

Tonight I sat in the darkened room, as slim moonlight stole in at the window, and the houses and chimneys beyond the uncurtained glass bulked and comforted; the steady stream of flickering headlights signalling homecomers on the road, an occasional pair of coal-bright tail-lights following those city-bound for the evening.

And in this hushed and umbered place I laid my child on my breast, stroking her back and touching her hair...

*Patricia Ace*



Cover images: Figures from Manuel Deutsch, *The Divining Rod*, from Agricola's *De Re Metallica*, Basle, 1556, and Hermes, God of Eloquence, from Moretus' *Philomathi Musea Juveniles*, Antwerp, 1654.

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The Divining Rod

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# Edinburgh Review



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*The Divining Rod, by Manuel Deutsch, from Agricola's DE RE METALLICA, Basle, 1556*

## GEOPOETICS, GEOPOLITICS

TONY MCMANUS & KENNETH WHITE

GAVIN BOWD

STEVEN COWLEY

# From the Centred Complex

AN INTERVIEW WITH KENNETH WHITE, JULY 1993

## Tony McManus

LAST summer, I visited Kenneth and Marie-Claude White at their home on the northern coast of Brittany, in Trebeurden (etymologically, *the place of the Britons*).

It is, geologically, a distinctive place, of a unique and subtle beauty. Great boulders of rosy granite are strewn all over the landscape like the earth's own sculptures. Not far out to sea lies an archipelago of 'seven islands' with names which evoke the presence of Celtic hermit-monks in those years of sporadic enlightenment which conventional history has labelled 'the dark ages'. In the round sweep of the bays, the deep cut of inlets, and in the rocks' swirling, seaward thrust, there is a continuous sense of the great volcanic activity which makes the place.

And in the air, a keen freshness, the flight and cry of seabirds, placing this landscape-seascape in the immensity of ocean.

It is what geologists call a 'centred complex', a term which contains a sense of powerful concentration as well as a sense of radiating movement outwards. A term which evokes not just the physicality of place, but also a sense of the *expression* of place – a truly geo-poetic term.

Writing in *Finisterra, or the Logic of Lannion Bay*, Kenneth White says:

as one who has studied  
the grammar of granite  
I have walked in this place

An apt place and term, then, for the man and his work, concentrated in his residence – a home and library-study overlooking the valley of Goaslagorn – and radiating out from there in the form of books, lectures, broadcasts and the work of the International Institute of Geopoetics, much of this work translated from the English by Marie-Claude White.

An important part of this 'opus' remains unavailable to English language readers – White's essays. I took the opportunity of this

visit, then, and of the forthcoming publication (by Grasset of Paris in January 1994) of his fourth major collection of essays, *Le Plateau de l'Albatros*, which surveys the terrain of Geopoetics, to ask him about the concept of Geopoetics and about his work as an essayist.

T.McM. *Four years on from its founding, the International Institute of Geopoetics seems to be going from strength to strength?*

K.W. The movement has been both quantitative and qualitative, and the archives are already quite voluminous. Without going into all the details here (that'll be for some future historian – me or somebody else), let's say that we started out in 1989 with a nucleus of about twenty people interested in the notion of 'geopoetics' I'd set in motion about eleven years before, and in the idea of an association whose aim would be to spread it out into the cultural context, while maintaining its energy and precision. In order to obtain subsidies, we needed legal status. In France, where it was all starting, the obvious solution was the Association Law of 1901. That meant a president, a treasurer, a secretary and members. We then got in touch with town councils and regional councils handling internal budgets. Pretty soon we were running a review, the *Cahiers de Geopoetique* (*Geopoetics Review*),<sup>1</sup> an annual Symposium that took place first in Pau, then in Nîmes,<sup>2</sup> and four seminars a year that were held in Paris.<sup>3</sup> Membership rose fast, without any publicity, just word of mouth, from 20 to 300. Although, after the first year, when we did practically everything ourselves (directly in touch with a printer for the *Review*, for example, which we also distributed ourselves), we benefited from the

organisational capacities of a regional council for the Symposium, and those of a publishing house (in Geneva) for the *Review*, the administrative weight was becoming quite heavy.

T.McM. *So there have been some structural changes recently?*

K.W. I'd always had the feeling that after a pretty strong institutional line initially, so as to get things firmly in place, once the idea was powerfully present, it would be good to change tactics. Which is why this year we proceeded to what I called an 'archipelisation'. Instead of a central superstructure and members, we'd have islands here and there, autonomous once they'd been habilitated by a central committee. This was meant both to alleviate administration, and to dynamise the association. Groups, already very active, have started up in Paris, Bordeaux and Brussels, other groups are starting up in France, Belgium, Switzerland, Germany and Canada. I'd like to see one starting up in Scotland, why not in Edinburgh? To my mind, Patrick Geddes' Outlook Tower in Edinburgh, and the place he started up in Montpellier, in France, were centres of Geopoetics, or pre-centres of pre-geopoetics, if you like. There's a nice logic there, a transnational continuity of energy and intelligence. And that's what we need.

T.McM. *Moving to the impetus behind the Institute – your own writ-*

ing – Grasset will publish in January your fourth major collection of essays: *Le Plateau de l'Albatros*. Can we go through your other essay-books – a brief comment on each?

K.W. I started off writing poems, then I moved into prose-writing that gradually evolved into what I call the 'way-books', and then, feeling the need for some kind of cartography, I started writing essays. I keep up this triple activity, and each type of composition has an influence on the others: quite a complex process. But to come to the essays. Since, (for reasons I've gone into elsewhere) I was based in France, and since there seemed to be little outlet for real essay-thinking in Britain, I tended to write them directly in French. The main body of essays begins with *La Figure du Dehors*, (Paris 1982). This was the term I invented in French to translate Olson's 'figure of outward', one of my early references. But it already had a different sense: not so much a figure projecting outwards, as a figure evolving (working out new configurations) in the outside. This book was followed in 1985 by *Une Apocalypse Tranquille* ('A Quiet Apocalypse'), which was the discovery (the 'revelation') of a territory, a landscape-mindscape, outside a lot of philosophy I felt had had its day, and a lot of concepts that were simply cluttering up the floor, such as 'national literature', 'identity', etc. Then, in 1987, came *L'Esprit Nomade* ('The Nomad Mind'), which was a questing, north, south, east and west for other lines of thought, other means of expression. One of the essays in that book is entitled 'Elements of Geopoetics'.<sup>4</sup> The new book, *Le Plateau de l'Albatros*, is a compre-

hensive introduction to Geopoetics. Once again, a logic, a process of development and deepening.

T.McM. And there have been long essays on particular subjects also published, individually, in book form?

