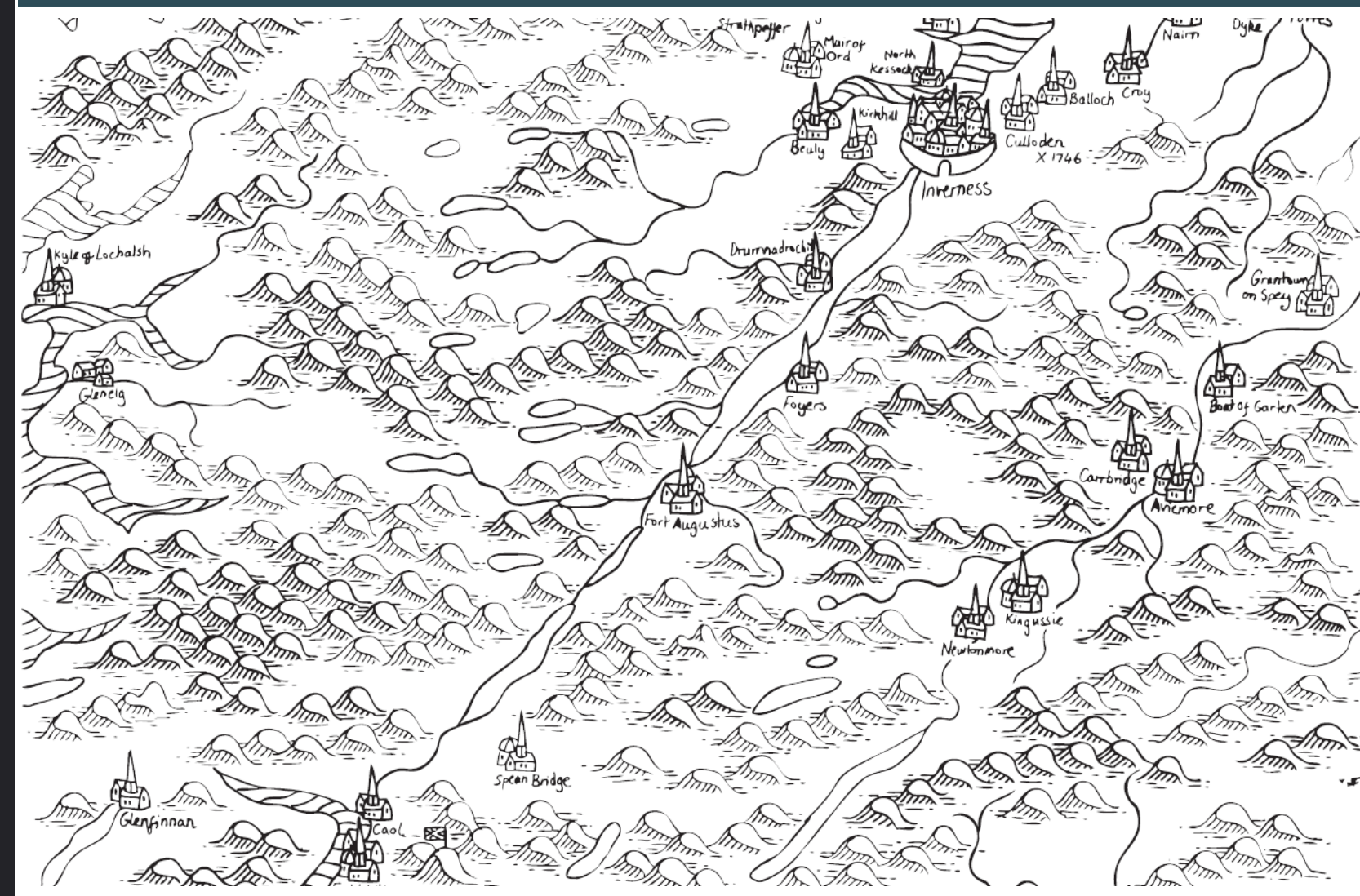


# Eemis Stane



ISSUE 1, 2022

# EEMIS STANE

ISSUE 1, 2022

## Wha We Are

### Editors

Sara Clark  
Thomas Clark  
Ashley Douglas  
Eilidh Douglas  
Matthew Fitt  
Paul Malgrati

### Cover Image

Andrew Redmond Barr

*P3. Editorial – Ashley Douglas*

P5. Whimbrel – Kathleen Jamie

P6. Pine Wid – Kathleen Jamie

P7. Gray Feather – Kathleen Jamie

P7. Twa Scots Haiku – Laura Law

P8. The Mindin – Ricky Monahan Brown

P10. Twa Pheasants – Alan McClure

P10. Syne – Jack Capener

P11. Ane Dialog betwix King James VI  
ae Scotland and his courtiour Sir Seumas  
MacDonald at Haltoun Hoose, 1597 –  
Ross Crawford

P13. Puir Finch – Douglas Mackenzie

P14. Dance o da Selkies – Hannah  
Nicholson

P15. Three Poems – Colin Bramwell

P17. The Laverock's Nest – William  
Hershaw

P19. Ghaist Yairn – Faith Liddell

P21. Fields o Stanes – Hamish Scott

P22. Lees an Crams, or Ossian on the  
Death of Cuchullin – Steve Dornan

P23. Vratched – F.E. Clark

*P24. Post-credits scene – Thomas  
Clark*



Scots is the speech ae the gutter. Scots is a leid o the laun. Scots is a leid o leeteratur and law, makars and monarchs and aw thon. Scots is a leid ae the playgrun and hame, ae bairnies and grannies anaw. Scots is a leid ae oor cities and toons, hoatchin wi fowks and thair ilka-day patter. Scots is the leid o the ferm and the isle, o launscape and nature and feelin.

Scots is aw ae this and nane ae this and faur mair forby. It's thirlt tae the mooths ae the maist doonhaunder in society nae mair nor it's thirlt tae the pens o michtie monarchs o centuries syne. It is nae mair the leid ae the warkin clesses and comedians nor it is the leid o queens and courtiers. It belongs naither tae guid fowk nor bad fowk, puir fowk nor rich fowk, nor oniebody in atween.

Truth be telt, pals, there's naethin special about Scots at aw. Thon micht seem an orra hing tae scribe in an editorial launchin a new magazine literally aw about scribe in it - but really, there's no. Like aw ither leids, at its maist basic,

“

There's naethin unjoukably guid or bad, gleg or glaikit, about Scots - or about thaim whae speik or hae spak it.

”

Scots is nae mair nor a mixer-maxter o soonds and wirds, phonemes and morphemes, that hae meanin tae the fowk that unnerstaun thaim.

This hantle o soonds and wirds can be, hus been, and wull be yaised fur guid and fur ill, fur doitit daftness and fur thochtie mensefuness - and fur awhin in atween.

Scots is, fundamentally, as suitit tae scribe in yer shoppin list (breid, tatties, aipples) as it is tae scribe in statutes o state (“It is statute ande ordanit that gif ony of the kingis liegis haf ony doute of his life” - fae the stert o the Lawburrows Act o the year 1429).

There's naethin unjoukably guid or bad, gleg or glaikit, about Scots - or about thaim whae speik or hae spak it. Ah strangly encourage ye tae get onie sic norrie oot yer heid noo.

Whit's mair, Scots can be yaised fur tae uphaud and it can be yaised fur tae ding doon - by the doonhauden and the doonhauder baith.

Noo, there's nae doot that Scots the day can be seen and yaised as a leid o smeddum, subversion, and conformity-joukin gallusness. As the soond o defiance agin nairrae-nebbit, wan-leidit, class-drookit snobbery and the smoorin doonhauds o the English-leid-dominatit state. Hooivver, there's naethin inbidin, ayebidin, or unjoukable aboot thon - thon's jist the wey the historical bannock's crummelt. Bibles were prentit in English and Elizabeth I didnae hae a bairn.

