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The Blakean Imagination and the Land in Jez Butterworth's *Jerusalem*

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Abstract: This essay argues that Jez Butterworth's *Jerusalem* challenges what Mark Shucksmith terms the "visioning of rural areas by hegemonic middle-class culture" (163), which still dominates the way many British people see the countryside and is rooted in nostalgia for a neat and pretty rural idyll, cleansed of untidy (bio)diversity. The second major line of argument is that the shadow of William Blake hangs heavily over the play, and that Rooster both embodies and employs the Blakean imagination in ways that challenge dominant "hegemonic" ideas about the rural. The untidy and disruptive Rooster, and the wood that bears his name, represent a very different kind of mindscape and a very different kind of (living) landscape. Simply by his presence in the wood he symbolizes an alternative way of being in the land. It is true that Rooster's is an imperfect echo of the mythopoetic Blakean world-view, but it is nevertheless unmistakeably Blakean, so the prologue to *Jerusalem*, part of the preface to Blake's *Milton: A Poem in Two Books* (1808), is central to a proper understanding of the play. Rooster's verbal combativeness and mythopoetic visions penetrate the hypocrisy behind the veneer of respectability in Flintock, and the justifications for prevailing human relationships with the land.

Keywords: anthropocentrism, land, materialism, mythopoetic, non-human, rationalism, rural

> The land ethic simply enlarges the boundaries of the community to include soils, waters, plants, and animals, or collectively: the land [...]. In short, a land ethic changes the role of Homo sapiens from conqueror of the land-community to plain member and citizen of it. It implies respect for his fellow-members, and [...] respect for the community as such. (Leopold 204)

Jez Butterworth's *Jerusalem* (2009) asks fundamental questions about the rural and represents rural spaces that are not generally seen in theatre about the countryside. The play challenges the "visioning of rural areas by hegemonic middle-

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class culture" (Shucksmith 163), which still dominates the way many British people see them and is rooted in nostalgia for a neat and pretty rural idyll, cleansed of untidy (bio)diversity. In this way of seeing, if villages are chocolate-box-tidy, verges are cut back, and fields are green, it doesn't matter whether there is very much 'nature' in the countryside beyond domesticated animals or monoculture agricultural crops. This essay argues that the way of seeing the land that emerges from "hegemonic middle-class culture" is bound-up with the rationalist-capitalist mindscape that so dominates the westernised world. In *Jerusalem*, Kennet and Avon Council and the people of mainstream Flintock represent this way of seeing, although the latter are sometimes conflicted in their commitment to the rationalist-capitalist paradigm. *Jerusalem* is much more than a state-of-England play – the standard reading by David Rabey, Sean Carney and Aleks Sierz, amongst others (although the idea has been repeatedly and "steadfastly rejected" by Butterworth, for example, in an interview for *Playbill* in May 2011). For Rabey, *Jerusalem* is a "necessary initiative, to reawaken considerations and visions of English society and culture; an interrogation into [English] 'identity and reality'" (109). For Carney, the play can be situated within "a dramatic discourse concerning the fate of English youth within an emotionally detached and uncaring society" (299). My contention is that the play's exploration of human interactions in the context of the fraught and complex human relationship with the land is at least equally significant. Indeed, the prologue signals that this is going to be a major theme in *Jerusalem*. In this essay, I will use the terms land and countryside interchangeably, and, when using both terms, I will also be referring to the non-human inhabitants of the land / countryside.

In a 2011 essay Anna Harpin argues for *Jerusalem*'s wider political significance (beyond the state-of-England) in context of the apparently insurmountable global tragedy of climate change, something that is not even implicitly referenced in the play. Harpin sees "extreme" localism as a reasonable response to this crisis: "does his [Davey's] blinkered outlook signal a form of bunkering down, of battening down the hatches in face of the looming storm [of global warming]?" (65) During the course of her essay, Harpin does make some brief suggestive comments about human stewardship of the land, and how the play asks what "sort land and life [are we] preparing for the next lot?" (72) Carney too notes in passing that "*Jerusalem* conjures a [...] sense of the role of location and place within the ongoing creation and maintenance of a community" (292). Rabey sees a relatively straightforward rural vs city opposition in *Jerusalem* (109); a confrontation about "local control and who is in charge" (Kingsnorth 106). I argue that Butterworth's play looks behind this opposition to interrogate more fundamental questions about the rural. Neither Harpin, Carney nor Rabey consider how Rooster both embodies and employs the Blakean imagination in ways that challenge dominant

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"hegemonic" ideas about the rural. The untidy and disruptive Rooster, and the wood that bears his name, represent a very different kind of mindscape and a very different kind of (living) landscape. Simply by his presence in the wood he symbolizes a different way of being in the land. It is true that Rooster's is an imperfect echo of the mythopoetic Blakean world-view, but it is nevertheless unmistakeably Blakean, so the prologue to *Jerusalem* is central to a proper understanding of the play. Rooster's verbal combativeness and mythopoetic visions penetrate the hypocrisy behind the veneer of respectability in Flintock, and the justifications for prevailing human relationships with the land.