K.W. If we went right back and looked more closely, we'd see that the essay was in my mind from the beginning. My first 'public' piece of writing (1954) was an essay on the archaeology of Ayrshire (for which I received a prize from the Edinburgh-Ayrshire Society). Then there was the biographical essay, written in English, that went into *En Toute Candeur* (Paris 1964). And the two essays published by Bill Butler of Montana at Unicorn Bookshop: 'The Tribal Dharma' (on Gary Snyder), and 'The Coast Opposite Humanity' (on Robinson Jeffers), both 1976. To that list you can add 'The Life-Technique of John Cowper Powys', published by Galloping Dog Press, Swansea, in 1978. In France, there was the long essay on Segalen (Paris and Lausanne, 1979) the essay on Artaud (*Le Monde d'Antonin Artaud*, Paris and Brussels, 1989), and the essay on *Hokusai*<sup>5</sup> (Paris, 1990). I've just finished a long essay on the painter, Atlan, which will be out in Paris just after *Le Plateau de l'Albatros*. All this may seem heterogeneous and wayward. But to me it's both open and coherent. I'm feeling out and filling in all the time. Where one writer-thinker stops, another starts, where one hits a blank, another comes in with substance. And they all meet in my mind, in a kind of cosmic symposium. I'm well aware, though, that this coherence I feel

won't be evident for some time. First, because the whole corpus of my work isn't yet available (in Britain far from it). Second, because the very notion of *opus* has been gradually disappearing from our culture – to its disastrous detriment.

T.McM. *Le Plateau de l'Albatros* itself – a quick run-through of its contents?

K.W. After a long introduction which analyses Western civilisation in general and our present situation in particular, it goes into a series of 'meditations' concerning thought and writing, music and the plastic arts, all heading to a general poetics. Thereafter come presentations of certain 'companions on the way': Ovid, Thoreau, Renan, Kazantzakis, Cendrars ..., who confirm the intuitions and bring in 'colorations' from other contexts. The third section is devoted to a movement around the world with navigators, explorers, geographers: across the Atlantic, along the American continent, into the Pacific, over to Asia ... And in the Epilogue, I come back to the shore here, a few hundred yards from my house. Movement far and wide, then, but also the need for concentration.

T.McM. *That rhythm – peregrination and concentration, errance and residence – is something you've made very much your own. In most artists we expect to find a line of development. In the case of your essay work this would take us from La Figure du Dehors through, 'in progression', to the new collection. But, sometimes, this doesn't seem quite appropriate with you – reading your earliest published poetry and essays it's clear that you had*

*the ideas worked out, or at least sketched out, from the beginning. So, your 'line of development' is more of a spiral, a deepening concentration and a widening 'peregrination' into the territory?*

K.W. You know, I've always taken my time. I wrote about seven complete books (the manuscripts, along with a lot of other material, are in the National Library in Edinburgh) before I even thought of publishing one. And when I broke with my first 'situation' (literary and social) in 1967, it was to go into nine years' silence in the Pyrenees. I've always had the sense of something large, and have worked at it. The first poet that really meant anything to me was Walt Whitman: 'I know the amplitude of time' (I read that on the Fairlie moors). And I remember reading in my student's digs in Glasgow, Herbert Spencer's definition of evolution: 'A change from a relatively indefinite, incoherent homogeneity to a relatively definite, coherent heterogeneity through continuous integrations and differentiations'. That's it. In Chinese culture, they used to make a distinction between a writing that 'has a world' and writing that hasn't. I've always (all ways) worked with that notion of *world*. It all depends on what kind of ground you start on, where you begin, thereafter on what you can find and found.

T.McM. *There is a sort of three-step rhythm shaping all your work. It begins with an extreme negativism – a total rejection of the idealist foundations and metaphysical aspirations of western civilisation, and a contempt for its modern version, veering as it does between banality*

and catastrophe. Then there is what you call 'intellectual nomadism' – starting from your childhood experience of the landscape of West Coast Scotland (a live, energy and light-filled contradiction of the society of the ideal), and moving from there to a physical and intellectual 'stravaiging' round the lands and thoughts of Europe, America and the East, experiences where you find confirmation of your distaste for modern civilisation as well as a similar preoccupation with earthing and landscape. Thirdly, we move into the territory which you are mapping – that of Geopoetics. But here it becomes difficult to pinpoint just what it is. It is as though the tracks leading to Geopoetics are visible and open to observation, but the territory itself – it's hard to name, to describe. Is this in its very nature rather like Taoist and Zen attitudes to reality: once you try to define it you lose it? In three words, what I'm asking is, 'What is Geopoetics?'

K.W. You're right about that ternary rhythm, present not only in the thinking process, but in the formation of books, in the writing style. With regard to the movement you evoke, it's perhaps a question of: *no* (radical nihilism), *maybe* (potentiality), *how* (method). Geopoetics is a complex field, and no little definition is adequate. You give a little definition, and you'll have all kinds of people rushing in, saying either: 'That's what I think', (and often, it's just not true), or: 'I don't agree', (and they don't know what they're disagreeing with). So, instead of definitions, there are invitations to travel, invitations to move, to 'get on the way', rather than to have yet another debate, yet another discussion, yet another dialectical jambo-

ree. It implies a change of identity and a change of premises – that takes time, and a variety of method, because some minds register to 'blue', some to 'red', some to 'quick', some to 'slow'. Let me say, though, that Geopoetics is concerned with 'worlding' (and 'wording' is contained in 'worlding'). In my semantics, 'world' emerges from a contact between the human mind and the things, the lines, the rhythms of the earth. When this contact is sensitive, subtle, intelligent, you have 'a world' (a culture) in the strong, confirming and enlightening sense of the word. When that contact is insensitive, simplistic and stupid, you don't have a world at all, you have a non-world, a pseudo-culture, a dictatorial enclosure or a mass-mess. Geopoetics is concerned with developing sensitive and intelligent contact, and with working out original ways to express that contact. And let me go a little further. So far, in the history of humanity, culture has been governed by magic, myth, religion or metaphysics – it's only lately it's run down into psychologism, flat sociology, or conceptualism without concept, myopic localism, complacent pathology, linguistic tiddlywinks etc. Take any of the sympathetic movements trying today to improve matters radically. They're all moving back into the language of magic, myth, religion, or metaphysics. Geopoetics tries to move forwards. It's more difficult. It's also a great deal more interesting.

T.McM. My reading of *Geopoetics* so far reveals a field of study, being and expression in which the human enters into ('rediscovers' might be a more precise term) an intimate rela-

tionship with the earth, so intimate that it becomes a kind of identification – 'you are that', says the Upanishad you often quote in this context. How far on is this from Blake's 'infinity in a grain of sand', and the Romantics' awareness of nature and landscape (that is, before they degenerated into sentimentalism)? They started from a radical basis to which you acknowledge some debt – does Geopoetics start from a basis already more advanced than this?

K.W. Within modernity (which, in my vocabulary, starts in the 17th century), Romanticism is the first movement of protest, criticism and new activity. Transversal science starts then (I'm thinking for example of Novalis' notebooks), and there are perceptions galore. When Blake starts out to clear the 'doors of perception', fine, when he intuitively relates the infinitely small and the infinitely large, fine. But here, with Blake, you have a case in point. In the absence of a living, working mythology, he invents one – idiosyncratic, overweighted. He sticks in the mud of mythology, in the nightmare of religion, incapable of going beyond it. As for the Romantics, after initial questing, they tended, in Germany, to go back to medievalism and national folklore, in Britain (take Wordsworth), to pathetic moralism. Geopoetics starts from a basis that is both more advanced, and more expansive. For example, studying history, it can see what pitfalls to avoid, and it has a wider referential field: in world culture, in other types of thinking (e.g. Eastern), in scientific developments, since, say, Einstein.

