



WEATHER STATIONS



WRITING CLIMATE CHANGE



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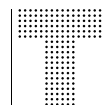
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Weather Stations



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INTRODUCTION



Many argue that climate change is the most important and complex crisis facing humanity, the overriding moral imperative of our time. It is not just an environmental threat, but also a critical human rights issue that impacts on every aspect of our lives – peace security, poverty, health, well-being, mass immigration and the economy. To preserve a liveable planet, scientists tell us we must reduce the amount of CO₂ in the atmosphere from its current level of 400 parts per million to below 350 ppm. We know we must strive to limit the rise in average global surface temperature to two degrees Celsius to stop levels of human interference becoming scientifically ‘dangerous’.

Whilst we increasingly recognize the necessity to address the challenges facing our environment, the majority support needed to change behaviour is difficult to harness. Scientists confound with statistics, journalists overwhelm with facts and too often the narratives of climate change are abstract, bleak and uninviting.

Weather Stations, an 18-month pilot project involving five partners in Berlin, Dublin, London, Melbourne and Warsaw, set out to redress this by placing literature and storytelling at the heart of conversations around climate change.

Each partner – or ‘Weather Station’ – appointed a Writer in Residence who engaged with scientists, philosophers, economists other writers and the public whilst developing their own writings. They also worked creatively with students in local schools – who, in the words of Tony Birch, ‘sparkled with

anger and enthusiasm’ – bringing the reality of our threatened planet and the ‘slow violence of climate change’ alive for a new generation, in the process nurturing young citizens with the knowledge, motivation and tools to fight for a more sustainable future.

A global website was set up as a scrapbook for the writers and students to share their experiences: the discoveries, delights and frustrations they encountered over the course of the project, as each writer visited each Weather Station to experience each partner’s unique perspective on climate change.

The powerful and evocative writing in this publication is the result. It is filled with humanity and humour, a questioning of language, the ‘connective tissue necessary for life’ (Mirko Bonné), a deep love of place and of nature, a sense of loss, of fear – and of hope. From poetry, stories and cartoons though to rap, reflection and personal diaries, each contribution offers us clues as to how, in the words of Oisín McGann, ‘we can take the compelling elements in everyday life and relate them to bigger, dramatic ideas’, connecting what we know with what must happen.

Weather Stations was founded on the belief that literature can give humanity to concept. Writers create worlds for us to explore and in entering them we are able to empathize with others, to begin to imagine how things can change and how we might work together towards ecological sustainability and social justice. We also need storytellers to interpret the science, to bypass the politics and to ignore the too often narrow self-interests of finance. And in doing so, show us how our lives could be lived differently, guided by ecological rather than economic imperatives.

This anthology goes out just ahead of the Paris UN Climate Change Conference in December; we hope its content and language help to bring the urgent stories of climate change into sharp focus.

As Annas Ahdamazai a student from London taking inspiration from Martin Luther King, writes: ‘Our lives begin to end the day we become silent about things that matter. Stop the silence and use your words for the things that matter most.’

Weather Stations Partners
September 2015

WRITING
CLIMATE CHANGE:
WRITERS IN
RESIDENCE

So it winds its way, the darkly glittering water-
adder, past bushes and paths, through
the banks' red-branched thickets. And
is utterly silent. A trickling, a softly purling
whisper is faintly heard when it has wood in its
mouth, stones in its bed...

PLASTIC SEA



Mirko Bonné, Berlin

The thin ribbon of water that flows
down to Hamburg beneath
locusts and ash trees, but mainly
old birches, where ducks live and coots
that dart off mutely, smelling of the swamps
in the quiet old woods of Stormarn and Holstein,
is called the Alster, and is and always was
a river. It was made into two lakes in the middle
of the great Hanseatic city only when Adolf
III returned to the city from the crusade
in the Holy Land and ordered a miller
to dam the stream with mighty dikes
that would have stopped even the Elbe's
flow. Then a northern sea spread out
amidst the wooden town; all the Holstein waters
of the Wöddelbek, Rönne, Wischbeck and Lankau,
the Sielbek and the Tangstedter Mühlenbach
flowed and could not drain; within weeks
the relentless element, flowing
on and on, grew vaster and
broader, grimly unstoppable,
until first the Outer, then the Inner
Alster (not cut off until much later), became
two lakes, turquoise green today and turquoise
blue tomorrow, and almost always roughened by
the west winds, hemmed by belts of dense reeds and
by now beloved for more than eight hundred years.

So it winds its way, the darkly glittering water-
adder, past bushes and paths, through
the banks' red-branched thickets. And
is utterly silent. A trickling, a softly purling
whisper is faintly heard when it has wood in its
mouth, stones in its bed, polystyrene panels washed
from a construction site somewhere or a spindly
bramble bush that got in its way and that it
drags along for a time as though
the winter-Alster claimed that
none need die as long as
they can play. It is black and half
a man's height higher when it floods.
Over Christmas 2014, after weeks of heavy
rain over the Feldmark and the last scraps of
deciduous woods between Kaltenkirchen, Bad
Oldesloe and Duvenstedt, the Alster's tributaries,
otherwise so idyllic, poured into the river with
unprecedented force and transformed it
within hours into an unpredictable
flood necessitating barricades
of sandbags to protect
the housing estates, and crowds of
rubbernecks were sluiced onto the shifted
shore of the Alster exactly like, as cynics said, flotsam.
Each black meter of water, rolling past ominously
mute, had the momentum of over three
hundred stacked-up fuel tankers,
by someone's calculations.
Meadows, playgrounds, riparian
woodlands, the paths and many streets,
as well as bridges, lots, docks, a big shed at
the foot of the railway embankment holding God
knows what long-forgotten junk were
submerged and sank for days
and for weeks. Children
asked whether the water would
stay like this now, so high, so dark, and
so, so bad. Yes, I said to a little girl
with an eye patch, it looks like
it'll stay like this from
now on. Ah well.
The world is
turning black.
And the neighbour,
arm in arm with his wife,
dog invisible, gazing at a bend in
the Alster where the river used to come
around the curve and fling its gold-brown
glitter at the bank, eyed the nightmarish

immensity of water and said hollowly
that never in his life, since he
sailed boats here as a
schoolboy, had he experienced
the like on the Alster, never had it
happened before, not even in a dream,
in which everything is possible, was it
possible. Too quickly for the darting pupils
to follow, the river rolled under the Fuhlsbütteler
railway bridge southward to the Free and
Hanseatic city. I saw three plastic
canisters and pictured a raft
you could build with them.
High water, said the stunned
neighbor. Floods. They'd always
happened, summer or winter,
in the fall or especially in the spring,
as soon as the snowmelt descended on Stormarn.
But this here, the black water masses, such
a draggled park, never, really, no.
Forced into stone embankments, the Alster
flows past the Rödingsmarkt and the Herrlichkeit
and joins the Elbe between Hamburger Neustadt and
the Portugiesenviertel. Six hours it takes for steamers,
freighters and tankers to reach the sea along the
deep-dredged channel. The three canisters,
a raft that will never be built, since I am
not Tom Sawyer or Huckleberry Finn
and my favorite river is not the Mississippi, but
a stream by which I often linger to gaze at the water
and reflect on the meaning of poetry, these three
pathetic empty plastic containers drift for
weeks from the railway bridge into the
brackish Elbe between St. Pauli,
Finkenwerder and Glückstadt.
Their plastic, cast, molded,
punched and glued in a factory in,
let's say, Hangzhou, before being shipped to
Hamburg along with millions of identical milky white
canisters, requires, unless it's ground to bits,
around 850 years to decompose and
vanish from the earth, as long a span of time
as the two Alster lakes have existed in the middle
of Hamburg. Though no doubt what is true
of the soul is true of plastic. Never,
never does it vanish for good.
In a poem in his collection Rare Earths,
Arne Rautenberg, from Kiel, transforms the
oceans' infestation of plastic into art, into his art,
for which he expresses his thanks (to the tides, the

motion of the waves, and to the ultraviolet light, as well as to the plankton and the great ocean gyres), his thanks for being an artist who can play upon all the continents. Long live art. Long live the one and only, eternal joy that is artistic freedom! This means, too, that everything wants to be art, just as everything that is at all alive wants to be free. Plastic, in the year 1800, for Friedrich von Hardenberg, who called himself Novalis, the one who clears new land, was an aesthetic term, when he wrote that music, plasticity and poetry were inseparable elements, existing together in every free art, just combined in different proportions. Novalis thought these thoughts in Burgenland, in Weissenfels on the Saale, which together with the Mulde, the Müglitz and the Vereinigte Weisseritz forms a river-land that he loved, and where he spent his whole life. All four rivers flow into the Elbe, and so, at Barby, does the Saale, where Novalis went swimming as a boy, naked, and often long into the night. In his whole life Hardenberg never once held a thing made of plastic. No wonder! There were no synthetic materials, not even in the hair-band of a tiny little doll, nowhere in the entire old world filled with the murmur of the endless forests, the stillness, the ringing of bells and the stink of cloacas. Yogurt cups; lids; clocks; cling wrap; shopping bags; bags of all colors, sizes and shapes; toys of all shapes, sizes and colors; cigarette lighters; disc jackets; pens; car mats; disposable razors; hub caps; combs; clips; ballpoint pen cases and cases for cases; bottles; bottle caps; automobile, tractor, truck and harvester tires; bowls; plates; eating utensils; bread bags and card cases; cases for card cases; cases for mirror frames; canisters; disposable chairs; disposable bowls; disposable tables; plugs; sockets; disposable socket boards; endless lengths of wires, wires, in sacks and bags, stuffed into disposable cases; nothing, nothing at all, not the least little bit of it existed in the as-yet undestroyed, unwired quiet world,

when Novalis swam in the Saale
without a thought for burning fat,
building muscles or steeling his
chest, but perhaps instead reflecting
whether the bosom is the breast elevated
to a state of mystery, and physics
nothing but the teachings
of the imagination.
For the most part, the plastic
trash which the Elbe sweeps into
the North Sea vanishes there in the sea's
dark abysses. The sediments of the long-since
ravaged sea floor contain inconceivable
quantities of tiny bits of microplastic
particles, mainly fibers, the sum
of which, according to the British Royal
Society's trade journal Open Science, exceeds
by ten thousandfold the larger fragments of plastic
that drift in polluted water gyres, agglomerating
into veritable continents of trash, larger than
Central Europe. If each square kilometer
of the ocean floor were a lake, all
these lakes would be clogged,
one could almost say: shat full of
quadrillions of plastic fibers, all the way
up into the tallest treetops on their shores.
Nowhere on this Earth, at the North Pole,
in the Black, Red or Dead Sea, the
Caribbean or the Antarctic, is there a
large body of water, a coast or a beach with-
out plastic residue, report London scientists
headed by Lucy Woodall from the Natural History
Museum, outside whose façade of noise-insulating
windows the Thames sloshes past, regulated and
polluted. Floating in the world's seven seas,
according to calculations, there are nearly
two hundred and seventy thousand tons
of plastic trash, a horrendous number,
but well-nigh absurd, for it is mysteriously
small compared with the galactic quantities of
plastic trash that all of us actually dump into the sea,
namely an estimated six and a half million tons, for
who can calculate the true weight of the plug
with which we are stopping the world?
Where does it go, all the crap of
affluence, you have to ask. Only
a fraction of the trash, it seems, floats
on the surface in the form of visible particles.
Larger particles break up in the swells, are ground up,
shredded, in part by UV light, into microparticles

that can barely be seen. If algae or microbes settle on them, they go under, sinking like ships, airplanes or a corpse down into the dark at the bottom.

Lucy Woodall's team analyzed twelve sediment samples from the ocean floor collected over the course of twelve years, up to 2012, in the southwestern Indian Ocean and in the northeastern Atlantic. Four coral samples, too, were studied under the microscope and in the infrared spectrometer. All the sediment samples contained microplastic particles, mostly fibers, generally two to three millimeters long, but often less than a tenth of a millimeter thick. The samples contained an average of thirteen and a half particles per fifty milliliters of liquid. More than half of the particles were viscose, which is not a plastic, but an artificial fiber made from cellulose and used in cigarette filters, and increasingly in clothing. Fish, skates, sharks, whales and turtles have no use for the stuff; for them viscose is poison from which they will perish, like anyone who finds nothing left to eat but plastic. The second most common material found in all marine creatures across the globe was polyester; indeed, one could speak of polyester fish, polyester water snakes, polyester octopi. And perhaps, once the particles are ground smaller and smaller, until they condense with the seawater vapors and rise into the air, one will speak of clouds of polyester or viscose: plastic clouds. Due to the small number of samples, it was impossible to compare the frequency and composition of the sediments. But fibrous microparticles seem to be found throughout the deep sea, ten thousand times more prevalent in sediments than in the contaminated ocean gyres. According to projections, just one square kilometer of sediment from the Indian Ocean's deep-sea mountains contains around four quadrillion plastic fibers. And studies of the deep-sea valley, the sink for the whole

world's plastic trash, have not yet been undertaken.
Darkest night reigns there. It is lightless and void
of stars. Nothing sparkles. And yet even there
breaths the vast world of the restless stars
that float in the sky's blue ocean.

Translated by Isabel Fargo Cole

I'm reading as much as I can about the politics and science of climate change. I speak to as many people as I can about the issue. I came to this project as a writer and teacher. And yet, increasingly I have become interested in not the power of language, but its limitations. The planet is more powerful than any words or narrative that humans ascribe to it.

RETURNING [AGAIN]



Tony Birch, Melbourne

As part of the Weather Stations project, in September and October of 2014 I visited the cities of Berlin, Dublin, London, Warsaw, Gdansk and Hel, working with school and community groups. I learned a great deal. Some of the knowledge I came away with surprised me. It was most common for people to tell me, ‘of course, you have it [climate change] much worse out there,’ a reflection on the issue as a visible catastrophe. Everybody knew about the experience of bush fires in Australia (which we are again experiencing), drought, and the damage to the Great Barrier Reef, reflecting an understandable but severely limited engagement with the issue.

Historically speaking, bush fires in Australia have little to do with climate change and have been, and are, a natural environmental phenomenon. Certainly, with the planet getting warmer (and 2014 may be the warmest year on record), fires will occur with both greater frequency and ferocity. And while some in Australia accept the link between climate change and the increase in bush fire activity, at a psychological and intellectual level we respond to fire as a disaster to be fought, conquered and overcome — even in grief. Even when the immediate disaster is associated with the broader issue, the language used to describe our response is couched in militaristic language. We battle and defeat the enemy. Confronted by widespread flood, caused as much or more by irresponsible urban planning than changes in weather patterns, we are Queenslanders, as if the heroic label somehow grants special status to a group of people hardy enough to defeat all — until the next flood visits.

The negative impacts of climate change on the environment do not manifest themselves in sudden bursts of meteorological activity alone. Climate change is not simply a recent phenomenon or future event. Its impact is both gradual and profound. The effects of climate change on the planet should not be reduced to a sound bite or dramatic image, such as the devastation caused by a bush fire. Remembering back to the catastrophic Black Saturday fires in Victoria in 2009, the weather conditions leading up to the weekend of the fires were extreme. What most people do not know, or have

forgotten, is that more people died in Victoria as a consequence of extreme heat before the fires than those who died in the fires themselves. Without doubt, the trauma and violence wreaked by the fires had an immediate and shocking impact on the lives of the people who experienced them. But, as most of us know little or nothing of the many hundreds of deaths that had nothing to do with the fires, but everything to do with the warming of the planet, we do not give enough thought to an issue that does not abate between fire seasons, being the impacts of climate change that are ever-present. While people in other parts of the globe watch images of fire in Australia on their TV screens and regard this country as a Global Warming Horror Story, they, like us, will have their lives changed, not by shock and awe, but stealth. For instance, the Arctic Circle is melting — melting too slowly to produce a 30 second YouTube clip of any consequence, but changing the planet in a way we have not known for thousands of years.

Yesterday I again walked the banks of my river — the Yarra, in Melbourne. I have written about the river several times now for the Weather Stations project; I have behaved as provincially, ‘non’ global, and perhaps small-minded as I can get. I’m not sure why as yet, but I think my understanding of the issue of climate change has to be found here, on the river. I’m reading as much as I can about the politics and science of climate change. I speak to as many people as I can about the issue. I came to this project as a writer and teacher. And yet, increasingly I have become interested in not the power of language, but its limitations. The planet is more powerful than any words or narrative that humans ascribe to it.

As I was about to leave the river yesterday, I walked by a favourite bend. At a particular moment, lasting no more than a second or two, I could smell the river the way I did over forty years ago. I could feel the memory of the river in my body. It was as much a physical as a psychological reaction. My next thought was that there were no words, not a single one available to me to describe the feeling.

I was content with that feeling.



Oisín McGann

I've erected a monument
more durable than brass
only today
of a plastic bottle
a yoghurt pot
a beer can
some chewing gum
three plastic bags

EXEGI MONUMENTUM



Jaś Kapela, Warsaw

I've erected a monument
more durable than brass
only today
of a plastic bottle
a yoghurt pot
a beer can
some chewing gum
three plastic bags
after I finish eating and drinking
they will take 450 years to disintegrate
there is also some other packaging
that I don't know
how long it will take to decompose
but definitely longer than I will
I'm not talking about recycled paper
that won't outlive me
even if I was to write a poem
on every single
paper bag
bags are one thing
carbon dioxide is another
10 tonnes of black gold
currently in a gas state
hovers over my head
and I'm glad that it hovers
as I wouldn't know where to store it
10 tonnes just this year

and no less in the previous years
300 tonnes by the age of 30
and I'm not planning to die just yet
(even though there are people who plan it for me at times)
several nice trucks
a little suburban house
made of carbon dioxide, waste and smoke
and all of it is mine
mine mine mine
my precious
just imagine that I'm saying it like Gollum
we even look alike
I've erected a monument more durable than brass
and so did you
to each his own Mordor
and to some a bit of others' as well
Translated by Anna Hyde

MEMORIES OF AN ISLAND



Xiaolu Guo, London

Island

1. North Sentinel Island

In the film, there is an island. Since I saw it fifteen years ago, this faded colour documentary has haunted me. It was shot from a small boat, off the coast of the island. The occupants of the boat were there to record the behaviour of the island's inhabitants. In the gaze of the camera's long lens, naked tribal men are frantically running along the beach. And our civilized modern documentary makers watch them from the sea — afraid to set foot on shore. When I think about these images, they remind me of the early anthropological films of Robert J. Flaherty or Jean Rouch. The violent dance of the islanders remains forever a symbol of innocence in my memory.

They are members of the Sentinelese People, and they lived on North Sentinel Island in the Indian Ocean's Andaman archipelago. With thousands of years of isolation from the world, their hostile attitude towards outsiders was famous. Stark, black, African-looking, lean with strong legs, they ran like leopards across grassland. You can tell this even from the blurred images shot from a distant camera on a boat. As well as the cameraman, there were three other men in the boat, including a thoughtful-looking Indian anthropologist. The trip was intended to be a 'Contact Expedition' with the tribe on the island. But it didn't work out like that. In the documentary, you can see the tribal people growing more and more angry as the boat gets closer to the island. They raise their spears and scream at the approaching filmmakers. It looks as if they are going to launch their weapons at the invaders. The camera keeps filming these gesticulating natives. Occasionally, the islanders fire a shower of arrows at the boat people. The boat stays on the wavy, windy sea, in deep, treacherous water, which can't easily be accessed by any swimming natives. The thoughtful-looking anthropologist says something to his colleague, then the colleague begins to shout incomprehensible language to the islanders, whilst, in a vain gesture of friendliness, he raises two coconuts and a few bananas. We modern audiences understand this sort of body language easily, but it

doesn't work for the Sentinelese people. They continue to jump in rage along the shore with their spears and bows pointing towards the boat.

The film has an old-fashioned BBC voiceover telling the story. It explains that, earlier in the day, the boat had got close enough to the beach for one of the crew to jump out with a live pig in his arms. He was able to tie the pig to a tree on the beach as fast as he could and then rush back to the boat. They then waited on board, scanning the jungle beyond for a reaction. At first, no one came, the pig from the civilized world being the sole creature in view. Then, gradually, a few dark bodies emerged from the tree shadows. They seemed to be frightened by the strangers on the sea and by the pig. Then more and more tribal men arrived, carrying spears and arrows. After producing some threatening body language, the men slaughtered the pig, but didn't take it with them. They buried it instead. Then they left, disappearing whence they had come.

I'm not sure exactly when this documentary was made, but it was easily three or four decades ago. Probably in the 1970s. The voiceover tells me that the Sentinelese were one of the last hunter-gatherer people on this planet. Because of their violent attitude towards outsiders, people have left the island alone. The last census undertaken by the Indian government in 2001 counted 39 people living on the island. But this number was arrived at from a distance, observing and counting roughly from a boat, or a helicopter. Some people were probably hiding in caves while this was being done. It was estimated there could be 200 people in total. It wasn't known what kind of language they spoke. Their religion remained unknown too, and their ethnicity was also unclear. But anthropologists believed that they were the direct descendants of hunter-gatherer people out of Africa. They probably arrived on their island 50,000 years ago and continued their lifestyle until today. Well, not actually today — the last news about the island was in 2006, when the inhabitants killed two fishermen from India who ventured too close. And now it is believed the Sentinelese people have all died out. But still, the Indian government won't allow any foreigners access to this place of violent mystery. So no verification of the extinction has occurred.

2. Island Mentality

Is there really an Island Mentality as opposed to a Mainland Mentality?

An island with life is a blessing of nature, but also a curse. To live on an island, even one teeming with life, is to face limits of resources. Islanders have to either venture out into dangerous, unknown waters to find sustenance, or remain on land dealing with an essentially limited supply of nutrients. This is not the predicament of mainlanders. The mainland has no clear borders, and what borders there are can be crossed. In the old days, there were always pack animals with which to transport goods over mountains, and in modern times there are guns to force doors open. The Chinese had to build the Great Wall of China through centuries to defend themselves. Even so, man-made borders are always shattered in the end. The Mongols conquered China on horseback without even needing to cross the Great Wall. The Palestinians have managed to dig tunnels out of the Gaza strip to transport goods and human beings back and forth. In an ideal world, people should never try to live within borders, but rather learn to live with openness. Openness allows people to adapt and to change with all sorts of influences, even sometimes violent ones. The ceaseless transformations of maps is a demonstration of cultural overlap and integration, even though, in the course of this flux of conquest and settlement, some cultures are overridden by others.

The island of Britain, where I have made my home, is the largest island in Europe. More than 60 million people live on this rainy and windy landmass, vying for jobs, for opportunities, and for the so-called democracy and liberty that lots of Third-World

immigrants came here for — at least in the first place. It is definitely the most crowded island in the western world, whether Scotland leaves it or not. Still, it is perhaps not the best place to search for examples of Island Mentality.

There are two reasons why at least parts of Britain have shaken off any Island Mentality. Britain has always been invaded, by the Romans, by the Vikings, by the Normans. Its culture has been mixed and its politics reshaped all the time through history. Secondly, Britain had an empire. The island of Britain expanded spectacularly beyond its shores to swallow a third of the world. Britain, by overcoming its Island Mentality, produced some of the best thinkers of our modern world.

Since coming to Britain, I have become fascinated by travellers and explorers who have left the confines of this island. People like Captain James Cook or Robert Louis Stevenson. Stevenson was a perfect example of the romantic adventurer — he first journeyed out to America because of his lover. Then he was on a perpetual mission to find an ideal home to live in. Later in his life, he decided to reside on the island of Samoa in Polynesia, which for him was a perfect abode. He made a strong friendship with the islanders. And he died there. In his last years he wrote, ‘Sick and well, I have had a splendid life of it, grudge nothing, regret very little ... take it all over, damnation and all, would hardly change with any man of my time.’ I believe in the sincerity of his words, as far as it’s possible to believe a fabulist.

James Cook conquered islands, and was killed by islanders. Robert Louis Stevenson made peace with them. In the course of history, races have mixed, ethnicities have diversified. Still, humans are all *Homo sapiens*. And to be *Homo sapiens* means to have an island mentality — we are unable to perceive what’s beyond our human life, let alone understand this Universe. As a species we have developed a narrow vision, an aggressive attitude towards other species. We think human goals on this planet are the first and foremost goals. As a result we have shaped our landscape as it is now, but at the cost of the extinction of many other species. We have overpopulated, heavily polluted this planet Earth. And of course we don’t give much of a damn for the next millennium since we can’t even be bothered to think beyond the life of our grandchildren. If we were to die out in the future, then our narrative in history would be like that of the Sentinelese people on their isolated little strip of jungle ringed by yellow sand. The people of the tribe disappear, and the island remains.

