

Into the Wild

POETRY READING WITH CATHERINE SWIRE



Catherine Swire's collection of poems, *Soil*, published by the Artel Press and illustrated by Marina Kolchanova, explores the way that trauma is translated by landscape, specifically that of the Worcestershire, Herefordshire border.

Soil provides maps of walks around trauma-sites to explore local myths and history; also the psychological dislocation of radical loss. In *The Wonder*, the woven and sewn map of a lost site, hanging in a library, overlays the living piled soil of a fifteenth century landslide, once believed to represent apocalypse, now grassed over and silent. *The Maker* uses medieval stained glass-making techniques, and the landscape of Little Malvern, to explore the

performance of sudden loss, through the Priory's representations of the Princes in the Tower. *The Chained Library* looks at the dialogue between the word, trapped and heavy, literally chained to the shelf and the natural beauty of Bishops Field outside. The poem draws attention to the internal machinery of control, censorship and resistance; both the Wycliffite bible and Henry VIII's censors' charcoal book slashing. Catherine works in the landscape that inspired the father of English landscape poetry and dreamscape, Langland; a contemporary of the Gawain poet.

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Biography

Catherine Swire lives on the Malvern Hills with her family and big dog. She reads English at Oxford with a particular interest in Medieval Studies; falling in love with the work of Julian of Norwich, Langland - and the Gawain Poet. She went on to postgraduate study in Canada. Her collection of poems, *Soil*, published by the Artel Press and illustrated by Russian artist, Marina Kolchanova, explores the way that trauma is translated by landscape. Now in their third edition, the poems were featured on Radio 4's *Ramblings* and at Ledbury Poetry Festival where a walk, guided by the sound of a rarely rung fourteenth century bell, recalled the landscape's continuity with its medieval past. Last summer saw an exhibition in Worcester Cathedral of drawings in response to the poems, by landscape artist Bridget Macdonald; her drawings return to the Poetry House in September 2024. Catherine has taught and given talks from the Midlands to North India and led poetry workshops from Kent to the Highlands. Her prize-winning book of prose and poetry, *Flame, Ash, Feather* will be published by Black Spring Press in March 2024.