

Annual Tony McManus Lecture 2018, South Leith Parish Church

Part 1: A Journey into Geopoetics

Part 2: Finding Radical Hope in Geopoetics

Exploring the contours of an emerging praxis

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Facts about our ecological crisis are incontrovertible. We must take action

Humans cannot continue to violate the fundamental laws of nature or science with impunity, say 94 signatories including **Dr Alison Green** and **Molly Scott Cato MEP**



▲ 'Humans cannot continue to violate the fundamental laws of nature or of science with impunity,' say the signatories. Photograph: Getty

most viewed



May urged to clarify whether she blocked Arron Banks investigation



Live Trump blames possible midterm losses on recent US terror attacks - live



Jamal Khashoggi's body was 'dissolved', says Erdoğan adviser



Two men arrested after stabbing at Sony Music's London HQ



David Cameron wants to return to politics. It's a shame he has so little to offer

Owen Jones

1: A Journey into Geopoetics



PhD (2012) 'The Space Between is Where the Maysie Lives: Presence, Imagination and Experience in the Traditional Ballad'

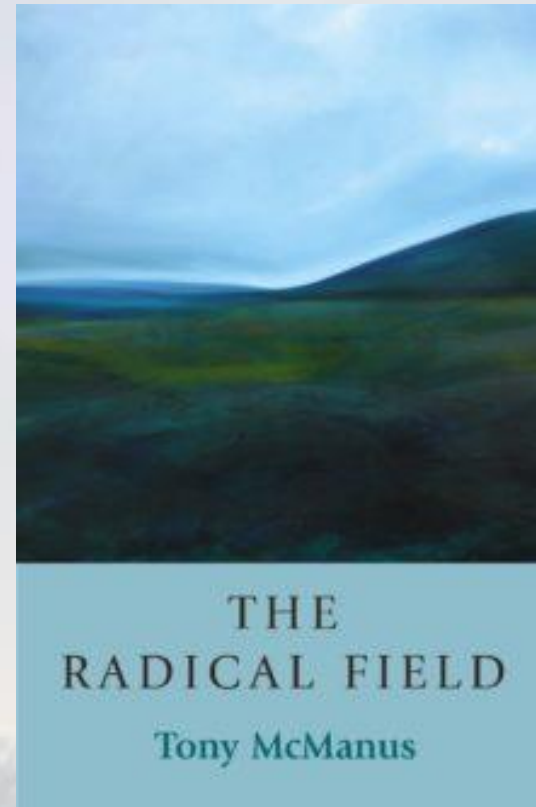
1: A Journey into Geopoetics

- New or renewed ‘**sense of world**’
- Seeking awareness and understanding both **intellectually**, by developing knowledge, and **sensitively**, using all our senses to become ‘attuned to the world’
- Embodied practice; grounded in an embodied, **aesthetic** experience of being-in-the-world

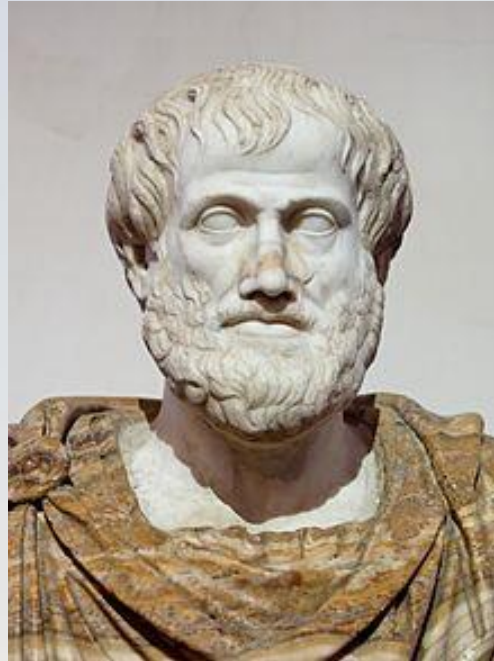
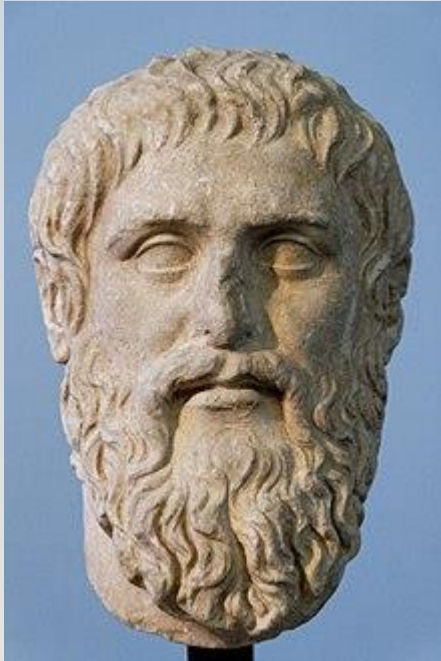
1: A Journey into Geopoetics

- What is the relationship between our embodied experience and perception, and the language we use to express it?

