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Duncan Bush's Welsh Petrofiction: Energy Transition and Neoliberalism in *Glass Shot*

Duncan Bush's Welsh novel *Glass Shot* (1991) registers one of the key historical moments in the UK economy's uneven transition from coal to oil: the 1984 – 5 miners' strike. The novel juxtaposes snapshots of a residual society founded on the collective solidarity of coal mining communities with an emergent neoliberal culture based on the individual 'freedom' afforded by the motor car. In this essay, I take a petro-critical approach to *Glass Shot*, contending that it critiques a US-inspired individualism which, when adopted by the UK Thatcher government, laid the ideological groundwork for the attack on collective solidarity, for the 'breaking of the miners' and the neoliberal economy that would follow. This individualism is closely associated in the novel with the lifestyle changes afforded by petroleum-based products, not least the motor car, and a toxic masculinity enabled by this lifestyle change. The essay will begin by introducing the novel and the subfield of petro-critical studies, before contextualising the 1984 – 5 miners' strike in Wales within the broader shift from coal to oil, and then turning to analysis of *Glass Shot*.

Published in 1991, *Glass Shot* has to date attracted minimal critical attention.¹ M. Wynn Thomas comments on Bush's work briefly, having little time for what he sees as Bush's anti-patriotic stance towards Welshness, reading Bush as an 'individualist'.² This claim is rightly challenged by Ian Gregson who instead suggests that Bush has a more critical approach to individualism; indeed, individualism and its limits are key questions posed by Bush's work.³ Gregson distinguishes between Bush and his narrators, praising Bush's ability to 'step outside his own identity and transplant himself into the minds of others'.⁴ He rightly suggests that *Glass Shot* is an investigation into an 'ideology of individualism' and ways in which 'the benevolent influence of local collectivity has been fragmented by global forces'.⁵

While Gregson's comment is insightful, it remains undeveloped. Wynn Thomas suggests, tantalisingly, that Bush is interested in exploring American influence on Welsh culture through 'seductive images of energy and abundance vividly imposed on the drabness of an exhausted, belt-tightening post-war Britain'.⁶ Although it is stretching a point to suggest that a novel published in 1991 and set in 1984 is about 'post-war Britain', the idea that Bush juxtaposes American energy and abundance against British exhaustion and drabness is an intriguing one. Unfortunately, it too remains undeveloped. I want to suggest that the themes raised, but not developed, by Gregson and Thomas – energy and abundance vs. drabness and exhaustion, individualism vs. collectivism, the power of American culture in Wales – are highly pertinent to Bush's novel. In a sense, they are themes awaiting a framework, and it is my contention that petro-critical studies, a sub-field of energy humanities – to which I now turn – offers a useful way of reading Bush's hitherto neglected novel.

Inspired by a reaction to the assertion of energy historian Vaclav Smil that 'timeless artistic expressions show no correlation with levels or kinds of energy consumption', scholars in the newly-emerged field of energy humanities explore the relations between energy resources and culture.⁷ Frederick Buell rejects Smil's claim, asserting that 'energy history *is* significantly entwined with cultural history', while acknowledging that there is more work to do to show the actual relations between the two.⁸ Imre Szeman makes the case that 'for too long, energy has been treated as a largely neutral input into society' and that 'the specific role of energy, in shaping both [culture and power] cannot be passed over, nor can the specificity of the experiences, social sensibilities and cultural imaginaries produced by distinct energy systems'.⁹ Szeman calls for scholars to become interested in 'petroculture', to become 'critically attuned to the deep ways in which culture and society have thus been shaped by oil'.¹⁰ As the name suggests, 'petroculture' is a term used here to emphasise 'the ways in

which post-industrial society today is an oil society through and through [...], shaped by oil in physical and material ways, from the automobiles and highways we use to the plastics that permeate our food supply and built environments'.¹¹ This definition by the Petrocultures Research Group (PRG) places initial emphasis on the infrastructural elements of our dependence on oil, but additionally draws attention to the ways in which oil and oil-based products 'have shaped our values, practices, habits, beliefs and feelings', for example our 'ideals of autonomy and mobility'.¹² Stephanie LeMenager has coined the term 'petromodernity' to describe the way in which this petroleum-based economy has become an inseparable part of the of the modern experience of self and social experience.¹³ To transition out of petromodernity, or out of our dependence on fossil fuels, requires not simply the replacement of the infrastructure on which they depend, but also 'the unmaking and remaking of our social worlds'.¹⁴ The PRG claim that without an understanding of the ways in which we have become used – or even addicted – to ways of life made possible by oil, we will not be able to transition away from it.

While Szeman's work constitutes a founding contribution to the sub-field, his argument that 'energy has been treated as a largely neutral input into society' does not ring true for Wales. In Wales, with its history of coal mining, scholars have certainly not passed over either 'the specific role of energy, in shaping [culture and power]' nor the 'experiences, social sensibilities and cultural imaginaries produced by distinct energy systems'. The political and social effects of coal production, the experiences of people in the coalfields and the cultural imaginaries within mining communities, as well as the influence of these communities on broader British society – for example, on the founding of the National Health Service - have been explored and documented. To be fair to Szeman, however, his remarks are particularly directed at the absence of scholarship on petroculture. In this respect, there is

more to do in exploring the ways in which Welsh culture has been shaped and informed by oil and its products.

Szeman calls on literary scholars in particular to ‘help us grasp how oil and its by-products generate the expectations and desires of the modern world’.¹⁵ One of the critics to take up this challenge is Graeme Macdonald, who identifies the particular contribution that literary – and in particular fiction - studies can make to the field:

Fiction, in its various modes, genres and histories, offers a significant (and relatively untapped) repository for the energy-aware scholar to demonstrate how, through successive epochs, particularly embedded kinds of energy create a predominant (and oftentimes alternative) culture of being and imagining in the world; organising and enabling a prevalent mode of living, thinking, moving, dwelling and working.¹⁶

As the close of the final sentence suggests, the task here of unpacking the relation between any particular energy form and culture is enormous – not least because the shaping power of that energy form is so ubiquitous. Szeman writes about the way that ‘the fantasy of suburban living and the freedoms of highways’ are made possible by the petrol-fuelled motor car.¹⁷ But the ubiquity of oil and oil-based products extends even further than the ‘suburbs’ and the ‘highway’. Following Timothy Morton’s coining of the term, Macdonald argues that petroculture is so widely distributed across time and space it is a ‘hyperobject’.¹⁸ He asks his readers to imagine ‘twentieth century suburbia’ with its ‘psyches, bodies and worlds saturated in oil-based products – suddenly shorn of plastics, deprived of automobility or domestic electric power’.¹⁹ To unpick modern society’s relations with oil – and, we might add, coal – is a monumental task.

