the most 'talent'.²⁰

In Causley's case, the survival and absorption of Smiles's Victorian attitude into his immediate family background, (rather than any revolutionary consciousness), sets the tone of dignity and explains the roots of his poetic measure. The energy of his rhythm and metre is subject to the discipline and order of the 'singular industry' required to survive in a context where there is no space for indulgence and very little for spontaneity. Tone and measure originate in these social and economic circumstances alongside the desire for self-respect and sensitivity to feelings and attitudes which set great store by independence. Causley's primary struggle was not initially for the secondary achievement of a glittering literary reputation; it was for the resilience to be able to pursue a life of reading and writing in an environment of few material resources

²⁰ Ibid.

and little time. Higher education and the opportunities for study and social net-working which went with it were potentially beyond the possibilities of maintaining a self-reliant domestic situation. The life and sudden death of Richard Bartlett, at work in the local slate quarry on that fatal July day in 1881, even though it was 'sing'd by time' when Causley articulated it in verse in 1984, epitomized the 'shadows' of poverty at the core of his own childhood, formative influences on his life and poetry.

'Grannie' Bartlett's efforts to be self-sufficient and maintain a working-class respectability independent of the disgrace of poor relief or the workhouse, were replicated in her daughter's circumstances after Causley's father returned from World War One. 'I was born in a wounded season', as Causley later remarked.²¹ It took his father seven years to die from the effects of pulmonary tuberculosis. During his prolonged illness and after his death, the fragile divide between independence and dependent charity was only sustained by that daughter, Causley's mother, taking in washing, cleaning and having a lodger. Causley explained that:

Her ability as a good 'manager', something on which great store was set among working-class women, was extraordinary. The house was always warm, clean and comfortable. There was plenty of food, and the weekly roast chicken was as regular as Sunday. She was always at home when I returned from school. She would have died rather than accept parish-relief or have dressed me in jumble-sale clothes or the cast-offs of other children.²²

²¹ Charles Causley, 'So Slowly to Harbour', *The Listener*, 97: 2499 (1977), 337-338 (p. 337).

²² Causley, 'Kitchen in the Morning', p. 100.

His family situation also gave him a perspective on the tension between literary aestheticism and the pragmatic realities of working-class life. Causley recounted an incident in the fifties when he was watching a Greek play on television. Women and children widowed and orphaned by war were howling and lamenting. His mother entered the room and he explained that the women were lamenting their fate. “Why,” she said decisively, “don’t they go out to work? Like I did”. Exit. I switched off the set. There seemed little point in watching the rest; more in pondering what she had said.²³ The legacy of working-class poverty revealed to Causley that art, whether drama or poetry, could be an indulgence in unrestrained emotion when survival depended on practical action.

Despite the poverty there was neither time, opportunity or inclination for political agitation. Williams had envisaged knowable communities as provisional and dynamic discourses which would generate change. The death of Richard Bartlett did not promote any kind of political activism amongst his contemporaries. In Cornwall, working-class Anglicanism and the work ethic of evangelistic non-conformity largely ignored political imperatives. E. P. Thompson has pointed out that even amongst the Wesleyan Cornish tanners of the eighteenth century there was little political radicalism.²⁴ Bartlett’s Christian faith was not interpreted within a political hermeneutic. The ‘killing stone’ which his workmate, Melhuish, tried to identify after the incident was never found and identified. The slate which killed his grandfather was simply a case of ‘The overhang / Shrugs off a quiet sting of slate’. Working-class solidarity came from the action of Bartlett’s peer

²³ Causley, ‘So Slowly to Harbour’, p. 106.

²⁴ Edward Palmer Thompson, *The Making of the English Working Class*, rev edn (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1972), p. 919.

group on the jury, not through direct action against the owners of the quarry. At Richard Bartlett's coroner's inquest '*The fees of the jury were given to the widow*'.

At the end of 'Richard Bartlett' Causley wrote 'I close the paper, / Its print of mild milk-chocolate. Bend to the poem. / Trying to find a place to insert the wedge.' 'Bending over the poetry' written in the 50 years from the fifties to the final *Collected* in 2000, this incident, which happened long before he was born, reveals some of the shadows which haunted his life and became the building blocks of his ideological formation. His early childhood included tensions on either side of the wedge. Working-class pride existed alongside a respectability which frowned on action for change. Resilience in poverty was challenged by the ever present threat of a potential descent into chaos. An inherited Christian faith, unquestioning of the literal application of the text or the paradoxes of faith in facing the inequalities and tragedies of life, co-existed with an attachment to the imagery and language of Christian liturgy. Isolation from any kind of academic privilege or middle-class mobility was accompanied by the educational aspirations of his mother. All this in the context of a stable yet isolated community albeit with an often physically bleak present and similarly bleak historical past. 'Never a chance of life, the doctors said' in 'Richard Bartlett', and this ambiguous statement could refer not only to Bartlett's physical state after the accident, but the apparently limited life choices available to his grandson.

The predominant ideology of Causley's childhood and adolescence was founded on the pride of Smiles's philosophy of self-help alongside the fatalism of knowing your place and being paralyzed within it. These sentiments were expressed by Robert Tressell's in *The Ragged Trousered Philanthropists*, the novel which shocked Causley in adolescence with

the revelation that working-class experience could have literary expression.²⁵ The total lack of regard for the safety of the workers in that novel rang true to the tragedy in the quarry. Tressell angrily exposed the abusive effects of poverty. Causley's poetry articulated the context of very practical struggles with that poverty relating to Richard Hoggart's 'felt sense of the texture of life.'²⁶ His poetry affirms working-class life and experience in literature although it did not foreground the political radicalism which would *overtly* challenge the values of the 'high' culture of the middle and upper classes or the economic and social foundations on which it relied.

The tone of the 1992 poem 'Mother's Meeting, 1921' (p. 396), hints at both resignation and cynicism. It expresses vividly the recollection of a small child taken to a meeting in the Chapel and the adult reflection of the poet using this to record some social commentary.

REDACTED: See 'Mother's Meeting 1921', *Collected Poems*, p. 396, l. 15-19.

Causley wrote poetry relating to the life of those excluded from the benefits of economic production and social hierarchy. This inclusion of the excluded was for Williams a distinguishing trait of a 'knowable community' along with collective concern and support. His vision was that class divisions and exclusions should be 'replaced by the reality of common and equal membership.'²⁷ The generosity of the working class to each other is continuous but as Causley observes in 'Mother's Meeting' neither religion nor

²⁵ Charles Causley, 'Bad Years', *The Listener*, 97: 2507 (1977), 597-598 (p. 597).

²⁶ Richard Hoggart, *The Uses of Literacy: Aspects of Working-class Life with Special Reference to Publications and Entertainments* (London: Chatto and Windus, 1966), p. 101.

²⁷ Raymond Williams, 'Culture and Revolution: A Response', in *From Culture to Revolution: The Slant Symposium 1967*, ed. by Terry Eagleton and Brian Wicker (London: Sheed and Ward, 1968), pp. 296-308 (p. 308).

this sense of collective solidarity alter the daily environment of dreary poverty. After an hour it will be back again to the 'cleaning, cooking and the kitchen range'. Solid, immovable inevitability, just like the kitchen range, ends the poem with the definite statement that 'things are never going to change'. As the presence of the castle continually reminded the occupants of the town, rebellion was not a practical option.²⁸

Rebellion against traditional morality and family life was also not conceivable. Causley was brought up in a context of traditionally constructed pattern of gender and relationships. 'Stang Hunt' (p. 399), reinforces the rigid moral code of the community, painting a brutal picture of the maliciousness which was visited on those who transgressed the prevailing code of morality, here an adulterer is being 'hunted' and shamed by the community. "'Stang hunt. It means a man was wicked to / His family", was what my father said'. There was a cruel side to a 'knowable community' and the strict moral judgements of a working-class community. 'Wedding Portrait' (p. 271), is described by Dana Gioia as one of Causley's 'most important poems of self-definition.'²⁹ It exposes the acceptance of identity within traditional concepts of family structure and obligations. The adult Causley is reflecting on where his sense of self originates in the midst of the family structure regarded as the norm in his culture.

REDACTED: See 'Wedding Portrait', *Collected Poems*, p. 271, v. 4.

The sentence 'I am not here' indicates a positive absence, implying that Causley's identity, although gifted by them, is not entirely dependent on his parents, reinforced by the

²⁸ The relationship of the physical environment to the constructs of the mind is explored in Will Self, *Psychogeography* (London: Bloomsbury Publishing, 2007).

²⁹ Dana Gioia, 'The Independence of Charles Causley', in *Causley at 70*, ed. by Harry Chambers, pp. 28-35 (p. 34).

reference to 'my day' at the end of 'Wedding Portrait'. It was through his poetry that Causley struggled to establish his own voice and some degree of autonomous identity.

In 'Forbidden Games' (p. 399), Causley indicated that from the time of his father's death the only attribute of his father's identity which remained for him was the name which they shared. 'A thin light burning at his head, / To me is no more than a name / That's also mine.' It is ominous that the young boy, on the evening of his father's death, is about to give the dice in the game of Snakes and Ladders another throw. The child Causley, aged seven in the poem, faces the death of his father brought on by the 'German War'. In doing so the adult Causley expressed a consciousness of the precariousness of his own personal identity and the feeling of being in the hands of the indifferent outcomes of chance. The 'shadowed grandfather' in 'Richard Bartlett', the 'fake pillar for an urn', the breath he was given by his parents in 'Wedding Portrait' and the 'shadow of the German War' in 'Forbidden Games', reveal the origins of a complex subjectivity between personal emotions and the influence of external circumstances in his work. Causley's varying perspectives of 'I' in his poetry avoid both Peter Middleton's definition of subjectivity as a 'repetition of bourgeois ideology' or that of self-confession.³⁰ Causley's 'I' voice articulates affection and respect for a working-class culture in which he recognised dignity and resilience. This affirmation was what he communicated in poetic form.

Personal struggles against poverty in his early life and experiences of bereavement and war in his youth fundamentally affected Causley's vision and energy. These struggles left

³⁰ 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), pp. 107-133 (p. 127).

little of either for ideological disputes or protest against social and material circumstances. The upheaval implicit in disorder and chaos was a threat, not a welcome means of social or political change. He belonged to a collective identity which valued stability, resistance to change and the values of self-help and independence within a working-class solidarity of concern.

Education: Hymns, Prayers, Songs and a Love of Poetry

Education was one way for a working-class family to ensure some improvement in their circumstances and stability for the future, yet within the social and economic system within which they lived. In childhood Causley joined the local library and his mother arranged piano lessons, evidence of aspirations which would look beyond a future of manual labour.³¹ In his book, *All Cornwall Thunders at My Door*, Laurence Green includes a 1926 photograph of a proud Laura Causley posing with her son in his grammar school uniform.³² The sense of obligation felt towards family ties, a characteristic of working-class life often arising from lack of mobility, was enhanced for Causley by the realisation of the sacrifices made by his mother to keep them out of poverty and him in education for as long as possible. His love of poetry was to arrive with his first exposure to formal education.

³¹ Causley, 'Kitchen in the Morning', p. 101.

³² Green, *All Cornwall Thunders at My Door*, p. 39.

By the time his father died he had been at elementary school for three years, ‘I was fetched to school / Too early. (‘Only child. Needs company.’) ‘First Day’ (p. 350). Through education, voice and identity were complemented for the child Causley by ‘the seeds of the love of poetry.’³³ This began in school. The physical location of the 1840 church school, built on a hillside beneath the Castle, was a physical reminder of bleak impressions from the past. The school bell was ‘a sobering relic from a medieval chapel on the Castle Green.’³⁴ The Castle Green had ominous associations with imprisonment and execution.³⁵ The windows were too high to look out of but Causley’s childhood imagination was stirred by Friday afternoons. All ninety children in one extended classroom ‘chanted our way through *Hymns Ancient and Modern*, *National Songs of the British Isles*, and — best of all — volumes of English folk-songs collected by, among others, Cecil Sharp.’³⁶

The traditional metres and rhymes of the majority of the hymns and the ballad like quality of the folk songs formed part of the young child’s introduction to the power of language. The patriotism of the ‘National’ songs and ‘Englishness’ of the folk inheritance placed his childhood in a context where it was assumed that there was a common literary and sung tradition accessible and familiar to all without distinction of class or education, existing outside formal poetic definitions such as metaphysical, classical or Romantic. A browse through the adult Causley’s record collection, available from the website of the Charles Causley Trust, reveals the lasting impression which these ingredients of the

³³ Causley, ‘Kitchen in the Morning’, p. 99.

³⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 97.

³⁵ See Wills and Faull, *Launceston Priory: Education*, [accessed 27 February 2020].

³⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 99.

elementary school Friday afternoons made on his stylistic and imaginative future.³⁷ The collection contains folk-songs from a variety of backgrounds ranging from Cornwall to the IRA, church music from the sixteenth century onwards, various English Songs set to music by composers such as Benjamin Britten and popular ballads from Victorian and Edwardian times such as the ominously titled 'Break The News To Mother'. Gioia compiled a list of these early influences on Causley, albeit with not enough emphasis on Celtic rather than English origins and lacking elucidation of which 'conservative counter-tradition' he is comparing Causley with.

His work [...] refers back to older, more specifically English roots. Taking his inspiration from folk songs, hymns, and especially ballads, Causley belongs [...] to a conservative counter-tradition in English letters that stresses the fundamentally national character of its poetry and the critical role of popular forms in its inspiration.³⁸

Hymns played an important part in this inspiration. Richard Wilkinson argues that hymn writing in the nineteenth century extended the concept of 'respectability' in the authorship of verse, beyond previous assumptions as to the social status of poets, not only to comparatively unknown clergyman but also clergy wives!³⁹ The 1931 enlarged edition of the *English Hymnal* also makes the link between hymns and poetry, thanks to the inspiration of the poet Robert Bridges. 'In the future, intelligent men will be able to

³⁷ Charles Causley Trust <<https://thecharlescausleytrust.wordpress.com/page/3/>> [accessed 25 April 2016].

³⁸ Gioia, 'The Independence of Charles Causley', p. 28.

³⁹ Richard Wilkinson, *A History of Hymns Ancient and Modern* (unpublished Doctoral Thesis, Hull University, 1985), p. 11.

take up a hymn-book and read it with as much interest and appreciation as any other collection of poetry and music.⁴⁰ In *The New Oxford Book of Christian Verse*, Donald Davie made the point that hymns are:

Scraps and tags (if no more) from some very sturdy and admirable poems. To pretend otherwise [...] smacks of the worst sort of 'elitism'. Among the pleas, never long stilled, that poetry be 'brought to the people', we habitually overlook this poetry that *has* been brought to the people, and still abides with them.⁴¹

Causley later had an ambivalent attitude to doctrine and church going but he did enjoy the musical aspects of liturgy. The influence of hymnody in his poetic style is shown by two hymns he wrote in response to specific requests. These were the 1975 parody 'On Being Asked to Write a School Hymn' (p. 255), and the 1983 'Hymn' (p. 257). Both of these, despite the School Hymn being a biting satire on the activity of the nearby abattoir, can equally well be spoken or sung to recognised hymn tunes.

The majority of the hymns which Causley and his classmates sang had successive or alternate line end rhymes within regular metrical patterns. These conservative structural and tonal elements were to figure prominently in Causley's poetry, especially in his ballads. The later 1950 Revised Edition of *Hymns Ancient and Modern*, reprinted as late as 1982, claimed to reproduce the augmentation of the 'rich treasury' of the past. It claims as a positive feature that there is no breaking of new ground or 'exploiting novel

⁴⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 173.

⁴¹ Donald Davie, *The New Oxford Book of Christian Verse* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1981), p. xx.

ideas.⁴² The genre, authorship and conservatism of the weekly diet of hymnody influenced the child Causley's view of what constituted poetry, who could write it, what were seen to be appropriate boundaries of tradition and innovation, and the close link between the spoken and the sung in verse.

Hymns in school were not the only influence from early twentieth century Anglican and non-conformist Christianity on Causley's feeling for language and on the springs of his imagination. 'I have a Christian background, brought up as a little Church of England choirboy and Sunday School boy and all that [...]'⁴³ This would have entailed weekly exposure to the Tudor prose of Thomas Cranmer's *Book of Common Prayer*. Cranmer's English in *The Book of Common Prayer* relied heavily on the effect of reading the liturgical material aloud, in his text the exhortation to hear often precedes that to read, and the oral is an important aspect of the character of Causley's poetry which Mason sees as 'within the very nature of storytelling and the ballad tradition.'⁴⁴ *The Book of Common Prayer* would also have accustomed the child Causley to 'idiom, cadences, imagery, repetition, contrast and general rhythm.'⁴⁵ Within the regular metre of the 'Song Of The Dying Gunner AA1' (p. 6), the repeated use of 'And', a device also used by Cranmer in his prose, slows the verse down where it begins lines, interrupting the action with pauses for thought. 'And it runs all runs away'. 'And the lads are down in the mess'. 'And don't depend on a long weekend', ending with the definitive 'And I shan't be home no more'. Other features of this regularity are often characterised, as is the Tudor language of *The*

⁴² *Hymns Ancient and Modern Revised Edition* (London: William Clowes and Sons, 1950), p viii.

⁴³ Wilmer, 'Charles Causley in Conversation', (p. 54).

⁴⁴ Mason, *Causley's Wild Faith* [accessed 18 April 2016], p. 1.

⁴⁵ *Influence of The Book of Common Prayer on the English Language* < <https://crossref-it.info/articles/68/influence-of-the-book-of-common-prayer-on-the-english-language> > [accessed 18 April 2016].

Book of Common Prayer, by repetition and contrasted, balanced and paired phrases, a feature especially prominent in the Psalter.

A striking example of this is 'I Am the Great Sun' (p. 57). This clearly makes use of the repetition of the 'I am' phrase, of balance and interlocking contrast in the first and second halves of each line and paired phrasing of the rhymes of the end lines.

REDACTED: See 'I Am The Great Sun', *Collected Poems*, p. 57, l. 1-4.

In addition to *The Book of Common Prayer*, Causley's frequent attendance at church services would have accustomed him to listening to the *King James Bible*. Alister McGrath points out that regular reading of this version of the Bible helped to imprint it on the minds of the listeners.⁴⁶ McGrath also argues that amongst many poor families whose ability to buy books was severely curtailed, having a Bible at home was a priority.⁴⁷ David Crystal highlights syntactic parallelism, rhymes within lines and personification as influences of the Bible on written style.⁴⁸ He also analyses the 'phonetic properties of iambic rhymes.'⁴⁹ These qualities are most marked in Causley's ballads such as 'Young Edgumbe' (p. 182), a local story of a confrontation during the Wars of the Roses. The first two and second two lines of each verse reinforce the significant point of each other, with alliterations, 'bow or bend' and 'speak or sing' and internal rhymes within the third

⁴⁶Alister McGrath, *King James Bible: How it Changed the Way We Speak*

<<http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/magazine-12205084>> 17 January 2011 [accessed 18 April 2016].

⁴⁷ Alister McGrath, *In the Beginning: The Story of the King James Bible and How it Changed a Nation, a Language and a Culture* (London: Hodder and Stoughton, 2002), p. 2.

⁴⁸ David Crystal, *Begat: The King James Bible and the English Language* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2010), p. 261.

⁴⁹ *Ibid.*

line of each verse. The pace of the metre is combined with rhetorical devices familiar to Old Testament Biblical texts such as the Psalms, 'O that men would praise the Lord...'⁵⁰

REDACTED: See 'Young Edgcumbe', *Collected Poems*, p. 182, v. 4.

For Causley and his contemporaries at school in the Twenties, hymnody and the associated religious texts represented poetry which had been brought to previous generations of working-class, often illiterate people. Folk-songs, in contrast, represented poetry *from* them and provided the child Causley with a linguistic contrast to the input from religious sources and one which was also outside the parameters of the formal tradition of 'educated' culture. The 1905 edition of Sharp's *Folk-Songs Noted in Somerset and North Devon* includes a list of the occupations of some of his contributors, 'Labourer's wife, shirt-maker, tenant farmer'.⁵¹ On those Friday afternoons it was Sharp's folk-songs which planted 'the seeds of the love of poetry' for Causley. There are eight poems in the 2000 *Collected*, all written in the fifties and sixties, which include 'Ballad' in the title. Nine of the poems in the 2000 *Collected* begin with the typical folk-song first line, 'As I' and four of these follow this with 'walked' or 'was walking'.⁵² Folk-songs and sea shanties often foreground themes of lost and betrayed romantic love, the intervention of the supernatural and the inevitable human destiny of death.⁵³ Death appears within a folk-song genre in the 1975 'Angel Hill' (p. 240).

⁵⁰ King James Version, *The Bible*, Psalm 107, v. 8.

⁵¹ Cecil Sharp, Frank Kidson, Lucy Broadwood and J. Fuller Mason, 'Folk-Songs Noted in Somerset and North Devon', *Journal of the Folk Song Society*, 6: 2 (1905), 1-65 (p. 2).

⁵² See Causley, *Collected Poems 1951-2000*.

⁵³ See Cecil Sharp, *Folk Songs From Somerset* (London: Simpkin and Co, 1904-1911).

REDACTED: See 'Angel Hill', *Collected Poems*, p. 240, v. 1.

The vernacular expression of the repeated 'right good will' and the movement in the metrical structure of the first three lines show a similarity with many folk-songs and sea shanties. There is a sinister implication behind the outward character of the sailor who assures the narrator at the end that 'You'll send and you'll fetch me one fine day.' Death was a respectable ingredient of ballads in the classroom, sex was not. The musical qualities of the folk-song and the narrative and flexible possibilities of the ballad were imprinted in Causley's consciousness even if his recollection is that neither teacher nor pupils were aware of the sexual implications of the imagery in the many songs which involved the pursuit of the hunt.⁵⁴ Following Victorian and Edwardian conventions of public attitudes to morality and sexuality, Sharp's songs had been censored of any content too explicitly descriptive or suggestive of sexual activity. Causley's poetry follows Sharp's sensitivities in this. The influences of his reserved temperament and the religious and cultural restraints of his childhood remained with him.

The education delivered to Causley and his classmates was not designed to make them aware of the 'conflicting modernist view' of questioning established attitudes. The patriotic ideology behind such volumes as *National Songs of the British Isles*, which also formed an element of Causley's early school introduction to verse through song, became apparent to him. As he progressed from childhood to adolescence, his piano lessons bore fruit. Eventually he was playing songs from:

⁵⁴ Causley, 'Kitchen in the Morning', p. 99.

a red-bound collection called *Songs that Won the War* [...] Their words gripped me, especially in such grim parodies as, 'If you were the only Boche in the trench/And I had the only bomb'. There was another, even more fearful:

If you want to find the old battalion,

I know where they are [...]

They're hanging on the old barbed wire.⁵⁵

Despite the influence of *National Songs of the British Isles* and *Songs that Won the War*, the role of both songs and poetry in promoting patriotism raised ambiguities for a generation whose childhood was dominated by the 'shadow' of World War One. The malign presence of this was ever present for Causley in the illness and death of his father. Later, his own war experience brought home to him personally how the triumphalism of the songs in volumes typified by *Songs that Won the War* parodied the horror of actual conflict. He was later to express this ironically in poems such as 'The Ballad of Jack Cornwell' (p. 163).

Causley's introduction to poetry in both the elementary and later the secondary classroom took place against the background of Sir Henry Newbolt's hugely influential 1921 *Report on the Teaching of English in England*.⁵⁶ Newbolt had great aspirations for the exposure of the child to literature in general and poetry in particular. 'The children, [...] have a natural love for beauty of sound, for the picturesque, the concrete, the imaginative, that is to say, for poetry.'⁵⁷ For Newbolt, Wordsworth, Shelley, Tennyson

⁵⁵ Ibid. p. 101.

⁵⁶ Sir Henry Newbolt, *The Teaching of English in England* (London: HM Stationary Office, 1921).

⁵⁷ Ibid., p. 87.

and Browning were considered to be ‘a way of educating, of drawing out, the best things in the imagination, the mind and the spirit of anyone, old or young.’⁵⁸ Newbolt did not specify what these ‘best things’ were but viewed poetry as a moral force. Causley admits that ‘Oddly, I remember little of what must have been read to us in the “poetry lessons”, but in his imagination realised as a small child that lines of Tennyson about castle walls could be linked in some way with the ever present Castle looming over the school. This led to an adult reflection that:

At least, perhaps it was the beginning of an understanding that the precise disciplines of history and geography haven’t much to do with the business of falling in love with a poem; that, rather, one listened to an individual voice, made an individual interpretation, constructed in the mind and imagination one’s own entirely personal map and calendar.⁵⁹

It was the sound and the imaginative capacities of poetry rather than any ideological convictions of injustice and change which fired Causley’s early love of poetry and which he took with him to the subject at secondary school. He passed the educational requirements to move on to secondary education, attended the local boy’s grammar school, Horwell, and after 1931 its successor, Launceston College. As with elementary English, Newbolt’s 1921 Report had very clear views about the nature of the study of English in the secondary phase. It should consist of:

⁵⁸ Ibid., p. 198.

⁵⁹ Causley, ‘Kitchen in the Morning’, p. 99.

the combination of a sensitiveness to the aesthetic and emotional appeal of literature with a reverence for exact knowledge and an appreciation of the use of language as an instrument of exact thought. [The teacher] must avoid the danger of using it to cultivate a shallow impressionism and an insincere fluency, in which case it simply feeds 'the lie in the soul' from which it is the aim of the best education to deliver us.⁶⁰

Newbolt, in his survey of an appropriate education in English literature in the twenties and thirties, believed that anything less than literature which was 'aesthetically sensitive' was a betrayal of the moral and aesthetic capacities of the nation's children. The definition of 'aesthetically sensitive' in Causley's secondary education did not extend beyond the traditional canon represented by Palgrave's 1861 *The Golden Treasury of the Best Songs and Lyrical Poems in the English Language*. The definition of 'Best' and the selections of 'Songs' and 'Lyrics' hinted at non-negotiable opinions of poetry which would uphold Newbolt's 'moral and aesthetic capacities.' In religious texts, hymns, sanitised folk songs and a poetic canon, Causley's primary education had exposed him to an idea of what 'poetry' was in restrained tone, regular metre and meticulously considered content connecting imagination and his sense of the aesthetic. Causley's memories of secondary English following a traditional curriculum included writing a sonnet, and the class being asked to write their own personal version of Rupert Brooke's 'The Great Lover'.⁶¹ He won the Senior English prize in 1932.⁶² Newbolt's mysterious references to

⁶⁰ Newbolt, *The Teaching of English*, p. 126.

⁶¹ Causley, 'Kitchen in the Morning', p. 103.

⁶² Green, *All Cornwall Thunders at My Door*, p. 44.

the 'lie in the soul' which was the result of the manipulation of 'superficial and insincere associations' resonate with Causley's later insistence on the depth of experience which poetry could articulate. The poem 'In 1933' (p. 405), illustrates the influence of Newbold's educational aspirations for poetic composition.

The scene is set in the annual and quite unexceptional carnival which the town celebrated each November. Causley blends his intimate knowledge of the event with a precise, tight and economic use of adjectives and adverbs, 'the deep November street' and the 'dark lurch of the Castle Keep'. The child's fear that the winter evening's firework display has a sinister undertone is expressed in lines which combine emotion and depth, 'A child's heart too afraid to ask / Which was a face and which a mask'. The vulnerability of the child speaks out of these lines with no hint of 'insincere fluency', neither is there 'shallow impressionism' in the startling imagery, irony and historical comment of the final verse.

REDACTED: See 'In 1933', *Collected Poems*, p. 405, v. 3.

It was those elements of Newbold's philosophy of literature, exactness of thought expressed through precision of language, and a depth of reflection on serious issues in sincerity of voice, which were to characterise much of Causley's later style and content. He combines this with psychological insight, recognisable allusions to the life of the community and a broader perspective of what is happening outside that community. As the adult Causley is aware, the adult mask could hide personal and collective deception. He did not consider his poetry as a vehicle for violently unmasking this in inflammatory

vocabulary or disrupted syntax. The rhyming couplets and restrained tone remain. In the poem 'In 1933', despite the colours and energy usually associated with fireworks, the end of Empire as symbolised by the monarchy, is characteristically expressed in Causley's restraint through direct, calm observation and simple adjectives, the 'blue flame' and 'dark colours'. A community celebration recognised as providing a moment of relief before the privations of winter, gives Causley the opportunity to look back at the event using the eyes of a child to make adult implications. This is an occasion instantly recognisable to his working-class, local community, part of the culture which the whole town had in common.

Williams saw the expression of such cultural practices as essential ingredients in the recognition of culture as 'ordinary' and a natural contribution to artistic production which would lead to a more democratic and participative recognition of 'culture'.⁶³ Newbolt supported mass education but with a different end in view. His 'lie in the soul' is the argument of those 'people in positions of influence who are inclined to regard a humane education of the lower classes as subversive of public order.'⁶⁴ But his vision of a 'humane education' for the 'lower classes' does not imply overturning this order. It is the capacity to enjoy the culture handed down to them and therefore be less inclined to be subversive. Green claims that Causley was 'never overtly political even though his poems reflect the voice of the common man.'⁶⁵ In the case of 'In 1933' it is a common cultural experience of carnival that Causley is using for the articulation of his voice.

⁶³ Raymond Williams, 'Culture and Revolution: A Comment', in *From Culture to Revolution: The Slant Symposium 1967*, ed. by Terry Eagleton and Brian Wicker, pp. 24-34 (p. 29).

⁶⁴ Newbolt, *The Teaching of English*, p. 60.

⁶⁵ Green, *All Cornwall Thunders at My Door*, p. 45.

Adolescence: Left Wing Politics and the Premonition of War

Adolescence was to challenge the structures of Causley's working-class life and emotions. His primary and secondary education had exposed him to a literature and an attitude to written English which fired his love of poetry. It did not persuade him to accept the status quo in politics, even though expectations from the locality, family, education and employers acted to reinforce the prevailing social hegemony. In later adolescence Causley began his life-long sympathy with socialist ideals for a more just and equal distribution of resources and opportunity.

In his survey of the Labour Party in inter-war Cornwall, Garry Tredigda notes that 'at the beginning of the inter-war period Cornwall was actually at the forefront of the rise of socialism.' He also points out that 'Labour failed to undermine the supremacy of Cornish Liberalism during the so-called 'Age of Alignment' in the Twenties, and it was not until 1945 that the party won a seat in Cornwall.'⁶⁶ Causley's North Cornwall, unlike the more industrialised south of the county where china clay, fishing and more intensive farming provided a basis for collective action, retained elements of deferential Toryism in both High Anglicanism and benign Liberalism with roots in non-conformity. It was not fertile ground for Labour. North Cornwall was not a constituency where the young Causley would find a thriving Labour Party for fellowship or the encouragement of radical views. However, an important influence on Causley's imaginative development in adolescence

⁶⁶ Garry Tredigda, 'Socialism and the Old Left: The Labour Party In Cornwall during the Inter-War Period', in *Cornish Studies: Second Series*, Seven, ed. by Philip Payton (Exeter: University of Exeter Press, 1999), 74-93 (p. 75).

came from a friend who was a member of the Left Book Club and lent him a copy of George Orwell's *The Road to Wigan Pier*.⁶⁷

Causley was nervous of committing himself to membership of the Left Book Club himself, 'can I do it?' he asked himself in 1938.⁶⁸ This was an indication of just how circumscribed were both the finances and the opportunities for independent thought and action, even for a 21 year old, in the enclosed community of Launceston.

Membership opened the world of Orwell's novels to him. It was a financial sacrifice but he eventually subscribed. Not only did the Book Club inform his sympathy for left wing domestic politics, it also gave a warning of the rise of Fascism in Europe, as did his reading material which included articles on Czechoslovakia and the persecution of the Jews.⁶⁹ Through the influence of this link with left wing politics, Causley went on to read *Keep The Aspidistra Flying*, and *Down and Out in London and Paris*. Those writing from a base of left-wing sympathies at this time whether poets or editors of and contributors to left-wing periodicals, may have been sympathetic to the thirties cause of 'the general problem of re-making of society' and 'the new world of political and economic justice.'⁷⁰ However, they were mostly from privileged, private school and Oxbridge backgrounds.⁷¹

This was in sharp contrast to Causley, whose formal education at this point was restricted to the School Certificate. As a grammar school pupil, Causley had an ambiguous status amongst those he had grown up alongside. Compared to many of them he was privileged academically and potentially socially. He was aware that he must

⁶⁷ Causley, 'Kitchen in the Morning', p. 104.

⁶⁸ Green, *All Cornwall Thunders at My Door*, p. 49.

⁶⁹ *Ibid.*, pp. 52, 53.

⁷⁰ Kenneth Allott, ed., *Contemporary Verse* (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1951), p. 19.

⁷¹ Rory Waterman, *Belonging and Estrangement in the Poetry of Philip Larkin, R. S. Thomas and Charles Causley* (Farnham: Ashgate, 2016), p. 136.

beware the temptation to patronise those without this chance who effectively did those jobs which made the daily routine of life possible, given that his own aspirations would be assumed to be towards a different if still limited destiny. In the 1988 poem 'The Clock' (p. 348), he articulated the sensibility which he never lost, of the necessities and practicalities which the working-class understood and had no option but to just get on with. Maisie, a servant in the Big House where he and his mother go to collect the washing, has become a friend of his mother's and is 'Helping us out at home, my mother ill'. 'Once, as a grammar school boy, Clever Dick,' he has made some patronising remark about cleaning to Maisie who doesn't bother to reply, making the boy feel ashamed. He tries to put this right as she is emptying the chamber pots.

REDACTED: See 'The Clock', *Collected Poems*, p. 348, v. 5.

What also needs emptying, as Maisie's lack of expression so forcefully implies, is any sense of superiority from those whose academic cleverness and opportunity has relieved them of the necessity to do mundane and socially stigmatised jobs. Causley is 'shamed', he has learnt the lesson of not patronising or devaluing those who do the work of sustaining everyday life.

Causley remained rooted in his community throughout his life. There is never any hint in his poetry of condescension towards those whom he grew up amongst and lived his life alongside and it was the culture he shared from living amongst them that he chronicled. Yet, as a working-class grammar school boy, he had no chance of taking the route of more fortunate contemporaries who were able to progress to university. He had to work to pay for his keep and contribute to the household and there was no money to

send him to higher education. The 'greatest shock of my life' came when his mother told him at age sixteen that she had found him a job in the office of a local builder. 'It didn't occur to me to protest. All I knew was that I was trapped [...] It was the end of the world.'⁷²

However, his intellectual horizons were expanding beyond this culture as he records:

I was a child of the Thirties. I left school in my sixteenth year — didn't go to university, went straight into working in an office, and so I relied on learning about poetry by reading literary weeklies. I mean weeklies like the old *New Statesman*, and literary journals like *Horizon*, and John Lehmann's *New Writing* and all that. I was always extremely interested and, through reading such papers, I became familiar with the work of Day Lewis, of MacNeice, of Spender and particularly of Auden.⁷³

Stephen Spender's use of imagery from the everyday, for example '32', with its condemnation of poverty, complemented the diet of poetry which Causley had been exposed to at school.⁷⁴ Poems such as this linked poetry with a representation of reality which he was familiar with from some of the Friday afternoon folk-songs and ballads. W. H. Auden's 'O What is that Sound?' expressed the growing sense of menace which pervaded the generation which came to adolescence in the thirties.⁷⁵ Causley described

⁷² Causley, 'Kitchen in the Morning', p. 104.

⁷³ Wilmer, 'Charles Causley in Conversation', p. 52.

⁷⁴ Stephen Spender, *Collected Poems 1928-1953* (London: Faber and Faber, 1955), p. 59.

⁷⁵ W. H. Auden, *Collected Shorter Poems 1927-1957* (London: Faber and Faber, 1969), p. 72.

his admiration for the 1930's poets who came to be known as the Oxford Group, Spender, Auden, C. Day Lewis and Louis MacNeice, in his conversation with Clive Wilmer.⁷⁶ From them came a variety of influences on his later work, lyric, ballad and MacNeice's poetic detachment from direct political rhetoric.

In the thirties poets Auden and Spender, Causley saw examples of poetic forms from the past such as the ballad and rhyming pentameter expressing contemporary social and political themes. These examples illustrated that such forms could be adapted without complex and often obscure imagery and without implying alienation from everyday life, in a narrative voice which did not prioritise impersonality. There seems little evidence that the potentially surrealist 'vibrant sub-culture' that was emerging in the second half of the thirties and that might be seen as having been 'nipped in the bud by the coming of war' ever reached Causley in his unfashionable, isolated Cornish location.⁷⁷

More applicable to Causley's poetics than any outside influences of surrealism is Bernard Bergonzi's summary of the poetry of Spender. The poet 'may want to improve society but accepts the here and now', writes in rational sequence, has a stable ego and respect for his craft but not the 'transcendent seriousness of the moderns.'⁷⁸ In conversation with Wilmer Causley had revealed his interest in Spender.⁷⁹ Bergonzi's assessment of Spender sums up a potent ingredient of Causley's work. Michael O'Neill argued that 'Spender has supplied in his practice a model for those who wish to

⁷⁶ Wilmer, 'Charles Causley in Conversation', p. 52.

⁷⁷ Trevor Tolley, 'Re-weighing the Baby and Re-testing the Bathwater: A Response to James Keery's "The Burning Baby and the Bathwater"', *PN Review*, 172: 33 2 (2006), 61-64 (p. 62).

⁷⁸ Bernard Bergonzi, *The Myth of Modernism and Twentieth Century Literature* (Brighton: Harvester, 1986), p. xii.

⁷⁹ Wilmer, 'Charles Causley in Conversation', p. 52.

negotiate between traditional and modernist forms' and that he was a model 'for many later lyric poets searching for a mode of credible expression.'⁸⁰

Causley admired Auden and Spender, who made some inroads into the political indifference of the political system and its ruling class members to the social and economic deprivation of the thirties. The Marxist critic, Christopher Caudwell, was critical of their limitations and lack of 'constructive theory'. 'As artists, [...] they may as economists accept the economic categories of socialism, but as artists they cannot see the new forms and contents of an art which will replace bourgeois art.'⁸¹ Causley had experience of the poverty and lack of opportunity implied by Caudwell's 'economic category of socialism'. Any theory behind the 'form and content' of his art was related to the articulation of the experience of living within this categorisation, not commenting on it from outside.

The thirties saw the origins of the debate over the identification and authenticity of 'working-class' and 'proletarian' literature, a debate relevant to Causley's working-class background. His eventual job as a primary school teacher amongst the children of his contemporaries who remained in this society, placed him in an inside position from which to reflect on class and poetry. Apart from Tressell's *The Ragged Trousered Philanthropists*, many novels describing working-class life were written in the thirties by 'middle-class intellectuals with socialist intentions.'⁸² Samuel Hynes argued that 'no writing of any importance came from the working-class in the thirties.'⁸³ However, Carole

⁸⁰Michael O'Neill, 'The Thirties Bequest', in *The Oxford Handbook of Contemporary British and Irish Poetry*, ed. by Peter Robinson, (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2013), pp. 38-56 (p. 55).

⁸¹ Christopher Caudwell, *Illusion and Reality* (London: Macmillan, 1937), p. 319.

⁸² H. Gustav Klaus, 'Socialist Fiction in the Thirties: Some Preliminary Observations', in *The 1930s: A Challenge to Orthodoxy*, ed. by John Lucas (Hassocks: Harvester, 1978), pp 13-41 (p. 14).

⁸³ Samuel Hynes, *The Auden Generation: Literature and Politics in England in the 1930's* (London: The Bodley Head, 1976), p. 11.

Snee observed that working-class writing, poetically alive in the literary journals of the time and also in the fiction of the decade, in novelists such as Walter Greenwood, Walter Brierley and Lewis Jones, was ignored in critical practice by previously dominant value judgements. Snee argued that such definitions exclude works which present political analysis, sensitivity and feeling and the concept of individualism which arise from an alternative working-class ideology.⁸⁴ Williams was opposed to any such polarisation:

What a socialist society needs to do is not to define its culture in advance, but to clear the channels, so that instead of guesses at a formula there is opportunity for a full response of the human spirit to a life continually unfolding, in all its concrete richness and variety.⁸⁵

Causley's 'human spirit' was not formed in the industrial environment of organised labour which was most likely at that time to provide a context for theories of socialism. If one of the pre-conditions for authors of socialist writing was life in an industrial base of production then Causley was never going to qualify. However, H. Gustav Klaus made the interesting observation, relevant to Causley's own Celtic environment, that in areas on the periphery of industrial civilisation, it was the oral tradition of peasants and village labourers who could better articulate a collective voice without either the perspective of individual losses inflicted by historical change or the temptation to succumb to

⁸⁴ Carole Snee, 'Working-Class Literature or Proletarian Writing?', in *Culture and Crisis in Britain in the 1930s*, ed. by Jon Clark, Margaret Heinemann, David Margolies and Carole Snee, (London: Lawrence and Wishart, 1979), pp. 165-192. See also Valentine Cunningham, 'The Age of Anxiety and Influence; or, Tradition and the Thirties Talents', in *Rewriting the Thirties: Modernism and After*, ed. by Keith Williams and Steven Matthews, (London: Longman, 1997), pp. 5-22.

⁸⁵ Raymond Williams, 'The Uses of Literacy: Working-class Culture', *Universities and Left Review*, 1: 2 (1957), 29-32 (p. 30).

nostalgia.⁸⁶ Causley grew up in an environment of rural poverty, independent from the demands of mass production. The collective and practical response of the community to the reality of individual misfortune, such as Richard Bartlett's accident, was still based on close family and social ties. It was this culture which Causley described in his poems and which accords with Williams's 'concrete richness and variety'.

Peace into War: The Expansion of Experience

In the late thirties, events in the outside world were beginning to intrude on Causley's life in Launceston. He became interested in the Spanish Civil War and the plight of Spanish refugees and played the piano for a Spanish Relief Concert in Launceston Town Hall.⁸⁷ In November 1938 he was delivering leaflets advertising a Peace Service to local vicarages alongside his friend, Russell Uren, who was a left-wing sympathiser.⁸⁸ Causley, himself born in the year of the Russian Revolution, was painfully aware in his late teens and early twenties of upheaval in Europe with the rise of Fascism and Nazism. Causley's childhood had been deeply affected by World War One. His adolescence was lived against the backdrop of tensions eventually culminating in the outbreak of World War Two.

The 'structures of feeling' of Causley's childhood and adolescence, place, family and education within the 'knowable community' of Launceston, provided him with the meanings and values of a working-class culture based on shared experiences, close social relationships and language accessible to all. 'We still lived', as Causley was to recall looking back on his childhood in the twenties, 'in the long shadow of 1914-18.'⁸⁹ Another war

⁸⁶ Klaus, 'Socialist Fiction', pp. 31-33.

⁸⁷ Green, *All Cornwall Thunders at My Door*, p. 48.

⁸⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 52.

⁸⁹ Causley, 'Kitchen in the Morning', p. 100.

would permanently influence his own adult perspective on life and relationships. Causley did not directly oppose the social hierarchy or economic determinants which formed the living context of his culture. His earliest memories as expressed in the poems written later in life illustrate that the 'structures of feeling' of resilience and collective pride resulting from poverty, combined with the love of poetry linked to music and song which his education implanted, were constant influences on the force of his poetry.

Peter McDonald argued that the increasingly menacing atmosphere of the thirties focused discussion in the arts on the relationship between art and action, art and belief and the exploration for the artist of individual inner reality and outer external events.⁹⁰ An adolescence in the thirties located these questions at the heart of Causley's aesthetic consciousness as 1939 gave way to 1940. His participation in World War Two was to provide the stimulus for his first adult collection of poetry and the beginning of his published life.

In his argument for revaluing the 'base' towards 'the specific activities of men in real social and economic relationships', Williams emphasised that this revaluation was 'always in a state of dynamic process.'⁹¹ Causley was to take with him into war the legacy of the structures of feeling in family, education and religion and the values and practices arising from the poverty in his knowable community. These influences were never to be eradicated, they were part of what Williams described as the rootedness of 'human and local continuities.'⁹² Naval service in World War Two confronted Causley with a test of how far this would be seen to be true. Would these continuities sustain him in addition to what

⁹⁰ See Peter McDonald, 'Believing in the Thirties', in *Rewriting the Thirties*, ed. by Keith Williams and Steven Matthews, pp. 71-90.

⁹¹ Williams, 'Base and Superstructure', p. 6.

⁹² Raymond William, *A Short Counter Revolution: Towards 2000 Revisited* ed. by Jim McGuigan (London: Sage, 2015), p. 3.

Williams describes as unavoidable and necessary diversities and 'the stresses of actual change.'⁹³

⁹³ *Ibid.*

Chapter Two:

War, Peace and 'Cultures in Common'

In 1939 Causley was 22 and future conscription seemed increasingly likely. This chapter claims that Causley's poetry written during and just after his naval service in World War Two locates Williams's concepts of 'structures of feeling' and 'knowable communities' within Causley's naval experiences. The 'knowable community' of the navy had its own hierarchical structures, disciplines and expectations of behaviour. It also had its own language, in military convention and informal slang, some of which dated back to Elizabethan times. Life at sea and on land during conflict included the limitations of space, of time for writing and of privacy. Emotionally there was the fear of sudden death, the loss of colleagues and separation from home and family. Williams regarded 'structures of feeling' as 'changes, meanings and values as lived and felt.'¹

'The whole totality of life as lived and experienced' for Causley during World War Two included this 'knowable community' and these 'structures of feeling'. The restrictions on space, time and privacy led directly to his decision to write poetry and he found subject material for poems written both during and beyond his naval service. Much of Causley's poetry of war is experience in re-collection. In this way life changing experiences are removed from the immediacy of that pain, after the passage of time has enabled deep and personal reflection. The poems in his fifties collections *Farewell, Aggie Weston* (1951) and *Survivor's Leave* (1955) exhibit Causley's restrained, introspective tone, his

¹ Williams, *Marxism and Literature*, p. 132.

use of traditional forms such as the ballad. Through his use of the song-like qualities of the lyric he expresses his thoughts and feelings, especially the predominant theme of loss of innocence through experiences of death and separation.²

Causley's five years in the Navy established his basic choice to write poetry rather than prose. It was in the Navy that he realised:

I didn't really know what was my line. I knew that I should be a poet or a playwright or a novelist, that's what I wanted to be, but being on a small ship or in a shore establishment somewhere meant that you had a job to do and that you could not write a novel or a play, you simply didn't have the time or the physical space. But poetry can be written in the head, without anyone having the faintest idea of what's going on, and I've gone on writing my poems in my head like that ever since.³

The privacy and reticence which were to characterise the tone of much of Causley's verse and his frequent use of 'I' voices as reflections addressed to himself, are hinted at in his 'writing my poems in my head'. They are 'my' poems in 'my' head. The poems in the early collections have the sense of the reader listening in to the poet's personal reflections. He continually dwells on survivor's guilt, loss and separation and fear of death, a direct response to the very present dangers and consequences of war. Although composed later, his accounts of past lived experience have a depth which avoids the

² Charles Causley, *Poems in Pamphlet 1: Farewell, Aggie Weston* (Aldington: Hand and Flower Press, 1951), *Survivor's Leave* (Aldington: Hand and Flower Press, 1953).

