

## **Tangled tales, entangled ales: Examining ‘recursive islandness’ through themes of place in Newfoundland craft beer**

With islands understood as generative sites of relational entanglement (Boon et al., 2018; Burgos Martinez, 2021; Pugh & Chandler, 2021), and craft beer itself described as a “zone of entanglement” (Sjölander-Lindqvist et al., 2020, p. 158) and meaning-building, it should come as no surprise that the island of Newfoundland’s craft beer brands are brimming with richly entangled themes of place. But what does that *look* like? This creative thesis project engages the island as both model and metaphor, examining themes of place in the craft beer names of Newfoundland and interpreting and embodying them — and their inherent meaning(s) — through creative textile practice.

### **Analytical framework**

Whether as a site of amplification or experimentation, containment or refuge, the figure of the island has often been reductively cast as bounded and insular, liminal and remote (Gillis, 2004; Hay, 2013; Ronström, 2021). That said — and, indeed, somewhat paradoxically — islands have also long been utopianized as “sites of infinite possibility” and “environments of imagination” (Boon et al., 2018, p. 2; Hay, 2013). The recent “relational turn” (Pugh, 2016) in Island Studies, alongside an increasing rejection of modern, linear frameworks in favour of more complex relationalities, has brought islands to the fore as “intensely relational spaces” (Dawson & Pugh, 2021, p. 8). In reality and in nature, *everything* is inter- and intra-related and, in recognizing and understanding islands as generative, productive sites where “relations play out with particular intensity and visibility” (Huijbens, 2021, p. 1), they become central to understanding the changing nature both of our world and of Anthropocene<sup>1</sup> thinking itself.

Thinking with islands in this way enables “alternative forms of thought and practice” (Pugh & Chandler, 2021, p. 77; Dawson & Pugh, 2021). This approach is central to the Anthropocene Islands initiative, which examines “why and how engaging islands has become important for the generation of some of the core frameworks of contemporary Anthropocene thinking” (AnthropoceneIslands.online, n.d., para. 2; Chandler & Pugh, 2021; Pugh, 2020; Pugh

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<sup>1</sup> The Anthropocene is a proposed unit of geological time used to describe the recent period in Earth’s history when human activity started to have a significant impact on the planet’s climate and ecosystems. This epoch has many proposed names (e.g., Plantationocene, Plastocene, Capitalocene, Cthulhucene), time periods, and definitions. The ‘Anthropocene Islands’ agenda engages the Anthropocene as an epoch marked by shifts in thought and approaches, moving away from ‘modern’ frameworks of reasoning and embracing the richness of relational entanglements — simply put, the era of the rejection of modernity.

& Chandler, 2021). In their agenda-setting publication, *Anthropocene Islands: Entangled Worlds*, Jonathan Pugh and David Chandler (2021) identify four key methodological analytics within Anthropocene island scholarship, two of which — *Patchworks* and *Storiation* — emerge as particularly salient in this project.

*Patchwork* ontologies focus on “how we make, explore and journey” (Pugh & Chandler, 2021, p. 16) our relational interconnections. This human-centred, “patchy” approach is seen as a variation and development on Resilience approaches (see Chandler & Pugh, 2021, pp. 3–6), which are more linear and solutions-focused in how they reflect and draw upon island relationalities; through *Patchworks*, we are learning *with* rather than *from* the island. By looking at “concrete interactions in specific moments” (Pugh & Chandler, 2021, p. 76), *Patchworks* help to shape an understanding and appreciation of the rich interrelatedness of our world more broadly, as well as of the question(s) at hand. Rather than offering “lessons” to be translated or applied elsewhere (as often seen in [misguided] “one size fits all” approaches to ‘resilience’), this perspective opens the mind to different ways of thinking — with far-reaching potential.

The (onto)epistemological analytic of *Storiation* engages islands (and island cultures) as “significant ‘holding’ sites” (Pugh & Chandler, 2021, p. 21), resisting and disrupting modern, linear notions of time and space, and approaching place — and the figure of the island — as an “embodied archive” (Burgos Martinez, 2021, p. 2; Pugh & Chandler, 2021). *Storiation* approaches are collaborative, “communicat[ing] place, identity, knowledge, and history as entangled embodied experiences” (Burgos Martinez, 2021, p. 2). In this context, the figure of the island ‘holds’ and highlights “traces and afterlives of actions and events” (Pugh & Chandler, 2021, p. 21) and, when thinking about and with these traces and afterlives, it becomes difficult to approach time linearly and to distance ourselves from any dimension of it. There is no past, no ‘away’ (Pugh & Chandler, 2021, p. 23); these traces, legacies, e/affects, and their entangled relations are omnipresent and very much part of the ongoing here and now — a realization which often manifests in powerful, haunting ways.

