The **FREE** literary magazine of the North

Northwords Now

Issue 22, Autumn 2012

Tom Pow on The Suitcase of the Dying Village

New Poetry and Fiction including Liz Niven, Aila Juvonen, Kona Macphee & Andrew McCallum Crawford

Articles and Reviews

EDITORIAL

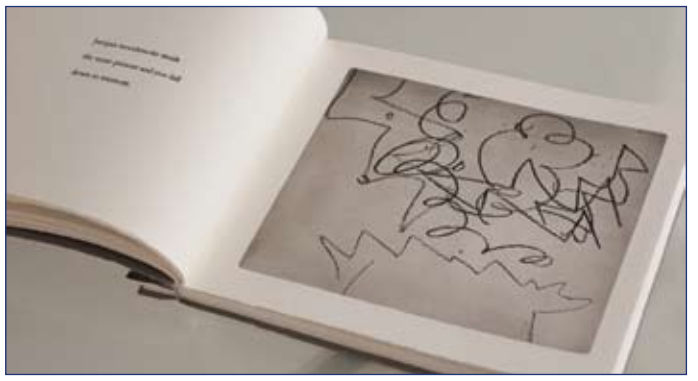
From Horse's Bits to Kindles

There is a saying, beloved of environmentalists, that *everything connects to everything else*. By this they mean the interdependency of life on earth – something that has been brought into sharp focus recently with the news of the threat to Europe's ash trees and the various animal and plant species that depend on them. I reckon a very similar principle of connectedness is at work when it comes to literature and, indeed, how we live our lives generally. When Tom Pow set out to explore the 'dying villages' of Europe (page 3) he travelled as far afield as Spain and Russia, but what he discovered there echoes on home turf as well. Tom's evocations of how the past clings on in surviving fragments of daily life – even in something as simple as a horse's bit – has a resonance in Scotland's rural communities. He reminds us of the eloquence of everyday things, of how they can speak so poignantly of ways of living which are becoming lost to us.

And then there's Aila Juvenon's wonderful poems, originally written in Finnish, translated by the writer into English, and from there finding a new shape (and sound) in Scots thanks to Liz Niven. It's collaborations like this which show how writers bridge the world, forging new connections across the north.

Speaking of making connections, there's a new way of getting your copy of *Northwords Now*. We remain, of course, committed to circulating the magazine among bookshops, libraries, galleries and art centres throughout Scotland, but the very popularity of the magazine results in frustration for some readers – copies can vanish all too quickly. To help solve this problem, and stay in touch with how readers engage with stories and poems, *Northwords Now* is now available via Kindle. Even if you don't have a Kindle device you can download the software free of charge onto PCs, Tablets etc. Tony Ross explains all on the back page. ■

Chris Powici, Editor



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Front cover image
Images from 'The Suitcase of the Dying Village' taken by Ross Zillwood. The suitcase itself, sliver of felt from a Russian boot in a wood and glass case, made by Kenneth Bryden. Boules from a Dying Village, cast in foundry bronze, by Elizabeth Waugh.

Submissions to the magazine are welcome. They can be in Gaelic, English, Scots and any local variants. They should be sent to the postal address. Unsolicited e-mail attachments will not be opened. The material should be typed on A4 paper. Contact details and SAE should be included. We cannot return work that has no SAE.

The next issue is planned for March 2013

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The Suitcase Of The Dying Village – A Journey In Objects

Tom Pow's explorations of the rural heartlands of Europe have resulted in his acclaimed book *In Another World: Among Europe's Dying Villages* - a response in poetry and prose, to the social, cultural and ecological 'crisis' facing rural communities throughout the continent. His journeys have also deepened a fascination with and respect for how the past persists in the remnant objects of everyday village life.

By Tom Pow

On the edge of a lane in a village in central France lie seven apples. They catch the light on their gravel bed - fruitbowl ready, a mixture of striated pinkish red and greenish yellow. One shows the bruise of its fall and the ragged triangle a bird has pecked. Ripeness alone has brought them down. Very different from a village in Russia, where an old woman tells me how people drive out from the city and strip her cherry trees bare: her helplessness, one sign of a dying village. Another this: ripe apples, unpicked, unlifted, already with an entry sign of decomposition. Maybe someone will chance upon them later and take them home; make use of them in the way that everything was once made use of in village life. In the meantime they lie there, another image of abandonment.

But there is something else about them

too – the way they sit, one couple touching, two couples with only the thickness of a stalk between them, one clearly on its own: they remind me of the chance pattern in a game of *boules*. *Boules* is, of course, the quintessential French village game – a game for old men in battered hats, Gitanes like rolled autumn leaves sticking to their lips, the plosive sounds of pleasure and despair. That is my memory, but there is also the scene in the film of *Jean de Florette* – the men under the shade of an old oak tree, bent over their *boules*. A still from the film shows three *boules*, their weight pitting them in the dust, their hatched surfaces catching the light where they've been worn. They have something of the presence of hand grenades. From these two objects – the abandonned apples and the memories of boules – I sense a third thing forming.

Boules from a Dying Village were made for me by the sculptor Elizabeth Waugh. I had told her I wanted three apples that were almost on the turn; ripe, but bruised, as if fallen, and one was to show the pitted attentions of a bird. They were cast in foundry bronze, given a mottled verdigris patina, through which the deep russet of the bronze shows. They are in form perfect apples, suggesting the moment of decomposition, but their colouring, like used coins, speaks of the passage of time. They sit in your hand, pleasantly cool to the touch, as a *boule* does, before the first play.

Their meaning for me deepens, when I read of how Gustave Courbet, in captivity for involvement in the 1871 Parisian Commune and forbidden life models, painted the fruit his sister brought to him. In dark times 'of terrible loneliness between life and death,' Courbet recalled the fields of Flagey, where as a boy he had gathered hazelnuts with his mother, and the pine woods where he had stained his hands with wild strawberries. His apples, speckled with their own impending deaths, speak of the unsophisticated village world with unaffected warmth.

Courbet's *Fallen Apples* (1872) are representative of a still-life tradition that favours, not plenitude, but what the art historian Norman Bryson terms, in *Looking at the Overlooked* (1990), 'the unassuming material base of life that "importance" constantly overlooks'. This is the genre of rhopography (as opposed to megalography, the depiction of encounters with history and gods) and Bryson characterises it as asserting a view of human life 'that attends to the ordinary business of daily living, the life of houses and tables, of individuals on a plane of material existence, where the ideas of heroism, passion and ambition have no place'. It is something of the pull of the transient forms of rhopos that moves J. M Synge to comment in *The Aran Islands* (1907):

> *Every article on these islands has an almost personal character, which gives this simple life, where all art is unknown, something of the artistic beauty of medieval life. The curraghs and spinning-wheels, the tiny wooden barrels that are still much used in the place of earthenware, the home-made cradles, churns and baskets, are all full of individuality and being made from materials that are common here, yet to some extent peculiar to the island, they seem to exist as a natural link between the people and the world that is about them.*

The French historian Fernand Braudel has taught us to examine the present for what survives in it of the past: a felt boot, a proverb, a snatch of song, a ritual linked to the land. In other words, the threshold between the past and the present is porous. In the world of the dying village, everything becomes an image of loss: an abandoned jar, a broken chair, a rusted bridle-bit, a felt boot, a proverb spoken out of context, a snatch of song, a wooden switch, the villagers themselves. Memory takes us by the hand, crosses the threshold into a lost land. A lost land, but one that we can visit from time to time, and one that visits us.

– From *In Another World*

It is this last quality, in the found material of the dying village, that makes what is insignificant in every other way so strangely moving: the sliver of a felt boot, from the village of Glebova in Russia, is a reminder both of the craft I saw practised and of its probable demise.. It sits in the plain wooden box I had made for it – the dullest silver reliquary.

For all that the bronze apples have been given a permanent physical form, I see them as a found idea within the paradigm that also accommodates the oval strip of felt. Many writers return to their desks bearing such "fruit". Robert McFarlane writes, in *Wild Places*, of the importance he attaches to bringing back with him something from each of his destinations and, in *Sightlines*, Kathleen Jamie tells of the whale's vertebra she brought back from an uninhabited Hebridean island ("It was strapped to the outside of my rucksack or I was strapped to it"). 'From it, all [her] interest in whalebones developed.'

Many such objects become personal talismans – touchstones of memory; intercessions between domestic life and other kinds of being. Of course, like poems, they also have meanings – or accrue meanings – that we can't control. A compulsive pocketer of stones, I find many of my memories, of where I collected them and with whom, are washed from them within a year or two: all that remains is ▸▸

their essential stony nature and the symbolising of the permeability of memory. It follows, as Jung would attest, that the objects we keep, the precious ones that retain meaning, tell us much about ourselves.

What grips us as writers is an unclear, chancy business. There are, for example, those members of the 'miraculous' school of poets, who will not write unless they are moved to do so, while others actively seek out subject matter, sending their senses out into the world to see what they might return with. Yet the movement away from one subject and towards another is inextricably linked to temperament, experience and history. Part of the pull of the dying village for me lies somewhere in my personal history, circumstances and experiences, in my fondness for looking backwards, for contemplating what is old, used and worn. The rusted bridle-bit, which I found half buried on a Highland croft, I kept close to me over many years - loving it, not simply for its perfect melding of form and function, but also for its history, for its long encounter with time; for what Czeslaw Milosz describes in *A Treatise on Poetry* as the 'Hours of labour, boredom, hopelessness/ [that] Live inside things and will not disappear'. I suppose the word that best captures what moves me here, is one of those untranslatable words: the Japanese aesthetic of *sabi* – a celebration of that which is old and faded. At its heart, *sabi* carries the Buddhist sense of life's transitory nature. Most of my wanderings through dying villages have been accompanied by a feeling of *sabi*.

I was aware, in this engagement with the material, as opposed to the linguistic, world that I was dealing with themes of time and of memory. I wanted next therefore to produce something that would memorialise dates in village life that suggested a communal, but private, sense of memory; the dates Norman MacCaig writes of, in *Memorials*, that 'are filled with a music no one understands any more.' I wanted to emphasise how precious these dates once were by having each embroidered. When I was explaining to the craft group at the village of Ae what it was I had in mind, I felt it would be useful to show them the kind of work I had been doing. I passed round the apples, the five fat blue-dusted blackberries also cast in foundry bronze (a hedgerow game of jacks), and two or three more of the objects I had. As they rolled the small bronzes in their hands and listened to me talk of the demographic deficit throughout rural Europe, I noticed how the objects relaxed the women, providing them with a focal point for comment and for conjecture – and, consequently, for the natural sharing of their own experiences.

It was then I realised that what I wanted to do most with this suitcase of dying village objects was to take it to people who lived in villages or to those interested in village life (many people I have found) and to use them, my photographs and the sound recordings I had made, to share memories and perceptions. This process gave some structure to what I wanted to remain an unpredictable and open exchange – one that would be reflected in the book I was writing. In one workshop, for example, at Sabhal Mòr Ostaig, the Gaelic college on Skye, a student indicated the horse's bit from my suitcase. 'Everyone in Skye has one of those. They find them and don't know what to do with them. They don't want to throw them out because they are still functional; only they have no function.'

I had worked with ceramicist Archie McCall on the creation of a double of the horse's bit. This one is made from porcelain and is ghostly, light, fragile. A third one has also been fashioned. It too is made of porcelain, but has been broken into pieces, its edges worn smooth, like the old sheep bones that had lain around the croft where I found its original many years before. I placed the trinity of horse's bits on a piece of green felt on the table.

The student explained that the ubiquity of the bit was emblematic of the fact that at one time every village would have had a blacksmith, as central to the life of the community as the church minister and the schoolteacher. Who would have guessed then that the way of life centred on the horse would prove to be so fragile? Alexander Nicolson's collection of nineteenth-century Gaelic proverbs lists, in its index, three proverbs relating to 'husband', seventeen to 'house', twenty-two to 'wife' and forty-one to 'horse'. And just four generations later, the intimacy we shared with these creatures has become the preserve of the tiniest minority. Yet their detritus still seeds the earth – objects, in Walter Benjamin's words, 'liberated from the drudgery of usefulness'; symbols, like so much else in village life, of the passage of time. ■

Poems by Kona Macphee

The exile

i
Their pale, impassive courtesy
patches another epic gaffe,
but any fool could see the ragged seam.

ii
He has no mirror; his own face
becomes a ghost in polished lacquer.

iii
The men – the warriors.
A hundred times a day, his gaze
whets the polished flection of a sword.

iv
Today, a finding: one grey hair
a turncoat on his chest.

v
The women.
The hushed, forbidden women.
He imagines strange thighs kissing
under the tight swathe of their brocades.

vi
Another raging night: a swung foot;
a paper panel opened like a lotus.

vii
If he could ride
some tradewind west and back in time,
he'd go. He knows they'd let him.

viii
Sometimes it's *why*? and sometimes
when? For just a few brief days
each spring, the blossom answers.

Salvage

only the ghosts
beneath the pillow

know the course
this love must follow –

which is the wick
and which the tallow

what crimson dammed
beneath the sallow

how far the deep
beyond the shallow

how close I keep
how much I swallow

Pageant

Her last shot at the Ten And Under crown
and this time, all the stops are out – her curls
and make-up sleeked by pros in the salon,
a junior couture dress, new three-inch heels.
She's charming, pert, gyrates a faultless dance,
yet come the judging, all her glamours fail
to win the sash and sceptre – just a glimpse
of Mommy in the crowd, that frozen smile.
It seems like hours she's pinned there on the stage
her teeth closed firmly on an inner fold
of red-glossed lip (*Don't cry! Look pretty! Wave!*),
those welling eyes held resolutely wide
but finally it ends: the curtain's seam
sweeps past her face, a velvet guillotine.

Poem for a goodbye

After Norman MacCaig

In the old snapshots
everyone is caught
while they were breathing;
love was a deep dive.

My heart was never stolen
by those golden ones:
I thrust it with the blunt haste
of an awkward child.

Now, the hang of the sac
of a gelded nag,
a coin purse weighing
its lost deposits,

is what my love is.
When you go,
the whisper that you wring
is everything.

Gone

These hours frittered,
seasons written off
to lassitude and squander,
torn off, crumpled, heaped
around a heart impoverished

and fretful as a dog half-hitched
to the line of lapsing fence
that curbs a B-road lay-by,
all light distant, home some glow
beyond the fallen sun.

The lamb

This one can only nuzzle if they tie
his butting mother tight against the fence -

that milkwet curly muzzle a soft lie,
the world awaiting: careless, brusque, immense.

A postcard

StAnza Poetry Festival 2010

Rough winds hoarsen
all the night,
then morning's aftermath:
a roof-slate, slipped
from tight-lapped ranks,
lies dashed and scattered;
tall bins, wind-felled,
loll square tongues
across the gutter.
Visitor, you thrust
and vanish. We abide,
fragmented and agape.

Minifesto

the greyscaled world
a scrawl of red
the jamming mass
this hidden space
the cynics' flood
a hollow reed
the silence poised
one errant voice
the arid work
a dew of knack
the wrath untold
the pen as sword
the fell of dark
one glowing crack
the reams unsaid
this tiny hoard
the covered face
a painter's guess
the years adrift
an honest craft
the days and days
a moment's ease
the void-mouthed beast
this one small fist

Bàrdachd Ùr/ New Gaelic poetry

an daras dubh
Aonghas MacNeacail

dlùthadh air an daras dubh
dlùthadh air an daras dubh
nach bu chòir a bhi cho dubh
nach bu chòir

saoilidh mi gu faighear cuan troimhe
de cheist is teagamh, smuaint is bruadar,
farsaing ri fàire

mar bu mhinig dhan chuan, dhan cheist
thèid an fhreagairt na cuairteag shiùbhlach
eadar sgeirean bhrùchdach nan aigne
is air do shaoilsinn gun do ghlac d'aire
a brìgh, siud i ag èaladh a-mach far nach
ruigear a ciall

fuirich thus air tìr, bi gu leòr
romhad mus faigh thu air ais thar na starsaich
gun shoills' ud, gus do cothrom a ruigheachd

ach air an t-slighe, gach taobh dhen cheum
preas a smèideadh, meòir gun mhaoidheadh
am bratach eòlach aithriseach fo na buinn
miann dùsgaidh tro uinneagan cuimhne

ged nach tuig thu lid dhem mormhar
cùm air thoiseach air na tuinn
cùm air thoiseach air na tuinn
na leig suas do shireadh ciall

spealg na poite
Greg MacThòmais

làrach corraig
a dh'fhàgadh air spealg poite
o chionn dà mhìle bliadhna
làimh ri uamh an àrd achaidh.
sgrob na h-ìne
a' sgeadachadh na bloigh bige sa
na sanas air maise na poite mar a bha
nuair a chuireadh teine rithe
mus deach a leigeil gu làr
le seann làmh luideach
mus deach a spealgadh
na mìle mìr bhloighte
mus deach a lorg le làmh an arceòlaiche
sa bhliadhna dà mhìle 's a seachd

seabhag dhubh inbhir losaidh
Greg MacThòmais

a' stialladh
a' sgreuchail às an fhàire
seachad os ar cionn
seabhag dhubh ifrinn
a' briseadh na sìthe
aig astar na fuaime
peilear a beatha
a' falbh à sealladh taobh ghleann eilg
a sgread ga leantainn
na ghille beag air a shlaodadh thar na h-iarmailt
is e air teadhair a chur air iolaire an taisbeanaidh
an saoghal a' stad
buidhre a' dalladh
an sealladh millte sgriosta creachte

an t-àite na thost
air a chur an imcheist fad tiotain
gus an cluinnear ceileireadh eòin bheaga an earraich
agus am smùdan a' dùrdail a-rithist

trasnadh bhèanais
Greg MacThòmais

shiubhail thu thar bhèanais
boillsgeag aithghearr dhìot
nad mheanbh eathair
dotag bheag de bhòidhchead
cumail ort air do thuras
shiubhail thu thar mo speuran
dh'òl thu balgam mo ghrèine-sa nad dhol seachad
is dh'fhalbh thu
is chan fhaicear do leithid rim bheò

Mo Duine Glainne
Catrìona Lexy Chaimbeul

Nuair a lorg mi thu
bha thu briste.
Thuirt thu rium gun robh cuideigin
air do leigeil sìos,
air do leagail
is air d' fhàgail air an làr.
Cha robh cumadh no cruth ort.
Cha robh annad ach iomadh sgàthan

far am faicinn m' aodann fhèin,
m' fhaileas a' gleansadh.
Glacte na do mhìle pìos,
bha mi bòidheach.