T.McM. One can see in the Romantics, in religions, in revolutionary movements, an original knowledge at their bases, a knowledge which was once live and energetic, often in revolt against a prevailing convention. This knowledge, and the mode of living accompanying it, becomes (often alarmingly quickly!) ossified into belief, idealism, obedience to new conventional mores no longer related to live reality. Even Taoism reached a compromise with Confucianism eventually. Does a similar risk face Geopoetics? An idea of the Earth becoming an ideal? Codes and conventions beginning to arise? Expression becoming 'style'? How can you protect Geopoetics in its anarchic movement while, at the same time, broadening out into a cultural movement?

K.W. That's a question of intellectual method and socio-cultural strategy. Anybody who attends, or has attended, the seminars I run knows the work I try to do both to break moulds and to prevent new ones forming. On a wider plane, the thing is to develop a live context to which individual minds can come for inspiration, while knowing that, in time, probably in lesser forms, Geopoetics will be integrated into the general cultural stream. That is both inevitable and necessary. Confucianism with Taoism is better than Confucianism alone. With regard to the general run of the *polis*, that is, politics, I'd say that Geopolitics is its adjunct, Geopoetics its complement.

T.McM. In the writings which you evoke in your own work, and in the pieces published in the *Geopoetics Review*, it is often a question of

non-'literary' texts. In *Le Plateau de l'Albatros* to take but one example, you include a long chapter on Humboldt. In the Review, we find essays by fractal mathematicians, anthropologists, botanists, geographers, scientists, ethnologists. The geo is evident in all these: what, though, is the poetics which brings them all together? Is it an attitude? A way of expression? Both?... What links the lucid description of fractal geometry by Frederic Ibanez with the extravagant exposition of the Americas and their relationship with European 'discovery' by Jean Maurice Morisset, and with Jacques Lemoine on 'The Physiology of Landscape in Chinese Geomancy'?

K.W. 'Literature' is not a very interesting concept – it's like – 'writer'. So much of that, so many of those around, and where does it get us? Poetics is a stronger, more necessary notion. And Geopoetics gives a grounding. You can find more elements of Geopoetics in the sciences than you can find in most literature, poetry included – *but not composed*. Poetics is concerned with the composition of a world. Several types of expression can come into play. There is the fundamental field, but there can be an impressionistic, expressionistic, conceptualistic, methodological approach to it. What counts ultimately, is the orchestration. A kind of world-music. Hence the coherent variety of the *Review*, hence the triple activity I practise, hence the various tonalities in my books.

T.McM. The implications of Geopoetics as a cultural movement strike me as being very profound. Merely as a mode of thought and expression, Geopoetics would not

be what it claims to be. It involves a re-examination of ways of living which goes way beyond mere 'environmentalism'. Its political implications are also far-reaching – how is it possible to promote a politics whose starting-point must be a rejection of 'growth' (the oxygen of the West)? This cannot be a collective movement, it can only occur at individual level or in small networks. How to reconcile what is an obvious need for such a radical change in living with the, perhaps, even more obvious difficulties such a change poses for the individual, never mind the collective?

K.W. That's right, it's more, and other, than a school of philosophy or literature, more, and other, than a new science. Poetics is, for me, a fundamental word, underlying science, literature, philosophy, and coordinating elements arising from all these disciplines. It involves, as you say, a re-examination, also a re-experience. Its first appeal is to individuals, because, except in absolutely totalitarian states (are we seeing the last of them? – probably not), the individual can always move faster than society. So, individuals, trying it out alone, then groupings of individuals: archipelagoes. Thereafter, some kind of percolation into society. It's impossible to be optimistic about history, and I'm no utopian. But, who knows? Anyway, the important thing for everyone to know is that, despite everything, a live field exists, and that one can live in it, one can live it.

T.McM. Finally, a little return to the terrain of literary preciousness if you don't mind! Your essay work seems to me to have the secondary effect of re-establishing the essay as

a literary form. Anyone who was present at your delivery of 'A Shaman Dancing on the Glacier'<sup>6</sup> at the Goethe Institute in Glasgow some time back will know what I mean – it was electrifying, intellectually levitating! Is that a matter of importance to you?

K.W. It's a matter of great importance to me. The essay, for me, is a real art-form. Not just the familiar chatty pieces of Lamb or Hazlitt, which I read with pleasure, but the

multiplicity of Montaigne, the fast thinking of Nietzsche which break, excitingly, new ground. And the lecture is also an art-form to me: the lecture-performance. It's part of oral culture. And I like there to be a lot of orality in my literacy, just as I like a lot of nature in my culture. I use a lot of ways, multiple references, various kinds of music. But I'm always making for the one thing. All the time, I'm making attempts (*essays*) towards a live, enlightened world.

## NOTES

1. There have been three Symposia so far: 'Approaches to Geopoetics' (Pau, 1990), 'The Geography of Culture' (Nîmes, 1991), 'The Other America: Outside the States', (Nîmes, 1992).
2. Three issues of the *Cahiers de Geopoétique* have been published so far. Issue No. 3 contains work by Edinburgh photographer, Patricia Macdonald. They comprise about 150 pages of essay work on various topics as well as poetry and high-quality reproduction of art work and photography. Issue No. 1 has been translated by Tony McManus, who is seeking a publisher ...
3. There was a Geopoetic Art Exhibition in St Malo, July 1992, which, among other things, featured work by Archie Macalister of Edinburgh.
4. This essay was published in English in *Edinburgh Review* No. 88, 'Patrick Geddes', [available from Polygon, 22 George Square, Edinburgh EH8 9LF, £5.95 + 50p p&cp].
5. Many of these books are available for reference in the Scottish Poetry Library, Tweeddale Court, Edinburgh. The SPL can also offer for consultation several individual essays by Kenneth White which have appeared in various English language magazines. A list of these is available from Tony McManus, 23 Buckstone Cresc., Edinburgh EH10 6PJ.
6. This lecture was published in *Artwork* No. 50, June/July 1991. A tape-recording of this lecture (and some others) is also available in the Scottish Poetry Library.

