



A Book of

NOUNS



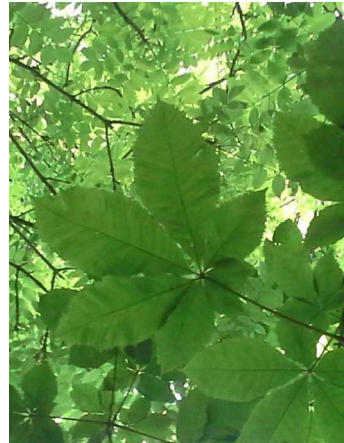
A Book  
of  
NOUNS

For  
Ali, Alex, Caroline,  
Joanna, Joy, Julian,  
Keith, Kristina,  
Mary, Paule,  
Sandra and Sebastian

This *Book of Nouns* is a dipping into my journey with the Move into Life 2013 Project Group. None of the nouns is mine. Most of the words are copied or derived from books the group suggested, lent or gave to me, e-mails they sent me and conversations they had with me. The inspiration came from them and their projects and from the fields and trees along Westhay Water. And from movement. And from all the people I have moved alongside for years. I am really grateful.

And I'm hoping that all the ideas had already escaped from the copyright zoo.

*Andrew*



# Nouns

Labels	Bee	Bow	Handkerchief
Maps	Mark	Cabbage	Hessian
Lines	Fabric	Softness	Kiss
Threads	Scratches	Taste	Service
Blood	Owl	Tremble	Interweaving
Skin	Otherness	Bottleseed	Verb
Red	Pounciness	Grandmother	Connection
Roses	Branch	Treeweed	Sallow
Excitement	Tree	Sinew	Admiration
Shame	Flux	Cleft	Capacity
Rubric	River	Skylark	Nasturtium
Smear	Stream	Root	Sea
Jewels	Pool	Leaf	Sense
Pebbles	Beech	Slit	Meaning
Sweets	Beach	Jellyfish	Bowl
Body	Longing	Mouth	Passage
Structure	Crotch	Trumpet	Stamp
Nouns	Splay	Toad	Giraffe
Longing	Legs	Foam	Heart
Union	Pattern	Moss	Hearth
Prenostalgia	Elephant	Lichen	Earth
Desire	Frisson	Ubiety	Theatre
Man	Love	Ash	Hollow
Distance	Thwock	Skull	Spiral
Flute	Butter	Drill	Leafmould
Reed	Meringue	Sediment	Manifold
Loneliness	Tendersadness	Mainsail	Thrill
Loss	Wellspring	Completion	Spill
Salamander	Rivulet	Vulva	Python
Tree	Raptor	Relief	Satisfaction

# Labels

Circles and lines  
made in a rush of hope, a scratch against this world  
a strike back against the labels  
announce  
I am... I am... I am what I am  
not what you expect  
not what you want... not what you hope

but what you need to recognise.  
These are my maps. Can you find yourself? Do you need help?  
There are other maps.  
I see the lines, the threads of love...

Before the labels, before the labelling, there are simply melons.  
Before the blushing, there is simply a rush of blood near the surface of the skin.





## Rubric - Red Writing - Red

At first sight, red is an adjective. But, of course, it is also a noun. It's the essence of redness. It's a vehicle for associations: it's the smear of colour across the shepherd's morning sky, the bathroom floor or the pale skin of a suicide. It's the colour of sentimental roses and haemorrhage and loss and it's the flush of excitement, exuberance and, inevitably, shame.

Choosing red pebbles on the beach I wetted them and then spelt out the word red and saw that the word was red because its three letters said so. It was red in meaning. (And meaning has to do with medium. Meaning doesn't live in the word, it's conveyed, delivered to us.)

The word was also red in colour. (And colour has to do with surface. Though the pebbles were red all the way through, it was the surface I had wetted and the surface that gleamed redly.)

But there was another redness. As I pressed the wet pebbles into the sand, they caught the early sun and cast absurdly long shadows. They reminded me of sweets and jewels. They had body and I was aware of my own body in a way that I am not when I write or type. The word was red in a third dimension - in its form. (And form has to do with structure and bone and sinew and the drag and clatter of the drawn down beach under the snarl of every winter wave.)

# Longing

There is a family of longing nouns. Nouns that tell of:

Our longing for something that cannot ever quite be named.

Our longing for a time we've forgotten or for a world we can't yet imagine.

Our longing for a lover who may be beside us or for a home that may never have existed.

Our longing for a union so complete it dissolves us.

Our longing to be dust in the stars.

*Saudade* in Portuguese and *Sehnsucht* in German speak of our longing to attain the unattainable and finish the unfinishable. While prenostalgia speaks of our remarkable capacity to miss something before it has gone.

Desire often seems to have an object: a baby, a mango, a man.

But longing often has no object. Or to have lost its object. While 'desire' suggests the possibility of closing the gap between me and what I'm desiring, there is a sense of 'inevitable distance apart' in 'longing'.

Longing speaks of our wish to belong to something that we can't quite remember.

If we do give it an object, we may be fooling ourselves, because we're all really longing for the reedbed:

Listen to the cry of the reed,  
The reed in the mouth of the flute,  
Listen to the story it tells  
Of separation and loss.

'Since I was cut from the reedbed',  
Sings the reed in the mouth of the  
Flute, 'Women and men have wept  
At my shrill and persistent song'.

'I speak to the heart that is torn  
Out  
By its roots.  
I speak to that heart of my yearning,  
Of the pain of separation and loss.'

'He that is torn from his home,  
She that's apart from her lover,  
They that are cut from the other,  
Long, as I do, for the reedbed.'



## Expression

### Pressing out

I might be bathing in imagination and then stop to ask 'what use is it to bathe like this?'