Chunnaic mi ìomhaigh
am measg na bodaich bheaga bhiorach.
is thòisich mi gad chàradh.

Làimhsich mi gach spealg gu socair.
Sheas mi h-uile bloigh gu moiteil
is nuair a bha thu slàn is neartmhor,
lìomhaich mi thu le vinegar is pàipear

Mo dhuine glainne
a' deàrrsadh
tro gach sgàin is srianag.
Cha àlainn airson mionaid
agus an uair sin,
sin thu tuiteam
chun an làir
a-rithist.

Is a-nise tha mi tuigsinn:
Cha b' e gun robh thu air do leagail
Ach gun do leum thu.

Tuath
Catrìona Lexy Chaimbeul

1. Dùsgadh

Bha latha ann nuair a dhùisg iad.
Creutairean laga,
le làmhan siubhalta
a' greimeachadh air an talamh –
sùilean dorcha air an fhosgladh às ùr.

Is cha b' ann sìos
ach suas
a sheall iad.
Sia mìle linn on uair sin
ach do sheòrsa
fhathast ag èirigh leis a ghrèin.

B' ann an sin a thòisich e –
leis a chiad ceist:
cò às a thàinig an t-solas?

2. Sgeulachdan

Agus dh' adhbharaich a chiad freagairt an dàrna ceist.
Le beagan tuigs'
dh'fhàs ar mic-meanmna.
Ruighinn sinn ar corragan gu na rionnagan
is dh'innis sinn sgeulachdan dha chèile:

chithear an fheadhainn gu 'n Ear
nighean ag obair le beart,
a gaol, an Cìobair, cho fad' às;

gu 'n Iar, tha Bhanrigh
a thabhaich mar tiodhlac
a h-uile pioc falt air a ceann gu Venus;

coimheadaidh na mairbh
air an fheadhainn a Deas
tro uinneagan san adhar, gan cumail faisg;

agus san Tuath, nas soilleir na càch,
tha òrdag a ghaisgich, shuas an sin fhathast,
bho thilg Thor e à abhainn Elivagar.
A' dèanamh ciall dhen fharsaingeachd,
a' toirt ainmean air mì-chinnt.
Ar dòchas sgriobt' ann an teintean beaga,
plaide sgaoilt' air doimhneachd fuar.

3. Saidheans

Dh'fhosgail sinn ar beòil is ghlaodh sinn
ann am beul na h-oidhche. in the mouth of the night.

Fhreagair cuideigin: Cruthaidhear.
Dh'fhaighnich sinne: cò?
Fhreagair cuideigin: Dìa.
Dh'fhaighnich sinne: carson?

… is mar sin air adhart, … and so on,
gus am faca sinn ar samhail fhèin
air an àird sin,
gus am faca sinn saoghail eile
tro ghloinne ar foghlaim,
le fradhrac a chruthaich sinne.

’S nach mòr ar farmad ri na h-eòin,
len gnè gan fhàgail os ar cionn.
Ag amharc oirnn bho na craobhan àrd’,
an còmhradh aca dhuinn
mar seinn.

Chuir sinn itean iarainn air gach druim
is threabh sinn rathaidean tro na sgòthan.
Creutairean laga,
le làmhan siubhalta,
a’ greimeachadh air innealan.

Tha làrach ar casan air aodann na gealaich
ach cha chuir sinn meur air meud na speuran.

Am Figheadair Sàmhach

(Aonghas Eòsaph Mac a’ Phì, 1915-1997)

Maoilios Caimbeul

1.
Tha mi a’ bruidhinn le feur is duilleagan is clòimh,
iad a’ sruthadh tro mo mheòirean gun tost;
latha às dèidh latha tha mi air mo dhòigh
a’ fighe an fheòir nach eil tiachdaidh no crost’.
Feur fada, goirid, lùbach, mìn,
a’ sruthadh tro mo làmhan mar chuimhne
air tìr nan each ‘s a’ mhurain, tìr
a tha a’ suathadh rium fad na h-ùine.
Mi dèanamh aodach do na seòid a dh’fhalbh
còmh’ rium, ‘na gillean grinn fon cuid armaibh’;
nì mi geansaidhean is bròga don arm,
do na curaidhean òga nach till gu bràth ann;
nach till ach ann an culaidhean feòir,
gu Tìr a’ Mhurain far an robh iad beò.

2.
An còmhnaidh sàmhach, a’ bruidhinn lem mheòirean,
leam fhìn fo na craobhan ann an Creag Dùn Eun,
a’ snìomh dhualan, a’ snìomh ròpan,
leis an dèan mi lèintean is brògan is iomadh nì faoin.
‘S beag a shaoil mi nuair a dh’fhàg mi Baile Garbh
gum bithinn sàmhach gu bràth nam dhìdean fhìn;
nuair a dh’fhàg mi nam shaighdear air a’ ghearran ‘s mi falbh
a shabaid an nàmhaid bha fuileachdach dian.
Nì mi acfhainn eich, srian, giort is bràid,
nì mi còta dhan ridire a shuidheadh gu h-uasal
air uachdar an eich a dheigheadh dhan bhlàr,
ach tha nise na fheur air a’ ghlasaich gun ghluasad;
bidh mi sàmhach ga fheitheamh, gus a-màireach
an tòisich mi rithist ga shnìomh is ga chàradh.

3.
An tìr ris an suath mi fad na h-ùine,
bhon thàinig an latha bha a’ bhruidhinn air falbh,
bhon uair sin rinn feur is flùr mo stiùireadh
ann am prìosan m’ anam a’ dèanamh dealbh.
Dè an èigh a nì mo chòmhradh sàmhach?
Cha dèan ach: is feur gach uile fheòil;
an duine, mar fheur tha a làithean,
chan eil ann ach mar na luideagan feòir.
Ach ‘s toigh leam mo stiallagan òir,
dè dhòmhs’ ach a bhith a’ snìomh is a’ fighe
gus an tig Muranach air mo thòir
‘s gum bi mi air ais ann an siud a-rithist
ris an tràigh far an robh mi òg,
sàmhach fon mhuran le mo phiuthar chòir.

Cò Seo Alba?

Màiri NicGumaraid

Le do chuid Albannachd
A’ dol na shnaimeanan mu thimcheall casan do shluaigh
’S gan leagail nan ceumannan shaoirsneil shocharach
Far an robh iad an dè
Toilichte gu leòr a bhith dìreach dòigheil, gearanach
Gu leòr
A bhith mar a bha
’S mar a b’ fheàrr
- Mar a b’ sheadh a b’ fhasa leoth’?

O fhalbh!
’S tu air a’ char a thoirt
As na brònaich
’S na breacanaich
A leig le usbagan iteanach gaoithe
Dhol suas
Cho diolagach
Eadar nam fèilleachan ac’
Gu ruige amaideas nan amadan
Is òinseachd nan òinsichean
’S Alba – o thus!
A’ siubhal thairis
Mar chailleach oidhche air Oidhche Shamhna,
’S mar aingeal nèimh air feasgar Nollaig
- Cho tarraingeach . . .
’S mar bhan-shìth gun là dhi dhol dhìth
A’ danns feadh nan gleann
’S a’ sèimheadh seinn
Fèinealachd àrd Dhùn Èideann.

Dèan air do shocair
A leanaibh!
. . . Nad chreathall
Gus am bi a’ chùis ‘Albannachd’ seo
Seachad.

Cruth-chaochladh

Fearghas MacFhionnlaigh

1)
Sa choille fhliuch an-diugh, corra-ghritheach
na seasamh san lochan uaigneach.
Preas crochte le crotal ri thaobh,

brù-dhearg a’ carachadh na bhroinn.
Le sgiathan leathann is sgread, an t-eun mòr
ag èirigh thar nan craobh silteach.

Chan e sgeulachd a tha seo. No bàrdachd.
Tha an eunlaith gu firinneach ann.
Tha agus na craobhan.

Cha do thachair an dearbh nì rona seo.
Ni mò thachras e a-rithist. Chan fhac’ ach mi fhìn e.
Ged tha thusa eòlach air a-nis.

2)
Air chall sa choille.
Air chall nam inntinn.
Mo chiall air iomrall.

Eòin, craobhan, poll.
Am broinn mo chinn, no muigh?
“Dinge an sich selbst betrachten”?*

Air uachdar a’ phuill,
fras a’ fosgladh chearcall
am broinn chearcall.

3)
Gam lorg fhìn an taic an lòin,
mo shùil air itealan àrd
a’ dol thairis os mo chionn,

mo cheann a’ claonadh
an comhair mo chùil
gus a leantainn.

Sa bhad, air cùrsa contrarra,
tarbh-nathrach an àite itealain,
a’ tarraing m’ aire air ais dhan lòn.

4)
Termineutair a’ dol fodha sa ghlumaig dhorch.
Stoc-craoibhe leagte eadar dà lionn.
M’ adhbrann air fhuasgladh à grèim freumha.

Sùilean dearg-lasrach a’ priobadh ‘s a’ dol às.
Dà chaor deàrrsach gan slugadh le lon-dubh.
Solas-grèine air bàrr nan craobh. Rachmaninov.

5)
Caolas Chrombaidh.
Fòghlais fo fhrois.
Eipifnidh

Gach cridhe thar tìme.
Gach nì ann a-nis.
A-nis gu sìorraidh.

*”Nithean air am meas annta fhèin” (Kant)

Fearghas MacFhionnlaigh

Eun

(an dèidh Mikel Laboa)
Angus Macmillan

Nan robh mi air a sgiathan
a ghearradh, bhiodh i leamsa.
Cha b’ urrainn dhi dol às air iteig.
Ach an uair sin
cha b’ e eun a bhiodh innte tuilleadh,
Is s’ ann air an eun bha mo ghaol.

facail bàthte

Angus Macmillan
thug iad ur cànan bhuainn
ur facail socraicht’, reubta
bho ur beòil, bhon duilleig,
ur leabhraichean ‘s ur làmh-sgrìobhainnean
air an tilgeadh sna h-aibhnichean
a’ dathachadh an uisge mar teàrr
a-nis a’ sruthadh
donn chuan neo-shùim

Poetry

Archipelago

By Andy Jackson

In the eye-socket of the ocean loch,
divers in mock-rubber circle crusted hulks,
then drop into the dark to trace the rack
of ribs. I cross the strait to knock
the barnacles from clanging hulls, and talk
with comrades lying in their bottom bunks.

Even in the summertime the water's chill
is on me like a kelpie's grip. I feel
my way along the wrecks like reading Braille.
I dream of Caribbean dives, whose still,
warm shallows drift beyond my modest scale,
and so I shiver here among Norwegian krill.

In nightmares, bubbles pop and fizz inside
my veins. Limbs thrash against the tide,
my goggles bulge with rolling, sightless eyes
and pains that run as deep as I can dive.
Surfacing from sleep, I blink and drive
my lurching minibus down to the water's side.

Later, office-bound and landlocked in a place
below the surface of myself, I appraise
conditions in the markets, far from peace
amid a storm of silt. Forecast says
visibility good, but most days
it is hard to see the hand before your face.

My fathers gathered up our islands in a cran
for centuries, trawling waters well beyond
the twelve-mile limit, gathering dominion
then watching as it dwindled and was gone.
But all fleets must one day go for scrap, or join
the scuttled cruisers at the bottom of the main.

As tickers show the fluctuating price of crude,
the glow from Flotta flickers on the tide,
lighting up a continent that lost its head,
the nations beached and lying on their side,
a crumbling archipelago imbued
with all the danger of an ocean bed.

The islands that are left are soused in brine,
stung by gales and stalked by submarine
and migrant whale. The great Atlantic stream
could drown me and not leave a sign,
but still I dive to shipwrecks I have never seen,
between the shoals of cod and contact mine.

**Archipelago won first prize in the 2011 Baker Prize Competition*

Lost Village, Helmsdale

By Elizabeth Rimmer

Here are come live with me hollows,
like the young seductive hills of Iceland,
their inclines catching the sun.
They are winter-burned, heather-bleached
to tephra-grey billows, an inland ocean.

No natural disaster ever came here,
No ash-cloud, fever, lava flow, but only
the suffocating tide of time,
of landlords' greed, want, hardship, cold.

Croft-house gable ends rise from the grass.
The hearths are cold and deep in moss.
Sheep-walks and neighbour paths
ephemeral as breadcrumb trails.

The fields are gone to bracken,
wood sorrel, hidden primrose-banks.
The nettles still remember them,
in patches where the soil is deep and rich,
and skylarks, singing out their claim of right.

The Sea, The Sea

By Alan Macgillivray

How can I have failed to see this all these years?
The coming tide by Murdo's burn,
Swirling seaweed at Stromeferry pier,
The St Clair's hissing wake up Bressay Sound,
Baltic bright behind the cruise ship sun-deck,
Slick wet sea-lions on their Frisco Bay pontoons,
The beach at Luskentyre, nothing until America,
Those bright perspectives west across
Atlantic or Pacific blank immensity.

Has it taken seventy years and more
To realise that this is all one,
The same expanse, the same enormous glassful,
Drawn from the tap in Glasgow,
Swigged from the plastic bottle,
Drunk from the hand in hillside springs,
Raised from the ocean's breast,
Swirled in clouds across fragmented lands,
Precipitated finally upon uncaring rock
To give it life, the chances to diversify and thrive,
A verdant glow concealing all the sterile underlay,
The irremediable stone?

Sea Legs

By Deborah Benson

You read the tides of the year, fingering
The spring soil before planting time
Watching the sky;
Testing the barley grain between your teeth
While the combine waited at the field's edge
Ticking in the summer heat.

You rode the waves of the land,
The crests and troughs of the furrows,
Ploughing the hill;
Your head turned with such grace over your shoulder
Watching the soft earth curl and fall,
The seagulls wheeling in your wake.

And lying in my hospital bed
I watched you come to me at the day's end,
Navigating the corridor,
Your ungainly gait on this hard land,
Your legs still braced to ride
The field's swell.

Poughkeepsie

By Howard Wright

Our dark blue Samsonite filling his SUV, Oswald, asking
about the flight over, the stewardesses and security,
the fall of civilisation, and what's so special about
the 'relationship' anyway, is soon on auto-pilot, laughing

and gesturing, the rammed multi-lane swallowed by
the rear-view mirror as we approach the last century's
supernova that is classic Manhattan from the East River –
skyline of thrillers, disasters and coffee-table architecture,

its splayed, plosive fan of orange and yellow smog
motionless, an array of modernist fumes radiating out
in a sundial sunrise like a mock suburban front door;
Art Deco spreading its smug theoretical wings. Higher up

(we say it because we like the sound), is *Poughkeepsie*,
and Oswald keeps talking, having seen all the repeats,
sequels and remakes, content to sweep us anonymously,
wondrously, across midtown and under the Mondrian carpet.

Standing Stones

Short Story by Juliet Lamb

You were looking for poetry. You wanted it carved across the landscape, seeped into the soil, hazy in the air. In my own way, I tried to make you understand. I told you about the Vikings: how they smashed through the top of a tomb five centuries sealed to shelter during a snowstorm, carving their names into the walls the way you see in men's toilets. There were reasons for what I said, but I'm not sure you were listening. The problem was that you were looking for poetry when all we have is life.

On the ferry it hurt to watch you (though I tried not to think of it at the time) copying ridiculous lines from the windows into your notebook, your scrawl eager and angular like the readout from a heart monitor, like the vibrations of the earth. You were out on deck in the fog when even the tourists stayed indoors, your jaw set with coiled wonder and ready to spring open. I stood with you and felt the moisture settle thick on my hair and the shoulders of my coat. The untroubled sea swelled and settled like a bedsheet around us; dark seabirds appeared out of the mist in sudden sharp punctuation. You put your hand on my back and let it rest there. The fog cleared suddenly when we reached Hoy, red cliffs shearing white fleece, the sun beatifically round. Laughing aloud, you whirled me under your arm, arched me backward, kissed my neck. I allowed myself to think that it might be enough: those cliffs, that dreamy fog, the sun. "Our new world," you said, low and serious.

Summer folded in on itself, those few weeks of long days before I started teaching. You wanted to see everything: geological, Neolithic, Viking, war debris. Flowers. We visited fields like other fields, witness to historical events that left them unmarked but extraordinary. I stood sentinel beside you, letting you tell me things I already knew. Even as I enjoyed your excitement I took its pulse, charted its ebb and flow, prepared to step in if it fell below a critical point. I was with you and watching you at once. Happy and aware of how precarious we were. A small boat in deep water.

