

<AT>'Sensuous Singularity': Hamish Fulton's Cairngorm Walk-Texts

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<ABS>**Abstract**

The purpose of this article is to consider walking artist Hamish Fulton's 'walk-texts' as ethical responses to the environment. In light of the environmental crisis that manifests in the proposed stratigraphic designation 'Anthropocene', Jane Bennett's writing on enchantment offers a direction for thinking about how an ecologically ethical sensibility might be cultivated. Fulton's communicative response to his walking art, I argue, embodies the discernment of 'things in their sensuous singularity' that Bennett identifies as a key attribute of enchantment. Yet, in his own writing on his art practice, the walk-texts are conceived as secondary – a necessary counterpart to walking as an experiential activity. By honing in on two recurring strategies we find in Fulton's Cairngorm walk-texts – the list and the return – I argue that his work offers a linguistic mode that holds great potential for tuning us to environmental ethics in the Anthropocene.

<KW>**Keywords:** Anthropocene, ecology, ethics, Hamish Fulton, Jane Bennett, sensuous singularity

<HDA>**Starting Points**

<FL>Since the early 1970s, Hamish Fulton has been combining two distinct activities: walking and art. Rejecting art-historical discourse that has labelled him variously as a conceptual artist, a sculptor and a Land artist, Fulton refers to himself simply as a walking artist: 'Every piece of art I make results from the experiences of specific walks – Every walk I make is recorded in words'.¹ The act of walking is where Fulton's art happens; the

documentation of the walks, in ‘walk-texts’ and photographs, records, in his own words, only the presence of a human experience. Yet, as his page on the British Council website maintains, ‘the communicative power [of his work] comes from the resonant texts which accompany [it]’.² These texts range from simple declarations of intent detailing the duration, date and location of a walk, to concrete poetry, *haiku*-style descriptions, and combinations of word and image that draw influence from advertising and graphic design. Often repeated in different contexts – from gallery walls to artist books and postcards – as well as with variations in form, Fulton’s walk-texts display a conscious engagement with language, typography, punctuation and the interplay of words and images. In this article, I focus on a selection of the walk-texts produced as a result of Fulton’s walks in the Cairngorms. Fulton has returned to the Cairngorms, *Am Monadh Ruadh*, or the red hill range, in north-east Scotland repeatedly since his first walk there in 1985, and has produced dozens of walk-texts documenting his experiences. Many of these are collected in two volumes, *Mountain Time Human Time* (2010), a book resulting from a project with Deveron Arts, a socially engaged arts organisation based in the small Aberdeenshire town of Huntly, and *Wild Life* (2000), a collection of Cairngorm texts produced between 1985 and 1999.³ Spanning twenty-five years, Fulton’s Cairngorm work expresses an intense attachment to and fascination with place that is representative of his work more broadly. The environmental concerns that permeate much of Fulton’s practice also find acute expression in response to this particular place, which he has dubbed Britain’s last wilderness.

Fulton has become increasingly candid about the ecological considerations underpinning much of his work, but as yet these motivations have remained largely unexamined in the growing criticism engaging with his art. Here, I begin to consider how Fulton’s art might be approached through the broad and inclusive category of ecocritical thought.⁴ In part, this responds to the critic Timothy Clark’s recent assertion regarding the

current landscape of ecocriticism, that '[l]inguistic narrative ... seems at issue solely as that mode which ... fits least well the demands of the Anthropocene'.⁵ The suggestion is that there are modes better suited for attending to or addressing our current epoch, marked as it is by large-scale and irreversible human impact on the Earth. Clark's comments reflect his observation that several prominent literary critics writing in this field display an 'almost complete absence of literature or the arts of language' in their discussions, turning instead to visual and other modes of artistic production.⁶ My contention is that Fulton's walk-texts may offer an alternative mode of linguistic engagement more adept at addressing our current ecological moment.

I approach this questioning of Fulton's work through the term 'sensuous singularity', which I draw from Jane Bennett's writing on enchantment in her 2001 book, *The Enchantment of Modern Life*.⁷ The ability, or striving, to recognise things in their sensuous singularity is an integral component in the cultivation of an enchanted sensibility, which, for Bennett, has ethical potential, specifically for an environmental ethics. Bennett's argument for enchantment responds to what she diagnoses as the prevailing disenchantment narratives of modernity, which she traces through, among others, Max Weber, Hans Blumenberg and Simon Critchley.⁸ A disenchanted condition, it is argued, 'discourages affective attachment to [the] world', and is therefore responsible, in part, for the continued exploitation and disregard for both human and non-human life which has played a significant role in the current ecological crisis.⁹ This is a view that is shared by Fulton: 'As a contemporary artist', he writes, 'I believe the causes of global warming are humanity's lack of consideration for the diversity of species on the planet'.¹⁰ Enchantment, in Bennett's terms, describes a childlike sense of wonder about things, a sensibility that is open to being 'struck and shaken by the extraordinary that lives amid the familiar and everyday'; enchantment, she writes, 'requires active engagement with objects of sensuous experience, it is a state of interactive

fascination’.¹¹ Although enchantment may be something that strikes us, that we encounter unexpectedly, crucially, for Bennett, ‘it is also *a comportment that can be fostered through deliberate strategies*’.¹² We find these strategies throughout Fulton’s practice, informing his own interactions with ‘objects of sensuous experience’ in both his walks and walk-texts. In the reading of Fulton’s work that follows, I argue for a reappraisal of the walk-texts, holding them to perform, as much as the walks themselves, these strategies for re-enchantment. In the second half of the article, I develop a reading around two recurring strategies found in the Cairngorm walk-texts – the list and the return. Through these, we can discern Fulton’s attentiveness to things in their sensuous singularity, and thereby explore how his walk-texts communicate an ecological ethics in line with Bennett’s thought, that attends to the demands of the Anthropocene.