(McManus 2007, *The Radical Field*)



1: A Journey into Geopoetics



Geopoetics is deeply critical of Western thinking and practice over the last 2500 years, and its separation of human beings from the rest of the natural world

1: A Journey into Geopoetics

- Seeks to reinstate the thinking mind as one which can **perceive reality as a whole**
- **Cultural renewal =**
a new cultural perspective whereby separated disciplines and areas of knowledge can be unified by a **poetics** which places Earth at the centre of experience
- “From diverse disciplines the forward thinkers see the need for the philosophical mind to unite their perceptions, ‘**to see life whole**’ and to give expression to that complete vision”
(McManus, ‘Philistinism and Cultural Revolution’)

1: A Journey into Geopoetics

- ‘The real work consists in changing the categories, **grounding a new anthropology**, moving towards a new experience of the earth and of life’ (White 2004)
- A radical unlearning
- A ‘**new mental cartography**’
- A re-mapping of our relationship with the world

1: A Journey into Geopoetics

- Geo (**world**) poetics (**making**)
- Poetry ‘is the expression of the human mind which has reached a perception of the world which it must express’
- ‘When the human expresses the perception of being which opens up to this philosophical mind, he is not scientist, he is not even philosopher, he is poet: ‘poetry brings being into the light’ (Heidegger)
- **Poetic** synonymous with ‘**making the world new**’ (Bachelard 1958)

1: A Journey into Geopoetics

- Word culture that recognises the **creative relationship between man and earth** in all its diversity and particularities
- Intercultural movement
 - recognises linguistic, cultural, poetic, philosophic and scientific diversity
- Radical call for more critique; '**opening up**' against dogmatic, ideological and religious discourses
- strident **challenge to all colonising homogeneities**

1: A Journey into Geopoetics

- A **Creative Ethnology**
- Form of interdisciplinary anthropological research and practice
- emphasis on drawing global insights from consciously situated perspectives
 - values human relationships and emotional connections
 - recognises the diversity of human experience
 - understands the importance of our ecological connection to place; 'wisdom sits in places' (Basso 1996)

1: A Journey into Geopoetics

Creative Expression

finding imaginative
ways to share and disseminate
research beyond academy,
such as performance
or creative writing

Collaboration

cultivating sympathy,
synthesis, synergy (Geddes)

Become Artists Ourselves

'Every man is an artist'
(Beuys)

Interdisciplinarity

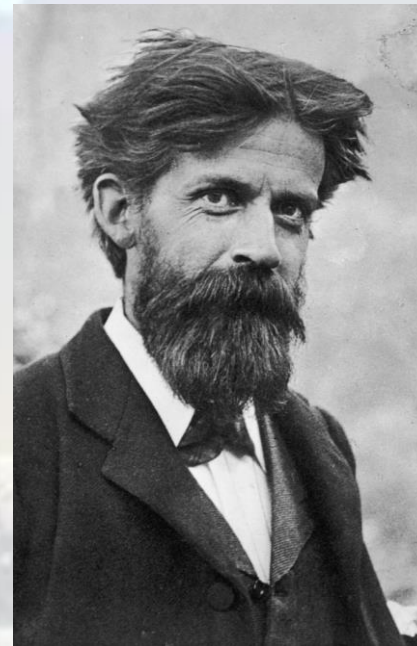
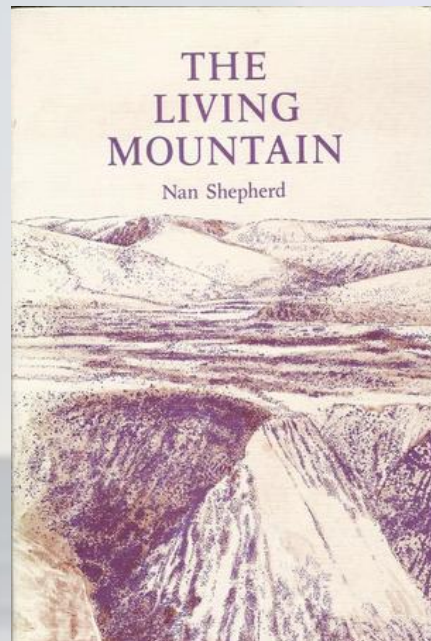
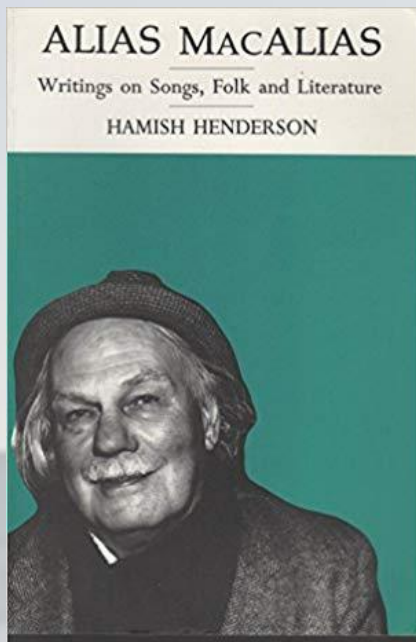
engaging in vital dialogue with
other fields - whether music,
writing, theatre or visual and
other arts or sciences