I might be moving in a garden or in the shade and then stop to ask 'what use is it to move like this?'

As if the salmon or the salamander, the beech tree or the bee were to pause and ask what use is my salmoning, my salamandering, my beeching or my being?

## Impression

### Pressing in

The mark made by the last hollowed-out pear tree that pressed against me front and back until I became aware of myself...

Received an impression of myself.



# Crotch

Longing is surely an upwelling from somewhere in the body. *Sehnsucht* shares its roots with the German word *Sehne*, meaning ‘sinew’ – suggesting that longing resides in the body, pulling us taut like a bowstring.

The Indonesian word *kangen*, meaning nostalgic longing, is closely related to *kangkang* meaning ‘the crotch’ or ‘with legs splayed’.

Observing dozens of tree crotches in the wood – mossy clefts where trunks and branches have grown apart – I am struck by the inevitability and recurrence of these growings apart. Almost never do trunks and branches grow back together again.

And finding the longing associated with crotch and legs splayed, it strikes me that splayed legs may always have been misinterpreted (even by their owners). They do represent a longing – but not necessarily a longing for *that*.

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When longing wells up I am trying to move with it as just that welling-up feeling – not giving it an object or a target, not giving it a name or an explanation or a label. To stop it running away with itself and accumulating unintended meaning, I am trying to simply embody it in my splayed legs.

# Crotch



# Yawn

## Inchoative ~ *noun*

An inchoative is an inchoative verb:

An inchoative verb is a verb or verbal form that designates the beginning of an action, movement, state, or event, such as the Latin verb *tumescere* 'to begin to swell'.



## Dehiscence ~ *noun*

The natural bursting open of things (capsules, fruits, anthers, etc.) for the discharge of their contents.

From *dehiscere* 'to gape, open, split down', from *de-* + *hiscere*, inchoative of *hiare*, meaning 'to yawn'.



Thursday 17th January, 05.50

This is an ordinary morning. No grass-ice. No panoply of stars. No high excitement. This is not my first morning excursion and there is no sublimation, no exaltation. I am not propelled anywhere. I am an ordinary man with ordinary desires. I can feel foolish; well, more sheepish, for my ideas of transformation, for my sense that I have drifted into the extraordinary in thought or feeling or connection.

Where last time I was elated at finding I knew without thinking where each gate latch was – left or right, high or low, slide, flick or pull – this time I get one wrong.

Nothing special happens. The event is uneventful. The sea and sky seem dull. Uninspired. And then I find that I can still hear, speak, touch and be touched, move and be moved. I can still wriggle in my net and feel the net move with me. I can still take pleasure, can still feel sad, sick in the stomach sorrow. I am still alive. And rather cold.

# Flux

A flowing, rolling, bleeding, looseness, slack.

In Wales, in April, I noticed that my crystallisation had already begun and that its ending had already begun and that my letting go of how it felt had already begun, and that my missing the project and the group had already begun - prenostalgia.

I had the sense that all of the project was a river, a flux and that there wasn't a precise 'here and now' in it.

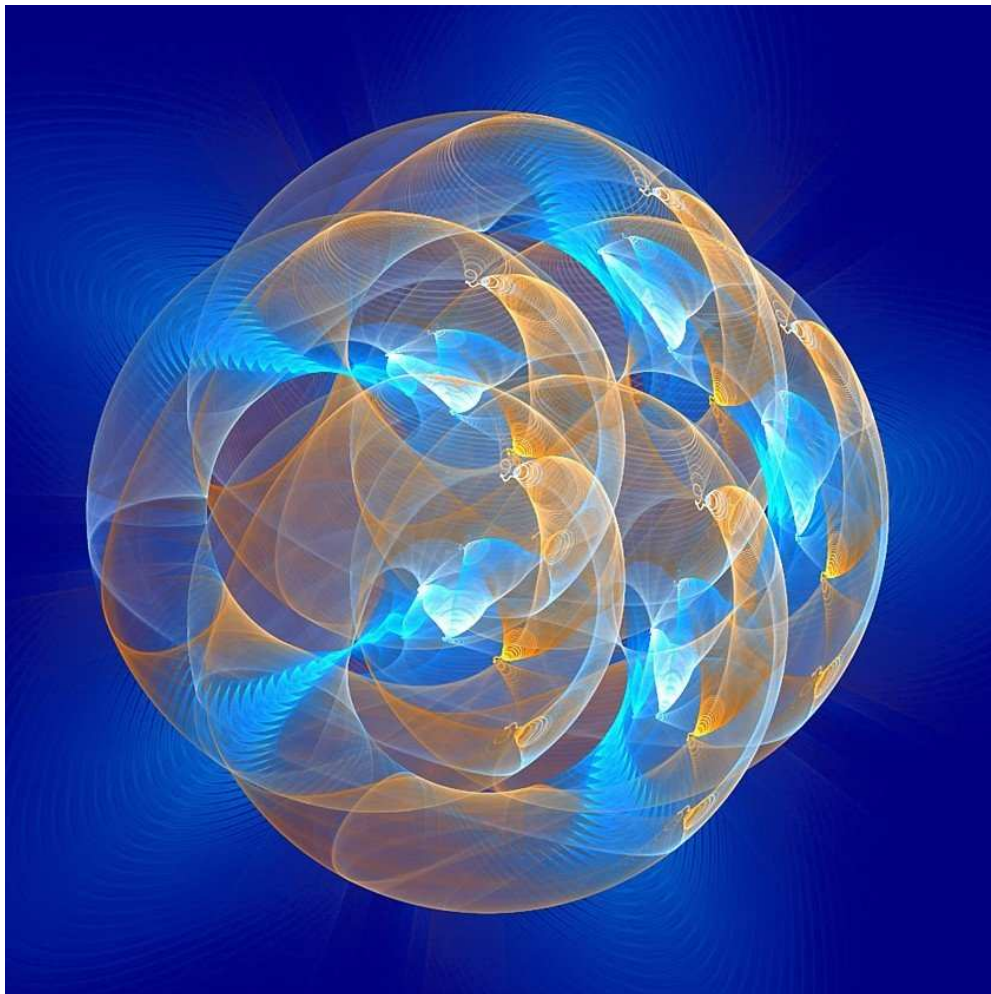
My project is not me moving by the stream.