These challenges notwithstanding, I read *Glass Shot* as ‘petrofiction’, a genre initially identified by Amitav Ghosh in the year after Bush’s novel was published, as a narrative ‘oil encounter’ connecting individual, national and global experiences of the petroleum industry.²⁰ As well as being the first substantial critical essay on Bush’s work, this piece is the first to offer a petrocritical reading of a text from Wales. While it introduces a Welsh dimension to petrocritical studies, it offers particular focus on the energy transition from coal to oil. In my reading, I focus on the role of oil in the production and shaping of the novel’s individual subjects, especially of its main protagonist and narrator, Boyle. His narrative consciousness, I will argue, articulates a petrocultural perspective that is the product of a particular set of policies pursued by Thatcher’s government through the 1980s. Key characteristics of this perspective include an addiction to the motor car, a fascination with American popular culture, an extreme individualism, opposition to the collective solidarity (symbolised by the miners’ strike) and an openness to the casino capitalism of the neoliberal era to come. Another characteristic is what Sherae Deckard calls ‘petromasculinity’: a male identity founded on love of the motor car and associated traits of misogyny.²¹ Taken together, they suggest that one of the main achievements of the Thatcher government, as Irving Howe notes in relation to the Reagan administration, was ‘a spectacular transformation of popular attitudes, values and styles’.²² Before I turn to the way that this transformation is represented in Bush’s *Glass Shot*, I will contextualise Wales within the shift from a coal- to an oil-fired economy.

Timothy Mitchell charts the broad historical shift in the West from an economy powered by coal energy to one powered by oil, and makes a persuasive case that this change enabled the weakening of democratic modes of thought.²³ He argues that organised workers –

including miners, railway workers and dockers – were, at key historical moments, able to exert a powerful enough grip over key nodes in the production and transport of coal to extract concessions from the ruling classes within their nation states. Mitchell argues that democracy was won ‘not by manufacturing the consent of the governed, but by developing the means to withhold consent – in particular through the threat of the general strike’.²⁴ The powerful threat of worker strikes in key energy sectors secured concessions which brought in more democratic societies with stronger employment rights and welfare safeguards in which wealth was more evenly distributed. Miners in south Wales were often at the forefront of this threat, helping to secure democratic concessions at key moments in the late-nineteenth and early-twentieth centuries. Conversely, Mitchell suggests that the shift to oil energy through the twentieth century was used by ruling classes as a means of weakening the power of organised labour, of weakening democratic control, lowering welfare standards, restoring inequality, and returning power to an elite. The characteristics of the oil industry enabled this shift for several reasons: firstly, because oil is extracted in dispersed locations around the world and – unlike coal in the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries – usually transported globally by sea or pipeline. This means that workers involved in the production of oil did not command as much power as coal miners when they threatened to withdraw their labour: the international oil companies could switch to supply from another area. Secondly, the sites of oil extraction tended to be in spaces directly or indirectly ruled by colonial regimes which were ruthless in suppressing labour organisation, sometimes aided and abetted by the secret services of the Western countries who depended on the oil. Thirdly, workers in transoceanic shipping – and sites of off-shore oil production – operate in spaces beyond national labour regulations, and therefore lack the power of a corresponding unionised rail workforce in transporting coal.²⁵ Mitchell charts a broad history of the twentieth century in which elites in Western countries – epitomised by Thatcher’s government – turn to oil not only as a way of

securing cheap energy, but also as a way of undermining the power of organised labour and the democratic concessions it had secured within their own societies. Over time, the switch to oil was ‘decisive in the defeat of the coal miners’.²⁶ As a society shaped by the nineteenth- and twentieth-century extraction of coal, Wales had a lot to lose from the shift from coal to oil.

With regard to the Welsh context, Mitchell makes the point that Winston Churchill’s decision to switch the Royal Navy from oil to coal during the First World War was influenced by labour unrest in the south Wales coalfield.²⁷ Switching to oil was a means for imperialists like Churchill to find sources of energy that were not subject to the power of organised labour, and thereby to evade its democratic demands.²⁸ The switch to oil was a process that accelerated at particular moments during the twentieth century. Mitchell identifies the First World War, while labour historian Ben Curtis identifies another pivotal point in 1959 when the demand for coal dropped thanks to ‘increasing use of oil and gas’, and the UK National Coal Board closed thirty-six collieries including some in south Wales.²⁹ This began another stage in the process of transition from coal to oil that continued through the following decade.³⁰ Thirty-three pits closed in south Wales between 1959 and 1964, and a further forty-four closed between 1965 and 1970.³¹ The miners’ strike in 1974 which brought down the Conservative government led by Edward Heath was successful because it took place in the aftermath of the 1973 Oil Crisis in which OPEC countries had reduced production and quadrupled prices. As Curtis notes, there was ‘a shortage of oil – and full advantage was taken of it’.³² But by the time of the 1984 – 5 miners’ strike, the Thatcher government had developed the North Sea oilfield, stockpiled coal and arranged for coal imports and non-unionised workforces to counter the effect of any organised strike action. As Curtis states, the miners’ strike of 1984 – 5 was ‘one of the most important industrial

disputes of twentieth-century British history, a titanic year-long struggle pitting the National Union of Mineworkers and its supporters against the combined weight of the state'.³³ As an area dominated by the coal industry, communities in south Wales were at the heart of the dispute. Thatcher's eventual victory was a decisive blow against one of the most powerful unions in the UK, and a death blow to the UK coal industry. The last round of pit closures occurred in 1992, while the last pit at Tower Colliery ceased producing coal in 2008. The UK economy was then run according to neoliberal principles in which unionised workforces had been stripped of much of their power.

Glass Shot is set in south Wales in 1984 at the height of the strike. The topic of energy is present throughout in the most striking formal feature of *Glass Shot*: the narrative perspective of Stew Boyle, a Cardiff tyre fitter who combines an emergent neoliberalism, a hatred of the collective solidarity witnessed in the strike, and extreme misogyny. He is a deeply unsympathetic and disturbing character whose attitude of 'take all you can get' epitomises Thatcherite views towards the idea of community and the acquisition of personal wealth.³⁴ But Boyle is more than a personification of Thatcherism. He is also, ultimately, revealed as a rapist and misogynist who, as the novel unfolds, reveals and attempts to justify his extreme violence against women. However, at the start of the novel, his disturbing character has not yet revealed itself, and so initially, it is possible to sympathise with Boyle's demotic, working-class, south Walian voice:

Christ, they say, is risen.

