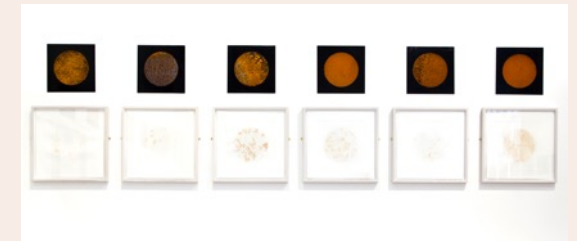
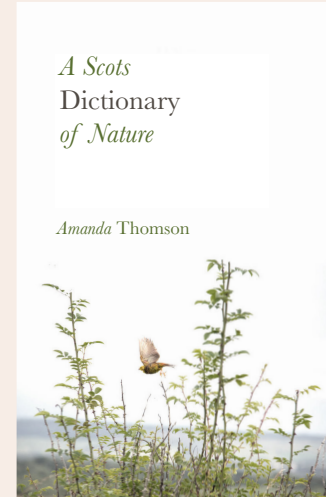


## Placemaking and Landscape: Articulations of Scottish Highland landscapes through artistic and poetic forms of practice

Dr. Amanda Thomson



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Detail, *Upcasting*, 2015

## Research Questions

What creative approaches might articulate the complex and interwoven narratives, timelines, properties and multi-layered complexities of Scottish landscapes?

- How might creative (artistic, literary, poetic) modes of paying attention be integrated with other forms of knowledge, including the ecological and historical, in ways that provide insights into the complex and multi-stranded layers, multi-sensorial engagements, and multi-disciplinary languages of landscape and place?
- How might slow processes of observing, recording and making articulate the complexities of Scottish landscapes?
- How might a sustained investigation rooted in a creative arts practice of a particular place – such as the remnant pinewoods of Abernethy in the north of Scotland – create a body of work that acknowledges and highlights particular social and ecological histories in ways that are attendant to a place's multi-faceted nature?

## Research Output

### Outline

This output comprises a body of work, completed over a six year period (2014 to 2020). It investigates placemaking and landscape, particularly focused on the landscapes of rural Highland Scotland, with a recurring interest in Abernethy forest. This practice-based research is articulated in a variety of forms that take account of the multi-faceted, multi-layered and multi-sensorial nature of place.

This output comprises:

- A book: *A Scots Dictionary of Nature* (2018)
- An academic article
- An academic book chapter
- Four new nature writing essays (two including video-elements)
- A new nature writing poem / word list
- One standalone video-work
- Twenty four etching plates with twelve etchings



## Research Output

### Published Works

#### Book

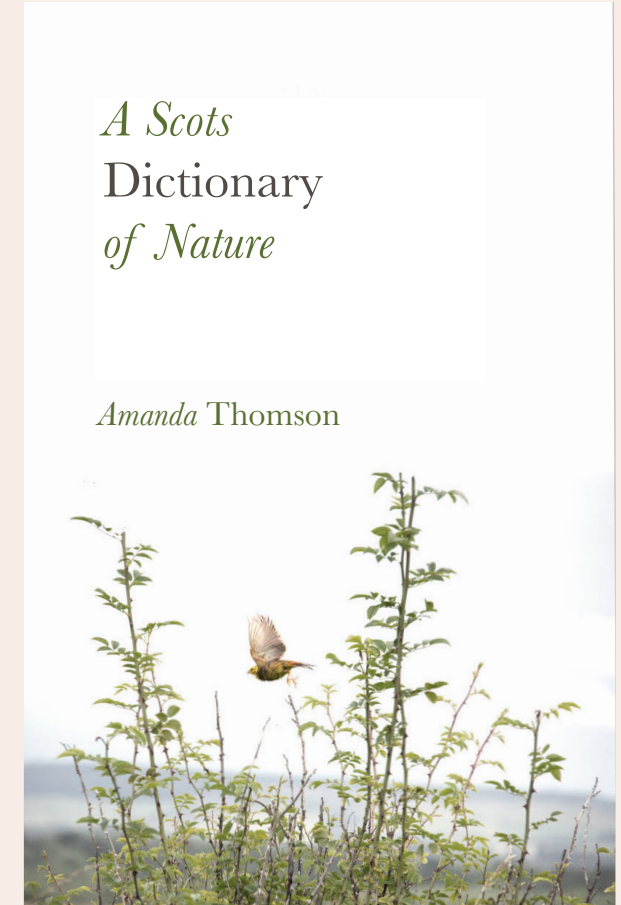
- *A Scots Dictionary of Nature* (Glasgow: Saraband, 2018); paperback, March 2019

#### Journal article

- 'I Like the Unpath Best: Art-practice-writing and the creation of complex, generative and complicating forms and contexts,' Special Issue: 'Art Writing, Paraliterature and Intrepid Forms of Practice,' *Journal of Writing in Creative Practice* 10 (1), 2017, pp. 77-94

#### Book chapter

- 'Making a Place: Art and a multi-modal, multidisciplinary approach', Ruth Pelzer-Montada (ed.), *Print Matters: An anthology of critical writing on prints and printmaking since 1986* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2018).



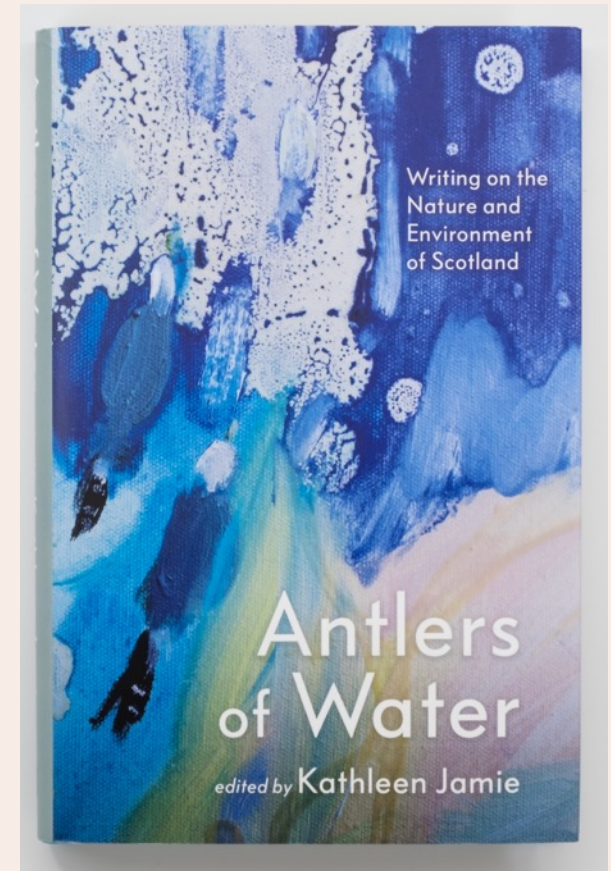
*A Scots Dictionary of Nature* (Saraband, 2018)  
Hardback cover)

## Research Output

### Published Works

#### Literary essays/ new nature writing

- **Essay:** 'Prelude 2020: Still, life,' Aerial Festival (published online: <https://aerialfestival.com/amanda-thomson-2/>)
- **Essay:** 'Around Some Islands,' in Kathleen Jamie (ed.), *Antlers of Water, Writing on the Nature and Environment of Scotland*, (Edinburgh: Canongate, 2020)
- **Essay:** 'Craw Sunday,' *Gutter 21 Literary Magazine*, March 2020
- **Videowork and essay:** 'Ox-e'en', *Willowherb Review*, 1, 2020
- **wordlist | poem:** 'Sixty two Words for Rainy Weather,' In *Cairngorm Anthology: Shared Stories* (Cairngorm National Park Authority, 2019)



Front cover, *Antlers of Water Anthology*  
(Edinburgh: Canongate Books, 2020)

## Research Output

### Artefacts

*Bridal (2014)* Videowork

*Upcasting (2015)* twenty four etching plates and twelve etchings

*Ox e-en (2018)* Videowork with essay

*Aar (2020)*, A dual screen video projection



Partial installation view, *Upcasting*, An Tobar, Mull, October 2015 - January 2016

## Aims and Objectives

### Aims

- To develop a deep understanding of landscape and place, rooted in being in place, exploring the proposition that new understandings of place can emerge through creative processes that privilege slowness, patience and walking in observing and recording place, particularly Highland forests and the landscapes of the north.
- To develop ways of recording that take account of the nuances and particularities of specific areas (small and larger), and thereafter develop multi-pronged approaches to research and making that are responsive to ideas of the world and place being ongoing, unfinished, and open; tangible and intangible, in the present day and with reference to the past, and taking account of different registers and frames of reference.
- To explore how text and visual imagery might work in concert to enhance understandings of Scottish highland landscapes.

### Objectives

- To produce a body of work that takes into account the complex and complicated elements of Scottish Highland landscapes, developing and realising creative outputs that emanate from research gathered from a variety of sources and in different forms that speak to the multi-layered nature of the environment, including time, slowness, human and more-than-human timescales and relationships.
- To create critical and creative reflections on aspects of practice that contribute to questions of creativity and multi-modal working practices; and how artists may engage with space, place and landscape.
- To disseminate the work in a variety of forms and ways that promote engagement and understanding, or raise questions and promote thinking with regard to place/landscapes and how one engages with them, and indeed, what one sees or feels.

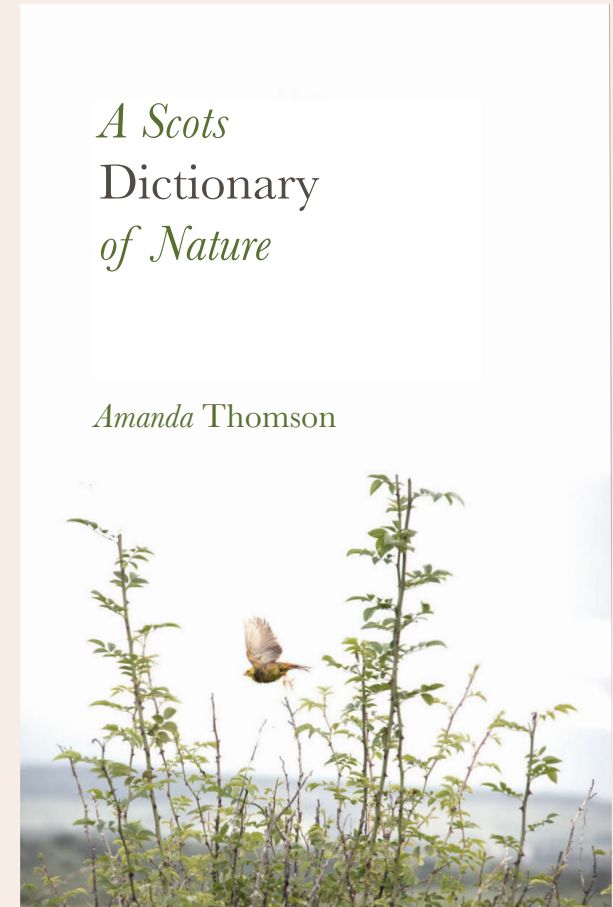


## Research Output

### *A Scots Dictionary of Nature*

*A Scots Dictionary of Nature* is a primary creative text that contains a carefully selected and thematically grouped collection of words found in 19th Century Scots Language Dictionaries, relating to aspects of nature. It contains a 3000 word essay as an introduction to the book, which explores the how language informs the way we see and experience place, and what we might learn from older, now largely lost ways of looking at and being in the world.

This work is an investigation of how language mediates the ways we see and experience place, whether that is visual or textual language. This book revives found words from 19<sup>th</sup> and early 20<sup>th</sup> century Scots Language Dictionaries, and brings them back into the popular consciousness. The insights provided by a reconsideration of – a looking again at – the words used to describe landscape in Scots language (indeed, potentially from any older, or other marginalized languages or ways of seeing the world) provide opportunities for the reader to see place differently, and understand past connections and ways of being in the land. The specific textures and characteristics of this landscape are attended to by Scots words in ways that are particular to the history and identity of the place, its flora and fauna, its formation, colours and characteristics as well as to the histories and cultures of the people and communities who inhabit the land, past and present.



*A Scots Dictionary of Nature* (Saraband, 2018)  
Hardback cover

## Research Output

### *A Scots Dictionary of Nature* (cont.)

*A Scots Dictionary of Nature* is one outcome of an ongoing research enquiry into the possibilities of how a creative arts practice might utilize and explore forms of representation (including written and spoken language) to facilitate perceptions of and perspectives on Scottish landscape that pay attention to the different and complex registers of these places, and add value to the ways in which such landscapes are perceived. As a researcher, I endeavor to attend to the multi-layered, complex and intertwined histories of the places I explore and attempt to bring those complexities – historical, ecological, social and political – through the variety of work I make and the different forms the works take – into view and consideration.

