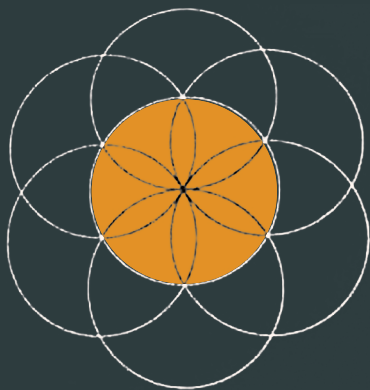


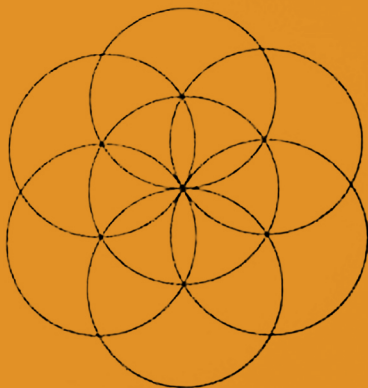
HOPE TALES



Chapbook II:
Land

**HOPE
TALKS**

HOPE TALES



Chapbook II:
Land

Contributors

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Dr Jude Allen runs Soil Voices, a project looking at narratives and oral histories that reconnect us with the soil. Soil Voices runs creative educational workshops for adults and young people and is exploring soil chromatography as a visual representation of soil stories. Jude is currently studying for an MSc in Regenerative Food and Farming at Schumacher College, Dartington.

Ranju Roy is a yoga teacher and teacher trainer, and has taught and lectured across the UK and Europe. He is co-author, along with Dave Charlton, of *Embodying the Yoga Sutra: Support, Direction, Space*.

Nicky Saunter is a writer of poems and stories, and a creator of diverse things, from artwork to businesses. She is a director of the New Weather Institute and Wellington Mills CIC.

Leary Hasson played as a professional musician playing in Prog Rock bands between 1969 and 1973. Since then he has run a small organic farm and was a founder member of a West Country marketing cooperative, as well as working for the Organic Advisory Service where he developed a marketplace for organic seed potatoes and onion sets.

Lindy Roy grew up in Wales surrounded by natural beauty. There were already serious environmental concerns in the 1970s, which encouraged Lindy to engage with nature conservation & holistic sustainable living. Lindy leads Transition Town Wellington Arts & Crafts Group. Positive change is a process. Creatives can imagine, explore & depict positive futures.

Anita Roy is chair of Transition Town Wellington, and is a writer, editor and cloud-maker. Her books include *Gifts of Gravity and Light*, *A Year in Kingcombe* and *Gravepyres School for the Recently Deceased*. She is a regular contributor to the *Guardian's* Country Diary column.

Jules Pretty is author of *Sea Sagas of the North* (2022) and *The Low-Carbon Good Life* (2023), and is at the University of Essex.

Dr Karen Stead-Dexter is an Animal & Nature Connection Teacher & Practitioner, inspiring deeper relationships with the natural world by integrating science and indigenous knowledge with human emotional experience.

Nick Robins is a sustainable investor and historian who works as Professor in Practice at the London School of Economics. He is author of *The Corporation that Changed the World: How the East India Company Shaped the Modern Multinational* (2012).

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introduction

The word “land” in English holds a range of weighty meanings, from the soil, ground or earth beneath our feet to a whole country. It is imbued with ownership, fraught with struggle and flavoured with power.

Passed like gold between kings, land was historically given in return for military or political support and today remains mostly in the hands of the rich, while many millions of people have none at all.

But it does not have to be this way.

There are many examples of land being traditionally owned by no one or shared by communities for the benefit of all. Land can be managed specifically for the sake of wildlife or kept completely wild. Soil can be nurtured and cared for so that it thrives and is able in turn to nourish us.

This Chapbook is the second in the series and focuses on the subject of Land. It follows the first book called Air, and Water is to follow. The creativity here shows some small speck of what we can do when we collaborate with an open heart, some hope and the fertile soil of imagination.

HOPE TALES

the _backstory

“HOPE IS NOT A LOTTERY TICKET,” wrote Rebecca Solnit, “but an axe you use in an emergency to break down doors.” If our personal habits and societies’ locked-in ways of doing things are doors blocking urgent climate action, then *Hope Tales* is intended as a small axe to clear a path to new imaginative possibilities.

