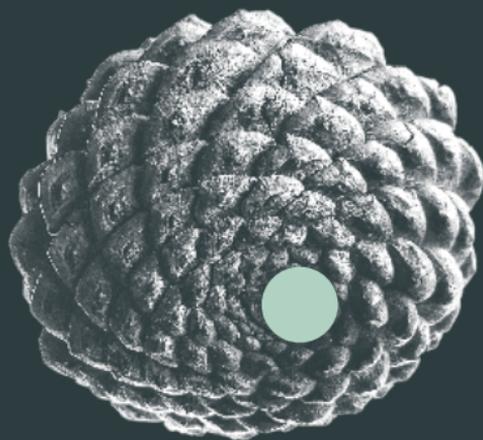


HOPE TALES



Chapbook I:
Air

HOPE
TALES

HOPE
TALES



Chapbook I:
Air

Contributors

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Matt Rendell has written and edited many books and articles with historical and anthropological tendencies, with a special emphasis on the South American Republic of Colombia.

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Caspar Henderson is the author of *The Book of Barely Imagined Beings* and other books. He is an old runner and bad singer. He lives in Oxford.

Judith Dean is an artist and Senior Lecturer in Fine Art and Art and Writing at UWE, Bristol. She lives and works in London.

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

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A Brief History of Chapbooks

INTRODUCTION

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Nicky Saunter, Jules Pretty, Andrew Simms

FIVE QUESTIONS ON HOPE AND REGENERATION

Jules Pretty

In the book, *Regeneration* (2022), Paul Hawken has posed questions to guide efforts for regeneration:

- i Does the action create more life or reduce it?
- ii Does it heal the future or steal the future?
- iii Does it enhance human well-being or diminish it?
- iv Does it create livelihoods or eliminate them?
- v Does it increase global warming or decrease it?

In short, he asks, is the activity **extractive** or **regenerative**?

Hope is a kind of regeneration, all about reestablishing attentiveness and astonishment, care and pride in places.



Wishing on a star



There is something childlike about the feeling we get standing head tilted back staring up at the stars on a cloudless night - the sheer awe of it all, its vastness and our tinyness. It may feel corny to say we are made of stardust, but the reality of that is mind blowing to a human brain taught to be the centre of the universe. To be like the Milky Way - actually made from the same material and at home there too. This is surely a thing of wonder. It can also be terrifying to let go of the complex, fragile construct we call our lives and dive into the universe, for we are ant people, made to scuttle about on the surface of rock and leaf, building our empires, rising and falling.

Neuroscientists tell us that these experiences of awe and wonder are rare moments where we are taken out of ourselves quite literally and become the part of the cosmos we really are. There is some hope here - that we might, through regular experience of awe in the natural world, become more comfortable with our own smallness and lack of importance. We don't need to fall into fear of lack of control, because we are connected to everything already.

The star is a symbol of many things to different people but here let it bring hope, reminders of simple pleasures and the true place of the remarkable (and very small and short-lived) human being.

Nicky Saunter

6



Our Urban Nature

These are the lyrics of two songs from a larger collaboration between London-based Andrew Simms, and the Stockholm-based musicians Anna Jonsson, Sara Nilsson and Nina Wohler. The songs explore the value, connection and sensory nourishment we get from urban green spaces, and the awareness of wider ecological issues that they can trigger.

Parliament Hill (on viewing a full eclipse)

On Parliament Hill the Moon and Sun
fall in line
A waiting crowd wonders, is it maybe
a sign
Or just the biggest ever shadow show
Where no one makes you pay to go
All these years we scanned the skies
Watching and hoping for some reply
But looking for life in outer space
No one held a mirror to their face

Chorus:
We are the life that's out there
We have been all along
Endless forms most beautiful
Now sing extinction's song

Birds fell silent, conversation died
Darkness swept in like a full flood tide
Drowned the horizon, spilled over
towers
Poured into parks, robbed colour
from flowers

We knew it was science, but started
to doubt
Ancient fears enter when lights go
out
And the sun becomes like a black-
eyed goat
Is this the last crossing, is that the last
boat

Chorus

From up on the hill, city sunk in false
night
Spellbound by awe at the thief of the
light
When the thief drops his catch and
daylight returns
In times of wonder, is anything
learned?
So small, so small, so easily eclipsed
We are our own shadows, even just
blips
But up on the hill, we see with fresh
eyes
Surprised at the world, surprised at
the skies

