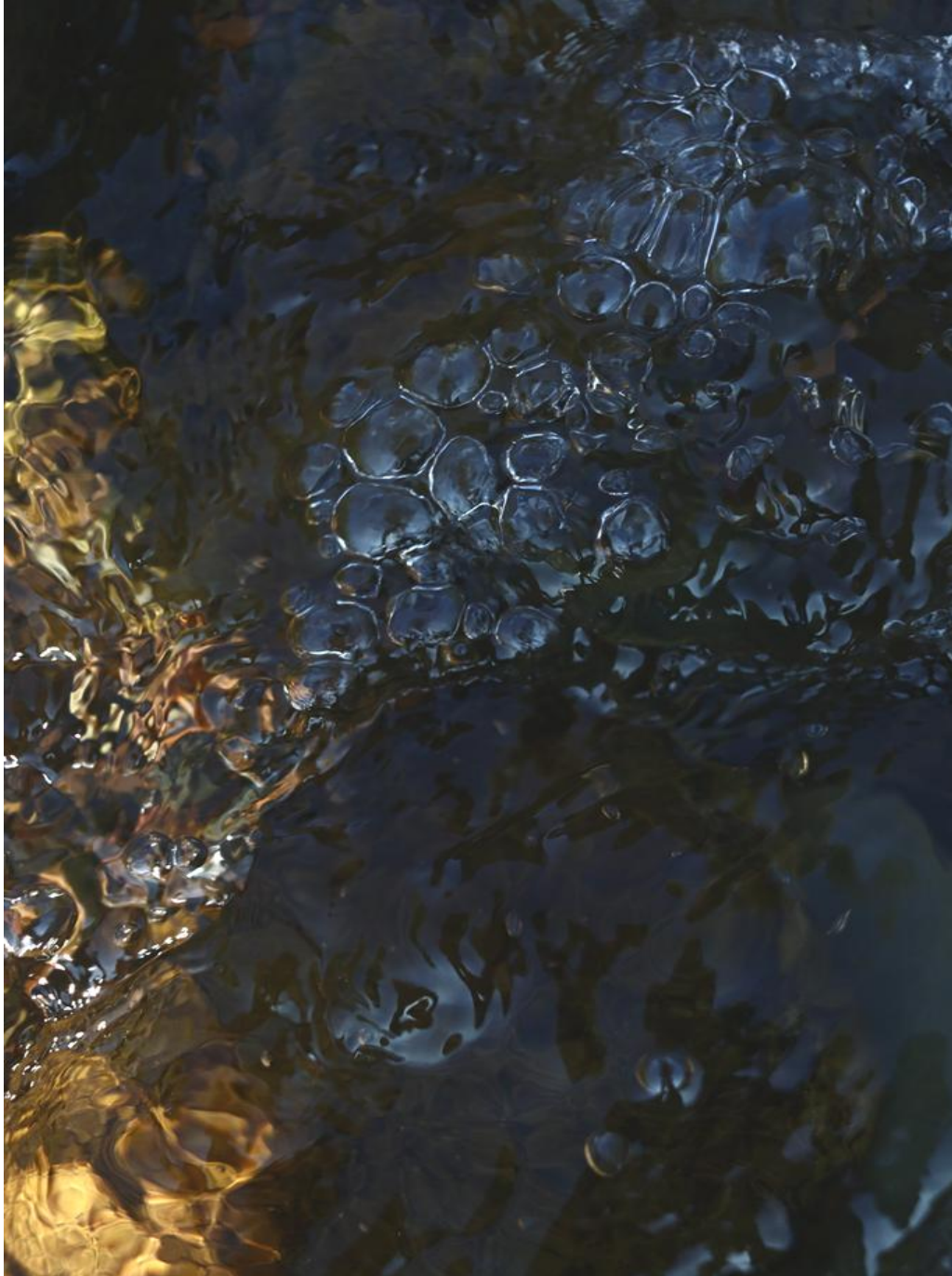


STRAVAIG #8

Rivers and Forests



Part Three

Poems

Art

Essays



Geopoetics

- ↻ places the Earth at the centre of our experience
- ↻ develops heightened awareness of it using all our senses and knowledge
- ↻ seeks to overcome the separation of mind and body and of human beings from the rest of the natural world.
- ↻ learns from others who have attempted to find a new approach to thinking and living, e.g. 'outgoers' like Henry Thoreau, Nan Shepherd, Patrick Geddes, Joan Eardley, Kenneth White and many others.
- ↻ expresses the Earth through oral expression, writing, the visual arts, music, geology, geography, other sciences, philosophy, combinations of art forms and of the arts, sciences and thinking.
- ↻ develops a network of Geopoetics Centres with a common concern about the planet and a shared project to understand geopoetics and apply it in different fields of research and creative work.
- ↻ opens up the possibility of radical cultural renewal for individuals and for society as a whole.

More information:

www.geopoetics.org.uk

<https://www.facebook.com/ScottishGeopoetics/>

<https://twitter.com/SCGeopoetics>

Front cover image: Sue Bell, *Long Philip Burn, Selkirk 1*

Back cover image: Norman Bissell, *Riverbed*

Design and layout by Caroline Watson

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Rivers and Forests in the Age of Ecological and Climate Emergency

Editorial

What's the connection between the failures of Governments in response to the global Covid-19 pandemic and the ecological and climate emergency? Would it be too simple to say: capitalism? Not really. It's those who believe in the 'free market' and austerity who have underfunded health and social services and who refuse to take action against the corporate multi-nationals responsible for polluting and destroying the natural world and so many of its species.

At our June 2019 Expressing the Earth Conference at Wiston Lodge near Biggar, we had many talks, films and workshops about rivers and forests, so we chose them as the theme of *Stravaig#8*. Then came the Extinction Rebellion actions and Climate Strikes at schools worldwide, so we made the Ecological and Climate Emergency a key part of our theme. As a result, we received fifty poetry, nineteen essays and thirteen art submissions — more than ever before. The standard was so high that this issue became 95 pages long.

However, since the Covid-19 pandemic has prohibited the printing and distribution of issue 8, we have decided to publish it online in 3 parts. The first part focuses on rivers, the second mainly on trees and forests, and the third mainly on rivers again. You will find differing opinions on the large scale planting of trees in the Highlands in essays by James Fenton and others. We hope this will stimulate discussion about the best way forward. The poems, prose and artwork provide very personal responses to our theme and yet they form a cohesive whole.

But what use is a creative journal to activists who are campaigning to reverse the effects of climate change on the planet and the extinction by humans of so many species, you

may well ask? As the creative expression of the Earth in arts, sciences and philosophy, Geopoetics offers an alternative vision of the world which deepens our understanding of it and sustains those who wish to celebrate and conserve it. Geopoetics combines a love of and attentiveness to place and particularity, with a knowledge of global and historical issues of geology, climate, and culture. A truly green politics must have the generosity and imagination to connect the local and the global, emotion and strategy. *Stravaig*, the annual journal of the Scottish Centre for Geopoetics, is an important way of bringing together those who believe in a better world in which humanity sees itself as part of the natural world rather than separate or superior to it.

The Covid-19 pandemic is a worldwide human tragedy and it has taken from us Tim Robinson, one of the great exponents of geopoetics in his writings about Connemara and the Aran Islands. In the late 1990s he gave a talk to members of the Scottish Centre for Geopoetics in Edinburgh at the invitation of Tony McManus. Yet this crisis has also shown the tremendous courage and self-sacrifice of health and social care staff and how communities can work together for the common good despite the many failings of the UK and US Governments. It remains to be seen what lessons will be learnt from what has happened and whether people will allow those in power to return to business as usual.

We hope that *Stravaig#8* will provide you with stimulating reading when staying at home and will encourage you to be as aware as possible of the landscape, bird life and other forms of life in the course of your daily walks outdoors. We welcome your thoughts on its contents by email, on Facebook and Twitter and we would encourage you to respond creatively to the Earth in whatever medium you decide.

Editors: Sue Bell, Norman Bissell, Ullrich Kockel, Callum Sutherland and Caroline Watson.

My Life and the River

Laura Hope-Gill

“May what I do flow from me like a river, no forcing and no holding back, the way it is with children.” —Rainer Maria Rilke

A cool crackle underfoot.
A shudder of wood and iron.
A something spoken by the man who was walking ahead of me.
Then, a fall.
Then, the night.
Then, the river.

I was 19 years old when I fell through the old bridge. It was defunct. It said so with a sign suspended from iron chain: VERBOTEN. Even a non-German speaker could understand, could comprehend, could, if she wanted, pay attention. I even knew some conversational German so I did not even have the excuse not to read and comprehend. VERBOTEN. There it is: the *threshold guardian* of mythology writ large, suspended in chain no less.

It was nearly midnight on a summer night in Interlaken. If you have been there, you know the river. The Aare. You know it's creamy green glow and that it flows between Lake Thun and Lake Brienze. You know that those lakes are glacial lakes and that their cold is bone-chill, head-exploding cold, the kind of cold you want around you only if you are on fire. You also know they are beautiful. The river, too, is beautiful. I had seen it three times before in my life. The first time I was only three when my family camped at the base of the Eiger and saw helicopters removing the bodies of a Japanese climbing team; we strolled along the Aare in our visits to town, away from tragedy. When I was ten my family camped beside the river. My mother handed me a travel diary, and I wrote in it for the first time sitting alone beside the River Aare. I wrote, “I am sitting beside the River Aare.” I was new at keeping a diary, and this seemed the most important thing to say.

