

OPEN WORLD

Issue 1 Part One



OPEN WORLD

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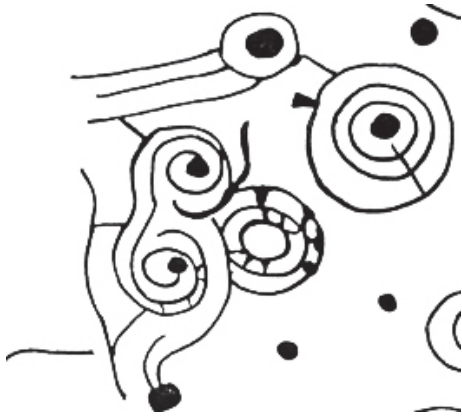
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**Drawings of cup and ring carvings at Achnabreck, Argyll, on the cover
and throughout the magazine are by Kate Sweeney McGee**

Images of trees are by Norman Bissell and Eilean Low



Hello,

As promised at the Geopoetics meeting I have tried to put together the first issue of Open World. These have been out of print for around 30 years. Putting this together again was a wee bit laborious, but it brought back many memories of those early meetings as some of the articles are based on those meetings and talks. People too that I have not seen for decades come back to mind. I was reminded of many joyous moments.

Well, to this publication: I thought I might have had some digital files of these magazines, but then I remembered they were all scalpel and paste jobs. As it is, I no longer have access to the great equipment I once had to do stuff like this, but I had a go anyway.

This is a full-sized document on A4 so photography can make each page a big file. I have tried to make the images as light as possible while still making the text readable. The paper was an off-white colour, so a slight grey cast remains in the background despite my effort to remove it without washing out the text completely. Issue two is on the same paper, but issue 3 is on bright whiter paper so hopefully this will make the last one a bit easier.

I must apologise for the page curl, but I only have two hands. I have tried to straighten text where possible, but some slants and curves still exist. However, I think I have made it readable. I will get better lighting and make something up to limit page curl on the next magazine.

I have made the magazine in two parts to make it a lighter file and easier to download. Anyway, I hope you find this mock-up of issue one of the magazine readable and interesting.

Best wishes

Joe Murray, Glasgow, March 2021



INTRODUCTION

To Open World Poetics

By Tony McManus

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

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

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

Suddenly Kenji blurted out:

"We have betrayed the real world."

"What's the real world?"

"I don't know. But it's not that" - and he made a gesture with his hand at the expressway.

"Well, maybe we'll get back to it. This Bedlam thing can't last long. There'll be a big crash some day soon."

"Too big and too late."

"Not if we keep some other roads open."

"Other roads open?"

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Since it has not been possible to include Dugie McInnes's papers on *Geology and it's Relationship with Art*, it might be appropriate to offer here a little nugget of his talks which

opened up some fascinating and fruitful areas. I remember in particular Dugie's description of Lewisian gneiss, 2.8 billion years old covered, eventually, by a sediment which was removed by glaciation so that that rock is now *visible* as it was, say, 2 billion years ago. That earth-image (later to be focussed on again when Ray Ross spoke about MacDiarmid's *On A Raised Beach*), that timescale which devastates our usual petty conception of time, that idea of movement and change, of the rock revealing itself in a form of "earth-writing" forged out of geology and meteorology - these things are central to what Open World Poetics aims to do: to go to the fundamental layers of things in order, perhaps, eventually to come back to our own situations with clearer eyes, informed by what Kenneth White calls a "sense of world."

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

ORIGINAL MIND

An introduction to Gary Snyder
by John Hart

One problem in presenting an introduction to the work of Gary Snyder in a short paper is how to adequately reflect the range, depth and diversity that it encompasses; to give some flavour of the subtlety of mind that runs through 40 years of poetry, essays study and research. Rather than attempt a comprehensive view, what is offered here is a biographical account and, as far as possible, Snyder *in his own words* on a number of aspects of his work which seems relevant to the Open World Poetics group.

Despite his lack of publication in this country Snyder's work has a shape and contains elements that will be familiar to anyone who knows Kenneth White. Snyder is a poet of particular relevance for a group like Open World Poetics - as a poet who has brought insight from a variety of disciplines into his work, as a writer who has made use of ecological perspectives and knowledge, as a person with a lifelong experience of working in the natural landscape - logger, forester, farmer - which has profoundly influenced the development of his thought and poetry. He has knowledge and personal experience of a number of different cultures and systems of thought which are outside the Western tradition. If the process of dialogue and study embodied in Open World Poetics is to mean anything then part of that must be to listen to other voices outside our own culture.

Kenneth White published an extended essay on the life and work of Gary Snyder in 1975 entitled *The Tribal Dharma*. It provides an illumination of two creative and individual minds which have followed their own course in the ensuing years.¹ In describing the areas of inquiry and the approach that Snyder has adopted White draws on a key passage from Thoreau's *Walden* which proclaims that the real work is to:

settle ourselves, and work and wedge our feet
downward through the mud and slush of
opinion...through Paris and London, through New
York and Boston and Concord, through Church
and State, through poetry and philosophy and
religion, till we come to a hard bottom and rocks in
place, which we can call reality, and say This is, and
no mistake.²

Snyder's first book of poetry entitled *Riprap* was published in 1959.³ "Riprap" is a term used to describe a cobble of stone laid on steep rock to make a trail in the mountains. This is an extract from the title poem:

Lay down these words
Before your mind like rocks.
placed solid, by hands
In choice of place, set
Before the body of the mind
in space and time:
Solidity of bark, leaf, or wall
riprap of things:
Cobble of milky way,
straying planets,

Jackson recognises the most striking quality of early medieval Celtic literatures to be

their power of vivid imagination and freshness of approach, as if every poet gifted with a high degree of imaginative insight, rediscovered the world for himself.⁴

This is an essential feature of the work of many writers and poets but it is an insight of great significance and relevance for Thoreau, White and Snyder. Direct and immediate perception of particular, local, natural landscapes which is mirrored in a vivid, vital poetry and prose. It also encompasses an awareness of the mind which perceives that landscape. Another example from Snyder's first book:

Sky over endless mountains
All the junk that goes with being human
Drops away, hard rock wavers
Even the heavy present seems to fail
This bubble of heart.
Words and books
Like a small creek off a high ledge
Gone in the dry air.