<HDA>Fulton: Walking and Walk-Texts

<FL>Walking, argued by many to offer in itself a strategy for gaining a deeper engagement with or appreciation of the world, is choreographed in Fulton’s work in such a way as to evoke the intentionality that Bennett advocates. Fulton employs tactics to alienate the everydayness with which we commonly regard walking. Such tactics have included walking for seven days in the Cairngorms without speaking, or assigning arbitrary distances to be walked each day, as in the series of walks conducted from his home in Kent between 1996 and 1998. Each work in the series involved Fulton repeating the same return route each day for seven days, on routes that extended up to thirty-eight, forty and forty-four miles.

Elsewhere he has established routes following roads, linking rivers or extending from coast to coast across numerous parts of the United Kingdom, Ireland, Europe and Japan. In his solo walks, he regularly imposes time restrictions that constrain or extend a walk beyond its ‘ordinary’ or ‘natural’ duration. This might involve a self-imposed number of days the walk

will be made over, or designating a specific day on which to begin or end, often associated with lunar or calendrical cycles. In 2010, in the project with Deveron Arts that resulted in *Mountain Time Human Time*, Fulton undertook a twenty-one-day walk in the Cairngorms, starting from Huntly Square and ending at the Scottish National Outdoor Training Centre at Glenmore Lodge. Eighteen years prior to the Huntly walk, in 1992, he undertook another twenty-one-day walk, coast to coast across France. That walk, to illustrate the point, was 600 miles longer than the Cairngorm walk of 2010. Fulton also has a recurring fascination with the number seven: ‘Seven’, he writes, ‘the readymade – the seventh wave, the seven colours of a rainbow. Rainbow is a seven letter word. Uses for the number seven already exist in the world – the trick is to discover them’.¹³ The twenty-one-day Cairngorm walk of 2010 took the number of days Fulton had walked in the region to 140, composed entirely of seven-day multiples. While these tactics appear to imbue Fulton’s work with a sort of pagan teleology, or suggest a fascination with physical and mental endurance, he is every bit as concerned with making walks in response to the pressures of contemporary life, and through clearly defined political motivations.

In group walks, his strategies are perhaps even more elaborate. His *Walk Around the Block* (2010), also in Huntly, necessitated that participants walk clockwise around a block of buildings near the centre of town in silence, in single file, while maintaining a steady distance of two metres from the person in front, for a period of two hours. “‘Art walks’”, writes Fulton, ‘encourage inventiveness, creating new perceptions of familiar neighbourhoods – transforming our sense of purpose. Choreographed in cities, these walks are not limited to recreation and being “outdoors”, they also change our sense of time – generating a momentary shift out of our worn brain furrows’.¹⁴ Such claims place Fulton directly in a lineage marked out by the art-literary history of walking, from the Surrealists, through the Situationist derive, and on to the psychogeographical wanderings that succeeded these earlier

attempts at a defamiliarisation of the environment and derangement of the senses through walking practices. Fulton's practice likewise celebrates the walk in terms of the bodily and subjective encounter with landscapes and temporalities, but he claims to draw inspiration more from mountaineers and climbers than from other artists. This is not to say that Fulton's work is apolitical. As Victoria Pomery and Jonathan Watkins write, '[calls] for political independence, for Tibet, and previously on behalf of Australian Aborigines and North American Indians ... recur in Fulton's work and correspond to the individual and artistic freedom it embodies'.¹⁵ His *Slowalk in Support of Ai Weiwei* in the Turbine Hall at Tate Modern in 2011 is a case in point. The walk, which consisted of ninety-nine people attempting to make four painstaking thirty-minute crossings of the hall – only twenty-three metres wide – over a period of two hours, in silence, was organised as a response to artist Ai Weiwei's 'disappearance' and imprisonment at the hands of the Chinese government. Ai Weiwei's *Sunflower Seeds* installation was in situ in the hall during the event. Fulton has written of this walk that he 'simply wanted to show [his] support for his COURAGE. The courage of a brother artist existing in a country with no rule of law'.¹⁶ Courage is a seven-letter word.