Chorus

7

CHELSEA PHYSIC GARDEN

My brow burns like hot
coals so I came to you
Ailing, fading
I reached out for Sorrel and
Feverfew
Fading, failing
Ground to a powder I drank
them as tea
Bitterness sweetened by
the bees honey

My soul in dark forest I
return to your gate
Failing, waning
St John's Wort you say
makes dark thoughts abate
Waning, aching
Yellow flowers I picked and
mixed them with sun
Waited and waited and
some peace I won

But the fear never leaves so
I come back again
Aching, quaking
Valerian and lavender will
calmness regain
Quaking, breaking
You say go to your garden
turn over the soil

Plant these and grow them
mix leaves with pure oil

Still old wounds from the
bad times cover my skin
Breaking, hating
Devil's horsewhip and
Wintergreen will bring
them back in
Waking, waking
As I heal I feel the real
cause of this woe
What we've done to the
world to drag it so low

My heart aches like winter
so thankless we've been
Taking, taking
Still you offer me the
foxglove and gardens of
green
Waking, waking
Waking, waking
My health is your health,
not more heat from above
There's no wealth but life,
its joy and its love
There's no wealth but life,
its joy and its love

**Andrew
Simms**

Uneaten

Hope knocks blind
inside an egg
cracks walls on instinct
ignores poor prospects of
surviving uneaten

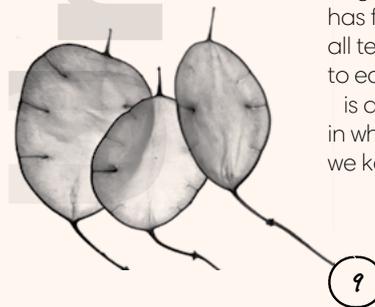
Next time feathers could
fill out in sun
flight might happen

Hope pulls back the duvet
lifts feet to floor, steps
over experience
of what days store

Ignored calls may, for once
be returned, a politician
say, 'I was wrong
lesson learned'

Hope is your oldest friend
forgives you every error
has faith to handle
all terrors, gives birth
to each beginning

is a world not knowing
in whose unwritten void
we keep living

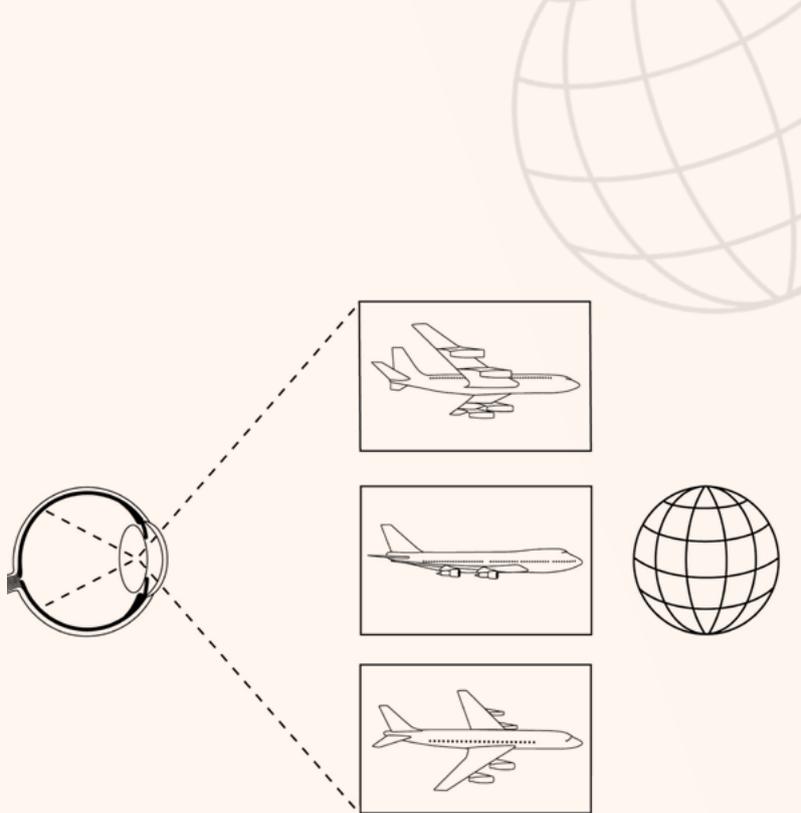


stopped using jet travel in 2005, when I could no longer reconcile my international career ambitions with my awareness of the injustices of climate breakdown, and the destructive pursuit of fossil fuels.

