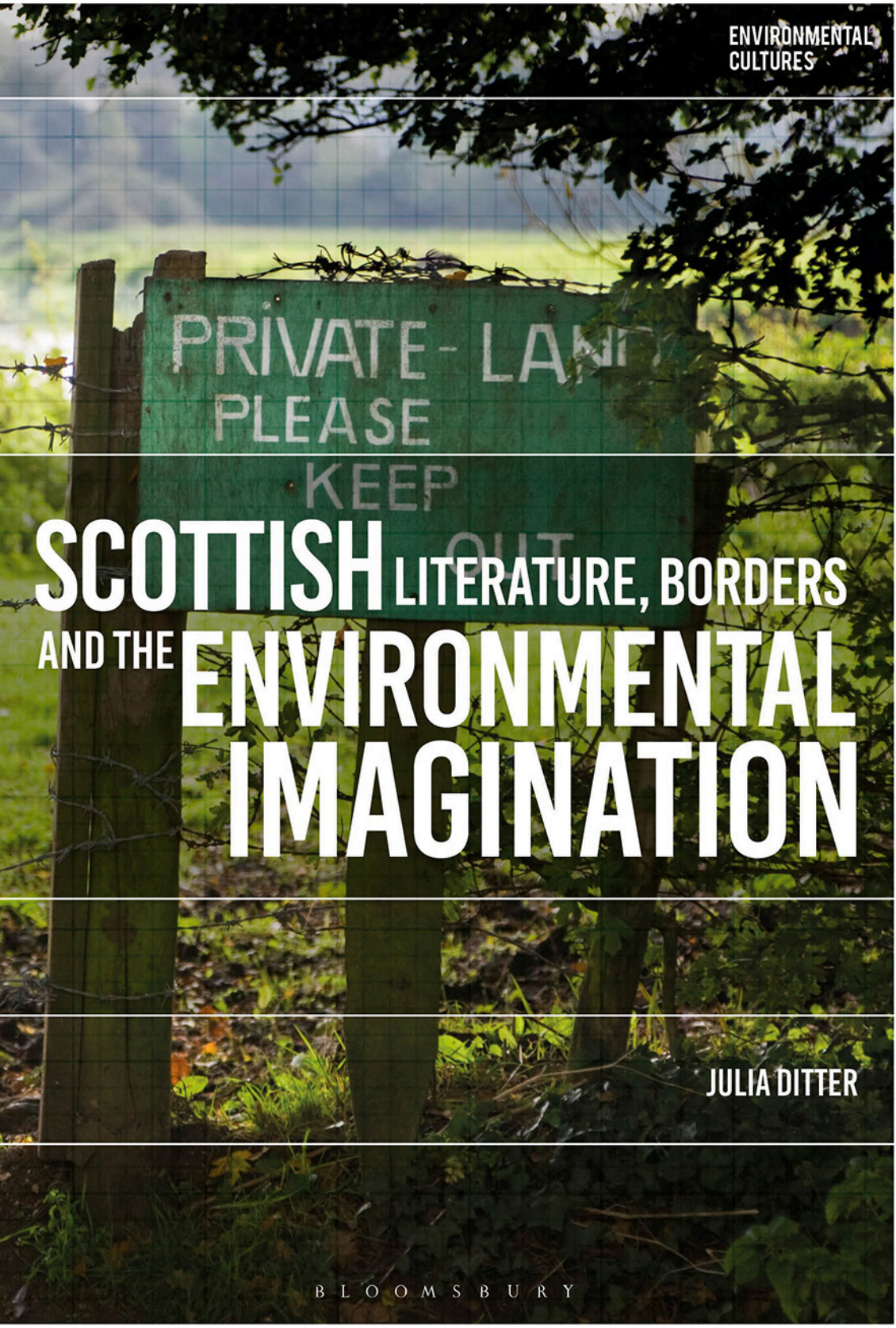

SCOTTISH LITERATURE, BORDERS AND THE ENVIRONMENTAL IMAGINATION

JULIA DITTER

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Scottish Literature, Borders and the Environmental Imagination

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1

Introduction

In the UK as elsewhere, the 2020 Covid-19 crisis threw into relief pre-existing social, cultural and political fault lines, and created new ones. Not only did the virus rapidly and easily cross national borders, but the subsequent border closures all over Europe served to remind even the most privileged individuals that national borders never disappeared but may be (re)activated at any time.[1] The Covid-19 crisis overlapped with the transition period of the UK's withdrawal from the European Union which ended in January 2021, after which the full effect of Britain's reinforced borders, including its inner-British borders, could be felt. The pandemic exacerbated a pre-existent sense of dissatisfaction with political leadership in Britain. As Dan Haverty and Amy McKinnon argue, the mismanagement of the Covid-19 pandemic by the Conservative government in Westminster gave 'further impetus to the Scottish independence and Irish unification movements' (2020). When Nicola Sturgeon announced that she would consider quarantining visitors to Scotland, Boris Johnson's response that 'there is no such thing as a border between England and Scotland' was not received well in Scotland, where the possibility of holding another Independence Referendum was consequently heatedly debated.[2] The acute presence of borders is continually brought back to our attention by events such as these which highlight the differential vulnerabilities of human and non-human bodies and the violence involved in border regulations. At the same time, the world is facing an environmental crisis of unprecedented proportions, a crisis that is not independent of but intricately connected to border politics as the effects of climate change will forcefully turn ever more people into migrants.[3] At a time when we are simultaneously facing a multifaceted crisis of borders and an environmental crisis, the intricate connections between which have been illuminated starkly through the Covid-19 pandemic, the examination of the interdependencies between bordering processes and environmental concerns deserves urgent attention.

The large output of creative works in the first few months of the pandemic demonstrates how important literature and the arts are in providing narratives through which we can understand and cope with crises.[4] Understanding the connections between borders and the environment is equally a matter not only of politics but of the imagination. According to Johan Schimanski and Stephen Wolfe, theories and practices of border crossing reveal 'borders as zones of instability in which ethical, political, cultural and national questions are negotiated' (2007, 9). Literary texts have the potential to explore these questions creatively through imaginative border crossings and the creation of textual zones of instability. Creative works from late 2010s and early 2020s, such as Sarah Hall's *The Wolf Border* (2015), John Lanchester's *The Wall* (2019) and Ali Smith's *Spring* (2019), not only displayed the vital connection between borders and the environment but also highlighted the special affordances offered by the inclusion of a Scottish context for thinking through the correlation between borders and the environment. The crossing of the Anglo-Scottish border by the wolves around which the plot of *The Wolf Border* revolves is one of the key moments in the novel and, according to Timothy Baker, achieves the elimination of borders by offering 'a new form of political thinking based not on parties and policies, but on a rejection of categorisations' (2016, 264). Lanchester's *The Wall*, set at different sections of a gigantic wall built to save mainland Britain from rising sea levels, imagines Scotland as a 'site of border mobility', the only location 'where the institutionalized boundaries of the nation-state are temporarily undermined' in the novel (Sandrock 2020, 173). Ali Smith's *Spring* (2019) is the third instalment of her seasonal quartet which, as a whole, is attuned to the correlation between borders and the environment and its manifold layers. It is the only novel of the quartet partly set in Scotland and the elusive Anglo-Scottish border takes on a symbolic significance. Not only can the refugee girl Florence not see the border, but she can also cross it without consequence, which leads her to muse on the idea of borders as contact zones that connect rather than divide places. While Britain/England is hostile to migrants and would prefer to wall itself in, Scotland is presented as a friendlier and more welcoming place. It is in the Cairngorms that the protagonists of the novel come to meet, and it is in Scotland that refugees receive help and assistance from an organization calling themselves the Auld Alliance.

As exemplified by these works, Scotland offers a distinct focus to approach the correlation between borders and the environment from a contemporary point of view. Historically, too, both concerns have long been considered as

entrenched in Scottish identity, literature and culture. Throughout this book, I examine the potential vantage points and trajectories Scottish literature can offer for a revaluation of the dominant frameworks underlying the relationship between borders and the environment. Focusing on Scottish literary responses to borders and environmental discourses from 1800 to the present day, I explore how literary texts are able to shift the dominant parameters used to define both bordering processes and the environment by thinking them through Scotland. I will suggest that looking at borders and the environment as forms articulated in literary works that think *through* Scotland rather than *from* or *about* Scotland offers a new practice of reading that can shed light on the complex relationship between borders, the environment and literature. The creative possibilities of literature and the specific affordances of a Scottish context enable Scottish literary works to play through and imagine the manifold interdependencies between bordering processes and environmental concerns. Henk van Houtum proposes that '[m]aking a border, demarcating a line in space is a collaborative act' and that '[t]he interpretation and meaning of borders is always open for reforms and transforms' (2011, 60). Literary texts, similarly, are collaborative and communal: they create meaning by entering into dialogue with their readers and with one another. By looking at three different literary forms mobilized by writers, the littoral, planetarity and territory, I explore how writers from the nineteenth century to the present draw on Scotland's geographical, environmental and political situation to shed light on how borders function and suggest how they might be remade. The literary texts selected probe dominant bordering structures by entering into conversation with the Scottish environment and provide multifaceted perspectives on borders that recognize both the opportunities and the limitations of reading them environmentally. They consider borders as constructs built on our visions of the world which can consequently be remade, first and foremost through a shared imagination.

Structure of this book

I begin this book by outlining how a dialogue between border studies and ecocriticism can be established through a new formalist methodology which will provide the basis for my argument that Scottish literature can vitally contribute to disentangling theoretical challenges and deadlocks related to the study of the relationship between borders and the environment. For this purpose, Chapter 2 will provide an overview of these theoretical fields, their main concepts and

methodologies, and suggest how they can be made to productively inform one another. Here I particularly consider potential pitfalls and challenges that come with considering borders and the environment in their relation, specifically in the context of essentialist conceptions of Nature. Not only can the study of borders benefit from the premises of deconstructive ecocriticism which calls into question more abstract borders such as those between human and non-human while also valuing the indispensability of borders as contact zones, but a more thorough understanding of bordering processes may also shed new light on some of the theoretical problems raised by deconstructive ecocriticism by addressing the multifarious functions, imaginations and orderings that are at work in all forms of borders, including those of interest to ecological thought. Integrating the interdisciplinary approaches of border studies and current ecocritical theory reveals how border narratives and their conceptualizations of power and ethics may be of interest to environmental studies. It also highlights the ability of the environment to underwrite and reinforce or to contest and subvert the representation of the border. Following these paths and highlighting theoretical impasses and challenges will allow me to demonstrate how literary studies, and Scottish literary works, provide a productive avenue to prompt a questioning of the basic premises and paradigms underlying present cross-disciplinary understandings of borders and Nature. Building on this overview, the chapter highlights the potential of using Caroline Levine's (2015) new formalist methodology to establish a productive interdisciplinary dialogue and finally considers the unique affordances of Scottish literature for examining the relationship between borders and the environment.

The three analysis chapters that follow identify three central 'ancillary' literary forms mobilized by writers to address the relationship between borders and the environment by thinking them through Scotland, the littoral, planetarity and territory, and detail their respective affordances. This organization into chapters is to be understood as a make-shift arrangement to allow me to address each form in detail rather than a clear-cut conceptual division between the literary forms in question. As will become clear by the end of this book, literary forms, despite their ordering function, resist such clear b/orderings in actual narratives in which they continually overlap, collide, clash or flow into one another.

Each analysis chapter begins by outlining current theoretical debates to assess the role that literary form might play and to open a dialogue between theory and literature. After defining each ancillary form, the specific affordances of thinking these forms through Scotland are addressed through what I call critical

vignettes: short discussions of literary texts that mobilize the forms in question from a decidedly Scottish context. The selection of texts for these vignettes is not exhaustive but merely serves to indicate certain trends in Scottish literature and to encourage readers to draw connections with additional texts that they have read in the form of an open-ended process. By examining texts from different periods in the vignettes, I do not want to suggest a teleological development of these forms across time so much as I want to examine how these forms resonate with writers in different periods and may occur in a variety of textual configurations.

Chapter 3 focuses on a littoral form of writing that is characterized by an amphibious aesthetic which captures the materiality of the transitional zone between water and land. In this chapter, I examine the literary affordances of Scotland's littoral zones for an environmental reimagination of borders of all kinds, from the national, to the cultural, to the borders of the human body. In Scotland, the intersection between political borders and littoral zones enables a special engagement with the littoral in the context of borders and allows writers to reimagine them through an engagement with terraqueous materiality. Drawing on the ontological instability of littoral zones allows the literary works discussed in this chapter to explore and transform borders by highlighting them as conceptually and geographically unstable and shifting constructs, even as they address their very real political effects.

In Chapter 4, I explore planetarity as an aesthetic form that captures the challenges of the Anthropocene by embracing the contradictory, irresolvable and sometimes unsettling aspects of planetary realities that resist being ordered into neat categories. The writers discussed in this chapter can be seen to think planetarity from within. Treating the notion of Scotland as peripheral and parochial as an affordance, rather than a limitation, their literary works show that the planetary should always be considered in conjunction with the local. By accessing the planetary through their local ecological, cultural and temporal contexts, they explore the role of human bordering in light of the incommensurability of thinking along planetary lines.

Finally, Chapter 5 looks at the form of territory, a form that has been regarded as fundamental to any understanding of human borders. The idea of land, both in an environmental and a political sense, is a historically complicated one in Scotland which makes Scotland an ideal context in which to explore the form of territory. By exploring territory both discursively and formally, the writers in this chapter probe at the ideational foundations of territory as a literary, material and

socio-political form. By rethinking territory from an environmental perspective, they develop a new understanding of territory, one of the most fundamental bordering concepts of human spatial practice. Rather than idealistically presenting a borderless world, they critically engage with territory by presenting an alternative vision that takes into account the enmeshment of territorial practices in more-than-human realities.

2

Conversations across disciplinary boundaries

Border studies and ecocriticism: challenges and potential

David Newman argues that border studies experienced a 'renaissance' in the final decade of the twentieth century, providing a counter-discourse to the notion of a borderless world which emerged in the light of postmodern and globalization theories (2006, 1). These new border studies, according to van Houtum, have adopted postmodern strategies of reading borders from a perspective that is decidedly 'anti-deterministic, anti-essentialistic and not focused on the line per se' (2005, 673). A central element in this new interest has been a move away from problematic distinctions drawn between 'natural' and 'non-natural' borders, which, according to van Houtum, were conventionally mapped onto an ethical hierarchy between 'good' and 'bad' borders (2005, 675). As a result, the notion of the natural border has been contested and borders today are no longer categorized according to an assumed stability or 'naturalness' but are instead seen as complex, multidimensional and dynamic constructs that are not limited to territorial demarcation practices.[1] Along these lines, border studies not only started to focus on bordering practices by reading the border as verb (see van Houtum 2005, 672) but they have also moved away from an exclusively state-centred view in which the national border is the primary object of interest. As Newman argues, borders have a fundamental influence in structuring our daily lives even outside the political arena (2006, 14). Border studies, even more so after the introduction of the 'lines in the sand agenda' of critical border studies (see Parker and Vaughan Williams 2009), can be seen to extend their interests towards multiple levels of 'b/ordering' (see van Houtum, Kramsch and Zierhofer 2005), and to take into consideration the intersection between territorial, political, social, temporal and other boundaries. While the move away from nature in the context of border studies has been a necessary move, it has also

meant a rejection of investigations into the correlations between bordering processes and environmental concerns.

When Newman praises the increasing interdisciplinarity of border studies in 2006, environmental studies, ecocriticism, literary and cultural studies are not among the list of involved disciplines. Since then, critical border studies has emerged as a distinctive approach within border research that examines borders beyond their territorial location. This new direction of border research pays attention to how borders shift over time, the representations that govern their construction, and highlights ethical considerations of bordering processes and border regimes (see Parker and Vaughan-Williams 2009; Brambilla 2015; Cooper 2020).[2] Similarly, considerations of environmental factors in bordering processes have gained more attention along several axes of analyses, including the effects of borders on animal migration (Tautz and Rothhaar 2012; Oppermann 2017; Ullrich and Middelhoff 2021), the need to rethink borders in the context of climate change (Casey 2020), and to reconceptualize 'natural borders' in relation to environmental conservation (Fall 2002, 2011). At the same time, anthropocentric distinctions between nature and culture are so deeply ingrained in scholarly practice that they frequently prove hard to overcome. In their introductory text to borders, Diener and Hagen describe nature 'as the most pervasive of border crossers' (2012, 84) and argue that 'even the most rigid of borders are regularly traversed by seasonal migrations of animals or by seeds and insects dispersed through wind and water' (2012, 86). However, as Serpil Opperman's study of non-human climate refugees demonstrates, animals cannot escape material bordering effects completely even though they have been excluded from wider discourses of migration (2017, 3). Even though Diener and Hagen take care to highlight that the dividing line between species and natural phenomena is 'rarely, if ever, clear and absolute' (2012, 86; 19–20), their discussion of territoriality re-establishes a stable dividing line by oversimplifying animal territoriality, eclipsing non-human agency and presenting human territoriality as supposedly more sophisticated. The clear distinction between human bordering and animal territories or bioregions that forms the basis of this argument is especially striking because it runs counter to the general tenet of their work which presents human borders as dynamic constructs that are themselves anything but 'clear and absolute'. The contradictions that arise in Diener and Hagen's discussion of the connection between borders and the environment are representative of the challenges inherent in developing an environmental theory of borders when bordering has traditionally been treated as a practice exclusively relevant to the realm of

culture and the human experience. The fact that anthropocentric assumptions continue to influence border studies' conceptions of bordering practices highlights the necessity of thinking about new ways of theorizing borders by entering into productive dialogue with the environmental humanities.

While the influence of bordering on the environment has been acknowledged more widely in scholarship and public debate, especially with regard to wildlife, the reverse, that is the influence of the environment on bordering processes, finds a more limited recognition. According to van Houtum, the move away from discourses of 'natural' borders is grounded in an understanding of the 'horrific consequences an extreme politicisation of the naturalistic and/or organic view on borders can have on humanity' (2005, 675). For Diener and Hagen, borders are always human-made and 'every geographic boundary is a symbolic representation and practical embodiment of human territoriality' (2012, 23–4). They describe how 'natural borders' such as rivers, mountains or deserts have been specifically selected by nation-states to support geopolitical expansion in declaring them as the only 'natural' national limit to justify conquests and annexations (2012, 42–4). These types of borders have been naturalized over the course of history and are in many cases still maintained today, such as the Rhine border between France and southern Germany (Diener and Hagen 2012, 33) or the Río Grande border section between Mexico and the United States (Casey 2020). Similarly, the Highland line in Scotland correlates with the major geologic fault zone of the Highland Boundary Fault, which, though elusive because it does not constitute a physical border on the ground, separates two physiographic terrains with distinct topographies, a division that is mapped onto a cultural distinction between Lowlanders and Highlanders. In environmental activism and international nature conservation, Juliet Fall shows, the idea of 'natural boundaries' is seeing a surprising revival in the context of decisions around protected conservation areas, which in some cases leads to renewed advocacy for bioregional redefinitions of political borders along environmental features (2002, 243). Even purportedly natural boundaries employed to distinguish areas in the context of environmental protection and natural resource management such as bioregions, biodiversity hotspots or ecoregions, though considered neutral by conservation literature, are, however, actually political, a fact frequently disregarded by international organizations, as Fall outlines (2011, 629). Such views, Fall argues further, are ultimately incompatible with the current academic debate which is trying to overcome the culture–nature duality (2002, 243). Paulina Ochoa Espejo locates the root of this problem in identity-based approaches to borders and argues that

we need to undo the 'conceptual entanglement with collective identity' inherent in dominant models of the border to build an environmentally and socially just society (2020, ix). As an alternative, Ochoa Espejo proposes 'a watershed model of territorial politics grounded on place, rather than identity' which centres on geographical and environmental relations as the basis for a reconfiguration of borders. Instead of assuming that borders are created 'naturally', Ochoa Espejo takes watersheds as the basis for a new model of borders that 'sees territory emerging from located socio-natural relations, obligations, and institutions' (2020, 19). This model 'takes the environment seriously' (3) by considering humans and human politics as enmeshed in the world, avoiding the separation between culture and nature that Fall identifies as the problem of conservation organizations.

Along similar lines, ecocriticism has increasingly come to question the vocabulary used to talk about its subject which has variously been called nature, landscape, ecology, the environment, the non-human world and the material world. Timothy Morton is the most outspoken critic of the concept and terminology of capitalized Nature which they expose and deconstruct as essentialism responsible for the destruction of the very thing it seeks to describe: 'The trouble with Nature is that it doesn't exist – yet its fantasies grip our minds with hope and fear, imprisoning them in the status quo' (2014, 302). Nature, for Morton and Clark, is at once a term whose meaning is impossible to grasp and a concept that has been employed for contradictory purposes (2007, 18–19; Clark 2011, 5–8). This leads them to conclude that nature is no more than 'an arbitrary binary rhetorical construct, empty of independent, genuine existence' that ecocriticism should move away from (2007, 21). As a viable alternative, Morton suggests open-ended ecological thought as the basis for ecocritical research:

> 'Ecology without nature' could mean 'ecology without a *concept* of the natural.' Thinking, when it becomes ideological, tends to fixate on concepts rather than doing what is 'natural' to thought, namely, dissolving what has taken form. Ecological thinking that was not fixated, that did not stop at a particular concretization of its object, would thus be 'without nature'.
>
> (2007, 24)

An interdisciplinary approach that considers environmental scholarship alongside border studies tackles and deconstructs the problematic associations connected to the 'natural' borders debate by deconstructing both traditional notions of fixed borders and the conception of the natural. Border poetics scholars

Rosello and Saunders mobilize the concept of ecology in a deconstructive vein to address the relationship between 'imagined borders and imagined nature' (2017, 25). Outlining the affordances and limitations of Bruno Latour's concept of political ecology, however, they remain dissatisfied by the approach which they argue falls short of addressing the complex power dynamics of the border and risks being misappropriated for the re-establishment of hierarchies of power (2017, 41–5). As a result, Rosello and Saunders conclude that an ecological approach to borders 'remains at best an aspiration' that cannot yet be translated into a truly democratic practice (2017, 46). Despite the understandable caution exercised by Rosello and Saunders, however, the affordances of an ecological/environmental approach to borders should not be dismissed too hastily. Deconstructive ecocriticism indeed productively navigates the challenges of ecological approaches that are endorsed by various ecocritical scholars and outlined in detail by Timothy Morton (2007, 2010, 2014). According to Morton:

> Thinking of ecosystems involves thinking without thin, rigid boundaries between inside and outside, because in order to exist at all, the ecosystem must exchange with circumambient phenomena. Indeed, thinking in systems theory seems remarkably close to thinking in deconstruction.
>
> (2014, 298)

Systems theory is crucially indebted to the notions of the rhizome, deterritorialization and reterritorialization developed by Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari (1987). In outlining their theory of deterritorialization and lines of flight, Deleuze and Guattari warn their readers of the limits of a deconstructive approach. As Jhan Hochman argues, their notion of reterritorialization relies on 'temporary and strategic fixities' rather than doing away with borders altogether which means that they remain aware of the potential advantages of borders: 'Their view of becoming-in-the-world, in contrast to a fixed being-in-the-world, merges structuralism (boundaries, limits, identities) and poststructuralism (transgressions, joyous confusions, protean fluctuations) into a shape-shifting multiplex postmodernism' (1998, 15). Their model thus complements the fluidity of rhizomatic networks with an adherence to 'a minimum of strata, a minimum of forms and functions' (Deleuze and Guattari 1987, 270).

Building on the work of Deleuze, Guattari and Jacques Derrida, deconstructive ecocriticism, also called eco-deconstruction, thus offers a productive framework through which this correlation can be approached in a way that goes beyond a simplistic return to 'nature' and the essentialisms connected to it.[3] As Timothy Clark argues, studies of the environment can no longer limit themselves to just

one disciplinary field but rather need to branch out to meet the demands posed by the concept of the Anthropocene (2011, 203). Criticism of its cultural politics has prompted ecocriticism to expand the scope of texts that come into consideration beyond environmentalist texts,[4] and brought about 'a striking turn to issues of environmental justice' (88) and interdisciplinarity that connect 'literary analysis […] with issues that are simultaneously but obscurely matters of science, morality, politics and aesthetics' (8). Thinking through a variety of disciplinary fields, deconstructive ecocriticism seeks to explore new ways of tackling environmental questions in and through literature by '*nurtur[ing] contradictions* and promot[ing] methodological *open-endedness*' (Clark and Lynes 2023, 6). Though the primary concern with borders in ecocriticism lies in the conceptual and physical borders between culture and nature, self and environment, human and non-human, these borderings are thus shown to overlap with the social and political borders of interest to border studies scholars as intersectionality and environmental justice are becoming indispensable elements of ecocritical enquiries.

While border studies can thus benefit from a more nuanced understanding of 'nature' from the perspective of ecology, ecocriticism would gain new perspectives by considering scholarship in border studies which intersects environmental questions in a number of ways, including the notion of deterritorialized (eco) cosmopolitan identities that think across geopolitical borders, an increasing interest in matters of climate justice between the Global North and South, or how bordering practices enable or constrict the movement of climate refugees. Clark finds that, as political allegiances and national borders continue to exert their power and undermine the feasibility of a borderless world, the Anthropocene reveals the difficulties inherent in thinking across borders and the power of the ordering structures they create: 'The planetary scale of the Anthropocene compels us to think and act as if already citizens of a world polity, even while it increasingly undermines the conditions of co-operation for any would-be cosmopolitan citizenship' (2015, 10). Ecocriticism, besides examining the intricate enmeshment of human and non-human histories, more generally seeks a balance between acknowledging the material world in its own right, emphasizing its radical alterity, and pointing towards the various ways in which it has been culturally constructed and the role literary and artistic representations have played in reinforcing or contesting these constructions. The detailed questioning of the most fundamental categories urged by Clark, connected to the radical concern of deconstructing the borders between nature and culture, human and non-human, while acknowledging and valuing unbreachable differences, may bring valuable insights for the study of borders more broadly. At the same time,

an understanding of the orderings, and the material and social effects of the borders which are the main focus of border studies may demonstrate correlations with the borders interesting to ecological thought and reveal the multiple layers in which borders are imagined, organized and made to function.

The complex interrelation of borders and the environment, though producing various ideological and conceptual complications, is more complex than it first seems and deserves renewed attention. A number of critics have already taken up the challenge by developing the field of animal geography (Philo and Wilbert 2000), expanding geocriticism through an integration of ecocritical approaches (Tally and Battista 2016), shifting the focus of anthropology towards non-human agents (Frank and Heinzer 2019), outlining environmental philosophies of borders (Casey 2020), and proposing environmental, place-based models of political borders (Ochoa-Espejo 2020). In literary and cultural studies, archipelagic criticism has contributed significant insights on the role of literary and cultural works in proposing ways of reading borders environmentally.[5] My work is indebted to the pioneering attempts at understanding borders through the environment and vice versa that I have outlined here. In adapting, mobilizing and drawing on strategies and concepts developed in border studies, ecocriticism and literary studies, I want to highlight the contribution that literature can make to these critical debates. Because of their imaginative power, literary works may serve as testing grounds in which the ideas set out by theory can be played out experimentally and their value for an environmental rethinking of borders may be explored. While debates about borders and the environment are frequently dominated by theoretical and political discourses, literature invites us to adopt experiential and creative perspectives that can shed new light on how borders and the environment converge at different levels of our lives. Drawing on the strategic formalist methodology proposed by Caroline Levine (2006, 2015) and the postcritical reading practices of Rita Felski (2015), I propose that looking at how borders and the environment are articulated through literary forms provides a more nuanced perspective on their complex relationship than framing them purely through theory.

New formalism as an interdisciplinary method

According to Dipesh Chakrabarty, the Anthropocene 'has brought into view certain other conditions for the existence of life in the human form that have no intrinsic connection to the logics of capitalist, nationalist, or socialist identities'

and that need to be taken into account in order to understand and tackle the climate crisis (2009, 217). These conditions, Chakrabarty argues, are linked to the interdependencies of life-forms inhabiting our planet: the developments of human history are made possible and/or restricted through non-human phenomena and life while humanity simultaneously figures as a geological agent influencing these other life-forms and phenomena (2009, 217–18). Complementing theoretical approaches, literary works are able to imaginatively explore how these new conditions could play out, offering alternative views of the borders we draw around not only political entities and social categories but also the category of the human more broadly.

Acknowledging the critical value of aesthetic negotiation of borders, critical border studies scholars Brambilla and colleagues argue for an integration between border theory, concerned with the metaphorical and conceptual meanings of borders, and border studies, which focuses on localized social experiences, in order to combine politics and aesthetics for a more comprehensive understanding of bordering processes between experience, representation and theory (2015, 3). Following from the same impetus, Mireille Rosello and Stephen Wolfe develop a methodology of border aesthetics which posits that 'aesthetics is essential whenever we need to recognize and appreciate the criteria that define borders' (2017, 4–5). Examining border narratives and their aesthetic configurations, they argue, 'will help us recognize new borders and new narratives' and acknowledge in what ways 'border fictions change dominant conceptualizations of who inhabits and can speak for the border' (2017, 13). While border studies show a renewed interest in aesthetic configurations, Marco Caracciolo finds that a large amount of research centres on literary texts and genres concerned with the environment on a thematic level and formal inquiries frequently get sidelined in favour of a focus on environmental politics (2021, 19). When literary works come to be seen only as conduits for political views negotiated elsewhere, however, their contribution to the discussion is overshadowed. Coming to the same conclusion, Pieter Vermeulen argues that 'an emphasis on *form* can help us make a case for the enduring relevance of literature in debates over the environment' (2020, 47) and foster interdisciplinary conversations:

> Literary *form* can enrich interdisciplinary discussions by providing patterns, connections, structures, and descriptions that other kinds of knowledge production are less free to generate, if only because their protocols don't allow the blend of imaginative, speculative, and descriptive elements that makes up literary form.
>
> (2020, 47)

For the purpose of this interdisciplinary project, literary form is thus of central importance and new formalist methodologies are key in making visible the patterns, connections and structures of literary form and thereby unlocking the contribution Scottish literature can make to critical theoretical debates on borders and the environment.