KENNETH WHITE'S WORK AT PRESENT AVAILABLE IN ENGLISH

*The Bird Path*, collected longer poems, Mainstream, Edinburgh and London, 1989

*Travels in the Drifting Dawn*, prose narrative, Mainstream, 1989

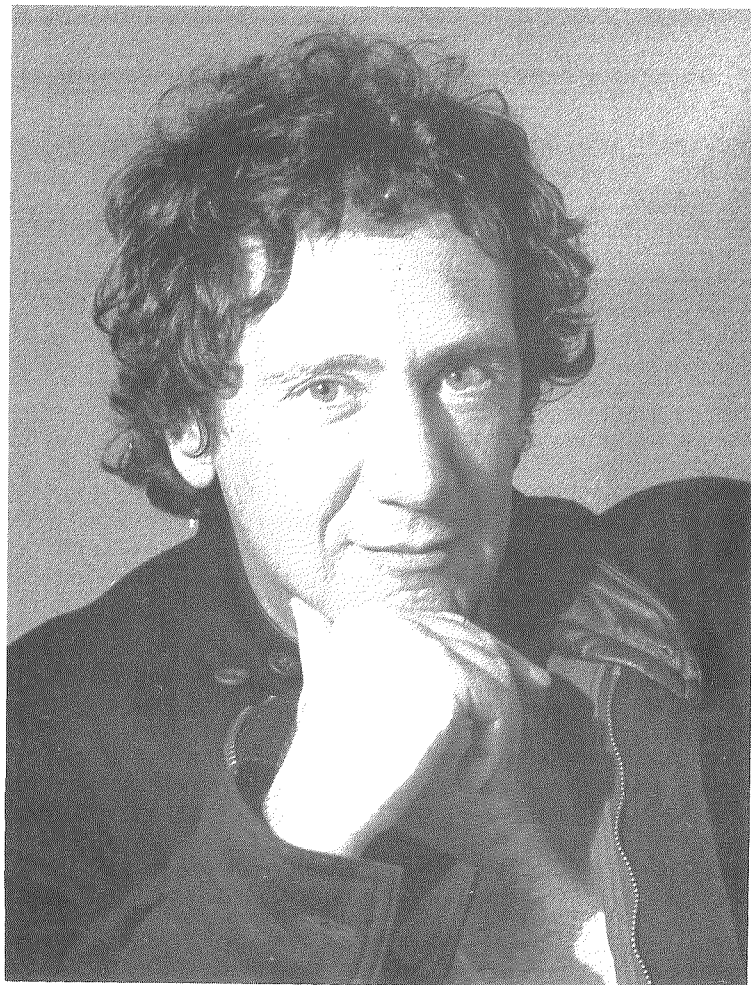
*Handbook for the Diamond Country*, collected shorter poems, Mainstream 1990

*The Blue Road*, prose narrative, Mainstream, 1990

*Pilgrim of the Void*, prose narrative, Mainstream, 1992  
*Into the White World*, poem readings (2-cassette pack), Scotsoun, 13  
 Ashton Rd. Glasgow, 1992

**Tony McManus** has published several articles in Kenneth White's *Geopoetics* and has taught day-schools on the subject at the University of Edinburgh's Centre for Continuing Education. He has contributed poetry, including translations from French, to various magazines and anthologies.

For more information about **Kenneth White** see the note following his 'Venetian Notes' above.



## On the Borders: Geopoetics, Geopolitics

*Gavin Bowd*

KENNETH WHITE'S 'geopoetics', his call for a 'new mental geography', have captured an audience in France and Scotland. Some recognise themselves in White's desire for a culture which, he says, referring to Antonin Artaud, 'would allow man, no longer as a social individual, but as a concentrated part of a cosmic field, to enjoy "the poetic state, a transcendent state of life"'. The culture, or 'world', in the making would involve a 'heightened sensitivity towards the environment', expressed in a language closer to the 'physics' of the universe. Geopoetics is not merely the union of geography with what we traditionally call poetry: it takes on board the new physics and philosophically, involves a 'disengaging of the mind from rationalism, realism and materialism'. Politics, however, is the whipping boy of geopoetics: it has been the arena for the 'lousy ideologies' that White wants to rid ourselves of. A key term of geopoetics is 'cultural cartography': a re-mapping of the world, a rediscovery of 'space', rather than involvement in an unfolding historical process (the discredited ambition of modernity).

It is at this moment that sceptics may draw away from White's thinking, however vigorous and seductive it may be. How convincing is it to abandon social relations in favour of relations between man and the non-human? Is it possible to distinguish between geography and history? Are the 'landscape' and the 'Earth' timeless givens that can offer us a welcome exit from the 'nightmare' of history? In other words, could geopoetics have time for geopolitics?

In this essay, we will explore these questions, with the intention of giving geopoetics a political grounding. In the best geopoetic tradition, the argument will be localised: we will look at a region, the Borders, and its poetic representation. The principal subject of this essay is a book which was first published in 1893, *The History and Poetry of the Scottish Borders*, by John Veitch, a professor of philology at the University of Glasgow. Veitch's survey echoes the preoccupations of White: an interest in the physical geography of

the region, a concern for the 'feeling for Nature' in poetry, and a belief that such sensitivity to the environment is a healthy change from the hot-house of modernity. One hundred years on, Veitch's eccentric work offers a starting-point for thought on the nature and uses of 'geopoetics'.

The aim of Veitch's study is to show that the landscape of the Borders is ideally suited to poetry. A cultural genius has grown from the physical features of this region:

By peculiarities of physical feature, by a very ancient history, by fusion of races, by language and social manners, by the written and unwritten poetry of its people, these southern uplands have so influenced the history of Scotland, that without considering them we cannot understand our present nationality.

For Veitch, geography corresponds to a state of mind:

natural features help to make and mould the character of the people, and, directly or indirectly, give a cast and colouring to those feelings, fancies, and imaginings that find an outlet song and ballad.

Veitch therefore prefaces his study of Borders poetry with a survey of the region's physical geography. Through his eyes, the Tweed valley comes to represent a synthesis of contraries:

The confluent streams of north-west and south-east unite in harmony in its peaceful valley, and murmur in one full flow along its green hillsides and through its tranquil haughs – a fitting boundary-line between the old hostile kingdoms – the opposing forces of north and south.

The Borders will come to symbolise a healthy harmony that Veitch contrasts with his contemporary society. The geology of the Borders seems to offer perfect terrain for the poetic mind. The bare greywacke heights and haughs are made of hardened sea-sand, which explains the lack of crags and precipices. And yet, in the heart of the Borders (at Talla, Loch Skene, at the head of the Ettrick, and in Galloway) is found scenery that resembles the Highlands. The result is poetic: 'loneliness, grandeur and pathetic contrast with the soft environing verdure'.

However, if the Borders is fertile ground for the imagination, it does not elicit the same sympathies from those who inhabit it. By studying names of places and natural objects, Veitch attempts to identify the different ethnic groups that have settled in the region, and their correspondingly different characters. The etymologies of

words such as 'shaw', 'dean' and 'hope' attest to the presence of Scandinavian peoples, who brought their native bardic genius. It is to this group of immigrants that Veitch traces the lineage of James Hogg:

in him, too, there were thrilling ideals and weird imaginings, such as might be found in the heart of any *Skald*; and he bore a name which might very fairly be regarded as indicating the Norwegian blood; for the Ettrick Shepherd was not named from the hog of the hill-side, but from the haig or hoig of the old northern tongue.

If the Norse invaders were to leave on the Borders this poetic imprint, the same could not be said of the Anglo-Saxons, whose names are 'very realistic or matter of fact in their meaning, and they are not musical in sound. They are abrupt, and generally monosyllabic: Dun Law, Black Law, Onweather Hill, Deid-for-Cauld Hill'. It is with the Cymric people – to whom the rivers Gala, Leader, Tweed and Yarrow owe their names – that is found a deeper communion with nature and a fine musical sense: 'their dwellings, perched on the tops of hills, away from the wooded and marshy low grounds, made them familiar with wide prospects and the ever-moving aspects of earth and sky, in storm and in sunshine'.

Veitch then passes to a history of Borders poetry, from Thomas the Rhymer onwards. The early poetry is thoroughly 'Anglo-Saxon', involving individualism of character, and recounting the exploits of the Reivers, in the face of a paralysed central government. Many poems are descriptive of social manners, rustic and ecclesiastical. They are moral and didactic in tone, as well as being boldly critical. In the Medieval poetry, Veitch remarks, 'the land, river and sea have but scant notice'.