³ Parker, *A Certain Man*, p. 20.

manufactured emotional ‘taste’ which Williams sees as a reduction of the expression of authentic and immediate experience.⁴

The chapter will also return to the ‘knowable community’ of Causley’s post-war life in Launceston centred on his teaching career and early publishing history. In his attitude to the teaching of English and in the struggle to achieve publication, his situation affirmed two aspirations regarding education and participative democracy reached by Williams in an analysis of ‘cultures in common’. In education Williams argued for the access of working-class adults and children to traditions from a socially diverse range of past and present cultural artefacts. So doing would affirm their own potential creativity. In publishing, Williams described the barriers to publication which existed for poets from backgrounds which lacked affluence and access to a privileged education. He ascribed this to the profit motive underlying the capitalist ownership of literary publication. These conclusions were articulated in The Slant Symposium of 1967 and later expanded as ‘The Idea of a “Common Culture”’, in the collection of essays and lectures edited by Robin Gable under the title *Resources of Hope: Culture, Democracy, Socialism*. In these writings Williams’s described how:

the majority of people, [...] were both shut out by the nature of the education system from access to the full range of meanings of their predecessors in that place, and excluded by the whole structure of communications — the character of its material ownership, its limiting

⁴ Raymond Williams, *Keywords: A Vocabulary of Culture and Society* 2nd edn (London: Fontana, 1988), pp. 128, 282.

social assumptions — from any adequate participation in the process of changing and developing meanings [...] ⁵

In his teaching career and in his struggles to get published, Causley had lived experience of these limitations. His teaching career began and continued in a primary school serving some of the most disadvantaged children in the town. His poems reflected the common experience of a community after World War Two. In the 'common culture' of the town, World War Two and the remembrance of the men and women who did not return were a powerful 'structure of feeling' as was the memory of the losses of World War One. Through his teaching, his poetry of war and in the struggle to publish his first two collections, Causley participated in the aspirations for education and exemplified the artistic reality of culture as ordinary so central to Williams's thought.

The Coming of War: Boarding the Train

In June 1940 Causley boarded the train which was to take him to war. The Spanish Civil War and the threat of war in Europe 'shadowed' his late adolescence just as World War One had been a malign presence in the background of his childhood. Bergonzi emphasised that in literature, the Spanish Civil War stirred the imagination and feelings of many contemporaries creating an imaginative myth, just as previous poets been instrumental in the mythologizing of World War One.⁶ Unlike the Spanish Civil War, participation in World War Two was not a question of choice and in its early stages,

⁵ Williams, 'The Idea of a Common Culture' in *Resources of Hope*, ed. by Robin Gable, pp. 32-38. and see 'Culture and Revolution: A Comment', pp. 24-34.

⁶ Bergonzi, *The Myth of Modernism*, p. 121.

before the horror and extent of atrocities unfolding in Europe were known, any justifications for war or patriotic exhortations were less likely to be expressed in a heroic genre. John Lehmann described the Spanish Civil War as a 'descent into international anarchy [...] made even more destructive [...] by the confusion of warring ideologies with warring empires.'⁷ Despite this confusion Lehmann recognised the excitement and drama 'involving the oldest beliefs and allegiances and spiritual hankerings of our civilisation.'⁸ The excitement and drama of this challenge, which were a powerful influence on Causley's adolescence, gave way to the reality of his own participation in conflict with the advent of conscription in World War Two.

McDonald argued that the thirties were defined by their conclusion, merely the final conclusion in a series of early endings embodied in the Spanish Civil War and the Munich settlement.⁹ In a domestic context, the decade dominated by 'social misery and political unrest' was now overtaken by the international crisis.¹⁰ The advent of war marked the final shift from domestic concern for social and political change to international preoccupations both for Causley as an individual and in the wider literary world. Looking back in 1946, Lehmann reflected in the introduction to a compilation of poetry from *New Writing* over the previous ten years, that *New Writing* was always concerned with 'contemporary awareness.' From 1936-1946 this 'contemporary awareness' gradually became a vehicle for those poets who 'have lived and died among the wars and rumours of wars', [...] the building of dykes during the ten years of flood weather' as he graphically

⁷ John Lehmann, ed., *Poems from New Writing 1936-1946* (London: John Lehmann, 1946) p. 6.

⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 6.

⁹ See McDonald 'Believing in the Thirties'.

¹⁰ John Heath-Stubbs and David Wright, eds., *The Faber Book of 20th Century Verse* 3rd edn (London: Faber and Faber, 1975), p. 26.

describes the decade.¹¹ Domestic social and political concerns took second place to the priority of survival and the dangers and consequences of war for anyone faced with active service.

In the thirties Geoffrey Grigson, another Cornishman, had attacked literary introversion as synonymous with lack of commitment to radical political change.¹² Causley had made tentative steps towards supporting political change in his support for left wing politics and literature in his adolescence. In 1939, the Tamil Meary James Thurairajah Tambimuttu founded the periodical *Poetry London*. The third letter in the November 1939 edition, quoted but not attributed by Trevor Tolley, voiced opposition to Grigson's view that 'poetry in which objects replace emotions [...] is the only poetry worth publishing.'¹³ Grigson's criticism of 'literary introversion' and his questioning of the role of the emotional in poetry were relevant issues at a time when young men such as Causley were forced to risk their lives. As Tolley commented of the poetry of this period, 'The concern with political and economic issues was replaced by a preoccupation with eternal verities and with the meaning of one's own destiny.'¹⁴

By the early forties, the 'eternal verities', presumably Tolley's euphemism for issues of life and death, and the concept of 'destiny' were realities for Causley, not literary speculations. He was faced with physical and emotional involvement in the course of combat in which he was personally in danger and he knew that friends were likely to die. In such circumstances it is not surprising that, in the course of his war service, heightened emotion and the resulting moods, feeling and attitudes would translate into poetry

¹¹ Lehmann, *Poems from New Writing*, p. 6.p.6, 7.

¹² Robin Skelton, ed., *Poetry of the Thirties* (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1981), p. 29.

¹³ Tolley, 'Re-Weighing the Baby', p. 61.

¹⁴ Ibid.

which expressed intensity of emotion through sensory recollection. 'But always, always / I see the German wreck on the thundering rocks at Cocos:' Causley writes in 'A Poetry Notebook' (FAW, p. 23). The collections *Farewell, Aggie Weston* and *Survivor's Leave*, although both published after the war, move between the 'introversion' of personal vulnerability and the intrusion and brutality of world events.

There was a positive dimension to the coming of war for Causley. He had migrated from a working-class background to office jobs rather than manual work, but the war released him from the drudgery of these successive office jobs, forced on him by the poverty of his mother's situation. With a sense of the inevitable but also the thought of at least the opportunity to achieve some sort of independence from his mother and release from the oppression of his mundane employment, he registered for the draft in December 1939.¹⁵ The First World War influenced his choice of the Navy rather than the Army in which his father had suffered so fatally in the previous conflict:

I opted to join the Navy through pure ignorance really. I'd read all of the First World War poets, and the accounts of what happened in France and Belgium didn't appeal to me at all.¹⁶

This was despite his childhood fear of being submerged in water, originating in the location of his earliest memories of the cottages in the valley of the river Kensey, prone to flooding its banks. The image of the sea as a symbol of death and separation in much of his poetry is explained in Causley's statement that:

¹⁵ Green, *All Cornwall Thunders at My Door*, p. 56.

¹⁶ Parker, *A Certain Man*, p. 19.

The notion of going to sea, I suppose, was a romantic one, but a rather mistaken one in my case. I wasn't a very resourceful sailor and I've never met anybody who loathed the Navy more than I did or felt so uneasy on what Shakespeare called the 'wild and wasteful ocean'. I absolutely loathe it, and nowadays I wouldn't set myself on it unless there was absolutely no alternative.¹⁷

Green chronicles in detail Causley's experiences of military registration, the subsequent medical examination in Plymouth, and the arrival of the brown envelope which contained his call-up papers in 1940.¹⁸ There were fatalities in North Cornwall when, as the *Western Morning News* reported, a bomb killed a middle aged man and two children in the nearby town of Callington.¹⁹ That Causley extracted and kept the report of this incident in his diary, where, as Green comments, it still is today, illustrates that the horror of war and its effects on particular lives was a deep and lasting impression on his emotional sensibility.²⁰

Personal experience shaped by exterior events is the focus of the poem '1940' (p. 285). Causley did not describe the start of his war service in verse until much later than 1940, in the 1984 collection *Secret Destinations*. He reserved the impact of the dislocation which the war years made on his consciousness to a later period. The adjective 'Secret' in the title of the collection is an indication that the privacy of poems written 'in my head' remained. The elapse of a significant period of time between event and articulation in

¹⁷ Ibid.

¹⁸ Green, *All Cornwall Thunders at My Door*, pp. 56-57.

¹⁹ 'S. W. Towns Hit by Big Bombs', *The Western Morning News*, 30 November 1940, pp. 5, 6.

²⁰ Green, *All Cornwall Thunders at My Door*, p. 57.

circumstances dealing with his personal life is another of Causley's characteristic distancing devices for diluting the pain of the moment yet expressing that it has remained with him, albeit in a less acute degree. '1940' combines personal experience with identification as a participant in conflict against a background of external public events. The poem is explicitly dated and timed as June 13th at 9.45. It chronicles Causley's first leaving of home in the apprehension of an unknown destiny.

The poem exemplifies the use of a traditional form, in this case the sonnet, in the context of the personal and global circumstances of the time. Causley describes the beginnings of the journey into violence which will include for many the horrors of physical suffering and the anguish of its results. Events which shatter lives start quite prosaically as the train pulls out of Launceston Station. The description of the everyday elements of the community he is about to leave behind are swallowed up in the movement of the land as the train plays its part in turning the page of war.

REDACTED: See '1940', *Collected Poems*, p. 285.

The basic sonnet construction of fourteen lines is disrupted by short, jagged descriptive phrases with irregular rhyming patterns but with a divide in content as the observed, seemingly impersonal impressions give way to the subjectivity and inclusiveness of the 'we' of the last six lines. The communal subjects, the use of 'we' inviting a bond and identification by the reader, are in the middle of this turmoil and are travelling due to circumstances entirely beyond their control. They are second class passengers and have third class cases. They have no possibility of determining the course of events. The function of the conscripted combatants, whose lives are 'glassed in', as the prospect of

any privacy and a life untouched by external events recedes, is solely to learn off by heart what has been designated for them on their Travel Warrant. As in their working-class lives, they have no prospect of agency or choice where these matters of life and death are at stake. They are powerless.

At the onset of war in 1940, the conscripted Causley reflects bewilderment and resignation. In the late thirties Auden and Christopher Isherwood went on their 'Journey to a War' and were primarily preoccupied not with the morality or otherwise of conflict, but with how it *felt* to be in the presence of war and what *meaning* this experience might have.²¹ There is nothing to be done to prevent war, one can only to wait with resignation for war to take its course. Muriel Rukeyser argued that for those caught up in conflict the priority was to win the war first, and work out the meaning afterwards.²² Causley looks back to 1940 from 1984. He recorded impressions which illustrate the impotence of those caught up in war. This suggests that, with hindsight, a search for meaning in war is either an impossible and fruitless task or one he preferred to ignore. This illustrates Rukeyser's point that 'one of the invitations of poetry is to come to the emotional meanings of every moment.'²³ For Causley, the roots of the past of the 1940s have grown into the emotional meaning of his present in 1984. To survive his war service was the urgent priority in 1940 itself, to live with the emotional consequences of that experience was a lifetime's struggle which dominated his poetic consciousness. Causley, writing in 1984, is not looking apprehensively or judgementally either in the time frame of the poem or in hindsight, to a future which is 'behind its veil' but chronicling his own

²¹ Hynes, *The Auden Generation*, p. 345.

²² Muriel Rukeyser, 'Chapter One from "The Resistances," *The Life of Poetry*', *The American Poetry Review*, 25: 5 (1996), 17-21 (p. 21).

²³ *Ibid.*

reflection with a preciseness of personal experiential detail of an exact moment which has powerfully lingered with him as a sense of isolation, inherent danger and resignation. There is no attempt to employ irony or explicit judgemental perspectives on the morality of events or the need to question or change the future. Causley has a different purpose, the need to share what this structure of feeling, dislocation, felt like to him, the indifference of a war machine to the individuals who are swallowed up in the progress of a war brought into being beyond their control.

The Navy: Language, Travel and Combat

Accounts of Causley's life following his departure for war are documented by Green who has provided a detailed account of the externals of Causley's relatively uneventful war service and its day to day concerns and notable events both on board and on shore.²⁴ The culture of life in the Navy contributed three elements to Causley's early poetry: a new common language, the stimulation of fresh locations and the motivation to write of the inevitable danger and lasting tragedy of death in combat. He now had the opportunity to experiment with the vernacular, including some vocabulary which had changed little from Elizabethan times and had previously been totally unfamiliar to him. 'I found myself in this totally new world with its marvellously Elizabethan language and slang. It was all wonderfully exotic language to my ears.'²⁵ Causley utilised the vernacular language of the Navy to convey the experience of life on board. The language of everyday speech, a vital component of Williams's 'common culture', is a component of

²⁴ See Green, *All Cornwall Thunders at My Door*, pp. 56-107 and Michael Hanke 'No Comfortable Return Tickets: Causley's War at Sea', in *Through the Granite Kingdom*, ed. by Michael Hanke, pp. 51-62.

²⁵ Parker, *A Certain Man*, p. 19.

his poetry seen at the very onset of his published poems. The use of colloquial language reinforces the sense of immediacy and authenticity in the narrative. Sharing his particular situation within the universal context of war and in the conditions he shares with his fellow naval conscripts, Causley writes poems such as 'Song Of The Dying Gunner A. A. 1' (p. 6), using the linguistic turns of 'Cooks to the Galley is sounded off' and 'Hang my tiddy suit on the door'. Equality of condition and common language and experience are vital components of this 'common culture'.²⁶

The literary influence of naval slang was accompanied by the imaginative stimulus of new experiences of travel and location. Angela K. Smith placed the emphasis in Causley's war poetry written during active service as that of displacement, suggesting that Causley 'juxtaposes different environments' in an attempt to articulate the displacement of a Cornishman forced into unfamiliar territory both physically and emotionally.²⁷ Smith used the poem 'A Poetry Notebook' (*FAW*, p. 23), to argue that displacement and the resulting state of isolation together with contrasting landscapes represented potential dimensions of experience and reflection for the poet.²⁸ Those poems which Causley wrote on board ship and during shore leave include not only examples of the outwardly visible life of this naval community but new 'structures of feeling' of wartime and exile. Causley's poetic impressions, written during the war, 'HMS Eclipse Approaches Freetown' (p. 12), and coming into port in 'HMS Glory at Sydney' (p. 8), are vivid accounts of what were for him new and exotic locations. He takes his usual care for matching noun and

²⁶ For an analysis of 'equality of condition' within 'common culture' see John and Lizzie Eldridge, *Raymond Williams: Making Connections*, (London: Routledge, 1994), p. 56.

²⁷ Angela K. Smith 'Displacement and the Combat Soldier: Poetic Interpretations', in *War and Displacement in the Twentieth Century: Global Conflicts*, ed. by Sandra Barkof and Angela K. Smith (London: Routledge, 2014), pp. 19-36 (p.20).

²⁸ *Ibid.*, pp. 33, 34.

adjective so that there is a very direct yet unexpected conjunction of colour and sense impression with the object. The 'yellow stammer' of the lighthouse which itself resembles 'white sugar'. Because of the heat, the activity in the harbour is 'fevered'. 'The yellow stammer from the lighthouse of white sugar / Pales as the African sun unfolds her tail of golden peacock / Over the fevered harbour' from 'HMS Eclipse Approaches Freetown'. 'O! I shall never forget you on that crystal morning! / Your immense harbour, your smother of deep green / trees', 'HMS Glory At Sydney'. 'Crystal' with its implications of the sharp, clear memories of each day is another example of the vividness yet accessibility of his imagery.

New variants of language and travel abroad provided 'structures of feeling' which the war contributed to Causley's poetry as he negotiated the 'knowable community' of his naval service. Naval slang and foreign locations appear in *Farewell, Aggie Weston* alongside the stark reality for all those on active service, of the threat of death in war. In *Farewell, Aggie Weston* Causley published poems of immediate reaction about the death of specific sailors, written while he was on active service, and naming the actual ships on which they were written, 'Rattler Morgan' (p. 18), was written on H. M. S. Cabbala, 'Song Of The Dying Gunner' (p.6), on H. M. S. Glory. In giving voice to this reality Causley focuses on individual deaths rather than extensive, graphic descriptions based on large scale combat. Causley's use of sonnet, ballad and nursery rhyme to articulate the experience of survival is the main element of his contribution to the poetry arising from World War Two. He did not want to use his imagination to *manufacture* what were for so many of his contemporaries, known and unknown to him, the dreadful realities of war and does not chronicle horrors which he had not experienced or deliver overt or covert

propaganda. This accords with Williams's priority of authentic experience as a vital element of artistic production.²⁹

Vernon Scannell argued that there is a lack of directness and immediacy in the content of his poetry inspired by war which can be equated with offering 'palliatives against the abrasiveness of the realities they disguise.'³⁰ He criticised Causley for 'transforming and idealizing, consciously making literature from carefully selected parts of his experience as a sailor.'³¹ Causley's poetry of war does not foreground the immediacy of combat but the results of combat, the loss and separation of death and the end of innocence. This is also a reality of war. Unlike Sidney Keyes, Alun Lewis and Keith Douglas, Causley survived, and his experience of war lay less in direct action and much more in the post-war realisation of loss not only of individual lives but the tragedy of a collective loss of an innocence which presumed that love will be accepted, not rejected. Despite the slaughter of World War One and the sacrifice of so many lives, Causley lived to see this rejection continue. Even after the war, the horror is too immediate to be articulated directly, as he had tried not to see the poverty in Launceston as he grew up. His skill is in expressing the horror of drowning in imagery which also maintains the authority of the lived experience at its heart.

There is an echoing of Shakespearean imagery in the description of the drowning of an actual individual in 'Rattler Morgan' (p. 18). 'His fingers are washed to stone / And to phosper / And there are starfish in his hair.' This strategy for dealing with raw fear and horrific death was tragically exemplified for Causley in the actual drowning of Eric

²⁹ Williams, 'Culture and Revolution: A Comment' p. 30.

³⁰ Vernon Scannell, *Not Without Glory: Poets of the Second World War* (London: The Woburn Press, 1976), p. 131.

³¹ *Ibid.*

Sullock, a contemporary from Launceston. Sullock's escort ship, HMS Bredon, was torpedoed in 1943 during duty escorting a Russian convoy.³² Causley's fear of the sea and understanding of how horrific it would be to be torpedoed and sunk was the more vivid due to his first-hand knowledge of the possibilities and reality of what a ship being attacked would involve. In 'Convoy' (p. 13), he focuses on the death of one individual. It has a strange dream-like quality suggestive of the influence of thirties surrealism in imagery, an impressionistic association of events and their articulation in the consciousness of the imagination.

REDACTED: See 'Convoy', *Collected Poems*, p. 13, v. 1.

Trying to avoid the cold reality by drawing a blanket over it might help but cannot efface the sense of desperate cold and rigid immobility from the 'f' alliteration of 'frozen face' and the icy, brittle 'g' sounds in 'glittering fish' and 'green freezing sea-glass'. After returning to the indifference of the physical environment where 'The iron wind clangs round the ice-caps', Causley finishes the poem with the two short lines from a Christmas carol which blend with the suggestion of a naval convoy from the poem's title. This fatal event can only be imagined in a retreat from reality and escape into childhood fantasy. After five lines of free verse related to the body lying in the waters, Causley's device for dealing emotionally with an horrific death which his own service in the Navy makes it only too easy to imagine, is to return the victim to Christmas and the 'white tumbling bears'.

³² Green, *All Cornwall Thunders at My Door*, pp. 61, 93.

REDACTED: See 'Convoy', *Collected Poems*, p. 13, v. 2,3.

'Convoy' and 'Rattler Morgan', use strange and fantastical description. Both are in free verse and in the present tense because, unlike the lived experience of naval slang and the travelling to unknown destinations, the effects of bereavement are a continuous and painful 'structure of feeling' beyond the war which remained with Causley.

The atmosphere of cold withdrawal from personal emotion in these two poems parallels the feeling of personal isolation which he was to live with for the rest of his life. He realised very early in his return from war that the literary and intellectual isolation of this condition was not going to be lessened by any emotional intimacy. This is acknowledged in the poem 'Autobiography' (p. 21), published in 1951. Causley writes a letter, which he realises will never be answered, to an unknown recipient.

REDACTED: See 'Autobiography', *Collected Poems*, p. 21, l. 1-10.

Post-war, when his 'sea going self-possession' has wavered, the lack of self-confidence in close relationships has already settled into his consciousness. There will be no reply to the letter. His pen, the 'razor at my wrist' dissociates passion and thought, the 'my poems in my head' will take the place of physical passion and he is left to his 'naked bed' with only the company of the sensations from his environment. Before the war he had grumbled in his diary that he could not afford to take a girl called Jean to the cinema.³³ After the war there was no-one, another experience which would resonate with many of

³³ Exeter, University of Exeter Special Collections EUL MS 50a/PERS/2, Diaries, 19 November 1938.

his contemporaries. For Causley, the turning of the 'page of war' seems to have settled not only his conviction that poetry was the form for his artistic expression, his lifelong obsession with survivor's guilt, loss of innocence and death and separation, but also his intuition that he would follow this vocation alone. This is a bitter and unwanted reality which he cried out against. Even as he recalled his sensory impressions of India in the poem 'Autobiography' and associates them with bodily sensation, the rationality, instrumentality and repression of life at home is never far away.

REDACTED: See 'Autobiography', *Collected Poems*, p. 21, l. 11-13.

He turns from the 'tactful friend' who tries to reassure him, and perhaps encourage him to persevere, to the 'candid sky', a more realistic assessment of how life will be.

REDACTED: See 'Autobiography', *Collected Poems*, p. 21, l. 14-15.

Loneliness is Causley's lived experience after the war as it was for many of his contemporaries and their families. The 'I' voice in which he chooses to communicate this loneliness is in an expanded sonnet form in 'Autobiography' but also in other poems the narrative conventions of the ballad. The common ballad trope of 'As I walked down by the river', can be seen in the 1951 'A Ballad for Katharine Of Aragon' (p. 2). Causley frames the juxtaposition of a visit to the grave of Katharine of Aragon and the fate of 'Jumper' Cross, a combatant known to him who did not survive, to provide the content of the narrative framework, ending with reflection on his lonely survival. 'For Jumper and

Kate are always out late / And I lie here alone.’ In the ‘Nursery Rhyme of Innocence and Experience’ (p. 4), he effectively uses narrative to foreground the implications of war and express the realities for those killed and those left behind. In the latter he chooses the naïve and fantasy elements of nursery rhyme to articulate a loss of innocence. ‘O where are the other / Girls and boys? / And why have you brought me / Children’s toys?’ The end of both of these poems is the loneliness and consequent vulnerability which he articulated in ‘Autobiography’. Causley’s temperamental approach hides personal feelings behind a restrained formality which discouraged excess of emotion.

The collection *Survivor’s Leave* contains poems which retain elements of *post-war* reflection. Causley was a survivor but the life changing experience of participation in the war never left him, he was only ever ‘on leave’. The poet is alone in *his* day just as he lay alone at the end of ‘A Ballad For Katharine Of Aragon’. Although it ended in loneliness, the navy had constituted Causley’s ‘knowable community’ for the duration of the war. Inclusion in the war through experience of naval service had added to the influences of place, family and education from his Cornish childhood and adolescence. The ‘structures of feeling’ through which he constituted meaning and value for the rest of his life were, from now on, inextricably connected to the fear of death, separation and loss. Any innocent view of the inherent moral goodness in humanity had been shattered for him by World War Two as it had been shattered for his father’s generation by World War One. Causley speaks from the experience of the conscripted and powerless.

The three important characteristics of cultural production for Williams were living, telling and communication in speech which makes meanings and values accessible and open to interpretation without academic or linguistic specialism. Causley’s poetic tone, however much it is dependent on imagination and metaphor, never becomes

inaccessible, he adds notes on naval slang where he sees the necessity. He could achieve this congruence with his readers, but the war had dissipated his energy for the change and protest beyond Eagleton's assessment of Williams's 'liberal humanism' which Eagleton regarded as insufficient in the struggle with 'developing forms of capitalism'.³⁴ The loneliness which accompanied this weariness was intensified by his return to a working-class culture in which writing and publishing poetry were outside the aspirations of those he lived and worked amongst.

Returning Home: Communal Memory and 'Common Culture' in Education

The coming of war and the culture of the Navy had removed Causley from the physical environment, social relationships and cultural norms which provided the context for his childhood and adolescence. The sense of confinement related to the naval environment which fostered 'writing my poems in my head' continued when peace returned him to rootedness in Launceston. With the exception of a short time as a teaching student in Peterborough, Causley returned to familiar locations and the historical contexts and literature which had informed his family life and education. This return could be seen as timidity, an aspect of distancing from change and dislocation. The reluctance to embrace any further change is also to be seen in his poetic choices of lyric, sonnet and ballad, familiar from his own school days. These he expressed in the daily speech which he heard

³⁴ Terry Eagleton, 'Criticism and Politics: The Work of Raymond Williams', *New Left Review* 0: 95 (1976), 3-25 (p, 7).

around him. In choosing Launceston as his home after the war he chose as the context for his future work the culture of the virtues of neighbourhood, mutual obligation and common betterment, ascribed by Williams as essentially working-class.³⁵ Causley's return to Launceston to teach in the very same primary school which he had attended symbolised a looking backwards in poetic form and content. This characteristic was to bring him both a high profile in popular media and indifference from academia, exemplifying Williams's 'divided and fragmented culture that we actually have.'³⁶ He went on to write poetry which typified Williams's criteria for a culture which celebrated those like himself from the constraints of a working-class background. Causley's poetry is based on lived experience articulated in a common language.

When he was demobbed after the end of World War Two, Causley had 56 days paid leave in which to recuperate and decide on his future. However, for him this future did not look promising. As the war came to an end, like many of his working-class contemporaries, he had to face the challenge of how he was to support himself. In his case there was the additional challenge of how to continue writing and publish his work. How was he to combine the demands of financial survival with the time to write and if he did succeed in writing, how, with no literary connections, was he to get published? The war had given him the chance to travel and to return home with broader perspectives. He had at least the benefit of some academic secondary education and the character affirmation in Launceston and elsewhere of having been on active service.³⁷ At home in

³⁵ Williams, *Keywords*, p. 96.

³⁶ Williams, 'The Idea of a Common Culture' p. 35.

³⁷ Green, *All Cornwall Thunders at My Door*, p. 109.

Launceston on demobilisation leave, everyone considered he was lucky to have survived and to have a job to go back to.

Causley expressed this in the 1951 poem 'Demobilisation Leave' (p. 19). The poem begins with an excited Causley using the 'white tiger' imagination to evoke some of the exotic locations which his time in the Navy afforded him. He refers to the customs officer Henri Rousseau known for his primitive and colourful paintings of jungles, including *Tiger in a Tropical Storm*. 'I have seen the white tiger, / Imagination, / In the Douanier Rousseau forest:'. Although as he says in the poem, Causley is 'writing in Cornwall, in winter, / And the rain is coming in from the moor,' he can use imagination to 'see' in his mind scenes from his naval life in the strong colours and direct representation of Rousseau's style. A frequent use of adjectives and alliteration and direct imagery characterise Causley's poetry and like the tiger in Rousseau's painting, his imagination is waiting to pounce. In Causley's case the prey is a use of language which will articulate the sense impressions and consciousness of his travels but also the contrast with his return to Launceston.

The contrast with home is suddenly introduced in the final section where those at home show absolutely no comprehension of the experiences he has had or the empathetic imagination to envisage that he might be looking for something beyond what he left behind in June 1940. There is no regular metre or rhyme to produce anything joyful or song-like alongside the selection of dull negatives, 'fed up', 'tired'.

REDACTED: See 'Demobilisation Leave', *Collected Poems*, p. 19, v. 5.

The repetition of 'nothing' ambiguously expresses the vacuum of enforced leisure after the excitements and pressures of his travels and naval service and the sense of the safe but dreary employment which was there for him to return to. The sense of entrapment which had hit him when his mother announced that he was to start work in a mundane office job was a shadow over his fifty-six days of 'survivor's leave'. Causley had no power and influence in any networks which promised an alternative. The tension between loyalty to the stability and values given him by his cultural roots and a desire for a life of some kind beyond the employment which the 'knowable community' offered, was a familiar ingredient in the struggles of working-class aspiration. Eventually Causley was to resolve that tension by remaining in the community but also acknowledging that he needed to escape via the writing poetry 'in my head' which he had discovered at sea.

Causley's own situation and the lived experiences of war which he articulated in the poems he was collecting together for publication, reflected not only life in the Navy but also the 'common culture' of life in Launceston which included the collective grief of wartime losses. This dilemma, in its juxtaposition of poetic imagination and the all too painful lived and prolonged experience of grief and suffering, illustrates that Williams's argument of culture as ordinary has to co-exist with the extra-ordinary possibilities of literary articulation. Williams denied that there had to be 'unbridgeable divisions between transmitter and audience'.³⁸ The loss of HMS Hood in May 1941 with the loss of 1,415 lives shocked the entire fleet. The death of Eric Sullock was a specific and, for Causley, representative tragedy. Sullock's name is inscribed on the War Memorial plaque in St Mary Magdalene, the parish church of Launceston, a particular example of the

³⁸ Williams, 'Culture is Ordinary', p. 98.

universal effect of war on a small town and the lived experience of its culture. There was no avoiding this death for Causley as he lived in the town for the rest of his life. The old Buttermarket in the Square at Launceston, the focal heart of the town, had been replaced in 1922 by an imposing War Memorial to which the names of those who died in the later conflict were added. Such memorials were created in hundreds of communities in the country, large and small, and were a powerful physical reminder of collective memory. The experience of bereavement was one which went deeper than ideological or political positions.

An individual bereavement illustrates the potential hazards for a poet living day by day in the community and giving poetic expression to the 'structures of feeling' which comprised its collective memory. The poem 'Convoy' provides a study of this dilemma. The poem illustrates the paradox within the remit of the personal connected to the rootedness of a physical location. Causley does not include details which can be identified with any specific experience or individual which would invade a sense of his own privacy or cause direct offense and hurt to individuals. However, when *Farewell, Aggie Weston* appeared, (including the poem 'Convoy', relating to the death of Eric Sullock, the sailor from Launceston), he wanted to persuade his local Smith's to sell as many publications as possible in the town.³⁹ The imagery does not provide graphic details of drowning in a freezing sea but does raise the question of how Causley imagined a local resident, let alone a bereaved one, would respond to the suggestion that her son is 'now a child in the land of Christmas: / Watching, amazed, the white tumbling bears / And the diving seal'. Here is the dichotomy of distancing; poetic expression rooted in a

³⁹ New York, University of Buffalo, The Poetry Collection of the University Libraries, Hand and Flower Collection, B39, F11 Letter, Charles Causley to Erica Marx, 9 January 1951.

strange and unexpected image which, although expressed in the language accessible to the community and following William Wordsworth's recommendation of portraying common experience in a new way, might well cause hurt and offense to the grieving.⁴⁰

The experience of grief had directly or indirectly touched everyone within the small community. Even after the war Causley could not escape the reality of individual grief and loss when he frequently encountered the mother of a casualty in the streets of Launceston. As he described to Susan Hill:

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.⁴¹

The war memorial and the encounter with relatives of those who died link elements of individual death and communal memory. They are the painful elements of living in a small, 'knowable community'.

The war may have ended and become an object of collective memory but it was to have yet another direct effect on the course of Causley's life. The archives of the government Board of Education reveal that:

⁴⁰ See Michael Mason, ed., *Lyrical Ballads* (London: Longman, 1992), pp. 53,59.

⁴¹ Susan Hill, 'Joking Apart', *The Guardian*, 15 November 2003, p. 37.

In 1943 the President of the Board of Education appointed an advisory committee to consider how to meet the need for teachers which would arise after the war.⁴²

Causley was eligible under this scheme and decided to train as a teacher. This would give him some flexible time in evenings and holidays in which to write. It was fortunate for his admiration of John Clare, evidenced in the poem 'At The Grave of John Clare' (p. 22), that in 1947 he gained a place at Peterborough Training College. His main subjects across primary and secondary teacher training were English and History and in this training he would need to reflect on the value and purpose of poetry in education.

As a secondary and then primary teacher of English, Causley had to make certain judgements about the curriculum. The linguistic implications of Williams's concept of a 'common language' by which a knowable community communicates lived experience are relevant to questions of dialect and vocabulary. The selection of texts for children of any age can be viewed against Williams's insistence that:

the whole tradition of what has been thought and valued, a tradition that has been abstracted as a minority possession, is in fact a common human inheritance without which any man's participation would be crippled and disadvantaged.⁴³

⁴² London, The National Archives, ED 143 Ministry of Education Pamphlet No 17, *Challenge And Response*, HMSO 1950, Board of Education, University Branch, and Ministry of Education, Teachers Branch: Post Second World War Emergency Recruitment and Training of Teachers, Registered Files (RE Series), 1944 <<http://www.discovery.nationalarchives.gov.uk/details/r/C6942>> [accessed 25 May 2016].

⁴³ Williams, 'The Idea of a Common Culture', p. 37.

At the centre of the debate over what constitutes culture is the question of ‘acceptable’ speech, pronunciation and syntax, all relevant to the teaching situation which Causley was to find himself in. For Williams one way to resist the theft of ‘common culture’ was through the discourse of common experience expressed through the language spoken in that community, but as John Eldridge pointed out, language was also captured by the dominant class.⁴⁴ This is amply demonstrated in a key educational text of 1943, *The Norwood Report*. Norwood argued that as part of their education in writing and speaking ‘correct’ English ‘it is essential that every pupil should be trained to understand his own language and to use it with ease and correctness, both in speech and in writing.’⁴⁵ The definition of the children’s ‘own language’ and ‘correctness’ in speech and writing would be a practical dilemma for the writer Causley coming from an area which originally had a native language and certainly retained a lively dialect. Norwood had advice on how such regional variations were to be treated in the classroom. Plurality merits only a patronising comment. English teaching is to:

bring its pupils to use such speech that everything they say can be easily apprehended in any part of the country. We have in mind mainly the correction of faulty vowel sounds and slovenly articulation [...] it does not follow that dialect (whatever may be understood by that word) will be extinguished, even though the man who uses one speech in his native

⁴⁴ Eldridge, *Raymond Williams: Making Connections*, p. 64.

⁴⁵ *The Norwood Report*, ‘Curriculum and Examinations in Secondary Schools: Report of the Committee of the Secondary School Examinations Council appointed by the President of the Board of Education In 1941’, (London: HM Stationery Office, 1943), p. 94.

town or family circle may be using another when he is addressing strangers.⁴⁶

The challenge for a poet with origins in a part of the country which still had distinct regional traditions of speech, is how far the requirements for this linguistic apartheid, with the assumption of what is and is not acceptable, inevitably linked to class structure, should be normative in the writing of poetry. As he was to return to Cornwall and teach there for the whole of his working life, Causley must have been aware of the tension between the received concept of what constituted desirable communication and the speech patterns, dialect and inflections of his pupils, the majority of whom came from homes where the family had lived in the settled community for generations and whose vernacular English persisted in the face of some influence from the radio, if not yet widespread access to television.

Regular exposure to the *King James Bible*, *The Book of Common Prayer* and *Hymns Ancient and Modern* in childhood and the naval slang of six years at sea had given Causley an insight into the expressive possibilities of language beyond that of the Cornish dialect which surrounded him.⁴⁷ Vocabulary, grammar and phonology are variant to different regions of Cornwall and Launceston has the complication of its proximity to the Tamar and Devon. In North Cornwall the distinctive 'burr' sound encasing speech in a phonetic 'r' stayed with Causley to the end of his life and is evident in the recording he made in extreme old age of 'Eden Rock' (p. 421), for the Poetry Archive.⁴⁸ He used

⁴⁶ Norwood, 'Curriculum And Examinations in Secondary Schools', p. 96.

⁴⁷ For a detailed discussion of aspects of regional spoken Cornish see D. J. North, 'Towards a Framework for the Analysis of English in Cornwall', *Leeds Studies in English*, 19: (1988), 203-230.

⁴⁸ Poetry Archive <<http://www.poetryarchive.org/cd/charles-causley-downloads>> [accessed 27 May 2016].

distinctive local vocabulary in his poems sparingly, for example the use of 'spry' in 'After the Accident' (p. 33), and 'Maze' and 'wisht' in 'In The Willow Gardens' (*Figgie Hobbin*, p. 61). There is very little use of the distinctive features such as the interchange of 's' and 'v' sounds, the long 'aa', the frequent 't' before i in 'is/isn't', or the syntactical variants of change of personal pronoun such as 'us' instead of 'we', and 'ee' for 'thee', noted by Simon Elmes in his study of the regional features of language in the south west. Elmes argues that all these elements 'help give classic Cornish its patina of deeply rural antiquity.'⁴⁹

'Rural antiquity' in literary expression was not an obvious attraction for an aspiring poet or his readers in the growing mass media world of the sixties. As the twentieth century progressed, the study of dialects took on a more sociological perspective, research indicating that judgements of social status as well as regionalism became attached to the persistence of accents and dialect.⁵⁰ As with other predominantly rural areas, the Cornish are particularly sensitive to the stereotyping of rural dialects as inferring naivety and stupidity.⁵¹ The dangers of being seen to parody or patronise, alongside his large amount of reading and his education at the grammar school, as with Tony Harrison's 'distance from his working-class origins brought about by education', at least in speech patterns and 'the linguistic aspects of social conditioning', may have been factors dissuading Causley from writing more in the vernacular.⁵² The whole concept of literary language 'appropriate' for poetry was in direct contradiction to the value of lived

⁴⁹ Simon Elmes, *Talking for Britain: A Journey Through the Voices of a Nation* (London: Penguin, 2006), p. 9. See also Peter Trudgill, *The Dialects of England* 2nd edn (Oxford: Blackwell, 1999).

⁵⁰ Clive Upton, 'English dialect study - an overview' <<http://public.oed.com/blog/english-dialect-study-an-overview/>> 2012 [accessed 21 March 2019].

⁵¹ Elmes, *Talking for Britain*, p. 9.

⁵² Jenny Stringer, ed., *The Oxford Companion to Twentieth-Century Literature in English*, (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1996), p. 286.

experiences expressed in the language of daily life in a community, so central to Williams's affirmation of culture as ordinary. Causley's neglect of dialect is another example of a divergence from the more challenging aspects of culture as ordinary. His own education, being realistic about what would sell, avoiding being labelled, or wanting not to clumsily stereotype, the demands of the market had a decisive impact on Causley's process of cultural production.

Michael Schmidt suggested that the vernacular can be used to leaven or subvert the received and imposed language, citing Tony Harrison, or the dialect itself can be formalised, citing Hugh MacDiarmid.⁵³ Causley took neither of these polarised approaches. As he took on the responsibilities of providing opportunity in life for his pupils, there appears to be a tacit assumption in his own literary career that credibility and acceptance require a certain pragmatism. In considerations of dialect he had a dual responsibility as a class teacher. He had to engage and instil in the completely random mixtures of pupils he taught over the 30 years of his career a love of reading and also the literacy skills they required to maximise their life opportunities. The expectation for Causley and his pupils to 'speak proper' was an unquestioned aspect of hegemony. A too frequent use of the Cornish dialect might be perceived as a sign of naivety and rural simplicity.

Causley also had to make decisions about the selection of texts. He came to extend by accident the literary experience of his pupils in a way which accorded with Williams's exhortation to include 'the whole tradition'. Causley recalled how 'I remember when I

⁵³ Michael Schmidt, *Lives of the Poets* (London: Phoenix, 1998), p. 1040.

began teaching very young children I could never find poems to *read* to them.’⁵⁴ In the interview with Wilmer in 1991, he recounted how:

I tried to read A. A. Milne and they were really bored out of their minds, and so was I, and I remember one day I went into the classroom and I took a wrong set of books and I’d got on the top a collection of English and Scottish ballads edited by Robert Graves. And this was a crowd of about forty rather tough little Cornish boys who I certainly shouldn’t leave behind in the classroom while I got the right books, so I just opened it and started to read one of the ballads. And it really worked, they understood *all* the implications. It taught me how very sophisticated children can be in their apprehension of what goes on in a poem.⁵⁵

In 1954 the Ministry of Education had published a pamphlet entitled *Language: Some Suggestions for Teachers of English and Others*, commending the development of critical awareness in the practical criticism method of I. A. Richards as ‘helping to change the spirit and method of the study of poetry in grammar schools and therefore in all schools’.⁵⁶ Chris Baldick cited as a characteristic of Richards’s practical criticism that it reinforced the ‘disengagement of ideologies or attitudes from questions of truth or fact.’⁵⁷ For Causley the narrative of the English and Scottish ballads which he read to the children was not a vehicle for explicitly unpacking assumptions or bias towards any kind

⁵⁴ Wilmer, ‘Charles Causley in Conversation’, p. 53.

⁵⁵ Ibid.

⁵⁶ Northumberland County Council CES 270/11/5g Ministry of Education, *Language: Some Suggestions for Teachers of English and Others: Pamphlet No 26* (London: HMSO, 1954), p. 145.

⁵⁷ Chris Baldick, *The Social Mission of English Criticism 1848-1932* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1987), p. 146.

of class, economic context or gender considerations or pressure for change in these areas. The value of the ballads was in dealing with facets of human experience readily understood by any audience. In the case of the ‘forty rather tough little Cornish boys’:

They knew all about the coinage of the ballad; they knew all about betrayal and illegitimacy and family disasters — all these things that happen but which we didn’t really talk about in school in those days.⁵⁸

The ‘coinage of the ballad’ was life experience: betrayal, illegitimacy and family disasters, as Causley stated. His own ballads illustrated that narrative could be vehicles for explicit reflection on universal dilemmas of lived experience as relevant in the second half of the twentieth century as they were in the past. The story of ‘The Song of Samuel Sweet’ (p. 189), is from an actual incident at the battle of Sedgemoor in 1685. This was part of Monmouth’s rebellion and in the aftermath the ferocious Judge Jeffries became a legend for brutality in the west country. During the fighting Samuel is wrongly hanged for harboring a fugitive. The action is fast paced and directly articulated ending in Samuel’s own commentary on the nature of war.

REDACTED: See ‘The Song of Samuel Sweet’, *Collected Poems*, p. 189, v. 29,30.

The ballad was first published in *Survivor’s Leave* which was not specifically designated for children but it illustrates the spirit behind the 1954 pamphlet from the Ministry of Education that, for young children:

⁵⁸ Wilmer, ‘Charles Causley in Conversation’, p. 53.

language is more an imaginative activity than a fixed and codified means of communication' [...] 'The language of the imagination [...] is, in its humbler manifestations, the common speech of all children and especially of very young children.'⁵⁹

In his teaching Causley relied on his intuition of the relationship between art and imagination much more than on any theories which he may have been supposed to have followed. His later description of his philosophy of education in an article in *The Listener* in 1964, reveals the value which he placed on communication of experience through imagination rather than theory, an attitude which he took in the whole of his professional life and which he also applied to the writing and reception of his own poetry. 'Teaching of any value depends rather more on a sound understanding of human nature through imagination and art than on educational theory and a pat knowledge of psychology.'⁶⁰

Judging him by Williams's criteria of the participative values of a culture in common, Causley's position in respect of the curriculum of literature and grammar he was expected to teach was ambiguous. He believed in expanding his pupils' experience of literature beyond a canon dominated by middle-class lifestyles and selections of prose and poetry chosen by the literary establishment of academia. In valuing a folk tradition, in particular that of ballads, he was encouraging the children to value the poetic expression of lived experiences with which they were familiar. By implication this

⁵⁹ Ministry of Education, *Language: Some Suggestions*, pp. 4, 134.

⁶⁰ Charles Causley 'Book Review', *The Listener*, LXX1: 1832 (1964), p. 765.

encouraged them to value their own experience and the potential for the creative work from it. However, Causley's own work placed little emphasis on affirming the local dialect. Professionally as a teacher he was expected to instruct in standards of oracy and literacy in terms of grammar and syntax. What he did believe in was the power of the 'white tiger' imagination, the 'common speech of all children and especially young children' as the Ministry of Education expressed it. The power of creativity for and by all was the liberation which he brought to what Williams described with approval as 'an educated and participative democracy.'⁶¹

There were various constraints, indicated in Causley's letters, of the expectations which his work as a teacher put on his ability to participate in activity beyond Launceston but also to spend time on his writing. These included 'wading through' 40 exercise books, 'marking thousands of exercise books', 'a hell of a week with school exams and that annual nightmare the School Concert.'⁶² However, this particular constraint provided exactly the opportunity he valued for bringing the writing and reciting of poetry into the lives of his pupils and the local community. The annual School Concert may have been a nightmare, but he could see the commercial advantages to himself and in the encounter of his pupils with poetry as performance, when, as he explained, he had been asked to select four poems for the children to recite in the local Music Festival. He was sending the syllabus to the publisher Erica Marx 'praying that it might be good for business.'⁶³ Even with this attention to his own personal profile, Causley's influence as a primary

⁶¹ Williams, 'The Idea of a Common Culture', p. 37.

⁶² Ibid., Letters, Charles Causley to Erica Marx, B39, F7, 6 December 1950. B547, FA6 7 March 1951. B39, F31 7 December 1951.

⁶³ Ibid.

school teacher publicly affirmed poetry as an art form accessible to his pupils, and by extension their parents.

Bringing together the local community to celebrate speech, music and drama was one way in which many adults and children had access to and could participate in communal cultural activity of this kind. Isolated and rural country towns such as Launceston were remote from the official cultural performances of theatres and concert halls. The local Operatic Society, Town Band and church choirs provided evidence that in the days before the technology of the culture industry had universal reach, local people were participants, not solely consumers, in local cultural life. The official, respectable tone of the local Music Festival ensured that the poems which the children recited were unlikely to challenge the social, religious and economic determinations within which the local community operated, no challenge here to prevailing hegemony. Causley's school choir and pupil poetry performances brought poetry to the public stage but however much they formed part of the 'common culture' of the small community and encouraged inclusive participation, they were hardly what Alan O'Connor describes as the 'emergent oppositional' to hegemonic culture.⁶⁴ There was an accepted cultural norm. Causley accepted this in his professional and poetic life. However, he did use his professional life to introduce the children he taught and their parents to the idea that they could enjoy and participate in music, song and poetry as an element of their everyday lives.

Getting Published: The Small Press and Poetry Beyond the Private

⁶⁴ Alan O'Connor, *Raymond Williams: Writing, Culture, Politics* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1989), p. 107.

Causley contributed to this local community. He also looked beyond it. After teaching training at Peterborough and in his first employment he wrote in the evenings after work and in the holidays. He began to turn his attention to the publication of the poems he had written both during and immediately after the war. He had already had a play and some short stories published but poetry was a new venture. His own struggle for participation in the world of published poets had begun.

Causley had to find a publisher who would take on a poet of no known reputation and with no academic or literary figures to vouch for him. In the early fifties he had plucked up the courage to correspond with Siegfried Sassoon.⁶⁵ He had read Sassoon in adolescence, connecting with the experience of his father's illness and death.⁶⁶ But he had no other notable contacts so his strategy to gain recognition was to send individual poems to magazines and the BBC. Each time a poem was accepted he was encouraged to believe he could eventually have his own collection published. It was unlikely that a recognized publisher would take a financial gamble on his work. The criterion of the market, as Williams observed, relates solely to what will sell.⁶⁷

In July 1950 Causley found a publisher who could afford to ignore this criterion. He found this thanks to his perseverance in keeping in contact with literary magazines. He had written to the Hand and Flower Press encouraged by an advertisement for new poetry in the magazine *John O' London*.⁶⁸ He was overjoyed when Erica Marx, the owner of the Hand and Flower Press, agreed to publish a first collection. Causley had tried two previous publishers with no success. He had already been active and successful in

⁶⁵ See Exeter, University of Exeter, Special Collections, EUL MS 50a/PERS/1/18/1 Letters from Siegfried Sassoon, 1952-1967.

⁶⁶ Wilmer, 'Charles Causley in Conversation', p. 53.

⁶⁷ Williams, 'The Writer: Commitment and Alignment', in *Resources of Hope*: ed. Gable, pp. 77-87, (p. 85).

