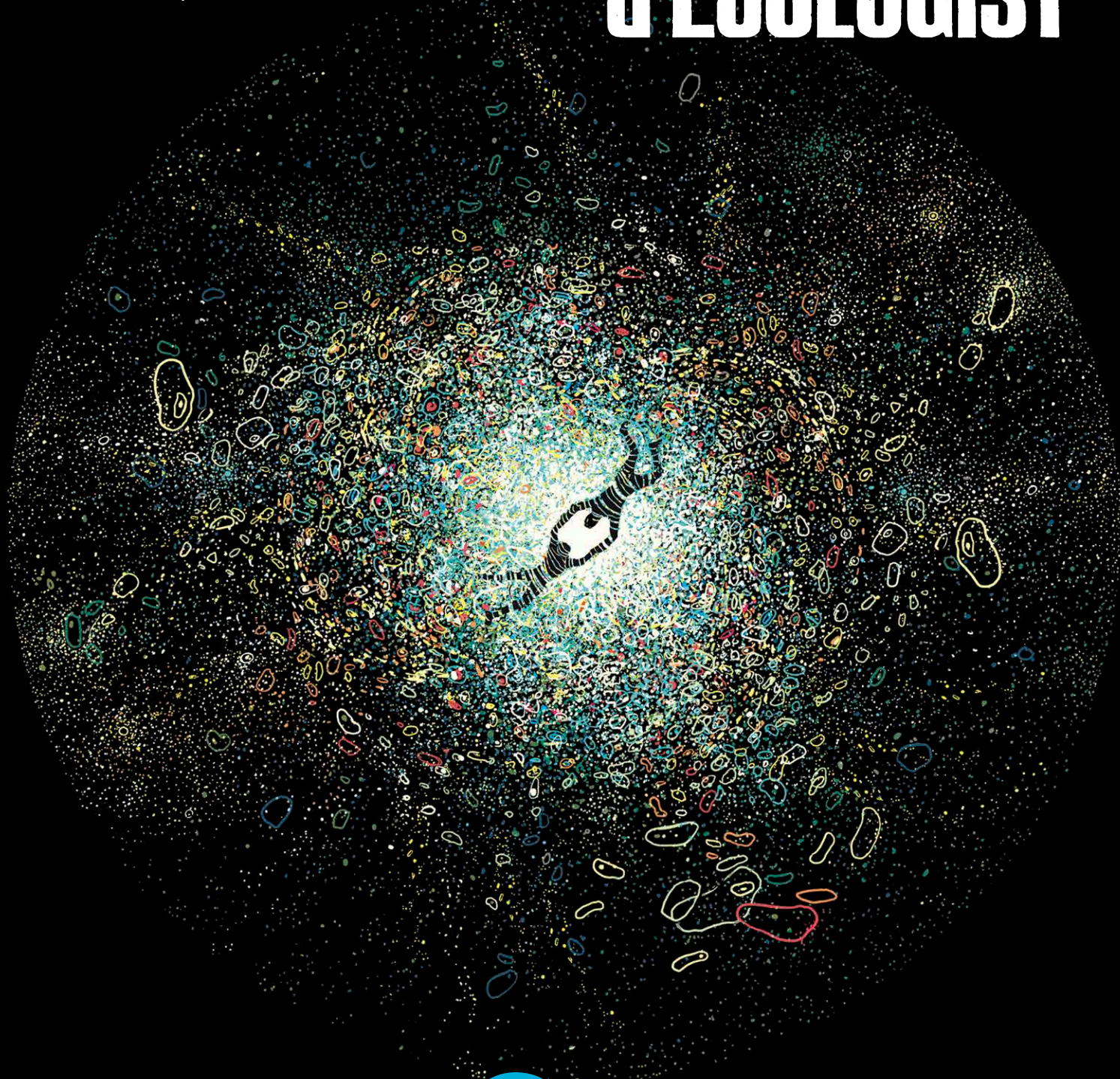


ENVIRONMENT • ACTIVISM • SOCIAL JUSTICE • ARTS • ETHICAL LIVING

Resurgence & ECOLOGIST

May/June 2018 No. 308

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WORKING TOGETHER & WORKING WITH NATURE

PLUS: SLOW POETRY ■ CO-OWNERSHIP ■ THE POWER OF PLAY



Reconnaissance by Eddy Kamuanga Ilunga, Acrylic and oil on canvas, 170 cm x 150 cm

Vivid symbols of hope amid turmoil

The Democratic Republic of Congo has been torn by political violence, economic distress and other hardships in recent years. But the vibrancy of its diverse cultures remains irrepressible. The painter Eddy Kamuanga Ilunga, whose works are featured in a new exhibition at the October Gallery in London from 10 May to 16 June, draws upon a widely eclectic set of references for his work, from modern pop music, fashion and dance to more traditional symbols of Congolese women – central figures in their communities – as in this work, 'Reconnaissance'. "His persevering vision is characteristic of the vibrant intellectual community that continues to flourish in Central Africa," one commentator has written. October Gallery, 24 Old Gloucester Street WC1N 3AL www.octobergallery.co.uk

WORKING WITH NATURE, WORKING TOGETHER

One of the pleasures, for me, of working at *Resurgence* is the short, tree-lined walk from our offices in a converted farmyard building to the nearby village of Hartland. In winter, with the winds blowing in from the nearby sea, and a particularly invasive rain that seems to come at you from all angles, you are reminded of Nature's elemental force, putting humanity and our daily concerns into perspective. But at this time of year, it is a particular joy to hear the birdsong that fills the air. The most routine day's work is enlivened, mundane preoccupations fall away, and your spirits are lifted.

Something of that feeling informs this issue: a theme of working in, with and for Nature. In their own, distinct ways, our writers reflect on the importance of the natural world, on our differing approaches to it, and on the imperative of finding new ways to solve the problems that face us collectively.

For James Thornton, his spiritual training in Zen Buddhism, together with his background as a lawyer, combined to inspire him to dedicate his professional life to environmental law. For Tony Juniper, a passion for conservation and a lengthy career as an environmental campaigner have led him to believe that we can best defend the natural world if we appreciate how central it is to our own survival.

But it is not only in our relations with the natural world that we must make connections. It is in how we relate to one another. So in this issue, Guy Singh-Watson, one of Britain's most successful organic farmers, explains why he is turning his business into a cooperative, and Darren McGarvey reports on the emergence of new forms of community activism in inner-city Glasgow.

As always, there is an artistic dimension to these new departures, these new connections. Justine Reilly talks about the work of Leah Barclay, bringing the sounds of the natural world to new audiences. The musician Alexander Chapman Campbell tells how a pilgrimage walking across the Norwegian countryside informed his latest compositions. And we look at the way the artist Garry Fabian Miller has married techniques of camera-less photography and textile design to evoke a deep relationship with the natural world.

Vandana Shiva writes on the importance of traditional medicine. Paula Byrne and Jonathan Bate, meanwhile, remind us of the health benefits of human culture – in particular, slow reading. And in a short story, the Scottish writer James Robertson shows the value of moving beyond modern technology to rediscover the virtues of human communication. As we move with the seasons, we hope you enjoy the connections we make. **R**

Greg Neale
Editor-in-chief

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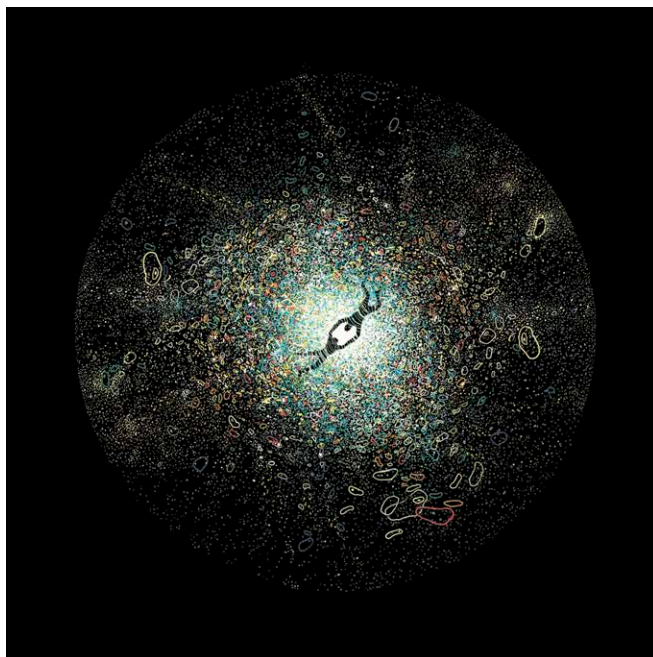
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Cover image: A Hundred Sunsets by James R. Eads

@james.r.eads.art

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www.resurgence.org

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Jonathan Bate on slow poetry – a special audio feature.

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www.theecologist.org

The stories environmentalists across the globe are talking about, plus opinion pieces and reviews. Check for new daily content, including regular analysis of key political issues.

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PROTEST

ACTIVISTS DIG IN AS AIRPORT PLAN IS SCRAPPED

Kara Moses reports on the end of a 50-year-old project

Activists are celebrating an announcement that plans to build a €580 million airport in western France are to be abandoned after more than 50 years. Opponents to the proposed Notre-Dame-des-Landes airport, which was to be built near the city of Nantes, said the project threatened nearby woods and wetland. Protests drew tens of thousands of people, including an estimated 40,000 people who formed a human chain around the site in 2013.

“This struggle was won because it brought together such a rich variety of rebels, from farmers to squatters, trade unionists to anarchists and ecologists,” says John Jordan. “This diversity was mirrored in the diversity of tactics, ranging from nonviolent civil disobedience to flaming barricades, from legal challenges in the courts to riots in the streets, and from citizens’ petitions to land occupations.”

The 4,000-acre site, has been occupied for 10 years. Hundreds of people work on the land, living in self-built structures and squatting in abandoned farmhouses. The ZAD (‘Zone to Defend’), as it has become known, has evolved into a large-scale social experiment of a post-capitalist community with communal food production, bakery and dairy, pirate radio and pay-what-you-feel markets. Although the threat of the airport is now gone, the community has vowed to remain on the land and keep it in common ownership, despite the French prime minister, Édouard Philippe, saying that the occupation should end.

“We always believed that the airport would never be built,” says Jordan. “We want the laboratory of commoning that is the ZAD to remain a beacon for struggles everywhere.” zad.nadir.org
 ■ Pictured right, from top: One of the demonstrations surrounding the airport project; the pirate radio station in action; celebrating victory.



Photographs (top) © Jean-Sébastien Evrard / Getty Images; (middle) © Kevin Faingnaert; (bottom) © REUTERS / Stephane Mahe

SOCIAL JUSTICE

OXFAM REPORT ON INEQUALITY CALLS FOR A ‘HUMAN ECONOMY’

Oxfam is calling for more companies to follow the lead of multinational Mondragon – which is owned by its workforce of 74,000 and where the highest-paid employee earns no more than nine times the lowest – in a bid to tackle soaring rates of global inequality. In its new report,

An Economy for the 99%, the charity highlights how extreme inequality has become – just eight men own the same wealth as the poorest half of the world – and outlines how a “human economy” can be achieved.

The report’s recommendations include ending tax havens, government

support of business models that promote fair wages and fair taxes, and reinvigorating civic space, especially for the voices of women and marginalised groups, harnessing renewable energy and moving beyond GDP to measure human progress.

MB

tinyurl.com/economy-99

AWARDS

NEW MAPPING METHOD TO PROTECT PEATLANDS

A team of scientists from the Netherlands, Germany and Indonesia has won the US\$1-million Indonesian Peat Prize, a contest run by the country's government to conserve the largest peat swamp forests in the world. The International Peat Mapping Team proposed a technique combining satellite-based technologies and airborne high-resolution mapping known as lidar to map peat soils.

The carbon released from the degradation of peat soils in Indonesia is one of the largest sources of greenhouse gas emissions in the world. In 2017 Greenpeace warned that forest fires in Indonesia would probably release far more carbon dioxide that year than the entire UK.

indonesianpeatprize.com tinyurl.com/indonesian-forest-fires

PRIZE FOR INSPIRING PERMACULTURE PROJECTS

Permaculture magazine has announced a new prize for permaculture projects across the world that help transform communities and regenerate habitats. First prize is £10,000, with four runners-up each receiving £2,500. Judges include the filmmaker John D. Liu, author Looby Macnamara, Kayode Olafimihan, chair of the London Permaculture Network, sustainability advocate Anthony Rodale and Simon Constantine, the son of the co-founders of Lush. The closing date for applications is 30 June.

www.permaculture.co.uk/articles/permaculture-prize-2018

EVENTS

WOMEN AND CLIMATE CHANGE

The Canadian novelist and environmental activist Margaret Atwood is to headline a summit and arts festival organised by art and environment group Invisible Dust on 1–2 June. Under Her Eye: Women in the Art and Science of Climate Change is being held as part of the 2018 centenary of women's suffrage in the UK. The first day, at the British Library Conference Centre in London, will feature speakers including Caroline Lucas, co-leader of the Green Party, and economist Kate Raworth. On the second day, participants will be invited to experience climate change through the lens of air, land and sea, via public art installations and workshops across King's Cross. Tickets cost from £30 to £45.

tinyurl.com/under-her-eye

TRANSITION DESIGN SYMPOSIUM

Key figures from global transition movements are coming together with designers, educators and activists for Transition Together, the fourth International Transition Design Symposium at Dartington Hall, Devon, from 21 to 23 June. Speakers will include Rob Hopkins, co-founder of Transition Town Totnes and the Transition Network, and John Thackara, the author of *How to Thrive in the Next Economy: Designing Tomorrow's World Today*.

www.schumachercollege.org.uk/events/ITDS



Photograph courtesy Forum for the Future

TRENDS

NAVIGATING SUSTAINABILITY IN UNCERTAIN TIMES

Forum for the Future report outlines key areas of change

The promotion of electric cars is heralding “as radical a shift as [from] horse to motor”, think tank Forum for the Future says in a new report, *Living in Nonlinear Times*.

The report looks at the impact of seven transformative trends it has identified, including new methods of mobility and agriculture; responses to the impact of plastic pollution; changes in retail and consumerism; new forms of social organisation; changes in employment and work; and the impact of blockchain. The report outlines the best way to harness these trends to achieve a sustainable future.

■ On agriculture, the report says new methods of farming, like intercropping and carbon farming – complemented by the use of data and even robots – can help combat soil degradation and rising CO₂ levels.

■ Innovations such as the development of biodegradable plastic and coastal waste management in China and South East Asia could help stem the tide of plastic pollution.

■ As online shopping becomes mainstream, threatening job losses and rising debt, the report says businesses need to harness the changes to ensure a sustainable retail system, including making shops more about experiencing products, supporting communities and contributing to urban food production.

■ As social media, campaigning and crowdfunding transform ways of organising, the report says conversations about ethics are needed to make sure these platforms are not hijacked by “uncivil” society.

■ Carbon-negative regeneration of ecosystems and degraded agricultural land could offer new livelihoods in countries where jobs are threatened by automation, the report says.

■ Blockchain – which functions as a decentralised ledger for making secure transactions – is being developed beyond use as a platform for cryptocurrencies such as Bitcoin, the report says. Now it is being employed for a variety of projects, from checking the source of origin for a particular product, to improving meal delivery to schoolchildren in India. Finland is also trialling a plan to use blockchain to support paperless refugees.

tinyurl.com/future-sustainability-report

WILDLIFE

“BROOD MEDDLING” PLAN COULD THREATEN RARE RAPTOR, EXPERTS WARN

Marianne Brown reports on a conservation conflict on driven grouse moors

The future of the hen harrier (*Circus cyaneus*), one of Britain’s most persecuted birds of prey, could be further threatened on the moors of northern England this summer, conservationists have claimed, with the start of a controversial two-year project designed in part to protect grouse bred for shooting.

The plan, by the publicly funded agency Natural England, will involve the removal of hen harrier eggs and chicks found within 10km of another nest on a driven grouse moor. The chicks will then be raised in captivity for several months, and released back onto the moors later in the season.

Natural England says the aim of the plan is to boost hen harrier numbers in the long term while reducing predation on grouse chicks. “This new wildlife management licence will give land managers confidence that impacts of hen harriers breeding on their land can be minimised, creating a win-win scenario,” according to Amanda Anderson, director of The Moorland Association.

However, many conservation groups, including the Royal Society for the Protection of Birds (RSPB), have raised concerns about the project, saying the number of birds is far too fragile.

“We all know why this magnificent bird is at such worryingly low numbers: the illegal killing of harriers in order to maximise the number of grouse that can be killed on driven moors across England and Scotland,” Martin Harper, the RSPB’s conservation director, said in a blog earlier this year. “Fundamentally, and this is where we think [Natural England] have got it wrong, brood management is about forcing hen harriers to fit in with driven grouse shooting. That’s starting in entirely the wrong place; driven grouse shooting should instead fit around the recovery of hen harriers. And if it can’t, well, it needs to change.”



A hen harrier nesting with her chicks, Scotland. Captive rearing plans have worried conservationists
Photograph © Peter Moore / FLPA

As this issue of *Resurgence & Ecologist* was being prepared for publication, the RSPB had just sent a “pre-action protocol letter” to Natural England, which it described as the first formal step before considering whether to start legal proceedings against the agency.

Hen harriers have been “virtually ‘cleansed’” from driven grouse moors through illegal persecution, conservationist Ruth Tingay told *Resurgence & Ecologist*. As a result, the bird is now a species of the highest conservation priority. “Yet here’s the government permitting the removal of hen harrier eggs and chicks to protect a grossly inflated red grouse population, just so those grouse can be shot for fun. It’s absurd,” Tingay said.

Last year there were only three successful hen harrier breeding attempts in the whole of England, even though there is sufficient habitat for an estimated 300 breeding pairs. “The government contends the trial is for the protection of hen harriers but in reality it is once again all about the protection of the grouse moor owners’ economic profit,” Tingay said.

Tingay is co-founder and curator of the website Raptor Persecution UK, set up in 2010 to raise awareness of illegal

wildlife crime on driven grouse moors throughout the UK.

Commercial game-shooting is “undoubtedly the biggest threat to some UK raptor populations”, Tingay said. In addition to hen harriers these include golden eagles, red kites, peregrines and goshawks. This is because, in order to maximise the number of birds available to be shot, commercial game-shooting applies intensive management techniques, including the removal of all predators. Some, like foxes, stoats and crows, are killed legally.

While the future of hen harriers may look gloomy, coverage of illegal raptor persecution has improved in the last decade, Tingay said, which is good news for the birds. “There’s barely a week goes by now when there isn’t some mention of it in the national press and it is a daily topic on social media platforms.” This is particularly substantial in the run-up to the grouse-shooting season on August 12 and the introduction of Hen Harrier Day in 2014.

With the fate of the bird in jeopardy, what the mood will be on Hen Harrier Day this year remains to be seen.

tinyurl.com/ybchyq9b

tinyurl.com/nat-eng-hen-harriers

tinyurl.com/rspb-hen-harriers-2018

WILDLIFE

BUILDING A FUTURE FOR AN ICONIC BIRD

Britain's swift populations are fragile, but we can change that, writes **Edward Mayer**

Swifts are incredible. A bird that can fly faster than any other, that can fly for three years non-stop, that sleeps on the wing, that can migrate at 8,000 feet high in the sky, that can fly for three or four days without food or water, that mates in the air, that has an intense, barely understood social life, forming screaming flocks in the sky: that is the swift.

But we are losing swifts because of the way we build. Long ago when Britain was covered with ancient forests, swifts nested in ancient woodpecker holes in ancient trees. The removal of those forests led swifts to move into buildings, into eaves and gable gaps, where they would nest, high up out of

harm's way. Recent changes in the way we ventilate buildings mean that these gaps no longer exist. Reroofing, demolition and repairs, as well as insulation work, are depriving swifts of nesting sites. New buildings are invariably inhospitable to them. Overall, we seem to have lost more than half our swifts in just 25 years.

I am helping to run a national Swift Awareness Week this coming 16–24 June. There will be activities at many locations, including a Swift Festival at the Walthamstow Wetlands Reserve, London on 16–17 June.

Edward Mayer is the founder of Swift Conservation.

swift-conservation.org

Put up a special swift nest box

You can buy these for about £16 each or make your own from Swift Conservation designs. Put them up directly under the eaves on a side of the house that is in clear airspace, with no creepers or trees too close. You can play swift calls on a CD or MP3 player to attract the birds to look at your nest box.



A nesting swift

Photograph © Alain Georgy

WILDLIFE

HUMAN EXPANSION THREAT TO CHEETAH

Areas where cheetah populations are the most precarious often overlap with places where humans face the greatest barriers to family planning services, according to a new report by the Cheetah Conservation Fund. “Since 90% of cheetahs live alongside humans, they are affected by the expansion of human settlements, and the health of humans is increasingly intertwined with their own,” the report *The Importance of Human Reproductive Health and Rights for Cheetah Conservation* says.

In an effort to stop this trend, the Cheetah Conservation Fund has become the latest conservation organisation to join the Population & Sustainability Network, a charity that promotes human sexual and reproductive health and rights as a critical element of sustainable development. (See *Family Planning Makes for a Healthy Ecosystem* in issue 306). Today there are only around 7,000 adult and adolescent cheetahs in the wild, 90% fewer than 100 years ago.

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tinyurl.com/cheetahs-humans

FARMING

CALL TO STOP LIVE ANIMAL TRANSPORT

Millions of live animals – including some who are pregnant, sick or very young – are transported for thousands of miles every year, often in shocking conditions. In a bid to end this practice, people are being urged to support Stop Live Transport Day on 14 June. Launched by Compassion in World Farming (CIWF) and now in its third year, the campaign has drawn supporters from across the world, with demonstrations from Paris to Israel. A petition to the UK government calling for an end to the export of live farm animals after Brexit had attracted over 99,000 signatures as this issue went to press.

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tinyurl.com/ciwf-live-transport

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Tony Boulton	Gabrielle Crisp	Darren Hall	Mukti Kumar Mitchell	Diana Morgan	Dame Fiona Reynolds	Ann Stanier	Joanne Wiles
Sarah Bovey	Sabine Crittall	Daniel Hall-Flavin	Nicola Kurk	Jen Morgan	Sally & Tim Reynolds	Dave Stanley	Jennifer Williams
Hilarie Bowman	Peter Crook	B. Halson	Chris Lampe	Margaret Morgan-Grenville	Lesley Rhoded	Derek Stedman	Shelley Williams
Juliet Boyd	Jon & Rachel Crookston	Sarah Hanson	Drs C. & G. Langley	Kate Morley	Maggie Rich	Cate Steele	Gordon Wilson
Sally Boys	Marion Curry	Stephen Hardman	Jonathan Lawrence	Dr Simon Morpeth	Liz Richards	Frances Steer	Patricia & Stephen Wilson
Gill Branch	Karen Dahlgren	Steve Harland	Brian Leach	Jacob Morrison	Emily Richmond	Sylvia Stevens	Harriet Winograd
Sally Branch	Lisa Davey	Tim & Caroline Harlow	Roland Lee	Sally Morrison	Susanna Riviere	Carina Stinchcombe	G. Winters
Rod Brans	Christina de Block	Penelope Harrington	Diana Lee &	Marge Moseley	Hilary Billie Roberts	Sara Stocks	Cheryl Wiseman
Denise Brien	Marcela de Montes	Charmian Harris	Rob Meredith	Mike & Trish Munro Turner	Trisha Roberts	Emily Stokes	Jenny Wood
John Briggs	Daniel Demmel	John Harris	Michelle Leggat	Mary Murray Wells	Nick Robins	John Stockford Stone	Julie Wood
Chris Bristow	Rupert H. Devereux	Ski Harrison	Gudrun Leitz	Hylton Murray-Phillipson	Patrick Robinson	Alan Suggate	Sean Wood
Michael Brock	Jacqueline A. Dewdney	Sarah Elen Hart	Suzanne Lemieux	Abi Myles	Jim Roche	Gillian Swan-Foster	Nigel Woodward
Chris Brooks	Sue Dickerson	Michael Haslewood	Emma Lewis	Renate Nahum	Ian Roderick	Systems Games	Dick & Sue Wright
Monica Brooks	Trish Dickinson	Judith Hedges	Karoki Lewis	Jeremy Naydler	Grace & Phil Rodgers	Stephen T.	Gilly Wyatt Smith
Marianne Brown	Howard Dobson	Martin & Jo Hefferman	Mary Lewis-Bizley	Gani Naylor	Dirk Rohwedder	Tanmayo	Lynne Wycherley
Dick Brown	Fred Dodson	Linda Henderson	Bruce H. Lipton	Duncan Needham	Florence Rolando	Mary Tasker	Pete Yeo
Peter M. Brown	Andrew Dodwell	Jennifer Heney	Catherine Lloyd	Revd Val Nellist	Cecilia Rose	Trevor Tasker	Irina Zadek
Daisy Bruce	Caroline Dorling	Di Hesketh &	Janet Lloyd	Lindy Newsam	Rosemary	Emma Taylor	Paul Zeal
Jennifer Bryce	Nicola Doyle	Gareth Watson	William Lloyd	Chris Newsam	Sheila Rowley	Nicola & Jonathan Taylor	
Rupert Bullock	Collette Drayson	Barbara Hickling	Ken Lomas	John Newton	Jill Rushbrooke	Patricia Taylor	
Angie Burke	Helen Drever	Matthew Hill	Ruth Longoni	Jenny Nissler	Rachel Russell	Phillip Taylor	
David Burnett	Michael Dunwell	David Hirst	Joyce M. Longwill	Diane & Fred Norman	Jane Ryan	Simon Taylor	
Jim Butterfield	Liz Dutch	Derek Hitchcock	Sarah Lovatt	Mrs E. M. Nottage	Nicola Rycroft	Stephen Terry	
Chris Buxton	Mike Dyer	Karis Hockey	Fran & Ian Lovett	Keith Obbard	T. James Sainsbury	Dorothy Thomas	



Illustration by Axel Scheffler

We'd also like to thank our business supporter Pukka Herbs and all the anonymous donors who supported our fundraising campaign.

Even though we reached our crowdfunding target, we are still fundraising to cover the costs of building a centre for education, the environment and the arts in Hartland. You can donate by calling us on +44 (0)1208 841824 or online: www.resurgence.org/resurgencefuture

NEW SPEAKERS AND PERFORMERS FOR RESURGENCE SUMMER CAMP



Illustration by Linda Scott www.lindascott.me.uk

More speakers, performers and workshops are being added for this year's Resurgence Summer Camp, which takes place at the Green & Away site near Bransford, Worcestershire over the weekend of 13–15 July, with the theme Exploring Creative Ideas for Change. Tickets are already on sale.

