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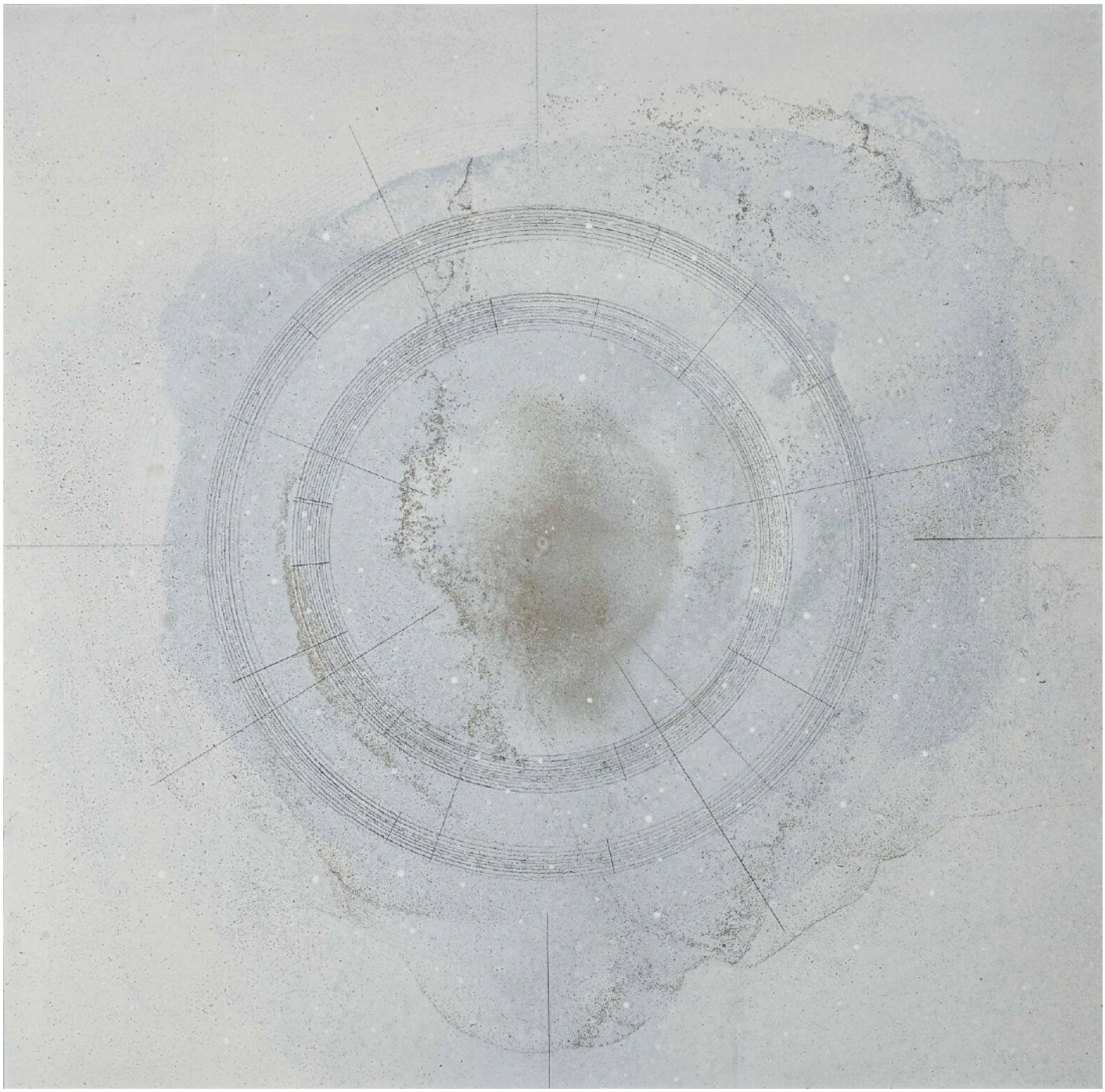


Scottish Centre for Geopoetics

Contents

Expressing the Earth

A large pebble plops into a pool. Its circled ripples extend outwards, disappearing into the distance. The *Expressing the Earth* Geopoetics Conference held in Argyll in June 2017 was just such a pebble and its ripples are still spreading.

We began planning the Conference together with the University of the Highlands and Islands some two years beforehand and put out a call for speakers and workshops in the usual way. The response was so overwhelming that we had to add an extra half day to the programme. Seventy creative people from a wide variety of backgrounds and countries attended the event, mostly for all three days.

Writers, musicians, storytellers, visual artists, geologists, ethnologists, botanists, ornithologists, geographers, conservationists and researchers who care about the future of the planet, came together to discuss our common ground and to express the Earth in various creative ways. Brazil, USA, Switzerland and Italy were represented as well as different parts of England, Wales and Scotland. Many of those who attended have since joined the Scottish Centre for Geopoetics and some have become members of our Council, editorial group and Office-bearers.

Our application for Creative Scotland funding to mount a travelling exhibition and publish a book arising from the Conference was unsuccessful but we received enough essays, poems, images and artwork to fill almost two issues of *Stravaig*. We have already published the Conference talks by Michael Russell MSP, Alastair McIntosh and Norman Bissell on our website and in this issue there are outstanding essays and images from Mairi McFadyen, Susannah Rosenfeld-King, Michael Glen and Elizabeth Rimmer which are based on the talks and workshops they gave at the Conference. Some of the poets such as Helen Moore and Ian McFadyen whose work is included in this issue also took part in the Conference. Artwork by other Conference participants Caroline Watson, Andrew Phillips, LesleyMay Miller and Seonaid Healy also features in this issue.

The Conference was followed last November by our AGM and the first Tony McManus Geopoetics Lecture on Nan Shepherd by James McCarthy which can also be read on our website. As a result of Laura Hope-Gill's attendance at the Conference, Norman Bissell and Alastair McIntosh were invited to give a keynote lecture and other presentations at the Asheville Wordfest in North Carolina in April. The session on setting up an American geopoetics group, Geopoetics Appalachia, was attended by 30 people at 9am on a Sunday morning and it's going forward!

Our first ever Highland Stravaig at Abriachan near Loch Ness which was held in May, organised in partnership with Moniack Mhor Creative Writing Centre and Abriachan Forest Trust, will no doubt inspire more splendid creative work. Truly, the beneficial effects of *Expressing the Earth* are still being felt.

***Editors**: Caroline Watson, Elizabeth Rimmer, Mairi McFadyen, Ullrich Kockel and Norman Bissell. Design and Layout: Bill Taylor*

Expressing the Earth: Personal Reflection

Mairi McFadyen

In June I attended the interdisciplinary 'Expressing the Earth' gathering on Seil Island. After a life-affirming few days of talks, walks and conversations, many disparate parts of my life and work began to emerge as parts of a coherent whole that had not revealed itself to me in quite the same way before. I left energised and inspired, for the first time in a long time, to reflect, to write and to re-connect with that which is important to me. This essay is a reflection on that experience, tracing both my own journey into geopoetics and the contours of an emerging creative practice.

I am an ethnologist. Ethnology is a form of interdisciplinary anthropological research and practice that, at its heart, seeks to understand how we, as humans, *make life meaningful*. We might describe it as the study of how communities (*ethnoi*) make sense of themselves to themselves in particular places through cultural memory and creative expression.[1] Often, the focus of ethnological study is on our relationship with the past and how we make sense of it in the present. Historically, ethnology has been closely associated with its sister discipline of folklore [2] and the study of local traditional culture.[3] As a practice, ethnology values human relationships and emotional connections, recognises the diversity of human experience and understands the importance of our ecological connection to place.

Here in Scotland - in part a response to the cultural and political context in the aftermath of the 2014 referendum and ongoing debates in arts, culture and higher education - a group of ethnologists and creative practitioners have begun to explore the potential of a 'creative ethnology' outwith the strictures of the university.[4] Implicit in the notion of creative ethnology is a creative practice. As ethnologist Ullrich Kockel has previously noted, Kenneth White insisted on the need not only for a 'new philosophy of poetry,' but a 'new *poetic anthropology*'.[5] 'The real work,' White writes, 'consists in changing the categories, *grounding a new anthropology*, moving towards a new experience of the earth and of life.' 'To be truly *creative,*' writes Norman Bissell,

'We must adopt [a] sensitive awareness and openness to the world, and work at it consciously in our various fields of endeavour – whether in music, writing, visual and other arts or sciences or combinations of these… By developing a heightened awareness of the earth and cosmos and our relationship to it we can nourish our creative expression in all these fields.'[6]

I invited Ullrich – a friend and fellow ethnologist whose writing I admire - if we might take 'Expressing the Earth' as an opportunity to explore what might be possible for a radical creative ethnology that boldly embraces geopoetics.

Aesthetic Encounters

Many of us will be able to bring to mind a moment or meaningful encounter in our lives – perhaps a piece of art or literature, a live performance, being in nature, a chance meeting, a discovery, being together, solitude – that has stuck with us; something that has caused us to think differently, to see the world in a new way. We began the conversation at Expressing the Earth by inviting participants to reflect upon and share such an experience. We talked about Nan Shepherd's

‘unheralded moments of revelation’ in her journey into *The Living Mountain* (1977) and Neil Gunn’s ‘moments of sheer unconditional delight'. [7] In *The Atom of Delight* (1956), Gunn reflects on his quest for

“the particular moment, the arrested scene, that holds a significance difficult to define, but not at all vague; vivid, fine with a delight that words blur; as the word ‘significance’ blurs the clear this is it... ” [8]

While we may find it difficult to express the full meaning of such encounters in everyday language, for many, these are the most meaningful and significant of our lives. As an ethnologist, I am interested in these moments, these heightened aesthetic experiences that re-frame or affirm our perception of the world and our relationship to it. A ‘heightened aesthetic experience’ is understood here not in the sense of a matter of judgement or taste, but rather - as opposed to the *anaesthetic* experience – as one in which our senses are operating at their peak, when we are present in the current moment with heightened awareness, when *we are fully alive*.

My own PhD research - which I have been revisiting recently through a geopoetic lens - explored the aesthetics and poetics of the traditional ballad.[9] Rather than

focusing on a collection of folklore ‘texts’, I was interested in the embodied aesthetic experience of performance: in this case, the shivers, tingles, and chills we sometimes experience listening to unaccompanied traditional song. Traveller ballad singer and storyteller Sheila Stewart (1937-2014) describes it like this:

'Just like maybe somebody says, “you sang there and the hair on my head stood up,” you know?'[10]

On these occasions, words and music, singer and listeners, past and present fuse together in the living present, unlocking layers of imagination, memory and meaning. In order to make sense of such experiences, we reach for metaphor - for poetic language - to create and re-create meaning. Metaphor has poetic power precisely because it re-connects abstract thought with embodied experience, providing ‘a *grounding* we often fail to see precisely because it is so pervasive and fundamental' The philosopher Mark Johnson makes the case that all metaphors are grounded in our visceral experience and explains that it is through our bodily perceptions, movements, senses and emotions that meaning becomes possible. That is to say, all aspects of meaning-making are *fundamentally aesthetic*. [11]

A richly poetic example of creative ‘thinking by metaphor’ is the Spanish Frederico Garcia Lorca’s ‘Theory and Play of the Duende’ first delivered in Argentina in 1933, reflecting on artistic inspiration and creation. The elusive *duende* is a metaphor that reaches to make sense of a heightened aesthetic experience in response to expressive art, in this case, *cante jondo* or deep song. Lorca describes it as

'a mental wind blowing restlessly over the heads of the dead, in search of new landscapes and unknown accents; a wind that smells of baby’s spittle, crushed grass, a jellyfish veil, announcing the constant baptism of newly created things.'[12]

The *duende* is the ‘mysterious force that everyone feels and no philosopher has explained,’ and ‘draws close to places where forms fuse in a yearning beyond visible expression'. The *duende,* of course, appealed to folklorist Hamish Henderson as an idea that contained all that he found difficult to express about the inexpressible and elemental qualities of traditional folk culture.[13] Henderson noted that in Scotland, the Travellers have an expression which corresponds with the duende - the *conyach* - which is used to describe the intangible creative power which can release the affective power of a song or tune. [14]

We might say we are ‘deeply moved’ by such an experience. The metaphorical expression ‘moved’ is semantically related to ‘motion,’ and also, interestingly, to ‘emotion'. This raises the question of experienced subjectivity: the human capacity to feel and to be aware of that which is being felt as being meaningful and significant. The term ‘deeply’ is based on the belief that human meanings exist not on a single plane but on a spectrum, ranging from the trivial to the profound. The new position to which we are moved, metaphorically, is ‘deep.’ The metaphorical use of ‘depth’ suggests something that cannot be seen clearly when we are positioned at the surface - something perhaps only surmised or fathomed vaguely, leaving room for ambiguity and imagination. When that which is hidden is suddenly seen, we are struck by meanings resonant with a sense of that which is most real to us: our consciousness of ourselves as being in and of the world. It is on these occasions that we become aware, if only fleetingly, that we are here, that we are alive, that we are together and connected.