As a consolation, I began collecting postcards of jet aircraft, fascinated by how such similar photos could evoke so many different journeys, and how the planes' formal differences conceal systemic similarities. To order the postcards, I explored perspective as, "the rationalisation of sight". I arranged the cards by their camera position relative to the subject: the lower the camera, the higher the card; the further left the camera, the further right the card. As "the objectification of the subjective" confirms the abstract worldview of the beholder, the result is internally coherent, but obsolete, and detached from the world.

Les Droits de l'Homme et du Citoyen

("The Rights of Man and of the Citizen") is the declaration published during the French Revolution, which proclaimed civil rights to be valid for everyone. Although based on "universal" ideals, the rights did not initially extend to the abolition of slavery, much less equality for women and people of colour. Today, seeing the interconnected nature of existence, and the ecocidal consequences of the imagined split between people and the planet, it would be fair to question any limit to the revolutionary conception of inalienable rights.



In Praise of Magical Thinking

ON a cold winter's night like today, I think of hot chocolate and remember 12 February 1545, when a delegation of Maya chiefs from what is now northern Guatemala stood in full regalia before Prince (soon to become King) Philip of Spain, at his court in Seville. In their view, the richest and most powerful person is the one who gives the most away. They duly lavished two thousand quetzal feathers on the prince, together with an unspecified number of 'containers of whisked chocolate.' It may have been the first time hot chocolate was drunk in Europe.

For one of the two parties concerned, it was just a cup of cocoa. For the other, cacao was a spiritual substance used for cementing relationships and striking up alliances. In the forests of Chiapas in Mexico, when a Chol Maya couple married, they exchanged five grains of cacao. The Awakatec Maya in Guatemala still call their marriage ceremony quicyuj, meaning 'cacao beans,' even though cacao is no longer involved.

Cacao is part of the global trade in exotic goods, which was probably already well advanced by the time Afghan lapis lazuli traders reached Egypt in 7000 BC.

Even so, despite our enthusiasm for exotic goods, the first thing we do is de-exoticise them, strip them of their cosmic surround, extinguish their numinous glow, make them banal.

Contrast this with the indigenous people who surrounded Christopher Columbus's caravels in their canoes, hoping to receive the cheap glass beads. For them, every object had a spiritual dimension that enriched the possessor's range of connections in the invisible world. They believed they were immersed in the cosmos, and that a complicated metaphysical contract ruled between us and the things of nature we depend on.

All this seems to belong to an earlier stage of being: the age of enchantment, or magical thinking. I don't mean non-scientific:

indigenous hunter-gatherers are brilliant natural scientists, and accumulate extraordinarily detailed knowledge of animal and plant life.

In any case, good science acknowledges its limitations. Science has little to say about falling in love, the emotions we feel when we look up on a clear night and see the milky way, or when a sudden insight or realisation feels like a gift from elsewhere, or, indeed, the feeling of loss and desolation we feel when we mourn our dead. These are the most meaningful moments in our lives. Even in a world of modern, disenchanted reason, magical thinking is in us and around us.

Indeed, there are reasons to ask whether conscious, deliberative, disenchanted reason is ultimately compatible with long-term species survival. After all, for the title of world's most successful civilisation, the 250-year age of science, or the 500-year age of mercantile capitalism, are not even in the running. The title has to go to the Ju/'hoansi Bushmen, the descendants of the first small group of anatomically modern humans, who have lived in the Kalahari desert region continuously for two hundred thousand years.

The enchanted self is one of the most complex and sophisticated ways of being human. At every moment, it makes reference to the widest perspective: eternity, the cosmos, the accumulated wisdom of the ancients. It slows us down, and gives each object – including every one of those cheap glass beads – its due.

By contrast, we moderns live on a thin layer of solid ground over a vast abyss of forgotten wisdom in forgotten languages. We should learn to step lightly. Magical thinking is how most humans in most of the world for most of our history have thought about their lives. We must stretch our powers of empathy to encompass it. If we can recognise this, maybe we can do more than survive. Perhaps we can really learn to smell the chocolate!

