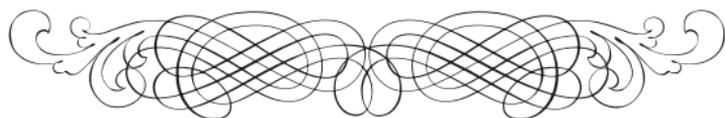


Travellers' Lexicon



Harry Giles

*Written as part of Outriders, a project of the
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**Edinburgh
International
Book Festival**



**The Scottish
Government**
Riaghaltas na h-Alba

Adventure: Journey in which there is an expectation of high return on investment in exchange for high risk of horror.

Airport: Specific form of sovereignty over time and space. Airport light is the light you are given on a wet dawn; airport air is the air that comes packaged in gentle pellets protecting your new.

Aurora: Maybe, if we launch enough rockets on enough columns of fire with enough fine instruments between them, we could learn how to turn these lights off and on, or maybe if you tap your teeth.

Bannock: Unleavened bread whose familiar sounds rest wholly different on your tongue.

Belief: Always respect the gods of the temple, and don't mess with magic you don't understand.

Bush: Small forest, low forest, or forest informally; rainforest or desert; country, the country, the country that it is; what is not the city; what is outside (of).

Camera: Your self seen as if by another,
which is no longer the only way you see
it. (cf. *Mirror*)

Card: Marker of rights including but not limited to admittance, cash and speech; on occasion, literally carried in folded leather next to your literal heart.

Ceremony: That's not for you.

Clear: To remove complications.

Commonwealth: (1) Belonging to everyone. (2) Retaining empire.

Constitution: Your limits. (Roll two dice.)

Cousin: The word unwinds from your fingers onto the keys as if it can carry across ocean, history or pressure differential a thread of meaning.

Crow: Bigger than you are used to, her cry
more human. (cf. *Robin, Sparrow, Steak*)

Design: (1) To remember. (2) To forget.

Discover: To cover.

Diversity: (1) Everyone loves me now but they still want to kill me. (2) Everyone loves me now but I still hate myself.

Empathy: To hold your hand against a lung fire and then to describe with care your particular blisters, aware that these blisters are not the only blisters, and indeed to press, with tenderness, these blisters against another's, and to hold that pain.

Endless: Here you begin to understand how the vastness appeared to someone from an island like yours, five miles by three and each fractal edge of shore with its own name, the few low trees personally known, and you find yourself using untrue words like “endless” and “boundless”, the way your Google Calendar appears to have infinite space for activity where a paper diary would expose your overcommitment in the cramp of its lines; that is, you see in this space that within you which desires expansion, which reads stories on a galactic scale and has always preferred the story of an infinite universe to that of an expanding sphere, and just as everything is determined by what it excludes, you see also the terror and blood of your desire to keep expanding beyond your own skin, while a raven flies over the carriage and the leaning trees continue.

Exhaust: To have nothing left, and to be so full that nothing can enter, and the shallow breath you give off in this state.

Explore: To scout the hunting area for game by means of loud cries, and/or to make to flow outwards. (cf. *Adventure*)

Facebook: Where everything happens.

Farm: To clear enough space to gather
enough light. (cf. *Clear*)

Festival: Cultural form which celebrates certain spheres of migrant labour for the purpose of obscuring others.

First: When you say it, it never is.

Freight: Everyone is behind us pushing us forward.

Golf: (*n*) The erasure of land. (*v*) To declare the erasure of land.

Grain: We hold one hundred and forty thousand tonnes in the complex and can load one thousand tonnes an hour; our gantry leans to the right with courage over the ice.

Gritty: What you become when you write
about a street.

Guilt: Less useful still than his sister
Shame. (cf. *Shame*)

Hello: A performative utterance,
conveying, depending on the melody:
(1) I only speak English; (2) I am asking
whether you speak English; (3) I am
requiring that you speak English; (4) I
have chosen not to learn how to greet
you in the language of this polity.

Hot: CAUTION, may refer to radically different temperatures in different geographies, may cause ice- or sunburn as it coughs from the tap.