While active campaigning for political independence and human rights is an integral part of Fulton's practice, his engagement with the Cairngorms, as a celebrated – if questionable – last vestige of 'wild land' in Britain, is representative of the ecological preoccupations that underpin his work. Francesco Careri suggests that 'Fulton develops the theme of walking as an act of celebration of the uncontaminated landscape, a sort of ritual pilgrimage of what remains of nature'.¹⁷ Fulton follows the philosophy of 'leave no trace' throughout his walking practice, entering into an ethical contract with the environment that is grounded in the intention to 'receive influences from nature' but to influence it as little as possible in turn.¹⁸ Wildness is thus a prominent feature in Fulton's writing. He notes in his

essay for *Mountain Time Human Time* that ‘[the] Cairngorms are the most extensive area of subarctic landscape in Britain – they are the highest, wildest, coldest, snowiest’, and ends his essay by declaring that ‘[at] the top of the 2010 list [of priorities], the most important is wild nature’.¹⁹ The very notion of the Anthropocene, however, makes the idea of ‘uncontaminated’ nature or even ‘wild nature’ problematic. Writing almost a decade ago, Will Steffen, Paul J. Crutzen and John R. McNeill noted that already sixty per cent of Earth’s ecosystems had significantly degraded, but their account of global temperature increase and the rise in carbon dioxide present in the atmosphere implies that nowhere on the planet remains unaffected by human impact.²⁰ Elsewhere, Timothy Morton argues that the Earth ‘now contains throughout its circumference, a thin layer of radioactive materials, deposited since 1945’, a marker of a significant moment in the Anthropocene, described by Morton as ‘a geological time marked by the decisive human “terraforming” of the Earth as such’.²¹ Fulton does recognise the inadequacy of the term ‘wild’ when he tempers his claims for the Cairngorms by noting that they are in fact ‘very small and not very wild’.²² However, the nature/culture dichotomy that inheres to the very conception of wildness as something outside of human contamination, and which contemporary critical movements including ecocriticism and new materialism – of which Bennett is a key thinker – strive to overcome, seems to persist in the tension that marks the relationship between the walk and the walk-text in Fulton’s own articulation of his practice.

In response to Gavin Morrison’s questioning of his aphorism ‘there are no words in nature’, Fulton says this: ‘The price I pay for not mimicking nature is that I provide written information about my walks’.²³ The encounter with landscapes and temporalities is central to Fulton’s work, and especially to the tension that pervades the understanding of the walk-text as a separate, mediated document evidencing the event of an experience: to walk is to encounter – space, land, trees, sights, sounds, smells, animals, footprints, cold, etc. – while to

make the walk-text is to record such encounters, but not to replicate them. As Careri writes, in Fulton's work '[t]he representation of the path is resolved by means of images and graphic texts that bear witness to the experience of walking with the awareness of never being able to achieve it through representation'.²⁴ The walk is an absent presence in the walk-text, while the walk-text is a necessary supplement to the walk: 'the price' to be paid. The implication is that the encounter with the walk-text is in some way inferior to the bodily, experiential encounter of the walk. But this stems from a foreshortened conception of the walk-text. Concerning the field of non-representational theory, geographer John Wylie notes that 'the act of representing (speaking, painting, writing) is understood ... to be in and of the world of embodied practice and performance'.²⁵ Representations are here understood not as a code one must crack, but rather as performative acts in themselves. In *Minimal Ethics for the Anthropocene* (2014), Joanna Zylińska makes a similar claim for ethics, arguing that ethical practice involves inscription. Zylińska defines ethics as a 'cultural practice, worked out by humans across history, as a form of regulating ways of co-existing and co-emerging with others'.²⁶ 'This cultural practice', Zylińska continues, 'involves providing an account – verbally, experientially, or aesthetically – of these processes of co-existence and co-emergence'.²⁷ 'There is', she writes, 'a story-telling aspect to ethics'.²⁸ Viewed in this way, the environmental ethic underpinning Fulton's walking art is to be found both in the walk and the walk-text. The walk-text needs to be conceived as a performative act, as both representation *and* practice.

Zylińska's call for the provision of an account can, in turn, be appended to Bennett's articulation of what constitutes her ethics of enchanted materialism. Ethics, for Bennett, is comprised of a moral code and the sensibility needed to enact it; this sensibility needs to be continually cultivated and maintained. The sensibility that underpins her ethics of enchanted materialism is defined as entailing a 'hyperecological sense of interdependence', an

‘appreciation of nonhuman, as well as human, sites of vitality [which] ... proceeds from and towards the principle of treading lightly upon the earth’.²⁹ Bennett does not go as far as ‘leave no trace’, but insists instead on what she terms the tempering of technological engagements with ‘the modesty that comes from acknowledging the independent vitality of nonhuman forms’.³⁰ Bennett recognises the vitality, the vibrancy (as she comes to call it in her 2010 volume, *Vibrant Matter*), or the affective force of things. Her claim is that by becoming more alert and sympathetic to the objects and things that surround us, there is a greater possibility of treading more lightly – of ‘minimizing harm and suffering’.³¹ Crucially, part of this effort entails, in Bennett’s terms, ‘the need to discern more subtly the *sensuous singularity* of all things, natural and artefactual’, or, in another phrase, ‘to hone sensory receptivity to the marvellous specificity of things’.³² Taking Bennett’s thought together with Zylynska’s assertion that an Anthropocene ethics involves the provision of an account prepares the ground for a closer look at Fulton’s Cairngorm walk-texts. How might we read these texts, in light of Bennett’s thought, as singular instances of such an account? I am suggesting here that Fulton’s walk-texts perform a receptivity to the sensuous singularity of things in the Cairngorms, and that in doing so they can open our thought to the implications of the Anthropocene. More specifically, I want to do this by focusing on two strategies that recur in these works: the list and the return.

