

An Archipelagic Environment:  
Re-Writing the British and Irish Landscape, 1972-2012

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## Abstract

This thesis explores a contemporary literary movement that has been called 'the new nature writing', framing it in its wider historical and cultural context of the last forty years. Drawing on recent developments in cultural geography, it explores the way such terms as 'landscape' and 'place' have been engaged with and reinterpreted in a diverse project of literary re-mapping in the British and Irish archipelago. It argues that the rise of environmentalism since the late 1960s has changed and destabilised the way the British and Irish relate to the world around them. It is, however, concerned with challenging the term 'nature writing' and argues that the literature of landscape and place of the last forty years is not solely concerned with 'nature', a term that has come under some degree of scrutiny recently. It sets out an argument for reframing this movement as an 'archipelagic literature' in order to incorporate the question of community. In understanding the present uncertainties that pervade the questions around landscape and place today it also considers the effects of such political changes as the partial devolution of Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland on the British and Irish relationship to the land. The literature that it takes as its subject often explores the way personal and communal senses of identity have found a renewed focus in a critical localism in opposition to more footloose forms of globalisation. Through a careful negotiation of Marxist and phenomenological readings of landscape, it offers an overview of what is a considerable body of literature now and what is developing into one of the most consistent and defined literary movements of the twenty-first century.

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