

the road north

Ken Cockburn (1960–) is a poet and translator based in Edinburgh. After studying French and German at Aberdeen University, and Theatre Studies at University College Cardiff, he worked for several years with touring theatre companies in Wales. He later worked as Fieldworker for the Scottish Poetry Library, taking the library van to schools, libraries and community centres across Scotland. He and Alec Finlay established and ran pocketbooks, publishing 16 books taking a ‘contemporary and generalist view of Scottish culture’ (1999-2002). He has worked freelance since 2004, regularly collaborating with visual artists including Mary Bourne, David Faithfull and Andrew MacKenzie. His published translations include poems by Christine Marendon, Arne Rautenberg and Thomas Rosenlöcher. Recent publications include *Ink, with artists -in the fields* (2011), and *Overheard Overlooked: Found Poems* (2012).

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Alec Finlay (1966–), artist and poet, lives and works in Edinburgh. Working across a wide range of media and forms, from microtonal sculpture, mapping and journeys, book and print works, to audio-visual and new technology, much of Finlay’s work considers how we as a culture, or cultures, relate to landscape and ecology. He was the first AiR at BALTIC, and has exhibited at the Sydney Biennale. Recent artist projects include Sweeney’s Bothy, an artist-residency hut for the Isle of Eigg, and taigh, Scotland’s national memorial for organ and tissue donors, installed in Edinburgh’s Royal Botanic Garden. Among his recent poetry collections are *Be My Reader* (2012), *A Company of Mountains* (2013), *today today today* (2013), and *a-ga* (2014). He is represented by Ingleby Gallery and publishes artist blogs at www.alecfinlay.com

Some other publications by Ken Cockburn

Souvenirs and Homelands

The Order of Things: an anthology of Scottish sound, pattern
and concrete poems (edited, with Alec Finlay)

The Dancers Inherit the Party: Early stories, plays & poems
by Ian Hamilton Finlay (edited)

Intimate Expanses: XXV Scottish Poems 1978-2002
(edited, with Robyn Marsack)

The Season Sweetens / Die Saison Versüssend: Football Haiku 2006
For “visions” read “meteors”: found poems, and an alphabet, from the
John Murray Archive

Feathers & Lime: translations from the German
On the flyleaf

CENTUM: 100 Years of Baillie Gifford 1908-2008 (with David Faithfull)

OVERHEARD OVERLOOKED: found poems

Ink (with -in the fields)

Snapdragon: poems by Arne Rautenberg (translated)

While yet we may

Some other publications by Alec Finlay

Ludwig Wittgenstein: There Where You Are Not (with Guy Moreton
& Michael Nedo)

siren (with Chris Watson)

Two fields of wheat seeded with a poppy-poem (with Caitlin DeSilvey)

Nose's Point: a coastal walk (with Thomas A. Clark)

Specimen Colony (with Jo Salter)

One Hundred Year Star-Diary (with Denis Moskowitz & Ray Sharples)

Mesostic Remedy (with Laurie Clark & Linda France)

Mesostic Interleaved (with Ken Cockburn)

Ian Hamilton Finlay: Selections (ed.)

A Company of Mountains

Question Your Teaspoons

today today today

Thorns

Sweeney on Eigg

a-ga: on mountains (with Ken Cockburn & Luke Allan)

Ken Cockburn
& Alec Finlay

the road north

*a journey through Scotland
guided by Bashō's oku-no-hosomichi
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Cid Corman and Kamaike Susumu, *Back Roads to Far Towns*.

*Cover image: Alec Finlay & Tomohiko Ogawa, photograph Tomohiko Ogawa,
2010. (The original image has been reversed.)*

Contents

I	Setting out	9
II	First Views of the Foothills	
	what is a journey?	17
	Bonnington House & Jupiter Artland	18
	Maspie Den & West Lomond	22
	Falkland	24
	Kingskettle	26
	The Hermitage, Dunkeld	27
III	Our Shirakawa	
	Perthshire glens	31
	Dalchonzie	33
	Sma' Glen	34
	Newton	35
	Acharn	36
	Ken's Dunira	37
	Alec's Dunira	39
	Saint Fillan's Hill	40
IV	Beyond the Border-line	
	tanzaku	45
	Glen Lyon	46
	what is a glen?	47
V	Archaic Argyll	
	what is a cup-and-ring marked rock?	51
	the hollow marks...	52
	sun's not shifted	53
	what is a dun?	54
	Dunadd	55
	Loch Etive	56
	Annie Briggs	58