As I explain in my introductory essay to *A Scots Dictionary of Nature*, ‘In mining these dictionaries, I’ve found words that are rarely heard, no longer in use or perhaps largely forgotten. These “found” words evidence a confluence of local and broader social histories, allude to changing ways of life and point to fascinating relationships with nature and the land.’

One: Land

## B

- baa** *n* a rock in the sea seen at low water.
- babbanqua** *n* a quaking bog.
- babie-pickle** *n* the small grain (the *babie*) which lies in the bosom of a larger one at the top of a stalk of oats.
- bachille** *n* a pendicle or small piece of arable ground.
- back-end o’ hairst** *phr* the latter part of the harvest.
- back-owre** *prep* behind; a considerable way back.
- backe** *n* the bat.
- backit-dyke** *n* a stone fence backed up with earth on the inner side.
- bae** *n, v* a bleat, the sound emitted in bleating; to bleat; to cry like a sheep.
- bai** *n* the cry of a calf.
- baillie days** *phr* days during which farmers were bound to labour for their lairds.
- baittle** *adj* denoting that sort of pasture where the grass is short, close and rich; also, fit for pasture.
- balderry** *n* female-handed orchis, a plant, *Orchis latifolia*.
- baldie-worry** *n* an artichoke.
- balk and burrel** *n* a ridge raised very high by the plough and a barren space of nearly the same extent, alternately.
- balk-bred, -braid** *n* the breadth of a balk or ridge of unploughed land.
- balkie** *n* a narrow strip of land separating two farms.
- balloch, belloch** *n* a narrow mountain pass.
- band** *n* (used of a hill) the top or summit; the ridge of a small hill.
- bandwin-rig** *n* a ridge so broad that it can contain a band of reapers, called a *win*.
- bane-fyre** *n* a bonfire.
- banks** *n* precipitous rocks or crags near the sea-shore.
- bar** *n* barley.
- bar awns** *n* the beards of barley.
- bar-ghaist** *n* a ghost all in white, with large saucer eyes, appearing near gates or stiles.
- barescrape** *n* very poor land yielding little return for labour.

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*A Scots Dictionary of Nature*

- barley-bing** *n* a heap of barley.
- barnat** *adj* native, the land of our *barnheid* or nativity, as in “our barnat land”.
- barr** *n* a ridge of a hill; a large hill.
- barried** *adj* thrashed; stiff and sore as after a day’s thrashing.
- bassie** *n* an old horse.
- bassin** *adj* of or belonging to rushes.
- basties, bastish** *adj* coarse; (applied to soil) hard, bound.
- bat** *n* a holm, a river island.
- bathie** *n* a booth or hovel; a summer sheiling.
- battell** *adj* rich for pasture.
- battick** *n* a piece of firm land between two rivulets, or two branches of the same river.
- battock** *n* a tuft of grass, a spot of gravel, or ground of any kind, surrounded by water.
- baud, bawd** *n* a quantity, or bed of whins growing closely together.
- baudminnie, baldminny** *n* a plant with the medicinal virtue of savin; the plant *Gentian*, believed to have properties that can kill the foetus in the womb, hence its name *bawd-money*.
- bauk, bawk** *n, v* a strip of land left unploughed, two or three feet in breadth; to leave small strips of land not turned up in ploughing.
- baukie** *n* the bat.
- baulkie** *n* a narrow strip of land separating two farms.
- bawd** *n* a hare.
- bawsie** *n* a horse or cow having a white strip or patch on the face.
- bay** *n* the sound caused by the notes of birds.
- bayle-fire** *n* a bonfire; any large fire.
- be-east** *adj, adv* eastwards.
- beal** *n* an opening between hills; a narrow pass.
- bear, bere** *n* barley, having four rows of grains.
- bear-feys, -land** *n* land appropriated to raising barley.
- bear-lave, -leave** *n* ground the first year after it has been cropped with bear.
- bear-root, beer-root** *n* the first crop after bear or barley.
- bear-seed** *n* barley; the time of sowing barley or of preparing the ground for it.
- beast** *n* a horse, cow, ox or sheep; a louse; the devil; any animal but man.
- bee-bike** *n* a wild bee’s nest.
- bee-stone** *n* the stone on which a hive rests.

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## Research Output

A Scots Dictionary of Nature (cont.)

Section Six: 'Walking,' *A Scots Dictionary of Nature*, pp 217-218

Six: Walking



**stot** *v* to rebound from the ground; to bounce in walking; quick or sudden motion; a leap or quick motion in dancing; to stumble; to stop.

**stouff** *n, n* to walk lazily and heavily; the act of walking with such a step; the sound of such a step.

**stour** *v* to move quickly from place to place, implying the idea of great activity, and often of restlessness of mind; to move swiftly, making the dust or water fly about.

**stouter** *v* to stumble; to trip in walking.

**straddle** *v* to stroll; to wander about aimlessly.

**stravaig, stravaug** *v* to stroll; to go about idly.

**stravaiger** *n* one who wanders

about idly; a stroller; one who leaves his former religious connection.

**stravaiging** *v* the act or practice of strolling; strolling about, generally in a bad sense.

**stray** *n, adj* lost; not at home; strange.

**stretch** *v* to walk majestically, used in ridicule.

**striffle** *v* to move in a fiddling or shuffling sort of way; often applied to one who wishes to appear of importance.

**string** *v* to move off in a line.

**strodd, strowd** *v* to stride along; to strut; to walk fast without speaking.

**strummel, strumbell** *n* a person so feeble that he cannot walk without stumbling.

A Scots Dictionary of Nature

**strunt** *v* to walk sturdily.

**stumple** *v* to walk with a stiff and hobbling motion.

**stye** *v* to climb.

**sugg** *v* to move heavily, somewhat in a rocking manner.

**swatter** *v* to move quickly in any fluid, generally in an

undulating way; to move quickly in an awkward manner.

**swaver** *v* to walk feebly, as one who is fatigued.

**sweill** *v* to move in a circular way.

**swig** *v* to wag; to move from side to side; to walk with a rocking sort of motion.

## T

**taiglesum** *adj* what detains or retards; a road which is so deep, or so hilly, that one makes little progress, as in "a taiglesum road".

**taik** *n, v* a stroll; a saunter.

**taiver** *v* to wander.

**tiawe, tew** *v* to amble.

**taissle, tassel, tassle, teasele** *n* the fatigue and derangement of dress produced by walking against a boisterous wind.

**taiver** *v* to wander; to rave as mad.

**tak the foot** *phr* to begin to walk as a child.

**tak the gate** *phr* to set off on a journey.

**tarsie-versie** *v* a term applied to walking backwards.

**thud** *v* to rush with a hollow sound; to move with velocity; to beat; to strike; to drive with impetuosity.

**tig** *n* a game among children, in which one strikes another and runs off. He who is touched becomes pursuer in his turn, til he can *tig* or touch another, on whom his office devolves; used of cattle, to run hither and thither, irritated by flies or boys.

**tine** *v* to be lost, to perish in whatever way.

**tipper** *v* to walk on tiptoe, or in an unsteady way; to totter.

**tipperty** *adj, v* unstable; to walk in a flighty, ridiculous manner, as in "to gang tipperty-like"; applied to a young woman who walks very stiffly, precisely, or with a mincing gait.

## Research Output

### 'Sixty-two words for Rainy Weather'

The word poem 'Sixty-two words for Rainy Weather' developed from *A Scots Dictionary of Nature* was commissioned for *The Cairngorms Anthology*, the book that came from the 2019 project *Shared Stories: A Year in the Cairngorms*. Organised and part-funded by the Cairngorms National Park Authority, with additional funding from the Woodland Trust and Creative Scotland, the project set out to encourage people to write creatively about how we and nature thrive together.

Please open '[Thomson\\_7530\\_Placemaking\\_Poem.pdf](#)' on the USB stick now, to read the poem.

wordlist|poem: 'Sixty two words for rainy weather' (extract),  
from *Cairngorm Anthology: Shared Stories, 2019*

### sixty two words for rainy weather

AMANDA THOMSON

|  |  |
|--|--|
| <i>sapless</i>                         | (used of the weather) rainless, dry  |
| <i>lunkie</i>                          | sultry: denoting the oppressive state of the atmosphere before rain or thunder |
| <i>heavy-heartit</i>                   | (used of the atmosphere) lowering, threatening rain                            |
| <i>mare's tails</i>                    | long streaky clouds portending rain  |
| <i>flobby</i>                          | (used of clouds) large and heavy indicating rain                               |
| <i>goutte</i>                          | a large drop of rain   |
| <i>saft</i>                            | used of the weather, damp, drizzly   |
| <i>a stew</i>                          | a rain so thin it resembles a vapour   |
| <i>a drow</i>                          | a cold mist approaching rain   |
| <i>a smirr</i>                         | a fine rain  |
| <i>a smush</i>                         | a light drizzling rain   |
| <i>a dawk</i><br><i>a muggle</i> }     | a drizzling rain   |
| <i>to ripple</i>                       | to drizzle   |
| <i>a skeetlie</i>                      | a drop, a small shower   |
| <i>a smurrack</i>                      | a slight summer shower   |
| <i>calledin-o-the-blade</i>            | a slight shower which cools and refreshes the grass                            |
| <i>a drifting</i><br><i>a hagger</i> } | a small rain   |

## Research Output

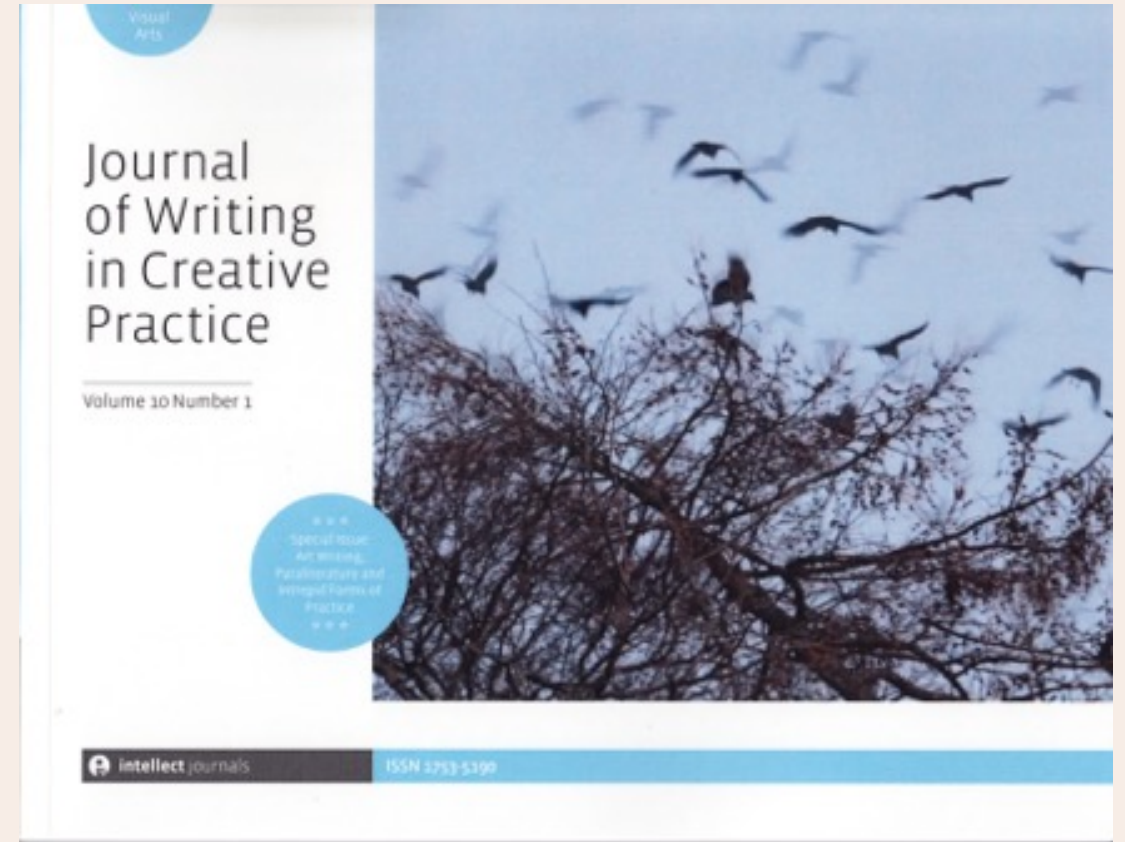
'I Like the Unpath Best'

**'I like the unpath best: art-practice-writing and the creation of complex, generative and complicating forms and contexts,' *Journal of Writing in Creative Practice*, 2017**

Situating myself as a visual artist with a multimodal practice, this article explores the relationship of writing to making, using the relationship of writing to my own practice to explore questions relating to research processes, the volume of information gathered and the insertion of other disciplinary perspectives.

