RUMINATING ON SEAWEED: AN ANNOTATED PHOTO-ESSAY

Exploring the Film-Philosophy of Pierre Creton with the Seaweed-Eating Sheep of North Ronaldsay

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ABSTRACT: In 1993, recently graduated filmmaker Pierre Creton returned to his rural Normandy roots. There, he has continued to make films alongside his neighbours in the agricultural environment to which he remains intimately tied. His philosophy of film-making is summarised in the title of a 2010 book, *Cultiver, habiter, filmer* – inhabit, cultivate, film. Contrary to more traditional notions of framing, distance and objectivity, here lens-based media is recognised as an apparatus that takes us into an aleatory, reciprocating process of inhabiting, nurturing and being nourished by a place – its geology, architectures, rhythms and populations, human and nonhuman. The ethics of encounter, ecology and openness is intimately embroiled in Creton's growing, beekeeping and animal husbandry, as well as his art making.

This photo-essay and accompanying text investigates Creton's maker-philosophy in the context of the Orcadian island of North Ronaldsay, famous for its seaweed-eating sheep, kept at the littoral edges by the island's stone dykes – themselves a high-maintenance apparatus. Led by Creton's ideas, through observation and habitation-with, these sheep become for the artist-writer more than subjects for the camera; they become guides as to how to inhabit and cultivate the watery margins of the archipelago. They become exemplary artists in their own right.

KEYWORDS: Littoral zone; Photography & lens-based media; Orkney; North Ronaldsay; Animal studies; Eco-aesthetics; Pierre Creton

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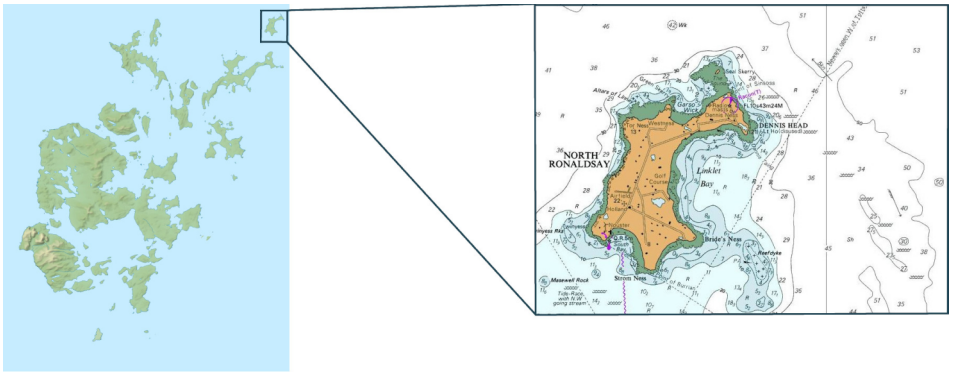
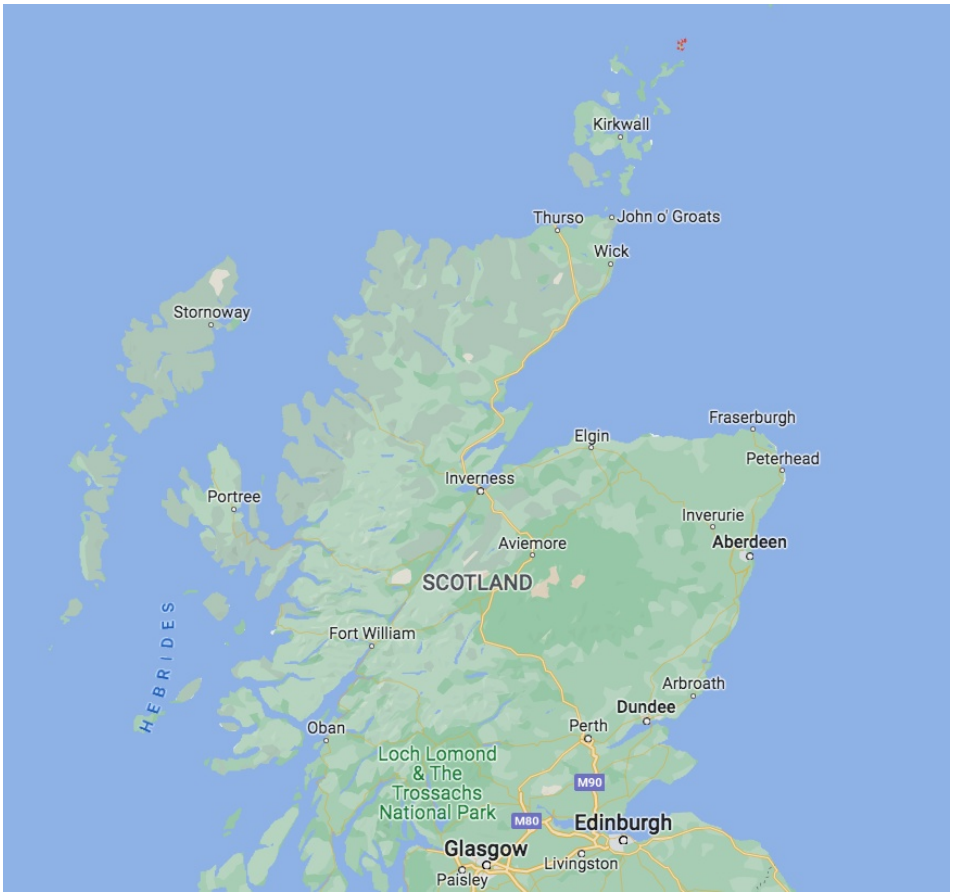


Figure 1a (above left) – Relief map of the Orkney Islands (excluding Sule Stack and Sule Skerry), UK (Ordnance Survey OpenData).