Among the keynote speakers are two familiar figures for *Resurgence & Ecologist* readers. Satish Kumar, former editor of this magazine, will be talking on *Soil, Soul, Society – A New Trinity for Our Time*, exploring the idea that catering for the natural environment, maintaining personal wellbeing and upholding human values are today's moral imperatives.

Oliver Tickell, former editor of the *Ecologist* website, and a regular contributor to this magazine, will explore how national and international law can be used to tackle the mounting plastics pollution crisis, in his talk *Marine Plastic Pollution – Holding Offenders Accountable*.

Among the entertainers at Summer Camp, Mobius Loop create gloriously eccentric gypsy folk stories, fusing world music and rap with free-form dance. Awantika Dubey is a Classical

Indian Raga singer and dancer with an international reputation, and Sally Pomme Clayton is a writer and performance storyteller with a recent BBC writing award to her name.

Julian Wood will lead a discussion group on *Random Acts of Kindness*, exploring how we can improve community life. There will also be yoga, a conversation café, craft and singing.

For many attending Summer Camp, however, the attraction is not just the events, but also the chance to meet old friends and make new ones in a beautiful environment.

Hilary Norton, who attended last year, said: "I love staying in the Green & Away 'village' surrounded by trees and shrubs. The vegetarian food is always delicious and there's nothing quite like getting to know others and having a sing around an open fire with an organic drink from the Rising Sunflower pop-up pub as the sun goes down. The speakers are always interesting and challenging and other activities are thoughtful and fun."

To book tickets and see programme updates visit:
www.resurgence.org/summercamp

RESURGENCE TALKS: NEW SEASON LINE-UP

The line-up for the rest of this year's Resurgence Talks, which take place on the last Wednesday evening of each month at 42 Acres, 66 Leonard Street, London EC2, has been announced.

25 April – Biologist and author Rupert Sheldrake will discuss *Science and Spiritual Practices*.

30 May – Colin Hines will speak on *The Way* in tribute to Teddy Goldsmith, the founder of the *Ecologist*, and expound his own ideas on Progressive Protectionism.

27 June – Satish Kumar will talk about *Elegant Simplicity*.

25 July – Patrick Holden, the founding director of The Sustainable Food Trust, will ask, "What should I eat to be sustainable and healthy?"

Talks resume after a break in August.

26 September – Scilla Elworthy, thrice nominated for the Nobel Peace Prize for her work with Oxford Research Group, will speak on *The Business Plan for Peace: Building a World Without War*.

31 October – Sir Tim Smit, founder of the Eden Project, will talk about *Creating Places of the Heart: the Need for Beauty to Go to War on Ugliness*.

28 November – journalist Madeleine Bunting will speak on *The Labours of Love: the Care Ethic and the Crisis in Human Sustainability*.

19 December – Rowan Williams, Master of Magdalene College, Cambridge, and former Archbishop of Canterbury, will consider *Educating for Insight: How Should We Rethink Education?*

www.resurgence.org/talks

NEW TRUSTEE

Herbert Girardet, the writer and environmentalist, and one of the world's leading thinkers on sustainable cities, has been elected a Resurgence Trustee.



MISSION: POSSIBLE

Rainforest Cloud Dawn Mist

Oliver Tickell talks about the rainforest, food systems and hope with author and

Tony Juniper is a man with a mission “to do for the natural environment what is finally happening with climate change – to attack the global wave of extinctions with the same focus and energy that climate campaigners took to Paris in 2015!”

Unlike most of us however, he is in a place where he might actually be able to bring it off. As the new campaigns director at WWF UK, he is determined to remotivate the organisation and make it a powerful fighting force to save our imperilled natural world. And the first thing is to transform the way we see Nature.

This is clear from the first chapter of his new book, *Rainforest: Dispatches from Earth's Most Vital Frontlines*. Rather than reiterating the usual compendium of precious rainforest biodiversity, he kicks off with the seemingly obscure research of scientist Peter Bunyard (as it happens, a former editor of the *Ecologist*) and his ingeniously low-tech experiments in a home-made ‘cloud chamber’ in his Cornwall garden.

Bunyard’s work has conclusively proved key elements of the ‘biotic’ pump theory originally advanced by Anastassia Makarieva and Victor Gorshkov: that forests – and especially

rainforests – do not merely grow in places that experience high rainfall. They themselves cause the rainfall and spread their life-giving rain and humidity through the atmosphere on a transcontinental scale. Hence the vast Amazon rainforest is responsible for the moisture carried in 6km-high ‘sky rivers’ all the way from the Atlantic coast west to the Andes, south to Paraguay and Argentina, north to Central America and the Great Plains of the USA (breadbasket of the world), and even across the Atlantic Ocean to distant Europe.

Suddenly the conservation debate shifts ground. Of course we should save biodiversity for its own sake, and for the potential of more useful plants like the Madagascar periwinkle, the basis of drugs used to treat childhood leukaemia. But it’s much more important than that. Tony’s message is blunt and uncompromising: “Rainforests are essential, living components of the planetary weather and climate systems that we depend on for rain, and hence for the water we drink and the food we eat every day. Destroy them, and we starve.”

And it’s that view of Nature as utterly essential, not an optional green lifestyle add-on, that he is determined to communicate. “Tigers, pandas and parrots are great symbols of



Photograph © Nick Garbutt www.nickgarbutt.com

campaigner Tony Juniper

conservation – but what it’s really about is our own survival. We have to go beyond individual species and take on the systemic drivers of biodiversity loss and deforestation. Like the food system: we have the expansion of soya into South American forests and wetlands, cocoa in West African rainforests, palm oil in South East Asia and around the tropics, industrial livestock farming in the Amazon, the overgrazing of fragile grasslands, the clearance of forests and rangelands for crops, pollution of rivers and coastlines with fertiliser runoff, pesticides killing off pollinators vital to agriculture...

“There is a mindset that destruction of Nature is the price we have to pay for ‘progress’ – but how is it progress if it’s actually destroying the food system itself? The loss of bees and other insects, large-scale soil erosion, unpredictable rainfall, depletion of groundwater are already making it increasingly hard to grow food. The food system is undermining its own future, which depends absolutely on all these free goods of Nature. Of course making our agriculture sustainable is good for the environment, but most importantly it’s about food security!”

And the good news? Well, it seems that major corporations are starting to appreciate these truths: “The business voice



Tony Juniper: we need to be bold

Photograph courtesy Tony Juniper

on these issues is changing. There's an increasing number of people who understand there is no profit on a dead planet, especially among those involved in food and water. Big global companies like Nestlé are putting into place major sustainability plans because they understand the dangers ahead and want to make their voices heard. And this shifting attitude in the business space is hugely influential. Politicians talk a lot about supporting business – and they are getting the message that one of the things business wants is a healthy environment. Maybe that underlies the green agenda we are seeing now in both the UK government and the opposition.

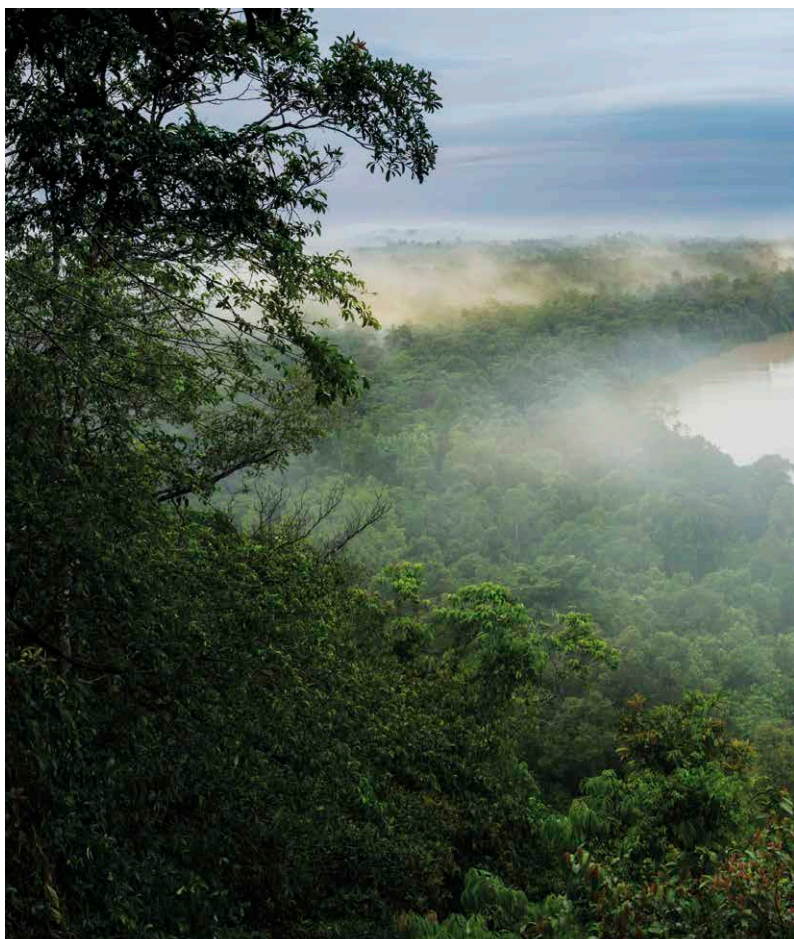
“And it's not just business, but ordinary people whose quality of life is intimately bound up with their local environment, and who often care desperately about stuff that's going on far away too, whether it's ocean plastic or the melting Arctic. And that creates huge opportunities for the environment movement to secure the gains we need.”

But shouldn't we be sceptical of politicians' promises? “It's true that David Cameron's ‘hug a husky’ phase was quite swiftly followed by ‘cut the green crap’,” Juniper responds. “But it was between the two that we secured the Climate Change Act, and it's still with us, and despite some unhelpful things it is forcing the government to take climate change seriously. Now we have a similar opportunity to push for a strong Environment Act to cement in all the policy changes that have recently been announced on farming, plastics, recycling and other topics, and make them permanent too.”

A huge opportunity for global conservation is coming up: the Biodiversity Convention's Conference of the Parties in Beijing in 2020. “The Convention has been in force since 1993, but it has yet to deliver a legally binding global agreement to stop the wave of extinctions we are now experiencing. It's time for a new regime that delivers, and that's why Beijing 2020 is so important. We have to make sure the COP delivers an effective Plan for Nature and stems the tide of species and habitat loss. And if the UK is responding to public demands for change, showing how farm payments can be used to restore Nature, soils, water quality and ecosystems, that will be setting a great example. We need countries to lead the way and set a standard for others – and it's our job to make sure the UK is one of those leaders!”

After the food system, a second big systemic driver of biodiversity loss is the financial system, he says. “The whole of human civilisation rests on the foundation of healthy Nature – soils, forests, fresh water, oceans... so we have to look at how the financial system creates money and allocates it to activities and projects that destroy the natural world, in the process undercutting its own future. Campaigners are doing great work on climate change: lobbying pension funds to divest from fossil fuels, raising fears about ‘stranded assets’ like unwanted coal mines and power stations, persuading banks that fossil fuels are a risky investment. Now we need to do the same for biodiversity.”

“A central challenge is to re-engineer the financial system to deliver natural benefits – and it's a tough one. But if the will is there it can be done. Look at how the world responded to the financial crisis: creating trillions of dollars out of thin air to bail out the banking system. Governments and central banks were prepared to take powerful, drastic actions. But



Morning mist, Kinabatangan River

“The Indigenous people have developed a worldview that aims at safeguarding the forest, not only from a spiritual point of view but because their lives depend on it”

the crisis we now face – which imperils the entire future of the planet – is immeasurably greater. This is why we need all countries to come together to work this out at Beijing in 2020 and adopt a strong, legally binding treaty to end the extinction tsunami.”

But to make it work will mean adopting new approaches to conservation. While protected areas, on land and in sea, have vital roles to play, Nature is not something you can just fence off from the world at large, and impose a ‘fortress conservation’ regime of the kind epitomised by national parks patrolled by armed guards. A telling chapter in Juniper's *Rainforest* book describes how “the best forest custodians are the people who live there,” quoting Colombian anthropologist Martín von Hildebrand's words:

“The Indigenous people have developed a worldview that aims at safeguarding the forest, not only from a spiritual point of view but because their lives depend on it. It is their home, their identity, their understanding of themselves and the world. They are at one with the rainforest. They are the rainforest ... they offer better protection for the rainforests than the National Parks.”



Photograph © Nick Garbutt

The rule holds across South America, but also more widely. While formal forest protection has delivered broadly positive results, Tony Juniper writes, “it is important to take account of the disputes and conflicts that have sometimes accompanied their designation, for example, in curtailing local people’s rights of access.” This is the case in Cameroon, for example, where Survival International (SI), which campaigns for the rights of Indigenous peoples, has made serious allegations over abuses of the Indigenous Baka people by forest guards employed by the government, but supported by WWF with uniforms, supplies and training, including human rights training.

His position on the broad principle is clear: “Conservation always works best with local people as partners. Community-based eco-tourism of the kind we see at India’s Periyar tiger reserve is my favourite model everywhere in the world – employing Indigenous guides, allowing low-impact uses of the forest, and working with smallholder communities next to forest areas. Anyone whose livelihood is taken away from them will be forced into things they may not want to do, and that’s something that can totally undermine what you’re trying to achieve.” And for SI, the message is a positive one: “The door is open and we want to talk about approaches to conservation that work for Nature, and for people too.”

And if all this new thinking is a departure from the more narrowly focused WWF of old, Juniper clearly believes it is time for the organisation to set out new directions. “Our

WWF supporters are not necessarily looking at things in that broad way,” he admits. “But they can be brought into the discussion. Even 20 years ago recycling was seen as an eccentric fringe activity. Now it is a huge, mainstream multi-billion-pound industry backed up by UK and EU laws.

“It is possible to create big shifts over quite small time-scales. Just yesterday I heard Steve Wright on BBC Radio 2 talking about families who have chosen to avoid single-use plastics. Or look to the rocketing numbers of vegetarians and vegans, evidence of the growing awareness of animal welfare and of wider issues in the meat supply chain like GMO feeds grown on former rainforest and doused in toxic pesticides. Can this be harnessed? I think it can.

“We are in a position where we have to think big now. We need a bold approach, and that’s what I want to foster here. We need to harness the incredible power of informed and committed citizens – which is the greatest power we have. So no time for rest, but who needs rest? There’s too much to do!”

R

Tony Juniper is Executive Director for Advocacy and Campaigns at WWF UK, and author of *Rainforest: Dispatches from Earth’s Most Vital Frontlines*, published this spring by Profile Books. He is a former trustee of The Resurgence Trust.

Oliver Tickell, a regular contributor to *Resurgence & Ecologist*, is the author of *International Law and Marine Plastic Pollution: Holding Offenders Accountable*, a report published by Artists Project Earth. www.apeuk.org/opli

The long, arduous journey of the migrant

Kate Blincoe welcomes back a bird unfairly bedevilled by its behaviour



Young cuckoo being fed by Eurasian reed warbler

© IMAGEBROKER, THOMAS HINSCHKE / Imagebroker / FLPA

The cuckoo was named ‘Skinner’, after my dad, and fixed with a tracker by the British Trust for Ornithology (BTO). We logged on as a family to see where he was, keeping check on him as he crossed continents. Skinner favoured a route from Norfolk in the east of England, over to southern Spain and then on to Angola.

We anxiously tracked him for a couple of years until his untimely demise. You surely can’t get too attached to a blob on a map, yet we felt something akin to grief, even though we’d been expecting it. Many cuckoos don’t live for very long, a fact highlighted by the BTO’s high turnover of tagged individuals, as well as the figures showing that we have lost over half of our breeding cuckoos during the last 25 years.

Research shows that climate change is a factor, with the birds failing to adjust their migration to coincide with an ever-earlier spring, but what we see in Britain is only half the picture. There are many challenges along the way: the barren heat of the Sahara desert will kill a cuckoo if it hasn’t fattened up sufficiently before attempting to cross, and

for birds there remains the risk of being shot in certain parts of the world.

Until recently, very little was known about the cuckoos once they set off for Africa – which routes do they favour, which are safest, and where exactly do they spend the winter months? The BTO’s findings illustrate that where Nature conservation is concerned, national borders are absurd. To tackle problems such as climate change, air pollution or biodiversity loss, we must think globally.

The cuckoo’s arrival here is something of a miracle, and I cannot avoid the comparison with human migrants, undertaking perilous journeys, hoping to reach safe shores to raise a family and sometimes dying in the process.

This year’s cuckoos will be arriving back in Britain around now for their breeding season. Will you hear that melodious two-note call this year? My children never have heard it and maybe never will, although the cuckoo’s breeding habits are entertaining to explain to a child: “Imagine a much bigger boy or girl coming into your home, tricking us that they were your brother or sister and then pushing you out of the window

when Mummy wasn’t looking!”

It’s easy to be scandalised by this behaviour, and the cuckoo has become entrenched in our culture as representing all that is duplicitous and deceptive – the true imposter. It features in much literature, including Chaucer and Shakespeare, where the term ‘cuckold’ was an insult to a man whose wife had been unfaithful – the implication being that the husband could be raising children that were not his own. It also plays into our fears of outsiders coming in and taking what is ours.

Yet the cuckoo’s breeding tactics are of course nothing more than an evolutionary niche, in the same way that a male stoat will mate with a female kit shortly after her birth so that she will be pregnant before even leaving the nest.

The cuckoo should be a reminder, not of trickery and infidelity, but for us to look beyond our borders and seek the wider context, and to remember that the things we hold dear as British are very rarely as straightforwardly ‘ours’ as we believe. R

Kate Blincoe is the author of *The No Nonsense Guide to Green Parenting*.

The body is *not* a machine

A new health bill could threaten the integrity of India's traditional medicine, argues **Vandana Shiva**

Across the world an intense contest is emerging between two paradigms of health and two paradigms of science. The first paradigm is holistic and sees links between the health of the planet and human health. It is based on the ecological science of interconnectedness.

The second paradigm is reductionist, mechanistic and commercial and sees humans as separate from Nature, and each part of our body as separate from all others, as parts of a machine are. It defines health as a commodity we buy from the pharmaceutical industry. In the US and the UK intense debates are taking place about whether health care is a public good or a privatised commodity for sale.

In India a multidimensional debate emerged when the National Medical Commission Bill, 2017 was introduced in the Indian parliament. The bill seeks to allow practitioners of Ayurveda, yoga, naturopathy, Unani, Siddha medicine and homoeopathy to practise modern (allopathic) medicine once they complete a short-term 'bridge' course.

There have been many objections to this bill. The Indian Medical Association called a strike to protest against it, and it has now been referred to a parliamentary select committee.

While the objection of allopathic doctors is to the Ayurvedic and other traditional medicine practitioners being permitted to practise modern medicine, my objection is to the degradation and devaluation of one of the oldest and most sophisticated health systems through being swallowed up by a mechanistic commercial system.

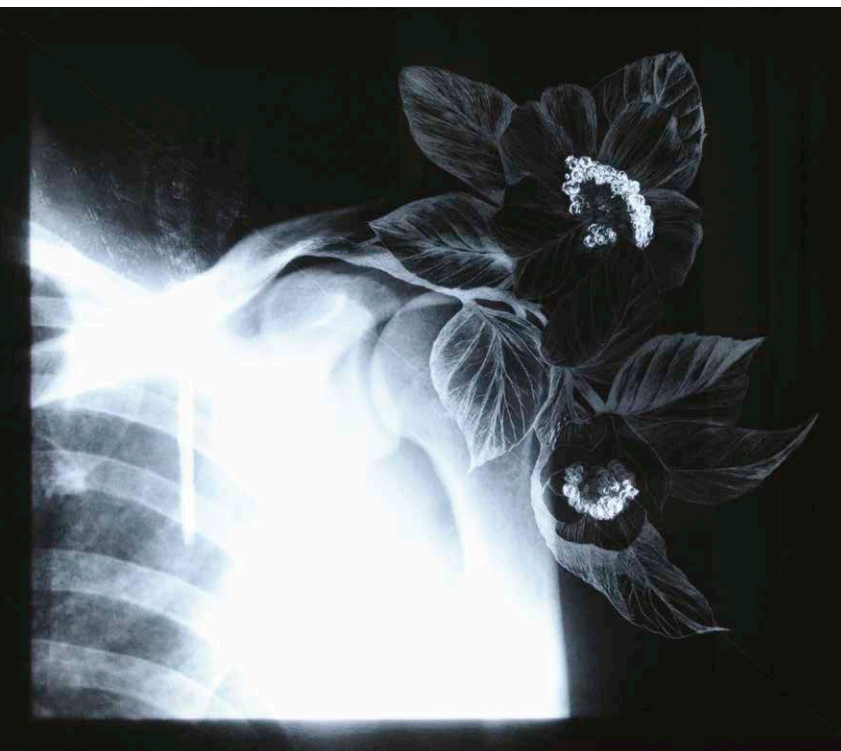
Ayurveda – the science (*veda*) of life (*ayur*) – is a highly sophisticated system of health, nutrition and diet guided by 5,000 years of time-tested knowledge. I see it as one of India's greatest gifts to the world, along with agroecology and organic farming, which were brought to the west by Sir Albert Howard through his *Agricultural Testament*.

In contrast, much of what is called 'modern medicine' is based on pharmaceuticals derived from the chemical and dye industries in the last hundred years or so.

The mechanistic paradigm has transformed the diversity of knowledge systems into a hierarchy, privileging the mechanistic and reductionist paradigm as the only science, and pushing all other knowledge systems to oblivion or treating them as inferior. The word 'science' is derived from the Latin *scire*, meaning 'to know'. To live is to know. We are all knowers of different kinds. Diverse knowledge systems are scientific within their own paradigms. Mechanistic reductionist thinking does not just reduce the world to fragmented, separated parts: it also reduces our capacity to know.

By creating hierarchies of knowledge, it creates a hierarchy of knowers. It creates the assumption that there are 'experts' with 'objective' knowledge, who are separate from and superior to ordinary men, women, peasants, workers. Not only does it falsely make the practitioner of reductionist science superior to experts of other knowledge traditions such as Ayurveda and agroecology, but it also tries to reduce the rich systems knowledge of agroecology and Ayurveda to a mechanistic basis, thus robbing them of their very strength. This is knowledge apartheid, which prevents us from accessing the real answers for living healthy lives.

But now, with the repeated failures and limitations of the reductionist approach to life, in agriculture and in health, the relevance of agroecology and Ayurveda is growing. There is increasing awareness that the health crisis and the epidemic of non-communicable chronic diseases (which I think are wrongly termed 'lifestyle' diseases and prefer to call 'food-style' diseases) are related to the environment and our food. We need holistic systems to understand the interconnections between



Clavicula by Nunzio Paci www.nunziopaci.it

ourselves and the Earth so that we can live in ways that contribute to a healthy planet and healthy people.

The Ayurvedic science of health is centred on food. Food is recognised as being key to the wellbeing of the planet and people, health and healing. Today, the cutting-edge sciences of biology are understanding that the body is not a machine, but a complex, self-organised, self-regulating ecosystem. Ayurveda identified the principles of self-organisation thousands of years ago. It has thus evolved as an ecological and a systems science, not a fragmented and reductionist one.

In a mechanistic paradigm, chemical, mechanical and genetic technologies become the measure of the sophistication of a health system. But technologies are tools. Tools need to be assessed on ethical, social and ecological criteria. Tools/technologies have not been viewed as self-referential in Indian civilisation. They have been assessed in the context of contributing to the wellbeing of all.

Reductionist mechanistic paradigms are being revealed as inadequate by modern science itself. The emerging alternative is that life is a process that is coordinated and influenced by all the molecules in living systems, including by their physical structures and the various emergent properties of these. Life is therefore self-organised.

Ayurveda recognises that every part of the body is related, and that the digestive system plays an important role in both health and disease – that the body is not a machine, and food is not fuel that runs the machine on Newtonian laws of mass and motion. Food is not ‘mass’: it is living – it is the source of life and the source of health.

Western science is now finding out the same. In his book *The Mind–Gut Connection*, gastroenterologist and neuroscientist Emeran Mayer acknowledges: “For decades the mechanistic, militaristic disease model set the agenda for medical research. As long as you could fix the affected mechanical part, we thought, the problem would be solved; there was no need to understand its ultimate cause ... We are just beginning to realize that the gut, the microbes living in it – the gut microbiota – and the signalling molecules that they produce from their vast number of genes – the microbiome – constitute one of the major components of these regulatory systems.”

There is an intimate connection between soils, plants, our gut and our brain. There are 100,000 times more microbes in our gut than there are people on the planet. To function in a healthy way, the gut microbiome needs a diverse diet, and a diverse diet needs diversity in our fields and gardens. A loss of diversity in our diet creates ill health.

The gut is increasingly being referred to as the second brain. It has its own nervous system – termed the enteric nervous system – with 50–100 million nerve cells. Our bodies are intelligent organisms. Intelligence is not localised in the brain. It is distributed. And the intelligence in the soil, in the plants, in our bodies makes for health and wellbeing.



Papaver field / Campo di papaveri by Nunzio Paci

The same chemical industry that brings us toxics in agriculture also controls pharmaceuticals. Bayer and Monsanto are now merging. The toxic chemical industry is responsible for many of the chronic disease epidemics we face. The chemicalisation of health has created new iatrogenic diseases, which are the result of mechanistic chemical approaches and diagnostic and therapeutic procedures leading to adverse drug reactions and side effects that are often more likely to prove fatal than the disease being treated.

The industrial health system and the mechanistic reductionist paradigm of health that it is based on cannot be the future of a healthy planet and healthy people. Instead of degrading Ayurveda by fitting it into the mechanistic paradigm, it is time to evolve a biodiversity of health systems and knowledge systems that recognise the ecology of health, the ecology of our bodies and the connection of our health to the health of the Earth.