3. Coochiemudlo Island

Not long ago, I went to another island in the South Pacific Ocean. It is a much smaller island than North Sentinel Island, only 5 square kilometres in size. It is Coochiemudlo Island, just off the Queensland coast of Australia. Coochiemudlo is an aboriginal word meaning red earth. One can clearly see the deep red soil in which the gum tree bush is rooted. The sand on the beach is also brown red, even after being repeatedly washed by the sea. The soil is from an ancient volcano, which explains the lush vegetation on the island. But the mad sprawl of mangroves is the most impressive thing. Mangroves thrive where there is salt water and a tropical, or semi-tropical, climate. They shoot their roots deep in the sea water, then release salt on the surface of their leaves. A magical process! Unlike us! But it is said that the increase in growth of mangroves indicates climate change — seawater has been swallowing more land, and the temperature has been rising each year.

In any case, Coochiemudlo is nearly perfect as an island in a romantic sense. It is compact, blue and sunny during the day. And at night it has the most beautiful clean and clear starry sky. The houses are in typical Queensland style — timber construction, high-set, one or two storeys, with a rusty but rather charming veranda space. Each is attached

to a little patch of land, and there are always one or two old gum trees standing in the front like guards protecting the house. I was told there are about 500 houses on the island, and 700 people living there. The average age is around 52, and of course most of the inhabitants are retired people. A ferry is the only public means to take the islanders back and forth to the mainland.

I went to Coochiemudlo to visit my friend and his family. They used to live in Brisbane and Sydney, but have now retired to the island. Life becomes much simpler with only two streets, one library and one shop. Wherever you walk you hear only the waves and the sound of birds hidden amongst the foliage of trees and shrubs.

The first time my island friends and I heard a bird on a gum tree chirping like a mobile phone, I burst out laughing. The mobile phone sound was so strange coming from high up in the sky. Anyone would be momentarily puzzled to hear such a noise whilst walking in a quiet tropical island. As we went further, another bird on a tree made another mobile phone ringtone. We stopped and stared at the bird as it cleverly imitated a piece of indispensable human technology. I felt sad and subdued that the pure tones of the birds, their pristine mating cries, had now been reprogrammed. There were three of us — I mean, three humans — each of us carrying a phone with a different ring tone. The birds were already picking up on these differences!

I stayed on the island for a few days, every morning walking on the beach and then in the afternoons creeping through the hidden tracks of the Wetland areas, where the mangroves dip their toes in the salty water. No supermarket, no cars, no urban scenes. One evening, those faded images filmed from a boat in the Indian Ocean returned to me. I remembered the Sentinelese people running like wild leopards along their beach. I missed them, as if I was one of them, as if I too belonged to that mysterious land. As I was taking the ferry, leaving Coochiemudlo for Victoria Point on the mainland, I looked back at the island I had stayed on, and wondered about its history, before the British arrived, before Captain James Cook's boat ran aground on the Great Barrier Reef. It is said that the English explorer Matthew Flinders was the first western man to set foot on this little island, at the end of the eighteenth century, while he was searching for a river in the southern part of Moreton Bay. This was twenty years after James Cook 'discovered' the east coast of Australia. But before James Cook, before Matthew Flinders, obviously there had been the aboriginals living on that land for 60,000 years, at least.

I took a flight to Melbourne and prepared for my trip back to England. I was not looking forward to returning to London. What would be waiting for me there? Electricity bills or balance sheets from Thames Water? Probably another overdue council tax demand? And surely many more glossy posters and ads from estate agents. Property renting and buying, that's the current passion in our urban world.

Before flying to London, in the airport, I read more about the Andaman archipelago and North Sentinel Island. I discovered that the anthropologist from India in the documentary was called T. N. Pandit. And finally I found a paragraph of writing by Dr Pandit himself about one of his last 'Contact Expeditions'. After 20 years of trying, he and his team finally managed to make contact with the Sentinelese in the 1990s. Well, at least they got to the shore of the island. He wrote:

'After 20 years, the islanders voluntarily came forward to meet us — it was unbelievable. They must have come to a decision that the time had come. It could not have happened on the spur of the moment. But there was this feeling of sadness also — I did feel it. And there was the feeling that at a larger scale of human history, these people who were holding back, holding on, ultimately had to yield.'

Sadness, Dr T. N. Pandit. You mean this sadness was born from the islanders' final surrender — which they manifested in the way in which they greeted the modern

intruders on their beach? Sadness. What an acute and sorrowful description. But I still wonder, why were the Sentinelese people sad if they had never been to the outside world? They had never been able to compare the two worlds. Perhaps the face-to-face confrontation already convinced them of their disadvantage. Somehow, the tribe members knew that the intruders wanted something from them, and indeed, would change them for ever.

I read in Dr T. N. Pandit's report that the last 200 inhabitants of North Sentinel Island had died. How had they gone, exactly? Too little food on the island? All the animals were killed by the tribe and became extinct? Sharks attacked them while they were fishing by the shore? Women died during labour, or from infections after childbirth? A tsunami or an earthquake decimated the population? Perhaps all of these. Only the island knows what happened to its inhabitants. Yet on the sub-continent, on the mainland of India, the population has reached more than 1.2 billion. Everywhere you go, there are people. And people only. Children live in the streets without homes, people die in the streets without being cared for, but the economy is growing, according to the government. The GDP is catching up proudly with China and the US. This is our very ordinary human story: the dying-out and the ever-expanding pattern, the two poles of this planet Earth. Whether we look back into history or forward to the future, we are aware that we humans have only one island to live upon and that is the island of our planet Earth. So, we must be careful.



Oisín McGann

THE GLASS OF WATER



Jaś Kapela, Warsaw

they say that some
upon seeing the same glass of water
see it as half full
while others as half empty
but I know
that regardless of it
being half full or half empty
you can drown in it
or drown somebody
because there are also people
ready to kill for this water
and others
for whom a glass of clean water
will remain an image seen in a film on TV
in which they will never play a part
as these were cast a long time ago
and roles didn't go to the poor, hungry and thirsty
there are also others
who will pour this glass down the drain
not even thinking about the fact
that it might save somebody's life
I am sometimes one of those people
so give me some water
before I die of shame
joking
though somebody might die here
but instead of me
it will rather be them

Translated by Anna Hyde

LET'S WALK



Tony Birch, Melbourne

How do we speak about the places we love? If we are not poets, if our education has been limited, if saying to a teenage mate, 'I love this place,' causes embarrassment (all round) and results in ridicule and possible humiliation, how can we express our fierce loyalty and attachment to place? When I was a teenage boy, I loved my piece of the Yarra River in inner Melbourne. I lived on a Housing Commission estate, typical of the brutalist architectural response to 'slum clearance' across the globe in the post-WW2 era of 'reconstruction'. We spent most of our time on the estate discovering new ways to slam each other into concrete walls — which dominated both the inside of the flats we lived in and the surrounding outdoor spaces.

Despite my delinquent behaviour at school, I was always a voracious and serious reader. My favourite novel around the time I discovered the river was Barry Hines's *A Kestrel For A Knave*, a story set on the other side of the world in a grim northern England mining town. The central character, Billy Casper, is a boy who suffers violence: in the home, the street, at school and on the football pitch. Billy is a boy who roams and falls in love with the 'wilds' surrounding his town. He also falls in love with a bird, a kestrel.

The book affected me in a deep and lasting way. I felt great affinity with Billy, and developed an admiration for the author of the book. I thought it remarkable that a writer could create a story that could travel across the globe and produce such influence in me. Hines became the first literary hero of my life, and has remained so to this day. When I was writing my first book, *Shadowboxing*, I thought of Billy Casper and Kes each morning before I sat down to write. And I wondered if I could, like Barry Hines, write a story that teenagers would connect with.

In *Shadowboxing*, and with each book I have written since, I have produced a story about the river: on each occasion, attempting to articulate more clearly my deep attachment to it. While I would not say that I have failed to express the extent of my attachment through words, it is clear to me that my words and stories are yet to fully satisfy me — as should be the case for any writer attempting to reiterate an idea mediated through landscape.

What is more revealing to me is that when I was a teenage boy, I did not possess the expression of language to convey my love of the Yarra River. And now that I do, the words still fail. Perhaps that is a good thing? My (slightly more mature) intellect and my creative work are no more able to express that love — that way I felt about the river, as I lived it, walked it, swam in it and dreamed of it when I was a boy.

Yesterday, I went walking with my sixteen-year-old daughter, Nina, along the Yarra River. On the way there, we stopped at my mother's place for a cup of tea. She is in her mid-seventies, and has lived her entire life within a couple of miles of the centre of the city. While we spent many years as children on the move from debt collectors, the police and government bulldozers, we never travelled far, living by a rule passed down to my mother from her mother — 'if you can't hear a tram bell when you're in bed of a night, you're living too far away.'

After we left my mother's house, we walked along a plantation separating Melbourne's Eastern Freeway from the narrow streets leading down to the river. The plantation had once been a street of terrace houses, full of kids, and kitchen tables, and backyards with barking dogs. It is all gone. When I pointed to a spot on the plantation and told Nina she was standing on my childhood front doorstep, she looked around as if searching for a ghost. The house I lived in at the time was knocked down for the freeway development. It was close enough to the river that I could lay in bed of a night and smell the scent of the water drifting into my bedroom, and could hear the water rushing over Dights Falls, no more than a few hundred yards from my back gate.

In the years that I hung out at the river, it was the remnant of a nineteenth-century industrial site. Cotton mills and factories had been built along the lower side of the river. The workers for the mills were crowded into narrow houses built in the shadows of capitalist expansion. Dights Falls itself, built over a 'natural' waterfall, was a 'man-made' construction. It had powered a turbine in an adjoining wheelhouse that supplied water for the mill. By the time I inhabited the river, more than 100 years later, both the mill and the wheelhouse were in ruin; all the better for young teenagers laying claim to our own place.

Nina and I took photos at the falls and walked across to the wheelhouse. While the ruin has been stabilized, its past remains present; in the rancid smell of stagnant water laying at the bottom of the wheelhouse, the damp mosses creeping up the redbrick walls, and the scratching sounds coming from the darkness below, which could well be bare tree branches bending with the wind. Or the river rats we witnessed as kids, happily strutting their stuff in the mud and rubbish and weeds. I pointed to various spots around the falls where we rode our bikes, where we jumped from rocks into the water, and where we came across burned-out wrecks of stolen cars. I would not say Nina was envious of the stories of my teenage years, but I do know she has a yearning to discover places of her own; places outside regulation, outside the prying eyes of authorities, parents and invasive CCTV cameras. Such places are harder to find in the contemporary city, but I hope she stumbles across them before it's too late, before she grows up.

We left the falls and headed downriver toward the city, passing endless numbers of drains that wash rubbish from the streets into the water. When I was a boy, it was nothing to see chemicals dumped directly into the water from the factories above. Until the 1970s, the lower Yarra was widely accepted as the open drain of industry. Swimming in it was hazardous (as I experienced as a teenager, collecting pus-filled sores and alien rashes after a swim in the river). In the 1970s, Melbourne's Age newspaper began a campaign, 'Give The Yarra A Go', in an effort to raise both the profile of the river and the consciousness of citizens. The campaign had some success, and the river did become cleaner (although over the years, many setbacks have occurred).

I often felt angry over the poisoning of my river. I would sometimes see dead fish in the water, in the area around drain outlets. Or oil and paint trails drifting downstream with the current. In those days, I would not have considered that the environmental damage done to my river could be stopped. I felt powerless. My parents were powerless. My community did not have a voice that could be heard. All we had was our anger. An awareness of environmentalism was an impossible notion. Today, so many of us are aware. And we are also more informed. There are also outlets for us to articulate and express our concerns. And yet many of us feel equally powerless.

Why is this so? I cannot provide an answer here. It is, though, a central idea in my thinking and writing for the Weather Stations project.

We left the river and went to the Salvation Army shop in Abbotsford. Nina bought a woollen cardigan, and I picked up a t-shirt and running top. I've been going to 'op-shops' for more than 50 years. I love the smell of the places. They smell of life, or use rather than refuse. We stopped for one last photo opportunity outside another house I lived in during the 1970s. Nina asked if I had enjoyed living in the house. 'Yes. I was happy here. We were never far from the water.'

The house had been seriously renovated and would fetch a packet at auction. I remember walking by the house many years ago when it was being fixed up. I was angry then also. When we rented the house, it had holes in the roof, the walls and the floors. The rising damp reached the ceiling, and the only hot water was supplied by a 'chip heater'. I was annoyed that it took someone with money to make the house decent to live in.

I don't think that way any longer. I'm simply happy that this is one childhood home of mine that was not bulldozed for some grand scheme. There was a kid's bike on the front verandah, and a muddy pair of gardening boots. There are children in that house, playing and crying and sleeping. There is somebody living in that house who turns their garden over and clips their roses and sits on a chair on the front verandah in the afternoon sun. I hope they love their house.



Oisín McGann

Like so many things in life, I didn't pay much attention to that tree until it became a problem. It was in a blind spot in my consciousness; there, but unnoticed.

CREMATION



Oisín McGann

I'm not sure when I first noticed that the tree was dead. I wasn't even sure what kind of tree it was — a poplar or maybe a birch. Before this, my main concern about it had been that it was close to the garage, which stands separate from the house, in the corner of the garden. There were traces of cracks in the concrete around the base of the wall, where it looked like the roots might eventually undermine the foundations. Like so many things in life, I didn't pay much attention to that tree until it became a problem. It was in a blind spot in my consciousness; there, but unnoticed. There was this thing towering over the back of the garden, at least as high as the house, and I hadn't even looked at the leaves to see what type of tree it was.

I was certainly paying attention to it now.

It hadn't reached maturity — the trunk was less than a foot in diameter at the base and it was about thirty feet tall. A thin, lanky adolescent, yet to find its bulky strength but already high enough to make an unwieldy corpse. I had noticed that the bark had started cracking and lifting away from the wood, no doubt due to a disease of some kind. With a baby, a toddler, a budding teenager and all the work I still had to do on the house, we had a lot of other things going on; having a disease in a tree treated was way down on my list of priorities. But soon the bark was peeling away in heavy leathery strips, exposing the pale bare wood of the trunk. Woodlice took up residence in busy clumps in the gaps and cracks of the sloughing skin. When the leaves didn't come back in the spring, I knew we had a problem. A dead tree, big enough and close enough to damage the roof and even the wall of our garage if it fell.

This wasn't the first tree to threaten our home. On the day we'd picked up the keys for our new house, we arrived to find a heavy bough had fallen from an ancient horse chestnut at the back of the garden, in the other corner — one of a line of gnarled and ancient trees that ran behind the row of houses and had been there long before anything had been built on the land. The branch had narrowly missed our neighbour's garage and could have done thousands of euros worth of damage. There we were with a house in need of renovation, an empty shell, still waiting for a heating system, a kitchen, bathrooms and even doors — so much of our money was bound into this place for the next few years and now the first thing we had to do was pay six hundred euros to chop

down a dead chestnut tree. Apart from the fact that I hated having to cut down such a beautiful old beast, it was money we simply couldn't spare, but there was no avoiding it. If the tree fell, it could demolish our neighbour's garage or crash through the back of our house.

That job took a full day, with three men, a cherry-picker and a tractor and trailer. The house was showered in sawdust that floated into the air in gritty clouds as the tree surgeons started high and worked their way down in a roar of chainsaws, lopping off a piece at a time and either dropping them or lowering them on ropes. That old chestnut ended up spread out across our garden in its component parts, as if waiting to be assembled again.

I watched as much as I could, trying to learn how they did it. I figured, I never knew when I might need to cut down a tree myself. They wouldn't take the logs in part payment and I couldn't keep them in the garden — they'd take up too much space and wreck our back lawn. Something else we wouldn't have money to fix for a few years. I didn't have the chainsaw, or the skills, to chop the huge logs into pieces I could burn. So I kept a few chunks, let a friend of mine take as much as his car could hold, and let the tree surgeons drive off with a large tractor trailer full of logs from our tree.

That was in 2010, just before we had the worst winter Ireland had seen in decades, when I ended up burning logs almost every day for about four months. Logs I had to *buy*. I was well bruised from kicking myself over that winter.

And then the other tree died. I could appreciate the irony. One of the things I'd looked forward to about finally owning my own property was planting a few trees with the kids. Instead, there would be two less trees in the world because of me. We were hit with several weeks of windy weather and I anchored the brittle mast of dead wood as best I could with a couple of ropes, worried that it would fall before I had a chance to *control* that fall. In the meantime, I started to do a bit of research online, learning how to cut down a tree. There were a number of helpful demo videos on YouTube — and many, many more that showed the accidents that could happen when idiots with no expertise or experience tried some DIY lumberjacking. Smashed roofs, walls, cars, cut and crush injuries . . . there seemed to be no end to the damage you could do with relatively little effort.

I also found out that it was impossible to hire a chainsaw in Ireland. Presumably because of the aforementioned idiots and the amputated limbs that resulted. But I was still confident. This wasn't a huge tree and as long as I could get it to fall diagonally across the garden, it wouldn't do any damage. I wouldn't even need a chainsaw. I had a couple of bow saws I figured would do the job.

I love wood in all its forms. I love walking in forests, I love working with wood with my hands, I love the colours and textures, the feel of cutting and shaping it. I like to burn it too — I prefer a wood fire to a peat fire. There may be less heat and it does burn out faster — depending on how well the wood is seasoned — but it also burns out almost completely, leaving hardly any ash, compared with the mounds left over when you burn peat. I hate the powdery grey clouds that ash makes when you have to clear out the fireplace.

It's better for the environment too. The managed forests replace trees as they're felled. Young trees absorb carbon as they grow and hold onto it, so using wood as fuel is, theoretically, carbon neutral. As long as we're replacing them, they're not adding any new carbon to the atmosphere. Ireland's peat bogs, on the other hand, would take hundreds, if not thousands of years to form again, if it was even possible. And in the meantime, we're releasing all the carbon trapped for thousands of years in that peat. The oil, coal and gas we've based most of our civilization upon have taken even longer to

form and there's no question that they'll eventually run out.

A wood fire sounds better than peat too. That whuff, the crackling is the sound of a comfortable home. Every couple of months we get sacks of logs delivered. They're always too big for the fireplace, too chunky to get a fire going, and for someone who works at a desk a lot of the time, there's no better stress relief than getting the axe out and spending an hour splitting logs and chopping some kindling.

The weather was getting cold again, there were new storms coming and the tree had been standing dead for too long. So one Saturday, I went out and tied two new ropes to branches halfway up to help steer it as it fell. The other end of one rope was anchored to a heavy stake in the ground, the second tied to the trunk of another tree. The dog was safe in her dog-run, watching with pensive curiosity, the cat was off on a hunt somewhere. Our teenage son was too cool to be interested, but our two daughters, three and four-and-a-half years old, were fascinated. They were under strict instructions to wait inside out of the way, but they pressed their faces against the back window, waiting for Daddy to amuse them — which, of course, was my most important role in life. The key thing was making sure the tree fell across the lawn, not towards the house, not onto the hedge and fence that bordered the back of the garden and *definitely* not onto the garage. And obviously I had to be careful not to be flattened by it too. A lot of the YouTube videos went through my mind as I started sawing. Climbing a stepladder, I cut off a couple of the bigger branches on the garage side, hoping the loss of weight on that side would help persuade it to fall the other way.

Then I started on the trunk. I cut two wedges out, one on the front and then one slightly higher up on the back, leaving it standing on a 'hinge' of wood just a couple of inches thick, which should, in theory, dictate the direction of the fall. The wood was taut, but lifeless and dry. I had assumed the tree was unstable, unbalanced and brittle, just waiting to topple at the first bite of the saw. Instead, it just stayed standing there after I cut out the second wedge, attached to its stump by no more than two inches of wood across the trunk. I gazed up into its branches, wary of its weight, but surprised and struck by a newfound respect for how well formed this thing was. Thirty feet high, with asymmetrical branches and yet so precisely balanced that it stayed upright on a base little thicker than the edge of my hand. It had taken decades to get to this size, through all manner of weather and even now that the life was gone from it, it was still stronger than I'd given it credit for.

Out of the corner of my eye, I could see my two little girls at the window, waiting. Putting a hand against the trunk, I pushed. And the tree came toppling down, hitting the marshy lawn with a soft crunching thump. I couldn't hear my daughters from outside, but my wife later told me she'd never heard the girls laugh so loud.

Daddy pushed a tree down with one hand.

I untied the ropes, then set about cutting the tree up into logs and sticks. I left them along the wall of the garage to season for a while, stacking the thinner branches into a rack I'd made by the fence and tossing the bundles of twigs into a pile to be used as kindling.

We only light a fire in the evenings, so it might burn for three or four hours before we let it go out. That tree took over ten years to grow and we used up all the wood from it in about two weeks. I thought a lot about that — the whole idea of burning stuff for heat and energy. And that's what we do; despite having other, limitless sources of energy at our disposal, we continue to burn in hours something that takes years, centuries or millennia to form.

As a species, we are setting fire to our house to keep warm. We are, ever so slowly, cremating the earth we live on. I love a good fire, but I miss the tree.

THE OBLITERATION OF THE DÜSSELDORF HOFGARTEN

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Mirko Bonné, Berlin

As this spring changed into summer I celebrated my 49th birthday by going out for dinner on Pentecost Monday with friends, my son and my wife in Hamburg's Portugiesenviertel neighborhood. It was early June, a warm evening on the Hamburg harbour; a storm was supposed to blow in from the southwest, but it failed to come, and we sat out on the sidewalk until late at night, drinking wine, laughing and listening to the distant rumble of the thunder as it drifted past.

One morning soon after I travelled to Düsseldorf to give an hour-long reading from my novel *Night No More* on the terrace of the Theatre Museum, at the edge of the Hofgarten. The organizer picked me up at the train station, and we drove through Düsseldorf in a taxi; I'd never been there before, but I was immediately struck, and profoundly disturbed, by the devastation I saw. We talked about the storm which, in its weakened state, had passed Hamburg by, but had clearly hit Düsseldorf with full force. The clean-up operation was in full swing, but I saw not a single street that wasn't filled with branches and twigs, strewn with trash cans, bicycles or torn-down awnings and billboards. A boat lay stranded in the middle of an intersection.

The closer we came to the Hofgarten, the more devastating seemed **the destruction of the city's urban nature**. On what until a few days ago had been a narrow strip of woodland leading up to the park itself, not a single tree had been left standing. The evening of my birthday, the organizer told me, three separate storms had merged over Düsseldorf to form one berserker hurricane that bore down on the city. She showed me the terrace on which I had originally been supposed to read an hour from now; it no longer existed. Copper beeches and horse chestnuts that were three or four centuries old had been torn from the ground like withered thistles, sunk, branches shredded, in their own canopy of leaves, mown down to lie on top of each other and every which way on the flagstones which were pressed crookedly down into the ground beneath their weight. A hundred, perhaps a hundred and twenty chairs, said the organizer, still pale, had been set up on the evening of the storm for a concert that was hastily adjourned — she could

still picture the string players diving for cover to save their instruments — just before the chairs whirled away like flies, then by entire rows like swarms of flies, rising into the trees while the trees were still standing.

Choked with emotion, I stood for a long while amidst the devastation. Down below, in a grassy hollow filled with tree stumps, I saw the ruin of a greenhouse, crushed and shattered by a fallen sycamore. An old man with a big dog came walking up through the drizzly grey June afternoon, making his way through the gaps in Düsseldorf's devastation, marked off with red and white tape. 'I was seven,' he called over to me. 'I used to go walking here with my father!'

Translated by Isabel Fargo Cole

HOW I DIDN'T STOP GLOBAL WARMING

THE CLIMATE DIARY OF A CONCERNED CONSUMER



Jaś Kapela, Warsaw

I started writing *The Climate Diary* encouraged by Claus Leggewie and Harald Welzer. In *The End of the World as We Once Knew It* they wrote: 'every day we do things that go against our deepest beliefs. This book is about energy consumption, which we increase despite the fact that we know better and often don't have to do it. We do it by using taxis, cars and planes. There are plenty of examples showing how easy it is for us to gloss over the contradictions between our beliefs and our behaviour. Proof? If you are aware of the climate protection issues, start writing your own climate diary, noting how often, in what way and in which situations you break your own principles stemming from that awareness.' As a person aware of the climate protection issues, I have decided to start my diary.