But Scots hus been - is aye jist as capable o bein - a leid o state and high-heid-yins. And Ah dinnae mean jist in the sense o a leid fur tae scribe doon formal documents or in which tae haud forrit wi official business. Naw, Ah mean fur tae breenge forrit wi ane o the warst exemples o state-sanctionit doonhaudin and depravity kent tae humankind.

Durin the saxteenth century, the Scots leid wis central tae ane o the maist scunnersome episodes in the hale o oor history. Jist speir at King James VI and the wimmen - no "witches" - torturit syne murderit at the hauns o Scots-speikin men on the orders o the Scots-speikin king o a Scots-leid state.

It micht gar us feel ill at ease tae maun accept that some o the skeeliest Scots makars were awfie chiels, but they were. James VI wis a stoatin Scots-speikin and scribein monarch and is crucial tae Scots leid history, aye. But he wis responsible, forby, fur monstrous state-uphaudit crimes o indescrievable violence agin wimmen. Baith hings are true. Baith maun be taen tent o. Coorse, he wis nae freen tae the Gaelic either - as ye'll read aboot in a winnerfu bit o historical Scots scribein in this issue.

But Scots is faur mair nor jist James VI. And it's faur mair nor jist Rabbie Burns, or Hugh MacDiarmid, or onie o the lave o thon rogues' gaillery o the male great and guid o Scots scribein - thon scrowe o scunners, ilka in thair ain wey, whae've yaised the leid tae pit thocht tae paper.

Forby, Scots is mair nor jist men - guid or bad.

In the saxteenth century, at the ae time that Scots wis the leid o the laithsome "witch" trials, it wis the leid in whilk a Scots wumman cried Marie Maitland scribevit a ferlie and pooerfu poem aboot her luve fur anither wumman. A poem, in Scots, that stauns as ane o the earliest expressions o lesbian luve in oor history - no jist Scotland's history, but warld history - syne Sappho hersel wis scribein twa thoosan year syne.

This, reader, is gallus Scots leid history tae be prood o and richt oot celebrate. But Scots is aye nae mair Maitland nor it is MacDiarmid. It's baith o thaim and nane o thaim and faur mair nor thaim forby.

We can tryst wi this roch and rich reality woot ower-critically dingin doon, or ower-uncritically heizin up and romanticisin, the hale leid and aw thaim whae speik it or hae spak it, scribe it or hae scribevit it. Mair nor thon: we maun dae sae. The principles o honesty and humanity demand thon o us.

This is the darg that we at Eemis Stane hae set oorsels. We can chorey oor title fae a MacDiarmid poem acause we like the ferlie Scots phrase while wan hunner percent reservin the richt tae criticise the chiel whaur necessar - and be in nae doot it's necessar.

We like hoo Eemis Stane represents the global and the specific aw at wance: the "stane" - the warld - alang wi the "eemis" - the slicht, shooglie aff-step fae it that is Scots; at least in oor Scotland o the early 21st century.

Eemis Stane wis stertit at the hinner end o 2021 fur wan reason, and fur wan reason alane: fur tae bring thegither unner the yin banner the best o whit's happenin in oor bonnie broukit bairn o Scots the day. We aw hud the feelin that there wis guid stuff - winnerfu stuff - gaun on in Scots, but wi nae mensefu place tae gang. As ye're aboot tae see - oor gut feelin wis spot on.

Oor maist muckle thanks tae awbodie whae taen the time tae scribe Scots that maitters, forby fur entrustin us wi it.

Oor hertfelt congratulations tae thaim that makkit the first issue. We howp ye're as prood o it as we are.

Tae thaim that didnae, haud forrit and keep scribein. Tae thaim mindit tae submit tae a future issue - dae it.

Gin ye're scribein Scots that maitters tae yersel, it maitters tae us.

Sae the years gang bi and we maun accept the yetts we nicht hae taen are aw steekit nou. Folk that aye fancied the stravaigin life, the pilgrim's wey, folk that hankert tae be like Maister Basho hissel, wi his winblawn speerit an his gangin fuit, weel, mibbe we are daein jist that, takkin the road e'en as we bide at hame. If the journey is the hame, the hame is the journey. Weemin – as wir neebour said the day - haudin it aw thegither. Until, mibbe the day will daw when we'll can rax for thon satchel, the ane we've aye kept hingin on an auld peg, and be awa...

*I will big masel a bower -  
'far ben in a nameless glen'  
I will lay me doon.*

Sic wer ma thochts, heid-doon kinnae thochts, daunerin alang the shore wi an oor tae masel. The pattren is for fine high early morns, giein ower tae wind an cauld rain in the late forenoon. Yestreen a navy ship was ridin at anchor oot on the Firth, wi heicopters thrangin it aw day. Burnin fuel, burning thro their conceit of thirsels. Thir radios must hae been yelpin and squaichin, an aw tae keep us siccer, or so we're telt. But then...

*whimbrel! twelve or thirteen,  
lettin fa their stipplin cry,  
nane luik back*

Heid doon nae mair, I watched them chaynge airts the meenite they were in aff the sea, sweeing nor-wastawa ower the Angus farms like they kent whaur they were bound, aw thegither, nane left tae trauchle alane -

*haudin it thegither  
the migratin flock  
abune the war-gemmes*

# Pine Wid

Kathleen Jamie

Wi their brainches  
the hie pines  
caw the wind throu

lik a ambulance  
taewart the awfy,  
the terrible scene

...and they sauch..

Tae yin anither they mutter *Aye*  
*the aix will come*  
*ae day, aye, an ca ye down*

*if no the aix the storm...*

Amang their living,  
straicht and thrawn  
their grey deid staun

*come widpeckers, they whisper*  
*come peck an pock*

# Grey Feather

Kathleen Jamie

Grey feather,  
cast frae an antrin burd  
  
tummelt alang the foreshore  
whaur self meets warld  
  
yer keeper's up an left ye -  
whaur? ye plead, flown whaur?  
  
hieven-wairds ye birl  
- naebdy there -  
  
ye chase abune the braeside  
- nane o your kin -  
  
nocht but the derk waves  
risin, risin,  
  
the tuim land  
an the wind.

# Twa Scots Haiku

Laura Law

## Winter

Winter comes the morn  
An the awfy cranreuch cauld  
Wi the mirkest nichts.

## Simmer

When the simmer comes  
Aw fir yin or twa days a year  
Jaickets an taps aff.

# The Mindin

Ricky Monahan Brown



The braw hing aboot the plague wis that, as the bodies piled up like a muckle great cairn o humanitie an were cairted aff, the crush in the auld toun wis relievit a wee bit. He cuidna mind iver haein stuid oan the flair, niver mind haein seen it. Then, ane day, as he pit a fit down, it kept gaun till he naur lost his balance afore it cam tae rest. The alien sensation o the packit mud flair unnerfit instead o anither fit or an ankle or a leg or a bodie or a heid wis fair mismakin. As

the days passit an mair room opennt up, it felt lik the earth wis swellin an fallin aneath his feet as he began tae adjust tae this newfangelt warld.

Efter even mair bodies were taen awa, he tried tae wauk twa-three unsiccar steps athout the support o the bodies that haed been haudin him up, but whan he reacht for a bodie tae gie him the resistance he wis efter, he fell tae to the grun whaur, treden intae the clairt, he seen a lang, shirpit sheet o clairtie paper.

If he cuida mindit seein trees or sky, he nicht hae describit the map screivit oan the paper as leukin lik a peelie-wallie tree strainin awards the sunlight. Nae dout, the panels o the map grew mair licht as they stretcht awa fae him, suggestin that the mair a body traivelt along it, the mair bearable it wuid become, till the map fetchit wi a brutal ryve. As he fingert the raggit tear, the map exertit a pouer ower him that wis aa the mair strang fir its story remainin untellt, a pouer that coarsed throu him lik a througate, persuadin the mair able-bodied fouk amang thaim tae form a human pyramid that cairried him tae the door that wis richt hyne awa, richt heich up, in the camceil.

