Scottish Centre for Geopoetics

STRAVAIG #9

From Alba to Appalachia

Poems Art Essays

Scottish Centre for Geopoetics

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: Dina Fachin, *La canzone di Pietro / Pietro's Song*, ink washes, ink, graphite on watercolor paper, 26x18 cm, 2021
Back cover image: Dina Fachin, *Growing Up* , ink washes, ink marker, graphite on watercolor paper, 30x23 cm, 2021
Design and layout by Caroline Watson

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From Alba to Appalachia

Acclaimed author Barry Lopez died from prostate cancer on Christmas Day 2020. In the course of a remarkable life he visited over eighty countries to experience them directly and learn from indigenous people, and he wrote knowledgeably and lyrically about place, animals and people, most notably in *Arctic Dreams* (1986) and *Of Wolves and Men* (1978), but also in his final book *Horizon* (2019) and seventeen other books. When seeking submissions for *Stravaig#9*, it was natural to mark Barry's passing and legacy by inviting John Lane to write about his long-term friend and mentor.

John has done so in a beautiful and moving essay about their friendship and Barry's influence on interdisciplinary environmental studies at Wofford College in the Piedmont of South Carolina. He took on board the wisdom of Barry's advice to 'listen, watch, record' and says,

'Go into the landscape. Try to understand, but first listen and see. Note your presence so your hard-won lessons can be used by you and others later.'

In March 2021 we asked John and fellow poet and educator Laura Hope-Gill from Asheville, North Carolina to have an online Conversation about Geopoetics Appalachia and it showed that there are great prospects for developing geopoetics in North America. You can view it at https://bit.ly/GeoAppalachiaYT. We also received lots of outstanding artwork, poems and essays from across the Atlantic, so we decided that this issue of *Stravaig* should be dedicated to exploring and reflecting the relationship between Alba and Appalachia whose land masses were once joined in deep time.

Assynt author Mandy Haggith has also travelled to the Arctic and shares with us her concerns about the ecological and climate crisis and possible responses to it in her essay Ice. Adrienne Hollifield beautifully illustrates the Appalachain Mountain tradition of storytelling and its links with Scottish, Irish, English and German settlers. Many other writers and artists from Scotland and North America also contribute their own creative reflections on the emergency facing the Earth. We intend to make an intervention in the United Nations COP26 if it goes ahead in Glasgow in November this year. Alastair McIntosh and James Murray White will hold a Geopoetics Conversation on Climate Action and Rewilding on Thursday 30 September and our AGM and fifth Tony McManus Geopoetics Lecture by Mairéad Nic Craith will take place on Saturday 6 November 2021.

We are also delighted to publish an essay by Kenneth White, the founder of the International Institute of Geopoetics, which reviews the development of geopoetics internationally over the last thirty years. Some of his short poems of places have been translated into Gaelic by Rody Gorman and appear in this issue for the first time. Some of his Collected Works are being published by Edinburgh University Press this year and more books and academic papers related to geopoetics are coming out than ever before.

What is becoming clear is that more and more people are becoming aware of the crisis facing the planet and of what geopoetics has to offer by way of a vision of radical cultural renewal to transform and sustain lives and benefit the world. Our paid up membership of the Scottish Centre for Geopoetics is at its highest ever and we welcome everyone who wishes to support and join us in developing its work. Many thanks to all who have joined and all who have submitted their work.

We received more poems, essays and artwork than for any previous call and enough work of high quality to create a further issue of *Stravaig*. Watch this space — and, in the meantime, we hope you will enjoy reading issue 9. All feedback welcome.

Editors: Norman Bissell, Ullrich Kockel, Callum Sutherland, Caroline Watson and James Murray White.

Letter from Brittany

Kenneth White

When, on the basis of long study in subterranian, antinomian, more or less anarchic movements, in Europe and other continents, and after direct experience with groups I started up in Glasgow (*The Jargon Group*), in South-West France at the time of the '68 revolt (*Feuillage*) and in Paris post-'68 ("*The Feathered Egg*"), I inaugurated, in 1989, in Paris, the International Institute of Geopoetics, it was with a long-term proposition in mind.

Strategically, after the stage of original Institutionisation as central focus, I proceeded to a second stage I called archipelagisation. This meant the creation of local groups in direct contact with their immediate socio-political context and environment. Pretty soon, there were groups in several parts of France (Paris, Lyon, Bordeaux), in various other countries (Belgium, Italy, Switzerland, Germany) among them, the Scottish Centre for Geopoetics, to which were added later groups in Canada, Chile, Russia, and groups are still being created here and there. The original groups were affiliated to the International Institute, on a principle of responsible autonomy. Seeing the proliferation of the groups and the general spread of the concept, I proceeded to a third stage, which I called oceanisation.

This abandonment of affiliation as such didn't mean *laissez-faire*. It was simply a recognition of the fact that the movement was spreading outside and beyond the groups. It was nonetheless expected (with no naive optimism), that any individual, any group, using seriously the highly charged term "geopoetics", would take the trouble (and the pleasure) to go into the full sense of the concept and keep abreast of developments, the main reference for that (apart from White's work) being the International Institute. Thus avoiding the temptation, the danger (without being dramatic about it) of comfortable installation, with facile amalgamation and cosy furnishing, in some halfway house.

After twenty years or so as president of the Institute (effective presidence, as you know, implying a lot of perseverance, perspicacity and perspectivism), I proposed that the post of president be handed over to Régis Poulet, geologist by formation, author by inspiration, well versed in geopoetics from the ground up. Régis has maintained its high level and vastly developed its website, that now exists in several languages: French, English, Spanish, Italian, German… on to Russian and Chinese.

What I retained, by general consent, was a position I amused myself by calling that of "ocean-pilot".

As such, I've continued to develop the concept of Geopoetics and to propagate it via lectures and interventions in colloquia world-wide, but principally, more and more so, the publication of books, such as, to mention only one of many, *Au large de l'Histoire* ("Offshore of History"). If I wrote most of this theory in French, it's because I saw no British or American publisher able to do such books and little or no intellectual context in which they could thrive.

But that has begun to change.

If Mainstream, Edinburgh, followed by Birlinn, Edinburgh, did, admirably, the prose books and the poetry, it was Polygon of Edinburgh University that did the first collection of theoretical essays : *On Scottish Ground*. And it's at Edinburgh University

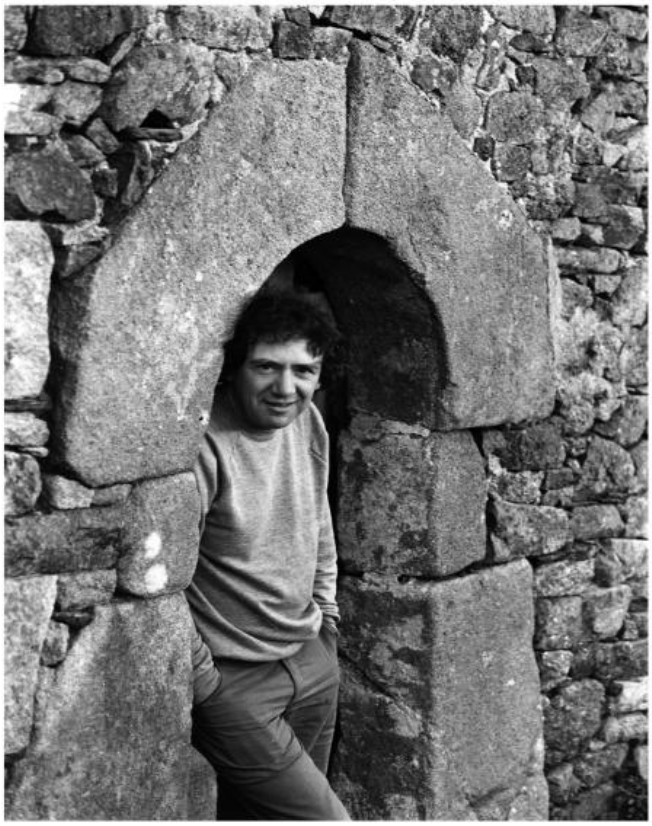
Press that Cairns Craig, one of the foremost intellectuals in Scotland, after an initial start at Aberdeen U.P., decided to transfer the ongoing series of a Collected Works, the first two volumes of which (early prosebooks, early essays) are due to appear in the Spring of 2021. At the same time will be published, also at Edinburgh U.P., a book I did in duo with the heideggerian philosopher, Jeff Malpas, on the relationship between poetry and philosophy.

I see the next number of *Stravaig* (a word, as you know, I've always had great affection for, and have used in many contexts) will be largely devoted to the theme of place. This theme, well understood, going well beyond couthiness, is, of course, fundamental to geopoetics and part integral of my work.

That work started for me in twenty square miles of territory, shore and back-country, in the village of Fairlie, North Ayshire, with many an excursion to the Island of Arran (an epitome of Scotland) where James Hutton of the Enlightenment discovered the principle of non-conformity. And it has continued and developed over many different territories since.

In 2015, I participated in an international collective volume published by Bloomsbury of London, *The Intelligence of Place* (it was I who proposed the title), concluding it, after essays on "Place and Limit", "Place and Singularity", "Place and Sensory Composition), etc., with "Place and Formulation". How sensation and idea get formulated, logically and poetically, is, obviously, of the essence.

While on this theme of place, it's maybe useful to add that in the book I mentioned above, on the relationship between poetry and philosophy, I have three poems on the relationship between three philosophers (poet-thinkers) and their primordial places: Empedocles on Etna, Nietzsche at Nice, Wittgenstein at Skjolden.



Marie-Claude White, *Kenneth White in Brittany*

To the Bone

Hearing a bird cry

back up there
in the fields behind Fairlie

an autumn afternoon
the air chill
the gold sun turning red

reality right to the bone.
`

Ràn

Ag èisteachd ri eun ri ràn
Gu h-àrd air ais an sin

Sna raointean os cionn a' bhaile
Feasgar as t-fhoghar,

An àile fuar fuar,
Grian an òir a' ol na deirge,

An fhìrinn
A' dol don chnàmh fhèin.

Near Point of Stoer

Full moon
and a wind from the north

little sleep tonight

up at four
walking along
a silent shore

trying to translate
into a tongue that's known
a poem writ
in the language of stone.

Mu Rubha Stòir

Gealach làn 's a' ghaoth
Bhon a' cheann a tuath;

Gun ach beagan cadail dhomh.

Air mo chois mu cheithir uairean,
Ri ceum
Air cladach gun fhuaim,

A' feuchainn ri dàn
A thionntadh gu cànan aithnichte
A chaidh a dhèanamh
Ann an cainnt na cloiche.

From *Open World The Collected Poems 1960-2000* by Kenneth White published by Polygon.
Gaelic translations by Rody Gorman.

Late December by the Sound of Jura

Red bracken on the hills
rain snow hail and rain
the deer are coming down
the lochs gripped in ice
the stars blue and bright

I have tried to write to friends
but there is no continuing
I gaze out over the Sound
and see hills gleaming in the icy sun.

Fadalach anns an Dùbhlachd mun an Linne Dhiùraich

Raineach air an t-sliabh,
Uisge, sneachda, clachan-meallain, uisge,
Na fèidh a' tighinn a-nuas,
Na lochan fo dheigh,
Na rionnagan soilleir gorm.

Dh'fheuch mi ri sgrìobhadh a dh'ionnsaigh
Mo charaidean 's cha lean mi orm.
Tha mi a' sealltainn thar a' chaolais
Is a' faicinn mhonaidhean a' boillsgeadh
Anns a' ghrèin làn deighe.

Late Summer Journey

The afternoon
washed itself out with rain
and a little rainbow
appeared above Barra
almost too good to be true

two hours later
all the blues having changed into greys
South Uist was a chain of black islands
lit coldly by the moon.

Turas Déanach Samhraidh

Ghlan béal na hoíche é féin
Amach leis an mbáisteach
Agus thaibhsigh tuar ceatha
Beag bídeach os cionn Oileán Bharraigh
Ina chuid suntais.

