

A photograph of a wetland landscape featuring tall, golden-brown grasses and green shrubs in the foreground, with a body of water reflecting the sky in the background. A large, white, irregularly shaped oval with a thin white border is overlaid on the right side of the image, containing the title and author information.

Thinking Like a Wetland

Dillon, et al. 2012

Take a moment to think

Close your eyes

I want you guys to think about water.

Not about water in the shower or tap or in a cup but I mean vast water
of rivers, oceans, seas, or bogs.

Picture it

What does it look like

What does it smell like

Can you feel it

What does it sound like

Are there birds?

Is there a storm coming?

Now that you have this image in your mind, what kind of feelings does
this evoke?



Choosing the article

Relationship with water

The Unconventional layout

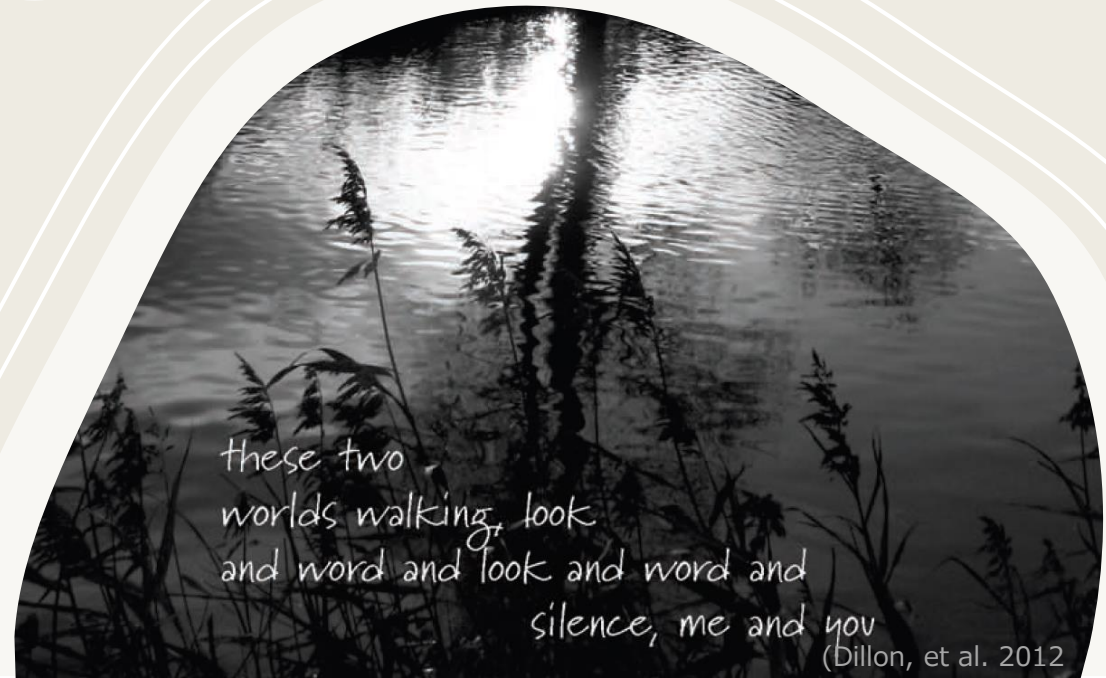
The art, poetry and imagery



(Burton, 2016)



(Dillon, et al. 2012)



these two
worlds walking, look
and word and look and word and
silence, me and you
(Dillon, et al. 2012)

Who, Where, why, how

The Wetland Collective

Patrick Dillon – Cultural Ecologist

Philip Gross – Poet and Writer

Richard Irvine – Anthropologist

Valerie Coffin Price – Artist

Chad Staddon – Geography of Water Management



(Dillon, et al. 2012)



Layout, Structure

3 Cantos

1. Our distinctions between wet and Dry
2. Our relationship with wetlands: humans at the margin of water
3. The embodied Experience of Water



“This article is (therefore) an exercise in working out how to think beyond anthropocentrism and how to think beyond the idea that we are agents outside of water. In taking wetlands as our shared field of exploration, we are trying to learn how to shift the focus to the materiality of the habitat itself, asking one another what it means to think from within the wetland rather than outside of it.” (Dillon et al, 2012)





Sitting in the bog of context

Meshwork of becoming and flux- Ingold – never complete, never finished

Meshwork connecting all things. Meshwork connecting things as a whole. –
Hyper objects – Morton

Breaking down of boundaries – porosity – boundaries overlapping.