As he fixit the map in the belt roond aboot his tunic and heavit himsel throu the door, he made a promise tae thaim he wis leavin ahint that he wuid return whaun he cuid.

‘Shut thae bluidy doors!’

He teuk ane last deek at the heavin mass o bodies ootby — or wis it ablow? — afore slammin the doors shut oer an oer on the hauns reachin oot tae be poud in till thae finally recoil. The cook, cursin the keetchen maid fur not haein securit the portal richt, jammit a besom throu the door haunnles, aa rochle-lik.

‘Aboot bluidy time! We’ve been waitin for ye — Nou, pit these oan an get tae wark!’

The room wis smaller than the pit, yet een as a richt clamjafrie o hafolk ran in an oot, it felt richt grand. The cook putt a muckle, razor-shairp gullie intae his haun.

‘Ye ken whit tae dae, aye? A mean, you aa the mair so, comin here fae the reiverlands.’

He had a richt guid vizzie at the six chookies oan the table afore him and set tae wark, flipping the first bird heelstergowdie an weeglin a weeng tae fin whaur the jynt attachit tae the breest afore snibbin throu the joint, then spinnin the bird aroun an repeatin the action oan the ither side.

Oan an oan it went, the pouin an bouin an yankin oan limbs, cuttin throu skin an fat an jynts and rib cages, reserrin giblets an rigbanes an necks, usin his hale wecht tae cut throu breist banes an cartilage an flesh wi ease, aa the while takin tent tae the staff an the room.

‘Why are the windaes bricket-up?’ he whispert tae the keetchen maid, an the child — ten years auld, wis she? Elieven? — leukit at him wi undisguisit contempt.

‘The windae tax, is it no? George paintit the fields oan the inside tae gie us something tae leuk at.’

He wonnert whit the fouk ootby had paintit oan thair side o the bricket-up windaes an whither it wis a pictur o the scene inby — Did the fouk they thocht o inside the waas leuk blythe an canty? Were they paintin the insides o the bricket-up windaes? — till the



butler burst in tae interrupt his dwam, interrogatin the staff about the unsatisfactorie progress o the denner.

Whan the keetchen maid startit greetin, he stoppit scrapin the flesh fae a chookie's breestbane an insteid pit the tip o the knife blade tae the butler's Adam's aiple. Amaist afore he kennt whit wis happenin, he had taen oaf his apron and hat, pit the knife intae his belt neist tae the map, an wis lampin awa throu the dinin room door.

He enjoys the soond o his fitsteps in the cool spring air as they echo agin the tenements till aa the hames an the biggins fade awa. The toun aye cried itsel tae be oan sieven hills, thou tae be honest it wis biggit on mair braes than a bodie cuid coont and unner mair bridges than that, an different panderers wad chuse their ain sieven hills to satisfy the conceit an tae be honest, whan he stauns oan his ain favourite, it is jist ane wee knurl oan the rigbane o the beast that is the toun.

As he leuks doun ower an athort the craitur, the glow o hunners o thoosans o sauls taukin, scrauchin, tittlin, murmlin, maks its claim oan him, an he begins tae navigate towards it usin

the map, correctin his path by keepin turnin tae the licht, faain in a spiral till he comes tae a stap in the mids o the toun at the bruital ryve. He is staunin in an ancient hiegate whaur a wumman in claes fae aulden days jams a runkelt piece o paiper intae his haun.

"Myths and legends, the deadly plague epidemic, and a famous royal visitor – there's a myriad of tales just waiting to be told on our one hour guided tour!"

Her peg teeth an stinkin-gin braith an the syphilitic sores oan her legs are sae convincin, he lets himsel be guyed throu the door an jynes the back o a tour in progress.

"– in myths and mysteries, this Close and its warren of streets, homes, and passageways offers a truly unique five-star visitor experience. Unlock the secrets of the capital's only truly original street, partially demolished and buried under the present-day city, wander through a labyrinth of the old alleyways, discover the stories of the people who–"

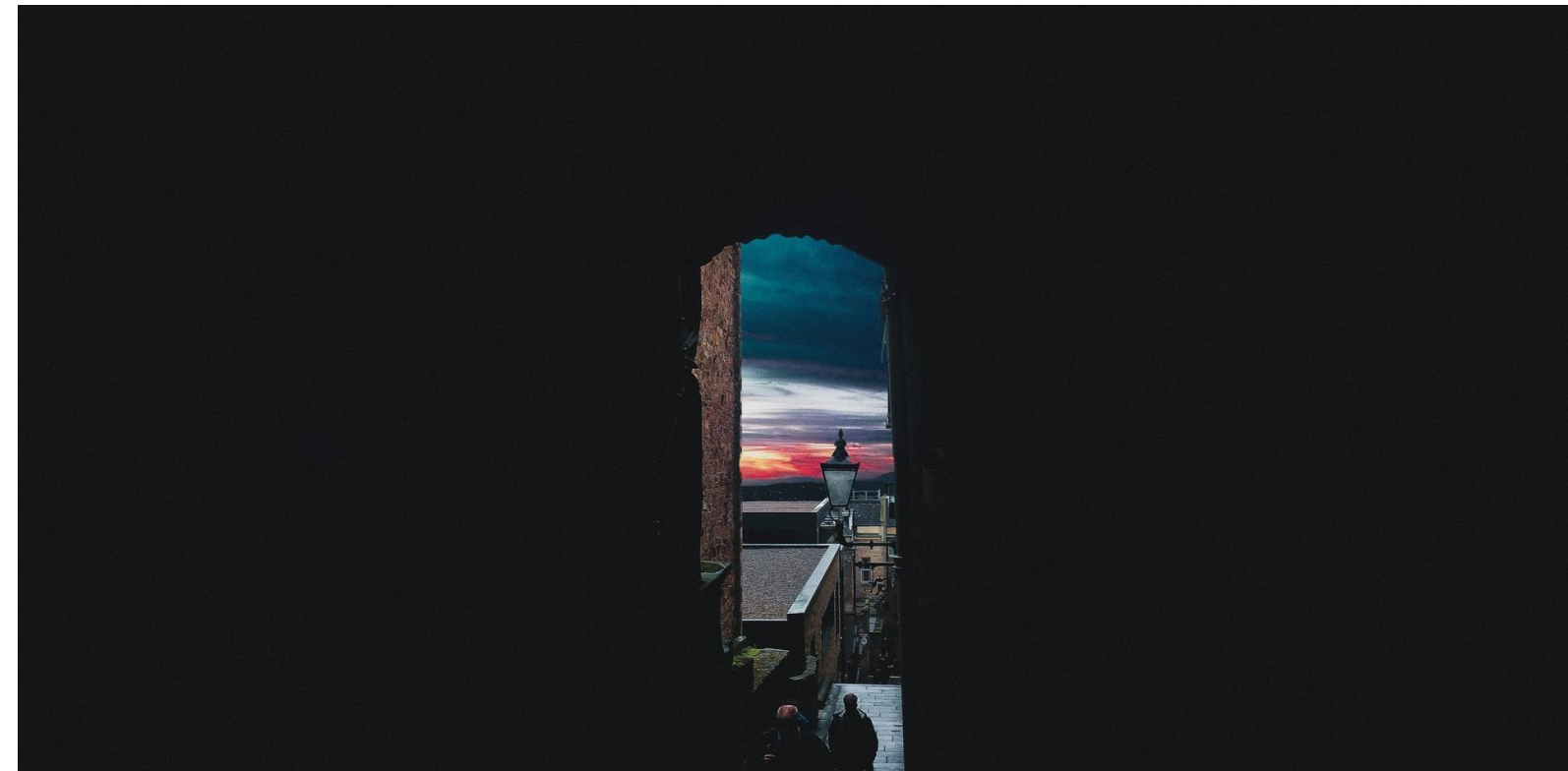
The scene makes him unsiccar again, sae he jinks awa unner the cover o the hauf-licht ahint a series o widden supports an doun a stair that leads intae a delf-lik chaumer. He stotters in the daurk an tries tae find his footin,