Figure 1b (above right) – Lightcharacter of North Ronaldsay showing extent of high and low tide in green (Northern Lighthouse Board).

Figure 1c (below) – Map of Orkney showing North Ronaldsay (top right, in red) and Orkney's position relative to the Scottish mainland (Google Maps, 2023).

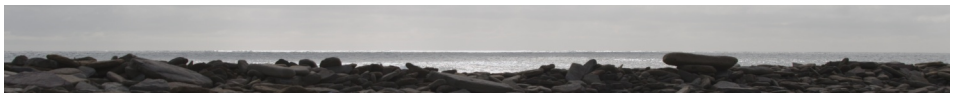


Arrival

According to Orkney dialect one does not 'live' somewhere, one 'stays' or 'bides'. Certainly there is rhetoric that seeks to distinguish those born locally – those 'of' or 'from' the place – and those who have arrived from elsewhere (universally designated as 'South'). But the language of biding is keyed to a deeper question about inhabitation and belonging as present-continuous activities. With the principle resources in my toolkit being image-making, philosophy and animal husbandry, and amidst ongoing research into the work of Pierre Creton, I boarded a plane from Mainland Orkney, where I currently stay, to the outermost island of the archipelago, North Ronaldsay, to ask, through perambulation, encounters, thought and photography, what it might mean to bide there – for a day, and perhaps for much longer.

Preamble

A widely hailed classic of island deep history, Tim Robinson's duology *Stones of Aran* sees the cartographer perambulate the border of Árainn Mhór, Galway in the first volume, *Pilgrimage* (1986), before tracing the rectilinear filigree of the stone interior in the second volume, *Labyrinth* (1995). To borrow a couple of terms from the continental philosophers Deleuze and Guattari, we can recognise the periphery as a baroque line, closed yet ever more intensely detailed as one zooms in (Deleuze, 1993, pp. x–xi, 3–10); and the island's interior is the acme of smooth space made striated (Deleuze & Guattari, 1998, pp. 484–492). The enclosures of stone sheep pens and potato fields are not imposed upon a pre-existing space, not mapped onto a set of coordinates. Rather, stones are moved aside, they cluster and stack such that the process of finding the space has also been the process of enclosing it. It is a



rather literal version of the demarcation of bounded, coordinate space, effected not by an abstracted process of cartography or legal wranglings, but through the entirely material, physical decomposition of storm-strewn rocky vector space into manmade coordinate space. In the peculiar lithography of Árainn Mhór, the imperfectly straight stone walls are noticeably less rectilinear than the faults through the newly re-revealed granite planes.

With the bare ground now enclosed – produced simultaneous with its enclosure – another important process of physical labour occurs. The Connemara folk over the water from Árainn Mhór historically mocked the islanders for "making land" (Robinson, 1986, p. 200): vast quantities of seaweed were hauled up from the sea to rot down in the enclosures, providing a growing medium for crops, especially potatoes and fodder. Each year the thin substrate would be stripped away by storms and the hauling begin anew.

It is 800 km northeast from Árainn Mhór to the kelp pits of North Ronaldsay. It, too, is an island of sheep and rock, the last point north of the Orkney archipelago. It, too, is littered with drystone structures, harking back to the long history of kelp hauling, but also sketching a picturesque hauntology of the 18th century kelp industry.

Like Tim Robinson's Árainn Mhór, North Ron is a place where the most significant differentiation is that between the edge and the interior. And the most significant operator in producing that difference is the forceful presence and managed re-arrangement of rock and seaweed. The architectures, apparatuses and modes of inhabitation are strongly determined by the ongoing impermanence and foreground–background shift of these things, as they are thrown up and around by storms, and underpin or fertilise as substrate.

Whilst hauling, burning and rotting of seaweed has historically happened here – the whole archipelago was caught up in the Scottish kelp industry boom from 1730, producing fertiliser in the form of soda ash (sodium carbonate)[1] – seaweed, and kelps especially, have a unique role. On North Ronaldsay, and neighbouring Auskerry, it is the preferred grazing of an indigenous species of sheep.

[1] For a good account of the industrial boom of seaweed processing for alkalis, see Clow & Clow (1947, p. 298). See also Gray (1951, p. 198).

Listen…

The stones of the foreshore displace and settle under the cleats of these peedie sheep – they stand on average 40cm high and rarely touch 30kg. The sound is so close to that of each wave as it retreats through those same stones. We begin to recognise that the sheep and the waves are fellows in some way, fluidly inhabiting the littoral zone of these islands – the edge of the edge of the Orcadian archipelago.

Pre-Post-Industrial Sustainable Resources

Skirting North Ron's 19 km of coastline is a stone dyke, often standing as tall as 1.8m, testament to the wily athleticism of the sheep. Having been crossed so rarely with domesticated breeds over the millenia, the North Ron sheep retain their feral intelligence and resistance to herding, with some scientific evidence of their larger brains. (Haywood & Britt, 2008b, p. 4)

The dyke was built by collaborative effort and completed in 1832. Although the commercial production of sodium carbonate would not be in full swing until Ernest Solvay introduced his method in the 1860s, it was clear from the developments of Leblanc's process (1791) and the adaptation of Fresnel's (1811) by Dyar and Hemming (1834) – not to mention the competition from high-concentrate Spanish salt-wort derived barilla – that the days of the Scottish kelp-soda-ash boom were numbered. Contrary to stereotypes about rural and isolated places, the archipelago's inhabitants are perennially canny and forward thinking (in practical, if not always in socio-political terms).

