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Kenneth White and Scotland's Intellectual Nomads

Cairns Craig

Kenneth White left Britain for France in 1967,¹ despairing of what he later described as a world in which 'literature was turning more and more into a sub-section of the entertainment industry, situated somewhere between lurid sociology and inturnd fantasia'.² A graduate of Glasgow, who had spent time in Paris and in Munich, and had returned to teach at the University, he had, by then, published one book of poetry, *The Cold Wind of Dawn* (1966) with a second, *The Most Difficult Area* in press (1968) as well as *Letters from Gourgonnel* (1966), a series of narrative sketches of his life in an old house in the Ardèche. This was a style of writing combining travelogue and the play of ideas about which his publishers were less than enthusiastic—they suggested he try a novel, and so he took himself off to France. His perception of British culture, and of Scottish culture within it, was 'that it had gone into a slump after the end of the Second World War, and that the situation was in all likelihood going to get worse'.³

I may as well make it clear right from the start that, for me, a creator's responsibility is first and foremost to his work, not to any community—the individual endowed with energy and intelligence can always go faster and farther than the community, and it is by following the paths of his intelligence, looking for a field adequate to his energy that he will, in the long run, do most for that community (as well as others), perhaps by extending the very notion of community.⁴

The sense of the dead-end nature of Scottish society is perhaps caught in his little poem 'Rue d'Écosse, Hill of Sainte-Geneviève, Paris':

¹ Kenneth White, *On Scottish Ground* (Edinburgh, 1998), 162.

² *Ibid.*, 121.

³ *Ibid.*, 86.

⁴ *Ibid.*

There's nothing much in the rue d' Écosse
 that dark little cul-de-sac—
 just the full moon and a stray cat.⁵

The cat had to stray further to escape the 'cul-de-sac' and this dedication to the autonomy of the individual artist led him into a seven-year silence while he meditated, in France, on the nature of his own creative pathway, working on manuscripts which then began to appear at a hectic pace in Paris after 1975. His books of travel—which he calls 'waybooks'—and of essays were written in English but appeared in French translations; his poems appeared in bilingual editions, with the translations increasingly provided by his wife, Marie-Claude White. Later, he began to publish his essays and theoretical studies directly in French, so that for these—such as *L'Esprit nomade* (1987)—there is no English version. From 1975 till 1989, White published nothing in English or with a British publisher; in that year Mainstream in Edinburgh produced collections of his poetry—*The Bird Path*, his collected longer poems, and *Handbook for the Diamond Country*, his collected shorter poems, as well as a couple of his waybooks, *Travels in the Drifting Dawn* and *The Blue Road*.

By then he had been, since 1983, Professor of Twentieth Century Poetics at the Sorbonne, and in 1989 the founding figure of the Institute of Geopoetics, a cross-disciplinary organisation whose mission was nothing less than to find and to found an alternative to modern civilization: 'Over the centuries', White wrote, 'civilization had been carried by various powers: myth, religion, metaphysics. Although remnants of all these remain, usually in degraded forms, today civilization is carried by nothing—it just grows and spreads, like cancer'.⁶ Against the cancer of civilization Geopoetics set out to reconnect humanity with the cosmos, to force humanity to see itself not in a historical trajectory—what White describes as 'the Motorway of history'⁷—but in a spatial one, a space which has to be continually rediscovered in its originality, implying 'a new wording, new working, new worlding'.⁸ The term 'geopoetics' was first used by White in 1979, as he sought for 'words more precise for designating the end of these "nomadic"

⁵ Kenneth White, *Open World: The Collected Poems 1960–2000* (Edinburgh, 2003), 21.

⁶ Kenneth White, *The Wanderer and his Charts: Exploring the Fields of Vagrant Thought and Vagabond Beauty* (Edinburgh, 2004), 229.

⁷ *Ibid.*, 231ff.

⁸ *Ibid.*, 247.

researches around the earth, a world, a language',⁹ pausing briefly over the possibility of 'biocosmographie' before settling on what was to become the key theoretical term of his later thinking.