Ways of Seeing the Land

For Raymond Williams, writing at the end of the twentieth-century, "the common image of the country is [...] an image of the past" (297, see also Woods 27), and such imaging of the countryside is just as prevalent today. The appearance of the countryside is what matters in this way of seeing, and many people associate the rural with 'nature' even when there is limited and rapidly declining biodiversity in intensively farmed agricultural land. Jo Robinson argues convincingly that modern and contemporary drama has contributed to this idealisation of a 'beautiful' and sterile rural idyll that involves "looking back to a pictorial and [...] static past" (16–17). Robinson also argues that because "cultural mappings [in Henri Lefebvre's terms] are potentially dynamic," theatre has the potential to "change understandings of the rural" (19–20), and goes on to consider some of the ways in which rural theatre shaped by lived human experience of the rural and / or performed in rural settings has contributed to this work. Plays performed in mainstream theatre houses can be provocative and challenging too, especially when audience expectations and common-sense assumptions about rural life and the countryside are reversed or disrupted. The unsettling rural dystopias of Dawn King's *Foxfinder* (2011) and Thomas Eccleshare's *Pastoral* (2013), which are not discussed by Robinson, certainly challenge the resilient pastoral ideal of rural life and human relationships with the non-human. Robinson's criticism that the social world represented in such plays would not take the typically middle-class audiences of mainstream theatre houses out of their comfort-zone does hold true though. *Jerusalem* also critiques the "hegemonic middle-class view" of the rural as neat, tidy and static, but it does so by focusing on insider-outsider characters at the margins of the predominantly middle-class world represented in *Foxfinder* and *Pastoral*, symbolised, in the latter, by the impending arrival of the Ocado man. This focus on the rural margins enables the carnivalesque linguistic invention and mixing of registers that is one of the most distinctive features of

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Butterworth's play. As in several of Philip Ridley's plays, most strikingly *Brokenville* (2000), story, anecdote and verbal jousting help to establish a better understanding of the relationship between the landscapes and associated mindscapes of the past and present, and to penetrate ideological obfuscations and mystifications. In *Jerusalem*, Rooster's mythopoetic visions are identifiably Blakean, even if (in a world that is even more resistant to mythopoetic explanations) they do not display the logical precision of Blake's prophetic books.

The title and prologue to *Jerusalem* explicitly associate the drama with a short lyric that is primarily about the central importance of the creative human imagination in any fully realised and flourishing state of being for both humankind and the land, including the non-human beings that inhabit the land. As will become clear, in a way that anticipates Timothy Morton's "ecology without nature" (see 2–8), William Blake's short lyric does not distinguish between these categories in any case, especially when it is read in the context of the long poem it prefaces. Blake's "Jerusalem" (recited by Phaedra in the prologue to *Jerusalem*), part of the preface to *Milton: A Poem in Two Books* (1808), is very well-known. Since the beginning of the twentieth century, Hubert Parry's 1816 musical setting has been used to represent a range of causes that seem to wilfully misread the poem. It is doubtful whether Blake would have understood the rationale behind the various reactionary adopters of the Parry setting, particularly the militaristic Fight for Right, the British National Party, or the Conservative Party. Since the 2005 Ashes series between England and Australia, the setting has also been sung prominently and regularly at major English sporting events, so it is likely that most of the inhabitants of Butterworth's Flintock would be familiar with it, even if they know no other Romantic poetry. Neither the political or the sporting adoption of Blake's lyric has much to do with the actual words of the poem, and the parochial nationalism that motivates them was ironically referenced by the curtain depicting dragons, maidens and the cross of St George standing behind Phaedra as she recited the lyric in Ian Rickson's 2009 first production at The Royal Court Theatre. Cedric Barfoot is right to describe these appropriations of Blake's poem, and more importantly, his poetic vision, to such a limited parochial vision of England, as "one of the most scandalous misappropriations in English literary and social history" (57).

Even if one reads the words of Blake's lyric with basic logical coherence in mind, the speaker first describes a land that is spiritually deficient and subjected to a malevolent influence in the present, and then goes on to imagine the renewal of the land in the future. The poem is not a celebration of England's greatness in the here and now. In relatively unambiguous terms, the speaker is making the point that England is not great now, but it was once, and, if humankind can rediscover a more spiritual, imaginative relationship with the land, it could be again in

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the future. Then there is the vexed question of what the phrase "dark satanic mills" means. It is in some respects a reference to the mills (productive organisations and modes of thought) that drive the capitalist project, but it is not only, or even mainly, about the developing Industrial Revolution. As Barfoot explains, it is a reference to the way in which, "for Blake, mankind, from long before the Industrial Revolution, long before the early Medieval development of windmills and watermills, way back in pre-history, had been caught in the mills of mind and rationality" (63). In other words, humankind is in thrall to a materialism that ultimately prevents both the land and human beings from flourishing. Robinson suggests that Phaedra's recital of Blake invokes a "lost" (7) rural idyll of the pictorial and static kind identified by Williams, but this is a superficial and literal reading of Blake's densely figurative lyric which, as I have suggested, also needs to be read in the context of the even more densely figurative *Milton* and *Jerusalem: The Emanation of the Giant Albion* (1820). The ideal of England's green and pleasant land only exists because of humankind's spiritual (or imaginative) dearth and embrace of (mechanical) materialism (see Barfoot 69–71).

Although Blake's vision is human-centric (he disavowed Wordsworth's nature poetic), it is very different from destructive modern humanism in that it does not prioritise minor human interests over the major interests of other beings and does not entail the sacrifice of a flourishing countryside to an anthropocentric world-view. Blake saw the health of land, and the non-human beings who inhabit the land, as inextricably bound-up with human spiritual realisation, rather than simply as resources to be endlessly exploited for the material benefit of humankind. As Kevin Hutchings has shown, Blake repeatedly critiques conventional hierarchies, including the human-animal boundary (75). The idea that "every [-] thing is Human" (Blake, *Complete Poetry* 180) and therefore worthy of veneration is also prominent in his prophetic books. This has profound implications for the new Jerusalem imagined in Blake's two most important long poems (*Milton* and *Jerusalem*) which is a much more inclusive place than the England Blake saw around him at the beginning of the nineteenth century. The key to this new Jerusalem is thinking outside the imaginative constraints of materialism and rationalism, which are combined and condensed most powerfully in the modern westernised world by what Istávan Mészáros calls the "forced normality" of neoliberalism (411, 416). In other words, in the westernized world human societies are circumscribed by the rationalist-capitalist paradigm and the fetishizing of the free-market, to the virtual exclusion of every other way of organising relations between individual human beings, and between humankind and the living landscape.