Rather:

project = stream

So I wonder whether the idea of being present in the 'here and now' is limiting in its exclusion of what has gone before and what is already emerging.

Is now-centred the temporal equivalent of self-centred?



# Flotsam

I can be the brook, the stream, the mountain torrent, the river -  
And I can be something adrift in it.

Out of control, I am caught up by its rush and pulse and mad dash.  
Drowning.

When control is overlooked, I am the flow of the water.  
I am the seep, spate, spout, spurt, eddy, pool, drift.

I can be the river flowing.

There is no reported incidence of a river having drowned.



# Flotsam



# Pattern

Waking not so early, I walk to the wood and am struck by patterns:

How the fold in the earth down which the stream runs resembles the crease in a lover's, another human's, a mother's, a father's skin.

How the beech trunk resembles the leg of an elephant, the trunk of a human.

How the ivy resembles my fingertips.

There is also a frisson here with the tree.

The frisson is in the glint and glisten of the damp bark touched, in the thwock of connection established, in the sigh of coming to rest (like a modern drawer doing its closing thing), in the swirl of a pattern recognised.

And I have the sense that, behind the veils and bubbles and projections and transferences, there is just connection, recognition, pattern or love.



# Reconditioning

A shaking of salt

A squeezing of lemon juice

A splashing of bitter wine

A sprinkling of powder soft sugar flour.

These dabs and claps and stretches and slipaways across the  
hall floor to wallstop,

They all shake, squeeze, splash, sprinkle new substance, new  
breath, new interest into me moving.

Look, this is what I mean.

I mean a movement comes and it peppers me, it salt and  
vinegars me, it reconditions me as surely as the pinch of  
saffron reconditions the rice.

But look, I also mean that a movement comes and it honeys  
the space, it butters the room, it curdles one neighbour, it  
whisks another into the soft, stiff peaks of a young meringue,  
it cocoas the buttercream community.

And I am butter and flour, sizzling, awaiting the ingredients  
that will make me, render me into today's sauce.

# Wellspring

This trunk is like an elephant's leg  
So tender to touch.  
I feel tender touching it, holding it.  
Where does that tenderness begin?  
Where does the sorrow come from?  
What is that tender sadness?

I can touch the metal of statue  
Or the matted covering on Greta's wire mesh  
Or the pale head of a dead soul  
Or the knuckle skin of an unloved ankle  
Or this tree.  
Eventually tenderness would have to emerge.

It clearly rises up. Wells up. The tenderness.  
I suppose it's spring-fed.  
Spring-fed from a source significantly below  
my heart.  
The wellspring of my tendersadness is  
somewhere around, or just below,  
My solar plexus.

This tree has wellsprings beneath its surface.  
These rivers running down the tree,  
Rivulets,  
Making their own waterbranches.  
Oh, and they make a real river running down  
this canyon,  
Cutting their way down and through,  
Hollowing out a riverbed in the bark.

And there's a pool overflowing between the  
roots at the bottom.  
Streams, river, canyon, lake, pool:  
A geomorphology of tree trunk.  
I can see the elements carving their way into  
this trunk, shaping it,  
Creating landscapes in it.

Yesterday when I came into the wood  
An owl fell off a branch in front of me.  
It fell off forwards and slipped away  
through the trees with one great flap.  
Blackbirds tutted.  
The owl was like the owl in my dream  
But that might have been a raptor.  
I don't associate owl with pounciness.  
I associate it with swooping  
And gliding and sitting and watching  
Floating through trees like a handkerchief  
And being fed mouse through a nasal tube.

This branch is all solid structure.  
I can squeeze it. Hold it. Hug it. Pressing.  
It's a constant affirmation,  
So long as I'm here.

I can love you in the pressing.  
I can feel you in the pressing.  
I can feel the twisting that you grew through  
to get here,

# Wellspring

Utterly determined  
One beech nut out of millions with the determination,  
Or luck or chemicals or genes or context or program,  
Or the will.as.desire to live.

I could fill sacks with leafmould and dress in hessian  
As a distraction or a performance or a provocation.  
High heels and sackcloth.

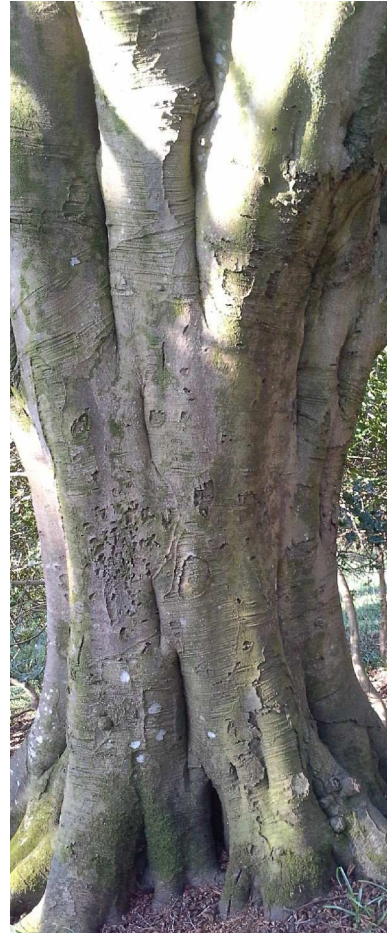
The tree has this weight but it's soaring.  
It has soaring weight and a slow rhythm that I might trap  
my fingers between.