But, in addition to these social concerns, there are also to be found 'glimpses of that weird and supersensible world which their fancies and their fears created for them, and which they believed lay bordering so near this world of common life and everyday experience, that at any moment it might flash on them in the form of fairy pageant in the green glen, or weird wraith on the moor, or waterspout mingling its wail with the sigh of the flood'. Such evocations of the elfin world were the 'earliest imaginative outcome of the feeling for nature'.

The Border ballads were principally concerned with tales of conflict and love: *Kimmont Willie*, *The Douglas Tragedy*, *The Dowie Dens of Yarrow*. The landscape may appear briefly, but what is at stake is the capture of territory and families vying for supremacy. 'Non-human' nature is not yet an independent and

central focus of attention: 'we have but few traces in the older Borders poetry, or ballad minstrelsy in general, of a direct feeling for nature in its softer or more beautiful side, and an exceedingly modified recognition, if any at all, of its grander or sterner side'. A hostile landscape remains a hostile landscape: it is not yet the sublime object of aesthetic contemplation. Nor is the physical geography yet invested with the poet's emotions: 'Only in the modern songs has the connection between the mood of mind and the aspect of nature been expressly proclaimed'.

Borders poetry of nature only appears in the eighteenth century. Allan Ramsay's *The Gentle Shepherd* 'first disclosed to the world the wealth and beauty in Scottish scenery, and the naturalness, simplicity and pathos that lay close at hand in Scottish rural life'. This work heralds the flowering of Borders poetic genius, which draws sustenance from the energy and repose offered by the region's geography:

It is true, as Mr. Ruskin has remarked, true however we may explain it, that the scenery most fruitful of literary intellect is not the absolutely mountainous nor the perfectly flat; it is the mixture of hill and vale.

Ramsay's approach was followed by John Leyden, whose contributions to the Minstrelsy – 'Lord Soullis', 'The Count of Keelder' – were 'among the first of the modern Border ballads which showed that loving sympathy with the aspects of hill, stream and glen as objects of poetic interest, which has since become an independent element in the poetry of the district'. Such poetry broke through the heartlessness and conventionalism of the time: 'it was thus that the life-blood of the Border country and the spirit of its scenery were poured into the sickly heart of the British poetry of nature'.

Hogg and Scott shared this feeling for nature: both were in contact with the muse of the Borders which 'kept court only amid the wild recesses of Liddesdale, the green holms of yarrow, and the pathetic solitudes of Ettrick'. Veitch portrays Scott as a typical Romantic: intensely in love with free nature; casting away the trammels of conventional order and restraint. And yet, at the same time, Scott's Romanticism is conservative and deferential:

The root-feeling in Scott's relation to outward nature is one of complete realism. He looks upon it as a thing wholly independent of himself and his passing mood of mind – it is, for him, absolutely impersonal. As such, it is an abiding spiritual power – stronger, greater, more enduring than himself, before which

he bows, and whose features, mild and stern, it is his moral and artistic duty faithfully to portray. His feeling for the grander side of nature is a reverential worship – for the gentler side, almost a feminine love.

At last, there is a coincidence between the peoples who inhabit the region and the poetic possibilities of the geography. After centuries, the bardic genius and feeling for nature characteristic of the Cymric and Scandinavian immigrants, bursts through:

we may take both Scott and Hogg as examples and proof of the physiological and psychological law, not as yet precisely formulated, and subject to many conditions of interference, in virtue of which qualities grow through the accumulated experience of successive generations, until, as with the root of the earth, after a long winter, there bursts forth a large complex growth, apparently spontaneous, and beautiful as the crowning and consummate flower of Spring.

Veitch ends his study by looking at Borders poets of the late nineteenth century. Their nature poetry attests to the apparent threat posed by modernity. An angler, Thomas Tod Stoddart, in 'Musings on the Banks of Teviot', remarks that 'the demon of pollution/Campeth on the banks of Tweed'. There is a need, says Veitch, to reconcile the rivers of the area with industrial development. Veitch therefore looks approvingly on the capitalist poet, J. B. Selkirk, whose 'A Song of Yarrow' 'shows how deeply and purely that stream of song can even now, in this materialistic age, touch the heart of one of its sons, who is not less distinguished by practical ability in industrial pursuits than by a tender imaginative susceptibility'.

Veitch concludes by praising the freshness of Borders nature poetry, and proclaiming our need for it if literature is to remain healthy, 'for we have abounding morbid introspection and self-analysis; we have greatly too much of the close, hot atmosphere of our own fancies and feelings'. The author ends by calling for nothing less than another Romantic revolt:

We need, as people did at the commencement of the century, some reminder of the simple life, of the instinctive character of high motives and of noble deeds, of the self-satisfying sense of duty done; and the close workshops of our literary manufactures would be all the better for a good fresh breeze from the hills and holms of the Teviot and Yarrow.

What insights can be found in Veitch's study? To begin with, we

can cast aside his interest in ethnic groups. His genetic explanation of Borders poetry threatens to confuse biology and culture.

However, Veitch's frustration at the unevenness of the 'feeling for nature' in early Borders poetry, and his relief at its Romantic flourishing, serve to make an important observation: the appreciation of the landscape is a historical phenomenon.

The French geographer Yves Lacoste, in *Paysages politiques*, points out that 'aesthetic interest in real landscapes is a very recent social phenomenon'. We have to wait until the Renaissance to see landscapes in the background of paintings (for example, the Mona Lisa) but even in these cases, the landscape is allegorical. It is only at the end of the nineteenth century that painters such as the Impressionists, then Cezanne, become interested in the whole of real landscapes. They do not seek to faithfully reproduce these landscapes (photography saw to that), but they create a work of art on the basis of its global reality.

Lacoste demonstrates that the representation of real landscapes predates landscape painting and finds its origins in politics. In the words of the title of Lacoste's most controversial work: 'la géographie, ça sert d'abord à faire la guerre'. The first artistic representations of real landscapes are engravings commissioned for military purposes in the sixteenth century. *The Topographia Gallica*, produced on the orders of Henri II, contains precise descriptions of fortified towns in the north and east of France and of the landscape that surrounds them. Lacoste explains this interest in geography: 'The observation of landscapes serves, first and foremost, to wage war: many tactical movements depend precisely on masked spaces allowing you to hide from the sight and fire of the enemy, and also to surprise him'. Successful fortifications demand a vantage-point that offers a panoramic view of the surrounding landscape. Lacoste links this military imperative with peace-time aesthetic contemplation: 'In fact, the landscape which militarily presents the most interest for the elaboration of tactics and strategies are, largely, those that we, without really knowing why, consider beautiful'. Hence, the tourist vogue for castles, whose walls and turrets allow us to appreciate scenic beauty. With this sobering thought in mind, Veitch's explanation of the Cymric 'poetic spirit' by the situation of their forts on hillsides, seems less absurd and fanciful.

Certainly, Veitch's history of Borders poetry does not confirm or refute Lacoste's thesis about the origins of the artistic representation of the landscape: in Borders poetry, it is warfare which explains the primacy of social themes, and it is only in peacetime that we see the solitary poet wandering in the landscape that echoes or

frustrates his emotions. However, the fact that the 'landscape' is obviously not a timeless object of interest lends credence to theories, like Lacoste's, which politicise geography.

