Scottish Centre for Geopoetics

STRAVAIG#18

Geopoetics: An Archipelago



Poems Art Essays

Geopoetics

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

More information:
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Director: *Glenda Rome* Producer: *Norman Bissell*

To find out more about the film and upcoming screenings across Scotland visit https://expressingtheearth.com

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Editorial Geopoetics: An Archipelago

It's been a year of significant transformation and growth for the Scottish Centre for Geopoetics. Improvements in our membership system created by Alistair Duncan and well attended screenings of our award winning feature documentary film *Expressing the Earth* have increased our paid up membership from 100 to almost 250 in one year!

The election of our new Co-Directors Bridie Ashrowan and Patrick Corbett at our Annual General Meeting in Glasgow in April was followed by more successful film screenings and workshops at the Royal Society of Edinburgh in September and at the first Hawick Geopoetics Gathering in late October. You can read all about our Glasgow Geopoetics Day in April in an article by our former Director Norman Bissell who is now our Honorary President.

We received more poetry and prose submissions for this issue than ever before and the work selected is once again international in its scope with poems and photographs from Nordic Prize winner Vónbjørt Vang from the Faroe Isles and and a poem from poet and publisher Dennis Maloney from USA who became members earlier this year. Canada is also well represented by poets Kirsteen MacLeod and Jessica Lee McMillan. And from Lamu off the coast of Kenya David Beatty contributes the second part of his essay appropriately titled The Geopoetics of Transformation which draws on the Japanese philosophy of Keiji Nishitani.

A moving tribute to Kathy Galloway, former Iona Community Leader, by our Chair Alyson Hallett also features one of Kathy's poems. We are also sorry to report that Anne Scott, a founder member of Open World Poetics and the Scottish Centre for Geopoetics, passed away in October at the age of 98 in her home in Largs. Her reflections on Dorothy Wordsworth were accepted by us for publication before this sad loss.

Two of the themes which emerged from the submissions were mountains and islands so you will find here some excellent poems, prose, artwork and photographs which illustrate this. Poets and artists from Scotland's west coast islands such as Mull, Gometra, Barra and Luing all have work here. This issue also introduces *From the Archive*, a look back to the early days of geopoetics with excerpts from the very first issue of *Open World* magazine in 1991 which demonstrate the wide ranging discussions held back then by the Open World Poetics group in Glasgow.

We continue our regular *Field Notes* section with a detailed account of a week of geopoetics activities during the Purbeck Arts Week in Dorset in late May-early June this year. This has led to the formation of a new Isles of Purbeck and Portland group hub being formed as part of the Scottish Centre for Geopoetics. It is a clear sign of a growing Geopoetics Archipelago of groups connected to the Scottish Centre and the International Institute of Geopoetics which illustrate the worldwide appeal of geopoetics in a time of climate crisis, wars and serious environmental damage to land and sea.

We hope you enjoy issue 18 and will let us know your thoughts on it.

Norman Bissell, Ullrich Kockel, Carol McKay and Caroline Watson editors

What the mountain said

Vónbjørt Vang
Translated from the original Faroese by the author.

I have stood here before your language.
Before the names of birds,
before the fences,
before grief learned to count itself in winters.

You call me Stiðjafjall,
and I accept this gently,
as moss accepts rain

I was lifted from fire.
I remember the earth
when it still spoke in molten sentences,
when the ocean came climbing
with its cold blue hands
to quiet the red mouth of stone.

Since then
I have practised stillness.

Not the stillness of death

do not mistake me.

I am busy with roots.
With thaw.
With light ptarmigan footsteps
With the secret labour
of snow becoming water
inside the dark body of spring.

Humans arrive carrying urgency

You walk my slopes asking:
How should I live?

How can sorrow be carried?
Why does love vanish?

I cannot answer in your way.

But I can show you
how even the stream slowly carves
deep furrows into my skin.
Winter splits me open each year.
How the raven wastes nothing of the wind.
How even the smallest flower
opens itself fully
despite the certainty of frost

You think that I am hard and ancient.
No.

Look closely at me.
I am breaking constantly.

And still
I remain.

Sometimes at dusk
the sheep disappear into mist

Those are the hours I love you most
when you grow quiet enough
to hear your own animal heart
beating among the stones.

Stay then.

Sit beside the crowberry and lichen.
Let the wind untie your mind.
The world is not asking you
to become anything other
than what you already are:

a brief warm creature
breathing beneath enormous skies,
trying to love the earth
before returning to it.



Earth Grammer I, Vónbjørt Vang



Earth Grammer II, Vónbjørt Vang

Vónbjørt Vang

Ein steinur	A stone
lá í grasinum	lay in the grass.
Eg helt	I thought
at hann hevði gloymt meg	it had forgotten me.
men tá ið eg boygdi meg niður	But when I bent down
og tók hann upp	and lifted it
í lógvan	into the palm of my hand,
var tað heitur	it was warm
sum hevði hann goymt	as if it had been keeping
hitan frá sólini	the sun's heat
sum eina lítla gávu	like a small gift
til mín	meant for me.

Translated by the author.



Skalsh Rock, Jessica Lee McMillan

Portal

think like
a monolith. imagine
its first gasps from unseen
depth. its rise, then slow reveal
through wind and rain—its heaving.
breathe its matter into your hands,
the shield of its granite, the recess of its air.
taste its grit. think of simultaneity. in stone,
you have both now and then, the story before
people. it outlives the catastrophe of we:
clock makers who render time brief.
a monolith thinks through constraints
lasting eons of upheaval and sleepy
eons. our years, but a breath of earth's
multiple atmospheres. the shallow sip
of the ruling instant
hyperventilates until our narrative
of today and tomorrow is a panic
that develops a stridor.
to think across time, step in
to a monolith. sink
into sediment,
bedrock, mantle, as you
you breathe the same
tempo from the same
diaphragm.

Jessica Lee McMillan

Cairn

Old Man of Storr,
remains of a perished giant.
You loom, misshapen, basalt peaks
that block the morning's light. I hike up
the rough trail, white stone in my palm.
Chill wind, fog-veil over the glen below,
cuckoo's faint *ku ku.* The past never stops
happening: lava boiled, a continent torn apart
like a rip in selfhood, cooled into this rock. Loose
scree skids, perilous to walk on an extinct volcano's
fissures and faults. Trees cling to vertical ground.
Twisted pinnacles look down as I place my cold
stone atop the rockpile at your feet, where it teeters.
Navigational aid, burial mound, memorial for you
who poked holes in my heaven.

Kirsteen MacLeod



A Spell, Rachel Stanley, acrylic on board

Bennett Bay, Mayne Island

Jessica Lee McMillan

coastal wind carries dead leaves until the horizon,
red Arbutus branches reach until the horizon

shale and sandstone texture paths to ocean bed and cliff
sculpted by the Salish Sea until the horizon

raven throats verbs, feathers a few croaks, overhead plane—
long distance with nobody until the horizon

Mount Baker and Mount Shuksan's glaciers light low cloud's edge—
snow's rising breath making eaves above the horizon

the blue vista cuts the grey from my eye, the grieving,
from the green draped A-frame that sees to the horizon

rain soft on darkening hay, trickle knits me a lace,
rain making each surface kin until the horizon

twin peaks sing couplets of closeness and ocean expanse,
waves and currents on repeat until the horizon

shore walker, whether your travels take you far or near,
something's always out of reach until the horizon



Bennett Bay, Jessica Lee McMillan

Lines

Brian Lavelle

amid spectres of bracken
the rill sings
        of metal bridges, reservoirs aligned

pylons overhead,
the lines crackle
and fizz, words overheard
at Clubbiedean and Torduff

now: keep silent
on an emptied path
in the heron's eyeline
near a half-seen shore

find yourself an outfall
instead of falling
and a carpet of cornstalks
        awave in the breeze

and watch as she emerges
from the shallows,
mere shadow of black cotton lines
          at watersedge
merging into white skin

and later,
much later,
the picture fading
from maiden to phantom,
pines creak and sway:

soft bark,
          stripped light

Hillsite

Brian Lavelle

angles of walking
on the dolerite pavement
soles connect
to sill
lift into air
ring bluebells
amid woodpecker clatter

eleven cupmarks
on the western slope
a sundial from the past
counting down
invisible hands counting time
counting still

of the ridge / on the edge

hill's incline
a reminder
of the world turning
despite it all

on the edge / of the ridge

talismanic reach
of boulder balanced
on branch and trunk
on fallen trunk

and cup and ring
are *bridge*

and I can just make out the other bridges
if I stretch

and pine and cone
are *bridge*
and trunk and branch
and earth and moss
and each inclusion

and all are *bridge*

Expressing Colinton through Geopoetics

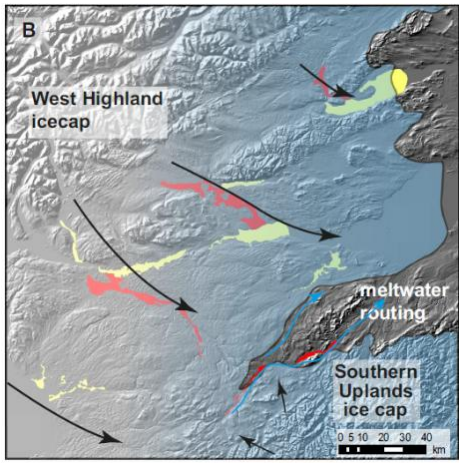
Patrick Corbett

Introduction

Colinton is a dormitory village to the west of Edinburgh, long since absorbed into the greater conurbation of the city. It is a location with a strong sense of place. This sense of place comes from its unique geological setting, social history and industrial heritage that makes it a suitable candidate for further geopoetic exploration. Kenneth White, the founder of the International Institute of Geopoetics, followed in the footsteps of Robert Louis Stevenson, who also had a close association with Colinton, believed that "Taking geology as ground-level, is a new way of being human and of living a human life on this earth".

Geological setting

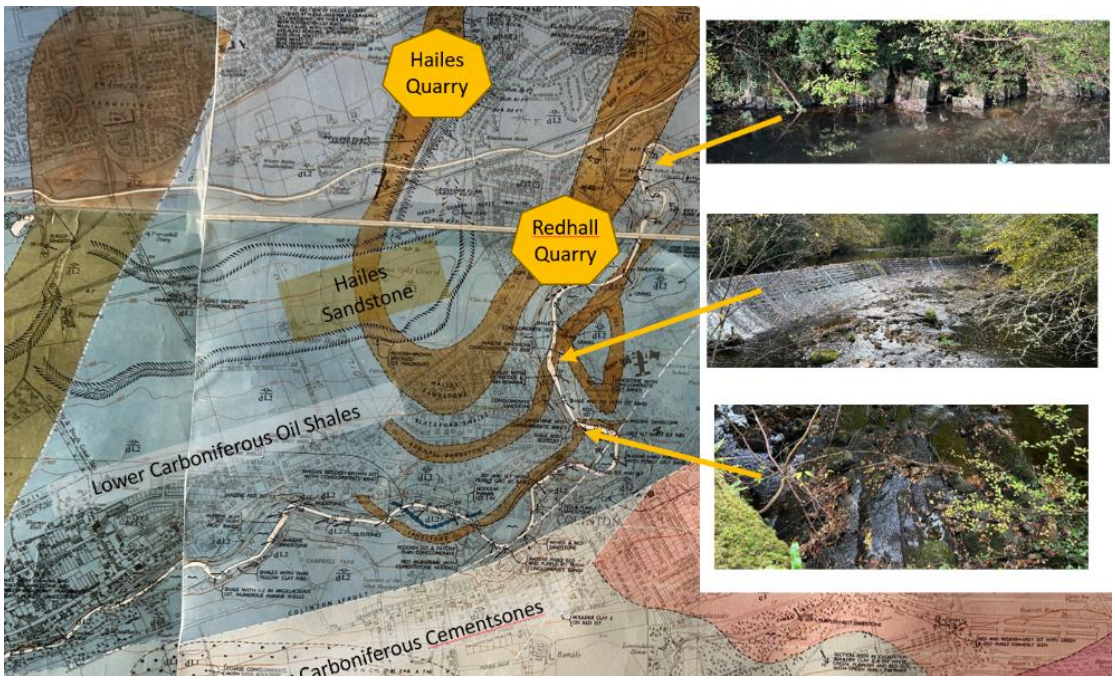
Kenneth White proposed that a country starts with the geology and in Colinton, as with many places, a unique setting of deep geology and the impact of the last Ice Age on the landscape, have created a unique setting today.



Location of Ice 12,00 years ago – showing the emergent Pentland Inlier.

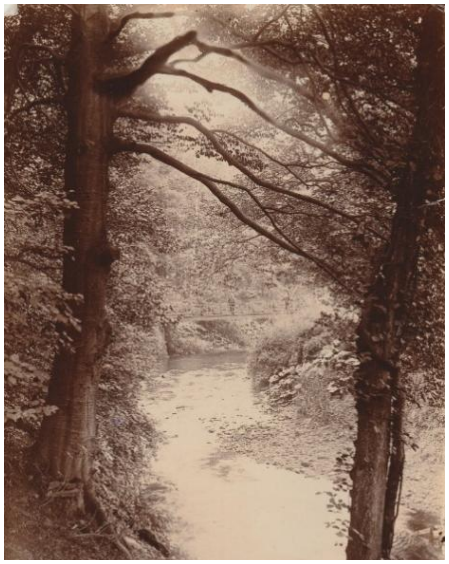
Colinton lies withing the Midland Valley of Scotland, to the west of the Pentland Inlier, a feature that is noticeable in the landscape (forms the present-day Pentlands) as a topographic feature formed of hard Palaeozoic rocks that are closely related to those in the Southern Uplands to the south.

Deep-water sediments for the Ordovician/Silurian periods were significantly uplifted as the Iapetus Ocean, in which they were deposited, closed. Once the rifting of the Midland Valley had initiated Devonian and Carboniferous sediments infilled the basin. The fill was primarily fluvial in the Devonian to fluvial-deltaic with marine incursions in the Carboniferous. The Carboniferous fill included many thick coal seams, but these are now only preserved in the significant Midlothian coalfields to the west of the Pentland Inlier. Colinton lies at the junction of Carboniferous and Devonian sediments, the Water of Leith cutting more easily into the soft shales and sandstones of the younger rocks. There were no significant coals deposited in the rocks exposed now in the area of Colinton and so coal mining is not a characteristic of the area. The Carboniferous rocks (ca. 340 million years old) included lagoonal oil shales, but these were not thick enough to warrant the exploitation that occurred to the north (and the resulting spoils left as very visible bings). However, the section did contain significant thick, river-deposited sandstones, and these were exploited in the Hailes and Redhall quarries in the 19th and 20th centuries.



Geological map of the Colinton area showing location of quarries, weirs and incised

There was also another natural resource that owes its existence to the geology and could be exploited, that is the Water of Leith, with its many mills. The energetic waters found the softer Carboniferous sediments easier to erode so, with thick ice cover to the north, they flowed parallel to the inlier in a broad north-westerly direction along the eastern margin of the Pentland Inlier towards present-day Leith. The Water of Leith was originally a meandering river that became incised and constrained by the sandstones which over time it cut through, making a series of natural weirs, to form the gorge that is such a prominent feature today. At various locations one can see thick sandstones forming the steep banks still resisting the lateral flow of the water. The melting of the kilometre-thick ice over the Edinburgh area in 20,000 of the last 30,000 years has resulted in the isostatic uplift of the region, and the rivers have responded by incising down into the bedrock, picking out a route through the softer rocks.



Water of Leith, Redhall, 1895 Garden Bridge, RA Inglis

Early days of Colinton

Not much is recorded about the area from the final melting of the ice (ca. 12,000 years BCE) to the 1200's. A few Bronze Age markers and Neolithic sites have been found. The Romans passed through the region and established a camp at nearby Cramond. Without a crossing place at Colinton, the Roman Legions likely found easier downstream crossings of the Water of Leith. The church at nearby Hailes was founded in 1248 and there were a small number of mills in Colinton Dell (e.g. Hole Mill) by the mid-13th Century. In 1550, Colinton Castle was built with stone from close by Redhall Quarry, strengthening the community. In 1650, Cromwell's Army raided and ransacked

Colinton Castle and an earlier Redhall House. Cromwell's army must likely have sought the river crossing provided by a bridge at Colinton on their way north.

Development of Mills and the Redhall Estate

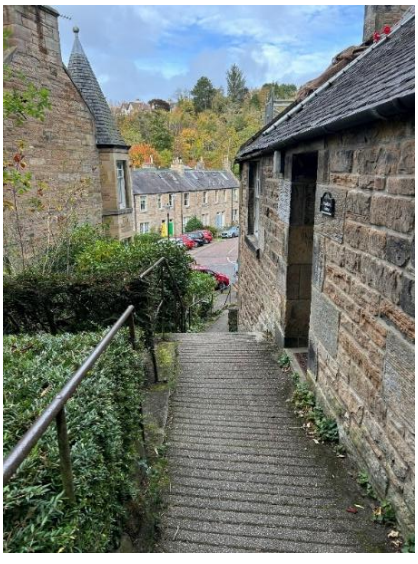
By 1682 there were half a dozen mills along this stretch of the Water of Leith reaching a peak in the late 1700's processing grain, wood, stone, waulking cloth, tanning hides, making paper and grinding spices and snuff. A new Redhall House was built in 1755 and the estate will have enjoyed private walks into the Dell and the building of bridges led to the gentrification of the wild gorge, along with the development of a walled garden on the western bank.

In 1773, a new church was built at Colinton and the 16 local mills active at that time employed 92 people. In 1801, Colinton House was started and by 1831 the local population had risen to 2232. Colinton must have been a thriving small community, a short day's ride from Edinburgh. The presence of 14 ale houses made it an early target for the Temperance Society. The arrival of the railway in 1874 must have shattered the peace of the Dell and significantly changed the nature of the place.