Indian civilisation has evolved and sustained itself over thousands of years by putting the health, happiness and wellbeing of the Earth, all her beings and all people at the centre of its agriculture and health systems. Our traditional sciences have been based on the recognition of the interconnections and interrelatedness between humans and Nature, between diverse organisms, and within all living systems, including the human body. R

Vandana Shiva is the director of Navdanya.
www.navdanya.org

When we try to pick out
anything by itself, we find it
hitched to everything else
in the Universe

– John Muir (1838–1914)
Scottish-American conservationist
from *My First Summer in the Sierra* (1911)

Wildness reminds us what it
means to be human, what are
we connected to rather than
what we are separated from

– Terry Tempest Williams (b.1955)
American author, conservationist, feminist

When I want to celebrate,
I always plant a tree

– Wangari Maathai (1940–2011)
Founder of Kenya's Green Belt Movement, which
since its inception has planted 51 million trees

Redevelopment makes new waves on the river

Plans for the future of the canalised Los Angeles River have brought praise and protest. Urban geographer **Bradley Garrett** walked its length

It was still dark when we scaled the fence at the confluence of Bell Creek and Arroyo Calabasas to begin our three-day trek down the 51-mile Los Angeles River. Our plan was to walk inside the concrete channel right through California's largest city, from the headwaters at Canoga Park to the point at Long Beach where canalised rainfall is sluiced into the sea. Our crew consisted of four self-confessed infrastructure aficionados – two geographers, a historian and an engineer. We were all yearning for adventure, but also keen to get a sense of the communities that lived alongside, and in, this riparian slice. We didn't know if walking the river was safe – or in places even legal – but we were determined to trace its entire channel.

After the first 18 miles we became entirely dismissive of the 'no trespassing' signs, since no one seemed to be around to enforce them, save a government lorry full of what looked like firewood, spraying an arc of water as it sped past, destination unknown. Traversing the vast channel at gloaming, hemmed in by an imposing concrete grade screening industrial zones, flanked by sodium street lamps peeking over the banks, we felt we could be traversing a desert wash halfway to Las Vegas rather than a backstage of Burbank. Incongruent landscape features, including fake palm trees serving up mobile phone reception, bolstered an eerie sense of placelessness.

The river was long inhabited by Tongva people and described in lush terms by Spanish explorers in 1769 expedition journals. It has always played a dual role, being both crucial to life as a water source and a great danger when that water bursts its banks. In 1938, at the end of LA's 'boom town' era, a flood carrying as much as 99,000 cubic feet of water per second killed over a hundred people, prompting the Army Corps of Engineers to use 3.5 million barrels of concrete to transform it from watercourse to flood-control feature in the public imagination. Today, the river is central to media representations of the city – think *Grease*, *Chinatown*, *Terminator* – but is not enjoyed by residents

in the way that rivers in other major cities are.

This is changing. LA Mayor Eric Garcetti has committed US\$1.4 billion to the environmental and aesthetic revitalisation of the river and awarded the planning contract to the eminent architect Frank Gehry. Garcetti claims that the river will be redesigned as a prominent public space, adding 2,300 acres of new parkland to the metropolis.

However, a small group of residents called Friends of the LA River (FOLAR), who have spearheaded a decades-long campaign for the ecological restoration of the river, are apprehensive about Gehry's plans, given statements about prioritising flood protection and water capture over recreation and wildlife. Many are also unnerved by the make-up of the board of directors behind the project, which includes real-estate developers and property lawyers, raising concerns for some that the river restoration may also be a green-sheened gentrification ploy in the run-up to the 2028 Olympics.

Nowhere is this more visible than in the Glendale Narrows heading into Frogtown, where a two-mile stretch of the river has been declared a "recreation zone" by the mayor, who can be seen online kayaking through a metre-deep greywater flow in the vicinity. A local business called The Frog Spot runs kayaking classes where people can paddle around small islands of native rocks and trees festooned with shredded bin bags like post-apocalyptic Christmas tree baubles. One of these islands, we noted as we passed the area on day two, had been decorated for a Pirate Thug Party, according to a hand-painted sign hanging under a disco ball. Playful, slightly sordid, and altogether temporary places like this will almost certainly be eradicated by Gehry's 'vision' for the river.

We met with two local artists here, Rob and Jen, who took us through an outdoor exhibition space in an 18-acre post-industrial lot called Bowtie Parcel. As we walked, they told us that many of their friends and neighbours were feeling the pressure of the redevelopment. According to a recent article in *The Nation*, more than half of riverfront properties





Los Angeles River and downtown skyline by Peter Bennett www.citizenoftheplanet.com

in Frogtown have changed hands in the last three years, sale prices have more than doubled, and rents have increased dramatically.

Later that day, we happened on a photo shoot in the shallow-pooled water under the charismatic Sixth Street Viaduct. Whereas most of our walk was lonely, here we encountered fellow trespassers who colonised the channel so utterly that police had long given up caring about those squeezing through the chain-link or driving down the access tunnel to reach the liquid flats. Weeks later, in orthodox LA style, the 84-year-old bridge, one of the city's most recognisable architectural features, was torn to pieces by heavy machinery and dragged to the dump to make way for a new one reminiscent of an airport terminal corridor.

Historically, the river has been a place where low-income Angelenos could afford to buy a home and even have outdoor space. Close to the district of Compton, we walked past makeshift plywood stables full of neighing ponies in people's yards. We also met people making the river itself home. As of last year, Los Angeles had almost 60,000 citizens living on the streets, some of whom made their homes astride the riverbanks and on sewage outfall platforms. One fellow we encountered had lashed himself and his belongings into bridge girders with a web of cables. Some of these riverside communities are so extensive that they have developed their own political structures, including mayors. I wondered how many of them had been consulted by Garcetti. What Garcetti has done is accept – perfectly legally – a US\$5 million donation from developer Morton La Kretz towards the cost of building a new bridge across the river, next to an area La Kretz seeks to have rezoned in order to construct a 60-unit subdivision.

Given that the Army Corps of Engineers will be the ones to chip out the concrete they laid 75 years ago, the redevelopment of the river will undoubtedly retain, and probably enhance, its ability to curtail rare flood events. It may even improve the drought-prone city's ability to harness and recycle the water flowing through it daily – enough, by some measures, to serve the needs of the half-million people living in Long Beach at the river's mouth. However, given also that most Angelenos could not point you towards the river and that many who do care for it are being forced away, it remains to be seen how the future LA River will serve the citizenry as a public space worthy of the name. Perhaps more people would appreciate that potential if they were to walk it, stitching together this parched metropolis through its weird wet scar. R

Bradley Garrett is an American social geographer currently working at the University of Sydney. His books include *Explore Everything: Place-hacking the City* and *Global Undergrounds: Exploring Cities Within*.



Earth as teacher Earth as client

James Thornton is an environmental lawyer who has taken on corporations and governments – and won. Here, he explains the philosophy that inspires him, how it can inform new law – and where a new ecological civilisation may be taking shape

ILLUSTRATIONS BY TONY DEMURO

Illustration from The Trees Series by Toni Demuro www.tonidemuro.com

I've been a practising lawyer since 1980, and a Zen student almost as long. My root teacher was a Japanese Zen master living in Los Angeles, called Maezumi Roshi. When I was in my tenth year of studying with Maezumi, my husband Martin met him for the first time. It was at the end of a week-long intensive retreat in the San Jacinto Mountains of Southern California, a very beautiful natural place.

Martin politely said to Maezumi, "Thank you for your teachings, which have been so important to James." Maezumi replied: "I am not James's teacher. Nature, Nature is his teacher."

After 10 years' intensive Zen training, Maezumi was pointing out who I really needed to pay attention to.

There are different ways to take Nature as your teacher. Deep meditation in the womb of the natural world is one. This is the traditional province of forest monks. Giving expression to the feelings opened by your connection with Nature is another – much of my poetry is about the natural world, and what it is always teaching.

Another way is to be with, move through, listen and absorb. We recently had a wonderful two weeks with the rainforests, desert and ocean in Australia. The cassowary we encountered, with his three chicks, is still unfurling teachings in my heart.

The Earth is also my client. I am an environmental lawyer, and the organisation I founded is called ClientEarth.

When I was in Australia, people asked why I was there. I told them that I was visiting my client. If you are a lawyer, you listen to your clients and serve their needs. So if your client is the Earth, *how* do you listen to it and enquire into what it needs?

I believe that when it comes to expressing its needs in a way that can connect with the worlds of policy and politics, legislation and litigation, the Earth speaks to us in the grammar of science. Let me give you some examples.

ClientEarth is now 10 years old, and we are now a team of over a hundred people. We have offices in London, Brussels, Warsaw, Beijing and New York, and lawyers in five African countries and Australia. We work to protect biodiversity, slow climate change, and protect forests and human health. In each of these areas, we start with the science, develop policy, help write laws, then implement those laws, and finally go to court when they are broken.

When I was just starting ClientEarth, we had only a handful of people. I wondered what was the most impactful thing I could do about climate change. The scientists made it clear: coal-fired power plants were public enemy number one. So I decided to prevent new coal-fired power plants in Europe. We then helped stop a new generation of six such plants in the UK, and we have stopped a new generation of 14 huge stations in Poland. This is not easy work, but it is something you can achieve with law. We are moving on to consider how we can stop the use of

coal entirely, in all existing facilities, across Europe.

Another example: we started working on fisheries because 10 years ago I enquired of the scientists, what is the biggest biodiversity problem in the EU that we can address? The answer that came back was, the destruction of European fish stocks.

That was the Earth teaching me, and the Earth being my client.

We worked on the legislation in Brussels that regulates fisheries: the Common Fisheries Policy. It took six years and a growing team, and collaboration with scientists, NGOs and politicians. At the final stage of the negotiations in Brussels, we were

Law can help transform society from where we are to where we need to be if we are to thrive in the future

close to losing out to the Spanish fishing interests. We brought in a group of six scientists from around the world to make a presentation to the politicians. We worked with them until they all simplified the message of their specialties into a single storyline, and it was this: if you leave enough fish in the sea, there will be enough fish in the sea!

This was the Earth giving a positive message to the politicians through the scientists. And it worked: we got through a law that requires enough fish to be left in the sea so that in 100 years there will be fish, and fishers with jobs.

The Earth is always telling a positive story. The intelligence that inheres in the Earth systems, and in the three and a half billion years of life's evolving, can be heard in the science. And the science needs to be worked into policy, then into law.

Law captures the agreement of what a society is willing to live by. It can be pushed by a positive vision, and informed by our best understanding of the facts. Law can help transform society from where we are to where we need to be, if we are to thrive into the future. Law captures a society's vision of itself in a network of rules. Those rules are as much a part of our natural evolution as the rules on energy transfer in ecosystems.

What do we need to do if we want to improve the network of laws that connect, protect and bind us? We need to start with a vision.

When Aristotle called human beings the rational animal, he forgot an important thing. He forgot story. Story and storytelling are more central to us as creatures than rationality. If we were really rational, the current US president wouldn't have won the White House. He won it by telling stories that illustrate what Buddhists call the three mental poisons: greed, anger and ignorance.

If we want to create wellbeing for people and the Earth, we need to tell a different story, and we need to make it compelling, because the rational

discourse of science and law always operates within the larger story a culture tells about itself. If we create, or I should say co-create, the right positive vision, then law, drawing on science, can build the foundations for a society that we want to live in.

Environmentalists like me have not been good at telling a positive story, a story so attractive that it will draw us into the future together. Instead, we have focused on what is wrong. This is understandable: environmental problems at a global scale are very new. Synthetic chemicals took off after the second world war. On the first Earth Day in 1970, no one knew about climate change – that came later. It is only in the last 40 years that the number of wild animals living on Earth has been reduced by 50%, and we have entered the Sixth Extinction.

If we are to create the world we want, we need to change our story

We are still waking up to what we have done, and many refuse to even admit these things are happening. So it is not surprising that we haven't absorbed the current crises, turned around, and articulated a compelling positive vision. But we need to. A positive vision is the best prophylactic against the fear-mongering of demagogues.

Let me borrow here from resilience theory, an exciting young discipline within ecology. Resilience theory grew from the study of forests. Scientists started by thinking that the fate of a forest was controlled by annual cycles of rain, pest infestations, and so on. But studying deeply, they found that the opposite is true. They learned that it is the longer cycles that control the shorter.

The surprise was profound. Not only did the annual cycles not control, but it was not even the trees that ran things. Instead, it was the forest as a whole that controlled all the quicker cycles. The forest controlled which plants and animals could survive there, and if big enough, the forest could also make the weather. The way the scientists put it is this: the long slow variables control the short quick variables. The forest, which lives thousands of years, controls the trees, which live hundreds of years, which control the leaves, which live a year.

What does this mean for creating stories, and achieving a positive future?

Let us take resilience theory across into human cycles. Mostly we are captivated by the quick things. We are captivated by the latest bad news, daily. We are captivated by the current politics, the current election cycle. These are like the annual cycle of the leaves. We rarely look up and see a longer time horizon. When we do, it is a cycle of a few decades. The New Deal and its impact in America in the

1930s and early 1940s; the participation of the UK in the European Union from the 1970s. This longer view is like the lifecycle of the trees.

What is at the *forest level* in human cycles, the long slow variable that controls the quick cycles? It is the story we tell ourselves as a culture. Every culture has its myth. This dominant story is what controls everything else. If an idea fits into the dominant story, it may take root and flourish. If it does not, it may wither or the person giving voice to it may suffer opprobrium or even death.

To take an example, for a long time the dominant story in Europe was Christianity. In the Middle Ages and extending into the Renaissance, Catholic orthodoxy was very strong. As a participant in that culture, the thoughts that arose in your mind would have been shaped by it. Your actions would have been determined by it. Deviation brought house arrest to Galileo, and burning at the stake to Giordano Bruno.

What is our dominant story in the west now? Growing from the start of the Industrial Revolution, our story has become capitalism. And though it is wearing thin, the recent edition of our story has been consensus neoliberal capitalism, as enunciated by – among others – economists at the University of Chicago. This has had profound consequences, including for the environment. Little that does not fit within this story gets onto the screens of decision makers. Because the current story places no value on anything other than growth, and gives us no role other than as consumers, it does not hold within it the seeds of a positive vision.

If we are to create the world we want, we need to change our story. With a compelling and positive vision, facts will matter again, people will be valued, and Nature will be treated as our teacher. We will take care of it like our own eyes.

Where do we turn for this positive vision? I have a suggestion that may surprise you. It comes from my work in China, and I have written about it in my book, *Client Earth*.

I was invited into China in 2014, to lead a seminar for members of the Supreme People's Court, the country's highest court, and other senior officials. The reason for their invitation was that a law had just been passed in China to allow environmental groups to sue polluting companies. My hosts were seeking my advice about how to set the system up, so that Chinese citizens could hold companies to account.

This began a period of deep engagement between ClientEarth and the Chinese Supreme Court, Ministry of Environmental Protection, and other officials. After much first-hand experience, I became convinced that their government is serious about addressing what they know are the world's worst environmental problems. China has terrible air, water and soil pollution, unsafe food, and the highest level of carbon emissions. The Chinese people



The forest controls the trees which control the leaves...

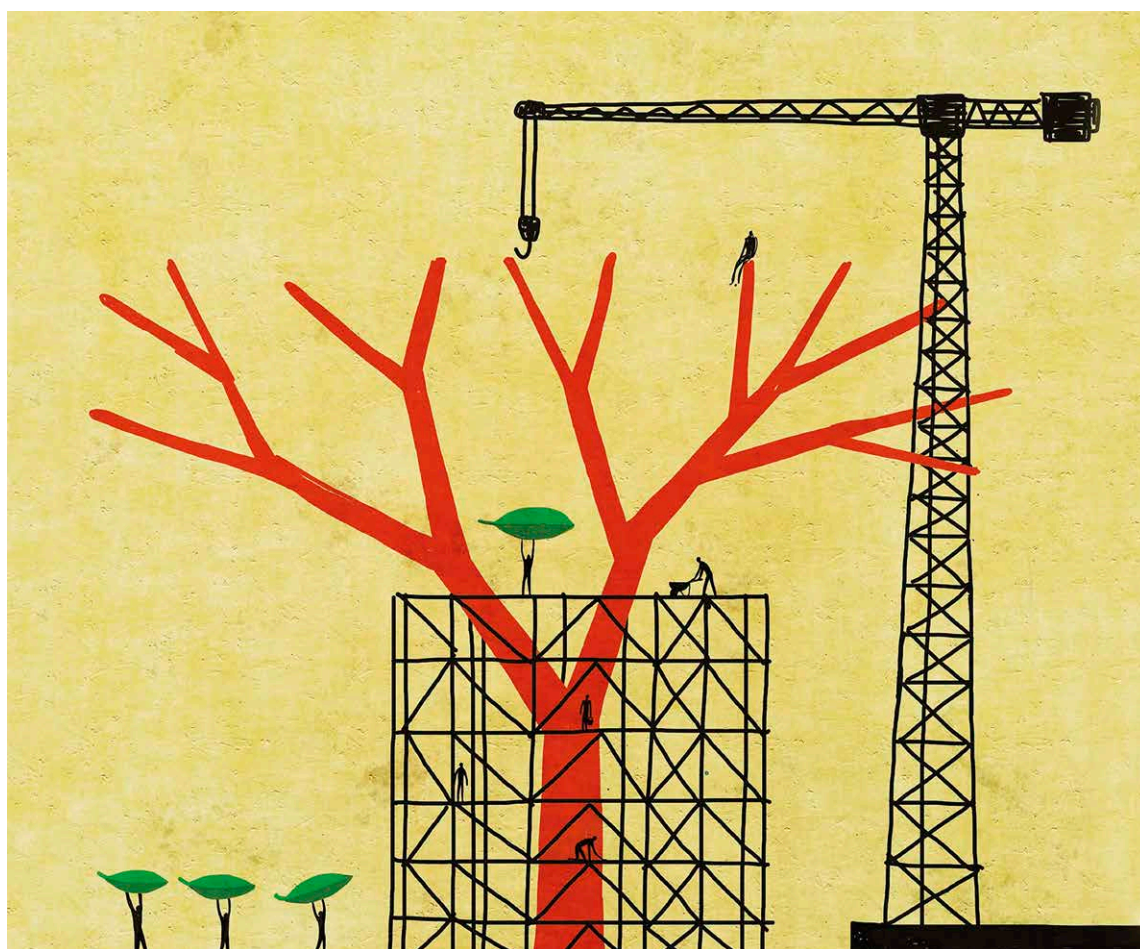
Illustration by Toni Demuro www.tonidemuro.com

are upset about it, and use social media to discuss it.

The vision of the leaders is that China has been there for 2,500 years and they want to have a prosperous and healthy future for another 2,000 years. That is their timescale. They say their goal was to raise the greatest number of people from poverty in history, and they have done so. But they were

ignorant of the fact that they were harming the environment. Now that it is clear, they must both clean up the environment and be seen to be doing so by the Chinese people.

As a result, I believe China is becoming the most environmentally progressive country in today's political landscape. It is giving people easier access



They are building a culture-changing vision

Illustration by Toni Demuro www.tonidemuro.com

They are building a culture-changing vision ... an ecological civilisation

But on top of all of these things, the Chinese have broken through to the need for story. And their story is at the level of the forest, the level that will set the tone and conditions for all the activity below. They are building a culture-changing vision.

They have decided that they are going to create an ecological civilisation. They say there was previously an agricultural civilisation, then an industrial civilisation, and that now we need to build an ecological civilisation. Nor is this just a slogan. It is the official policy to create this ecological civilisation.

Being practical people, they asked themselves how to go about doing so. They broke it down into eight components: these include economic policy for an ecological civilisation, agricultural policy, industrial policy, rule of law, and so on. I was on a panel that worked for a year and a half – Western and Chinese experts together – to come up with

recommendations for how to change the Chinese legal system so that it could help deliver an ecological civilisation. Our recommendations have gone to the Premier. We will now see what happens.

This is a conscious experiment in building a new story for a culture, one designed to draw forward the changes that are needed. The Chinese have committed hundreds of their best intellectuals to design the different elements. It is very different from what is going on in London, Washington, or any other western capital or country.

I profoundly hope the Chinese succeed. For if they do it right, it will be because they are straining to hear the Earth's teachings, and working hard to embody them in a range of decision-making disciplines, which can then guide society.

If they get it right, and export it, then the Earth our Teacher may become healthy enough to teach future generations of people well.

If they get it right the Earth, my Client, can relax a little, and maybe I can do more bird-watching. **R**

James Thornton is the CEO of ClientEarth. A member of the bars of California, New York and the United States Supreme Court, he is also a solicitor in England and Wales, a writer and a Zen Buddhist priest. This article is adapted from his talk at the Resurgence Festival of Wellbeing, held in London last September. His most recent book, with Martin Goodman, is *Client Earth*.

ILLNESS IS A GREAT TEACHER

During the day I fall asleep eight times, drink three litres of water, eat nothing. Every part of me hurts – my bones, muscles, head, throat, skin, chest. Even my eyes are painful. I am feverish and shivery. I don't remember ever feeling like this. Is it something serious? I'm not worried. A nun at my former Zen temple once told me that illness is a great teacher. I wondered how that could be, given the physical distraction, the assault on one's equanimity. But this new form of pain tells me: I am vulnerable; transient; not in full control of my life; grateful for the times when I've been healthy; humbled, reliant on others; perishable. Another saying of Mahayana Buddhism is "Intention never truly hits the mark." I had not expected to lie around in bed all day. I had planned to cycle to a Zen monastery in the hills. There's something very Zen about being unable to go to a Zen monastery, thus receiving a valuable Zen lesson instead.

– Kevin MacNeil

From *Outriders* (Edinburgh International Book Festival / Polygon, 2017) a collection of writings by authors chosen by the Festival to travel in the Americas, drawing on their experiences. Kevin MacNeil is a novelist, poet and playwright.

A new plot in the story of Riverford

Guy Singh-Watson, a pioneer of the organic veg box business, talks to **Marianne Brown** about plans for employee ownership

The road to Riverford is as pleasantly daunting as any Devon lane can be – narrow, winding and hemmed in by towering hedgerows teeming with songbirds. It can be a little hair-raising too, as the branded lorries, presumably laden with organic vegetables, come lurching around the corners. Meandering, captivating, and at times intimidating – in many ways I could use these same words to describe the objective of my trip: a conversation with the founder of Riverford Organic Farmers, Guy Singh-Watson.

Singh-Watson is known for speaking his mind. In fact, his thoughts – in the form of newsletters – are a regular feature of the organic vegetable box deliveries. Topics range from why the pointed cabbages won't grow, to Brexit and plastic packaging. It appears his strong views and self-belief have got him far. Over the last 30 years, Riverford's veg box scheme has grown from 30 boxes transported to a handful of locals to around 50,000 boxes delivered a week to homes around the country. These are supplied by the original farm in Totnes and by regional franchises that distribute two-thirds of the boxes.

Underpinning his commercial success is a desire to “use business as a force for good”, Singh-Watson says. Indeed, in 2015, Riverford won the Observer Ethical Product of the Decade Award. In May this year he is going a step further, with plans to make the business 74% employee-owned.

“Over the years I've questioned myself, what I want to achieve, what I want to leave behind me,” he says. “I feel very unhappy with conventional forms of ownership where there is a complete disconnect between owners and the people who run the business. I just think that's wrong in so many ways and leads to most of the problems we see in the world as a result of this system of capitalism.”

Under the new model, staff profit share will be distributed on a per-head basis, rather than on who owns the shares. There will be a staff council and a board of trustees ensuring that the principles on which the business is set up will be upheld. “It's quite similar to John Lewis, the store, but I hope we'll maintain that dynamism and diversity and being a little bit more challenging than John Lewis,” he adds.

Retaining Riverford's identity as “a bit of a campaign organisation” is very important, he says. Highlighting the impacts



Guy Singh-Watson: “I've questioned myself”

Photograph © Matt Austin

of non-organic food makes this inevitable in many ways, but Riverford has gone a bit further. In 2016 it launched its ‘How Much Meat?’ campaign, aimed at raising awareness of animal welfare and the environmental impact of meat, as well as encouraging people to eat less meat (and only eat organic). This didn't go down well with the farm's neighbours, who are mostly livestock farmers, Singh-Watson admits.

One way to protect these values is the belief that the customer isn't always right – “which is a bit controversial for a retailer”, Singh-Watson says with a chuckle. “Retailers do anything to please customers, but I believe if you really have values you should uphold those values even if at times your customers disagree.”

He cites the example of plastic packaging. “Ninety-nine per cent of our customers loathe plastic,” he says. “But according to some research that we did, just from an energy / climate change / gases point of view, you're better off with a plastic bag than a paper bag. I know some of this is slightly at odds with the idea of marine pollution, which is a huge issue, but not using plastic is just one way of addressing that. A much better way is to use plastic responsibly and dispose of it responsibly. It doesn't have to end up in the ocean.”

Despite an apparent tendency towards the irascible, Singh-Watson is not averse to admitting he is in the wrong. Following our interview, in a newsletter published in February this year he apologised to Riverford customers for the company's use of plastic and announced that all packaging was being reviewed.

“Please be assured that we have woken up,” he wrote.

Rather surprisingly, following an energetic discussion on the importance of autonomy among his workforce, my host admits that 26% of the business will remain in his hands as “a way of retaining control”. In a good way. “There was a lot of concern I’d swan off into the sunset and never be seen again,” he says. “Keeping the 26% is a way of providing reassurance. I’d much rather relinquish control slowly and set it on a path we all feel confident with. There’s no doubt this is a big path and there will be mistakes.”

The road ahead will certainly provide challenges, not least in the form of Brexit. With characteristic candour, Singh-Watson has long expressed his trepidation following the vote to leave the EU. The devaluation of the pound has already resulted in a price hike on almost all Riverford goods, apart from the box dedicated to veg grown only within the UK. Has this led to a rise in demand for UK-only veg boxes? Apparently not. “We are selling more than we’ve done before, but it’s still only 3.4% of sales,” Singh-Watson says. “We’re all hypocrites. Most people don’t really want to eat local food. The reality is that from November to June you’re not going to have broccoli, and you’re never going to have bananas, oranges, lemons. I don’t think people understand how much of their food is imported.”

One of the biggest problems following Brexit will be finding farm labour because it is “inconceivably hard work”. “Even if we paid £15 an hour we’d struggle to get UK labour to do the job,” Singh-Watson says. “For most people, to go out into a field and pull leeks for eight hours in the rain in January is just mind-boggling.” This could, however, provide opportunities for smaller producers. “The larger producers who are so dependent on Eastern European labour will find life difficult going on impossible, I would say. So we could see a restructuring of agriculture in quite a positive way.”

