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# Mobilities of form

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## ABSTRACT

Mobilities scholarship has provided convincing accounts of the increase in the quantity and range of movement of people and things. Literary texts have responded to this increased mobility. Drawing on Rancière's notion of the 'distribution of the sensible' and Badiou's idea of literature as an 'event', this paper develops the idea of mobile forms that identify the literary text as an aesthetic object that is realised in moments and always on the point of disappearing.

## ARTICLE HISTORY

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## Introduction

This article argues that an attention to ideas and practices of mobility can produce new readings of works of prose fiction and poetry that take into account the increased movement of people and things in the twentieth and twenty-first centuries. The work is informed by, and informs, the development of mobilities scholarship in a variety of disciplines including human and cultural geography, sociology and anthropology. It sustains a dual emphasis on the ways that literary works provide representations of movement and mobility in their narratives and subject matter, and the ways that the form and genre of the work is influenced by mobility practices.<sup>1</sup>

Ideas of movement have informed the work of many writers. Literature provides, and has always provided, representations of movement and mobility that range from Homer's *Odyssey* to Chaucer's pilgrims in *Canterbury Tales*, the wanderings of Shakespeare's King Lear and the general 'geographies' of novels and poems (Chaucer 2005; Homer 2003; Shakespeare 1997). The quest or journey that results in a change in the characters, or as a plot for constructing heroism and vulnerability, is a familiar structure or device. My aim, therefore is not primarily to demonstrate that there are representations of mobility in literary texts – that work is useful but self-evident – but to use specific examples of literary works, and ones that may well have representations of mobility within them, to develop a notion of a 'mobility of form'. The aim, therefore, is to not only produce new readings of individual texts, but also suggest new ideas about narrative, that will permit broader and more generous readings of varieties of works frequently overlooked.

My specific literary examples in this article are taken from post-war writing from the USA where, by the late 1940s and 1950s the automobile, as one example of increased mobility, had become available to a much broader range of the population.<sup>2</sup> This is a period, and mode, of American literature that I have written about extensively elsewhere where I explored relations between space, spatialisation and poetic form, in connection with authors that included Charles Olson, Muriel Rukeyser, Edward Dorn and Frank O'Hara (Davidson 2007, 2010). In this work on the mobility of form, I also want to argue, that my findings are not restricted in terms of national context or period, but can, at least in part, be

transferred across time and space. The specificity of contextualized practice and the ways practices and ideas might move between contexts is more fully explained in my section on the philosophies of Alain Badiou which follows.

## Theoretical context

The theoretical context for this work develops new connections between mobilities scholarship and contemporary European philosophy, and particularly the work of Alain Badiou and Jacques Rancière. Highly influential in related but different ways, both of these philosophers have made extensive and significant contributions to ways of thinking about social change and the specific role of the arts and literature within it, and developed theoretical approaches that support the possibility of collective action. Although their work might lack the empiricism of other disciplines that contribute to mobilities scholarship, their deep commitment to politics and activism means that they connect with the materiality of cultures and societies, and create new ways of thinking about the transmission and reception of artworks in mobile cultures. In Jacques Rancière's idea of the 'distribution of the sensible', non-representational forms of art that are part of the contemporary 'aesthetic regime' change the relationships of people with the world (Rancière [2004] 2014, 7–14). Works might be constructed of everyday material and processes, but are distinguished by a mobile aesthetic form that is differently realised in new contexts (Rancière [2004] 2014, 15–26). They might also be distributed through sections of society that are least exposed to art, producing new communities through the commonality of a sensibility it produces (Rancière [2011] 2014, 7). The 'distribution of the sensible', is 'the system of self-evident facts of sense perception that simultaneously discloses the existence of something in common, and the delimitations that define the respective parts and positions within it.' (Rancière [2004] 2014, 7). For Rancière this process determines the place and stakes of art and politics as a form of experience. Politics revolves around what is seen and what can be said about it, around who has the ability to see and that talent to speak. If part of Rancière's project is to give voice to those that do not have voice, he supports the Platonic project of identifying writing as that which wanders aimlessly without knowing who to speak to (8). For example, when Bremser's work existed purely in the form of letters to her husband it was arguably without a fixed addressee. If humans are always mobile through space and time, and always identified as moving towards something or away from something through phenomenological notions of intention, so too is writing.