Here, I address the elements of my practice that are based in and on landscape, specifically explorations that begin with the idea that places are multi-layered, ever-changing, embodied and always active. In seeing places as experiential fields of investigation, I argue that creative writing and the essay form can add a more complex dimension as it flows from the landscape itself and research about it, to practice, with writing occasionally becoming the artform itself.

**Please open 'Thomson\_7530\_Placemaking\_Article.pdf' on the USB stick now, to read the article.**



Cover, still of A Thomson, *Bridal o' craws* videowork

## Research Output

'Making a Place'

**'Making a place: art and a multi-modal, multidisciplinary approach', Ruth Pelzer-Montada (ed.), *Print Matters: An anthology of critical writing on prints and printmaking since 1986* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2018).**

My chapter in this anthology is a revised version of a paper first presented at the *Impact8 International Printmaking Conference* (2013) and published in the conference proceedings (2015). In this revised and developed version, I explore how place has been conceptualised by geography and anthropology and discuss the ways in which a contemporary arts practice intersects with the concerns of those subjects. I then move on to address the ways in which practice-based research within a contemporary art context can add further insight to the questions posed of place by such subjects. Conversely, my practice-based research has been enriched by drawing on the methodologies of these other subjects. I draw on my ongoing work on the forests of Morayshire and the native pinewoods of Abernethy in Scotland. My research involved repeated visits to these places and incorporated ethnographic fieldwork, walking with foresters and ecologists, and working as a volunteer on a nature reserve. By incorporating these methods of gathering information, elements of these places hitherto unknown to me were revealed. Repeated visits meant that different aspects of place were revealed at different times, and using ethnographic methods allowed other people's expert knowledge of these places to influence and impact on my work.

**Please open 'Thomson\_7530\_Placemaking\_Chapter.pdf' on the USB stick now, to read the chapter.**



Still from films shown as part of the essay *Still, Life*, Aerial Festival, 2020

## Research Output

### 'Craw Sunday' / *Bridal o' craws*

'Craw Sunday' is a literary essay, which emerged from writings and observations about winter crows, and a video that I made of their dusk behaviour. The essay looks at their place in natural history, their behaviour and their place in the Scots language, folklore and literature, using the essay form to integrate knowledge from a number of subjects including historical sources; field guides, and reference guides (including the Scottish Ornithological Club's Birds of Scotland).

The essay is a companion (though also stand-alone) piece which gives a deeper context to the videowork, and is part of my ongoing explorations of how text might inform and enhance visual imagery and add other layers of interpretation, meaning and perspective.

**Please open 'Thomson\_7530\_Placemaking\_Essay\_1.pdf' on the USB stick now, to read the essay.**

**Please open 'Thomson\_7530\_Placemaking\_Film\_1.pdf' on the USB stick now, to watch the film.**



*Bridal o' craws* (still from video)

## Research Output

### 'Craw Sunday'

#### Excerpt

'Still, there's more to what draws me to these birds. Perhaps it is their very blackness, and their other(ed)-yet-connectedness. Crows have always spoken to, and had a close relationship with, us humans. They speak to our humanity and our connections to nature. When I look at them, I see their intelligence, their co-operation and their power. How they control the air and wind currents above a stand of trees. But I'm also aware of their association with domains more disquieting and unnerving. It is, after all, an *unkindness of ravens; a murder of crows*. The language of crows pulls us into a myriad of different eras, frames of reference, attitudes and realms both everyday and preternatural; to the facts and fictions of them and how they continue to speak, and to crow, to us. A *crow's nest* means a robber's den in old Scots; to *sit like a crow in the mist*, is to sit in the dark. To have a *craw (in one's throat)* means 'to have a strong craving for drink, esp. that induced by a night's debauch.' In the *Edinburgh Encyclopaedia*, they are described as follows: 'For the most part they are sagacious, active, and faithful to one another, living in pairs, and forming a sort of society, in which there appears something like a regular government and concert in the warding off threatened danger.' And though the word rookery now refers to their night-time roosts, in the 18th and 19th centuries, a rookery was also a slang term used for a slum. Thus Thomas Beames wrote in 1852, 'Doubtless there is some analogy between these pauper colonies and the nests of the birds from whom they take their name; the houses for the most part high and narrow, the largest possible number crowded together in a given space'. The anthropologist Claude Lévi-Strauss suggested that the raven is a mediator between life and death. Max Porter's recent and beautiful *Grief is the Thing with Feathers*, brings Crow to a father and two sons bereaving the sudden loss of a mother. Says his Crow, 'I find humans dull except in grief. There are very few in health, disaster, famine, atrocity, splendour or normality that interest me (interest ME!) but motherless children do. Motherless children are pure crow. For a sentimental bird it is ripe, rich and delicious to raid such a nest.'



*Bridal o' crows* (still from video)



## Research Output

'Around some islands,' in Kathleen Jamie (ed.), *Antlers of Water, Writing on the Nature and Environment of Scotland*, (Edinburgh: Canongate, 2020)

'**Around some islands**' is an essay commissioned for the anthology, *Antlers of Water*, edited by the poet and writer Kathleen Jamie. Jamie commissioned writing that 'concerns our relationship with the more-than-human world. It announces a "new Scottish nature writing".'

This literary essay is based on a trip taken to Mingulay - an uninhabited island off of the west coast of Scotland - the slow traversal to get there, birdlife and reflections on climate change and precarity, referencing a Scottish Natural Heritage report on climate change, rising sea levels and the Western Isles, and reflections on time passing. As Jamie writes in the introduction to the collection, 'We have long shown kind attention to our land and its non-human creatures; we have sung and painted and photographed our extraordinarily beautiful country. But what is different about the twenty-first century, what makes our nature writing 'new,' is our increasing awareness of unfolding ecological crisis.'

**Please open '[Thomson\\_7530\\_Placemaking\\_Essay\\_2.pdf](#)' on the USB stick now, to read the essay.**



Around some islands, shearwater. (unused image)

## Research Output

### 'Still, Life' / Ox-e'en

'Still, Life' was commissioned by *The Willowherb Review*, a journal dedicated to diversity in nature writing, for the Aerial Festival, a festival of contemporary music, literature & performance which is also a platform for new work inspired in some way by the natural, cultural or social history of Cumbria. I was invited to respond to the tumultuous events of 2020, inspired in part by Wordsworth's epic poem *The Prelude* and his 250<sup>th</sup> anniversary celebrations. 2020 has been a year of tumultuous events and deep reflection. Wordsworth too lived through seismic events; he saw the 1790s as a time of 'dereliction and despair,' borne out of disillusionment at the course of the French Revolution and wrote about it extensively in *The Prelude*. Can the present also be seen as an age of despair? Wordsworth declares that if he retains a faith in humanity it is because of the benevolence of Nature.

'Still, Life' is a literary essay with film that responds to this call. Rooted in place, in the Highlands of Scotland, it draws on writers such as Rebecca Solnit, Sadiya Hartman, the artist Ed Burtynsky, in a reflection of the sublime in the 21<sup>st</sup> century and time spent in the Scottish highlands during Covid-19. In this essay, I reflect on wildlife and plantlife and perceptions of time, present and past (incorporating words from *A Scots Dictionary of Nature*), the intersections and implications of the Anthropocene, Sadiya Hartman's reflections on the 'afterlife of slavery,' and ideas of remoteness, slowness and containment.

AERIAL

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**Amanda Thomson** responds to the events of 2020, inspired in part by Wordsworth's epic poem *The Prelude*. Commissioned by **The Willowherb Review** and **Aerial**.

In *Still, Life*, Amanda Thomson writes on being present, and contained, relatively speaking, in a rural, Highland location during lockdown. Accompanied by short filmic extracts she writes of an awareness of the slow unfolding of the year with the coming of spring and the attendant species of flowers and birds; what it means to be remote, and in a 'rural idyll' at this point in time when our connectivity to the world and what's going on has never been so immediate and wide-ranging, considering ideas of precarity and what the sublime might mean in this early part of the 21st century and in these current times.

## Research Output

### 'Still, Life' / Ox-e'en (cont.)

Ox-e'en is a videowork and piece of flash non-fiction which was selected for publication in the *Willowherb Review*, an online literary magazine.

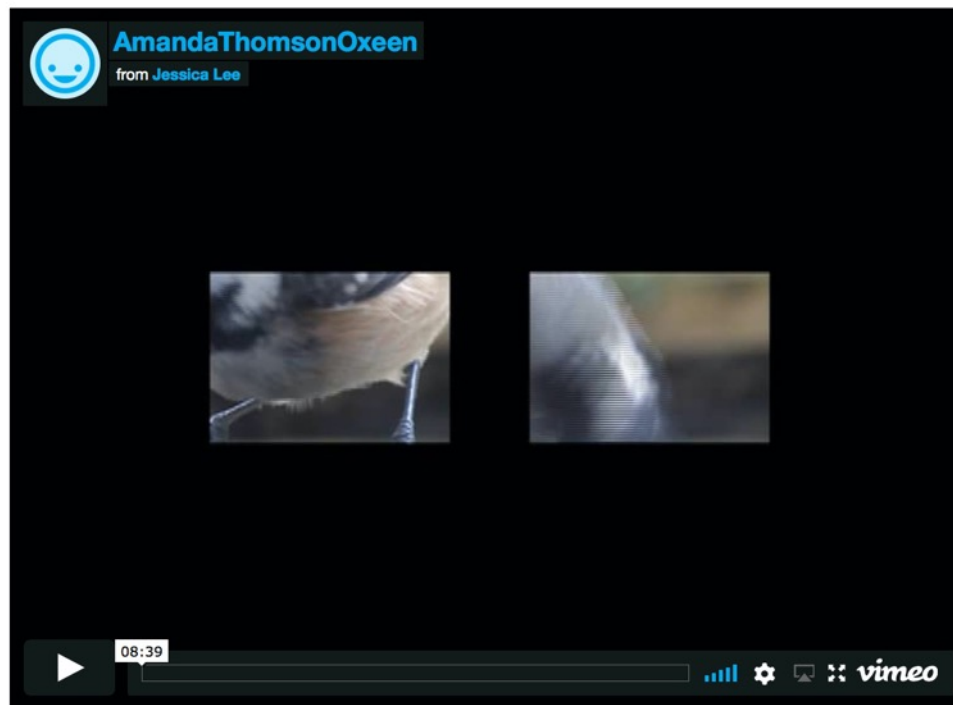
In concert with the essay (here, below the video), **Ox-e'en** demonstrates the intersections between writing and visual imagery, and how these may work in concert to create multi-layered perspectives that bely the seeming simplicity of singular events/ recordings.

Please read 'Still, Life' and watch Ox-e'en here:

<https://www.thewillowherbreview.com/oxeen-amanda-thomson>

*Ox-e'en*.channel videowork and flash non-fiction;  
published in the Willowherb Review I

ox-e'en / Amanda Thomson



For several summers, I've stayed in a house in the middle of Abernethy Forest, in the Highlands of Scotland. Every morning I'd sit at a table and look out at the trees—birches before the swathes of Scots pines. Coal tits, blue tits, chaffinches and occasional siskins would fly in from the trees and a blackthorn hedge to feed from the niger seeds that were in a little metal cup on the window sill. So small and fleeting in the bigger landscape that was behind them, it took me ages to think to film them, to frame them in a way that that would put them front and centre, with their hurried breathing, the droplets of water on their breasts, their rapid wingbeats and incessant movements. These tiny birds. Coal tits weigh on average 8–10 grams, and later, when I walk with a bird ringer and see how he holds these birds in his hand, I see how delicate they are, how easily they could be broken.

## Research Output

Upcasting



Abernethy (September) Etching plate and print

## Research Output

*Upcasting* is a year long investigation of place, focused on the island air of Mull and the Scots pinewoods of Abernethy, and considers the action of time.