⁶⁸ New York, University of Buffalo, B39, F1 Letter, Charles Causley to Hand and Flower Press, 28 July 1950.

sending individual poems for publication. As he pointed out, 27 of the poems he was proposing for the collection *Farewell, Aggie Weston* had been published in various magazines over the previous four years and some had been broadcast by the BBC.⁶⁹ Now he wanted to consolidate his work in his very own collection. Having received an acceptance he wrote back excitedly:

I can't tell you how pleased I am that you may be able to publish my poems. To say that I appreciate your point of view would be an understatement. I'm quite prepared to re-write, more formally, the two poems you mention; and I'll get to work on them.⁷⁰

Eventually, his first two collections were published by the Hand and Flower Press, under the auspices of Marx, in Aldington in Kent. She was wealthy enough to publish independently and according to her own literary judgements.⁷¹ The output of the Hand and Flower Press which published between 1940 and 1964 provides an illustration of the importance of small presses in promoting unknown and in Causley's case, working-class and academically isolated poets, in a format which would be affordable to the vast majority of readers.⁷² In the early fifties such small presses provided a 'platform for less established work outside the marketable mainstream' of established publishers with

⁶⁹ The magazines included *The Adelphi*, *Life and Letters*, *The New English Review*, *The Observer*, *Poetry Quarterly*, *Tribune*, *The West Country Magazine*. See Charles Causley, *Farewell, Aggie Weston*, backcover.

⁷⁰ New York, University of Buffalo, B39, F2 Letter, Charles Causley to Erica Marx, 9 August 1950.

⁷¹ Barry Newport, ed., *A Hand and Flower Anthology: Poems and Fables Commemorating Erica Marx and the Hand and Flower Press* (Wisbech: Daedalus Press, 1980), p. 8.

⁷² For a list of the Poems in Pamphlet Series see I. D. Edrich, *Modern First Editions, Literary Periodicals* <<http://www.idedrich.co.uk/Mags/Pmags/Poems%20in%20Pamphlet.htm>> [accessed 20 May 2019].

static conceptions of the nature and popularity of poetry and what would sell.⁷³ Causley, like some of his more privileged Oxbridge contemporaries in what later became known as the Movement, had his first publishing opportunities via a small press, willing to take a risk of an unknown poet in the unknown climate of post-war publishing. The Hand and Flower Press also printed some early work of Charles Tomlinson.⁷⁴

Causley was appreciative of Marx's care with the appearance of his publications. The visual aspects of the collections were important to him. When he received the draft of the cover for *Survivor's Leave* he declared himself:

absolutely delighted with it! [[[...]]] The cover is dead right [...] The whole thing is splendidly set- out, and I particularly like the look of the index, and the way you have fitted in the odd bits of information [...] How you can do such an elegant piece of work for 3/6d beats me.⁷⁵

Marx took care with the appearance of her publications, as Causley wrote to her, 'I have always noticed how regularly the reviewers note the appearance of your books and their beauty'. The cheap post-war austerity mould-made rag paper and relatively unelaborate design of the pamphlet series allowed the Hand and Flower Press to take a risk with new writers without an excessive financial outlay and was therefore crucial to the publication of poets such as Causley. Poems in Pamphlet appeared monthly at the

⁷³ Katharine Cockin and Jago Morrison, 'Literary and Cultural Contexts', in *The Post-War British Literature Handbook*, ed. by Katharine Cockin and Jago Morrison (London: Continuum, 2010), pp 57-78 (p. 76).

⁷⁴ Donald Davie, 'See, And Believe', *Essays in Criticism*, 1X: 2 (1959), 188-195, (p. 188).

⁷⁵ New York, University of Buffalo, B39, F53 Letter, Charles Causley to Erica Marx, 3 May 1953.

cost of 1s and each was 'devoted to the work of a writer hitherto not published in book form in England'.⁷⁶

In an anthology commemorating Marx and the Hand and Flower Press, Barry Newport comments of the Press that:

One of its principle achievements was 'Poems in Pamphlet', a monthly series that ran during 1951 and 1952 — difficult times for new poets when few were accepted by the major publishers and the small press movement was only beginning to develop. With one or two exceptions each pamphlet, which was priced at only a shilling, was the poet's first collection [...]⁷⁷

In correspondence with Marx in November 1950, speaking of the new *Key Poets* publications edited by Jack Lindsay and Randall Swingler, Causley criticizes that series for:

wasting paper and energy and money on known poets, whereas obviously and under the conditions poets have to write nowadays: the pamphlet is a Godsend to writers like myself.⁷⁸

Part of those conditions for Causley was a lack of financial resource or contacts with established publishers. He explained to Marx that he had written another two poems which he was anxious to include. 'Will you be so kind as to look at these two I now

⁷⁶ Charles Causley, *Farewell, Aggie Weston*, backcover.

⁷⁷ Newport, *A Hand and Flower Anthology*, p. 7.

⁷⁸ New York, University of Buffalo, B39. F6 Letter, Charles Causley to Erica Marx, 3 November 1950.

enclose? I worked very hard at what I think is their lyrical quality [...] This would make a respectable (wrong word!) little book of 20 pieces.⁷⁹ Causley is making revealing connections about his poetics here. He wants to sell and has an idea of the number of poems which will help to sell a publication. 'Working hard at the lyrical quality' is a measure of 'respectability'. He not only equates 'respectability' with the lyric but implies that 'respectability' is desirable, although the ironic aside shows that he understands that there is a degree of compromise between the poet's composition and the dissemination of poetry in the publishing world. He is ostensibly keeping his poetry within the constraints of what is considered by the majority of his readers as appropriate to the formal and literary expectations of the genre.

In attempting the publication of a collection, after initial success in various magazines, Causley exhibited a mixture of persistence and willingness to respect Marx's judgement regarding revision of some of the original texts. In correspondence later that summer he asks her to consider including some poems which she had previously not marked for publication from the selection she was sent but which he defends as not being 'difficult' or 'private'. The matter of poems being too personal or of private significance, appears again as the correspondence develops.⁸⁰ Marx encouraged Causley to make connections with the reader which were not dependent purely on sharing *identical* experiences with the poet but experiences with which the reader could glimpse some affinity and resonance with their own lives, thoughts and feelings.

Later, in 1968, Causley remarked that 'In the process of writing it [poetry] something highly personal has — somehow — to be universalized'.⁸¹ His dominant characteristic

⁷⁹ Ibid., B39, F2 Letter, Charles Causley to Erica Marx, 9 August 1950.

⁸⁰ Ibid., B39, F3 Letter, Charles Causley to Erica Marx 27 August 1950. B39, F4 29 August, 1950.

⁸¹ Brown and Paterson, eds., *Don't Ask Me What I Mean*, p. 29.

remained the personal and reflective poetry in the variety of 'I' voices, the personal felt experience and the wider comment in ballad, sea shanty and nursery rhyme, which began with the writing in his head during naval service. Marx obviously had to take some account of a potential market and suggested that he combined this reticence with the need to make wider links which would make more direct affective connections with readers. She asked him to re-write 'Outlines' which never made it into *Farewell, Aggie Weston*, and 'A Poetry Notebook' which appears in *Farewell, Aggie Weston* (p. 23), but was not among the choices for the final 2000 *Collected*. Causley did not find the revisions easy. They took him beyond his comfort zone. The poems were on paper but still predominantly poems in *his* head. He describes the attempt to re-write these as like 'being sick on an empty stomach'.⁸² In order to get published he was prepared to compromise with Marx over potential identification of his imaginative scenarios with the reader, but he was not entirely overawed by his position as needing Marx's approval. The letter also makes it clear that he wished to include the satire 'Yelverton' (p. 26). Causley comments ironically on the post-war respectability of the naval rating who finds himself thinking of the barracks in the winter evenings but had settled for domesticity. The awful blandness of this is expressed in the repetition of the adjective 'nice'.

REDACTED: See 'Yelverton', *Collected Poems*, p. 26, v. 5.

The 'convict air' and visits to Princetown introduce the imagery of imprisonment, present physically in the nearby Dartmoor prison. For Causley, teaching had provided the best

⁸² New York, University of Buffalo, B39, F4 Letter, Charles Causley to Erica Marx, 29 August 1950.

possible compromise between the time and space to write poetry and the necessity of earning a living. His post-war life in Cornwall provided the safe security to embody this compromise. The security of this 'knowable community' also had insecure foundations. The naval rating's sense of the nearness of Dartmoor articulates a sense of entrapment which Causley himself felt at the demands of his work and his obligation to his mother.

In settling back into the familiar after the war, Causley relied on his poems to give him a sense of an individual identity beyond that of the local schoolmaster. The correspondence with Marx and the existence of his own published collections gave voice to his emotions through poetry. They were an outlet for his actual emotional loneliness as were the occasional meetings with Marx and other poets in London. His escape into poetic creativity released him from the confinement of a culture and society which he both needed and yet resented. Poetry was the way he broke out. As he became more confident of Marx's approval of his work, he ventured to make suggestions beyond his own output. 'Why don't you bring out a book of essays by poets on how they work? [[...]] It's a subject which I find fascinating: we all seem to do it differently.'⁸³ In remarking that 'we' do it differently, Causley has the confidence to include himself in the category of published poets.

In a cultural environment controlled, as Williams recognised, by privilege and influence, Causley had to look beyond Launceston. But he also valued recognition in the local community. His growing confidence in the ability of his poetry to sell saw him beginning negotiations with the local manager of Smith's bookshop to promote *Farewell, Aggie Weston*. The manager was happy to order a gross, 'assured of selling the lot' and ready to

⁸³ Ibid., B39, F6 Letter, Charles Causley to Erica Marx, 3 November 1950.

do a window display. 'Such a bookseller is worth encouraging', Causley wrote.⁸⁴ This strategy worked. Within three weeks sixty had gone and the manager was ordering more. 'The idea of poetry for the people is certainly working', Causley wrote and followed this up with evidence. 'I was immensely touched that one of the first copies was bought by a young girl of a very poor family in our local slum quarter — I discovered this by accident, and was very pleased.'⁸⁵

'Poetry for the people', the people amongst whom Causley lived and worked in a daily context, was important to him. It valued the articulation of his and their shared experiences of their lives, the dignity in their shared language and an understanding of their material circumstances, precisely those attributes which predicated Williams's assertion that 'culture is ordinary'.⁸⁶ The content could be ironical as in 'Yelverton', but it was not maliciously patronizing, stereotypical, or based on the assumptions of middle-class norms and values. Language and imagery used the common language, not depending on obscure academic allusions or a 'poetic vocabulary' confined to literature. It was also affordable. Causley could see this for himself. By February the local Smiths had sold over 180 copies.⁸⁷ Despite the fact that the shop had sold nearly 500 copies of various Causley items, the manager was upset and angry to be reprimanded by Head Office in February 1953 for ordering copies of Causley poems and short stories 'off his own bat', which both he and Causley regarded as an unjustified restriction of the manager's independent judgement and was an indication of the growing power of large retail chains to limit the circulation of published poetry.⁸⁸

⁸⁴ Ibid., B39, F11 Letter, Charles Causley to Erica Marx, 9 January 1951.

⁸⁵ Ibid., B39, F13 Letter, Charles Causley to Erica Marx, 21 January 1951.

⁸⁶ Williams, 'Culture is Ordinary' in *Resources of Hope: Culture: Democracy: Socialism* ed. by Gable, 3-14.

⁸⁷ Ibid., B39, F15 Letter, Charles Causley to Erica Marx, 11 February 1951.

⁸⁸ Ibid., B39, F49 Letter, Charles Causley to Erica Marx, 9 February 1953.

After the publication of *Survivor's Leave* in 1953, Causley revealed that '*Survivor's Leave* turned up on the shelves of the County Library here today — but I asked the librarian to hide it away in case it discouraged sales at Smith's.'⁸⁹ Commercial pressures and a wish for wide recognition were a consideration. His concern for the dissemination of his poetry locally amongst those who might find purchasing it a difficulty was obviously balanced by a desire for successful sales! He pursued success. He always valued being reviewed in regional newspapers such as *The Western Morning News* and radio opportunities such as BBC West and BBC Bristol.⁹⁰ Meanwhile Marx was sending complimentary copies to Louis MacNeice and the Arts Council and Causley was pleased with a review in both the *Sunday Times* and the local *Cornish and Devon Post*. His readers encompassed a wide range of educational and social backgrounds.

Causley's poetry was published in 'the market-led polarization of readerships', the popular and the elite, which had begun to take root as far back as the Twenties.⁹¹ In the 1932 study *Fiction And The Reading Public*, Q. D. Leavis had written of the disintegration of any kind of unitary reading public.⁹² By the fifties, the 'unitary reading public' may have disappeared in the sense of the 'Common Reader' envisaged as an exemplar of a Leavisite educated and critical elite reinforcing the 'solidarity of the discriminating.'⁹³ But the sales of Causley's first two published works, *Farewell, Aggie Weston* and *Survivor's Leave* illustrated that, as in Williams's vision of creative diversity within a 'common culture', there was a market for poetry amongst that section of 'the people' who found Causley's poetics resonated with their expectations and experience of poetry. David

⁸⁹ Ibid., B39, F59 Letter, Charles Causley to Erica Marx, 28 July 1953.

⁹⁰ Ibid., B39, F53 Letter, Charles Causley to Erica Marx, 3 May 1953.

⁹¹ David Ayers, *English Literature of the 1920s* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2004), p. 119.

⁹² Baldick, *The Social Mission*, p. 176.

⁹³ Ibid., p. 189.

Trotter could see dangers in the 'easily identifiable reader' trained to respond to the same limited variety of signals, in a world of shared grammar and homogeneous culture coming to identify value with the cult of the personality of the poet.⁹⁴ In certain respects, Causley's poetry fell into these categories. His signification in image and syntax is not explicitly experimental and is often open to both straightforward and complex interpretation via the syntax and vocabulary of everyday speech. His 'homogeneous culture' is that of the 'respectable' and aspirational working-class, based on both economic structure and formative experience, which values education and literature. From the outset he had chosen the recognizable styles of lyric and ballad. While familiarity may have been the initial attraction, it was the development of alliteration, assonance and vivid imagery generating potential layers of meaning within the poems, that evaded Trotter's accusations of complacency in appealing to the presumed 'easily identifiable reader'.

Causley did not assume that theoretical or critical training was needed to enjoy and respond to poetry. He did not envisage a separation of his readers into any distinctions of a 'common' reader, whether defined in an intellectual elitist and critical way or as a feature of mass culture. In the *P.N. Review* interview with Wilmer he expresses some amusement over complicated reader reaction to his ballads:

⁹⁴ David Trotter, *The Making of The Reader: Language and Subjectivity in Modern American, English and Irish Poetry* (London: Macmillan, 1984), pp. 2, 3, 233.

Well, you know, I was quite surprised to be dubbed a ballad writer at all. I just wrote what I thought were very simple poems like 'The Nursery Rhyme of Innocence and Experience'; I mean,

I had a silver penny
And an apricot tree
And I said to the sailor
On the white quay

And I didn't really get worried until I started getting letters, particularly from America, saying, 'Dear Mr. Causley, What did you mean when you said "I had a silver penny"?' Well, I meant I had a silver penny. (Laughs)

People will not believe that you mean what you say!

That's right!⁹⁵

Wilmer did not go on to probe this rather disingenuous statement. It slyly hints at Causley wishing to present himself as a guileless storyteller in rhyme. It is possible that he was ironically playing academia and critics at their own game: this is how many of them had labelled him, so this is what he will claim to be. A 'very simple poem' has to form in the poet's mind from some complexity of ideas. Causley had called this poem a 'Nursery Rhyme of innocence and Experience', already hinting at the juxtaposition of the two qualities. The viciousness in Nursery Rhymes is seldom 'innocent'.

⁹⁵ Wilmer, 'Charles Causley in Conversation', p. 54.

In initially commending himself to Marx, Causley cited encouragement from John Middleton Murray, Henry Williamson and J.C. Trewin and added:

I realise the poems must speak for themselves; but, reading them, it may help in the general background for you to know that I am a young Cornish schoolmaster, where I live and work: and that I was six years in the wartime navy.⁹⁶

Here Causley voices a negotiation of literary theories which includes both the impersonality of New Criticism, that the poems should 'speak for themselves', and what would become New Historicist elements of biographical and cultural context. His suggestion that knowledge of his Cornish identity, his professional occupation and his former active service provide a 'general background' to the reading of the poems implies that some kind of validating authenticity of experience, rather than mechanical repetition or abstract imaginings, lies behind the poems which emerge from these contexts. As in so many of his poems, the attraction of regular rhyme and metre which impress on the memory like a song, combined with the hint of disquiet that all is not well under the surface, attracted and intrigued sufficient readership and sales which ensured commercial survival.

For Causley the early fifties had seen exciting developments on the poetry front. His growing confidence found him more assertive in the selection and character of the poems for inclusion in *Survivor's Leave*. Four-line stanzas on Cornwall, teaching and a

⁹⁶ New York, University of Buffalo, B39, F1 Letter, Charles Causley to Hand and Flower Press, 28 July 1950.

long ballad telling the story of an incident after the Battle of Sedgemoor during Monmouth's rebellion were all examples of subject matter and form which Marx was happy to accept for publication in the light of Causley's reputation following his first collection. There is much less correspondence on modifications from her point of view, although one letter at the earlier stages of the project in January 1952 does find Causley agreeing with her that being 'adjective-happy' (borrowing the phrase from Roy Campbell) has to be put right.⁹⁷

Following these early publications, Causley's work had been featured not only on regional radio but in the prestigious BBC Third Programme *New Soundings* presented by John Lehmann, although as Causley remarked 'We can't get the Third down here, but I hope somebody hears it.'⁹⁸ He was represented in *P. E. N. Anthologies* for 1954-1956 and 1958-1961 with prestigious editors such as Patric Dickinson, Stephen Spender, Bonamy Dobree, Philip Larkin and Louis MacNeice. He was included in John Heath-Stubbs and David Wright's 1953 *Faber Book of Twentieth Century Verse* and *The Chatto Book of Modern Poetry* in 1956, edited by Lehmann and C. Day Lewis.⁹⁹ By 1957 when the collection *Union Street* was published, Causley had already had poems and reviews included in literary magazines and newspapers including *The Listener*, *Encounter*, *The London Magazine* and *The Spectator*.

Causley's increasingly high profile could have indicated the danger of falling into the 'cult of personality' which Trotter had seen as a trait of the 'easily identifiable reader'

⁹⁷ Ibid., B39, F47 Letter, Charles Causley to Erica Marx, 6 January 1952.

⁹⁸ Ibid., Letters, Charles Causley to Erica Marx, B39, F43, 11 September 1952. B39, F33 3 February 1952. B39, F49 9 February 1953.

⁹⁹ John Heath-Stubbs and David Wright, eds., *The Faber Book of Twentieth Century Verse: An Anthology of Verse in Britain, 1900-1950*. Cecil Day Lewis and John Lehmann, eds., *The Chatto Book of Modern Poetry, 1915-1955* (London: Chatto and Windus, 1956).

whose main attraction was the personality of the poet rather than the poetry. Despite his wish for his poems to receive the affirmation given by publication, Causley appears to have had no interest in establishing such a cult of *personality*. This would have contradicted his reserved and modest temperament. Aware of his struggle and with limited influential friends in the world of poetry publishing, he was still unsure of his acceptance in it. He wanted to give the impression that he was not much troubled about adverse literary criticism: 'I am of the opinion that it doesn't matter much what they say as long as they say something.'¹⁰⁰ However, this did not dampen his enthusiasm when he got good reviews or when his poems were chosen for anthologies. 'Poetry for the people' was linking into establishment networks and Causley was just as excited about this as his sales to the slum parts of Launceston.

'Cultures in Common': The Context for the Future

In reticent and reserved tones and within traditional forms, Causley's first collections, *Farewell, Aggie Weston* and *Survivor's Leave*, articulate in content two tensions at the root of his sensibility, dislocation and confinement. The former in the legacy of war as guilt at his personal survival and the lasting apprehension of loss, death and separation. The latter in the stability and community of his lifelong home and the cultural norms and material circumstances which he chose to surround himself with, but which were potentially a source of frustration and restriction. The tensions between the negatives of confinement and the positives of rootedness remained.

¹⁰⁰ Ibid., Letter, B39, F60 Letter, Charles Causley to Erica Marx, 31 July 1953.

These tensions included the writing of poetry in voices which could speak for, with, and beyond his daily life in an isolated community. As the sixties approached this isolation and the culture which accompanied it were already facing the pressures of mobility and the external forces of culture as a mass phenomenon. Causley's teaching life and poetic life by the end of the fifties illustrate crucial ingredients of Williams's arguments for the establishment of a 'culture in common'. These are the incorporation of aesthetic production from the past from a wide class base, the celebration and affirmation of the life of knowable communities, and success in the struggle with the economic determinants of marketing inherent in capitalism. The eventual publication of the collections *Farewell, Aggie Weston* and *Survivor's Leave* demonstrate the vital role of small, independent presses in publicizing new poets with no influential connections in academia or publishing.

Williams, in a discussion of 'The Creative Mind' in *The Long Revolution*, describes the divergence between art and reality. The divergence between the two, he suggests, can be overcome by the representation of lived experience by a creator who is at the same time subjective and visionary.¹⁰¹ Causley's representation embodied both. He remained grounded in the reality of the two cultures of naval life and Launceston life. He had been sustained in his poetics thus far by the 'structures of feeling' embedded in his wartime experiences, survival and return to the 'knowable community' of Launceston. In addition to his own emotional welfare, he had a vision of 'poetry for the people' which connected reality and art. It remained to be seen if this could survive the huge cultural upheavals of the sixties.

¹⁰¹ Raymond Williams, *The Long Revolution* (London: Chatto and Windus, 1961), p. 19.

Chapter Three: Culture and Modernity: Causley, Modernism and the Movement

Causley's collection *Union Street* was first published in 1957. It was a 'union' of poems from *Farewell, Aggie Weston* and *Survivor's Leave* with additional material. The actuality of World War Two became more distant as social mobility, mass media and the threat of nuclear war brought changes in culture and consciousness. These changes raised urgent questions about the composition and role of poetry as a response to post-war culture. Williams saw modernism in art as 'a series of breaks from the most orthodox representations and forms of thought of established class society'.¹ The response to modernity in poetry encompassed fragmentation in discourse and syntax, estrangement as both personal and social alienation within established hegemonies, and defamiliarization. The latter implied new ways of representing and signifying events, places and relationships. *Union Street* challenged the poetry world at the end of the fifties and the beginning of the sixties. Causley had not broken with 'orthodox representation' but in his publications in the early fifties he gave voice to particular 'forms of thought'. He named, described and identified the 'structures of feeling' of his 'knowable community' to affirm working-class and Naval culture as legitimate forms of poetic discourse. His predominantly lyric voice did not conform to those who believed that 'orthodox representation' was at best irrelevant and at worst an impediment to 'new forms of thought'.

This chapter claims firstly, that in Causley's poems, a sense of alienation emerges which resonates with one of Williams's five definitions of that state in *Keywords*, that of self-estrangement. This connects with Jeremy Noel-Tod's description of the tension between

¹ Raymond Williams, *Writing in Society* (London: Verso, 1991), p. 221.

lyric and modernity.² Noel-Tod summarised the key dilemma of post-war poetry as how lyric poetry was to 'encompass contemporary reality without simplifying the otherness of lyric expression.'³ Causley's lyric voices were 'other' if contrasted with the experimental which was assumed to be necessary to fully comprehend and articulate contemporary dislocation. They did not originate from the complexities and depersonalisation of industrial society. Noel-Tod referred to a 'self-conscious struggle' with 'the representation of reality itself.'⁴ Cultural Studies, stimulated by the work of Williams and Hoggart, also questioned how the 'otherness' of poetic language could reveal both disjunctions and possibilities in the relationship between individuals and communities within the social and economic determinants of an expanded perception of what constituted 'culture'. The determinants which Causley focused on were not economic but the personal and social experience of living in a rural, non-industrialised community and the traumatic effects of two world wars. Causley's 'contemporary reality' may have been expressed in poetic and personal retrospection but it was his reality as a survivor of both poverty and conflict. The growing popularity of his collections, his profile on the radio and in magazines such as *The Listener* illustrated that there were readers and listeners who also shared his 'contemporary reality'.

Secondly, this chapter argues that *Union Street* illustrates Causley's technique of defamiliarization, new ways of signifying and enhancing the perception of the familiar, yet which still meet Williams's aspiration in his 1983 *Writing in Society*, that such forms should not exist as remote from lives and relationships.⁵ Defamiliarization is found in

² Raymond Williams, *Keywords*, p. 36. Jeremy Noel-Tod, 'In Different Voices: Modernism since the 1960s', in *Contemporary British and Irish Poetry*, ed. by Peter Robinson, pp. 111-129.

³ Jeremy Noel-Tod, 'In Different Voices: Modernism since the 1960s', p. 127.

⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 111.

⁵ Williams, *Writing in Society*, p. 223.

Causley's poetry in the use of particular images which transform his everyday experiences of family, place, war and latterly travel, into signs of loss of innocence, betrayal and death. These images are typically from nature, such as the snow, from his naval service which reinforces a sense of foreboding from the sea, from his personal interpretation of the Christian narrative of the crucifixion and from his context of poverty.

Finally this chapter illustrates that in literary expression and production of meaning, Causley's response to modernity has both similarities and differences to that of his contemporaries in the prominent poetic grouping of the fifties known as the Movement. He shared with the Movement a characteristically restrained tone, conventional syntax and unfragmented form in his poetry. However, his conviction of the possibilities of lyric and ballad for the twentieth century combined vivid imagery and symbolism, a wider perception of readership and a committed personal voice, albeit lacking the confidence of the Oxbridge background of his Movement contemporaries.

The connection with Williams's theories and the comparison with the Movement exist alongside the success of Causley continuing to find a publisher. British poetry in the late fifties remained the outcome and province of an elite education system with publishing opportunities which privileged this same system. The existence of small presses such as Hand and Flower had been vital to Causley's initial publications and consequent networking. In *The Spectator* in November 1957 John Betjeman commented:

Today a young poet is luckiest, I think, if he is first published by Miss Erica Marx, whose Hand and Flower Press first published names now well

known, such as Charles Causley, Thomas Blackburn, Peter Russell,
Constance Ward and several others [...]⁶

Despite Betjeman's enthusiasm for the four poets, it was Causley whose reputation has been the most enduring. The fifties was a time of significant transition for Causley as he made the move from the Hand and Flower Press to a more established and high profile publisher, Rupert Hart-Davis. It was reading his poems in *The London Magazine* that prompted Hart-Davis to express an interest in Causley.⁷ In April 1956 Causley told Marx that Hart-Davis would be delighted to see a prospective volume of poems. 'He would very much like to do a book of my poems old and new [...] he did, of course, just the same thing for R. S. Thomas [...] I would love to take this chance of widening my scope [...]'⁸ This aspiration was a possibility thanks to Marx. Betjeman praised Marx for her contribution to poetry publishing. 'Miss Erica Marx has probably done more for young poets than any living publisher [...]'⁹

From war service to primary teacher, by the time Causley's next publication, *Union Street*, was published in 1957 he had achieved much. With the help of an independent press and despite his isolated location, he had forged a poetic identity, although not on the London-Oxbridge social or academic map. This was despite his reticent personality, isolated geographical location, unfashionable education and traditional employment pattern. He had come this far without sacrificing his use of traditional forms influenced by the cultural and educational norms and values of his community. Causley's

⁶ John Betjeman, 'City and Suburban', *The Spectator*, 199: 6751 (1957), p. 642.

⁷ New York, University of Buffalo, B40, F6 Letter, Charles Causley to Erica Marx, 10 April 1956.

⁸ Ibid.

⁹ John Betjeman, 'City and Suburban', p. 14.

determination combined with the existence of a wealthy, independent publisher had gained him an entry into the publishing world. His ability to fully participate in this world was hampered by his own financial situation. Causley's only source of income was a modest teacher's salary, he had no other financial resources. As a teacher he was just as trapped by cultural, social and economic convention as he was when his mother found him his first job. He had to make a living. The expectations on a primary teacher of what was seen as respectable responsibility to parents, children and the tightly knit community closed around him. Primary school teaching was not a fashionable or obvious occupation for a poet aspiring to a recognition in publishing circles.

Causley had not the time or the finance to travel to London regularly for gatherings such as G. S. Fraser's weekly poetry readings in Chelsea. Randall Jarrell characterised the fifties as an 'Age of Criticism' when most poets made their living as critics and lecturers.¹⁰ Employment, location and finance curtailed Causley's visits to London and the home of the Hand and Flower Press in Aldington, Kent. The timing of school holidays and financial pressures meant that he was unable to attend a poetry reading in May 1953. He had to save his money for occasional visits to London when he could 'turn up' for a significant amount of time, a weekend was not a justifiable expense:

The fact is, I have to conduct the school choirs at a music festival. I realise these people can't pay expenses — but a quick weekend wd cost me £6, and honestly I can only afford a longer stay when I turn up. And I really am hoping to do so in August.¹¹

¹⁰ Blake Morrison, *The Movement* (London: Methuen, 1986), p. 8.

¹¹ New York, University of Buffalo, B39, F53 Letter, Charles Causley to Erica Marx, 3 May 1953.

As the fifties progressed, the impact of these restrictions was gradually lessening. Correspondence with Marx illustrates how his isolated situation in Launceston as a primary school teacher was supplemented during this period by connections with literary activity wider afield. Occasionally he was able to get to London. In March 1954 he describes an evening at Thomas Blackburn's in the company of Michael Hamburger, George Barker, David Wright and John Heath-Stubbs.¹² T. S. Eliot was one poetic hero he was so overawed by that he could not imagine meeting him in person. He wrote to Marx in February 1957 when he planned to be in London at half term, 'I have written to Eliot asking him what time he's going to Church next Sunday as I'd like to see him (from a distance), en route. Not a word about this to anyone: and I'll tell you the result.'¹³ Unfortunately there is no indication in future letters as to whether this tentative rendezvous ever took place.

Despite this admiration for Eliot, Causley's own expressions of the fragmentations and dislocations of his culture and society remained resolutely in the realm of personal testimony, logical syntax and coherent narrative. 'It seems', Davie argued in *Purity of Diction in English Verse; and, Articulate Energy*, 'as if the poet's choice of diction is determined in part, at any rate, by the structure and the prevailing ideologies of his society'.¹⁴ The ideology of Causley's working-class culture and his education for conformity was not conducive to risk, experimentation or deviance from convention. The *Kirkus Review* of 1958 placed *Union Street* firmly within the lyric tradition. 'A remarkable little volume in which the spirit of lyric poetry seems to have for once in a way been

¹² Ibid., B39, F74 Letter, Charles Causley to Erica Marx, 15 March 1954.

¹³ Ibid., B40, F13 Letter, Charles Causley to Erica Marx, 19 February 1957.

¹⁴ Donald Davie, *Purity of Diction in English Verse; and, Articulate Energy* (London: Penguin, 1992), p. 10.

recaptured.¹⁵ 'The spirit of lyric poetry' in this case, is seen to consist of the combination of the ballad form with a 'fresh' approach through 'modern' subjects and a focus in imagery which communicates disturbing themes of death and tragedy.

Lyric, Modernity and Estrangement

The title of the collection, *Union Street* has connotations for Causley's life and work. By the time he published *Union Street* in 1957 the street itself physically embodied the fragmentation and disintegration of a settled community. Its former tidy, well-ordered and prosperous appearance of late Edwardian gentility reflected the life led and the values held in the time of his parents, the settled and hierarchical world of domestic service before World War One. This began to disintegrate as the twentieth century progressed. Causley felt that it was significant that the wartime reputation of the actual Union Street in Plymouth was the red light district well known to sailors in World War Two. He wrote to Marx:

I'd call the book, Union Street — after the famous matelot's thoroughfare from Plymouth to Devonport where they pick up all the tarts & illicit unions, and also make it as a kind of double-take (of), the union of 3 branches of my work.¹⁶

¹⁵ 'Union Street', *Kirkus Reviews*, (1 December 1958), < <https://www.kirkusreviews.com/book-reviews/charles-causley-3/union-street-2/> > [accessed 6 January 2017].

¹⁶ New York, University of Buffalo, B40, F6 Letter, Charles Causley to Erica Marx, 10 April 1956.

The reputation of Union Street was well known. Any local reader would instantly approach the ensuing poems with no expectations of conventional notions of beauty and refinement. Post-World War Two, Causley himself had no expectations of beauty and refinement from the breakdown of all those 'structures of feeling' which had sustained him through childhood, adolescence and the naval community in war. The chaos, instability and disregard for conventional morality of the red light district which emerged mirrored the decay of these familiar cultures from the twenties and thirties onwards. However, Causley's title for the Collection alludes to wartime Plymouth, as he pointed to in the references to 'matelots' and 'tarts' in the letter to Marx. He makes no reference to the re-building of Union Street in its post-war stark concrete modernity. The impetus to look back, not forward, remained. In the late forties and early fifties when Causley was writing the later poems in *Union Street*, the rebuild of the actual Union Street after the bombing was yet to be completed but he did not look to the future. Stark, concrete modernity can hardly be used to describe either the poems reprinted from *Farewell, Aggie Weston* and *Survivor's Leave* or the third section of *Union Street* which contains later poems. Causley, even at the outset of this new publishing dimension for his work, was using poetic forms such as lyric and ballad suggesting looking backwards in literary taste to the Edwardian existence of Union Street in its first incarnation before World War One and replicating this to apply to the wartime and post-war street after World War Two. The collection illustrates Williams's point that dwelling on past experience will lead to stasis rather than the dynamism and that urge to change, which Williams saw as a prerequisite for 'a modern future in which community may be imagined again'.¹⁷

¹⁷ Raymond Williams, 'When was Modernism?', *New Left Review*, 0: 175 ((1989), 48-52 (p. 52).

Causley's attempt to resolve the dilemma of how contemporary reality can be articulated in the lyric is related to Williams's analysis of the literary dimension of a 'common culture'. Williams advocated the three strategies of the retelling of *lived* experience, the voicing of the dynamics of *personal and social relationships* in community and communicating imagery and symbolism through *accessible* language. These three strategies give practical expression to Causley's vision of 'poetry for the people'. In doing so they include what Williams describes in general as the 'real alignments' of working-class consciousness in knowable communities, forming part of the plurality of a potential 'common culture'. Williams eventually rephrased 'common culture' as 'cultures in common', implying such cultures were created by all, not just sharing of an imposed norm of aesthetics.¹⁸

The resolution of lyric and the articulation of individual consciousness yet grounded in social and individual relationships, can be seen in Causley's poem 'Armistice Day' (p. 76). The commemorations of Armistice Day were a valued, common experience in the years after World War Two as they had been after World War One. Causley links this with his own struggle to represent the contemporary reality of survivor's guilt and isolation linked to this communal experience. He is not foregrounding patriotic sentiment but what the whole ceremony signifies in the experience of the victims of war, sailors of no prominent status caught up in conflict outside their control. The poem combines observation and details of shared experience with his former naval comrades interweaved with the interiority of the poet's emotional connections between peace and war. The sky is a

¹⁸ Williams, 'The Writer: Commitment and Alignment', p. 86. 'The Idea of a Common Culture', p. 34.

destroyer unloading 'grey fire' and the sound of Big Ben resonates with the ship's bell 'exploding'.

REDACTED: See 'Armistice Day', *Collected Poems*, p. 76, v. 1.

As the poem unfolds, Causley sees his three friends, known by their nicknames as Starry, Oxo and Kitty, through the lens of wartime events at sea and in the common language of their naval slang.

REDACTED: See 'Armistice Day', *Collected Poems*, p. 76, v. 3,4.

The annual Armistice Day remembrance re-collects memory, experience and relationships under the influence of war, a central focus of poetic consciousness for Causley. Emotional intensity is expressed in the haunting, staring eyes of the 'stiff sea-horses' and the sense of utter loneliness. He is with his comrades but essentially alone.

REDACTED: See 'Armistice Day', *Collected Poems*, p. 76, v. 6.

The city (and other poets), may move on but Causley's lyric with its fusion of contemporary reality and past events chronicles the persistent emotional pull of the war. 'Armistice Day' was a contemporary reality but the war itself is never really over for the survivors. Causley was only too aware of individual deaths and the sacrifices made by those with no control over events. There is criticism in the reference in verse five to Whitehall's 'appalling decisions' in the course of the war. The lives of Causley and his

shipmates are living examples of the effect of these 'appalling decisions'. His voice speaks from a powerful example of the personal isolation and the alienation from cultural 'norms' such as deference, which is one of Williams's definitions of estrangement.

Modernism as a response to modernity implies some expression of the fragmentation of an established order and the disintegration of the narratives, such as patriotism and deference, which validated it. In 'Armistice Day' the prevailing tone is that of lament and decay in imagery and language in which the range of empathetic understanding and therefore the possibility of ascribing meaning, could be applied to the lived experience of Causley's readers. They could connect with the remembrance of Armistice. Causley confronts the legacy of World War Two without responding to chaos with chaos. Enough chaos is enough, a sentiment which Causley reflected in the measure of his own choice of formal diction and syntax.

Diction and Energy in Defamiliarization

Causley and Davie shared life changing experiences of combat. In the early fifties, Davie's advocacy of caution and order through imagery rather than experimentation in syntax appeared in his comments on the effect of World War Two wartime experience on those writers who lived through it. He points to the common sense which influences the ex-serviceman who 'knows very well, because self-preservation has taught it, where bravery topples over into foolhardiness, caution into timidity, subtlety into sterile

ingenuity.¹⁹ Anne Cluysenaar regarded the 'moderate tone and scope' of British poetry after World War Two as being due, not to ignorance of the horrors of war or ignorance of the brutality of Stalinism, but to the 'psychic numbing' of poets such as Davie who had survived the war. This, she argued, led to a 'suspicion of irrationally extreme impulses' which accounted for the poetry of restraint and its ability to act as 'an axe for the frozen sea within their readers, or probably, within themselves.'²⁰ Causley's withdrawal into his own pain, yet a sharing of it in his poetry, is a way of dealing with this 'psychic numbness'.

From this early stage in his publishing history, Causley's relationship to the destructive threats which had shaped modernity was characterised not by experimental form or syntax but by Davie's later point at the end of *Articulate Energy*, 'articulation in rhetoric and poetry, is not by syntax but by figuration of images.'²¹ The implication here is of the power to persuade into a new way of seeing through the choice of object and the symbolism attached to it within the poem. The quantity of images and their balance relative to each other in the poem are crucial. Causley's skill in defamiliarization was in using familiar locations and the physical and emotional resonances of these alongside figures of speech which move from the literal of the familiar to the use of imagination and comparison to invest new significance in the 'ordinary'. The use of 'figuration of images' as creating meaning through imagination with often diverse possibilities of interpretation is a central component of Causley's work.

¹⁹ Davie, *Purity of Diction in English Verse: and, Articulate Energy*, p. xi.

²⁰ Anne Cluysenaar 'Post-culture: Pre-culture?', in *British Poetry Since 1960: A Critical Survey* ed. by Michael Schmidt and Grevel Lindop (Oxford: Carcanet, 1972), pp. 215-232 (p. 215).

²¹ Davie, *Purity of Diction in English Verse: and, Articulate Energy*, p. 325.

This can be seen in the two poems 'I Saw a Shot-Down Angel in The Park' (p. 45), and 'At the Ruin of Bodmin Gaol' (p. 80). The fallen statue in the park and the ruins of the gaol were there to be seen and visited in the fifties. A park has implications of play and recreation, a ruined prison that the forces of control have been defeated. Causley's poem invites sinister conclusions in the implications of these familiar locations. Davie's 'figuration of images' is apparent when Causley utilises the local park as a location for the 'wounded' statue of an angel. It is an image which is extended in both elaborate descriptive detail and allegorical significance. From the unexceptional occurrence of a collapsed ornament in the local park the crowded images embody ideas of unreconciled destruction. The dramatic but conventional syntax follows the consequential thoughts of the narrator who takes the reader through the poem in vivid images.

REDACTED: See 'I Saw a Shot-Down Angel in The Park', *Collected Poems*, p. 45, v. 1,5.

There is energy from the enjambments in the verses and the careful choice of vocabulary with compact expression achieved through unusual verbs such as 'slucing', 'firing' and 'wintering' coupled with the deliberate alliteration of 'dyke', 'death', 'wintered', 'wounded'. The metaphors are economically expressed and fixed to the central image of the angel. All these techniques lead to the premonitions of death in 'the sneaking snow' and the crow's proximity to the gallows tree. The park is a place of estrangement rather than re-creation and the shattered statue of the angel hints that the fabric and morality of religious faith have been shot down from any position of credibility or authority.

The use of the 'I' voice as an observer of intense, vivid and semi-religious images articulating violence in contexts of physical destruction is found in 'At the Ruin of Bodmin Gaol'.

REDACTED: See 'At the Ruin of Bodmin Goal', *Collected Poems*, p. 80, v. 3,4.

The prison had closed in 1927. The familiar ruins of the gaol and the knowledge of historical imprisonment which a visitor would bring to this ruin are utilised and transformed into an entirely different perception of imprisonment, the cycle of violence lived out in two world wars and continuing in the post-war world. Thoughts of desperate heartbeats, scratchings on the wall and the sound of birds in the ruins would occur to the tourist. But the 'quivering darts' with which the narrator's tongue is 'shot' transform and present a location familiar to the inhabitants of the town as a place where love and evil are in a desperate confrontation. The sinister dance of the rams at the defeat of love, the pain of the birds' song and the Christ figure with a burning crown of thorns remove the setting from one of a nostalgic visit and defer any final resolution of the tensions. It is never specified whether the Christ figure is turning towards or away from the scene or whether his crown of thorns is burning with redemptive energy or is being destroyed. In the image of the shot-down angel in the park and the agony of the visit to the ruined gaol the poems express a perception of destruction through the defamiliarization of the lived experience of a specific contemporary location and imagery based on elements of the Christian narrative.

Causley uses a contemporary visit to a war museum as another opportunity for defamiliarization. The experience of visiting the location juxtaposes the order and formality of the museum with the barbarity of its exhibits. The combination of past and present in the context of war prompts a personal reflection of restrained anger at the gulf between the lived experience of war and the way in which the museum reduces it to acceptable artefacts. 'The Invasion Museum, Arromanches' (*US*, p. 71), exists in a world

bounded by physical realities, in this case the museum artefacts. Causley connects the museum artefacts of an historical wartime event to his ever present survivor's guilt. The tone and style of the poem are in ordered rhetoric and regular rhyming appropriate to the polite behaviour expected of a visitor to a formally arranged museum. The opening line expresses the conventional attitude to such a visit, especially in the neutral invitation to 'consider'. 'Let us consider General Ridgeway's boots / Here in the musee formally exhibited, [...]'. The choice of image of the General's boots skilfully suggests absurdity and gentle irony.

Restrained irony continues, despite the emotional connotations which the war has for the narrator. Museums are expected to be places where chaos is transformed to order, celebration and curiosity but war is in reality an invasion of the innocence of the self. As the narrator wanders among the exhibits, the cost of these memories gradually becomes evident until the final verse finally reveals the legacy of survivor's guilt. Within four short stanzas, in a work of rational structure Causley carefully weighs the significance of each word. He is selective and economical. The syntax and the tragic events which are re-collected are reduced to that which can be controlled. In their economy the metaphors ironically reflect this control. The 'bones' of the boats, the 'shot cliff' and the 'seasick' photograph, express the ambiguity without relapsing into indulgent excess of imagery or obscurity. The verbs are carefully chosen and precise. The visitor 'pokes' the bones rather than just observing them, he 'quarrels' with the verbs as he struggles to describe the implications of the 'shot cliff' and the photograph is 'seasick' with heroes, reinforcing the moral concern and ethical implications of his guilt at survival.

REDACTED: See 'The Invasion Museum, Arromanches, *Union St*, p. 71, v. 4.

The last two lines indicate his sense of his own 'unheroic' inadequacy and the loneliness which will haunt his future as one of 'the lost'. The sober ending of death, separation and loneliness exist alongside a lack of certainty about any positive future. Causley articulates vulnerability and 'lack of confidence in certainty'. In the post-war context he needed to express the fearful disturbance of survivor's guilt without revealing this disturbance in the threatening chaos of experimental syntax.

Military order expressed in poetic form and diction is also present in 'At the British War Cemetery, Bayeux' (p. 59). Edith Sitwell, who wrote the preface to *Union Street*, commended the 'magnificent, moving, terrible' qualities of this poem.²²

REDACTED: See 'At the British War Cemetery, Bayeux', *Collected Poems*, p. 59, v. 1.

Despite their decay the dead are each clothed with their own 'shirts of earth'. The rhymes and metre produce an atmosphere of rational military precision within the context of vast human destruction. Causley admired Sassoon.²³ In his teens he did manage occasional visits to London. On one of these he bought *The War Poems of Siegfried Sassoon* and began to read Graves, Blunden and Owen.²⁴ In his poem the 'talking graves' are tidied up and neatly arranged so that they can be strolled through. The five thousand are correctly dressed in 'shirts of earth' in the parade ground organisation of what a later verse describes as 'your geometry of sleep'. Davie looked to

²² Edith Sitwell, 'Preface', in Causley, *Union Street*, p. 9.

²³ Exeter, University of Exeter, Special Collections EUL MS 50a/PERS/1/18/1 Letters from Siegfried Sassoon 1952-1967, 4 January 1952.

²⁴ Causley, 'Kitchen in the Morning', p. 104.

his war experience as formative in the question of expertise in literary theory accompanied by a lack of confidence in certainty. Those who ask for less tentative and more sweeping theory, he comments, 'are those who have never experienced war, nor expect to experience it in their lifetimes, nor can imagine what it is like.'²⁵ In his use of the locations of the park, the ruined gaol, the museum and the World War One cemetery, Causley achieves Williams's affirmation of culture based on images from lived experiences and with language in poetry open to interpretation and meaning for those of whatever class who share the life of common experiences.²⁶

The rebuilt Union Street symbolised the architectural search for new forms of expression relating to the brutal legacy of two world wars. Causley did not replicate verbally Union Street's new stark concrete modernity in either estrangement or defamiliarization. He had had enough of change and dislocation in his life after war and coping emotionally with survival. He needed to remove himself from the immediacy of the horror whilst re-collecting it. He is content with Davie's wish for 'articulate energy' in 'syntax flawlessly correct but compact and flowing.'²⁷ Within traditional genres such as the ballad, sonnet or rondel form Causley commented directly on the post-war condition bringing a new way of looking at the familiar tropes of his generation.

Representation, Voice and Readership: Causley and the Movement

In the fifties when the horrors of war and the austerity of the immediate post-war period began to be overtaken by concerns of how to re-build the nation state, there was

²⁵ Davie, *Purity of Diction in English Verse; and, Articulate Energy*, p. xi.

²⁶ Williams, 'The Idea of a Common Culture', in *Resources of Hope* ed. by Robin Gable, p. 35.

²⁷ D. J. Enright ed., *Poets of the 1950s: An Anthology of New English Verse* (Tokyo: Kenkyusha, 1955), p. 47.

a parallel debate in literary circles on the development of poetry. The controversy over the poetic elements of form, content, voice and readership in the literary debates of the late fifties and early sixties initially focused on the poetic grouping known as the Movement. Use of ballad, rhyme and metre might seem superficially to align Causley with the conservative characteristics supposed to typify the Movement. The Movement had three main phases in its origins and development, chronologically and in terms of location. The locations were all far remote from Causley, Oxford, Cambridge and London.²⁸ Causley shared some common ground with Davie and Kingsley Amis in the experience of wartime service. He also shared with many of the Movement poets first publication in pamphlet by small publishers. In his case this was the Hand and Flower Press and in theirs, as Robert Conquest noted in the introduction to the 1956 anthology *New Lines*, the Fantasy Press, the Marvell Press and The University of Reading School of Art.²⁹ Poetic recognition and controversy in academic and publishing circles was centred on the influence of this relatively small network which, after J. D. Scott's article in the *Spectator* in October 1954, became collectively referred to as the Movement. They were marketed in the mid fifties as a homogeneous grouping with a common purpose and philosophy of poetry.

The spectre of privileged education and middle-class networks spoke of exclusion for Causley, the type of exclusion which Williams was trying to destroy in his advocacy of a culture in common and education for participative democracy.³⁰ Causley had neither Cambridge nor Oxford connections. He was excluded from the Oxbridge elite and did not share the university education and friendships or the subsequent academic contexts and

²⁸ Morrison, *The Movement*, pp. 12, 29, 42.

²⁹ Robert Conquest ed., *New Lines: An Anthology* (London: Macmillan, 1956), p. xiii.