Dhá uair an chloig ina dhiaidh sin
Bhí gach gorm ina liath
Agus bhí Uibhist ó Dheas
Ina sraith d'oileáin dhubha
Soilsithe go fuar ag an ngealach.

From *Open World The Collected Poems 1960-2000* by Kenneth White published by Polygon.
Gaelic translations by Rody Gorman.

Ludaig Jetty

The small motorboat has puttered its way
out to the fishing
the bus has passed by
to collect the children for school
the red postal van has delivered the mail

now here at Ludaig jetty
there is only
the wind and the light
the cry of a peewit
and the lip-lip-lipping
of grey water on white sand.

An Lùdag

Dh'fhalbh an eathar bheag
Le h-inneal-crochte don iasgach.
Dh'fhalbh am bus
A thogail na cloinne don sgoil.
Tha Pàdraig air am post a sheòladh.

A-nis aig an laimrig anns an Lùdaig,
Chan eil ann ach an solas is a' ghaoth,
Gliagail na curraige 's plubadaich
An uisge ghlais
Air gainmheach geal.

In the Mountains of Taiwan

Up here
there is neither East nor West
the white heron
has disappeared in the mist.

Ann am Beanntan Taiwan

Shuas an seo chan eil Sear no Siar ann.
Dh'fhalbh a' chorra-bhàn
A-mach às an t-sealladh
A-steach don cheathach.

From *Open World The Collected Poems 1960-2000* by Kenneth White published by Polygon.
Gaelic translations by Rody Gorman.

Piedmont Dreams: Remembering Barry Lopez

John Lane

Much of my life I have worked close to my childhood home here in the Piedmont of South Carolina. Besides teaching thirty-four years at Wofford College, I have written about nearby nature, rivers, woods, hawks, coyotes. Wofford is a traditional liberal arts college, but mostly students stay within disciplinary silos. At the end of the 1990s, after twenty years in the English department, I helped build an environmental studies major that was the college's first fully interdisciplinary program.

Instrumental to Wofford College's establishment of an environmental studies major were the two visits renowned environmental writer Barry Lopez made to the college. He visited in 2000 and again in 2010. Both times he rattled our institutional frame. He helped to keep things in motion that have altered the ecosystem of the college for what I think will be a very long time.

Barry was my friend and mentor for forty-one years, and yet, as is often the case with friends, we were different but also much alike. I am a Southern boy; Barry was born in New York, then moved to California, then back to New York, then to university in the Midwest, and finally lived fifty years in Oregon. Barry was widely known for the wisdom he brought back from the far-away. Some might say he made his mark as traveling literary shaman. The landscape I am associated with is the Carolina piedmont; Barry will be forever associated with the distant Arctic where he gathered data and registered irreducible magic in the light, ice, animals, and native peoples there. His book *Arctic Dreams* (1986) won the National Book Award.

Barry died on Christmas Day 2020 after a long battle with prostate cancer, but his last years were richly productive. He found energy and space to finish his 600-page magnum opus, *Horizon*. In *Horiz*on he wrote, "In every culture in which I have encountered formal elders, the people… carry the history of what will work and what won't..."

The first time Barry visited Wofford in 2000 we weren't yet thinking about environmental studies. The Hub City Writers Project, a local arts organization I'd co-founded, planned to use his appearance to kick off a week-long interdisciplinary environmental arts festival celebrating Lawson's Fork, our local waterway. Wofford and Hub City would both benefit from his presence in town.

Walking along our local river the first afternoon we talked about the upcoming festival, and I told him we wanted him to answer the question, "Can stories save a river?" Barry said the answer was yes. Walking along the stream's banks he showed me how— he reversed my relationship to the living stream. I had called the stream "impaired," compromised by non-point source pollution like runoff from septic tanks. "John, it's not the river that's impaired," he

asserted. “It’s our relationship to river that’s impaired.

The next day a group took him on a hike in the mountains, to a magical destination called Big Bradley Falls. Along on the trip were two students, Kristen Hite and Will Garland. Kristin is now an environmental lawyer and is the UN’s Special Rapporteur on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples; Will is a high school English teacher who twenty years later still keeps Barry’s work on his syllabus. Gerald Thurmond, one of my colleagues, wrote of that day in his journal. He records how Barry talked about story, how he said fiction should have the attitude of a dream. In writing fiction, he said, you just make a start and see where it takes you. Gerald had just finished Barry’s *River Notes* and said Barry’s book was as much like a river as any one he had ever read. Gerald recalls on the hike to the falls we scrambled down from the old logging road that leads to a small overlook. Below, Bradley Falls was partially obscured by a hemlock. As we stood at the overlook, Barry identified as ravens two large black birds that were flying below us. I have read enough spiritual ornithology to know the significance of ravens—always gatekeepers to sacred landscapes.

That night Barry read “The Near Woods,” an essay about a black bear living at the edge of the wilderness in Oregon, unwilling to sacrifice the easy access to civilization for deep woods. He also read “Jedidiah Speaks with the River,” a short story. I felt the second reading was a gesture toward me and my question from the day before. The story begins with Jedidiah speaking, “Good morning. Can you forgive me?”

At a dinner following the reading Barry told us of his work with E.O. Wilson to help create an interdisciplinary arts/natural history program at Texas Tech University where he was a visiting scholar once a year. At that point there was no similar program for students like Will and Kristen at Wofford where they might study field science, arts, and humanities and somehow find a new way of ordering all the information they were awash in. Barry suggested that the synthesis could be found through story. That sort of interdisciplinary thinking, he suggested, might work even better at a small liberal arts college where people are closer to community.

I’d first met Barry at the Power of Animals Conference in Port Townsend, WA, in April of 1979. Presenters that weekend included American environmentalist and deep ecologist Paul Shepard, poet Gary Snyder, ecofeminist Susan Griffin, poet Melinda Mueller, storyteller Howard Norman, and Barry Lopez. There were maybe 25 or 30 participants. The conference was the brainchild of poet Sam Hamill, editor of Copper Canyon Press, and I was his right hand man that weekend. I was the one who drove over to SeaTac to pick up participants. I erased the blackboards after the lectures. I wrote down what was written there in my notebook.

On the second day of the conference, Barry was in the lunch line ahead of me, and he turned suddenly my way and said, “I’ve been thinking beaver, and I feel everybody else is thinking caribou.”

I parsed that opening salvo of a friendship for forty years. What did Barry mean? I was twenty-three at the time. I’m sure I just nodded and went on filling my plate from the salad bar. I either didn’t ask him what it meant to think like a beaver, or if I did, I did not record his answer in my notebook where the fossil record of that exchange still slumbers. The comment remains a koan I’ve worked on for all these years.

Obviously, caribou are big herd animals of the Arctic. They fit into the category charismatic megafauna, like moose and elk.

But beavers? They are a local industry, busy constructors of dams and houses and ponds and waterways. They are engineers. They care for families. Their love is private and clannish. Their sense of place and community is strong in a way I understand.

That first exchange between us laid the groundwork of our common love of place. Soon after that, in the summer of '79, I was off on a crocodile survey to Central America, and Barry instructed me as to what my role should be as a poet among field scientists—listen, watch, record. But, unlike Barry my life work did not proceed to focus on faraway landscapes and animals. I fell in love instead with the animals of the nearby more than the charismatic polar bears and sea eagles. There was a real seed of my writing in that moment in Port Townsend and also a seed as to how I developed my love of the nearby, and how I could pass that life on to others through teaching. Barry helped set me on my path as a young writer. A decade later, after a wandering apprenticeship in which I stayed in close contact with Barry, I found myself back home in Spartanburg at age thirty-three teaching where I had grown up.

The second time Barry visited Wofford was in 2010. In the intervening decade we had begun to use the interdisciplinary Texas Tech model to help build an environmental studies program. We had also acquired a field station on Lawson's Fork, and we were figuring out how to make it useful to our community of students, faculty, and staff. The afternoon of his lecture we took him out to walk with students, to tour the new Goodall Environmental Studies Center, and to experience the recovering textile mill site along the river.

How might we use our presence to create a sacramental relationship with the stream? That's what a group of faculty asked Barry at a special breakfast the next morning. Some had the idea that we might create a community around an anagama kiln, as Barry had described had happened in Oregon in his essay "Effleurage: The Stroke of Fire," from his essay collection *About This Life*. Maybe that sort of intentional community created around art could happen at Glendale?

Barry listened and instructed us to think about ceremony. "Animals are parallel cultures," he explained. "You need to consult and incorporate all the non-human cultures that are occupants of the place. Story is the bridge. Build the bridge between arts and the landscape."

I realize much of our work since has been focused on ceremony. We have collected study skins from roadkill mammals and tried to give these animals some dignity and use as Barry had taught in his short book about roadkill, *Apologia* (1998*)*. One class built a labyrinth near the river. We have yet to build the great dragon anagama kiln, but a colleague created a mud pizza oven from nearby earth and stones, and many flaming firings have darkened the interior. The wood we burn in the oven is deadfall from the grounds. A student constructed a healing poetry garden along the river.

Another set of students created a small shack for outreach programs, built from the timber of an old chicken coop and a threshold board pulled out of the creek's flotsam. Inside our environmental center our guest book is graced with a photo of Barry signing the ledger.

Barry's legacy will continue to show us what works. He lives on in many ways, both visible and invisible, documented and anecdotal. It's still easy to locate and acquire his dozen or so important and beautiful books about landscape and the imagination. If you Google Barry's name you could spend days sorting through the links— videos, recordings, photos, interviews, tributes—but none of this gets at his living presence, how, shaman-like, he animated space and rearranged perspectives.

Like Kenneth White, the founder of Geopoetics, Barry found a way to help us see a world. He forged a language — reverential and deep — and he continued an old monastic method best shown in *Arctic Dreams*. Go into the landscape. Try to understand, but first listen and see. Note your presence so your hard-won lessons can be used by you and others later.

Yesterday I walked along Lawson's Fork near dusk and lay down on the river bank next to where a beaver has been dismantling a young tulip poplar since late October. I had not made the connection with the beaver and my first conversation with Barry until then. I stayed there, thinking beaver, listening to the river flow, making my own ceremony.

One of the last times Barry visited Texas Tech, my friend Kurt Caswell says he told him that after he was gone, if anyone decided to think or speak or write about his life, he hoped they would conclude that his life helped. His life helped immensely here in the Southeastern United States. He helped us establish and clarify our Piedmont Dreams.

Dina Fachin, *Le Vette feltrine*, ink washes, ink, ink ball pen and graphite on watercolor paper, 2021

Dina Fachin, *Malga Campon*, ink washes, ink, and graphite on watercolor paper, 2021

Above the Arctic Circle

Gerry Stewart

Steamy breaths frozen on whiskers,
reindeer silhouetted on cliffs
by the unsinking sun.

Talisman for my first migration,
its drum sounding
against my chest.

Our boat kissed the coast,
sampled fjords.
Drunk on lack of sleep
we kept moving, laughing,
arms linked against
the sea-rolling of our legs.

We shared stories
beneath the orange crackle
of the aurora,
the same journey
retold a dozen times.

We broke away at port
with lighter steps,
pushing the horizon.

Braiding and unravelling,
ribbons against the snow.

Only 2

Stuart Graham

2 degrees was bad they said
but everyone laughed and praised the sun.
Sure, they missed the Tigers and the elephants,
but we still had them in museums.

But it just kept getting hotter and hotter.
Ice all gone and the sea so high.

We climbed up high.

The rising tide of plastics
crowded our hill top refuge,
but who can live in that heat?

So Siberia and Canada were to be
our new Eden. The great north trek,
but there was more sea than land.

Antarctica next, but no soils there
once the ice left. Ship after ship
brought it in before the flash floods
and winds striped the mid-latitudes -
bare.

Two by two on the ark we
brought on the distilled residues of life.

Why does no-one respond, still
the same old message,
someone out there please –
earth doomed -
Need rescued!
At critical levels now,
only two remain.