In the mid-late 20th century, well before the North Sea oil reached its 1999 peak of 6-million barrels per day, and faced with the prospect of uranium mining in Orkney's southwest Mainland, the islands would invest heavily in renewable energy sources, going big on wind and wave energy.[2] The archipelago is now a net exporter of electricity.

[2] For more on North Sea peak oil, see Department for Business, Energy & Industrial Strategy (2021). On the uranium find and protests see, for example, details of artist Anne Bevan's project from 2017, University of the Highlands and Islands (2017). For the history and ongoing innovations in

Similarly, a canny glance at how the global trade in salt ash was headed in the mid-19th century saw the islanders making ambitious and original realignments in how to survive on their most voluminous raw material: kelp. It is of marked significance that, whilst stable isotype analysis has shown that the sheep's microbiome has been developing to metabolise kelp since at least 4000BCE (Smale et al., 2013, p. 4026; Balasse et al., 2005; Blanz et al., 2020), the contemporary entanglement of animal, habitat and stone-dyke apparatus emerged in the context of a tussle between globalisation and industrialisation.

To this extent, and despite their relatively feral genetics and habits, we must consider the North Ron sheep as technical rather than simply natural phenomena; and, like, the archipelago in general, postnatural and posthistorical: reliant as it is on tourism income that needs to see rare, scarce and bucolic natural phenomena framed by nostalgic scenes of rural subsistence living. These are the two axes of the archipelago's romantic allure; but the sheep's spatio-temporal vector of inhabitation – precisely what, guided by Creton, I hope my camera, itself a spatio-temporal framing device, might acclimate me to – is not the pragmatism of the canny islander, nor the closed loop of the nostalgia circuit. In contrast to the annual population booms of the island's myriad migratory birds, and to the diurnal rhythms of the majority of their species, the North Ron sheep are synchronised to a sort of progressive circularity, a rhythm: the tides that replenish their fodder and, by extension, the moon.

renewables, see Orkney Renewable Energy Forum (n.d.). The most sustained and elegantly written enquiry into the archipelago's energy futures is surely Laura Watts' *Energy at the End of the World: An Orkney Islands Saga*, a personal, scientific and resolutely practical journey investigating "how locally made electrons… become 'good' Orkney kin." (Watts, 2018, p. 140)

Immanence: A Farm

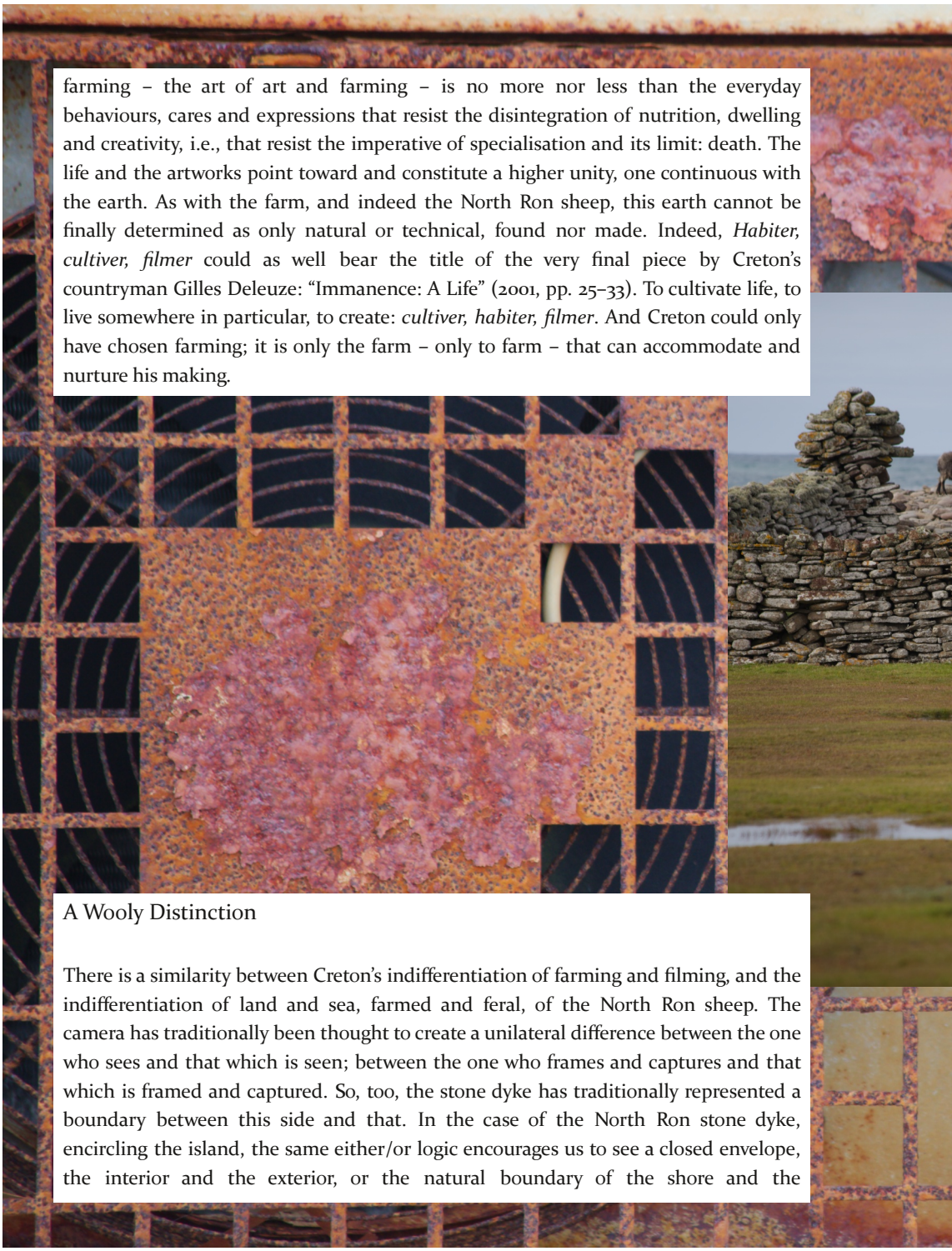
Contemplating Pierre Creton's appearance at the 2019 Viennale, Patrick Holzapfel attempts to explain why, in a creative scene which increasingly foregrounds ecological themes and animals, Creton's films nonetheless stand out. They are, he concludes, an island, "for they are wild, beautiful, different, and born from a necessity to survive"; they devolve from the festival's other screenings because they "have a different rhythm, a different point of interest." (Holzapfel, 2020).