In *Jerusalem*, Johnny Rooster Byron represents the last vestiges of a very fragile Blakean spirituality; not the disembodied form of spirituality imagined in

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Blake's *Milton* and *Jerusalem*, but Blakean nevertheless.[1] At a superficial level, the interruption of Phaedra's recitation of "Jerusalem" by Rooster's sound-system at the beginning of the play suggests that individuals like Rooster threaten a Blakean reconnection with the land. In fact, Rooster problematises the misappropriation of Blake to a sterile / static ideal of the rural. Albeit imperfectly, he embodies an alternative to the dominant materialism, and an incipient Blakean spiritual realisation. That the mercurial Rooster is left to fight for a mythopoetic and imaginative alternative to the dominant world-view is however a reflection of the condition of England, and by extension the westernised world in general, because he is by no means conventionally heroic. He "litters" the space around his caravan and deals in "cheap spliff [cannabis] and whizz [speed]" (Butterworth, *Jerusalem* 30). The various items that Rooster has accumulated, including the old caravan, are designated "rubbish" by Carney (294) and described as "pollution" by Kennet and Avon Council (Butterworth, *Jerusalem* 8). Then again, a more imaginative way of seeing these items is as other people's "rubbish" and discarded items, that would otherwise have gone into landfill, recycled for a purpose. Except for the "*smashed television*" (Butterworth, *Jerusalem* 6), which might have worked when Rooster acquired it, all the items are being put to good use. In a small way Rooster's recycling acts as a brake on mainstream throw-away culture. Even the disturbance resulting from his sound-system would be intermittent, given that he doesn't have "gatherings" (11) every night. The duration and the power would also be limited by the fact that he lives off-grid. We only hear the sound-system very briefly at the beginning of the play, and it is immediately replaced by "*Birdsong*" (6). Rooster's "pollution" doesn't prevent his wood from flourishing in the Blakean sense, whereas the council and their developer cronies' plans would do so.

Rooster's occupation of the wood, and his Blakean mythopoeic visions, even when they are apparently directionless and rambling, draw attention to the fact that the way we see, understand and relate to the land is a product of language and narrative (Jackson 155–170). The significance of mythological explanations and narratives is implied in several of Butterworth's previous plays. In *The Night Heron* (2002), set in the dynamic and transitional space of the Cambridgeshire fens, Butterworth references English Christian mythology (Protestantism and Bunyan) through Wattmore's incoherent ramblings, and employs Christian symbolism (a huge iconostasis dominated the stage in Ian Rickson's 2002 first production of the

1 In Blakean terms, Carol Rocamora in the *Broad Street Review* has it the wrong way around when she argues that "Rooster and all the other sociological and economic outcasts who live on society's fringe are shattering that myth [of England's green and pleasant land]."

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play at The Royal Court Theatre) and natural symbolism through the out-of-place night heron that is a constant presence. As several critics noted, the overall effect was baffling because the significance of the setting, and the relationship between mythology, symbolism and narrative is not apparent. Michael Billington observed in his review for *The Guardian* that the play "collapses under the weight of its own religious symbolism." There is a mythic background to the drama in *The Winterling* (2006) too. A discussion between West and Patsy about an ancient hillfort adjacent to the farmhouse in which all the scenes take place suggests that mythic England is closer, and destiny can be decoded more easily, in the countryside than in the chaos of the metropolis (Butterworth, *Plays One* 215–218). The impact of the mythopoetic imagination on human relationships with each other, and human relationships with the land, is central to *Jerusalem* though. Rooster's story-telling and myth-building are the most distinctive features of the play, and there is a clear relationship between Rooster's mythopoetic ways of seeing and narrative development that was not manifest in Butterworth's earlier plays.

The representation of mythology in *The Night Heron* and *The Winterling* is mimetic, decidedly so in the latter. In *Jerusalem* Rooster's explicitly hybrid mythology is indebted to tradition but reshaped for the present. This hybrid myth-making often arises out of Rooster's response to the landscape of England, but his stories also range through diverse histories and through different regions and countries. As Anna Harpin observes, and despite moments of comic localism exemplified by Davey's remarks about other countries – "I've never seen the point of other countries. I leave Wiltshire my ears pop. Seriously. I'm on my bike pedalling along, see a sign says 'Welcome to Berkshire', I turn straight around" (Butterworth, *Jerusalem* 24) – Rooster's "retreat into local woods is not in the spirit of nationalism or isolationism" (Harpin 66). The most outrageously creative instance of this composite transregional and trans-historical myth-building is Rooster's report of an encounter with the "giant that built Stonehenge […] just off the A14 outside Upavon. About half a mile from the Little Chef. [After he had been] up for three days and nights straight, playing canasta with these old ladies in a retirement home just outside Wootton Bassett" (Butterworth, *Jerusalem* 57). There is a blending of the contemporary – a personal history that is both mundane and ridiculously unlikely, and that name-checks some of the most banal landmarks of modernity – with the traditionally mythical, through an adaptation of the Arthurian legend that Stonehenge was built by giants in Ireland and later transported to England by Merlin (Reno 41). The conversation descends into burlesque as Rooster's associates maintain that the appearance of giants in the landscape would have been reported by the regional news television programme *Points West*. The comedy underscores the constricted ability to imagine different ways of seeing and being that is often a feature of so-called common sense.

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Rooster's Wood and Flintock

In recent years, several social scientists, most notably Tim Ingold, have argued that the places we inhabit and our identities, as individuals and communities, are mutually dependent (*Perception* 203; see also "Building, Dwelling, Living" 57–80). In other words, we are drawn to places that reflect or reinforce our world-view, and, at the same time, create places that are a product of our world-view.[2] Rooster inhabits an untidy, temporary and liminal place, living illegally in a caravan, within a clearing in a wood, alongside the non-human animal inhabitants. Rooster is drawn to the wood because of its marginality, and that same marginal quality fosters his iconoclastic world-view. The marginality attracts other outsiders too: most of the main characters in the play, and wild non-human beings, many of whom can only exist at the edges of mainstream Flintock, whether due to the spread of biologically-cleansed housing developments or chemically-managed monoculture farmland (Woods 67–78). There is a moral dimension to the relationship between space, place and identity that increases the potential for confrontation between those who inhabit different places. Yi-Fu Tuan has influentially written of how we experience the mindscape associated with the place we inhabit as positive (*topophilia*), and at the same time transfer negative attributes to signally different or unknown, and thereby dangerous or threatening places (*topophobia*) (Tuan 203–204).