Me, I'm down. Depressed. Today's Easter Sunday. All day. Right through to midnight. And tomorrow? Easter Monday. Which means another day at home. Which, what with having Good Friday off work too, and yesterday as well, makes it a four-

day weekend. Which aside from not earning an iota of spending money, is a long weekend when you're on your own, just killing the day, awash in the limbo of a sunlit Bank Holiday, watching motor sport on television, eating salted peanuts by the handful, drinking beer.

All this while my wife is probably having a wonderful holiday weekend, making the most of the good weather, off somewhere or other windblown in the car, on day-trips with the kids [...] They've got the windows down, the sunroof up. And they've got a new life now. (p. 1)

There are many interesting aspects to this opening passage - its nod to a post-religious culture in its opening sentence; to consumer culture in the representation of work as a means of acquiring spending money for 'beer' and 'peanuts'; boredom and loneliness in contemporary culture, the centrality of the car to Boyle's imagination – but its defining feature is the energy of the male, working-class narrative voice. It is a confident, opinionated, irreverent, colloquial south Wales voice. It draws us in, and as readers we initially sympathise with its speaker, Boyle, at home alone, imagining his ex-wife and children enjoying themselves elsewhere. As the novel unfolds, however, Boyle reveals more of his right-wing, individualist politics and misogynist fantasies, and any initial sympathy turns to repulsion.

The character of Boyle is deeply shaped by petroculture, in particular by its icon: the motor car. Boyle works in a Cardiff repair garage as a 'Quick Change Fitter', a new job for the 1980s, one in which his mechanical skills are restricted to the narrow, repetitive, and increasingly automated, task of changing car tyres at speed. Boyle is physically marked by this labour:

Nothing will ever get out all those years of engrained grease, not if I were to stand at that sud-soiled sink and scrub till morning. The first joint of each index finger will always be a dark pad from spinning oil nuts. And the ball of each thumb is whorled forever with dark loops, like in a police fingerprint. (p. 39)

This is another passage, early in the novel, in which we initially sympathise with Boyle. He does the ‘lousy dirty boring repetitive work’ at the heart of petromodernity, keeping cars on the road (p. 14). Boyle is ‘forever’ marked by oil, and in this sense he physically embodies petroculture, while the likeness of the oil markings to a ‘police fingerprint’ anticipate the novel’s dark ending, and the way any initial sympathies for Boyle will shift. The car does not only occupy Boyle’s working hours. When he is not working, he is cruising the city’s streets, driving along the motorway, or passing through the coalfield towns in the Valleys. When he is not driving, as we see in the opening passage, he watches motor sport on TV.

The novel represents the motor car as a symbol of an individualism that the text juxtaposes against community. Early in the novel, Boyle decides to leave his local pub, ‘The Locomotive’ on his own:

The keys are out all ready in my hand. I run a ’57 Thunderbird, I’m under the limit and I’m going to drive it with the windows down and play *Born in the USA* on all four speakers, loud, and feel the whole night blow through me like it’s blowing through the car. (p. 46)

Here, the symbol and the means through which Boyle leaves the communal area of the pub in order to enter his own individual space is the motor car. ‘The Locomotive’ is aptly named, a

form of transport powered by coal, the energy that shaped modern south Wales in the nineteenth century, about to be decisively replaced, with huge ramifications for south Wales. The 'keys [...] ready in [...] hand' signal Boyle's anticipation of driving, the ability to move effortlessly and immediately, whenever he wants. There are also unmissable references here to American culture: the car itself is a US import, a 1957 American Thunderbird. It is a statement car (1957 was indeed the year in which Roland Barthes suggested that cars had undergone a cultural shift from being symbols of 'an alchemy of speed to a *gourmandise* of driving').³⁵ He suggests that in the post-war period, cars no longer primarily serve as functional machines for simply travelling quickly, but as symbols of style. In *Glass Shot*, this is certainly the case: for Boyle, the '57 Thunderbird is a retro statement, a reflection of his desire to turn heads, to be seen, and to be associated with American culture.

Boyle's chosen soundtrack – Bruce Springsteen's 'Born in the USA' - is also a reflection of such desire. It is an iconic song that offers subtle commentary on Boyle's character. 'Born in the USA' speaks to a 'lost generation' of working-class American men returning from service in Vietnam, best encapsulated in the fourth verse:

Down in the shadow of the penitentiary
 Out by the gas fires of the refinery
 I'm ten years burning down the road
 Nowhere to run, ain't got nowhere to go³⁶

Haunted by his military service, Springsteen's lone speaker struggles to find meaningful work in a declining industrial society, instead defiantly mythologising an aimless working-class masculinity through the ready metaphors of petroculture. As he leaves the pub, Boyle

anticipates driving as an immersive experience in which he will project himself onto his surroundings: he will be ‘wind-blown’ with the ‘windows down’ and music will blare from ‘all four speakers’ drowning out all other sounds and feelings. This is a pose, an image of masculine heroism based on Hollywood film. In an article on car culture in African-American communities, Paul Gilroy suggests that flamboyant public car use is a form of ‘compensatory prestige’, a refusal to be defined by material deprivation and socio-political prejudice against African-American communities.³⁷ He argues that music raises the emotional temperature within the car’s interior, while blaring the sound beyond the car’s borders is a projection of black culture into what is perceived as ‘dead public space’.³⁸ There are strong parallels here with Boyle who also uses the car as a form of public display. Like the members of the African-American community described by Gilroy, Boyle refuses to be defined by his own form of material deprivation, his boring, repetitive job and his lonely existence. At this point in the novel, Boyle comes across as a relatively sympathetic character, albeit one who chooses the private spaces afforded by the motor car over public or communal places.

The novel represents Boyle’s love of driving as an addiction. Szeman writes of petrocritical approaches to literary texts as attempts ‘to puzzle out the implications of our dependency, as much metaphysical as material, on [oil]’.³⁹ Recent scholarship in the subfield of petroculture has focussed attention on the modes of thought most associated with our dependence on oil, and in particular on the idea of addiction.⁴⁰ In one extended passage, Boyle describes driving as a compulsive activity, anticipating Szeman’s use of the term ‘dependency’:

Let's keep things brief. I piss, shit, dress, eat a fried egg sandwich, drink two cups of tea, throw a few things in a shoulder bag and drive. What else is there to do with another sunny day when you've got nothing in the diary.