Into the Field

To begin to understand the creative process of meaning making in the case of the 'ballad experience', my ethnological enquiry was rooted in the tradition of European hermeneutic phenomenology.[15] Phenomenology is a research method that attends to the affective dimension of our embodied experience; hermeneutics is concerned with how we interpret and express our subjective lived experience in and through language in a process of meaning-making.

What is the relationship between our embodied experience and perception, and the language we use to express it? Is it possible to express essential reality in human language? I came later to discover that these are the very questions of geopoetics', as outlined by Tony McManus in his book *The Radical Field*.[16]

In truth, I found the experience of academic research both thrilling and strangely alienating; alienating in the sense that, in such an intensely cerebral environment, I felt disconnected from my own body. I discovered that it is quite possible to grasp or comprehend a philosophical concept but not *understand it,* bodily. Theoretical explanations quickly become removed from lived reality and from the infinitely rich encounters that cause us to want to think more deeply about our experience in the first place. In geopoetics, I found a way to reconcile - or perhaps reconnect, in a way that made sense to me - the rigour of cerebral, analytic work with the experience of being a body in the world. For me, this is what geopoetics was first about: seeking awareness and understanding both *intellectually*, by developing knowledge, and *sensitively*, 'using all our senses to become attuned to the world'. [17]

I visualise geopoetics as the rigorous pursuit of clarity of thought, chasing those flashes of insight, creativity and connection, but always grounded in my embodied, aesthetic experience of being-in-the-world. It requires a slowing down, a time for quiet reflection, and paying close attention. I can remember the very moment

geopoetics first made sense to me. I was on an escape from academia to Oldshoremore beach in North West Sutherland, just south of Cape Wrath. The experience of being in this open, lunar, treeless landscape is, for me, like pressing a giant re-set button. I was out for a barefoot walk along the beach one evening when the setting sun hit the water, and remembered White's poem, 'A High Blue Day on Scalpay':

this is the summit of contemplation, and
    no art can touch it
blue, so blue, the far-out archipelago
    and the sea shimmering, shimmering
no art can touch it, the mind can only
    try to become attuned to it
to become quiet and space itself out, to
    become open and still, unworlded
knowing itself in the diamond country, in
   the ultimate unlettered light.[18]

This is a phenomenological poem: it is a poetic manifestation of *elemental experience*, literal and concrete as it is abstract and metaphorical. Here, 'the power of the simple strikes through to a place of primordial selving where…we are *reattuned to the otherness* of the startling cosmos' [19].

Being-between: a transformation in thinking

'Why does one study?' asks Kenneth White. '*To become unlettered*.'[20] Geopoetics endeavours to get at this trackless space, this 'unlettered light.' Like Merleau-Ponty's phenomenological 'radical reflection'[21] or Heidegger's hermeneutic drive 'to get back to the beginning of thought'[22], geopoetics requires an openness and readiness to both recognise and consciously abandon inherited concepts, philosophical assumptions, cultural baggage, language and discourse, to 'clear the way' for a direct encounter with the world. It is a process of *radical unlearning.* Such a 'transformation in thinking' requires a 'mindfulness transcending instrumental reason, to a *renewing of our being in the middle*.'[23]

In order to think nomadically, the middle point is the point from which to begin. The task of White's intellectual nomad, his 'poet-thinker', is to traverse both a landscape and a mindscape to get back to a moment more primordial, the moment before our present thought-forms, in order to grasp something essential, *elemental*. From this new ground, this *entre-deux*, new ideas can emerge. This is what White means by *grounding a new anthropology*:

'One could say that it concerns a new mental cartography, a conception of life disengaged at last from ideologies, myths, religions etc. and the search for a language capable of expressing this other way of being in the world, but making it clear from the start that this is a question of rapport with the earth (energies, rhythms, forms) not a subjugation to Nature (Romantic). I'm talking about the search (from place to place, step by step) for a poetics situated, or, rather, moving outside the established systems of representation…'[24]

We find this approach to life, for example, in Nan Shepherd, who writes exquisitely of those ‘moments on the mountain’ when she is ‘not bedevilled by thought,’ ‘living in one sense at a time to *live all the way through*'[25]. Such moments come most often, she writes, when ‘waking out of outdoor sleep, gazing tranced at the running of the water and listening to its song.’

For me, these ‘moments’ most often come in musical experience, in shared spaces and intimate settings, particularly listening to the old songs. Rilke said it:

existence is song (*Dasein ist Gesang*).[26] Irish philosopher William Desmond reflects on the ancient power of traditional song in the following::

'Listening to the old ballads we sometimes here the elemental – so simple, so elegant, so powerful – yet without insistence – as if singers were more directly in touch with something irreducible …For the elemental is just its simple being.'[27]

The experience of singing is a profound experience of coming into embodied being. Speaking from my own experience, on certain occasions, I am so focused on singing a song that I experience the sensation of *becoming* my voice. This could be described or understood as form of *ex-stasis*. Paradoxically, during this experience, we become more aware of ourselves as being a body, while at the same time, our awareness requires us to be outside of ourselves. In singing, we become *aware of our own otherness*. It’s the experience of *being between*.

In returning to the elemental, we find a breakthrough in the interstices, a way to ‘think our way through’ with liminal freedom. The very meaning of the word ‘hermeneutic’ is tied up with this idea of ‘being between.’ The word can be traced back to the myth of

the Greek figure Hermes, a sort of shaman — *spirit of the gaps,* god of boundaries and roads, music and playful thought. To exist hermeneutically is to stand in this gap between past and present, this zone of 'world-disclosure'.[28]

As McManus explains, this is where White's interest in the figure of the shaman lies.[29] The shaman can access this state of between-ness by standing (or moving) outside the socio-historical context to 'penetrate deep into the territory of perception, deep into participation in the earth' in order to bring those elemental experiences and perceptions back to the community.[30] White sees the shaman as a myth-metaphor for a figure with a role in society that goes beyond the narrow understanding of 'the artist' that we have today (as 'reflector of the state of things', inside a closed circle), to something deeper – an ability to maintain an open contact between the socio-human context and the world. What the shaman as a metaphor points to is an art, a creation, a *poesis*, which draws on that liminal space in order to open up new perceptions. It is from this marginal zone that the great artists, writers, and social critics have been able to look past the prevailing social forms in order to see from the outside and to bring back insights from beyond it. That is to say, artists are able to keep the 'between' *live* in ways others do not.

A Creative Ethnology: everyone is an artist

The shaman is both the 'great outsider' who sees things from a distance and, as custodian of archaic images and themes of original cosmic perception, also the great 'whole-holder'. In many ways, ethnology shares something of that shamanic ability to see things whole from a distance, to 'keep the whole in view', in order to suggest how we might transform ourselves.[31] An education in ethnology does more than furnish us with knowledge; it educates our perception of the world and opens our eyes and minds to other possibilities of being. In Merleau-Ponty's understanding,

'we become ethnologists of our own society if we distance ourselves from it…[This is] a way of thinking that demands that we transform ourselves'.[32]

As both Kockel and Walters have discussed,[33] the German artist Joseph Beuys believed that the birthright of all human beings is our capacity to shape society - to *transform* and *be transformed* by it. Beuys argued that we must bring our *whole selves* – our intuition and imagination, as well as our rational thinking, our will – to a conscious, active participation in culture, a form of what he called 'social sculpture.' This is what he meant by his famous words '*everyone is an artist*.' This understanding of the artist appeals to an expanded anthropological notion of creativity. 'Culture' is understood here not as a category of sociological enquiry but rather as a process, constantly reshaping in new and meaningful forms.[34] In White's view, culture is 'the way human beings conceive of, work at and direct themselves.' If 'agri-culture means working at a field to produce the best crop,' he writes, then 'human culture means working at the most harmonious growth of the individual.' Transformation, then, is at the heart of culture, which is itself a continuous process of renewal. Culture has a direction, a sense of the 'horizon of the possible'.[35]

White's call for a 'poetic anthropology' suggests a creative approach to fieldwork, much like the artistic process.[36] For some, the creative potential of ethnology is about finding more imaginative ways to share our research through creative output, such as performance or creative writing; for others the potential is in its interdisciplinarity: how we engage in vital dialogue - cultivating

'sympathy, synthesis and synergy' – with other fields, such as ecology or the arts. [37] This is not simply a question of drawing on the creativity of 'the artist'; there is a sense too in which we must *become artists ourselves*. Like Beuys' social sculpture, as creative fieldworkers, 'we make the field, but the field also makes us'.

'As we come to terms with the fact that [we] make, and are made by, the field that [we] study, [we] have a choice: either retreat into the safe realm of pure cultural theory, or get to grips with the messy business of trying to navigate the morphogenetic cultural field as it changes shape under [our] very hands.'[38]

From Thought to Action: radical transformations

It is vital to recognise the political dimension of our work. Many ethnologists consciously engage in different forms of cultural and political work – for example, in consciousness raising, advocacy and social change.[39] As practitioners in the field, we *dig where we stand*; our own personal roots, as well as our own local place, are vital to our theory-practice. How we choose to write about the world constitutes a deeply political choice, and we cannot escape our potential effects on the people or communities around us (effects which are inescapably political).

As Kockel has observed, many ethnologists are motivated by concerns 'not unlike those that have inspired the work of artists, poets, theologians and campaigners'.[40] These shared concerns include a desire to create and to connect, to seek and share knowledge, to raise awareness, to challenge the use of power, to bring people together, to search for meaning, to imagine and make manifest new ways of thinking and being. Speaking personally, an ethnological being-in-the-world also speaks to the need for an activist orientation in practice.

What, then, might be possible if we approached our ethnological theory-practice with an open, geopoetic mind?

As part of his project 'Earth Writing,' anarchist geographer Simon Springer argues for a theoretically informed, critically reflective scholar-activism that boldly embraces geopoetics.[41] In defence of any anti-intellectual accusation of 'esotericism,' he argues passionately that we need theory for meaningful action as much as we need meaningful action to refine our theories:

'For activists to have any chance of success, we need to fill [our] lungs with the fresh air of creativity by living and breathing the ongoing, iterative process of theory and action.'[42]

For Springer, *geopoetics demands praxis.*[43] This is because a geopoetic worldview allows us to 'replace the hubris that so often attaches itself to academia, with a modesty and humility that brings us into greater contact with the world', by venturing into the 'unchartable terrain that is the mystery of life' and by

acknowledging the ‘hidden enfolded immensities,’ ‘sheer physical messiness,’ and the ‘sticky materiality of practical encounters’ that can never be captured, pinned down, or fully understood.[44] He writes,

'When we approach praxis with an open, geopoetic mind that “expresses reality in different ways … [through] combinations of different art forms” a material space for radical transformation might follow. Possibility becomes possible.'[45]

This is why geopoetics is vitally important: it can be directed to align our bearings with different kinds of deep poetic, cultural and political work, where ‘the scope of theory and the hope of creativity collide in kaleidoscope.[46]

Cultural Renewal: a live, lasting culture

In a series of essays on the theme of cultural renewal,[47] White calls for the need to 'reground', to reconnect with the ground on which we stand:

'A country begins with a ground, a geology. When it loses contact with that, it's no longer a country at all. It's just a supermarket, Disneyland or a madhouse'.[48]

Geopoetics, in pursuit of this ground, traces structures, ideas, themes, expressions, lifelines back to the archaic landscape, and *forwards* into possible developments, outside and beyond the discourse of any Celtic Romanticism, nationalism or identity ideology. Crucially, White was seeking a *local* grounding for this new worldview. This is not nationalist and provincial, but parochial in the most expansive sense of the word. *Parochial is universal*, it deals with the fundamentals. By placing cultural elements in a wider context, we give them greater scope. In the words of Irish poet Patrick Kavanagh,

'To know fully even one field or one land is a lifetime's experience. In the world of poetic experience, it is depth that counts, not width.'[49]

To extend the hermeneutic metaphor, in order find a country other than its stereotyped image, we must grasp the *elements* of culture and make 'renewed contact with the landscape'.[50]. 'We need minds', writes White, that can draw the 'significant lines together' through geography, history, culture and open up new ways of 'inhabiting the Earth' *in this place:*

'At surface level, [cultural renewal] is a question of politics. At a deeper level, it's a question of poetics…If you get politics and poetics coming together, you can begin to think that you've got something like a live, lasting culture.'[51]

This, to me, is the role of the creative ethnologist as artist-philosopher, as poet-thinker, as cultural activist: to 'draw the significant lines together,' to 'reconnect poetics and politics,' to push culture forwards, developed *with*, not against, the past. Kockel talks of ethnology as 'engaged toposophy'[52], a way to release 'the wisdom that sits in places'.[53] It is *field*-work. *Poetic* work.

