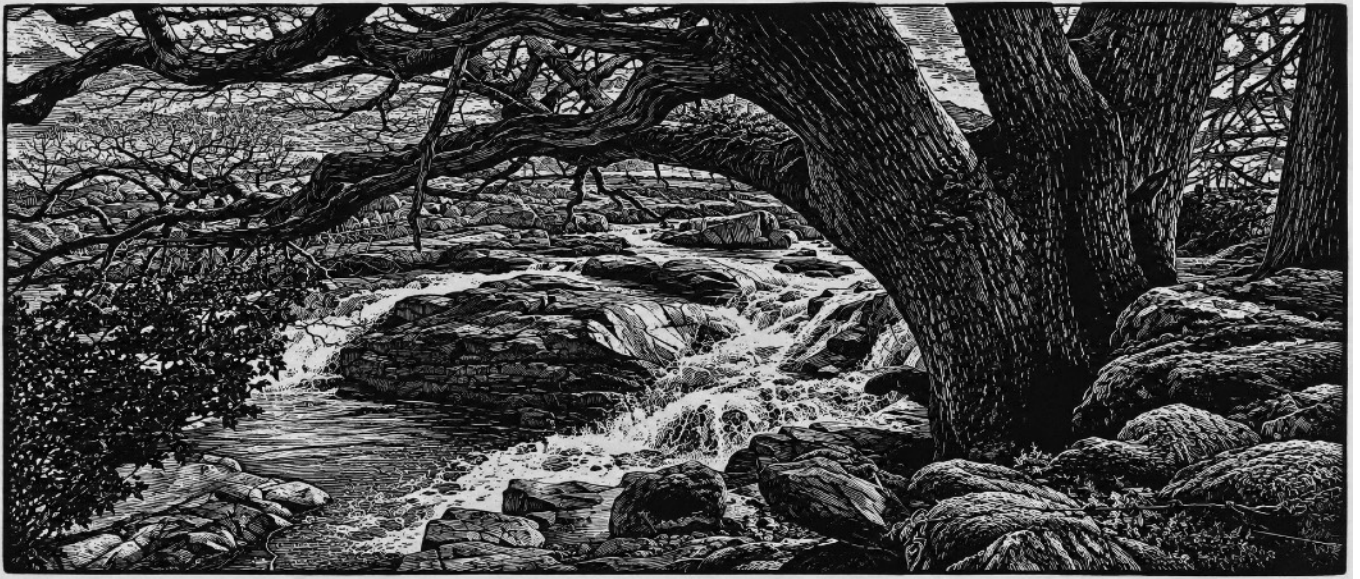


My Grandfather's Burns



He blethered a lot, did Wullie,
about the burns that came from
ahint the Cathkin Braes ran
down through the bluebell woods
ferny hills long grasses
byways with brambling hedges.
Streams rambling underground
surfacing - forced by a scuff
of rain - creating confluences
spreading along streets
winding
down to Burnside then
Ru'glen - once the highest part
of the Clyde's tidal reach.

And he aye told tales of each
of these places: from where Mary,
on her seat, surveyed the defeat of her forces

and, on better days, saw stunning scenes
 across the river and up to the Campsies.
 But viewpoints change. Along came:
 Coal. Steel. Chemicals. Forever
 more he would lament what happened to his
 Jenny's Burn. *Befouled!* An industrial revolution?
 He, along with other White's factory canaries, whistled
 another tune. While they worked. With waste
 turned to ashes and to dust. Chromium dust.
 An explosion shook them all too. He had a shock
 of white hair. *Skaithed*. To the third degree.

A sair fecht, aye. He didn't brag about those burns but –
 he preferred to tell stories of *lang sin syne* when
 great white egrets waded in waters
 clearsome and fine. And he prayed that – by God's grace -
 through all the smoke and haze there'd be a promise
 of better days when *Ru'glen's wee roon*
rid lums widnae reek sae briskly. Natural shades
 would return to his beloved burn.
 And she would rise
 and flow forever. And ever on
 to the Firth of Clyde
 and into the wide wide
 North Atlantic Ocean. Healing and restoring
 on her way. This most ancient of journeys.

Sheena Oo