Facts and figures too often bounce off people, make them more anxious, whereas stories and creative ways to look afresh at the world stride more boldly into ours minds and hearts. We believe that creative re-engagement with the world, more making, storytelling and a great reskilling can help break the spell of consumer and policy passivity that dulls both our sense of emergency and opportunity.

The world faces interwoven crises on climate, social inequality, loss of nature, and ways of living that make us ill. What shall we do in these dark times? Berthold Brecht knew what to do in 1939, writing:

*“In the dark times, will there also be singing?
Yes, there will also be singing. About the dark times.”*

We need storytelling that uses a language of kindness and generosity. The pandemic revealed how kindness – not the selfishness encouraged by orthodox economics – is both our common state and best response to threat. It is selfishness that is the outlier.

An ancient burnished fisherman, a famed skipper of the drifters and trawlers from the English east coast, looking back said, “You know, in those days when we had the fishing, there was more kindness and generosity here. We travelled over the sea to other ports and seaside places, and came back with gifts and stories.”

The ecological collapse of the fisheries led directly to social and cultural change, and people lost friendships across the North Sea and eastern North Atlantic.

To overcome our era's great crises, plausible stories of **hope** are needed. If we can believe in the possibility of change there is stronger motivation to act. Where can **hope** be found? Perhaps at the Rapid Transition Alliance – rapidtransition.org. In *Hope in the Dark*, Rebecca Solnit advises not to look for **hope** in the limelight, but in the flickering shadows and margins. **Hope** is located in uncertainty: we do not know what will happen and so our actions matter. When you act with **hope**, you soon find others: **hope** helps us move from the individual to the collective. We can be amazed by the peach blossoms on the far hill, and then work together to care for them. Stories unite and enchant us in a cultural commons. The great Navajo-Diné storyteller Yellowman said, "If children hear stories, they will grow up to be good people."

Yet **hope** too requires some patience. **Hope** is a charged waiting, it is the force of grass pushing up through the pavement. It is life itself, and has its own eloquence. **Hope** is also getting up when we are knocked down. Listen to birdsong, and at the end the birds will still be there. Watch the moonway on the night sea, and the moon will come again. Listen to a story, and the words and guidance could carry you across the ages.

Change is not easy, but if you sift through this miscellany and listen, really listen, you may hear siren songs from a better future calling across the water. Crossings carry danger, the seas are mighty, many monsters lurk. But there is the deep silence of the earth too. There are hints of bright halls, the synchrony of oars pulled together, the planet rising once again and now all blue-green and fertile.

Nicky Saunter,
Jules Pretty,
Andrew Simms

LOAF

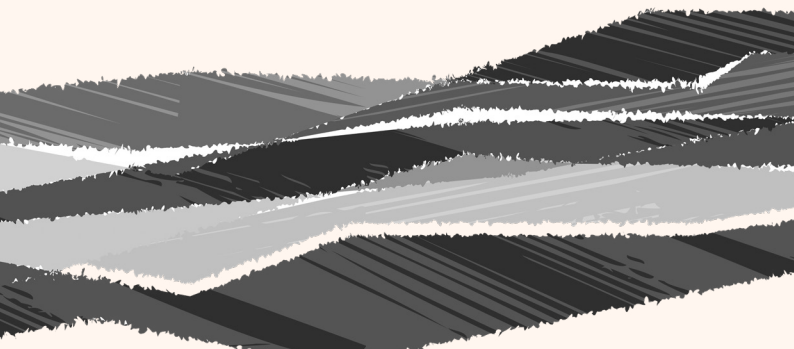
She'd kept it back for me
a little piece of virus luxury
its scabbed and dented
helmet-head,
onto which sweet walnuts
are softly spread.
I saw them blossom
in Californian heat.
I saw the plains
where grew the wheat.
I saw the grains
then ground to dust.
I saw it rise
and grow its crust.
It lies before me,
some words are spoken.
Bread is complete
when it is broken.

A REPUBLIC OF HOPE

The wheat is yet young in the valley
vines rise with the warmth of the sun
we walk in the cool of the hollow
where the tanglewood rose does run.