There is trouble in Flintock because Rooster's Wood abuts the permanent, ordered and expanding new estate, cleansed of untidy biodiversity. Butterworth's debt to Harold Pinter has been remarked upon by several critics (see Rabey 76–77 and 87–88), and, although *Jerusalem* was heralded as a new departure, Rooster's confrontations with members of the Flintock community remain firmly in the Pinteresque mode. In earlier plays Pinter had focused on the way in which the return of a relation or the arrival of outsiders could disrupt domestic relations; the kind of dynamic Butterworth also explores in *Mojo* (1995), *The Night Heron* and *The Winterling*. In later plays such as *One for the Road* (1984) or *Party Time* (1991) Pinter turned to the irrational hatred and violence with which settled communities often respond to the social other – as Victor Cahn suggests, the plays are still about the negotiation of power, but "the boundaries are expanded" (75). Charles Grimes remarks of *Party Time* that community members are defined in "moral opposition to outsiders, considered less than human, whose existence serves to justify any means of preserving the in-group's lifestyle" (103). In

2 Vicky Angelaki has explored the way in which this relationship is represented in Simon Stephens' *Wastwater* (2011), *Carmen Disruption* (2015) and *Song from Far Away* (2015), see 160–173.

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Butterworth's later rural (borderland) plays, this expanded opposition is often even more conflicted because many people within the settled communities represented in them are both irresistibly drawn to wild spaces, and at the same time threatened by them, as well as the wild less-than-human beings, like Rooster, and non-human beings who inhabit them.

In *Parlour Song* (2009), a play about the dysfunction behind the closed doors of houses on a seemingly safe and secure new estate, and first performed at the Almeida Theatre only a few months before *Jerusalem*, Butterworth began to explore tropes that would be developed in the later play; specifically, the strange appeal of dangerous and threatening wild spaces. This is most apparent in Joy's conflicted experience, culminating in her dream monologue towards the end of the play, when she imagines that: "The road has gone. The houses have gone. I'm standing in a forest. After rain. I take a step forward. Another. I don't turn around. I just walk. Away" (Butterworth, *Plays One* 309). Joy's experience reflects the westernised world's love-hate relationship with wild places and wilderness. In *Jerusalem* this tension is represented more explicitly than in *Parlour* Song. (In addition to Mark Rylance's performance as Rooster, this is one of the major reasons that the play connected with North American audiences.[3]) Rooster haunts the imaginations of mainstream Flintock, especially the people who live on the new estate, because he personifies both the danger and the allure of wild landscapes at the margins of our constructed normality; spaces that contain untidy nature, and, more disturbingly, outsiders with unsettling world-views. As Davey observes, the details provided by the property developers were probably selective in terms of the information that was included: "Detached house, three beds with a garden overlooking wood with free troll. Free ogre what loves trance music, deals cheap spliff and whizz, don't pay tax, and has probably got Aids. Non-stop aggravation and danger. I bet that weren't in the brochure" (Butterworth, *Jerusalem* 30). The idea that Rooster is a kind of troll highlights his less-than-human otherness, his association with non-human wild nature, and the disruptive potential of his presence on the edge of human normality.

Davey's troll metaphor initially suggests a parallel with the grotesque and surreal outsiders that appear in several of Ridley's plays, most notably in *The Pitchfork Disney* (1991), although Rooster does not display the utterly amoral and darkly sinister characteristics of Cosmo Disney or, especially, Pitchfork Cavalier. There is also

3 In North-American culture, this is manifested most obviously in the not-wholly uncontroversial, and, on occasion, contradictory revaluation of nature and wild places that underpinned the conservation movement during the late-nineteenth and early-twentieth centuries. For example, the new national parks were to be both economic resources as tourist destinations for civilised North Americans *and* wildernesses (see Jones 31–47).

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an echo of the malevolent cartoon troll of modern globalised popular culture in Davey's description. In fact, Rooster has more in common with the impish and social troll, originating specifically within southern Scandinavian folklore. Just as Rooster is part of his living wood in the Blakean sense of the human being inextricably bound with the non-human, the original Scandinavian troll of pre-industrial society was part of the living landscape that modern westernised industrial society (particularly industrialised agriculture) has almost destroyed. In the words of Jon Lindow, these trolls "were 'nature beings'; that is, beings who were encountered in nature" (9). They could be friendly if treated fairly and accepted despite their difference, but they were also mischievous, and could take advantage of the weaknesses in our characters and dispositions during their dealings with humans. Like this more ambivalent version of the troll who is both human-like and different, Rooster is one of those disruptive (and creative) boundary-straddling characters, whom the dominant majority will always endeavour to manage and control. They are disliked and scapegoated by settled human communities because they persistently ask awkward questions and mischievously (or, in the case of individuals like Rooster, simply by their continued presence as representatives of a very different way of seeing, and being in, the land), bring into the light what people would rather keep in the dark (Bauman 1–3). At the same time, in Butterworth's world, places like Rooster's wood, and the wild beings that inhabit them, represent a safety valve for the repressed desires beneath the surface of apparently civilised communities.