New formalism productively bridges the gap between aesthetics and politics. In her definition of form, Levine moves beyond an exclusively aesthetic understanding of form, extending the term to include 'all shapes and configurations, all ordering principles, all patterns of repetition and difference' (2015, 3). Politics is, in fact, not possible without form, just as form is not possible without politics (2015, 3). Forms, for Levine, are simultaneously social, political, aesthetic, discursive and material, and Levine's methodology 'involves reading particular, historically specific collisions among generalizing political, cultural, and social forms' (2006, 632). In considering the collisions between forms, Levine takes care to mention that even though colliding forms may compete and reroute one another, their encounter follows an anti-hierarchical, relational structure in which no one form dominates over another (2015, 16). Central to Levine's conception of form are five major principles according to which forms operate: they are '*containing*, *plural*, *overlapping*, *portable*, and *situated*' (2015, 6). They contain because they impose controls and constraints, they differ, overlap and intersect on different scales, they travel across time periods and cultures as well as aesthetic and social material, and they emerge out of and do political work in situated contexts (2015, 4–5). Drawing on this definition, I will be treating both borders and the environment as forms and identify how they overlap and/or collide 'to produce surprising and unintentional political effects' (Levine 2006, 627).

According to Levine, '[t]he form that best captures the experience of colliding forms is narrative' because narratives, rather than tracing causalities, present the experience and outcome of formal collisions relationally (2015, 19). Comparing how forms are articulated in different narratives allows a reading of how forms 'cooperate, come into conflict, and overlap' outside of causal relations (2015, 19). In order to prevent a reading of form for its causes and intentions, and to explain the contradictory and complex workings of forms as 'both political and aesthetic, both containing and plural, both situated and portable', Levine employs the concept of affordance. Borrowing from design theory, Levine defines affordance as 'the potential uses or actions latent in materials and designs' which forms carry with them as they move (2015, 6). These potentialities limit what forms can do, as much as they create possibilities. At the same time, specific forms may

'be put to use in unexpected ways' that go beyond an initial understanding of their affordances (2015, 6). The focus of new formalism, or, as Levine terms it, 'strategic formalism' (2006, 627), is neither to trace the intentions of writers, nor to simply make a set of historical claims about literary form or determine what forms are. Rather, strategic formalism seeks to consider 'what potentialities lie latent – though not always obvious – in aesthetic and social arrangements' (2015, 6–7). No form exists in isolation, and within each encounter many different organizing principles come into play which 'may activate latent affordances or foreclose otherwise dominant ones' (2015, 7).

Even though the focus of this book will be on examining narrative manifestations of the forms of the border and the environment, these will necessarily resonate, interact with and inform social, political and cultural manifestations of these forms. For Levine, there are four major forms that are particularly common and pervade the ordering of society and literature alike:

> [B]ounded wholes, from domestic walls to national boundaries; temporal rhythms, from the repetitions of industrial labor to the enduring patterns of institutions over time; powerful hierarchies, including gender, race, class, and bureaucracy; and networks that link people and objects, including multinational trade, terrorism, and transportation.
>
> (2015, 21)

The form of the border I will discuss here overlaps with all of these forms but is, in contrast to what Levine suggests, not synonymous with any of them. The border contributes to the shape and functioning of the bounded whole through its affordance to enforce 'restrictive containers and boundaries' (Levine 2015, 3), to establish hierarchies of inclusion and exclusion, to impose a temporal regime around bordering practices, controls or repair works, and to create circulating networks of communication and transportation of goods and people. Even though Levine reads walls and national borders as bounded wholes, and they are indeed tied up in the production and maintenance of such wholes, the border should be treated as a form in its own right with its own affordances. Literary representations of the border may focus on its affordance to construct bounded wholes that create hierarchies of inclusion and exclusion which, if upheld, serve to keep the whole intact by defending it against invasions from the outside. This is the case in John Lanchester's *The Wall* (2019) where Defenders are protecting the wall against Others who are trying to enter the country. The Defenders' routine includes long stretches of immobility and waiting for potential threats, which highlights the peculiar temporality effected by the wall and its protection.

The detailing of the networks of workers and transportation of goods that keep the wall intact highlights the networking affordances of the border. At the same time, borders may take up a different function and produce different political effects depending on their formal configuration in any given literary text.

The form of the environment is more difficult to grasp and can best be read as a set of aesthetic mediations of the material environment. In referring to the environment as a literary form, I refer to how the environment manifests itself and is articulated in the literary texts that I am examining. From a holistic perspective, the environment has been read as the ultimate containing form, a bounded whole par excellence. Recent ecocritical research has largely rejected holism in favour of reading the environment as a rhizomatic network, or mesh, in which, according to Morton, 'the whole is always *less* than the sum of its parts' (2019, 102). I do not claim to provide a comprehensive history of the form of the environment or an overview of how it has been conceptualized and employed in other, non-literary contexts. Nor do I aim to understand what exactly the form of the environment is in any objective or indisputable way. The literary works discussed here highlight their enmeshment in the world and while they provide multiple possible ways of reading the environment, they do not attempt to fix its meaning. In the same way, I am less interested in hermeneutically determining the forms I discuss than in how they are used and to what effect.

The formal arrangements articulated in literary texts are often more contradictory and complex than they may seem at first, especially when the forms of the border and the environment collide with each other and produce unexpected results. In order to investigate the interface where borders and environments overlap, I will be concentrating on moments when they are connected through what I will describe as ancillary forms. Ancillary forms are forms which, in overlapping with two other forms, in this case the form of the border and the form of the environment, take on a connecting function and catalyse the political effects that are produced at their intersection. These ancillary forms retain their autonomy while also functioning as connecting elements that allow an articulation of borders and the environment in relation. By catalysing the political effects emerging at their collision, the ancillary form highlights the ways in which the two forms may work together, reinforce one another, and/or undermine one another (Levine 2006, 651). Each analysis chapter discusses one specific ancillary form and its affordances: the littoral, planetarity and territory. These are, of course, not the only forms that could function in this way. The forms of the archipelago, mobility or temporality might be other examples on which an analysis of ancillary forms could focus. The selection I have decided

on appears to me most pertinent in its political effects and wide enough to cover a range of temporally portable configurations. These serve to provide insights into borders as processes and constructs and suggest ways in which they may be reconfigured in connection with the environment.

Each examination of an ancillary form begins with an overview of relevant critical theoretical debates which are then put in dialogue with a range of Scottish literary texts. To demonstrate the versatility and portability of the forms, what follows is a combination of shorter discussions of a set of literary works written and published from the nineteenth century to the present which I call critical vignettes, and a detailed case study of one particular writer or text from the 1920s and 1930s, the very middle of the period covered here. Choosing literary works set in the middle of the period covered by this book for the case studies allows the case studies not only to enter into productive dialogue with one another, but also to serve as nodes of connection between the vignettes that make visible the formal patterns that I am tracing. What emerges from the combination of case studies and vignettes is a sense of how the literary works discussed as case studies respond to literary traditions of, for example, the romance adventure or the historical novel, but also how they themselves become formative for the writers that come after them. At the same time, I do not want to create a literary genealogy of the forms I am discussing. Rather, I want to show how they can operate outside of national literary histories. In focusing on form rather than individual authors or literary histories, I want to show how the ancillary forms I look at have resonated with writers across time and how they mobilize them in ways that make use of the affordances of Scotland for reimagining borders through the environment. The time period covered by the critical vignettes amounts to roughly two hundred years and reaches from the early nineteenth century, with the earliest work I discuss published in 1822, to the twenty-first century, with the most recent literary text covered published in 2020. Focusing on the formal qualities of the literary texts discussed here allows me to consider them beyond their situatedness within history, culture, or literary tradition. Instead of outlining the differences between these works by reading them through the lens of specific national literary histories, a focus on form reveals instead what these literary works have in common. By considering literary form beyond historical contexts, a strategic formalist approach highlights how they might help us as readers and scholars to make sense of, and encourage us to rethink, the relationship between borders and the environment for our own contemporary moment.

Literary critics have provided useful frames for approaching both historically situated formal analyses and their wider transtemporal implications beyond national (literary) histories. Levine's strategic formalism, striking a balance between situatedness and portability, engages with local and national literatures while at the same time moving and thinking beyond them. It offers a way to identify the potentialities that may emerge from an approach that moves beyond periodizing according to national literary history. I agree with Michaela Bronstein who argues that literary forms 'are often precisely the most useful things about the texts of the past for the readers of the future' when they are regarded outside of those contexts and put to new uses (2018, 8). Reading forms within as well as beyond their socio-historical contexts, Bronstein and Levine employ what Rita Felski terms postcritical reading practices (2015, 2017). Postcritical reading, as opposed to suspicious reading, Felski explains, is not about 'looking behind the text – for its hidden causes, determining conditions, and noxious motives' but rather places the critic 'in front of the text', asking them to reflect on the text's affordances, that is on what it 'unfurls, calls forth, makes possible' (2015, 12). Rather than applying either theory or history to the works I look at, I am more interested in the critical intervention that literature can make in current theoretical discussions. By reading postcritically, we allow forms to produce new ways of thinking about borders and the environment beyond the frameworks of history and the nation. Postcritical reading practices encourage literary forms to take centre stage, assert their agency and guide our reading in sometimes unexpected directions.

For Susan Stanford Friedman, transhistorical and transnational approaches move beyond the limitations of linear approaches to time while keeping aware of the local and the specific, and therefore call forth new ways of approaching literary history 'that engage with the nonhuman, the planetary, even the interstellar' (2019, 398). As I show in the remainder of chapter, in order to fully understand the affordances of Scotland for rethinking the relationship between borders and the environment, we need to think outside of the historicist and nationalist framework that has long dominated Scottish literary studies. Paying attention to literary form, rather than national history, highlights how Scottish literary works develop environmental perspectives on borders that cannot be captured through a periodizing lens. This approach allows literary works to produce new conceptual worlds beyond national and historical meaning-making and can help us rethink the categories we use to b/order not just our world but also our discipline.

The Scottish situation: predicament or affordance?

What is Scottish literature? In a booklet of this title, Alan Riach begins his exploration of this question with the natural imagery depicted in the poetry of the twentieth-century writer John Cunningham as characteristic of an understanding of Scotland for which nature and its symbolism are central (2009b, 3). To gain a comprehensive view of what constitutes Scottish literature, Riach argues, this understanding of Scotland through landscape must be complemented by a historical reading of Scottish national identity. This leads him towards a detailed rendering of the reconfigurations of Scotland's national borders over time and the significance of these changes for a Scottish national identity, and, by extension, for the definition of Scottish literature (2009b, 3–4). Riach's reading is representative of a long tradition of reading Scottish literature through a national lens. In the following, I want to propose alternative ways of reading the connection between Scotland's borders and environment beyond the national.

As Eleanor Bell contends, Scottish studies, in responding to post-Union Scotland's status as a stateless nation and the perceived lack of an organic literary tradition, has been overly dependent on cultural nationalist readings, privileging and overemphasizing concerns of national culture in the process (2004, 2). The overdetermination of national characteristics in definitions of a Scottish literary tradition limits its possibilities and pathologizes Scottish literature under the header of what Edwin Muir, in 1936, termed 'the predicament of the Scottish writer'.[6] For Berthold Schoene, any attempt undertaken by Scottish critics to locate an authentic Scottish literary tradition within essentialist concepts of organic nationhood is fraught by its insistence on homogeneity and autonomy that neglects both Scotland's internal heterogeneity and the influence of cross-cultural flows of ideas (2007, 9). In nationalist readings, Scottish culture and literature appear 'doomed to failure by history, geography, by ideology – all of which conspire to produce a cultural waste land' (Craig 1999, 17). For Cairns Craig (1999), the modern Scottish novel is tied up with nation-building processes and thereby engages in bordering work. The failure of Scotland to produce a coherent literary tradition and a unified sense of nationhood, by extension, signifies to Craig a failure of the Scottish novel as an instrument of the modern nation-state (1999, 14). Cultural nationalist readings thus tend to focus on Scotland's lack of an organic, continuous literary tradition, undermined further by the controversy around the authenticity of the Ossian poems, published by James Macpherson in 1760, whose foundational claims to a national tradition of writing eventually turned out to be fabricated. In the eighteenth century,

when other European countries were defining themselves as nation-states with an organic folk tradition, Scotland not only lost its autonomy through the Act of Union but was thereby also subject to mockery for the invention of a false literary tradition on which nationhood could be based in an otherwise ethnically, religiously and linguistically fragmented national landscape. Not being able to define Scotland through shared linguistic, cultural or literary heritage, state-power or geopolitical borders, modern Scottish critics in the twentieth century tried to find unity in a shared pathological condition.

What would happen if instead of reading Scottish literature and culture as inherently flawed and unsettling, we concentrated on the alternative perspectives and trajectories that the special situation of Scotland might engender? What happens if we turn the presumed predicament of Scottish literature into an affordance that allows a rethinking of the conventional understanding of borders and the environment and how they structure society, literature and history? Carla Sassi demonstrates that the contradictions bemoaned by modern critics define Scottish literature as anomalous, characterized by the lack of confidence of Scotland as a country that has been marginalized for centuries by England as the dominant cultural centre, a country that can neither define itself as nation-state nor as a minority culture, and whose postcolonial status remains conflicted (2005, 2–6). For Sassi, however, this anomaly, instead of signifying a predicament, rather serves as a blessing 'in the light of the disastrous outcome of the rise of nationalist movements in the period between the wars' and suggests the desire to follow the cultural model of the nation-state to be the true problem (2005, 7–8). The special affordances of Scottish literature lie, for Sassi, in its anomaly: in Scotland's flexible and uncertain relationship to national identity. Consequently, Sassi urges us to treat the study of Scottish literature and culture as a task 'of checking globalisation and of resisting assimilation to the falsely multicultural, "united colours" ideal promoted by glossy magazines on one side, and, on the other, the pull towards a closed national model (which seems to be dangerously gaining ground again), based on exclusivity and intolerance' (2005, 12). This view is supported by Schoene, who argues that, from a twenty-first-century viewpoint, when national unity and the proliferation of borders are increasingly questioned, the 'apparent centuries-old shortcoming' of Scottish culture to define an organic literary tradition and unified national culture 'would reveal itself as thoroughly advantageous' (2007, 9). After the paradigm shift away from traditions of cultural nationalist criticism, Schoene argues, adaptability and discontinuity are now praised as the positive results of Scotland's geopolitical situation and 'no longer signify lack and inferiority, but harbour a resourceful

flexibility' (2007, 9). Rather than conducting another 'suspicious reading' (Felski 2015), I will follow the assessments by Schoene and Sassi and propose to read the predicament of Scottish literature as a unique affordance that turns it into an interesting arena for exploring alternative visions of borders and the environment.

Moving beyond cultural nationalist readings of Scotland, archipelagic approaches have fostered an understanding of Scotland as a collection of islands in ways that acknowledge the value of its internal heterogeneity, decentre traditional nationhood and the borders that come with it, and connect Scotland with the wider world by looking outwards along and beyond its coastal edges rather than inwards. As Bell points out, Scottish literature invites such a reading in that, in contrast to critical accounts defining Scottish literature and culture through lack, literary works have long displayed Scotland's dispositions as affordances and continue to do so (2004, 5). According to Baker, contemporary Scottish speculative fictions, for example, 'emphasise the missing, the abnormal, and the failure, all as a way to reach towards potential and possibility' (2016, 263) and treat 'the novel as a form of unlimited possibility' (2016, 266). Rather than imagining Scotland's political future as a nation-state with clearly defined borders, the writings Baker considers make use of the affordances of the Scottish situation in order to dissolve borders and envision Scotland as 'textually-located, fluid, and essentially democratic' (2016, 265).

In an attempt to shift Scottish criticism into a similar direction, Schoene argues that the crucial task of the contemporary critic lies in assessing the value of critical invocations of Scottishness and determining whether Scottishness remains a viable category to define or employ (2007, 8). Trying to find a solution to this question, Sassi suggests we adopt new strategies of reading that find a balance between isolating a discipline focused on national literary history and dissolving the discipline altogether (2014). Such reading practices, Sassi contends, would simultaneously attend to and defamiliarize the local 'by questioning and problematising, both the national literature paradigm and the cosmopolitan agenda of the "new" World literature studies' (2014). Sassi builds on the theoretical work of Susan Stanford Friedman whose questions about the temporalities offered by transnational literary research serve as a useful framework for a revaluation of Scottish literature beyond geopolitical or temporal containers:

> Instead of falling back all too easily into periods of literary history as markers of a national literary history, can we develop what have been variously called

> transnational, global, or planetary approaches without giving up the rigorous historical and geographic contextualisation of points of production and reception?
>
> (2019, 395)

While Ursula Heise suggests a type of multiscalar reading practice that moves beyond the local (and national) to develop a sense of planet (2008), Timothy Clark criticizes the limitations of historicist approaches and methodological nationalism in the context of the Anthropocene:

> The focus [of critique] is on the specific time-honoured notion that to understand a text is to reconstruct its context. Yet 'putting it back in context' is something that must become more problematic when we are forced to consider issues which, in however minute a way, require both planetary and even futural contexts.
>
> (2015, 22)

What is needed, Clark argues, is a methodology that takes the environmental crisis as a prompt to question the basic conceptions of the human, the social and the cultural (2015, 20). Clark's multiscalar reading practice moves away from suspicious reading 'with the critic being particularly attentive in retrospect to the destructive effects of modes of hierarchy, exclusion and exploitation' (2015, 50) and turns towards the affordances of texts. Rather than confining texts to singular meanings or determining and evaluating their environmentalist value, Clark's reading practice suggests 'a way of enriching, singularizing and yet also creatively deranging the text by embedding it in multiple and even contradictory frames at the same time' (2015, 108). This turn towards affordances, creative derangements and the collision of contradictory frames aligns Clark's environmental methodology with the literary methodologies of Levine, Felski and Friedman which inform me in this book.

What I am interested in here is how the forms and models developed by Scottish literary works may speak across geographic and temporal boundaries and work both within and outwith their geopolitical and historical contexts. 'Literature […] never comes without borders', Hollier and Bloch caution in the midst of emerging transnational and world literature approaches to reading literature (1994, xxi). It would indeed be naïve to deny the material effects of borders and how bordering processes influence the production of works of literature whether they locate themselves within a national tradition or outside of it. Nevertheless, it is crucial to problematize these borders, because, as Bell argues, 'if nations

are now potentially subject to reconfiguration then, similarly, the notion of national traditions can no longer be uncritically assumed' (2004, 4). This study is therefore not a critical invocation of 'Scottishness' (Schoene 2007, 8), and I am not interested in examining how far the authors or the themes with which they concern themselves can be normatively pigeon-holed into the category of 'Scottishness'. Rather, my interest lies in how writers past and present, within and outside of Scotland, employ the special affordances offered by the political, historical and cultural situation of the geographical area of Scotland to explore questions about bordering processes and the environment through specific forms. For Glenda Norquay, the metaphorical uses of debatable lands, nomadic literatures and reconfigurations of borders suggest a move away from monolithic literary traditions which, by extension, opens alternative avenues of investigating the relationship between bordering practices and identities, and suggests an understanding of 'Scottishness' as an open-ended and lived experience rather than as an inherited essence (2012, 112–15). When I employ the term Scottish, Scottishness or Scottish literature, I am referring to such an open-ended and nomadic implication of these terms. The affordances I see in Scottish literature are not rooted in any form of national consciousness perceived or exercised by the writers themselves but arise in the context of a practice of *thinking through Scotland* in terms of an awareness of its geographical, environmental and socio-political situation. The practice of thinking through Scotland is pertinent for an understanding of the situated Scottish context while also moving beyond this rather narrow scope by identifying formal arrangements and developing models that may fruitfully be transposed into other contexts and complemented by comparative approaches.

Borders and the environmental imagination in Scottish literature

Robert Crawford convincingly outlines how the idea of the border as a dynamic zone rather than an inflexible line, concurrent with current understandings of the border in critical border studies,[7] not only originated in Scotland but also serves as a crucial cultural model that can be transferred to other contexts (1992, 185). Despite the absence of immediate conflict in the time considered in this book, the figure of the border remains an ongoing presence in the Scottish literary imagination. Both ecocriticism and border studies understandably focus largely on landscapes of destruction and borders characterized by violence and

conflict (Lamont and Rossington 2007, 5). Scotland's borders do not fall into this categorization today: their material effects are more abstract, dispersed and elusive. Even though they are characterized by violent histories (Bruce and Terrell 2012; Shaw 2018), these histories do not re-emerge with the same urgency as they do for those borders and landscapes in which human and non-human lives are immediately endangered. And yet, as Sassi suggests, a reading of borders beyond crisis regions might offer a more comprehensive understanding of bordering processes (2009, 146). If European border studies is indeed still missing the aesthetic theorizations and political transformations that American/Chicanx thought has achieved (Sassi 2009, 145), Scottish literature could offer a critical vantage point for transformative and creative border theories.

In order to fully understand what Scotland can offer to a wider discussion of bordering processes, it is necessary to relieve Scottish literature from the restrictions of nationalist meaning-making, by moving beyond a state-centric view of the border and towards a multiperspectival approach as suggested by Chris Rumford (2012, 896). At a time when supra-national organizations like the EU implement flexible bordering practices and national borders are becoming increasingly dispersed and invisible, Rumford argues, 'we should endeavour to develop an approach which does not rely on the assumption that important borders are always state borders, representing divisions, and more importantly which does not reinforce the tendency to always "see like a state" when viewing borders' (2012, 888). Rumford's multiperspectival approach, which, rather than simply reframing borders from the periphery, 'is concerned with borders that are diffused throughout society as well as those at the edges' (2012, 894), has been adopted widely. Conventional state-centred investigations of the border are increasingly questioned by critical border studies scholars who advocate for an approach that regards the border itself as a 'privileged point of view' (Mezzadra and Neilson 2020, xxi). Such a shift in perspective, they argue, allows us to focus on 'the making and instability of spatial and temporal limits and demarcations' and remains aware of the far-reaching significance of borders for political and economic formations (Mezzadra and Neilson 2020, xxi). Borders, then, are no longer understood simply as top-down or bottom-up constructions found on the edges of nations, but as diffused and dispersed across society and constitutive of everyday practices (see Rumford 2012; Nail 2020).

Scotland, in facing the impossibility of seeing like a state and in reading this impossibility as the special predicament faced by Scottish critics and writers, fosters a literature that appears uniquely suited to such a multiperspectival approach. According to Sassi, critical revisions of the nationalist paradigm

and the national border have involved an inquiry into 'an integrative or substitutive paradigm' that could be found in a mode of thinking about borders as multi-layered, mobile and dispersed (2009, 149). The status of the Scottish border as a soft border delineating a stateless nation and the consequent 'internal difficulty in delineating a monolithic idea of nationhood' have led to a better understanding of the multiplications of borders 'along and across regions, social classes, dialects and languages' and the representation of such multiplications in fiction (Sassi 2009, 147). This dispersal of the border into everyday life allows for an understanding of borders as 'mobile and multiple' (Nail 2020, 197). Looking at Scotland through a lens of cultural nationalist readings has led to a neglect of such mobile multiplications, for example in the exclusion of women from debates about the nation (Whyte 1995; Christianson 1996; Gifford and McMillan 1997). While the Anglo-Scottish borderscape and concerns with national identity remain important to any discussion of Scottish literary responses to bordering,[8] and crucially structure Scottish modes of thinking about borders, the literary works discussed here draw the focus away from national and geopolitical borders. Even those texts that refer to or are set on the national border can be seen to work their way around a state-centred view by considering the manifold multiplications of the border in everyday life and diverting, diffusing or dislocating it. They mobilize a perspective of 'seeing like a border' to foster an understanding of how borders have been configured in Scotland in connection with environmental discourses.

Scotland is a country still understood to be defined heavily through its environmental characteristics.[9] While Sassi finds that the environment has always been and remains a core component of Scottish identity, she argues that this connection structures a post-national sense of space which is linked not so much to geopolitical borders as anchored in geology and landscape (2005, 178). Despite the optimism of Sassi's statement, the identity-landscape nexus is not an unproblematic one, especially where critical issues such as access, land ownership, and debates about conservation and land use are concerned, which turn many rural areas, especially in the Highlands, into contested territory structured by complex bordering processes (Smout 2000; Manfredi 2019, 3–4). A conflation of the national and natural not only risks depicting the Scots as naturally and historically 'closer to nature' but, as Manfredi argues, may generate exclusionary and essentialist forms of ethnoregionalism (2019, 6). Monika Szuba and Julian Wolfreys find such complications reflected in the very naming

of a bounded national entity that obscures internal differences of the manifold Scotlands that people experience in their everyday lives:

> The name 'Scotland', in naming an undifferentiated entity, fails to grasp, precisely because it obscures (as do all such 'national' names) the many and varying differentiations understood as distinct places, regions, areas, cities, geographical, and other locales, which though associated with the mastery of the proper name, resist any such easy gathering.
>
> (2019, 7)

Taking these risks into consideration is crucial for the development of a more inclusive (post-national) sense of place through which territory-bound identities are continually reinvented and adapted (Manfredi 2019, 208). An inclusive environmental perspective on Scotland nevertheless poses for Manfredi, as it does for Sassi, an alternative to nationalist readings of a bounded environment, or what Brambilla terms the 'modern geopolitical, territorialist imaginary' (2015, 19). Manfredi finds examples of such an alternative mode of thinking in the works of twenty-first-century Scottish artists and writers who, through acts of rethinking and reclaiming the land imaginatively, question 'the origin, destination and therefore propriety of that territory – our land, their land, everybody's or nobody's land' (2019, 7). Opening up a forum for debate which situates Scotland in relation to larger issues of planetary import, these literary works, Manfredi shows, establish understandings of environment, territory and history as ongoing processes of 'de- and re-aestheticisation, disinvention and reinvention' (2019, 9). Susan Oliver identifies similar processes at work in nineteenth-century Scottish literature, where the historical controversies around Scotland's borders afford an understanding of 'country' in which humans are part of an integrative material environment and which presents Scotland as 'a complex but connected nation, where cultural diversity can be mapped bioregionally as well as according to more conventional political, linguistic and cultural borders' (2014).

Environmental modes of thinking about borders characterize a tradition of Scottish critical thought which, though said to have its origins in the Enlightenment, has been eclipsed in ecocriticism by a foundation-myth tied up with the English Romantic project.[10] Tracing the origins of environmental discourses in Scottish literature, Louisa Gairn outlines a decidedly Scottish ecological tradition of writing from the mid-nineteenth century onwards (2008).[11] Ecological approaches, according to Gairn, can be 'potentially liberating'

for the study of Scottish literature because they contribute to dissolving internal divisions previously cast as inherent cultural failures and highlight the value of Scottish ecological perspectives within globally relevant environmental debates (2). Archipelagic criticism provides a further counter-discourse to the view of Scotland as paradoxically flawed, recasting its anomalies as affordances. Connecting the lines of environmental thought and bordering processes supports Sassi's archipelagic reading of Scotland as 'a post-nation, a meta-nation, a geological nation' (Sassi 2005, 183). By reading borders environmentally, the literary texts in this book offer ways of re-making borders for our current times that respond to Diener and Hagen's plea that '[w]e must find a way to harness [borders'] ability to catalyze belonging and identity but diminish their propensity for exclusion and the creation of "others"' (2012, 27). Discussing how borders and the environment are negotiated through ecocritical lines of inquiry highlights how literature reconfigures the seemingly anthropocentric concern of borders through an emphasis of our enmeshment in the physical reality of the world.

3

Littoral

Borders in the littoral imagination: rhythmic and material reconfigurations

Ecologically, a littoral zone is defined as an ecotone, a transitional area between two ecosystems shared by their respective biological communities and can be found on the nearshore area of lakes, seas and other bodies of water. Besides describing an ecological contact zone, the littoral also constitutes a cultural and literary field of tension. Ecological understandings overlap with the cultural, political, and literary imaginaries of coasts, beaches and shores. As such, it is frequently caught between tendencies to romanticize shorelines as paradisiacal spaces of leisure and a view of littoral spaces as precarious sites which bear testimony to violent political realities. Beaches and coasts witness the destructive effects of climate change and collect the flotsam and jetsam evidence of global environmental pollution just as they experience the tragic effects of global social inequalities when the bodies of refugees wash up on the shore. Frequently delineating national borders, coastal geographies and their imaginaries are sometimes instrumentalized to reinforce insular national identities and render visible the violent actualities and effects of the policing of borders on a (supra-) national level. The littoral consequently emerges as an acutely relevant form for thinking through the connection between borders and the environment.

In this chapter, I examine the literary affordances of Scotland's littoral zones for an environmental reimagination of borders of all kinds, from the national, to the cultural, to the borders of the human body. The material ambiguity of littoral zones makes them uniquely suited to address the arbitrary, mobile and in-between status of borders and to destabilize the foundations on which they are built. Scholars and writers alike grapple with the conceptual difficulties posed by littoral imaginaries: the terraqueous quality of the littoral complicates attempts to imagine it through a focus on either shores or waters. But it is also this in-between

status of the littoral that creates its special affordances as a literary form. In the littoral, ontological certainties come undone. Thinking with the littoral offers writers the opportunity to address the challenges of locating geopolitical and social borders and to suggest how they may be transformed or rebuilt from dynamic ground as our perspective shifts with the tides. The inherent instability of littoral zones is complemented by the temporal flux of the tidal flows that blur the line of where the land ends and the sea begins, thereby challenging the locational certainty of any littoral border. Focusing on the terraqueous materiality of the littoral highlights the shifting sinuosities of fractal coastlines that make any attempt at establishing clear-cut borders an impossible endeavour.

Before moving into literary terrain, I will outline central theoretical perspectives on the littoral to assess the role of literature in dialogue with them. To highlight what a literary perspective can offer to these wider theoretical debates, I will theorize the littoral as a literary form which allows writers to read borders through the environment. I will then move on to consider the special affordances that arise from thinking the littoral through Scotland by examining a range of literary works from different periods to find out how the littoral form has been mobilized within them to create a multiscalar analysis of borders. These examples are not meant to provide a comprehensive view of the littoral across (Scottish) literary history but shall serve as critical vignettes that indicate the consistently recurring interest in the form of the littoral in Scottish literature. They demonstrate the versatility of the littoral form which may be adapted to different genres and socio-historical contexts while maintaining some key affordances for addressing borders across time. Following this suggestive transtemporal overview on uses of the littoral form, the second section of this chapter will provide a detailed case study of Willa Muir's *Imagined Corners* (1933) which takes a closer look at the aesthetic potential of the littoral form for examining borders through the environment.