<HDA>The List

<FL>The games theorist and object-oriented philosopher, Ian Bogost, offers an insightful commentary on the list in his chapter on ‘Ontography’, in *Alien Phenomenology*. Bogost provides a range of definitions and applications of ontography, drawing from fellow object-oriented philosopher Graham Harman, physicist Richard F. Kitchener, and science and technology scholar Michael Lynch. For these thinkers, ontography is held as the descriptive

counterpart to ontology. In geography, meanwhile, ontography refers to the description of the human response to the environment.³³ In the end, Bogost suggests that we could ‘adopt *ontography* as a name for a general inscriptive strategy, one that uncovers the repleteness of units and their interobjectivity’.³⁴ Ontography, he writes, ‘can take the form of a compendium, a record of things juxtaposed to demonstrate their overlap and imply interaction through collocation. The simplest approach to such recording is the *list*’.³⁵ Bogost’s language here echoes Bennett’s desire for singularity in interdependence, and thus posits the list as a powerful tool in representing the discernment of things in their sensuous singularity.

Lists are a recurring feature of Fulton’s Cairngorm walk-texts. Indeed, Fulton has referred to his walk-texts generally as ‘life’s lists’: ‘The work of art (walk-text) contradicts the reality of nature: “life’s lists” set against a broad sweep of hills’.³⁶ In *Mountain Time Human Time* we find several. In a two-page walk-text describing a ‘seven day wandering walk’ in 1999, a list of mainly Gaelic place names is presented in four columns (Figures 1 and 2). We find the same list in *Wild Life*, there presented in three columns across three pages.³⁷ Fulton’s topological markers provide a map in the abstract sense, rather than the smooth contour-bound flow of the Ordnance Survey (OS).³⁸ If we are to trace the markers Fulton provides here on the OS map, we find that they do indeed mark out a route. They are points on the journey. What is striking, however, is the disjuncture between their appearance on the page and the route they trace across the map. The path the list suggests curls and spirals, returning on itself; names like Rothiemurchas and Einich Cairn are repeated. It weaves and wanders over the map, touching on watercourses, lochans, summits and ridges, hollows and woods, while the path on Fulton’s walk-text moves vertically and horizontally down, up and across the four columns. Tracing the names on the map like this reveals what is marked by the white space that lies between these toponyms on Fulton’s page. When we look

at the map, the terrain across which these points link discloses innumerable features. We can imagine this terrain in the space-time of Fulton's walk: the undulating ground, rocks, water, high crags, the fluctuations of cloud, the movement and calls of animals and birds, precipitation, light and shade; we imagine the multi-sensory tapestry of such experience – the scents, textures, sounds, the taste of air and water, and of food foraged along the way. The non-representability of such a dizzying catalogue of experience and sensation becomes clear. This is Fulton's 'contradiction', between art and 'the reality of nature'. Rather than attempt to reproduce the experience of the walk, Fulton records only a selection of proper nouns. But in doing so, his spare, economical text produces a space that we are urged to fill. If we engage closely with Fulton's minimal walk-text, following the path it sets out before us, then, paradoxically, the fullness of that reality begins to emerge, precisely as a result of the disavowal of mimetic representation.



**Rothiemurchus
Creag an Leth-Choin
Lochan Buidhe
Ben Macdui
Loch Etchachan**

**Beinn Mheadhoin
Coire Etchachan
Glas Alte Mor
Moine Bhealaidh
Coire Ruairidh**

Beinn A' Bhuid	Coire Bogha-cloiche
Cnap a Chleirich	Allt a Choire Ghuirm
Leabaidh an Daimh Bhuidhe	Lochan Odhar
Dubh Lochan	Rothiemurchus
Carn Fiaclach	Allt an Lochain Odhair
Allt an t-Sneachda	Sron na Lairige
Dubh-Ghleann	Braeriach
Allt an Aghidh Mhilis	Einich Cairn
Lairig an Laoigh	Allt Loch nan Cnapan
Glen Derry	Sgor Gaoith
Glen Luibeg	Sgoran Dubh Mor
River Dee	Creag Dubh
Glen Geusachan	Coire na Leacainn
Loch nan Stuirteag	Am Beanaidh
Einich Cairn	Rothiemurchus

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<CAP>Figures 1 and 2. Hamish Fulton, 'Walking', in *Mountain Time Human Time*, 8–9. © Hamish Fulton and Charta Milan, 2010. Reproduced with kind permission of the artist.