A clear, attentive mind
Has no meaning but that
Which sees is truly seen.

In Snyder's work the question arises - where did this sense of rediscovering the world, of seeing the world afresh come from? To answer this it is useful to outline some details of Gary Snyder's life.

He was born in 1930 and grew up on a small farm in the Pacific Northwest. From the age of 10 years old he sometimes went off and slept alone in the woods. A few years after this, again alone, he was making camping trips into the wilderness of the Cascade Mountains. Anyone who heard Kenneth White at the Goethe Institute last year will recognise the similarities between the two poets with respect to their childhood experiences. Both showed an immediate, intuitive, deep sympathy with the natural world and spent considerable periods of time on their own in that world. Here is Snyder's own description of his early years.

From a very early age I found myself standing in an undefinable awe before the natural world. An attitude of gratitude, wonder and a sense of protection especially as I began to see the hills being bull-dozed down for roads, and the forests of the Pacific Northwest magically float away on logging trucks...The economic base of the whole region was logging. In trying to grasp the dynamics of what was happening, rural state of Washington, 1930's, depression, white boy out in the country, German on one side, Scotch-Irish on the other side, radical, that is to say, sort of grass roots Union, I.W.W., and socialist-radical parents, I found nothing in their orientation, (critical as it was of American politics and economics), that could give me an access to understanding what was happening. I had to find that through reading and imagination which led me into a variety of politics: Marxist, Anarchist and onwards.⁵

Part of Snyder's attempt to access this deeper understanding was through his studies at Reed College where he enrolled in 1947. There he began a process of political analysis and study that culminated in his discovery of Marxism which provided a rigorous critique of capitalist economics and society and offered some understanding for the gross exploitation of the natural world. However further studies in American Indian myth and folklore, contact with some of the American Indian Elders and studies in anthropology led to a growing awareness that the nature of the problem was not confined to the economic development that accompanied capitalism but that it was an endemic feature of Western civilisation. Alongside his study of anthropology and American Indian culture Snyder was studying Chinese poetry and all the major classics of Mahayana Buddhism - Indian and Chinese. A flavour of how this wide range of reading informed his work as a poet can be seen in the poem, *Revolution in the Revolution*

The country surrounds the city
The back country surrounds the country

"From the masses to the masses" the most
Revolutionary consciousness is to be found
Amongst the most ruthlessly exploited classes:
Animals, trees, water, air, grasses

We must pass through the stage of the
"Dictatorship of the Unconscious" before we can
Hope for the withering away of the states
And finally arrive at true Communism

If the capitalists and imperialists
are the exploiters, the masses are the workers,
and the party
is the communist.

If civilization
is the exploiter, the masses is nature,
and the party
is the poets.

If the abstract rational intellect
is the exploiter, the masses is the unconscious,
and the party
is the yogins

& Power
comes out of the seed-syllables of mantras.⁶

Snyder's interest in the development of Mahayana Buddhism in China was partly due to its assimilation of the older Taoist tradition with its particular emphasis on the natural world and the place of human life within that world. Drawing on the work of Dr. Joseph Needham's extensive life-long study *Science and Civilisation in China*,⁷ Snyder characterises Taoism as follows

...The largest single coherent chunk of matrilineal descent, mother-consciousness oriented, neolithic culture that went through the, so to speak, sound barrier of the Iron Age and come out the other side half way intact.⁸

On learning that part of the tradition based on Taoism and Mahayana Buddhism was still alive in Japan he quit his postgraduate study of Linguistics and Anthropology and transferred to Berkeley University of California to learn Japanese and Chinese. After four years of study he moved to Japan where he studied in the Rinza school of Zen Buddhism for seven years, most of this time being taught by Oda Sesso Roshi.

In 1968 he returned to America for a variety of reasons one of which was his conviction that the US was one of the few cultures where a number of people have recognised the threat contained deep in the values of Western culture (this threat is detailed in more depth below).

Since his return Snyder has worked on his subsistence farm with his family in the Sierra Nevada mountains. He has continued to work and publish as a poet, an environmental activist, a practising Buddhist and teacher. He is also a founder member of *Alcheringa, Journal of Ethnopoetics*.

In one of his essays on Ethnopoetics published in 1975 he raises the question of the significance of oral literatures

... I can't think about our situation in anything less than a forty thousand year timescale. Forty thousand years is not very long. If we wanted to talk about hominid evolution we'd have to work with something like four million years. Forty thousand years is a useful timescale because we can be sure that through the whole of that period man has been in the same body and in the same mind as he is now. *All the evidence we have indicates that imagination, intuition, intellect, wit, decision, speed, skill was fully developed forty thousand years ago ...* In that forty thousand year timescale, (I owe a great deal to Dr. Stanley Diamond for my sense of

this), the major part of man's interesting career has been spent as a hunter and gatherer, in "primary" cultures. As recently as 12,000 years ago, agriculture began to play a small part in some corners of the world. It's only in the last three millennia that agriculture has really penetrated widely. Civilisation, 8,000 years old; class structure, surplus wealth accumulation, literate societies which on balance in that total represent a very small part of human experience; since it's only been in the last two centuries that any sizeable proportion of any civilised country has had much literacy. Thus oral literature, the ballad, the folk tale, myth, the songs, the subject matter of ethnopoetics has been the major literary experience of mankind. Understanding that, it becomes all the more poignant when we realise the richness that is being swept away.