The Stevenson Connection

Robert Louis Balfour Stevenson first visited Colinton (aged 3 months) in 1851. His grandfather Balfour was minister in Colinton and RLS spent many a happy childhood holiday there until Grandfather Balfour died in 1860. Stevenson's father leased a cottage at Swanston in 1867, maintaining the family links with south-west Edinburgh. RLS wrote his semi-autobiographical memories of childhood "A Child's Garden of Verses" (64 poems for Children) in 1885 before dying tragically young in Samoa in 1894, aged 44. These poems are now well recorded on the various boards around Colinton and down the Stevenson Steps. The memories of the river would have been his source of inspiration: "on goes the river,/and out past the mill" from *Where go the Boats?* and "years may go by, and the wheel in the river/wheel as it wheels for us, children, today" from *Keepsake Mill* (thought to be inspired by Kirkland Mill, across the river from Colinton's Minister's house).

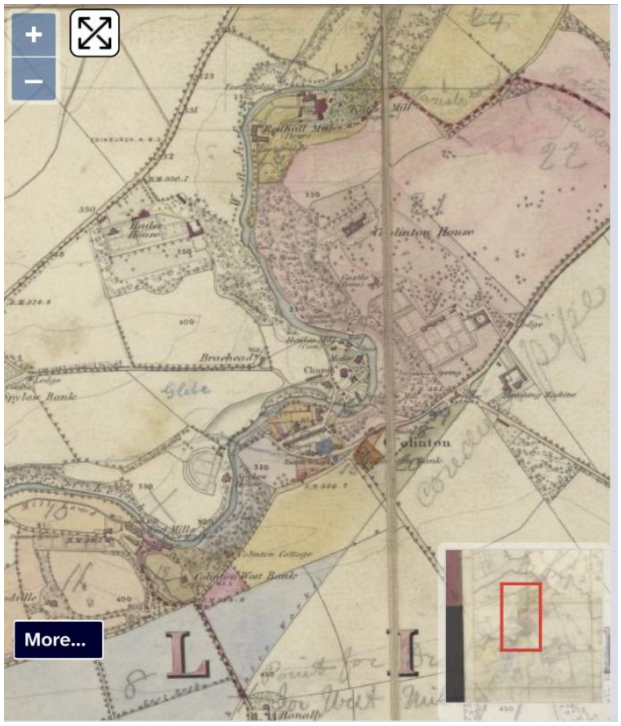
Stevenson was an influence on Kenneth White. After spending time in the Cevennes Stevenson was humbled by geology, "the great affair … is … to come down off this feather-bed of civilisation and find the globe granite underfoot and strewn with cutting flints." Kenneth White in the Pyrenees was also to experience the imposing geology close up. On walking, Stevenson considered "In order to get in the landscape-mindscape it's best to travel alone. By walking you enter 'the parish of the infinite'". Kenneth White used landscape mindscape and wordscape in setting out the narrative in his waybooks and whilst he wasn't necessarily alone on his travels, he would often write as if he was.



Stevenson's Steps today.

Railway and Barracks

The railway arrived in 1874 and the presence of a station in Colinton meant that the middle classes flocked to the villas and Colinton saw significant growth. During WWI the barracks arrived and Colinton greatly expanded. In 1920 the Colinton Literary and Debating Society was founded as the oldest literary society in Edinburgh on the literary foundations laid down by Stevenson. During WWII the trains stopped running and relative peace returned to Colinton Dell. By now, the Redhall Estate had been taken on by the Council and the walks along the Dell opened-up to the public which is why the Dell walks are now appreciated by all.



David Chalmers 1855 map of Colinton ('Reproduced with the permission of the National Library of Scotland') Colours represent the main estates.

Colinton today

Today, Colinton is a thriving parish absorbed within the City of Edinburgh but retains a strong sense of community. The Colinton Literary Society thrives. The old railway line is now a well-maintained cycle route, the old railway tunnel has been lit and painted with an RLS mural and a new visitor centre is under construction. The walk down from Colinton through the Dell to the café at the Water of Leith Visitor Centre remains one of Edinburgh's (relatively) secret gems. It is not unusual to see kingfishers and dippers along its length. The ransoms in spring provide a heady scent.

Sources

Kenneth White quotes taken from Craig Cairns ed, Collected Works of Kenneth White, 2021, Edinburgh University Press

History of Colinton drawn from Gladstone-Millar, L., The Colinton Story: 900 Years of a Scottish Parish, 2012, St Andrews Press.

Water of Leith Conservation Trust, https://www.waterofleith.org.uk/history/

Image: Water of Leith, Redhall, 22 Jul 1895 Garden Bridge, RA Inglis (courtesy of Alistair Buckoke, descendant of David Chalmers).

Colinton Dell

Patrick Corbett

What about this river's rights?
We value the riverside sites,
to flow freely and unpolluted,
unadulterated and undiluted.

The water from ice once forged
this route to Edinburgh — much engorged
that locals now see as gorgeous —
for Colinton Dell always restores us

Land has risen, process isostatic
water's incision has been dramatic.
This river makes no demands
flowing freely through these lands

Progress stalled up by dykes
fed half-a-dozen millworks
ponded a moment behind weirs
whilst religions fashioned theirs

Dippers' and kingfishers' homes
along riverbanks of ramsons.
Commuters on bikes, now electric,
ride along the old railway track

Proper masonry, the old halts marked,
where city-bound folk once embarked.
The smoke and noise in the air hung
adding volumes to Ol Reekie's lung

Through private estates, by wills
of paper, spice and snuff mills,
hidden cascades, past many mighty dens
hidden away in those pleasure gardens

Carboniferous strata will reveal
aside a river with such quiet appeal,
character long after we are done,
as erosion stops for no one

My Friend Mica

Shirley Nicholson

A kind grey,
not thunderstorm grey,
a soft tone
like the hum of a lullaby,

sea-smoothed,
speckled like a blue tit's egg,
grey schist
glitter-flecked

from this shore of winks,
each pebble
light-fizzy in the glow
of a low golden sun

and here in my hand
a marvel –
in this stone
the twinkle of stars.

Remembering Kathy Galloway (1956 - 2026)

Alyson Hallett



The first time I met Kathy Galloway was on the Isle of Iona in the mid to late eighties when I was there as a volunteer. She was co-warden of the Abbey along with her husband at the time, Ian Galloway. I have a memory of meeting her in the refectory and when I call it to mind now it's a rush of energy that I see first, reddish in colour, as if Kathy was a cauldron of life and light.

I probably can't think of a better description of her than this, but of course she was many other things too: poet, writer, singer, activist, mother, innovator, speaker, preacher, mover and shaker against injustice and one of the first women to be ordained as a Church of Scotland minister. At the heart of all things though was this great energy that she brought into a room and shared with others. I liked her at once. She was a beacon of inspiration.

Over the next few decades I met her from time to time in Glasgow at events connected with the Iona Community or gatherings with friends. The last time I saw her was at the Scottish Centre for Geopoetics conference at Glasgow University. We sat next to one another and chatted between events. It was good to see her. It was always good to see her.

I was shocked to hear of her death last year. Her love of life led me to almost believe she was someone who couldn't die. I attended the thanksgiving and as can often happen at times like this I learned even more about what she had done with her life. Kathy had been Leader of the Iona

Community, Head of Christian Aid in Scotland, editor of the Coracle, and in 2005 she was one of 1000 women collectively nominated for the Nobel Peace Prize. There are many, many other things too but I want to keep close to the Kathy I knew. The writer, the woman who reflected deeply and spoke up for those whose voices were marginalised and excluded, the poet with a deep, deep love of land.

Here are a few lines from Kathy's poem 'Stone Heart' from her book, *The Dream of Learning of Our True Nature*:

> I came there under a grey sky, and still
> the leanness of the land delighted me,
> seeing the stripped-back beauty of the bones,
> the wind-whipped water and the stretch of sand,
> yellow mosses, salt-damp, time-polished stones;
> a stone-hard, soul surrendered place to stand.

She's writing about Iona in this poem, and it's not difficult to see why she had an affiliation with the poems of Kenneth White and the Scottish Centre for Geopoetics. The land, the earth, the beauty and barrenness of it, the music of islands and voices and the need for a place to stand for a while and take it all in. Kathy is sadly missed and I am grateful for the astonishing wealth of writing, thinking and action that she gave to the world.

the folk that give life

Kathy Galloway

She was just a lassie
when she drove her big army ambulance into the camp,
but what she saw then
marked her hale lang life
and for the rest o' her days, she was a healer.
Never again, folk said, never again.
But of course it was again and again,
and if it wisnae here, it was some place else;
the greed and the cruelty and the sheer rank badness o' it,
and aye the uprooted yins and the hungry yins
and the pathetic excuses o' the high heid yins.
But there were aye folk who saw things a bit differently -
saw the weans wrapped in newspaper against the winter cauld
and the auld yins wi naething tae eat but cabbages,
and the hameless folk among the rubble
- and said, this'll no dae, something'll need tae be done,
and they did it and wouldnae tak' naw for an answer.
It wisnae charity, it was mair like a helping hand
it was giving folk a voice, and a pal,
and dignity.
And as the drilling and the logging and the mining and the landgrabbing went on,
and the powerful offered bread and circuses and lies,
and set folk against each other,
the other thing went on as well.
Year after year, mair mountains climbed, mair lang miles walked,
mair red tins filled, mair bridges crossed, mair banners waved,
mair choirs and dancers, shows and speeches, cakes and scones,
mair prayers raised tae the heavens,
year after year after year.
Naebody says 'never again' noo.
Naebody would believe it onyway,
but low down, on the ground,
where there's folk still just getting on wi' it,
there's aye the steadfast yins, the cheery yins,
the persistent yins,
and ye ken,
they're the loving yins,
every day,
they're the folk that give life.

© 2025 Kathy Galloway Written to mark the 80th anniversary of Christian Aid.

Earthrise

Dennis Maloney

At ninety you are piloting your vintage Beech A45 plane
performing an orcas flyby along the San Juan Islands,
something you've done hundreds of times,
when your plane plunged slapping the water.

Bill Anders, your name isn't as familiar
as the astronaut that walked on the moon,
but part of the crew on Apollo Eight that
circled the moon ten times you saw

the gorgeous orb that was earth
for the first time and took the photo
saying *We set out to explore the moon*
and instead discovered the earth.

The earth rising over the moon's horizon
floating alone in the eternal night of space,
the planet a shadowed blue veined marble
seen for the first time as one living organism.

An iridescent biosphere teeming with life,
interconnected and interdependent.
Some call her mother earth,
we name her Gaia.

Some days we can hear
the heartbeat of the earth,
other days we feel its pain.



The Himalayas (Darjeeling), Nandini Sen

Dorothy Wordsworth At Grasmere 1802

Anne Scott

She had often liked to play with the foamy cover on the brooks, to stir and change it with her hand. It turned and faltered in the pools and drifted into shapes, lakes, rivers, seas, continents. It was a map, islands and a world through time altering, inland seas forming inward from streams and channels.

Lately she watched only, the water moved by currents that she could barely see.

In June in 1802, she looked for ease and answer in the stream. It was herself she saw, her present life. The foam moved gently, spreading waters opened, gently met and closed. Long fiords led to seas and hopefulness, but always, other sliding lines appeared, the clear water trailed and joined and made new continents.

She rose. There were things to do.

By October, she and William had been to France to close that open reach where William's child and lover waited, wanting of a husband and a father. Now it was done, a gentle eviction from his life: her mind had seen the pausing stream, and then the foam-seal like a kiss.

William was ill on the long journey home to England, a man remapping his life. On Westminster Bridge on their journey out, they had enjoyed the early morning silences. She had stood on the roadway over the fifteenth arch, mid-way precisely for balance of her world, and looked across at the peaceful smokeless air, the geometric sky. Quiet before the world awoke, she and William were alone. The Thames beneath them turned upon itself. An early boatman rowed across the tide. She saw the river lift, fall, and the smoothness curdle. Would it come back, ever, to all it had been, perfect and unbroken?

Their return was not to Grasmere yet. They must travel, the two of them, by coach to Yorkshire where William would be married and the creaming map close on the last of the open water. There might have been ease for her if he would marry a stranger whom she might kindle to an enemy, and so live in windswept clearings. But the bride was Mary, their childhood friend, her own close comfort and virtual sister.

On the day, 4th October, she was too apart from herself to go with William to the church. He had entrusted the ring to her, the wedding ring. A little after 5, the dawn cold and the birds quiet, he came to claim it. He took it from her finger and set out on his road. Then she waited. The pattern might change. He could still turn back.

*

She knew it was over when William with Mary and her two brothers returned surrounded by all the qualities of their wedding. She ran out to meet them, weeping, to William.

They were not parted. Together the three became Guardians, Celebrants, of Earth,
- the natural demesne of Earth, its channels and decisions. Its Resolution, like Stone.

Above Manor Bridge, July ’25.

Ian McFadyen

We have entered a silence,
and find ourselves asking
how between these green
and wooded banks
such a volume of dark and
shining water can
slip by us soundlessly,
second by second –
and how over on the far side
the aimless movements
of a few brown ducks
have suddenly become
the centre of everything.

You Want The Names?

Ian McFadyen

You want the names?
You say you own the island,
but without the names
you do not own the history..
Your knowledge does not reach
beyond the highest ben,
the widest stream, the biggest beach,
and you cannot spell, pronounce
or tell the story of even these.
Everything you own
is in another language,
one you do not deign to learn.
You want the names in your tongue.
This island that your money bought,
our forbears bought it with their blood.
They tended it with care, co-operation, barter.
They held your money, laws and systems
in contempt, and with good cause,
as we have come to know.
Their story is contained within
the names that they have sown
in every field they cleared,
each track and road they made,
each landing place and beaching place,
each mound they raised,
and every house they built.
Be careful of the cairns that they have left:
Some are the resting places of those that
we must leave behind.
And you want the names?
If you could, you would take them,
like everything else, but these are
intangible, the memories we share,
the one thing that we can withhold.
You will find us unanimous in this.
We will scatter the names across Canada.
You will not know that you are walking
the corrie of the white hare,
the meadow of the red deer,
the white strand of the oyster-catcher…
Why should you?

Rearrangements

Ruby Bayley

At 57.7°N, 3.1°W, the River Spey concludes her 107-mile journey from the slopes of the Monadhliath Mountains. Her braided channels carve through sand and gravel before pouring into the Moray Firth in a carnal meeting of waters.

A shingle beach extends westward as far as the eye can see, 85 stone cottages clutching its backshore. It was here I found myself for the first time - ten years old on a dreich day in March – desperately trying to summon a sense of belonging, pressing myself into the shingle until it made space for me. The air was thick with salt, the water sighed and swelled, sucking at the pebbles as it ebbed. The sea still spoke its familiar language.

The beach at Kingston-on-Spey becomes a bastion at high tide. Steep shingle walls brace against a mass of water. The sea roars, churns, and lashes, spraying slate roofs with spindrift and filling the air with peppery brine.

Low tide reveals just a lip of sand, scattered with pebbles of translucent jade and amber. Sanderlings dart between them, chasing the retreating waves and picking for hoppers exposed briefly in the wet sand. The colour of the sea is in constant flux – cerulean, pewter, navy, aquamarine, umber - unpredictable as it responds to the whims of the sky and the currents below. Sometimes, in the stillness of a June day, the leather-grey of a common bottlenose dolphin breaches the surface.

Arranged along the length of the beach stand cuboid tank traps. Concrete crumbling at the edges, pitted by wind, salt, and sea, rebar curled out like exposed nerves. A platoon sergeant pillbox subsides into the shingle every few yards - black slits watching the shore, unblinking.

Erected in 1940 in the face of Nazi invasion, these traps were meant to buy time against an enemy that never came. Men - my grandad among them – were conscripted, uniformed, and sent where they were told. They dug trenches, mixed gravel and concrete, built and filled moulds, and skewered mortar with steel. Once hardened, they heaved the blocks into formation. There they remain, holding the line, as the beach reshapes around them.

Half a century later, a battered Tennent's can balances on top of one. We take aim, throw our best shots, and watch it tumble into the shingle. When we've had our fill, we scramble up edges, grabbing handfuls of rough concrete, scuffing knees and palms. The first to reach the top throws their arms wide - king of the beach, just for a moment.

Artifacts from distant rigs feel like pirate treasure. Intensely red hard hats. Stringy hi-vis vests. Rubbery black gloves that, in 10-year-old hands, belong to giants. We squint our eyes at the horizon, determined to spot him standing out there. The water swelling through the metal grating below his

feet, his cheeks burning from the slap of the wind, the rhythmic knock, knock, knocking of the pumpjack his soundtrack.

Bravado clouds our judgement. We edge towards a pillbox door, the darkness thick with damp, piss, and old war. Great walls of water slam into the bunker, bursting through slits in furious jets of white. We play chicken, daring each other to stand inside as the sea crashes in. The sound is deafening, searing cold spray whips our faces, water pools around our feet, soaks through our shoes and socks, rises fast, swallows the floor. Someone bolts first, shoving and slipping on the slick shingle. The rest of us follow - cackling, breathless, hearts hammering in our chests.

The speed of our River Spey is unmatched. She crashes and tumbles, breaks over riffles, pounds against glacial deposits. Underneath, sediment moves in complex patterns: ribbons of silt, sand, and gravel. Where the current slows, the water forms whirlpools, suspended in motion, reflecting the blues and steels of the sky above. Here, we do not play unsupervised.

