

A black and white photograph of a turbulent ocean. The sky is dark and overcast, with a single seagull in flight in the upper left quadrant. The ocean surface is dark and choppy, with a large, white, foamy wave cresting in the foreground. The text "What the Waves Make" is centered in the middle of the image in a white, sans-serif font.

What the Waves Make

BY INGRID LEONARD



Ingrid Leonard

In July 2022 Ingrid Leonard spent two weeks in residency at EMEC in Stromness, talking to staff and absorbing the work being undertaken.

What Ingrid and EMEC both have in common is Orkney. How our islands are home to, and influence, our thinking.

EMEC's work as an innovation catalyst testing new technologies is inherently driven by science and engineering, but we have long been enthusiastic about the intersection between art and technology – how we see, hear and interpret what we do to different audiences. It was therefore particularly exhilarating to see Ingrid's writing in Orcadian dialect, and moving to hear how, in poetry, she captured the feelings of the power, movement and potential in our work. So much more commanding than the datasets we deal in.

Our work is driven by a vision for a different energy future – we hope through these poems you can envisage that energy too.

Neil Kermode
Managing Director
EMEC

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PROSPECTOR, PLANNER, LAWMAKER - STEER YER THOWTS TAE THESE



Harshness is thi point in this madrom o wave
an water, this seethe; I imajin thi mooth o a whael
trappan krill, strainan water fae thi flesh that feeds hid.
A tidal stream moves through a turbine on me screen,
a shoal o arrows shaan hu thi energy converts;
there's a waveswing at thi end o thi dock, awaetan
hids testing berth, yella underneath thi gull-scat,
birds takkan off in a skry. We aal hiv something
we want fae thi oshun – an ebb, a resetting,
a slap-up lunch; at this fetch, hid's thi moshun
that's draan folk, makkan power intae power,
thi ootpit benign. Prospector, planner, lawmakker –
steer yer thowts tae these trials; thi earth's
warman up, this is thi last rev o thi dial.

E TRIALS, THI EARTH'S WARMAN UP, THIS IS THI LAST REV O THI DIAL.



It would take all the people of the planet to ape this thundering; tonight, all life forms shelter – the cows and hens are in, the boats roped in the bay, a cleg flits in its crook. The wind has deployed its battering ram, in formless screams and whistles. Waveriders work in the surge, measuring, feeding back – ones and zeros populate sheets in the data centre while a prototype weathers the surf, working, bettering with each fresh storm. This is what the waves make, this rolling in of energy where the Atlantic ends, begins.



Me mither let go me hand -
I fell, left a red
weet scaep on thi land.

OF ENERGY WHERE THE ATLANTIC ENDS, BEGINS.



We bounce out of the bay on a charter
boat past gleaming liners, their chiliadal
crowds swarming into port. To the left,
a scrap of rock – starboard, a grass-
covered rise. We're fast, advancing
over the lump to a place where water
leaps like lava, a fury of white froth.
Here's a beast with its nose down,
biting for a strange catch – the sun
and moon are worth fighting,
movement's the prize. It hurls itself
at grullyan limbs that spin through cable,
rack, substation; it'll power the world
and its pans, masts – no land without tide.

HERE'S A BEAST WITH ITS NOSE DOWN, BITING FOR A STRANGE CATCH



'energy is a health issue' [Alec Finlay]

We drink, pass water, warm hands by the stove,
cough, reheat, refrigerate, mix medicine,
look for signs of swelling, squeeze pus
from a painful wound, take x-rays,
sip eucalyptus, drill for fillings, soothe
stomachs with broth, eyes with chamomile;
we stew meat, simmer libations, incubate
newborns, build, we build with cranes,
diggers, scan breast, brain, heart, liver,
we're here for the shortest ping of time,
we need light to knit the yarn by, salve
for our offspring; the flooding has begun,
our sheets are on the line – the pips beep,
repeat – none of this should cost the earth.

- THE SUN AND MOON ARE WORTH FIGHTING, MOVEMENT'S THE PRIZE.



Into the race, a device roars,
neap time approaching.
The tides give scant chance for divers –
each turn half an hour, tops.
Grid work happens away from this
rip, in a salt-scored substation,
inching into electricity. In other parts,
the scene slackens – a white-tipped
yacht slips along the bay's surface.

