

The Anthroposcentic: Landscape in the Anthropocene

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Abstract

Through the 'Anthroposcentic', this paper explores how landscape becomes emblematic of processes deemed to mark an Anthropocene epoch, beginning with a detailed discussion of Simon Roberts' photography of Somerset floods. The Anthropocene, whereby the human species is held to have made a distinctive mark on the geological record, has received extensive scientific and public commentary, and the Anthroposcentic indicates a potential point of correspondence with landscape. The paper discusses the temporality of the Anthropocene, and forms of image work carried out around it. The paper then examines various forms of contemporary Anthroposcentic landscape imagery concerned with coastal erosion. Recent years have seen a proliferation of coastal art practice, with the meeting point of land and sea an apt site for reflection on the Anthropocene and climate change. The paper also discusses imagery evoking undersea lost lands, including the North Sea's former 'Doggerland'. The paper sets current art practice alongside the imagery of scientific research, and within a genealogy of narratives of coastal change.

Author Biography



David Matless is Professor of Cultural Geography at the University of Nottingham. He is the author of *Landscape and Englishness* (Reaktion Books 1998, revised edition 2016), *The Regional Book* (Uniformbooks, 2015), and *In the Nature of Landscape: Cultural Geography on the Norfolk Broads* (Wiley-Blackwell, 2014). His current research considers landscape and identity in England since the 1960s, East Anglian cultural landscapes, and the cultural geographies of the Anthropocene.

A New Deposition

The 'now' in 'Landscape Now', the title of this theme issue of *British Art Studies*, deserves scrutiny. One emerging definition of 'now' is the Anthropocene; a now whose beginning remains open to dispute, but which will linger if the label takes hold. A geological epoch identified as beginning in the recent past might even outlast the study of British art.

This essay uses the term 'Anthroposcenic' as a means to explore how landscape might figure a newly epochal now, beginning with an image of flood. In February 2014 Simon Roberts photographed a family looking from Burrow Mump over deluged landscape: 'Flooding of the Somerset Levels, Burrowbridge' (fig. 1).



The image appears in Roberts' 2017 collection *Merrie Albion*, a photographic exploration of landscape and identity over a decade, environmental tumult appearing alongside the political turmoil documented elsewhere in the book.¹ The flooded 'Albion' shown here carries its share of national iconography, the Levels carrying historic associations with King Alfred at nearby Athelney, and mythic standing via Avalon and Glastonbury. Roberts' viewpoint, Burrow Mump, is a smaller version of Glastonbury Tor, complete with St Michael's church ruin at its summit, the tower standing behind the man behind the lens. Burrow Mump was donated to the National Trust in 1946 by Major Alexander Gould Barrett, a plaque on the tower recording it as a memorial: 'that the men and women of Somerset who died serving their country in the Second World War may be remembered here in time to come'.

Roberts' photograph lays a new landscape narrative over older iconography, new stories of anxiety and value, the temporal and precarious. Flood management had achieved newly political status in 2014 as a wet winter brought climate change and the future likelihood of extreme events to the fore. The government Environment Agency were accused of effectively abandoning Burrowbridge, and Royal Marines were brought in to reinforce defences; a line of white sandbags appears near the centre of Roberts' image. The embanked River Parrett flows in the middle distance beyond the A361, and has spilled into the fields to the west. The Quantock Hills are beyond, the river flowing to the right, north to Bridgwater and the sea.

Flood events can be disaster and spectacle, and Roberts photographed the flood on 11 February, choosing the elevated prospect offered by the Mump, and to register others looking. Roberts gains a perspective on a family's perspective on altered landscape, his own tripod-mounted large format camera capturing the adult family members moving phones to record events. The family picture the flood, and their own viewing of the flood. Muddy foreground turf indicates that others too have been here for the view, though Roberts recalls that on his visit Burrowbridge was 'eerily deserted', save for this one family.² As often in his images, Roberts, who would have been conspicuous on the day, appears to escape the attention of the observed, hiding in plain sight, though the small child peering over the adult shoulder does seem to catch Roberts' camera eye. What is that man doing?

Roberts' landscape images are marked by careful social observation; we assume this is a family group, and from dress, situation and lack of baggage we might assume they are familiar with the place already, are not tourists. Here are working people viewing a working landscape whose normal patterns of work have been suspended for the weather. Cars are parked behind the industrial buildings below, so indoors things seem to be proceeding, and roads are passable, but field working is out. The family may, like Roberts, have driven here for the view, or walked up from home. This inter-generational picture indicates not only spatial but temporal prospects, viewpoints forward as well as outward. Will this happen more as the children grow, as adults age? The flood waters are vividly brown with sediment, signalling erosive disruption, yet also deposition for future fertility. Floods have made this landscape in the past, but will increased frequency and severity shift the present balance, becoming in human terms destructive rather than constructive, anthropogenic climate change disrupting human habitat? Another landscape reclassification thereby registers in this Somerset image. As the world enters a proposed new geological epoch, the Anthropocene, where humanity has marked the rock record, the flooded River Parrett lays down future Anthropocene deposits. Future geologists on the Levels may find Anthropocene sediments; future art historians, viewing *Merrie Albion*, might find Roberts' photograph Anthroposcentic.