Simply having values can prove problematic when people expect a particular stance. In 2014 this came in the form of a social media maelstrom surrounding the permitting of fox-hunting on land owned by Singh-Watson’s sister, Louise. As a self-described “strong libertarian”, Singh-Watson defends his sister’s right to do what she likes but admits his family backed down as a result of the bad publicity. “I don’t like hunting personally. I’m sure it is cruel to the fox, but no more cruel than so many other things we inflict on the animal kingdom as human beings,” he says.

More recently, he and his family were in the news again regarding a badger cull, which his siblings were allowing on their land, but he didn’t allow on his. The decision wasn’t made lightly. “Who are people to be so self-righteous as to say that a badger’s life is worth so much more than a cow’s life? That’s a judgement I don’t feel competent to make,” he said. “People expect us to have a view. I suppose that’s reasonable, but I honestly don’t know what the answer is.”

Honesty is, of course, a large part of being an ethical business, and Guy Singh-Watson’s lack of apparent pretensions certainly fits the bill. I muse on this as I rumble cautiously back along the Devon lanes. Although the route might provide some surprises – pleasant or otherwise – and some changes of direction, it never loses its identity along the way. **R**

Marianne Brown is Deputy Editor of *Resurgence & Ecologist*.



A growing business

Photographs courtesy of Riverford Organics

READ THIS SLOWLY

— *it could save your life*

Paula Byrne and Jonathan Bate invite
us to savour good literature

For more than a decade now, there have been strong advocates of the benefits for human wellbeing not only of slow food, but also of slow cities, slow travel, slow parenting and even slow sex. We would like to add another snail's pace to the menu: the value of *slow reading*.

The Welsh writer W.H. Davies (1871–1940) lost his father, was brought up by his grandparents, got into trouble at school, never found regular work, and spent his twenties as a drifter in North America, surviving the winters by getting himself arrested and jailed. While he was trying to jump a freight train in Ontario, his foot was crushed beneath the wheels, causing his leg to be amputated below the knee. He returned to England and lived in London dosshouses and Salvation Army shelters, until, through the good offices of George Bernard Shaw, he published his bestselling *Autobiography of a Super-Tramp* in 1908. A few years earlier, he had met the writer Edward Thomas and, partly under his influence, he became a poet. His most famous poem, 'Leisure', published in 1911, might well be described as a slow manifesto:

What is this life if, full of care,
We have no time to stand and stare? –

No time to stand beneath the boughs
And stare as long as sheep or cows:

No time to see, when woods we pass,
Where squirrels hide their nuts in grass:

No time to see, in broad daylight,
Streams full of stars, like skies at night:

No time to turn at Beauty's glance,
And watch her feet, how they can dance:

No time to wait till her mouth can
Enrich that smile her eyes began?

A poor life this if, full of care,
We have no time to stand and stare.

For Davies, modern man has relinquished his capacity to spend free time in the lap of Nature. The poem urges us not to rush, but to slow down, to stop. The words "no time" appear in each of the seven rhyming couplets. The colon at the end of each stanza creates a pause, and then the repeated question forces the reader to mark time and to make time, to see simple things that we usually ignore (a

squirrel storing food for winter, the star-like glint of the sun's reflection in water). The "stare" overcomes our constant sense of "care" and makes us care in another sense – care for our precious, beautiful, vulnerable environment.

No time to stare, no time to see, no time, no time: it's a phrase that we all, with our busy, busy lives, can understand. Especially in a world, unimaginable to Davies, where texts, emails and messages on social media invade our headspace at every moment of the day.

For centuries people have turned to poetry in dark times

Hardly a week passes in which there is not some new media report into the growing crisis of mental health among people, which seems to be linked to conflict with friends, fears about body image, and other pressures exacerbated by social media. The epidemic of self-harming among teenage girls; the millions of pounds spent by the National Health Service on stress, anxiety and related disorders; the cost of burnout to businesses, organisations and especially the NHS itself: the litany of adverse effects of the pace of modern life is depressingly familiar.

There are, of course, many ways of dealing with stress, and most of them involve the simple expedient of slowing down. Obvious examples that come to mind are a walk in the park or the country, stroking a pet, and the pleasures of gardening. But one of the oldest remedies of all is the reading of poetry. The great 18th-century reader and writer Samuel Johnson said that the only purpose of writing was to enable the reader better to enjoy life or better to endure it. He read the entire works of all the English poets, not least in order to redirect his spirits away from his own depression and physical ill health.

For centuries people have turned to poetry in dark times. John Stuart Mill claimed in his *Autobiography* that reading the poetry of William Wordsworth cured him after he suffered a severe nervous breakdown as a young man, and that thanks to poetry he was able to manage his depression for the rest of his life. Queen Victoria said that Tennyson's *In Memoriam* was the only means other



Poems take you out of yourself, away from your troubles

The Reader by Yelena Bryksenkova www.yelenabryksenkova.com

than the Bible through which she coped with the death of Prince Albert.

What is the particular quality of poetry that gives it such power? The answer surely is that, of all kinds of writing, poetry is the form that most demands *slow reading*.

Poetry is language in concentrated form. Poems make you feel and they make you think. They take you out of yourself, transport you to other worlds,

away from your present troubles. Because they use words with beauty and care, they demand to be read with attention and without rush. The words must be savoured, because they are the linguistic equivalent of the best food and wine. Most of the time, we fill our minds with words that are the equivalent of fast food. Poetry is slow mind food, real nutrition for the soul. Attentive reading slows the breath and empties the mind of other cares. The rhythms of a

good poem may be inherently calming and therapeutic, regardless of the subject matter. The brevity of a poem can be a blessing for many people who, when stressed or depressed, lack concentration and sometimes are unable to read. The subject matter of poetry – memory, love, the restorative power of Nature, confrontation with sorrow and death – often serves for attentive readers as a mirror of their own feelings, a welcome discovery that we are not alone.

Slow reading encourages us to stop. “Compose yourself” is a phrase that we might say to ourselves when we are stressed or flustered. The word ‘compose’ here comes from the Latin meaning of ‘putting things together’ – that is to say, creating order. The chime of rhyme, the reassurance of repetition, the sense of balance in the pattern of a stanza or the fourteen lines of a sonnet: all of these are formal devices that poets use to bring order to the chaos of experience, and a sense of musical harmony, of resolution.

Poets, like those who write music, are composers. They take emotions and ideas and put them into harmonious, melodious order. There is no better example of this process than that special form of poetry known as the sonnet: fourteen lines, a regular five-beat rhythm, a pattern of rhymes, and sometimes a twist in the tail.

In his sonnet ‘Bright Field’, R.S. Thomas urges us to remember that life should not be rushed, that hurrying is an illusory quest for a “receding future”: instead, like W.H. Davies, we must make time for “turning aside”. Similarly, one of Wordsworth’s most composed poems is that celebration of a moment of stillness at dawn before the start of a busy London day – ‘Composed upon Westminster Bridge’:

Ne’er saw I, never felt, a calm so deep!
The river glideth at his own sweet will:
Dear God! the very houses seem asleep;
And all that mighty heart is lying still!

Poetic moments such as this are typically characterised by solitariness. W.H. Davies, R.S. Thomas and Wordsworth connect in stillness with Nature because they are alone. But, for us as readers, there is a sense that we are not alone: by slowly reading their words, reanimating their vision in our imagination, we feel connected to their world and thus to our world. The slow poem performs two sorts of work at the same time – an easing of pressure is combined with a sense of community: “Others have felt the same as me. Ah, that’s it – that’s exactly how I feel.”

John Keats beautifully articulated two “axioms” for poetry in a letter to his publisher, John Taylor:

1st. I think poetry should surprise by a fine excess, and not by singularity. It should strike the reader as a wording of his own highest thoughts, and appear almost a remembrance.

2nd. Its touches of beauty should never be half-way, thereby making the reader breathless instead

of content. The rise, the progress, the setting of imagery should, like the sun, come natural to him, shine over him, and set soberly, although in magnificence, leaving him in the luxury of twilight.

Poetry is slow mind food, real nutrition for the soul

A spiritual luxury, that is – not the relentless quest for material luxury that Wordsworth condemned when he spoke in another sonnet (‘The World Is Too Much With Us’) of how, “Getting and spending, we lay waste our powers.”

It was our belief in these ideas that led us to establish ReLit, a charitable foundation devoted to the proposition that slow reading of nutritious literature, especially in the compacted form of poetry, may work as a form of stress relief and combating loneliness. Reading is cheap and, in contrast to pharmaceuticals, has no deleterious side effects. Whether by the bedside of the insomniac, in a hospice or in the anxious environment of a doctor’s waiting room, there is nothing to lose and everything to gain by having a volume of poetry to hand.

That was the motivation behind our publication in 2016 of the anthology *Stressed Unstressed: Classic Poems to Ease the Mind* and now *The Shepherd’s Hut*, a collection of original poems and free translations of lyrics from several different poetic traditions. Among the new poems is one that tries very simply to catch the spirit of slow reading, by asking the reader to stop and make time for words, for images, and even for the pause that comes at the end of a line of verse and the stress-free white space that surrounds the thoughts:

Slow Reading

Take time for each word,
Give room to white space,
Listen for the beat,
Tune to the weather,
Rekindle memory,
Life-scape and heart-leap.

Know that poetry
Is not of the world:
It is in the worth
Of the words to you,
Patient reader, open
To the spirit of slow.

R

Paula Byrne is an author and biographer as well as Chief Executive of ReLit. Jonathan Bate is Provost of Worcester College, Oxford. *The Shepherd’s Hut* by Jonathan Bate is published by Unbound with all author royalties devoted to the charitable work of ReLit. www.relit.org.uk

Local heroes



Castlemilk: The well-intended promise of the housing scheme was never realised

Glasgow Kids © Tom Stoddart / Getty Images

What happens when a community feels abandoned by traditional party politicians? **Darren McGarvey** has spent much of the last few years chronicling the life of his own inner-city district of Glasgow. Here, in an extract from his book *Poverty Safari*, he profiles grass roots campaigners making a difference despite the odds – and the strains it places on them

2017

Poverty not only expresses itself in the behaviour and lifestyles of the poor, but also in their social attitudes. Apathy is a big one. Scepticism of authority and public institutions is another. People are raised in homes where nobody believes they can effect change and they grow up internalising those beliefs.

The apathy of the poor, in terms of politics, is so apparent that it's factored into political calculations: leaders pitch policy to those who are more likely to participate. This, in turn, creates a cycle where the interests of those who do not participate are not considered, which leads to more apathy. But every now and then, when things are at breaking point, social deprivation vomits up an antidote to apathy.

Castlemilk is a district on Glasgow's south side that was developed as a

'housing scheme' in the 1950s. But the well-intended promise of the housing scheme was never fulfilled. For many it quickly turned into a living nightmare and by the 1980s had become synonymous with crime, drugs and violence. The anger and scepticism that built in communities like Castlemilk over successive decades, not only due to poor social conditions but also because of the lack of opportunity to escape them, became a volatile cultural energy, oscillating between anger and apathy, that many movements have since tried to politicise in the hope of harnessing it for electoral purposes.

The sudden interest in the daily plight of the 'working class', 'lower class' and 'the poor' always seems to peak in the run-up to an election (or a referendum). This interest quickly peters out. Once the politicians get power, they retreat into their privileged political spheres.

This pattern has been duly noted by locals, who are often privately regarded by politicians as lacking the necessary sophistication to do politics right.

"I'm not a politician," says Cathy Milligan, a 53-year-old community activist who grew up in Castlemilk. Cathy recently ran as an independent in the local elections. She, along with a core group of community activists, founded Castlemilk Against Austerity (CAA) in 2014. The fact that Cathy is not a politician is currently her biggest asset, though how long that will remain the case is anybody's guess. Political figures are not highly regarded in communities like this.

She is not only visible in the area, but also fluent in the local language and customs, which are often regarded as coarse, vulgar, offensive or abusive by many of the politicians and activists who parachute in looking for scraps of political capital. Cathy is intuitive, not only to the day-to-day concerns of locals, but also to how people express those concerns and how the disparate challenges in the community can coalesce in outbursts of apathy, anger and, increasingly, racism and xenophobia.

"The root of racism is austerity," says Cathy, unambiguously. "People on benefits turn against others on benefits. If you're backed into a corner it brings

out the worst in you. As human beings, we know how to make things better for each other, but the economics of austerity stops all that. We're under the cosh and we're fighting for our lives."

'Fighting for their lives' is not an exaggeration. For many people in Castlemilk, poverty will be the indirect cause of death. What makes Cathy so endearing is that her intelligence is not marshalled in service of an agenda to harness local anger for her own ends. Instead, Cathy represents a nurturing, caring force. She encourages people to rediscover their self-belief and take responsibility for the upkeep of their own community.

Cathy recognises that capacity in the community, emotionally and socially, is very low and that there will be no meaningful change until people become more active, engaged and resilient. This resilience is not only about belief in political participation, but also about resisting the temptation to ascribe blame for poverty to the popular scapegoats of immigrants and drug addicts. Cathy is resigned to the reality that the age of austerity may continue for many years but is adamant that people stand up and be counted rather than see themselves as helpless victims: "We're not saying we have all the answers. But we're smart enough to figure it out. We believe in each other and we believe in the community."

In one month alone, CAA ran a variety of campaigns and events that took a holistic view of community needs and aspirations. In Castlemilk, they understand that it takes more than chants of "Tory scum" to bring about the sort of shift in thinking required to reorganise a community. Whether it be the food solidarity programmes – they don't call them food banks here – aimed at reducing the social stigma associated with food poverty, leaflets designed to push back against racism and xenophobia, or seminars about the impact of bullying, CAA are charging on with a lack of concern for the agendas of political parties or activists jockeying for banner positions at anti-Trump rallies. Obviously everyone is welcome, but people have been warned about who is really running things around here.

In fact, talk of Trump and Brexit is viewed here as a distraction. At



Solidarity programmes – they don't call them food banks here...

Photograph © Castlemilk Against Austerity

a recent screening of Ken Loach's *I, Daniel Blake*, the award-winning drama about the UK benefits sanctions regime, Glasgow poet and activist Robert Fullertone – who writes the sort of poetry you won't find in a school curriculum – clipped me around the proverbial ear for mentioning Donald Trump during a panel discussion. "Are you out there, Trump?" he joked, his gesture towards the door perhaps alluding to the perma-tanned egotist's role as a bogeyman for radical socialists and left-wing groups.

Such groups, in recent years, have struggled to find their voice as nationalist folds have emerged across the fabric of society. But the rallies and stunts they often engage in to boost morale and visibility have created cynicism and

irritation among the very working-class people they are hoping to mobilise. The left is no longer assumed to comprise exclusively good guys. Robert, as eloquent a public speaker as you are likely to hear, believes the obsession with Trump and Brexit has become just another side-show that detracts from the struggle taking place in his community.

While many on the cultural left – who've come to dominate the liberal institutions of the arts, the media, the public and third sector as well as our universities – appear capable only of blaming right-wing conservatives for everything, increasing numbers in communities like Castlemilk are just as hacked off with the left as they are with everyone else. But, as well as this

outward anger at the system, at those whom they feel ignored or abandoned by, there is a growing desire for self-scrutiny here.

This urge to challenge themselves as well as everyone else is not only admirable, but also extremely practical. They understand that externalising blame for their circumstances while remaining inactive is simply just another way of handing their agency to the opportunists, sowing yet more seeds of apathy down the line. Castlemilk Against Austerity, while adamant that austerity politics is making life harder, doesn't spin a 'poor us' narrative.

Instead, as well as organising to resist the system, they challenge the community to examine its own shortcomings and false beliefs. They recognise the link between belief and action that creates the conditions for apathy, anger and prejudice. Whether it be blaming immigrants for social problems or paying lip-service to wanting change while sitting on your hands and doing nothing, CAA are on the front line, calling out this kind of attitude wherever it is found.

Addressing a packed hall in Kinning Park, Robert didn't mince his words: "The problem with our politics right now is none of us are doing it. It's no good enough to go up the road after this event, thrilled at what's been said. You've got to go and do it. My back is killing me tonight, I've lost my inhaler and I'm short of breath, but that never stops me walking slow – to where the battle is."

The battle is on his doorstep, on his street and up his close. In these communities, you'll find the real foot soldiers in the fight against the far-right ideas breaking in as the cracks begin to show in these historically stressed communities. Here, if you want to challenge a racist it's a little trickier than writing a blog or composing a condemnatory tweet – although all forms of resistance have their place. Here you can really put yourself in harm's way, not only by challenging racists, but also by being consistently visible doing it.

At grassroots level, it's not as simple as instigating a social media witch-hunt against people who behave offensively. In Castlemilk, and areas like it, simply condemning people is not an option.

Here, the war of ideas is messy and coarse and sometimes even shocking. People work out their differences in a way the poetry of the school curriculum hasn't quite managed to capture.

Robert Fullertone commands the room, not only as an orator, but also as an elder, a sage and a leader. But in political circles, or in activist communities with a different entry level into the conversation, a guy like Robert may be regarded as a bit vulgar, rough around the edges or – my personal favourite – too angry.

But he employs the sort of powerful, heartfelt rhetoric that gets you in the gut. He has a way with words that politicians across the spectrum have tried – and failed – to mimic. CAA, who launched a crowdfunding to raise a modest £1,000 to fight the local election, will likely be shouted down or sneered at by various sections of the public. The xenophobes will think Cathy an apologist for the crimes of immigrants, regarded by many as undeserving of help or compassion while so many of the 'indigenous' population struggle. Others will see this attempt to enter the political arena as a distraction from a worthier pursuit, either party political or nationalist. And the rest will conclude it's a waste of time and energy because things never change.

I suspect that when faced with the sheer power of the message Cathy and Robert are carrying, which is as much about challenging themselves and the community as it is about rallying against the system, those who would sneer will come to bow their heads for fear of drawing their gaze. Down here, life is very real and people can cut you down with a shooting glance. As services are cut and apathy sets in, while the endless debate rages on in political circles, it's the people like Cathy and Robert, who refuse to lie down and play victims or to allow their fellows to scapegoat the vulnerable, who show people there is another way to live. They become the new centre of the community. Sadly, however, not every community has a Cathy or a Robert to fill the void. 

This is an edited extract from the book *Poverty Safari*, by Darren McGarvey, published by Luath Press (2017).

2018 POSTSCRIPT:

Shortly before this issue went to press, The Castlemilk Against Austerity campaigners announced the group would be winding down. This extract from a statement posted on the CAA's Facebook revealed the strains community activists can endure:

Good afternoon folks.

At last Tuesday's meeting of CAA it was regrettably decided by the people present that we have taken the group as far as we possibly could...

...A lot of good people came together over the past 3 years and produced a series of programmes and events that for a time galvanised the community and spread to other communities far and near. This was a great example of the working class coming together to look out for the rest of society.

This series of events, talks, shows, food solidarity drives as well as our weekly stall at the arcade led us to support Cath when she took the brave decision to stand in last year's council elections on behalf of CAA and the wider community here in Castlemilk.

Although unsuccessful in terms of winning the seat the campaign was a definite success in galvanising our community in the fight against party politics but the flip side to that was the group suffered because we were all exhausted at the end of the campaign.

The dynamic of any group will change with time and CAA were no different but without the people of Castlemilk getting really angry and joining together to fight for change it was always going to be a struggle against a much bigger struggle and in the end we have grown weary and tired...

...The fight goes on people, things are getting worse and will continue to do so so let's not look at this as CAA giving up. None of the people involved, right back to 2014 when this started, will be giving up but for sake of our class it is time for a change.

Thanks.



Illustration by Hollie Chastain www.holliechastain.com

It's more than simply child's play

Aya Husni Bey on a therapeutic tool with everyday implications

Few would argue with the German philosopher Karl Groos, who suggested in his work *The Play of Animals* that we don't stop playing because we grow old, but rather we grow old because we stop playing. Yet precious few adults pencil in 'playtime' on their to-do lists. It simply doesn't chime with the modern, materialistic, time-stretched lifestyle; there is no money in play. And thus our playful spirit atrophies, and we age and wither accordingly.

My first epiphany about play as a counselling tool was in 1999, when I worked for a children's charity in Lebanon. A boy shouted at me, using aggressive language reminiscent of an unruly adult, and his posture hinted at violence. I stood stock still, wondering what to do. Then I walked to the desk and got him a ballpoint pen and some paper. Of his own volition he drew spiral after spiral, pressing down on the paper with enormous tension. After a few minutes he stopped, and I took this as a cue to escort him out of the room to join his friends.

The interaction nevertheless had a faintly adult quality, of equals communicating. That perception stayed with me as I went on to train in child-centred education, as a Waldorf early years teacher. I later trained as a therapeutic play practitioner and then the more adult holistic counsellor, and I am currently training as a transpersonal arts counsellor.

Through my work experience I have developed a profound faith in the power of play for adults. This stems from a less dramatic epiphany when I was contemplating some clients, a friend and a colleague: a downbeat, resentful young man, a grieving woman, an anxious businessman, a young artist struggling with her confidence, and a middle-aged manager striving towards authentic leadership. What struck me was this: people carrying sadness and worry long-term *never* play. It's as simple as that. Contrastingly, people living into a hopeful prognosis always had an element of play in their

lives. Did it not follow that play in itself had the potential to move people from the miserable camp into the resilient camp?

Of course, therapists and counsellors have been cajoling their clients to play and enjoy life since time out of mind, but what about bringing play into the counselling room? I decided to do it, and have never looked back.

Replenished by play, life becomes more manageable

One of my clients, the US media personality Erika de la Cruz (who gave permission to use her name in this article), said: "The experience of using play to discover inner truths, subconscious insights and perspective felt more raw and real than a traditional [counselling] conversation for me. Rather than talking about the experience I was going through, I got to actually express it. It was so refreshing to revert back to childhood by playing with actual elements and toys."

I see people gain an afterglow, a warmth and *joie de vivre* that transcend the quotidian. Daily life inevitably contains ongoing concerns that forever threaten to drag us down. Replenished by play, life becomes more manageable. I have often sensed that clients coming from work have a tense, neurotic disposition, a flat and sometimes enervating presence, while people who have had a playful day, even if they have expended a lot of physical energy, have a vibrant presence.

I have always played creatively: an evening habitué of the art classroom all through boarding school, followed by years in a dance troupe, performing as a puppeteer, and in improvised performance theatre. Initially, I wasn't sure that play could be taken

seriously in a counselling context, though I could see the potential of play meeting the needs of clients. I tried it anyway and, to put it romantically, I discovered the deep Keatsian beauty of play: it reveals truth. And sometimes it reveals truth that could have taken a month of Sundays to access through conventional counselling. This can occur with the darkest and most obscure troubles, when a client feels stuck after talking for unenlightening hours.

Let us be clear that we are dealing with full-on play here: child-like play (not simply *childish* play). We are not talking about the passive entertainment that absorbs hours each day as our hard-working bodies flop onto the sofa, stare at a screen and perhaps opt for a glass of *vino escapo*. Properly speaking, play requires a modicum of physical and mental effort. Nor is this the normal therapeutic role play where scenes from a client's life are acted out or re-enacted. This is play where we pick roles that have no obvious bearing on our lives but suggest themselves as amusing or interesting – that is, playfully.

The spontaneity of play is key. An unravelling occurs, a sort of letting go whereby our minds are no longer consciously controlling what happens next. In these moments anything can happen. It chimes with Carl Jung's observation, "Until you make the unconscious conscious, it will direct your life and you will call it fate."

I have had clients suddenly understand the dynamics at work between themselves and their employer, client, child or partner, merely by playing out repressed feelings in supposedly unconnected stories and dramatic acting. While painting – again, in free-form style – the unconscious roams freely through a client's life, and thus the client is often surprised at what ends up on the canvas, in clarifying symbolic language. It might be a picture of aching sadness between back-to-back figures, revealing that a relationship is over or that perhaps a hurt is deeper than previously realised.

Later reflection on what has been experienced during play can give new perspective and open clients up to the opportunity to make better-informed decisions. A drawing might evoke strong feelings and faith, even if it is simply faith in the mystery of life. Play always has that replenishing quality, even if nothing specific has been learnt.

Storytelling works, too: there is a realm of storytelling wherein we surprise ourselves with our own narrative twists and sympathetic characters. Enacting plays with figures in a sand tray can throw up realisations from very murky wonderings with regard to social dynamics. An arrangement of figures provides an overview, enabling us to observe from a place where we can gain space and perspective.

Playing in a group changes the dynamic, in that everyone is doing something together rather than just one talking while others listen or drift off awaiting their turn. Multifaceted interaction is constant

when a group plays. People are enlivened, because they are constantly being stimulated by others.

These are just brief patterns I notice in play, but they all point to a distraction from hyper-consciousness, and a liberation of the spirit. It's an easy process to observe and understand, even for those who have neglected play since childhood – sadly, most of us.

In play the unconscious is free to wander and explore, no longer under the strict cosh of the conscious, which is absorbed in the processes of the play-task. This can be extended to almost any form of creative play: mask making, for example, can throw up a lot of thoughts. Even simply playing with building blocks can call to mind the ephemeral or solid nature of relationships and troubles, good

"You can discover more about a person in an hour of play than in a year of conversation."

times and bad, as feelings of creativity and destruction course through our being.

Charlie Chaplin, a master of pathos, nailed it in one pithy line: "To truly laugh, you must be able to take your pain, and play with it!" I came across this saying when I discovered that my faith in the therapeutic value of play for perfectly sentient adults was not terribly original after all.

In fact, in the United States there is the highly esteemed National Institute for Play, founded by Stuart Brown, a leading psychiatric clinical researcher. He is a popular author, owing to his fascinating book *Play: How It Shapes the Brain, Opens the Imagination, and Invigorates the Soul*. From a counselling point of view, the words on the landing page of the Institute's website sum up the appeal perfectly: "You can discover more about a person in an hour of play than in a year of conversation."

However, we rarely talk about play so knowingly, as if it were a regularly available option – which it is. We simply don't play much, and when we do it is usually within a specific time frame involving careful arrangements. It has been packaged into something small and pressurised. In an adult context the word 'play' most often means the intensity of formal, competitive sports booked in a sports facility. It's fun, but it isn't creative, open-ended play.

If I called myself a playfellow for hire, I would have no clients: it would sound unprofessional. Deep down I hope that is precisely what I am to many clients: a good playfellow. And I suspect we should all aspire to that tragically neglected role. R

Aya Husni Bey is currently working at the Lao Friends Hospital for Children in Luang Prabang, Laos.