Three contexts gave 'geopoetics' a political visibility in France (and at various outposts elsewhere) that turned White into a significant cultural figure in that country. First, in intellectual terms, 'geopoetics' provided in a literary-intellectual context a way of incorporating that 'spatial turn' in Western thought which had been building through the 1970s and '80s in the work, in France, of thinkers like Henri Lefebvre, whose *La Production de l'Espace* (1974) began to rethink Marxism in terms of spatial dialectic rather than class dialectic. Second, the Institute was founded during the period of the collapse of communism and the arrival of a capitalism which declared that there were now no alternatives. Through geopoetics, White insisted that there was an alternative. That alternative could also, thirdly, be envisaged as part of the 'eco-critiques' that had been heralded as far back as 1962 by Rachel Carson's *Silent Spring* and which had gained public impact through the activities of organisations such as Greenpeace, founded in 1971. White would himself determinedly resist any reduction of geopoetics to eco-poetics or to a simple commitment to a 'green movement', but there can be little doubt that geopoetics gained some of its momentum from the association. The Institute of Geopoetics was by far the most prominent but not the first outcome of White's career as a cultural activist, a career which had seen him found and run a whole series of small organisations aimed at promoting and disseminating his ideas.

Fundamental to geopoetics' opposition to the Motorway of History is the figure White describes as the 'intellectual nomad', someone who sets off from the highway to explore, to discover, to encounter—to engage with space rather than passing through it. The two figures who call White to his destiny as an intellectual nomad are Arthur Rimbaud and Friedrich Nietzsche:

I saw Rimbaud and Nietzsche as being the first, the one departing from the literary precinct, the other from the philosophical, to leave what I tended to think of more and more as the Motorway of Western Civilization, laid down and directed by Platonic idealism, Aristotelian classification, Christianity, Renaissance humanism, Cartesianism and Hegelian historicism, to mention only a few major stages in its progression. They left the motorway, set out on roads that were no

⁹ Kenneth White, *L'Esprit nomade* (Paris, 1987), 394–5.

more than tracks, and on tracks that were no more than a series of traces, trying to open another space.¹⁰

The nomad refuses the organisation of space as defined by modern civilization and seeks a space, and an awareness of space, that requires a geological rather than a historical conception of time:

A country begins with a ground, a geology. When it loses contact with that, it's no longer a country at all. It's just a supermarket, a disneyland, or a madhouse... I take it to be common knowledge nowadays in Scotland that the country was not always where it is now, that is, hitched to England. About five hundred million years ago, Scotland was situated on the edge of a continent that linked Scandinavia, Greenland and North America. Later it was to swing down south of the Equator. Later again, about sixty million years ago, it settled in its present position, but without, geologically, forgetting its previous locations, especially that very early one which is written into its bones.¹¹

Connection with the ground is something that was known and understood by primitive peoples, especially through various forms of *shamanism*—‘when we look, say, at runes on a rock, or at an Oceanic mask, or at an Amerindian totem, we know we are in presence of a power that is almost regularly absent from modern art and modern life’¹²—and these forces have been recovered by the best of modern artists who uncover a ‘connection with an archaic tradition, allied to an anarchic use of it—let us say an *abstract* shamanism, away outside any antiquarian reproduction’.¹³

Precisely because poetry is thus rooted in the archaic, the ‘ground’ to which art is related is not the ground of the nation: it far pre-dates any concept of nationality and one of the things intellectual nomads need to escape is precisely ‘the nation’; they need to encounter a multiplicity of cultures rather than living in one:

Exile of one type or another (and intellectual exile is the most interesting, if not the most soul-tearing and tear-jerking) is part and parcel of every

¹⁰ White, *Wanderer and his Charts*, 10.

¹¹ *Ibid.*, 199.

¹² White, *Scottish Ground*, 19.

¹³ *Ibid.*, 45.

powerfully creative life. It is the lesser poet who is anxious to appear as part of a community: for his song, he needs to belong.¹⁴

The 'nation' and its borders, like its motorways, are the barriers to nomadism:

... the greatest blockage lies in the ideology of national(ist) identity and in the intellectual regression to culture-complexes that were productive of those identities, which may be looked to as 'havens of stability' in a time of cosmopolitan confusion, but which in fact can be no more than half-way houses full of internal dispute, mere parliamentary discourse and pathetic poetics.¹⁵

The consequence in literary terms is that the national history of art is entirely irrelevant to the achievement of art: every new creation is a nomad crossing of the border of the nation into another territory than that described by national history:

The history of literature, and especially of this or that country, scarcely interests me. National histories of literature only serve to maintain the illusion that something like a national culture continues to exist. What I present in this book, is a geography of thought, a meteorology of the spirit, in taking Scotland as a terrain for exploration. Such a geography, however fragmentary, is worth much more than a dense history.¹⁶

The figure of the 'intellectual nomad' disrupts those 'havens of stability' that are national histories and forces us to 'open' ourselves to an alternative reality.