The Anthroposcentic Now

This essay uses the term 'Anthroposcentic' to explore landscape as emblematic of processes marking the Anthropocene. Though yet to be formally approved as a new geological epoch, the idea of the earth entering a time where not only its land surfaces and sea waters, its air qualities and climatic systems, but also its rock records are irredeemably stamped by human activity, has taken a cultural hold. The Anthropocene may be a label suggesting human culpability or guilt, or

human capability and power. The very act of labelling the earth in this way may be for some an indication of human hubris, for others a recognition of blame which might spur remedial action; not that such action could ever quite remove the label, everything becoming Holocene again. Even an Anthropocene made less destructive to humanity (whatever the consequences for other species) would remain an Anthropocene, the remedial action itself signifying the human capacity for earth effects.

The term 'Anthroposcenic' was floated in a scientific journal, *Nature Climate Change*, in an attempt to carry humanities reflection into scientific discourse.³ Anthropocene debates have indeed been marked not only by cultural practitioners using the languages of science, but by scientists being ready to engage with cultural discourse, to recognise their own narratives as narratives with cultural and political import. Just as the Anthropocene is, like any other geological terminology, a piece of wordplay, and one that has stuck precisely for its provocative conjunction of the human and the geological, so the Anthroposcenic offers a term through which landscape, in all its cultural complexity – material and imaginal, emotional and financial, immediate and intergenerational – might help figure a coming epoch.

The 'now' of the Anthropocene contains a complex temporality, which studies of art or visual culture should acknowledge and reflect on if meaningful engagement with scientific narrative is to proceed. Four key traits of the Anthropocene's treatment of time may be identified here. First, the designation is, unlike any other geological epoch, prospective as well as retrospective. The geological imagination, which in the nineteenth century became a significant cultural and aesthetic force for reflections on human and planetary pasts, evokes in the twenty-first century what might mark the future rock record. A visual culture of future as well as past and present geology therefore emerges. Second, while geologists are seeking a 'golden spike' in the sediment record to mark the stratigraphic beginning of the epoch, with the current favourite the post-1945 global traces left by atmospheric nuclear weapons tests, the drive to a precise date sits alongside the fact that the processes making the Anthropocene were evidently set in train long before this.⁴ Third, commentators have argued for a range of start dates, and this is likely to remain a matter of scientific contention, with arguments made for the Anthropocene beginning around 1800, in the 16th century, or in prehistory. In terms of wider cultural debate, the events deemed to open the Anthropocene will shape its formulation; the beginnings of farming, the colonial exploitation of the Americas, the industrial revolution, the bomb. Different 'Anthro' stories may proceed from different Anthropocene openings.

Fourth, one can trace a history of commentary on the human geological presence which prefigures and anticipates current discussion, and which itself goes back well before the potential 'golden spike'. For example Charles Lyell, whose *Principles of Geology*, first published in 1833, significantly shaped the nineteenth century geological imagination, including via discussion of coastal regions discussed in this essay, anticipated the Anthropocene emphasis on the 'geology of mankind' in stating: 'The earth's crust must be remodelled more than once before all the memorials of man which are continually becoming entombed in the rocks now forming will be destroyed'.⁵ The Anthropocene therefore finds itself concerned with what Caitlin DeSilvey terms 'anticipatory history', such that 'landscape now' and landscape then converse.⁶ One prediction for the Anthropocene, should it be formally designated, might be that the scientific requirement for precise stratigraphic temporal demarcation will jostle with Anthropocene stories migrating across such lines. Should future Anthropocene histories stop at the epochal beginning, with, say, 1950 becoming a checkpoint, beyond which lies Holocene territory? This would seem unduly restrictive, and this essay therefore takes a permissive path, moving from the present across two centuries.

Anthropocene Image Work

Lauren Rickards has suggested that: 'Intellectually as well as materially, the Anthropocene is a deeply cultural phenomenon ... all aspects of the Anthropocene, including its underpinning science, reflect the broader, dynamic cultural imaginary that it is part of and that it is now helping to reshape'. For Rickards the sense of 'humans as a geological force' indicates the 'novel geographical imaginaries' released by the Anthropocene.⁷ Elisabeth Ellsworth and Jamie Kruse's 2012 collection *Making the Geologic Now*, produced as the term Anthropocene came to public prominence and in part concerned with its cultural consequences, reflects on the upsurge of geological cultural debate:

Until recently, the word "geologic" conjured meanings and associations that referred simply and directly to the science of geology - the study of the origin, history, and structures of the earth. But that seems to be changing. Something is happening to the ways that people are now taking up "the geologic."

Contemporary artists, popular culture producers, speculative architects, scientists and philosophers are adding new layers of cultural meaning and aesthetic sensation to the geologic. It is as if recent events and developments are making geologic realities sense-able with new physical intensity and from new angles of thought as a situation that we live within, not simply as something "out there" that we study.⁸

That said, the Anthropocene intrigues in part as a term of cultural debate which carries geological science with it, still tied to stratigraphic reasoning however widely it migrates over different fields. The Anthropocene's scientific particulars shape the cultural geologic now.

Varieties of image work have come to inform Anthropocene debate, concerned with how a geological epoch and its related earth system processes might be visualised and represented. Adam Trexler considers *Anthropocene Fictions*, presentations of climate change in the novel, set around events and processes deemed to mark out new states, including that of sea level rise and flood. Trexler emphasises Anthropocene novelty, positing that 'unprecedented things force unprecedented literary acts', although the complexities of Anthropocene temporality noted above may indicate more varied possibilities.⁹ Roberts' Burrow Mump image may thus be starkly contemporary in its picturing of people picturing landscape via mobile devices, yet is also conscious of longstanding conventions of prospect views, themselves made in dialogue with earlier mobile devices, back to the portable Claude glass. The Anthroposcenic might mix novel forms for novel times with older perspectives for sidelong insight.