The text that opens *Wild Life*, from a seven-day walk in 1985, is composed of a list that extends to seventeen pages, one of which can be seen in Figure 3. It is a prodigious list. Fulton's walk-text seems to suggest a parallel between an ontographical listing of everything the artist encounters as he walks in an area of the Cairngorms, and a list of 'marvellous specificities'. Again, there is no attempt at mimetic representation. Language is the medium of these accounts, where Fulton uses words as both signifiers of meaning and graphic design. The simple use of colour and punctuation – red dashes, black text on white background – isolates each thing, affords it its own space within the work. Elizabeth Long suggests that Fulton, here, 'in no way tries to capture the exterior beauty of the ... landscape that is the locus of his art ... [but uses] words and their pacing and repetition to convey the rhythms of a

branches in the stream ■
broken pine branches ■ snow
capped rocks in the stream ■
snow filled deer paths without
deer tracks ■ feeding deer ■
disappearing deer ■ deer
tracks on flat snow covered
ground ■ dead grass ■ a few
snow flakes falling ■ old trees
■ drops of water falling from
branches into the snow ■
green leaves ■ dead grass ■
wind through the pine trees ■
no sound of the stream ■
distant bird song ■ anthills
facing south ■ sound of the
stream ■ small herds of deer

<CAP>Figure 3. Hamish Fulton, extract from ‘Seven Days Walking Seven Nights Camping in a Wood Cairngorms Scotland March 1985’, in *Wild Life*, 19. © Hamish Fulton, 2000. Reproduced with kind permission of the artist.

walk and to reveal the close attention to detail that results from treading the same path over and over’.³⁹ In an earlier version of this work, Fulton organised the list as a single block of text.⁴⁰ There, the visual impact is arguably more akin to viewing a landscape painting; the eye is drawn to the contours of the lettering, the undulations formed by the language, the transitions within the dusk-like monochromatic block. Again, as with the list of Gaelic place names, Fulton here creates an abstract map, or a landscape. The difference is that the experiences and observations that are listed in this work are not specified by place or location, other than ‘a wood’ in the Cairngorms.⁴¹ In both versions, like the experiential map described above, Fulton’s observations pull us into a deeply felt, sensuous terrain composed of singular entities that interact ‘through collocation’ (to borrow Bogost’s phrase): the snow and the deer tracks; the sound of the small stream and the feel of the wind blowing through

the pine trees; dead grass; drops of water falling from branches into the snow; anthills facing south; white lines of snow on fallen trees; a crow flying in the wind; pine cones; no sound; dusk. ‘To create an ontograph involves cataloguing things, but also drawing attention to the couplings of and chasms between them’, writes Bogost.⁴² The power of a text such as this lies in its ability to draw us to these things, glimpses or couplings, with an increased attentiveness. Through a process of individuation and accumulation, the walk-text performs the partition of these entities in a way that highlights their singularity, while at the same time registering a resonating interconnection or interdependency.

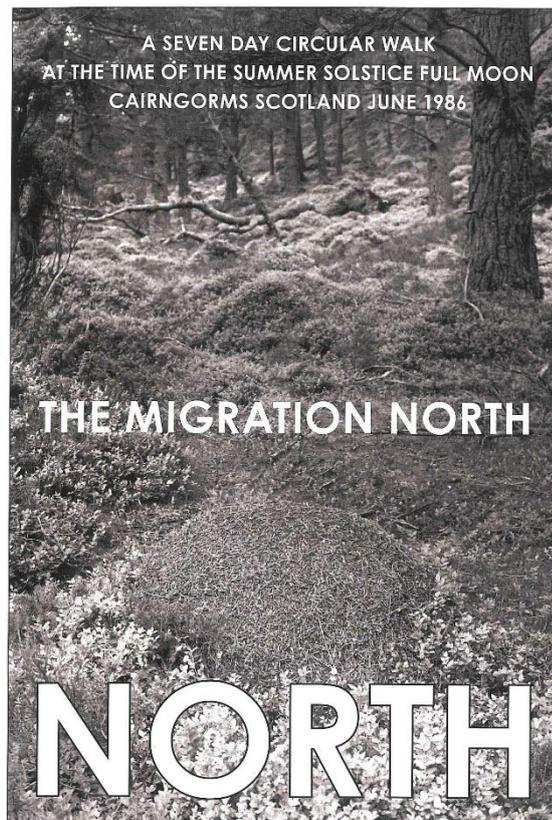
<HDA>The Return

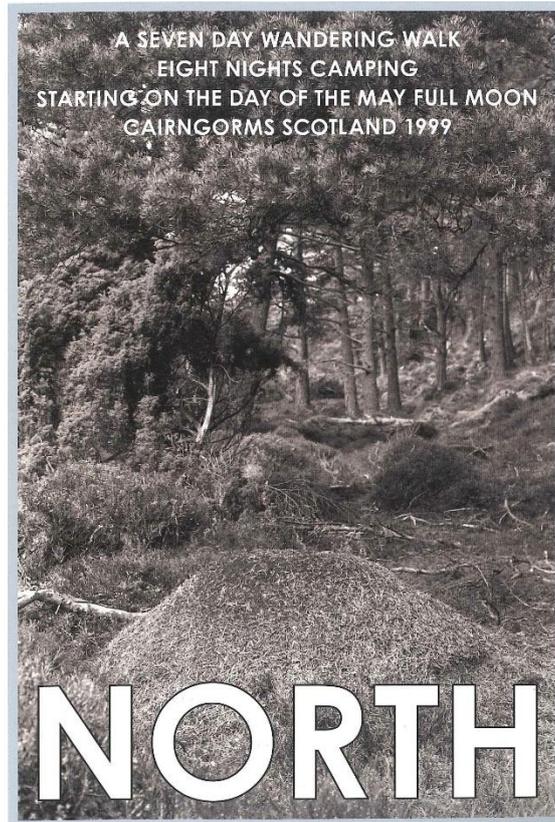
<FL>The act of returning is another recurring strategy in Fulton’s Cairngorm work. As already stated, Fulton has returned to the Cairngorms to make walks repeatedly since 1985. In *Mountain Time Human Time*, we find a series of paired walk-texts that draw particular attention to this. These texts feature images taken from roughly the same spot on different visits. The first sequence shows a section of woodland with a number of smooth, rounded boulders in the foreground. The words ‘River Rocks’ are printed across the centre of each photograph, with the details of the respective walk on which the photograph was taken printed at the bottom of the image. Another shows the granite tor of *Clach Mhic Cailein* exposed on open hillside; the next presents another area of forest, with a Scots pine growing adjacent to a large boulder. Following this, ‘North’ (Figures 4 and 5) repeats a similar format to ‘River Rocks’, but here the ‘title’ text is printed at the bottom of the image; the foregrounded subject matter is an anthill rather than river-polished stones. A pair of images of the same gnarled and twisted tree follow, and the final pairing depicts a large boulder on open hillside with a tree growing around its top. The images may be separated by years – thirteen in the case of the ‘North’ texts; six in ‘River Rocks’ – or, as with ‘*Clach Mhic*