Since graduating from film school in 1992, Pierre Creton has mostly lived and farmed in his native Normandy at Vattetot-sur-Mer, 35km or so along the coast from the port of Le Havre, where the Seine snakes into *La Manche* (The English Channel, literally the 'sleeve'). Initially practising drawing alongside his farm work, the availability of digital film cameras facilitated a return to his artistic métier. Dubbing his apparatus a *caméra-crayon* [pencil-camera], Creton makes clear that he is concerned with the continuities between things: shared destinations and reciprocities, more than any final disjunction. The camera may step back and frame, but the pencil touches what it makes. Indeed, the immanence of

art, life and work – "the-man-and-the-complete-work", to purloin a phrase from Jacques Derrida (1986, p. 29) – is succinctly and powerfully affirmed in the title of a small volume of interviews with Creton by cinema critic Cyril Neyrat, *Cultiver, habiter, filmer* (Creton & Neyrat, 2010). *Nurture, Inhabit, Film*: the activities flow into each other and from each other, sympathetically catalysing, grounding and reframing each other.

If Derrida's staged encounter between Hegel and Genet (and its clandestine antagonism of Sartre's *Saint Genet* [1963]) offers a choice between a single "key" to the meaning of both life and work, on the one hand, and the ironic compound of a cumbersome string of hyphens (the-man-and-the-complete-work), on the other, Creton's cycle of different but homologous terms – *cultiver, habiter, filmer*; nurture, inhabit, film – affirms something greater than the sum of its parts. For Derrida, to think of a totality that is "the-man-and-the-complete-work" sails too close to metaphysical closure, to a stilled absolute where *différance* should churn. On the contrary, for Creton the totality is always already there, and the art of

farming – the art of art and farming – is no more nor less than the everyday behaviours, cares and expressions that resist the disintegration of nutrition, dwelling and creativity, i.e., that resist the imperative of specialisation and its limit: death. The life and the artworks point toward and constitute a higher unity, one continuous with the earth. As with the farm, and indeed the North Ron sheep, this earth cannot be finally determined as only natural or technical, found nor made. Indeed, *Habiter, cultiver, filmer* could as well bear the title of the very final piece by Creton's countryman Gilles Deleuze: "Immanence: A Life" (2001, pp. 25–33). To cultivate life, to live somewhere in particular, to create: *cultiver, habiter, filmer*. And Creton could only have chosen farming; it is only the farm – only to farm – that can accommodate and nurture his making.