but aa that is unnerfit is anither fit or an ankle or a leg or a bodie or a heid. He fummles for the map, but a shaddie with shairp teeth reives it fae him an scrauchles awa. Smit by a stark sense o *déjà vécu*, he draps tae the flair and scraibles aroun for the map that shuid be there waitin for him, but the deid bodies hinnae-been–arenae-bein cairted aff. Athout ony pouer tae connect tae ony o the few fouk still leevin, he begins the lanesome wark o pilin deid bodies oan deid bodies oan mair deid bodies agin the waa. Whan some o the livin try tae climb his great cairn o daith, he still has his muckle, razor-shairp gullie and he jist adds thaim tae the haip.

At ane mair, the haip reaches the door richt

hyne awa, richt heich up, in the camceil. A wizened auld besom jammit throu the door haunnles disnae offer ony resistance tae his desperate, adrenaline-fueled rage, an the door swings inward tae reveal a concrete slab merkit wi the bluid an claw marks o hunners o years. A raggit sign in a forgotten leid reads *KEEP OUT–GOVERNMENT PROPERTY–DANGER–HAZARDOUS AREA*.

Nou his een hiv adjustit tae the daurk, he surveys the devastation aneath him fur a mament afore beatin oan the concrete till his knuckles bleed.



## Twa Pheasants

Alan McClure

As ah walked oot aroun the watter  
a great stramash assailed ma een  
Twa pheasants focht, wi clash an clatter  
sae eydent ah could pass unseen  
They flapped an scraiched an strutted crouselly  
waggled wottles, lowped an crowed  
Forgot the warld ayont their stooshie  
tae claim this wan wee scrap o road  
Ah hud tae step aside tae pass them  
sae little heed they paid tae me  
Tae me, or ocht that nicht distract them  
fae this wan vital victory  
The feathers flew, the battle breengin  
their hens were fleggit by the fray  
Till ae cock triumphed, puffed an preenin.  
(The baith were shot by close o day.)

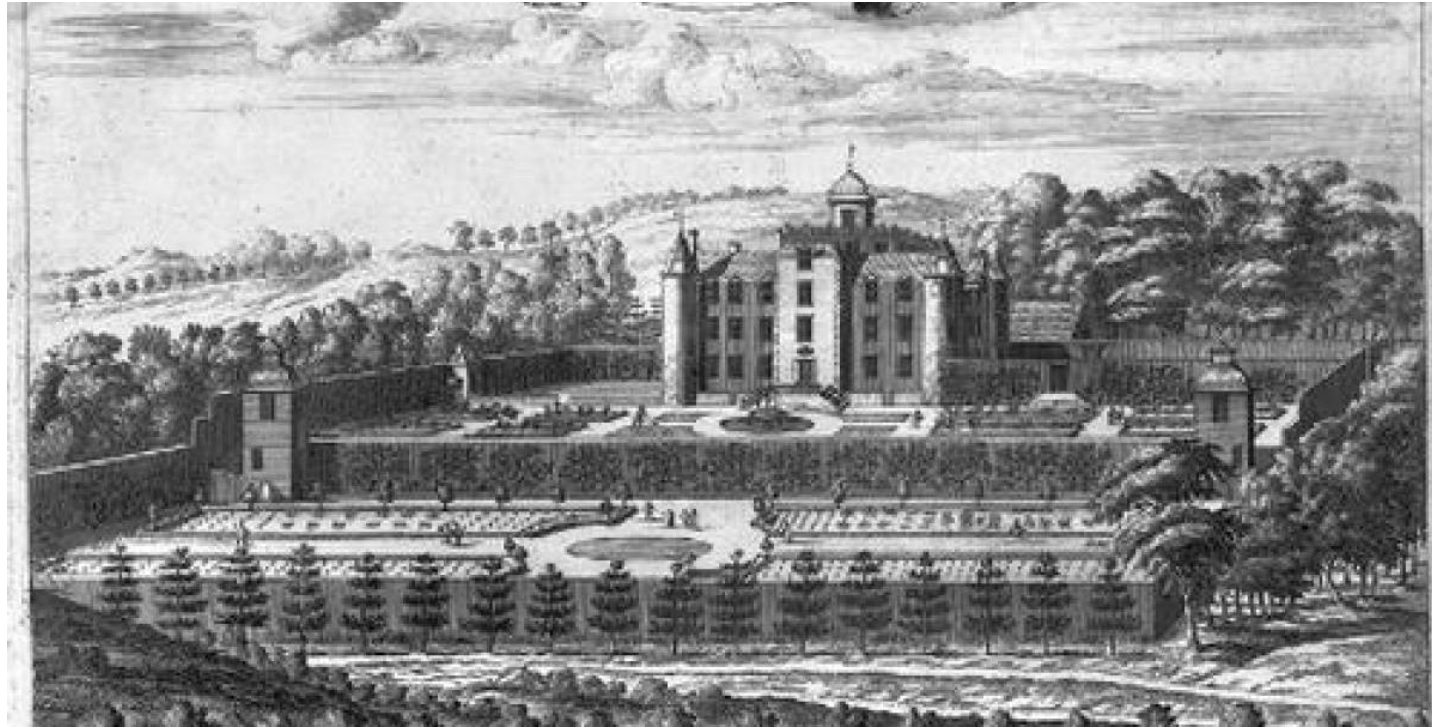
## Syne

Jack Capener

As a smooed ingle's heat remains,  
Dissipatin ghaist ae lang-gane flames,  
The nicht claims scraps ae daylight as its ain  
An cries it 'gloamin'.  
  
Whiles, a hunner hoodies hoach, convene,  
Ilkae beak's *clack* lit a fawin stane  
Bit the hail the cascadin ae scree, aw tae ane:  
Graivel scartin the mirk.  
  
An as een lose their fecht agin deen licht,  
Day's dowie dawin comes bricht intae sicht  
An aw days atween lose their braidth, depth, an hecht:  
Fauld intae nocht.  
  
Whae kens  
whither it's mornin  
or eenin  
onyweys?

# Ane Dialog betwix King James VI ae Scotland and his courtiour Sir Seumas MacDonald at Haltoun Hoose, 1597

Ross Crawford



King James: I see oor Hieland freend has decidit tae jyne us! No afore tyme!

Sir Seumas: Apologies, my King.

King James: It maitters not. We wur jist bletherin aboot yer tongue, namelie that quhilk ye spak. Why dae ye Hielanders persist wae yer Erse? Huv ye not the sense tae set it asyde and uptak wae Scots instead? It gey vexes me. Scots is plaine, honest, comelie, and cleane.

Sir Seumas: I have nae doot it is! As much as ony ither leid, I'm shair. I converse craftilie enough in Scots, I wid daur. Indeed, I am lernit in sudron as weel, oan accoont ae my guid educatioun. I dinnae see the hairm in kepand sauf the leid ae my hamelan, my King. It gies me pleasour tae spak the wiy I wish, the wiy I wis upbrocht.

King James: But whit dae ye huv tae say in Erse that ye cannae say in Scots? It's yin ae the problems wae yer people. My trustiest servands spak in wiys I comprehend. Ainlie those quho seek tae hide plots full ae unpardonnable crymes spak in sic rusticall and corrupt aliene tongues!

