

L'Océanite

The Storm Petrel

*the aperiodic newsletter of the
International Institute of Geopoetics*



Issue 1
March 2022

©Published by the International Institute of Geopoetics founded in 1989 by Kenneth White
<https://www.institut-geopoetique.org/en>



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EDITORIAL

In the 1990s, just after its 'archipelisation', the International Institute published a newsletter, called *Feuille de route* (Roadmap), and then another, *L'Estran* (The Foreshore). A number of publications were issued, for a few years, and then stopped. The road has continued ever since. Geopoetics has spread widely, with the inherent risks of diluting the idea and causing aberrations. When it came to strongly reaffirming the Institute's ambition for geopoetics, it was decided in 2016 to go for an 'oceanisation' evolution.

This means that geopoetic groups and individuals who prefer to remain isolated now operate in a large, open space, an ocean, where they work "in close relation' to their locality and according to their particular theme, 'from the perspective of well understood and well developed geopoetics, that is, without hasty amalgamations, without 'confusionism' (Kenneth White)". The role of the Institute is to remain, as it has been since its foundation, the main reference point for geopoetics, the place of maximum concentration.

If these objectives have not changed, it seemed to us that the Institute could enter into more direct contact with its members and those, many of them, who navigate around it. This is the reason for this aperiodic newsletter entitled *L'Océanite*, of which this is the first issue. *L'Océanite* is first and foremost a storm petrel, of the pelagic and cosmopolitan seabirds family, whose small size – as opposed to the albatrosses to which they are related – in no way undermines its sailing qualities. These birds are reputed to herald storms, fly acrobatically, feed on plankton and come ashore only to breed. The watchful readers who have noted the reference to Kenneth White's *Plateau de l'Albatros* (an Introduction to Geopoetics, 1994), will appreciate the humility of this newsletter. But Oceanite also refers to an olivine-rich basaltic volcanic rock that evokes 'verdant seas'. In one word, we find water, air, fire and earth - what makes a world.

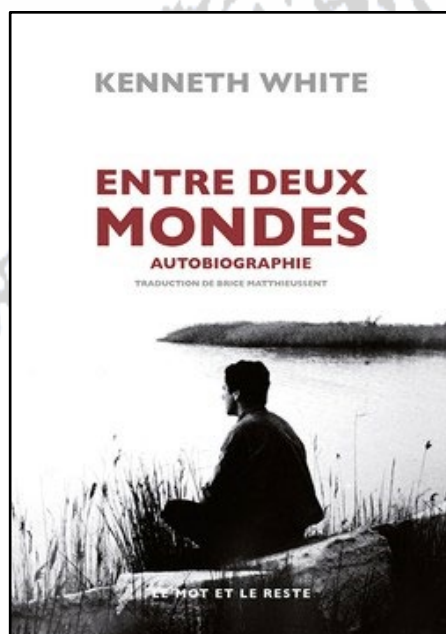
L'Océanite will follow the lessons of the wind which, as everyone knows, blows where it will. It will keep you informed of the life of the Institute and of the most significant geopoetic activities, and will be able to provide other information such as noteworthy publications or ongoing projects. *L'Océanite* will provide information on a well understood and well developed geopoetics, true to the high seas navigation of the mind to which Kenneth White's work invites us.

Régis POULET
International Institute of Geopoetics, President
Editor of *L'Océanite*
On the shores of the Rhône, January 2022

RECENT PUBLICATIONS

In French:

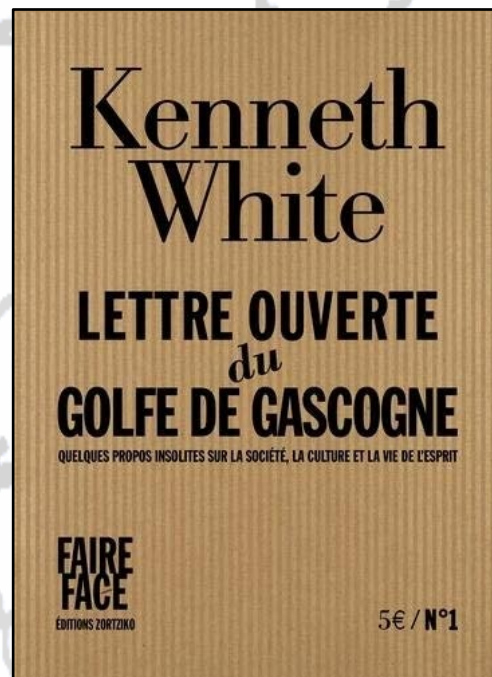
- Kenneth WHITE, *Entre deux mondes — Autobiographie*
Le Mot et le Reste 468 p. / 27 € TTC / ISBN : 9782361398033



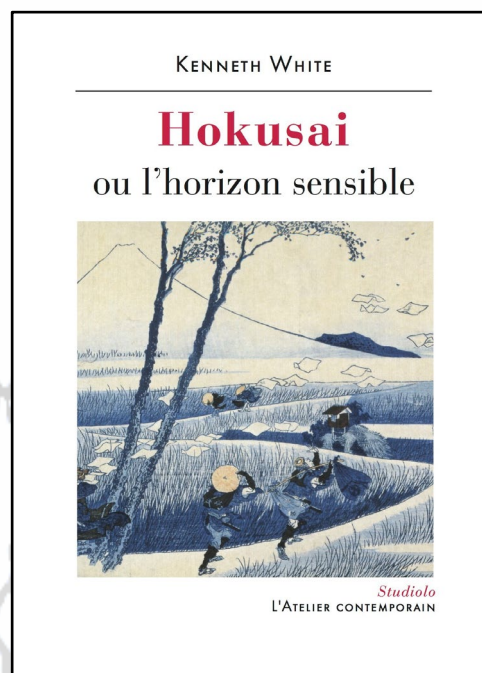
- Kenneth WHITE & Patrice REYTIER, *La voie du vide et du vent — un vagabondage planétaire*
éditions Rue Échiquier 96 p. / 19.90 € TTC / ISBN : 978-2-3742-5275-9



- Kenneth WHITE, *Lettre ouverte du golfe de Gascogne* — quelques propos insolites sur la société, la culture et la vie de l'esprit
éditions Zortziko 56 p. / 5 € TTC / ISBN : 9791095492290

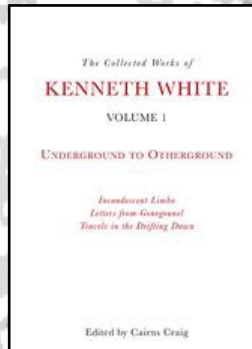


- Kenneth WHITE, *Hokusai ou l'horizon sensible*
éditions L'Atelier contemporain 224 p. / 8.50 € TTC / ISBN : 99782850350252
(réédition de l'ouvrage épuisé paru en 1990 chez Terrain vague, collection "Vision")

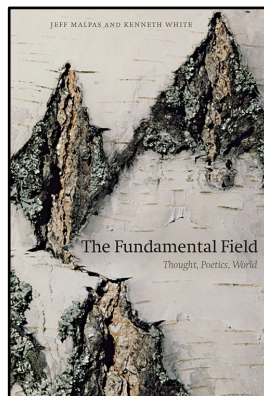


In English:

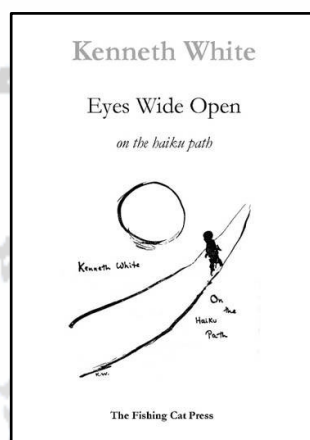
- Kenneth WHITE, *The Collected Works of Kenneth White, Vol. 1, Underground to Otherground (Incandescent Limbo, Letters from Gourgounel, Travels in the Drifting Dawn)*, Edinburgh University Press, ISBN-13: 9781474481298,