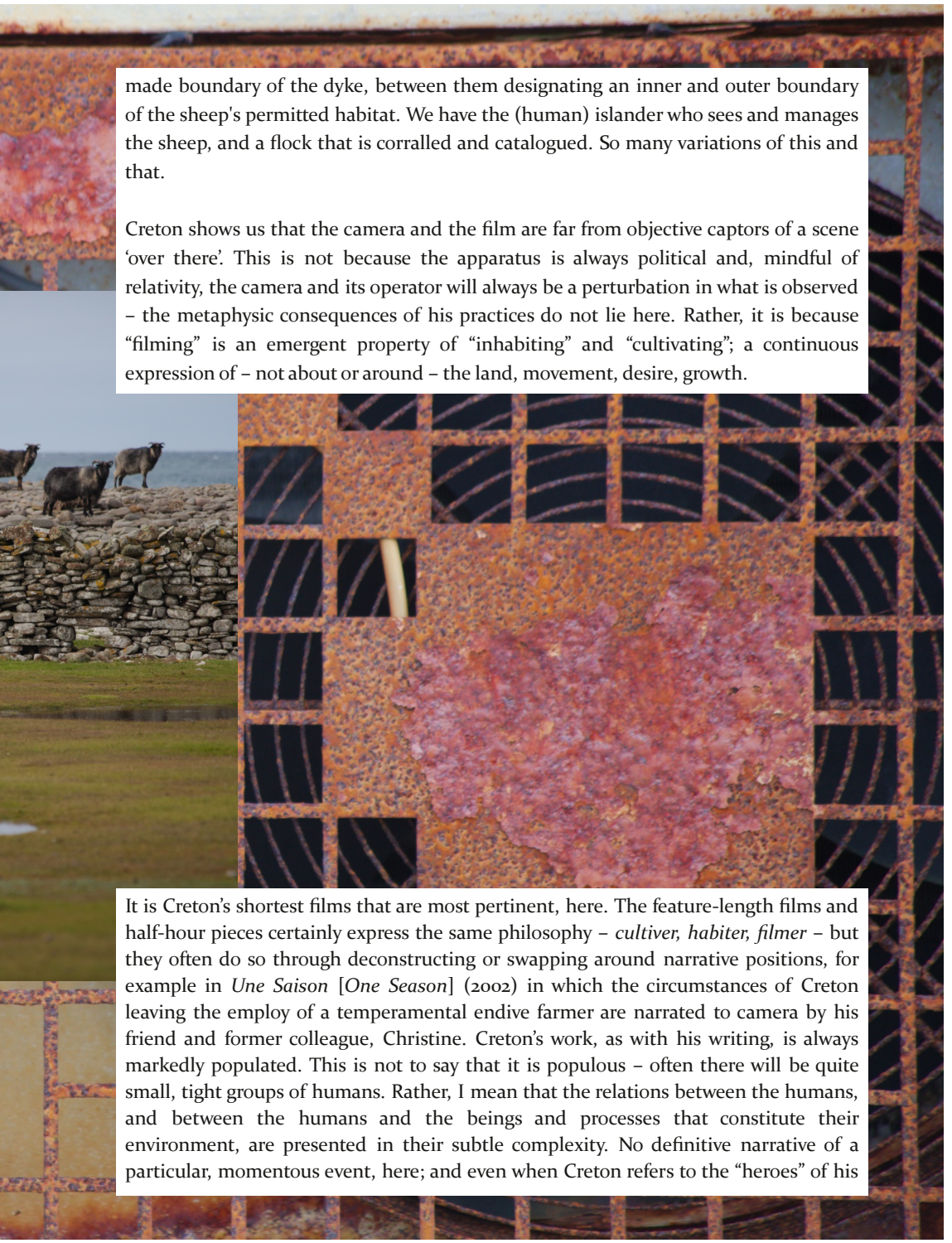


A Wooly Distinction

There is a similarity between Creton's indifferentiation of farming and filming, and the indifferentiation of land and sea, farmed and feral, of the North Ron sheep. The camera has traditionally been thought to create a unilateral difference between the one who sees and that which is seen; between the one who frames and captures and that which is framed and captured. So, too, the stone dyke has traditionally represented a boundary between this side and that. In the case of the North Ron stone dyke, encircling the island, the same either/or logic encourages us to see a closed envelope, the interior and the exterior, or the natural boundary of the shore and the

made boundary of the dyke, between them designating an inner and outer boundary of the sheep's permitted habitat. We have the (human) islander who sees and manages the sheep, and a flock that is corralled and catalogued. So many variations of this and that.

Creton shows us that the camera and the film are far from objective captors of a scene 'over there'. This is not because the apparatus is always political and, mindful of relativity, the camera and its operator will always be a perturbation in what is observed – the metaphysic consequences of his practices do not lie here. Rather, it is because "filming" is an emergent property of "inhabiting" and "cultivating"; a continuous expression of – not about or around – the land, movement, desire, growth.



It is Creton's shortest films that are most pertinent, here. The feature-length films and half-hour pieces certainly express the same philosophy – *cultiver, habiter, filmer* – but they often do so through deconstructing or swapping around narrative positions, for example in *Une Saison* [*One Season*] (2002) in which the circumstances of Creton leaving the employ of a temperamental endive farmer are narrated to camera by his friend and former colleague, Christine. Creton's work, as with his writing, is always markedly populated. This is not to say that it is populous – often there will be quite small, tight groups of humans. Rather, I mean that the relations between the humans, and between the humans and the beings and processes that constitute their environment, are presented in their subtle complexity. No definitive narrative of a particular, momentous event, here; and even when Creton refers to the "heroes" of his

films (to Neyrat [2010, p.10]), he is talking of peasants whose heroism lies in their remaining peasants; those who live on and through the land and its communities, not those who conquer or overcome it as if others were an obstacle to fulfilment. Indeed, for Creton it is not so much that "heroes" – perhaps, better, non-heroes – like apiarist Marcel Pilate "reconcile [him] with nature", because there was never such full alienation. Nonetheless, Creton says, it is with these heroes that, for the first time, he acts within nature, that his actions take place in and as nature. (Creton & Neyrat, 2010, p. 10)

The archetype of Creton's very short films is also his first, *Le Vicinal* (1994). The title refers to a 'local' road or pathway, those that fall below regional–institutional purview. More a 'back way' than a shortcut, the vicinal need not be more efficient. In a figurative sense, it refers to the particular mode in which something is done in a particular place; the local 'way'. The

official, recognised route may get you where you are going just as well, but there is a convention of taking this more idiosyncratic path. Again, there is no requirement that external factors determine the existence of a *vicinal* – it is not a superstition or a folk custom or a tradesman's entrance; it need have no mythology nor worldly coercive force sustaining it. Indeed, it is best understood through place than through history – with or without a capital H.

Wandering on the *vicinal*

No vicinal is depicted in the film. Rather, it constitutes a series of scenes. In one, a human child occupies the centre of the frame, and is shortly called back to his schoolroom desk. The voiceover reminds us to look at what we want to look at, not only what we are instructed to. To dissipate any sense of wanton liberalism – before we allow the children to run off with

an undeconstructed notion of 'want' and the social dimension of desire – we are invited to reflect on a brief description of an Ancient Greek sacrifice, a bull's blood fertilising the ground through biochemical enrichment and metaphysical bargaining.