The green is unbound.  
The brown of the tree looks bound.  
The winter branches look lifeless and held and bound in,  
And then this green erupts like a special effect.

When I press myself between these two branches  
There's a possibility of almost infinite satisfaction.  
I can feel my whole back and rolling shoulders and press  
my chest and legs and feel the pressure back.

There is no word for this green.  
If that's true, then there are no words for anything.  
But all these words are for something.  
My mind breathing.

I could eat one of the leaves  
Or kiss it or feel it soft on my face.



# Interlarding

There is a family of inter-nouns that describe our interest in weaving fabrics of various sorts – a valuable capacity before we had glues and staples and sheets of plastic or saws to cut thin slices of wood.



Alongside interlarding (mixing with alternate layers of bacon fat) are interlacing ~ interweaving ~ interwreathing ~ intertwining ~ interknitting ~ interlocking ~ intertwisting ~ intermingling ~ interspersing ~ intersplicing.

There are interstices in the webs that are woven and, nearby, the imbrication of overlapping tiles and all the plickety-plic folding words of implication, complication, replication, duplication, explication, application, supplication, multiplicity and, inexplicably, of splay and display.

There are lattices and trellises, there are Moorish screens in the Alhambra. Everywhere there are canopies of leaves and branches, the plaitings of stalks and stems, the binding and knotting of visible and invisible tree roots.

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When boredom, disappointment, excitement (or any other signs of my own preoccupation with my self's importance) well up, I intend to remember these words and the meshes they describe. I intend to remind myself of the webs of genetics and affect and the patterns of meaning and growing and dying that I am an inseparable part of. And to stop my self running away with its own importance, I intend to embody that being part of by weaving myself like a wetted sweet or jewel into the sycamore's ivied curtains and into the curling goosenecks of the sallow trunks.

# Fabric

Down here, close up,  
Just as my body is the fabric of my experience,  
So, the floor is no longer some palimpsest,  
Some ass-rubbing,  
Some historical record.  
Now the floor becomes a simple fabric,  
A tautish skin grown baggy over time.

And now there is no commentary  
For acting out,  
No joy or sadness to embody.  
There's just planks and dents and grooves and scratches  
And in return I find I've only joints and muscles,  
Bones and skin and pushing on and pulling back  
And always pressing,  
As if pressing might melt the threshold  
And allow me to commingle.



# Desire

A lack of connection provokes in me a desire for connection.  
A prolonged lack of connection provokes in me a longing for connection.  
This longing seems more protracted and intense than desire.  
A lack of connection is accompanied in me by a sense of sadness  
Which might be a nostalgia for a time when there was a sense of connection  
Or might be a sense of despair that there may never be a sense of connection  
Or a prenostalgia for the loss of whatever sense of connection there already is.

However the sadness is already a label.  
What there actually is, is just a sense of softness, of availability for connection.  
Being tender, the sadness is quite appealing.  
I like the tendersadness, although it's lonely.

I find that my habit is to put myself in situations where I am disconnected,  
Because there I will find a familiar longing for connection  
And the tendersadness that goes with it.  
I am actually looking for the tendersadness of disconnection  
Rather than the satisfaction of connection.

So my desire becomes turned in on itself.  
I desire not connection but the lack of connection -  
Because that is where I feel the desire for connection,  
Where I feel the tendersadness.

If I desire a situation where I have desire (rather than the fulfilment of that desire)  
Then I am by definition always going to be dissatisfied -  
If unfulfilled desire equals dissatisfaction.  
But perhaps unfulfilled desire is what keeps us alive.  
Because without desire there'd be no reason  
To grow or breathe or go about our daily lives.



On the other hand,  
I am also looking for a place of emptiness where I don't get hooked by sadness.

# Nasturtium

Moving in Julian's session I have blossomed into a nasturtium.

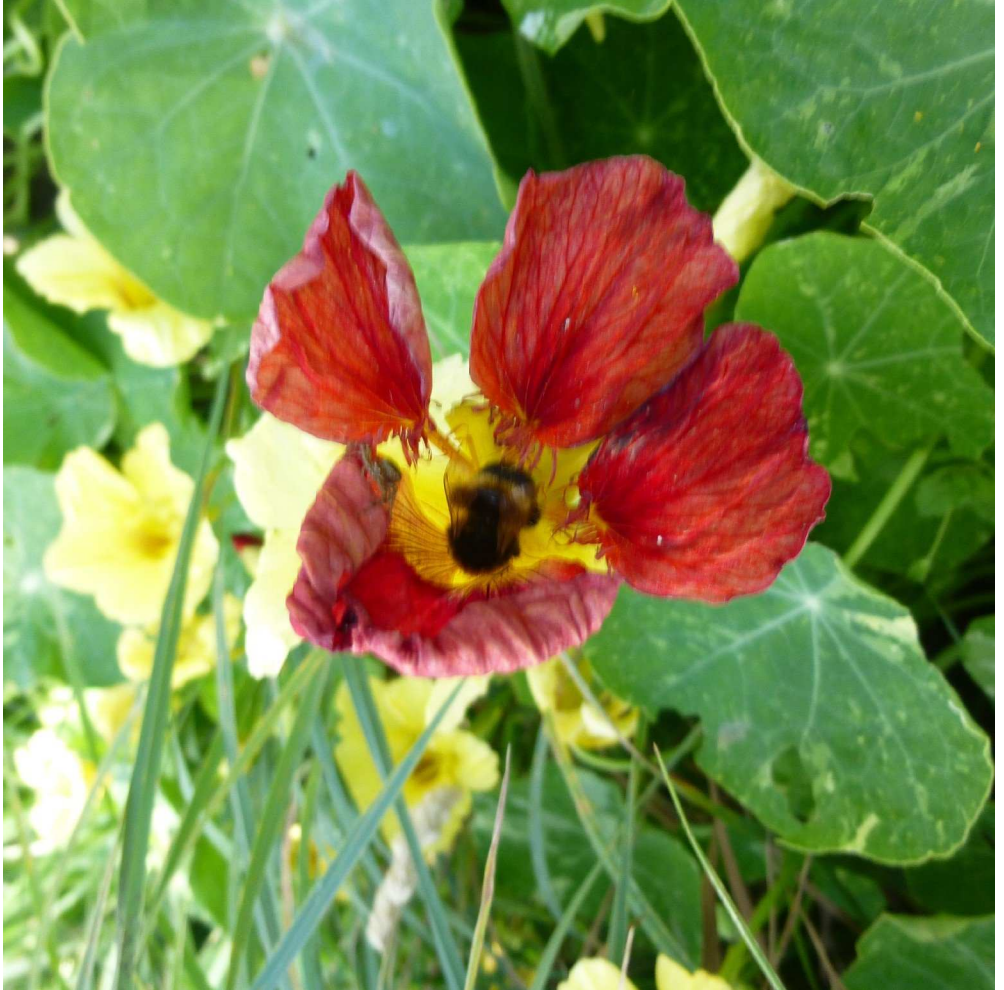
My body shaped itself into the productive.receptive trumpet of a nasturtium  
Folding back its petals in soft desire.

