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STORMING SKY AND JAMIE MCPHIE

A Last Wolf in England: The Wolf's Tale

Note from Storming Sky: Some of the key terms in this prologue may be unfamiliar to some of you, so we thought we'd ask our co-creator, Jamie Mcphie, to try to explain in a more digestible, anthropocentric manner. This appears in the Epilogue, after our anthropomorphised poem, *the hunt*.

'Franny is listening to a program on wolves. I say to her, Would you like to be a wolf? She answers haughtily, How stupid, you can't be one wolf, you're always eight or nine, six or seven.'

(Deleuze and Guattari, 2004, p. 32)

Prologue by Storming Sky

Call me wolfing. I was murdered in Lancashire (now a part of Cumbria) in 1390 CE, by some pre-enlightened gentlemen. It was just before the perceptual turning point from Theos to Mechanos;¹ from a transcendent God to little ghosts in your little machines.²

We were once many in the forested lands of all my relations but this changed (again) as a residue from the land laws of the Norman invaders.

The story of my existence is a complex one for I have never been a wolf. I, if you like, am wolfing,³ for that is what we are. I am 'pack' may be more recognisable to you but I am wolfing is more accurate. I am not a pronoun, a solitary object, static in time or space; I am a verb, I am an action, I am an idea, I am a multiplicity, I am wolfing, for that is what we do.

Those animist cultures we (all my relations) still remember, from days before the Rhododendron Roman invaders (who were influenced by the

post-Socratic Greek state). The Celts may not have ‘liked’ us but they understood us as they understood themselves. Those Celts, like us, were not *on* or *in* the land, they were *of* the land.⁴ They grew to know it patiently as they told stories that morphed them to it. They knew that memory has to be embodied if the land is to be truly understood. Oral traditions knew this. Animists know this. We know this (but not in your anthropocentric ways). Once memory is externalised into written form, you lose your intra-relations.⁵ It is said that the animist Celts (before the Romans introduced monotheistic Christianity to England) had a god of thunder, *Taranis*. But my relations knew differently. *Taranis* was not a transcendent god *of* thunder for those Celts. That was the Roman translation (*interpretatio romana*). *Taranis was* thunder.⁶ This makes all the *difference*.

You have forgotten your immanence of the world, just as you forgot mine. There is no nature or there is all nature,⁷ never a divide, never a connection (for that too implies a divide). Your health depends on this as my health did. I am no longer here and the world became mechanised. Not long after you took my fierce green fire⁸ out of this world, you contracted interpretosis⁹ and developed little ghosts in your little machines as a consequence. (We knew this was coming. It was building up to it. It was obvious of the land).

We were your trophic cascade, we were your keystone. Yet you favoured ‘your’ sheep, ‘your’ aesthetics and ‘your’ transcendence.

Now I will tell my tale in your alphabetised tongue, in the same *style* as Mrs Jerome Mercier’s¹⁰ romantic version of my *civilised* death, for it will be easier for you to consume (but not digest). But you can never know me and I can never let you in, for I am dead to you. I am other-than-human. It is a wolf’s tale told to you in an anthropomorphic patois. Because of this, you are merely an observer and never a participant.¹¹ And I am sorry for this, for now it is too late in the day for you. You must sleep now.

I lived *of* a land that is now known as Cumbria. The human language of the region, *Cumbric*, like my kin, became extinct before me... as so goes that culture. The increasing palimpsest of one all-consuming, homogenising paradigm all leads to one monoculture. The layering of the staticising agricultural revolution; the essentialising of the Greek state; the introduction of urbanised thinking and a transcendent monotheistic worldview by the Romans; the inequitable land grab by the Normans; the Cartesian split from the Earth; and the industrial revolution have

forced all variations of heterogeneity into just *one story* that will ultimately decide your fate.

You may try to run from the hunt, like I did, but *the* story will always catch you.

The hunt

Those humans better knowing, might call me 'storming sky',
But you may call me 'Humphrey', for the Head is where I die.
It started with a horn I hear, and barking dogs in twos,
Plump humans dressed in Sunday best, weighed down the horses' hooves.

The song of doom I heard that morn, and fled as fast I could,
From Humphrey Head at first I flew, across the Levens flood.
Through Lowick's kindly wooded realm, in front of Ruskin's eyes,
I climbed the stairs of Coniston, sought freedom in the skies.