The work consists of 24 etching plates, and etchings made from the plates. This research explores the ways in which we gather, capture and index essences of 'place.' In the resulting two sets of plates we encounter both generalities and specificities that are related to the nature of each place e.g. the unremitting effect of salt sea air in the Mull set and the effects of growth in the pinewood over the year (including leaves, pine needles and bracken) that affect the shapes of the rust in the Abernethy set. This research explores the cusp of when something – a natural form – becomes a work of art: there's the raw form of weather to plate, and a process thereafter that results in a print. Here, the hand of the artist is in concert (or perhaps at odds) with the agency of the weather. The plates variously reveal the interactions of humidity, salt-sea air, wind and rain (and, in Abernethy, sometimes pine needles, birch leaves and pine pollen) with the steel. The plates from Mull are uniformly coated in a thick orange rust, in each of the months, compared to the varying nature of the pinewood plates e.g. the May plate contained evidence of pollen, and its interaction with the metal stained the plate blue.

The rust patterns that form give abstract impressions of time passing, and this residue forms the 'etch' that is the basis for the prints made. Yet the very process of making the prints removes the direct connection of air and water to plate and destroys the delicate film of rust that has been created.



Detail, *Upcasting*, 2015

## Research Output

### Upcasting (cont.)

While our relationship to landscape has historically been in some way to 'capture' it, here, the agency of landscape begins to play a part in the making of the work. The uncertainty of the stability of what is formed on the plates begins to interplay with the choices that artist can, and wants to make: the process of etching itself. The very nature of weather and landscape impacts on the marks made on the plate, which may or may not be surface, ephemeral, and easily vanquished when the process of printmaking and, subsequently, their translation into print.



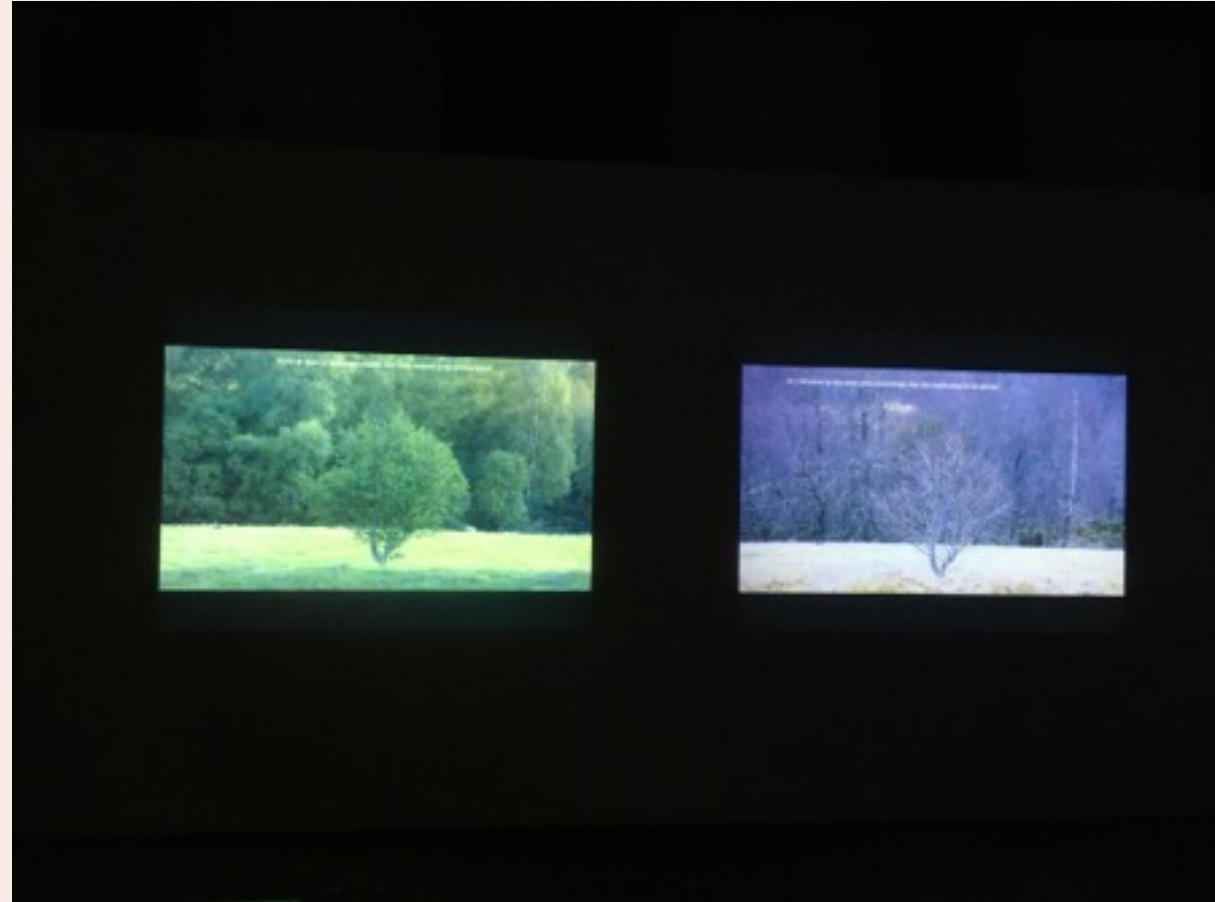
*Upcasting*, An Tobar Arts Centre,  
Tobermory, Mull, 2015

## Research Output

### *Aar*

*Aar* (a Scots word for alder tree, as found in the 19<sup>th</sup> Century Jamieson's Dictionary of the Scots Language, with the title *aar* chosen for its homophonic relationship to 'are' ) is a videowork of an alder tree, filmed over an 18-month period, in segments of around 30 seconds. These have been edited down to create a work of around 19 minutes in length, shown on a continuous loop. The videowork is shown as dual screen, and takes us, in segments, over a year in the life of the tree, with each video running at roughly six months apart. The work is based in Abernethy forest, which has been described as the largest area of remaining remnant pines in Scotland. The tree is situated on the banks of a burn which is hidden in this view. Behind are a mixture of juniper, birch and Scots Pine trees. The work incorporates text extracts taken from an ongoing, shared, household diary of recorded sightings of flora, fauna and birdlife.

*Aar* is one aspect of an ongoing phenological exploration and reflection of a place and ongoing change, questions of attentiveness and care, and human and more-than-human timescales.



## Research Output



Stills from *Aar*, videowork, 2020



## Research Output



Please open 'Thomson\_7530\_Placemaking\_Film\_2.mp4' on the USB stick now, to watch the film.

Stills from *Aar*, videowork, 2020

## Context

This research sits within the field of landscape art, where landscape is not something to be represented but to be experienced. As such, my research has resonance with traditions of land art and environmental art. Relevant artists include:

- **Olafur Eliasson.** His work which addresses climate change in poetic ways, sometimes in temporal and experiential works.
- **Tacita Dean.** Her multi-form work, research and writing responds to different aspects of landscape, both physical and affective.
- **Robert Smithson's** ideas of site and non-site
- **Katie Paterson.** Particularly her *Future Library*, a 100-year project where Paterson has planted a forest in Norway, which will eventually supply paper for a special anthology of books to be printed in 100 years time. Between 2014 and then, one writer every year will contribute a text, with the writings held in trust, unread and unpublished, until the year 2114.
- **Ilana Halperin's** broad practice on landscape, deep time and geology.
- Artists such as **Richard Long**, who uses walking to explore his ideas.
- **Hamish Fulton**, whose work is also rooted in spending time and making in landscape.

More specifically, my work relates to the [Cape Farewell Sea Change](#) project, A four-year Programme of Research and Making Across Scotland's Western and Northern Isles 2010 – 2014, which brought artists together with others in a 'cultural response to climate change.' In this project, 'artists and scientist worked collaboratively and independently to consider the relationships between people, place and resources in the context of climate change.'

*Sea Change* also aimed 'to extend the languages, metaphors and methodologies of participating artists, enabling them to find new and affective forms for the stories and experiences of island communities.' *Sea Change* was part of Creative Futures, a Creative Scotland talent development programme which aims to promote the professional development, capabilities, connectivity and ambitions of Scotland's creative practitioners and organisations. My chapter, 'Around Some Islands,' published in the anthology *Antlers of Water* (August 2020), is concerned with my time on this project and subsequent reflections and investigations. Many of the ideas propagated here are incorporated into my work about forest environments.

## Context

My role as a respondent in GSA's Reading Landscape research group's 2019 Symposium, 'Staying With the Trouble: Critical and creative approaches to the climate and biodiversity crises,' together with other artists, an art historian, musician and dramaturg also connects these the different facets of my thinking and practice.

As videoworks, both *Ox-e'en* and *Aar* relate to questions pertaining to attentiveness and noticing, temporality, and 'slow art'; work that develops after spending time in a place and observing. I also follow the walking artists' network; a cross-disciplinary constellation of artists and writers whose practices intersect at the junction of walking.

While psychogeographies have more often than not been situated in the urban, I implicitly explore the implications of walking and wandering in a rural context. Ideas related to movement and wandering as well as observation, stillness, watching and slow unfolding, and what the anthropologist Tim Ingold has termed an 'education of attention' are at the heart of research and investigation. Arden Reed's explorations of what he has also termed 'slow art' (2019) roots itself in spending time with art, however in my work ideas of slowness relate to how the work is made or *becomes*; slow looking, spending time in place and an attention to what is there, change, difference and emergence.

Here, even before it is the art object, the subject matter itself – the landscape, the view, the tiny birds before me – is subject to repeated attention and observation. The work itself, as a temporally experienced video on loop, 'Slow art is not a thing but an experience, an ongoing conversation between artwork and spectator' (Reed, p36). This slowness relates to how the work unfolds as well as how the viewer/ reader might experience the work. *Aar* was created over the course of one and a half years – the text observations are still ongoing. *Upcasting* was created over the course of a year. Such works, together with my broader body of work that includes field observation, essay, wordplay and language creates a slow unfolding and examination of place and how we come to experience it.

Videoworks such as *Aar*, and *Bridal*, are on loops so viewers can spend as much time as they like with them. In essays such as 'Still, Life,' the video insertions between text allow for a pause, a slowing down, as well as an insertion of the sounds of place, as one reads.

## Context

A further context for this research are recent geographical and anthropological studies that conceptualise the world as unfinished, ongoing, embodied and enacted (Ingold, 2000, 2010, 2011; Stewart, 2007, 2011; and Shotter, 2005). Exploring notions of landscape, ideas of lived landscapes and broader anthropological concerns and writing regarding movement, inhabiting, living and being-in-the world, this body of work corresponds with Ingold's quest for an 'approach to creativity and perception capable of bringing together the movements of making, observing and describing' (*Redrawing Anthropology*, 2011).

Lorimer (2008), calls for geography to find 'a language sufficient to do fullest justice to the intensities, to the properties and to the rich lore of place'; and has looked to the possibilities of art, poetry and experimental writing. Discussions around these themes were the subject of a special issue of *The Geographical Review* (103 (2), April 2013) with the theme 'Creative Geographies,' to which I contributed an article, 'Making a Place: Art, writing and a more-than-textual approach.'

The literary essays which form a part of the body of work sit at the cusp of 'new nature writing' and challenge its boundaries by often including a visual element. J Moran's article 'A Cultural History of the New Nature Writing', (*Literature & History*, 23:1, 2014 pp. 49–63) presents an overview and discussion of 'new nature' writers in the context of the discipline of literature, acknowledging that it is not a single movement as such, but rather there are shared concerns including 'our everyday connections with the non-human natural world.' Moran includes the Scottish writers Kathleen Jamie and Nan Shepherd, who are important touchstones for my research and thinking.

His conclusion that 'all these writers have concluded that using the human tools of language and meaning-making to relate to the natural world increases our attentiveness to it and potential for caring for it' chimes with Ingold, Lorimer and others above, and with the intent of *A Scots Dictionary of Nature*.

In her introduction to her book 'Ecology and Modern Scottish Literature (Edinburgh University Press, 2008), Louisa Gairn seeks to make connections between historical and contemporary Scottish Literature and ecological thinking, arguing that 'writing about the natural world is a vital component of a diverse Scottish literature.' She notes 'Scottish writers in particular have been sensitive to the perceived erosion of links between language, traditional culture and the natural world; the need to re-enact gestures of reconnection and reconciliation.' *A Scots Dictionary of Nature*, through its unique excavation and curation of these 19th century words, contributes to this tradition.