Defining the littoral

In an essay printed in Helen Douglas's visual portrait of the Hebridean tideline during ebb and tide, Rebecca Solnit describes the seashore as 'perhaps the only true edge in a world whose borders are mostly political fictions' which, however, defies any notion of the legitimacy of 'natural' geopolitical borders 'by being unfixed, fluctuant, and infinitely permeable' (2001). In response to the visual imagery of the Hebridean tidal zone, Solnit emphasizes that 'the border between

land and sea is not a Hadrian's Wall or a zone of armed guards, it's a border of endless embassies of sandpiper diplomacy and jellyfish exportation, a meeting or even a trysting ground' (2001). Littoral zones invite a questioning of natural/national bordering processes because their iterative submersion provides them with a special in-between status in that they belong to both/neither land and/nor sea (Nail 2016, 3). This in-betweenness of mobile littoral environments that continuously alternate their allegiances between land and sea constitutes littoral borders as 'aterritorial, apolitical, nonlegal, and noneconomic' borders because they can never be fully co-opted by either side (3). They are not, however, lifeless areas but quite the contrary: sentient life thrives in intertidal regions which have a particularly high level of biodiversity. This 'intensification of activity over a border zone' (Allen, Groom and Smith 2017, 6), together with the mobile quality of the littoral zone, makes it a particularly productive site to explore borders imaginatively – not as demarcation lines, but rather as contact zones that demand critical attention to non-human as much as human agents.

Historically, the littoral zone has often been equated with the coast, the beach, or the shore and made to signify an ultimate natural border, a true edge as in Solnit's account above. For countries with coastlines, coasts and beaches often overlap with geopolitical borders and are therefore subject to strict regulations of access policed at national and supranational levels.[1] Due to the sinuous materiality of shorelines, however, the exact location of such coastal geopolitical borders necessarily remains elusive. Developing a concept of borderwaters, Brian Roberts argues against the terrestrial bias underlying dominant understandings of (geopolitical) borders (2021, 24) and instead demands an attentiveness to how 'sea and land are interlapping' in the establishment of coastal and oceanic geopolitical borders (28). The shifting and fractal environmental qualities of coastlines, Roberts argues, challenge bordering practices by producing borders that run counter to Euclidean geography and resist clear measurement:

> [T]he fractal coastline produces non-Euclidean borders that are projected to exist at a distance from the land out in the ocean, with their tangled and tortuous shapes anchored to a non-Euclidean shore that is in constant spatiotemporal flux as waves crash and recede, and as currents erode and deposit, producing a fractal and infinite array of temporally provisional coastlines attendant to a littoral materiality whose fractal sinuosities and inlets evoke an infinite spatial length.
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> (129)

As a result, borders are frequently located offshore rather than directly along the coastline and tend to incorporate seas and oceans into national territory that can be owned and regulated (Gillis 2012, 159). For Roberts, however, this seaward projection engages states 'in natural-cultural, water-human collaborations regarding their territorial boundaries' that do not make their littoral borders any less 'geometrically grotesque' (126).

At present, there remains a striking division between land-based research focusing on the terrestrial formations of the coast, either framing the coast as a geographical and political edge or attending to post-national archipelagic perspectives, and scholarship in the blue humanities which aims to resist the terrestrial bias of coastal studies by their shifting attention towards oceans and seas. While both of these directions are indispensable to understanding the littoral, especially from a socio-political perspective, they most often cannot capture the crucial in-between status of littoral borders. To truly capture the littoral as a site in which environmental and bordering concerns overlap and to examine what emerges at their intersection, what may be needed is a special attention to the terraqueous materiality of the littoral zone. To develop an understanding of littoral borders, then, we may follow the direction of border studies scholars who argue for the border as a 'privileged point of view' (Mezzadra and Neilson 2020, xxi) and adopt a position of 'seeing like a border' in order to gain insights into its workings (Rumford 2012, 895). This includes an attentiveness to what Steinberg and Peters, focusing on the ocean, have termed 'wet ontologies' which acknowledge the 'world of flows, connections, liquidities and becomings' (2015, 248) that becomes visible through the 'turbulent materiality' of the seas (247). What is needed, then, is an invitation to such wet ontologies to transform, and be transformed by, terrestrial matters. The writers discussed in this chapter make use of Scotland's environment and geography in order to develop a littoral form of writing that may best be described as amphibious[2] in its ability to draw on the ontological uncertainty of the border between land and sea in order to address and transform not just political but also social and material borders.

The littoral as a literary form

Ursula Kluwick and Virginia Richter define littoral space as 'a contradictory and unstable signifier' which can take on a variety of socio-cultural, political and aesthetic functions for different people and purposes (2015, 5), while John Mack similarly describes the shore as 'a neutral space, […] awaiting a metamorphic role' (2011, 165). The literary form of the littoral is thus not

merely defined by setting its action near a shoreline. Rather, considering the littoral as a literary form means inquiring into how actual places, geographies and environments bring their materiality to bear upon literary examinations of littoral zones. The form's attentiveness to the terraqueous, shifting materiality of the shoreline shapes the structure and aesthetics of littoral narratives. By allowing the littoral to flow through every element of the narrative, the littoral form brings together a conscious interest in actual littoral zones with formal experimentations that expand the symbolic meaning and function of the littoral as an aesthetic form to a material and socio-political dimension. According to Solnit, 'the seashore also suggests the border between fact and imagination, waking and sleeping, self and other – suggests perhaps the essential meeting of differences, essential as in primary, essential as in necessary' (2001). As a space of metamorphic, contradictory and unstable meaning, the littoral zone appears ideally suited to explore borders of all kinds through aesthetic means.

The literary works discussed here make use of the material, socio-political and aesthetic dimensions offered by the littoral as a transitional contact zone between land and sea to explore borders on all levels from the most 'essential' and ostensibly stable borders between human and non-human to interpersonal borders based on gender, age, or ethnicity. New perspectives unfurl at the intersection between borders and the environment within the littoral zone. By focusing on the imaginative potential emerging from the environmental features of the littoral zones at the centre of their narratives, they demonstrate how these materialities may give rise to a transformative rethinking of bordering processes. Rather than focusing on the landforms characterizing littoral space, Rachel Carson points towards the importance of the watery elements that create the shore, arguing that a true understanding of the shore must be aqueous:

> Understanding comes only when, standing on a beach, we can sense the long rhythms of earth and sea that sculptured its land forms and produced the rock and sand of which it is composed; when we can sense with the eye and ear of the mind the surge of life beating always at its shores – blindly, inexorably pressing for a foothold.
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> (1998, xiii)

While previous critical engagement with the littoral has frequently tended to focus more on the meaning and materiality of ocean-facing landforms, the works discussed here emphasize the watery qualities of the littoral zone highlighted by Carson. They formally capture the rhythms of earth and sea and engage the lively potential of water to transcend geographic and material

borders, including those of the body. In doing so, they make visible a world of water in which multiple human and nonhuman temporalities overlap. Rather than moving away from a concern with dry land, they transform the boundaries between land and water to highlight their connectivity and show how a thinking through the watery, transitional qualities of the littoral may produce a new, more expansive understanding of human politics.

Literary works that make use of the littoral form develop a political perspective akin to the notion of an aqueous ecopolitics as suggested by Cecilia Chen, Janine MacLeod and Astrida Neimanis which considers water as a 'political commons' that includes all life on the planet past, present and future (2013, 6). Aqueous ecopolitics thinks *with* rather than about water, continues to draw connections between human politics and 'politics as concerned also with the (imperfectly surmised) interests of a squeaking, humming, chirping, and pheromone-exuding non-human multitude' (6), and as a result 'might invite more humility and careful listening – while annulling neither solidarity nor decisive action' (7). This aqueous political direction becomes visible in littoral writing both through a foregrounding of the relationship between land and water as a primary concern and the simultaneous encoding of such concerns on a formal level. The aesthetics that results from the use of littoral as a literary form turns the works discussed here into amphibious narratives characterized by a proliferation of watery metaphors, a unique attentiveness to the materiality of water in relation to land, and temporal structures and plots reflecting what Carson describes in the passage cited above as 'the long rhythms of earth and sea'. Even when the subject matter turns towards matters such as social regulations and human politics ostensibly situated on *terra firma*, aqueous relations continue to structure the form of the narrative. Amphibious narratives situate themselves at the very border between land and sea to make use of the ontological uncertainties of this physical and metaphorical site and converge human and non-human rhythms and bodies.

Rather than presenting littoral zones as ideal spaces in which a pure dissolution of borders may be realized without any disadvantages, amphibious narratives carefully assess the potential of the littoral perspective by taking into account its constraints as well as the opportunities it offers. While highlighting the potential of the littoral form to engender new ways of thinking about social relations, geopolitical borders and the legitimacy and exclusionary tensions of borders of all kinds, the literary works discussed here also highlight the dangerous political tensions and precarity surrounding the status of shores and their waters as borders. Even though the literary form of the littoral enables writers

to prise open a space of possibility in which borders may be reimagined as fluid and flexible contact zones that can be moulded in a democratic fashion, they necessarily recognize the political limitations of such an endeavour. The littoral form, in this case, should be seen as a means to highlight how the materiality of (Scotland's) littoral environments reveals them as exploratory sites in which alternative formations of borders may be explored and tested through literary methods, but one which inevitably has its own limitations.

The littoral in the Scottish literary imagination

In 2020 and 2021, Scotland organized the Year of Coasts and Waters celebrating and showcasing Scotland's coasts and waterbodies through a diverse programme that highlighted the role of water for Scotland historically and culturally as represented in music, literature and art. Historically, David Worthington finds that Scotland's geography and location where 'saltwater is never more than fifty miles away' (2017, 3) make it an ideal site for littoral explorations. Scotland's geopolitical/geographical borders are significantly littoral in nature which leads to locational and political uncertainties. On the coastlines, the political borders of Scotland and the UK converge. Geologically, however, the coastal border around Scotland is maybe the most frayed border of the UK, not just because of the unruly irregularities of the sinuous shore of the mainland. The sprawl of dispersed islands in almost every direction around the mainland further complicates a clear location of the border geographically and politically. Many islanders, especially on Shetland and Orkney, have historically sought allegiances across the North Sea, locating themselves outside of mainland Scotland and Britain and stressing their connection with Scandinavia through their Norse past. To the south, the terraqueous connections are not less pronounced: the Anglo-Scottish border runs partly along several waterways. Beginning at the Solway Firth in the west, the border converges with several rivers including the rivers Sark and Esk, Liddel Water, the Kershope Burn and, finally, the Tweed before running into the North Sea to the east. This intersection between political borders and littoral zones creates a set of literary affordances that enable writers to engage with wider debates about littoral borders and contribute new, imaginative perspectives on how they may be reimagined. In the following, I examine a range of pertinent literary works to indicate how the littoral form has been mobilized in Scottish writing since the nineteenth century, paying special attention to the versatile configurations of the form while working out its key affordances.

Carol Ann Duffy's 'River' (1990) situates itself at the bend of a strategically unnamed Anglo-Scottish border river, suggestive of the Tweed, which separates two language communities. The poem examines the border through water and considers how language changes into 'a different babble' as the river turns, highlighting the overlap between natural and political borders captured by the river and emphasizing the border-crossing ability of water. Able to speak all languages, the rivers' water 'translates itself' while 'words stumble, fall back' (99). A border river, Edward Casey argues, should be seen as a 'drifting and shifting border' in which the meaning of natural and national becomes conflated, turning the river into an artificial–natural hybrid (2020, 74). In Duffy's poem, the river similarly takes on a hybrid role with political and linguistic meanings imposed on it, but its fluid instability is soon shown to undermine its bordering effect. A shift in language alone signals the border in the poem, fastened through a sign nailed to a tree next to the river, while the river itself resists its bordering function: the border in Duffy's poem is an arbitrary political construct constituted through conventions and signs. When communication appears to fail on the basis of linguistic differences, the speaker suggests that it may become possible after all by availing oneself of the connective quality of the borderwater. Rather than relying on human language and meaning-making, the speaker asks their readers to imagine building a connection with a woman on the other side of the river by 'dangling your own hands in the water / where blue and silver fish dart away over stone, / stoon, stein, like the meanings of things, vanish' (1990, 99). The linguistically established border may then be overcome through an embodied allegiance with water, by becoming fluent in more than one sense. The final evocation of words written 'on the sand, near where the river runs into the sea' (99) further highlights the volatility of borders built upon the fundaments of human language which is subject to a continual deferral of meaning that can be lost in translation.

Similarly set in the Borders region, though on the western end of the Anglo-Scottish border close to the Solway Firth, **John Buchan's 'Streams of Water in the South' (1896)** explores in more detail the potential for ontological questioning and material repositioning emerging from a littoral perspective which Duffy's poem hints at. Buchan's short story explores littoral borders and the possibilities of crossing them through the relationship between the inhabitants of the Scottish Borders and their environment. The Borders region as portrayed by Buchan is characterized by an abundance of rivers, creeks, burns and other waterways. The littoral perspective frames the story from its onset, in which a ford swells up in the rain and turns into a raging river and thereby highlights

the transitory and shifting quality of riverine littoral zones. The story centres around the unique capability of the tramp Adam Logan to connect with water and to cross (almost) every waterway that he encounters. Logan is nicknamed 'Streams of Water' by the shepherd because of his 'queer crakin' for waters' (59): he not only knows 'every bit sheuch and burnie frae Gallowa' to Berwick' (59) by name but also displays an intuitive understanding of the local streams, being able to recognize them by smell and sound alone. His intimate relationship with water is not merely conceptual but constitutes an affective and embodied bond through which he is transformed whenever he enters a river or ford, becoming 'straighter and stronger' when in touch with their waters (58). On land, Logan appears to the young rover narrating the story 'so bent and scarred with weather that he seemed as much part of that woodland place as the birks themselves' and he silently merges with the non-human world and its elements, not disturbing even the slightest bird by his fluent movement (60). Through Logan's deep intimacy with waters, perceived by others as an increasing obsession, the story reads the Scottish Borders region through its terraqueous qualities with 'a hundred lochs, a myriad streams, and a forest of hill-tops' visible from the hills where the 'ripple of the sea' is audible alongside the constant murmur of 'the rising of burns […] innumerable and unnumbered' (67). When a ford swells into a dangerous river, leaving the shepherds separated from their flock, Logan is the only person able to cross it and get the sheep to the other side.

Throughout the story, it becomes clear that Logan, prior to his final and fatal attempt to cross the Solway Firth, had never encountered a ford that he could not cross. At the end of the story, Logan wanders farther off from his local environment than usual and is encountered by a shepherd on the shore of the Solway Firth. The shepherd explains to Logan that he is looking towards the Atlantic Ocean, a saltwater estuary impossible to cross. Though Logan perceives the smell of the Solway as 'cauld and unfreendly' (67), he is seen wading determinedly into the sea the next morning in a fatal attempt at border crossing. The aqueous border of the Solway is categorically different from the other littoral borders Logan crosses with ease, not only physically, but also conceptually. Choosing the Solway as the final borderwater to be crossed, Buchan taps into a literary tradition of writing about the Solway as a mobile, flexible and dangerously unstable border.[3] Examining a range of Romantic literary works centred around the Solway, David Stewart describes how the mobile littoral landscape of the Solway prompts writers into adapting their ways of writing because its environment resists the neat categorizations of the conventional picturesque experience (2021, 42–3). Even though it is only encountered

towards the end of Buchan's story, the Solway could be said to influence the form of the narrative in similar ways. The undulating rhythm in which the story is told repeatedly returns to the acoustic and olfactory properties and sensory experience of the different waterbodies of the Borders. The changing tides of the Solway are evoked formally in a narrative otherwise temporally fragmented and based around unexpected encounters with Logan, who, as a tramp, remains a crucially mobile character to the end. Like Logan himself, whose mind is 'aye rinnin' on waters' (1896, 66), Buchan's story runs on water, exploring the different ways in which the aqueous can be categorized, understood and crossed. The tragic ending of the story transfers the ontological questionings raised about the nature of borders, water and the connection between human and non-human to the Solway and its double functioning as a natural/national border that may be crossed by some and not by others. Logan's impression of the Solway's smell as cold and unfriendly may be explained through its saltwater materiality, unknown to Logan, but it similarly speaks to the political meaning of the Solway as a border that comes with histories, processes and regulations that could merit these adjectives, a national context merely hinted at vaguely by Logan's exclamation about his home in the Borders: 'It's my ain land […] and I'll never leave it' (64). Exploring the possibilities of border crossings through littoral zones and waters, the short story raises questions about how borders may be recognized and by whom, who is able to cross them, how and why. It points to both the potentiality of littoral zones to allow for the transgression of borders and the limitations of fluid imaginaries. In the end, Logan is buried on his native hills where he lies 'at the fountain-head of his many waters' of which many will flow into the Solway Firth. After his death, Logan's body symbolically and materially merges with the waters he loved during his lifetime and which flow into and across the final and only border he could not cross during his lifetime (69).

Besides examining Anglo-Scottish borderwaters, writers also frequently draw on the littoral form when attending to Scotland's outer edges. By orienting themselves outwards, such works make use of the littoral form to propose new allegiances based on commonalities and stories inspired by shared littoral environments. In the case of Scotland, this results in a literary fascination with Scandinavia from the nineteenth century onwards which continues to influence discussions about Scotland's national and cultural identity in the present. The potential future of Scotland in the Nordic Council was discussed in the context of the 2014 Scottish independence referendum (Little 2014), and writers like

Mandy Haggith picked up on the historical connections between Scandinavian countries and Scotland, as opposed to England. The Anglo-Scottish border remains notably absent in Haggith's *Bear Witness* (2013) which imagines a newly independent Scotland in the process of redefining its national borders and identity. Instead, it is the North Sea border between Norway and Scotland that is crossed by the protagonist and that is found to be easy to transgress when the protagonist illegally smuggles a bear across on a boat. The action continually moves between these two countries (and Romania) and the novel consistently emphasizes the cultural and literary networks between them. A similar engagement with the connection between Scandinavia and Scotland can be found throughout Scottish literary history: from the adventure novels of Jessie Saxby and John Buchan, to George Mackay Brown's poetic novels about the Orkneys and Margaret Elphinstone's historical fiction, to contemporary environmental writing by Malachy Tallack.[4] Navigating national identity through oceanic allegiances rather than land borders and geopolitics, these writers, as Elphinstone argues, 'insist that we review Scotland on the map' and imagine it as 'one of a network of far-flung islands linked together by seaways, so that they become a cohesive cultural, if no longer a political, hegemony' (2006, 110). Even though such projects of remapping and reforming Scotland's political, cultural and literary landscape do not always make use of the littoral perspective, Claire McKeown outlines a literary tradition in which the littoral is employed for a redrawing of allegiances across the North Sea, arguing that 'there is often a specific emphasis on unifying Scottish and Scandinavian cultures through a specific Northern landscape mythology, linked with a proximity to the sea' (2017). In those accounts that make use of the littoral perspective in order to imagine Scotland's connection with Scandinavia, according to McKeown, the Scottish coast repeatedly 'takes on the role of a bridge, providing a point of comparison' for both sides (2017).

Not all stories that imaginatively relocate Scotland based on its proximity to Scandinavia make use of the littoral environmental perspective, but there are some vital examples that demonstrate affordances of the littoral perspective for an environmental renegotiation of borders, among them **Walter Scott's *The Pirate* (1822)**. Scott's novel, set in Shetland (Zetland in the novel) towards the end of the seventeenth century, not only draws on the legacy of historical and cultural connections between the Shetland Islands and Scandinavia, but makes use of the littoral form to destabilize conventional borders more fundamentally. In the nineteenth century, according to Penny Fielding, literature produced

in Shetland, regarded within Britain mostly as 'a distant, wet, isolated and unproductive outpost', is able to foster a northward perspective that 'challenges the national geographic imaginary' (2021, 273). Fielding connects this perspective to Shetland's 'terraqueous condition', outlining how the environment gives rise to what she, inspired by Scott, describes as an 'amphibious quality' that permeates all elements of Shetlandic life, from economy to literature (2021, 275).

In *The Pirate*, the cultural history of Shetland's allegiance to Scandinavia, rather than to Scotland or indeed the UK, is evoked through the terraqueous environment of the islands and their geographical location. Most scholarship on Scott to date has tended to focus on the influence of historical and political debates on his writing and in particular his negotiation of national and cultural borders, thereby neglecting 'the full extent of his contribution to environmental literature and ecological historiography' (Oliver 2021, 1). Scott's mobilization of the littoral form for a negotiation of borders highlights the meaningful contributions of his writing both within and beyond its historical moment. As a novel that is strikingly in tune with contemporary border studies and environmental theories on the littoral, *The Pirate* invites an environmental rereading of littoral borders historically and for the present.

Environmentally, as Susan Oliver argues, Scott's novel creates a Nordic connection through descriptions of 'light effects from around the year in which the Icelandic Sea connects Scotland with Norway to the East and Greenland to the North-West' which serve to present Scotland 'as a location closer in environmental character to the Arctic than to London' (2021, 165). The location and environmental characteristics of the islands embed the lives of Scott's characters into larger planetary relations beyond the national, allowing them, as Oliver puts it, to 'live in a marginal, maritime relationship with sea birds, oceanic life, mythical creatures and forces of weather and water that surround and define their lives' (168). In Scott's novel, weather and water serve as flexible and shifting boundaries that blur conventional geopolitical and social borders. They create a watery landscape that resists any attempt at human intervention, and land-based mobility is consequently limited when the land takes on an 'impassable character' with its 'hills covered with loose and quaking bog' that are 'intersected by the creeks or arms of the sea which indent the island on either side, as well as by fresh-water streams and lakes' (1822, 50). If any notion of a clearly distinguished border between land and water persists after this imagery, it is washed away by the oncoming storm in which land and sea become indistinguishable: freshwater mingles with the seawater swept in by the gale, turning 'inland waters […] into

sheets of tumbling foam' (60). Land and sea, or land and water, are presented as unstable signifiers, describing a space of ontological uncertainty which can rapidly shift from one to the other. In nineteenth-century Shetland, the ontological uncertainty of littoral space 'required particularly careful linguistic management', according to Fielding, as can be seen in the local avoidance of the Shetlandic taboo word 'sjusamillabakka' to describe the space between land and sea (2021, 286). Scott, on the other hand, makes use of the ontological uncertainty of the littoral and consciously draws on the borders between land and sea only to subsequently highlight their transitory nature. This ontological questioning overlaps with the conceptualization of cultural borders when the island's environment proves resistant to the improvement schemes planned by the Scotsman Triptolemus Yellowley who is repeatedly ridiculed for his plans. In resisting Yellowley's regulatory practices, the terraqueous environment forms the basis for Shetland's cultural differentiation from mainland Scotland. In *The Pirate*, Shetland is an in-between space which oscillates materially between land and water and politically between Scandinavia and Scotland. The islands afford a littoral perspective in which 'natural' borders that still appear fixed in other places can be undone and remade through their watery landscape.

As Scott's novel demonstrates, engaging with the littoral requires a different temporal rhythm of life, one in which pathways are continually performed anew, not in a linear fashion but by meandering along and around the watery ways created by creeks, inlets, streams and lakes, especially when the weather turns the islands into a waterscape in which Mordaunt Mertoun struggles 'through brooks that were sending their waters all abroad, through morasses drowned in double deluges of moisture' which requires him to 'perform a considerable circuit' (1822, 61). Instead of inviting regulation practices as proposed by Yellowley, the weather-/water-world of Shetland remains uniquely influenced by the ever-present littoral instability of the environment which influences the stories that are maintained and created on the islands. Scott examines the literary and imaginative affordances created by Shetland's environment and geography through his narrator:

> [T]he imagination is far more powerfully affected by them [myths and legends] on the deep and dangerous seas of the north, amidst precipices and headlands, many hundred feet in height, – amid perilous straits, and currents, and eddies, – long sunken reefs of rock, over which the vivid ocean foams and boils, – dark caverns, to whose extremities neither man nor skiff has ever ventured.
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> (39)

Littoral space in Shetland exists outside of human practices in this passage, figuring as a border between human and non-human, created by an ocean that appears almost agentic and which operates in a space where human and non-human creatures have no influence. Scott had been inspired to write *The Pirate* by the littoral environment of the Shetland Islands that he experienced first-hand during his cruise around the Scottish coast with the Northern Lighthouse Commissioners in 1814, which took him along the coast of Shetland. Paralleling the shaping of the cliffs, caverns and reefs by the ocean, the littoral environment in turn shapes the imagination of the characters and directs the stories told on the islands, just as it can be seen to shape Scott's own novel.

Next to the coastline, the beach is a central setting for the plot development of *The Pirate*: on the beach, the pirate Cleveland first appears, a character who will move the lives of the characters into new directions. The beach witnesses the 'heroic' killing of a whale in which Mordaunt almost drowns but is saved by Cleveland, another important turning point for the story. For the Shetlanders in Scott's novel, the sea not only provides food and economic opportunities, but also supplies them with furniture, clothes and other treasures washed up as flotsam and jetsam from ships wrecking off the coast where the waters are difficult to navigate. In this instance, the beach turns into a liminal borderzone, a heterotopic space in which rules and regulations are suspended and in which greed overrules morality. Shipwrecks are seen as almost fortunate by those who inhabit the islands and who raid the beach for any items that might be of use. The precondition for this to happen is the perishing of the original proprietors of these items, which, under the guise of superstition, leads the pedlar Bryce to refuse Mordaunt assistance in saving the drowning Cleveland 'so that, there being no survivor, [the wreck] might be considered as lawful plunder' (1822, 387). Gender and class distinctions become irrelevant as all characters equally loot the objects washed up on the beach, from pedlar to Udaller (the Norwegian precursor to the Scottish laird). Filling their homes with the clutter collected from the beaches, the interiors of their houses bear 'witness to the ravages of the ocean' (221) and further blur the symbolic distinction between land and sea by serving as a physical reminder of the littoral zone from which they were collected. This practice of allowing the littoral to enter the domestic sphere and witness the everyday lives of the inhabitants even within doors highlights the crucial and all-encompassing influence of the littoral in structuring the lives of the inhabitants.

Differing from accounts that direct their attention towards Scotland's outer edges, be it in the south with the terraqueous Anglo-Scottish border or

northwards towards Scotland's coastal border, **Sarah Moss's *Summerwater* (2020)** draws the littoral perspective inland, away from the edges. Set in a holiday park in the Trossachs on a single rainy day, Moss's novel connects the various perspectives of the makeshift community between the holiday makers and the forest creatures through the materiality of rain. Chapters mediating characters' reflections on issues as diverse as climate change, gender inequality, Brexit, (inter)national politics, family life and mental health are alternated with interludes highlighting the non-human world in an impressionistic and affective way by detailing the geological history of the region, exploring the lives and thoughts of wood creatures and pondering the sentience of trees. The result is a truly polyphonic novel that gives voice to a variety of human and non-human perspectives that the reader is invited to read as if they were in conversation with one another. In its use of the littoral form as a connective element to break down the borders of gender, generation, nationality, species and the body, Moss's novel may best be described as atmospheric, both in the literary and in the meteorological sense.

Central to an expansion of the littoral perspective to include discussions of the aqueous qualities of the earth beyond the shoreline itself, John Gillis argues, is a recognition of land and water as 'inseparable parts of an ecological continuum' of which we also form part (2012, 199). It is this continuum that is at the heart of the weather-/water-world of Moss's novel which highlights Scotland as a country defined by water, not just along its coast, but also through its lochs, rivers and ultimately through the cycle of weather that leads to its rainy climate. This is reflected in the form of the novel, its free indirect style of narration and its structural organization around the shared experience of rainfall which flows between and merges the otherwise clashing perspectives of human and non-human characters. Thinking about the vibrant matter of rain (Bennett 2010, 53), its life and agency, Lowell Duckert argues that 'by paying attention to rainy texts, even if it means slowing down, we can imagine an ontological approach to ecology that builds upon epistemological modes […]' which may provide responses to questions such as 'What stories has rain told? What stories can it tell? What "positions" can it still create?' (2014, 115–16). As a 'rainy text', *Summerwater* indeed explores these questions and makes use of the littoral form to demonstrate how, as Duckert puts it, 'living rain propels (non)human things into new relationships and new material embodiments' (115). Moss's diverse characters are put into relationships not simply through physical proximity but through their individual experiences of rain which shapes their perspectives in

different ways. For some of them, the rain offers the opportunity to engage with watery materiality on a bodily level:

> She thinks of the blood pulsing on one side of her skin and rain on the other, the thin membrane so easily opened, of the threads of blood in water. […] Leaves flutter in the wind and rain, the valves of her heart flicker, currents of water move in the loch below her running feet and rain filters through earth where the roots of oak and beech reach deeper, spread wider, than the trees' height. There are waterways through the soil, aren't there, trickles and seeping, and the branching streams within her body, the aortic river and the tributaries flowing from fingers and toes, keeping her going.
>
> (2020, 18)

This passage highlights an understanding of bodies as permeable and relationally connected to other bodies through water, similar to Astrida Neimanis's suggestion that we consider ourselves as 'bodies of water': 'we leak and seethe, our borders always vulnerable to rupture and renegotiation' (2017, 2). Resembling Willa Muir's *Imagined Corners*, which I examine in more detail later on, Moss's novel makes use of the shared watery materiality between bodies in order to transform borders on a material level before addressing social and political borders. Through the idea of a shared soaky material embodiment, the above passage fosters an understanding of the non-human world as vibrant matter, a world that has a life on its own that is deeply connected with ours. The aqueous quality of human bodies is paralleled and explored through the ubiquity of watery relations on what is perceived as solid ground or *terra firma*, undermining the clear separation between land and water.