- Kenneth WHITE & Jeff MALPAS, *The Fundamental Field*, Edinburgh University Press, 184 pp., ISBN: 978-1-4744-8527-2



- Kenneth WHITE, *Eyes Wide Open — on the haiku path* The Fishing Cat Press, €15 per copy (plus postage fee)



ARTICLES

- **Kenneth WHITE: *In the philosophical background of geopoetics***

Summary: In this essay, I am answering two questions which, in today's confused and rather deteriorated mental context, may arise. Namely: 1) Is geopoetics dogmatic, that is, anti-liberal? 2) Is geopoetics inhuman, that is, non-humanist? I undertake this intellectual exploration in the company of two thinkers, Spinoza and Nietzsche, who were in the vicinity of geopoetics from its origins.

There is no doubt that freedom is a very common and convenient conception. But one can have more than serious doubts about the accuracy of the hypothesis. One can even venture to say, "dogmatically", that for the majority of men it is a total illusion. To see clearly, one needs, as Lichtenberg says in one of his aphorisms, "a very deep study", a study "for which one man in a thousand has the necessary time and patience."

Much has been said, written and glossed over about the notion of "freedom", and there is much more to come. But to my mind, the best examination of the question is to be found in Spinoza's *Ethics*, and especially in its fifth part, "Of the Power of the Intellect, or the Liberty of Humanity », this culminating part having been prepared by the part "Of the Servitude of Humanity, or the Strength of the Emotions".

[Read the article on line \(in French\)](#)

- **Régis POULET: *From Mandala to Atopia - Kenneth White's extreme urban experience***

Summary: Since his Glaswegian and Parisian beginnings, Kenneth White's practice of the city has often been linked to Asia and, less expectedly for this poet, to mandalas. From the 'thaumaturgic walks' in Glasgow to the mandala wanderings in *Incandescent Limbo*, White intensifies his practice of the city in making the movement of the body a psychic exploration. Then came the discovery of Asian cities, in 1975-76 and 1984. Kenneth White's intellectual nomadism, inspired by the lofty encounters of the mind initiated in the 19th century, as well as his use of Nietzschean thought, suggest a disencumbering of the illusions conveyed about cities such as Hong Kong, Macau, Taipei, Bangkok or Tokyo, almost all of which have an ancient representation in the West that is sometimes found even down to popular culture. Many people (artists, writers, thinkers) have projected onto these cities either preconceived ideas from their time or fantasies that were inherited long ago. However, the Whittian practice of these cities, while inspired by the mandala, is not reduced to it. Far from any acculturation, it gives precedence to openness. Freeing himself from the cumbersome ideological and cultural baggage of the East, he has given these urban explorations in Asia a geopoetic dimension. From *Incandescent Limbo* to *The Wild Swans*, *Scenes from a Floating World* and *The Face of the East Wind*, the poet and peregrinator has turned an urban space that is not a priori conducive to geopoetics into an atopic horizon. The particular contribution of Asia to this emergence deserves to be highlighted.

What is the relationship between a term - *mandala* - referring to esoteric knowledge, with all the often negative connotations associated with it, and another - *atopia* - at the heart of contemporary thinking? Readers of Kenneth White will have already spotted two layers of his thinking: thoughts of Asia and place.

The combination of these two terms is heading towards the intellectual nomadism theorised by White in that it does not, *a priori*, make a distinction between what is worth studying and thinking about and what should be left aside. The relationship between inside and outside, between esotericism and exotericism, between the Western and the non-Western is thus posed in an open and non-contradictory manner. The same applies to the relationship between the city and its exterior, which is not necessarily the natural world. [Read the article on line \(in French\)](#)

NOTES ON KENNETH WHITE'S BIBLIOGRAPHY

(Extracts from the) Exhaustive Bibliography of Artist's Books 1977 - 2022
(revised, expanded and updated by Stéphane Bigeard)

In an internal document issued by the *Association des Amis et Lecteurs de Kenneth White*, entitled *Bio-bibliography de Kenneth White*, a first listing of the author's artist's books was established leading to the year 1999. The Nicaise bookshop (contemporary bibliophile bookshop), in its catalogue n°12, published in May 2000, extended this listing. Through this section, our ambition is to review, improve and update these first bibliographical attempts.