The notion of the distribution of the sensible, of the mobility of the aestheticised literary text, functions within Rancière's revised periodisation of art history. He identifies three 'regimes' of art; the ethical, the representational and the aesthetic. The aesthetic regime: 'stands in contrast with the representative regime', and its mimetic principle of imitation and identifies a 'sensible mode of being specific to artistic products.' (18). The aesthetic is therefore that which enables the art object to be identified within its context, while at the same time being composed of that context:

The aesthetic regime asserts the absolute singularity of art and, at the same time, destroys any pragmatic criterion for isolating this singularity. It simultaneously establishes the autonomy of art and the identity of its forms with the forms that life uses to shape itself. (19)

And the 'aesthetic state', he goes on to say, 'is a pure instance of suspension, a moment when form is experienced for itself' (19).

What Rancière calls the aesthetic regime permits the development of a notion of mobile forms that remain incomplete. They do so because of the integration of art and the experience, particularly that of the 'everyday'. Some works, of prose for example, are not only in conversation with the novel form, however much they concede to the genre or transgress it, but also with phenomenologies of experience. This has two implications for the literary text. First, it can have no conclusion, as to have a conclusion or ending is to bring an end to life and, as Heidegger affirms experience cannot witness its own end. The authenticity of the moment, like the moment of death for Heidegger, is characterised by being experienced alone, for what it is. It has no witness, or at least no witness that is still alive. Secondly

it is characterised by connections that spin off into multiple worlds, rather than only those necessary for its narrative (Heidegger 1962, 311). The analogy here is a text that often seems to have no formal time structure and no limit to its spatial reach, and therefore might appear uneven and unfinished, in a condition of permanent mobility.

Alain Badiou develops the idea of literature's potential as an 'event' that is the result of inconsistent and unstable elements within a 'set' (Badiou 2013, 65, 2006, 240). For Badiou the 'set' is a mathematically structured organising principle that is made inconsistent by the elements within it that cannot be contained by the organisation of the state. These inconsistencies that destabilise the set or the situation can lead to an event that is impossible to predict and produces new possibilities that become 'truths' through a process of collective subjectivisation that transcends the context in which the event took place (Badiou 2005b, xii). This means that while an individual literary text, for example, cannot independently construct new truths, poems that challenge a genre can construct new possibilities for literary texts and bring about new truths through changes to the genre that, while not universal, are capable of being true in other contexts (Badiou 2013, 10).

Rancière and Badiou, therefore, believe in the capacity of mobile art forms in conditions of instability and inconsistency to transform people, societies and cultures. They emphasise form not content, and their primary interest is not in that which an artwork represents, but in its materiality. As Badiou says: 'The poem offers itself as a thing of language, which one encounters each time as an event.' (Badiou 2014, 24). Rancière says: '... art consists in constructing spaces to reconfigure materially and symbolically the territory of the common' (Rancière [2004] 2009, 22). Modern poetry is similarly identified by Badiou as a 'form of thought' (Badiou 2005a, 20) and 'the opposite of a mimesis.' (21) and his examples include, a little predictably, Mallarmé and the multiple identities of Pessoa. Hallward agrees when he says that for Badiou 'poetry is language reduced to the strict presentation of presentation' (Hallward 2003, 197) which is 'freed of the existing regime of re-presentation' (197). Badiou summarises:

The poem is neither a description nor an expression ... The poem is an operation [and] the reader must enter into the enigma in order to reach the momentary point of presence. Otherwise the poem does not operate ... The rule is simple: to enter into the poem – not in order to know what it means, but rather to think what happens in it. Because the poem is an operation it is also an event. The poem takes place. (Badiou 2005a, 29)

The work has the qualities of an event, and contains inconsistencies that not only produce a finite work of art that constructs a new set, but also, through the process of subjectification (in this case through readers, and perhaps readers who become other writers) it can produce generic change; that is, change in the genres within which it is apparently located. The emphasis on the material form of the text, its transmission or distribution, and on the elements of the set or situation, all contribute to the production of forms of literature that are actually, potentially and conceptually mobile.