As a liminal figure who is alternately demonized and instrumentalized by the wider community of Flintock, with whom his encounters are at best uncomfortable, Rooster personifies and externalises this internal conflict. He remarks on the various services he provides, for example, "painting" and "shagging," to the people living in the "seventy-eight brand-new houses" that are now very close to his clearing-haven; "four hundred yards down there, through them trees, across the brook" (Butterworth, *Jerusalem* 34). The houses are symbols of order and conformity in *Jerusalem*, but they clearly hide some discontented people (like Joy in *Parlour Song*) and some wild and disorderly desires that can only be satisfied by the wild less-than-human troll at the end of the garden. Wesley, the landlord of The Cooper's, is similarly caught between two worlds – the one he occupies, dominated by the corporate agenda of the brewery to co-opt the traditional fair for profit and tabloid-style received opinion about where underage drinking is and is not acceptable, and Rooster's Wood; the wild and imagination-enabling place to which he constantly returns and is clearly drawn.[4] Most dramatically,

4 Professor David Nutt, the former British government drug adviser, considers alcohol to be a more harmful drug than the illegal ones supplied by Rooster (see 1558–1565).

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Troy projects his own predatory sexual impulses onto Rooster who repeatedly taunts him about the real reason for his desire to find his missing fifteen-year-old stepdaughter; "It's not just you feel a little bit randy today," and later; "You miss her, boy? She's your treasure? […] Bet it's hard to sleep with her right next door. She in your dreams, boy? She in your dreams?" (81) For Troy the source of depravity and danger is always the social other, particularly if they also originate from, or dwell in other places. He is satisfied that, as someone who occupies a wild untidy place outside normality and has an untidy and unconventional lifestyle, Rooster represents all that is wrong with the world. He finds it particularly irksome that a "gyppo"; "pikey"; "*diddicoy*" (79–81) seems to have a good idea of what goes on behind the closed doors of Flintock. This is a Pinteresque confrontation about the control of public discourse (Grimes 103), and Rooster's story about Troy's abuse of his stepdaughter reveals the danger and depravity to be inside rather than outside the settled community. On the other hand, Troy's account of how Davey filmed Frank and Danny Whitworth urinating on Rooster, after finding him lying senseless in the path having over-indulged in "own brand" (Butterworth, *Jerusalem* 82), constructs the latter as a pathetic rather than sinister outsider. Troy is forced to resort to brutal violence; returning to brand Rooster on the face, permanently marking the social other as other in an endeavour to reassert in-group order.

Mythopoeic and Bureaucratized Space

The people of Flintock have an ambivalent relationship with Rooster. The principal reason that they would like him to leave the wood though is their dislike of his messy (in both the physical and the legal sense of the word) occupation of a marginal place on the edge of the community. Ultimately, their dislike is rooted in an unconscious and unmitigated adherence to the rationalist-capitalist view of the land as a resource to be organised for the benefit of humankind. This benefit is almost always measured in functional or economic terms (hence the obsession with increasing GDP as a measure of national progress), as if space organised in other ways, or not organised by human beings at all, can be of no value and no benefit to humankind. The wellbeing of non-human animal species does not register in this way of seeing and being in the land. National parks on both sides of the Atlantic are regarded by many as valuable, but these are managed, controlled and ordered places. In the UK such places are often dominated and shaped by agriculture, especially sheep-farming, and within both the UK and the USA they are important economic resources through their status as tourist destinations. Spaces / places which could not be easily adapted for functional purposes, or that

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were not incorporated into the rationalist-capitalist paradigm, such as mountainous areas and common land, were historically conflated with "waste" (Rogers 8). Notwithstanding that he proves alluring to some, the dislike of disordered places, as well as the wild beings that inhabit them (like the less-than-human Rooster), shapes most of Rooster's encounters with mainstream Flintock. The conflicted nature of human attitudes to (dis)ordered land is made much more explicit dramatically and mythopoetically in his dealings with the council. Rooster's command of language, linguistic register and narrative enables him to give as good as he gets when Flintock folk challenge the legitimacy of his way of seeing and being in the land – Troy's extreme violence appears to increase Rooster's mythopoetic power. Kennet and Avon Council does have the power to force him to leave, and Rooster's verbal acrobatics and mythopoeic stories have little or no impact upon the council officers despatched into Rooster's Wood as representatives of the established order. The desire for plot (or order and control) in human lives, in relations with others, and in relations with the environment is something that has always been important, but different kinds of narrative have been privileged during different historical epochs. Rooster's mythopoeic interventions and stories do not sit easily with the "forced-normality" of the modern westernized world in which virtually everything is described and negotiated through a rationalist-capitalist narrative framework (see Megson 42).

More than any of Rooster's other encounters, those with Kennet and Avon reconnect with and interrogate questions introduced in the prologue to the play. Blake's lyric is central to a proper understanding of *Jerusalem* because it introduces the idea that the way we see and describe the land around us is the key to our spiritual realisation. Seeing the land through a mythopoetic lens might just help to unlock the "mind-forg'd manacles" (Blake, *Songs of Innocence and Experience* 150) of materialism, yoked to a rationalist-capitalist paradigm, that constrain the human imagination. Rooster doesn't have practical solutions as to how humankind could better manage the countryside within the prevailing system of land ethics. This is not the point of his mythopoetic visions, which are Blakean exercises in imaginative bravura that are meant to disrupt common-sense understandings. Like Ginger and Lee, when they suggest that an encounter with "the giant that built Stonehenge" (Butterworth, *Jerusalem* 57) would be reported by *Points West*, most people in the westernised world would likely dismiss Rooster's stories as pointless abstractions. The dominant capitalist ideology obscures the fact that capitalist interpretations are abstractions too, and it is this obfuscation that Rooster sets out to challenge in his encounter with Kennet and Avon. Monetary and utilitarian value only predominates over every other measure of value in human relations with the land because this way of seeing is continually reinforced in bureaucratised stories about the spaces around us (Lotz 9). In most of

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the westernised world, it is accepted that the value of land should be measured in monetary terms, and the stories considered important are narratives about who bought a parcel of land, what legal rights they and other human beings have in relation to that parcel of land, and how these rights were accrued etc. Non-human nature is most often seen as an obstacle to the rationalist-capitalist endeavour – a sentiment dramatized in King's *Foxfinder* where the fox is the source of all evil in a bureaucratised and dystopian countryside. This rationalist-capitalist way of seeing and interacting with the land has come to be viewed as an obvious truth, that could only be questioned by fanatics and lunatics (see Descola 322 and Gilman).