The visualisation of climate change and the global environment indicates such combinations of old and new, with, as Denis Cosgrove has shown, longstanding traditions of imaging the whole earth extended by photographic images of earth from space, which themselves became iconic for environmentalist critiques of modernity.¹⁰ Thomas Lekan suggests that such whole earth imagery in turn becomes inadequate to 'the vertiginous spatiality and inescapable viscosity of the hyperobjects we encounter in the Anthropocene'. For Lekan powerful Gaian narratives are restrictive, serving to foreclose 'comedic forms of storytelling, ironic visual representation, or non-linear ecologies without Nature'.¹¹ The visual cultures of climate change and the Anthropocene also encompass future projection, what Martin Mahony terms 'picturing the future-conditional'. Photomontages of future flood events, such as a 'Postcards from the Future' series presenting a London newly tropical, or scientific iconographies of map, graph and diagram, such as the International Panel on Climate Change's controversial 'burning embers' diagram of risks from global temperature change, concentrate such projections.¹² Anthropocene visual culture thus moves across artistic and scientific practice, indeed has seen their deliberate meeting, as in those 'galleries of the Anthropocene' discussed by Libby Robin, Dag Avango, Luke Keogh, Nina Mollers, Bernd Scherer and Helmuth Trischler, including the Munich Deutsches Museum's 2014-16 exhibition 'Welcome to the Anthropocene'.¹³

This paper uses the term Anthroposcenic to indicate emblematic landscapes of the Anthropocene.¹⁴ Stephen Tooth, in his online 'glossary for the Anthropocene', presents the

Anthroposcenic as referring to 'landscapes that have come to be viewed as picturesque (i.e. 'scenic') but that actually are in a far-from-natural, highly-altered state (e.g. the reservoirs in the Elan valley of mid Wales)'.¹⁵ Tooth, Hywel Griffiths, Gavin Goodwin, Tyler Keevil, Eurig Salisbury and Dewi Roberts have subsequently extended an emblematic sense of the Anthroposcenic in their collaborative discussion of upland mid-Wales, presenting responses to the Anthroposcenes of the Ystwyth and Elan valleys in poetry and prose: 'our aims were to engage with the concept of the Anthropocene in a landscape that could be emblematic of the proposed new geological interval'. This 'group of poets, writers and geomorphologists' emphasise the ways in which the Anthroposcenic might connote not only associations of loss and erosion but a positive valuation, even social reverence, of landscape.¹⁶ Such emotional and political complexities echo the approach taken here, and the remainder of this essay examines the English coast, where traumas of present loss mix with fascination for, and even inspiration from, that which has passed. Whether in despair or hope, regret or anticipation, Anthroposcenic landscape catches an Anthropocene predicament.

Anthropocene Signatures on the English Coast

Sea level rise associated with anthropogenic climate change has made coastal landscape emblematic of Anthropocene process. The focus here is on English material, considering recent art practice and the wider visual cultures of coastal process, alongside the ways in which past landscape images, and images of past landscape, may speak to the Anthroposcenic present. Jan Zalasiewicz, Colin Waters, Mark Williams, David Aldridge and Ian Wilkinson have recently explored the scientific 'stratigraphical signature of the Anthropocene in England', tracing deposits carrying signals including pesticide residues, microplastics and artificial radionuclides, in 'an initial sketch of how the Anthropocene might be recognized in England'.¹⁷ This essay pursues complementary cultural-historical coastal landscape 'signatures' of the Anthropocene, indicating a further potential seam of science-humanities exchange. With the stratigraphical signatures noted by Zalasiewicz et al as a starting point, future cultural-historical studies might emerge of, say, seashores marked by microplastics, or coastal landfill sites where marine action may expose an archaeology of late twentieth century consumption. Landfill erosion might give us the plastic human figure, from a precisely-dateable Christmas toy craze, tumbling to the beach.

An English Anthroposcenic is evident from the soft cliffs at East Runton on the north Norfolk coast, just along from Cromer. Caravans look out, some only yards from the cliff edge, from the Seaview caravan park, in unimpeded view (fig.2).¹⁸



The attraction of the site is heightened, and shadowed, by its precarity. The beach shows clear evidence of cliff falls, and repeat visitors will bring memories of defences lost, former access steps fallen. If awareness of loss has long accompanied coastal play, the view from soft cliffs is now overlain by climate narratives, bringing new senses of change to the view. Out to sea near the north-west horizon is the large Sheringham Shoal wind farm, 88 turbines seeking to mitigate climate change at the same time as storm tides eat into soft coastal sediment. The English seascape alters, carrying new freight.