In a few sequences, a Langstroth-style beehive is being inspected and some wax comb that has been constructed outside the frames is scraped away. We see little of

the apiarist – likely Creton himself – but enough to know that he wears no special equipment, relying instead on the stupefying effects of smoke from a small bellows canister and his own smooth, efficient movements.

Three texts interject the images: a poem by Creton titled "*Le vicinal*"; those lines from Ovid concerning the sacrifice of a bull and the subsequent fertility of the site (VII, ll100–158), in which the newly

tilled and fertilised land yields not plants but armed men to aid Jason and his Argonauts in their capture of the golden fleece; and a quotation from Alexandre Kojève. The latter, a philosopher practising in France through the early twentieth century, is a recurring figure for Creton, and his ideas are, I think, an equally useful resource for my attempts to think with the North Ron sheep's inhabitation of the edge, the watery land between the stone dyke and sea.

After the Master

Kojève is best known for his lectures on the philosophy of Hegel, delivered in Paris from 1933–39 (Kojève, 1969). The series was attended by a number of prominent contemporaries, but more remarkable is the roster of students who would rise to prominence in the post-war period – Albert Camus, Maurice Merleau-Ponty, Jacques Lacan, André Breton, Raymond Queneau and Georges Bataille all attended. The influence of Kojève on Bataille's thinking around expenditure (Bataille, 1988a) and on Lacan's theory of "the mirror stage" (Lacan, 1989, pp. 1–8) runs deep and is quickly evident. Creton, like Bataille, adopts Kojève's turn to anthropological concerns, and draws in particular on Kojève's interpretation of the "master–slave dialectic", a parable from Hegel's *Phenomenology of Spirit* of 1807 (Hegel, 2018, pp. 102–116). Kojève's reading of this relationship is the founding idea of his interpretation of Hegel's philosophy. It is also the pivot on which his reading of philosophy becomes a more creative "doing" of philosophy; where the fruits of others' labour yield the seeds of his own practice as a thinker. But it is not the purpose, here, to dissect Kojève's reading of Hegel. Rather, we are interested in how Kojève's own fruit are metabolised, and their seed re-sown, by Creton.

In Kojève's reading of the master–slave dialectic, much less attention is given to the universal recognition of the master's rights, the part of the slave or "bondsman" proving much more instructive (Kojève, 1969, pp. 8–30). Two reasons are especially important, here. Firstly, that the slave already works for others, and so is well placed to collaborate as a social being when the hierarchical relationship with the master is sublated. Secondly, that the slave is better placed to plan and work in such a way as to reconcile culture with nature.

The non-hero of whom Creton speaks, the peasant who remains in place, is not the master who would undo himself in taking mastery of the place and refusing to recognise the Other. Rather, he is the sage who inhabits, who knows the *vicinals*, who is copresent in, and coproducing of, place. This sagacity is creative and practical, and it is nourishing: *cultiver*, *habiter*, *filmer*.

In his introduction to the translation of Kojève's lectures, Allan Bloom notes that,

> *Kojève, like every other penetrating observer, sees that the completion of the human task may very well coincide with the decay of humanity, the rebarbarization or even reanimalization of man... After reading it, one wonders whether [this] is not identical to Nietzsche's Last Man.*
> (Kojève, 1969, p. xii)

Certainly Bloom is not suggesting that we cast Hegel and Nietzsche as fellows whose friendship we had hitherto missed. Rather, he argues, the 'confrontation' between the two thinkers is revivified as a question of the primacy of History against the human animal's reconciliation with itself and its environment. Like Creton, Nietzsche prefers the *vicinal* to the wide avenues of progress, and one suspects that Hegel would hold little interest for Creton if not for Kojève's reworking of this particular dialectic's priorities.

Slippery when wet

It would be incorrect, or at least deadening of potential, to think of the tide which delivers fresh seaweed to the North Ron sheep twice a day as a teleological dialectic between land and water. In such a diagram, the "watery land" would represent a final sublation of an antagonistic difference but, as the sheep show, the watery land of North Ron's periphery is habitable and nourishing because of its rhythmic, lunar variation: difference, here, is a pulse not a progression, and water and land are embroiled and distinguished in more complex ways. It is precisely such a convulsively open dialectic that Creton, too, pursues; and, indeed, it is where his work owes most to Kojève. Creton's cleaving close to nature yet remaining a cultivator is the same pulse that drives both habitation and artistic creation. Habiter, cultiver, filmer is never a completed scheme, but an ongoing play of small differences and creative emergence.

The sheep's inhabitation of the shore – in particular the area defined by the human-made dyke as 'not-inner', the subtractive demarcation of a reified periphery – entreats us to acknowledge the sea as an entangled presence with the land, rather than any simple binary opposite. It was just such an accent on the importance of water to the archipelago – that is, as constitutive rather than adjunct – that led to the proposal of the term "aquapelago" (Hayward, 2012). The coinage has been adopted and investigated at length in the intervening decade, a flourishing that is nowhere better represented than in the special anthology section of *Shima* itself. Clearly, a term that raises the profile of "the aquatic spaces between and around a group of islands" (ibid, p. 5) promises to be a useful one for thinking about the North Ron sheep. But Hayward is clear that the term is proposed as the best name for the assemblage, the most apt one term to cover the diversity of the many. I readily accept the importance of thinking in terms of multiplicity – the ethology of the sheep, their place in island history and its stacked temporalities undoubtedly require complex attention, interdisciplinarity and all the diverse approaches academic attention can muster. But the sheep's inhabitation of the periphery, the thickened edge that is the watery land beyond the stone dyke of North Ron – and, indeed, my own adventure to encounter the sheep through the apparatus of the camera – are best thought of in terms of a parallel philosophical debate about 'the one' and difference: namely, the notion of 'two-ness'.