2 December, 10:30 a.m.

I have turned the radiator up. Because I was feeling unwell. And today I really don't want to get ill. I don't have time to be ill. Isn't my health more important than turning the radiator up to generate a bit more heat?

2:30 p.m.

I met a friend for lunch and got some soup to go. I didn't bring a container, so I was given a disposable one made of Styrofoam. And I didn't bring a container, because I wasn't planning to get any takeaways. But the soup was part of the 5 złoty set and I felt like it, but I was afraid that if I ate it straightaway, I wouldn't be able to eat the main. So I got it to take away.

3 December, 3 p.m.

I went to the shop to get tobacco and some linden tea, because I was coming down with a cold. There is nothing like cigarettes for colds. Joke. When you have a cold it's best to stay under a blanket and drink tea. I wasn't planning to get anything else, so I didn't take my shopping bag with me. But when I was out and I got my tobacco, I decided that it

might be a good idea to buy some fruit as well. After all fruit is a natural source of easily absorbed micro-elements and vitamins. But because I didn't bring my shopping bag, I had to take a plastic one from the greengrocer.

4 December

I bought a new computer. Well, not exactly new, as it is second hand, but new for me, because I still have the old one. I got the old one a good few years ago and it really was on its last legs. Kept freezing all the time and stuttering, so I thought it was time to get a new one. Now I'm in a quandary, because the old one still works, even though it likes to freeze and stutter. Well, I'm not going to throw the old one away, I will give it to my brother who will find it some use, I'm sure. To make it worse, the new computer came packed in bubble wrap. And I don't know what to do with it now. It's a shame to chuck it, so it is sitting on the armchair, sending me reproachful looks.

5 December, 12 p.m.

I went shopping. In the greengrocer's I told the shopkeeper that I didn't need the plastic bag just for two onions. 'Always a decagram more,' he cracked a joke. He meant that he would make more money thanks to that plastic bag. It took me a while to get his joke. So we were there, laughing and in the end I took the plastic bag, which I didn't want. I hope he really did make some money on it.

1:18 p.m.

A courier brought a parcel, which reminded me about my dilemma on how to use courier services in an ethical way. As if it wasn't enough that they increase traffic on the roads, couriers' working conditions (as well as sorting departments employees') are truly dismal. But since stating it doesn't help them at all, perhaps I should instead cycle to get all those things, which are so easy to buy online with one click of a button? They might be more expensive, but all in all it would be cheaper, because I wouldn't buy half of those things.

9 December

I have changed the phone and now I'm guilt tripping again. I'm thinking about all those children forced to work in gold and platinum mines, thanks to whom I can enjoy a new mobile phone every other year. I would like to be able to shake their hands one day. To thank them for all those years which kept my life on a steady, technologically advanced level. But I will probably never have the chance; I can only lament their fate fleetingly. Perhaps I should light a candle for them? Or perhaps I shouldn't have changed the phone? After all the old one still works and if I put some work into it, if I got rid of all the junk, it would probably keep working well for quite a while longer. Admittedly I was annoyed with the crappy camera, but if I want a good camera perhaps I should get a camera and not keep changing my mobile every two years in the hope of finally getting a snapper that is good enough. Perhaps I should do just that, but for now what is done, is done. I bought a new mobile and extended my contract with the operator for two more years. Poor us.

10 December

On my way to Lubomierz (a village in the mountains where my grandparents left me a cottage) I bought a yeast pastry and a bagel. Both were put in plastic bags and I was in too much of a hurry to object. There was this experiment once when young pastors were asked to prepare a sermon on the Good Samaritan and then told to go to a different

building to deliver it. Most of them were in such a hurry that they didn't even notice a man lying on the pavement, pretending to have an epilepsy attack. Only a few of them stopped and checked if he was alright.

12 December

I've travelled into the mountains and I'm sitting here writing a book. I came by train and coach, which wasn't too bad for the climate. Today I took a coach to Mszana Dolna, a slightly bigger town than Lubomierz where my grandparents' house is located. I'm wondering now if it was a stupid idea. I bought a lot of things, which I will most likely need, but some of them I could have bought in the village shop (though not most of them). And anyway even if I couldn't buy some of those things in the local shop, perhaps it is time to learn how to cook good meals using products that I can find in the nearest shop. And not just soya milk and sun dried tomatoes from Biedronka supermarket all the time. After all tinned beans are also an excellent product, one that I have not appreciated enough in my cooking up until now. Perhaps it is time to get more friendly? Non-tinned beans would be better, of course, but who has time to soak them? On the other hand if climate matters to me, perhaps I should find the time needed?

Basically I went to town, because I made an attempt at climbing yesterday, but gave up quickly. The crampons I fastened to my boots were broken and I had to adjust them all the time. So I thought I would buy myself new crampons. You would expect to be able to buy them in every other shop in a little town located in the mountains, wouldn't you? After all a lot of people go climbing here and surely they need that kind of a product? But I found out it was not the case. Clearly people have better boots and are more skilled in walking on ice than I am. Nobody here needs crampons. In the end I bought myself a new pair of boots. One good thing is that they are not made of leather, but still quite pretty. I did indeed need a new pair of boots, as I only have a pair of riding boots for winter. And I can't wear riding boots everywhere I go. Or perhaps I can? Perhaps I don't need new boots at all? And some other things I bought? For example, if I had more forethought I would have brought my sunglasses from home and I would not need to buy a new pair. But I didn't have enough forethought. I was too busy doing other things. I didn't think about what I might need in the mountains. As a result I bought even more things, things that I don't need in the long run. And the GDP keeps growing, and growing, and growing. One day it will bury the old world.

There is one more thing that worries me. Usually I don't think about it. It's electricity. I can't live without electricity; I understood it today. It was very windy and suddenly the lights went off. It was 9 p.m. The idea of spending the rest of the evening without power, by candlelight, was unbearable. Even more so when I finally found and lit candles, which were just some pathetic stumps. You couldn't even read. I wrote on Facebook that I had a power cut and asked what to do. A friend inquired how much battery I had left. (That's quite telling too — that I can be without power, but still have enough power to write on FB.) I thought about her question and wrote: 'Do you mean my laptop, tablet, mobile phone or the other mobile phone?' Of course while writing those words I was fully aware of their dubiousness. As a person concerned with the climate issues I shouldn't be showing off with my technological overindulgence, should I? But I feel like doing it, exactly because I shouldn't. I constantly think about reducing my energy consumption. I tend to switch off my computer, tablet and mobile when not using them. Ok, one of the mobiles. But still.

15 December

I'm still in the mountains, which supports my ecological lifestyle. I haven't left the house

for the second day in a row. Of course I'm still emitting CO₂ by using the fireplace, my computer, and so on, and so forth. After reading another text on balanced development — on the economics of waste, to be precise — I stumbled upon the idea that it doesn't make sense to flush the toilet after a wee; we should only do it after a poo. I agree with this thought. Getting the water to the top of the mountain just to let it out mixed with urine seems quite absurd. But it can be difficult to change one's instinctive reactions. I still catch myself flushing after a wee. There is a long way from the resolution to the actual change.

16 December

I have to go to Kielce to stand as a witness in a case about a photo I once took of myself with an inscription that read: 'The Pope is a dick and Poland is a whore'. I don't know if they can find the perpetrators; I don't know who wrote it. And I presume I'm the only witness, as this photo was taken in Berlin. If I wasn't in the picture, there would be no case at all. At least I am not the suspect. But I still have to go to Kielce, which is stupid, because that will increase my carbon footprint. Not to mention the footprint of the prosecutor's office, wasting fuel on such stupid cases.

I made hummus sandwiches for the road and packed a salad, which I have been eating for the third day in a row. It's a leftover from the visit of my Auntie and Uncle and their kids. I had to change in Krakow. The railway station in Krakow has been practically turned into a shopping centre, so there is nowhere to sit down if you don't want to sit in the chain coffee shop, a bakery or a restaurant, but in the end I managed to find a bench where I could perch and eat my meal. I was very proud of doing something so naff as eating home-made food in the middle of this retail temple. Nobody paid any attention to my act of resistance, but that wasn't important. Perhaps today nobody notices it, but tomorrow they might themselves think that it doesn't make sense to buy a hamburger if they can bring a home-made sandwich, which is cheaper, tastier and healthier.

The hearing went on for so long that I didn't even have time to buy anything else to eat. At least I didn't get another plastic bag.

18 December

I went to see a friend in Cieszyn, where more resources are wasted than at home in Lubomierz. For example I bought three pairs of socks just because they were decorated with an inscription saying: 'fuck you'. There was one thing there that made me happy (apart from the fact that trips are generally cool, my friend is cool and it was generally nice there). My friend's toilet was broken and it was not enough to press the button to flush, you had to open the tap too. So flushing the toilet required a moment of reflection, which gave me time to remember that flushing after a simple wee is a waste. It stopped me from doing just that. I only flushed after a longer session.

19 December

I went shopping and forgot to take my cotton shopping bag, because I was only supposed to buy a bread roll and a paper but, of course, there were other things: apples, pickled peppers, another bread roll. I couldn't stuff it all into my pockets but I still refused to take the offered plastic bag.

20 December

I've come back to the house in the mountains and now I'm wondering if sitting here on my own is indeed ecological. I buy fewer things, that's true, but heating adds more to global warming than making plastic bags which I sometimes accidentally take.

Admittedly winter this year is particularly warm, but not so warm as to sit here just in a jumper. Luckily the family will come down soon, which will make it more energy efficient.

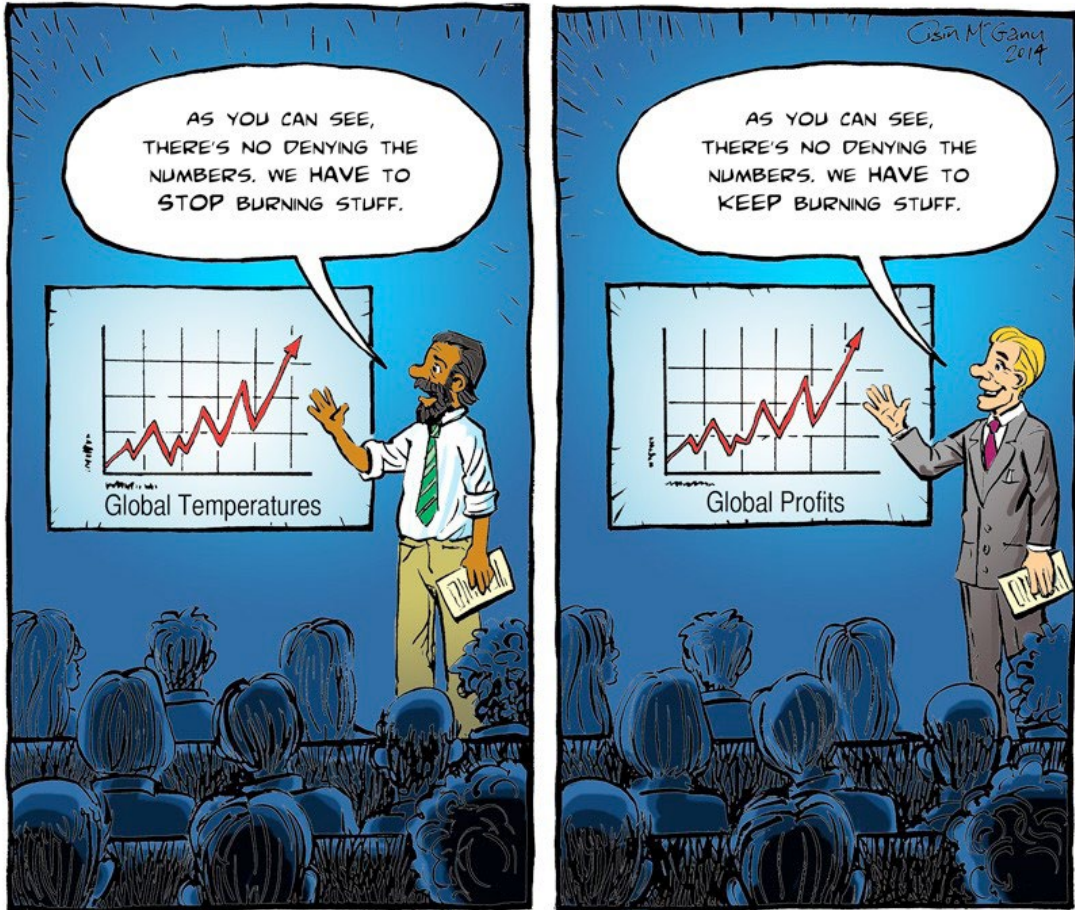
27 December

Christmas, Christmas, Christmas. We ate from morning till night, we managed not to resort to a fistfight, and I was called a fascist only three times. Luckily my mother has done most of the shopping, so I didn't have to concern myself with calculating the amount of carbon dioxide released into the air. But I did tell her off for trying to burn plastic in the fireplace. We have recycling systems; we don't need to burn rubbish. But I don't think I convinced her and she still burns rubbish when I'm not looking. I'm a bit worried about putting weight on, but fortunately I have the metabolism of a 15-year-old, so pretty much everything is out of my system soon after I've eaten it. Let's see what the scales in the gym show, though. When I finally get there. Not flushing after a wee is proving more difficult than I expected, but I am slowly getting used to it. And stopping myself.

30 December

I came back to the city and the plastic bag problem returned. Everybody wants to give them to me. I try to decline, with varied results. It's not always easy to say no, sometimes it is easier to take it and just live with it. I mean, it is always easier, but I don't give up. Luckily there is a shop on my street where they sell different types of grains, dried fruit and nuts or spices packed in paper bags. So I try to shop there. Not that this shop wasn't there before, but I didn't like going there because there used to be a guy who liked to wear a nationalists' t-shirt working there. What's the point of fighting against global warming if you support nationalism? Luckily the staff has changed. I'm not sure if I mentioned it before, but I might become a vegan. That will surely decrease my carbon footprint. The meat industry is responsible for over 20 per cent of CO2 emissions. Well, when you buy vegetables, it is difficult to stop the shopkeepers from putting them in plastic bags, but I'm sure there must be a way around it. I will tackle it in the New Year. That's my resolution.

Translated by Anna Hyde



Oisín McGann

THE TERN



Tony Birch, Melbourne

For more than a year now my elderly neighbour, Jack, has been sorting through his life and getting rid of some of his stuff. While we're not family, and have known each other for just a couple of years, a lot of what he has no more use for has come my way.

He began with hardback copies of *The Encyclopaedia of Australian Tractors* and *Tractors and Modern Agriculture*. He offered them to me one sunny morning as we were talking across the scraggy hedge of lavender that passes for the fence separating us.

Jack knows his tractors and loves talking about them. Had he been a contestant on the old Mastermind television quiz, tractors would surely have been his 'specialist subject'.

Jack spent his working life selling tractors across Victoria in partnership with his twin brother, Ronnie. They set up the business together and a couple of years later married girls from their hometown — in the same church and on the same day.

They'd also planned to retire to a pair of neighbouring beach blocks on the west coast. But just a few months before they were to quit the business the ute Ronnie was driving was washed from a bridge during a flood while he was trying to cross a swollen river out the back of Colac. While the battered wreck eventually turned up a few miles downstream from the scene of the accident, Ronnie's body was never found.

Even though he missed Ronnie greatly, Jack went ahead with his retirement plan just the same, while Ronnie's widow sold their block to 'some city type', as Jack dismissively referred to him. Although the 'city type' built a house next door to Jack, he rarely visited it over the following years before putting it on the market.

I bought the house with the dream of fixing it up in between writing the great novel. But I've done little work on the house since moving in, and have scratched out no more than a few paragraphs.

In addition to his books on tractors Jack has also been handing his old tools across the hedge to me. To be honest they're of as much use to me as the books on tractors. It is not that I don't appreciate Jack's generosity, but I couldn't bang a nail straight to save myself.

Jack has taken great care of his tools. The oiled metal surfaces are rust free, while the wooden handles have been worn smooth by the years of use. Although I don't expect I will do anything with them, each offering, be it a shovel, a hammer or a variation on the basic hand saw has been added to a collection I keep in the room behind the kitchen that overlooks the back yard.

It is also the room where I do my writing. Or to be exact, it is where I am supposed to spend my day writing.

I begin what I misguidedly refer to as my 'writing day' at my desk, armed with a cup of tea and some inspirational music — my 'writing music' as I optimistically refer to it. My working morning, which is not at all long, alternates between staring at the computer screen and then out of the window, to an overgrown garden badly in need of the attention I am unable to give it, as I am busy with my writing.

After an hour or so, sometimes less, I realize that today is not a good day to write. So I get up from my desk, leave the house and walk to the bottom of the garden. I then slip through the gap in the fence and head for the beach.

When I began my daily walks to the beach Jack was always alongside me. Actually it was Jack who showed me the secret pathway, hidden beneath a mass of tea-tree just over my back fence. And it was Jack who guided me along the pathway to the beach, where he shared a second secret with me.

On the morning of that first walk I had just given up on another writing session when Jack found me pacing the front garden. I was on a search, not for a story, but for a humble sentence, or a single word perhaps that might get me started.

'Hey ya, son,' he waved across the hedge to me.

Sure that there had to be something troubling a man beating a track into his yard, Jack walked around the hedge, blocked my path and asked if he could help. When I explained that I was reasonably certain that I had contracted writer's block he looked me in the eye, both puzzled and concerned.

'Writer's block?' he repeated to himself several times. 'Never heard of it. What is it?'

'Well, Jack. It's like having a problem that you can't sort out. Or an idea you're looking for. An idea with words. But words you can't find.'

Jack's eyes lit up, confident he had a solution.

'Well, you've got it half right, trying to work through your problem with a walk. I do that. Take a walk and sort the head out. But going round and round in circles? That's not good for you. You've got to walk in a straight line.'

He waved in the direction of the low hills behind our neighbouring homes. 'A straight line, son. A straight line.'

He then coaxed me down to the bottom of his garden and pointed to a two-paling gap in the fence behind his shed.

'I have thought about putting a gate in here,' Jack explained to me as we climbed through the fence. 'It would be easier than doing this every morning. But to tell you the truth, it wouldn't be as much fun. Makes me feel like a bit of a kid.'

I could see a narrow track ahead of us, disappearing beneath a canopy of tea-tree. I walked behind Jack, along a shaded track that rose sharply, reached a ridge and then sloped gently down to the beach between sand hills and waves of golden grass.

Jack waited for me on the beach as I crossed a strip of sand littered with straps of leathery kelp. We took our time as we walked on, chatting and stopping occasionally to admire the dazzling colours in the rock pools between the beach and the ocean. As Jack identified each species of fish weaving through the forests of seaweed I felt like a boy trailing joyously behind his father.

We had walked for maybe a half hour when Jack left the beach and headed into the

Scientists have tracked that bird to every stop along the way. Same place every year, they stop. They never forget where they've been, or where they're heading. That's their secret. Never forget. Remember that, son.

grass. He walked about thirty metres and then stopped. He nodded in the direction of a shallow depression in the ground.

'There it is.' He pointed to the spot we were both staring at, although I had no idea what I should be looking for.

Jack's eyes widened. 'Well, what do you think?'

I again looked at the flattened bed of grass. 'What do I think about what, Jack?'

If he'd heard my question he ignored it.

'Every summer, they come. Have been since I've had my place. And thousands of years before that, I'd reckon.'

'Who comes, Jack?'

'Not who, son. What. The Tern.'

He said those words — The Tern — quietly and calmly, like I should know, without question, what he was referring to.

Jack then turned around and started back along the beach. He surprised me by breaking into a jog.

I ran after him. 'A Tern, Jack? What is it?'

He stopped on the beach as he took a deep breath.

'The Arctic Tern,' he explained as he walked on. 'It's a bird. A courageous little bird. It comes right here, to this beach every summer, from the top of the world, from the Arctic Circle. 20,000 miles it flies, to get here. And then later on in the year it flies back again. Same distance. Most people never get to see the bird. Spends most of its life in the air.'

I looked across the ocean to the horizon, and then up at the empty sky. 'Must be a big bird, Jack, to fly all that way?'

'Na,' he scoffed. 'Wingspan's maybe a foot across, a bit more. And the bird itself,' Jack clenched his gnarled fist, 'not much bigger than this.'

I whistled with admiration. 'So you've seen it then, Jack? The bird?'

He looked at me and softened his face but said nothing more.

As we headed home I occasionally looked over my shoulder to the clear morning sky as I asked him more questions about the bird.

'From the Arctic Circle, Jack? How do they get here?'

'They fly,' he laughed.

'But how, Jack? How do they know where they're going?' I again stared out to the horizon. 'All that way.'

He stopped and put a hand on my shoulder. I was surprised by the strength of his grip.

'They remember, son. That's how. It takes them months to get here. I read it up. Scientists have tracked that bird to every stop along the way.'

'Same place every year, they stop. They never forget where they've been, or where they're heading. That's their secret. Never forget. Remember that, son.'

He again gripped my shoulder. 'And you know what else?'

He waited for an answer from me, but I didn't have one. 'What else, Jack?'

His eyes glowed with sheer pleasure.

'They live a long life, for a bird that is. More than twenty years, some of them. All that flying, you'd think it would wear them out. But it doesn't. All their strength comes from that flying. And another thing. Over all that time, they mate for life. They fly all over the world to the same place and the same mate, every year. What about that, hey?'

After we had slipped back through the fence following our walk Jack invited me into his garden shed.

'I've got something in here for you,' he said, winking at me cheekily.

His shed was an exercise in order. A vast supply of nails, screws, and nuts and bolts

were arranged in labelled glass jars along the back of a wooden workbench beneath a window looking onto the yard. His garden tools, shovels, rakes and picks of varying sizes, stood to attention along one wall, while his saws, hammers and drills hung from brackets above the garden tools.

There was not a power-tool in sight.

Odd lengths of wood, some of them 'rare finds' according to Jack, lay on a raised open rack across the back of the shed. And below the collection of wood a second shelf had been neatly stacked with several dozen tins of paints and varnishes.

'What are we looking for, Jack?' I wondered aloud, as he rummaged around the shed.

'My binoculars,' he answered as he searched through a cardboard box marked ODDS AND ENDS in heavy lead pencil.

When he did not find his binoculars in the box Jack left the shed and returned with a wooden ladder. He rested it against the back wall and directed the end of the ladder to the top shelf, where a kerosene heater, more cardboard boxes and an old suitcase sat.

As he tested the sturdiness of the ladder I offered my services. 'Can I help, Jack? Let me climb up there for you.'

He waved me away as he put a foot on the bottom rung of the ladder. He climbed up to the shelf and moved one of the cardboard boxes aside as he reached for a second box. As he did so the box cannoned into the suitcase. I jumped back as the case crashed to the floor.

'Shit,' Jack whispered to himself as he looked over his shoulder and down at the suitcase.

He searched through several more boxes before lifting a scuffed leather binocular case from one of them. He took the binoculars out of the case. 'Here they are.'

I stood at the bottom of the ladder as he passed the binoculars down to me. They were in immaculate condition — the dark metal, the chrome, the glass lenses, each surface reflected the sunlight resting against the shed window.

Jack climbed down from the ladder and rested a hand on my shoulder. 'When he heads back this summer, the Tern, you'll be ready for him.'

I looked down at the glasses. 'But what does he look like, Jack? I can't tell one bird from another.'

Jack answered by handing me a book from a shelf above the workbench — *Migratory Birds of the World*. As I flicked through the pages he concentrated on the suitcase that had fallen to the floor. He picked it up by the handle and shook the case. I heard something rustling gently inside. I looked at Jack to see if he had heard it also.

He scratched his head. 'What have we got here?'

He rested the case on the workbench, moved to unbuckle it and then hesitated for a moment before finally opening it. I moved closer to the workbench and looked down at the dazzling sequins sewn into the pure white fabric of what appeared to be a wedding dress.

Jack reached into the case and lifted the dress out. He nursed it in his arms like a newborn baby. 'This is my wife's wedding dress,' he explained. 'She's been gone more than ten years now.'

He slowly circled the room, holding the dress to his body, as if he were waltzing with it. When I saw that he had tears in his eyes I walked out into the garden, leaving him alone.

When Jack eventually came out of the shed he invited me into the house. As we sat at a wooden table sipping mugs of sweet tea he talked about their forty-five-year marriage and his wife's death after a short but painful illness.