The forest is empty of monarchs
no crowns do the woodpeckers wear
we walk in the cool of the hollow
where cuckoo song fills the air.

The beech is shading the yew tree
the hazel supports the oak
we walk in the cool of the hollow
where lives a republic of hope.



NICK ROBINS

What Nature Wants

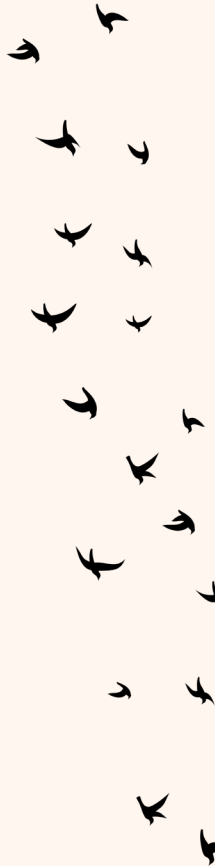
What the Wolf Moon said to me was this:

'The Winter he's a-winding down
and Light's a-coming in
but Spring does refuse to Leap,
'cos Nature's on strike see,
she wants her Wages now see,
for her Soil and Leaf and Breeze
for your Millenniums on the take.

She's done the Sums too
and it's £999,999,999,999.99
9 hundred and 99 thousand pounds
and 99 pence
so far: you can ring it up if you like'.

Then the Wolf Moon shone brighter still:
'Close your mouth now, don't you fret.
She'll offer you flexible terms
She doesn't want her own Gold back,
or your poxie pounds and bitter coins.
What she wants is to dance on Strictly,
bring a bit of diversity and respect
to that single species show.
And after all is nice and healed,
Spring will bless you with her smile.
One more thing: give us
the number of Mick Lynch's mobile.'

Nick Robins



GUESTS

every spring they come, hoards of em
without so much as a by your leave
moving in willy nilly, turfing out the old bedding
bickering over space, trying them all out for size
some of them are very picky indeed

then there's the noise of course
singing god knows what earlier every morning
like there was no tomorrow
and you should hear the mouth on those tiny ones
I'll say nothing about the copulation in the bushes

the internationals come last, all style and no luggage
but they do bring the warm air from down south
full black tie, head in the clouds, airy fairy bunch
they're no trouble though, not really
and I shall miss them when they go

Fields on fire

One cigarette butt from a hairless lip
Is all it took to torch the hay
Strewn with care round tender trees
Searching still for tap root safety
(Aren't we all?)
But even as the cinders sparked skyward
Supporters poured in a soothing flood
To extinguish the pain, splash laughter on flames
Buckets and barrows, old-fashioned really
But prompt and willing, that's the key
The rest is nature's job, rejuvenation
The total miracle of life from death

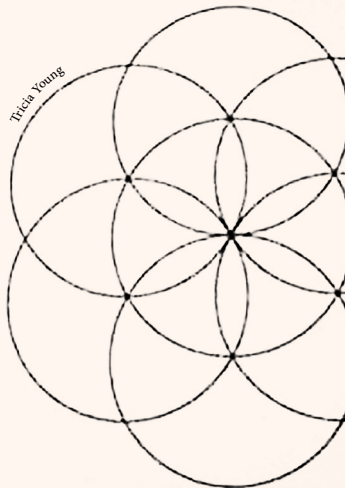
Nicky Saunter

GEESE

Every day at the same time
An arrow of geese cross overhead
Honking from pond to pond
Like a group of old friends
Bantering from pub to pub
Improbably heavy, with slow wing beats
They firmly but gently suspend disbelief
I don't know why
But they bring me unspeakable joy
Rising in my chest as a bubble of laughter
Emerging uncontrollably as a human hoot
Head back, arms flung wide, a small star on a muddy field,
I shout back to the sky GEESE!

