Valuable Ecologies: A Geography of Angling

Submitted by Jacob Andrew Bull to the University of Exeter as a thesis for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy in Geography and Politics, March, 2008.

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I certify that all material in this thesis which is not my own work has been identified and that no material has previously been submitted and approved for the award of a degree by this or any other University.

..................................... (signature)
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Credit must also go to Rob Fish for his invaluable help and advice in the early stages of this PhD, he and Michael provided me with such a firm base from which to progress. I also blame him entirely for the structure of chapter 4; had he not introduced me to B.S. Johnson’s *Trawl*…

Mike’s influence as fishing buddy in the early stages and as supervisor later on has been great, I have really benefited from his thoughtful and careful support. The guidance through the thesis and opportunities given for teaching and fieldtrips has been greatly appreciated and I never thought I’d sit in a bar in New York to watch American football…

Thanks must go to my examiners, Charles Watkins and Simon Naylor for my rigorous but enjoyable viva. Thanks also to all those who have read this thesis through; as it sits before me printed out, I realise just how large an undertaking it has been. I am sorry I used so many semi colons, colons and dashes and I probably will continue to begin sentences and paragraphs with a conjunction. And so many typographical errors!
Abstract

Animals have occupied a prominent position in geographical research for some time (Philo and Wilbert 2000, Wolch and Emel, 1998) and the importance of animals in personal narratives of identity, place and space is widely accepted (see for example Matless et al., 2005). However, such research is predominantly focussed on understandings of mammals. This thesis contests this dominance by critically investigating the significance of fish in shaping understandings of animals.

The work also connects with the burgeoning geographical interest with water (see for example, Gandy, 2002; Swyngedouw, 2004; Gandy, 2004, Kaika, 2005; and Braun 2005) but through an approach which steps away from understandings of water as just a resource to recognise that it is a resource that connects different issues, scales and approaches and has a materiality that shapes, and influences understandings of people and places. It also contributes to debates surrounding nature/society as it examines the interactions between humans and non-mammalian animals to interrogate issues relating to escape, wildness, nostalgia and connects large scale ‘landscape’ approaches to close-up encounters with the more-than-human world. These connections flow from the connectivity generated through water as it connects ‘diffuse’ issues into particular organisms. This connectivity has been exploited as fish are used as indicator species for public policy. Alongside this use as indicator species, fisheries management is usually science driven. Therefore running through the thesis is a critique of the role of the natural sciences and economics in shaping understandings fish as the political ecology of which fish, in which locations, are made to count. All this was achieved through a methodology that encouraged anglers to address the complexities, inconsistencies and tensions within their angling experience.
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The themes of this thesis have become encapsulated within and radiate out from this image. The slightly stunned eight year old is (proudly) displaying a tench of two and a quarter pounds. He looks to be struggling with the size of this wet, slimy, alien creature. The small fingers, somewhere between cradling and grasping this beautiful, and yet slightly repulsive animal, trying to both display the trophy and control the unpredictable creature, that could flap and escape his grasp and injure itself before it was returned.

The sedges and reeds behind the angler, the dark shadows under the trees on the far bank, the ripples on the water, hint at the landscapes the angler finds so fascinating – few other pastimes would lead an individual to spend hours in reed fringed boggy areas by ponds or rivers, in pursuit of creatures that spend most
of their existence several feet beneath the surface of the water, hidden from sight; their presence belied perhaps, by a stream of bubbles breaking the surface, a swirl, or a cloud of sediment, perhaps.

The number 21 attached to the wood in the bottom right hand corner of the photograph hints at the way that these boggy areas are managed and maintained; how the angler and the reeds are protected from each other and how the angler accesses the water.

This photograph has become my first angling memory.

Images, the process of making images and the stories that become attached to images are at the heart of this thesis.

In the image accompanying the article by Annalisa Barbieri (Figure 1.1) on the front cover of a Guardian Newspaper ‘fishing special’, we see a photograph of a woman, presumably the author. She is dressed in fishing apparel, a waistcoat with pockets filled to bursting, flies hang on a lapel patch, a pair of forcep-disgorgers dangle from where they have been pinched onto the fabric of a pocket… the badge of the Salmon and Trout Association is stitched to the right hand shoulder and beneath it, the motif of the manufacturer of the waistcoat. In contrast to these badges, the portrait itself is black and white, but it is also quite formal, and the edges are broken, all this giving an air of history, or timelessness. The background is plain, the edge of a landing net in the bottom right hand corner, the only incursion into an otherwise uniform, timeless backdrop. The hat she is wearing is fur, suggesting a ‘frontier’ style practicality and similar experience, yet she wears a fleece and a waistcoat that is located in the latter stages of the twentieth or the beginning of the twenty first century. This assembly of motifs, may either represent an attempt to remove angling and the angler from the temporal setting or be an effort to locate
angling within the historical context, a context which is examined in greater detail in the next chapter.

Inside the ‘fishing special’, there are images of Ian Katz enjoying himself as he is taught the basics of fly casting. There is also an image of an angler in Polaroid glasses, partially concealed behind a tree, with the caption ‘stalking a..."
trout’. The articles, invariably begin with where, or when the author learned to fish: Annalisa Barbieri, learned ‘as a child on holiday in Italy’ (Barbieri, 2007); for Ian Botham, ‘cricket is my job and fishing is my passion. I’m a country boy and first started as a youngster…..’ (Sethi, 2007); Hugh Fearnly-Wittingstall begins, ‘my dad took me fishing in Richmond Park, in London, when I was six….’ (Fearnly-Wittingstall, 2007), the list could continue…. An alternative introduction focuses on escape from everyday life, or the restorative nature of the pastime: Fishing takes you away from everything… Begins Charles Rangeley-Wilson (Sethi, 2007) and Adrian Searle suggests that ‘when I neglect fishing, things usually go wrong elsewhere in my life….’ (Searle, 2007).

The popularity of angling is often used to justify research or interest in angling (see Franklin, 1999; Barbieri, 2007; Simpson and Mawle, 2005; EA, 2004). Indeed I have used the popularity to underline the significance of angling in reference to masculinity in chapter eight. This popularity does make angling significant, it is an important pastime to many, including myself, but angling is an interesting topic for study beyond public or personal interest. As illustrated by the introductory comments above, angling is a highly emotive practice, shaping the way that people experience the landscape and construct their identities. Furthermore, angling incorporates an experience of animals, nature, and the environment that differs from other experiences in contemporary society. It requires a delicate intertwining of the senses that results in the visual become much less significant in the interaction. Partly from this sensual engagement with the world, angling has been constructed as occupying an interesting position in relation to modernity (Franklin, 2001).

The locale of these experiences adds a further dimension to the study of angling. Water creates fascinating spaces: It pervades our daily life and manifests itself in a variety of spaces and forms and is used in a multitude of ways. But water is not merely a resource. It affects and is affected by people, shaping spaces, defining ecologies and provoking emotions. These watery spaces are crucial to the angling experience and understandings of space and place.
Despite these intriguing spaces and interconnected relationships, and even though angling is so popular, there are relatively few studies of angling within geography and the wider social sciences. This thesis therefore, in part, offers a geography of angling, however, it particularly focusses on angling for salmon, trout (collectively known as Salmonids) in the South West of England.

These Salmonid species are particularly socially and culturally important more-than-human animals; they are prized by anglers, studied by biologists, eaten by many and used as ‘indicator species’ for policy. As a consequence of this multiple interest from different social groups, the importance of salmonids has been presented in many ways. The most dominant understandings of salmonids in the academic, management and political arena are those of a biological science and neo-classical economic form (Willis and Garrod 1999; Peirson et al. 2001; Morey 2001; Navrud, 2001; Roth et al. 2001; Curtis 2002; Arlinghaus and Mehner 2004; Toivoven et al. 2004). Therefore this research on the social and cultural understandings of salmonid angling represents an addition to the knowledges created through the existing biological and economic constructions of the importance of Salmonids.

What becomes evident from these multiple approaches in the academic, management, conservation, and lay discourses is that the particular ecologies that emerge from angling are highly valuable. The scientific and economic discourses propound a particular system of valuation that is expressed in financial terms. This thesis complements and counterpoints such work as it examines the social and cultural milieu of the particular ecologies of angling and the way that they create materialities which shape understandings of, animals, places, nature, and identity. Materialities which are immersed in a politics of practice, emotion and the everyday; that things, animals, people are affectual and understandings are emotional.

‘Clearly our emotions matter. They affect the way we see (hear and touch…?) the substance of our past, present and future; all can seem bright, dull or darkened by our emotional outlook [emphasis original].’
(Davidson and Bondi, 2004: 373)
From this quotation it is clear that ‘the emotional’ is crucial to the processes that make place(s) matter; that place is simultaneously more-than and less than rational, that cannot be reduced to a range of discreet internally coherent emotions which are self identical with the mind of an individual’ (Anderson, 2006:735). Such emotional responses are ‘embodied and mindful phenomena’ (Bondi and Davidson 2004: 373) which shape and are shaped by encounters with people and the more-than-human world. The temptation is to elide affect and emotional geographies but such temptations must be resisted as theories of emotion and affect operate in different political schema (Tolia-Kelly, 2006:213).

‘Affect’, after Spinoza and Deluze, has gained greater influence in geographical debates in recent years (See for example, Anderson and Tolia-Kelly, 2004). Such affective work suggests that the limit of the body can only be defined through action; that the materialities matter through performance, and are formed in that moment of pre-contemplative knowledge (Dewsbury, 2003). This is not to suggest that there is a continuum or linear progression between affect and cognition, immediacy and experience, instead each ‘modality is radically relational: a passing determination of different types of relation that is never self-contained or fully-self present in an individual body existing ‘in’ space or ‘in’ time’ (Anderson, 2006:737). In constructing experience ‘out’ of space and time suggests an apoliticality that ignores the history of bodies: ‘to put it simply, affective registers have to be understood within the context of power geometries that shape our social world, and thus research in this field requires an engagement with the political fact of different bodies having different affective capacities’ (Tolia-Kelly, 2006: 213).

Despite these differences and tensions between geographies of affect and emotion, the two remain conjoined as the emotional and/or the affective qualities of landscape become interwoven as ‘landscape’ affects the body and understandings of the self-in-situ. It is this tension between things and anglers that this thesis investigates; the way that the ecologies surrounding angling come to be so valuable epitomises the way that things, place, space, organisms come to affect and be affected by individuals and the politics behind such value.
Research Context

The broad aim of this thesis is to unpack the social and cultural milieu that informs the affectual ecology of angling and creates such valuable ecologies. Within this broad aim I have made significant methodological and conceptual contributions to the policy issues that surround angling and processes by which angling becomes valuable. This has been achieved through a narrative approach which encourages respondents to become self-reflective about the tensions, complexities and inconsistencies of the angling experience. The methods used were chosen to stimulate 'story telling' (Fish 2004) around these issues. Chapter three explains these methods and highlights the justification and benefits of such choices, developing this narrative approach.

The methods and approaches utilised in this thesis do not necessarily map easily onto the management and policy arena. However, this methodology proposes a depiction of the angler narrating the self, presenting their experiences and attending to the inherent tensions of angling. Through the narrative style and the introspective qualities of the method the angler is forced to face the personal dilemmas about the whys and wherefores of their angling experience. Consequentially, such narratives offer much for environmental politics as a mechanism for understanding what counts for whom.

My methodology also addresses the manner in which the research is embodied by the researcher. The ethnography affected me bodily. The technique of casting a fly uses muscles that are not used in day-to-day life. My muscles, sinews and synapses have been affected by, and affected the research; that my project required my body to fish, and how my body fishes affected what information I received. But more than this corporeality, I needed an angling history, I needed to narrate my angling history and share stories with the respondents. In essence I am suggesting that reflexivity should include more than just intellectual power relations between the researcher and the researched. Rather it should include the physical attributes of the individuals in relation to the practice; to consider how angling has shaped the physical form and to consider the power tensions created between the researcher and the researched in terms of the angling life stage and angling elites.
Through the thesis I have made a number of contributions to relevant geographical debates. These contributions can be condensed into four principle categories: animal geographies, geographies of water, nature/society and landscape/identity.

The thesis, contrasts with other research on animal geographies, as it is concerned with non-mammalian organisms. Furthermore it recognises the non-visual dimensions of human/fish/water interaction in angling, so contributing to developing a geography of un-seen animals. These animal geographies are inherently bound up with geographies of water, however, with some exceptions, current geographies of water tend to conceptualise water as a resource (Braun, 2005), focussing on how it is used, how property rights and access are defined, and how it is metabolised (eg Heynen, et al., 2006). This assumption hides the material effects of water in creating and defining space and place. The thesis challenges such assumptions by identifying the influence of water in connecting landscape and particular bodies; known and unknown; self and other.

Building on work on hybridity (Whatmore, 2002) and friendships (Bingham, 2006) the thesis makes contributions to how ‘more-than-human’ interactions are understood and acted upon within the particular setting of angling, a setting that as illustrated earlier contrasts with other experiences in contemporary society. Building on this uniqueness, the thesis builds on how landscape and identity is constructed and experienced in two key areas: Firstly, through a critique and extension of notions of dwelling (Ingold, 1993; 2000; Cloke and Jones, 2001); Secondly, by building on the liminality of water in creating landscapes where identity can ‘slip and reform’ (Creswell and Dixion, 2002; Leyshon and Brace, 2007). Beyond these broad aims, the thesis has a number of specified objectives. These are laid out in Table 1 and discussed below.
Objective

i  To examine the role of water in creating particular understandings of space, place and identity.

ii To analyse angling as a bodily practice through which the more-than-human world is *encountered* and *narrated*.

iii To unpack the influence of such encounters on understandings of animals, landscapes, identity and society and nature debates

iv To set out an agenda for an affectual political ecology.

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The first objective listed in the table above, to examine the role of water in shaping understandings of space and place, features at various points through the thesis. Water is considered as more than a resource as it shapes understandings of space, place and identity. The second objective, to examine angling as a bodily practice, begins in this and the next chapter, and as with the interrogation of the role of water, it threads its way throughout the thesis.

Objective three – the unpacking of the influence of encounters with the more-than-human world – returns to the narrative process that is at the heart of the methodology for this thesis, recognising that while the interaction with the *nature* through angling may be particular to angling, the way that such experiences are prepared for and then incorporated into the wider context is also important.

Objective four is an attempt to consider the implications of this work. In attempting to set out an affectual political ecology, this thesis looks to draw the emotional, affective register of experiences of the valuable ecologies of angling into a political, social and historical context; to recognise that there are materialities that matter, and that they are important within a particular political context.

Having introduced the valuable ecologies of angling and laid out my intentions for this thesis as it builds towards understanding encounters with these ecologies within social and cultural contexts, I want to now introduce some of the theoretical positions on which this thesis is based.
**Theoretical Context**

My theoretical position with respect to affect and emotion has already been highlighted as the starting point for much of the discussion of angling in this thesis. What follows is an introduction to the other aspects of theory that informed the thesis. I have identified broad theoretical themes yet such delineation and demarcation is a simplification, these ideas blend into each other and inform one another. However, to separate out these strands is helpful for ease of introduction and as these themes constitute important directions for the substantive chapters in the latter stages of this thesis. These broad topics are nature, landscape and identity.

**Nature**

Nature is a significant theme in both personal narratives and wider angling discourses. However, considerable work over the last two decades both within and beyond geography (see for example, Demeritt; 2001; Braun and Wainwright; 2001; Cronon, 1996) has seen the concepts of nature and society critically examined and regularly challenged. This has developed to the extent that divisions between human and more-than-human are no longer accepted as obvious and permanent. Rather bodies are contingent on each other and their boundaries are blurred as we ‘admit and register the creative presence of creatures and devices amongst us, and the animal sensibilities of our diverse human being’ (Whatmore, 2007: 37). Consequentially this thesis recognises the fluidity and permeability of such boundaries by discussing the more-than-human (Whatmore, 1999) rather than the non-human and recognising the hybridity of existence.

‘Hybridity and corporeality trip those habits of thought that hold the body apart from other bodies and the human away from other mortals’ (Whatmore, 2002:166). This work interrogates the boundaries of angler/waterscape, self/other, internal/external, human/more-than-human; and how these are constructed, transgressed and blurred. This recognition of the hybridity of existence is brought out through methods that not only challenge the divides
between insider/outsider but also highlight the corporeality of research, by accepting the manner in which the body is instrumental in the construction of the research and is shaped by the research (Chapter 3).

The hybrid requires the re-thinking of the delineation between human and more-than-human in a manner which recognises that physically and metaphorically the more-than-human is distinctly human and vice versa. Eschewing the separation between human and more-than-human the research interrogates the angler’s interaction with the world in terms of friendships (Bingham, 2006; Derrida, 2005). It recognises the interconnectedness of existence and develops this in corporeal and identity terms, using friendships as a continuum on which to place and unpack the associations of the valuable ecologies of angling.

In this thesis I illustrate how the notion of hybridity fuels the analysis of the relationship between the angler and the more-than-human; acknowledging the bi-lateral interaction between the components in the angling experience, in creating an intimate involvement with nature. Unlike many other experiences of the more-than-human in contemporary society this interaction between the angler and the environment is one that is less focussed on sight. That is not to suggest that the visual is not important, but that angling requires the angler to use multiple senses in the pursuit of the quarry. Indeed there may be moments when the visual may be the least relied upon sense; the angler relying more on tactile and auditory indications of the external world. This embodiment of the environment through the multiple senses results in a feeling of being in the world.

Being in the world or belonging, is rooted in the work of (amongst others) Tim Ingold (1996, 2002). It is used in this work to conceptualise the manner in which ‘das Umwelt’ (after Heidegger) is used by individuals in explaining place; how the more-than-human is loaded with meaning and value, thereby making sense of practices and the spaces in which they are conducted. But rather than conceptualising these interactions as rigid and fixed – and reflecting the hybridity and corporeality (introduced above). I use belonging as a context within which the fluid encounters (Law 2004) with the more-than-human occur.
Landscape

Landscape is not some mute external field that is scribed by human action. It is something ‘distant and intimate all at once’ (Rose and Wylie, 2006). It is something seen and experienced, a lived spatiality, a verb as well as a noun (Brace, 2003). Taking this into account, the valuable ecologies of angling are assemblages of organisms, objects, networks, that both affect and are affected by anglers. This thesis illustrates the meanings and values in such assemblages, the way that they impact on the angler and are shaped by angling.

These landscape assemblages are given a further nuance by the focus on the aquatic. The landscape of waterways despite being spatially fixed, is a space of fluidity and flows; the river is described as a defined entity, yet the only constant about the river is that it is always different. This echoes the Heraclitus’ proclamation that ‘You cannot step twice into the same stream’. Consequentially I use the term waterscapes to emphasise this state of flux despite the relatively fixed location.

The primary consequence of this waterscape is its liminal character. It becomes a space where identities reflect the fluidity of the water and become ductile, malleable and tactile, that they can shift and slip. Therefore the relationships between individuals and the more-than-human in waterscapes become dynamic and shifting as relations are constantly re-defined.

Identity

Deleuze and Guttari’s (2004) Capitalism and Schizophrenia is a key departure point for my discussions regarding identity and landscape. Flowing from this I suggest that a contingency is evident in the lived spatiality of landscape and the close-up encounters with the more-than-human; that the self is fractured and inconsistent. As such I re-examine the notion of the individual to recognise a collective behind the self:
I am on the edge of the crowd, at the periphery; but I belong to it, I am attached to it by one of my extremities, a hand or foot. I know that the periphery is the only place I can be, that I would die if I let myself be drawn into the centre of the fray, but just as certainly if I let go of the crowd. [Emphasis original]  

(Deleuze and Guattari 2004(b):32)

This excerpt encapsulates a polemic which does ‘not demand of politics that it restore the ‘rights’ of the individual as philosophy has defined them. The individual is the product of power. What is needed is to ‘de-individualise’ (Foucault, 2004: xvi). This collectivism infuses my thinking both on identity and landscape and reflects the hybridity offered with respect to bodies, nature and the environment.

The significance of the individual has been pronounced since the widespread acceptance of DeCertau’s concept of everydayness led to a ‘peopling of human geography’ (Cloke, 2001). As a consequence of this ‘peopling’ the individual has become the object of study. But what Deleuze and Guattari call for is a de-individualising - that the individual, as a component of a whole, is not the unit of study. Instead it appeals for a step away from the totalising effect of the concept of the individual – to go beyond the unitary. While this shift has occurred in so many aspects of geographical thought, the individual – conscious understandings of the self still seem to be considered as complete, and known. This prioritising of individual experience belies a wider national and international politics which entrenches the importance of independence, individualism and self sufficiency which dismisses the collective and contingency of life. This is not to suggest that geographers consider the self to be fixed and unyielding, but that:

‘the idea of a fixed, or neatly evolving organism must be jettisoned in favour of a ‘geographical’ notion of becoming in which the dynamics of evolution must be conceived... ...in terms of the affective relationships between heterogeneous bodies.’ [Emphasis added]

(Thrift and Amin 2002:79)

My thesis revolves around these relationships between heterogeneous bodies, the tensions that temporarily define particular bodies or create ecologies that
are valuable. But these relationships, associations, friendships, come from a *becoming* not a defined and rigid collective but organic and evolving connections between people, things, animals. In terms of identity, these connections are a searching for a commonality – a shared understanding – that stems from a granting of agency to other beings, such as the relationship between angler and fish. But the agency granted to the fish reflects an imagining of oneself as other beings, thus challenging the coherence of the individual consciousness. These imaginings become articulated as the angler narrates existence using the multiple voices of multiple beings. Therefore, just as corporeality and hybridity trip the boundaries between bodies, I suggest that identity is similarly contingent, varied and blurred as multiple beings are mobilised in the angler’s narrative.

The narration of experience, to become effective, must to be rooted in causality, coherence and linearity (Fish, 2004 p. 45). In absence of this ‘holy trinity’ the narrative ceases to be a process for the navigation through a world full of tensions and disharmony and becomes accounts of the ‘alternative realities where ideas jar and, events don’t follow, and so forth’ (ibid p. 53). However, through angling the individual deploys multiple narratives, to explain the encounter with the more-than-human, a fracturing made most evident as the angler becomes the fish. This narrative approach underpins the methodology as it uses photographs, interviews and ethnography to unpack the meanings ascribed to the more-than-human.

**Conclusion**

This chapter has introduced the valuable ecologies of angling and has identified how such values and meanings are expressed in a variety of ways, both by anglers and in wider social contexts. It has laid out specific objectives within an overarching aim to unpack the social and cultural milieu that informs the affectual ecology of angling and creates such valuable ecologies. It has also set out how this will be achieved within this thesis.
The chapter has also introduced some of the theoretical positions on which this work draws as a context for the following chapters. This context is further developed in the following chapter as it unpacks the rich discourses that surround and inform angling. Chapter two therefore offers a historical context as it examines the way that fish, angling and the angler has been constructed through history.
Chapter 2

Angling Awareness: Constructing Fish, Angling and the Angler

As when a fisher, on a jutting rock, with long rod, throws a bait to lure the little fishes…

Homer, The Odyssey, 2003:153

Introduction

The preceding chapter set out my intentions for the thesis and offered an introduction to fish and angling and it asserted that salmonids are socially and culturally important more-than-human animals. In this chapter I will examine how value has historically been ascribed to fish. Angling has a long history, as evident in the excerpt above and the discourses are rich and extensive. Consequentially, what follows is an introduction to these discourses. As angling has been relatively under researched, this history of angling offers a context to the research. Furthermore, this introduction also prologues the following chapters by identifying and describing how the multiple relations between anglers and the more-than-human have become established and contorted.

The history depicted here discusses key themes from the angling discourses, rather than offering a chronology of the developments in angling, the historical context of various themes are examined. The four themes that receive particular attention are: nature; technology; leisure and social order; and the angling subject.

Angling, Anglers and Others: The Changing Narratives of Fishing

And first and most essential whereof, is that a skilful angler ought to be a general scholar, and seen in all the liberal sciences; as a
grammarian, to know how either to write or discourse of his art in true and fitting terms…

Markham, 1633 (Cited in Falkus 2002)

Embedded in this excerpt is a morality that confines angling to those who can afford to be educated in all the liberal sciences. Indeed, a history of angling offers an insight into the various moral discourses which define what is appropriate for whom and how the world, ‘should’ and could be valued. However, despite the hierarchical implications of an education in ‘all the liberal sciences’, this story-telling ability to which Markham alludes – to write ‘his art in true and fitting terms’ – is crucial to this thesis. The empirical approach is grounded in a methodology that harnesses this inclination to narrate experience, and the rich discourse to which this chapter refers surrounds and informs contemporary experience.

The history of angling is long. The term angling originates from the Anglo-Saxon word *angul* meaning hook. However, the use of a hook to catch fish pre-dates the Anglo-Saxon era. There is evidence that the Romans used lures (hooks dressed with feathers and other materials) to catch salmon on the Thames and Tyne. The ancient Egyptians also used similar principles to catch fish, and it is believed that the Chinese used kingfisher feathers attached to a hook several thousand years BC (Voss bark, 1992). The focus of this project and therefore this history, is recreational salmonid fishing. That is not to suggest that recreational salmonid fishing emerged in isolation, the various forms of angling share common roots and their histories and practice overlap and infuse one another. However, a more complete history of angling would demand more pages than I have available. The focus on salmonids can be justified as a consequence of salmon and trout commanding such a prominent position in the collective conscious, being prominent in conservation agendas, featured in policy and prized by both anglers and non anglers.

The historical context of angling is important not just as a consequence of its relevancy to the themes I discuss later in the thesis, but because the ‘context’ that it grants, has a particular relevancy to the story-telling of angling. Anglers’ tales are infamous, but the ability to narrate experience is crucial to the performance of angling; the aural aspect to angling cannot be overlooked. This
ability to articulate the discourse as acknowledged in the Gervase Markham quotation that begins this section, was crucial to the methods employed in this research, and while I am not suggesting that such skills are limited to anglers, it may offer some explanation of the abundance of angling literature; that there is a preponderance among anglers to write their stories, but also to hear those stories, to be enthralled, to recall encounters, and to wonder at possibilities. As Michael mentions in his covering letter when he returned photographs to me:

\[I\ have\ been\ collecting\ fishing\ books\ for\ some\ years\ and\ have,\ what\ I\ like\ to\ think\ is\ a\ fairly\ extensive\ library.\ Angling\ literature\ is\ extensive\ with\ many\ classics\ and\ I\ would\ even\ claim\ you\ could\ base\ much\ of\ your\ thesis\ on\ it.\ Below\ is\ a\ short\ list\ of\ what\ I\ regard\ as\ the\ most\ important\ books\ to\ help\ in\ your\ research:\\]

\[A\ Summer\ on\ the\ Test\ by\ John\ Waller\ Hills.\ Quite\ simply,\ I\ believe\ this\ is\ the\ best\ fishing\ book\ ever\ written\ and\ is\ a\ worthy\ piece\ of\ literature\ in\ its\ own\ right.\\\nWhere\ Bright\ Waters\ Meet\ by\ Harry\ Plunket\ Greene.\ Some\ rate\ this\ above\ Hills’\ book\ and\ I\ can\ understand\ why.\ His\ joy\ and\ enthusiasm\ comes\ through\ the\ book\ at\ every\ page,\ although\ there\ is\ one\ chapter\ in\ which\ he\ laments\ the\ deterioration\ of\ his\ river – the\ Hampshire\ Bourne – due\ to\ a\ policy\ of\ over\ stocking.\\nAn\ acknowledged\ classic\ is\ Going\ Fishing\ by\ Negly\ Farson.\ It\ is\ not\ my\ favourite\ but\ there\ is\ one\ chapter\ on\ fishing\ in\ Devon – chapter\ VIII – which\ I\ can\ readily\ identify\ with.\ Within\ that\ chapter\ there\ is\ a\ particular\ passage\ which\ has\ enormous\ resonance\ with\ me\ and\ I’ve\ included\ a\ photocopy\ with\ the\ return\ of\ your\ camera.\\nMichael,\ River\ Otter 15th\ August\ 2006\]

In this excerpt and by including photocopies with his letter, Michael is identifying the significance of story-telling and literature to his angling experience. For Michael, and other respondents, the collection of literature relating to angling is not a side issue but integral to his angling; the way he relates to places, the practice of angling and the more-than-human world is shaped by his engagement with historical texts. I am not suggesting that this significance of literature is confined to angling but that the histories of angling are important to contemporary experience. It is recognising this importance of the historical literature that I offer this prologue to angling as context but also in an effort to begin to unpack the underpinnings of angling.
Excepting the reference in Homers Odyssey, that began this chapter, the first documented evidence of fly fishing for trout is by Aelian, a Spaniard, living in Rome about AD 200. In his writings about the region now known as Macedonia, he describes the mechanisms by which the people of that region fish for trout using mechanisms and practices which share similarities with contemporary fly-fishing:

_I have heard of a Macedonian way of catching fish... ...they have planned a snare for the fish and get the better of them by their fishermen’s craft. They fasten red wool round a hook and fix on to the wool two feathers which grow under a cock’s wattles and which in colour are like wax. Their rod is six feet long and their line the same length. Then they throw their snare, and the fish, maddened and excited by the colour, come straight at it, thinking by the sight to get a dainty mouthful; when, however, it opens its jaws, it is caught by the hook and enjoys a bitter repast, a captive._

*In Voss bark, 1992: 3*

Continuing to track these description of angling through history, around 900 AD, Abbot Aelfric of Carne Abbey Dorset is rumoured to have taught Latin by the translation of Anglo-Saxon texts on fishing, similarly there is reference to a text on fly-fishing originating from the abbey of St Bertin in France around 1000 AD though no known copy remains (Voss Bark, 1992). Apart from these two documents there is little reference to _The Treatise on Fishing with an Angle_ was written in the early part of the fifteenth century. It too is connected to a religious establishment and is often attributed to Dame Juliana Berners prioress of Sopwell Priory near St Albans. This text is considered to represent the birth of angling – until _The Treatise_, literature on fishing is about catching fish – a description of the methods employed to provide fish for consumption. In _The Treatise_ angling is levitated above the utilitarian provision of fish to the status of a sport. _The Treatise_ brings angling alongside hunting and falconry for the first time and by doing so brings it into the realm of leisure pursuit and precipitates the nominal creation of the code of practice that has dominated angling to the present day:

_And therefore, I will now choose among four good sports and honourable pastimes – to wit, among hunting, hawking, fishing and fowling. The best, in my simple judgement is fishing, called angling, with a rod and a line and a hook._

*Berners, 1418 (In McDonald, 1997: 44)*
This code, the very definition of angling, requiring the use of a rod, a line and a hook begins to generate a very particular relationship with the more-than-human. It is this particular and peculiar relationship between the angler and nature that I now discuss.

Angling, the Body, and Nature

Angling is an amalgamation of many activities: walking, fishing, nature watching, cooking and eating, combining and spilling out to include spatial and temporal settings that extend beyond the context of the riverbank, boat or lakeside. Consequentially, angling is a complex experience which results in an equally varied set of accounts and representations of nature. These individual natures are constantly evolving. However, while angling natures are multifarious and contingent, strong themes are evident in the discourse. This section identifies some of the themes that have shaped the angling discourse. It begins by identifying how the nature in angling is conceptualised through the medieval period, beginning with The Treatise of Fishing with an Angle (Berners, 1418). In this text, representations of nature are wholly imbued with pre-enlightenment philosophy, centring on the worshipful engagement with nature. Contrasting with the Acracadian nature evident in the Treatise, the puritanical dominance in post civil war Britain offers subtle nuances in the way that nature is portrayed in the angling discourse. The section moves on to consider the impact of the emergence of enlightenment science and the romanticism that infuses angling discourses from 1800 to the mid 1900s. The section closes with an investigation into more contemporary accounts of angling nature, picking out neo-Darwinism and environmentalism in particular.

Overall, the section outlines the manner in which these discourses are evident in and have shaped the angling discourse, with particular reference to the interaction between the angler and the more-than-human. This is not to suggest that the attitudes are confined to particular periods: they infuse and inform one another and indeed many of the texts to which I refer are still in print and read by anglers to this day. This continued relevancy of medieval texts to
contemporary experience reiterates the importance of stories and the written discourse to angling experience and further emphasises the importance of this history of angling to the wider thesis and the bearing of medieval constructions of nature on contemporary encounters.

**Medieval Nature: Worship, Arcadia and Self-control**

During the 15th Century biblical references were often used as justification for particular actions and attitudes. The angling literature is not exempt from this preponderance; the justification for indulging in angling in *The Treatise of Fishing With an Angle* (Berners, 1418) stems from an engagement with God’s creation. The author of the treatise looks for a biblical confirmation of angling, using excerpts from Proverbs:

*Solomon in his proverbs says that a glad spirit makes for a flowering age – that is to say, a fair age and a long one. And since it is so I ask this question, “What are the means and cause to bring a man into a merry spirit?” truly in my simple judgement, it seems to me, they are good and honest sports and games in which a man’s heart takes pleasure without any repentance.*

*Berners, 1418 (in McDonald, 1997: 44)*

Such a biblical reference is quite common in interactions with the more-than-human in this period (Thomas, 1983). Yet unlike the interactions described by Thomas (1983) the encounter of the more-than-human through angling seems to revolve around worship rather than a domination. The domination of nature in texts from this period is justified through biblical references such as Genesis, 1 v. 28 offering dominion over all living things, or genesis 9 v. 3 ‘every moving thing that liveth shall be meat for you’. In contrast to these approaches *The Treatise* looks to nature to provide ‘a flowering age’ and sets the angling nature as a divine manifestation of God through his creation. Unlike later periods when the puritanical order (discussed below) is more dominant, this discourse focuses on an Eden rather than on The Fall; therefore the angler while engaging in angling is in some way re-entering an Eden. Thus the angler’s body becomes part of God’s creation and the engagement in certain activities becomes appropriate. The physical health of the body is ensured by immersing
oneself in the rhythms of God’s creation. The angler ensures ‘a flowering age’ by the practice of a ‘Good and honest sport’. The benefits for the health of the body can be extended to the mind – the nature provided by angling ensures a ‘merry spirit’ and a healthy soul. Moreover, this divinely created nature exists regardless of the ability of the angler and though no fish may be caught the quiet, restful and contemplative style of the angling engagement ensures that this nature can be appreciated and its benefits ensured:

\[
\text{And yet at the very least, he has his wholesome and merry walk at his ease, and a sweet breath of the sweet smell of the meadow of flowers, that makes him hungry. He hears the melodious harmony of birds. He sees the young swans, herons, ducks, coots and many other birds with their broods, which seems to me better than all the noise of hounds, the blasts of horns and the clamour of birds that hunters, falconers and fowlers can produce... Also whoever wishes to practice the sport of angling, he must rise early, which is a thing profitable to a man in this way. That is, to wit: most for the welfare of his soul, for it will cause him to be holy; and for the health of his body, for it will cause him to be well.}
\]

\[
\text{Berners, 1418 (In McDonald, 1997: 46)}
\]

Once more the nature described in \textit{The Treatise} is one of peace and harmony rather than dominion over the creeping things of the world (Genesis 1:24). That is not to suggest that the attitude is not anthropocentric – it offers that which is ‘profitable to a man in this way’. But that the nature focuses on worship rather than domination. It must be pointed out that this text pre-dates the period described by Thomas (1983) and so is not a direct comparison, but it does suggest that there was a slightly different attitude to the more-than-human than that described by Thomas from 1500. The pre 1500 construction of nature, in its arcadian attitude, is less ordered, less hierarchical; the angler is positioned \textit{in} the world, rather than \textit{above} the world. Indeed the \textit{Treatise} is less hierarchical than other discourses on blood sports as it appeals to “all that are virtuous, gentle and freeborn” (Berners, 1418 in McDonald, 1997, at page 47); this commends the sport to not just the nobility but all freeborn - a democratisation of the sport which avoids the connection to the languished lifestyles of the ruling classes and includes the emerging entrepreneurial middle classes. Overall however, it reflects the pre-reformation attitudes to the more-than-human with an emphasis on Eden rather than The Fall.
The authorship of *The Treatise* is usually attributed to Dame Juliana Berners, prioress of Sopwell priory, although the exact authorship is unknown. However such connections are indicative of the Christian, and specifically Catholic influence in pre-reformation Britain in the shaping of attitudes to and the meaning of the more-than-human. This Edenistic attitude to the angling nature is less evident in the later literature. The reformation and Civil War in England left their marks on the documented experience of nature through angling. It is to these accounts, accounts that remain prominent in contemporary experience that I now turn.

The puritanical dominance of the years following the Civil War was the backdrop to influential angling works and shaped the creations of authors such as Venebles, Cotton and, most famous of all, Isaak Walton. In these books, angling as a pastime becomes both a confirmation of the puritanical order and rejection of such ascetic lifestyles. The puritan rejection of merriment and indulgence leaves little space for such enjoyment of nature in a leisurely, unproductive pursuit such as angling. However, the construction of nature as God’s creation provides an opportunity for leisure to become worship of the divine. Angling becomes a particularly appropriate pastime as a consequence of its quiet, individual style, providing a restful and more complete observance of creation. This imagining of angling as a peaceful practice reinforces the observation in the *Treatise* that angling contrasts with the ‘blasts of horns and clamour’ involved in hunting or hawking. This peacefulness, coupled with the less hierarchical appeal, made angling an appropriate vessel for the protestant work ethic. Thus angling offered an experience of nature that could be moulded into puritan doctrines to enable Colonel Robert Venables to suggest it as “that recreation which cometh the soul to that calmness and serenity, which gives a man [sic] the fullest possession and fruition of himself” (Venables, R 1662 at page iii). Therefore what emerges in the angling literature of the mediaeval period are two, contrasting natures. The pre-reformation nature is a jubilant, worship of the divine, less concerned with the positioning of the angler as apart from nature. In contrast the experience of the more-than-human evident in post-reformation period is much more contained, calm and ordered: the angler does not indulge in the ‘melodious harmony’ of nature, rather it is what nature, the
more-than-human, the landscape, can do for the angler; not to be indulged, but to be conditioned – to be given the ‘fullest possession and fruition of himself’.

What is evident in this dual nature is a use of the more-than-human to both accept and reject dominant social structures. Angling offers a nature that is acceptable to the puritan order, however it also offers a return to the pre-reformation Christian Arcadia (Franklin, 1999). A nature of freedom, where the rhythms of nature are remembered and the protestant order and discipline is insignificant. In Walton’s *Compleat Angler*, one of the virtues of angling is the escape from the ‘men of sowre complexions – those money getting men’ (Walton 1653). Thus, even in this early modern period the escape benefits of angling are evident – the return to a divine nature away from the order of the urban and social control. Indeed for Walton, the culmination of a day spent fishing, is drunken tales in bawdy country inns. Therefore while the sport of angling is compatible with the self-controlled society of the post Civil War era, angling is simultaneously used to criticise the emerging capitalist structures. The product of this affirmation and critique of Puritanism is the emergence of two natures. One of these natures is an ordered, serene worship of creation; the other is an indulgent nature set against this ordered interpretation. This duality of natures mirrors the Dyonisian and Apollonian struggle offered by Nietzsche. The arcadian nature being the indulgent and exciting, set against the ordered and serene Apollonian nature, the two gaining ascendancy in turn. *The Treatise* reflects the Dyonisian nature; a natural nature; an indulgent exciting nature. This Dyonisian nature is also evident in *The Compleat Angler* albeit tempered into a calm quiet exterior. The Apollonian nature gains a greater ascendancy in Robert Venables’ more puritanical text *The Experienced Angler* as a more reserved experience is described.

The creation of a contained and ordered Apollonian nature and an exciting, awe-fuelled, Dyonisian nature continues to emerge during the late 1700 hundreds, through the Victorian period and into the early part of the twentieth century.
1750 to 1950: Enlightenment and Romanticism

As modernity progresses the Apollonian ordered nature is given greater credence. The protestant work ethic develops a nature that is the adversary. Nature is no longer something divine to be worshiped but an antagonist against which the angler must toil for reward. This is a battle that is relished, through which the success increases in value; the healthy body and soul achieved in engaging nature is an earned victory. In spite of this considerable decline in the worship of nature as divine accompanied by a shift to a more rationalised nature, particularly during the Victorian period, nature is still held in awe. This intertwined duality of opinion of nature as both awe-full and an overcome adversary becomes ever more prominent especially with the emergence of the scientific angler epitomised by Ronalds.

Through the Victorian age the ascendancy of the ordered nature is pronounced. Ronalds exemplifies the change as the flies tied shift from being ‘creatures bred of putrefaction’ (Venables, 1969/1662: 9) to “The Blue Dun. Order, Neuroptera. Family, Ephemeridae. Genus, Potamanthus. Species rufescens (Pseudimago).” (Ronalds, 1993/1836: 60) The trout becomes defined by anatomical characteristics such as the fins: “the anal fin always, I believe, contains eleven spines, the dorsal twelve or thirteen, the ventral nine and the caudal twenty-one.” (Ronalds, 1993/1836: 2). This named and explained nature has perpetuated through to the present day with Victorian fly patterns still widely used today. However the Dyonisian nature has been maintained and has on occasions bubbled through to highlight differing relationships between the angler and the more-than-human:

*There is first the expectation of a bite or a rise, the sudden thrill when it comes and directly a fish is hooked the overwhelming rush of anxiety as to whether it will be landed.*

Grey 1899/1984: 12

In this excerpt Grey is highlighting the exciting, thrilling and anxiety filled moments of fishing and acknowledging the emotional impact of fishing.
The emotional relation to the more-than-human in part stems from a romanticising of the other. This process is evident in the way that Isaak Walton longs for a return to Arcadian times, a period when emotional values of nature were not dominated by the puritan value system. Such nostalgia and the social processes over the following decades have cemented this romanticism of less regimented and understood natures. This coupled with the development of the urban dominance established and sustained the rural idyll and angling’s connection to it (Bunce, 2003).

**Nostalgia: Searching for the Pre-modern in the Modern**

What emerges from these dual natures and the romanticism of the more-than-human world is a nostalgia in the angling literature which suggests an interaction with the world that contrasts with the visually dominated experience of modernity. The ‘felt’ nature rather than the observed nature is evident in the angling literature. While the dominance of the Catholic worship of creation may have declined since the reformation and increasingly in more recent times, the embodiment of nature through angling discourse is still evident. Such experiences of the more-than human have led some to suggest there may be pre-modern resonances within the angling experience. These resonances stem from the manner in which anglers are perceived to involve themselves in the environment. The triangulation of the more-than-human through all the senses produces an environment that is felt rather than observed. Furthermore the embodiment of the more-than-human becomes literal during the consumption of the catch. A further dimension to the angler / more-than-human relationship is the proximity of the killing. The angler causes the mechanical death of the fish with no physical separation as provided by shooting or hunting with dogs. These atavistic impulses that are romanticised; the connection to the environment believed to herald from pre-modern times. But with no necessity to fish for survival angling can be considered purely ritual – an attempt to contrive a connection with the environment that has been lost during modernity.
Much of this ritualised engagement with the more-than-human is imbied with notions of masculinity. The pre-modern construction provided is that of the hunter. The hunter is perceived as masculine while domestic and farming activities during ancient ages are regarded as more feminine. This masculinity also connects to issues surrounding rites of passage. Whilst there are no defined practices similar to ‘blooding’ in hunting, most anglers will remember their first fish or fish of a significant size or species:

\[\text{That is the thing – the boy in the angler never dies, but remains as full of awe, delight and excitement as he was when he caught the first prickling little perch.}\]

Venables, B 1953: 4 (Cited in Franklin, 2001)

The nature formed by this masculinity and rights of passage continues to emphasise the construction of nature as adversary evident during the earlier stages of modernity. However, these formulations appear more obvious in the literature since 1900. That is not to suggest that such issues did not exist but during the twentieth century such themes become more evident. This is particularly prominent in the development of the species specific ‘bounty hunter’. Indeed carp were a relatively insignificant species before the 1970s (Franklin, 1999). Since then carp fishing has become a specialist activity with large numbers of individuals pursuing this species exclusively, hoping for fish in the excess of thirty or forty pounds. Other species-specific anglers exist aiming for ‘specimen’ fish of their particular species.

In so called ‘game angling’ (the branch most often associated with salmonids) this ‘size matters’ mentality is complex, as for example, wild and migratory fish have become more revered than large, stocked fish. This increased value of fish over a specific weight or of a particular pedigree is less evident in the historical literature. However, Isaak Walton deemed the salmon to be ‘The King of fishes’ and Venables recommends light lines to improve the sport of the fight (1662, at page 22). This pursuit of particular fish valued for their guile and increased challenge may connect to the masculinity highlighted earlier – a desire for combat – certain circumstances offering a more challenging duel. The use of light tackle to increase the likelihood of failure may stem from a notion of
chivalry introduced during the middle ages; aiming to increase the agency of the fish, thereby creating a more evenly matched duel. Alternatively the increased agency may result from the closely linked desire to maximise the excitement, to provide an appropriate “tension equilibrium” (Elias and Dunning, 1986). Either way, this contrives a nature that is not too easily overcome.

**Neo Darwinism**

During the late nineteenth century, the growth in scientific understanding and the theory of evolution gave rise to Neo-Darwinism - a theory used to explain why individuals engaged in sporting activities such as angling by considering the archaeology of the species. The evolution of the “Killer ape” (Cartmill, 1993) lost favour after the Second World War but until then angling was explained as a desire to return to these roots, to experience the nature understood by our ancestors. The sentiments in this theory strongly reflect the romanticism of the Christian Arcadia mentioned earlier, but with much more bloody intentions. According to this conceptualisation, angling therefore stems from a desire for adventure and a bloodlust that is an inescapable consequence of our hunting ancestry. This explanation offers an angling nature that is both emotional and rational; the Dyonisian struggle against the Apollonian order is understood and permitted. The passionate connection with nature finds validation in the scientific explanation of human origin. This postulation of the reason for angling however, is not very evident in the angling literature though it could be bound up with the romanticism of, and nostalgia for, Walton’s Arcadia. But the absence of extended reference to a bloodlust suggests that the killer ape theory does not justify angling (Franklin, 2001). In contrast, there is a strong awareness of the position of the angler in the wider environment, and it is to the environmental movement that I now turn, to document how modern environmentalism has shaped angling and the experiences of the more-than-human in angling.
Environmentalism

Environmental issues are particularly apparent to the angler. Fish, as a consequence of their aquatic existence are very susceptible to pollution. As such they embody localised environmental damage and, through consumption of the catch, so does the angler. It is no surprise, therefore, that the growth of environmental awareness over the second half of the twentieth century has greatly affected anglers. Coupled with this awareness of environmental issues, there has been a much greater consideration of the ethics of involving animals in the sporting enjoyment of humans. The extension of rights to animals has gained general acceptance to a certain degree and has changed the manner in which many human/more-than-human interactions are valued. These evolving attitudes to animal rights in angling can be traced through two key discourses, the first, relating to environmentalism, the other an anti-hunt lobby which sought to prevent the exploitation and death of animals for the enjoyment of people. In contrast to the anti-hunt lobby, environmentalism took a wider perspective as it sought to recognise the interconnectedness of environmental issues and the human position within the more-than-human world.

The rise of environmentalism and the anti-hunt lobby was both instrumental in the making of otter hunting illegal and significant changes in wildfowling (Matless et al, 2005) such adaptations appear necessary for the survival of wildfowling and are also evident in angling. This enforced adaptation to changing perspectives on hunting forced angling to alter the manner in which it presented itself to non-anglers. The development of ‘anglers as conservationists’ was key to this softening of the angling image. This evolution compares to the similar changes in hunting and shooting and represents the incorporation of the changing perspective of ‘nature as adversary’ to ‘nature vulnerable’.

One of the most prominent effects on angling of this progression is the increasing implementation of ‘catch and release’ policies on many waters. Such policies are widely employed as part of conservation practices for the protection of fish stocks. Further fisheries policy at both the legislative and specific fishery level, continued to change through the 1970s and 80s with the decline of gaffs
and gags. The former was a large hook, which was used to drag an already hooked fish ashore. The latter was a wire spring system used to spread the jaws of larger fish to ease hook removal. The eighties also saw the introduction of barbless hooks, which are considered to result in less damage to the fish and are now required on many fisheries. The last decade has also seen a reduction in the use of keepnets, especially for larger fish. Such nets were and to some extent still are used to retain the day’s catch before release at the end of the session, but are considered by some anglers to subject the fish to excessive stress. While some legislative measures were introduced regarding fish stocks, more informal mechanisms, through recommendations for ‘best practice’ from organisations such as the Environment Agency or water authorities, had a greater impact in terms of transposing the environmental discourse into practice.

Alongside these changes in tackle and policy there was a growth in the number of angling clubs. Unlike the earlier wave of club formation, the emphasis was to provide a regulated angling location, free from pollution and to protect stocks. The conservationist attitude to stocks is further demonstrated by the establishment of the ‘wild trout conservation trust’ (established in 1997) and the formation of associations to manage entire river systems where valuable migratory and non-migratory stocks exist. Such groups were established to ensure science driven management was implemented. An example of such an institution is The Tweed Foundation established in 1983. These trusts and foundations signify a changing perspective of the angling nature with migratory and native species becoming more valuable than non-native or course fish which are perceived as less threatened or less significant.

These developments typify the incorporation of environmentalist and conservationist values to the angling nature and may signify a further suppression of the emotional connection to nature and its pre-modern resonances; a further rationalising of the connection with the more-than-human. What emerges is a value system that prioritises the wild and the native, but simultaneously, reduces the wildness of the fish as it is subjected to scientific

1 Source: www.wildtrout.org <28/08/05>

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understandings and management strategies. Such sanitising of the angling experience is considered necessary in order to conserve stocks but could well reflect a further ordering of the angler-nature interaction. The importance of wild stocks is critical to justifications for research and management into these creatures. However, such wildness is increasingly challenged as the organisms are further integrated into knowledge systems and therefore positioned within the control of human knowledge. Thus the fish that emerge from such management approaches are hybrids as the knowledges, both human and piscine, about what makes appropriate river conditions are adapted and the boundaries between organisms are blurred and become less meaningful. Therefore, while the scientific management of fish stocks concept is postulated as “sustainable use” and as such, “traditional” contriving an historical connection with nature when the angler ‘only took what was needed’, with no utilitarian need for fishing, such regulation of the angling nature undermines components of the angling experience.

By reducing the atavistic element to angling, sanitising and mediating the experience, the angling nature becomes more about the excitement offered to the individual, and the experience of nature is reduced to that of the component parts of angling. The angling nature and the angling excitement become divorced. The hybrid spaces and organisms exist to ensure and enable a particular level of excitement in the angler, rather than being about traditional, or pre-modern experiences of nature as the environmentalism agenda so often purports. Consequentially the experience of the more-than-human through angling becomes less involved and shifts towards that offered by other rural pursuits such as walking or nature watching. This dislocation of the angling excitement from the immersive practice may in actuality create an excitement that could be offered in more ‘civilised’ and synthetic surroundings, negating the need for environmental projects to preserve fish for angling.

The various natures which have been conserved, worshiped and constrained by anglers over the last 600 years have been constructed in a variety of ways. What is evident is a dual approach to nature. Throughout the angling literature two opposing natures are offered - the rationalised and the emotional. Differing value systems are employed in the justification of the forms of these differing
stances, and create constantly evolving natures that are highly individual. This individuality stems in part from the multifarious nature of angling with varied component parts contributing to the wider angling experience. The different formulations of the more-than-human by the angler bring emphasis to particular aspects of angling. A key element in the way that the more-than-human is experienced through angling relates to the technologies of the rod and line. Not only are they the mechanism for the physical contact with the fish, they shape the interaction, and are subject to the various moral geographies of what is and is not an authentic connection with the angling nature. It is to the history of these technologies that I now turn in an effort to document the changing relations between technology and experience and the various ways technology have been contested, accepted and rejected over time.

**Angling Technologies**

The *Treatise of Fishing with an Angle* heralded the birth of angling as a sport in that it provides a code of conduct. But coupled with this idealistic aspect is a much more practical facet to the treatise. The author offers insight into how and where to fish alongside the manufacture of the equipment needed to engage in this pursuit;

*If you want to be crafty in angling, you must first learn to make your tackle, that is your rod, your lines of different colours. After that you must know how you should angle, in what place of the water, how deep and what time of day; for what manner of fish, in what weather; how many impediments there are in the fishing that is called angling; and especially with what baits for each different fish in every month of the year; how you must make your baits-bread, where you will find the baits and how you will keep them; and for the most difficult thing, how you are to make your hooks of steel and iron, some for the artificial fly and some for the float and the ground line, as you will hear all these things expressed openly for your knowledge.*

*Berners, 1418 (In McDonald, 1997: 47)*

*The Treatise* goes to great lengths in describing how one produces a rod so “light and nimble to fish with at your pleasure and desire” (In McDonald, 1997: 48). Following this is a description of how to create and colour one’s lines,
however, “the subtlest and hardest art in making your tackle is to make your hooks” (In McDonald, 1997: 51). Thus the three components, the rod, the line and the hook (or angle), for this earliest form of angling are described. No significant developments in angling are recorded until the publication of *A Booke of Fishing with Hooke and Line* by Leonard Mascall in 1590. In his book Mascall describes for the first time the double hook and the floating fly. Until this point the fly had been fished in the upper part of the water but below the surface, the floating fly allowed imitation of the insect caught in the surface film. Mascall also introduces the notion of stock conservation through habitat management and aquaculture (Tavener, 1957). The next significant development occurred in 1600 with the often-overlooked John Tavener. He is considered a forerunner of the angler/naturalist epitomised by Ronalds (1836) (Tavener, 1957). He commanded considerable knowledge of the life cycles of the fish, their biology and significantly, also entomology which is quite unusual until the latter part of the nineteenth century. That is not to infer that anglers were unobservant – quite the opposite, the flies created were often imitations of insect life – but they were predominantly ignorant of the biology of the flies, suggesting that they were “bred from mud or corruption” (Tavener, 1957).

John Dennys in 1606 first suggests constructing rods using split bamboo cane. Until this point, the fishing rods were constructed along the lines suggested by *The Treatise* – the butt section is made of hollowed hazel or aspen or willow, into which is inserted “a fair shoot of buckthorn, crabtree, medlar, or juniper” (In McDonald, 1997 at page 48). It is Lawson who first mentions casting in 1620. This permits a line twice the length of the rod to be used. In 1651 Thomas Barker offered three insights into the development of angling knowledge; the first, the reel a technological advancement which allow the use of much longer line; the second, the establishment of tackle dealers providing tackle, including (thirdly) silk lines which gradually replace the horse hair lines used until this point. Thus signifying the formation of a formalised support industry for angling.