Matt Rendell

3 GRAPEFRUITS

In the late 1960s, after a six-year stay in Japan, Taitetsu Unno and family were soon to return to California. Unno had written about how little bits of rubble can be turned to gold.

A friend had come from over the Pacific, and had given them three grapefruits. At the time, overseas fruit was rare and expensive in Japan because of import restrictions. Unno and his wife decided to give away the three grapefruits. His wife gave them as a gift to her *ikebana* flower-arranging teacher.

A few days later, they received a letter written with brush and ink on traditional paper.

The teacher wrote that she shared the first grapefruit with her grandchildren, who were thrilled with the fragrance and taste of a fruit they had never seen before.

The second she ate with a friend whom she'd not seen for twenty years, infusing their reunion with added power.

The third she took to a hospital where a best friend was dying. The friend hadn't eaten for a week, but tried a segment.

She asked for another, then another. The family were in tears. The gifts of grapefruit, the sweet aroma and taste, the memories created. This one act of giving caused ripples. True gifts involve giving up something we could cherish, and in doing so Unno and his family created something kinder.

The grapefruit story had grown greater with the giving. It had become a new currency.

“In the continuance of the stories and song,
The Earth shall continue.”

[Simon Ortiz, Taos Pueblo poet, from Joan Halifax, *The Fruitful Darkness*]

Jules Pretty

Joy in strange places

On a cold dark night when in prison during the apocalyptic upheaval of Europe in 1917, the writer and radical Rosa Luxemburg found her spirits lifted, despite her perilous situation, by an awareness of the strangeness and beauty of the force of life. Through ‘layers of darkness, boredom, bondage, winter’, she found that her heart nevertheless ‘beats with an inconceivable, unknown inner joy’. Then she smiles at life, as if she knew ‘some magic secret which gives the lie to all that is evil and sad and transforms it into sheer radiance and happiness’. The secret, she decides, is ‘nothing but life itself, the deep nocturnal darkness is as beautiful and soft as velvet’, and even in the sound of sentries’ heels grinding in gravel outside, ‘there is the small, lovely song of life – if one knows how to hear it’.

EXTRACT
FROM:
CANCEL THE APOCALYPSE,
ANDREW SIMMS

Hope

Hope came in gently, unassuming dancing in
hedgehog form, on tiptoe
lightly, sprightly, slightly prickly

Hope took the time to sit
and pen a wish for our future
to post in that great flimsy jar

Hope played her violin with gusto
and courage my friends
her jaw set against performance terrors

Hope bought a Mr Whippy ice cream
each afternoon and sat on the grass
watching the swans awe the children

Hope shuffled in, lank fringe
covering her face, desperate to connect
let her teen spirit cry out, soar

Nicky Saunter



EVIDENCE OF HOPE

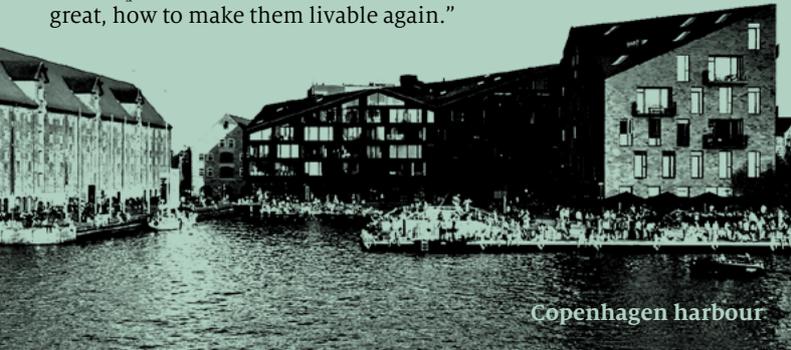
Jules Pretty

HOPE IN A CITY

Copenhagen was once typically industrial, the air dirty, rivers and harbour polluted black. Today it is a blue-green city of hope and clean air: commuter cycle routes, outdoor activity, harbour bathing pools and wild swimming, renewable energy schemes, green corridors and walks, harbour cafés and galleries. It is said to be the best bike city in the world. Traffic accidents are few, noise and air pollution down: each year, \$43 million of annual health costs are saved by the greener city.

Meik Wiking heads the Happiness Research Institute, and says the concept of *hygge* is at the core. *Hygge* is happiness, giving value to friends and togetherness, equality and gratitude. It is sharing food, baking cakes and lighting candles. It is also co-housing, it is volunteering and looking after neighbours, it is being in nature. It is feeling you have a meaning in life. In the northern latitudes it is always waiting for the sun. And all these activities, they are low in material consumption and low in carbon emissions.