Since that day, a lot has happened. I have published poems and essays and stories. I've written books. Still, the most important thing to say would be “I am sitting beside the River Aare.” At ten, I had it right. I had it right because nine years later I would nearly die in the River Aare.

My relationships to rivers have always been strong. My childhood weekends and summers happened along the embankment of the Niagara at the U.S. and Canada border. A house stands on the Niagara Parkway, which runs beside the river, called River Bend. My father's parents purchased it after their internment in a prison camp in China during World War II. When they put it on the market in the 1950's my mother's parents came to see it, and my parents started their courtship in the gardens and orchard. The house faced the river, divided from it by a black road and a brief woods sloping down to water. Small tornadoes appeared on the surface. Bracken and branches leaned over it. To wander beside the river felt astonishing and strong. I recall feeling the act required trust that the river would stay where it was. No one teaches children about “vertigo,” that feeling of falling. In *The Unbearable Lightness of Being*, Kundera wonders if it isn't so much the fear of falling as it is the fear of our desire to fall, to jump. Children ought to be told about that feeling. I felt it when I walked along the Niagara. Sitting with my grandmother one afternoon just meters before the actual Niagara Falls begins, she said, unpacking tidy sandwiches of cucumber and cream cheese, “This is my favourite part of the river.”

The part of the river my grandmother, Nanny from Northern Ireland, was claiming was the part where a ruined ship still lodges against the rocks. It is where the boulders of an early earth break the current and churn the waves

into mists. It is the part of the river moments before death for anyone stupid enough to be in a boat that close, some unknowing sailor, some misguided canoeist who didn't look at the map. It was the launching place of people in barrels barreling toward their smashing end, where no bird dares to build a nest. Nanny's favorite part of the river was pure madness. But Nanny was not mad. Nanny was sweet, patient, kind. She was relaying the wisdom to me as she had done for years in her writing of little greeting cards which always began with the words, "A wee bird was telling me it's time to write to my Laura." She wasn't being metaphorical. She was teaching me that birds spoke to us. Sometimes it was a chipmunk or a snail. Nanny's world was on-the-surface oatmeal cookies and lullabies at bedtime. Her rituals reflected an inner world she could only reveal to me at moments like the one beside the river. "This," she motioned to the some of the wildest water in the entire world, "is my favourite part of the river."

I didn't think of Nanny when I was in the Aare. The immediacy of drowning was too evident. This is how I know that your life doesn't flash before your eyes. At least not in glacial water. I fell only five or six feet through the rotting wood of the decrepit bridge. Earlier that evening I had refreshed at Balmers Youth Hostel. I'd eaten a good supper of soup and bread, paying with the cash I'd translated from Travellers Cheques earlier that day. It was supposed to be the last full day of my two-month backpacking adventure in Europe. After dinner, Movie Night featured *The Sound of Music*, a geographical imperative seeing as we were at the destination one imagines the Von Trapp family were heading for. Like everyone else, I'd seen it. I headed out into Interlaken for a walk along the River. As I fell through the wooden bridge, the words, "This is just not an asset to the abbey" were all I thought. With music. That answered that question. The last thing to run through your mind when

you die are actually Rogers and Hammerstein lyrics.

I hit the water. Instantly it enclosed me. The current pulled me into it with no recognition of my skin dividing me from water. The cold abetted the abduction with shock, with substance, a thud to my heart and all its previously warm blood. Like that, my body became one with the River. Churned and tumbled, I could ride water's gravity, which pays no mind to up or down. It is only speed and chill. From inside sense, I had a thought. I needed to find a surface because the River did not know it had one. And it did not care. I swam. I touched the bottom, with its rough earth and rock. I swam. I touched the bottom, with its penetrate mud, with its small stones. I swam. Again, the earth and rock and stone. I began to swim again and realised my lungs no longer held air. They'd been deflated. They were tight, sealed, cold gatherings of cells and nothing more. "This is it, then," I remember very clearly thinking to myself, "This is how I die. In a River. In Switzerland. At age 19." The next thought still stuns me, and I return to it often whenever some film or conversation brings up the conversation of a fear of death.

See, I was down there, at the bottom of the glacial River, with my lungs flattened of air, my blood all congealed in my heart, seemingly frozen there like blood in a blood bank's freezer. My hand had touched a rock when I had expected it to touch clear air, and my hand had gripped that rock as though asking it to be something I might climb up back to the open night. But the rock was only a rock at the bottom of a River, left there or pushed there or broken there either a year or centuries before. This had been my River. The River I first wrote beside when I was first discovering the mysterious relationship between language, page and mind. And River. It was familiar to me. The River had been my friend. If not this River, then the Niagara River. Surely they were all related, all

cousins under the moon and sun, cousins in the earth.

Which is what had led me to the bridge in the first place. I'd been walking. On my walk, I'd met a young man from California, named Koben. Koben had long hair and had also spent the previous night up in Gimmelwald above Lauterbrunnen. He had a Haight-Ashbury scruff and swagger, someone you'd look at and say, "He must be a poet." We had walked the last bit of the hike back to town together, but we had not planned to walk beside the River together that night. It just happened. Koben had heard my travel stories, as I had heard his, because what else do travellers talk about and why else do travellers travel? Koben had told his stories and I mine. His were about girls and bars. I had noticed weeks before that my stories were sounding crazy. I'd arrived in Europe with my freshman year boyfriend, who had chosen to wear a cowboy hat and a Dallas Cowboy t-shirt to Frankfurt. At 30,000 feet above the sea I'd told him I wanted to travel alone for a spell, just as he was suggesting we get married. Three days later, we parted on the Rhine. After weeks on Greek Isles, I was robbed - twice - in Copenhagen, so I'd spent the last four weeks traveling with a Benneton shopping bag with a sweater sometimes in it and sometimes on me. And I had a book my father had given me before in the airport the day I left, Thomas Wolfe's *Of Time and the River*. Both times that I was robbed, I had been either holding onto it (the time someone swiped my knapsack from between my feet as I called home in the train station) or reading it (the time someone emptied my locker while I spent an afternoon reading on the grass in Tivoli). Other than these items, I'd lost everything, which is how I saw it. That morning, in fact, I had written in the little notebook I had left, having had two journals vanish with theft and having learned that a journal should fit in one's pocket rather than be stuffed into a knapsack, "I have lost everything on this trip: a boyfriend, a backpack, a knapsack, even my meekness.

I've learned that all I need to travel are my passport, my Eurail, and some money."

As Koben and I walked along the path beside the Aare, I saw a crow-shaped shadow cast by moonlight onto a cliff above. I wanted to see it more clearly. I wanted to photograph it, too, but someone else owned my camera now. In order to see it well, we had to step over the chain holding the sign, VERBOTEN, across an old wooden bridge.

"We shouldn't do that," said Koben. "It will be fine," I said, growing increasingly aware that his long hair was more fashion than spirit. "Just a few steps—"

He walked farther across as I faced the cliff, amazed at how perfect the outline was for something that was projected by moonlight through a tree branch. It was a perfect crow, from beak to head, to chest, to body. Could have been drawn by a master.

"You know," shouted Koben, impatient with my shadow inspection, "I don't believe all those things really happened to you during your trip. I think you just wish you were Kathleen Turner in *Romancing the Stone*." He walked fast.

I took offence. "Wait! What?" His outburst struck me as insulting. And even if he was a faux-wild man from California whom I'd probably never see again, I wanted to defend myself. I cared very much what he thought, I thought. In retrospect, what mattered was that he believed me. Maybe it was so I could be sure that my stories were not so far out there that they rendered me a fictional character, even if it was Kathleen Turner. And that's when I fell through the bridge. "It's just not an asset to the abbey." And there, at the bottom of the River, my hand wrapped around an actual stone, the thought moved through my mind, "This is it, then. This is how I die. In a River. In Switzerland. At age 19." And then the thought that I return to, the surprising coda, the unexpected twist, "Not

bad.” And there we were. The stone, the River, death, and me all gathered in the dark, and I was perfectly okay with all of it.

I felt something that I now call my third lung fill with air at that moment. I heard a voice which I attribute to my third grade swimming teacher. His name was Doug. He had big frizzy hair like the popular magician, Doug Hemming, whom I’d seen on TV and whom, looking up from the swimming pool at the Y learning how to drown-proof, I often thought could also be a swimming teacher for children in Toronto, where we lived. I heard the magician/swimming teacher’s voice say very clearly, “Relax. Let the blood rush away from your heart into your arms and legs because you will need them. Float up to the surface. Swim diagonally, with the current.” That was it. I had completely forgotten that when left to our bodies’ devices, we float. Such an easy concept. I let go. I floated. And then I swam with the current toward what just might be the only shrub growing from the bricks that keep the River Aare tame and orderly. I seized its branches and then, like it was nothing at all, scaled the wall and passed out in a woman’s tomato garden. I know it was a woman because she called the police on me, claiming I was a thief. When the police woke me in the dirt, I heard one of them ask her, “If she’s a thief, why is she soaking wet.” After that, at the station, I got my first and only police report: Fraulein Hope-Gill fiel Von einer bruche in der Aare.” Back at the youth hostel, I asked another traveller if I could borrow her towel so I could take a hot shower to address what appeared to be hypothermia. I was standing before her soaking wet like Eeyore when Piglet finds him,

“Oh, Eeyore, you are wet!” said Piglet, feeling him. Eeyore shook himself, and asked somebody to explain to Piglet what happened when you had been inside a river for quite a long time.”