Even though scholarship on the littoral predominantly centres on coasts and beaches, the term actually encompasses all sorts of shorelines, including those of rivers and lochs which similarly present ecologically diverse environments. More recently, historical scholars have argued for the value of considering inland water routes as forming part of a littoral perspective (Worthington 2017, 8–9, 13). Scottish literary works such as Sarah Moss's *Summerwater* expand the littoral perspective as a space not just between water and land, but as a transitional zone between solid and fluid, earth and water. According to Gillis, 'if we are to live *with* rather than simply *on* our shores' (2012, 198) we need to acknowledge the fluid nature of *terra firma* by adopting a 'brown-water' perspective (199). The potential of such a brown-water perspective for rethinking conventional ideas about borders is visible not just in the passage above but also in an interlude focusing on the cultural-geological border of the Highland Boundary Fault through a deep time perspective:

> The sandstone to the south was made by seasonal rivers carrying sand and pebbles down from the mountains in the days of the first plants. Was that water brown with the sediment, did it foam? Have the sounds of rivers changed in all those millennia? What was the riverbed, before bedrock?
>
> (2020, 25)

Moving away from common accounts of the Highland line, Moss considers the terraqueous geological history of this border and, by highlighting it as fluid rather than solid, asks us to consider how we might begin to rethink the nature of the Highland Boundary Fault both on an environmental and on a political level. The interdependency of these two categories is demonstrated through the questions raised by elementary deep time perspectives: 'In the beginning was earth and fire. Was there here, then? Was Scotland? Should the history of bedrock comfort us, in geological time?' (25–6). Compared with these watery geological timescales, national borders come to appear insignificant and meaningless. In a novel concerned with the violence that comes with nationalism and the problematic divisions created by social and political borders, the suggestion of a comforting potential of deep time imaginaries raises numerous unresolved challenges. Could there be comfort in the idea that these borders are indeed not 'natural' but constructed, not embedded in the make-up of the earth, which means they may yet be remade in a more democratic and inclusive fashion? Or does human action indeed appear ultimately meaningless in the face of the earth's history which may make tackling these challenges a futile endeavour, a thought that would link this novel to other Anthropocene fiction grappling with the difficulty of scale effects? Scotland's terraqueous environmental history functions as a vantage point for rethinking the political categories that structure geo- and socio-political borders, a connection that repeatedly resurfaces throughout the novel.

The experiences of the characters are embedded in a literary and cultural tradition of thinking through Scotland's waterbodies. Featuring a number of references to historical, cultural and literary figures engaging with the littoral environment of the region, Moss's novel gestures towards a Scottish literary and cultural tradition of thinking with and writing about the littoral in order to address questions about national, cultural and social identity. By evoking the literary and cultural history of the region, Moss inserts her own novel into this tradition. The balancing of tradition and reinvention in which the narrative engages suggests a literary interest in the littoral as consistent and recurring beyond the use of the literary form by individual writers. Locating the holiday park in the Trossachs near Loch Katrine enables the novel to evoke the history

of the region, referenced also in one of its interludes: 'Here was Bonnie Prince Charlie and there was Mary Queen of Scots and Braveheart and Walter Scott and Rabbie Burns and every Scot you've ever heard of, and if Nessie's not in this particular loch we have our own submerged monsters' (97). The region's waters are saturated with stories that appear to frame and limit how they may be understood. After considering the boats traversing the surface of the loch, however, the narrative perspective is submerged through the imagination of sunken coracles, canoes built from trees taken out of the forest, and the 'cow-ghosts' of leather shoes worn by boys who disappeared long ago on the loch (97). Human history and natural history merge as land and water become intricately connected through human activities and natural processes. The loch witnesses the cultural, literary and political, through both the stories in which it is embedded and the untold human/non-human histories below its surface. Through its polyphonic style, Moss's novel is able to include larger, multispecies narratives, producing layered perspectives on Scotland's littoral zones. By simultaneously incorporating and resisting any conventional framing of the loch, Moss suggests a littoral perspective that is both thoroughly atmospheric and urgently political.

Even though *Summerwater* may, at times, '[feel] unburdened, an escape from history' (Morrison 2020), shifting our focus towards the environmental dimension underlying the novel's politics shows that it is decidedly not unburdened or escapist. The witnessing of violent histories and sudden disappearances by the lake is not confined to the past but is repeated in the present when Violetta, a Glaswegian girl whose family immigrated from Ukraine, is bullied by two English children. The passage ends with the suggestion of violence, followed by Violetta's absence during the rest of the novel. A shoe spotted near the shore provides the only clue to what may have happened. The loch below the swing on which Violetta is last seen by the reader is the only witness of the implied incident of ethnic violence. Violetta becomes another child disappearing on the loch side and continues a history of disappearances which, as the novel suggests, have been happening for centuries. In the end, all of the connective qualities of the rain cannot erase interpersonal or interspecies borders as easily as it might at first seem, nor can they prevent the violent events of the novel.

All of the indicative examples discussed here develop formal techniques that are littoral in quality. Employing littoral forms of writing enables them to rethink social questions from new perspectives and to explore the unstable

boundaries between self and other, including on a material and bodily level. Focusing on the materiality of specific littoral zones and their shared ontological uncertainty, they conduct formal experimentations, allowing the littoral to structure the rhythm and direction of the narratives in order to reconfigure bordering constellations. This selective sample of literary works, while not aiming to present a comprehensive view on the use of the littoral throughout literary history, suggests a transtemporal resonance of the littoral form within a Scottish context. The diverse formats of the literary works represented here, encompassing poetry, short fiction and the novel, highlight the versatility of the littoral form and hint at the imaginative possibilities that unfurl at the intersection between borders and the environment.

The case study selected for the final part of this chapter captures the multiplicity of formal arrangements that become possible by mobilizing the littoral as a material, political, social and aesthetic form. Muir's *Imagined Corners* (1931) shows that the practice of mobilizing the littoral should not simply be understood as an aesthetic rendering of a physical place between land and sea, but as a formal exploration of the materiality of littoral zones that is attentive to their multidimensionality. Through an amphibious aesthetics, Muir's novel transposes material and ontological questions onto the socio-political sphere. As a result, the land becomes soaked by aqueous rhythms and philosophies when the fluid relations of bodies on land are made to interact with the watery worlds of the ocean to explore the social configurations of human politics in more detail. In *Imagined Corners*, Muir manages to find a balance between dry and wet perspectives and while the novel highlights both the dangers inherent in thinking with the littoral and the precarious vulnerability of human bodies, it also carefully navigates the positive affordances of Scotland's littoral imaginaries for transforming borders by tackling them at all possible levels, including those of the human body.

'We're only separate like waves rising out of the one sea': Willa Muir's aqueous materialism

Critical forays into Willa Muir's life and writing have revealed the ways in which her work engages with the social and cultural discourses of her time. They highlight Muir's keen interest in social bordering processes by focusing on gender relations (Christianson 1996; 2011; McCulloch 2009, 79–86), her engagement

with psychoanalysis, anthropology and continental philosophy (Christianson 2000; Lumsden 2007; McCulloch 2007), as well as her contribution to the idea of a Scottish Renaissance (Bell 2004, 23–7) and to the wider modernist movement (Bell 2004, 7; McCulloch 2009). Other critical accounts portray Muir as a thoroughly cosmopolitan figure and focus especially on her travels and her work as a translator of German-language modernist texts (Woods 2010; McCulloch 2017; Lyall 2019a). Willa Muir's first novel, *Imagined Corners* (1931), has consequently been understood as a literary text that is deeply involved in human national and social politics, taking up discussions about religion, gender, nationhood, cosmopolitanism, and modernity and exploring them within the context of Scotland at the beginning of the twentieth century. Building on Muir's obvious interest in human politics and philosophy, I want to propose an environmental reading of these politics that takes seriously the material relations in which they are enmeshed.

The novel begins with the move of a young woman, Elizabeth, to the small coastal town of Calderwick in North East Scotland after her marriage to Hector Shand whose family owns the local mill. Having trouble being accepted into the smalltown community, Elizabeth desperately clings to her unfaithful husband who ultimately leaves her in search of a better life abroad. At the end of the novel, Elizabeth finally leaves Scotland herself together with her sister-in-law to begin a new life in southern France. Detailing the lives of the inhabitants of Calderwick, the novel centres on the experiences and thoughts of Elizabeth Shand until her exiled sister-in-law, Elise Mütze (the 'original' Elizabeth Shand) returns from France, after which the novel begins to switch between Elizabeth's and Elise's perspectives. The women exchange philosophical views about life, including the position of women in society, mental illness, religion, music and interpersonal relationships. While all of these debates might be said to focus on matters of human interest, the littoral environment of Scotland's North East functions as a connecting point for their negotiation and crucially influences the direction of the plot and the thoughts of the inhabitants in manifold ways.

Despite being situated near a geopolitical border, the sea border of both Scotland and the UK, the novel's interest is not so much in national politics as in the material and symbolic significance of the coastline. *Imagined Corners* examines borders not as physical dividing lines but explores their function when they are dispersed across society and multiply themselves in the form of cultural and social boundaries along lines of gender, class or religion that are reflected through the materiality of the littoral. Muir's literary borders are best understood

as imaginative constructs through which social boundaries are upheld. In many ways, Muir's treatment of the border anticipates some of the theoretical insights of critical border studies (see Rumford 2012; Nail 2020) but also moves beyond them by involving the environment as a constitutive agent in the creation and/or destruction of borders. Focusing on the littoral materiality of the coast as an in-between space connecting land and sea, Muir projects the environment on discussions of socio-political and philosophical borders. Situated between material reality and symbolic meaning, the littoral environment of the novel urges a rethinking of political issues from an environmental perspective. Seemingly human-centred concerns are environmentally inflected through an emphasis on the terraqueous material relations in which they are embedded, offering a view on the political that goes beyond the human. By mobilizing the form of the littoral, Muir's novel offers a particular way of thinking through Scotland and its borders as embedded in watery relations. At the centre of the novel is an environmental engagement with borders through the relationship between land and sea, fluid and solid: through oceanic metaphors, watery references, tidal rhythms and the dissolution of human corporeality, the narrative explores the ability of water to reroute identity and undermines preconceptions of stability.

I want to begin my discussion of Muir's work by attending to the material context from which the novel's engagement with the littoral emerges. Setting her novel on Scotland's North East coast allows Muir to draw on the metaphoric, contradictory and unstable characteristics of littoral environments. The material border between land and sea takes on an additional metaphorical significance in the novel when Muir maps conceptual and political boundaries onto it: between townspeople and outsiders, repression and desire, religion and spirituality, confinement and freedom. At the same time, the novel retains a sense of the physical materiality of the littoral which informs but also disrupts such metaphorical uses. Following this discussion on the role of the coastal environment, I outline how the novel shows socio-political borders to rely on a reiteration of strictly regulated temporal rhythms which are, however, pervious to the disruptive intrusions of non-human temporalities. While some parts of the novel's discussion appear to centre exclusively on land and others on the sea, the confluence between them and the meandering streams of the narrative's engagement with a terraqueous material world and its different temporalities suggest that land and water are not as separate as we might at first believe. I will pay particular attention to this overlap in the final section, in which I consider how Muir draws out the radical potential of fluid matter to rethink human

corporeality and suggest how thinking with water may be seen as an ecofeminist endeavour. While the focus here appears to lie not on the relation between water and land but seems to shift the discussion entirely towards the aqueous, Muir includes a negotiation of the limits of a purely watery perspective that is equal to her criticism of a purely land-locked perspective. Through an amphibious perspective, the novel suggests that what is needed for a rethinking of borders is indeed a littoral perspective: one that shifts with the ebb and flow of the tides, neither fully submerged under water nor entirely dry.

Coastal environments between metaphor and materiality

The first description of Calderwick depicts the coastal town from the view of the sea as an almost paradisiacal space. This image is neatly woven together with depictions of the beach as a place of middle-class leisure and entertainment, layering different meanings and images of the coast. In early September, a day on which the sea is still warm and inviting to bathers, the air heavy with the 'oily fragrance of gorse blossom and the occasional sharpness of thyme', bathing tourists as well as golfers are sharing the space with sea larks and crows (1931, 1). These images of harmonious enjoyment, however, are revealed as fabrications that resemble touristic postcards and brochures. The narrative simultaneously declares the distancing of the local population from the coastal environment and their assertion of ownership over it:

> All this late summer peace and fragrance belonged to the municipality. The burgh of Calderwick owned its golf and its bathing, its sand and its gorse. The larks nested in municipal grass, the crows waddled on municipal turf. But few of the citizens of Calderwick followed their example.
>
> (1)

This reframing of the relationship between the burgh and its coastal landscape aims to co-opt the environment into legal and political territory to be monitored and regulated. Mineral, plant and animal lives are turned into assets of the community that cater to the leisure industry alongside activities such as golfing and bathing. As the novel shows later on, the non-human resists such easy attempts at co-optation, and they can only ever be achieved partially. The absence of the citizens on the beach is telling because even though Calderwick is situated on the coast, its inhabitants do not truly identify themselves as a coastal community. Not only are they absent from beach activities, but the whole town materially and metaphorically 'turn[s] its back on the sea and the links, clinging,

with that instinct for the highest which distinguishes so many ancient burghs, to a ridge well above sea-level' (1931, 2). This contrastive imagery initiates the iterative metaphorical contrast between the land and the sea which runs like an undercurrent through the novel and forms the basis for Elizabeth Shand's negotiation of her status within Calderwick. For Elizabeth, who, contrary to the rest of Calderwick, 'had a habit of turning her back on the land' (116), the land represents the community with its rules, restrictions and their judgements which, rather than bringing people together, serve only to divide them. For most of the inhabitants of Calderwick, the coastal environment appears undesirable and when the townswomen complain about the wind intruding into the town's streets and rumpling their hair, it becomes clear that the unruly littoral environment disturbs, rather than enhances, their neat and orderly lives (226).

Despite the township's refusal to acknowledge their status as a coastal community and their desire to turn away from the sea, the coastal environment remains an insistent presence in the narrative. The littoral enters the narrative in the form of slippery metaphors which tend to move the narrative away from human politics towards broader material perspectives; it enables the most radical moments of the novel and shapes (for better or for worse) the lives of the characters. For Allen, Groom and Smith, the coast is not only an ecological borderscape, but also a cultural and literary one, 'a site of open-ended cultural inquiry' (2017, 2) in which 'relationships and tensions between geography and culture are felt intensely and are played out dynamically' (5). On the beach, where waves and tides continually shift the boundary between sea and land, as John Mack argues, the quality of the littoral as 'a neutral space, neither properly terrestrial nor yet thoroughly maritime, awaiting a metamorphic role' is particularly highlighted (2011, 165). Walking along the dunes, Elizabeth is enchanted and transfixed by the apparent wildness of the sea which she perceives as liberating, showing her a world of vibrant matter and unrestrained desire:

> The sand was firm and level; the sand-dunes had been curved by the wind as by a slicing knife into clean, exact curves; the long tawny grass above was matted and tufted like the sodden fell of a weary animal. The land was still and quiet, but the sea had not yet forgotten its rage. […] Elizabeth turned her back upon the land and revelled in the recklessness with which the walls of water hurled themselves headlong. Shock after shock of the plunging monsters vibrated through her until she was lashed to an equal excitement and hurled back again the charging passion of the sea. That was the way to live, she cried within herself. Hector and Elizabeth Shand together would transform the world.
>
> (1931, 69)

As an ecotone, a transitional area between two ecological zones, the coast functions as an in-between space, neither entirely unruly with its clean-cut curves, nor entirely orderly in inviting the raging plunges of the waves onto the shore. The metaphorical distinction between land and sea through the contrast between stillness and rage in the passage above invites a psychoanalytic reading of the waves as representing Elizabeth's desires, especially when she is brought to exhilarating passion by watching the hurling waves. At the same time, Muir's characteristically capacious, shifting prose suggests that a purely symbolic reading would be too limited. The vivid description of the coastal environment verges on the fantastic in the imagery of the grassy dunes resembling the body of a weary animal, and the waves moving like reckless monsters suggests the coast as a living, sentient organism capable of degrees of intentionality. But the affective power of the passage shows that, for Muir, the power of the sea is not simply fantasy or pathetic fallacy, but very much a material reality. Even though a large part of Elizabeth's ecstasy derives from her symbolic reading of the sea, her experience is also visceral and registered in language that foregrounds a densely realized, material environment: that of the North Sea, a dominant force in the novel's environment that is frequently described as agentic, even if it is a force upon which parts of the community attempt to turn their backs. Even in moments in which the novel's collection of watery metaphors appears to cater primarily to philosophical ideas of fluidity, the actual material environment flows through the cracks and disrupts the idea that water-inspired language should ever be thought of as outside material relations. Ignorant of the 'earth-life', the connection of all things in the universe in which Elizabeth believes and that 'inspired all poetry, all love, all religion' and which is decidedly terraqueous, Calderwick's inhabitants try to turn the environment into 'a desert of sand fit only for ostrich-like inhabitants', 'arid' and 'desiccated into conventions' rather than embracing the 'spontaneous and natural' perspectives afforded by the littoral (1931, 244). As Chen, MacLeod and Neimanis point out, many philosophical concepts would be difficult to conceive of were it not for water-inspired language and thinking in watery metaphors does not preclude an acknowledgement of the materiality of waters. Rather, metaphorical waters can be linked to corporeal experiences (2013, 10). While not all such metaphorical language is helpful from an environmental perspective, Muir's use of watery metaphors is never purely abstract but asks the reader to acknowledge the links between philosophical ideas, social politics and the materiality of the world. As I discuss in more detail in the final section of this discussion, it is only in complementing symbolic interpretations by an embodied and affective relationship with the coastal

environment and the sea in particular, that Elizabeth is able to connect with her bodily passions and temporarily regain the agency she has lost in trying to fulfil her assigned role as dutiful wife responsible for keeping her promiscuous husband in check.

Elise Mütze, alternately called Madame Mütze/Mrs Dr Bonnet/Elizabeth Mütze née Shand/Lizzie Shand, is only talked about as an absence from Calderwick until she arrives in the town in the third part of the novel. When she is finally introduced, she is portrayed as a person who is 'too good to all the creatures', who worries about the well-being of the stray cats at her villa in southern France before she leaves for Scotland, and who is fascinated with the sea:

> Madame turned slowly round and looked over the sea, marvelling as she still did after three years [in France] at the persistent blue of the water in spite of the grey sky above it. In her childhood she had imagined heaven as a space of luminous blue, […], and the magic of that infantile heaven still cast a glamour over the Mediterranean; for the sea remains changeful and mysterious even to those who are disillusioned about the sky. Yet although the sense of magic suffused Elizabeth Mütze when she looked at the blue sea her characteristic passion for analysis insisted that a colour so independent of the sky must be caused by minute particles of some kind held in suspension in the water. In another person the analytical passion might have dispelled the sense of magic, but Elizabeth Mütze had preserved them both; and on this dull day she wondered as usual whether it was limestone or salt in the water that made this southern sea so magically blue whenever one looked at it with one's back to the sun.
>
> (1931, 145)

The narrative here again consciously shifts between the metaphorical and the material, combining a sense of wonder with scientific interest and shifting from the possible spiritual meanings of the mysterious sea to the physical properties of its actual waters down to the level of minute particles of limestone and salt. The aesthetics of wonder Muir employs in this passage resonates with the writing of her contemporary Nan Shepherd (see Chapter 4). Like Shepherd's Martha Ironside, Elise connects affective and scientific engagements with the non-human world, showing them to be interrelated rather than opposed to one another.

While the Mediterranean Sea fosters a sense of wonder and a desire for scientific understanding, and the Scottish beachscape invites bathing visitors and birds alike, Calderwick's 'fair harbour' (1931, 2) turns out to be not so fair

after all. Characteristically, as Hector wanders down the docks, the harbour is introduced as a site of labour that connects Calderwick to the wider world: '*Elsa*. Kjobenhavn. Copenhagen. Strange, clipped syllables were tossed along the deck, and he listened to them with a vague pleasure in the strangeness. Calderwick wasn't the only place on God's earth after all' (44). This impression of the harbour as a dynamic and fascinating contact zone shifts almost instantly as Hector moves on and transports the reader into its mucky material reality:

> He wandered round the dock, peering into the water. One corner, the corner nearest to Dock Street, which led into the heart of the town, always used to be foul with straw and floating rubbish, he remembered, a nasty, stagnant corner which would be damned unpleasant to fall into. It was still as dirty and foul as ever. On a dark night, he reflected, it would be easy to come down to Dock Street and walk right over the edge into that scum. When he was a child that corner had always given him the creeps. He gazed into the murky water. Better to drown in the open sea than in that stagnant muck.
>
> (44)

Merging metaphorical meaning and material reality once again, the narrative portrays the town's harbour not as a thriving place characterized by the flow of waves, people and wares, but instead as filled with scum, stagnant muck and rubbish, which leads Hector to philosophize that he would rather face the challenge of leaving Calderwick than drown in this 'stagnant muck'. This realization comes back to Hector later in the novel and informs his decision to leave for Singapore. Even though Hector adopts a littoral perspective that acknowledges the terraqueous materiality of the harbour, then, he cannot but see Calderwick as static and unchanging and, significantly, he sails for Singapore not from Calderwick's murky, stagnant waters but from Aberdeen (128).

Challenges to bordering are invited by the coastal environment in various forms, not only in terms of the borders upheld by the community but also in the form of a more radical questioning of the borders of the body and the human more broadly. Even though a symbolic reading of the stagnant waters dominates Hector's thoughts, the narrative again resists a purely metaphorical reading of the harbour's environment. Through its vivid descriptions of the smell and feel of the docks, the narrative insists on the real and material existence of the waters of the dock. It is in this reality of the nasty unpleasantness of the harbour with its dangerous edges, in which the minister William Murray loses his path in a snowstorm and tumbles down, into the very corner that Hector fears, to drown in the murky waters of the stagnant dock. The contrast between watery

metaphors and the materiality of actual waters is highlighted in this scene which directly follows a dream-like vision in which the minister had thought himself steering on a wooden tea-tray along a yellow river both situated in China and signifying to him the river of God (271–2). Directly before his death, dream and reality merge in the minister's mind: he is astonished at the 'the force of the elements' and the snowflakes that 'pelted into his eyes' but only in so far as they resonate with the 'torrent force in the yellow water of his dreams' (273). Too caught up in his dream-like vision, the minister does not watch his steps as he approaches the quay. His firm belief in the body as 'nothing but darkness' and his concurrent conviction that 'the body and the passions of the body could darken the vision of the spirit' (100) lead William Murray to turn away from the corporeal experience and material reality of the snow storm which ultimately causes his death.

Focusing on how the relationality of water 'inaugurates new life' and holds 'the infinite possibility of new communities', Chen, MacLeod and Neimanis are careful to point out that 'water also reminds us that relationality is more than a romanticized confluence of bodies' (2013, 13). Through Hector's reflections and Murray's death, Muir similarly reminds us that actual waters, despite all their connective, life-giving and radical imaginative potential, are not only subject to industrial pollution, becoming 'foul with straw and floating rubbish', but that water is also a potentially dangerous, life-threatening element outside of human control. Elizabeth, looking towards the sea to regain a sense of connection, feels that the waters have betrayed her by taking her husband towards the South Seas, and by leading the minister to his death: 'and if the sea in Calderwick harbour, in his own town, can deceive and drown William Murray, why not? Why not?' (1931, 276). It is not, for Elizabeth, that William Murray drowns in the passive stagnant waters because of his own actions, but rather that the sea is agentic, actively deceiving the minister and orchestrating his death. These narrative interventions of the coastal environment ask us to rethink land-locked perspectives along aqueous lines to gain new perspectives on social-environmental relations.

'Unpredictable and unforeseen': porous borders and nonhuman rhythms

That geography, borders and the environment are intertwined with social politics in *Imagined Corners* becomes visible from its opening paragraph. The small town of Calderwick is located geographically, environmentally and nationally along

the northern latitudes. Northernness becomes an environmental condition that disrupts seasonal and diurnal rhythms, and such a position might even, as Muir suggests with tongue in cheek, condition the Scottish character:

> That obliquity of the earth with reference to the sun which makes twilight linger both at dawn and dusk in northern latitudes prolongs summer and winter with the same uncertainty in a dawdling autumn and a tardy spring. Indeed, the arguable uncertainty of the sun's gradual approach and withdrawal in these regions may have first sharpened the discrimination of the natives to that acuteness for which they are renowned.
>
> (1931, 1)

The overlap between these different modes of situating the narrative is significant for understanding *Imagined Corners*'s treatment of borders and how the novel simultaneously relates and displaces questions of identity in connection with the environment. Muir's attentiveness to the natural light of the North East as a shaping element of Scottish character echoes the importance of light in the novels of Nan Shepherd (see Chapter 4). Like Shepherd, Muir makes use of the affordances of Scotland's geography and environment to suggest how this local environment shapes particular modes of perception while simultaneously resisting a nationalist framing of place. Muir's novel offers a critically nuanced reading of the symbolic connections between the environment and geopolitics by drawing on the ambiguity and potential restrictions of dissolving borders by reading them environmentally. Ideas about the possibility of rethinking national and/or regional borders and identity through philosophical discussion enter *Imagined Corners* through the figure of Elise Mütze who considers Calderwick and its inhabitants through the lens of French and German intellectual debates. While Elise contrasts Scotland's 'Celtic twilight' with the direct light in Southern France which highlights the 'clear, firm contours of the land' and 'made her beliefs sharp and concrete' (1931, 147), this claim, rather than offering a contrast, only seems to echo the 'acuteness' of the Scottish character at the beginning of the novel, refuting the assumption that the environment could be read in nationalist terms. Contradictions such as this one occur frequently throughout the narrative and undermine the possibility of universal meaning-making.

In the novel's negotiation of borders, the perceived solidity of *terra firma* is representative of social restrictions. Gender, class and regional differences are structured around discourses about the confines imposed by the borders of 'civilization' that are reiterated by the novel's psychoanalyst, Dr Scrymgeour, but also taken up by the narration itself:

> Civilization, in binding us to one another with a solid wall, turns into ramshackle structures the private dwellings of our spirits; we lean lopsidedly upon each other and hesitate to complain of encroachment, or to refuse support even when the rooftree is cracking under the strain. We rely more and more upon the wall of civilization to stave off collapse, and less and less upon ourselves. In fact, we live so much upon the wall and so little in ourselves that we do not often know what condition our house is in, or whether it needs repair.
>
> (1931, 130)

This metaphorical passage physically materializes civilization by reading it not as a status maintained within secure borders against the savagery lurking outside but as the border itself. More than that, however, the metaphor focuses on the function of the border to confine people and keep others out. The novel criticizes the behaviour of the 'border guards' of civilization who live 'upon the wall', looking for potential threats from the other side of the border rather than looking inwards at the problems and threats that exist within the community, the internal ills of civilization itself. The passage echoes Sigmund Freud's *Civilisation and Its Discontents* (published in Germany in 1930) which discusses the tensions that arise between communal life (civilization) and the individual.[5] This tension structures the novel as Elizabeth tries to find her place in the small community, an endeavour that appears impossible from the start:

> Human life is so intricate in its relationships that newcomers, whether native or not, cannot be dropped into a town like glass balls into plain water; there are too many elements already suspended in the liquid, and newcomers are at least partly soluble.
>
> (1931, 2)

If the elements suspended in the water represent the townspeople with their strict adherence to rules, Elizabeth takes the solid form of a glass ball. Being partly soluble she is neither able to fully assimilate nor able to disintegrate fully into the waters of the community. Together with the metaphor of civilization as a solidly built wall, this metaphor of Elizabeth's situation draws on the contrast between solidity and fluidity that also characterizes the juxtaposition between land and sea in the novel.

The novel contrasts the solidity of *terra firma* with the liberating potential of the sea through a negotiation of the heterogeneity of time. 'The land' is associated with the community's restrictions including the rhythms to which Elizabeth must submit if she is to be accepted by them. Elizabeth sees the land as something

that is 'still and quiet' in contrast with the raging sea through which desire and freedom can be explored and experienced (69). While the land is characterized by economic rhythms that structure the life of the coastal community, the tidal rhythms of the sea are both regular in following the moon phases and irregular in being subject to climactic change and weather. Calderwick follows a purely economic regime: the environment is transformed into products for consumption and trade through industrial labour. The characters' deliberate rejection of environmental rhythms becomes even more striking in comparison with the way other novels of the period, most notably Lewis Grassic Gibbon's *Sunset Song* (1932), structure the lives in accordance with seasonal cycles. Grassic Gibbon highlights the plurality of overlapping temporalities by connecting natural seasons to agricultural labour and linking the deep time of planetary history with human history. Calderwick, by contrast, clearly favours of a more clear-cut, economically oriented temporal regime of absolute time which leaves no room for local contingencies.[6] Instead of showing an interest in the lingering summer and the uncertainty of seasonal change in northern latitudes mentioned at the beginning of the novel, the town's inhabitants go about their business, because, after all, 'the season for summer visitors was over' no matter the actual weather (1931, 1). The town is too preoccupied with 'its jute mills, its grain mills, its shipping, schools, shops, offices and dwelling-houses' to break out of its daily routine (1–2) and this static regularity of industrial rhythms is contrasted with the fluidity and unpredictability of non-human rhythms of life. Even the diurnal rhythms of the sun, which the novel introduces to its readers as uncertain and unpredictable at first, are submitted to the illusion of an orderly economic regime when Sarah Murray expresses her satisfaction that '[t]he orderly life of Calderwick was keeping pace with the ordered march of the sun' (7). The orderly life mentioned here is centrally dictated by middle-class sensibilities rooted in a firm belief in the institutions of work, marriage and family. Those characters who, for various reasons, fail to comply with the pretensions of propriety resist the demands of a Protestan work ethic, feel stifled by the imposition of this rigid socio-economic regime. Notably, these are also the newcomers or returnees to the Calderwick who had the chance of experiencing life outside the confines of the township. When Ned Murray returns to Calderwick, he is unable to adjust to the rhythms of the town and his traumatized mental state is explained by the vague reference to an 'imperfect civilization' (206). The border of 'civilization' which bounds the community is shown to be maintained in part through these economic daily rhythms.