'All those years on the road, travelling from town to town. I should have been home

with her. It was only after I'd lost her that I worked it out. We'd spent more time away from each other, more nights in those years in separate beds than where we should have been, in each others arms.'

I felt I should say something. I wanted to tell Jack that I was sure they had loved each other very much, and that their time together would more than have made up for the nights apart. But I couldn't say it. I felt that I did not know him well enough to do so. And besides, we were men, so I said what was expected of men on such occasions.

'You were out there working hard, Jack, for both of you. I'm sure she would have understood.'

He looked into the bottom of his mug as he thought about what I had said.

'We both understood,' he finally answered. 'You might be right. But it changes nothing. Those nights apart add up to years of separation. Wasted years.'

It was early last Spring that I first noticed a change in Jack. I was at the mailbox one morning when he shouted out to me from across the hedge. 'Ron! Hey Ronnie boy!'

He smiled and waved at me, before quickly looking away. He appeared confused and embarrassed. I walked around the hedge. Jack was scuffing the ground with the toe of his boot as he studied a bare patch of grass in his lawn.

'Jack. Are you okay?'

He would not look up at me. 'Yeah. I'm right, son. I was just thinking about something. Don't you mind me. I'm just an old fool.'

In the following weeks I had to return several of Jack's tools after he confided in me that he'd misplaced a hammer or saw — 'I don't want to be a nuisance but have you one I can borrow for a few days?'

I also noticed that he was slowing down, and walked down to the beach with me less often. When I knocked at his door one morning in early summer, there was no answer from Jack. That had not happened before.

I made my way down to the gap in the back fence alone, with the binocular case hanging from a leather strap around my neck. When I reached the ridge above the beach I took the glasses out of the case and scanned the horizon. There were plenty of birds around, seagulls mostly, but no sign of Jack's Arctic Tern.

Were Jack with me he would have asked 'anything out there today?'

After I'd replied, as I always did, 'nothing this morning, Jack', he would have become momentarily disappointed before lifting his spirits. 'Tomorrow. Maybe tomorrow.'

After searching the sky I walked down through the sand hills and along the beach to the spot where Jack was certain the bird would eventually return. It was not there. When I turned for home I noticed someone on the beach in the distance, walking away from me. Although I was surprised to spot his wiry frame I was certain it was Jack. I lifted the glasses. He was heading for the surf beach.

As I ran towards him I called out 'Jack! Jack!'

He did not look around until I was almost alongside of him. He studied me closely, even a little suspiciously. 'Ronnie? Ronnie?' He took a step back. 'Ronnie Boy? Well, I'll be buggered. Where have you been all this time?'

I offered him an open hand. 'Sorry, Jack, but I missed you this morning. Must have slept in. Come on. Let's walk back to the house together.'

He searched along the beach, to where some teenage boys were laying on a grass embankment above the surf beach. With their dark wetsuits glistening in the sun they resembled a colony of seals.

Jack then turned and looked in the direction we had come from. He stared down at the sand, at the impression his footprints had made just a few minutes earlier. He followed their journey back along the beach as an incoming wave slid gently across the

sand and swallowed them.

‘Home?’ He looked bewildered.

‘Yeah. Home, Jack. We should head back now.’

At that moment something fell into place for him. A look of confusion shifted to one of calmness, followed by a slight smile of recognition. He looked down at my open hand as if it were an unintended insult to his independence.

He brushed me aside. ‘Come on, son. I’ve got something to show you.’

Winter is coming and Jack has not walked on the beach with me since that morning. A little over a week ago I was on the track and heading for the beach when a storm hit. As the heavy rain soaked through my woollen jumper and baggy track pants I thought about retreating, or at least returning to the house for a raincoat. I briefly stopped on the track before deciding to go on.

The low sky over the horizon was bruised with heavy weather, while the rain, driven by a southerly gale, stung my face. Although there seemed little point in bothering to remove the binoculars from their case, I took them out anyway and went through the exercise of searching the horizon.

I firstly spotted a cargo ship, overladen with multi-coloured containers. The ship was being thrown around in the white-capped sea like a Lego model. It was not until I lifted the glasses to the sky that I caught a glimpse of a shadow against a cloud, and then the dark smudge of a bird.

Although it was only a brief sighting I immediately convinced myself that I had just seen the Tern. It was in my sights for just a few seconds before disappearing. Perched on the ridge, I scanned the horizon for another half hour or more, but did not see the bird again.

By the time I got back to the house I was wet to the bone and shivering with cold. I threw my clothes in the washer, took a shower and went over the thoughts that had occupied me on the walk home from the beach. After dressing I left the house and ran around the hedge to Jack’s front yard. I knocked at his door several times but he did not answer. I went back to the house and made myself a cup of tea. I then went into the lounge room and flipped through my c.d. collection until I found some writing music — Iron and Wine.

I sat at my desk surrounded by the musty smell of tractor books and the oiled surfaces of metal and wrote the following words to myself:

The Tern has a sharp blood-red beak and wears a black hood with a white cap. When the Tern grazes in the grasslands and low dunes where it prepares its nest its true beauty remains hidden beneath a covering of dull grey feathers. But when it lifts its wings in flight, particularly when gliding, which it does to conserve energy, the bird exposes its translucent mix of rich colouring. The Tern is a bird of strength and beauty.

A THOUSAND WORDS FOR SNOW



Xiaolu Guo, London

Prelude

A great iceberg is drifting on the water. If you were a bird or a fish, and if you followed this iceberg long enough, you would arrive somewhere in Greenland. There you might see a dead seagull frozen on the snow, or the skeleton of a large musk ox on a hillside. Or, you might meet this Inuit family in a small igloo house. Our story starts from their igloo.

So what's this Inuit family doing at this moment? As is not unusual for any family, they have gathered around, engaged in domestic activities. The mother is cooking, her three sons are feeding their dogs. Occasionally they help their mother prepare the food. Their father died a long time ago. He died in a snowstorm while out hunting. The youngest son here is Tekkeit Qaasuitsup. He is only nineteen and a half, but he is the hero of the region and everyone calls him Smart Tekk. He is the one who speaks good English and has ventured far out into the world. He made front-page news from Germany to America, from Russia to Australia. At this very moment, he is telling his family of the adventure he has just had:

'I said to the German people, we call aput — the snow that is on the ground; and qana falling snow and pigsipor drifting snow; mentlana pink snow; suletlana green snow. And that kiln is remembered snow, naklin forgotten snow, and so on. The Germans were intrigued, so they asked me what is 'remembered snow' and what is 'forgotten snow'. I said you can't remember all the snow you have encountered. You only remember some of the snow from your life. For example, the snow that lay on our dead father's body, motela, that snow one can always remember...'

1.

Our young Nanook is asleep in his bed. But this is not Greenland. There is city traffic outside, mixed with the sound of aeroplanes. The curtains are tightly drawn, but still, a beam of morning sunlight is sneaking in and penetrating the darkness.

Tekk opens one eye. He observes this strange space and wonders if he is still in a dream. He closes the eye again. The dreams he has just awoken from seem to be inconsistent with his current surroundings. He dreamt he was swimming with a young polar bear through the water, but the bear swam faster than him because polar bears are famous for their strong long distance swimming. He had to give up the race in his dream. Now he feels as if his face is wet: probably from his swimming in the water. But what sort of dream is going on right now? Tekk opens his eyes again and moves his head on the soft pillow. Well, there is a television set on the wall, a fridge, a desk, a chair, a mirror, a wardrobe, and a bathroom beside his bed. Everything seems clear and concrete in his eyes. This is not a dream then. Tekk sits up with confusion. Then he suddenly recognizes his orange suitcase standing on the carpet in the middle of the room. It is a brand new suitcase his family bought for him before he left Greenland. Yes, it is not a dream: it is real. He is somewhere in Germany. He must have landed here yesterday, after a very long and complicated trip. He vaguely remembers he was on a long distance bus, and then he was put on a small local plane, and then he was in a big international airport, and after that he was flying on a very big plane, and he was given some free wine and alcohol by a smiley stewardess, and after that... he can't remember anymore.

He hears a knock on the door. Tekk does not move at all. There's another knock on the door. He silently places his feet on the carpet. Now he hears someone turning the key in the keyhole and opening the door. There she is: a young white woman, wearing a uniform with a vacuum cleaner beside her feet. Tekk jumps up with astonishment, and asks in his halting English: 'Who are you?'

He realizes he hasn't practised his English lately.

The woman is a bit apologetic when she realizes the hotel guest is still in his room. 'Entschuldigen Sie!' She says: 'Should I come back later?'

But Tekk stops her: 'Wait, you don't go!'

The woman turns back: 'Yes, sir?'

'Is this Berlin, right?'

She smiles. 'Yes,' she answers, 'it is.'

'Where about in Berlin?'

'You are in Hotel Kantstrasse, we are near the Berlin Zoo.'

'Berlin Zoo?' Tekk repeats, slightly surprised.

'I mean, this is a hotel, not a zoo,' she explains in English that is equally hesitant: 'but we are near Berlin Zoo.'

Seeing that Tekk is not responding, the woman asks again: 'You want me to clean up now, or should I come back later?'

Tekk stares at the maid, weakly shakes his head.

The woman leaves with her Hoover, closing the door behind her. Now Tekk sits up. He realizes he is fully dressed. He has slept with his clothes on. He touches his head, finding that there is nothing there apart from his short hair. Where is his walrus fur hat? He loves that old fur hat. He can't walk around in the world without his hat on. He spots it lying on the desk by the window. He grabs it and presses it down on his head. Now he feels a bit better. He pulls open the curtains. Light floods in. He opens the window. Outside there is a city skyline. He can see huge advertizing signs on top of some tall buildings. One reads 'Benz' and another 'BMW'. He looks down. The streets and cars are like small toys. He feels dizzy. He closes the window. Again he walks around in the carpeted room, trying to get used to the space.

He enters the bathroom. The washing basin is strangely designed, like a huge lotus flower. It's not that he has seen many large flowers in his life. As he touches the basin, a ring of lights turn on automatically, just like in a sci-fi movie. Tekk stares at the shiny

washing basin, trying to understand where the light bulb is. Then he gives up. He needs a wash. But there is no faucet for him to turn on. He tries to move his hands under the tap, but nothing comes out. Then just when he lowers his head down to check the tap, a stream of water bursts out and drenches his face and head.

'Tiaavuluk!' Tekk curses, grabbing a towel and wiping his face dry. He opens the fridge. There are many small bottles of wine and vodka. He opens a vodka and drinks it directly from the bottle. It tastes good to him and gives his dry throat a kick. He sits on his bed and sips more, as if he is drinking tap water. He then opens the fridge again and finds a package of peanuts. He eats all the peanuts and brings out another vodka, as well as a coke. When he is about to finish the second bottle of vodka, the door bell rings.

Tekk opens the door. A tall, handsome European man stands there and smiles at him. 'Good morning. You must be Tekkeit Qaasuitsup. Can I come in?'

Tekk nods his head. The man steps in and shakes his hand right away.

'I am Hans. I work for this year's International Global Warming Conference. I will be accompanying you during your stay here.'

'Everyone calls me Tekk.' He answers a bit shyly.

'Sure, Tekk. I speak a little Greenlandic, but I won't embarrass myself here. Is this your first time in Berlin?'

'Yes.' Tekk nods but somehow he feels as if he is being looked down on. So he adds: 'but I have been to Copenhagen once, and to Stavanger. Have you been to Stavanger?'

'Hmm...' Hans shakes his head. He has never heard of such a place. 'I am not sure. Is it in Denmark?'

'No.' Tekk laughs. Hans notices that the boy has a loud and untamed voice and seems to enjoy his laugh. 'It is in Norway! They have got this domkirke. Very big.'

'Domkirke?' Hans is no longer following what the boy says. Besides, he is a bit bothered by the strong vodka smell in the room.

'Yes, a domkirke. A huge old cathedral. Very scary inside.'

Hans decides not to sit down. He checks his watch and seems to be in a hurry.

'That's great to know, Tekk. If I visit Stavanger one day I will go to see the domkirke. But now we are pressed for time. Let me take you for some breakfast, if you are ready. We have a whole day's schedule after that.'

Tekk agrees and puts on his woollen boots. He follows Hans to the door.

'Don't forget your key!' Hans takes the key from the key slot and closes the door behind them.

2.

It is a beautiful café with lots of art hanging on the walls. Tekk feels a bit uneasy sitting on such soft cushions. Hans has ordered some breakfast for them already. A waitress comes and gives each of them a plate: fruit salad for Hans, an omelette for Tekk.

But Tekk stares at his plate, not touching the food.

'I thought you said you like eggs?' Hans leans over, slightly concerned.

'Yes. But don't they have some meat?'

'Meat? Sure, meat is inside the omelette.' Hans points out.

Tekk suspiciously pokes the omelette with his fork. Yes, there is some ham inside. He eats quickly, but he is clearly not satisfied: 'I thought there would be real meat.'

'You want real meat. Okay, I'll ask them for a plate of smoked ham.'

Hans calls the waitress and orders a plate of ham. A few moments later, a large plate of pink tinged meat arrives, decorated with a few slices of melon.

At last, Tekk is happy. He instantly brings out his own walrus ivory knife from his pocket, which sends ripples of shock amongst the people around him. Before everyone's

silent gaze, the young Nanook picks up slices of ham with his knife and swallows them ravenously. Hans watches him eating, but doesn't make any comment.

In no time, all the ham has been dispatched. Only the melon remains on the plate.

Tekk cleans the blade of his walrus ivory knife with a white napkin, then wipes his mouth. He now speaks.

'You know, Hans, this meat is too soft. I like solid meat, like the caribou you get back in Greenland.'

'Right, caribou meat! I'm afraid we don't have that here in Germany.'

'You should try: more solid meat. Good for teeth.'

Hans finishes his fruit salad, and finally says: 'I'm a vegetarian.'

'What is a vegetarian?'

'A vegetarian is someone who doesn't eat meat.'

'Why?' Tekk looks at his German companion in bewilderment: 'You don't have good teeth?'

Hans is amused. 'My teeth are perfect,' he says, 'I'm not that old yet! But it's nothing to do with teeth. It is just...how should I put it?' He thinks for a few seconds, then remarks: 'eating animals has a bad effect on the environment. Nor is it good for one's health.'

Tekk looks at Hans with a quizzical expression. He wants to laugh, but he tries to be polite. All he can say is: 'if my family heard about this, they wouldn't believe it. You know, only caribous eat grass.'

Hans shrugs his shoulder. 'Then I am a caribou. I eat grass and you can eat me. We make up a perfect food chain!'

'You German people are funny,' Tekk says, feeling a bit offended.

Hans finishes his coffee and takes out his wallet: 'I think we should move on. I want to show you around.'

But Tekk can barely stand up. He feels a bit drowsy from the vodka he drank this morning in his hotel room.

'Hey, have some water.' Hans hands him a glass.

3.

Hans and Tekk walk along the street, like a comedy duo: one very tall, the other rather short. One walks fast, the other slow. They trundle down to Savingnyplatz. The street brims with cafes and bars. Tekk looks around as he staggers along, curious about the world around him. He looks drunk, as is obvious to anyone passing. It's strange to see a drunk Inuit, fully dressed up in furs, waddling through a fashionable district of Berlin. Hans tries to guide him as they cross over the street.

They pass a bar decorated with flowers and neon lights. In front of the bar, there are some chairs and tables. A lady in a miniskirt is conversing with a gentleman friend. Her naked legs are exposed, and are very attractive to Tekk's eyes.

Tekk lurches towards the mini-skirted lady. Without saying a word, he lays his head on her white naked legs. The woman recoils in shock. Seeing his obvious drunkenness, she screams. Her gentleman friend stands up and drags Tekk away. He berates him: 'was ist loss mit dir, mensch?'

Hans intervenes, pulling Tekk out just in time, apologizing profusely to the irate couple.

A few minutes later, Tekk finds himself in front of a huge building with a glass structure outside. 'This is the headquarters of the International Climate Change Research Centre,' Hans says as he drags Tekk into the lift. 'I want you to meet the chairman and the organizers of this conference.'

‘Why?’ Tekk feels his head splitting in the elevator. He can barely walk straight, and he feels like vomiting.

‘Because they are the people who invited you for this trip, and pay your hotel bills. They would love to have you speak at the conference.’

As they enter the office, they are told to wait for a few minutes as the chairman is still in a meeting. Tekk sinks his body into a sofa. When Hans returns from the bathroom, he discovers that his friend is already sleeping, snoring loudly.

As Hans waits on the sofa patiently, one of the organizers comes to greet them. But as soon as he sees the state of their guest, he suggests to Hans: ‘why don’t we let this poor fellow rest today, and do some sightseeing if he wants to. He can come back for the conference tomorrow.’

Hans agrees.

In the afternoon, Hans takes Tekk to the Tiergarten, which makes the young man feel much better and more energetic. As they walk deep into the woods, they come across a pond. Some ducks are swimming around peacefully. Then they see a little canoe, with a man and a woman paddling. Tekk stares at the little canoe. He feels his heart swell with yearning. When the couple on the boat wave at him, he takes this as an invitation. He runs along the bank and, without removing his clothes, jumps into the water and swims towards them. This makes the couple on the boat a little frightened and bemused at the same time. Tekk manages to climb onto it in no time.

Tekk is laughing and having fun in his new canoe. Despite Hans’ yells and gesticulations from the bank, Tekk grabs the paddle from the man’s hands and starts to dip it into the water. Hans runs along the bank and yells to the couple: ‘Please excuse my friend! He is from Greenland — he doesn’t know the rules here!’

4.

The press conference is held in the morning. When the general delegates arrive, a line of important speakers are already on the stage. Tekk is on the stage too with a nametag on his chest. He is given a place at the side of the table, next to Hans.

The chairman makes a welcoming speech and emphasizes the deep importance of research into climate change. His speech is long. Tekk starts to doze, slumping in his seat. Then the chair begins to introduce the delegates on the stage: scientists, professors, activists, and so on. When he gets to Tekk, he announces Tekk as the ‘last Nanook from Greenland: the ice melting community.’ The audience applauds with excitement, while cameras click frantically. Hans hints to Tekk that he should stand up for photos.

Then the chairman continues: ‘Tekkeit Qaasuitsup, one of the last Nanook from northern Greenland, will be making a speech in the next few days about his family’s traditional way of life, and what we can learn about the Inuit culture. Now, without further ado, let’s begin the conference...’

A few hours later, a huge close-up of Tekk’s face under his walrus fur hat has appeared everywhere in Berlin’s media. The headlines above the photo say things like: ‘LAST NANOOK IN TOWN!’ or ‘WHAT ESKIMOS HAVE TO SAY ABOUT OUR MODERN WORLD’.

The conference moves along smoothly, and soon all the delegates are having their lunch break. They are in the dining room next to a very lush garden, enjoying a buffet. A number of people come to shake hands with Tekk, asking him about his family and his trip. Tekk’s attention is drawn by something in the garden.

His eyes are following a young woman in a red dress passing through the garden. Hans follows Tekk’s line of sight, and sees the black haired young woman, carrying a caged raven across the flower bed.

‘Did you see that? Hans? That black bird?’

‘Yes. A raven, actually,’ Hans answers, curiously. ‘A raven in a cage. It’s the first time I’ve seen a raven as a pet.’

As they watch the woman, she seems to sense their gazes and looks back. She smiles to them mysteriously. Just when Tekk runs into the garden, she disappears.

‘Sedna! I found my Sedna!’ Tekk cries.

‘What is Sedna?’ Hans follows him out.

‘Sedna! Our Inuit sea goddess!’

‘You mean the raven or the young woman?’ Hans asks.

‘The young woman! Her name is Sedna!’

‘Okay, calm down, Tekk.’ Hans says: ‘Do you want to tell me who she is?’

‘Yes. She was a very beautiful Inuit girl with long black hair, just like that woman.’ Tekk is still walking around restlessly in the garden, hoping to encounter the scene again. ‘Everyone in our region knows the story. Because Sedna was so beautiful, she was always turning down the hunters who came to her house wishing to marry her. But Sedna’s family was very poor, so her father wanted to marry her off. Her father said to her: “Sedna, we have no food and we will go hungry soon. You need a husband to take care of you, so the next hunter who comes to ask for your hand in marriage, you must marry him!” One day a hunter covered in smooth black fur arrived before their igloo, and asked Sedna’s father if he could marry his daughter. Sedna said yes, though she didn’t even see the man’s face. She was then placed aboard the hunter’s kayak and journeyed to her new home. You know what a kayak is?’

‘Yes, I know what a kayak is. So what happened to her and her strange husband?’

‘It was a long way on the sea. It was snowy and windy. They covered themselves in their heavy robes. For the whole tripe, Sedna never saw her new husband’s face. At last they arrived at an island. Sedna looked around. She could see nothing. No hut, no tent, no cooking pots, just bare rocks and a cliff. Her new home was a few tufts of animal hair and feathers strewn about on the hard, cold rocks. As they stepped onto the rocks, the hunter stood before Sedna and pulled down his hood. He let out an evil laugh. Guess what?’

‘Sedna’s husband was not a man but a raven! Is that the story?’ Hans smiles.

‘Yes, you Germans are clever people! He is a big ugly black crow!’

‘So then what? Did she live with that evil bird for the rest of her life?’ Hans asks impatiently, aware that everyone around them is finishing lunch. Yet Tekk and Hans have not started eating yet.

‘Of course Sedna didn’t want to live with that ugly black bird. But it was a long way home. She couldn’t just go back by herself...’

At this point the conference organizer comes to them and interrupts Tekk’s story. ‘Hello Tekk, hello Hans, I hope you are enjoying the press conference this morning?’

Tekk shakes hands with the organizer. He then realizes how hungry he is. He rushes to the food table, grabs a plate and serves himself some food.

‘Indeed. I just hope our friend from Greenland can take a whole week of conferencing!’ Hans greets the organizer, heaping salad onto his plate at the same time.

‘Don’t worry. If our Inuit friend gets bored with all the talks, you can take him sightseeing. There is lots to do in Berlin — the Holocaust Museum, the Checkpoint and so on. What do you think, Tekk?’

Tekk’s face cracks into a dry smile. He is busy with his deep-fried schnitzel.

‘How did you find Berlin, Tekk? Have you seen our famous bear yet?’ the organizer asks.

‘Bear?’ Tekk swallows some schnitzel, startled. ‘You have bears in Germany?’
‘Yes,’ the organizer answers, ‘we have our own famous polar bear. His name is Knat.’
‘You are teasing me!’ Tekk stops eating, and is exasperated. ‘Where is he? Can we go to see him now?’ He turns imploringly to Hans.
Hans laughs. ‘Not now,’ he says, ‘but maybe later if you are not too tired.’
Journalists crowd around them, urging Tekk to pose in his fur hat and to smile at the camera. Tekk poses with the hat, but he cannot summon a smile.

5.

Tekk and Hans are queuing in front of Berlin Zoo. Like them, there are lots of people waiting to enter. Eventually, Hans gets hold of two tickets.

As they pass the entrance, Tekk is already impressed by the scale of the zoo, with its lush plantations and artificial hills. He asks lots of questions.

‘So people find all sorts of animals and then put them here, not killing them?’

‘No. That’s why we can see them, I mean, to be able to see a live tiger eating and running before our eyes.’

‘A tiger!’ Tekk exclaims: ‘I saw them on TV. Very scary animals! I don’t want to see them. Please don’t take me to meet one.’

‘Okay, no tigers then.’ Hans smiles, leading him further into the zoo. ‘I will make sure you don’t meet any animal you don’t want to meet. But you haven’t finished your story yet. About Sedna! What happened after that beautiful girl married the ugly raven?’

‘Yes... Sedna discovered her husband was only a black crow. Frightened and saddened, she tried to escape, but the big bird would drag her to the edge of a cliff, threatening to push her off. The bird also begged her to be his companion, as his life was too lonely to endure. So she became the raven’s wife, living on bare rocks. Everyday, the raven would fly out and bring back home raw fish. And that was the only food she could eat. She cried and cried and called her father’s name. The howling arctic winds carried the sound of Sedna’s weeping cries all the way to her father’s ears. Sedna’s father recognized the call in the air and knew it came from his daughter’s weeping. One day—’

Tekk stops narrating the tale. He is distracted by some big animals in front of him. His face is anguished and frightened. They are in front of some gorillas. Apparently Tekk has never seen a gorilla in his life. He is crying and laughing at the sight of such large, dark, human-like animals.