The 'feeling for nature' praised by Veitch and his contemporaries carries a political charge. Veitch is hostile to modernity, and chooses as his poetic heroes the Tories Sir Walter Scott and James Hogg, whose attitude to nature is characterised by 'deference' and 'worship'. The importance of respect of a higher order, coupled with the telling metaphor of the 'literary manufactures' that Borders poetry blows away, plus the references to noble deeds and the simple life, display Veitch's adherence to the old families of the pre-industrial Borders. Contemporary Borders poets share this conservatism. David W. Purdue, for example, in 'Rural Poetry', contrasts the countryside with the 'smoky towns', while praising the exploits of the Buccleuch family. William Addison lovingly evokes the 'Hamely Hills o' Ettrick', while condescending to the hardness of Tom Turnbull, the dyker, 'eighty-one and working yet'.

A slightly different perspective is offered by Roger Quin (1850–1925), the Tramp Poet. A Liberal, admirer of Shelley, this late Romantic divided his time between winters in a Glasgow model lodging-house and summers wandering the Borders. His borderland is the locus for the contrast between Town and Country and for the dramatisation of the solitary poet:

From the moorland and the meadows  
To this City of the Shadows  
Where I wander old and lonely, comes the call I understand;  
In dear, soft tones enthralling,  
It is calling, calling, calling –  
'Tis the Spirit of the Open from the dear old Borderland.

The vagabond spirit of this nomad does, however, to the relief of the author of the introduction to his collection, *The Borderland*, make room for bourgeois respectability: 'He washes his face in the brook that babbles by and shaves – for his Bohemianism has never made him careless of a scrupulous cleanliness'.

Quin's borderland means the 'old trail', the 'open road'. This seems extraordinary when it is taken into account that Quin was, for a long time, a resident of Galashiels, arguably the birthplace of the Scottish Industrial Revolution. The 'City of the Shadows' was not limited to the walls of Glasgow: the same dirty, polluting environment belonged, on a small scale, to the Borders. By the end of the nineteenth century, when Veitch and Quin wrote, Galashiels was a dynamic, overcrowded manufacturing town.

Neither Veitch nor Quin could quite come to terms with this

reality – despite it being the reality shared by most Borderers. Veitch holds at arms length the manufacturers, choosing instead a past age of chivalry. Quin operates an erasure that transforms the Borders into one vast open space where the poet's ego can wander. These attitudes are understandable, but could there not be another sense of place, one more modern, more representative, more communitarian, less retrograde?

Hugh MacDiarmid's work throws some welcome dirt on Veitch's poetry of hygiene. The Borders becomes a locus for his national-bolshevism. Certainly, in 'The Borders', MacDiarmid echoes Veitch in his praise of the poetic richness of the region's landscape: 'On the Border scene's a wonderfu' drama/ Wi' endless variety and sudden changes'. This 'combustion of the placid wi' the intense' has given rise to the Border ballads, to volcanic spirits such as Carlyle, as well as to Quin. But MacDiarmid also pays attention to the rituals and practices of contemporary Border folk: the seven-a-sides, the common ridings. The message of 'The Borders' is geopolitical: a cry of rebellion against the mediocre oppressors across the border.

MacDiarmid has certainly no respect for local worthies: such faceless figureheads are his target in 'The Monument'. The reality of textiles manufacture is transformed poetically in 'The Seamless Garment', MacDiarmid praising Lenin, 'the best weaver Earth ever saw', and calling for human progress that can match the development of technology. Other parts of the region also serve MacDiarmid's politico-cultural project. In 'Water Music', the burns embody the polysemous poem – one lexical and ideational flurry – while, in 'Tarras', 'This Bolshevik bog! Suits me doon to the grun!', from which he can wage his struggle against 'cul-ture'. MacDiarmid's sense of place is profoundly modernist.

Having surveyed the representation of the Borders in the work of Veitch, Quin and MacDiarmid, we can return to Kenneth White and his notion of 'geopoetics'. His own poem about this region, 'On the Borders' (published in *Open World* magazine, 1991) illustrates his world-view. The motif of this poem is 'rough wind, a rock, and a rowan tree': the Borders landscape in its natural bareness. White seeks to dig beneath cliché, doing 'a little clean phenomenology' that will bracket out the toxic waste of modern mass culture. White is interested in the geological foundations of the Borders, and in people only in their primitive, tribal state. The effects of human habitation lead only to the 'bitter quarrelling of nations'. White is not interested in 'the border between nation and nation'; he seeks the silence at the back of the 'noisy areas:/muzack, politics, TV shows/kilts and saddles, buttons and bows'. What matters is 'the

border/between human and non-human/between one field of knowledge and another/between spirit and matter'. The poem assembles the keywords of geopoetics: 'cartographies/topologies', 'clear mind, words and reality/complex ecology' – 'these Borders border on more than England'.

White, like Quin, operates an erasure. His Borders is a region evacuated of politics; there are no social practices worthy of respect; popular culture is reduced to caricature. All that remains is a vast, inhuman space, nature red in tooth and claw, which the solitary subject confronts. The only human beings worth mentioning are the great, eccentric intellectuals of the Borders: Thomas Carlyle, Alec Murray – 'I'm not forgetting either/MacTaggart's *Encyclopaedia*/or MacDiarmid's *polymathic poetica*'. White's geopoetic survey Borders is 'a rediscovery of Alba', which, if we remember that Alba means 'white', amounts to the poet's narcissistic *mise en scene*.

In his essays, poems and lectures, White is keen to de-politicise geopoetics. He seeks to leave the 'motorway of History', to abandon the grand narrative handed down by Judeo-Christianity to the likes of Hegel and Marx. White makes a distinction between geography and history – 'breathing space' is the object of his quest. What is left is the solitary individual, a body moving in the biosphere. Only in the distant future might politics be a beneficiary of the subject's poetic life-work: 'politics itself needs a concept of living, a grounding, and that only the single, complex, living intelligence can provide'.

It would be very wrong, however, to divorce geopoetics from its historical context. We must understand why Kenneth White, who was propounding more or less the same ideas in *En toute candeur*, in 1964, should become a media star in France at the beginning of the 1980s and finally in Scotland at the end of that decade. Robert Bréchon offers an explanation: 'Many European minds had been waiting for such an event, such a personality. For too long, Marxist theory, psychoanalytical dogma, structuralist method, had damped down on literature and spread a reign of intellectual terrorism. Kenneth White's work was seen as the sign of a great thaw'. The work of the man who 'discovered' White, Michel Le Bris, of Editions Grasset, offers another pointer. Le Bris, former editor of the post-68 Maoist paper, *La Cause du peuple*, is the driving force behind the *littératures voyageuses* movement. In his theoretical work, Le Bris rails against the deleterious effects of marxism, psychoanalysis and structuralism. He attempts to save the creative individual from suffocating determinations: economic, psychosexual and linguistic. He valorizes the heroic subject as it is found in adventure novels (e.g. Robert Louis Stevenson) and in travel-writing.

Kenneth White is another such heroic subject, dancing free of the wreckage of our fin de siècle. He has no truck with the deterministic ideologies that we hold responsible for our accumulated misery. He stands for renewed contact with nature and for the primacy of lived experience. His refusal of the 'social', in favour of the 'cosmic' strikes a chord with those of us weary of political infighting. White thrives in a climate of backlash and disillusion. Like Veitch and Quin one hundred years ago, White makes use of the Borders (as he does of other regions) as a locus for a geopoetic project which rebels against unhygienic, tentacular modernity.

