L'Océanite The Storm Petrel

the aperiodic newsletter of the International Institute of Geopoetics

> Issue 2 April 2023

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EDITORIAL

L'Océanite is back. As everyone has seen, we are going through times of worries and withdrawal, of innovation and half-measures. To evolve in a pelagic space is not to move in the ether or the ideal, it is on the contrary to be in touch with the most concrete reality and an open vision. Who still wants old ideas, especially reduced to recipes? The greening of the current discussions has often given rise to neologisms borrowing from ancient roots (but not always well digested by those promoting them). These are mostly the eco- and geo- roots, which define a field of exploration, and the roots relating to how the mind will consider and explore these fields: -poetic, -critical, even -poetry. This editorial is not the place to distinguish these approaches. Readers will find in Kenneth White's works and, incidentally, in the links of this newsletter, something to explore more deeply this question whose importance is far from being only lexical. But let it be made clear here that geopoetics is not in opposition to other approaches especially those that take ecology as a basis (the latter is part of geopoetics, like a sedimentary layer). Geopoetics is not in opposition because it is simply not party to these problems, it evolves in a fundamental space where problems disappear or, according to the old Taoist adage that Kenneth White likes to mention, because: All muddy problems dissolve in the ocean.

What is new in the open ocean? A new geopoetic centre in Brazil. On the other hand, as Kenneth White's readers know, two emblematic places are particularly attached to geopoetics: the Ardèche, whose Letters of Gourgounel (1966) constitute White's 'first' book, with the main lines already present, and the Côtes-d'Armor, where the work has been unfolding for several decades. The Institute's objectives are to develop there geopoetic projects. In 2019, towards the end of the summer, we inaugurated a "Kenneth White Geopoetic House" in Valgorge (the town of the Gourgounel farm) with widespread enthusiasm. The world's well-known pandemic has put all this on hold. This spring, the project is off again to a good start, and we will keep you posted as soon as possible. In return, as far as Brittany is concerned, the project is very much on track: the Institute, in partnership with the Association of Friends and Readers of Kenneth White, organizes on July 15 and 16 in Trébeurden (at the cultural centre. Semaphore), Kenneth and Marie-Claude White's place of residence since 1984, the first "Kenneth White Geopoetic Meeting". Over a weekend, and in the presence of the inventor of geopoetics, we will propose (see the full schedule in this issue) a mix of conferences, readings, films, with three art exhibitions as well as an evening concert all organized around two themes: travel and residency. This event is open to all and we hope you will be there in great numbers!

> Régis POULET International Institute of Geopoetics, President Editor of *L'Océanite* On the shores of the Rhône, March 2023

EVENTS

Kenneth White Geopoetic Meeting

The International Institute of Geopoetics organizes on **15 and 16 July 2023** the first <u>Kenneth White Geopoetic Meeting</u> which will take place in the **Sémaphore**, **Trébeurden**'s cultural centre (Côtes-d'Armor).



The above schedule is conceived as a mix of conferences, readings, films and a concert that will be held in the Grande Salle. The lectures on geopoetics and on the work of Kenneth White will be given by Kenneth WHITE, founder and honorary president of the International Institute of Geopoetics, by Régis POULET, current president, by Emmanuel DALL'AGLIO, president of the Friends and Readers of Kenneth White and by Stéphane BIGEARD, secretary of the Institute and bibliophile. The readings will be made by Élisabeth POULET, actress, and Frédéric FAURE, actor. The composer of concrete music Lionel MARCHETTI will play excerpts from PLANKTOS, the work he composed inspired by Régis Poulet's eponymous collection. Two rarely shown films about Kenneth White's itinerary will be shown to the public, which will have the opportunity to see, during the breaks, three exhibitions of geopoetic art by Bernard ALLIGAND, Dominique ROUSSEAU and Marie-Claude WHITE, which

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will be held in the Foyer. Finally, the entrance hall of the Sémaphore will host the exhibition "The open world of Kenneth White" as well as a pop-up bookshop proposed by the Gwalarn bookstore (Lannion) and Isolato Editions (Nancy).

(Tickets will be on sale on site on the day, at the price of \in 7 per day and per person, within the limit of available seats - payment in cash).