Then, to my surprise,  
I was pollinated by a bumble bee which fell asleep  
in the orange.red embrace of my nasturtium.

Furthermore,  
I was unceremoniously shafted by a large tree trunk  
using clunky symbolism that would have made Freud glad.

I now feel completely at sea.

# Nasturtium



# Sense

In April in Wales I spotted the obvious:  
that trees grow up and apart, while rivers  
flow down and together.

Production and reception ~ male and  
female ~ divergence and convergence.

So, I wondered about my project:  
Is it growing up or flowing down?  
Is it diverging or converging?

Well, clearly diverging - leaping from one  
stone to another in the stream. But the  
trajectory suggests a pattern, a flow, a  
convergence. Then my Ecological Body  
crystallisation looked like this:



Looked at from the outside  
The stream has a clear purpose,  
A beginning, a middle and an end  
Like a proper story.

Well, it's been given purpose  
Dug under the wall or wall planted over it  
It arrives excitedly in a stone container  
An early bowl,  
Where it is held, swirling  
Insofar as it can swirl  
So water can be fetched for the kitchen  
And clothes washed.

Then the stream clatters out  
Like daddy-long-legs  
Skittering over the ground to the privy  
Where it catches whatever matter is  
Falling  
And washes it under the wall again  
To the rushes, the cliff edge  
And, tumbling, to the beach.

Along the way dogs lap, bees sip,  
Plants drink, cows' tongues curl in  
Slow motion and toads breathe.

From the outside the stream brings life,  
Sustains life  
And carries away the waste.  
It makes sense...

But my journey upstream makes less sense  
Makes no sense.

I considered asking everyone to climb over the wall, cross the field  
And sit in the shade of three blackthorn trees – slån : prunelliers –  
Whose trunks have been rubbed smooth by the passage of cows.

Ah, there, the passage of cows.  
You could get squashed, pressed, crushed  
You could get rubbed smooth yourself  
In the passage of cows, by the passage of cows.

I considered oiling the trunk of the ash,  
Using linseed to soften the bark, make it supple  
And visibly reduce the appearance of signs of aging.  
In my mind's eye it would have become smooth  
Like the elbow of the blackthorn rubbed smooth by the passage of cows.

In any case, it may only be that a journey upstream serves as a reminder  
That it's the flowing downstream that makes sense.  
Journeys upstream never make sense.

They help us to make sense  
They unearth origins and beginnings  
They help make maps and descriptions  
But they don't make sense in themselves.

A journey upstream makes as little sense as a life lived backwards,  
Dying first.  
So maybe it's an idea to hurry back down, with the sense,  
Skittering as fast as possible to carry away the shit.





## Admiration

Social emotions like admiration activate the posteromedial cortices - parts of the brain important in constructing our sense of self. The upshot is the 'social me'.

I had never thought of admiration as an emotion, but I realise it belongs with hierarchy and pecking orders. So, as I admire you, I lift you up and set myself down. But also, as I admire you I recognise at least a potential in myself to be admired. My experience is that, as I feel love and kindness and admiration for others, I get softer and wider and wetter and more available to receive the thwock of the other's love.

Friendship science says that the more I do for you, the more I will like you - because I wouldn't do a lot for you unless you were a lovely person. And, as you're a lovely person, then I will do more for you...

so the wide spiral of generosity and love begins.

# Ubiety



I got less interested in who I am and more interested in where I am.



# Ubiety



‘Ubiety’: the condition or quality of being somewhere, in a context. My whereness.

# Neuter

Oh, I am covered in stupid death foam.  
I don't want to aspire to be neutral.  
I want to mean something.  
And who makes meaning?  
'Not I', said the lizard.  
Then it must be me.  
We are meaning.making.machines.



So I want to mean something to someone?  
Is it that?  
Yes, I do.  
Do I want to mean more?  
Do I want to mean something to more people?  
To more others?  
Will this great pear tree of acceptance come to my  
funeral and say 'He meant a lot to me'?  
Would it help?

My moving flows down like butter.  
Unseen. Unmeaning. Unmeant.  
Neutral. Neuter. Neither.

Letting nothingness flood in.  
Letting a wave of nothing flood in on the tide.  
Being filled with emptiness.