Only disconnect

A short story by James Robertson

Illustration By Charlotte Day www.charlottedaydesign.com

First to go was the television. That wasn't hard. It was mostly rubbish that came out of it anyway. And the news was better on the radio. No, not better, weightier. Yes, that was part of what she craved: substance.

Next, the computer. The daily waded through emails, the fatuous chatter of so-called friends on social networks – gone. She had to cancel her online banking facility, and arrange to receive bills by post and pay them by cheque, and this would be dearer, but she didn't care: there was something civilised about slowing down. She found her old typewriter in a cupboard, but the ribbon was dry and the keys stiff, so she took it to the charity shop and rediscovered the pleasure of writing with a fountain pen. Her first correspondence was with the TV licensing authority, who assumed she was either mistaken or lying.

The mobile phone went. One last text went out to everybody – AS OF NOW I AM NO LONGER AVAILABLE ON THIS NUMBER – and, once she'd chopped the SIM card up with the herb cutter and recycled the dead phone, she wasn't.

For six days she lived in blissful tranquillity, sleeping, gardening, making soup and reading Anthony Trollope.

On the seventh day her daughter arrived, puce

with rage. "So you're not dead or lying helpless on the floor," she said.

"It would seem not."

"And how would I have known? All my messages have bounced back and your answer-machine's not working."

"It was, when I took it to the charity shop."

"What's going on, Mum?"

"I want to go back," she said. "I hate this world of gadgets. I hate that word 'connectivity'. I don't want that, I want human contact. And look, here you are. You've come to see me for the first time in months. I'll make some coffee."

"This is pure hypocrisy," her daughter said. "I bet I know how you spend your days now – with your nose stuck in a book and your mind so far removed from reality that you don't hear the phone ringing. What kind of human contact is that?"

"You have a point," she said. "Come in and let's talk about it."

R

Edited excerpt from *365 Stories* (Penguin), by the Scottish writer James Robertson, reproduced by permission of the author. His most recent book is *Michael Marra: Arrest This Moment* (Big Sky Press, 2017), a biography of the late Dundee songwriter, musician and performer.

Where there's life

Kate Davies on how cultivating hope can help build a better future

Are you hopeful about the future? How do you feel about the state of the world? About two years ago, I posed these questions to my family, friends and colleagues. The responses I received were alarming. Not one person said they felt hopeful and many spoke about their fear, sadness, despair, anger, guilt and/or grief. Having worked on ecological issues professionally for almost 40 years, I am very familiar with these emotions, but I was shocked by how common they were among the people I know.

This completely unscientific survey was part of a personal enquiry into hope that I started back in 2011. One day, when I was feeling especially disheartened about the Fukushima nuclear power station disaster in Japan, I found myself asking myself questions such as, “How can I be hopeful when the world seems to be falling apart?”, “How can I nurture hope?” and, “What does hope even mean in these times?” And because I had no satisfactory answers, I decided to launch an investigation into the subject.

The first step was to look in the dictionary. Most common definitions use words like ‘desire’, ‘expectation’ and ‘anticipation’. The *Concise Oxford English Dictionary* says that hope is “expectation and desire combined” and *Merriam-Webster’s* says it is “to cherish a desire with anticipation”. After reflecting on these definitions, I realised they are based on the assumption that life should give us whatever we desire. In other words, whenever we hope for something, there’s a belief – even if it is very subtle – that events will conform with our wishes.

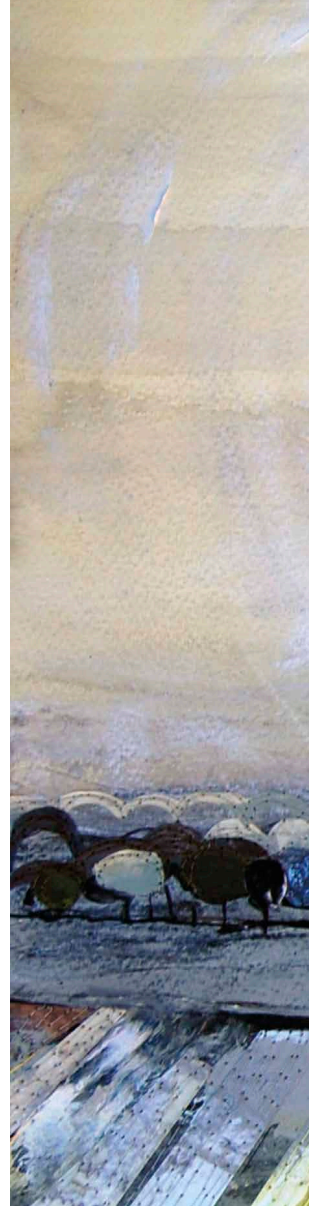
But life doesn’t always give us what we want. Many people, including me, hope to see a just, peaceful and sustainable society. But as global ecological problems continue to worsen, life seems to be giving us the opposite – what we don’t want. The trend lines for climate disruption, water scarcity, species extinction and resource depletion say it all. No matter how

sincere and well-intentioned our hopes and no matter how hard we work to achieve them, there are no guarantees we will get what we want.

There is, therefore, a dissonance between our hopes for the future and what is actually happening. This makes it inevitable that we will experience fear, sadness, despair, anger, guilt and grief. Indeed, the yawning gap between what we hope for and the reality of life is a set-up for these painful feelings. Even though our hopes may be noble and altruistic, the more desperately we want to attain them the more emotional suffering we will experience when life doesn’t conform with our wishes.

By this stage of my enquiry, I was feeling even worse than when I started. So I went back to the dictionary, and thankfully I found another definition. In addition to defining hope in terms of desire, expectation and anticipation, most dictionaries provide secondary, archaic definitions of it as ‘trust’. This older and much less common meaning is based on having confidence in life, without the expectation or anticipation that we will get what we want any time soon. To me, this type of hope feels much more robust and capacious than the first type because it doesn’t depend on attaining specific improvements in life. At last I felt that I was finding answers to my questions.

Related to Judaeo-Christian hope, this type of hope has an unshakeable faith in whatever happens and in the human capacity to respond. It is an outlook or an inclination towards life that is positive, although not necessarily optimistic. Unlike the first type of hope, which is based on expecting or anticipating favourable outcomes in our external circumstances and conditions, the second type comes from inside – from our hearts, souls and spirits. It is about loving life so much that we cannot sit idly by and do nothing. I called this type of hope ‘intrinsic hope’ and I called the first type





Hope transcends the world, said Václav Havel

Epiphany by Helen Hallows www.helenhallows.com

‘extrinsic hope’. Václav Havel described intrinsic hope, saying: “[Hope is] a state of mind, not a state of the world ... it is a dimension of the soul; it’s not essentially dependent on some particular observation of the world or estimate of the situation. Hope is not prognostication. It is an orientation of the spirit, an orientation of the heart; it transcends the world that is immediately experienced, and is anchored somewhere beyond its horizons.”

Intrinsic hope is not about wishful thinking. However, it offers a different and helpful perspective

Over time, I came to see that intrinsic hope is inherent in all life. Where there is life, there is hope. We can experience hope simply because we are alive. It is sewn into our genes – just as it is sewn into the genes of every living thing. It’s the way a dandelion sprouts between the cracks in a city pavement, even if there’s no soil, lots of pollution and a constant onslaught of passing pedestrians and dogs.

It’s the way a single maple tree releases hundreds of thousands of seeds, oblivious of whether any take root and grow. And it’s the way Pacific salmon, heavy with eggs, strain to swim up their natal rivers and streams to spawn, even though they will die in the effort. One could say that intrinsic hope is life’s love for itself.

Although we are all born with intrinsic hope, it’s easy to forget. Because we usually focus on problems and difficulties, we can fail to appreciate the miracle of life and become blind to its potentials and possibilities. By concentrating on the negative, we don’t see the positive. By emphasising what we lack and what we want, we ignore what we already have, and don’t consider what could be.

I’m not suggesting that we become like Pollyanna and adopt a naively optimistic outlook on life. Intrinsic hope is not about wishful thinking. However, it offers a different and helpful perspective on what’s happening. Moreover, we can choose to embrace intrinsic hope at any time, no matter how bad things seem. Victor Frankl, who survived the Nazi concentration camps in the second world war, said, “Everything can be taken from a man but one



Morning by Helen Hallows

HABITS OF HOPE

Being present cultivates intrinsic hope as it increases our awareness of life. Although our bodies are always in the present, our minds are usually wandering somewhere else. When we are present, our minds slow down, life reveals itself and this makes it possible for us to respond to what's happening in a fresh, unobstructed and positive way.

Expressing gratitude fosters intrinsic hope. When we are grateful, we naturally become more hopeful. It's what gets poured into the glass to make it half full. It's counting our blessings, not only our problems.

Loving the world nurtures intrinsic hope because when we feel love for others, or experience others' love for us, we naturally feel good. We can love other people whether we know them or not, we can love specific communities and places, and we can love the Earth itself.

Accepting the reality of our situation lays a foundation for hope because it gives us the possibility of changing things. By saying yes – even a qualified or reluctant yes – we accept responsibility for doing something about our problems.

Taking action develops hope as it liberates us from the vicious cycle of not wanting to do anything because we feel hopeless and then feeling hopeless because we are not doing enough.

Persevering for the long haul is essential for intrinsic hope because it provides the determination to endure whatever happens and keep on going. With perseverance, we can work to resolve our problems and build a just, peaceful and sustainable world without expecting to see the fruits of our efforts.

thing: the last of the human freedoms – to choose one's attitude in any given set of circumstances, to choose one's own way."

So can we choose intrinsic hope in these troubled times? Can we choose to come from love rather than fear? Can we choose to come from compassion rather than anger? Can we stay open and engaged rather than closing down or distancing ourselves from those we disagree with? Can we let go of wanting to achieve particular goals and immerse ourselves in doing what is good and right, simply for its own sake?

This is a tall order and it is one I still struggle with. So, to conclude my investigation, I decided to explore how I could sustain and nourish intrinsic hope in daily life. And after careful reflection, I identified six 'habits of hope' – being present, expressing gratitude, loving the world, accepting what is, taking action, and persevering for the long

haul – and I sincerely 'hope' that these simple ways of being are as helpful to you as they are to me.

Sustaining intrinsic hope is not always easy, but it is essential. If we lose hope and give up, all the gloomy predictions about the future will likely become a reality. And if we dwell on our extrinsic hopes, we will continue to feel fear, sadness, despair, anger, guilt and grief whenever life does not give us what we want. But if we can live from intrinsic hope, we will be able to cope with whatever happens – staying positive and engaged even in the darkest of times. And in doing so, we can influence whether there will be a viable future for our children, their children and all future generations of life on Earth. R

Kate Davies is Senior Fellow at the Whidbey Institute and Emeritus Faculty at Antioch University in the United States. She is the author of *Intrinsic Hope: Living Courageously in Troubled Times* (2018).

The pleasure principle

Leo Johnson follows the pursuit of happiness

"IF A WOUND COULD SPEAK" asks the poet Clare Shaw, the sun slanting in through the window of her home in Hebden Bridge, West Yorkshire, "what would it be saying? 'I am hurt. I'm in pain.' If it was a scar – that I have the capacity to heal. Why did I cut myself?" she adds. "I didn't have the words to express the enormity. Self-injury was an articulate language."

Then she floors me. "I cut myself," she adds, "but here's the difference. I knew it. There isn't a person I know who doesn't know what it's like to consciously and often deliberately hurt themselves – through overwork, through lack of sleep, through putting on the high-visibility jackets that make us invisible."

Are we killing ourselves on the hedonic treadmill, locked into the conformity of maximising pleasure? And is there any alternative? That's the question I'm trying to grapple with, as part of a series on happiness for BBC Radio 4, and there are two new people on my radar – André Spicer and Carl Cederström, academics who just spent a whole year trying to escape the nine-to-five with a year of relentless self-optimisation.

"The question isn't, how did Beethoven become Beethoven?" the psychologist Abraham Maslow commented. "The question is, why isn't everyone Beethoven?" In a Thai kick-boxing gym under the arches in Bethnal Green, East London, André and Carl explain just why. Between them, they learned pi to 1,000 places, unlocked their consciousness with amphetamines, kick-boxed, man-camped, competed as weightlifters, wrote a novel, and attempted to become

multi-orgasmic by means including but not limited to prostate vibrators.

"What did you feel at the end of it all?" I ask them. "That we had gone," Carl replies. It was a giant dashboard of failure that they created. As they chased the results on it, somehow they disappeared. So what is happiness about?" I ask Carl. "I think it's maybe more about other people."

I TAKE THE TRAIN to North Yorkshire, to a site of what *The New Yorker* writer Larissa MacFarquhar would call "extreme altruism", the Kirby Misperton anti-fracking camp. "That should take the police about 35 hours to cut through," says Eddie, leading me through shin-deep mud to a rusted Calor Gas container filled with concrete. "You slide your arm down the metal tube in the middle, and handcuff yourself to the pin in the centre. Someone locks in from the other side, and then you just lie down in front of the gate. Unmoveable. There's other stuff in there to make it hard to cut through – bitumen, bits of metal, Kevlar from old chainsaw trousers. Ironical that it's Calor Gas."

Is Eddie happy? "Sometimes in the early morning when I have to chip the frost off the zip of my tent I wonder what the heck I'm doing," he tells me. "But I feel a deep sense of fulfilment. For the first time in my life, I know where I'm supposed to be, and that brings a joy with it."

SO IS THAT IT? Does happiness mean sacrificing pleasure for purpose? As dusk falls, my train pulls into Skipton in the Yorkshire Dales, twice recently billed as the happiest town in England. It's a Monday, freezing cold and pouring with rain.

I head for the first pub I can find. Sarah, the landlady of The Albion, talks me through her day.

"We know everyone. If we don't see you in here, we worry about you. If you've had an operation, we will try to make sure that someone pops into the shop. That grumpy old toad in the corner" – she points over towards a customer sitting alone – "he doesn't have a family, but I know he absolutely adores *Shaun the Sheep*. So for Christmas I got him a set of DVDs and a little pin badge to go on his biker jacket. Now what did that cost me?" she asks me. "Almost nothing. But seeing him smile like that... He was just like a little kid."

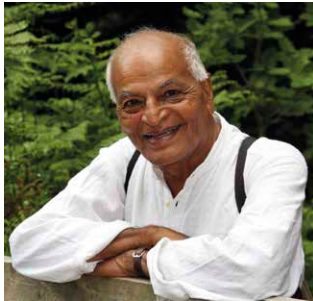
It's not extreme altruism, I think to myself. It's being there, sensing the unexpressed enormities, noticing someone else's wounds, and bandaging them. Ordinary altruism would be the word if it was ordinary. "I like my job," Sarah says. **R**

Hacking Happiness will be broadcast on BBC Radio 4 from 16 to 20 July at 1.45pm.

Clare Shaw's *Flood* will be published by Bloodaxe.



Cartoon by Ian Baker www.ianbakercartoons.co.uk



A new trinity for our time

A holistic view of life embraces Nature, humanity and spirituality, says **Satish Kumar**

In chapter 17 of the Hindu scripture the *Bhagavad Gita*, Lord Krishna tells the warrior Arjuna that from the very beginning of our lives we exist in three dimensions: natural, spiritual and social.

Firstly, you use soil for your food, you drink water and breathe air, use fire for cooking and warmth, and use space to live in. These five elements are a gift from the universe to you and to all living beings. The economy of the universe is a gift economy based on reciprocity and not a theft economy based on selfish consumption, waste and pollution. Therefore it is your responsibility to ensure that these five elements are maintained in good order, kept clean, pure and replenished on a regular basis. This act of replenishment is called *yagna*.

Secondly, from the day of your birth you have been given a body, senses, intelligence, your soul: your entire self, your whole being. As you are required to maintain the purity and integrity of the five external elements for your well-being, you are also required to remain constantly mindful of the purity, integrity and health of the intimate elements: your mind, body, spirit, soul and intelligence. As you live you are bound to experience exhaustion, burnout, stress and even despair. Therefore it is your responsibility to find ways and means to replenish, recuperate and nourish your soul, your own self. Such self-care

is not selfish: it is an imperative and a prerequisite for the care for others. This self-care is called *tapas*.

Thirdly, you are born not as an isolated and disconnected individual: rather, you are a member of your family, your neighbourhood, your community and your wider society. As you have the gifts of food, water, air and warmth from Nature and the gifts of imagination, consciousness, memory

You are not here merely
to consume the gifts
of others: you are
responsible for making
similar gifts in return

and intelligence from your soul, you also have many gifts from your human community. These gifts include culture, architecture, literature, philosophy, religion, arts, crafts, and much more.

You have received these gifts from those who lived in the past and you continue to receive them in the present. You are not here merely to consume the gifts of others: you are responsible for making similar gifts in return. You are required to contribute your creativity, your talent and your skills as free offerings to enrich the social order. Such giving back to your community should be in recognition of the fact of

mutuality and reciprocity; when it is done with a sense of selfless service it is called *dana*.

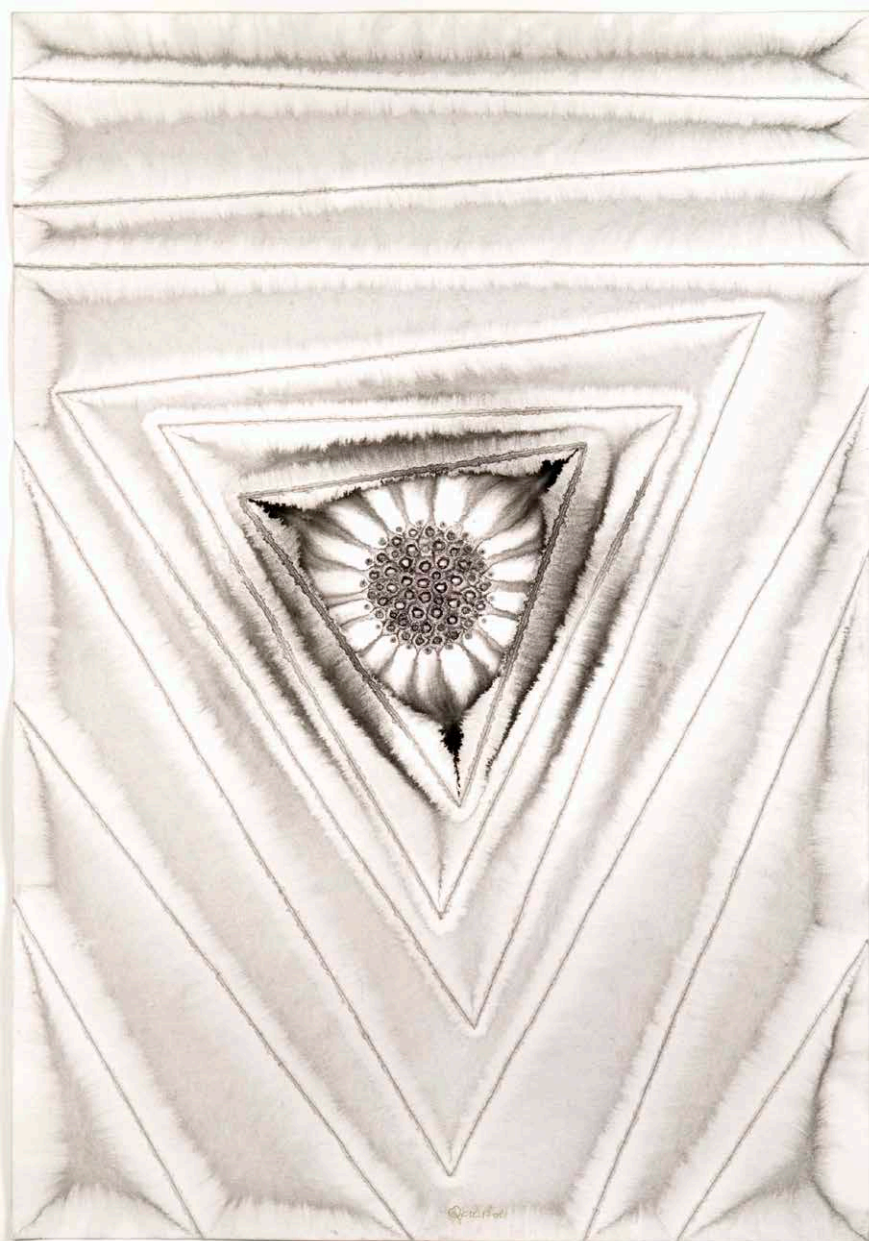
These three timeless principles of the *Gita* are as relevant today as they were when they were first formulated some 3,000 years ago.

I have adapted these principles for our age in my book *Soil, Soul, Society*. I have called it a new trinity for our time.

Not only did Lord Krishna encapsulate his teachings to Arjuna in three words or phrases, but many other religious, philosophical and political traditions have done the same. Father, Son and Holy Spirit is the Christian trinity. Truth, Goodness and Beauty was the ancient Greeks', and *Liberté, égalité, fraternité* was the driving sentiment of the French Revolution. Now we have reached a time when we need another revolution, based on Soil, Soul and Society.

In this age of ecology and holistic thinking we need a new paradigm that addresses the unity and interconnectivity of Nature, spirituality and humanity. That is why I have interpreted the trinity of the *Gita* – *Yagna*, *Dana* and *Tapas* – as the replenishment and nourishment of Soil, Soul and Society.

Often people get focused on a single vision. If they are devoted to conservation and protection of Nature, for example, then that becomes their sole commitment. Spiritual or metaphysical dimensions cease to enter their consciousness.



Sohan Qadri, Puja III, 2006

ink and dye on paper, 39 x 27.5 inches / 99.1 x 68.6 cm
Image Courtesy of Sundaram Tagore Gallery

Conversely, some people are devoted to a spiritual quest. They practise meditation, yoga, the study of spiritual texts and living a life of self-upliftment. They have no time for the preservation of the rainforest or the decontamination of oceans from plastic pollution.

There are others who totally devote themselves to the cause of social justice, human rights and economic equality. For them spirituality is a mumbo-jumbo of self-indulgence, and the conservation of Nature something too distant. They ask: "How can anyone be concerned with the saving of whales, coral reefs or rhinos when millions of humans are dying of hunger?" They believe that human welfare must come

before the welfare of animals, forests and wildlife.

I urge them all to drop their prejudices for a moment and take a look at the holistic perspective of the *Gita*, which says that everything is connected and related.

Even if you are focusing on one dimension of earthly existence, you need to be aware of the subtle and hidden links between the outer and the inner, between the social and the spiritual, and between the natural and the artificial.

Those who are concerned with the conservation of Nature need to remember that Nature is not just 'out there'. Yes, the forests, rivers and rhinos

are Nature, but humans are Nature too. Etymologically, 'nature' simply means 'birth'. Whatever is born is Nature, be it human, animal or tree. So caring for humans is as much part of Nature conservation as caring for wildlife. Similarly, humans are made of humus, the soil. Our bodies are soil transformed, as are our food, our clothes and our houses; everything comes from the soil and returns to the soil. Therefore, upholding the rights of Nature is as much part of human rights as is working for social justice and economic development.

Nature and humans are not just physical entities. The Earth and all living beings upon it, humans and other than humans, are spiritual organisms. We are an embodiment of compassion, generosity, humility, love and other soul qualities. If we have a good social order and a clean environment but no joy, no empathy and no love, what will life be? So we need a clean environment, a just social order and a flourishing personal life in equal measure; we need spirituality, a sense of the sacred and love in our hearts to be fully fulfilled. This is what Lord Krishna says to Arjuna: there is no fragmentation or disconnection between the natural, the spiritual and the social. You are an integrated whole. R

Satish Kumar is the author of *Soil, Soul, Society*.

Paws for thought

Matt Harvey benefits from animal therapy

I was genuinely touched to hear that the government has appointed a Minister for Loneliness, to carry on the work of the murdered Labour MP Jo Cox. Life was imitating and slightly improving on art, as I'd recently made up various posts for the Little Soldier theatre company's *Journey to the Impossible*, including the Ministry of Maintenance and Misdirection, The Office of Artifice and Attitude and the Minister Responsible for Doing Quietly What Is Regrettable but Necessary.

The appointment set me looking for my favourite Kliban cartoon: hat in hand at the front of a long queue stands a humble, hapless-looking man speaking, finger raised, to a local government official behind whose desk a sign says, "Register Emotion Here". I relate to that man, to everyone in that queue, and to the dutiful public servant jotting it all down. But I couldn't find it on my shelves or in the three boxes of books I unpacked, only four months after our move. So I asked the internet. Where, to my surprise, I stumbled

across a wealth of sites offering the following:

"Click *Here* to Register Your Therapy Animal. Any animal can be an Emotional Support Animal. Federal law does not require these animals to have any specific training and you do not have to be disabled to have an Emotional Support Dog." If your mutt is officially classed as a support dog it can accompany you into potentially stressful situations, e.g. a visit to the dentist, a long-haul flight or a difficult court case.

This is not new. In high-security prisons inmates serving long sentences for violent crimes have been encouraged to keep rabbits. Although I do remember a hostage situation occurring in one instance, the floppy-eared innocent used as a pawn in a tense stand-off with no real winners. There are no guaranteed outcomes.

It seems we've long known and recognised the supportive role that animals – dogs and cats particularly – play. It can only be good that this is formally acknowledged. In Britain we cannot

currently register our dogs in this way. Nevertheless, let me point you to dogsfordepression.org.uk, which has a good FAQ page, case studies and support material. Out walking with Tess earlier, I met Cass, Phil and their dog Monty – all three of whom suggested I go to dogsforgood.org, whose PAWS Family Dog service brings together the parents and carers of children with autism to explore the helping potential that a pet dog might have within their family.

I recall years ago coming across an advert for Hearing Dogs for the Deaf and making up other kinds of 'compensatory canines' such as Feeling Dogs for the Insensitive, Interesting Dogs for the Dull, and Up-to-the-minute Dogs for the Outmoded. I thought this was vaguely amusing, until in recent years I've come to appreciate that my own dog performs all these functions for me.