Tom Astbury, *Beinn Dorain*

Tom Astbury, *Glen Lochay*

Ice

Mandy Haggith

This year seems to be giving us the snowiest and most beautiful winter for at least a decade. I wake to a world written all over with clots, blots and spatters of white, lochs frozen over, snow doubling the girth of posts and gates and hoar crusting fences. Every overhanging rock is festooned with elaborate stalactite formations and icicles that drip by day and gleam by night. Water, the liquid we know so well, has metamorphosed. What was clear has become suddenly white; from colourlessness it reaches out and fills the full spectrum. Instead of soaking in or running through, it rests on and covers over. Fluid becomes surface, as if blood has become skin. Inner motion transforms to outer formation. The ubiquitous damp that flows, pools, trickles and ripples is brought to a standstill.

Simon D Wood, Frozen Mull Waterfall

Ice, if we let it, can stop us too: give pause, halt the mental stream and make way for wonder. Our footsteps leave a visible trace in snow, then with the next flurry they are rubbed out again. It is most marvellous because (at least in Scotland) we know it is temporary, ephemeral, fleeting, soon to be chased off by sun or a wet sea breeze. But while it is here, we must both wonder at its glory and face the questions that it raises.

Frozen water is a key component of dynamic earth. Far from fixed, its extent over the surface of the globe has varied hugely over the life of the planet, from no ice at all to almost total cover, shrinking and growing in response to global warming and cooling. Ice is not only influenced by perturbations in the weather, it has become an icon of climate change. As a metaphor, it raises political and ethical questions about how we, both as a species and as individuals, might think about the future.

Climate change is nothing new. It has been one of the most important drivers of the evolutionary process that has led to biodiverse life on earth. However, two things are different now: first, the human species is having a measurable influence over the global climate; and second, we know that those who will suffer worst as a result are some of the world's poorest people. This leads me to understand the climate change issue not as an environmental issue about 'saving the planet' but as a moral imperative towards people whose survival is more precarious than mine.

Polar bears

The ultimate symbol of icy terrain is Nanuk, the great white bear. Although currently the nearest polar bears are found far north of here, they used to roam northern Scotland. We know this because one left its skull behind in a cave known as 'the bone cave' at Creag nan Uamh, near Inchnadamph, near my home in Assynt. It was discovered along with many reindeer antlers and other bone fragments, which together evoke a landscape of wild tundra and the icy climate of a colder era, thousands of years ago. The skull itself is 18,855 years old. Quite how this sea mammal (polar bears are not called *Ursus Maritimus* for no reason) ended up in a cave 300 metres

above sea level, several miles inland, is a mystery. Did it wander there to hole up for its final old-age sleep? Was it summering between freezes, waiting for ice to form in Enard Bay so it could head out to sea to hunt seals? Did it encounter a well-armed paleolithic human, hungry for meat and fur? Or did it find itself stranded, starving, as the climate warmed and the ice-sheet failed to form?

We will never know for sure, but this last scenario has a ring of truth about it, echoing what we see happening now, further north, as polar bear habitat in the Arctic is threatened by the shrinking summer sea ice. Polar bears need ice to hunt their preferred prey, ringed seals, and without it they go hungry.

Polar bears have always been my favourite animal. One of my earliest memories is of my grandparents' white Triumph car pulling into our drive with a big white teddy bear on the back seat and knowing with total certainty that this was *my* polar bear. She was bigger than I was and the most beautiful thing I had ever seen. She is in every photograph of me from the age of two to about thirteen. We are still inseparable.

I harboured the need to see a real polar bear for decades. I used to go to zoos and cry at the caged bears in their ice-free pools, deranged by boredom. In my thirties I started actively seeking them out in the wild. It was important to me not to be shown a bear, not to stare out from a bus or boat at an unreachable animal while some tour guide gave a microphoned commentary. I had to come across one on its own terms. When I finally did, it was in the woods, waiting for the ice to form on Hudson Bay in northern Canada. The polar bear's woods were in the full glorious blaze of autumn, fiery tamarack trees over a carpet of ruby and jade undergrowth, sparkling with the first winter frosts. That polar bear was also bigger than me, and beautiful, and it settled a calm gaze upon me that contained not the slightest hint of fear. I was a mere edible option, probably not as tasty as seal. My two-year-old self had the same urge as ever to reach out and hug the big white furry bear, while the rest of me thrilled to feel the humility of meeting an animal of such power. Imagine these big, fierce creatures roaming the landscape of home in years gone by!

The polar bear's ferocity is an essential aspect of its beauty. The reverence it inspires is due in no small part to it being dangerous, quite capable of knocking off a human head with one swipe of its big ice-insulated paw. Love can be close to fear. In our risk-averse times we must not forget this. William Spufford, in his analysis of the Edwardian obsession with polar adventure, *I May Be Some Time*, reminds us of the potency of 'the sublime', where danger and beauty, both just out of reach, combine to produce a heightened sense of wonder. Polar bears are sublime in this sense, which is why they are such appropriate symbols of the icy north, with its crevasse-riddled glaciers, ice bergs calving into ocean, floes, blizzards and northern lights gleaming on frost. Ice gives us snowballs but also frost-bitten fingers; a sundae with a cherry on top or a perfect murder weapon. It's lovely but it's lethal: it's sublime.

As polar bears have struggled in recent summers to find sufficient sea-ice to hunt from, they have come specifically to symbolise the prospect of runaway global warming. Yet the melting ice-cap is only the most recent threat to them. Hunting by people has been the biggest cause of polar bear population decline for decades. In 1973, after polar bears had become endangered, an international treaty was signed by the Arctic polar nations: Russia, Canada, USA, Norway and Denmark (for Greenland). All banned sport hunting. In Canada and Alaska, indigenous people were granted limited

quota rights to hunt polar bears, but in Russia, even indigenous people were banned from hunting them, and this has caused conflict, particularly with the Chukchi people from the Russian Far East.

Traditionally, for a Chukchi boy to be initiated into manhood, he must take part in a polar bear hunt, and the prize from the ceremonial killing of a bear, all parts of which will be eaten or used, is a pair of trousers made from the fur. These will be worn for the rest of his life as not only a hugely practical item of clothing but also an emblem of bravery and a sign of connection with and respect for a fellow dweller in the northern landscape. The Chukchi people continue to fight for the right to wear polar bear pants.

As a result of stories like this, I have come to realise that ice, and how we as a species interact with it, is a human rights issue. All round the Arctic, indigenous people have come together to assert their right to live in an environment that is not trammelled by the activity of people elsewhere. For the past century their land and sea have been intruded upon by nuclear weapons tests, long-distance persistent air and water pollution, drilling for oil and gas, and now the ice-melt caused by global warming. In 2009, indigenous peoples from around the world stated in the Anchorage Declaration: 'We are deeply alarmed by the accelerating climate devastation brought about by unsustainable development. We are experiencing profound and disproportionate adverse impacts on our cultures, human and environmental health, human rights, well-being, traditional livelihoods, food systems and food sovereignty, local infrastructure, economic viability, and our very survival as Indigenous Peoples.' A decade later, things have only become more difficult.

Sea levels

We're all now aware that melting polar ice will cause rising sea levels and it's important to remember this isn't something new and to understand where we are in climate change history. Whatever the story of the Assynt polar bear, we know for sure that when it lived here this land was ice-covered. The ice has left its signature carvings all over what was once a year-round snowscape, scraping out valleys, giving each of the mountains their individual shapes and shifting boulders for miles. We also know that over subsequent millennia there was a huge melt-down, glaciers retreated to a few high corries and by 15,000 years ago Scotland ceased to be a viable home to ice-dependent animals. Some of this melt left dramatic formations in the land: humps like the Stronchrubie drumlins and hollows like the shake holes at Cromalt and Inchnadamph plus many of the lochans.

As far as polar bears were concerned there was a short reprieve, known as the Loch Lomond advance, when ice formed again between about 13,000 and 11,600 years ago. This was caused by a massive lake in North America, which had been trapped behind an ice dam, bursting out and releasing vast quantities of fresh water into the northern ocean. This cold, fresh inundation collided with the warm, salty water that is pushed north from equatorial seas by planetary gyration. This current of warmth, the north Atlantic conveyor, brings temperate conditions to northern Europe. It eventually meets the cold, less salty water of the polar region, causing it to sink down and back south. The sudden influx of fresh water 13,000 years ago caused this to happen much further south than previously, giving polar bears more northern room for manoeuvre.

But not for long, geologically speaking. After a 1400-year cold snap, northern Scotland suddenly shifted from tundra to warmer than now, as part of a global temperature rise of more than 2°C in just 70 years. This opened the period called the Holocene and created

the conditions for woods to grow. For the next 3000 years the climate became more and more benign, trees migrated in and vegetation moved up the glens and hills, growing in soils formed from the rich mineral tills left by the ice. By 8500 years ago it was as warm as it had been for more than a hundred thousand years and, as temperatures reached their maximum, this was a verdant forested world.

Ice movements over millennia have had a huge effect on the level of the sea. During the Ice Age, the weight of ice effectively squashed the entire landmass under it and ever since it melted, the land has been slowly bouncing back in what is called isostatic rebound. This upward movement of the land results locally in falling sea-levels, whereas the ice melt causes an increase in sea volume and thus a sea-level rise.

The different pace of these two factors has caused several metres of variability of sea-level around our coasts over the past twenty millennia.

Storm flooding at Cullipool, October 2020

A single metre of sea level rise can be catastrophic for a coastal community. In India, the Ganges and other rivers torrent down from the Himalayas and debauch out into the Indian Ocean via a huge delta in the Bay of Bengal. A few years ago I was invited to the Kolkata book festival and afterwards stayed on a Bengali island where 1800 people live on a few hundred hectares with a maximum height of 50 centimetres above sea level. Among neighbouring islands, the highest one, with its two-metre summit, has been designated a refuge in case of sea level rise. The daily tidal variation is a massive 10 metres, so at low tide, huge mud banks flank the island, pocked by mangrove roots and populated by egrets, kingfishers, crocodiles and tigers, then at high tide the islands are fringed by floating forests. Brackish water laps at the clay walls mounded up around the villages to protect their fields from flooding. When cyclones blow in from the ocean, the risks are high. Inundation of farmland by the salty water would mean no crops could be grown for at least five years and for the subsistence farmers this would mean the end of their livelihoods, with migration to cities like Kolkata the only way to survive.

Watching a group of men digging clay and carrying it on their heads in scoop-shaped baskets to shore up the village dyke, I knew I was watching desperate people trying to fend off imminent disaster. It is not only Arctic people who will suffer the effects of a large-scale melt of sea-ice.

Freezers

So, globally, ice matters. It's also a handy substance, particularly for preserving food, and its use for this purpose is emblematic of our society's consumption patterns, which underpin the atmospheric emissions worrying climate scientists.

In Scotland, commercial fisheries, in particular, have made great use of ice for keeping fish in edible condition on its way to markets further south. By an old fishing station at Culkein Stoer, in Assynt, there are two intriguing semi-subterranean ice houses. Both have a small outer vestibule leading to a large inner underground room. One is square in section, the other round, no-one seems to know why, nor how old they are. Both have only one small window, up at ceiling level on

the inside, at ground level outside, where ice was loaded into the building during cold weather, to be extracted from below at times of fishing surplus. Both ice houses are now home only to the odd sheltering sheep, their roofs disintegrating after several decades of neglect.

These days, most of the fish caught off the west coast is landed in Lochinver, where the ugliest building in the parish, a tall, rectangular, concrete monstrosity, looms over the harbour. This is the ice plant, and long gone are the days of relying on winter weather to provide the freezing service. Nowadays it's done with fossil fuels and nuclear power.

Such is the madness of our food and fuel economy that almost all the fish brought ashore in Lochinver is taken from the sea by French and Spanish boats, which (until Brexit) are unloaded into huge, refrigerated lorries to drive the catch to markets on the continent.

Despite the second biggest landings in Scotland (after Peterhead), so little fish comes in on Scottish boats that the local fishmonger has been unable to sustain a business. Therefore, most of the fish eaten here results from an 80-mile round trip by road to the nearest supermarket where people buy frozen food products to take home to their domestic freezers.