This tree accepts me  
Or I take its admitting me as acceptance.  
It presses me back and front as I squeeze in  
Giving me an impression of myself.  
Can I be nothing here?  
On my own, I wrapped myself in a red cloth and  
sang 'I'm so happy' forlornly until I cried.

There are two ways to understand Lacan's maxim:  
'Man's desire is the desire of the Other'.

1. that desire is a desire for recognition from the 'Other'.
2. that desire is for what the Other desires; what they lack.

Hmm, but I recognised just the other day that I am always looking for what the other wants...

*I am nearly always moving to offer myself 'in service', so that the people I meet are those I might 'serve'.*

*It's sticky because of what I'm not acknowledging that I want to get out of the arrangement.*

*I can focus this offer on the Other like a boy with a magnifying glass, pounding myself on their beach.*

So I undertook to look first for what I want – and to state it. This would be more manly and less tentative, suited to the square-jawed man of my shadow who knows what he wants and is relatively untroubled by the needs of others.

And then I find that my looking for what the Other wants is exactly what Lacan says is the basis of all desire.

In which case, finding my own desire would be an elaborate way of concealing the fact that I am really trying to find the Other's desire.

Knot: an intertwining, a knitting of ropes



# Engenderment

I have become a tree hugger and realise the tenderness that emerges from the tiniest fluttering of my fingers against the mossy trunk. The fluttering is a reminder and a generator of tenderness.

This is the delicacy of interweaving – in smiling, I remember having been happy and engender happiness.

In fluttering, I remember tenderness and engender it.

This seems to connect to finding that:  
**when blood vessels first start to form, the heart does not yet exist...  
early blood flow stimulates the development of the heart.**

**Fixed form not only shapes movement, but is first of all the result of  
movement. The human body is a formed stream.**

Sitting quietly with Nancy in Wales for almost an hour, watching the fire and, through the window, sheep (certain), a farmer (debatable) and a giraffe (statistically improbable) – I find there is no catching; nothing whatsoever is required of me.

I am nothing here.

## The opening of anything with capacity

Symmetry influences how an animal moves about.

Animals with bilateral symmetry, like humans, have bodies specialised to move in one direction — forward.

Many animals with radial symmetry don't move or do so slowly. When they do travel, most of these animals do so in a direction determined by their body's central axis, defined by the location of their mouths. Think of a jellyfish.

I intend to practise moving in a direction determined by the location of my mouth.



# Hollow

I find in hollow the soft moss, the cupping, the creases of experience, the warmth, the reassurance of a determinate shallow depth, the sense of receiving and of shelter, the comfort of protection, the tenderness of a long-tailed tit's nest, the repeated shaping of a companionable occupant – all of which are absent from hole.

And then I imagine some moulded form that might fit exactly into that hollow, complementing its bowl and grooves and lips, completing it and being completed by it.

In this rare fitting, that exists more in the world of dream and precision engineering than in daily life, I find satisfaction.





## Spiral

In fertilisation, the continuity of the egg cell membrane is never broken. The common image of a sperm cell penetrating the egg cell is not correct.

In the Pre-Conception Attraction Complex (PCAC) there is no question of an active versus a passive partner, nor of a penetrating versus penetrated partner, nor fertilising versus fertilised one.

Rather, the morphodynamic process of fertilisation is like the gestures and rituals associated with mating amongst animals.

In a continuing exchange of signals, of attraction and repulsion, male and female circumambulate one another before copulation happens. This gesture is discernible in the PCAC, which exhibits a tendency to rotate. The linear (radial) movement of the sperm cells turns into a spiral motion.

# Assuagement



The act of making something more sweet.

Softening, moderating, alleviating, calming, soothing, pacifying

Self-assuagement is not best achieved by self-arousal.

I only realised this today.





# Occidentation

The falling down, in this case from the heart to the sea.

# Otherness

I think that nouns long for otherness  
Long to be other than they are.  
And to be other than you are requires movement.  
Nouns, therefore, long for movement.

So that an owl (a noun) might indeed fancy a mouse (another noun)  
But what it leans towards and longs for is to fall off its branch and to  
Float through the wood like a handkerchief.  
It desires owlsh behaviour,  
Longing to turn, rotate, gyrate its head  
Longing to hear owlshly,  
Ultimately so that it may catch a mouse, I grant you,  
But primarily for the joy of owling about  
For the joy of becoming owl rather than just being owl.

Vertical axis

Skylark

Heart\_beat

Footfall

Leafmould

# Nothing



In the wood,  
I am in Life and Death valley.  
I don't need to move at all,  
The world is already amove  
Round me, with me, for me.

The stream is plipping its way  
Down from its source  
Through the hollies.

The woodpecker is rattling like a tentative  
Witness in the corner of the hall.  
The sea is loudly breaking in –  
Demanding the plipping stream.

The blackbird, collared dove, crows,  
Robin, wrens, skylark and late owl  
Are all establishing themselves.  
The evergreen leaves are touching the air  
In light circles. There is breath.  
Mum and Dad are travelling compost  
In the veins of the incongruous chestnut.  
As I walk up through the wood  
The sun watches me rise over its horizon.  
Am I nothing here?  
Where is my proportion?  
Perhaps I'm something like my footprint  
And my shadow –  
As important as the marks I leave...  
and no more.

# Soft-close drawer slides

I am interested in the way a sound closes,  
in listening to the end of:

A pebble dropped in a well

A stone flopped into the sea

A new-fangled drawer soft-closing

Any oof moment, where the breath is  
pushed out involuntarily

A pattern being recognised

The moment of connection

A French frisson or an English shiver

A ball of something doughy dropped into  
a bowl of flour or icing sugar.