Despite the resistance of the township, however, non-human temporalities enter the narrative and engender transformative political effects. In considering the major forms that structure social, political and aesthetic arrangements, Caroline Levine lists temporal rhythms as one of the most common and pervasive forms, describing how such forms are often routinized through repetitive temporal patterns and fulfil a double function:

> Terrifyingly, rhythms reveal opposing affordances: on the one hand, they can produce communal solidarity and bodily pleasure; on the other, they can operate as powerful means of control and subjugation. Whether imposing a temporal order on bodies or labor, sounds or machines, rhythmic form has the potential to do serious political work.
>
> (2015, 49)

The opposing affordances which Levine identifies map almost seamlessly onto the interplay between non-human and human temporalities in *Imagined Corners*. As Levine argues, 'rhythms […] can be put to strategic ends and have the potential to work with and against other forms to surprisingly transformative political effect' (52). Such transformative effects occur, in the novel, in moments when non-human temporalities enter the narrative. Levine mostly employs her 'rhythmic form' in the plural, highlighting 'the multiple patternings of time' created by a plurality of converging temporal structures which 'often thwart or compete with one another' (51). As Christianson points out, Muir 'uses Bergson's idea of motion and continuous change in the passage of time and the flux of consciousness […] as an enabling image for Elizabeth's state of division' (2000, 93). Muir applies Henri Bergson's ideas in her novel to attend to the non-human. Drawing on Bergson's fluid concepts of time and consciousness to highlight the multiplicity of coexistent temporalities, she connects her literary engagement with temporal rhythms with her keen interest in the materiality of littoral environments. The multiplicity of coexisting rhythms and their often contradictory and competing nature is drawn out creatively by Muir's novel in moments when fluid non-human temporalities seep into and disrupt the orderly and rigid dynamics of social and economic regimes of time. The narrative explains the necessity of following daily economic routine by the fact that Calderwick's human inhabitants have civic and economic responsibilities that go beyond those of the non-human occupants: 'The larks, the crows and the gulls, after all, were not ratepayers' and '[i]t is doubtful whether they even knew that they were domiciled in Scotland' (1931, 2). Any attempts of the inhabitants to claim ownership over the environment are, however, shown as ineffective: the

non-human cannot be bound by the regularity of economic, legal and national frameworks. This contrast between human and non-human temporalities is used to question the legitimacy of imposing civilizing structures on the environment. In alignment with Levine's ideas on the workings of rhythms, Russell West-Pavlov calls for an attentiveness to the 'immense heterogeneity of temporal processes immanent to the world and its various human and non-human (animal, vegetable, mineral) inhabitants' (2013, 53). Recognizing the various human and non-human actants which, through their interaction, create a meshwork of temporalities beyond universal notions of time, West-Pavlov claims, will enable us 'to re-find our own humble but exhilarating place within this complex but democratic order of immanent flows of becoming' (157).[7] The narrative recognition of the multiplicity of converging temporalities and non-human rhythms, which remain largely unacknowledged by the majority of Calderwick's inhabitants, means that non-human perspectives surface at often unexpected places in the novel and disrupt the regularity of societal rhythms: in the narrative's reflection on whether boredom is a human affliction or rather common to humans, animals and plants alike (1931, 81), and in Elizabeth's musings on death and the momentariness of human life evoked by the falling of leaves in autumn (118–19).

These convergent temporalities offer a more fluid and environmental understanding of place as made up of a variety of human and non-human forces alike. The agency of the non-human emerges despite being either unrecognized or consciously repressed. Aside from smaller, momentary intrusions of the non-human, the narrative offers instances of a deliberate and detailed environmental reframing of place through species histories and deep time imaginaries. In contrast to the community's wilful ignorance of such connections, Elise, returning to Calderwick after years of absence, appears particularly conscious of the inseparability of human and non-human lives. This acknowledgement of the non-human characterizes Elise's perception of the world in her contemplation of life *sub specie æternitatis* as she travels to Calderwick in an express train and reflects on the impressions of the outside world rushing by:

> Children stop playing in the dust to wave a hand; startled small animals lift their heads; in one continuous movement she experiences countless disconnected existences, bound to their environment and changing in nature, in occupation, as that changes. Thickly cultivated ground, lonely waste, wayside village and spreading city all spoke to Elizabeth Mütze in their own voices as the train sped on, and by the time that darkness fell she had become a passive listener.
>
> (1931, 148)

Even though the train moves in a linear fashion, Elise's thoughts branch out horizontally as the world unfolds in front of her eyes. The fast movement of the train allows Elise glimpses of other lives that she begins to connect within a relational meshwork of life. Instead of trying to interpret the momentary snapshots of the scenes she perceives or using these impressions to philosophize about her own life, Elise abandons her subjecthood by becoming a listener and lets the world communicate in its own voice. She does not attempt to take conceptual ownership of what she sees and refuses to order this impression of life as mobile and ever-changing into a linear, teleological narrative that would suit the requirements of absolute time. In Elizabeth's perspective, the reference to 'the land' predominantly functions as a guiding metaphor to signify a land-locked mindset as opposed to a seabound perspective which opens up to fluid reimaginings of identity. For Elise, however, terrestrial environments are not merely solid but fluid, moving and changeable. It is significant that even though the reference to 'the land' does not always signify an environmental understanding, the deep time perspectives they offer make terrestrial environments indispensable for a rethinking of place that disrupts anthropocentric patterns of thinking. As Elise looks down on Calderwick from the rim of the elevated moor she views it through non-human temporalities and rhythms, considering the manifold layers of human and non-human histories that make up the place:

> In the hollow beneath them lay Calderwick, with its spires and chimneys pricking up through a faint haze of smoke, and behind it the plough-land, cut into rectangles, titled upwards towards the rim of hills. The masts of fishing-smacks could be seen lying along the jetty; the little river flowed invisibly along the foot of the ridge on which they were standing. It was a spacious and peaceful landscape, filled with light. Elise, as she looked at it, was divesting it of civilization, restoring its forests, its swamps, its naked moors and sandhills. Unpredictable and unforeseen, she was saying to herself, thinking alike of the new self she had discovered and of the new character that humanity had impressed on the landscape before her during the past two thousand – four thousand – she did not know how many – years.
>
> (244)

In this imagery the hills and river sit alongside human industry which is described as a combination of chimneys reminiscent of industrial development, agricultural plough-lands and fishing smacks, reflecting on different kinds and levels of humanity's imprint on the landscape. Revisioning this familiar

landscape through non-human temporalities reveals to Elise the incredible impact of human habitation on the environment. Even though there is no critical reflection that would either add value to or criticize this development, the passage nevertheless demonstrates that human history does not follow a clear, linear and foreseeable development, but that it is more complicated and unpredictable than such teleological linear views of history and time would suggest. Against a community that tries to establish boundaries through orderly, linear, economic rhythms, Muir includes non-human temporalities that are allowed to speak for themselves in her narrative, offering a counter-voice to anthropocentric understandings of time and place.

The potentials and limits of the aqueous imagination

Interweaving social, national and environmental politics, the novel turns from terrestrial to watery matter to develop an alternative vision of bordering that corresponds with what Chen, MacLeod and Neimanis conceptualize as an 'aqueous ecopolitics', a multispecies version of politics enabled by a thinking with water (2013, 6). The novel's engagement with water builds on the notion that human and interspecies borders are porous and it explores our watery relations in increasingly radical ways by imagining the solubility of selfhood and human corporeality. Through her fictional experiments, Muir could in many ways be regarded as a pioneer of an early strand of material ecofeminism. Drawing together perspectives from a range of material ecofeminist theorists, Stacy Alaimo argues that while their theories 'take social constructions seriously, by insisting that culture profoundly shapes what we experience, see and know', material ecofeminism is also deeply invested in exploring 'how nonhuman nature or the human body can "talk back," resist, or otherwise affect its cultural construction' and ask us to 'radically rethink materiality, the very "stuff" of bodies and natures' (2008, 242). Human corporeality, biology and the cultural construction of female bodies through natural discourses are central to Elizabeth's spiritual engagement with the aqueous. In contrast to William Murray, Elizabeth does not believe body and mind to be separate: 'I can't think of my spirit without feeling that it's even in my little finger' (1931, 100). In its consistent attendance to the material world, Muir's novel displays a distinctly ecofeminist quality: Elizabeth's growing awareness of her corporeality is central to her ability to perceive and harness the energy of watery relations and to allow her body to 'talk back'.

Through Elizabeth, the narrative takes a plunge into a watery form of writing and develops a radical aqueous aesthetics that blurs corporeal boundaries and rethinks agency in relational terms. In thinking with water to explore feminist politics and its connection to cultural constructs of Nature, the novel establishes a dialogue between human and environmental concerns and reveals them to be deeply intertwined. 'We're only separate like waves rising out of the one sea', Elizabeth exclaims having been inspired by a night-time vision of herself as a body of water (192). Neimanis proposes that a rethinking of human embodiment along lines of water, that is a consideration of humans as bodies of water, 'stirs up considerable trouble for dominant Western and humanist understandings of embodiment, where bodies are figured as discrete and coherent individual subjects, and as fundamentally autonomous' (2017, 2). This is indeed the case for Elizabeth, who loses a sense of her body as a clear and autonomous entity. When she masturbates in bed, she imagines a shadowy vision of herself hovering above which she describes as 'an overlapping of vibrations rather than a solid form, and the vibrations extended beyond the farthest stars' (1931, 174). This vibrant notion of her body, characterized by physical sensations of pleasure, elicits an understanding of her corporeality as fluid through the visceral imagery of waves and tidal currents:

> One end of this shadowy projection had long, slow, full waves; that was the body and its desires. At the other end were short, quick waves; these represented the mind. […] The firmness of sandy soil, the coolness of short grass on the naked foot-sole, the wet softness of drifting leaves in a ditch, all the sensations her feet had ever experienced, seemed to become a part of her again, and drew her down through her feet until she was the earth and all that grew upon it. Her blood ebbed and flowed with the tides of the month and the tides of the seasons, and she was no longer separate in her own body but a part of all life.
>
> (1931, 174–5)

In this passage, the human body becomes a node in a meshwork of relations. Drawing on biology and neuroscience, Tim Ingold suggests that looking at the human body as an organism that is not limited by the skin will make us aware of its leakages and reveal that the body inhabits a 'fluid space' characterized by 'substances that flow, mix and mutate' (2011, 87). In this space, the body becomes permeable, part of a meshwork that encompasses littoral environments: 'Every line – every relation – in fluid space is a path of flow, like the riverbed or the veins and capillaries of the body' (87). Muir's contemporary Bergson describes

the nervous system as a transmitter 'composed of an enormous number of threads which stretch from the periphery to the center, and from the center to the periphery' (Bergson 1896, 45; Ingold 2011, 87). Elizabeth's vision speaks to this understanding of human corporeality when the flow and the rhythms of her menstrual cycle are connected to the cycle of the moon and seasonal change, showing that these human bodily flows are inseparable from nonhuman temporal rhythms. The long and quick waves, as bodily sensations of female pleasure, evoke the rhythms of neurotransmission which connect mind and body.

Through her connection with water, Elizabeth tries to reclaim her agency and self-confidence after a period of scornful gossip about her inability, and unwillingness, to change her husband's immoderate behaviour. Elizabeth's engagement with the sea is linked to this strained relationship with her husband with whom she can only connect on a corporeal, instinctive level. Even though she does not regard mind and body as separate, Elizabeth slowly realizes that her relationship with her husband is based on bodily passion rather than shared intellectual interests: 'inside a room, in the world of talk, of articulate expression, […] Hector was trivial. Out of doors, with no roof but the sky, he was like an impersonal force' (1931, 175). As a result, Elizabeth repeatedly tries to locate Hector in the material realm with which she can easily establish a connection:

> They were both wild and passionate; they wanted the whole of life at one draught; they would sink or swim together. Images flowed through her mind: in the air or under the sea or rooted in the earth she saw herself and Hector living, growing, swimming, breasting the wind together.
>
> (50)

The metaphoric imagery in this passage moves between solid, gaseous and liquid elements and infuses everything with water. Air, sea and earth are all equally fluid or solid for Elizabeth in this passage and in her mind, she moves freely between these elements. Through this terraqueous imagery in which solid and fluid become flexible concepts, the bodies of Hector and Elizabeth become permeable and immersed in the relational meshwork of the world. At the same time, Hector is indeed turned into an 'impersonal' force in such encounters, de-individualized and disconnected from the actual person of her husband. Increasingly, as Hector's actions become more hurtful to Elizabeth, the two figures merge into each other and the actual Hector disappears behind his own creatureliness when Elizabeth notes that 'his hair was like grass, his shoulders […] were mountain ridges' (237). That this description of Hector in the most

fluid passages of the novel appears terrestrial rather than aqueous and returns us to the mountainous solidity of the land is telling. While this metaphor serves to remind us of unbreachable distance between Hector and Elizabeth even in the fluid space of her imagination, it also suggests that the sea cannot be conceived of as entirely separate of the land but that they exist in relationship of a dynamic interplay.

In such moments in which Elizabeth is successful in assimilating Hector with the universe, she feels that an 'invisible current flowed apparently unbroken around them' (237). Through these explorations which are based around the aqueous imagery of flows, the narrative imagines ways of harnessing the 'disturbing potential' of our unruly relations to water, which, as Chen, Macleod and Neimanis discuss, allows us to 'situate ourselves in ways that challenge land-based preconceptions of fixity' (2013, 8). By tracing her connections with Hector through their shared being as bodies of water, Elizabeth aims to overcome the fixed notions of their identity and relationship that the township attempts to impose on them and their bodies. For Neimanis, '[w]atery embodiment thus presents a challenge to three related humanist understandings of corporeality: discrete individualism, anthropocentrism, and phallogocentrism. We also note that these three "isms" are all deeply entangled, mutually enforcing the claims of each other' (2017, 3). In Elizabeth's holistic visions, heterosexual, reproductive and gender expectations lose their relevance, vanishing below the material imagery of flows and bodies dissolving into matter. The challenges to this phallogocentric logic resonate with the absence of motherhood in the novel (McCulloch 2007, 90), Elise's rejection of compulsory heterosexual reproduction (1931, 215) and the suggestion of a queer ending of the novel in which fulfilment and social change can be found outside the heterosexual matrix.

In describing Elizabeth's ecstatic connection with the universe, Muir shares in the modernist interest in holism which, rooted in the first-wave feminism of the nineteenth century, established 'a critique of the atomistic individualism and rationalism of the liberal tradition', proposing instead 'a vision that emphasized collectivity, emotional bonding, and an organic (or holistic) concept of life' (Donovan 2007, 65). Modernist visions of holism, as Bonnie Kime Scott suggests, express a certain 'hope that, by returning to the primordial, the semiotic, or material, […] a different cycle of human nature may arise' (2009, 222). While availing itself of the radical potential of the material world, however, *Imagined Corners* rather suggests that a simplistic return to the primordial would be a step in the wrong direction. Elise strongly counters the holistic critique of individualism and rationalism, exclaiming that her individual identity is exactly

what she would never surrender. Elise believes that, in losing herself through her holistic spiritualism, Elizabeth relinquishes her agency and risks drowning metaphorically in a sea of sameness:

> Your universal sea out of which we all rise is too featureless for me. If I have risen out of it, which is possible, I'm not going to relapse into it again. The separate wave-top is precisely what I am anxious to keep. […] I maintain myself in the teeth of all indeterminate forces. This wave-top, this precariously held point of separateness, this evanescent phenomenon which is me, is what I live to assert …. And should I like to know why you want to drown yourself?
>
> (1931, 194)

The most explicit critical engagement and rejection of holistic ideals emerges through a lengthy debate between Elizabeth and Elise about the material/metaphorical power of the non-human world and its instrumentalization in patriarchal constructions of Nature:

> People who urged intelligent men and woman to go 'back to Nature' were merely imbecile, in Elise's opinion. It was no use trying to drive either oneself or Calderwick back to Nature; if one wanted to drive anywhere it should be towards a more enlightened understanding …. In short, civilized mankind was what it was, good or bad, mainly through its own efforts, and might develop in the most unexpected directions if it were encouraged to trust its intelligence and to outwit Nature wherever it could. Elizabeth […] protested against the use of the expression 'to outwit Nature'. […] Nature was too strong, too cunning; one had to filch from her the energy for one's own purposes. Especially if one was a woman.
>
> (245–6)

In this passage the novel takes a step back from its imaginative engagement with water and the material world, evaluating it from a critical point of view that draws on the gendered dimensions of cultural constructions of Nature. For Elise then, neither a deep ecologist 'return' to Nature nor a spiritual transcendence of it can provide an answer because both perspectives overlook the gendered histories of human relationships to the environment in which the domination over women and the non-human alike has long been justified by linking them and portraying both as irrational, instinctive and passive.[8] Patriarchal constructions of Nature occur throughout the novel to underline Elise's criticism and are usually tied to the superstitious beliefs she references, for example when Hector wonders whether it is true 'that a stallion or a gelding can swim for hours if need be,

while a mare must inevitably fill up with water and founder' (263) or when Elise tells her family about her maid's biblical fear of snakes (159). To 'outwit Nature' for Elise, then, means to outwit the cultural construction of Nature used to legitimize patriarchal power.

After drawing out the radical potential of thinking with water, the novel cautions about the limits of such fluid imaginings. Even though 'Elizabeth's world was in flux', we are told that she is unable to consider this Bergsonian phenomenon with a scientific distance and instead 'felt as if she were drowning in it' (1931, 115). As in the drowning of William Murray, an overreliance on watery metaphors is presented as dangerous and the dialogue between Elizabeth and Elise functions to balance environmental experimentation with political reality, reminding us that 'although [Elizabeth] had turned her back on the land it was still there, quiet and unshaken' (69). At the same time, it is important to recognize that the constructions of Nature which Elise criticizes, and which Muir significantly writes with a capital N, differ crucially from the littoral materialities shaping the novel. Discussing the manifold possibilities water offers for a rethinking of material relations and corporeality, Chen, Macleod and Neimanis warn that 'an over-emphasis on fluid concepts can obliterate important theoretical and material distinctions' when the language of cross-border 'flows' disguises the regulatory mechanisms and material effects of borders (2013, 11). Through dialectic intervention, Muir's novel highlights exactly such theoretical and material distinctions: the voice of Elise balances the narrative's exploration of fluid concepts and watery materialities with a critical view on the political realities that continue to structure the lives of both women. Even the more radical explorations of human corporeality through the connection with the aqueous cannot ultimately be thought of as entirely outside the realm of human politics.

At the same time, it is Elizabeth's perspective on the world, her view of the universe as a meshwork of relations and her ability to recognize herself as a body of water and to reveal the porosity of corporeal borders by entering into relations with the nonhuman world, that bring about this balancing act in the first place. Thinking about the interconnections between human and non-human bodies, according to Alaimo, 'may catalyze the recognition that the "environment", which is too often imagined as inert, empty space or as a "resource" for human use, is, in fact, a world of fleshy beings, with their own needs, claims and actions' (2008, 238) and this recognition is exactly what the novel achieves through the littoral form. While the critical interventions undertaken through Elise caution against overstating the opportunities to rethink environmental relations explored by

the narrative's engagement with water, they do not undermine their radical potential. The narrative hints at the complexities of what is at stake and evades making a didactic argument or advocating for any one truth. Elise's view, while ostensibly straightforward, is ultimately less firm than it might seem. Reflecting on Elizabeth's ecstatic musings and fascination with the sea, Elise is reminded of the religious feelings the chorus of Beethoven's *Ninth Symphony* evoked in her and concludes that 'Elizabeth gets more out of *hers* than mass emotion […]. She hurls herself into it impetuously … But how alive she is! She goes on living in me and excites me to rhapsodizing about choruses' (1931, 218). In the end, Elise admits, listening only to one's own views, 'one remained perched on a high fence without any incentive to descend on either side of it' (280). Together, she declares, the two women may 'clear away stones of prejudice and superstition so that other girls might grow up in a more kindly soil' (281). Even if, as Elise claims, 'one need not be completely submerged even by billows rising from the sea' (245), allowing oneself to be carried along with the waters may encourage a rethinking of borders from the national to the body.

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Like the critical vignettes discussed earlier, Muir's novel makes use of the terraqueous materiality of Scotland's coastal edges to examine and reconfigure borders through a littoral perspective. By shifting between the metaphorical and material affordances of the littoral environment of the North East, *Imagined Corners* (1931) shows human politics to be deeply enmeshed in and shaped by the world. Rather than accepting and reinforcing a clear b/ordering of the world according to societal norms and rules, Muir shows these b/orderings to be embedded in watery relations and suggests how an environmental engagement with borders may serve to reconfigure borders that are perceived as unjust and exclusionary. While she draws heavily on watery language and metaphors, Muir simultaneously remains aware of the limitations of philosophical notions of fluidity and cautions her readers that a purely aqueous perspective may not bring the desired results. Instead, she reminds us that long-established social borders are not easily dissolved. Through the interaction between Elizabeth, who believes strongly in the liberating potential of a seabound imagination, and Elise, who recognizes the force of the social norms that structure their life on the land, the novel suggests that the most productive political effects may emerge exactly at the point of connection between sea and land: in the littoral zone.

4

Planetarity

Writing the earth: planetarity as a literary form

The notion of planetarity has become of central importance to today's environmental movement and the conceptualization of the current geological age of the Anthropocene in which humanity's impact on our planet's geology and ecosystems has been widely proven and acknowledged. More so than global and transnational approaches, planetarity asks us to take agents beyond the human into consideration and to expand our perspective towards the animal, vegetal and mineral agents with which we share this planet. The Anthropocene requires us to rethink our frames of reference and to adopt a planetary perspective, but this imperative is accompanied by a range of conceptual and practical difficulties. As Timothy Clark argues, even though '[t]he planetary scale of the Anthropocene compels us to think and act as if already citizens of a world polity', it is often the opposite that happens when acknowledging the environmental crisis becomes 'a matter of political allegiance' and of personal opinion (2015, 10). Environmental justice has become a central theme in debates about environmental governance, conservation, climate change and related migratory movements, connecting environmental concerns and border politics by demanding we look beyond national borders and take responsibility for scale effects: the unintended effects of our actions on other parts of the planet. Part of the difficulty of conceptualizing planetarity has to do with the impossibility of evaluating the effect even small, seemingly insignificant things may have when, as Clark puts it, 'the Anthropocene manifests itself in innumerable possible hairline cracks in the familiar life-world' (9).

In this chapter I will address the theoretical and conceptual difficulties that arise in the context of planetarity and suggest ways in which literature may contribute to current debates. Even though I do believe that understanding planetarity is not only a matter of politics but of the imagination, I am sceptical

to call what we are experiencing in the context of the environmental crisis and bordering processes a 'crisis of the imagination' that haunts literature as Lawrence Buell (1995, 2) or, more recently, Timothy Clark (2015, x) and Amitav Ghosh (2016, 9) would have it. Rather than appearing overwhelmed by the burden of having to find better ways to communicate planetary realities, the literary works I consider in this chapter engage with planetarity in creative, playful and critical ways. They make use of the affordances of Scotland's geography, environment and history for a rethinking of borders, from the geopolitical to the material, along planetary lines. And while they grapple with conceptual challenges, they do not provide neat solutions. Rather, they capture and embrace the messiness, confusion and contradictions that come with adopting a planetary perspective and invite their readers to engage in the sometimes-disorienting process of making sense of their position on a shared planet.

In order to locate the potential intervention of literature, I will begin by outlining current theoretical debates. I then propose planetarity as a literary form that allows us to better understand the relationship between borders and environmental concerns. Following this, I outline the particular affordances of Scotland's historical, environmental and geographical situation by looking at a range of literary texts from different periods and how they develop a planetary form of writing by thinking through Scotland. These critical vignettes highlight the key affordances but also the versatility of the planetary form which has been mobilized in a variety of different ways to address the relationship between borders and the environment. After considering the different literary configurations of the planetary across time, I will use the second part of this chapter for a case study of two novels written by Nan Shepherd, *The Quarry Wood* (1928) and *The Weatherhouse* (1930), which will provide a detailed view on how planetary methods of writing may be used to explore borders through the environment.

Defining planetarity

In the twenty-first century, the planetary is often understood as a geographic scale. Similar to the scale of the region, nation, continent or indeed the global, it is described to encompass the planet as a whole. Scale is a useful concept for acknowledging the impact of humanity on the planet in the Anthropocene. By describing the unintended environmental effects of our actions on a larger scale, the notion of scale effects helps us reconsider individual and collective human agency in the context of the climate crisis. At the same time, scale should not

be misjudged as a purely descriptive term. Rather, scalar thought is implicated in power relations that can become obscured if the term is used without differentiation. Using the concept of scale risks confounding the planetary with the global, a term that has been criticized for its frequent use in the service of neoliberal and imperialist agendas. Hannes Bergthaller and Eva Horn (2020) define the planetary as a theoretical subcategory of scale. In their book, scale is the overarching concept that can be subcategorized in matters of the planetary (which, for them, are mainly spatial) and matters of deep time (encompassing the temporal dimension of scale). While this allows them to dedicate more space to the individual spatial and temporal aspects relevant to thinking about the Anthropocene, when considering the planetary as a literary form, deep time cannot so easily be separated into a different category. In the context of the literature of Scotland, which has often been conceptualized as regional, rural, or even provincial, the planetary can only rarely be understood as a spatial category. Instead, planetarity often manifests as a desire to explore local human history through deep time imaginaries.

In his reading of Anthropocene literature, Timothy Clark makes use of the concept of scale to propose a multiscalar methodology of reading literature which suggests that we should read on multiple scales at once in order to make sense of the manifold ways in which the Anthropocene manifests in our lives and within literary texts (2015). In order to focus and direct such multiscalar reading, Clark notes that we should 'read and reread the same literary text through a series of increasingly broad spatial and temporal scales, one after the other' (97) and proposes three scales to be used for this purpose: the personal scale of the narrator, the cultural scale that includes both historicity and spatial or geopolitical location within a national culture, and the 'larger, hypothetical scale' of the planetary which encompasses the whole earth (99–100; 100). Reading at this latter, planetary scale, according to Clark, constitutes an act of '*unframing*' the first two scales by making them appear incongruous and incoherent, and by highlighting their shortcomings in understanding the realities of the Anthropocene (104). Clark's focus on scale is useful to detect the multiple levels at which texts can be read within an Anthropocene framework. In case studies, Clark reveals the recurrent limitations of environmental readings of canonical texts which, he posits, have continued to privilege nationalist readings or a focus on psychological exploration over an interest in developing a truly planetary reading practice. However, despite the allure of multiscalar reading and its promise to read across scales, and to derange them through a consideration of the planetary as an act of unframing, there remains in Clark's

work an artificial separation between scales that is embedded in power politics and value hierarchies: Clark dismisses critical attention to the personal scale as 'naïve' (99) and a focus on the cultural scale as 'methodological nationalism' which disguises the damaging parochialism of particular texts (102). In the end then, the desire to discover how these scales overlap and layer the experience of planetarity is discarded. Instead, the scales of the local, national, global and the planetary are played out against one another. Clark's planetary scale only ostensibly encompasses and layers all the other (more geopolitical) scales that he offers. The shortcomings of thinking through scale become visible once the limit is reached, when the reader needs to stop in their path and say, 'now I'm moving on to look at this other scale', separating scales into categories with clear-cut beginnings and ends.

While scale as a concept can be very useful, and multiscalar reading may allow us to detect a range of different meanings in texts that have so far been read only within a limited context, it is important to be aware of these shortcomings. Reading the literature discussed in this chapter solely through scale would not do justice to the explorative interventions of these works which aim to think beyond scale by acknowledging that the multiple layers of planetarity cannot easily be categorized and made to fit neatly into geopolitical categories. The neat separation into scales, these texts show, is neither possible, nor desirable. The confusion that arises from the impossibility of thinking about the planet within commensurable scales is embraced by these writers and turned into an aesthetics that speaks to lived experiences of planetary realities. Criticizing the prominence of scale in current thinking about the planet, Anna Lowenhaupt Tsing develops a theory of non-scalability to challenge 'the false belief that both knowledge and things exist by nature in precision-nested scales' (2012, 523). According to Tsing, scalability is connected to a neo-imperial, neoliberal mindset of endless growth and leaves ruins in its wake because it erases heterogeneity, imagining the world as ordered into 'uniform blocks, ready for further expansion' (505). Tsing's theory fits the creative practice of the Scottish writers considered here who understand planetarity not as scalable form but instead show it to manifests across and within conventional scales, unsettling and rerouting them.

The understanding of the planet as an easily scalable object has indeed been described as a global, rather than planetary mindset by most critics. Clark notes that the Anthropocene may best be understood as a 'threshold concept' that crucially shifts the categories through which we make sense of the world (2015). As such, the Anthropocene offers an important potential for border crossings even at the most fundamental levels: as the long-established borders between

cultural and natural history, human and non-human, self and other collapse, the Anthropocene provides a chance to reconceptualize alterity and rethink the epistemological foundations of borders. This includes a shift from the image of the earth as globe to the idea of planetarity. The global model of the earth goes back to the early modern period and, as Bergthaller and Horn note, 'was both the instrument and an emblem of the European expansionary project insofar as it translated planetary space into manageable scale' (2020, 146). Tim Ingold criticizes the representation of the earth through model globes in geographical education, describing how '[t]hough the sea is painted blue, the continental landmasses are frequently painted in a mosaic of contrastive colours, representing the territories of nation state' and thereby paying attention to how human society has b/ordered the world through discovery, expansion and colonialism (2000, 214). The imagination of the world as globe often necessitates a zooming out to a perspective outside of the earth, rather than being grounded within it, leading Ingold to claim that 'the global environment is not a lifeworld, it is a world apart from life' in that the abstracted image of the globe cannot be related to lived experience (210). As an alternative to the globe which comes with the assumption of neatly separated scales, Ingold suggests reading the world as 'a nesting series of spheres' which highlights the overlapping and multiplication of layered perspectives through which the world is to be 'perceived from within' rather than outwith planetary inhabitation (211).

In border studies research, the concept of globality has become central to the discourse of environmental governance because, as Amanda Machin notes, 'the environmental concerns of the Anthropocene spill over conventional political borders' and require transnational strategies to tackle them (2019, 2). Machin highlights the problematics of thinking within rigid state borders in the context of the environmental crisis and environmental justice in particular, pointing out how such an insistence on state borders 'serve[s] to maintain the violent social, political, and epistemological exclusion of those who have most at stake in the Anthropocene and bolster the continuation of the status quo' (2). At the same time, Machin also cautions against approaches that seek to eliminate borders altogether: even though borders may be detrimental to the development of environmental policies that are able to tackle the environmental concerns of the Anthropocene, they are also vital in ensuring 'a functioning democratic politics' (2). The problem with the concept of the Anthropocene, Machin argues, 'lies precisely in its delineation of an undifferentiated global identity' which is why doing away with borders will not provide a useful alternative to state politics (3). Instead of seeking alternatives to democratic state politics, Machin suggests

an approach that resembles Clark's conceptualization of the Anthropocene as a threshold concept in that it treats the Anthropocene as a useful framework to tackle difficult questions around governance, borders and democracy. For Machin, the Anthropocene needs to be repoliticized in a move away from the image of a homogeneous global species identity which 'is best achieved through embracing its potential to stimulate disagreement' (3). The paradoxical and challenging relationship between democratic state politics and the Anthropos then should be understood as an opportunity for what Machin calls a practice of 'political agony' which encourages political debate and an ongoing collective examination and reinvention of borders (10). Responses to environmental concerns such as climate change, Machin argues, 'cannot be a matter of a unified policy based on an illusionary consensus but rather must be a plural and piecemeal venture that involves collaboration and contestation' (9). In highlighting the necessity and value of disagreement, contradiction and contestation, Machin's notion of political agony moves beyond the unified image of the globe criticized by Ingold, Tsing, Bergthaller and Horn. Robyn Eckersley similarly addresses questions of democracy and agency within the Anthropocene when she proposes a 'geopolitan imagery' which 'does not require any renunciation of national citizenship or local identity [but] nonetheless puts citizenship and territorially based democracy in a more critical and less exclusivist light' (2017, 993).