‘Maybe they are also men, don’t you think, Hans?’ Tekk asks with a trembling voice.

When a gorilla comes towards them, Tekk becomes very still. Then suddenly he drops to his knees, facing the fence and praying to the gorilla.

Hans observes Tekk’s strange behaviour, raising an eyebrow but saying nothing.

They move towards the enclosure where the giraffes live. Tekk carefully observes the towering animals, impressed by their long necks.

‘I wish I had such a long neck, so I could see the enemy coming from a far distance.’ Then he kneels down again: ‘Hans, we must pray. Otherwise they will revenge us one day.’

Hans shrugs his shoulders, watching Tekk pray to the animals while murmuring a string of inaudible words.

Finally they walk towards the zoo’s most famous tourist attraction: the polar bear. The area is surrounded by tourists. Everybody is waiting by the fence with their cameras and smart phones. According to the news report, the famous bear has made no appearance for a few days.

But as soon as Tekk gets close to the fence, things change. From behind some large

rocks, a huge white body gradually appears. All the visitors hold up their cameras with anticipation. Tekk stares at the great bear, the famous Knat, who is now sitting on a rock by the water, looking bored and lonely. Paying no attention to the tourists and constant clicking cameras, the polar bear surveys the shallow water around him.

‘Oh Tekk, you are lucky to have a chance to meet our city’s super star. He has created about 2 million euros annual income for us.’ Hans says with some excitement.

‘How?’ Tekk asks.

‘How? You see all these people here? They bought tickets just want to see the polar bear.’

‘Knat...’ Tekk murmurs. ‘In Greenland we don’t wish to see bears face to face. We would wish them the best of luck, but don’t want to invite them any closer.’

A team of school kids arrive. They push Tekk to the side and jump around, trying to catch a glimpse of the super star animal.

‘Well, Knat has not been very happy in the last few months. Some animal experts say he is missing his native land, or he needs some companion. He does look a little sad. Sometimes he refuses to come out to bathe in the sun. He just hides in his caves, so no one can see him.’

Tekk seems to understand this situation very well. He says; ‘I would be the same, if I were put in a big cage. I would die, I think, probably in three days.’

The more Tekk watches the bear, the more he is affected. As if caught by some magic power, Tekk is rooted to the ground. His hands grip the fence. His eyes follow every movement the bear makes. And he speaks as if in a dream: ‘I think he knows me...’

Under Tekk’s gaze, Knat finally seems to respond to Tekk. The animal’s eyes shine with sadness and hope. Tekk is in a trance, and keeps murmuring. ‘Oh Hans,’ he says, ‘he is watching me. I think he knows me...’

6.

A gust of wind blows above the zoo, carrying the sound of sirens and city traffic. Knat suddenly makes a sorrowful and angry cry. Slowly, he walks back to his cave, and decides to hide himself away for a little while. Tekk shakes himself as if from a swoon, rubbing his eyes. Hans asks if he’s alright. Tekk says nothing, pulling at the fence, his head down. Then, suddenly, as if snapping out of a dream, Tekk resumes his black raven story.

‘So I was telling you that Sedna had to become the raven’s wife, and cries her eyes out on the cliff every day. Then one day, Sedna’s father heard his daughter’s cries through the snowy wind. He felt very guilty for what he had done to his daughter. So he decided it was time to rescue her. He killed a big walrus, preparing food to eat for the next several days. He loaded up his kayak with food and water, and followed the sound of the crying. He paddled for three days through the icy arctic waters to Sedna’s home. As soon as he approached the island of Sedna’s husband, he saw a red figure standing on a cliff. He recognized his daughter, wearing the same red dress she had had on when she left home. She was so happy and surprised to see her father, she ran towards him and quickly climbed into his kayak. They paddled away without hesitation. After many hours of travel, Sedna and the father turned and saw a black speck far off into the distance. They knew it was Sedna’s angry husband flying to chase her.’

At this point the polar bear inside the cave howls twice, as if he can hear the story and understands it well. The bear then emerges from his cave. Tekk stops speaking: he cannot help but be drawn in by the bear. The bear seems to meet Tekk’s gaze.

‘Maybe we should walk around the fence, in between the tourists,’ Tekk suggests. ‘So I can see if the bear really recognizes me.’

As they walk around the enclosure, at first the polar bear loses sight of Tekk. But after

a few moments, the animal finds Tekk again amongst the crowd. It's like some electric current passes between their eyes. But then suddenly two zookeepers distract the bear by throwing a large rubber seal into the enclosure, their hope being to get the depressed bear to do some exercise. Knat seems to be roused into an angry state, leaping from his rock, and starts to tear the rubber seal apart.

Tekk turns away in disgust. He drags Hans away from the enclosure to a bench near a tree. With a sigh, he continues the story: 'So the big black raven chased after his wife, steadily gaining on her, riding on the wind. Finally he swooped down on the kayak. Sedna's father took his paddle and struck at the raven, but missed it. The huge bird continued to harass them. Finally the raven swooped down near the kayak and flapped his wing upon the ocean. A vicious storm began to brew. The calm ocean soon became a raging torrent, tossing the tiny kayak to and fro. Sedna's father became very frightened. He grabbed Sedna and threw her over the side of the kayak into the ocean. "Here," he screamed: "here is your precious wife. Please do not hurt me. Take her!" Sedna screamed and struggled as her body began to go numb in the icy arctic waters. She swam to the kayak and reached up, her fingers grasping the side of the boat. Her father, terrified by the raging storm, thought only of himself, as he had always done. He grabbed the paddle and began to pound against Sedna's fingers. Sedna screamed for her father to stop but to no avail. Her frozen fingers cracked and fell off into the ocean. Gradually, all her fingers turned into seals and swam away under the water. She tried again to swim and cling to her father's kayak, but again he grabbed the paddle and began beating at her hands. Sedna's hands froze and cracked off. The stumps slowly drifted to the bottom of the sea, this time turning into whales and walruses. Sedna could fight no more and began to sink.'

'What a sad story,' Hans gasps. 'The father is as bad as the raven.'

'In Sedna's desperation,' Tekk went on, 'she turned her body parts into sea creatures — her hair became millions of shrimps and little fish, her intestines became lobsters and octopuses, her sorrow became seaweed and her longing became a sand dune on the beach. Finally her red dress became the Mara Mountain towards the North Pole, protecting people from the icy wind. Now all the hungry Inuit families could get their food from the rich sea which had become filled with sea animals. They could now build their huts at the foot of the mountain. It is for this reason in our region that after a hunter catches a seal he will kneel towards the direction of the Mara Mountain and drop water into the mouth of the mammal before he kills it, a gesture to thank Sedna. Sedna is our sea goddess.'

'But what happened to that horrible father and the evil bird?' Hans asks.

'Both the father and the evil bird were taken by a polar bear. Actually the polar bear was the master bear of that region and he knew all this was going on. So he punished the raven and the father.'

Tekk has finished his story. They both grow silent, as they gaze back into the distance. Inside the fence, the bear has already retreated into his cave. Hans sees this as an opportunity to leave. He promises Tekk that they will come back to see Knat tomorrow.

7.

The evening passes for Tekk without any significant moments. He is in some grand restaurant, with the most beautiful seafood and meat before him, with luminous candles on the table and inky red wines and golden beer. But Tekk only manages to eat two pieces of roast beef. He feels depressed, although many friendly delegates are trying to hold a conversation with him. But he has no vocabulary for the cultured white

Europeans. Nor can he involve himself in any sophisticated discussions about carbon dioxide emissions or levels of acidity in the oceans. He misses his family, his favourite dogs, his igloo, and most of all, the freedom he can only feel in his natural environment. He asks Hans to walk back with him to the hotel, while everyone is having wine and gooseberry cakes.

Later, alone in his hotel room, Tekk feels a little better. He removes all of his clothes, stripping down to his shorts, although he leaves his walrus fur hat on. He loves his fur hat. It reminds him of all those great times when he and his father went hunting for walrus, and watching his father skin animals with his knife. He misses his father, though he knows his father's dead body is lying there senselessly deep in the snow by their house. Suddenly, tears run down his face.

He lies in the bed, pressing the remote control, flicking through TV channels.

On one channel there's a cooking programme, on another some soap set in a rich family's house somewhere in Europe. On another is a police story with car chases and gun fights. Tekk watches this for a while, but it's in German. He soon grows bored, and his feeling of loneliness returns.

He switches off the TV, lying still, trying to sleep.

Through the thin wall, he hears the noise of two people making love next door. The noise grows louder and louder.

He lies there, eyes wide open, listening to the noise.

The next day, Tekk asks Hans to take him to the zoo again. This time, Hans only accompanies him to the entrance, and tells Tekk that he will come back to meet him by the gate in three hours time, because he has to work at the conference. Tekk is grateful to have three hours by himself in the zoo. He walks straight to his friend's enclosure, and in no time, he is standing in front of Knat, the lonely polar bear. He watches the creature's every single move, but is careful to remain hidden, so that the bear doesn't see him.

Today, around the enclosure, there is a television crew from the BBC reporting on the famous polar bear. Tekk watches a blonde woman presenter, speaking in front of the camera in English:

'Welcome to the BBC World Service! Right now I'm in the Berlin Zoo, standing in front of Knat, their famous polar bear. I want to give you some insight into why Germans are worried about him and what is the real problem. We were told by the zookeepers that Knat has been leading a very reclusive life and stays in his cave for most of the time. He's also been showing some signs of losing his appetite. Usually polar bears would eat raw meat, but recently he's lost interest in that, and instead he's begun to eat human food like vegetables, cooked food — even croissants and bread which the tourists give him. Could the famous carnivore become a vegetarian? In a week's time, Knat will celebrate his fifth birthday with the zookeepers and I'm sure we'll be seeing plenty of cute photos of Knat's birthday party...'

The bear in the background roars towards the camera, which frightens the television presenter slightly. But she adjusts her smile and continues her report. Then a group of animal rights activists swarm in front of the camera, raising their banners and shouting together: 'Caging is a crime!' The bear seems to be getting more and more disturbed. But at this point, Tekk steps out from behind the tree, and into Knat's field of vision. After a few moments, Knat notices his friend. Then he gradually grows quiet. Tekk is chanting words in his Inuit language, louder and louder. His chant seems to pierce the noise of the protesters and the crowd of tourists. The bear seems to sway back and forth in time with his chant. And then the eyes of bear and man lock again.

It's at this point that everyone else begins to notice the strange scene happening between the bear and the fur-clad Asiatic man standing by the fence, who's producing

a resonant song from deep inside his chest. Knat releases a long sad groan in response, and raises his head, stretching his whole back, as if waving his head to Tekk. Suddenly, there is a silence, only punctuated by the background sound of traffic, and the occasional animal noise. Tekk and the bear stand frozen, gazes locked, as the crowd and zookeepers look on. But then, like a string breaking, an air of hopelessness comes over the bear, and their mutual gaze is broken. Knat, as if releasing some heavy weight, turns to go back into his cave, dragging his paws over the concrete. Tekk leaves quickly before anyone can question him.

8.

The week-long conference is heading towards its climax. It's the morning Tekk is going to give his speech. He has a text Hans helped him to write. Over the last few days he has been practising it and he has learnt to read it quite well. This is his speech:

'Dear delegates of the 5th Global Warming Conference,

My name is Tekkeit Qaasuitsup and I am from a village in Greenland. I feel honoured to be able to present the story of my family and my people to you here. I must admit that I know nothing of global warming or climate change, but still, I want to thank the organizers for inviting me to come to Berlin.

Here is my story: I am from an Inuit tribe. We are hunter-gatherers. I am indeed a Nanook, that is, a good hunter. Originally, Nanook in my language meant the master bear. In our culture, polar bear is the master of all bears. Only he can decide if hunters deserve success in finding and killing bears; he will also punish the bad hunter who violates the rules. My father was a bear hunter and so am I. We have to hunt for our food. We have no shops near us. The nearest supermarket to our house is three days away by dog sled. So we have to fish and hunt to keep our life going. We always listen to the calls of the bear master when we hunt. After arriving in Germany, I was very surprised to see our master was caged in the Berlin Zoo. So, while I have been here, I have had to go there every day to worship him. I am worried about his condition. I hope he is not going to punish me one day.

The final thing I want to do is thank my friend Hans. He has taught me good manners and I have learnt through him something of the European way of life. But I am not sure I will become a vegetarian like Hans, because if we eat the good animals from the sea and we only eat what we need to eat, then there is no need to be a vegetarian. We can't eat three seals in one week. We can only eat so much food every day. It's strange then, for me, that there is so much food in the supermarket. What happens when they can't sell it all by the end of the day? They throw it away, or let it rot? Anyway, I know big cities have more opportunity for living, but I prefer my hometown and I already miss being there. I hope to fly back as soon as possible. This is the end of my speech. Please excuse my English and thank you for listening.'

After this speech, everyone applauds and agrees Tekk is the most charming guest in the conference. He is instantly asked for photographs by his new fans. A few minutes later, a man in a nice suit approaches Tekk. He introduces himself as Werner Vidoni and he is the head of Berlin Zoo, specializing in animal behaviour.

'What do you want from me?' Tekk is a bit surprised.

'Oh, we need your help, Tekk, if you don't mind my direct approach.' Werner explains.

'What sort of help?'

'You already met our polar bear in the zoo, and you know he is very precious for our city. Indeed, I have witnessed your power with our Knat. I was there the other day, when you calmed Knat down.'

'Yes, I know Knat.' Tekk answers somewhat enigmatically.

I said to the German people, we call aput – the snow that is on the ground; and qana falling snow and pigsipor drifting snow; mentlana pink snow; suletlana green snow. And that kiln is remembered snow, naklin forgotten snow, and so on. The Germans were intrigued, so they asked me what is ‘remembered snow’ and what is ‘forgotten snow’. I said you can’t remember all the snow you have encountered in your life. You only remember some of the snow. For example, the snow that lay on our dead father’s body, motela, that snow I will never forget...

‘Knat was born in our zoo and his mother died shortly after his birth. So he has lived a somewhat lonely life for a bear. Now in the last several months he has grown more and more reclusive, and he eats less and less. We are quite worried about Knat’s health. Since you are from Greenland, the native land of polar bears, I wonder if you might have some good suggestions for us. And if you like, we can invite you to accompany our bear keepers, so you can get closer to Knat and tell us what you think about his diet and his behaviour.’

This is a surprising appeal for Tekk. He is lost for words. He nods his head in earnest.

‘Tekk loves Knat, I am sure he will be very happy to have an opportunity to get closer to him.’ Hans hears the conversation and answers for Tekk.

Next day, Tekk is picked up by the zookeeper from the hotel. On the way to the zoo, two documentary filmmakers with a camera and recording machines also join them. They want to make a ‘Reality TV Show’ about how an Inuit trains the bear and they believe the whole of Germany will love to watch the show. The team is received in the zoo by the enthusiastic staff. Before Tekk enters a back door leading towards the inner enclosure occupied by Knat, he kneels, facing the cave where the bear is, and prays silently. When the ritual is over, he wipes dust off his trousers and says: ‘Now we can go in.’

The zookeeper is curious about Tekk’s ritual, he asks: ‘Tekk, what do you believe?’

The young Nanook answers with an old saying from his Inuit culture: ‘We do not believe, we fear.’

‘You fear?’ the zookeeper repeats. ‘What about God? Do you have some kind of god like we do here in Europe?’

‘God? Everything is god. Seal is god, walrus is god, fish is god, and polar bear is god too.’

‘So do you fear these gods? I mean, if you don’t believe in them, you wouldn’t fear them...’

‘Belief is not important for us, but fear will protect us. We fear nature,’ says Tekk.

The documentary filmmakers record Tekk’s speech. Soon Tekk’s mysterious answer will become an enigma for the Berlin media. Soon the genial Nanook will become a celebrity, as famous as Knat. Tekk’s photo will appear in *Bild* and *Süddeutsche Zeitung* alongside that of the polar bear Knat, with the headline: WE DO NOT BELIEVE, WE FEAR.

The day passes with Tekk inside the enclosure, along with the bear and the animal specialists. Tekk has been talking to the zookeeper about his and his father’s knowledge of polar bears. ‘You know, polar bear is the great long distance swimmer. But here in the zoo, he can swim nowhere and he can’t do any exercise really.’ The zookeeper nods his head. He knows the problem well, but he doesn’t think they can change Knat’s living space.

9.

‘We can’t return our Knat to nature, because he was born in captivity and has never lived outside of the zoo. He won’t even have the ability to catch his own food. He will just die if we let him out,’ the zookeeper explains to Tekk.

Tekk has no more words to offer. Before he leaves the zoo, he suggests: ‘Knat needs a friend, his own kind of friend to live with.’

‘Yes, that’s the right thought.’ The zookeeper says. ‘We have decided to raise 500,000 euros to buy another polar bear — a female one from Norway, to be the mate of Knat and to conceive future baby bears. We have already secured some money and we are confident that we can raise the rest of fees to host our new Mrs Knat.’

But only our young Nanook knows that his friend inside the fence is reaching the end of his life. The bear is short of breath, and he hasn't eaten half of what he is supposed to eat in the last few days. He has no more strength, not even bringing himself out of the cave to meet the public.

Next day, when Tekk is accompanied by Hans to the airport along with his orange suitcase, they find hundreds and thousands of people gathering in front of the television news in the departure hall. Everyone is watching the direct live broadcast from Berlin Zoo: Knat is dead! He died from a mysterious disease, apparently a tumour in his heart. Both Tekk and Hans freeze in front of the news report. It says Knat's sudden death has caused an international outpouring of grief. Hundreds of fans are visiting the zoo, leaving flowers and mementos near the enclosure. The mayor of Berlin, Mr Herzorg, is speaking on the television now: 'We all held him so dearly. He was the star of our city. But he will live on in our hearts. We will create a monument for coming generations to preserve the memory of this unique animal.' The report also says that Knat's remains may be stuffed and put on display in the Museum of Natural History. The news ends with a song performed by children: 'Knat, The Dreamer, we love you forever'.

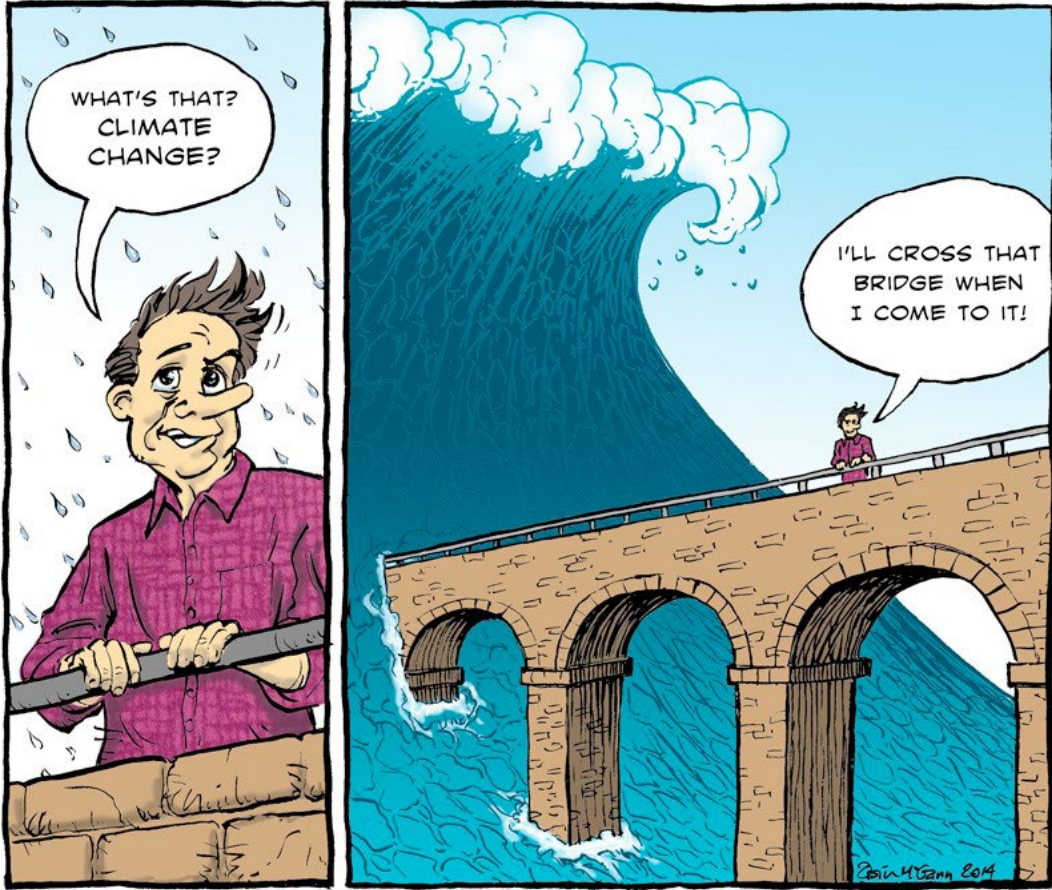
Alone on the plane, Tekk contemplates the floating clouds outside his cabin. The scenes from the last few days are like a film playing before his mind's eye. He falls asleep as the plane makes its way north. In sleep, he returns to the dream he had a week ago, on the night after he arrived in Germany. He is swimming with a young polar bear in the arctic sea. But the bear is such a good swimmer, he soon leaves Tekk far behind. In no time the bear is nothing but a small, bobbing head on the swell far ahead, and then, slowly it fades, becoming indistinguishable from the grey sea surface and the dull sky. Tekk scans the horizon, hoping to catch a glimpse. But there is nothing. He is alone, far out in the ocean. Then, suddenly, the sky to the north, begins to change its form. The light and clouds merge to form a smile — a smiling bear head hovers before him in the fading day's rays, and the grey waves are touched by a shimmering whiteness.

Epilogue

A great iceberg is drifting on the water. If you were a bird or a fish, and if you followed this iceberg long enough, you would arrive somewhere in Greenland. There you might see a dead seagull frozen on the snow, or the skeleton of a large musk ox on a hillside. Or, you might meet this Inuit family in a small igloo house. Our story continues from within their igloo.

So what's this Inuit family doing? As is not unusual for any family, they have gathered around, engaged in domestic activities. The mother is cooking. Her three sons are feeding their dogs. Occasionally they help their mother prepare the food. Their father is dead long ago. He died in a snow storm while out hunting. And now their youngest son, Smart Tekk, is telling his family of the adventure from which he has just returned:

'I said to the German people, we call aput — the snow that is on the ground; and qana falling snow and pigsipor drifting snow; mentlana pink snow; suletlana green snow. And that kiln is remembered snow, naklin forgotten snow, and so on. The Germans were intrigued, so they asked me what is 'remembered snow' and what is 'forgotten snow'. I said you can't remember all the snow you have encountered in your life. You only remember some of the snow. For example, the snow that lay on our dead father's body, motela, that snow I will never forget...'



Oisín McGann

REFLECTIONS BY WRITERS

AFTERWARDS



Xiaolu Guo, London

A London-based Canadian writer attacked me for being someone who works on a climate change project but flies around the world in order to do that work. She said that this was hypocritical and unacceptable. There is some truth in what she said, and I feel it keenly. But the spirit of her remarks didn't get to the whole truth of the matter. Say I hadn't signed up for this project. I would still have produced a vast carbon footprint (indeed, probably bigger than the one I actually produced), by flying back and forth to China visiting my family, and by flying back and forth to Australia in the cheapest season to see my partner's family. I am not trying to excuse myself here, I am trying to discuss the core problem of current reality.

The problem of climate change is the problem of our global economical structure. Inequality is increasing. Both I and this Canadian writer belong to a group that has the resources to live a global life to some extent — we use planes to visit family members and conduct our work as well as spend holidays by flying from one city to another. Some other immigrants have to jump on a boat, risking their life inside a ship container and hoping to arrive in a 'better' country. Lots of them don't survive the trip. We human beings live in an age of 'life is elsewhere', the grass is greener in front of other people's houses. The global system does encourage people to live in this way - even if you are poor you will still aspire to become rich and to live that lifestyle. This is the disease of our age. What's that big word again? Anthropocene.