Drive. Out of the summery city westwards on the motorway and into three-lane holiday traffic already all going the same way, hardly any coming at you, [...] everybody heading for the country, to the 'farm shops' and the garden centres and the Monster Bathrooms and the Texas Homecares, and the beaches. Drive, at a steady eighty with my foot down in the third lane. And every car I overtake is jam-packed with them, whole fucking families of them in there, everyone from babes-in-arms to their great-grandparents, complete with friends and in-laws [...] I turn my head and look at them from somewhere behind my Orbisons, and they don't even notice. They don't even see the car. All these morons do is stare ahead or sideways from the window. They're as flat and blank as playing cards, and as alike, in fact they're like the townspeople who've already been inhabited by aliens in *Invasion of the Body Snatchers* [...] No matter where you look, zombies are on the move.

So drive. Passing them all the time, the needle wavering up to eighty-five, west down the blue motorway until the Briton Ferry Bridge. Where naturally it all. Slows down. And stops [...]

One car after another ahead of me now putting it into first and then getting it out of first and into second, into third, getting out onto the bridge, and now I'm moving too, the Man in the '57 T-Bird, still smoking, squinting, one hand guiding the wheel, the other tapping on the outside of the door, just keeping my foot on the brake in third and listening to Ry, the country blues, that slithery guitar, till on the last stretch, at the roundabout, the car that's been in front of me heads for the bridge and

leaves me the space I need to flick the Marlboro away, head for the second exit, and gun the engine just enough to let me hit ‘em with a Wheel Squeal.

And drive. (pp. 52—5)

This passage represents driving, not as means of travelling from one place to another, but as one of the basic human functions, a daily habit: as the narrator says, I ‘piss’, ‘shit’, ‘dress’, ‘eat’, ‘drink’ then ‘drive’. The imperatives - ‘Drive’, ‘Drive’, ‘Drive’, ‘So drive’, ‘And drive’ – frame the extended passage, functioning as a siren call to join in the habit, speaking to the addictive and compulsive nature of the activity. The passage is typical of Boyle’s demotic voice. The urge to ‘drive’ is Boyle’s answer to the boredom of his lonely existence: ‘what else is there to do[?]’. This is a passage about compulsive behaviour, heard through the voice of the addict. For Boyle, to drive is to take pleasure in the fantasy of limitless, immediate power beneath the sole of his foot, driving ‘at a steady eighty with my foot down in the third lane’ or ‘gun[ning] the engine’ and accelerat[ing] away in the closing lines of the passage. In her pioneering article, ‘Automotive Emotions: Feeling the Car’, Mimi Sheller notes that ‘cars are above all machines that move people, but they do so in many senses of the word’.⁴¹ She goes on to explore ways in which a ‘dominant culture of automobility’ is ‘implicated in a deep context of affective and embodied relations between people, machines and spaces of mobility and dwelling’.⁴² Peter Hitchcock suggests that while ‘the car enables the joy of movement’, it also represents ‘a privatisation of space’.⁴³ Matthew Huber further develops these ideas, suggesting that ‘energized practices prefigure particular forms of politics’.⁴⁴ In particular, he contends that petroleum products build consensus for ‘neoliberal cultural politics’.⁴⁵ They ‘both powered and provisioned a particular lived geography – a “structure of feeling” – that allows for an appearance of privatised command over space and life – or petro-privatism’.⁴⁶ He suggests that people moved ‘from private homes in private

automobiles to privatised workplaces and consumption locations' inhabit a lived geography in which they become 'individuals' primed for 'the construction of a realm of "the public" as irrelevant and burdensome'.⁴⁷ In this way, an "American way of life" saturated in petroleum products is not simply about material profligacy, but it is also about a specific vision of life best negotiated through market forces in opposition to any notion of public or collective solidarity'.⁴⁸ Boyle's competitive, intimidatory driving and his contempt for his fellow road users certainly suggest his individualism, his aggression towards others, and his one-upmanship. His US-inspired 'vision of life' is 'petro-privatised' in the sense that the car keeps him and everyone else isolated in their individual vehicles, cocooned from each other. Boyle's world is physically mediated through American cultural products – different forms of the 'glass' of the novel's title: his Roy Orbison sunglasses and the windshield of his Thunderbird. The passage is rich in allusions to American culture: to pop singer Roy Orbison, to blues guitarist Ry Cooder, to Marlboro cigarettes, marketed in this period through glamourised images of the cowboy in the American West. American culture supplies the stories through which Boyle visualises himself and role plays his relations with others. In the final part of the passage, once the traffic has started to ease, Boyle sees himself as the hero in a Hollywood film, complete with the blues soundtrack, the iconic macho Marlboro tobacco product and the 'Wheel Squeal'. His relation to other people is limited by the 'petro-privatised' space of the car moving along the motorway. Fellow drivers either give him the recognition he craves by looking at him, or they are dismissed as 'zombies' from the American sci-fi film *Invasion of the Body Snatchers*. There is a particular hatred of families and those with company which stems from his own isolated individualism.

Huber's point – that American petroculture primes its participants for neoliberalism and for a way of life in opposition to collective solidarity – is aptly illustrated in the next

passage of the novel. Immediately after his paean to compulsive driving, Boyle turns off the M4, and continues along minor roads north into one of the valleys of the south Wales coalfield:

I turn right, north, and again north, heading up a valley, then another valley to the hills (or it should be The Sticks), the map's red A-road for three or four miles, then a yellow B-road (if not worse) for the next fifteen or so. (p. 55)

This passage registers Boyle's frustration as he turns onto roads that - unlike the motorway - are narrow and twisting, and not designed for an American car. They are bound by the topography of the Welsh landscape, and the transport network pushing into the valleys that developed around the coal industry. Here the comments in parentheses hint at Boyle's disdain for these older roads which limit his speed and smoothness of movement. On the earlier part of his journey, he was taken 'west down the blue motorway', a journey understood in terms of compass directions on a map, and his pride in its smoothness and speed: 'a steady eighty', 'wavering up to eighty-five'. In this way, the text registers a fantasy of petromodernity: of smooth movement across space, unencumbered by features of the landscape. Eventually, at the head of the valley, Boyle encounters a form of collective solidarity when he comes across a pit involved in the strike:

I slow to look as I pass a pit on the left: a yard full of coaldust and yellow plant, a chained gate, half a dozen sitting men around a fire in an old oil drum brazier. A hand-painted sign is propped against the link fence:

NUM Official Picket

The second *f* is corrected in above in a narrow stroke. And I remember the miners are out on strike, have been for a while now. There's been a lot about it in the TV news.

In a circle playing cards, they stop and look up as I slow, holding it long enough to be a stare. Woollybacks. Up here I don't suppose they've seen a car like this except in films. [...]