³⁰ Williams, 'The Idea of a Common Culture', in *Resources of Hope* ed. by Robin Gable, p.33.

connections in the world of magazine publication of the Movement poets. Recognition in the academic and therefore publishing world of poetry was largely confined to those whose education included access to the Oxbridge world. This included the emphasis in the study of literature at Cambridge on close reading and the moral purpose of literature through direct study under the influence of F. R. Leavis and the publication *Scrutiny*, or the inspiration for close textual analysis expounded to students by Empson. In Oxford, F. W. Bateson's purpose in *Essays in Criticism* was a 'concern with socialism and his educating a British cultural elite.'³¹ It was assumed in many of the influential literary and literary press circles that both the Cambridge of Leavis's moral purpose and the Oxford of Bateson's elite socialism would be promoted by the publication of poetry from Oxbridge figures. Causley's previous publications had not made an impression in this academic environment.

Anthony Hartley was a literary reviewer and one of the Movement's foremost supporters. He discussed the nature of experimentation in post-war poetics in his *Spectator* article 'Poets of the Fifties' which appeared on 27 August 1954. Hartley dismissed the neo-Romanticism of Dylan Thomas and the symbolic indulgence of the New Apocalyptics. In contrast, the new breed of poets were all distinguished by their 'attempt to introduce meaning — and complex meaning at that — at a time when English poetry [had] been ravaged by the indiscriminate use of evocatory images.'³² Hartley was confident that the 'general reader' looking for 'modern poetry', would be ready to move on from the twenty year 'domination' of the poets of the Thirties, with its 'hygienic'

³¹ See Alexander Hutton, 'An English School for the Welfare State: Literature, Politics, and the University, 1932-1965', *Oxford Journals: English* 65: 248 (2016), 3-34 <
<https://academic.oup.com/english/article/65/248/3/2367094?searchresult=1>> [accessed 23 March 2019].

³² Anthony Hartley, 'Poets of the Fifties', *The Spectator*, 193: 6583 (1954), 260-261, p. 261.

Marxist-Freudian style 'representing obscurity and provocation.'³³ He was enthusiastic about the future of English poetry:

New names in the reviews, a fresh atmosphere of controversy, a new spirit of criticism — these are signs that some other group of poets is appearing on the horizon [...] we are now in the presence of the only considerable Movement in English Poetry since the Thirties.³⁴

The fact that in numerical terms, the media exposure and sale of his publications showed that Causley's readership was growing, could be seen as affirmation of his ability to communicate with Hartley's admittedly undefined 'general reader'. If this 'general reader' was indeed looking for 'modern poetry', another of Hartley's vague and unsubstantiated statements, Hartley expected they would find it in the poets who became known as 'the Movement'.

Although his early published life coincided chronologically with the latter stages of the Movement and he shared some characteristics with them, there were significant tensions between Causley and the Oxbridge group. In July 1954, in a context not specified in the letter, Causley had remarked to Marx that 'I am battered over the head by Hartley in the current *Spectator* for allowing Lehmann to print 2 poems in six months.'³⁵ Causley had shown a persistence and determination to get his work published. Immersion in the two cultures of his hometown and his war service had produced poetry which was successful in the post-war cheap edition market-place

³³ *Ibid.*, p. 260.

³⁴ *Ibid.*, pp. 260, 261

³⁵ New York, University of Buffalo, B39, F78 Letter, Charles Causley to Erica Marx, 5 July 1954.

reached by a small independent press. His exclusion from the contemporary national literary debate and critical speculation on the type of poetry evolving in the fifties is underlined by the reference in the *Times Literary Supplement* in January 1955 in a discussion centred entirely around *university* poets and publishers, that through *these* figures 'the characteristic poetry of the mid-century is now established.'³⁶

Martin Dodsworth argued that the phenomenon known as the Movement was the outcome of the 'journalistic purposes' of Anthony Hartley and J. P. Scott who were not interested in an authentic poetic manifesto.³⁷ In retrospect Davie was just as scathing. His assessment was that 'because the positions that matter are so few', those who infiltrated 'sub-editorial chairs' and 'reviewing spots' could 'impose their shared proclivities and opinions as the reigning orthodoxy for a decade.'³⁸ The complications of defining 'sides' in the poetry of the Fifties have been summarised by Bergonzi:

If Movement poetry is to be identified by intrinsic factors such as formality, compression of sense, wit, and a moral concern, [...] one has to acknowledge that these qualities are to be found in many texts outside the milieu and circumstances of the Movement. If, on the other hand, it depends on extrinsic factors such as class origin and education [...] one has no way of telling, by critical examination, whether or not a text belongs to the Movement.³⁹

³⁶ John Barrington Wain and J. Wain, 'Two Generations', *The Times Literary Supplement*, 7 January 1955, p. 10.

³⁷ Martin Dodsworth, 'The Movement: Never and Always', in *Contemporary British and Irish Poetry*, ed. by Peter Robinson, p. 101.

³⁸ Donald Davie, 'The Varsity Match', *Poetry Nation*, 1: 2 (1974), 72-74, (p. 74).

³⁹ Bernard Bergonzi, *Wartime and Aftermath: English Literature and Its Background 1939-1960* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1993), pp. 137-138.

Union Street illustrates elements of both sides of Bergonzi's analysis. Causley could not be identified with the 'class, origins and education' of the Movement. On the other hand, *Union Street* does exemplify that poets other than those of the Movement could write with the formality, compression and moral concern which were also the elements seen by Davie as intrinsic to 'purity of diction' in his 1952 Movement 'manifesto' of the same name.⁴⁰

The key issue at stake between Causley and the Movement poets is whether rationality and accessibility can be combined with the use of symbolism and imagery to produce the 'complex meanings' which Hartley praises. The detached, rational and clever elements of the Movement poets, which earned them Hartley's nickname of 'the wits', assumed a logical positivist stance. Language was there to produce empirically proven accounts of experience. 'It is free' said Conquest in the introduction to *New Lines*, 'from both mystical and logical compulsions and — like modern philosophy — is empirical in its attitude to all that comes'.⁴¹ In contrast, Causley's rich imagery found such favour with Sitwell because it was capable of creating systems of correspondence between the symbolic world with mysterious images, yet which resonate with experience without unfathomable obscurity.⁴² Causley's admiration for Federico Garcia Lorca was evident in this desire to link the symbolic and the experiential. Sitwell's concept of poetic language having 'a life of its own' has echoes of Causley's remark of 'the suggestion beyond the words' and the refusal to remain 'caged within a single area of experience' which he refers to in a letter

⁴⁰ See Davie, *Purity of Diction in English Verse; and, Articulate Energy*, Chapter One.

⁴¹ Conquest, *New Lines*, p. xv.

⁴² See Graham Hough, *Image and Experience: Studies in a Literary Revolution* (London: Gerald Duckworth, 1960), pp. 9,10.

describing his admiration for Sassoon, an admiration he shared with her.⁴³ Causley's imagery and metaphors are more profuse than those in the two main Movement anthologies. His predominantly lyrical voice and characteristics of musical syntax in rhyme and personal, emotional content, reveal his affinity with lyric address. The concern for craftsmanship and meticulous construction were conventions exactly suited to his instincts and talents. The care he took to produce them and the economy with which he employs them does not exemplify Hartley's sweeping criticism of 'indiscriminate evocatory images.'

In 1954 Hartley described two strands in English poetry and placed Sitwell amongst the 'symbolists' rather than the 'university wits' of the Movement. Causley did realise that there were lines of engagement to be drawn in the realities of the poetry world. He commented to Marx when he first heard that Sitwell had praised his poems in a radio broadcast, that he 'didn't know she'd be on my side.'⁴⁴ The choice of Sitwell to Preface *Union Street* indicates a significant divergence between Causley and the Movement poets. Sitwell was criticised by Leavis and Grigson in the 1934 *Aspects of Modern Poetry*.⁴⁵ She was ridiculed by the Cambridge undergraduate magazine *Granta* in the early fifties, and dismissed as a poet of no importance by Amis and Davie.⁴⁶ Richard Greene argued that Sitwell had compassion for the underprivileged through childhood memories of a friend's disadvantage.⁴⁷ This would resonate with empathy for the poverty of Causley's background and he was excited that Sitwell had written his Preface and was

⁴³ Exeter, University of Exeter, Special Collections EUL MS 50a/PERS/1/18/1 Letters from Siegfried Sassoon 1952-1967, 4 January 1952.

⁴⁴ New York, University of Buffalo, B40, F3 Letter, Charles Causley to Erica Marx, 20 September 1955.

⁴⁵ Jane Dowson, Review, 'Edith Sitwell: Avant-garde Poet, English Genius', *Reviews in History* 1390: (2013) <<https://reviews.history.ac.uk/review/1390>> [accessed 20 May 2019].

⁴⁶ Morrison, *The Movement*, pp. 30, 50.

⁴⁷ Richard Greene, *Edith Sitwell: Avant-garde Poet, English Genius* (London: Virago, 2011), p. 122.

favourable to his work. 'I heard from Dame Edith, just before she left America, that she was reading from the book in her P. E. N. lecture next week' he wrote to Marx.⁴⁸

Sitwell's enthusiasm for symbolic and extravagant imagery emerges in the Preface to *Union Street* where she sets it in context of 'the lyrical beauty of the English and Scottish Ballads', and comments that 'the book is full of beauties.'⁴⁹ This would reek of aesthetic indulgence to the emotional and imaginative economy of poets such as Grigson. But for Sitwell, Causley's use of metre, rhyme and the conventional stanza form alongside imagination and imagery, unfragmented narrative and a poetic syntax which prioritises the flow and sequence of this imagery, was entirely appropriate for the contemporary poetic moment. Sitwell praised Causley's 'abundant fancy.'⁵⁰ She saw this as combined with rootedness, 'strange individuality' and 'clearness and freshness.'⁵¹ In the Preface she quoted the beginning of 'To a Poet Who Has Never Travelled' (p. 52) with its extravagant images of the 'ravished sea', the jewels, the fire and the moon, the whole enveloped in fire:

REDACTED: See 'To a Poet Who Has Never Travelled', *Collected Poems*, p. 52, v. 1.

Sitwell praised the restrained and yet emotionally intense imagery. This avoided Hartley's fear that austerity, rationality and detachment could lead to the dangers of 'the elimination of richness, of dryness pushed to the point of aridity'.⁵² This, Hartley felt, was a potential danger in Movement poetry due to the ' "dissenting" and non-conformist,

⁴⁸ New York, University of Buffalo, B41, F1 Letter, Charles Causley to Erica Marx, 14 May 1957.

⁴⁹ Sitwell, 'Preface' in Causley, *Union Street*, p. 9.

⁵⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 8.

⁵¹ *Ibid.*, p. 9.

⁵² Hartley, 'Poets of the Fifties', 260.

cool, scientific and analytical' tone which he assumed were the positive hall marks of this new departure.⁵³ This poetry, he suggested, was revered by his *Spectator* readers, already familiar with the likes of 'Mr Wain, Mr Davie, Mr Gunn and Mr Amis'. He obviously did not feel that Causley's poetry warranted citing as an example of how to overcome the dangers of 'dryness pushed to the point of aridity.'

Philip Larkin illustrated the complexities and ambiguities in trying to categorise Movement sensibility when, in his personal introduction to their poetry which Enright featured in *Poets of the 1950s*, he focused on the importance of preserving personal experience but related to imagination rather than dwelling on the technicalities of poetic aspiration and composition.⁵⁴ There is a similarity between Larkin's rational, unemphatic and sparse, unemotional attitude in 'Church Going' (*New Lines*, p. 20), and Causley's 'bicycle-tyre / Hanging from the high stone feather of your monument' which prosaically ends his evocative yet primarily descriptive account of his thoughts 'At The Grave of John Clare' (p. 22). Yet immediately before this mundane observation and in contrast to Larkin, Causley gives way to the emotion of what might be considered excessive and 'Romantic' feeling.

REDACTED: See 'At The Grave of John Clare', *Collected Poems*, p. 22, v. 4.

The refusal to be restricted by being confined to a recognised style or grouping is indicative of the fact that neither Causley nor the Movement poets conformed without exception to rigid aesthetic rules or practices.

⁵³ Ibid.

⁵⁴ Enright, *Poets of the 1950s*, p. 77.

Morrison detects in the Movement an assumed collective identification of poet and reader as 'we'. He describes the Movement's tendency to:

...imply by their very reasonableness and sociability that attitudes other than those held by the speaker are unreasonable and anti-social. They force our opinion on the poet or critic [...] and distract us from the implications of what is being said.⁵⁵

Jennings makes the authoritative pronouncement in 'Not In The Guide Books' that 'NOBODY stays here long' (*New Lines*, p. 5.). 'We all hate home', Larkin states in 'Church Going' (*New Lines*, p. 20). Causley's frequent use of the first person in *Union Street* reveals a sensibility which is primarily fragile rather than coercive. He invites a voluntary sharing in, not complicity with, his imagination. The order and restraint of the language does not suggest an undisciplined outflowing of emotion which is simply overheard by the reader. Neither does it impose on the reader, as an invited participant in the experience of this lyrical expression of emotion, any obligation or expectation to indulge in it alongside the poet who, as very common in Causley, is revisiting childhood with adult sensibilities. Causley does not seem to feel any necessity to stereotype readers or implicate them in any intellectual or emotional agreement. He frequently uses the personal 'I' and 'My' but makes no claims to authority beyond his own experience. This was possibly a reflection of a lack of assertive confidence which an Oxbridge environment had fostered in his Movement contemporaries but paradoxically, it reveals

⁵⁵ Morrison, *The Movement*, p. 144.

an alternative kind of confidence based on the dignity and values of individual experience.

Considerations of poetic voice are intrinsically bound up with the issue of readership. The tension between the Movement writing on the one hand for a minority, academically trained readership, 'competent' at appreciating poetry, which, as Morrison points out they were also quite happy to satirise, and the new post-war 'Welfare State' democratic aspirations of the Arts Council, was not a dilemma for Causley.⁵⁶ He wanted to be published and to be respected by those whose work he in turn respected, but he had no pressure to conform to expectations from academic or poetic elites. The academic environment and established networks of the Movement favoured a culturally elite view of reader identity. The Movement poet John Wain in his trilogy of poems in *New Lines* finds himself in a dilemma in the poem of the same name, 'Who Speaks My Language?' (*New Lines*, p. 85-87).

And then there is the question of how far
You can expect the Common Man to share
Your own concerns with words and what they are.

The existence of a category labelled the 'Common Man' was not a distinction which preoccupied Causley. He wrote his poems with no expectation of a stratified readership either in distinctions between adult and child or in terms of education, location or social status. He assumed that he was writing in a culture which had no such boundaries. He may not have shared the Movement's confident collective identity with the reader or its self-assured sarcasm but he claimed to have an underlying belief in the way his poems

⁵⁶ See Morrison, *The Movement*, Chapter Three.

came to be which did not depend on where his readers were situated in the context of social class, education or economic circumstance. He stated in a 1991 interview with Wilmer that:

I don't concern myself about the audience at all. I mean, if you're thinking about the reader over your shoulder, whether it's a child or an adult, especially a child [...] I mean, yes, you have to shut all that out and just write the poem, work away at it, and see if it works or not. Never ask anybody else's opinion. I would never dream of doing that. I mean, I regard anybody who thrusts a poem in my hand and says 'What do you think of that?' as making an improper suggestion.⁵⁷

Causley rarely invokes any connections which imply a formal, academic study of Classical or English literature amongst his readers. He is not writing inside the academy. Where he uses such allusions as in 'Ou Phrontis' (p. 46), or even those from folklore as in 'The Ballad of San Joan and Joana' (*US*, p. 76), there are short and straightforward footnotes, any literary references within the poems are not dependent on familiarity with other texts, but are obvious referents or can be easily located.

The Introduction to the Movement anthology *Poets of the 1950s*, and one of its main features, is Enright's policy of giving the opportunity for each of the poets included to comment on their work. Both Enright and Amis complained of the difficulty of finding

⁵⁷ Wilmer, 'Charles Causley in Conversation', p. 55.

and choosing subject matter.⁵⁸ Another comparison with Causley emerges here. One of the most striking comparisons between *Union Street*, and Enright's and Conquest's anthologies is Causley's continued pre-occupation with World War Two and its aftermath expressed in personal rather than more general terms. There are few poems with direct reference to World War Two in either Conquest or Enright's anthologies, but those there are speak of the effects of war without Causley's intimacy. Conquest had described as one of the 'good principles' in the Preface to *New Lines*, that poetry should have reverence for the 'real person or event'.⁵⁹ His 'Lament For A Landing Craft' (*Poets of the 1950s*, p. 40), subscribes to this but laments not one man but men who may have escaped or who '[...] have been / Made smooth bone by the keen / teeth'. Causley refers to an actual event foregrounding one individual in Crete in 1941 where, following the destruction of a German aircraft, one of the local resistance faces a firing squad rather than escaping and putting the whole village in danger. 'Death of an Aircraft' (*Collected*, p. 69).

REDACTED: See 'Death of an Aircraft' , *Collected Poems*, p. 69, v. 14.

Causley notes at the beginning of this poem in *Union Street* that it has a personal dedication and is a dated event in the Cretan campaign of 1941. This connects the poem to the community and is an indicator of Williams's authenticity of experience 'away from a predicted, prefigures and controlled content'.⁶⁰ In this instance it also illustrates Conquest's aspiration of reverence for actual people and events.

⁵⁸ Enright, *Poets of the 1950s*, pp. 14, 17.

⁵⁹ Conquest, *New Lines*, p. xv.

⁶⁰ Williams, 'Base and Superstructure', p. 6.

Steadily Into the Sixties

In the attempts to make meaning through poetic expression, Causley's work demonstrates Williams's argument that working-class consciousness requires a different mode of expression from the literary forms of another class. This difference, Williams argued, was largely articulated in the alignment of 'I' voices with 'our social relationships, ourselves and our practices, not someone else's markets or policies.'⁶¹ Enright had predicted in his anthology that the effect of the 'donnish' environment of the Movement poets who found it 'safer to live in literature than life', would wear off as they increased in confidence.⁶² Causley did not start off in 'a donnish environment'. This was not a poetic journey which he needed to work through.

In May 1957 Causley communicated his excitement that *Union Street* had gone into a second edition and dismissed criticism of it by Al Alvarez in the *Observer*, merely remarking to Marx that Alvarez thought it was 'near lousy' but 'all the others have been good.'⁶³ Causley was unapologetically on the side lines of this establishment, instead enthused by local projects and the prospect of introducing children and young people to poetry via schools broadcasting and inclusion in school anthologies. 'I've just had the "Harrap Middle School Anthology" with Keats at Teignmouth and Kings College Chapel. It's certainly a pleasure to share pages with Flecker, Masefield and Hardy.'⁶⁴ He valued local connections with schools and with arts centres and poetry readings in the south-

⁶¹ Williams, 'The Writer: Commitment and Alignment', p. 86.

⁶² Enright, *Poets of the 1950s*, p. 14.

⁶³ New York, University of Buffalo, B41, F1 Letter, Charles Causley to Erica Marx, 14 May 1957.

⁶⁴ *Ibid.*, B39, F84 Letter, Charles Causley to Erica Marx, 6 May 1955.

west centres of Plymouth and Exeter. Causley saw the humour of the connection between status and the absurd. He had been made a Cornish Bard in September 1954 with the druidic name of 'Morveth' or 'poet of the sea'. He approached this honour without pomposity, recording that the visiting Archdruid of Stonehenge made a speech in Celtic 'inciting, I gather, the Druids of the World to Unite: I can't imagine what for.'⁶⁵

By the end of the fifties he was gaining national recognition. He had strong connections with the British Council and its overseas programmes and the Arts Council, being one of the judges of the Cheltenham Festival. In 1958 he attended a meeting of the Royal Society of Literature to formally accept his Fellowship.⁶⁶ This broadening of Causley's activity in the Arts was reflected in the widening success in publication. The poems were moving out, not only from Cornwall but from England, to find approval in America. His growing popularity in American anthologies indicated readers with similar fears and hopes for stability after the upheavals of two world wars, economic recession and the unpredictability of cultural and social change. Causley wrote in November 1958:

The poems are going steadily into anthologies — the two most recent being the *American Pocket Book of Modern Verse* revised edition by Oscar Williams [...] and have just heard that 3 are going into the new Everyman edition of their book of modern verse.⁶⁷

In *Purity of Diction*, Davie attempted to define the characteristics of 'modern poetry'.

He pointed out:

⁶⁵ Ibid., B39, F80 Letter, Charles Causley to Erica Marx, 14 September 1954.

⁶⁶ Ibid., B40, F25 Letter, Charles Causley to Erica Marx, 11 January 1959.

⁶⁷ Ibid., B40, F24 Letter, Charles Causley to Erica Marx, 14 November 1958.

We cannot say, simply, that all poets who have written since a specific date are thereby modern poets [...] Usually, when we use the term (modern poetry), we have in mind poetry which has broken with the poetry of our grandfathers [...] modern poetry, as we usually understand it, is something that appears aggressively and consciously different, in important ways, from the poetry of the past.⁶⁸

In terms of readership and popularity, Causley's poetry of the fifties was succeeding in an age of modernity without Davie's elements of rupture and aggression. The tone of Causley's poetry is not aggressive in its attitude to subject matter or the reader. Davie considered that 'the break with the past is at the bottom of the change of attitude towards poetic syntax'.⁶⁹ Conquest refers to 'the sort of corruption which has affected the general attitude to poetry in the last decade.'⁷⁰ The fear of change brought on by the past and the search for stability, not experimentation, was at the root of Causley's estrangement and cautious defamiliarization.

Schmidt comments that Causley 'knows about modernism but what he has to say requires not fragmentation but narrative'.⁷¹ In *Union Street what* Causley has to say about the present and the future and *how* he says it are rooted in a narrative from the past. It was that part of the past, his war service, which impelled him to speak of the

⁶⁸ Davie, *Purity of Diction in English Verse; and, Articulate Energy*, p. 336.

⁶⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 337.

⁷⁰ Conquest, *New Lines*, p. xiii.

⁷¹ Schmidt, *Lives of the Poets*, p. 987.

isolation and emotional damage done to himself and his generation. The poems of the fifties illustrate Causley's specific response at this point in his poetic life to the challenges of Modernism: the dilemma of what subjects, expressed in what ways were appropriate to poetry after the displacements of war and continuing technological advance and societal upheaval. The later poems, specific to *Union Street* set the precedent of conservatism in poetic form for the whole of his future work. As Edward Levy remarked, *Union Street*, which appeared in 1957, 'might be said to prefigure Charles Causley's *Collected Poems: 1951-1975*.'⁷² The sixties would challenge the confidence in his own voices and readership that he showed in the era of the Movement.

⁷² Edward Levy, 'The Poetry of Charles Causley', *PN Review*, 6: 5 2 (1979), 46-48 (p. 46).

Chapter Four:

Equality, Popularity and the Traditional: Causley in the Sixties

The Movement played a large part in the poetic discourse in the early fifties. In the sixties, as the austerity of the post-war years receded, a new decade illustrated Schmidt's estimation that 'the retrenchments of the Movement were almost forgotten' and 'Poetry readings, poetry and jazz, little magazines and presses, poetry in translation, proliferated.'¹ Schmidt also asserted that the sixties saw 'a number of unexpected opportunities and temptations for the "new and established poet".'² Causley had always been an advocate and practitioner of poetry readings and owed his publication as a poet to the Hand and Flower, a small press. Neither of these opportunities were new for him. What was alien to Causley was the sixties climate of rebellion against conventional morality, against hierarchical authority and against formality in behaviour, diction and literary expression.³

This chapter will make three claims focused on Causley's two sixties collections, *Johnny Alleluia* (1961) and *Underneath the Water* (1968). Firstly, that in his independent attitude to the 'opportunities' and 'temptations' in British poetry implied by Schmidt, Causley's poetics embodied a contrasting yet neglected presence in the experimental culture in British poetics. This was categorised, as the sixties progressed, as the 'British Poetry

¹ Michael Schmidt and Grevel Lindop, eds., 'Introduction', *British Poetry Since 1960: A Critical Survey*, pp. 1-9 (p. 4).

² Ibid.

³ See Eric Mottram 'Our Education Is Political', in Wolfgang Gortschacher, *Contemporary Views on the Little Magazine Scene: Salzburg Studies in English Literature* (Salzburg: Poetry Salzburg, 2000), pp. 48-94.

Revival'.⁴ Helen Bailey criticised an exclusive emphasis on the analysis of British poetry as a binary contrast of main-stream or avant-garde as it moved into the seventies. 'Indeed, the poetry world became so preoccupied over what it thought it *ought* to be, attempting to map out a course for itself through theories and reviews, that it failed to recognize what it *actually* was.'⁵ She regarded the promotion of this division as a futile attempt by critics and poets to 'legitimise the chaos by superimposing order onto it.'⁶ Causley was a part of the diversity of 'what it actually was'. Although he contributed to *The Listener*, regarded by Bailey as a vehicle for establishment literary opinions of the time, Causley was neither interested in, nor seen as, a player in the struggles for recognition on any side of supposed divisions in the academic and critical poetry scene.

Causley's independence from metropolitan poetic controversies and his physical rootedness in the lived experience of both adults and children in working-class life in Launceston is the basis for the second claim of this chapter. Causley's sixties collections give voice to a stable but complex life in familiar poetic constructions of ballad and lyric relating to Williams's advocacy of 'equality of being' as expressed in *Culture and Society*.⁷ Nick Stevenson, writing in the Journal *Keywords*, described 'rooted settlements' as locations where attitudes to change are hampered by the stability of a familiar 'lived complexity' which does not see people as 'moveable units' open to 'alienated constructions'.⁸ Williams argued that culture is more than the result of economic forces

⁴ Peter Finch, 'British Poetry Since 1945', *The Continuum Encyclopaedia of British Literature* <www.peterfinch.co.uk/enc.htm> [accessed 23 March 2019].

⁵ Helen Bailey, 'Two Poetries?: A Re-examination of the Poetry Divide in 1970s Britain', in *The Oxford Handbook of Contemporary British and Irish Poetry*, ed. by Peter Robinson, pp. 130-149, (p. 148).

⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 149.

⁷ Williams, *Culture and Society*, p. 317.

⁸ Nick Stevenson, 'Raymond Williams and the Possibilities of "Committed" Marxism', *Keywords: A Journal of Cultural Materialism*, 16: (2018), 63-83 (p. 68).

and the social identities forged by these forces. He spoke out against an inequality which ‘cripples human energy’ and which ‘rejects, depersonalizes, degrades in grading, other human beings.’⁹ Essential to the ‘equality of being’ which Williams envisaged was a celebration and affirmation of the ordinary by valuing the ‘structures of feeling’ and lived experience of the complexities of working-class life.¹⁰ This Causley provided in his particular context, resisting the dominance of an elite conception of culture or the stereotyping of working-class as synonymous with the ‘masses’, merely consumers of the products of a culture industry. However, in one respect Causley did diverge from the trajectory of cultural studies in the sixties. Personal pre-occupations of death, loss and the end of innocence were his priorities rather than advocating emancipation from the power and exclusion exercised by the dominant hegemony.

That ‘culture in common’ should concern itself with a variety of expressions of the lived experience of the ordinary is the substance of the third claim. This is that a focus on the ballad reveals Causley’s work as within Williams’s category description of the ‘traditional popular’ classification of verse from pre-industrial society. The judgement, which followed Causley all his life, was that of a bard with a reputation built on ballads and children’s verse. Robert Nye, in *The Times*, focused on the ballads in his review of the *1975 Collected*. He claimed that Causley had ‘few modern rivals in the field of ballad’, praising the ‘jaunty, strutting hyperbole’ and high spirits.¹¹ Causley’s ballads do not signify the decline of rural and agrarian *economic* structures or the effects of *industrial* mass production, but are a continuation of the disappearing ‘traditional popular’ within a

⁹ Ibid.

¹⁰ Williams, *Culture and Society*, p. 317.

¹¹ Charles Causley, *Collected Poems 1951-1975* (London: Macmillan, 1975). Robert Nye, ‘High Spirits and Hyperbole’, *The Times*, 21 August 1975, p. 5.

cultural environment proving that such a description could still exist alongside the exigencies of corporate publishing.

These three claims, Causley's successful independence from contemporary controversies in British poetry, his publications as expressions of the equality of being which affirms culture as ordinary, and his particular contribution to the survival of the ballad, are at least commercially substantiated by widespread sales of his collections. They sold sufficiently to make at least the required profits for his publishers. By the end of the sixties Causley had a well-established readership which produced a sufficiently viable financial base to move from Rupert-Hart Davis to the publishing power of Macmillan, a much larger and more prestigious company. Macmillan was unlikely to take chances with its reputation or its profit margins. By 1968 Causley was with Macmillan. In a letter to Marx who had just had an operation and was to die that same year, he confided his anxieties about this, 'I hope I did the right thing by changing to Macmillan's; but they are certainly very kind and considerate there.'¹² In the same letter, he also paid a moving tribute to her encouragement through the Hand and Flower Press:

WHAT a marvellous inspiration to us all your work in launching us all in the Pamphlets was and IS. I see the sets on the shelf from where I write – and remember you saying so well, "one day they'll be sought after by collectors!". They certainly are! Your instincts and sensibility were and are prophetic!¹³

¹² New York, University of Buffalo, B40, F35 Letter, Charles Causley to Erica Marx, 5 April 1969.

¹³ Ibid.

Writing Marx's obituary for a P. E. N. Newsletter in the spring of 1970 Causley's gratitude for the start he was given in his publishing career continues this theme of the absolutely essential role of the small presses before the centralising and corporate world of the larger publishers began the dominance which was to reach way beyond the sixties:

Erica Marx was a patron of the arts (not merely that of poetry) in its widest and most liberal sense. To have known her was an inspiration, particularly for young and inexperienced creative artists, who might otherwise have faltered or fallen, discouraged by the wayside. Her life, by modern standards, was short: but she employed it — particularly in the service of poetry — supremely well.¹⁴

In the fifties Causley had moved to the publishing house of Rupert-Hart Davis. He had remarked that 'Rupert-Hart Davis likes my new coll. Johnny Alleluia' in a letter of February 1961.¹⁵ The move towards large conglomerates of publishers is typified by the fate of the publishing house Rupert-Hart-Davis. It eventually moved to be under the direction of Harcourt Brace and a controlling interest was then taken over by Sidney Bernstein, whom Causley connected with the A. T. V. television company, but he kept out of the details. 'I really know nothing of these things: just go on trying to write poems and

¹⁴ Austin, University of Texas, Harry Ransom Humanities Research Centre, PN 121 P223, Charles Causley, 'Tribute to Erica Marx', *P. E. N. Newsletter*, 10: (1970), 4-5 (p. 4).

¹⁵ New York, University of Buffalo, B40, F72 Letter, Charles Causley to Erica Marx, 26 February 1961.

& hoping they'll be printed.'¹⁶ The struggle for acceptance by a major recognised publishing house was over for Causley by the end of the sixties. His move to the international publisher Macmillan exhibited one aspect of the increasing influence of global access and provision leading to corporate consolidation and control in the publishing industry.

Causley's voice had commercial success even though it did not qualify for any of the rebellious characteristics of the sixties underground described by Peter Finch. 'Valuing open forms and producing an anti-hierarchical, anti-war protest poetry the Underground thumbed its nose at centralist values and took its own little mag, alternative route to the people.'¹⁷ Wolfgang Gortschacher estimated that:

there were 2000 poetry magazines in the 1960s. The social basis for this was the giant expansion of higher education from the late Fifties onwards, giving rise to a new literate class of largely working-class origin, unable to identify with the existing literary system, and eager to devise new worlds of its own.¹⁸

In conversation with Gortschacher, Eric Mottram was scathing about 'the big publishers, like Faber and Faber, Chatto and Windus.' He pointed to the expansion of little magazines and claimed that 'in that ten-year period from 1960 to 1970 — things started

¹⁶ Ibid., B40, F29 Letter, Charles Causley to Erica Marx, 10 October 1963.

¹⁷ Peter Finch, 'British Poetry Since 1945' [accessed 9 August 2018].

¹⁸ Andrew Duncan, 'Such that commonly each: A Various Art and the Cambridge Leisure Centre', *Jacket Magazine* 20: (2002) <<http://jacketmagazine.com/20/dunc-camb.html>> [accessed 23 March 2019].

moving.¹⁹ The nascent cultural studies agenda of Hoggart and Williams was beginning to be explored in Hoggart's *The Uses of Literacy: Aspects of Working-class Life* (1957), and Williams's *Culture and Society* (1958), criticised the increasing domination of commercial, artificially manufactured 'popular' literary culture which Williams was to deal with more explicitly in his later work, *The Country and The City* (1973).²⁰ This domination was seen by Williams as inevitably arising from a society and its culture existing with a priority of profit and minority ownership of production central to a capitalist system.

Causley was an exception to the argument that the 'literate working-class' would automatically find their poetry home in these magazines. He had a readership from an older generation who followed him from the fifties and a soon to disappear younger generation who had studied his work as part of the school curriculum. He was moving in the opposite direction, towards the 'big publishers', as ultimately would the poets of the so called 'Revival'. The forces of consumerism in the sixties eventually tied both Causley and the poetry revival to the demands of profit. Lacking the personal rapport with a publisher with the independent means to risk new work which he had enjoyed with Marx, and to which the wealth of letters in the Hand and Flower Press Archive bear witness, Causley was now dependent on larger, more impersonal and financially motivated judgements of what would and would not be commercially viable.

Expanded Consciousness and Alternative Verse: Causley and the 'Poetry Wars'

¹⁹ Mottram 'Our Education Is Political', p.55.

²⁰ Hoggart, *The Uses of Literacy*. Williams, *Culture and Society*, *The Country and the City* (London: Chatto and Windus, 1973).

By the sixties, Causley was writing and editing in an era of the rejection of inherited traditions and of the whole concept of the canon. The wider literary context seemed set to increase what Robert Hampson and Peter Barry referred to in the title of their book as 'the scope of the possible.'²¹ As a response to modernity this scope included the value of experimentation with syntax, with language and with non-sequential structure in poetic form. Causley did not embrace these or those characteristics of modernism which moved away from the centrality of personal emotions and coherence in thought and language. His fifties poems did not seem a positive prospect for either articulating the tone of a new decade or selling poetry in the Sixties. His adherence to lyric and ballad forms and restraint in tone combined with a sometimes Romantic use of imagery and symbolism, appeared superficially outmoded and indicative of previous rather than innovative ways of expressing the experience of life in the sixties.

Ian Hamilton, looking back in 1973, questioned why Causley's poems were not forgotten after the second world war.²² The answer to Hamilton's question is in Causley's continuing appeal to a specific readership. Although Causley's readers were unlikely to attend mass gatherings in the Albert Hall or subscribe to 'Underground' magazines, the popularity of his collections and his contributions to the BBC Home Service and *The Listener* magazine indicate a readership and audience which valued stability and the comfort of the familiar. This attitude was an alternative to the assumption in poetry that the dislocations of the war years and the speed of change in society necessarily implied the new and experimental to the exclusion of the established and traditional. Causley's return to his home town and his own primary school after the war suggests a physical

²¹ See Hampson and Barry, eds., *New British Poetries: The Scope of the Possible*.

²² Ian Hamilton, *A Poetry Chronicle: Essays and Reviews* (London: Faber and Faber, 1973), p. 57.

dimension of a return to the security of the known. In his use of traditional forms, his poems suggest a parallel literary retrenchment. Commenting on the connection between culture and change, Williams described community as dynamic, not necessarily in the physical proximity of its members, but in holding in common certain meanings and values, and in the active participation of process.²³ For Williams community also implied change. Causley's readers were a community who with him were clinging onto the perceived stability and sensibility of the poetic past and looking fearfully, not with enthusiasm, towards upheaval in the future. Around them was change and a 'growing out of' the poetic expression of the past. In Causley they could recognise feelings of anxiety and apprehension without having these feelings expressed in ways which increased that anxiety by suggesting that the stability of poetic form, the traditional literary expression of their values, was also under threat. Causley's popularity and readership appealed to the cautious reader across boundaries of class and economic or educational status.

Williams saw plurality of cultures as an ingredient of a thriving 'common culture'. Causley and The Revival were divergent examples of such plurality. The Revival was not the resuscitation of established poetic forms such as the lyric and ballad. Order, apparent simplicity and long history could be seen as a betrayal of the upheavals which had lurched the twentieth century out of any sense of complacency and continuity with the literary past. Alvarez had pointed to the causes of a change in consciousness after World War Two when he wrote in the early sixties that poetic articulation after the fading away of the fifties 'gentility' of The Movement would have two major components.

²³ Raymond Williams, 'Culture and Revolution: A Comment', p. 25.

Interviewed by Davie just after the publication of *The New Poetry* in 1962, Alvarez commented:

the forcible recognition of a mass evil outside us has developed precisely parallel with psychoanalysis; that is, with our recognition of the ways in which the same forces are at work within us.²⁴

Causley does not shrink from the 'expanded consciousness' of offering an exploration of the post-war external *and* internal shadows of the threats of disintegration and even annihilation. He achieves this in a less confrontational and aggressive way than the prevailing 'beat generation' of the sixties.

The external threat of human destruction and the damaged internal consciousness which struggle with the loss of innocence and the end of belief that humanity will trust in the healing powers of love, are both present in Causley's collections of the sixties. His first poem in the 1961 collection *Johnny Alleluia* articulates the preoccupations of the sixties fear of annihilation in his preferred short and ordered rhyming stanzas, accessible language and imagery and direct address to the reader. The title 'Innocent's Song' (p. 83), combines Biblical reference to indiscriminate slaughter and the theme of innocence, symbolised by childhood, in danger of being betrayed. The title invokes the lyrical connection to song. The stanzaic form and rhyming scheme, in their order and predictability emphasise the anarchic implications of the subject matter precisely

²⁴ Cluysenaar, 'Post-Culture: Pre-Culture?', p. 215.

because they are in tension with it. Causley poses questions within the scenario of the poem: in verse one, 'Who's that knocking on the window, / Who's that standing at the door, / What are all those presents [...]?' In verse two the 'smiling stranger' is introduced. He has rubies on his fingers, turns the 'salty' snow red and ominously has 'fingers made of fuses'. In verse five comes the question 'Why does the world before him / Melt in a million suns / Why do his yellow, yearning eyes / Burn like saffron buns?'

The connotations of nuclear war are explosive but skilfully contained within Causley's careful alliterations, 'the smiling stranger', the 'cold, cold crown' the 'yellow yearning' of the eyes, the 'melt in a million suns', but they are no less explosive for that. The powerful imagery and horror emerges in the beneficent Father Christmas figure, who is also an element of destruction, playing and singing carols with the naïve children. The identity of this persona is revealed in the final verse as Herod, after a void line space, very rare in Causley. The line space is a premonition of the nuclear void, and in the final line 'Herod is his name', the allusion moves full circle back to the Biblical reference in the title. Lying ominously behind all the other questions in the poem is the fundamental one. 'Who' asks Causley in verse two, 'could have let him in?'. The internal motivation to destruction cannot be separated from external motivations and actions.

The title of the 1968 collection, *Underneath the Water* hints at deep, unacknowledged influences in the human psyche inflicted by the experience of the past and fear of the future. In 'Christ at the Cheesewring' (p. 112), the scene setting of 'As I walked on the wicked moor', the rhetoric emphasis of 'O' and the inversion of 'he did' to 'did he' in 'O loudly did he nail my name' and 'O will you drink my body deep', and the archaic vocabulary of 'plucked' in 'I plucked the thorn', are elements of poetic expression which

Causley believed still had the force to communicate in a twentieth century present. The Christ figure at the Cheesewring prints a gallows-tree on the 'brow of staring snow' of the narrator. This imprint signifies the bleakness of the future; snow is a symbol of death in Causley. The legacy of war has individual as well as global implications. The prisoner of war may be physically liberated but is suffering another type of imprisonment as he wrestles with his conscience in 'For an Ex-Far East Prisoner of War' (p. 100), 'I am that man, long-counselled to forget,/Facing a fearful victory, to forgive;'. The alliteration of the 'f' sound in 'forget, 'facing' and 'fearful' drives the sound on to the climax of 'forgive'. For the survivors, the effects of war live on into present consciousness.

These poems illuminate Alvarez's theory of post-war consciousness as a combination of pressure from external and internal forces. Causley takes this exploration of the influence of loss of innocence and hope on the human psyche into the realms of religious belief and language. 'After the Accident' (p. 152), is a mysterious poem attempting to express the emotional and religious resolution to an unidentified trauma. A wounded figure searches for some affirmation of both meaning in a life after this trauma and the language to express it. Faced with an uncomprehending crowd, the figure 'comes back to the world of men'. He refuses to acknowledge his wounds '*I never felt, he said, so fighting fit. / Such joy at last to have regained my powers!*'. But there is no ultimate healing and as in 'Christ at the Cheesewring', the Christian meta-narrative may provide the imagery but no longer provides a convincing overarching hermeneutic for healing the irreparable damage and suffering resulting from the mysterious 'accident'.

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

Despite trying to cover his wounds up, the figure has 'scars about my head' and the onlookers notice 'blood that's running down your wrists'. The wounded figure's final fate is indifference and rejection, as was Christ's.

REDACTED: See 'After the Accident', *Collected Poems*, p. 152, v. 6.

Sean 'O'Brien argued in *The Deregulated Muse* that poetry 'risks losing its essential nature if it does not maintain a vigilant regard for its own interests as an art made of language'.²⁵ In 'After the Accident', Causley expressed his conviction that, however desperate the circumstances, poetry should maintain vigilance in preserving formality of language. There is courteous questioning between character and character and finally between the voice of the narrator and the reader. For Causley, using language to create the art of poetry implied working with the possibilities of past conventions, on occasions with the Christian religious narrative. The poems such as 'Innocent's Song', 'Christ at the Cheesewring', 'For an Ex-Far East Prisoner of War' and 'After the Accident' employ a linguistic security of the familiar, returning to confidence in a culture where religion and art can deliver a vision of reality in which the Biblical imagery is recognizable, however bleak this reality may be. Poems from *Johnny Alleluia* and *Underneath the Water* were published during the crises of how to represent the reality of living in the decade and of how personal voices could effectively articulate this. Despite the commercial pressures, Causley communicated internal and external consciousness of the post-war crisis of

²⁵ Sean O'Brien, *The Deregulated Muse: Essays on Contemporary British and Irish Poetry* (Newcastle upon Tyne, Bloodaxe Books, 1998), p. 20.

global destruction and personal identity in an atomic and psychoanalytic age. The poetics through which he conveys this consciousness differ from the fashionable in the poetic climate of the sixties. This consciousness, including the common fears of many of his readers, he expressed in accessible language, if mysterious in interpretation.

Causley's voices and preoccupations spoke to a wide readership even though he was on the unfashionable side of the 'poetry wars' controversies over what constituted creation and articulation of meaning in the art of poetry at this time. As long as he sold sufficient copies, publishers were not concerned with categorising Causley's poetry and tended to rely on a simple definition of 'modern' poetry based exclusively on it being contemporary. Hence for them, Causley was 'modern'. There was never an absolute dichotomy in publishing terms between Causley and the Underground poetry of the 'wild times, popular readings and independent distribution systems' which Finch delineates as the explosion of the sixties.²⁶ Causley was included with two of the high profile sixties poetry icons, Michael Horovitz and the Liverpool Poets, in the Penguin Modern Poets series.²⁷ Penguin dominated the popular market for anthologies and Causley was sufficiently well known for them to market him in their series of 'modern' poets. The adjective 'modern', implying contemporary, would sell copies to those seeking for poetry which they assumed would speak effectively to the contemporary world. Causley's publishers had faith that the readers would not be disappointed.

²⁶ Finch, 'British Poetry Since 1945' [accessed 8 August 2018].

²⁷ Michael Horovitz ed., *Children of Albion: Poetry of the 'Underground' in Britain: Penguin Poets 116* (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1969). Adrian Henri, Roger McGough and Brian Patten, *The Mersey Sound: Penguin Modern Poets 10: Adrian Henri, Roger McGough, Brian Patten* (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1968). *Penguin Modern Poets 3: George Barker, Martin Bell, Charles Causley* (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1968).

Equality of Being: Aspects of Working-Class Life in Causley

Causley's conservatism in poetics is replicated in his attitude to social and economic change. His articulation of consciousness was not primarily concerned to include advocacy for change to the social and economic determinants through which global capitalism was increasingly manipulating the lives of populations and individuals. However, the left wing sympathies of his adolescence endured. His loyalties to these sympathies emerged in his poetry as he gave practical expression to what Williams expressed as 'equality of being'. Causley did this in his poetry by affirming the dignity of the lives he saw around him. He refused to degrade or depersonalize working-class people. Cultural theory of the sixties was preoccupied with the study of manipulative social and economic structures consolidating artificial demand for cultural consumerism with no roots in lived experience. The immersion in lived experience and affirmation of equality of being as described by Williams, which Causley foregrounded in the majority of his poetry, resisted this manipulation.

Causley certainly admired Hoggart. One early publication was of interest to Causley and Marx. In 1957 he had written to her that 'You shall have the Hoggart book, THE USES OF LITERACY the moment I have compiled my review.'²⁸ Hoggart's book was first published in 1957 and Causley reviewed it for *The London Magazine* in June of that year. Sue Owen comments that Hoggart shared his interest in culture as a force for moral improvement with the Leavisites, but, unlike them, took the potential of working-class culture seriously

²⁸ New York, University of Buffalo, B40, F14 Letter, Charles Causley to Erica Marx, 2 March 1957.

as part of this aspiration.²⁹ Hoggart's emphasis on lived experience rather than what he termed the appeal to a standardised 'conventionalised' imagination was crucial to Causley's appreciation of the book, based on the everyday detail and particular experiences of Hoggart's poor and disadvantaged upbringing. Causley had an immediate affinity with Hoggart's childhood, mirroring as it did his own situation of a widowed mother struggling to raise a family with the dignity of an independent spirit and the common sense to try and feed children on a nutritious diet. In his review he comments of Hoggart's mother, whose financial circumstances were even more deprived than he himself experienced, that:

she brought up the children on a pound a week from 'The Guardians', dressed them as well as she could, and was glad of cast-off shoes and clothing. A firm and intelligent woman, she resisted the demands of her family for tea and chips and fed them on gallons of cocoa and vegetable stews: with sometimes, as a special treat, sweetened condensed milk on bread.³⁰

That Causley chooses to use up his word allocation describing Hoggart's biographical background to the book in what is already a brief review, illustrates the importance and respect which he placed on the lived experience of the self-help ethos they both inherited. Hoggart described as strong elements of working-class life the self-respect

²⁹ Sue Owen, 'Richard Hoggart as Literary Critic', *International Journal of Cultural Studies*, 10: 1 (2007), 85-94 (p. 85).

³⁰ Charles Causley, Book Review, 'The Uses of Literacy', *The London Magazine*, 4: 6 (1957), 70-73 (p. 70).

based on traditional views of moral resources and moral capital, the ambience of warmth and food and the stoicism which was a self-defence against humiliation.³¹ Hoggart also understood the practical implications of a working-class childhood for future life chances. Causley's first job fitted the description by Hoggart as dull and making no intellectual demands with little real sense of a future and no opportunity of individual creativity.³² Causley's commended Hoggart's 'shatteringly authentic study of working-class life — and, particularly, of the changes in its culture — over the past forty years.'³³ These were physical and emotional connections and vulnerabilities he could empathise with.

Hoggart's book suggested to Causley a scene from his own childhood. This scene, he explained in his review, 'exploded fresh, sacred, sour as gunpowder in my mind: and set burning a thousand fires and memories.'³⁴ The choice of adjectives is significant here. The memory is 'sacred' an attitude to childhood which implies a value of innocence beyond nostalgia, it is 'sour as gunpowder' triggering the embarrassments which Causley describes in his 'Review' when a friend referred to his house as disgusting. In this same context he cites Hoggart when, as a child, he had to ask for credit at the grocers. Despite these personal humiliations, Hoggart was dubious of the effectiveness of Marxist ideology to comprehend working-class consciousness, describing its efforts as 'part-pitying and part-patronising working-class people beyond any semblance of reality.'³⁵ He identified Marxism with a middle-class who indulged in a romantic and nostalgic view of

³¹ Hoggart, *The Uses of Literacy*, pp. 325, 37, 93.

³² *Ibid.*, pp. 174, 189, 249.