## Literature and mobility

The ability of more people to engage in more movement has increased during the twentieth-century, although the global distribution of mobility is uneven and contested (Urry 2007; Adey 2009). The increase is a consequence of both technological advances and relative (although again uneven) prosperity. I am not, however, primarily interested in examining the impact of changes of place, or changes in representations of places. That has long been the province of approaches in literary criticism that include postcolonial studies, travel writing and the extensive romantic and post-romantic interest in 'place'. I am interested in the process of mobility itself, that is, the effect of the increase in mobility, and what happens 'in between', 'in transit' or 'on the road' (Cresswell 2006; Merriman 2007, 2012; Urry 2007). Mobility works with notions of endless circulation, rather than a journey that has a sense of completion. It therefore examines the different qualities of movement that occur, recognising that their initiation can be by different factors, and vary in range and intensity.

The breadth of practices of mobility and their varieties and different intensities are informed by a historical understanding of philosophical ideas of movement. These ideas are used by many writers, either implicitly or explicitly, including, for example, Philip K Dick, who carried out an extensive if idiosyncratic

study of varieties of philosophies that is recorded in his work *Exegesis* and is reflected in many of his later novels (Dick 2011). The poet George Oppen drew on both Heidegger and Parmenides (Oppen 2008). Diane di Prima was influenced by Zen Buddhism as were many of the American writers of the 1950s including Jack Kerouac (Kerouac 1997, 2000, 2007; di Prima 2001). Patrick Hamilton was influenced by the ideas of Karl Marx (Jones 2008, 201). The poet Bill Griffiths references Boethius and Plotinus amongst others, (for e.g. Griffiths 2014, 17–59, 137–150) while Allen Fisher frequently provides footnotes to his poems that include Alain Badiou amongst others and combines an interest in a Platonic notion of form with an Aristotelean approach to experiences of observation and speculation (Fisher 2010).

The history of the ideas of movement that have influenced writers is long, from the pre-Socratics onwards. They include the Parmenidean notion of a 'way of truth', through which nothing moves and nothing changes, and its opposite, a more mobile way of opinion, through which 'mortals, two headed, wander' (Parmenides). Despite the geographic imagery of the 'way' and its suggestions of movement, the way of truth exists in a sphere composed of dynamic relations within which nothing moves. Outside the sphere there is a 'nothing', not even a void, but a pre-Euclidean notion of space in which no further geometrical point is possible. Plato, however, in his dialogue *Parmenides*, usefully contests such a world view, and asserts that: 'motion is the means by which we come to know all that is contained within the stability of form'. More importantly in the ways contemporary writers have gone on to use movement in varieties of narratives, he distinguishes between two principle kinds of motion: movement around a centre, and a trajectory that takes the subject or object from place to place (Oliver 2005, 2). The differences between these two types of movement take on a highly symbolic significance, often indicating notions of both resistance to change and change itself.

If Parmenides constructed a worldview that began with fixed universals and then went on to critique a more fluid everyday experience, then Aristotle began with sensory derived experience before moving to more general abstractions. For Aristotle, objects fall downwards in order to reach their 'natural place', the centre of an unmoving universe. His explanation for motion was based on a relationship between potentiality and actuality, and that things have within themselves a potential or a possibility for movement (Apostle 1970, 52). Actuality is the fulfilment of that potential as well as the cause of movement; in narrative terms it is an end that drives the beginning. His construction of movement (and he would include change within that) is therefore teleological rather than ontological; it is movement by design rather than from a first cause and which pulls the movement towards its actuality, rather than being pushed by its potential, qualities that are always and already present, although incomplete: 'Motion is ... both an actuality and not an actuality ... difficult to grasp but capable of existing' (Apostle 1970, 190).