Then, right at the head of the valley, is a place I remember, and I know I'm almost at the end of the road. It's only one more dirty-looking, Welsh, played-out little village, don't even ask me to pronounce the fucking name of it. Just another place that grew up around a hole in the ground twenty miles from nowhere, a couple of dozen or so houses, every one complete with outside toilets, and views of half-grassed slagheaps if you take a glance out of the wrong window. (pp. 55-6)

This is a key passage in the novel in which Boyle's petro-individualism is juxtaposed with the collective solidarity symbolised by the striking coal miners. The passage suggests Boyle's isolation from the major political events unfolding around him: to live in south Wales in 1984 and refer to the miners' strike as an event remembered from 'the TV news' is a comment on the atomisation of Welsh society, achieved in part by the lifestyle shifts enabled by oil. Boyle has no empathy with the miners whatsoever. They are represented as illiterate, unable to spell the words on their own placard. They are also static and immobile, 'chained' behind a 'link fence'. This fixed position is in contrast to the movement afforded to Boyle by the car: his vantage point is always mobile. The passage emphasises Boyle's anti-Welsh racism in the term 'Woollybacks' with its connotations of backwardness and bestiality. His attitude towards Welsh-language place names is similarly dismissive. Boyle 'slows down' as he passes, not to affirm his support for the pickets, but searching for the return of his gaze in

order to affirm his own imagined superiority. The pit village is judged as a place in terminal decline; it is ‘played out’, finished, in contrast to the petroculture future symbolised by Boyle and his car. The passage sets up a number of oppositions: mobility vs immobility; the individual vs. community; clean vs. dirty; modernity vs. backwardness; future vs. past; America vs. Wales. These oppositions are crystallised in the novel’s central juxtaposition of oil and coal, and explored in the spaces visited by Boyle in his car.

In this passage, and those like it, Boyle’s pathological hostility towards Welsh mining communities is evident. Driving his American car is a way of escaping from Wales, from community, from the coal industry, from immobility and rootedness, from what he sees as backwardness and the past. In the next passage, as he leaves the pit village, and turns the corner into another landscape, this desire to be elsewhere becomes clear:

[a]nd suddenly for the first time, right across the next valley, you see the mountains. And on a clear day like it is again today, it’s like Wyoming must be or Montana, like a background you’d see in a film. Or some Shangri-la, another mountain land painted on glass. And I slowed the car right down last time to look at it, and I do again now, and it gives me the same lift this time as last. Because it’s suddenly like you’re not in Wales anymore. You’re in America.

So drive. Leaving the railway sidings and the massive coalyard dunes and another chained gate with a half-dozen men who again immediately stop playing cards in front of it to stare me past, the stranger in the two-tone Yankee car. (p. 57)

This image of ‘Shangri-la’ is the ultimate ‘glass shot’ in the novel’s title which, we are informed in the epigraph, refers to ‘a shot obtained through a glass plate on which part of the

scene has been painted. The painting on the glass is photographed along with the action seen through the clear portion of the glass, providing the illusion of a complete setting' (p. 1).⁴⁹ The technique was common in early Hollywood films in which actors filmed in studios were made to appear as if they were in another place, for example in a mid-Western landscape or in a precarious situation too dangerous to film in real life. Boyle's narrative consciousness is epitomised in the 'glass shot'. American culture – the Hollywood film in which he visualises himself, the windshield and mirrors of his Thunderbird car, his Orbison shades – is the lens through which Boyle pictures himself 'not in Wales', but 'in America'. Stephanie LeMenager coins the term 'petrotopia', in relation to Upton Sinclair's *Oil!*, to define the way that petromodernity represents itself as 'an ideal end-state', one which 'represses the violence it has performed upon, for example, south Bronx neighbourhoods levelled for freeway development'.⁵⁰ We might find a similar parallel in *Glass Shot*, where Boyle's embodiment of the desire to 'drive' along the M4 comes at the cost of the violence that shift to oil has performed upon the coal communities of south Wales.

Boyle's desire to picture himself in America is also provoked by another trope of petromodernity: the passenger jet. At one point in the novel, Boyle looks up from his Cardiff home 'above the garages and the other flats behind' to see 'a jet passing down the blue sky' (p. 29). Identified as a Boeing 747, Boyle describes it as 'a minute gleaming arrowhead' before imagining himself onboard 'with people all Going Somewhere, excited, nervous, having their first drinks, heading west, heading right out over green, ragged-coasted Ireland, and all the way to America' (p. 29). The trope of the passenger jet functions, like the car, as a means of escape from the no-place of Wales and the boredom of his job to 'Somewhere'. Boyle declares that '[o]ne day I'll go to these places too' before watching 'that travelling mathematical point catching the sunlight, a vector of silver waste slowly lengthening across a

sky as blank and empty as amnesia' (p. 29). The abstract lexicon of movement employed here – 'mathematical', 'point', 'vector' – recalls the idealised mode in LeMenager's petrotopia: a form of transport unencumbered by material restraints, experienced as pure movement. It is another example of the feeling of thrust and power experienced by Boyle as he presses the accelerator to the floor on the motorway. However, as in the motorway passage when Boyle grounds to a stop in a traffic queue, the text never fully allows readers to believe in the ideal: the word 'waste' references the pollution caused by transatlantic air travel's excessive burning of fossil fuels, while the word 'amnesia' critiques our capacity to continue with practices that we know full well are damaging to communities that are left behind. While this is suggestive of Boyle's ability to forget the plight of the miners, it also anticipates a key line of critical enquiry in ecocriticism: our tendency to carry on and selectively forget the damaging environmental effects of our lifestyles.

The political culture generated by oil and its products – one of competitive individualism and an opposition to collective solidarity – lays the ideological groundwork for the 'breaking of the miners' in 1984 – 5, and the neoliberal economy that would follow in the decades after. The novel takes the image of the picketing miners playing cards, and juxtaposes it with the image of city traders moving capital around the world:

These boys were sat there playing for matches. Matches. Over on the Dow Jones average, on the Nikkei index, on the old FTI, they're yelling down the phone in thousands, millions. Pounds. Yen. Dollars. Belgian Francs. Those guys are where the only game in town is. Man, they're betting with the world. (p. 83)

The novel here registers the shift to a financialised, globalised economy, and draws attention to the people who paid the price: those in the coal-mining communities from where capital investment was withdrawn. In the aftermath of the 1970s Energy Crisis, oil prices quadrupled, and the newly mobile petrodollars of the ruling elites of the oil-producing countries were re-invested in the West's financial centres. Thomas Waller draws attention to 'the gradual and profound integration of oil into the immaterial circuits of international finance capital since the mid-1980s'.⁵¹ Thatcher's de-regulation of the City in the mid-1980s successfully attracted these petro-dollars, with the result that excess capital passed through financial centres like London, in search of further profit from ever-grander acts of creative destruction. Even as Boyle identifies himself with this shift, despising the miners for gambling for such paltry sums, his language suggests what is at stake. The phrase 'they're betting with the world' nods to the casino capitalism of the financialisation to come, a phenomenon that Frederic Jameson would describe as a 'vast world-wide disembodied phantasmagoria'.⁵²

At one point, the text registers the extent of government efforts to defeat the miners, and the specific role of petroculture in this battle. Boyle describes coming across a convoy of strike-breaking coal trucks travelling along the M4, returning to Port Talbot from the Llanwern Steelworks.