These fast-flowing waters have shaped life along the riverbanks for centuries. In the 1800s, vast tracts of Scots pine were stripped from the surrounding forests of Rothiemurchus, Abernethy, and Glenmore. This wood was rafted down the Spey to the shipyards at Garmouth and Kingston. There, local folk built ships designed to advance Britain's colonial ambitions, while the lairds upstream reaped the rewards. The crofters, reliant on the ancient forests for farming, grazing, and hunting, were forced from their lands to make way. With fewer root systems to bind it, the soil eroded, sending sediment into the river to smother spawning salmon and raise the riverbed. Pine martens and wildcats all but disappeared. The lungwort and slippery jack faded from the forest floor. After a while, you'd be lucky to catch a black-red glimpse of a capercaillie or a crossbill. In their place, a monotony of Sitka spruce. Dense, dark, and barren. Their roots gripping the ground with engineered efficiency, draining water, and locking the land in service to a singular purpose: timber. By the time the final vessel was launched from Garmouth in 1908, more than 80,000 tons of ship had been built from our forests.

The estuary at the Spey is a site of exceptional biodiversity. At high tide, seawater advances upstream, merging with the river. At low tide, freshwater pushes back, flushing salt out to sea. These currents carry life-giving gifts. The river brings nitrates, phosphates, and organic carbon, while the sea offers up sulphates, calcium, and magnesium. This constant chemical exchange supports an abundance of life. Prismatic phytoplankton bloom, imperceptible to you and me. Schools of spring smolt linger, their bodies gradually adjusting to the salinity before venturing out to sea. Blue mussels cling to the rock bed, hoovering up particulates and clearing the water. The estuary drags all manner of flotsam, heavy metals, and pesticides into its bed. Here, seagrass, sunlight, salt, and bacteria do their very best to filter, absorb, and neutralise.

When the tide ebbs, the water recedes long enough to expose layers of mudflats, glazed with silt. Mr Whippy-shaped casts mark the entrances and exits of lugworm burrows along the surface. In late summer, curlews stride among them, dipping their long, curved beaks deep into the mud and

scoring the surface with their arrow-like footprints. Occasionally, their probing beaks leave faint divots in the surface; a map etched in the soft mud.

On slightly higher ground, to the southwest, swathes of common reed form a labyrinthine bed of yellow-brown. Their feathery tips move in constant choreography with the breeze. Early July mornings see male skylarks burst right through them, smudges against blue sky. From an altitude of 50 metres, they fill the air with a celebratory chorus of territory and courtship before gradually spiralling back down into the reedbeds and quiet. Sometimes, another 50 metres above him, an osprey can be seen powering through the sky, its talons clenched around the fleshy pink flank of an Atlantic salmon.

Never mind snow days, school flood days are a real thing around here. Overnight, the streets become one with the reedbed and the mudflat and the river and the sea. No vehicles, not even the school bus, can get in. We shove our feet into oversized wellies, bundle little siblings into puddle suits, and leap and skip and splash our way up the main road, squealing in sodden delight. The water distorts the claggy road markings beneath it, *slap, slap, slap*ping as it laps at the lampposts' feet. There is euphoria in these road safety transgressions, this watery playground. For one tidal cycle, the village belongs only to us.

On days when high tide and heavy rainfall coincide, the water creeps closer and closer, dragging itself up the driveway, suffocating the lawn, licking at the concrete slabs of the front steps. Mum stands watch, straining to quantify its progress, her face pinched, mouth dry and silent. Each year it seems to come a little closer.

King tides bring a new nighttime ritual. Moonlight slices through the house, bars of silver crisscrossing the floors and twisted shadows dancing up the walls. We cram paperbacks into top shelves, some spines visible, others turned inward, a jumble of tilted titles and pale foredges. Clothes teeter in uneven piles on top of the empty chest of drawers. The dog receives an unexpected upgrade for the night, his bed claiming a temporary spot on the sofa. Those nights, I would dream of waking, swinging my legs over the side of the bed, and finding myself ankle-deep in water. I can still feel the soggy beige polyester through my toes.

Sinking and rising is nothing new. The coastline here tells a geological story that spans millennia. During the last Ice Age, nearly all of Scotland lay buried beneath ice sheets several kilometres thick. Only the highest peaks remained uncovered. This immense weight forced the Earth's crust to bow into its mantle. As the ice melted, the weight was lifted, and the land started to rise again, seeking equilibrium after millennia of compression. This rebound was not instantaneous. In Moray, post-glacial uplift continues at a rate of 1.5 millimetres every year. You can see this slow upward movement written in the landscape. Parallel lines of shingle ridges and raised beaches trace the sea's gradual retreat for miles along the coast. At Bin Hill, to Kingston's west, these sit nearly 700 metres inland and 15 metres above the current shoreline. This ongoing rise interacts with powerful coastal forces to create what is, at present, one of the most extensive shingle systems in Britain. A crucial barrier, it safeguards the coastline from a multitude of threats. Its porous structure is its

greatest strength. As waves and wind collide with shingle, the lattice of stones and pebbles scatters, absorbs, and dissipates their force.

This precious system is in constant evolution, shaped and reshaped by the entanglement of river and sea. Vast quantities of sediment are carried downstream by the River Spey and deposited. Stone, gravel, and sand become the beach's raw material, replenishing what the tides have taken. When the river's flow is disrupted – by whisky distilleries, hydropower, dredging - the sediment once carried with ease struggles to reach the mouth, leaving the beach with less and less to rebuild itself. Then come the coastal processes. The sea approaches the shore at an angle, shifting the shingle westward. In calm weather, constructive waves give more than they take, gradually adding height and stability. But when the storms come, each less forgiving than the last, fresh sediment is pushed downstream and existing shingle is torn from its place, rearranged by the surging water. In some places, entire swathes of the beach disappear. Nothing here stays still for long. Our familiar beach takes on an entirely new shape overnight.

Another dreich day in March. The sky is stretched taut and colourless, my wedding band loose on my finger in the shrinking cold. In a blur of golden fur, pup leaps the remnants of a lobster pot and lands with a joyous thud, her tail wagging in wide arcs. I call her, and she trots over, panting, proud. We return along the backshore path, passing the concrete shells spaced evenly along the ground at the foot of the seawall. The village is quiet, the houses huddle close, smoke curling from a single chimney. I breathe the delicious smell of woodsmoke deep into my lungs. As we round the corner, the solid blue garage door comes into view, silver fir in the foreground, planted three Christmases ago when someone insisted on a potted tree. At the end of the regraded driveway, the correx for-sale sign stands stiff and bright, its red cutting hard against the brushstroke blues, browns, and greens of the estuary. After years of measuring tides and watching the shoreline shift, it is time to say goodbye, again.

Simmer Dim, Dunbar

Cindy Stevens

Waves break gently on new-washed sand,
bright green seaweed shivers beneath me
as I walk at the low tide margin.
Above a line of pebbles brown kelp
lies shrivelled on the shore,
cast up by last night's storm.

A heron, motionless in the shallows,
suddenly takes to flight,
flaps lazily over the sea.
On the horizon a freighter moves
with ponderous ease,
dark against fading light.

In the west the sky is still bright.
The setting sun has cast the rocks
into sharp relief, uplit grey clouds
with orange and the sky shows
soft apricot over the harbour,
rose-pink above the town.

A few birds float out at sea
but they make no sound;
all is quiet and calm.
The waves move soundlessly,
lapping gently at my feet.
Even the air is still.



Early Birds, Pippa Gatty

Doubt

Robin Leiper

waking at 2
moon full overhead
a light like silver mist
risen from the earth

each bush, each rock
illuminate, reveals
its secret
inward glow

and I all eye
afloat, my own
dark centre

*

waking at 3
two moons are tapping
at the window
demanding
a professional opinion:

which one of us is
more beautiful?
which real?

*

the first hard frost
and the morning's
crystal glitter sunrise
on grass and fence

a tiny beetle,
emerald
outshining all
grazes peacefully
on a frozen dog turd

*

the poplar asks
the setting sun
how tall am I now?

the sun tries to draw
the mark upon the hill
oh, do stay still



Bower, Douglas Robertson, graphite on paper



Corbies, Douglas Robertson, graphite on paper



Snakes, Douglas Robertson, graphite on paper

A Walk In The Wild

Anne V McClure

'Cumbernauld is wild,' I say. 'Aye,' folk reply, 'I've heard it's pretty rough outside the Spur pub at kicking out time.'

Join me for a walk: away from the brutalist 1950s Town Centre, now leaky as a sieve; away from the graffitied underpasses and the endless roundabouts. Come and see that you can get as lost in green spaces as among the house numbers.

First, let's saunter down Luggiebank. A few years ago, you'd have found a tangle of dogwood choking birch and hawthorn, refusing to let light penetrate the understory, allowing nothing to grow on the forest floor. Now shrubs and trees unkink their stymied limbs and stretch towards the light. Bluebells, dormant for years, are spreading out in glimmering rivers. The dreaded dogwood, dismembered, has its uses. Woven into dead hedges, standing in serried ranks, it becomes home to insects that birds feast on, and shelters mammals like hedgehogs and voles. Some hedges are higgledy-piggledy, made by folk keen to attack the next dogwood. Others are engineered to perfection by someone with patience. See that path, smoothed by decades of padding feet? That's a badger clan's route; don't put anything in its way.

At St Maurice's Pond let's see if the grey heron is at his usual spot, standing motionless like a Grenadier guard in his greatcoat. Above the boardwalk, damsel and dragonflies flit on glistening blue and silver wings. There's the gorse whose flowers prove that on the sunny side they taste of coconut and on the shady side of peas. Between the pond and car park, firework colours of orchids and knapweed, ox-eye daisy and meadow vetchling explode from the meadows. Frogs shelter in the shade of those plants and grasshoppers hum. We scythed those meadows on hot August days as if in a local version of Poldark. Except we kept our shirts on. It is Cumbernauld, not Cornwall, after all. Hear the mew of a buzzard and look up to see an adult catch a thermal, watched by a juvenile learning how to use this aerial elevator.

The Community Park is Cumbernauld's best food take-away. You'll find hazelnuts to ripen at home, sloes for gin and brambles for jam, rosebay willowherb to make black tea, hawthorns for ketchup and cleavers to give a crisp, cucumber taste to water. If you feel you're being watched, you probably are, as deer are plentiful. Hear the satisfying crunch as volunteers snap Himalayan Balsam they've uprooted, clearing waterways of a plant that doesn't belong and would take over. Come back at dusk, stand on the path between the hedgerows, and have your hair parted by soprano pipistrelle bats chasing insects in a Top Gun precision fly past.

Another day we can visit Broadwood Loch, Abronhill peat bog, Seafar Woods and all the other places. Meantime, as you walk from your house to the shops, enjoy the wildflowers planted in Carbrain Gully. If you're in the Village, visit the Middle Age Langriggs, one of the last remaining in Scotland, now restored to a place where local folk grow food and wildlife is abundant.

But we do have time to visit the Glen, and I've saved the best till now. When the earth last warmed, some 15,000 years ago, the ice that covered Scotland a kilometre deep retreated north, leaving a great lake of meltwater just outside Cumbernauld. Finally, the force of the water broke through, gouging great channels through the rocks, carving the Vault Glen. Over time the Glen and its slopes were covered by generations of trees and plants that grew then fell, decayed and created the soil for a myriad of insects, birds and animals to live in and on. It's said, the meeting of two streams here, the Red Burn and the Bog Stank, gave Cumar nan Allt its name.

No one knows the age of the yew trees in the Glen. Unlikely, but perhaps they date to when Romans built the Antonine Wall a few miles away. Maybe a Syrian archer, on his way to a frozen north and an unknown future, marching through England, saw a twisted old yew that reminded him of the olive trees in his native land, took a cutting and brought it here.

Then this yew watched the Romans retreat, the medieval building of the Village church and the raising of the Comyn's motte and bailey castle. Perhaps John 'Red' Comyn leaned against it as he debated whether to accept Robert the Bruce's invitation to meet in Dumfries. A decision to go which cost Comyn his life, gave Bruce the kingship of Scotland and changed our history forever. Those days pine marten, red squirrel and wolves shared the woods with humans. I've heard rumours that pine martens have been seen here again.

That tree knows if hooded Druidic figures really do cavort around the Dovecot at night. It's withstood the building of the railway and even the filming of Gregory's Girl.
Now, in daytime, the Glen echoes to the sound of children laughing and dogs barking. To the clatter of crews filming Outlander. To the people of Cumbernauld who discovered a sanctuary here during lockdown and who love the place. Some who come out at 5am to listen to the bird chorus, spotting tree creepers and nuthatches and thrilling to the joyful blue flash of a jay. Folk who widen paths and hold each other up when they're sad, who mend fences and tell ridiculous jokes. In the hush of a snowy, winter night a fox crosses the stream by a fallen log bridge, leaving unexpected footprints for us to find four feet off the ground. Hoar frost crackles out of decaying wood creating fantastical shapes. Our walk is done.

The Tax Office is gone. The Town Centre will come down. Few buildings last. The rocks and the trees and the land endure, although changed and always changing.

All within 3 miles of your door.

Is Cumbernauld wild? Yes, yes, yes.

february

Donal McLaughlin

catch it unawares
before day takes over
a world still asleep
after jessie kesson

*

beauty ae this place?
ye dont hiv ti dae nuhin
jist melt intae it

*

nae wagtails
nae wagtails – a week n mair
ae nae wagtails

dippers
a haiku diptych

Donal McLaughlin

I.

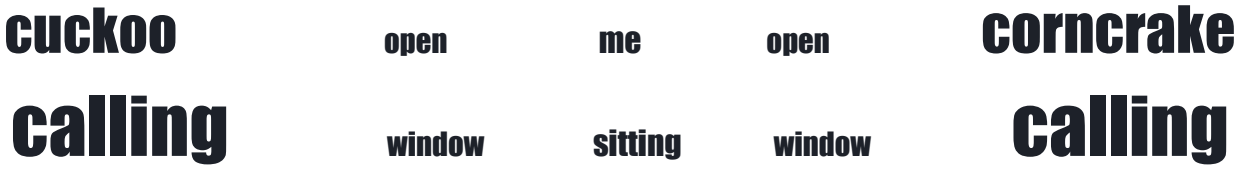
stoneflies–
caddisflies–
        good sprut for a dipper

II.

sun after thon rain –
        the white bib of a dipper
        zippin towards me

I, after iolo williams, on *springwatch,* 2021

In S(terre)o



Seth Crook

Sound

Morag Smith

While we breathe there's no such thing
as silence – ears hiss
pulse booms gut nags
with worry, hunger empty houses
stir to announce themselves
at 3a.m.. Stairs settle
restless as new-borns
radiators tap as
tired brains twitter
to sleep
only sometimes at the top
of a walk you can catch
the suck and seep of
boot-prints in bog grass
that ticks through fingers
the question in a Reed Bunting's
call the cadence of its heart
that shivers through Asphodel
Cinquefoil Bell Heather
while the sea thrums and waves
burst on cliffs more sky than earth
where eagles hang on thermals
and you might almost
fool yourself that you can hear
their flight feathers whisper
the one right note
that vibrates
from island
to mainland



Isle of Bute

Morelle Smith

Yesterday I took the bus from Rothesay to Kilchattan. When I get off the bus driver says – do you know the times of the buses back? (yes). Do you have a map? (yes). A couple of flares? (!!).

The path uphill is through woods, the friendliness of trees, the company of them, the shelter and canopy and spaces between them. Up on top of the hill it's moorland, no trees, just the yellow gorse bushes. Some of them grow in hedgerows by the roadsides, mostly beech hedges, trimmed and curved and rounded like small hills growing naturally there. But they are tended and smooth, mostly still the grey bark of beech, the crumpled dried leaves from the autumn still clustering there and flashes of yellow gorse blossom in the hedge as if they have sidled in there, pretending to be beech but unable to hide their golden, vibrant blossoming.

On the crest of one hill, looking down into the valley, across to the next hill. The path is mud, churned up by the cattle. The path disappears. I sit on some rocks and have coffee. The rain patters on the back of my jacket. I don't turn around. It will pass, that's what I think, it's come over the water from Arran, these weather clouds sweep in rain, carried by the wind, just like the seabirds with spread wings, lifted up by the wind, effortless, balanced, they move up and down, just a little on the updrafts and currents of air. So the rain squalls on the wind, that's what I think. After exuberance, crossing the water, the rain will die out. And it does.

I go back part way up the hill then cut across country, it's boggy and marshy in places but the map shows a path by the side of the phone mast and once I find it, it goes steeply downhill, joins the little road. The post van goes past and later, a tractor. And that's all.

Turn off from the road to the path, rejoining the West Island Way – a thin avenue between fields. At the far end, a private airstrip. A notice warns to look out for planes landing. I see none. Further

on now, almost at the beach on the other side of the promontory, from Kilchattan Bay. A notice says there is a real risk of being hit by a golf ball. So be careful. You proceed at your own risk. Stay on the path where the signs are. Will the path protect you I wonder, from flying golf balls? It seems that the path is definitely protective, it guides all the pilgrims through gorse bushes and golf courses, down to the beach which is shells, tiny and glowing with colours and patterns and red rocks with seaweed and one tree trunk arched in the water. The tide is in so there are only a few banks of red rock, like shelves in the cupboards and larders of time.

More rain clouds hover over the island of Arran. They don't cross the water.

Someone in black stands on the golf course. He has no caddy, he doesn't appear to be playing. Later, when I look up again, he's disappeared. I'm kneeling on the beach, picking up shells. Who made these colours and patterns, these bluish-pink mother of pearl, these criss-cross patterns, these spirals in perfect proportion? Who made them like this? Tiny spirals of form, the colours of sunset and sand, the colour of rain and the hills in the distance, the blue of the air, the grey of a dove's wing, the slate blue and purple, the moods of the sea.

Today you come like a seabird, you float on air currents and there you are too, in the bay on the other side of the island, back at Kilchattan, where sun shines and water is blue and two seagulls are sitting on rocks and the wind ruffles their feathers but still they sit there, beaks pointing into the wind.

