

MinnMouth is a collaborative multimedia project conceived by Alec Finlay, considering the crucial issues of renewable energy, rising sea levels, and linguistic diversity. Finlay's place-aware approach will encourage a broad audience from Shetland to London to consider relationships with the sea, integrating different dialogues to enrich the discussion and frames of reference in the climate change debate, envisaging a future in which potential catastrophe is transformed into inspiring challenge.

The book features Finlay's most ambitious poem sequence to date, inspired by coastal toponyms/hydronyms. Place-names introduce the themes of coastal erosion, navigation, sea lore, and marine energy; linguistic archaeology reveals the energy latent in the tides; and mytho-poetics predicts renewable technology – whirlpools, and sunken quern (hand-mills) become gyring turbines.

Finlay defines current research into marine renewable energy in Orkney, Shetland, and Caithness as *avant-garde*, recognizing the ingenuity of engineers. *MinnMouth* updates the localized experimental knowledge so crucial in terms of Scottish ideas, offering a definitive contemporary expression of this tradition, and contributes to his significant body of work contextualizing marine renewables culturally.

MinnMouth is the first multi-dialect text published in the UK. It features East Coast dialects from Shetland to Suffolk, with glossaries and English translations, ensuring the work is accessible, educative, and entertaining. It extends *Ebban an' Flowan's* unique perspective on marine renewables, connecting folklore and energy generation, through maritime dialect expressions from Scandinavian and British languages. The poems describe different community's relationship with the coast – powerful seas, dangerous reefs, safe harbours – and celebrate the potential of energy technology to renew these relationships. Our survival depends upon it.

The new poems draw on research into Russian Futurist poetry and its use of neologism, archaism, and dialect: using phonetic transcription, the poems render archaic terms in contemporary accents, creating a hybrid text that celebrates cultural adaptation and technological transformation.

Sample poem in Shetlandic from *MinnMouth*:

BANNA MINN, *TETHER MOUTH*

Burra teddirt
bya sandy rib)
puckerin da lip
skoarnin da bod

soondsa mooth
nammās th childers
murmurashen

needfu fir mynnye

Translation: Burra, tethered by a sandy tombolo, puckering the lip, imitating the waves – sound is a mouth, and amma [mother] is the children’s discontented murmuring, needful for their mum.

Note: Banna Minn is a tombolo connecting Kettle Ness to the rest of Burra, Shetland. **Band**, N. band or fetters; **band**, Sc, string together; tether, bond. **Minni**, **mynni**, ON, **mijin**, Sh, mouth of a stream, inlet; **munnr**, the mouth, from PIE *ment-. **Minn**, **mijn**, Sc, **minni**, Sh, the mouth, a child's word. **Mynnye**, OSc, mother, said to be a child’s instinctive utterances; also a bay or inlet, sound or strait. **Teddirt**, OrN, tethered. **Skoarn**, Sh, imitate someone. **Bod**, Sh, onward motion of waves. **Soond**, Sc, sound. **Mooth**, Sc, mouth. **Childer**: Sc, children. **Amma** (Ind), mother. **Murmurashen**, Sh, discontented muttering. **Needfu**, OrN, needy for.

Finlay recently gave keynotes on renewables and art at the University of Bath, CHAT archaeology conference (Orkney), and Energy Ethics (DJCAD, Dundee). This grant will allow him to blog these ideas on *skying*, the first multimedia blog surveying renewable energy, culture, and landscape, featuring poets, artists, landscape designers, and meteorologists, which Finlay initiated in 2010, and present these issues in new ways, translating the ideas of energy experts into layperson’s terms:

tidal energy is moored to the moon

a tidal device must float – but leave off being a boat

it's not the median tide but the storm that will finally decide

estimate : 10,000 sites worldwide suitable for generating from the tide

(from Ebban an’ Flowan)

In *MinnMouth* Finlay envisages a new ‘tidal theory’ of poetics, characterising dialect as energised language, promulgating the relationship between localism, culture, and energy solutions.

a poem should emerge from the sea of locality

dialect is an energy resource

poetics is a conception of Nature embodying the tide of Time

poets can be divided into those who conceive the wave as a word and those who conceive it as a phoneme

a word's potential energy is not defined by meaning alone

the poem is a device for transferring energy

The work connects Synthetic Scots (MacDairmid), and Shetlandic poems (Robert Alan Jamieson), with younger poets, such as Harry Giles (a contributor to the book), and extends the creative dialogue between regions and dialects, supporting marginal communities and endangered expressions. It values the breadth and longevity of indigenous knowledge: *"We don't know what kind of knowledge and experience will enable us to be more in tune with the changes the environment is throwing up – however, experience in other parts of the world are demonstrating the value of indigenous knowledge. In the Pacific for example, islanders are long familiar with a history of coastal change and have the navigational skills to be able to cope in different ways than those being suggested by the more technocratic engineering solutions proposed in the west"* (Veronica Sekules).

