

14<sup>th</sup> August 2020

## Sky

**"I long for scenes where man hath never trod  
A place where woman never smiled or wept  
There to abide with my Creator God  
And sleep as in my childhood sweetly slept,  
Untroubling and untroubled where I lie  
The grass below, above, the vaulted sky."**

*John Clare, I am*

On a holiday with friends on the islands of Lewis and Harris in Scotland's Outer Hebrides, we dropped in on an artist's studio. Like all the artist's I've ever known, the man we met wasn't perturbed by the interruption – I suspect because he was also looking after the adjacent gallery in his wife's absence and had the chance to sell some of his paintings – and he was happy to chat about his work. He'd come up to the far north west of Scotland a few years before ("from the big city", he said, though he never did reveal which one) and had been painting most days for several years. We asked him why. Stretching his hand in an arc across the floor-to-ceiling window of the front of his studio he said, with emotion in his voice, "It's the light! Just look at that! The sea and the sky are always changing. And the light is so pure. How could you ever tire of what's out there?"

Walking by Port Seton harbour the other day I recalled these words, For across the Forth, at the end of a glorious day, there was a big sky, a wide expanse of water and the last vestiges of the setting sun. The light, the sea and the sky ... "How could you ever tire of what's out there?"

Today is my birthday. So I hope that, like the 19<sup>th</sup> century English poet, John Clare, I can look again at "the vaulted sky" and be "untroubling and untroubled" in my life, even for a short time. I promise I will pause a while in the presence of my Creator God and give thanks for another year of life. And even with so much that causes me sometimes to be fearful and downcast, I will look up at my sky, and, with an unnamed Hebridean artist, ask again, "How could you ever tire of what's out there?"

### **A prayer for today**

*The grass beneath us and the sky above us; the light upon us and the air around us;  
the love within us and the truth beside us ... thanks be to God. Amen.*

*An original reflection by © Tom Gordon  
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