Yet still the hounds of hell came forth, led on by bold and brave,
Why do these humans come at me, the last to see the grave?
I ran and swam through mere and tarn, Esthwaite to Windermere,
I turned aside to Witherslack, through Grange, but out of fear

I returned from whence I fled that day, a place that I called home,
A place of safety once, I thought, becomes a living tomb.
Two hounds, two men, two horses left, how long must this press on?
The Raven waits atop my cave, for soon I will be gone.

The last I see, the last I taste, the horse's blood in mine,
A single spear right through my heart, as is the end of time.
And in my dying hour I spy, the men rejoice in song,
The bold, the brave, the Christian Knave (none thought that they do wrong).

But I live on, in kith and kin, for I was *she* not *he*.
We are not one, we are not two, nor even merely three,
An assemblage of becoming-wolf, a multiplicity.
For I did leave my cubs that day (*take care of them dear sea*).

As days did pass, the cubs grew weak, until they cried no more,
Still waiting for their milk they lay on the cavern floor.
Just as they almost gave up hope, the lapping of the sea
Provided one more charm for them, in the guise of *he*;

A lonely fisherman, Tam Lin, took pity on the cubs,
He took them home and kept them warm, with a mother's pups.
For 'his' dear Collie just gave birth, a la'al litter of three,
Now she who had a pack of wolves, saw them as mothers see.

The years they passed, to future days, the Greens blew on the breeze,
Cumbric was spoke and mountain tops were carpeted with trees.
Wilding here, ~~r~~ewilding there, *life* ~~r~~eturned once more,
Eagles came and Beavers too, even Grizedale Boar.

But the most ~~r~~emarkable of all, a cub born in a cave,
The ancestor of Storming Sky, that she-wolf so brave.
You see she still lives *of* this world, she who is not *dead*,
For deep within this *baby* wolf, lies she of Humphrey Head.

Epilogue

by Jamie Mcphie

'In the participatory universe, to be a full member of it, you must participate fully; the more fully the better. We are sitting at the feast of life. Its name is participation.'

– Skolimowski, 1994, p.157

1. 'Theos' and 'Mechanos' were terms used by Henryk Skolimowski (1994) to describe the last two stages out of four (the first two being 'Mythos' and 'Logos') of the history of the Western mind. Theos describes the period of Christianity that emerged from the Dark Ages and Mechanos describes the scientific revolution and later enlightenment that eventually led to treating the universe as an objective clockwork mechanism to be measured to find 'truth'. Positivist research terms, such as 'data' and 'variables', are examples of how this reductionist and essentialist way of mechanised thinking *treats*

- the intra-relational process that is the flow of life itself.
2. The ‘ghost in the machine’ was coined by Gilbert Ryle in his 1949 book ‘The Concept of Mind’, which refers to Rene Descartes’ mind-body dualism. Descartes believed that our pineal gland, in our brains, held our mind (or immortal soul); a non-material, non-physical, non-spatial entity separate from our ‘body’ (which he believed to be spatial but not conscious). This led to the *belief* that the mind was separate from the body and that *nature* was separate from human *culture*. This view is still dominant in Western thinking, including the belief that we are disconnected from ‘nature’ (a term *invented* to create a division and possible binary bias) as it still implies a Cartesian dualism (i.e. how can we be disconnected from nature if we *are* nature?).
 3. ‘Wolfing’ is perhaps the most alien concept to traditional Westernised thinking as it refers to an alternative paradigm and worldview from which to ‘see’ the world. Wolfing is perhaps in line with much animist thought but also shares similarities with Deleuze and Guattari’s (2004) ‘Becoming-wolf’, Tim Ingold’s (2011) ‘Wayfaring’ and David Abram’s (2011) ‘Becoming Animal’ due to an immanent understanding of the world as opposed to a transcendent one.
 4. The phenomenologist Merleau-Ponty (1964), suggested that we are not *on* the world, or even *in* the world but rather we are *of* the world. Ingold (2011) summarises Merleau-Ponty’s conclusions that ‘since the living body is primordially and irrevocably stitched into the fabric of the world, our perception of the world is no more, and no less, than the world’s perception of itself – in and through us’ (p. 12).
 5. The notion of ‘intra-relations’ is built on quantum physicist Karen Barad’s (2007) concept, ‘intra-action’:

‘The neologism “intra-action” *signifies the mutual constitution of entangled agencies*. That is, in contrast to the usual “interaction,” which assumes that there are separate individual agencies that precede their interaction, the notion of intra-action recognises that distinct agencies do not precede, but rather emerge through, their intra-action. It is important to note that the “distinct” agencies are only distinct in a relational, not an absolute, sense, that is, *agencies are only distinct in relation to their mutual entanglement; they don’t exist as individual elements.*’ (Barad, 2007, p. 33)

‘Intra-actions are practices of making a difference, of cutting together-apart, entangling-differentiating (one move) in the making

of phenomena. Phenomena-entanglements of matter/ing across spacetimes-are not in the world, but *of* the world. Importantly, intra-actions are not limited to human-based measurement practices.' (Barad, 2012, pp.7–8)

It is important to note that intra-relational does not mean relations *within the self* as an isolated entity but rather the non-separate co-emergent relations *of* the world.

6. In her book 'Exploring the World of the Druids', archaeologist Miranda Green (1997) emphasises that the Celtic spirit/god 'Taranis' name indicates not that he was the god of thunder: he *was* thunder; Sequana was the River Seine at its spring source; Sulis was the hot spring at Bath, not simply its guardian or possessor' (p.24). This suggests that whilst the animistic Celtic belief system was still very much *of* the land, the Roman introduction of a monotheistic Christian belief in a *transcendent* God began to *cultivate* a belief, in the West, of separation and division (although it could be argued that this belief of separation had already begun with the agricultural revolution).
7. Timothy Morton's (2007) concept of 'Dark Ecology' conceives of an ecology without nature, where 'the very idea of "nature" which so many hold dear will have to wither away in an "ecological" state of human society' because 'the idea of nature is getting in the way of properly ecological forms of culture, philosophy, politics, and art' (p. 1).
 'Timothy Morton contends that a really deep ecology would let go of the idea of nature because it marks the difference between 'us' and 'it'. He argues that the chief stumbling block to environmental thinking is the idea of nature itself, and sets out to expose that, paradoxically, in order to have a proper ecological view, one must relinquish the 'idea' of nature'. (de Vega, no date, p.4)
8. 'Fierce green fire dying in her eyes' were Aldo Leopold's words in 'A Sand County Almanac' (1949) when he witnessed a dying wolf that they'd shot. In his description of 'Thinking Like a Mountain', he infers that 'only the mountain has lived long enough to listen objectively to the howl of a wolf' (Leopold, 1949, p. 129).
9. 'Interpretosis' is a Western disease that Deleuze and Guattari (2004) describe as 'the fundamental neurosis of mankind'. It refers to interpretation as an illness 'typical of Western representational schema, whereby every experienced affect is read as the signifier of some original scene' (Colebrook, 2002, p. 134).
10. Mrs Jerome Mercier was a Victorian Lady whose version of 'The Last

Wolf' (1906) was intended to map the change from a savage England to a more civilised one. The civilised Christian gentlemen were putting an end to the savage Barbary of the England symbolised by the wolf. Within her small book, the poem that follows the hunt was reprinted from James Stockdale's *'Annals of Cartmel'*, first published in 1872. She quotes Edwin Waugh, who initially wrote about the wolf hunt. For a more in-depth look at the legends of Britain's last wolves, see Bob Pegg's excellent blog, <http://lastwolf.net/5.html>.

10. A First Nation *elder*, that I befriended at a conference in Canada, told me a story that I will never forget but cannot repeat here due to its complexity and the fact that I would not want to do it a disservice, as many *things* are lost when translating an oral tradition into a written one. But I can let you in to a small part of its meaning by repeating a comment he whispered to me after hearing the anthropologist, Tim Ingold speak. *'That Ingold fella'*, he said, *'we would give an 'A' for anthropology but an 'F' for participation; for he is an observer, not a participant'*. As an admirer of Tim Ingold's ongoing exploration of a process-relational understanding of the world, I felt almost hurt by the truth of this comment.

You see, like Tim Ingold (but unlike Storming Sky), I myself am a recovering observer ...

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