My fellow traveller replied, even seeing me,

“What happened to you?”

“I fell through a bridge in the river.”

I realised then that I did not have my waist-sack on. Or my necksafe containing my passport, cash, airline ticket, green card (I’m Canadian, living in the States), and Eurail pass. I had no identity, no money, and no way of getting home. I undressed in the hot shower and waited to drip dry because my dorm mate had declined to give me their towel, saying simply, “Sorry, I brought it with me from home.” I didn’t sleep that night because each time I closed my eyes I saw the darkness at the bottom of the river. But I couldn’t hear that voice. With my eyes closed, it seemed, part of me stayed in the River, was now flowing toward the lake, would be somewhere else by morning. I remembered that I called out my own name as I swam. “My name is Laura. I come from Canada.” I wanted someone to be able to say who I was.

The night I fell through the bridge, my father’s mother was diagnosed with a brain tumour back at home. Not the “little bird told me” grandmother but the one who had survived three years of internment in North China. Granny’s language had begun to slip. Words replaced other words. After that would be a decline in communication. For a month, I’d remain in Switzerland not knowing about it while my parents back home dealt with the Consulate and Embassy to figure out how a 19 year old Canadian with no papers can be allowed to fly to Tampa, Florida. They’d also be facing the brain tumour and the burgeoning end of Granny’s life. When I did arrive home, she was convalescing in our home on a bayou on our small island of mangroves off Siesta Key. When I returned to college in central Florida, my professors asked how I could miss the first two weeks of school and just show up expecting to be taught anything. My parents had been so caught up with Granny’s illness that no one had told the school what happened. I said plainly, “I fell through a bridge into a river in

Switzerland and lost all my I.D., money, and plane ticket. I couldn't get home." They let me stay. While other sophomores decorated their dorm rooms with posters and Grateful Dead tapestries, throw pillows and cool furnishings, I scotch-taped the worn-out map from my Eurail book next to my desk. That was it. By the end of Fall term, I had added a poster, Joy Division, "Love Will Tear Us Apart." After winter holiday, I added a Georgia O'Keefe exhibition poster featuring a ladder reaching to a moon over Abiquiu. I didn't want these posters on my wall. I was covering something up. Not on the walls but in myself. My grandmother with the brain tumour moved back into her condominium on Exit 38B near my college. I visited her three times a week and listened to her stories. Doing her tarot reading, as she'd taught me, I hid the death card under the cushion of her white sofa. "Put it back," she scolded me when she saw her spread without it.

Thirty years have passed since I fell into the river. I think often about what I wrote in my journal the day I fell through the bridge, "all I need is my airline ticket, some cash, and my Eurail Pass." I remember writing it, and I remember seeing it on the page and feeling like I'd transcended all material things and attained true enlightenment. Ha ha, said the river to that idea. All I needed was breath. And even without that, things were "not bad." Also, I think a lot about rivers. For several years after the Aare, I experienced severe and completely unconscious panic attacks when I was near running water of any kind. Even a tap running could cause my fingers to tingle and swell. Hiking with friends in the Blue Ridge Mountains, we dove into a high branch of what becomes the Davidson down below, and I shouted out to my friends, "Don't jump in. The water is filled with nettles." It wasn't. I was experiencing the beginning of the most severe reaction I ever had: I crawled to shore, lay on my back in a patch of wildflowers and watched them swell, levitate, multiply, and swirl, as though I

had taken acid, but I had not, and neither did my friends ever indulge. I cried for help, and one friend ran back up the Parkway and drove to find a ranger who returned with a team of men and a long wicker basket in which they carried me to an ambulance. EMT's challenged me for what drugs I had taken, and all I could answer was, "It's the River." They found nothing in my system at the little hospital in Brevard, and I was discharged before midnight. After that, I intentionally exposed myself to rivers. I stopped at a shorter distance each time. I listened to its soft rush. I took deep breaths to assure my body I wasn't putting it through "that" again. After a year, my fingers no longer swelled or tingled. After two years, I could wade and swim. Today, from my home in Asheville, Thomas Wolfe's home embraced by Thomas Wolfe's rivers, I go to the Davidson almost daily in summer and autumn. Wendell Berry, also of the Blue Ridge, is a fellow river-lover, "The river and the garden have been the foundations of my economy here. Of the two I have liked the river best. It is wonderful to have the duty of being on the river the first and last thing every day. I have loved it even in the rain. Sometimes I have loved it most in the rain." I walk along the Swannanoa with my dogs and gaze out over the French Broad from a favourite restaurant. I feel the three rivers like they are friends, welcomers back to something essential and dark and bitter cold and all at the same time nourishing and life-giving. "I had been afraid of the awful presence of the river, which was the soul of the river, but through her I learned that my spirit shared in the spirit of all things," writes Rudolfo Anaya in *Bless Me, Ultima*. If I had stayed in the youth hostel that evening and watched *The Sound of Music*, my life might be very different. I might not feel so bonded to rivers, and *all things*.

My mother told me that my father wept the night I fell through the bridge. I'd called home to tell them I couldn't fly the next evening.

“Why?”

“Because I fell through a bridge into a river.”

“What you need to do is go to the Consulate in Bern and begin the process for getting a new passport.”

“How do I get to Bern? I have no money.”

“I’ll wire some.”

“How will I get it? I have no I.D.”

“We’ll figure something out.”

The conversation had been perfunctory and practical. Hearing that he had wept, news I got only once I returned home, made the experience more meaningful. Because he could be business-like after I told him, I was business-like in the aftermath. I played the piano in the hostel for tips, and travellers departing Switzerland left me their francs and centimes because you couldn’t exchange coins. I got to Bern after several missed attempts because the Consulate closed at 2 in the afternoon and I hadn’t enough money for a hotel and no Youth Hostel card for ID for a hostel. I came to know the people in the town. They had heard about the Canadian girl who fell through the bridge.

“Ah, fraulein fiel von der bruche in der Aare . . .” My police report on the tip of everyone’s tongue. In a way, I had become a fictional character, possibly even mythological. I lived among this community for a month. Shopkeepers gave me bread. The hostel gave me soup. Among them I lived, paperless, officially nameless, in this middle space between life and death as I dwelled in what I understand now was a form of shock that follows near-death experiences. I didn’t call it that at the time though. I was like my father, business like. Over time, the experience would unfold in me, with meaning. Reading Herman Hesse’s *Siddhartha* in a literature course months later, I broke into tears.

Have you also learned that secret from the river; that there is no such thing as time? That the river is everywhere at the same time, at the source and at the mouth, at the waterfall, at the ferry, at the current, in the

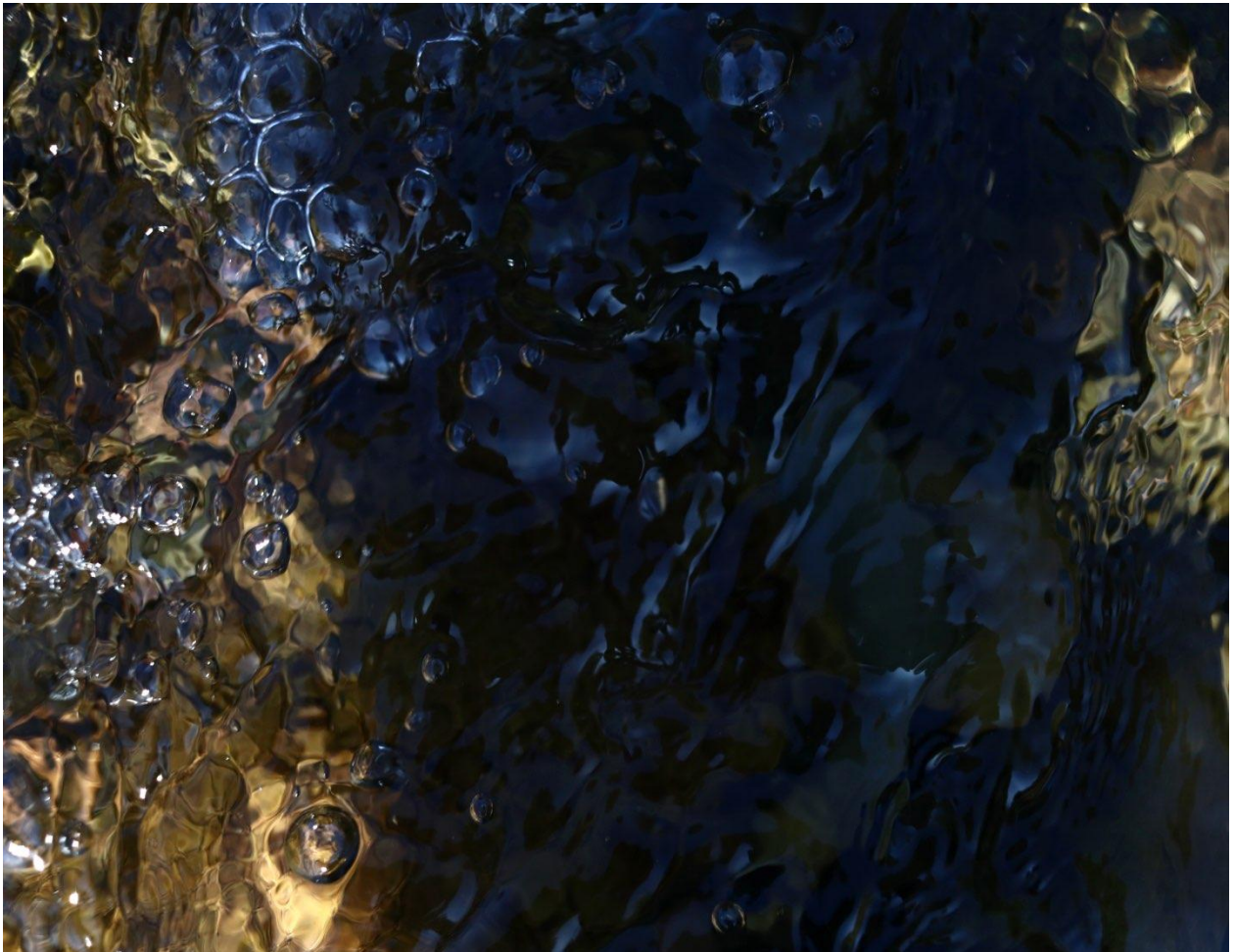
ocean and in the mountains, everywhere and that the present only exists for it, not the shadow of the past nor the shadow of the future.