In 1653 possibly the most well known of angling discourses was published – Isaak Walton’s *The Compleat Angler*. This text draws heavily on what preceded it; indeed the only particularly unique aspect is the mention of stock conservation by the enforcement of a closed season and catch limits. *The Valuable Ecologies: A Geography of Angling*
Compleat Angler discusses a range of styles of fishing and it is Walton’s contemporary, Charles Cotton who first offers himself as a fly fishing specialist – all the discourses to this point tend to include fly fishing alongside other methods now more closely associated with coarse fishing. Cotton also offered sixty-five new fly patterns recognising that flies developed from aquatic creatures rather than from dew heated by the sun or decay as commonly assumed at the time (Voss Bark, 1992). Until 1681, with the exception of Charles Cotton, the flies used were variations of the twelve offered by the treatise, James Chetham broke this tradition and concurred with Cotton, offering new flies that are considered recognisable forerunners of dressings used today (Tavener, 1957). In spite of this movement away from the twelve offered by The Treatise and a greater awareness of the biology of the fly, there is no record of fly dressings developing along these more entomological lines until 1747. It was in 1747 that The Art of Angling by Richard Bowlker was published. This book offered insights into the transition of the insect from nymph to sub-imago to fully adult fly; the dressing proposed were a consequence of close observation of these stages of development and careful replication with intricate combinations of materials. Alongside the dressings is a reference to the specificity of the imitations and therefore the particularity of the utilisation of such reproductions.

From 1800 the split cane rod gained favour. It was made from four sections of bamboo split lengthways glued and bound and was the predecessor of the six-sectioned cane rod (1841), which was dominant until the 1980s. In 1801 the dry fly became more widespread. These were imitation flies that floated as a consequence of the manner in which they were tied rather than due to the addition of buoyant materials such as cork – dry fly fishing was to become for many (such as Halford Dry Fly Fishing in Theory and Practice (1889)) the only “true” means of fishing.

Ronalds’ publication of The Fly Fisher’s Entomology, published in 1836 was the first time that the natural fly, scientific name, and dressing appeared side by side in a single publication. This development generates a strong scientific influence in the selection of the fly by the angler. This scientific influence is extended by the advice of Sukes (1910) to perform a post-mortem of the catch in order to discover on what the fish are feeding.
Therefore it can be seen that the angling technology is closely woven with the morality of angling and the subsequent immersion in the more-than-human world. As different technologies were invented they were often contested but then became intertwined with the splitting of angling and the creation of various purist groups. This segregation was further underpinned by various societal forces revolving around class and gender, forces that affected the leisure experiences of anglers throughout anglings 600 year history. It is to angling’s role as a sport, and leisure pursuit that I now turn.

**Angling, Leisure and Social Order**

Angling is often described as a ‘sport’, sometimes as a ‘blood sport’. Both are fair descriptions. As shown by the preceding sections, angling is governed by a complex set of rules and regulations that, according to Elias and Dunning, begin to define a pastime as a sport:

> Most types of sport embody an element of competition. They are contests involving bodily strength or skills of a non-military type. Rules constraining the contestants are aimed at reducing the risk of physical injury to a minimum.

*(1986:19)*

According to the first two sentences of this definition angling is a sport, it embodies (quite literally) competition and involves a degree of skill. The third prong of this trident definition of a sport, the rules, is also present. However, the rules in angling are not aimed at limiting the risk of physical injury; the rules most often exist to increase the challenge and required skill level. Consequentially it may be slightly troublesome to use the rules associated with angling to define it as a sport. However, when this ‘excitement’ is unpacked, the rules that induce a more skilful interaction with the more than human world, can be considered as increasing the agency of the fish and therefore limiting the physical injury of the contestants. Therefore angling fits within this definition of a sport.
Despite this framing of angling as a sport, there are a number of complications with such a definition, not least the relative absence of spectatorship, and the individual nature of angling. The majority of other sports, including other blood or field sports, have an element of spectatorship or a collective atmosphere. That is not to suggest that angling is not watched or there is an absence of common identity amongst groups of anglers, but that the activity of angling is in many ways lonely (a theme developed later in the thesis). Therefore it may be more accurate to describe angling as a pastime, but the sporting element cannot be overlooked, therefore throughout this thesis I use both terms in describing angling. One area that is less contested is that for most anglers, angling, be it a sport or a pastime, is a leisure activity.

‘Leisure’ offers us ‘freedom’, ‘choice’ and ‘satisfaction’ (Koshar, 2002) and can be linked with notions of escapism; However, this utopian state of happiness regularly eludes our grasp both in experience and to some extent in description; the work/free time dichotomy is often used to define our leisure experiences. But this clinical separation of leisure from work suggests that all free time is innately enjoyable whilst all work time is a toilsome burden; neither of these simplifications exist, rather both aspects of our everyday lives can be both tiresome and pleasant. Thus whilst freedom, choice and satisfaction are not absent from the work experience, neither are they categorical characteristics of the free time. Therefore, while leisure may be the time and space granted to the individual by society, the surplus of production (Rojek, 1995), or “the non-productive consumption of time” (Veblen, 2001); it is a consequence of the lived experience of individuals which is contingent upon the relative meanings of freedom, choice, and satisfaction in relation to social formations, formations which are conditional on the specificity of the particular place, time and society in which they exist. Consequentially, angling cannot be considered independent from the wider leisure experience, nor from wider sociological interactions, interactions that are reliant on the individual’s particular historical and cultural context.

Norbert Elias (1986), proposes a system for the understanding of leisure, which does not rely on a binary, and zero-sum understanding of power relations. His Civilising Process describes a web of interactions which empower and constrain
all individuals to differing extents, creating a subtle mesh that is both democratic and constraining of ‘excessive’ emotionality and that sport provides a socially acceptable enclave for the expression of such emotions. While this process has a number of flaws, not least that it fails to unpack the process itself and the social construction of acceptable emotionality, and is inherently bound up with a fact based linear understanding of development it does offer a recognition that sport, and leisure occur in particular social, cultural and historical context.

The social and cultural processes of the last 600 years have shaped angling, defining what is acceptable and unacceptable. Under early modernity socially appropriate forms of leisure were valued as part of ‘progress’ while ‘deviant’ leisure activities were marginalised. In the case of angling, accepted practices were defined by the use of a rod, line, and hook while exhaustive methods such as netting, poisoning, and later, the use of explosives were, and still are, excluded as ‘unsporting’. This begins to create a moral landscape, where not only is the interaction with the more-than-human defined and civilised (after Elias), but the physical spaces of angling become defined and defining of what is and is not acceptable.

Angling is further managed through the definition of the locality and timing of leisure activities, thereby defining and maintaining the particular social orders prevalent during the (early)modern period. Examples from angling include the ban of fishing on a Sunday and the ‘close season’ in England and Wales. As figure 2.1 (an Illustration from the Treatise on Fishing with an angle) shows throughout its history, angling has been set apart from the ordered spaces of the urban; the locality of angling is necessarily riparian but is also predominantly rural. As the illustration shows the angler is enjoying a successful fishing trip, with the river, grass and hills in the fore and middle distance, and the city in background. The urban space is walled and thus emphasises the separation between the positioning of the angling experience as something which is not urban.

These accepted and marginalised forms of ‘fishing’ were, and are, enforced formally, by police and water bailiffs, and informally by the etiquette of the anglers themselves. In recent years however, such regulation has been
Figure 2.2
The Cover of The Treatise of Fishing with an Angle (From McDonald, 1996:184)
contested, or example the National Rivers Authority requirement for a rod licence has been waived, albeit informally, on certain private waters. Furthermore the ‘close season’, formerly enforced during the fish-breeding season, is no longer regulated on many private lakes.

While leisure cannot be considered separate from the social and cultural processes of the workplace, free time is, necessarily, defined to a certain extent by employment both temporarily and spatially. During the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries the emerging social structures resulted in a ‘decreed leisure’ on the working class for the idealistic purposes of worker welfare and improvement. With “the minds of anglers being more calm and composed than many others” (Venables, (1662) 1969: ii) the aptitude of angling to personal health, commends this pursuit to the capitalist perception of leisure. Stewart also propounds the health benefit of angling:

_We have it from high medical authority, that rheumatism is more engendered by hot rooms and fires than by exposure, and as for the comfort of the thing, that is according to taste. It is surely better to have fresh air and exercise, even when wet, than to be spending the whole day in some country inn, yawning over some second rate novel for the third time…_

_Stewart 1907(1942): 3_

Such self-help and moral improvement discourses were prominent and continued to expand during the nineteenth century. Moral pressures on leisure time are evident in angling at both the national and community level. This is epitomised by the creation of angling clubs such as the Northampton Nene Angling Club in the mid-nineteenth century, or possibly more significantly, the Derby Railway Angling Club established in 1895. This was an institutionally created leisure organisation for the employees of the Midland Railway. This construction of rural nature as a salve for the ailments of the mind and body is evident in the angling literature through to the present day. Alongside this the influence of the Protestant work ethic is also apparent. The avoidance of laziness and the value of earned leisure and benefits from such activities is evident in the discourse and is illustrated by a verse presented in W. C. Stewart’s _The Practical Angler_ (1907 (1942), 4):
Though sluggards deem it but an idle chase,
And marvel men should quit their easy chair,
The toilsome way and long long league to trace;
Oh! There is sweetness in the mountain air,
And life that bloated ease can never hope to share.

Returning to the works of anglers such as Izaak Walton, Charles Cotton, and Robert Venebles, these texts can be read as mechanisms in the acceptance, critique and rejection of the puritanical authority dominant after the English Civil War (1625-1649). The way that such authorities moulded the angling discourse is evident in the way these seventeenth century angling texts critiqued the morality of free time experiences and the constructed nature of leisure. Angling offered a disciplined and purgatory leisure activity that permitted the individual to escape those 'men of sour complexions - money getting men' (Walton, 1653); Walton deems angling as an appropriate ritual for the Christian, as an activity through which the individual is immersed in the rhythms of God’s creation. The aesthetic created is one of a restful, peaceful, emotion-free experience of the divine creation, away from the urban with its emerging greedy, slothful, lust-filled and envious capitalist order. Similarly Venebles, a parliamentarian, though one with Royalist sympathies (Parker, 1969: 15), and his discourse on the art that 'composeth the soul to that calmness and serenity, which gives a man the fullest possession and fruition of himself and all his enjoyments; this clearness and equanimity of spirit being a matter of so high a concern…' (1969 (1662): iii/iv), gives an account of a pastime that endorses the virtues held in such esteem by the puritan order. Walton’s work however is a foil for a critique of the puritan ascetic attitude, with a day fishing ending in drunkenness and tales in bawdy pubs. Therefore, these discourses on angling also offer insight in to the various social structures of Walton and his contemporaries, as the purpose of leisure is asserted and contested through various processes, and performances which are both covert and conspicuous.

Veblen redefined leisure as the non-productive, inefficient consumption of time (1925 (2001)). The outcome of this consumption is “pecuniary emulation” through conspicuous leisure. Veblen’s “leisure class” decrees the tastes and values of such consumption with status depicted through “conspicuous consumption” or apparent elitism (Wolfe, 2001). This theory is focussed on the
upper and middle classes and lacks awareness of the ability of the working class to generate its own identity. However, such visible leisure ritual can be observed in society as a whole (Rojek, 1995), and in contemporary angling this conspicuous consumption can be observed through the application of technology coupled with a nostalgic link to constructions of the ‘traditional country gent’ [sic]. The application of technology can be observed in both game and coarse angling, the high-tech developments in rods, reels and lines become the latest ‘must-haves’ almost as if fish can indirectly be bought through the purchase of the most expensive equipment. Following on from what was introduced in the technology section above, carp anglers equip themselves with multiple ‘specialist’ ‘3 lb test-curve’ rods fished simultaneously which requires the use of electronic bite indicators that emit an electronic bleep whenever a fish takes the bait, alerting the angler and all around to the capture. Similar “technological badges” are worn by game anglers, however, the dress code of such anglers may offer a demonstration of a conspicuous consumption more closely linked to Veblen’s thoughts on dress as an expression of the pecuniary culture. The game fishing retailers offer angling clothing, which often consists of tweed or wax jackets in an almost nostalgic romanticising of the Victorian gentleman angler; that by the connection to this ‘golden age of fly-fishing’ one is imbibed with the knowledge of prominent figures such as Ronalds, Halford or Skues (Taverner, 1957; Voss Bark, 1992; Falkus, 2002). Indeed as one participant in the research noted, this connection to the historical exclusivity is still evident in the way that certain anglers approach angling:

But there is still, boys younger than me who will go out and they will want a wicker creel, plus fours, wear a tie, you know whether they are on the river or on a lake, to have a cane rod, silk line, hand tied flies, almost as if they want to maintain the days gone by when it was exclusive.

John, Roadford, 2nd June 2006

Goffman (1967) suggests that this conspicuous consumption takes place in ‘action spaces’ where the individual engages in ‘vicarious experiences’. In angling these action spaces are the riverbank and historically at least, predominantly rural locations. This coupled with the individual, private nature of angling results in a performance not for society but for the individual. It is a projection of the self onto a more exciting, alternative ego denied by the rigidity.
of the labour space. The action space takes on significant meanings as the non-urban, non-modern, almost antithesis of the labour space created by the discourse. As Cohen and Taylor (1978) submit:

_We want a genuine escape, a flight to an area in which we can temporarily absent ourselves from paramount reality, find ourselves out of play and assemble our identity in peace or with new and more powerful symbolic resources. Society creates just such areas and assiduously signposts them. Indeed it signposts them so well that they become… part of the paramount reality itself._

This escape to “identity sites” is apparent in the angling discourse from Walton through to the present: “We think of our pleasures in night watches, in passing from one place to another, upon the pavement, in trains and cabs.” (Grey, 1899 (1984) 3).

The cultural perception of leisure as escape, either physically or mentally, maintains a division between work and play, the mundane and the exciting: Elias and Dunning (1986) break this dichotomy arguing that both can be enjoyable and both tedious. Elias and Dunning’s (1986) ‘civilising process’ constructs sport and leisure as places where the expression of emotions are permitted in a socially approved enclave; between two evenly-matched teams (Elias and Dunning 1986) or in the case of angling, between the angler and the fish. Thus the leisure space and time becomes not a location of relaxation but a site of passion and turmoil. The process is dynamic and evolving with neither prescribed goals nor obligatory direction. However, while such tensions between individuals exist, a release through leisure is a necessity.

According to Elias and Dunning (1986) the result of the internalised emotionality created through daily life is a ‘quest for excitement’. The excitement required of leisure activities is maintained by the introduction of rules and regulation to achieve an appropriate ‘tension equilibrium’ between actors. Such an equilibrium maintains a sporting evenness between individuals or, in the case of angling, between the angler and the quarry. The rules surrounding methods used increase the agency of the fish, raising the likelihood of failure and consequentially the excitement surrounding possible success. Therefore any change in the regulation of methods employed represents a ‘civilising’ of the sport and an increase in the tension levels in angling. The Treatise of Fishing
with an Angle (1418 (1997)) heralded the birth of angling; the rule of rod, line and hook completes the first stage in the development of angling as a sport. The introduction of size limits by Walton in 1653 (2002), limits the angler to the older, more-difficult-to-catch trout. There is then considerable debate among fly fishers between 1800 and 1930 about methods: the dry fly versus wet fly debate, the conflict between up-stream and down-stream fishing as well as the friction between fly-fishing and coarse fishing. Each of these sub cultures and sub-disciplines castigates the others and has dedicated followers, each limiting themselves to the confines of their art. Thus we see the individual “tension equilibrium” maintained as technological advancements make catching fish easier. The uptake and rejection of these various technologies, the fish pursued, or the style of engagement with the more-than-human world becomes significant in defining individual and collective identities.

**Constructing the Angling Subject**

The angling subjectivities are constantly created, contested and recreated through the everyday experiences of individuals. Cultural preferences, tastes, styles financial security and economic prosperity, gender, and race all affect contemporary angling experience. However, the social structures of earlier social orders may still manifest themselves in the angling experience. As mentioned above, the creation of angling clubs serve to nurture angling identities though homogenising the angling experience. The Nidderdale Angling Club (1897) offers further evidence for the establishment of a defined identity amongst anglers. Rather than being an association created by an institution this local group was formed in the local pub. However both forms of the angling club can be considered as generating a uniform experience amongst anglers. In spite of this, it is impossible to suggest that the experience of angling is uniform across society; although all classes and all age groups engage in angling, individual experiences differ - “the juvenile Cockney who bobs for gudgeon and eels in the dubs and ditches in the neighbourhood of London… …plies his lure as unremittingly as the sportsman who captures the monarch of the streams in some noble river, such as the Tweed or the Tay” (Stewart, 1907 (1942) 7). This
passage highlights not just the accessibility of angling but also the divides manifest within angling and the consequential experience of the environment through angling.

This exclusivity of aspects of angling has been both maintained and blurred during the twentieth century. With increasing wealth and mobility the cockney is no longer constrained to the ‘dubs and ditches’ of London. However, there are still divides between different angling groups. The divides now fall less between ‘classes’, and more between angling sub-cultures each with a specificity of experience. This is possibly best illustrated by the proliferation of angling magazines. The number and diversity of angling magazines offers an example of the contest between cultural groups. Within the coarse fishing genre, general coarse angling competes with pole fishing, match fishing, predator fishing and carp fishing. Similarly, with game fishing salmon and trout compete along with wild versus stocked trout as well as with the side shoot of fly-tying; this “angling family tree” is illustrated in fig 2.2.
Most of the branches are championed by at least one specialist magazine, and if this is not the case, the cultural divides between different groups are evident within more general angling publications. This construction of sub-cultures is highlighted by the moral superiority taken by fly fishers over the coarse or bait angler:

*Fly-fishers are apt to sneer at worm fishing as a thing so simple that any one may succeed in it – their notions of it being that it is practiced either when the waters are swollen after rain, or with a float and sinkers in some deep pool; and it is not surprising that with such ideas of it they should hold it in contempt.*

*Stewart, 1907(1942): 124*

This quotation is highly emotive, and indicative of the moral discourses that have run through the preceding sections on nature, technology and this section on angling identities. It is a theme returned to in the conclusion below, but remains at the heart of understandings of self and landscape; that there is a process of conflict that divides anglers into subcultures, accompanied by a degree of group cohesion which remains and is evident throughout the wider angling community producing a collective identity that is hinted at in the excerpt from Venables’ *The Experienced Angler* – a community that no angler could ‘wholly cast off’:

*I know no sort of men less subject to melancholy than anglers; many have cast off other recreations and embraced it, but I never knew any angler who wholly cast off, though occasions might interrupt, their affections for their beloved recreation; and if this art may prove a Noble brave rest to thy mind, it will be satisfaction to his, who is thy well wishing friend.*

*Venables 1662 (1969): iv*

Thus the hegemonic interplay between dominant and subordinate groups within society is played out through angling and also within angling - between identity groups within angling categories. This begins to offer a greater depth in the explanation of the multifaceted nature of angling beyond notions of freedom,
choice, creativity and self-determination. Yet this explanation of the multifarious engagement in angling relies heavily on class structure contested by cultural groups through leisure practices, and as such it is over-deterministic and fails to represent the diversity within the angling community. There are many different power relationships between anglers, which the class divide/identity group explanation fails to recognise. The cultural struggle argument dislocates angling from enjoyment and erroneously suggests that the manipulation by the leisure industry is unidirectional, that the consumption of the individual angling experience of carp fishing, pole fishing or salmon fishing is entirely passive, when it is shaped by the interplay between individuals and different groups.

Just as the engagement in angling is not classless, neither is it de-racialised and de-gendered. Franklin (2001) confirms the masculine dominance of hunting sports generally. Angling is a form of intimate hunting, which involves the individual in the capture and possible death of a fish, rather than a form of spectator hunting in which a group witness the killing of a quarry by external means, such as dogs (Matless et al., 2005). The space in which angling is enacted is predominantly the rural, and the romantic construction of angling connects to ‘the rural idyll’ (Halfacree, 1995). This spatial and conceptual location away from the urban and domestic arena may have historically precipitated a masculine dominance. The rural space reinforces the exclusion of females from angling as a consequence of the hetero-patriarchal supremacy of rural gender relations (Little and Austin, 1996; Hubbard, 2005). However the location of angling is not exclusively rural, therefore existing gender relation of particular constructions of rurality cannot directly explain the masculine dominance of urban angling. In spite of this, the experience of angling as individual, peaceful and completive, even in the urban location shares much with the idealised view of the ‘rural’ in which the countryside:

...is pictured as a less-hurried lifestyle where people follow the seasons rather than the stock market, where they have more time for one another and exist in more organic community where people have a place and an authentic role. The countryside has become the refuge from modernity.

This description of the rural is echoed in many of the sentiments related to angling; the changing tactics according to weather conditions, a sense of belonging (Cloke and Jones, 2001), and an escape from ‘money getting men’ (Walton, 1653 (2003)). These understandings of the angling nature follow angling regardless of locality. The sentiments offered by Thrift (2000) on walking could easily refer to angling as “a means to contact the Earth, to be at one with ‘nature’, even to be deemed therapeutic. It becomes a means of gathering stillness... ...a means of contemplation and mystical communion to be found within the body. Thus, just as “the long fingers of [the] idyll reach into our everyday lives” (Cloke, 2003) so do the tendrils of the “pastoral myth” (Halfacree, 1995) encroach on the urban space, along the waterways where individuals immerse themselves in an angling rurality. Consequentially the link between angling and rural gender relations may be maintained. However, it is impossible to suggest that rural social structures follow particular constructions of rurality or that existing social relations perpetuate existing formations of urban rurality.

It is wrong to suppose that angling is exclusively male; Paterson (1990) highlights the success of female anglers. However, the anglers that are introduced by the text occupy privileged social positions. Even though angling occurs in the urban and suburban regions there is still a connection to the rural idyll and a notion of escape from the oppression of industrial life. This connection to the rural idyll could bring the rural power structure into the urban angling space, perpetuating the masculine dominancy of angling. This power structure predicated on the hyper-masculine escapism of angling fosters a protectionist attitude amongst anglers and thereby further excludes females. Thus the pursuit of angling and the locus of angling are male-dominated with gendered power relations possibly affecting female access to angling. Furthermore, the ‘rural location’ of angling could also affect the racial demographic of the angling community. The prevalence of rural racism is well documented in the academic literature (Neal, 2002; Hubbard, 2005) and while it is possible that differences in racial leisure preferences result in the dominance of the angling fraternity by white ethnic groups, racism cannot be ignored (Rojek, 1995). Through the connection to the “English Countryside” the
constructions surrounding angling are also embedded with an invisible racism (Bonnett, 1997; Neal, 2002). The iconic nature of “the rural” as the last bastion of Englishness brings a protectionist attitude to resulting angling identity (Hubbard, 2005) thereby excluding the non-white community. Once more the *flight to nature* as an antidote to urban life brings this imbibed racism into the urban angling experience.

**Conclusion: The Moralities of Fishing**

This chapter has added a historical context to what has shaped the angling experiences of contemporary anglers. It has shown how angling, the body and nature have been sites for the acceptance and rejection of various discourses of nature through modernity. The accounts used are lay interpretations (despite representing elite knowledges of angling) and therefore reflect how these big themes are translated into the everyday experiences of individuals. What has also been highlighted by this chapter is the way that the meta-narratives of enlightenment science, romanticism and modern environmentalism have shaped both the angling discourse and defined how the more-than-human world should be approached by the angler. These themes that have defined the interaction between the angler and nature have become embodied and shaped by the various technological developments over the last 600 years.

These technologies became the mechanisms which not only defined how particular people in particular places fished but also how power relations were formed and maintained. The various moralities about which rods, which flies and which techniques are appropriate and represent ‘true fishing’ also fragment the collective ‘anglers’ along the various lines that reflect social and cultural norms, preferences, tastes and economic position. Consequentially these multiple moralities of fishing have become mapped into multiple angling subjectivities but also spatial differences of desirability, as different places become associated with different approaches to fishing. Scottish rivers offer fine salmon fishing, the canals of the Midlands provide opportunity for the urban angler, the drains and ditches of fenland provide a wealth of coarse fishing,
large reservoirs and stocked fisheries provide a particular version of trout fishing while the South West has become increasingly associated with ‘wild brown trout’. This is by no means an exhaustive list and neither does it acknowledge the heterogeneity of the angling identity and associated experiences. However what it does begin to recognise is that these historical discourses have defined angling as they have created a morality which corresponds to different angling subjectivities and has shaped the spatial dynamics of different angling sub cultures.

These moral discourses of angling transpose into the various practises and performances which constitute the contemporary angling experience and turn these inclusions and exclusions, power relations, ideas and codes, into materialities that affect both people and places. It is with this contemporary experience that the majority of this project is concerned. However, it has been important to acknowledge the historical context in which the politics of contemporary angling is played out and transferred into a lived spatiality. What follows in the next chapter is a depiction of the methodology that I used to gain insight into the some of these practices and performances and the meanings and values which they embody.
Chapter 3

Methodology

Introduction

The previous chapters have introduced fish and angling and identified how salmonids have become socially and culturally important more-than-human animals, prized by anglers, studied by biologists, eaten by many and used as ‘indicator species’ for policy. As a consequence of this multiple interest from different social groups, in the wider literature the importance of salmonids has been presented in many ways. The most dominant understandings in the academic, management and policy arenas are those of the biological sciences and economics (Willis and Garrod, 1999; Peirson et al., 2001; Morey, 2001; Navrud, 2001; Roth et al., 2001; Curtis, 2002; Arlinghaus and Mehner, 2004; Toivoven et al., 2004). The research offered by this thesis represents a divergence from the knowledges created through the biological and economic constructions of the importance of Salmonids, and is part of a growing interest amongst geographers into the social and cultural understandings of water, a further development to animal geographies, issues of landscape and nature society interactions. However, angling raises a number of methodological issues and it with these issues that this chapter is concerned.

Chapter two identified the historical discourses which described the various moralities of angling, part of which prioritised the more-than-visual elements of angling and constructed angling as the corporeal involvement of the angler in the environment producing intimate and multiple experiences of the more-than-human, that are much more than just visual. This prominence of the non-visual-senses in angling distinguishes angling from many other interactions with the more-than-human, in contemporary society. But beyond this sensory involvement, angling creates multiple interactions with the more-than-human, not only in the form of a temporal sequence but also in the way that ‘nature’ is pushed, pulled and regulated to create an appropriate tension with the more-
than-human. As a consequence of these multiple and corporeal involvements, angling offers a unique insight into the manner in which the more-than-human world is experienced and imbued with meaning and valued. However, alongside this insight gained through the multiplicity of experience and interaction of anglers with the more-than-human, is a complexity in (re)presenting these involved practices in academic research. This intricacy almost requires an involved and heterogeneous methodology. Not in an attempt to achieve the myth of a complete objective representation, but to allow the gaps to be seen; revealing some of the intricacy through thick descriptions of the experiences of anglers.

This chapter is broken into two parts, the first section deals with the intricacies, peculiarities and idiosyncrasies of researching angling, to discuss how such issues have impacted on and shaped the research. The second section is more pragmatic as it attends to the practical decision making, justification and implementation of the various techniques employed in this research.

**Embodying Research: Power and the Angling Body**

The sections below identify which methods were chosen and outlines how the methodological decisions have been reached. Before such discussions it is important to identify the particular intricacies of angling, the effect of these intricacies on research and the wider implications of such developments. As described in the previous chapter, angling is an involved encounter with the more-than-human world. The discourses suggested that much of this encounter involves an ‘opening up’ to nature, a being (made) aware of nature, through, for example, a ‘reading of the water’, or a ‘hunter-gather instinct’. This awareness of the more-than-human, is a process of giving agency to the nature. In this section I want to discuss how this notion of agency impacts on the research in two ways. Firstly how the raft of techniques used, capture the way that agency is granted to the various more-than-human elements of the angling experience. And secondly how this agency impacts on the research, and how bodies and power relations are shaped by angling.
Although, for Isaak Walton, angling represents a serene and cerebral immersion in God’s creation, through the practice of angling, the angler’s body is modified; the actions affect the corporeal form. The extent to which the muscles, sinews and synapses are modified affects how the angler fishes. This manipulation of the body accompanies and complements the cerebral knowledges that enable the angler to catch fish. These multiple embodied knowledges create angling elites. It is with these elites that I am talking and sharing angling experiences. This notion of elites adds a complexity to the ethnographic (and interview) process, in that I am ‘researching up’. Thereby requiring an interrogation of the researcher-researched relationship which is more than merely considering the positionality of the two involved parties, and represents an opening up of the complexity of the relationship beyond the interrogation of who holds and exercises power over whom. Therefore I want to illustrate how angling affects the body, to recognise and investigate the construction of the ‘angling elite’, unpack the power relations present in the participant observation of the angler and depict the manner in which my body, knowledges, performances and narration of angling forms the research.

**Shaping Bodies, Creating Elites**

Without unpacking the concept of the elite I want to depict some of the impacts of angling on the body. These impacts take two forms: a conditioning to enable the angler to fish and a deformation (both temporary and permanent) as a consequence of fishing.

Through the practices of angling the angler conditions the body to facilitate the capture of fish. This conditioning ranges from muscular development to increased reaction times and includes growing of nails to aid the tying of flies. Charles Ritz in his book *A Flyfisher’s Life* (1959) describes a series of exercises that the angler should undertake to build up and then maintain the muscles required for casting a fly line. These exercises are depicted with diagrams (figure 3.1) and involve the use of a wine bottle filled with sand to act as a
weight to stretch the muscles used while casting. The effort required in casting should not be underestimated; whilst seemingly straightforward and serene it is a skill that requires years of practice, and is crucial to how well someone fishes — I often described how well someone fished in terms of how they cast — ‘he was a competent caster’ (Roadford, Field Notes, page 3).

Having developed the muscles and sinews to enable the cast and mastered the mechanics of the cast, the angler modifies the way that the angler approaches the water. This behavioural modification requires the angler to advance to the water with caution in order not to spook the fish. Indeed the angler may talk of moulding into the environment:

… I had a rod here it doesn’t matter who it is — he’s dead now so it doesn’t matter! Who used to go stumbling up the bank, and every time I used to see him, he used to say in a loud voice with his rod over his shoulder, ‘surely thing Fergus, I can’t see a damn fish’, and you could see the fish moving up in front of him in shoals, instead of just quietly kneeling there, moulding into the grass behind, and seeing a fish rising and looking behind and seeing if there is anything to stop you casting,

Kenneth, The River Wylye 8th June 2006
This may be linked more generally to hunting and an accompanying heightened awareness of the environment. However, this heightened awareness is a consequence of the tuning of the senses – of the angler’s body – that allows them to move without scaring the fish, to see the fly on the water, choose an imitation and present it in an appropriate manner. Accompanying this immersion in the more-than-human is the direct detection of ‘the take’ that the angler is tuned to read the different vibrations on the line to distinguish ‘the nudge of a large fish from a leaf’ (Falkus, 2002: 152). Once more the angler enters a phase of heightened sensual awareness of the environment to sense the take but relies on quick reaction speeds to hook the fish.

Further bodily adjustments are evident through growing of the nails on the index finger and thumb of the left hand to facilitate the grasping of feathers while tying flies: ‘Little things like growing the nails on your thumb and finger...’ (Roadford 02-08-06). Accompanying this range of bodily adjustments made by the angler to better facilitate the capture of fish there are a series of physical impacts on the angler’s body as a consequence of the practice of angling, in the extreme these may be called deformities but may be as little as aching muscles, or getting cold and wet or suffering with blisters from rowing (see figure 3.2).

However these impacts may be longer lasting such as the risk of tendon injury or repetitive strain injury:

*The other thing is that if you are going to fish all day if you’ve got to strip your flies through, you’re going to tire yourself out. I’ve done plenty of that before and it does get quite tiring. And I did fish one day, very hard conditions at Argal reservoir and I ended up almost having RSI in the wrist I had to strip my flies so fast all day and so, a bit of damage limitation as well.*

Eric, Drift 21st May 2006
But beyond these short lived effects is the manner in which a life-time spent angling affects the body and how it works. This is clearly depicted in the manner in which the casting hand is deformed according to different grips of the rod (figure 3.2). The body is both affected by and affects the manner in which the angler engages with the practice of fly fishing. This bodily influence – the way the angler’s body ‘knows’ how to fish is coupled with the cerebral knowledges accrued by the angler to create the ‘elite angler’; that it is not just knowledge of ‘how to fish’ gathered over the angler’s lifetime but also how the
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Power, Elites and Ethnography

Having illustrated how the angling elite is constructed through the bodily shaping of cerebral and non-cerebral knowledge, this concept of ‘the elite’, as Smith (2006) suggests, must be deconstructed. However, where Smith and others (e.g. Cormode and Hughes, 1999; Herod, 1999; England, 2002; and Desmond, 2004) have discussed the notion of elites with regard to interviews this deconstruction occurs within the combined interview and ethnographic setting of this research: By involving angling elites in the research I am ‘researching up’ and encountering different issues to those experienced when ‘studying down’ (Desmond, 2004). But rather than these issues being encountered in the interview setting they are experienced within the setting of participant observation and relates to the widely discussed issue of insider/outsider in research (Narayan, 1993; Pini, 2004; and O’Connor, 2004 amongst others) but in a slightly more nuanced manner.

Power relations between the researcher and the researched are widely documented (eg Gilbert, 1990; England, 1994; Mattingly and Falconer-Al-Hindi, 1995; and Rose, 1997). However the researcher is often positioned as the powerful actor in the exchange, dictating how the research is conducted and ‘speaking for’ the researched (Spivak, 1988; Rose 1997). This constructs the researcher as the holder and wielder of power – suggesting that research is always conducted ‘down’. Recent authors have called for a research agenda that embraces an approach that includes elites – the holders of power and authority (Ostrander, 1995; England, 2002; Desmond, 2004). Many of the people that volunteered for the research had been fishing for most of their lifetimes. One had been managing the same river for 50 years, another had represented Wales in angling competitions. Therefore the research conducted with anglers represents an interrogation of an elite, obviously in differing
grades, but these ‘experts’ are holders of knowledges and understandings that position them as holders of authority within the angling fraternity – as elites.

Smith (2006) emphases the problem with the term elite, contesting that the notion of elite often relies on hierarchical and structural constructs of power and assumes that it is possible to ‘clearly identify powerful people’ (P.645) and that the ‘power’ that individuals hold in “normal” circumstances will ‘transfer directly onto the interview space’ (Ibid). Smith contends that these assumptions break down when poststructuralist notions of power are recognised and the interview situation is closely scrutinised. Therefore it must be recognised that there are multiple power relations in operation through the ethnography and interview. However, these power relations play out in different ways. The power stemming from my position as a researcher was evident from the outset – the reason for the meeting was my research. However, the angler’s elite status was not predetermined, the power structures that Smith describes as identifiable are not so in such embodied practice. While there may be indicators such as the deformation of joints from casting or extended finger nails, these are not limited to the angler. The elite status of the angler becomes evident through the act of angling. The precision of the cast, the choice of flies and ultimately success in catching fish, define angling elites in ways that are not clearly defined until they are performed. Anglers are everyday elites; their elite status is not manifest in a title, job description, or particular economic position. These elites become evident through the ethnography and interview and represent a power relation that can compete, contrast and/or complement the researcher-researched relationship. Such relations ensure that there are multiple powers tensions through ethnography that cannot be pre-defined or categorised. These are embodied elites that become evident through performance.

**Working with Elites – Performing Legitimacy**

The status of elite in angling is not conferred by title, it is an embodied performance that defines who is and who is not an elite. The power relations in the setting of the interview and ethnography was emergent as the various
positionalties were played out. My position as an angler was useful in accessing angling groups (see below). My status as an ‘insider’ as far as angling shaped the research. As Herod (1999:325) suggests, ‘interviews conducted by “insiders” and by “outsiders” are likely to produce different texts – particularly with regard to how interviewees feel and think about certain things’. Herod goes on to note that insider texts are not automatically more valuable. However, this insider/outsider dichotomy is problematic. As I discussed above, I was often in the position of the less competent angler and I felt scrutinised in my ability at various stages. Therefore, my status as insider was a contested politics, as one angler commented:

_Eric:_ well I hope you’ve enjoyed it

_Jacob:_ I have enjoyed it and it was nice to catch something!

_Eric:_ Glad it was successful, I mean that was something I was thinking, ‘got to catch fish, we’ve got to make sure he catches a fish’ and then you did, and you didn’t need much help to be honest, which is good, I was thrilled when you caught, when you hooked a fish over there. I thought ‘good he knows what he’s doing’

_Jacob:_ Well it came off just as I was… just as I rattled the loop into the top rings, and the jolt and it twisted...

_Eric:_ But you landed one, that’s the main thing. You know, when I arrange for people to go fishing with me I feel responsible, I feel I’ve failed if they haven’t caught a fish, you passed! [laughs]

_Eric, Drift, 21st May 2006_

Through this excerpt a bi-lateral dynamic emerges; firstly I connect enjoyment and success. Eric then goes on to admit how he was watching me, and that I hooked something was evidence for me ‘knowing what I was doing’ – that I was part of an elite. I respond, deferring my status, or anxious to be included into such an elite? Eric reassures that ability is evidenced through success and that I ‘passed’. This bi-lateral affirming and differral epitomises the multiple power relations that are in operation through angling; power relations that become evident through the performance of angling.

However, while this inclusion into the everyday elite of anglers was evident, my role as a researcher was not negated. Indeed, following on from Herod (1999), I
was in between researcher and insider as I was both privy to the specialist knowledges of the angling fraternity and opening it up to wider scrutiny. However, by acknowledging these multiple and fluid dynamics that are not defined but emergent through the ethnographic process the ‘hybrid and positioned nature of our identities’ (Narayan, 1993) become evident.

But the existence of these hybrid identities is not the limit of their influence. As described above, angling is embodied and consequentially the elitism is emergent rather than pre-defined. However, my status as an insider was similarly dependent on my ability to catch a fish, which in turn is a consequence of the coordination of various muscles and sinews to enable me to cast, knowledge that has been built up over a number of years, in a variety of contexts. These contexts also influence the research, in ways that go beyond the particular abilities expressed in the particular spaces of the ethnography. Part of being an insider, of being an everyday elite, was the ability to narrate back histories and incorporate different places, different spaces, and different encounters into the conversations that occurred both in the interviews and the ethnography.

Therefore, not only does positionality refer to our power relations flowing from our social, cultural and historical positions, positionality is affected by the researcher’s body. In investigating embodied practices the body shapes the research and the researcher-researched relationship. My ability to cast, catch a fish or narrate back histories and provide an angling narrative, was as important as my ability to understand the particular language of angling. Indeed each interaction was shaped, not only by my increasing familiarity of my role as a researcher, but as my senses, synapses, reflexes and muscles became attuned to the practices and performances of angling; that the embodiment of angling gives agency to the more-than-human to shape both the angling experience and the research. Having identified how agency is given to the more-than-human world through angling, and how these peculiarities have shaped the bodies of the research I want to now discuss, which particular techniques have been mobilised and utilised through the research.
The Raft of Techniques

As described earlier in the thesis, angling is a very involved practice. My methodology reflects this intricacy. According to the various discourses surrounding angling, the process of giving agency to the more-than human world is crucial. I have discussed how angling has shaped my body and how my body has shaped the research, what follows is an introduction to the raft of techniques that were implemented to gain insight into the peculiarities of angling. These techniques were used in an effort to give agency to anglers; to enable them to describe their experiences in a culturally credible or meaningful manner. Such approaches were chosen in an attempt to reflect the angling experience, to capture both the functional data about who fishes, how often and how much they spend, but also to capture movement, emotion, affective elements of the angling experience.

The techniques used were ethnography, auto-photography, interviews, as well as more structured (postal) questionnaires. The ethnography and interviews were used to gain some understanding of the processes and structures that give meaning to the angling experience (Winchester, 1999). The ethnography in particular was used to situate these understandings in their everyday scenarios (Sayer, 1991) in which they occur and in the spaces where they are formed (Herbert, 2000).

The combination of objectives was interrogated through a blend of different methods, each adding greater perspective to the discussion and evaluating and informing the other strands of my enquiry. I did not intend to confine individual objectives to a specific method or combination of methods, rather that such goals are attained through a blending of the methods. The ‘conclusions’ have emerged with different aspects leaning more heavily on particular parts of the methodology.
The value systems dominant in salmonid management are those of the biological science and economics. The methods implemented did not mirror the ‘objectivity’ required by such traditions and challenged the silencing of emotion in such an involved and emotion filled experience. The auto-photography, the ethnographic work in general, and possibly the interviews, may be considered inappropriate in this statistically representative landscape.

**Rigorous Qualitative Work**

Despite, and possibly because existing studies are so firmly rooted in the objective traditions of the natural sciences and economics, my methods remain solidly qualitative and predominantly devoid of numbers. This approach is used to explore the issues already mentioned; that the involved essence of angling required an involved methodology; to create ‘thick descriptions’ of the meanings ascribed to aspects of the more-than-human by the angler(s); thereby interrogating aspects of held beliefs and values that the anglers deploy in their interaction with their environs through the practice of angling. The qualitative nature of my methodology therefore aims to investigate the social, cultural and historical positioning of the individual and by doing so, gain insight into the processes and structures with which the angler imbibes the more-than-human with meaning. It aims to locate the angler at the centre of the research rather than abstractly investigating angling: throughout this study I wanted to involve people, to hear different opinions in a variety of contexts and situations. Despite embracing the qualitative methodology so completely, there is still a need to ensure that my methods are academically appropriate.

While quantitative methods involve careful control to ensure that results are accepted and deserving of attention, Baxter and Eyles (1997) suggest that there is a need for a similar degree of ‘rigour’ in qualitative methods. This is most commonly achieved by describing the appropriateness of the methodology to the research, the use of multiple methods, information of respondent selection and the presentation of verbatim quotations (although they also note a general lack of transparency as to the means by which quotations are selected). They
also suggest that extended periods of research and repeat visits often add weight to the findings and reduce the likelihood of misrepresentation. A further method for ensuring rigour identified by Baxter and Eyles is the appeal to an existing body of literature. However, they feel that this grounding in accepted thought does not automatically ensure rigorous results. Eyles (1988) suggests that rigour can be achieved through ‘scientific validity’ where the conclusions flow from the evidence offered. Baxter and Eyles (1996) extend this to require a ‘plausibility’; ‘involving data-to-concept links which not only make sense to scientists but also to the lay people on whose experiences interpretations are based’ (p. 510). This constitutes a creation of ‘participant validity’ to the scientific validity. Baxter and Eyles go on to describe Jackson’s (1985) notion of ‘logical connections’ between the methods used and the generalisations made. Jackson is critiqued for combining validity and representation. McDowell (1992) requires the methodology to be acceptable to the intended audience of the piece. This echoes Smith (1984) in her need for ‘logical inference’ in statements made. Baxter and Eyles compound all these suggestions to the need for ‘logical inferences’ that ‘appeal to scientists, those researched and a wide array of lay people’ (p. 511); that the ‘key to validity is clarity’ (Ibid.). For them this is ensured by qualitative research being: ‘Credible’ – authentic representations of experience; ‘Transferable’ – fits within contexts outside the study situation; ‘Dependable’ – minimising of idiosyncrasies in interpretation with variability tracked to an identifiable source, and; ‘Confirmable’ – the extent to which biases, motivations, interests or perspectives of the enquirer influence interpretations.

The rigorous requirements of Baxter and Eyles present qualitative methods as untrustworthy, suggesting a need for a rationalising of qualitative work to ensure objectivity. This leaves qualitative methods as little more than supportive of ‘real’ science. Some have claimed that qualitative methods can be just as objective as quantitative methods (Brannen, 1992, in Winchester, 1999), indeed Baxter and Eyles’ rigour attempts to raise the objective validity of qualitative methods. However there is no need to diminish the validity of qualitative methods purely because of a lack of statistical weight; qualitative methods fit within a ‘critical realism [that] looks beyond the empirical, recognising that
underlying structures are complex and may be different from the observable events and discourses to which they give rise’ (Winchester, 1999).

Therefore I feel no need to ensure my methods fulfilled the prescriptive standards of rigour laid down by Baxter and Elyes; I rely heavily on qualitative measures. I do not attempt to simply aggregate the data generated, but allow the different knowledges formed through the different methods generate an emergent understanding of the significance of angling on perceptions and values of the more-than-human. In spite of these sentiments, many of the suggestions made by Baxter and Eyles are met: I used multiple methods, I provide information on informant selection, I undertook extended research, and provide verbatim quotations. Moreover I aim to provide a logical connection and present findings which are accessible to a broad audience.

The mixed methodology approach to the interrogation of the relationships formed with the more-than-human through angling and the role and significance of angling as a leisure pursuit, revolves around a notion of gaining an ‘understanding’. Even with qualitative methods the likelihood of ever achieving understanding must be questioned, the double hermeneutics – constructions of constructions – creates considerable moral and ontological issues surrounding methods that attempt to ‘speak for others’. This leads to a need to assess the relationship between the researcher and the researched.

Positionality

Who we are, what we are, and how we are, affects the manner in which we view the world; this situating of knowledge challenges universalism and absolutism in the formation of academic knowledge not only by recognising the particular cultural ‘standpoint’ (Harding 1987) of the researcher but also the position of the researched. Therefore, what follows is an account of the relevancy of positionality to my research and my methods, but is not the sum total of my acknowledgment of the importance of positionality, but rather offers the foundations for a more general reflectivity, one that percolates through the thesis.
The situating of all knowledges (Haraway, 1988) affects the manner in which the world is presented and represented; that these (re)presentations cannot be complete or impartial. The ethnic locatedness of all individuals – that ‘we all speak from a political place, out of a particular history, a particular experience, a particular culture, without being contained by that position’ (Hall, 1992) – results in an interpretation of *ethnicity* coloured by the *ethnic position* we occupy, even if that position benefits from hegemonic dominance and claims complete and disinterested understanding. Indeed the power relations that gives rise to such dominance is at the very core of the construction of knowledges – who speaks for whom - can the ‘sexed, subaltern subject’ (Spivak, 1988) ever be heard without misrepresentation? Hartstock (1987) suggests that a greater understanding of difference is required, that through this ‘hitherto marginalised groups can name themselves, speak for themselves and participate in defining the terms of interaction’. This positionality between the researched and researcher raises issues in regard to what is given credence in the representation of culturally significant accounts.

The locatedness of the researcher’s interpretation cannot be avoided. However Rose (1997) suggests that the impact can be minimised through a process of ‘transparent reflexivity’. This dispenses with claims to ‘see everything from nowhere’ (p 308) to ‘make one’s position vis a vis research *known* rather than invisible, and to *limit* ones conclusions rather than making grand claims about their universal applicability’ (Mattingly and Falconer-Al-Hindi, 1995: 428 – 29, emphasis original). But more than stating the existence of the cultural location of the researcher, the power balance between the researcher and researched should be ‘made visible and open to debate’ (Gilbert, 1990 p. 90); to create a reflexivity which ‘looks both *inward* to the identity of the researcher and *outward* to her relation to her research and what is described as *the wider world*’ (Rose, 1997 p. 309).

Transparent reflexivity suggests the difference between these positions occupied by the researcher and the researched can be spatialised as distance in the ‘power landscape’ (Rose, 1997 p. 312). However, this presentation of difference as a distance between two points is excessive simplification. The
metaphor of landscape suggests a network of power relations operating in antagonistic pairs and as such fixed and defined suggesting a dichotomy between those with power and those who are subject to power. However the combinations of influences experienced by the individual(s) are infinitesimally variable and not necessarily linearly antagonistic (see above); as Rose acknowledges, this reflexivity relies on ‘a transparently knowable self separate from its transparently knowable context’ (p. 314). Rather ‘reflexivity may be less a process of self-discovery than of self-construction’ (p. 313). But even if the vector locations of the researcher and researched within this multidimensional landscape were identifiable such spatialisation makes no allowance for the temporal evolution of the relationships (Kobayashi, 1994).

Alternative approaches to the situation of knowledges have been offered, revolving around uncertainties, gaps and connection. Miles and Crush (1993) suggest that uncertainties and contradictions should be evident in the representations of the researcher thereby permitting the voice of the subordinate party to push through into the presentation and expose the underlying complexity of the presentation of the issues made to the researcher. Smith (1996) also acknowledges the usefulness of gaps in the product of the research – to acknowledge the incompleteness in meaning through gaps in the representation. A further tactic to address positionality is to situate the understanding through a connection Gibson-Graham (1994) (or lack of (England, 1994)) or rapport (Smith 2006) generated through the research. This is significant as the inward and outward reflexivity collapses as the relative identities are formed once the researcher – researched relationship is entered. This relationship is further unpacked (explicitly) in the sections below, but also permeates the thesis as a whole and the descriptions of the methodology particularly.

**Questionnaires**

Cloke et al. (2004) suggest five instances where questionnaires are appropriate: where large numbers of people are surveyed; where time limits the face-to-face
interaction with the respondents; where face-to-face access to respondents is impossible; where data is required to fulfil preconceived statistical methods of interpretation; and, where greater acceptability and impact for certain audiences is gained by the presentation in such a rationalised form (p132). I used the questionnaires to facilitate the involvement of a large group of anglers. This structured form of involving respondents should have greater ‘credibility’ with certain audiences prevalent within salmonid management, but beyond this ‘credibility’ the questionnaires have generated significant information in their own right as well as being the first stage of the selection of volunteers for the more involved stages of the research and also informing the interview and ethnographic process. The questionnaire was conducted by post through the West Country Rivers Trust and through local fishing tackle shops.

Insider Going Out - Outsider Going In: Reflecting on the Questionnaire Process

In an effort to address the power balance between the researcher and researched, the relative positions should be ‘made visible and open to debate’ (Gilbert, 1990 p. 90); to create a reflexivity which ‘looks both inward to the identity of the researcher and outward to her relation to her research and what is described as the wider world’ (Rose, 1997, 309). I must ask: What is my ‘ethnic’ position? How has this affected the way in which I have approached this questionnaire and the questions I have asked of the particular ‘ethnicity’ of anglers? And furthermore how might I have been perceived and how might these perceptions have shaped who, why and how people have responded?

Therefore I reflect on this stage in my research as I shift from being an angler to being a researcher and from being a researcher to being an angler as these two identities become more closely intertwined through the field work phase. I perceive three segments that have influence the production of the questionnaire: firstly, the evolution of the questionnaire form, secondly, the structure of the questionnaire, and thirdly the distribution mechanism.

Reflections on the Evolution of the Questionnaire
The style of the questionnaire and its role in my research evolved considerably over the course of the research. In the first instance I viewed it as a mechanism for generating volunteers for the ethnographic work, and to create more technocratic measures of value in the style of a contingent valuation, to ‘produce numeric measurements of what people think and how they behave, alongside information about their gender, age, occupation and so on. This information can then be cross-tabulated and used to make quantifiable inferences’ (Cloke et al., 2004, 130). The inclusion of this style of questionnaire stemmed from a feeling that some form of quantification was necessary to create greater acceptability in certain fora where more rationalised manifestations of value are more ‘valuable’. However, I did not have complete faith in contingent valuation as a method for generating worthwhile information for my study, but I did perceive its benefits as a ‘portal’ into my other methods; not just in physical terms by generating volunteers for the ethnographic work but as a theoretical schema, through monetarised systems, to more involved, emotional manifestations of value. My experiences with individuals and groups involved in salmonid conservation and management have proved this concern founded; emphasis is placed on the monetary worth (often for grant applications) and where ‘touchy feely’ methods are accepted, it is as an ‘add-on’ rather than as ‘worthy data’ in its own right. However, by pandering to this dominance as a gateway to other methods maybe I was becoming complicit with the hegemony of rationalised value and reinforcing the subordinate role of other manifestations of meaning. Beyond this relationship between rationalised and less technocratic forms of value was the more prominent issue of achievability; would the contingent valuation achieve what I wanted it to do? The modest scope of any contingent valuation that I could accomplish would be unlikely to stand up to rigorous criticism as a worthy representation of the results achievable by such methods. This would undermine the validity of my contingent valuation both as a portal into my more involved methods and as a counterpoint such methods. Furthermore, the use of a contingent valuation as a method for selecting volunteers for the ethnography may have selected for respondents that were more comfortable with (or were passionately against) such methods for valuation, thereby affecting the future work.
As a consequence of these problems the contingent valuation method was discarded. However the questionnaire as a method for involving people was maintained and adapted to incorporate a travel-cost mechanism for monetising values and include more biographical questions to generate a ‘profile of respondents’. This use of the travel-cost method was questioned on similar grounds as those used against the contingent valuation; namely that a worthwhile study was beyond the scope of the project and was less compatible with the other methods to be employed, as well as reinforcing of rationalised valuations.

Therefore the third and final stage was reached (though there have been considerable modifications within this form); the use of a monetary scale is still present though with a greatly reduced capacity. Instead there is development of questions intended to generate useful data in its own right – that not only has the questionnaire become less of a ‘straw target’ (as a consequence of the reduced importance of monetary measures) but that it becomes more compatible and connected with the other methods to be employed.

Reflections on the Questionnaire

I am a white, middle class, male. I am in my mid-twenties, but possibly most significantly for this project I am an angler. I have been angling from a very early age. My father taught me to fish. We predominantly went coarse fishing and my first angling memory is aged 8 catching a tench on the Norfolk Broads. Throughout my childhood I regularly went fishing with my family. In my late teens and early twenties I began to go fishing on my own and with friends and took up game fishing in earnest. However, my father (my principle teacher) does not fly fish. This aspect of my fishing is therefore mainly ‘self-taught’ from books and magazines with additional help from friends. Therefore I have a multiple identity as a angler; the description of myself as ‘an angler’ I am wholly comfortable with; the description of ‘coarse’ or ‘carp fisherman’ I am also at ease with; however, ‘game’ or ‘fly-fisherman’ does not sit so comfortably in my mind and I often find myself qualifying any affirmative answer to the question ‘do you [fly] fish?’ with statements like ‘but I have only recently got into fly
fishing’. I think that part of this insecurity regarding my identity as a fly fisherman may stem from my awareness of the animosity between “fluff-flingers” and “worm-drowners” (fly and coarse anglers). However despite the slight quibble regarding my angling heritage, I occupy a demographic similar to many anglers (that being a white middle class male, see Table 3.1) but, I may be a little young as angling is more favoured by older generations (see Table 3.1 and Figure 3.3).