Attempts to identify the structural elements of narrative (Bal 1997) and of the novel (Watt 2001; Currie, [1998] 2011, 2007), and the metafiction of the postmodern novel, have identified the ways that writing of various kinds anticipates and challenges expectations. Mark Currie, for example, dismisses the notion that novels reflect 'the way that time works in life'. He continues: 'The present for a reader in a fictional narrative is not really the present at all but the past. It is somebody else's present related to us in the past tense' (Currie 2007, 5). Although Currie allows for the normative practices of temporal sequences that are not chronological, I would claim that they are still dependent on identifying static structures for fictional and novel forms that may unfold over time in the reading process, but can be apprehended spatially. I am trying to identify a more fluid notion of form, one related to collective notions of being and experience, that explicitly challenges structural or metafictional accounts of the literary text. Texts, I would claim, present a performative experience in the present, the experience of the writing and reading, not re-present an experience in the past. Using ideas of mobility to examine literary forms brings together these spatial and temporal aspects in 'moments' that challenge any notion of an overall completed structure. Narratives become an open-ended series of collisions that occur periodically throughout a work of fiction, while poetry is defined by a series of space/time coincidences that illuminate those moments, without ever defining a finished form (Rancière 2004a, 218–231). In philosophical terms it is the difference between a narrative formed from a Heideggerian unveiling (Heidegger 1993, 115–138), where the truth is gradually revealed, and a notion of truth that arises from

an event that is the consequence of an incoherent or inconsistent multiplicity, of things that are, but can't be made to fit, together (Badiou 2005b, 23–30).

## Mobile practices and forms

Ideas of motion influence the ways we think about, present, and represent mobility in the early twenty-first century. One brief example from film history will serve as an illustration of the ways that, for example, movement, is inextricably linked to change and is threatening to an established order. This is compellingly illustrated in a Russ Meyer film from 1965, *Faster, Pussycat! Kill! Kill!*, where narratives of women's mobility are given a sinister cast. Three women who have worked together as strippers and dancers kill a man in the desert and kidnap his girlfriend, before trying to rob a lecherous farmer of his hoard of money. Various described as a cult classic and a sexploitation movie – and it is both, as well as being one point of reference for Quentin Tarrantino's 2007 film *Death Proof* – the film portrays mobile women as inherently dangerous, unstable elements that produce an unpredictable narrative. Their characteristic Meyer comic book sexual characteristics are neither funny nor particularly erotic, but become predatory when released into the desert. They have no home other than the car they drive around in, seem unconnected to the landscape, and lack any form of domestic centre or 'normal' feminine values or behaviour. When the last of the three women is finally killed by the 'good' son of the farmer, after she has killed his brother by repeatedly crushing him against a wall in a car, he looks down at her body and says: 'You're not going anywhere'. She is dead, of course, but the implication is that she is now not able to move, and it was the movement, and particularly her automobility, that made her dangerous. Increased mobility for women is not therefore innocuous or unchallenged, but rather potentially part of an uncontrolled female sexualised rage that will destroy family and social values.

Films are, of course inherently formally mobile, they are called 'the movies' (see Iain Borden's *Drive* [2013] for an extended study of driving in films), but some of the same ideas are played out in literary texts such as Bonnie Bremser's cross between memoir and novel, *For the Love of Ray*.<sup>3</sup> Moving to Mexico with her husband the poet Ray Bremser, who is on the run from the police, she turns to prostitution as a way of ensuring they can stay out of the USA, out of jail and fund their drug use. Ray Bremser acts as her pimp, while her child, who she finally gives up for adoption, is variously cared for by neighbours. Bonnie Bremser therefore breaks all the codes of femininity. She doesn't keep house and doesn't look after her child. She explicitly sells sex, turning her body into the commodity that marriage might make, but also sanctifies. But she does so for the love of her husband, despite his violence towards her, and in order to keep him out of jail, and therefore demonstrates feminine characteristics of loyalty and subjection. Despite her husband's coercion and violence towards her, her body remains her own. She more or less takes control of her sexuality, albeit in a context that is full of danger. It is a troubled and troubling narrative, and one of considerable isolation, in which the roles of wife, mother, lover, artist and breadwinner become confused with her work as a prostitute. As a consequence her mobility, although a result and symbol of US privilege and the means by which they evade the law, also becomes the means of her degradation, wearing her down physically, until she is unable to function as wife or mother. From the start of the novel her attitude towards domesticity and childcare is ambivalent, making her bus journey in to Mexico hard work, regretting the lost opportunity for sexual liaisons and resenting the role of single parent. She may gain a measure of freedom and independence as a sex worker, able to move at will and between cities, but as a consequence she loses her child.