NOT YET HEFTED

I am not hefted to this land
my soles hover just above the ground
reluctant to touch, allowing no roots to grow
my babyfeet spread their toes in hot Nigerian sun
never knowing the wince and tension of cold
my childfeet skimmed the dusty fields of Essex
long summers in flip-flops at most
these wet, green wedges of the west
are alien, claustrophobic, though beautiful to many
drawn south and west in a great migration
even as I feel the pull east, against the tide
and yet here was home to my ancestors
Celts all – dark, moody and damp
wrapped in their fiery religions
digging deep for Cornish tin
even my bones are confused – is this home?
I am not yet hefted to this land



Nicky Saunter

NO SIGNAL

The toad was as flat
As the road
As flat as the tyre
That snagged on the wire
As flat as the land
Covered in sand
As flat as the feet
Scorched by the heat
As flat as the note
Killing all *hope* from
The flat voice
That offered no choice
As flat as the face
Staring lost into space
As flat as the line
I *hoped* wasn't mine

BLOOD ORANGE MOON

Blue glazed fruit bowl, dark as
a dying night sky, wide brass
rim, medieval map of wonders
where banana, a comet, arcs
lemon, sour angel face, looks up
pear the irregular asteroid,
rocky sand-flesh
grapes on stalks dot-out
new constellations
celestial nature table-spills
but I lose myself to
the blood orange moon
reach to hold the round
heavens in my hand

GWR (1892)

Tracks grew like frost
across a fallen oak leaf, and
the leaf was a whole land
lightly holding our future

They worked all night
clearing, lifting, hammering
watched by bats and owls who
suspected change was coming

By dawn the sleepers readied
laid for waking trains
rolled-out like ladder rungs
to climb a napping country

The forest dozed again, last fitful
hours the least of those to come
a great uprooting had begun
the railway urging
something must be done
something must be done
something must be done

FIRM GROUND

I got drunk on sky
wide, deep and liquid
it poured into my
empty stomach

I'd had enough, but
across the water
birds called more
so we drank on
swayed together

Looking up
things span
I pressed my feet
firmer into sand
land opening
to ocean, struggled
for balance, for words

Slurring, happily, everyone
-thing, was my friend, this life
would never end

Watching the horizon
they say keeps nausea at bay
I see it, long, patient
there after I am
gone. Then, rove a few
unsteady steps

WEEK

Two days on the map of seven
another land
where other things happen

Free from toil
the old, occupying army
on time's fertile soil

Unstopping factory clocks
roped down like statues
of toppled despots

Seizing back sleep
more hours for conversation
to sit, look, count sheep

How France once teased
dubbed in languor our love
of work the 'English disease'

How linguistic revenge
saw us send back
with love, 'Le Weekend'

Andrew Simms



Lindy Roy



Peter Hine

Land tax

The game of Monopoly has for years been a Christmas ritual for families. Seemingly a celebration of ruthless, speculative, capitalist accumulation, how many of us realise its origins were an attempt to do the opposite and expose the evils of land speculation, for which a land tax is a prime remedy? A Quaker called Elizabeth Magie Phillips invented the game in 1903. Originally called *The Landlord's Game*, she gave its streets names like *Beggarman's Court* and *Easy Street*. Another, *George Street*, was a clue to her inspiration being the radical economist Henry George. George had been a journalist who reported on land grabbing by railroads and the injustices of land speculation and landlordism. In response he developed what became known as the 'single tax' on land as a remedy to the resulting extreme inequalities.



Today, with the cost of housing and property speculation back at the top of the political agenda, debate around land taxes has returned. For example, even removing the general effects of inflation to arrive at a 'real' comparable purchase price, in today's money the average UK house price in 1960 was £55,000, whereas in 2022 it was £271,000. The reason is not the cost of the bricks and mortar but the land beneath them. It leaves people with properties already sitting pretty, and those without, priced out, increasing inequality between both regions and generations.

Windfall gains also accrue if one owns land on which planning permission for a housing development is granted. A hectare of

farmland worth £20,000 without planning consent can rise in price toward £2m if a local authority zones the land for housing. Without a land tax, although the result of a public decision, the benefits are reaped by the private landowner.

Dive down

The windfall incomes from rising house and land prices have been fed, significantly, by a financialised, speculative market model that has shifted away from providing social housing toward a private market that George would have recognised. In 2018, the British Labour Party proposed a form of land tax designed to tackle the windfall, unearned income – so-called ‘planning gain’ – when land gets zoned for housing. The proposal was that land intended for the building of new social housing could be bought at pre-planning consent prices. This operates, in effect, as a 100% windfall tax. This would reduce the cost of building 100,000 such homes per year by an estimated £10 billion, and lower the cost of building a two-bed flat in a South East English commuter town like Chelmsford in Essex by around £80,000. Other responses to the unaffordability of land driving high housing costs have included the formation of unions for renters.