Sir Seumas: Gàidhlig isnae aliene, my King. It is yin ae the leids ae the realm, same as Scots.

King James: Ay, but it isnae weel kent in these pairts.

Sir Seumas: It wis yince.

King James: No onymair. Nevermar. It is relegatit tae yer distante incivile landis.

Sir Seumas: That might be, but some wid say that the king shid ken aw the leids ae his realm, fae his maist distante landis tae his palace yettis. Ainlie then will he govern fair and weel.

King James: Ah, I admit ye are bauld! But this is a fulische thocht. Knowledge ae Erse isnae needit tae rule. I mak the commandis and the people follae, or they will be danted.

Sir Seumas: And yett, my kin remembir yer greit-grandfaither spak Gàidhlig. Did he not rule fair and weel? Fowk caw his reign a Gowden Age, dae they no?

King James: They dae, but he wisnae perfyte. Ye widnae see me gangin ower the bordour at the heid ae an airmy! If myne awin dearest grandfaither got that wrang, whit else wis he wrang aboot?

Sir Seumas: That's no fur the likes ae me tae judge, but I can say he wis weel respectit by my people. Noo, we didnae luv him – he still cam up wae airmed men tae enforce oor allegiance – but he did spak tae the chiefs wae familiar wirds, in wiys they could unnerstaun. And accepte. He wis lik the heich-chief.

King James: Chief? King, ye shuirly mean!

Sir Seumas: Ay, that. But mair anaw. His pouer wisnae aw in his cannons.

King James: Sae, yer proponin I shid tak up wae my auld tutor, Buchanan, lang deid? Studie by candill licht ilka nicht? If I did, wid that calm yer unrulie faither? Whit about aw the ither caterans and brokin men in yer landis? Wid they aw sit peacefullie in thur castellis and pay thur rents oan tyme if they jist heard me blow some Erse betwix my cheeks?

Sir Seumas: Perhappes not.

King James: As I thocht. The mair we spak, the mair I am persuadit that the Hielandman's persistence wae Erse is nocht but joukerie! It is tyme fur ane new mandate: aw the people, fae ilka ranke and honorre, shid yaise the leid ae thur king. It is ainlie richt. The king's leid is the heich-leid, he is the shepherd. His subjectis, fae aw airts and pairts, shid follae his lead, and his leid.

Sir Seumas: As is yer will, my King. Ye ken whit is best. But ye maun tell me, whit will happin quhen ye heid doon tae tak up the throne ae the sudrons?

King James: Guid Queen Bess isnae deid yett. Haud yer horsis!

Sir Seumas: Permit us tae imagine fur ane moment. Doon ye gang tae London, becomin King ae England forby Scotland – whit will ye huv fowk spak tae ye then? And whit shid fowk spak in thur awin rowmes?

King James: Maist will shuirly spak Englische, but that's tae be expectit. I cannae verie weel ask the Earl ae Gloucester tae spak Scots, can I?

Sir Seumas: Why no? Ye wid be thur King, divineliie appointit.

King James: Weel, that's true. But thur's mair ae thum quho spak Englische than us quhom spak Scots. We cannae ask the lesser tae tak ower the greiter.

Sir Seumas: Sae, will ye abandone Scots yersel quhen ye become King ae England?

King James: Certainlie not! I'm ane Scottish-man! I'll spak Scots til I dee, quhether the Englische can thole it or no.

Sir Seumas: And lykwyes, my King, I will spak Gàidhlig, quhen the occasioun suites.

King James: Ah hah! Dear Seumas, this is why I kepe ye in myne companie. Yer mynd is schairp indeed fur ane Hielandman. If ainlie aw yer countriemen hud yer civilitie. But ye huv forgotten yin hing in yer prettie argument.

Sir Seumas: Whit's that?

King James: I am the King.



# Puir Finch

Douglas Mackenzie

Puir finch yer time wi us wis brief  
Tis true that death's a random thief  
That like a bud new heezed in leaf  
Ye were pu'd early.  
That ye sae sune were brought tae grief  
Sair maks me ferlie.

A breath ago a jaunty burst o colour  
Is noo an ash o beak and feather  
And though we are baith foe and brither  
Twas necessary,  
For some are born tae flee the ither  
And some tae harry.

It's no for me anthropomorphic preacher  
Tae mourn the passin o a fellow creature  
And frae my windae bay beseech her  
Tae spare her prey.  
Could she address this moral teacher,  
What wad she say?

“Ye frae your windae stand and gawk,  
And censure me the hungry hawk,  
Yer weel swelled kyte a meenit's walk  
Frae larder fu,  
While I for hours the burdies stalk  
Tae fill ma mou.

“Sic sleekit cant frae human beast,  
Hypocrisy tae say the least,  
Wha staws his kyte in daily feast  
O tup and kye.  
While I wi hunger pangs increased  
Must vainly fly.

“I watch ye frae the starry lift,  
And frae that hicht yer no great gift.  
Could I great nature's riddle sift,  
You'd be the chaff.  
This humble hawk is better dicht  
Though ye may gaff.

# Dance o da Selkies

Hannah Nicholson

“So cease yer claivers chancy man  
And stick tae things ye understan.  
Think o your true state if ye can  
That it might free ye.  
For aw yer hairst o muckle scran  
Ah wouldna be ye.

We rise up fae da watter,  
Slippin aff wir skeens as we go  
An makkin wir wye tae da shore.  
Da sun is oot as we geng tae da rock,  
An it warms da saand an’under wir feet  
As we laeve da pile o silvery skeens  
Apö da stone, an da men  
Lift da fiddles oot fae ahint it.  
We aa gadder tagidder idda middle o da sands  
In a circle, an da fiddles start tae play.  
Wi dat, we dance da wye at wir ay don,  
Gaffin an birlin, an keepin up.  
Hit taks nae time fir wis tae get wint  
Wi walkin’ on wir human feet  
Eftir sae lang an’under da watter,  
Swimmin aa’wye wi da flippers  
At we were born wi –  
Somethin at wir don fae we  
Were juist peerie bairns.

The lives that live inwith us canna be coontit

Colin Bramwell (*Eftir Ricardo Reis*)

Eftir a time, wir peerie group  
Is lost in da fiddle music,  
An it's only when we hear a shout  
At we look up, an we see  
A human, comin doon da hill  
Toward da beach. We stop immediately  
An run tae feetch wir skeens,  
We hurry back intae dem  
As we run fir da shoormal,  
An eence dir on we dive back in  
An tak wir true shape ageen  
As wir submerged an'under da watter.

The lives that live inwith us canna be coontit;  
When thinkin an feelin, I dinna ken  
Wha's haein the thochts an feelins.  
I ken I'm jist a place whaur thochts  
Are thocht o, feelins felt.

I huv mair sauls than wan,  
An I conteen mair selves an aa.  
Aye an on, I exist,  
Indifferent tae that lot.  
I haud thair wheesht. I speak.

The owerlappin impulses  
O whit I do or dinna feel  
Fecht ower whit I am,  
But dictate nocht.  
I'm deif tae them:  
I anely iver scribe the wans I ken.

## I'd like tae like tae like it aa

Colin Bramwell (*Eftir Álvaro de Campos*)

I'd like tae like tae like it aa, but.

Haud up... Gonnae pass us a fag?

They're oan the bedside table.

Cheers man. Noo, proceed... Ye said

That in the forritgaein o philosophy

Somethin wiss tint

Tweesh Kant an Hegel.

I cud tryst wi that. Aye.

Aye. I'm listenin to ye, man.

*Nondum amabam et amara amabam.* That's Saint Augustine.

Mad, eh, whaur the train o thocht'll stap.

Am jaupit frae the notion that I *cud* feel mair than this.

Licht? Cheers, mate. Noo, on ye go. Hegel...