It should be noted that Kenneth White has contributed to the publication of more than a hundred works of this type in association with dozens of contemporary artists. He is without doubt the most prolific living French-speaking writer in this field. It is a primordial but little known part of his work. The rarity of certain editions explains in particular the fact that the general public is not necessarily aware of them. Only on the occasion of exhibitions organised by media libraries allow the discovery of these treasures kept or stored in reserves of rare books.

Without going into specialist considerations, I offer the following personal definition of an artist's book: a happy gathering of three people: an author, an artist and a publisher, around a text and with the ambition of creating a beautiful work, most often in a limited edition, which goes beyond the usual norms for the production of works of current distribution (format, paper, composition, typography, illustration, binding, etc.).

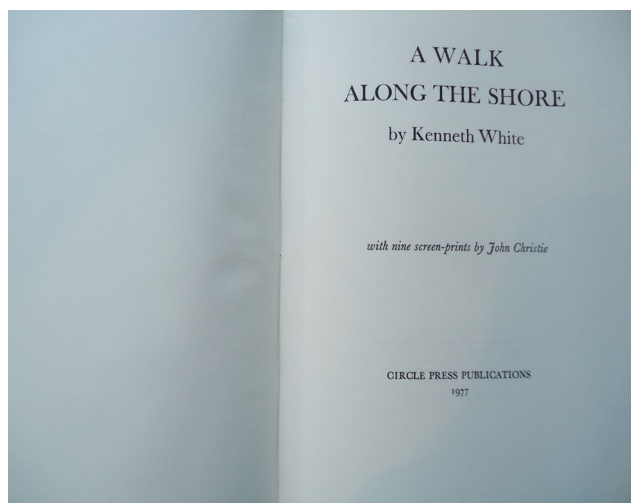
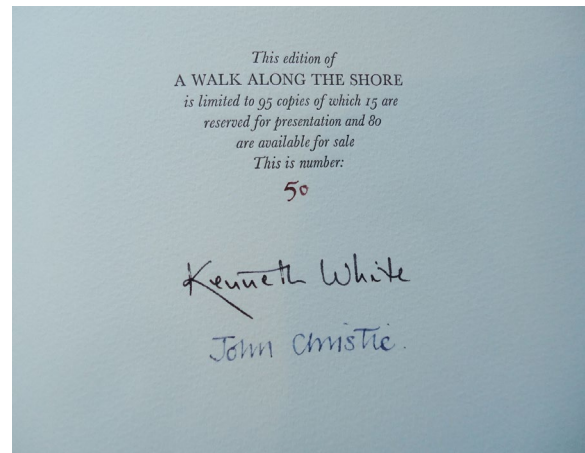
1. Description of the work: Kenneth White, John Christie, *A Walk along the shore*, Circle Press, Guildford Surrey, England 1977 (33x23 cm). 9 colour screenprints by John Christie. First edition in English of a poem in 55 sections. Limited edition of 95 copies on Arches vellum paper (including 15 copies not for sale) all signed by the author and the artist in the colophon. Hand-lettered by Walter Taylor and Willow King in 14pt Baskerville. Part of the edition is bound in cream card boards with black borders in a black casing (binding by Ted Robbins of the Royal College of Art). Price: £75.



2. The artist: Born in 1945 in London, John Christie started out as a cameraman for the BBC. He began his graphic work with works on Erik Satie. His encounter with Ronald King, founder of the Circle Press publishing house, led to a close collaboration

with this prolific publisher, which lasted for almost forty years. This book is the second work created in collaboration with this publisher. In an interview, John Christie describes this production as follows: 'Ron has a long history of working with different writers when producing his own books and pamphlets (...) and I followed his example, firstly with the Scottish poet Kenneth White whose long poem 'A Walk Along The Shore' (1977) became the text for my first substantial book and then a long fruitful collaborative friendship'.