For White, 'open' is a key term: it is the openness of the world to the wanderer, it is the world 'open' to our discovery, it is the world not imposed upon by pre-existing categories. It is what White describes (in a self-congratulatory denomination that infuriates his critics) as 'The White World', a world he finds inscribed in all the major poets that he names as his precursors—Holderlin, Whitman, Hart Crane, William Carlos Williams, Robert Duncan: 'an elementary-ecstatic state of being which Stefan Zweig, in his essay on Dostoevsky, calls "white glowing feeling"'.¹⁷ The 'white world'

¹⁴ White, *Scottish Ground*, 87.

¹⁵ *Ibid.*, 203.

¹⁶ Kenneth White, *Écosse: le pays derrière les noms* (Paris, 2010), 46; my translation.

¹⁷ White, *Scottish Ground*, 63.

is the fulfilment of the Kantian sublime that allows us to see into the reality which philosophy cannot penetrate:

Kant affirmed that the ‘noumenal world’, as he termed it, was unknowable, and that the life of Man must be one of practical reason. But it is knowledge of the ‘noumenal world’, which we call the white world, that is the passionate research of poetry, and its supreme realisation.¹⁸

The White World and the world sought by White’s poetry is a world beyond the boundaries of the historical and the categorical:

It is to that level... that what I would like to call, in its most general terminology, open world poetics also tries to penetrate. There may be local reference and colouration, but the thrust will always be through to that open world—beyond the expression of any closed system, of any mediary society.¹⁹

It is a poetry in search of ultimate liberation from boundaries, a poetry following the Heideggerian path into the mysteries of Being that has been concealed from us by the very history of metaphysics which has tried to illuminate for us the nature of reality: the intellectual nomad who was Nietzsche is followed by the Heidegger who lives at the margins of human society, and whose thought passes through the White Country to meet with White, the intellectual nomad, like two hawks in search of the ultimate prey:

Black Forest

Heidegger at home

On the steep slope
of a mountain valley
a little chalet
eighteen feet by twenty

all around
meadow and pinewood

¹⁸ Ibid., 66.

¹⁹ Ibid., 190.

when snow surrounded the house
that was the time for philosophy:
following all those
secret, silent paths
till cogitation turned into sight

like this high summer morning
and two hawks gliding
round and round
in the absolute light.²⁰

Heidegger's 'cogitation' turns into 'sight'; the poet's sight of the hawks turns into 'absolute light', each a nomad beyond the boundaries of the discipline which would seek to trammel them.

Set in a contemporary context, White, it might seem, could be a standard-bearer for that 'denationalised' literature which many recent critics of Scottish writing have been calling for. Here, for instance, is Scott Hames on Don Paterson:

The mode of recognising poets as spokespeople for the nations is hopelessly reductive, and the transfigurative dimension of Paterson's work stands against it in every possible way. Whereas the 'identifying' procedure thrives on recognising, restating and verifying a preconceived Scottishness, Paterson's work scorns any mode of repetition which does not transform, however slightly, our perception of the already familiar.²¹

The *Edinburgh Companion to Contemporary Scottish Literature*, from which this is taken, is full of such assertions that insist that Scottish writers, post-devolution, are released from the burden of the 'national' and free to develop the potentialities of the 'cosmopolitan': as Berthold Schoene puts it in his introduction, some Scottish writers still seem 'unattuned to the majority of new Scottish literature's experimentation with a less isolationist and more cosmopolitan and "planetary" mode of narration'.²² Significantly, however,

²⁰ White, 'Black Forest', *Open World*, 92.

²¹ Scott Hames, 'Don Paterson and Poetic Autonomy' in Berthold Schoene (ed.), *The Edinburgh Companion to Contemporary Scottish Literature* (Edinburgh, 2007), 248.