By highlighting questions of citizenship, democracy and environmental justice, scholars like Machin and Eckersley propose ideas that correspond with postcolonial criticisms of the globe which crucially complement a concern for the planet with social responsibility. In a paper presented at the Stiftung-Dialogik in Zurich in 1997, Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak proposes the notion of planetarity as an alternative to the globe, an idea that has since been taken up scholars across disciplines. Connected to positions in the environmental humanities, Spivak's notion of planetarity forms part of a critique of imperialist and capitalist modes of dominating the planet and takes up the idea that subjects are formed through obligations but also rights to collective responsibility (2012, 341). In a more recent outline of her concept, Spivak takes care to differentiate this notion of planetarity from the 'planet-talk' of the environmental movement:

> [C]ontemporary planet-talk by way of environmentalism, [refers] usually, though not invariably, to an undivided 'natural' space rather than a differentiated political space. This smoothly 'translates' into the interests of globalization in the mode of the abstract as such. This environmental planet-speak is the planet as an alternate description of the globe, susceptible to nation-state geopolitics.
>
> (2015, 290)

While supporting the sense of accountability central to an understanding of humans as custodians of the planet, Spivak criticizes the particular use of planetarity by environmentalists for catering to imperial capitalism and disguising their desire to save the planet in the interest of 'good' imperialism and 'sustainable' capitalism (291). This understanding of planetarity, Spivak suggests, is actually closer to the notion of globality which is focused on control over the planet, rather than a recognition of its alterity:

> The globe is on our computers. No one lives there. The 'global' notion allows us to think that we can aim to control globality. The planet is in the species of alterity, belonging to another system; and yet we inhabit it, on loan.
>
> (291)

Spivak suggests here that invoking the planet involves an acknowledgement of the impossibility of imagining the planet. The planet must be understood as a form of alterity of which we are an integral part, rather than being positioned outside it. Because we are part of the planet rather than outside of it, stable categorizations always remain out of our reach (2003, 72–3). Despite being critical of nation-state geopolitics as a whole, Spivak's theorization resonates with Machin's criticism of rigid state borders as both scholars seek new ways to think about borders, inter-personal ethics and democratic responsibility. Similar to Spivak's planetarity, stable categorization is not the object of Machin's political agonism. Rather, both of these ideas aim for a continual process of contestation and reinvention. In contrast to concepts like 'world' or 'global', Spivak's planetarity, as Hayley Toth suggests, 'defers self-authority and actualization, strategically un-mapping the planet in order to leave it open to new social connections and political possibilities' (2020, 459). This is only possible because Spivak protests against defining planetarity in a uniform way. Once the meaning of planetarity is fixed, it becomes translatable, and is subject to attempts that try to control and organize it in similar ways to the concept of the globe. In contrast to the globe, the planet in planetarity is not mapped, scaled or b/ordered, through a totalizing gesture, into a homogeneous, unified object, but instead, as Jennifer Gabrys notes, resists representation and 'remains that which cannot be fixed or settled' (2018). This dynamic instability of the planetary is also taken up by Jeremy Bendik-Keymer who describes Spivak's use of planetarity as a 'fluctuating gesture' that seeks to disrupt meaning in the same way that Derrida's concept of *différance* continually destabilizes and defers meaning (2020). This is also why Spivak insists on the categorical difference between planetarity and globality:

> [Planetarity] is not really amenable to a neat contrast with the globe. I cannot say 'the planet, on the other hand'. When I invoke the planet, I think of the effort required to figure the (im)possibility of this underived intuition.
>
> (2015, 291)

While Spivak thus invokes the planet as an alternative to the globe, the notion of planetarity presented here cannot be understood as simply an alternative way to describe the global, nor does it constitute a simple reverse of the global (2003, 72). Instead, it is categorically different from the globe, in that it resists stable meaning: planetarity remains untranslatable and is therefore 'not susceptible to the subject's grasp' (2015, 291), which means it cannot easily be instrumentalized by imperialist or capitalist agendas.

In being irresolvable, Gabrys claims, Spivak's planetarity enables not only a diversification and pluralisation of the human but also an inclusion of the non-human into a consideration of the world. Similar to Ingold's idea of spheres, Gabrys points to the value of local perspectives which perceive the world 'from *within* planetary inhabitations' (2018) to achieve this pluralization and to prevent the risk of reducing planetarity into an evasive figure outside politics. The notion of planetarity developed in these theoretical debates can best be grasped by putting them in dialogue with literary texts. The literary works discussed in this chapter are able to imaginatively explore planetarity by situating it in local contexts without reducing its complexity and by developing experimental methods of writing that capture the incommensurable contradictions inherent in planetary thought. By inviting readers to engage in an open-ended process of reimagining bordering processes through environmental engagement, literature provides a collaborative testing ground in which abstract theoretical ideas can be experimented with on the experiential level in a direct and imaginative fashion. In this way, planetary forms of writing contribute to the theoretical debates outlined here by locating the planet within the local, bringing the experience of planetary reality closer to the reader without falling back onto a unified and abstracted global view of the world.

Planetarity as a literary form

The literary works examined in this chapter, by situating the planetary within a local ecological, cultural and temporal context and highlighting its relation to human affairs and politics, offer a perspective that begins 'from within the thick of planetary inhabitations' (Gabrys 2018). Writing about planetary

media, Gabrys suggests that such media 'call attention to the differences that planetarity invokes, to the inassimilable, the incommensurate conditions of planetary inhabitation than cannot and do not settle into one coherent or planar object', letting their narratives unfold in a form of collective engagement that acknowledges the presence and agency of the non-human (2018). The same could be said about literary experimentations and methods of exploring the planetary through aesthetics. Édouard Glissant considers the possibility of a planetary style of writing when he calls for the emergence of an 'aesthetics of the earth' (1997, 150) and thereby provides an important link between the philosophical, theoretical understanding of planetarity outlined above and its use as a poetic form. In line with theorization of planetarity by critics such as Ingold and Spivak, Glissant describes this aesthetics as one of 'disruption and intrusion', 'rupture and connection', an '[a]esthetics of a variable continuum, of an invariant discontinuum' which resists 'transforming land into territory again' (1997, 151). In short, Glissant proposes an aesthetics that captures the challenges of meaning-making in the age of the Anthropocene by drawing on the contradictory, irresolvable, confusing and sometimes unsettling and discomforting aspects that come with thinking along planetary lines because planetary thought resists being ordered into neat, easily understandable categories.

Writing that imagines the planetary through Scotland can be said to take up the theoretical and aesthetic challenge outlined here by addressing the difficulties of thinking about an incommensurable concept like the planetary on a formal level, while at the same time situating the planetary within a distinct historical, cultural, local and environmental context that helps their readers make sense of their enmeshment in planetary realities. By situating planetary thought within the local, such writing does not attempt to fix and stabilize the planet, but instead grounds the planetary in the local, understanding the local as a node in the meshwork of planetary relations. In doing so, these writers are able to welcome the confusion and discomfort caused by the planetary into their texts in order to develop techniques that guide their readers in making sense of these concepts without proposing a neat solution. Timothy Clark argues that 'any literary representation of environmental issues – and which issues now are not in the end? – over the past century at least, must be a representation in part of this emergent human or planetary reality' (2015, 73). Ursula Heise, following Zygmunt Bauman (1993), criticizes what Bauman terms an 'ethic of proximity' which focuses on local attachments and promotes a sense of place as the basis for an ethics of responsibility for the planet that guides environmental

action and policy. For Heise, this focus on the local constitutes a form of parochial essentialism by predicating a core identity generated through the sense of place of one's local environment (2008, 42). Heise thereby establishes a border between the local and the planetary in arguing that these concepts, and the concerns related to them, are somehow mutually exclusive. This artificial distinction, however, erases the lived experiences of planetary inhabitation and is contradicted by writers for whom, to use Heise's own terminology, their sense of place forms the very basis for a sense of planet.[1] As Bergthaller and Horn note, 'the local always needs to be viewed in conjunction with the planetary, in light of the interdependencies between localities, actors, technologies, and ecological processes' (2020, 154), and, I would add, the planetary always needs to be understood in conjunction with the local. By thinking through Scotland, the writers in this chapter develop a conception of planetarity that emerges from the qualities of Scotland's local geography and environment, from the earth itself rather than from a perspective outside of it. In their understanding, the local is not categorically different from the planetary but exists always already within an understanding of the planet and vice versa.

Planetarity in the Scottish literary imagination

Eleanor Bell contends that debates on Scottish nationalism have traditionally focused on the core–periphery model, in which Scotland figured as the periphery that defined itself against an English metropolitan centre (2004, 48). Negotiations of Scotland's identity through this model are not only visible in travel accounts but also characterize the foundational genres of nineteenth-century Scottish literature: the national tale and the historical novel. Even though these genres were frequently understood as narratives serving to unify the nation, Ina Ferris argues that their plot, in which 'an English stranger travels into the hinterland, full of national prejudices, only to fall into a cross-cultural romance that radically alters his perspective', was not meant to reinforce notions of Scotland as the undomesticated periphery, but was actually 'directed at placing in question certain English perceptions, and the kind of challenge it encoded was typically reinforced by direct contestation of standard metropolitan readings of the peripheries' (1997, 208). The dominance of the centre–periphery model for Scotland results in critical readings of Scotland's culture and literature that are continually reliant on defining Scotland through its national borders and against England. Moving beyond the dichotomy between centre and periphery, Bell

argues, affords a reflection 'on alternative and possible future readings of Scottish identity' (2004, 48) beyond its status within the UK. Post-national archipelagic writing presents one way of dislocating the centre–periphery model and reimagining Scotland's geopolitical borders from an environmental perspective by reading them through a nexus of movement.[2] Mobilizing planetary forms of writing may offer another way to develop an alternative reading of Scotland's borders and identity by situating Scotland within the larger frame of planetary habitation. By reading the local through the planetary and vice versa, the writers in this chapter playfully work through the dominant dichotomies (centre–periphery, England–Scotland, North–South) that have been used to read Scotland through an established border paradigm. Instead of reinforcing these dichotomies, however, they take recourse to environmental perspectives to build alternative, often fantastical, futures against which the presumed universality and permanence of human bordering practices appears trite and insignificant. By locating Scotland temporally, in relation to geological history, and spatially, by focusing on geography and environment influenced by its location in northern latitudes, the writers in this chapter de- and reterritorialize Scotland along planetary lines.

In connection with the centre–periphery model, localism and regionalism have been dominant frames through which Scotland and its literature have been read, sometimes with the result of painting a picture of Scotland's literary tradition as parochial, peripheral and ultimately insignificant.[3] Scottish modernism of the early twentieth century, for example, if indeed identified with the wider modernist movement at all, has been defined as a rural form of modernism opposed to the canonical urban modernism of the metropolitan centres through which the movement has been primarily identified. Instead of seeing this ascription of a heightened sense of locality as a hindrance to situating Scotland in relation to planetary considerations, the writing is this chapter suggests that local and regional perspectives present unique affordances for accessing planetary consciousness through Scotland's environmental and cultural history. The continuous negotiation between heterogeneous local, regional and national identities in Scotland, which are often seen as irreconcilable, makes writing through Scotland in the context of planetary realities especially productive. Rather than subscribing to the idea of the local and the planetary as binary oppositions, the writers discussed here understand the planetary as an inherent constituent part of local and regional perspectives and vice versa. While the form of planetarity can certainly be found in varying configurations in Scottish literature, the texts engaged with here do not merely represent an

emergent planetary reality, but actively take part in shaping this reality through the imagination.

Hugh MacDiarmid, a central voice in the negotiation of Scotland's national and cultural identity, not only tried to situate Scotland within European modernist traditions but was equally preoccupied with capturing a form of planetary consciousness that arises out of the local. In an author's note to his poem **'In Memoriam James Joyce' (1955), Hugh MacDiarmid** writes:

> Our consciousness is beginning to be planetary. A new tension has been set us between the individual and the universe. It is not new because poets and entire literatures have been lacking in the sense of the vastness of Creation, but new in the response provoked in the writer in relation to his own language and his own environment.
>
> (224)

He understands this planetary consciousness in relation to an emergent world literature which captures a new planetary reality that can no longer be denied and must be expressed through a characteristic 'multiplicity of souls' and a 'realization of the deep abyss of time' (1955, 225). These elements create an ambient poetics that captures these new planetary perspectives. MacDiarmid's poem **'The Eemis Stane' (1925)** presents its readers with a disorienting view of planet earth as simultaneously seen from within and outwith planetary habitation. The poem's first line roots us in time and space when we find the speaker in the 'how-dumd-deid o' the cauld hairst night', presumably looking up to the night sky after the harvest has been brought in (27). Right after, however, we realize that in looking up, the speaker is simultaneously looking down, and we are catapulted off the earth to be presented with an image of our planet as an 'eemis stane', an unstable stone, that moves in the sky. The disorientation caused by this double vision is heightened further when the speaker tries to recall some undefined 'eerie memories', but they begin to fall up-side down '[l]ike a yowdendrift', a counter-swirl of fallen snow that drifts up again from the earth. This yowdendrift both confuses the speaker's memories and makes them unable to read an inscription they discern to be 'cut oot i' the stane' that is the earth. While the poem zooms out of the earth to present its readers with a view of the earth from space, the perspective that results is deeply unsettling and disorienting. The view of the earth we get is not clear or stable, but the use of Scots to describe the world as an 'eemis stane' defamiliarizes global perspectives: it presents the world as both unsteady, variable like the seasons through the adjective 'eemis', and as insignificant by describing it as nothing

more than a small stone in the universe. Amidst the metaphorical chaos of snow, all semblance of clarity is lost, and we are left to wonder what words might be written on the earth: an inscription of geological or human history, a poem? Even without the disorienting yowdendrift, the speaker admits, they could not have read the words which were already buried under the moss and lichen of history. In light of the immensity of the planet and universe, the poem suggests, words become meaningless. The inscription in the stone cannot be read either way, and even if it could, it would be incapable of expressing planetary reality.

In **'Au Clair de la Lune' (1925)**, MacDiarmid continues this interest in planetary consciousness in developing a planetary poetics that considers the planet simultaneously from within and outwith itself. Like 'The Eemis Stane', this poem resists the lure of a global perspective despite zooming out into the universe and looking at the earth as a 'bare auld stane' that '[g]litters beneath the seas o' Space' (24). Instead, it defamiliarizes the earth: no longer the planet of water, the earth is now a stone surrounded by the seas of space. This is taken further yet when we are told that the earth is '[w]hite as mammoth's bane' (24), a description more fitting for the moon, and the speaker admits that they are 'dumfoun'ered […] Wi' keethin' sicht o' a' there is' (25). The spinning movement of the universe disorients speaker and reader alike by merging planets, confusing impressions and preventing clear thought. Rather than producing an abstracted view of the globe, the poem grasps at the confusion and incommensurability of planetary reality. By imagining the earth in conversation with the winds, the sea, other planets and the stars, MacDiarmid invites the reader into a universe filled with unearthly music, an image that is described as both frightening and fascinatingly beautiful. Borders cease to matter, in relation to the timescale of the earth the transience of human constructions becomes evident: in a futuristic view, the earth is 'littered wi' larochs o' Empires' and '[m]uckle nations are dust' (23). Time, seen in planetary dimensions, will slowly erode these monuments of human life. The local rootedness of the perspective here is only hinted at in this disorienting poem through the use of Scots and the subtle connection between the stars and the Cairngorms: looking at the Orion constellation and infusing it with life, the speaker sees '[t]he colour o' Cairngorm' reflected in the locks of the huntress (25). In contrast to the vagaries of human constructions which have become dust, the Cairngorms continue to exist in this planetary vision of the future. Language and local environments are crucial to MacDiarmid's understanding of planetary consciousness and Louisa Gairn notes how his 'earth lyrics' (2008, 80) move between the universal and the particular:

> MacDiarmid's imagination vaults from scenes of Scottish rural life to other-worldly vistas, swinging into orbit to gain a view of the earth from space, whilst retaining a sense of specific individual experience, embedded in local environments.
>
> (81)

While MacDiarmid's lyrics may be unsettling and disorienting, they are also firmly grounded in the lived experience of local inhabitation.

Because of his prominent role in the movement of the Scottish Literary Renaissance with its cultural nationalism, its promotion of vernacular Scots and Scottish literature and culture more broadly, MacDiarmid's work is usually read in cultural nationalist terms. Despite his interest in national identity and advocacy for Scotland's literature and language, however, these poems express his fascination with planetary perspectives. Scots, in the poems discussed here, is not only a source of rootedness in contrast to a more 'global' English, but Scots words for environmental phenomena, such as 'yowdendrift', permit the feelings of disorientation central to MacDiarmid's planetary perspective. Like the other writers discussed in this chapter, MacDiarmid's poems draw on Scotland's cultural, political, linguistic and environmental affordances to develop a planetary perspective. The local and environmental attachments of Scottish writers, based on the specific literary-cultural traditions that foreground locality and place-based negotiations of the world, allow them to resist the global outlook encouraged by viewing the earth from space. By reading the planetary in combination with an attachment to their local environment, that is by thinking the planetary through Scotland, writers like MacDiarmid resist scalar thinking and the totalizing perspective of the global.

Jules Verne's *The Underground City* (1877), alternatively titled *The Black Indies* (from the original French title *Les Indes Noires*), is set in the fictional Aberfoyle coal mines located below the Trossachs and recounts the story of James Starr, an Edinburgh engineer, who is called back to the mines ten years after their exhaustion by his former foreman Simon Ford. To his surprise, Starr finds that the Ford family still lives down in the mines and claims to have discovered new coal seams. The discovery of a huge underground network of caves which hold enough coal to reopen the mines is accompanied by curious incidents and dangerous accidents which befall the protagonists, including the draining of Loch Katrine into the caves in which a new mining community had built a whole underground city. Verne's fascination with planetary thought runs through his oeuvre and centrally shapes his most popular works, from *Journey*

to the Centre of the Earth (1864) via *Around the World in Eighty Days* (1873) to *Twenty Thousand Leagues under the Sea* (1870). John Lichfield describes Verne as 'the first "global" writer' (2005) and his writing is indeed decidedly international as characters of varying nationalities move across the world. I would go a step further and suggest that Verne's acute interest in the environment, geology, physics and natural sciences make it possible to describe him as a planetary writer. Lionel Dupuy cites Verne's ambition to portray the earth in a collection of 'romans géographiques' (2017, 9). Through these geographical novels, Dupuy explains, Verne aimed to generate a 'géographie universelle pittoresque' that offered his readers to explore locations as yet unknown to them (11). Through an exploration of such unknown localities and by drawing on geographical, geological, physical and astronomical knowledge, albeit often in the vein of the picturesque, Verne intended to compile a history of the universe, as he explains in the foreword to one of his novels (cited in Dupuy 11). Verne's negotiation of the relationship between humans and the non-human world involves an attentiveness to various forms of inhabiting the earth from an ecological perspective and his Scottish novels are no exception to this.

The ecological consciousness Dupuy detects in Verne's writing equally shines through in *The Underground City* which Ian Thompson describes as Verne's 'most successful Scottish novel' (2012, 139). As Thompson points out, Verne's travels through Scotland in 1859 inspired him to not only record a fictional account of his travels in *Backwards to Britain* (published posthumously in 1989), but also set *The Underground City* in the Trossachs, the region 'that most stimulated his creative imagination' (139). According to Garry MacKenzie, 'Verne was a self-confessed Scotophile' who 'claimed Scottish ancestry' (2017, 281) and Thompson finds that Verne's admiration for the writing of Sir Walter Scott led him to write five novels set at least partially in Scotland and to populate the rest of his works with 'no less than forty Scottish characters' (2012, 138). The influence of Scott is most strikingly visible in a chapter in which the miners travel above ground to show Nell, a child who grew up in the depths of the mine and is rescued by the group, the beauty of the Scottish countryside. These scenes above ground connect the world in the mines to a planetary consciousness that is afforded by Scotland's environment and geography, both in a material and an imaginative sense. The areas around Stirling were indeed perforated by mines at the time Verne was writing, but as the novel moves above ground, it connects this perspective with literary traditions that can be traced back to the mysticism of the Ossian poems and the romantic and picturesque imagery of Walter Scott. Only above ground, Harry Ford believes, will Nell be able to 'perceive that the

limits of the universe are boundless' (1877, 360). This belief is confirmed as Nell exclaims that the sky appears so high that she feels as if she 'could take wing and fly' (367) and we are told that she 'had now obtained an idea of the universe – of the works both of God and of man' (370). The brief qualification of the universe at the end merges spiritual ideas with human activities: it represents exactly the combination of human labour, represented by the coal extraction below ground with its impacts on the earth, and romantic mysticism that make up Verne's planetary imagination. The 'works of man' equally refer back to the role of literature in shaping reality, especially in relation to Walter Scott who crucially shaped how Scotland was viewed from abroad. Verne's admiration for Scott is shared by his characters who enthusiastically quote from his works during their journey, and it visibly structures Verne's depiction of Scotland as both a 'country […] written in gigantic characters of mountains and islands' and uniquely characterized by violent histories that 'dyed with blood these lonely glens' (1877, 372). Scott's influence is most graspable, however, in the location of the mine below Loch Katrine, a popular tourist spot since Scott published his famous poem *The Lady of the Lake* in 1810 and which Verne visited during his own travels. The world of Scott and the world of the mine come together in the novel when, tragically, the bed of the lake gives in and the loch drains fully into the mine, so that 'there was not left enough to wet the pretty foot of the Lady of the Lake' and '[t]here was nothing for it but to erase Loch Katrine from the map of Scotland' (376). The erasure of Loch Katrine from Scotland's geographical, but also literary, map subtly implies the potentially devastating effects extractive labour can have in a country whose environment is inextricably interwoven with cultural and literary history.

Though Verne's *Backwards to Britain* mainly discusses the coal-mining histories of Liverpool and Newcastle, the novel also highlights Glasgow and the Trossachs as an area full of profitable coal deposits right below the surface and relates the centrality of coal for warmth and light in Scotland: 'all you need to do in this generous land is dig a hole for perennial heat and light to gush forth' (1989, 126). Aside from these geological assets, setting *The Underground City* in this area allows Verne to draw on the cultural and literary traditions of Scotland which continued to fascinate him and which he felt were concentrated in the Highlands, and particularly the area around Loch Katrine. The location of the mine in Stirlingshire, rather than northern England, is thus of central importance to illustrate how Verne develops planetary thought in this novel by thinking through Scotland's geographical and environmental affordances. The centrality of coal for the story opens its planetary concerns. As Nathan

Hensley and Philip Steer point out, '[c]oal was the very engine of British global power in the nineteenth century' (2019, 64) and formed 'the enabling condition for an increasingly global imaginary' (67). According to Eric Gidal, the industrial and military developments in Scotland following the Act of Union in 1707 'and the rapid transport of coal and iron ore by canal, railway, and sea, alongside the production of textiles, ships, and locomotives throughout the nineteenth century, positioned Scotland at the forefront of the carbon age' (2015, 11). Coal, Hensley and Steer argue, takes on a central 'structuring role in texts that consider how bounded or localized systems of belonging – economies, nations – might be transgressed, opened up, or otherwise superseded' (2019, 67). This is the case in *The Underground City* which explores a subterranean form of planetary habitation through the miners' desire to live inside the mine and their development of a whole city below ground. The original title of the novel *Les Indes Noires* (the Black Indies) refers to the name given to English coal mines and connects the narrative directly to global structures of power and posits carbon capitalism as the engine of the British Empire: 'these Indies have contributed perhaps even more than the Eastern Indies to swell the surprising wealth of the United Kingdom' (Verne 1877, 280). Outside the bounds of above-ground society, the miners are exempt from paying rent, tax or dealing with other troubles of the outside world, including the Scottish weather, and develop their own community of belonging based on an appreciation of the 'soul of the mine' (308) and a shared feeling of belonging: for inhabitants with the 'miner's instinct', such as Simon Ford, their 'whole existence is indissolubly connected with that of the mine' from birth to death (299) and they never desire to venture above ground. The existence of coal creates a subterranean world that is a mirror of the world above and extends even further than Stirling, stretching below the seabed and the Caledonian Canal to the north and featuring a number of lakes to supply the new city:

> Of course the waters of these lakes had no movement of currents or tides; no old castle was reflected there; no birch or oak trees waved on their banks. And yet, these deep lakes, whose mirror-like surface was never ruffled by a breeze, would not be without charm by the light of some electric star, and, connected by a string of canals, would well complete the geography of this strange domain. (318)

The estranged landscape of lakes mirroring Loch Lomond and the Trossachs above ground draws on an industrial aesthetic that surfaces at other points of the novel, including Starr's first impression as he returns to the mine after

ten years of absence that the countryside had turned into a desert. Instead of the 'more stirring, active, industrial life', the county had, to Starr's immense disappointment, turned to agriculture:

> The engineer gazed about him with a saddened eye. […] The air was no longer filled with distant whistlings and the panting of engines. None of the black vapors which the manufacturer loves to see, hung in the horizon, mingling with the clouds. No tall cylindrical or prismatic chimney vomited out smoke, after being fed from the mine itself; no blast-pipe was puffing out its white vapour. The ground, formerly black with coal dust, had a bright look, to which James Starr's eyes were not accustomed.
>
> (290–1)

In an inversion of the pastoral trope, traditional agriculture disrupts the industrial scenery in this passage: rather than describing the adverse effect of the machine in the garden, as theorized by Leo Marx (1964), the garden is overgrowing the machine, the object of Starr's nostalgia. The pollutive effects of carbon capitalism so dear to Starr have been neutralized without a trace. The relationship between extractive technology and natural processes is presented in a curious fashion in the novel in the description of the caves. After Starr and the Fords find the location of the new coal seam through the detection of fire damp, they blow up the path with dynamite and enter into a subterranean world already magically carved out for them: 'there existed beneath the county of Stirling a vast tract, full of burrows, tunnels, bored with caves, and perforated with shafts, a subterranean labyrinth, which might be compared to an enormous ant-hill' (1877, 304–5). The narrative invests some time to present this subterranean country as entirely natural, comparing the tunnel system to the Mammoth Cave in Kentucky and stressing that they were created not by men and machine but through geological processes:

> [B]y an unaccountable retreat of the mineral matter at the geological epoch, when the mass was solidifying, nature had already multiplied the galleries and tunnels of New Aberfoyle. Yes, nature alone! […] Human termites had never gnawed away this part of the Scottish subsoil; nature herself had done it all.
>
> (317–18)

This is a convenient explanation that circumvents the need to address the violent processes of extraction and the human impact on the earth involved in mining: 'tightly packed between these useless strata' of sandstone and slate that support the caves, 'ran valuable veins of coal, as if the black blood

of this strange mine had circulated through their tangled network' (317). The subterranean lake country is so perfectly hollowed that it practically invites extraction and habitation alike.

Curiously, carbon pollution is never thematized. Inside the caves we find 'calm fresh air' and '[a] soft and pleasant temperature […] instead of the strife of the elements which raged without' while 'electric discs shed a brilliancy of light which the British sun, oftener obscured by fogs than it ought to be, might well envy' (341). The actual labour of building the subterranean city equally remains invisible as the story abruptly jumps three years into the future. As Karen Pinkus argues, '[c]ombustion is deferred, displaced' in Verne's novel (2019, 243) and the technological optimism that shines through the narrative leaves us, as readers of the twenty-first century who are acutely aware of the destructive effects of extractivism on our planet, feeling uneasy. Even though the scarcity of energy resources is discussed early on in the novel and explained through a lengthy excursus detailing the geological history of coal formation that takes up almost the entire second chapter, the new Aberfoyle mine appears to be inexhaustible and its depletion is deferred to the far future. At the same time, some of the seemingly optimistic statements about extractivism voiced by Starr and Ford feel too exaggerated to be taken at face value. When Simon Ford exclaims that 'it's a pity that all the globe was not made of coal; then there would have been enough to last millions of years', Starr's reply is not an agreement but a word of caution against the destructive greed of carbon capitalism: 'The earth would have passed to the last bit into the furnaces of engines, machines, steamers, gas factories; certainly, that would have been the end of our world one fine day!' (1877, 291). Again, however, the day of exhaustion is deferred into the distant future and what could have turned into a fierce critique of the dire consequences of extractive capitalism remains vague and unspecific in the end as the story turns away from such concerns and celebrates the utopian subterranean city made possible by the discovery of new coal seams. Even though Starr predicts a shift to hydraulics and electricity to take over the role of coal in the future, the actions of the characters do not reflect the fact that fossil fuels are an exhaustible resource and Starr, suddenly infected himself with exhilaration about the discovery of a new coal seam, turns into the embodiment of the exploitative attitude of industrial capitalism: '[L]et us cut our trenches under the waters of the sea! Let us bore the bed of the Atlantic like a strainer; let our picks join our brethren of the United States through the subsoil of the ocean! Let us dig into the center of the globe if necessary, to tear out the last scrap of coal' (322–3).

These scenes heighten the risk that readers begin to conflate author and narrator by reading Starr's arguments as representative of Verne's own views and, as a result, losing track of how Verne challenges his readers to work through the contradictions and conflicts inherent in planetary thinking. As Dupuy (2017) demonstrates, Verne displays an ecological consciousness in his work and his characters often voice environmentalist views. A look at Verne's *Backwards to Britain* helps to contextualize his treatment of extractive capitalism and suggests that we may not want to let the positive attitudes towards coal that Verne's characters in *The Underground City* express overdetermine our reading of his work. As they arrive in Liverpool, the two French protagonists of Verne's travel fiction are shocked by the misery they see in the docks where impoverished women and children walk 'barefoot in slimy black mud', wearing only rags and once precious hats which now look as if 'they had finally come to rot' (1989, 59). The flowers on the women's hats are barely recognizable anymore and seem to be 'held in place by that dank, grimy blend of fog and coal-dust so typical of England' (60). The fiery atmosphere of Newcastle, or 'Old King Coal' as it is nicknamed in the novel, impresses a nightmarish vision on Verne's protagonist:

> [H]e glimpsed a terrifying nightscape. The kingdom of coal was ablaze. Plumes of fire flicked above the tall factory chimneys, these are the trees of this dirty black region, and they form an immense forest, illuminated by wild, tawny reflections. A low endless moan rises from the pits, where relentless burrowing takes place in the bowels of the coalmines that even unravel under the sea, scorning the powerless waves.
>
> (162)

In Glasgow, 'the unpoetic details of an industrial city' mirror those of Liverpool exactly, 'with public buildings blackened by soot and fog' (131). The intermingling between industrial aesthetics of extractivism and romantic imaginaries of the environment that characterizes Verne's depiction of Scotland as a whole is taken up most explicitly when the travellers find that the two monuments dedicated to Walter Scott and James Watt not only stand side by side but 'looked so very much alike that the novelist might have been mistaken for the inventor of the steam engine' (131). All in all, then, Verne recognizes the central importance of coal for the world economy of the nineteenth century. He does not portray it as an altogether positive industry but equally addresses the negative social and environmental effects of extractive capitalism.