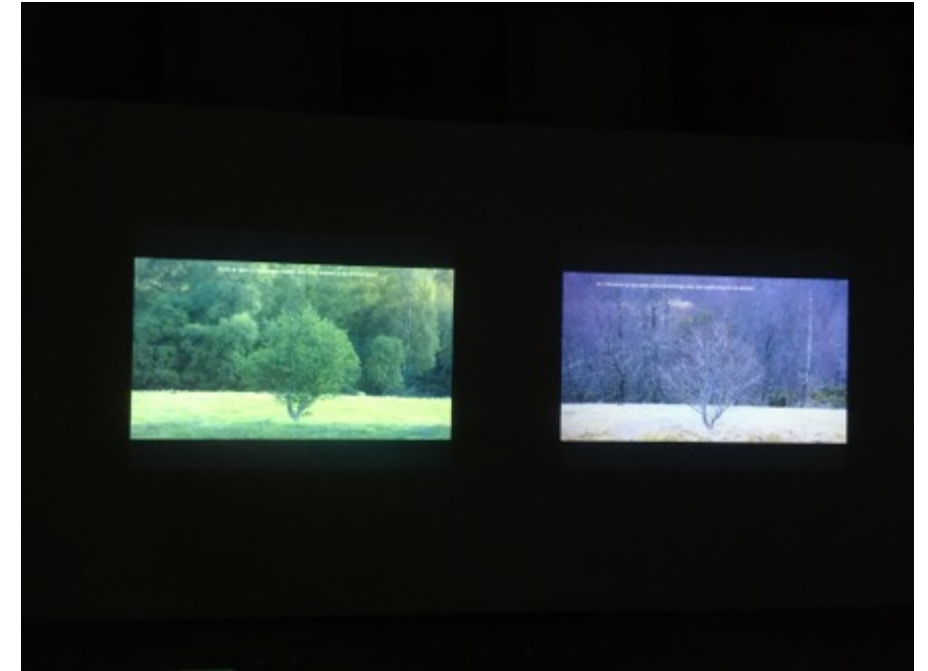
While, this body of work relates to a way of working which is in part site-specific, its evolution also leads to ideas of situational-specificity, and situational responsiveness, taking account of the site itself and the possibilities it holds, and may have held in the past e.g. the essay 'Craw Sunday' relates to the video, *Bridal*, which draws in: a natural history of crows, their numbers, migration patterns and geographical distribution; as well as crows in literature, in Scottish language and in folklore; personal experience of observing them; and, through the negative connotations of Blackness and evil often associated with them, alludes to racism and discrimination, which is another strand in my writing.

# Methods

This research incorporates a variety of different methods, including variations and adaptations of:

- Content analysis
- Fieldwork (including Walking and Site-writing)
- Upcasting
- Observational Video

The bulk of this research was undertaken in Abernethy Forest, in the Highlands of Scotland, a place I have researched since 2005.



*Aar, 2020*

# Methods

## Content Analysis

The method of enquiry undertaken for **A Scots Dictionary of Nature** was an adaptation of content analysis, for creative ends. Content Analysis is a method used in Social Sciences, ordinarily to determine the presence and frequency of certain words or themes. Here it was used to gather words that relate to aspects of Scots Language. Three sources were used: Dr John Jamieson's *A Dictionary of The Scottish Language* (1846); *Supplement to Jamieson's Scottish Dictionary*, abridged by John Johnstone (1887) and Warrack's *The Scots Dialect Dictionary* (1911). In *Scotland in Definition, A history of Scottish Dictionaries*, Iseabail Macleod and J. Derrick McClure (eds.) explore the history of lexicography in relation to the Scots language, noting how 'dictionaries have a key part to play in the maintenance and development of the living languages which we speak.' John Jamieson's *Etymological Dictionary of the the Scottish Language* has been described as 'landmark' and 'by far the most important work of Scots lexicography before the 20<sup>th</sup> Century', and it was the condensed version of this dictionary that constituted my core text. Donaldson's *Supplement to Jamieson's Scottish Dictionary* (1887), adding to Jamieson's work, was a second source. Alexander Warrack's *Scots Dialect Dictionary* (Later renamed *Chambers Scots Dictionary*), from 1911, was the third source.

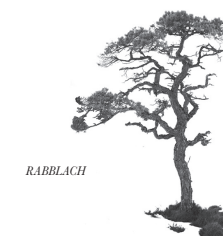
While content analysis is a recognised method within social sciences, here, I build on traditions of appropriation art by using it to identify 'found words.' Each dictionary was systematically read and words that related to the natural world were gathered and then compiled into different thematic areas. The categories were chosen in relation to embodied responses to place i.e. words relating to land, wood, weather, birds, water, and walking. As I state in the book's introduction: 'There's a subjectivity, too, and some words placed in one section might equally sit in another, or several, and this speaks to the interrelatedness of our world.'

By systematically searching the dictionaries for words relating to land, wood, weather, birds, water and walking, then listing them under these headings, I utilised the quantitative premise of content analysis but for qualitative, and poetic ends, creating lists of words that reveal the poetics inherent in the language of description of place; shifting perceptions and ways of being in the land.

*Tree: Wood*

## Q, R

- quaking-ash, quaukin-ash** *n* the aspen.
- quibow** *n* a branch of a tree
- raaca** *n* driftwood.
- rabblach** *n* a stunted tree.
- rack** *n* a piece of wood used for the purpose of feeding a mill.
- raglat plane** *n* a species of plane used by carpenters, in making a groove for shelves of drawers etc.
- rammel** *n* brushwood; small branches.
- rantle, rannle, rantle-tree** *n* a wooden or iron bar across a chimney from which a chain and pot hook were suspended.
- ran, rantree, rantle-tree, raun, raun-tree, roan-tree** *n* the mountain ash, the rowan tree.
- rap and stow** *phr* a phrase meaning root and branch.
- raultree, raeltree** *n* a long piece of strong wood placed across byres to put the end of cow-stakes in.
- rauntree, rawn-tree** *n* the mountain-ash.
- red sauch** *n* a species of willow.
- red-wood** *n* the name given to the reddish or dark coloured and more incorruptible wood found at the heart of trees.
- reserve** *n* a tree reserved in a hag, or the cutting of an allotted portion



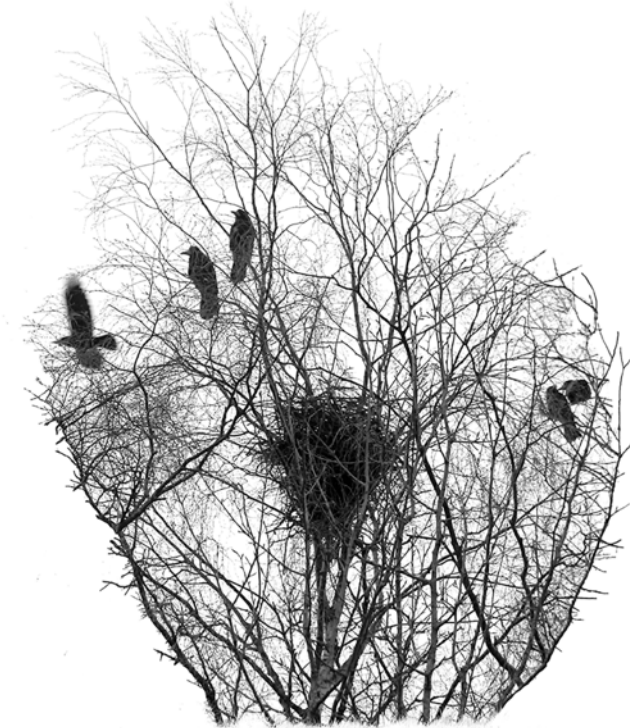
107

# Methods (cont.)

## Content Analysis (contd.)

The dissociation (liberation) of words from their alphabetical position in a dictionary and their re-framing and re-grouping with other 'natural' words into the categories of land, wood, weather, birds, water and walking, creates differing narratives and understandings of landscape, and indeed, descriptions of landscape, and ways of looking at and being within.

The section on walking was, in part, a reframing of ideas relating to walking, and indeed, 'walking methodologies' (e.g. Dee Heddon's *Walking, Writing and Performance*, 2009; and her ongoing Walking Library project; Ingold and J. Vergunst, eds, *Ways of walking: ethnography and practice on foot* 2008).



# Methods

## Content Analysis (contd.)

Excerpt from the introduction to  
*A Scots Dictionary of Nature*

I'm not a lexicographer, a linguist, or a historian of the Scottish language, but as an artist I am interested in words and language and how we might describe our world. In mining these dictionaries, I've found words that are rarely heard, no longer in use or perhaps largely forgotten. These "found" words evidence a confluence of local and social histories, allude to changing ways of life and shifting connections, and point to fascinating relationships with nature and the land. Some show how land and nature permeate other aspects of our lives. The word *flocht* relates to birds and means *on the wing*, but then there's *flochter*, which means *to give free scope to joyful feelings*. Others give us immediate access to a language and a way of being in the world, being on and in the land, which may or may not be the same as now. While we see the same weather phenomena today, more or less, as when the Jamieson dictionary was published – over a century and a half ago – the impact and significance of particular kinds of weather is probably, for most of us, not the same. Naming denotes importance and significance, and the ability to notice *angry teeth*<sup>1</sup>, to recognise *Banff-baillies*<sup>2</sup>, or to observe that the day is *lunkie*<sup>3</sup>, has very different implications for car drivers or city-dwellers than for someone out in a small fishing boat or for a farmer assessing whether the barley should be harvested.

A collection such as this will always be partial. Jamieson's original work listed words from Older Scots (gleaned from earlier sources) as

<sup>1</sup> the fragment of a rainbow appearing on the horizon, and when seen on the north or east indicating bad weather

<sup>2</sup> white, snowy-looking clouds on the horizon, betokening foul weather

<sup>3</sup> denoting the oppressive state of the atmosphere before rain or thunder

well as (his) contemporary Scots. Language, like our world, is responsive and in constant movement. There's a subjectivity, too, and some words placed in one section might equally sit in another, or several, and this speaks to the interrelatedness of our world. Some words can mean different things, sometimes dependent on locality. The word *flichter*, for example, means *a flake of snow* but it can also mean *a great number of small objects flying in the air, as a flichter of birds, a flichter of motes, etc.* Then the verb can also mean *to run with outspread arms, as children, to those they are much attached*. I am sure there are some relevant words in these dictionaries that I've missed, and I know also that there are words I've come across in other books that are not in these dictionaries and I've not included. "A flinchin' Friday," warned Miss Annie, who had a farmer's knowledge of the weather signs. "There'll be a storm on the heels of this," Nan Shepherd writes in *The Weatherhouse*.