Cailein, only one month, from March to April 1991. They are also separated by season, so, for example, we see an image taken in summer of 1991 repeated in March of 1997. Fulton says of this practice of returning that (at that time) ‘98 days spent wandering on foot through the Cairngorms gave [him] a sense of familiarity with the same place under different conditions. ... [He] was able to notice, for instance, how deer paths changed and evolved through the years ... often [he] would just wander round and check on the condition of branches, ant hills, stream levels (and wind velocity)’.⁴³ This is the familiarity with place that Long identifies in Fulton’s use of lists.

The idea of recording the encounter with objects in the Cairngorms in different seasons, days, months or years apart, is a familiar trope in writing of the area. We find it in Nan Shepherd’s celebrated meditative essay, *The Living Mountain*, and again in Jim Crumley’s *A High and Lonely Place*.⁴⁴ Crumley was commissioned by Deveron Arts to write an essay, ‘The Thing to Be Known’, for *Mountain Time Human Time*. In it he recalls a passage from Scottish naturalist and photographer Seton Gordon, in which Gordon records the incredible transformation of the Wells of Dee in the space of nine days in mid-June. On the first visit: “‘Not a bud showed on the innumerable plants of the dwarf willow and the rosettes of cushion pink were brown and apparently lifeless’”; by the second: “‘summer had come with a rush to the Cairngorms’”.⁴⁵ With the introduction of photographs, combined with text, what Fulton achieves with these walk-texts is to transpose the attentive gaze of the naturalist to the spectator, the reader of his book. One cannot help but inspect the images, so similar yet subtly different. In the colour images, we are struck by the variation in tone and shade from one to the other – a marker of season. You look to see if you can discern growth and change – how far the lichen on the boulders has spread; we observe, in ‘North’, how the anthill has grown – a measure of thirteen years; or try to work out the subtle variation in position from where the photograph has been taken. In this way, Fulton positions us, the

spectators, on the ground; there are variations in elevation and background, the shapes and contours of the depicted objects morph and adjust as we look from one image to the next. As we become aware of these things in their ever-changing materiality, the relationship between Fulton and the objects of his attentive gaze also begins to materialise. Although I am looking here at a photograph, I am attending to texture, colour, difference, and as such, the objects are revealed in their sensuous singularity, a singularity that is always in the process of becoming, each time encountered anew.





Figures 4 and 5. Hamish Fulton, 'North', in *Mountain Time Human Time*, 24–25. © Hamish Fulton and Charta Milan, 2010. Reproduced with kind permission of the artist.

Attending to difference in repetition in Fulton's walk-texts also prompts us to consider a feature that Clark identifies as one of the key consequences of the Anthropocene: scale effects. Clark offers the following observation: 'The Anthropocene is itself an emergent "scale effect". That is, at a certain, indeterminate threshold, numerous human actions, insignificant in themselves (heating a house, clearing trees, flying between the continents, forest management) come together to form a new, imponderable physical event, altering the basic ecological cycles of the planet'.⁴⁶ We can think of scale effects on both spatial and temporal axes. Towards the end of *Mountain Time Human Time*, Fulton remarks that he had noted 'two categories of unwanted human traces inside the Cairngorms', the use of saws to cut trees for firewood, and a 'bulldozed road'.⁴⁷ Putting to one side the question of who or what determines which human traces are wanted, or warranted, Fulton's observations provide a context for considering how the walk-texts speak to the spatial scale effects of the