The hope, says Meik, is “To change the story; how to make cities great, how to make them livable again.”



Copenhagen harbour

The *Cobbler* and the **Raven** Anita Roy

This traditional tale, set in the small hamlet of Far Cotton, outside Northampton's Castle wall, was recorded in 1975 by The Celebrated Ratcliffe Stout Band. Their LP, 'Under the Greenwood Tree' was a constant feature throughout my childhood and somehow the words and music seeped into my brain, such that I learnt this tale by heart without knowing it. The telling of the tale, so the sleeve notes inform us, is followed by two lively tunes which often accompany the Cogenhoe Onion Dance, "a fertility rite performed blindfolded around a pattern of onions", and warns the listener not to get too close to the record at this point, as a pungent odour will be revealed. You'll have to imagine the music – and the smell – but here are the words, steeped in memory.

THERE ONCE WAS A COBBLER and he did dwell outside of the old town walls. And he made his bread by the playing of a pipe and the mending of holey shoes. But his back was bent as a shepherd's crook, as a sail upon a full-blown sea, and he took his delight in good ale on a night, to pass time pleasantly.

For company he kept a raven, with wings as black as pitch, and it chortled merrily, asitting on its perch, while daily the cobbler stitched.

Came an hour before the May Day morn, the cobbler he was working late. Came a rattle of the latch, a knocking of the catch, and a creaking of the gate...

He let in a man so gaily clad with a shoe in his right hand. And though it bore of a tear, a finer shoe in no land could be found. "If

you'll mend this, I'll grant a wish for you upon May Day. But beware if thou kiss a very pretty miss, for the charm it will fade away."

"Hand me up that shoe!" cried the cobbler in haste, "and a neater stitch will not be seen. And then, kind sir, if you're true to your word, you'll grant this wish for me: Set my back as straight as an arrow of fate. Give my limbs the strength of a tree. For dearly would I love, by the heaven that's above, to dance away the May."

Well – this was done. And the cobbler was one... a stronger body ne'er drew breath. This handsome young buck, he went to dance amuck the fields of barley and of rye. He skipped so high he fair touched the sky! He whirled like a spinning top. Not once did he pause, there seemed no cause to make his dancing stop.

Now, a crowd they gathered round – it was the custom of the town – as the sun did rise full high. And this comely wench, she stood in awe, until the cobbler, he caught her eye.

As he drew breath, so she came forth and kissed him upon the cheek. A calamity took place and the crowd they fled in haste, and the maiden she let go a shriek. Oh!

E'er should you fain to travel abroad to the fields upon the day of May, halt for a while. Listen and look. For two ravens at dance you'll spie. Now one was the cobbler whose back was bent, with wings as black as pitch. And the other is the raven that chortled merrily, while daily the cobbler stitched.



From *Under the Greenwood Tree* by The Celebrated Ratliffe Stout Band (Beck Recording Studios, Wellingborough, August 1975).

Written and performed by Tom Hall, Diana Hall and Ebenezer Wilson. And re-created for *Hope Tales* by Anita Roy.

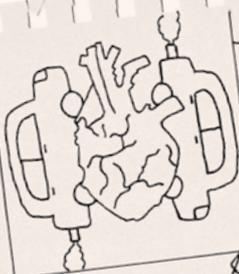


12 DRAWINGS FROM NATASHA LODGE

1.
Trapped in a cage of our own making



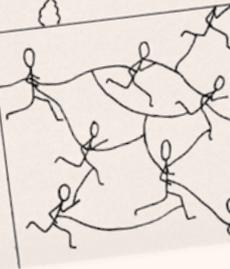
2.
Suffocated by the fumes



3.
At the mercy of the elements



4.
Blindly going it alone

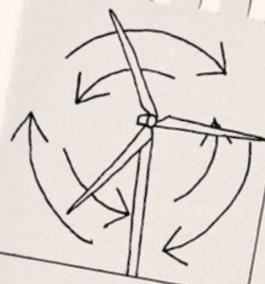


5.
Working together



6.
Changing the rhythm

7.
Renewable energy



8.
Repairing the planet



9.
Nurturing what we have



10.
Appreciating nature



11.
Breathing freely



12.
Creating balance

Our quest to clear the air of pollution is perhaps older than we think. On 13th September 1661, John Evelyn presented his new work, *Fumifugium* to England's prestigious scientific club, the Royal Society. People had been complaining about the hazards caused by coal-burning since the 13th century. But this was Britain's first real anti-pollution manifesto: the Latin title can be simply translated as 'the flight of smoke'.