The opening scene of *Jerusalem* sets up a keystone opposition in the play between a reductive legalistic way of describing and understanding the land (in which money is the measure of value), and Rooster's more imaginative and Blakean mythopoeic world-view. Mrs Fawcett announces her presence in Rooster's clearing with the following words: "Linda Fawcett, Kennet and Avon Senior Community Liaison Officer. 9.00 a.m., 23 April. Serving Notice F-17003 in contravention of the Public Health Act of 1878, and the Pollution Control and Local Government Order 1974" (Butterworth, *Jerusalem* 7). "Section 62 of the Criminal Justice and Public Order Act," "Order 24, the County Court ruling which was heard in Salisbury County Court on the 12th March" and "Order 113 of the Rules of the County Court" are also invoked, before Fawcett concludes: "With the aforementioned notice, Kennet and Avon include a brochure outlining Unauthorised Encampment Policy, the Strategy and Partnership Section, issue date December 2002, reference 4.06.0001006" (8). Neither Rooster, hidden inside his caravan, nor the audience have much of an idea what this story of Rooster's bureaucratic relationship with the land (and the council) means. The full meaning can only be understood by those whose occupation is to develop and employ statutory instruments and court orders – the council will have access to such individuals, but Rooster will not. The story does have symbolic resonance though, in that the numerical signifiers and references are being used to intimidate and control in an asymmetrical power relationship.

After placing their notice on the door to Rooster's caravan, Fawcett and Parsons prepare to leave the wood, and, even though they are taking advantage of Rooster's "pollution" to enable his removal, Parsons muses to himself wistfully and somewhat contradictorily: "I'll say this. It's a lovely spot" (8). Parsons' observation indicates that the wood as "rubbish tip" (Carney 294) is an uncritical assumption, and, as suggested earlier, many of the items referred to in Butterworth's stage direction are other people's rubbish recycled for a purpose, thereby saving the planet from some of the gratuitous damage caused by mainstream throw-away society. It is also ironic that Parsons can easily see the beauty of the place through Rooster's "pollution" but is part of the rationalist-capitalist

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bureaucracy that would have all trace of this biodiverse beauty destroyed and replaced by an extension of the new estate, cleansed of biodiversity and green spaces.[5] At this point, Rooster and his loudhailer emerge from the hatch on top of the caravan. The ever-present loudhailer symbolises the difficulty of challenging the dominant world-view when it is so rigorously supported by powerful vested interests and a pervasive, but opaque ideology. This is the reason, notwithstanding the volume, that Rooster can only challenge the authority of the council representatives in such oblique terms:

> Hear ye, hear ye. With the power invested in me by Rooster Johnny Byron – who can't be here [because] he's in Barbados this week with Kate Moss – I, his faithful hound Shep, hereby instruct Kennet and Avon to tell Bren Grewstone, and Ross Taylor, and her twat son, and all those sorry cunts on the New Estate, Rooster Byron ain't going anywhere. Happy St. George's Day. Now kiss my beggar arse, you Puritans! (Butterworth, *Jerusalem* 9)

Rooster is airing personal grudges with various occupants of the new estate, but in terms of human interaction with the land, the final two sentences in this proclamation are important because of their diverse and wide-ranging mythopoetic associations.

In Ridley's *Brokenville*, mythopoetic exchanges between characters lead to a kind of resolution because there is common acceptance of the legitimacy of such narratives as a way of responding to the difficult situation in which they find themselves. In *Jerusalem* there is no such acceptance, and Rooster's words make very little impression upon Fawcett and Parsons, whose imaginations appear to be particularly constrained by westernized "forced-normality." The word puritan is often used to refer to those who would police carnivalesque boundary-straddling activity and discourse. Rooster has in mind the strain in Puritan thought that saw wild nature (e.g. Rooster's Wood or the North American West) as a place of physical and moral (because it was a favoured dwelling-place of the devil) danger that must be ordered and brought under bureaucratic control. As Michael Woods demonstrates, this is a way of seeing wild nature that has in some respects survived into contemporary popular culture (36–37), and it is certainly the view of Kennet and Avon. Rooster's exchanges with the council's representatives are not, however, empty gestures, because they are addressed outwards into the audience and even beyond (again symbolised by the presence of the loudhailer) as much as they are to his internal auditors. Through them the audience (Rooster's would-be disciples) glimpse the potential for mythopoeic ways of seeing and describing the

5 The litter around Rooster's caravan does impact upon the environment superficially but does not appear to have a negative impact upon the non-human nature in the wood.

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land to rekindle stunted imaginations. As Rabey notes of Rickson's production of the play: "[Mark] Rylance imbued Johnny with unfathomable moments of both distraction and power in his intermittent tendency to gaze out towards the audience; was [he] implicating them, as (spirit?) witnesses (invisible to all but him) beyond his immediate context (the fictional social world), as he self-consciously persisted along the dramatic and mythic stations of his own *via dolorosa*?" (120)[6]