Ethnology strives for an overview of the field, but - much like the experience of singing - we must both *stand outside* and be *immersed in* this work. As a cultural project, a geopoetic creative ethnology can inspire a radical process and re-engagement with a broader and deeper understanding of culture *in this place*, not by looking back and re-performing fixed heritage, but by generating new meanings. This is also an ethical project. One reaction to our current situation, often in an attempt to 're-connect with the earth,' is the embrace and appropriation of pick'n'mix world folk cultures devoid of any context, knowledge or understanding. This pursuit is, in effect, a form of unreflected colonialism. While we may be able to create sustainable ways of living out of bits and pieces selected from diverse cultures across the globe, it would be wholly unwise to attempt this without first understanding these elements in their original contexts (and appreciating the consequences of taking them out of those contexts). As ethnologists, we must work towards developing a shared reflexivity and respectful, cultural awareness.

Geopoetics calls for *poeisis* – the making, gathering, the bringing together. As ethnologists, as 'artists of the everyday', we must bring our *whole selves* to a conscious, active participation in culture. We must find ways to 'rekindle those

transformative powers which are vital, not only in order for social, revolutionary change to occur, but to confront the challenges of the future'.[54] The affective force of our aesthetic experience helps us articulate new ideas. A greater responsiveness to the world engenders a keener sense of ethical responsibility towards it. This is where '*possibility becomes possible*.' As Tony McManus mused:

'Perhaps, eventually, a movement might arise which could revolutionise society, not from a standpoint under a banner (this is always exploited by a power group or class) but on the basis of knowledge and awareness – individuals sharing a grounding, living a shared culture of perception.'[55]

To be truly creative in our field of endeavour, we need to bring this 'sensitive awareness and openness to the world' and engage in ways that promote a joyful, enlivened, connected state of being. This is to participate in our collective human attempt to find meaning in its fullest realisation. Such a way of being has the potential to re-energise individuals and develop a grounded, live, lasting culture that is connected to the world.

With thanks to Ullrich Kockel and David Francis from the National Council of the Scottish Centre for Geopoetics for reading early drafts of this essay and offering thoughts and advice.

Notes

[1] As ethnologist Ullrich Kockel explains, 'the theoretical basis…lies not in any singular discipline, but rather…in the interaction of different approaches to common issues, the culture and life-style of a particular land and its people.' See: *The Catharsis of European Ethnology Borderline Cases: The Ethnic Frontiers of European Integration*. 1999, p79.

[2] Gary West writes that ethnology and folklore canbe viewed as 'non-identical twins within a family of disciplines that study the culture of humanity.' See: *Voicing Scotland: Folk, Culture, Nation*. 2012, p36.

[3] Ullrich Kockel argues that a 'guarded approach' is required in the use of ethnology, 'a discipline which stood at the cradle of (romantic) nationalism and identity politics, with all their subsequent excesses that it often served to legitimise.' See: *Borderline Cases: The Ethnic Frontiers of European Integration*. 1999, p77.

[4] Although the term 'creative ethnology' was used before (West 2012), it acquired wider currency and meaning following Gary West's inaugural lecture as Personal Chair in Scottish Ethnology, 'Performing Oral Testimony: Towards a Creative Ethnology for the 21st Century' at the University of Edinburgh, November 30th 2016.

[5] Kenneth White, *The Wanderer and his Charts: Essays on Cultural Renewal*. 2004, p145; emphasis added.

[6] Norman Bissell, 'Atlantic Poetics: Expanding Our Sense of World,' *Stravaig 3*: Geopoetics in Practice. 2013; emphasis added.

[7] Neil Gunn, *Highland River*. 1937, p48.

[8] Neil Gunn, *Atom of Delight*. 1956, p8.

[9] Mairi McFadyen, 'The Space Between is Where the Maysie Lives: Presence, Imagination and Experience in the Traditional Ballad,' University of Edinburgh. 2012

[10] Personal fieldwork, 2009.

[11] Mark Johnson, *The Meaning of the Body: Aesthetics of Human Understanding*. 2007.

[12] Fredercio Garcia Lorca, 'Theory and Play of The Duende'.
[13] Hamish Henderson, *Alias MacAlias: Writings of Songs, Folk and Literature*. 2002 (1992).
[14] Listen to Hamish Henderson, Belle and Sheila Stewart discuss the *conyach* on *Tobar an Dualchais/Kist O Riches* here.
[15] See, for example Frykman & Gilje *Being There: New Perspectives on Phenomenology and the Analysis of Culture*. 2003.
[16] Tony McManus, *The Radical Field*. 2007, p148.
[17] Norman Bissell 'What is geopoetics?' 2007. See: http://www.geopoetics.org.uk/what-is-geopoetics.
[18] Kenneth White, *Open World:The Collected Poems 1960 – 2000*.
[19] William Desmond, *Philosophy and Its Others: Ways of Being and Mind*. 1990, p275.
[20] Quoted in book review 'White Power', Scotsman 2003.
[21] Maurice Merleau-Ponty, *Phenomenology of Perception*. 1945.
[22] Martin Heidegger, *On the Way to Language*. 1959.
[23] William Desmond, *Philosophy and Its Others: Ways of Being and Mind* .1990, p275.
[24] Translated in Tony McManus, *The Radical Field*. 2007 p74.
[25] Nan Shepherd, Letter to Neill Gunn, 1940.
[26] Quoted in William Desmond, *Philosophy and Its Others: Ways of Being and Mind*. 1990 p270.
[27] *Ibid* p275.
[28] Martin Heidegger, *On the Way to Language*. 1959.
[29] Kenneth White, 'A Shaman Dancing on the Glacier,' *On Scottish Ground: Selected Essays*. 1998, pp35 - 48.
[30] Tony McManus, *The Radical Field*. 2007 p73.
[31] Konrad Kostlin, 'The Passion for the Whole: Interpreted Modernity or Modernity as Interpretation.' *The Journal of American Folklore* Vol. 110, No. 437 (Summer, 1997), pp. 260-276.
[32] Merleau-Ponty, *Signes*. 1960, p150.
[33] Victoria Walters, *Joseph Beuys and the Celtic Wor(l)d*, 2012; Ullrich Kockel, 'Morphogenetic Fieldwork and the Ethnologic of Toposophy: Meditation on a Coyote Wandering on Rannoch Moor' *Beuysian Legacies in Ireland and Beyond: Art, Culture and Politics* 2011.
[34] For example, Tim Ingold, *Being Alive: Essays on Movement, Knowledge and Description.* 2011.
[35] Kenneth White, *The Wanderer and his Charts: Essays on Cultural Renewal*. 2004, p245
[36] Quoted in Ullrich Kockel, 'Morphogenetic Fieldwork and the Ethnologic of Toposophy: Mediation on a Coyote Wandering on Rannoch Moor' *Beuysian Legacies in Ireland and Beyond: Art, Culture and Politics* (eds) Christa-Maria Lerm-Hayes, Victoria Walters, 2011, p207.
[37] Ullrich Kockel ,'Liberating the Ethnological Imagination,' *Ethnologia Europaea: Journal of European Ethnology* 38:1 2008, p8.
[38] Ullrich Kockel, 'Morphogenetic Fieldwork and the Ethnologic of Toposophy: Mediation on a Coyote Wandering on Rannoch Moor' *Beuysian Legacies in Ireland and Beyond: Art, Culture and Politics* (eds) Christa-Maria Lerm-Hayes, Victoria Walters, 2011 p205.

[39] See for example, Local Voices CIC www.localvoices.co.uk.
[40] Ullrich Kockel, *Re-Visioning Europe: Frontiers, Place Identities and Journeys in Debatable Lands*. 2010, p184.
[41] Simon Springer, 'Earth Writing,' *GeoHumanities*, 2017. 3:1, 1-19.
[42] *Ibid,* p15.
[43] *Ibid,* p9, emphasis added.
[44] Simon Springer, 'Human geography without hierarchy.' *Progress in Human Geography*, 2014. 38 (3): 402–19 p410.
[45] Simon Springer, (2017) Earth Writing, *GeoHumanities*, 3:1, 1-19 p16, emphasis added.
[46] *Ibid,* p4.
[47] Kenneth White, T*he Wanderer and his Charts: Essays on Cultural Renewal.* 2004.
[48] Kenneth White, 'The Re-Mapping of Scotland,' *The Wanderer and his Charts: Essays on Cultural Renewal*. 2004.
[49] Patrick Kavanagh, 'The Parish and the Universe.' *Collected Prose.* 1973.
[50] Kenneth White, 'Scotland, History and the Writer,' *On Scottish Ground: Selected Essays*. 1998, p157.
[51] Kenneth White, 'The Re-Mapping of Scotland,' *The Wanderer and his Charts: Essays on Cultural Renewal*. 2004, p197.
[52] Ullrich Kocklel European Ethnology as Engaged Toposophy.' Identity Politics: Histories, Regions and Borderlands: Acta Historica Universitatis Klaipedensis XIX*, Studia Anthropologica III*, 2009, 147–163.
[53] Keith Basso, *Wisdom Sits in Places: Language and Landscape*. 1996.
[54] Victoria Walters, *Joseph Beuys and the Celtic Wor(l)d*. 2012. p348.
[55] Tony McManus, *The Radical Field*. 2007.

Slate Haiku

LesleyMay Miller

For Lorne

Helen Moore

"In such landscape-mindscapes there are ideas and energies, both manifest and latent, that can, potentially, bring in a live society, an intelligent republic, and open world." – Kenneth White

1.
Memory is a thin soil stripped of minerals, and we're rootless beings, no land in which to flourish – the price remote as clouds. Who knows deeply the soil from which they grew? Whose lineage returns generations in a single place?

The bones of my folks rest in ground hundreds of miles from my current home. Can I, as Alastair McIntosh would have it, *become indigenous to place?* I, a Sassenach, whom Mairi Mhor would have had deported from Eilean A' Cheo?

Can this deracinated being swept on wind and tide find earth in which to anchor, to embrace a *culture-region's* ancient sense of place? And there –
atoning for the crimes committed by her nationality, her race – become a temporary guardian of that terrain, leaving it richer?

2.
West coast, *Earra Gael* – Argyll's Atlantic seaboard.
Here in this frayed green/grey archipelago,
shaped by tectonic shifts, volcanoes and the last glacial age,
the Firth of Lorne with islands, peninsulas, sea lochs, skerries…

Sgeir nam Faoileann *Sgeir Carnaich* *Sgeir na h-Aireig.*
(Encoding ancient navigational knowledge, the Gaelic
sgeir denotes 'rock in the sea which spring tides cover'.)

After the polar sheet's retreat,
open sea-roads sailed by early ancestors in cow-skin boats –
these first true explorers of wild, intact land.

On the islands of Seil, Easdale, Luing,
volumes of sedimentary rock are a compendium
of human and Earth history….

At Ellenabeich the beach is formed of waste slates
pounded by tides into a steep bank – a warm seat
despite the shrouded radiance
of Midsummer Sun.

Under our feet chink and rattle of fragments –
rust-brown, ochre, orange, the greeny-blues
of this Dalradian rock this fractured seabed

raised and razed –

skin flakes sloughed away by burrowing men
feathering the nests of others –
roofs for Clydeside tenements distant cathedrals.

On Luing wounded land where dynamite
blasted through vertebrae
that once linked continents;
amidst the rubble, starbursts of Stonecrop
and Wild Thyme foraged by Bees.

My boot knocks a slate out of place. Crouching,
I watch Ants rush to restore order,
hauling fat, creamy larvae
into earthen holes.

At Cullipool, the flooded quarry pool swims
with dark memories… a tidal wave devouring
industry in its giant maw.

Here, white-washed cottages once
brimmed with workers…
now a thin population clings on – nine
children at its primary school, and the disease
of second homes *(fine*
views across to Mull).

An old lighthouse squats
on Fladda in the Sound of Luing;
there, behind white walls, two families
would batten down to tea and herring,
perform the nightly ritual of lighting up
the leviathan eye –
Diar Sgeir Sgeir Buidhe.

3.
Here, through the Scottish School of Geopoetics,
I'm opening by degrees
to new identity –

an expanding sense of self
on the North Western fringes of Europe… this beacon
of learning, spirituality and arts never quite extinguished

since that igniting spark of Finn-men sailing out of Ulster,
settling the broad, fertile valley of Kilmartin Glen.
In their medieval sea kingdom –

Dalriada – bards recited sagas
of Cu Chulainn (his vanquishing
of Connaught's Queen Medb);

and giant standing stones expressed
this culture's rootedness
in this corner of the world.