Scholar-activism

engaging in forms of social,
cultural and political work,
such as advocacy & activism

1: A Journey into Geopoetics

- **On the Carrying Stream Into the European Mountain: Roots and Routes of Creative (Scottish) Ethnology** (Kockel & McFadyen ...)



1: A Journey into Geopoetics

- ‘Beyond profession, my concern has been to find and follow a calling, a deeper voice. It finds its roots in who I am and a **sense of purpose** I have on earth’ (Lederach 2005)
- Beuys believed 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**

Scholar-activism

engaging in forms of social,
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1: A Journey into Geopoetics

- World theory-practice
- ‘Geopoetics demands *praxis*’ (Springer 2017, ‘Earth Writing’)
- ‘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...
- ‘The scope of theory and the hope of creativity collide in kaleidoscope’

1: A Journey into Geopoetics

- ‘Geopoetics holds out not just the possibility of, but the necessity for the fully human being as one who **strives towards perceptive awareness of the world through experience, thought and action** and who **strives also to express that sense of world in his/her life and thought.**’ (McManus)



Part 2: Radical Hope in Geopoetics

- Globalisation = colonisation
- **Cultural invasion** on a global scale
- ‘It’s a habit of mind. As such, it can be changed. Except that most of the time we cannot see this, because we are “locked in, politically, physically and culturally” to the world that capital has made.’
(Klein 2014, This Changes Everything: Capitalism vs. The Climate)
- Geopoetics calls for **decolonisation** – of the mind, of our ideologies and our institutions



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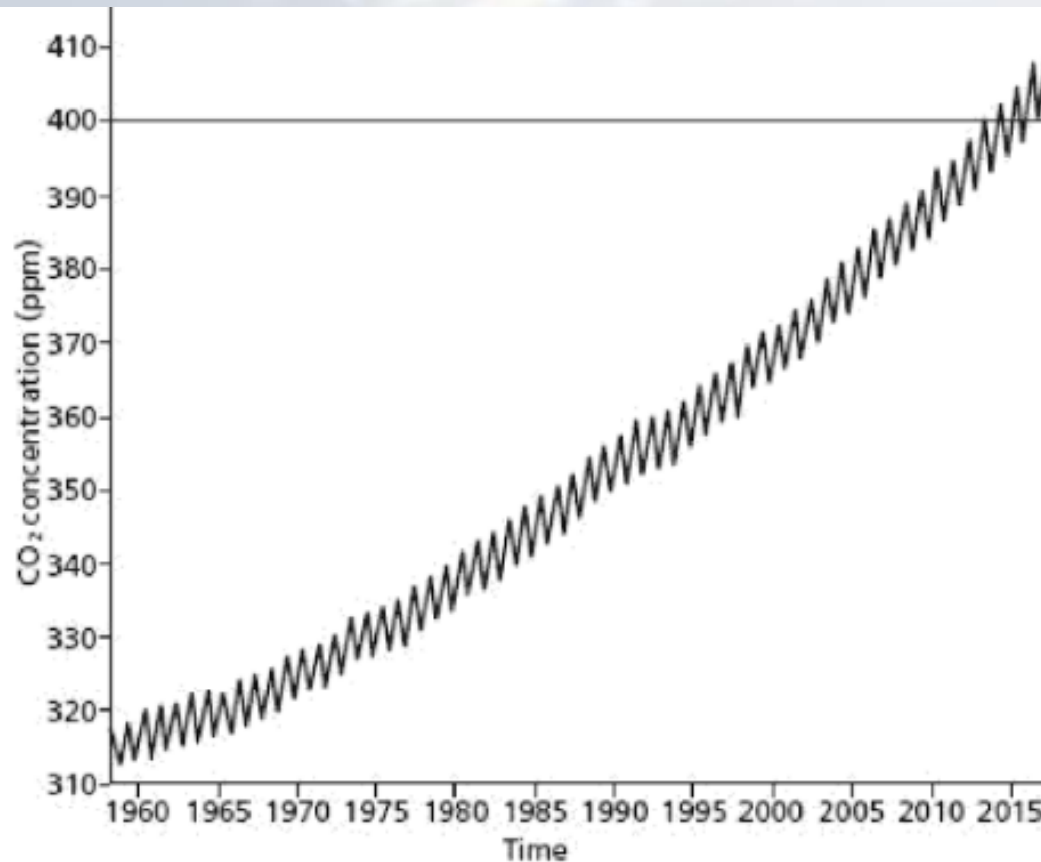