Counting (with) Sheep

The turning of the tide is not an abrupt, momentous event; ebb and flow are observed slowly, through cumulative evidence. For the North Ron sheep, browsing is best between high and low tides, when the kelp calculus of freshness and accessibility is at its optimum. I am reminded of Nietzsche's excitement for midday, his eschewing the fetishisation of dawn and the coming of 'the One' light that Platonists and Pauline Christians alike conspire in adulation of. Nor, for Nietzsche, is the sun's zenith an affirmation of its supremacy. Rather, as Alenka Zupančič puts it, noon is the time of "the shortest shadow", the moment when "the thing casts its shadow on itself" (2003: 27). As Zupančič convincingly argues, this moment in which something is most intimately proximate with the seemingly other, is a moment of one "breaking" into two (2003: 8); and, as such, we should understand Nietzsche's philosophy – and the very engine of its power as creative thought rather than a slavish "will to truth" – to be a matter of 'two-ness'. Crucially, this is not the moment of maximal difference – the peak of difference we call contradiction; rather, it is the most minimal difference.

This idea of the moment of smallest difference between two things – an explosive divergence that grounds difference and multiplicity per se – is also found in Kojève's contemporaries and protégés: for Marcel Duchamp, it is the "inframince", the interior of an infinitely thin distinction, like that between breath and cigar smoke.[3] For Bataille, the moment when one breaks in two is a moment of "nonsense" (as in "the taste of garlic that the roasted lamb had"), a reflection that comes as the conclusion of a strikingly Kojèvian text in which "surrender", the convulsive openness to the other is the foundation of artistry, in explicit opposition to the masterful heroism of the Hegelian "last man" (Bataille, 1988b, 61). Like Nietzsche's event, these ideas affirm the fact of a distinction without that distinction itself having any content or characteristic. For both Duchamp and Bataille,

3 The notion of inframince is recorded in a series of scraps and fragments held at the Centre Georges Pompidou in Paris. An excellent project by artist Rebecca Loewen catalogues and translates these (Loewen, 2016). The example cited here is from fragment 33.

this fundament of difference can only be communicated as examples of ontological vertigo from phenomenological ambiguity; no firm and final, abstract definitions can be given. Twoness, it seems, exists as an irreducible but homologous series.

My contention is that the North Ron sheep, too, propound a metaphysics immanent to their habitat and habitus – like Creton, I use the camera to touch this. Browsing on seaweed sees the sheep make of the inhabited edge of North Ron a numerical disaster or, as Bataille would have it, an arithmetic "nonsense": just as a tossed coin displays either "heads" or "tails" whilst remaining constitutively both, so the sheep make the inhabited periphery a

watery-land, as tides ebb and flow. But where the coin is "both" heads and tails only through our idea of the coin – through reason, abstraction, induction etc. – the sheep browse the seaweed on dry land, practically affirming alternation, mutual exclusion and coexistence.

In this case, counting with the sheep places neither them nor the tides within or after the archipelago/aquapelago debate on the dominance of land or water in an islands assemblage. Rather, it places them as twoness prior to it, inhabiting difference *per se*,

within the event from which the fact of difference erupts. As for Nietzsche, this is the very event of differentiation prior to multiplicity, when the island as watery-land is simultaneously a count of one and a count of two. In the spirit of naming twice – established by Deleuze and Guattari as the necessary operation for affirming difference[4] – we could say that the contraction "watery-land" must always be accompanied by the expansion "water–land", where the endash, rather than a hyphen, demarks a relation or spectrum.

The same might be said of Creton's 'camera-pencil'. His images emerge along the seam of minimal difference that separates touching and the lens; just as, through inhabitation and