In the same essay he states what for him is the central question:

...what is occidental and industrial technological society doing to the earth. The earth: (I'm just going to remind us of a few facts), is 57 million square miles, 3.7 billion human beings, evolved over the last 4 million years; plus, 2 million species of insects, 1 million species of plants, 20 thousand species of fish, and 8,700 species of birds; constructed out of 97 naturally occurring surface elements with the power of the annual solar income of the sun. That is a lot of diversity.⁹

A fundamental and constant theme of his work has been the threat posed to that diversity by economic, political and technological development. Asked by a young woman in a Canadian University what did he fear most he found himself answering "that the diversity of the gene pool will be destroyed".¹⁰ For Snyder the treasure of life lies in the richness of information in the diverse genes of all living creatures. That richness is threatened because the US, Europe, the Soviet Union and Japan have acquired a habit. They are addicted to huge energy use currently met by fossil fuels which as they run out will be replaced by taking dangerous risks on the health of the biosphere - most particularly nuclear power. This was a view expressed in the early 60's. Since then if anyone need be reminded we have seen a series of environmental and ecological catastrophes from the Chernobyl disaster to the nightmare of the Gulf War (the latter having been fought out against a backdrop of the need to secure the world supply of oil and stabilise oil prices).

Snyder's overview of historical development in the West put at its simplest identifies that for several centuries Western civilisation has exhibited a relentless drive for material accumulation - continual extensions of both economic and political power. This has been termed "progress". Culturally this process is supported and maintained by a Judaeo-Christian worldview in which men are seen as working out their ultimate destinies with the earth as the stage for the drama - trees and animals mere props, nature a vast supply depot. This is Snyder being interviewed where he develops this line of thought further.

Interviewer Sometimes it almost seems as if you have a grudge against Western civilisation.

Snyder Oh, I do. No doubt about it. Any sensible person does.

Interviewer Why?

Snyder Because Western civilisation has committed itself to a separation of spirit and matter, a separation of mind and body, a vision of both material and metaphysical achievement in linear history, a metaphysic of the millennium that justifies and underwrites the arms race and the nuclear confrontation which means that there is a secret wish in almost all occidental minds for the Apocalypse which will be interpreted as nuclear war.

Western culture is just an ethnic variant, right? It is an ethnos that for the time being come to far greater influence and power in the world than any given ethnos by rights should have and by virtue of its own perverse notions monotheism and millennialism has drawn the whole world into its peculiar twisted mythology and the peculiar intensities of its mythology which involves so much greed. Nobody else in the world want to live like that. And then you turn around and you find Occidental thinkers saying this is human nature and trying to fob off the fact that they have arrived at the present condition of the world as though all human beings have tended the same direction from the beginning of history and saying well this is human nature. Well stand back and speak for yourself white man as Tonto said to the Lone Ranger....¹¹

Staying in this cultural context Snyder in another interview quotes the Japanese poet Basho

"To learn about the pine, go to the pine. To learn about bamboo go to the bamboo." But this Learn is not just what you think learn is. You only learn by becoming totally absorbed in that which you wish to learn. There are many people who think they have learned something and wilfully construct a poem which is artifice and *does not flow from the delicate entrance into the life of another object.* (my emphasis)

Interviewer So when Sartre, the Western philosopher, goes to the tree, touches the trunk and says "I feel in an absurd position - I cannot break through my skin to get in touch with this bark, which is outside me" the Japanese poet would say what?

Snyder Sartre is confessing the sickness of the West. At least he is honest. The Oriental will say "But there are ways to do it, my friend. It's no big deal." Especially if you get attuned to that possibility early in life. American Indians and the Japanese both know that that's possible - to learn about the pine from the pine rather than from a botany book.¹²

For Snyder this is the crucial consideration. As someone trained in anthropology he is knowledgeable about the diversity of human cultures through pre-history and history. He is also particularly attuned to those cultural products which have been preserved in the anthropological record - poetry, story-telling, religion, ritual, paintings, etc. - which suggest this alternative way of knowing. Two primary

examples which he discovered early on were American Indian cultures and Zen Buddhism. The growth of knowledge in this century in a variety of fields - archaeology, linguistics, anthropology, history - means, as Snyder was quick to identify, that the present generation are the "first human beings in history to have all of man's culture available to our study" and to be "free enough of the weight of traditional cultures to seek out a larger identity".¹³

In a collection of essays entitled *The Old Ways* he argues.

The evidence of anthropology is that countless men and women, through history and pre-history, have experienced a deep sense of communion and communication with nature and with specific non-human beings... Men of goodwill who cannot see a reasonable mode of either listening to, or speaking for, nature, except by analytical and scientific means must surely learn to take this complex, profound, moving and in many ways highly appropriate, world view of yogins, shamans, and ultimately all our ancestors, into account.¹⁴

Coming back to the issue of current economic and technological development Snyder's view is not that the longing for growth is wrong. The nub of the problem now is how to flip over, as in jujitsu, the magnificent growth-energy of modern civilisation into a non-acquisitive search for deeper knowledge of self and nature. Self-nature.

The value of writers like Snyder and White and Thoreau and many others is precisely their ability to challenge everyday assumptions and beliefs in the most fundamental sense and, in the case of Snyder in particular, to make us more aware of our unique position in terms of human history, human culture and human development. Curiously enough his interest in social change and human history is partly a result of his deep affinity and reverence for the natural, non-human world of rock and tree, plant and animal and the threat that we as a species pose for that world. Part of that reverence stems from early childhood experiences in the terrain of the Pacific Northwest and finding resonance of these experiences in Chinese poetry, in Buddhism, in his study of anthropology, in his practical work life on his farm.

He has been practising formal Zen Buddhist meditation for over 40 years and has studied with a Zen master in the living tradition. But running alongside that practice he identified a number of critical insights into Institutional Buddhism. As early as 1961 in an essay addressing the question of Buddhism and its relationship between revolution and social change Snyder stated.