These freezers are powered by electricity from the grid, which is all, apart from a micro-hydro scheme near Oldany, generated outside of the parish. There are a few of us who have resorted to generating our own small-scale electricity supplies. Our croft is powered by two solar panels and a wind generator and we've survived happily without even a fridge, let alone a freezer, for more than 20 years – it's easy if you eat your leftovers the next day and don't open another jar or packet until you've finished the contents of the open one. A couple of other homes are similarly off grid, but most of the heating and cooling in the area, as in the rest of the country, is achieved with fossil fuels and grid electricity. One local effort to develop more renewable energy supplies included a proposal for three wind turbines, but this caused so much controversy about the visual impact of such installations on the landscape of our National Scenic Area, that the proposal was put on hold. Ironically, the language used to describe the shelving of this project was that it was going 'in the deep freeze'.

All these freezers are important for two reasons: climate change and consumption. First, the burning of fossil fuels to power them releases carbon dioxide (CO_2) into the atmosphere at a level that is unprecedented for hundreds of thousands of years and which is driving global climate change. Second, freezers have a huge environmental footprint. In the UK, we are living lifestyles which, if everyone on earth behaved like us, would require the resources of three planets. It is crazy and unsustainable to consume at these levels. While we focus on carbon emissions we must not forget the urgent threats to communities and habitats from mining, logging and industrial pollution caused by our consumption.

While the climate change movement has made massive strides in raising awareness of the problem and encouraging politicians to set targets towards net-zero carbon emissions, there is still an awkward silence when it comes to policies to use less of pretty much anything, and you can bet that post-pandemic recovery plans will feature plenty of encouragement to get people buying more stuff in order to try to reverse the shrinking economy. But this is also a human rights issue. Rising sea and increases in extreme weather events are the result of the past and present profligacy of our northern lifestyles, but the price will be paid first by blameless,

vulnerable, poor people in the global south and far north. This makes me angry. In fact it generates a slew of uncomfortable emotions. I feel guilty on behalf of my society, my continent, my country and my community, with its street lights on all night, empty buses, shiny new cars, oil-fired central heating, chest freezers, road gritters and refrigerated fish lorries driving cod and monkfish to southern Spain to return with a truck-load of sardines to use as bait. What's worse, I feel completely impotent to change this state of affairs.

The ice cube

My feelings of anger, guilt and powerlessness have gradually led me to a deeply cynical sense of gloom. I have no faith that political policies (even if they could be changed by my emails, which I doubt) would influence the fish lorries and freezers of our society. I have no faith that a political pact between nations will really challenge the petroleum and paper industries or the billions of people who want a car, a bigger TV screen and a tub of ice-cream to eat in front of it. I watch my moral imperative melt into impotence like an ice-cube vanishing into a gin and tonic. Is there any way to keep my moral ice-cube frozen?

One way would be for politicians to refuel my faith in them, not just by responding to emails about targets, but by showing that they are willing, at international level, to strengthen and reform the multi-national governance institutions so they actually can influence global industry, and at national level, to wield full-throated power to put the brakes on runaway consumption.

Politicians need to start taxing and banning things, putting serious obstacles in the way of greed, embracing the idea that less stuff being bought and sold on the high street, even at Christmas, could be a good idea. They need to start implementing real world programmes to reduce our national footprint: not only insulation and energy efficiency schemes. Let's have a minister of thrift heading up a government department of resource efficiency making laws about using less stuff. Let's have a national conversation about the opportunities offered by the lockdown recession, the benefits of reduced consumption and how to manage the downsizing of our material economy.

Globally, each year, people use as much energy as the entire living planetary system can absorb from the sun in four hundred years. If it weren't for the few millions of years when the earth laid down some energy reserves in the form of coal, oil and gas, our species' existence in anything like our current form would be completely untenable.

Resilience

While I wait and hope for change, there is a lot to be done to make my local environment more resilient and an effort I need to make to try to make up for my own life's environmental footprint. There is woodland to regenerate. There are skills to develop to help the community to manage the land in future. There are soils to nurture to allow more food to be grown, fruit trees to plant, knowledge about wild foods to be re-discovered. There are renewable energy resources to develop. There are wind breaks to build and storm defences to construct so we can withstand the extreme weather events predicted for the future. Perhaps we should also be making plans to accommodate climate refugees from places like West Bengal and the Arctic.

We can also listen to peoples whose cultures have been around longer than ours. Back in 2006, I fulfilled a long-standing urge to go to Russia in winter, to experience the biggest country in its full snowy majesty. My nostrils froze when the temperature dropped below minus thirty. Walking out onto Lake Baikal in Siberia, the biggest body of freshwater on the planet, the half-metre of ice creaked

beneath my feet. Snow blew and drifted as the wind sang across its ridged and pitted surface. I'll always carry the wonder of those moments with me: ice at its most sublime. But most of all I will carry the memory of Fayina, the Buryat woman who chortled at my delight at bubbles in the lake's frozen crust, which proved to her that Baikal was a breathing organism, a living being. What else can we learn from the wisdom of indigenous peoples who are still connected closely to nature, even where it seems most inhospitable? How to survive with fewer consumer goods? How to adapt to Earth's rhythmic changes?

A frozen future?

There is evidence laid out in the land, the ice-caps and the sea, revealed by clever scientists, showing the history of the changing climate over past millennia. The saw-tooth temperature graph indicates we are in a warm phase, following the most recent Ice-Age, and although the mercury is still on the rise, if past patterns continue this place is due to freeze again sometime. If things go as they have in the past, at some stage the North Atlantic conveyor will stop drawing warm water northwards and an Arctic cold will penetrate south to Scotland, restoring conditions conducive to polar bears again. I find that scenario somehow comforting.

So, meanwhile, perhaps it is enough to plant trees on good days and enjoy the delights of winter, seeking out the beauty of frozen H_2O: icicle-hung grottos formed under overhangs on crags; goose-wing feather patterns on frozen lochans; the lacework of frost. I shall imagine the paw-prints of polar bears in some future century and hope, in my untrusting way, that we don't drive them to extinction before the next Ice-Age comes.

Andrew Phillips, *Nothing Is Ever Taken. Nothing Is Ever Undone*

Andrew Phillips, *I am the Shape Lifting From the Earth*

Mountain Ice: Snow Pack

Lynne Goldsmith

Freeze-thaw bursts the rocks.
Rotational shift occurs.

Above the glacier, scree falls
to debris below on valley floor.

Rocks scrape and scour.
Plucking occurs (rocks breaking off)

creating steep back walls (mountainside)
with armchair-shaped hollow.

Glacier moves through corrie
down into U-shaped valley.

Interlocking spurs crashed through,
moraine working. Tarns formed above
in corrie

with erratic stones settling below
in glacial trough.

Ice melted
thousands of years ago—
Last Age of Ice.

Tweeddale Life Cycle 1
Meltwater

Patrick Corbett

meltwater covered the area between the palaeozoic hills
scree and bare rock were all that was left to be seen
by the incoming grass, shrubs, trees and corvids
change happened one starless night
as the moraine dam burst
outflew the lake in one
leaving just a stream
as a trickle

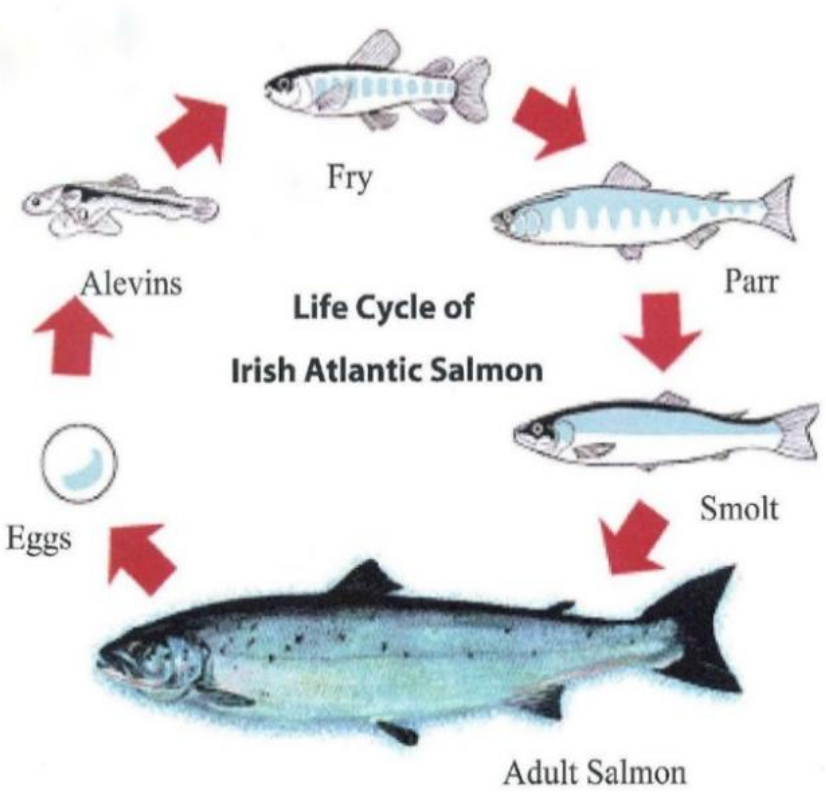
grass
moved in
sheep and shepherds
followed by the moor miners
until the day commuters took over
and watered their own verdant swathes
before long humankind forgot the lake once there
and trusts the nonsense that the meltwater cannot return

Tweeddale Life Cycle 2
Salmon Circular

Patrick Corbett

Does all the hard work
Fighting gravity with muscle
Flying up over falls
Powering into the shallows
To spawn their eggs
In a carefully selected nest

Alevins and fry have it easy
It is downhill all the way
Gilded braided path to the sea
Fleeting parr at every turn
Until that day of smolt for their
Shout at all the hard work



https://www.marine.ie/Home/site-area/areas-activity/fisheries-ecosystems/salmon-life-cycle

Follow the Root

Gail Folkins

I became a forest steward less than a week after my Dad died in his mountain home. Still in shock over his passing – though in his early 90s, he was so robust in mind and spirit it seemed he'd live forever – it would've been easy to skip the land conservancy orientation I'd signed up for. I'll show up for the first part, I promised myself, welcoming the distraction of PowerPoint slides followed by a walk to a nearby bog where half a dozen of us studied plants and picked chokecherries, just budding for spring.

"You can eat these," the arborist leader said, popping them into our hands, enticing us to stay.

Weeks later, at my first restoration event, I snap a Himalayan blackberry vine thick as my thumb. Coaxed with a shovel, its root ball breaks free in a shower of dirt. I toss the vine on a bed of branches and broken tree limbs raised a few feet above the ground to prevent this vine from taking over. Our small group includes a plant expert who works for the city, a teen running for student government, and a professional in his thirties who loves this valley tucked between the mountains and Seattle, a buffer zone of farms, forest, and high-density neighborhoods.

Our job for the next two hours is pulling and piling invasive blackberry. The Himalayan, an invasive plant reaching the Pacific Northwest in 1945 and now barely held at bay, can grow 20-40 feet long and up to 15 feet high, forming thickets that overrun wildlife habitat and impede hiking. Culling it is a first step before planting species like snowberry and shore pine – drought-hardy natives better suited to a forest bordering a grassy park and neighboring houses.

On the acreage where I grew up, our driveway stretched into the forest and owls called to each other each fall. My brother and I explored trails shaped by deer, loggers, and miners, by the time we were in college preserved by county and state agencies. Mostly, my Dad navigated the woods by leaving it alone, pitching in to help other times, like his annual ritual culling a pretty, non-native plant nicknamed stinky Bob. Along a steep-sided ravine, my husband, John, helped Dad perform this chore several years ago.

"Is this the right plant?" John asked, holding a pink flowered-stem in one hand, a purple flower – maybe a bleeding heart – in the other.

"The pink one," Dad told him, and turned back to his own section of the riverbank.

Halfway through my own work party I reach for a strand of a trailing blackberry, a native plant, by mistake, its stem frosted purple and thorns less sharp, its berries smaller. I poke it back into the soil, reminded of the tart berries I picked with my brother, mom, and grandma in southwestern Washington on lands disturbed from logging; an area, like so many others, now in recovery after years of misuse.