The First Canto

Wet and Dry

Therapeutic
Deconstruction

Dealing with wetness

Striving for dryness

An invitation to therapeutic deconstruction



“We are therefore working on the margins of our own disciplinary understandings, just as we are walking the margins between wet and dry, or as Gross puts it:

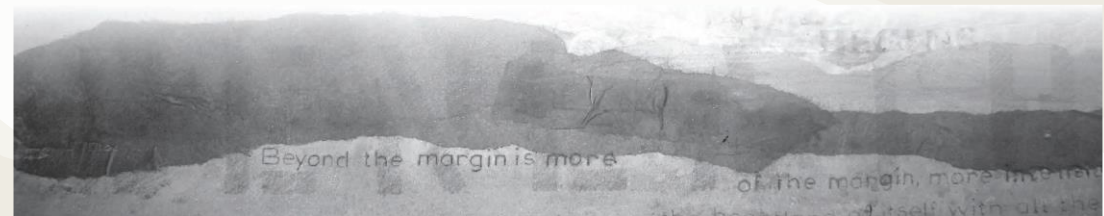
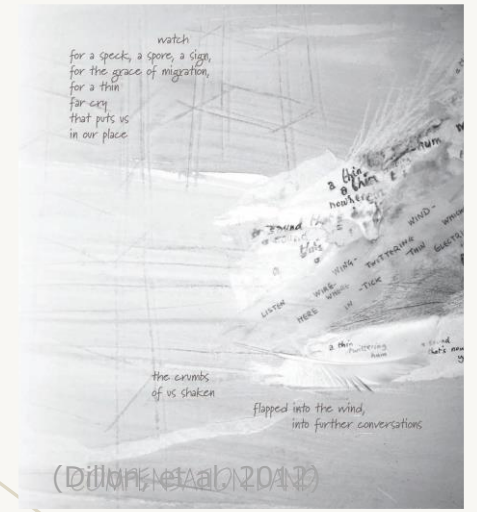
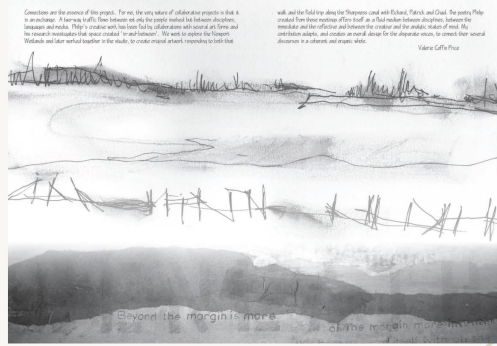
these two
worlds walking, look
and word and look and word and
silence, me and you”



**Why do we
in the UK
dislike the
wet ?**

Connection

Art and collaboration



Wetland, Thinking...

I... Well, I wouldn't say 'I', to begin with. If I think, I think I am a we.

Water is only one of the voices, though the most volatile, the most apt to come at you with threat, or gift, or glitter. Earth is the quieter partner. It inheres.

And plants, the children of this (shifting, this uneasy) marriage made... if not in heaven, in the actions of the moon? They're what holds us together, all the way from marram grass in sand dunes to the sphagnum moss that feeds on, and feeds itself into, the body of the bog.

No one governs the 'we' in 'wetlands'. OK, maybe the moon, but is she really looking, does she really care?

We're family, then, born into webs of connection? Root hairs, rhizomes, obligations. Channels worn, entrenchments. The awful relations whom we rub along with after all.

You don't know, do you, (ah, this human language) whether this 'we' is the kind including 'you'?

Or are we crowds of strangers, jostling in the customs hall, towards border control? The rich melange of voices. Tongues as many as grass. You have to bend down very close to hear.