<https://www.ronkingstudio.com/pages/focus-on-john-christie-and-ron-king>



3. The publisher: Ronald King has been an established artist and publisher of artists' books since 1966. In 1967 he set up a studio in Guilford, Surrey, with artists and poets to create original work. With this book he began a long collaboration with Kenneth White. Together, they will produce major works that will be discussed in this section in the future issues. His editorial work has been the subject of major exhibitions and retrospectives. One can get an idea of his creations by visiting the following sites: <http://www.circlepress.com/> and

<https://www.ronkingstudio.com/pages/rons-biography-in-brief>

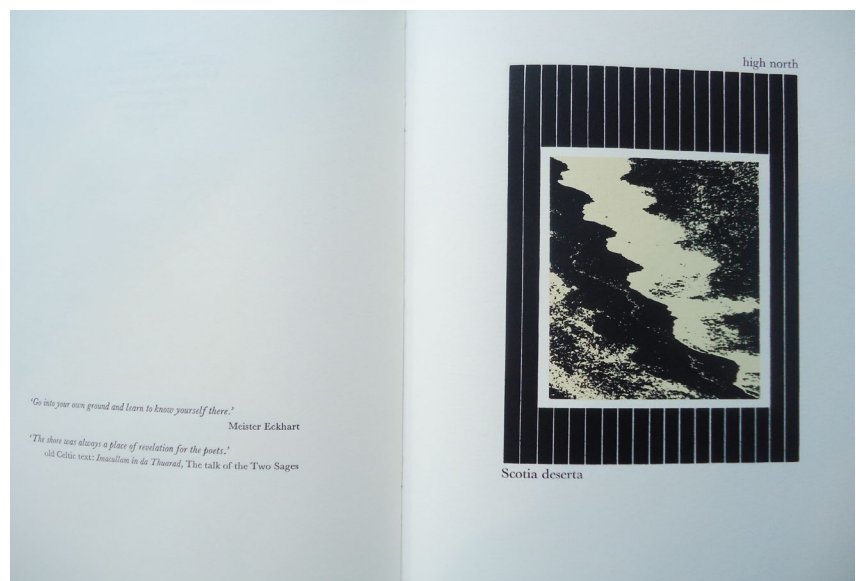
4. The text: Kenneth White is known as a poet, and in particular for his short poems. But he is also the author of this text, considered by some to be the most important long poem of the 20th century. Let's quote him: "I have lived for ten years with a long poem, *A Walk along the shore*. It is a long-term undertaking, which involves all sorts of studies, botany, ornithology, zoology. I pile up the materials, I proceed to a work of sedimentation. When this sedimentation has become almost granite-like, then it starts to come out. It's geological, geophysical", interview in the magazine *Fanal* (Fanal, Kenneth White, February 1982, Club Yvan Goll de St-Dié). Extracts of this long poem were previously published in the journals *Raster* (Amsterdam), *Akros* (England), and *Scottish Poetry* 7 (Scotland).



The original French edition of the text was published in 1980 in a limited and bilingual edition (translation by Patrick Guyon): *Le Grand Rivage*, Le Nouveau Commerce, Paris, 1980, 125 pages (50 very rare first copies on Vélin d'Arches paper, 1,400 on vergé d'arjomari paper). It was since republished by Isolato (Nancy), in 2009, with also a first edition: 30

copies on Vélin d'Arches paper, 160 gr., numbered from I to XXX, signed by the author and accompanied by an original photograph — *Vague 1* — by [Marie-Claude White](#).

Let us quote the presentation of the latter publisher: "Considered one of the great poems of the 20th century, *A Walk along the shore* was composed in Edinburgh at the end of the 1960s within a three-week period of intense concentration. Kenneth White was at a crucial moment in his itinerary, going through a period of transition. The poem is both an overview of his learnings, an existential



journey, and a sketch of the new mental map that was taking shape in his mind. As for the shoreline in question, if it is first and foremost the Atlantic coast of Scotland, it is above all the anonymous place of a meeting of forces, forms and rhythms.

