

Route 57

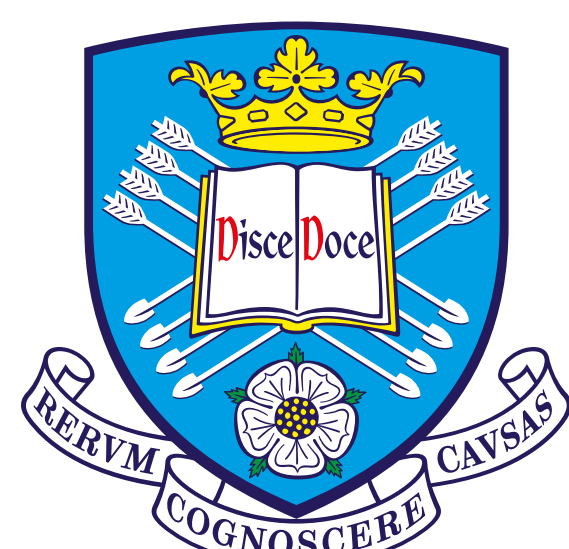
These texts are from Route 57, the University of Sheffield’s creative writing journal. Issue 15, **Environs: Modern Natures**, was the result of a collaboration with The Hepworth Wakefield and The University of Sheffield. The words on the pages took inspiration from The Hepworth Wakefield’s ‘Modern Nature’ photography exhibition which explored the relationships between the urban, the rural and the modern world. The issue contains place-writing on topics such as bringing local and global understandings together, the local environs of Sheffield’s street trees and the interstitial modern natures of our towns and cities, the ambivalence of industrial heritage, re-wilding & the fabrication of the ‘rural’, to the global environs of climate crisis and plastic pollution.

To ‘environ’ is to surround, skirt, compass; to enclose, encircle or circuit. But it is also to consider what environs us, the borders and breachings of layers of atmosphere, “green belt”, the hinterlands of ecological resilience and/or biodiversity decline. As heatwaves in February and springtime snowstorms force us all to rethink meteorology, the contributors to Route 57 re-interrogate the place of the human within ‘modern natures’.

The Hepworth Wakefield is an award-winning art gallery set within Wakefield’s historic waterfront overlooking the River Calder. Designed by the acclaimed David Chipperfield Architects, the gallery opened in May 2011.

Named after Barbara Hepworth, one of the most important artists of the 20th century who was born and brought up in Wakefield, the gallery presents major exhibitions of international modern and contemporary art and has dedicated galleries exploring Hepworth’s art and working process.

In summer 2019 The Hepworth is opening a major new public garden designed by Tom Stuart-Smith. “We are delighted to be collaborating with the University of Sheffield to explore the creative potential for this new outdoor space. We are working with academics, students and residents across Wakefield District to explore the many ways in which writers, artists and communities shape a vision for our rural and urban landscapes”.



The
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THE
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Jenny Donnison, ‘Three Boys and a Pigeon’

Framed by the grey of low-rise flats,
a bird cupped in the nest of your hands.
Who taught you to hold it safe and still,
love its graceful wing and racing heart?

You gently cradle its apple-round breast
two fingers secure the scaly feet
fan tail circled by index and thumb
poised on the cusp of the wild.

Released an odyssey away,
snow of feathers softly falls
as birds lift in a flurry of flight
heading for the home loft.

Your steady gaze into the lens
a way of life light in your palms.

Photograph by
Daniel Meadows:
‘John Payne and friends,
with pigeon Chequer.
Portsmouth, April 1974’



Ferrybridge Power Station by Helen Angell

only the children speak,
thumb-sized warriors face concrete
struts, the rest twist, turn

towers, clay-wet from the potter’s wheel
then fired unglazed, loom like my father’s shadow
pewtered against the sky

their curved walls
quell and vaporise anger,
cool the whirlpool seethe

chimneys, tapered and tipped, dwarf pylons
whose delicate fretwork webs the air
with frail Egyptian symmetry

in the loft, Jenny sews her quilts silently,
collects soap shaped like shells. Right now
it is those little pleasures that remind you who you are

downstairs, kitchens jut, mornings
leak and pool,
the dog barks at the door

Photograph by Simon Roberts:
‘Ferrybridge Power Station,
Knottingley, West Yorkshire, 2016’
from the series,
Merrie Albion - Landscape Studies of a Small
Island © Simon Roberts /
courtesy Flowers Gallery London