Historically, Buddhist philosophers have failed to analyse out the degree to which ignorance and suffering are caused or encouraged by social factors, considering fear and desire to be given facts of the human condition. Consequently the major concern of Buddhist philosophy is epistemology and "psychology" with no attention paid to historical or sociological problems. Although Mahayana Buddhism has a grand vision of universal salvation, the actual achievement of Buddhism has been the development of practical systems of meditation towards the end of liberating a few dedicated individuals from psychological hangups and cultural conditionings. Institutional Buddhism has been conspicuously ready to accept

or ignore the inequalities and tyrannies of whatever political system it found itself under... No-one today can afford to be innocent, or indulge himself in ignorance of the nature of contemporary governments, politics and social orders.¹⁵

This quote carries a double significance. Firstly as a critical response to Buddhism by someone who with over 20 years of meditation practice may be said to have an *insider* view of Buddhist philosophy, psychology and practice. Secondly, and perhaps more importantly, it is a good illustration of the need for retaining sharp and critical reasoning while at the same time investigating, studying and experiencing in the areas that Snyder, White and many others have opened up.

Given the range of immediate problems that demand our attention and action from unemployment to racism, from famine to violence against women and children, one response to the work of Gary Snyder can be to find these areas of work and study irrelevant, obscure or impossibly idealistic and utopian. But these problems are not simply a product of the 1990's or the post war years or the twentieth century or even since the Industrial Revolution. You need to go much further back. Racism, sexism, poverty, violence, exploitation of the earth have been around for a long time. They are deeply ingrained in our current cultural context but their roots trail far back into history. Although Snyder's cultural work may seem divorced from our immediate problems and everyday life this is not so. A central concern in his poetry and other writings is the quality of our lives here and now. It is the quality of the water that comes from our kitchen tap that we use to cook for our lovers our friend and our children. It is the quality of the air we breathe whether in Argyle Street or Rannoch Moor or Bhopal village in India. It is the quality of our individual life, our relationship with each other, our relationship with the natural world. Snyder's work, along with many others, represents an opportunity to re-consider, to re-evaluate, to re-source ourselves in a much wider and much richer field of feelings and ideas. To explore and find out for ourselves and with others what he calls "the Real Work". In his view

The mercy of the West has been the social revolution, the mercy of the East has been individual insight into the basic self/void. We need both.¹⁶

1. Kenneth White *The Tribal Dharma* Carmarthen, Unicorn 1975 2. Henry David Thoreau. *Walden* London, Walter Scott, 1888 3. Gary Snyder. *Riprap*, Original Press, 1959 4. Kenneth Hurlstone Jackson. *A Celtic Miscellany*, London, Routledge, Keegan & Paul, 1951 5. Gary Snyder. *The Old Ways*, San Francisco, City Lights, 1977 6. Gary Snyder. *Regarding Wave*, New York, New Directions, 1967 7. Joseph Needham. *Science and Civilisation in China* 8. Gary Snyder. *The Old Ways*, San Francisco, City Lights, 1977 9. *Ibid* 10. Gary Snyder. *Turtle Island*, New York, New Directions, 1974 11. *Interview with Gary Snyder Radio 3* 1989 12. Gary Snyder. *The Real Work*, New York, New Directions, 1980. 13. Ekbert Faas. *Towards A New American Poetics*, Santa Barbara, Black Sparrow Press 1978 14. Gary Snyder. *The Old Ways*, San Francisco, City Lights, 1977 15. Gary Snyder. *Earth House Hold*, London Jonathon Cape, 1970. 16. *Ibid*.

Norman Bissell





Kate Sweeney McGee

Xochipilli, Lord of Souls

When he comes
it is rain in the desert,
slaked thirst

a shimmer
blue-feathered
flying the loneliness of bones

petals of light
unfolding
within the darkness of flesh

seed of the spirit, full grown

It is for this he comes-
feather
seed
flower
soul

Ancestors

They are alive
in the memories of eagles

In green leaf
and the white breath of snow
we inherit them

With the wrong eyes
we watch for them

With the wrong ears
we listen for them

They are here-
singing in our veins
dancing in our bones

Though sometimes
they weep for us

And touch us
like light, like rain

Poems by Anne Tall

Totem Pole

The moonlit waves
had always mediated
between wind and earth

This place was different

No sea

Just wind
hovering over
the green pine
tree tops
Threatening his roots
so that he'd move on

Sooner or later
he'd try flight
It had to come
sooner or later

And of course
the first flight
requires power

So he fights it

Till he ignites the dead shavings
of his most wooden
of creations
and slowly sets alight
to his gaze

Now he can see
it's the silence
that makes it
into the island

Poem by Colin Kerr

Norman Bissell



DIALECTICS OF NATURE

By Norman Bissell

First, a quotation which was not on the circular for this meeting, it comes, perhaps surprisingly, from John MacLean.

We are out for life and all that life can give us

Materialism

According to widely-accepted scientific evidence, the physical universe has existed for something like 20,000 million years. The planet earth was formed some 4,600 million years ago and the first life on the planet, small simple cells, appeared about 3,500 million years ago. Our earliest ancestors can be traced back to about 4 million years ago, or so my sources tell me.

As human beings we are part of that material world which exists independently of us. We are born into it by means of a finite material process, we live and develop physically and mentally in that material world, and when we die, we again become purely material particles of that world, which continues to exist and go on changing without us.

Many of us of course like to think of ourselves and our ideas as independent and separate from that world, our thoughts as free-ranging, able to transcend material reality and, in the religious variants of this, to transcend life itself.

The great basic question of all philosophy, especially of modern philosophy, is the relation of thinking and being ... spirit to nature ... which is primary spirit or nature ... ?

The answers which the philosophers gave to this question split them into two great camps. Those who asserted the primacy of spirit to nature ... comprised the camp of idealism. The others who regarded nature as primary, belong to the various schools of materialism.

That's from Engels' *Ludwig Feuerbach*, 1888.