Carry Me*

when I wander down strange avenues
dark corridors of mind
when my emptiness is cavernous
and I'm difficult to find
when I've taken a position
I can't possibly defend
and refuse to show contrition
she will still be my friend
when I'm a wretch she'll fetch me
though I've stumbled way off track
when I'm difficult and tetchy
she will always bring me back
when everything is off-key
all rainbows monochrome
she'll sniff me out and lift me
and carry me back home

* Three things to note: 1. Claudia's picture preceded the poem, not vice versa. 2. I didn't realise that while drawing, Claudia was thinking of my own dog, Tess. 3. Nor did I realise as I was writing that, emotionally, the two figures are actual size. Also 'Dog' is just 'goD' backwards. R



Illustration by Claudia Schmid

Matt Harvey and Claudia Schmid's book 'Sit!' is available from www.claudiaschmid.co.uk

For more of Matt Harvey's poetry, visit www.mattharvey.co.uk

The turning of the world

Peter Reason is taken by the tides



The flooding spring tide carries my little yacht Coral up the river Tamar, through the wide and busy Hamoaze, where warships are moored in the dockyards and the big chain ferries clank across between Devonport and Torpoint, to the confluence with the St Germans River, a wide expanse of water with extensive mudflats and tidal lakes just below Brunel's famous railway bridge. I steer Coral round the marker buoy into the narrow channel up this tributary, deep enough for her after half-tide.

After about two miles, the river narrows and the banks steepen as it sweeps round a big curve. On the outside of the bend, alongside a cluster of dark pine trees high up the bank and a patch of light-coloured rock on the foreshore, is a small area where the water deepens to some thirty feet at high tide. This is the Dandy Hole, where even a deep-keeled yacht can remain afloat as the tide flows away leaving mudflats all around. It's a suddenly quiet place, away from the bustle of the main river.

Once I am sure Coral is in the right place I drop the anchor and look about to make sure it is holding. The south shore rises abruptly from the water, densely covered with stunted oak and a scattering of pine and alder, the lowest branches hanging over the river. Today the trees are blown around by the breeze, their spring-fresh leaves dancing in a pattern of pastel greens. In contrast the north bank rises in a gentle slope, cultivated fields criss-crossed with lines where a tractor has systematically passed. Just above the shingle beach at the water's edge stands a row of hawthorn trees in the full white of May blossom.

By early evening the river is full to the brim and the stream no longer pulls Coral against her anchor chain. The fresh westerly wind has died back. All is still. There is a twittering of birds

in the trees, from time to time the caw of a crow. And is that an owl I hear call? The sun drops behind the hills, the long shadows cast by trees and hedges deepen; soon, only the high points on the undulating fields catch the light. At this liminal time between day and night, is it my imagination, or can I sense the movement of the Earth as it rolls eastward?

Finally, the sun disappears behind the trees up the river. Directly above, the fattened crescent of the waxing moon appears in the darkening sky, three days past new, Venus shining next to it. "Of course," I say to myself, "spring tides. The sun and the moon are on the same side of the Earth, pulling the water together." I have known this for many years, but today I see it so directly I can almost feel it.

I sit in the cockpit, watching the turning of the world for nearly an hour. I am poised, as it seems is everything around me, waiting for the next move in the rhythm of days and nights, ebb and flow, wind and calm. Even Coral is waiting, swinging quietly this way then that between wind and the remaining tide. And then, ever so gently, water begins to flow downstream. The pressure on her keel becomes more powerful than the force of the light breeze, and she begins to swing. For just a few moments she catches, broadside across the river as if holding the moment of anticipation, reluctant to commit herself; and finally firmly points her bow upstream. The ebb has begun and night has finally closed around me.

Now the new phase has set in I feel released to go about my evening chores. I go below to get ready for the night. **R**

Peter Reason's *In Search of Grace: An Ecological Pilgrimage* is published by Earth Books. Illustration: Starry Sky by Charis Raine www.studiofactotum.com



Voyage Into the Deepest, Darkest Blue by Garry Fabian Miller, 2018
Tapestry woven by David Cochrane, Rudi Richardson, Naomi Robertson and Emma Jo Webster. Photographs by Shannon Tofts, courtesy of Dovecot Tapestry Studio

A journey through light to the elements of life

Emma Crichton-Miller meets
artist Garry Fabian Miller

Hanging in the Dovecot Gallery in Edinburgh is a brand new tapestry, six months in the making, the centrepiece of *Voyage*, an exhibition devoted to the work of Garry Fabian Miller. 'Voyage into the Deepest Darkest Blue' is an abstract work of extraordinary chromatic intensity, a collaboration between the Dovecot weavers and the British artist photographer.

The tapestry divides in two, with varying darknesses of night or deep sea above, and a brilliant sun yellow thickening into orange below. A hint of green – a green ray? – at the horizon creeps along the dividing line, softening, adding

mystery. What holds you to the work is the depth of colour, and the powerful contrast of light and dark, as if all the accumulated hues of the world had been drawn into these radiating poles.

The work is inspired by two of Fabian Miller's intensely coloured abstract images, created in the darkroom of his studio on Dartmoor, where he has worked since 1989. Made without a camera, these images use light itself to activate the chemicals in the paper. Over long exposures, the light, passed through oil or water, digs deep, in Fabian Miller's words, "to excavate the paper ... to show that in this special material there are reds and blues and greens, which are as perfect as their manifestation in any other material that anyone has ever made". But while Fabian Miller's work depends upon the chemical reactions controlled in his darkroom and exults in the specificities of

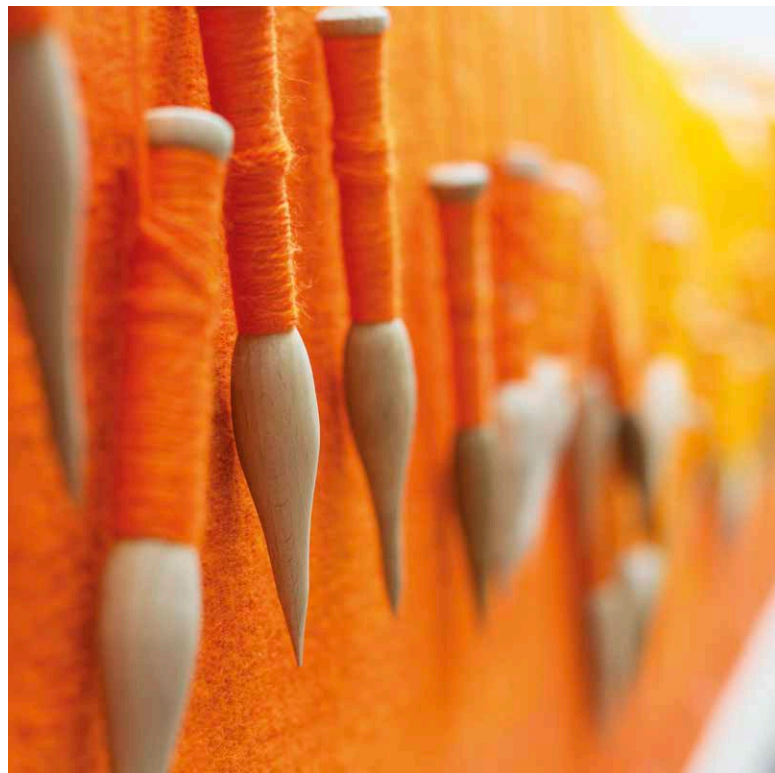
What holds you to the work is the depth of colour, and the powerful contrast of light and dark

his chosen material, it alludes also and everywhere to the elemental world outside – the world of fire, water and air that gave birth to matter and our planet Earth.

As I sit later in the calm drawing room of his home, with sunlight pouring through windows across wooden floors from the garden, fields and moorland beyond, Fabian Miller, born in 1957, explains that he was brought up just south of Bristol in what was once countryside but was quickly swallowed up by suburbia. It was a loss he felt keenly. The city had much to offer – it was there in the 1970s, working for his father's commercial photography business, that he found the Arnolfini, at that time one of Britain's leading contemporary art galleries and the hub of a thriving local art scene. New photography from America was being shown – bringing colour for the first time – as well as new British photography.

It was when he saw the exhibition *Artists Over Land* in 1975, which featured work by land artists Richard Long, Hamish Fulton, Phillippa Ecobichon and Marie Yates, exploring the experience of being in the landscape, that Fabian Miller saw a way forward for his own work. "It showed me that you could be an artist and you could have a relationship to landscape and you could use photography."

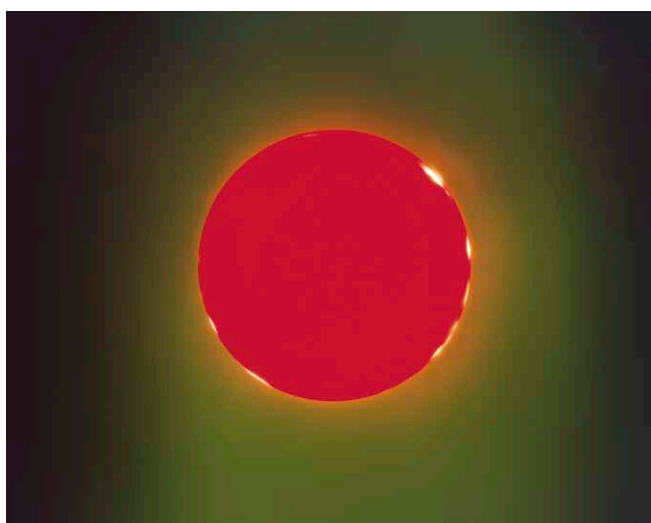
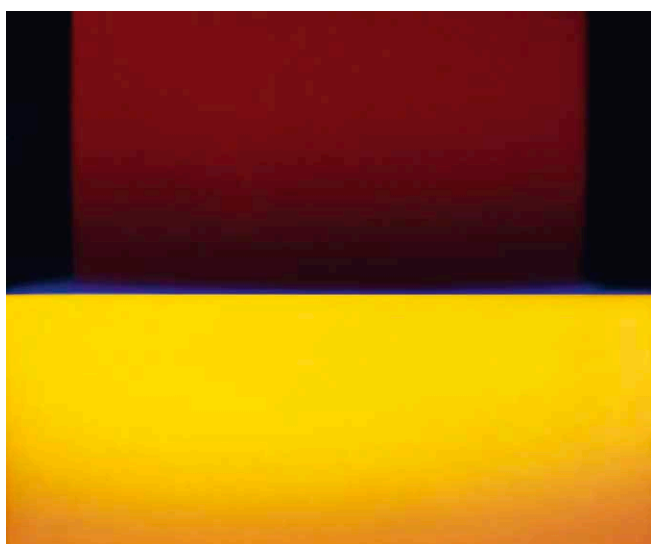
Using his newly acquired skill with Cibachrome, a material he relishes for its "perfect richness of colour", he embarked on a project to photograph the view from his window. "I was looking across the Severn Estuary as it comes into Bristol and dividing it in the middle with the horizon – creating a square image with the line dividing it half sea, half sky – and then just observing it for two years." The resulting *Sections of England: The Sea Horizon* is a powerfully meditative body of work, harking back to the pioneer French landscape photographer Gustave Le Gray as well as the whole British landscape painting tradition. "I knew at the beginning," he says, "that whatever happened on the horizon was probably



Voyage Into the Deepest, Darkest Blue by Garry Fabian Miller 2018
(above) spindles; (below) with yarns

the most significant question, what happened when the earth and the sky come together."

The series was exhibited at the Arnolfini and the Serpentine Gallery, but Fabian Miller was not sure what to do next. Inspired by Robin Tanner, the Quaker, printmaker, conservationist and educationalist, and by gardeners such as Marjorie Fish, responsible for the Grade II* listed cottage garden at East Lambrook Manor in Somerset, Fabian Miller felt compelled to move out of the city. He bought a small house with some land in Lincolnshire and made a garden. It was there that he discovered the camera-less technique he has made his own.



(top) Sections of England: The Sea Horizon
(middle) Voyage to the Blue Edge
(bottom) They Lit Fires
All pieces by Garry Fabian Miller

“I was watching intensive agriculture all around me and I was trying to make pictures about the way the light pulled the seed out of the ground and made it grow into this amazing crop,” he recalls. “Suddenly it occurred to me that I could just take the plant, place it into an armature, and shine the light through it onto the Cibachrome paper.”

The technique involves using the plant like a transparency, and relying on its own natural processes of photosynthesis and chlorophyll production for the colours. The results are extraordinary – as if you were watching Nature itself paint on the paper. At this point Fabian Miller’s career took off. Commissions and exhibitions followed, and he moved back to the West Country, setting up home with his wife in a 100-year-old wooden house on the edge of Dartmoor.

Fabian Miller says, “We liked this house because it had the aesthetic of a Quaker meeting house. It is filled with light.” Today, the plain white board walls create a calm setting for books, paintings by Charlotte Verity, and the astonishing pots Fabian Miller has collected by such luminaries as Lucie Rie, David Leach, John Ward, Julian Stair and, above all, Richard Batterham.

Down a path through a 10-acre landscape enhanced with small lakes, trained hedges, orchards and woods, a tall wooden studio has been built, with the darkroom at its heart. In this partly trained, partly wild landscape Fabian Miller began to build the way of life that underpins all the work he has made subsequently, grounded in a quotidian rhythm of walking, working, gardening and family life. “I have always thought that domestic life is fundamental,” he says.

Around 1992, wanting to get closer to reflecting some original, primal energy, he found that he could dispense altogether with the plants as intermediaries, and use a container of oil or water, or, occasionally, flame, to mediate between the light and the paper. With multiple long exposures, channelling light in specific areas, he coaxes his glowing planets or balls of fire, his chromatic grids and shimmering horizons, from the chemical paper. He likens his process to that of an expert potter, working with the vagaries of the kiln to bring about the miraculous transformations of glazing.

Fabian Miller is now at a crossroads. The Cibachrome paper he has used consistently since the 1970s ceased to be produced in 2011, and he is eking out the last supplies. He has many projects, including publications, exhibitions, an ongoing series of digital prints he is creating based on his Cibachrome images, and a film made in collaboration with the poet Alice Oswald.

Long an admirer of the pioneering 20th-century weavers Elizabeth Peacock and Ethel Mairet, Fabian Miller has found the tapestry project particularly rewarding. At Dovecot he found weavers with as highly tuned a commitment to colour as his own. In recognition, last year his wife bought him Ethel Mairet’s classic 1916 book, *A Book on Vegetable Dyes*, for his 60th birthday.

Far from mourning an ending, Fabian Miller says, “I don’t know what it means but this black book, I believe, has the future in it.”



Emma Crichton-Miller is a freelance arts writer. *Voyage* runs at the Dovecot Gallery, Edinburgh, until 7 May.
www.dovecotstudios.com

Seeing me, seeing you

Nicholas Shakespeare appreciates the art and profound experience of looking closely

Sometimes the art of looking requires an extra level of instruction. Last May, on the Greek island where he lives, one of my oldest friends took me with a small group into a Byzantine chapel dating back to the 13th century, celebrated for its wall paintings.

After I had stared dutifully but unmoved at a fresco of Saint Nikolaos, finding it somehow hard to relate to, my friend, an art historian, observed tactfully that I might be looking at it in the wrong way.

He then made an electrifying point. Ever since the Renaissance, when we first formed the habit of looking at paintings as windows out onto reality, we have tended to see icons as figurative representations. But to the eyes of faith, icons function more like peepholes, allowing us mortals the chance of direct access to the deities – who in return squint back at us pitilessly out of their painted forms. Inside this chapel, my friend explained, we were as much the watched as the watchers.

He pointed out other faces on the lime plaster, the whites of their eyes prepared from ground chicken bones, the black from burnt vine leaves, and the colours mixed in with purified fish glue. Saint Dimitrios on horseback. John the Baptist. The Madonna. All fixing us with their inscrutable yet suddenly compelling gaze, like in that first world war recruiting poster featuring the face of Lord Kitchener, with little raised bumps to catch the light.

Meeting their painted eyes, I felt my capacity for wonder stirring, aroused to approach these icons not as primitive portraits but as two-way lenses into a mysterious parallel dimension.

Also with us on the visit to the chapel was another good schoolfriend, now an Egyptologist. Piers had spent the past three years excavating a tomb in the Valley of the Kings where he had made an exciting discovery, a photo of which he showed us.

To my uneducated eye, this revealed nothing more than a minuscule chip of mud-coloured wood. Had he been patiently digging all this time for that?

Piers then gave its background. Badly eaten by termites, and with the glass inlays long ago fallen out and the gilding lost, this was the bracelet from a coffin hand. It would have formed one of the crossed arms on a female coffin, probably of a Great Wife of Amenhotep III called Nebetnuhet, who had died about 1350 BCE. From this minute flake of cedar rubbed almost to darkness, Piers had been able to branch out and fill in the family tree, as it were, of an entire civilisation.

My journey to Kythera retaught me several things, aside from the importance of maintaining friendships that stretch back a long way. It was a reminder that not only does God



St Simeon Nemanja, a Byzantine era fresco at monastery Mileševa, Serbia
© BrankaVV / Shutterstock

lie in the details, but so does humanity – and inhumanity too. And that the art of looking closely at anything is more intimately bound to our pleasure, philosophy and religion than I had previously imagined. **R**

Nicholas Shakespeare is a novelist and biographer.
www.nicholasshakespeare.com

Sound effects

Ecoacoustic artist Leah Barclay took the Amazon rainforest up the Eiffel Tower. Justine Reilly hears how – and why – she did it

When multidisciplinary artist Leah Barclay was invited to contribute to ArtCOP21 – the arts activism festival surrounding the 2015 Paris Climate Conference – she immediately knew what she wanted to do. As visitors to the Eiffel Tower ascended its four platforms, they would be simultaneously immersed in the sounds of the Amazon rainforest, recorded at four corresponding levels of the forest canopy.

Barclay achieved this using mobile technology, by ‘planting’ GPS trigger points that weaved their way up the platforms. Visitors could tap into her extraordinary sound composition simply by carrying a smartphone and a set of headphones.

The intention was to reach the busloads of delegates on tours that included the Eiffel Tower. “Many of these people were there to make decisions about the future of the Amazon rainforest, but the voice of that environment wasn’t part of those conversations,” she says.

Barclay invited human voices too, from Indigenous communities based in Peru, Brazil and Colombia, which she threaded into the installation. She also included the voices of communities she had worked with in Vanuatu – one of the countries facing the greatest threat from rising sea levels.

Five years earlier, she had made the rainforest recordings during a field trip to the Amazon. “At the time, I had no idea what I was going to use those for,” Barclay recalls. “I just thought it was important to understand what was happening at different levels of the rainforest, because the canopy was hundreds of metres above our heads. It seemed obvious that the soundscape was dramatically different up there.

“Some of the people I was working with thought it was ridiculous. They said, ‘Well, you can set up microphones on the ground and hear what’s happening up there anyway.’ But when we listened back to the recordings [made at different heights] you could hear how different it was.”

The Eiffel Tower project, known as Rainforest Listening, is indicative of Barclay’s work, which began in music composition and has since migrated into acoustic ecology. She works across environmental sciences, audio engineering, software engineering, creative arts and anthropology to form installations and performances that merge past, future and real-time people and Nature. The

creative art of sound composition offers unforetold benefits to environmental sciences: it turns out that accurately recorded sound is one of the most effective forms of data for tracking changes to fragile environments in the process of climate change.

Having worked at Arizona State University and New York University, and at UNESCO Asia-Pacific on a project called Biosphere Soundscapes, Barclay has returned to Australia, where her undergraduate studies began – Griffith University’s Queensland Conservatorium of music in Brisbane. Here she carries out post-doctoral research and teaching, and is formulating new interdisciplinary courses.

It was at the Queensland Conservatorium that she began working with William Duckworth and Nora Farrell, a New York-based composer/producer team, in 2007. Their composition *iOrpheus* left a lasting legacy. Using new mobile phone technology, they created a performance combining live music and site-specific sound installation.

“I came into the field of acoustic ecology as a composer and performer,” Barclay recalls. “But in parallel, I was working a lot in conservation, and engaged in all of these different forums where many people were saying, ‘We need better tools to engage people in the environment; no one’s responding to messages that scientists are putting out into the world.’

“I thought, there seems to be a real potential to combine both these worlds.”

The initial piece was an exhibition for the opening of the Queensland Great Walks at a gallery on the Sunshine Coast. “Gallery staff were saying that people were getting the information and going out to the Great Walks. It was a trigger to inspire people to go to that environment and experience it. And people were donating to conservation groups related to the walks.

“So from that point almost 15 years ago, I was just sold on that idea. I thought, this is it, because if these kinds of performances and installations that I’m engaged with have some kind of scientific grounding and a conservation focus, and they can trigger that engagement for people, then why would I do anything else?”

Within her large-scale projects, Barclay has created youth engagement programmes, while Sonic Explorers is a workshop model for field recording and interacting with the environment through mobile technologies and sound.





Canyon Kids, 2016. Oil on panel 177.8 cm x 152.4 cm by Jules de Balincourt.
Courtesy of the artist and Victoria Miro, London/Venice

“I was trying to inspire this culture of listening with the idea that, if we’re listening to the environment, we’re more engaged with the environment, and if we’re more engaged, hopefully that inspires communities to take action and start responding to climate change,” she says. “I realised it was important to work with people who were younger. And I was finding that 6- to 12-year-olds involved in these workshops would get really engaged.”

She tells of one group of about 40 students transforming, from an attitude of disrespect and destruction, to wonder and awe. “We went through just an hour of blindfolded sound walks, field recording, and engaging with one of these installations. Just within an hour, you could see they were treading lighter and engaging with the environment in a completely different way.”

Barclay has discovered that this way of listening to the environment is simply common sense to people indigenous to the places where she has worked, including Vanuatu, and Kabi Kabi Country on Australia’s Sunshine Coast.

The power of sound is in its capacity to provide a visceral experience of an environment. Instead of viewing images of a dying ocean reef, an audience can hear the desolation and compare it to the auditory experience of a healthy, bustling ecosystem. The power also is in its accuracy and integrity as a form of data. Rather than using invasive and relatively inaccurate electrofishing and capture-and-release methods, scientists using sound recordings can gather a clearer picture of an ecosystem’s health, without disturbing the environment.

Barclay has armed citizen scientists too, providing low-cost recording equipment to communities who can capture GPS-specific information. This creates a form of accountability. For instance, a community in the Amazon has captured the sound of chainsaws in an area claimed to be safe from logging.

Acoustic ecology emerged out of Simon Fraser University in Vancouver, British Columbia, in the late 1960s. “My research positions acoustic ecology as an inclusive, interdisciplinary field that can help us understand the rapid social, cultural and ecological changes taking place across the globe,” Barclay says. “It embraces the emerging scientific possibilities of ecoacoustics and draws on the foundations of sound studies in arts and humanities, and the value of Indigenous knowledge systems.”

Barclay is a key member of the team bringing this year’s Ecoacoustics Congress to Brisbane from 24 to 28 June. The event is a collaboration between the World Forum for Acoustic Ecology and the International Society of Ecoacoustics. For Barclay, it is an exhilarating prospect.



Justine Reilly is a freelance writer.

For more details about the Ecoacoustics Congress visit ecoacousticscongress.org and leahbarclay.com

Songs of open spaces

Illustration © Akira Kusaka www.akira-kusaka-illustration.tumblr.com

The composer Alexander Chapman Campbell describes how a 400-mile pilgrimage in Norway inspired his latest work

I stood on the edge of Oslo, staring at the forest. The city and wild woods were almost touching. Ahead of me stretched a path, connecting me to a place hundreds of miles away. It felt almost like a secret. The path was almost hidden, like an invisible door into the wilderness. The busy city seemed unaware of it. Even with my map I still got lost trying to find the way through the last row of buildings. And then with a few steps forward I left the city behind me and came into a world of rushing streams and innumerable fir trees.

As the narrow path curved upwards through the forest, I imagined all the places it might lead me. This was the first pilgrimage I had undertaken. On my back I carried my tent, food and stove. I wanted to have the experience of being alone in wild and beautiful places and of coming into closer contact with the natural world. I hoped it would be a time of washing in rivers, sleeping under the stars and hours of silent meditation in the forests and the mountains.

The destination of my pilgrimage was Nidaros Cathedral, 400 miles to the north. Rising magnificently within the coastal city of Trondheim in western Norway, it's the most northerly medieval cathedral in the world, and the resting place of Olav, Norway's national saint. With the reformation of the Norwegian church in the 16th century the Catholic pilgrim routes fell silent, and it is only in recent times that the paths have been restored and walked upon once more.

I began my pilgrimage on 22 June. The weather remained bright and warm for the first two weeks. By the second week the land was growing more mountainous, and at each turn of the valley I searched northwards for a sight of the high mountains, the ranges that rise to over 2,000 metres. I was told the snow still lay thick upon these high peaks, and my path would soon be leading me through them.

Meanwhile, my journey had taken an unexpected turn. I'd intended to have a break from my musical work, but throughout my five weeks of walking, and to my great surprise, I kept finding pianos. Usually they were in churches, or in the cabins and farms where I stayed. Sometimes I'd play and compose on them for only a short time; on other days I'd sit for hours. It ended up becoming one of the most creative periods of my life. The music felt intimately entwined with my pilgrimage, and the music became my journal, unfolding and expanding as I progressed ever further into the north.

At the end of the second week I made a detour from the traditional pilgrim route and passed through the Rondane mountain range. The path had been following the deep Gudbrand Valley (Gudbrandsdalen) for some days and I was longing to climb into more open spaces. I felt elated as I ascended above the tree line with the mountains all around me grand, noble and ringing with the sound of mighty waterfalls and rivers full of melting snow. It was a wilderness unlike any I had experienced before.

The remote mountainous expanses of Rondane became Norway's first national park in 1962 and it offers refuge to one of Europe's last wild reindeer herds, while bears, wolves and lynx can still be found there. My tent froze on the first night and I rose at 4am to boil water to keep warm. A crescent moon hung in the cold sky, and around the eastern peaks dawn was already gathering. I spent several of my happiest hours wandering onwards through a golden sunrise and luminous mist, wishing the morning might go on and on.

I travelled through the mountains for three days before rejoining the familiar, signposted pilgrim path. Soon after this I wrote two further compositions, and listening back to this music now I catch glimpses of those high places. How my music is inspired by Nature I can't say exactly. Inspiration is so mysterious: ideas and sounds flow from invisible worlds, often pouring in with a suddenness, like a light being switched on. Usually I'm simply focused on the sounds, my mind clear of other thoughts. What I do know is that I love Nature, and although I don't under-

stand the processes, I believe (and hope) that this love comes through in my music.

My solitary road was later joined by some others, pilgrims from France, Italy, Germany and the United States. We were

a small group, glad I think for the company after so many days of walking alone. Unlike the famous Camino to Santiago de Compostela in north-western Spain, the Norwegian pilgrimage routes are still very quiet; I was told only 40 people walked from Oslo to Nidaros during 2014.