Evelyn's mission to free London from the "Clouds of Smoake and Sulphur, so full of stink and Darknesse" and make the city "one of the sweetest and most delicious Habitations in the World."¹ For him, the problem went to the heart of what it is to be human, writing that it was "strange stupidity" that people "whose very Being is Aer should not breath it freely when they may" but rather "condemn themselves to this misery."²

Evelyn could see for himself that the uncontrolled use of coal in London meant that the sun's rays were "hardly able to penetrate" the smog. Taking an indignant ethical line, Evelyn blamed the "accursed Avarice of some few Particular Persons" and condemned the pursuit of Profit which did "prejudice the health and felicity of so many."

His proposals to overcome this toxic threat didn't really measure up to the scale of the problem, however.

First, he argued that industries which used coal, such as brewing and soapmaking should simply be moved

1 John Evelyn, *Fumifugium*, copy of original version p.14

2 F, p.20

a few miles outside the city, shifting rather than solving the problem. Then he proposed that fields near London should be planted with "the most fragrant and odoriferous flowers" such as Sweet Briar and Jasmine, Junipers and Rosemary, again masking rather than dealing with the cause.³

A draft Parliamentary bill was drawn up to implement Evelyn's proposals, but the drive to curb pollution fizzled out. In the years that followed, millions of people in London and Britain more broadly would have their lives cut short by coal-fired pollution. Avarice and greed would overwhelm ethical anxiety until more fundamental regulations were introduced centuries later in the late 19th and early 20th centuries. This all culminated in the Clean Air Act of 1956 which was passed after thousands died in the Great Smog of 4 December 1952. Sunlight gloriously returned: in the 1960s, inner city London had 55% more sunshine during November, December and January than in the same months between 1930 and 1960.⁴

Smog continues to kill millions across the world each year and we still have to rid the atmosphere of our greenhouse gases that are boiling the planet. Law and science, technology and ethics all need to be dialled up to bring the sweetness back. And although his policy proposals were on the quaint side, my sense is that we will only really rid ourselves of this curse when we see as Evelyn did, that "our very being is Aer".

As I reached the top of the escarpment, my attention was distracted from the 17th century by a squabble in the air above my heads. Later that day I wrote this poem: it's called **Launch**.

3 F, p.46

4 Roger Fouquet, *The demand for environmental quality in driving transitions to low-polluting energy sources*, *Energy Policy* (2012) p.138-149; p.145

Launch

August 2020

Two hawks fought and flew and flickered
Another joined
And all three dived into the deep air
of a valley cutting chalk from greensand
a gulf dividing this silent grove of yew
from the rustling beech beyond.

I had walked hours in the heat
and felt the dry urgency of rest
But another voice said: keep moving;
roots can wrap unwary hopes;
follow the hawk, spring from the branch
and launch yourself to the farthest slope.

Nick
Robins



The Magic Flute

In 2017, the flautist Anna Potengowski released an album of sounds that might have been played on flutes made from bone more than forty thousand years ago in the Stone Age. The arrangements, for solo flute with occasional percussion, are spare, meditative and intense.

But there was almost certainly more to ancient flute playing than this in the many different places they may have been independently invented. The Bayaka pygmies, who live in the Congo in the present day, play small wooden flutes, exchanging looping phrases that carry far through the forest and rise above but also interleave with the sounds of birds and insects. The effect is mesmeric and entrancing – a kind of wild ur-text for Steve Reich’s Vermont Counterpoint. For all we know, similar wooden flutes may have been played by their ancestors tens of thousands of years before bone flutes appeared in Stone Age Europe.