For interest

The original game of Monopoly featured a poorhouse, and if you trespassed on Lord Blueblood’s estate you were sent to prison. You could collect money to buy your basic goods on squares marked ‘absolute necessity’. The game lost its original purpose when a sharp salesman stole the idea for the game from the Quakers during the Great Depression and sold it to a games manufacturer.

Adapted from *Economics – A Crash Course*

by Andrew Simms and David Boyle (2019) Quarto, London



The Wisdom of Ancient India: We are Nature

In ancient India about 3,000 years ago (and some say much longer), a group of Rishis 'heard' some divine songs. A Rishi is a 'Seer' (or in this case, a 'Hearer') and like shamans, they are believed to have travelled to non-human worlds where they were able to access teachings, hymns, poems and songs. These are collectively known as the Vedas, four books of hymns and chants composed in an ancient form of Sanskrit. Some say they are the oldest songs that have been continuously chanted by humans in an unbroken tradition – their melody, metre, pronunciation and rhythm has been strictly taught and faithfully preserved over the generations.

I chose to open the evening with a beautiful Vedic invocation to various deities of nature, all of whom have an internal equivalent in our human system. This chant opens the Taittiriya Upanisad, which in itself is one small part of one the Vedas. It is an honouring of both external forces and internal processes, and importantly, it pays homage to air and therefore to breath. Breath, it proclaims, is the Divine made perceptible.

śikṣāvallī

śaṃ nō mītraśśaṃ varuṇaḥ |
śaṃ nō bhavatvaryamā |
śaṃ na indro bṛhaspatiḥ |
śaṃ nō viṣṇururukramah |
namo brahmaṇe |
namaste vāyo |
tvameva pratyakṣaṃ brahmāsi |
tvāmeva pratyakṣaṃ brahmā vadiṣyāmi |
ṛtaṃ vadiṣyāmi |
satyaṃ vadiṣyāmi |
tanmā mavatu |
tadvaktāramavatu |
avātu mām |
avātu vaktāraṃ ||
om śāntiśśāntiśśāntiḥ ||

|| taittiriya upaniṣat I.1 ||

A rough translation of this is:

Praise to the deity of dawn (Mitra - linked to inhalation)

Praise to the deity of the setting sun and water (Varuṇa - linked to exhalation)

Praise to the deity of the sun (Aryamā - linked to eyes and vision)

Praise to the deities of strength (Indra) and of wisdom and intelligence (Bṛhaspati)

Praise to the deity Viṣṇu (here representing feet - as the 'great strider')

Praise to Brahma from whom everything arises

Praise to the breath (Vāyu)

You (Vāyu) are Brahma made manifest

I declare you are Brahma made manifest

I declare you are the rhythm of everything, the truth which cannot be spoken (ṛta)

I declare you are the subjective truth, which can be spoken (satya)

I pray for you to protect me (mām) and also my teacher (avaktāra)

(This is repeated for emphasis)

Ranju Roy

GRATITUDE HAS THE POWER TO BRING HOPE

To respect and honour the earth beneath our feet is a way of coming into a closer relationship with the non-human on this planet. Gratitude for what the earth provides is something us 'humans' have forgotten and we need to remember. For gratitude has the power to bring hope.

By being present and feeling the earth beneath our feet, feeling its energy and everything it has provided for us, we wove our thanks into sedges that were ceremonially cut from Fox's Field earlier that day. Each braid of sedge held the story of the land, everyone present, and their connection to this land. All braids were collected and burnt in sacred ceremony, with the ashes finally gifted back to the land the following morning – full of our thanks, our love, for what this land has given us as a community. In the process of giving, we receive. For gratitude has the power to bring hope.

DR KAREN STEAD-DEXTER



What on earth are we here for?