As Jean-Paul Dekiss argues, 'there is much in Verne that goes beyond simple optimism' (cited in Lichfield 2005) and Timothy Unwin suggests that

Verne's works reflect on 'the corrupting power of money […] rather than the positive economic benefit that can come only from a careful and thoughtful sharing of natural resources' (2005). According to Unwin, Verne's 'future is less one of whiz-kid gadgets and machines than a less glamorous one in which communities, societies, and nations have trouble managing the inventions that the Industrial Revolution and its aftermath have produced' (2005). It is the complex ambivalence about coal and the fact that elements of a potential ecological critique come to nothing in the end that explain Pinkus's uneasiness. And yet, these contradictions, the oscillation between feelings of fascination and terror in relation to the machine age, characterize Verne's mobilization of the planetary form. In Verne's imagination, the planetary is full of contradictions and disruptions that cannot be turned into a neat order, so much so that the romantic plot that determines the happy ending of the story appears incongruent with the novel's engagement with carboniferous realities.

Verne's novel, though not a traditional industrial novel, demonstrates the viability of the form of planetarity for critical explorations of extractivism in the late nineteenth century. Accessing planetarity through the local, then, is not limited to environmental(ist) fiction set in a pre-industrial countryside. Instead, the inassimilable character of planetary thought distorts such categorical distinctions and invites us to re-read Scottish texts set within industrial cities to consider how they speak to the planetary by standing in opposition to global systems of domination. Given its central position in the Scottish literary canon and its strong focus on human social and cultural politics, one of the most interesting literary works to revisit in this context might be **Alasdair Gray's *Lanark* (1981)**. Gray's novel, Graeme Macdonald notes, documents 'the corrosive effect that an aggressive and imperialist military-industrial complex has had, not only in initiating processes of modern clearance and dispossession on vulnerable local communities but also increasing environmental waste, pollution and biohazards on an accretive, global scale' (2012, 227). Gray's Unthank, a surrealist, subterranean city paralleling Glasgow, is curiously reminiscent of Verne's New Aberfoyle aside from the fact that Gray, unlike Verne, depicts his city in an explicitly dystopian fashion. Entering Unthank through a mouth that opens up in the ground, Lanark ends up in the Institute, a medical facility which claims to cure patients from various diseases, including Lanark's own affliction with 'dragonhide', a physical expression of pent up emotions in which scales begin to gradually cover the whole body and the patients lose their ability to feel: 'someone may start by limiting only his affections or lust or intelligence, and eventually heart, genitals, brain, hands and skin are crusted over' (1981, 68).

When the disease reaches its end state, the person within the dragonhide is lost and the whole body explodes, releasing large amounts of energy that are harvested by the Institute which also uses the human remains for clothes and food. While shocked and disgusted by the horrors of Unthank, Lanark realizes at the end of the novel that Glasgow is no better: 'Unthank […] may be bad but the badness is obvious, not gilded with lies like here' (552). Lanark returns to Unthank and climbs to the Necropolis to watch an apocalyptic deluge flooding the city, a spectacle that fills him with a feeling of exhilaration:

> The colours of things seemed to be brightening although the fiery light over the roofs had paled to silver streaked with delicate rose. A long silver line marked the horizon. Dim rooftops against it grew solid in the increasing light. […] He looked sideways and saw the sun coming up golden behind a laurel bush, light blinking, space dancing among the shifting leaves. Drunk with spaciousness he turned every way, gazing with wide-open mouth and eyes as light created colours, clouds, distances and solid, graspable things close at hand.
>
> (557–8)

The aesthetic importance of light and the spaciousness of the land in this final passage create a planetary vision of the world that resonates with the planetary form of writing mobilized by all of the writers discussed in this chapter. Light and vastness of space are two of the central environmental characteristics that Scotland affords for a rewriting of borders along planetary lines and can be found in the writing of Jules Verne, Eleanor Elphinstone, Malachy Tallack and Nan Shepherd alike. Like them, Gray uses the natural light of Scotland to both illuminate and defamiliarize the industrial dystopian aesthetics of Glasgow and Unthank that much of the novel relies on. Instead, the claustrophobic atmosphere that dominates much of the novel is replaced by a wondrous feeling of spaciousness, familiar categories are transformed by the light and a new perspective opens up for Lanark. At the end, then, what Macdonald describes as *Lanark*'s 'ecologically spent and democratically exhausted world' (2012, 231) is destroyed in a clear allusion to the biblical deluge sent by divine judgement to end corruption and evil that also characterizes Unthank and Glasgow. Gray's novel moves between mysticism and realism, drawing on Glasgow and Scotland as actual material places with real histories and defamiliarizing them in the process of providing a social and environmental critique. The cautiously hopeful ending of the novel evokes a planetary consciousness based on Scotland's geography and environment that connects with the planetary form mobilized by the rest of the literary texts discussed in this chapter, suggesting that the world

may be built anew after the global capitalist system of exploitation has been washed away.

Similar to the 'eco-apocalyptic vision' of *Lanark* in which humans are turned into fuel to energize 'a dark, decaying and poisoned world' (Macdonald 2012, 230), **Margaret Elphinstone's *A Sparrow's Flight* (1989)** is concerned with the devastating effects of energy production in the nuclear-industrial complex. Elphinstone's novel imagines a society arising from the capitalist ruins of a nuclear fallout. The result is a seemingly pre-industrial world infused with a sense of enchantment that makes the novel appear almost like a fantasy novel. It quickly becomes clear that what readers at the time and today would consider to be everyday technology has become unknown and is perceived as dangerous in this world. Equally, the nuclear catastrophe that befell the world is a hushed topic that the characters understand as the result of 'a kind of sorcery' through which powers of the earth were greedily harvested with the result of destroying the source of life (1989, 84). In this world, the fiddler Naomi travels north across the debatable lands to the 'empty lands' in the company of Thomas, who is looking to return home to join a traditional dance for which Naomi is to play the music.

Familiar categories, patterns and structuring principles come undone in Elphinstone's post-apocalyptic world which, as Alison Phipps argues, challenges its readers by offering 'a counterscript to the dominant reality in Scotland' (2012, 110). As Phipps points out, material objects 'exert a different agency' in the novel that 'results from the different orderings required for human survival "after the world changed"' (110). The road on which Thomas and Naomi travel appears to move organically which serves to further defamiliarize the land:

> It was more like the sea. A long swell of hills, their curves smooth as a whale's back, birds circling over them, the cry of curlews desolate as the calling of gulls over open water. It seemed one could follow those long undulations, slide down into the troughs with the smoothness of a narrow boat, then rise up slowly, carried by the moving swell of the land. Only this was not water, but earth, stripped to its bones and carved to deceptive smoothness through ages of ice and wind. It was land, but land limitless as the sea, an open road above the tree-chocked lowlands that encircled it.
>
> (1989, 32)

The road takes on an agentic and organic character, shaped by climactic conditions rather than human hands and entirely in harmony with the surrounding landscape. The land is infused with littoral qualities that lend it an

ontological instability which underlines its limitlessness. Readers may roughly identify the direction of the journey from an island that might be Lindisfarne in the east to the Solway Firth in the west. However, the estranged geography of the novel suspends topographical certainties. The travels unlock a connection with the past that haunts Thomas in dream-like visions that become so entangled with reality that he has difficulties locating himself not just geographically but also temporally. Like the road, the past is fluid and moving and appears to Thomas like a parallel country that he inhabits at the same time as his present reality: 'I am in two countries, and they are too far away even to see that there is a border' (8). Even though the nations of England and Scotland no longer exist in the novel and are barely remembered, the territorial conflicts along the Anglo-Scottish border are written into the environment and can be sensed by Thomas:

> The hills presented no conflict, because they were as they had always been. It was down here, among lands which has once been different, that he had to cope with two worlds. There was something in this land that refused to resolve itself, like two pictures of the same place that would not blend into one image.
>
> (24–5)

The environment of the Borders records the violent battles of the past 'between the men of the north and the men of the south' (25) and plays them back to Thomas even after the region has lost its status as a geopolitical borderland. The borderland between England and Scotland thus serves as a foundation for the novel's destabilization of conceptual and physical borders more widely. Thomas and Naomi's journey leads them across the country north of Hadrian's wall, an even older and physical border that survives in this futuristic vision. The concept of borders, however, is entirely baffling to Naomi who cannot conceptualize the purpose of a border wall:

> 'What wall?'
> 'It does what we do, only further south. It crosses the whole land, from one side to another.'
> 'No,' said Naomi, considering. 'It can't do. What for?'
> 'To divide one country from another.'
> 'But why? The mountains do that. Land makes divisions, then people make connection between them. A wall like that would be going the wrong way.' (40)

In Elphinstone's borderless world, the very function of borders is questioned while conceptual borders between reality and dream, past and present, and human and non-human become fluid. As they enter the 'empty land', Thomas

declares that they have reached the border of his country, but lacking any physical markers, Naomi, to whom the other side 'just looked like more mountains, not so very different to the ones they had crossed before' (1989, 81) cannot make sense of this declaration.

Naomi's idealistic borderless vision of the world in which humans create connections rather than divisions allows her to tap into a planetary consciousness after they arrive in the empty lands. Walking on the hills and looking down into the valley of Thomas's village, the unfamiliar surroundings disorient Naomi, but they also shift her perspective beyond the human:

> It was like stepping out of a magic circle into a dimension that had nothing to do with the world she knew. The floor of the valley looked quite smooth from here, like a spinning top. It had spun her out of one world into another, and there was no telling where she was. She looked at the mountains opposite, trying to remember their names. That reorientated here; there were still signposts, and they only seemed […] to have changed.
>
> (177–8)

The altered signpost suggests a reorientation of perspective from which Naomi can explore the world from an alternative point of view. The landscape twirls from valley to mountains, to the rough plateau, curving around and forming a path 'heading directly towards the moon' (178) and Naomi feels that '[t]he sky seemed to expand right down to her feet, encompassing her, as though space had overflowed its limits and reached down to touch the earth' (178). Naomi loses her identity in the vastness of this spatial expansion as a new world opens up to her and encloses her within itself: she loses her colour and becomes no different from the rocks. While the rocks 'were silent and eternal', however, Naomi 'was quick and transient', and she feels like a small tune within the overall music of existence (178). Through this encounter, Naomi understands that 'voicing the substance' of the world through her fiddle music should be one of her central responsibilities in life (178). By losing herself briefly, Naomi gains a new understanding of her position and is able to relocate herself within the living world of planetary relations:

> The earth was alive, and it was the same earth, wherever she might be. There was a music to it beyond the range of human ears, but within the compass of her body. She couldn't hear it, but she recognised it, a vibration too vast for any instrument, spinning out into space, the beginning and end of every human tune, the sound of home.
>
> (178)

Elphinstone's mystical future-past version of the Anglo-Scottish borderlands catalyses a dissolution of borders as structuring principles on a conceptual level. The formal ambiguities and shifting quality of the narrative, together with the estrangement of familiar categories and patterns, highlight the inassimilable and incommensurable condition of planetary habitation. The narrative embraces confusion and discomfort on the level of both form and content, and it is through embodied and affective encounters with the intensely local that the characters can recognize themselves as part of a complex and challenging planetary meshwork.

An interest in processes of defamiliarizing topography and conventional borders similarly characterizes **Malachy Tallack's *Sixty Degrees North* (2015)** and ***The Valley at the Centre of the World* (2018)**. Even though Tallack's travelogue *Sixty Degrees North* was published three years before his first novel, he had already begun writing *The Valley at the Centre of the World* when he started out on his journey along the sixtieth parallel, or line of latitude, and took a break to write about his travels before returning to the novel. Because of the overlaps in the writing processes, the two works inform one another in their concern with planetary habitation and it is worth considering them together. In his travelogue, Tallack describes his journey from Shetland along the sixtieth parallel to trace the idea of the North by travelling through Greenland, Canada, Alaska, Siberia, St Petersburg, Finland and Åland, Sweden and Norway and back to Shetland. Locating Shetland along planetary lines, in a way that diverges from conventional geopolitical frameworks, and connecting it to places such as Greenland and Alaska, is, for Tallack, a way to create a meaningful narrative about identity: 'Sixty degrees north is a story […] about where – and perhaps also who – we are' (2015, 3). For Tallack, geography begins with planetary habitation: it begins within us as we try to situate ourselves in relation to the earth and the universe which, even as they appear stationary, are caught 'in ceaseless motion' (13). Imagining oneself as situated within a celestial system of constant motion, for Tallack, 'is to be overwhelmed not just by a feeling of insignificance, but of fear, vulnerability and exhilaration' (13). He tells us about a moment when he was seventeen and looking out of the window of his Lerwick home when he attempts to imagine the places connected to Shetland through the sixtieth parallel:

> I imagined that I could see those places from above. I felt myself carried around the parallel, lifted and dragged as through connected to a wire. The world turned and I turned with it, circling from home towards home again until I reached,

> inevitably, the back of my own head. Dizziness rose through me like a gasp of bubbles, and I fainted, briefly, landing on my knees with a jolt on the bedroom floor.
>
> (1–2)

This mixture of feelings that result in being dizzily overwhelmed captures the impossibility of imagining planetary reality which resists being neatly packaged into graspable categories of thought and feeling. In attempting to imagine that everything on our earth is connected, and that the earth is constantly turning within a mobile universe, Tallack admits that 'it seems somehow impossible that we could be anywhere at all' (2015, 14). At the same time, what guides Tallack on his journey is the attempt to find a sense of belonging, to locate himself against the 'unshakable feeling of exile and of homesickness' that accompanies him on his way (24).

It is in the categorization of the parallel as a kind of border that the narrative becomes slightly tangled up in trying to distinguish the parallel as a more 'natural' border from the artificial borders drawn by human histories. Even though Tallack suggests that 'it is possible to claim that the sixtieth parallel is a kind of border, where the almost-north and the north come together' (3–4), the 'border' of the parallel remains unmarked and there are no preconditions nor consequences for crossing it. Its significance is removed from the divisive function of a geopolitical border. Instead, Tallack focuses on how the parallel connects places that are characterized 'by climate, by landscape, by remoteness' that make habitation challenging (4). To focus on the location of Shetland at sixty degrees north, Tallack proposes, means 'to assert that this is not just a forgotten corner of the British Isles', a peripheral remote place, but that 'Shetland belongs also to something else, something bigger' (3). Rather than focusing on the sixtieth parallel as an approximate line that affords an alternative mapping independent of political borders, the bigger picture Tallack refers to is one of human history in which Shetland 'was at the geographical heart of a North Atlantic empire, enclosed within the Norse world in a way that provokes nostalgia even now' (3). At the same time, Tallack makes the contradictory suggestion that '[u]nlike political or cultural geographies, the sixtieth parallel is certain and resolute; it is impervious to the whims of history', a reading that allows him to situate Shetland as a central part of 'the north': 'At sixty degrees, Shetland is as central as anywhere and everywhere else' (3).

While the sixtieth parallel may indeed not be subject to the whims of history, however, it very much depends on the whims of both the earth's motion and the

cartographer. Different cartographical projections may create slightly divergent circles of latitude with varying degrees of distance between the latitudinal lines, and while the position of the Equator may be stable, the parallels are not entirely fixed but subject to fluctuations based on the tilt of the earth's axis of rotation relative to its crust. Tallack experiences the difficulty of locating the line that he describes as so 'certain and resolute' with the help of a map. He quickly realizes that the reality on the ground is different and the line that appears so natural to him and which he argues differentiates climactic and environmental zones may actually be just as arbitrary as other borders when encountered on the ground, especially where it overlaps with the littoral zones of the islands:

> The map showed a cave, over which my line appeared to cross, but from where I stood the cave was entirely hidden. I walked north until I was sure I had crossed the parallel, then retraced my steps. As I peered over the edge of a steep scree slope, the map's clean lines were shattered into stones and grass and waves. The angle of the cliff and the jutting rocks prevented any kind of certainty.
>
> (2015, 12)

The comparison with a borderline may then not be entirely off in that the sixtieth parallel, just as any other border, represents a construct based on cartographical conventions, an imaginary line that is not removed from global power relations, especially where the division between a Global South and Global North is concerned. In attempting to replace geopolitical borders with 'natural' lines of latitude, Tallack's travelogue reveals all geographical categories as arbitrary constructs. The result is a story that attempts to locate the local within the planetary more than the other way around, but Tallack's travelogue is equally a story about restlessness and mobility in which stability can only ever be temporary. The paradoxes and contradictions that characterize the imaginary of the sixtieth parallel result in a messy collision of environmental and cultural mappings that is characteristic of the inherent challenges in imagining planetary reality. In the end, there is no clear, stable location, but a continuous process of locating and dislocating places in ways that are meaningful for those that encounter and inhabit them.

Building on the insights gathered during Tallack's travels, *The Valley at the Centre of the World* (2018) imagines the planetary through the local by paying attention to how the environment is infused with the human stories and everyday struggles of a small community inhabiting a valley on the Shetlands. Planetarity in this novel is mainly narrated and imagined through Alice, a writer and initially an outsider who has been writing a history of Shetland for just over

three years when the novel begins, a history which will later bear the same title as the novel. To Alice, the Shetlands are a perfect microcosm, the history of which can easily be told because of their remoteness and the bounded nature of the islands: 'You feel your mind can encompass everything in it, everything there is to see and to learn and to comprehend. You feel you can contain it, the way that it contains you' (2018, 26). Contrary to her expectations, however, her writing project simultaneously expands and contracts, shifts and changes direction, until the focus is ultimately narrowed down to the small space of the valley in which she lives. Through this intensely local focus, Alice is able to integrate the non-human world into her history book and explore new angles of vision: 'She liked to see this place from new angles, to look at it from ground level or even deeper' (62). As she looks closer at 'the shadowed nooks, the burn banks, the ground beneath the heather stalks, the dirt and damp corners' (62), Alice's perspective widens, and she feels that she can no longer contain the valley as easily as she thought:

> [H]ere in the mud Alice felt the weight of her own ignorance, and the enormity of all she could not put a name to. […] The closer she looked, the more the valley would expand. Whatever she held a magnifying glass to would grow to fill the lens, whatever was minute would become momentous. Here, she was struck by the vertiginous thought that the world beneath her was in fact infinite, that the more she looked at it, the more there would be to see, and that everything she saw, every atom of it, was its own centre.
>
> (62–3)

The 'vertiginous' immensity of the mesh of life on this planet echoes the dizzy spell Tallack describes in his travelogue: the full extent of planetary reality is conceptually challenging, if not impossible, to grasp. At the same time, it is the relations between things, human and non-human lives, that matter. In light of the infinity of non-human life that Alice experiences in the thick of planetary habitation, in the literal mud, humanity and its borders come to seem insignificant and small as the valley expands. When everything and everywhere is a centre, it is not just the centre–periphery relations underlying bordering constructs that come to be dislocated, but the dominant position of the human as well.

The works in this chapter pick up a range of cultural preconceptions through which Scotland is portrayed as provincial or peripheral to the larger frameworks of the nation or globe. They draw on a Scotland defined by an interconnected set of ecological and cultural conditions, which allows them

to infuse an earthy, material realism with elements of Celtic mysticism. The results are texts characterized by irresolvable contradictions in which common conceptualizations of Scotland and its borders are defamiliarized through the connection with the planetary: the world is too complex and confusing to be ordered into such neat categories as borders, be they physical or conceptual. Taking into account these literary and aesthetic traditions, the writers discussed here develop a planetary form of writing that thinks through Scotland and works through the prism of the local in all its complexity. While the selection of examples here can by no means serves as a comprehensive list as to how the planetary form is mobilized in Scottish writing, it nevertheless shows how writers of different periods have found value in conceptualizing planetarity through Scotland. The imaginative potential of the form manifests in the versatile configurations of texts to which it can be fitted, from industrial realism to speculative fantasy. In the case study that follows, I will explore how Nan Shepherd, now considered a pioneer of environmental writing from Scotland, develops a planetary poetics through which she encourages us to continuously adapt our frames of vision. Shepherd attends to the intensely local in order to garner an understanding of planetarity from within that embraces the contradictions and messiness of planetary reality.

Borders 'dissolved in light': Nan Shepherd's planetary poetics

With the increased popularity of the New Nature Writing and the rise in ecocritical scholarship, Shepherd's writing, in particular her non-fictional writing on the Cairngorms in *The Living Mountain*, has been reappraised in recent years by a wider circle of readers and scholars alike. Her work is praised for the way it speaks to a contemporary interest in and concern for local environments and geography and in ecological writing in the context of the environmental crisis more widely (Lyall 2019b; Walton 2020). Gillian Carter reads Shepherd's writing as expressing 'a kind of domestic geography that maps borders and then transgresses them' through its engagement with landscape (2001, 28). Similarly, Carla Sassi explores the relation between the local, the national and the global in Shepherd's work and, finding that these categories frequently become unstable, identifies a planetary dimension in the way Shepherd writes about the Cairngorms (2008, 77). Samantha Walton puts Shepherd in dialogue with a range of contemporary ecocritical theories, outlining how her writing 'might offer new ways of relating to human and

more-than-human communities and reimagining humanity's place on earth in the context of the Anthropocene and the environmental and climate crisis' (2020, 2). While these studies provide a valuable entry to Nan Shepherd's writing and contribute to a growing body of scholarship on Shepherd, they largely focus on *The Living Mountain* and, if they mention them at all, only marginally address her novels, poetry or essays. In this chapter I will be drawing on ideas developed in *The Living Mountain* but focus mainly on two of Shepherd's novels, *The Quarry Wood* (1828) and *The Weatherhouse* (1930). While Shepherd's non-fiction partially resists labelling through its formal instability and experimental qualities, it is through the fictional and multiperspectival qualities of the novel that Shepherd could really explore planetarity both formally and thematically in a way that truly captures its contradictions and incommensurability. In her novels, even more so than in *The Living Mountain*, Shepherd makes use of the affordances of the Scottish environment in a way that contributes to the development of a planetary poetics through which geopolitical, social and material borders are destabilized and reframed. Her novels provided Shepherd with a testing ground to play her ideas through thematically and aesthetically. Attending to the planetary in content and form through a focus on the local geography and environment of Scotland, Shepherd develops a planetary poetics that not only allows for a reframing of Scotland's geopolitical borders but also constitutes a more fundamental examination of bordering practices from a planetary perspective.

As I wish to show, Shepherd's novels attend to disruptions as much as connections, and her planetary poetics encourages reading practices that efface totalities through a multiplication of perspectives and a dissolution of boundaries from the levels of geopolitics to matter. Both *The Quarry Wood* (1928) and *The Weatherhouse* (1930) present borders through the qualities of the Scottish environment which allows them to question the basic premises underlying their constitution, function, durability and their material effects. Reading Shepherd from an environmental perspective, it becomes clear that Shepherd herself could be described as an early ecocritic as well as a novelist. Not an ecocritic who subscribes to the deep ecologist beliefs of some of her contemporaries but indeed rather a deconstructive ecocritic before her time who, while engaging with nature in an ecologically meaningful way, often appears impatient with her descriptions and ideas and who recognizes the continual slippage of meaning. Shepherd's planetary poetics is not always about comfort, but about confronting and embracing contradictions and harnessing the potential of our discomfort to rethink the frameworks through which we have previously understood the

world, but which have become inadequate. In this sense, Shepherd's novels speak to our contemporary planetary reality and can be read as part of a growing body of Anthropocene literature. The planetary in Shepherd's work does not present the world as a holistic, integral whole but instead as full of incongruities, asymmetries and contradictions. By finding ways of writing that follow a planetary poetics and encourage reading from multiple perspectives at once, Shepherd's fiction addresses the potential of new planetary connections and possibilities that allow her to move beyond established bordering conventions. Even though Shepherd seemingly writes from an intensely local perspective by developing these ideas through Scotland, and the North East in particular, a purely situated understanding of her works would neglect the potential contribution of her interventions to theoretical debates around borders and the environment.

Before looking at Shepherd's fiction, I want to briefly outline the insights that *The Living Mountain* can provide into Shepherd's planetary method of writing, in particular her view on perspectivity and the human literary subject. Following this, I will examine the role that the natural light conditions of the Scottish North East play in Shepherd's planetary reframing of borders along planetary lines. While natural light is mostly presented as a source of wonder that allows characters to engage intimately with their material environment, I will show that Shepherd's multiperspectival writing style simultaneously resists such straightforward interpretations. I will then move on to discuss the question of historical agency that is central to debates on planetarity in the context of the Anthropocene and discuss how Shepherd navigates the complexities of human agency in her novels. Following from this, I will outline the idea of a fourth dimension of reality that Shepherd develops in *The Weatherhouse*. I will suggest that this dimension creates a planetary frame of vision through which borders become flexible and dynamic but also ambivalent and potentially necessary in navigating our lives.

'How the earth must see itself': Perspectivity and the decentred subject

The reflections on perspective and perception in *The Living Mountain* provide vital clues for understanding Shepherd's approach to writing about borders and the environment. Reflecting on the value of experiencing a familiar landscape differently, Shepherd witnesses the landscape with all of her senses, letting her eye travel across it very slowly several times:

> This change of focus in the eye, moving the eye itself when looking at things that do not move, deepens one's sense of outer reality. Then static things may be caught in the very act of becoming. By so simple a matter, too, as alternating the position of one's head, a different kind of world may be made to appear.
>
> (1977, 10–11)

She suggests lying down, facing away and even bending over to look at the world upside down as possible strategies to shift to a new perspective that will open up a new view of the world. As a result of such perspectival shifts, Shepherd recognizes herself as part of the planet, being able to see with 'unaided sight that the earth is round' (11). The adjective 'unaided' is significant here because it differentiates Shepherd's planetary perspective of the earth from the abstracted view of the earth as a globe which, as Tim Ingold argues, 'the world appears as an object of contemplation, detached from the domain of lived experience' (2000, 210). Instead of looking at the world as a globe, a perspective that is necessarily positioned outside the planet, Shepherd's attempt to decentralize the subject and to attend to how the earth may see itself constitutes a planetary practice, as described by Jennifer Gabrys, in that she attempts to understand her environment 'from within the thick of planetary inhabitations' (2018). The multiperspectivity that is created by shifts of position decentres the human subject as the focus of the experience. Moreover, it highlights that everything is in relation to everything else and that the centre is actually nowhere to be found:

> Details are no longer part of a grouping in a picture of which I am the focal point, the focal point is everywhere. Nothing has reference to me, the looker. This is how the earth must see itself.
>
> (1977, 11)

The link to art in comparing the experience to the composition of a picture is significant and suggests that Shepherd's attitude on perceiving the world from multiple angles parallels modernist visual arts movements such as Cubism. The move away from a fixed viewpoint and the belief that an object can only be properly understood when seen from different angles are part of a cubist aesthetic that is similar to what Shepherd posits here as a more viable alternative to traditional landscape art. As Carter argues, by adopting an anti-imperialist stance and imagining the perspective of the earth instead of advocating for a subject position based on aesthetic detachment, Shepherd breaks 'the link between vision, power and possession' and thereby undermines discourses 'that promulgate conquest, domination and mastery' over the environment (2001, 31).

Passages like these that attempt to destabilize the primacy of the subject, and together with the modernist style of Shepherd's writing, break with the genre of nature writing with which *The Living Mountain* is commonly associated, and which often, if not always, favoured first person narratives in which the subject can easily become the surveyor, or even conqueror of nature. Rather than focusing on her personal connection to the natural world, Shepherd attempts to move beyond her individual perspective to approach something beyond the position of the human 'looker'. Shepherd's reconfiguration of the subject can be understood as an approach to artistic work that is focused on dynamic acts of becoming and emphasizes the necessity to look at the world from multiple angles. Only in doing so, she suggests, can we begin to grasp that the world is indeed not static but continually changing and exists beyond human terms. In this light, it appears limiting to adopt a reading of Shepherd's writing as bounded by region, nation or gender. The reflections on perspectivity, the positioning of the human subject and the attribution of a subject position to the earth itself in *The Living Mountain* can help us to understand the narrative techniques she employs in her fiction writing and which lie at the heart of her planetary poetics.

Written over the course of several years, *The Living Mountain* does not fit neatly into the category of nature writing due to its fragmented and experimental form. Her non-fiction allowed Shepherd to experiment with and theorize her ideas about the environment and planetarity which we can see woven into the fabric of her fictional texts on the level of form as well as content. Through her novels, Shepherd brings various ways of seeing and understanding the planetary into dialogue by bringing together a multiplicity of perspectives by characters of different backgrounds who relate to the Scottish environment in different ways. In Shepherd's first novel, *The Quarry Wood* (1928) we follow the journey of Martha Ironside who comes from a rural working-class family in the North East of Scotland to study at Aberdeen University to become a teacher. While the bildungsroman form of the novel limits the narrative perspectives available, as everything is filtered through Martha's perception, Shepherd breaks with the developmental structure of the genre. Rather than following a linear or teleological development, Martha accumulates different perspectives over the course of the novel which serve to complement rather than replace one another. Shepherd's second novel, *The Weatherhouse* (1930), revolves around the lives of the inhabitants, mostly women, of the small, fictional community of Fetter-Rothnie in the North East of Scotland in the wake of the First World War. The Scottish environment plays a central role in both novels and Shepherd manages to describe manifold ways in which the characters relate to the environment

they inhabit. Charlotte Peacock describes Shepherd's writing as modernist and 'kaleidoscopic', characterized by 'endlessly shifting perspectives' and focused on the exploration of fragmented identities (2020). This kaleidoscopic view, I would argue, is the basis for a planetary poetics which allows Shepherd to portray the environment as much as bordering processes, in Shepherd's words, 'in the very act of becoming' (1977, 10), as dynamic rather than static categories that are in a continual process of reshaping.