Home: Where you claim from, where all
seek to claim, where claims.

Homecoming: Advertising campaign as
philosopher's stone: transforms settler
to tourist.

Hydro: Means of diverting the flows of water and power.

Ice: The clearer the ice, the harder the walking.

Imiqqutailaq: cf. *Pickiterno*.

Immersion: A means of learning a language, of drowning.

Inclusion: (1) You take that land you've won, you dig in, you build your bulwark there, and then you start to expand your territory. (2) And if that's not working, you take out a grenade and put it on that land and blow it up.

Informant: One who gives information to one who does not deserve it.

Insanity: Rejected defence for intense religious (political) resistance.

Lake: Large.

Land: (1) Not merely the surface on which you walk but rather a legally-described frustrum of rights to defence, extraction, travel, support, &c., extending so-and-so feet towards the centre of the earth and outwards from that centre into the atmosphere. Actually, I'm not sure if "up" and "down" are described in relation to the oblate spheroid of Earth or as if said planet were flat; the latter would necessitate yet more conflict, as frustra (frustrums?) would overlap beneath and crack apart above, whereas the former would involve tapering equations from an infinitely narrow point to expansion, expansion, expansion. Then again, whomsoever has rights enough to find out would themselves become the guarantor of such rights, which is to say, they wouldn't have to care.

(2) Where you are free, given respect.

Language: (1) Words which are outside.
(cf. *Bush, Swearing*) (2) Synonym for
land. (3) Precognition. (4) The first
technology of the imperial nation-state.
(5) Synonym for land.

Linguaphagy: You eat what you are.

Manners: A currency that buys time to work out if you're among friends or enemies.

Map: (1) (*n*) Land as videogame. (*v*) To play.
(2) Listen, can you draw how the land appears from the land; can you draw what means, and what new lines will you need?

Marriage: A contractual relation, said contract being emotional, legal, financial, sociopolitical or some combination of the four described by a time-space waveform such that when it is viewed in one temporal locale from another it appears indeterminate, or maldetermined, such that the accuracy of measurement tends towards zero for such qualities as “love”, “ownership”, “family”, “business” and “rape”.

Mirror: Your self seen in reverse, which is
no longer the only way you see it.
(cf. *Camera*)

Museum: History is written by the— No, look, it's more complicated than that. Most of the people I know who work in museums are of the sort we might call “progressive” or “liberal”; that is, they want to move the world forward through an understanding of the past. And so while we can see museums as a primary site of colonial history-making, there is now significant movement for critical curation, seeking to bring different stories into the display. (cf. *Diversity*) This process, however, interfaces with nation, state, church, academy, &c., depending on sources of funding and training, and so the interpretative panel becomes a site of contest; and most frequently in a “progressive” or “liberal” state the fact of the interpretative panel's apparent or declared liberality is itself what gives the authorisation to the state to

continue colonisation. That is, we're nice now, let's keep going. And so any given self-critical cultural text within a liberal sphere, including one such as this which has as its voltage a hard-left critique of liberality, is itself such a justification, and also an attempt to take dominant ownership of any alternative (cf. *Linguaphagy*), and the more critical it becomes the more justified is the state. To acknowledge this is happening, right now, in the moment of writing, of reading, is not to escape. There is no escape. Except to say that there is no escape is itself to reinscribe such a logic: to say there is no outside (cf. *Bush*) is to show you are incapable of stepping through the door. To say there is no door. To organise around the logic of doors. Can an interpretative panel throw the sink through the wall? History is written.

Name: You know these names. One tortured you when you were a child; one held you; one did both. You read them again on street signs, schools, graves. Here the parishes are so much larger. Whose names are these?

Nanuq: You can't help half-believing
you'll still see one, but all you get are
sparrows.

Networking: To ask questions until you know how someone is useful to you.
(cf. *Speiran*)

Open: You want your work to be “accessible”. To whom? Which doors are you closing and which are you opening, and which handles do you have the right to touch? Are you aware of the decisions you’re making with each key stroke? Not everyone can come in, or should: to say you have opened all doors is to hide which doors you have already closed.