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**Table 3.1**
Freshwater angler demographics based on rod licence holder data 2001
Source: EA (2005)

In many respects this ‘insider’ status offers me an increased insight into the topic; I have been familiar with the discourse from an early age. But it has also permitted me to address the prospective respondents in the covering letter (Appendix A), as ‘fellow angler’. This offering of commonality in my letter has possibly softened some of my more contentious questions (as I am not...
perceived as a threat to angling) and may well have aided me in asking about status of angling as a blood sport, about the methods for killing of a fish, or about the hunting ban. I was also very open regarding the research; I offered a leaflet (Appendix B) giving an introduction to the project as well as offering a web address for further information alongside my email address and telephone number. I felt that this would enable possible respondents to begin to position me as an angler (the angling identity seems quite relevant with one telephone inquirer directly asking me if I was an angler in the opening few sentences) but also as a researcher.

My covering letter and leaflet clearly displayed my academic affiliations and the web site is hosted by the university. By making my role as a researcher apparent from the start I am establishing a set of relations which may affect who replies and how they respond. However by being transparent about who I am and what I am researching I hope to gain more respondents that are prepared to be involved in the extended research. I believe that my identity as both researcher and angler permitted me to break down some of the insider/outsider dichotomy and enables me to situate understanding through a ‘connection’ (Gibson-Graham, 1994; England, 1994) emerging through the research process. The inward and outward reflexivity is then somewhat collapsed as the as the relative identities are formed as the researcher/researched relationship is entered.

While the commonality of angling may aid response rates and the enthusiasm in which people respond, my angling background has affected the questions I have asked. The questions cover areas I believe are important and while this occurs in all research, my position as an angler has resulted in my approach being imbibed with my angling history. While the questions reflect themes I have observed in the discourse, these observations are affected by my social, cultural and historical positioning and are quite possibly different from those that would have been selected by a non-angler and even another angler. I feel I have overcome this to a certain extent by conducting a short focus group with anglers, this informed the questionnaire, which was then piloted. My concern with the focus group was that it did not involve any game anglers and therefore may have emphasised themes which are less relevant to fly fishing or omitted
themes which are significant. However, the pilot was completed by those with experience of fly-fishing and there were no significant suggestions for improvements. After the pilot, minor alterations were completed and the questionnaire was distributed to 500 anglers. I was slightly concerned that there would be insufficient responses from 500 questionnaires but was limited by cost and a concern that response rates would be very high and I would be inundated with data that would hold up the progression to the next phase of the methodology. This concern about lack of interest was unfounded – I received in excess of 30% of the questionnaire with a large proportion volunteering for the ethnographic stages.

Reflections on the Distribution of the Questionnaire

The questionnaire was distributed through the Westcountry Rivers Trust (WRT). ‘The Westcountry Rivers Trust is an environmental charity (Charity No: 1045806) established in 1995 to secure the preservation, protection, development and improvement of the rivers, streams, watercourses and water impoundments in the Westcountry and to advance the education of the public in the management of water’². They also offer permits to fish a number of rivers in the southwest. It was the database relating to the sale of these permits that was accessed for the research.

The use of the WRT as a vector for the distribution of the questionnaire was very helpful as it offered an easily accessed database of anglers who had either fished or expressed an interest in fishing in Devon and Cornwall. It offered a degree of credibility to the study as the questionnaire went out with a covering letter from Dr Dylan Bright, WRT director (Appendix C). However, while this support may have improved response rates and softened people’s attitudes to an essentially unsolicited survey, it may well have impacted on the manner in which people responded. Indeed, by way of introducing my work the letter used the phrase ‘The trust is currently supporting a research project investigating the positive effects of angling on individuals and the wider benefits of angling to society’. While this statement in many ways is just an introduction and an

² [http://www.wrt.org.uk/](http://www.wrt.org.uk/) (WRT website) <accessed 06/04/06>
expression of the trust’s support, I feel that it also displays a degree of
ownership by the trust. This ‘ownership’ by the trust was given further weight by
the opening line of one of the email enquiries - ‘Having received a letter from
WRT this morning….’ This perceived involvement of the WRT in the
questionnaire, conceivably links my questionnaire with the WRT ideals ‘to
secure the preservation, protection, development and improvement of the
rivers, streams, watercourses and water impoundments in the Westcountry and
to advance the education of the public in the management of water’\(^3\). This is
further emphasised by the wording of the second part of the phrase already
quoted (investigating the positive effects of angling on individuals and the wider
benefits of angling to society) and this sentence from the opening paragraph of
the letter ‘As you are probably aware the Westcountry River Trust supports
research to improve the health of rivers and fisheries.’ The involvement of the
WRT and the access to their database has been invaluable, but it may well
have begun to position my research in a particular framework and position it
within certain preconceived ideals and values in relation to angling, nature and
the countryside. While I cannot suggest that my research is in any way
completely impartial, it is now linked to an institution’s ideals in the minds of my
respondents and therefore volunteers. However, the connection to the WRT
and the covering letter, probably improved response rates.

This positioning of the questionnaire as comparable if not within the remit and
ideals of the WRT may have affected who responds. Such a connection may
include those who support the WRT and or connect to their principles, or those
who are vocally passionate in counter arguments. Not only may such
involvement influence who responds but it may also affect how they respond to
the questions offered.

This influence from the WRT may be negated somewhat by the use of the
online survey which may collect information that has not been sent out via the
WRT with a covering letter from the director of the WRT. This influence may be
further eroded by the distribution of some questionnaires through local tackle
dealers. Despite the impact of involving the WRT, the access to anglers has

\(^3\) http://www.wrt.org.uk/ (WRT website) <accessed 06/04/06>
been extremely helpful and the support and credibility offered by that involvement permitted me to pursue a line of questioning that was quite direct, sometimes simplistic and occasionally contentious.

One unresolved issue is that by pursuing this method of gathering volunteers I only selected individuals that are inclined to respond to a questionnaire and are prepared to participate in academic research (though this may have been blurred by the involvement of the Westcountry Rivers Trust).

**Ethnography**

Ethnography occupies a relatively marginal position in the human geographers arsenal, it is often criticised as being overly subjective and thus ‘unscientific’; that it is too specific to permit generalisations to be made; and finally that it reproduces power disparities and does not question the moral significance of the representations it makes (Herbert, 2000). The issue of lack of scientific rigour has been dealt with above. The usefulness of ethnography in generating generalisations can be addressed by either the demonstration that such relationships exist elsewhere – repeat ethnography. Alternatively generalisations can be justified in the depth of understanding generated and that the relationships and structures that such thick descriptions uncover are contingent on interdependent phenomena – thus perceived unique experiences are a consequence of less than unique scenarios (Sayer, 1991). The final criticism, regarding power relations refers to the positionality touched on above and is also discussed in the ‘Embodying the research’ section above. Therefore, while the use of ethnography is to some extent problematic, it does open the researcher to everyday life experiences in the action spaces where they are formed (Herbert, 2000), and allows the observation of what people say they do in comparison to what they do (Crang et al., 2004) and is therefore extremely useful in the interrogation of such an involved pastime such as angling.

Beyond the almost compulsory ‘observation’ aspect of ethnography, auto-photography (Crang and Cook, 1995) was used to gain a situated
understanding of the processes and structures that give meaning to aspects of the fishing experience. The participants involved in the interviews generated the photos using disposable cameras sent out in advance. Accompanying the camera was a letter briefly describing the project and introducing the cameras, asking the volunteers to capture some of the most personally important aspects of their angling experience (see Appendix D). The photographs fed into the interviews but also stand in their own right: the content of the photos offer direct reference points to both perceptions and values in the themes that are represented and their frequency of occurrence. However beyond this counting, the images reveal the underlying components to the angling experience that are not consciously acknowledged or may not be articulated (Ziller, 1990). Thus what is excluded from the image(s) can be particularly interesting, this was most evident when the photographs were discussed ‘in situ’. The auto-photography is discussed in greater depth below (see Imaging value: making the image).

As well as the auto-photography, I also conducted a classical interpretation of participant observation – fishing trips. This was conducted during short fishing sessions over a morning or afternoon, they ranged in duration from about an hour to seven or eight hours fishing. I began by trying to take surreptitious notes about my observations, thoughts and feelings but found that:

*By stopping fishing I drew attention to myself. I was very obviously expressing myself as researcher. As I scribbled notes in the notebook I had brought I was very aware of the glances I was receiving. I did not feel animosity exactly, but more a combination of curiosity and self-consciousness on their part, leading to a separation, a barrier or a distance being created. I think this was particularly noticeable as I was not directly recording what people were saying but rather was making notes and comments on people’s behaviours, actions and processes, rather than their words specifically.*

*Field notes 22nd May 2006*

Having felt this distancing, I resolved to make notes after the sessions, scrawling anything crucial when the opportunity arose. I made this decision in an attempt to avoid people performing for the researcher, rather I wanted to immerse myself as much as possible in their angling experience, and build up a rapport with the individuals. This immersion and rapport hopefully revealed
more about their fishing than the somewhat stilted and awkward rendition evident within the first hour of the first session; that by making my identity as researcher less blatant during the session a more relaxed situation was created and hopefully allowing more to be demonstrated through their fishing. Furthermore, by working on building a degree of amity through the sharing of some fishing the respondents engagement in the recorded interview session was enhanced. However, I cannot suggest that I was able to achieve unanimity with every respondent on all levels; indeed I found ‘the duplicity required to smile and nod at opinions I believed to be bigoted and offensive riled me’ (field notes) Whimple 28–10–06). Also this apparent delineation of fishing and research also caused some problem – the relevance of the fishing with people was overlooked by some:

_As we walked along the river he asked if this was part of my research or ‘just a jolly’ – he did not seem to be overly respectful of this style of research – indeed he suggested that I was having a ‘wonderful wheeze, jaunting about the country going fishing’_

Field notes River Otter 15th August 2006

Despite these slight caveats, the ethnographic work went generally smoothly, and I found the volunteers who I met were affable and pleased to be involved. The only compromise I had to make was a consequence of individuals time constraints and meteorological influences: as a consequence of other commitments and very bad weather, the final two respondents were met after the season had ended and so ethnographic work was impossible.

**Interviews**

Hilary Winchester in her paper on lone fathers in Newcastle, Australia describes how the interviews ‘encapsulated the emotions, the discourses and began to hint at the structures, the complexity of the sexual domestic and financial contract in which these people had become engaged’ (p65). In line with this, I found the interview and the process of interviewing helpful in allowing individuals to express individual opinions in an attempt to capture the emotions,
discourses and structures underlying the formulation of meanings surrounding the more-than-human through angling. Furthermore the interviewing process granted me a more active role in the construction of the information and therefore permits a greater scope for reflexivity than with the questionnaires; the semi-structured nature of the interviews providing a greater role to the researched in the construction of the data. This co-construction of the information, whilst contingent on the caveat of positionality, gives a greater voice to the researched.

The interviewees were selected from the respondents to the questionnaire sent out through the West Country Rivers Trust and local tackle shops. The selection permitted me to incorporate as wide a demographic of anglers as possible to provide a varied interpretation of, and response to, the issues discussed. I attempted to generate a ‘sample’ which while it could not be considered statistically representative, reflected the demographics of both my sample as gained through the questionnaires and also the demographics offered by the environment agency.

Each prospective interviewee was provided with a disposable camera with the instruction to capture image(s) that represent important aspects of their angling experience (see above and below). I sent out 43 cameras, 12 people returned cameras and were then involved in the ethnography and interviewed. Some of these interviews occurred during the ethnography, over lunch; some after a shared fishing session, others beforehand. Some interviews were split up and occasionally I was invited back for another meeting and another interview. The photographs generated by this process fed into the interviews. It worked as an icebreaker as well as generating information of the manner in which the angler views angling and their position within it. The photographs may aid the discussion of the explicit emotions and sentiments relating to angling and nature but also as a handle on the implicit, unconscious (or those lost through routine) opinions regarding the manner in which issues relating to angling and nature are constructed and accepted (Crang and Cook, 1995).
Imaging Value

Making the Image

As mentioned above, each respondent chosen was provided with a disposable camera. A letter (see appendix D) accompanying the camera instructed the individual to take the camera with them on one or several fishing trips in an attempt to capture on film, some of the most important aspects of their angling experience. The emphasis was on what was personally significant about their experience. This was an attempt to break my grip, as the researcher, on the construction of the research narrative. The photographs were developed and then returned to the individual in the setting of the interview, with the instruction to select favourites, or to just talk about what they were attempting to capture in the images. These images were then discussed and often annotated by the respondent, either directly or at my bidding to write their ‘key-words’ on the reverse of the images. Added to these snapshots of their experiences were other artefacts that the angler considered significant, such as existing photographs (i.e. those that predate the engagement in the research) and other images, tokens, abstracts from books and pamphlets. These images were also often directly annotated, including labelling and story telling, by the respondent as they presented the images to me.

These photographs and their multimedia annotations then fed into the interviews, and provided ‘ice-breakers’ as the method was a novel and interesting mechanism for engaging the respondents and many were keen to discuss the method, their experiences and my expected outcomes. But these images also stand in their own right as representations of the objectified meanings of held values. The content of the photos offer direct reference points to the meanings with which the angling nature imbued. Through the themes that are represented and their frequency they occur it is possible to begin to ascertain the significance of various themes. However beyond this counting, the images reveal underlying components to the angling experience that are not consciously acknowledged or may not be articulated. Ziller (1990) recognised an absence of black students in photos by white students in a ‘mixed college’, while the photographers would deny any racial discrimination or segregation on
campus. Thus what is excluded from the images may be particularly interesting; this was quite evident when the photographs were discussed ‘in situ’ although this was not always possible. The discussion was recorded on a tape recorder.

The outcome from these photographs and interviews are a direct interrogation of the values held and ascribed by the angler. Whilst the product is not financial, the process sheds significant light on the ordering of preferences and is indicative of both the rationalised and the emotional connection with the more-than-human in angling; highlighting the most significant themes in angling and the processes that produce meaning and value.

The Image

The photograph is a powerful symbol of ‘truth’. The lens as with ‘the gaze’ (Urry, 1990) is perceived as objective and its product as absolute. As such, the photo is iconic in representation of fact. Yet it is not so definitive. What is included in an image is highly individual. This individuality does not diminish the photographs’ usefulness as a depiction of a truth the highly subjective and personal involvement in the production of the image can inform on the processes and principles that produced the image. Indeed the fact that it is the product and not the process can reveal much about the underlying construction of the image. The image lends itself to the depiction of value as a consequence of the capture of moments, moments into which great care and thought has been put through the construction of the representation. Thus a series of photographs about an angling experience will produce a map of moments illuminating the individual important mien of the angling experience.

Beyond the processes underlying the production of the image there are extensive influences on the value of an image (which in turn affect the author during the production). The worthiness of an image is subject to extensive culturally defined meanings of a good photograph. The technicalities of producing the worthy image may impact on the meaning ascribed to individual images; that images which depict personally significant objects may be disregarded as a consequence of their failure to fulfil the criteria of ‘a good
photograph’. The shot – what is actually captured – is heavily influenced by the angle, size of the object, the space, the glamour and crucially what is excluded. And yet the lack of technical worthiness does not limit the richness of the image. Indeed the most mundane snapshot may reveal extensive information about the spaces, objects and individuals that it captures or fails to capture.

A photograph can say more about the author than the subject, more about the ethnographer than the other (Aitken and Wingate, 1993), and by turning the camera over to the researched, the abstract imperialism of the researcher’s voice is reduced (Dodman, 2003). The ethnographer becomes a watcher of the watcher, interpreting the product of the researched research. The researched constructs the image from which the researcher and the researched co-construct meaning. The benefit of relinquishing the camera permits the use of images produced in a space and time where the researcher is not present (or at least not physically present) (Young and Barrett, 2001; Dodman, 2003). The individual is given freedom over both the product and the process of constructing the image, permitting the account to be constructed on their own terms in their own voice. A voice that is not limited to verbal communication. Indeed as mentioned earlier, the image is a powerful communicative tool in isolation, but beyond this the photograph may be used to facilitate verbal communication; to both depict meaning and consolidate (and be emphasised by) discussion. This combination with interviews will not exclude the technically less impressive image and those photos that fail to depict the intended subject. Indeed these ‘failures’ may depict more about the inherent perspective of the individual (Young and Barrett, 2001). And consequentially such images may be involved in the discussion.

Auto Photography

The method of auto-photography, beyond the benefits of ‘the image’ discussed above, may capture the imagination of the researched (Young and Barrett, 2001). The control over the process and content of the images is empowering for the individual in its self-expressive form. Furthermore the familiarity with the technology and relative simplicity of the method coupled with the unusual concept may facilitate engagement with the research. In contrast, the method
may make the respondents feel disempowered as they attempt to conform to the research objectives but are limited by the technology. However, the production of images in this method has one further benefit. The perceptions of the individual are grounded in the image. The discussion of abstract concepts even in non-academic forms is difficult. The image offers a reference point for these deeper issues. But this referencing is more than just a connection to wider, more abstract, issues; it is also a personal reference point. The photos are of personal and/or recent experience and rather than referring to a generalised fishing experience, they are specific with specific meanings (Young and Barrett, 2001). It is these meanings that auto-photography offers to the research.

Auto-photography is not limitless. As mentioned, the construction of a ‘good image’ is heavily influenced by the cultural forces that generate aesthetics. Furthermore, the gaze itself is imbued with a significance that perpetuates gendered and culturally specific forms of knowledge. This specificity may undermine the very objective of auto-photography – by constricting representations into loaded forms of presentation (Aitken and Wingate, 1993). However, co-construction of the meanings extracted from the images through combined discussion may help to minimise this loading. A further means by which to negate the impact of this constriction is through the images dismissed by the researched as less good. The discussion of the decision making process may offer considerable insight into the manner in which the individual is affected by the loaded form of presentation. This specificity of the gaze is compounded by the exclusivity of the visual – the centring on the visual limits the expression of non-visual. Such limitations require the involvement of interviews to permit the discussion of non-visual around the image. Beyond this discussion, those involved in the auto-photography could be encouraged to submit other images, and sources of inspiration in a multi-media collage describing their angling experience.

The photograph as a static image is merely a snapshot of meaning; unlike film there is less explicit demonstration of the process of constructing the meaning. But, as mentioned above, this focus on the moment creates carefully crafted images depicting a multitude of values in a montage of meaning. Not only is the

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image static, it is lacking – while it is supposed to be self expressive, the self is distinctly absent. The image rarely captures the individual in the environment, a crucial part of the research. However, people did get others to take images of them. Involving other people in the research, that are hidden from view, and their framing of images cannot be discussed. Despite this, the method still enables people to become reflective about their experience and the research. The photograph not only captures the just visual aspect of the embodied nature, it also fails to capture the individual engaging this visual element. This exacerbated by the temporal nature of research into human-more-than-human interaction. The moment may be missed, leaving the image as a representation of the consequences of the moment. This happened on a number of occasions but did not stop the angler from talking about what they had intended to capture or what the image represents to them. Once more this underlines the need for discussion of the images and combination with other methods such as participant observation. Finally, while the severance of control over the camera from the ethnographer is intended to diminish the researcher’s authority over the process and content of the images, the images are produced for the research, with the researcher in mind, at the bidding of the researcher. Therefore the extent of the democratisation of the process must be questioned; the proportions of the co-construction may be less ‘balanced’ than suggested. However, the power relations in this instance are more than in many other methods, and the submission of other images and stimuli by the researched may improve this equilibrium.

Capturing Meaning with Photographs

As mentioned above there are a number of general limitations with auto-photography. However there were also issues arising as a consequence of this project: up-take, time and visual dominance. The level of drop-off with the photographic work is more than I would have expected (table 3.2). With a response rate of over thirty per cent to the questionnaires and a little under half of these volunteering for the ethnographic phase I expected a larger response to the cameras – just under thirty per cent were returned with photographs. Some were returned with apologies due to changing circumstances but the large majority were not heard from despite repeated chivvying letters. This large
drop-off can, in part be attributed to the manner in which I distributed the cameras – I had not met with people before sending them the cameras and was as vague as possible in my direction as to what was expected. This can be easily justified methodologically but probably contributed to the lower up-take than was expected. A further contributing factor was the time requirements of involved research – taking photographs and going fishing with a stranger may represent a larger time commitment than some are willing to share.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Stage</th>
<th>Questionnaires</th>
<th>Cameras (Photographs, Interviews and Ethnography)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Number sent</td>
<td>500</td>
<td>43</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Number received</td>
<td>157*</td>
<td>12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Percentage uptake</td>
<td>31.4</td>
<td>27.9</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 3.2
Uptake of phases of the research
* Four questionnaires were incomplete

The third issue relate to the capturing visually of a practice which significantly involves the other senses. This was a problem that was voiced by some volunteers:

‘Attached are some digital photos I’ve taken in response to your recent letter... ...this was not an easy task as I’ve realised that so much of what fishing means to me depends on more than just the visual, and many of the visual aspects are impossible to capture on camera anyway. However, I hope these go some way towards helping you. I’ve given a small commentary on each picture.’

Michael, River Otter, email preceding meeting 15th August, 2006

This limitation was not unexpected. However, the image remains useful as a departure point for anglers to reanimate the narrative of their fishing experience. In many ways the images depict routines and repeating moments in the angling life history (Chaplin, 2004). Therefore the image is a moment in the narrative; a point from which to rebuild the story (Barthes, 1977). But also the artefacts pictured within the photograph are loaded with sentiments that are more than visual, thereby creating an image which visualises the intangible (Whincup, 2004).
Conclusions: Towards a Narrative Approach

This chapter has made two contributions, firstly it has laid out how the particularities of angling shape the research, and secondly which methods were incorporated into the raft of techniques implemented in an effort to capture some of these particularities. What has emerged through this chapter is the importance of narratives of angling; narrative being the process of structuring specific events into a coherent order. The performed elitism of angling can be considered as the embodiment of narrative. That angling is an embodied practice and that the particular performance of any single moment is the consequence of the embedded knowledges that create their own coherence in the body. On a more arcane level, the importance of being able to tell stories is crucial to acceptability and gaining ‘insider status’. Similarly, the mixed methodology implemented a narrative approach as it attempted to encourage the participants to become reflexive and introverted about the inherent tensions and complexities of their experience. The next chapter makes a different narrative as it offers some of the wider context to angling and begins to offer some of the information generated through this study.
Chapter 4

The Approach

Introduction

The approach is a crucial component of angling. The way that anglers come to
the water; prepare for encounters; deal with the likely but unknown presences of
the fish; read angling literature; rehearse and re-affirm their personal narratives;
conceptualise their expectations of a days fishing; choose particular venues;
imagine themselves as an angler; shape their fishing. While the spaces of
angling can be conceptualised as escapism (see chapter seven for further
discussion), they are not isolated incidents or separate identities that can be
removed from wider existence: ‘We think of our pleasures in night watches, in
passing from one place to another, upon the pavement, in trains and cabs’
(Grey, 1899 [1984]: 3)

This chapter therefore represents the connectivity between angling and the
world on multiple levels. It offers a connection between the anglers who feature
in different areas of the research as well as with national statistics. However,
this chapter also illustrates my entry ‘into the field’; it is an introduction of the
characters that are developed elsewhere in the thesis and articulates how the
methodology becomes more than a methodology as I move beyond simple data
collection. Furthermore, this chapter also introduces my theoretical approach as
I begin to articulate some of the theory I have outlined previously. I have
attempted to demonstrate some of the theoretical complexity in this chapter
through a multiplicity of form, structure and layout. This use of form to convey
meaning reflects the complexity and non-linear experience of angling, fieldwork,
theory and writing. However, it is not an attempt to reinstate ‘the mirror’ (Barnes
and Duncan, 1992: 2). I am not suggesting that by considering how I present
angling, methodology and theory in my writing I am getting a mirror image of a
reality. Rather it attempts to do two things: First, it attempts to step away from the linear story of academic representation and by doing so connect theory, method and presentation. Secondly, it makes the author more apparent in the story that I am creating. This is not to reduce slippage from author to audience but to, almost as a metaphor, recognise the importance of representation and context in shaping lives.

My use of form to connect theory, method and presentation is linked to the theoretical precedents of performativity and cultural geography more generally. This is not a negotiation of geography’s crisis of representation, however, it does flow from the recognition that ‘this is a world in which the metaphysical referent for truth is now in doubt’ (Dewsbury 2003: 1908). The response of culturally informed geographers to the crisis of representation is to focus on the politics of representation and the engagement with the ‘heterogeneous entanglements of practice’ (Latham, 2003: 1901) while performativity centres on an understanding that ‘we live in a multi-verse not a uni-verse, in which intersection, transfer, emergence and paradox are central to life’ (Thrift, 2002:6). Both of these theoretical stances recognise the complexity of everyday existence (see for example Thrift, 2004, Massey, 2004, Urry, 2003). However, while different theoretical positions have generated particular mechanisms to examine the knotty experiences of existence; such as those revolving around performance, or participatory methods which acknowledge the politics of representation, these mechanisms still rely on largely ordered, linear, and predictable forms for their dissemination. It is this paradox – between the theory and methods that recognise the contested, inconsistent tensions of existence and the coherent stories that describe them (see for example England, 1994; 2006) – that I partially challenge in the layout, structure and form of this chapter.

This chapter encompasses 153 questionnaire responses; 12 interviews; several fishing trips; fish caught; individual back-histories; the reading of hundreds of pieces of literature; as well as the writing of this chapter; this is not an exhaustive list. Such events are always unfurling, they are not predetermined neither are the responses fixed (Doel, 1999). But such events or moments ‘are the building blocks of any narrative style’ (Fish 2004). They become important as they are stilled and used to negotiate the inconsistencies, tensions and
fluidity of experience, as coherence is sought both for definitive and communicative purposes. However, these stories are in their coherence belies the messiness and contingency of experience: the state of ‘becoming’ (Grosz, 1999) generated in the event is not understood; it is experienced and then made cogent through the omissions and connections made through hindsight. Similarly the various events which constitute research are messy and contingent, consequentially the way that they are presented must be examined. Therefore in this chapter the first section offers a connection between the methodology laid out in Chapter Three and the theoretical positions of the thesis. The second section approaches the various angling groups involved in this project and connects the method to the practice of angling. It introduces the particular participants in my research, giving some of their story, and contextualising them within the wider arena of angling and anglers. The third section documents my approach of the sites to highlight the importance of the places both on angling and anglers’ experiences but also on the research. Furthermore, it unpacks a little of my identity as an angler and reflects on how this has affected and been affected by the research process. The fourth section re-connects the angler into the practice of angling to examine how angling is justified by anglers and how various angling narratives and discourses are connected to various social processes. Processes become articulated through terms such as economy, environmental politics, ‘nature’ or ‘the rural’. Finally this fourth section connects the process of angling to fish. It centres on how the particular encounters with the more-than-human are prepared for, predicted and rehearsed, offering a link to subsequent chapters.

Much of the methodological preparation for this research was focussed on the process of constructing and disseminating the questionnaire. Other aspects of the methodology became more significant as the project progressed. However, they were an important starting point through which some of my thoughts began to crystallise. They were also the mechanism through which anglers were recruited for the other stages of the research. Therefore the questionnaires were instrumental in the way that the various respondents and volunteers approached the project. It is this dual functioning of the questionnaires I want to reiterate before investigating the responses to the questionnaires and the different data sources used later in the thesis.
The questionnaires shaped the research – the responses to the questionnaires affected how I approached the interviews and respondents occasionally referred to their questionnaire responses in interviews; the questionnaires were the beginning of the introspective interrogation of their angling:

_I mean, you know, your questionnaire really got me thinking slightly more deeply about the ‘why do I like this’ there was a… I knew when I was younger, how much I enjoyed it, it was an intensely, interesting, exciting thing. But […] _

_Roger, River Lyd 12th June 2006_

In this regard what is included in this chapter introduces the characters that appear and disappear at various stages in the thesis. This is why it is an introduction; it offers a context to the later chapters – showing how the people I spoke to reflect people that completed the questionnaires and how while they are not representative they do to a certain extent ‘represent’ those anglers, anglers in the South West, or anglers in England and Wales.

The questionnaires were more than an introduction; they generated information that was valuable beyond a preliminary mode of enquiry for the more ‘in-depth’ interviews and auto-photography. This is a ‘geography of angling’ and part of this geography is how it connects to wider discourses such as ‘rurality’, ‘economy’ or ‘politics’. Therefore this chapter also provides information on financial expenditure on angling and views on rural issues as well as age, ethnicity and household income alongside the moral dilemmas and emotional resonance of killing fish.

These two themes run alongside each other through the chapter as they introduce issues and approaches that become interwoven throughout the chapter and the thesis. The characters that appear through this thesis speak out of particular historical, social and political contexts. This chapter therefore offers some of that context.
The way that this context is offered through this chapter is an attempt to capture some of the complexity of research and challenge, or at least identify, the orthodoxy that presents the emergent qualities of methodology/theory/practice/sources/styles of research in a coherent (linear) style. That the punctuated narrative style and form of this chapter is a metaphor for the movement and turbulence of research. The way that this turbulence is confined to this chapter is an acknowledgement of the importance of linearity – apparent coherent narratives – in making sense of experience and shaping understandings of landscape, animals, masculinity, nature, political arguments or identity.

Having highlighted the theoretical and methodological complexity of research and acknowledged the practical and contextual significance of the questionnaires, I want to go on to discuss some of the social, cultural and historical positioning of the various groups of anglers.

**Approaching the Anglers**

The anglers with whom this study is most concerned are anglers who have purchased angling permits through the Westcountry Rivers Trust’s *Angling 2000* scheme or expressed an interest in doing so. The second significant group are Environment Agency rod licence holders. This group is used to represent wider angling interests in England and Wales. From these two groups there are three clusters of anglers introduced in this section. The first section gives a national context. This draws heavily on EA reports and literature that describe the angling in England and Wales. Secondly, I describe the anglers that completed the questionnaires, giving the demographics and some biographical information of these anglers. After this group I will then introduce the anglers I came to know best, those who talked to me, took pictures for me and fished with me. Once more I will give demographic and biographical information of the group but I will also begin to introduce some of the characters, put faces to the names and personalities behind the statistics. Finally I will discuss the groups in relation to each other before moving onto discussing the spaces of the research. Obviously these
categories are arbitrary, however they provide a useful context, demonstrating how anglers appear in various guises and are incorporated into different discourses at various scales.

**The Anglers of England and Wales**

It is a requirement for anyone who wants to fish for both migratory and non-migratory freshwater fish in England and Wales to have an Environment Agency rod licence. When purchasing a rod licence anglers are required to give the information for the following categories: name; address; date of birth; and gender. This nationwide licence requirement dates back to 1992. Before 1992 licences were issued under the ten regional water authorities. This licence requirement gives the EA a considerable database on anglers over the last fifteen years. However, the Environment agency also conducts extensive research into many aspects of angling. One such study examined the public attitudes to angling (Simpson and Mawle, 2005). While the data collected is not as detailed as the work conducted in this project it is does provide a national context.

The EA rod licence is a two tiered mechanism. One licence covers non-migratory trout and coarse fish and costs £24. The other permits fishing for migratory trout (sea trout) and salmon and costs £65. As this study spans these categories I have included both.

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[4](http://www.environment-agency.gov.uk/subjects/fish/165773/169852/174139/174227/?version=1&lang=e) <accessed 14/3/07>
Non-migratory trout and coarse fish

<table>
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</thead>
<tbody>
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<td>female</td>
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<tr>
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<td>12-</td>
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</tr>
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</table>

Table 4.6
Freshwater Angler Demographics Based on Rod Licence Holder Data 2001
Source: EA 2005

From the graph (figure 4.1) and table (table 4.1) above it can be seen that the modal age for anglers is shared by the two categories 40 to 49 (median age 45) and 50 to 59 (median age 55). However there is a high percentage (30%) in the categories over the age of 60. Broadly, this age distribution reflects what was found in the questionnaire responses below and suggests that angling is a pastime that is favoured by the middle aged rather than the young. This preponderance is possibly unexpected when considered in light of the paternal/filial discourse that surrounds angling. Therefore, such a dominance by the older age groups may reflect the time demands of angling, demands that are incompatible with the circumstances (such as familial and work commitments) and preferences of younger generations, resulting in a larger percentage of retirees, and therefore higher mean ages.
As table 4.2 suggests, the ratio between the sexes is 95% male to 5% female. Consequentially it is evident that not only is angling dominated by older generations, it is almost exclusively male. Such a male dominance makes angling a fascinating pastime, through which masculinity can be examined (see chapter 8).

The ethnicity breakdown in the EA data identifies three categories: White, Asian and Afro-Caribbean. The percentage distribution across these categories is 89; 4; and 2 respectively (Simpson and Mawle, 2005: 21). Consequentially, the description of the social grouping of angling is further confined to white, middle-aged, men.

Information is not given on employment or income levels of anglers, however the EA does provide social grade data as displayed in table 4.1. The social grading system categorises individuals according to their job title. The classes range from A through to E with A corresponding to ‘Upper Middle Class’ (such as doctor, solicitor, accountant, company director) B to ‘Middle Class’ (such as teacher, nurse, police officer, middle manager); C1 ‘Lower Middle Class’ (such as junior manager, clerical, supervisors); C2 ‘Skilled Working Class’ (such as foreman, plumber, bricklayer, plasterer); D working class (Manual workers, fishermen, apprentices) E includes the unemployed, casual workers and the retired. Such classifications belie the complexity of the various social, cultural and historical positions of individuals. However, this is the only data available that reflects employment and income status of the anglers of England and Wales.

The EA data displays a dominance (60%) of angling in the C2 and D and E grades. However, this report considers attitudes to angling in general terms, but, there are many sub-groups and factions within angling that may reflect different social and cultural positions. Therefore the ‘national statistics’ hide the complexity of identity within the angling fraternity. Such divisions may reflect or challenge the assumptions made by the ‘national statistics’ such as social grade.
One of the most prominent divisions is the one between game anglers and coarse anglers. This boundary is by no means rigid. It is defined in a number of ways such as by quarry species or method, however it is an issue that is implicitly connected with this research as it examines the social and cultural importance of salmonid angling. This separation is not so apparent in the National statistics as non-migratory trout anglers are combined with coarse anglers, however, the EA does offers a limited amount of information on salmon and migratory trout anglers as a distinct group. It is to this limited data that I now turn.

*Salmon and Migratory Trout*

There is less information about salmon and migratory or sea trout anglers from the EA. This may reflect the dominance of coarse fishing effort in the UK – 86% of rod licence holders go coarse fishing, compared with 24% going trout fishing and only 7% for salmon and sea trout (EA, 2002:13). However, salmon and sea trout anglers appear to go fishing more often – on average 32.5 days compared to 26.5 for coarse anglers (EA, 2002: 11). This may reflect the investment into salmon angling making it a less spontaneous or casual hobby, or alternatively may reflect the groups involved in various types of angling. Those who can afford to get involved in salmon and trout fishing can also afford more time to go fishing.

There has been a decline in salmon and sea-trout licences sold (EA, 2004:16) Furthermore, salmon and sea-trout fishing also represents an increasingly narrow group of anglers. Only 4% of coarse anglers and 21% of trout anglers also go salmon fishing (EA, 2002: 15) and salmon angling tends to attract older anglers with 60% over the age of 45 (EA, 2002: 2004). Despite this decline and narrow social group, salmon and sea-trout angling remains, a highly valuable and highly valued commodity, with extensive research and conservation effort focussed on, particularly the salmon population. It is therefore interesting that there is such limited information on this group of anglers. Reports tend to hide (or at least disregard) the social status of this valuably commodity and valued species to focus on stocks, effort and catches rather than who is fishing where (See for example EA, 2004). As a consequence of this focus, there is limited further information that
can be offered about this particular group of anglers that constitute such a small component of the angling effort in the UK. Therefore, this study begins to critically examine the social and cultural process and divisions that permeate through Salmonid angling. However, while these salmon and sea-trout anglers are an important component of this research, they are not the limit of this study. The following section introduces the anglers who responded to the questionnaires, before I go on to introduce the anglers who were a part of the ethnography.

The Anglers of the South West

I sent out my questionnaires... having spent a day sticking labels on envelopes at the WRT I was a little apprehensive as to what the return rate would be and how many people would be keen enough in my research to volunteers for the second phase... … I went into the office on the Wednesday to be greeted by over sixty responses; not only had people responded quickly and with great enthusiasm, about 60% had volunteered for the second phase.

Research Diary 11th April 2006

The final number of responses to the questionnaires was 153 – a response rate over 30%. It is these 150 anglers that I will now describe. I have broken the description down into demographic and biographical characteristics. The former describes the age/sex/location of these individuals while the latter depicts more of their social, financial, familial positioning.

Demographic
This section describes the demographic information offered through the questionnaire. It has been broken down to describe the age, sex, ethnicity and location of anglers.
The age distribution of the questionnaire respondents peaks around 50. This focus is slightly different from the England and Wales figures (see above). The modal age is similar: 50 compared to 45 and 55 in the national context. However, there is more of a concentration in the questionnaire respondents around this mode than seen in the EA data. Despite this slight discrepancy, this data reinforces to a certain extent that angling is a mid-life practice, or rather it suggests that people in mid-life have the time, ability, inclination or confidence to meaningfully discuss their angling experience.
Sex

The ratios between the sexes reaffirms the general perception of angling and the EA data (see above). Once more it becomes evident that angling, or at least those anglers most inclined to engage in this research are males aged 40 or above.

Ethnicity

Figure 4.20
Ethnic Breakdown of Questionnaire Respondents
The ethnicity of the questionnaire responses also reflected my expectations as influenced by the EA data (see above). 96% were White British, English, Welsh, Scottish or Cornish. Of the Other USA (white) occurred twice. The proportion of anglers describing themselves as Cornish is small but not insignificant, and there were some who described a dual identity including one Devonian. As a further specification, one respondent described themselves as Cornish (Tamar valley). This local identity may add a further nuance to angler’s experiences of fishing in the South West (see below). Overall, the dominance of white ethnicities, linked with the sex data above coincides with the expectation that angling in the UK is the preserve of the white male. The particularly low proportion of non-white ethnic minorities in this data may also reflect the very low non-white ethnic minorities in the South West region as a whole – 2.4% compared to the national average of 9.2%\(^5\). However, the questionnaire responses included anglers from well beyond the South West Region.

**Location**

While this study focussed on the South West, the mechanism used for engaging anglers – questionnaires through the WRT – resulted in a geographically less contained population. The most responses came from Devon, but anglers also replied from as far a field as Durham (see figure 4.5). This reflects the distances anglers are prepared to travel to experience fishing, especially as the WRT scheme connects to a discourse that constructs the South West as wild, new and secret:

*If you are new to small stream river fishing or have struggled in the past, I suggest you take one of the local guides out for the day. They will help you unlock the secrets to catching wild fish in wild surroundings*  

\(^5\) [http://www.gos.gov.uk/497666/docs/220636/309014/swkeyfacts](http://www.gos.gov.uk/497666/docs/220636/309014/swkeyfacts), <Accessed 16-03-07>
In this excerpt from their website, the South West is positioned as peripheral, distant from civilisation, through its wild-ness, a secret landscape and requiring local knowledge of the different angling styles. Similarly the angling described by WRT privileges certain forms of knowledge that centre on local specificity and wildness in the angling experience. In this regard they connect to a burgeoning theme in the wider angling press that propounds a discourse centred on wild rather than farmed trout. The spread of anglers reflects this duality of the angling offered by the South West: it is both on the periphery and therefore worthwhile travelling for, but also offers a uniqueness that the local resident can enjoy, at relatively low prices.
Figure 4.5 (above), as well as showing the location of the anglers that responded to the questionnaire, graphically displays this duality of angling in the South West as the Angling 2000 scheme provides both for the local and the visiting angler. The high density of anglers from Cornwall (17) Somerset (13) and Devon (47) reflects the low cost accessible angling offered through the WRT Angling 2000 scheme. In contrast the spread of anglers across the (predominantly south) of England and Wales and particularly in the South East shows the popularity of the angling of the South West and its position as providing opportunity for this ‘unique’ ‘wild trout’ fishing experience. Slightly tangentially, it must also be observed that the South West is a popular tourist destination and as such offers a dual destination for the family angler, thereby offering a further explanation the spread of anglers using the WRT scheme.

The angling of the South West has a larger influence than I expected, but overall this survey of angling in the South West generally reinforced my expectations and connects to the wider angling population described in the previous section. Having described the demographics of the people who angle in the South West I want to now describe some of the wider social contexts of these individuals.

**Biographical**

In this section the biographical information of the respondents to the questionnaire are described in terms of employment, Income and the number of anglers in each household.

**Employment**

As displayed by the Graph (Figure 4.6) below, the majority (over 80%) of the respondents to the questionnaire are in full time employment – including self employment (52%) or retired (29). This contrasts with the regional statistics where
21.7% are over the age of retirement\(^6\). However, this regional statistic also fails to take into account those who may have retired early. 14% of respondents are in part-time employment – including self-employed, leaving only 2.1% declaring unemployed status compared to 5.5% nationally\(^7\).

Rather than provide categories for job titles, job descriptions were left to the respondent to complete. The responses were varied, and were not always completed, however, it is possible to group these responses to generated a picture of the employment details beyond employment status and income levels. The most prominent groups were: Managerial (19); Directors (12); trade and construction (12); creative industries, including design, media, writers, musicians and craft (8) Financial (7); Medical/Vet (6) Teachers (4); Engineers (4) and Enforcement Officers (4)


From these groupings it would seem that the ‘class’ of the anglers involved in this research differs considerably from those described in the national statistics with a preponderance (67.3% of those responding to this question (104) in what would be classified in the A, B and C1 social grades used in the EA report. This may reflect the social and cultural particularities of salmon and trout angling, however when the large proportion of retirees (47 respondents) is included the distribution is less heavily skewed: only 49% are classed in the A, B or C1 social grades. However, these groups remain highly represented (49% compared to 40%) in this study.

*Income*

![Figure 4.23 Income Distribution of Questionnaire Respondents](image)

The data above describes the household earnings. The peak at 40,000 - 59,999 suggests that income levels among salmonid anglers are above the national average. This data coupled with the low unemployment levels mentioned above suggests that there may be some significant factors affecting uptake in angling. This may reflect costs involved in start up, the access regimes that dominate salmon and trout angling and the historical cultural preferences and discourses that connect lower income anglers with coarse fishing. Alternatively there may be a
correlation between this higher average income and the age peak at 50 as observed above. While this possible correlation may not explain away this discrepancy completely, it may be an exacerbating factor in the description of the financial circumstances of salmonid anglers.

The national statistics did not have any in-depth information on employment and income data, however, the EA report (Simpson and Mawle, 2005) did suggest that there was a dominance of people from what was categorised as ‘working class’ groups. As described above, this is not directly comparable with the income data provided by this research, however, with more than 55% of respondents on incomes greater than £40,000, there seems to be a discrepancy between those that have been involved in this research and the EA data on angling for freshwater fish. I suggest that the explanation for this difference my lie in the focus on recreational salmonid fishing in this research – both salmon and trout. This difference may reflect social divisions in angling approaches – a perceived differentiation between fly fishing and coarse fishing, a difference the EA data does not unpack.

Household

As Table 4.2 shows, almost 50% of respondents came from households containing two individuals. This may reflect a preponderance of angling amongst individuals in the later life stages – this is in line with the high proportion of retirees and the high average age. Table 4.3 shows that 76% of respondents were the only anglers in the household. This coincides with the sentiments revolving around escape discussed later in this chapter and in explained more fully in Chapter Seven.
Having described the respondents to the questionnaire and offered the limited data I have on the national angling population I now want to introduce the anglers that were involved in the ethnography, those who talked to me, went fishing with me and took photographs for me.

### The Anglers of the Photographs

As described in the previous chapter, these anglers were in part self selecting as it was necessary for them to complete a volunteer form attached to the back of the questionnaire (see appendix E). I had a large number of volunteers, and so some
selection was necessary, however despite this selection\textsuperscript{8}, this group remained self-selecting as those who wanted to be involved, took the pictures while those who were unable or disinclined to be involved did not return the cameras.

\textit{Demographic}

\begin{figure}[h]
\centering
\includegraphics[width=\textwidth]{age_distribution.png}
\caption{Age Distribution of Volunteers}
\end{figure}

Like the questionnaire responses described above, the anglers involved in the photography and ethnography the age peaks at 50. However, there are fewer anglers involved in this stage below 50, with 9 out of 12 being in the 50 or 60 age group.

\textsuperscript{8} About 30-40\% were filtered out – decisions were made on selection were based on an attempt to maintain the demographic spread of the questionnaire respondents and to ensure as many different social groups as possible were included.
Sex

Men account for 92% of the anglers involved in the photographic stage, the sex ratio reflects the ratio described both in the questionnaire responses and the national statistics.

Ethnicity

Figure 4.25
Sex Ratios of Volunteers

Figure 4.26
Ethnic Breakdown of Volunteers
With 92% of the anglers involved in this stage British White, English, Welsh, Scottish or Cornish the dominance of white ethnicities evident in both data groups above is maintained, particularly with the ‘other’ category being ‘American White’. There is however, a greater proportion of Cornish respondents in this group (17% compared to 4% in the questionnaires). Similarly the Welsh and Scottish contingent is larger in this sample.

Location

The anglers involved in the ethnographic work were focussed in Devon (5) and Cornwall (4). Alongside these nine respondents there is one from each of Wiltshire, Surrey and Mid-Wales.
Biographical

Employment

It is in this employment section that the largest discrepancy occurs between the questionnaires, the national statistics and these anglers involved in the photography. Whereas 29% of the questionnaire responses were from retirees, almost 60% of those involved in this second stage were retired. In many ways this
statistic only matters in terms of how ‘representative’ the auto-photography stage is, and the discrepancy can be attributed to the time requirements of such involved methodologies.

![Bar chart](image)

**Figure 4.28**

Employment Status of Volunteers

Income

Income levels are also lower amongst this group – in line with the dominance of retirees described above, the lower income level is not unusual.
Once more, as shown in Table 4.5 there is a tendency for the volunteers to be the only angler in the household and the modal household size is two (Table 4.4). I suggest this is for the reasons given in the questionnaire section along with the later life stage of the anglers.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Number in household</th>
<th>Frequency</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 4.4
Size of Household

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Number of Anglers in Household</th>
<th>Frequency</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 4.5
Number of Anglers in Household

Having offered through the preceding sections, some the demographic and related data on the anglers of England and Wales; the questionnaires and the
I now want to offer an account of my experiences in the ethnographic stages of the research and to introduce the anglers who I came to know best.

**Approaching the Sites**

We were on holiday in Norfolk, Clipsby campsite, my father, my mother, my brother and I, we had borrowed a tent from my aunt. I remember the dog, Luke (he was bought on Saint Luke’s day) was already getting old and he disgraced himself in the boot of the car he was getting old. It stank. Dad dropped us off at the campsite, we all put up the tent. We had a space near the toilet block. Dad then had to go and get things we had not managed to fit in the car on the first trip. Home was an hour away. Or maybe he had a service to go and take? (he is a priest) I cannot remember exactly. Daniel and I made friends with some other boys on the campsite and played football. I fell on one of the other boy’s bike, I hurt myself. We played table tennis in the campsite games room, it was a conservatory off the bar area they had a BBQ here too – did we go? A blackbird had got trapped in the conservatory. It had been eating blackberries – its droppings were purple, soft and spattered across the table. We had to clean it before we could play.

Why do I remember excrement?!

…blackberries or at least black berries – it was July or August – blackberries would suggest August? It was hot. Not good fishing weather. Or at least not usually very productive fishing weather. Fishing is all I remember of this holiday. We went everyday or so it seems to me. The only other things I can remember is going to the water stand to fetch water for the cooking or washing… And struggling with a gas canister to the shop.

These memories are tied into the fishing. The water fetching because I was wearing the t-shirt with the green stripes – was it my favourite or does my mind play tricks as I connect this memory to the picture, to the fish? The gas cylinder was because as I was struggling a man offered to carry it for me – I was told not to talk to strangers – I did not know him – but I spoke to him – I had also been taught to be polite, to ignore him would have been rude. But I carried it on my own. He tried to reassure me that he worked at the shop. I carried it. I got to the shop. He did work at the shop. He exchanged it for a full one. I couldn’t carry the full one. Dad arrived. Or was it mum? Dad I think but maybe both. The man was called Malcolm. He spoke to dad. Dad told him that we were ‘here doing a bit of fishing.’ He fished too, Dad asked if he could recommend any where. Malcolm asked if it were ‘just something for the kids or something a bit substantial?’ Dad chose the latter. Malcolm told him about Martham
Pits. It was good for tench – I hadn’t caught a tench – we could get a permit from the post office in Martham. Malcolm gave us directions. We could only fish until dark, but if we got special neon tippets for our floats we could fish until fully dark. This was the best time to fish. The baits we were to use was bread flake on the hook, and sweet corn as a loose feed to attract them. We had always used maggots up until this point. This is how we fished. I remember finding our way – read following dad – to the particular spot Malcolm had recommended (peg 21 it would seem).

I’ve been back since and the locals call this spot ‘tench corner’.

I do not remember much now until the float went under and I struck into a fish, a big one – Dad was telling me ‘not to put too much pressure on it’, ‘don’t rush it.’ Mum and Daniel were watching. It came towards the bank and I brought it close to the bank – dad told me – did he shout? I felt I was being told off – anyway, I was to keep it out of the reeds. It was landed. It’s soft slightly slimy sides stick in my mind. The touch of a tench still makes me smile, and takes me back to that moment. It was two and a quarter pounds. I was eight. I caught another? No one else caught anything that I remember. I know my dad fished until it was very dark before mum persuaded him to leave. We went (had to?) go back the next morning – we still had a few hours on our permit. We did not catch anything more.

Two other trips I remember from that holiday.

One we fished a river and we caught some roach and I got in a terrible tangle and dad had to cut the line and bring it in hand over hand – there was a fish on the end! I found a big hook and some line in the reeds we took it home so that it wouldn’t do any birds or animals harm. Daniel caught an eel that day. I don’t like eels, never have.

The other was from a boat on one of the broads I don’t remember catching anything and only going down through the trees to the boats and having to row back across the lake to get an anchor…

I begin this section with these memories for three reasons. Firstly that this is my first angling memory, or rather the first fixed memory, this may be linked to the existence of the photograph, but it is the point to which I return in terms of my beginning angling. Secondly, and flowing from the first, I often used this story in the early stages of my interviews. Not as an introduction and not in such detail, but early on in the discussion, I would get people to talk about their first memories, how they first got into fishing and then I would respond, when appropriate, with the above memory. This use of my story is indicative of the influential role of my back
history in shaping an angling narrative that shapes the research as discussed in the previous chapter.

The third reason for including this narrative here, is to illustrate the complexity of capturing events, and the role of memories, images, histories, back-histories in capturing, and making meaningful, emotional engagements with the world. It illustrates how emotions, pleasure, excitement, boredom etc are caught up and played out through embodied emotion filled practices. But most crucially it shows how such practices, event, moments, encounters are not isolated, but made sense of in a retrospective manner, as connections are made and past, present and future become connected in each encounter. It is precisely these meaning filled moments, memories that this research attempts to capture, and it is this narrative process that is at the very heart of the ethnographic methods employed by this work.

This memory is therefore a fitting place to start the section that describes my approach to the sites. I conducted twelve interviews, but I describe three sites in greater detail. These three sites were my entry into the ethnographic and interview stage of the research. They epitomise my shift from angler to researcher and therefore link the story above with the information and arguments below. It was through these three events that I began to identify and respond to the demands of involved research. In this section I will also introduce the remaining 9 people and places where the research was conducted. In the interests of anonymity, the names supplied here are not the individuals real names, however, they are named in an effort to recognise that they are more than just research subjects.

Eric, Drift Reservoir 21st May 2006 09.00 to 17.00

I arrived at Drift in a howling gale and pouring rain. I met Eric and his father who were fishing the corner furthest from the car park, near the dam. I tackled up and wandered across to meet them. They had been there a about half an hour and had begun fishing – which was a shame – I would have liked to have seen how they tackled up and selected flies and leaders etc.
After initial greetings they asked if I was going to fish, and when I answered with the affirmative they went about examining my fly selection, which was very limited. After a brief glance at my selection they both produced their own tins and started making suggestions...

Field Note Book, 22nd May 2006

This is how I began the fieldwork. I did not like this site, and I did not feel much of a connection between myself and the volunteer. My dislike for the site may have been from the weather coupled with the fact that I had a heavy cold. However I also felt that the site was quite ‘industrial’ - the big water, the dam and the regulated facilities – car park and picnic facilities – created an atmosphere that reminds me of the big midland waters at which I have neither had much success nor particularly enjoyed.

My disappointment in not witnessing the angler ‘tackle-up’ (the process of assembling rods and lines in preparation for fishing) reflected my thoughts that in many ways this has become a subconscious act but one that offers much about
the angler’s approach to angling. This is also connected to the role of technology in angling, the way that particular technologies are used or disregarded, celebrated or presented as purely functionary implements. That tackle matters, both physically, in the way it is used, and understood through repetitive, and repeated experience and in the way that it either included or excluded from the angling experience.

Reservoirs, like Drift, involve a style of fishing with which I am not particularly familiar. The flies are different, this is evident in my lack of appropriate flies (the flies used are illustrated above). The approach is casting from the bank and working lures beneath the surface of the water. However the key unsettling factor in my experience came from my feelings of inadequacy as an angler and the scrutiny to which I felt subject:

I met with my first volunteer yesterday[…] He was a very competent angler[…] […]I felt heavily scrutinised with particular attention to my fishing. While I was uncomfortable with this pressure, I fished OK, but it made me feel self conscious and as if I wanted to hide […]
Research Journal 22nd May 2006

This sense of scrutiny was my primary feeling in regard to this site and this scrutiny has been discussed in the preceding chapter. My second site was considerably more comfortable experience.

John, Roadford Reservoir 2nd June, 2006 12.00 to 17.00

I was late – I’d been held up in traffic. It took me 2 1/4 hours to get there – I was a little flustered – John had been there since 09.00 even though we were not supposed to meet until 11.00. Therefore he had tackled up and had also hired a boat for the day. John put me at ease from the start – his relaxed easy chatty character did not make me feel at all on edge or as if I had to prove myself as I had done previously. We chatted as I tackled up and John told me anecdotes about the reservoir…

Field note book 2nd June 2006
The map (figure 4.17) shows the how angling is regulated across the lake and the segregation of angling and nature, as well as a prioritising of activities at the site: Boating-angling-nature watching. Such prioritising probably reflects the income generated by the various activities, however, it also represents a distancing of nature from culture. The bird watcher is set furthest from the watersports centre. In turn, angling is located between the watersports centre, an aspect of culture and the spaces of bird watching from which the angler is excluded. The map also shows how different areas are named, for example, ‘North Wortha’ (called Wortha Bank by John) ‘Gaddacombe Inlet’ or ‘Shop Inlet’.

