

Landscapes: the Journal of the International Centre for Landscape and Language

Volume 9
Issue 1 *Landscape: Heritage II*

Article 14

April 2019

Fortunates Part 1

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Recommended Citation

Upton, L. (2019). Fortunates Part 1. *Landscapes: the Journal of the International Centre for Landscape and Language*, 9(1).

Retrieved from <https://ro.ecu.edu.au/landscapes/vol9/iss1/14>

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Fortunes Part 1

Lawrence Upton

2017 -- 2019

Fortunates

Prelude

What is happening in this place
is the sea breaks
rock into smaller rock, and moves it off
somewhere not necessarily near long term;
and it may become, in due course, new farm soil.

Nothing will be lost, though it is to us here.

Some things will survive; and new things may grow.
All things are living, in ways of thinking
which are amenable to our sanity
amenable to what we cannot change.

It will take time for the whole archipelago to be sunk.

But there is plenty of time.
And all *this* will pass in its own season.

Go with it, on its current, and a breeze,
though both now flow alarmingly from true.
Seeds and birds blow in; many others go.
It is an interchange, perhaps exchange.

Barest rock in the Western Isles may hold
growth
giving mammalia basis
no death

beyond each individual's; our stone
is yet in process, one thing becoming

another

which is not yet.

We *are* animals.

We *are* things.

We *are* substance and meanings

leaning to meanings which do not have ends.

Needing no justification, we live.

That is: we do exist in time: eye lands.

For years, I have been watching these places.

More than sixty years, though I forgot much,

anything external to myself, my head,

which happened to my seeing early on.

Make it around only half a century

and something protrudes from underneath my Earth;

but, still, like anything that's newly born,

I did not much investigate origins,

relying upon myths of my own thought,

without science, inculcating desire.

More recently, my brain began to see

the unchanging changeability, as *theme*

replayed itself as themes changing

repetitively and repeatedly,

bright daisies all out of a now dulled grass,

birds hopping around shallow fresh puddles,

much seen anew without becoming bland,

remaining informative, informational.

One finds that nothing changes, and remains

open to alternative, at a risk,

generalising from particularities

of the individual to the social

though what persists persists in single heads
and in a reality they do not see
without finding their love's alteration.

Give me evidence each new time
when you speak
it is your new speech
not a truth read out.

Each act of memory, and its recall,
rewrites memories, reordering all its,
making versions of the detail,
changing the parts of each before utterance

and thus what is said
will misrepresent
impressions
each impression a new act
being read in an improvisatory voice

and thus things fade

we stay unsure

and grow

The whole world grows,
impatient to grow newly,
pushing quickly for what is now possible.
That is: for what is now thought quite possible.
And every thought has its own consequence.

Fortunes

Song -- Wingletang

I could say this hasn't changed much
in four thousand years.

I've not said that.

At most I might attribute it
but do not, at all, understand
how it can be known with certainty.
A useful datum, if correct;
or *interesting* I might say;
but said straight, as conversation,
it would be better to exclaim
"I don't know if it's changed. Sorry.
Only been here four millennia.

Meanwhile

we know

islands

fragmented

The whole island was once larger;
the southern coasts further apart
while now it's almost size ten waist,
holding its breath, standing straight north
as much as matters.

An island,
another one, a new thing, broke off
some time in the past. I don't know;
though I'm sure that some are knowledgeable,
or think they are, or say they are.
It's still in the process. Each tide
effects a separation for hours,
only for a few hours. Danger
and nuisance; but nothing permanent.

The biggest change there's been
is in the name – from ek enes
into agnes, once Kernewek
ceased to have meaning. In English,
it means nothing, an odd series
of phonemes we do not recognise.
That is, *if* the name is correct:
No one has seen it written out
in any contemporary manuscript

and climate.

Rats on all islands --
how long had they been there? --
we brought them here -- changed ecology.

Now, on *this* bit of rock, they're gone;
and Manx Shearwater eggs can hatch,
where before they were laid, then
eaten. Year after year. Centuries.
The quay at St Mary's covering
a part of Rat Island.

The birds have winter home oversea,
flying a few inches above
the waves between Brazil and here.
They and their ancestors.

Land mass
moving from land mass.