And they keep passing me, passing me. I know it takes a lot of coal to keep a steelworks going. But there must be over a hundred of these cowboys running this shuttle. They've been passing me a full five minutes now, taking up the whole damn middle lane. (p. 233)

Here, even Boyle is in awe of the scale of the enterprise. The description of the strike breakers as ‘cowboys’ is ambiguous. On the one hand, ‘cowboys’ are idealised figures, recalling Boyle’s love of American culture, while on the other they suggest a critique of the drivers’ role in breaking through the picket lines. According to Curtis, as soon as the railway workers joined the blockade of Llanwern Steelworks, the government organised ‘massive convoys of up to 200 giant haulage lorries’ to make coal deliveries twice a day to the steelworks.⁵³ Boyle’s narration registers how dangerous the high-speed convoys are, for miners and for fellow road users:

Not a fucking lot is going to stop these boys, I’ve seen them roaring out of the dock gates through the pickets on the TV news. One of these days some miner’s not going to get out the way in time and go down under the front wheels and come out as a tyre print at the other end [...] There’s something fucking *scary* about so many lorries travelling so close together and going so damn fast, they’re even armoured, all those metal grilles fitted over the windscreens and side windows. (pp. 233—4)

The reference to the speed with which the lorries enter and leave the steelworks alludes to the decision to open the eastern gates of the steelworks, which, as Curtis suggests, enabled the ‘convoy to travel at high speed through the picket lines’.⁵⁴ In September 1984, two miners from Penallta were indeed killed while picketing this entrance to Llanwern. At one point, Boyle compares his encounter with the convoy to ‘that film of the German motorised divisions taking Poland’ and suggests that ‘we’re in a state of war’ (pp. 233—4). Even though Boyle’s politics is hardly in solidarity with the miners, there are passages like this in which he nonetheless registers events on an affective level, suggesting the possibility of a different politics, more sympathetic to the miners. Nonetheless, Boyle’s narrative voice

always eventually takes sides against the miners. His individualism primes him to understand, to side with, and to envy the strike-breaking truck drivers:

They're empty now, which is why they're so fast. They've tipped at Llanwern and now they're heading back to Port Talbot for reloading. Another load of coal, another fistful of folding money. And these boys are on Special Rates. They say they're wheeling the dough back home in wheelbarrows. No wonder they're in a hurry. (pp. 233—4)

In this passage, the repeated metaphors for money – a ‘fistful of folding money’, ‘Special Rates’, ‘wheeling the dough back home in wheelbarrows’ – speaks to Boyle’s situation as a member of a non-unionised workforce, a product himself of Thatcher’s policies. The attraction of higher remuneration overcomes any loyalty to collective solidarity. Finally, Boyle notices that:

‘The A-Team’ one has written on it with a fingertip, and circled, in the grey dust (the metal back so filthy only those fresher letters show the blue paint underneath).

Another, two lorries back, has ‘Scab’ in savage red. (p. 233)

The reference to ‘The A-Team’ is yet another indication of how American culture plays into Welsh and British politics at this critical juncture. *The A-Team* is a 1980s US TV series which features heroic members of a shadowy, US government-funded, paramilitary group operating in theatres in which the government cannot officially be seen. Viewed through Boyle’s eyes, the allusion to *The A-Team* serves to legitimise and valorise the strike breakers’ behaviour. It turns them into heroes. However, by drawing parallels between this kind of

activity and the miners' strike, the text - though not Boyle himself - raises concerns about the legality and ruthlessness of the British government's response to the strike. It suggests that imported American petroculture primes its viewers to justify and support Huber's 'neoliberal cultural politics', in this case, the actions of the strike breakers.

There are connections between *Glass Shot* and some of the work in Bush's 1986 poetry collection *Black Faces, Red Mouths: Poems on the Mining Communities and the 1984—85 Strike*. In 'Onnlwyn, West Glamorgan, 1985', a poem about the site of the Onnlwyn pit, closed in 1961, the speaker revisits the site of the closed pit at the height of the miners' strike. Unlike in *Glass Shot*, there is no study of the petroculture that replaced coal culture, but in the closing lines of the poem, the speaker's anger at the exploitation of communities by those who closed the mines is clear:

here, in this long hamlet lost in the dog-days
 at the top of coal-tracked minor roads,
 on the border of

coalfield synclines and conservationist Park,
 bleakly wonder, stranger, as you
 await a red bus out,

at what can only have been the contempt
 for those who had to stay of those
 who took out what

there was and went, like carpetbaggers, leaving
 the rest to wind, rain and
 the agency of birds.

Not even flattening it, you think. Christ,
 Not even bulldozing or leaving the
 bought seed to grass over

the mountainous geology of waste.⁵⁵

The poem angrily identifies the mine owners and decision makers in the National Coal Board ‘who took what there was and went’, leaving the remaining inhabitants in a ‘mountainous geology of waste’. In the phrase, ‘what can only have been’, the speaker struggles to imagine the ‘contempt’ those authorities must have felt for those left behind. *Glass Shot* can be read as an extended attempt to imagine that hatred and to explore how it could possibly have political support. The novel is especially disturbing because it locates the support for the ‘contempt’ towards collective solidarity, not in the poem’s anonymous mine owner or a decision maker in the National Coal Board, but in the novel’s only narrator, Boyle: a working-class Welsh character, an everyday figure produced by the right-wing politics of the time. His attitudes are the product of the flexible, non-unionised working practices of the Thatcher government. In particular, Boyle’s individualism, encouraged by Thatcher’s government conditions, his lack of support for the miners and for any form of collective solidarity. Boyle is ‘primed’, to use Huber’s term, for ‘neoliberal cultural politics’.⁵⁶ The formal achievement of *Glass Shot* is to write the Boyle character in his own words, to make Boyle the sole narrative voice. Coming in 1991, he embodies attitudes within the working

class which caused those on the left of British politics to despair. Since 1979, the Thatcher government had attacked workers' rights, union power and collective solidarity, with devastating effects for many industrial and coal mining communities, and yet had still won three General Elections. Boyle's narration challenges the novel's readers to see through the packaging of this politics in the demotic, colloquial voice of the working-class male narrator, and recognise the danger in the individualism and opposition to collective solidarity that Boyle personifies. The novel's significant formal achievement, to have its narration in Boyle's voice, is the source of its challenge to readers. There is no critique of Boyle's voice within the narrative; his neoliberal voice is unopposed. Until we read critically and find a way to see through the compelling voice and recognise the ideology Boyle represents, we will be susceptible to that kind of politics.