Even if it can be presented as self-conscious, a better way to describe Rooster's self-projection is that it is frequently quite considered. For example, during the encounter with the council officials his personal story is further intertwined with the myths and legends of old England. In reminding the audience that the events depicted in the play all take place on Saint George's Day (also Shakespeare's birthday), he invokes a figure who, like William Blake, is often co-opted to a regressive vision. In fact, the cultural associations of the two are intertwined because "Jerusalem" is frequently sung to celebrate the revived Saint George's Day. Very little is known about the historical Saint George, but the story of Saint George the dragon slayer, read from any kind of imaginative or mythopoetic point of view, is obviously about the plight of the weak and the vulnerable (including, but not only, the maiden depicted on the curtain in the Rickson production) when confronted by cruel and unfeeling power. Saint George's Day had been primarily a religious festival, until it gradually fell out of the calendar following the Act of Union at the beginning of the eighteenth century. Recently there have been calls for a revival, led by the Conservative politicians Andrew Rosindell and Boris Johnson, alongside English Heritage and The Royal Society of Saint George. Like the perverse co-option of Blake's "Jerusalem" lyric, Saint George is invoked today to celebrate the economic, social and environmental status quo. This means unthinkingly endorsing a puritanical *laissez-faire* capitalism that often sacrifices the ecosystem-health and biodiversity of the countryside, and the wellbeing of the poor, the sick and the disabled – the kind of people for whom Saint George would have fought.[7]

The question of exactly who and what Saint George represents is an important one, however, the principal effect of Rooster's intervention is to invite a com-

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6 For a discussion of Rooster's mythical drum, and other examples of his 'shamanistic' power, see Rabey 217–218.

7 Since the publication of Max Weber's seminal *The Protestant Ethic and the Spirit of Capitalism* (1905), Puritanism or Protestantism (The Church of England) is often associated with extreme forms of *laissez-faire* capitalism. The connection has been reiterated by many historians, most prominently Christopher Hill in his influential essay 'Puritanism, Capitalism and the Scientific Revolution.' But this view has also been challenged by several revisionist historians. See, for example, Trevor-Roper 221–223, and, more recently, Coffey 20–25.

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parison between the content and language of the two sets of announcements. Like those of the council officers, Rooster's statements are couched in an official-sounding register. But unlike the council's announcements, the declaration that Rooster is "in Barbados this week with Kate Moss" is logically coherent, as is the claim that he is represented by "his faithful hound Shep." In neither case does meaning depend on specialist knowledge or detailed and elaborate context, and, in this respect, Rooster's statements make much more sense at a superficial level than the council's deracinated numbered references and legal jargon. Rooster adopts his own levelling carnivalesque version of the official register employed by the council officials because it enables him to display his very particular mythopoeic way of seeing the world, but also to mock their pompous sense of right. Of course, the audience knows that someone like Rooster is unlikely to holiday with someone like Kate Moss, and that dogs can't talk in the way that humans do. The audience knows that most of what Rooster has said is nonsense and will have little or no impact on the council. This is another signally important difference though. Rooster brings into relief the striking dissonance between the logical incoherence of the council's announcement when contrasted with his own, and the fact that the former will have a serious impact because it is about removing the different, the marginalised and the disempowered from the land (including non-human fauna and flora). A similar kind of bureaucratization is deployed to rationalise the eradication of foxes in King's *Foxfinder*. As stated previously, the way we describe space, the language we use, is important. The language used by the council officials and their developer cronies in *Jerusalem* might appear to be neutral, but it is bound up with a bureaucratized capitalistic mindscape that regards the land only as a functional or economic resource, and silences those who have more heterotopic and imaginative ways of seeing and being in the world.

As Philippe Descola notes in his seminal study *Beyond Nature and Culture* (2005), the idea that non-human nature is primarily an economic resource is not common to all cultures, and only developed into the dominant structure of feeling within the western (and westernised) world in the last couple of hundred years (322). It is highly significant that Lee, one of Rooster's disciples, has an interest in native North Americans, and wishes to move to Australia (see Butterworth, *Jerusalem* 20–23). Native North Americans did not believe that land could be bought or sold; they did not see ownership, fences and cultivation as natural. For Australian aboriginal peoples the places connected with the most important mythopoeic narratives have the greatest value. As Bruce Chatwin remarks in his account of travels with aboriginal people during the 1980s, "anywhere in the bush you can point to some feature of the landscape and ask the Aboriginal with you, 'What's the story there?'" (13) Of course, a different way of seeing the land has come to prominence in Australia since western colonisation began in earnest at the end of

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the eighteenth century. But to the aboriginal people who have been able to retain something of their ancient culture, the western way of conceptualising the fundamental relationship between human beings and the land is incomprehensible and outrageous. Similarly, because it echoes the Australian aboriginal tradition, Rooster's way of seeing and being in the land is very difficult for the people of mainstream Flintock and the council to accept. Nevertheless, the example of Australasia demonstrates that the stories told about the land can change, and, given the widespread crashes in ecosystems health, it is becoming ever more obvious that humans in the westernised world need different narratives about the land today. The mythopoetic story that Rooster tells about the wood near the end of the play is important because it demonstrates that immersion in a living landscape can reveal the link between human realisation and a flourishing land.

The Myth of Phaedra

Phaedra is not directly involved in the action, but symbolizes the silencing of the disruptive outsider through association with the myth of Phaedra, and is therefore pivotal to the opposition between Rooster's vision and various kinds of groupthink.[8] Rooster can challenge the "moral *personae*" that individuals like Wesley, and especially Troy are desperate to "preserve" (Rabey 121) – this is what makes him so disruptive in Flintock. In terms of the overarching framing narrative of the play concerning his occupancy of the wood, however, and despite his knowledge of Linda Fawcett's extra-marital intrigues, the encounters with mainstream Flintock bring into relief his apparent impotence when faced with the much more insidious threat posed by the council. In this context, Rooster's dialogue with Phaedra at the end of the play is important, especially given her association with the power of imaginative ways of seeing the land through her rendering of Blake's "Jerusalem" in the prologue. The dialogue demonstrates that Rooster knows the value of the wood far better than the council or the developers because his relationship with it has been rooted in an imaginative rather than an instrumental response to the place. It is not the romanticised (biologically-cleansed and ordered) version of the

8 In all the various versions of the Phaedra story in Greek mythology, she falsely accuses the illegitimate and exiled Hippolytus of rape. Phaedra does not make any direct accusations of this kind in the play; she does not have much of a voice, but the people of Flintock make the comfortable assumption that she has been sexually abused by the "gyppo"; "pikey"; "*diddicoy*" outsider (79–81). Even if Troy (the real abuser) is looking for a reason to silence Rooster, the fact that Phaedra does not correct the mistaken belief and prejudice of the people in and around Flintock, also contributes to the chain of events that leads to the assault.