New Geopoetic Centre

As of April 2023, a new geopoetic centre will feature on the map of centres of the Institute: the **Geopoetics Research Group of the University of Bahia**, led by Camila Gomes Sant'anna and Lirandina Gomes.

This second South American geopoetic centre — with the Chilean Centre for Geopoetic Studies (actually composed of two centres, one in Santiago and the other in Puerto Aysén) — is turning into reality the significant marked interest in the work of the Institute in recent years in Brazil (see the GA reports of recent years), as shown with the participation from France of Régis Poulet in a geopoetic symposium in Bahia in September 2022.

The **Grupo de Pesquisa em Geopoética**, in its original name, focuses its efforts on two lines of research, namely: "investigations of cultural, urban and tourist dynamics" and "apprehensions of urban centres through landscape, literature and the arts".

A more complete presentation of this centre is available in four languages, via the map of geopoetic centres and, in English, <u>with this link</u>.

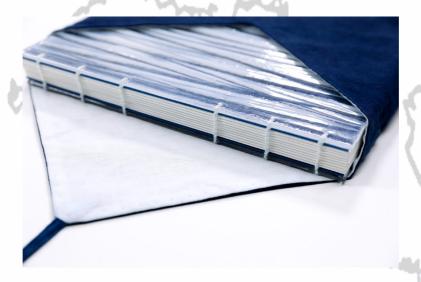
We wish them a fruitful activity to promote geopoetics in a country with considerable potential.

RECENT PUBLICATIONS

In French

Books and Journals:

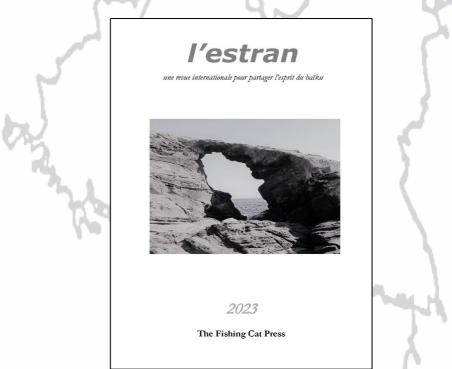
• Kenneth WHITE, *Les Cygnes sauvages* in a rare edition, published by <u>Éditions Leal</u> <u>Torres</u> and illustrated with photos by Marie-Claude WHITE, March 2022.



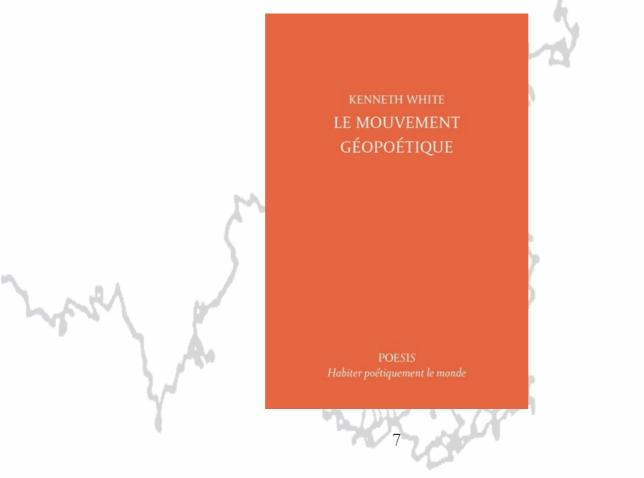
• A chapter dedicated to geopoetics features in the journal *Poésie/première*, number 82 of May 2022, under the direction of Pascal MORA (author of an article on America), with contributions from Norman Bissell (Presentation of the Scottish Geopoetics Centre), Marie-Josée Christien (on the Atlantic in the works of K. White), Michèle Duclos (reviews of K. White's works published over the last year), Miguel Laborde & Cazú Zegers (Presentation of the Chilean Geopoetics Centre) and Régis Poulet, who delivers, in the introductory interview, an excerpt from his forthcoming essay entitled *The Metamorphosis of a World — A Geological Approach to Geopoetics* (Isolato), May 2022.



• First issue of the *l'estran*, une revue internationale pour partager l'esprit du haïku (an international journal to share the spirit of haiku, published by The Fishing Cat Press), including, among others, essays on haiku by Alain Kervern, Michel Jourdan & Gilles Fabre (chief ed.) as well as by Kenneth White and Régis Poulet on the links with geopoetics, February 2023.