Will you come tomorrow, cross over the water
just like the rain on the shifts of the wind –
see how easy the rain comes, curving over the hills,
imitating the roundness of mountains?
What the rain can do, you can too.
You too are the jackdaws and seagulls and dippers
and wrens in the hedges of beech leaves from last summer's foliage
and especially you, the flashes of gold in the prickly dark green,
from this year's spring.



gloaming

Ian Newton

heavy headed grasses
bow in the low light
seeds
glowing

the bronze skin of the river
flexes

the air above it
is taking long breaths

sand martins
are looping
their last passes
of the day

and with invisible silks they're
stitching the sky to the idling river
tugging the sky to the old soul
of the earth

trees yawn and stretch
roots settle
branches shrug

leaves sigh -
whispering of days
whispering of decades

the ground
lifts itself a little
in expectation
of our foot-fall

from a walk 15.6.2024



Hebridean Love Poem, Ian Newton, West Moreland slate

Beachcombers

Marguerite Doyle

It has been a tumultuous month,
one in which spring's last breath,

summer's birth, was the gift
of a windless afternoon, a broth

of slate grey sands and muddled
sun that climbed on tired feet

to sit still, so we could not know
if this was harbour, or cloud,

or shore. We gazed at flocks
of clamouring rooks, swooping

over waterline to grasp and climb,
dropping mussels on the rocks

below. The blue shells piled high
like tiny boats, as if waiting

for the coming tide to bring back
the wind, and outline.

On the clifftops though

Kirsteen MacLeod

it begins with blue waters of my body
wind and waves and white gannets flaring back
to far island shores sea-lit shards of tidewater
  breathing in and out mind's ocean
    wears away the hard

Just as there are seabirds of the air
of the guano ledges of the naked rocks light
particle and wave shifting kelp
  redraws shorelines where the ocean opens
    and closes

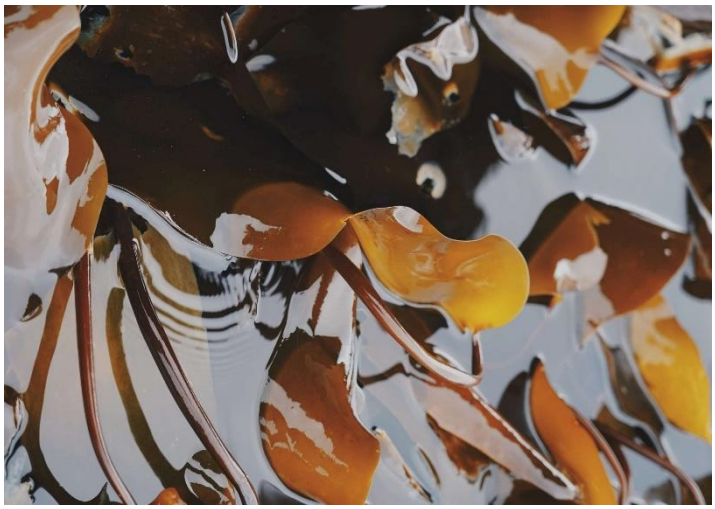
I hate and I love I'm weather-beaten
and washed by waters I hear gannets *urrah-urrah-urrah* spill
into the future from the clinging mist

  What I would like now is for there to be a seabird
    of me









From the *Intertidal* series, Hannah Close

Mother of Pearl

Hannah Close

sundown at the foreshore
the sky, rose and lemonade
Turkish delight and plum champagne
veins of alabaster, gull, chemtrail

the purple topshell ambles
gleaming in the seafoam
drags its diamond exoskeleton
beneath the tightening *Belt of Venus*
towards the bloom of darkness

night shining clouds
the crystal archipelago
a sea patina
under the Earth umbra

on the pale sand, a clam
clapper, clacker
heart on a hinge
emptied of memory
love letter, trinket
organic and inorganic as one

a paradox
a celebration

have you ever seen
the colour of an uncooked lobster?

all cosmos and constellation
lapis, glaucous, periwinkle, heather
noctilucent scatterings
on its twilit back

indigo to soothe the soul
warm and cool together
as a cornflower
as a mother's milk

light bends as it moves through bone
that's how I know you're there
molecular, crepuscular
inverse shadow of energy itself

the iridescent pearl
is a response
the body; an almanac
prismatic chronicler of entropy

geometry is light work
at the intertidal zone

salt, eggshell, porcelain
quicksilver flesh at the rising hour
and the waning moon!
mother of all pearls

albedo means
how much light
you give back

territory

Finola Scott

in stealthy dusk
under hesitant moonlight
shrubs quiver rustle
reveal another life
slipping in

shadows soft shift
whisper *fox*
details unfold - rowan swing paths
as the furred shape flows over the wall
tiptoes through the borders

sharp-jawed he advances
following Earth's magnetic field
his night eyes scan compost
discover beetles slugs worms
ears prick at the squeak of sweet mice

flaring his balanced tail he leaves
rub-marks his station owns it
deposits pungent faeces for emphasis
on my lawn my garden



Tree growing on bare coral at low tide, East Africa, David Beatty



Aspen Trees, Dades Valley, Morocco, David Beatty

THE BEYOND IS HERE NOW AND INESTIMABLE

The Geopoetics of Transformation Part 2

David Beatty

There is another world, but it is in this one. Paul Eluard

In the last essay I attempted to convey the experience of encountering the depths of deep time archaeologically, in the sense of being both physically in a location which, stripped of the superficial cosmetic layers of modernity, conveyed a powerful feeling of our collective inheritance as creatures of the earth, and in the company of someone whose whole life had been devoted to unearthing the evolution of stone tools. This raises other questions about the strata of deep mind, and to explore how we might link these twin aspects of our humanity, at least metaphorically, I turn now to another profound influence on my attempts to penetrate to the core of our human dilemma, namely Keiji Nishitani[1] the Japanese Kyoto School philosopher.

Nishitani was in some ways an archaeologist of the mind, but not in the analytic manner of Freud or Jung, but through a penetrative contemplative practice coupled with a creative discourse between Western and Eastern philosophical traditions. Nishitani's masterpiece, *Religion and Nothingness* published in English in 1982,[2] began as an essay entitled *What is Religion*? which became the first chapter. This may provoke some practitioners of Geopoetics to object that Geopoetics steers clear of 'religion'. However, if by this is meant the institutional structures of belief systems I might concur but would allude to the Eastern practices (e.g. Chan or Zen) that Geopoetics frequently refers to, without wishing to be embroiled in the 'spiritual not religious' debate common in our times. The key issue is deeper and more complex.

How does Nishitani answer this question? In a nutshell Nishitani says, '*For all peoples in all times, Nothingness*.' This stark challenge to our settled modes of understanding the world, and the word religion, is irreducible to either an atheistic or theistic perspective. It is not a matter of belief, of religion seen as a category into which to slot premodern ways of life, whose diverse practices embodied the sacred within the worlds of human communities. The category 'Religious' as distinct from 'Secular', which in its modern sense is a Western invention, was reinforced in the 18th c. by the so-called Enlightenment that enthroned Reason as the arbiter of truth, and relegated 'religion' to privately held belief, still acknowledging spaces of communal worship (churches, temples, mosques), but without granting Transcendental values, even if conceived Immanently, any meaningful public space in the project of Modernity. Only what can be measured was considered real, hence reality is reduced to a single corporeal ontological plane of linear causality.

Nishitani's answer is more nuanced and, as I understand it, discloses a mode of apprehending reality that challenges the mode of reflective thought so central to the modern picture of reality. This has become almost exclusively dependent on representational thought, to the extent we are now living under a tyranny of propositional knowing, as opposed to other more intuitive modes. In this framework what we understand by rationality has been reduced to mere computation. Now

recognised by some as one of the most important texts of 20th century philosophy, Nishitani was also a deeply ecological thinker, yet I have been puzzled by finding no mention of him in any text by Kenneth White, in spite of his several visits to Kyoto. Granted I have not read all his texts, and Nishitani's book is not an easy read but certainly easier than Heidegger, a key thinker for White, whose two-year course on Nietzsche Nishitani attended between 1937-1939. Nishitani then returned to Japan which was yet to suffer the final humiliation of WWII as well as the decimation of Hiroshima and Nagasaki.

Nishitani's focus was the problem of ground, which had erupted as the West's spiritual/cultural earthquake that Nietzsche termed the death of God. An ecstatic reader of Nietzsche, who in his youth had turned his back on traditional Japanese culture, Nishitani now reengaged with Zen, both as practice and deep study, and uniquely evolved a discourse (dialogos) between his own Zen tradition and German philosophy and the West's problematic nihilism to plumb the depths of the human mind, and to find the living source of our deepest humanity. Nihilism can only be overcome, he maintained, by penetrating through to the depths of it. To be fair, Kenneth White also referred to the need for 'supernihilism'. But is this really the same as Nishitani's 'absolute nothingness', given that White's reading of Nietzsche is very selective? Some Zen schools, though not all, might concur, but one must not forget its origins in Chan, and Chan's deep shamanic roots. We should also keep in mind that our contemporary cultural mindset is quite unable to discern between the 'No-Thing-Ness' of, for example, the Neoplatonic One, and the 'Nothingness', as a void of 'absence', that lies beneath our nihilistic take on the world. In considering Geopoetics then, we need reminding of what is still fiercely opposed to such an outlook. For the problem Nishitani articulates is still very much with us, namely the Kantian framework of modernity and the idea that we construct our reality, in spite of the by now huge corpus of critiques against Kant.

The West's existential crisis is found in the appearance for the first time of a self-enclosed subjectivity. Upon discovering the relative nothingness of Sartre, the self withdraws within itself devoid of any relationality, other than that demanded by society for its mostly utilitarian agendas. This core of self-enclosed subjectivity becomes the only thing that seems real. Isolation or self-expansion are the only antidote to the quicksand that we sense underlies all our settled modes of thought and identity. This has permeated the whole of Western culture to the point where everything becomes centred on this human subjectivity and is geared to serving it, while the earth is reduced to a standing reserve to cater to the human-all-too-human subjectivity. Constructivism, which draws on Kant, opposes the 'mystical' reciprocal mirroring of self and world found in Eastern understandings of reality, claiming our experience is *projected onto the world*, and we are never in intimate, immediate contact with reality.

The denial is that we can ever break out from the prison of relative reality to ultimate reality, as Buddhist teaching and practice maintains. Following Nietzsche, Freud et al, the hermeneutics of suspicion drives the culture to view truth negatively: *everything becomes projection*. The spiral down into this nihilistic vision has no counterbalance in, for example, a hermeneutics of beauty. Nishitani adopts this downward spiral but takes it through the self-imposed limits of relative reality and plunges into absolute nothingness as an underground opening into an abyss as the groundlessness

of both self and world that explodes all contraries, namely the dichotomies that haunt modernity. His method is contemplative, not the mode of reflective thinking common in the Western tradition. Nihilism is not a concept, but something that happens, that is revealed, when your habitual modes are unsettled, perhaps by loss, and are found to be based on nothing substantial. The overcoming of nihilism, which can hide in the darkest recesses of the mind, inevitably entails the bottom falling out of your world. You are exposed, naked, vulnerable. But everything is done to avoid this.

There is a comparative increase in intelligibility enabled by extracting information from the materially real, yet there exists a contact with reality presupposed beneath any ideas of projection or construction, which brings up the possibility of an active conformation: the mind con-forms to an object, and this allows for trans-formation. The Kantian dichotomies have all been conceptually demolished by analytic philosophy: fact v. value; is v. ought; theory v. data; analytic v. synthetic; and so on, so how does the world look without these? We arrive at a metaphysics which is not the view from nowhere, but a 'meta' that is both *between and beyond at the same time, in the sensuous immediacy of realization of the inexhaustible abundance of reality*, which is closer to us than we are to ourselves while also beyond us. Nishitani understands this by way of his penetration through absolute nothingness: the unfathomable eternity of death, from where life/death flowers inexhaustibly as the generative whole, which is why Nishitani loves Meister Eckhart, without all the elaborate institutional doctrinal baggage.

There is then a non-theistic convergence among the esoteric aspects of sapiential traditions, which is no longer esoteric but the logos of the *metaxu* - betweenness. It doesn't depend on the acceptance or rejection of the framework of modernity but on a deconstruction of both modernity and postmodernity that avails us of this deeper realization of the reciprocal interplay of mind and world, the dialogical comprehension of reason, being, mind, when there is a reciprocal process of a co-emergent reality in the dia-logos between the grammar of the mind and the grammar of the world. Thus, the mystical need not be seen as something 'esoteric', but rather natural and appropriate to human beings in the simple fact of the inexhaustibility found in the primordial contact with reality, the ability to be astonished that calls you to a deep and comprehensive transformation.

And Nishitani sees clearly how, for all his brilliance, Nietzsche's Will to Power is in fact the *coming to fruition of this self-enclosed subjectivity*. After the initial relative self-doubt has reinforced itself by a wilful redefinition of self, thus resolving the self-enclosed subjectivity in the only way it can by expanding itself outwards devoid of any relationality to anything. It thus perpetuates nihilism, which for the most part is where we still are. Nihilism, Nishitani tells us, can only be overcome by penetrating it to its depths. *This means even the standpoint of the ecstatic self must die*. In the Zen tradition the relative nihility triggers the Great Doubt, followed by the Great Death. From what I venture to call the Great Silence emerges the inexhaustible generative source of life that resituates one within a wholly different register, which could be said, in Geopoetic terms, to constitute the participation in the world *as it worlds in its worlding*.

It is in the Great Silence that the Great Turning occurs, flourishing as play. Nishitani is not a thinker of transcendence – there is no hierarchical schema – but he finds the real fruit in the embodied

sensuous immediacy of realization, in becoming what you see. It is a reverse transcendence immanently realised by penetrating to the eternity of death and abiding in emptiness as plenitude, where I am both singularly unique and at once the entire ecological web of inter-dependent relationality that constitutes who *I am*:

From the pine tree
learn of the pine tree
And from the bamboo
learn of the bamboo (Basho)

The poet Nathaniel Tarn, a contemporary of White's, who also died recently in June 2024, characterised Nishitani's book as *an immense spiral staircase thrown over the void.* In his essay[3] on Nishitani, *Newly Saying the Already Said*, Tarn recalls wondering whether words, amidst the deafening clamour of language, could ever recover their innocence, having earlier suggested *'poetry is the religion of language'*. Asking, after Nishitani, what is religion for, he ponders why we should even need poetry, given that the poet's vocation in our culture is a marginal one, and reminds himself that he always felt words *traced to their uttermost origins, had to be accepted as arising out of an unspeakably mysterious depth*, which he names, and I concur, The Great Silence. And then comes his most crucial insight: *The most interesting characteristic of the mystery was that the more deeply and unimpededly one listened to the voice welling up from this primordial silence, the more this voice appeared to exhibit general characteristics, the more it appeared to be the collective human voice rather than the individual voice of the poet. But this was a matter of trust or faith…that, blessedly, something beyond one's insignificant subjectivity could be called into being in our vocation…*

Nishitani questions long-standing assumptions foundational to the Western view, such as a substance ontology from Aristotle to Descartes, that cements a notion of Being that Heidegger attempted to dismantle. And then, by employing Zen beyond Heidegger's hesitancy at the brink, he opens the door to a deep realization of *sunyata*, emptiness, not only individually but also historically, which essentially recovers the more ancient pre-modern understanding of Being as Relationality, as manifesting the paradox of what might be termed non-dual multiplicity. This goes to the heart of the ancient comprehension of the One and the Many as a dance, a reciprocal inter-play, that never reduces one to the terms of the other, but which in terms of poetry can open a door to disclose the real mystery of what it means to be human.

This seems to me where the real work of Geopoesis lies. Without this radical transformation, this realization as the Real realizing itself, cutting through the miasma of nihilism, emptiness, nothingness, even Geopoetics can easily be co-opted into a 'programme', and remain within the comforting standpoint of self as entity, for the Western mind is deeply configured by all the dichotomies of modernity (time v eternity; subject v. object; body v. mind; unity v diversity;) which predisposes many to view the mystical as a quest for an *experience* (all 'experience' per se being interpretation), rather than for a transformative way of life.

We live within a framework where cognition has been reduced to computation, and can be replicated by AI, and where qualitative experience only takes place inside my head, with no relation to the 'physical' world, which is quantified mathematically, leaving me isolated in a skeptical solipsism, with no common shared objective world. This then differentiates those who may merely undergo an 'experience', from those who then take this up into the enactment of a radically different mode of living, of interbeing. Nishitani suggests that this is the way out of the maze, in which we oscillate between nihilism and narcissism, where a radical shift of identity can resituate us within the earth's community of life, both human and more-than-human.

It seems to me that our present crisis is also the crisis of the redundancy of language. With everything made available to us at a digital click nothing makes sense anymore. It is this crisis of how *to newly say the already said* that has driven the escapist quest to replace the ambiguity of words with the certainty of numbers and algorithms, and so to fool ourselves that we are embarked on a new cosmic evolutionary stage, where the many will be controlled by the few. Instead of acknowledging our full potential humanity, the digital utopia is to build a new algorithmic Tower of Babel of accelerated computation masquerading as 'intelligence', when our real task is now to recover our ancestral sense of deep time and, if not to say the already said, at least to recover the possibility of *living deeply the unsaid*, where the singularly unique voice of the poet somehow newly resonates with the collective voice of humanity.

This surely is the common denominator that Geopoiesis can unearth, to create a deep attunement to an animate earth. This may align with the alternative life urged by Naomi Klein in her essay[4] that calls out the digital utopians as agents of doom, pushing us towards self-destruction, hypnotised by an erroneous belief that humanity as presently constituted has an expiry date that happens to coincide with the creation of AI superintelligences. Our far older sapiential traditions, born of patient apprehension of our nondual relation to the Real, present us with an alternative path which Nishitani has articulated through a deep engagement with, and penetrative exposure of, the error in the source code of our dysfunctional Western narrative.