The book also contains *TidePoem*, a suite of adventurous visual poems, in colour, featuring key linguistic elements – minn, skerry, ness, geo, ebb, etc, – which reveal linguistic origins. This material is extended by *TideSong*, a refulgent 'tidal' vocal composition by Hanna Tuulikki, exploring the relationship between poetry and composition, written and sounded text.

Tuulikki will develop and perform *TideSong* with Lucy Duncombe, an emerging Glasgow-based vocalist, composer and regular collaborator. For this project, Tuulikki will mentor Duncombe in practical aspects of production.

TideSong is inspired by sea-related words – Norse, Norn, Scots and Anglo-Saxon – from Finlay's text. Sung and spoken sounds will play with sonic semblances, moving between recognisable words and abstract vocalizations, hinting at phonemes and proto-language. Dialect comes over more effectively when sounded – spoken or sung – and the composition will integrate elements of the poems, performed by Finlay.

TideSong furthers Tuulikki's investigation of place, mnemonic topography, and mimetic voice as musical expression, and, by extending and manipulating the vocals with electronic technology (TC Helicon), for the first time Tuulikki will blend multiple voices in a live context. Overlays will suggest energy through cross-dissolving languages, blending oscillating intervals in waves of undulating sound. This new technological approach achieves the same complexity and 'fullness' of Tuulikki's ensemble work, with restricted means. This will be the first composition she has performed at a City of Culture venue (Hull), and a leading London venue (Southbank Centre), reaching new audiences.

Film, projections of *TidePoems* and images of bays and river mouths will enhance the performances, and the three performers will wear fisherman's ganseys (jumpers) produced on Orkney.

Finlay and Tuulikki's collaborative vinyl-LP will feature in the exhibition and be sold at the venues. Extracts of the film and recordings will be available online. The music will be recorded at Mareel (Shetland) with sound engineer Tim Matthew.

The exhibition will also feature audio and related poem objects by Finlay, including cups and saucers displaying sea bays, river mouths, derived from the place-names the poems describe, and, outdoors, street signs with the same names, partially obscured as if by flooding. The artworks are to be produced at Peacock Visual Arts (Aberdeen) using their fabrication technology and skills, and on Orkney.

Summary of exhibition and performance venues:

1. Exhibition and performance: curated by Steven Bode (Film and Video Umbrella), for Hull 2017 City of Culture, celebrating the unique character of the city and its geography. *MinnMouth* will include local place-names and dialect.
2. Exhibition and performance: sea-themed group exhibition at GroundWork gallery curated by Veronica Sekules, King's Lynn, whose programme responds to the changing environment with great impact and public interest, in summer 2018 to coincide with the King's Lynn festival. *MinnMouth* will include local place-names and dialect, along with two additional audio artworks funded separately.
3. Potential exhibition and performance: Mareel, Shetland, awaiting for confirmation.
4. Potential event, residency, performance or exhibition: NorthLight Festival, Dunbar, awaiting confirmation depending on funding.
5. Potential event, residency, performance or exhibition: Hospitalfield, Arboath. Finlay will meet with Lucy Byatt in December 2016 to discuss what form this would take.
6. Potential performance: the Nordic Cultural Project 2017 at Southbank Centre London, unconfirmed.

Finlay and Tuulikki will also give public lectures and readings on aspects of the work at the exhibition and performance venues, including Peacock Visual Arts (Aberdeen) and, potentially Northlight, Dunbar.

Finlay will work with Scottish designers StudioLR, to ensure the *MinnMouth* book and LP packaging combines inventive design, typographical clarity, and a generous explanation of the issues, which affect us all.

It is crucial Finlay and Tuulikki are supported so they can make thought-provoking work that reaches a broad audience and raises awareness, in a spirit of critical investigation, inspiring society to make change happen. Their skills in creating ambitious multimedia and cross-art collaborative artworks will engage people through a variety of platforms. The combination of the well-designed illustrated book, free audio, and vinyl-LP is the ideal way for readers and listeners to experience *MinnMouth's* combination of dialect poetry and song. The blog adds a diaristic and time-responsive aspect, while the integrated performances of poetry and song allow audiences to be immersed in a coastal sound world.

Working on *MinnMouth* and *TideSong* will be extremely beneficial to the artists and the creative team in terms of this work of international significance. It will also promote one of the most important technologies for our era to a new audience, in a poetic and informative way, increasing understanding of the role Scottish island communities are playing in the struggle to avert climate change.