²² Berthold Schoene, 'Going Cosmopolitan: Reconstituting "Scottishness" in Post-

though Edwin Morgan and Liz Lochhead are both accorded the right to be considered as parts of ‘Contemporary Scottish Literature’, the one Scottish poet who has tried to take literally the notion of the ‘planetary’ as the terrain of his writing—Kenneth White—receives not a mention; someone whose poetry takes its inspiration from Eskimo chants, Japanese haiku, Buddhist poets and thinkers, German philosophers as well as French and American writers might be thought to be a symptom of what Gavin Wallace calls ‘those cosmopolitan imagined communities of writers and far-away readers’.²³ But such cosmopolitanism is given no recognition in this version of ‘contemporary Scottish literature’.

Had it been, however, readers might have discovered a profound counter-current in Kenneth White’s work that works against that ‘de-nationalised’ reading of Scottish poetry. When White moved to France he established himself in Pau, in the Pyrenees. Pau was one of those towns which, after the Napoleonic Wars, became a centre of healthy tourism for the British upper classes, and one of the centres in France for the establishment of British sports—like rugby and golf. For White, Pau represented what he has described as a ‘negative destiny’, a place of refusal in which it would be possible to begin the ‘instauration of a type of thinking freed of (French) rationalism, (English) realism and (North American) materialism, a thinking that would go from the “the slavery of fact” to the “freedom of the real”’.²⁴ But Pau undergoes a strange transmutation in White’s experience of it:

But perhaps I should begin with a window—a geographical and philosophical window—in Pau. From my study window, I could see a great length of the Pyrenean chain, in front of me the Pic du Midi d’Ossau, the last great granite peak before the chain tails off to the West, towards the Pic d’Anie, on the edge of the Basque country, the Mont Orhy and La Rhune. The geographer I most read at that time, indeed the second tome of his *Géographie Universelle* had been a *vade-mecum* with me for years, was Elisée Reclus (anarchist as well as geographer, like Kropotkin—and the combination intrigued me) who, as chance would have it, was raised only a few miles from Pau, in Orthez. I remember

devolution Criticism’ in Schoene (ed.), *The Edinburgh Companion to Contemporary Scottish Literature*, 13.

²³ Gavin Wallace, ‘Voyages of Intent: Literature and Cultural Politics in Post-Devolution Scotland’ in Schoene (ed.), *The Edinburgh Companion to Contemporary Scottish Literature*, 18.

²⁴ White, *On Scottish Ground*, 204.

reading a phrase of his with a little jolt of recognition: 'On many a peak of the Western chain one might imagine oneself in rainy Scotland'.²⁵

Pau is, as it were, another Scotland: 'I recall asking myself too if there was any linguistic connection between the Val d'Aran in the Pyrenees and Aran Isles of Ireland (and the Arran in sight of which I had been raised on the West Coast of Scotland)'.²⁶

The window in Pau is not merely a view on to a similitude of Scotland; it is a window which looks out on the landscape through the eyes of Elisée Reclus, and his connection with Scotland was far from accidental, since Reclus, with his brother, Elie, had been regular attendees at the summer schools that Patrick Geddes had organised in Edinburgh in the 1890s, in the Halls of Residence he had renovated there as part of his transformation of the city's Old Town. The Reclus brothers—both of whom had narrowly escaped death for their part in the Commune of 1870—were part of an international anarchist network that included the Russian Peter Kropotkin, all of whom Geddes invited to Edinburgh to consider how to transform industrial society and to produce a new kind of society in harmony with its environment—what he described as 'Neotechnics'. White's 'Geopoetics' is not simply a 'cosmopolitan' product of his experience of exile in French culture but one based on specifically Scottish precedents—precedents that had themselves had more than a casual French connection. For it was while studying marine biology at Roscoff in Brittany, and then a broader scientific curriculum at the Sorbonne, that the young Patrick Geddes had begun to think about the inter-relatedness of biology and, as it was later to become known, sociology, and was inspired by the work of Frédéric Le Play on the relationship of *Lieu, Travail, Famille*, a trinity that Geddes would later render as 'Place, Work, Folk' in his analysis of the interconnectedness of cities and their environments.²⁷ The Reclus through whose eyes White sees Scotland in France is mirror-image to the Patrick Geddes who uses French theory to help him see Scotland—as in the famous 'valley section' diagram of the relationship between the various parts of a territory.²⁸

Geddes certainly conforms to White's conception of the 'intellectual nomad', since his theories were inspired by experiences in France and Mexico,

²⁵ Ibid., 205.

²⁶ Ibid.

²⁷ Philip Mairet, *Pioneer of Sociology: The Life and Letters of Patrick Geddes* (London, 1957), 27–8, 123.