Orange: Once, the well-meaning American partner of a well-meaning American cousin asked why you were not wearing orange, because surely Scots were supposed to wear orange on St Patrick's Day. Your jaw sunk slowly and the sounds that emerged were guttural; not knowing what was wrong, he explained that this was what his history teacher had told him, and thus before you could speak you had to wrestle with the newly clear understanding of what is meant by the word "history" and the practice "history" and that it was not what you had first thought. As you pass through museums and history books in this new place you encounter the shade, the word and the symbol again, each time twisting into new forms; as you sit in your brown leather seat in a plexiglass dome waiting for the sun to sink you are waiting for the new meanings' wavelength to scatter.

Philanthropy: A means of advancing (your interests in) society by paying for/off resistance.

Pickiterno: cf. *Imiqqutailaq*.

Politeness: As of hierarchy.

Prestige: These seats are reserved and someone has removed the stickers.

Pride: They target the things that
make you want to be together. The
successfully oppressed person is full of
Shame. (cf. *Shame*)

Romance: Tell me about the lights! The birds! The distance! You know these demands. This is never the story you want to tell. You want to tell how it costs too much to remove a dead machine and so it goes to maggots next to the bruck of several wars. You want to tell how the small interiors of postwar prefabrication are more familiar than stone. You are angry that you cannot talk about the lights because all they see of you is light, and you know the light matters. And now you are here and you want to tell *Aurora, Imiqqutailaq, Snow.*

Realness: (1) Do you carry a card? (2) Do you hunt?

Rights: An illusion cast to preserve maldistribution.

Safe: That which is safe is commodifiable;
that which is commodifiable is safe.
(cf. *Food, Folklore, Fashion*)

Settler: (1) One forced from home. (2) One who forces from home. (N.B. These senses are not mutually exclusive.)

Sext: Reaching out to what seems more straightforward by dint of never having pretended to be straightforward.

Shame: May with grace and care give way
to Freedom From Denial.

Smile: Why do you smile so big and so often and with so little effect, as if you had not taken pliers to every tooth?

Snow: You have not known snow.

Snow: Yes, it appears here pink, blue, brown, grey, white; here luminous, opaque; here a textural rift between snow-over-rock and snow-over-ice which carries a heavy name; here falling, lying; here covering the known name on a grave; here hollowed out for a husky pup and her meat; here under runners and feet; here on trees; here heaped over that which is not needed and cleared from that which is needed; here figure, ground; here.

Solidarity: Neither can we call this a begging of misery, or a borrowing of misery, as though we were not miserable enough of ourselves, but must fetch in more from the next house, in taking upon us the misery of our neighbours.

Speak: cf. *Listen*.

Speiran: To ask questions until you know
how someone is related to you.
(cf. *Networking*)

Square: A more efficient style of surveillance, as it requires minimal manipulation of the chains; additionally, it allows at a maximum four neighbours, and careful rotational plotting enables the elimination of neighbours entirely.

Statue: My friend Paolo taught me a game, “Woman or Concept”, which you can play in any city in order to explore (cf. *Explore*) its political relation to history and present. To play the game, whenever you first see a feminine statue, you must guess whether it represents an actual named woman or an abstract noun (such as “Liberty” or “Britain”). Keep score. This game is also played with race.

Subdivisional: Keep your eyes out for the black and white signs with numbers that you can count; if you miss them check the signals; when we've gone for as long as we can we reset to zero.

Sustainability: Half a mile of neatly stacked logs followed by half a mile of solar panels, some broken, when viewed from a novelty train.

Swearing: Low status language savaging
high status language.

Terra Nullius: To make empty that which
is full.

Tourism: An extractive industry.

Train: Screwdriver, snake, scalpel, &c.:
steel opens everything.

Translate: To remove from one place to another.

Travel: A means of generating content.

Treeline: Here, you can see it. This is the point where trees give up and say, “This is not for me.” The oldest trees are tiny and thin, their hard-won rings packed so tight you’d need a microscope. Tracks cross your tracks. You grew up without trees, but the line was never so clear before. You weave across the barrier at the speed of thirty-two trained feet.