The fossil evidence and the work done by biologists and

natural scientists in general has, I believe, proved the correctness of the materialist view of the world as against the idealist view.

Yet idealism continues to exist in all its many forms, one of the most recent of which is a renewed advocacy of the Scottish Common Sense school of philosophy, which is based on a mind-body dualism, one of whose first principles, number one on Thomas Reid's list, is "The existence of everything of which I am conscious." i.e. a philosophy based on the thoughts of the *self*.

The earliest expressions of materialism go back at least some 4,000 years to Egypt and Babylonia where the view was recorded that water was the prime source of the world, giving birth to all things and living creatures, a view echoed by the Greek Thales who lived from 624 to 547 BC, about 1400 years later.

In the first millennium BC in India, the Lokayata school founded by Brihaspati opposed the religious beliefs contained in the Vedas of Hinduism by denying the immortality of the soul and asserting that there was not, nor could there be, any other life than in this world.

In China the first materialists maintained that all things were various combinations of the five elements, fire, water, wood, earth and metal, and according to Lao-Tsu the world was eternal and in a constant state of motion and change. This motion was directed and governed by the Tao - the way or path taken by natural events.

For Chuang Tzu a bit later, nature is also in a constant state of flux and incessant transformation and he even seems to have anticipated the theory of natural evolution by some 2,000 years. He says our goal is to be a "companion" of nature, not to impose our way on it, but through knowing the capacity and limitations of our own nature, to adapt to the universal process of transformation.

This of course raises a key issue: the relationship between woman/man and nature. That is, whether it is one of living in harmony with nature through knowledge of ourselves and of nature; or of being in conflict with nature, having to struggle to control and overcome the forces of nature in order to survive.

This dialectical view of nature contained in Taoism was also held by the Greek philosopher Heraclitus who believed that everything came from fire and eventually turned into fire. He maintained that the world was one whole, created neither by God nor man, and was continually in motion, with the possibility of one opposite transforming into another. In the words of Heraclitus:

Upon those who step into the same river different and ever different waters flow down.

There is one and the same in us - alive and dead, awake and sleeping, young and old. Indeed this, when changed is that, and conversely, that, when changed is this.

From the seventeenth to the nineteenth centuries the materialism of Francis Bacon and Thomas Hobbes in England, Paul Holbach and Denis Diderot in France, and Ludwig Feuerbach in Germany, was mechanistic and deterministic. It was Marx, Engels and later Lenin who took the dialectical outlook of the German classical philosopher and idealist Hegel and put it on a materialist basis, turning Hegel, in whose work the dialectic "is standing on its head, right side up, again".

These dialectical materialists said that the world is in constant motion and change, and passing from one state to another from simple to complex forms - molecules from atoms, living organisms from inanimate substances, from single to multi-cell organisms. They also believed that in the natural world, in human society and in thought itself it is possible to abstract certain general or basic laws of dialectics.

Laws of Dialectics

The first of these is *the transformation of quantity into quality* and conversely of quality into quantity which Engels illustrates with reference to the natural sciences. He says that qualitative change in a body can only occur by the addition or subtraction of matter or notion, that is by quantitative changes.

The molecule of oxygen consists of two atoms while that of ozone, a qualitatively different gas, of three. Nitrogen pentoxide (N_2O_5) is a solid, while nitrogen monoxide (N_2O) is a gas and qualitatively different, and similarly with carbons.

In physics, the heating of water to 100 degrees, or cooling to zero degrees, turns it into steam or ice. In human society, the cooperation of many, the fusion of many forces into a single force creates "a new power", a leap, a qualitative change, a revolution.

The second law put forward by Engels is *the unity and conflict of opposites*. In fact Engels calls this the interpenetration of opposites. It was Lenin who developed an extension or a clarification of that concept calling it the unity and conflict of opposites. That is, that all phenomena in nature, thought and society contain mutually exclusive, opposite tendencies and that their development or self-movement comes about through the conflict or struggle of these opposites.

In mathematics - plus and minus; in mechanics - action and reaction.

In physics - positive and negative electricity; in chemistry - the combination and disassociation of atoms. In society - the class struggle; in the individual - birth, development, life and death. And development takes place through the contradiction of these opposites.

Thirdly, there is the *negation of the negation*, probably the hardest one to comprehend, which is a repetition of a stage in development that has already been passed, but on a new and higher basis.

In botany, we have the development from a seed to the growth of a plant, its flowering and then back to seed again, but on a different basis. In early societies, there was common ownership of land and property, then came the various social formations with different forms of private ownership, and under socialism there would again be common ownership of the means of production, but on a higher basis because of the development of the productive forces in between through technological advances and so forth.

Chaos theory

The concept of laws in nature, society and thought has of course been attacked, criticised and disputed. For example, the Chaos theory, which I think was first developed about twenty years ago by Edward Lorenz and supported by an increasing number of scientists, emphasises the unpredictability of behaviour, based initially on a study of the weather, on the idea of the "butterfly effect" in bringing about changes in the weather.

The Chaoticists also talk of recurring patterns, "simple abstractors" rather than laws, of the development of ordered structures from less ordered matter eg biological organisms. They also emphasise bringing about a more harmonious human relationship with the natural world rather than trying to control it. This last point is also part of the Gaia theory introduced first by James Lovelock and Lynn Margulis.

In the December ('89) issue of *Living Marxism*, there is an article by John Gilbert who criticises Chaos theory as speculative model-building based on simple equations, which scientists like Lorenz have built into their computers. He also points out the convenience of Chaos theory for some politicians who can absolve themselves of all responsibility for controlling the uncontrollable.

Dialectical materialism recognises the relativity of all our knowledge in the sense that it is historically conditioned and that there are certain limitations of that knowledge at a particular time. Newtonian physics and its laws represented a considerable advance in our knowledge of the world - laws which were true within certain limits. With the discovery of atomic physics and the theory of relativity, those truths turned out to be relative.