²⁸ Ibid., 123–4.

and found their expression in projects in India and Palestine. Returning from the East after the First World War, Geddes decided to found a new Scots College on the hills above Montpellier in imitation of the original Scots College in Paris: it was an effort which some of his followers, like the American theorist of cities, Lewis Mumford, regarded as folly, but through his window in Pau the logic of it is clear to White:

Closely related to the Scots College, which would house, not a coterie, nor a party, but ‘an evolutionary group’, were, to Geddes’s eyes, the School of Archaeology at Les Eyzies and the School of Regional Survey at Domme in the Dordogne, run by Paul Reclus, the son of an old friend of his, Elie Reclus, the ethnologist brother of Elisée Reclus, the geographer.²⁹

The Scots College that Geddes built aimed to be at the centre of development of a new conception of human history—or, rather, of the transformation of history into geography, as laid out in the vocabulary that Geddes invented for describing the stages of human evolution:

Paleotechnics meant waste of natural resources, blighted landscapes, pandemic cities full of factories, offices, slums and stunted human lives. Neotechnics meant the use of non-polluting energy and the attempt to reunite utility with beauty, city and landscape. Biotechnics would promote new life-thinking, leading to more developed human lives, more expanded psyches. As to geotechnics, it was the means for human beings to learn how to really and fully inhabit the earth.³⁰

The paraphrase is White’s: just as he sees the landscape of Pau through the eyes of Reclus, so his geopoetics views the world through the eyes of Reclus’ friend, Patrick Geddes, and his ‘geotechnics’. Whether White constructed geopoetics on the basis of Geddes’s geotechnics, or discovered Geddes as his predecessor as a result of tracing the roots of geopoetics is not clear—but the relation is one which he is keen to endorse. The first Scottish ‘renaissance’ – the one announced by Geddes in the 1890s – adumbrates White’s own ‘reconnaissance’ into a new field, into an open space.³¹

²⁹ White, *On Scottish Ground*, 137.

³⁰ *Ibid.*, 146.

³¹ *Ibid.*, 42.

The Scottish-French connection represented by Geddes' Scots College at Montpellier gestures to the longer connection of Scots with France that was inaugurated by the original Scots College in Paris, founded in 1326. The Scots College was therefore the oldest of the Scottish Universities, and the first university of Scotland's intellectual nomads. The 'Intellectual Nomad' is not, therefore, a modern outcome of the need to escape from Scotland—however much modern Scots may feel impelled by that need. It is in fact part of the very fabric of Scottish intellectual life: when Duns Scotus died in Cologne in 1308 he had travelled from Duns in Berwickshire, to Oxford, to Paris and then to 'exile' in the Rhineland. The intellectual nomad, it turns out, is not, for White, the antithesis of a Scottish identity trapped within the trajectory of a destructive history but, in fact, the very foundation of a Scottish identity for which border crossing, migration and nomadism is the norm:

Scotland's contacts with the Continent, and, as we shall see, with France in particular, were to continue at full force at the time of the Renaissance, and the anthropological type of the Continental Scot was still foremost. Even after Scotland had started up its own university system in 1410 at St Andrews, largely on the French model (its founder, Henry Wardlaw, was a graduate of Paris), Scottish students still tended to go to the Continent whenever they could: you find their names ... in the archives of Paris, Orléans, Avignon, Louvain, Cologne, Bologna and Padua, and very often with the word *pauper* after it, indicating that, being without sufficient resources, they were to be relieved of the payment of fees ... The number of Scots teaching and writing all kinds of books in France during those times is amazing: George Buchanan in Paris and Bordeaux; Michael Scott in Paris; James Beaton (called by Mary Stuart 'Monsieur de Glasco') in Paris; James Kidd in Toulouse; James Crichton (the Admirable) in Paris and Bordeaux; John Cameron in Bordeaux, Adam Abernethy in Montpellier, John Gordon at Avignon ...³²

Kenneth White at Pau in the Pyrenees, at Paris and at Trébeurden in Brittany is not an outsider to Scottish tradition, but its reconstitution. If he shares the sense that MacDiarmid and Muir expressed of the decline of Scottish culture after the Reformation, that decline he attributes to

³² Ibid., 108.