From a patchwork approach to saving open lands, a new vision of linked landscapes is taking shape across the Pacific Northwest, where smaller, forested edges join larger swathes of protected areas. The nonprofit we volunteer for, a collaboration of local government, the Snoqualmie Tribe, businesses, and a neighborhood association, gives a thousand acres of forest and park lands a chance to rejuvenate following disturbance through housing or other

development. Being part of this group gave me a chance to give back after years of hiking and horseback riding in these foothills.

Dad, on his own, had been caring for the mountain all along, what amounted to more than 50 years. After every windstorm, he'd clear the steep ditch on either side of his driveway, ensuring water flowed unimpeded. This not only kept his gravel driveway from washing out, but also benefitted stormwater easing down the mountainside.

One afternoon, a county worker stopped her truck when she saw my Dad, who was already tall, half hidden in the ditch. "What'd she say?" I asked Dad when he told me this story, uncertain how receptive he might've been to a stranger's advice, just as doubtful a county worker would consider a 90-year-old working in a culvert a great idea.

"She started helping," Dad smiled. It was a good outcome for all, including the water source. Caring for this section of forest helped water percolate down the mountain to area rivers, lakes, and Puget Sound, its integrity impacting salmon, orcas, and numerous species in between.

I listen for animals at the trailhead – bear and deer are common here – but the only wildlife we hear are squirrels, the occasional chickadee. With every glimpse of sun breaking through the clouds, the park grows busier with people taking kids to the playground or walking their dogs on the trail. Several residents smile or chat with us along the way. "Thank you," they say of our restoration event's goal to temper the reach of the blackberry, of ourselves. I think of Dad's mountain, out of sight but no less connected.

By the end of two hours we wear scratches on our arms from the thorns biting through our long sleeves and pants. We share our two cents on the dark-haired teen's campaign slogans, chat with the professional about his work, tell the bearded horticulturist the native varieties we'd like to see planted here after the invasive blackberry is abated. Piles of Himalayan vine rest on two platforms like burial mounds, left to return to the soil through weather and time.

(Map: North West USA. https://en.m.wikipedia.org/ wiki/File:PacNW_satellite.jpg)

from: *Atlas*

Glenn Bach

There are changes,
and then there are *changes,*
this New York City
of record-breaking height,
beneath us the vital kind of life
we believe in living.

You are part of this, too,
stuck with the city we have.

The sun low through the clouds
alight on the water, three thousand
shades of blue that morning.

How many times
this ground broken into
to lay bare the pipes and cables
below, tools fit to fixtures,
a queue of planes on runways,
a shallow line of brown rooftops
on the far shore, slivers of west
facing walls cast with fading light.

Shorelines on their last few years
as the ocean continues its slow advance,
tankers and tugs far from the shoals,
sand spits and wetlands.

What settles on the dredged floor,
salt mixed with fresh, pilings withered
under the tide, oysters drinking
in the simmering debris.

How many evergreens among
the stark, brown skeletons,
buildings abutting
into their invisible seams,
stoneworkers and bricklayers
unfurling their hammers
upon the city.

Light Of The Shore

Patricia McCaw

A term in the Celtic calendar for the longest day of the year

Bone white sand, graveyard of shells.

Lagoon beach
diamonds on the sea.

Red dulse, leather slaps,
when dried a popcorn feast.

Candy-headed pinks soften
harsh marram grass, green anchors underground.

My mother's wheelchair churns ancient pram-tracks,
covered-over castles of falling-down sands that she
would build with water until they stood, and my tears dried.

Her fingers lift, reed-thin, and wave towards mine.

This longest day is too short.

Message From The Margins

Patricia McCaw

I was looking for some thing
some sign from my mother
some signal from Charon's boat
on which she'd left
without bags or warning.

Hard to forgive her.

I searched the beach where she'd brought me
from the birth-house, it was
still the same sea, its sands oyster-grey.
There were no shells to be found
or bottles from far shores.

I left the sea behind and walked
towards the woods of deep country
where I'd lived as a child.
The roads were bare, no traffic,
the old home swallowed by furze.

I turned back on to the blank road, and a shell
lay on the tarmac, before my feet, miles
from its source-- a huge whelk spilt over my palm.
Dark pigments showed great age, dirt showing
travel over oceans, time. It was whole, pink.

I held it to my ear.

Story Land

Adrienne Hollifield

The moon shone brightly on the arroyo, lending magic to the Santa Fe desert, and allowing us to pick our way to the campsite without a flashlight. Grandmother Moon would watch over this storytelling session, punctuated by distant cries from coyotes in the hills around us. The odor of sage, juniper, and pinyon, unfamiliar to people who inhabit the deeply forested mountains of the East, drift off the desert floor. Sage burning in the small campfire purifies and sanctifies the communion we were about to share.

The enchantment of the desert lies in the structure of the land itself. Every formation simultaneously tells of what is, what was, and what will be. The arroyo, a dry riverbed, forms where water was and will be again when it rains. It holds mystery and history and story in its very being. The aridity of the land holds stories, as well, because nothing decays. To climb out of the arroyo onto the cliff of sand that forms it and see the desert beyond, is to see the story of the fins and spires of sand pushed up 65 million years ago, at the formation of the Ancestral Rocky Mountains and then again 30 million years ago, forming the Sangre de Cristo Mountains, part of the modern Rockies. This is what remains of the Dakota Wall, sandstone outcroppings containing millions of years of stories and history, remnants of earlier cultures. The desert also contains traces of more recent humans, like a bar built for a wedding years ago that continues to mystify hikers who come upon it in the desert. In one surreal moment, the bar spawns many tales to come. The high desert tells the story of geologic time, the pueblo native ancestors, and the colonizers, first Spanish and then Anglo.

About 65-million years ago, in the late Cretaceous period, near the place that is now known as Santa Fe, a sensate being, maybe a dinosaur, feels churning under her feet, followed by a low rumbling and growling. The beast pays it no mind until the sound grows louder and the movement cannot be ignored. Her body, usually so staid and solid on the ground, moves involuntarily as the upheaval knocks her down. The rumble becomes a roar and then a shriek as Mother Earth thrusts her innards upwards, higher and higher, great sheets of sandstone and rock, forming the Ancestral Rocky Mountains and the Dakota Wall.

Doug and Jack Wallin with Adrienne and Janey Taney

Joe and Debra Roberts, our hosts, held frequent community events with friends and their families, gathering in the desert, usually for a dance, a drum circle, or a sweat. Today's event was storytelling, in honor of my husband Clyde, an Appalachian storyteller. The admission was a story, any kind of story: a personal story, a fairytale, a story read in a book, a piece of history, a

myth, a legend, what happened to you at the checkout counter that day. They could be told by anyone who was able and willing to speak, from a child to the elderly. I was excited to participate in this tradition, as old as humans themselves.

Oral storytelling is very different from reading a story, even if the story being told was read in a book. First, in oral culture, anyone can tell a story, with or without expertise. If the story rambles on, so what? If it has big gaps in time and sense, so what? If it never comes to a point, so what? It might not have the beautiful wording of a professional teller, but it means something to the person telling it, and that meaning comes through to the audience. The audience is charged with figuring out what it is. The value system of the of teller comes out in the telling. For instance, if the teller is recounting the well-known story "Beauty and the Beast," one teller might have more sympathy for Beauty and another for the Beast. Those feelings will affect the audience, and the audience's reaction affects how the teller tells the story. The partnership between the storyteller and the audience in the telling of that story is what makes oral storytelling such an exciting and living event. I was anxious to see what would happen here in the arroyo.

The session was already in progress when we got to the small fire. A 7-year-old was telling a tale about a mouse, with a rambling plot, which got her much applause. With no amplification of the voice and an open-air setting, the group had to listen in complete silence to hear that small voice. Their attention, their smiles, and their clapping validated this child's ability to make her voice heard.

Next, an older man sitting next to her, maybe her grandfather, told a story of something that happened to him at the corner store. It sounded real, like the everyday happenings that are frustrating at the moment but when looked back upon, take a humorous turn. The audience laughed, confirming the truth of the experience that held even if the story was a fiction.

My husband, in keeping with the Appalachian Mountain tradition, told a tall tale he learned from his grandfather when he was young. A tall-tale is an exaggerated story that has enough plausible details to make it seem real, until the fantasy comes into play. Adults who are part of the culture know this, and they appreciate the skill with which the storyteller mixes the fact and fiction. Children, however, think it's all real, which is what Clyde thought when his grandfather told him this story. Some parts of the story are keyed to getting the audience to respond, like questions and the repetition of the phrase, "But don't you know!" He started with a question and a definition that lets the adults know it's exaggerated while the children listen wide-eyed:

How many of you know what a hoopsnake is? Yeah, a hoopsnake. One of them great long copper-headed, rattle-moccasins of a snake that can coil itself up into a hoop by forming a circle on the ground and sticking its tail into its mouth. He forms a hoop, and then he rolls down a hill, chasing you like a wagon wheel. Everyone knows that a hoopsnake has a long stinger on the end of his tail. If he catches you, why he'll sting you with that stinger, and you're just done for.

At this point, Clyde had the group hooked. Adults were laughing at the obviously made-up copper-headed, rattle-moccasin, while children were listening intently. He went on.

Well, one day, I was out hoeing corn, when I heard a little noise behind me, and I looked over my shoulder, and don't you know, there, in the woods, was a hoopsnake, a-coiling up,

getting ready to come sting me. Well, I just held my ground, and when he got next to me, I stepped to the side and I jumped through the hoop. It made that snake so mad that he stung that hoe handle with his stinger.

I didn't think much of it, and I just went back to hoeing corn, but after a row or so, I noticed that hoe handle felt unusually large. And I looked down at it, and don't you know, where the snake had stung the wood, it was a-swellin' up. It was getting bigger all the time. Finally, it got so big, I had to throw it down on the side of the garden. It was so big, it was the size of a tree trunk.
Well, I knew there was a lot of good wood in something that large, and I went to the barn and got my old mules, Bert and Ert, and hooked them to that old log of a hoe handle and drug it down to the saw mill. And don't you know, that wood had swelled up so much, we got enough wood to build two log cabins and a chicken house! And that wasn't the end of it. In a couple of days, when the swelling went down out of that wood, them log cabins commenced to shrink, and when they shrunk all the way down, I had to sell both of them for bird houses. And it's only a good thing, I hadn't a put my chickens in that chicken coop, ain't it?[1]

By the end of his story, the magic of the desert was working. The crowd, a disparate group to begin with, were a cohesive whole in story. They had eaten a potluck dinner before the session started, another traditional part of storytelling culture. Food and drink are common precursors to a session, bellies full and mouths loosened. Add to that the darkness emboldening tellers under its cover, and the moonlight to spotlight the teller, and the session was ripe for more tales.

The biggest surprise of the evening came a few stories later, when a young woman stood and said this:

A friend of mine told me a story that takes place in the time of King Arthur. A young knight was riding in the forest and came upon a fair maiden who walked alone in the woods. She was beautiful, and the knight wanted her, so against her will, he ravished here there in the woods. The people were outraged, and when the knight was brought before King Arthur, he quickly pronounced a sentence of death by beheading; however, Queen Guinevere asked that she and her ladies be allowed to pass judgment on this man. Arthur agreed, and with the knight before her the queen said:

"Your neck is not yet saved. I will grant you your life if you can tell me what women most desire. You have one year and a day to find the answer and come back here."

The knight gave his word and searched the land over, questioning every woman he met, but none of their answers was the one he sought. The year drew nigh, and the knight was getting desperate. One day, in a clearing in the wood, the knight spied lovely women dancing, but when he went towards them, all he found was an ugly, old woman, a hag.

"You are off the road, sire," she said. "Tell me what you seek. Sometimes the old ones know things others do not."

The knight told her of his search, and she said, "Worry no more. I know the answer to your question. I will tell it to you if you must promise to grant me my very next request."

Knowing he had no choice, the young man agreed. The hag told him the answer, and he went on to court. When Guinivere asked what women want the most, the knight said, "My lady, what women desire is dominion, mastery over their husbands. Now do with me what you will."