³³ Causley, Book Review, 'The Uses of Literacy', p. 70

³⁴ *Ibid.*

³⁵ Richard Hoggart, 'Schools of English and Contemporary Society', quoted in Ben Clarke, 'The Return of Richard Hoggart', *Cultural Studies Review*, 16: 2 (2010), 362-370 (p. 364).

working-class life, the remnants of the concept of the 'noble savage.'³⁶ Hoggart did recognise that this same middle-class might admit their part in the betrayal of the working-class by a system which betrayed and debased the working-class into accepting a 'mean form of materialism as social philosophy.'³⁷

Ben Clarke summarises Hoggart's approval of novels which take the characters beyond 'material, simplified figures who become significant once they are transformed by intellectual labour', and are seen as 'complex and interesting in their own right.'³⁸ Causley creates characters with no narrowly intellectual credentials or interest in ideological or political systems, but a huge ability to impact on the lives of others, without transforming these characters into stereotypes. He does not simplify, pity or patronise the characters from his family and local community in his poems.

In the character of Ma Treloar, ('Demolition Order', p. 137), Causley is able to combine this sense of the complexity and dignity of working-class lives with the imagery of the Romantic vision of life returning to a state of existence at one with natural impulses. There is nothing sentimentalised about Ma Treloar. She is first introduced in the poem in the domestic context of hanging out the washing, but as the poem progresses there are increasing hints of her liberated and carefree moral behaviour. Her role in the local community serves as a hint of a forbidden freedom to the young and respectably brought up Causley, who is remembering passing her later demolished house every morning. 'What do I remember of my home-town? / I remember Ma Treloar / Hanging blankets. Sheets for banners / Over a measled kitchen door'.

³⁶ Hoggart, *The Uses of Literacy*, pp. 323, 16.

³⁷ *Ibid.* p. 323.

³⁸ Clarke, 'The Return of Richard Hoggart', p. 367.

The contrast with the world of Causley's house-proud and upright mother and his carefully regulated home life could not be greater. It illustrates the fallacy of restricting working-class experience to preconceived and monochrome models. Resisting stereotyping, although not explicit in advocating activism, is one strategy through which Causley gives voice to diversity. Williams supported resistance to stereotyping, particularly of rural communities, as populated by exemplars of 'innate nobility'. He emphasised the value of communal generations of experience.³⁹ He also pointed out in *The Country and The City* that one of the potential dangers for the writer is that of making literary lower class characters themselves 'knowable' in an inauthentic way. There is a trap of being inadvertently patronising and reverting to stereotypes so that the depictions are 'socially successful' and acceptable to the reader. Williams argued that this springs from the middle-class writer having respect for such characters but, in order to make them particular, needing to unconsciously invest them with the known of his or her own social class and mores.⁴⁰ One of the benefits of Causley's lifelong rootedness in his local community and of his teaching career in a local primary school, is that he neither needed nor wanted to distance himself from the lived experience of his characters in this way and his poems reflect this. Williams placed much value on this lived experience as 'equality of being' which he stated as necessary, without restrictions, for a 'common culture'.⁴¹ The description of Ma Treloar shows Causley affirming such equality.

REDACTED: See 'Demolition Order', *Collected Poems*, p. 137, v. 3,4.

³⁹ Williams, *Culture and Society*, p. 311.

⁴⁰ Williams, *The Country and the City*, p. 208.

⁴¹ Williams, *Culture and Society*, p. 317.

'Demolition Order' enters both the world of Causley and the world of Ma Treloar seen through his imagination, with the informality of conversational speech in an unregulated metre and frequent enjambment. Ma Treloar's anarchic home and sexual life is skilfully woven into the ordered rhyming scheme of abcb in each of the four lines of the octave stanzas. Throughout the body of the poem, Causley's adjectives and metaphors are direct and economical. The children have 'voices like fire-engines' and 'manners like goats', there is no suggestion of a caricature of a 'noble savage' literary artificiality. The speaker's voice envies the completely carefree attitude to sex and the 'terrible relaxation' of the 'indefinable relation', not applicable to him, which the occupants of this house 'enjoy' with the elements of the natural world around them. As Colin MacInnes pointed out with regard to Causley's social comment, in a review of the earlier *Johnny Alleluia*, 'an ominous tart line slips in casual counterpoint amid stanzas of effusion.'⁴² Thus the 'respectable' dead who might just as well already be decaying in the cemetery, which will be their predominant connection with nature.

REDACTED: See 'Demolition Order', *Collected Poems*, p. 137, v. 2.

The diversity of culture and attitude highlights a division often attributed by the 'respectable' to the working-class, of 'deserving' and 'undeserving'. Causley questions the ideology behind this division suggesting that not only authentic living but also unconditional generosity is displayed in this chaotic and apparently irresponsible but very

⁴² Colin MacInnes, 'Wizard's Innocence', *The Spectator*, 207: 6961 (1961), 789-790 (p. 789).

communal poor household, succeeding where church and state are reluctant to go with their patronising charity.

REDACTED: See 'Demolition Order', *Collected Poems*, p. 137, v. 5.

Demolishing the house was one strategy for the forces of respectability to destroy vitality represented by 'the Fall'. It seems likely to be replaced by the exploitation of Hoggart's 'mean form of materialism', justified by the excuse of benefitting the poor by slum clearance and more consumer driven lifestyles. In Ma Treloar's distribution of wine and bread with its resonances of the sacramental, something profound about life giving is being communicated by her actions, related to the 'secret and indefinable relation' of human beings with each other and their environment and relationships, replaced by the 'progress' of slum clearance. Ma Treloar's anarchic and spontaneous lifestyle is demolished and replaced by the imposed forces of an external order masquerading as civilised. Her house may have been 'stinking' but it had an innocent liberation expressed in the emotional intensity of the tenderness of the mother's love and the joys and generous reaction to the calamities of others.

The combination of these elements of lyrical expression and the starkness of 'Now that the old girl's dead' and 'her stinking house bashed down and eaten by bulldozers' creates a mixture of romanticism and social comment. In 'Ma Treloar' Causley laments for the end of innocence within a foundational context of lived experience. He includes an ironic observation of power and class without a strident polemic for change. Causley's protest is in disclosure and dignity. In 'Demolition Order' there is resignation, not resistance.

Education would have been one strategy to recognise the dignity and creativity of working-class life, but this has been sabotaged by the same educational selection which ironically had benefitted both Causley and Hoggart. It was a political strategy which they both recognised. In his 'Review' Causley suggests that there are no new conclusions in Hoggart's book which he had not arrived at in the left wing reading and activities of his own adolescence:

Nothing he has to say is, I think, particularly original: no more, for instance, than that the eleven-plus examination steadily milks the labouring class of its brains, its critically minded members, leaving it debilitated and more vulnerably exposed to attack by mass-propaganda of all kinds. We need, he says, more journals — searching, thoughtful — which would “start from the sort of background their readers have”.⁴³

Causley quotes with approval the view expressed by Hoggart that if the active minority in the working-class concentrate exclusively on immediate political and social objectives, 'the pass will be sold, culturally, behind their backs.'⁴⁴ However, he makes no direct reference in his review to Hoggart's long term conclusion that the cultural subordination of the working-class in the future can only be rectified by a redistribution

⁴³ Causley, Book Review, 'The Uses of Literacy', p. 71.

⁴⁴ Ibid.

of wealth which will close the gap between rich and poor and that until this happens the poor will be 'culturally robbed'.⁴⁵

As a primary school teacher working in a poor community, Causley realised both the enormousness of the task of recognising and celebrating insight from working-class experience, and the limitations of what could be done in the classroom to encourage this in his pupils. 'Packing my bag with useless bits of paper', he writes in 'School at Four O'Clock' (p. 129), describing another day struggling to keep alive the voice and creativity of his largely disadvantaged pupils, the majority of whom would not be selected for the apparent advantages of education beyond the age of 14. They would, in Hoggart's terms, be prime targets for exploitative mass propaganda. Hoggart saw the potential of mass entertainment to be 'anti-life', with a 'corrupt brightness', 'improper appeal' and 'moral evasions'. It equated 'progress with material possessions, equality with moral levelling, freedom with irresponsible pleasure' and did not 'grip the heart or the brain'.⁴⁶ In contrast, Hoggart felt the crux of genuine, challenging creative writing was in the ability of the imagination to relate to lived experience and thus avoid the 'anti-life' and 'corruptly bright' writing which appealed to a conventionalised stage of the reader's imagination with no grounding in the local. For Hoggart, the latter destroyed the authentic creativity, which 'moulds words into a shape which bears the peculiar quality of their experience'.⁴⁷

'School at Four O'Clock' which starts from Causley's background in daily relationship with the children and his own experiences of a childhood similar in many respects to

⁴⁵ Hoggart, *The Uses of Literacy*, p. 243.

⁴⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 340.

⁴⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 209.

theirs, illustrates authentic creativity as defined by Hoggart. In the poem he evokes the granite school building which he himself attended and where he teaches, at the end of the day, clinging to the side of the hill. The children climb the hill home.

REDACTED: See 'School at Four O'Clock', *Collected Poems*, p. 129, v. 2.

The shape and sound of the crowd of children climbing the hill is exactly caught by the line 'Up the hill a squabble of children wanders' and the sudden silence in the building is evoked by the metaphoric device of comparing that silence to a drought in the valley below.

REDACTED: See 'School at Four O'Clock', *Collected Poems*, p. 129, v. 4,5.

The 'love', 'wonder' and 'marvellous hope' will wither and be subsumed in 'some Piper's tune', eventually being extinguished altogether. The sturdiness but not invincibility of the building, reflects in its ambiguity the fragility of the voices which persist in crying for nourishment but which are persistently denied. Causley is asking his readers both to ponder on the fate of the childhood sense of love, wonder and hope, and to listen to the voices pleading against the extinction of these voices. There is no appeal to materialism, irresponsible freedom or a sense that moral purpose can be easily achieved. He is describing the roots of the cultural subordination which will be offered and accepted by many of his pupils.

REDACTED: See 'School at Four O'Clock', *Collected Poems*, p. 129, v. 3.

He fears for the exploitation of their creative life if they are unable to engage the power of language to express and shape their aspirations. Causley's poetry is part of that 'speechless cry' which is raging to be let out. He can at least attempt to make them receptive to the power of language 'Better than his who hears nothing at all.' Many of these children will enter a culture where art is seen as an escape, not a resource for transformation, and as a contrast to the reality of their experiences which lie elsewhere. Cultural repression is inherent in the privilege built into the class system. Hoggart wrote in an article in the *Times Educational Supplement* that he valued literature because of the peculiar way in which it 'explores, re-creates and seeks for the meaning in human experience; because it recreates the texture of that experience [...]'⁴⁸ Causley's descriptive images and metaphors in 'School at Four O'Clock' create this texture in experiences that would be familiar to his pupils and their parents.

Owen comments of Hoggart's literary criticism that:

[...] we see that all of his judgements are informed and enriched by his working-class origins and his status as that contradictory phenomenon, the working-class intellectual.⁴⁹

⁴⁸Richard Hoggart, 'Why I Value Literature', *Times Educational Supplement* (1963), quoted in Owen, 'Richard Hoggart as Literary Critic', p. 88.

⁴⁹ Owen, 'Richard Hoggart as Literary Critic', p. 89.

That there should be an implied contradiction between working-class and intellectual ability is symptomatic of the categories ascribed to what counted as being 'cultured'. This tension was a living one for Causley. He had first seen Marx's advertisement for the submission of poetry in *John 'O' London's Weekly* which Hoggart cites as a magazine for those who wished to enter into a cultured life and foster a 'love for things of the mind'.⁵⁰ That magazine had ceased publishing in 1954, but Causley continued to engage with publications such as *The Listener*, *The London Magazine* and *New Statesman* as the acknowledgements in *Johnny Alleluia* make clear. These were hardly the sort of journals which would originate in the backgrounds of the majority of poor and disadvantaged readers. Causley did feel that the title of Hoggart's book would appeal to an educated middle class, limiting the scope of its readership where it would be most appreciated and effective:

My one real regret is the book's intimidating title, *The Uses of Literacy*: for this means, of course, that it will go largely unread where it might, in the best sense of the word, be most enjoyed.⁵¹

Hoggart had himself wanted to publish under another title, was refused and then had another suggestion which would partly answer Causley's point. He had wanted *The Abuse of Literacy* and when this was not acceptable to his publishers suggested adding *The Feeling Heart* to emphasise the values and attachments particularly articulated in

⁵⁰ Ibid., p. 309.

⁵¹ Causley, Book Review, 'The Uses of Literacy', p. 71.

working-class songs. *The Feeling Heart* was not meant as an indication of patronising sentimentality but of the genuine personal and social attachments to community. Ironically, it was also a parody of a TV programme which manipulated this phrase not as 'an appeal to old decencies' but was actually promoting 'making your pile'.⁵² Williams's vision of 'equality of being' in the production and consumption of culture of any kind was diametrically opposed to the concept of 'making your pile'. The latter completely contradicted the value of lived experience based on structures of feeling and articulated in a common language which ascribed dignity to working-class values of both self-help and collectivism.

The disintegration of these values, of equality of being as an aspiration to human dignity, is vividly portrayed in Causley's poetic account of a visit to his cousins who lived in Reservoir Street in Plymouth in the poem 'Reservoir Street' (p. 127). Causley uses an urban setting which interweaves personal, social and economic elements. He illustrates Williams's argument that cultural experiences expressing meaning should relate to the totality of what is lived, not just the base structures of economic production.⁵³ The poem communicates Williams's prediction of what happens when ways of seeing and knowing cast the observing voice in an unrelated stance to his or her community, unable to be integrated through a common consciousness of shared meanings and values.

REDACTED: See 'Reservoir St' *Collected Poems*, p. 127, v. 1.

⁵² Owen, 'The Abuse of Literacy', 149-150.

⁵³ Williams, 'The Idea of a Common Culture', p. 35.

The rhyming has a regular pattern of abcb. The tone is unsettled, as is the child. The images send clear clues as to the implications of being in the city. It is associated with the upheaval and lack of collective community cohesion. It is the year of the General Strike. The 'bubbling heat' and the 'sun-faced cousins' suggest the oppressive, not consoling, presence of the sun. Verses three and four confirm the destructive atmosphere, even though the view is one with the potential for natural beauty of a park. There is no sense of any beauty in people or nature. The scene culminates in a fatality. In this physical and emotional environment a man is drowning.

REDACTED: See 'Reservoir Street' *Collected Poems*, p. 127, v. 4,5.

The bedroom wall is mindlessly spoiled and stained. There is no innocence in this household, even though it is largely populated by children.

REDACTED: See 'Reservoir Street' *Collected Poems*, p. 127, v. 3.

The vulnerability of innocence emerges from this experience and is enigmatically expressed in the final verses.

REDACTED: See 'Reservoir Street' *Collected Poems*, p. 127, v. 8.

The innocent well water contrasts with the poisoned city reservoir and the imaginary brother provides the security which has been shattered by the city, compensating for the

total lack of actual relationship. The child in 'Reservoir Street' feels himself to be experienced by the 'five prime-beef boys' as an object known only as weak and contemptuous. The use of the city as place of horror as opposed to the innocence of his rural home does not accord with Williams's wish in *The City and the Country* to expose the negligence of seeing the country as equally as a place of exploitation. Causley's point is less this than the contamination of human relationships. There is no shared understanding of human experience on either side, no commonly held moral parameters regulating conduct. Lack of effective communication and respect for the variety of the human condition were seen by Williams as fatal to human flourishing. 'We need a 'common culture', not for the sake of an abstraction, but because we shall not survive without it.'⁵⁴

Seen in the context of Williams's concept of 'equality of being' the narrator's voices, the adult in 'Ma Treloar', the teacher in 'School at Four O'Clock' and the child in 'Reservoir Street' contribute a powerful testimony to the powerless voices of the excluded. In 'Ma Treloar' Causley used romantic imagery to re-create a vivid picture of a chaotic life of poverty, lamenting the passing of authenticity expressed as eccentricity. In 'School at Four O'Clock' he highlighted the suppression of the creative voice of a whole generation of working-class children. In individual terms, any child who has been bullied will instantly recognise the fearful tone and personal vulnerability of 'Reservoir Street'. Ma Treloar's individuality had been bulldozed out of existence and the cry of the children's voices goes unheard, the bullies succeed in intimidation. However, Causley's poetry did at least give him the opportunity to use these voices to illustrate that poems

⁵⁴ Williams, *Culture and Society*, p. 317.

could affirm the complexities and dignity of the familiar in the lives and experiences of those he lived amongst. Another of his strategies for what Williams described as 'telling as an aspect of living', was the contemporary ballad.

The Traditional Popular in Causley's Ballads

Both Williams's and Hoggart's fear of the cultural robbery of the poor is addressed in Williams's notable study in the late fifties which addressed itself to the survival of a working-class cultural tradition rather than its collapse into a corporate apathetic consciousness compensated by limited affluence. This was *Culture and Society* first published in 1958. Williams's concern was primarily the evaluation of literature in the context of ideology and culture. He argued that the potential threat to a 'common culture' created by and creative for all, is a misunderstanding of the underlying nature of communication. This failure he saw as perpetuated by pressures towards conformity and paternalism, neglecting the crucial perspectives of 'telling as an aspect of living' and 'learning as an element of experience.'⁵⁵ For Williams, communication without respect for lived experience, along with imposed 'knowledge' which is acquired from a source outside that experience, reinforces hierarchical attitudes. These attitudes are consolidated by the dominant class who control the transmission and distribution of a selective tradition controlled by this class.⁵⁶

⁵⁵ Ibid., p. 314.

⁵⁶ For A. L. Lloyd's summary of E. P. Thomson's definition of class see A. L. Lloyd, *Folk Song in England* (St Albans: Palladin, 1975), p. 169.

In a contemporary review of *Culture and Society*, D. W. Harding commended Williams's 'central and utterly sound conviction that the great danger lies in allowing highly developed cultural interests to separate us humanly from people without them' but added the qualification that this applies 'at least as much to mutual distrust and disparagement within classes as between them.'⁵⁷ In a discussion of *Culture and Society*, Oliver Bennet acknowledged that Williams's dialectic is primarily concerned with the influence on culture of the social and economic changes brought about by the Industrial Revolution. The lack of large scale industry in Causley's location does not imply that aspects of these changes were absent in his agrarian, rural community. There may not have been a strong union presence or labour and co-operative influence but as Bennet remarked, 'The idea of culture, in both its conservative and radical inflections, comes to represent an alternative set of values to those embodied in the new kind of society that is emerging.'⁵⁸ And this new society in which the 'shared source of life' was disintegrating and members and discoverers were replaced by strangers and agents' was emerging in Launceston as elsewhere.⁵⁹ Causley's environment of a small, rural country town in an isolated part of the country placed him in a situation which had none of the large-scale effects of industrialisation on employment, housing and community and family life but was, at the same time, increasingly exposed to post-war communication and media innovations.

Williams saw mass production as a vehicle in stereotyping the mass with the negative connotations of a mob, neither truly for nor by the working class. He made a distinction

⁵⁷ D. W. Harding, 'The Single Culture: Culture and Society 1780-1959 by Raymond Williams', *The Spectator*, 201: 6798 (1958), 495-496 (p. 495).

⁵⁸ Oliver Bennet, Review Essay, 'Raymond Williams: Culture and Society 1780-1950', *International Journal of Cultural Policy*, 16: 1 (2010), 9-10.

⁵⁹ See Williams, *The Country and the City*, p. 358.

between the ballads of post-industrial society which form a dissident element but not the whole of a culture, and the 'traditional popular'. The latter, and the transmission of ballads which accompanied it, had been irretrievably weakened to the point of near extinction by the Industrial Revolution.⁶⁰ A. L. Lloyd's account of folk song in England traced the popularity of ballads back to the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries when the propensity of upper class poetry to focus on high affairs of state confined the poetic expression of the local, oral artistic imagination to the rural lower classes.⁶¹ This latter tradition lived on in Williams's concept of the 'traditional popular' and in Causley's enthusiasm for twentieth century ballads. These differed in origin from the predominantly sung ballads. Being contemporary, they were not the result of anonymous oral transmission by communities, but the deliberate creations of specific writers. Causley believed that this form still could communicate current preoccupations and past events which lived in the memory of local and regional communities.

'The Ballad of Charlotte Dymond' (p. 108), is an example of the 'traditional popular'. It recounts an actual murder on Bodmin Moor, near Launceston in the 1840s. The realities of the servant and labourer economy are present in the circumstances of Charlotte, a domestic servant, who has Sunday evenings off. She goes to meet her young man, Matthew, a farm hand. Matthew is disabled and consumed by thoughts of Charlotte's unfaithfulness. He slashes her throat with a razor and leaves her on the moor where a stone still marks the spot. Matthew is later hanged.

REDACTED: See 'The Ballad of Charlotte Dymond', *Collected Poems*, p. 108, v. 20.

⁶⁰ Williams, *Culture and Society*, p. 320.

⁶¹ Lloyd, *Folk Song in England*, p. 137.

In 'Charlotte Dymond' Causley uses the particularity of a local historical event with the elements of poverty, disability and jealousy to evoke the description of the execution and a challenge to the reader. Ballads such as 'Charlotte Dymond' provide examples of what Williams perceived as common resources of meaning arising from the social, economic and material aspects of lived experience. As one of these common resources, ballads often based on historical sources and actual people are, as A. L. Lloyd argued, a collective and retrospective local memory which can mirror social concepts and express the realities of lower class life past and present.⁶² They portray the lives and experiences of those without any option of agency for change, excluded from the material benefits of a class stratified and dominant culture centred on the ownership of land or capital.

In the final verses Causley integrates this narrative from the life of the community with an appeal to the reader.

REDACTED: See 'The Ballad of Charlotte Dymond', *Collected Poems*, p. 108, v. 21,22.

The final two verses break with the narrative simplicity of the rest of the poem to introduce into the ballad a plea for reflection and subsequent judgement. To accomplish this Causley changes the tone, moving from descriptive action. This contrast with the previous verses takes the ballad beyond mere commemoration and is achieved through the carefully constructed combination of the nouns, 'kingdom', 'airs', and 'heart' and the adjectives, 'granite', 'travelling' and 'steel' in addition to the references to the two lovers and the wedding day. Causley makes this intervention to ensure that the ballad is taken

⁶² Ibid., pp. 127-130.

beyond narrative to explicitly raise the ethical issues. He uses this strategy to introduce a final transition between the two tones of the poem from narrative to folk song. This provides contrast whilst at the same time keeping the unity of the poem in the realm of ballad and folk song, whereas a more direct and less archaic final two verses would disrupt this unity.

Although they often re-tell narratives and legends from the life of the community such as 'The Ballad of Charlotte Dymond', the appeal of 'traditional popular' ballads is to a wider audience than the local. Lloyd explained this claiming that it is in the nature of the everyday language used in ballads to reinforce their communal identity even if they have a specific individual source. As a component of folk music, ballads, often based on historical sources and actual people, are a collective memory.⁶³ This collective memory is expressed through the voices present in the poem. The narrator who begins by describing the scene takes on the role of the questioning local community and Charlotte and Matthew both have dialogue before the narrator returns to directly address the listener.

The simplicity of the narrative in 'The Ballad of Charlotte Dymond' never descends into sensationalising the horror of the crime or sentimentalising the characters. Francis Hope in *The Times Literary Supplement* in a 1968 review of *Underneath the Water* claimed that 'Causley's schoolchildren, sailors and Cornish ghosts are felt presences, not exploited exhibits.'⁶⁴ The character who gives his name to the collection *Johnny Alleluia*, hangs himself in the poem of the same name (p. 119). Ballads and working songs have the

⁶³ Ibid.

⁶⁴ Francis Hope, 'Can You Hear Me?', *The Times Literary Supplement*, 16 May 1968, p. 499.

potential to articulate simultaneously *collective* models of the expression of culture which focus on the detail of *individual* lives and limit the danger of reducing those individual lives to an abstraction. The ballad form for Causley is not an excuse for uncritical nostalgia or a romanticism which degenerates into abstraction. In 'Charlotte Dymond' he is using a story of the relationship between two working-class individuals, a domestic servant and a farm hand, which is part of the heritage and experience of one community, but which raises issues of self-esteem, moral values and legal retribution on behalf of and beyond that community and any one class.

Causley wanted to tell stories from the past in the ballad genre, not for the sake of prolonging old forms or dictating the nature of human personality in a newly constructed social and economic society, but because the traditional verse form of the ballad allowed him to clearly articulate the experiences, value systems and social conditions past and present which were the everyday contexts of the life of his community. Hamilton argued that 'The folk-poet stance is bound to look a bit literary and artificial.'⁶⁵ This is only the case if the language and form appear to be artificially contrived to fit the poem in a way which does not authenticate the linguistic or lived experience of the characters.

Causley's reputation as a writer of ballads originated in his first publications in the fifties and followed him into the sixties. He believed that this 'expression of communal experience' was still possible via the ballad form in the twentieth century. The credits at the beginning of *Johnny Alleluia* in 1961 refer to him as an 'acknowledged master of the ballad.' In a review of *Johnny Alleluia* in the Guardian in 1961, Richard Kell found Causley's use of the ballad form to be inconsistent in its quality but comments that when

⁶⁵ Ian Hamilton, 'Deaths and Entrances: New Poetry', *The Observer Review*, 10 March 1968, p. 28.

the ballad form is used in a down to earth way ‘the result is brilliant and original.’⁶⁶ ‘The Ballad of the Bread Man’ (*Collected*, p. 154), makes Kell’s point. When a sparse narrative form where events from one category of text, in this case Biblical, are transferred to another, in this case the ballad, using contemporary speech patterns, the result is a challenge to conventional expectations of meaning. The meaning of the ministry of Jesus as ‘bringing the living to life’ and the familiar Causley trope of the rejection of this message is expressed in the narrator’s direct speech and immediately comprehensible allusions.

REDACTED: See ‘Ballad of the Bread Man’, *Collected Poems*, p. 154, v. 16,20.

Causley’s use of the ballad did not preclude risk-taking in using the conventional ballad form to narrate well-known stories in everyday speech and allusions which avoid archaic mannerisms. This was disputed by Hope who saw only an impression of complacency in her assessment of his work. ‘Contentedly old-fashioned, he has no qualms about the thudding metre or the huge, expansive rhyme; he takes these in his ballad-monger’s stride.’⁶⁷ P. J. Kavanagh’s comments in 1968 are rather more nuanced. ‘His style is of deceptive ballad-type doggerel, spiced with surprising words’ [...] ⁶⁸ The patronising tone of the descriptions ‘ballad-monger’ and ‘ballad-type doggerel’ reveal an attitude to the genre which suggest an already pre-conceived negative attitude to its contemporary

⁶⁶ Richard Kell, ‘Plain and Fancy’, *The Guardian*, 10 November 1961, p. 7.

⁶⁷ Francis Hope, ‘Can You Hear Me?’, p. 499.

⁶⁸ P. J. Kavanagh, ‘Diseases and Complaints’, *The Guardian*, 15 March 1968, p. 7.

poetic potential. Kavanagh, however, sees that Causley's use of the 'ballad style' may be 'deceptive' in its apparent simplicity and 'surprising' in its vocabulary.

As an example of this 'deception', Causley's sophisticated approach to the ballad form which reflects on communal experience through the medium of memory and irony can be seen in 'Ballad of Jack Cornwell' (*Collected*, p. 163). Traditional ballads often dealt with the fate of conscripted soldiers or sailors forced into conflict and leaving their loved ones at home. 'The Ballad of Jack Cornwell' is a twist on this familiar theme as it moves from pure narrative to express ironic distance. Jack Cornwell enlisted illegally as a minor in World War One and was killed at the Battle of Jutland. Irony pervades the final verse.

REDACTED: See 'Ballad of Jack Cornwell', *Collected Poems*, p. 163, v. 13.

The allusion to song rhythm is evidenced in the positioning of 'ever' before rather than after the pronoun 'they' in the final verse, 'If ever they heard of me' and in the metre, which seems superficially regular but has varied irregularities throughout the poem. The rhyming scheme is carefully constructed, it links Carson, Verdun and the continuation of the war which 'went on'. The irony of the 'great' Sir Edward Carson and of the 'Great War' which sent Cornwell to his death, the Gilbert and Sullivan associations in the rhyme and metre of the 'First Lord of the Admiralty' and the patriotic sentiment of using Cornwell's death as an example to encourage others, which Cornwell himself appears to be boasting of. It abruptly leads on to a list of the horrendous casualties and a substantial stanza break, isolating the final line. The silence of this break echoes the endless, destructive progress of the war. 'The Ballad of Jack Cornwell' illustrates Causley's faith in the legitimacy of the ballad form to comment on the characteristics of war in the

twentieth century from the experience of a totally insignificant combatant, with both the simplicity of a narrative structure and an ironic tone.

Kavanagh's second characteristic of Causley's 'ballad-type doggerel' is that of the 'surprising words'. There is occasional unexpected vocabulary, the 'cawing' of a carol in 'Innocent's Song', the 'heeling bird' in 'Emblems Of The Passion' (p. 88), the 'ruddled' city in 'In Coventry' (p. 146), and the 'seeded' sky in 'Dallas Revisited' (*UW*, p. 28), Causley is mostly content to use the vocabulary he has inherited. The expression of consciousness must be controlled. It is his use of alliterative and unexpected combinations of adjectives and adverbs linked with their nouns and verbs, which is the distinguishing feature of his work. There is a danger that an overemphasis on alliteration combined with the obvious effort to find rhyming words will draw the bulk of attention to itself as a form of cleverness and the dominant component of the poem, reducing the power of the imagery. This is especially apparent in 'A Certain Man' (p. 151), there are 'slate suns', the 'stream scuds' by, palms 'bled with burning light' and a tongue 'blazed bright'. This is particularly so where there is double alliteration in some lines as in 'Master And Pupil' (p. 95), 'Flooded with fire his hollow heart of stone', 'The colours of the cock the winter wore / And the sun faltered in the flowing west'.

Reviewing *Underneath the Water*, Hamilton felt that this degenerated into a lack of linguistic subtlety. 'He aims for a narrative resonance and lets the language take care of itself — a crudely adjectival slackness soon sets in.'⁶⁹ When Causley resisted the temptation to cram alliteration into every line, the instances of it become more effective in allowing the combination of familiar words to communicate concepts in a different

⁶⁹ Hamilton, 'Deaths and Entrances: New Poetry', p. 28.

way. But it is noticeable that by the time of the poems included in the later collection, *Underneath the Water*, he has progressed beyond what becomes the predictable repetition of this trope which irritates in his earlier work. Where alliteration is used it is sparingly within the individual poem and there is a greater emphasis on unusual rather than quantitative pairings of adverb and verb and adjective and noun.

Causley promoted the contemporary ballad form as a survivor in twentieth century poetics. His ballads blend images based on every-day and historical experience with rhyming and song-like cadences and common diction. His art is in making this appear effortless and not contrived. For Causley, the twentieth century ballad illustrated, against probability, that the 'traditional popular' concept could survive as an element in the discourse of twentieth century British poetics without the oral transmission and anonymity of the original examples. Gioia described this phenomenon as 'a conservative counter-tradition'.⁷⁰ The counter-cultural is in the radical independence from the orthodox expectations of experimentation in post-war poetics and a daring affirmation that the 'traditional popular' could continue to flourish in the evolving era of media and mass culture.⁷¹

Independence, Equality and the Popular

⁷⁰ Gioia, 'The Independence of Charles Causley', p. 28.

⁷¹ See Rosemary Walters, 'Tradition and Innovation: Charles Causley and the Ballad in 20th Century Poetics', *Emergence: University of Southampton Arts and Humanities Postgraduate Research Journal*, X: (2018), 103-116 (p. 115).

Eagleton highlighted two key components of Williams's arguments, 'Culture is ordinary' and that 'vital modes of speaking to each other should be wrested back from the cynics who exploited them for private gain.'⁷² These can be applied to Causley from the beginnings of his published poetry in the fifties and through the sixties. Causley's poetry of the sixties has a dual effect. It recreates, without nostalgia or sentiment, a world of 'knowable communities' which was fast vanishing. The technology of communication was advancing rapidly. ('I'M NOW ON THE PHONE. SENSATION:', he wrote in 1969)⁷³. In recreating this world he illustrated that it was still possible to produce 'popular', widely read poetry which did not conform to the external forces causing that disappearance. It also reveals the error of reading the popular poetics of the sixties as dominated by the controversies and output of the 'Poetry Revival'.

Causley is depicting characters who live in a 'knowable community' in which they are not alienated or strangers. They do exist in a society and culture manipulated by poverty and a class and educational system which relegates them to limited aspirations and opportunities, deferential political stances and religious conformity. Yet they are not yet totally subjected to the imperatives placed on them by the external forces of capitalist consumerism. In Williams's words, even in negative circumstances, they can still 'accept and enjoy' in the sense of their belonging as subjects, rather than being objectified as those who 'use and consume'.⁷⁴ Causley's poetry relates to Williams's cultural framework of lived experience and literary expression of cultures in a language common to specific communities. In *Marxism and Literature* Williams defined such a language as

⁷² Terry Eagleton, 'Culture Conundrum', *The Guardian Online*, 21 May 2008

<<https://www.theguardian.com/commentisfree/2008/may/21/1>> [accessed 16 March 2017].

⁷³ New York, University of Buffalo, B40, F 35 Letter, Charles Causley to Erica Marx, 5 April 1969.

⁷⁴ Williams, *Culture and Society*, p. 358.

one which produces meaning in a 'shared and reciprocal activity embodied in relationships.'⁷⁵ In lived experience, articulation of this and a common language, Williams sees the articulation of meaning and values, reflecting the role of ordinary experience and relationships in aesthetic creations.⁷⁶ Causley's poetry heighten awareness of what is being replaced as the vision of equality of being is eroded by the social and economic determinant of profit through which post-war global capitalism was manipulating individual lives.

In the following decade, the seventies, Causley continued to be busy in editing anthologies. The successes of *Johnny Alleluia* and *Underneath the Water* illuminated theoretical lines of argument relating to the definition of cultural production and activity within a diversity of social and economic contexts, foregrounded in the cultural studies agenda of *The Uses of Literacy* and *Culture and Society*. The early seventies saw Williams's publication of *The Country and The City* and the literary and cultural theory of the eighties was hugely influenced by Eagleton. Causley's collections of the eighties, *Secret Destinations* and *A Field of Vision* can be analysed within the categories of Williams's forces within cultural production and Eagleton's discussion of the power structures behind these forces. They relate also to Empson's discussion of the nature of the 'pastoral' in literature.

⁷⁵ Williams, *Marxism and Literature*, p. 166.

⁷⁶ Williams, 'The Idea of a Common Culture', p. 35.

Chapter Five:

Into the Eighties: Conventions, Class and Culture

This chapter claims that Causley's poetry of the eighties illustrates an authenticity arising from genuine immersion in a lifelong residence and work as a primary school teacher in Launceston. These were the roots at the heart of his identity. It views such authenticity within Empson's distinction between pastoral literature that is often 'about' those who live in certain lowly social categories but is not actually 'by' and 'for' them. It is observationally and objectively 'about' them and is not critically conscious of a need for or aiming to promote, change.¹ Poetic expressions of pastoral which are 'by' and 'for', although susceptible to idealised misrepresentations of rural society, can articulate independence from the manipulation and distortions of lived experience in literature. Empson progresses his discussion of the pastoral with a further category of proletarian literature. This seeks to realise the potential of literature as an agent of protest. In Causley this agency is realised through the foregrounding of his 'structures of feeling' within 'knowable communities'. In so doing it challenges both elitist and experimental assumptions of literary culture but does not overtly encourage political dissent.

Locating himself primarily in Launceston and teaching in a local primary school Causley remained rooted in the life experiences which he shared. An extract from a conversation in the *Guardian* between Causley and Raymond Gardner, just after the publication of *Collected Poems 1951-1975*, illustrates the combination of rural locality and class

¹ Empson, *Some Versions of Pastoral*, p.6.

relevant to Causley's location within a far from idealistic rural setting. 'In the early Thirties', he remarked, 'this [Launceston] was a very tight class-ridden community and if you were born into a working-class family you usually stayed there.'² The conversation with Gardner revealed that Causley was well aware of the class structure in which he grew up, but his poetry gives little indication that he wanted to encourage himself or others to take action in defiance of this sense of acquiescence. In the latter sense, his poetry reflected one of Empson's definitions of pastoral rather than proletarian literature, that of 'pastoral' as 'class-conscious all right, but not conscious of class war'.³

Secondly this chapter will argue that Causley's poetry can be identified within one of the three forces in the production of culture as process as defined by Williams. This is the force described by Williams as the residual in his 1973 article 'Base and Superstructure' and the 1977 *Marxism and Literature*. Rather than static 'pre-formed bodies of literature', Williams identified three fluid strands in the process of any analysis of 'actual works, practices and conditions.' These are the residual, emergent and dominant.⁴ The *dominant* is the contemporary established tradition and institutions which perpetuate this dominance in the transmission of meaning and value in social, economic and cultural life. It favours a public, corporate and industrialised product rather than the private, the personal and the evocative of the natural world. The latter rather than the former most applied to Causley. *Emergent* forces are those which may be neglected or undervalued at any one time but are constantly producing new meanings and values.

² Raymond Gardner, 'Voice from the Edge', *The Guardian*, 27 August 1975, p. 8.

³ Empson, *Some Versions of Pastoral*, p. 6.

⁴ See Williams, *Marxism and Literature*, Chapter Eight. 'Base and Superstructure', pp. 10-12.

The residual element, which exists alongside emergent and dominant forces and is most applicable to Causley, can be seen in experiences, meanings and values which, although they may have chronologically originated in the past, are not totally archaic. In Williams's analysis, residual forces are still active and effective in contemporary artistic expression yet do not depend on verification or legitimization by the current culture which seems most prevalent at any one time.⁵ Pastoral in Causley's poetry presents as one of Williams's residual forces, not archaic in the sense of existing only in the past but still active and therefore influential in the present.⁶ The theoretical perspectives of the pastoral, the proletarian, authenticity, and residual and emergent, constitute a critical discourse within which to assess Causley's poetry of the eighties. This will include an interrogation of conventions of pastoral and proletarian, their implications for the concept of immersion and identity as authenticity in working-class literature and the emancipatory potential of residual in the process and production of culture.

Destination and Vision: The Background to the Eighties

Apart from anthologies marketed for children, Causley's major poetry collections of the seventies and eighties consisted of three publications, *Collected Poems 1951-1975* (1975), *Secret Destinations* (1984), and *A Field Of Vision* (1988).⁷ These include autobiographical and local material alongside poems from his travels. This later poetry marks a distinct development in Causley's work. Many of the poems focus on

⁵ Williams, *Marxism and Literature*, p. 122.

⁶ *Ibid.*, pp. 121-126.

⁷ Charles Causley, *Collected Poems 1951-1975* (London: Macmillan, 1975).

reminiscence from childhood and travels away from Cornwall. For this Causley uses free and blank verse, still highly crafted but expressing spontaneity of thought and impression less formally than lyric or ballad. Rae described *Secret Destinations* as a radical departure from Causley's earlier work along with his 'readiness to accommodate details of everyday life.'⁸ Rae's review was called 'Escaping Time', suggesting that at one and the same time Causley can 'accommodate details of everyday life' and yet in poetics is open to a range of conventions from past and present.

The evolution of Causley's work away from more established ballad and regular rhyme and metre can be traced through the three publications of the seventies and eighties. The comments on the endpaper of the 1984 collection *Secret Destinations*, a Poetry Book Society Recommendation, remark on this poetic development with approval:

While some of the poems continue in Causley's remarkable vein of breathing new life into the ballad form, many of them derive from more personal reflections and experience: thoughtful observations of friends, the influence of the past and vivid memories of the joys and agonies of childhood.⁹

The comment implies that 'more personal reflections and experience' are a factor in moving Causley away from the ballad form with its priority of narrative. This movement

⁸ Rae, 'Escaping Time', p. 470.

⁹ Causley, *Secret Destinations*, endpaper.

coincided with major disruptions in his personal and professional circumstances which are directly reflected in the poems. These concerned family and employment. He was a carer for his mother and then visited her at the local geriatric hospital, the old workhouse, until her death in 1971. His mother's restricted health was the stimulus for more autobiographical poetry. During the course of her final illness he had opportunities to speak with her at length, as he recalled in an article in 1987:

And I talked to my mother about her childhood, her long past. She had been approaching eighty when she first fell ill. And through the simple, clear glass she held up, I found myself able to observe as if with new eyes, my own childhood; and I wrote about it in poem after poem.¹⁰

In his employment there were changes which affected his emotional life in the seventies and eighties. The National School, where he taught, was renamed and moved to new buildings in 1975. This was a considerable emotional dislocation for Causley. The original school with the tolling bell from the Castle Green was the one which he had attended as a child and where he had taught since returning home after World War Two. This was where he had first felt a love of words and poetry. Now it was declared unfit for purpose. The standard modern replacement had no such personal connotations. After a total of four years as Deputy Head and a year's sabbatical as Visiting Fellow in Poetry from 1973-1974 at Exeter University, he retired from teaching in 1976. Now he was able to travel

¹⁰ Causley, 'So Slowly to Harbour', p. 109.

much more extensively. The content of *Secret Destinations* reflects this. However, the secrecy of the destinations implied in the title points to emotional as well as physical displacement.

The closure of the old school building coincided with an expansion in Causley's uses of poetic form. The building was 'unfit for purpose', life had to move on. In addition to his personal life, there were huge changes in ideology which subverted those 'structures of feeling' which had remained with him from his childhood. Politically, the concept of society and the ties of community were denounced in the era of Thatcherite politics. Society was no longer seen as a co-operative force for communal flourishing. Established communities such as the miners, were suppressed in the name of economic progress.¹¹ The emphasis on the 'sovereignty of the individual' from the political thinking of Thatcherism in the eighties coincided with the frequency of Causley's fondness for the autobiographical 'I' voices in his poetry. But, in contrast to Causley, in Thatcher's interpretation the 'sovereign individual' was diverted by the ideology of the right to acquisitiveness and self-interest which ignored any sense of community, collective concern and responsibility.

Pastoral and Proletarian

Causley's work displays a rootedness in the past through the medium of the pastoral and the residual. Contrary to the tenets of the right wing economic and upwardly mobile

¹¹ For an analysis of Williams's reactions to the politics and thought of the 1980s see John Higgins, *Raymond Williams: Literature, Marxism and Cultural Materialism* (London: Routledge, 1999), pp. 136-138.

aspirational ideology of the eighties, his poetry affirmed the literary expression of the common language and lived experience of the poor and vulnerable, living out their everyday, 'ordinary' culture. The condition of the powerless in literature is discussed by Empson in his 1935 study *Some Versions of Pastoral*. Empson explored the contrast between pastoral and proletarian, highlighting the distinction between literature 'by' and 'for' rather than 'about' the working class, and the potential of both pastoral and proletarian for prompting social and economic change.¹² Eagleton argued in *Marxism and Literary Criticism* that the distortion of social reality was heightened by the alienation from reality if the writer was an observer rather than a participant.¹³ For Empson the dignity of the actuality of life and for Eagleton, authenticity and therefore empowerment are conferred by the participative status of the author.¹⁴ Hence Eagleton's summary of Eric Auerbach, that art has its roots 'in the depths of the workaday world and its men and women.'¹⁵

Eagleton does not doubt the value of 'what is out there'. Beginning by admitting that 'Realism is one of the most elusive of artistic terms', he claimed, in a review of Auerbach's *Mimesis: The Representation of Reality in Western Literature*, that 'the idea that everyday life is dramatically enthralling, that it is fascinating simply in its boundless humdrum detail, is one of the great revolutionary conceptions in human history [...]'¹⁶ But for Eagleton, art which relates to perceptions of reality in the real world only through

¹² Empson, *Some Versions of Pastoral*, p.6.

¹³ Terry Eagleton, *Marxism and Literary Criticism* (London: Routledge, 1997), p. 31.

¹⁴ Empson, *Some Versions of Pastoral*, p. 8. Terry Eagleton, *The Function of Criticism* (London: Verso, 2005), p. 84.

¹⁵ Terry Eagleton, 'Pork Chops and Pineapples', *London Review of Books*, 25: 20 (2003), <<https://www-lrb-co-uk.chain.kent.ac.uk/the-paper/v25/n20/terry-eagleton/pork-chops-and-pineapples>> [accessed 24 March 2020]

¹⁶ Ibid.

reflection, simply registering what is 'out there' does not sufficiently interrogate what underlies appearance. The values of the everyday as a revolutionary force will only stimulate actual revolution if it interrogates and then opposes prevailing ideologies. Art as a mirror lacks connections and the potential for being a collective force for change. It is content to be a component of complacent, smug and 'sterile ideologies.'¹⁷ Eagleton saw as a key element in Gyorgy Lukacs's sense of realism 'that it means an art which penetrates through the appearances of social life to grasp their inner dynamics and dialectical interrelations.'¹⁸

Causley's poetry of childhood and reminiscence describes the dynamics of the social context in which he lives and interrogates its inner life. The fascination of the 'boundless humdrum detail' of the 'dynamic and dialectical interrelations' of everyday are vividly expressed by Causley as the voice of a hospital visitor in 'Ten Types Of Hospital Visitor' (p. 232), and 'Ward 14' (p. 261). He is both a participant and an observer in the life of the wards which he enters. His observations bring into being characters who are instantly recognizable as familiar in type yet are not manipulated abstractions. They are located firmly within the everyday experience of the townspeople whom Causley was living amongst yet their particular characteristics are familiar beyond this context. Richard Pevear comments that in the 1975 *Collected* there are examples of speech and emotion 'nourished by something more generic than Causley's own sensibility'.¹⁹

The first visitor of the ten types 'destroys hope / In the breasts of the sick, / Who realize instantly / That they are incapable of surmounting / Her ferocious goodwill'. The second

¹⁷ Eagleton, *Marxism and Literary Criticism*, p. 58.

¹⁸ Eagleton, 'Pork Chops and Pineapples', [accessed 24 March 2020].

¹⁹ Richard Pevear, 'Poetry and Worldlessness', *The Hudson Review*, 29: 2 (1976), 305-320 (p.313).

of these is the vicar whose role and attitude separate him from the social class of his parishioners. Roger Sales argues in a discussion of pastoral and politics that religion is part of 'the propaganda of the victors' and colludes in maintaining the status quo.²⁰ Causley has an unlikely revolutionary in one of the patients in the ward. The vicar arrives, 'a melancholy splurge / Of theological colours; / Taps heavily about like a healthy vulture / Distributing deep-frozen hope'. Most of the patients 'Play for safety / By accepting his attentions / With just concealed apathy.'

REDACTED: See 'Ten Types of Hospital Visitor', *Collected Poems*, p. 232, v. 2.

The fifth visitor's 'bullock foot' places him as labourer or farmer but the tone of the description emphasising his vulnerability through physical discomfort, resists being patronising or ridiculing.

REDACTED: See 'Ten Types of Hospital Visitor', *Collected Poems*, p. 232, v. 5.

The tone of gentle irony is maintained through the artlessness and sincerity of this fifth visitor who 'Tenderly kisses his wife's cheek / —The brush of a child's lips—', and a description of his naïve innocence of what is to come. In the final verse, as he leaves 'He

²⁰ Roger Sales, *English Literature in History 1780-1830: Pastoral and Politics* (London: Hutchinson, 1983), p. 23.

does not appear to notice / The dusk'. In contrast the seventh visitor who 'Smells of bar-room after shave' and whose friend is asleep 'whether real or feigned ', prowls the ward looking for 'second-class, lost-face patients / With no visitors' until he can escape to the pub at opening time.

'Ten Types Of Hospital Visitor' is an observation of social practice from within a lived situation. It contains a combination of irony and humour. Throughout the poem the representations of the thoughts and actions of the visitors illustrate Causley giving substance to Christopher Caudwell's premise that all art is class art, the 'consciousness of that group whose experience in general resembles his own — his own class.'²¹ Using Caudwell's terms, the visitors are a group with whom Causley has shared a social life which produces an affinity of emotional consciousness.²² He is able to observe and chronicle this affinity whilst also producing a more metaphysical commentary on the passage of death through the ward. This passage is only thwarted in one instance by a patient whose visitor looks so near to death himself, 'The crumpled look of a slightly used shroud', that the patient takes heart and recovers! It is not the human characters who populate the climax of the poem as, so often in Causley, the juxtaposition of life and death is the decisive crisis of consciousness and it is death which has the last word. 'The ninth visitor is life' but 'The tenth visitor / Is not usually named'. As Peter Porter claimed of Causley in *The Observer*, the 'new poems of reminiscence strike me as the best things he has done', remarking also that in these poems, 'Causley has uncovered powerful images of disquiet.'²³

²¹ Caudwell, *Illusion and Reality*, p. 226.

