



# Midway: Letters from Ian Hamilton Finlay to Stephen Bann 1964-69

*Ian Hamilton Finlay*

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Ian Hamilton Finlay (1925–2006) was one of Scotland's leading twentieth-century public intellectuals, and famously one of its most brilliant and combative correspondents. His letters raise issues of particular and widespread interest both within Scotland and further afield. His correspondence with Stephen Bann, the English poet and academic, have a very special place in this context. These letters present in a clear and commensurable form the development of his ideas about poetry and art, and increasingly about sculpture and gardening, over this critical five-year period of his creative life.

The letters begin when Bann was still a student at Cambridge, and Finlay was living in considerable hardship in Edinburgh, though he already had a significant international reputation as a poet. They reveal in fascinating and intimate detail the poet's developing creative process, and also record his often turbulent relationship to the worlds of literature, art, and critical journalism. When he settles in Lanarkshire, he begins to develop the ideas that will result in the creation of the world-famous sculpture garden known as Little Sparta.

This book, edited, introduced, and annotated by Bann himself, is a unique and compelling self-portrait of the man who is now recognized not only as a great poet, but also as a major artist and one of the most original garden designers of modern times.

**Stephen Bann** is a poet, historian, and cultural critic. He is an emeritus professor of the history of art at Bristol University, and the author of numerous books and articles.

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