“an attempt
to get at and say out
all
that the world comprises
which man
only rarely
realises.”

THE DICTIONARY OF GEOPOETICS

Atopia, atopic

Définition

Atopia is not a neologism ; its first use is medical.

A place outside of places. But it has nothing to do with a utopia. The latter is a projection of preconceived ideas (ideology) onto the real. Atopia is a space free of codes, close to naked reality. The A also indicates a new beginning. For a humorous presentation of this notion, see the first pages of *The Blue Road*. *Lexique géopoétique, Poésie 98, October, N.74.*

Main instances of this term

ADL, p. 159 ; AE, p. 11 ; AT, p. 32, p. 219 ; CG, p. 119 ; DD, p. 31-32, p. 48 ; DEN, p. 57 ; EB, p. 80 ; EN, p. 232 ; FD, p. 53, p. 138, p. 144, p. 148 ; H, p. 118 ; LCGT, p. 93 ; PA, p. 208 ; PC, p. 71 ; MAA, p. 44, p. 160 ; MM, p. 68 ; Cosmose, p. 76 ; Incisions III, p. 32 ; In'hui, p. 52 ; ALH, p. 145, p. 249, p. 322, p. 327 ; Lisières, p. 9.

[Click here to access list of books and abbreviations \(in French\)](#)

Related terms: **Most difficult area, Disencumber, Post-history, Poetic topology**

Quotations

"Take the A train.' Maybe you wondered what the A stands for ?

I'll tell you:

America

Atopia

Anarchic

Anachronistic

Anomic..."

In *The Blue Road*, Mainstream Publishing, 1990, p. 25.

"In a lecture, '*Des espaces autres*' (Other Spaces), delivered at the Cercle d'Études architecturales in 1967 (later collected in his *Dits et Écrits* of 1994), Michel Foucault speaks of 'heterotopia', defining it as 'a floating piece of space, a place without place, existing by itself, in itself, and yet open to the infinity of the sea'. That's a pretty good description of what came across in my book *Scènes d'un monde flottant* (Scenes of a Floating World), situated between West and East, in Hong Kong, which I later 'localised' more particularly in *House of Tides*, that heterotopia being a stage on the way towards what I've come to call, in general terms, atopia, a place radically outside the commonplaces, without being a no-place."

In *Ideas of Order at Cap Wrath*, The Collected Works of Kenneth White, Vol. 2, Edinburgh University Press, 2021, p. 302.

"They are doors opening onto an atopia, something more radical than any utopia."

In ***The Fundamental Project***, The Collected Works of Kenneth White, Vol. 2, Edinburgh University Press, 2021, p. 335.

"So I jumped the Channel at one point and have been living and working in France. That doesn't mean I've been 'converted' to French culture and am trying to fit myself into another scheme of things. No, what it means in effect is that I'm living in a paradoxical situation, a real little transnational atopia."

In ***Letter from the Pyrénées***, The Collected Works of Kenneth White, Vol. 2, Edinburgh University Press, 2021, p. 515.

"When it amused me to put names to that continent, I called it Euramerasia (because of its main field of exploration), White World (because it had neither map nor formula) or Atopia (because, while being "another world", it wasn't utopian, it was this world without the furniture)."

In ***Preface, Incandescent Limbo***, The Collected Works of Kenneth White, Vol. 1, Edinburgh University Press, 2021, p. 5.

Comments

In *Le Plateau de l'Albatros*, White distinguishes between atopia and utopia in relation to Thoreau.

For him, atopia is not a 'no-place' but an 'outside'.

Other reference

In her second book dedicated to White, Michèle Duclos proposes the following definition for atopia: matrix of all the places where thought and earth gather together in the completeness.

Access the [Dictionary on line \(in French\)](#)

CREDITS

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Photos

Cover: Océanite tempête, *Hydrobates pelagicus*, Mor-Braz, Morbihan, July 2016, Fabrice Jallu

Artist's Book: Stéphane Bigeard, personal collection

Web site

<https://www.institut-geopoetique.org/en>