Not so long ago, the dominant Western narrative was that humans were separate & superior to nature. Nowadays many people acknowledge we are not apart from nature, we are a part of nature – something most ancient & indigenous cultures have always known. So harming nature harms ourselves; caring for nature, cares for ourselves in the process. Everything is connected.

We are in a time of transition. How we live now affects the whole earth & the future of the earth & everything & everyone who lives there. We either respond in the green zone or react in the red zone. Either way, everything changes.

Creative people tend to be more observant in their sphere of interest. To perceive & portray some thing or being, often requires really looking at, or listening to, or feeling, what is really there, not what you think is there. Artists are well placed to contribute to depictions of present & future possibilities.

Imagination, ideas & stories are an integral part of human development. Where we go from here will depend on which directions we choose to go. We are in the privileged position of still having some agency, some choice. The stories we tell now of the present we have, & the future we want, will influence how things are & will be. They are therefore crucial. Creative people have a lot to contribute.

Lindy Roy



MUSICAL MUSINGS

The latest research into neurobiology shows that every living cell is interconnected with every other and have their own tiny amount of intelligence which is shared through a series of spoke and hub centres that connect the whole organism together.

Geneticist Dr Mae-Wan Ho has adapted a polarising microscope used by geologists to look right into the cells and tissues of tiny creatures that live in garden ponds and in the soil. The molecules of these organisms are moving around constantly in concert as a whole and show evidence of the remarkable coherence and oneness of life. She says: "These creatures are thick with spontaneous activities at every level, right down to the molecules inside their cells".

Quantum Jazz

Dr Mae-Wan Ho has called this activity "quantum jazz" where every tiny part of the organism is improvising spontaneously and freely, yet keeping in tune and in step with the whole. There is no conductor, no choreographer, the organism is creating and re-creating herself afresh with each passing moment. Jules and I improvise together attempting to recreate the way these organisms interact with each other.

Winter into Spring

We have also improvised a piece while reflecting over the transition from Winter into Spring. I use a minor chord sequence to represent winter and change to a major chord progression to represent spring.

Leary Hasson



The Duende of Cohen

That unmistakable voice, an alchemical mix of growl and sigh and prayer, had for so many years sounded like a man heading that way, I shouldn't have been surprised when the news came in that Leonard Cohen was dead.

Listening to his final album, 'You Want it Darker' sent me back to Lorca's poetry, and a speech by the poet delivered in Buenos Aires in 1933 – the year before Cohen was born. In it, Lorca talks about duende – sometimes translated as 'the spirit of evocation', of 'having soul', a heightened state of emotion, expression and authenticity, or the mysterious power of art to deeply move a person. "I have heard an old guitarist master say: 'The duende is not in the throat; the duende surges up from the soles of the feet... This 'mysterious power that everyone feels but that no philosopher has explained' is in fact the spirit of the earth."

In his acceptance speech for the Prince of Asturias's prize for literature in 2011, Leonard Cohen talks of his profound debt of gratitude to Spain. "Everything you have found favourable in my work comes from this place. Everything that you have found favourable in my songs in my poetry are inspired by this soil."

He talked about the smell of his Spanish guitar – a guitar fashioned from the cedar trees that grew there – and of its helium lightness. He told a story of the young flamenco guitarist who taught him his first few clumsy chords, the foundation upon which he built his tower of song. And he spoke of Lorca, who, he says, gave him "permission to find a voice, to locate a voice, that is to locate a self: a self that is not fixed, a self that struggles for its own existence."

Lorca's translator Christopher Maurer identifies four elements in Lorca's duende: "irrationality, earthiness, a heightened awareness of death, and a dash of the diabolical." These elements are best described by Lorca himself, talking about the legendary flamenco singer, La Niña de los Peines: "With her voice of shadow, with her voice of liquid metal, with her moss-covered voice and with her voice entangled in her long hair. She would soak her voice in *manzanilla*, or lose it in dark and distant thickets." And one point, she "got up like a woman possessed, broken as a medieval mourner, drank without pause a large glass of *cazalla*, a fire-water brandy, and sat down to sing without voice, breathless, without subtlety, her throat burning but...

with duende. She succeeded in getting rid of the scaffolding of the song, to make way for a furious and fiery duende, companion of sand-laden winds, that made those who were listening tear their clothes rhythmically, like Caribbean islanders clustered before the image of Santa Barbara."