On the 24 July I came at last before the great edifice of Nidaros. Crowds of tourists surrounded me, and the noise was overwhelming after the silence of the hills. In the evening there was a service held for the small number of pilgrims who had arrived that day. I sat listening to the mighty organ, its tones echoing through the cathedral like thunder across the mountains. The previous five weeks sat in and around me like a glowing painting newly completed, full of so much detail and wonderful colours. It seems there is a great power in pilgrimage and in the transformative effects it can have. It enriches the whole person, body and spirit, and leaves a lasting glow in the heart. The other pilgrims who sat with me that evening in the cathedral, although with varying beliefs and backgrounds, seemed to share these feelings. As the service concluded, a final prayer was read, the words reaching outwards through the great spaces of that holy place:

"Let us pray, here at our resting place, where we put down our pilgrim staff. We give thanks for helping hands, for the creative fellowship that we are a part of. Preserve us from life that stands still. Strengthen our longing to explore new roads where we may find meaning and a goal for our lives." 

Alexander Chapman Campbell is a Scottish composer and pianist. His latest album is *Journey to Nidaros*, published this year on his own label. alexanderchapmancampbell.com

An impression of presence

Peter Abbs talks to poet and author Fiona Sampson

Fiona Sampson is a philosophical poet of a peopled landscape. In a steady stream of publications over the last two decades, she has refined her vision of human life in relationship to Nature. Her work presents a subtle perception of our condition where a profound sense of connection often comes in elusive moments of sudden insight.

What is sensed can only be hinted at through a sparse and unadorned language drawing on the powers of musical cadence and visual image. She is an epiphanic poet of Nature and presence, of phenomena and ontology, of tangible things and intangible being. As she puts it in one of her most recent poems, 'Phenomenon', featured below, this is a "story about surface and presence / it's an old story but we / live in it you and I."

In a recent interview, it was not surprising to learn that she has been influenced by such metaphysical eco-poets as Rainer Maria Rilke and T.S. Eliot. For these poets, too, sought to affirm largely through the cadence of words and honed images a cosmos of unexpected correspondence and belonging.

PA: How do you see the task of the contemporary poet?

FS: I don't think that all contemporary poets have the same task: rather, we have as many as there are pressing human tasks in today's world.

For me, poetry isn't some discrete zone to the side of life, but is necessarily interleaved with it. We live in confusing, challenging times, and poets are human individuals with varied insights and understanding, who make the contribution they can. Some examine identity and belonging with real insight, some explore ethics or social and political injustice, some are simply preoccupied by what, mental, physical or spiritual, makes a well-lived life. Others find ourselves writing eco-poetics.

Which poets have most influenced your own work?

I like to read with deliberately naive enthusiasm; to steep myself in the work of a poet. That way the influence goes deep: it's not only conscious and technical, though it is that too. I guess I'm listening for the characteristic rhythm and note of a poet's thought.

Some names: early, the great permission-giving women, Plath, Rich, and very soon a slightly younger generation of North Americans than these: Glück, Graham, Pegeen Kelly. Eliot and Rilke have always been indispensable. Milosz too. The Metaphysicals: Traherne, Herbert, Vaughan and Donne. Currently, Merwin, Hass and Hillman... I could go on.



Fiona Sampson: "I'm preoccupied by the peopled landscape"
Photograph courtesy of Fiona Sampson

Do your poems have any relationship to the postmodern preoccupation with the nature of language?

I care about language, because it's what we write and think with. I like the musical elements of language that glue poetry together, then make it chime and come clear. I think that grammatical precision helps establish what exactly a line of argument is, or how a metaphor really works. Theory too, properly grounded in actual philosophy, can help one think and read. But theory preceding verse whose execution then matters not at all seems to me decadent, a derogation of the work of poetry. It's also laughably easy to do. Is language unmoored by thought or meaning – leave alone ethical, profoundly complex thought and sense – really language any more? The French psychoanalytic philosophers call this infant behaviour lallation, babble for the sheer pleasure of hearing your own voice.

How do you see your work relating to the current ecological crisis?

I'm preoccupied by the peopled landscape, the dialectic between human and environment. In other words, by anti-pastoral. This spills over into prose, for example in my recent book *Limestone Country*. The continuities between human and animal aren't cosy anthropomorphism, but a cohabitation reminding us we aren't little gods. Until we understand that landscapes are manmade, we won't be able to address the crisis. R

Fiona Sampson's most recent books are *Lyric Cousins: Poetry and Musical Form* (Edinburgh University Press, 2016), *Limestone Country* (Little Toller, 2017) and *In Search of Mary Shelley* (Profile, 2018). fionasampson@yahoo.co.uk

Afternoon

No not at all
the wind says
in the threshing
trees the south wind
glittering
among the birch leaves
stirring up
the sycamore

Once again
and long ago
the south wind says
filling the garden
with sunlight
and restlessness
until the roses
bend beneath it

burning red
along their branches
lavish summer
promises
the wind takes them
and breaks their petals
over itself
as a wedding

and Ah the wind says
as it fills
my arms and empties
them Remember
this remember
this you who
are carried away
with the wind –



Blew by Beth Richardson www.brichart.co.uk

Noumenon

Snow falls and fills the valley
and under a roof of snow
the sleeper dreams that snow is falling
secretly for her alone
on and on through the darkness
snow falls like something speaking
noiselessly into silence

something that's all alone
in its own silence cannot hear
itself can't feel the grass the stones
the small branches it has them covered
even in the sleeper's dreams
the falling snow fails to feel
the world that it longs to touch

and misses falling through its own
cold embrace on and on
in the dark the sleeper dreams
the snow is falling on her pillow
as wide wet words the night
speaking about itself the snow
speaking the words of night

Phenomenon

Snow falls and fills the valley
and the house fills with snow light
more clear more exact
than the musky light of days
where a little tenderness
hides like a pencilled shading
just to the left of things

that favourite chair or that table
cupped with care by daily light
is suddenly laid bare

snow light
coming in from all sides looks
straight through the prism frankly
curious there is no myth
it says to equal this story

about surface and presence
it's an old story but we
live in it you and I
the snow light says as it comes in
and makes itself familiar
among the chairs and tables all
dressed up today in frankness

There is a practical and urgent dimension that runs right through the book: “Only by relearning to understand our existence as a practice of love will we grasp the overwhelming human dilemmas that we face ... and find the means to deal with them differently than we have thus far.” Weber describes the book as a collection of love stories, “erotic affairs with stones, plants, rivers, animals, people, and words”; for “love is an answer to the lack that lies at the heart of aliveness.” 



Loess Plateau in China, before (1995) and after (2009) watershed restoration work



Images © Yan Jinmin

HOPE FOR A WATERSHED MOMENT

Minni Jain is uplifted by a call to work with, not against, Nature's rhythms

Replenish: The Virtuous Cycle of Water and Prosperity

Sandra Postel

Island Press, 2017

ISBN: 9781610917902

Can we restore the balance to Nature's most neglected asset, the water cycle? Can we go from our current 'vicious' cycle of neglect of our Earth's natural gifts, to a 'virtuous' cycle of their care? To find out I picked up Sandra Postel's book *Replenish: The Virtuous Cycle of Water and Prosperity*.

The book starts very promisingly, quoting Mary Oliver's timeless words that transport us instantly into the mystery of the gift water offers us: "In water that departs forever and forever returns, we experience eternity."

On a less mystical level, though, Postel lays out how disrupting the Earth's water cycle is proving to be a costly business indeed. Billions of dollars are spent in cleaning up every time a flood happens and in looking after migrants fleeing droughts and dangerous, desertified landscapes across the planet. The probability of a one-in-a-hundred-year flood happening within every ten years will now make bookies very happy indeed. Not to mention the narrowing odds against global food and water security.

Can we fully grasp the magnitude of the threat potential of this currently disbalanced water cycle of the Earth? And if we can understand it, can we step forward and do something about it and avert it?

To find some answers to these questions, Postel takes us across the world, citing various cases to prove that, yes, we can. She introduces us to magnificent large-scale projects such as that on the Loess Plateau in China, which covers an area one and a half times the size of California. The plateau, said

to have started becoming brown and barren as early as the 1300s, when tremendous pressures on the land led to heavy tree-cutting, overgrazing and crop cultivation – by the 1900s all that was left there were some of the poorest people in China eking out a harsh, dry, eroded existence – is now perhaps the biggest watershed restoration project in the world. Since the 1980s over a million hectares have been restored by working with Nature; we now know that it is possible to rehabilitate even the most eroded of soils and landscapes.

From such huge-scale replenishment work, Postel takes us to successful, small-scale, community-led projects started by the Stockholm Water Prize-winner Rajendra Singh. Working with Nature and communities, Singh has revived seven dead rivers in arid Rajasthan, India by encouraging his people to build small check dams and plant trees. (See *Resurgence & Ecologist* Issue 293.)

As a director of the Global Water Policy Project, co-creator of an award-winning water-stewardship organisation and National Geographic Freshwater Fellow, and with countless accolades to her name, Postel has more than enough credentials to write a book of this depth.

With provocative and intriguing chapter titles such as 'Put Watersheds to Work', 'Make Room for Floods' and 'Rescue Desert Rivers', she gives both reasons for and methods of looking after our water cycle locally. *Replenish* presents us with countless innovative local, national and international solutions. In Postel's words, "My goal ... was to find those innovative farmers, ranchers, cities, communities that are showing we can have a healthier water cycle. We can repair it, we can replenish it, we can rebuild it." She certainly succeeds in achieving her goal. **R**

Minni Jain is a director of The Flow Partnership, which works with communities globally to help them ease floods and droughts. www.theflowpartnership.org

Bomb

Our ancestors didn't leave us words for this.
Rain, downpour, deluge
Do not describe cars and central heating
Become invisible, argued-over carbon –
Heated air that holds the weight of oceans
And, drop by millions of drop,
Returns it to us,
Filling fields with the fish-coloured
back and forth of sudden lakes,
Reversing gravity to thunder upwards from a drain.
This rain, heavier than memory,
Overtakes us,
Using roads that we made for ourselves
And leaving us, with hands gripped to the wheel,
Poor captains of our unexpected ships.

Emily Diamand

Emily Diamand is an author of children's fiction who writes fantasy adventure stories with an environmental theme. Her first novel, *Flood Child*, won the Times/Chicken House Children's Fiction Prize in 2008, going on to be published worldwide. She has since published three more novels, and her work has been shortlisted for the Branford Boase award and several regional awards and has been nominated for the Carnegie Prize.

A COSTED PLAN FOR PEACE

Clive Barrett is inspired by a blueprint to counter conflict

The Business Plan for Peace:
Building a World Without War
Scilla Elworthy

London, Peace Direct, 2017

ISBN: 9781999816407

Peace is a utopian concept, they say (the “realist” generals and politicians), for idealists and dreamers. In the real world, they say, there is no alternative to war, to the arms trade, to massive defence budgets. Through her well-argued, accessible and impassioned writing, Scilla Elworthy begs to differ.

Elworthy is driven by the practical potential for change, whether undertaken by governments, charities, companies or the individual reader. She has met the people who have made a difference, and knows that change for peace is possible. Not only has she founded both the Oxford Research Group, a security think-tank, and Peace Direct, a charity empowering local nonviolent development, but also she advised those who set up The Elders, global leaders who work together for peace. (Unfortunately, this book was published just before Aung San Suu Kyi’s fall from grace; a second edition might not include her as an example of self-awareness transforming the conduct of politics.)

The first half of the book is a mathematician’s delight, dripping with statistics: eight men have the same wealth as the poorest half of humanity; global military expenditure is nearly US\$1.7 trillion, and everyone on the planet could have education, clean water and sanitation for less than one quarter of that.

The purpose of the figures is to provide a context for the set of international

development initiatives that Elworthy proposes. The core of the book is a concise outline of 25 practical plans to transform global military culture into a culture for peace. For each there is an underlying principle, a practical example from Elworthy’s experience of the principle successfully at work somewhere in the world, followed by a brief proposal often consisting of just one or two sentences. This is later given a ballpark costing.

Although Elworthy is better at the big ideas, the credibility of the proposals comes from the inspiring examples that she cites. There are stories of non-violence schools in north-west Pakistan, former child soldiers in the Democratic Republic of Congo buying today’s child

soldiers out of militias in exchange for goats, and thousands of Liberian women refusing to let men out of peace negotiations until agreement was reached.

The budgeting might consist of back-of-an-envelope calculations, but it still gives the scale of finance needed for Elworthy’s proposals. Ten years’ support for locally led peace-building organisations in conflict zones, US\$140 million; four Truth and Reconciliation Commissions in relevant countries, US\$24 million; providing the ten most conflict-ridden countries with a peace and security centre each, US\$250 million... The total cost over ten years for all these plans to prevent violent conflict is just under US\$2 billion. That sounds, and is, a lot, but it is well within some



Illustration © Michaela Pointon www.martiillustration.com

corporate budgets. The annual expenditure on war amounts to more than US\$220 for every person on the planet. This plan for peace would on average cost less than 3 cents per person.

I had so many questions... Who would 'own' these projects? Who would implement them? What would the details be? Would they be another form of western imperialism? Yet the questions are part of the point. Let's not be fatalistic about war. Let's start a debate about what is realistically possible for peace, and then do it.

This volume reads like a manifesto of

a person in a hurry, impatient for change that she knows could be undertaken and would be transformative if it were. It is born of a can-do attitude that sweeps up the reader, not in 'if only' sighing, but in a desire to make a personal difference. The intention of the second half of the book is to answer the reader's question, "What can I do?" Whether or not it succeeds probably depends on where the reader is coming from. Self-awareness is relevant, of course, but individualism must give way to collective action, to joining with others, getting stuck into existing projects, organisations,

campaigns. We need each other – we make change together.

If this book succeeds in getting the reader to take up just one of the suggestions, it will be a life-changer. Elworthy concludes: "The most powerful and lasting way to counter war and violence is to build a culture of peace... Peace involves transforming society from the inside out, in our own lives and across borders." Let it begin with me – and you. **R**

Clive Barrett is Chair of Trustees of the Peace Museum in Bradford, West Yorkshire.

WAR AND ORDER

A book of essays on American imperialism doesn't completely convince **Russell Warfield**

Voices for Peace: War, Resistance and America's Quest for Full-Spectrum Dominance

Edited by T.J. Coles

Clairview Books, 2017

ISBN: 9781905570898

At a time when the world feels closer to nuclear war than it has in decades, it's welcome to receive a collection of essays and interview transcripts called *Voices for Peace* – a book that promises some hope, and perhaps even a little strategy, for pulling ourselves back from this brink. Sadly, despite its subtitle, it is light on 'resistance'. Aside from an inspirational missive from Brian Terrell on breaking into Whiteman Air Force Base, there isn't much on anti-war activism or arguments for peace. Instead, the pieces fixate on the ills of American imperialism, and its "quest for full-spectrum dominance".

Given the importance of American imperialism in global warfare, I have some sympathy with the collection's focus. However, by framing the quest for US hegemonic dominance as the primary driver of conflict, the collection ends up hitting the odd note of portraying war as an inherently rational act. Sure, former president Obama's "pivot to Asia" may have been both immoral and undesirable, but if global dominance is what you want, militarisation and war is at least a cogent, strategic approach. What this collection lacks is an exploration of the frequent irrationality of war: the bizarre belief of some politicians that you can bomb your way to peace.

Think of Iraq. While driven by a clear neo-imperialist scramble for resources, one can't ignore the fact that Britain's then prime minister, Tony Blair, seemed to hold a sincere conviction that you could utterly obliterate a country and that western democratic values could then somehow be raptured from the rubble. This sort of apocalyptic evangelism is arguably more chilling than the sheer drive to power displayed by the US military complex, but it gets short shrift here, aside from

highlighting 'blowback' in the form of international terrorism.

Almost inevitably in a book about war in the age of President Trump, the tiresome 'Hillary [Clinton] would have been worse' line of thought rears its head once or twice, somehow managing to ignore Trump's swift switch from isolationism to brinkmanship. Similarly, whilst it is not trite to protest that extrajudicial drone killings skyrocketed under Obama, it is a shame to see John Pilger sully the point by using it as ammunition against the left's so-called preoccupation with identity politics.

In making no moral distinction between former president George W. Bush and Obama, and between Clinton and Trump, the book skirts around a fairer point: the idea that the person acting as US president at any given time is almost incidental to the war machine. The drive for dominance is deeply ingrained through the apparatus of government, and forms an important part of any modern-day presidency. We saw this evidenced when Trump ordered the dropping of the "Mother of All Bombs" in Afghanistan in April 2017. After months of worrying about his 5am tweets, his sexual assaults, and the incompetence of his White House, many Americans were at last reassured. Finally, they thought, he is beginning to seem presidential.

One of the book's finest points comes during T.J. Coles' introduction, arguing that "from an elite perspective, it is better to portray the world as relentlessly cruel and people as wholly self-interested, as the media do." Here, war is identified as a key part of the neoliberal order – helping to portray a Hobbesian hell of all against all as the natural order of things, with no space to imagine a world based on cooperation. It is a pity this is not explored further, not least because it might have teased out strategies for achieving peace, rather than just railing against US dominance. Nonetheless, it is an encouraging message for these dark times: fight neoliberalism, and we fight war too. **R**

Russell Warfield is a freelance journalist.

THE SCIENCE BEHIND SPIRITUALITY?

Hugo Davenport considers an ambitious attempt to assess the benefits of religious practice

Science and Spiritual Practices

Rupert Sheldrake

Hodder & Stoughton, 2017

ISBN: 9781473630079

God and the secular have been debated in minute detail for centuries, especially since Europe's 18th-century Enlightenment. To embrace the subject is a huge undertaking, perhaps reminiscent of a statement by Empedocles, Plato, Pascal and Voltaire that God is a "circle whose centre is everywhere and circumference nowhere".

It is typical of Rupert Sheldrake's range as a thinker to attempt the task. He adopts a modest, uncontentious style, seeking where science and religion might learn from each other rather than highlighting their manifold divergences. The book is short, and arguably its title draws the circle just too wide to keep its implied promises.

Sheldrake is described by his publishers as being "at the heart of the intellectual and scientific establishment", which is surely no longer true. He has long been seen as a maverick – even "a heretic", to use his own epithet. That reputation has stuck with him since he first came up with his theory of morphic resonance and later engaged in a very public dispute with Richard Dawkins, apostle of the selfish gene and former Professor for the Public Understanding of Science at the University of Oxford.

His approach in this book – not the first he has written on overlaps between science and religion – is to identify seven spiritual practices he uses himself and to try, with varying success, to provide scientific evidence for the benefits. The wider aim is to bring together science with a religious, or more precisely Christian, perspective. His strong opposition to the narrowness of scientism and dogmatic materialism, which he argues condemns us to inhabit a lifeless universe, is plain.

Such evidence is very patchy, drawing on a wide range of sciences. They're often at the 'softer' end of the spectrum – psychology or anthropology, say, rather than the traditional terrain of natural science such as physics – and are employed depending on the particular practice. Botany, Sheldrake's original specialism, figures prominently. At the least convincing end of the scale, he resorts to the health-giving properties of green space and fresh air. Real enough, but some way removed.

Meditation has now been widely introduced by corporations and the military, along with groups or individuals more conventionally associated with it

Sheldrake starts with meditation, where evidence for the benefits to brain function is relatively abundant, although he is at pains to draw a distinction between the mind's possibilities and the physical activity of the brain. Meditation has now been widely introduced by corporations and the military, along with groups or individuals more conventionally associated with it.

Moving on to gratitude – not taking people and things for granted, and saying grace before meals – Sheldrake has some pertinent observations. For instance, in a money-based economy, the opposite of gratitude is "a sense of entitlement", which breeds dissatisfaction and unhappiness. Here the scientific evidence is thin, and much of the chapter resembles good advice from a kindly, civilised uncle.

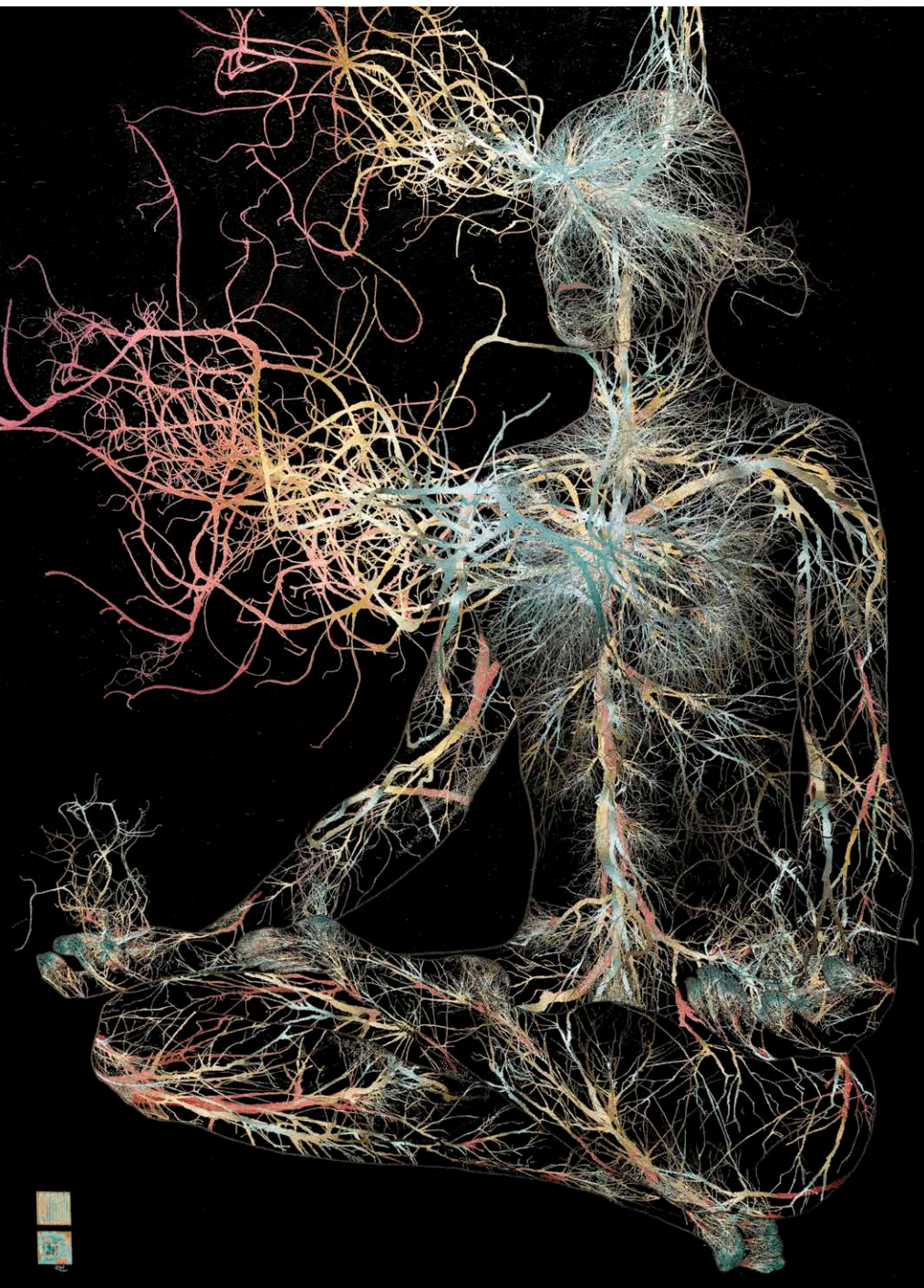
Then it's the turn of 'Reconnecting with the More-Than-Human World'.

Clearly, he states, "there is vastly more non-human nature than humanised nature in the universe," before launching into a discussion of human evolution contrasting the beliefs of traditional societies with modern theories. He works his way up to the Romantic reaction to post-Reformation thought and the 17th-century conviction that Nature is machine-like, unconscious and inanimate, to the revival of animism.

The chapter ends with a slightly startling speculation that the sun may be a conscious entity. Sheldrake cites the ancient belief of many cultures that the sun is a god. (It's a theory he shares in more recent times with Gurdjieff, who also thought planets were conscious, though the less evolved were somehow parasitic on the energies of the more advanced.)

Later chapters – 'Relating to Plants', 'Rituals and the Presence of the Past', 'Singing, Chanting and the Power of Music', and 'Pilgrimages and Holy Places' – display a similar mix of broad understanding and wide knowledge from many fields. The link of each to 'hard' scientific evidence remains patchy, though Sheldrake's naturally speculative cast of mind makes for a continually stimulating journey. Each chapter ends with two suggestions for how readers might put its practice into effect.

I have two main reservations about this book. The first is that it lacks any historical perspective on the immense amount of bloodshed and suffering that religion has engendered in world history and still does. This, too, has formed a major component of religious practice over the centuries, if rather emphatically not the spiritual kind. It is especially true of the three great desert religions – Christianity, Judaism and Islam. Even Buddhists have joined in the slaughter with the recent massacre of the Rohingya people in Myanmar. Perhaps Sheldrake sees this as a perversion of real spiritual belief and practice; others, more sceptical, may wonder why people have created so much suffering



Pranayama: Breath of Fire by Greg Dunn

www.gregadunn.com

in the name of unprovable abstractions or downright illusions. To that question, he offers no answer. It makes it all a bit 'accentuate the positive'.

The second problem is that where the title implies equal consideration of all spiritual traditions, Christianity comes to predominate progressively as the chapters unfold. Sheldrake was born into a Methodist family, became an atheist early in his science career, and is now a self-declared Anglican, so this may be inevitable.

Where the book leaves a big gap is in its sketchy handling of the non-theistic beliefs and practices of Buddhism, Taoism and Confucianism. For me, Buddhism is a science of mind above all, now converging in revolutionary ways with theoretical physics. The texts of Taoism are also more subtle and mysterious than the sometimes legalistic tone of the Bible. However, Sheldrake can legitimately insist that the prime purpose of his book is to promote practice, so this may well lie beyond its scope.

OBITUARY HUGO DAVENPORT 1953–2018

Hugo Davenport, in recent years a leading book reviewer and feature writer for *Resurgence & Ecologist*, died on 12 March. He was 64, and had been suffering from cancer for several years, but had continued to write until just before his death.