Art and coastal change, in Norfolk and elsewhere, have met in Julian Perry's paintings. Perry's work addresses a range of environmental concerns, including the place of trees in landscape, and threats of arboreal disease, as in his 2015 show 'When Yellow Leaves', and tree and coast meet in Perry's paintings of beached tree stumps in Suffolk.¹⁹ In the 2018 piece '5 Meters a Year', a cubic work made for the charity exhibition Cure³, Perry paints an uprooted birch tree found on the beach at Benacre, with on the reverse of the tree painting a seascape. A mirror on the back of the cube in which the paintings are mounted reflects the seascape, enabling the conjoined images to be viewed simultaneously. The tree is painted against a plain background, in isolation from its beach context; the reflected seascape shows its future place, floating or sunk. The title gives the official rate of erosion and land loss at the site, the tree's future locked to the sea's presence.

In 2010 Perry exhibited 'An Extraordinary Prospect: the coastal erosion paintings', works in oil presenting Norfolk, Suffolk and Yorkshire coastal scenes, including tree works.²⁰ The catalogue cover showed 'Fanfare 34' (2010), a clifftop caravan eroded, Fanfare being the model of caravan shown, but also perhaps suggesting a soundtrack for the humble caravan's dramatic entry into the frame of art. These paintings do not in any sense look down on their objects, which gain

elevated status as the ground is pulled from under them; 'Fanfare 34' echoes the composition of 'Caravan Holiday' (2010), caravans taking a break of sorts (fig. 3).



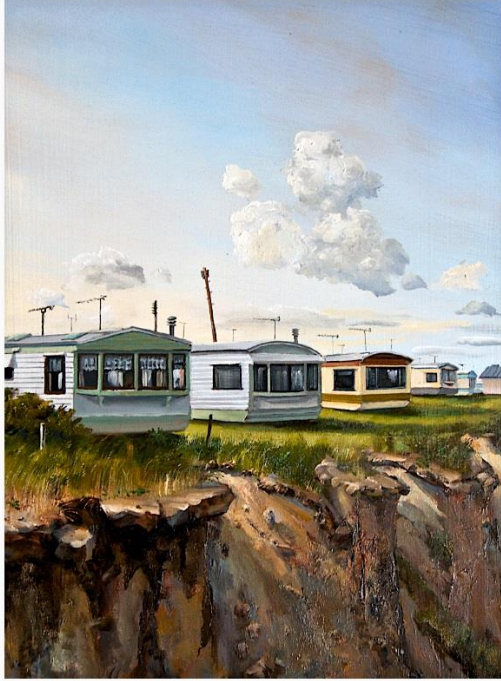
Perry pictures human dwellings, bungalows as well as caravans, hovering in mid-air, still grounded on grass and topsoil. Elsewhere objects in situ cling on; the breaking white railings in 'End of the Road, Skipsea', the wooden wall remains of a 'Yorkshire Barn', still just part of the eroding region of Holderness. The medium of oil paint, rather than, say, watercolour, allows ordinary objects to retain their substance as they contemplate, and make for, an extraordinary prospect. Paintings such as 'Skipsea Bungalow', 'Coastal House Suffolk', and 'Caravan Holiday', make for exemplary Anthroposcenes. Paul Gough notes that these floating forms, frozen in air, serve as a kind of 'poetic redemption' for the humble structures depicted.²¹ There is perhaps a parallel here with the close picturing of the ordinary by a painter such as George Shaw. The stilled life of these pictures may stand as a warning of what happens to things on unprotected soft cliffs, yet in their appreciation of structures they give caravans, chalets and bungalows an attention and value beyond the dismissal they sometimes receive in landscape commentary. The Caravan Holiday was good, while it lasted.

East Anglian coasts have become prominent in cultural engagements with climate change and the Anthropocene, in part through local artistic and literary networks, but also from proximity to public and commercial institutions in London, and the not unrelated gentrification of coastal areas through second home ownership, notably in Suffolk and north-west Norfolk. The interpretation of processes defined as global is here, as elsewhere, inflected by local social geographies, which themselves shape geographies of creativity. Art works other than Perry's

have tracked erosion, as in 2005 at Bawdsey, Suffolk, where Dutch artist Bettina Furnee's 'Lines of Defence' placed flags in lines stretching back from the cliff edge, spelling out 'SUBMISSION IS ADVANCING AT A FRIGHTFUL SPEED', their subsequent disappearance between installation on 15 January and the fall of the final flag on 16 September marking 'the invading force of the sea' (fig. 4). A 30-minute time lapse film records their toppling, the message lost as it is confirmed.²²



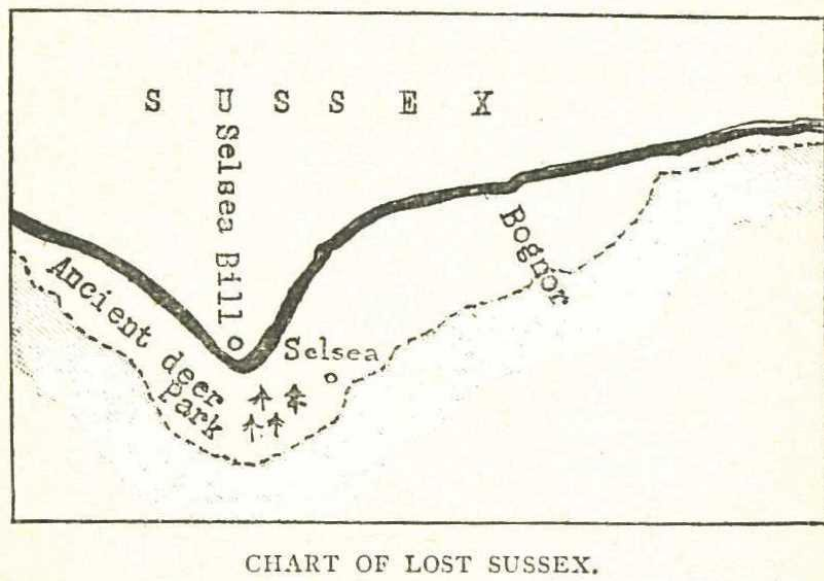
Perry's 'Caravan Holiday' was inspired by clifftop caravans on the eroding coast at Happisburgh in Norfolk, a site which demonstrates how past, present and future landscape visions may become intertwined in an emerging epoch. Perry's 'Happisburgh Defences' (2010) and 'Cliffs at Happisburgh' (2010) show wartime pillboxes eroding into mid-air, a defence never used in wartime receiving no protection now.²³ 'Happisburgh Scene' (2013) shows caravans still on site, yards from the eroding cliff edge, neatly curtained for the view, maintaining decorum in the face of nothingness (fig.5).