The book has a non-linear narrative that, closely tied to the body of the narrator, occurs in moments. Its non-linearity is not an example of the episodic narrative forms of modernist experimentation, or a metafictional device, but, I will go on to explain, the consequence of a symbiotic relationship between form, mobility, experience and subjectivity, discernible in certain modes of textual composition and production. This is not, again, an attempt to re-inscribe authorial intention into the text, and Bremser describes the method of composition to Nancy Grace in an interview in 1999:

*Mexican Memoirs* was not conceived as a book. It was composed in a series of two page writings that were sent to Ray, who was in jail, on a weekly basis. By claiming it was business correspondence we side-stepped the one-page-a-week rule on correspondence. (Johnson and Grace 2004, 113)

The very act of writing, of exceeding the limits set by the prison authorities, was transgressive, as was the form of the book in its challenge to both memoir and novel. She describes the process of writing as equally indeterminate: '... when I wrote *Mexican Memoirs*, I'd just sit down, smoke a joint, sit at a typewriter, and go. Put it in a pile and that was that' (Bremser [1969] 1972, 113). The book was written in 1962, but 'finished' later. Nancy Grace says in her introduction to the interview that: 'Bremser [Ray], along with the book's editor, Michael Perkins, arranged the letters into a narrative, and *Troia* was published at Bremser's insistence in 1969' (109). It is one final act of exploitation of his wife's sexuality, a last pimping. The text has moments that are deeply affecting and perceptive, as well as aspects of experimentation that are more or less successful. While some of the more obvious Kerouacisms might seem hackneyed, the opening of the book is a sophisticated piece of memoir that both begins a narrative through its strong and insistent voice, and tells a reader what they are not going to get:

... First off I want to tell you a few really important things about me. I know that continuity is necessary ... but believe in distortion – I believe that if you get to a place where something is taking place and you want badly to comprehend the thing that you have created ... then any old thing to fill the gap will do – ... what's important is not the technique or lack of it, but those minutes when you overcome the frustration, bridge the gap, and hold something incredibly beautiful to you ... (Bremser [1969] 1972, 7)

Its aesthetic is mobile, occurring in 'those minutes' when you bridge the gap, as is its subject.

The ideas of the text as an event, of a material presentation that causes change in the subject and a mobile form that occurs in moments, are not only helpful in reflecting on the qualities of Bremser's hybrid memoir and novel but also in producing a reading of Jack Kerouac's most problematic text and his most extreme experimentation with book form, *some of the dharma* (1997). That he thought of it as a book, although it was composed in notebooks, is clear from the introductory material, although that it was not published at the time is not surprising. It is a record of experience, that links the mobile forms of life and mobile form of the text. Helen Weaver provides another perspective on that life when she persuasively and perceptively links Jack Kerouac's writing style and notion of spontaneity to both the Catholic confession, where it is a sin to fail to record experience 'exactly as it happened', and the Buddhist practice of meditation and to writing as a 'conscious exploration of the way the mind works' (Weaver 2009, 226). The work as a whole is a record of Kerouac's relationship with Zen Buddhism that combines varieties of material.

*Some of the dharma* is printed on a large size page that allows the text from the notebooks to take its own form and draws attention to the process of its material construction. A default typeface with multiple left and right hand margins is interspersed with handwritten observations, while pages are subdivided in various ways. Just as Zen Buddhism is studied through its practice, the form of the book is physically encountered through the layout of the text. Its material is similarly diverse, and contains theological meditations, instructions, journal entries and poems. In the same way that Zen requests a focus on the self in order to obliterate the self, it is a book that is self-conscious about form in order to attempt formlessness, and where 'Form is the horror of the world' (Jack Kerouac 1997, 46), or as he says a few pages later: 'DREAM IS THE FORM' (51). Form becomes a kind of temptation that people, things and processes are drawn to or turn towards it, only to be destroyed. It is also linked to the passage of time and the lifespan in conflicted ways. In a long poem from *some of the dharma*, 'JAMAICA CEMETRY', emptiness defeats form when: 'Holy & Bright | the Emptiness | at the heart of Love' is in the 'desert of form' (148). The poem ends: '... just in time | Before form could claim him | And turn his essence to shambles.' (151) Notions of form extend to those of space and time themselves, and Kerouac approvingly quotes William Burroughs' claim that: 'Ignorance ... is the assertion of the space-time-motion conception and all that is dependent on it.' (156).