This is a common trait at venues and is also seen in the map of the river Wylye below (Figure 4.19). This paper map was irrelevant to the respondent, he knew the names, he knew the restrictions and more crucially he knew which restrictions were bendable in an effort to catch fish. I did not catch any fish but I was much more comfortable in my role as researcher and did not feel so heavily scrutinised. I enjoyed the fishing.
Figure 4.17
Map of Roadford Reservoir
Available from the boat house at Roadford
Kenneth, The River Wylye 8th June 2006

[Kenneth] was keen to know about me and my background as well as about the project. Indeed interrogation regarding where I was from and the such began virtually as soon as I stepped from the car. I found myself discussing where I was from, what my parents did and where I went to university. He was also very inquisitive regarding the purpose of my project. He seemed re-assured by my answers and suggested that I was ‘putting the heart back into’ the study of fishing.

Research Journal 9th June 2006

This interrogation is in many ways similar to the greeting I got at Drift Reservoir, however, I was more comfortable with this interview. Things were relaxed, the setting and style of fishing contrasted starkly with that of Drift, not least because it was river fishing and a small river at that, where dry fly fishing was the only technique permitted. There was also a mayfly hatch – a traditionally important hatch, these are flies that would not have existed at either drift or Roadford and were matched with the Grey Wulf depicted above (Image 4.3). The river Wylye is a renowned river amongst the fly fishing fraternity, very exclusive and expensive, I felt honoured to be able to fish it. Despite all of these daunting factors I was not daunted by my role as the researcher:

*I was expecting to be subordinate… …I feel as if they [the volunteers] will all be my betters as anglers… …I was not expecting to be held in high esteem… I think this may also be about affirming my self; avoiding or negotiating my low self-esteem and accepting my role as an ‘academic’.*

Research Journal 10th May 2006
Figure 4.19
Map of Hanging Langford Syndicate showing the extent of the fishing and how names such as ‘the rummage’ become attached to particular stretches of water.
Roger, River Lyd 12th of June 2006 10.00 to 14.00

My fourth session was with Roger, he was a visiting angler from London. We arranged to meet at one of the Angling 2000 beats on the River Lyd, a place he found enchanting:

[Roger] was quite enthused by the river, describing it as ‘lovely’ and ‘very fishy’ meaning I suppose that there were lots of spots that looked like they might hold fish. He reiterated that he was just beginning and talked much of coarse fishing ‘where his love began’. But also mentioned how pleased he was that he had been ‘bow casting’ well – that he was improving.

Field Note book 12 June 2006

Joe, White River, St Austell 15th June 2006 11.30 to 21.00

I met Joe at his home – unlike all the others who I met at the venues. When I arrived he immediately began talking fishing. He fetched his fly tying box and showed me the huge range of materials, threads, feathers furs, synthetic materials and beads. He guessed that he had about £500 to £800 worth of materials. He had tied the night before, half-a-dozen of his special ‘killer fly’.

Field Note book 15th June 2006

This excerpt from my field note book shows two things, firstly the way that I prepared for a session – usually I would meet a respondent at the venue. In this way we were meeting as anglers to go fishing. However, in this instance, I was given insight into this respondent’s home life. This access into the angler’s home life illustrates my second point, that angling and the associated practices, performance and encounters cannot be taken out of context. They have a history, they are prepared for as illustrated by Joe’s enthusiasm for fly-tying.
Jack, River Camel 16th of July 2006 19.30 to 23.00

Like Joe, I met Jack at home before we headed out to fish the River Camel. Once more this gave me insight into the way that the social contracts of home life affect the way that anglers approach their angling:

I met Jack at his home at about 7.30 pm. He has a new baby and so he wanted to ‘put the baby down’ before going out. I waited while he got his gear together and answered his questions about my research.[…] As a consequence of his new familial responsibilities, Jack had only been night fishing for Sea Trout.

Field Note Book 16th July 2006

Bill, Upper Reaches of the River Torridge, 17th July 2006 16.00 to 20.00

I have less to say about this one [fishing session] as we did not fish ‘together’ – by which I mean alongside one another. Rather we fished a stretch each – leapfrogging down the water, or rather up the water as we were fishing upstream with dry flies. He made sure I had the best pools. […] [Bill] showed me where he collected blackberries and sloes from, for pies and for sloe gin. He also talked about wider nature and pointed out where some otters had a holt and where the young played.

Field Note Book, 17th July 2006

Michael, River Otter, 15th August 2006 13.00 to 17.00

As we walked along the river, he asked if this was part of my research or ‘just a jolly’ – he did not seem to be overly respectful of this style of research – indeed he suggested that I was having a ‘wonderful wheeze, jaunting about the country going fishing’.

Field Note Book 15th August 2006

This scepticism about the research was not limited to this volunteer, but was rarely as obvious as in this instance.
Gerald, Broadfordwidger 25th August 2006 13.00 to 17.00

It was not until the day before I was due to meet Gerald that I found out that we would be going coarse fishing. This was his fishing experience and it offered a contrasting point of view, to the others I had fished with. It highlighted just how differentiated angling has become. But the differences were too marked to be included and examined within the confines of this thesis.

Ian, River Mole, 8th September 2006 12.00 to 16.00

He was very proud of his bit of river (and rightly so it is a lovely river in a beautiful setting). He owns the rights to fish (which he shares with a friend) about a mile or so of the river, every Thursday during the season.

Field Note Book 8th September 2006

George, Whimple, 28th October 2006 18.30 to 10.30

Old A30 – A303 – Whimple.
Left into Whimple,
New fountain Inn
6ft
Balding
Glasses
Red Belingo Van.

Directions from Diary 28th October 2006

The fishing season was over by this point so I was not able to fish with this volunteer. He had taken photographs of his fishing up on Dartmoor. The auto-photography was still very productive without the shared fishing session, and the interview went well despite the noisy atmosphere of the pub.
Rachael, Hay-on-Wye, 31st October 2006

Once more the season had already ended and so we did not share any fishing, however I was fed a sea trout that she had caught and we sat in the kitchen of this self professed Fishing Rhymester:

This section has introduced the characters and sites that re-appear throughout the thesis. It has also documented my transition from angler to researcher. This has been achieved through returning to my first angling memory and then recognising how this history and my ability and self belief as an angler shaped how I
approached the sites and the people I met there. Having described how I settled into my role as a researcher, the next section will offer some attitudes to angling offered through the questionnaire.

**Approaching Angling**

The section above described my approach to the anglers and the sites involved in the research, this section provides data from the questionnaire on angler's attitudes to angling. The title 'approaching angling' is particularly pertinent for two reasons. First, and most directly, the data depicted reflects anglers' attitudes (or their approach) to angling: secondly, the answers were made out of context – the anglers did not complete the questionnaires while fishing and so it reflects a separated articulation of the activity. As such it is an approach rather than a description.

The data offered in this section presents anglers' reasons for going fishing, the less enjoyable aspects of angling, the perceived threats to angling and the components of angling experiences. The second half refers to the structure of angling: it gives information on how often anglers go fishing and the distances they travel for their fishing. It culminates in a discussion of the economics of angling in that it refers to expenditure on angling, on a per-session and annual basis, then extrapolating to offer speculations to the relative value of the WRT scheme, angling in the South West, and the national context. The section concludes with a discussion of these values, in the context of the first part of this section and the sections above.

**Why do you go fishing?**

This was a free-response question. The responses were multiple and varied. Coding using terms that appeared in the responses was used to generate twelve
categories. The most cited reason for going fishing was the Locale/Countryside (38%). This category included responses about the environment, the countryside, being outdoors and in the fresh air. A similarly large percentage (35%) of the respondents cited peace, tranquillity and a desire to escape either work or home life and a need to ‘switch off’. The third most prominent response (32%) centred on statements relating to the excitement, sporting nature and challenge posed by fishing. In many ways there is some overlap between this category and the fourth topic of atavism (28%).

The term atavism has been used to cover topics that focussed on hunting, catch, or food, but the term atavism was often used along with suggestions that there was a primeval urge, or genetic disposition to hunt or fish. Many anglers (23%) simply cited relaxation (a possible overlap with escapism) or recreation, as a justification for going fishing.

The term nature has been used to encompass specific references to the more-than-human such as the beauty of the trout, bankside vegetation as well as use of the label ‘nature’ in responses; it also includes comments that express a desire to ‘commune with nature’, 19 % of responses included some reference to nature. Again 19 % of responses simply stated that angling was pleasurable, made them happy or made comments about deriving contentment from angling. Eight % made specific reference to the river or water, six % cited history as a reason; that they had always been fishing or had been fishing from childhood. A further six % described the social aspect as important with three % using other justifications including work, or references to the fish

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Reason</th>
<th>Percentage response</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Locale/Countryside</td>
<td>38</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Peace/Escapism</td>
<td>35</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Excitement/Challenge</td>
<td>32</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Atavism/Hunt/Food</td>
<td>28</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>To Relax/Recreation</td>
<td>23</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nature</td>
<td>19</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pleasure</td>
<td>19</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Water/River</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>History</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Social</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Technology/Knowledge</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 4.6 Reasons cited for going fishing
What are the Less Enjoyable Aspects of Angling?

This question was also free-response. It was coded in a similar manner to the ‘why do you go fishing’ question above. ‘The conditions’ was the most cited aspect (35%). These conditions included both inclement weather and water conditions that made fishing impractical. The second most popular response (28%) related to other people. This conflict with other users included too many anglers, other anglers’ angling practices, walkers, noise, and other people’s dogs. This may reflect a conflict with the peace atavism and escape described above. Access to fishing was another commonly cited less enjoyable aspect to fishing, this covers both travelling to a venue and the cost of angling as well as referring to the ownership structures in place. Pollution including water course pollution as well as wider pollution, litter, water abstraction and global climate change was also a significant negative factor with 23% of respondents citing it. 15% of anglers voiced concern over damage, either to fish stocks through commercial practices or poaching or the fish specifically through poor angling practice. A day without catching anything or ‘losing fish at the net’ spoiled the angling experience for 11% of the respondents. While eight% said that there were no negative aspects, five% suggested that falling in or difficulties with equipment made a session less enjoyable. Finally there were some other aspects that included references to otters, swans and barbed wire.
What are the Threats to Angling?

Seventy % of respondents perceived animal rights organisations and the various guises of the anti-hunting lobby as threatening angling. Some of the responses were less understanding of this different position than others with some describing them as ‘loonies’ and ‘ignorant’. The second most pressing threat was river quality. This label included direct watercourse pollution and abstraction as well as issues relating to the ecology of the channel and riparian zone such as loss of biodiversity. These specific threats were held as separate from the wider environmental issues such as climate change, over-fishing in the marine environment, over population and development. Animal rights organisations, river quality and wider environmental issues are by far the most pertinent to anglers. However, there was a concern over various political issues such as legislation, governmental policy and even concern regarding immigrants. Finally there was concern about attitudes within the angling fraternity itself that threatened the long term survival of the sport.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Perceived threat</th>
<th>Percentage response</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Animal rights organisations</td>
<td>70</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>River quality</td>
<td>53</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Wider environmental issues</td>
<td>40</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Political</td>
<td>20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Angling</td>
<td>15</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 4.8 Perceived threats to angling

Frequency of Angling Trips

Data was collected on how often anglers went fishing over the course of the season. The information was collected in categories rather than as absolute figures and the responses and percentages are illustrated in table 4.8 below.
Interestingly almost 80% of respondents go fishing either more than once a week or between once a month and once a week. This high number of regular anglers is not remarkable, however, the 20% who go more intermittently may constitute a significant group as their occasional excursions become a important moment in their calendar and therefore may involve considerable time and financial investments.

**Distance Travelled**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Distance (miles)</th>
<th>F</th>
<th>%age</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>less than 5</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>16</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5 to 10</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10 to 19</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>14</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>20 to 29</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>30 to 49</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>50 to 99</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>100 to 149</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>150 to 199</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>200 and over</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>14</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>DNA</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 4.10 Distance travelled for last angling trip

Table 4.9 Frequency of Angling Trips
Following on from the frequency of trip data described above, the distance travelled by anglers to particular venues is highly variable as displayed in the table (table 4.10) below. However, 60% of respondents travelled less than fifty miles for their last angling trip and 28% less than twenty. At the other extreme some anglers travelled up to 400 or more miles on their last angling trip. Once more we see two categories of angler – the local and the traveller, the everyday experience and the adventure. This is reinforced by the data on location in the section titled ‘approaching anglers’ above and the frequency data in the previous paragraph.

This compares to EA data which suggests that anglers travel 16 miles to go river trout fishing and 48 miles to go salmon fishing (EA, 2002). Once more this reinforces the dual character of angling that it is both a local hobby and an extravagant adventure.

### Economics of Angling

The financial implications of angling have been discussed in various guises throughout this chapter. Moreover, the relative importance of financial expressions of worth have been described in earlier chapters. Therefore I want to conclude this section and the empirical data offered by this chapter with some information on the monetary worth of angling.

**Table 4.11**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Distance (miles/hours)</th>
<th>Last Trip</th>
<th>Annually</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>£50 =D/1 (n=101)</td>
<td>£50</td>
<td>£550</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>£60 =D/2 (n=15)</td>
<td>£60</td>
<td>£750</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>£670 &gt;D/3 (n=30)</td>
<td>£670</td>
<td>£1770</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Part of the questionnaire asked respondents about their expenditure on angling. They were asked both what they spent on their last trip as well as what they spend annually. The mean expenditure on the last trip was approximately £150 with approximately

**Table 4.12**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Frequency</th>
<th>Last Trip</th>
<th>Annually</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Often</td>
<td>£90</td>
<td>£640</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Less Often</td>
<td>£420</td>
<td>£690</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

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£640 spent annually. This figure included permits, licences and tackle as well as travel costs and accommodation for longer trips.

In an effort to further unpack these figures, I want to return to the dual function of *Angling 2000* serving both as accessible angling venues for local anglers and offering attractive fishing for travelling anglers. As Table 4.11 shows, the distance travelled on the last angling trip greatly affects both trip and annual expenditure: those travelling less than 50 miles spent only £50/£550 compared to £670/£1770 for those that travelled over 100 miles (see Table 4.11). This appears to reinforce this dual functioning of *Angling 2000*. Similarly those who go fishing most often (either ‘more than once a week’ or ‘between once a month and once a week’), spent considerably less (£90) on the last trip than those who fish less often (£420). However, the annual expenditure of these two groups does not differ considerably (Table 4.12). Therefore it seems that *Angling 2000* is part of an angling economy that has a dual role by both providing for local demand as well as accommodating the concentrated expenditure by visiting anglers.

**Conclusion**

This chapter is the meeting point for a number of threads that run throughout the thesis. I have involved the theoretical position outlined in previous chapters with the technical data to produce a particular narrative of angling. This narrative, focussing on numerical descriptors resonates with the understandings prevalent in contemporary fishery management debates. The more scientific approach and an emphasis on numbers reflects how particular management attitudes narrate angling experience and make sense of the ‘events’ of multiple individual experiences. These individual experiences are rationalised through numbers and statistics into a form which can be used in management decisions. In part then this chapter is an ethnography of the political structures that drive fishery management. The Environment Agency data is part of these structures and the categorising of individuals into particular groups enables policy decisions such as a need to
involve more women, youth or anglers with disabilities (EA, 2005). This quantification of angling experience in some ways is contradictory to the main ethos of this thesis, as it seeks to move away from such approaches and recognises the politics of such representations. This is a objective welcomed by the participants in the study as indicated by one gentleman’s description of how I was ‘putting the heart back’ into the study of angling. Therefore it seems that there is a sentiment within the angling community that the forces that drive fisheries management ignore the wealth of lay understandings and individual experiences of anglers (Trout and Salmon, 2006). As a consequence of this theoretical approach, this chapter has also introduced some of the characters that appear throughout the thesis, and described my transition from angler to researcher. However, this focus on socially and culturally informed theory and practices is not an attempt to denude these numerical narratives of value; quite the contrary. My approach to form throughout this chapter – some of it subtle, some of it less so – has been an attempt to acknowledge the competing mechanisms for making sense of angling. The numerical and scientific is dominant in contemporary management; it is fitting that it comes first. What flows from here is a greater emphasis on the (elite) lay understandings created through the more involved aspects of my mixed method approach.
Chapter 5

The Angling Landscape: Water, Technology and Emotion

Introduction

Chapter four introduced some of the people involved in the project. It described the anglers involved in the various stages of the research and provided a connection between the anglers of the Angling 2000 scheme and anglers in the South West. Furthermore it provided a national context for the work and joined the anglers of the project to the anglers of England and Wales. Having made these introductions and connections, this chapter will unpack the role of landscape in shaping the angling experience identity and sense of place. In doing so it focuses on the way that various assemblages of landforms, people and more-than-human organisms that define and are defined by angling.

Throughout this chapter the way that landscape is both understood and imbied with meaning in critically examined. This interrogation unfolds in three sections: Landscapes of Water; Landscapes of Emotion and Belonging; and Landscapes of Technology and Skill. The significance of water in the angling landscape is paramount, therefore this is where I begin: unpacking the way the water has been shaped and manipulated both physically through river management and reservoir creation and metaphorically through narratives of rurality and wildness. The latter stage of this opening section examines the role of water as a vector that both brings together diffuse issues and provides a medium for aquatic life: diffuse ecologies that become embodied by particular organisms. The latter stages of this first section focuses on how these ecologies have been manipulated through fisheries management such as the introduction of particular species, or even
particular fish, and the regimes of river management that permit these ecologies to flourish.

In contrast to the focus in the opening section on the way that the angling landscape has been manipulated by people, the second section in this chapter is concerned with the affective qualities of landscape: how particular places and spaces generate particular emotional resonances and are imbied with (personal) meaning. That is not to suggest that the anglers are entirely passive in this experience, quite the opposite, it is through repeat experiences of particular water courses that such notions of *dwelling* are fostered. The importance of these waterscapes on people is illustrated through a series of stories from various respondents that highlight how ‘ownership’ of particular rivers and lakes becomes established.

The third section of this chapter recognises that while these landscapes are focussed on water and provide particular ecologies through particular management regimes, the purpose behind these landscapes is neither the river, nor the fish – it is not about the water quality or the fish that swim in it, rather these are purpose filled landscapes. Behind these landscapes and ecologies lies a rod and line. Therefore these particular technologies and skills become instrumental in the way that these landscapes are formed, managed and are experienced. As a consequence of angling, these landscapes and their ecologies become valuable and have huge amounts of money invested in them. Time, money and effort is expended to create ‘features’ in rivers that hold fish, not just to hold fish but to hold fish to which an angler with a particular technology and a particular skill level can cast. Therefore the third section in this chapter unpacks the role of technology and skill in shaping landscapes and mediating experience.

Finally running through this chapter is an interrogation of how the close up encounters of particular organisms become tied up with experiences of the wider landscape. In this regard it somewhat mirrors the way that diffuse landscape issues become embodied in particular fish. This theme draws these connections through the physical and metaphoric value of ‘the photograph’, reflecting how landscape is
remembered and authored through particular events and encounters. In this regard it underlines the juxtaposition of the visual representations of the more than visual world, especially as the encounters with fish and particular waterscapes may rely only momentarily on the visual.

**Landscapes of Water**

It is in many ways axiomatic to say that water is at the heart of angling. However, it is crucial to the valuable landscapes enjoyed by anglers. This research has found that the experience of nature and the countryside is a widely cited justification for going fishing. Landscape is not a mute external field across which human action is scribed, but a fluid and influential space through which various identities are shaped and performed – that landscape is something done (Brace, 2003). Building on this notion this section discusses how the various waterscapes of angling are formed, managed and maintained.

The anglers involved in the project expressed that they enjoyed being by a river or on the lake. This fascinating quality of water is by no means limited to anglers: the abundance of waterside cafes, restaurants or pubs; the ubiquitous walk by the river, both urban and rural; the fountains of classical piazza or water features of corporate headquarters; the humble garden pond, water is imbibed with and imbues meaning, shaping spaces and influencing people.

Water features in the angling landscape in two ways, firstly water is managed by anglers and for anglers and secondly water provides the unique habitats for the particular ecologies that enable fish to exist. The manner in which anglers and managers intervene with water is twofold: firstly by creating new places through hard engineering such as reservoirs lakes and canals, or secondly, through the manipulation of existing spaces: adding weirs, controlling flow and creating the conditions for particular creatures to flourish. It is with this space making practice that I engage with first to highlight how angling may be constructed as rural and
rivers as wild and yet these spaces are highly mediated; that while they may be physically remote, they are closely bound up with ecologies that flow across the urban/rural divide and through the concepts of modernity. The latter stages of this section deal with the animal geographies that these watery spaces facilitate: to recognise how the competing discourses and personal narratives of fish value different species and even different genetic material of the same species in a complex web of management strategies and angling practices.

**Angling, Water and Modernity**

The domestication of water to provide for the metropolis has been widely documented as one of the defining moments of modernity (Gandy, 2002; 2004; Kaika, 2006). Consequentially water is bound up with and flows through the concepts of modernity and across the divide between urban and rural (Braun, 2005). In his insightful and interesting account of the provision of drinking water for the city of New York, Gandy demonstrates how the ongoing daily life of the people of Manhattan are fundamentally connected to the Catskill-Delaware catchments from deep within New York State. Through ‘nearly 6,000 miles of gravity fed water mains. This vast network delivers 1.3 billion gallons of water a day to 9 million people’ (Gandy 2003:19). Through these pipes the urban, the antithesis of nature is closely connected to the catchment functions of distant, sparsely populated inaccessible areas many miles from the city. The continued fragility of water supply to the city underlines the frailty of the urban capitalist project and the contingency of the private spaces of the city on nature and the rural (pages 74/5). While it may not be recognised, this ever-present nature in the city is not only accepted but expected. As Kaika (2006) notes: ‘the flow of water in my home was a natural and simple thing: I simply had to turn the tap or press a switch to satisfy my needs.’ This ability of water to flow to the heart of the city underlines the nature in the city, but the provision of water puts the city at the heart of the rural as reservoirs are created to provide water for urban areas and at the same time offering anglers the opportunity to ‘escape the pressures of modernity’. While this notion of escape is
unpacked in chapter seven, I want to touch on this juxtaposition here as it becomes important in the wider discourse of rurality and wildness that infuse the angling discourse.

Kaika (2005) identifies the dam as the ‘successful outcome of modernity’s Promethean project to tame nature (page 3). In particular the Marathon Dam, was ‘a symbol of the new era of modernisation in Greece’ (page 125). Through this harnessing of nature behind the dam; the interruption of the flow of a river; and the resultant control over the flow of water, these structures of concrete and steel are undeniably a product of modernity. The water they provide connects them firmly with the urban (as in the New York or Athenian context). However, the spaces that the dam creates can become firmly enmeshed with the ‘rural’ angling experience. To illustrate this juxtaposition I want to describe the role of two reservoirs: the first is Chew Reservoir - it provides drinking water for Bristol and is a prominent trout venue; the second is Roadford Reservoir which provides water for Plymouth. Roadford is a fishing venue in its own right, but is also integrated into the management of the River Tamar catchment.

Chew Valley Reservoir was completed in 1956, covers an area of about 1,200 acres (575 Hectares) and holds about 4,500 million gallons. This reservoir is part of a network of water bodies that provide water for the city of Bristol. Chew is a prominent venue: it features in articles in the angling press and benefits from extensive web based advertising. A day fishing at Chew will cost £30.50 per person for those who want to fish from a boat and £14.50 if fishing from the bank. Although Chew was not a venue for my research, as a consequence of its prominence, it offers the opportunity to examine the role of ‘the reservoir’ in creating new spaces that facilitated the modernisation of angling.

Although the Chew river would have had local stocks of trout, when the reservoir was established in the 1950s it was not only a new venue that was created but a new ecology. Farmed fish were released into the emerging lake, a system that was

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9 Source: http://www.riverchew.co.uk/chew_valley_lake.htm <21-06-07>
10 Source: http://www.bristol-water.co.uk/fishing/prices.asp <21-06-07>
only bounded at the dam and was filled by a catchment that spread across 14,000 square miles of the Mendip Hills\textsuperscript{11} thereby altering the ecology of the waterways above the dam. When it was completed, the reservoir was the largest in the country and in the three years before its completion, it was stocked with 850,000 trout fry mainly brown and rainbow trout (in equal proportions) with a few brook trout (Horsey, 2006). Initially fishing was by invitation only however from 1957 the lake was opened to the public and the reservoir becomes a space that not only provides water to the private spaces of the city but also offers opportunity for public recreation. This recreational landscape represents the modernisation of the angling experience as it evolved to create a space that purports to connect with the discourse surrounding angling but in actuality offers an experience which is highly mediated.

As described in Chapter Two angling has a rich and extensive discourse. Prominent themes in the literature centre on an experience of the more-than-human world that differs from other experiences of nature in contemporary societies. The angling experience is deemed so unique that it has induced Franklin to state that ‘[i]f any sort of activity expresses an opposition to and a rejection of the social character of modernity it is angling and hunting sports’ (1999:106). And yet at Chew (and at similar venues across the UK) this pre or anti-modern experience is modernised and sanitised. Such changes are exemplified in three ways, firstly through the definition of the venue through numbers; secondly through the adaptation of the killing involved in angling and the redefining of ‘the trout’ and thirdly, through the changing techniques and approaches implemented in the pursuit of these creatures.

The large reservoir as the epitome of the modern angling landscape, is a landscape obsessed with size, numbers and the process of quantification. That is not to suggest that angling is not in itself obsessed with measuring – chapter eight discusses the role of size and success with reference to masculinity. Neither is the process of quantification limited to the ‘modern’ waterscapes of the reservoir.

\textsuperscript{11} Source: http://www.riverchew.co.uk/chew_valley_lake.htm <21-06-07>
Bear (2006) offers an insightful account of how salmon management in Scotland rests on a system of quantification that blurs the distinction between scientific and local knowledge. The assessment of the Scottish salmon stocks through ‘official records’ held by the Scottish Executive grants the process an authoritative position, while the data relies on a process that harnesses local knowledges from a variety of levels that are far from ‘scientific’. This blurring of the knowledge surrounding salmonid management is indicative of the tensions created as the ‘anti-modern’ practice of angling becomes subject to the processes of rationalised conservation science. This modernisation becomes particularly evident in the spaces created behind the dam or as Elias (1986) would suggest: that the waterscapes behind the dam are part of the civilising process that has permitted the irrational and emotive practice of angling to become rationalised and modern. This civilising process differs from the general march of modernity as it picks out a cultural practice which is focussed on refinement rather than domination; that while the civilising process cannot be extracted from the overall march of progress, civility is a ‘symbol of the new refinement of manner’ (Elias and Dunning 1986:21). Therefore, the spaces created by the dam can be considered as both civilising and modernising. The reservoir offers a space where the emotional and contingent practice of angling is civilised through the provision of a regulated space. It also provides a mechanism for the definition and domination of nature, reflecting the wider process of modernity.

This modernisation becomes most evident in the way that the fish involved in the waterscapes behind the dam become numbers rather than fish: the presence of the organisms that are called either Brown trout (Salmo trutta) or Rainbow trout (Oncorhynchus mykiss) are defined by either abundance or size. These two definitions of presence are appropriated as part of the advertising of the Chew Valley reservoir as a fishery (see table 5.1). These presences become relevant at two moments: at stocking and at capture. The table illustrates how abundance in terms of stocked fish 43,535 is important along with the total catch last year (17,149). The discrepancy between these two numbers is huge: the capture is only 39 percent of the stocked fish suggesting that the abundance at stocking is less
significant than the abundance as measured by rod catch (2.3 fish per visit). The other way that the fish are quantified is by weight: both average weight (2lb 4oz) and ‘best fish’. It is here that the numbers move slightly back towards being trout as the two species of fish are distinguished. Regardless of this recognition that there is some genetic definition of ‘best fish’, the quantification of the abundance and weight of fish is more than measures of fish, it is representative of how the practise of angling can be modernised.

The reservoir is part of a financial initiative that competes with other uses on the lake (see the map below (figure 5.2 this is also developed later in this section). Bristol Water is managing Chew for angling, watersports, bird watching and other recreation. Consequently the reason angling occurs at Chew is that it offers financial benefits. As the fish that exist in the reservoir are appropriated into this system they are quantified in terms of a series of presences – both by abundance and size. However what is ‘sold’ is not the fish, it is the right to fish, as a consequence these numbers are not solid presences but likely presences; presences that cannot be seen, and given the discrepancy between stocking levels and fish caught can not always be caught. Therefore it is the moments when these fish shift from being likely presences to known presences that are quantified: i.e. at stocking and capture. The reservoir then gives the impression of the modernisation of angling as it identifies success as measured by quantity and size as the reason anglers fish. Through the mechanism of stocking the genetic specificity of the fish in the location is eradicated as fish become quantities and weights that swim. However, the waterscape created is vast, a vastness that is part of ‘modernity’s promethean project’ (Kaika, 2005) as it demonstrates how nature in all its magnitude can be controlled. Simultaneously, however, this vastness undermines the ability to quantify and define and therefore modernise. The reservoir creates a

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Size</th>
<th>1200 acres</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Season</td>
<td>15th March to 30th November</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total Catch last Season</td>
<td>17,149</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Average Weight</td>
<td>2lb 4oz</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Best fish</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Brown</td>
<td>13lb 4oz</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Rainbow</td>
<td>9lb 9oz</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Number of Rods</td>
<td>7,353</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Average Fish Per Rod</td>
<td>2.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fish Stocked</td>
<td>43,535</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 5.1
The statistics of Chew
Source: adapted from www.riverchew.co.uk/chew_valley_lake.htm <Accessed 21-6-07>
space that cannot be known thereby reducing the quantification to likely presences creating and depending on a tension between the known and unknown. Therefore, the new spaces created behind the dam, are simultaneously part of the process of modernisation - creating a space of numbers and quantities – and but at the same time confounds such quantification. However this numerical obsession is not the limit of the modernisation of angling the fish are defined likely presences but they are also temporary presences.

As a consequence of the use of rainbow trout (which rarely breed in the UK) the new ecologies of the dam are created not to provide a self sustaining population that will perpetuate into the future, instead stocking becomes part of a monthly or yearly cycle. These regular stockings provide a steady supply of fish that are released in order to be caught, and as so often is the case on large venues, killed. The prices offered for fishing Chew is dependent on how many fish are taken (see table 5.1). The angler is obliged to kill the fish as part of the terms and conditions of fishing, therefore the right to fish becomes a right to take fish. The angler’s choice on which fish to take is reduced. This shapes the interaction between the angler and the more-than-human in ways that is incongruous with the pre or anti-modern sentiments evident in the discourse. In making the execution of the fish obligatory, it changes the morality of the killing. To a certain extent this shapes the fish as organisms that will be killed; almost like other farmed animals, destined for human consumption. Through this acceptance the act of killing is normalised. This shapes the reservoir as a moral landscape where the killing of living beings is expected and accepted (c.f. Matless et al, 2005 on the moral landscapes of killing wildfowl).

This expectation of killing frames the purpose of angling in terms of success and therefore as a place where the atavistic bloodlust can be satiated. This bloodlust is contrary to Franklin’s (2001) findings in his analysis of the historical discourses of angling. In this way angling and the act of killing becomes more sanitised and socially acceptable, or as Elias and Dunning (1986) would suggest, civilised in a moral landscape where the killing of creatures is legitimised. However, inherent in
Figure 5.1
Chew Valley Lake Map
this acceptance of killing is an assumption that define angling in terms of success: fish are provided in an abundance that increases the likelihood of success and the size of fish that is acceptable to the angler. However, ‘success’ is defined by anglers in many ways and may only briefly consider the numbers of fish caught. Consequentially not only is the reservoir a space that provides for angling, it is also a space that shapes angling. As Lefebvre (1991) discusses, spaces are both an arena for practices to be performed and a place where performances are mediated. Following on from this, the reservoir can be understood as a space which is both created by and for anglers and at the same time defines and mediates the experience. With angling framed in terms of ‘success’, the experience is defined through mechanisms that can be measured and managed (such as the number of fish caught). Therefore the reservoir is a created landscape that also permits the practice of angling to be shaped and modernised. The reservoir creates a space where angling is modernised as success is framed in quantified terms, such as size and weight and the emotional engagement with the world, especially the killing, is mediated and normalised. Even the ecologies of these spaces are a product of modernity, relying on stocking rather than reproduction, with the biological functioning of the fish populations closely managed and understood in numerical terms as presences. The reservoir also confounds the quantification, limiting the control to likely presences. However, the reservoir remains a space which simultaneously provides for and mediates angling. This moulding of angling is evident in the way that techniques and approaches have adapted to the modernised quantified angling offered by the reservoir.

For example, reservoir tactics have evolved considerably since these large waters during the twentieth century. In the early stages of reservoir fishing, the flies used were of similar patterns to those used for hundreds of years. The patterns described by Berniers were similar to those of Walton and Cotton, patterns that were still used through the 1800s and are similar to imitations used today. However, the dressings of reservoir flies has diverged considerable over the last 50 years. John Horsey in his article on the history of Chew Reservoir notes that:
ack when Chew Valley first opened the killing flies were mainly larger versions of sea trout patterns. Flies like the Alexandria, Dunkeld and Mallard and Claret... ...loch style flies such as the Green Peter and the Wickham’s also played their part.... Today a typical cast on Chew would be heavily biased toward nymphs, with a Diawl Bach on the point, a black super glue buzzer on the middle dropper and a red headed Diawl Bach on the bob. For dry flies the cast... ...would involve a Ginger Hopper on the point with a Red Bits in the middle and a Carrot Fly for the top dropper... ...Lures are simple – Orange Blob on the top, Cormorant on the middle and a Black-and-Green Goldhead Taddy on the point. (2006: 45)

Through the description above the changes in the style of fly are made evident, and accompanying these changes there is also a greater incorporation of synthetic materials than other patterns. The changing patterns that Horsey describes are on one hand more gaudy and less imitative and on the other highly anatomically accurate representations of insects, larvae, fish and other creatures, such patterns often involve the use of synthetic materials. These developments are by no means confined to reservoir fishing, however it does represent a significant component of the adaptation of angling to the new spaces offered by the reservoir. The intention of the lures and more gaudy patterns of the reservoir angler is not imitation, rather it is to trigger a response in the fish that is not necessarily related to feeding; to get them to chase:

Fish can be funny, sometimes they are in a chasing sometimes they’re not. They are down and they don’t want to chase. So sometimes, I don’t know why, fishing the flies slowly can have more success than fishing faster.

Eric, Drift 21st May 2006

This adaptation of technique reflects how the reservoir has created a different space for the angler: creating a landscape that challenges the pre- or anti-modern construction of angling and forms a landscape that is both at the heart of the urban and at the heart of a modernised, sanitised, civilised rural where particular atavistic impulses can be fulfilled, measured and mediated. This production of a landscape of the tempered rural is not limited to Chew Valley, but its prominence as a venue highlights the processes that are shaping these spaces. Much of what has been
said about Chew could also be said about Roadford reservoir, though the details are somewhat different.

Roadford Reservoir is a large reservoir that covers 730 acres and is situated a few miles north of Dartmoor at the head of the River Tamar catchment. Unlike Chew Valley, the lake is only stocked with Brown Trout and stocking information is less readily available. However it is a prominent fishing venue and just as at Chew, the dam at Roadford creates a hybrid space which is both *rural* and modernised.

The lake was a venue that I fished with one volunteer. He fished the reservoir regularly and many of the photographs that he supplied for the research were of the lake: the dam is not obvious in any of the photographs. However the aeration pipe at the dam end was a significant ‘feature’ which he fished as he would any other physical aspect of the lake: it was a ‘fish holding spot’:

*Jacob: Have you been up to Roadford much since I last saw you?*

*John: My fishing pal David and I had a weekend before we went to Canada, and that is what this day is based on, our experience of those days, most of our fish were taken here on the aerator, especially once the sun had gone down. So there is a dog leg at the end of this, you’ll see the rougher water where it goes… …as I explained earlier we have got the wind coming this way and the bubbles coming up and broadening out and you get scum trapped. So we might just stop here and drift back onto that scum as you might get fish under that scum. And i’ve just noticed that seagull out there and this scum will contain all sorts of bits and bobs, vegetation and flies and… [Discussion of flies] you’ll notice these aerator, there are like little pods of air and coming away from them is like little riverlets, and you can almost fish the riverlets as if they were little rivers

*John, Roadford Reservoir, 8th August 2006*

This ‘new’ space is the very epitome of this hybrid rural space: the angler is fishing a feature that is entirely a consequence of human intervention in the river catchment, but that it is creating features currents and flows that are understood as small rivers that the angler fishes accordingly. This aerator is marked on the map below (figure 5.2), and from the notes it is obvious that this area around the aerator should not technically be fished, however, while these lines are neat and obvious
on the map, the absence of any markers on the water allowed these boundaries to become more flexible.

From the map (figure 5.2 (below)) it is evident that the space created by the Roadford dam is not limited to anglers. Just as at Chew valley the water is divided amongst a range of different recreational uses, however, unlike at Chew, angling is not so dominant. Here anglers make way for sailing and are excluded from certain areas which are designated as ‘nature protection zones’. These boundaries, like the exclusion zone around the aerator, while defined on the map are, in practice, imprecise, permeable and not particularly regulated. Therefore this zoning of the lake, like the management strategy focussed on presences at Chew, purports to be fixed and delineated but in actuality is fluid and imprecise. Thus while Roadford lake is a space which is modernised and mediated, it has also created a space where such measured and delineated attitudes are confounded.

A further element in the impact of the Roadford dam stems from the fact that these reservoirs are part of a system, that while these spaces seem fixed and located they are part of a catchment wide system of flows and dependencies which extend beyond the dam itself. Roadford dams the River Wolf, which is a tributary of the River Lyd which in turn is a tributary of the River Tamar. The River Tamar is an important salmon, trout and sea trout river. The dam therefore becomes involved in a wider politics as water held by the dam affects the lucrative fishing downstream.

The role of water in shaping the angling landscape is not limited to the technological and physical interventions afforded by ‘the dam’. More subtle physical interventions are described in the section on emotion and belonging below. However what I want to turn to now is the role water has as a vector for life; recognising that these landscapes of water not only materially shape people and practices but are the location for particular ecologies, ecologies that are highly valuable and yet, as a consequence of the watery space unseen.
Figure 5.2
Roadford Reservoir Map
The Ecologies of Waterscapes

The preceding section focussed on how water is physically interrupted, and manipulated, creating new spaces which both shape and are shaped by angling. Rather than continue with this discussion of the material intervention in watercourses, this short section discusses how the place of the more-than-human components of the landscape are affected by and affect the spaces that are created by and for anglers. This has in part been introduced in the earlier section through the discussion of the role of different species in creating the particular ecologies that are woven into the economic structures which produced reservoir fishing. However, what is highlighted through this discussion is the different ways that particular genetics, populations and ecosystems are manipulated and made to count. This is given further emphasis, given the contingency of these valued ecologies on the diffuse ‘landscape scale’ issues that affect the river habitats of salmonids.

…what brings me back is really is being able to catch fish, er, and the thought that yeah, one day I’m going to get a nice big brown trout. That really is, that keeps me going but I’m very happy catching very small brown trout, I love catching the brown trout, because they are wild and you know, they are in good condition, when you look at the stocked rainbow trout, you know, they’re in poor condition.

Eric, Drift, 21st May 2006

Jacob: Could you take me through, the process of fishing, the act – when you are casting, what are you trying to do when you say you are ‘fishing’ and area?

John: I take it we are already tackled up, we are at the designated spot, are we on a river or on a still water?

John: I’d rather be fishing dry fly up stream. Or down stream?

John: Which would you rather?

Jacob: Which would you rather?

John: I’d rather be fishing dry fly up stream.

John, Roadford 2nd June 2006
Jacob: So what do you judge your season by?

Kenneth: Oh I think, I think, very simply, no, it’s not so simple because, you see I’m talking as a river manager, rather than a fisherman, and the two things are quite different. The average rod will say ‘have I caught a lot of fish? Have there been good fish rising?’ but in my heart of hearts, I am saying ‘has this river done the best it can?’ and if there has been a good hatch of fly throughout the season, and the fish are healthy and they are all over the river, and we catch a reasonable number of wild trout, which most of the rods don’t give a damn, they don’t mind if it’s a wild trout or not to be honest, to me catching a wild trout is infinitely more important than catching a stocked trout.

Kenneth, River Wylye 8th June 2006

…Because I’ve seen salmon and seatrout numbers dwindle, over… er in the sixties, when I was growing up and you had a flush of freshwater you could walk across their backs to get to the other side. And then UDN came in and knocked them for six. We are sucking them out of the sea: trawlers are like factories now – not just from this country but from other countries and there are so few that the actual numbers that are getting to the rivers are… the very last hope that we have got for them breeding and coming back in numbers in the future…. … I’d much rather catch lots of browns and I know there are lots of browns in the rivers and I still enjoy catching fish and know that I am not doing too much harm to the environment while I am doing it.

Bill, River Torridge 17th July 2006

Through these excerpts there is a prioritising of different species, different fish and even different approaches. Such hierarching reflects both what anglers fish for and, as in the final excerpt, what they do not fish for: brown trout are favoured over rainbow trout because of condition; dry fly fishing rivers over reservoir fishing; wild trout over stocked trout; brown trout over sea trout and salmon due to the abundance of the former and relative scarcity of the latter two. The way that a water is constructed and managed affects the relative abundance of these different fish.

Rainbow trout, which are native to North America were widely introduced into British waters, especially the large reservoirs but also small so called ‘put and take’ fisheries and even some rivers. The rainbow trout does not breed in the UK very well as a consequence of its need for higher water temperatures to ensure
hatching (Maitland and Campbell, 1992). However, they are favoured by fisheries managers because, unlike the native brown trout, they are active throughout the year, especially when ‘triploid’ fish (fish that are altered to have three sets of chromosomes and therefore sterile) are stocked. Such fish have a reduced drive to reproduce thereby ensuring they are constantly feeding with no need for a close season during breeding. Furthermore rainbow trout also feed more actively during the warmer summer months making them more financially rewarding in fisheries management terms. However, the intensive farming processes that permit such stockings to occur leave their marks on the bodies that they create, an aesthetic which is picked up by the angler in the first quotation. The way that these farming techniques become embodied by the fish and then the angler also affects decisions:

_You don’t want to be associated with your factory farming of trout. You hope that you are going to be fishing for organic farmed trout: Free-range farmed trout._

_Roger, River Lyd 12th June 2006_

As the third quotation above shows, this mixed attitude to farmed trout is not limited to the rainbow-brown debate, the ‘wild’ brown trout is favoured over all other trout as it is constructed as authentic, healthy and natural. However, just as the stocked trout embody farming practices, so the ‘wild’ trout embodies the entire aquatic ecosystem and also the diffuse and mobile environmental issues of an entire catchment. While such issues may be preferred over those of the farmed fish, the fish’s quality and even presence is subject to landscape processes.

The influence of ‘landscape scale’ processes on the bodily form of fish are many and varied. For example the silt level on spawning redds (the depressions cut by hen fish in the river gravel in which the eggs are laid) greatly affects embryo development (Armstrong et al., 2003). Similarly the stream characteristics create different habitats for fish at different stages of development (Egglisahaw and Shackley, 1982; Milner et al, 2003). In more general terms, water quality affects the abundance and quality of salmonids (see for example Parrott and MacKenzie,
Therefore it can be seen that salmonids embody landscape, both in material terms through issues relating to water quality and through the construction of the fish as ‘wild’ and ‘natural’ connecting to discourses of an authentic rurality. Having focussed on the close-up encounters with landscape in somewhat abstract terms, using ‘the trout’ as the embodiment of the waterscapes discussed earlier, I now want to turn to the emotive personal encounters with the world.

**Landscapes of Emotion and Belonging**

The preceding section highlighted how the material landscape and particular locales are manipulated by anglers and for anglers, creating spaces and forming ecologies that shape angling. This section takes these waterscapes and reconnects the individual angler; recognising that landscape is ‘something distant and intimate all at once’ (Rose and Wylie, 2006), that while the waterscapes of the dam may represent a hybrid space full of tensions and the river becomes a manipulated ecology that defines angling, this abstract locale is interpreted and becomes imbied with personal meanings. Therefore while the next section deals with the somatic landscapes of technology and skill, this section looks to unpack how particular landscapes are given ‘depth and folds’ (Wylie, 2006) through personal narratives. Such depths and folds go beyond physical characteristics to describe how landscapes become filled with reference points that connect particular spaces through time as well as connecting different places. This section employs three narratives to articulate how landscapes create emotional resonance and foster an understanding of ‘dwelling in the world’ (Ingold, 2000).

What follows is the photographic account offered by one of the anglers with whom I fished. She was the only female angler I interviewed, but more crucially for this argument – she employed a narrative style to her presentation. The images and captions that follow are all as they were presented to me:
[M]y earliest sort of fishing memories which were really as a child fishing with my brother with bent pins and the things that children do but we did actually catch trout, believe it or not! Maybe that was the beginning of it all?! And then pretty much as I have told you – how my love of fishing got started and all the places where I have actually fished in the last 30 odd years because not only have we fished in Scotland and England, but we have fished Yugoslavia, New Zealand, Kenya…

(The following excerpt corresponds to the images in Collage 1 page 160)

...That photograph was taken on the Arlene, just up from loch Arlene which is on the west coast of Scotland. That is on the Dee. That is on the Helmsdale up in Sutherland

Jacob: In the snow!

Rachael: Gosh it was cold

Jacob: What time of year would that be?

Rachael: March: fishing with very large flies: about that big, sinking lines…

Jacob: Heavy work

Rachael: Very heavy work… I wonder where that is? You can usually tell by the hat… um… that is loch Areannus we were dapping have you done any of that?

Jacob: Yes but without any success I’m afraid.

Rachael: I only had one small trout I think if I remember rightly on that occasion…

(Collage 2, page 161)

That is on the Irfon which is a tributary of the Wye. And I remember that because I fell over about five minutes later [laughs]. That is the Wye, yes it is very narrow but it is the Wye. That was on the Helmsdale. This was extraordinary. This was on the Isle of Lewis and this is an estuary, the river came up the estuary all the way round this bay in a big loop and up to a little loch where it rose. That is in New Zealand…

(Collage 3, Page 162)

... that is cooking something… a fish that I have caught. That is a sort of typical fishing picnic.... And that’s entering casting competitions and that’s winning a prize!

Hay-on-Wye 2nd October 2006
Figure 5.3
Collage 1
Figure 5.4
Collage 2
Valuable Ecologies: A Geography of Angling

Figure 5.5

Collage 3

I COOK 'EM FOR SUPPER........

FOR PICNICS........

I CAST FOR PRIZES AND WIN SOME, TOO.
From this brief discussion of the photographs, it was evident that these images were caught up with a wide range of memories that were highly detailed in that they triggered accounts of fish, locations and techniques that included fine details. But that were not limited to these technical details, they were highly emotional and part of a multi-sensory and post-sensory experience that became evident later on as the respondent recounted the trip to New Zealand:

_Rachael:_ The best one was the New Zealand trout and up in the bathroom there is a photograph of me with the chap who I went with. And we walked six miles down stream, yes that’s right, to just; we didn’t fish at all on the way down. We then stopped and had our lunch and we then had to turn round and dry fly all the way back to where we were actually camping. And Geoffrey, my husband had gone off to another river that day mainly because it was my fault because I’d forgotten to bring the bread, and he very gallantly said he’d go off to get some bread. And he knew that there was this lovely river called the Materari and he wanted to go back and fish it, so he was quite happy. And we were fishing a river called the Alrikki, which is a tiny little river and it comes out into a big lake, about opposite Queenstown in the south island of New Zealand. [...] anyway he went on ahead. And it’s a sort of way you fish in New Zealand, you need someone to sort of spot fish and then they indicate with the person with the rod and they point like that to let you know where the fish is. So Bert did all this and he was going like this ‘under the bank’ and then he did that which meant ‘you’ve got one chance’ and then he went like that which meant – I was false casting in the air – more line, more line. And then when he thought I’d got enough out he went like that and I went on false casting in the air and then ‘one chance’ so with my heart going like this so I landed it and I thought that’s it I’ve missed it, and so I did a really stupid thing: I picked it straight up and recast it, and normally that would spook the fish and it would be off. But for miraculous reason the fish decide to take the fly and it did and after half an hour we landed it, we beached it and it was nine pounds. And it was absolutely huge like a salmon, and I only had this tiny little rod I think it was a 5lb breaking strain cast and a tiny little nymph on the end.

_Rachael, Hay-on-Wye 2nd October 2006_

This excerpt shows how the image embodies the series of events that remain highly vivid. In this instance these are stilled moments which do not capture ‘the event’ per se; they capture the post event, manifestation of success but they summon life (Thrift, 2004) in that they become tools in the recounting of stories, but also trigger the personal experiences of particular places: the excitement of catching this salmon-like trout is evident in the excited way that such detail is
described and the fluctuations across the emotional register is evident in this story. As such, photographs become important components of the narration (Fish, 2004) of the life histories and particular events of peoples in this account. The rivers and landscapes of New Zealand become synonymous with the excitement, fear, shock, joy, relief, nervousness that run through the capture of this particular fish. In this regard, the photographs epitomise the ‘visual landscape’ (Rose, 2001; Cosgrove, 2002) combined with the affective qualities of experiences in an event filled world. The image is simultaneously a commodified, positioned, meaning-filled way of understanding landscape, and an indicator of the emotional resonance of place. This emotional understanding of place recognises that landscape is ‘not just a way of seeing. Nor of course, is landscape something seen, a mute, external field. Nor, finally, can we speak altogether plausibly of the practice of self and landscape through notions of a phenomenological understanding of the formation and undoing of self and landscape in practice’ (Wylie, 2006: 245). This ‘post phenomenological’ understanding of landscape constitutes a spontaneous definition of the self-in-situ, that the world and the individual are concurrently defined. That is to say that landscape is a series of events in which materialities and sensibilities collide and reform as both landscape and identity are formed; that neither identity or landscape are pre-formed, but respond or ‘unfold’ in response to these encounters. As such depth becomes more than a vector in space and a reference to immediacy; that encounters with particular assemblages of things have a spatial and temporal setting. Therefore, the collages of pictures and the captions presented as part of this particular angling narrative, offer insight into the way that the New Zealand landscape and the subject within it become defined through a series of unfolding encounters with particular people, places and more-than-human organisms. In this regard photographs are part of and fuel the ‘imaginative enactments’ that infuse materials, objects, landscapes with meaning and generate, as Rose (2006) suggests ‘dreams of presence’. Implicit in these cognitive processes however is a retrospective process that makes sense of landscape. Therefore, while landscape and identity may be formed through spontaneous encounters, it is through this retrospective process of narration that these encounters are made meaningful. The ‘unfolding of self in landscape’ therefore, belies two complexities, firstly that such encounters have a history or
back story, that encounters cannot be divorced from the social, political and historical contexts through which they are formed; and secondly, the meaning of encounters is afforded after the event, that they are re-iterative and thereby part of a retrospective narrative process which makes sense of the complexities, tensions and inconsistencies of existence (Fish, 2004). This narrative process is also subject to social, cultural and historical positions and processes. In this regard the photographs become an insight into the ‘formation and undoing of self and landscape in practice’ (Wylie, 2006:245) and how they still moments and enable the retrospective cogency of place and identity, as these encounters are connected to previous events, filled with meaning and potentialities, or alternatively discounted, devalued and disregarded as particular moments are made into nodes, pulling the network of events into a coherent, meaningful, story.

Consequentially, while the photographs and accompanying accounts of the people, places and encounters that make up the angling landscape may represent a complexity to landscape that underlines how depth or distance ‘is no longer simply one vector in an inert geometric space: it is the very medium and vibrancy of lived spatiality’ (Wylie, 2006) and the epitome of the constant (un)folding of self and landscape – the accounts of identity and place remain particularly grounded. The focus is not on this process of unfolding but on the manipulation of events that draws in these varied experiences into an articulate, coherent understanding of the self-in-situ. That while the process of identity may be a fluid and tension ridden process it is often imagined as static and known. As such the self in situ, and the narrative style that projects the image of stability is open to the wide range of social and cultural processes and power relations that constitute a politics of affect. It is on this politics of affect and the processes that give understandings of identity and place permanency that I now focus.

_Dwelling Through Angling_

Ingold (2000) builds on Heidegger (1971) to develop a _dwelling_ perspective to understanding of landscape. While there are a number of assumptions within the
Heideggarian notion (discussed in chapter 6) that are somewhat problematic, the concept of dwelling offers a connection between the spontaneous unfolding of self and landscape and the grounded articulations of a defined identity and place so prevalent in personal narratives. The dwelling perspective recognises the interplay between the subject and the *umwelt* (Uexkull 1957 cited in Ingold, 2000) or ‘the environment’, that landscape is not constructed and then experienced but is constructed through experience (Ingold 2000;1993).

The material world is embodied through an interplay between the senses that creates a hybrid understanding of self and landscape (Cloke and Jones, 2001). As described in other chapters, angling differs from many other experiences of the more than human in contemporary society in that the relative influence of sight is limited (see also Franklin, 2001). This is not to suggest that sight is absent, nor to attempt to replace the hegemony of sight with some other prioritising of the senses, but to recognise that the angling landscape combines the ‘landscape of sight’ (see for example Cosgrove, 2002; Wylie, 2002) with the embodied encounters with landscape. Studies of landscape has regarded a prioritising of the visual in western traditions (see for example Urry 1999) as diametrically opposed to the auditory. Dwelling perspectives recognise that such segregation, delinearation and opposition of the senses is not prominent in experiences of the material world (Ingold, 2000). Angling epitomises the conflation of the ocular with the auditory, tactile, olfactory, and even with taste and balance.

Ingold suggests that much of this embodied experience of the landscape stems from a process of doing things in the world, creating a ‘taskscape’ (2000: 194). I want to explore this notion of taskscape in the angling context to show how ‘doing things’ in the landscape as well as ‘being through events’, are also part of the processes that solidifies landscape and fosters a sense of belonging. To achieve this I want to offer two accounts of practical management of waterscapes, the first in Devon, the second in Wiltshire.