Happisburgh has been important in coastal defence argument, with dispute over the degree to which existing coastal lines should be maintained, or managed retreat pursued.²⁴ Erosion following the destruction and non-replacement of defences led to loss of the houses of Beach Road in the early 21st century. As houses and bungalows fell over the cliffs, however, signs of older human life became apparent. East Anglia has been a key site for the Ancient Human Occupation of Britain (AHOB) project, with Happisburgh findings including 800,000 year old footprints in forest bed deposits exposed by erosion in May 2013, pushing back the story of human life in England.²⁵ The disappearance of Beach Road prompted the provision of a new visitor car park and beach access ramp (itself subsequently eroded), where display boards include explanations of coastal process, the mobilisation of local response through the Happisburgh Coastal Concern Action Group, aerial photographs and old postcards, and landscape art. The visual culture of this landscape encompasses art practice, the board showing a photograph of 'Cutting Edge', a beach work showing scissors and erosion made by the Splinter collective, and a reproduction of 'Black and Red Study II', a charcoal and pastel drawing by Norwich artist Malca Schotten, showing the new embayment creating by erosion, and Beach Road houses lingering in 2010.²⁶ 'You Are Here', says the board location map, and looking from the displays to the eroding cliffs you wonder how long this will last; how long here will be here.

The coastal analytical enfolding of human and natural, and of past into present and future, itself has a long history. A genealogy of sea level melancholy indeed becomes part of the anticipatory history of the Anthropocene. Thus Beckles Willson's 1902 *The Story of Lost England* indicates how erosion then, as now, becomes caught in national narrative nets, in Willson's case those of

threatened imperial island nationhood. Willson explored lost landscapes for the early 20th century now, as at Selsey, where a 'Chart of Lost Sussex' mapped lost prospects (fig. 6):



Perhaps no point off the coast of Sussex presents such interest to the student of Lost England as the waste of waters immediately fronting Selsey Bill.

Standing on the verge of that promontory, the visitor to-day, directing his face seaward, may, if he chooses, and his imagination aiding him, conjecture that in the ruffled expanse of breakers, exactly one mile distant from where he stands, was founded the first monastery in Sussex ... Landward from the Saxon cathedral and the episcopal palace stretched a great wood, known as Selsey Park, containing many thousands of acres, and stocked with choice deer. Here, truly, is a choice and memorable fragment of Lost England.²⁷

Undersea worlds are described as if preserved in aspic, lending enchantment and value to the lost. Imagination here makes whole that which has been eroded, and the effect is at once cultural and political, lost island homes tapping anxieties over English futures.

Happisburgh, and Willson's Selsey, show landscape history and prehistory speaking to the present, whether in imperial 1902 or Anthropocene 2018. It is striking also how another region, previously unnamed, has arisen from prehistory to speak to today's England. Under the North Sea lies an area now labelled 'Doggerland', on which the recent upsurge in commentary is notable. Here is evidently a landscape for now. In a period preoccupied with sea level, and with the British relationship to Europe, prehistory chimes, though to varying effect; as a sign of British connection or of insularity, as a warning of how lands have been lost before and might be again if extra care isn't taken, or as a naturalisation of change, confirming that seas have always risen and fallen and that maps will thereby shift. The name Doggerland was coined by

archaeologist Bryony Coles in 1998 in tribute to geologist Clement Reid (1853-1916); Reid's 1913 book *Submerged Forests* included a chapter on the Dogger Bank, with a map 'Showing approximate Coast-line at the period of the lowest submerged forest' (fig. 7).²⁸

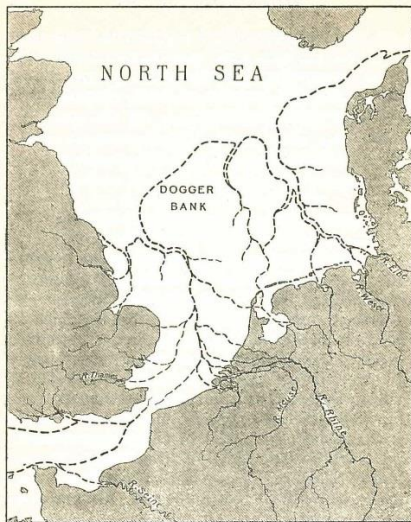
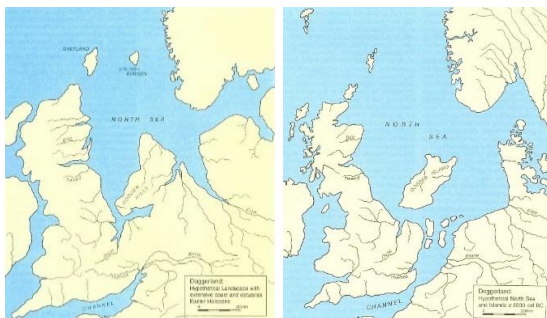


Fig. 4.—Showing approximate Coast-line at the period of the lowest Submerged Forest.