The book itself responds to this dilemma. In writing terms Kerouac is avoiding the imposition of traditional literary forms, the process of their production and the notion of a deep or organic form. Art might be identifiable through its aesthetic, but is made up of everyday life and becomes indistinguishable

from it. The only possible literary form is mobile, following the twists and turns of an unfolding life, resisting completion or the manipulation of material into plot and narrative. This is what Rancière is referring to when he talks about the momentary nature of form, as a moment in a passage of time. The work becomes a form that has no fixed form. The reluctance to completion, and the reluctance to homogenise uneven literary surfaces, is not a result of laziness, indulgence or inability, but one of necessity. As Kerouac says, in ways that make him the spokesperson for a kind of post-war literature more radical than his previous reputation has permitted:

January 1, 1955 – New Years Day – Got up, washed, went back to bed and thought.  
I still feel like writing  
Book of Mind, in which  
I would recall and disintegrate all events in  
the life of Jack Duluo –  
starting from the center of interest  
ignoring time & space which are prin-  
ciples of ignorance, dwelling on the  
essence – destroying the forms – (194)

The work is always trying to catch itself in the moment outside time, while being completely dedicated to time. Its form is only realised in moments that disappear, in moments of emptiness that arise from the conjunction of self and writing. The work is not only about mobility in ways I've described above, and about movements within and outside of the USA, but the form itself uses its mobility to always destroy itself as it moves on, as if, like a dream that is always fading away, the next life event changes the propulsion of the narrative. Life made into stable forms is death, or so the book seems to say.

Eileen Myles' *Snow Flake – New Poems, different streets – newer poems*, a double collection published in one volume back to back, combine a mobility of form and representations of a mobile subject. The poems often refer to an Eileen, who is a lesbian and working class and whose voice is entirely American, but it is an Eileen who can never be reduced to the lyric voice of the author. The speaker within the poems is always evident but always mobile, moving between positions. Myles' work is therefore intensely biographical, even as it constructs new notions of biography. *Snowflake/Different Streets* can also be read thematically, and one of the themes is automobility with:

the former rooted and in conflict with the nomadic car culture of Southern California; the latter adamantly rooted in attention to the present moment, whether in Montana or Manhattan – they do indeed share themes of technology, mediation, perception, communication, and relationship. It seems important to note that these themes are linked together – and driven – by desires: to connect intimately with another; to see clearly the mind's relation to the world; to respond to such clarity and to record a response; to examine how language structures and sustains connection and relation; and to bring connection, relation, and response into dramatic tension through language. (Teare 2012, no pagination)

The first poem in *Snowflake* describes an intermedia experience that also recalls synesthesia of production, if not reception. It begins:

sometimes  
I'm driving  
and I pressed  
the button  
to see who  
called &  
suddenly I'm  
taking pictures (Myles 2012, 1).

The pictures turn out to be only 'Big dark ones' and the view is from inside the car, a film that is made from where you sit. After all, as the speaking 'I' of the poem says: 'I wasn't | taking a | picture | I was driving | it's black & || there's all | these lights | I'm strong | it's night.' (1–2). The intensity of the experience, the effort of driving and its visuality, link the driving body with the outside environment, a theme picked up in the later poems. It becomes, however, an experience, where inside and outside become part of the same experience, and we never forget that the speaking 'I' of the poem is navigating a metal projectile at speed down the road, that she is driving home and needs to stay 'strong'. In another poem in the

collection, '8 Car camera', the driver imagines the entire car as a camera, shooting without pointing, 'so that everything that's going | on out there could be coming in.' (34). It is a process that mirrors that of driving, in which the driver does not consciously point the car down the road but unconsciously steers it on its way. The car becomes, for the driver, an all seeing eye that absorbs the landscape and records it. Just as the body of the driver is a conscious, thinking and perceiving body, not just an extension of a conscious mind, the body of the car becomes an active device.