4.
20.05, in watery sunshine Seafari throttles out from Ellenabeich, its prow a buzzing up and down, as a giant Bluebottle trapped inside. Kitted out in waterproofs and life jackets, we dozen passengers are penguin-like on board this RIB zooming us to Corryvreckan, *world's third largest whirlpool.*

At spring tide, and with winds set west, in the strait between Scarba and Jura calm waters turn maelstrom – water ascending from the depths making flat, glassy plates, around which vortices appear.

At the centre of each marine dervish, the skipper puts the engine in neutral, and queasily we turn, silent questions swirling within. What brings us here? Is this our longing to experience the world's mystique… our need to feel awe, to know some limitations to our sense of domination?

Yet 'peak experience' is mediated by exchange, and fossilised sunshine through combustion. How can we belong to a world which we're slowly choking? How may we live simply that others may simply live?

A student in marine biology is our guide to the science of the whirlpools, and to local wildlife – the fly-past of a White-tailed Sea Eagle (knowing majesty skirling the prow) too swift for snapping smart phones.

Versed in threads of local mythology, the young Englishwoman tries to weave it through her commentary – sea-witches in caves, the plaited hair of nine virgins to hold ships at anchor – but unconsciously is a mouth-piece for quaint superstition.

Here, at this turning point of the turning world, no one speaks of *Cailleach Bheur* who'd come at Samhuinn to wash her plaid. *Cailleach Bheur,* blue-skinned hag of Highlands (*Sgriob na Caillich*), and of our very marrow.

With warp and weft roiled of all colour, that wild crone would sweep inland – an icy, roaring plaid trailing from her shoulder... and where it flailed trees and bushes, the blossoming of frost.

I brood quietly on collective seas of amnesia, the waning of Winter's snow and ice….

5.
And yet if we knew land from the sea, as once
in our evolution we did –
exploring archipelagos

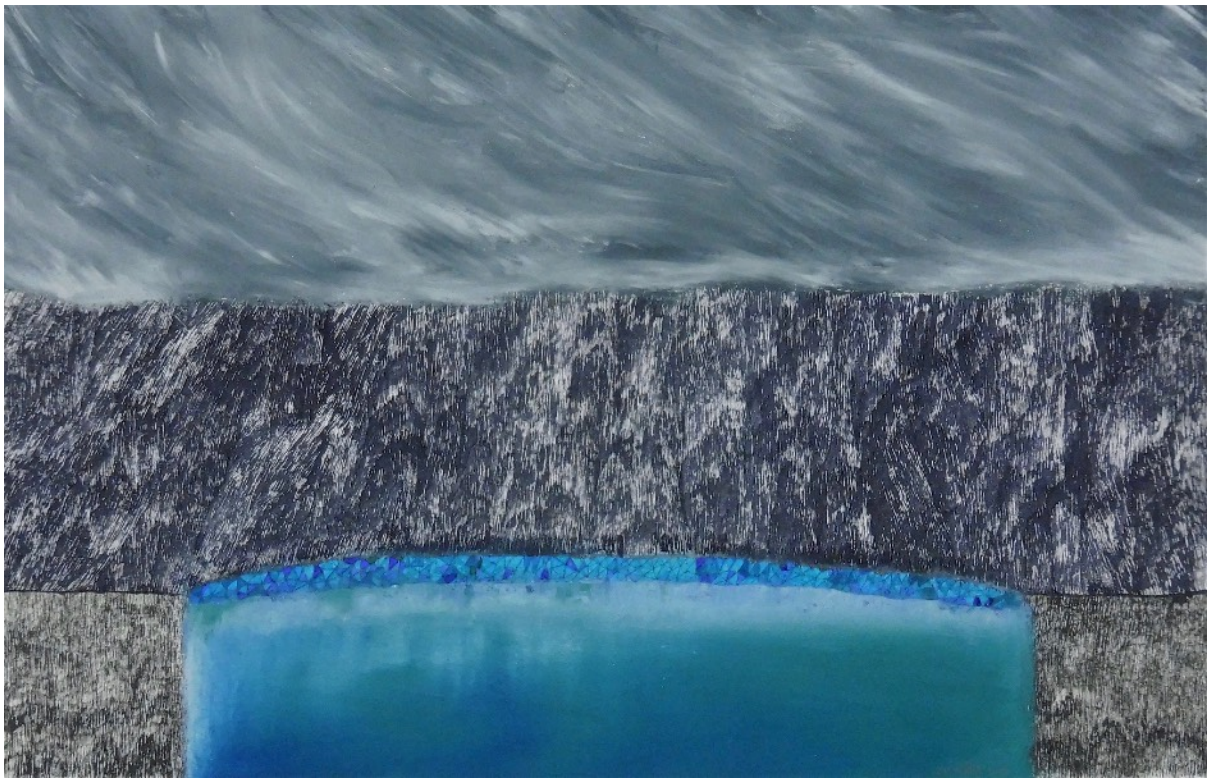
with oars, aching arms, sheets, sails,
perceiving vast cliffs and skerries
from the liquid level…

if becoming one with the ocean moving continuously
around our Great Mother –
us sensing Sun and Moon's pull,
and adapting to local conditions,
seabed's contours, narrow straits –

we were to evaporate
into high alto cirrus… to roll in, hang as particles concealing
forest-tops…

and fall, return transformed – turquoise at times
as clouds pass…

and were to rise up in whipping wind,
and to whirl…
to whirl… what world then?



Three Sisters

Ian McFadyen

You ask for an image*; I bring you darkness.
On the first night, well after midnight,
I stepped outside to savour the strangeness
of this different place - solid blackness at first,
the air damp and sweet, stirring gently,
fresh from a day of rain. Shapes came slowly
into focus, as they tend to do these days –
a fuchsia tall as I am I could never grow at home,
three trees – a venerable rowan and two sycamores.
I could hear rather than see them,
over by the fence – where I was suddenly aware of
breathing; warm, gentle, enormously powerful,
a low, deep snorting sometimes,
a bittersweet smell of sour milk and hay.
It was a visit, a deputation.
Attracted by the unaccustomed lateness of our lights,
and the muscular presence of our Japanese hatchback,
three heifers had strolled up
to lean over the fence and keep us company.
Curious, conspiratorial, they nudged each other
like kids in a queue, one so sand pale
that I could make her out quite clearly,
her neighbour red, and the third one
black as the night.

**The first draft of this poem was written at the Scottish Geopoetic Centre's conference "Expressing the Earth"on Seil Island, at a workshop led by Andrew Phillips, on 23rd June 2017.*

Steadfast

Geraldine Green

And all manner of thing shall be well – Julian of Norwich

sometimes, when you listen to a hedgehog feed
the world steadies itself on its axis and you feel ok.
sometimes when you hear a woodpecker,
deft clatter of beak against solid wood,
the world steadies itself and all is ok.
sometimes, when you recall the softness
of a lapwing chick you held in your hand
as a child you feel a rush of something
other than your self and you feel yes,
ok the world is good
can be good sometime
and sometimes, when the oak
you know so well
that stands just there on your horizon
steadies itself into a ship's mast,
you can feel steady inside somewhere,
feel some kind of steady-ness
that is fed by the lapwing chick
its feathered heartbeat
you held in your childhood palms
and all is well with the world.
all can be well, all is well.

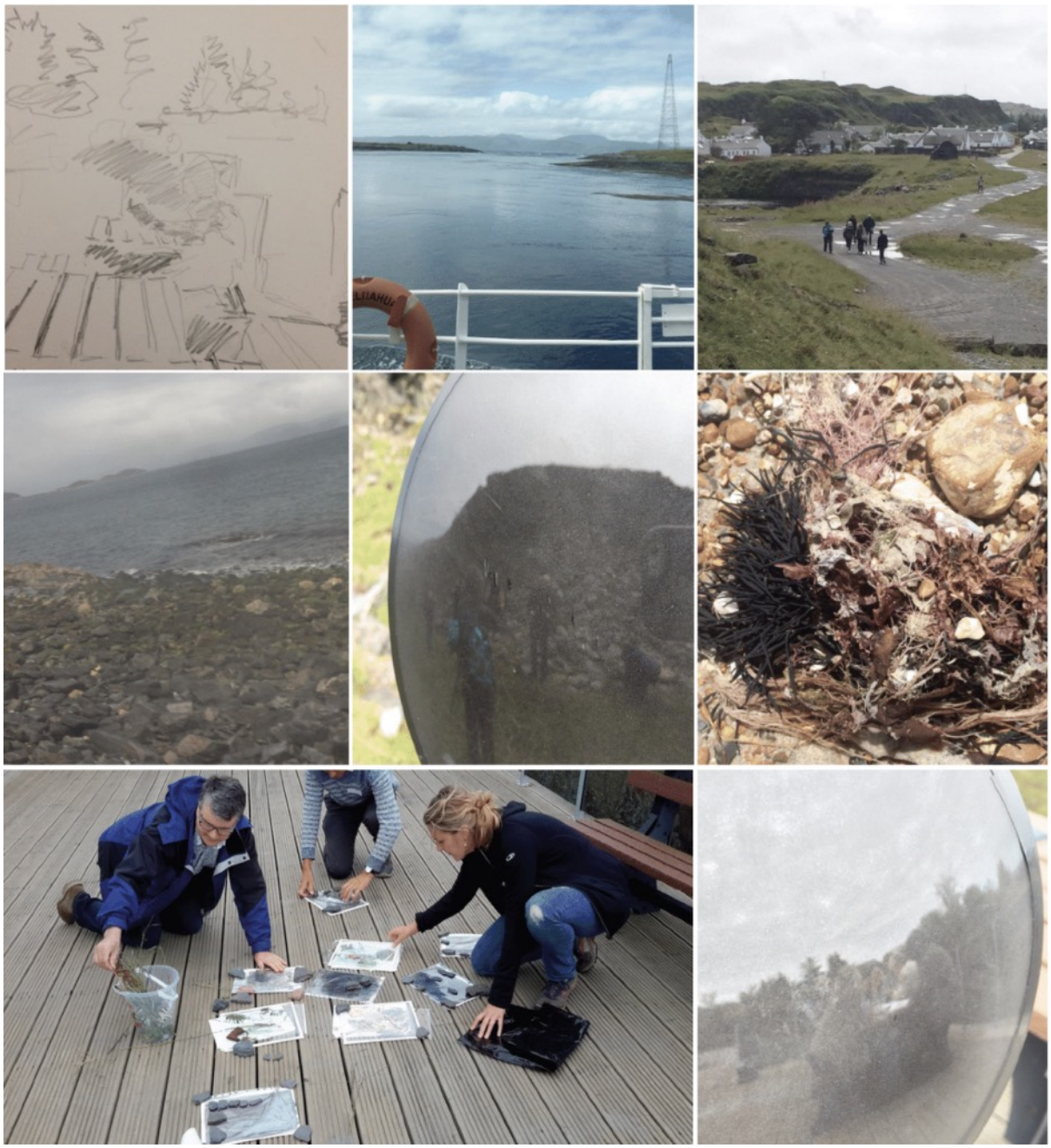
Poem to be published in *Passing Through* Indigo Dreams Pubs. 2018