You hope we're a pack, the sleek flow mapped by those black and white canny dogs lolloping home. Those dogs grown to be part of your pack, your purpose, only closer to the ground and to the sheep. You can do business with that.

We're not so different from you, maybe — you singular, who call yourself a personality. You too let your memories, your meanings, bank and veer and flow to cohere with their neighbours, following their wingtips, the whole flock of you lightening, darkening, scarfing and furling in flight.

What do we want of you? You, who've elected yourself first cousin to the old ones, tide and moon...and yet, so childlike, touching really, the way you gaze into us, wanting to see words like 'want', like 'think', like 'I'. Reflections of your own face in our standing water.

But we level with you, all the same.

You can do this by taste. This blank page of surface water, where the beasts graze, is it salt or sweet? You could take a sample bottle of it for analysis. Or chance it, to know us that close. Our languages, there, on the tip of your tongue.

“Gross’ words, coming from the perspective of the wetland, invite us to see the reflections of ourselves in the water, and challenge us to consider how we characterize the wetland and our connections to it.”

Poem

The re-thinking of human experience, porous boundaries and meshwork of things. Wetland is a singular but also a ‘we’



Thinking through doing

Mark Making Exercise



How This is Going to Work

Step 1: Grab something nearby that has a connection with nature

Step 2: think about where has this object come from?

Step 3: close your eyes, concentrate on the texture and feelings of the object you're touching

Step 4: 20 seconds (eyes closed) Use your paper and pen to express the feeling of the object

Step 5: 20 seconds (eyes Open) draw, scribble, make a mess, continuing from step 4

Step 6: Enjoy what you have made! (and if you're willing show us what you've created and the object you originally chose and share your thoughts!)

Exploring the world through our bodies

The disconnection between mind and body in human society.

How thinking like a wetland asks us to connect ourselves with nature and in doing so connecting ourselves with our body.

Mark making exercises like this or sketchbook walks, etc. are a form of interaction with our world in a way that requires us to be aware of ourselves and the world we are interacting with.

Taking time outdoors (or even indoors like we have done today) to consider our bodies place in our surroundings.



the world-

Wide web-foot wing-

Spread twitter of connection

the world-
wide web-foot wing-
spread twitter of connections...



punctuation
for a text still
being written
and resembling silence

(but only
to us)

For a text still

and resembling silence

Punctuation

Being written

(but only
to us)



The Second Canto

‘Thinking and behaving like wetland’: A cultural ecological framework

Patrick Dillon



“Engaging with the metaphor of thinking and behaving *like* wetland requires us to look again at how we think and behave *towards* wetland.”

Beyond the margin is more
Of the margin, more intensely,
the heartland of itself,
All the edges in-gathered

(mud, salt, freyedwaves, stumps
Of jetties, signatures of oil or steam,
Gloss, satin or matt,
and the birds'
where to pick in the mud,
where not)

all habit-
ations shifting, now
all borders porous,
every land
a landfill

Beyond the margin is more
of the margin, more intensely,
the heartland of itself,
all the edges in-gathered

(mud, salt, freyedwaves, stumps
of jetties, signatures of oil or steam,
the water's fine discriminations,
gloss, satin or matt,
and the birds'
where to pick in the mud,
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Tiddly Mun humanising nature and the effects of time

Richard Irvine

“Is it so alien for us to think like a wetland?
What does it mean to engage with – no, more
than that, *to be part of* – the materiality of land
and water?”





The Third Canto

Squelching along thoughtfully



Cultures of water – Chad Staddon

“water is central to both human life and culture and flows through our social and cultural fabric as a generative force, something both mundane and sublime.”





