

The Encyclopedia of Scotland

ANNIE FINCH's books of poetry include *Eve* (1997), *Calendars* (2003), and a forthcoming translation of the *Complete Poems of Louise Labé*. Her collaborations include the opera libretto *Marina*, which premiered from American Opera Projects with music by Deborah Drattell. She has also written, edited or coedited books on poetics, including *An Exaltation of Forms: Contemporary Poets Celebrate the Diversity of Their Art* and *The Body of Poetry* in the Poets on Poetry Series from the University of Michigan Press.

Books by Annie Finch

Books of Poetry

The Encyclopedia of Scotland: A Libretto (chapbook, 1982)

Catching the Mermother (chapbook, 1996)

Eve (1997)

Season Poems (chapbook, 2001)

Calendars (2003)

The Poems of Louise Labé (translation, 2005)

Books About Poetry

The Ghost of Meter: Culture and Prosody in American Free Verse
(1993)

The Body of Poetry: Essays on Women, Form and the Poetic Self (2005)

As Editor

*A Formal Feeling Comes: Poems in Form by Contemporary
Women* (1994)

After New Formalism (2001)

Perspectives on Carolyn Kizer (with Johanna Keller and Candace
McClelland, 2001)

*An Exaltation of Forms: Contemporary Poets Celebrate the Diversity
of Their Art* (with Kathrine Varnes, 2002)

Lofty Dogmas: Poets on Poetics (with Deborah Brown and
Maxine Kumin, 2005)

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ANNIE FINCH



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by king
out of sea
by sea

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Acknowledgments

A version of *The Encyclopedia of Scotland* premiered in Northampton, Massachusetts in April 1982, performed by Annie Finch (vocals) with the Fiction Music Ensemble: Roy Finch (synthesizers, electronic percussion, tape loops, and vocals), Chris Houston (keyboards, vocals), David Hauer (guitar, banjo, clarinet), Gary Rzab (drums), David Rosten (fretless bass), and Kirsten X (bagpipes), and with Alix Baer (costumes, sets, vocals), Susie Landau (production), Jonathan Miller (photography), and Stephen Pocock (movement, vocals).

An abridged version of the poem was published in 1982 in a limited edition by Caribou Press.

Excerpts from the poem were published in *Fulcrum* (Winter 2004)

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Four Woodcuts: Alix Baer Bacon.

Calliope and the Sheep: line drawing by Annie Finch.



Introduction

The Encyclopedia of Scotland was written during 1980 and 1981. The following year I published a much-abridged chapbook version of the poem and performed it as a musical ritual during 1982 and 1983 with several other readers, masks, costumes, and music by the improvisatory group Fiction Music Ensemble. This edition is the first publication, slightly edited, of the full-length original poem.

More than any other book I have written, *The Encyclopedia of Scotland* embodies a particular place, time, and community. It is a poem of the multimedia art scene based in the Lower East Side of New York at the beginning of the punk era, and also of a group of artists creating a community in an old house on a lake in the Maine woods without roads, electricity, clocks, or running water.

The poem is a pastiche of many voices, written under the influence of Marcel Duchamp, Clifford Geertz, Frank O'Hara, the Greek Anthology, and a collection of victrola records. Some of the threads include found text, overheard conversation, my own earlier poems, poems I painted as visual art projects, works by other poets, and popular songs. One overarching goal of the poem was to create a performative, ritual innocence that didn't take itself too seriously, an alternative to irony in a time that presented irony as the most viable way for art to gain distance from the culture of technology and consumption.

—ANNIE FINCH, June 2004

[Note: All apparent typos are intentional.]

o. Invocation

I saw the Muses winging through the air.

They said "Rust."

They said "Peace."

They said "Quiet."

They said "Peace,

Like under water . . .

. . . But the peace
Under water
Is not like sleep.”
A howling comes. A call comes. Sheep. Sheep. Sheep.

First the rust. Then the quiet.
Then the noise. Then the hearing.
Then the mountains grow,
And then the sheep come flocking.
“The moon is growing flinty now,”
They said with eighteen wings.
“The moon is growing flinty. Dusty. Speak.
You always stop when the ecstasy starts.
You are afraid of your instrument.
You are a-feared. You stop and cry,
'April in Paris, whom shall I turn to,
what shall I do with my heart?
April in Paris, whom shall I turn to?
Don't be too timid, don't be too strong
April in Paris, whom shall I turn to?
Youth is fleeting to the rhythm beating
In your mind, oh my bridle, my bangle, my land,
My husband, my bridle, my bangle, my bride,
Let me pass!' And then you stop.”

Since there's no talk, this seedless rain
Hath ruth nor reck, the touch of it,
Since there's no sound.

Rust. Quiet. Noise, hearing,
Moon growing, flint, dust, speak,
The mind's a knot, the mind's a furrow.
Open in the sun light, and heavy in the rain ;

since there's no talk, the touch of it
hath ruth nor reck, this seedless rain,
since there's no sound. The heart's a knot.

Let the pears bear on their backs,
the mushrooms grow out of the rain,
Let the pears bear out of the water,
the mushrooms grow up to the rain,
Green rain. Peppers, seeds, or pearls,
Those days it comes right out of the ground
or makes itself as it falls or rises, not before.

Pears bear on their backs,
Mushrooms grow out of the water,
Pears bear out of the water,
Mushrooms grow up to the rain,
Green rain, like peppers, or seeds, or pearls,
Those days it comes right out of the ground
or makes itself as it falls or rises, not before.

Trees come to life,
And us be trees.
Us clouds of earth,
Us gray dolphins,
Us clods of earth
at the foot of faded gray stairs.

Then one of the muses, Calliope hent,
Threw back her black hair and around the
Wind-spent sea-drift gan to call
"Pessimistic!" "Dost thou not know?"
What of a night devastated

She the lambs hight Casanova?
Here, in the glen?"

"No," I replied, and the lambs gat hence and spun
Driftings of homage around her heels high;
She returned, drifting, and the sense spun high
"Optimistic! Surely thou know
that best of all possible betters the good
in this best of all possible cat worlds?"

"Thou knowest," I spied.

"The earth is awake." "Come here."

"Through all silence

You have been

AS A RAIN FROM OUT MY WINDOW.

You have sat delicately, rubbing the delicate rain
around your heart."

1. Coals to Newcastle

“do as you would be done by”