Some days we didn't leave the house. I scaled your ribs with my fingertips, spanned them with hands, built a nest under your skin. You sighed, slept, woke reaching for me. When you wrote in bed without dressing, I dozed against your shoulder, the computer warm as a curled cat sharing our laps, watching words march across the screen to the rhythm of the keys. You always began with titles: "Myth and Landscape"; "Sky, Sea, Stone"; "Canvases in Green and Sand". You floated above your own sentences, and I floated along with you, my cheek on your collarbone and the warm sheets tangled around our legs. We didn't look at clocks until late afternoon, and then one of us would stretch, laugh, dress, walk down the street for fish and chips.

The weather stayed fair even after school began. I thought that meant something: a benevolence, a reprieve. You kept writing, although the local publications, already too small for you, were stubbornly not hiring. I came home and went where you wanted to go. We wandered through the cramped shops and went back again to the same monuments. Once, from the clifftop at Yesnaby, surrounded by the bed of an ancient sea, we watched a hurricane tear the water to shreds. Even at work I was your satellite, exchanging news in whispers from the staffroom. When my coworkers asked, I showed them a photo of us from one of the first days we arrived, your arm snaking up out of the corner of the frame, our shadows falling onto pillows of thrift behind us. They said you were lovely. I handled their compliments like coins, warming them in my palm, ensuring our future.

But the sky closed over, a grey fist; the days grew sunless and short. We watched more television. You liked the programs about beautiful remnants in far-off places: Chinese temples, Mayan and Aztec ruins, Egyptian statuary. Look what they did, you told me once, they took rocks and made them beautiful. They didn't just make walls out of them.

I watched as you began to build walls with words, and there was nothing I could do. You wondered, What kind of masochists would live in a place with no sun, no natural resources? You meant me. Another time, when I came back from school, you were waiting for me with a plan to go to Nepal for the holidays, laid out like a court case. They carved stone Buddhas while the farmers here were standing sandstone slabs on end, you informed me. They could teach you people a few things about delicacy. You people.

On the weekends you got up early, wrote perched on a stool in the kitchen with the heater on. When I came in, wrapped in my robe, you smiled and went back to work. You didn't tell me about the applications any more—when I asked, you said they were here and there. At the beginning you let me be indignant for you, let me tell you that you were better than they were. Now you wouldn't even give me that.

I didn't think we were broken, not yet. I remembered your face on the crossing, your readiness to be awed, and I knew there was something there that couldn't break. I planned a weekend trip for us: an inter-island ferry, a B&B, a walk to a cairn. It rained on the way over and you stayed inside, reading an abandoned magazine. I stood out on deck, facing into the wind, the rain peeling my eyes. That night I clung to you like someone in a strong wind. You held me so gently I thought I might shatter from feeling it too much, expansive cathedrals opening inside me. Wasn't that love? Being too big for your body, too small to contain yourself? I was sure you felt it.

You whispered into my hair, Let's get out of here. There are other teaching jobs. We can't let this place ruin us like this.

I let go. Not us, I said, quietly. It isn't ruining me.

A few weeks after that, you heard from an international paper in Athens. You were to start in a month, but there were things to organize: housing, travel, bank accounts. Although you never really asked if I wanted to come, you told me the news on an uptilt, as a question. Only when I didn't answer did you start making your arrangements. I waited until after you went to bed to cry, closing the living room door. If you noticed —as you must have— you never mentioned it.

I went with you to the ferry. You kissed me quickly, your face already lit with possibility. Dry-eyed, I watched you go. We clicked closed so easily, like a latch; you sailed on.

That night, I walked to town in mist, the barest echo of rain, watching the lamplight shiver and sift between the paving stones. The street was quiet, the grey walls of the shops tinted blue in the light, each edge sharply defined. I thought of the stories I used to tell you to make you laugh. Where I come from, a man found a five-thousand-year-old tomb while bulldozing the parking lot of his restaurant. He did his own excavations and hired a mason to fix it, and now he charges entry. Where I come from, a farmer blew up standing stones with dynamite because he was tired of having tourists on his land. Where I come from, there is Viking graffiti in the ancient tombs. Where I come from. I want to tell you now what I really meant then, though I never knew it until you left: where I come from, we are not the servants of our history. We only know how to live. When a wall falls, we build it again. When a tomb caves in, we make a cellar. When the fish disappear, we harvest wind and tides. There is beauty here, strength, but not the kind you are looking for. It is the kind I found in myself while you were leaving, when I began to collect my stones again, to rebuild my walls.

You wanted poetry, but you never looked hard enough. All we have is poetry. All we have is life. ■

Poems by Laurna Robertson

North

When there's nowhere else to go you head for home,
sailing north over darkening water, guessing
the names of headlands and lighthouses slipping by.

There's the clang of feet on steel stairways.
Doors bang. Below deck the world lurches and sways.
There's the smell of salt and thick paint on iron.

And under your rockaby cradle
the keel slices a wake in the ocean --
a past-and-future reel of three.

Then the calm of a sheltering coastline
pitches you out of your bunk. There's a blast
on the ship's siren and you're into the harbour.

Bells sound from the bridge. Anchors rattle.
Cables are thrown. Dockers warp the vessel
alongside. Families fill the pier.

Two figures, huddled against morning cold,
search for the sight of your face at a porthole.
But after the first wash of welcome,

your place set at the table, they shrink you
to the earlier maquette that they knew
before you fled over the sea.

maquette: small model of something to be made, as for a sculpture

Foula

We were two girls and the three-man crew
of the Foula mail boat. Grocery boxes crowded
around the coffin of an island woman
who had died in town.

Damp fog closed in. The engine thundered,
its fumes hung in the air, its wake was dizzying swirls
of white water. Occasional birds - a puffin or guillemot -
flew with us over the slow heave of the waves.

Two hours and twenty-two miles out to sea
the men cut the engine. And listened.

We might have missed Foula. We might be heading
out into the ocean. Into cliffs. Onto reefs.
Even on clear days the five-peaked silhouette
was never certain, was always a gift.

A horn. We heard a horn. Someone on shore
was blowing long and continuous notes
to guide us in to the pier.

We landed. The Laird's wife snatched our wrists
and drew us with her to the Haa
for women folk must not be part of the procession
carrying the coffin into the mist.

Foula. The edge of the world.

Losing Melby

Somewhere in the north west of this map,
among those wriggling lines, is Melby.
If I can't find it the knitted land will unravel
like ripped back stitches and I'll never conjure up
the pattern of the scattered isles again.

We spent a week of rainy days at Melby House.
Low watt lights burned all day. Ewers of hot water
stood at our bedroom door each morning.
While we queued for mother to comb and plait our hair,
I sat by the window staring out at clouds above the bay.

Fourareens were drawn up on the sand.
Another waited at the slipway.
Still it poured.
    The Holm of Melby lay off shore.
    Did it rob Atlantic skies of grey reflected light?
    Was I facing north?
The lines settle. There's Melby with the red road
that ties it to the Bridge of Walls and my way home

The Gunnister Man

An Inventory

A stick in three pieces, two writing boards,
a staved wooden vessel with twisted birch bands,
a horn spoon, a knife handle, its tang rusted away;

a collarless, Jack Sparrow, justaucorps coat
of fulled wool, gauntlet gloves knitted
with wide, patterned cuffs; belt, buckle, two caps;

a twilled woven jacket, cloth breeches, torn shirt,
long knitted stockings shaped at the calf,
and the soles patched in clocks; rivlins. *shoes made from hide*

In the ghosts of lined pockets
a hollowed horn with a stopper
(inkwell or snuff mull), a very short quill

and an intricate tri-colour, draw-string knitted purse
with three bands of pattern, tassels at lower edge;
inside it a silk ribbon and three foreign coins -

one copper 1/6 ore (Swedish lion and crowns)
and two silver stivers stamped with the names
of towns in the Netherlands 1691; *Nymegen, Overijessel*

bone fragments, finger nails, tufts of brown hair.
These are all that remain of the mystery man
found in a peat bog on Gunnister Hill.

Photo Call Lerwick 1898

Elizabeth Scott, who starched these collars and smoothed
these heads of hair, sits at the heart of this photograph.
She faded out before the War that claimed three sons.

There is Mackie, who played Mikado on the Lerwick stage;
Donnie, his twin, who half a world away in Adelaide
felt his death twinges; Peter, pilot out of the port of Leith;

Annie, the lonely girl; Laurence, solicitor's clerk in Edinburgh;
Willie, whose will caused chaos, leaving goods to be shared
by his surviving brothers' sons, or his brothers' surviving sons.

Jimmy settled in Queensland. Frank was shelled on the Somme.
Bertie, sailing south with Anzacs, died of wounds at sea.
Tom was blown up in Jericho with Allenby's men.

Bob, shipmaster on the Tasman Sea, married Florrie
who could not stand Australian insects. They found safe
harbour in Vancouver.

Not in the group, Sam, still unborn -
he would sell cars in New South Wales, marry twice
and learn to fly at sixty, his last mistake-

completes Captain John Scott's family
- eleven sons and a sister for each -
still with their journeys to make.

Dinnerdate

Short Story By Alan Gillespie

He sat while she fussed in the kitchen.

Why don't you pour the wine, she said. There were two glasses on the table. Are you having some, he said. Yeah, I'm having some. He poured the wine. Measured them equal. He sniffed the rim of his glass. Peaches and tang. It's a vouvray, she said. Your favourite.

She brought the plates to the table and placed them gently. Smiling. Cheers, she said. Cheers, he said. They touched glasses and drank the wine.

He picked up the salt grinder. You haven't tasted it yet, she said. I seasoned it already. Don't add anything until you've tasted it. She'd made mussel risotto. Gooey rice. Blackblue shells sticking out like jewels. He forked a little into his mouth and ate it. Mmm, he said. Delicious. She smiled and started to eat. He had another mouthful and then ground salt and pepper over the plate.

How was your day, she said. It was fine, he said. Same old same old. They both chewed. Something must have happened, she said. He looked up. I don't want to talk about work. It's boring. How was your day?

Good. Was up at the clinic. Went to the fishmongers. How's the risotto?

Great.

And the mussels? They're good mussels.

The mussels are good.

Good.

But they're seafood.

Yes.

Are you okay to eat seafood?

I'm okay.

Sure?

Sure.

He finished his glass of wine and poured himself another one. Hers was only half-drunk and he topped it up.

Heard from your sister, she asked.

Yes.

How's she getting on?

Good.

Good.

Seems to be enjoying it. Won't be long now.

Good.

He drank the vouvray. It was his favourite but too expensive. The mussels were good but too expensive. He could see a frill of lace at her cleavage.

She swallowed a mouthful of risotto and sipped some wine and put her cutlery down and smiled, reaching over the table to him with both hands. He swallowed the mouthful he was chewing and sipped some wine and put his cutlery down and reached his hands to hers. I love you, she said. I love you too, he said. Do you? Of course.

These really are good mussels, he said and pulled his hands away. And the rice is good too. Good flavours. What's in it?

Its butter and chopped onions and garlic and white wine and chicken stock and mascarpone and parmesan and oregano.

It's really good.

Thanks.

Is the recipe from a book?

Yes, it is.

They ate the risotto and drank the wine. When they had finished their meals there was just enough left in the bottle for them both to have another half glass to drink with their cigarettes. He lit one and left the pack on the table and she took one out and lit it.

What've you got on this week?

Nothing. Busy.

Busy.

Yes. Busy. That was delicious. Let me clear the plates. He took her plate and scraped a little rice from it onto his plate. He put her plate underneath and her cutlery on top. He balanced the salt and pepper grinders next to the cutlery and took the pile to the kitchen. He came back and picked up the two bowls filled with empty mussel shells.

Great mussels.

I know.

Were they expensive?

Not really.

He took the mussel shells to the kitchen and poured them into the bin. In the bin was the bag from the fishmongers. He lifted it out and read the label.

He took the bag from the fishmongers back to the table. Did you buy these today?

Yes. This afternoon.

They're out of date.

What?

Out of date. Says here.

Let me see. He gave her the bag and pointed to the sticker. So they are, she said.

A good few days out of date.

I can't believe it. I didn't even notice.

Why would you? You go to a fresh fishmongers and expect fresh stuff. This isn't on.

No, it's not on.

He sat back down and lit another cigarette. The bag from the fishmongers sat between them. I thought they tasted fine, he said. Wouldn't have known.

Me neither. They tasted fine.

I never could've guessed anything was wrong at all. Could you?

No, I couldn't. I'm sorry.

It's not your fault.

It is. I should've checked.

Don't be silly. You shouldn't have to check. You don't expect it to happen.

I've ruined everything.

No.

I have.

You haven't. You didn't know. You weren't to know. It tasted fine. It was good. I liked it. And the wine. It's delicious. You did really well.

She started to cry. Don't cry, he said. Come on. Don't cry. It's not your fault.

It is my fault.

It isn't. It isn't.

We're going to be sick now, she said. Both of us will need to throw up.

I feel fine.

You feel fine now.

There's no point worrying about it. Let's just see what happens.

They sat on the couch beside each other and he put on the television. For a while they watched programs and didn't worry about the mussels. Then her stomach made a noise.

Oh god, she said. He muted the television.

Are you okay?

Did you hear that?

Yes. Do you feel alright?

I feel alright but not for long.

Do you need to go to the bathroom?

Not just now.

He unmuted the television and they watched some more programs until her stomach made another noise. Grumbling, bubbly.

Did you hear that?

Yes. Are you okay?

Oh god I'm going to be sick.

Just now?

Soon. I need to do something. I need some water.

He got up and went to the kitchen and poured the cold tap for a while. He filled a glass and took it back to her. Here you go, he said.

Thanks. I'm scared.

Don't be scared.

I don't like being sick. I need some milk. I'm going to get some milk. She stood up and went to the kitchen and poured the water down the sink and filled the glass with milk from the fridge.

He followed her. Just relax, he said. There's nothing you can do about it. What's done is done. You need to accept it.

I can't. I don't want to be sick. If I drink this it'll make it better.

It won't.

Why do you always disagree with me?

I don't.

I want to drink milk so I won't be so sick so why won't you just let me.

Okay. Drink it.

She drank some milk and rubbed her stomach.

Do you feel better, he said.

No.

I don't think milk will make a difference.

I want to try to fix it.

It's too late to fix it. You can't fix it.

Why do you always have to make out like you know best? You're always doing it.

I just don't think milk will help when we've eaten mussels that are off.

This isn't about the mussels. It's everything. You always know best. Telling me what to do. Oh yeah. Just walk away. Where are you going?

He had left the kitchen. She followed him into the living room. He muted the television. I think you're being hormonal, he said.

Always my fault, she said. Never your fault. You never do anything wrong. Mister perfect.

I never said that.

But you think it. You think it now and you were thinking it when –

He put his hand up. He belched softly and lurched towards the bathroom. Oh god, he shouted, I'm going to be sick. ■

Poems by Aila Juvonen & Liz Niven

Ma sister deed faur awa fae us

BI AILA JUVONEN
owreset intae Scots bi Liz Niven

oan the asphalt byled bi sun
the tod's fur shines siller
an deid gowd

ye said ye must be brunt

yer bonnie gowden herr
deed doon bi the years
ye sookt aw the pollution o the warld intae ye
filtert doule an despair
intae bio-waste

in the place
whaur ye took aff
polis caur an yella tapes

when yer ashes cover the sun
an rain oan ma face
it tarnishes ma tears

A came ower late tae this kintra
yer coffin cannae be opent onie mair
an naebodie pit yer woollen socks oan
ye're gan tae meet the fire wi cal fuit
it maks me greet

A sit oan the bench in the station
Forged metal flooers press ma back
ahint me yer toon
which is nou tuim

ma mindins are yella papers
stories aboot wretchedness
an longin
awbodie wants tae read them

A scrievit a secret buik aboot ye
there yer herr flows in the win
ye sit oan the carpet aside me
ye hiv new leather buits oan
tea in the cup and the reid flooer

we lean tae each ither
an wir shouders ken
that we are wan

the seed inside ye
grows in yer luive
it yaises aw o it
ye chose tae leave naethin fir yersel
ye easily cuid hiv

the stane cave whaur ye tak me fir a waulk
breathes oot damp an cal
an A wunner
cuid there no be in this vastness
at least yin wee flooer grow?

Mither rows wi virr oan the unner earth loch
the oars are o metal
the boat cuts the watter lik it was The Reid Sea
the rock spleuchters
thegither they rise a tsunami
that sooks yer rubber duck intae the shipwreck

It is no allowed .
Dinna love her!

A luive ye in the morns for the restrictit time
jist thrie meenutes an thirtie thrie secons
it has become a pairt o ma ilkaday life
that gans ower an ower itsel lik a tickin o ma alarm cloack.

Oan Setterdays A dinna usually think aboot ye
only if A happen tae buy somethin expensive and wi'oot use.

Oan Sundays mither thinks aboot ye
fir a wee whyle durin the sermon

Faither hammert the wa
atween you and himself.
He pit thick plestic oan the baith sides
an a wheen wool atween.

If the wapaper bubbles
fae some place
he sticks a muckle piece o isolator oan it.
That's the repair we dinna hiv tae wait
or spear fir ower an ower.