• Kenneth White, *Le mouvement géopoétique*, published by Poesis Éditions, 16 p. / 978-2-492239-03-8 / March 2023.

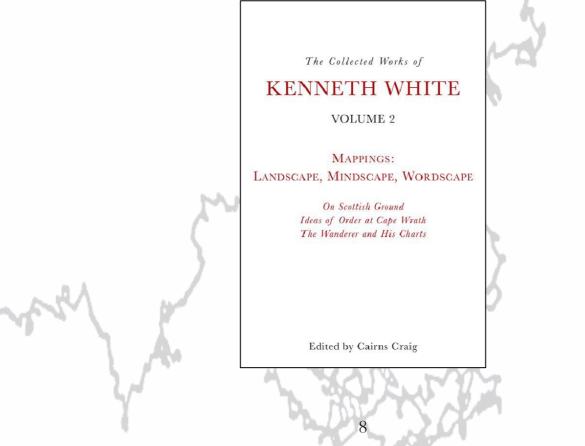


In English:

• Kenneth White, *The Collected Works of Kenneth White*, Volume 1_*Underground to Otherground*, 328 pages, Published February 2023 (Paperback), 9781399511124, £24.99.

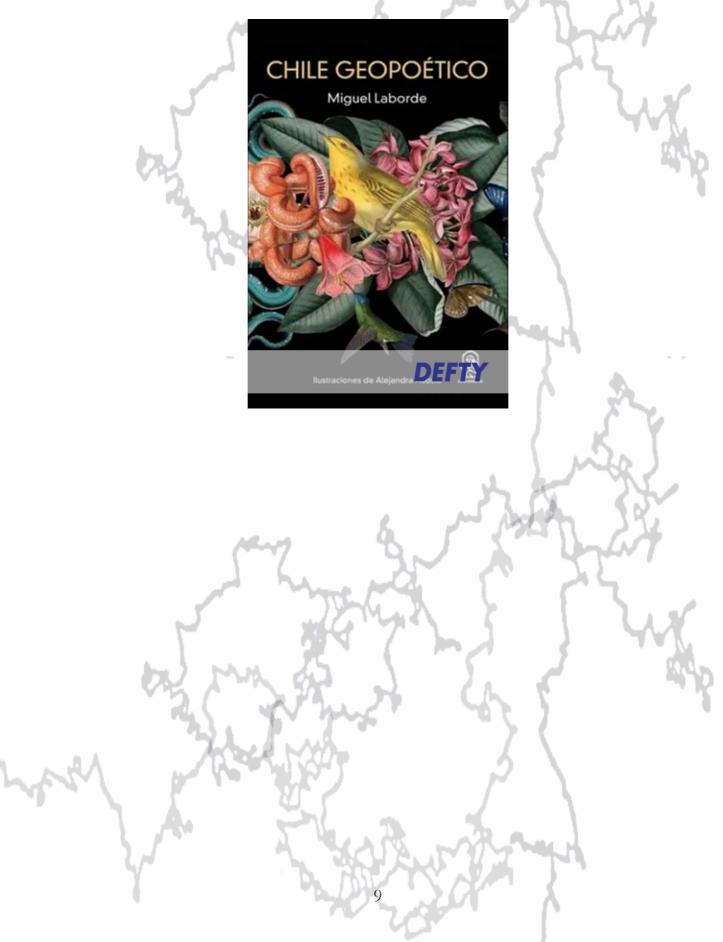
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		maria
	Edited by Cairns Craig	

• Kenneth White, *The Collected Works of Kenneth White*, Volume 2, *Mappings: Landscape*, *Mindscape*, *Wordscape*, 728 pages, Published February 2023 (Paperback), 9781399511131, £29.99.



In Spanish:

• Miguel Laborde, *Chile geopoético*, Ediciones UC, December 1, 2019, 212 pages, ISBN-13 : 978-9561424821.