I personally don't know enough about developments in modern science to say whether Chaos theory is really taking relativism or unpredictability too far, or whether indeed it represents another Newtonian or Einsteinian revolution. I



suspect not, but that's an area for discussion that needs to be developed by someone with a lot more scientific expertise than me.

Theory Of Knowledge

That brings me to the theory of knowledge of dialectical materialism - how do we learn, how do we know things - which I think could be a very fertile area for our particular interest, the arts in general and poetics in particular.

Consciousness/thought emerges in the brain at a certain stage in human development as a result of certain physiological processes occurring within it and also in relation to the material world. Thought cannot exist without matter, while matter on the other hand can and does exist independently of our consciousness.

Our ideas reflect the world as images transmitted to the brain by our sense organs and they are devoid of weight, space dimensions or any other physical property. Knowledge develops out of our practical action on the outside world. It is in acting to change that world that we begin to get beyond the appearance of an object to its essence.

Knowledge is constantly moving from direct perception to reflection, to abstract thinking, which involves the isolation and combination of concepts to obtain new knowledge, and from abstract thinking back to practice, and so on. Some Marxists compare this process to a spiral.

Scientific methods of cognition include observation, experiment, making comparisons, hypotheses, analogies, model-building, induction and deduction, analysis and synthesis.

Another important quotation:

Cognition is the eternal, endless approximation of thought to the object. The reflection of nature in man's/(woman's) thought must be understood not 'lifelessly', not 'abstractly', not devoid of movement, not without contradiction, but in the eternal process of movement, the arising of contradictions and their solution.

That comes from Lenin's *Philosophical Notebooks*, volume 38 of his *Collected Works*.

Another from the same source:

The coincidence of thought with the object is a process ... not lifeless, without impulse ... (or) ... motion ... like abstract thought.

The contradiction between thought and object has to be eternally overcome.

Truth

Individual being is only one side of truth. Truth requires still other sides of reality independent of us. Truth is composed of the *totality* of all sides of the phenomenon, of reality and their relationships. That reality is in eternal change.

Truth aims at getting beyond the multiplicity of events and forms to the essential relations and features of what exists - that is from appearance to essence of a situation, or a society or a natural scene. Truth is a process of developing our knowledge and testing it out against past knowledge and against objective reality which itself is everchanging.

Our knowledge can never be complete because the world is infinite in its diversity and inexhaustible. For dialectical



philosophy, nothing can endure except the uninterrupted process of becoming and of passing away.

Walt Whitman expresses this in just one small section of *Leaves of Grass* when he says:

This day before dawn I ascended a hill and look'd
at the crowded heaven,
And I said to my spirit, When we become the
enfolders of those orbs,
and the pleasure and knowledge of everything in
them,
shall we be fill'd and satisfied then?
And my spirit said, No, we but level that life to pass
and continue beyond.

And indeed, is it the case that these main elements of the theory of knowledge of dialectical materialism are also the central concerns of artists in the broadest sense? Are not artists concerned with:

- an attempt to grasp reality as a whole, in all its interconnections and interrelations
- to try to more and more closely reflect the world in its essential features
- to get at the essence of phenomena through insight

all filtered through the subjective thoughts, mind and feelings of the artist, through her or his own consciousness, and to express all of that through a particular artistic medium?

Poetics

I'm going to take as a working definition of poetics, that it's a way of looking at the world and everything in that world, and suggest that some aspects of that poetics or way or method of looking at that world might be the following:

Firstly - Grasping the totality

Someone who was passionately concerned to 'see life whole' as a 'comprehensive, synthesising generalist' breaking down the barriers of specialisms, compartments of disciplines, which I think we have already established as one of our aims, was Patrick Geddes.

PG, as he was known, was at different times and at the same time, a botanist, economist, sociologist, producer of pageants, public lecturer, writer of verse, art critic, publisher, civic reformer, town planner, moralist, provocative agnostic and academic revolutionary, so his biographer says.



One of my favourite incidents in his life is when he was running his summer school in Edinburgh which took place each August from 1887 to 1899, involving 120 students from different countries and about twenty lecturers by 1893. The motto of this school (and it is a good one) was "by living we learn". It aimed to reunite art, literature and science into a related cultural whole.

About eleven o'clock one evening PG wakened the students from their beds to take them a climb up Arthur's Seat so as to take in the beautiful moonlit night over the city. After pausing and reflecting on the scene for many minutes, he then went on to talk about the Celts, their legends and beliefs. His biographer, Philip Boardman, says that he was "at his best that night on the hilltop", and I believe him.

This idea of trying to grasp the totality and absorb the whole of past and present knowledge you also find in Thomas Wolfe. I think it is in *Of Time and the River*, which is appropriately subtitled (at least I think it is), 'A young man's hunger for life', where he talks about this great urge of a young man to want to read all the books in a vast library, to know everything that ever was written.

This vastness of the cosmos, of time, of our own planet and of the natural world in comparison with a single individual, ourselves, I find well expressed in some Chinese paintings. (These were passed round.)

In these paintings you find a human figure, or a house or a boat which seems tiny in comparison with the natural world which surrounds it. The figure is standing amongst great hills, or gorges and rivers and that reflects this idea of the individual within this much wider totality.

A second aspect of poetics I would suggest is the attempt to ever more closely reflect the world.

Take for example an experience, a moment alone in the hills, a fresh spring day with rock, water, trees and birds only



for company. How do we try to capture this? By photographing it? Filming it - adding movement and sound? Through painting more or less abstractly? Or even more indirectly in music, drama or even dance, or in prose or poetry? Or through the interaction of various media, by a collective rather than purely individual effort?

This last is an approach interestingly in which the Open Circle group of painters and poets are currently involved, and are exhibiting in Hillhead library. I would think this is an area that we as a group should be exploring and perhaps doing something about - the idea of collective work and the relationship between different artistic media.