Maybe it's not such a big deal for a Canadian writer, since they have been enlightened by Naomi Klein for the last 15 years. But for someone like me, without participating in the Weather Stations project I would have never witnessed how a rural Irish community has fought for its way of life in the face of terrible urban industrial developments. It has enabled me to write about them and to tell their stories to other people. The same goes for my understanding of how acidity and increasing sea temperatures are killing coral in Australia's Great Barrier Reef. When I saw and touched the grey skeletons of dead coral in the ocean I had to write about it. Because of these

opportunities to learn and to see, I came to realize that we don't actually know enough about our environment and how species on this planet survive. It's this ignorance that enables our human ego to eat away what's left on this planet. Education about the environmental crisis has to start in primary school with very young kids. And I really think the next generation will be our best hope. Indeed, they are our only hope. There is a positive side as well as a negative side to almost everything. It depends on what you make of your experience as a human finding yourself in whatever field you operate in. The most difficult part for me has been to translate scientific language into literary language, which has to be done in writing and public lecturing. So I hope this bitter Canadian writer will read what I wrote from those trips, if she is not too busy moaning about the End of the Nature. Now, the nearly two-year-long Weather Stations project is coming to an end. But I feel that I have only begun to scratch the surface of the whole thing. The story has only just begun. For sure, we are not at the end of history.

10 THINGS I HAVE LEARNED DURING MY FIGHT AGAINST GLOBAL WARMING



Jaś Kapela, Warsaw

It's impossible to list everything I have learned and understood, everything the Weather Stations project has given me, but I will try to make a list of the ten most important things:

1. I was reminded about the importance of the issue of global warming and also why most people couldn't care less about it. Or, if they could, they still don't care enough. But despite everything, it is not completely alien to them, it affects them.
2. I have learned to take my water bottle with me everywhere I go, but I have also learned to drink all the water from it before getting on the plane. You can refill it pretty much straightaway with tap water in the bathroom.
3. Tap water is tasty and healthy, but people still prefer to buy bottled water, which costs 2000 times more and leaves unbelievable amounts of plastic on the planet. [There is a nice film about it.](#)
4. There is so much plastic in the world that [the Great Pacific Garbage Patch was formed](#). (See also the film *Plastic Paradise*.) Albatrosses eat plastic, as can be seen in [photos made by Chris Jordan from Midway](#), and as a result they die. As do fish. The populations of numerous species of fish have decreased within the last forty years by 90 per cent. Eating fish that have eaten plastic can cause various diseases in humans, including cancer.
5. Industrial farms seen from a satellite are more beautiful than Salvador Dali's paintings. And more terrifying. No wonder conceptual artist Mishka Henner exhibits them in galleries. You can see some [on his website](#).

6. Meat consumption is killing the planet. The meat industry is responsible for 18 per cent of greenhouse gas emissions, more than transport. Forests are cut and monoculture GMO plants cultivated for animal feed, generously sprinkled with pesticides, which cause the death of millions of insects and birds. And meat consumption is still on the increase.
7. In the space of the last few years, populations of animals living in the wild decreased by 50 per cent, but population of animals reared in cages went up. Those animals never see the sun, never touch the soil. We have organized a little animal Auschwitz for them, but on a larger scale. What's more, we pump them with antibiotics and as a result those same antibiotics will stop having an effect on us.
8. Sometimes you have to travel by plane, even if it is against your deepest beliefs. Though **there are people who think that we don't have to fly at all**. And I'm inclined to agree with them.
9. I'm cool, I'm smart, I'm inspirational. Even at events in London or Berlin. Though I think I should learn English properly. Or should I? There are so many great translators. Perhaps it's better not to take the work away from them. Anyway poetry read in Polish sounds beautiful. So let's have it in Polish.
10. Everything is possible. I still don't know how to write about global warming to captivate the attention of owners of companies, which pollute our planet, or the politicians, who are paid by them, but I'm not giving up. And anyway — as far as I know — they do understand the problem. But we still don't exert enough pressure on them, so it's worth writing about it to make a change.

Translated by Anna Hyde

FINDING REASONS TO GIVE A DAMN



Oisín McGann, Tallaght

When you consider that everyone talks about the weather, that it is a common interest for people around the world, it would be easy to assume that we all care about the climate. Strangely, this is not the case. To put it bluntly, for most of us, deep down, for most of the time, we just don't give a damn.

As a Writer in Residence for Weather Stations, I thought I had a reasonable knowledge of the subject for someone with no scientific background. I was intrigued to meet the other writers and discover how different we all were, not just in the kind of work we each produced, but also in our attitudes to the issue.

But what knowledge I had fell far short of what I needed to write — or draw cartoons — about what is arguably the most important challenge facing our civilization. I saw this project as a means to improve on that, to explore the different facets of the issue and, well . . . find out what was going on.

Most of all, I wanted to know why, as a society, we didn't care enough. That fascinated me.

Part of the project has involved meeting people with relevant areas of expertise. Whenever I met anyone who knew more about climate change than I did, I posed this question to them:

'If I was someone who lacked the knowledge or perspective to understand the threat of climate change, can you tell me why I should care?'

The best answer came from Professor John Sweeney, of NUI Maynooth. His response was: 'Less land, less food, more conflict.'

For the most part, however, the question was met with reactions that ranged from dismay to disgust, a rolling of the eyes at the short-sighted or inherently selfish nature of human beings. Often, the attitude of people who understood and appreciated the threat was one of impatience — a long-suffered frustration that anyone still had to be convinced. There was a sense that, since the world of science had already given us the information, the cold hard facts, no further motivation should be needed.

I realized that a wide, fundamental gap existed between those who understood the issue well enough and those they needed to reach. The experts believed that to present facts was enough — that it was now up to the uninitiated to step up and get on board. The uninitiated, having enough on their plate already, had yet to be given enough reason to take an interest.

I recognized this gap in understanding. Writers face it, between ourselves and our readers, all the time.

This, I decided, was what our project was all about. People are not rational beings; we are emotional creatures who act rationally on occasion. Data on geographical anomalies was never going to make people think differently about how we affect our climate. These distant, theoretical things could not convince us to give a damn.

Empathy, on the other hand, has always been one of our most powerful motivators. A vital element in any story and in the creation of characters, it's also key to working with young people, who live their lives in the now and the immediate future. It was the focus of my workshops with the students, how we create empathy using just words, how we provoke emotions. It was to find the compelling elements in everyday life and relate them to bigger, dramatic ideas and more abstract themes.

Life is complicated, stressful and demanding. It's not natural to go looking for more things to be concerned about. You don't care about flooding until it comes down your street. You don't care about drought until you don't have water to flush your toilet. However, if we can successfully imagine how our weather might affect our daily lives, then the threat of climate change can be made to feel more real. That's not selfishness — it's just our inherent need for perspective and empathy. It can be simulated in fiction, in poetry, because these are how our brains model life experience just as climatologists model weather patterns, trying to create in our minds what we don't yet know or to predict what will happen in the future.

And it's achieved largely with emotions and experience, rather than facts.

Whether in Dublin, London, Melbourne, Potsdam or Sydney, I was able to observe the same thing everywhere in the faces of the oceanographers, cloud researchers and meteorologists we talked to: their frequent astonishment at sitting across from people for whom language actually means something fundamentally different.

PROBABLY THE LAST CHANCE FOR A GREATER SENSE OF TOGETHERNESS: A SELF-INTERVIEW

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Mirko Bonné, Berlin

Directing this question at the mirror, even if just the mirror of language, I work out that it's been more than fifteen months now that you've been one of the five authors working on the Weather Stations project. Has the way you see the world changed after having been at a weather station yourself?

Every morning, the first time I look out of the window I take in the weather, the sky, the clouds and trees, the trees that enable us to read the wind. A year and a half ago, reports about a tornado in Mecklenburg-Vorpommern would have surprised me, but I certainly wouldn't have made the connection with my profession and noted down the things that the mayor of Nützwow said, things, by the way, that I also heard expressed in very similar fashion in regions of Australia, where they've been living with extreme weather for decades now.

The Weather Stations project is about raising awareness. Something which must be pretty much old hat for you, no?

Climate change is of course a good match for today's world. No one actually attends to anything that can't be understood or consumed. The only thing that counts is what's useful — and preferably to oneself. During my adolescence in the Kohl era, we still used to offer dogged opposition, happy to have something to rebel against in the form of the throwaway society, but we didn't guess at the time that we in our morally flawless manner were taking part just as diligently in establishing the throwaway world in which we live today. It goes without saying that writers are concerned with raising awareness. But they shouldn't allow themselves to be yoked to a particular cause, not even one such as this. Writers have to keep hold of the reins themselves and not allow themselves to be led too much, the best balance is somewhere between horse and driver. As far as I'm concerned, climate change is a linguistic problem, as for me it's all about examining the possibilities of how it can be represented and communicated in literary terms. The Weather Stations project has taken me to linguistic fields into which I would never

In my eyes, [language] is the connective tissue necessary for life, that which connects me to everything and everyone else, linking our world of today with the past world of the dead and the future one of our as yet unborn grandchildren. Language is the only parallel world whose existence I do not deny. MIRKO BONNÉ, BERLIN

I'm reading as much as I can about the politics and science of climate change. I speak to as many people as I can about the issue. I came to this project as a writer and teacher. And yet, increasingly I have become interested in not the power of language, but its limitations. The planet is more powerful than any words or narrative that humans ascribe to it. TONY BIRCH, MELBOURNE

Stop the silence and use your words for the things that matter the most! ANAS AHMADZAI, ARTS AND MEDIA SCHOOL, ISLINGTON, LONDON

otherwise have ventured. I sat at Chowder Bay in Sydney with two oceanographers who explained to me what it's like to dive in a forest of seaweed and algae.

Are writers able to contribute to making the complex, manifold demands exacted on today's world by so-called climate change and its consequences more transparent — would you agree that that's what it's about?

Over the course of the project, I've realized — and have been very surprised by — just how much everything depends on the individual here. I would even say that climate change isn't a problem for humanity, but rather affects each person individually. Whether in Dublin, London, Melbourne, Potsdam or Sydney, I was able to observe the same thing everywhere in the faces of the oceanographers, cloud researchers and meteorologists we talked to: their frequent astonishment at sitting across from people for whom language actually means something fundamentally different.

For a writer and for a poet in particular, it's difficult to talk about language and writing in purely abstract, fundamental terms. Was the Weather Stations project restrictive to this end?

There's no reason to relinquish a sense of productive doubt just because the problem in question seems so very urgent. It would be absurd to have to disregard the demands, dismissals and doubts that poetic minds have attempted to communicate for centuries as soon as the focus is on seemingly unambiguous conflicts that can only be determined for sure via science.

You've said in various panel discussions that you believe the debate surrounding climate change revolves around a conflict either not recognized as such or concealed.

The conflict is far-reaching and can hardly even be expressed in words. I regard the consequences wrought by climate change as the expressions of a world attempting to put its human inhabitants in their place. It is a dialogue that has gone off the rails, an ancient conflict that is now escalating. Humankind against nature — and vice versa. This is likely the root cause for the fear many people have of engaging with the subject to any real extent. Yet I equally believe that it is first and foremost the linguistic side of things that is important in this debate.

Because you're a writer rather than a computer or speaker. Could you maybe formulate your approach in more detail?

I try to avoid every theory. John Keats said that every philosophical axiom must be proved on our pulse. And Günter Eich was of the opinion that writing means seeing the world as language. Communicating the dramatic nature of climate change — I actually prefer to say climate destruction — is to my mind also a problem of precision. Science claims to operate based on the most precise language possible. For me, as a poet, on the other hand, language is far more than just a vehicle for data or a semantic tool. It is a sensual, tangible, historical medium, that is, a narrative one. It is itself the communicator. And it is always also a monster fully capable of being manipulated. I can never hear or read the word 'total' without thinking of the criminal demagoguery of someone like Goebbels. For me, language is no more or less an instrument than magic is. In my eyes, it's the connective tissue necessary for life, that which connects me to everything and everyone else, linking our world of today with the past world of the dead and the future one of our as yet unborn grandchildren. Language is the only parallel world whose existence I do not deny. The wonderful quotidian poetry of so many of the texts written by my Melbourne Weather Stations colleague Tony Birch talks about precisely this again and again: What does my life, the life of people today, have to do with

the stories of people from the past, who still knew how to read the land and didn't have to cover everything in concrete and destroy it out of pure fear and insecurity?

What experience was the most important for you in these months at a weather station?

The best moments were always when people started talking. Past weather and the weather of today. The sort of weather described by my grandfather, the sort of weather we used to have when I was still a girl. A student in Tallaght near Dublin told me how he saw his grandparents' house being washed away when the heavy storms hit Ireland in the summer of 2014. It was really moving to visit the Yarra valley south of Melbourne and to speak to people about the bushfires that destroyed entire stretches of land there. In those months, it became very vivid to me how much people love their lives and their stories. I think that's also something we have a form of language to thank for which aims at vagueness rather than precision. That's why I think that climate change represents a chance, probably the last chance, for a greater sense of togetherness.

Translated by James Lattimer

THE WEIGHT OF A WORD



Tony Birch, Melbourne

When I began working on the Weather Stations project my key concern, shared by some of the other writers on the project, was the question — does writing matter? Or to be more precise, will our involvement in this project and the words we put together have any impact on the way in which people respond to the issue of climate change? I was surprised how quickly I stopped asking the question to myself, and how little I cared about it. It was not that I did not care about the writing itself. I take both my writing and reading very seriously. Yes, writing does matter to me. But how much it might influence someone else to think, to change, to act, is unknown. To expect it to is also a little self-righteous. The project changed greatly for me once I began working with the young people involved. Whether they were from Australia, Berlin, Dublin, London, or in Hel on the Baltic Sea, each of the young people I met with and spoke to shifted my attention and had a profound impact on how I now see myself dealing with the vital issue of climate change in the future.

Older generations often criticize today's teenagers. We label them as 'slackers' for their seeming disinterest and self-obsession. For sure they love to 'selfie' and spend more time on their phones than they do with their heads in a newspaper. But, they are also young, energetic, and spilling over with original ideas. And they did not put us in the situation we find ourselves in today. We owe it to young people, not only to take responsibility for the damage we are doing to our planet, but we also owe them the opportunity to produce the voice of the young — a voice that will also teach us a way forward. My memories of the teenagers I have worked with will remain with me. In a country such as Australia, where it's hard to find a politician of true integrity when it comes to seriously confronting climate change, young people are my hope. None of the kids I worked with were from affluent schools. Many of them were from communities and families that struggle economically. In countries such as Ireland, where the global economic crisis hit like a tsunami, many people were pushed to the margins. And yet, the teenagers I met, from across the world, sparkled both with anger and enthusiasm.

We owe it to young people, not only to take responsibility for the damage we are doing to our planet, but we also owe them the opportunity to produce the voice of the young — a voice that will also teach us a way forward.

I think some of that anger is rightly addressed to those who came before these kids; a generation, including myself, who have sat on our hands for too long, doing little or nothing. And yet, their enthusiasm is not without trust — a trust in parents, teachers, even writers! They have not given up on us, and want us to work with them. The young people I have been privileged to come to know in the last year or so have had a profound impact on me. I decided that I need to do much more in the area of climate change as a writer, researcher and educator. I am now in a fortunate position. From July of this year I will begin a five-year project on Climate Change and Indigenous Knowledge, as a senior Research Fellow at Victoria University in Melbourne. I can thank the Weather Stations project, Melbourne's Wheeler Centre, and a bunch of global teenagers for the opportunity.

WRITING CLIMATE CHANGE: SUBSTATIONS

Below is a selection of writing from students aged 14–16 from eight schools across five countries who took part in our ‘Substations’ programme. Over eighteen months they worked with our Writers in Residence and produced poems, reflections and stories, many coming to creative writing for the first time.

The earth is in a cry for help.
Our skin burns like never before
as cracks cannot be filled in, as if the earth's crust
was like glass.

THERE IS NEVER ENOUGH WATER



Rita Paz
Arts and Media School, Islington, London

The earth is in a cry for help.
Our skin burns like never before
as cracks cannot be filled in, as if the earth's crust
was like glass.
As we take a wrong step we break our surface.
Pods cannot grow in such darkness.
We act as if there is no right or wrong on our planet.
But is there a solution to the decay of earth?
Are we saving ourselves or are we never learning the lesson, until
until...
until it is too late.
Are we as intelligent as we think we are?
Is our brain big enough to understand that without a planet, we cannot study the planet!
So should we keep searching for WATER in the Universe or SAVE the ONE that we
HAVE?
THINK.

DAHAB, EGYPT

A DAY AT THE REEF OF THE BLUE HOLE — FROM A FISH'S PERSPECTIVE



Silke Müller
Romain-Rolland-School, Berlin

I was woken up by a plastic bag covering the entrance of my crevice that morning. I usually spend the night in this small crack in the reef. A few weeks ago, I was living in a bigger crack further north, but it was destroyed by divers. Many of my friends' houses have been destroyed by air tanks and fins as well. The amount of available crevices is starting to decrease considerably...

Back to the plastic bag. Plastic bags in the morning mean one of two things: a strong current carrying the plastic from other parts of the Red Sea towards our reef or a strong wind on the surface blowing trash from the streets of Dahab into the ocean. Dahab is not the cleanest of cities. It is not as bad as some other places I have heard of, but the presence of trash is ubiquitous wherever you turn. Wind plays an important role in the lives of almost everyone here. When it is windy, the fishermen cannot go fishing because the waves are too high for their little boats, divers cannot access every dive site because the entry is too difficult and the merchants on the market have to run after their wares. Only the kite surfers on their boards are happy about the wind. We do not get so many of the surfers at my reef, however. They tend to stay closer to their hotels. The Blue Hole — my home — is located about thirty minutes away from Dahab and is bordered by the Sinai Mountains on one side and the ocean on the other. It is the world's most dangerous dive site with several people dying every year, yet there is a lot of diving and snorkelling activity in this area. I do not mind the divers much, as long as they stay away from the reef and leave nothing but bubbles.

As I have already mentioned, the day started out quite windy. You can feel the surge underwater and many of my plankton-eating friends love this kind of weather. The surge and current carry nutrients closer to the reef and they have new food. I myself eat corals, but since the corals feed on plankton as well, I am glad for a little bit of wind now and then. The wind also meant more divers coming to the Blue Hole, though. The entry to the reef is protected from the sea and not exposed to the weather, making it one of the few dive sites in the area accessible in these wind conditions. Most of the divers keep

their distance from the reef and just pass by. Some divers, however, grate on the corals every time they enter the water. Tech divers, that have many tanks attached to their bodies, do the most damage. Three of my homes have already been destroyed by the carelessness of tech divers.

At around noon, the sun decided to come out and the wind settled down a bit. The effects of the windy night were still visible: plastic bags, empty cans and carpets were floating in the water. The sun was illuminating the plastic hovering over our reef and trying to bring beauty to the tragedy. Although the light reflecting off the trash had something almost magical to it, I know that in reality there is nothing magical about plastic. It will most likely kill some of my friends in the next few months.

After a short interval of sunshine, the wind picked up again. It was around three o'clock, time for the reef checkers. The reef checkers are a group of divers that return to our reef every year and take notes on its health. They will lay down a line and then record everything within a certain distance of that line: the fishes, the substrate, the invertebrates, the amount of coral damage, etc. Apparently the data they collect helps the humans understand the reefs. They want to know the developments throughout the years and find the causes for some of the problems that they find. I do not think you need to search hard for the answer. The root of all of our problems is mankind. We can deal with thunderstorms, flash floods and crown-of-thorn breakouts. What we cannot recover from are divers kicking up sand which lands on the corals and suffocates them and the plastic which takes years to decompose. Even then, the plastic does not just magically disappear. It is still present. You just cannot see it with the naked eye anymore. My friend the turtle once told me of the Giant Pacific Garbage Patch. An enormous area covered with human trash. Many of her brothers and sisters have lost their lives trying to escape the jungle of debris.

Nevertheless, I appreciate the reef checkers' efforts. It lets us know that at least some people are taking notice of our situation and want to help us. On this day, they are rewarded by the sight of a young whale shark passing by. It has come into this region to feed on the plankton that the wind of the early morning has stirred up. I watch their excitement at seeing such a rare animal and smile to myself. If only they knew how many rare and unbelievably astounding animals are hiding in the walls of this reef.

The rest of the day is uneventful and I go about my business without much disturbance from divers or snorkellers. My only concern is the undulated moray eel a few corals down, who is continuously eyeing me in a strange fashion. I return to my crevice and know that — despite the plastic — it has been a good day at the reef.

Translated by Silke Müller

WHEN I WAS THEN



Madeleine Jolliffe
Arts and Media School, Islington, London

The sun beamed onto the crystallized grass,
Although bright, the air was frosty.
The wind slid through the door leading to my garden which chilled our bodies as if we
had been plunged into winter.
The grass crunched like autumn leaves. Our night clothes practically set in stone and our
bare feet were as cold as a witch's heart.
Our quick footsteps pounded across the lawn as our feet numbed.
We soon realized that going on a trampoline in polar-like temperatures was not the best
of ideas.



Ahead lies the river, its shimmering surface alight with the blazing rays of the sun. Grey rocks tinted with the deep green of algae line the water on both sides, separating the land from the water.

RIVER VIEW



Eliza Lucid
Footscray City College, Melbourne

My feet thud against the wooden planks as I cross the bridge, a slight breeze stirring wisps of my hair and blowing them into my face. Pausing at the centre, I grip the red handrail and gaze at the landscape before me, taking in the details. Ahead lies the river, its shimmering surface alight with the blazing rays of the sun. Grey rocks tinted with the deep green of algae line the water on both sides, separating the land from the water. Lush green grass ripples in the wind, darkened by the shadows of the enormous trees that tower above the ground. Sparrows, magpies, galahs and rainbow lorikeets dart in and out of the vegetation, disturbing the quiet with a ruckus chorus of birdsong. In the distance a dog barks, followed by a squeal of childish laughter floating on the breeze. Suddenly I hear my name being called, telling me that it's time to go. Slowly, I turn away and begin making my way across the rest of the bridge, thinking about the river. The river I have grown up on. The river that I have always lived on. The river that is so full of life... I can only hope it stays that way.

GLOBAL WARNING – SUBSTATION SLAM



Aneta Michniewicz, Damian Trendel
The General Education School Complex, Hel

Global warming, it calls for a warning,
The ice is melting, the planet's drowning.
We burn up tonnes of coal, gallons of oil too,
You love airplanes, they're guzzlers, it's sad but true.

Global warming, it's time for a warning,
Earth's surface's burning, it's alarming.
Water reserves drying up —
Let's drink water from the tap.

Could good old cooperation
Save us from deterioration?
A filter for your chimney, that's right!
Fight to spread it nationwide.

Start recycle and repair,
That's our way out of despair.
Translated by Mikołaj Denderski

A MEMORY



Bella Amodeo
Arts and Media School, Islington, London

For me the sea used to be a beautiful place with a pleasant atmosphere but now as things change, the sea also changes into a dangerous weapon that takes lives rather than regenerating them...

As I walked closer to my new discovery
I could hear the light blue waves
washing up on to the hot golden sand.
As I approached the waves I could feel
the scorching earth grow colder and colder
until I stopped and waited for the transparent water to tickle my toes.
The blazing sun beamed down on my back
turning me red like a lobster.
The delicate ocean touched me gently
giving me goosebumps all over my skin.
As the waves retreated they drew me in.
I followed their lead and threw myself in to that deeper world,
my body moving quickly in shock from this new sensation.
I let this feeling wash over me so I could explore this new
magical place that I now found myself in.

The sun wants to tell me something,
now that I have been thinking about her.

LATE SUMMER AFTERNOON



Lukas Hoffman
Sophie-Scholl-Schule, Berlin

I look up.
The ocean that we call sky is clear.
The burning light of the sun hurts my eyes.
Instinctively I turn my head in another direction.
What I see is the reflecting after-glow on the other side of the big mirror.
My brain tells me it's a good day,
but it's been a cold day.
The sun wants to tell me something,
now that I have been thinking about her.
But she doesn't like what I have been thinking,
so she goes and her place takes a red and orange cloud.
This beautiful blue ocean turned into a dark unclear cover.
All that happened within a few minutes.
Translated by Christine O'Neill

THE CLASSROOM



Manuel Plonsky
Romain-Rolland-School, Berlin

As I roll onto the school yard I enjoy the nice weather and lock my bike full of anticipation for the upcoming English lesson. It is Friday and after I was able to sleep in because my first 2 lessons were cancelled, I am looking forward to 4 hours of school and a beautiful weekend after that. I greet some friends as I enter the school and lost in thoughts of what I am going to do this weekend I enter the classroom. Immediately I realize that something is wrong. It smells weird, almost like a forest in here. As I look around I can see why. There are plants everywhere, vines climbing up the walls, roots coming out of the floor, moss scattered on the ground and I can even see a bird fleeing through one of the broken windows. Disbelieving, I take another step into the room, and hear a crack as I step onto a ruler that I left in the room the day before. I bow down to pick it up and can only stare at the abrasion on it that looks so real.