North Sea becomes former land, and a quick shading in of Reid's outline reconfigures the geography of Britain and Europe. In 1906 Reid wrote:

If what I have said is correct, and since civilised man lived in Britain there has been a rapid change of sea-level, followed by a long rest, what are the prospects of a similar period of rapid change again setting in? ... It is a problem of great importance, for a new rise or fall of the sea-level to the extent of a few feet would have most disastrous effects on all our coasts and harbours, and would seriously interfere with our inland drainage until things were again adjusted. Are we now living in a period of exceptional stability, both of sea-level and climate; or is it, as geology suggests, a mere interlude which may at any time give place to rapid change?²⁹

Coles' paper, entitled 'Doggerland: a speculative survey', sought to shift the archaeological narrative from ideas emphasising a former land bridge between Britain and continental Europe to imagining Doggerland as itself 'a place to be'.³⁰ Maps trace submergence, and familiar shapes emerge (fig. 8).



At 13000 years BP the North Sea is merely an inlet between southern Norway and a northern European coast, but at 10000 BP something like Scotland is clear, and the North Sea extends south to the Dogger Hills; after 5000 BP Britain and Denmark appear, the East Anglian coast defined, with Dogger Island stranded. Coles' paper provides a departure point for artist Stephan Takkides's website 'Reclaiming Doggerland', 'an attempt to remap Europe and claim back the lost territories of the North Sea'. Site blogposts report photographic excursions in Germany, Holland and England, including Happisburgh, where 'the effect of erosion looked almost violent', with abandoned defences wrecked by the sea, and concrete 'gradually slipping down on to the beach (fig. 9).



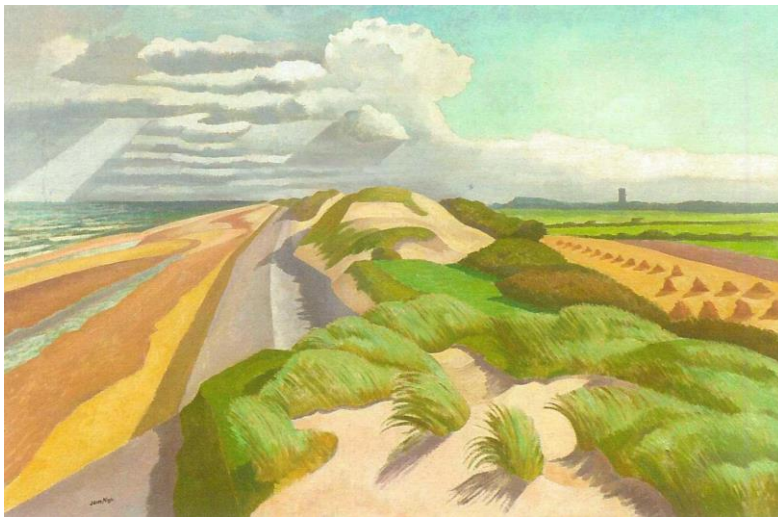
'Adventures in Doggerland: Day Four. 30 May 2011' records:

On the edge by the car park stood a shack, or at least a sort of holiday chalet, in which people were living – apparently holding on until the ground literally disappeared beneath their feet. They were flying a cross of St George. This could have been for a number of reasons – football, patriotism, nationalism – but it occurred to me that the claiming of this land as England seemed so pointless. Presumably it would not be long before this would cease to be England, or in fact anywhere.³¹

As Takkides' commentary suggests, the prevailing tone of Doggerland discussion, in England and elsewhere, is counter-nationalist, highlighting what archaeologists Vince Gaffney, Simon Fitch and David Smith label 'Europe's Lost World' off the English east coast: 'Doggerland may well have had a significantly different character, in cultural and environmental terms, in comparison with Britain and possibly all the surrounding countries'.³² There is an irony in finding lost Europe off an English coastal region frequently highlighted in recent political debate as favouring the UK's departure from the European Union. Other narrative turns are however available. Doggerland might also mark remaining eastern areas as distinctive *within* England, part of a former lowland European territory now lost. Why look out to sea for European Doggerland? Look underfoot in eastern counties instead.