The Expanded Territory of the Garden

Susannah King

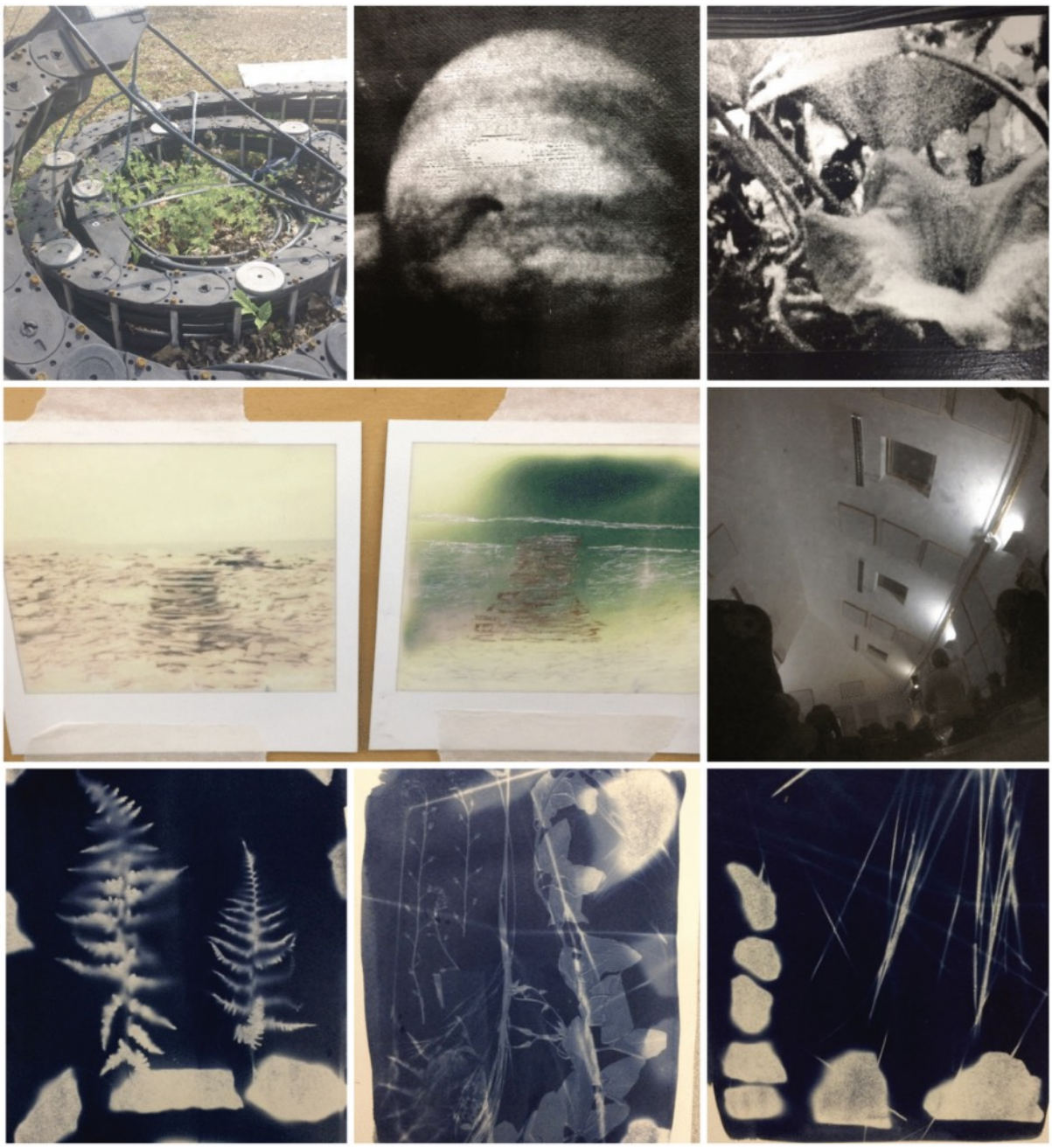
Alternative photographic drawing workshop accessing and exploring the landscape and found materials of Seil Island, Cullipool, Isle of Luing and Kilmartin Glen on Friday 23rd June 2017 as part of the “Expressing the Earth Conference: A Trans-Disciplinary Conference in Argyll for Scotland’s Year of History, Heritage and Archaeology 2017”

Seil Island Hall, Argyll 22-24 June 2017



The montage on each page presents examples of work made by participating delegate. Cyanotypes (both processing and outcomes), site recordings made over the few days of the conference, Camera Lucida drawings, Polariod imagings, Claude Glass imagings and further examples of my own creative practice. My personal interest in landscape derive from inhabiting and passing through a range of rural, suburban, urban, communal, private, nurtured or abandoned spaces and the human relationship I access and cultivate to each territory. My particular interest is in Gardens, in all their forms. I record these locations via alternative photographic techniques, drawing, collage and painting and in turn a new visual access is permitted, often an altered reality that suggests the emergence of an unexplored location

When denied access for exploration a disenfranchisement of experience can exist and contemporary civilisation becomes ‘de-territorialised’ to our surroundings. On a scale of progress since the early Industrial Revolution, it is this narrative of detachment that acts as a gauge of social development and one that artists play a key role in highlighting to their audience for a shared observation, comment and



engagement. My own locations may be localised and seemingly insignificant however by highlighting their success or plight, I raise awareness whether historically we are Diggers, Chartists, Hermits, Poets, Writers, Artists, Environmentalists, Guerrilla Gardeners or just simply Gardeners gardening.

The approach and application of Geopoetics (conceived by Kenneth White) I relay in my practice is of a realignment of our relationship with our surroundings. The communal response from the conference delegates was vital to the participatory element of my Geopoetic workshop. We explored the landscape witnessed on the various trips via a Claude Glass reflecting and recording as we moved from place to place. We took Polaroid photographs and in some cases scratched into the surface to make new narratives. Out on trips we collected natural and manmade elements to use in Cyanotype printing.

Finally, we used a Camera Lucida to draw/trace the landscape reflected via its shadow.

Whether we became re-enfranchised to our surroundings, is down to individual interpretations, however the work made was as a community sharing and rejoicing in our collective experience. I think and feel this can constitute.

Perhaps the noun ‘community’ indeed holds the key, with a collective response from the greater community, many artists, writers, musicians, scientists and politicans are ‘working through’ rather than ‘acting out’ the irrationality of our modern age and we can change this noun into its adjective.

“The real voyage of discovery consists of not in seeking new landscapes but in having new eyes.” - Marcel Proust

“The majority have been unwilling to listen in earnest and conceive a new view, yet the earth is always looking for something different and what better place to start than in the …(Garden).” - Kenneth White

With sincere thanks and gratitude to the delegate participants Colin and Wilma Brown, Gordon Peters and Caroline Watson.

High Borrowdale Farm

Kerry Darbishire

Great burnet, daisies, yellow rattle,
pignut, star bright, bedstraw
and a hundred other flowers
I can't name,
have found their way home.

Horse hair and lime-wash
barely patch the walls. Windows,
curtains and bread oven are gone,
nettles burn through a grate standing proud
of the hearth.

The open flue maps the last draw
of peat smoke from the kitchen
and bedroom – open wide
to sycamores filtering
today's hot sun.

A lintel crumbles to dust where salt
and spices were stored oak-dark
and dry. One thistle coming into flower,
sits at the table in its July best.
The pantry floor dips, slate slabs stare

at the sky. I count five
stone steps up to the half-way turn
and see the giant fallen ash. Here
a family caught the last glimpse of stars
before bed. Here

candles cast shadows from the sill –
danced themselves to sleep
as prayers rolled out to hay meadows
where now a pair of buzzards cry
shadowing the summer-long lane.

Winter Tracks

Kerry Darbishire

Days grow weak as boughs
dip heavier with apples
sweetly scented air

Above faded land
the wild geese fly south again
wood-smoke barely moves

December returns
stirring storms on mountain tops
footprints in the snow

Full moon on mountain
singing in a winter sky
falling stars on tarns

Landale's slate-sharp nights
soften over Skelwith Force
waking heavy pines

Woods shadow the land
still as tribes biding their time
I am not alone

Sunlight seeks out tracks
of moonlit hare, deer and stoat
running clear away

Words in the wind: Widening horizons and deepening perceptions

Michael Hamish Glen
Touchstone / QuiteWrite

By way of introduction

This contribution is based on the short PowerPoint presentation I gave at the *Expressing the Earth* conference where the slides acted as my notes. The background is my work as a consultant and as a creative writer in heritage interpretation which I explain below. After spending time with so many folks involved with geopoetics, I realized that our aims are largely common and our methods overlap.

I regard my public work as that of a 'perception pollinator'. By interpreting a place, I hope to fertilize minds with awareness, understanding, appreciation and ideas in relation to our landscape, our natural heritage, our cultural heritage and, particularly, how these are all related – in effect, as 'land and life'.

Freeman Tilden, working at the behest of the US National Parks Service, wrote his seminal work, *Heritage Interpretation*, in 1957. It is just as relevant and applicable today, sixty years later, as it was then. He offered this definition:

Heritage interpretation is an educational activity which aims to reveal meanings and relationships through the use of original objects, by first-hand experience and by illustrative media, rather than simply to communicate factual information.

Heritage interpretation is, essentially, a form of storytelling. By applying wisdom, it makes knowledge accessible; it translates, if you like, the *scientia* of the expert into terms comprehensible to the lay person. Most importantly, it makes connections with visitors to sites of heritage value or interest and relates to their experience, to the intellectual and environmental 'baggage' they bring with them.

Ideally, it provokes further investigation on the part of the visitor and reveals, in the words of one consultant, great explanations. Relate, provoke and reveal are the watchwords that guide all heritage interpreters. It is an art, craft or skill that uses intellectual processes to produce practical results. It may touch upon the scholarly but it is not an academic activity.

Much of my recent endeavor has been my work as a wordsmith. I hesitate to call myself a writer or author, even less a poet. My job is to meet my client's brief by employing, simply put, craftsmanship rather than artistry in the handling of words. In the way a drystane dyker builds a wall for a set location to meet a defined need, I assemble words using what might be called disciplined creativity.

Importantly, this demands that I be thrifty with words but liberal with meaning. The words may be in prose or verse form, or contemplative in style to elicit responses. They may arouse surprise, humour, sorrow; they may ask questions and even set puzzles. What I try to do, variously, is make people smile, frown, ponder or reflect, or a combination of these.

My great hero, my mentor, in achieving economy in the use of words, is the great concrete poet, master of the one-word poem, Ian Hamilton Finlay for whom I printed many of his small booklets and cards in the late 1960s and early 1970s.

Words in the wind

Most of my presentation was a brief canter through some ‘chosen samples’, as Holy Willie might have described them, of work I have done for a variety of clients whose commissioning, and permission to include them here, are gratefully acknowledged.

Working with Welsh

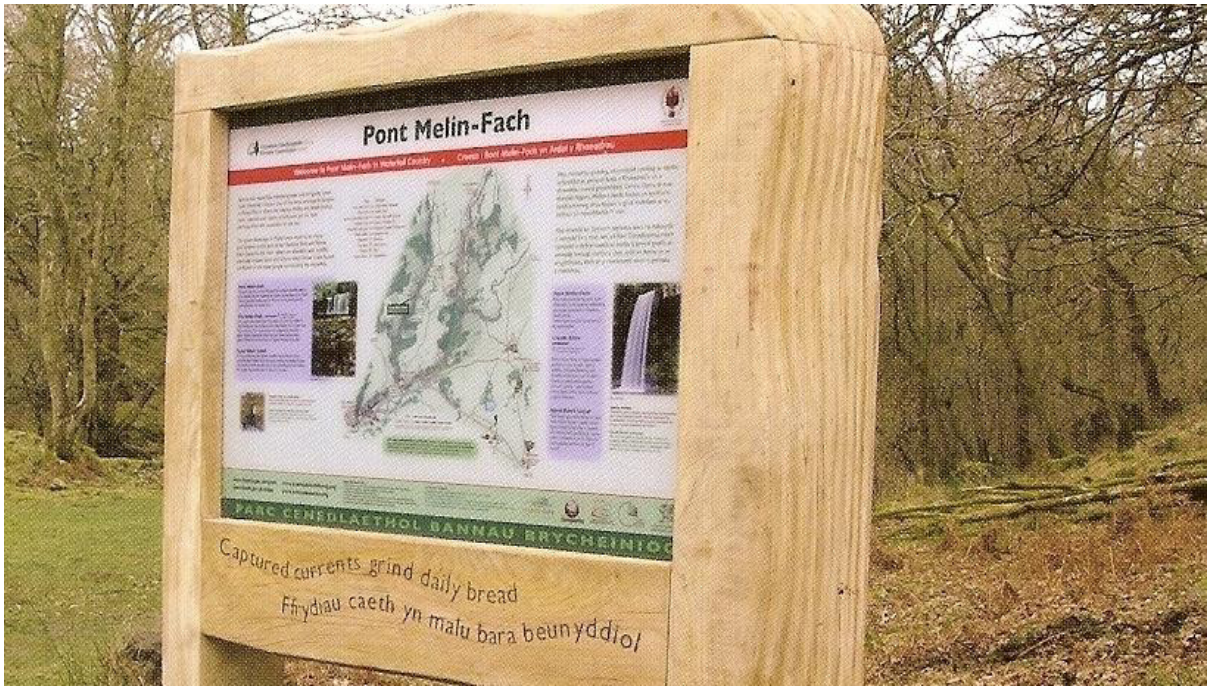
Brecon Beacons National Park is very proud of what it calls *Bro’r Sgydau*, *Waterfall Country*, home to five dramatic cascades. I was asked to describe each in no more than about 40 characters that could then be rendered in Welsh, rather than translated as such.