Hundreds of people showed up for a symbolic act of #ExtinctionRebellion against the UK government last week, accusing it of inaction in the face of #climate breakdown and ecological crisis.

Source: [DESMOGUK](https://www.desmog.uk)

2: Radical Hope in Geopoetics

- Arguments about climate breakdown are really arguments about **how and what we can think**
- **hyperobject**: a thing that surrounds us, envelops us and entangles us, but that is too big to see in its entirety
- ‘The crisis of climate breakdown is a **crisis of the mind**, a crisis of thought, a crisis in our ability to think another way to be. Soon, we shall not be able to think **at all.**’ (Bridle 2018, A New Dark Age: Technology and the End of the Future)



Data from the Scripps Institution of Oceanography.

The Keeling Curve as of October 21, 2017.

2: Radical Hope in Geopoetics

- **Deep Adaptation: A Map for Navigating Climate Tragedy, July 2018** (Bendell 2018)

**Deep Adaptation:
A Map for Navigating Climate Tragedy**

IFLAS Occasional Paper 2

www.iflas.info

July 27th 2018

Professor Jem Bendell BA (Hons) PhD

“The purpose of this conceptual paper is to provide readers with an opportunity to reassess their work and life in the face of an inevitable near-term social collapse due to climate breakdown.”

2: Radical Hope in Geopoetics

Resilience

How do we keep what we really want to keep?

Relinquishment

What are we willing to let go of?

Restoration

What can we bring back to help us through this?

A 'new mental cartography'

A re-mapping of our relationship with the world

2: Radical Hope in Geopoetics


- From what position can we effect most change?
- Where are the pockets of resistance?
- Where are the **openings**, pressure points, connections, networks?
- Where are the spaces for freedom of thought, action, and **transformation**?
- Where are the spaces for celebration and disruption?
- How do we connect and support each other?
- ‘**Nomads of the present**’ (Melucci 1989)

2: Radical Hope in Geopoetics

- We each embody **poetic power** – the power of the human body to transform and be transformed in a constant, creative process
- ‘The body is always in a sense **unfinished**, open-ended, always capable of more creative activity than what it may be manifesting right now’
(Eagleton 2018)

2: Radical Hope in Geopoetics

- There is a time and place in the ceaseless human endeavour to change the world, when alternative visions, no matter how fantastic, provide the grist for shaping powerful **political forces for change** (Harvey 2001)
- ‘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**’ (White 2004)



Restoration. We might think of this, in geopoetic terms, as finding ‘a new ground.’ Restoring life and community. Recovering a ‘sense of world.’ Seeing life whole. To be fully human, to be fully alive.



The Shieling Project: embedding people within a healthy land

It is hard to teach environmental awareness; The Shieling Project explains.



Through exploring shieling life, the project can deal with difficult subjects like environmental and cultural sustainability through direct lived experience (without having to 'preach' about these things). Founder Sam Harrison, whose idea it was to start the project, is a specialist in place-based education and outdoor learning. For Sam, it is not so much a question of teaching environmental awareness, but one of allowing it to develop. It is about creating a context and a space for direct experiences and encounters to take place, not prescribing them. It is about doing, living, being, connecting—re-kindling a sense of place and community.



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2: Radical Hope in Geopoetics

- ‘Possibility in Conviviality’ (Wight)
- ‘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’

(Walters 2012, *Joseph Beuys and the Celtic Wor(l)d.*)

2: Radical Hope in Geopoetics

- ‘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.’
(McManus 2007, The Radical Field)