The click in my skull when I move my  
legs in a particular way

The dragonfly's sudden dart

The sound of a gong

The last churr of a gecko

## Drawer

# SLIDES

or steel & wood cabine





## Manifold

This tree is a multiplex  
A multiplicity  
With many foldings  
A mångfalt.  
A folding together of xylem and phloem  
Of sinewed uprootings  
Of roots becoming shoots  
Of shoots becoming trunks  
Of trunks becoming trunk  
Of trunk becoming tree  
Of tree becoming branches  
Twigs, stalk and leaf  
After leaf, after leaf, after leaf  
Of leaf becoming leafmould  
Becoming root  
Becoming roots.

If I lie back,  
When I lie back  
It goes on and up and out  
Forever  
Becoming wood  
And I am folded easily  
Into the dry brown  
Leaves  
Becoming copse,  
Becoming wood  
Myself.



## þyrl

Metathesis is the re-arranging of sounds in a word. For example, ‘bird’ and ‘horse’ came from Old English *bryd* and *hros*; ‘wasp’ and ‘hasp’ were originally *wæps* and *hæps*.

The Old English *þyrl*, meaning ‘hole’ underwent metathesis to *þryl* and this gave rise to a verb *þrylian* meaning ‘pierce’, which became *thrill*, and formed *nosþryl* ‘nose-hole’ which became *nostril*.

So the words for ‘hole’ and ‘to make a hole’ and ‘the excitement of hole-making’ are essentially the same:

**Hole** – the [bottomless] hollow. The container. The passageway. The receptacle. The receiver.

**Drill** – the whirling, piercing to make the hole.

**Thrill** – the whirling, exciting, exhilarating feeling of making the hole – or is it the whirling, exciting, exhilarating feeling of the hole being made?

Could this apply to any movement? There are other places where it almost works. A ‘stamp’ is a mark or impression made and ‘to stamp’ is to make the mark or impression. The word has something of the feeling that comes with stamping and the other feeling that comes with being stamped on. So the stamping movement contains the stamp received, the making of the stamp, the explosion of stamping and the crushedness of being stamped on.

Perhaps all movements have that multiplicity, that folding in of many senses.

# (Ga)spillage

I dreamt that in a classical concert there was a spillage. Red wine or coffee or something rich and dark. Blood perhaps. One of those fluids that spreads in films across pale carpets and newish sofas, bringing in its wake horror or shame or dread. Spilling and spoiling. Spillage and spoilage. Spilt and spoilt.

‘What a shame’ is the cry I remember from my childhood at anything spoilt or spilt. No use crying but a turning down of the mouth.corners in the face of it all. It even applied to the wind in a nautical family. If you pull the jib or mainsail in too tight or let it out too far, wind will spill out of the canvas and you will lose speed, lose way. Spilling wind comes with an admonition. Like spilling seed.

I rinsed the clothes on which the dark liquid was spilt in a small bath and, when I emptied it, found the bath coated in a thick layer of dark brown sediment. As I scrubbed the enamel clean, the squeaking of the sponge slowly became the squeaking violin. The symphony began to play itself again in the bath as I rubbed it clean.

So the sound had been taken up by the liquid just as surely as the molecules of context can cling to a word or a taste, to be released as a memory decades later when the same word is heard or taste tongued. Just as surely as the slightest tremor of discomfort, disapproval or disgust on a mother’s minutely watched face can bring shame flooding back when the, now adult, hyperalert baby sees the same shadow of distaste cross the face of another, however fleetingly. Just as surely as the magic of a kiss can heal and repair now, as it did when we first fell, cried and were repaired.

I saw my life as a fabric releasing old contexts unremittingly – and unremittingly spinning the new threads with which to weave new moments.

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I have the sense that each movement I make carries both the interwoven fabric of my whole life.so.far and the unspun threads of all the movements I have yet to make.



# Hierophant

The family of phant words is tiny. Elephant and triumphant don't count. That leaves sycophant (displaying the fig) and hierophant (displaying the sacred rituals and mysteries).

But we can make more. *Phanein* means to display, and we can bung anything Greek in front of it. A *chronophant* would show the time (a watch). A *chasmophant* would reveal a yawning, hollow emptiness.

There is something interesting for me about displaying – the active variant of the longing crotch whose longing can be misinterpreted. Splay and display are plic words and mean unfolding; spreading out.

Display is disapproved of – it's vain or shameful. Showing myself to you is a debasing invitation to you to sneer at me. But my 'painfully honest' display can be a way of hiding rather than revealing myself – a winning admission of my hopelessness. The display that might really show my vulnerability would be one where I owned up to my grandiosity and acknowledged the times when I am impressed by myself - not those where I think myself hopeless.



So I intend to move with the sense of being slightly impressed with myself. Maybe to approach the space and others in it with the knowledge that they are lucky to have me there; with the knowledge that my presence is blessing enough for everyone.

I am experiencing a strong physical reaction to having written these words. I think I've just found a piece of my shadow and shown it to you. Which makes me a *skiaphant* – a displayer of my own 'thick darkness'.

# Context

## A weaving together

It is a characteristic of all interaction between people that what happened between you and me yesterday carries over to shape how we respond to each other today. That shaping is a transference from past learning.

This transference exemplifies the truth of the idea that we think in stories. I stretch the life I experience to fit my childhood stories. I also take it from one context and squeeze it into another.

And 'context' is linked to 'sense' and 'meaning'. Without context, words and actions have no meaning at all. This is true of human communication in words and of all communication, of all mental process, of all mind, including that which tells the acorn or the beech nut what to do next.

This is why I think the question 'where am I?' matters so much.

# Attachment



My bottleseed is gone.  
Mine.

I've looked everywhere and deduce that it  
was lost in a very minor landslide.  
Perhaps it's not even lost.