ARTICLES

• Kenneth WHITE, 'News from the Great Shore. Elements of geopoetics'.

for the question is always how out of all the chances and changes to select the features of real significance so as to make of the welter a world that will last

Walking the Coast

In this short essay, published in French by *Ruptures écocritiques, à l'avant-garde* (dir. Olivier Penot-Lacassagne. ELFe XX-XXI, Études de la littérature française des XXe et XXIe siècles, 11-2022), Kenneth White starts with a note from Nietzsche's *Posthumous Fragment* and tells us about, from the Nietzschean figure of the « isolated », certain intellectual encounters and ruptures constitutive of the « field of the great work » cleared up book after book, which he calls by the name of geopoetics: a transdisciplinary theoretical-and-practical project, the exploration of a sensitive and intelligent relation to the earth, a poetics of the chaosmos, the opening of a world following the lines of the Earth.

Read the full essay on line (in French)

• Régis POULET, « At the Root of the Earth, a Poetics: an interview with Carole Mesrobian for the *Recours au poème* journal, March 2023 issue.

Recours au poème: Like all of us, our readers are facing a climate and civilisation crisis that never ceases to give rise to concerns, alarms and, in response, attempts to respond. In recent years, neologisms have flourished as answers to our problems. To stick to those that seem closest to the concerns of our journal, and without any intention to be exhaustive, we can mention geopoetry and geopoetics. Can you explain to our readers what distinguishes one from the other?

Régis Poulet: As a preamble to this interview, and I thank you for giving me this opportunity, I would like to clarify that geopoetics does not present itself as a solution to our problems. These always arise, to repeat Kenneth White's words, in a narrow space and disappear into a wider space. Geopoetics does not deals with problematics, it opens a mental, existential, expanded space.

Among the avenues you mentioned, you have made a draconian choice that brings us back to three roots. And, if I may, I will add, for the sake of discussion, a fourth root frequently encountered, and mention ecopoetics as another neologism. Thus we find ourselves with *eco-*, *geo-*, *-poetry* and *-poetics*. The question of roots is not negligible, since it allows us, beyond radicalism – a notion often misunderstood and corrupted – to touch on the fundamental. It is very difficult to say what is fundamental, if not the ability to think calmly from the ground up, when everything incidental has been eliminated, when there has been a large disencumbering. This is a work Kenneth

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White, the inventor of the geopoetics theory-practice, performed, in the 1950s, from a founding experience on the west coast of Scotland where he grew up. On the one hand, it is intellectual nomadism, and on the other hand, later, geopoetics – both forming a continuum.

Thus Kenneth White developed and deepened the figure of the intellectual nomad, this spirit moving from epoch to epoch, from culture to culture, searching, in the history of humanity, for elements of culture that could make it possible to bring out a complete culture – taking here what is missing there, and vice-versa, and so on...

Recours au poème: To what needs does the invention of this concept respond?

Régis Poulet: The Crisis of the Mind proclaimed by Paul Valéry at the beginning of the twentieth century notably marked the end of the West's claims to show the way to the rest of humanity, the term of what White called the "Highway of the West", namely a thought inherited from Descartes and a science inherited from Newton giving the old metaphysics the modern means of its ancient ambitions: to divide the world into subjects and objects, to give mankind the technical means to dominate the world.

Read the full interview on line (in French)

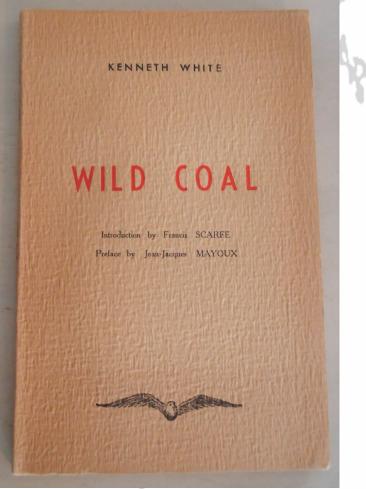
NOTES ON KENNETH WHITE'S BIBLIOGRAPHY

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

WILD COAL : 1963 - 2023

I have a great love for little books. Kenneth White

It was in 1963 that Wild Coal. Kenneth White's first book, was published, a booklet of poetry in English published in Paris. The poet, then 27 years old, is a lecturer of English at the Sorbonne and he had not yet "cast off" with his native Scotland (he will not do so until 1967). The Club des étudiants d'anglais first published him in the pages of their internal journal, Soap *Box*. His articles are well perceived. The idea then emerged to publish his first collection. The copy of the first edition dedicated by the author to André Crépin, assistant in the English department of the Sorbonne at the time, indicates that the latter would be at the initiative of the publication: "To André Crépin, who first put the idea of publishing these poems into our heads, with my *sincere friendship*". As it is a work decorated with photographs, it can be considered a precursor to the many artist's books published by the author.