My rationally thinking brain switches on and tells me that there has to be a logical reason for this. I am not dreaming. I step outside the room and notice to my surprise that the hallway, which has just been full of people, is now empty and shows the same characteristics as the classroom I just left, and also looks like there hasn't been a human here in a long time.

Then it enters my mind. This has got to be a prank! Not by some random person but professionally done. I scan the area for cameras, but I cannot find one. 'This is so weird,' I say to myself as I hear a noise like singing from around the corner. It is coming closer. Not knowing what to expect, I hide in a niche in the wall and wait for the source of the singing. It is getting closer and closer and finally I can see an old man, about 65, probably, with the typical Santa Claus beard and short grey hair pass me. As I decide that no danger emanates from him I step outside my niche. He slowly turns around, and then he looks at me with slightly confused eyes from head to toe and then from toe to head. He just says: 'No school today buddy,' and turns around with a laughter so loud that it makes me wonder if his joke is the only thing that he laughed at in a long time.

I realize that he is probably my only chance of finding out what is going on so I go

after him and ask: 'Why, what is going on, where is everybody?' He just walks on and answers: 'I don't know where they are, but what I do know is that no student has entered this building in over 25 years.' And after a second he adds, 'Well, except for you.'

'No,' I say, 'I was here yesterday.'

He suddenly turns around and looks at me: 'Wait,' he says, 'I remember you, you're the guy who went missing 35 years ago.'

Translated by James Lattimer



MARTIN LUTHER KING JR: “OUR LIVES BEGIN TO END THE DAY WE BECOME SILENT ABOUT THINGS THAT MATTER”



Anas Ahmadzai
Arts and Media School, Islington, London

(‘Let’s be aware of climate change because it’s real!’)

We should not be afraid of failing the task ahead of us. This fear of failure should not be an excuse for turning away from looking at the problem of climate change. We have to tackle this task and change it for the better before the decision is no longer in our control. That is why I believe we have to make the world’s leaders and peoples realize that change needs to begin as soon as possible before sea levels rise even higher, before any more species become extinct due to natural disasters, before vast bushfires occur, before severe droughts and floods take place in the next 50 years or even less and before countless more disasters that are just waiting to happen!

Stop the silence and use your words for the things that matter the most!

The earth's condition past the point for us to live in,
Turn off the lights hey hey that's a given
The ice caps will melt, the sea level will rise, humans
we are close to our demise,
No matter how much the government try to disguise,
We need to have a look at the stats and be wise

RAMAN'S RAP



Raman Sing
Firhouse Community College, Tallaght

The earth's condition past the point for us to live in,
Turn off the lights hey hey that's a given
The ice caps will melt, the sea level will rise, humans we are close to our demise,
No matter how much the government try to disguise,
We need to have a look at the stats and be wise,
Change our thinking cause soon enough we will be sinking,
Lower emissions hey it's just tradition....use public transportation, become a walking
generation,
The reason earth's days are coming to a limit is cause humans won't
commit, submit or admit!
But people listen up the time is now,
Reduce, reuse, recycle, take a bow!

THE RAIN



Alisa Seddon
Firhouse Community College, Tallaght

When the rain first began to fall, all the little kids went out to play. Yes, I know this probably sounds like the beginning of a fairy tale and believe me it sort of looked like one, the boys and girls dressed in multi-coloured rain coats and wellies, splashing and giggling in the puddles.

But it's not.

I felt it in the air then. That something wasn't right. The clouds had completely covered the afternoon sky and a strange, heavy fog had settled. It was also unusually warm for this time of year which, of course, only made being out in the rain more enjoyable for the kids. But really, who could blame them, with all the horrible drought we'd had this past summer. Rain was welcomed.

The lane was scattered with leaves of red and gold as autumn made way for winter. This meant the village was surrounded by bare trees, giving the place an eerie feel.

Large puddles had already formed along the winding lanes flooding most of the drains and gutters. The soil outside had become waterlogged. It had only been an hour.

I know what you are thinking. You're thinking, 'So what? It's only a bit of rain.' Well, yes it was only a bit of rain.

There was just one problem:

It didn't stop.

Two hours passed, then three. The children who remained outside had gone in to dry off as night time crept in.

It still didn't stop.

The clouds still hung heavily in the sky the next morning, and the next. Two days passed, then three. Small puddles had become large pools, and streams had become rivers.

It didn't stop.

Schools were closed, roads were blocked off and electricity was down. Each night we would see a flash of lightning closely followed by a crash of thunder, revealing to us how

close the storm was.

I don't think anyone slept that night. I know I didn't.

Dad had said we should leave before the house started to leak but with the roads closed and no public transport running, we knew it would be pointless.

I used to hate living so high up on the mountain side. It took extra-long to get to school and the closest shop was three miles away.

But once a month passed and the rain still hadn't stopped, I became grateful. We could see the whole valley below us from our house. Every summer you would see flowers growing beside the stream that runs through the middle of the beautiful land. I used to wish I could live near the flowers.

Now I don't.

The valley was completely flooded with water. All the houses, drowned. No more flowers. The stream was now more like a canal.

I didn't know what happened to everyone living down in that valley. Maybe they escaped somehow. Maybe.

Tuesday 24th December. 11:25am.

The day The Rain finally stopped. The air suddenly stilled and finally we heard it: Silence.

I slowly opened the door to see several people already out surveying the damage. Trees were uprooted, buildings were torn down and the beautiful valley, the one that was once blanketed with colourful flowers, was submerged in at least 10 metres of water. The ones who survived were left speechless.

You wouldn't have known it was Christmas Eve.

I warned you this wasn't a fairytale.



GLOBAL WARNING — SUBSTATION SLAM



Jakub Witkowski, Emilia Kurpet,
Michał Firla, Kinga Łuczkowska
The General Education School Complex, Hel

Global warming, it calls for a warning,
The ice is melting, the planet's drowning.
We burn up tonnes of coal, gallons of oil too,
You love airplanes, they're guzzlers, it's sad but true.

Carbon dioxide's the villain,
That's who stands behind this killing:
Storms and droughts and floods and tides,
Creatures cannot live their lives.

Let's plant green plants, shut down your greed-plants,
Trees are the best filters, now give them a chance.

Flooded by plastic and cows' greenhouse gas
We soon may forget the looks of the grass.

Translated by Mikołaj Denderski

BELIEVE



Maxine Huntsman
Footscray City College, Melbourne

Great arching roofs
The windows cracked and split
A thousands shades of light
Shining onto rows of wooden seats
Beautiful in their conformity

Everyone is the same here
You step through the door
And nothing matters anymore
We all have the same purpose

I don't believe in a God
Or a life after death
But the candles
— One hundred wishes
Melted into one —
Make you wonder

The echoing silence
Fills every corner with calm
Thousands of prayers
Floating in the quiet air
Some want to save
And some need saving
Bu they all end up here

I don't believe in a God
Or a life after death
But I believe in an idea
That unites the world

WATER AND CRICKET JUST DON'T MIX



Elijah Andrews-Quinn
Footscray City College, Melbourne

'Hey Tom, get the ball!' called Jack. So Tom reluctantly chases after the ball which was rolling away and they continue to play some cricket in their home town of Renmark. Jack steams in and bowls the ball fast and straight on target to hit the bin but Tom swings and makes contact which sends the ball flying into the river. The boys are both unhappy and wish the river wasn't there. Luckily it wasn't too hard for them to get their hands on another ball. Later Tom says to Jack, 'Water and cricket just don't mix,' which Jack warily agrees to.

The boys take a break and go down to the milk bar to get a pie and a Big M. They both sit by the river absorbed in watching their ball float away and their pies. Later they start playing again and one by one just about their whole year level is joining in. Competition for a bat is more fierce and picking the gaps in the field is almost impossible. They keep playing and more rules are constantly being made up to keep the game flowing. The game keeps going until everyone has been called in for dinner and by that time it is so dark that it is impractical to keep playing anyway.

They next day at school Tom and Jack organize a big cricket game at the local cricket oval for later that night. 'BBRRIINNGGG' the school bell rings and everyone rushes straight home to get out their favourite bats. At 4:00 about 20 boys are there ready to play and Tom has even managed to rope in an umpire (his younger brother). After lots of controversy the teams are finally settled on; it took many attempts but finally the two captains' way worked, with Tom and Jack the captains.

The game starts and Jack's team is bowling first. Tom's team get off to a good start and then collapse and end up with 56 off 10 overs which may be an alright total. Jack's team starts batting and have a terrible start of 8/15 off 5 overs. Jack comes to the crease and builds a good partnership with Max, now they only need 6 off the last over. Max is on strike but can't connect with the first fourballs, everyone is now nervous. Max finally hits one and they run. Tom fields the ball and then throws to down the stumps while Max is definitely out of his crease. There is one ball left, Jack is on strike and they still need 6 runs to win. The bowler comes in and bowls a full toss. Jack connects and it looks like it's going for six but someone catches it. Because of the unclear boundary it is hard to tell if he caught it over the boundary. Everyone is now questioning the umpire who responds

with, 'What happened?' After lots of arguing the game is declared a draw. The next day at school yesterday's game was affirmed as the best game by people from both teams.

30 Years Later

'Are we there yet?' asks James. 'Nearly,' replies Tom as they zoomed along the Freeway as they approach the end of the long drive from Melbourne.

'Are we there yet?' asks Mitch. 'Nearly' replies Jack as they turn off the Freeway on the same route as Tom and James.

Two cars pull up just before the river crossing. 'Hey Tom!' calls Jack. Tom looks around and immediately jumps out of the car to greet Jack. The two boys, James and Mitch, also jump out. 'I can't wait for the cricket match,' says James. 'Yeah, my dad said it's the best ground,' replies Mitch. The boys then go and have a look around.

'It's good to be back,' says Tom. 'Yeah, the river seems wider than I remember,' replies Jack. 'True,' agrees Tom. 'I remember the banks bursting but I didn't think it was this significant.' 'What's the Murray Gulf?' yells Mitch. 'What, the Murray Gulf?' Tom and Jack yell out. 'Yeah!' both the boys respond. Tom and Jack walk over and see a big official but temporary looking sign with the words 'Murray Gulf'. They both look at each other with confused looks. Cars going the opposite way are flashing their indicators at them as if to notify something. They drive past a sign identical to the one at the river with the words 'Murray Gulf'. There are signs warning them that the road is about to end. They don't believe it until they see the barricades. They stop the cars and jump out and again see the 'Murray Gulf' sign.

Someone in an official uniform comes up to them and asks them if they're alright. They respond positively and but ask, 'Why is the road closed?' He says, 'Haven't you heard?' Tom blankly says, 'No'. The man replies 'Well there has been massive flooding in the area. Then last night we were woken up by water and then suddenly the whole area was underwater. We are yet to find the cause and how large the affected area is. For now we are just closing the area so unfortunately you will have to turn around.'

They turn around and rent a room for the night. Later that night there is a news flash with the headline 'THE POLAR ICE CAPS MELT'. Then this map pops up:

'What was first thought of as just flash flooding has been recognized as the melting of the polar ice caps. This has caused a massive rise of sea levels which has taken over much of Australia including towns like Renmark and the port of Adelaide. The new seas in Australia have been named the 'Murray Gulf' and the 'Artesian Sea'. That's all for now, a more detailed report will be broadcasted later.'

Everyone in the room is gobsmacked and are all staring around speechless. Tom once again says 'Water and cricket just don't mix,' which Jack wearily agrees to.

GLOBAL WARNING – SUBSTATION SLAM



Michał Gwardzik, Mateusz Zborowski,
Gabriel Cieślak, Fabian Piskorski
The General Education School Complex, Hel

Beach and sunshine, porpoise too?
Still there's beggars feeling blue.
Too much heat in atmosphere?
Plant more trees and hold them dear.
Porpoise, my dear friend, what's wrong?
Haven't seen you for so long.
Start recycling trash at home,
Don't watch TV all alone.

Translated by Mikołaj Denderski



SINGAPORE, SINGAPORE



Kim Burkart
Romain-Rolland-School, Berlin

When we woke up the sky was blue
We went on the streets and enjoyed the view
No clouds in the sky, but later the day
The blue sky was gone and it turned into grey
It was very hot and not at all windy
It was overwhelming, we enjoyed our iced tea
The 5-minute-rain was intensive but short
The weather at home is different than abroad
Noisy thunder broke through the night
Followed by flashes throwing their light
The remaining night was very calm
As the breeze of Singapore blew through the palm
Translated by Kim Burkart



FOOD FORAGING



Luca Cernaz
Footscray City College, Melbourne

Whilst blindly walking through Footscray we were stopped and Patrick illuminated edible plants lying poisoned next to us, where once they breathed and twirled around each other. After scavenging for a small variety of the many edible plants available in our unique land they were mixed together into a salad. The divine smell of the natural essence that the herbs and leaves produced had me drawn in like fish to bait, although the flavour was overwhelming the vibrant taste and lively crunch was enlightening. Disgracefully this fresh food is emaciated and intoxicated by our litter, our pollution and our poisons. No longer can we treat what was here before us like this, we can't disregard what mother nature provides us, we must respect our earth.

This is not my sky. Not any sky I've seen
before. When did the sun go black and the
moon fade to grey?

MY PIECE OF SKY



Réamoinn Ó hAircí, Seán Clintúin,
Jaic Ó hÍr, Conchúr Ó hUallacháin,
Melissa Ní Dhochartaigh,
Dara Ní Chuaig, Stiofán Mac an Mhadoc,
Danielle Nic Dhomhnaill

The sky is a crystalline blue that obviously goes on to darkness. This sparkling blue backdrops white puffy cumulus clouds that often morph into cumulonimbus, the kind of cloud that can go grey in a matter of minutes and throw lightning bolts that will blast you off the ridgeline if you are dumb enough to be there after lunchtime.

Réamoinn Ó hAircí

Coláiste de hÍde, Tallaght

A nice day so bright, the sun shines so bright even when it's behind the clouds. Boys are looking at the nice day not realizing how nice of a day it is, to them just another day. The wind coming off the mountain blowing in my face. My jacket keeping me warm. Very quickly the sky turns black. I run back to my house before the rain came down. Looking at the boys running back to their house. The clouds break, the sun shines so bright. The boys run back out and start to play again. They still don't know how powerful the weather can be and everything they see now might be gone one day.

Seán Clintúin

Coláiste de hÍde, Tallaght

I stand in the night, cold but not afraid because as I gaze up into the sky admiring every detail that the moon and the stars have to offer, I realize the moon is as a school of silver fish swimming across the sky, and its light shelters me from the night like a mother shelters her child from danger. The stars are also aligned perfectly with the moon; they dance around in the sky adding life into the night. I wish I could admire the setting forever but I can't and I won't need to because the beauty and life will return again tomorrow, and I will be waiting.

Jaic Ó hÍr

Coláiste de hÍde, Tallaght

This is not my sky. Not any sky I've seen before. When did the sun go black and the moon fade to grey? The sky changes all the time. Maybe one day my sky could be your sky. The sky is forever changing, sometimes for worse, sometimes for better, but it always changes.

Conchúr Ó hUallacháin
Coláiste de hÍde, Tallaght

It is a dark cloudy night. The sun is gone and my mood has gone down. I sit and I look at the bright moon and the clouds changing into different shapes. Every time the sun comes out my mood goes up and when the sun goes down my mood goes down. Thousands of other people in the world feel the same way when the moon comes out.

Melissa Ní Dhochartaigh
Coláiste de hÍde, Tallaght

It's a lovely day and we're all in the dressing room getting ready for the big day. There's not a cloud to be seen in the sky. The whistle blows and everybody is concentrating - the ball glides smoothly along the ground. Everybody's running as the sun beams down. It comes to half time and we're up by one point. Everybody's sweating. The whistle goes again and we all start to get tired but we keep our heads up until the final whistle. We're up by one goal with three minutes to go. We put everything into the last three minutes and end up getting another goal and the whistle blows and we win by two goals. Everybody's so happy; they're jumping around and crying that we won the county final against Cork.

Dara Ní Chuaig
Coláiste de hÍde, Tallaght

The sky is blue with soft clouds gliding through the air.
Today was a great day and the sky tops it off with a calm soft wind.
The sky really improved our trip as it wasn't wet and miserable which would have made our day a miserable and cold one.
The sea blended into the sky and it was a clear horizon and the sea was calm.
All the birds were out because there were no rain or rough winds.

Stiofán Mac an Mhadoc
Coláiste de hÍde, Tallaght

When I look up to the sky and I see clouds and people say they're full of water, well I think when it rains they're letting all their sorrows out by crying all the rain away. Not only humans can be upset and show emotions, but clouds can have emotions also. The clouds are showing their emotions when they rain which could be shown as crying. I also think when it's sunny they must be happy because they're not letting all the rain out and I also believe sun and sunny weather can put people in better humour.

Danielle Nic Dhomhnaill
Coláiste de hÍde, Tallaght

SOLAR ECLIPSE



Igor Zaytsev
Romain-Rolland-School, Berlin

20th March 2015

One of my first thoughts, as my alarm clock goes off and I lift myself out of my bed, deals with an event that has been discussed and planned for several weeks in my additional Physics course. Something unique and rare is going to happen today. Something so unique, that I will even be allowed to bunk off my Biology lesson and half of my English lesson to watch it: the solar eclipse which can be viewed not only in Berlin, not only in Germany, but in almost half of the European countries. So I am VERY excited, particularly because this is the very first eclipse for me to observe. As there will be a lot of preparation and special equipment required for the observation, I won't have Biology today and, instead, will be spending time outside and enjoy the beautifully warm and sunny spring weather today. Sunny spring weather? Oh, yes, we are actually very lucky today. Our Physics teacher especially was really concerned about the weather forecast provided on Wednesday, our last lesson before the eclipse, which predicted cloudy skies — not the best conditions for the use of our brand-new solarscope. But on my way to school I am reassured as I see the bright blue sky. I actually have not seen such a beautiful sky for a long time: it looks like a freshly washed tablecloth that somebody laid on top of Berlin. Clean, no clouds, no fog, just sunshine and a few white tracks left by several airplanes. At the moment the sun is still shining as it usually does, but boy, this will change after the next two Geography lessons. 90 minutes pass like 90 seconds after which I will join the guys from my additional Physics course to build up our observation zone. During the break all the other students will have the opportunity to watch the eclipse with the help of our instruments. Which instruments? Apart from the solarscope, which is a special telescope for sun observations, a special box-shaped projector that shows an enlarged projection of the sun, and a set of super-fancy-looking sunglasses which are so dark that you can look through them in the direction of the sun without setting your eyes on fire. And so it begins. The moon starts to cover the sun at approximately 10 a.m. The eclipse reaches its climax right as the long break starts.

But on my way to school I am reassured as I see the bright blue sky. I actually have not seen such a beautiful sky for a long time: it looks like a freshly washed tablecloth that somebody laid on top of Berlin.

Hundreds of junior and senior RoRo students come to watch this spectacular event and I am right in the middle of this crowd. Now the moon covers 80 per cent of the sun and I can feel something strange: obviously it is getting colder and I notice that the sunrays shining on my face do not feel as warm as they usually do. Although the sunlight still seems to be really bright and intense it almost feels cold on my skin, which is a feeling I have never experienced before. The break passes quickly, the students start to leave, and so does the moon. It starts to leave the sun which reveals its native, well-known, round shape. The schoolyard is empty again as I start wrapping up all our equipment together with my fellows.

For now, that was my eclipse experience. That Friday was very exciting for me and I bet I am not the only one. The next eclipse visible from Germany will be on August 12, 2026 and I am sure I will not miss out on that one either.

Translated by Igor Zaytsev

OUTSIDE – AN EXTRACT



Michéal Eastwood
Mount Seskin Community College, Tallaght

I opened my eyes and sat up in bed looking around the bland, empty room as I did every morning, to remind myself of where I am. I stood up and walked over to the corner of the room where there was a small dirty bucket that had the word ‘toilet’ painted on it. I did as I did every morning and when I was finished I walked to the centre of the room and sat on the floor with my legs crossed, adjacent to the window. The light from the outside hit my face and I thought to myself ‘The sun must be out to play.’ As I looked up to peer out the window, the light blinded me so I had to squint to see. The outside was like a painting that has been worked on to perfection, the clear blue sky was bright and full and there were only a few chalky clouds perfectly placed so as not to disrupt the view. The sun was in its full glory, it appeared to be smiling onto the world with such grace and joy as to bring life to the planet and made the distant green hills that showed their peaks look all the more alive. I sat here a while looking out the window taking in the beauty of what was through the glass portal in my wall.

I heard footsteps coming from outside the door and, as they drew closer, I sprung to my feet and shouted out ‘Mommy!’ as I ran towards the door. My mother walked into the room and quickly shut the door behind her. She did this every time she walked into the room and I never questioned why. She turned to look at me. I always thought my mother was the most beautiful person in the world. Her eyes were light blue like the sky and always had the same look of love. She had gorgeous blonde hair that would glisten when the sun would hit it and a slight smile that always made me smile right back at her. She opened her arms and wrapped them around me. ‘How are you my son?’ she whispered in the most delicate voice I could imagine. I looked up at her and softly kissed her pale cheek before replying with, ‘I want to go outside.’ My mother’s embrace loosened as she bent down to my level holding my shoulders and looking deep into my eyes with hers. ‘You know the outside is dangerous sweetheart,’ she said while brushing her hand through the hair around my ear. ‘I’ll be safe I promise,’ I protest with a grin on my face. She looked into my eyes again. ‘We’ve talked about this sweetie, the outside

world is a dangerous place filled with people who will hurt you,' she says calmly. I could feel her grip tighten as she said this and her voice sounded like she had a lump in her throat, however she kept the same smile and never looked away from me, she kept her composure. 'But what if...?' I started, but she halted me by saying, 'Now let's get you fed sweetie,' as she rose back to her feet. She now continued with the usual morning routine, she walked over to the window and opened it to 'let in the freshness', as she always told me. This was my favourite part of the morning because I could hear the sounds that were outside. I ran up to the window and looked up, I couldn't reach it but I just closed my eyes and listened to all the wondrous sounds that came flooding into the room.

My mother left to go get my breakfast but I just stood there with my eyes closed, listening to the seemingly endless world outside of my window. A familiar sound met my ear. 'BIRDS!' I shouted happily, as I listened to their careless chirping, a grin once again appearing on my face. I kept listening for more sounds and I focused in on things such as cars, the wind, motorcycles and footsteps. I waited for my favourite sound of all... people. I love listening to the voices of people walking past and especially the sound of other children playing in the streets, although it made me want to know what it would be like to be out there with them, the sun on my face, the wind in my hair and maybe, just maybe, I could be the person that someone else is listening to out of their window...

[Click here to read the story in full.](#)

Global warming, pollution's growing,
You keep asking me if there's another morning.
Hold your breath now, noxious gas is blowing,
What's next in store for us I'm only wondering.
Global warming, it's time for a warning

GLOBAL WARNING – SUBSTATION SLAM



Michał Gwardzik, Mateusz Zborowski,
Gabriel Cieślak, Fabian Piskorski
The General Education School Complex, Hel

Global warming, pollution's growing,
You keep asking me if there's another morning.
Hold your breath now, noxious gas is blowing,
What's next in store for us I'm only wondering.
Global warming, it's time for a warning
The ice is melting, the planet's drowning.
We burn up tonnes of coal, gallons of oil too,
You love airplanes, they're guzzlers, it's sad but true.
Our roots in here and wildlife and fruit on trees you like
Deserve to be preserved instead of that steel pipe.
Steel pipes run to our oceans and mess them full with muck,
We're fed up with dead fish, it's time you take pipes back.

Translated by Mikołaj Denderski

THE GRAMPIANS



Javier Diaz
Footscray City College, Melbourne

Walking out of the house and into the sun all I could see was dirt, clear blue sky, ants, rabbits and kangaroos. As I look around the ground I see a group of ants gathering together to go into their home, while looking up into the sky all I smell was pure fresh air. The clouds were moving around slowly like a turtle race, the feeling of the wind pushing against me was like having a shower. While looking far away I can see two kangaroos looking straight at me as I make a move from my position they two did the same thing.