—Herman Hesse, *Siddhartha*

I did walk along the river again before I left. I returned to that place where I had climbed into a woman’s tomato patch. I saw the sheer brick wall I’d climbed, and I could not make sense of it, how I’d climbed it, soaking wet, exhausted, wearing a leather jacket from Florence I refused to let go even in a moment I’d ditched my passport and money. The priorities of my drowning self I will never entirely understand but always smile at, just as at the time that this all happened, I did not fully understand how strange an occurrence it was. Girls didn’t fall through bridges all the time in Interlaken. Most people didn’t lose everything they had when backpacking. I have learned to view it, over decades of reading and becoming, as a wondrous initiation not even attempting to be veiled. It was the beginning of my life. For, every day since being arrested in a tomato patch, I have known that I could have died there, that the rock at the bottom of the river could have been my last rock, the river my last river. Instead, I got more life. Every time I see a river I am reminded.

The semantics of the river expand and contract within me, sometimes a river, sometimes a rite of passage, sometimes a god. Serbian poet, Dejan Stojanovich, peers also into this linguistic aspect of nature, “There is another alphabet, whispering from every leaf, singing from every river, shimmering from every sky.” The German word for it is “fluss,” and it also means flux, change, and current, so I am reminded that the language of the river I fell into is flux, change, current. Every time I see a river, I understand all over again. Just as when I was ten, I am now always sitting beside the River Aare because as Hesse writes in *Siddhartha*, “The river is everywhere.” Wilma Dykeman writes in her book named for The French

Broad, "I am going out to see the wide sweep of the river's silent power around a certain bend beneath the sycamores. I'm going out to smell fresh rain on summer dust and the prehistoric water odours of the old French Broad in flood. Won't you come, too?" I have come, too, to the river.



Sue Bell, *Long Phillip Burn, Selkirk 2*

Leiter Fura

Michael Hamish Glen

Stones

clutched by neighbours, stood mute while
neighbours, clutched by hunger,
sought hope from debris, wrought
green from tired soil and brought
silver from between the winds
of a ceaseless sea.

Forest

fashioned from the seeds of lost ice,
broad-rooted on layered red stone
from a distant era of hot sands,
and truncated to satisfy the dead
gods of shiphulls and bobbins
in southern lands.

Woodland

held dear by clanland chiefs,
but walled against their people's
needs and wilful goats;
to tan a nation's hides,
rich oak and birch were stripped
of bark and dignity.

Trees

contouring a great horseshoe from
the ebb and flow of the loch,
and tended from generations past
to grow a nurtured future
for webs of life and spiders
among the lichen.

Timber

cut by stone and untold energy,
to smelt a life of new horizons
from a fire-mouthed cave, and
axed by wintering traders,
once Norse invaders, hauled high
on a repairing shore.

Boughs

bent from the branching of growth,
seized immortality as crucks,
rough-fashioned and pegged
to lesser timbers, framing allegiance
from lesser tenants
of the island's lairds.

Clachan

an greim nàbaidhean, nan seasamh balbh, fhad 's a tha
nàbaidhean, an greim an acrais
a' sireadh dòchas bho sprùilleach, a' fàsgadh
gormachd bho ùir chloaidhte, a' spìonadh
bèo-airgead eadar gaoithean
luasganach na mara.

Dèanta

bho shiol deigh chailte
leathan-freumhaichte air clach fhillte dhearg
bho linn chian de ghainmhich theth
agus gearrte gus diathan marbh
shligean-luingeis agus bhoban a shàsachadh
an tìrean deasach.

Coille

ga glèidheadh le gràdh aig cinn-fheadhna,
ach dùinte an aghaidh feuman an daoine
agus an aghaidh ghobhair thoileil
gus seichean an nàisein a chartadh
chaidh urram a rùsgadh bho dharaich
is bheithe bheartach.

Craobhan

nan sgrìob mhòr chrom
os cionn tràghadh is lìonadh an locha
air àrach le ginealaich a dh'aom
gu fàs fo chùram san àm ri teachd
airson lìn bheatha agus dhamhan-allaidh
am measg a' chrotail.

Fiodh

gearrte le cloich agus neart do-innse
gus saoghal ùr a leaghadh
bho uaimh theine-bheulach agus
snaidhte le malairtich a' gheamhradh
a bha uair nan ionnsaighich Lochlannach,
tarraingte àrd air cladach càraidh.

Meanglain

lubte bho mheurachadh fàis
air bith-bhuannachd a ghlacadh mar cheangail
dèanta gun snas agus pinnichte
ri fiodhannan nas lugha, a' riochdachadh ùmhlachd
bho thuathanaich bheaga
fo uachdarain an eilein.

Ash

that Odin carved as his first Norseman,
rich in mystery, magic in healing, and
strong in millwheel axles,
lined a procession of humble,
wide-horned, destined cattle
for a lowland table.

Birch

not silvered as its lowland cousin,
but brightly flamed on black-house
hearths; and for weaker kin,
a short-lived forest nurse
in lasting armour,
that enrobes its corpse.

Bracken

snatching swaying forest light,
saw sons of Angus, women of Morvern,
people of MacInnes, sink roots
into MacDonald soil until bonds
of kinship died on the hillside
in a blaze of oaktree.

Cone-bearers

draw shadows of a distant homeland on
rocks across near waters,
and guard a scatter of islands,
home to urgent, hungry fisherfolk
who plough their own sleek furrows
through the shoreside sea.

Hawthorn

herald of a later May,
that breathes fire into its
harvest and cuts fire into weathered
drovers' arms as journeys to distant
trysts seek tides of peril
in the nearing narrows.

Hazel

springs ladies with a tiny blush
and hangs their dusted suitors
for passing bees and breezes
to seed an everlasting crop of
hope for hidden hunger
and hurdles for gathered ewes.

Holly

draws drops of blood upon
its everlasting green and beckons
thrushes, mindless of this
symbol of eternal presence in a
litany of myths that woodsmen
fear to fell.

Uinnsean

a shnaigh Odin mar a chiad Lochlannach
làn dìomhaireachd, draoidheil gu leighis,
agus làidir ann an aisil roth a' mhuillinn
na sreath, ri taobh triall de chrodh
leathann-adharcach dhan robh
bòrd gallda an dàin.

Beithe

chan ann airgead mar a co-ogha gallda
ach lasrach, dealrach air cagailtean
taighean dubha; agus do ghnèithean
nas laige, na banaltram choille gheàrr-ùineach
ann an armachd buan,
mar èideadh air a corp.

Raineach

a' goid solas priobach na coille,
a chunnaic mic Aonghais, mnathan na Morbhairne
a' cur sìos freumhan
an talamh 'IcDhomhnaill gus
an do bhàsaich bannan-cinnidh air an leitir
's craobh-dharaich na caoir.

Luchd-giulain nan durcan

a' tilgeil faileas de dhachaidh chian
air creagan thar uisgeachan dlùth
agus a' deanamh faire air eileanan sgapte
nan dachaidh do dh'iasgairean acrach, cabhagach
a' treabhadh an sgrìoban slìogarra fhèin
tron mhuir taobh a' chladaich.

Sgitheach

teachdaire bho Chèitean nas anmoich a
chuireas teine na thoradh agus
a gheàrras teine ann an gàirdeanan
sian-bhuailte nan dròbhar nuair a tha
tursan gu dàiltean cèin a' sireadh sruthan
baoghlach sa chaolas dhlùth.

Calltainn

as t-earrach a' cur mhaighdeannan le meanbh-rudhadh
agus a' crochadh an suirghichean dustach
gus an siolaich na seillein 's na h-oiteagan
bàrr maireannach de
dhòchas do dh'acras falaichte
agus cliathan do chaoraich chruinnichte.

Cuilean

a' tarraing bhoinnean fala air
a sior-uaine agus a' smèideadh air
smeòraich, coma den
t-samhla seo de bhuan-mhaireannachd
ann an liotan fionnsgeòil a bu leisg
le coilltearan leagail.