*This is a set of photographs about work we did some years ago, stream clearing. So yes as I listed there it’s about friends, the hard work, rewards*
– yeah we improve the environment and the satisfaction of all of that. Interestingly, when we… Roadford lake was formed and three years later they opened it up for fishing. And right on the back of that one or two of us decide we were going for a Roadford fly fishing club. And the club discovered that waters feeding the lake emanate from the river Wolf – that’s the major contributor at the north end of the lake and a smaller stream to the North west. However, when we learnt from locals that there was quite a run of trout coming from, there always had been, trout sea trout and salmon going up the river wolf, but since impoundment they thought all that would stop. But no all the trout, well not all the trout, but a lot of trout from Roadford lake now, still moves up the river Wolf, and they move up for about three miles. So we were enquiring ‘well could that continue?’ ‘well it’s blocked and all sorts’ so local guys told us. So we started to look into this and with the help of angling 2000 that’s west country rivers trust and the environment agency we learnt that there were trash dams heading on up the river wolf, beyond Roadford still affected by the great storm of when was that – 98? So there was trees down right across the river and so on causing flooding. And this team of hardened individuals got going. And this is a guy is still is with west country rivers trust, but these four characters are club members, a father and son, the volunteer bailiff, and ex-army he would more anything – built like a tank. And that’s the sort of … this next picture shows the sort of trash dam that we’d be confronted with – two or three trees in there all harbouring smaller stuff – and it’s growing – it wasn’t going to get any better and the fear is the next spate washes out
bits more bank and stuff, so we set to and with chainsaws we waded in and tried to clear as many of these as we could. All the time asking south west water as it then was, the trust hadn’t been formed but south west water would give us their blessing ‘no they said, you are likely to disturb sediments and metallic material will come into the lake and…’ codswallop evidently! We consulted scientific advice through west country rivers trust and they said ‘no it won’t you are doing a good job because you are allowing trout…’ the trout could get up during a spate and get on their spawning redds, but when the water dropped – they couldn’t get back, so by clearing all that, hopefully we have done something towards it all.

John, Roadford 2nd June 2006

This excerpt and the accompanying photos show how important this material contribution to the landscape in terms of hours laboured and perceived beneficial effects can be. The use of local knowledge regarding historical presence of trout and salmon in the River Wolf, inspiring local action in the form of local anglers through the club, represents this understanding of landscape through tasks and experience. The local knowledge of the anglers is challenged by the water authority scientists, which in turn is challenged through the Westcountry Rivers Trust. This creates a hybrid knowledge (Bear, 2006), between science and local knowledge but the outcome highlights the importance of understanding self and place through action creating a local ‘taskscape’.

Similarly the River Wylye in Wiltshire is a landscape that is delicately managed and constantly maintained:

Kenneth: …we are improving the river. and to run a river properly, is a very costly exercise. A, you have got to do it so that it is actually going to enhance the fishing. Enhance the weed growth, enhance the fly life, all those natural things. And you can do things on the river, like that and you can ruin it. And I’ll give you an example later on, which I did and I was terribly wrong. Or you can employ someone to do it and you get these technical experts who coming along and putting all the river right. Or better still you can have your full time Ghillie who has done it all his life, knows the river like the back of his hand, knows what to do, and that is why
something like Piscatorial with their highly efficient river managers, run a better river than we do, and better from everybody’s point of view. Because if the weed growth is better, the fish have got shelter, they have got feeding off the bugs that live on the weed, the river level will go up because of the bulking out of the river because there is a good weed growth, the insects will improve because they have got a shelter are. So the whole thing, I don’t think there is anything I know, in my experience in life that is so responsive to good management as river-work is.

Kenneth, River Wylie 8th June 2006

These taskscapes are ‘rewarding’ as the river ‘responds to good management’ this sense of achievement as they have ‘done something towards it all’. In this regard the taskscape may represent a connection between the abstract connotations of ‘landscape’ and the close up embodied experience of ‘being in the world’. The sense of achievement permits the individual to survey all that has been done: to subject the landscape to an objective gaze while remembering the involved event of working in the landscape, creating a taskscape. But these taskscapes are not lonely processes: not only might there be a degree of group cohesion as described in the first excerpt but these landscapes are part of a temporality that connects anglers now with those who have dwelt before and those who will dwell after.

Anglers invariably refer to one or two key figures in their lives who taught them to fish. Often this is their father. These figures remain prominent in their angling experience, along with other figures:

Kenneth: can I just stop you for one moment, you asked me about this fishing business. Did you note in the paper I filled in for you, it is all summed up in a book... ...it is a book called Going Fishing, it is written by a man called Negly Farson... ...Negly Farson is a man who I think I know without having met better than any other person in the world.......And Negly Farson writes about fishing down, not far from where you are, on the Bearle, my river, my westcountry river, and there is a picture of him there and he says ‘you will go out on this river, with a few flies in your lapel, or a little tin box and you will fish all day and you will be lucky if you catch three fish to the pound’, and he said ‘but if you get your fly under those over-hanging bushes over there, you will probably pick up a half-pounder, and you will fish with a cast, no thicker than a brunette’s hair.’ [laughs] that, I read that book every year, every year, and it fires me.

Kenneth, River Wylie 8th June 2006
This account describes a very involved knowledge of the works of a particular author, and hints at a connection that seems to infuse not only the way that the respondent approached fishing, but also the way that respondent managed the water. That through a connection to place – the River Bearle, he was connecting to this prominent literary figure. As such the angling landscape becomes infused not only with the tasks of anglers here and now, but also those who have gone before. Therefore dwelling is an attitude that incorporates the ghosts of those who have dwelt before, and in the case of angling, have managed rivers and cast lines to trout. It is to the technologies of angling that I now turn to describe how the angling landscape becomes a techno-social space which are defined by the use of particular technologies.

**Landscapes of Technology and Skill**

Having discussed the angling landscape both in abstract and emotive terms in this short section I want to highlight how the angling landscape is managed for anglers. As such the waterscape is managed for the particular technologies and skills that angling requires. That while landscape may be both ‘something distant and intimate all at once’ (Rose and Wylie, 2006) behind these landscapes, waterscapes or taskscapes is a particular technology and skill level that shapes the interaction.

The technology of angling is relatively simple: the rod is used as a spring to cast a weighted line with a bait attached to curved metal hook. That is not to say that technology is absent, the rods, lines and hooks are highly machined and complex items to produce, but the mechanics, and quantity of equipment remains relatively simple. This simple technology may facilitate the imagining of hunter-gather and other pre-modern notions. Indeed as Ingold notes:

> ‘The transition, in human history of human technicity, from the hand-tool to the machine, is not from the simple to the complex, but is rather tantamount to the withdrawal of the person from the centre to the periphery of the productive process.’ (2000:289)
As such the relatively simple tools employed in angling and the way that technological advancements are contested (see Chapter 2) reflects a desire in angling to search out an ‘authentic’ connection with the more-than-human world where this withdrawal of the person is reversed and the angler is placed centrally in process of catching fish (see Chapter 7 for a development of this ‘authenticity with regard to the notions of escape). In this regard the angling landscape becomes shaped by these simple technologies, with the waterscapes managed to facilitate and accommodate the spatial requirements of an angler with a rod and line.

Accompanying this simple technological intervention and infusing the romantic or nostalgic element of the anti-modern discourse that surrounds angling, is an attitude that while the technology is simple the skill levels required to enable success are high. That as the human is placed at the centre of the process, human ability and the limits of the body become more apparent. The offsetting of technological advancement with high skill levels is reflected in the highly challenging cognitive process of hunting generally (Ingold 2000:28). The level of skill becomes woven through the angling landscape as different waters are categorised as challenging. The ‘put and take’ fisheries and the rainbow trout as a species are conceptualised as less challenging, requiring less skill and consequentially considered somehow less ‘authentic’ than a river and wild trout. As the following images and captions depict, this ‘authenticity’ and the way that particular rivers are constructed as more, or less, ‘challenging’:
Photograph 5.6
‘The beginner on easy water containing eager, avid stocked rainbow trout.’
Kenneth, River Wylie 8th June 2006

Photograph 5.7
‘The beginner on more difficult water – undergrowth, bushes and over head trees and a natural wild, suspicious trout which knows it all.’
Kenneth, River Wylie 08-06-06
Therefore the way that the spaces of angling are formed and managed reflects a tension between the authentic and inauthentic; the challenging and the unchallenging; the modern and the anti-modern as the perceived agency of the more-than-human world is manipulated to ensure an appropriate ‘tension equilibrium’ (Elias and Dunning 1986).

This technological element makes evident the way that particular encounters with the more-than-human world are not as spontaneous as some understandings of landscape and animal geographies may suggest. The encounters are prepared for; they are subject to the social, cultural and historical positions of both the individual and angling more generally. This rehearsing and preparing for encounters with fish is most prominent in the way that fly-tying can be crucial to some anglers’ enjoyment; as described in the following image (showing the fly vice and fly box, photograph 8) and excerpts

Joe: …if you look at the wings on that, and that’s quite a nice little piece of kit that; I haven’t tried it yet, but I will.

Jacob: and what’s the intention with this?

Joe, well I just thought to myself, well they like yellow, and they like winged insects, you know.[…]

Joe, White River 15th June 2006

To some extent the fly tying is an end in itself:

... every, fly that I tie I’m gonna use. I got one in auction in a box that I would never use. But it’s a old, er, fly and it’s a salmon fly, about that big [about two and a half inches] the hook on it is... and it’s got the spade tip and it’s got the gut loop on it. And that is something that I will... ...eventually tie some really mega flies, some really nice flies and put them in a box and put that one in the centre...

Joe, White River, 15th June 2006
Consequentially, rivers and lakes become spaces which are not only places in which anglers come in contact with particular ecologies, they are landscapes that are pre-defined and rehearsed through various technologies and skills, such as fly-tying and casting ability.

**Conclusion**

This chapter has addressed the issue of ‘landscape’ in a number of ways. It seeks to recognise the complexity of how angling is shaped by and shapes space, place and identity, both in material terms and as part of wider social and cultural processes. It begins by recognising the significance of water in these landscapes, as it shapes and is shaped by the various spaces and practices that constitute angling. The second section of this chapter looks to recognise the importance of landscape in understandings of identity, by showing how landscape and identity are co-constituted and unfold simultaneously. However, while identity and place may be an unfolding, contingent event and an affective process, the way that such
events are retrospectively narrated becomes highly significant as such notions become solidified through the process of recounting stories; stories that foster a sense of dwelling and belonging. Throughout this chapter the conflict between the visual and the focus on the more-than-visual in more recent ‘affective’ understandings of place, space and identity has been acknowledged. In connecting these two aspects, this chapter suggests that the visual and mechanisms that focus on the visual such as photographs, do not preclude post or extra sensing experience (and vice versa) but rather can become an important component in the cementing of affected, embodied experience through the narrative process. The chapter concludes by highlighting the role of technology in shaping how the material world is managed experienced and understood.

Implicit in acknowledging the role of technology in mediating, but also shaping the interaction between the human and more-than-human world, is a recognition that particular encounters with landscape are more-than spontaneous unfoldings of the self-in-situ: they have a history. The spaces where rods are chosen, flies are tied, and management decisions relating to river keeping are intrinsically connected to the affective interaction between the angler and the more-than-human world. Furthermore, the process by which encounters are imbued with meaning is a retrospective act, filled with politics. Thus while events may be ‘spontaneous unfoldings of self in landscape’ the way that such encounters become (everyday)life events or nodal points in personal narratives is a tension-ridden process, fuelled by various social, cultural and historical processes and power relations. This is not to disregard the affective and emotional register of the angling landscape, but to recognise that the various assemblages of materialities and subjectivities that intertwine to form the angling landscape are filled with tensions, inconsistencies and politics that spiral out from the events that constitute encounters with landscape or particular ecologies.

Having discussed the politics of landscape in the angling experience, the next chapter focuses on the peculiar ecologies of angling. In so doing, it examines how the natural, the animal, the more-than-human, is encountered, constructed and responded to by anglers.
Chapter 6

Understanding Nature

‘Were a lion to talk, we could not understand him’

Wittgenstein, 1979/1922

Introduction

Drawing from Wittgenstein’s dictum, this chapter explores how anglers generate understandings of the more-than-human through the practice of angling. It connects to chapter two as it builds on the multiple constructions of the more-than-human through the angling discourse and illustrates how these multiple ‘understandings’ of the more-than-human infuse the contemporary angling experience. It unpacks the complex relationship between the angling body and the more-than-human through a variety of relationships but focussing on how the close-up encounters with the more-than-human shape and influence the angling body. Running through this chapter is a critique of the way that angling is constructed in relation to modernity and how this affects the angler’s encounters with the more-than human world. Often angling is either set against, or removed from modernity, and this anti- or extra- modern position is influential in the way that experiences of nature are couched in the angling discourse and individual experience. This application of animal geographies and the understandings of the social and the natural is followed by a particular interrogation of the watery setting of angling. Water has a particular materiality which greatly influences understandings of place, space and identity: the significance of the bank and other boundaries is unpacked and combined with the fluid nature of water to discuss how these waterscapes are liminal.
In the latter stages, this chapter develops the notion of ‘understanding’ the more-than-human to challenge the underlying premise of Wittgenstein’s lion and by building on work by Franklin, Ingold, Whatmore and Elias and Dunning, amongst others, demonstrates how the fish is imagined by the angler and how the watercourse is ‘entered’ through various becomings. These becomings demonstrate how through angling, the hybridity of existence trips not only the corporeal boundaries of bodies (Whatmore, 2002) but also represents a splitting of the self as anglers attempt to understand fish.

**Angling, the Body and Nature**

It is through the everyday practices such as angling that the environment and nature are most keenly felt (for further discussion, see for example; Cloke and Jones, 2001; Macnaghten, 2003; and Macnagten and Jacobs, 1997). In recognising this importance of the personal in generating understandings of the more-than-human Macnaghten and Urry (1998) suggest that there is not one overarching nature or construction of nature, but multiple natures, which infuse our daily life and that it is these everyday experiences of environment that shape our conceptualisation of what constitutes the environment or nature. Keith Thomas (1983), amongst others, highlights how attitudes to the more-than-human have changed over time, recognising the importance of theological thought and then the power of enlightenment classification and domestication in the human ordering of the more-than-human. In contrast, the civility of British attitudes to the animals depicted by Thomas can be considered as setting the foundation for the modern environmentalism that infused both public discourse and the politics of the more-than-human in the late twentieth century. Macnaghten and Urry (1998) describe how this ‘compassion for the brute creation’ (Thomas, 1983: 143) was shaped through various events such as the Torrey Canyon Disaster in 1967, publications like Osborn’s The Plundered Planet (1948) (McCormick, 1995) or Carson’s Silent Spring (1962), political moments such as the Rio Earth Summit (1992) or the boarding of the Brent Spar by Greenpeace activists (1995) and narratives such as
global climate change. Such events, literature, narratives and moments signify, or signified a dissatisfaction with dominant discourses relating to nature, the environment and management of natural resources. In spite of the supposed public disaffection with political treatment of nature political activism regarding nature is often limited to individual interactions with the environment; that it is when the more-than-human directly impacts on the habitus of the individual that the environment is most keenly felt and the responses are most vehement. This study’s focus on angling reflects this heightened importance of the everyday in shaping understandings of the more-than-human. It connects both to the landscape scale interaction, which historically has been dominated by the visual as well as discussing the intimate ‘encounters’ (Law, 2002) with particular aspects of the environment, encounters which are distinctly more than visual and more than sensory. Much regarding ‘landscape’, or waterscape, has been covered in the preceding chapter, therefore it is with the close-up encounters that this chapter focuses, while maintaining the connection between landscape and these experiences of particular agents of landscape.

In contrast to many interactions with the more-than-human in contemporary society, and unlike most aspects of hunting, angling requires an intertwining of the senses that is more than visual: the engagement with nature requires the use of all the senses. The focus on vision in many human-more-than-human interactions through modernity may be linked with the enlightenment philosophy that generated a belief in an objective truth that could be observed. This coupled with the influence of maps and technologies such as photography have resulted in constructions, discourses, and narratives of nature becoming more visually dominated descriptions rather than articulations of the complex combination of sensual experiences that constitutes angling, a walk in the park, gardening or even rainforest destruction. This emphasis on sight is further encouraged through management techniques aimed at minimising environmental damage and the touristic attitude renders anything other than the gaze as damaging (Franklin, 2001). However, there has been an increasing articulation in academic literature that many experiences of the more-than-human are more than visual, and that pastimes such as angling are ‘immersive practices’ (Thrift 2001) where nature and
the environment are directly engaged. However, beyond this recognition that immersive practices are more-than visual, in angling, sight may be the least relied upon sense. This is a consequence of the quarry – the fish – occupying a watery domain that cannot be easily viewed, this is particularly obvious when fishing at night:

Apart from some auditory assistance – the whirring of a piece of grass caught on the fly during casting; a fish that makes its presence known by splashing at the head of the pool, and so on – night fishing is carried out almost entirely by the sense of touch. The feel of the line in the air tells the distance cast; the feel of the fly in the water informs how it is fishing in a fast “run”; the drag of a sunk line gauges the depth at which the fly is working in a deep, slow pool; only by feel is the touch of a drifting leaf distinguishable from the gentle nudge of a big fish – a fish that may be caught if detected and cast to again.

(Falkus, 2002: 152)

In this excerpt, Falkus in his book on Sea-Trout fishing, describes how the visual element may even be completely excluded in the pursuit of sea trout at night. The cast is made to a splashing trout, the length of the cast is measured by the weight of the line during the cast and the take is recognised subconsciously, triggering the reaction required to hook the fish. This identification of the contra-visual in experience has led some to suggest that the importance of the visual should be down-played with attention being focussed on other senses to produce ‘soundscapes’ (Bull 2002) or landscapes of touch. This change in emphasis has been compounded by the development of extra-sensory understandings of encounters with more-than-humans or landscape. Such affective or emotional geographies (Davidson and Bondi, 2004; Thrift, 2004; McCormack, 2003; Milton 2002) downplay the visual as the importance of post-perceptive meaning (Laurier and Brown, unpublished) is identified to figure highly in narratives of landscape, space, place and identity. However, such down-playing of the visual through recognition of the importance of the more than visual and post-perceptive understandings of the world can result in the replacement of hegemony of sight with new hierarchies of the senses or a preponderance with the extra-sensual in writings of encounters with landscape, nature and the environment. However, as evident in the above
excerpt, it is not a matter of recognising the importance of senses other than the visual in shaping angling understandings: angling requires a re-ordering of the senses, not just to supplement sight, but in particular instances to replace it completely. As such the practice of angling requires a delicate intertwining of the senses that contrasts with many other interactions with the more-than-human in contemporary society (Franklin, 2001).

This multi-sensory character is considered as reflecting an inherent human condition fuelled by atavism, indeed angling has been described as occupying peculiar positions in relation to modernity: Adrian Franklin has described angling as pre-modern (1999; 2001), and respondents to this research often cited an atavistic impulse as a reason for going fishing (see chapter 4 for further discussion). This relation between angling and the condition of modernity is unpacked in chapter 7 on Escape. However, the particular interaction with the more-than-human that becomes the justification for such arguments stems from this multi-sensory engagement and the killing involved (discussed below and in chapter 9). Therefore, beyond the multi-sensory involvement in the pursuit of angling fishing is pre-modern in the manner in which the angler inserts himself or herself into the environment with the objective of killing. As Franklin (2001) suggests, the killing involved in angling is undertaken, not as a consequence of some blood lust or satisfaction from killing but as a consequence of a number of decisions and actions. The angler takes only that which is to be consumed or can be afforded by the animal population. The execution is done appropriately, i.e. as cleanly and painlessly as possible. But more than this expectation and acceptance of killing, the angler, unlike other hunting pursuits, is mechanically involved in the execution of the prey; unlike shooting for example where the individual is physically separated from the death of the creature, in angling the most common way of killing the fish is through battery:

*Jacob:* Yeah, but what about the killing, the way you kill a fish — I don’t know do you use a priest?

*Jack:* No, I just break its neck or I…
Jacob: You break its neck, ok.

Jack: Well actually, to be honest I just go like that with my fist, [mimes a down-ward blow with the knuckles of a clenched fist]

Jacob: Do you? Right.

Jack: If it’s a salmon I pick up a rock and use a rock. Because I always forget to put a priest in my pocket. So I use whatever I’ve got around me, but anything under about two pound, I’m quite happy to just kill with my, just grab it and just whack it with my knuckles, you know…

Jacob: But that’s quite a…

Jack That’s quite primeval as well…

Jack, River Camel 16th July 2006

To suggest that angling or hunting is entirely pre-modern is problematic. Modernity is not excluded from the interaction; the technologies employed by anglers in an effort to catch fish offer scientific methods for the domination of nature. Advances in materials and techniques are offered to tempt the angler into considering whether better equipment will improve their catch returns;

Unique new carbon materials are combined with a revolutionary computer aided design process to produce rods that are lighter, faster and more responsive than ever before. Precision engineered by experts in our factory at Alnwick to exacting standards.

The result?

A handcrafted performance rod and reel without equal.

Advertisement: Hardy of Alnwick (Trout and Salmon April 2005)

The “unique new carbon materials” and “computer aided design” of the tackle suggests that the use of such technology will improve the angler’s chance of success. This use of technology to command the capture of fish may shatter the illusion of angling as pre-modern. Consequentially, it may be suggested that, whilst atavistic impulses may be inherited the lack of any requirement for angling for survival – especially amongst the wealthy – would suggest that the performance of
the angler is highly ritualistic and the purpose of angling is socially embedded (Franklin, 2001). Much of what has been offered above as representations of the pre-modern sensual experience of angling – arguments revolving around the more-than-visual, involved, and primeval engagement with the world – could be used to demonstrate a romantic idolising of hunting as a means by which humans can become involved with nature in a manner lost during modernity. This construction leaves the angler as merely performing the ritual of ancestral practices; the authentic connection with nature having faded (Franklin, 2001).

Falkus suggests that such multi-sensory involvement with the environment generates a greater understanding of the world stemming from an integration with ‘nature’ through becoming ‘in tune’ with one’s surroundings and aware of the purpose and role of one’s self as an angler; an ability to understand ‘the environment’ in a manner which is lost in modern life (Falkus, 2002). This 'being in-tune with the world' echoes Ingold’s (2000, following Heidegger) notion of being in the world; that through a series of repeat and involved engagements with the world, individuals create an authentic sense of place, that individuals dwell in the landscape (Ingold, 2000, Cloke and Jones, 2001). Such dwelling occurs through labouring on the land, walking across the land, and eating the produce from the land: that through such mechanisms, the landscape is embodied – the bodies and landscape bilaterally shape one another generating these authentic connections. However, such definition of authenticity becomes problematic: the notion of authenticity or dwelling in its attempts to be meaningful becomes arbitrary. Implicit in the notion of dwelling or authenticity is a hierarchic – authenticity implies an inauthenticity, a prioritising of certain experiences over others. Furthermore when or what are the events that convert inauthentic dwelling into authentic dwelling. Moreover, how are those who dwell at different degrees from such an authentic event reconciled against one another? In short, that dwelling, relies on a fixed authenticity of being, that belies the fluidity of existence, more easily reconciled in a processes of becoming.
The root of these contentions stems from the Heideggarian premise which is grounded in a utopian construction that prioritises the peasant communities of the Black Forest, (Heidegger, 1976): suggesting that communities that represent or reconstruct such interactions with the world are in some way more valid than other societies. Such romanticism does not reflect an authenticity, rather it is a product of the particular social and cultural processes that shape particular understandings of nature as authentic. However, when the complexity of existence is taken into account such understandings of ‘being in the world’ do grant some insight into the (environmental) politics of deciding what counts as individuals and society searches for meaning in the \textit{nature} or the \textit{environment}. Therefore the construction of angling as pre- or anti- modern offers an appreciation of the meanings and values inherent in understandings of the environment. But this is not to dismiss the involvements in the world that permit these constructions to be made.

These interactions with \textit{the environment} not only shape understandings of \textit{nature}, but also represent an involvement with \textit{the environment} that goes beyond the Cartesian dualisms of social and natural: that the angler is a part of \textit{the environment}. The more-than-visual and positioning as hunter within the world, directly challenges the accepted orthodoxies of contemporary society. When the intimacy of the interaction is considered, the tension in angling, between the civilised, ordered, and acceptable practice and the uncivilised bodily experience centred on killing (or harm) is exposed. In this regard, angling extends beyond the ‘lingering one-plus-one calculus of ‘couplings’ (Whatmore, 2002:166) to recognise that the angler is constructed in relation to the world.

The embodiment of landscape processes by the fish that are present in a particular waterscape was discussed in the previous chapter. This embodiment of environmental issues regularly interjects itself into everyday experience as food scares around the chemical content of fish. But just as the boundaries between fish and environs are transgressed so that the fish embodies water quality, so too are the notions that hold anglers as separate from the environment equally blurred. As
such the angler is not just within *the environment* but the environment is within the angler. This relational sense of being raises particular issues for the valuable ecologies of angling. That these spaces are valuable not just because of the entrenched social politics which perpetuates monetary value but because angling is a redistribution of the ethical subjectivity through the more-than-human world. That these ecologies matter not just because people own rights to fish for them, but because of the webs of attachment that exist between anglers and these ecologies create ethical considerations; that fish, mayflies or river levels *demand* attention.

The relational sense of being between things described above become particularly apparent through the bodies of fish as they are manipulated through farming practices before they are released into water for anglers to catch:

...generally speaking, any stocked fish has got a very slight wear to the fin or the tail, because they have been in stew ponds. And they do, I mean you look at a fin, at the tail fin of a fish, like that, you'll get a little bit of wear down on the bottom there, and on the anal fin, and sometimes of the adipose fin here if you get a little bit of wear there. And you never get that on a brown, a wild trout ever, ever, ever. So if you get that, and you sometimes get a little bit of sort of flagellation along the edge there, just a little. Most of the fish we have there is not too much of that but there is always a tiny bit. And I regret to say, that most of the wild fish don't grow much more than three quarters of a pound. Not much and as we only put in fish of a pound and above, anything that is under that is practically always a wild fish.

*Kenneth, River Wylye 08th June 2006*

These bodies are manipulated through fish farming to become both heavier but also slightly ‘worn around the edges’ – an effect of the cramped and crowded conditions of the stew ponds, raising particular moral issues for the angler. The hybridity and consequential ethics, does not end at the definition of the fish’s body; the angler physically consumes the fish, continuing the hybrid, affecting and being affected by the world. Therefore ‘hybridity and corporeality trip those habits of thought that hold *the body* apart from other bodies and *the human* away from other mortals’ (Whatmore, 2002:166). The relational existence exemplified through
angling is made most apparent as a consequence of the watery context of the experience. What follows is an interrogation of the aquatic spaces that the angler and the fish inhabit.

**Water**

…It’s all about rivers: I am never happier than when I am standing on the bank of a river. And I can watch a river – if you are driving, anywhere in the country, and stop I could have a picnic, or have a break, and it’s near a river, I look at it in a way of ‘where fish are going to lie – it could be how trees are forming shadow on the water. And I know it sounds rather peculiar and technical but it isn’t like that, it’s a natural instinct, I will instinctively look to see how this river is flowing and whether it could potentially hold fish and what sort of fish.

*Rachael, Hay-on-Wye, 31st October 2006*

Rivers, lakes, canals, ponds, reservoirs: water lies at the heart of angling – it is obviously a prominent force in the locale of angling, it is the home for the target
species, but it is also a fascinating and influential component to the spaces in which angling is conducted and enacted. Through this research the significance of the body of water for anglers and in angling has become more and more apparent. Furthermore, the water body is a significant actant in the network that connects the particular ecologies involved in angling: it is, as both the photograph and the above excerpt suggest, ‘what it is all about’. But more than being a focus for a picture, the river – a linguistically compartmentalised and photographically fixed entity – is a complex and evolving actant; it’s agency in shaping the anglers interaction with the more-than-human is profound. This agency is recognised by anglers, though possibly not articulated in these terms, the waterbody is spoken about in a manner that recognises its influence:

Jacob: yes, so where would you like to begin? You say you began fishing with your uncle?

Kenneth: My uncle, I began fishing with my uncle, who was a soldier. And he taught me about fishing and he came up with this lovely thing – ‘my dear boy: never ever leave the river without saying “good night little river and thank you” or whatever the time was…’

Kenneth, River Wylye 08th June 2006

Here, the river is placed at the start; it is prioritised not only in that it is described at the very beginning of the interview – thereby emphasising the importance of the river, of water in his angling experience – but also as the beginning of this respondents historical positioning as an angler: he identifies who taught him to fish and this respect or reverence, for the river was the most important thing his uncle taught him. Therefore, having placed water at the very heart of angling, this section recognises the importance of water and unpacks the watery setting to angling. This is achieved by identifying two key theoretical and practical threads in the character of water. The first relates to water’s materiality, its qualities and effects on people and places. The second discusses water’s ability to trip the boundaries between bodies, dualities and places.
The Materiality of Water

There are two important concepts arising from water, and to highlight them I want to return to the excerpt from the beginning of this section and highlight two words:

...It's all about rivers: I am never happier than when I am standing on the bank of a river. And I can watch a river – if you are driving, anywhere in the country, and stop I could have a picnic, or have a break, and it's near a river, I look at it in a way of where fish are going to lie – it could be how trees are forming shadow on the water. And I know it sounds rather peculiar and technical but it isn't like that, it's a natural instinct, I will instinctively look to see how this river is flowing and whether it could potentially hold fish and what sort of fish. [Emphasis added]

Rachael, Hay-on-Wye, 31st October 2006

From these two words the crucial characteristics of the waterbody is highlighted namely the bank and the flow. Turning first to the bank: The bank is a boundary it is the meeting point of the water and the land: It is conceptualised as fixed and linear. Cartographic representations reinforce this bounding of the river: a map depicts the position and extent of the river indeed rivers and other watercourses are often used as boundary markers for land rights. However, rivers are not fixed and delineated. Their edges are a gradual transition from wet to dry, their positions change, this becomes a very real and significant issue when land disputes arise after changes in water boundaries (Whatmore, forthcoming) but equally this boundary issue becomes pertinent to the spaces that are created by water bodies and the practices that occur along and in them. The Bank is not the only boundary: the river bed has similar qualities and the meeting between the water and the air creates a film where water evaporates, and gases are dissolved, and crucially for the angler (and trout) where invertebrates get trapped. These boundaries affect the angler in three ways: firstly they affect how the river flows, secondly they represent a line that the angler must cross, which connects to the third point they represent the transition between the known and the unknown.
Boundaries

As the diagrams below show (Figures 6.1 to 6.3), the influence of the bank on how the river flows—its speed, and volume—on the landforms of the bed and banks affect where fish lie (or the positions they occupy) and which fish lie where:

Jacob: And what sort of things are you looking for?

Rachael: Well you are looking for, in the summer you are looking for hatches of fly, you are looking for little eddies, the current, the flow of how the pools form. And over the years, I have begun to understand how these pools are formed and where fish instinctively will lie—particularly with the difference between salmon and trout. And every now and again you get tripped up and someone will say by the way that is one of the best salmon pools and you look at it and it looks like a canal! But probably underneath there is a socking great rock where the fish have always been and will always come to and will always stay until the rise in the water to take them on further up.

Rachael, Hay-on-Wye, 31st October 2006

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Figure 6. 4 From Ritz (1959:70) ‘On the Andelle’ Showing river forms, current and fish positions.
Figure 6.5 From Ronalds (1993 (1836):4) ‘Haunts of the Trout’

Figure 6.6 From Ritz (1959:200) ‘On the Aaro’
Showing the effect of features on where fish ‘lie’ and how anglers should position themselves as a consequence of these ‘lies’
Therefore as this excerpt, coupled with the diagrams below show, the angler is able, through experience to map presences of fish in terms of presence/absence as well as by species and size.

The bank and bed characteristics affect not only where fish lie, but also their existence and reproduction. The composition of the bed affects salmonid reproductive capacity. For example the presence of more than 8% fine sand or 15% silt and organic particles is considered as poor quality spawning gravel for salmon (Armstrong et al., 2003). Similarly Hendry and Cragg-Hine suggest that post year one salmon parr benefit from a substrate of cobbles and boulders (2003). The bank as meeting point and site of influence and turbulence is not the only significance of the bank as boundary. The bank is part of a gradient through from the river, through the bank and the riparian zone to the wider catchment area of the river. Water flows through this series of zones and boundaries connecting the river to wider processes occurring in the catchment. Such processes affect salmonid abundance as well as fisheries access and management priorities: the surrounding land use affects stream quality and as table 9.3 displays salmonids have particular requirements with respect to water quality. The characteristics of the boundary zone, its permeability and influence on the water course greatly affect fish presences (see for example Parrott and MacKenzie, 2000; and Nisbet, et al, 2004) and therefore angler presence. Furthermore as fish occupy the water, the corporeal boundary between the stream and the fish is also crossed as the fish embody water quality or lack thereof. Therefore the presence of water pathogens (Crabill et al., 1999) from surrounding farm land becomes crucial to fish health and abundance.

Beyond translocation of chemicals (Parrott and MacKenzie, 2000) and pathogens (Aitken, 2003; Kay et al., 2007; Oliver, et al., 2005)) between the surrounding environment, the river, and the fish, the boundaries of the stream are also crossed by invertebrates and light. The surrounding vegetation can be a very important source of insects on which trout feed a fact widely recognised by anglers:
...last weekend was fantastic, erm you know, tonnes of fish caught, it was really very good, because the hawthorn (a black terrestrial fly) was on the water, but the blustery conditions are not ideal, you need a bit more steady wind conditions really...

Eric, Drift Reservoir 21st May 2006

Similarly the ability of sunlight to pass through the surface layer is crucial to the abundance and location of fish (see for example O’Grady, 1993). How the light bends as it passes through the surface of the water greatly affects how an angler fishes (see diagrams 6.4 and 6.5) and is so important to the angler’s imitation of the fly the fish is feeding on (see photograph 6.2). Crucially it is this boundary between water and air – the surface film – that is so crucial to both fish and anglers. It is crucial because it is in this surface film that insects get trapped – either emerging insects as they break from the aquatic nymph to the airborne adult (or sub-imago), or drowned mature insects (imago). It is these ‘caught-between’ insects that the dry-fly angler imitates.

Figure 6.4
Angles of view: how refraction of light shapes the anglers view of fish and the fish’s view of the angler. (From Ronalds (1993(1836): 10) ‘Optical Diagrams’)
Figure 6.5
Holes in the mirror: how reflection and refraction shape what the fish sees and how the fish is seen by creating mirrors and windows
Source: O'Reilly, 1997

Photograph 6.2
A fish’s view: how an imitation of a fly becomes visible to the fish as it moves from being hidden by the mirror image of the gravel bed into the trout’s ‘window’
Source: O'Reilly, 1997
Just as the fly caught in the surface film is straddles the divide between wet and dry, so the angler crosses these boundaries and occupies multiple spaces. The angler can stand on the ‘dry’ bank, and cast a line across the water, and if a wet-fly (a fly that is fished beneath the water surface) is cast, occupy the water by *becoming* (Whatmore, 2002) the insect that is represented:

Following Haraway’s (2007) notion of the cyborg, the technology of the rod and fly becoming and extension of the self allowing the angler to occupy a space that cannot be humanly inhabited. However, although this extended body through the rod allows the angler to occupy spaces not normally accessible, it is limited. While the angler can now cross the boundary from dry to wet, the bank still has influence: the water that is opened up to the angler is only that within casting range. This range depends on the angler’s skill, the technology used and the anglers’ body – the development of particular muscle groups to enable casting (see chapter 3). This influence of the bank is negated in two ways, firstly through wading and secondly through the boat. By wading the angler enters the water, thereby increasing the range and areas that can be fished:

...well quite often what I’ll do is, especially if I’m going to wade in certain spots here I’ll fish a bit of the water before I get into the water. I’ll have a couple of short casts just to where I’m intending to stand. Because in a lake like this very often there are fish right under your feet, sometimes it can be a mistake to get in the water. So I’ll do that a couple of times then I’ll probably get 10 to 15 yards of line out and then I’ll wade in and then I’ll gradually increase the length of my cast really, what I’ll also do is do what they call fan casting. So if I’m fishing one particular spot I’ll cast in different directions so I’ll cast to a rise that way, right in front of me and fish all those angles like that. I’ll also, you know, if I don’t get a... ...if I’m fishing with a floating line and I’m not getting any pulls or anything, I’ll let the flies drop a little bit deeper so I’ll vary the depth....

*Eric, Drift Reservoir 21st May 2006*

But beyond this extension of the body through the rod, the angler, by wading, occupies the water physically – entering the water to stand and cast. This appears as an occupation of the river but it is actually considerably less than complete immersion: the angler is still standing, only now on the bottom of the watercourse. Neither is the angler getting wet – the use of rubber or neo-prene waders allows...
the angler to enter the water without getting wet. Consequentially, wading does not constitute a crossing of the boundary, rather it is a shifting of the boundary: the boundary between wet and dry is no longer defined by an edge, rather it is defined by depth. However, the importance of this shifting of the boundary should not be overlooked. The ability to wade permits the angler to occupy spaces which are not normal, thereby shaping how the angler interacts with the more-than-human world as this angler’s story recounts:

...And also the wildlife side of it you know, you can see so much because nothing in nature expects to see a human being from the waste up – in water – very much more if you’ve got a hat on. That breaks up the image of you being a human being, erm, you can see things that you’d never ever otherwise see, erm, secondly, I’m probably boring you...

Jacob: no no not at all

Bill: secondly, sea trout fishing one night on the river brae, yes I caught a couple of bats because they think the fly in the air is a fly, and yes you get insight into the sharpness of bat’s teeth... and one evening I’m there and I’m fishing away and I think ‘what on earth is that?’ pshurpt, pshurpt, pshurpt coming down the stream. I couldn’t... ‘that is big! That is either some absolute dick head in the river or that is big!’ pshurpt, pshurpt, pshurpt and it’s come right into the pool I’m fishing it’s stood no more than ten yards away, it is as black as a cows guts and it is in the water. And I cannot really make out what it is, apart from that it is very big. And I think ‘oh it’s a cow in the water and I turn on the torch and it’s a fully grown male stag, in the water, it’s head sprung up with the torch and I took one look at it and I don’t know who was more frightened – if that thing goes for me I’m dead – and it just goes Buwushed back up through the stream and it was gone. That was quite spooky, er, but that did get me going for a while. But obviously you see all sorts of birds from wagtails and dippers to kingfishers and I’ve been fishing on rannoch where I’ve seen golden eagles, and I’ve seen osprey catching fish. More efficiently than me [laughs]. You see an incredible range of wildlife in their natural habitat. Otters, I’ve seen. Many, many otters, mink. But like I say right down to the humble sort of wagtail, skitting up and down the valley floor looking for bugs and what have you.

Bill, Upper Torridge 17th July 2006

Finally in this discussion of the significance of boundaries in shaping anglers understandings of and interaction with the more-than-human, I want to emphasise how the boundaries that encase the water body translate into boundaries of knowledge. Again the fact that the angler can never occupy the same space as the
fish is, in many ways, indisputable. The angler can enter the water and map the bed, measure the depth, judge the width and assess the speed: the oxygen content can be determined and the pH can be noted: the degree of shading and the amount the light bends as it enters the water is known. However, while all these factors are known to affect fish and their behaviour, this is not knowing what it is like to be affected by such variables. Therefore the bank is also the limit of the angler’s knowledge as the river becomes a humanly uninhabitable space. However, the water is minutely imagined by the angler; the factors mentioned above become known as flows are read, and likely lies are assessed, the local fly life is identified and the ‘hatch is matched’ (imitating the fly life that is presently hatching):

*I was trying to show them that fishing is so much more than just the business of catching fish. It’s looking at a piece of river and saying to yourself ‘I wonder if that is telling me that that is where the fish may lie’, ‘the tree over there with its roots, I bet the fly come down onto the river from the tree and there is an old devil down in the corner there that no one has ever caught, that is what its all about for me.* [Emphasis original]

*Kenneth, River Wylye 8th June 2006*

The angler then imagines herself or himself as the fish, to gauge its behaviour, and then focuses on the fly to imitate or become nature:

*Every time a good fisherman is fishing his cast is getting the fish [fly?] into the right place, that’s the technical part about it, but he is actually putting down an attractive fly in front of the fish that is going to move, in a natural way, that is fishing. That is what it is all about.* [Emphasis original]

*Kenneth, River Wylye 8th June 2006*

This imagining of the fish or the fly can be considered a state of *becoming*, of anthropomorphism, or egomorphism (Milton, 2005). It constitutes a splitting of the self and the resulting tensions is developed later on in this chapter, however the reason I highlight it here is to emphasise how the angler crosses the boundary between the known and un-known and occupies both sides of this divide.
Having focussed on *the bank* and the significance of the boundaries between wet and dry, land and water, highlighted the importance of the surface film, and recognised that not only is the river a space full of boundaries but also how these are boundaries that are constantly crossed and what they represent in terms of knowledge, I now turn to the second significance of the materiality of water – its fluidity.

**Flows**

That water flows, that it is a fluid is absurdly axiomatic, however, it remains a significant character of water and influential in the defining of the spaces of angling. The dominance of water in these landscapes is significant as water flows with ease across the intersections between nature/culture urban/rural self/other, internal/external and through the concepts of modernity (See for example Gandy, 2002; Swyngedouw, 2004; Gandy, 2004 and Kaika, 2005). It connects both different places as it flows across different terrains, thereby becoming a physical epitome of the connectivity and heterogeneity of place; connecting the *here* with the *there* as well as highlighting the vast differences that exist within particular locales (Braun 2005); but beyond this physical connectivity granted by waterways, water is metabolised; through the landscape, through plants; through animals and through people: therefore water underlines the more-than-human character of existence (Whatmore, 2002). But beyond waters ability to transgress dichotomies and emphasise the hybridity of life, waterways have a materiality that fascinates and transforms humans. Waterways are attractive, in that they fascinate people, becoming crucial and contested aspects of the landscape.

The delineation of watercourses in landscapes may in actuality be constantly shifting and blurred, in conceptual terms the presence of water is firmly entrenched. A river, marked on a map, with sections given names is imbued with a sense of timelessness but as McEwen (2006) shows rivers are constantly redefining their place in our landscapes. Such permanency stems from the attitude
in contemporary western society that largely takes water’s presence for granted; as Kaika (2005) observes, ‘the flow of water in my home was a natural and simple thing: I simply had to turn on a tap…’ (page 4). The possibility that a river might not flow is a greatly unnerving concept and one that can induce particularly emotional resonances within those who fish, manage and care for sections of a stream:

Kenneth: When you come down to the river in a few moments, I will show you where the water ought to be at this time of the year. And that will then answer the question that you have just asked me – I will say no more!

Jacob: Right

Kenneth: We are down, seriously down.

Jacob: And has that been a long term thing?

Kenneth: It has been gathering momentum over the last two or three years, I mean it has been quite dry, water abstraction, which is our blood, the springs has been infinitely too great, people want to wash their cars, have washing machines, what do you do? I don’t know how you get this right. It is certainly not right on the Wylve. We are in quite serious, a quite serious situation, you’ll see when we get down there.

Kenneth, River Wylve 8th June 2006

However, despite the recognition that a river can cease flowing, the particular and repeated relationship with a particular river constructs the river as a fixed entity. This is further emphasised by the conceptualising of water as the antithesis of all that is human. Water is also set at the heart of many romantic idolisations of the pastoral myth; once more the river becomes a timeless and unchanging entity. But water flows, the unfettered flow that aids the construction of ‘out of time’, places the river at the very heart of the now: the river is a space of constant change, of turbulence and the fluid. Even bodies of water that are perceived to be static, are affected by currents. These flows, currents and movements, underpin how the angler fishes and shape the interaction. Water is a medium that passes over, around, and immerses beings, and a medium through which beings pass: insects, fish things, move through water they are rarely suspended, static, in water. It is this state of constant movement of turbulence and flow that in combination with the ever-present boundaries makes waterscapes spaces focussed on the fluid, on
currents and flows, and as such the angler is always ‘betwixt and between’ (Turner 1978). Such emphasis on flow and changes shapes these spaces as liminal (Creswell and Dixon, 2002; Leyshon and Brace, 2007; Azaryahu, 2005; Madge and O’Connor, 2005).

This concept of liminality can constitute a ‘time out of time’ (Madge and O’Connor) and to a certain extent the angler’s notion of escape (see chapter 7) and the sense of timelessness poured into water can be considered as out of time, but the main source of water’s liminality comes from its materiality: its boundaries, and its flows. The boundaries between the wet and the dry are numerous and blurred. Therefore any interaction with waterscapes is focussed on the transient, on the transition and on the transgressions of the boundaries between wet and dry, known and unknown, habitable and uninhabitable. Therefore, waterscapes are ‘other spaces’ (Foucault, 1986) in that they are spaces that cannot be occupied, they are outside of the normal parameters of human existence; spaces which induce the crossing of thresholds (Shields, 1991). As a consequence of the multiple boundaries and the focus on the fluid, waterscapes become spaces which are ‘overloaded with potential meanings’ (Fiske, Hodge and Turner, 1987. cited by Azaryahu, 2005), with water occupying a status loaded with mysticism and otherworldliness. Therefore the angler desires to exist ‘betwixt and between’ highlights a particular relationship with the more-than-human world, centred on tensions that is enjoyed and searched for by anglers.

**Love and Killing: Angling for Tension Equilibria**

The first section of this chapter described how the angler bodily engages with the environment: how everyday experiences such as angling create interactions with nature that may foster a sense of *dwelling*. Following on from that abstract connection it highlighted how, through concepts such as corporeality and hybridity, experiences of nature and the environment can be conceptualised as more-than-human. Moving from this general depiction of the post-humanist or post-natural
condition of angling, the previous section described how the more-than-human world affects anglers as *water bodies* create spaces which are imbued with multiple meanings, and how through a blurring of the fixed and the temporary, these spaces affect the angler by highlighting, emphasising and generating tensions in understandings of identity, space and place. In this section I want to continue this theme of tension and highlight how the angler searches for and generates tensions as the more-than-human is used to generate meaning. The tensions I describe are focussed on two facets of the angling experience: the periphery and the intimate, therefore I want to re-iterate this (incomplete) distinction before delving into the tensions evident through the splitting of the angler’s relationship with the more-than-human world and the manner in which this is managed through the concept of agency in *the duel*.

As implied through the previous sections, there are two angling natures: the peripheral and the intimate. The periphery being the broad, abstract nature that is influenced by a vast melting-pot of issues, not least the scale (ranging from grand mountain landscapes as well as a single bank-side bloom) – the photographs and accompanying excerpts show some of these...
connections to the periphery, such as riparian flowers, trees silhouetted against a sunset or the river. These are writings of landscape that are crucial to fishing. Indeed, for many anglers this is what it is all about: the calmness achieved in vibrancy of nature. However this is the periphery - it is not the purpose, it is the setting for a much more intimate experience of the more-than-human and while it may be ‘what it is all about’, it is forgotten, irrelevant, ignored as the anglers senses are focused on the close-up encounters which result in the capture of the fish.

This periphery is place specific, and also very personal – joy may be taken in a quiet chalk-stream, a highland loch or even a river flowing through an urban setting. These personal joys reflect the different meanings ascribed to and produced by the materiality of landscape and hinge on the particular cultural, political, historical positioning of the subject. These meanings, whilst highly personal, connect to the wider social process that construct the various values attributed to the more-than-human. However water holds a particular dominant position in the angling landscape, so much so that they may be termed waterscapes. The dominance of water is significant in these spaces as a consequence of the factors discussed above, relating to water’s ability to transgress the dichotomies and highlight the hybridity of life.

Regardless of the peculiarities of waterscapes, this landscape connection remains the periphery – the source of part of the happiness enjoyed through angling – but only part for the ‘purpose’ cannot be insignificant or anglers would not be anglers, they would be walkers, or twitchers, or entomologists. As described above, the relationship between hunter and quarry, angler and fish is an immensely involved connection; angling involves a consanguinity with the environs both in an emotional and sensual capacity; the senses are intricately intertwined to enable the capture.
Because the involvement is more than just visual it often involves a complete reordering of the importance of the senses as the quarry occupies a watery domain into which the angler cannot always see. Moreover when sighting the quarry is possible, the view is distorted. As a consequence, touch becomes more important, especially when fishing beneath the surface. But even when fishing on the surface, the visuality which is important is that of the fish, as the imitation of nature is not from the angler’s perspective but rather is concerned with the fish’s perception of the fly.

As the watery domain can never be physically occupied by the angler, the angler imagines themselves as the fish and as the lure that they are using to imitate aspects of nature, be it a fly, nymph or fish fry. The water is ‘read’, the position of fish is guessed, the cast is made and the fly is then used to imitate a creature that the fish is feeding on (returning to the excerpts from above):

_I was trying to show them that fishing is so much more than just the business of catching fish. It’s looking at a piece of river and saying to yourself ‘I wonder if that is telling me that that is where the fish may lie’, ‘the tree over there with its roots, I bet the fly come down onto the river from the tree and there is an old devil down in the corner there that no one has ever caught, that is what it’s all about for me._ [Emphasis original]

_Kenneth, River Wylye 08th June 2006_

The angler then imagines herself or himself as the fish, becomes the fish, to gauge its behaviour, and then focuses on the fly to imitate life (cf. Thrift 2004 on ‘summoning life’), and make it move like a natural fly:

_Every time a good fisherman is fishing his cast is getting the fish [fly?] into the right place, that’s the technical part about it. but he is actually putting down an attractive fly in front of the fish that is going to move, in a natural way, that is fishing. That is what it is all about._ [Emphasis original]

_Kenneth, River Wylye 08th June 2006_

In order to achieve this, the angler needs to be able to assess the movement of the water, decide how that will affect where fish may be lying, identify what they are or
may be feeding on, select a suitable imitation and then work this fly through the fish’s domain, to give it life and induce the take. This is achieved by an imagining of the self as fish and as fly:

_What I am looking for is, this is a spin-off from a deep pool. I’m looking for rising fish on the edge of the deeper pools because fish in the middle tend to get picked off by herons and other predators, and you are looking for, I am looking for rising fish in the deeper, slower water. So I’m looking for the glides and water like that where I know the better fish will be – those that ‘muscle’ the smaller ones out, because they are very territorial they keep their station, that’s the primary area for feeding, that is where they will be, that is where I’m going to fish._

_Bill, Upper Torridge 17th July 2006_

Through this excerpt, the angler is imagining himself as a trout – knowing where to avoid or rather where the trout avoid because of predators. He is assessing the water speed and depth, knowing what a fish will prefer in the particular conditions (a warm sunny day with low flow). He also imagines the ‘better fish’ muscling out the smaller ones, as well as where fish go to feed. Such an intimate understanding of what and how the fish will behave and react to particular factors is built up over a lifetime of angling. As this understanding is built up, anglers will describe sections of water as fishy not meaning untrustworthy as such a phrase may mean in common parlance but meaning a place where fish will lie:
Similarly in the excerpt from the river Wylye above, the angler may imagine particular fish being holed up in particular lies such as where the roots of a tree come down into the water. Such imaginings of the particularities of the river and the imitation of the fly are crucial to the angler’s success:

…and if my aim has been right and the fish is still there, and if the fish is now looking up again having eaten his last morsel, and not been distracted by the splash of my line behind him or any of those things, hopefully he comes up and he takes it.

John, Roadford, 2nd June 2006

This extract also hints at the agency granted to the fish in assessing the anglers’ imitation of the fly. The acceptance or rejection of a fly and the anglers’ presentation of the imitation ensures that the angler’s efforts are judged not by the angler but by the fish. Consequentially, ‘the take’ becomes constructed as a mechanism by which the angler’s understandings of nature is judged by a more-
than-human jury. However, such agency is illusory: the angler is not competing with nature, rather he or she is competing within the limits imposed by his or her own rules and standards; standards that the angler will judge through the eyes of a trout. Therefore this imagining and differed judgment represents a splitting of the angler’s consciousness – the angler simultaneously exists as angler and as trout. This splitting is to some degree an extension of what Whatmore describes as成为 (in this case) fish: the trout is so intimately known, that the angler becomes the fish. This represents a creating of life from stillness and the unknown (Thrift, 2004). However, this fracturing of the self represents an imposition of the angler’s consciousness onto the trout. Therefore, as hybridity and corporeality trips the boundaries imposed on bodies, this fracturing of the self undermines the constriction of understandings of identity. Consequently just as it is recognised that the human cannot exist without the more-than-human, identity is constructed, not in isolation but as a consequence of the more-than-self; that:

*I am on the edge of the crowd, at the periphery; but I belong to it, I am attached to it by one of my extremities, a hand or foot. I know that the periphery is the only place I can be, that I would die if I let myself be drawn into the centre of the fray, but just as certainly if I let go of the crowd.*

Deleuze and Guattari 2004(b): 32

Therefore identity becomes both relational and fixed as tensions are created between groups, individuals, others. These tensions give an illusion of stability as identity is formed in reference to ‘the crowd’ but simultaneously separate from ‘the crowd’. The nominative singular pronoun, I – the self – must be held separate from the crowd by various political acts, but just as Derrida recognises that there is no friend (2005:26), the I is on a continuum (or continua) with the crowd. By recognising these continua as tensions, the politics of friendships, or associations, of crowds is
made apparent, and the dynamism in existence is accepted. Therefore the illusion of stability in describing the self at any one time can be understood as a tension equilibria: a point which can change but is, for now, stilled.

The equilibria points reached by the angler, in reference to the fish raise particular issues about the subsequent execution of the quarry. Once the fish has been captured, the more-than-human, the prize is exhumed from its watery world and is then either returned or killed. This removal to the humanly occupied world seems to re-establish boundaries, the human and more-than-human is re-established as this alien creature lies in an environment in which it cannot exist.

This separating of human and more-than-human may be underlined by the gendering of the quarry by some anglers. While in the water the fish is often referred to in the masculine – ‘he’s putting up quite a fight’. However once it is on the bank he becomes she – ‘isn’t she a beauty?’ Then through the act of killing the fish is further abstracted either as a living thing – the anglers right to define its fate is rarely questioned so long as it is executed efficiently – or it becomes food – a pan sized trout.

The latter form is a slightly more complex relationship but in both instances the quarry shifts from being a living being and an equal to a living thing that they are quite happy to kill:

*Jacob: How do you feel about killing fish? Do you find it …*

*Eric: No compunction in killing them at all, what I kill I eat, I’m quite happy to put fish back; unless I get a really good brown trout I wouldn’t kill it. I have taken brown trout from here before, and they were very nice but most of them are too small, so I wouldn’t kill them. I kill rainbow trout, I take them home for us and the family to eat, my mother in law likes them, I’m quite happy to kill them from that point of view.*

*Eric, Drift Reservoir 21st May 2006*

This being-thing relationship is particularly relevant to the angler-fish relationship as a consequence of the sporting nature of the pastime.
No matter how often angling is constructed as pre- or anti-modern, with no utilitarian need to fish angling in the UK, it cannot be considered as a necessity on sustenance grounds. This angling discourse that contests modernity, is further undermined by the sporting element of the angling experience. As mentioned in chapter two, the birth of angling the sport, as opposed to fishing, can be traced back to *The Treatise of Fishing with an Angle*. Written in 1418 this book heralds the birth of the sport in that it imposes rules requiring anglers to use a rod line and hook.