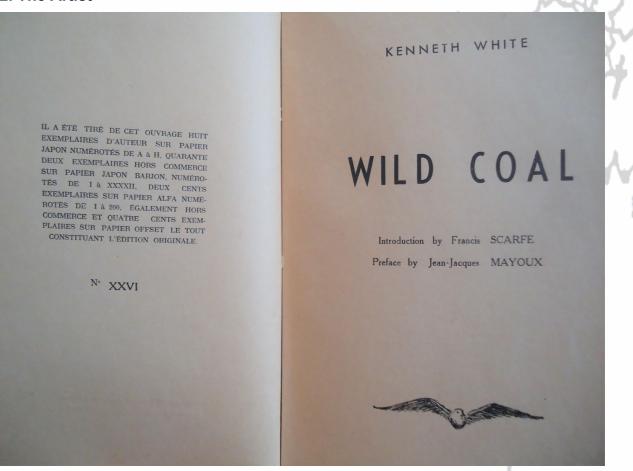


1. Description

Kenneth White, Marie-Claude White (photographer),

Introduction in English by Francis Scarfe. Foreword in French by Jean-Jacques Mayoux. *Wild Coal*. Club des Étudiants d'Anglais, 5, rue de l'école de médecine, Paris 6th, undated (1963). In-8 paperback, 24 x 14.8 cm, 48 pp. Red and black typography of the cover. A drawing of a gull with wings spread on the cover and reproduced on the last page of the book. Two black & white photographs out of text by Marie-Claude White. Total print run of 650 copies as follows: eight author's copies on Japanese paper numbered A to H, forty-two non-commercial copies on Japanese Barjon paper numbered I to XXXXII, two hundred copies on alfa paper numbered from 1 to 200, also out of trade and four hundred copies on offset paper. Imprimerie R. Maillol 19 avenue du Général Leclerc.

2. The Artist



Marie-Claude White, wife of the author, made her debut as a photographer with this book. She has continued her artistic work in parallel with her activity as a translator of the work of Kenneth White. She illustrated other artists' books by Kenneth White: in 2009, the first edition of *Le Grand Rivage* (A Walk Along The Coast) published by Isolato (see Storm Petrel, #1), *Le Voyage à Skjolden*, published by Claude Blaizot in 2016, and *Les Cygnes Sauvages*, published by Leal Torres in 2021.

Link to the artist's web site: https://www.marieclaudewhite.com/

3. The Publisher

The *Club des Étudiants d'Anglais* at the origin of the publication is not a publisher strictly speaking. The undertaking was ambitious and had to represent a significant financial commitment for a print that is not confidential after all. And the result is up to par with a book with neat typography and elegant layout. The copies on large paper are pamphlets of great bibliophilic interest worthy of the productions of established publishers. In his recent autobiography, *Entre Deux Mondes*, Kenneth White states that for him *Wild Coal* is a "clandestine publication", as it is published outside the traditional publishing circle. Clandestine publication certainly, but a real editorial success that marks the entry into poetry, in his future adopted country, but in his mother tongue, of a poet of a global stature and scope.

Here is the author's introductory note (p. 11):

'I wish to thank the Club des Etudiants d'Anglais of the University of Paris and in particular Monsieur Bernard Galtier, without whom these poems would not have appeared at this time or place. As for the book itself, it is not a collection of verse ; it is a synoptic whole and it is in movement, connected. However much I should like each poem to be considered in and for itself, it must also be seen as part of that greater whole.' K. W.

4. The Text:

A clarification first of all on the title of the book. *Wild Coal* is a technical term for the rarest coal, the one that contains the most energy, a memory of his readings in geology.

The book opens with two prologues: one by Francis Scarfe, poet, former professor of Kenneth White in Glasgow and director of the *Institut d'Anglais de Paris*, the other by Jean-Jacques Mayoux, then professor of English literature at the Sorbonne.