Oak

rough-barked elder of the forest,
recalls head-tossed generations
of sheltering black cattle,
clambering children and smoke-roofed
families
huddled in stone.

Rowan

once a bowman's tree,
dropped by birds in high places,
shakes its berried head in
defiance of a winter's knife,
and flourishes where witches
fear to tread.

Willow

bent by the weeping burn,
compliant to an adolescent life
cut short by baskets
woven into afterlife for enfolding
seaweed, potatoes and babies
huddled in wool.

Earth

worn hard, then watered to deny
the dust, sparse comfort to the
urgent feet of bootless bairns
and sparse help to growth that calls
on sea-reapings and byre-sweepings
to nurture bere and kail.

Wind

invading shivering walls,
snatches smoke from wayward hearths
and paints patterns in cold skies
but also winnows hope and fear
from hard-won harvests
of a hungry clan.

Fire

friend in need for
winter hands, for smith and
broth-cook, for kilns of drying grain
but foe indeed when blackened heather,
roofing poultry and a precious hoard,
ignites all terror.

Darach

na eildear garbh-rùsgach na coille
a' cuimhneachadh nan ginealach ceann-luaisgeach
de chrodh dubh a' gabhail fasgadh,
de chloinn a' dìreadh agus teaghlaichean
fo mhullach-smùdanach
còmhla am broinn clachaireachd.

Caorann

uair na craobh bhoghadair
leagte le na h-eòin sna h-àirdean
a' crathadh a ceann dearcagach
an aghaidh sgian a' gheamhraidh
a' cinntinn far am bu leisg le bana-bhuidisichean
siubhal.

Seileach

crom ri taobh an t-sruthain dheuraich
aontach do bheatha òigeil
geàirte goirid le bascaidean
fichte na ath-bheatha
gu feamainn, buntàta agus leanabhan
pàisgte a chumail.

Uir

air a cosg cruaidh, 's air uisgeachadh gus
an dust a dhiùltadh, na sochair ghanh dha
chasan cabhagach aig cloinn casrùisgte
agus na cuideachadh gann dha chinneas a dh'iarra
air buain na mara agus cartadh na bàthcha
gus eòrna mòr is càl àrach.

Gaoth

a' dèanamh ionnsaigh air ballachan critheach
a' spionadh ceò bho chagailtean frithearra
agus a' peantadh phatrain sna speuran fuara
ach cuideachd a' fasgnadh dòchas agus eagal
bhon bhuaibh cruaidh-dhèanta
aig cinneadh acrach.

Teine

na charaid ann an dìth dha
làmhnan a' gheamhraidh, dha ghobha agus
còcaire, dha àthan làn gràin a' tiormachadh
ach na nàmhaid gu dearbh nuair a lèsas fraoch dubhte,
na mhullach air cearcan agus air tasgaidh phriseil
na oillt uile.





Caroline Watson, *Sculptor's Sense 1 & 2*, mixed media drawing

Riverrun

Antony Lyons

In 2018, I travelled to the 'Memory Of Mankind' (MOM) archive, deep in an abandoned salt-mine in the Austrian Alps. There, assisted by curator-maker (and MOM director), Martin Kunze, I made - and deposited - 30 printed ceramic tablets containing visual and textual content relating to a UK academic research project called Heritage Futures. These tablets, and thousands of others, are intended to form a million-year, deep-time repository; a crowd sourced snap-shot of our time. There exists a short documentary of my visit to MOM.

<https://vimeo.com/362045214>

One of my ceramic tablets (20cm x20cm) is shown here. It features a sequence of still-frames from a long-take film poem recorded in the Côa River valley of eastern Portugal (one of the study sites for the Heritage Futures project). This slowly depopulating valley is the core area of a major new 'rewilding' initiative, supported by Rewilding Europe. The valley was threatened with inundation by dam construction in the 1990s, but was saved, mainly because of strenuous protests to preserve the valley's unique and important prehistoric animal rock-engravings. These now serve as inspirations for contemporary efforts aimed at conserving endangered species and promoting 'rewilding'.



The film piece, 'Côa Valley' can be viewed here.

<https://vimeo.com/378012906>

Traces of the past; Portents of the Future

Using video recording as an observation method, and even a form of cartography, a storm in the valley provided me with an opportunity to record an in-between state. In the resultant moving-image work, as cloud gradually envelops the scene, the accompanying torrents of rainwater are palpable. Through watching - and listening - the viewer is encountering some of the flows that continue to contribute to the formation of this steep-sided, rugged valley.

"I had come from wondrous lands, from landscapes more enchanting than life, but only to myself did I mention these lands, and I said nothing about the landscapes which I saw in my dreams."

- Fernando Pessoa - The Book of Disquiet

*Come quando la nebbia si dissipa,
lo sguardo a poco a poco raffigura
ciò che cela 'l vapor che l'aere stipa.*

- Dante, *Inferno XXXI*

*As, when the fog is vanishing away,
Little by little doth the sight refigure
Whate'er the mist that crowds the air conceals.*

In 2001 and 2003, I spent periods of time in the valley of the Guadiana River in southern Portugal, before and then very soon after it was flooded by the huge – and controversial – Alqueva Dam/Reservoir project (pictured). My main focus then was destruction of the unique ecology of the *montado* cork-oak forests, which includes the critically endangered Iberian Lynx. Later, in 2011, as artist-in-residence at the Grand Canyon (USA), I again found myself in a close encounter with a dammed landscape – that of the Colorado River, whose over-extracted waters no longer reach the once fertile delta region in Mexico, evocatively described by proto-conservationist Aldo Leopold nearly a century ago. In my video-essay, 'No Concept' [link <https://vimeo.com/51288400>], based on these two encounters, I contemplated the changes, displacements and sense of loss in the 'Post Dam-Nation era',¹ and the entanglements of river terrains with human and non-human ecologies.

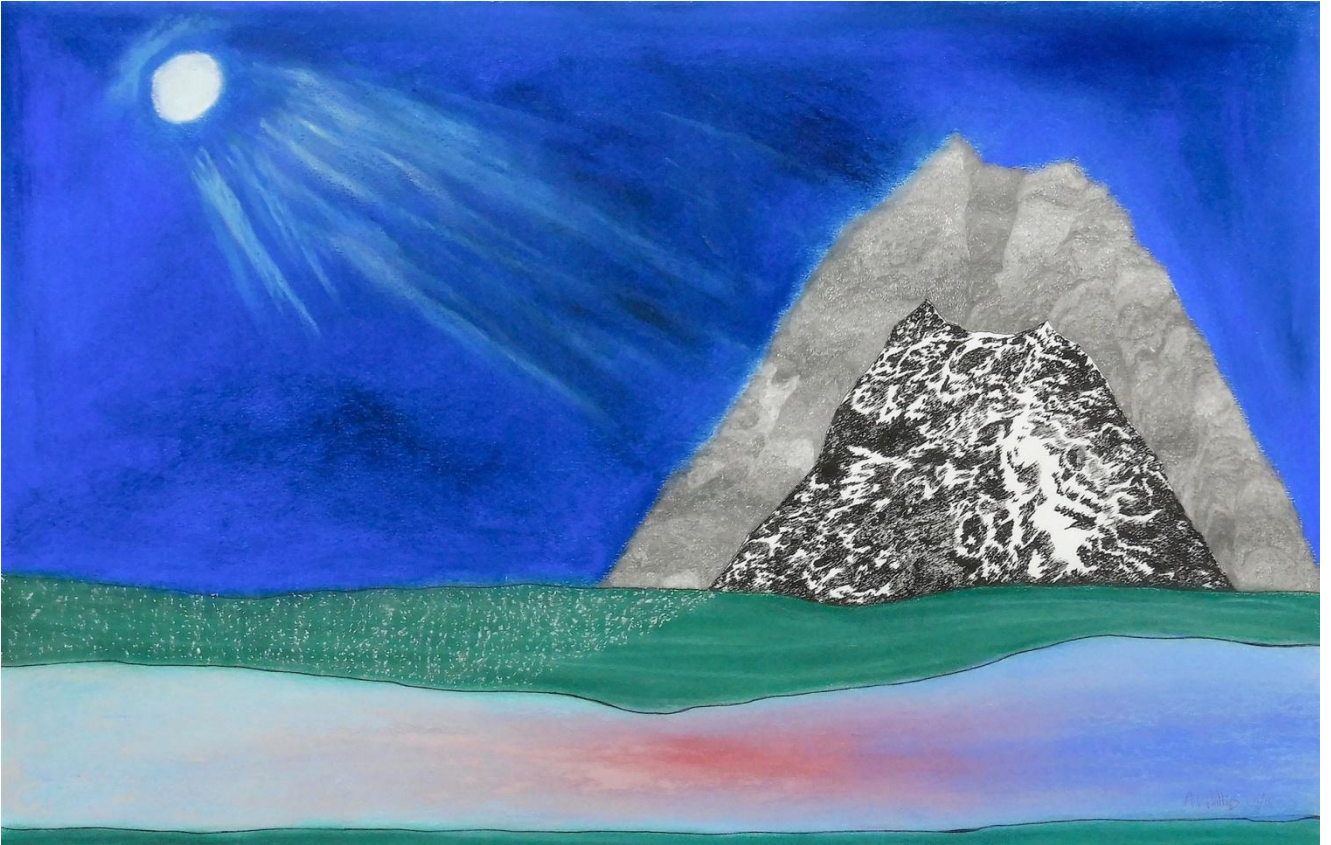
Acknowledgments

The video works discussed here and associated creative research were linked to an academic research project (www.heritage-futures.org) and/or supported by grants from Arts Council England.