## Jist appenin the winnock's no eneuch

Colin Bramwell (*Eftir Alberto Caeiro*)

Jist appenin the winnock's no eneuch

Tae really see the fields an the river—

And yir inlack o blinness isna sufficient

Tae huv seen the trees an flooers an aa.

Ye maun hae no philosophy forby.

Wi philosophy, thair's no trees, jist ideas.

Thair's the ilk o us, a cove.

Thair's anely wan winnock, and it's shut, and awthing ootwith;

Includin the dwam that ye'd see if yir winnock appened,

Which isnae whit ye see when the winnock appens.



# The Laverock's Nest

William Hershaw



Ane secont he was running fou tilt through the cornfield- breinging, stecheran, lowpan, gespan for gulps o braith, neir cawin his ain feet fae himsel in his haste, wi his airms sair and thrabbin fae haudin the lourdsome rifle abuin the fanklin corn. Syne, in a glisk, he was tummelin faurrit, heelster gowdie, doun ablaw the swaws o thon gowden sea, heid first intil the stourie yirth. He liggit thonder for a meinue, ettlin tae tak it in. Whit chyngie had juist ettled? There was a bizzen soun somewhaur in the back o

his heid, like a trapped wappie, yet he could feel naethin. Sweit seemed tae be trauchlin oot his lug and doun his neck. The reek o the weet airth skailt up his neb. He felt forfochten yet lown and somehou lightsome. Aheid, he could aye hear the thump and clump o explosions and the rattlin o gunfire and the shouts and the scraighs o men. The retching o the machine guns was like maggies and pyots fechtan ower fousty breid. But the yammer seemed mair mufflelt doun amang the corn, hynin faurthier awaa efter ilka rummlin

reboun.

He had trippit up ower his ain feet, that was aa! Like a daft bairn in his excitement tae be rinnan roun efter being lowsed intil the schuilyaird. He wad juist courie in here for a wee afore getting back tae his feet and re-jyning his feirs.

He wantit tae sleep. The nicht afore in the trenches had been wanrestfou. Govin up in wonder at the slawly birlan starwheel. Bidin on the daw tae brek, jalousan whit it wad bring for him. Ettlin tae shut out a muckle regiment o hirselin unwanted thochts - thochts o hame and faimily maistly.

He dovert ower for juist a wee bittie.

When he cam tae the fore again it was gloamin and aa was still. Fae the edge o the field whaur the wuids began he heard a craw cawin as it fleppit hamewirth. Whit was this? Hou could he hae slept through a battle? His pals wad hae braw fun at his expense wi thon story... he wad heeze hisel up in a meinue or sae and heid back. But whit wad the Sergeant say tae him? Shuirly he wadnae be puit on a chairge for desertion? Yet aa that had happened was that he had tummelt ower his ain clumsy buits and faain asleep. It wasnae his faut ataa. It had aye been his mintin tae rax tae the front line and tak on the enemy, haund tae haund. He'd get up by the by...

He had faain asleep aince mair. It was nicht-time nou. Fae the wuids he heard a

saft hoot - a houlet - hunting efter mice, nae dout. It mindit him o simmer nichts at hame wi the aipen winnock wammlin a gentle flauchter o the curtain and the blate muin keekin ahint it. Eneuch draimin! He couldnae lig here onie langer like a lazy sumph. He was in awfou trouble as it was. He'd hae tae gae back and face the music.

When the young sodger ettled tae rise it was anely then that he unnerstuid and saw aathing as it was. Sklentan and cleir. Forby, he saw as weill, in an instant aathin that wadnae ever ettle nou. The stoun and grue that gaed ben him was no ane o sel-peity for the mishanter that had befaaed him but for the fee that he thocht he had won that had no been taen up. For he kent nou o aathin that nicht hae birlt in the mervellous dance amang the antrin licht. He had been rehearsing the steps o this for aa his life - yet nou it had turned out that he wasnae needit. Nae invitation tae the pairty. Hou no? And why was it anely nou that the haill jingbang, in aa its glisteran magick, was in plenn sicht tae him? His hert was ruggit by the lowan ferlie o life! Acht, hou he lippent tae lowp intil it.

"Hou no?" he whuspert again and the corn reishelt in the nicht saur ...

...the Fermer tuik guid tent airtin the muckle green combine harvester aroun the rinds o the field tae win hame his hairst. The whirlmagig o the cramson blades cawed up a gowden stour. Suddently, fae oot o its smirr and reek a laverock rose heich intil the air and cowpit its melodious

caa attour the blae luift. A tottie broun thing, but a phoenix buird juist the same.

The fermer was a kind-hertit man and at aince he puit the hems on the ranting engines o the hired machine. It stuid there trummelin in the field, a muckle thirlt dragon, as gif it was straining ilka link o an unsichtit chain in its rage tae brek lowse and swallae the haill field. The coarse mechanical thing could bide whaur it was for nou. The fermer kent the sign and had read it weill. He sclimmed down fae the driver's bink and walked aheid twal yairds intil the yellae sea. He hunkert doun. Shuir eneuch, it was as he had thocht. His gleg een had sichtit and saved a when o sic nests afore and he was ayeweys taen up wi them. This was a walcome blaw tae hae fae the clash o hairstin.

The hecht o new life was aye a hansel tae be celebrated. In this airt o the warld, it was aye the case yet that ferm wark sometimes had tae be haultit aucht tae mair doulsome mindins. The tractor driven plous were aye howkan up roustit ordance even yet, lang buried fae the Great War ower a century afore. The fermers redd them up in smaa piles tae be liftit for disposal by the authorities at the side o