The first, at an early iron works:

Toiling rivers turn mighty engines / Nerth afonydd yn troi peiriannau mawr

At another workplace, a grain mill:

Captured currents grind daily bread / Ffrydiau caeth yn malu bara beunyddiol



At a sheer drop, carved by water:

Sudden torrents drown tumbling steps / Llifiannau sydyn yn boddi grisiau serth

Where underground channels had been formed:

Searching waters carve dark secrets / Dyfroedd chwilgar yn cerfio tywyllwch cêl

In one of the many areas of woodland:

Seeping streams reach thirsty roots / Nentydd yn treiddio i wreiddiau sychion

More water

Remaining on the theme of water, I was asked to construct a series of words for the handrails of a new bridge over the River Leven at Findatie, on the Loch Leven Heritage Trail. Again, I developed a convention, using the same form of words for each of the six statements. The river had been canalised in the early 19th century to provide a better flow to mills along its length and to lower the level of the Loch to create more farmland.

Sturdy Leven bridge, braced over working water

Sluice-curbed Leven cut, carved out for working water

Snaking Leven river, replaced by working water

Languid Leven loch, lowered for working water

Thirsty Leven mills, maintained by working water

Fertile Leven lands, left free from working water

Still more water

One of my most successful commissions, which produced positive comments from folk who didn't know I was the author, was a series of stanzas for more than 20 seats around Loch Leven, on its Heritage Trail. The words were carved on stone seats or into the backs of oak benches, most of which were designed in three parts which conflicted with my two-line fragments! However, the woodworker responsible found a happy solution.

Some of my favourites include:

The tumbles of lapwings and the gobbling of geese
echo the spirals of skylarks and the squabbling of ducks

Skeelie hurlin an canny burlin
focht unfurlin fortouns frae curlin frost

Chimney stacks, linen flax, corn mills, whisky stills

snuff mills, paper mills, bleach fields, profit yields

The fisherman's friend is the flirty fly,
fickle food for fleeting fish

Sneaking snails, battling beetles,
dashing dragons, dancing damsels

Ablow yon auld an scrievit stanes
lirk Kinross toun's respeckit banes

Among the trees

An early essay into this kind of creative writing was the preparation of twelve 'interpretive statements' for Bennachie Forest in Aberdeenshire. Here I worked with three sculptors whose brief for each installation was the line of words I had created. Age has told on many of the timber works but two the more lasting examples include one on stone by the distinguished letter-carver Mary Bourne (*The tumbling of waters is the teeming of life*) and a delightful and whimsical interpretation of my interpretive statements:

Rejected and dejected

Not every effort is rewarded by posterity. For a hide, overlooking a loch in Argyll, I constructed 12 of what I thought were mildly entertaining and certainly explanatory six-line pieces, set out as diamonds. Although I was paid, words written by a local writer were preferred and mine rest on paper, rather than cut into timber panels.

Two I liked well were the following:

Ròn : Seal

Glistening seals

haul their awkward

sleekness from the easy

seas and then dream,

flippers high, of

fish suppers

Iasgair : Fisherman

Fish-farmers

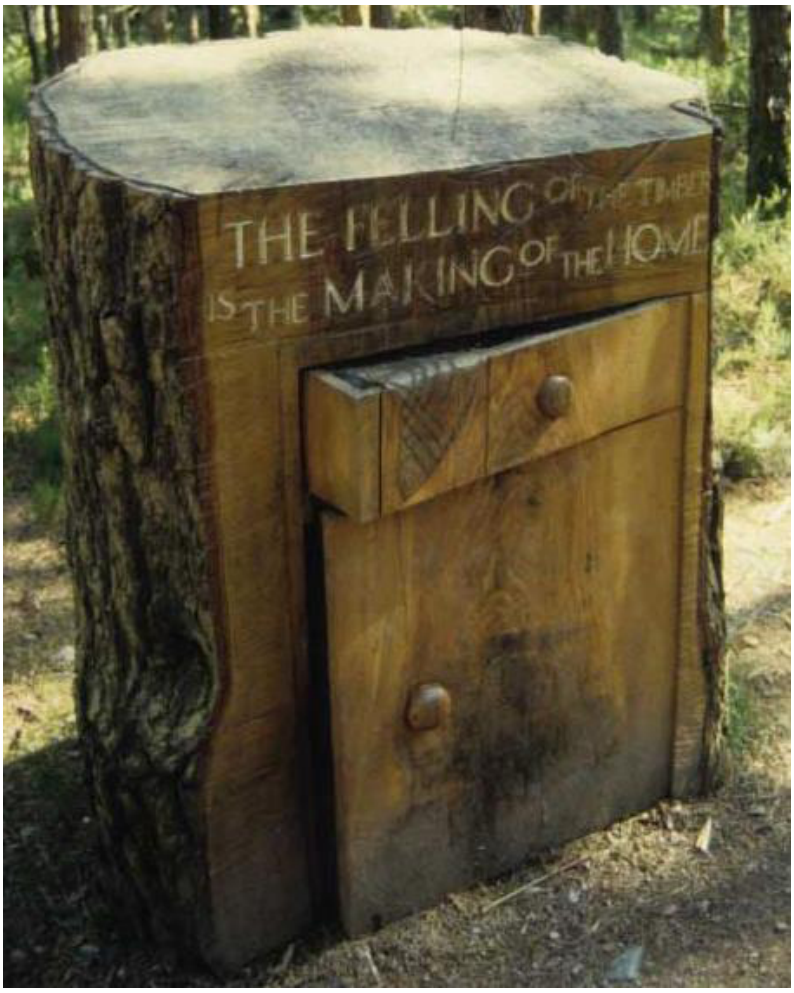
have learned new

skills to harvest leaping

energy whose ocean of

journeys goes round

in circles



A clearance reveals a clearance

The Forestry Commission, which has been my best customer, giving me a lot of scope to choose the style of my work, set about clear-felling a woodland in Morvern only to discover (the original planting map was missing) that the trees had been planted on a clachan cleared nearly 200 years before. They asked me to provide, in this case, longer interpretations of the story of the place and the sadness that went with it.

The story is well-documented. This *Lament for the township Aoineadh Mòr / Tuireadh an Aoinidh Mhòir* found various forms, the most innovative of which was to print the words of short statements on filled plastic sacks which were then scattered (carefully!) among the remnants of the houses. I've chosen four examples. As elsewhere, I relied on creative Gaelic speakers to provide their versions of what I wrote. Once again, I stuck to a convention so that each statement is constructed in the same way.

As an aside, it is salutary that both in Wales and Scotland, the original work is in English and relies on interpretations in Welsh and Gaelic. I hope this will change.

The only rustle is the browsing of a hind in the wood
'S e eilid a' sporghail sa choille an aon ghluasad a chluinnear

The only whistle is the blowing of a wind in the trees
'S e sèideadh gaoithe 's na craobhan an aon fhead a chluinnear

The only scurry is the searching of a mouse in the grass
'S e luchag a' sireadh san fheur an aon riagail a chluinnear

The only hurry is the darting of a finch in a birch
'S e an glaisean a' riagail ann am beithe an aon chabhaig a chithear

Abandoned but not forgotten

The rendering in Gaelic of my words at Leitir Fura, near Glenelg on Skye, was so successful that one visitor wrote and asked if Sorley Maclean had been the author. In fact, it was Gavin Parsons of Sabhal Mòr Ostaig. The site was an abandoned, rather than a cleared, village with a timeless story to tell from prehistory, via the Vikings to today's woodland planted among the heaps of lost homes. The words were inscribed on small panels, cleverly concealed in timber posts in order to minimise their intrusion. I was allowed to write what we used to call blank verse when I was at school and I even adopted an anarchic layout and an e e cummings approach to

initial capitals, except in the titles which, I think now, was an oversight! Much of it expected the visitor to discover the meaning of the more cryptic lines.

Timber

cut by stone and untold energy,

to smelt a life of new horizons

from a fire-mouthed cave, and

axed by wintering traders,

once Norse invaders, hauled high

on a repairing shore.

Fiodh

geàirrte le cloich agus neart do-innse

gus saoghal ùr a leaghadh

bho uaimh theine-bheulach agus

snaidhte le malairtich a' gheamhraidh

a bha uair nan ionnsaighich Lochlannach,

tarraingte àrd air cladach càraidh

Imitation is the sincerest form …

Marketing is not new. In the 1860s, some bright spark invented the longest place name in Europe: *Llanfairpwllgwyngyllgogerychwyrndrobwllllantysiliogogogoch*. It was done to promote a railway station on Anglesey. Undaunted by accusations of plagiarism, I worked with a delightful Welsh woman farmer to find a way of linking the various natural and built sites and communities in the Ystwyth Valley. The result was a great success, particularly with school kids who were challenged to unscramble the name which looks best as one line but is small to read here in Welsh and smaller in English:

Yr Avon Ystwyth

Cwmafonystwythsy'nsyrthiotrosgraigheibiogoedwigpentrefdiwydiantcollrhydpontceunanto'rhafodgerybwa

Or, in expanded form:

Cwm yr afon ystwyth sy'n syrthio tros graig, heibio goedwig, trwy pentref a diwydiant coll, ar draws rhyd, tan pont, i lawr ceunant o'r hafod ger y bwa

The Ystwyth Valley

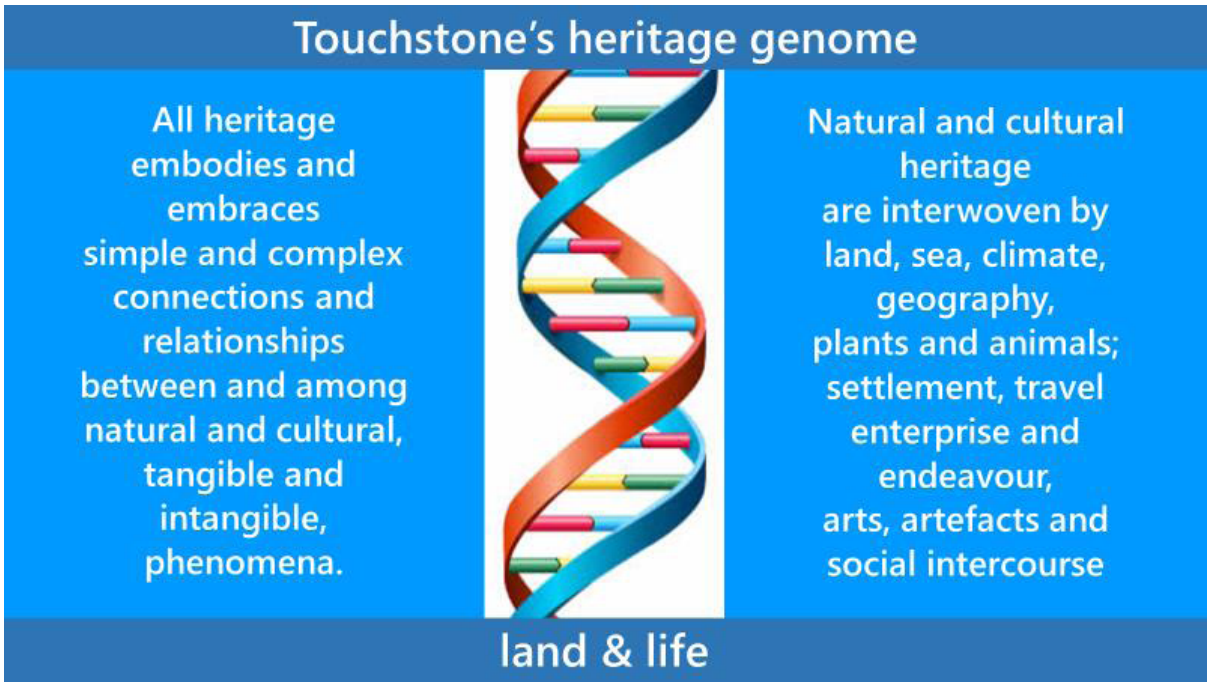
Valleyoftheagileriverthattumblesoverrockpastwoodlandvillagelostindustryfordbridgeravinefromtheuplandfarmnearthearch

Or, in abbreviated form:

> The valley of the agile river that tumbles over rock, past woodland, village and lost industry, across the ford, under the bridge and down the ravine from the upland farm near the arch

Land and life

In all that I do, I try to link natural and cultural history for each depends on the other to a greater or lesser extent. To explain this, I created my heritage genome which I have used extensively to explain this synergy.
This is expressed, evocatively and memorably, in folk song which I believe, offers as



fine an inspirational and sub-conscious interpretation of our heritage, natural and cultural, as any constructed text. I have articulated these thoughts at various gatherings, not least at an international heritage interpretation conference in Inverness in October 2017. I was aided and abetted by the distinguished young traditional singer, Robyn Stapleton. She adorned my presentation by singing a number of songs to illustrate some of the points I was making – having delighted the delegates the night before with a short set of songs.