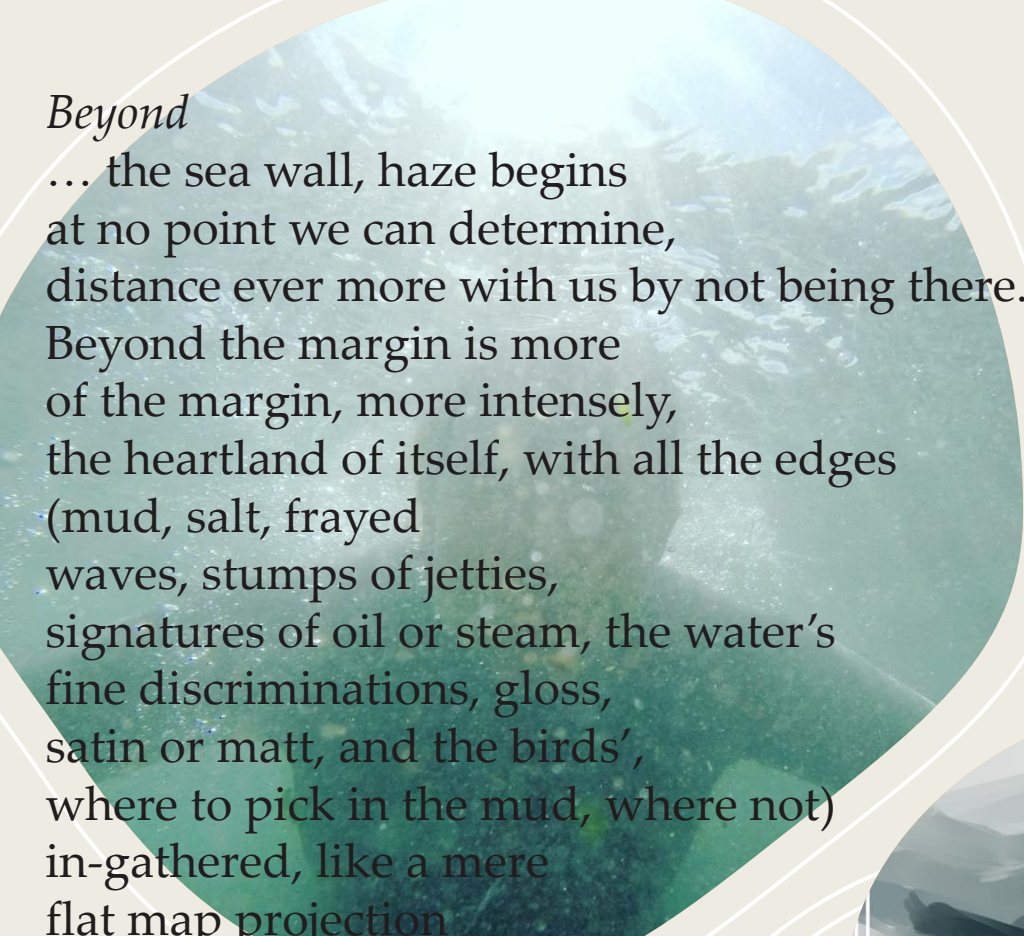
Other thoughts connected with this article

When reading through this article I remembered a few things I've seen or had read in the past.

Go Tell The Bees – Community film – National Theater of Wales

Cawl Mympwy – short stories in podcast format – Y Môr by Dyfan Lewis

The Glorious Life of the Oak - John Lewis-Stempel



Beyond

... the sea wall, haze begins
at no point we can determine,
distance ever more with us by not being there.
Beyond the margin is more
of the margin, more intensely,
the heartland of itself, with all the edges
(mud, salt, frayed
waves, stumps of jetties,
signatures of oil or steam, the water's
fine discriminations, gloss,
satin or matt, and the birds',
where to pick in the mud, where not)
in-gathered, like a mere
flat map projection
or the great grey linen tablecloth
grandmother grabbed by the lugs
of its corners, the crumbs
of us shaken in, frisked to the doorstep,
flapped into the wind,
into further dimensions,
distances we couldn't grasp of a world.



Beneath

... the great glum and always unravelling
knot of weather,
pressure, heat, precipitation,
cloud without visible movement
but a bush of steam arisen
from its chimney leans
from the north - not wind
exactly, more that grey itself
might have an inclination
like us this morning; we walk
to be warm, and to find ourselves
somewhere, lifted clean
out of ourselves, as we watch
for a speck, a spore, a sign,
for the grace of migration,
for a thin far cry that puts us
in our place, this temporary landfall,
brief sweet water, and a little green.
from *The Margin*
Philip Gross

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Catupilt.