VI	Rocks & Peaks	
	mountains without end	61
	what is a mountain?	62
	casting our chosen peaks	63
	Schiehallion	65
	Outlandia	67
VII	Woods & Glens	
	woodland credo	71
	Loch Eilt	72
	Loch Eilt rite	73
	the Glenelg brochs	74
	Abhainn a' Ghlinne Bhig, Glenelg	76
VII	Westerly Shores	
	Matsushima / Luing	79
	what is a beach? what is the sea?	80
	Isle of Luing	81
	Moidart, Arisaig and Morar	82
	Dun Scaich	84
IX	The Outer Isles	
	ding-dong, ding-dong	87
	Lochmaddy	88
	Barpa Langais	89
	Berneray	92
X	Crossing into Autumn	
	Slioch	97
	The Groves of Isle Maree	98
	River Inverianvie	100
	Glen Etive	103
XI	Winter Interned	
	Sora's illness	107

XII Weak March Sun	
what is a hut?	111
Carbeth	112
XIII Paths of Faith and Doubt	
what is faith?	115
St Medan's Cave & Chapel	116
Acharn Falls	118
XV Epilogues	
Alec's Epilogue	123
Ken's Epilogue	125
Appendix	129

I

Setting Out

*so, when was it
I first had that dream
of roving the glens
up and down
guided by Bashō's oku?*

some morning
I will wake on Pillow Hill
with a matinal willow
warbling at the window
books on the bed
my heart in a fankle

to see clouds and mountains
in the far-away
to be on the road north
where paths of moss and crottle
follow peaty waters

some morning I will cross over
to the Kingdom
shrouded in mist
tracking back
to the origin of things
sipping tea from a shell

I will how learn to tell
burns that run
lochan to lochan
from the wide river
that flows freely
to the sea

I will turn down
some other glen
east-west into low sun
scooping shelter
from a mountain wind
to plant two rowans

by a white croft
waiting for a boy
whose supple hand
will gently twist
the pliant saplings
so they grow entwined

ten years on
pink again in the Park
and a flitting
in the offing
as I swap one view
for another

familiar streets

Pilrig
Rosslyn
Bonnington

exchanged for hills

Lomond
The Buachaille
Roshven

it's time to pack

old pink and new orange maps
a picnic blanket for the dog
yellow bottles of Rescue Remedy
miso packets, rice noodles,
oatcakes, flasks and chocolate

compass, gazetteers, pens
pencils for rubbings
wee Moleskine notebooks
hokku-labels for trees
and paper wishes

a handful of CDs

Neil Young's Jukebox
Anne Briggs
Dylan's 'Highlands'

mind the teas

Iron Warrior
Monkey on the Mountain
Black Ruby
Gabalong
Grasshopper Oolong

and the whiskies

Glenkinchie
Tullibardine
Bruichladdich
An Cnoc
and the Super Nikka!

come summer we'll name our band

shafts of sun

come fall we'll name our album

bands of rain

now we're leaving behind
lanes of gean
blossoming in The Meadows
heading off on the *hosomichi*
to look for Shirakawa

now we'll let our looking
survey Scotland
from Monreith to Poolewe
setting out to see
the best view
of all where the land
meets the sky

II

First Views of the Foothills

what is a journey?

a journey is the day
it's impossible
to stay

the day *there*
means more
than *here*

the day you
enter the view
from your window

*our beginning is a walk
at Jupiter Artland, Bonnington House, West Lothian*

far over the Firth
north through the thin
line of pale ash
over the pommel
of Binny Craig
noble Illieston
the pinkish bings
of Albyn, Faucheldean, Greendykes
relic spoil turning green

the Forth's strutting span
of rivet and iron
Mossmorran's fractionated cloud
lifting above Bishop Hall
and domed West Lomond

today we can see
to where we'll meet ourselves
next week up by the Yad

blackthorn winter
should be over now
but there's a fresh
sprinkling of snow
on East Cairn
reckoning by the old ways
it's Mayday
and Bashō's anniversary
so let's bawm the thorn
with the riches of rags