That was the answer and the queen said his life should be spared. All at once, the old hag jumped up to ask for her request. To the knight, she said, "In return for giving you the answer, I ask you to take me for your wife." The knight was horrified and tried to get out of the marriage but to no avail. The couple were wed, and when bedtime came, the knight avoided the bed, causing the hag to ask what made him so unhappy with her. He said, "You are old and ugly and of low birth." In her defence she said that age came with wisdom, and her lack of beauty meant that she would always be faithful to him. She could hardly control to whom she was born, but honor didn't come with birth, and he had already seen her to be an honorable and loyal soul. She then gave him a choice: "Husband, you may either have me young and beautiful but unfaithful, or old, ugly, and loyal. Make your choice now." With barely a thought, the knight said, "I leave that choice to you, my wife." She answered, "Because you gave me the choice, you shall have both. I will be young, beautiful, and faithful all of my life with you."

The audience in Santa Fe laughed and clapped. The young woman who told the story laughed as well. I sat on the sand astounded. Apparently no one knew that she had just told one of Geoffrey Chaucer's *The Canterbury Tales*, "The Wife of Bath's Tale." It was one of a series of "loathly lady' tales told during that time period. Chaucer used orally generated tales as sources for this work, and I always thought this feminist tale, saying that what women wanted most in that culture was power, was unusual coming from a man in the fourteenth century. What was even more odd was that here, in this desert, at the end of the twentieth century, a young woman felt it was equally applicable, and the audience's enthusiasm showed they agreed. Where in modern times do we, as adults, have opportunities to tell each other stories like this and get confirmation from our peers? Had we not had this session, so common to earlier cultures, the sharing of stories, songs, and poems giving voice to truths in our lives, these sentiments would never be spoken. The desert held more stories now.

At another mountain range, the Southern Appalachian Mountains of Western North Carolina, a different people used story as an integral part of their culture. The Appalachian mountain chain is the oldest range in the world, but unlike the land in the west, the moisture and humidity erase all but the most hardy cultural remnants quickly. The Cherokees inhabited these mountains. Their artifacts surface in newly ploughed fields, and remains from villages have been unearthed along the Swannanoa River on what is now Warren Wilson College land. These relics from the past hold stories of a village in the Pisgah phase (1000-1400 AD) of the Mississippian period. Remnants of homes, large roasting pits, and smaller pit hearths tell stories of the people who ate, drank, hunted, fished, gathered in communal groups, and most certainly told their own tales. Deeper in the ground, traces of a native culture from the Archaic period (8000-1000 BC) have been unearthed.[2] Mounds, sacred places for the Cherokee, are dotted through the mountains. Townhouses built on top of the mounds would hold people in the community for a yearly ceremonial ritual of dousing and relighting the household fires from the sacred fire kept burning in the townhouse. The people believed the fire came from the mound itself. This connection between the fire, the mound, and the people

Paint Rock

kept the community together.[3]Paint Rock, in Madison County, NC, is another storyholder of ancient peoples.

Five thousand years ago, when the woods were lush and deep, four young Cherokee men and women followed their elder, an old woman, wise in the lore of her people, to the waters we now call Paint Creek. There she called out: "Ama Wodi, who provides the water of life for feeding, for healing, and clay for paint, we come to you once again. We thank you for the paint clay we take today. Sgi." The four repeated "Sgi," and they dug the clay and mixed it with bear grease and water to make red and yellow paints. When the old woman was satisfied the paint was the proper color and consistency, the group started painting the rock.

Paint Rock is positioned at the crossroads of ancient trails between Tennessee and North Carolina, and near the sacred healing springs of Hot Springs, NC. Surveyor John Strother, in his 1799 diary entry, described the pictographs painted there as including humans, wild animals, fish, and birds. He also determined the rock was a little over 107 feet tall, and said much of the paint was obscured by the smoke of campfires. Today, very few pictographs remain, only enough to give those people a place in our consciousness.

Because of difficulties accessing the close gaps and high peaks of the Western North Carolina mountains, settlers of European descent did not arrive in a land grab from the Cherokee until they managed to find gaps in the mountains, allowing them to pass. Then just the hardiest of people moved in. They were mainly of English, Scottish, Scots-Irish[4], and German descent, the first of them settling on land grants in Buncombe County in 1784. These people quickly moved further

into the hills and coves, first warring with, then living among, and finally driving out the native dwellers. With them came their culture—stories, songs, music, dance, religion, games, and ways—which when intermingled with contributions from the native and black cultures, developed a new lore. The device through which the change occurred was oral tradition, transmission by word of mouth, which changes with each teller or singer and molds to fit an ever-changing culture.

From 1916 through 1918, English folklorist Cecil Sharp travelled through the more isolated mountain areas, including Madison County, NC, where he found the British ballad culture very much alive. From his visits, he created his contribution to American folklore, a collection called *English Folksongs from the Southern Appalachians,* published in 1917. In 1993, I received an undergraduate research grant from UNC-Asheville, to investigate how the oral culture of yore was faring in a community called Sodom Laurel.

My husband and I follow our friend, musician David Holt, deep into the hills, to meet 94-year-old Dellie Norton, who was 17-year-old Dellie Chandler when her relatives sang for Sharp. We turn from larger roads with names and numbers, to smaller, more twisty roads, whose names were known by locals who had no need for road signs to tell them where they were. Directions were given with markers—a fence post, a barn, the site where a chimney once stood, a country store—as we make our way deeper into the coves, the hills closing in, womb-like. David stops at an inconspicuous white, frame house. Inside, sitting next to the stove is Dellie, a wrinkled, old woman with monkey eyes, neatly tucked-in hair, and strawberries on the apron she wears. An oxygen tank is nearby, but she is not using oxygen now.

Dellie Norton and Deleen Norton, July 1993

Dellie was the oldest of the living Sodom Laurel singers, but she no longer had the breath to sing. I spent that summer mostly with her relatives, in a variety of venues, learning that oral communities exhibit a close relationship between the land and its people. The people I met either lived in or had lived in houses without modern accommodations such as inside toilets and air conditioning. Even screen doors were rare, so creatures abounded both inside and outside the house. The venues in which I heard songs were all outdoor community gatherings: a Fourth of July pig-picking celebration, with homemade moonshine distributed freely; the front porch of Doug and Jack Wallin's log cabin, where Doug played the tune on his violin before singing it acapella in his high, sweet voice; a church singing where the back wall of the tiny church had been removed, the inside of the building being transformed into a stage, while the pews on the grass held the audience; and at a grave decoration at a

family graveyard, only accessed by walking or riding uphill on a tractor. In each of these places, music, dance, ballads, stories, family stories, and history were shared. A sense of community is key to connection to the land and place, and storytelling, in whatever form it takes, builds a sense of community.

The Sodom Laurel community was not a purely oral culture when I arrived there. However, they had kept the aesthetic and traditions of orality. In literate cultures, texts are written down, frozen, unchanging. In oral cultures they are fluid; they change from telling to telling, from teller to teller, from one time period to another. Having no fixed text means there is no correct text. I collected the "same" song from several of Dellie's family members. They all appeared to be different to me, and each teller said they had learned the song from Dellie. Also, the singer or teller does not have to be professional, polished, or an expert in oral cultures. Everyone's contribution is recognized and desired. Craft is appreciated but not a prerequisite. Stories or songs are shared in communal settings, where everyone participates as singer/teller or audience. Being an audience member in this community is an active role. The listeners know the stories being told and their reactions are key. Often the ballads have many verses, sometimes forty or more. The singers don't sing all the verses each time. The audience fills in the gaps with the information they already know. In contrast, the modern storyteller, singer, or actor, gets up on stage alone, presenting a more fixed text to an audience in a polished and beautiful manner. No one in the audience is expected to sing that song or tell that tale to their friends and relatives. This is the difference between individuals and the community.

The ballads I heard and collected were not sung with the aesthetic I had come to know from folksingers like Jean Ritchie and Joan Baez. Some voices sounded like screeching to me, and Dellie's singing was distinguished by a special musical ornamentation, a slide in pitch called feathering. It sounded like a short yodel and made sense in these pitch called feathering. It sounded like a short yodel and made sense in these mountains because it could be heard at a distance outside. The ballads had many references to the land of their origin. "Young Emily," Dellie's signature song, is about a girl whose love has come to show her the gold he's made by working, "Down in the lowlands, low." She suggests Edmund get a room at her father's "public house," but that he keep silent about his holdings. He doesn't, and after spending a night drinking, he is murdered. Emily goes to search for her love and discovers that her greedy father murdered Edmund for the gold and threw his body in the ocean. Emily reports her father, testifies against him, and he is hanged. Three references tag this song as not being a North Carolina locale: first, we don't refer to flatlands as lowlands or mountains as highlands; then, a public house is our hotel; last, and most notably, the North Carolina mountains are 400 miles from the ocean. The people who sang these songs here had never seen the sea. It's obvious, if you look closely, that the songs describe land in Great Britain, probably Scotland, but with the few exceptions mentioned, the land in North Carolina's mountains is quite similar to the land from which the ballads came. The agony of Emily's loss of both lover and father is the same on both sides of the Atlantic.

Before our current isolation due to Covid-19, storytelling as a form of communal sharing was coming back in vogue. Ted Talks and The Moth Radio Hour are two US national forums for individuals telling their stories, while more local venues keep popping up. Communication and community are basic to being human. With a sense of community, we come to care more for each other, ourselves, and the place we call home.

References

[1]Transcribed from a taped version of my husband telling the story from *Appalachian Patchwork*, a tape of stories and songs from our puppet show. We were professional puppeteers for 22 years, using this heritage as our subject matter. The tape is no longer in circulation.

[2]"Warren Wilson College (Mississippian)." *Ancient North Carolinians*. UNC-Chapel Hill, Research Laboratories of Archaeology. Ancientnc.web.unc.edu/Indian-heritage/by-time/mississippian/warren-wilson-mississippian/

[3]Stone, Jesse. "Protecting the past: Mounds hold key to understanding Cherokee history." *Smoky Mountain News*. 3 August.. 2016.

[4]This term, used primarily in the United States, refers to the Ulster Protestants who immigrated to America from Northern Ireland in the 18th and 19th centuries. They originally migrated from the border lands of Scotland and northern England, along with a few Highlanders. The term used in Great Britain and Ireland is Ulster Scots.

At The Margin

Don Taylor

The day he passes, I go towards the sea.

Down past the ruined keep
a clatter of jackdaws,
blue-eyed amongst the ivy,
accuses me.

I stray an hour or more
into the dark
until a shy moon slides up the sky
to silver-lip the cresting waves.

Each wearied wave slumps upon the sand,
a pause —another takes its place.
In each hiatus hangs
the glance unmet,
the word unsaid,
the hand unclasped.

A cloud masks the moon,
and still, the beat goes on,
surge upon surge declines unseen
along the endless shore.

The Northmost Moon

Michael Jarvis

One night when I was younger I stood here on the heather at the centre of the ring of stones, and I watched as the full moon grazed down the slope of the island, down into the sea. The island is so distant that I have only seen it in the clearest of North-wind daylight, a tiny pale triangle that quivers a little in the ocean air.

I shall not see the moonset tonight, nineteen years on: the moon is still uncovered but there are lines of cloud piled under it along the horizon. In the intervening years, the place where the moon sets has swung back and forth in its complex way, but it has never been as far North as it was then and would have been tonight. The moon will not stroke the island again for another nineteen years, and it will not be me who sees it. I should be disappointed at tonight's weather, perhaps, but I am old enough to be merely glad that I have seen the Northmost moon once in my life.

They call me a mystic. Not with ill will, mostly. Nevertheless, I don't agree. I know others who watch the moon with respect and a hunger for understanding. Like me they are also humbled at how much there is that we do not understand, so many things in land and sea and weather and the turning sky that we can see to be connected but we do not know what connects them, as the moon's direction is connected inexplicably with the different times of high tide up and down the coast. We do not invent connections, nor try to extract them from myths, as those who call us mystics seem to think. We just watch, wonder and try hard to understand.

I'm happy to be asked for predictions that I am competent to make, like whether there will be a full moon for the dancing on New Year's Eve. I get annoyed when people ask me to predict things that are obviously unknowable, like whether the harvest will be good three summers from now or when the herring will return. Maybe that's why I don't really like being called a mystic.