The ocean
widening millimetre by kilometre
over aeons, illustrating
Darwin, if you follow my thought,
in that the Manx are good fliers --
those that weren't that good have drowned! --

but they're lousy at touching down,
and crash into the grass, tumbling,
comically to human eyes; but live
to reproduce inability --
after staying aloft that far.
So our theory works without belief.

Fortunates

Song -- An archipelago

It isn't that we eat too many fish.
Not per capita. We should eat *more* sea food.

There are too many eating everything!

Tourism sustains the islands
and it may destroy what's left.

The uninhabited islands
are not uninhabited at all --
lots of people live there: it's just
that they are not human beings

which we regard as not living
in the same way that we're alive.
They don't need us; though we need some
of them, exclaiming as we watch,

noting details of behaviour,
physiology et cetera.
They're part of our entertainment.
We impose that upon creatures.

That is to say, we're attentive
if we enjoy their activities.
Otherwise, we may exterminate
or enslave most of the majority.

Much the same with our own species,

declassifying as we strode
into new worlds in America
and Australia --

who needs foreigners?

one said in the pub the other day.
It saves pointless philosophy
and shilly-shallying with words
which do not add up to anything.

Efficient Management Techniques
avoid wasting time with argument
when the argument's already been agreed.
That's my opinion anyway.

First we should secure our place
in whatever we invest in.
There is time for conservation
after we have made safe our selves.

That's not only theory. It is
also common sense.

All agree.

No one thinks we should bother much
with life forms beyond the polity.

It is much better for us knowing
by data analyses and rules
what policies will benefit
all stake-holders than to spend time.

Beasts have their internal clocks
but few or none may understand
chronology as an abstract
and so its value to the ecosphere.

That's why God gave us dominion
over creation.

Let's be creative.

We learn from mistakes, believing
Nature can and must be improved.

Perhaps the main thing wrong with heritage
is *heritage* – as if the world were ours
to make off with.

Other animals do live
in an environment, without vandalism.

What a statement is *the anthropocene*
layers of rubble and plastic and various junk

even as more bits of Scilly separate
from each other under eustasies
furthered by wanton daft humanity
as if we have lost control.

Put into care
to be kept an eye on.

There is no one
to care for us but us.

We could make nests
and even rooms.

But cities?

Those seagulls
in their birth season maintain separation
from each other upon The Gugh's north tip.

The rocks lie where they have rolled. Birds don't mind.
They see it as it is; and use it so.

Old graves there, a line of them, stay put.
Only we desecrate them, destroying

history as we read it. The biggest's
disembowelled. We've done more than the sea
to smash up where we live, cutting circles
in the walking surface

like the Marx Brothers.

There are many interleaving landscapes
which even the frequent visitor may miss
keeping to roads or following the coast --

occupy an individual territory,
which you mayn't (it's owned by a Duchy),
and, as anywhere, you'll learn unsigned purposes
which everyone who lives here knows well,
a ghostly vital life purposing the whole.

What might the tourists note? Holiday snaps.

The thrush singing from that tall roof sees more
scraping a daily living from landscape
while all in view are made subsidiary
to upper air when it is ruled by raptors

Though the land beneath humans *is landscape*
even if just available to sighs,
there are also *catscapes* in which felines,
with their adaptability, perform
actions by their own brains' functional operation

self-directed automata are fed
and trained up lazy, chasing distraction

so a lot like us

and much discouraged
and self-distracted from their murderous hunt.

A small tribe of Dodecanese ferals
would move as one distributed network
of brains no matter how unreflective
killing all mammals in an empty house
in the time it takes an ape to walk past
depopulating depopulated towns

Henry slept out its old age on seat backs
offside Coastguards Cottages, or on a wall
alongside the way up from Troy Town Farm
near where the road is never fixed
because no one agrees whose space it is.

He fell off the seats quite hard if he dreamt
and ran away if any saw and laughed --

Cats do not like laughter: how can that be?

He yearned for greetings; and stood on his head
on the wall's top stones when he heard his name;
and then, before the stunt had completed,
rolled over, on his own skull, to the ground,
three or four feet below, somehow getting
his feet into position for the unex -
- pected touch down, where he had snoozed,

That was his repertoire. Same thing each day.
He fed from plates and was, mostly, asleep.

Dragon aims, bound in failing memory,
to claim his seat in the cafe garden
where he sits upon a bench or a table
until he is chased off. If spoken to
without aggression, he likes to lean on
something which isn't there; and so falls off.

The fall seems to reset him, without pain.
He lives a life of infancy and love.