²² *Ibid.*, p. 228.

²³ Peter Porter, 'Sleeping Beauties', *The Observer*, 2 June 1985, p. 22.

Another of the poems on a hospital theme written for this collection, 'Ward 14', has much darker expressions of the irony and humour of hospital visiting and the unspoken presence of death. Causley's personal pain comes through as the speaker describes visiting 'The mother with the brain three quarters / struck away / By apoplexy, and other / Assorted fevers and indignities[...]'. The nurse exhorts the mother not to cry and to 'be a good girl' and the visiting son is left sitting helplessly by as she weeps uncontrollably 'swift, unceasing tears / Of pain, misery, frustration.' The tone and force of these two hospital poems reflects the value, dignity and humour of daily life seen from a perspective outside the wealthy, influential, intellectual or academic. 'The word', says Christopher Caudwell, 'has a subjective side (feeling) and an objective side (perception). But these do not exist in the word-as-itself, in contemplation [...] They exist only in the word as a dynamic social act [...]'²⁴ Causley's perceptions of the ten hospital visitors and his feeling of personal pain visiting the hospital ward, recreate the experiences of his community, and this expression of the ordinary is more than contemplation. The dignity which he ascribes to the vulnerable and voiceless is a dynamic social act. Eagleton commented on Empson's critical discourse of pastoral as discerning an irony between 'general humanity and specialized critical intelligence, the suavities of poetic meaning and some more generous, all-encompassing social ambience.'²⁵ This perspective provides an appropriate description of Causley's skill in these two hospital poems. In 'Ten Types Of Hospital Visitor' and 'Ward 14', he creates poems which approach their subjects, not as objects, even though they are in recognizably ordinary human situations, with his

²⁴ Caudwell, *Illusion and Reality*, p.159.

²⁵ Eagleton, *The Function of Criticism*, p. 84.

insightful critical intelligence and a mixture of irony, humour and courtesy which results in a 'generous, all-encompassing social ambience.'

Sales had pointed out the danger in pastoral poetry of a poet 'who loves to stuff his den with antiquity, yet uncultured historians prevent him from enjoying his collection by pointing out that it consists of craftily artily reproductions.'²⁶ These poems are not 'craftily, artily' reproductions but authentic experiences, in this instance in a working-class context, which stimulated for Causley a poetic reflection on the response of human beings to mortality. The act of committing re-collection, reflection and imagination to expression in poetry means that it can never be 'pristine' or 'unmediated'. Neutrality is not possible but despite their physically, economically and socially limited lives, it is Causley's participation in these lives which removes him from the distance of a mere observer and any sense of alienation from the reality of the society he is recording. Causley's poetry is not objectively 'about' the poor, it is 'by' them in the sense of an articulation of his and their feelings and experiences. And because of this intimate empathetic consciousness and understanding of both strength and vulnerability, precluding stereotyping and patronising, it is 'for' them. The actual individuals who appear in his verse are not manufactured as agencies of a specific ideology justifying and promoting the illusion of 'universally acknowledged truths' to sustain a particular value system.²⁷ Eagleton does allow that typification, accompanied by a genuine sense of the individual, even if it is reactionary in practical terms by being open to the dangers of

²⁶ Sales, *English Literature in History*, p. 16.

²⁷ *Ibid.*, pp. 17, 19.

paternalism and stereotyping, can 'recognise the forces, essences and essentials' which shape concrete experience.²⁸

Neither 'Ten Types of Hospital Visitor' nor 'Ward 14' would satisfy a definition of proletarian art which insists that it should dismantle the assumptions of bourgeois hegemony and 'express a new world coming into being.'²⁹ The poems chronicle the persistence of Causley's belief in the validity of art which expresses individual experience situated within the social practice arising from his 'knowable community'. However, experience has to be situated and Eagleton observes that the terms 'culture' and 'experience', central to Williams's analysis, are not ideologically neutral.³⁰ In this connection, Stuart Middleton reviewed the development of the concept of experience and concluded that:

"experience" was a fundamental category for the early "New Left" in Britain — most prominently in the influential works of Raymond Williams and E. P. Thompson, for whom in different ways it denoted a pristine, unmediated reality to which imagination or consciousness responded.³¹

Causley's reality is mediated by his grounding it in actual physical and emotional circumstances. Middleton also concluded that the category of experience, once intended by Williams and Thompson to establish a kind of cognitive identity between writer and

²⁸Eagleton, *Marxism and Literary Criticism*, p. 29.

²⁹ Caudwell, *Illusion and Reality*, p. 319.

³⁰ See Terry Eagleton, 'Criticism and Politics: The Work of Raymond Williams', 3-23.

³¹ Stuart Middleton, 'The Concept of Experience and the Making of the English Working-class, 1924-1963', *Modern Intellectual History*, 13: 1 (2016), 17-208 (p. 179).

reader had potentially quite the opposite effect. Art which is unsuccessful in establishing this sense of cognitive identity serves instead to diminish understanding of the actuality of experience among contemporary and historical audiences alike.³² It is 'cognitive identity' in the sense of authenticity, speaking to and from shared, lived experience which Causley succeeded in establishing. This is the most compelling feature of the poetry in the three publications.

Causley's poetry leaves open the opportunity for the reader to make a critical judgement on the social and economic structures which place his characters in the situations he describes but he is not going to make that judgement himself. Likewise, he does not object to the material necessity which locates his characters within their social relations. Empson connected this kind of neutrality with the static nature of pastoral which is 'permanent and not dependent on a system of class exploitation'. For Causley's characters the desire to 'break their way out of the proletariat into the intelligentsia' is not a priority.³³

Empson argued in *Some Versions of Pastoral* that '[to] produce pure proletarian art the artist must be at one with the worker; this is impossible, not for political reasons, but because the artist never is at one with any public.'³⁴ Commenting on Empson, Benjamin Kohlmann commented that 'the position of honesty-as-independence always runs the risk of being drawn back into its dialectical opposite, honesty-as-conformity.'³⁵ The poet John Cornfield had observed that 'Bourgeois "impartiality"', was an illusion, sides had to

³² Ibid., p. 208.

³³ Empson, *Some Versions of Pastoral*, pp. 6,7.

³⁴ Ibid., p. 15.

³⁵ Benjamin Kohlmann, 'An Honest Decade: William Empson and the Ambiguities of Writing in the 1930s', *ELH*, 18: 1 (2013), 221-249 (p. 244) < <https://muse.jhu.edu/article/502328> > [accessed 10 December 2018].

be taken and there was 'no middle position between revolution and reaction, [...] not to take sides was to support the *status quo*.'³⁶ Causley's poetry celebrated the life he saw around him, even if that life was 'conformist' to the common sense which Williams had described as a weapon of hegemony. His skill was to identify and challenge a contemporary critical hegemony dominated by exterior observations and objectification of the working-class by an academic and literary world originating from and approved by bourgeois sensibility.

Causley achieved this by employing the agency of working-class scenarios to change perceptions of what is of literary value. He remarked to Malcom Williams in an interview that a writer 'must be involved with life. I'm certain being mixed up with the business of living in a small town like Launceston helps my writing.'³⁷ This sense of being 'for' is in the identification of such social practices and experiences as valid expressions of literary production, as Empson said, 'Good proletarian art is usually covert pastoral.'³⁸ It is pastoral in the sense of being lived rather than reported experience, it is 'proletarian' in the celebration and affirmation of the cultural significance of that experience, but is 'covert' in that it does not extend to a plea for change. In terms of Empson's definitions, the poems 'Ten Types of Hospital Visitor' and 'Ward 14' conform to all three descriptions, the 'pastoral', the 'proletarian' and the 'covert'.

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³⁶ John Cornford, 'Left?', *Cambridge Left*, 2: (Winter 1933-34), 26.

³⁷ Malcolm Williams, *Writers in Cornwall* (Redruth: Tor Mark, 2010), p. 47.

³⁸ Empson, *Some Versions of Pastoral*, pp. 4, 6.

As it charts the re-collection of his memories, Causley's autobiographical poetry witnesses to aspects of his working-class experience which point to the ideological framework within which that class operated. Both Eagleton and Williams challenged the expectation that 'art' is firmly fixed outside everyday experience and bears no relation to the social and economic determinants at the root of that experience. Causley's autobiographical narratives of everyday occurrences communicate the challenge of establishing the relationship between art and experience implicitly through the lens of social and economic circumstances and as an individual in the midst of them. A 2003 obituary of Causley in the *Telegraph* remarks:

The school where Causley taught all his life was a primary school, and after his mother had a stroke, he chose to nurse her at home for six years until her death. It is probably lucky that he was in no position to pursue a middle-class career after the war.³⁹

The *Telegraph's* hints that it was advantageous for the poetry which Causley wrote that he stayed outside the 'middle-class'. Teaching in a primary school was obviously not a 'middle-class career' for the *Telegraph's* readers, a prep school probably would have been. This condescending observation reveals the class system to have been just as prevalent in 2003 as in Causley's early twentieth century childhood. Causley's

³⁹ <<https://www.telegraph.co.uk/news/obituaries/1445994/Charles-Causley.html>> [accessed 20 April 2017].

circumstances limited his life chances in a variety of ways, and not just in the expectation that for economic reasons he would leave school and take a 'respectable' and 'appropriate' job as a clerk in a builder's yard. The obligation to care for elderly members of the family, as Causley did for his mother, was another aspect of the cultural expectations of his working-class origins.⁴⁰

The assumption that becoming a poet is a strange and possibly suspect outcome amongst the working-class is depicted in 'Bridie Wiles' (p. 351). Here Causley confronts the question of the origins of literary consciousness and the boundaries which a working-class poet transgresses in giving a poetic voice to experience. 'Bridie Wiles' is a rare example of an autobiographical poem in which the adult Causley is both present as poet and absent as a conscious participant. At the outset, he is not able to articulate any conscious thoughts as he is in his pram. The two characters first encountered are a neighbour, Bridie Wiles, and Causley's cousin Gwennie, aged nine. The reality of the physical setting which locates these characters is the space between industrial development and the decaying smells of the tanyard. There is nothing natural about the landscape apart from the river which Bridie intends to use to dispose of the child. The timing of the Armistice anniversary connects this to the remembrance of innocent death in World War One.

REDACTED: See 'Bridie Wiles', *Collected Poems*, p. 351, v. 1.

⁴⁰ Empson, *Some Versions of Pastoral*, pp. 6, 7.

Bridie has a reputation in this 'knowable community' '[a]s our local madwoman / Of Chaillot'. Being acknowledged as eccentric, Bridie's motives in the first place do not have to be explained. They are not presumed to be logical and therefore sane. The conceptual world of her mind lives physically in the totally uninspiring environment of Gas Court Lane. She wishes to end Causley's life before he has shown any signs of creativity. Cousin Gwennie, whose lack of height does not prevent her from threatening Bridie, is a combination of bodily action and logical thought. She is not concerned with anything other than practical possibilities.

REDACTED: See 'Bridie Wiles', *Collected Poems*, p. 351, v. 2.

Bridie can sometimes be quite sensible. She eventually replaces the baby in the pram but the wrong way around, a move consistent with her unconventional mind and his future. The poem then moves decades on to Causley and Gwennie meeting at '[...] Uncle Heber's Co-op funeral.' The expectation is that Causley will be at the family funeral. He grounds the situation in a particular working-class context by specifying the undertakers as the Co-op. An adult Gwen, grown up and no longer known to the family as Gwennie, explains that in the course of the event described in the poem Causley as a baby was dropped on the head. This is connected in Gwen's mind with his vocation as a poet.

REDACTED: See 'Bridie Wiles', *Collected Poems*, p. 351, v. 5.

'Bridie Wiles' sets the physical scene and event for everyday lived experience but uses this to ask the pertinent question of why Causley, who is still 'one of our lot', is the only one writing poetry, something so remote from Gwen's experience that she struggles to describe it and falls back on 'doing what you do.' The reason for his poetic consciousness is beyond Gwen's comprehension. She cannot understand the need to articulate experience in this way. It is not common sense. The poem has recognisable referents in the implications of the physical environment, the conceptual world of the characters and the awareness of the poet's search for the origins of his imaginative process. The departure from regular metre and rhyme and the conversational tone add to the carefully constructed informality to suggest everyday conversation in the narrative through short sentences and enjambments.

Causley used the poem as a vehicle to articulate the dilemma of being in, and yet having gone beyond, a working-class consciousness. It delineates physical, social and personal 'structures of feeling': actual people, actual places, actual occasions, actual thoughts, yet with a final question and Causley's skilful answer as he attempts to deflect an explanation from himself and asks Gwen to elaborate. She wisely understands that his strange pre-occupation with the life of the imagination might only be able to be understood by the sometimes sensible local madwoman. The irony is that Causley has transgressed the boundaries of his class but he might owe it all to Bridie and Gwen who remain in it.

REDACTED: See 'Bridie Wiles', *Collected Poems*, p. 351, v. 6.

Throughout most of his published life, Causley was in the fluid position of remaining inside the working-class community of his roots at home, slightly elevated to the status of a primary school teacher by day, in his own poetic consciousness as he wrote in the evenings and holidays and also in the realm of publishing and making contacts further afield. His poetry was the outcome of these tensions, an attempt to be heard and find some stability in this sense of a flux of identities, exacerbated by the chronological accident which saw him so profoundly influenced by two world wars.

'Bridie Wiles' records the social reality of Causley's working-class family without critiquing the power structures which create that social reality. The poem 'Family Feeling' (p. 404), expresses the tension of living in two worlds and charts the ultimately unsuccessful attempt of Causley's Uncle Alf to escape altogether. Uncle Alf both is and isn't living in present reality and for this ambiguity Causley returned to a regular abcb rhyming pattern but with irregular metre. He uses a combination of stylised form but with informal speech. The at once comic yet sad, contrived situation accentuates the vulnerability at the heart of the life of Uncle Alf who wants to be other than he is. Uncle Alf tries to break the mould he has been placed in but his life is a strange mixture of mystery, fancy and fake. No-one knows what Uncle Alf has been doing in the three years after World War One when he was assumed dead. He turned up three years later in Southampton with no explanation apart from a postcard reading 'Coming home Tuesday. Alf'. Returning home, he dressed up in the local Carnival in Launceston as exotic eastern characters such as the Son of a Sheik, perhaps a clue that the three lost years were spent in the Middle East. Despite being absent for the theologically significant number of three years, Uncle Alf's resurrection is

not a success. He is riding on the milkman's donkey and the child Causley recognises him in this impersonation.

REDACTED: See 'Family Feeling', *Collected Poems*, p. 404, v. 5.

Even as a child Causley sees through this, as an adult writing the poem many years later he realises that 'Family Feeling' involves unfulfilled aspirations and possible subterfuge. Causley was 'nosey' about working-class consciousness all his life. Articulating this consciousness as a legitimate concern of poetry without compromising its authenticity is not a difficulty for him. Uncle Alf tried to escape and ultimately only got as far as the local carnival! Trying to transgress the boundaries and expectations which come with your social and economic background is a puzzle to Gwennie and an illusion for Uncle Alf. The articulation of these dilemmas and difficulties rooted in working-class consciousness was one of Causley's achievements in the context of what Eagleton describes as Lukacs's 'deep sense of realism'.⁴¹ 'Bridie Wiles' and 'Uncle Alf' give a voice to the 'material stuff' of lives inherent in Williams's concept of 'structures of feeling'.

Although set in the past, these poems speak to the present in posing questions of the ownership of cultural production and the desire to go beyond what is seemingly determined by social and economic forces. Williams recognised the role of the aesthetic in giving voice to 'structures of feeling' which brought another dimension to these forces. The awareness and communication of the dilemmas of working-class aspiration and

⁴¹ Eagleton, 'Pork Chops and Pineapples', [accessed 20 March 2020].

mobility, witness to a sense of the reality of life for many people. This awareness is, to use Williams's terms, 'alternative', to a dominant media culture increasingly wishing to use 'reality' to make money out of or distort working-class experience. It is not necessarily politically 'oppositional' to social and economic structures, it 'can be accommodated' within that hegemony.⁴² In Causley, the reason for this accommodation lies partly in its often courteous and formal tone and what Chris McCully observed as Causley meeting the expectations of what was considered the normative 'idea of poetry'. Causley felt no compulsion to align himself with what Eagleton described as 'various Modernists and avant-garde Marxists of the early twentieth century' who felt that existing modes of representation were complicit with 'the dominant political power'.⁴³

In his review of *Secret Destinations*, McCully assessed Causley as directly in a received tradition of what he defines as an 'idea of poetry'. He explains Causley's popularity in the context of an ideologically received idea of what poetry is and ought to be:

Causley is a popular poet because an Idea of Poetry exists; he writes what many people think of as poetry. And what is this artefact? It is a thing quite different from what many contemporary critics would have us believe; its idea is even cruder and more haphazard than theirs. It rests on the assertion (which on the face of it looks ridiculously naïve) that poetry is an idea of 'word pictures', that its energies are somehow correspondent to the localized energies of a controlling vision.⁴⁴

⁴² Williams, 'Base and Superstructure', p. 10.

⁴³ Eagleton, 'Pork Chops and Pineapples', [accessed 20 March 2020].

⁴⁴ Chris McCully, 'The Idea of Poetry', *PN Review*, 49: 12 5 (1986), 58-59 (p. 58).

McCully argued that there is a normative definition of poetry remote from the world of the critics, to which Causley adheres. His review of *Secret Destinations* is primarily focused on syntax and the use of metrical forms which he considers give Causley's work a 'prose energy'.⁴⁵ His conclusion is that Causley's verse has the 'modest aim' of description, not explanation and discourse, but significantly he ends with the caveat that 'on the other hand, its tact, its unwillingness "To cast a meaning", as Causley puts it, is peculiarly expressive.'⁴⁶ McCully's discussion of Causley's technique ends with an interpretation which, despite foregrounding 'the localised energies' of Causley's 'controlling vision' as a variety of 'I' voices within a predetermined definition of poetry, does highlight as a positive his reticence to provide closures of meanings in his poems.

McCully's emphasis on the descriptive ignores Causley's effectiveness in articulating the complexities of his imaginative reconstruction of both characters and place. He fails to take account of the balance between skilful and effective description and Causley's search for meaning in his experiences within these pictures, seen, for example, in many of the travel poems in both *Secret Destinations* and *A Field of Vision*. The openness of interpretation redeems the poems from being mere catalogues of the apparent and allows for a hermeneutic which includes cultural analysis. At the beginning of *Secret Destinations* Causley quotes Martin Buber's statement that travellers are often unaware of their destination. This mystery can be seen in 'Gelibolu' (p. 353).

⁴⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 59.

⁴⁶ *Ibid.*

'Gelibolu' illustrates Causley's skill in 'word pictures' and a rhyming scheme which paint a present scene but have layers of implication. The title 'Gelibolu' sets the tone of a contemporary tourist destination. The rhyming scheme creates a sense of order and security at odds with the chaotic events at the location in World War One. In fact it is Gallipoli. It appears to be an attractive destination, but even in this first verse there are hints of the fragility of this supposition.

REDACTED: See 'Gelibolu', *Collected Poems*, p. 353, v. 1.

It would only take a syllable to break the glass of the painted image. Causley supplies more than one syllable. In the second and final verse, the sunset is black, the air is savaged, the ground is poisoned and finally the dark and destructive legacy of Gallipoli is revealed.

REDACTED: See 'Gelibolu', *Collected Poems*, p. 353, v. 2.

In line with McCully's comment of Causley's 'peculiarly expressive' unwillingness to 'cast a meaning', the potential interpretations and implications of the dead being 'unstilled' and the open wound of the night are not articulated. Past events are not over but have implications for the future. McCully's 'idea of poetry' partly explains Causley's popular reputation through the second half of the twentieth century. It's accommodation rather than opposition to the dominant culture reflects the residue of conformity still conferred within the culture on the characteristics of the McCully's 'idea of poetry'.

Residual and Emergent Pastoral

In Williams's analysis of culture as a dynamic process there are forces which look back and forces which push forward. These are the residual and the emergent. Both of these can be identified within the characteristics described at various times in literary criticism as 'pastoral'. Terry Gifford analysed 'pastoral' at the end of the twentieth century. Gifford argued that it is a contested term with a variety of implications, two of which focus on the rural and the idealistic, the former accompanied by a sense of complacency as textual evidence hides economic reality.⁴⁷ The limitations of pastoral as an active agency in contemporary literature was a theme taken up by Sales, one of Williams's students. Sales, in his book, *English Literature in Politics 1780-1830: Pastoral and Politics* insisted that any literary depiction of the rural inevitably makes political statements.⁴⁸ Hence he condemns pastoral as inadequate when it offers 'a propagandist reconstruction of history' which 'cooks the economic books' to mask inequality, and attempts to place all responsibility for change as external to, not arising from, prevailing economic imperatives. Sales predicated five 'R's as a critique of pastoral sentiment in literature: refuge, reflection, rescue, requiem and reconstruction.⁴⁹ Gifford has defined each term and its connection with the whole concept:

⁴⁷ Terry Gifford, 'Pastoral, Anti-Pastoral and Post-Pastoral', in *The Cambridge Companion to Literature and the Environment*, ed. by Louise Westling (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2013), pp. 17-30 (pp. 1, 4).

⁴⁸ See Sales, *English Literature in History*.

⁴⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 17.

‘Refuge’ refers to the element of pastoral escape and ‘reflection’ to the backward-looking tendency for pastoral to seek settled values in the past that require a ‘rescue’ in a nostalgic ‘requiem’ that is also a politically conservative ‘reconstruction’ of history.⁵⁰

The tenacity of Causley’s attachment to his small, rural community might well indicate the dangers of a nostalgic sentimentality, characterised detrimentally as ‘pastoral’ within all of the five categories above. He ‘escaped’ back to Cornwall, ‘reflected’ on past events, ‘rescued’ his emotional stability from the ravages of two world wars through this looking back and provided a ‘requiem’ for a fast vanishing culture. His consistency in employing all these perspectives in his present aligns with Williams’s category of the role of residual forces in the production of culture. Williams believed that within the residual were lingering influences of meaning and value which continued to have a voice in the dominant culture. These were predominantly rural in context. In Causley’s case they spoke of settled communities with a common religious affiliation within an organic society. The attraction of the simplicity of this vision still appealed to many in the fast changing, complex and consumer driven post-war culture.

The sonnet ‘Samuel Palmer’s *Coming from Evening Church*’ (p. 380), provides an example of a residual force in Causley’s poetry. It is based on the 1830 painting by that artist. Here Causley illustrates that, where he considers the subject matter requires a certain nostalgic kind of imaginative reality, he can also write in a romantic aesthetic in sonnet form, projecting this pastoral aesthetic as an idealised tranquillity. In a poem

⁵⁰ Gifford, ‘Pastoral, Anti-Pastoral and Post-Pastoral’, p. 21.

based on a work of art rather than lived experience, Causley makes no attempt to destroy the artist's creation of this pastoral scene as a vision of 'a kind of rural paradise, an ideal landscape, touched by a divine presence.'⁵¹ An 1892 commentary on Palmer by A. H. Palmer remarks that Samuel was greatly inspired by Blake's engravings. Blake's engravings, the painter considered:

are visions of little dells, and nooks, and corners of Paradise; models of the exquisitist pitch of intense poetry [...] There is in all such a mystic and dreamy glimmer as penetrates and kindles the inmost soul.⁵²

Causley's transfer of the visual expression of the artwork to language utilises the sonnet form to articulate this 'intense poetry'. He records how 'The heaven-reflecting, usual moon / Scarred by thin branches, flows between / The simple sky'. The figures are 'those who, locked within a dream, / Make between church and cot their way'. The intensity is expressed in the enclosed feeling of the world created by the painting and the poem. The ideal world is absolutely self-contained in a harmonious mixture of nature, religion and domesticity. The ending includes the image of the sea as extinction which is so prevalent in Causley but, in keeping with the tone of the poem, lacks the fear and

⁵¹ Frances Fowle, *Samuel Palmer : Coming From Evening Church 1830* (2000) < <https://www.tate.org.uk/art/artworks/palmer-coming-from-evening-church-n03697>> [accessed 2 May 2017].

⁵² Alfred Herbert Palmer, *The Life and Letters of Samuel Palmer, Painter and Etcher* (London: Seeley, 1892), pp. 15-16.

harshness which often accompanies this image, merely describing its properties as 'unknown'.

REDACTED: See 'Samuel Palmer's *Coming from Evening Church*', *Collected Poems*, p. 380, l. 11-14.

The residual works in 'Samuel Palmer' to project and look back with nostalgia at a vanished world whilst promoting the concept of an aesthetic beyond commodification. In doing so it illustrates resistance to the complicity of hegemony with the concept of human flourishing as solely related to economic prosperity. Williams remarks in the case of Wordsworth's lines for the painter Haydon, that the common pursuit of 'imaginative truth' is evoked to run counter to the idea of art as a commodity.⁵³ Causley's romantic world is valuing a naïve and innocent consciousness which is immune to commercial and oppressive economic and social structures. A negative critical reading of this example of Causley's romanticism is open to the argument that any dream-like articulation of ideal possibilities is itself a part of bourgeois heritage, distracting energies which should be directed away from this utopian dreaming to social action.⁵⁴ In this case, Causley succumbs to this distraction. Both 'Samuel Palmer's *Coming from Evening Church*' and 'Helpston' (p. 247), illustrate Causley's profound sympathy with traditional romantic expression yet at the end of the poem on a visit to John Clare's grave, he introduces images which mix the pastoral and the commonplace. He dilutes the pastoral tone. He

⁵³ Williams, *Culture and Society*, p. 40.

⁵⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 56.

reveals that the visit to Clare's grave ended in the pub at Peterborough, 'Later, drinking whisky in the Bull at Peterborough,'. Causley's imagination is tempered with this mundane reality and his use of pastoral and romantic conventions include this mixture.

Neither the Clare poem nor the reflection on Samuel Palmer's painting are concerned to comment on any class based or societal issues regarding the production, recognition and distribution of Clare's poetry or Palmer's art. However, Causley's pastoral poetry as a manifestation of life in a small, rural town, is not entirely immune from emergent influences. By the time he published *A Field of Vision* in 1988 he had had time to reflect on, and trace the roots of, an outlook in members of his working-class family beginning to be influenced by the forces of commodification. Causley had no idealistic pretensions as to the emerging dominance of what Eagleton refers to as 'sterile ideologies'.⁵⁵ New 'structures of feeling' were emerging to replace the self-help and proud collectivism of his youth. He perceived that class structure and stratification of social and economic opportunity were rigidly embedded in the system. They had become embedded in the psyche of those who might be most expected to struggle for change because their families have suffered or are suffering the most. These are victims of the emergent sensibility of apathy, dependence and state entitlement, superseding the values which Causley had inherited from his childhood.

In the poem, 'Dick Lander' (p. 344), a local man returns to Launceston shell shocked after World War One. The residual community life is fragmenting. The enjambments reinforce the realism of re-collected thoughts spilling out in often fragmented sentences. Vestiges of conversation in the common language and thought processes of the

⁵⁵ Eagleton, *Marxism and Literary Criticism*, p. 58.

community emerge in the text, 'had every girl after him', 'spoiled quite out of recognition', 'If he's mazed as a brush'. Causley's auntie and uncle are not stirred to question the causes of Dick's ruined life, merely to articulate his previous prospects.

REDACTED: See 'Dick Lander', *Collected Poems*, p. 344, v. 5,6,7.

Dick's fate illustrates vividly through the devastation of a particular person's life, the wreckage of the pre 1914 elements of a knowable community, the cricket, the humour, and the relationships which were common knowledge in a close knit community, the dignity, independence and pride of the family who ran a small business. The space between 'Was spoiled quite out' and 'Of recognition' emphasises the break in continuity. But there is no strong sense of poetic outrage about what has been destroyed or feeling that some new order needs to emerge from this catastrophe. The fate of the shell-shocked Dick Lander is articulated through the depiction of his ruined life which parallels the enormity of the effects of World War One on a previously stable and settled culture. Within this culture there had been a sense of communal relationships and mutual dependence. This sense is being eroded as new meanings and values emerge. In a previous generation, Causley's grandmother and mother had no urge to challenge the system which left them destitute after industrial negligence in the quarry affected one and World War One irrevocably changed the life of the other. But, unlike his auntie and uncle, his grandmother and mother did display the dignity of self-reliance which led them to abhor the suggestion of poor relief. After World War One, Causley's 'grinning' uncle accepts that there is no need to worry if 'the money's coming in' from the state.

The new meanings and values here are retrogressive in stimulating change, linking acceptance not with dignity but with complacency. Causley's 'grinning' uncle is neither outraged by Dick's fate and the manipulations of the political hegemony which caused it, sympathetic to Dick as an individual, or advocating that the family and community have any contribution to make to Dick's welfare. The reality of the powerful forces which have caused Dick's condition and the complacency which is corrupting the sense of dignity and purpose of working-class life persists through the poem. The poet/narrator recognises and describes it, even if his characters cannot, Dick through his psychological injuries and auntie and uncle through their acknowledgement yet unquestioning acceptance of the situation.

Eagleton identified the danger of this acquiescence as a response to the domination of the capitalist system. He argued that Williams's preoccupation with relating experience to the present would be done at the expense of prioritising the action needed for change and was a naïve response to the prevailing hegemony:

The creation of new values which is in fact only enabled by revolutionary rupture was read back by him (Williams) as a description of the present. Indeed it was not only that men and women *can* create such meanings now: they are doing so all the time, simply by living. This generous reverence for human capacities, turned to fine polemical effect against

conservative cynic and liberal sceptic, entailed a drastic misconception of the structures of advanced capitalist formations.⁵⁶

In 'Dick Lander' auntie and uncle are already exhibiting signs of compliance with what Eagleton described as 'the structures of advanced capitalist formations'. As long as enough money is coming in from the anonymous source of the state, they will be passive in the face of the destruction of the dignity and values of self-help and collective concern which were previously so fundamental to the everyday lives of working-people in their community. The complacency of auntie and uncle in 'Dick Lander' that the wreckage of human lives can be resolved by the handout of 'the money coming in', bears witness to manipulation by established social and economic structures. The proud independence of a member of the 'knowable community' is reduced to a dependence which makes a struggle for change even more unlikely. Eagleton's criticism of Williams's misconception that the dignity and value of 'reverence for human capacities' would be honoured without 'revolutionary rupture' seems to be vindicated.

In *Marxism and Literary Criticism* Eagleton argued that Williams held a 'mechanistic view of art as a passive reflex of the economic base' and 'a Romantic belief in art as projecting an ideal world.'⁵⁷ On the first count, Causley's poetry in 'Dick Lander' might appear to concur with this and to be a 'passive reflex' of his local community. In contrast, it can be argued that Causley's consciousness of himself and his characters makes Williams's point that that the lived meanings and values which construct social and economic repression,

⁵⁶ Eagleton, 'Criticism and Politics: The Work of Raymond Williams', p. 12.

⁵⁷ Eagleton, *Marxism and Literary Criticism*, p. 54.

may not be 'ideal' but are less rigid than formal world views or ideologies since they are the material stuff of actual lives. Causley's poetry brought the diversity of this 'material stuff' into literary existence. He illustrated that the material determinants of lived experience and social relationships exist alongside the economic. In portraying this, art is adding a perspective to the reality of economic oppression. In his *Collected Poems 1951-1975*, *Secret Destinations* and *A Field of Vision*, Causley provided examples of poetry set in the traditionally rural context of the pastoral yet with a mode of representation which originated in an immersion in his culture and an identity formed within it, beyond mere observation.

'A Thrilling Departure': The End of the Eighties

The poetic initiatives of the eighties which centred on sound and performance rather than text did align with Causley's enthusiasm for the oral roots of the 'traditional popular' and the ballad. For Causley, what separated him from these trends in contemporary poetics was not the emphasis on the performance of the spoken verse, although he was nervous of his own ability in this context. He admitted to Simon Parker, 'I don't enjoy giving readings, although I'm told I look like I'm enjoying it.'⁵⁸ The difference was in his overwhelming sense of the influence of the past in his lived experience. This was allied to a temperamental sense of privacy and the value of order and familiarity in both vocabulary and syntax.

⁵⁸ Parker, *A Certain Man*, p. 31.

Both residual and emergent forces of culture and free and blank verse in Causley's later poetry exemplify a vitality which was not subjugated by the dominant poetic culture in the seventies and eighties. This vitality is confirmed in the sales of his collections. Martin Booth, quoted on the jacket of *Secret Destinations*, described the collection as 'A thrilling departure [...] Causley has now stepped into the arena of truly major poets [...]'⁵⁹ It was proof of Causley's skill in the use of a variety of poetic form which prompted Booth's comment, not a departure from reflection on either past life or new travels, both of which confirmed Causley's roots in Launceston and the preoccupation with the loss of innocence which stayed with him wherever he travelled.

Causley's love of the familiar is apparent in this article for *The Sunday Times* written in October 1975 on the occasion of the London Brass Band Championships. He recalled his childhood listening to the Town Band in Launceston:

As a child in this grey fortress I longed for colour and drama: some kind of theatrical treat for the senses [...] one such was the Town Band, referred to as the Municipal Band, pronounced mooney-sipple, before the BBC helped us out with the pronunciation of hard words we'd seen in print but never heard spoken [...] a small community bent on realising itself artistically, and of making its dream a powerful and meaningful reality.⁶⁰

⁵⁹ Martin Booth in Causley, *Secret Destinations*.

⁶⁰ Charles Causley, 'Bands of Hope and Glory', *The Sunday Times*, 12 October 1975, p. 35.

The ironic reference to the role of the BBC 'correcting' local pronunciation indicates Causley's acknowledgement that the oral tradition which had inspired him to love poetry as a child was being gradually standardised by the forces of the establishment at the centre. Yet the possibility of the small community having a dream of the value of its own cultural production and making that into a reality were the stuff of Causley's life's work despite the social and economic structures which worked against the dignity of that dream. He employed poetic conventions of the pastoral and his work exhibits cultural theories of residual and emergent forces in depicting an authenticity in pursuit of this end.

'Uncle Alf' is an unashamed and roguish fake, pretending his life is situated elsewhere. Causley made no such pretence. He approached his seventies. His future publications were a revised *Collected* in 1991 and a complete *Collected* in 2000, three years before his death. The latter formed a fitting epitaph to a life which was to end, as it had begun, in Launceston, surrounded by the graves of the small community whose life was lived out in 'this grey fortress'.

Chapter Six:

Missing the Point or Doing it Right?: Causley and Children's Poetry

This chapter will make two claims in respect of Causley's work in the context of poetry for children. Firstly, that his own work and his support for children as poets expresses his belief and practice that the distinction between poetry for adult readers and child readers is often a false dichotomy. Causley believed that children have the potential to engage intellectually and emotionally in poetry including but beyond a menu of humour and fantasy. In much of his work he dismissed the boundaries of imagination and experience assumed to exist between adult and child consciousness, validating the study of what is often assumed to be 'childish' as a serious component of poetics. The second claim of this chapter is that Causley's advocacy of poetry for and by children implies the inclusion of such poetry as a literary expression of what constitutes a 'common culture'. Causley's work affirmed the value of childhood experience in the literary expression of cultures as it did of the working-class life which surrounded him in his life's work as a primary school teacher.

Causley's poetry for children contributes to the problematic question of what *is* 'children's literature'. The question itself presupposes a static state of childhood, a specific audience to which an adult author addresses his or her writings. It is literature directed at children with adult control of material and message. This raises issues of the wide range of ages and developmental stages of the generic term 'children's' but also the crucial question as to whether childhood itself is so fluid a conception as to be invalid as

a category. Peter Hunt, introducing a compilation of citations for winners of the Signal Poetry Award, asked who is to define in each individual case, where 'childhood' ends and 'maturity' begins.¹ As Hunt is hinting, states of chronological growth can be fixed by numerical boundaries but states of consciousness cannot. A wide variety of genres, ballad, lyric, and nonsensical verse widen further the scope of such a classification. Causley confronted the paradox of children's literature: mediation by the adult author of the material delivered to the child reader. His children's collections beginning with *Figgie Hobbin* in 1970 can be interrogated on the grounds of ownership, identity and function, fundamental to the construct of childhood and the implied reader. Whose childhood and what reader? And for what purpose?

Causley is chronologically located in what is termed the second 'Golden Age', following on from the first 'Golden Age' of the late nineteenth century through the period immediately preceding and during World War One.² The descriptions of children's literature in 'Golden Ages' is itself suspect. 'Golden' for the adults who write it and sell it, or the children who read it? Contrived by the former, the epithet 'Golden' sounds suspiciously likely to carry adult ideological baggage. Jacqueline Rose, writing of children's fiction in the 1980's, had no hesitation in concluding in generic terms that children's literature is an adult fantasy of how adults wish childhood to be and is designed to reinforce the compliance of the child to a status quo.³ This includes ideological implications of authority and cultural formation within social and political

¹ Peter Hunt, 'Introduction', *Poetry for Children: The Signal Award 1972-2001*, ed. by Nancy Chambers (Stroud: The Thimble Press, 2009), pp. 11-23 (p. 21).

² See Fiona McCulloch, *Children's Literature in Context* (London: Continuum, 2011).

³ Jacqueline Rose, *The Case of Peter Pan or The Impossibility of Children's Fiction* (London: Macmillan, 1984), quoted in *Children's Literature* by Matthew Grenby (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2009), p. 51.

values. It is potentially an agency of control reinforcing adult literary, and by implication cultural hegemony.

There were particular normative assumptions of childhood which were embedded in Causley's own childhood through exposure to poetry in church and school. In church he was very familiar, through frequent repetition, of the potential of regular rhyme and metre in hymns to deliver doctrinal and moral strictures. He remarked of his own primary schooldays in the National School in the Twenties that his teacher, obviously feeling that poetry was an obligatory element in the curriculum, but with no idea precisely why, 'had a faint-hearted attempt to interest us in poetry.'⁴ It was based on Christopher Robin and didn't take for any of the pupils. 'Christopher', said Causley, 'didn't go down terribly well with me or with anybody else. He might as well have come from outer space.'⁵

Whilst Causley was enduring A. A. Milne at school, in the history of literary criticism the dichotomy of adult ownership of children's literature was already a contentious issue. It was discussed by one of the most popular authors of children's stories as early as the 1930's. Writing in *Junior Bookshelf* in 1937, Arthur Ransome was in no doubt that:

To write a book *for* children seems to me a sure way of writing what is called a 'juvenile', a horrid, artificial thing, a patronizing thing, a thing that betrays in every line that author and intended victims are millions of miles apart [...]⁶

⁴ Parker, *A Certain Man*, p. 15.

⁵ Ibid. p. 16.

⁶ Huddersfield, University of Huddersfield, Junior Bookshelf Collection, GB 1103 JBS/1 Letter, Arthur Ransome to the Editor, *Junior Bookshelf*, 1:4 (1937), 3-5 (p. 3).

As a poet in adult life, Causley was aware of this distance, although he preferred to describe it as 'secrecy', quoting the Czech writer Karl Capek. 'The young are a secret society and the old have forgotten that they once belonged to it.'⁷ However, talking to Brian Merrick in an interview for the National Association of the Teachers of English in 1989, Causley claimed that distance between adult and child was not inevitably a polarised position for him. Asked whether he saw himself as children's poet separately from an adult poet, he replied:

Oh I don't see these separately at all. What happened was that I didn't write a book of children's poems, or so-called children's poems, until 1970: until *Figgie Hobbin* [...] I noticed that a lot of the poems up to that point were used in children's anthologies — as well as in adult anthologies [...] I've always been very much influenced by the idea that the only difference between an adult poem and a children's poem is the *range* of the audience. I mean a children's poem is a poem that has to work for the adult and the child as well — at the same time — that's the only difference [...] What I'm really saying is that I try to look at the poems with an absolutely straight eye, and not write down to children [...] if I have an idea for a poem I write it and decide afterwards whether I should put it in

⁷ Exeter, University of Exeter, Special Collections, EUL MS 50a/LIT/5/9 Manuscript, Prose Pieces About Teaching, undated.

a book for children or a book for adults. I keep two absolutely distinct files. Sometimes, it's impossible to decide, so I put 'em in both [...]⁸

This last statement is borne out by the presence of poems from his adult collections in children collections and vice versa. The rationale behind this joint inclusion is explicitly addressed in an obituary, published on November 6th, 2003. The west country newspaper *The Western Morning News* quoted Causley as saying:

People who talk about 'children's poetry' are missing the point. The thing is that if you do it right and present it to children they are often the ones who get the essence of the thing, whereas many adults just don't get it.⁹

The 'it', the clue as to what Causley meant by 'missing the point' and 'doing it right' can be found in a remark he made to John Mole in an article titled 'Popular Poet with a Primal Insight'. Causley is quoted by Mole as claiming that there is no cut-off between the capacity of childhood and adulthood to live within the 'complex interplay of innocence and experience.'¹⁰ 'Missing the point' was to assume that children had no understanding or experience of the tension between the two. 'The essence of the thing' was the point at which adult or child grasped in a poem an identity with a human

⁸ Brian Merrick, *Talking with Charles Causley* (Exeter: National Association for the Teaching of English, Short Run Press, 1989), pp. 16,18.

⁹ Simon Parker, 'The Greatest Poet Laureate We Never Had', *The Western Morning News*, 6 November 2003, p. 19.

¹⁰ John Mole, 'Charles Causley: Popular Poet with a Primal Insight', *The Independent*, 6 November 2003, p. 66.

emotion, relationship or activity with which they could empathise and reflect on in a new way. Causley's own poetry marketed primarily for child readers was an attempt to do this, portraying human situations in contexts which reflected a very different everyday reality, current or historical, to that of the dominant hegemony of middle class norms and values.

A second definition of 'children's literature' avoids the issue of adult ownership by placing the emphasis on the agency of children as poets. Causley's primary school teaching convinced him that his working-class children should be given the opportunity to write and publish poetry reflecting their own imaginative creativity and the ability to verbalise it in speech and/or text. The potential of children to enter into emotional depth as writers and readers of poetry and the potential of poetry to celebrate the actualities of their lives brought Causley national recognition. His reputation originated with the publication of the narrative poems in *Figure of Eight* (1969) and the varied styles in *Figgie Hobbin* (1970). It continued until Macmillan produced a celebratory *Collected Poems for Children* in 2000 to mark his eighty third birthday.¹¹ Two of the collections won prestigious awards in the field of children's literature. *Early in the Morning* (1986) won the Signal Award for children's poetry and *Jack the Treacle Eater* (1987) was awarded the Kurt Maschler Award for the imaginative integration of poems and illustrations.¹² As Causley reached the end of his life, the 2000 *Collected Poems for Children* brought together all the poems marketed as for children over thirty years of publication.

¹¹ Charles Causley, *Figure of Eight* (London: Macmillan, 1969). *Figgie Hobbin* (London: Macmillan, 1970). *Collected Poems for Children* (London, Macmillan, 2000).

¹² Charles Causley, *Early in the Morning* (London: Macmillan, 1986), *Jack the Treacle Eater* (London: Macmillan, 1987).

The Adult Poet: The Primal Insight

The betrayal of innocence by experience was one of the major themes of Causley's adult collections following his wartime experience and its aftermath. He was himself on the continuum of this complex interplay between the two. He was able to form a subjective empathy and identification with the imaginative life of his child readers. Critical and literary theory has failed to investigate Causley's 'complex interplay', too often viewing his poetry for children as superficial and immature rather than a source of 'primal insight'. It is a poem only printed in an 'adult' collection which provides the clue to 'getting it right' and reveals the assumption at the heart of all Causley's publications for children. This was the conviction that taking a simple view of childhood innocence and experience is a delusion. The poem 'Conducting a Children's Choir' (p. 131), shows him foregrounding children as subjects, not readers, of his adult poetry. He speaks as the conductor, seemingly in control of his school choir.

REDACTED: See 'Conducting a Children's Choir', *Collected Poems*, p. 131, v. 1.

This first verse is replete with sinister references. The flowers are only masks, the snow, a symbol of death in Causley, is already anticipated, reinforced by the crow, also an image of the coming of death. The adults watching the choir are quite ignorant of these undertones, 'oblivious of each black, unbalanced wave.' For Causley, the conductor, the children's singing 'assails the sense with brilliant pain' and he feels 'Underneath my palm

a calm corruption' which wears 'an innocence articulate as rain.' The climax of his terror appears in the last verse.

REDACTED: See 'Conducting a Children's Choir', *Collected Poems*, p. 131, v. 4.

There is an irony here in a conductor who realises that he accompanies rather than controls the group. In addition to the complexity of imagery, placing this in a children's collection would reveal the superficiality of adult control in a child's world. When Causley as an adult wrote *about* children, he confined the poems to his collections for adults, although the sensibility expressed is a necessary consideration in evaluating his poetry *for* children. The adult voice speaks to the adult reader in order to articulate perceptions of the pain of human existence and human nature through childhood but in this case in image, metaphor and vocabulary which Causley considered to be inaccessible to children. But it also reveals a fate common to both. The tragedy of life is that both adults and children are subject to the finality of death, the children are vehicles of this fate just as much as adults. The adult audience in the concert takes refuge in the escapism and naivety of the innocent children making music. The poet who 'sees' the reality of mortality is afraid and cannot escape. The children, meanwhile, in their own world, are enigmatically unsmiling. Whether they themselves comprehend the enormity of mortality or not, and the poet makes no comment on this, pain and death are lurking in their lives.

'Conducting a Children's Choir' conveys a sense of the secrecy of childhood. The consciousness of children, Causley seems to suggest, is a mystery which adults mistakenly assume they can remember rightly. For Causley, children accompany adults in the human destiny of loss, as well as being capable of a primeval sense of cruelty. 'You walk among them at your peril', he remarked.¹³ He had no illusion that childhood consciousness was an uncorrupted, romantic vision of hope and possibilities. When he first introduced ballads into the classroom he realised that their appeal to his pupils was due to the children's understanding and lived experience of betrayal, loss and death which adults would prefer to think were not of concern to children.¹⁴ Causley's fear expressed in 'Conducting a Children's Choir' is an example of Mole's 'primal instincts'. The recognition of childhood as a place where dangerous human emotions lurk, evident in this poem about children, illustrates an objective quality of observation. It was this observation, alongside a subjective perception identifying with the memory of his own childhood and adult wartime experiences, that made it possible for Causley to write poetry in which adult and child recognise the 'primal insights' at the heart of their own lives.

Causley's remarks to the *Western Morning News* indicated that some poems can transgress boundaries without a distinction needing to be made between adult and child as readers of poetry. In the poems for both categories of readers or marketed for children, the theme of innocence and experience is dealt with in ways which do not depend solely on adult perception. This mediation, the 'doing it right' was presenting children with literature which enabled them to access links with their own experiences of

¹³ Hill, 'Joking Apart', p. 37.

¹⁴ Wilmer, 'Charles Causley in Conversation', p. 53.

innocence enjoyed, often through humour and fantasy, and of innocence betrayed. To emphasise this particular double-sided perspective was a choice made by the adult Causley which connected with his own post-war emotions. From the Romantic tradition he did take the concept of the child's clear sight into reality, but this reality needs testing and may be tainted. Neil Philip comments that Causley is a 'poet of loss', striving to see the world anew.¹⁵ The results are not nostalgic or sentimental. Childhood has no inevitably redemptive function for the poet, a trait which Pat Pinsent dates to the post-war world.¹⁶ This world, as also configured by Fiona McCulloch, is a world of modernity, corruption and danger in contrast to the conservative and pastoral.¹⁷ The description 'Second Golden Age' seems ever more fanciful in retrospect, an essentially middle-class perspective which ignored the poverty and injustice which blighted the imaginative and material lives of so many children. In both children's and adult collections Causley employed pastoral poetic conventions of lyric and ballad to articulate the reality of the human condition he and his pupils found themselves in, a world of modernity. He inhabited his children's verse with the profound impact made on him by his own childhood, the death of his father and the loss of friends in World War Two. But this also includes memories of childhood delight given by the opportunities of the imagination to escape from the present. The inner life and outward expression in his children's poetry is based on the foundations of both innocence and betrayal.