If older geological and archaeological researches appear newly resonant for the Anthropocene, earlier paintings might also turn anticipatory for the present. The edging of land and sea has long offered a territory for complex symbolic and emotional play, as in the work of Paul Nash,

whose Dymchurch paintings and depictions of coastal defence might gain another complex resonance as Anthroposcenes in advance. As with other Nash subjects such as war or prehistory, it would be rewarding, though beyond this paper, to plug the Dymchurch images into wider contemporary cultures of landscape concerning sea defence, where personal and political preoccupations with control, anxiety and the capacities of the human meet. Sea defence debate in the early twentieth century, as today, turned on future expectations and the lessons of past failure, the intended and unforeseen effects of hard engineering structures such as walls and groynes, and the potential for working with natural forces. Nash's Dymchurch paintings might set such questions in motion, as does his brother John's work in East Anglia. Ian Collins' study of East Anglian art shows a John Nash painting entitled 'Norfolk Coast (Waxham to Winterton)', dated as 1932, a view looking south with Winterton church tower on the inland horizon (fig. 10).³³



This is a dune coast, a few miles south of Happisburgh and backed by the low-lying Norfolk Broadland, with no elevation to stop the sea for miles, should it break through. The sea indeed had broken through here on a number of occasions, most recently then in 1897, and it would do so again to catastrophic effect in 1938 at Horsey, half way between Waxham and Winterton, just along the beach in Nash's painting.³⁴ Just north of Waxham, at Sea Palling, seven would die in 1953 as the major North Sea floods broke the dunes. Nash pictures the levels of land and sea, the dunes a brief interruption on a single plane. The movement of sea, cloud and marram grass evokes a breezy present balance, yet one vulnerable should states of sea and atmosphere combine to produce a North Sea storm surge.

Moving back north up the Norfolk coast, we return in conclusion to East Runton. Reflections on 'landscape now' can emerge not only from academic reading and visual cultural analysis, but from everyday fieldwork, and spending holidays in a caravan on the top of soft cliffs makes the Anthroposcopic vivid (fig. 11).



Looking up from the low tide East Runton beach the caravan fronts peep over, sea views looking down. Present and future again meet distant pasts, as fossils emerge from the eroding cliffs, indeed this is now promoted as the 'Deep History Coast', its map logo merging the Norfolk coastline with the back of a fossil steppe mammoth, found in the cliff at adjacent West Runton.³⁵ The diurnal rhythms of a seaside holiday are supplemented by other temporalities, from fossil pasts to the prospective non-fossil future signalled by wind turbines at sea.

Family and friends view the breakers from the van, and sea views become entangled with other prospects (fig. 12).



How long will this caravan be here? How far could you book ahead? Does that roaring breezy summer night sound of the sea signal danger? Not that erosion questions weren't asked on holidays forty years ago, but the prevalent narrative of climate change and sea level rise, and the designation of a new Anthropocene geological epoch, makes questions of 'landscape now' somehow different. As Anthropocene signatures emerge on the shore, sea views turn Anthroposcentic.

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¹ Simon Roberts, *Merrie Albion: Landscape Studies of a Small Island* (Stockport: Dewi Lewis Publishing, 2017), 101.

² Simon Roberts, pers. comm., April 2018.

³ David Matless, "Climate Change Stories and the Anthropocene," *Nature Climate Change* 6 (2016): 118-119; David Matless, "The Anthropocene," *Transactions of the Institute of British Geographers* 42, no. 3 (2017): 363-376.

⁴ Colin Waters et al, "The Anthropocene is functionally and stratigraphically different from the Holocene," *Science* 351, no. 6269 (2016): 137-147; Jan Zalasiewicz et al, "The Working Group on the Anthropocene: summary of evidence and interim recommendations," *Anthropocene* 19 (2017): 55-60.

⁵ Charles Lyell, *Principles of Geology, volume II* (London: John Murray, 1866), 563; Paul Crutzen, "Geology of mankind," *Nature* 415, 3 January 2002: 23. Lyell's work on the east coast of England, including the site of a ruined church tower on the shore at Eccles in Norfolk, is considered in David Matless, "Next the Sea: Eccles and the Anthropocene," *Journal of Historical Geography* (forthcoming).

⁶ Caitlin DeSilvey, "Making sense of transience: an anticipatory history," *Cultural Geographies* 19 (2012): 31-54; Caitlin DeSilvey, Simon Naylor and Colin Sackett (eds.) *Anticipatory History* (Aixminster: Uniformbooks, 2011); Caitlin DeSilvey, *Curating Decay: Heritage Beyond Saving* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2017).

⁷ Lauren Rickards, "Metaphor and the Anthropocene: presenting humans as a geological force," *Geographical Research* 53 (2015): 280-287, quotations 280, 286.

⁸ Elisabeth Ellsworth and Jamie Kruse (eds.), *Making the Geologic Now: Responses to Material Conditions of Contemporary Life* (New York: Punctum Books, 2012); also available as open access download at <http://www.geologicnow.com>; quotation from "Introduction" by Ellsworth and Kruse. Accessed 26 April 2018. See also Kathryn Yusoff, "Anthropogenesis," *Theory, Culture and Society* 33 (2016): 3-28.

⁹ Adam Trexler, *Anthropocene Fictions: The Novel in a Time of Climate Change* (Charlottesville: University of Virginia Press, 2015), 74.

¹⁰ Denis Cosgrove, "Contested global visions: one-world, whole-earth, and the Apollo space photographs," *Annals of the Association of American Geographers* 84 (1994): 270-294; Denis Cosgrove, *Apollo's Eye: A Cartographic Genealogy of the Earth in the Western Imagination* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2001).

¹¹ Thomas Lekan, "Fractal Earth: Visualising the Global Environment in the Anthropocene," *Environmental Humanities* 5 (2014): 171-201, quotation 177.

¹² Martin Mahony, "Picturing the future-conditional: montage and the global geographies of climate change," *Geo: Geography and Environment* 3, no. 2 (2016): 1-18; Martin Mahony, "Climate change and the geographies of objectivity: the case of the IPCC's burning embers diagram," *Transactions of the Institute of British Geographers* 40 (2015): 153-167.