The ring of stones was built twenty-three generations ago, by people whose names have been passed down. But I know very little about what sort of people they were, nor what motivated them. The stories don't say. Perhaps they too were called mystics. Certainly, they wished to understand, as we do. It seems to me that they wanted their understanding to survive and were prepared to let it grow gradually as generation after generation stood here and watched and thought. Why else would they have set out these stones, unless they distrusted their descendants to pass down knowledge accurately by word of mouth through the mischances of history, and thought it better to leave immovable reminders of where to stand at moonset, trusting that people like myself would rediscover any understanding that had been lost and add new insights when they could?

Perhaps those who call us mystics might say that there is something mystical about being informed by our ancestors in that way. I don't think so, any more than I can find mysticism in the intentions of these people long ago when they left us the legacy of the ring of stones. I'm not even sure that I know what mysticism is, nor if it exists. But I hope that twenty-three Northmost moons from now, someone will stand here watching and thinking.

Alastair R Noble, *Lithogenesis#3*

Alastair R Noble, *Lithogenesis#2*

Flesh and Stone

Graham Fulton

to the sparkling water

patient changeling slurps at the loch edge,
gulls that sound like mating wildcats

orange blister buoys,
rigging whistling,
tapping against a mast,
one that sounds like a dinner gong,
a man in a rowing boat
rowing away
Gordon pulled out the oar too fast
and the rollock flew out of its hole and plopped
into the water and Gordon stood up and tried
to haul it back in with the oar but the boat
rocked wildly back and forth and I couldn't swim
and I pulled at him to sit down as we watched
the rollock sink into endless black,
an endless black
I don't suppose… *George Orwell*
Wendy Hiller
another man in a rowing boat
rowing out to a bigger boat

boats within boats within boats
within
archipelagos of char-black seaweed,
flaps of seaweed
– black rock – grey freckled
with white yellow green,
fish smell,
shells,
a picturesque wreck rearing out
of the shallows like
a Spielberg shark,
rotting, rust-coloured wood
reflected in the stillness,
tethered by a slimy rope

a body losing its sense
but, somehow, becoming more
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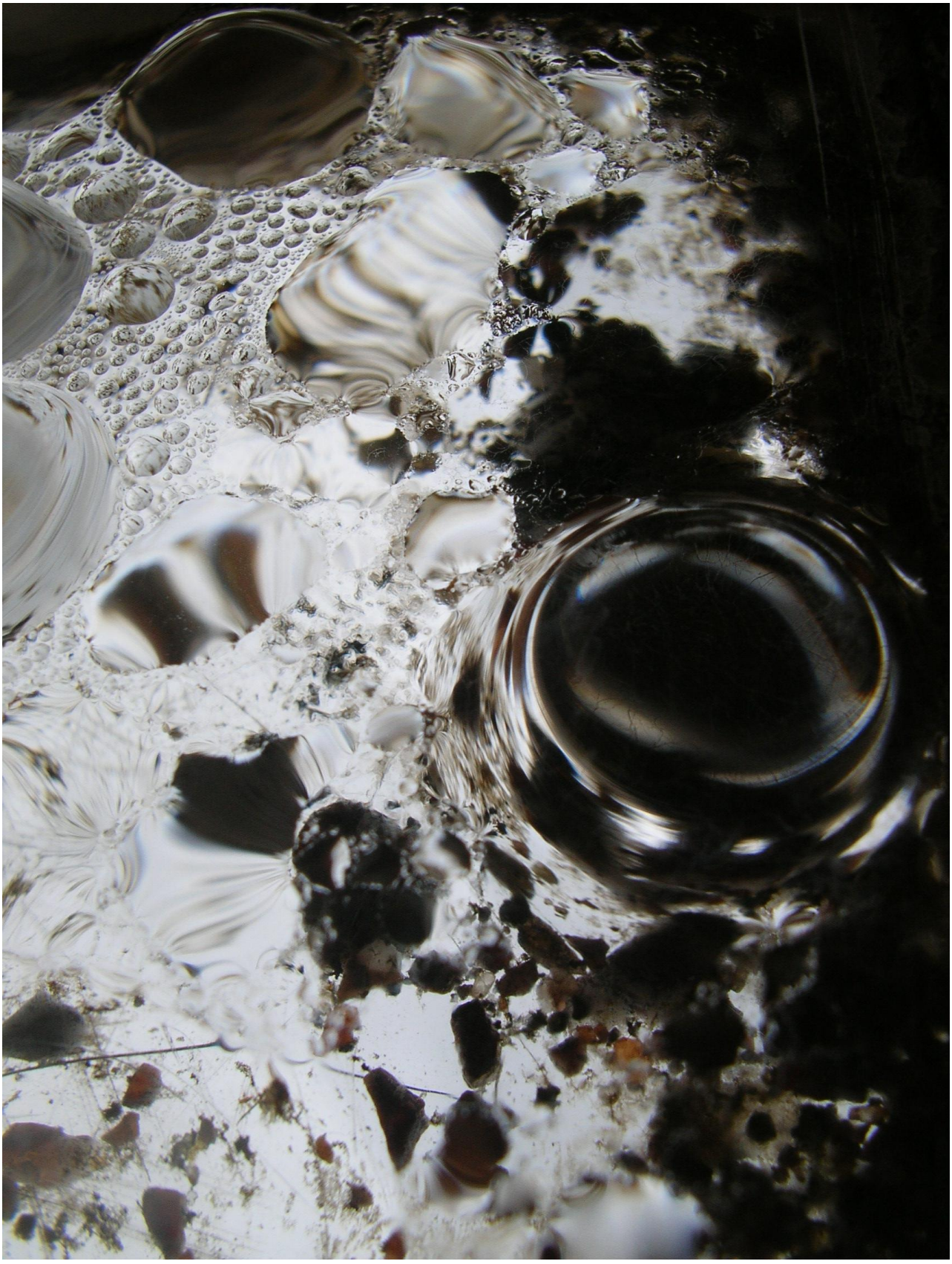
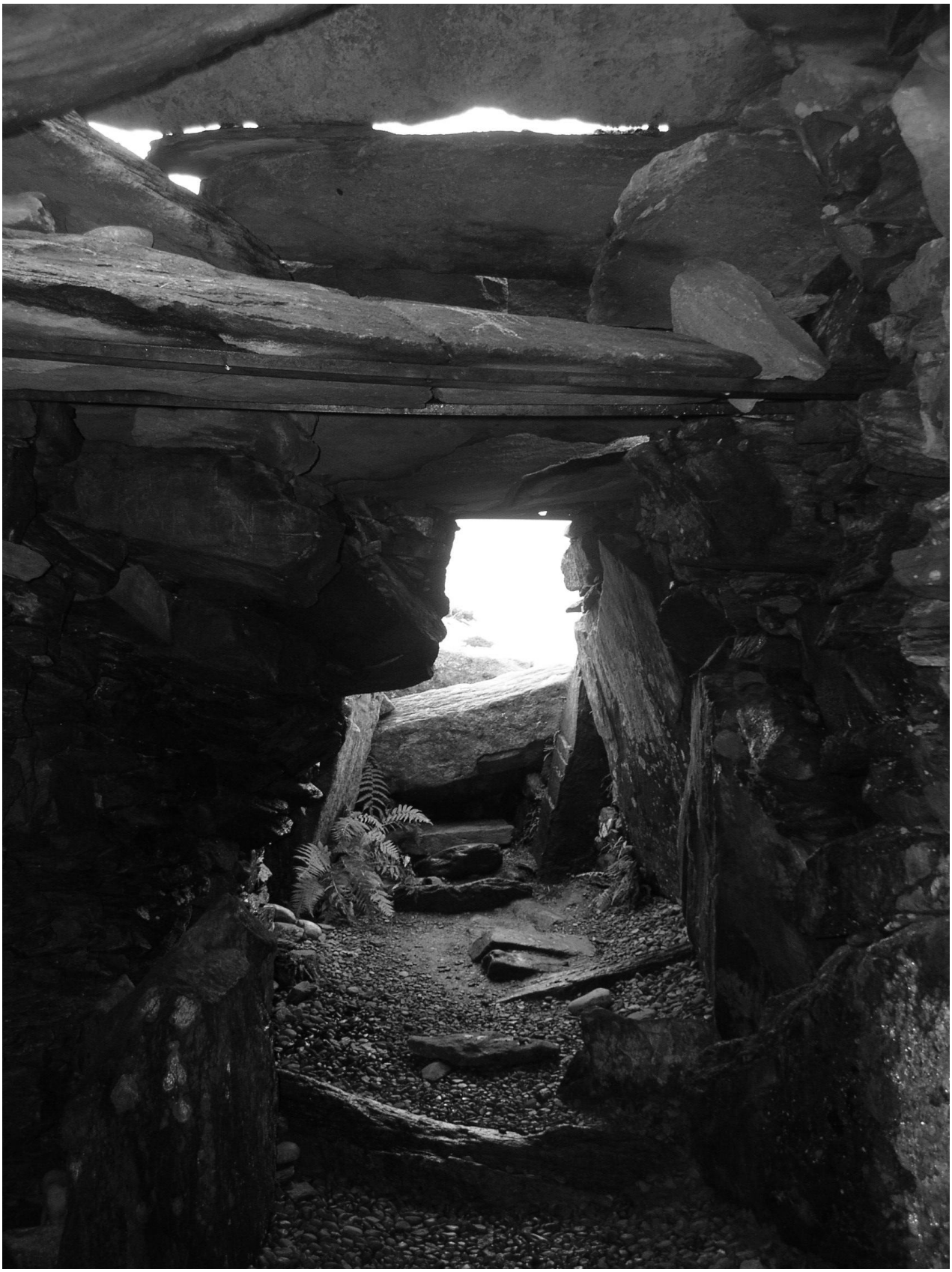
more dignified
in its disintegration



Graham Fulton, Flesh and Stone 2



Graham Fulton, *Flesh and Stone 1*

Kilmartin Glen Reunion

Gerry Stewart

Three points on the compass return,
Danmark, Suomi, Ísland,
our voices folding back to Scotland,
our umbilical centre,
far from the solid university spires
that anchored us twenty-five years ago.

The slanting light traces
cairn and cist, cup and ring,
menhir and henge.
We walk the gloaming,
secrets locked in stone.

I skirt my own truth,
struggling back.
My separation, a thorny mess,
fades to an ignored ghost here.

Straddling the Great Moss,
one foot on Crinan Ferry's sunset beach,
the other on Dunadd,
king for the moment,
the fourth compass point
offers a taste of freedom,
destination unknown.

Alert

Don Taylor

Between motorway, rail and river
lie the disputed lands:
scratchy winter stubble,
or new-furrowed fields
unsealed against a coming spring.

Heads down, unaware
the wild geese graze.
One outlier, only, stands elected sentinel,
neck erect, eyes a-swivel:
the skein, tight-knit in trust.

The derrick looms above
thicket, ditch, and drain;
to probe the porous earth
and frack the last crack and cranny
for what shall profit man.

As night advances darkly west,
foxes nose the frozen air;
the flock takes flight
to roost by pearly creeks
that shimmer-sheen
in the oil-plant's ghastly flare.

Elaine Campbell, *Greylag Geese*

Geese-fall

Anne Shivas

Autumn flared orange, the bitter orange
tang of sea buckthorn berries on our tongues

and we lingered until dusk on the dunes,
geese gathering in their thousands

of small ‘V’s, ribbons, dark skeins, honking
their way home against the mandarin-to-

turquoise sky towards the night’s roost and turning
to drop singly to land. In near night we followed

the path beneath short hawthorn, across the bridge,
the geese still coming from north and south and east,

great waves of winter guests, their chatter increasing
as they arrive, and us wheeshed, our inscape widened.

Archipelago

Nat Hall

She ran to the edge of the land, where birds gather before each dive.

Her eyes searched for the faintest sight of stars. Winter has clawed her every breath, wrapped in that wind straight from the pole, she felt at one with her own world.