There's a beautiful poetry, but also a prosaic unsentimentality in some of the old Scots words that we have lost: *fir gowns*, *fir trousers* and *cauld-bark*, as well as *timmer breeks* are all words for coffin, and, together with words for the grave like *doon-lie*, *lang-hame* and *cauld-yird*, speak of a close connection to the earth, and the materials of the earth we use. There's a lovely drift, sometimes, between workaday descriptions and spillages into other, more preternatural realms. For example, the bird, the swallow: *In Teviotdale, this harmless bird is reckoned uncannie, as being supposed to have a "drap o' the de'il's bluid"; in other places, it is held a lucky bird and its nest is carefully protected; and the uncanniness is attributed, for the same potent reason, to the beautiful yorlin (the yellowhammer). I wonder if there are still any hellie-man's-rigs about, areas of land dedicated to the devil, or where we might see bar-ghaists, these ghosts, all in white, with large saucer eyes, appearing near gates or stiles.*

Some words evoke very specific phenomena, but also lovely connections. *Summer-couts* are *the gnats which dance in clusters on a summer evening, or the exhalations seen to ascend from the ground in a warm day. A startle-o'-stovie* also means *the undulating exhalations seen rising from the ground in very hot weather, and then there's the verb, to startle, which means to run wildly about, as cows do in hot weather, and the word stove, which means a vapour, or a ground mist.*



# Methods

## Fieldwork

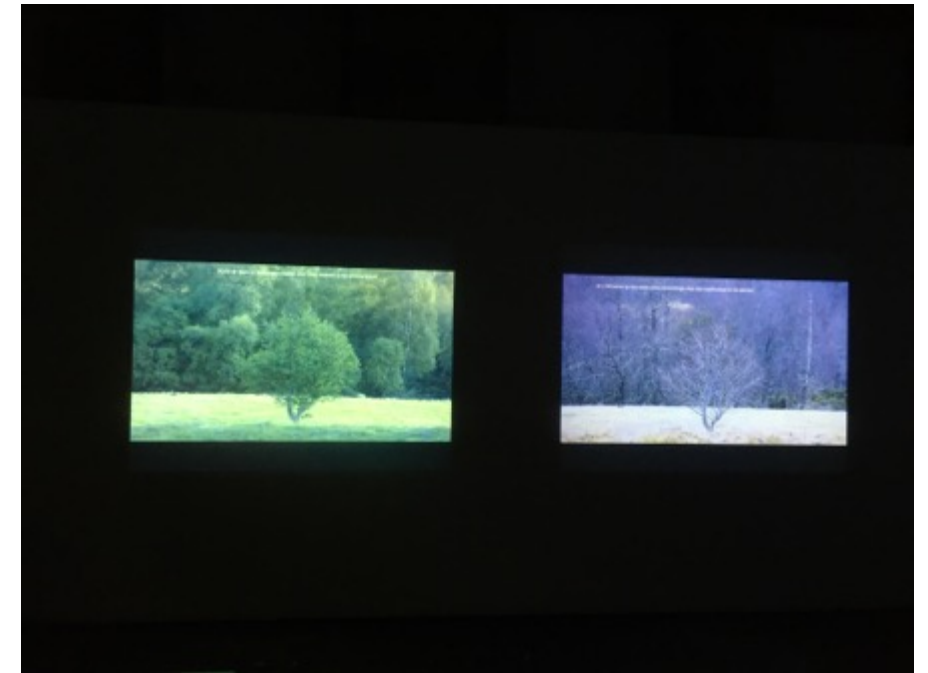
Here, fieldwork is expanded to include Amanda Coffey's notion of an interpersonal field, which she terms 'the ethnographic self' (1999). It incorporates the time before and after fieldwork; in my case from site-specific activity to time in the studio and at the writing desk. Coffey's concept accounts for the interface between our fieldwork, knowledge and interests. Similarly, Coleman and Collins' reconfigure the field as the place that 'in a world of interconnections, we never leave,' and thus, 'the site and its boundaries may actually be determined *post hoc* through processes of analysis and writing' (2006, pp.5-6). The field then expands to the studio, printshop and notebook, which work as interstices between artist and place; sites where things get worked out and brought into focus. Here information is distilled, connections are made and the testing of forms and content takes place.

- Walking

John Shotter's position that knowledge is dynamic and responsive to a world in constant movement (2005), and ideas of 'ambulatory knowing' (Ingold 2000, 2010) and 'ambulatory encounters' (Bender 2001) has been helpful in identifying how places come to be known. Movement, walking and ways of coming to know are multisensorial and quiet realisations happen over time. The environments we walk through and the atmospheres and circumstances in which we walk, who we walk with, the weather, the light and a host of other material and ephemeral aspects impact on the nature of our experiences and what we remember. Ingold notes how the walking subject passes through and is affected by the air, pointing out that as walking 'is a process of thinking and knowing,' this knowledge also comes through 'paths of movement in the weather-world' (2010, p.121).

- Site Writing

Site- and situational responsivity are at the core of the research. The practice of site-writing and observation provides a method of situated attentiveness which incorporates repeated visits to particular geographical locations. Site-writing takes the form of phenological note taking e.g. in relation to the videowork *Aar*, ongoing journal entries and observations.



*Aar*, 2020

## Methods

### Upcasting

**Upcasting** is a year long investigation of place, focused on the island air of Mull and the Scots pinewoods of Abernethy. In fact, **upcasting** is more of a place-by-proxy investigation, as I posted a steel etching plate each month to a collaborator who placed them in a specific spot in each of the areas on the first of each month over 2014. Each plate was left for the month, and rain and moisture, instead of the usual nitric acid, served to etch the plate, forming a kind of record of weather and place over a year.

Again, slowness, chance, the interactions of materials, the artist's hand and the world are integral parts of this investigation.



Detail, *Upcasting*, 2015

# Methods

## Observational Video

**Ox e-en** consists of a split-screen videowork, made using a fixed camera placed in close proximity to a bird feeding bowl. The depth of field is shallow and the work is framed so that the birds are centre of the frame. The work is dual screen to get a sense of the busyness and movement of the birds while feeding, as well as speed and partiality. This observational video approach provides a detailed visual description of the feeding behaviour of these elusive birds.



*Ox e-en*, screenshot

# Methods

## Observational Video (contd.)

**Aar**, a split screen video work, is an example of slow looking and observation, rooted in a single place and a single outlook; with concomitant observation and recording.

For over a year and a half, I filmed an alder by the burn outside my window, sometimes two or three times a day, occasionally once a week, sometimes just once or twice a month. The resulting work reveals the slow and shifting changes of season, light, and time passing. *Aar* (a Scots word for alder) also includes notes from a shared, household diary that recording sightings – often the first flowers or migrant birds of the year: cuckoos, house-martins, geese; spring primroses, summer germander speedwell, late summer creeping ladies tresses. These relate to what is noticed when there, and in the course of the everyday. The diary also records the fleetingness and luck of seeing of residents such as eagles, crossbills, and hares, or a flock of redpolls scared up by a sparrowhawk

The work evokes the changing seasons, in terms of light and weather, as well as the migratory patterns of birds and the seasonality of plants and flowers.

The way the title of the work is pronounced phonetically evokes the sense of 'are' and being.



# Methods



*Aar*, detail

# Contribution to the field

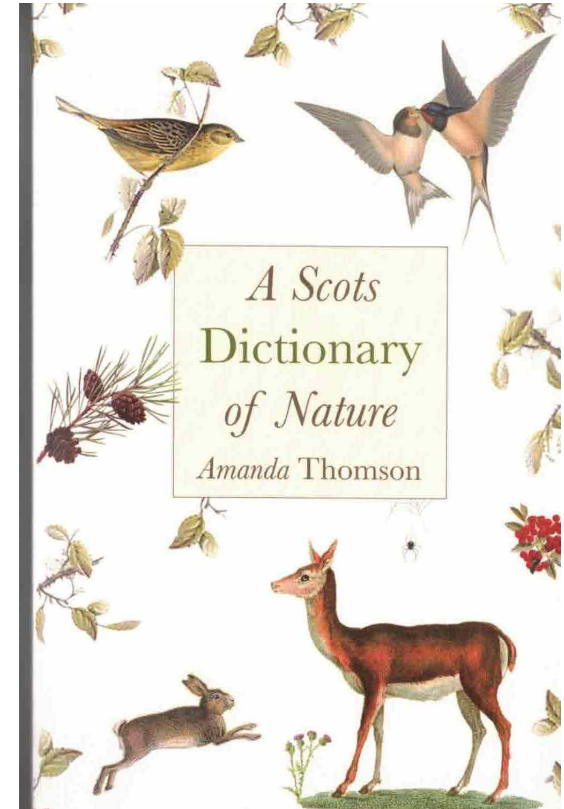
This research takes the form of visual art and new nature writing and contributes to the field of landscape art. It draws on the fields of anthropology, ethnography, geography and Scottish language and literature, using and adapting methods from these fields to explore, test out and develop appropriate forms of language to represent the particularities of place. In the case of Abernethy Forest, the subject of this body of work, the Scots language provides access the specifics of the landscape (and a means to describe those) and becomes a jumping off point for the identification of suitable visual languages.

My research proposes the use of transdisciplinary methods to iteratively test and develop ways of visualising, writing about and contextualising the landscapes of Scotland in ways that attend to its complexities. It presents new understandings of the Scottish Highlands – and its flora and fauna – that have emerged through slow creative processes of observing and recording, which are transferrable to other environments and locations. This research also demonstrates the expanded possibilities of representing place through the interplay of textual and visual forms e.g. the text insertions in *Aar*, which come from a kept diary of observations, reveal what is happening in place, but off and around camera, showing how a multi-faceted approach to place can effect more rounded and nuanced representations of place.



# Dissemination

- *A Scots Dictionary of Nature* (Glasgow: Saraband, 2018); paperback, March 2019
- 'I Like the Unpath Best: Art-practice-writing and the creation of complex, generative and complicating forms and contexts,' Special Issue: 'Art Writing, Paraliterature and Intrepid Forms of Practice,' *Journal of Writing in Creative Practice* 10 (1), 2017, pp. 77-94
- 'Making a Place: Art and a multi-modal, multidisciplinary approach', Ruth Pelzer-Montada (ed.), *Print Matters: An anthology of critical writing on prints and printmaking since 1986* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2018).
- **Essay:** 'Prelude 2020: Still, life,' Aerial Festival (published online: <https://aerialfestival.com/amanda-thomson-2/>)
- **Essay:** 'Around Some Islands,' in Kathleen Jamie (ed.), *Antlers of Water, Writing on the Nature and Environment of Scotland*, (Edinburgh: Canongate, 2020)
- **Essay:** 'Craw Sunday,' *Gutter 21 Literary Magazine*, March 2020
- **Videowork and essay:** 'Ox-e'en', *Willowherb Review*, 1, 2020 (published online: <https://www.thewillowherbreview.com/oxeen-amanda-Thomson>)
- **Wordlist | Poem:** 'Sixty two Words for Rainy Weather,' In *Cairngorm Anthology: Shared Stories* (Cairngorm National Park Authority, 2019)
- **Upcasting**, in *Four Suns*, group show, An Tobar, Mull, 30<sup>th</sup> October 2015 – 16<sup>th</sup> January 2016



# Dissemination

## Conferences, Talks and Workshops

- *Conference Paper: I Like the Unpath Best: Art-Practice-Writing and the Creation of Complex, Generative, and Complicating Forms and Contexts.* College Arts Association Annual Conference, 15 - 18 February 2017, New York, N.Y, USA. This paper formed part of a co-convened panel with Elizabeth Reeder (University of Glasgow), Laura Edbrook (GSA) and Susannah Thompson (GSA) at the above conference. The paper formed the basis for the journal article of the same title.
- *Staying with the Trouble: Critical and Creative Approaches to Biodiversity and Climate Crises.* Landscape Research Group. Invited discussant, Friends House, Euston Road, London, 6<sup>th</sup> December 2019. Podcasts of Events available here <https://landscaperesearch.org/landscape-symposium-2019-podcasts/>
  - “Recognising there are contested understandings of ‘landscape,’ we believe arts and creative practice has core value to research, asking key questions, and challenging received wisdom and current thinking to develop new visions for just and sustainable relationships between people and landscapes.” Landscape Research Group
- *Making and doing: new approaches to the archives of hands and feet.* Invited speaker, Dept. of History, University of Glasgow Post-graduate seminar, 1<sup>st</sup> November 2019, University of Glasgow
- *Speaker, Scots Syntax Atlas Datahack – mapping language use in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century.* Workshop, Department of Linguistics, University of Glasgow, 10<sup>th</sup> -11<sup>th</sup> June 2019.
- *University of Glasgow Creative Writing*
  - Contributor to PGR Practice as Research course
  - Contributor to PGR Art of Essaying course (run with GSA Art Writing MLitt)
- *University of Edinburgh, Institute of Geography and the Lived Environment Public lecture February 2020*
- *University of Newcastle, speaker, Lost Voices festival, June 2020 (postponed due to Covid-19)*





# Dissemination

## Exhibiting Artworks

**Upcasting**, in *Four Suns*, group show, An Tobar, Mull, 30<sup>th</sup> October 2015 – 16<sup>th</sup> January 2016

**Ox e-en** (spoken word version), Launch of the *Journal for Writing in Creative Practice*, 17: 1: Art Writing, Paraliterature and Intrepid Forms of Practice, Centre for Contemporary Arts, Glasgow 22<sup>nd</sup> November 2018.