In any reading of *Glass Shot*, the misogyny and violence of the narrator Boyle make for a deeply uncomfortable read, not least because Boyle's increasingly obvious misogyny, culminating in his shocking sexual violence, are described in the words of the perpetrator-narrator.⁵⁷ Boyle is more than a product of Thatcherite individualism. He is also deeply misogynistic, sexually objectifying women from soon after the opening of the novel, and revealing himself to be a stalker, a serial rapist and probably a murderer. The novel's exploration of his toxic masculinity and violence against women would make a profoundly revealing subject of study in its own right, but this current paper is limited to the novel's portrayal of – to use Deckard's term – petromasculinity, to the intersection of gender and petroculture. They are inextricably related in *Glass Shot*. Boyle uses his statement American car, a head-turning '1957 Thunderbird', as part of the 'image' he curates in the hope of picking up women for casual sex: 'sometimes the sight of it [his car] is enough. Like with that girl at Sully Island' (p. 219). The novel also registers the way the car enables Boyle's

sexual objectification of women, culminating in his violence against them. For example, after decrying the ‘dirty boring repetitive work’ of repairing cars that ‘roll up on the forecourt’, Boyle suggests that ‘the big, the only, plus is that sometimes of course it’ll be cunt in the car’ (p. 14). The broken-down car brings Boyle his next victim. He uses his access to cars as a tyre fitter to find out his next victim’s name and address, and to identify characteristics that feed his violent fantasies. Having acquired this information, Boyle then uses his own car to stalk his victim, hiding in his ‘dark car’ outside her house (p. 47). As Boyle says, ‘when I’m not out Posing in my car, I’m happiest lying low in it, parked somewhere On Surveillance’ (p. 95). The car is also the place in which he fantasises about sex with his victim, and where he fantasises about committing violence against his ex-wife (p. 49). It is his car that enables him to travel the fifty miles from Cardiff to his ex-wife’s new home and to find a place on the hill above her home from which to spy on her (p. 77), and to recce his next victim’s home (p. 116). Boyle’s crimes are made possible by the mobility, access and privacy afforded either the motor vehicle (p. 112). In the ‘Book’ in which he records information about the women he has raped, or with whom he has had sex, Boyle sometimes mentions locations where the sex takes place, sites often linked to the motor car: ‘in the car park’ (p. 85), or the car itself (p. 86). At one of the most horrific and disturbing moments in the text – the moment he is about to rape the woman whose house he has broken into – he articulates his own feelings towards his victim in a metaphor straight from automobile culture: ‘I’m throbbing like a gearstick for her now’ (p. 255). These passages implicate petroculture – its products, its metaphors, the anonymity and mobility it affords – in a toxic, misogynist masculinity.

To conclude, set in the pivotal events of the 1984 – 85 miners’ strike, *Glass Shot* registers the final decisive shift from a coal to an oil-based UK economy. It also registers a new kind of character in Welsh literature. An extreme misogynist, Stew Boyle is also the

prototypical creation of petro-modernity: the product of a US-originating individualism, made possible by oil and oil-based products, weaponised by the Thatcher government in its fight against the collective solidarity and hard-fought workers' rights symbolised by the south Wales miners. Through its narrator, *Glass Shot* registers how the development of petroculture lays the ideological groundwork for the 'breaking of the miners' and the neoliberal economy that would follow. Bush's formal innovation is to write the novel entirely from the perspective of Boyle, challenging readers to see through his demotic, south Walian voice to the politics behind. This article adds a Welsh dimension to the growing corpus of literary petrocritical studies, and brings a particular focus on the energy transition from coal to oil. The uneven and socially unjust transition away from coal led to deep-seated social, economic and political problems in the 'left behind' communities which are still playing out in Welsh and UK politics, and which we are still trying to understand. Bush's work has a contribution to make to these efforts. As we embark on another energy transition – this time from oil to renewables – *Glass Shot* is a bleak reminder of the need to consider the politics behind any energy shift, and above all to put community and social justice at the heart of any change.

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Notes

¹ For critical work on Duncan Bush, see Dai Woosnam, 'Review of Duncan Bush, *Glass Shot*', *New Welsh Review* 16 (Spring 1992), pp. 83 – 4; Richard Poole, 'Duncan Bush's personae', *Poetry Wales* 28 (1992), 3—45; Richard Poole, 'An Interview with Duncan Bush',

Poetry Wales 28 (1992), 11—22; Robert Minhinnick, ‘Duncan Bush: interview’, *Poetry Wales* 38 (2002), 46—50; Nerys Williams, ‘Duncan Bush: the “parasitic” art’, *Poetry Wales* 38 (2002), 51—5; Ian Gregson, ‘Transplanted (Duncan) Bush’, *Poetry Wales* 41 (2005), 16—21.

² M. Wynn Thomas, *Corresponding Cultures* (Cardiff: University of Wales Press, 1999), p. 246.

³ Ian Gregson, ‘Transplanted’, p. 17.

⁴ Gregson, ‘Transplanted’, p. 16.

⁵ Gregson, ‘Transplanted’, p. 18.

⁶ M. Wynn Thomas, *Corresponding Cultures*, p. 246.

⁷ Vaclav Smil, ‘World History and Energy’, in J. Vutler Cleveland (ed.), *Encyclopaedia of Energy*, Vol. 2 (New York: Elsevier Science, 2004), p. 559.

⁸ Frederick Buell, ‘A Short History of Oil Cultures: Or, the Marriage of Catastrophe and Exuberance’, *Journal of American Studies* 46/2 (2012), 273—93 (p. 274).

⁹ Imre Szeman, ‘Conjectures on world energy literature: or, what is petroculture?’, *Journal of Postcolonial Writing* 53/3 (2017), 277—88 (p. 280).