Driving a car might be an intensely visual experience, but inside the car the experience is also auditory. Not only does the driver '... keep hearing | the music | of the weekend' but they also remember a past love and '... someone | who read me a poem on the phone', a memory that leads to a meditation on love. The journey ends and 'I'm glad I'm home', an opportunity to think about 'what's not technology | what's not seeing'. (2–6).

In a statement of poetics from *Eleven More American Women Poets in the twenty-first Century*, Myles says:

My poems are comfortable with the idea that experience is a kind of knowing and that technology endlessly delivers new ways for us to describe how that knowing occurs ... The thrill for me is always the looming possibility of disconnection'. (Rankine and Sewell 2012, 252)

Combining the notion of proprioception, of a body in space, but also a body that is identified as female and queer, and the idea of decoherence, *Snow Flake* also contains a sequence of 12 poems which Myles describes in the acknowledgements as, 'The set I vaguely think of as the LA/Driving poems [which] were dictated onto a small digital recorder while I drove from San Diego to Los Angeles at twilight then night' (Myles 2012, 84). In 'More Oil', (76–79) a driving poem that lies outside the sequence but is in conversation with it, Myles describes seeing a dead rabbit, and responds '... I hate us | I hate our roads ... we are not | the kindest | of mammals | with our fucking tar | & our bombs.' They are lines that bring to mind the tale of Bre'r rabbit who gets stuck in the 'tar baby' that Bre'r Fox has constructed. In that tale, whose racist connotations are obvious, the rabbit escapes. It is also a poem in which driver and car merge, and where the car takes over as the speaker of the poem: 'I just pull over | listen to the fossil fuel | churning in my guts.' The guilty body of the driver becomes the car, reflecting the relationship between the private inside of the car and its public outside.

The LA/Driving sequence is based on the sensory experience of moving. The first poem, '#1 (with music)', is a coda for the sequence which reflects on the '... emerging | possibility of writing | this way' (26) on a journey that also has a soundtrack of '... pop music given | to me by some young | person ...' (26). In '#2' the cars become 'spider drizzle' as they enter the fast/fat restaurant chain and the red trucks remind her of the Grant Wood painting 'Death on Ridge Road', where a red truck careers over a hill towards two cars that are trying to avoid it. The car has no voice, it is 'not a microphone' and receives rather than transmits, but it is a god that 'catches me & stops me all the time.' The new technology also brings new physical responses, where 'I use my nail to write' and 'I mark time by palm trees' (30). 'Driving', however, is a process that can cause a clashing rhyme with, 'wiving with the | land', to suggest a marriage between car and environment that is permanent, financial and legal.

Driving is also about leaving things behind. To equate freedom with driving is commonplace, and writers from Oppen (1978) to Kerouac (1984, 1988) have made that connection, but for the speaking 'I' of the poem it means leaving 'Eileen' behind, losing the history of that name, and both its public connections as poet, critic, pedagogue, performer etc. and private history. 'I forgot this | and I forgot that | and in my freedom | I forget why I leave | Eileen, | I leave my name' (32). There is a recognition that the process of movement and the act of automobility has produced change.

In '#7 Dark Water', '#9 Destroying Us' and '#10 Ball', the concerns becomes increasingly environmental and they simultaneously register the impact of the car on the land, while also constructing the road as a surface that keeps the car divorced from it. The road is a darkness that has apparent depth as it reflects light and heat, and the mirage that in those reflections cars appear through the road, not driving on it. Her ambivalence is underlined in '#9' where, despite an acknowledgement of the environmental concerns, would 'happily drive | more than two hours' and particularly 'for friendship.' '#10 Ball' follows

the same pattern where 'we're driving on our own limited past | ... | the fluid of everything and everybody | that ever was here | we're draining that | to just get around.' (37). This negative reflection on oil consumption is balanced by the end of the journey where the driver is able to '... feel around in | the dark' and then 'touch a button | to make it light.' The journey into the light is reminiscent perhaps of earlier feminist campaigns for better street lighting as well as a more domestic reference to coming home at night. The final poem in the sequence '# The Lines', brings together the act of driving with the act of writing while sustaining the balance between freedom and restriction, and where the need to 'stay in your | lines' is imperative.