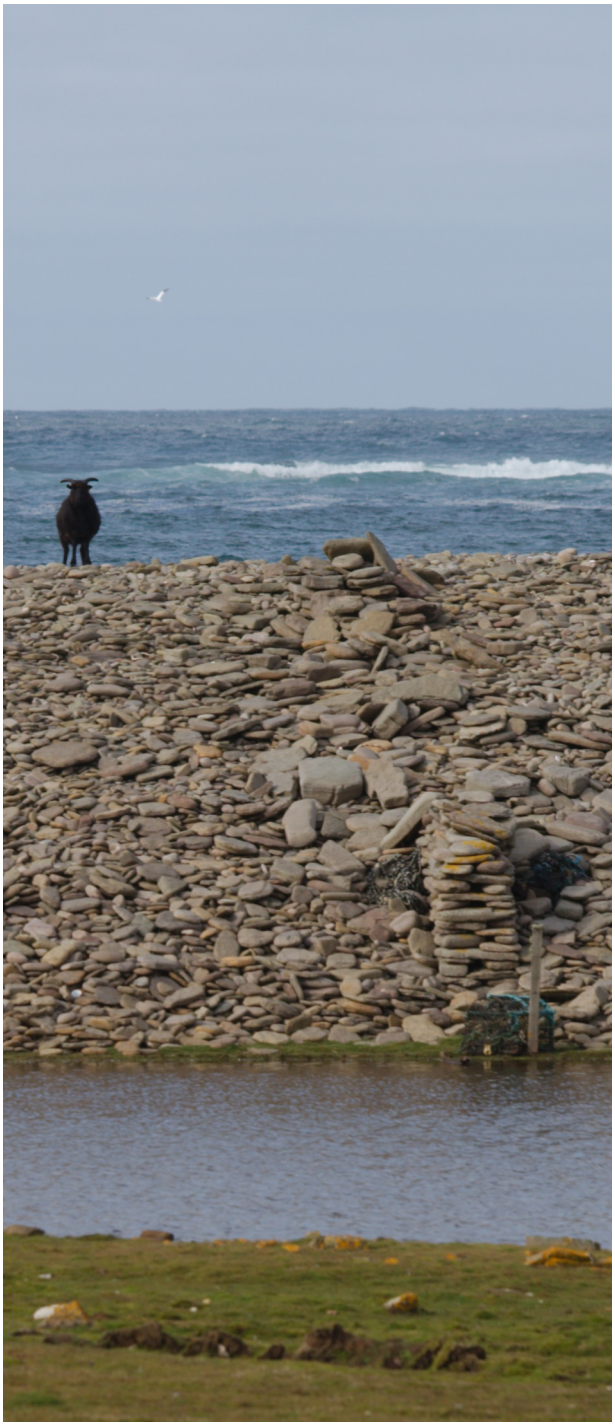
cultivation, his films emerge at the minimal difference with nature as pure difference. Likewise, the North Ron sheep show us that this seam, this impossible can be inhabited, that we can linger – indeed, subsist – in the cracking open of the world, in the very ontological substrate of multiplicity that is 'twoness'. Is it any coincidence, then, that for Luce Irigaray, to read Nietzsche, to expose oneself to this "midday" event, is not only an amorous encounter of opening to the other, it is also a *watery* adventure: one becomes the philosopher's "marine lover" (Irigaray, 1991).

4 Their contemporary Alain Badiou argues in *Deleuze: The Clamor of Being* (2000), that Deleuze's conception of time is always as "a double creation" (ibid: 61 [italics in original]); that his is foremost a philosophy of divergence (ibid: 5); and that to effect the absolute basis of his ontology – the assertion of the "univocity" of Being – for Deleuze "a single name is never sufficient… in order to say that there is a single sense, two names are necessary." (ibid: 27)

Homeward

So. The camera-pencil of Creton effects a separation (from the image) which is also the condition for an overcoming. The camera-pencil does not ultimately isolate and subordinate its object, but joins it, places itself within the same environment, at the most minimal, vital difference. As such, Creton's filming affirms the cultivation and habitation that are the precursors from which filming emerges, whilst also further embedding the farmer-film-maker as a creative energy in his milieus (not least the human community) through the filming. Put another way, the camera-pencil does not simply extract, but enriches – as the cow browses and fertilises its pasture.

The stone dyke and the sheep of North Ron effect the same expansive creation. The dyke preliminarily splits the island into the "proper" interior and the changing, misceginated exterior – by turns high-tide, littoral zone, bare stone shore and piles of tangs: sugar kelp, serrated, knotted and bladderwracks, oar- and gutweed, all picked over by the tang-sparrows (*Anthus obscurus*). Through the stone dyke, the edge is reified as such: what might at first seem to split North Ron into island interior and wet exterior, in fact establishes a zone – at once bounded and under-determined – in which the land and the water, like heads and tails, are affirmed as continuous, both either/or and simultaneous. The inhabitation of North Ron's watery land by the sheep makes the island always slightly bigger than itself; a vital assymmetry or immeasurability whereby the stone dyke includes what it excludes.



In the Hegelian terms that Creton receives through Kojève, we might say that the stone dyke identifies the island's manageable, landed identity as a kind of Self-consciousness, excluding the wild otherness of water, shore, weed and sheep. Even the lighthouses try to cast a bit of landedness out to sea, to remind sailors that they are one with us, with those who can striate and coordinate space, catalogue and confine sheep.

We have an assymmetrical pair of terms, then: the Self-consciousness of the land that dominates – through exclusion and extraction – the Other. But this is also, as I have argued, the very condition whereby the island dialectic of land and water is overcome. The opposition and antagonism of land and shore, sketched by the stone dyke, sublates to

the island as watery-land. The motor that makes this opposition a dialectic – rather than, say, a static architecture, animated by neither Spirit nor phenomenology – is the North Ron sheep. Simultaneous to the sublation that renders the island as watery land, the sheep overcome their (Hegelian) animality, and are recognised as island inhabitants.

Far from the Last Man at the End of History touted by the right Hegelians – most famously Francis Fukuyama (1992) – as a kind of bastard child of post-Glasnost, secular neoliberalism, I wonder, as I limp toward the airstrip for the fourteen minute flight home, whether with Creton and Kojève, I might think of these sheep – these peri-geologically ancient, peedie sheep – as a model for how to live in this new island home.

I'm glad I brought a camera. To frame the scenes, to provide some structure through which to move into and through the island as watery-land. In this way, I did not only see the universalisable wisdom of the North Ron sheep – their Historical being – I also followed the idiosyncratic peregrinations of their place, tracing their *vicinals* with my own camera-pencil. Seeing and touching, with the tides, perhaps together we began to cultivate, inhabit and film.

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