The archaeologists David Graeber and David Wengrow argue that we tend to underestimate the diversity of social and political worlds of our distant ancestors, and their willingness to experiment with new forms. And it may be that they were often inventive and playful, as well as serious and devotional, in their culture and music too. Our ancestors “knew where they stood in the scheme of things, which was not very high, and this seems to have made them laugh,” suggests Barbara Ehrenreich in a reflection on those who painted animals on the cave walls of Stone Age Europe. Alongside the rather earnest sounds summoned by Potengowski, there may well have been times for something more like the palaeolithic equivalent of Herbie Hancock’s high-spirited and playful Watermelon Man.

from *A Book of Noises* by Caspar Henderson, Granta, 2023
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Three poems on air

Andrew Simms

Humid

Before summer rain
air murmurs
a meeting about to argue

trees shift in their seats
flies itch – not ready to speak
streets breezeless as a hostile glare

faces bead like sweating cheese
no one reaches 'any other business'



Coast path

We rose over downs
like gulls on warm air
buoyed by our plans
each a wing angled
lifting possibilities

Wet heat kettled from
rocks, hummed on worn
earth tracks, billowed like
mosquito clouds, made our

XXVIII

faces glisten like the sea
We saw the warnings
thought somehow they
weren't for us, graffitied
red edges peering
through overgrown hedges

Cliff tops unstable
invisible drops, yet lost
absorbed, hanging one minute
on each other's words, next
from thin gorse

All over, that was us
I mean the bigger us, first
minds flying, empire building
overstepping, oblivious then
filipendulous



Heatwave

Angry like a Friday night
taught hormonal looks
everyone waiting
a spark is all it took

Then we were fire weather too
raging at this indifferent age
sweeping through deadwood generations
demanding to write the next page

XXIX

From

acrylic on melamine, 50 x 53cm, 2019



The hope here is that the stronger will help carry the weaker, so they can travel together to wherever they need to go, however they can get there, wherever they've travelled from. A metaphor, of sorts.

Judith Dean

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The story a pine cone can tell

Lucy Neal talks to Andrew Simms

The cone had fallen from a Black Pine that grows in Eileen's garden, a midwife living in the village of Batheaston. It is the last surviving tree from an arboretum known as Annie's Wood planted by suffragettes a century ago to recognise and celebrate their actions. The Black Pine was planted by Rose Lamartine Yates, a young woman with an eight month old son, from Wimbledon, arrested by accident at a protest and radicalised by her experience inside Holloway Prison. Dorset Hall, her home, became something of a base camp for activists. Every Sunday she spoke for women's emancipation on Wimbledon Common. Emily Davison, the suffragette who died trying to attach a campaign scarf to the King's horse at the 1913 Epsom Derby, was a close friend and stayed with Rose at Dorset Hall the night before her action.

"Imagine Rose planting the tree at her time, her bravery for going against the grain as a young mother and being ridiculed," says Lucy Neal, who tells Rose's story as part of a 10 year project called Walking Forest. In the 1960s all the other trees planted by the suffragettes were cut down to make way for houses, but Rose's survived at the edge. "The tree is stupendous", exclaims Lucy, "full of birds and life. Four people linking arms could barely reach around its trunk." Lucy collects cones with fellow Walking Forest artists from the tree, collecting the tiny seeds that fall when you tap them, some they propagate. Some they took to a major climate conference in Katowice, Poland in 100,2018 years on from the vote to partially enfranchise women in Britain. At the conference she would stop government officials and campaigners alike, ask them to close their eyes, tell them Rose's story and then gift them a seed from the tree. The point, explains Lucy, is that Rose could not have known the long term impact of her campaign, or imagine all of us sitting here today. Yet, she acted regardless

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with courage and tenacity. Today we need the same courage and steadfastness even though we don't know the impact of our actions, but must apply ourselves like Rose. "Give the whole of yourself into that uncertainty," says Lucy, to the people gathered at the first Hope Tales event, "and you forge links backwards and forwards in time. In 100 years, who will hold what is your pine cone." When handing out the tree's seeds today to those grappling with the climate emergency, Lucy is "gifting them back their own courage. Tiny seeds against the backdrop of huge events."

Walking Forest will culminate in 2028, taking a cue from the suffragettes key period of campaigning from 1918 to 1928 to get the full vote. It will end with the planting of an 'intentional woodland'. In a place called Floyd's Fields in Coventry on land donated by Lettice Floyd, another early suffragette who also defied convention at the time by living openly with her lover, Annie Williams, two saplings from Rose's tree have been planted by Lucy Neal, "Two radical sisters", she says.



A BRIEF HISTORY OF CHAPBOOKS

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

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

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

Chapbooks are for sharing, passing on and discussing.
Please leave a comment on this page and pass it on to
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