## Conclusions

Myles' poems combine the topic of automobility with a poetic form that reflects the speed and direction of travel by car and the relationship of the human body to the technology through its short and rapidly turned lines. The use of poetic form is, however, more sophisticated than that, and constructs a poetry in which the speaker is also mobile, through its rapid twists and turns, and capable of going in any direction. Although sometimes apparently linked to a journey by car, the work does not adopt the teleological form of a journey, but functions in moments in which the form appears, like the headlights of a car flashing through the windscreen, a scene glimpsed outside or the rush of sound from in-car-entertainment. They are constructed from a radical US post war poetics that itself prioritises mobility, the sense of an ongoing voice that never completes a sentence, with similarities to second generation New York poets such as Ted Berrigan and Ann Waldman in the USA, and Tom Raworth in the UK.

The other works I examine in this essay are more difficult to fit into any kind of literary context. While Bremser acknowledged her debt to Kerouac for the development of her prose style, there were few examples she could follow. Perhaps the works most similar to *For the love of Ray* are Jan Kerouac's memoir style novels, that chart similar adventures in the sex and drug industry, although their style is quite different, and less reflective and they were published two decades later. Bremser's real inspiration is, however, the story of her life. If it is compared with the structure of a more conventional novel the work can only be found lacking. It is unfinished and uneven, knowing and innocent. The final scene where she and Ray, having abandoned their baby, sit in a room in New York and take drugs, is neither an end or a beginning but another moment in which the entire form of the work and her life, its past and imagined future, are illuminated. As Bremser says in the prologue:

As soon as I knew that Ray was coming back, that there was no end to things... and when time got turned on again we both coolly moved to each other's sides to start it all over again (Bremser [1969] 1972, 10). And then again, later in the book:

But I am getting ahead of my story and run the risk of telling various endings first and never getting back to the middle, leaving it like that. Excuse my timeless sentences, I want to ex-perience it all over again, so take it on me to flash back as necessary. (42)

The endless circulation is a fiction, and Bremser's reinvention of herself as Brenda Frazer, and as an ecologist through time spent on Allan Ginsberg's farm and commune is now a matter of record, but it is one that serves the book very well.

Jack Kerouac's *some of the dharma* is a complex form. That Kerouac saw *some of the dharma* as a book is indisputable but to read it as a novel or as a long poem is to experience dissatisfaction. That he saw it as a book that could be read outside of the overall project of writing a life, is in more doubt. It is part of what Kerouac called the Duluoz legend, a Proustian memoir that included many of his works. While some of Kerouac's other works were able to be marketed as novels, this one certainly wasn't. Its overall structure and the ideas that it is made up of, are given far more resonance when read alongside his other work, and particularly *The Dharma Bums*. The mobility of the work's form therefore occurs at two levels, at the level of the page, whereby different sections and fragments can be constituted and re-constituted, read alone or read in combination, and at the level of the work, where it remains in a fluid relationship to the total of Kerouac's other works.

These three examples begin to give some indication of the ways that a mobility of form not only develops new readings of individual works, but also enables practices of combining works that might appear uneven and unfinished and challenge notions of genre. It demonstrates the ways that an increased mobility of people and things has changed the kinds of cultural products that are produced, in this case literary texts, in an increasingly auto-mobile post-war USA. These findings also resonate with other case studies I have published on British fiction and poetry, and survey work in European literature. There are contextual differences, of course, but the principal concepts hold. In all cases, I would claim, artforms have non-representational characteristics, acting themselves out over timespans that include the time of the life and the non-time of eternity. Structures and forms, such as they are, only appear in moments, forming and reforming.

## Notes

1. For studies of relationships between literary texts and mobility, particularly automobility, see for example: Duffy (2009); Seiler (2008); Dettelbach (1976); Clarke (2007); and Lackey (1997).
2. Car ownership in the USA went from one car per six members of the population in 1925, to one car per three members of the population by the mid-1950s (McShane 1997, 177) and to one car per member of the population by 2015. For comparative purposes the UK and France had car ownership levels of about one car per twenty members of the population in 1955 (177).
3. All references are to the UK publication, but its publication as *Troia* in the USA had an identical text.

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