Here is Francis Scarfe's introduction in the form of a vibrant tribute (p. 5):

'This is a testimony, not a testimonial, but in the case of poems like Kenneth White's in which the whole stress is on the inward truth of men and things, one is immediately face to face with the man.'

'Since I first met Kenneth White when he was a brittle sharpeyed student. I have been increasingly impressed by his ferocious honesty. He has that wilfulness, sense of purpose and of destiny which is an essential element in the character of a poet or in poetry itself. He compels, irritates and excites the mind in much the same way as D.H. Lawrence, and his poems have all that living freshness (or what D.H.L. called starkness), of Lawrence's. Nobody can read these poems without being under the spell of their naked vision and it is important to notice that the vision is equally clean and original in his landscapes and townscapes. Another refreshing quality is their energy which is both intellectual and nervous. The gift that White is probably least aware of because it is entirely natural is his faultless sense of rhythm. I do not find here any of those platitudes of rhythm or tone which are so common today: the poet's versification (if he as any) is as instinctive as his touch on the world. It would perhaps be an impertinence to analyse such qualities in an introduction of this kind. It is more important to point out especially to readers in France that poetry is passing through a very bad phase in Britain. So far as Scottish poets are concerned – and I've read them all - I do not see one who approaches White's honesty, clarity and seriousness. As for English poetry, in the past ten years or so it has become much too cerebral and artificial. I do not hesitate to say that a book like Kenneth's White's which contains at least a dozen poems which can teach something to other writers (Coffin Close is a masterpiece) not only stands against the current but may help to turn it and bring poetry back to what it ought to be. And this is because he is more than intellectual. There is no split in his personality, no distance between what he knows and what he feels, or between what he is and what he writes.'

With this introduction, Francis Scarfe gives the very first critical judgment on Kenneth White. It is striking to note that, a few years before André Breton, he alerted us to the "high level of originality" of the work.

Here is for the first time a translation of Jean-Jacques Mayoux's foreword (p. 7), which has never been published again in French since:

"It is usually 'up there' in the warm filth of Glasgow or the soft smoke of Edinburgh that one has the opportunity to evoke the Auld Alliance. Let us do it, for once, in Paris, to welcome this young Scottish poet who is now half one of us in his personal life, and his poetry which remains as firmly anchored 'out there' as James Joyce's prose was in Dublin.

It is indeed the landscape even more spiritual than physical of the home land that these firm, solid, verses evoke and which compose in a hard way the place, which make it seen and experienced.

Every Scottish poet is somehow or somewhat a descendant of Robert Burns. For Kenneth White, it is from the right side, fearless, mocking, human and opposed to all the inhuman forces that for centuries taking the Devil as God have obscured what the warmth of blood would have given joy of life to the obstinate humanity of this cruel country.

A reader who, like me, has always felt very strongly our Celtic affinities, finds them here very vigorous. Ignoring the linguistic and other separation of British and Gaelic one sometimes believes to find a younger brother of Dylan Thomas with mischievous lyricism, sometimes a last descendant of the tradition of gnomic and aphoristic poetry of ancient Wales.

Kind knowledge is more than cunning Stars are staring streets are stony The making of music ends in misery A girl can give more grace than a god

misery ends in the making of music

But which affinity with a distant East and also close to the Celtic soul is reflected in this solitary and simple meditation of a moment of the poet facing the world, familiar to readers of Tu Fu as well as those of Bashō? These are moments, and there are moods, presented with as little pretension or sophistication as possible, but with great talent, great certainty in formulas, the precious gift of the casual image (and *smiles like a crack in the mirror*) – and that characteristic movement of the poet in his youth, between melancholy, humour, ingenious self-mockery. He is also reminiscent of Villon, our 'escos' when he writes.

the seat of my pants is as thin as charity

Irreverence and valour, and this quality called *resilience* that has no real name in French, and that is perhaps lacking in our language, make one of the tones of this work. Scotland of this evocation is a *vital* space and this bold, proud, passionate feeling of space one of the hallmarks of our poet.

the man who works in a narrow space

builds no more than prison or grave

And any space leads to the sea. Kenneth White, a free man, cherishes it with its sky shrieking with birds and myths. But in the end, in addition to the authentic living whose presence dominates everything else, there are two writers in him: a man facing the

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real and human drama, who will maybe write novels, and a lyrical poet who occasionally knocks out gravity and begins to sing. The present indecision is an asset, and we can only hope that it will increase and widen further."