With all of this in mind, the current project presents the metaphorical Entangled Island of ‘place + craft beer + Newfoundland’ as a figure through which to better understand, appreciate, and engage the relationality of place identity, both on this (literal) island and beyond.

## **Process**

Focusing specifically on craft breweries on the island of Newfoundland, this project positions themes of place in beer names as indicators of connection to place. This approach is supported by decades of literature identifying craft beer brands as rich sources of themes of place (see, e.g., Baldacchino, 2010; Flack, 1997; Hede & Watne, 2013; Schnell & Reese, 2003;

Sjölander-Lindqvist et al., 2020), and an understanding of islands as “spaces of heightened conceptualisability ... that are exceptionally easy to imagine as *places*” (Grydehøj, 2018, p. 1, italics in original) which affords them an amplified sense of connection to place (Campelo et al., 2014; Hay, 2006).

### ***Data collection and analysis***

A list of active craft breweries on the island of Newfoundland was compiled (n=17), based upon which a dataset of flagship beer names (n=135) and their associated backstories has been collected, sourced from breweries' websites and social media channels. In the instances where backstories were not explicitly provided or available, explanations or meanings will be researched. In these cases, meanings will be ascribed only if the connection is definitively clear. This dataset of names and stories will then undergo manual content analysis to identify and extract embedded themes, which will then be clustered using thematic analysis.

### ***Spatial visualization***

The resultant thematic data will be represented through a selection of reproduced/reiterated maps. Verified data maps relating to or representing the prominent themes will be sourced and then creatively replicated using a digital illustration app (Procreate) within which they can also be layered and modified (aesthetically). To ensure that the visualization concept emerges organically, this phase of the project will be approached without a set agenda or process, as opposed to going in with an idea of what I want the end product to look like and (intentionally or inadvertently) imposing a framework or restrictions on the analysis phase and/or visualization phase.

### ***Output***

The tangible output of this project will comprise a written component and a textile component. The major written component will be a treatise of approximately 60 pages outlining the purpose, theoretical framework, literature review, methodology, findings, discussion, conclusion, and any other content that is relevant to the project.

For the textile component, salient elements from the spatial visualization phase will be reiterated onto/as a large textile artwork. The 'canvas' for this piece will be an existing handmade patchwork quilt that was given to me as a baby in Newfoundland, with the mapped thematic interpretation being added as a new layer. The technique(s) used for this could include embroidery, hand-quilting, and/or other stitching techniques. Traditional practices like quilt making have long been associated with expression of identity, meaning, and culture (Parker,

2010; Pocius, 1979; Wilson, 2011). As Lisa Wilson (2011, p. 84) states in her study of quilting practice and iconography on Newfoundland's Great Northern Peninsula, "Quilt making means different things to different people, but for everyone, whether aware of it or not, a sense of identity is being created and asserted." In the context of the current project, incorporating a 'decorative' dimension while maintaining the utilitarian intention of the quilt actively adds new layers (both literal and figurative) of meaning — while serendipitously bringing many others to the (figurative) surface.

### **Piecing it together**

This project engages the figure of the island as both model and metaphor, examining themes of place in the craft beers of Newfoundland while emphasizing the value and potential of relational approaches. Putting forth beer name themes as representations of connection to place and, in turn, 'mapping' that thematic data allows us to think about the relationship between place and identity in Newfoundland in a more 'graspable' way: "What does that *look* like?"

Moreover, by engaging with traditional craft practice in recreating these findings in and onto a textile form, data visualization then becomes data *storytelling*, imbuing even further layers of meaning and connection. In adding this (literal) layer of meaning onto an existing (literal) patchwork — as opposed to creating something new from scratch — the textile piece itself becomes "a site of regenerative recrafting" (Loveless, 2019, p. 3), mirroring or even reiterating the patchy Anthropocenic reading of the island as a figure of generative, ongoing 'becoming' (Chandler & Pugh, 2021; Gillis, 2004; Pugh & Chandler, 2021).

Stepping back, the project unfolds to reveal that it is itself an island — a figure of what I am calling ***recursive islandness*** (Whitten Henry, 2021), reminiscent of a geographically recursive island or, more theoretically, of Roberts and Stephens's *infinite island* ("a place constituted by infinitely large numbers of analytical frames moving toward the infinitely minute"; 2017, p. 28) or Benitez-Rojo's *repeating island* ("unfolding and bifurcating until it reaches all the seas and lands of the earth, while at the same time it inspires multidisciplinary maps of unexpected designs"; 1997, p. 3).

This Entangled Recursive Island, then, both as model and metaphor, pushes back against modern frameworks of reasoning, embracing and further demonstrating the depth, power, and potential of relational approaches and giving a nod to the generative, ongoing 'becoming' of the figure of the island — in all of its forms and readings — in the Anthropocene.

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