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rural from an urban perspective identified by Robinson as prominent in drama about the countryside (15). Indeed, Rooster's Wood is not the kind of space commonly represented in rural drama – none of the definitions of rural that Robinson presents, and none of the plays that she discusses, refer to rural spaces outside human control, or the wild non-human inhabitants of the countryside.

King's *Foxfinder* and Eccleshare's *Pastoral* do explore our contemporary disconnect with the non-human through satirical representation of wild nature as an antagonistic and malign force. Butterworth takes a different approach by representing the relationship between place and world-view, including attitudes to the non-human. The *dénouement* of *Jerusalem* reflects the Heideggerian (and Blakean) sense that the non-human "being" in place is central to human "being" in place (Maly 53). Rabey makes a pointed observation about the "blanket-clad Byron" at the end of the Rickson first production, noting that he resembles "an English version (descendent?) of Wovoka (a.k.a. 'Jack Wilson'), the [late nineteenth-century] Native American prophet" (130). This only reinforces Rooster's association with a more respectful, stewardship-driven and sustainable relationship with wild nature because Native Americans traditionally saw non-human beings as "relations"; as "brothers, sisters, uncles, grandpas" (LaDuke 2), rather than as simply resources or obstacles to progress. When Phaedra asks him "a real fairy. Or an elf. In this wood? You ever see one," Rooster replies:

> I've seen a lot of strange things in this wood. (*Beat*.) I seen a plague of frogs. Of bees. Of bats. I seen a rainbow hit the earth and set fire to the ground. I seen the air go still and all sound stop and a golden stag clear this clearing. Fourteen-point antlers of solid gold. I heard an oak tree cry. I've heard beech sing hymns. [...] When the light goes, and I stare out into the trees, there's always pairs of eyes out there in the dark, watching. Foxes. Badgers. Ghosts. [...] (*Beat*.) Elves and fairies. (Butterworth, *Jerusalem* 102)

"Rooster Byron, ancient green man, is not so much *in* the wood, as *of* it" (Harpin 67). The wood is an uncannily magical place full of "Ghosts [...] Elves and fairies" (Butterworth, *Jerusalem* 102), and, at the end of the play, the ability to see these mythical beings is associated with the imagination required to appreciate the magic in ecologically healthy and biodiverse non-human nature. But this counts for nothing in a world where value is pretty much *only* gauged in numerical and monetary terms; as Christian Lotz notes "money as the form of value – in its capitalised form – is the true sun around which all [...] relations are organised in capitalist societies" (xiv). Rooster is acutely aware of this reality, and the relationship between council and developers, when he asks Fawcett "who gets the kickbacks" (Butterworth, *Jerusalem* 98). The natural world is multifaceted, interconnected and complicated, but as Paul Burkett suggests: "Especially when combined with capitalism's division of labour and nature [...], money's abstraction

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from natural diversities and interrelations helps create a tendency toward simplification and homogenizations of natural conditions" (85).[9] Rooster is branded by Troy, but it is the council and the developers who force him out of Rooster's wood, and, by the end of the play, no one is any the wiser as to precisely how this has happened. What is clear though, is that the natural magic of Rooster's wood (both the human and the non-human magic) will soon be bulldozed and gone forever.

Sierz and Rabey associate *Jerusalem* with rural plays like *Pastoral* and *Foxfinder*, all of which, it is argued, represent a countryside "*riven* with class conflict and *blasted* with strange imaginings" (137–143 and 137–138, my italics). This essay demonstrates that the conflict represented in *Jerusalem* (and, arguably, *Pastoral* and *Foxfinder*) has more to do with different ways of seeing the land than class, and Rooster's mythopoeic visions only seem 'strange' because humankind in the westernised world is so conditioned to viewing the countryside through the rationalist-capitalist paradigm. Rooster's "strange imaginings" do not signify a "blasted" land; they represent the desire (in Blakean terms, Rooster's "arrows of desire") for a future in which both the human and the non-human are flourishing and in place. Rabey's idea of "flourishing" primarily involves a more equitable settlement for "society's abject," apparently within the existing rationalist-capitalist paradigm, and he mis-reads Blake's "mental fight" which he sees as an invocation to challenge "those who profit from corruption, distraction, apathy" (138). As shown in the first part of this essay, neither Blake's lyric nor Rooster's visions concern abuse of wealth and power. Both are about the need to escape the dominant and unimaginative rationalist-capitalist mindscape if humans are to achieve any kind of genuine fulfilment or spiritual realisation. For Rooster, as for Blake, this is bound up with language. The words "mental fight," both within Blake's lyric and *Jerusalem*, mean the imaginative labour of challenging the way in which people see and describe human relations with each other and with the land. The weapons referenced in Blake's poem are metaphors for the power of the creative imagination (Barfoot 71), entreating people to confront conventional thinking and ways of seeing. Rooster's weapon is not so much the curse that he places on Kennet and Avon Council in the final moments of the play, as his ability to frame the curse in imaginative and mythopoeic terms. In the end, Rooster's way of seeing is more important than his occupation of the wood, and the final invocation is a rallying call to the ghosts of Rooster's kin, and to the giants (represented by those ancient feet in Blake's lyric) who promised to come to his aid at the beat

9 Burkett cites John Bellamy Foster who makes the same point in a slightly different way: when "labor became more homogenous, so did much of nature, which underwent a similar process of degradation. […] Natural diversity is destroyed in the same proportion as profits are promoted" (111–112).

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of the mythical drum. The sound of the giants' footfall in the Rickson production emphasized the power of mythopoeic vision to help us see the world and our place in it differently.

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