'Memory of Mankind' link

<https://www.memory-of-mankind.com/what-is-mom/>

¹A phrase used by Jonathan Waterman in *Running Dry: A journey from Source to Sea Down the Colorado River* (2010), National Geographic Books.



Andrew Phillips, *Guided by Gneiss*, mixed media

Paper River, Knotted River

Sarah Tremlett



A contemporary haibun journey into ancestral places

The Past – The Intertwined Fates of a River, a Mill and a Family; or How a River was Exploited and Exacted its Revenge

Just north of Exeter lies Stoke Canon (a ‘settlement belonging to Exeter Cathedral’s canons’), now more commonly known for being a commuter village on the Paddington to Plymouth line. With low-lying flood plains, (historically said to have been an island on occasions), it sits just above the watery confluence of the Exe and the Culm. Why the Church wanted this land is open to question. Was it once a mythic site, more akin to the Isle of Ely? Walking towards Exeter from what historians have called an ‘unremarkable’ Devon village, a long, mediaeval bridge system (some say 1274, but at least 1326) spans two braidings of the Culm and a mill leat, with three weirs marshalling water levels.

Once, standing almost halfway across, in the silence of a morning with just cows grazing either side, a spiritual conviction might have descended; but, today, fending off the revving commuter traffic it is hard to imagine. From this vantage point, the site of the mill can be seen to the right through poplar and willow across the meadows; now new shiny zinc-coated roofs glint in the morning sun. It was not always so.

The river Culm (meaning knotted or winding) rises in the Blackdown Hills at a spring near the old RAF Culmhead. It flows through the Devon Redlands, a pure, fast-flowing river,

attracting numerous paper mills along its banks in the Victorian era: two at Rewe, six from Huxham and 18 from Bradninch (Maxted). Devon was known for making paper in the nineteenth century, and became the main employer in Stoke Canon for a century and a half, accompanying the growth of the printed book (Blundell Jones, 2012). The Victorian emphasis on learning and knowledge for social betterment created a burgeoning demand for books, periodicals and newspapers. The characteristics of the river were vital: good quality, pure, iron-free water was the most important element for a paper mill, in producing better quality white paper (Bodman 2003).

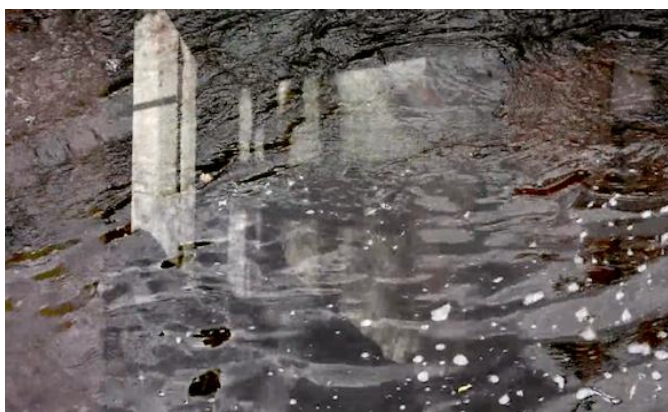
Exploiting the River

Sheets were originally handmade from rags, collected by rag and bone men (the bone used as size for the paper). Size is a liquid that coats the fibres of paper to improve water-resistance allowing inks and pigments to sit cleanly on the surface of the paper. It was lyrically noted that rivers produced books from rags, the moral redemption of knowledge on pure white paper from the poverty of dirty rags (not unnoticed by Dickens) (Wynne 2015). In this equation, the pure river spiritually cleansed and recycled or literally and metaphorically gave new life to the social conditions of the time; less was said about the effluent produced by the mills,

nor their working conditions, and employees' rights.

Chlorine bleaching at the end of the 18th century enabled coloured rags to be used, but contributed heavily to river pollution, and poor quality paper. By the 1870s, rag paper was gradually supplemented by wood – rags became in short supply, even though Victorians sought to recycle cloth (Tournoy 2008). Paper made from wood consists mainly of white cellulose, and also a dark substance called lignin, making wood stiff and trees stand tall and upright, but also turns paper yellow. Lignin also gives paper a strength, so blue and pink colouring matter were originally used to attempt to remove the yellow impurity.

Water has always been key to making paper. Fibres immersed in water are subject to mechanical beating and chemicals to make pulp. They are then fed along conveyer belts with vibrating wire mesh where the water is partly removed. Continuing through rollers and steaming achieves a dryer, stronger, bonded paper that is then coated and calendered to make sure the paper irregularities are smoothed out. Approximately 85% of the water used in the pulp and paper industry is polluted process water and much of this returns to the river (Sappi 2012).



Rags were: 'boiled in a cauldron for a long time before being rinsed in a steam-powered machine and subjected to manganese, vitriol and salt to make them white' (Wynne 2015).

Chemicals such as zinc bleach liquor, sulphate of soda, hydrochloric or sulphuric acid, chloride of calcium, chloride of lime and bleaching powder 'quantities of caustic soda in leys of different densities' (Watts 1907), were used in all the processes, and to break down the fibrous material and get rid of lignin. Paper was also treated with size which could be animal size (boiling of hide pieces) creating a stench over the whole mill, to prevent ink and gum etc. penetrating the paper.

The Culm, a river containing both coarse fish and a breeding ground for salmon was exploited mercilessly for its purity, by over 20 mills along 27 kilometres of its banks. Toxic substances detrimentally affected ecosystems. Today we also dump large amounts of fibre, starch, resins, bleach, dyes, sizing materials, and other matter into our pure rivers, creating effluents that can cause loss of life, thermal impact, slime growth, scum formation, and loss of aesthetic beauty in the environment (Bajpai 2018).

Fated Fortune

The hard reality of industrial mill life set against a bucolic setting was not unusual in Victorian times, but Stoke Canon mill seemed cursed, having more than its fair share of accidents. Could an ancient ecclesiastical contract have been crossed, on that very spot, transgressing its 'holy' blessing; or maybe nature – the river itself, tired and used had finally been driven to exact its revenge. Perhaps local papermaker Grace Cragg was aware of this, when as the first known owner in 1780 she took out an insurance policy on it with Sun Alliance (Shorter 1957). She was certainly a woman of foresight since a Mr. Cragg (likely her first husband) was badly injured when a cart overturned in 1790. She then married into the Dewdney family. For a while production expanded, aided firstly by the reduction of excise duty in 1837, and then its abolition in 1861. But in 1844 a fire occurred when the mill employed around 30 people – 'loss of

property has been great, a considerable part of the manufactory and a farm house contiguous being destroyed' (*Exeter Flying Post*, 1 August 1844: 3a). They seemed to recover from this, aided by the boom in the demand for paper and this fuelled William Dewdney's ambitious plans to improve the mill, paralleling his sense of himself as a country gentleman, not so much 'in trade'. He totally remodelled their home from a modest long, thatched house into a double-fronted gentleman's villa between 1863–70 (Pevsner 1989).

By 1867 they were employing over a hundred people and powering three steam engines, but fate again intervened; in 1867, an explosion occurred: 'Stoke Canon, Fearful Boiler Explosion' (*Exeter Flying Post* 6 February 1867: 7f). It seems that as ambition overreached itself, economic disaster was sure to follow. Despite the Dewdney's renegotiating their terms with the Ecclesiastical Commissioners, an auction notice appeared in *Exeter Flying Post*, (18 March 1874: 1d) offering the business for sale at auction.

However, worse was to come. In July of the same year, Thomas and William Dewdney were involved in a court case, heard before the Lord Mayor of London at the Mansion House under the Debtor's Act, and accused by John Arthur Reed, a buyer of their paper, with having misused a cheque of his to pay the wrong creditor (*Exeter Flying Post*, 1 August 1874: 3f). The charge of fraud was dismissed, but the incident suggests a struggle to remain solvent (Blundell Jones 2012). William and Richard Dewdney had reached rock bottom, and it has been rumoured that, after this slight on their business or another insurance claim, the Dewdney in charge at the time committed suicide on the nearby railway line, and a week later his wife did the same.

With such a history, in November 1876, the mill was sold: 'The Mills have two Machines

capable of turning out twenty-five tons per week of "printings" and "shops". Frederick, my great grandfather, had been a farmer further north near Langford Budville. Something made him change profession. Was there no money in farming (something my grandfather, a tenant farmer, later told my father who wanted to farm). What seems clear is that Frederick was in some way an outsider. His father had turned away from farming to milling paper, and Frederick's brothers were working for him, centred on Head Weir Mill, further down the River Exe, in Exeter. But when Frederick decided to leave farming he didn't join them in the highly profitable mill in Exeter. No, he decided to go it alone.