INTO THE RACE, A DEVICE ROARS, NEAP TIME APPROACHING. THE TIDE



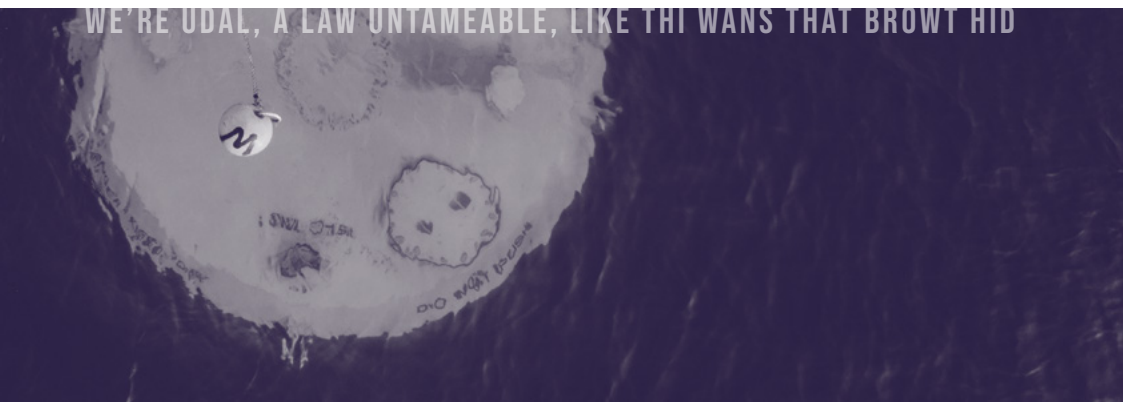
Thi lungs o me beleufid haeve
an swell in a whchshhhh. Braith laeves
his body in sibilance, so ivry night
I faal asleep tae thi soond o thi sea.

S GIVE SCANT CHANCE FOR DIVERS - EACH TURN HALF AN HOUR, TOPS.



There's gold here, but hid disna glister –
hid's a life, pulsan in thi stone-baffled surf;
when ye come, in yer time-skerped era,
mak like thi seal that sweems roond thi rotor,
hid kens tae share thi channel. Uis mammals
farm field an water, wir life in ivry atom,
why wid we relinquish thi root o wir refuelling
tae thi requisitioner's roll? Ye hiv previous
for poor planning, on page an ower thi water;
them already here, thi pioneers, use local,
whenever they're able, understand that thi land
begets hids folk. We're udal, a law untameable,
like thi wans that browt hid; must we stand
atween colonisers, at a centre we've no right tae?
Hid'll be up tae you, here's a good paert o thi answer:
work wi thi folk for thi folk, don't trash Thi Bu.

WE'RE UDAL, A LAW UNTAMEABLE, LIKE THI WANS THAT BROWT HID



There's no a motor trip taen,
nor slick piece o tech that didna flunk
at thi workshop, thi engineer's stèshun
at wan time, becis o ill-fittan screw
or maths miscalculèshun. So much o life
spent in thi *and so on*, thi redeployment
o aims & obchectifs that were flotted,
sunk, resurfissed. Sourced yer containers
fae Spain? They'll dae, dead right
for thi storage o an element, wind
an water-tight, but thi rain here
has knuckles, thi spray's a jötunn's fist.
There's many a first ahint thi first,
an seconds, tenths – sailors hiv dodged
these lengths since thi gret melt –
thi moon's queek tae shoogle hids fences.
Tak heart if yer contriving hisna yet
dealt thi master-strokk – on Eday,
thi larries drive on ter ower paet –
there are some things salt kinna aet:
for each iterèshun spun, folk learn
an that learning steys at this crossroads
begun an built upon whar minds
absorb fresh findings, pass them on.



Glossary – Orcadian

cleg – horsefly

apaece – still

grullyan – a giant/monster

Glossary – Norn

madrom – fury

skry – crowd

screever – very strong gale/hurricane

skerped – torn

Quote

The quote in *Mantra* is from a poem by Alec Finlay entitled ‘*after gareth and laura we sometimes used to say...*’ from *ebban an’ flowan*, published by morning star in 2015.

Notes for *Tae Thi Power*

The udal system of tenure is a legal system which is derived from Norse law and which includes ownership of the foreshore, as opposed to other parts of the UK, where the foreshore is predominantly owned by the Crown.

The Bu is the farm which is requisitioned and destroyed by government officials in the George Mackay Brown novel, *Greenvoe*, against the wishes of the family who have lived there for generations and who are forcibly evicted at the time of its destruction.

Thanks

These poems were written during a residency at the European Marine Energy Centre in the summer of 2022. It was a great experience and I'd like to say a huge thank you to all at EMEC for making me so welcome, for the site visits and for taking the time to tell me about what you do. I hope you enjoy these poems.

Ingrid



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