A drive doon the weel kent road
the sun has gan doon
haar is risin fae the road
the tod's plaistert ower the road lik a shilpit cairpet
the corbie sittin on it's deid fur
eatin it's nicht deener

The Sunset

BI AILA JUVENON
owreset intae Scots bi Liz Niven

The edge o the wuid
lik a traffic polis afore us

burds are improvisin thir tunes
the faimilie sits lik in a picter

by the loch aroon the hearth
sausages are sizzlin

fire is warmin us
smell o sauna oan wir skins

Wi'oot warnin
the sun bursts intae flames

wuid end reeks lik burnin hooses
birds scream lik deein weans in snaw
shilpit

The picter shatters doon
saut watter rains oan us

sausages faw intae the fire
we gan back intae wir holes

heids atween wir paws we shut wir een
smellin lik earth
lik hurt tods in thir burrows

At the simme

BI LIZ NIVEN

We slept sole tae sole
oan the lang rectangle
wuid draped wi blanke
Yer bairnhood wuid re

Ye took yer mither's si
a crucifix abuin yer he
some buiks aside the b

A took yer faither's sid
his clock inches abuin
An in the middle o the
fower am its hauns saic
ma flailing arm brocht
upon me.

In the wuid there,
time stoppin
unner a full muin,
a dull light ower
the derk loch
ye'd kent aw yer days,

an us twa
sharing wir thochts
wi the lake, the muin,
wi clocks an crucifixes

A Note on Translation

Aila Juvonen had already transl
English. Thus, I was using her
version. In many translations,
sponsible for many choices suc
references, emulation of the fo
of this had already been done
which seems to exist in Aila's I
as-second-language voice, is les
and the rhythms shift well into

As Aila herself states, 'You ha
have translated them to Engli
translations from Finnish. I have
them as I don't have to translate
kind of rewrite them to fit the

er cabin

o bed;
ets an mats.
etreat.

de,
id,
ed.

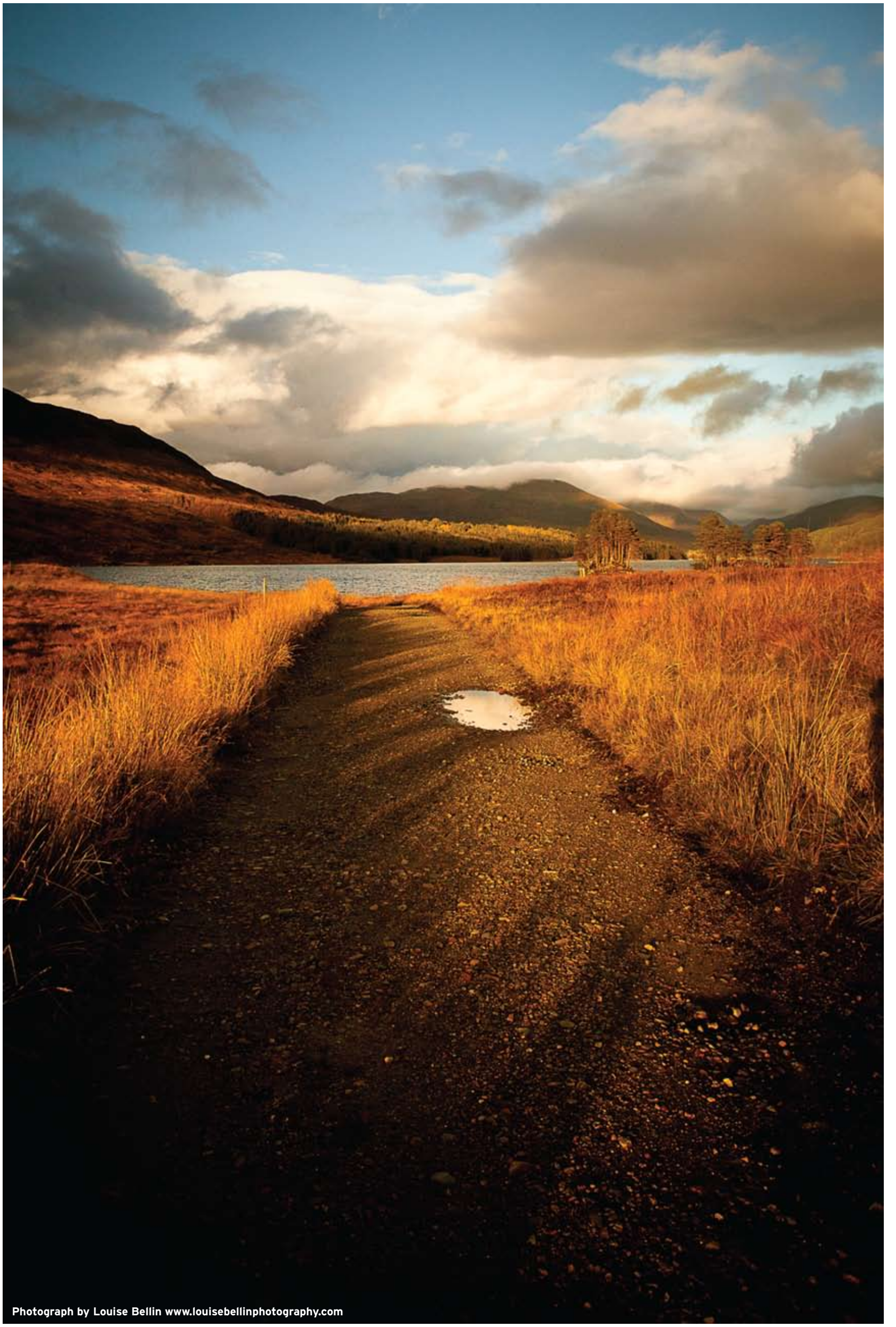
e,
ma heid.
e nicht,
d,
it doon

.

n

lated her Finnish poems into
English poem for my Scots
the translator has to be re-
ch as decisions about cultural
orm of the poem etc. Much
e and I found that directness
English versions, her English-
s like a native English speaker
Scots.
ve to remember that I already
sh and they are not straight
e more freedom to work with
them word by word. So I can
language and culture'.

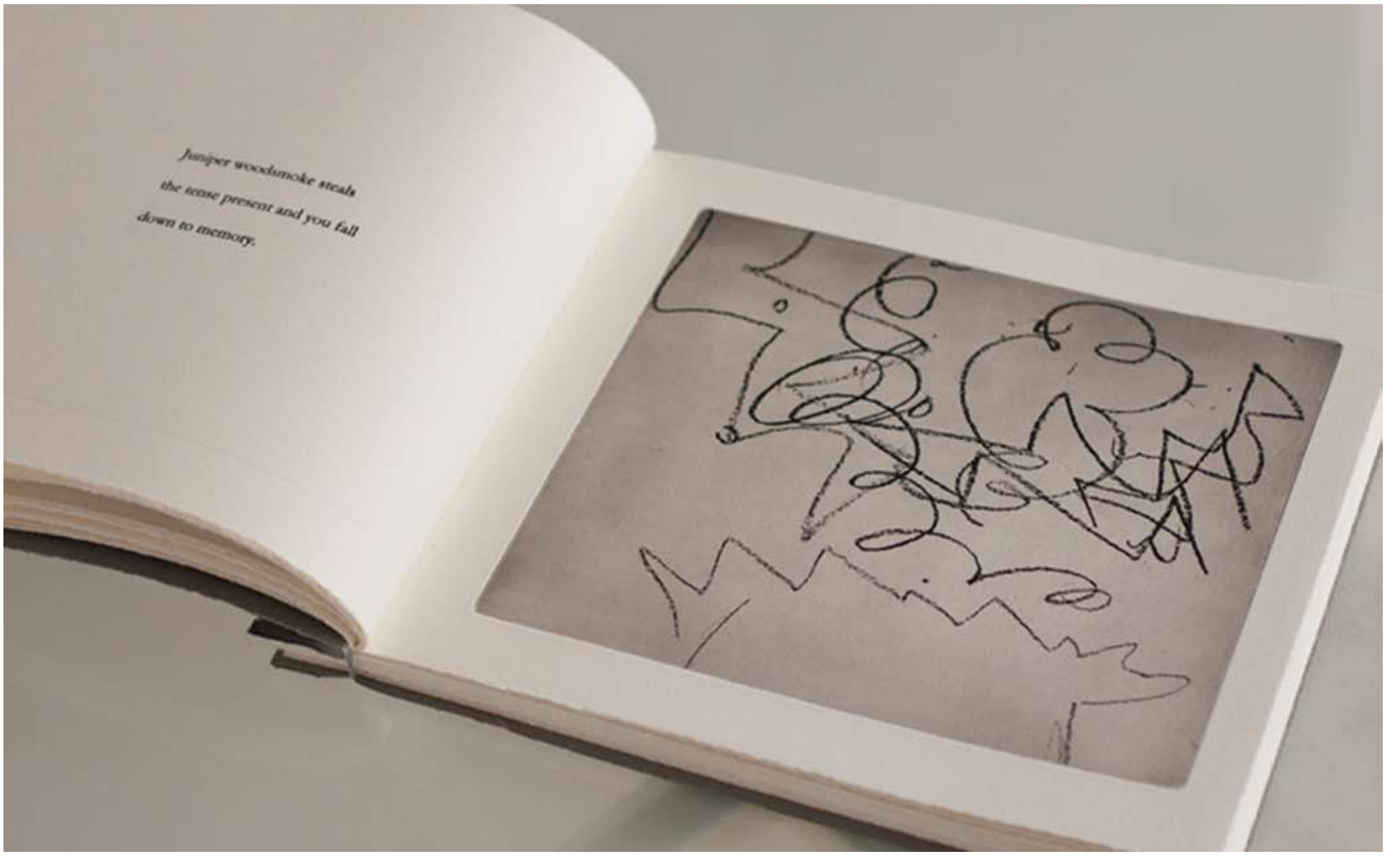
– Liz Niven



Photograph by Louise Bellin www.louisebellinphotography.com

Acts of Trust

Ian Stephen describes a prize-winning multi-arts project exploring 'the act of trust in telling a story and the act of trust in letting the imagination guide the hand'



Acts of Trust artists book, Edinburgh College of Art Degree Show 2012
Christine Morrison

I'm going to tell you the story behind a project built on stories. It started in a cul-de-sac in Stornoway. People still visited each other and yarned. They would have laughed if you'd called any of them storytellers. But I now know that my uncle Kenny 'Safety' Smith, was passing on the Mac an t-Sronaich stories he heard from his own father. And my mother loved a blether with her pal, May Hiortach, the next door neighbour who was born on Hirta. Yarning was a key part of the way of life. And there is still a strong culture of talking on my home island – it can take a while to walk from one part of the harbour area to another.

I think I was more slow to realize that my father's Doric wit was an opening to a very similar culture of yarning. When we visited a pre-fab in West Road, Fraserburgh, we found another extended family with people dropping by for the chat in the evening. The supper table was laid as soon as we had eaten our tea. And you were never sure who would call by. When I went on to become a student in Aberdeen (after another yarning environment in the forestry-van in Mull) I met Stanley Robertson. This was about the same time my brother's closest friends were the Stewarts – a traveller-family then settled out at Marybank near Stornoway.

I heard other great traveller storytellers like Betsy White, Belle and Sheila Stewart and Duncan Williamson. Like so many others in Scotland, I was encouraged in storytelling as well as poetry by Hamish Henderson, met first at Keith Festival. From then on it was explicit that oral storytelling would work hand-in hand with writing literary prose and making poems to be published for the page or to be sounded out loud.

There have been many collaborations over the years. And education work has also gone together with making books and exhibitions. It was my main subject of study and the B Ed training has come into everything I've done since. But you know that feeling when the strands simply fall together? The beginning of the 'Acts of Trust' project was in a municipal library in Grasse, France. I'd been invited to a small Festival Ecosse run by a friend from these writing group days at Uni, now settled in France.

Helen Kirk translated for me, as I told the story of the three knots of wind – a tale often linked to Lewis but which has strong affinities with a tale from Homer's Odyssey. Then the visual artist, Christine Morrison led from key images in the story to an exercise in 'blind-drawing' – where the children looked at the knot they'd tied or simply imagined an image from the tale. And then they drew it in a fluent line without looking at their pastel, making its mark on the paper.

Christine's proposal seemed to me an exact parallel for the act of trust in telling a story without the security of a text. The drawings were arresting in themselves but the act also consolidated the story so some students could tell their own version at once.

That's why I invited her to join me in the outreach programme linked to my Reader in Residence post with Western Isles Libraries. Christine was willing to invest the time into taking the workshops further as it would form a research project as part of her Masters in Fine Art – the Art, Space and Nature course at Edinburgh College of Art. Both Western Isles Libraries and Donald Anderson of Shetland Arts, who developed and administered the five residencies, throughout Scotland, were happy with the idea of a systematic experimental programme, rather than merely aiming for the largest number of school visits.

This was our method, from the first very full day at Laxdale school. After providing storytelling entertainment at Assembly, we both visited every classroom, from P1 to P7, performing the same workshop. Three different stories were used. These were all based on texts or transcriptions which were held in the library collections.

'The Bag of Winds' must surely have existed as an oral tradition before it was worked into the great poem of Homer and it has very strong parallels with Hebridean traditions of gaining control, for a time, over the elements. Donald Smith, Director of the Scottish Storytelling Centre, invited me to tell this story as part of a re-telling of all the main stories of the Odyssey by island tellers from the Mediterranean to the Atlantic. I got bogged-down in Chapman's lulling translation despite Keats' sonnet. It came alive for me in the robust version by Robert Fagles.

The story of 'the three knots' re-occurs all round Scotland's coasts but is often linked to Lewis. I knew of it first from conversation with my late friend Norman M Macdonald, the playwright and novelist. Research at the School of Scottish Studies found links with versions transcribed and published in volumes held in Western Isles Libraries. My telling was based mainly on a version from the Monach or Hyskeir islands but there are elements of an Orcadian version too, indebted to Tom Muir and other Orcadian tellers and researchers.

'The Kingsfish' is based on a tradition noted by J F Campbell and used in a print by Will Maclean. I developed my own version of the story during the North East Expressive Arts project, around 2001 and it was published in one of the pocketbooks/Polygon series, *Mackerel and Creamola*.

So we used three distinctive strands – a retelling of a story from a work of classical literature; a faithful retelling of an island story; and the development of an intriguing but lightly-sketched tradition.

The workshops were repeated with schools in North and South Uist and in Harris, from P1 to Sec 1. We found that each of the three stories seemed to engage the pupils. The feedback showed that the story from Homer's epic worked as well as the traditional tales, across the age-groups. A huge number of free drawings was produced. We photographed all of these and returned the originals.

I have an ongoing working relationship with Highland Print Studio and a recent project led to a body of prints using the photo-polymer process, superbly realised by John McNaught. This time, Christine wanted to print our edit of the work, to present the project for her own Masters show and for a sharing of work completed during the Reader in Residence posts.

The aim was to gather and present representative drawings to tell the stories along with three pared-down texts for each of the three tales. We felt the process, which combines digital transference of photographed images with timeless printing methods, would present the work as well as we could but without intervening with the pupils' immediate responses.

It did however present a huge technical challenge because the texts are done in relief and the images in intaglio, whereby the image is incised into a surface, and the incised line or sunken area holds the ink. The paper has to be damp for the images and dry for the texts. Christine's design for the presentation used the method of Japanese binding, whereby two pages are printed on one long sheet of paper, before folding. The spine is held by the stab-stitch method. One smudge and we would not have been able to complete the work in the time-scale.

After one intensive workshop with John, Christine led the printing process, accomplished in a very tight time scale, with me assisting. She then bound the results into two artists' books. We see these as prototypes for what could become an ongoing exhibition and outreach project.

The whole process has made me very thoughtful about the relationship between storytelling and poetry. I feel that the short texts I produced for the book are simply a very short version of the stories. About a week ago, I was asked to produce an introduction to a group of my recent poems, to be published in next year's Oxford Poets anthology. This is what came to mind:

The more I'm immersed in telling stories – an improvised form where the audience plays a part in the mood and detail around a narrative – the more I feel that the opportunities of poetry are different. For me, the backbone of a story needs to be very clearly defined, before I can tell it. Like a voyage at sea, the route will never be exactly the same because the sea-conditions will be different but there is a pre-conceived plan, open to alteration if conditions change. For me, poetry is more like drawing with a very free hand as a way of discovering.

Here are the very short stories:

The Bag of Winds

All the winds except the west
in a dark sack of hide with
a silver locking hitch.

The skipper's foot on the storms,
his eye on the creaking cloth,
and the sheet-rope in his palm.

Juniper woodsmoke steals
the tense present and you fall
down to memory.

The Three Knots

When you let it go
the first knot will give you
the wind you want.

The second knot will bring
as much wind as the boat
and you can take.

You must promise not to
even look at the third knot but
the others won't work without it.

The Kingsfish

There is eating fit for a king or queen
in the *dallag* or huss.

The wide gob of a shark
is under its chin.

Two lines trail to two
hooks in the one fish.

★ Acts of Trust won the multi-arts category in the British Awards for Excellence in Storytelling. Another Scottish teller, Michael Kerins won the male storyteller of the year award. Sheila Stewart won the lifetime achievement award. ■

When Iron Turns To Rust

By Andrew McCallum Crawford

Trying to boil water in a small, long-handled pot. The flame was tiny, sputtering. There was hardly any gas left in the canister. The water had to be boiled, and boiled well. It was orange, the colour of old iron. He tried to tell himself it was nothing bad. There is nothing harmful about iron. It is supposed to be good for the blood. Maybe it would make a man of him. But he was careful. You never knew. Germs. It is never wise to give them a head start.