Truth: Everything that is. What is real is true, what is is true.

Walk: I never saw a hill I didn't want to walk up.

We: When you speak, press CTRL-F and type this word. Now, for each highlighted instance, ask yourself to whom this we refers, and what/who sets its boundary. Then press DEL, and rest your fingers lightly on the keys until your god whispers in your ear.

Weight: They carried so many gifted carvings it brought the plane down. They knew they shouldn't have done it but they did it anyway.

What About: The homunculus in your skull who says, when confronted with pain from which you have profited, “But I’m good”, and “I’m hurting”.

WiFi: A tether.

This poem was written for the Outriders project, which sent me on a journey from Montréal to Winnipeg to Churchill, travelling with the writer Katherena Vermette. I was primarily researching language and settler-colonisation, with a particular focus on the role of my home, Orkney, in the colonisation of Manitoba. Thanks to the Edinburgh International Book Festival, who chose me to be one of the five Scottish writers for Outriders. Outriders was supported through the Scottish Government's Edinburgh Festivals Expo Fund. I wrote ongoing reflections, a companion to this poem, at harrygiles.org/categories/outriders.

Taking this journey (which is not over) and writing this work (which is a start) has meant a lot of support and help from many people. Thanks to Cléo Sallis-Parchet and all at the British Council Canada, and to Nick Barley, Jenny Niven, Cat Tyre and Ioannis Kalkounos at EIBF for organising and supporting the project all the way through, plus to Chris DiRaddio, Shelley Pomerance, and Tiphanie Flores at Blue Met / Metropolis Bleu for their hosting. In Montréal, thanks to Natasha Kanapé-Fontaine, Jonathan Lamy, Rachel McCrum and Kai Cheng Thom for brilliant conversations. In

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I take responsibility for these words in this form, but many of these entries draw from words spoken by others to me in conversation or public discussion and should be credited. *Aurora*, *Grain* and *Weight* draw on anecdotes told to me by Bill Calman. *Solidarity* quotes John Donne. *Museum* draws heavily on the academic writing of Dr Darcy Leigh. *Shame* and *Guilt* draw on Layli Long Soldier in conversation with Krista Tippett. *Diversity*, *Inclusion* and *Manners* draw on a public exchange between myself, Ann-Marie Macdonald and Kai Cheng Thom. *Statue* references my collaboration with Paolo Perdicini. *Ceremony*,

Informant, Realness and *Safe* draw on David Treuer in conversation with Duncan McCue. *Card, Facebook, Gritty, Ice, Pride* and *Truth* draw on my conversations with Katherena Vermette.

Though I have written from my own experience, this poem and my approach to the journey was informed extensively by the work of indigenous scholars, artists and activists writing and working in decolonisation and associated fields. My primary encounter with this work is through poetry, fiction and memoir. My reading list during this journey offers one small route into this large and vital field:

Josephine Bacon et al, *Terres de Trickster*
(Possibles 2016)

Leanne Betasamosake Simpson, *This Accident of Being Lost* (Anansi 2017)

Maria Campbell, *Half-Breed* (University of Nebraska 1982)

Ma-Nee Chacaby, *A Two-Spirit Journey* (University of Manitoba 2016)

Gord Hill, *The 500 Years of Resistance Comic Book*
(Arsenal Pulp 2010)

Natasha Kanapé-Fontaine, *Assi Manifesto*
(Mawenzi House 2016)

Layli Long Soldier, *Whereas* (Graywolf 2017)
Hope Nicholson (ed), *Moonshot: the Indigenous Comics Collection* (AH! Comics 2015)
Louis Riel, *The Diaries of Louis Riel* (Flanagan ed., Edmonton 1976)
Walter Scott, *Wendy's Revenge* (Koyama 2016)
David Treuer, *The Translation of Dr Appelles* (Vintage 2008)
Katherena Vermette, *The Break* (Anansi 2016)
Katherena Vermette, *North End Love Songs* (Muses' Company 2012)

This poem is published in 2017, and so I also recommend reading and supporting the work of #Resistance150, a diverse and disruptive project resisting ongoing colonisation.