this loss of continentality, and intercontinentality [producing] provincialisation and an ingrowing discontent that could come across in many ways; contortions of the psyche; aggressive identity-ideology; the couthy complacency of localism ... Add to that locally fabricated ingredients such as hard-bitten Calvinism (leading to aesthetic malnutrition and moral *rigor mortis*), as well as whole regiments of rubber-brained pedagogicals, parochial patterers, evangelical haverers, not to speak of bonnie prince Charlies, and you have all the enemies of large, cogent and coherent Scottishness.³³

This tradition of intellectual nomadism is inscribed in Scottish culture right back to the early Celtic-Christian missionaries to a benighted Europe:

Those Celto-pagan Pelagian-Christian monks were perched there on the cliffs 'at the edge of the world', and then in the sixth century, they started flying over the waters, in droves. Again wideflung travelling was written into the tradition ... Eric of Auxerre wrote about 'all those Scotie philosophers landing on our shores', saying that 'the more intelligent and learned they are, the more they want to travel'. Brandan, born in Kerry, founds a monastery at Clonfert, and then when a certain Barintus tells of a trip he made to visit a disciple of his on a distant island, embarks for the Hebrides, Iceland, Brittany, and maybe further. St Malo, St Pol, St Renan settle in Brittany ... There were so many of them at Péronne the place was called Perrona Scottorum.³⁴

That Scots are intellectual nomads is 'written into the tradition', a tradition of which Patrick Geddes and Kenneth White—prophets of geotechnics and geopoetics—are the modern embodiments, the rediscoverers of an ancient energy that is Celtic in origin:

Brandan built him a boat

he built it of seventeen pieces
making first a framework of pliant wood
covering it with bull hides tanned in oak
smearing the hides with grease and resin—

³³ Ibid., 109.

³⁴ Ibid., 105.

a boat light as a bird to ride the sea!

when the boat was ready, firm and true
 he gathered men about him, saying:
 'this will be no pleasure cruise
 rather the wildest of wild goose chases
 around the rim of the world and further
 a peregrination in the name of God
 and the promise of white martyrdom'.³⁵

Like Geddes' regenerative Celticism of the 1890s, White finds in a Scoto-Celtic tradition an alternative 'ground' from which the crisis of modernity can be addressed. It is, he insists, 'minds with a Celtic background that get closest to the Far East', and if this is clear in the case of 'Segalen, the Breton, in China',³⁶ it is equally clear in the work of both Hugh MacDiarmid and Neil Gunn. The tradition of Lowland Scotland is, however, no less significant to the issues posed by modernity:

Philosophy in Europe has been going through a radical crisis, with questions being raised as to its limits and perspectives. Among the foremost in this discussion and investigation was Martin Heidegger, trying to find ways into 'regions philosophy has never heard of', and Heidegger's doctoral thesis was based, precisely, on Duns Scot.³⁷

Scotland may be a place of the margins, a place at the margin, but the Scotland of the intellectual nomad is at the very centre of modern intellectual development, and is, indeed, the hinterland from which an alternative conception of our relation to the world can begin to be perceived. In his intellectual nomadism, Kenneth White sees himself not in rebellion against Scottish tradition but as its fulfilment, a follower of Scottish precursors, from Duns Scotus to Robert Louis Stevenson, whose journey through the Cévennes White was to repeat in the 1990s:³⁸ White, the intellectual nomad who has taken 'passage through many cultures in order to arrive at a potential world-culture',³⁹ travels in fact

³⁵ White, *Open World*, 516,

³⁶ White, *On Scottish Ground*, 73.

³⁷ White, *The Wanderer and his Charts*, 14.

³⁸ Kenneth White, *Le chemin des crêtes: Avec Robert Louis Stevenson à travers les Cévennes* (Paris, 1999).

³⁹ *Ibid.*, 247.

in the footsteps of Scottish precursors, the exponent of a universalism which is still a Scottish universalism, a cosmopolitanism which is always a Scottish cosmopolitanism:

The Wandering Scot

Scotus vagans

It was a clear, cool, April-blue afternoon
just after the winter snows

I was waiting at a Paris railway station
on a train bound for Aurillac
(the ‘place of the winds’?)
up there on France’s central plateaux

why the hell go to Aurillac—
God only knows

in my rucksack
(graced with the claw of a grouse)
I had *Sartor Resartus*
alongside an empty notebook.⁴⁰

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⁴⁰ White, *Open World*, 20.