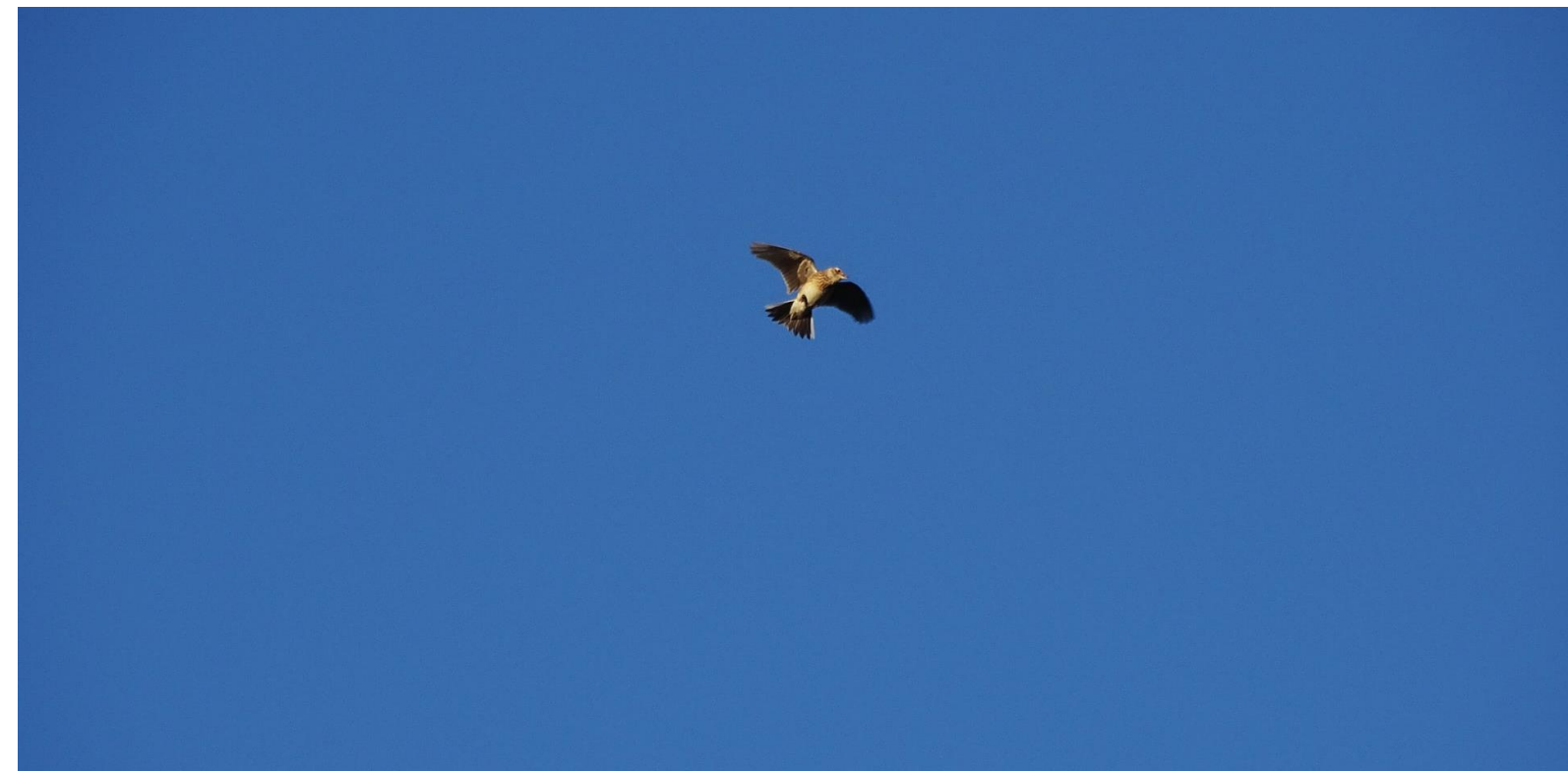
the road along the dyke neuks and sheuchs. Oorisome they luiked, nirlt and bauchelt bits o shells caked in yellae glaur. Maistly they were sauf eneuch - juist deid relics and mindins fae senseless History - but betimes there was a live ane yet that hadnae dischairged its ugsome mintin. And every nou and again ane o them wad blaw up, almaist as if the conter thing had been hauden on tae its spite and hate like a twistit, auld man wha wants tae hae the last word. The fermer wondered hou lang it wad tak till the last ane melled and crined intil the airth - anither hunner, or aiblins a thousan years? Yet whenever ye jaloused that ye'd seen the last o them, mair wad kyth tae the surface. Ugsome weeds. They seemed tae hae a life o their ain, wammlin and tyauvin like mowdiewarps, syne aa o a sudden back again efter echtty, ninety years derved ablau groun, like ugsome taeds sitting crouse in a vegetable patch efter a heavy shouer o rain.

The fermer goved doun and saw a clutch o five smaa eggs, grey-white and green, wi olive and broun spots. Gently, he picked up the nest wi the eggs in it, cuppin it in his haunds. He wad hae tae muive it aside and howp for the best. The rest was up tae the mither buird wha wad be awaa oot

after insects. He was ayeweys taen up wi the nests. Some were nae mair nor a bit scrape in the groun wi a happin o gress roun the edge. Flung thegither in a buird-brained wey and haurdly fit for purpose. Ither anes were biggit wi care and forethocht, wappit wi strae and gress in a tentfoul wey, some even domed wi a wee ruif tae beild the fledglin bairns. The fermer was bumbaised wi the buirds' intelligence and leid. Hou did even the gytest o them ken whit tae dae? Hou had lairned them sic leir?

He had never seen a nest biggit like this ane though. He haudit it up and examined it wi thochtie, wondering een. The sun neir shone through the thin, worn, opaque,

airth-turned base. Nae laverock had faushioned this. Raither the clever mither buird had uised whit was aareddy liggin thonder. The five eggs sat there, snod and sauf as if presented in a bone china tea tassie or a warked horn spuin. But the fermer saw whit the thing's former maitter had been afore it eikit intil the founs o a nest. A blaff fae a bullet had cawed awaa the croun o a puir laddie-sodger's heid. This fragment had aince been pairt o a sentient ingine. Nou it was a creel for life. The Fermer ettled tae jalouse whit thochts and glisks and wuidrims the harns it aince kistit had kythit and lowed a century afore.



*(Fur Pete)*

It wisnae lik a hauntin;  
Less ghaist, mair jist the man.  
Ah kent whit he wiz wantin,  
Bit jist let the bastart staun.

Even in the unnerwarld,  
He couldnae crack a smile.  
Bogshaivelt, wi eez hauns aw gnarled.  
Ah seys, “It’s been a while.”

He rattelt, spat and sputtered,  
Sterred at me oot the murk.  
“Whit dae ye want ya fucker?  
Tae see yer haundywurk?

Ma mither, she’d come often  
Tae chide me fur a sin,  
Bit faither, greetin, cochlin,  
Hoo hid Ah conjured him?

Ma hert wiz fou ae loathin.  
Ma heid, it kirnt wi fury.  
“Ya breenge in boggles clothin  
I am yer judge an jury!”

Fur every beatin, brek an blow  
That runtit ma wee speerit,  
Wee’d me richt doun, brocht me sae low  
Ah thocht Ah couldnae bear it.

Ah taistit fist an fear again,  
Louped up aw boun tae flee.  
Ah smelt eez haird, coal-dustit skin,  
Bit still turnt back tae see

Ah’d nivver kent im sae bereft,  
The sairness in eez scowl,  
Bit Ah’d nae a peck ae pity left  
Fur eez wurdless, wanwirth saul.

Tho' Ah did feel it thru oor flaws-  
Somethin in him, in me.

Ah wiz still risin fae his blaws,  
An ower puffed up tae see.

“Fuck aff back tae Purgatory!  
Tak yer ire oot oan the diel!  
Or find it in ye tae say sorry,  
An Ah'll learn hoo tae feel.”

He pleadit wi eez rheumy een,  
Cocht soft an turnt aroon,  
Syne left me, sudden-sad and mean-  
Tae tend ma open wounds.

Lately, Ah hae cawed eez name,  
In howp he'd hirsle back;  
The man he wiz, no jist became  
Fae laubour, loss an lack.

Ah've dug eez dule richt oot masel,  
Fur hoo else tae be free?  
But if Ah stood tween him an hell,  
Wid Ah ken noo tae forgie?

# Fields o Stanes

Hamish Scott

Short an lang, Jeems cam hame at the ferm-toun whaur his fowk bade an wirkit at, that wis its ain place in its ain warld, an he stertit the wirkin life as a hauflin thare whan he left the schuil at fowerteen year auld. He wis content enouch wi the wark – an parteiclar fan saitisfeein helpin redd the fields o stanes, makkin redd cairns o thaim – but the fower year syne he sattelt hisselt i the ceity for ti wirk thare. He haed gotten the yung fowk’s want for the ceity, the life an the birr, forby the lan needin less fowk wi graith bein uised mair an mair. The wark at the factorie wis for ordnar trauchle, but thare wis mair siller for him thare, mair freedom awa fae the aye tentie een o the ferm-toun (een that saw sae faur as the narrest toun), mair adae in his leisur, an the gritter sense o bein a pairt o the modren warld.

For aa, it wis a defeekwalt sinderin for Jeems ti lea the lan an the life wi naitur, for he kent nane ither. Him an

aa his fowk – thaim afore him an thaim in life same time as him – leived daily day, follaein the saisons, uised wi the sights, souns, smells an aa. Thair hail existence wis shaped wi it: ootby an hame, at thair wark an i their leisure. The first o the faimlie ti quat the lan an dae ither, his ain life wis thon unco shift fae the lan an field ti the toun an factorie associate wi the Industrial Revolution, tho he cam til it efter monie.