In the course of a quite deep-going interview with *Verse* magazine last summer ('89), Ken White has some interesting things to say about how a poet might try to let the reality shine through, making the objects of the natural world present to the reader, not overlaying them with words, metaphors and so on. He says in that interview:

If you try too hard at it you miss out ... if you say too much you cover the reality so you've got to say just enough and no more ... this is very touchy territory and it's more than literary. It implies work on the self.

Why does one study?
For the white-gathered element -
having shaken the letters
to become unlettered
living
in the unlettered light





Mayakovsky in a little booklet *How are Verses Made?*, which attempts to demystify the process of writing poems, says:

Overdoing assonance, alliteration and so on, produces an impression of satiety after only a short time ... Doses of alliteration must be administered with extreme caution and as far as possible the repetitions mustn't be obvious ... You must always remember that a policy of economy in art is the most important principle of every product of aesthetic value....

... rhythm is the basis of any poetic work, resounding through the whole thing. Gradually individual words begin to ease themselves free of this dull roar.

He compares this for him to:

... the sound of the sea ... the rotation of the earth
... the whistle of a high wind.

I'm sure we have all encountered poetic moments in the city or elsewhere. Whether it's the sun coming up on the way to work, or Hamish Henderson's experience in that square when the Highland army came from Sicily to Italy which he later turned into the famous song. Another one, an experience I had recently, was of seeing a heron standing motionless by the falls at New Lanark, or it could be a good story well told.

The trick is to be open, sensitive to these experiences in the midst of our busy lives and perhaps to try to capture, express for ourselves, and communicate them to others. Our lives will be all the richer if we do.

On that idea of trying to capture a moment in the country, this is from *Wild Coal*, Ken White's earliest work published in this country

Poem of the white hare

A thought that leaped out like a hare
over the moor, from behind a great rock
oh, it was a white leaping hare, and
the heather was a fine red world
for its joyance, just that day on the moor
a grey day marching on the winds
into winter, a day for a sparkling sea
three miles away in the trough of the islands
a day high up at the end of the year
a silence to break your heart, oh
the white hare leaping, see the white hare

That to me would be an example of a poetic moment and trying to capture it for all time.

The third area is that of trying to get at the *essence* of things.

In *Walden*, in the chapter *Where I lived and what I lived for*, Henry Thoreau says:

I went to the woods because I wished to live deliberately, to front only the essential facts of life, and see if I could not learn what it had to teach, and not, when I came to die, discover that I had not lived. ... I wanted to live deep and suck out all the marrow of life, to live so sturdily and Spartan-like as to put to rout all that was not life ... Our life is frittered away by detail.

It is no accident that an unusually literary and romantic film, *Dead Poets Society*, which actually uses that passage as one of its key themes, has struck a chord wherever it has been shown, especially among younger audiences. I think it illustrates or tries to express the opening up of the possibilities, that zest for meaningful life which is so vital to us all.

Take another area altogether, the city. In its over-blown, over-hyped Culture City version who would want to? This poem says a lot about Glasgow and indeed about cities in general. It is another White poem. Tony McManus read a little of this at the last meeting, I would like to read it all.

City

City the anonymous slavery that
rots the mind and makes offal
of dreams and the frenzied rootless
urge to escape from this swamp
of carrion life. City the network
of screaming solitude the fetid
loafing of desire the sharp stabs
of despair. City the dark warren
of your tenements where blind eyes
stare - eyes that were burning red
in your factories now pallid
empty blind echoes turning
in your streets the cry of the wind
on the steel cords of your heart
the wail of the seagull wheeling
above this wreck in the ocean of nature
the parrot yawp of traffic the occasional
song at the dingy corner. City the squeal
of haggard animals the mutterings
of madmen the odd defiant word
from lacerated lips the forlorn
phrases of love. City - the poem
listens and sees wandering
in the alleys and the thoroughfares

That's the way life remains for the vast majority of Glasgow people, particularly those living in the schemes, both outer and inner - "deserts of despair" which exist not just in Glasgow, but in major cities all over the world.

Brecht says something of this in his poem *To Posterity (To Those Born Later)*

Ah what an age it is
When to speak of trees is almost a crime
For it is a kind of silence about injustice!

.....

Alas, we
Who wished to lay the foundations of kindness
Could not ourselves be kind

And again in (the interestingly titled) *Bad Time for Poetry*

.....
Delight at the apple tree in blossom
And horror at the house painter's speeches.
But only the second
Drives me to my desk.

He wrote this in 1938-39 when fascism was at its height as was Stalinism in the Soviet Union. I think Brecht is wrong to counterpose social to natural world themes in poetry or in the arts generally. The natural world only becomes a diversion if we try to shut out totally or turn our backs on the social experiences being made and struggles taking place. There is obviously an issue to be discussed here about which is the more fundamental, the most urgent, the most rewarding. In my view, each can and should enrich the other.

The Cultural Revolution

The cultural upsurge which is taking place internationally at present does represent, I believe, something significant. It's no accident that the revolution in Czechoslovakia has thrown up Havel as its new President, or that a Rumanian poet at the occupation of the Bucharest TV station appealed to the people all to come there into the station to help them make a new constitution.

In many countries including the Soviet Union and Latin America where political activity has been banned, it has been through dissident poets and writers that a ferment of ideas and views has been expressed. This was also the case in 19th century Russian literature under Tsarist autocracy.

Not only that, but the particular insights of poets, painters, writers and so on have enabled them to cut through much of the falseness, injustice and iniquities of class society.

In Scotland, and in the west of Scotland particularly, in recent years there has been and is currently an expansion, almost an explosion, of magazines and networks, writers' groups, artists' groups, and poets' and artists' groups. This of course is what the business and civic culture cultures have seized to feast on. There is a danger that this kind of development could become a substitute for political action.

In a manifesto published in 1938 by André Breton and Diego Rivera after discussions with Leon Trotsky, they have this to say:

True art, which is not content to play variations on ready-made models but rather insists on expressing the inner needs of man(/woman) and of mankind(/womankind) in its time, is unable *not* to be revolutionary; not to aspire to a complete and radical transformation of society.