At the heart of Nishitani's non-theistic contribution to the realization of a truly planetary ecological consciousness is found a way that overcomes the duality of the two worlds mythology. This is crucial if we are to evade succumbing to escapist Utopias that end by drenching the world in blood. We would do well then to engage with the no less arduous task of transformation which, as Nishitani suggests, is the only real solution to the human and ecological dilemmas that afflict us.

Notes

1. Keiji Nishitani, a key member of the 20th c. Kyoto School in Japan that included his mentor Nishida Kitaro and Ueda Shizuteru (d. 2019).
2. *Religion and Nothingness,* Keiji Nishitani, University of California Press, 1982.
3. *The Embattled Lyric,* essays by Nathaniel Tarn, Stanford University Press, 2007.
4. *The Rise of End Times Fascism,* by Naomi Klein and Astra Taylor, The Guardian 13th April 2025.

On a Glacier, Dancing
(for Kenneth White)

Derek Brown

Shaman of north shores
drifter in dawn light
maker of fire from
crystals of ice.

He'd have you at the
shoulders of tired
legionaries scanning
the mountains of
Alba that once
circumscribed the world's edge.

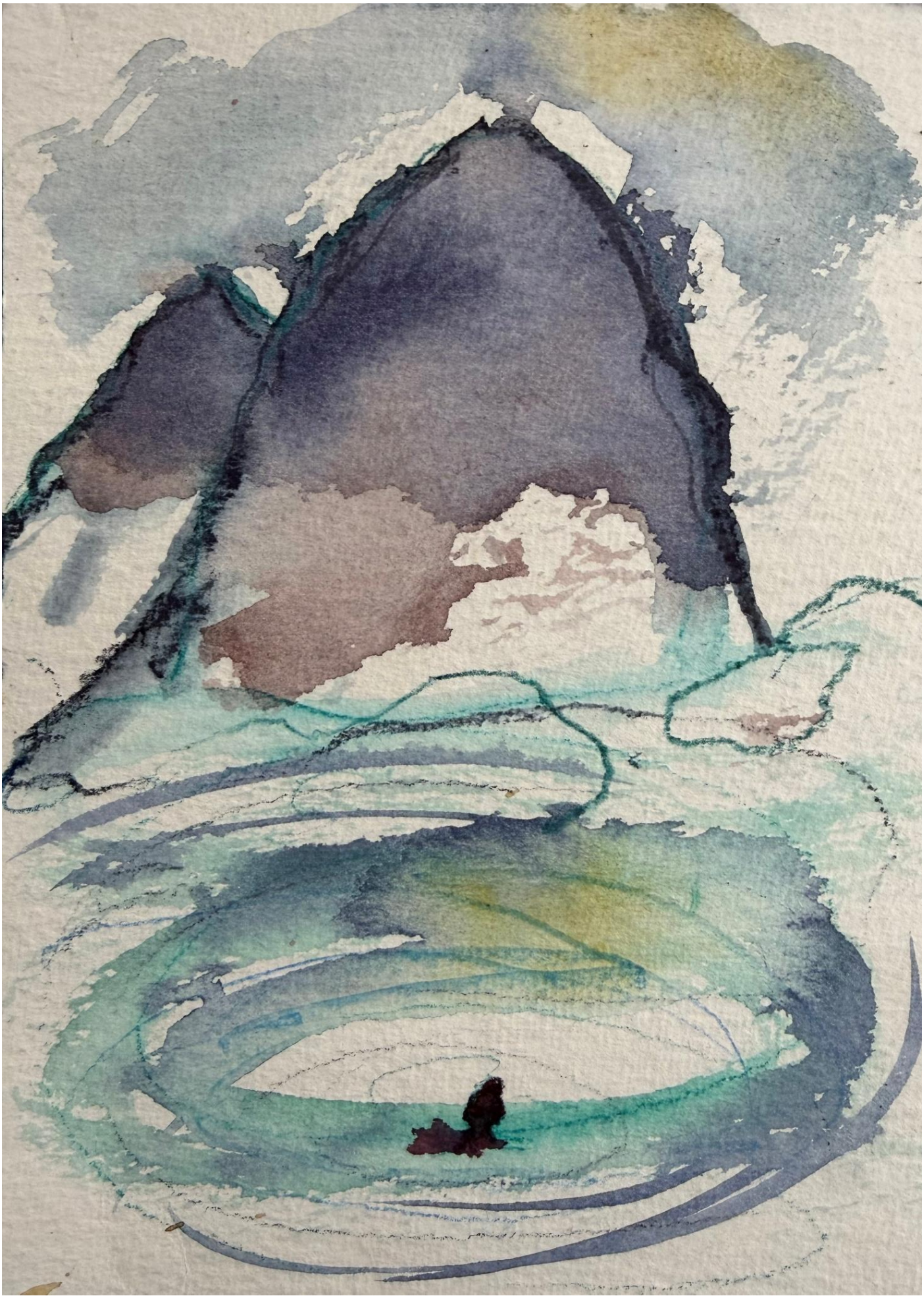
Or with Brandon on the
prow, chanting at
Atlantic waves
welling like mountains
bible held forth
set west for Eden –
the eyes of oarsmen
salt soaked from ocean storms.

He'd have you ride again
through nightmares,
across rivers
with the chanter Tam.

His heroes, all dreamer scientists
mappers of extremities
seers who sang of lost patterns
in glistening songs.

His truths rung out
to the wide aurora

a necromancer dancing
on a glacier.



Samhchair an Tuath (Stillness of the North), Sara Davies, watercolours, watercolour pencil, and inks on watercolour paper

In Dornoch, Re-imagining Hugh Miller

Derek Brown

Stomping the estuary bed,
that distant tide threatening to tamper with you –
        it would not end well, if you dawdled too long.

Bare feet slipping
Toes grasping at foam
        loam sprouting, sponging
                sucking at your soles.

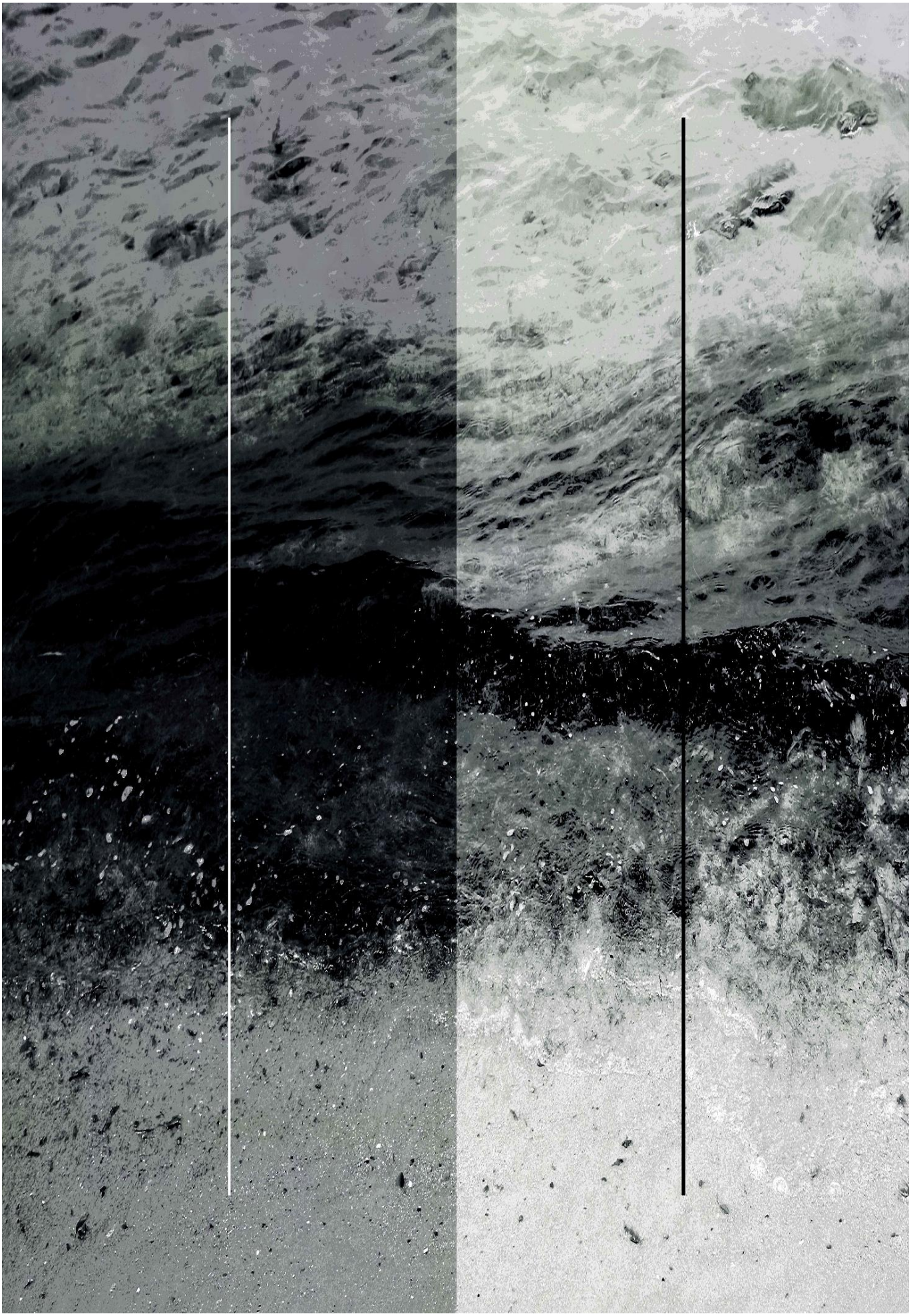
He'd have come here, maybe,
to read the sands
        probing till his fingers ached
                prizing fossils from mud
                        racing the tide.

Always striving to reconcile
his faith in fundamentals
        with those unearthed signs
                of beasts that walked these shores
                        before any human did –

a creator's hallmark
on old rocks that spoke
                                of miracles
                                of past storms
                                of competing truths.

In the end
far from the Black Isle's stillness
        his torments overwhelmed him
                those waves snuck in
                        and snatched him from himself.

Carrying him right out to sea
                                where gods
                                and dinosaurs
                                and scientists
are all one.



Rip Tide, Bill Taylor, archival pigment print on Hahnemuhle paper (unique edition)

Does the Mountain Breathe?

Jane Robb

I recently took a trip back home to Scotland, and while wild camping in the mountains, I began to think about time. Deep time, the only time that matters to the mountains. And in considering the mountains' relationship to time, I thought about mine, how the measure of my time can be in years, days, minutes, breaths.

As part of my artistic practice, I create embodied practices, one of which I offer here.
Look at the mountain. Does it breathe?

Think of your breath, how does it feel? On an inhale, can you feel the air rushing in to your lungs, expanding your ribcage in all directions? On an exhale, can you feel your diaphragm releasing its contraction and relaxing upwards towards your sternum? Can you notice the physical experience of this action caused by the pressure differential between your thoracic cavity and the outside environment?

The physics of our bodies in space and the physics of the earth in space each conjure up different associations: bodies in space as the air around us, earth in space as the vacuum surrounding it. Does the mountain breathe? The physical forces acting on the earth's crust, mantle, outer and inner core are also those that work on our bodies, albeit on a different scale: mountains push up, crust rebounds, slabs pull down. The earth is always moving.

Look back at the mountain. Has it moved?

Can you see its folds, the rocks snaking their way around its base? Can you see where it has been sheared, fractured, deformed? Like our bodies, the mountain holds evidence of its movement - just over millennia, rather than decades. Our bodies are present and witnessing this ongoing moment of the mountain, in between taking its next breath.

Look back at the mountain. What can you see?



Brecciation and Becoming, Jasper Russ



Yoke**,** Helen MacAlister, oil on canvas with inflatable mouth-pieces

NB: 1581 - The records show that the tenants of church-owned farms in Northern Iceland partly paid their rents in kind with knitted stockings.

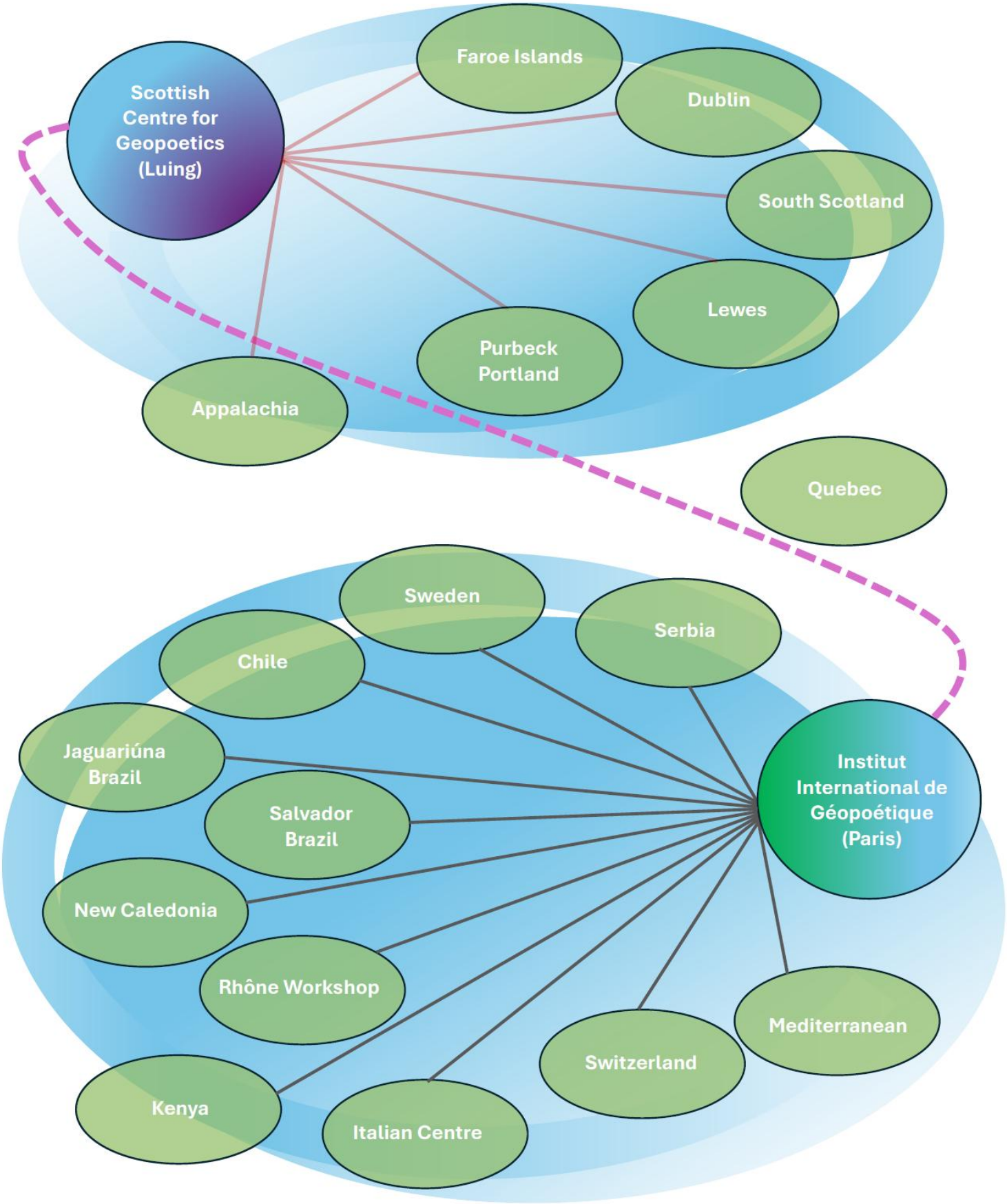
Yoke
Patrick Corbett

Green fractal shape
Dramatic land of fire
Scuplted so sharply
At the seam of the world
Inflatable taut canvas
Fair isle choke yoke
Route mapped out as
Garland or draw-string
Candidate for Thule

Pulls vulcanologists
Plutonism surfaces
Hutton proved right
Spews enough dust
To ground the world
Simple Eyja-fjalla-jökull
Twig of Yggdrasil
My geological event
My ultimate Thule

Eyjafjallajökull - island mountain glacier - erupted 2010
Yggdrasil - central tree in Norse cosmology

Geopoetics Archipelago





Burngate Purbeck Stone Centre's week of Geopoetics

Patrick Corbett and Sarah Acton

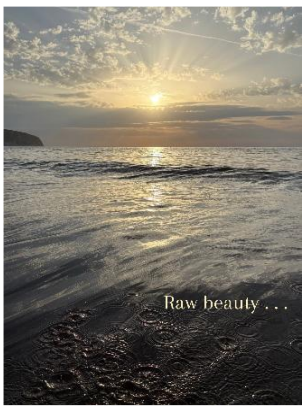
Between 29th May and 6th June, 2026, Burngate Purbeck Stone Centre hosted a week of geopoetic events as part of the annual Purbeck Arts Week ('PAW') which is always a highlight of the Burngate calendar. Burngate is primarily concerned with all aspects of stone carving and Purbeck stone learning but at this time of year also includes poetry, music, film, geology, walking and general Purbeck landscape to its offerings and the PAW programme attracts a core of annual visiting carvers to its community.

