



The Silent Skin

Field Notes on Stone, Sediment and Formative Force

My research begins with a simple observation: what we experience as solid is fluid on a geological timescale. Rock appears as a temporary configuration of forces within a continuum of energy and matter.

In Ireland, among the rocks of Achill Island and the Dalradian formations, this insight became physically tangible. What was once horizontal sand on an ocean floor was folded, tilted and rearranged under pressure and heat. Sand became quartzite; mud became schist. What had lain loose became crystalline and coherent.

The stone has been reorganised.

What appears to be fracture proves to be reordering.

What appears to be a fold is memory in material form.

I read these processes both as geological history and as manifestations of what I call formative force: matter's organising capacity to take on form, establish coherence and rearrange itself under the influence of pressure, rotation, differences in temperature and time. I regard formative force primarily as a morphological principle: a way of understanding how matter organises, preserves and transforms itself beyond strictly physical frameworks.

In Ireland, this formative force was consolidated into crystalline resistance. Yet it was not confined to geology alone. The megalithic sites also reveal how human beings related to this matter: by reading stones, moving them, raising them and orienting them. The megalith thus

constitutes a human inscription within the world of stone — a place where matter also becomes a bearer of orientation, ritual and memory.

Here, stone acquires a new function. It is not only the ash of stars, but also the place where this earthly matter is realigned with the living stars above us: with light, solstice, direction and rhythm. In the megalith, stone, formed from stardust, returns to a conscious relationship with the heavens.

Rotation is essential to this. It creates rhythm, duration and coherence. What becomes visible in galaxies as orbit, rhythm and cohesion returns on Earth as a related grammar of ordering: direction, duration, pressure and form. Here, the text touches upon the ancient principle of *as above, so below*: not as dogma, but as an intuition that the same organising tendencies manifest themselves on different scales. The elements of which this stone consists were formed in stars. In this sense, the ground beneath our feet is a tangible archive of what once occurred above. The rocks at Cathedral Rock are the condensed ash of extinguished stars: a material remembrance of a cosmic fire that has turned inward within the stillness of quartz.

Within the series, the megalithic images form an intermediate space. They reveal a passage: from natural stone to oriented stone, from landscape to ritual ordering, from matter to threshold. These images show how human beings do not stand outside formative force, but continue its work by carrying stones, orienting them, raising them and connecting them with horizon, water, sun and memory.

The drumlins of Clew Bay form a key element in this. These hundreds of small islands, left behind by melting glaciers, are movements turned to stone. When sea levels rose and the land was inundated, only the summits of these hills remained above water as islands. Within these elongated ridges of glacial sediment — a mixture of sand, gravel and clay — flow has been recorded as landscape. They form a connection between rock and soil, between primal force and deposition, between mass and direction.

Deeper still in time, Achill carries another memory. The Dalradian formations contain traces of the Cryogenian, the period during which ice may have reached even into the Earth's tropical regions. Tillites and glaciomarine deposits reveal how even the planet as a whole was subject to formative force. Ice, sea, pressure and time inscribed their own grammar into matter. Achill thus becomes not only a landscape of folding and crystalline resistance, but also a bearer of primordial ice: a silent skin in which the memory of an almost entirely frozen Earth remains present.

Opposed to this deep, hardened time stands Zeeland as a younger, softer body. In Zeeland, the same formative force appears in a fluid state: clay, mudflats and tides — matter rewritten each day by currents. Where quartzite resists, clay absorbs. Zeeland is a continent of sediment. Where the megalith concentrates, the tidal landscape disperses. Yet these do not represent opposites, but different states of a single process.

It is a body that has repeatedly changed its form since the last Ice Age: sandy plain, peat marsh, tidal region, polder, field, harbour, oyster ground, sea defence. Here, formative force does not

become visible as folding or crystallisation, but as repetition: the coming and going of water, the settling of silt, the subsidence of clay, and the breaking and restoration of dykes.

Where Achill reveals the Earth as consolidated pressure, Zeeland shows it as an ongoing negotiation. Nothing here remains fixed for ever. In the Drowned Land, in tidal creek ridges, salt marshes and mudflats, the memory of vanished habitation persists as a layer beneath the surface. What was washed away did not disappear entirely; it changed its form.

Human interventions, too, are absorbed into this dynamic. Harbour piles, shipwrecks, oyster beds, dykes and storm-surge barriers become interwoven with tides, sedimentation, erosion and time. They bear witness to the human attempt to give direction to water and time. Zeeland thus becomes Achill's softer counterpart: a body of clay; an earth that breathes, sinks, accretes and preserves.

Within *The Silent Skin*, fixed boundaries between nature and culture, science and spirituality begin to dissolve. The work does not propose a conclusive theory, but asks for a shift in the way we perceive. In rock, consolidated pressure appears; in drumlins, movement brought to rest; in megaliths, concentrated human orientation; and in Zeeland, a landscape of continual rewriting, tides, use and residual forms.

For me, Zeeland is also more than a landscape. It is a walk along the shores of my existence, a region in which personal history, matter and memory flow into one another. Here, memory is contained not only in clay and tide, but also in lived experience, in loss and return.

Within this work, Ireland activates a different movement: a search for origins, but also for meaning. It was precisely at megalithic sites, stone circles and tombs that meaning was given to the passage between life and death. It is this intermediate world that fascinates me: the zone in which stone and consciousness, landscape and memory, loss and form touch one another.

Stone appears in this work as the silent skin of a living Earth. From folded quartzite to drumlin, from megalith to harbour pile, a kinship of form unfolds. What appears in one landscape as crystalline resistance returns in the other as sedimentary absorption, erosion, traces of use and rewritten time.

Stone as movement brought to rest reveals that landscape continues to work within us. The megalith, the drumlin and the harbour pile become markers within a field of becoming, in which human metamorphosis and the formative force of the Earth mirror one another.

What is silent, forms.

What forms, preserves.

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