**Ox-e-en**, [The Willowherb Review](#)

**Aar** [Practicing Landscape: Land, Histories and Transformation](#), The Lighthouse, Glasgow, Scotland, 25th January to 22nd March 2020

**Ox-e'en, Aar, Bridal** Three videoworks shown as part of *Úna Tradigital Festival*, <https://unafest.com/una-fest-2020/>

**Still, Life**, [Aerial Festival](#)

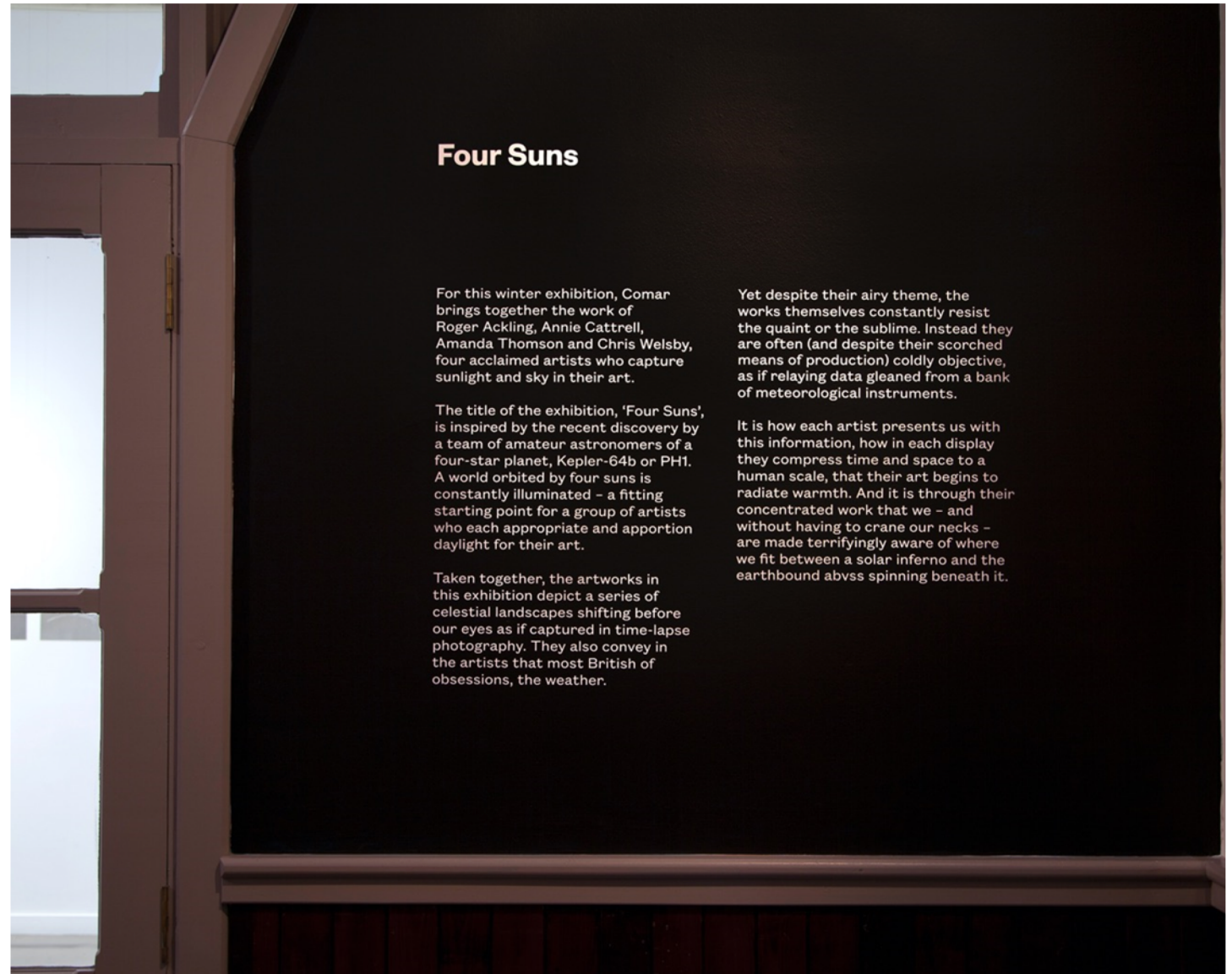
**Bridal o' Craws**, in [Sharing a View: Contemporary Art from Glasgow](#), Luxun Academy of Fine Arts, Shenyang, Liaoning, China, 23rd October - 7 November 2020 & touring



*Four Suns*, group show, An Tobar, 30<sup>th</sup> Oct 2015 – 16<sup>th</sup> Jan 2016

# Dissemination

Four Suns, An Tobar, Tobermory, Mull  
5th November – 16th January 2016  
Introduction to exhibition



# Evidence

## A Scots Dictionary of Nature

### BOOK FESTIVALS (in conversation, and/ or illustrated talks)

- Wigtown Book Festival, Wigtown, 27<sup>th</sup> September 2018
- Aye Write, Glasgow's Book Festival, Mitchell Library, Glasgow, 24<sup>th</sup> March 2019
- Edinburgh International Book Festival, Words Carried on Waves, Amanda Thomson and David Gange, 16<sup>th</sup> August 2019
- Tidelines Book Festival, Irvine, 29<sup>th</sup> September, 2019
- Nairn Book and Arts Festival, Nairn Community and Arts Centre, Nairn, 13<sup>th</sup> September 2019

### OTHER PUBLIC TALKS/ EVENTS

- *A Scots Dictionary of Nature*: Launch, Reading and Discussion, Grantown Museum, Grantown-on-Spey, 11<sup>th</sup> October 2018
- *A Scots Dictionary of Nature* - Amanda Thomson in conversation with Robbie Guillory. Waterstones, Sauchiehall Street, Glasgow, 7<sup>th</sup> November 2018
- On Landscape, People and Place: in conversation with Elizabeth Reeder, Sligachan Hotel, Sligachan, Skye, 26<sup>th</sup> November 2018
- An evening with Jim Crumley and Amanda Thomson, Waterstones, St Andrews, 25<sup>th</sup> May 2019
- Publishing Scotland Scottish Writers' Showcase, University of Glasgow Memorial Chapel, 22<sup>th</sup> August 2019
- John Muir Trust Wild Words, Highland Bookshop, Fort William, 25<sup>th</sup> October 2019
- Outwriters Africa, a joint reading with the poet Nadine Aisha Jassat, Womanzone, Cape Town, South Africa, February 2020



Dr Amanda Thomson with Dr David Gange and chair Esa Aldhigeri,  
Edinburgh International Book Festival, August 2019

# Evidence

## A Scots Dictionary of Nature (cont.)

### PRESS

#### NEWSPAPERS/ MAGAZINES

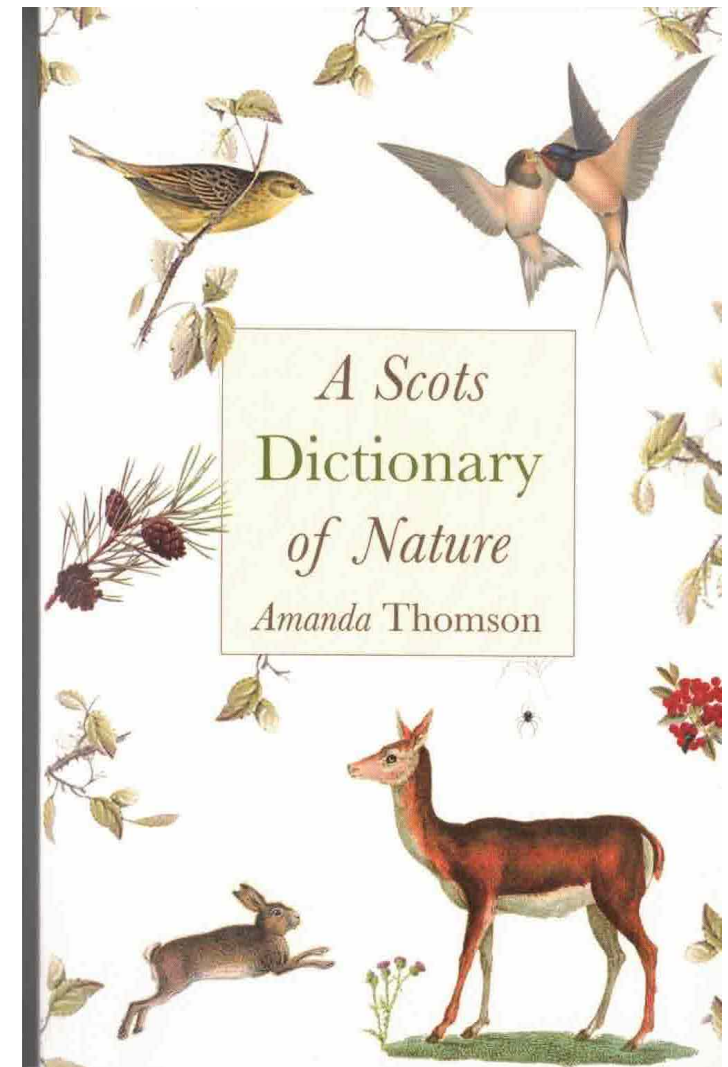
- 09/09/18 Sunday Herald “Long forgotten words to describe the countryside have been uncovered and included in a new dictionary of words compiled during academic’s research in the Cairngorms. Dictionary author Amanda Thomson said: “These words reveal so much about our history, natural history, and our changing ways of life - they are indicative of the depth, richness and variety of the Scots language and its unique relationship to nature and the Scottish landscapes of Lowlands, Highlands and islands.”
- 10/09/18 The Herald “A reminder of how easily the beauty of language and its connection with nature can be lost”
- 10/09/18 The Times
- 10/09/18 The Courier
- 12/09/18 The Scotsman, News/ Opinion section and front page banner. “It deserves as wide a readership as possible given the significance of its cultural contribution” ((Martyn McLaughlin)
- 15/10/18 The Scotsman, “Thomson’s book is full of words and expressions which, although not in common usage now, seem ripe for reappropriation”
- 30/05/20 The Herald Magazine, A Scots Dictionary of Nature – what to read this week

### RADIO

- 11/09/18 Interview, Good Morning Scotland
- 10/11/18 Interview, Out of Doors, BBC Radio Scotland

### TV

- 20/9/18 Timeline, BBC2 Scotland
- 16/12/18 Countryfile, BBC1
- November 2020, The Big Scottish Book Club, BBC Scotland



# Evidence

## A Scots Dictionary of Nature (cont.)

- 02/01/19 **Northwords Now** (excerpt from introduction)
- **Cairngorm Anthology, Shared Stories** (Cairngorm National Park Authority) features my wordlist/poem, *sixty-two words for rainy weather*
- 16-22<sup>nd</sup> November 2020, **Book Week Scotland: Nature Trail, Linlithgow**. Part of a nature themed book trail, with words from *A Scots Dictionary of Nature* placed in response to/ used to highlight aspects of Linlithgow and its environs.
- 24<sup>th</sup> August 2020, **Edinburgh International Book Festival** live event (online) with Kathleen Jamie and Chitra Ramaswamy
- 11<sup>th</sup> October 2020, **Wild Goose Festival/ Wigtown festival**, live event (online) in discussion with Dr Dave Borthwick, Karine Polwart and Chitra Ramaswamy

# Evidence

Examples of how *A Scots Dictionary of Nature* has been used in innovative ways



Dear Dr Thomson

Hello! We are Primary 7B at Kingcase Primary School in Prestwick. We took inspiration from the words in your book, *A Scots Dictionary of Nature*, and created our own Scottish beach landscape paintings based on our recent experiences at the Dolphin House outdoor centre.

When Storm Ali hit – a glousterin day - we spent an hour on the beach, facing the dolister, our wellies overflowing with seawater. It was amazing. We actually created our own Scots word: stomping! It means stomping in the surf on a stormy day. We were wondering if you might be able to include it in the next edition of your Dictionary?

We are attaching some of our paintings. We hope you like them. We used charcoal from our beach campfire to write the words from your book.

Thanks for inspiring us with your words!