And White's geopoetics also has its inadequacies and blindnesses. His distinction between the 'cosmic' and the 'social' is scarcely tenable: no *art de vivre* carries much conviction if it does not involve a convivial relationship with others; both the idea and the reality of nature have been transformed by millenia of humanisation. White's nomadic subjectivism is hardly compatible with collaborative work, political or cultural.

Similarly, White's distinction between 'history' and 'geography' should also be challenged. As we have seen, interest in the landscape is a historically-bounded phenomenon. The discipline of geography has political origins. The 'feeling for nature' carries a political charge: it connotes sympathy with order or spontaneity, a certain attitude to modernity. The 'sense of place' is selective, always coloured by social and ideological *parti pris*.

Such criticisms do not invalidate the idea of 'geopoetics'. Kenneth White has pointed to a rich field of work: the interface between 'nature' and 'culture'. It is simply high time that geopoetics and geopolitics met. Many questions need to be posed on the road to renewal: what are the politics of 'nature'? What are the politics of the landscapes we inhabit and reproduce? What are the politics of contemplation and conservation? And how do we dramatise such questions in our own 'nature poetry'? There is a lot of work ahead for other 'horribles travailleurs'.

## John Veitch, Scottish Philosopher, Poet and Literary Critic

*Stephen Cowley*

THIS YEAR marks the centenary of the death of John Veitch (1829–94), professor of Logic and Rhetoric at Glasgow University from 1864 to 1894. As a prolific author of biography, history, literary criticism, poetry and philosophy, as well as through his involvement in many social and political projects, Veitch is a significant figure in our cultural history. His concern for the study and transmission of Scottish culture, the higher education of working men and women, for the landscape and for animal welfare all mark him as a thinker whose concerns anticipate those of twentieth century Scotland. In philosophy, his stress on 'feeling' as an autonomous mental phenomenon accompanying the intellectual processes more commonly considered central in philosophy anticipates more recent thinkers, whilst his opposition to the teaching of his colleague at Glasgow, Edward Caird generated still-interesting arguments about the role of the mind in perception. The attention to 'feeling' combined with his cultural nationalism to produce his innovative interpretations of Scottish literary history.

### *Early life*

John Veitch was born on 24 October 1829 in the town of Peebles in the Scottish borders, twenty-three miles from Edinburgh and fifty-one miles from Glasgow. Peebles is set in the rolling hillscape of the borders and is one of the more scenic of the border towns. His parents' house where he was born is No. 14 in Biggiesknowe in the Old Town near Eddlestone Water. The hill of Venlaw is visible from the front door. A sister, Isabella, died aged seven in 1842, leaving Veitch an only child, whilst his early experiences of the Southern Uplands in winter impressed his mind deeply. His mother, Nancy Ritchie, was a borderer steeped in local folklore which she passed on to her son. His father, James Veitch, was a retired veteran

of the Peninsular War against the Napoleonic regime in Spain, and was also said to be 'full o' stories'. His parents were split over the disruption of the Scottish Kirk in 1843. The Presbyterian Church of Scotland had divided in 1843, after a ten year struggle, over the question of the right of congregations to refuse a minister appointed by (often aristocratic) lay patrons. Veitch followed his mother to the Free Kirk whilst his father stayed with the continuing Church of Scotland. Veitch considered his upbringing humble but of great value, and it perhaps contributed in his later life to 'the contempt he expressed, and expressed strongly, for rank or wealth without intellect or worth'.<sup>1</sup> His early years also gave him what his biographer and niece, Mary Bryce, called a 'mixture of abandonment and common sense'<sup>2</sup> which marked him for life. At school he learned bible questions, Latin and the poetry of Walter Scott, and was noted as 'aye runnin' aboot, wi' a buik at his airm, a canty callant'.<sup>3</sup>

#### University education

In 1845, he went to Edinburgh University, where over a period of five years he studied a wide range of subjects in the 'generalist' tradition of the Arts Faculties of the Scottish universities. Studying at first under the Free Kirk professors at New College, he later came under the spell of the leading Scottish philosopher of the day, Sir William Hamilton (1788–1854), who held the chair of Logic and Metaphysics at Old College from 1836 till his death in 1854. In 1875 he would write:

As the years flow on, one is increasingly impressed with the rareness of a life such as that of Hamilton - a life that rose grandly yet naturally above the seductions of the merely professional, to daily communion with questions of ultimate principle and the reality of things.<sup>4</sup>

His philosophical studies led him away from the strict Calvinism of Free Kirk doctrine. In a private letter to his friend Alexander Nicolson he wrote:

I cannot but think it a stain on our churches, and men in them, to have acquiesced so long and so unthinkingly in the [Calvinist] doctrine of Necessitation, or rather of a necessitated volition. I know that this arises from their holding 'Election' views. These I hold too; but we ought not on that account to annihilate the notions of merit and demerit, or at least render them ridiculous. I think I shall manage to be perfectly orthodox, though for that, of course, I do not care a fig, provided it had

not been the true, or what seemed to *me* the true. However, I think there is a great deal of rubbish which requires clearance connected with what is termed Calvinism.<sup>5</sup>

At Edinburgh he also heard the lectures of John Wilson (1785–1854) and William Aytoun (1813–65). Wilson was the Old College professor of Moral Philosophy, but better known as 'Christopher North', the principal author of *Noctes Ambrosianae* (1822–35), a series of wide-ranging fictional dialogues which appeared in *Blackwood's Edinburgh Magazine*. The poet William Aytoun was professor of English Literature at Old College, and the author of *Lays of the Scottish Cavaliers* and a two-volume collection of Scottish ballads. Veitch was thus immersed in the atmosphere of a Scottish high culture, as well as studying philosophers and writers from many other countries.

#### Early employment

The years from 1850 to 1860 were lean years for Veitch financially, following his decision in the mid 1850s to abandon plans for a Free Kirk ministry, where he was once expected to be 'a herald of the Absolute'. He earned money from journalism (for the *Edinburgh Guardian* and the *North British Review*) and from tutoring. He produced translations of Descartes' *Discourse on Method* (1850) and *Meditations* (1853) together with short introductions advocating a 'Scoto-Cartesian Psychology' as a central discipline in philosophy. The translations are still in print (as the Everyman Edition of Descartes' writings) and are read by students of Ordinary General Philosophy at Glasgow University to this day. His first original work was his *Memoir of Dugald Stewart* (1753–1828) which appeared in 1857. As joint literary executor of Sir William Hamilton, he shared responsibility for editing the four volumes of Hamilton's *Lectures on Logic and Metaphysics* (1859–60).

#### University life

In 1860, his publications and Free Kirk connections, as well as the support of the French philosopher Victor Cousin, won him the professorship of Logic and Rhetoric at St Andrews University, which he held for four years before moving to Glasgow. His time at St Andrews seems to have been happy. In 1862 he married Eliza Hill Wilson (1836–1906), although the marriage proved childless. At St Andrews, a friendship grew with the poet and literary critic John Campbell Shairp. Discussions centred on:

Newman and Keble [Anglican Church figures], Walter Scott and Scottish story - especially the history and fate of the

Douglasses, – the old ballads, and the Minstrelsy of the Border especially – [Shairp] chanting with fine feeling stanzas of the best. Then passing perhaps to Kant and the Relativity of Knowledge, but luxuriating with fullest soul in Wordsworth.<sup>6</sup>

When he arrived in Glasgow in 1864 to take up the professorship of Logic and Rhetoric<sup>7</sup> which he was to hold till his death, his interest in Scottish history and literature had thus been further stimulated by contact with the Gaelic-speaking Shairp.