'Getting rid of the scaffolding' was a life-long project for Cohen. He spent almost forty years with Buddhist monk Kyozan Joshu Sasaki or Roshi as he was known.

In his last recorded interview, with *New Yorker* writer David Remnick, Cohen describes his monastic life as a "bootcamp." The aim of it all, he says with a gentle laugh, was "basically to get you to stop whining. It makes whining the least appropriate response to suffering." To put it another way: "if one is to express the great inevitable defeat that awaits us all, it must be done within the strict confines of dignity and beauty."

Remnick later says, of Cohen's last live concert, "It was one of the best things I've ever seen in my entire life. I'd always admired Cohen's songs but I'd never been quite... swept away... His voice was as deep as the ocean."

Cohen's own great inevitable defeat had been transformed by the end of his life, into a deeper darkness – an embrace of the mystery of this mortal life; the "dark sound" that Lorca says is at the heart of duende "the roots thrusting into the fertile loam known to all of us, ignored by all of us, but from which we get what is real in art."

You want it darker? Cohen asks us, in his final farewell, delivered with his signature dignity, grace and beauty: well, it is.

Anita Roy



Sienna Crumble – Jude Allen

SIENNA crumble, cradling
next year's life.
frost guarded cotyledon of vetch
slowly germinates under dark cover,
imperceptibly slips, unfurls, through worm tunnels and grit.
watch me.

OMNAUDIANT bearer of looping, twining, networks.
communication hub of damp-stretched umber messages.
complex chemical intricacies
of sickness and health and warning. And love.
vandyke-brown fingered lines of tree chat.
hear me.

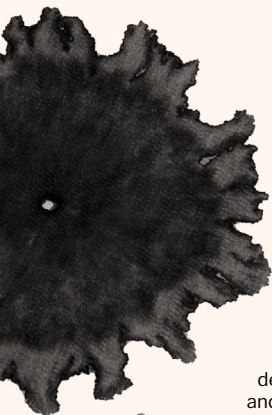
INTIMATE holder of mole and badger.
pad nurturer, claw sharpener.
home for red brush of fox, and nursery for iridescent scarab.
underground thrum
of munchers and crunchers,
of rollers and burrowers,
of squirmers and shufflers,
of scudders and wrigglers.
feel me.

LYSOTROPHIC, mushroom-rich,
oozer of pungent ferment.
olfactory flakes reveal
damp of geosmin. petrichor. terpenoid.
dry of sun-crushed twig. paring of beetle.
smell me.

SOUL-giver, death pouch.
pocketeer of history, carbon, and treasure.
trimmer of carcass, bringer of flesh.
cyclical chameleon of dust and bog.
traveller of wind and river.
decayed. rebirthed.
love me.



The **Hope** **that Comes** When Communities Own the **Land**



Protest 2023

The Highland and Islands of Scotland were depopulated by deliberate clearances from the 1700s to early 1900s. Not long after the late 1990s devolution, the Scottish government signed the remarkable Land Reform Act of 2003, later followed by the Community Empowerment Act of 2015. Communities could now, with help from government and foundations, purchase whole estates and islands owned by absentee landlords.

Community ownership allows the community to decide what they want to see happen locally. In both rural and urban areas, community landowners have been able to reverse years of decline. This has created a new movement of collective action organised around the land commons, and this is producing social and natural benefits. There are now 400 assets in local ownership, including 27 estates and islands comprising 220,000 hectares. Communities have invested in housing renewal, renewable energy projects, local foods, tourism infrastructure, and new forms of marine protection.

The result: more jobs, attraction of new incomers, fossil fuel free systems. A number of islands and estates, such as Eigg and Gigha, are now entirely renewable in energy supply. They have been untouched by the recent energy crisis, showing what can happen when whole economies escape from fossil fuels. The three wind turbines on Gigha are known as Faith, Hope and Charity.

See Fearann Coimhearsnachadh na h-Alba:

<https://www.communitylandscotland.org.uk/>

Jules Pretty

Collaborative poem from the Hope Tales event in Wellington

Welly boot brûlée again!

A marvelous feast for us all to enjoy

together, hands holding sweetness, sticky fingers.