Folk song and music have a heritage beyond history; early finds in China date folk music back to at least 5000 BCE. It is a universal and lasting medium of communication and is the expression of the people, by the people, for the people. Folk song records, relates and reflects land, life and mores and Scotland is fortunate

to have a remarkable canon of folk tales and song. Hamish Henderson did so much to bring this to everyone's attention in his unique, scholarly and entertaining way.

Folk song, like more conventional 'heritage interpretation', is storytelling at its best; it encapsulates the synergy of our natural and cultural environments and conveys hidden truths and deeper meanings. It is participative, provocative, memorable and enjoyable and is a powerful arrow in the heritage interpreter's quiver. It is a way of widening horizons and deepening perceptions about land and life in all their linked manifestations.

On that note, I cannot end without mentioning my profound appreciation of the unforgettable and outstanding performance by another acclaimed performer, Karine Polwart, of her own work, *Wind Resistance* which sings a story of skeins – of geese, but skeins of stories of land and life. It is unmissable and has achieved widespread admiration – and many repeat performances.

Oh, to have her talent!


AND STONES MOVED SILENTLY ACROSS THE WORLD

By the Book - Herbs, Creativity and Ways of Knowing

Elizabeth Rimmer

In 2013, I started a project on my blog called *Half a Hundred Herbs*, which later developed into my third full collection of poetry, *Haggards*. It opened thus:

> *In my youth, with a certain atavistic longing for a simpler universe to be fabulous in, I took a serious interest in herbs, largely inspired by a book by Audrey Wynne Hatfield, entitled* ***Pleasures of Herbs*** *(Museum Press London 1964), a mix of cookery, garden, folklore, traditional healing and beautiful line drawings.*

I've grown herbs, cooked with them, made pot pourri and medicinal teas and salves ever since then. I've learned a lot, and as I'm a child of my generation, I mostly learned from all the books I could get hold of. But when you start getting serious about herbs, you very quickly discover a problem with books. A lot of books about herbs aren't quite so serious; they are beautiful, evocative, romantic, but they contain pitfalls for the unwary: material that has been cut and pasted without checking the information, assertions made that contradict information in other books, and in the worst cases, even in the same book, in different chapters. There is occasional misidentification of plants and very often vague or insufficient instruction. It's as if the authors don't believe anyone will actually take it seriously and try out the furniture polish, perfumed items, biscuit recipes or traditional remedies they write about. I got pretty impatient with what I saw as sloppy writing and people who didn't do their homework.

It's fair to say that some writers about herbs - Claire Loewenfeld (*Herb Gardening* Faber 1964) comes to mind here - are very meticulous. Their quantities and temperatures are exact, their illustrations botanically accurate and their methods

clear and explicit - but some aren't. Sometimes they are good at the gardening, like Jekka McVicar, or the cookery, and settle for folklore on other topics. Sometimes they seem to thrive in an atmosphere of magic, nostalgia and ignorance, almost to cultivate it, as if scientifically responsible disciplines of thought were simply cultural oppression. Renee Davis, a herbalist who writes the blog *Goldroot Botanical Medicine* writes of an encounter with such a one in a blogpost dated 6th May 2017 in which she sums up incisively the contrast between this mindset and the usual scientific discipline of medical practice.

> *I was recently speaking to an herbalist about the issue of licensing in herbal medicine. He was daftly opposed to such a thing, as he "is an artist, and will not stand for any board or organization telling me how to do my art." As an artist, his reasoning is obvious. Any type of regulation is automatically censorship to his personal expression. Criticism can be threatening. Why stifle one's creative expression? It's cruel, heartless, and unnecessary.*

http://www.goldrootherbs.com/2017/05/06/herbal-medicine-substrate-art/

My dissatisfaction with what I was reading came to a head when I read a book called *Letting in the Wild Edges* by Glennie Kindred – a book which was long on atmosphere and inspiration and exasperatingly short on detail. It was as I was preparing a harshly critical review that I realised what the root of the problem was: this kind of knowledge was not meant to be learned from books.

Herbal practice is supposed to be transmitted on a one to one basis, in person, seeing for yourself what a 'handful' is, tasting the teas and tinctures, observing the processes, and learning by direct experience what 'enough' is. Learning happens through direct hands on contact with the plants, the landscape in which they flourish, and the weather that nourishes them; and the way you practice is designed to be adapted to the needs and the overall condition of the individual patient. It depends on highly developed responses to sensory experience and a wholly different attitude to the learning process. Medical treatment becomes a dialogue between practitioner and the body of the patient, and the relationship of the healer to the teaching is constantly changing and adapting to lived experience.

People who work the land on the permaculture model are taught according to exactly this mindset – no more imposed decisions derived from authorised principles, no more working by the numbers. Soil conditions, weather, native species or availability of local resources may mean that a design that works well in the tropics, with warmer temperatures and a day-length that varies very little, won't give the same results in a climate with short growing seasons and extreme temperatures. A design feature such as a herb spiral, which has become iconic in places with light soils, low rainfall and predictable sunshine, can be completely unsuitable in heavy clay or wetter climates. You have to know your own situation in detail, adapt and correct as you go,

be willing to scrap brilliant plans because they have different consequences in your particular circumstances, and be open to doing something completely new or different because your situation has changed. Your design can, and should, vary from not only region to region, but from one garden to the next. It needs the kind of intimate and experience-based knowledge that books can't give.

I had been steered in this direction a year before by meeting a very learned herbalist from Oregon called Heather Nic Fleisdheir. When she visited my garden, she tasted a herb that she didn't recognise and said, 'hmm, that tastes like good heart medicine'. It was a revelation. It's one thing to know which drugs are used to treat medical conditions; it is something else to know how they taste. But before the NHS and pharmacological industries, a healer would need to be able to find his ingredients himself, (the healing profession has never been exclusively male, but it is true that the male perspective has usually been dominant) and before books and university courses he would have organised his knowledge very differently.

Further research provided evidence that the traditional experimental adaptive mindset is the way medical teaching used to be practised. I found considerable evidence of scientific rigour, experiment and collaboration in traditional practice in the book *Healing Threads* by Mary Beith. (This book has long been out of print and second-hand copies can be astronomically expensive, but the publishers Birlinn, have recently announced that it will be reprinted in May of this year.) Mary Beith studied the libraries of the Beaton medical clan (Clann Meic-bethad), who originated in Ireland but who were prominent in Scotland from 1300 until 1750. Many of their books and records survive, and reveal them to be both literate and experimental, in contact with and learning from some of the most prominent medical schools from Scandinavia to the Mediterranean, including the renowned colleges at Paris and Salerno. They quote Islamic scholars as well as the Greek and Latin classical authors, and occasionally refer to medical treatises written by women. It is not generally recognised that women practised medicine at this time nor that at least one university, Salerno, admitted women as students. There is even a record of one woman from Salerno who came to Scotland as part of her studies, was invited to Oxford, and was then tried as a witch once she reached England. I heard this on the Out of Doors programme, but have never been able to find any more information to verify it.

In my own work on a translation of the 9th century *Charm of Nine Herbs* I found evidence of adaptation, improvisation and the combining of data from a wide range of sources. There are references to Thor as well as Christ, pagan charms alongside quotations from the Bible, and the northern lambs' cress (a plant from the same family and with similar properties) is substituted for the non-native and possibly more tender houseleek cited in the source material. The usual assumption made by commentators on such texts is that people were passively working from texts they couldn't understand and filling up the gaps with magic and superstition. Such

curiosities as the theory of the four humours, the astrological classification of herbs cited by Culpepper, or the Doctrine of Signatures, first mentioned by William Cole, are used as evidence of ignorance and unscientific thinking.

It is indeed true that astrology was indeed taken more seriously in the seventeenth century than today, not simply as a method of cultural classification, but predicting the future. Culpepper, despite his avowed intention: “I consulted with my two brothers, DR. REASON and DR. EXPERIENCE, and took a voyage to visit my mother NATURE, by whose advice, together with the help of DR. DILIGENCE, I at last obtained my desire” was involved in a form of political strategy-building that was completely based on the predictions of the contemporary astrologer William Lilly. I will do no more than draw a parallel with current theories of political and economic modelling.

My belief is that astrological or elemental classifications of plants were useful filters to organise the mass of data a healer would have had to manage, and the Doctrine of Signatures no more than a visual mnemonic to help a trainee. If the language of ancient medicine is more poetical and figurative than we are used to, it does not follow that they were not as rigorous or disciplined as modern scientists. The dogmatic creation of systems and laws we find so laughable did not seem to play such a big part in traditional practice, but arises from later developments. There has been a definite change, not only in how we express and organise knowledge, but in how we learn, and how we test information we are given. I would like to suggest that this coincides with the development of printing, and an increasing reliance on the written word.

There were herbals before printing, but they were not the primary storehouses of knowledge they are today. They were expensive, and treated like artworks rathe than reference books. Most of their illustrations were heavy on symbolism rather than identification guides, and Agnes Arber points out in *Herbals: Their Origin and Evolution* that illustrations, copied from one text to another, became less and less realistic as copyists became more remote from their source material. It does not follow, however, that healers were equally ignorant. By the time Gerard - who was not the last herbalist to be dismissed as ‘a thinker and a plantsman rather than a scholar’ (Anna Pavord *The Naming of Names* 2010) - compiled his famous herbal, in 1597, his concern was not that people did not know their plants, but that they knew only the plants of their own gardens. Culpepper, whose *Complete Herbal* was published in 1653, often points out that it was not worth describing some plants because they were already so well-known. It is significant that even as early as the 1650’s he already felt it was necessary to break the stranglehold of professional bodies on the practice of medicine.

Herbalists such as Gerard and Culpepper were able to profit not only from the ability to produce books in large quantities and to make them widely available, but also from the opportunity to include illustrations that would be uniform across an entire

print run, so that for the first time it was possible to ensure that everyone was getting the same information. Very quickly, woodcuts of surprising quality and detail were being produced, and by the sixteenth century there was a serious attempt at botanical accuracy, with the production of herbals by Otto Brunfels (1530) Hieronymus Bock (1539) and Leonhard Fuchs (1542). Later, illustrations were produced by engraving on copper plates, from botanical drawings. It is notable that some of the best of these scientific professional works were produced by women, most famously the Scottish Elizabeth Blackwell, whose book *"A Curious Herbal"*, was published between 1737 and 1739, and was commended by the Royal College of Physicians. Botanical classification in the way that we understand it was also being developed, with the result that it was possible for the first time to standardise the names of plants.

All of this meant that it was possible to evaluate a doctor on the basis of an agreed body of knowledge, and to grant or withhold a license to practice. Right and wrong answers became much easier to define, and correct procedures could be imposed, and errors checked and remedied. Doctors began to do things, quite literally, by the book. This is not altogether a bad thing. There is value in accuracy, in having established standards, and a practice that is constantly evaluated and transparent. Having had more acquaintance than I would wish with the medical profession over the last few years, I can't disagree with this, and I am very grateful for the fact that I can go to a surgery run by the NHS with a reasonable certainty that I will receive expert treatment.

On the other hand, however, this meant that more experimental and adaptive practices that didn't fit the protocols were first side-lined, and then prohibited. Controls over who could practise and even train as doctors kept healing within the bounds of a narrow social group (and often vested interests) and people whose mindset didn't fit the way the establishment wants to work were first marginalised, then despised or seen as a threat. Women, speakers of Gaelic and Welsh and people who could not afford university fees were excluded from medical practice, and the learning they had cherished for generations was reduced to folklore, superstition and magic. Treatments are less flexible, and focussed on the ailment rather than the patient, and while it is excellent for acute and obvious problems, it is much less so for chronic problems which may have variable symptoms and multiple causes. We may be given treatments for illnesses and then treatments for the effects of the treatment (sometimes it is worth it, though – if you really need steroids you need them, and if you have to take stomach protectors and calcium tablets to mitigate them, you are still ahead of the game.) Patients get alienated from health care and doctors don't have time to explain or to see the complaint in the context of the patient's wider circumstances. Distress caused by social or environmental concerns may be treated medically, because it's quicker or cheaper. By the book doesn't always work.

There has been a further development over the last ten years, as the internet has radically changed everything about the way we learn. We have access to all sorts of information, of varying levels of knowledge and good intentions. Some is accurate, well-researched and properly validated, some merely anecdotal, some serving a particular agenda, such as sales pitches, conspiracy theories and paying off grudges. Some is based on misunderstanding or only partial knowledge, and some of it is frankly irresponsible and fantasy based. We are having to learn to filter information ourselves, to check it against our own experience, and establish our own criteria for what will work for us. We are relearning the old adaptive, intuitive and experienced ways of knowing, learning how to make allowances for the vocabularies of different generations and standards of translation. We know that there are many ways of getting information across, and comic panels and YouTube clips can be as authoritative as academic articles (sometimes). We are already developing new ways of thinking and speaking, new sensitivities to how other people express their experience.