Our Geopoetics programme kicked off with poet John Hegley recording a 'Words to Inspire' session for the local community radio station, Purbeck Sounds:

(https://www.mixcloud.com/PurbeckSoundsCatchup/words-to-inspire-john-hegley-comic poet-and-showman). Later John performed outside at the Square and Compass for an enthusiastic audience of all ages. A consummate performance poet over decades, he attracts loyal supporters who look forward to his visits, and he did not disappoint new and old fans with his unique relaxed stand-up poetry and songs. A lovely sunny evening and a great landscape view provided geopoetic ambience, and John was joined by a fossil-geologist,Rocky, a puppet who resides in a large lump of rock accompanied by his friend Pat Corbett. Publican Charlie Newman with his saw violin also joined John on mandolin in a musical contribution to round off the evening. John Hegley, Charlie Newman and Rocky entertain at the Square and Compass.

Back up at Burngate over the weekend, stone carving tutor, Amanda Randall, led a two-day 2D Landscape Relief Stone Carving course where participants connected to different aspects of the Purbeck landscape, its plant and marine life and fossil past. Watching people, in this case a family from Sussex, convert an idea into a permanent stone record for the first time is an immensely satisfying contribution for the Centre's tutors. Burngate's resident sculptor, Sophie Orde-McGuire, engaged with the geopoetic theme by exhibiting a new work in progress entitled Expressing the Earth, and co-hosted a celebration party at Burngate, During the week a set of Jo Tatchell's *Thoughtprints* were on show celebrating words and local scenes of sea and rocks.



The results of the 2D Landscape Relief Stone Carving course, Sophie Orde's piece "Expressing the Earth" (in progress) and one of Jo Tatchell's *Thoughtprints*.

Guest speaker, Steve Garrett, gave a talk on the geology of the suitable letter carving stones of the UK to carvers and later performed Music of Place at the Square and Compass. His solo guitar pieces took us from Deeside to Brazil, from Ireland to Pluto, and from Spain to Dorset.




Steve Garrett at the Square and Compass and Alyson Hallett at Burngate

Guest poet Alyson Hallett gave a talk on Listening to Stones, reading poetry and speaking about her Migrating Stones project which sees many stones carried on journeys across the world. Alyson followed this theme in a programme with Fiona Sturrock on Purbeck Sounds community radio.
PURBECK SOUNDS RADIO - Home

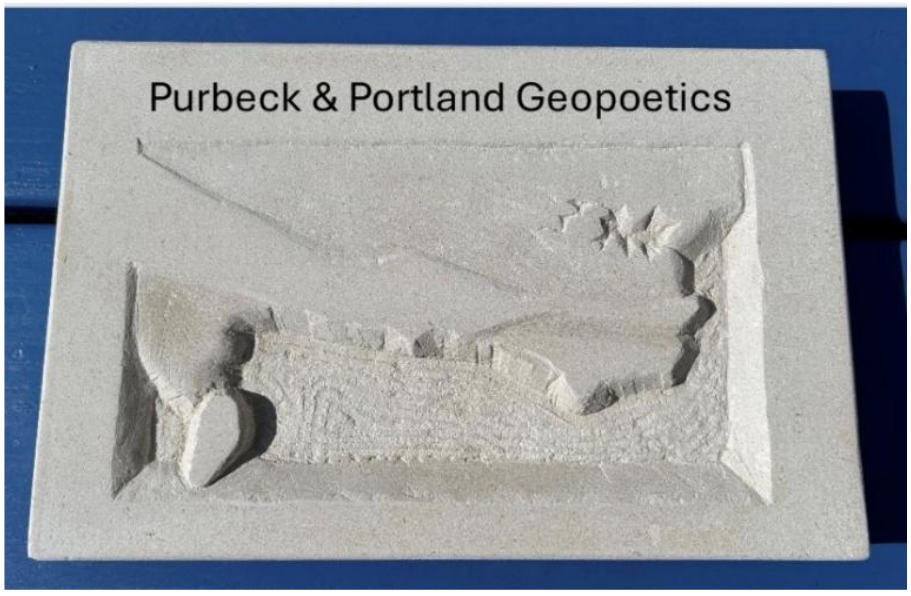


An evening showing of the film Expressing the Earth (2025) drew 30 people and gained interest and momentum for our local geopoetics hub plans. This was our second screening of the film at Worth Matravers Village Hall in partnership with Planet Purbeck and Burngate and on both occasions, audiences commented on how moved they were and inspired. Thanks to Kathy and Greg Hollidge at Planet Purbeck for co-hosting and supporting the film.



Two walks didn't take place as planned, the weather on the last day certainly didn't help, but we did formally open the new gate into the Burngate site from the Quarry to Castle Trail. The gate connects Burngate more safely and effectively to the trail. This trail, which opened last year, links geology and stone heritage sites and leads from Dancing Ledge to Corfe Castle over 14 kilometres of medium difficulty walking terrain in two loops: https://burngatestonecentre.co.uk/tuition/quarry-to-castle-trail/.

As a result of the Geopoetics programme for PAW, where many locals heard the term Geopoetics for the first time, we successfully recruited a group of multi-media artists (including stone carver, sculptor, mosaic artist, blacksmith, poet, photographer) to join as members of the Scottish Centre for Geopoetics and a new group hub to be known as the "Isles of Purbeck and Portland Geopoetics" coordinated by Dorset writer and performer, and long-time supporter of poetics inn Purbeck, Sarah Acton. The Purbeck hub looks forward to social meet-ups from late summer, (Thursdays 6.30-8pm: September 10th/ November 12th/ January 14th at the Burngate Purbeck Stone Centre at Acton), please contact Sarah (blackvenpress@gmail.com) to find out more about these upcoming events and future activities. The Scottish Centre for Geopoetics welcomes the addition of these two southern isles to the Geopoetics Archipelago.



Geopoetics Day, Glasgow - A Trip Down Memory Lane

Norman Bissell

Our Geopoetics Day in Glasgow on Saturday 25 April this year felt like a trip down memory lane for me. I chose Victoria Park in Whiteinch where I had played as a boy as the setting for our morning walk on my last day as Director of the Scottish Centre for Geopoetics after almost twenty-four years.

We assembled at the Main Gates in Victoria Park Drive North at around 10 am and walked down an avenue of tall lime trees and beyond to the Fossil Grove where David Webster, Secretary of the Fossil Grove Trust, told over thirty of us how the fossilised trunks of 330 million year old trees had been discovered by builders creating the park in 1887. He said it was unique in Scotland and the only other one in Wales is smaller than it. Growing up nearby in Thornwood, I had visited the Fossil Grove as a wee boy, but the layout, display boards and interpretation panels were much improved since then.







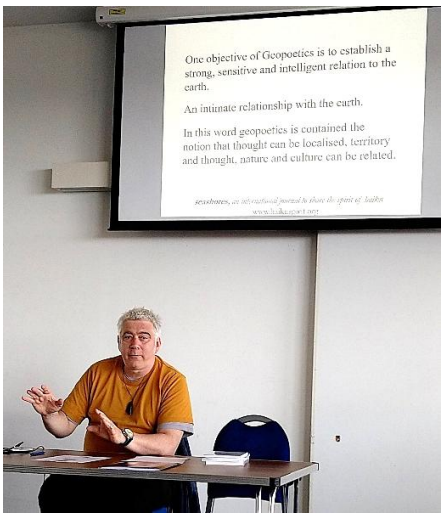
Next we walked round the large pond and stopped at various points so I could reminisce about going out in tiny paddle boats that hardly moved, catching baggie minnies in jeely jars and watching wee men in bunnets racing round the pond, boathooks in hand, to try to stop their model sailing boats from crashing into the opposite bank. Nowadays swans and coots have nests there and in the small pond under a weeping willow we came across the grey heron we were searching for.

Lots of discussions took place as we walked along and made our way to Scotstoun Leisure Centre for lunch where we were joined by martial arts men and women in black robes. Our well attended Annual General Meeting was held in the Club Deck of Scotstoun Stadium which had been considerably upgraded from the open stand and wooden benches last time I was there to watch international athletics in the presence of Sebastian Coe. I was pleased to report that our paid up membership had increased by 60% to 160 (it's now almost 250!) thanks to the membermojo system set up last November by our tech wizard Alistair Duncan, and that our award winning documentary feature film *Expressing the Earth* had sold out the 180 seats of Filmhouse Edinburgh just three days before.

We elected Bridie Ashrowan and Patrick Corbett as Co-Directors, Caroline Watson as Publications Officer and Caroline Schofield as Events Organiser, along with eight other Council members and four editors of *Stravaig*. I was delighted to be nominated as Honorary President on my retirement and to be presented with a beautiful print of Arthur's Seat by James Hutton where we walked on our 2023 Geopoetics Day.







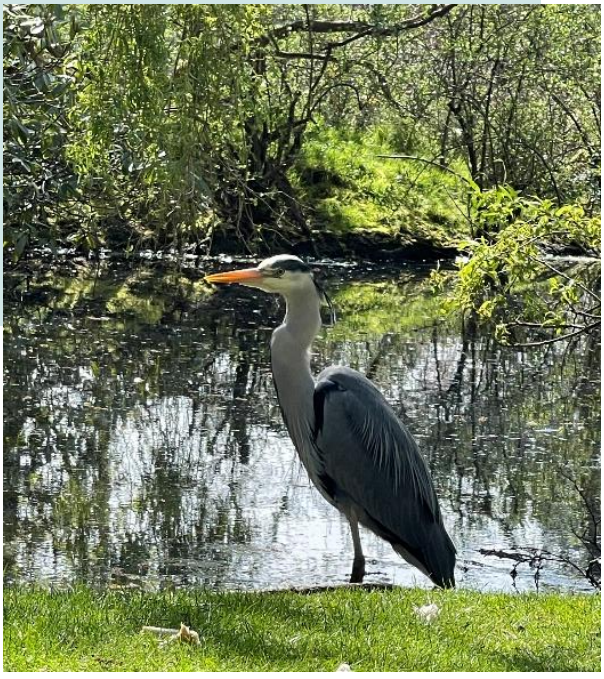
After the AGM, Mike Small, Editor of Bella Caledonia, gave a fascinating Tony McManus Lecture on the influence of Alexander Trocchi and others on radical publishing in Scotland. It brought back memories of when Kenneth White in his Hamilton Drive flat showed me an A2 sheet about the Sigma Project which Trocchi had sent him in 1964 and told me how Trocchi's 'insurrection of a million minds' chimed with his own ideas of an underground cultural revolution. What I was amazed to learn, however, was that *Jabberwock* magazine edited by an Edinburgh student Alex Neish in 1959 contained articles and poems by major Beat Generation writers such as Allen Ginsberg, Gary Snyder, Gregory Corso, William Burroughs, Robert Creeley, Jack Kerouac and Charles Olson. Tom McGrath continued that radical tradition in the London based *International Times* and by creating the Traverse Theatre in Edinburgh, as did Bob Tait with *Scottish International* magazine and Ray Ross with *Cencrastus* to which Tony McManus was a regular contributor.

Gilles Fabre gave a well received short talk on how haiku influenced Kenneth White's poetry and geopoetics, and showed most of a documentary by Oscar winner François Reichenbach of Kenneth White's journey in Japan in the footsteps of Matsuo Basho which Gilles had subtitled in English. It led to a lively discussion which wrapped up that part of the Day.

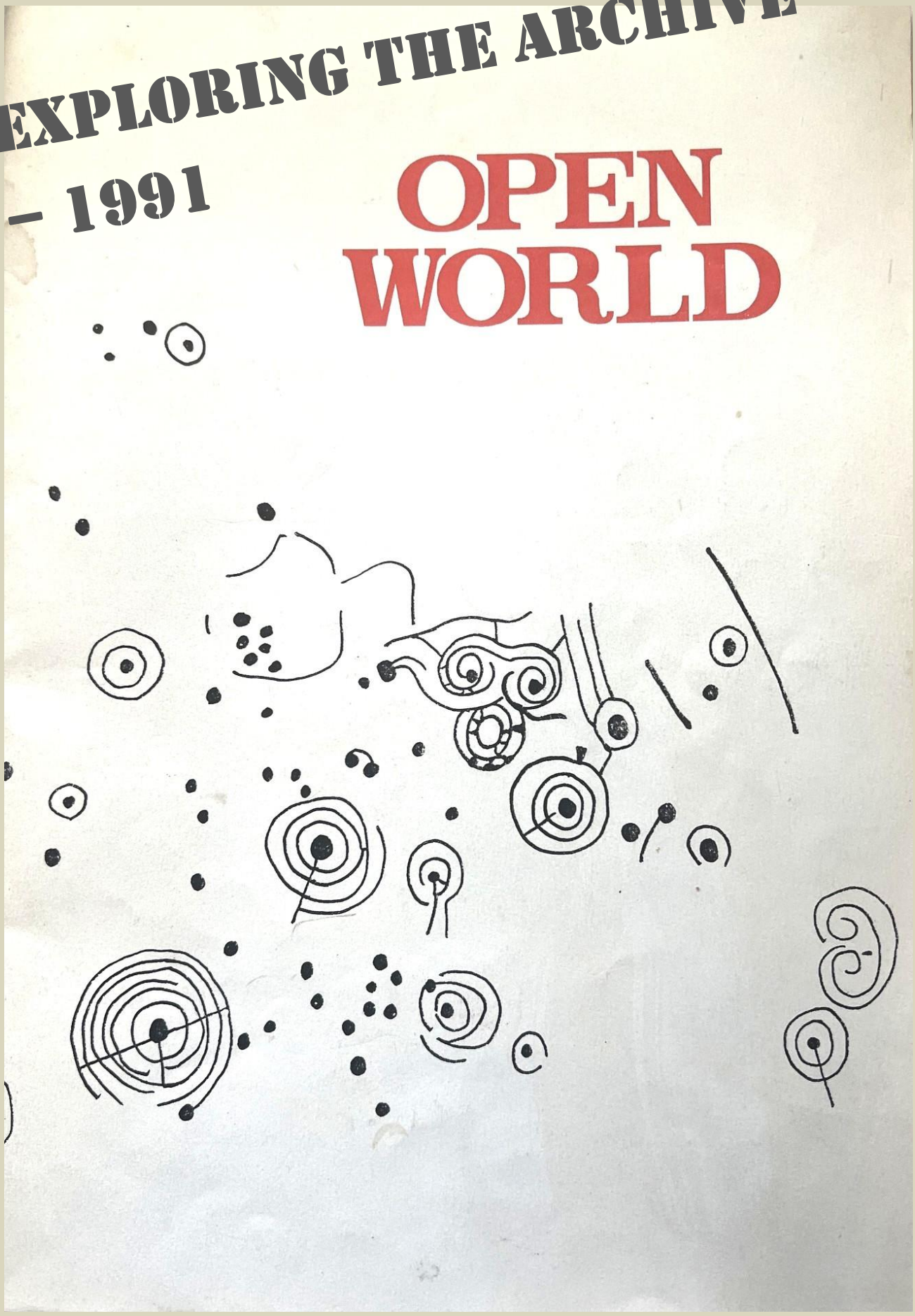
In the evening, eighteen of us gathered in Kudos Café in Finnieston for a buffet meal, ably hosted by my grandson Callum Bissell, where we talked the night away with such enjoyment that we abandoned the original plan of having a poetry and music ceilidh. A fitting end to my lengthy labours as voluntary Director!




Geopoetry
will save our Planet



EXPLORING THE ARCHIVE – 1991



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INTRODUCTION

To Open World Poetics

By Tony McManus

Open World Poetics was set up in Glasgow in November 1989 at an inaugural meeting called by Norman Bissell, Catriona Oates, Norrie MacDonald and Bob Dibble. The group meets on Tuesday evenings every three or four weeks in Dow's Lounge beside Queen Street Station. The aim was to move into areas where we could re-examine our ideas and perceptions, explore other modes of thought from different places and times to found a new grounding for our own ways of thinking, going beyond the stale categories of the "expert" and cutting through to meet the underlying patterns and unities in the philosophical, ecological, scientific, cultural, poetical and political fields.

Large aims - impossible some might say, but the important thing is the movement towards them.

The impetus for all this lay in the return to publication in Scotland of Kenneth White - whose work is not merely "interesting", but something of a challenge to one's way of being. It might make sense, then, to start unravelling the white thread that runs through the following papers, and offer some pointers to the nature of "open world poetics", with some of White's own words as a departure point:

> Suddenly Kenji blurted out:
> "We have betrayed the real world."
> "What's the real world?"
> "I don't know. But it's not that" - and he made a gesture with his hand at the expressway.
> "Well, maybe we'll get back to it. This Bedlam thing can't last long. There'll be a big crash some day soon."
> "Too big and too late."
> "Not if we keep some other roads open."
> "Other roads open?"

So the *I* in his most recent way-book, *Les Cygnes Sauvages* (*The Wild Swans*)[1] speaks to his Japanese companion on the road out of Tokyo, in the footsteps of Basho, towards the "deep north", and beyond to Hokkaido, (lit."north sea road"), with its indigenous pre-Japanese people, the Ainus.

One could (almost) be forgiven for thinking that even the habitués of the "motorway of western civilisation" have begun to recognise the need for change - witness the apparent movement that has its source in the Russian word for "opening-out" - "Glasnost". As *Les Cygnes Sauvages* was being prepared for publication last year, a leading Soviet military man, Vice-Admiral Gennadi Zoltukhin was interviewed on the subject of nuclear weapons testing. In the Barents Sea, off the Western Siberian Plain, north of the East/West frontier of the Ural Mountains, lie two long islands called, together, Novaya Zemyla ("New Land"). It was home to a number of nomadic Nenets until 1954 when they were "asked to leave" by the Soviet government which then established this wild place as a prime nuclear testing ground. The site was "secret" until Glasnost created the conditions in which the Vice-Admiral could talk about it openly. The interview's tone of self-satisfaction over the fact that it is taking place at all, only heightens the callousness of his remarks:

> The whole archipelago, I recall, covered 83,000 square kilometres, with Northern Island totally covered by the USSR's biggest glacier and the South Island an arctic tundra. The islands are nearly deserted and hundreds of kilometres from the nearest human habitation. And ... the wind pattern is one of the most stable in the Arctic. So, in geographical, geological, meteorological, technical and economic terms, the testing area was virtually ideal.