Circular beams from the lighthouse are reassuring in winter. She turned her heart to the ocean where tides collide and kiss at will. The taste of salt left on her lips reminds her of her sense of home. Home, where sea pinks thrive in early June; where each skylark sings in deep blue... Home, where time wanders inside rollers.

Home. The twigs she planted in the ground have grown to trees. She learnt to clicks of each starling, as she replenished hooked feeders on the tip of strongest branches.

Hame. her heart listened for brand new words she harnessed as her midder tongue. Her sense of belonging in her community nestled for the first time when she discovered wicks, holms and her taing of land, heartfelt welcome fae folk., peat fire in their hearth.

On the strange primal night, she looked up to the stars. She looked at them as her angels. The constellations of her heart, Orion and Andromeda, Aquila, Auriga and Taurus.... She finds solace, there in Lyra or just the Plough. She knows clouds don't stay forever.

On the tip of her loved headland, she listened to wrath from The Roost. Each wave heaves kelpies and njuggles - awakes spirits from the water. Two footsteps back, she loved the safety of the stones an islander used for a wall like a jigsaw to guard against the Roost's anger.

She remembered her own journey in between skerries at high tides, treacherous straits, hell from hailstorms... Yet she believed in her dear stars to find her archipelago.

This archipelago, her own world. She knows the lighthouse is safety.

Nat Hall, *World Wamderers*

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.

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Name ……

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E-mail address ……

Contributors

Tom Astbury is a photographer and cameraman based in Dunblane. A few years ago Tom was introduced to the beautifully evocative poetry of Duncan Ban MacIntyre (1724 - 1812) and the landscape that inspired such poems as *Beinn Dorain* and *Song of the Misty Corrie*. This selection of black and white pictures is from his series dùthchas, which was first exhibited in 2017, and is the result of a number of expeditions through the natural and cultural layers of this landscape and the photographer's response to it.

Glenn Bach is a poet, sound artist, and educator who lives and works in the foothills of the San Gabriel Mountains. His major project, *Atlas*, is a long poem that documents his reflections on place, landscape, and our understanding of the world. It has been excerpted in small journals such as *jubilat*, *Otoliths*, and *Plumwood Mountain*. The first book of the poem, *Peripatetic*, is available as a free PDF from www.glennbach.com

Norman Bissell was born in Glasgow and now lives on the Isle of Luing in Argyll. He is the Director of the Scottish Centre for Geopoetics and his poems, essays and reviews have been widely published. His poetry collection is *Slate, Sea and Sky: A Journey from Glasgow to the Isle of Luing*. His novel *Barnhill* (2019) about George Orwell's last years has been well received. www.normanbissell.com

Patrick Corbett is a geologist and poet. Born in Surrey he moved to Dorset at a young age and grew up there. He developed a love of geology and worked as a professional and academic geologist for 35 years before retiring, when he took up poetry. He has lived in the Scottish Borders and now lives in Edinburgh. He is on the Board of the Scottish Poetry Library and is involved with the Scottish Centre for Geopoetics and the School of Poets in Edinburgh.

Elaine Campbell focuses her art on a sense of identity, place and time by painting the elements, light, and locations with which she has a genuine connection. Her work features wildlife; especially birds and fish, but there are no people – only occasional detritus left behind by them. She wants to connect this with the wider world, and the energy of nature. Elaine aims to be as environmentally friendly as possible and works using water-based oil paint and natural linen, occasionally incorporating other materials such as sand.

Dina Fachin lives in St. Louis, MO with her husband and two children. She is originally from Italy and came to the United States to pursue a PhD in Native American Studies at the University of California, Davis. She is a self-taught artist painting with acrylics, watercolors and ink, as well as drawing. Her work is strongly influenced by her Mediterranean origins, love for literature, and former academic work in ethnic, cultural and indigenous cultures from Latin America. Over the years Fachin's relationship with her native landscapes has shifted, transformed and it is now stronger: the journey of creativity across many bridges is one that never ends. www.dinascolours.com @dinafachin4791 #frammentivaia

Gail Folkins often writes about her deep roots in the American West. She is the author of a memoir titled *Light in the* Trees (Texas Tech University Press, 2016), named a 2016 Foreword INDIES finalist in the nature category, and *Texas Dance Halls: A Two-Step Circuit* (Texas Tech University Press, 2006), named a 2007 Foreword Indies Finalist in popular culture. Her essay "A Palouse Horse" was a Notable Essay in *The Best American Essays 2010*. Folkins teaches creative writing at Hugo House in Seattle.

Graham Fulton is a poet, publisher, pamphleteer, live performer, artist, photographer and local historian based in Paisley. His poems have been widely published in the USA and Europe in many magazines, anthologies and online journals. He's the author of several pamphlets of poetry and nineteen full-length collections published by, among others, Polygon, Red Squirrel Press, Salmon Poetry and Pindrop Press. His work has been translated into several languages including French, Spanish and Romanian. His most recent collections are *Coronaworld* from Penniless Press and *Chips, Paracetamol and Wine* from Smokestack Books. Website at www.grahamfulton-poetry.com.

Lynne Goldsmith wrote her first book, *Secondary Cicatrices*, and won the 2018 Halcyon Poetry Prize, was a 2019 Finalist in the American Book Fest Awards, a 2020 Human Relations Indie Book Award Gold Winner and a Finalist in the International Book Awards. Her poetry has been published in *Spillway, Thimble Literary Magazine, All-Creatures.Org, Journal for Critical Animal Studies, The Environmental Magazine, Red Planet Magazine, Interalia Magazine, Tiny Seed Literary Journal*, among others.

Stuart Graham lives in Dumfriesshire and works in Nature Conservation. He writes poetry on themes including Landscape, Geology and Nature. He received a "Highly Commended" award for Poetry in The Hugh Miller Writing Competition 2020. Recent work has appeared in ScotlandsNature Blog, Ballantrae News, Scotland's Geology, Hugh's News and The Dumfries and Galloway Standard. He has given readings of his work at Geopoety 2020 and to the "High Street Writers" Poetry group in Dumfries.

Mandy Haggith lives in Assynt, Scotland, and teaches Literature and Creative Writing at the University of the Highlands and Islands. She has four published poetry collections, a tree poetry anthology, a non-fiction book about paper and five novels including an Iron Age historical trilogy, *The Stone Stories*.
www.mandyhaggith.net

Nat Hall is a Norman-born, Shetland-based poet & visual artist, educated on French and British shores in Aix-en-Provence, Oxford and Edinburgh. Member of Shetland Arts, the Scottish Centre for Geopoetics and Federation of Writers (Scotland). Contributor to the *New Shetlander, NorthWords Now, Stravaig, The Poetry Scotland's Open Mouse, Artipeeps (England)* and *Poemata(Canada).* Anthologized in Shetland, Scotland, England & Canada, co-author of From *Shore to Shoormal/D'un rivage à l'autre* (BJP, 2016), author of *Compass Head* (Nordland Publishing, 2016) and translator of Georges *D'If, Shetland* (2018). Currently working on second poetry collection.

Adrienne Hollifield is a retired high school English and journalism teacher and former professional puppeteer (22 years), living in Black Mountain, North Carolina. A native of Brooklyn, NY, Adrienne came to Western North Carolina in 1973, where she was entranced by the beauty of the mountains. There she met and married her husband, Clyde Hollifield, who was raised in traditional mountain culture. Adrienne has been engrossed in storytelling most of her life. She takes writing classes at Lenoir Rhyne University with Laura Hope-Gill.

Michael Jarvis is a retired academic who taught environmental science at Glasgow University, and ran a research group studying wood. He has published over 150 scientific papers, but he now writes books for fun. He lives in Renfrewshire with his wife Margaret and two large dogs.

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*.

John Lane is Emeritus Professor of environmental studies at Wofford College and was founding director of the College's Goodall Environmental Studies Center. He is the author of a dozen books of poetry and prose including *Circling Home, Anthropocene Blues* and *The Woods Stretched for Miles*. His *Coyote Settles the South* was one of four finalists for the John Burroughs Medal and was named by the Burroughs Society one of the year's "Nature Books of Uncommon Merit."

Patricia McCaw is an Edinburgh poet who was born and brought up in Northern Ireland. Following a career in social work in Belfast and Scotland she enjoys writing about being human within the natural world and the effect of place on a sense of self. She has published widely in various magazines and Cinnamon Press published her pamphlet *Breaking Apple* in 2019. She is keeping a journal of the extraordinary events of the past year and the current year and hopes others are doing the same. mccawpatricia@gmail.com

Alastair R. Noble is an environmental artist, bookmaker and poet. His practice is a response to the natural environment, and reflects on particular sites in the context of poetry and literature. He is informed by both current and ancient literature/poetry that engages with the land and sea. Scottish poets and writers such as Hugh MacDiarmid, Nan Shepherd and Ian Hamilton Finlay are key to his practice. His poetry and writings are an extension of his visual art and engage with alternative methods of reading and mapping the environment.

Andrew Phillips is a visual artist from the South Downs of Sussex, now living in Newport, Wales. It was here amongst the Welsh valleys over fifteen years ago that Andrew first became aware of the natural propensity towards healing in landscapes, as spoil heaps from mining began to grass over. His work has since focused upon themes of rejuvenation, other-than-human sentience, and numinous qualities within landscapes. Between 2015 and 2020 Andrew resided in Scotland, during which time he was elected a Professional Member of the Society of Scottish Artists.

Anne Shivas has an MFA in poetry from Drew University in New Jersey. *Whit Grace*, her first book, was published in 2017 by Word Poetry, of Cincinnati. Her poetry has been published in *Lallans, Causeway, Northwords and Voices, Israel*, and has been published in anthologies in New Zealand and the USA. Her poem *An Old Woman Cooking Eggs* was selected as one of the 20 best poems of 2017 by the Scottish Poetry Library. She is currently sequestered in Vermont, but is otherwise often found in the woods and beaches of East Lothian with her husband and dogs.

Gerry Stewart is a poet, creative writing tutor and editor based in Finland. Her poetry collection *Post-Holiday Blues* was published by Flambard Press, UK. *Totems* is to be published by Hedgehog Poetry Press in 2021. Her writing blog can be found at http://thistlewren.blogspot.fi/ and @grimalkingerry on Twitter.

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 Postscularism: Re-evisioning Politics, Subjectivity and Ethics*. In his spare time he is a songwriter, often drawing inspiration from geopoetic themes, and an attender at a local Quaker meeting.

Don Taylor lives in Central Scotland and spends much of his time in the Highlands. Short fiction work has been published in print and online in Germany, UK and the US. Pushcart Prize Nomination (2018); Finalist, Chester B Himes Memorial Short Fiction Prize (2019); long-listed The Short Story Award (2019) Commended and Highly Commended (two separate works) in FWS Vernal Equinox Competition, included in New Writing Scotland Anthology *The Last Good Year*, December 2020.

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.

James Murray White is a writer and filmmaker; has been an environmental journalist in the Middle East, and was senior producer on a local TV Channel. He is currently making films that reveal the crucial elements of the natural world we often overlook: beavers (and the case for re-introduction), rooks (a huge rookery in Norfolk) and preparing for death. His documentary on the contemporary relevance of mystic artist William Blake will be screened later in the year: more info at www.findingblake.org.uk.

Kenneth White is a Scottish poet, essayist and thinker who lives on the north coast of Brittany and whose work has been widely published in English, French and other languages. He founded the International Institute of Geopoetics in 1989 and has given lectures on geopoetics in Scotland and many other countries. His poetry collections include *Open World, Collected Poems 1960-2000* and *Latitudes and Longitudes*. His prose books include *Across the Territories, The Winds of Vancouver* and *The Collected Works of Kenneth White, Volume 1: Underground to Otherground*. Some of his essays are available in *The Collected Works of Kenneth White Volume 2 Mappings: Landscape, Mindscape, Wordscape*. A full bibliography and biography is at http://www.kennethwhite.org.

Marie-Claude White is a photographer and translator whose photography has been exhibited in France and Scotland. Working with her husband Kenneth White she has translated many of his poetry books into French which have been published in bilingual editions.

May 2021

Scottish Centre for Geopoetics