When the Dewdneys ran into difficulties Frederick saw an opportunity to run his own paper mill. He rented in Stoke Canon with his wife Louisa and eldest son William (b: 1871), before moving in, and making small alterations. Whether he chose to ask Louisa about the new business opportunity, is another question. Perhaps he painted it that she would have a better life, closer to Exeter and civilization. Perhaps she was the one who prompted the decision. In 1881, aged 39 Frederick was listed in the census as a paper manufacturer employing 18 men, ten women and four boys. He was running a tighter operation than the Dewdneys and life was prospering with the birth of more children. At first everything ran smoothly, but slowly the mill's bad fortune returned.

In 1886 Frederick's much-loved son William Frederick died, aged 15. Perhaps it was from proximity to imported rags carrying cholera, a disease that would kill within a day. It was often found in the women rag sorters, who usually worked in small family groups, crammed into badly ventilated lofts. Equally the same conditions were ripe for transmitting smallpox, another deadly killer. Women often wanted to move up to the cleaner environment of the 'Salle'; this was at the other end of the mill where the finished

sheets were sorted and counted (Harris 1999). Frederick and Louisa must have been heart-broken but stolidly carried on.

William's death left the middle son Charles, (who was 11 at the time), as the new successor to the business, followed by the youngest brother, my grandfather, Henry Wilfred (b: 1882) 'Fred', alongside his sisters Ellen, Alice, and Minnie. Charles had to adapt to a new role, but more disaster was to follow. In the face of a tough but successful business, and eleven years after the death of her eldest son, Louisa Tremlett died in 1897 at the relatively young age of 54. Charles was 20 and my grandfather 15 at the time. Charles, a young man with no role in the family business, found the weight of the enterprise falling on his shoulders, alongside giving emotional support to his father. In 1901, perhaps to develop strength of character, his sense of duty and commitment led him to voluntary service in the Exeter battalion as second lieutenant.

Meanwhile, my grandfather escaped. He opted for his father's earlier choice – farming, but way beyond the economics of British farming conditions. He set sail for New Zealand where, the story goes, he 'slept with his head on the saddle'. My vision of my grandfather (whom I met only once) is a man who wore tweeds and smoked a pipe, in a plainly furnished rented, ivy-covered, Oxfordshire farm, with no central heating or electricity. Like an adventure from *The Famous Five* I went to bed with a candle (in the 1960s) and listened to sparrows arguing outside my window early in the morning when I stayed there. [This farm has since been renovated beyond recognition]. My grandmother Marie Schwerrer, of German descent, was a concert pianist who had two grand pianos. I learnt in my forties from an uncle that she had red hair, but I never met her. My grandfather was a man who sought a peaceful life, with few possessions, for whom it seems farming was a vocation not a way of making money. He had turned his

back on trade, the mill and all it encompassed.

War and Strikes

As papermaking grew, societies were formed to address industrial conditions.

Throughout the early years of the twentieth century the unions were gathering strength, with rising standards and stronger rules. Trade unionism roughly doubled between 1900 and 1913 and nearly doubled again by 1920 (Wrigley 2015). This in part reflected the growing advance of socialism in parts of Europe including Germany, Austria, Russia, France and Italy. After various incarnations, by 1914 the papermakers' union became the National Union of Printing and Paper Workers (Modern Records Centre, Warwick University).

On June 28th, 1914, Bosnian Serb nationalist Gavrilo Princip assassinated the Austro-Hungarian heir Archduke Franz Ferdinand in Sarajevo. This led to the beginning of the First World War a month later. The ruling classes in some of the European countries hoped a short victorious war would put an end to class differences and reduce the support for socialism that threatened the existing order (Tonge, 2018). In Devon, the war created its own rippling crises in terms of production and workers' strikes. The wartime demand for soldiers (at first volunteers) in the Armed Forces meant the remaining labour force was diminished but also stronger. Conscription didn't begin until January 1916, and before then some 2.4 million men volunteered for the army, mostly in the first year. After discussions in the autumn of 1914 between employers and trade unions, there was a failure to agree on measures to increase output with the reduced available skilled labour. Under the Munitions of War Act on 2 July 1915, strikes were banned, and workers were forced to increase production, seeking arbitration through special industrial courts called munitions tribunals, where necessary. In the first three months of 1916, 5,828 cases were heard at the twenty-one busiest local tribunals.

Yet little legal action was taken against strikers. *Taking employees to court was not likely to enhance industrial relations in employers' workplaces* (Wrigley 2015).

However, in small, industrial areas of England such as Devon, employers found that losing brave, good men, often meant dealing with those left on new terms. Paper rationing was enforced although newspapers were expanding, and the Armed Forces sought light reading matter. For those on the front books were increasingly produced with poor quality paper, giving rise to the term pulp fiction. Government propaganda replaced journalistic reportage through The British War Propaganda Bureau (WPB) publishing numerous pamphlets, posters and books.

Devon Wartime Spirit

The Mayoress of Exeter was a formidable fund raiser and organizer, having raised £400 since the outbreak of war. Soldiers on Exeter station were supplied with a bag containing a large sandwich, two pieces of cake, an orange or banana and a pack of cigarettes. Provisions were supplied to around 13,000 soldiers between September and January (Maxted 2007).

Frederick's father and brothers at Tremlett Bros Ltd 'contributed £262 10s to the Times Sick and Wounded fund in the June', (Maxted 2007). We do not know if Stoke Canon Mill contributed funds, but perhaps this was because, during the spring of 1915, it was undergoing unrest. The mill workers were beginning to feel the pressure of a reduced workforce. Production was down and Charles, aged 38, who was running the mill for Frederick, told the remaining staff to work to a piecemeal tonnage system, by quantity produced. Supported by their union, the workers demanded instead that their pay be increased by three shillings a week. At this time, all the employees were housed in tied cottages belonging to the mill. Les Kennedy, labour historian: 'The Tremletts, the owners

of the mill, said that would cost them far too much, in fact they offered to open their books up to the public and said it would cost an extra £500 a year. And the workers said no, we're serving you with a notice to strike' (BBC 2014).

At the same time as the passing of the Munitions of War Act in July 1915, the mill was forced to stop production. On August 7th, 54 out of the 58 (these figures vary) men, women and boys employed went out on strike. Kennedy: 'The case went to court. By the middle of August (1915) the Tremletts had clearly had enough and decided to seek an injunction to have all the workers evicted from the cottages which they owned.'

It seems that negotiation wasn't Charles' strong point; and no doubt he was mindful of the strong financial support his wider family had given the war effort. Employers and the media accused the strikers of being unpatriotic, betraying brave fighters in the trenches. Charles had a knee-jerk reaction.

Kennedy: 'The case was heard by magistrates sitting at Exeter castle. The union fought the case in the courts claiming it was impossible for the tenants to harvest the crops growing in their gardens in the time allocated, and that the eviction was "a weapon to break up the strike"'. Historian Jean Seaton notes: 'The local newspaper reported a Mrs Radford saying that she had gone to work in the mill to keep her home going after her husband had been paralyzed following an accident there [this was often caused by falling under a ream of paper]. But eviction orders were still granted against her and 13 other strikers. She warned that she would end up living in a tent. And that's exactly what she did, along with 50 men women and children, three dogs and a cat, in tents provided by the paper-makers' union.' A two-day court case ended in favour of Tremlett, and the strikers were evicted (BBC 2014).

They camped in a field in the village which is

now the children's playground, helped by the school mistress. Kennedy 'Ultimately the action was a failure as blackleg labour from Scotland was brought in to break the strike' (BBC 2014). Down they came, and the mill wheel began turning again: the rollers, beaters, pulpers, finishers; the horse, the donkey pump, all got back to work. Meanwhile, the strikers won widespread support from around the area and funds were raised by the union to support the families.



The strikers, 19 men, 13 women and six boys, were supported by their union. The workers lost not just their livelihoods but their homes. There is also a sense of the absence of a mother and wife, in the hardness of Charles' decision. In fact, Charles did not marry until he was 54 in 1930.

Standing outside the partly derelict site of the Old Paper Mill today, these events may not be visible but are interred in its history; an unspoken, dark cloud that is trapped

within family memories. Bad fortune has run its diverting course, like the leat to Stoke Canon mill. Elements of this story have repeated in my own life, and I wonder have I also paid the price for what happened in Devon at the start of the First World War?

Today a Chinese businessman has taken it over, with shiny zinc roofs and a security gate. The old buildings are being rejuvenated for import and export, so they say in the pub. The waterwheel and the main buildings are long gone, the leat is calm, and aside from a couple of remaining mills upstream, the water purity is better than it ever was. As I stand on the ancient bridge, gazing into the quiescent flood waters, there is a sense of quiet new beginnings.

In an era of environmental catastrophe, it must be clear to everyone that this pure river, and its fine eco-structure should be protected and valued. As far as I know, no bad fortune seems to have yet befallen the latest owner although it is hard for me not to feel a sense of abeyance in the air. As I walk along its banks, catching sight of steely fish on a cold, grey Devon morning, I am careful of the cow-pocked edges, disappearing into the deep, dark water.

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seasons (four haiku)

Alan Spence

spring sunshine
white swan on the water
trailing light

sheer exhilaration -
three dolphins leaping
out there in the bay

in the ancient forest
the leaves are falling
again...

midwinter night
the moon, the stars
regardless

An offering

Larissa Reid

This child's gecko-grip climb
Heart rising with the sap
Of an uneasy spring.
Sinew seek, sinew bend, sinew release;
Repeat.
Brow trickled with salt and mingled fear
She finds her tangled seat
And sits cross-legged,
In a miraged belief
That her presence will prevent
The desecration
Of this vertical world.
Now settled, she breathes
Forms words into birds
That lift, fly, flicker from her pen
Lacing wings with verbs, her action call;
All her courage
Corseted to pin feathers
She sends scattering to the breeze.