There have been many artists in the general sense who have allied themselves with revolutionary movements of various kinds. There have also been a number of cultural movements which have seen themselves as providing the real way to bring about change in the widest sense, including social change. I am thinking here of *Project Sigma* in the 1960's, about which there is a very interesting article dealing with its relationship to Alexander Trocchi in the current *Variant* magazine (Dec '89); or the student movement in France in 1968 with its emphasis on the cultural revolution.

Cultural Revolution I take to mean an expansion or explosion of consciousness. I for one don't see it, if it exists or is going to exist, as an alternative to, or substitute for, social and political revolution, rather as something which enriches and is enriched by these. It should be about developing the whole self and its activities for its own sake, and that may in turn have political repercussions.

A Revolutionary Culture

From the standpoint of dialectical materialism this implies a *revolutionary* culture not a socialist culture which would only be possible under socialism, which does not exist anywhere at present because of the economic impossibility of socialism in a single country. It almost goes without saying that the norms of 'socialist realism' are a bureaucratic absurdity and an obscenity.

Nor can it be a proletarian or working class culture within capitalism or even in a transitional phase after a revolution, because of cultural oppression of the working class by the capitalist system. A revolutionary culture, should it develop, would have to have a close interconnection with the working class as the revolutionary class in society. If this is something in which we were interested, then we would need to discuss that and other aspects of the idea, but a revolutionary culture cannot be a purely working class culture.

And it would certainly have nothing to do with Culture City 1990 which has appropriated the cultural growth taking place, with a view to controlling, marketing and sanitising it; trying without success to take under its wing the voices of rebel writers and poets like Jim Kelman and others. We've even recently had people like Maurice Lindsay suggesting that perhaps we can heal the class wounds, bridge Glasgow's great class divide by this process. It fair makes ye puke.

Perhaps what we are involved in here is an alternative and a more deep-going vision of what culture is about; and we should be discussing and determining our understanding of that and its manifestations both individually and collectively, and how we want them to grow. I started with a quotation from a key male figure in Scottish and international history, John MacLean, and I want to end with an extract from the *Journals of Anaïs Nin*. She says that we write to heighten our awareness of life and:

We write to taste life twice, in the moment, and in retrospection. We write, like Proust, to render all of it eternal, and to persuade ourselves that it is eternal. We write to be able to transcend our life, to reach beyond it. We write to teach ourselves to speak with others ... We write as the birds sing ... It should be a necessity, as the sea needs to heave. I call it breathing.



DIARY OF EVENTS

1989

November:

Inaugural meeting

December:

An introduction to Kenneth White by Tony McManus

1990

January:

(i) Workshop at the Self-Determination and Power conference in Govan

(ii) Dialectics of Nature by Norman Bissell

February:

What is Open World Poetics? collective discussion

March:

The Geological Context by Dougie Macinnes

April:

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

May:

(i) Saving The Environment: Red v Green by Joe Eyre and Tony Clayton

(ii) Aspects of Taoist philosophy by Jim Griffin

June:

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

August:

Kenneth White on Geopoetics: video excerpts viewed and discussed.

October:

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

November:

Patrick Geddes and The Unity of Knowledge by Murdo MacDonald.

December:

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

1991

February:

Gary Snyder: an introduction to his work by John Hart

March:

A Poetics of Experience: by Miller Mair

April:

(i) Reading by Edwin Morgan along with a discussion of his work.

(ii) Mapping and regional understanding: by Kevin Anderson

May:

(i) Group visit to Kilmartin, Argyll

(ii) Poetry readings and discussion at the Transmission Gallery

June:

(i) Reading by Kenneth White and discussion of his work.

(ii) Open World Poetics at the Scotia: Poetry Readings and Blues music.

Future Events

August - Launch of Open World

Saturday 14 September - Visit to Dollar Gorge

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

Tuesday 8 October - Taoism and Creative Work: Jim Griffin

Tuesday 29 October - Chinese Poetry: Graham Hartill

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

Tuesday 26 November - Ethnopoetics: Gerry Loose

Tuesday 10 December - Desert Island Poems: collective

Other events planned for the coming year include:

- the return of Tony Clayton and Joe Eyre for Red v Green II
- Mental Mapping II with Kevin Anderson
- Open World Poetics at the Scotia
- Awayday to Inverchaolain

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

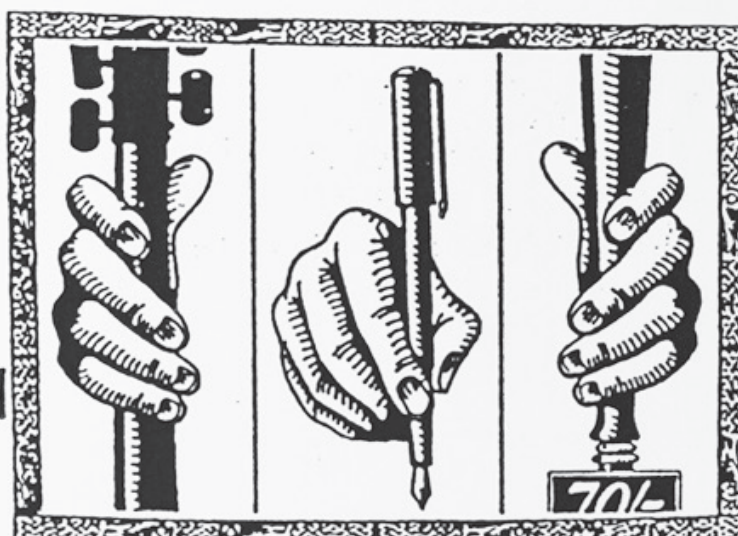
Note: some of the above speakers and topics are provisional. To confirm details contact any of those named on the inside front cover.

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