The toun haed its ain life, wi its ain sights, souns, smells an aa, an the tounsfowk’s hail existence fashion’d wi it. The maist fowk wis gydit wi naitur ainlie whit little thai allou’d it, sic as wi the wather or the presence or no o naitral licht. Houaniver, Jeems haudit the kintra life sum, sic as uisin the auld wirds an the plain speakin, that wis pairtly wi him bein uised wi it aa but the likin for the souch o the ferm-toun forby.

He leukit wi pride an hert-likin til his fowk afore him. He wad aft imaigne thair guid kintra faces, wi thair orra brawness, that spak o haurd wark throu the Scots towmond an o wit heir’d an wan wi the sair fecht o thair life. He narratit his genealogie, an the tales an siclik things anent the faimlie, lik sum shenachie. He wis prood o his place in it an for eikin mair generations til it.

It wis Janet he did the eikin wi, that wis his wife gey near the fiftie year. Met wi hir, mairrit wi hir an the first o the three bairns wi hir aa athin the twa-three year. For sum, that’s the awfu ram-stam wey o daein things, but for the twasum lik Jeems an Janet it wis simply gittin on wi it – thai wir thegither for ayewis oniegait.

Whan thai got a hoose i the suburbs Jeems made siccar it haed a yaird – an size enouch for the bairns an growin sumkin ‘craps’. He wirkit it lik the wee bit ferm, that he cud haud at wirkin the lan that wey. It wis a kinna hame-gaun tho in a pathetic mainer sum.

He treatit the bairns lik a crap an aa, an i trowth – tho he niver wad tell thaim – thai wir his maist prised hairst, tho monie’s the tentie towmond teuk.

While his fowk afore him wis aa lanwart-bred an bidin thare thair hail life, ainlie

kennin the lan an its wark, the bairns an granbairns wis aa toun-bred, steyin thare aye. Ti the bairns, growin up wi thair faither affen oot an about the toun frequentin naitur whar he cud, seein thair lanwart fowk an whar thai bade, bein taen about the kintra-side bi thair faither, his reddy tellin o the faimlie’s tales an thair life on the lan, his tales an talk o the kintra-side generally, his tales an aa fae the Bible, an him at the beuk Sawbathlie, wis aa unnerstuid. Ti the granbairns, toun-bred bi the toun-bred bairns, an ti wham naitur, the kintra-side an its fowk, thair gutcher’s tales an the Bible, wis aa fremmit, he wis the queer bodie that wey.

Cum his hame-gaun, he wis sawn i the kirkyaird for the hairst o the risin.

It’s an unco thocht the bodie redd fields o stane as the lifie callant nou lys the forjeskit auld carle deid an yirdit in anither field o stanes – whar stanes is inbrocht rather nor redd – a staunin-stane wi his nem upon it at his graff. Aiblins he wis keen o reddin thon fields o stane as a loun for thaim signifeein his en place, gin waur o’t or no.

## Lees an Crams, or Ossian on the Death of Cuchullin

Steve Dornan

*Thou hast not fallen by the sword of the mighty, neither was thy blood  
on the spear of the brave. The arrow came like the string of death on  
the blast: nor did the feeble hand, which drew the bow, perceive it.*

*(James McPherson, "Death of Cuchullin")*

Ah doot ye hae heerd bards bummin an blawin

About tha great daeins o tha boul Cuchullin?

A yin-man airmy whan nae mair nor a wean?

He dee'd on his feet, strapped ticht tae a stane?

Weel, clock ye doon at oul Ossian's knee

An Ah'll tell ye nae crams, nae wurd o a lee.

Cuchullin had garravashed far fae his hame

Tae begunk his folks' faes an big his ain fame.

Tha nicht afore fechtin, he was coorse, he was thran,

Fidgin wi blood-drooth, his spear in his haun.

He caaed for a bonfire tae bleeze through tha nicht

An he skelped his spear aff his shield in its licht.

Ah alloo in tha fecht his strang airm bore tha gree:

He chairged, gulderin-wild, diels daunced in his ee.

Faes gaed cowp-carlie, an in squathries they fled

Tha deid lay in furs an tha burns pappled red.

But a coof, jookin battle, nae worth a sang,

Turned tae shoot yin last arra intae tha thrang.

Cuchullin uplifted his spear, bloody-reekin,

As through dailygaun mizzle tha arra gaed wheekin.

Inablow his oxster through muscle an bane

It hoked its gleg neb: he screiched oot his pain.

He hirpled ootby, his een govin wide:

He was pechin, he was doddery, aa owre tae yin side.

# Vratched

F.E. Clark

He gaed doon on his hurdies an let oot a croon  
Then cowped intae tha glaur, an dee'd, bake-doon.

Nae glaim nor glaw lichted his skin,  
Whan tha mools were dug an we laid him in.

Nae comet lichted thon dairk, driech plain,  
Whaur we happed him ticht in his coul lang hame.

Nae gods nor ghaists turned oot tae mak mane  
Whan we gaithered roon tae uplift his cap-stane.

Sae gin ye believe ma oul yarn ye'll alloo  
That tha bummin an blawin o bards isnae true:

Tha deid houl their wheesht, an gie deil tha damn  
That tha leevin hae mind o oul lees an crams.

Fan the tide o glamour yoams oot an ahm trippet doon yon blaik bore,  
an A greet to ye—please dinnae tell ma fit to dee, just sit wi ma an  
hud ma hand a whiley. Ahm sair made an the deil o makkin cowks an  
clarts his reek in ma heid, ma hairt, in ma huns. It's ay come back, the  
glamour, bit een day, een day mibbe it winnae, an Ahm wrung oot an  
foonert deen an clowtd doon—vratched in the stink o the place far my  
myn cannae reach ma. Just hud ma han an dinnae hector ma—for  
Ahm vratched an A will bite.

# Ye're Still Here? It's Ower. Gang Hame.

Thomas Clark

That's you, then. Ye'll hiv had yer Eemis Stane, aw 40-odd pages o it. Noo here's me tae tell ye whit ye thocht about it.

Ach, wha's kiddin wha. Ah dinnae even ken whit *ah* thocht about it, yet. An ah've been thinkin about these poems an stories ever syne ah first read them. Ah still am. The orrals ye've jist read, they speak for theirsels. Hiv tae, syne there's naebody else tae dae it. Hiv tae, syne there's nae ither wey tae be.

An ah dout whit's needit here is a wee valedictory bit, an upbeat *clausura* tae shear aff aw the unanswered questions an ends left hingin. "Here is the evidence, if evidence were needed, that the Scots language remains an essential part of our national culture..." If ye dinnae ken the wirds, nod alang tae the tune.

But whit a rid neck it'd be, tae staun up efter aw that an lat on tae ken whit the moral o the thing wis! Better aff herdin wild baudrons as ettlin tae fling the wan blanket ower the twinty gaberlunzies furthset here.

Sae ah'm no gonnae. Guid eneuch that we corralled these radge things atween twa covers for even a meenit. If Scots *is* like Brigadoon, it's anely cause it willnae sit in the wan place for lang. Forget yer bi- an tri-lingual signs; this show's here the day an gane the morn. Blink an ye'll miss it.

An it's wi gratitude tae yese aw that we pull up oor stakes an gang oor mony weys. Strike oot intae the knap-hie fields o wheat an jaggy nettles. Jyne us - but tak a different road, an if ye cannae find wan, mak wan.

Quoth yer man, a language is a dialect wi a literature. Weel, here's yer literature. Quoth yer man, a language is a dialect wi an army. Weel, here's yer army.

## Eemis Stane

### Scrivein that maitters

Eemis Stane furthsets poetry, fiction, essays and polemics in Scots o ony and ilka variety, frae ilka airt and pairt. The kind o Scots ye scribe in is faur less important tae us than the thing ye're yaisin it tae say.

Eemis Stane is rin by Matthew Fitt, Thomas Clark, Ashley Douglas, Sara Clark, Paul Malgrati and Eilidh Douglas.