Asked about the Nenet people, the Vice-Admiral points out that there were *only* 104 families, and since they were nomadic, he implies, they would agree to moving out! As to the apparent mineral richness of the islands, he is content to state that no "industrially useful" minerals were to be found, *so there was no interest in them!*

Anyone who has been even a little of the way into Open World Poetics will recognise in the description of Novaya Zemyla a fundamental image of the naked virgin landscape, cold, clear and keen, rich in geological character, windswept home of abundant migratory birds, a place whose reindeer people, the Nenets, were no doubt a part of the landscape

rather than an exploitative infection upon it. An image of an original world that becomes an image of being. What western idealism (here in its humanist-political form) has done is to turn it into what the military man glibly calls, "no place for a stroll":

> In areas where surface tests were carried out before 1963, there are heightened levels of ionising radiation, about one milliroentgen an hour. They are, of course, closed and no one is allowed to enter.

The damage done to the ecosphere does not seem to matter very much, nor that this area of the Earth and the people on it are part of that great Northern belt stretching across Europe and Asia (taking in the Ainus of Hokkaido who, among other things share a bear totem with the Nenets) and into the Americas, the territory of an ancient tradition, an alternative to the Mediterranean one which produced, finally, the Vice-Admiral and his nuclear technology.

If the world has *changed* only to the extent that the removal of secrecy allows people to display the poverty of thought which, alarmingly, accompanies their wealth of "power", then the need for a more *radical* movement becomes a matter of urgency. Which brings us back to those "other roads" which may have been left open. It need hardly be said, we hope, that nobody is advocating a return to primitivist life, a resurrection of the "Noble Savage". What is interesting in these places and their peoples is their live relationship with the earth which we have become "civilised" away from (hence our neuroses, psychoses...) and their sense of the significance of the world. This survives also in other areas where an alternative tradition manifests itself in the clear perception of the natural world which is to be found in Taoist, Zen and Celtic nature poetries. That such perception has its roots in pretty primitive ground is testified to by Dr. Joseph Needham in *Science and Civilisation in China* as he is summarised in Gary Snyder's *The Old Ways*:

> Taoism being ... the largest single chunk of ... neolithic culture that went through the, so to speak, sound barrier of civilisation in the Iron Age and came out the other side half-way intact. (p.38)[2]

In what has gone before are images of the three basic impulses behind Open World Poetics - the recognition that all is far from well on the western "expressway", a movement then away from this road towards re-establishing contact with the earth, through exploring the ideas arising out of more earth-rooted areas of thought, aiming for a new new clarity of perception.

The following papers represent more than a year's work by the group as well as poems and artwork from some group members - work which has been completed within the context of these explorations. We are pleased to be able to include, also,an essay from Kenneth White as well as an unpublished longer poem. Of the group's papers, two (Norrie Bissell's on The Dialectics Of Nature, and John Hart's on the work of the American poet and essayist, Gary Snyder) are virtually the texts delivered to our meetings. John has also written an account of the evening on Taoism led by Jim Griffen, to include the discussion which, as always, took place along with the talk. That evening was, like the evening spent debating aspects of the environmental crisis with Tony Clayton and Joe Eyre, exceptionally diverse and stimulating.

Since it has not been possible to include Dugie McInnes's papers on Geology and it's Relationship with Art, it might be appropriate to offer here a little nugget of his talks which opened up some fascinating and fruitful areas. I remember in particular Dugie's description of Lewisian gneiss, 2.8 billion years old covered, eventually, by a sediment which was removed by glaciation so that that rock is now *visible* as it was, say, 2 billion years ago. That earth-image (later to be focussed on again when Ray Ross spoke about MacDiarmid's *On A Raised Beach*), that timescale which devastates our usual petty conception of time, that idea of movement and change, of the rock revealing itself in a form of "earth-writing" forged out of geology and meteorology - these things are central to what Open World Poetics aims to do: to go to the fundamental layers of things in order, perhaps, eventually to come back to our own situations with clearer eyes, informed by what Kenneth White calls a "sense of world."

One person who attempted to work from such a basis, and so found himself working without the recognition he merited much of the time, was Patrick Geddes. Catriona Oates offers an account of our meeting on the subject of Geddes' work led by Archie Macalister and Murdo Macdonald. We hope this will add to the growing awareness of Geddes' contribution.

I have noted elsewhere (*West Coast Magazine issue 6*) how Open World Poetics had reached down to a re-examination of the concepts of Materialism and Idealism, and begun to consider how they might be just two more examples of the dualist thinking which characterises western culture. Our meeting in December 1990 we heard a report by Anne Bineau and Evelyn McLellan, from the Symposium of the International Institute of Geopoetics in Pau, France last October. On that evening we delved down further to some searching questions about consciousness and perception, thought and being, the nature of matter and our relationship with it.

And so the work progresses. This publication allows more people to participate in what has been going on and, we hope, might encourage new members to come along to our meetings which are, of course, open and free. It may be difficult, but unless things are to be allowed to culminate in a "big crash", it is necessary that this type of work, in little cells here and there, continue and deepen.

I am writing this in the season of the "fairy-tale", that cute Victorian name for those ancient stories which go deeper than the usual mythological themes and have clear Northern shamanistic echoes no doubt capable of finding more than a glimmer of recognition among the Ainus and the Nenets. The 20th century has, typically, shrouded the really energetic sources of these ideas in Freudian interpretations relating ,of course, to "growing up". We could, rather, be talking in terms of "growing- out", or "growing-into", and perhaps groups such as Open World Poetics are taking the axe to the dense thorny clutter of our inherited civilisation, aiming eventually to break through to that nameless beauty (the Earth?) which can be looked at clearly then, as if seen for the first time.

And then the really difficult work begins - how to rouse such long-sleeping beauty...?

1 *Les Cygnes Sauvages* Kenneth White published by Grasset 1990

2 *The Old Ways* Gary Snyder published by City Lights San Francisco 1977

Diary Of Events

1989

November:
Inuagural meeting

December:
An introduction to Kenneth White by Tony McManus

1990

January:
(i) Workshop at the Self-Determination and Power conference in Govan
(ii) Dialectics of Nature by Norman Bissell

February:
What is Open World Poetics? collective discussion

March:
The Geological Context by Dougie Macinnes

April:
Idealism and Materialism in Hugh MacDiarmid's *On A Raised Beach* by Raymond Ross

May:
(i) Saving The Environment: Red v Green by Joe Eyre and Tony Clayton
(ii) Aspects of Taoist philosophy by Jim Griffin

June:
(i) Along The Blue Road: Geopoetics by Kenneth White
(ii) Open World Poetics at the Scotia: poems, songs and prose.

August:
Kenneth White on Geopoetics: video excerpts viewed and discussed.

October:
(i) Open World Poetics at the Scotia: Poems and Songs
(ii) Geology and Art by Dugie Macinnes.

November:
Patrick Geddes and The Unity of Knowledge by Murdo MacDonald.

December:
International conference on Geopoetics: report from Pau: by Anne Bineau and Evelyn McLellan.

1991

February:
Gary Snyder: an introduction to his work by John Hart

March:
A Poetics of Experience: by Miller Mair

April:
(i) Reading by Edwin Morgan along with a discussion of his work.
(ii) Mapping and regional understanding: by Kevin Anderson

May:
(i) Group visit to Kilmartin, Argyll
(ii) Poetry readings and discussion at the Transmission Gallery

June:
(i) Reading by Kenneth White and discussion of his work.
(ii) Open World Poetics at the Scotia: Poetry Readings and Blues music.

Future Events

August - Launch of Open World

Saturday 14 September - Visit to Dollar Gorge

Tuesday 24 September - Clues to the Origins of Life: Graham Cairns Smith

Tuesday 8 October - Taoism and Creative Work: Jim Griffin

Tuesday 29 October - Chinese Poetry: Graham Hartill

Tuesday 12 November - Kenneth White and the poetry of perception: Tony McManus

Tuesday 26 November - Ethnopoetics: Gerry Loose

Tuesday 10 December - Desert Island Poems: collective

Other events planned for the coming year include:
- the return of Tony Clayton and Joe Eyre for Red v Green II
- Mental Mapping II with Kevin Anderson
- Open World Poetics at the Scotia
- Awayday to Inverchaolain

All of the above events except the Dollar visit begin at 7.30 pm in Dow's upstairs lounge, 9 Dundas Street, opposite Queen Street Station, Glasgow.

Note: some of the above speakers and topics are provisional. To confirm details contact any of those named on the inside front cover.

One year on,

A RESPONSE

By Gerrie Fellows

These questions were posed to participants in Open World Poetics. The following is the most informative of the responses received.

What has been the most valuable for you in the sessions we have had over the first year?

Specifically:
geology, dialectics of nature, taoist philosophy
though I'm sure I've missed a few interesting meetings.

On some occasions the interest has been in the debate (dialectics of nature), on others (taoist philosophy) it has been in the initial talk - it seems to be the case generally that we need two meetings around most topics, one for initial input, the second for a more wide ranging discussion of the implications etc.

Generally:
ideas spoken rather than read, the juxtaposition and/or fluidity of ideas when part of group discussion, rather than solitary reading for example.
Even for those of us who find thinking/talking in public difficult, the effort to shape ideas in this context is valuable.

This feeds my own thinking in indefinable ways - I wouldn't say I take away precise changes in thinking or even clearer definitions, my own philosophy and ideas evolve much more slowly than that - but a sense of being engaged in certain processes of thought. OWP operates in exactly the area - the crossover of cultural/political/environmental thinking which I hope I'm working in as a poet.
I'm not (at least at the moment) particularly active politically but it is important to me to be engaged in political thinking. I think debate between the more active and more philosophical aspects is important (don't want to polarise these as if they weren't conterminous).

Also these connections between people active in different areas is fruitful whether the wide areas of visual art, writing, political activity or the more specific: geology for example.

What ideas do you have about the future

Specifically:
more scientific input (from whom?)
particularly in the area of sub-atomic physics and how it changes our understanding of the world, time...
Maybe specific discussion of Gaia theory.
I think there are probably other areas: technology: computerisation (eg can it be separated from 'control' or is the computer by its nature hierarchical?), film, how these have been determined by thought and how they are changing our world/perceptions, how political activity might need to change also.

I would also like to see some input/discussion on the technological environment and medicine/health - & implications in biology of sub-atomic physics. (Obviously this connects with ecology and computerisation).

I missed Murdo's talk on Geddes unfortunately and the following suggestion may have been covered in that? - the relationship of city and land, from city planning to land access and land use issues.

Nationalism - curiously enough not very often directly discussed - (the political and the cultural/linguistic).
Also if it is possible without hype (!) some kind of discussion of post-modernism - if it really exists, what its political meanings are.

This is maybe a bit too specific -? The place of the personal in open world poetics - I think this is an area of White's thinking that is bothering people and it might be useful to think of open world poetics from this angle. Also there is no reason why White should be the sole definer of, ie authority (!) on, what open world poetics is/could be.

Feminism has analysed and used psychology - I'm sure some kind of input on psychology and radical thinking would be good.

What does open world poetics mean to you?

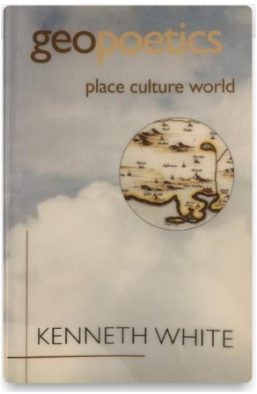
A network, a non-hierarchical connection between strands or planes of thinking/being through our entire area of experience.
Anti-expert, multi-faceted.
I don't think the person(al) can be separated from this any more than the person(al) can be left out of physics for example.

Other comments

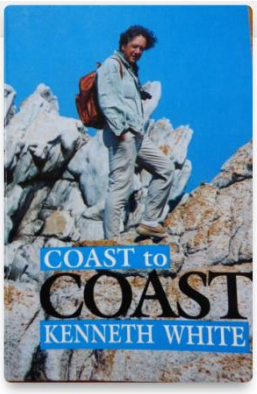
There have been times in my life when I have been quite involved in trying to organise groups of various sorts - but this is not a stage in my life when I have any time - so I'm very aware that other people are keeping this group going in organisational terms - Thank you.

Gerrie Fellows

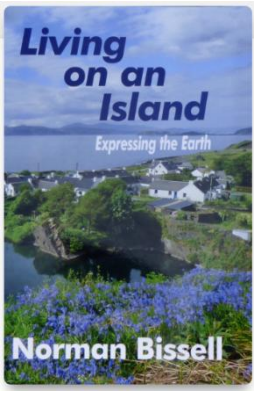
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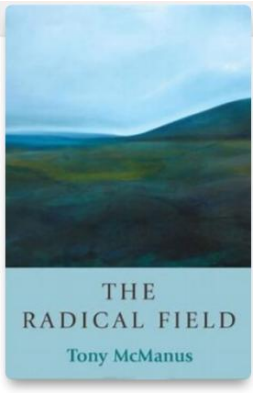
Geopoetics – place culture world
In this booklet, Kenneth White presents in succinct form the concept he developed over 30 years. Non-fiction. £6.00 Or free with membership of Scottish Centre for Geopoetics



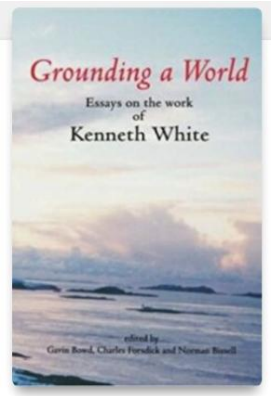
Coast to Coast
Twelve interviews and conversations with Kenneth White, 1960 – 1990, with an introduction by Norman Bissell. Non-fiction. £7.95



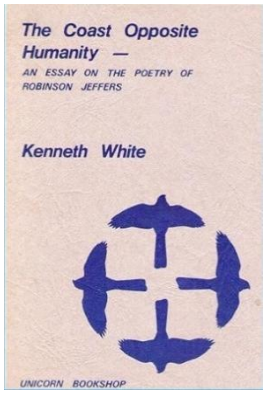
Living on an Island – Expressing the Earth
A memoir about leaving Glasgow to live on the Isle of Luing, and an account of the growth of the Scottish Centre for Geopoetics and of those writers, artists and scientists who have contributed to it. Non-fiction. £9.99



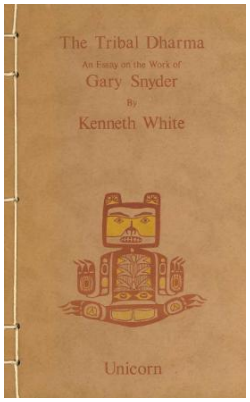
The Radical Field
A breakthrough analysis of geopoetics and the work of Kenneth White. Non-fiction. £8.99



Grounding a World: Essays on the Work of Kenneth White
Sixteen essays on the work of Kenneth White, edited by Gvin Bowd, Charles Forsdick and Norman Bissell. Essays. £9.95
Or free with a membership to Scottish Centre for Geopoetics



The Coast Opposite Humanity An essay on the poetry of Robinson Jeffers by Kenneth White
A rare first edition published in 1975. £10.00



The Tribal Dharma – An Essay on the Work of Gary Snyder by Kenneth White
A rare first edition published in 1975. £10.00

All books are available to order online from the Scottish Centre for Geopoetics.

Shop – Scottish Centre for Geopoetics
or email info@geopoetics.org.uk

Scottish Centre for Geopoetics



Membership

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

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

Further information is available from info@geopoetics.org.uk and at www.geopoetics.org.uk.

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

- a free copy of *Geopoetics: place, culture, world* by Kenneth White rrp £6.00.
- Newsletters by e-mail.
- advance news of and discounts on books relating to geopoetics.
- advance news of geopoetics events.
- invitations to all our meetings and field visits.
- the satisfaction of assisting the development of our geopoetics work and publications.
- encouragement to develop your own understanding of and creative response to geopoetics.

Please send this completed form with a cheque for £10, payable to the Scottish Centre for Geopoetics, to David Francis, 214 Portobello High Street Edinburgh EH15 2AU. Or you can pay by standing order or bank transfer to the Scottish Centre for Geopoetics account no. 00694888 sort code 80-02-24. Or sign-up and make payment on line! Visit membership@geopoetics.org.uk .

Name ……

Address ……

…… Postcode …….

E-mail address ……

Contributors

Sarah Action is a writer and performer with a passion for stone and her writing connects with the places and histories she encounters through underground exploration, immersive research and through expanding traditions of orality and storytelling. Sarah's many social engagement and oral history-based projects on Dorset stone over the last ten years, highlight local voices and landscapes blending myth, magic and in depth-research. She is the author of Seining Along Chesil (Little Toller, 2023) and currently writer-in-residence at Burngate Stone Centre as part of an Arts Council funded project Of Quarries and Stone. www.blackven.org

Ruby Bayley is a writer and environmental justice practitioner based in Edinburgh. Raised between Ecuador and Scotland's Moray coast, her work explores questions of place, belonging and environmental change. She is currently completing an MSc in Environment, Culture and Society at the University of Edinburgh, where her research explores more-than-human relationships and marine governance in the Moray Firth. Her creative practice spans creative nonfiction, poetry, photography and film, and is shaped by practices of close attention, particularly through time spent in, on and alongside the sea.