Anthropocene. In light of Clark's examples, both these human traces might be deemed insignificant when viewed at a global scale. But taken at the scale of the Cairngorms – neither 'very big [nor] very wild' – such acts have a noticeable impact. Scaling down further still, to the level of the individual trees sawn or removed entirely to make way for the road, and the multitude of live and non-live entities interconnected with them within the forest, the results begin to appear catastrophic. Fulton's elision of such human interventions in the accounts he provides in the walk-texts points towards what Careri identifies as his 'celebration of the uncontaminated landscape', and might be criticised as naïve or nostalgic. However, we can also read the walk-texts as offering an alternative model of human intervention in the landscape. In a pair of images like 'North', taken more than a decade apart, Fulton draws our attention to an intensely local scale, to the subtle alterations that this landscape has undergone in the absence of human intervention, particularly through the labour involved in the production of the anthill. But he makes no attempt to present this forest scene as unmediated or untouched, instead foregrounding the media he works with. While the photograph, unlike the list, offers a mimetic visual representation of the site, the colour has been leached out of these monochrome images, partially obscured by the text that covers almost one third of the panel. The text directs us: north is both a movement – northwards, as with the migration in Figure 4 – and a location. It is also a concept. 'North is always a shifting idea', writes Peter Davidson, 'always relative, always going away from us ... Everyone carries their own idea of north within them'.⁴⁸ Perhaps this is Fulton's, or perhaps Fulton is asking us to question our own idea of north, but what is crucial here is the superimposition of the word on the image. North is a word, (super)imposed on the forest, a 'human trace', or a record of human experience that supersedes or stands in for more destructive ways of marking the landscape. Read in this way, the walk-text is as much a *practising* of the environmental ethic that underpins the walking practice as the walk itself.

This human trace is equally foregrounded in the description provided at the top of each walk-text detailing the date and duration of the walk. The details Fulton provides, along with the images, act as a record of his passing through. Taken together, the dates evoke a temporality that can also be read in terms of scale. Inviting us to reflect on the material, or spatial, differences produced in the gap between one image and the next, ‘North’ foregrounds duration, the *passing* of thirteen years. It is a human timescale: a childhood. The conjunction of temporal scales contained in the title of his volume, *Mountain Time Human Time*, is apposite; this timescale, which, framed within the lifetime of a person, may represent deep personal and physical changes, is here held against the millennia of the forest’s lifespan and, in turn, against the geology of the Cairngorms – the granite of the mountains and the river-polished rocks. Fulton thus directs us towards the almost unimaginable temporalities evoked by the Anthropocene – those of deep time. Indeed, the phrase ‘mountain time human time’ could be read as a synonym for the Anthropocene, the reframing of human time at the level of geology. Underlying the banal specificity of the details Fulton provides of his walks, then, is a reminder of human finitude. Spatial scale effects, as described by Clark above, may render futile the efforts of a singular being striving to leave no trace on the land as he passes through on foot. What use is such an environmental care ethic in the face of bulldozers, or beside the knowledge of the vast clearfelling of old growth forests on the other side of the planet? But temporal scale effects remind us that although human traces, in plastic fossils, terraforming and nuclear waste, will last into the deep future, it is unlikely that humans will. To think through the scale effects of the Anthropocene is to think precisely in terms of the hyperecological interdependence of all singular entities, which underpins Bennett’s enchanted ethics. ‘Hyperecological’, because it extends the spatial and temporal reach of these connections beyond what we would usually consider within ecology, at least within the ecology of a delimited place such as the Cairngorms. By returning, by meditating again and

again on the sensuous singularity of the objects and places he encounters, and by communicating these experiences through the deliberate strategies that shape his walk-texts, Fulton's art discloses the wonder in attending closely to the world, and offers a singular account of an Anthropocene ethics.

<HDA>Conclusion

<FL>In her conclusion to *Vibrant Matter* (2010), in many ways a follow-up to *The Enchantment of Modern Life*, Bennett notes that 'the ground beneath [her] old ethical maxim, "tread lightly on the earth"', has become less firm.⁴⁹ 'Sometimes', she writes, 'ecohealth will require individuals and collectives to back off or ramp down their activeness, and sometimes it will call for grander, more dramatic and violent expenditures of human energy'.⁵⁰ Scale effects induced by our awareness of the Anthropocene seem to support this argument – there are and will be, increasingly, instances when to refrain from intervention, to leave no trace, will be inadequate to counter the effects of the traces we have already left. Indeed, the enormity of the environmental crisis that the Anthropocene brings in tow can make any efforts we make to address it seem futile. This has led Timothy Clark to posit serious reservations about ecocriticism. While valuing as 'useful and necessary' the ecocritical work that seeks to identify, as I am doing here, those texts that ought to be considered 'important' for studying the cultural response to the environmental crisis, Clark worries that this entails a more or less implicit assumption that cultural artefacts and their criticism can actually effect changes in behaviour to the extent of reducing negative human impacts on global ecology.⁵¹ These are valid concerns. What is certain, however, is that any such changes in behaviour, whether enacted at an individual or collective level, whether induced by cultural artefacts or otherwise, will require an ethical stance, and this is where Bennett's argument for enchantment comes in. What I have attempted to argue here is that Fulton's walk-texts both

express and encourage an enchanted sensibility, and move towards Bennett's ethics of enchanted materialism. Through the strategies of the list and the return, alongside the other 'deliberate strategies' he employs in his solo and group walks, Fulton's work demonstrates and *performs* sensuous singularity and interconnectedness, and, as such, at least, tunes our attention to that which is threatened in the Anthropocene.

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<HDA>Notes

1. Hamish Fulton, 'Walk', *Visual Studies* 25, no. 1 (2010): 8–14, doi:

10.1080/14725861003606696.

2. 'Hamish Fulton: Overview', British Council,

<http://visualarts.britishcouncil.org/collection/artists/fulton-hamish-1946> (accessed 20 April 2016).