The flame wheezed. He would have to risk it. He added a teaspoon of coffee and stirred vigorously. Perhaps friction would speed things along.

Someone was at the door.

He wiped the spoon on his vest.

A woman was standing out in the passageway. She looked vaguely familiar. The expression she wore was tearful, apologetic. A suitcase was at her side. He became aware of his heart beating as vague familiarity welled up into something else.

'You can't be fucking serious,' he said.

'Bastard,' she said. She leaned to pick up the case, but he got there before her, a real gentleman.

He squared the sheet on the bed. He made it last longer than necessary, tucking the corners in just so. He could feel her standing behind him, next to the sink, taking in the state of the place.

The canister gave a final pop. The flame died.

'I'd make you a coffee,' he said. 'But, eh...'

'No, fine,' she said. 'I'm not...can I sit down?' She wasn't asking for permission. There were no chairs in the room. There was nothing in the room apart from the bed and the wardrobe. The toilet was on the other side of a threadbare curtain. All mod cons. He reached out onto the balcony for the stool, which was filthy, the result of prolonged rain followed by a heat wave. She lowered herself onto the edge of the mattress.

He wasn't good at small talk. He wasn't good at confrontations, either. This one was of his own making. Not just his. They'd concocted this situation between them. It had been a long time coming. He sat on the stool, his knees up around his chin. It was ridiculous. He tried to read her eyes, but she wouldn't look at him. The grate over the drain in the middle of the floor had her transfixed.

'Look at me,' he said.

She did.

'What happened?' he said.

'Are you still writing?' she said. She wanted to get down to it. Of course she did. 'I haven't read about myself for a while.'

'No, I gave it up,' he said. 'It was causing too many problems.'

'Yes, tell me about it,' she said.

He hadn't meant it like that. It was true, though. That was the problem.

'So I'm no longer your Muse?' she said. 'No, hang on, how does it go? That's right, I'm the oxygen that breathes life into your words.'

'Sarcasm was never your strong point,' he said. 'How are your kids?' He was relieved to note she hadn't brought them with her.

'They're at my mum's,' she said. She looked at the drain. A cockroach scurried out of the grate and stopped, its antennae gyrating, next to her left shoe. It about-turned and scurried back again. 'Thanks for asking.'

'So, what happened?' he said.

She splayed her fingers in her lap. Some of her nails were broken. The skin around all of them was chewed. She looked at him. She looked at him for a long time. Her eyes were dull, like neglected emeralds. 'He found out,' she said.

He knew all about jealous spouses. Well, one. He didn't blame his wife for reacting the way she had. So much deceit, all those years of trust being cunningly, methodically, mathematically chipped away. Secrets cease to be secret, sooner or later. You have to deal with the consequences. Not that he had wanted to leave. He had been thrown out, quite literally. His wife's cousins were large fellows impervious to his whining. And here he was languishing in this dump, skint, but at least he was safe. 'How did you know where to find me?' he said.

'You emailed me months ago,' she said. 'When you moved in here. Then you disappeared. Have you given up the Internet as well?'

He'd been offline for a while. Had it been months? The laptop was out of sight, under the bed, probably covered in dust and worse. He used to get a signal through the wall, but they had wised up to it and put a lock on. He couldn't afford an hour down the cafe, never mind his own connection.

'Strange, that,' she said. 'Giving me your address. Very old-fashioned.'

'I wanted you to send me flowers to brighten the place up,' he said, lamely. There was only one reason for telling her where he lived. He was sitting looking at it. 'How did he...I mean, what did he...'

'He didn't speak to me. He went out and came home drunk. He started shouting, breaking things. I dressed the kids and took them to my mum's. I haven't been back to the house since. He's okay, though, if a bit hysterical, judging by the texts he's been...'

'So you decided to jump on a plane and come to me?' he said.

'Yes,' she said. 'Mad, eh?'

He looked at the drain. 'I can't help feeling responsible,' he said.

'You don't say!'

'Let's not argue,' he said. 'I haven't got the energy, believe me.'

'I can see that,' she said. 'You look like shit.'

'Yeah,' he said. He couldn't help himself. 'So do you.'

She started crying, quietly.

He scratched the side of his face. 'I haven't eaten since Tuesday,' he said.

Her fingers, blunt claws, started opening and closing as if she were trying to grab something to stop it getting away. What it was, he had no idea. It certainly wasn't her dignity. She'd lost the last vestiges of that when she knocked on his door. She clenched her fists tight. He heard something break. He could have been mistaken. 'God, what am I doing?' she said. 'You are so selfish.'

'I know,' he said.

She took a tissue from her pocket. Her nose. That way she had. Still the same. Delicate, but effective. 'Could we go for a walk?' she said.

It was an idea.

'I'll need to get changed first,' she said. She hoisted the suitcase onto the bed. The lid flapped against the wall. A pair of jeans. A white blouse with red roses. It looked new, the way it was folded. He should have given her some privacy, but where could he go? He leaned against the wall and rubbed the stain on his vest. It was damp. It wasn't the first time he'd watched her undress. He wished it was. He wanted to feel something, he really did, but there was nothing sexual in the white cotton and naked skin. It was almost unreal, he was standing outside himself, watching these two desperate characters playing a scene; an excerpt from the jaded routine of married life.

His mouth made a sound.

She turned to face him. A challenge. Look at me. Look at all of me. He tried not to stare. Her breasts hung heavy, overripe, a vertical crease of wrinkles between them. His heart. His hand moved to his chest. Whatever dream he'd written her into, whatever it was they had shared, its time had come and gone years ago.

A crack like a gunshot as she pushed an arm through the sleeve of her blouse. 'You're some piece of work,' she said.

'What is it you want from me, for Christ's sake?' he said.

'Don't you dare shout,' she said. 'I can tell by the look on your face. Think about all those things you wrote.'

'They're just stories,' he said. 'I told you that.'

'Yeah,' she said. 'You're a liar.'

She was right. For him, the line between fiction and confession was so fine it didn't exist. He was fooling no one, not even himself.

'Okay, I'm a liar,' he said. 'My wife could tell you all about it. But I never lied to you. Not once. Call it misplaced loyalty. If it's the truth you want, look around you. There's mould on the ceiling and bugs crawling out the floor. That's the truth. That's my truth. You're welcome to it.'

She sat on the bed and stared at the grate. The cockroach had taken cover. Perhaps all the noise had given it stage fright. 'I want it to be like it was,' she said. Her words were measured. Controlled. As if she'd practised them. 'I want to feel wanted, not owned. I want you. Most of all...' She was struggling. 'I want you to leave me alone.'

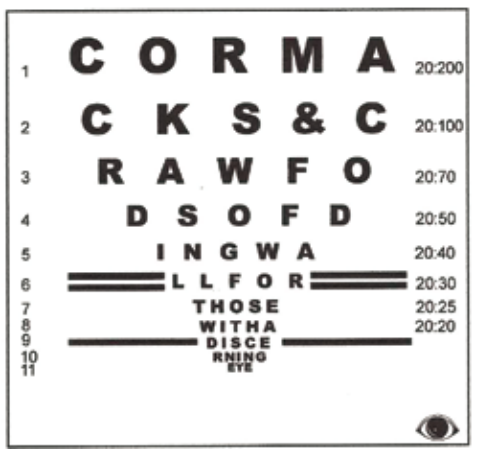
'I didn't ask you to come here,' he said.

She buried her face in her hands. She was crying again. This time she meant it. 'Yes, you did!' she said.

He remembered a tumbler in the cupboard over the sink. It was still there. He held it close to the tap, which spat orange liquid, as he knew it would. What happens when two things, two good things, are attracted? Sometimes they make something bad. Iron is good for the blood, and oxygen is good for everything else. But when you put them together all you get is rust.

Water came into the equation somewhere. Offering her a glass of it was more than he was capable of.

'I'm sick of this place,' he said. She was climbing into her jeans. He pulled the curtain closed and used the toilet. She was waiting for him when he came out. Her perfume. He followed her down the passageway, all the way to the lift. There was a place he knew. Coffee and rolls. He hoped she had money. ■



Five Poems About Birds

Buzzard
By Joan Lennon

Rising
through the morning traffic of
blackbirds and starlings,
winding
steadily
up
the long slow corkscrew
of heat.

Pass without a second glance
a layer of swifts -
no more than static
on your airwaves -
one more turn, and
they have fallen squabbling behind.

Almost directly overhead now,
there - your casual flex,
one leg stretched down,
each formidable claw
displayed, then tucked away.

For a while there are two of you -
synchronous circles -
until the other peels away,
leaning
with a cry
into another whorl.

Higher, till,
for you the mountains
shrink to wrinkles
on the shore,
and in the distance
a gull-white plane
scratches an incomprehensible
white line.

Bird Street
By Lesley Glaister

In our patch swallows scythe the sky
all summer long and martins
squeak and tig and jink
between the eaves.

Blackbirds ride the chimneys
pouring out their song, while
blue-tits nip, and sparrows
slip and interject among the leaves.

A tiny tick of wren flees and finches
fluster in the shrubbery
as squeals of seagulls wheel in,
stealing, squabbling.

Among the swaying branches
of the fruiting trees, doves
puff out their throats,
and soothe and croon and grieve.

(Oh and there are humans there who,
plodding from shell of house to car,
will sometimes stop,
tilt back a massive head, and stare.)

The Owls of Charolles
By Anita John

A shadow of pale wings land
on the latticed fence by the *Poubelle*
just as chance would have
us alight in Charolles as evening falls.

In the half-light they stir the silence, pale silhouettes
close by as we pitch tent beneath the ash
and willow, alongside the pond where
in starlight frogs will blow and bellow.

The coffee percolator purrs and through
the close night-air these other-worldly cries
carry across field and fence to tell us
we are hee-er, hee-er, hee-er,

our journey's end, as much chosen
as if we ourselves had made the choice.

Gull
By Kate Ashton

Splay-winged, hang-limbed,
astounded as a hungry child
man-hoisted on the wind -

a scream of *take this cup*
from me sky-borne
above virtuous town

where fisherfolk bent the knee -
ravenous steeple-house lament
beside an emptied sea.

Owls and Voles
By Lesley Glaister

A good year for owls and voles
says James; see voles make corridors
beneath the snow to scurry in.

Imagine those white
tubes, that gleaming
creak, free of silent wings
and swooping beaks,
safe for voles to race
and feed and breed in
- a sudden sparkling palace -

while above the owls hoo-hoo
famished, puzzled
by the squeaking snow –

until the thaw, the caving in,
when the palace generation
is revealed and now the owls
shut up, swoop down
and feed and feed.

Flash Fictions by Sheena Blackhall

The Deid Flee

Virgil the Roman poet fand oot that the sen-ate wis plottin tae rype the lans o the weel-aff tae ower-gie tae war veterans, aa bar grun wi a mausoleum on it. The story gyangs that Virgil held a wake fur a hoose flee fa'd bin his wee pet. There wis coronachs an keenin fur the deid flee, a hale squatter o musicians, greetin an bitties o barderie spakk ower its mools, an a muckle mausoleum biggit abune it. It wisnae chaip, aboot eicht hunner sesterces, this sen-aff fur the flee, bit Virgil, sleekit billie, keepit his grun aa tae hissel. ■

Catched Oot

"Foo disn't da gyang tae bed?" Alisdair speired his mither.

Since the cancer grew in him, Alistair's faither sleepit in his cheer, ready tae lowp up at the first soun. He'd sat there day an nicht fur three wikks in his fermin dangers that guffed o sharn an strae, a gless o fusky cockin at his elbuck. Gin Daith wis comin, he'd nae be catched nappin, by God no! He'd niver coored frae onythin in his life.

Sae quick it wis fin it cam, naebody noticed he'd left, till the bellas in the cave o his briest quietly stoppit meevin. ■

The Auld Pyoke

The pyoke is stappit wi the banes o ma timmer forebears. It wis fulled fin the warld wis young. We are the aiks, the trees o wyceness. Hynie back fin the warld wis new-vrocht, we waulked an daunced like yersels on the taps o wir reets, takkin oor ludgers hames wi us, the hoolets' nests an the wirm-holes. Eftir the first Lichtenin an Thunner, we cooried inno widlans in boorichies, sharin wir sorras an stories. Bit puckles o's cudna cheenge frae the auld wyes, an they deed oot, the first dauncers, keepit foraye in the founs o the auld pyoke. ■

Spreading the Word – Writers Groups News

North-west Highland Writers

By Stephen Keeler

I don't know much about writers' groups, and that perhaps ought to disqualify me from publication here. Until a couple of years go I had never encountered one face-to-face. As a resident over 30 years of the leafy London Borough of Richmond-upon-Thames, where writers outnumber even newsreaders and TV presenters a hundred to one, I had never felt compelled to join them for what I imagined to be self-congratulatory poseur sessions seething with studied existential angst, over pretentious little red wines and hand-rolled ciggies. I have no idea of the extent to which that parody comes close to an accurate characterisation but I am happy to apologise unconditionally before the e-mails start arriving from Surrey.

I moved to Ullapool in 2010 and was introduced to Irene Brandt, long serving Chair of North-west Highland Writers, in my first week there. There is no question that that was the single most important introduction in my new home town.

One of the many and occasionally contradictory reasons for leaving my beloved Metropolis was to find an imagined serenity in which to write more and write better, to discover more in my writing, and to commit more of myself to practising the art form I have always felt was somewhere, somehow waiting for me to spot it across a crowded room. Too earnest?

Well, I joined the North-west Highland Writers simply by turning up with my first set exercise, to write a 'story' in the form of a tweet. It was fun and the criticism was constructive, generous even. Here was a roomful of people with whom I felt immediately comfortable. Don't get me wrong, this wasn't a love-in. There were pieces I heard which I really didn't like. There were pieces which could have been transformed by a little extra work. There were pieces written without a glance towards style or form or convention. And all of that is fine because what unites us is a shared and passionate compulsion to observe and express, to share and compare not only what we see and feel but how we see and feel it, and how we interpret for our own purposes and in order to make some sense of it all. Whatever 'it' is. There were pieces, too, which were staggering in their originality, beautifully crafted and exquisitely expressed.

Two years on we are about to publish a slender anthology, and anyone who has ever done anything by committee will know of the anguish and heartache which has characterised the processes of submission, selection and editing, let alone the considerations of style and layout, artwork and cover design. We are, I think, predominantly an environmentally hyper-aware (euphemism? you decide) group. Certain potential sponsors (and we have been very fortunate in finding extremely generous local sponsors) could not be considered for ethical reasons. Paper had to be recycled, recyclable and certifiable a renewable resource. Even printing ink had to be ethically sourced. You have no idea how hard it was for me to resist an exclamation mark there (I failed, didn't I?). But we've done it and although not one of us will be entirely happy with every aspect of the book – that is in the nature of anything created by groups – I think it's true to say that we are pleased and not a little proud of our efforts, and most of all we now want people to read it.

We are all published writers. We have two award-winning novelists, a writer of broadcast radio plays, a couple of novelists awaiting major publication, and a crime writer whose hard-bitten protagonist will eventually appear on TV screens if not in the movies. A couple of us have backgrounds in journalism. There are writers of non-fiction (archaeology and mountaineering), and, in case that begins to sound intimidating, we are open to anyone who cares to join us. You don't have to write anything and share it until you're ready. If you live in the north-west highlands (and even if you don't), firstly, please buy *Rock, Sea and Sky,* and secondly, contact us with a view to joining us at one of our monthly (second Saturday) meetings in Achiltibuie, Lochinver, Scourie, Durness or Ullapool.

Our anthology of writing inspired by the region, *Rock, Sea and Sky,* will be published later this year. There are poems, short stories, some non-fiction and even a piece written in Scots. The booklet will be launched officially after the group's AGM at the Ceilidh Place, in Ullapool, on Saturday 8 December 2012. If you're interested in buying a copy of *Rock, Sea and Sky,* or would like to know more about The North-West Highlands Writers Group, please contact Irene Brandt: **branchis@dsl.pipex.com** ■

Soutar Writers

By Heather Reid

Perth is one of the most southerly locations in the reach of *Northwords Now*, and it is home to one of the most active writing communities in Scotland. The Soutar Writers originally met in the home of Perthshire poet, William Soutar, but now meet fortnightly at the AK Bell Library in Perth to read and critique each other's work, and to share information about the business of writing.

Past members such as Linda Cracknell and Tim Turnbull have gone on to publication and further literary success, whilst current members such as Fiona Thackeray, Deborah Trayhurn, Morgan Downie and Patricia Ace frequently see their stories and poems featured in magazines, anthologies, pamphlets and books, and on the winners' lists of competitions far and wide.

The focus of the group is on serious-minded feedback and support. Sometimes writing groups can tread lightly around the work shared by members and shy away from saying what needs to be said, but the Soutar Writers, previously under the guidance of a succession of talented and sensitive writers-in-residence, has worked hard to create an environment where meaningful but supportive criticism can take place. Robust but friendly, its ethos is evident in the success of its members in a variety of literary fields, with 2012 being a particularly successful year for group members.