Indeed, over time, Kenneth White's work will follow much more complex and subtle paths than this opposition between novel and lyricism.

It is perhaps through Jean-Jacques Mayoux, that *Wild Coal* arrived in the hands of Pierre Leyris, his friend. Pierre Leyris, an eminent translator, brought the young White into the prestigious *Domaine Anglais* collection of the publisher Mercure during his lifetime (among the authors, he was in fact the only contemporary) with the publication, in 1964, of the collection *En toute Candeur*. In the foreword to the book, he describes the effect that reading *Wild Coal* has on him: "Last year, in a rather touching gesture towards their lecturer, the students of the Sorbonne published in English the poems of Kenneth White. As soon as I had opened the white booklet with a gull in light, my heart leapt with joy. For many years, perhaps no contemporary poet had sung so clearly in my ear, nor so well rendered the poignant grace of primitive things" (*En toute Candeur* p. 9).

In *Le Poète Cosmographe*, Kenneth White looks back on his beginnings in literature (p. 94): "It was in Paris, in 1963 (I had lived there since 1959), that my first book came out. It was a small edition and it was called *Wild Coal*. Pierre Leyris discovered this book and offered me to add essays on my "personal mythology". The book was published in 1964 at the Mercure de France, under the title *En toute Candeur*. »

Leyris states in his foreword: "When asked about the real context of his poems, he explained to me how he grew up between 'the matricial hills' (on the west coast of Scotland) and 'the furnace of the city' (Glasgow); what were his real territory, his roots; and what had nourished his intimate mythology. I urged him to write these things down and to make out of them (we had now formed the project of a little book which appeared in French) a prologue to his poems – to those of them, at least, which I would not have quite destroyed in trying to translate them (*Commerce*, which welcomed six of them in the second notebook, was a valuable testing ground)."

In fact, on closer inspection, Wild Coal includes 24 poems and *En toute Candeur* retains 17 (the following poems were discarded: *Background, City, Wild Coal, The Blazes, Song about the uselessness of life, Ballad of the C. and W., Revolt*).

It should be noted that *En toute Candeur* was the subject of an extremely rare first print of ten numbered copies on Arches vellum paper and a few non-commercial copies.

And so *Wild Coal*, a semi-prominent, clandestine and inaugural book, found its place among this bilingual collection directed by Pierre Leyris on a par with the works of De Quincey, Stevenson, Yeats and Thomas Hardy.

THE DICTIONARY OF GEOPOETICS

Conceived by Stéphane Bigeard

Academy of Gulls, Gull Academy

Definition

"I once thought of founding / an Academy of Gulls / (based on an ancient / Chinese model) / with one aim in view: / say the world anew / dawn-talk / grammar of rain, tree, stone / blood and bone / I can conceive of black gulls / and white crows (no race fiends need apply) / I mean crow could also be / of the Gull Academy / the croaking member / but that plan went with the wind / and I ended up / with broken wings / on a cold island". Crow Meditation Text, in *Open World*, p281.

Also, see the poem entitled First Colloquium of the Gull Academy, in Open World p554.

"in Summer dawns / in golden Autumn evenings / in chill Winter mists / something like those old Taoists / who founded the Academy of Gulls / (a bird and an eye, a bird and an eye: / ideogram for monastery) / an academy without walls / active contemplation: no ideals, no idols / and no over-hasty / over-personal, over-poetical projections / rather long-ranging recognitions / in space and time". Finisterra or The Logic of Lannion Bay, in *Open World*, p576.

Other references:

Anne BINEAU, De l'Académie des Goélands à l'Institut international de géopoétique, HKW, p. 62-67 ; Marie-Luise LATSCH, Kenneth White et la pensée taoïste, KWG, p. 95-109 ; MOKW, p. 134.



CREDITS

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<u>Photos</u>

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

Artist's Book: Stéphane Bigeard, personal collection

Translation

Gilles Fabre

Web site

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