¹⁵ Neil Philip, ed., *The New Oxford Book of Children's Verse* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1998), p. xxxiv.

¹⁶ Pat Pinsent, 'The Post-War Child: Childhood in British Literature in the Wake of World War II', in *The Child in British Literature: Literary Constructions of Childhood, Medieval to Contemporary*, ed. by Adrienne E. Gavin (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2012), pp. 212-224 (p. 212).

¹⁷ McCulloch, *Children's Literature in Context*, p. 41.

Innocence Enjoyed in Causley's Construct of Childhood

One aspect of the power of the imagination is to express delight. Robert Nye described as at the heart of all Causley's poetry, quoting from the 'adult' poem 'A Ballad for Katherine of Aragon' (p. 2), the belief that 'poetic perception, is seeing things "with the eyes of a child of ten"'.¹⁸ In the forward to Arthur Bate Venning's *Book of Launceston* in 1976, Causley speaks with enthusiasm of the idea that Venning had, as a child, that Launceston Carnival was put on solely for his benefit.¹⁹ Alan Brownjohn comments, writing in *The Times Literary Supplement* in November 1987, that Causley is a poet who 'preserves and enriches a tradition in children's poetry which holds that the world is a place for innocent surprise and wonder.'²⁰ The insight into this world of 'innocent surprise and wonder' combines the inner and outer sight of the Romantic concept of childhood as a place of uncontaminated vision, often ridiculed by adult rationality and sophistication. Causley celebrated this vision in the poetry his pupils wrote and in his own poems.

'In the Willow Gardens' (*CPC*, p. 378) presents a vivid sense, not only of the merging of past into a present which exists out of time, but also the poet's inner vision merging with his outer world. Standing in the Willow Garden allotments in Launceston where Tom and Jack are working, and not far from the school, Causley looks up to the Norman Castle Keep.

¹⁸ Robert Nye, 'Bard of the British Ballad', *The Times*, 27 November 1997, p. 39.

¹⁹ Causley, 'Preface', in Venning, *The Book of Launceston*:, p. 9.

²⁰ Alan Brownjohn, 'Traditional Times', *The Times Literary Supplement*, 20 November 1987, p. 1287.

REDACTED: See 'In the Willow Gardens', *Collected Poems for Children*, p. 378, v. 3,5.

The actual physical environment blends into an imaginative perception here to the accompaniment of a metre which replicates the horses' hooves. Causley is not afraid to recreate a credibility which is childlike in a sense of wonder, but not childish. It is in the realm of fantasy but has an integrity blending a deep respect for place, history and the imagination which lends a maturity to this sense of wonder. Writing in *Children's Literature in Education*, Ted Hughes described imagination as a 'reconciliation of the presence of the outer world with the full presence of the inner world' and an 'all-inclusive system in a creative spirit.'²¹ Despite being questioned, the two adults, Tom and Jack, cannot see what the poet sees or hear what the poet hears and conclude that his grip on their understanding of reality is tenuous. As Gwennie suspected in 'Bridie Wiles', the bump on the head that the baby Causley received has somehow affected his mind in a way similar to Bridie, the local eccentric, who dropped him from his pram. "'Maze as a brush'" says Jack to Tom'. Jack and Tom may have originated and are living in identical social and class circumstances to Causley, but, as in 'Bridie Wiles' they are sceptical of Causley's imaginative world. There is a divergence between the poet and members of his community.

'In the Willow Gardens' depicts the adult Causley returning to a state of surprise and delight. Causley's poetry for children also shares this in expressing his own childhood and is an invitation to the child and adult reader to enter into an empathetic relationship with

²¹ Ted Hughes, 'Myth and Imagination', in *Writer, Critics and Children: Articles from Children's Literature in Education*, ed. by Geoff Fox, Graham Hammond, Terry Jones, Frederic Smith and Kenneth Sterk (New York: Agathon Press Inc, 1976), pp. 77-94 (p. 92).

the imaginative world which he recreates from this perspective. Both children currently and adults retrospectively can relate to 'I Saw Charlie Chaplin' (CPC, p. 8).

REDACTED: See 'I Saw Charlie Chaplin', *Collected Poems for Children*, p. 8, v. 1.

His father, as you would expect of an adult, tries to dispel this act of imagination with a rational explanation.

REDACTED: See 'I Saw Charlie Chaplin', *Collected Poems for Children*, p. 8, v. 5,6.

The child defies adult rationality and insists that what he saw was real.²² 'I Saw Charlie Chaplin' shows a delight in children's imagination which, for some brief moments, indicates the quality of innocence in childlike 'sight' before it is contaminated by the pragmatism and rationality of adulthood. Established adult perceptions join economic determinants in creating the divisions which lead to the concept of culture as other than working-class.

REDACTED: See 'I Saw Charlie Chaplin', *Collected Poems for Children*, p. 8, v. 5,6.

The poem foregrounds a situation of adult contradiction of a child's imaginative world familiar to any child, a warning that adulthood will effectively destroy this type of reality.

²² Philip, *The New Oxford Book of Children's Verse*, p. xxvi.

For Causley, education was the opportunity to prevent this repression from contaminating the artistic potential of his working-class pupils.

Over twenty years in a primary classroom exposed Causley to the irresponsibility and imaginative playfulness of children, qualities surfacing in clever silliness, rhyming and repetition in verse which he knew from experience would resonate with children's sense of enjoyment and which he enjoyed himself. 'You have to make sure you don't take yourself too seriously, which I hope I never have', he remarked to Parker.²³ This is a remark which Causley could afford to make in old age. He certainly felt differently when he struggled to get his poetry published at the beginning. But it does indicate a sense of humour which spilled out into his poems. The limericks, jingles, counting and word play poems, examples of what Andrew Lambirth, in the significantly titled article, 'Child Power Poetry', described as 'language let loose', are set in contexts which make no sense in the actual order of physical possibilities.²⁴ They reveal a contrasting concept of childhood to the fearful, unsmiling kingdom of the school choir and constitute a very effective strategy for engaging with children. Causley was acutely aware of the potential for the musical qualities of poetry to be a positive element in the children's education.²⁵ The manipulation of humour and diversity of meaning within this play is enjoyable and, as a teacher, he could see its value as an aid to develop communication skills.²⁶ He recognised that one of his principal problems was communication with his young pupils and he wanted to communicate the possibilities of, and his love for, poetry.

²³ Parker, *A Certain Man*, p. 31.

²⁴ Andrew Lambirth, 'Child Power Poetry', *The Primary English Magazine*, April 1998, 16-18 (p. 16).

²⁵ Neil Philip, 'Beyond Eden Rock: The Children's Poems of Charles Causley', in *Beyond the Granite Kingdom: Critical Essays on Charles Causley*, ed. by Michael Hanke (Trier: Wissenschaftlicher Verlag Trier, 2011), pp. 249-261 (p.250).

²⁶ See Virginia Bower, *Games, Ideas and Activities for Primary Poetry* (Harlow: Pearson, 2011), p. 66.

A strategy which he often employed in his children's verse is that of playing with words and sounds. In his work it appears deceptively easy to achieve. 'Out in the desert lies the sphinx/It never eats and it never drinx/Its body quite solid without any chinx'. Like many of Causley's word play and fantastical poems there is an enigma at the end as in, 'It sometimes smiles and it sometimes winx:/But nobody knows just what it thinx' ('Out in the Desert' *CPC*, p. 385). As well as word play Causley understands that children are likely to appreciate poems which avoid didacticism and fabricate larger than life characters and animals. This sense of enjoyment is not employed by his adult voice with any intent to instil behavioural norms. In his fantasy verse Causley does not employ the rather more vivid parodies of adult strictures to children in the didacticism of Hilaire Belloc and the unfailingly disruptive children in *Cautionary Tales*. These often end up dead through their own failings of telling lies about fire or overfeeding the pets who fall on them with fatal results. Nevertheless, the imprisoned budgerigar bought by the lady from Par who was determined to feed him on 'cream-cakes / And doughnuts all smothered in jam', in Causley's poem 'One Day at a Perranporth Pet-Shop' (*CPC*, p. 74), seizes his chance to escape and does deliver a moral. 'Best eat frugal and free in a far-distant tree / Than down all the wrong diet in jail.' Causley's children's verse is intended to liberate, not confine.

There are countless examples of Causley having fun with words and numbers in his children's poetry using the repetition, pace, rhythm and rhyme which connect with children's excitement at memorising verse. These are grounded in the life of his community and many of them are also informative of the months of the year, the seasons and the days of the week which marked everyday life. The cyclic movement of these is captured in 'Here We Go Round the Round House' (*CPC*, p. 217), and 'Round the

Town' (*CPC*, p. 174). Both of these use the rhythms of singing games. They presuppose a setting where the reader observes the changing seasons. 'Here we go round the Round House / In the month of five, / Waiting for the summer / To tell us we're alive.' The context presupposes a settled and small community. 'What do you do on Friday? / The local paper's read / To find out if we are still alive / Or whether we are dead.' There is a hint of mockery, albeit affectionate, in the description of summer telling us if we are alive or not and Friday in the town where the first section of the paper that anyone reads is the obituaries to reassure themselves that they, at least, are still in existence. There is also a sense of the inevitability and changelessness of time repeating itself in both poems, leading the reader back to the beginning of the cycle. As in 'Round the Town', 'What do you do on Monday? / We look out through the pane / And if it's wet or if it's fine / Begin all over again.' Causley's invocation of the seasons and his use of local legends and local ways of life have long since ceased being passed on through the generations. The rhythm of the ordinary remains. The expression of this rhythm of the ordinary, although pedantic in Causley's verses for children, is a component of Williams's lived experience, 'alignments, social situations relationships.'²⁷

What is not pedantic is fascination for children of the world of animals and how it corresponds to the world of humans. Some humans and animals in Causley's poetry just enjoy their relationship. Knocketty Ned, in 'There Once Was a Man' (*CPC*, p. 342), 'wore his cat / on top of his head. / Upstairs, downstairs, / The whole world knew / Wherever he went / The cat went too.' Other animals in the poems are enigmatic or raise questions. Characterising animals, particularly cats, is a favourite device of Causley,

²⁷ Williams, 'The Writer: Commitment and Alignment' in *Resources of Hope* ed. by Robin Gable, p. 85.

himself the owner of a large and independent cat called Rupert. Mawgan Porth, the cat in the poem of the same name (*CPC*, p. 66), has an uncanny way of seeing through his adult visitor. 'His Siamese cat-ical / Aristocratical / Eyes as he gazed me / through and through.' Causley does not patronise his child readers, any more than his adult ones, by assuming they need directed closure.

The birds in Causley's poetry for children do not include the sinister crow of his adult collections, but generally symbolise a yearning for the freedom to change identity to a more liberated state. Humans gain freedom by changing into birds, such as 'Mrs Malarkey' (*CPC*, p. 4), and Barnaby Robbins ('Dear Me', *CPC*, p. 123), reprimanded for eating worms as part of his transition to a bird. "“Barney”, I said, “don’t take it amiss — / But you simply can’t go on behaving like this”.' A less frivolous expression of the wish to be free is in 'Leonardo' (*CPC*, p. 160). Causley used a story of Leonardo da Vinci freeing some wild birds he saw in a cage, the variable layout of the lines replicating the flight of the birds out of captivity. The wish for freedom from his daily existence at school and looking after his mother may well lie behind this imagery.

REDACTED: See 'Leonardo', *Collected Poems for Children*, p. 160, v. 3.

The capacity for poetry to articulate this liberation, as it was in the case of the budgerigar from Par, can release in both child and adult consciousness a desire to question all that restrains them, including material circumstances.

Not only the relationship between humans, animals and birds, but also the adult world itself is seen to be strange and contradictory, as it is in *Alice in Wonderland*. The

predictable and musical poetry seems paradoxically to provide the context for a reversal of this order and predictability. Children are free to voice their thoughts about adults through Causley speaking as a child himself. The voice of the child in the text is rebellious. It is permissible to think negative thoughts about your adult relations as in 'Family Album' (*CPC*, p. 18).

REDACTED: See 'Family Album', *Collected Poems for Children*, p. 18, v. 1.2.

Causley's achievement is to introduce his child readers into something more substantial than simply a fanciful world. The world of the town is not just one innocent, pastoral Eden. 'What do you do on Wednesday? / We watch the butchers' men / Drive the frightened animals / In and out the pen' ('Round the Town'). Death and questions of mortality lurk behind the poems in the obsession with obituaries in the local paper, the terrified animals who are driven in to the abattoir pen on Wednesdays, the desire for freedom and transformation symbolised by the birds and the enigmatic, disturbing eyes of the cat. In his children's collections there are poems which celebrate the delight of childhood. But location and relationships could conceal a darker side in which vulnerability and innocence are exploited. He believed that this side of life was also the proper concern for children's poems.

Innocence Betrayed in Causley's Construct of Childhood

'My Mother Saw a Dancing Bear' (p. 230), shows that, however removed from the actual event from the life of poet and reader, childhood memory can speak across generations of the effects of manipulation of power and exploitation by adults. The illness of his mother in the late sixties gave Causley the opportunity to hear some of her recollections of childhood. He talked with her about her childhood and described how he began to see again the events of her childhood memories as well as his own.²⁸ An incident from his mother's schooldays articulates adult power manifesting itself in cruelty to and the exploitation of animals. Children can identify with the vulnerable and this makes the treatment of animals of particular concern to them.

The children begin as spectators, invited to share the warped sensibility of the adult world when the spectacle of a dancing bear is permitted in the schoolyard.

REDACTED: See 'My Mother Saw a Dancing Bear', *Collected Poems*, p. 230, v. 1,2.

The elements of brutality, the heat of the sun and the keeper's restraints, are introduced within the regular metre and rhyme which are indicative of the music which accompanies the tricks which the bear is taunted to perform. The children initially laugh as the bear marches and does roly-polies and somersaults. But when the keeper comes around with the begging-cup and the spectators see the bear's 'burning fur', their sight becomes more intense and they realise they have been duped into acquiescing with something obscene in the denigration of the dignity of the creature. This is emphasised by the 'aching eyes' and the distance between the bear's present situation and his natural

²⁸ Causley, 'So Slowly To Harbour', p. 109.

habitat. In the poignancy of the last two lines Causley effectively evokes a vision for the reader, whether child or adult, of the bear's exile, and makes the pain personal for the reader through the agency of the single adjective 'aching', an example of an adjective easily recognisable in the experiences of children and adults.

REDACTED: See 'My Mother Saw a Dancing Bear', *Collected Poems*, p. 230, v. 5.

In 'My Mother Saw a Dancing Bear', child readers can identify with the children in the playground and Causley gently but brutally leads through this to the heart of the poem, the cruelty centred on an animal which is powerless. The child spectators and the readers may both reflect on roles which they are expected to play and circumstances which nourish this. Causley's poetry for adults and children uses the combination of imagination and experience to deal with these more sombre subjects of power and exploitation.

As in the nonsense verse of Edward Lear and Lewis Carroll, there are dark undertones in the nonsense element of Causley's poetic worlds. Unlike Carroll and in line with his conservative attitude to syntax and vocabulary and respect for formality and order, Causley did not often indulge in creating portmanteau words, preferring to utilise established vocabulary and resisting innovation. However he is similar to Carroll in hinting at irony and underlying dark implications. The vicar of Morwenstow dresses up as a mermaid, sings the National Anthem and entertains the people on the beach. In the last verse he reflects on the gullibility of his parishioners in 'The Merrymaid' (*CPC*, p.

256). Beneath the surface there are suggestions of sinister goings on in 'My Neighbour Mr Normanton' (*CPC*, p. 354). Mr Normanton appears to be 'as typical an Englishman / As anyone alive.' He turns out to be a double agent.

REDACTED: See 'My Neighbour Mr Normanton', *Collected Poems for Children*, p. 354, v. 7, 8.

Mr Normanton's innocent neighbour, having been invited to tea with Mr Normanton, finds that asking questions has dangerous implications. Espionage can be a violent form of betrayal.

REDACTED: See 'My Neighbour Mr Normanton', *Collected Poems for Children*, p. 354, v. 15.

Mr Normanton has been leading a double life and, as his neighbour finds to his cost, what appears to be thrilling is not what it appears, duplicity is even next door. The neighbour's sense of excitement is totally misplaced.

Familiar nursery rhymes may also be not what they appear and be open to alternative versions which are a distortion of the original, ending in disquiet, a feature of Lewis Carroll's verse in the Alice stories. In their definitive study of nursery rhymes, Iona and Peter Opie demonstrated that many nursery rhymes originated in adult culture and

history.²⁹ It is not surprising then that Causley prized the form for its ability to ‘strike notes both simple and deep.’³⁰ ‘It is darkness’, says Richard Flynn, ‘which gives nonsense its power.’³¹ Jill and Jack never return from their quest for the ‘pool of morning dew’ despite having ‘walked the track’ (‘Jill and Jack’, *CPC*, p. 369). Causley’s own track had encompassed the loss of innocence and awareness of death and separation beginning in childhood, reinforced in adolescence and confirmed by World War Two. His poetry was a search for the resolution to his journey but there is no return from the ultimate destination. The track from which no one returns has suggestions of the trenches in World War One.

REDACTED: See ‘Jill and Jack’, *Collected Poems for Children*, p. 369, v. 4.

The track of loss of childhood innocence, like that into the trenches, is, for many, irreversible. ‘Poor Jill. Poor Jack.’

The Child as Urchin in Causley’s Construct of Childhood

The destruction of hope, one aspect of this journey, begins for many children in the injustices which they inherit from impoverished and unjust material circumstances and therefore inequality of opportunity. Causley vocalised this poverty which he understood

²⁹ See Iona and Peter Opie, eds., *The Oxford Dictionary of Nursery Rhymes* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1997).

³⁰ Anthea Bell and Brian Morse, ‘Charles Causley: Early in the Morning’, in *Poetry for Children*, ed. by Nancy Chambers, pp. 127-145 (p.127).

³¹ Richard Flynn, ‘The Fear of Poetry’, in *The Cambridge Companion to Children’s Literature*, ed. by Matthew Grenby and Andrea Immel (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2011), pp 76-90 (p. 83).

from childhood and which he still saw around him in adulthood as a primary teacher in a poor community. Causley's efforts, in his early teaching career, to return to the traditional view of appropriate poetry for children, met with little success. Neither his nor his pupils' understanding of children's material experience was built around middle-class social convention. It does not include nannies, governesses, ponies or boarding school. These were irrelevancies in the world of his pupils, whether from rough or respectable working-class backgrounds. They were not elements of experience which they could ever expect to encounter:

I tried all different kinds of different poems — the sort of thing that I thought was children's poetry, like A. A. Milne — which personally I had no feeling for at all; and I very rapidly made the discovery that the children in my classes hadn't very much feeling for it either, because it spoke of a world which was entirely divorced from their own. I tried all kinds of ways of doing poetry, and all the so-called children's poems didn't seem to work.³²

'Appropriate' realism in early twentieth century literature for children was of upper or middle-class lifestyles. Such 'realism' was largely confined to the pastoral idyll of characters such as Christopher Robin, written by and for a middle-class elite.

³² Merrick, *Talking with Charles Causley*, p. 18.

Causley's view of children's literature resisting compliance and the status quo can be found in his childhood admiration for Alice in Wonderland and the work of R. L. Stevenson. Significant change in the convention of children's fiction had occurred in 1865 with the figure of Alice in Wonderland, analysed in Empson's 'Child As Swain'. Alice exhibited what Empson regards as the authentic pastoral characteristics of independence and intuition, a characteristic of pre-industrial communities. Social, moral and political expectations were more easily imposed in urban, industrial contexts where commercial profit and worker subsistence depended upon imposed conformity.³³ Causley was an admirer of Alice.³⁴ He was also an admirer of Robert Louis Stevenson. He recounted how, before he had published anything, he confided to a member of the Westcountry Writers Association that he wanted to be a poet. He was thrilled when he found he was talking to someone who had met Stevenson:

We shook hands. And there I was shaking the hand of a man who had shaken the hand of the author of *Treasure Island* and *Kidnapped* and *Jeekyll and Hyde*. Wonderful.³⁵

Hunt points out that behind the foregrounding of adventure and the struggle of good and evil in Stevenson's *Treasure Island* is a subtext of criticism of corruption and moral

³³ See Empson, *Some Versions of Pastoral* pp. 253-293.

³⁴ Andrew Brown, 'Cornish Pastimes', *The Independent*, 29 August 1992, p. 29.

³⁵ Parker *A Certain Man*, p. 26.

ambiguity, critiquing the approved social order.³⁶ Stevenson was also influential in children's poetry. In *A Child's Garden of Verses*, published in 1885, he is credited with the innovation of the child's voice and experience into this genre.³⁷ Causley's boyhood liking for Lewis Carroll and Stevenson provided examples of subversive and innovative influences through the passage of his own childhood reading and imagination, if not in any disposition to rebel against the normative cultural inheritance.

The fear and powerlessness of poverty was ever present in Causley's childhood and he did not shrink as an adult from the task of giving a voice to children living in poverty in his children's verse. Even though the historical context of children in the workhouse was far remote from his late-twentieth-century audience, in the poem 'On St Catherine's Day' (*CPC*, p. 230), he used this context to hint to contemporary children the physical and emotional punishment of poverty which stunts the development of all children. He was able to do this convincingly and vividly from his own past experience as he recalled that:

The school I attended was only a couple of hundred yards from the local tramps' lodging house. You'd also always be seeing these poor deprived kids from the workhouse. They didn't know they were deprived, but they looked yellow, their skin was stretched, their clothes falling off their bodies. They were frightening. It had a powerful effect on me.³⁸

³⁶ Peter Hunt, 'The Same But Different: Conservatism and Revolution in Children's Fiction', in *Children's Literature: Approaches and Territories*, ed. by Janet Maybin and Nicola J. Watson (Milton Keynes: Palgrave Macmillan, 2009), pp. 70-83 (p.72).

³⁷ Morag Styles, 'From the Garden to the Street: The History of Poetry for Children', in *Children's Literature*, ed. by Janet Maybin and Nicola J. Watson pp. 202-217 (p. 213).

³⁸ Parker, *A Certain Man*, pp. 17-18.

Usually excluded from society, the pauper girls were taken out of the workhouse in Victorian times on St Catherine's Day. St Catherine was the patron saint of young girls and spinners, the latter relevant to their daily work. The first three verses detail the special costumes for the day and the crowning of the girl chosen to represent St Catherine. The mood changes as the children beg for money to carry on with the daily drudge.

REDACTED: See 'On St Catherine's Day', *Collected Poems for Children*, p. 230, v. 4.

The shocking reality of everyday life for the children is introduced in the last four stanzas.

REDACTED: See 'On St Catherine's Day', *Collected Poems for Children*, p. 230, p. 4, v. 6,7,8,9.

As befits the deprivation and ordered spartan life of the children, the rhyme and metre are regular, the language is plain and direct and the white faces and bony hands are images of correspondence which can easily be pictured by a child. The last line of each verse is abrupt as if there is no more to be said and no hope of any change. These children recognise and see clearly the truth of their situation. They see the early death which may await them as it did the stone children of the church, comment on the meagre diet and the necessity of appearing to conform, but are prevented from rebelling against their lot by adult respectability which judges and isolates the poor. The last verse suddenly jolts the reader into the contemporary, with the simple but chilling statement that the Workhouse children are always here. In the poem Causley is locating a state of

consciousness dependent on material circumstances and with no element of autonomy. He uses direct language with no commentary which resonates with control and repression.

The Workhouse wall may be broken but the power of child poverty to inflict inequality is evidently the case in perhaps the most famous of Causley's poems, 'Timothy Winters' (p. 65). This has been consistently anthologised. In highlighting child poverty it also highlights a category supposed to herald a 'new school' of children's poetry in the twentieth century, described as 'urchin verse'. The creation of this term was attributed to John Rowe Townsend in his 1965 book *Written For Children*.³⁹ Townsend was himself an author of children's books and described his 'shocked awareness of the unbridgeable gap between the comfortably jolly lives of the young characters in the books he reviewed and the harsh realities faced by the children he had seen while researching a feature on the NSPCC.'⁴⁰ According to Townsend 'urchin verse' is characterised by poems featuring '...family life in the raw, with all its backchat, fury and muddle, instead of woods and meadows are disused railway lines, building sites and junk heaps.'

The validity of Townsend's view of the need for poetry to represent childhood culture in this way and the whole issue of what is appropriate content in 'children's verse' was a concern of Thomas Blackburn. Writing to Causley in the seventies he praised Causley's refusal to indulge in this 'terrible humdrum stuff about ash bins and football and street corners which passes for poetry in this decade.' He put the blame on 'The determination of materialistic teachers' to limit children's imagination and prevent 'a return to the

³⁹ John Rowe Townsend, *Written for Children: An Outline of English-Language Children's Literature* (London: The Bodley Head Press, 1995), p. 315.

⁴⁰ 'John Rowe Townsend Obituary' < <https://www.theguardian.com/books/2014/apr/02/john-rowe-townsend> > [accessed 18 August 2017].

seminal imaginative river.’⁴¹ Although applauding the wish to place children’s lives in the ordinary present and not the romanticised past, Matthew Grenby questioned whether a poetic response to the construction of childhood using free verse, slang and the vernacular, would be superficial.⁴² Content for Blackburn and poetic form and vocabulary for Grenby are in tension with the need for Townsend’s lived experiences.

Causley’s own poetry and that which he encouraged his pupils to write, was based precisely on liberating the ‘seminal imaginative river’. The promptings of imagination could be expressed in direct observation and concrete imagery. Hence Timothy Winters who ‘sleeps in a sack on the kitchen floor.’ Lambirth commends this seventies development in poetry for children, typified in the work of Michael Rosen and Roger McGough, as ‘touching the nerve of creativity’ for children and empowering them to value their own experience.⁴³ Urchin poetry is contrasted by Lara Saguisag with the first three quarters of the twentieth century when ‘poetry for children in Britain hardly strayed from the lyric tradition set by Robert Louis Stevenson and Christina Rossetti, as can be seen from the work of Walter de la Mare, Eleanor Farjeon, and Charles Causley.’⁴⁴ Saguisag seems to suggest that if Causley writes lyric poetry he cannot articulate personal lived experience in adverse conditions and is confined to sentiments more readily found in escapism. However, Michael Benton perceived a more sophisticated link between lyric and the reality of childhood, exemplified in Blake’s *Songs of Innocence* and cites ‘Blake’s fusion of the language and forms of the lyric with the space which he allows

⁴¹ Exeter, University of Exeter Special Collections, EUL MS 50a/PERS/1/2 Letter, Thomas Blackburn to Charles Causley, 1 March 1974.

⁴² Matthew Grenby, *Children’s Literature* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2009), pp. 51, 52.

⁴³ Lambirth, ‘Child Power Poetry’, p. 17.

⁴⁴ Lara Saguisag, ‘Performance, Politics, and Poetry for Children: Interviews with Michael Rosen and Benjamin Zephaniah’, *Children’s Literature Association Quarterly*, 32: 1 (2007), 3-28 (p. 3).

for his implied child readers and his evocation of their world.’ He then cited Causley as a poet who can similarly engage children in a relationship that ‘gains its density’ from the internal features of the poem, the child *in* the text, choice of vocabulary and structure and content, as a vehicle for a perspective on lived experience.⁴⁵ Williams’s whole concept of culture as ordinary arising from shared, lived experience expressed in common language runs counter to the accusation that cultural artefacts based on the material limit imagination. Causley’s own verse and his support for his pupils’ poetry bear witness to Williams’s theory.

Admittedly ‘Timothy Winters’ is not situated as the voice of Timothy himself but the observations of the narrator speculating on the possible intervention of a social worker. However, the poem, like ‘On St Catherine’s Day’ has at its centre the child *in* the text, a regular and memorable metre and rhyming scheme, direct imagery and everyday vocabulary with a perspective which articulates Causley’s attention to the timeless realities of the existence of children living on the margins, whether in the Workhouse children or the twentieth century classroom. It goes beyond the limited lens of woods and meadows, so scorned by Townsend, which did exist beyond Timothy Winters’s school but have no bearing on his material life. Through 25 years of teaching in a primary school Causley was well able to remain acquainted with the conditions under which such children lived.

REDACTED: See ‘Timothy Winters’, *Collected Poems*, p. 65, v. 4,6.

⁴⁵ Michael Benton, ‘Essay Review: Poetry for Children — Prepositions and Possessives’, *Children’s Literature In Education*, 28: 2 (1997), 105-109 (pp. 105-106).

In the end Timothy Winters, despite the irony in the final verse of his saying 'Amen' very loudly in assembly, just goes on growing up, the cup which he drinks is a given and despite the good intentions of the Welfare Worker, the system, slanted against the poor, prevails. Angels do not appear.

REDACTED: See 'Timothy Winters', *Collected Poems*, p. 65, v. 8.

Neither divine intervention nor the well-intentioned machinery of the middle-class state succeeds in mitigating Timothy's situation. Amen is the final word, so be it. In 'On St Catherine's Day' and 'Timothy Winters' Causley not only gave an example of the realism expected from 'urchin verse', but illustrated how adult ownership of a poem can create childhood identities which, through the presence of children in the text, reveal the extent and pernicious effects of an adult society whose ideological priorities are insufficient to promote the flourishing of such children. He exposed this as a cultural norm, a blight on the complacency of any 'Golden Age'.

Supporters of what they considered to be a more realistic and urban environment in 'urchin verse' criticised irrelevant traditional referents in childhood poetry. But the settings for the 'urchin verse' as described by John Rowe Townsend in 1965 are equally liable to such charges of obsolescence.⁴⁶ All poetry for children is susceptible to this diagnosis. Michael Lockwood commented in his analysis 'Michael Rosen and Contemporary British Poetry for Children' that the childhood Rosen is describing in his 1977 collection, *Wouldn't You Like To Know*, is based on Rosen's growing up in the fifties

⁴⁶ See Townsend, *Written for Children: An Outline of English-Language Children's Literature*.

and sixties, 'remote from the experience of contemporary children.'⁴⁷ Between Causley's own recollections of childhood from the twenties and thirties and his publications from the seventies onwards is an even longer time gap. Just as Causley once found the world of Christopher Robin remote from himself and his pupils so those poems which rely on the natural world and the social and physical environment in which he grew up are dated for computer literate children who live in contexts where there are far fewer manifestations of the community aspects of shared lives. The poet's own impressions may well be pedantic but the poverty and inequality remain and can be exposed.

Expanding the 'Common Culture': The Child as Poet, the Child as Consumer

Portraying a child *in* the text, without using the poetic voice as a mask pretending to *be* a child, is one effective strategy which gives the implied child reader a feeling of identification and ownership of the world inside the poem and avoids patronising and stereotyping. Causley did not use childhood as a construct with no value in its own right. It remains accessible to child and adult without patronising the reader. Susan Hill commented:

'Ah, people said, Charles Causley, "the children's poet"'. The tone was always

⁴⁷ Michael Lockwood, 'Michael Rosen and Contemporary British Poetry for Children', *The Lion And The Unicorn*, 23: 1 (1999), 57-66.
<<https://search.proquest.com/docview/752002427/4AA1858A56634B08PQ/1?accountid=7408>> [accessed 8 April 2019].

patronising. And indeed, he wrote poetry for children, some of the best in English. So, of course, did Ted Hughes, about whom no one ever dared speak patronizingly. But there is nothing sweet or charming or, well, patronizing, about the poems either of them wrote for the young.⁴⁸

This generosity towards the expression of experience and imagination typifies an approach to creativity which was replicated in his classroom and in the anthologies which his pupils produced. Causley believed in allowing children to articulate their own imaginative worlds. Reflecting on poetry in the primary school classroom during the course of his teaching career in the interview with Merrick, he described the process of producing an anthology by the children in his class. There is direction but it is minimal:

We published an anthology and I always used to give them lots of time to write their poem. I never said 'I want it by twelve o'clock'. I couldn't write a poem by twelve o'clock. It might take me three months. So I didn't mind if *they* took three months as well [...] I never set a subject, for example, unless they absolutely needed a bit of help: the general rule was that you wrote about something you loved or something you hated. There's no middle ground in poetry or in art at all, I don't think. You have to feel very strongly about it. And I discouraged writing about things they'd seen in a film or on television, but always tried to make them write about their own lives.⁴⁹

⁴⁸ Hill, 'Joking Apart', p. 37.

⁴⁹ Merrick, *Talking with Charles Causley*, pp. 21-23.

Hughes also argued strongly that personal experience and feeling should be at the heart of encouraging young people to engage with poetry, 'not 'How to Write', but 'How to try to say what you really mean [...] the search for self- knowledge and perhaps, in one form or another, grace.'⁵⁰

The importance of such self-knowledge was emphasised by Causley:

The most interesting poems for me were almost always written by children who could scarcely put two words together. But they had the feeling, the real personal feeling: they hadn't read it in a book and they weren't trying to imitate something which they'd seen or read somewhere else. It was something which came absolutely from the well, the deep well, of their own experience. ⁵¹

Causley refused to use his own poems in the classroom for a captive audience.⁵²

Although he enjoyed sharing ballads with his pupils he made no attempt to promote any kind of orthodox styles of poetry as the legitimate ones. In the context of control, there is however, a question to be asked of Causley's inclination, in his verse for children, to subdivide many of the collections and name each division. Subdivision in the list of contents provide a level of direction. Why should children be guided to regard the poems in categories before they have even read them? The way in which Causley divided the

⁵⁰ Ted Hughes, ed., *Poetry in the Making: An Anthology of Poems from Listening and Writing* (London: Faber and Faber, 1969), p. 12.

⁵¹ Merrick, *Talking with Charles Causley*, p. 22.

⁵² *Ibid.* p. 18.

Collected Poems for Children could suggest an attempt to persuade the readers to conclude that some are definitely playful, some are about the contrast between 'Great and Small' or 'Insider and Outsider', 'Seasons and Festivals' and some are 'Songs and Stories'. The logic behind the titles of the subdivisions into which the poems are placed, Causley seemed particularly fond of contrasts, is never explained, which are which? The title of the sections deliberately invites the reader to ask these questions of the poems. In contrast, subdivision may illustrate Causley's classroom experience. An index is helpful to both teachers and children looking quickly for a poem in one of the subject categories, a positive feature rather than a diminution of the reader's independent judgement, but still a significant distinction between the adult *Collected Poems* of 2003 and the *Collected Poems for Children*.

Children will often go to the visual before attempting to read the text and have formed an impression of the interpretation of a poem before they have read it. The issue of the control of the hermeneutic is present in illustrations in the children's collections. Illustrations can liberate the imagination but also direct it. William Moebus's 'Introduction to Picturebook Codes' identifies various codes which can reinforce the readers interpretation of the text.⁵³ Identification with the characters is heightened or diminished by the framing of the illustration, the perspective from which the contents are viewed and the readers sense of the status of the items in a picture by where they are positioned.

⁵³ William Moebus, 'Introduction to Picturebook Codes', *Word and Image*, 2: 2 (1986), in *Children's Literature*, ed. by Peter Hunt, pp. 139-143.

Causley's children's collections were illustrated by a distinguished selection of book illustrators of the time. These were Gerald Rose, *Figgie Hobbin*, Tony Ross, *The Young Man of Cury*, and John Lawrence for the celebratory 2000 *Collected*.⁵⁴ All of these were able to convey a sense of the poems being outside a particular time constraint irrespective of where the factual or imaginative content is located chronologically. This sense of suspension in time is conveyed in Charles Keeping's colour illustration for the Workhouse children in 'On St Catherine's Day' (*Jack the Treacle Eater*, p. 63).⁵⁵ Definitely not looking contemporary but without being caricatures, the group of girls dressed up and sent out to beg look out sullenly at the world and grimace. Their facial expressions contrast pointedly with the absurd yellow flowers, all part of the cruel make-believe of the day, that they have been forced to wear in their hair. They fill the frame of the picture and they look hungry but at the same time they resist any sentimental appeal for sympathy to the reader. Rose's line drawing for 'My Mother Saw A Dancing Bear' (*Figgie Hobbin*, p. 93), has both children and the bear's keeper at the same height regarding the bear, who dominates the foreground, with the ache in his eyes emphasised by the poignant expression of his clamped mouth. It is the children who are looking quizzical while the adult's hard, staring eyes and satisfied grin locate him in a darker place.

Often eyes or the actions indicate profound implications. The sea serpent in 'Nicholas Naylor' (*Early in the Morning*, p. 42), seems at first sight to be a great fan of Nicholas. On closer inspection it is apparent that Nicholas has a vicious looking needle and is about to sew up the serpent's mouth as he has done the shark in the foreground. He is also about

⁵⁴ Charles Causley, *Figgie Hobbin and Other poems: Illustrations by Gerald Rose* (London: Macmillan, 1990). Charles Causley, *The Young Man of Cury and Other Poems: Illustrated by Tony Ross* (Basingstoke: Macmillan, 2003). Charles Causley, *Collected Poems for Children: Illustrated by John Lawrence* (London: Macmillan, 2000).

⁵⁵ Charles Causley, *Jack the Treacle Eater: Illustrations by Charles Keeping* (London: Macmillan, 1987).

to sew up a sailor in a dark kit bag. Causley's illustrators do not do the work of suggesting the meaning of the poem in pictures or prejudge any closure of meaning which would destroy Causley's frequent ending with questions or inscrutable statements. They create a world for the poem which resists chronological classification but in which the humour and nonsense and the deeper implications are blended, especially appealing to primary age children. They are also selective, not every poem has an illustration, giving space for the visual imagination of the reader.

Causley's own work in *Collected Poems for Children* contains a wide variety of poetic forms in terms of lengths of lines, length of poem and use of refrain at the end of verses. Causley stated:

I found children had the most wonderful eye for the architecture of a poem. I don't think enough work has been done on the visual effect of poems. [...] when I think of a poem I can see it on the page even before I can conjure up the actual words. [...] And I found children have a very, very, good eye for just how a poem should look and just how long it should be and whether it should be a short thick one, as some of my children used to say, or a long thin one, which was their marvellous description of a ballad.⁵⁶

⁵⁶ Merrick, *Talking with Charles Causley*, p. 22.

Visual appearance ranked with the enjoyment of rhyme and rhythm in Causley's assessment of fostering the value and potential creativity of the child's imagination through poetry.

The Transparent Disguise: The Achievement of Causley's Poetry for Children

'At present I hammer away at another collection disguised as one for children' wrote Causley to fellow poet and Cornishman, A. L. Rowse in 1988.⁵⁷ Causley's humorous and nonsense verse confronts the adult control of literature and literacy in education which teaches English as merely a functional tool of communication, in contrast to what Flynn praises as 'language as exploration.'⁵⁸ Flynn also points out from the discourse of 'adult' literary criticism, the characteristics of multiple meanings, lack of closure and unpredictability of conclusions, as elements in children's poetry which highlight the potential for freedom from manipulative authorial intention.⁵⁹ There is no implication that the undertones of Causley's playful verse and the illustrations to his work are intended to be an adult voice mocking and parodying the world of childhood, or making fun of the simple way in which children naively take delight in such literature productions.

In Causley, childhood is a poetic location for voicing exactly the independence and intuition independent of social, political and cultural hegemony which Empson had seen

⁵⁷ Exeter, University of Exeter Special Collections, EUL 113/3/1 Letter, Charles Causley to A. L. Rowse, 7 April 1988.

⁵⁸ Flynn, 'The Fear of Poetry', p. 78.

⁵⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 79.

in the pastoral world of Alice. Causley contributed to the liberation of children's poetry, both for himself and his pupils, from the often didactic and middle class worldview of the first 'Golden Age' using the freedom of the lyric form for nonsense and for communicating life experiences in everyday language and deceptively simple imagery, not restricted to the category of 'children's poetry'. In doing so he unwittingly demonstrated that children's poetry collections are a valid element of legitimate critical analysis within the field of poetics. Such poetry, as Margaret Meek argued, can stand on its own in a critical context and does not need to be judged against standardised paradigms laid down by adult convention.⁶⁰

Hunt argued from Perry Nodelman that for critical theorists the process of matching the literature to the reader is considered inferior to expecting the reader to live up to the demands of the text. In this theory the implied reader of children's literature begins from an assumed position of lower status.⁶¹ Causley saw this danger. He wanted the publishers to omit 'Poems for Children' as part of the title of his much praised first major anthology for children, *Figgie Hobbin*.⁶² In conversation with Parker, Causley revealed that although the title *Figgie Hobbin* ostensibly refers to a type of Cornish pudding, the key is in the poem of the same name where the king eats it 'to cure the sickness of the heart' (*CPC*, p. 364).⁶³ Causley recognised a sickness of heart, the move from innocence to experience, in himself and in the lives of children as well as adults. He believed poetry

⁶⁰ Margaret Meek, 'What Counts as Evidence in the Theory of Children's Literature?', *Theory into Practice*, 21: 4 (1982), quoted in *Children's Literature*, ed. by Peter Hunt, pp. 166-180 (p.168).

⁶¹ Hunt 'Introduction', in *Poetry for Children*, ed. by Nancy Chambers, pp. 11-23 (p. 11). See Perry Nodelman, *The Hidden Adult: Defining Children's Literature* (Baltimore: John Hopkins University Press, 2008).

⁶² Exeter, University of Exeter Special Collections, EUL MS 50aPERS/1/25/1, Letter, Charles Causley to Michael Wall?, 9 May 1989.

⁶³ Parker, *A Certain Man*, p. 22.

to be instrumental to the 'cure' and wrote the children's collections based on this belief. Along with Hughes he was regarded by Peter Hollindale and other critics as an outstanding practitioner in the field of children's poetry in the second half of the twentieth century.⁶⁴ Philip evaluates his *Collected Poems for Children* as standing as 'one of the peak achievements of children's poetry, alongside Blake, Lear and Stevenson.'⁶⁵ Hollindale assessed Causley as 'the great cross-border traveller between adult's and children's verse in the twentieth century.'⁶⁶

Flynn speaks of the 'mythology of the childish adult (most often a boy-man) as uniquely able to address the needs of children.'⁶⁷ Causley's 'childlike' imagination was a retreat into the past of childhood, but there was nothing 'childish' about the yearning for freedom, the blight of poverty and the loss of innocence which he hints at in his so called 'children's verse'. In the focus on the lived experience of his own life and his pupils' childhoods, the border which Causley negotiated in his children's poetry reveals this poetry as a working out of Williams's declaration of the dignity of everyday life. 'What kind of life can it be, I wonder, to produce...this extraordinary decision to call certain things culture and then separate them, as with a park wall, from ordinary people and ordinary work?'⁶⁸ Causley's poetry for children crosses both the 'park wall', of received ideas of culture and of age distinction in the profound and the light hearted enjoyment of poetry.

⁶⁴ Peter Hollindale and Zena Sutherland, 'Internationalism, Fantasy And Realism 1945-1970', in *Children's Literature: An Illustrated History*, ed. by Peter Hunt (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1995), pp. 252-288. (p.284). Neil Philip, 'Signal No 39' quoted in Margaret Meek and Neil Philip 'The Signal Poetry Award 1983', in *Poetry for Children*, ed. by Nancy Chambers, pp. 65-78 (p. 73).

⁶⁵ Philip, *The New Oxford Book of Children's Verse*, p. xxxiii.

⁶⁶ Peter Hollindale and Sophie Hannah, 'The Signal Poetry Award 2000', in *Poetry for Children*, ed. by Nancy Chambers, pp. 367-389 (p.379).

⁶⁷ Flynn, 'The Fear of Poetry', p. 83.

⁶⁸ Williams, 'Culture is Ordinary', in *Resources of Hope* ed.by Robin Gable, p. 94.

Chapter Seven: Selecting from Tradition: Causley as Anthologist

From the late fifties to the early eighties, six anthologies of poetry and two local volumes of poems from his own primary pupils were published under Causley's editorship. In addition, there were invitations to compile anthologies for specific contexts such as 'Poetry Please', a popular radio programme. Causley produced two of his high profile anthologies in the sixties, *Dawn and Dusk* (1962) and its companion volume *Rising Early* (1964). These were followed by two Puffin imprints in the seventies, *The Puffin Book of Magic Verse* (1974), *The Puffin Book of Salt-Sea Verse* (1978), and a book of Christian verse, *The Sun, Dancing* in 1984.¹ He achieved critical notice in America for these as he did for his own collections. Two of the anthologies, marketed for children, *Dawn and Dusk* and *The Puffin Book of Magic Verse*, were reviewed by *The New York Times*.²

This chapter will critically assess the criteria for selection in his anthologies in the context of canonicity and Williams's concept of selective tradition as shaping the past and pre-shaping the present, with the implication of exclusions.³ Doing so will highlight Causley's distinctiveness as an anthologist in the decades from the sixties to the eighties. He used the introductions to these anthologies to reveal his individual vision of the nature, composition and function of poetry. This chapter claims that these revelations

¹ Charles Causley, ed., *Dawn and Dusk: Poems of Our Time* (Leicester: Brockhampton Press, 1962). Charles Causley, ed., *Rising Early: Story Poems and Ballads of the 20th Century* (Leicester: Brockhampton Press, 1964). Charles Causley, ed., *The Puffin Book of Magic Verse* (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1974). Charles Causley, ed., *The Puffin Book of Salt-Sea Verse* (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1978). Charles Causley, ed., *The Sun, Dancing* (Harmondsworth: Puffin, 1984).

² Paul Engle, 'There's Every Sort of Poem for Every Kind of Child', *The New York Times*, 10 November 1963, p. BR22. Thomas Lask, 'Getting Them While They're Young', *The New York Times*, 29 December 1974, p. 194.

³ Williams, *Marxism and Literature*, p. 115.

from the introductions yield important clues to three necessary conditions for the formation of Causley's own poetry and for his principles of selection for anthologies.

These principles are firstly, the *use* of poetry as a weapon in a war against what he refers to as 'barbarism and darkness', terms which will be elaborated on in the Chapter. Secondly, the *motivation* to write poetry arising from a commitment which reacts against the social, economic and cultural determinants which impoverish human flourishing. Thirdly, the *nature* of poetry to employ language and imagination to make assertions about the human condition and human aspirations which go beyond the empirical. This latter outcome Causley labels as 'poetic truth'.

Selection and Tradition

In his selections for inclusion in these five anthologies Causley was aware that his own agenda shaped the choices. He explained in the Introduction to *The Sun, Dancing*:

I have tried to bear in mind that the word 'anthology' springs from a Greek root: *anthologia*, meaning a collection or gathering of flowers — an occupation equally as personal and perhaps as self-revealing.⁴

⁴ Causley, *The Sun, Dancing*, p. 16.

Publishers such as Macmillan, the Brockhampton Press and Penguin obviously had faith that he would make judicious commercial choices, which would sell to defined and profitable markets such as radio audiences, schools, and outlets aimed at children. By the sixties, Causley's credibility with literary reviewers and his more popular media exposure, particularly on the radio, meant that his name on the cover would sell anthologies. In addition, as Robert Sheppard pointed out specifically in relation to anthologies, cheap versions such as those which Penguin were able to produce ensured maximum distribution.⁵ The Puffin series was a high profile market explicitly introduced by Penguin to promote literature for children but it also had a respected reputation in mainstream publishing.

Subject matter rather than uniformity of style was a priority for Causley. The overall theme of his anthologies, especially those for children, was often dispersed into the named sections within it, foregrounding content rather than style or than trying to demonstrate a style of poetics in a specific time span. In *Dawn and Dusk* and *Rising Early* he deliberately focused on contemporary poets but for their individual contributions to his themes. He himself stated the centrality of content. 'What is important here is not a 'definition', a stringing together like sausages of strictly recognizable types, but the poems themselves and what they have to tell us.'⁶ Causley felt that the subject matter and message of the poem was crucial without needing to promote 'recognisable types' although *Rising Early* did focus on narrative poems. Causley chose poets who represented his own childhood,

⁵ Robert Sheppard, *The Poetry of Saying: British Poetry and Its Discontents 1950-2000* (Liverpool: Liverpool University Press, 2005), p. 20.