HER MAJESTY, THE QUEEN – OUR EARTH



Kayleigh Ratcliffe
Mount Seskin Community College, Tallaght

Entangled leaves on royalty rest,
Grown from waving wood,
Her canvas once as blank as her dress,
From her skin the sun would erupt,
Rosy red lips aim to subdue,
The black coal guards,
The deep ocean blue.

Creating her kingdom,
Knowing the unknown,
Her subject argued about, her provenance unshown,
Some say hand,
Others a big bang,
But little did this bother their elated leader,
Whose only care is for them and their uncertain future.

As time upon time began to dissolve,
The miraclepowers and creations began to evolve,
No one could predict what could happen next,
A vulture would come and make its nest.

Tired and drained,
The miracle had enough,
Her subjects had ruined her,
It was hard to rebuff,
Stealing her possessions,
Trapped unable to pursue,
Her vengeful plan was about to ensue.

Creating her kingdom,
Knowing the unknown,
Her subject argued about, her provenance unshown,
Some say hand,
Others a big bang,
But little did this bother their elated leader,
Whose only care is for them and their uncertain future

Tears she had cried massed the peasants' lungs,
Leeches were scolded with the blood for which they clung,
The survivors were buried,
Within the endless cracks of her heart,
Then stood still,
The ruler was torn apart.
Had they only prevented,
Cracking eggs from completing their hatch,
The subjects would have saved their kingdom,
From such a devastating collapse.

TURTLE



Olivia Burmeister
Footscray City College, Melbourne

The slight purr of the motor drums in my ears, as I look out into the harsh, yet peaceful waves crashing against the fast boat. Dipping in and out of the rough sea, the cool breeze beats against my face. On the way to the pure forest green island, I admired the few clouds covering random parts of the ocean blue sky. Few birds glided through the clouds, as I squinted my eyes at the bright sun, like a gold nugget floating in the sky. Exiting the boat into the crystal waters I started kicking and lightly splashed in the crisp, but warm sea water. 100s of magnificent and beautiful types of fish darted in and out of their unique coral homes. In between my strokes through the water, a deep, greeny-brown shell swam by lapping through the water just under me as I recognized a 70-year-old Turtle. The Turtle was poking its head out of the water as I had risen up to glance out of the salty sea, as the Turtle was popping out of the surface every now and then for a fresh breath of air.

GLOBAL WARNING – SUBSTATION SLAM

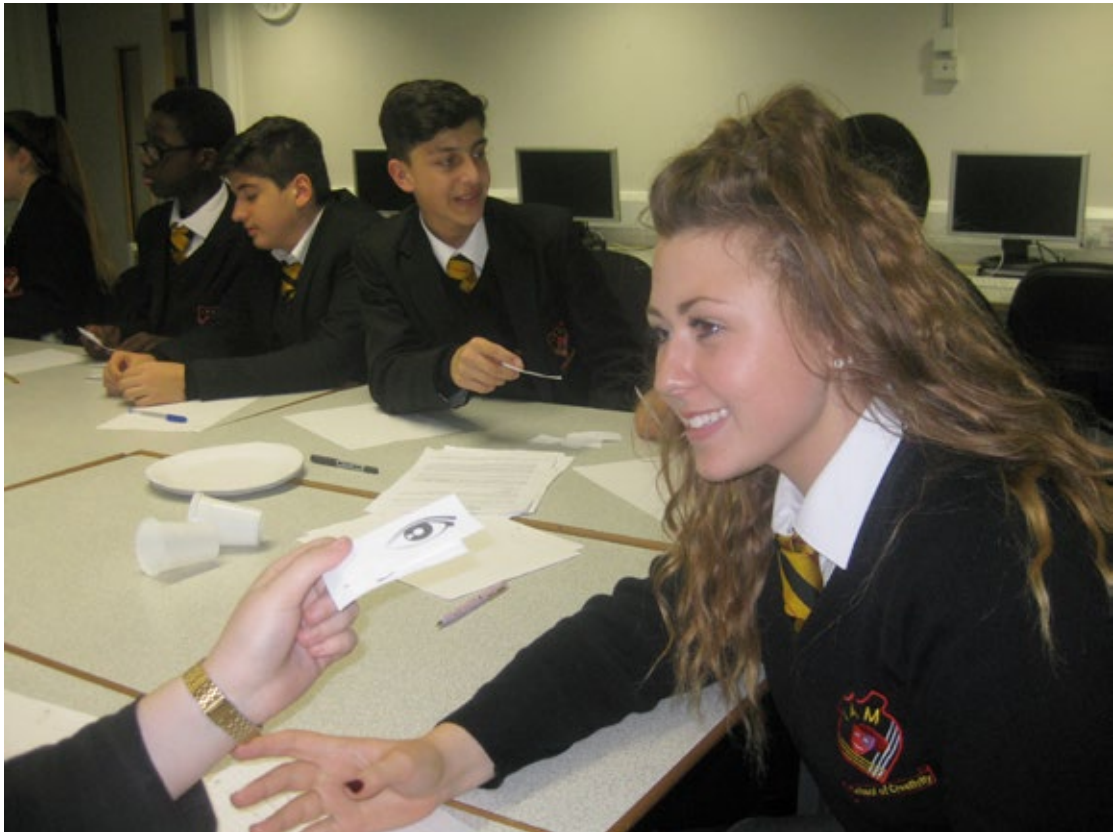


Weronika Bokota, Marcin Pieszak,
Ewelina Kurpet, Ola Górska
The General Education School Complex, Hel

Global warming, it calls for warning,
The ice is melting, the planet's drowning.
We burn up tonnes of coal, gallons of oil too,
You love airplanes, they're guzzlers, it's sad but true.

Don't eat hamburgers in bed,
Better take a walk instead.
Are you brave enough to smoke?
What if those around you choke?
Our atmosphere's our common good
Don't see it yet? Well, you should.

The ozone hole, up there, is a real evil badass,
It's mean as methane, the cow-produced bad gas.
Methane makes the Earth keep heat,
We'll all end up as sizzling meat.
Save the planet's water now,
Ask not why, start thinking how.
Translated by Mikołaj Denderski



WE OF THE WESTERN WORLD



Mo Konteh
Arts and Media School, Islington, London

We of the western world
Indeed have the power
To preserve what was once held
But have only acted in the closing hour.

We stand protected in our bubble,
With our vast wealth
Protecting us from any trouble,
Wasting what can keep our earth in health.

How could it take so long to detect?
Why do we show no sorrow?
We know how to profit but not how to protect
The people of tomorrow.

I was speaking to a friend recently, talking about the practice of ‘soft eyes’, used by some Indigenous communities in Australia... in seeing the land.... ‘Soft eyes’ is a way of looking at land, and sky, and water in a way that refuses to focus on a single object or site. By seeing nothing with detailed specificity, one is able to engage more fully with the whole. TONY BIRCH, *TIME*

ABOUT THE PARTNERS

Free Word (London)

Free Word is an international centre for literature, literacy and free expression that celebrates and explores the power of words to change lives. Through our artistic programmes and public events we promote and protect the written and spoken word and provide a space for collaboration, exploration and dissent. We have three main areas of activity:

- Our building is a vital meeting place and hub for literature, literacy and free expression organizations. We have six Resident organizations and over 30 Associates;
- With our Residents, Associates and other partners we present a year-round programme of public events – debates, films, conferences and exhibitions – exploring politics, culture and ideas.
- Working with local, national and international partners we have developed three major programmes of work around translation – The Power of Translation; the environment – Living Dangerously: Stories of Climate Change; and Democracy – Speaking Freely.

www.freewordcentre.com



internationales literaturfestival berlin (Berlin)

The Berlin International Literature Festival (ilb) takes place annually in early autumn. Its purpose is to present contemporary developments in prose and poetry from all around the world and to let its audience experience literary diversity in the age of globalization. Fascinating new discoveries stand up alongside recognized masters of world

literature, the new emerges, and interconnections become visible when, in 180 events over 11 days, 150 authors provide glimpses into new and traditional streams in world literature. Prose, poetry, conversations with authors and political discussions, children's and youth literature, film adaptations of literature – the ilb is a vital, polyglot forum, staged by and for literary enthusiasts.

www.literaturfestival.com



Krytyka Polityczna (Warsaw)

Political Critique was set up to reinvigorate the Polish tradition of the engaged intelligentsia. We are active in three main fields: education, culture and politics. We believe they differ only in their areas of concern, but are connected by the influence and impact they have on how the society is shaped. Our main aim is to combat economic and cultural exclusion; to increase civic participation in public life and popular social awareness in public sphere; to work out diagnoses and solutions of the current breakdown in social bonds and social imagination. In just a few years, we have created Poland's biggest socio-political platform and expanded our activities abroad. We are active both in the academic sphere and mainstream media. We run cultural centres (Warsaw, Cieszyn, Gdansk, Łódź), a network of more than 20 local activist groups in Poland, Political Critique Publishing House, online Opinion Daily website, and the Institute for Advanced Study in Warsaw conducting academic research and didactic activity.

www.krytykapolityczna.pl



Tallaght Community Arts (Dublin)

Tallaght Community Arts is an arts development organization working with local communities, schools and youth groups since 1996. Tallaght Community Arts creates work in the heart of communities; in schools, community gardens, football stadiums and individual people's homes as well as in designated arts spaces. Our work focuses on participatory arts, encouraging and supporting people of all ages to be involved in the making of art. We put people at the centre of a cultural process. Placing participation at the heart of our work enables us to

actively explore ideas of who can be involved in the making of art. This is a two-way process. We bring people together to explore their creativity: writers, teachers, visual artists, directors, choreographers, sound and broadcast artists, policy-makers, elders, school children and young people. We commission new works and seed projects across South Dublin County, opening up the transforming potential of the arts to a wide group of participants and audiences. Participants have found that working with leading national and international artists has given them new skills and expanded horizons. Artists have in turn enhanced their own work. Tallaght Community Arts has worked in partnership with Collective Actions on the Weather Stations project.
www.tallaght-arts.ie



The Wheeler Centre (Melbourne)

The Wheeler Centre was created in 2010 when Melbourne was officially designated a UNESCO City of Literature, recognizing the city's international leadership in books, writing and ideas. In just five years, the Wheeler Centre has established itself as one of Australia's leading arts organizations, dedicated to making public conversation an art form. The Wheeler Centre passionately believes in the power of ideas and conversation and we have created a hub for the literary and ideas activity that defines this city.

Each year, we design and produce a rich programme of 220 lectures, events and discussions on literature, arts, identity and public affairs to over 40,000 audience members. Accessibility is a guiding principle and we strive to ensure that over 80 per cent of our programme is free and the remaining are low cost. We support our writers of today and tomorrow through the Victorian Premier's Literary Awards, Children's Book Festival and the provision of residencies and fellowships. Our digital publishing arm consists of original video and audio of our programme and daily articles, enabling us to reach regional, national and international audiences.

As a cultural institution, we are dedicated to being the cornerstone of Australia's literary activity, to contribute to a deeper thinking society and to build a community around the sharing of ideas and conversations.

www.wheelercentre.com

ABOUT THE SUBSTATIONS



In Ireland – Coláiste de Híde, Mount Seskin Community College and Firhouse Community College

Tallaght Community Arts and producing partner Collective Action are engaging in an educational arts programme with three second level schools focused on how storytelling can help us re-imagine how we might live our lives in 2050 as a result of climate change. Teachers and students, ages 14–17, have been working with a number of science experts and our Weather Stations Writer in Residence, award-winning Irish children and young adult writer and illustrator, Oisín McGann.

The project addresses learning across Geography, Science Arts, English, Foreign Languages, ICT and personal and social development. The schools taking part include: Coláiste de Híde, Mount Seskin Community College and Firhouse Community College.



In the UK – Arts and Media School, Islington

Free Word has been working together with staff and students from the Arts and Media School, Islington (AMSI) to think about how we might use literature and storytelling to think and talk about the issue of climate change. The project has encouraged students to engage with sustainability and the environment on a local and a global level.

AMSI is a comprehensive trust foundation school for boys and girls in the heart of Islington, London. It has an open, friendly and enthusiastic approach to education and provides a vibrant learning community which sets high expectations for all pupils. The workshops take place within an after-school enrichment

programme and make connections between literature, geography and climate politics. Students are supported by school staff, a Substation Coordinator and five Writers in Residence visiting from the centres in Berlin, Dublin, London, Melbourne and Warsaw.



In Australia – Footscray City College

The Weather Stations project at Footscray City College involved a class of Year Nine students in an innovative programme that invited them to engage with climate change and the environment through art and creativity. They took writing workshops with Tony Birch, went on excursions – including a city laneway walk, a walk along the Yarra with an Indigenous perspective, and a guided forage for food in Footscray (followed by preparing a meal) – and were engaged by school visits from leading thinkers and artists. The students involved chose Weather Stations as one of their elective subjects for 2015. ‘One of the big questions in education, I think, is how do we engage students with thinking and acting on climate change?’ says Sue Dwyer, the teacher running the Weather Stations program at Footscray City College. ‘To most teenagers it’s still a very abstract concept – they can’t grasp the immediacy of the problem and don’t see the point in wasting time and energy on it. Climate change is in the news, but not many teenagers watch or read the news. They’re probably more familiar with the scenarios in post-apocalyptic novels, films and video games, which they see as not real. But teenagers are heading towards a future that will be radically different to anything most of us have imagined. They are the citizens, and even the leaders and policy-makers, of the future. Their generation needs to reimagine, invent, innovate and create new lifestyles, industries, careers and consumer choices. To do this, they need to be analytical and creative thinkers.’



In Poland – The General Education School Complex in Hel Krytyka Polityczna (Political Critique) worked together with teachers and students from the General Education School Complex in Hel, running workshops and events tackling issues of how we might change ourselves step by step, day by day to become more aware and sustainable in our actions. They used

literature and storytelling to engage others and themselves with the real, local and global issue of climate change and sustainability.

The workshops made connections between literature, geography and climate politics. In autumn 2014 students prepared and performed the theatre piece 'Blue Planet' to show the problem of unsustainable redistribution of wealth, which is a great problem in today's world. The play is based on the story of the blue planet by Andri Snær Magnason. It's a very important subject in the marine city of Hel, where a lot of people make their living from fishing.

Students were supported by schoolteachers, a Substation Coordinator, five Writers in Residence visiting from the centres in Berlin, Dublin, London, Melbourne and Warsaw and the partner in Hel – The Hel Marine Station. The Hel Marine Station was established in 1992 and is a field station in the organizational structure of the Institute of Oceanography in the Faculty of Oceanography and Geography at the University of Gdańsk. As the only station of its kind in Poland it is open to the research needs of the whole scientific community of the country, and provides field support for all research groups working in this region (academic teams from various higher schools, institutes in this line of work, and the Polish Academy of Sciences).



In Germany – The Sophie Scholl School and Romain-Rolland-School

ilb works with two schools. The five authors of the project visited the students and worked with them on the following questions: What does climate change means to us? Is literature a way to sensitize us? Can we use creative writing to access this subject?

The students visited workshops in theatres and museums, and heard discussions and lectures to not only expand their knowledge, but develop their empathy also.

The Sophie-Scholl-School is located in the district Berlin-Schöneberg. ilb worked together with one class, from 10th grade.

The Romain-Rolland-School is located in the district Berlin-Reinickendorf. It is a Gymnasium with a French focus, but the students speak English as well. Our substation group was an English course with 14 students in the 12th grade.

ABOUT THE WRITERS

We were delighted to work with five Writers in Residence for Weather Stations. This inspirational group of writers were chosen for their talent, style and commitment to creating a more sustainable future:



Xiaolu Guo at Free Word, London

One of Granta's Best of British writers under 40, Xiaolu Guo is profound, incisive, funny and often disturbingly accurate.

Guo is author of *I Am China*, *A Concise Chinese-English Dictionary for Lovers*, nominated for the Orange Prize for Fiction, and Writer and Director of *UFO in Her Eyes*, which won the 'City of Venice' prize at the Venice Film Festival.



Mirko Bonné at internationales literaturfestival berlin

Mirko Bonné, born 1965 in Tegernsee, lives in Hamburg. Besides translations of, among others, Sherwood Anderson, Robert Creeley, E.E. Cummings, Emily Dickinson, John Keats, Grace Paley and William Butler Yeats, he has published five novels, five volumes of poetry, and a book of travel journals and essays. For his work Bonné received many awards,

including the French Prix Relay du Roman d'Évasion, the Marie Luise Kaschnitz Prize and the Rainer Malkowski Prize. As a Writer in Residence Mirko Bonné visited Marseille, Rio de Janeiro and Shanghai. His novel 'Nie mehr Nacht' was a finalist for the German Book Prize in 2013.

Watch Mirko talking at our London Weather Stations panel discussion 'Climate Change and the Stories We Tell'.



Jaś Kapela at Krytyka Polityczna in Warsaw

Jaś Kapela is a poet, novelist and columnist, as well as a member of the Krytyka Polityczna team. He is a proud left-winger who, in his darkly comic work, focuses on the conflict of a traumatized individual with a hostile society which heads straight to hell. His work often takes a form of a social performance. In 2013 Kapela participated in Live Green, a campaign for ecological lifestyles led by the Green Cross, Poland.

Kapela is the author of *Stosunek seksualny nie istnieje* (*Sexual Intercourse Does Not Exist*), *Janusz Hrystus* (*Janus Hrist*) and *Dobry Troll* (*The Good Troll*), published May 2015.



Oisín McGann at Tallaght Community Arts in Dublin

Oisín McGann is one of Ireland's leading writers and illustrators of books for children and young adults. McGann's work weaves fantasy worlds with real issues allowing young readers to consider often quite serious social and personal consequences. McGann's writing and illustrations are a stimulating catalyst for young writers to explore the metaphorical landscape of how to write imaginatively and provokingly about climate change in a way that will actively engage young readers.

McGann is author of 11 young adult novels, his latest is a two-part story, *Kings of the Realm*, released in 2014.



Tony Birch at the Wheeler Centre in Melbourne

Tony Birch was born in inner-city Melbourne to a large family of Aboriginal, West Indian and Irish descent. His challenging upbringing inspires much of his work. Two of Birch's novels, *Shadowboxing* and *Father's Day*, are taught in the Australian Victorian secondary school system.

Birch is also the author of *Blood*, shortlisted for the 2012 Miles Franklin Award.

ABOUT THE TRANSLATORS



All partners felt strongly that this project would happen in three languages, and we were delighted to work with following translators for Weather Stations:

Małgorzata A. Bartula is a Germanist, theatre specialist, scriptwriter, playwright, curator of independent art and public space events, translator. She lives in Warsaw and Berlin.

Gisela Böhnisch is a German-born professionally trained translator for English and German. She has lived in Ireland, Spain, Canada, the United States, New Zealand and Australia and is currently based in London, UK. Gisela took part in the BCLT Literary Translation Summer School 2012 at the UEA, provides reader's reports for UK publishers and is a part-time bookseller. When she is not translating she travels the world blogging about literature, film and music festivals and occasionally curates cultural events.

Rebecca DeWald is a freelance translator for German, English, French and Spanish living in Glasgow. She is currently completing a PhD in Translation Studies at the University of Glasgow on the Argentine writer Jorge Luis Borges's translations of Virginia Woolf and Franz Kafka. As co-founder and co-editor of the Glasgow Review of Books she aims to help unveil the 'modest mystery' of translation (Borges) for critical readers with and without knowledge of translation issues. She is always keen to collaborate on interesting projects to foster translation and green issues. You can contact her through Twitter @DeWald_Rebecca, the GRB or LinkedIn.

Marta Dziurosz lives in London. She has been translating and interpreting from and into Polish for more than ten years and is a member of the Translators Association. She has translated or interpreted travel literature, historical novels, academic essays, film scripts, author meetings, lectures and oral histories of Holocaust survivors. Her most recent translations are: an excerpt from Sylwia Chutnik's novel „Hustlerettes” on the For Books' Sake website (translation into English) and Nessa O'Mahony's poetry in the June issue of ArtPapier (translation into Polish). She also works at Pan Macmillan and tweets at @MartaDziurosz.

Isabel Fargo Cole is a US-born, Berlin-based writer and translator. Her translations include *Boys and Murderers* by Hermann Ungar (Twisted Spoon Press, 2006), *All the Roads Are Open* by Annemarie Schwarzenbach (Seagull Books, 2011), *The Jew Car* by Franz Fühmann (Seagull Books, 2013), and *Selected Essays*, by Friedrich Dürrenmatt. Her translation of 'I' by Wolfgang Hilbig was published by Seagull Books in summer 2015. She is the initiator and co-editor of www.no-mans-land.org, the online magazine for new German literature in English.

Katarzyna Fetlińska, born in 1991 in Ciechanów, Poland, is a writer, translator and a PhD student in the Institute of English Studies at the University of Warsaw. Her literary and academic works focus on the links between humanities and natural sciences. Her main interest is the growing importance of brain studies in contemporary culture. She usually translates scientific texts and poetry.

Jakub Głuszak was born in 1982 in Kielce. He has published poems and translations in a number of journals, including *Rita Baum*, *Wakat*, and *Przekładaniec*. He is one of the winners of the 2011 Połów project by Biuro Literackie; in 2013 he published his first poetry collection, *Moje przesłanie do pokolenia współczesnych trzydziestolatków*.

Anna Hyde (Anna Blasiak) studied Art History in Warsaw, Film Studies in Kraków and Arts Policy and Management in London. She has translated over 30 books from English into Polish (mainly children's books, including Anthony Horowitz's *South By South East*) and fiction from Polish into English (Mariusz Czubaj, Wioletta Grzegorzewska, Jan Krasnowolski).

Kaja Malanowska, Daniel Odija, Anna Augustyniak and Mirka Szychowiak). She has also translated poetry into Polish (by Maria Jastrzębska, Mary O'Donnell and Nessa O'Mahony). Apart from translating, Anna has worked in museums and a radio station, run magazines, and written on art, film and theatre. She writes poetry in Polish and English.

Jolanta Kossakowska is a Polish musician, author, editor and translator from English and German. She is a graduate of Asia-Africa Institute, University of Hamburg and the Faculty of Oriental Studies of the University of Warsaw. Jolanta worked for *Krytyka Polityczna*, *Świat Literacki*, Museum of Modern Art in Warsaw, social-cultural magazine [named:] (op.cit.) amongst others. Her short stories – Notes de Voyage by the fictional character Professor Schwarzenfuss – were published in the anthology *Doświadczenie świata, doświadczenie lektury* (DIG 2011). Jolanta is the frontwoman of *Mosaik* (fusing early, traditional Polish music with the Orient) and a member of *Pochwalone* (ethno-punk band), performing contemporary and alternative music.

James Lattimer is a translator, editor and film curator based in Berlin and graduated with a MA in Film Studies and Spanish from the Freie Universität Berlin in 2012. He started working for the Berlinale Forum in 2008 and joined their selection committee in 2011. As a film journalist, he is a regular contributor to *Slant Magazine* and *Mubi's The Notebook*. His first film project 'Our Body', a collaboration with filmmaker Dane Komljen, was screened at the Tiger Awards Competition for Short Films at the 2015 Rotterdam Film Festival and was nominated there for the European Short Film of the Year.

Elisabeth Meister is a Sydney-based translator with an MA in History and Linguistics. She's been translating since her university days and moved to Australia in 2003 where she gained her NAATI accreditation. She loves travelling, chocolate, theatre and books, though not necessarily in that order, and was awarded runner-up at the 2013 AUSIT Awards for Excellence in Translation for her work on Cate Shortland's multi-award winning film 'Lore'.

Ulrike Nichols holds a PhD in German Studies and has been a professional freelance translator since 2007. She specializes in medical, marketing and medical historical materials and also

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Christine O'Neill is a researcher, editor and translator (English/German; German/English) who specializes in literature, linguistics, arts, culture, education and academic writing. She wrote her PhD dissertation on stylistic aspects of *Ulysses*. Among her publications is 'Zerrinnerungen: Fritz Senn zu James Joyce' (Verlag Neue Zürcher Zeitung, 2007) which also appeared as 'Joycean Murmoirs: Fritz Senn on James Joyce' (Lilliput Press, 2007). After working in the Zurich James Joyce Foundation for a number of years, she moved to Ireland where she lectured at St Patrick's College Drumcondra and worked at the Arts Council, the Irish Museum of Modern Art and Ireland Literature Exchange.

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