David Beatty is a photographer, writer and mindfulness teacher who lives in Kenya, his adopted home. Born in UK his photographic work in Africa and Asia included stories on threats to indigenous communities posed by large development projects. In 2020 he published *The Island, A Mirror for the Soul*, a memoir, part travelogue, and part critique of modernity, based on diaries he kept during a retreat on a Buddhist hermitage island in Sri Lanka in 1981. He has established a Geopoetics Centre in Lamu, where he now lives, an island off the East Coast of Kenya known for its unique Swahili culture and Indian Ocean connections. A collection of his poems will be published soon. He ruminates occasionally on substack: https://deepractice.substack.com

Norman Bissell has lived on the Isle of Luing for 19 years and is the Honorary President of the Scottish Centre for Geopoetics. He is the author of the poetry collection *Slate, Sea and Sky* and the novel *Barnhill* about George Orwell's last years on Jura. His latest book *Living on an Island Expressing the Earth* tells of how he came from Glasgow to Luing and his involvement in geopoetics over many years. He was the lead artist in the Coastal Cultures Islands Residency *Expressing an Island* funded via Culture Heritage Arts Assembly Argyll & Isles (CHARTS). https://www.normanbissell.com

Derek Brown is a former English teacher who works in local government. He lived in Madrid for a number of years before returning to Scotland. He has prepared a collection of poetry called, 'Between an Idea and a Wish' and a collection of short stories called, 'Between a System and a Breath' which he is seeking to publish. His poetry is explicitly framed around *betweenness* — the space between certainty and doubt, history and the present, the personal and the political, science and belief, love and loss. In it, movement through place is a form of thinking.

Hannah Close is a writer and artist exploring islandness and the *genius loci* or 'spirit of place'. She works with words, photography and film. *A Stone Made of Circle*, her island waybook, is out in winter 2027 with Humans & Nature Press. She is also making a documentary called *Islandness*. That work extends through the Islandness Gatherings on the Isle of Ulva, and voyages co-steered aboard the Eda Frandsen. Hannah offers courses for the transformative learning platform Advaya including Wild Imagination: Exploring Creative Ecology, Contemporary Spirituality: Meaning and Mysticism in the Modern Age, and KINSHIP: Islands. She has co-steered creative residencies under sail with Sail Britain, and is part of the Dark Mountain Project

team. She is from the West Country and lives in the Hebrides with her dog Rune. https://hannahlclose.com

Patrick Corbett is a retired professional geologist. Following a career in academia he took up poetry and is now expressing the earth in new-found ways, combining technical expertise in the widening field of science communication through geopoetics. Patrick co-edited *Earth Lines: Geopoetry and Geopoetics* published by the Edinburgh Geological Society in 2021 which was recently reprinted. He had a significant role in the film Expressing the Earth which received a Certificate of Excellence from the Geologists' Association amongst its many other film awards. He is a Co-Director of the Scottish Centre for Geopoetics.

Seth Crook lives on the Isle of Mull and loves sea slugs. His poems have twice been selected as "Best Scottish Poems Of The Year" by the Scottish Poetry Library. His poems have been widely published in such places as The Rialto, Magma, Gutter, Causeway, Poetry Salzburg Review, Butcher's Dog, Poetry Scotland. He has a pamphlet of concrete poems "Chalked On The Path" (Dreich Press).

Sara Davies lives on the edge of the Peak District in England but continually feels drawn to being in Scotland, maybe because of her family's Scottish heritage. She has always been a creative using visual arts and the written word to express her relationship with the natural world. She enjoys immersing herself in nature by wild swimming and hiking and making art outdoors as often as possible. Her latest artworks use mixed media applied to Indian recycled handmade paper. Her work is often a response to the sea, other bodies of water and islands, which is reflected in her palette. She is glad to have found a home in Geopoetics!

Marguerite Doyle lives in Dublin, Ireland. The environs of her native city, the mountains and coastline are the backdrop to her writing in which she explores the relationship between urban spaces and the natural world. Her poems have appeared in *Hive Poetry Journal, Reliquiae, Drawn to the Light, Anthropocene, The New Welsh Reader* and *Dreich.* She holds a First Class Honours M.A. in Creative Writing from Dublin City University. Marguerite's poem "The Corncrake" was recently selected as Highly Commended in the Francis Ledwidge International Poetry Award.

Pippa Gatty completed her MA at Chelsea College of Art in 2008 and has exhibited widely in the UK and abroad including 'Made in Britain' at the National Museum Gdansk (2019), 'Contemporary Masters from Britain', touring various museums in China. (2017-18) 'Painting and History' CAA Shanghai. (2017) L'Ora Blu,' at Yellow in Varese Italy, (2018). Salon 21, Green St, New York (2023). She has shown at the Royal Scottish Academy and RA Summershow and was shortlisted for the Threadneedle and Discerning Eye where she won a regional award, Contemporary British Painting Prize (2019). Solo shows include, "Against the Fall of Night' at Arusha Gallery in Edinburgh 2019 , and 'Of Mere Being' with the Soho Revue Gallery in London 2023. Pippa has been living and working on the Isle of Mull since 2013. www.pippagatty.org @pippagattystudio

Alison Haylett is a poet, mentor, mystic, editor and artist. Her next full collection of poems, *The Brilliant Girl*, will be published by Bloodaxe in 2027. Her latest exhibition and collaborative project, Migrating Rocks, looked at returning rocks to Aotearoa New Zealand and the ethics and colonial impact of rock collections. She is Chair of Scottish Centre for Geopoetics.
http://www.alysonhallett.com http://www.thestonelibrary.com

Dr Ullrich Kockel is Professor of Creative Ethnology at the Institute of Northern Studies, University of the Highlands and Islands, Professor Emeritus in the School of Social Sciences at Heriot-Watt

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

Brian Lavelle is a poet and musician from Glasgow who has been living in Edinburgh for the last 30 years. He has had poems published in print and online journals such as *aswirl*, *whiptail, Password* and *dadakuku*, and his music, both solo and collaborative work, has been released since the mid-1990s on various labels across the world on LP, CD and online formats.
https:/brianlavelle.scot

Robin Leiper is a psychologist and psychotherapist living between Galloway and Glasgow. His poetry has been published in various magazines and anthologies in Scotland and South Africa. He won the Seahorse pamphlet competition of 2022 and the Wigtown Festival Fresh Voice award of 2023.

Helen McAlister is a Scottish painter. She studied drawing and painting at Duncan of Jordanstone College of art, Dundee and graduated with honours in 1991. Her art has been exhibited international. From 1991-2004, she was part-time lecturer at Duncan of Jordanstone College of Art, and from 2001-2002, she was a part-time lecturer at Edinburgh College of Art.

Kirsteen MacLeod is a poet who lives near the shores of Lake Ontario. Her poems were finalists for Canadian Broadcast Corp.'s Poetry Prize, for Arc Poetry Magazine's 'Poem of the Year,' and were nominated for National Magazine Awards. Kirsteen's work appears in literary journals including Grain, Literary Review of Canada, The New Quarterly, Canadian Literature, Contemporary Verse2, Event, ARC Poetry, Humber Literary Review, Wee Sparrow and The Dark Horse (UK). Her first poetry chapbook is forthcoming from Alfred Gustav Press July 2027. Kirsteen is a former fellow of Hawthornden Castle in Edinburgh, and a contributing editor at *Arc Poetry Magazine*.

Dennis Maloney is a poet and translator. A number of volumes of his own poetry have been published including: *The Map Is Not the Territory, Just Enough, Listening to Tao Yuan Ming, The Things I Notice Now, The Faces of Guan Yin* and *Windows*. A bilingual German/English volume, *Empty Cup* was published in Germany in 2017. *Clearing the Stream*: *New & Selected Poems* apeared in 2026 from Walton Well Press. His work has been translated into over a dozen languages including full length collections in German, Japanese and Bulgarian. His translations include work by Pablo Neruda, Antonio Machado, and Juan Ramon Jimenez. He is also the editor and publisher of the widely respected White Pine Press.

Ian McFadyen is an ex English teacher and lives in Peebles, sometimes Sutherland. Received James McCash prize for poetry in Scots back in1986 along with Wee book "Tom's Boat and Other Poems" (Peebles Arts Festival 1996.), poems in "Jorum", Scottish Borders Arts 2000, "Expressing the Earth", a music-and-readings show, "Why the Birds Sing", for Tradfest 2017, with kind and talented friends. These poems come from opposite ends of a geopoetic spectrum. One is a dramatic piece of narrative. it is about land issues, and is historical. But the kind of awareness that comes from our imaginative participation in work like this is what drives our commitment. The other poem is contemporary and descriptive. It concerns a personal, not a communal experience. It's a sudden, unexpected response to the world, a moment of connection. It is there in Wordsworth with his spots

of time, there in the Japanese haiku tradition, there in the translations of the oldest Celtic poetry. Website (still embryonic) www.ianmcfadyen.scot .

Donal McLaughlin is best known for his two short story collections (*an allergic reaction to national anthems* and *beheading the virgin mary*); haiku (one third of *a rabble of glints*); and literary translations (of mainly Swiss fiction). A long distance walker for almost four decades of his life, he spent 20 months in hospital from March 2023. He now writes from a wheelchair.

Anne V McLure writes poems, short stories and about her time in international aid work. She's been runner-up in the Scottish Wildlife Trust's writing competition and longlisted in the Cymera — Shoreline of Infinity Speculative Fiction prize. Anne's poems have been published in Green Ink Poetry, Sky Painting, Pushing Out the Boat and the Bute Collection by Seahorse Publications. Anne is working on her first collection of poems. If you would like to read more, Anne writes_WordsWork _on Substack.

Carol McKay writes poetry, fiction and creative non-fiction which have been published widely for over 25 years. Awards include the Robert Louis Stevenson Fellowship. https://carolmckay.co.uk

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Jessica Lee McMillan (she/her) is a poet and teacher with a Creative Writing Certificate and an English Masters from Simon Fraser University. She sits on two boards of local arts organizations and is a full member of the League of Canadian Poets. Her work spans over 50 journals with recent/forthcoming poems in *Contemporary Verse 2, The Malahat Review, QWERTY, Canadian Literature*, and her chapbook *Shine Like a Dime in the Dirt under the Moon* via *Pinhole Poetry*. Jessica lives on the lands of the Halkomelem-speaking Peoples (New Westminster, BC) with her little family and large dog. www.jessicaleemcmillan.com

Naluka Art 'In many of my works I research the land, the water, the history and the culture of a place and combine this with my ability to listen to the unseen which I then express in art or writings. 'I love working with ink and pen. It's like the ticking of the pen creates a state of nothingness. And from that state of being I grasp the essence of things. The space between matter and energy. Captured in intricate pointillism. Sometimes more bold when using a brush.' Scottish nature and its cultural heritage are of great inspiration. Its lichens and mosses, cup and ring marked rocks and standing stones being favourites'. Naluka makes Substantial Art, visual poetry that taps into the subconscious. She is based on the Isle of Luing, Scotland. Her works are found in exhibitions, (online) galleries and have a home in many private collections.

Ian Newton has worked as a stonemason and stone carver for fifty years. For Ian, this has been a fundamentally grounding experience; finding expression and purpose through working with this dense, ancient, elemental foundation of our planet. From drystone dyking to Cathedral restoration to making gravestones he has had 'a very enjoyable and fulfilling Life'. 'I walk and sit and gaze; it's been a lifelong pleasure to be outdoors soaking in the wonder, magnificence and fragility of our world. The line from John Donne says it for me: "It's an astonishment to be alive and it behoves us to be astonished".

Shirley Nicholson lives in Greater Manchester but spends regular time in Scotland. Her family are Scottish. Following a residency on Fair Isle she published a book of poems, Tilted Days. Also, she brought to publication her aunt's wartime diary The Milk Lady at New Park Farm, about working on the land in World War Two. She holds an MA in Creative Writing from the Centre for New Writing, University of Manchester. Her poems have appeared in various magazines and anthologies, selected twice for Poems on the Move. She participated in two London Gardens' Poetry Residencies.

Dr Jane Robb is an artist and academic with over a decade of experience in environmental education, including as a qualified teacher and lecturer in outdoor education. She works with the themes of the body in the landscape and how we interact with places, using a mix of photography, drawing and writing. She is interested in how the practice of research is also a creative practice. Her exhibited work spans fine art photography, photo-essays, drawings, video, animation and illustrated flash fiction.

Douglas Robertson is a Scottish artist whose work is inspired by the landscapes, folklore, history of Scotland. Drawing on childhood experiences exploring museums, historical artefacts and the River Tay, he creates paintings, drawings, assemblages and collaborative projects that blend memory, storytelling and place. Robertson has exhibited widely throughout Scotland and the UK and has worked with numerous poets, writers and musicians, including Donald S. Murray and Isobel Dixon. His artwork often explores themes of migration, birds, coastal communities and cultural identity, bringing together visual art, literature and performance.

Jasper Russ is currently approaching the end of his Bachelors degree in Artist Blacksmithing in Hereford. His creative practice revolves around the relationship of material, landscape and geology. His current body of work is exploring the relationship of hot metalwork, the environment of the forge and geological process. This collection traces a material ancestry linking stone, ore and steel; a hereditary line of properties shaped in the earth and reawakened through making. Using recycled and reclaimed metal, it explores geological time in motion—materials constantly becoming. The act of making facilitates this cycle, enabling matter to transform and be reborn.

Anne Scott was a founder member of the Open World Poetics Group and a longstanding member of the Scottish Centre for Geopoetics. She was a lecturer at Glasgow University until 2019, an Open University Tutor in Arts and Literature, and a guest lecturer on poetry in America and Ireland. Her book *18 Bookshops* was published in 2011 then in paperback in 2016. Her essay On Exactness was included in *Grounding A World, Essays on the work of Kenneth White*. She wrote articles for *The Scotsman* and *Glasgow Herald* and was interviewed on BBC Radio Scotland and Radio 4's Women's Hour. She died peacefully aged 98 at home in Largs in October 2026.

Finola Scott Writing in both Scots and English, gardener Finola Scott examines the world. Trembling Earth, her recent pamphlet, considers the implications of the Climate Crisis. Her widely published poems gain competition success, winning the Scottish Book Trust Scots competition, the Hugh McDiarmid Tassie, The Ulster Scots competition. She was a runner up in the McCash, McLellan, Bladenock and SWC competitions. A slam winning granny, she regularly performs at events & venues from the Scottish Parliament to the Edinburgh Book Festival. She judges competitions and runs workshops for various groups. Find her in The Irish Pages Press, NWS, Lighthouse, Paperboats, Gutter. Finola's work is available on FB Finola Scott Poems and at https://www.scottishpoetrylibrary.org./FinolaScott

Dr Nandini Sen, is an anthropologist. She likes to write about water bodies, forests, and nature in general in the context of peace and harmony. Her poems are about how in future human beings can protect and heal nature, climate change, and conserve and repair natural resources. She tries to connect natural aspects as they emerge from this blue planet. She is a frequent traveler to different international countries and she clicks photos of both nature and human world. She also tries to connect her writing between different problems of the diverse kingdoms of human beings, animals, and plants.

Morag Smith writes poetry and also works in mixed media visual poetry. She has been published in various e-zines, magazines and anthologies including Poetry Scotland, Wet Grain, Gutter and the Scottish Poetry Library's Best Scottish poems of 2023. Her first pamphlet, *Background Noises,* about the re-wilding and human history of a semi-derelict psychiatric Hospital, was the winner of the William Bonar poetry prize. Her second pamphlet, *Notice to Leave* celebrates the green spaces and wildlife that exist on the edges of urban and human existence. It will be published by Art Riot Press in 2026.

Morelle Smith has worked in the Balkans as English teacher and aid worker and has collaborated with other European writers, translating and editing their work. She writes poetry, fiction and non-fiction. Her most recent poetry collection is *Shaping the Water Path*, her most recent novel, *Beyond the Lion Gate*, both from diehard, Scotland. Novella *Lovers of Leaving* takes place in 1930s Persepolis and will be published in 2026, by diehard's Fiction Direct. She blogs at https://rivertrain.blogspot.co.uk https://morellesmith.substack.com @morellesullivan

Cindy Stevens has been settled on the Isle of Barra (which she will never leave) for more than 12 years, after living and working in various parts of Europe and Africa. In addition to poetry, she has published work in the fields of social policy, trees and Sherlock Holmes. @cindybstevenspoet

Bill Taylor was born in Banff, Scotland and studied at Duncan of Jordanstone College of Art in Dundee. He has held various senior posts in art education and has exhibited extensively throughout the UK. He is represented in several national collections and in private collections in the UK, USA, France, Jamaica and Belgium. Bill Taylor's work is essentially landscape-based and is influenced by the geometries and rhythms which occur in nature. He works from his studio in Newport on Tay and the Print Studio at Dundee Contemporary Arts. www.billtaylor.scot

Vónbjørt Vang is a Faroese writer and poet and a distinctive voice in contemporary Faroese literature, establishing herself as an important writer in contemporary Nordic literature. She has been an active and creative force in the Faroese literary scene, leaving a strong mark through her poetry, short prose, and essays with her characteristic language, bold imagery, and reflective tone. She made her literary debut in 2011 with the poetry collection Millumlendingar which attracted considerable attention for its sensuous and experimental poetics. Since then she has developed a distinctive body of work in which nature, memory, the body, existence, and human relationships are interwoven in a poetic and sometimes philosophical form. Her recent publications include the poetry collection Svørt orkidé together with the essay work Úr loggbókunum. Svørt orkidé received the M. A. Jacobsen Literary Award (2024), the Nordic Council Literature Prize (2025) and the Readers' Prize (2026). In addition to her work as an author, she works as a librarian and publisher and is actively engaged in strengthening Faroese literary culture and creating new platforms for literature.

Caroline Watson works from her studio in Paisley making drawings and mixed media works on paper about connection and attachment to place with an interest in photography. She is committed to the local creative and cultural community where she lives and is a board member of Creative Renfrewshire. She is part of the SCG *Stravaig* editorial team. www.carolinewatsonart.com @carolinewatsonpaisley



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