Over the years the rules have been refined and supplemented, limiting when and how the angler may fish. This imposition of rules is significant in that it increases the agency of the fish; there are more productive mechanisms for catching fish than fishing with a rod, line and fly:

*Us fishermen never make anything simple. If we wanted fish for the pot, we’d cast a net. But we don’t, so this is something of a game that we are playing with these fish I think.*

*John, Roadford 2nd June 2006*

This game or duelling increases the perceived (by the angler) agency of the fish, and posits the relationship as a game or duel; by requiring the angler to know more about the more-than-human, to imitate nature and understand the fish’s aquatic habitat the two participants in the duel are given a more equal standing in the eyes of the angler. However, to re-iterate, these games are not played against nature, rather they are played through nature, they represent the angler setting herself or himself targets and challenges by the imposition of rules, rules that are kept only through conscience (and possibly the desire to recount the story later). The angler judges the success through the fish. This sporting element, as it produces a game, a duel, targets and challenges, creates a nature that is more-than-*nature*. By increasing the agency of the fish, angling is constructing a nature that is presented as pristine, wild more-than-human, but is given human characteristics.

What I have highlighted is the complex and scalar relationship between angler and the environment, focussing on the intimate nature located in the fish’s being and its
immediate environs in the form of the river. I began by suggesting that this was the most and least known of natures. The river is a space humans can never occupy, but angler’s do so by becoming fish and fly. Through these mechanisms anglers know nature and the angler’s knowledge is tested not by human standards but by the more-than-human. Yet the knowledge is not complete. Boundaries exist in the watery setting. These boundaries become the limits of angler’s understandings: the individual is constrained and bounded through the imposition of rules and standards. Such boundaries are crossed, and re-established; the killing of the fish represents a re-affirming of the distinction of human and more-than-human. Indeed the splitting followed by the execution may represent in a crude psycho-dynamic terms, the angler splitting (Lemma, 2003) aspects of the self into the fish. This splitting followed by the execution of the being into which consciousness has been transferred may be a re-defining of the boundaries of modernity: the angler transfers his animality into the creature and then executes this animality thereby, becoming more civilised, less animal, more human and re-affirming the delineation of what is and is not human. This reading of the encounter with the fish, creates many tensions, not least with the construction of angling as pre-modern (Franklin, 2001). However, I submit that it is these tensions that make angling so appealing; that while rules define angling as a sport, the challenge of angling lies not in its sporting nature but rather in the way that the boundaries between the human and more-than-human worlds are blended and re-established; transgressed and re-affirmed. Through this transgression and reaffirmation tensions between different understandings of the more-than-human are created, dissolved and remade as the angler constantly redefines the fish as another being or another thing.

This pushing and pulling of nature and our understanding of it may be a balancing of our knowledge; that we do not want to know too much. In the case of the angler once everything is known, there is no challenge, fish can be taken at will; the tension is lost. What is desired is a balance, an equilibrium where understanding exists through tensions. Similarly, the understanding of the self within the more-than-human is a tension equilibrium between multiple imaginings. The boundaries between the self and the other, the human and the more-than-human are
constantly transgressed and re-affirmed as the self is stretched between different moments of egomorphism, as different things demand different attentions.

**Conclusion: Boundaries, Tensions, Equilibria**

This chapter has described and interrogated how angling constructs the more-than-human, and critiqued how the angler becomes bodily involved with the environment. In recognising this embodiment and hybridity, the chapter identifies a relational ethics as ecologies come to be valued not just in financial or semiotic terms but in bodily, affected ways. This relational perspective is emphasised by the watery context within which angling occurs. This chapter has shown how the river, the lake or the stream, has a materiality which shapes the way that the more-than-human is approached and physically encountered. Such approaches and encounters have influenced and been influenced by angling as a sport.

Elias and Dunning (1986) have discussed how *tension equilibria* are created in sporting scenarios as a result of a “quest for excitement”. Elias and Dunning suggest that excitement gained from leisure activities is maintained by the introduction of rules and regulation to achieve an appropriate “tension equilibrium”. Such an equilibrium maintains a sporting evenness between individuals. The concepts map comfortably onto the rules and regulations surrounding methods used to increase the agency of the fish, increasing the likelihood of failure and the excitement surrounding possible success. But as outlined above, these tensions become more than a quest for excitement in sport, they become a new ‘language of attachment’ (Ignatieff, 1984: 139) as the boundaries between wet and dry; human and more-than-human; known and unknown; self and other are transgressed and re-affirmed. These attachments are managed to create tensions that position identity in relation to others. The tensions result in a state of flexible equilibria which gives the illusion of a fixed and known identity. Taking this significance of tensions, the next chapter looks to develop how anglers escape, and in doing so create new tensions and different equilibria.
Chapter 7

Escape, Leisure and Excitement

Introduction

There is an ingrained attitude both within society and the academy that there is ‘a ladder of aspiration or pretension, at one end of which are the exuberantly or crassly playful and at the other end the deeply serious and real’ (Tuan, 1998: xii). Despite the value of salmon and trout, angling is with the playful. Therefore while the previous chapter investigated how the more-than-human world is prioritised by the angler, this chapter examines how angling fits within the ladder of experience. This ladder, is in part, a consequence of the engrained social processes that have long prioritised the realities of ‘science’ over the frivolous and emotional experience. But it also reflects a greater emphasis on understandings of inequalities and injustices in academic research, which is somehow ‘more real’. Despite this discrepancy, this chapter does not attempt to justify the research, rather it recognises that recreational fishing is playful and critically examines the significance of escape in angling and the importance of escapism in contemporary society. The first section critically examines the role of escapism in society, and identifies its significance to the angling discourses and personal narratives of angling. In this regard it connects to chapter five where I unpacked landscape and the narrative process of experience and the second section of this chapter builds on what was set out in chapter 6 on understandings of nature. The later section builds on the existing literature on leisure, hunting, and recreation to examine the role of animals in leisure. While the initial focus of this chapter is the escapist attitude which surrounds the ‘playful’ pastime of angling.
**Escapism**

Jack: I don’t know really, I was just trying to think of that now – challenge is – I think you can’t use one word, because there is the challenge of it, there is the therapeutic side of it when you are fishing, no matter what it is for, you are so locked into what’s going on, you’re forgetting the pressures of everyday life, you’re not really worrying about my, you know, my accounts are over due, or the wife is going to murder me because I haven’t done this or that. Everything is just gone isn’t it? Well that’s how I thought of it…

Jacob: no, I agree…

Jack: …ability to switch off. It’s as intense as normal life, but just a different way, and you’ve just got switch all that is going on in your mind at the time, you’ve just got to switch off and focus into something else which I find, just relaxes me. It’s just nice to sit there and un-wind for a few hours, although sitting there is obviously the wrong word because I’m not sitting down [laughs]

Jacob: no I understand what you are saying about the unwinding aspect.

Jack: even though it’s quite intense. It’s focussing it’s not intense, it’s focussing, because you are using all your… you are watching what’s going on and what goes on around you and you know, paying attention to all the… it’s like tonight, we’ll go down tonight now and I’ll look over the bridge, and I’ll think ‘the tides too…’ there is always something happening, you think ‘oh the tide is too high’ because we are going to fish just above the tide tonight, erm but looked just as we left the door, it’s a 6.9 high tide tonight so it might be a bit too high for us, so we’ll have to go somewhere else. So there is always something there isn’t there. You got to take it all, think about all the things that are happening, all around you, the big picture and fine tune it down to catching one bloody fish. Which is actually quite a… if you were to make maths out of it, it would be a hell of an equation really, when you factor everything in you know: the light, the wind, the river temperature, the height, you know what you are using, you know, it’d be a massive mathematical equation, I’m sure somebody has probably had a go at it somewhere. You know, so you still, you still… there is a lot going on in your mind even though you are unwinding. But it is just nice to use it in a way that, I think it’s about using your mind in a way that you want to use it rather than what you have to do. I think your mind always wants to be busy, or else you are bored, I think when you are doing something that you want to do, be it fishing or football or whatever these things are, it’s just switching all of that energy in your mind to one thing that you want to do rather than loads of things that you really don’t want to do. I think that’s probably a major factor in relaxing.

Jack, River Camel 16th of July 2006
The ability to forget, to switch off, to escape, is a crucial component of leisure and angling. The above excerpt picks out four components of the escape: the spatial, the social, the temporal and the complexity. Implicit in the escape described above is a physical re-location away from the setting of everyday life. In turn the spaces of everyday life are the setting of various social contracts such as those with the bank manager or ‘the wife’; all the tasks, jobs and obligations that it is necessary to complete during one’s ‘leisure time’. In this regard the escape is evading of society. Closely entwined with this social aspect is an escape from the clock time that governs such interactions; that through angling the temporal obligations are erased in favour of the rhythms of tides, light levels and winds. The overarching theme in this account is the escape from complexity of existence – an awareness that the social obligations do not disappear, clock time does not cease to tick by, but the complexity of the relations and obligations is hidden as attention is focussed on a single task. The significance of the way that angling can facilitate escapism is made evident through these four interconnected components.

Having identified the importance of escapism in the angling experience it is important to unpack the process of escape: that escape is an expression of dissatisfaction and also an act that involves some degree of movement away from sources of discomfort and towards an (imagined) more satisfactory position. Therefore escapism raises three issues for consideration: first what is being escaped; secondly, the destination; and thirdly, the political implications of the process of escape. It is these three facets of escapism that I now investigate through the angling experience.

Isaak Walton professed that angling allowed the angler to escape ‘men of sowre complexions… …those money getting men’ (2002/1653). This can be read as a call for the angler to throw off the emerging capitalist order of the seventeenth century and seek solace in a pre-modern Christian Arcadia (Franklin, 2001) as developed in chapter two. The escapist dream of the angler has not developed much further in the intervening three hundred and fifty years. Anglers still seek opportunity to throw off the burdens of the modern/latemodern/postmodern existence, as depicted by the above excerpt: the pressures of money, the burdens
of responsibility, the nagging partner; to this list we can add work, noise, technology, the built environment and the environmental degradation attributed to modern and urban life; or even a complexity in food.

*I’ve found that, when I’m fishing I don’t think about work at all. My work is quite stressful, and a lot of stuff is in my head all the time, because the nature of my work, but if I come fishing, I totally forget.*

*Eric, Drift Reservoir 21st May 2006*

Similarly:

*Bill: er certainly the erm, social bit has a mirror image if I’m going on my own because then I’m on my jack jones, I can put the world to rights, but especially I’ve got four children, I might, sort of put issues with regards to them to right, and that gives me opportunity to do that. So it’s the solitary side of it which is good because you can use fishing to get your head straight. A lot of people go around with their head screwed most of the time and they don’t know how, perhaps, relax…*

*Jacob: … do you think the solitude that fishing gives you is different from the solitude you would experience doing maybe other things?*

*Bill: no… I think that most people, their psyche requires it. Whether they are gardening, horse riding, whatever their pastime is, perhaps a round of golf on your own would be similar. Whatever, they, somebody does, if it’s done on your own, you do it for a variety of purposes, yes you want a pretty garden or you want to catch fish, or whatever you want to do, but I think a lot of people do it because that’s where they put their head right. That’s where they get their mind around problems in their lives, if you do that and it’s a successful therapy for you then that’s another reason why you do it. You can make the excuses, I think a lot of it is that, that a lot of people like that time to put things right in their own minds. So there is a bit of that certainly and I think that… I’ve always fished, I’ve always fished quite a lot and throughout a fairly lengthy marriage I fished a lot - it diminished with the advent of the children and the responsibilities - down to virtually nil at one point. But that wasn’t a problem, you are very busy with young kids, and a career, and your responsibilities, so your need for personal space perhaps becomes less, or you manage it in different ways, I don’t know. So… three years I left home and had an enormous amount of stress that I had never had before, and realised that I had to do things with it. And do things with a clear conscious because lots of people have guilt about doing things for themselves, and to overcome those first stages of that sort of psyche and then just go ahead and enjoy it. And I do. And I’d not been for ages, so erm…*
Jacob: How do you think people… that’s a very interesting point you raised about the guilt of doing something for yourself… on fishing… it can be a very indulgent pastime how do you think people justify that to non-fishing people?

Bill: you can always turn it round and say ‘why do I have to justify it?’ there is an element of selfishness in all people, it’s natural, and as I say it can be any pastime… it doesn’t have to be fishing and the more extreme it becomes the more selfish you may appear. And apologies for John there for his is the extreme case of him doing something that he loves to do, but he also does it because it pays the mortgage and it keeps the house and home together for his wife and children, so the drive there to the extreme is there, he would say, justified. I would say that for all the primary, for all of these things, I outline – time on your own, getting your head together, catching fish, to enjoy the countryside, to be free not all those… all those things are important reasons to, for going, and if that’s selfish then lets be a little bit selfish. I understand that that is important and it’s done by all people, whether they are fastidious about their house, they are fastidious about work and work huge amounts of overtime, that might also be their escape from other aspects of their lives, that can be less pleasurable to them. And we all know people that we can pigeon hole into those things… there are some extremes there are people who are animal lovers who spend their entire time collecting animals and looking after them. Offspring, or children, other people’s children and in many respects it may look as if those people are actually doing things for others, but a lot of the time they are filling a personal need which they have generated within themselves, and that is their way of getting through the day.

Bill, Upper Torridge 17th July 2006

These extended excerpts, reiterate the sentiments of the excerpt above; angling gives the respondent opportunity to sort out relationship problems, straighten out work issues, and have time for ‘getting your head together’. Therefore, escapism affords a greater (perceived) agency to the individual. This may have a particular gender bias; that men need time to ‘sort their heads out’ as such, the hunter becomes a figure that stands out of modernity and the complexity of social contracts., a return to nature where men can be men (this is developed in chapter 8). In the above instance angling gave the respondent something practical to do with spare time and deal with the stress of the break-down of his marriage. This stress can be used as a general concept for the negative connotations of contemporary society beyond Walton’s ‘men of sowre complexion’.
Having established that the things that anglers flee are numerous and varied, but captured within the notion of ‘stress’, the destination of the escape process is more implied rather than defined and is evident in the way that angling is discussed rather than any particular place. Thus, while the actual locale of the angling experience may be highly varied and not necessarily rural as the following quotation suggests, there is an element running through both the angling discourse and personal narratives of an escape to nature.

...when my dad started me fly fishing in er Cardiff, there were a couple of lakes there called Llanishen and Lisvane reservoirs, which are man made lakes, totally concrete boulders, stone, the whole thing and it was very much on the edge of a suburb so erm, you’d be fishing along the bank there and behind you there would be a load of back gardens, and on a nice spring evening people would be out cutting the grass or outside there playing with the kids and stuff like that, so that was, while was part of it was rural on one side it was surrounded on three sides by residential areas. And I’ve also fished, with my dad on a river in the middle of Cardiff where you’ve got people walking to work past you and stuff like that and that is different because people stop and watch you and whatever else, so I’ve fished in those sorts of environments.

Jacob: and how would you say that they compared, for you?

Eric: I’d rather fish in a rural environment like this, to be honest, because there is less distraction...

Jacob: why, sorry?

Eric: well you get, you get, if you’re fishing and someone’s having an argument in their back garden you tend to stop and look. And er if you are fishing on a river bank and there are people walking their dogs and then they let their dogs get in the river in front of you, and then they are throwing sticks in and then they are shouting to you ‘have you had any luck?’ you sort of get after a while, you get a little bit fed up with that [laughs]

Eric, Drift Reservoir 21st May 2006

This excerpt indicates how angling can occur in urban environment but it is the rural that is preferable: it offers fewer distractions. I read distractions in this context to mean reminders of that which is being escaped as well as the particular interactions that they constitute. As the Torridge excerpt suggests (‘to catch fish, to enjoy the countryside, to be free…’) the rural offers a freedom. This timeless idyllic
construction is echoed by Farson: ‘I love this English scene. And I hope that no war or no such evil thing as ‘progress,’ will ever change it.’ (1981: 118). This nostalgic element is reiterated through the photograph below and the accompanying excerpt. This nostalgia can be described as an attitude that while modernity, urbanisation and ‘evil things such as progress’ may threaten particular landscape forms, parts of the English countryside remain, that ‘the door is still ajar’ (Brace, 1999).

![Photograph 7.1](image)

‘I do tend to feel that the south east of England is getting horrifically crowded and there’s not the, you know, the England of the Fifties…but that seems to have gone, but going back to fishing there is still chunks of Britain that still are reasonably untouched by the mad pace of life.’

Roger, River Lyd follow up telephone call 18\(^{th}\) July 2006

From the above discussions, it becomes evident that while the particular stresses may differ and the articulations of the consequences may have changed, the sentiments of Walton remain prominent in the discourses and personal narratives. The angler seeks to escape modernity and return to a (Christian) Arcadia or a
Rural Idyll. Consequentially it is important to consider the process of escape as well as the dissatisfaction and imagined utopias.

In considering the process of escape I want to consider angling within the theoretical framework of escapism laid out by Tuan (1998). In particular I want to draw on three themes from Tuan’s escapism thesis: Earth; People; and Animality. While other elements are also significant, these three themes map most directly onto the discourses and narratives that surround angling.

The escape to the rural idyll so prevalent in the discourses of angling and throughout the literature can be described as a component of the ‘escape to nature’ narratives. That by imbibing the rural and nature with notions of balance and timelessness, anglers are seeking an ‘escape into a make-believe world of perfect order’ (Tuan, 1998: 14). This perfect order, be it the pre-modern Christian Arcadia of Walton’s *The Complete Angler* or the rural idyll is positioned as an escape from culture, a return to a *natural* order. That through an immersion in the more-than-human world, in a manner that connects with the atavistic impulses of a pre-modern age, the angler is in some regard subjected to nature in a way that is contrary to modernity’s promethean project to govern nature through human ingenuity. However, this escape from culture into nature is actually an escape to a culture of nature; a culture that is imbibed with the narratives of anglers from Berniers, through Walton to Falkus and contemporary accounts. This is not to say that the angler is not immersed in the more than human world that differs from other experiences of nature in the western setting. To some extent there are pre-modern resonances in the way the angler is positioned within *nature*, however this positioning is not without modernity – science infuses the technologies of rod and line; the angler when fishing does not cease to be integrated into the networks of everyday life; and the structures which permit access to angling are firmly embedded within a late/post/modern context. Therefore the way that these networks, structures, and processes facilitate angling reinforces the ‘escape to nature’ as an escape to a culture of nature.
Interwoven with the notion of escape to nature is an escape from people: either the physical proximity to the collective human or from the particular relationships anglers share with specific individuals. One respondent to the questionnaire wrote as an answer to *why do you go fishing?* Stating: ‘My wife drives me to absolute fucking distraction!! So I need to relax away from home.’ He wrote no further justification.

The loneliness of angling is for many an attractive element. That is not to suggest that angling is purely an individual sport without sociality. Anglers hold a common identity and share knowledge and stories. This collective identity and a commonality was made evident through the perceived threat from the anti-hunting lobby, but the actual practice of angling is individual and lonely that even if anglers fish with friends, the fishing is an individual pastime:

*Jacob:* ...you were talking about going fishing with people, about fishing with your granddaughter, are there people you go with a lot? Regular …

*Kenneth:* ... yes I have five or six friends who I go fishing with quite regularly, but Jacob, let’s be quite clear, fishing with friends means they’re at one end of the river and I’m at the other, we meet for lunch, and we stay at pubs together, or eat meat together in the evenings, or we come home but we never ever, see each other during the day. Robin, er Suzy’s husband, Robin Farrington, we used to fish a lot together, just one of those souls that one had a great rapport with, and we’d start off ‘what are you going to use today Fergus?’ ‘oh black gnat’ ‘oh no’ he’d say, I’m going to use the Adams.’ And we’d meet at lunch and I’d say, ‘how’s the Adams?’ and he’d say, ‘very good, how’s the black gnat?’; ‘oh very good’ and he’d fish with a black gnat and I’d fish with the Adams, and that was about the only conversation we ever had! [*laughs*] That was going fishing with friends! [*laughs*]

*Kenneth, River Wylye 8th June 2006*

Therefore angling can be seen as a pastime that is significantly individual. This lonely engagement with the more-than-human world offers the individual opportunity assert uniqueness – both from other animals (see the paragraph below) and other people. But as Tuan notes ‘to stand out is ego-boosting but it is also tiring and stressful. It not only exposes one to criticism, it can also lead, as a consequence of isolation from shared practices and values of the group, to attacks
of melancholia and a sense of meaninglessness.’ (1998: 83; see also Tuan, 1995).
This return to the group is evident through the practices mentioned in the excerpt above: sharing meals and staying in pubs together. Consequentially the escape from people becomes an act which is only temporary and partial; the angler enjoys the (re)defining of self through lonely experiences of the more-than-human, but it is only through the re-connection with the group that such adventures become meaningful. This meaning is ascribed via the group in two ways either through the narration of stories within the angling group or through the need for a connection to be maintained in order to have something to assert individuality against.

The third part of Tuan’s Escapism thesis that I want to apply to the context of angling regards the escape from animality. The core of this argument revolves around the contention that the nature that humans find most repugnant is the nature of the human body. Animals eat, copulate and die. In an effort to escape the bounds of human animality people, dine, love and seek immortality. I am not concerned with love, lust, desire or copulation in this chapter – though some understandings of hunting would perceive the hunt in erotic terms (see Luke, 1999). The elements of food and death however, are more obviously intertwined with angling. The angler utilises the consumptive drive of the fish to enable capture, and death is an ever present possibility if not necessarily an automatic consequence of the capture.

A straightforward interpretation of the events that constitute a successful fishing session would centre on the angler fooling the fish into taking an imitative pattern of a food stuff. In this regard the angler is affirming the divide between the human and the animal: the fish must eat in order to survive, whereas the human can choose when to dine. Similarly the angler’s choice over the life of the fish highlights the ever present mortal threat to the fish compared to the human longevity. Indeed the taking of photographs and trophies may be considered as tokens towards a degree of immortality – that the angler will be remembered after death as a consequence of catching particular fish. However this understanding of angling is incomplete. Through the intimate way that the fish is imagined and the detailed way that anglers understand the ecologies of fish, the angler is becoming the fish.
(see chapter 6 for a more detailed account of these understandings of nature). Consequentially through this awareness of the hybridity of existence the distance between human and animal is to some extent overcome through the practice of angling: that individual encounters with individual fish blur the boundaries and accept the human animal. However, understanding this within the context of the escape to nature and the escape from people, the heightened awareness of animality experienced through angling may be a distancing of human from animal; that by recognising the animality of humanity at particular moments, when the angler returns to the urban, culture, the group, she or he is re-humanised. This argument is similar to Bell’s description of the way the rural space can become a space where the urban, effeminate male is ‘re-masculinised’ (2008) (or Campbell et al, 2007).

This unpacking of the process of escape does not undermine the benefit of escapism, neither does it deny the reality of the escape – while the ‘escape to nature’ may be a product of particular social and cultural processes, that aspects of the more-than-human world grant a relief from the stresses of everyday life cannot be denied. This relief from the dissatisfaction of everyday life may be couched in terms of *enchantment*. This state is described by Bennett as ‘a mood of fullness, plenitude, or liveliness, a sense of having had one’s nerves or circulation or concentration powers turned up or recharged – a shot in the arm, a fleeting return to childlike excitement about life’ (2001: 5). These sentiments are echoed by Venebles: ‘That is the thing, the boy in the angler never dies, but remains as full of awe, delight and excitement as when he caught his first prickling little perch’ (1953: 4). These excited, hyper-sensitive and post-sensing states are evident in the following excerpt describing the moment of getting a bite:

…the tug, that sort of trembling tug you get when a fish takes a wet fly, that is pretty exciting, not as exciting as a dry fly, but pretty damn good, exciting – and that vibration comes up the line and through the rod and down your arm – that obviously is something that is electrifying...

Roger, River Lyd 12th June, 2006
Consequentially it becomes evident that while this enchantment may be a product of the escape to a culture of nature, the materialities of a more-than-human world matter (cf. Anderson and Tolia-Kelly, 2004).

**Leisure**

The first section of this chapter unpacked the theoretical importance of the notion of escapism and applied it to the particular issues raised by anglers and through angling. While such theories can be both implicit and explicitly interwoven with angling narratives and discourses, angling is also grounded within the complex social formulations relating to the leisure. This concept of leisure simultaneously transcends and is subject to the concepts regarding escapism: as highlighted in the previous section, escapism is not merely an understanding of ‘running away’, it is a complex reading of the deep issues and tensions that run through the human condition. As such, escapism offers a particular reading of the personal and social practices that constitute leisure. However, leisure remains a highly grounded concept which offers insight into the processes and practices that shape identity and understandings of space and place.

In 2002, the concept of ‘life satisfaction’ and ‘happiness indices’ crept onto the UK Policy agenda (Dorling and Ward 2003). This ‘happiness’ is predated by concepts of ‘well being’ and ‘welfare’. Such concepts have a long tradition in the UK policy arena (see for example, Offer 2006). Though it is ‘not a statement of government policy’ the *Life Satisfaction: the state of knowledge and implications for government* issued by the Strategy Unit in December 2002\(^{12}\) suggests a possible role for such indices in public policy. As Nordhaus and Tobin (1972) note the role of leisure in the pursuit of happiness, wellbeing and welfare is significant. Beyond the suggestion that happiness can be quantified through indices and quantified in

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\(^{12}\) [http://www.cabinetoffice.gov.uk/strategy/downloads/seminars/ls/paper.pdf](http://www.cabinetoffice.gov.uk/strategy/downloads/seminars/ls/paper.pdf) <09-08-07> the report is described as ‘an analytical paper to provide a basis for discussion. It is not a statement of Government Policy’ (Page 1).

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financial terms (the loss of a spouse corresponds to between £7,000 and £14,000 per month financial equivalent of happiness Donovan et al. 2002:28) implicit in the proposals made by the report is an agenda that commodifies happiness. Furthermore, such attempts to measure happiness, merely reiterate the existing social understandings of what is ‘good’ and ‘desirable’ and draw an automatic connection between particular achievements and psychological wellbeing. Indeed to suggest that having particular things, time, leisure equates to happiness, disregards the detrimental qualities of the social and material milieu that represents daily life; as Zoltas (1981) identifies, there are aspects of existence that undermine happiness.

In spite of these problems with the quantification of, and policy construction around ‘happiness’, the role of leisure in personal well-being cannot be overlooked. Therefore, while the quantification may be controversial and the commodification a thinly veiled reinforcing of the ‘politics of avarice’ (Dorling and Ward, 2003: 957), the leisure and relaxation remains an important component in the individual search for contentment. The following section is a discussion of the role of leisure in contemporary western societies and the significance of ‘angling as leisure’ in shaping identities and understandings of landscape.

In recognising the importance of leisure and happiness, this is not to suggest that there is an automatic connection between leisure and satisfaction, though it is often constructed as being so (Koshar, 2002). As chapter two showed, the leisure time has been considered as unproductive consumption (Veblen, 2001), a form of social control, flight spaces (Goffman, 1967) or spaces in which the quest for excitement can be fulfilled (Elias and Dunning, 1986). All of these discussions of the role of leisure in society underline the importance of elsewhere in defining space. The leisure experience is simultaneously an escape from and a perpetuating of the social roles and norms everyday life. Consequentially, the angling as a leisure experience becomes an important component in defining attitude towards the more-than-human world.
The significance of escapism in the leisure experience, and the quest for excitement through angling raises a number of issues about the use of more-than-human animals in leisure, the search for happiness, well-being or satisfaction. The understanding of angling as a search for tension and excitement – as a socially acceptable outlet for violence and emotionality – raises significant issues about the role of nature and particularly animals in leisure. It is to this that I now turn, to examine how the more-than-human world becomes integrated into leisure practises.

More-than-Human Leisure

Nature is thoroughly integrated into many leisure pursuits of contemporary western society. The role of landscapes as spaces and actors in our escape attempts has been outlined in the section above. However, individual animals are also appropriated into human leisure pursuits in a number of ways; the gorilla in the zoo, the bull facing the matador, or the fox fleeing the hounds for example. These three examples represent three different ways in which animals embody different discourses of nature: the gorilla the exotic; the bull the powerful and the fox the wild. Each of these examples are incorporated into leisure in three different ways: the gorilla is subjected to the public gaze in the zoo – separated from its context. The bull once more is brought into the public ‘civilised realm, subjected to the public gaze, but it is the fight that is to be witnessed. It becomes the epitome of the uncivilised rural, and is humiliated as its strength is sapped as its power is overcome by human skill and intelligence. It is killed with flourish by the matador’ (Marvin, 2007). With the hunted fox, the animal unlike the other two examples is not extracted from its context. Rather it is pursued ‘in situ’ and is given agency. Other examples of hunting are described as bodily involvements with the environment where the agency of the quarry is further emphasised and relations are described in almost pre-modern terms (Franklin, 1999; 2001).
The human fascination in animals as spectacles, objects of intrigue, is long-standing (Kalof and Fitzgerald, 2007). However, accounts of animals in recreation favour the mammalian. Therefore what follows in this section adds to the discussion of the role of animals as spectacle and sport in that it focuses on fish. It does so by considering the way that fish are conceptualised as exotic like the gorilla, and become part of duel as with the bull, and most significantly are hunted like the fox.

*The Exotic*

Much has been written about the role of zoos in contemporary western society and their role in ‘domesticating, mythologizing and aestheticising the animal universe’ (Anderson, 1995: 275) as they simultaneously extract organisms from one context and present them in another (Benbow, 2000; Whatmore, 2002). Underlying the principle of the zoo, is a ‘spectatorship’ (Malamud, 2007), which provides the animals in the zoo for the objectification of the disconnected human gaze. The point of the zoo however, in contrast to that of the museum, is to display life: animate, living objects. The fish involved in angling are rarely appropriated into the zoo though the aquarium offers a similar forum for the spectatorship of aquatic creatures. However, the gaze over the exotic remains a significant component in the way that fish become part of the angling narrative. The fish is extricated from the river for the angler’s enjoyment and then either returned or kept, thereby becoming a trophy, and subject to the gaze in ways similar to the museum. This significance of success in terms of the gaze over the exotic fish is exemplified by the following photograph and caption:
A sea-trout at last.

I didn’t intend to include any pictures of fish, but I happened to catch this one recently and have included it because it is the first sea-trout I have caught for over 40 years! It illustrates that even lack of success does not prevent us from fishing, and we always retain hope that we shall at last succeed.

Michael, River Otter 15th August, 2006

This caption shows that while success is not crucial to enjoyment (he did not intend to include picture of fish), the fish remains even inadvertently the very centre of the angling experience. But the fish while at the centre is not always killed:

Jacob: yes, yes – why would you rather put the fish back?

Roger: because they’re beautiful, they’ve got their own life, you know, I just think I don’t need to kill them, and I’m a bit guilty about the fact that I’ve given the trout a shock but I trade that off – but I don’t need to kill the things because I don’t… I go to Waitrose!

Roger, River Lyd 12th June, 2006

With no utilitarian need to fish, it is the capture: the process of exerting control and the consequential opportunities for subjection to the gaze that becomes more
crucial. As the next section shows the duel represents a subjecting of nature to human will and through execution a domestication of the wild. But a component of this domestication and subjecting is an appreciation of the beauty of the fish as described in the excerpt above, an organism that is exhumed from a humanly uninhabitable domain. In this regard the capture reflects similar processes to those at work in the zoo: the fish is removed from its (unknowable) context and positioned within various discourses and personal narratives that work towards the domestication, mythologizing and aestheticisation of the fish. At the heart of this process is a strong focus on ‘the duel’.

*The Duel*

As discussed above, ‘the duel’ is an important mechanism for the involvement of animals in both angling and the wider leisure experience. The pitting of animal against human in battle for entertainment has a long tradition. The gladiatorial battles of ancient Rome can be read as demonstrative of a battle between nature and culture and the victory of the human over the animal is a victory of culture over nature (Kalof and Fitzgerald, 2007: 193). But such clear divisions between the human and the animal are blurred in the battle as Pliny the Elder observed in his commentary *The Natural History*; human qualities are read into animal actions and there is human disgust at the slaughter (2007/1855). This duel between human animal has perpetuated through to contemporary society, the most direct comparison with the gladiatorial battles is the matador facing the bull.

Garry Marvin’s interesting account of *Being Human in the Bullfight* (2007) identifies the significance of the battle between nature and culture within the corrida (bullfight and arena). The victory of the matador over the bull is indicative of the conquest of intelligence over strength (Page 203) and the cultured, restrained urban over the unruly and wild rural space, a conquest made all the more significant through the bringing of the wild bull into the urban space where the corrida is located.
Angling can similarly be read as a conquest of culture over nature – the angler uses knowledge, wit and cunning to capture the wild fish:

*With dry fly fishing you are saying *that* fish is rising there, it’s eating *that* fly. Let’s put *this* fly on, which I have tied, and see if I can imitate it, and *that* is what fishing is all about. I don’t care how big it is or how small it is, if I have tied the right fly, and it has gone into that fishes orbit and it comes up and takes my fly – perfect! What more could you want? You’ve got everything together. You’ve got the skill of tying a fly, you’ve got the skill of presentation, you’ve got the skill of observation, and then you’ve got the skill of success!* [laughs]

Kenneth, River Wylye 8th June 2006

While angling is not confined to the rural space, the angling landscape is constructed as wild, remote and rural. In this regard, the conquest of culture over nature is more significant: the angler goes out into the rural space to duel with more-than-human opponents. A further discrepancy between the bull fight and angling is that the bullfight is a public display and the victory is a display of private control – the matador’s conquest over his (sic) fear (this concept of the duel is developed in chapter eight with regard to masculinities) and over the body of the bull (Marvin, 2007:204) – within a public space. Angling is not a spectator sport, therefore the self control and skills involved in the capture of fish is hidden unless a trophy is taken where such skills become embodied by the fish or photograph and can become part of stories where ability is discussed. Therefore through an inversion of Tuan’s (2007) dictum ‘domestication is domination’ the fish like the bull, is ultimately only truly domesticated through death. Consequentially it can be seen that while angling is not a public duel, and is not performed in the urban space, the rules governing the practice and the way that the bodies of the fish are constructed and appropriated into narratives of self can be read as a duel between nature and culture; a duel that gains greater emphasis when considered within the particular social and cultural practices that constitute *the hunt.*
The Hunt

The issue of hunting has received more attention than angling (Hoyle, 2007; Marvin, 2005, Woods 2000, Milbourne, 2003b; Cox and Winter, 1997: Winter and Ward, 1999; Cox et al 1994), especially as a consequence of the ban in the UK of hunting with dogs. However, the focus on hunting with dogs, and fox hunting in particular, has understandably prioritised certain understandings of hunting within both the popular and academic discourses. In light of both this abundance of literature and the focus, this section positions angling within the academic literature on hunting and attempts to extend this literature to include fish.

As Cartmill (2007) suggests there have been a number of (often antagonistic) attitudes to hunting through the ages, as ‘the hunt’ has been accepted and contested. He goes on to define hunting:

*A successful hunt ends in an animal’s death, but it has to be a special animal killed in a special way. It must be free, able to flee or attack the hunter. It must be killed on purpose, and in person and by violence: no traps, no cages, no poison baits, no road kills. Above all it must be a wild animal; and what that means that it must be hostile, not friendly to human beings or submissive to their authority. You can kill cows in a dairy barn but you cannot hunt them. (Emphasis original)*

(Cartmill 2007: 238)

Following this definition of hunting, the classification of angling as hunting is slightly problematic: angling often results in an animal’s death. But not always – I have argued through this thesis that success is not limited to fish caught, let alone fish taken. Those fish that are killed are killed in a particular way - a blow to the back of the head. Other suggestions made by the questionnaire (see appendix E) for the killing of fish were rarely considered as humane, and often triggered vehement castigation. The implement used in the execution is called a priest as it delivers the last rites, adding a further ritualistic dimension to the death. The execution is, when it occurs, deliberate and cannot be more personal – the mechanics of holding a fish down and hitting it with a priest is much more intimate than watching a pack of dogs bring down a fox or shooting pheasants. With respect to the wildness of the
fish, some anglers would consider fishing in some ‘put and take’ fisheries as killing cows in the barn. However, the fish have a degree of agency over whether or not the fly is taken. Therefore, it would appear that as a consequence of the incomplete mapping of the practice of angling onto this definition of hunting, angling should not be considered a hunting practice. However, a definition such as this with the focus on the kill, is an incomplete definition. It fails to recognise that hunting is a bodily practice filled with ritualised performances and somatic involvements with landscape.

While the kill may be rarely witnessed when hunting with dogs, the attention to the kill in defining hunting leads Cartmill to propose the ‘killer ape’ (1993) as an explanation for the desire to engage in hunting pursuits in a context where the utilitarian need to hunt for existence has long since passed. However this notion that the human has a deep ‘bloodlust’ that must be slaked, while in some way connecting with Elias and Dunning’s ‘quest for excitement’ as discussed above, privileges the kill over all over aspects of the pursuit. As Franklin (2001) observes the bloodlust that Cartmill describes is not prominent in the angling literature, or in personal narratives of angling:

\[\text{John: So yeah I guess I’m not after big bags of fish, and that picture is, I think two, two fishermen. I’m after the quality fish I guess. And I’d be in a real quandary – I wouldn’t want to knock it on the head. I try to remember to take the camera with me now and keep a photographic record rather than anything else, measure the thing and then put it back.}
\]

\[\text{John, Roadford 2nd June 2006}\]

This excerpt exemplifying the angler’s quandary in killing the fish: He does not want to kill the fish. However, the photography and the measurement constitutes the ontological death of the specimen and a mechanism for the fish to enter future narratives (see chapter eight). However, the bloody kill is avoided. This may add further weight to the consideration that angling is not hunting: the angler is not positioned in the landscape for the expressed purpose of killing. However, while the main objective of fishing is not the kill, the taking of the quarry, killing is not avoided:
Jacob: Er, how do you feel about killing fish? Do you find it …

Eric: No compunction in killing them at all, what I kill I eat, I’m quite happy to put fish back; unless I get a really good brown trout wouldn’t kill it. I have taken brown trout from here before, and they were very nice but most of them are too small, so I wouldn’t kill them. I kill rainbow trout, I take them home for us and the family to eat, my mother in law likes them, I’m quite happy to kill them from that point of view.

Eric, Drift 21st May 2006

This lack of compunction about killing fish may reflect an ordering of species and a blurring of what ‘constitutes an animal’ as fish are positioned as, in some way, less animal (see chapter nine). But it also reiterates that while hunting may be about killing an animal in a particular ritualised manner, the kill is not the limit of the performance of hunting. Therefore while fish may be released relatively unharmed, this does not stop angling being hunting. Rather hunting is a bodily and extra-sensory practice that is an immersion in landscape predicated upon an atavistic experience of the more-than-human world. That while there may be no utilitarian need to fish in contemporary western society the atavism; the providing of food; the positioning oneself as hunter provides an important role in the contemporary psyche. This contribution revolves around notions of escape: performances that are simultaneously evading and reinforcing the human-animal, nature-culture divides. The spaces of the hunt and the way that particular places are constructed facilitate these narratives of escape, and the angling landscape is no exception.

As mentioned above, the escapist dream can be heavily reliant on particular locales: that while day-dreaming may permit the mundane to be left behind without physical re-location, narratives of landscape, nature and wilderness become crucial to the mechanism of escape. As the Cartmill quotation discussed earlier, suggests you cannot hunt a cow in the dairy barn. However, can you hunt a cow on a mountain side or in a forest – how important are the spaces of the hunt in defining hunting? As Cartmill suggests the hunter is a:

‘Liminal and ambiguous figure, now a fighter against wilderness and now a half-animal participant in it, who stands with one foot on either side of the boundary and swears no perpetual allegiance to either side.’

This emphasis on the spaces of the hunt stresses the role of landscape in defining the hunter, a theme unpacked in chapter five. Waterscapes are crucial to the definition of angling. The watery landscape is a liminal space filled with boundaries and turbulences that create a space that emphasises change and shapes understandings of self and experience (see chapter six). Therefore the form water takes becomes crucial to anglers definition of angling as hunting:

Roger: When you are on a commercial lake, they often look like commercial lakes. And you think 'some one has come along and said – you can see people have said 'we'll scrape this out and we'll have an island there and an island there. Plant a few trees' and you know. And it feels like a farm, it's not nature, it's a farm. It's not a wild place, so you feel actually, I'm in a farm, trying to catch a cow. Basically except you kill your cow and take it home with you. In that river today it felt wild and natural and although there is a slight thread of commercial in it, it's so small, you think I'm fishing here in a wild place in a natural way.

Roger, River Lyd 12th June, 2006

This is the angler’s equivalent of killing a cow in the dairy barn, and exemplifies how water and the spaces it creates define angling shaping nature, wildness and creating the liminal spaces that produce ‘the hunter’. Consequentially, while hunting constitutes a particular relationship with the more-than-human world, the discourses and narratives of hunting caught in a constitutive web with the affective role of landscape in defining hunting should not be overlooked.

Conclusion

An often cited reason for going fishing is that angling permits the angler to escape the stresses of ‘the mad pace of life’. That when fishing one is so locked into what’s going on, that the pressures of everyday life are forgotten; that angling allows an escape from modernity; that through angling, everyday life is buried through the immersion in a temporarily and spatially separated practice; that angling commands so much focus, that problems have to be forgotten or are at least
allowed to sort themselves out. This escape may be described as a flight to nature. Such descriptions of escapism construct a rural idyll that is imbued with sentiments of timelessness, harmony, and nostalgia. Consequentially the escape to nature evident in angling can be considered illusionary, reflecting in actuality an escape to a culture of nature. Alongside this escape to nature is an escape of people and of animality, however these forms of escape are temporary and incomplete – that the loneliness of angling is only partial and only becomes significant when contextualised with a return to the group. Similarly, angling may be considered as a blurring of the boundaries between human and animal, but that this may be a mechanism for re-forming the boundaries between human and animal. Despite this unpacking of the process of escape, the significance of the materiality of landscapes as vectors in the process of distracting, forgetting, escaping cannot be undermined.

Just as the materiality of landscape is significant in the process of escape, neither does the unpacking of the various social and cultural processes that constitute escape, undermine the significance of leisure in shaping understandings of identity, space and place. Animals occupy an interesting role in leisure pursuits. Three pertinent themes with respect to angling are the exotic, the duel and the hunt. The fish, as it occupies a realm unknowable to humans, becomes an exotic creature held out of context and becomes part of a process of mythologizing, and domestication. Enmeshed with the processes of domestication, the fish is an adversarial construct of human versus animal which has a long tradition. The duel gains greater prominence as part of the social and cultural practices that govern the hunt. What is unpacked by the section on the role of animals in the hunt is that hunting is a system of somatic practices which are heavily reliant on particular constructions of place but are also affected by the materialities of space. Therefore, while some may define hunting in terms of killing animals, the definition of hunting and hunting identities is much more complex. Continuing this interrogation of angling identities, the next chapter investigates the particular forces that go into defining the angling masculinity.
Chapter 8

Watery Masculinities

Introduction

Characteristics defined by strength, power, violence, mastery, virility and the heroic are regularly deployed in the description of men and masculinity, especially masculinities performed in the rural. But these terms are incomplete descriptions: masculinity is not homogenous, constant and monolithic. Therefore, while the last chapter examined the importance of escapism, leisure and the more-than-human in shaping identity, this chapter uses the masculinities performed through angling to critically examine understandings of masculinity and particularly, rural masculinity.

Masculinity is widely accepted as contested (see, for example, Connell, 1990, Campbell and Bell 2000; Bell 2000; Connell 2000; Lysaght 2002, Connell 2002; and Cloke 2005). However despite this acceptance that masculinity is contested, accounts (and particularly those portraying the rural male) still rely on a hegemonic masculinity that displays the traits outlined above; traits that I encompass in the term machismo. In challenging this preponderance of machismo in accounts of masculine identities this chapter depicts how alternative masculine subject positions, demonstrating traits such as calmness, gentleness, finesse and equality,

13 Parts of this chapter were presented at the AAG in 2007 under the title ‘Watery Masculinities: Fly Fishing and the Angling Male’. It has also been submitted in a similar form for a special edition of Gender, Place and Culture.
exist alongside more macho traits. Having recognised the multiplicity of subject positions, I go on to demonstrate how these different attitudes are fluid and dynamic; how there is a cadence to masculinity as different traits gain ascendancy.

This multiplicity and cadence to masculinities is made evident through angling and the liminal waterscapes in which angling masculinities are performed. These watery spaces, while appearing fixed and located, are in fact spaces where the slippage of identity (Creswell and Dixon, 2002; Leyshon and Brace, 2007) can be made most apparent. This liminality does not abjure the macho from the angling masculinity; therefore once I have demonstrated how existing accounts of rural masculinity centre on the machismo, I identify such themes in angling and then move on to identify how traits such as civility, serenity and, finesse infuse angling, and highlight how the more-than human is referred to in accounts of angling. These themes are woven through the angling male’s identity and become apparent as these watery places are occupied.

**Water**

The location of angling is often presented as wild, remote, and rural: water is crucial to this construction. Having discussed in previous chapters the ease with which water flows across the dichotomies of nature/culture, urban/rural self/other, I want briefly to reiterate the significance of boundaries in waterscapes and to highlight the fluidity of water before I discuss how this materiality is significant in shaping understandings of place and space and its influence on masculinity.

The turbulence, the change, the flow of waterscapes aids the imagining of the wild in the angling location. But while notions of wild(er)ness and the rural idyll are poured into the river giving it a sense of fixity and timelessness. Yet the river, regardless of its location, is focussed on the temporary; the turbulent flow emphasising the change, the constant difference of watery places; even bodies of water that are perceived to be static, are affected by currents. Water is a medium
that passes over, around, through and immerses beings. These flows, currents and movements, underpin how the angler fishes and shape the interaction. Therefore, while anglers may purport to have a connection to a particular water body they are in fact connecting to a place of flows, currents and turbulence.

It is this state of constant movement of turbulence and flow that in combination with the ever-present boundaries makes waterscapes spaces focussed on the fluid, on currents and flows, and as such the angler is always ‘betwixt and between’ (Turner and Turner 1978). Such emphasis on flow and changes shapes these spaces as liminal (Creswell and Dixon, 2002; Leyshon and Brace 2007; Azaryahu, 2005; Madge and O’Connor, 2005).

This concept of liminality can constitute a ‘time out of time’ (Madge and O’Connor) and to a certain extent the anglers notion of escape, the sense of timelessness poured into water can be considered as out of time, but the main source of water’s liminality stems from its materiality: its boundaries, and its flows. Consequently, any interaction with waterscapes are focussed on the transient, on the transition and on the transgressions of boundaries between wet and dry, fixed and fluid, known and unknown, habitable and uninhabitable. Therefore, waterscapes are ‘other spaces’ (Foucault, 1986) in that they offer spaces that cannot be occupied; outside the normal parameters of human existence. They are spaces which induce the crossing of thresholds (Shields, 1991), and as a consequence of the multiple boundaries and the focus on the fluid, become spaces which are ‘overloaded with potential meanings’ (Fiske, et al., 1987. cited by Azaryahu, 2005), with water occupying a status loaded mysticism and otherworldliness. Therefore the angler’s desire to exist ‘betwixt and between’ highlights a particular relationship with the more-than-human world that shapes an understanding of masculinity: that in these liminal spaces, as both the landscape and identities are movable, so too can masculinities slip, reform, and evolve (Leyshon and Brace, 2007; Cresswell and Dixon, 2002). Thus rivers, lakes and ponds create a fascinating backdrop to the discussion of masculinity in the rural space.
Rural Masculinity

Gender issues in the contested spaces of *the rural* have been widely debated (see Little and Morris, 2005), and rural masculinity is an obvious component of this wider critique (see Berg and Longhurst, 2003; or Cloke, 2005 for an over-view). One significant theme in the debate surrounding masculinities is the extent to which there are masculinities which are definitely *rural* as opposed to *urban* (see Campbell and Bell, 2000; and Campbell, Bell and Finney, 2006). Contrasting this rural masculinity thesis is the concept that *rurality* is in some way defining of masculinity (Campbell and Bell 2000; and Bell 2000), that *the rural* makes men.

As mentioned above, the location of angling is often constructed as remote and distant and connects to notions of *rurality*. Consequentially, angling can be considered as a masculinity typical of the rural space i.e. masculinity in the rural. Also, the relations between the angler and the more-than-human can be considered as affirming of the angling masculinities, i.e. the rural in the masculine. However, rather than continue with the debate on whether the angling masculinity represents the masculine in the rural or the rural in the masculine I demonstrate how the angling masculinity, affected by the liminal space, makes evident the multiplicity and cadence to being male and cultural constructions of masculinity that contradicts the preponderance in the existing literature to focus on when men are most male. To do so I pick out four themes from existing accounts to demonstrate how they rely on a macho hegemonic masculinity.

The first of these themes describes the male domination of nature and constructions of the rural heroic; the growth of the machismo as the male is set against the physical landscape through farming, forestry, military training or extreme sports (see Saugeres, 2002; Brandth and Haugen, 2005; Woodward; 2000; or Cloke, 2005 for examples). The second theme depicts masculine violence both against human and more-than-human beings (see Aitken, 2006; Bell 2007; and Luke, 1998). A third trend focuses on personal interactions within rural *social space* rather than the relationship with *nature* (e.g. Little and Austin, 1996; Hubbard, 2005; Bell, 2003; Little 2003; Little and Leyshon, 2003; or Campbell,
Finally there is work, often-labelled *alternative* masculinities (see Bell 2000, Cloke, 2005), which critiques the heterosexual dominance in the rural space and depicts the masculinities of gay sexualities in the rural. While not suggesting that work has not already highlighted the problematic nature of rural masculinity (Campbell and Bell, 2000; Bell, 2000; Lysaght, 2002; and Cloke 2005), I attempt to take these categories and extend them to add nuance to debates on masculinities in the rural. To show that masculinity is not fixed and defined but fluid and changing.

**The Rural Macho**

Saugeres (2002) depicts how the idiomatic notion of the male as the ‘natural farmer’ is formed and used to legitimise men’s domination of nature (and women) in rural France. This legitimacy stems from a ‘connection’ and a ‘predisposition’ to working the landscape. Rose (1993) and Law (1997) both recognise the romanticising of certain agricultural practices and their connection to rural gender relations. Through a connection to these romantic ideals, the rural masculine is further linked to the agricultural employment and landscape. Similarly, Brandth and Haugen (2005) describe the masculine dominance in forestry. The male position is justified by his ability to operate large machinery and to complete strenuous physical work. Likewise Woodward (2000) illustrates how masculinity in terms of military training is set against the recruit’s ability to overcome the hostile rural environment. Rural masculinity, therefore, is defined in these three accounts by physical and mental strength employed to propagate male mastery over ‘nature’ in a display of almost Darwinian fitness.

In line with these constructions of rural masculinity as synonymous with machismo, Bell (2007) suggests that through films such as *City slickers* and *Hunter’s Blood* the rural masculine is constructed as a rural savage, holding the characteristics of strength and power through a more *authentic* connection to the landscape. Alongside this construction of the rural male is a masculine rurality into which the
urbane male immerses himself in an effort to become ‘re-masculinised’. Once more the masculine interaction with the rural is positioned in terms of strength and power. Indeed Bell goes on to describe how such depictions suggest that if the urban male is not re-masculinised through his interaction with the rural, through a connection with ‘raw nature’, he is further feminised (2007).

This visiting of the rural space to re-assert or re-define masculinity is also depicted by Bonnett (1996), in his investigation into the ‘mythopoetic men’s movement’; that by creating a tribal scenario the men engaging in this practice are connecting to a timeless, animalistic order where unequal power relations are ‘natural’, all within the setting of the ‘wilderness’. Similarly, research on adventure tourism has illustrated how the masculine involvement with the more-than-human is constructed as ‘challenging’ - the male is seen to re-affirm his self worth through the mastery of the more-than-human world through demonstrations of strength and resilience (Cloke and Perkins, 1998).

Connected to these displays of masculinity through strength and power is the connection between men and violence (see Aitken 2006) both against human and more-than-human beings. Depictions of rural violence are common in cinematic representations such as Deliverance and Hunter’s Blood (see Bell 2007) and hunting represents an obvious expression of violence against more-than-human subjects in the rural space. Luke (1998) connects violence through hunting to a heterosexuality that revolves around predation and penetration of the more-than-human animal, be it by knife, crossbow bolt or bullet. With this, he adds an erotic element to the rural masculine encounters with more-than-human animals. This ‘erotics of hunting’ is not easily transferred to either angling or wider hunting in the UK context. It is problematic as a consequence of its focus on hunting in a form more frequently referred to as stalking in the UK. Indeed hunting with dogs does not usually involve death by bullet, or knife – with the exception of when deer are brought to bay by dogs. While the concept of ‘predation’ remains in hunting with dogs the automatic equation between hunting and death by a weapon that pierces the creature must be questioned. Similarly the execution of fish rarely involves a knife, relying on a priest to deliver the last rites. Despite this problematic
understanding of hunting Luke’s approach reiterates the emphasis in the masculinities literature on re-affirming masculinity through hunting in displays of power and strength (see Leyshon, 2003).

To consider the rural masculine as purely centred on interactions with the more-than-human ignores the social space of the rural. As touched on in the discussion above, rural masculinity is more than just the interactions between the male and the material rural landscape, wilderness, *nature* or more-than-human animals. The interactions in the *social space* of the rural are formative of particular forms of masculinity. It has been recognised that the rural is male dominated (e.g. Little and Austin, 1996; Hubbard, 2005) and heterosexual (e.g. Bell, 2003; Little 2003; Little and Leyshon, 2003), while Campbell (2000) suggests that drinking in rural spaces represents a macho display. Indeed through the ability to consume large amounts of alcohol, the male body can be viewed as being conditioned – once more a display of masculine strength and power over nature (this time the nature of the human form) (Leyshon, 2005). But more than this bodily performance of masculinity the pub allows the rural male to narrate their feats of mastery, a crucial component in the definition and perpetuation of masculinity.