I realise that there are probably thousands  
more in the wood and that grieving for  
seeds is a fruitless task.

As is claiming ownership of them.  
But I'm an animal optimised for  
attachment and empathy.

Trying to let go of my optimisation  
Is like a seed letting go of its inclination to  
grow up and put roots  
Down.

I am trying to learn that attachment is not  
personal in the face of my daily  
experience that it IS.



Monday 28th January, 06.05

Blades of grass glinting in the moonlight are winter glow worms.

Tuesday 29th January

I dreamt about three parsnip or horseradish roots in sheaths of water. The water turned out to be smelly air which farted out balloon-like into the face of an old woman sitting in a deckchair. I danced between her and the farting sheaths to protect her. She giggled.

Thursday 31st January

I had the idea to follow the stream down through the wood to the beach (beech to beach) and maybe sleep in the wood and carve the dead tree trunk and build a bridge over the stream and cut down some of the hollies and collect kindling wood and create a movement space and put everyone's project stuff on an encrypted website, and walk round each of the fields rather than through them, and get under the skin of the soil.



# Toepath

Moving early on Monday morning, the first light affords me:

a toepath along the side of the stream  
the dapple and the mottle that makes spaces for hiding  
the treeweed that is the lichen  
the moment when the branch that has grown horizontally along and through the  
waterside grass is moved to lift and turn unfeasibly by the wind in the higher branches,  
startling me with its python-like python-life.

And I remember there is python in me.

Or maybe not.

At least the genetic recollection of some pre-legged creature.

And I realise that my counting back of grandmothers  
(50 generations takes me to the Vikings)  
((oh, how widely were my grandmothers desired? oh, how warmly did they desire?))  
Is hardly a beginning if I am to count back past  
Eve to my ape.grandmothers and on back through  
My tailed and tailless grandmothers,  
To ones that crawled for a living.

How many grandmothers ago was my grandmother's daughter last hatched in the  
mud?  
In the grey clay?

# Toepath



# Satisfaction

I half stood/half lay against/on one of the mossy trees and there arose such a strong and clear sense of satisfaction.

The feeling arose but I was unclear where it came from, where it had its beginning, its wellspring. It was a response to the shape and texture and solidity and pressure offered by the tree, or offered by my pressing myself against the tree. But I couldn't say that the feeling was entirely mine.

It was caused in part by the tree and seemed to come into me, to arise between me and the tree as a sensation which I then experienced - as if it had a life of its own. And I couldn't exactly say that I received the feeling any more than I could say that I produced the feeling - it was partly active and partly passive.

Then, exploring satisfaction (which comes from the Latin 'to make [or do] enough'), I became interested in:

making enough not making full or complete  
making enough not made enough (becoming enough – a more satisfying idea than satisfaction achieved, because 'becoming' has movement).  
making enough not getting enough  
making enough not given enough

Who is doing the making? Surely I am? I am the one who recognises when enough is enough. Or perhaps I don't: wanting more food, more drink, more stimulation, more excitement, more calm.

What about receiving enough as well as doing enough? That would be *satisception*. Or being enough? That would be *satisessence*.

Is this moment enough?



# Tremble



The tremble, before it becomes attached to lust or fear or excitement or rage or shame or grief or the outbreak before death or any other label... is just a tremble, just what a system does in any situation where it's more extended along one axis than the other.

The tiny, green-skinned, white-fleshed, pip, before it becomes a peach, a pear, an apple, a sloe, a mango or a walnut, is just a tiny, green-skinned, white-fleshed, pip. Just what a tree does in any situation where it's called upon to be fecund.

# Connection

It seems that the zing of touch, of Michelangelo's Creation of Adam, the metaphor of electricity, of current flowing between, of telephone plugged in, of spark jumping... that this is what characterises connection for us.

And when I first reach out and touch the lichened bark of the beech tree, there is a surge. But overriding that is some sense of spreading out, widening, melting.

And the noun has it right.

Where context is a weaving together, nexus is a binding and connection is a binding together: a weaving and interweaving, an interlacing of self and other and surroundings - a rethreading of myself into the tapestry of things where it's no longer possible to see where one ends and the other begins.

So connection can become an interweaving or the plaiting of completion, the amplex embrace of the toad. And toad, where is now thy zing?



# Essence

I was not interested, at first, in the tree for itself but for its effect upon me.

That is still true.

But as I become less resolute, I begin to find the tree in itself:

its contours, its textures, its colours, its wetness, its crevices, its deviations and deformities, its lichened softness, its frailties, its angles, its history and its passage. This process is just beginning.

Knowing a tree is endless. The tree to be known grows with the knowing. As do I.

Getting to know tree is a journey towards the essence of tree. I know more and more of the tree until, suddenly all those contours and textures fall away, leaving a curve, a blur, a touch.on.skin, a taste.of.love.

As I lean further into the tree's life, I lean also further into my own. For a moment I am beyond desire or tenderness or excitement or relief.

For I too am falling away.



And in a sudden moment of clarity, in a moment of sudden clarity, I get the image of the penis.cock fitting into the vulva.hen so that I realise I'm ending with the act of fitting together, the enactment of completion.

Then any coupling - witnessed - becomes a representation of bow and bowl, plug.in.socket, finger.in.dyke, putting the last piece in the jigsaw, the last word in the crossword, the last cabbage in the bed, the last frame in the honey super - all of them accompanied by a sigh.breathed.out and the sometimes unspoken word, 'there'.

And any coupling - undertaken - becomes the attempt to inhabit that completion, to be that completion, to be completion. Yet the attempt is always unsatisfied - I emerge from my communion with tree resoundingly still myself, not half-tree.

I can see a whole union but only ever be half a union. So I'm always longing for union but always adrift, always only one.

I am always at sea.







