SCRUB

In recent years, both philosophy and creative writing and publishing practice have taken a turn towards materialisms and materiality, through theorists including Timothy Morton and Jane Bennett, and handmade/home-made forms such as the artist’s book and zine. At the same time, critique and experiment in ‘nature’ and ‘landscape’ poetry led Harriet Tarlo to coin the term ‘radical landscape poetry’ to denote work where ‘the relationship between human beings, their fellow-creatures and the land we live in is under close and scrupulous examination’ (2011: 7).

This project aims to ‘scrupulously examine’ the relationship between ‘scrub’ plants and humans through material poetic practice. ‘Scrub’ is defined as vegetation dominated by shrubs or bushes, forming the margin between grassland or heath and woodland, and in coastal locations. Now recognised as ecologically valuable, it is also seen as ‘invasive’. In built environments, scrub marks the ever-moving border between the human-made and the other-than-human.

‘SCRUB’ draws on Donna Haraway’s ideas of sympoiesis, or ‘making with’, and the performative investigations of practitioners such as Camilla Nelson. It questions notions of human authorship (plants have a role in the making of these poetic pieces) and what constitutes a ‘poem’ (the project spans writing, book-making, cyanotype printing, letterpress, video, seeds). The poetic practice reveals analogous relationships between recommended conservation methods for ‘managing’ scrub – enhancement, maintenance, reduction, elimination – and both the linguistic processes of poetic writing and editing, and material processes of creating the bookworks and prints.

The project’s physical outputs take the form of poetry bookworks and cyanotype prints, which advance the nascent creative fields of radical landscape poetry and language art. These have been selected for exhibition and the National Poetry Library has acquired the limited edition ‘SCRUB management handbook no.1 Mere’ artist’s book for its archive.

Tarlo, Harriet, ed. *The Ground Aslant: An Anthology of Radical Landscape Poetry*. Exeter: Shearsman Books, 2011. Print.