It's not Imbolc yet

Elaine Morrison

When the crimson flower
Of the hazel tree
Blooms in January
Something is wrong.

Her brother the catkin
Downy yellow-green
Appears in November
But on his own.

The stems of daffodils
Proud in the woods;
Not due until March –
These bluebell leaves.

Why have you come early Brighde?
Your wand of silver birch
Your blessing on our home
Has waved in spring too soon.



Membership

The Scottish Centre for Geopoetics is a membership organisation which relies on members' subscriptions to fund its activities which are carried out by volunteers. Its purpose is to raise awareness of geopoetics as a crucial way to approach and creatively respond to the natural world of which we are part.

It is a network of individuals including visual artists, writers, musicians, ornithologists, geologists, botanists, teachers and lecturers who share a common interest in developing an understanding of geopoetics and applying it creatively in their lives. The Centre organises talks, discussions, events and field walks which are designed to extend members' knowledge and experience of geopoetics. As the main English language geopoetics centre, it has members in USA, Sweden, Poland, Ireland, Australia, Wales and England as well as throughout Scotland.

Further information is available from normanbissell@btinternet.com and at www.geopoetics.org.uk.

If you join or renew your annual membership you will receive:

- a free copy of *Grounding a World; Essays on the Work of Kenneth White*, ed. G Bowd, C Forsdick & N Bissell rrp £9.95.
- newsletters by e-mail.
- advance news of and discounts on books relating to geopoetics.
- advance news of Kenneth White and geopoetics events.
- invitations to all our meetings and field visits.
- the satisfaction of assisting the development of our geopoetics work and publications.
- encouragement to develop your own understanding of and creative response to geopoetics.

Please send this completed form with a cheque for £10 waged/£5 unwaged, payable to the Scottish Centre for Geopoetics, to David Francis, 214 Portobello High Street Edinburgh EH15 2AU. Or you can pay by standing order or bank transfer to the Scottish Centre for Geopoetics account no. 00694888 sort code 80-02-24.

Name

Address

..... Postcode

E-mail address

Contributors

Sue Bell is a self-taught photographic artist influenced by the daily walks she takes, mostly around her home in south-east Scotland but sometimes further afield. This practice has become an intrinsic part of her identity and affords a powerful connection to the countryside and community she inhabits. Her images are often representational, a visual attempt to capture the essence of the interaction experienced on each journey. She is drawn to the abstract—shape, texture, colour, light, shadow—and the potential these offer for seeing beyond the obvious into the deeper patterns and rhythms that form in the world around us. www.fromfoxfield.com

Norman Bissell is the Director of the Scottish Centre for Geopoetics and a co-editor of *Stravaig*. His novel *Barnhill* about George Orwell's last years and his poetry collection *Slate, Sea and Sky a Journey from Glasgow to the Isle of Luing* are published by Luath Press. His essays, poems and reviews have appeared in magazines, newspapers and books over many years. He lives on the Isle of Luing in Argyll and is writing a memoir about Geopoetics in Scotland. His website is www.normanbissell.com.

Michael Hamish Glen has written, since childhood, in many genres. In recent years, as an adjunct to his work as a heritage interpretation consultant, he has created text in prose and verse for a variety of media at places of natural or cultural heritage significance. Some of his poetic and contemplative work has been inscribed on stone or timber. He is particularly keen on the economic use of words – as befits a disciple of his late friend, Ian Hamilton Finlay. These stanzas, in English and Gaelic (by Gavin Parsons) were commissioned by the Forestry Commission Scotland, now Forestry and Land Scotland. They evoke the story of an abandoned community at Kinloch on Skye.

Laura Hope-Gill connected with Scottish Centre for Geopoetics in 2011 and after attending Expressing the Earth conference in 2017, she invited Norrie Bissell and Alastair McIntosh to speak at Asheville Wordfest which saw the emergence of Geopoetics Appalachia. Laura directs the Thomas Wolfe Centre for Narrative at Lenoir-Rhyne University, Hickory, NC. Her work includes *The Soul Tree: Poems and Photographs of the Southern Appalachians* (Grateful Steps 2008) and two collections of architectural history, *Look Up Asheville 1 and 2* (Grateful Steps 2010, 2011). Her memoir about her diagnosis with deafness at age 32 is an exploration of audiology, music, and spirituality and will be published by Pisgah Press in October 2020. Her poems and essays appear in *Parabola*, *Missouri Review*, *Fugue*, *Bellevue Literary Review* and other journals.

Dr Ullrich Kockel is Professor of Cultural Ecology and Sustainability at Heriot-Watt University, a Visiting Professor of European Ethnology at Vytautas Magnus University, Kaunas, Emeritus Professor of Ethnology, University of Ulster and former Editor-in-Chief, *Anthropological Journal of European Cultures*. His overarching research interest is sustainable local/regional development, especially the appraisal, planning and management of cultural resources, approached from an interdisciplinary perspective. In 2017 he was elected as a Council member of the Scottish Centre for Geopoetics and to the editorial group of *Stravaig*.

Antony Lyons is an eco-social artist. With a creative practice based on immersive fieldwork, research and site-responsive production, Lyons is deeply interested in relationships between ecological dynamics and human activities, often anchored in water-related processes. Using methods which include re-mixing and juxtaposing of archives, new recordings and contemporary voices, he experiments with installation techniques, drawing attention to 'micro' levels of perception and the flows of time and materials. He has recently worked with the National Trust in the post-military landscape of Orford Ness and is currently artist-in-residence in the Elan Valley in Wales. www.antonylyons.net

Elaine Morrison is originally from Renfrew but grew up in the Highlands and Aberdeen. After ten years living and working in Argyll, she has recently returned to North East Scotland with her family. On a career break at present, Elaine is studying Scottish Literature and creative writing at the University of Stirling. She

considers herself a novice writer. Inspiration for her work comes from the coasts, forests and traditions of Scotland as well as from her academic background in geography. She is never without a hand lens and a map.

Andrew Phillips is a visual artist from the South Downs of Sussex. Having lived in Edinburgh between 2015 - 2020, Andrew has recently moved to Wales, where he studied Fine Art over a decade ago. It was here amongst the Welsh valleys that Andrew first noticed the propensity towards healing in the landscape, as spoil heaps from mining began to grass over. His work has focused upon these themes ever since. www.AndrewVPhillips.co.uk Twitter / Facebook / Instagram @APhillipsArts

Larissa Reid is a former English teacher turned freelance science writer based on Scotland's east coast. She balances her writing life with bringing up her daughters. Larissa has written poetry and prose regularly for the past five years. She is intrigued by visible and invisible boundary lines in landscapes - geological fault-lines, myth and reality, edge-lines of land and sea. Larissa runs the Hugh Miller Writing Competition, a national competition that invites entries inspired by Scotland's geoheritage and is also a founding member of the Edinburgh-based writing group, Twisted::Colon. <https://ammonitesandstars.blog>

Alan Spence is an award-winning poet and playwright, novelist and short story writer. With his wife Janani he runs the Sri Chinmoy Meditation Centre in Edinburgh. His books of fiction include *Its Colours They Are Fine*, *Stone Garden*, *The Magic Flute*, *Way to Go*, *The Pure Land* and *Night Boat*. Poetry collections include *Glasgow Zen*, *Seasons of the Heart*, *Clear Light* and *Morning Glory*. He is Professor Emeritus in Creative Writing at Aberdeen University, and in 2017 was appointed Edinburgh Makar. In 2018 he was awarded the Order of the Rising Sun from the Government of Japan.

Callum Sutherland is a research associate in the Geography Department at the University of Glasgow. Specialising in geographies of religion, spirituality, and politics, his current work explores emerging conceptions of Acid Communism - a term coined by the late cultural theorist, Mark Fisher - at the nexus between academia and activism. He recently published a book with three colleagues entitled 'Geographies of Postsecularity: Re-envisioning Politics, Subjectivity and Ethics'. In his spare time he is a songwriter, often drawing inspiration from geopoetic themes, and an attendee at a local Quaker meeting.

Sarah Tremlett MPhil, FRSA, SWIP and co-director of Liberated Words Poetry Film events, is a writer, artist and poetry filmmaker. Author of *The Poetics of Poetry Film* (2020) commissions include a film for a finalist in the Poetry Society's National Poetry Competition, and for the Visible Poetry Project (2020). She has given talks on poetry film worldwide and judged at Liberated Words, Newlyn Film Festival, and Light Up Poole. Her latest curated touring screening *Uprooted* (films on the refugee crisis) was part of REELpoetry festival, Houston, 2020. www.sarahtremlett.com www.liberatedwords.com

Caroline Watson is an artist working in drawing and mixed media and interested in light, space and our relationship to place. She is currently working on a series 'The Walking' which looks at the need and importance of green spaces to be found in our towns and cities. She is a Canadian Scot working and living in Paisley with a strong commitment to her local cultural community. Caroline has exhibited in Canada and Scotland including RGI, VAS and PAI, and is a recent recipient of Creative Scotland VACMA. www.carolinewatsonart.com @carolinewatsonpaisley.



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