From 1864 onwards, his life was divided between Glasgow and Peebles, with short trips to the mainland of Europe. He was involved with a host of charitable and other societies: ballad societies, borderers associations, animal welfare organisations. He lectured to audiences of working men and women and from 1877 to 1883 put on courses for the *Glasgow Association for the Higher Education of Women*, the predecessor of Queen Margaret College. He founded the *Scottish Mountaineering Club* in 1892, which aimed to encourage city dwellers to visit the country. His opinion of industry was unfavourable. He wrote in a letter:

Manufacturing industry has much to answer for; it has cursed this country, and deprived thousands of their natural sustenance – the light of heaven and the greenery of earth.<sup>8</sup>

He also deplored the effects of the railways, industry and neglect on the landscape, and was involved in many campaigns to save old buildings, welcoming legislation in the wake of the 'Thirlmere reservoir project' to make amenity as well as utility a consideration in planning decisions. In politics, he was a Liberal until 1886, when he joined the Liberal Unionists following the split in the Liberal Party in that year.

#### Major Writings

The many books of his Glasgow period are Veitch's lasting monument. Turning to his major writings,<sup>9</sup> Veitch wrote no less than three books on the thought of William Hamilton, the monumental *Memoir of Sir William Hamilton* (1869), the volume on *Hamilton* (1879) in the popularising *Blackwood's Philosophical Classics* series and the brief *Hamilton – The Man and his Philosophy* (1884). These are all essential reading for students of Hamilton's thought. His attitude to the tradition of Scottish philosophy is given in a long article in the journal *Mind*, entitled *Philosophy in the Scottish Universities* (1877). His brief *Lucretius and the Atomic Theory* (1875), the long introduction to the 1879 edition of his translations from Descartes, and the two sets of philosophical essays *Knowing*

*and Being* (1889) and *Dualism and Monism* (posthumous, 1895) fill out his own philosophical position. Veitch thought the study of the mental faculties central to systematic philosophy, and distinguished these into three interwoven strands of knowledge, feeling and action. His defence of a Cartesian dualism of mind and body was an attempt to maintain a balanced vision of the world in the face of the narrowing, if perhaps more rigorous, materialist and idealist theories of his day. His *Institutes of Logic* (1885) was used as the textbook in his Logic classes from 1886/7 onwards.

Veitch's three volumes of poetry *Hillside Rhymes* (1872), *The Tweed and Other Poems* (1875) and *Merlin and Other Poems* (1889) are full of Wordsworthian blank verse. A highpoint is the autobiographical *Alta Montium: Among the Uplands* in *Hillside Rhymes*, where Veitch expresses the stress between his philosophical studies in Edinburgh and his own ambitions in his thought:

Like bow o'erbent returning to the straight,  
Elastic to his native wilds he sprung,  
And there would be long days among the hills,  
Rejoicing in far, breezy upland heights,  
The beauty free of purple moorland bloom;<sup>10</sup>

The figure of Merlin, whom Veitch considered a historical figure from Scotland's Celtic past, bridging Paganism and Christianity, is developed as a Zarathustra-like peg for Veitch's reflections on life.

#### Literary criticism

The crowning achievements of Veitch's life however, are undoubtedly *The History and Poetry of the Scottish Border* (1873; 2nd edn 1893) and *The Feeling for Nature in Scottish Poetry* (1887). The former presents the rich pageant of border history and verse from the days of the Welsh speaking Celtic tribes to the time of Hogg, Leyden and Scott in the early nineteenth century and beyond. *The Feeling for Nature in Scottish Poetry* is particularly valuable for its mixing of philosophy and literary criticism. Beginning from Veitch's own experiences of awe and reverence at border scenery, it then analyses the experience of 'feeling' into a degree of pleasure or pain related either to a bodily state or to a content of cognition. Thus hope would be a feeling of pleasure directed at some possible future occurrence, fear a feeling of pain with the same class of object. The hypothesis is then made that pleasure results from the free exercise of the proper functions of mind or body. With this theoretical model, the whole mass of Scottish poetry is surveyed. The medieval period is characterised by the fear of winter and wild nature, with only gardens, fields and meadows apprehended

positively. From the seventeenth century however, Veitch finds passages such as this from a border ballad:

The king was comin' thro' Cadon Ford  
And full five thousand men was he,  
They saw the derke foreste them before  
They thought it awesome for to see.<sup>11</sup>

Here 'awe' has replaced fear, and Veitch traces this overcoming of fear through to its full disappearance in the time of Scott and Wordsworth. The development is explained as the natural response of thinking to its surroundings once the clouding forces of feud and famine have been overcome. Whilst the study of feeling has not been prominent under the recent dominance of empiricism it has been carried forward in this century in R G Collingwood's *The Principles of Art* (1938) and in the Scottish philosopher John MacMurray's *Reason and Emotion* (1935), *The Self as Agent* (1957) and *Persons in Relation* (1961), where human relations and actions replace nature as the central focus of feeling.

Although some of Veitch's more abstract arguments about mind, body and perception still have an interest, it is mainly for his literary criticism that he deserves to be remembered as a creative thinker. This work contains a wealth of insights apparently lost to more recent scholarship. Although his parents' house survives, and a plaque, monument and ill-maintained fountain commemorating him can be found at Gilmorehill, on Cademuir and in the High Street of Peebles respectively, neglect allowed the demolition in the early 1990s of his Scots baronial country house in Peebles (now replaced by 'The Loanings'). Veitch's thought does not deserve a similar neglect and his centenary this year would be as good an occasion as any for us to re-read and re-evaluate his distinctive contribution to Scottish culture.

#### NOTES

1. *Peebleshire Advertiser and County Newspaper*, 8 September, 1894.
2. Mary R L Bryce: *Memoir of Veitch* (1896), p 28.
3. Bryce: *op. cit.*, p. 11.
4. John Veitch: *Lucretius and the Atomic Theory* (1875), pp 90-91.
5. Bryce: *op. cit.*, pp 53-4.
6. William Knight: *Principal Shairp and his Friends* (1888), p 202.
7. Robert Crawford, in *Devolving English Literature* (1992), p 160, misdescribes Veitch as 'Professor of Moral Philosophy and Rhetoric'.

8. Bryce: *op. cit.*, p 172.
9. R M Wenley's introduction to *Dualism and Monism* (1895) has an (incomplete) list of Veitch's published writings.
10. John Veitch: *Hillside Rhymes*, p 63.
11. John Veitch: *The Feeling for Nature in Scottish Poetry* Vol II, p 160.

**Stephen Cowley** studied philosophy at Glasgow University. A translation by him of one of Victor Cousin's lectures on Scottish philosophy appeared in *Edinburgh Review* 89. This article is a short version of the introduction to a selection of Veitch's writings which has yet to find a publisher.