¹⁰ Szeman, ‘Conjectures’, p. 286.

¹¹ Petrocultures Research Group, *After Oil* (Edmonton, Alberta: Petrocultures Research Group, 2016), p. 9. The Petrocultures Research Group is an international group of academics from a wide range of disciplines committed to researching the ways in which oil and oil-based products inform and shape culture, with a view to improving our understanding of how we might move to post-oil society.

¹² Petrocultures Research Group, pp. 9—10.

¹³ Stephanie LeMenager, ‘The Aesthetics of Petroleum’, after *Oil!*, *American Literary History* 24/1 (2012): 59—86 (p. 60).

¹⁴ Petrocultures Research Group, p. 17.

¹⁵ Szeman, 'Conjectures', p. 284.

¹⁶ Graeme MacDonald, 'The Resources of Fiction', *Reviews in Cultural Theory* 4/2 (2013), 1—24 (p. 4).

¹⁷ Szeman, 'Conjectures', p. 280.

¹⁸ Graeme Macdonald, "'Monstrous transformer": Petrofiction and world literature', *Journal of Postcolonial Writing* 53/3 (2017), 289—302 (p. 290).

¹⁹ Macdonald, 'Resources of Fiction', p. 5.

²⁰ Amitav Ghosh, 'Petrofiction: The Oil Encounter and the Novel', *The New Republic* 206/9 (1992), 29—34 (p. 29).

²¹ Sherae Deckard, "'This oil thing touches everything": World-Literary Crime Fiction and Fossil Capital', *Études Anglaises* 74/1 (2021), 34-52 (p. 38).

²² Irving Howe, quoted in C. Parker Grieg, 'Energy Futures: John Updike's Petrofictions', *Studies in American Fiction* 44/1 (2017), 87—112 (p. 88).

²³ Timothy Mitchell, *Carbon Democracy: Political Power in the Age of Oil* (London: Verso, 2011).

²⁴ Mitchell, *Carbon Democracy*, p. 79.

²⁵ In the case of Wales, Mitchell's argument stands. There was a significant Welsh workforce employed in the oil industry in particular locations: in the Llandarcy refinery, built outside Swansea in the 1920s; in the Queen's Dock in Swansea where the oil tankers from the Persian Gulf unloaded; in the post-World War Two plastics factories of Baglan Bay and Barry; and then later in the deep water port of Milford Haven where the next generation of supertankers could dock. Nonetheless, the workforce employed in oil was a fraction of the size of that employed in the production and transportation of Welsh coal.

²⁶ Mitchell, *Carbon Democracy*, p. 153.

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- ²⁷ Mitchell, *Carbon Democracy*, p. 63.
- ²⁸ Mitchell, *Carbon Democracy*, p. 61.
- ²⁹ Ben Curtis, *The South Wales Miners 1964—1985* (Cardiff: University of Wales Press, 2013), p. 12.
- ³⁰ Curtis, *South Wales Miners*, p. 12.
- ³¹ Curtis, *South Wales Miners*, p. 55.
- ³² Curtis, *South Wales Miners*, p. 118.
- ³³ Curtis, *South Wales Miners*, p. 40.
- ³⁴ Duncan Bush, *Glass Shot* (London: Secker and Warburg, 1991), p. 124. All references to *Glass Shot* hereafter are included in parentheses in the body of the essay.
- ³⁵ Roland Barthes, *Mythologies* [trans. A Lavers] (St Albans: Paladin, 1973), p. 90.
- ³⁶ Bruce Springsteen, ‘Born in the USA’. <https://brucespringsteen.net/track/born-in-the-u-s-a/> [accessed 1 August 2024]
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- ³⁸ Paul Gilroy, ‘Driving While Black’, p. 97.
- ³⁹ Imre Szeman, ‘Introduction to Focus: Petrofictions’, *American Book Review* 33/2 (2012), 3—4 (p. 3).
- ⁴⁰ See Stephanie LeMenager, *Living Oil* (Oxford: OUP, 2014); Imre Szeman, *On Petrocultures: Globalization, Culture and Energy* (Morgantown: WVU Press, 2019); Petrocultures Research Group at <https://www.petrocultures.com> [accessed 4 July 2024].
- ⁴¹ Mimi Sheller, ‘Automotive Emotions: Feeling the Car’, *Theory, Culture and Society* 22/4 (2004), 221—242 (p. 221).
- ⁴² Sheller, ‘Automotive Emotions’, p. 221.

⁴³ Peter Hitchcock, 'Oil in an American Imaginary', *New Formations* 69/4 (2010), 81—97 (p. 91).

⁴⁴ Matthew Huber, 'Refined Politics: Petroleum Products, Neoliberalism, and the Ecology of Entrepreneurial Life', *Journal of American Studies* 46/2 (2012), 295—312 (p. 297).

⁴⁵ Huber, 'Refined Politics', p. 299.

⁴⁶ Huber, 'Refined Politics', p. 306.

⁴⁷ Huber, 'Refined Politics', p. 306.

⁴⁸ Huber, 'Refined Politics', p. 311.

⁴⁹ The popular image of 'Shangri-la', synonymous with an earthly paradise set in the mountains, isolated from the world, is a reference to the classic American film *Lost Horizon* (1937) from which the term originates.

⁵⁰ Stephanie LeMenager, 'The Aesthetics of Petroleum After Oil!', p. 65.

⁵¹ Thomas Waller, 'World Energy Literature: Oil, Finance and Abstraction in João Paulo Borges Coelho's *Campo de Trânsito*', *Textual Practice* 35/3 (2021), 413—430 (p. 414).

⁵² Frederic Jameson, *The Cultural Turn: Selected Writings on the Postmodern 1983—1998* (London: Verso, 1998), p. 142.

⁵³ Curtis, *South Wales Miners*, p. 216.

⁵⁴ Curtis, *South Wales Miners*, p. 216.

⁵⁵ Duncan Bush, *Black Faces, Red Mouths: Poems on the Mining Communities and the 1984—85 Strike* (Penycae, Powys: Bedrock Press, 1986), n.p.

⁵⁶ Huber, 'Refined Politics', p. 299.

⁵⁷ One of the initial reviews of *Glass Shot* mistook Boyle's views for those of Bush, accusing the author of writing pornography, a charge which Bush felt compelled to refute. See Dewi Roberts, 'Review of Duncan Bush, *Glass Shot*', *Bulletin of the Welsh Academy* 23 (Autumn

1991) and Duncan Bush's response to this hostile review, 'True Experiences in the Field of Pornography', *Bulletin of the Welsh Academy* 24 (Winter 1991), pp. 8 – 9.