Best wishes  
from Primary 7B

Gail Nicoll | P7 Class Teacher | [gail.nicoll@south-ayrshire.gov.uk](mailto:gail.nicoll@south-ayrshire.gov.uk) | Tel: 01292 473451  
Kingcase Primary School | Nursery Avenue | Prestwick | KA9 2DG | [www.kingcase.sayr.sch.uk](http://www.kingcase.sayr.sch.uk)

Letter and images from Ayrshire Primary school about *A Scots Dictionary of Nature*

# Evidence

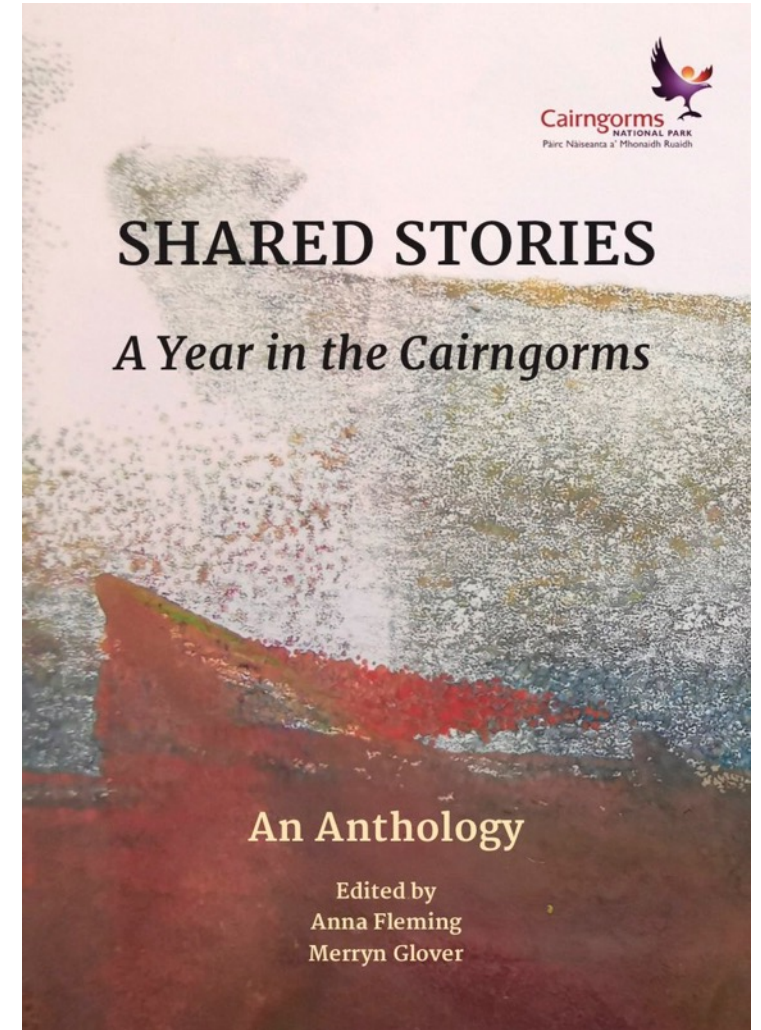
Examples of how *A Scots Dictionary of Nature* has been used in innovative ways

| Scots Nature Words   |   |
|--|---|
| found in <i>A Scots Dictionary of Nature</i> by Amanda Thomson |   |
| attercap:  | spider; an irritable person                   |
| blastie:   | gusty, blustering                             |
| caver:   | gentle breeze moving the water slightly       |
| doo:   | dove  |
| eard-din:  | thunder                                       |
| fat-a-feck:  | (of the weather) favourable, seasonal         |
| glashtroch:  | non-stop rain and the dirty roads it causes   |
| gulliewillie:  | a quagmire covered in grass                   |
| huam:  | the moan of an owl in the warm days of summer |
| imaky-amaky:   | an ant  |
| jowie:   | fir cone                                      |
| kippen:  | a rabbit                                      |
| linky:   | flat and grassy                               |
| muggle:  | drizzling rain                                |
| nose-feast:  | a storm                                       |
| oak-nut:   | acorn   |
| peuchling:   | a slight fall of snow                         |
| quaking bog:   | a moving quagmire                             |
| rain-bird:   | the green woodpecker                          |
| splorroch:   | the sound made by walking in wet mud          |
| tomshee:   | a fairy hillock                               |
| whutterick-fuffing:  | a gathering of weasels                        |
| yerth:   | earth, soil                                   |



Handout given to teachers who attended Merryn Glover's Creative Writing workshop which she ran as part of her Cairngorm National Park Writer-in-Residence position

'An important thread through *Shared Stories* has been the celebration of languages. In the workshops, we explored the Gaelic, Scots and Pictish place names of the Cairngorms, along with the rich lexicon of local words for the outdoors. Amanda Thomson's *A Scots Dictionary of Nature* was an inspirational source, as you will see from her *sixty two words for rainy weather* on page 62' (from introduction)



# Evidence

Examples of how *A Scots Dictionary of Nature* has been used in innovative ways

## Book week Scotland: A nature themed literature trail

“For Book Week Scotland (16-22 November 2020), a nature-themed book trail will pop up across the outdoor spaces of Linlithgow. Featuring favourite nature books, quotes and authors, the trail will encourage us to pause and enjoy the beautiful outdoor spaces of our town, perhaps to explore one or two new green spaces, and help us to discover some new nature writing to inspire us through the winter months.

Half of the trail locations will feature entries from Amanda Thomson’s beautiful ‘A Scots Dictionary of Nature’: A Scots Dictionary of Nature brings together the deeply expressive vocabulary customarily used to describe land, wood, weather, birds, water and walking in Scotland. Artist Amanda Thomson collates and celebrates these traditional Scots words, which reveal ways of seeing and being in the world that are in danger of disappearing forever. What emerges is a vivid evocation of the nature and people of Scotland, past and present; of lives lived between the mountains and the sky.

Thanks to a public call out, the people of Linlithgow have chosen their favourite nature writing to feature on the trail markers too. Accordingly, the trail will feature quotes from classic writers such as Nan Shepherd and Robert Burns, more contemporary favourites including Dara McAnulty and Carol Ann Duffy, and children’s authors Kenneth Grahame, Beatrix Potter and A. A. Milne.

The trail will go live around Linlithgow on 16th November, and be in place for the duration of Book Week Scotland for people to explore and enjoy. Markers will be located around the lochside path, along the canal towpath, in community gardens and enroute to Beecraigs Country Park and Cockleroy, highlighting the beautiful outdoor spaces we are so lucky to have all around us in Linlithgow”.

[CLICK HERE FOR THE BOOK TRAIL MAP](#)

## Book Week Nature Trail

For Book Week Scotland (16-22 November 2020), a nature-themed book trail will pop up across the outdoor spaces of Linlithgow. Featuring favourite nature books, quotes and authors, the trail will encourage us to pause and enjoy the beautiful outdoor spaces of our town, perhaps to explore one or two new green spaces, and help us to discover some new nature writing to inspire us through the winter months.

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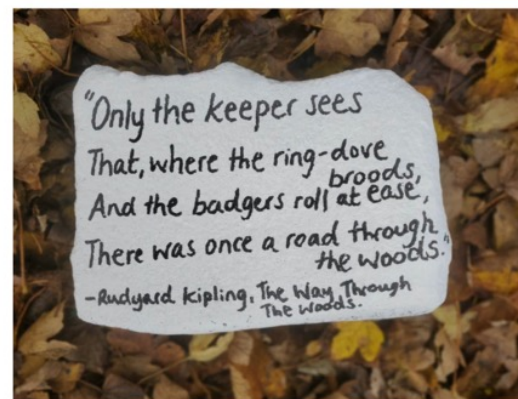
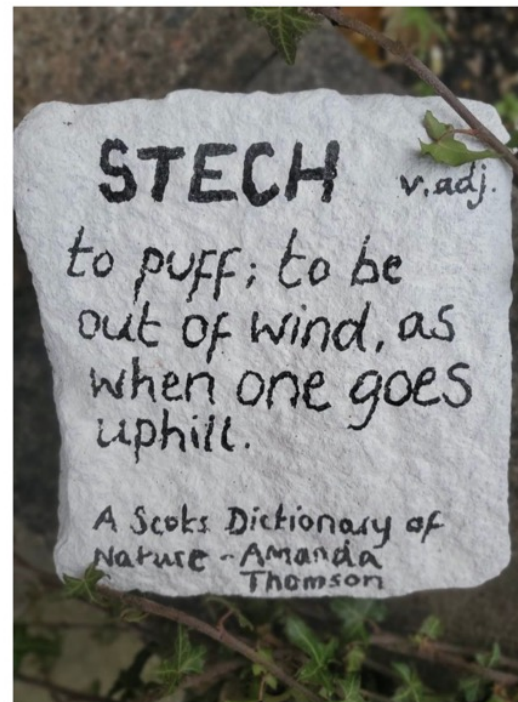
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The selection of books chosen as Linlithgow’s favourite nature writing will be featured in Far From The Madding Crowd this November - enticing us to discover some new favourites, rediscover a classic or get started on the Christmas shopping - with a 25% discount on all featured books.

Sally Pattle, of Far From the Madding Crowd, said: “We are delighted to be involved with this brilliant project – this year more than any other, I think we’ve all come to appreciate how lucky we are to live in a place where we can access nature and wild spaces relatively easily. It seems so fitting to celebrate Book Week Scotland with a nature theme and Amanda Thomson’s beautiful book is the perfect starting point! All the books featured on the trail will be available at a 25% discount from Far From The Madding Crowd throughout the week”.

Pamela Barnes from Transition Linlithgow said: “Such simple pleasures: reading, walking and appreciating nature! Bringing them together is nourishment for the body and soul indeed. Transition Linlithgow is delighted to be promoting this wonderful trail for all ages to enjoy.”

The trail is supported by the Scottish Book Trust, and delivered by Kathryn Welch in partnership with Transition Linlithgow and Far From The Madding Crowd.





## Acknowledgements

Glasgow School of Art Research Development Fund for Aar

Cape Farewell for participation in their Sea Change Project

Cairngorm National Park Authority for commissioning *sixty-two words for rainy weather*

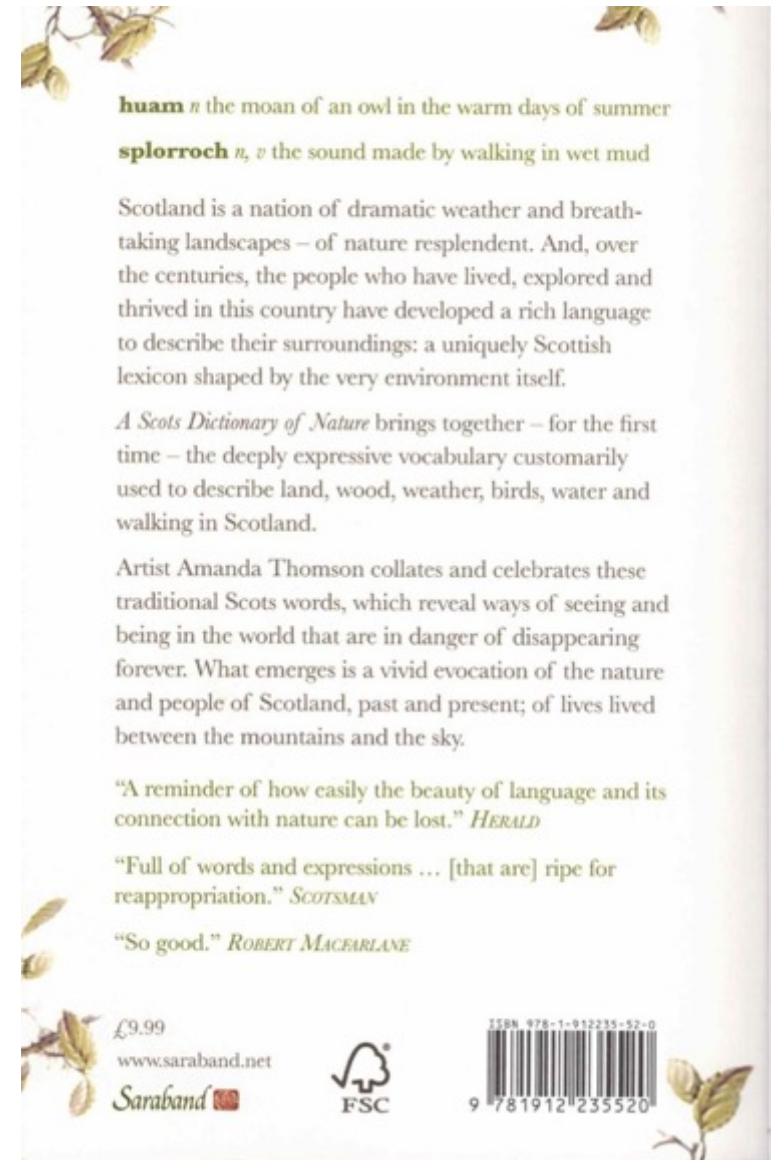
Kathleen Jamie/ Canongate books for commissioning *Around some Islands*

*Willowherb Review*/ Aerial Festival for commissioning *Still, Life*

*Bookweek Scotland Partner Writer for nature themed book trail in Linlithgow*

The first iteration of what became A Scots Dictionary of Nature was a set of handmade artist's books that formed part of the practice element of a PhD supported by the Forestry Commission, the University of the Highlands and Islands, and Highlands and Islands Enterprise.

A Scots Dictionary of Nature is published by Saraband Books.



Back cover, paperback edition