⁶ Causley, *Rising Early*, p. 9.

adolescent and adult experience of what constitutes poetry, in order to cluster poems around his themes.

Compiling anthologies can be seen to be sustaining the concept of canonicity according to the aesthetic value judgements of self-referential experts. Andrew Milner and Jeff Browitt argued that the literary canon is 'never the expression of the spirit of 'a people' but the product and possession of an extremely small and socially exclusive elite.'⁷ In the second half of the twentieth century there were contemporary debates around canonical inclusion focusing on volumes such as Larkin's *Oxford Book of Twentieth Century English Verse*. There were selections defined by chronology or promoting characteristics of style, language and genre as was the case of Enright's support for 'The Movement'. But Causley's success was based on a wider foundation, a different agenda. He felt himself liberated from categorising 'new' poetry or seeking to achieve what Schmidt described as 'trying to make sense of modern poetry'.⁸ His anthologies did not claim to delineate 'shifts of sensibility' or the potential of 'claims for a monolithic or diverse poetic of the decade.'⁹

Causley had struggled to publish from a low profile of location and educational background. However, it would be wrong to suppose that his anthologies were primarily designed to facilitate publicity for those in a similar position and who were just starting out in attempting to publish their poetry. Apart from a very few examples, the biographical details for each poet at the end of *Dawn and Dusk* reveal a majority of poets from higher education, often Oxbridge, mostly in their forties and above. The majority of Causley's

⁷ Andrew Milner and Jeff Browitt, *Contemporary Cultural Theory: An Introduction* (London: Routledge, 2002), p. 172.

⁸ Philip Larkin, ed., *The Oxford Book of Twentieth Century English Verse* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1972). D. J. Enright, *Poets of the 1950s*. Michael Schmidt, *The Harvill Book of Twentieth-Century Poetry in English*, (London: Harvill, 1999), p. xxv.

⁹ Sheppard, *The Poetry of Saying*, p. 20.

poets are white, male and British or American. The women he does include such as Edith Sitwell, Elizabeth Jennings and Stevie Smith are mostly already well-established on the literary scene. As in his own poetry, Causley is mostly cautious and conservative. His concept of 'poetry for the people' in his anthologies is limited to what he was familiar with or had encountered from traditional sources.

In contrast, any 'anthology wars' of the fifty years of the post-war period focused on conflicts between different versions of newness and change. The only diversity which Causley does venture into is geographical diversity, but only when he feels that a particular culture can provide insight into *his* themes. There is verse from Wales and Scotland as well as Anglo-Saxon, and there are translations from Polish, Spanish and Mexican and North American Indian. They are placed where Causley sees their content as relevant to his thematic divisions, providing voices from contrasting cultural norms but in a minority. They are firmly embedded under categories which reflect the conceptual thinking of an anthologist with a childhood steeped in the rural communities and cultural narratives of folk tradition and institutional religion of England in the early twentieth century.

Causley's success in publishing anthologies through the sixties, seventies and eighties occupied, as did his own poetry, a unique and independent place in an era when the legitimization of taste by a previous social and cultural elite, with a monopoly of defining aesthetic value, was being challenged by a new, fashionable yet still self-referential elite. Natalie Pollard cited as an example of an anthology by this new elite, Andrew Motion and Blake Morrison's *The Penguin Book of Contemporary British Poetry* published in 1982, an

attempt to establish 'the tenets of a new poetical values system'.¹⁰ She suggested that Motion and Morrison wished to startle and surprise readers familiar with the poetry of The Movement with 'unsettling habituated perceptions' of 'super-typical reality'.¹¹ Other fashionable elites had a different idea of poetical values and advocated the 'most strident poetry anthologies' which Sheppard sees as important components of the official literary history of the period 1950-2000.¹² The groupings of 'Performance Poetry', 'The New Generation' and the 'Martians', had communities of readers with expectations of poetry different to those of Causley's readers. The latter looked for poems which were recognizably starting from titles they could relate to and content which elaborated these in ways which may be mysterious and uncomfortable but were restrained in tone with established genres and styles of lyric and ballad and measured forms of free and blank verse. Readers came to Causley for familiarity and stability in what they regarded as poetics. This is what they got. He chose poems which feature everyday speech and imagery in a range of style and form, with the capacity for a variety and depth of interpretation, but in regular syntactical order.

'Every anthology', as Schmidt argued, 'proposes a canon'.¹³ Causley is often prone to assume that 'we' and 'our' are totally inclusive and that there is an evaluative criteria for the 'best' poetry according to the preferences of the anthologist. His theoretical stance is reflected in the comments of both T. S. Eliot on tradition and Louis Zukofsky on sensibility. Causley's wish for simplicity, sincerity and integrity of emotional presentation in his

¹⁰ Nancy Pollard, 'Stretching the Lyric: The Anthology Wars, Martianism and After', in *The Cambridge Companion to British Poetry 1945-2000*, ed. by Edward Larrissy (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2015), pp. 99-115 (p.99). Blake Morrison and Andrew Motion, eds., *The Penguin Book of Contemporary British Poetry* (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1982).

¹¹ Pollard, 'Stretching the Lyric', p. 100.

¹² Sheppard, *The Poetry of Saying*, p. 20.

¹³ Schmidt, *The Harvill Book of Twentieth Century Poetry in English*, p. xxvi.

selections reflected those elements of what Zukofsky saw as the ‘test of poetry’.¹⁴ His choices also conform to T. S. Eliot’s regret in ‘Tradition and the Individual Talent’ that tradition is too frequently relegated to ‘the reassuring science of archaeology’.¹⁵ Eliot regarded tradition as more than mere inheritance but a historical sense which included and affirmed the presence of the past in the contemporary. This presence lingers in Causley’s selections. His discussion of narratology in *Rising Early* is particularly pointed on the potential of ancient and contemporary ballad forms to articulate past and present culture and history in a contemporary communal activity of story-telling based on lived experience.¹⁶ Some of Pollard’s description of a so called ‘new narrative’ of the second half of the twentieth century would not seem new to Causley.¹⁷ Her listing of ‘hidden instabilities of familiar places, voices and histories’, ‘shape-shifting speakers’, and ‘a sense of complicity with violent narrators’, were exactly the qualities which he valued in pre-industrial ballads, emulated in his own work and included in the narrative poems of *Rising Early*.

The clearest explanation of Causley’s own sense of what poetry is, what it is for and what motivates a poet to write, is found in his introductions to the anthologies. The answer to these questions reveals his distinct approach to what is included in his anthologies and why. In the Introductions he discusses what he refers to as the nature, composition and function of poetry.

¹⁴ Louis Zukofsky, *A Test of Poetry* (London: Routledge and Keegan Paul, 1952), p. 70.

¹⁵ T. S. Eliot, ‘Tradition and the Individual Talent’, in *The Complete Prose of T. S. Eliot: The Critical Edition*, ed. by Anthony Scuda and Ronald Suchard (Baltimore: John Hopkins University Press and Faber, 2014), p. 105.

¹⁶ Causley, *Rising Early*, pp. 9-12.

¹⁷ Pollard, ‘Stretching the Lyric’, p. 101.

The Function of Poetry: Confronting the Darkness

The Introductions to *Dawn and Dusk* in 1964 and *The Puffin Book of Magic Verse* a decade later, are clear that the use of poetry, as of the aesthetics of all art, is to be a 'weapon against brutality and darkness', and 'a spell against insensitivity, failure of imagination, ignorance and barbarism'.¹⁸ In the prolonged death of his father after World War One and the death of friends during World War Two, Causley had experienced the results of such 'brutality', 'darkness' and 'barbarism'. Born in 1917 and dying in 2003, his was a generation which saw the effects of the mechanised and global warfare of the first half of the twentieth century and the resulting unspeakable horrors. Causley's experiences of family bereavement, naval service, survivor's guilt and the fear of nuclear aggression were at the heart of his attempts to employ poetic imagination against the ignorance and insensitivity which had produced these obscenities.

In the course of using art as a weapon, as quoted from Picasso in the Introduction to *Dawn and Dusk*, and his own perception of poetry as a spell against human destructiveness in his Introduction to *The Puffin Book of Magic Verse*, Causley as anthologist had to make practical decisions of selection. One strategy which he employed was naming and describing fear and degradation, as a stage in confronting them. In *Dawn and Dusk* he was careful to include examples of these negative experiences placed within contexts familiar to children. He choose terrifying experiences of childhood such as Herbert Read's 'The Boy in the Barn' (*Dawn and Dusk*, p. 27), where a child enters a place of decay 'And the bats and the moths and the fluttering things / Flew in his face

¹⁸ Causley, *Dawn and Dusk*, p. 11. *The Puffin Book of Magic Verse*, p. 15.

and made him afraid.’ He included the bullying of the child Stephen Spender whose ‘parents kept me from children who were rough’ (*Dawn and Dusk*, p. 79). These are poems which resonate with the terrors of childhood. There are echoes here of Causley’s own childhood terrors in his own poetry; the continual awareness of death following the death of his father, the bullying at school by the pork butcher’s son, his lifelong disgust at any cruelty to animals as well as people. The latter is evident in the treatment of ‘Nino the Wonder Dog’ (*Dawn and Dusk*, p. 60). In Roy Fuller’s poem the circus dog Nino ‘goes in the glare alone, / Through what it must to serve absurd -/ ities beyond its own.’ Any sense of innocence and wonder is dispelled early in childhood. The brutality and malevolence of the adult world an early reality.

The tragedy of exploited childhood in an industrial society is given a profile in the desperation of the picks which cannot break through the wall in Vernon Watkins’s ‘The Collier’ (*Dawn and Dusk*, p. 80), ‘And I heard mouths pray in the after-damp / When the picks would not break through.’ A network of material practices and reference to theological rather than literary texts weaves through the poem on the short life of the collier’s son. The story of Joseph from the Biblical narrative provides a partial referent, but prayer is powerless in the face of inhumanity and greed. The adult Causley found truths about human nature in the stories from his church and chapel background but little comfort in the assurance of a beneficent interventionist deity.¹⁹ The boy spends his childhood free in the countryside, his jealous brothers ensure he is destined to die down the pit. With a narrative persona and a varied metrical system but a regular abcb rhyme scheme, the poem attacks the corruption and imprisonment of the child. The child’s

¹⁹ Joseph Pearce, ‘The Great I Am: Ontological Objectivity in Causley’s I Am the Great Sun’, in *Through the Granite Kingdom*, ed. by Hanke, pp. 133-139 (p.139).

freedom to be in the natural world is corrupted by human greed and the demands of regimented production. Physical death can be paralleled in the death of the freedom of imagination, an effect of the mass culture criticised by Hoggart and Williams in their analysis of culture as a consumer industry.²⁰ 'Williams was scathing about those who 'use scraps of linguistics, psychology and sociology to influence what he thinks of as the mass mind'.²¹

Confronting the mystery of death, the ultimate darkness, within an imaginative framework, is another strategy of poetry in its war against destructive forces of death and darkness. In Jon Silkin's 'Death of a Bird' (*Dawn and Dusk*, p.70), the caged blackbird dies three days into captivity. The image of the 'black friend' with 'the gold mouth', the incomprehension of death and the burial in the garden are easily apprehended by a child's experience and imagination, whilst adults may well wish to dwell on the symbolisms of the framework of three days, the implications of black and gold and question the space which is taken away. The short lines of free verse portray an intensity of spontaneous reflection with no excess of sentimentality for the dead bird but an emphasis on questions of mortality which preoccupy the poet who 'cannot understand why he is dead'.

REDACTED: See 'Death of a Bird', *Dawn and Dusk*, p. 70, v. 10,11.

²⁰ Hoggart, *The Uses of Literacy*, p. 24. Williams, *The Country and the City*, p. 38.

²¹ Williams, 'Culture is Ordinary, in *Resources of Hope* ed. by Robin Gable, p. 95.

Causley comments that the order of the poems in the anthology is deliberately arranged so that they can be read through or dipped into. Following Silkin's 'Death of a Bird' he places Anthony Thwaite's account of the death of another blackbird, 'Dead and Gone' (*Dawn and Dusk*, p. 71). The death is witnessed by Thwaite himself and his three-year old daughter, who wants to bury the bird because she enjoys hiding away and thinks that 'spiders, flies and ladybirds' are asleep when they are dead. Having an adult and a child in the poem is a powerful link to the experience and imagination of both. Enigma remains in the final lines. A characteristic of Causley's own poetry, his wish to allow for plurality of meanings, favours endings in which questions are raised but not answered. There is no closure in Thwaite's poem.

REDACTED: See 'Dead and Gone', *Dawn and Dusk*, p. 71, v. 7.

The skilful proximity of these two poems introduces the pain of loss and the mystery of death in two different stanzaic forms of lyric, neither of which have a rhyming pattern but which share brevity, formality and the fluency of reported common speech within the range of a child's experience. The description of events, direct access to the thoughts of the adult narrators and consistency of reflective tone, reflect Zukofsky's test of speaking with simplicity, sincerity and emotional integrity. These qualities replicate Williams's advocacy of authenticity through lived experience expressed in direct and accessible language, not 'someone [else's] market or policies.'²²

²²Williams, 'The Writer: Commitment and Alignment' in *Resources of Hope*, ed. by Robin Gable, pp. 86,87.

In the title pages to *Dawn and Dusk*, an extract from *Cape Ann* by T. S. Eliot, hints that poetry, whether serious or humorous, can do no more than hold fears of loss of identity and extinction at bay. Causley's choice of topics for his sections winds through songs, animals, people, places and significant times just as Eliot's poem celebrates the songs and dances of the various birds. 'All' says Eliot in his poem, 'are delectable' and stimulate a variety of human responses. But in the end the land, says Eliot, has to be resigned '[to] its true owner, the tough one, the sea gull.' And yet, in Causley's own work as in the poem which ends this anthology, George Barker's mysterious 'My Joy, My Jockey, My Gabriel' (*Dawn and Dusk*, p. 111), there is a hint of some kind of resolution to the fear of extinction. Barker writes that 'Time will divide us, and the sea / Wring its wild hands all day between; [...] But always and for ever he / At night will sleep and keep by me'. It is never disclosed who the 'Joy, Jockey and Gabriel' is or represents. Causley, in his great poem of meeting with his parents 'Eden Rock' (p. 421), finds some kind of presentiment of immortality with those who have gone before, 'For you had never been away'.

In *The Puffin Book of Magic Verse* Causley continues to use solemnity and seriousness in the task of exposing the threat from darkness and barbarism. The theme of the supernatural and 'other world' of both positive magic and malevolence is at the heart of the Puffin anthology and it shares with its predecessor the mixture of tones, including both seriousness and humour. There are comical characters resembling Causley's own comic inventions, such as the Whale and the strange Merman in George Barker's poem who could speak neither 'English or French or German' and gave up on listening to 'the Reverend Et Cetera's sermon' ('The Reverend Arbuthnot-Armitage-Brown', *The Puffin Book of Magic Verse*, p. 196). But the tone of the poems as revealed overall in the section headings, Ghosts, Hauntings, Changelings, Ogres, Demons and Strange Events, is characteristic of the

attempt to use the imagination to neutralise and ward off fear, found in so much of Causley's own verse. The combination of the sinister and the humorous is characteristic of Causley's ability to provide children with poems with rhyme, metre and pace using content and imagery which opens up further speculation and widens their exposure to diversity in literature.

In the Introduction to *Dawn and Dusk* Causley implies an affinity with the sixties critical approach of reader-response theory which affirms the contribution fo the reader to the making of meaning from a poem. He celebrates plurality of meaning and admits such meanings may be hidden and various:

We must remember that all poems hint at many other worlds, thoughts, feelings, imaginings. A poem about a bird, for example, may have the whole of life contained in it as well as the bird. At certain times, of course, the reader must bring more to a poem than at others. The 'meaning' is something personal; it speaks to each of us alone. If we wish to work it out, we have to do so according to our own sensibility. In doing so, we may also find that a marvellous fact about a good poem is that it will stand up, quite unshaken, to almost any number of interpretations.²³

This is a straightforward account of what is essentially reader-response theory communicated to both the adult and child reader of the Introduction to *Dawn and Dusk*.

²³ Causley, *Dawn and Dusk*, p. 9.

Causley saw such diversity of interpretation as a positive development. He reiterated this view in the Introduction to his anthology of magic verse. 'All poetry is magic [...] The way that a good poem 'works' on the reader is as mysterious, as hard to explain, as the possible working of a charm or spell.'²⁴ As he anticipates child readers with a tendency to see the subject matter of poems as literal, he is at pains in the Introduction to *The Puffin Book of Magic Verse* to point out in the interests of safety that 'this book contains *poems*; not remedies and cures.'²⁵ He emphasises that 'a charm loses its power when it is written down or published for all to see.'²⁶ The use of everyday speech in a variety of already established linguistic patterns to express the interplay between the five senses and the imagination was, for Causley, the proof of quality and the basis of this mysterious 'working' on the reader. Introducing *The Puffin Book of Magic Verse* he comments that:

I hope this anthology will remind the reader that mystery and magic are not necessarily faraway things of the past, but are found here, today, close to our five senses: and to these five senses we must bring our minds and our imaginations.²⁷

He includes in this children's anthology poems which have an explicit sense of fear and of the human activity which feeds on oppression and manipulation. Reviewing the magic verse anthology in the *New York Times*, Thomas Lask referred to its ability to 'appeal to

²⁴ Causley, *The Puffin Book of Magic Verse*, p. 15.

²⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 17.

²⁶ *Ibid.*

²⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 18.

the child's sense of mystery, for these are the kind of poems which fascinate even as they scarify'.²⁸ Theodore Roethke's 'The Serpent' (*The Puffin Book of Magic Verse*, p. 177), 'had to sing' [...]. He simply gave up Serpentine because 'He was a Serpent with a soul;'. The end of the poem casts doubt on his sincerity. "'You see," he said, with a Serpent's Leer, / "I'm serious about my singing career!'" . Duplicity and deviousness are never far away.

In 'The Serpent' the poetry is a vehicle for unmasking hypocrisy, with resonances of the Garden of Eden. Auden's poem 'Song of The Ogres' (*The Puffin Book of Magic Verse*, p. 162), uses the aura of menacing figures from the past to paint a bleak picture of the triumph of fascism. A leap of imagination reinvents the concept of an ogre with modern implications. The threat from them is explicit but Auden, using metre and rhyme that has hints of incantation and curse, nowhere spells out its nature. Causley had heard the beat of the drums in his adolescence in the thirties, the soldiers had arrived in the form of World War Two. Post-war, a new fear of instability with nuclear consequences had arrived. Auden's fusion of the ballad form and a central image, in this case the ogres ostensibly from the past but with contemporary resonance, was a great influence on Causley's form, content and sensibility.

REDACTED: See 'Song of the Ogres', *The Puffin Book of Magic Verse*, p. 162, v. 2,4.

Neither 'Honest Virtue' nor 'Love' triumphs in the affirmation in the poem of the callous destruction wrought by power. For Causley these forces of destruction were still active and might prevail in the world beyond the thirties. The 'Song of the Ogres' is a sophisticated choice for a children's anthology, given that, even though its bleak message is similar to

²⁸ Thomas Lask, 'Getting Them While They're Young', p. 194.

'The Serpent', it does not temper its bleakness with humour or the familiar children's trope of anthropomorphizing sinister creatures such as serpents.

The range of poems in *Dawn and Dusk* and *The Puffin Book of Magic Verse*, and Causley's introductions to these two anthologies, illustrate his belief that the work of poetry is to confront and attempt to dispel darkness and brutality. The poems expose the mystery of death as the ultimate darkness, expose the agents of destructive power and their duplicity and use the option of humour to cope and/or escape. Many cultures have tried to utilise the power of magic in poetry to harness the mysterious transformative power of the imagination against the power of fear. Hence it is in *The Puffin Book of Magic Verse* that Causley makes most use of diverse cultural resources. The struggle transcends borders.

The Composition of Art: Poetry and Motivation

Cultures have in common the inevitable end in death of humanity's conscious relationship to the passage of time. One of Causley's selections in *The Puffin Book of Salt-Sea Verse* is Kevin Crossley-Holland's 'A Beach of Stones' (p. 49) which ends with the lines 'They shift through centuries,/ Grinding their way towards silence.' Despite the inevitability of death, the indifference of the passage of time does not prevent Causley from wanting to show that the voices of poetry are still needed to speak out against loss and despair which threatens to stifle human creativity. The commitment of the poet is urgently needed. Despite the grinding of the stones towards silence, Causley was not yet ready to be silent. He continued to believe that aesthetics was an imaginative weapon

encountering the darkness and exposing and protesting against the violence and cruelty which contaminated an innocent sense of the goodness of life. The urgency to write driven by his historical situation explains Causley's description of the conditions for the flourishing of artistic *composition* in the Introduction to *The Puffin Book of Salt-Sea Verse* in 1978.

Just as he felt obligated to express the profound consequences of the results of war, so Causley could not remain apathetic or indifferent to the need to ascribe dignity and give literary credibility and voice to the lives which unfolded around him, the ordinary culture of Williams's vision. He had watched his mother's unremitting struggle with poverty in his childhood, he later taught pupils from material circumstances which limited their aspirations and opportunities. A post-World War Two reconstruction through a welfare and education system which would end the disadvantage of the poor proved unable, in his lifetime, to resist the individualism and inequality produced by advanced capitalism. This commitment to exposure and protest explains his statement on the *composition* of poetry in *The Puffin Book of Salt-Sea Verse*. Causley refers to poetic motivation, the source of the energy to write:

Almost all of us have strong feelings of love or fear or hatred for the ocean: and sometimes a strange mixture of all three. Not surprisingly, then, many good poems have arisen out of these strong feelings: for art cannot take root in attitudes of indifference or apathy.²⁹

²⁹ Causley, *The Puffin Book of Salt-Sea Verse*, p. 18.

The naming of 'love, fear and hatred' hints at the 'strong feelings' behind Causley's own motivation as a poet. The heart of his poetry is essentially the response of the emotions against the corrosion of love and the insidious forces which limit human flourishing. In the Introduction he cites *The Sea in English Literature*, written by Cornishwoman Anne Treneer, speaking of Poseidon, ' he is shifty, [...] the sea is ungenerous, not to be trusted for a moment, without the character or will of its own, reflecting the sky, following the moon, and driven by the wind.'³⁰

The vocabulary and concepts in this Introduction are far more complex than those in the previous anthology and the Introduction appears to be directed at adult readers. Causley is again presuming his own definition of 'good poems' and, in the pursuit of these, transgressing boundaries of adult and children's verse. He believed that the characteristics of such 'good' poems, the struggles they reveal, rendered them urgently applicable to both categories. They arise from strong commitment and characterise the poet's struggles with personal integrity (incorruptibility) and with the wish for permanence (eternal life) symbolised by the image of salt:

It seems to me a happy accident that salt is also the ancient symbol of purity, vigour, wit, strong love, and — perhaps the most important of all — incorruptibility and eternal life: all qualities associated with the best of poetry, and of every kind of art.³¹

³⁰ Anne Treneer, *The Sea in English Literature*, (Liverpool: Liverpool University Press, 1926), quoted in Causley, *The Puffin Book of Salt-Sea Verse*, p. 18.

³¹ *Ibid.*, p. 15.

Antony Maitland's line drawings reflect the dualism of communicating the twin implications of salt and sea in their attractive, childlike impressions which nevertheless draw the eye into deeper possibilities. The cover illustration of a Viking Ship and a modern Destroyer emphasise the continuity of the sea as a location of human conflict. Something of the tension between the destructiveness of the sea and the positive qualities of salt is present in Stevie Smith's 'Mrs Arbuthnot' (*The Penguin Book of Salt-Sea Verse*, p. 199). Mrs Arbuthnot's talent as a poet has left her since she has given up the struggle, compromised with the chaos and now lives beside it, she lives 'at home by the sea'. The last verse explains that 'Nobody writes or wishes to / Who is one with their desire'. The commitment which motivates the poet dies without struggle.

This commitment does not automatically entail change in poetic style. *The Puffin Book of Salt-Sea Verse* follows its two predecessors in resisting experimentation in poetic genre, syntax and vocabulary. Causley's choice of first poem for this anthology, Stephen Spender's 'Word' (*The Puffin Book of Salt Sea Verse*, p.23), plunges straight into the paradox inherent in the whole anthology, the imposition of art on the chaos of language via the poetic imagination.

REDACTED: See 'Word', *The Puffin Book of Salt Sea Verse* , p. 23.

The word bites until it is articulated but the poet has to decide whether to allow it to go free or constrain it in the dish of rhyme. Spender does not answer the question but Causley

does. In the anthologies there is a sense of discipline in the choice of formal vocabulary and often the preponderance of the structure of iambic pentameter. Vernon Watkins's 'The Heron' in *The Puffin Book of Salt-Sea Verse* (p. 46), is a powerful expression of the enduring power of ordered language to withstand chaos. In Watkins's poem rhyme and metre are employed to express commitment to the life-giving potential of language and imagination. Causley's argument that the composition of poetry cannot take root in apathy and indifference is illustrated by the fixation of the golden eyes on 'light's reflected word' in the midst of calamity.

REDACTED: See 'The Heron', *The Puffin Book of Salt Sea Verse*, p. 46, v. 5.

The word reflected in the light can be expressed in some modest variety. Clarence's great speech before he is drowned in Shakespeare's *Richard III*, 'Methought I Saw a Thousand Fearful Wracks' (*The Puffin Book of Salt-Sea Verse*, p. 160), is included alongside Walt Whitman's abandonment of metre and rhyme to imply a hidden world in 'The World Below The Brine' (*The Puffin Book of Salt-Sea Verse*, p. 163). 'The world below the brine, / Forests at the bottom of the sea, the branches and / leaves'. As with *The Puffin Book of Magic Verse*, the strategy of arranging the sections thematically rather than stylistically, makes the movement from one poem to the next seamless, however far apart chronologically.

The commitment of the poet to expose the violation of nature is apparent in John Betjeman's ironic title 'Delectable Duchy' (*The Puffin Book of Salt-Sea Verse*, p. 81). This is

a bitter satire on the encroachment of modernity on the natural world of Cornwall, 'The lichened spears of blackthorn glitter / With harvest of the August litter'. The force of Betjeman's ecological concerns in the poem is weakened by his uncritical pastoral perspective of life pre-modernity and ignoring how hard life was for those inhabiting a community of 'The slate-hung farms, the oil-lit chapels', a relevant example of how Causley's fondness for poems which celebrate the past runs the danger of uncritical nostalgia. Motivation to expose other human abuses, in this instance cruelty to animals, is also apparent in the anthology. The poetic compulsion which prompted Walker Gibson's 'In Memory Of The Circus Ship Euzkera' (*The Puffin Book of Salt-Sea Verse*, p. 160), results in a vivid description of the horrible fate of animals used for entertainment. Adults take children to circuses. The loss of the animals as the Euzkera is wrecked provides a trigger for children to reflect on the morality of what is on offer, although they may not recognise the irony of the linking of this carnage to the 'most stupendous show'.

REDACTED: See 'In Memory of the Circus Ship Euzkera', *The Puffin Book of Salt Sea Verse*, p. 160, v. 1.

Reviewing the anthology in *The Times Literary Supplement* in December 1978, Alan Brownjohn praised its scope as being 'notably free from the parasitism that characterises so many anthologies.' Causley is confidently presenting his own selection of poems on themes important to him. Within this he can select poems which do not have to conform to any preconceived reputation for specific styles. Brownjohn attributes the success of the anthology to Causley's research, his willingness to be open to a variety of material and 'a

selection that is continually original and surprising.’ These features add up, says Brownjohn, to an anthology that ‘sets a standard for all others.’³²

Causley was working inside a selective tradition of the type of poetry which Williams described as an inheritance of ‘common understanding’ which has shaped meanings in the past and pre-shaped the present’.³³ Selective tradition is selective in what it chooses *from* and what it omits. Given the fragmentation of a commonly agreed definition of culture as the second half of the twentieth century progressed, it seemed unlikely that Brownjohn’s ‘standard’ could ever be widely applied. Speaking judgementally of a ‘standard’ against which anthologies can be compared implies a norm. It is itself an assumption from a fast disappearing conviction of elite value judgements. Causley’s choices adhered to both Eliot and Williams’s validity of the past as a still living presence in contemporary verse and culture, particularly Williams’s residual forces. Causley did not challenge poetic conventions. He selected on the basis of poetry which reinforced his emotional response to and personal preoccupations with, the indifference of time, death, loss and separation, illustrating that a range of poems can exemplify the strong feelings of fear, hatred and love communicating effectively beyond the era in which that poetry is written. Yet, given the focus on struggle against the forces which impede human flourishing and the need for commitment to this on the part of the poet, Causley shows limited initiative in finding and including poets from less traditional sources. This is particularly so from those writing from working-class perspectives about concerns of inequality and injustice. The anthologies

³² Alan Brownjohn, ‘Sea Passages’, *The Times Literary Supplement*, 1 December 1978, p. 1399.

³³ See Williams, *Culture and Society*, p. 338. *Marxism and Literature*, p. 115.

reveal the overwhelming influence of the literary culture which he had been taught to value. The cultural conditioning of the middle-class education system had done its job.

The Aesthetic of Poetry and Causley's 'Poetic Truth'

In *Dawn and Dusk* and *The Puffin Book of Magic Verse* Causley had taken as his underlying conviction that poetry was a force against potentially destructive human inclinations and elements of the natural world which tend to destruction rather than creation. In *The Puffin Book of Salt-Sea Verse* the poetry explores the urge to participate in this force. The use of poetry and the commitment to voicing resistance to loss in a variety of manifestations, results in what he saw as 'poetic truth'. In the Introduction to *The Sun, Dancing* Causley stated that the *function* of poetry is specifically to deliver a unique kind of truth.³⁴ He posits this 'truth' as an aid to reflecting on the mysteries of human existence which are not susceptible to 'a mere recital of factual evidence.'³⁵ The mysteries which had most profoundly featured in his own life were the negative forces of war, the struggle with poverty of his working-class background, and the disintegrating sense of community occurring post World War Two. The use of the word 'mysteries' implies both the possibility of plurality in meaning and a lack of definitive closure. Poetry presents a perspective on 'truth' as seen by the poet who has been profoundly moved by these experiences.

Causley believed in the possibility of 'poetic truth':

³⁴ Causley, *The Sun, Dancing*, p. 16.

³⁵ *Ibid.*

What is of the greatest value here is poetic truth: something, hopefully, ever more salutary and meaningful as we reflect on the mysteries of human experience than a mere recital of factual evidence.³⁶

The selection of a religious narrative as the basis for content, as in *The Sun, Dancing*, is itself an aspect of the selective tradition. Religion has traditionally been viewed as the realm of human activity through which the search for meaning in such mysteries is located and poetry as an appropriate vehicle for articulating this search. During the post-war decades religion fitted the analysis of selective tradition given by Williams in *The Long Revolution*. It was part of general human culture and had a historical record.³⁷ Williams viewed as an attribute of selective tradition. the rejection of what was once termed culture but was being superseded in the process of selection.³⁸ *The Sun, Dancing* was first published well into the post-war era, in 1982, yet Causley was still assuming a readership familiar with the Christian narrative and receptive to a role for religious faith in approaching questions of meaning and value. Yet religious tradition and religious literacy were being superseded in the course of the second half of the twentieth century. Typically for him, Causley clung to this particular 'structure of feeling' which had played such a prominent role in his own heritage.

The function of poetry to combine religious narratives, imagination and contemporary experience to create 'poetic' rather than 'factual' truth is conveyed in *The Sun, Dancing*, through the re-telling of significant narratives from the Christian scriptures of the Old and

³⁶ Ibid.

³⁷ Williams, *The Long Revolution*, p. 51.

³⁸ Williams, *Marxism and Literature*, p. 115.

New Testament. This includes predictable and canonical medieval and contemporary poetry on Noah, Moses, Christmas and Easter. Causley's justification for restricting the choice of poems to those which 'have been written basically from a Christian standpoint, or to embody a Christian point of view' was that the choice of one narrative is necessary, given the huge amount of material from religious and non-religious world views which would qualify as agencies of this 'poetic truth' from a wider scope.³⁹ He admitted the poems are 'an entirely personal choice,' and nowhere states that any faith of his own intrudes into his decisions, although the familiarity of Christian influences in childhood would privilege both Christianity and examples of narratives from Judaism alongside his poetic judgements. Eliot's affirmation of the value of tradition can be seen in content based on the ancient narratives of the relationship between humanity and the created world and the Christian chronology of Christmas to Easter by way of miracles and parables. In compiling a book with the strap line 'Christian Verse' Causley revealed that, as with his attachment to measured tone and style in poetics, he cannot entirely let go of the culture of his childhood. His Anglican and Methodist upbringing predisposed him to view the expression of mystery through reference to prayers and songs, Biblical stories, miracles and saints and to favour poems with the metrical resonance of psalms and hymns.

The search for poetic truth beyond mere factual evidence raises questions inherent in religious texts. Causley does not shrink from this. The anthology does illustrate the potential of poetry to express theological questions through incidents in Biblical narrative. L. A. G. Strong's 'The Wicked Pig' (*The Sun, Dancing*, p. 28), posits the basic theological question of the existence of evil.

³⁹ Causley, *The Sun, Dancing*, p. 16.

REDACTED: See 'The Wicked Pig', in *The Sun, Dancing*, p. 28, l. 12-16.

Causley's valued the narratives of institutional religion as he experienced it in church and chapel as a child. Nevertheless, his understanding of the effect of *organised* religion in everyday experience, coloured by his own childhood, is apparent in the choice of D. J. Enright's 'Sunday' (*The Sun, Dancing*, p. 205).

REDACTED: See 'Sunday', in *The Sun, Dancing*, p. 205, v. 2,3.

The repetition of 'sickly' economically and forcefully uses one adjective to convey decay, waste and something basically moribund about the lives of the adults and imposed on the children, potentially pernicious in manipulating religious narratives into doctrine. 'The churches were run by a picked crew / Of bad actors radiating insincerity.' Sunday School is seen as part of the aspiration to respectability, a substitute in working-class culture for the unattainable public school. The sentiments that 'I cannot recall one elevated moment in church,' and 'Though as a choirboy I pulled in a useful / Sixpence per month' were true to Causley's own childhood experience. They ground the poem in criticism of a particular church-going culture of the Twenties world where truth is handed down and presumed to be embedded in the uncritical acceptance of religious narratives as literal. As it did for Causley, something clings persistently on. Enright ironically observes in the last verse.

REDACTED: See 'Sunday', in *The Sun, Dancing*, p. 205, v. 6.

Causley's own religious poetry echoes Enright's suspicions of the way religious texts are distorted to enforce the power of the inadequate over the vulnerable. Causley identified with an appreciation of the potential beauty of religious language and a sense of mystery but had no time for cerebral doctrinal statements or appropriation of the text as fact rather than imagination.⁴⁰ His choices for *The Sun, Dancing* include poems critical of the way institutional religion smothers questions and suppresses the spirit of enquiry and the potential for inspiration from the texts.

Despite this criticism the mystery of the sources of internal creativity remains. Causley's selection in *The Sun, Dancing* infers that the definition of 'religion' is not confined to doctrine and dogma and the outward trappings of Enright's 'grim buffoonery'. The brief opening section 'Starting Points', raises the central ontological mystery of the source of creation and creativity. The final poem, 'Wonder' by Thomas Traherne (*The Sun, Dancing*, p. 237), brings the desire for understanding the identity of God and man back to Causley's introductory assertion of a truth beyond the factual. Causley has no wish to impose closure on theological questions on the nature of God, the creativity which seems the 'sea of life' to Traherne.

REDACTED: See 'Wonder', in *The Sun, Dancing*, p. 237, v. 3.

⁴⁰ Ibid.

Traherne's sense of wonder is inspired by the presence of *his* undefined God. Causley includes a seventeenth century poem which he considers to articulate universal statements about the search for meaning in spiritual and mystical experience.

The chronological time span of Causley's choices illustrates the durability of the religious tradition in the dominant culture. Religion can be seen as one of Williams's 'residual' forces in the twentieth century, not yet archaic and still a presence in 'cultures in common'. The type of religious influence which surrounded Causley in his childhood had largely disappeared but as Williams argued 'No dominant culture, in reality, exhausts the full range of human practice, human energy, human intention.'⁴¹ Placing Traherne in the same anthology as Enright's cynical attitude to the institutional religion which the dominant culture presented to him in his childhood, makes clear Causley's division between inspiration and ritual and dogma. Any social, economic and therefore class implications of Traherne's vision are not questioned. O'Connor pointed out that Williams criticised Eliot's version of religion and culture as a whole way of life by ignoring the economic and social systems which sustained them.⁴² Causley is foregrounding religion for other reasons than interrogating the privilege of Traherne's education and social standing which predispose him to find 'a vigour in my sense' and 'seas of life' denied to those whose sole priority was subsistence and survival.

In *The Sun, Dancing* Causley applauded 'fresh attitudes' and 'excitingly varied interpretations of religious thought and experience.'⁴³ He did select poetic forms

⁴¹ Raymond Williams, 'Base and Superstructure in Marxist Cultural Theory', in *Problems in Materialism and Culture: Selected Essays* (London: Verso, 1980), p. 43.

⁴² For a discussion of Eliot and Williams on culture see O'Connor, *Raymond Williams: Writing, Culture, Politics*, p. 58.

⁴³ Causley, *The Sun, Dancing*, p. 19

recognising the power of free verse, including Hughes 'Birth Of A Rainbow' (*The Sun, Dancing*, p. 229), and Gerard Manley Hopkins's 'Million-Fueled, Nature's Bonfire Burns On' (*The Sun, Dancing*, p. 157). There is some poetic diversity in translations from the past. Ronald Tamplin's 'The Need for Baptism' (*The Sun, Dancing*, p. 227), is a translation from William Langland's 'Piers Plowman'. There are other translations from the Middle English version of the poem by Tamplin in more conventional layout but this stands out as visually diverse in a collection otherwise very conventional in line structure and presentation.

REDACTED: See 'The Need for Baptism', in *The Sun, Dancing*, p. 157, l. 1-9.

In this extract the images from everyday life and the structural principles of short lines and pauses give the translation a feel of everyday speech as distinct from Tamplin's other extracts from Langland which look more formal and 'literary'. Poetic diversity in *The Sun, Dancing* is present but in these new interpretations Causley still required the discipline of order, restraint and familiarity, even in encountering the mysterious. He assumed that archaic language required translation from the original in order to communicate with his readers, which would be especially so in the case of children.

In critical assessment, Causley was a victim of his own success in compiling verse which he felt adults and children could respond to. *The Sun, Dancing*, was re-printed specifically as a Puffin Book in 1984, thus implying its destination to be the children's market. This conclusion was endorsed by *The Times Educational Supplement*, quoted on the back cover as saying that:

It is unthinkable that any imaginative child, confronted with this book, should fail to find flashpoints, poems that lead to a fuller understanding of the Christian faith.⁴⁴

The combination of accessible and very complex hermeneutic, transgressing preconceived boundaries of adult and children's verse, was limited to the child's side of the boundary in critical appraisal by Causley's reputation as a 'children's poet'. In *The Sunday Times* review of 'children's fare', Margery Fisher does not seem to appreciate the irony of her review being designated in this way despite the fact that she commends the accommodation of an 'astonishing range of thoughts.' She also praises the aptness of Illustrations, always an obsession of Causley. *The Sun, Dancing* benefitted from the work of Charles Keeping. Fisher was enthusiastic about Keeping's work, commenting that 'Charles Keeping's decorations emphasise the mysterious, expansive quality of this remarkable and timeless collection.'⁴⁵

The choice and sequence of the sections in *The Sun, Dancing* place 'poetic truth' within the pattern in which 'religious truth' is most often expressed, that of narrative. Causley had celebrated the power of narrative in his 1964 publication, *Rising Early*, which the Brockhampton Press published as a follow-on to the success of *Dawn and Dusk*. The Introduction to *Rising Early* refers to 'the poet's search for the stuff of life itself and the way he is able to touch mankind through his work.'⁴⁶ In a reflection of Zukofsky's

⁴⁴ See Causley, *The Sun, Dancing*, backcover.

⁴⁵ Margery Fisher, 'Send in the Clowns', *The Sunday Times*, 1 July 1984, p. 43.

⁴⁶ Causley, *Rising Early*, p. 12

endorsement of simplicity and emotional integrity, the directness of story-telling, Causley believed, could speak 'without bias or sentimentality'.⁴⁷ The reliability of direct observation and disclosure and the completion of the story within the time span of the narrative could be effective aspects of the re-telling of lived experience so valued by Williams.⁴⁸ Causley's admiration for narrative, the basis of the anthology, *Rising Early*, illustrates Williams's assertion that 'a culture has two aspects: the known meanings and directions' and 'the new observations and meanings'. Williams contended that 'culture is always traditional and creative', combining 'the most ordinary common meanings and the finest individual meanings.'⁴⁹ Williams also argued, at the beginning of the chapter 'Structures of Feeling' in his book *Marxism and Literature*, that 'the tendency of reducing culture and society into a past tense or "finished products" is the strongest barrier to the recognition of human cultural activity.'⁵⁰

Narrative poetry was, for Causley, one of the effective opportunities for 'poetic truth' to be heard against the efforts to silence it by those forces of barbarity he had referred to in his perception of poetry as a weapon. Reflecting Eliot's belief in the potential for expressions of past wisdom to be merged with present articulation, Causley believed that the genre of the story poem from past tradition, could be utilised in contemporary poetry. The contribution of the present would be developments in embellishing the surface of the story line with more complex stories, characterisation and elaborate language. He also advocated the possibilities of narrative to avoid moralising and closure. The incidents of the story 'can speak for themselves: and, as we listen, we remain

⁴⁷ Ibid. p. 9.

⁴⁸ Eldridge, *Raymond Williams: Making Connections*, p. 133.

⁴⁹ Williams, 'Culture is Ordinary' in *Resources of Hope* ed. By Robin Gable, p. 4.

⁵⁰ Williams, *Marxism and Literature*, p. 128.

watchful for all kinds of ironic understatements.⁵¹ 'Poetic truth' was not to be understood as a vehicle for absolute propositional statements but as a vehicle for imaginative expression which sought to go beyond the constraints of observable 'factual evidence'. The Greek Cypriot shepherd, killed by security forces in Patricia Beer's 'The Fifth Sense' (*Rising Early*, p. 120), lies dead in the hospital because his deafness prevented him from responding when challenged. 'I see how precious each thing is, how dear, / For I may never touch, smell, taste or see / Again, because I could not hear.' For Causley, poetic truth has to be heard or the whole human capacity for compassion is repressed.

Influencing the Future and Continuing the Past.

When Causley began his role as a significant anthologist of the post-war period, Kamm had written to him in October 1962 explaining that publishing poetry had commercial implications and involved judgements which touched on the contentious issue of expert aesthetic judgement:

Brockhampton Press is a unique and curious set-up. Publishing books that only children can read, and wishing to continue to be entirely self-supporting, it is necessary to publish every kind of book, including (and in

⁵¹ Causley, *Rising Early*, p. 9.

particular) those that sell in very large numbers but which may not appeal to all the experts on aesthetic grounds.⁵²

‘Poetic truth’ in all its components but controlled by his own definition, was the only priority which mattered to Causley. He had little concern for appeal to experts or conformity to theories. Through the sixties and on into the seventies and eighties, the ‘notion of literary value as an inviolable essence’ had disintegrated and critical vocabularies were ‘becoming porous.’⁵³ Nevertheless, as part of this diversification, the ‘common culture’ descended from traditional poetic form; vernacular language, static social structure and residual religious belief, represented by his anthologies, remained viable publishing projects alongside the more rebellious urban manifestations of Horovitz and The Liverpool Poets.⁵⁴

Anthologies based on the theme of magic and the quaintly named ‘salt-sea’ do not usually sit with ‘serious’ literary preoccupations and seem unlikely subjects for contemporary poets in a post-war age. But Causley did not feel he was dealing with the past. The Introductions make it plain that he regards verse from the past and the present as resources for contemporary expression. As in his own poetry, his conservative attitude to experimentation reflects Eliot’s valuing of the influence of tradition in shaping

⁵² Exeter, University of Exeter, EUL MS 50a/LIT/1/1, Letter, Antony Kamm to Charles Causley, 9 October 1962.

⁵³ Andrew Bennett and Nicholas Royle, *An Introduction to Literature, Criticism and Theory* (London: Routledge, 2009), pp. 46, 49.

⁵⁴ Horovitz ed., *Children of Albion: Poetry of the ‘Underground’ in Britain*. Henri, McGough and Patten, *The Mersey Sound: Penguin Modern Poets 10*.

contemporary poetic expression but without Eliot's developments of fragmented images and disjointed narrative as a means of communicating alternative ways of seeing reality.

Causley's inner compulsion to not only write his own poetry but to bring a wide variety of poets to the 'general understanding' referred to by Kamm sustained a precarious tradition of a continuing non-experimental poetic culture in the mass market. Compiling poetry inevitably risks personal preference and possible elitism. Through the second half of the twentieth century, Causley reflected on which poetry from the past and the present would communicate to adult and child readers. He selected poetry which he had himself encountered which spanned anonymous medieval verse to 'poets of today'. He did not look to the future with any confidence that extreme experiments with grammar, syntax and form could deliver this. Eric Falci argued that all anthologies are polemical.⁵⁵ In his polemic, Causley illustrated Williams's statement that it is the emphasis on 'a mutual determination of values and meanings, that I think one has to remember in considering one possible meaning of a "common culture"'.⁵⁶ The irony is that in his own poetry as well as in his anthologies Causley was being counter-cultural in promoting these values in poetics in the fast changing contexts of the second half of the twentieth century.

Causley's individual stance on the selection of his poems and in his own work, revealed a taste which responded to experience with an emotional energy formed in the educational influences of working-class childhood and by the personal tragedies of war. He expended his energies in looking back and to the careful contemporary in poetics. The measure of Causley's success as an anthologist, as of his own collections, is that he

⁵⁵ Eric Falci, *The Cambridge Introduction to British Poetry 1945- 2012* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2015), p. 182.

⁵⁶ Williams, 'The Idea of a Common Culture', in *Resources of Hope*: ed. by Robin Gable, p. 37.

recognised a culture in common with those readers content to be served by this selective tradition. Causley's anthologies illustrated his emphasis on the primary importance of subject matter delivering an imposed theme within these constraints. To compile anthologies which might have a chance of influencing poetic taste in the future, particularly by influencing new generations in classrooms from 'cultures in common' hugely different to that which he himself participated in, could be seen, to use his own context of battling the anarchy and indifference represented by the sea, to be clinging to the wreckage.

Conclusion:

This thesis has demonstrated that Causley was consistent in his belief and practice that the subject matter, production of, and access to poetry was an expression of the creativity of everyday life. He maintained in belief and practice that poetry should speak with and for, not about, the people he encountered in that life. He recognised that the mystery and creativity were already there, he had no need to look elsewhere.

Causley's poetry illustrates Williams's aspiration for the 'cultural importance of language' to go beyond 'a single heritage of meanings which were held to sanction particular contemporary values.'¹ Unlike Williams's concept of dynamic 'cultures in common' in a continuous process of change, Causley's affirmed his past as it affected his present but with few signs of reaching into the future. Yet as Williams comments in 'Base and Superstructure', 'certain genuinely residual meanings and practices in some important cases survive.'²

In his article 'Raymond Williams and the Possibilities of "Committed" Marxism', Stevenson describes Williams's enthusiasm for and vision of;

...a genuinely humane and creative society that made use of the latent potential of the mass of the population who capitalism used for its own purposes or left to live wasted lives trapped in poverty.³

¹ Williams, *Politics and Letters*, p. 177.

² Williams, 'Base and Superstructure', p. 11

³ Nick Stevenson, 'Raymond Williams and the Possibilities of "Committed" Marxism', p. 66.

This thesis has made the case for the importance and survival of Causley's poetry as an element in such a society. He was a poet from working-class origins outside the fashionable and experimental diversity which features so largely in the academic history of British poetics in the second half of the twentieth century. In setting out Causley's achievements within the analysis of knowable communities, structures of feeling, equality of being and selective tradition, this thesis is an original and important contribution to the greater critical recognition of his work.

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