Hugo was the son of Nigel Davenport, the actor, and inherited some of that profession's capacity for *brio* and delight in the spoken word. But after gaining a first-class degree in anthropology, philosophy and literature at Sussex University – which suited his always eclectic curiosity – he was accepted as a graduate trainee journalist at the *Liverpool Daily Post* and *Echo* group.

Liverpool's traditions for poetry, music and entertainment – and night life – proved a perfect training ground for a career that later took him to the *Observer* and other Fleet Street newspapers, including a decade-long stint as film critic for the *Daily Telegraph*.

His book reviews for *Resurgence & Ecologist* demonstrated his love for language, literature and Nature, a thoughtful sense of spirituality and an irrepressible sense of fun. A contributor to our recent crowd-funding campaign for our new education centre at the Small School, he sent thanks for his hand-made *Resurgence* mug, describing it as "a thing of beauty. Please tell the potter that it sits in the hand with uncannily perfect balance, better than any mug I've ever held, and the bowl shape keeps hot drinks warm for a lot longer..."

A few weeks later, as he faced the pains and privations of radio-therapy with characteristic insouciance, he admitted in his last message to me that, "yes, it's true – I do sometimes wish there were something in my *Resurgence* mug other than tea or coffee, but only really hanker for a chilled glass once or twice a month..." He apologised for a confusion over deadlines, making light of "another cock-up by a brain at present functioning only intermittently". The self-deprecation was typical of a man whose appetite for life and love made him an enduring and endearing friend.

Greg Neale

THERE IS ANOTHER WAY

Colin Tudge enjoys a critique of modern food systems and agriculture

Food Sovereignty, Agroecology and Biocultural Diversity:
Constructing and Contesting Knowledge

Michel P. Pimbert (ed.)

Routledge, 2018

ISBN: 9781138955356

To forestall the global collapse that now is well in train requires a total rethink. Fortunately some excellent thinkers, doers and activists are on the case, as evidenced now by *Food Sovereignty, Agroecology and Biocultural Diversity*, edited by Michel Pimbert, director of Coventry University's Centre for Agroecology, Water and Resilience. In particular, says Pimbert, we need to take seriously the traditional knowledge that is still manifest in Indigenous societies worldwide. This knowledge often proves to be factually accurate and is of great practical use – not least in agriculture, which we *must* get right.

The world needs small, low-input, complex and skills-intensive farms of the kind that are still the norm worldwide – more than 70% of farms are one hectare or less. Such farms are the world's biggest employers and still feed most of the world's people even though they have largely been forced onto the most difficult land. The world as a whole could gain enormously from their know-how, but the small farms are being swept aside as fast as big industry and governments, including here in the UK, can do the necessary deals and grab the land, while the farmers and their families head off for urban slums.

At least equally to the point, traditional ways of thinking are not rooted in the felt need to dominate Nature, or to increase personal wealth, as is de rigueur in the modern west. They are rooted in values – albeit values that may sometimes be difficult for westerners to appreciate.

Oxford University's Nina Isabella Moeller describes an attempt by a German pharmaceutical company to persuade the Kichwa people of Ecuador to allow bio-prospecting – with of



Illustration by Luke Best, courtesy of www.heartagency.com

course shared profits, leading to wealth and modernity. The negotiations broke down. In the early meetings the Kichwa were simply bored – the men grabbed the opportunity to get drunk on free western booze. The trappings of modernity held no allure. What did appeal was a song that a woman made up on the spot that expressed her yearning to fly like a toucan.

This may simply sound bizarre – the kind of fantasising that brings out the cynic in western hard-heads. Yet it is not a million miles from the sentiments to be found in Coleridge and Blake: a longing to be *with* Nature, or again to be part of it. But although English Romanticism occupies a significant slice of conventional western education, it has very little influence on the strait-laced, “conventional” thinking that shapes economic and political strategy.

The cultural contrast runs deeper. For, says Moeller, when a Kichwa healer was asked how he acquired his knowledge of medicinal plants, he said that when his grandmother was sick the plants themselves came into the house and danced and told him what they could do and how they should be prepared. Such accounts reinforce the conventional western conviction that traditional peoples should be brought up to date for their own good – but we should surely be asking instead what such a story really implies.

To me it suggests that all human knowledge, the things we take to be true, rests ultimately on intuition; that intuition needs to be cultivated; and that the intuitions of peoples closer to a state of Nature may be far more refined than ours. In large part we have exchanged our intuitive powers for what Pimbert calls the “lens vision” of materialism and logical positivism: the

conviction that nothing is worth taking seriously that we cannot stub our toes on and mathematicise. We have gained by this – antibiotics and IT – but how much have we lost along the way?

Since the modern western paradigm is so obviously failing – threatening indeed to kill the whole world – we

As Vanloqueren and Baret acknowledge, we cannot simply “roll the clock back” but it is very foolish indeed to suppose that we have nothing to learn from traditional practices

should ask, “How come?” Why have we, obsessively rational beings, allowed ourselves to be so led astray? Why do we put up with the status quo, which so obviously sells the world short and treats so many people, and other creatures, so cruelly? Why don’t we kick out the oligarchs who have brought the world to such a pass?

Gaëtan Vanloqueren and Philippe V. Baret provide at least part of the answer. The ideas that catch on in the world are not necessarily or even usually the ones that come closest to the truth or benefit the most people, but are rather those that enrich and empower the people who believe in them. So it was that in the early 1970s in agricultural circles agro-ecology and genetic engineering were taken equally seriously, as promising newcomers. Since then, genetic

engineering has been vaunted in high places as the world’s saviour: the only possible source of the new crops and livestock that the world is deemed (erroneously) to need. The reasoning is flawed at every turn, and after nearly four decades of hugely expensive biotech research and development it is hard to find a single example of a GMO that is unequivocally good for humankind or for the biosphere.

Yet, even though GM crops cannot yet be raised commercially in Europe, they are the prime focus of Britain’s agricultural research strategy. Agro-ecology, by contrast, receives hardly any support at all. Agro-ecology imitates Nature: farms are treated as ecosystems, diverse and low-input, demonstrably sustainable and resilient, and, when properly supported, just as productive as the industrial kind, and certainly productive enough.

Truly the world needs rethinking across the board. Truly the western post-Enlightenment paradigm needs to be challenged. As Vanloqueren and Baret acknowledge, we cannot simply “roll the clock back” but it is very foolish indeed to suppose that we have nothing to learn from traditional practices, or to assume a priori that “modern” western ways must be superior, or that the people who have adopted those ways are themselves superior and have a right to impose their will. *Food Sovereignty, Agroecology and Biocultural Diversity* is essential reading for all who can see that the dominant paradigm has run its course. We need both to rethink, and to rethink the way that we think. **R**

Colin Tudge is co-founder of The College for Real Farming and Food Culture. His latest book is *Six Steps Back to the Land* (2016).

NATURE, RACE AND AN IDEA OF HOME

Louisa Adjoa Parker enjoys a discussion on the link between Islamophobia and ecological crisis

Is Racism an Environmental Threat?

Ghassan Hage

Polity, 2017

ISBN: 9780745692265

Ghassan Hage is a Lebanese-Australian who is Future Generation Professor of Anthropology and Sociology at the University of Melbourne. In *Is Racism an Environmental Threat?* Hage, who has written extensively about ‘race’ (a social construct rather than something that actually exists), describes his stance as “slightly unusual” – he argues that racism is connected to the ecological crisis: both have roots in domination, colonialism and capitalism. Both come from the same mode of inhabiting the world, and each supports and reinforces the other. Anti-racist and ecological struggles, therefore, are intrinsically linked. The main concept of this book is of “generalised domestication” – a way of inhabiting the world through dominating it and making it yield value. Hage draws on a wealth of interlinking theories and sub-theories to demonstrate his convincing central argument.

He begins by arguing that racism (specifically Islamophobia, which he posits as today’s dominant form of racism) is related to the environmental crisis, as both involve the exploitation of humans and Nature. Hage warns of the need to understand the use of animal metaphors in relation to the racialised Other, as they reveal the nature of racist classification. Racism itself, he argues, is not a crisis and only becomes one when it fails to do its job of keeping the racialised Other in his or her place. For example, American anti-black racism is “always tinged with a sense of panic”, as there is a fear of losing long-established power.

The book shows how the world was divided into two very different realities during colonial times – that of slave and that of master. For some it is a world of national borders. Yet the (largely white)



Artwork by Emma Burleigh www.emmaburleigh.com

upper class “are made to feel truly at home in the world”. Colonised Others have been seen in turns as exploitable, dangerous and exterminable. Today, the Muslim is portrayed as an increasing threat, an ungovernable, lurking ‘wolf’ that stops us feeling at home (the aim of generalised domestication).

The book is written in the essay tradition, from a historical, sociological, anthropological and political perspective. It draws on a wealth of secondary sources and is well written and lucid. The arguments are fairly straightforward, and well illustrated. However, the use of language drawn from a highly academic, expert and subject-specific vocabulary may alienate non-academic readers. This is a shame, as many important conversations around ‘race’, animal welfare and the environment are currently taking place outside academia.

The arguments are convincing. Although some may find it controversial, it seems entirely logical to explore the link between racism and speciesism. It is also logical to argue that the same forces have moved across the globe, dominating and exploiting people, animals and Nature for the extraction of value. My main criticism would be that it is not completely clear why the focus is on Islamophobia – colonial racism continues to impact on all people of colour.

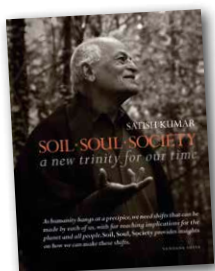
The book concludes by offering an alternative way of making ourselves at home in the world. The problem lies, Hage argues, not with generalised domestication itself, but in the way it has been favoured in modern times. We need to aim instead for multiple modes of inhabitation. He draws on the concept of mutuality from anthropologist Marshall Sahlins’ work on kinship to demonstrate that we can participate in each other’s existence, that the boundaries between the self and the Other, human and animal can be less absolute: ‘in me’ instead of ‘for me’. He also draws on sociologist Marcel Mauss’s work on ‘inter-giftedness’ – people, animals, plants and objects can exist as gifts for one another. We have become unable to see solutions other than through the lens of generalised domestication.

The aim of the book was to encourage readers to look at things differently and provide better ways of negotiating the problems. Hage has certainly achieved this – readers are left with a sense that the world they have long taken for granted has been turned upside down. R

Louisa Adjoa Parker is a writer with a particular focus on Black, Asian and Minority Ethnic history. Her collection of poems, *Blinking in the Light*, is published by Cinnamon Press. www.louisaadjoaparker.com

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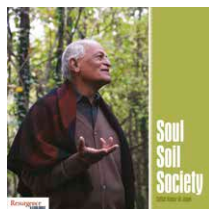


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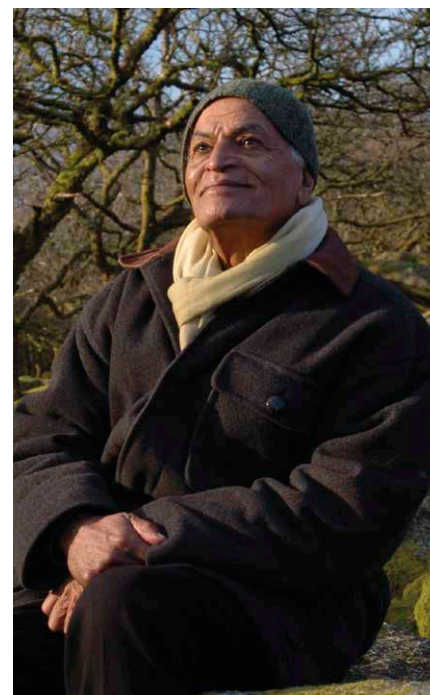
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LETTERS TO THE EDITORS

WE TREASURE OUR LOCAL HIGH STREET

When I saw the pictures accompanying Naomi Canton's article on small traders (Diversity Keeps a High Street Alive, Issue 306), I assumed the article was going to be about our local shopping area of Bishopthorpe Road (affectionately known to locals as Bishy Road), as the illustrations are by Emily Sutton, a local York resident.

Like Ilminster, the subject of the article, we also have an amazing street offering a real mix of shops (though sadly no longer a post office). In 2015 it won the Best High Street in Britain award and has its own website www.bishyroad.net

Our shops – many family-run businesses – include a butcher, a baker (no candlestick maker, sadly), two green-grocers, a florist, two charity shops, an optician's, a dry cleaner, a chemist, two gift shops, a hardware store, a bicycle shop, a Sicilian café/bar, four restaurants (including Thai, Indian and a wine bar/pizza café), a children's shoe shop, a children's organic clothes shop, an art gallery, several hairdressers, a chiropodist, a delicatessen, a fish and chip take-away/café, a carpet and bed centre, an antique shop and an estate agent, as well as branches of the Costcutter and Sainsbury supermarkets.

We also have independently run pubs, and a nearby community pub and community centre.

I feel so lucky to live nearby.

Di Hennell

York

HEALTH CUTS THREAT TO TRUE COMPASSION

The article Compassion is the Best Medicine (Issue 307) is indeed inspiring. However, what remarkable achievements have been attained in Frome may not be achievable throughout England.

It was in a McKinsey & Company paper published in 2009 that I first read that 40% of patients in acute-care hospitals should not be there. They should apparently be treated at home,

in community day care centres or – through self-help prevent programmes – they shouldn't be sick at all.

The motivation here is not compassion but cost savings. Yet preventing loneliness and isolation – in all age groups – is not an NHS healthcare priority; neither is it a local authority social care priority. Instead, the 44 NHS "footprints" areas across England have to collectively cut national annual costs by £22 billion by 2021.

In North West London a 40% reduction in annual emergency hospital admissions (so called non-elective admissions) is required by 2025/26. This action will supposedly assist in reducing annual NHS costs for the area by £1.3 billion. Two district general hospitals – with accident and emergency units – were closed in September 2014. A&E performance plunged and has not recovered. Another district general hospital in Ealing is due for the chop by 2021. Reduction in non-elective admissions in North West London and Ealing is tiny, and the validity of even this data is debatable.

I notice from your article that Frome Town Council offered "enthusiastic financial and strategic support" and that the lead GP had "remarkable vision". Sadly, there is no sign of any of this in Ealing or throughout North West London.

Eric Leach

Hanwell, London

WE NEED TO WAKE UP TO WIFI POLLUTION

Lynne Wycherley's report (Frontline, Issue 307) on the mounting concern in the United States over wireless technology brings into sharp focus the unnaturalness of modern communication techniques.

The initiative in Massachusetts will wake up many other states to the perils of electromagnetic pollution. The call for cable-only internet in schools is the first example of common sense on the subject.

The threat of microwave exposure is real, and such moves to reorganise our communication techniques recall the warning by Rachel Carson on the

dangers of insecticides, in her seminal book, *Silent Spring*.

The precautionary handouts being issued by the Massachusetts Department of Public Health on the possible risks of mobile phones, masts and wifi could be a catalyst for change – away from the slavish adherence to potentially harmful electromagnetic pollution.

David Harvey

Chippenham, Wiltshire

■ It is shocking to learn that so many films have been made on the dangers of wireless technologies and yet we rarely get to hear or read about them (A Call for Screen Protection, Issue 306). How is it possible that pharmaceutical companies must go through rigorous testing procedures before introducing new drugs, and yet mobiles and wifi have been through no equivalent regime? What price human health? Your magazine is to be congratulated on publishing this review and helping to raise public awareness.

Julia Ogonovsky

Templenoe, Kerry, Ireland

REVERENCE FOR WOOD

Satish Kumar's article, A Deeper Appreciation of Nature (Issue 305), prompted these memories. I learned many things in my near 30 years as a member of the Findhorn Foundation Community. The biggest teacher was through the woodworking I did in my studio. I already had training in traditional furniture making; however, I found that a more flowing organic way wanted expression. I started making boxes for the Angel Cards of the Game of Transformation, a board game devised at Findhorn. This helped me learn how to work together with the wood to create a piece of beauty. I also trained in Reiki in order to put healing energy into the wood.

An inner crisis prompted me to have a soul channelling. This gave me the final lesson – to work from the God in my heart with the intention of bringing a gift to the God in the user. Thus



Cartoon by Jonesy www.jonesycartoons.com

I came to see each object as a key to opening the heart of the Other. The work came to be more than just making a piece of merchandise, but also a gift to the Divine, and I found a responsibility to work with reverence and fill the box with good energies.

I recently met again one of these boxes after 30 years. I instantly recognised it as I had not shaped the top but left it rough, even glue showing. However it is a treasured piece, which I was proudly shown, and it clearly carries much love to all who see and handle it.

Richard Brockbank
Schlehdorf, Germany

LEARN FROM NATURE FOR OUR WELLBEING

Issue 307 contained many articles that resonated with me and, I am sure, with other readers concerned with the dire threat to the Earth's ecosystem caused by the human economic system.

Three articles in particular struck home. The first two lead us back to an appreciation of the beauty of the natural, organic world, which we have largely deserted and neglected in our relentless pursuit of, and dependence on, the products of the machines we have used to control and dominate other organisms, including other humans.

Andreas Weber's hymn to blossoming (Nature is an Erotic Process: Embrace It) immediately evoked a quotation from D.H. Lawrence: "We know that the rose

comes to blossom. We know that we are incipient with blossom. It is our business to go as we are impelled, with faith and pure spontaneous morality, knowing that the rose blossoms, and taking that knowledge for sufficient."

Kate Blincoe's reference, in her Nature Notes column, to the song of the skylark reminded me of my childhood on the Berkshire Downs. One day I decided to lie down on the grassy hillside and, addressing the sky, said: "Oh God, if you exist, please give me a sign." A skylark, far over my head, immediately went into full-throated song. It was as if the sky itself sang, because the true source was too small and too high to be seen.

Lastly, in his article The Life Required, David Orr makes an excellent case for the necessity to reinvent the whole basis of how human society provides goods and services to all its members. He is surely correct that tinkering with the existing system will not suffice. It will not shake the foundations of "institutionalised greed, perpetual growth and consumerism" underlying our present condition.

David Dobereiner
Newcastle upon Tyne

PLASTIC WRAPPING CAN BE RECYCLED

Having just read Roderick Nicholson's letter ('It's a Wrap, But Is It the Best?', Issue 307) may I say that the plastic wrapping for posted copies of

Resurgence & Ecologist is recyclable. It can go in the same container that supermarkets use for recycled disposable carrier bags. Not all supermarkets still collect these, but our local Morrisons does. I've just put two carrier bags of plastic there today, almost none of which was actually carrier bags. Magazine wrappings, food wrappings (fruit and vegetables, bread, etc.), even compost bags from the garden centre, all of these are the same plastic and there is a substantial market for recycled polythene. I used to be works manager of a company employing 25 people, and we exclusively used recycled polythene.

No, polythene doesn't need to go to landfill.

Tony Richardson
West Walton, Norfolk

CORRECTIONS AND CLARIFICATIONS

Apologies to Helen Iles, author of the article A Local Spirit Blossoms on the Vine (Issue 307), whose name was given incorrectly in the accompanying standfirst and on the Contents page.

We welcome letters and emails commenting on *Resurgence & Ecologist* articles and issues. These should include your postal address. Send your letters to The Editors, *Resurgence & Ecologist*, Ford House, Hartland, Bideford, Devon EX39 6EE or email editorial@resurgence.org. Letters may be edited for reasons of space or clarity.

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- biodynamic training "growing the land"
- social therapeutic education "growing people"

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Fees for direct applicants: two year, non-assessed course £1,200, with assessment £1,450. Fees include all training, study materials and practical activities, in addition to meals and refreshments. Accommodation and travel is not included.

Individual units may also be undertaken for those not wishing to subscribe to the full programme. Please enquire for details.

A small number of subsidies are available, particularly for those working in a Rudolf Steiner setting. Ruskin Mill Trust also offers a number of trainee placements under the Charity Volunteers Scheme. More information on this scheme is available on the website.

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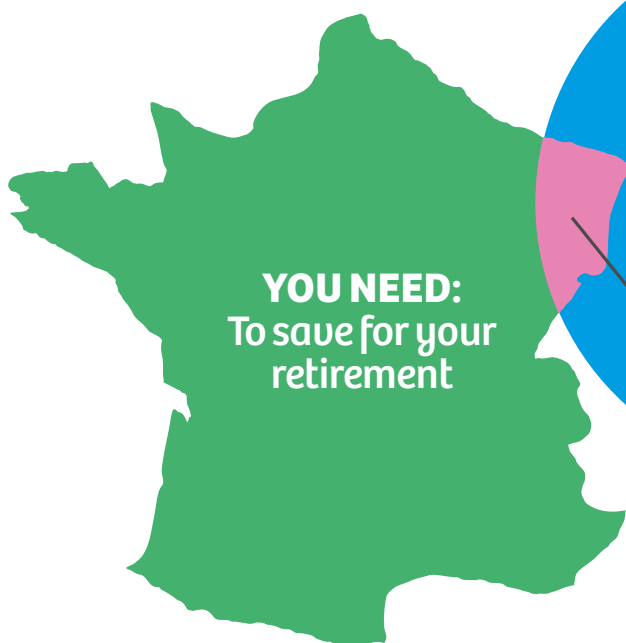
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Illustrations by Linda Scott www.lindascott.me.uk



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Investments for people
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(although some actually
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The Pedagogic Potential of Craftwork
Craft as a tool for human education and development
16 – 20 July 2018 intensive week

Building on the success of last year's intensive week, Ruskin Mill Land Trust is offering a further week for teachers and craftspeople. The course will combine theory with practice. Participants undertake craft activity and will observe themselves through self-reflection in an action research process. Throughout this process special emphasis will be given to understanding the imperatives of learning to focus, grasp and step as a pedagogical assessment tool in child and adolescent development.

The Trust will be hosting the course at three centres: Freeman College, Sheffield; Glasshouse College, Stourbridge; and Ruskin Mill College, Stroud.

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Fees include all training, study materials and practical activities, in addition to meals and refreshments. Accommodation and travel is not included.

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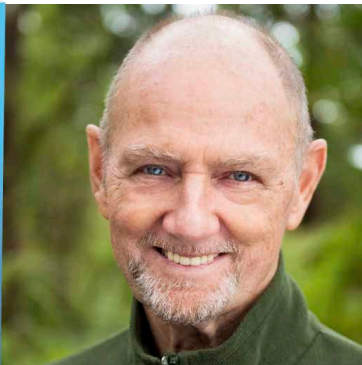
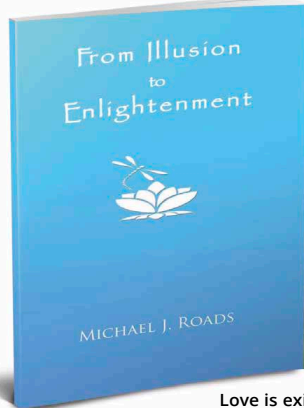
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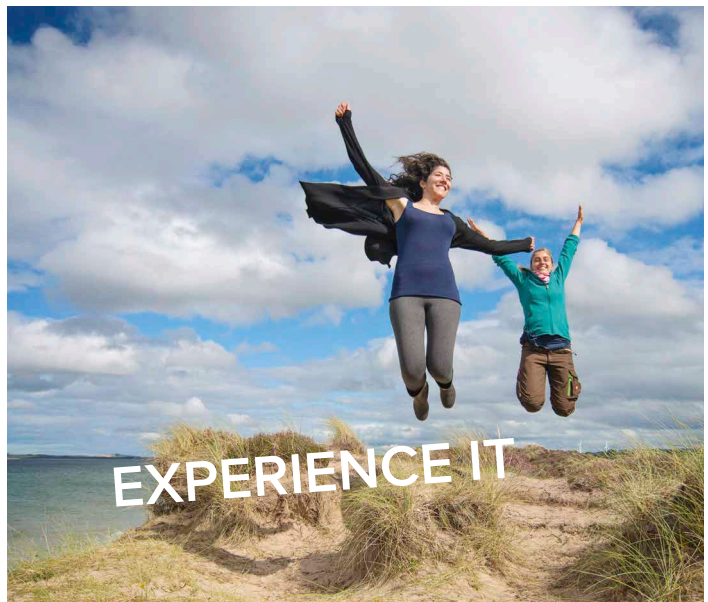
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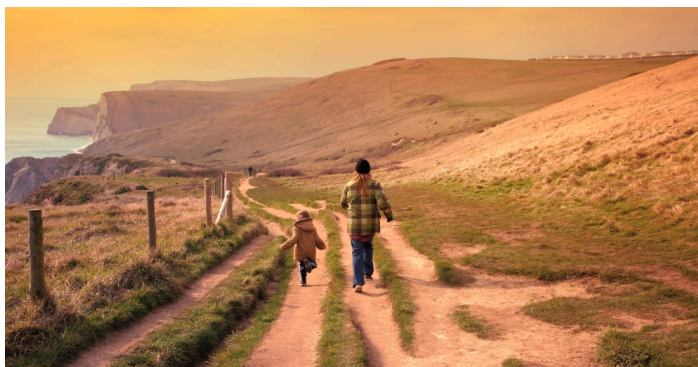
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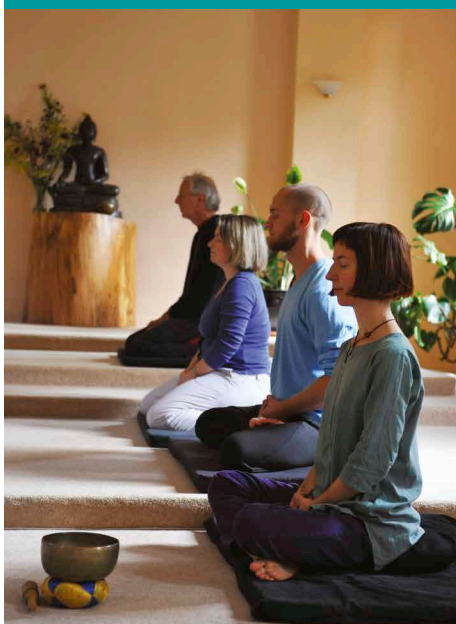


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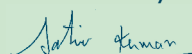
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25
April

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30
May

The Way

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27
June

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25
July

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26
Sept

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Contact: Galeo Saintz +27 (0) 82 888 8181
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Meeting bi-monthly

East London

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SUPPORTING GROUPS

Hemel Hempstead

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Meets on the 2nd Wednesday of the month

London

Contact: Annemarie Borg
antara05@gmail.com
Antara Project Group focused on role of artists

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