In contrast to this mastery of nature by both the rural masculine and the masculine in the rural, Bell’s (2000) account of ‘rural gay masculinities’ offers a masculinity that is ‘closer to nature’. However, the constructions described by Bell do not negate the setting of the nature of the male form against the nature of the rural; Bell connects aspects of ‘rural gay masculinity’ to the butch cowboy where the male form is legitimised through strength and the machismo.

All of these categories depict how the rural masculinity is dependent on a hegemonic masculinity (Connell, 1990; 2000) that is founded on strength mastery, domination, power, violence and the heroic. What is absent from these accounts of rural masculinity is an awareness that rural masculinity is not uniform and purely violent or heroic. The moments or discourses that define rural masculinity in such accounts fail to acknowledge the less violent, less heroic, less strong or powerful moments in the lives of rural men.
Saugeres (2002) follows Brittan and Maynard (1984) to suggest that ‘the process of objectification which is central to the masculine ideology naturalises the separation between subject and object in the distinction between “agency of man and passivity of nature” (p.375). While I do not challenge this subject/object position, it may, to a certain extent essentialise rural masculinity. There are many practices and performance in the rural which respond to nature, nurturing, shepherding and cultivating, rather than domineering and subjecting; that there is an entirely less violent aspect to rural masculinity. This contrast is identified by Brandth and Haugen (2005) as they recognise that ‘elements of service work that go beyond masculine rural knowledge and networks and introduce features of femininity and urbanity’ (p.20). However, this still suggests that there is somehow an authentic rural masculinity based on strength and ruggedness which is compromised by adapting to the evolving rural economy.

What is evident in much of the academic discourse is a focus on the machismo, stemming from an attention to when men are most male. By focussing on these spaces and times where men are most male creates a masculinity that is hyper-normal, supra masculine, constant, and definite – in essence suggesting that men are very male, all of the time. Connell (1990; 2000) has observed the conflict within masculinity both in individuals and in wider social processes. But I want to move on from this conflict to suggest that individual masculinity is a multifaceted existence; to delve into the concept of hegemonic masculinity to realise that it is not a monolithic pillar to be used to describe attitudes to the world, or a tower against which to set ‘alternative masculinities’. Essentially, that hegemonic masculinity is a varied and multiple existence, that is not pre-occupied with displays of strength, power and the heroic. I am not suggesting that the machismo is not important in the performance of masculinity or that masculine dominance is not pervasive in attitudes and performance (Bourdieu, 2001) but that its physical manifestations are only part of the medley of characteristics that constitute masculinity and that are evident in the cadence of being male. Before discussing the multiple and ‘alternative’ masculine subject positions evident in angling, I will
first depict how the macho is evident in angling masculinity. Indeed angling displays many of the characteristics of a ‘traditional’ (rural) masculinity.

As chapter four showed, 95% of rod licence holders in 2001 were male and 94% of those that went fishing between 2003 and 2005 were white (Simpson and Mawle, 2005). In line with these statistics, of the 150 questionnaire responses I received for this study, only three were women and of the twelve involved in the ethnography, photography and interviews only one was female. As a consequence of this male dominance, angling becomes a fascinating practice within which to examine masculinity, and particularly rural masculinity.

Chapter two highlighted how the spaces in which fly-fishing occurs are often constructed as remote, wild and almost exclusively rural while angling is often constructed as a connection to a bucolic, Arcadian and idyllic landscape imbibed with nostalgia (see Farson, 1981 (1942); Grey, 1984 (1899); and Walton, 2003 (1653) as examples). This spatial and conceptual location away from the urban and domestic arena may have aided this masculine dominance in that it reflects the patriarchal prevalence of rural gender relations (Hubbard, 2005; Little and Austin, 1996). It is to the traditional rural masculine characteristics of angling that I now turn.

**Domination, Mastery and Competition: The Angler’s Machismo**

The numerical dominance of angling by men makes angling a rich subject for the discussion of masculinity. This is not to suggest that angling is limited to men: Paterson et al (1990) highlight the success enjoyed by many female anglers, but the presence of women does not prevent, unless we return to assigning particular ‘sex roles’, angling from being a masculine practice (Connell, 2000: 16). Regardless, angling creates spaces and times that are dominated by men, and socially constructed as male. Such spaces provide opportunity for the reinforcing of masculine attitudes to the world, and the macho rural traits described above are
quite apparent in the angling experience. Consequentially, in this section I will establish the macho themes evident in angling. Reflecting the earlier discussion on rural masculinity this passage follows two threads, the first centres on the angler’s identity formation in relation to the more-than-human. The second theme focuses on the social aspect of angling, identifying the importance of story-telling and trophies in narrating encounters with the more-than-human, that occur in the lonely setting of angling.

**Angling, Anglers and the More-than-Human**

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*Table 8.1: Competition Dates, Grafham Water Fly Fishers Association*  
*Source: [http://www.gwffl-grafham.co.uk/competitions.htm](http://www.gwffl-grafham.co.uk/competitions.htm) <Accessed 16/05/07>
As mentioned above, the macho element to angling is not absent. In both personal narratives and the wider discourse, themes such as competition, rites of passage, rural savagery, and heroic duels with nature abound. I now want to identify these macho traits in angling and thereby underline angling as a ‘masculine practice’. Competition and success are the most common ‘macho-themes’ evident in angling. Organised competitions and the resultant hierarching, are frequent events on many large venues, and most clubs have a competitive element (see Table 8.1 for a list of the competition dates for the Grafham water fly fishers association).

The competitive element is not limited to organised events: anglers often assess their success according to how other anglers at a particular venue are doing. Indeed one angler described how he didn’t like competitions but then went on to describe how he measured success:

I suppose I’m competing with myself, I’m competing with other people when I come here, even though there’s not, it’s not heavily fished, I would prefer to see myself catching fish rather than someone else catching fish, simple as that… … I’m competitive with my dad, we’ll still count out who’s had the most fish….

Eric, Drift 21st May 2006

This excerpt and the table depicts the inherent competitive element in the angler; proving oneself against nature (developed later with respect to ‘the duel’) as well as against other anglers. This is not to suggest that only anglers or only men are competitive but that the proving of self worth through competition against nature is a particularly ‘macho’ desire evident in angling.

This ‘proving of oneself’ in competition is echoed in the life course development of the angler. When asked when did you begin fishing, anglers inevitable return to a particular day fishing or even a particular fish:

Ooh, begin fishing? Eight years of age? Which would be 1950. Father taking me on to the Thames, with a green heart rod, that weighed a ton, far too big for a little boy. But I caught the biggest roach for the day.
Beating my older brother and my father, so that was the very beginnings...

John, Roadford, 24 June 2006

This excerpt re-affirms the competitive but also reveals a notion of ‘rites of passage’ that by catching the biggest roach of the day, or indeed by catching a fish at all, the angler ‘begins fishing’; that through the event of catching a first or notable fish the individual becomes an angler. Caught up in this excerpt is the intergenerational aspect of angling, many anglers described how they had been taught to fish by their father or uncle: it was invariably a male relative and as such represents an adult male taking the child away from the feminised space of the home to pass on masculine knowledges and be immersed in nature. As such the angler is constructed as hunter and atavistic impulses are dominant themes both in angler’s justification for fishing and in the discourse.

The prevalence of atavism in the discourse has led Franklin to suggest that ‘[i]f any sort of activity expresses an opposition to and a rejection of the social character of modernity it is angling and hunting sports’ (1999:106). The construction of angling as pre-modern connects to a notion of rural savagery: that through this immersion in the rural space the angler escapes the shackles of the modern world and is ‘re-masculinised’ through his immersion in and mastery of nature (see Bell 2007).

The final macho trait I want to highlight in reference to the more-than-human is the notion of the duel. The heroic runs through much of this evidence for the angler’s machismo, however the construction of the duel represents a particularly heroic, almost chivalrous theme. The social and personal limits imposed on the angler increases the challenge; as the excerpt at the beginning of this section suggests the angler is competing against her or him self: that through the limiting of techniques and technologies a ‘fair fight’ is ensured thereby increasing the relevancy of the angler’s success. Therefore the angler is searching for a particular fish, a fish that success and therefore masculinity can be measured against; a leviathan:
No it’s not quantity, so that only leaves us with quality I guess, and it’s the bigger fish. We are begging questions – here is Roadford lake, thirteen, fourteen years old, ninety foot at it’s deepest, ‘there’s got to be ferox [cannibalistic and therefore very large] trout in there’. We think that the trout we catch on opening day, so after all the hardship of a winter, they are still pretty good shape. They are not outwardly diseased, although they suffer from nematode worms. I reckon there could be a stonking trout in there, but how to get it – you’d probably need a lead line or a trolling rig, if the rules allowed you to troll as they do on Loch Awe and places, but one day…

John, Roadford 2nd June 2006

Here the angler dreams of the ferox monster, the fish of his lifetime – the ultimate measure of his ability as an angler. He shifts from the dream to reality; from the ‘stonking trout’ to ‘how to get it’ – how to prove himself in a battle with this massive fish – the biggest nature can throw at him – the ultimate duel and conquest. In this regard angling can be read as a reaffirming of the traditional construction of masculinity in the rural and the rural in the masculine. Underlying the duel mentality evident in this discourse is the concept that it is two individuals in combat. It is to this individual character of angling that I now turn.

The Lonely Masculine: Space for Stories...

Having described the macho angler in terms of the interactions and constructions of the more-than-human, I now want to identify firstly, how these encounters become part of the stories that anglers tell, thereby reinforcing their masculinity and secondly how anglers summon life to their stories through the use of trophies.

The heroic and macho duels described above, become part of the angling masculinity through the infamous fisherman’s tales. The significance of the story is underlined by the fact that much of the encounter with the more-than-human is often a lonely experience. As mentioned in earlier chapters, even when not fishing alone angling is a lonely, individual and personal practice. This individual nature of angling makes the performance of angling an interesting relationship as only one of the actors in the dance can narrate the encounter. Evidence abounds in the
form of fish or photographs taken, but the experience is personal, even if other anglers are present, the minutiae, and it is the unseen minutiae that is crucial in angling, can only be experienced and therefore told by one. This separation from others permits the angler a barely contestable primacy in the narration of experience. Thus the majority of the macho posturing comes after (or before) the event, over meals or in other social spaces such as in pubs together. Therefore it is through the narration of life histories the heroic angler is formed – the story rather than the event affirms the masculine; that macho enhancement and heroic imaginings, power and dominance over nature, do intertwine with angling but their creation is part of the preparation for and articulation of the encounters experienced through angling.

Therefore the pub, similar social spaces, and the accompanying conversations between anglers become important in the formation of the angling masculinity; that how the experiences of the more-than-human are made public is crucial to the angler’s identity. Pubs and the social spaces formed between their walls have always formed important components in the angling experience – as demonstrated by Walton’s *The compleat angler*:

> And so, Master, here is a full glass to you of that liquor: and when you have pledged me, I will repeat the Verses which I promised you...

Walton, 2002/1653

Indeed the entirety of Walton’s book is a narration of the merits of angling through personal experience. Therefore, ‘story-telling’ (Fish, 2004) is a powerful and important component in the construction of the angling masculinity.

While telling stories is important, the physical displays of success cannot be overlooked. The fish enters the social space in two forms: as a trophy or as food. The food element reflects a masculinity of survival while the role of the fish as trophy is slightly more complex. The trophy can be stuffed and mounted for all to see – this requires the death of the fish and presents a masculinity concerned with size and domination. Alternatively the trophy can be captured in photographs (see
photographs 8.1 to 8.3) or in measurements such as weight, length and girth. This does not require the physical death but represents an ontological death. In this form, the trophy is much more closely linked to story telling – that it legitimises the story, giving greater credence. But this calibration of success differs in that it is not just about the trophy – it can then become food or be released to become future myths.
‘[T]his one I am holding now, is buttery brown. But a fish of about three pounds I suppose, and summer time...’
John, Roadford 2\textsuperscript{nd} June 2006
Yes that’s a nicely conditioned fish that. Er, I tried to get an impression of how large the fish was by sizing it in the net. Er, and you know, I wanted to take it quickly before I put it back. So that was trying to show, you know, that I love catching fish like that. Good condition, reasonable size… [Accompanies Photograph 8.3]

Eric, Drift 21st May 2006

Therefore both the fish as trophy and the fish as food creates a masculinity that is both relational, in terms of comparison to other stories (and trophies), and also repeatable. But this focus on the trophy should not be taken to be a preponderance of phallo-centrism in angling; as stated above this is but one component of the angling masculinity; indeed size is a subject that is both revered and repugnant:

And I said ‘I’ve caught a really rather splendid fish, Peter.’ So I put it on the lawn, and I put it down and he said, ‘good god! Fergus that’s enormous, where the devil did you catch that?’ I said ‘off the Anton’. ‘what did you catch it on?’ I said, ‘caught it on a little bug’. He said ‘heavens above! How heavy is it?’ I said, ‘six and a quarter’ and he was an admiral of the navy and he suddenly pulled himself together and realised what we were saying, and said ‘good heavens, how vulgar!’ [Laughs].

Kenneth, River Wylye, 8th June 2006

Consequentially the size of the fish is in many ways immaterial; rather it is that the fish through its death (either material or metaphysical) and becomes part of the narration that is important: In both cases the experienced is stilled as the moment is captured. Thus the moments become a resource from which histories (and possible future pasts) are created; how life is summoned (Thrift, 2004) in the surroundings of the pub, amongst anglers, before or after the experiences.

This consigning of heroic dominance to pre and post encountering does not involve a separation of narrative and experience – these aspects are consanguineous – but rather represents how moments are formed and understood through a shifting nebulos of meaning that waxes and wanes as attention is focussed on a specific interaction with a more-than-human being(s). It is to the fluid encounter of the fish that I now turn, to describe some of the alternative
emotions, beliefs and meanings described by anglers when recounting this intimate experience of the more-than-human, in the form of fish and rivers.

**Alternative Subject Positions in the Angling Male**

The previous sections have highlighted how accounts of rural masculinity focus on the moments when ‘men are most male’, thereby equating masculinity with strength, power, and the heroic. Such sentiments are evident in both the angling discourse and personal narratives. However, what follows is an articulation of the alternative attitudes that infuse angling and contrast with the characteristics more traditionally considered as masculine.

**Civility, Contemplation and Nostalgia**

Sir, there be many men that are by others taken to be serious and grave men, whom we contemn and pity. Men, that are taken to be grave, because nature hath made them of a sour complexion: money-getting men.

Walton, 2003/1653

This contempt of ‘men of sowre complexion: money getting men’ represents a rejection by Walton of the emerging capitalist order of the latter half of the seventeenth century (Franklin 2001). But it is also indicative of a general attitude that embraces an approach that is peaceful, calm, serene sedate and quiet:

[T]hat recreation which composeth the soul to that calmness and serenity, which gives a man the fullest possession and fruition of himself... ...and incline the mind of man to a quiet calm sedateness.

Venables, 1969/1662
This sense of escape from the hectic existence of life or modernity and the capitalist order, into the calmness sedateness, peacefulness of angling is still evident in contemporary society:

...it’s a bit like having a walk on the river bank really, but a bit of something else chucked into it as well, you know, with a bit of a challenge thrown in as well.

Jacob: yes, yes.

Jack: I don’t know if challenge is the right word, there is just something, just something I like about it.

Jacob: what word would you use if it wasn’t challenge?

Jack: I don’t know really, I was just trying to think of that now – challenge is – I think you can’t use one word, because there is the challenge of it, there is the therapeutic side of it when you are fishing, no matter what it is for, you are so locked into what’s going on, you’re forgetting the pressures of everyday life, you’re not really worrying about my, you know, my accounts are over due, or the wife is going to murder me because I haven’t done this or that. Everything is just gone isn’t it? Well that’s how I thought of it...

Jacob: no I agree.

Jack: …ability to switch off. It’s as intense as normal life, but just a different way, and you’ve just got switch off all that is going on in your mind at the time, you’ve just got to switch off and focus into something else which I find, just relaxes me. It’s just nice to sit there and un-wind for a few hours, although sitting there is obviously the wrong word because I’m not sitting down [laughs]

Jacob: no I understand what you are saying about the unwinding aspect.

Jack: Even though it’s quite intense. It’s focussing it’s not intense...

Jack, River Camel 16th July 2006 [emphasis added]

In this excerpt, the angler shifts from discussing the challenge – the immediate reason – the mastery of nature in providing fish, to recognise the complexity of the angling experience. He then goes on to describe angling as ‘therapeutic’, ‘forgetting the pressures’, that ‘everything is just gone’. This escape, from the pressures of modernity connects directly to the sentiments of Walton and his men.
of sowre complexion. Similarly, there is an escape to Robert Venebles’ calm, peaceful existence that is not intense ‘it’s focussing’. Superficially this connects to the discussion of the rural savage above; the escape could be considered as a longing for an idyllic, bucolic, arcadian existence where life, and therefore masculinity, is more straightforward. However, the critical point of this excerpt is that it is not about the challenge; that angling is not about overcoming or mastery or success. Rather it is therapeutic, that it ‘composes the soul to calmness and serenity’ (Venebles 1969/1662).

An attitude of calmness or civility surrounds the engagement with the more-than-human through angling. That rather than being brutish and savage in competition with nature, the angler engages in a calm and serene manner. This is not to suggest that violence is absent – the angler often kills the fish, but that the violence is only part of the interaction; consequential rather than causative. Similarly, Franklin (2001, p. 63) notes an absence of bloodlust in the angler literature and likewise concludes that the angler’s embodied engagement with the more-than-human is ‘quiet, modest, spatially anchored and sensitive’. This attitude, I submit is to some extent, antagonistic with the strong, savage, dominating and masterful masculine both evident in angling and depicted in accounts of the angling and rural male. Or as the angler in the excerpt above describes it ‘just relaxes me’; it is about unwinding, the therapeutic. This is not to suggest that ‘relaxation’ is limited to angling but that there is a strong therapeutic discourse which is contemplative and civil.

**Angling: Delicate, Gentle and with Finesse…**

The calmness of the approach, by which I mean the attitude brought to the encounter rather than the physical access, is mirrored in the technical ability of the angler. The skills and techniques employed require a calm temperament but also are very measured and delicate in their execution. Angling involves the
deployment of many of the senses and as such requires a heightened sensitivity in the angler:

...the drag of a sunk line gauges the depth at which the fly is working in a deep, slow pool; only by feel is the touch of a drifting leaf distinguished from the gentle nudge of a big fish...

Falkus, 2002/1962, [emphasis added]

This quotation from Falkus’ book on sea trout fishing epitomises the serenity of angling: the slow deep pool; the dependence on the tactile rather than the visual; the minute differences between the touch of a leaf and the gentle nudge of a fish. This stands in stark contrast to the masculinity depicted in agricultural or silvicultural accounts above: the human presence is minimised and delicate rather than strong and muscular; the technology employed is mechanically simple and measured in grams rather than highly computerised and weighing tonnes. That is not to suggest that the technology is insignificant in the interaction but that it is less complex and less obvious than agricultural machinery; that angling is a gentle sport:

...and on a favourable day in the month of May, “Tweed’s fair river, broad and deep,” will be fished by many hundred followers of the gentle craft.

Stewart, 1942/1857, [emphasis added]

I would want to cast the fly so that it alights on the water a couple of feet ahead of where I saw the fish rise. You’ve got to remember that the rise formed those ripples on the water that I saw have probably moved towards me a foot from the actual time that the trout poked its nose through the meniscus so I cast ahead of where I think the fish is. Now if there is no problem with drag because of conflicting currents on that part of the river, the fly floats back towards me without showing any signs of drag, in other words it looks very natural, and if my aim has been right and the fish is still there, and if the fish is now looking up again having eaten his last morsel, and not been distracted by the splash of my line behind him or any of those things, hopefully he comes up and he takes it.

John, Roadford 2nd June 2006
Or as the angler above suggests, you cast so the fly alights on the water. It is just light enough to float and there should be minimal splash. In all, the execution of angling demands a delicate and gentle touch. But more than that, the angler also reveres the fish, discussing them in emotive terms.

Love and Emotion

A beautiful fish, silver and lilac, firm as a rock and covered with sea lice.

Falkus, 2002/1962

His enamelled sides, studded as with rich gems and his tints of yellow gold…

Ronalds, 1993/1836

As the above quotations display, the beauty of the quarry is widely commented on – both between anglers and in the angling literature. In his account of the erotics of hunting Brian Luke (1997) describes how images position women as the prey; that ‘the image of women as trophy fish (or fish as trophy women?) enhances the erotic appeal’ of stories or fishing. While the connection between the male predatory attitude to women and nature is evident in highly sexualised images. In contrast, the beauty and love described in the angling literature is less sexualised. The gendering of the quarry (developed below) as male in the above quotation emphasises the divergence between the love of anglers for their quarry and predation of the female form. This could be an indication of a latent homosexuality in the angling male however the accounts seem to lack a sexual element, rather highlighting beauty and admiration. This love raises issues for the angler in relation to the execution of the prey; after describing his longing for the ferox trout (see excerpt in the section on the macho angler above) the respondent continued:

And I’d be in a real quandary – I wouldn’t want to knock it on the head. I try to remember to take the camera with me now and keep a photographic record rather than anything else, measure the thing and then put it back. I don’t even like the thoughts of weighing them live – I suppose I could put them in the bass bag and weigh that - weigh the fish that way.

Eric, Roadford 2nd June 2006
Here the conflict in the angler between capture, competition and record and the love and respect for the prey is manifest: the respondent voices the fact that he would be ‘in a real quandary’; he wants a record but not to kill for the trophy; that dimensions and weight are important but the fish cannot be damaged. Whilst not necessarily contradictory to the masculinity of mastery, this respect of the fish is a counterpoint to the mastery discourse and adds further depth to these additional masculinities of serenity and finesse highlighted above. This difference occurs through the emotional register of the love and respect for the quarry rather than the more pragmatic masculinities of serenity and finesse.

Equality and Imitation

Extending these additional masculinities played out through angling is the manner in which the angler becomes the more-than-human (as described in chapter six): that not only is masculinity demonstrated in the manner in which the nature is approached and the emotional resonance of experience, but that the mechanism of engagement through imitation of the more-than-human and the gendering of the quarry depicts an alternative gender position in relation to the rural and the more-than-human.

Every time a good fisherman is fishing, his cast is getting the fly into the right place - that’s the technical part about it. But he is actually putting down an attractive fly in front of the fish that is going to move in a natural way, that is fishing. That is what it is all about.

Kenneth, River Wylye 8th June 2006

This excerpt demonstrates how the angler attempts to trigger a response in the trout through an imitation of a more-than-human creature. Through this imitation, the angler imagines that his success is assessed not according to human criteria but by a more-than-human jury. This deferral to more-than-human appraisal represents the angler’s attempt to subject himself to nature rather than to
dominate. It is obviously incomplete and merely an illusion of subjection (see Chapter Six) but does reflect a different attitude to the more-than-human.

The effort made by the angler to increase the agency of the more-than-human may be interpreted as an effort to create a greater degree of equality between the angler and the fish. This equality is often demonstrable through the gendering of the quarry – in the quotation above, Ronalds describes ‘his enamelled sides…’ or as John mentioned as he was describing casting to a fish:

*So there is two ways in which I could go about it – I could go about it by waiting until I see a fish actually move, if I am very fortunate I may see him move under the water, or I might see him rise to a food particle and cause a rise and I can cast to that rise.*

*John, Roadford, 2nd June 2006*

Therefore it can be seen that when gendered, the fish is often made masculine, and rarely is its biological sex ascertained, or at least commented on – the trout quite regularly remains male even when exhumed from the water. Similarly with salmon, the initial gendering is masculine – the salmon is referred to as the *King of fishes* and is often described as male:

*The fish made his leap, his eye intent
On the journey that was to follow,
His body dressed in a silver livery
With the grace of the evening swallow.*

*Excerpt from Salmo the Leaper. Hopton, 2006*

This initial gendering as male is less persistent in salmon as biological differences are more pronounced. However, the attributing of the masculine objective pronoun contrasts with the more typical description of nature as feminine. This reference
may be linked to the characteristics often described in fish – such as ‘fight’ – the degree to which the fish resists the tension in the line. However, the fish is also described in terms often considered feminine – such as beauty (see the quotation above). The gendered reference to fish and the method of interaction through imitation reflects an interaction with nature that contests the traditional demarcation of nature as feminine.

Escaping Traditional Definitions of Masculinity

In describing the alternative masculine subject positions evident through angling, I have highlighted some prominent themes that stand in contradiction to traditional constructions of rural masculinity. I suggest that these alternative subject positions become more evident as a consequence of the liminal space of the waterscape. As mentioned in the section on water above, the focus on flow, fluids and turbulence and the presence of multiple boundaries that are constantly transgressed creates a spaces in which the angler is constantly ‘betwixt and between’.

As a consequence of this liminality, these spaces become places of escape; spaces where identity can slip and reform. As such the waterscapes of angling can be considered as a therapeutic landscape (Gesler, 2003). Indeed, as Baer and Gesler (2004) note spaces centred on water become particularly therapeutic. Furthermore the construction of the angling space as rural and distant, coupled with the immersive character of angling, may create spaces that offer the angler a degree of escapism (Tuan, 1998). In terms of masculinity and in light of what this paper lays out in describing alternative masculine subject positions, these places of escape may offer the angler a place and time to reject and challenge dominant orthodoxies relating to masculinity. However, it remains that this multiplicity to
masculinity evident through angling requires a re-thinking of the understandings of being male and the cultural definitions of masculinity.

**Conclusions**

Gender is not an attribute solely possessed by women.... It also provides an intellectual and research challenge to the one-dimensional man, garbed in his unyielding patriarchal power, by insisting that masculinity, too, is also an uncertain and provisional project, subject to change and redefinition.'

McDowell 2001, p. 182 as cited by Van Hoven and Hörschelmann, 2005, p.5

**The Multiplicity of Subject Positions**

The angling masculinity is uncertain, provisional and subject to change and redefinition. Angling displays many of the traits associated with the highly masculinised depictions of the rural male. But to focus on these traits is to belie the complexity of angling and rural masculinity. Accounts which define this ‘traditional perspective of rural masculinity, tend to focus on the moments when men are most male. This paper has demonstrated the multiplicity of the subject positions experienced in angling. To a certain extent this multiplicity is set against the uniformity of some other representations of masculinity in the rural and rurality in the masculine. I am not suggesting that such accounts as those outlined above treat the masculine as one-dimensional or un-yielding but rather that in capturing the hegemonic male attitudes in agriculture, extreme sports or forestry the machismo is overemphasised; that (rural) manliness is equated with strength, dominance and physical form. And in so doing the complexity and tensions of rural masculinity are not fully emphasised.
In recognising this complexity I am not suggesting a lack of awareness of difference between groups or between individuals but rather within individuals. Connell (2000) underlines the contradiction between the construction of the hegemonic male and the lived reality of masculinity. Therefore to follow on from Connell (1995) and Leyshon (2005) I submit that while there is ‘a gender politics within masculinity’ (Connell, 1995), there are also multiple masculine subject positions within the angling male. None of these positions are more masculine than the others – although competition and success offer a close representation of a more widely accepted ‘hegemonic masculinity’ – they all exist together within the individual. Furthermore I am not suggesting that these strands of masculinity are spatially or temporarily fixed. But that they exist together and are not necessarily antagonistic.

**The Cadence of Masculinity – the Ebbs and Flows**

These multiple masculine subject positions are evident throughout the angling discourse and do not reflect a ‘crisis of masculinity’. Instead these subject positions reflect a complexity which display the multiple attitudes to the more-than-human through different experiences and narrations of the angling male; experiences that occur in a watery place. This aquatic setting, full of flows and currents is a liminal space. The ever present boundaries and the constant transgression, coupled with the sense of flux created by the fluid environment permits the alternative masculine subject positions to become apparent. These varied encounters with the more-than-human are given a degree of fixity in the angling mind through trophies (both tangible and metaphorical) and are used to summon life (Thrift 2004) to the angler’s account of his masculinity in situations both pre- and post- the actual activity of angling. But these trophies tend to emphasise the more macho elements of angling and hide the multiplicity. However, embodied in these trophies is a multifaceted masculinity. Facets of this varied angling masculinity reflect traits, such as gentleness, calmness and finesse; traits that would often be labelled as feminine. These traits and the use of different objective pronouns in reference to the more-than-human demonstrate how, in the
fluidity of the waterscape, masculinity is dissolved and subject to flows and currents as it forms and reforms; that men are not very male all of the time, but that there is a cadence to the multiplicity of masculinity.

This Chapter has, through the lens of angling, critically examined rural masculinities, to suggest that there are multiple, non-antagonistic masculinities, that have a cadence to their performance, and the way that they shape (the angling) experience. The next chapter signifies a change in direction as it considers how these embodied, emotional experiences of landscape, animality and identity influence and are influenced by the politics of angling.
Chapter 9

The Politics of Angling

Introduction

In the last chapter I unpacked the masculinity performed through angling and offered a critique of the current tendency to define the hegemonic masculine position in a constant and uniform manner. In doing so the last chapter highlighted the influence of the liminal spaces in which angling is performed in shaping identity. This chapter appears to signify a change in direction. It is expressly concerned with ‘the politics of angling’; the areas of conflict that surround angling. However, while this chapter may appear as a shift in emphasis, the whole thesis centres on an affectual politics which revolves around the valuable ecologies of angling. The earlier chapters examine how the valuable ecologies of angling create a materiality by which various more-than-human organisms, are socialised. It represents an unpacking of the affectual ecologies that are immersed in the politics of practice, emotion, identity, landscape, animality, water, masculinity, images and history.

The explicit attention in this chapter to the politics of angling, reflects a further unpacking of the representations of the more-than-human world made evident through angling. I examine how the understandings of angling laid out through this thesis are ways of socialising various more-than-human organisms, and that through a careful political ecology (Hinchcliffe et al, 2005), the various actants that shape the angling experience can be brought into the democratic process. Consequentially this chapter lays out the three key areas of conflict that surround angling. These areas are: Fish, Netting and Conservation; Rights of Piscary and the Recreational Use of Water; and Angling, Hunting and Animality. Finally, this chapter begins to build towards the framework of an affectual political ecology laid
out in the next chapter, building on work by Latour, Hinchcliffe, and Whatmore within which the meanings constructed through angling are interrogated; as the way that tensions and conflicts are played out through space and a careful political ecology is shaped in the angling context.

The focus of this chapter however, is the conflicts, politics and issues that surround angling. This is by no means an exhaustive list but it does touch on some of the issues that are currently most prominent in the various angling fora. In so doing it attempts to connect the understandings of angling that have been expounded in the earlier chapters. Therefore, it approaches the political issues in a manner which is sympathetic to the framing of angling throughout the earlier chapters.

**The Politics of Angling**

As expounded through this thesis, water connects; it flows across the divides between urban/rural, nature/culture and self/other and through concepts of modernity (see for example, Gandy, 2002; Swyngedouw, 2004; Gandy, 2004 Kaika, 2005: Braun, 2005). But water is more than a resource. It connects different issues, scales and approaches and materially shapes understandings of people and places. This connectivity between different locales, scales, people and ecologies raises particular conflicts. In this chapter I focus on the conflicts that revolve around angling. This is not to suggest that wider issues are less significant in the management and governance of aquatic and riparian ecologies. However it is the conflict between anglers and the different user groups and more-than-human actants in the networks that enable the functioning of the complex ecologies that give rise to salmonid fishing that is most relevant to this work. These conflict areas can be grouped under three main headings: other recreational use, hunting, and conservation and commercial fishing. It is with the last of these three that I begin this discussion of the conflicts surrounding angling.
Fish, Netting and Conservation

The Atlantic salmon is listed in both annexe II and V of the EU habitat directive; it is subject to general decline and local extinctions (Hendry and Cragg-Hine, 1997). As a consequence of this presence on conservation agendas and their value to anglers, much has been done to conserve and restore the habitats of both salmon and trout. However, research, conservation and fisheries management become closely intertwined with the exploitation of these species by anglers through institutions such as the West Country Rivers Trust, the Tweed Foundation, NASCO and even the Environment Agency.

The relationship between angling and conservation is complex and in many ways runs through the other issues in this section. However at the heart of the relationship between angling and conservation is the tension between the conservation of a species and the exploitation and execution of the organisms that are being protected. The Environment Agency’s National Trout and Grayling Strategy (EA, 2003) has at its heart an aim to ‘conserve and improve wild stocks of trout, sea trout, char and grayling…’ (Ibid. page 2), yet on the same page of the strategy is the statement ‘enhancing social and economic benefits from trout and grayling fisheries will be achieved primarily by promoting angling…’ (Ibid.). This tension is recognised by the EA and the Strategy, however, the justification of conservation through the social and economic benefits from angling, frames conservation in very particular terms and creates particular issues and conflicts.

Part of the justification for reducing net fishing licences was the resultant increase in the spawning population (EA, 2004)\textsuperscript{14}. As a consequence of reduced netting through agreements with net licence holders on three of the South West’s most significant salmon rivers the Tamar, Tavy and Lynher benefits from an increase of 500 spawning adults per annum. This represents a huge boost to the stocks on local rivers, however, from data on rod caught salmon in the South West (EA 2006) the five year average of retained fish is 878 (see table 1). Furthermore the same report suggests that a mean 990 fish are caught and released annually. With only

\textsuperscript{14} EA online news story: http://www.environment-agency.gov.uk/subjects/fish/fishnews/835768/ <accessed 06-09-07>
an 85% survival rate of released fish (EA 2003) that adds an extra 148 fish per year and creates a figure for total deaths of 1026 fish per year, twice that ‘saved’ through the agreement to cease netting on the Tamar, Tavy and Lynher.

The commercial netting in this instance is focussed on three rivers and the local impact will be greater than that felt from rod catches from across the region. However, there are 43 netting licences issued by the EA within the South West Region; but only 19% of permitted days were utilised in 2005 (EA, 2005:14), demonstrating the relatively lower importance of commercial net operations on salmon populations in the south west region. Moreover this is underlined when the numbers of fish taken through netting in the region as a whole is considered. The five year average for net catches in the South west is 1469 fish per annum (see Table 9.2). This corresponds to only 442 more than the number retained by rod catches. Indeed in 2005, as net fisheries continue to be bought out, net catches contribute only 27% of salmon catches in the South West (EA 2005: 25).

This decline in net fishing is undoubtedly a positive statistic for salmon populations, however, it underlines how deaths of fish are constructed as negative when linked to commercial enterprises and acceptable – as a consequence of the social and economic

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Table 9.8 Rod Caught Salmon in the South West adapted extended from EA 2005

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Net Catches SW Region</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>year</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>-----------------------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1999</td>
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<td>2000</td>
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<tr>
<td>2001</td>
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<td>2004</td>
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<tr>
<td>2005</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>mean</td>
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</table>

Table 9.9 Net catches in the South West from: EA, 2005
benefits of angling – when caught by recreational anglers. This underlines how the tension between preservation and exploitation is at the very heart of salmonid conservation. The justification for the prioritising of deaths by anglers compared to deaths by netting flows from economic reasoning for both local economies, salmonid conservation and wider ‘environmental issues’ (see for example Navrud, 2001; Curtis, 2002 Farber, 2002). There are a number of tensions within this literature and the allocation of numerical value to individual salmonids is problematic at a number of levels, but even if the economic justification holds, conservation continues to be framed in terms of salmonid availability for the hunting by anglers (a theme developed in the hunting section below).

The justification of conservation through exploitation raises issues about the genetic authenticity of fish. With the focus on the value of salmonid to anglers in justification of research and conservation, arguments can be made that frame successful conservation in terms of the presences of fish. Accepting this focus on presences, it is possible to posit stocking as a practical solution to degredations in the freshwater habitat and to combat high levels of at sea deaths. Indeed re-stocking has been implemented on some rivers in the UK such as the Tyne. However, recent developments in conservation practice have attempted to maintain genetic diversity and local uniqueness (Milner et al, 2004) by relying on existing populations to multiply rather than restocking a river. Despite this there have been calls in the angling press to stock with hatchery reared fish rather than wait for so called ‘natural re-stocking’ to increase the local population (Wigan, 2007). This appears to be an argument that the conservationists are winning as the authenticity of wild fish are becoming more and more relevant to angler’s experiences. This role of wildness in defining the angling experience is demonstrated by the uptake of the WCRT Angling 2000 scheme which attempts to position itself as providing opportunity to fish for ‘wild’ trout.

As chapter four discussed, the Angling 2000 scheme has a dual role, providing for both the local population and anglers from across the UK. There is a heavy density of anglers from Devon, Cornwall and Somerset. But, there are also large numbers of anglers using the scheme from counties as far away as Durham and Suffolk.
The largest proportion of anglers using *Angling 2000* come from Devon, but there are a similar number of individuals using *Angling 2000* from London as there are from Cornwall and Somerset. While the visiting anglers may make fewer annual trips than ‘local anglers’ they remain significant, as they make use of multiple locations across the UK.

This dual source of anglers is significant in that it is embedding *Angling 2000* in national networks of people, places and discourses. These visiting anglers connect different initiatives by various river trusts around the country and by doing so enmesh conservation and science led management with attitudes to angling and promotes the local specificity of experience within this wider context. Therefore *Angling 2000* promotes the importance of the ecologies that favour wild fish. Consequentially, the scheme becomes influential in shaping public attitudes to angling and the particular genetic resources of local fish populations. Beyond this elevation of the attitudes to fish and angling, the scheme is also promoting a particular narrative of the landscape of the South West. In this regard it is connecting to and re-enforcing the conceptualisation of the South West as unique and valuable. This framing of the unique landscape of the South West is widely adopted for the promotion of the tourist element, and as such is setting the landscape of the South West at the heart of the regional economy.

Beyond these tensions and contradictions within salmonid conservation at the local and national scale, wider aquatic policy is also bound up with the presences and absences of fish. Therefore, not only do these creatures drive conservation agendas in their own right, they also become indicators of wider water quality. In assessing water quality in various ecosystems, the EA developed a five tier scale based on chemical content (see table below). RE1 and RE2 are considered as appropriate for all fish (including salmon and trout) whereas RE3 and RE4 are considered as only suitable for coarse fish and the lowest (RE5) is thought to be of such poor quality that it would limit all fish populations. Therefore the presence (or absence) of particular fish species represents an embodiment of water quality outside of the moment that constitutes the test-tube test. Consequentially the
presence of salmon and trout in conservation projects is extensive. However, the practical implications of conservation raise many issues.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Class</th>
<th>Dissolved Oxygen % saturation</th>
<th>BOD (ATU) mg/l</th>
<th>Total Ammonia mg N/l</th>
<th>pH</th>
<th>Dissolved Copper μg/l</th>
<th>Total Zinc μg/l</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>RE1</td>
<td>80</td>
<td>2.5</td>
<td>0.25</td>
<td>6.0-9.0</td>
<td>5 - 112</td>
<td>30 - 500</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>RE2</td>
<td>70</td>
<td>4.0</td>
<td>0.6</td>
<td>6.0-9.0</td>
<td>5 - 112</td>
<td>30 - 500</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>RE3</td>
<td>60</td>
<td>6.0</td>
<td>1.3</td>
<td>6.0-9.0</td>
<td>5 - 112</td>
<td>300 - 2000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>RE4</td>
<td>50</td>
<td>8.0</td>
<td>2.5</td>
<td>6.0-9.0</td>
<td>5 - 112</td>
<td>300 - 2000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>RE5</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>15.0</td>
<td>9.0</td>
<td>-</td>
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</tr>
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</table>

Table 9.10
River ecosystem classification: water quality criteria
<Accessed 18-05-07>

In this regard, the presence of fish as indicators of water quality represents a hidden agenda of authenticity embodied in the presence of particular animals. As Waley, (2000) notes: ‘in Japan, the cleaning of the environment in the wake of rampant industrialisation was marked in popular and scientific discourse by the return of fish whose presence indicated cleaner water” (Waley, 2000:170). Similarly a March 2007 BBC Berkshire article heralds the Thames 'clean enough' for salmon.15 Therefore, what becomes important about river restoration or conservation is not the presence of the particular assemblages of chemicals, nutrients, insects and other organisms that constitute a ‘healthy ecosystem’ but the presence of particular organisms. Partly this is a product of the embodiment of environmental quality in organisms such as fish that enable the assessment of water quality beyond momentary test tube tests: that through a series of stages in the political and scientific process, the biodiversity and environmental quality of a river; catchment; landscape; region; can be filtered into the presences of particular

creatures. Indeed, the bodily form (health, size, genetic diversity) of particular organisms and populations become indicators of environmental quality (see Lorimer, 2006 for a greater discussion of this ‘alternative taxonomy’); that the presence of particular fish in particular conditions is taken as a description of water quality or biodiversity.

Furthering this discussion on the prominence of fish as indicators for public policy and subjects for research, salmonids can also be considered as ‘charismatic’ in the way that they occupy space in the collective conscious that decides what constitutes valuable ecologies (see Lorimer 2006; and Lorimer 2007); they are affective species and their presences conjure emotional resonance as well as ecological integrity. However, the conceptualising of fish as indicators of water quality and biodiversity could also be understood as a shaping of ‘big-nature’, biodiversity or water quality as a commodity that as Robertson (2006) suggests is an ‘uncontroversial measure’ that can be understood by both business, and in this instance, policy makers and research funding bodies. Such preferences are predicated on an established taxonomy that connects different species into food webs, chains and hierarchies, thereby allowing one species to ‘speak for’ the wellbeing of many. This definition of salmonids or other key species, as a currency for nature or a spokesperson for ecologies, represents an embodying of both scientific agendas and emotional resonance, and as such enables these issues to be quantified for the purposes of the financial and policy decisions that are typical of the governance of environmental and conservation issues. While this quantification enables decisions to be made, they give an illusion of fixity that hides the social and political processes that have given rise to such valuations and therefore consequential conservation.

Leaving this immediate conservation issue based on the presences or likely presences of various species one of the most fundamental issues facing salmonid conservation is global climate change. Increased temperatures on the rivers Wye and Dee have seen some growth rates of pre-smolt salmon (young salmon still living in freshwater) increase, though not significantly (Elliott and Hurley, 1997). Furthermore and possibly as a consequence of the preceding discovery, a decline
in mean smolt age (fish undergoing physiological changes in order to adapt for saline environments) has also been noted (EA 2005a). Post smolt data is even less certain, with few definite connections to be drawn between changes in sea temperatures and marine growth and survival (see for example Friedland et al., 2000; Crozier and Kennedy, 1997; and Friedland, 1998; Hughes and Turrell, 2003). However, Cairns (2003) does suggest that salmon may look to attain a particular weight before returning to spawn and therefore any changes in forage abundance and survival rates may reduce time spent in marine environments, thereby affecting susceptibility to predation and therefore return rates (Ea 2005a).

The future impacts of climate change on salmon, as in other areas, are uncertain, however it is expected that while the rises in temperature may result in increased growth rates that could be beneficial in the short term, as temperatures exceed the particular levels necessary for salmonid survival, populations, particularly in the southern half of the British Isles may fall (EA 2005a). Furthermore, with temperature changes are only one impact of global climate change, the increased incidence of winter floods and summer droughts could also impact pre-smolt survival (EA, 2005a). This raises two issues for salmonid angling. Firstly, it seems that not only is conservation for angling justifiable, it is justifiable in the short term as any benefits from conservation in the southern half of the UK are undermined by long term climatic changes. Secondly the reduced capacity of southern rivers to support viable populations of salmon in the face of climate change reinforces the physical location of salmonid angling in the ‘remote’ ‘rural’ spaces where human activity is considered to have less impact. This could reduce accessibility and opportunity.

In light of the possible impact of global climate change on angling, anglers could be expected to hold strong attitudes regarding global climate issues. Furthermore as Macnaghten (2003) suggests environmental issues are most keenly felt when they impact directly on the individual. Therefore, given the involved, embodied nature of the angling experience, vociferous views regarding environmental issues might be commonplace. However, attitudes amongst anglers to the scientific discourse
surrounding global climate change vary widely. Sentiments range from denial, disbelief and uncertainty as captured in the excerpt below:

…I’m not sure whether it exists, I’m not sure. I’ve listen lots to what is said about global warming, and the climate does seem to be a little bit changed, but if you read what has happened in the history of climate then we’ve gone through ice ages and it, you know, the weather develops in different patterns doesn’t it. And I wonder, you know; ok at time’s it seems hotter, at times it seems colder and I’m not sure whether it’s just a natural phenomenon, I’m yet to be convinced that what we are seeing is not a natural phenomenon.

Eric, Drift Reservoir 21st May 2006

This scepticism appears to deny the scientific orthodoxy that promotes the global climate change thesis. This is not the extent of angling attitudes to global climate change. One angler expressed a belief in the balancing power of ‘big nature’; the ability for the atmosphere to ‘cleanse itself’ as demonstrated by the following excerpt:

well yeah, this year, I have to say, this spring has pulled up more questions in my mind about global warming than any previous spring. So here we are two or three months into this fishing season and I’m thinking ice melt, north pole, north Atlantic very cold, lows coming off, now very cold, we’ve had a very cold winter, a cold northerly wind coming into the beginning of our fishing season, is that why the mayfly hatch is so late? Etcetera. Um they tell us that global warming in this hemisphere could mean more rain, flooding, perhaps not in my lifetime but it could come that way and if there is a huge rise in sea levels, Cornwall could become an island I guess. In the meantime, I think all our rivers could benefit from a bit more water, the fishing would improve probably, but I believe that nature has a way of cleansing itself – I’m just wondering that a very wet month of may is just the atmosphere cleansing itself

John, Roadford, 2nd June 2006

Another attitude that emerged through the interviews was a concern that the ‘natural world’ is in critical decline, a decline that is directly attributable to human action; as Bill suggested:

If I was to sum it up in one sentence, I have the gravest concern for the planet and the disrespect for it by man.

Bill, Upper Torridge 17th July 2006
This variation in the sentiments expressed by anglers may vary more than could be expected given Macnaghten’s (2003) assertion that issues relating to the environment are most keenly felt when they impact on the individual most directly. After all through the consumption of the fish environmental issues are physically consumed by the angler. However, throughout these excerpts is an awareness that issues in the environment, be that micro, meso or macro scale issues, impact on the fish, fishing and their experience of the more-than-human world. Even the angler who was so disbelieving of global warming walks when he can rather than taking the car and discusses his concerns regarding upstream pollution from the main road and run-off:

At the beginning of the season, on opening day the water was very discoloured. And it was like that for the first couple of weeks, and the fishing was not very good. And erm I thought it was just because we’d had a lot of rainfall and the feeder streams had got, you know, coloured up and it had coloured the whole water up. But as it turned out, it was a, I think a brown algae and the water was very, very cloudy, … … and I do wonder if it’s because there’s pollutants coming in through the streams or if it’s too much nitrogen, so things like that bother me. Whether their modern farming techniques are um causing water quality problems and of course, both of those streams go under the road, so if there was a bad accident somewhere, and diesel spill or something like that it could affect the water…

Eric, Drift Reservoir 21st May 2006

Therefore it can be seen that anglers are concerned about large scale environmental issues, though in varying degrees, and angling can be seen as a space in which these issues are both most keenly felt and most closely scrutinised.

The most significant aspect that emerges from these various discourses relating to the conservation and environmental issues is the way that fish become important for wider social agenda; that they are ‘charismatic’ (Lorrimer, 2007) creatures that are appropriated to speak for ecologies, but that their value to anglers is never surpassed. Moving away from this conservation agenda, the next section is concerned with the access afforded to anglers and the consequential conflict with other users.
Rights of Piscary and the Recreational Use of Water

Alongside the conservation issues, which are by no means limited to the issues described here, are the conflicts surrounding other recreational users of watercourses. The two key groups that come most often into conflict with anglers are nature watchers, and watersports enthusiasts there are also other users such as ramblers, dog walkers and other casual users of watery spaces which conflict with angling, however such conflicts are less obvious. In many ways the conflicts that arise through this competing use of the rivers and lakes of the UK are very apparent and relatively straight-forward. These issues arise from the competing interests of the various activities that focus on these spaces.

The antagonism between anglers and nature watchers stems from the effect that the presence of anglers interferes with the wider nature (beyond the ecology of the fish and its immediate environs) that is so valued by the wildlife watchers. These nature watchers tend to focus on bird watching and as the maps earlier show many reservoirs in the UK have facilities such as bird hides that cater for and encourage this pastime. This conflict is not limited to the lake and reservoir spaces, however, it is in these spaces that such conflicts can be most clearly seen. As the maps in the earlier chapters show, anglers are excluded from particular areas of the reservoir, both the banks and water immediately in front of hides (see map of Roadford lake figure 9.1 (below).

At Roadford the angler is excluded from the ‘nature protection zone’ that is located directly in front of the bird hide in the north east corner of the lake (marked with a small X in the top right hand corner of the lake). A similar exclusionary zone exists at Drift Reservoir. This exclusion of anglers from the spaces immediately in front of bird hides and from ‘nature protection zones’ indicates that from the birdwatchers perspective at least the anglers occupying the spaces of the reservoir banks, and the open expanses of water are some-how ‘out of place’. The presence of anglers represents a disturbance of what the birdwatcher expects from the particular watery spaces and the segregation of anglers and birdwatchers results in the anglers being removed from view through the mechanisms of the exclusionary
zones. The previous chapters have submitted that these are liminal spaces, and following on from this could be suggested that the bird watcher is uncomfortable with the angler occupying the spaces between the wet and the dry and understanding them in terms that are incompatible with the framing of ‘nature’ from the bird hide and the gaze through the telescope.

Figure 9.2
Map of Roadford Lake
The conflict with the birdwatchers is not limited to this ‘out of placeness’, and the exclusionary zones have some very practical justifications. The presence of anglers within these areas will affect the particular assemblages of bird and animal life that are present. This defining of animal presences can become quite literal as anglers and managers control the ecology of waterbodies to improve fishing such as through the control of predator species, such as the cormorant, or competitors, such as the swan. However, one of the most frequently cited reasons for excluding anglers from particular areas of a reservoir is the disturbance to nesting birds as Eric at Drift notes:

*Eric:* …I am always very wary that if I’m not careful, those other people are competing for your venue and if you are not careful they will take it all. And we’ve seen it down here at this venue because there’s no fishing up the very top, there is no fishing beyond a certain point up there. Because the bird watchers say that it disturbs the nesting birds which is…

*Jake:* Is that a recent development?

*Eric:* It happened about four years ago. And that, that really sort ofannoys me.

*Jacob:* Why is that?

*Eric:* Well, you know, it’s a nice piece of water up there. This is a huge lake and I don’t honestly think providing you are sensible that you are going to disturb nesting birds just because you walk past them. But that is an excuse: that the birds are nesting so you shouldn’t go up there.

_Eric, Drift Reservoir 21st May 2006_

As this excerpt shows, the angler is concerned that his access to the water is being limited; that he is being denied access to a ‘nice piece of water’ for reasons that seem to him unjust and unfounded. Regardless of the actual implications for nesting birds these access rights and ownership of the water is an interesting dimension. The Rights of Piscary in the UK are highly prized and can be extremely valuable in monetary terms. Whereas in other situations the angler uses environmental discourses to validate angling, in this instance the birdwatcher is using ecological arguments against the angler. In response to such challenges, the angler mobilises different arguments justifying his in monetary and practical terms:
Jacob: …do you feel that this is a predominantly and angling venue and therefore the birdwatchers are intruding on that or….?

Eric: That’s a difficult one. I mean I suppose the selfish part of me says yeah, you know, leave the anglers to it, the anglers pay, pay money to fish here, you’ve got to have a permit, I don’t think that the bird watchers do have to have a permit so they can just come and go as they like. Erm, so I suppose, yeah I sort of feel in a selfish way that it should be erm, you know, that anglers should have priority. Because in all honesty, there are not all that many places like this where you can go and fish, yet birds predominate in lots of places. You know, you can go and watch er, sea birds down at the Cliffside if you want and in the estuaries and wherever else….

…You could look at it both ways really, there is an element that if you are paying money you have the right to take some fish and if you want to take some fish, you have to pay for the privilege.

Jacob: So if you are talking about the bird watchers, do you think that they should pay to use the venue or …?

Eric: Yeah, if there are expenses in terms of maintaining the place they should make a contribution towards it.

Jacob: But they are not taking anything out.

Eric: They are not taking anything out, no, but at the end of the day, the foot path there has to be maintained, the banks have to be maintained, and if you go a bit further on there is a foot, er, a board walk to go across a marshy area that has had to be repaired and maintained because of the constant traffic back and forth and so, if that has to be maintained at our expense, anybody else who uses it should have to, ought to contribute to it’s maintenance.

Eric, Drift Reservoir 21st May 2006

This conflict of use between the anglers and the naturalist described thus far has arisen from the spatial politics of human and more-than-human actors within the particular locale of the reservoir, such conflicts are not confined to the space of the reservoir. As chapter five discussed, the space created by the reservoir is a relatively recent phenomenon. Consequentially the Right of Piscary for this venue are not so entrenched in the private property system that guards such rights so vehemently in other spaces. Furthermore, the reservoirs were usually constructed under local water authorities, and therefore, public access for a range of different
uses is preferred. However rights and conflicts of use do spill out from the spaces of the reservoir. Similarly to Eric, Joe believes that his use of the White River near St Austell, and the fact that he ‘found it’ qualifies him for an ownership that exceeds any claim made by the WCRT despite the fact that he does not pay anything for it:

He was proud that he knew about it [the venue] and that it was free fishing. He was very protective about the venue and made me promise not to tell anyone – that it was ok for me to revisit the spot with a very good friend but not to tell the world – he didn’t want people to come along and fish the river indiscriminately – taking all the big fish.

As a consequence of the high nutrient content caused by the sewage works there were abundant and large fish relative to the stream size. However he did not feel that it could take heavy fishing and voiced concern that the WCRT were attempting to gain the rights to fish and make it available to everyone on a ticket basis – something that Joe would not appreciate or abide by saying that ‘even if they did, I’d still fish here and not pay – I think they do good work but…’

Field Note Book, 19th June 2006

This belief in ‘ownership through use’ echoes of the ‘squatters rights’ in Property Law. Though Joe’s claims may not hold in a legal sense, it seems indicative of a belief that an angler, through informal access and the consequential fishing an angler ‘owns’ the river in ways that a non-angler or organising body does not. This ownership has been more directly challenged through the conflicting interests between anglers and watersports enthusiasts, in particular canoeists.