May saw the launch of Helen Lawrenson's poetry pamphlet *Upon a Good High Hill* shortlisted for the Callum Macdonald Memorial Award 2012, and Alice Walsh's poem, 'Austerity Blues,' shortlisted for the Percy French Prize for humorous verse at the Strokestown Festival in Ireland. *Mother Icarus*, a collection of short stories by Crieff-based writer Maurice Gartshore, made the shortlist for Salt Publishing's Scott Prize, the only Scottish collection to do so, while poet Andy Jackson, whose poem, 'Allogeneic' was placed second in the NHS-related section of the prestigious Hippocrates Prize, also saw one of his poems feature in the list of Best Scottish Poems of 2011, chosen this year by Roddy Lumsden, as well as success for *Split Screen*, an anthology of poems inspired by film and television, which Andy compiled and edited for Red Squirrel Press. More recently Di Chorley's 'Tea at the Ritz' was announced as the winner of the annual William Soutar Prize.

The Soutar Writers is a vibrant and energetic collection of talented and committed writers. Further details, including how to become a member, can be found at **www.soutarwriters.co.uk** ■

Ross-Shire Writers

By June Munro

On Thursday 6th of December, 2012, Ross-shire Writers will unveil their latest anthology, *Ross-shire Reflections*. This is the third collection from this successful, prizewinning group, and should make a welcome addition to anyone's Christmas list. The event will begin at 7.00pm in Dingwall Library and members welcome guests to join then for light refreshments and to hear readings from their latest work. As usual, the collection contains poetry, prose, humour and pathos, with stories set in various parts of the world as well as locally.

The anthology will be available for purchase on the night or from the usual outlets—Storehouse of Foulis, Victoriana, Waterstones etc. Books may also be ordered via the website **www.spanglefish.com/ross-shirewriters** ■

Poetry

Magic Bucket Frog
By Julian Colton

All you can say with dubious certainty

This is an empty red bucket
Cast aside in overgrown bushes.

But a carefree hand is a kind of Big Bang
A random chaos theory, unwitting genesis

To the wet glistening miracle of creation
Nature filling the plastic womb

The impossible nothingness
With dirty green rainwater stew –

Leaves, twigs, unmentionable scum
And from deeper vacuity

Cracking unseen tadpole darkness
A frog, a tiny frog, emerges

Plops into a solitary galaxy
Luxuriates in cold-bloodedness

For cold-bloodedness sake
Fabulist frog-centred uniqueness

Swims, eyes threaded to waterline
Origami flesh folded legs pushed out

Fried mushroom hue camouflaged by leafy gunk
Frog-eyed imperfect hippo parody

Yet epitome of itself – breaststroke, sidestroke frog
Feeding off barely visible, fly egg frontier resources

Tongue in air, slime-bellied, born-slippy contentment.
But in the quartering of the friendless moon

A black full stop swimmer
Diving beetle with a *Pac-Man* mouth

Air bubbles in wing cases
Its singular buoyancy

Devouring above mini bladder weight
Such undeniable, tearing teeth

Threatens this Eden idyll
Wreathes the lime green rim, inexorable.

So in dark sleeve night
Frog leaps into an infinite garden universe

Of hoolit shrieks, fox and hedgehog smells
Crystalline snail trails, croaking mates

Once again a lonesome pioneer
Disappears to earth, fire, water and air.

Whale wall
By Jane Aldous

As he scraped remnants of flesh
from the carcass of the dead pilot whale,
Trevor spoke of whale sightings
and death accumulations of fossils.

Once he had seen an Orca pod
steal up on a RIB full of Antarctic tourists
and he'd gripped the tiller and stared hard
into the eye of a killer whale.

A man whose arthritic hands now pulled
wires tight through the bleached skeleton,
fixing it to the whitewashed croft wall:
a whale leaping into its own shadow.

Birch-Blood
By Karen Bek-Pedersen

There are white birds in the snow –
I see their moving shadows.
They speak in blue and purple words.
I clutch my knife – I'm ready.

When the morning light arrives
I carve into a slender birch
and spill its heart blood in red drops
scattered all across the snow.

Now I know how real it was.
I'm very close to absence –
I wipe the fragile tears away
before they freeze my face.

Those birds have seen me weep before.
Their eyes are soft with kindness
that I can neither touch nor hold.
I want to be that birch.

I show my red hands to the sun.
He burns them. I feel weak.
He licks my blood. He eats my heart.
By then the birds have flown.

In the snow their tiny claws
have scribbled secret messages
I do not comprehend.
I leave my knife. – It's done.

The True Religion
By Seth Crook

By an island off the coast of Europe,
there is another littler island, Mull.
Adjacent is another, Ulva, where
amongst the goats and gulls,
there is a seemingly immortal shrew -
who, if you but knew, works great wonders;
even keeps the whole great world unfolding;
quiet God, quite shy, quite humble,
who has no chapel but a small bay view.

Some Questions for the One Who Stole my Purse
By Irene Evans

Were you disappointed –
a five-euro note, a few coins?
But maybe that was enough.

Were my library card and bus pass
a good likeness? You were watching
me at the bookstall – yes?

What did you make of my name?
What did you do with the keys?
and the little slip of paper –

could you read my writing?
Mark, Annalisa, Danny, Sue
their phone numbers. Not for you.

Do you ever write letters?
If so, the stamps will be useful.
If not, they might get you something.

Nothing else but the purse itself;
privy to each day's expenses
a small, neat, friendly companion

fitting my hand and the pocket
your hand took it out of;
my life into yours.

Moon
By Jen Cooper

Huge and low
the sympathetic moon
hangs its pious, medieval
face in the east. Its blurred

nearness could swallow me
whole or I might
burst the skin, tambourine
thin, my body curled

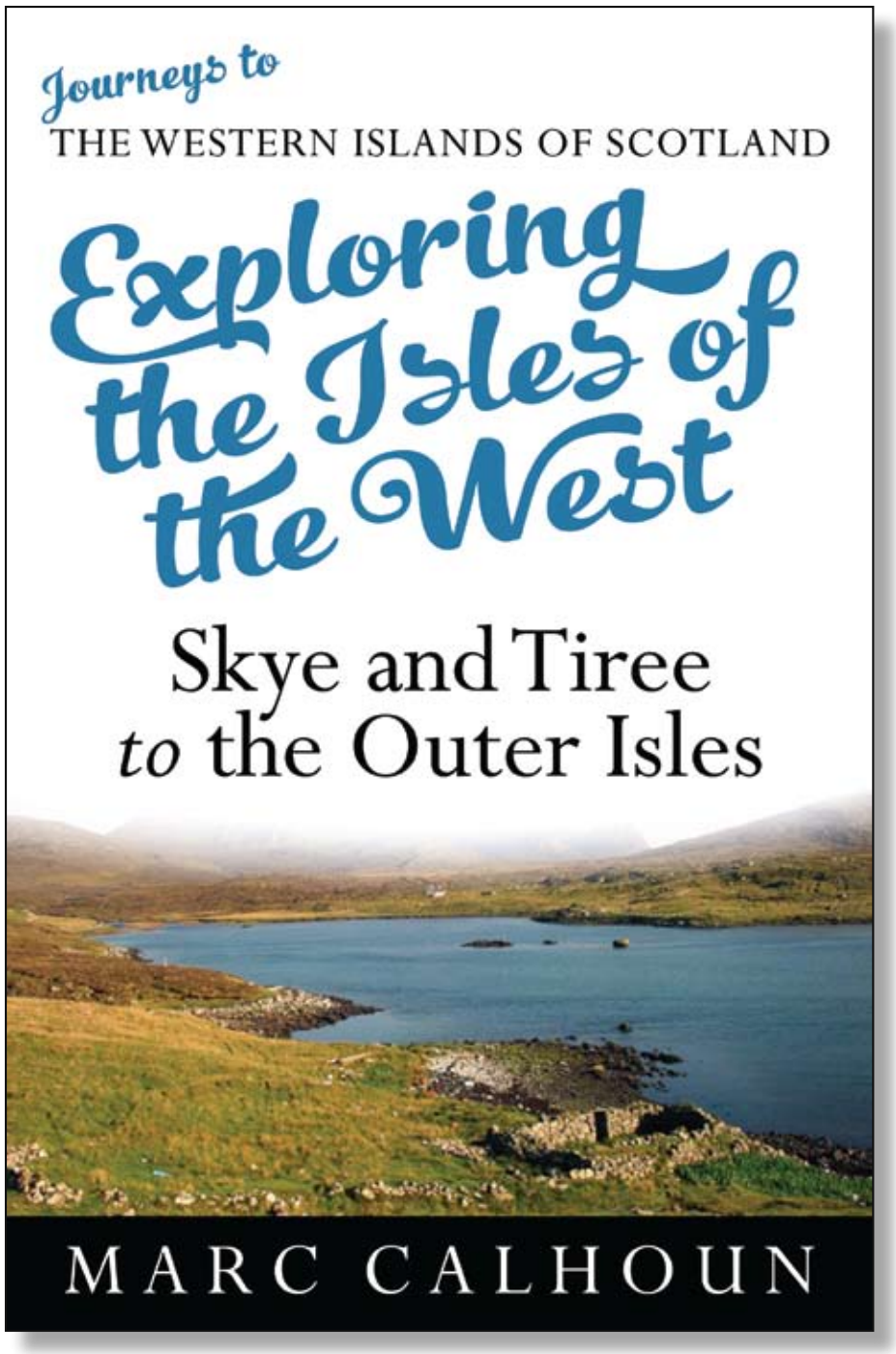
tight like a fist
and pass right through. Oh
to know behind
the moon is blue.

I have been behind
my own moon head
tonight, and the moon
so saintly sad and white.

▶▶

Exploring the Isles of the West – Firth of Clyde to the Small Isles

Exploring the Isles of the West – Skye and Tiree to the Outer Isles
by Marc Colhoun
Published by The Islands Book Trust
Review by Stephen Keeler



While researching his Scottish roots, back in 1989, Marc Colhoun, from Seattle, made the first of what would become over sixty visits to the Western Isles where the stirrings of his self-confessed addiction to the 'magic west' began.

These companion volumes are testimony to this otherwise apparently sane man's ascent (something so glorious could never be described as a descent) into Island Madness. They are compilations of pieces written over a period of twenty years of searching and re-searching, of walking and climbing and stopping to look, often where few others have been.

It all began 'once the last ferry of the day departed (from Iona, and) everything changed':

It was peaceful, and beautiful. I climbed Dùn-I, and found the view astounding. Set in a turquoise sea, islands galore sparkled in the sun to the north, east, south and west…I fell in love with the place.

What follows becomes the story of repeated journeys conducted with the growing passion, verging on geekiness, of a schoolboy philatelist. It is apparent from the 'Overture', in *Firth of Clyde to the Small Isles,* that we are in the presence of one of those great collectors – not an island-bagger, a term Colhoun dislikes because it suggests, perhaps somewhat sententiously, 'shallow, thoughtless visitors', so much as an island collector – like one of those Victorian lepidopterists or colonial ethnographers, inconsolably curious, possessed by his passion, hopelessly consumed.

Colhoun is not content merely to visit and describe. Within a couple of pages of the first piece, on Holy Island, we are referred to the sixteenth-century histories of Dean Munro, learn a Buddhist mantra and brush sleeves with the Lama Yeshe Losal on the foot-ferry from Arran.

The writing is seasoned with references from Walter Scott and Boswell to some of the most esoteric books ever written about the Western Isles. I found myself scribbling a margin note half-way through the second volume wondering whether there might be any book ever written about these islands that Colhoun has not read and remembered. Probably not.

The two volumes of *Exploring the Isles of the West* are, however, anything but dry or narrowly academic. Colhoun wears his learning lightly. Perhaps too lightly for those who might have appreciated an index or a bibliography. It is a small flaw and it seems churlish to dwell on it.

He never assaults the reader with his undoubted knowledge and experience, or takes the superior tone of the 'expert'. Indeed his humility – as well as his undoubted love in the face of the geography of these islands, their weather, their wildlife, their ancient cultures and their history – is evident in every sentence. He is neither the wide-eyed innocent abroad, nor does he over-romanticise the mystery. Like a good teacher, he puts the fruits of his researches in front of us in refreshingly straightforward prose and moves on, never lingering long enough to bore. In one page on Ailsa Craig, for example, we get the railway, the gasworks, ailsite granite, the Stevensons' lighthouse, a reference to *Stargazing* (by Peter Hill), rats, a Spanish invasion plan and Hew Barclay's 1592 landing. I found myself making lists of 'fun facts' (his term): the hoards (sic) of fleas on the Bass Rock which are absent from her near-twin sister island off the west coast; Scotland's second-oldest lighthouse (Little Cumbrae); where the best curling stones come from (Ailsa Craig); the dual sources of R L Stevenson's *Kidnapped*, which we learn on the way to Rum (*Firth of Clyde to the Small Isles*, p249).

These books are, however, rather more than repositories for trivia questions. If, like me, you know you will never set foot on St Kilda, for example, you could do much worse than read Colhoun for a vicarious scramble over the cliff-tops. This is from Skye and Tiree to the Outer Isles:

> *We crossed the steep grassy slopes to the base of Ruaival, and then climbed a jumble of boulders to its summit. Three-hundred feet below us the sea flowed through the narrow channel that separates the long, narrow island of Dùn from Hirta. Dùn's undulating knife-edge ridge stretched for a mile into the sea, and swarming in the air above it were thousands of puffins.*
>
> *On the north-west side of Ruaival we found the Mistress Stone; one of two lustily named stones on the island, the other being the Lover's Stone. There are tales of young Kildan men proving their cliff prowling prowess, impressing possible wives in the process, by performing various balancing acts atop these precarious perches. The Mistress Stone bridged a narrow gully of rock in the side of the hill, and I sat on the airy roost for a rest. No prospective mistresses were about, so, sadly, I wasn't able to impress one with my version of Cuchulainn's salmon-feat; where I spring into the air like a fish, and then throw a spear with my toes. Maybe next time…*

As the blurb makes clear, Exploring *the Western Isles* is not a pair of guidebooks. They are, though, close to indispensable for the obsessive island-hopper wanting rather more than a sightseeing list. The sketch maps for each chapter give the appropriate Ordnance Survey Landranger reference, and there are useful black-and-white photographs taken by the author. Colhoun himself warns against relying on the books for up-to-the-minute information about access to some of the remoter islands or whether a four-star country club has by now been built on Càra, 'a fate which almost befell the island of Wee Cumbrae'.

These books are the tangible outcome of a man's obsession and are written with a guileless charm, an obvious affection, an unquenchable curiosity, and in prose of such down-to-earth enthusiasm that the reader is drawn unwittingly closer to the fireside as each account follows the one before it. This armchair island-bagger found himself reading 'well just one more chapter, then', before realising he'd read both books at one sitting. ■

Laughing at the Clock/Déanamh Gáire Ris A' Chloc: New & Selected Poems/ Dáin Úra Agus Thaghta
By Aonghas MacNeacail
Published by Polygon
Review by John Glenday

A Glorious Living

In *Night Falls on Ardnamurchan*, Alasdair Maclean notes how, on the death of his father, the last Gaelic speaker in Sanna Bay, all the local names for the little inlets and rocky outcrops on the foreshore – the microgeography of the area - were lost. This is what we need to bear in mind when we consider the loss of Gaelic – not simply the beauty of the language, nor even the impoverishment of thought that would accompany it, but the physical loss of a part of Scotland. We can't afford that. Macneacail himself, in an interview with Richard Holloway, admitted that the demise of Gaelic culture is a realistic concern, then added with a twinkle in his eye: 'but what a glorious dying!'

Laughing at the Clock the New and Selected Poems of Aonghas Macneacail will certainly help preserve Gaelic as living language. It celebrates the welcome, sprightly presence of this septuagenarian poet; recognises the continuing richness of his work, and reminds us how important that work is, not just to the language and poetry of Gaeldom, but to poetry on an International stage.

What strikes me again and again about this collection is its universality: this isn't poetry that turns inward, rather, it is poetry which even as it looks inwards, amplifies what lies beyond it; shows how the dynamics of Gaelic language and culture mirror larger themes in the world, and as such, are relevant to us all. It is at times mystical and steeped in history, yet it forges new boundaries both of content and form.

Macneacail himself described the purpose of the collection as 'bringing the best of his

first three collections together with a sheaf of new material'. The thirty new poems which begin the collection show how undiminished his powers are. He sets the scene well in the very first poem, 'the season's feast':

'let us leave a space/as we raise our toasts and sweetmeats/for the journey out/between icicle, fable and joy'.

Typically, these recent poems cover a vast range of subject matter, from Sorley Maclean to Mae West; Cape Breton to Vienna; from the landscape of history to the landscape of love. His voice is at times lyrical, sometimes fiery with anger, often jocular. But though he pays homage to the great tradition of Gaelic bards, he is essentially a modernist, moving forward in form and subject matter – so essential if Gaelic is to be sustained as a literary language. In 'home vacation' he notes: 'there was a time nostalgia/drowned me…/ …now rage carves my words'

At the heart of the collection, 'The Great Snow Battle' stands as an important, central work and in its second section Macneacail talks to his art with touching ambivalence: 'who are you/who but you/my love my enemy/your white words/unbound unchanging/seeping ever seeping/into my thoughts'

But Macneacail is also master of the short lyric. 'the contention' and 'hero and lover and the heart of ireland' are fine love lyrics and in the wonderful 'making butter' he conjures the magical process of writing from a few lines: 'there's nothing like it/turning and turning the golden whiteness/inside the darkness of the brain…'

My one criticism would be one of exclusion – I would have liked to have found more early work included here, but that, I suppose, must wait for the Complete Poems.