¹³ Libby Robin, Dag Avango, Luke Keogh, Nina Mollers, Bernd Scherer and Helmuth Trischler, "Three galleries of the Anthropocene," *The Anthropocene Review* 1 (2014): 207-224.

¹⁴ Online searches indicate that the word has developed independently in other contexts. In a November 2015 talk, 'Into the Anthropocene', William L Fox suggested that the Anthropocene might be a broad 'cultural corollary' for the Anthropocene; www.ngv.vic.gov.au/program/into-the-anthropocene/. Accessed 26 April 2018. A November 2015 talk in Munich by Bernhard Malkmus addressed 'anthropocene fenlands' in the work of

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- WG Sebald and Graham Swift; www.carsoncenter.uni-muenchen.de/events_conf_seminars/event_history/2015-event-history/2015_lc/lc_malkmus/index.html. Accessed 26 April 2018. In August 2015 short experimental films were screened under the 'Anthropocenic' heading by 'Survivalist Cinema', a solar-powered micro-cinema in Vermont; www.rachelstevens.net/project/survivalist-cinema/. Accessed 26 April 2018.
- ¹⁵ <https://stephentooth.wordpress.com/2016/03/09/a-glossary-for-the-anthropocene/>. Accessed 26 April 2018.
- ¹⁶ Hywel Griffiths, Gavin Goodwin, Tyler Keevil, Eurig Salisbury, Stephen Tooth and Dewi Roberts, "Searching for an Anthro(po)s(cene) in the Uplands of Mid Wales," *GeoHumanities* 3, no. 2 (2017): 567-579, quotations 568.
- ¹⁷ Jan Zalasiewicz, Colin Waters, Mark Williams, David Aldridge and Ian Wilkinson, "The stratigraphical signature of the Anthropocene in England," *Proceedings of the Geologists' Association* (2017) (in press, published online July 2017), citation p.2 of online text. Accessed 26 April 2018.
- ¹⁸ This view is considered further in David Matless, "Seaview: the Anthropocenic," in Tim Dee (ed.) *Ground Work: Writings on Places and People* (London: Jonathan Cape, 2018), 185-188.
- ¹⁹ Perry's tree paintings are considered in Paul Gough, "'Cultivating dead trees': The legacy of Paul Nash as an artist of trauma, wilderness and recovery," *Journal of War and Culture Studies* 4, no. 3 (2011): 323-340.
- ²⁰ Julian Perry *An Extraordinary Prospect: the Coastal Erosion Paintings* (London: Austin/Desmond Fine Art, 2010).
- ²¹ Paul Gough, "Painting on the edge," in Perry, *Extraordinary Prospect*, 4-7, quotation 6.
- ²² The film, from a 2005 project called 'If Ever You're In The Area', is at <http://www.ifever.org.uk/camera/>, along with an archive of camera images from throughout the process. See also: <http://bettinafurnee.co.uk/works/if-ever-youre-in-the-area-2005/>. Accessed 26 April 2018.
- ²³ Perry, *Extraordinary Prospect*.
- ²⁴ Tim O'Riordan, Carla Gomes and Luisa Schmidt, "The difficulties of designing future coastlines in the face of climate change," *Landscape Research* 39 (2014): 613-630.
- ²⁵ Nick Ashton, Simon Lewis, Isabelle De Groote, Sarah Duffy, Martin Bates, Richard Bates, Peter Hoare, Mark Lewis, Simon Parfitt, Sylvia Peglar, Craig Williams and Chris Stringer, "Hominin footprints from early Pleistocene deposits at Happisburgh, UK," *PLoS ONE* 9, no. 2 (2014) e88329.
- ²⁶ Schotten's Happisburgh drawings can be viewed at: <http://www.malcaschotten.net/Projects/landscapes.html>. Accessed 26 April 2018
- ²⁷ Beckles Willson, *The Story of Lost England* (London: George Newnes, 1902), 164.
- ²⁸ Clement Reid, *Submerged Forests* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1913).
- ²⁹ Clement Reid, "Coast erosion," *Geographical Journal* 28 (1906): 487-491, quotation 491.
- ³⁰ Bryony Coles, "Doggerland: a speculative survey," *Proceedings of the Prehistoric Society* 64 (1998): 45-81, quotation 45.
- ³¹ 'Reclaiming Doggerland' can be viewed at: <http://log.doggerland.net/>. Accessed 26 April 2018.
- ³² Vince Gaffney, Simon Fitch and David Smith, *Europe's Lost World: the Rediscovery of Doggerland* (York: Council for British Archaeology, 2009).
- ³³ Ian Collins, *Water Marks: Art in East Anglia* (Norwich: Black Dog Books, 2010), viii.
- ³⁴ On the 1938 floods see David Matless, *In the Nature of Landscape: Cultural Geography on the Norfolk Broads* (Chichester: Wiley-Blackwell, 2014), 199-204. For the representation of the floods in documentary film see David Matless, "Accents of Landscape in GPO Country: *The Horsey Mail, 1938*," *Twentieth Century British History* 23, no. 1 (2012): 57-79.
- ³⁵ See the 'Deep History Coast' website at: <https://www.visitnorfolk.co.uk/things-to-do/Deep-History-Coast.aspx>. Accessed 26 April 2018.