3. Hamish Fulton, *Mountain Time Human Time* (Milan and New York: Charta, 2010);

Hamish Fulton, *Wild Life* (Edinburgh: pocketbooks, 2000).

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4. I am using the term ‘ecocritical thought’ in a very broad sense here to accommodate work, specifically philosophical and theoretical writing, that has been influential to the environmental humanities but which would not necessarily be considered within the mode of literary and cultural study labelled ecocriticism.
 5. Timothy Clark, *Ecocriticism on the Edge: The Anthropocene as a Threshold Concept* (London: Bloomsbury, 2015), 187.
 6. Ibid. Clark is referring here to Timothy Morton and Claire Colebrook, among others.
 7. Jane Bennett, *The Enchantment of Modern Life: Attachments, Crossings, and Ethics* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2001), 157.
 8. See *ibid.*, Chapter 4, ‘Disenchantment Tales’, 56–90.
 9. Bennett, *The Enchantment of Modern Life*, 3.
 10. Hamish Fulton, *Walking in Relation to Everything* (Margate and Birmingham: Turner Contemporary and IKON Galleries, 2012), 32.
 11. Bennett, *The Enchantment of Modern Life*, 4, 5.
 12. *Ibid.*, 4. My emphasis.
 13. Fulton, *Mountain Time Human Time*, 50.
 14. Hamish Fulton, ‘Group Walks’ Postcard (Hamburg: Galerie für Landschaftskunst, 2008).
 15. Victoria Pomery and Jonathan Watkins, ‘Foreword’, in Fulton, *Walking in Relation to Everything*, 5.
 16. Fulton, *Walking in Relation to Everything*, 24.
 17. Francesco Careri, *Walkscapes: Walking as an Aesthetic Practice* (Barcelona: Gustavo Gili, 2002), 146.
 18. Leave No Trace is the seven-point outdoor ethics programme advocated by the Leave No Trace Centre for Outdoor Ethics and their partnership organisations, including the Wilderness Foundation in the UK. See <https://lnt.org/about>; Fulton, *Mountain Time Human Time*, 47.

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19. Fulton, *Mountain Time Human Time*, 49–50, 51.
 20. Will Steffen, Paul J. Crutzen and John R. McNeill, ‘The Anthropocene: Are Humans Now Overwhelming the Great Forces of Nature?’ *Ambio* 36, no. 8 (2007): 614–621, here 620.
 21. Timothy Morton, *Hyperobjects* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2013), 4.
 22. Fulton, *Mountain Time Human Time*, 49.
 23. Gavin Morrison and Hamish Fulton, ‘Interview with Hamish Fulton’, in Fulton, *Wild Life*, 189–202, here 191.
 24. Careri, *Walkscapes*, 148–150.
 25. John Wylie, *Landscape* (London and New York: Routledge, 2007), 164.
 26. Joanna Zylińska, *Minimal Ethics for the Anthropocene* (Michigan: Open Humanities Press, 2014), 92.
 27. *Ibid.*, 93. My emphasis.
 28. *Ibid.*
 29. Bennett, *The Enchantment of Modern Life*, 157.
 30. *Ibid.*
 31. *Ibid.*
 32. *Ibid.* My emphasis
 33. Oxford English Dictionary Online,
<http://www.oed.com/view/Entry/258981?redirectedFrom=ontology#eid> (accessed 12 April 2016).
 34. Ian Bogost, *Alien Phenomenology, or What It’s Like to Be a Thing* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2012), 38.
 35. *Ibid.* Emphasis in original.
 36. Morrison and Fulton, ‘Interview’, 191.

37. Fulton, *Wild Life*, 94–96.

38. Careri makes this observation in *Walkscapes* (148): ‘In Fulton, the representation of the places crossed is a map in the abstract sense’.

39. Elizabeth Long, ‘Written Landscapes’, *Afterimage* 34, no. 6 (2007): 26–27, here 26.

40. Hamish Fulton, ‘Seven Days Walking and Seven Nights Camping in a Wood Scotland March 1985’, Tate, <http://www.tate.org.uk/art/artworks/fulton-seven-days-walking-and-seven-nights-camping-in-a-wood-scotland-march-1985-p77618> (accessed 20 April 2016).

The title given in *Wild Life* is slightly modified, along with the form.

41. Fulton, *Wild Life*, 12.

42. Bogost, *Alien Phenomenology*, 50.

43. Fulton, *Wild Life*, 190.

45. Nan Shepherd, *The Living Mountain* (Edinburgh: Canongate, 2011); Jim Crumley, *A High and Lonely Place: The Sanctuary and Plight of the Cairngorms* (London: Jonathan Cape, 1991).

45. Jim Crumley, ‘The Thing to Be Known’, in Fulton, *Mountain Time Human Time*, 66–69, here 68.

46. Clark, *Ecocriticism on the Edge*, 72.

47. Fulton, *Mountain Time Human Time*, 77.

48. Peter Davidson, *The Idea of North* (London: Reaktion, 2005), 8.

49. Jane Bennett, *Vibrant Matter: A Political Ecology of Things* (Durham, NC and London: Duke University Press, 2010), 121.

50. *Ibid.*, 122.

51. Clark, *Ecocriticism on the Edge*, 20–21.