Macneacail's 'versions' of his own originals stand well in English though I found it intriguing that there are two poems left untranslated in this parallel-text edition: 'òran mnatha' and 'tarbh 'na shuidhe' I thoroughly approve of that and take it as no publisher's error (though misspelling the Lakota Sioux name of Sitting Bull certainly is) but rather as a quiet reminder from Aonghas Dubh that there will always be an essential element in Gaelic poetry which will remain completely inaccessible to the English language - small, obdurate, unweatherable, like the nameless stones of Sanna Bay. ■

A Song Among the Stones
by Kenneth Steven
Published by Polygon
Review by Lesley Harrison

By the 6th century, the monastery on Iona was a significant administrative, intellectual and spiritual centre. It sat on the main sea roads between Ireland, Argyll and the Western and Northern Isles. It owned land and collected taxes; it maintained an extensive library of manuscripts illuminated using pigments from the Mediterranean and Afghanistan. However, in the early histories there are accounts of monks who renounced the clutter, and possibly dullness, of monastery living. They were ascetics and needed isolation to practise their faith. Though their mission was to convert the heathen, the historians tell us, monks such as Ronan, Brendan and Columba desired ultimately to retreat from the world to a 'desert in the ocean'. They sailed out in ox-hide currachs, and often then vanished from history apart from the cross slabs or parts of names left on broken, sea-swept rocks. Some reappear in other stories: the 9th century *Book of Icelanders* states that when the first Norse settlers arrived they found Christians hermits already farming there. From their books, bells and croziers, the Norsemen knew they were Irishmen.

The poems in *A Song Among the Stones* are fragments from an imaginary lost manuscript describing the voyage of four Irish monks who sailed from Iona to Iceland. The *papar* cross rough, rolling seas, enduring storms and seasickness that almost destroy their faith in God and their will to live: 'lifts of sea, slopes of sea / peaks of sea, rafts of sea / hollows of sea, steeps of sea'. They arrive at last, barely alive.

In this new place 'they built somewhere out of burnt stone / a beehive that let in pieces of sky'. Like the island they came from, this place also has a power of its own: 'it was God who sent us here, one said / closing his eyes // no, said another, it was the island / that was sent by God to find us'.

The poems are mainly couplets; sentences and parts of sentences without the starts and stops of punctuation. He uses vivid, pictorial similes to evoke moments of weather and place: 'the sunlight comes wild and strong / in gusts like bunches of blown daffodils'. His description is sensual, almost tactile – 'heavy grapes of rain', 'the cloth call of an owl'. There are blank pages between the poems, and this, along with the immediacy of description in the different 'fragments' work well to bring the lost manuscript to life.

He occasionally borrows Biblical imagery, sometimes in a slightly heavy-handed way: 'the boat lurched and swung / like thread through the eye of a needle'. These poems are also devotional, exploring the experience of believing and the anxiety of doubt. 'Sometimes faith is elusive / hard to catch as a fish'. In the end, three of the four monks decide to return home. The fourth, in making the decision to stay, perhaps to go further north, immediately begins to transform into a lighter, purer being: 'they turned to look at him, it seemed / as if they stood below, in shadow'.

Kenneth Steven has written an intimate, enchanting and very moving sequence of poems. They evoke the intense spirituality of wild, barren places, and the longing for emptiness and clarity of vision that draws people to them. ■

Collected Poems
By Robert Rendall
Edited by John Flett Brown and Brian Murray
Published by Steve Savage Publishers Limited
Review by Pam Beasant

For those who don't know about Robert Rendall, the *Collected Poems* puts it in a nutshell in the first lines of the introduction: 'The man who gained honours, popularity and affection for the way he lived his life and what he produced in it, was thirteen years old when his formal education ended.'

Robert Rendall (1898-1967) is a much-loved and respected figure in recent Orcadian history, and was a man of many and various passions and interests. A draper by trade, and largely self-taught, he became an authority on Orkney shells and shore and archaeology, and was a life-long and enthusiastic writer and painter, enjoying close friendships and long correspondences with artist Stanley Cursiter, George Mackay Brown and that whole talented and erudite generation of Orcadians, including Ernest and Hugh Marwick.

At its best, Rendall's poetry is unrivalled, especially a handful of his dialect verses, which were much admired during his lifetime and beyond. And there is precious little top quality dialect verse in Orkney. For this alone, he takes his place, and is an important figure in the islands' literary tradition.

He was a mentor to the younger George Mackay Brown, who later judged that some of Robert Rendall's verses were 'among the best poems that have been written in Scotland this [twentieth] century'. Stanley Cursiter wrote to him, 'you catch the essence of Orkney'.

This new, and first, edition of Robert Rendall's *Collected Poems*, painstakingly compiled and edited by John Flett Brown and Brian Murray, is a huge and timely undertaking, and a crucial addition to Orkney's literary heritage. All four of the collections he produced during his lifetime are included, and an additional 177 pieces of newly collected verse and fragments. The introduction is an insightful analysis of and commentary on Robert Rendall's life and work, and the processes and decision-making involved in compiling such a volume. Thankfully, in the end, the editors 'decided that the best approach was to lay Robert Rendall's work before the public and let them judge.'

Most acknowledge that Robert Rendall's poetry did not always reach the level of his best verse. At its heart, however, it has a direct, stripped bare and almost innocent quality, affirming his humanity and central Christianity, his wonder in the landscapes and characters surrounding him, and the application of his wide reading, travelling and scholarship. (Who else would have so naturally rhymed 'beachcomber' with 'Homer'?) We should be grateful, too, for his recognition of dialect, which in his view contained 'simplicity of diction, sincerity, colloquial truth and craftsmanship'. There are well-known and loved poems, such as 'Cragsman's Widow':

He was aye vaigan b' the shore,
An' climman amang the craigs,
Swappan the mallimaks,
Or taakan whitemaa aiggs.

Now, we have many new verses, tracked down, dated and collected meticulously by the editors; from 'Ocean and Reef':

'Out from the geo we man this little skiff
Toward the perilous verge where interlock
Ocean and reef beside a beanstalk cliff
whose menacing height looks down upon the shock
of swirling tides that flood the shining rock.'

Robert Rendall was a great appreciator with a tirelessly enquiring mind. His life and influence need to be remembered, and his poetry deserves to live, and be read and enjoyed by succeeding generations. As George Mackay Brown said: 'It is an inheritance for all young Orcadians. It tells us islanders what we truly are.' This volume makes that possible. ■

The Big Music
by Kirsty Gunn
Published by Faber and Faber
Review by Donald S Murray

Anyone who has ever heard the Big Music (or Ceol Mhor) being played, say, on the bagpipes of Fred Morrison or the Macdonald brothers of Glenuig never quite forgets the experience.

As their fingers flit across the chanter, a work of great subtlety and intricacy is created, one in which there is an astonishing swirl of sound, punctuated by moments of silence, refrains and rhythms that are both repeated and transformed, generating music which is as vital and varied as any in the classical tradition. There are times, too, when it is baffling to its audience, until the moment patience is rewarded and there is a satisfying whole, one that communicates its meaning to the listener in a mysterious and satisfying way.

Kirsty Gunn's majestic new novel, *The Big Music* does much the same. It tells the story of a family of pipers called the Sutherlands who live in the Grey House near Brora. Using the structure of classical piobareachd with its urlar (or ground), its cruanluath (or crown), it conveys its tale in a great swirl of words which resemble canntaireachd or the language in which pipers communicate the essence of their music to one another. As readers, we become caught up in the loops and whirls of its long, often ungrammatical sentences, the rhythms and music of its prose. We can even see the obsessive nature of many pipers, tapping out their tunes even on their cutlery as they eat, wishing to find out more and more about the craft they love.

The repetitions and rhythms which occur within *The Big Music* are relevant to its theme. It provides the reader with – to quote Kirsty Gunn's words – 'the image of a group of people with a certain sound to them, a particular clustering of notes that comes through the tune and their characters as a recurrent theme'. This relates to the way the Sutherland men have, from generation to generation, fought with one another, each one attempting to deny their musical inheritance and the tug of their homeland upon them, bringing them back to the Grey House and its surroundings for all they struggle against its pull.

This is also conveyed in its effect on the women involved in the lives of these men with Margaret, the lover of John Calum Mackay Sutherland and Helen, her daughter and the nearest voice to a narrator in its pages, being the strongest individuals in the book. Beside them, their men seem both inhibited and obsessive, able only to express their emotions in the 'B to E', 'A to A', 'B to D' of piping notation. It is little wonder then that one bagpipe tune, the aptly named Patrick Mor MacCrimmon's 'Lament For The Children' recurs throughout the work. ▸▸

As a novel, it seems to me have few real precursors in Scottish Literature. In spirit, it is closest to *Highland River* written by another member of the Gunn clan, the celebrated novelist Neil Gunn. It, too, has a similar swirling effect through its narrative, the theme of returning to a source. It also belongs to a similar geography.

Yet it is richer even than that fine work. *The Big Music* is a magnificent novel with its own fine, distinctive melody, one that fills the reader with the same sense of mystery as the art-form that inspires its characers. Trust the writer as you turn its pages with the same slow care as the fingers of the likes of Fred Morrison and the Macdonald brothers as they play upon the chanter. Connections will be made. Wholeness will – eventually – be restored to your understanding of the world that its words portray. ■

The Magicians of Edinburgh
By Ron Butlin
Published by Polygon Books
Review by Stuart B. Campbell

This is Ron Butlin's seventh collection of poetry. At 112 pages, this book is more substantial than many collections currently on offer and the publisher, Polygon, should be congratulated for giving Butlin the space to address his subject: Edinburgh. A few of the poems appeared in his 2005 *New and Selected Poems*, *Without a Backward Glance*, but the collection is very much a reflection of Butlin's time as Edinburgh's Makar (which he has been since 2008). Unlike Andrew Motion's experience of being Poet Laureate, Butlin gives the impression that he does not find that badge of office a dead weight and the 45 poems contained in *The Magicians of Edinburgh* clearly show that it hasn't stifled his creativity. There are poems here that were commissioned, as might be expected, by the likes of Edinburgh UNESCO City of Literature Trust and the City of Edinburgh Council (and perhaps unexpectedly by the Round the World Yacht Race), but mostly the poems are Butlin's own response to his home environment; you can sense he would probably have written these poems anyway, whether or not he is Edinburgh's Makar. In terms of Butlin fulfilling his role as Makar, there is no indication of him being merely a poetic voice for the Council, or of this collection being written as some sort of promotional material for Edinburgh. In that respect, the Council should be given credit for letting Butlin get on and do what he does without interference (political or artistic).

There are many poems that rightfully celebrate the city – and Butlin's enthusiasm and pure delight in the people, history and places is very engaging – if he has a poetic forbearer, it would be the Fergusson of Auld Reikie or Leith Races. There are also poems, such as 'EH1 2AB' or 'Edinburgh is a Thousand Islands' which point up some of the darker aspects of life in the city. Those acquainted with Butlin's work would not expect anything less – in 'Not for Profit' (commissioned by the Scottish Parliament for a paper on arts funding) he doesn't mince his words: "Artists are not for sale, of course, but they come cheap – / ridiculously cheap when set aside the going rate / for consultants, say. Or cluster bombs". Nor does he shy away from contentious issues, like the trams. It is how Butlin addresses this sort of civic dysfunction that makes these poems less an opportunity for a rant or for regret. 'Oor Tram's Plea tae the Cooncillors o Edinburgh' will stop you in your tracks and at least give (make) you pause for thought because the circumstances are viewed with a poetic eye, not a political one.

A number of poems are given a short introduction (much shorter than many poets give at readings). This works well in setting the context and providing just enough background, particularly for anybody not familiar with recent events or history (both local and national). The book is subdivided into three sections; insofar as this allows certain poems to be grouped together, those concerned with music for instance, this makes some sense, though it probably wouldn't have made much difference to the reading experience if they hadn't been – Butlin's voice is consistent throughout. This collection feels like taking a stroll through the city and seeing where you arrive at; not so much an aimless wander, more one of open-mindedness and attentiveness. There are many landmarks that citizens and visitors to the town will recognise: Calton Hill, the Royal Mile, Greyfriars Kirkyard; but Butlin helps us see these anew – even Greyfriars Bobby appears to be so much more than he is usually taken for. This is not a definitive Edinburgh collection, nor is it intended to be a guide, but a walk round the city with *The Magicians of Edinburgh in* your pocket might be provide new insights. ■

Anywhere's Better than Here
by Zöe Venditozzi
Published by Sandstone Press
Review by Cynthia Rogerson

Reading this novel is a little like opening up a bag of donuts covered in chocolate, gorging yourself, then just as you're scolding yourself, because nothing that's so easy to eat can be good for you, you discover a secret ingredient list on the back. It turns out the donuts are chock-full of vitamins, fibre, life-enhancing minerals and proteins. So, this book is that rare thing – both delicious and good for you. A literary mainstream novel, with a young angst-ridden heroine, a monotone boyfriend, and the villainous mysterious older man who leads the heroine a merry dance. Laura is instantly likable because she manages to be miserable humorously. She hates her job, her boyfriend, her appearance, her home. She hates herself, and is at rock bottom of disillusionment. Who wouldn't warm to her? But I couldn't help also sympathising with her un-ambitious boyfriend, who prefers violent computer games and take away curries to conversation and cooking. It all seemed so real. The novel focuses on that phase of adulthood not often written about. The truth about being young and healthy and employed and not being homeless or alone? Sometimes it is still all crap.

This is Zöe Venditozzi's first novel, which is not obvious from reading it. The style is rather like Laura Marney - unpretentious and confident, modern and edgy. The tone is blackly funny with a kind of yearning romantic thread. The rather convoluted plot is competently propelled by her deft dialogues and credible characters, and of course, the suspense of the unsolved mystery. I was swept along, forgot everything else I meant to do that day, and basically gobbled up the whole bag of donuts. I recommend this book to anyone who is not in the mood to work at reading, but still requires emotional substance. Deceptively light, the book still delivers real punches. I am looking forward to her second novel. ■

Poetry Reviews
by Lesley Harrison

In 1997 Eddie Linden's biography became a stage play; as the man said, you couldn't make it up. His life is an epic of abandonment, struggle and excess, yet the tone of his poems is often of redemption and the fight for joy. In *A Thorn in the Flesh* (Hearing Eye, 2011), moments of his past come sharply to life. 'Passing Youth' is a rush of memories from his own scrambled childhood: 'I was two and remember / Thirty-two years later / And cried like the day / He left her womb'. Others address the forces that molded his life – Catholicism, illegitimacy, poverty and defeat, sectarianism – and he does not hide their bitter ugliness, or their deadening impact on the people round him. But his own will to live shines out: 'The birds begin to sing / The dreams of what's to come / And out of bed we get.'

Chris Powici adds: Eddie Linden is not just a fine poet in his own right but the editor other literary magazine editors look up to. Thanks to Eddie's passion and insight, *Aquarius magazine* was a shining light in modern poetry for more than thirty years. The regard in which Eddie is held by poets, translators and critics is beautifully demonstrated by Eddie's Own *Aquarius* – a special 'tribute' issue produced in 2005. It contains contributions from, among others, Tom Leonard, Seamus Heaney, Alasdair Gray, Elizabeth Smart and James Kelman. If you come across a copy, buy it!

The Glassblower Dances, by Rachel McCrum, is a slight wee book of fresh, fluent, gem-like stories sculpted into poems, some short, some long. In 'Are the Kids Alright?' she uses repetition to underline the narrator's lament 'This is not our story / And we do not know what to do'. She also plays with form, and I loved the circularity and the lurching description in 'Sundrunkroadtrip', which extols the joys of being drunk in the afternoon: 'We traveled to drink fruit wines in Fife / and peerless blue skies made our appetites exotic.' These lovely poems beg to be read aloud.

In *Fleck and the Bank* (Salt, 2012), Rob A. Mackenzie explores the shifting world of international finance which disguises and conceals his friend Fleck. From the moment we meet him – 'A cloud completes Fleck like a tailored wig suspended two meters above his head' - through a frenetic world of monetary crisis, religious doubt and customer care videos, he remains 'in the world but not of it'. In 'Route Map to God', an endless fence is the metaphor 'which Fleck will / have encountered someday as a razor edge, the fence vast / and limited as the thought to think a thought of God.' The poems are fluent and surreal with the swirling, obscure jargon of finance, only slowing with the last poem, a 'cento'. It is fragmented, stilted; a final bewildered acceptance of his absence.

Charlie Gracie's poems aim to capture the clear, tender moments of beauty around us – how rain brings light with it, the warp and weft of a single-track road, Tam o' Shanter at bedtime. *Good Morning* (diehard, 2010) is a quiet celebration of life and living: "and even when the sunshine bakes us / the rain is only hiding / smirring off the surface of the sea / gathering its breath / for the big Heave Ho".

The blurb on the back of John Mackie's chapbook *Pearl Diving by Moonlight* includes the intriguing remark from John Byrne – 'He's almost Irish'. Many of these poems are set along the Moray coast, his adopted home, and all deal equally passionately with the natural world and with love. There are lots of wonderful phrases: 'This place is full of ghosts / I'll walk with them when my limbs unlock'. Mackie's language and range of reference is rich: he relishes alliteration, making these poems fresh, meditative and heart-felt.