Black crumbly soil filled with bugs
and worms and rich potential.

Digging for worms.

Winter, soggy, squelchy, sucking.

Earthworms and springtails.

WET MUD, SQUELCH, SUCK, AND SPLASH.

Beneath my fingernails the stuff of life,

Beneath my feet, the memory of the Earth.

Fat, clay, platform boots.

Lovely, loamy, wiggly worms.

Squelching feet with oozy softness between my toes.

You're deep in the soil, the soil, the soil, the soil, the soil.

We dug a hole and laid her body on the bare earth.

Expansive and rolling as far as the eye and beyond –

Soil too hard to dig is grief-laden.

Love of the land is love of the self.

While the compost lies on the land, the worms dance and are happy.

Soil! Worm! Spade ... two worms.

SOIL – NOURISHING, HOLDING, SUPPORTING ALL OF ME – ALL OF THE WORLD.

THE WELLINGTON SLIPS

I remember making small gardens
for my toys to play in. Getting an
insects eye view of the land.
This was in a garden in Birmingham.

What is your memory of soil?

Reaching into soil from an unearthed tree,
collecting stones for grinding into pigment.
It was the day after my dad died, and I was
walking the paths and places that had been
a big part of his life.

What is your memory of soil?

The summer of 1976, sitting in the
parked back garden, soil like concrete,
we'd recently moved house and
everywhere fields around the town
were being built on and I wondered
for the first time, why do we wage
war on nature?

Andrew J
Simms

What is your memory of soil?

Nick

I've kept some ^{soil} ~~side~~
a memory of the garden
that grew beyond the brick
roset climbing, stretching to the street.
All cleared now: the planting
will begin soon.
And one day, with my feet & one cool
too with touch the sun.

What is your memory of soil?

Of course, it took me ten years on the
allotment of getting it 'wrong' before I really
started getting it right. By then, the soil was
in good heart. I took my children to the
allotment. When they were little, I took
them to the allotment in the wheelbarrow. They
enjoyed the wheelbarrow ride. They enjoyed planting
and lifting potatoes. One tea time, I said to
the children, "Everything on our plates here, we
grew at the allotment." My daughter, then six,

smiled and put her arms round my neck and
kissed my face.

Twenty-some years later, my daughter works
with the land as a forester, and is active
in the Landworkers Alliance.

Plant your love
Let it grow

A BRIEF HISTORY OF CHAPBOOKS

Chapbooks first emerged in the 1600s, and grew in popularity the 1700s and 1800s to become widespread forms of urban and rural street literature. A chapbook was small, typically short in length, published on flimsy paper, and illustrated with woodcuts and drawings. Chapbooks covered a wide range of material: from fairy stories and folk tales to heroic journeys, from ghost stories to songs and ballads, from fortune telling to political manifestos, from almanac to religious tract, from news of crime and disaster to dreams of hope.

Chapbooks were sold by shopkeepers and booksellers, but achieved great popularity through itinerant vendors and peddlers. These men and women came to be known as chapmen, who also carried to rural villages other items for trade: bootlaces, ribbons, needles, seeds and spice, gloves and fans. The term “chap” originates from the Old English *cēap*, meaning to barter or exchange. In France, chapbooks were known as blue books (*bibliothèque bleu*), and in Germany as people’s books (*Volksbuch*). “Chapman” became a common surname.

Many well-known fairy tales were first published in chapbooks: Jack and the Beanstalk, Jack the Giant Killer, Cinderella, Bluebeard, Little Red Riding Hood. Samuel Pepys collected and published chapbooks; John Clare heard chapbook tales as a child; and Robert Louis Stevenson and Charles Dickens both used the form. Traditional folk songs and ballads were recorded in chapbooks, and chapbook tales and poetry was read aloud in pubs and salons. It is said that tens of millions of chapbooks were sold annually on the streets by the mid-19th century.

Chapbooks are for sharing, passing on and discussing.
Please leave a comment on this page and pass it on to
someone you think will enjoy it.

A Rapid Transition Alliance Chapbook

in partnership with Centre for Public and Policy Engagement,
University of Essex

rapidtransition.org

essex.ac.uk/centres-and-institutes/public-and-policy-engagement

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