Then there's the deaf one, quite small and old,
with clear blue eyes which she averts, hunched up.
She sleeps in her silence; constantly startled;
unafraid, on concrete in the road middle,
where it branches downhill towards the church

in that church there is a stained glass window
which shows the sea and island fields as one
interlocking continual pattern

And Fizz, down at the farm, moves quite a bit;
and in early years roamed a great distance
letting herself be carried back uphill
then struggling to be put down at the height
making her descent alone and dignified --
yes, one cannot help anthropomorphise
something which collaborates for its own gain.
She likes the table where one eats ice cream,
charming the customers to feed her fat
sometimes back-flipping into the low air
to fail to catch hold a flying song bird.
At night she'll tour the campsite tents, trading
entertainment for warmth and scraps of food
or turning tricks in the self-catering lets.
She's good at taking voles, but not the taste.
Mice were her thing when there were mice to catch.

Yampi, before they had him done, would leap
at the picture window if birds flew near
and then fall on to the sill somehow not
breaking the line of decorative china.
He could surround a bush full of small birds
all on his own simply by moving fast.

Pebble is younger still. Outside the shop
he sits and takes what he can get, clean-furred
and solid and alert; seeing off dogs
much bigger than himself. And that's his thing.

They live their rapid lives, and then disappear,
unremarked unacknowledged legislators
as mice built Earth as an experiment --
though we may bring it down to build motorways.

Is it my fault then? You should have told me.
I didn't know, did I? I didn't know.

Fortunes

Song -- Church Cove, St Agnes

Wind briefly gets through to church land
baffled by walls. Round low branches,
it smashes out a rough slight warmth
one appreciates after a walk
through its blastings which dominate
experience. Cold, you think.
That's how it feels to those inside,
warm, desk-tied all the time,
otherwise keeping still, gravestones,
until they sail out on a breeze.
That heat means pleasure above the ground.

Those buried in soil are cold,
hard, stiff as granite,
breaking down into weaker stuffs
other than they've been, becoming
earth, which might yet grow crops; but sea
is ready to inundate our land,
snatching nutrients like hungry gulls.

Fortunates

Song -- In early days

In early days, human culture was spread
along littorals – which we think an oddity --
holding attention pointed on cities
of this age, and perhaps of earlier times,
but not necessarily, probably just not
on the edge of the land. We see it falsely.

There is a map, seeking to praise Cornwall,
which frames the whole of Europe; with Falmouth
at its centre; portraying a polity
I do not recognise yet find startling
and exciting. A world I've not yet seen
and cannot physically perceive.
Yet brains' eyes need corrective help to know
where and how to look. That way, we move
the location of the world, pushing Cornwall
to a periphery. And England? Where's that?

A hinterland far off where wealth has gone.

Fortunes

Song – unimproved animals

I think it was Professor Charles Thomas
who told that farmed animals on Scilly Isles --
not deer; they were extinguished early on --
stayed, into modern eras, unimproved

from the state of brain of product and yields,
in a style from before the Christian Era:
small; adapted to their own needs, not ours;
not shaped to a management ideal like us,

or most of us, where the obvious response
to interference is to kick out hard
and face the possibility of death.
And that comes on our animals to schedule.

(At best, they're taken some hours on seas
often stormy and for them alarming
to be slaughtered in a factory, ending
their lives of being factories themselves.

.

Not that I expect the Iron Age creatures
were treated well – a larger space perhaps...
but maybe a more kindless brutal cut.

What is the answer? What is the question?
No one records *their* final thoughts, do they?
They're only animals. We've got to eat.

Fortunates

Song -- Destinationed

Destinationed. Flying into Scilly?
Where you want to be or where you are now.
Somewhere on a map, not in your brain.

Birds do it better. They navigate! Their shit
doesn't foul more than a little atmosphere,
and that for seconds.
Birds are worth seeing.

Fish and animals know their way. Without tools.
And some days later you'll lift off again.

We overcome our own limitations;
but so, often, do beasts.
We don't see it.
We don't see anything.
We lack perception.
Our senses are not suited to our lives.

"Why don't you all do something about this?"
screams a woman delayed for an hour
by a very low spring tide; and then asks
if there is a nearby railway station
so she can get herself home to main land.
And here's a moth clattering the window pane.

*Exe Valley, Devon; & Bath, Somerset; Autumn 2017
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