Snapdragon by Arne Rautenberg and Ken Cockburn is full of surprises. Rautenburg lives in Kiel and writes short, curious, linguistically playful poems and sequences observing layers and moments of human life in his city. Ken Cockburn has translated a selection for this pocketbook for The Caseroom Press (**www.the-case.co.uk**), a collective at the University of Lincoln which experiments with the function and format of the book. In *Snapdragon*, Rautenberg's German and Cockburn's English poems are published facing each other. I don't speak German, but the English versions conjured very clearly a city-world still recovering from war, and Cockburn's clipped, wry translations seem to be a perfect window to it, both clever and compelling: 'out of an olden german tree / an olden german leaf fell down / flew from an olden german dream / upon an olden german town'. ■

CONTRIBUTORS' BIOGRAPHIES

Jane Aldous lives in Edinburgh. Winner of Wigtown Poetry Competition 2012 with *Eel Ghazal*, longlisted for Bridport Prize 2012, commended in the Barn Owl Trust Poetry Competition 2012.

Kate Ashton returned to Scotland in 2003 after 25 years in the Netherlands. Her poems appear in magazines including *Shearsman*, and a pamphlet is just out from Lapwing Publications.

Pam Beasant lives in Stromness, Orkney. She was the first George Mackay Brown Fellow in 2007, and is Director of the Orkney Writers' Course for the St Magnus Festival.

Karen Bek-Pedersen lived in Scotland for fifteen years before moving back to her home country, Denmark. She is a writer, a teacher, an academic and a translator.

Deborah Benson grew up near London but has lived for twenty years in Aberdeenshire where she at present works as a carer and tutor.

Sheena Blackhall is a writer, illustrator, traditional ballad singer and storyteller in North East Scotland. From 1998-2003 she was Creative Writing Fellow in Scots at Aberdeen University's Elphinstone Institute. In 2009 she became Makar for Aberdeen & the North East.

Maoilios Caimbeul – Às an Taobh Sear san Eilean Sgitheanach. Nochd na dàin chruinnichte leis, Breac a' Mhuiltein, ann an 2007.

Stuart B. Campbell lives in Portsoy on the Moray Firth. His latest collection of poetry, *In Defence of Protozoans* was published in 2011.

Catrìona Lexy Chaimbeul – À Nis ann an Eilean Leòdhais. Tha i air Duais Bhaile Ùige (Wigtown) airson bàrdachd Ghàidhlig a thoirt a-mach agus an sàs ann an sgrìobhadh de dh'iomadh seòrsa.

Julian Colton has had three collections of poetry published including *Everyman Street* (Smokestack Publishing). He co-edits The Eildon Tree magazine and lives in Selkirk.

Jen Cooper is completing a PhD in Creative Writing at the University of Aberdeen. Her poems have appeared in Causeway/Cabhsair, which she now edits, Pushing Out the Boat and New Writing Scotland.

Seth Crook lives on the Isle of Mull. His work has been published in various places this year (such as Other Poetry). He has taught philosophy at various American universities.

Irene Evans lives in Muthilll, Perthshire. Her poems have appeared in various magazines and anthologies. Her pamphlet collections are *Slim Volumes I & II* (The Patchwork Press).

Alan Gillespie is a teacher in a remote school in the West Highlands. He tweets about writing and teaching at twitter.com/afjgillespie

Lesley Glaister has published twelve novels, numerous short stories and now two poems! She lives in Edinburgh and teaches Creative Writing at the University of St Andrews.

John Glenday lives in Drumnadrochit. His most recent collection, *Grain*, was shortlisted for both the Ted Hughes Award and the Griffin Poetry Prize.

Lesley Harrison lives in Angus and works in Sutherland. Her most recent poetry pamphlet, *Ecstatics: a Language of Birds* is published by Brae Editions, Orkney.

Andy Jackson (b.1965) has been published in *Magma, Gutter* and *New Writing Scotland*. His collection *The Assassination Museum* was published by Red Squirrel Press (2010) and he is editor of *Split Screen anthology* (2012, also Red Squirrel Press).

Anita John tutors creative writing for Edinburgh University's Lifelong Learning programme. She was recently selected for the HappenStance/Writers' Forum Mentoring Scheme and also won the 2012 Biscuit Combo Prize. See www.biscuitpublishing.com.

Aila Juvonen teaches social skills and assertiveness to children. She has published two books - *Kipeä Katse* and *Skidikantti* - and is currently working on a children's book and a poem collection. Aila has translated Liz Niven's poems into Finnish for Liz's reading tours in Finland.

Stephen Keeler is a former BBC World Service website columnist. He writes non-fiction diary and travel pieces, haikus and poems and is currently working on a first collection of poetry while teaching occasional literature and creative writing courses in Ullapool.

Juliet Lamb works as an ornithologist, researching the movements and biology of seabirds. She is British-American by birth, French by association, and Orcadian by adoption.

Joan Lennon remarks that 'the Kingdom of Fife is thought to be shaped like a dog's head. If this is so, I live on the ear, which explains a lot.' www.joanlennon.co.uk

Fearghas MacFhionnlaigh – Bàrd a tha air an dreuchd aige mar fhear-teagaisg ealain ann an Inbhis Nis a leigeil dheth o chionn ghoirid.

Alan MacGillivray has published four collections of poetry, including *the saga of fnc gull* (Crowling Press) and *An Altitude Within* (Kennedy & Boyd). He is a winner of the McCash Scots Poetry Prize, and has twice been selected for Best Scottish Poems.

Angus MacMillan – À Leòdhas bho thùs. Air a' bhith a' fuireach ann an Dùn Phris fad iomadach bliadhna a-nis, far a bheil e an sàs anns an iris Southlight.

Aonghas MacNeacail is an award-winning poet (including Scottish Writer of the Year 1997), journalist and broadcaster, working mostly between English and Gaelic.

Kona Macphee is a UK-born, Australian-bred poet now living in Scotland. Her second collection, *Perfect Blue,* won the Geoffrey Faber Memorial Prize for 2010, and her third, *What Long Miles*, is published in March 2013. www.konamacphee.com

Greg MacThòmais - Ag obair aig Sabhal Mòr Ostaig anns an Eilean Sgitheanach. Dàin leis ann an *New Writing Scotland* is àiteachan eile.

Andrew McCallum Crawford's work has been widely published, in journals such as *Interlitq*, *Gutter* and *Spilling Ink Review*. His new collection of short stories, *A Man's Hands*, will be available later in 2012.

Donald S. Murray comes from Ness in Lewis but works in Shetland. A teacher who is also a poet, author and occasional journalist, his books include *The Guga Hunters* (Birlinn), *Small Expectations* (Two Ravens Press) and *And On This Rock; The Italian Chapel, Orkney* (Birlinn). His latest book is *Weaving Songs* (Acair).

Màiri NicGumaraid – À Leòdhas. 'S e an cruinneachadh as ùire leatha Fo Stiùir A Faire (Coiscéim, 2012).

Liz Niven is a poet and creative writing facilitator. She has published six poetry collections; the most recent, *The Shard Box,* was selected as a Scottish Libraries Summer Read 2011. She has participated in Literary Festivals in Europe, Scandinavia and the Far East. Her work in Scotland often involves collaborations with artists in public spaces and education buildings.

Tom Pow is primarily a poet but has also written young adult novels, picture books, radio plays and a travel book about Peru. *In The Becoming, New and Selected New Poems* (Polygon) was published in June 2009. *In Another World: Among Europe's Dying Villages*, a mix of travelogue, essay, story and poem, was published in 2012. www.tompow.co.uk, www.dyingvillages.com

Heather F Reid lives in Perthshire and writes short fiction and poetry for both adults and children. Her collection *Kiss and Other Stories'* is available on Amazon Kindle.

Elizabeth Rimmer is a poet, gardener and river-watcher. Her roots are Catholic, radical, feminist and green. Her poems have appeared in *Poetry Scotland, Northwords Now, Gutter, Brittle Star* and *Eildon Tree,* and her first full collection, *Wherever We Live Now*, was published by Red Squirrel in 2011.

Laurna Robertson was born in Shetland and now lives in Kelso. Three poetry pamphlets of her work have been published: *The Ranselman's Tale* 1990, *Milne Graden Poems* 2007 and *Sampler* 2009.

Cynthia Rogerson has published four novels and a collection of stories.. Her novel *I Love You, Goodbye* was shortlisted for the 2011 Scottish Novel of the Year, and developed into a Woman's Hour serial.

Ian Stephen's *St Kilda lyrics*, first published in *Northwords Now* will be published, in an expanded version, along with the music of David P Graham by Inventio-Musikverlag in Berlin, in 2013.

Howard Wright lives and works in Belfast. Recent poems have appeared in *Arete, The Fiddlehead* and *Other Poetry.* His first collection, *King of Country* was published in 2010 from Blackstaff Press.

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Hootananny, Church St
Visit Scotland, Castle Wynd
Inverness Museum & Art Gallery
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Shetland Arts Trust, Lerwick
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Aberdeen City Libraries
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The Lemon Tree, West North St, Abdn.
Blackwell's, Old Aberdeen
Woodend Barn, Banchory
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Newton Dee Café, Bieldside

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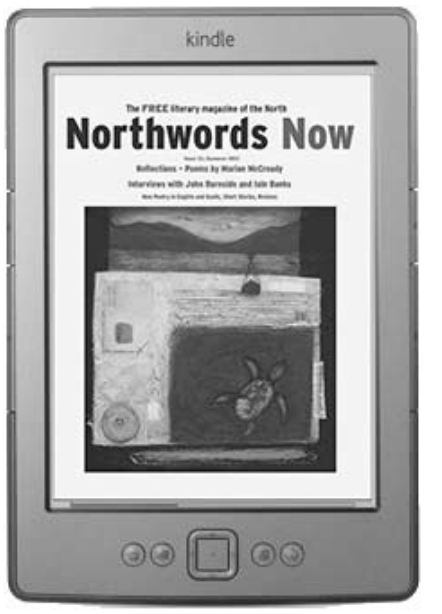
Dundee Contemporary Arts, Nethergate, Dundee
Kesley's Bookshop, Haddington, East Lothian
Midlothian Council Libraries
Stirling Libraries
East Lothian Libraries
Ewart Libraries, Dumfries
Gracefield Arts Centre, Dumfries
Byre Theatre, St Andrews
The Forest Bookstore, Selkirk
Prestongrange Museum, Prestonpans, East Lothian

Edinburgh
Blackwells Bookshop, South Bridge
Scottish Poetry Library, Crichtons Close
Bongo Club, Holyrood Rd.
Oxfam Bookshop, Raeburn Place
Elephant House Café, George IV Bridge
The Village, S. Fort Street, Leith
Filmhouse, Lothian Road
The Fruitmarket Gallery, 45 Market Street

Glasgow
Centre for Contemporary Arts, Sauchiehall St, Glasgow
Mitchell Library, North St.
Òran Mòr, Great Western Road
The Piping Centre, McPhater St.
Caledonia Books, Gt. Western Rd
Tchai Ovna Teahouses, Otago Lane
Oxfam Books, Byres Road & Victoria Rd.
Mono, King's Court, King St, Glasgow
Gallery of Modern Art, Royal Exchange Sq.
Glasgow Film Theatre, Videodrome, Rose St.

Northwords Now goes Kindle!



Nobody could accuse us of falling behind with technology. In the last redesign of our website, we added both audio and video casting capabilities to bring you the spoken word as our wonderful authors intended it to be heard and (when they're not being shy) seen.

But we're not stopping there. Everyone knows that the world has evolved to embrace all things mobile and, based on requests and suggestions submitted by our esteemed readership, we concluded that our magazine should be available to read on mobile devices too. So, the latest and greatest advance from Northwords Now's very own "Q" means that your favourite literary periodical (that's us) will also be available on your favourite Kindle device!

Those of you familiar with Kindle devices will be aware of how the format works. For those of who are not familiar, Tony Ross has provided this reasonably short and fairly jargon-free explanation of Kindle.

What is Kindle?

Kindle is an electronic book (or eBook) reader produced by Amazon. Kindle is also available, as a piece of application software (called an "app"), for many devices other than Kindle readers themselves:

- Smart-phones (such as iPhone, Galaxy II & III, etc.)
- Tablet computers (such as iPad, the new Microsoft Surface and the many Google derivatives)
- Laptop/desktop computers (such as PCs running Windows and Macs running OSX).

In order to view Kindle publications on one of these devices, you can download the Kindle reader app from the Amazon website. Simply go to Amazon.co.uk and hover your mouse over the "Shop by Department" menu item, which appears underneath the Amazon logo. A drop-down menu will appear. Hover over "Kindle" and a side-menu will appear. Click on "Free Kindle Reading apps" then select and install the app appropriate to your device.

The idea behind Kindle was to have a publishing platform that would display legibly across any device (regardless of its limitations in terms of power, screen-size and capabilities) and provide the user with controls to allow them to adjust the text to a size and contrast level which suited them in ambient light conditions.

This capability is almost unnecessary on laptop and desktop computers as they tend to have screens which are not only big enough to display a lot of text on one page, but also bright enough to make the text easily readable. However, when reading on smaller devices, this capability is invaluable. On Kindle, the reader has the choice of:

1. How big or small the text on the screen is
2. How strong the contrast is (i.e. how sharp or distinct the text is from the screen)
3. Which font, or character style, is used to display the text (there is a limited number of font choices)

In terms of consideration, the most important of these for any publication is the first choice – how big or small the text on the screen is. Because the person using the Kindle reader controls this, there is very little that can be done to have the Kindle version of the magazine pages laid out as beautifully as the paper or PDF versions. The ability for the user to control the text display size also means that there is no viable concept of "pages" in Kindle; pages are now considered to be "sections".

The net result is that the Kindle version is laid out in a very simple way for a very flexible display. Articles will start in a new section with a title, followed by any given image or photo and then the article text.

Downloading Northwords Now to Kindle

Please be aware that, because of space limitation in the magazine, the procedure I'm about to describe is just one of a few possible methods of downloading the magazine to your device. If you prefer to not read it, you can watch the video-cast instructions by visiting the Kindle page of the magazine at **northwordsnow.co.uk/magazines** and clicking on "**Amazon Kindle**". You will then see the video screen that you can click on and watch.

When you obtained your Kindle reader (or installed the free Kindle reading app on one of the other devices we talked about), you would have had to register the device to your Amazon account. You'll need the login details for your Amazon account to hand.

One-Time-Only Set-Up

To send the magazine to your device, there are two things we need to do. The first is to take a note of your Kindle personal document email address (which is not the same as your Amazon account email address). The second is to set your Kindle account to permit *Northwords Now* to send you magazines.

To achieve these things, simply follow these steps (they'll take less than a minute and you'll only ever need to do this once):

1. Logon to your Amazon account in any web browser
2. Hover your mouse over the "**Shop by Department**" menu item, which appears underneath the Amazon logo. A drop-down menu will appear
3. Hover over "**Kindle**" and a side-menu will appear
4. Click on "**Manage your Kindle**" in this menu and you will be taken to the Kindle settings page
5. On the left of this page, there is a menu headed "**Your Kindle Account**" and underneath that, there is a menu item called "**Personal Document Settings**"; click on that menu item. The page will reload and display your Personal Document Settings
6. On the right of this page, there is a section headed "**Send-to-Kindle E-Mail Settings**". Underneath this, you will see your Kindle device name and an email address that ends with "**@kindle.com**". This is your Kindle personal document email address. Take a note of that email address
7. At the bottom of this page, under a section headed "**Approved Personal Document E-mail List**", there is a link titled "**Add a new approved e-mail address**". Click that link and a small pop-up window will open containing a text-box asking for an approved email address. Into this, you should type **kindle@northwordsnow.co.uk** and then click "**Add Address**" at the bottom of that window. The email address you've just entered will permit *Northwords Now* to send the magazine to your Kindle device

When you've completed these steps, the settings will be saved by Amazon and you won't have to complete them again.

Download Northwords Now

Finally, now that we've obtained the Kindle Personal Document email address and set your Amazon account to permit Northwords Now to send you magazines, we can get on with sending the magazine to your Kindle. Follow these steps:

1. Open a web browser and surf to **northwordsnow.co.uk/magazines**
2. Click on the "**Amazon Kindle**" link
3. In the textbox on this page, enter your Kindle personal document email address (which you took a note of in step 6 previously)
4. There is a security text displayed, enter what you see into the "**security text**" box (this is so that we can confirm that the magazine is being requested by a human being, rather than some spam-bot)
5. Click "**Send this issue to my Kindle**"

That's it! Delivery may take about five minutes or so, but this is down to how busy the Amazon site is at that time and has nothing to do with Northwords Now.

After about five minutes, log in to your Amazon account to check that the magazine has been delivered. Here are the steps:

a) Logon to your Amazon account in any web browser

b) Hover your mouse over the "**Shop by Department**" menu item, which appears underneath the Amazon logo. A drop-down menu will appear

c) Hover over "**Kindle**" and a side-menu will appear

d) Click on "**Manage your Kindle**" in this menu and you will be taken to the Kindle settings page

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f) If it has, click on "**Pending Deliveries**". You should now see the magazine listed under "**Queued For Delivery**" on the right of this page

g) Switch your Kindle device on and, after it downloads the magazine (you may have to "refresh" your device to do this), you're now ready to enjoy Northwords Now on Kindle

If all of the above seems complicated, don't worry – as mentioned earlier, on the *Northwords Now* website, there is a video-cast in the Kindle page of those magazines available on Kindle, which will show you each of these steps.

We will be employing a registration mechanism in the near future, which will give you the option of permitting us to automatically send you the magazine on Kindle as and when it becomes available.

Happy Kindling!