As a poet, I find this enormously exciting and fruitful. Geopoetics has helped me navigate the fields of both arts and sciences, to draw connections and understand experience in new and creative ways, to revive old insights and give them new

relevance. I don’t think I will ever leave books behind, but the herbs on the one hand, and the enormous diverse resources of the internet on the other, are creating ways to cross-fertilise and renew our ways of understanding and expressing the earth.

Lemon Balm

Loriana Pauli

That scent!
It immediately takes me
on a journey out of real time:
I stand in a garden
at the foot of the Subasio near Assisi,
soaking up the warmth of the sun on my skin,
bathing in the warm,
refreshing,
inspiring,
nourishing,
sharp and yet soft scent
of a full bed of Lemon Balm.
I have one in my garden on the island.
It does its best, it gives all it can.
I use some leaves for my tea
and some twigs to ‘float’ my bedroom.
But never will it reach that generous,
almost voluptuous power of the cousins
living on dry, hot ground,
exposed to hours and hours of sun.
Its leaves look modest, unpretentious,
reminding me of nettles
or some rare mint species,

but the potion living in the leaves,

all created by sunshine, water, air -

and who knows what else,

is an alchemical mystery to me.

Subasio = mountain by Assisi

Wind over Water

Harriet Fraser, Image: Rob Fraser

wind over water
land leaning eastwards
with a hundred birds

the wind is swimming
and we disappear
like old bones
between thoughts

It somehow takes skin longer to dry out when it's windy. I have taken shelter in the lee of a wall. Wind is being funnelled over the top in a whip-whorl of force. On the tarn the water is racing in waves and has engulfed all the land that was Marsh in the summer. The bulrushes are leaning eastwards with the wind at their backs, their heads nodding furiously with a hundred individual rhythms, like birds pecking. When the rain comes past in gusts it is cold, feels icy - although this is strange as it has been so unseasonably warm recently.

There are no birds to be heard. Maybe the wind is out-noising them but more likely they are taking shelter. I have only seen two swans. They were swimming and diving by the opposite shore when we arrived and they too have disappeared now, out of this fierce wind.We walk up the hill and on the exposed top, where limestone juts out like old bones, I have to take shelter, to stop myself from being blown over. I fight my way in between gusts of wind to the base of the Hawthorn.

Its trunk is gloriously solid and still, and parts of the gnarled bark are dry. I rest my hand on them. I crouch down into the crevices between limestone slabs to gather my thoughts, and write in my notebook. Beside me are small gatherings of tiny bones. What is it, I wonder, who hides them here?

When we leave the ridge and walk back down to the road, it seems that the sheets of hail leave too. Above us, now that the rain has passed, blue sky and white clouds.

Found Poem from notes made at the Little Asby Hawthorn, Dec 20 2015
Published in The Long View (somewhere-nowhere press) 2017

Rubha Aird nan Eisirein, Loch na Keal, Mull

October 2017

Harriet Fraser, Image: Rob Fraser

there is no hurry

I sit with the coming / waves

tucked out of the worst of the wind

I sit with the going / waves

and let the rhythm fall into myself

in ways I cannot name

salt scent seeping in

light on rocks / gold

the sea retreats returns

a rush of grunts / slaps

in the inch-high shallows

decorations of shells

bring centuries of water

to one curved moment

there is no hurry / waves

coming coming going

Boundary Layer

John MacPherson

As the quill pen recorded the story of our history, so bird flight writes the story of the wind for us to witness.

Can you read it?

Let me help you understand.

When a steady strong wind moves along a surface, lets choose the sea, it results in a variation in the wind speed called a wind gradient, where the wind speed varies with altitude.

The gradient is strongest near the surface, diminishing gradually with altitude. The air closest to the sea will move more slowly than the air further away due to frictional force between sea and wind.

Birds know that moving in and out of these different wind speeds in certain patterns will allow them to utilise the extra energy created. This is called dynamic soaring.

It differs from conventional soaring in that it does not use rising air to sustain flight, but rather the boundary layer that separates different wind speeds.

Energy is extracted from the air simply by flying in and out of air masses moving at different speeds.

But of course birds don't really know all this.

They simply feel it.

They just flounder when they are unsupported, and when buoyed up they rise, and soar and glide.

(Just like people.)

And the name of one of the first scientists to investigate this? And whose studies "Observations of Herring Gull Soaring," (1940) and "Soaring over the Open Sea" (Scientific Monthly. pp.226-252 1942) hints at some of this avian magic?

Woodcock. Alfred H. Woodcock.

A man whose name can now effortlessly soar and glide through the boundary layers of your imagination.

Lighthouse Photographics

Siobhan Healy

My partner Dr Campbell Fleming and I were interested to read about the Geopoetics Conference that was to take place on the Isle of Seil and approached the Scottish Centre to invite conference participants to visit our recently established studio on the island. We were delighted to be asked to give an illustrated talk at the Conference and outlined the development of the Art & Environment Foundation. We gave an overview of our aspirations for our crystal sculpture project and showed examples of some of the experimental sculptural pieces that we are developing on the island of Seil.

Our work explores the relation between changes in climate, extreme weather, earthquakes and volcanos and relates them to the human experience. As part of the research process, we visited the Darwin Research Station on the Galapagos Islands to research the geology, flora & fauna of these remote and interesting islands. The artworks we are developing relate to the effects of nature on humanity.

My artwork is inspired by rare species of flora and fauna and I depict them with precious materials such as crystals, diamond dust and gold leaf, to give a sense of the delicate preciousness of these species. Some of my work is in the Scottish Parliament and internationally at venues such as Harvard University Herbarium, USA and in the private collection of Sir David Attenborough.

Dr Campbell Fleming specialises in geology and hydrology and his knowledge of rocks and crystals feeds into my experimental sculptural work. I am interested in working with writers and poets to develop the work further.

We have built a hot crystal studio on the hill overlooking Balvicar bay in which we are experimenting with melting pyrites, other minerals & natural materials found throughout Scotland. We heat the crystals to create molten material to recreate the processes of the natural forces of geology. The crystal is cooled at differing rates to show how crystals are formed due to slow cooling and to reference the discovery of devitrification by Scottish Geologist John Hutton (1726-1797).

We hope to create a space on the island of Seil in which art, science and environmental issues are considered and expressed in assorted artistic media. Our website www.ArtandEnvironmentFoundation.com contains further details of our projects.

Contributors

Norman Bissell is the Director of the Scottish Centre for Geopoetics and his poems, essays and reviews have been widely published. His poetry collection Slate, Sea and Sky: A Journey from Glasgow to the Isle of Luing, (photographs by Oscar Marzaroli), was reprinted in 2015. His forthcoming first novel is about the desperate struggle of George Orwell to find love and finish writing Nineteen Eighty-Four. Born in Glasgow, he now lives on the Isle of Luing in Argyll. www.normanbissell.com

Kerry Darbishire lives on a Cumbrian fellside where she finds most of her inspiration. Her first poetry collection ‘A Lift of Wings’, was published by Indigo Dreams in 2014. Her second collection, ‘Distance Sweet on my Tongue’ in 2018. Kerry has won many prizes, including shortlisted in the Bridport Prize, 2017. Kerry’s poems have appeared widely in magazines and anthologies. She is a member of The Brewery Poets, Dove Cottage Poets, Write on the Farm and Kim Moore’s poetry group.

Harriet and Rob Fraser work together as somewhere-nowhere, combining writing, photographs and temporary art installations in an exploration of the natural world and environmental issues. Their practice is rooted in walking and extended periods of slow time outdoors. They are currently touring an exhibition of 'The Long View', resulting from two years with seven remarkably ordinary trees; the Little Asby Hawthorn is one of these seven trees.

Michael Hamish Glen has been writing plays, stories, poetry and prose since he was first able to manipulate a typewriter. Much of his work in the last thirty years has been as a heritage interpretation consultant and author of creative text for places of natural and cultural heritage. He has recently won awards in the Scottish Arts Club annual open competition for short stories. He is particularly interested in the role of folk song and tales as interpretations of Scotland's intangible heritage.

Alyson Hallett The Migration Habits of Stones is a poetry and public art project that Alyson has been curating for 18 years. Work is sited in Australia, USA, Scotland and England. The migrations Alyson makes with stones has been documented in an audio-diary for Radio 4, presented at The Geological Society (UK) and the Bellarmine Forum, Los Angeles. *Stone Talks*, an essay recounting adventures/ poems/images with stones, is due out from Triarchy Press in spring 2019. fyi thestonelibrary.com

Susannah Rosenfeld-King uses the artistic disciplines of lens-less photography, painting, printmaking, and drawing to synthesise collected in-situ images and elicit reinterpreted realities of environmental and social change. She has an MA in Fine Art from Middlesex University, a PGCE from the Institute of Education and a BA in Fine Art from Central Saint Martin’s College of Art and Design. She teaches in Further and Higher Education and is an exhibiting, professional artist.

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 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.

Ian McFadyen Ex English teacher. Lives Peebles, sometimes Sutherland. James McCash prize for poetry in Scots back in1986. Wee book “Tom’s Boat and Other Poems” (Peebles Arts Festival 1996.) Poems in “Jorum”, Scottish Borders Arts 2000. Submit stuff to “The Eildon Tree” and “Northwords Now” these days. Other than “Expressing the Earth”, my last major outing was a music-and-readings show, “Why the Birds Sing”, for Tradfest 2017 and the Edinburgh Fringe 2018, with kind and talented friends. Next to McGonagall on SPL Website. Embryonic website: www.ianmcfadyen.scot.

Dr Mairi McFadyen is a creative ethnologist with a background in academia, arts and culture who is currently based in Inverness. In her work she has taken on the various roles of researcher, tutor, lecturer, teacher, writer, activist, campaigner, organiser, coordinator, producer, facilitator, curator, host, speaker and performer. She was elected in 2017 as the Assistant Director and a Council member of the Scottish Centre for Geopoetics and to the editorial group of Stravaig. http://www.mairimcfadyen.scot/.

LesleyMay Miller is an artist and poet. She combines her words and visual art in Artist Books, sculpture and in soundscapes. Her poetry is published in anthologies and magazines. She created a sculpture garden in the Scottish Borders. She now draws inspiration from living by the coast in East Lothian.

Helen Moore is an acclaimed ecopoet based in NE Scotland. She has published two poetry collections, Hedge Fund, And Other Living Margins (Shearsman Books, 2012) and ECOZOA (Permanent Publications, 2015), described by John Kinsella as “a milestone in the journey of ecopoetics”. Her poems, essays and reviews have been published widely, and her work has been translated into Italian. A pamphlet, The Disinherited, was published in 2017 and Helen’s third collection, The Mother Country, is due in 2019. FFI: www.helenmoorepoet.com

Mary Morrison is from the Isle of Harris, and her work is concerned with landscape, mapping and identity. She aims to combine a sense of place in her work with annotation – grid references, staves and tide tables are recurring motifs, balanced against fluid paint effects. She is continually inspired by the relationship between the written word and image, with paintings responding to works by Kenneth White, and the Sufi poet, Rumi for example. www.marymorrison.co.uk

Loriana Pauli lives on small island of the Outer Hebrides. Passionate about birds, flowers, herbs and (sometimes) people she tries not very successfully to re-create in her small garden the enchantment of the gardens of her childhood in Ticino, Switzerland.

Andrew Phillips grew up in the landscape of the South Downs, and now lives in Edinburgh. Always called to the wild and mountainous space of old rock, whilst

maintaining a love for the chalk homelands, the work emerges from a longing for these two distinct landscapes. Andrew's drawings have been shown in exhibitions in Scotland including the Royal Scottish Academy, and Society of Scottish Artists annual show, and published in Dark Mountain, and The Island Review.

Elizabeth Rimmer has published two collections of poetry with Red Squirrel Press, *Wherever We Live Now*, in 2011, and *The Territory of Rain*, in September 2015. Her third collection, *Haggards*, appeared in February 2018, including poems about herbs, wild landscapes, and ways of knowing as a response to personal grief and social upheaval. Her website is www.burnedthumb.co.uk.

Caroline Watson is an artist based in Paisley with a strong commitment to the cultural life of the local area. Working in drawing and mixed media, she explores ideas about our relationship to place with a growing interest in the use of photography in her work. She was elected to the editorial group of Stravaig in 2017. http://www.carolinewatsonart.com

Expressing the Earth

Conference Images of Seil, Easdale and Luing


Food
Drink
Medicine
Dyes
Crafts


Some Contributions of Geopoetics to
Modern Scottish Land Consciousness

Scottish
Centre
for
Geopoetics