Where salmonid fishing and other water based recreation collide, economic justifications are often the most frequently cited response. A 2004 report from Scottish Natural Heritage on the relative merits of salmon fishing and canoeing on the River Spey in North Eastern Scotland found that more time (54,746 days compared to 38,194) and money (£11.8 million compared to £1.7 million) was spent on salmon angling and more jobs (367 compared to 48) were created (SNH, 2004: 2). However, a similar report for the Countryside Agency suggested that the issue is much more complex than purely financial returns and jobs created. In particular the CA report highlighted the possibility of water based recreation to be socially inclusive. While the issue of canoeists rarely came up during this study,
this conflict area remains a significant issue within the wider angling community as evident in recent articles in the angling press suggest (Trout and Salmon 2006a; 2006b; Dales, 2006). The CA report highlighted the importance of property rights in these access agreements (or lack there of). The report highlights how through the complex and longstanding rights of Piscary, the angler can exclude other water based recreation activity groups and consequentially any informal or negotiated access agreements are unlikely to meet the demands of recreational canoeists (CA, 2004: 4). As shown by the excerpts above, anglers feel justified in their ownership both as a consequence of the pecuniary expenditure and occupation through doing – that they have invested into the landscape through the management of rivers and the understandings gleaned through the unique position of the angler in the river. In the words of Tim Ingold (2000), anglers perceive rivers as taskscapes with the angler at the very heart. The emotional ownership of rivers cannot be limited to anglers but, the entrenched and extensive position with regard to management of rivers for angling may reinforce the anglers’ pecuniary arguments.

The existing landownership and access arrangements tend to favour particular groups and the social, cultural and historical idiosyncrasies of angling have been described elsewhere in this thesis. As a consequence of these social structures, any attempt to re-adjust access rights to water must be delicately considered. Such reform may not be within the agenda of the current government; the Countryside and Rights of Way Act 2000 opened up access to some non-enclosed farmland, the Hunting Act 2004 addressed Hunting with Dogs – any legislation regarding angling and access to rivers could be seen to further impact on already disenfranchised groups. Indeed this study has found that the government; the anti-hunt lobby; and access rights are highly emotive issues amongst anglers and are viewed as highly significant threats to angling (see Chapter Four). Consequentially any attempt to decrease either the extent or value of the Rights of Piscary, through changing access rights could further increase the already articulated concerns of anglers, as well as being challenging for both landowners and countryside groups such as the CA. This is not to suggest that such legislation should not be enacted,
but that there may be a lack of political will to challenge landowners, ‘rural’ votes, and the largest participant sport in the UK.

This sub-section has highlighted how there is a trend to value the ecologies of waterscapes through their importance to multiple uses and users, and to justify their presence through varied uses. However, as with the conservation ecologies highlighted above, the rights of piscary are not currently challenged and the value of angling is firmly entrenched in the social structures. What is evident in these arguments is the way that ecological arguments and different systems of ownership are deployed by anglers to justify their sport. Those who angle, own rights of piscary or are members of the exclusive syndicates that control these waters are holders of social and cultural authority. Thus what is fascinating is the use of these various discourses to not only justify angling but to also perpetuate existing power relations – to buy out netting rights or limit canoeists access, practices which could be described as equally embodied and environmentally aware. Thus what is evident in these landscapes is the way that not only is the river manipulated to create particular ecologies but that these ecologies and the scientific discourses which surround them are mobilised and manipulated to perpetuate particular ‘landscapes’ and existing social structures.

The following section addresses the conflicts that surround angling as part of the medley of hunting practices that occur in Britain. Once more it highlights how angling is both included and separated from other practices, thereby exposing the unique meanings and values ascribed to angling by anglers and wider society.

What is latent in this section is a value system that recognises that while killing fish may be an issue for many animal rights activists, the more poignant issues facing angling revolve around access and the entrenched inequalities of the current prioritising of Rights of Piscary over other interests groups and activities. Nevertheless, angling’s association with hunting remains pertinent and it is with the subtleties of this association that the following section is concerned.
Angling, Hunting and Animality

The political connection between angling and hunting is intriguing. Throughout this thesis I have regularly drawn on the connection between angling and hunting, both from the wider discourses and the personal narratives of anglers. The atavistic element is prominent in the angling experience (see Chapters Four to Seven for further discussion). However, angling has managed to avoid being subsumed within hunting: angling is not labelled as ‘hunting for fish’. Indeed aspects of angling may even lie outside the term ‘field sports’. This may be particularly true of the coarse fishing elements.

This recognition of the separation between angling and other hunting disciplines both from within angling and from wider social groups may diminish the validity of drawing associations between angling and hunting, but connections and parallels remain. Indeed this boundary between angling and the wider hunting debate reveals considerably more about the ordering of animals within society than any considerable differences between the various hunting practices of which angling is part.

Fish are, in many ways, not considered animals; they are largely absent from view physically and metaphorically in most social scenarios. The physical absence centres on the fact that while sheep, cattle, rabbits, birds, and so on feature both in representations of the countryside, individuals, and day to day encounters with the more-than-human world, fish are unseen. They occupy spaces that hide their presence. Even anglers are unlikely to come across fish on a daily basis. The metaphorical absence of fish as animals, can be depicted through an analysis of the multi-sensual experience of food shopping. In the highly packaged, sanitised consumerist centre of the supermarket where meat is sold in plastic wrapped packages, the fish counter displays whole fish complete, with heads. This presence of the complete organisms on the fish mongers slab is expected; large fish are cut up to order. A similar presence of animal carcasses in the supermarket space would cause unease. This packaging of food represents a ‘refashioning of nature’
(Goodman and Redclift, 1991) that increasingly distances the consumer from the producer (Ritzer, 1998) let alone the animal.

In spaces where the packaging of meat is less sanitised – the butchers – where whole carcasses are not considered out of place, the animality of meat is disrupted by the removal of the head and feet of the animal. Even a chicken, one of the few meats sold as a whole carcass is headless and footless, thus distanced from the animate living organism. This is not to suggest that fish are not offered for sale in inanimate ways, they are often filleted and as the can of tuna or salmon epitomises, are regularly packaged for ease of consumption. Indeed the canned salmon has a long and important history in British National Identity (Coates, 2006: 72) as it became a ubiquitous product across the British Empire. However, the whole fish, presented with head and fins, suggests that society requires less distancing from the animality of fish.

The acceptance of the stilled animate form of the fish is further underlined by the olfactory recognition of the smell of dead fish as something unusual. On entering the fishmongers, the smell of fish is marked. When a butcher’s shop, similarly focussed on the sale of dead organisms, is entered a particular odour is less recognisable. This is not to suggest that there is no smell in a butcher’s shop: it is filled with the smell of blood and meat, but that the animality of the organisms and their subsequent death is more readily accepted: that the recognition of former life conjured by the smell of dead fish is unusual and therefore remembered. This hierarchy of animality with fish considered as lower organisms may be the reason that angling has avoided direct comparison with hunting. This hierarching of animals and the subsequent impact on people’s sensitivity to killing was noted by Jack:

*Jack: …I think there’s a basic part of man’s hunter gatherer instinct, which makes fishing very popular. I’m sure that’s a big part of it, the primeval hunting thing. And fishing is probably quite an easy way to fulfil that urge without getting too bloody, you know, I think that’s why fishing is so popular, people don’t go out and shoot rabbits and pheasants and things because you’ve got to gut them and it’s a real messy thing when you go up to a rabbit and it’s still kicking and you know, a lot of people*,
you know, I was brought up with all this sort of stuff anyway, but a lot of people don’t do that, you show a lot of kids here’s a rabbit I’m going to kill it now, slit its guts open, where as a fish, you go plump and pull it’s stomach out. it’s not really a – I suppose not being a mammal, there is probably not that same link with life and death struggle kind of thing I don’t think. So I think that is probably why fishing is quite an easier thing. I used to do a lot of shooting when I was younger and you know, I’m still partial to, you know I’ll eat whatever comes my way, if there’s a leg of roe floating around I’ll have it as much as the next man will. But I do think that fishing is probably an easier way to fulfil that er, primeval hunting urge – it’s not quite so real or so drastic because you haven’t got the blood, and the, I’m sure it’s a mammalian contact – I know a lot of vegetarians, for instance, who’ll not eat mammals but they’ll eat chickens, but their reason for not eating red meat is because it is a mammal. As opposed to it just being a red meat.

Jack, River Camel 16th July 2006

As this excerpt shows, the ordering of animals as more or less animal is in fact an ordering as more or less human. That people connect more to endotherms than extotherms, limbed creatures than those with fins or wings, mammals over birds (and birds over fish – and possibly reptiles) those with red meat over those with white, and so on. Thus the reason that people are more comfortable with the presence of the stilled animate bodies of fish over chickens, lambs or cattle, is that they are further distanced from the ‘life and death struggle kind of thing’. Into this struggle can be a read a personal awareness of the individual’s own mortality. That the death of some animals is more keenly felt as it underlines the inevitable mortality. This has been unpacked by Tuan, and he views the human condition as an attempt to escape (among other things) animality through the process or dining rather than eating (1998: 33). However if this is inverted: that decisions over consumption (and hunting) reflect a recognition of individual animality – then this connection to animals can be understood in emotional terms. This may be set against a wider discourse or social process that attempts to distance the human from the animal, the cultural from the natural. Caught up in the justification of consumption or hunting is a particular reasoning that connects the human to the animal. In this regard the understanding of humans and animals may be considered in terms of friendships (Bingham, 2006).
As Derrida takes up Aristotle’s polemic ‘oh my friends, there is no friend’ (2005: 26) he acknowledges the continuum between friend and foe, the distinction between human and animal may similarly be framed as a continuum. Such thinking is closely linked with work on the *hybridity* of existence. But while ‘Hybridity and corporeality trip those habits of thought that hold the body apart from other bodies and the human away from other mortals’ (Whatmore, 2002:166), this continuum that is made evident through the hierarching of animals posits a hybridity that trips the boundaries of identity: That the self is constructed not in opposition to animals but on a continuum that includes animals and allows judgements about animals to be made in human, emotional terms.

By conceptualising these decisions in emotive terms this connects to the *charisma* (Lorimer, 2007) described earlier in this chapter. In this context, mammals and birds could be considered as having a greater charisma than fish; that some animals affect humans more than others. However, beneath this charisma, this affective emotional judgement of organisms is an understanding of animals in human terms, a form of anthropomorphising, no matter how buried and implicit or overt and explicit. The mammal – limbed, warm blooded, and bearing live young is considerably more human than a bird... continuing down to fish and beyond. Even within fish the salmon is prized partly because of its peculiar life-cycle: the rational explanation of developing an anadromous life-cycle in order to exploit the rich feeding grounds of the sea, is so often lost in the salmon’s majestic attempts to fulfil its epic journey and do its natural duty (Coates, 2006). Thus it is easier to imagine the humanity of animals so constructed than the roach that lives its life in a drain in fenland. But this human-animal continuum as suggested earlier is not a human animal continuum but a Self-animal continuum; that this is not anthropomorphism but egomorphism (Milton, 2005). That given the social and cultural constructions of particular animals, it is easier to become some animals than others.

As a consequence of this hierarchy of animals within the self-animal continuum it is easy to understand why angling has been less heavily scrutinised by the anti-hunting lobby. However I do not think that this is the limit of reasoning. There are
many different practices within hunting, some of which are more socially acceptable than others. In this order, the calm, serene and lonely construction of angling may facilitate its acceptability in comparison to its more bloody and boisterous counterparts. In hunting there are two themes beyond the ordering of quarry already described, that make hunting more or less socially acceptable. These are spectatorship on the one hand and consumption on the other.

The hunting for consumption seems more socially acceptable, despite the absence of any utilitarian need to fish in the contemporary western setting. Indeed killing fish is regularly justified in consumptive terms:

Bill: If it is large enough to keep, then you kill it – I make no qualms about it.

Jacob: So you have no qualms about it

Bill: No qualms at all. Just as if I was rabbeting I wouldn’t have qualms or… if it is to be taken to be eaten I have no qualms about it. But I couldn’t hunt a fox. Or an otter because what is the point of that?

Bill, Upper Torridge 17th July 2006

The hunting of edible species for pleasure as well as food, therefore becomes more justified and justifiable. While there is no need to hunt the angler can go to the supermarket or the fish mongers to provide fish but that there is some utilitarian output from the practise becomes part of the distinction between angling and fox hunting for example. Shooting could be justified in similar ways, that while there is an element of sporting enjoyment in hitting high game, the quarry is edible and consumed. When shoots record large bags and pheasants are driven over waiting guns for slaughter, the consumptive element is lost within the bloodlust of the kill, the excitement, the sport; and the social acceptability is reduced. This is evident through the way that various hunting practices have become marginalised or eradicated throughout history as Hoyle (2007: 4) notes:

For all the popularity of field sports and the culture of hunting, we should not assume that the killing of mammals and birds and sport was universally approved of even in the last quarter of the nineteenth century. Some sports were thought repellent and disappeared in the
face of public disapproval and legislation. The battue, in which the birds were driven towards the guns, was thought unsporting and even un-English.

The other theme that augments the social acceptability of angling over other field sports is the involved encounter that constitutes angling. This involved encounter is lonely, rather than social, multi sensory and constructed as having pre-modern resonances. In contrast, hunting with dogs can be perceived as highly socialised and thoroughly modern. The Bilsdale Hunt was established in the 1670’s however hunting became increasingly popular through the 18th century (Hoyle 2007b: 264) and became rooted in the establishment figures of the 19th and 20yj centuries. For some ‘membership of a hunt was plainly aspirational: along with a good horse, the right school for the children, it conferred social cachet for the arriviste’ (Hoyle 2007b : 263). That is not to suggest there is not diversity within those who follow the hunt. Indeed fox hunting may be one of the more accessible field sports for women (Hoyle 2007a: 39). However what sets hunting with dogs apart from some other forms of hunting such as angling is the spectatorship of a hunt. With dogs, the hunt is a multi-sensory experience of the wider landscape, animals, nature and the environment, but there is a visual element flowing from the enjoyment gained in watching a pack of dogs pursue a quarry. Such spectatorship is absent from a large percentage of the angling experience. While the televísual and magazine based literature that surrounds angling may induce degrees of spectatorship, the majority of the angling experience is personal, with spectatorship rare. Thus while hunting can be considered as broadly socially unacceptable as ‘opinion polls have persistently shown, small majorities in favour of legislative bans’ (Hoyle, 2007: xiii), some aspects of hunting are more acceptable than others.

Consequentially the legislation banning hunting with dogs can be considered as part of a process for the definition in the ethical landscapes of hunting along the themes of egomorphism, spectatorship and consumption; that hunting with dogs is less socially acceptable as a consequence of the way that the fox is constructed in a variety of ways which mobilises a process of egomorphism. As Woods (2000) identifies, the fox has been constructed in a variety of ways by both sides of the hunting debate. By constructing foxes as ‘cunning reynanrd’, ‘vicious vermin’, and
‘cuddly cub’ (Woods, 2000 pp 184/186/190) such discourses are reflecting and
developing an anthropomorphism such that ‘the representations of animals
mobilised in support of human-derived political positions are ones constructed by
humans and tainted with human interests’ (Ibid). Adding to this, the fox is killed as
part of a spectacle, firmly embedded within social networks and for non-
consumptive ends, hunting with dogs constituted an ethical position which
challenged individuals and society collectively in terms of consumption,
spectatorship and egomorphism. In contrast other forms of hunting, such as
angling are less challenging and therefore less challenged. But this is not the limit
of the complexity regarding angling’s position within the wider social context of
hunting.

With the exception of consumption, hunting and angling mobilise similar discourses
in explaining and justifying their existence. However, while hunting with dogs has
come under increasing pressure and an eventual ban in 2004, angling has
remained relatively unscathed by the animal rights lobby. Beyond the three themes
discussed above angling, or rather fishing remains firmly embedded in the social
and cultural framework of local and national identities. While arguments relating to
local and identity, especially rural identity, were mobilised in the hunting debate
(see for example, Milbourne, 2003), I suggest that angling or fishing at least is
even more firmly entrenched in the national conscious. The justification for this is
two fold, the first of which focuses on the popularity and wide appeal of angling;
and the second hinges on the role of ‘the island’ in national identity.

Angling is the largest participant sport in the UK involving over 4 million anglers
(Franklin, 1999). With a population of just over 60 million people, approximately
one in fifteen Britons are anglers. While fox hunting may be less male dominated it
cannot compete with such popularity. Moreover angling transcends the social and
cultural distinctions that have often been ascribed to class, and is not
predominantly either urban or rural. As such the social arguments that infused the
hunting debate loose weight when applied to the angling context.
Accompanying this popularity, is a national context that sees the fishing industry (to which angling can be loosely associated) as integral to an island identity. In front of a backdrop of falling fish consumption nationally (Franklin, 1997) the fishing industry, the government report *Turning the Tide* (RCEP, 2004) noted the detrimental effects of the fisheries sector and calls for radical change in fisheries policy (section 11.2/3). However currently there seems limited political initiative to fundamentally alter the approach in line with current initiatives that challenge assumptions of the role of farming in contemporary Britain or even the historical challenge of the coal mining industry.

Consequentially it can be seen that there are a series of social and cultural processes that have entrenched fish and fishing in notions of national identity. Coupled with this there are various processes that simultaneously position angling within, and separate it from, the wider hunting context. Caught up in this is a prioritising of animals that not only influences the construction of fish as a quarry, also underpins the approach dominant in Salmonid conservation that permits the simultaneous preservation and exploitation of a species that features on national and international conservation action plans. Sandwiched within these debates is the prominent issue of conflict between the ownership of rights of piscary and other recreational use.

Having drawn out what I consider to be the most prominent issues and conflicts surrounding angling I now want to bring these and the wider themes caught up in this thesis towards a political affectual ecology.

**Conclusions: Towards the Politics of Affectual Ecology**

This chapter has offered insight into the key debates and conflict areas surrounding angling. The politics of angling can be crystallised into three key areas relating to conservation, access and animality. Each topic infers much about the social and cultural position of angling and the associated values of fish, and the
practice of angling. Fish are important species, their use in policy arenas stems from the emotive and charismatic position they hold in contemporary society. However by implication, fish become the mouthpiece for ecologies as they are used as indicator species for the health and wellbeing of ecologies. The way that such values become embodied by salmonids creates particular tensions in reference to their exploitation by anglers. This chapter has shown how salmon removed from the system by anglers are constructed as acceptable and even desirable, whereas deaths associated with the netting industry is constructed as the dearth of salmon stocks. A final dimension to the conservation issue is that through bodily practices such as angling environmental issues are transposed into materialities that can be accepted and contested. That through angling not only are issues such as global climate change most keenly felt, they are most keenly examined.

The financial implications of angling can be considerable. The rights of Piscary are highly valuable, and angler’s access rights are firmly entrenched in both legislation and wider social structures. Yet anglers are not the only social groups that benefit or enjoy the spaces of waterscapes. While there are many casual users which may compete with anglers it is with nature watchers and watersports enthusiasts that access rights are contested most vociferously. The postal survey conducted as part of this study suggested that ‘the government’ was perceived as a significant threat to angling. This was often paired with ‘the anti-hunt lobby’. However, the access rights issue may become a more significant issue than any connection with the hunting ban. Despite this greater prominence of the access rights issue, the present government appears disinclined to legislate, pursuing more time-consuming consultative processes.

The association with hunting however cannot be overlooked. I submit that the greater acceptance of angling over other forms of hunting stem from a series of social and cultural processes that entrench fish and fishing in the national identity. Such processes can be condensed into three themes: egomorphism, spectatorship and consumption, and make the hunting of fish more socially acceptable than other forms of hunting.
In conclusion, it is evident that fish are highly emotive organisms and angling is an important practice, that stimulate numerous conflicts and contentions around many different issues. Though these conflicts may be more politicised they do not differ in substance from what has been suggested in the previous chapters. Angling revolves around an affectual ecology that is immersed in a politics of emotion, identity, landscape, masculinity, and nature. The final chapter draws these themes together as it seeks to unpack the valuable ecologies of angling and develop an affectual political ecology and a methodology that permits the emotional register of such valuable ecologies to be positioned within the wider social, cultural, historical positioning of the individual.
Chapter 10

The Politics of Affectual Ecology

Introduction

The previous chapter addressed the politics of angling and showed how angling and anglers come into conflict with interest groups and other users of water ways. However there is another politics of angling, a politics which is not directly concerned with conflicts with other users. It is a politics that infuses every aspect of the angling experience. It is a politics of practice that shapes and is shaped through experience of materialities, the construction of identities, the understandings of space and place: a politics of being affected. It is towards this politics of affectual ecology that this chapter works. In doing so it begins with a reiteration of what the preceding chapters have discussed. It then relates the content of these chapters to the aims and objectives set out in the introduction to this thesis. Moving beyond these themes, the chapter puts these issues in a theoretical context that explains associations in terms of tensions, underlines the importance of performed, emotional, affected understandings of the world, and propounds a collective understanding of relations. And then offers a context and future possibilities for this work. However, first I want to reiterate what the various chapters of this thesis have discussed.

Threads of Representations

The first two chapters of this thesis analyse angling, fish and anglers. They provide a context for the thesis by discussing accounts of angling from both the angling
and non-angling discourses. They highlight how fish are socially and culturally
important. Fish are eaten by many, studied by biologists, are indicator species for
public policy as well as being important for anglers. The first and second chapters
also offer some of the theoretical framework that has shaped the thesis and at the
core of chapter two is a historical context of angling. This historical perspective is
significant as it remains extremely important in shaping contemporary experiences
of angling.

The third chapter outlines the methodology for the project and highlighted how
angling is a performative process and identifies the influence bodies and personal
histories can have on research. The method enabled a reflexive approach to the
power relations in the research and interrogated how these may have shaped the
research. Chapter three also introduces auto-photography as a narrative research
tool which demands participants become reflexive and introspective about the
tensions and inconsistencies of their experience. Through this self-reflexive
practice the various meanings and values become crystallised, though not
necessarily visualised in the various images created through the research process.

Chapter Four begins the presentation of a ‘geography of angling’. It provides a link
between the methodology and the later substantive chapters as it gives colour and
context to this relatively under examined practise, sport or pastime. It positions the
work in terms of the demographics of the various angling groups involved in the
project. It connects the anglers of the South West to the anglers of England and
Wales as well as giving some of the histories of the people involved in the
ethnographic aspect of the project, in an effort to position them within wider social
and historical processes and contexts.

Following on from these somewhat introductory chapters, Chapter’s Five to Eight
begin to unpack the personal narratives and wider discourses of angling. The first
of these substantive chapters recognises that angling occurs in some very
particular locales, and is influenced by the materiality of landscape; that a lived
spatiality not only shapes the spaces through which it is enacted but that
individuals are simultaneously influenced by landscape. The chapter begins by
recognising the significance of water in these landscapes, as it shapes and is shaped by the various spaces and practices that constitute angling. It goes on to recognise the importance of landscape in shaping understandings of identity, by showing how understandings of landscape and identity are co-constituted and unfold simultaneously. In a critique of this spontaneity, of this affective process, the chapter highlights how such events are retrospectively narrated. Experiences become solidified through the process of recounting stories; stories that foster a sense of dwelling and belonging. Running through the chapter is a critique of the preponderance with the visual in landscape studies and the resultant focus on the more-than-visual in recent ‘affective’ understandings of place, space and identity. Rather this chapter suggests that the visual and mechanisms that focus on the visual such as photographs, do not preclude post or extra sensing experience but rather can become an important component in the cementing of affected, embodied experience through the narrative process.

Chapter Six takes a more focussed approach as it deals with the close-up encounters with particular animals, in particular settings. It describes how angling constructs the more-than-human, and considers how the angler becomes bodily involved with the environment, especially in light of the particularity of interactions within spaces defined by water. It goes on to describe how tension equilibria are created throughout angling and used to manage the relationship between angler and the fish, self and other, nature and culture. Through this control of the relationships the agency of the fish is increased, as is the likelihood of failure and the consequential excitement surrounding possible success. But these tensions become more than a quest for excitement, they become a new ‘language of attachment’ (Ignatieff, 1984: 139) as the boundaries between wet and dry; human and more-than-human; known and unknown; self and other are transgressed and re-affirmed.

Angling allows escape. When fishing the angler is so locked into what’s going on, that the pressures of everyday life are forgotten; that angling allows an escape from modernity as everyday life is buried through the immersion in a temporally and spatially separated practice. Angling commands so much focus, that problems
have to be forgotten or are at least allowed to sort themselves out. Through analysis of this *flight to nature* it is obvious that such escapism can be considered an escape to a *culture of nature*. Chapter seven further discusses this notion of escape in terms of an escape of people and of animality, and demonstrates how these forms of escape are temporary and incomplete – that the loneliness of angling is only partial and only becomes significant when contextualised with a return to the group. Similarly, angling may be considered as a blurring of the boundaries between human and animal, but that this may be a mechanism for re-forming the boundaries between human and animal. However the chapter also recognises that despite the incompleteness, and illusionary nature of the process of escape, the significance of the materiality of landscapes as vectors in the process of distracting, forgetting, escaping cannot be undermined. It goes on to suggest that escape as part of a leisure experience is crucial to understandings of identity, space and place.

Animals occupy an interesting role in leisure pursuits. The chapter unpacks three themes – the exotic, the duel and the hunt – which are pertinent to the use of animals as objects of leisure within angling. It highlights the processes and constructions that mythologise and domesticate fish. Furthermore it interrogates the role of the duel as part of the social and cultural practices that govern *the hunt*; how they are heavily reliant on particular constructions of place but are also affected by the materialities of space.

Continuing this interrogation of angling identities, chapter eight investigates the particular forces that go into defining angling masculinity. It shows how masculinity is uncertain, provisional and subject to change and re-definition and provides evidence for the multiplicity of the subject positions within the angling experience. This multiplicity is set against the uniformity of some other representations of masculinity in the rural and rurality in the masculine which equates masculinity with strength, dominance, physical form and particular relations with the more-than-human world. In doing so, such formulations undermine the complexity and tensions within rural masculinity. By recognising this complexity the chapter is not an attempt to reaffirm differences between groups or between individuals but
rather within individuals; suggesting that there are multiple masculine subject positions within the angling male: that there is a cadence to the multiplicity of masculinity.

Having identified the significant themes that emerge through this thesis, I now want to briefly identify how the chapters and themes correspond to the various objectives laid out in chapter one and listed in Table 10.1.

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<th>Objective</th>
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<td>i  To examine the role of water in creating particular understandings of space, place and identity.</td>
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<tr>
<td>ii To analyse angling as a bodily practice through which the more-than-human world is <em>encountered</em> and <em>narrated</em>.</td>
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<tr>
<td>iii To unpack the influence of such encounters on understandings of animals, landscapes, identity and society and nature debates</td>
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<tr>
<td>iv To set out an agenda for a politics of affectual ecology.</td>
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In utilising auto-photography, this thesis, makes significant methodological and conceptual contributions to ‘valuing nature’. Auto-photography is a method that utilises a narrative approach which enables the meanings and values that are caught up in the valuable ecologies of angling to be unpacked. The ‘stilling of moments’ afforded by the process of taking photographs, grants access to the emotional and less rationalised nebulous of beliefs that extend beyond financial expressions of worth. The narrative process offered by the auto-photography enables the respondent to become introverted and reflexive about not only what is important, but about the tensions and inconsistencies of experience. This is not to suggest that auto-photography is without limitation, the time consuming nature of these close-in investigations of experience makes them less practical for extensive studies. Furthermore, much has been said on the violent, political, situated practice of envisioning and the use of visual methods to gain access into practices which are more-than-visual must be acknowledged. However, the image is not the extent of the method; the discussion radiates out from the image to involve wider meaning and social processes which are not necessarily visible in the image.
All four objectives have been addressed at different stages in the thesis, as I have made contributions to relevant theoretical debate within geography. I have developed current thinking in animal geographies by including non-mammalian animals, and through chapter six in particular developed a geography of unseen animals. My use of hybridity and narrative into identity theory develops a notion of the constructed self as an incomplete and partial project, filled with tensions, and adds to understandings of nature and society. In contrast to existing work this thesis recognises that water creates spaces that are unique and possess a materiality that shapes understandings of the self-in-situ. Chapter eight extends current thought on masculinities, and identifies a multiplicity and cadence to masculinity.

Objective four is achieved throughout the thesis but it reaches its pinnacle in this and the preceding chapter. It is to this affectual ecology that I want to now turn. In so doing, I will highlight the importance of tensions, emotions and materialities and finally the social and cultural context of affect.

**Towards a Politics of Affectual Ecology**

Chapter six introduced tension equilibria both as a way of understanding excitement in leisure and as a metaphor for human-animal interactions. Hybridity recognises that the boundaries that hold bodies as separate are blurred and permeable, however such boundaries matter. *Tension equilibria* is offered as a way of explaining the hybridity of identity. That, after Derrida, (2005) ‘there is no friend’, but a continuum between the self and other that connects the angler and the trout. The conceptual bodily boundaries that hold these two bodies apart reflect the associations that define the angler as human and the trout as fish. These associations pull against the interaction formed between the angler and the trout; this is the tension. These tensions are not singular and bilateral, but are components in the web of interactions that define Deleuze and Guattari’s rhizomes or crowds (2004). These tensions are affect, or charisma, or emotion, or politics,
the impulses, interests, fascination, revulsions of encounters; they are the social, cultural, historical processes that demand attention.

Tension equilibria have much in common with Actor Network Theory. However they differ in four ways. Firstly they concerned with identity as well as materialities. That is not to suggest that materialities are categorically separate from identity formation, but that these tensions are not just between actors but within actors. In contrast ANT has been described as ‘semiotics of materiality’ (Law and Hassard, 1999: 4). Second, these tension equilibria are momentary and fluid thereby reflecting the dynamism of existence. The networks in ANT suggest a fixed spatiality, temporality and hierarchy of actors and relations. This has begun to be addressed by later works on ANT (see for example Law, 2000). Third and flowing from the second point tensions can be and are multiple; that the existence of one tension does not negate the presence of another. And finally, tensions recognise a politics of associations, that the assemblages of actors is imbued with power relations that have different and evolving emphases. These tensions do not rely on zero sum equations, and their equilibrium is only momentary: relations are temporally stilled in space and time rather than being fixed and located.

Having identified tension equilibria as a mechanism for describing the affect of valuable ecologies, it is important to discuss how these tensions can usefully be examined. Two routes are most prominent: first an investigation of the various presences of processes and actors that are at work in the hybrid space of the tension equilibrium. The second avenue recognises that these equilibria arise not from the presence of particular actors or processes but through their interaction – that tensions are created and maintained through the performance of the tension. Such performativity and Non-Representational Theory (NRT) more generally has gained a considerable following in certain areas of geography.

This thesis has involved, in part, issues of performativity, and draw on NRT theoretical approaches. Such work has relevancy as it is only through the performance that tensions are formed and maintained (Dewsbury 2003). That is to say that the assembly only gains relevancy through interactions, ‘to realise that we
are always thinking on our feet’ (Dewsbury, 2000). It is helpful to acknowledge this spontaneity of life, to involve feeling or emotion separate from thought or action but with active consequences and recognise that such emotions have material and political consequences as they both inspire action and are used in political arguments (Thrift, 2003). Consequentially such approaches become important when attempting to consider the more-than-rational world, as the affect of materialities only becomes (at best) partially incorporated into rationalised representations.

However, the spontaneity of unfolding of events is also only a partial description of existence. Performances do not occur without thought; without precedence, without context. And neither are actors marionettes dancing on the strings of social forces. The encounters described through this thesis are very thoughtful interactions, and while particular events may represent a spontaneity that is not captured in representations, they also rely on social, cultural and political forces to give them meaning. The spaces of performance rely to two other spaces; first events do not occur in isolation, they are prepared for, either directly as in the spaces of the fly tying bench, or indirectly through knowledges relating to the particular sensual stimuli that signal a fish. As Fulkus suggests:

During recent years this odd prescience has become more and more pronounced, especially after long quiet periods of fishing when nothing has been moving. It manifests itself by a sudden tingling of the senses; a vague feeling that I am about to hook a fish; that now is the time; that such and such is the place or that a certain fly should be used.

(Falkus, 2002: 153)

This somewhat ethereal discussion epitomises how spontaneous encounters do not occur without precedence. Following this through gives the second important space of the event (or third if you include the event itself): encounters become meaningful after retrospectively being connected to other events. This is to suggest
that the triggers that forewarn anglers only become informative once they have been given coherency after they have been experienced. Indeed performances or the spaces of non-representational experience are connected to other events and other spaces. Consequentially, emotional experience cannot be isolated out from reasoned representations and categorised as ‘excesses’ (Massumi, 2002) or othered from rationality (Anderson, 2006) – such excesses do inform rational choices. Therefore, while performances remain important as they form and reaffirm tension equilibria, they do so within a particular set of social and cultural positions that remain crucial to experience. It is to these politics of tensions that I now turn.

This politics of tension equilibria, or the politics of affectual ecology, has some roots in political ecology, however there are also some marked differences. Political ecology has a long history. Emerging during the 1960s it looked to draw together Marxist political economy and cultural ecology (Nietschmann, 1973). In so doing, it hoped to explain resource use issues through the historical context and political processes that give rise to resource distribution and affects their use. It applies political principles to understandings of ecosystems and applies ecological principles to the processes of power. However, this explanation of the complex interface between nature and society leaves much to be desired; not least in that it perpetuates the nature-society binary as either ecology is inserted into political thought or politics is appropriated by science. If this binary is eschewed, then in order not to dispense with political ecology entirely a new way to ‘bring the collective together’ (Latour 2004: 53) must be imagined. This collective recognises the interdependence of existence and calls for a democracy that reflects such ecologies. Hinchliffe, (2004) looks to develop a careful political ecology that is ‘an openness to listening for things that matter, a willingness to be confronted with matters whose matterings is not yet determined...’ (p.14). And so as the collective is formed through an ethnology of being. So to is the affectual ecology formed as we rub up against organisms that matter.

Once more this echoes what Lorimer (2007) terms charisma as some creatures begin to matter more. But the collective is not limited to organisms, and neither is it limited to those things that can be categorised as charismatic organisms. It is an
autonomous commonwealth that recognises the hybridity of existence through a system of tension that demand that people, organisms, things, actors are attended to. The affective process is a drawing in of the emotive into the realm of politics and science but through a process that recognises that ‘the more-than or less than-rational cannot be reduced to a range of discreet internally coherent emotions which are self identical with the mind of an individual’ (Anderson, 2006:735). Therefore an affective political ecology looks to move away from the webs of interactions that constitutes a (careful) political ecology to recognise that an assemblage of organisms affects individuals in ways which cannot be reduced to its constituent parts or particularly charismatic organisms such as the leaping salmon. But finally it recognises that affect, emotionality, matterings cannot be taken out of the social, historical and political context of the individual that give rise to valuable ecologies.

This politics of affectual ecology or tension equilibria, therefore is a process by which the performative, emotional and material experience of the world is given cogency. It is an attempt to recognise the democratic of hybridity and the immediacy of performativity, but within a narrative framework that recognises the historical and political context of events.

**Implications for Further Research**

This chapter has discussed how this thesis has worked towards a politics of affectual ecology – the way that the ecologies of angling demand attention and become socially and culturally valuable. This is an attempt to bring together performance and the social and cultural processes behind such performances. It is neither a listing of power relations and nor an isolation of ‘the event’. Instead it is an attempt to recognise the ethical and political implications of affect. This final section attempts to suggest how such a stance may impact on further work. These implications can be categorised into two groups, first the more empirically based implications of this thesis for future work; and secondly the theoretical implications.
Therefore in this section I pick out the empirical and theoretical contributions of this thesis and suggest how they will become enrolled in future research trajectories.

**Empirical Implications**

Empirically this thesis has raised a number of relevant points to current geographical debate. In particular, issues relating to angling, geographies of water, animal geographies and methods have considerable bearing on possibilities for future research.

**Angling**

The approach utilised in this thesis contrasts sharply with the discourses which surround and inform angling and the management of fisheries. The style of the work may in many ways reduce its immediate transferability to wider audiences. However there is scope for the findings of this research in regard to the points at which the valuable ecologies of angling become crystallised into particular issues such as fish, biodiversity, landscape or escape, to be of interest to the fisheries management arena. Such points could be particularly pertinent as trusts such as the WRT or the Wye and Usk Foundation look to combine fisheries science and management with a commercial element. The work also has implications for the way that the conflicts surrounding waterways are managed. The way that particular powerful parties raise ‘ecological’ arguments to justify and entrench existing structures suggests particular questions regarding access, river management and rural politics.

In discussing angling in this thesis, there has been a focus on salmonid angling, and a prioritising of fly-fishing. The focus was necessary in practical terms and connected with the prevalence of ‘game fishing’ amongst users of the WRT. However, angling is a highly spatially and culturally differentiated practice.
Therefore having identified the significance of angling, fish and observed the general absence of work on angling in geography, there is great scope for future work to examine the role of angling in shaping understandings of space and place in a variety of different locales and social and cultural contexts.

**Water**

In discussing angling, this thesis has engaged with the burgeoning literature on geographies of water. Inherent in many of the arguments made through this work is a discussion of the role of water in shaping understandings of space, place and identity and way that the particular ecologies created by water enable the particular performances of angling. Therefore, what is implicit in this thesis is a call for a geography of water which recognises that water is more than a resource, that it generates particular relations and connects different issues, scales and approaches and has a materiality that shapes, and influences understandings of people and places.

**Animal Geographies**

By engaging with fish this thesis challenges the preponderance of understandings of mammals in writings on animal geographies. This is not to undermine work on mammals, but that by discussing the way that fish are appropriated into various discourses much can be said about animality, humanity and understandings of the self. This has implications for analysing the way that animals and animality are used in academic, political and lay discourses. Therefore the thesis opens up opportunities to develop understandings of animals that go beyond the mammalian.

Fish remain largely unseen, therefore this work also begins to offer a geography of unseen animals. By discussing how these unseen animals speak for ecologies and wider environmental quality, the role of the *unseen presences* of animals is made evident. The way that fish are appropriated into various discourses highlights how
animals can cut across social processes and support and/or deflate particular hierarchies; that despite invisibility, fish demand attention. This unseen quality of fish also has implications as to the way that animals are encountered. The invisibility of fish generates a particular relationship between angler and fish which reiterates the issues relating to animality, humanity and the self. Consequently, this thesis is also a call for greater research into the importance of the unseen presences of animals in shaping everyday experience.

Methods

This thesis used a mixed approach. The two significant points which emerged from this mixed approach were the embodiment of positionality and the use of auto-photography in generating a narrative approach. The way that the body of the angler is involved in the environment and shaped by the practice of angling highlights the way that the positionality of research is performed within bodily limits. Therefore what this opens up is an interrogation of the performance of research and significantly the way that such research is written – that writing is also a performance and a process by which the fleshiness of experience is written into a coherent story.

The other significant methodological point arising from this work is the usefulness of auto-photography in generating a narrative approach. In this instance photographs are used to trigger accounts of events and to encourage individuals to become introverted about the tensions of experience. Even when photographs fail, the attempt to still moments, offers opportunity to unfold the neat packet of experience to discuss how events, creatures, landscapes become important. There is scope to develop this approach, not that it is limited to photographs, to generate methodological approach which creates and discusses events and the way that such moments are packed into coherent narratives.
Theoretical Implications

Having discussed the direct implications of this research and the way that they might unfold in different directions, this section discusses the possible theoretical contributions made by the research and the way that such beginnings may continue. These theoretical contributions centre on two interlinked concepts: narrative, and the politics of affectual ecology.

Narrative

The thesis has drawn heavily on the concept of narrative – the way that the hectic complexity of existence is drawn into an often linear coherent story. The methodology attempted to invert this somewhat by encouraging participants to examine the tensions and inconsistencies of their angling experience. The necessarily retrospective consequence of narrative – that events are experienced and then given cogency – creates an apparently coherent story that can simultaneously be filled with tensions. Even the process of preparation is in fact an anticipation of future pasts, that what is imagined is an event which will connect with the existing narrative and permit particular stories to be told. This narrative approach has considerable implications for the performative and non-representational elements of current geographical debates. While such conceptual positioning is not necessarily antagonistic with NRT it does suggest that the politics that surround events – the social and cultural milieu that informs experience – is at least equally significant. Therefore this work opens a range of possibilities for further work into the process of narrative. The most direct transfer may be into landscape and identity as the role of memory in understanding of space is unpacked.
The Politics of Affectual Ecology

As discussed above, the politics of affectual ecology recognises the immediacy of performance and the democracy of hybridity but positioned within an historical and political context which decides what and how things matter. This politics connects with the issues of narrative and in many ways the implications of the work are similar: while the democratic and immediacy is recognised they are simultaneously challenged as the historical processes which have given rise to existing power relations are given credence. The specific implication of the politics of affectual ecology is that it is an attempt to identify not only what matters but how such things matter. Therefore there are possibilities to develop this preliminary framework into a robust analytical tool for the investigation of human interaction with the more-than-human world.

Conclusion

This Chapter therefore has reiterated the points offered through the preceding chapters. It has examined these issues to discuss how they represent a politics of practice that identifies how materialities, fish, things come to matter and how such importance is woven through various discourses. Partly as a conclusion and partly as a departure point, the chapter has laid out a politics of affectual ecology which develops a notion of tension equilibria to understand what matters and the political structures which create and perpetuate meaning and value.

To conclude this chapter and the thesis, the implications of the work have been identified. The implications mentioned include both empirical and theoretical contributions and cover a wide range of topics, and creates a number of possibilities. Empirically the thesis has connotations for understandings of angling, water, animal geographies and methods and theoretically the thesis continues work on nature society relations in terms of narrative and the politics of affectual ecology. This is not to suggest that such work is not already occurring but that the
Valuable ecologies of angling offer much to understandings of contemporary nature society interactions.
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**Y**


**Z**


Appendix A: Covering Letter

Department of Geography,
Tremough Campus,
University of Exeter, Cornwall Campus,
Perry's,
Cornwall,
TR10 9EZ

Jacob.A.Bull@ex.ac.uk
31st February 2006

Dear fellow angler,

I am a postgraduate researcher at the University of Exeter, Cornwall Campus. As part of my research I am studying the viability of current initiatives on a number of topics surrounding their experiences of angling. The research is part-funded by the European Union and involves observation and interviews in watercourses led by The Institute of Grassland & Environmental Research and the Universities of Exeter and Lancaster. But on a personal note the research is driven (at least in part) by my enjoyment of angling.

Part of my information gathering revolves around a questionnaire. If you could take the time to answer these questions, you will be greatly aiding me in my study, and will be contributing to an academic understanding of angling and its importance in the South West.

If you feel inclined to express your opinions regarding angling and specifically angling in the South West, please complete the enclosed questionnaire and return it in the pre-paid envelope. Alternatively, an electronic copy can be found at [www.uoe.ac.uk/geography/jacob.htm](http://www.uoe.ac.uk/geography/jacob.htm) which can then be emailed to the above address.

There will be further opportunities for people to be involved in this research - more information can be found at the end of the questionnaire, on the web, and in the enclosed leaflet.

It is my intention that the product of this research will be used in academic publications (such as my PhD thesis). Rest assured, your anonymity will be maintained throughout. Furthermore, any information you give in the questionnaire, or in any other form, will not be released to any other body or organisation for purposes, such as market research.

I am extremely grateful for your time and effort, and if you have any further queries regarding this study please do not hesitate to contact me. Thank you.

Kind regards,

Jacob Bull
Appendix B: The Leaflet
Appendix C: WRT Letter

29 March 2006

Dear Angling 2000 Supporter

Please excuse this unsolicited letter. As you are probably aware the Westcountry Rivers Trust supports research to improve the health of rivers and fisheries.

The Trust is currently supporting a research project investigating the social effects of angling on individuals and the wider benefits of angling to society. If you are prepared to complete a survey, which will contribute to the study being undertaken at Exeter University, and we would very much appreciate your participation. The information you supply will remain anonymous and I have enclosed a freepost envelope to allow you to return the completed form.

If you would rather not participate just ignore this letter and have a good season’s fishing.

Yours sincerely

[Signature]

Dr Dylan Bright CBiol MIBiol
Director
Appendix D: Covering Letter (photographs)

Jacob Bull  
University of Exeter  
Geography Department  
Cornwall Campus  
Penryn  
TR10 9EZ  

Email: Jacob.A.Bull@ex.ac.uk  
Telephone: 01326 370400  

5th May 2006  

Dear Volunteer  

Thank you for completing my questionnaire on angling in the south west and for volunteering to aid me in this next stage of my research; I am extremely grateful. The returns rate has been fantastic and the results are very interesting – people seem very willing to talk about their angling. If you are still willing I would like to talk to you further about your angling experience. As I mentioned in the questionnaire, as part of my research I am conducting some informal interviews and going fishing with people. For each volunteer, this will mainly occur on a single day, revolving around a morning or afternoon/evening fishing followed by an informal interview.

While the majority of the involvement will occur on a single day, I am also keen for volunteers to photograph their angling experience. I have enclosed a disposable camera for you to do so, but please feel free to use your own equipment if you would feel more comfortable. My hope is that you will take pictures of the things that are most important to you about fishing. I want you to attempt to capture in the photographs the aspects and things that are most meaningful about your fishing in general, or a specific session - in many ways the reasons you go fishing, or what makes angling important and attractive to you.

I realise that to some this may seem daunting, but I want to emphasise that the exercise is not about producing ‘the perfect picture’; I am not looking for photographs that could be entered in a photographic competition or grace the front an angling magazine - I want images that are specific and personal to you and your fishing experience. If you feel it would help get your message across, there will be opportunity for you to attach other media to particular images to put them into a context. Such additions may be other images, articles, book excerpts, pieces of music, recipes, or anything else that you feel may be useful.

Once the photographs have been taken (please do not feel obliged to use all the film) please could you post the camera (or film if you have used your own equipment) to me in the enclosed pre-paid envelope. Alternatively, if you have used a digital camera
please could you return the disposable camera along with a set of the images you have taken (electronic versions by email are fine). I can then return a copy of the photographs to you and we can talk about them when we meet. In my schedule I was intending to fish with you in June/July. If you would like to email, phone or write to me we can confirm a date and time.

If for any reason you feel that you can no longer participate in this research please return the camera to me I will no longer bother you. However I hope that you will enjoy participating in this research and I look forward to meeting you.

Kind regards,

Jacob Bull
Appendix E: The Questionnaire
Angling Questionnaire

Your angling experience

1) Why do you go fishing?

2) What do you enjoy about angling?

3) What are the less enjoyable aspects?

4) Who taught you to fish?

4 a) What age were you when you took up angling? (Please tick)
   13 and under  14 to 20  21 – 35  36 to 50  51 to 65  Over 65

5) Do you usually fish alone? (Please circle)  Yes  No  Occasionally

5 a) If you do not fish alone; with whom do you usually fish?

6) Would you describe angling as a rural pursuit? (Please circle)  Yes  No

6a) Why (not)?

7) Would you describe angling as a blood sport? (Please circle)  Yes  No

7a) Why (not)?

8) Are there any threats to angling? (Please circle)  Yes  No

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8 a) What do you consider these threats to be?

8 b) Who is(are) responsible for these threats

9) Have you taken action against these threats? (Please circle)    Yes   No

9a) If yes, what?

10) Do you consider any of the following negatively affect your angling experience? (Please tick)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Threat</th>
<th>Yes</th>
<th>No</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Agricultural development</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Traffic volume and noise</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Urban growth</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Loss of biodiversity</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Industrial development</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lack of services (e.g. shops, pubs)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pollution</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Housing development</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Loss of green space</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lack of access</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other – please specify</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

If you would like to make any further comments regarding any of these points please do so here.

11) How do you feel about the following statements? (Please tick)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Statement</th>
<th>Strongly agree</th>
<th>Agree</th>
<th>Neither agree nor disagree</th>
<th>Disagree</th>
<th>Strongly disagree</th>
<th>Don’t know</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Catching fish is irrelevant to my enjoyment of angling</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The remoteness of a location is important to me</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The scenery/location is important to me</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I enjoy the peace of angling</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I enjoy the challenge of outwitting a fish</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I enjoy being amongst nature</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Strongly agree</td>
<td>Agree</td>
<td>Neither agree nor disagree</td>
<td>Disagree</td>
<td>Strongly disagree</td>
<td>Don’t know</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>---------------</td>
<td>-------</td>
<td>---------------------------</td>
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<td>-------------------</td>
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<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

It is good to be away from the work place
It is good to be on my own

It is good to catch something to eat

Angling gives me a good opportunity to spend time with friends
I enjoy fishing trips more if I catch a fish
I enjoy being outside in the fresh air

It is good to be by the water

I enjoy catching something on tackle I have made
Angling is different from my other hobbies
Good angling depends on good equipment
Tackle should be matched to the fish to ensure a good fight
Angling relies heavily on specialist knowledge
Angling generates a special understanding of nature/the environment

*If you would like to make additional comments about any of these statements, or to make further suggestions please do so here.*

12) Do you kill your catch? (Please circle)  
Yes  No  Sometimes

12 a) How would you rate the following methods for killing a fish? (Please tick)  
Humane  Neither cruel nor humane  Cruel

Hitting it with a priest
Slitting its throat
Stabbing it in the head
Breaking its neck
Leaving it to die on the bank

*If you would like to elaborate on any of your answers please do so here.*
13) How do you kill your catch?

14) During your season, how often do you go fishing? (Please tick)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Occasionally</th>
<th>Once every 6 months</th>
<th>Once every 2 to 6 months</th>
<th>Once every 1 to 2 months</th>
<th>Between once a month and once a week</th>
<th>More than once a week</th>
<th>Don’t know/ not applicable</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>

15) How far did you travel for your last fishing trip?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>In miles?</th>
<th>In hours?</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>

16) Roughly how long was your last fishing trip? (Please tick)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Up to 1 hour</th>
<th>1-2 hours</th>
<th>2-3 hours</th>
<th>3-4 hours</th>
<th>4-5 hours</th>
<th>Over 5 hours</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>

17) Roughly, how much did you spend on your last fishing trip on the following…

- Permits and licences
- Tackle
- Other (please state)

18) On average, how much do you spend annually on the following…

- Licences
- Permits
- Tackle (consumables e.g. flies, leaders etc)
- Tackle (long lasting e.g. rods, reels, waders etc)
- Other (please specify)

19) Do you fish for salmon/trout exclusively? (Please circle)  

Yes  No

19 a) If not, which other species?

19 b) And how often do you fish for these other species?

20) Do you only ever fly fish?  

Yes  No
The countryside

21) How do you feel about the following statements? (Please tick)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Strongly Agree</th>
<th>Agree</th>
<th>Neither agree nor disagree</th>
<th>disagree</th>
<th>Strongly disagree</th>
<th>Don’t know</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>

Developments should occur mainly in the cities

Development should be permitted in the countryside to allow people to choose where they live
The beauty of the countryside should be preserved by stopping too many people visiting it
It is legitimate to eradicate invasive species to protect native species

Compared to other users, farmers have too much influence on the countryside.
Hunting with dogs is cruel and it was right to ban it

Hunting with dogs reinforced class divisions and it was right to ban it

Hunting with dogs was a rural issue that did not concern me

Hunting should not have been banned

There should be more national parks and nature reserves

Less intensive farming methods should be encouraged

Organic livestock farming is better than mainstream methods
22) Do you think the countryside is threatened? (Please circle)  
Yes  No

22 a) Why (not)?

23) Are you concerned about changes in the countryside?  
Yes  No

23 a) Why (not)?

Biographical information

24) Age (Please tick)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>19 or under</th>
<th>20-29</th>
<th>30-39</th>
<th>40-49</th>
<th>50-59</th>
<th>60-69</th>
<th>70-79</th>
<th>Over 79</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>

25) Sex (Please circle)  
Male  Female

26) Where do you live? (Please state the name of your nearest village/town/city and your county)

27) How many people live in your household?

28) How many of these go fishing?

29) What is your ethnicity? (Please tick)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>British (Afro-Caribbean)</th>
<th>British (Asian)</th>
<th>British (White)</th>
<th>Welsh</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>English</td>
<td>Scottish</td>
<td>Cornish</td>
<td>Other (please state)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

30) Which of these best describes your current employment situation (please tick)

- In full-time paid employment
- Self employed (full-time)
- In part-time paid employment
- Self employed (part-time)
- Retired
- In full-time education
- Currently looking after the family/home and not in employment
- Other (please specify)
31) What is your job title?

32) How long does it take you to get to work?

33) How many hours do you work a week?

33 a) At work do you…
Often work late at your place of employment? Yes
No
Have the flexibility to decide when you arrive at work? Yes
No
Have the flexibility to decide where and when you work? Yes
No

33 b) Do you…
Bring much work home with you? Yes
No
Enjoy your work? Yes
No

34) In which category does your annual household income fall? (Please tick)
0 to 9,999
10,000 to 19,999
20,000 to 29,999
30,000 to 39,999
40,000 to 59,999
60,000 to 79,999
80,000 to 119,999
120,000 to 159,999
Over 160,000

35) What proportion do you contribute to that annual income? (Please tick)
None
About 25%
About 50%
About 75%
All

36) Other than angling, what hobbies do you enjoy?

37) How often would you do the following? (Please tick)
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Activity</th>
<th>Never</th>
<th>Occasionally</th>
<th>Once every 6 months</th>
<th>Once every 2 to 6 months</th>
<th>Once every 1 to 2 months</th>
<th>Between once a month and once a week</th>
<th>More than once a week</th>
<th>Don’t know/ not applicable</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Go out for a meal in a restaurant</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Go to friends for a meal / entertain</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Go out for a drink with friends</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Go for a walk</td>
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<td>Go horse riding</td>
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<td>Go to the cinema</td>
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<td>Play individual sports or exercise</td>
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<td>Play group sports</td>
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<td>Engage in country sports (hunting, shooting etc.)</td>
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<td>Go to the theatre</td>
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<td>Go to a concert</td>
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<td>Sit down to read a book</td>
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<td>Sit down to watch the television</td>
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Thank you for taking the time to complete this questionnaire, your co-operation is greatly appreciated.

I want to involve people throughout this project - this questionnaire is only one stage in my data collection - I am looking for individuals who would like to be involved in some interviews and ethnographic work. The interviews will be informal; the aim is to hear individuals’ opinions on some of the issues surrounding angling and may revolve around photographs. The ethnographic work will focus on a morning or afternoon fishing - I want to join you on a fishing session, to talk to you at stages during the session, and to witness your angling experience alongside you. Obviously I am not expecting you to bear the cost of this trip.

If you are interested in becoming involved with further aspects of this research please enter your details in the space provided below.

Name_____________________________________

Address_________________________________________________________________________________
_______________________________________________________________________________________
_______________________________________________________________________________________

email address______________________________

Signed ____________________________Date_______________

If you are under 18 please get a parent or guardian to approve of your engagement in this research.

Signed _______________________________ (parent or guardian)            Date _____________