(De)bordering: affective geographies and the aesthetics of light

The first chapter of *The Quarry Wood* (1928) features a debate about the seemingly insignificant and small material border of a garden fence which symbolically introduces the novel's treatment of borders:

> The fence was not neglected from carelessness, or procrastination, or a distaste for work. Still less, of course, from indifference. Miss Leggatt had a tender concern for her seedlings, and would interrupt even a game of cards at the advent of a scraping hen. But deep within herself she felt obscurely the contrast between the lifeless propriety of a fence and the lively interest of shooing a hen; and Aunt Josephine at every turn chose instinctively the way of life.
>
> (4)

The comedy of Aunt Josephine Leggatt's rejection of a garden fence in favour of a more flexible and 'instinctive' system that requires her to jump up at random intervals to run out and shoo her hens away from her seedlings is characteristic of Shepherd's playful engagement with bordering practices. The refusal to put up a fence, as Carter points out, 'speaks of a gentle anarchy in a world governed by property and propriety' (2000, 47). While this may be an intervention with an intensely local focus, it can also be understood as a speculation on the function and purpose of borders that has wider implications for the novel's complex treatment of bordering processes. The clearly local and particular focus of passages such as the one above represents one way in which Shepherd will be seen to bring the larger and sometimes more elusive and experimental passages on planetarity back to everyday experience, grounding the planetary in the local. Not only does the passage serve to introduce Martha's eccentric aunt, who indeed does not care much about the restrictions of social decorum and boundaries on the whole. It also lays out how borders will be understood in the novel in a straightforward and realist mode before Shepherd dives into more experimental modes later on. Instead of relying on the 'lifeless propriety' of a

material border that would serve to exclude the hens from the garden plot in the interest of securing the seeds, Martha's aunt chooses a more mobile and ad hoc 'policing' of her garden plot that intentionally leaves room for transgression. While the space around the garden is monitored and thereby constitutes a form of border, the performative acts of policing are described as a comical game that serves to ensure the survival of seedlings without restricting the hens' freedom of movement. Rigid, physical borders are rejected as lifeless in favour of a creative and dynamic view of the space as a contact zone which, exactly because it is continually renegotiated in direct embodied encounters, enables the productive and affectionate cohabitation of multiple species in the space of the garden. Throughout, the novel privileges such a lively, affective engagement with borders that allows for dynamic encounters and cross-border movement.

The connection between this lively view of borders and environmental readings of Scotland's borders along planetary lines is made later in the novel when Martha and her family debate the centrality of light for a geographic reimagination of Scotland's limits. In her non-fictional writing and in her novels, Shepherd explores the idea of light and tries to describe its special qualities in the North East: 'Light in Scotland has a quality I have not met elsewhere', Shepherd claims early on in *The Living Mountain* (1977, 2), in which she dedicates a whole chapter to reflections on 'Air and Light'. What makes the natural light in Scotland special, according to Shepherd, is that '[i]t is luminous without being fierce, penetrating to immense distances with an effortless intensity' (2). On a clear mid-summer day, the natural light allows the local environment of the Cairngorms to expand and defy the rules of distance, to become spacious in reaching beyond its own boundaries towards 'the ends of the earth and far into the sky' (22). Natural light situates Scotland within a network of planetary relations by allowing Shepherd to move back and forth between the local and the cosmological. Its special qualities foster an experience of boundless space and dissolve borders. Light and spaciousness are central elements in Shepherd's planetary poetics of the border.

In *The Quarry Wood* the quality of natural light frequently evokes feelings of wonder, not least in the scene in which Geordie, Martha and her sisters reflect on the seeming boundlessness of Scotland under the gleam of the Northern Lights. Martha is drawn out of herself by her experience of the 'Merry Dancers':

> A shudder ran over Martha. Something inside her grew and grew till she felt as enormous as the sky. She gulped the night air; and at the same time made a

> convulsive little movement against her father. She was not afraid; but she felt so out of size and knowledge of herself that she wanted to touch something ordinary.
>
> (1928, 18)

The affective tone of this passage draws on the sublime while explicitly distancing itself from it: the feeling of enormity that Martha experiences is not accompanied by the terror inherent in the sublime but characterized by a feeling of incommensurable wonder. Martha feels part of something that exceeds her being and only by anchoring herself on a local level of experience by touching her father can she start to wonder about the meaning of these feelings. The luminosity of the Scottish environment in this passage can be seen to evoke modernist moments of being, though not quite in a Woolfian sense. In a letter to Neil Gunn, Shepherd describes her idea of 'movements of being' as an exchange between the natural environment and a spiritual inner world and it is in this more environmental sense that the moments of being in Shepherd's work are to be understood (cited in Peacock 2019, xi). As the family tries to understand the phenomenon of the Northern Lights, they collectively reinvent a ballad in which the 'Arory-bory-Alice' is said to bound Scotland to the north. As a result, light becomes central to an alternative and playful understanding of the borders of Scotland:

> Martha said it over and over to herself: Scotland is bounded on the south by England, on the east by the rising sun, on the north by the Arory-bory-Alice, and on the west by Eternity. Eternity did not seem to be in any of her maps: but neither was the Aurora. She accepted that negligence of the map-makers as she accepted so much else in life.
>
> (1928, 20)

This affective geography displaces geopolitical borders in favour of an environmental understanding of Scotland that is expansive and insubstantial, understood through the movement of the planet with the cycles of the rising sun, the intangible and unpredictable waves of the Northern Lights and the even less graspable spiritual category of eternity. Even though the ephemerality of the Aurora as a legitimate boundary for Scotland is questioned by Dussie who asks, 'what bounded Scotland when the Aurora was not there' (19), the boundary is accepted unequivocally, allowing the initial sense of wonder to be maintained. The reliance on non-scalable environmental categories that exceed human systems of organizing space and encompass the planet itself suggests that

the boundaries of Scotland cannot quite be grasped except by affective and lively engagement.

It is only the geopolitical border involved in the description of Scotland, the Anglo-Scottish border, which at first glance appears fixed and cannot be imagined into anything other than what official maps describe. For Carter, this difference between the dynamic and ephemeral nature of Scotland's northern, eastern and western boundaries and the fixity of its southern border 'would suggest that England alone anchors Scotland in the material world' and that Scotland, consequently, 'can only be read in relation to England because the other boundaries are not chartered in atlases' (2000, 53). Such a reading of the passage, however, underestimates the affective potential of the more elusive boundaries and their formative role in delineating the lifeworlds of Martha and her family. The family does not try to replace England as Scotland's limit to the south, accepting it as a geographical given and anchoring their reality on a national scale. Nevertheless, 'England' in this case cannot be considered solely in geopolitical terms, but is more accurately understood, similar to the other boundaries, on an affective level: physically and conceptually distant from their lifeworld, England remains no less abstract, maybe even more so, than the Northern Lights. This overlay of geopolitical and affective terms of understanding their position in the world highlights the planetary poetics of Shepherd's writing which embraces contradictions rather than trying to dissolve them. The productive incongruity between the frames of reference here highlights the imaginative potential of adopting multiple dynamic perspectives rather than settling down on what is most commonly accepted. This becomes even clearer when the Atlantic Ocean is first suggested as Scotland's western border but rejected by Geordie's claim that in his story, '[i]t was a bigger word nor that' (1928, 20). Rather than providing the story referenced, the novel opts to offer half-remembered fragments that are brought together and reinvented through debate which captures and embraces the disproportionality between geographical denominations and affective impressions. The coming together of multiple perspectives demonstrates not only that the planetary perspective shifts geopolitical borders and encourages us to read them differently, but also that the planetary can only really unfold collectively, in the interaction between various human and non-human actors. According to Laura-Lee Kearns, an 'ethics and aesthetics of wonder would enable us to greet and meet […] with an openness that seeks wonder instead of fear and could potentially undermine dualisms' (2015, 100). By reimagining Scotland outside the dualistic perspective that would define it in its relation to England, or even in relation solely to human history, the alternative map

presented by Shepherd's novel captures this creative openness. Drawing on the conditions of light present in Scotland because of its latitudinal position and geology, conditions which change how characters perceive their environment, the novel facilitates the multiperspectival reframing of conventional geopolitical borders and simultaneously suggests that it is the Scottish environment itself which unlocks the imaginative possibilities that encourage a creative and lively approach to borders.

The creation of hierarchies between official cartographic delineations and more creative and intuitive understandings, or even between England and Scotland, is not what the novel leads up to. Rather, the coexistence of both frames of reference captures the ethical undercurrents of the aesthetics of wonder that characterizes passages such as the above. For Mireille Schnyder, the poetics of wonder can best be understood as poetics of the border, with wonderment defining a boundary experience in which epistemological borders are crossed (2013, 112–13). The crossing of epistemological borders from the known into the unknown can lead to what Kearns defines as an ethics of wonder in which cultivating a sense of wonder forms the basis for ethical relationships with others in that it refuses to totalize experiences and contain them within a closed system (2015, 100). While the imaginative map of Scotland is internalized by Martha as more truthful to her experience than the abstracted knowledge provided by maps, she does not prioritize between experiential and conceptual cartographies. Instead, Scotland's position in relation to larger-than-national systems of deep time, planetary movement and earthly phenomena is acknowledged alongside the national geographies that Martha learns at school where she 'repeated the boundaries of Scotland with the same satisfaction as she repeated the rivers in Spain' (1928, 20). Having crossed this border, Martha is able to read the world from multiple perspectives at once, seeing herself simultaneously in an embodied sense as anchored in a particular moment in time and space and in an affective relation to the planet. Her initial boundary experience of wonder establishes room for a creative engagement with borders and makes it possible for Martha to understand the world on both an affective and a scientific level.

In Shepherd's second novel, *The Weatherhouse* (1930), the quality of the natural light in North East Scotland and the spaciousness of the landscape return as central imageries through which Shepherd dissolves spatial and temporal boundaries. This is foregrounded in passages that draw on the particular qualities of Scotland and, in an inversion of nationalist perspectives on land as confined or liberated by humans, describe it agentically, as 'a country that liberated' on the basis of its geological history and its latitudinal

location: '[m]ore than half the world was sky. The coastline vanished at one of the four corners of the earth' (9–10). In this opening chapter, Shepherd already attempts to capture and layer contradictory perspectives in order to develop a planetary outlook. The reference to a more commonly accepted geographical framework of borders is hinted at by the reference to the 'four corners of the earth', which is put alongside an environmental understanding of Scotland not as territory to be limited through imperialist structures but, in Glissant's terms, as land that is limitless and connects Scotland to other parts of the planet. In *The Weatherhouse*, Shepherd is able to mobilize the quality of natural light in Scotland to unsettle minute boundaries on the smallest material scale by seemingly dissolving substances:

> On the willows by the pool the catkins were fluffed, insubstantial, their stamens held so lightly to the tree that they seemed like the golden essence of its life escaping to the liberty of air. Once, as the two wandered in the wood, they saw a rowan, alone in the darkness of the firs, with smooth grey branches that gleamed in the sun. The tree had no seeming substance. It was like a lofty jet of essential light.
>
> (1930, 59)

In this passage, the landscape appears almost spectral to Lindsay on her walk with Garry, real in the focus on the willows' catkins, the rowans and the firs which they encounter in their daily walks, and simultaneously unreal, at the point of complete dissolution into light. That the trees are simultaneously identifiable and caught in the process of becoming insubstantial and turning into something other than themselves resonates with Shepherd's assessment in *The Living Mountain* that changing one's perspective will reveal 'static things […] caught in the very act of becoming' (1977, 10). Passages like the one above appear almost unexpectedly, in the middle of conversations rather than in silent contemplations. In between encounters, they insert the environment into the narrative, bringing it into focus as something that is always in flux, just as the narrative itself is constantly shifting its perspective and resisting static interpretations.

Even though such scenes of becoming show humans to be enmeshed in the environment, they do not work to promote a dissolution and merging of substances into an integral whole in which boundaries are completely suspended. When Lindsay walks outside under the full moon, she experiences a similar sense of wonder at the spaciousness and seeming boundlessness created by the light to that experienced by Martha in *The Quarry Wood*. Just

like Martha, Lindsay is astonished at how huge the night seems to her when she describes leaving the house as an act of 'escaping from the lit room into light itself' (1930, 29):

> Light was everywhere: it gleamed from the whole surface of heaven, round a third of the horizon the sea shimmered. […] She ran through the spruce plantation and toiled up the field over snow that was matted in grass; and, reaching the crest, saw without interruption to the rims of the world.
>
> (29)

The light of the full moon blurs the boundaries between sea and sky, and spatial distances can be imaginatively overcome when Lindsay feels that she can see beyond the limits of the coastal border on which she stands into immense distances. As with Martha, the experience draws Lindsay out of herself. Even though she tries to focus on being grounded on the earth through her feet, Lindsay feels herself to be 'lost in light and space' with her 'identity vanished' (29). But this potential dissolution is only temporary and as soon as Lindsay starts to move, she is surprised to 'stumble[] with the rough going' because she feels that she 'ought to have glided like light over an earth so insubstantial' (29). The feeling of becoming part of the light and the blurring of the boundary between self and environment cannot be sustained on a practical, bodily level and the ability of the land to dissolve borders remains a purely imaginative potential. In scenes such as this, in which the world seems at the point of dissolving into something insubstantial, the narrative abruptly returns to the material level, halting a potential transcendence of the earthly. At the same time, however, the narrative plays with the idea of what a dissolution and reshaping of substances might look like to explore the imaginative potential of such a breaking down of borders. Imagining the borders between self and environment, or substance and light, as porous constitutes an intervention to borders on a conceptual level. What results is a method of rethinking conventional framings of bordering processes while simultaneously maintaining an awareness that political borders and their effects are not easily dissolved.

The contradictoriness and inassimilable qualities of planetary consciousness are captured in the additional meaning of light in *The Weatherhouse*. Light acquires another meaning in relation to the war context that forms the backdrop of this novel which highlights the sense of bewilderment and discomfort that also comes with planetary thought in contrast to the more pleasurable feeling of wonder invoked, for example, by the Northern Lights. While natural phenomena of light trigger the imagination of a world without substances and boundaries, it

is also light that forcefully draws the violent trauma of the war into the narrative when the eccentric Barbara Paterson is harshly judged by her neighbours because she leaves the lights on at night despite by the potential danger of air raids. The contrast between threatening, artificial light and the wonders of natural light becomes starkest after a visit from Barbara Paterson to the Weatherhouse in which she appears to intimidate the young Lindsay Lorimer. The narrative directly contrasts natural and artificial light in the framing of Lindsay's journey into the night as she leaves the Weatherhouse to run away from Barbara. In her first encounter with Barbara Paterson at the house, Lindsay feels her to be 'towering over her' (1930, 27) and describes her as a being more like a thing than a person, as 'an undisciplined and primitive force', an 'earthly relic of an older age' that disturbs the orderly propriety of the ladies at the Weatherhouse (28). The radical energy that radiates from Barbara Paterson both exhilarates and terrifies Lindsay. Before she runs out to catch up with Miss Barbara, she imagines her out in the snow: 'Lindsay had a vision of the white light flooding the world and gleaming on the snow, and of Miss Barbara convulsed with laughter in the middle of the gleam' (29). Lindsay catches up with Miss Barbara right after she experiences the moment of temporary dissolution into the light described above. As they walk towards Miss Barbara's house, Lindsay realizes that in every one of her windows a light had been left on, and her terrified vision alters her impression of Miss Barbara: 'A spasm of terror contracted Lindsay's heart. Miss Barbara had clambered on to the next dyke. […] She stood there poised, keeping her footing with an outstretched arm at the lights, a menacing figure' (30). Light is no longer solely understood as a radiating element of nature that invokes feelings of wonder but instead becomes a potential threat as its presence bears real physical danger to the characters. Lindsay is brought from a moment of dissolution into the material world that is invoked by the natural light illuminating the landscape back to her political and bodily reality, which is endangered by a different kind of light: first the artificial light of the lamps, and then the terrifying gleam of Lindsay's vision. In this moment, the illumination of the landscape which made her feel weightless and full of wonder is turned into discomfort. Shepherd turns wonder into bewilderment when the light turns into a terrifying gleam signalling a threat to Lindsay's physical integrity in a completely different sense, one that does not lead to a transcendence of the physical, but a destruction of it. Even in her use of an aesthetics of light, then, Shepherd is not looking to produce something consistent or universal but instead layers different ways of seeing the world, present even within the same

character, seemingly asking: when does light allow us to transgress borders, when do we embrace this transgression, and when is it threatening?

Planetarity and historical agency

The persistent materiality of political borders finds special consideration in debates on historical agency which complement explorations of moments of possible dissolution with references to political and individual responsibilities. When Martha takes lectures in natural history, she gains an understanding of deep time which widens her perception beyond human temporal frameworks. This not only helps her understand her position within a mesh of life on a shared planet, but also leads her to consider her role within human history and to think about humanity's impact on the planet and other lives. Martha's perspective multiplies as a result of her natural history lessons and she begins to recognize and take into account non-human lives whose 'incredible shapes moved through an unimaginable past; and an unimaginable present surged into one, humming with a life one had not seen before, nor even suspected' (1928, 62). In her non-fiction, Walton demonstrates, Shepherd is able to cultivate 'a "deep time" sensibility' that relies on both 'a feeling of wonder and openness' and 'an expanded sense of interconnection and kinship with the living world' through the geologic directions her writing takes (2020, 108). The same is true for Shepherd's fiction in which the expansiveness that deep time imaginaries open up is not to be understood as an expansion in the sense of an imperialist teleological development. Rather, the expansion towards the non-human happens on a horizontal level as different human and non-human imaginaries begin to form layers over the course of the narrative. Being more interested in asymmetries and contradictions, however, the novel does not linger long on the emerging image of a harmonious web of life. Again, the landscape intervenes, distracting Martha from her history lessons and the wonders of geology and creaturely life, drawing her back into the present landscape as shaped by human activity:

> Martha lifted her head from the pages and looked out on those infinitudes of light. She was reading history that year. The slow accumulation of facts and dates was marshalled in her brain […] and as she turned from reading and gazed in that wide country gathering blue airs about itself; saw the farms and cottar-houses, roads, dykes, fields, river, she was teased from her own inner stillness by an excitement to which all she had been reading anent the press and stir of

> the centuries contributed. Looking up, she thought suddenly, 'I am a portion of history.'
>
> (1928, 80)

The mere reading of history, then, is not what triggers Martha's recognition of her part within it, or the thoughts which follow from this recognition. Instead, it is the gaze into the spacious landscape surrounding her, characterized by 'infinitudes of light', that shapes Martha's planetary consciousness. The understanding of her world through the geological time frames on a planetary scale based on her reading of natural history reframes Martha's perception and enables her to think across spatial and temporal scales and to create new kinds of knowledge. Planetarity in the novel is understood as both a temporal and spatial category and the two are interwoven in Martha's altered perception of the world and the environment which she inhabits. As Bergthaller and Horn point out:

> Planetary thinking must comprehend the particularity of the local along with the Earth system as a whole – not in order to reduce the former to a subordinate part of the latter, but in order to understand the emergent effects, the escalations and causal cascades that bind them all together.
>
> (2020, 154)

The return from the abstracted knowledge presented by her natural history book back to Martha's present suggests that the planetary is not removed from the local but instead opens a new way of understanding the interdependencies between social and cultural history and planetarity by situating the planetary within the local. What the narrative strives for is therefore not a transcendence of the local in favour of the universal nor a privileging of the local over the planetary. In fact, this would contradict the idea of the planetary the novel develops which could more accurately be described, in the terms of Bergthaller and Horn, as a '[s]pherical space' which 'curves back on itself, enveloping and enclosing the human, and bringing every place and every spatial scale into contact with other places and scales – without, however, assimilating them to a single homogenous and scalable space' (2020, 152). Along these lines, the narrative unsettles the assumption of the local and the planetary as separate categories, treating them instead as nested layers that cannot be understood outwith their relation to one another. The recognition of different time scales much larger than human history astonishes Martha just as much as the pluralization of her present where particular creatures inhabit the same space, some of them encountered and yet never acknowledged: minute creatures that inhabit the air and everything around

her, making her realize the extent to which she is surrounded by unknown lives that play out on scales as big and temporally extensive as tectonic shift and as small and localized as the creatures inhabiting the grass blades of her present.

The reflections that arise from Martha's astonishment and fascination further integrate the planetary within a specific social and cultural history. As with the Northern Lights, it is again a landscape shaped by specific light conditions that awake in Martha a sense of wonderous excitement that leads to a wider reflection on the world and humanity's place within it. This realization that everyone, including herself, is an agent forming history leads to an understanding of the complex and unpredictable effects of historical agency:

> She perceived that the folk who had made history were not necessarily aware of the making, might indeed be quite ignorant of it: folk to whom a little valley and a broken hilltop spelt infinity and who from that width and reasonableness of life had somehow been involved in the monstrous and sublime unreason of purposes beyond their own intention. The walls that shut people from people and generation from generation collapsed about her ears; and all that had ever been done on the earth – all that she had read and heard and seen – swung together to a knot of life so blinding that involuntarily she closed her eyes and covered them with her hands.
>
> (1928, 81)

The lack of awareness and comprehension of the farming community about the impact of their daily actions on a larger scale is shocking and unexpected to Martha who describes the unintended consequences of these local actions as contributions to 'monstrous and sublime unreason'. According to Kelly Sultzbach, ecocritical readings of modernist works often reveal discussions 'about how rural and metropolitan identity is influenced by the global power dynamics of warfare and the rise and decline of England's imperial influence' (2016, 13). The passage remains deliberately vague about how it is to be read in relation to the socio-historical context in which the novel and the events it relates are situated. Even though the novel predates the concept of the Anthropocene, coined by Paul Crutzen and Eugene Stroemer in 2000, this passage speaks to twenty-first-century concerns, in particular in relation to the question of historical agency. The difficulty of imagining the unintended consequences of individual but also collective actions that may appear small and insignificant, in this case the daily actions of Martha's local community, on larger geographical and temporal scales, are recognized as one of the key challenges in understanding climate change today. Scale effects, that is the sometimes unforeseeable and detrimental effects

that small-scale actions can have when considered on a larger scale, require us to rethink our definition of agency as based on effect rather than intention. Looking at the land shaped by human labour represented by the cottar-houses, farms and fields, Martha recognizes that the natural world she looks out to is inseparable from the events recorded by her history books and is able to draw connections to her natural history lectures. Increasingly, Martha's perspective takes in the historical relations embedded within the environment she inhabits, moving first from a view of the surrounding agricultural landscape to a perspective of the whole valley seemingly bordered by the broken hilltop and eventually to a less easily describable view that goes beyond the situation of the characters around which the novel revolves in order to situate them within complex and contradictory planetary relations.

The recognition of such complex structures and relations of events, and the attempt to look at their layered temporal and spatial dimensions, leads us to consider the wider relations in which the story's characters are enmeshed and the relevance of their perspectives beyond the socio-historical context in which the novel is situated. Martha is here not focused exclusively on the history of her region, her nation or even her species but recognizes the pattern of a relational 'knot of life' in which all of these other dimensions collide and become layered upon one another in a non-hierarchical way. When Martha is overwhelmed by 'all that had ever been done on the earth – all that she had read and heard and seen', this includes her knowledge about natural history: the knot of life, in including everything on earth, overwhelms her because it becomes impossible to grasp the incommensurability of planetarity. Rather than sorting the history that unravels in front of her into neat categories or a teleological narrative of progress, Martha's view attends to the relations between human and natural history as shaped by multiple human and non-human actors. Instead of describing what Martha perceives positively as a web of life, the narrative opts to describe the mass of knowledge that opens out to Martha as a blinding knot. This description highlights the impossibility of thinking on all scales at once when, as Clark argues, '[a] certain scale must make up the fundamental structure of any imaginable experience, or any model of the world' (2015, 73). This challenge in meaning-making and storytelling lies at the heart of planetary thought in the Anthropocene. At the same time, however, *The Quarry Wood* expresses a certain resistance to scale framing, 'a strategy for representing complex issues in ways that make them more amenable to thought or overview' which, according to Clark, runs the risk of oversimplifying or even evading complex issues that cannot simply be understood as happening on one scale (74). Rather than

oversimplifying or offering any easy solutions, Shepherd's novel resists such scale framing by multiplying, rather than converging perspectives and experiences, allowing them to sit alongside each other and encouraging dialogue between them. In creating these dialogues but also in allowing her characters to live with these contradictions rather than being paralysed by the impossibility of finding a single clear path to navigate them, Shepherd appears to capture the importance of the 'continued struggle to try to understand heterogeneity with humility but not futility' which, according to Jill Tan, 'is at the crux of a planetary relational practice' and which insists on fostering connections and building new allegiances 'in spite of shock, alienation, and discomfort' (2020). The sense of wonder Shepherd generates, then, might easily slip into a wonderment in the sense of bewilderment and thereby manages to capture what Gabrys describes as 'the inassimilable, the incommensurate conditions of planetary inhabitation than cannot and do not settle into one coherent or planar object' (2018).

In *The Weatherhouse*, the trauma and violence of the First World War enter the town with the arrival of Barbara Paterson's shell-shocked nephew Garry whose return home on medical leave is overshadowed by the horrors of war. Garry is haunted by the memory of a visceral delirious vision: trapped in a shell hole in the trenches, Garry began to identify himself with the corpse of a fellow soldier who he desperately tried to haul out of the mud. His war experiences leave him shut off to the imaginative possibilities the landscape holds for other characters such as Lindsay. As Walton points out, Garry's association of the earth with his trauma 'most viscerally addresses the difficulty of reconnecting with the land when the earth itself is visually and sensually associated with traumatic experience' (2019). Walking from the station to Knapperley, Garry contemplates the landscape in a long scene, which, after the turmoil of war, irritates him in its silence. The absence of noise is perceived by Garry not only as 'dumb' and 'graceless', but also signifies to him that the place he is coming back to is dead and lifeless, far removed from and unaware of what happened at the front (1930, 56):

> Garry felt himself fall, ages of time gave way, and he too, was a creature only half set free from the primordial dark. He was astonished at this effect upon himself, at the vastness which this familiar country assumed. Width and spaciousness it always had, long clear lines, a far horizon, height of sky; yet the whole valley and its surrounding hills could have been set down and forgotten in the slum of the war territory from which he had crossed. All the generations of its history would not make up the tale of the fighting men.
>
> (1930, 56)

The narrative picks up the affective perception of the vastness and spaciousness of the country that is at the heart of the aesthetics of wonder when the narrative relates other characters' experiences. The reference back to this affective dimension highlights the imaginative possibilities offered by the environment in order to make clear that Garry is incapable of fully harnessing such potentials because of his traumatic experiences.

Nevertheless, the countryside has a similar effect on Garry's thinking about temporality as it has on Martha as he reflects on the marks humanity has made on the landscape and contemplates the architectural remains that tell of a history of violent conflicts since the Picts and Celts: he sees in the darkness the 'timeless attributes' of the land, and, similar to Martha, is drawn into the mass of history he confronts, feeling 'as though he had ceased to live at the point in time where all his experience had hitherto been amassed' (56). And yet he thinks in different dimensions from Martha for whom the imagination of the planetary and the whole of natural and human history turns into a blinding knot of life. Garry's worldview is limited at first by the war to an imperialist anthropocentric mindset through which he glorifies the destruction of the earth, including of human and non-human life, as an act of creation:

> The world he had come from was alive. Its incessant din, the movement, the vibration that never ceased from end to end of the war-swept territory, were earnest of human activity so enormous that the mind spun with thinking of it. Over there one felt oneself part of something big. One was making the earth.
>
> (56)

In this passage, Garry's attitude mirrors the idea of war as a force of creation promoted by the Italian movement of the futurism in the early twentieth century. Wanting to rouse society and politics from the perceived stupor of traditionalism, the futurist movement led by Filippo Tommaso Marinetti saw war as a form of 'regenerative violence' needed to revitalize politics and rebuild the world (Berghaus 2009, 32–3). Similar to the futurists, Garry exhilarates in what he perceives to be a creative human activity and the descriptions of the sounds, movements and vibrations of the war zone resonate with Marinetti's image of an 'orchestra of the trenches' (cited in Berghaus 2009, 33). At the same time, this passage does not simply address the creation of a new world order, but also visualizes acts of creation on a physical, material level. The only history the war-torn landscape reveals to Garry is a human history of violent conflict, primordial savagery and borders that divide, but it is also one in which humans possess the agency to 'make the earth'. Mirroring the farmers' work in *The*

Quarry Wood, the fighting in the trenches is presented as a series of human acts of making the earth, influencing the environment in as yet unforeseeable ways. At the same time, this form of making is a destructive rather than a creative act. Garry's masculinist worldview, and indeed the necessity for this kind of thinking to carry out his duties as a soldier in the trenches, makes it possible for him to reframe destruction as a creative act and to focus on the feeling of power and agency his activities grant him in a situation not of his own choosing. Like Martha, Garry recognizes himself as an integral actor in history, but, unlike her, he does so from a position of mastery. Clark writes about the challenges of the Anthropocene in which it becomes difficult to recognize the unintended consequences of our impact on the earth, and argues that 'the challenge becomes to think the Anthropocene as a threshold at which humanity becomes a new unprecedented agency en masse, escaping subjective experience of itself' (2015, 60). It is this collective sense of an agency en masse, of becoming subsumed into something bigger than oneself, that lends Garry a feeling of power and agency in this situation, but which, as the novel progresses, will leave him feeling alienated.

Over the course of the novel, Garry slowly recognizes the limitations of his world view as he moves from an experience of clear-cut lines to a more heterogeneous understanding of life and realizes that boundaries are not so easy to maintain after all. At the same time, he acknowledges that a partial dissolution of boundaries does not necessarily pose a threat to his sense of self but opens up a new understanding of the self in relation to other human and non-human lives. Whereas the clear black and white/us versus them divisions in war helped him make sense of his own position, they also led to a de-individualization and a loss of agency: in Garry's dark visions of the earth 'time and the individual had ceased to matter' (1930, 58) and he is unable to reconcile this feeling of powerlessness with the defiant vivacity of his aunt who he watches 'dancing alone on her kitchen floor in the middle of a world war, for no other reason than that she wanted to' (57). Similar to Martha's Aunt Josephine, Barbara Paterson does not care for propriety so much as for a lively engagement with the world and defies the limits others attempt to set for her, no matter the danger this might pose. However, the absolute and extreme loss of boundaries between himself and other bodies which Garry experiences in the trenches as he envisions himself dragging his own corpse out of the mud, rather than that of his fellow soldier, shows that a dissolution of all boundaries may indeed not be desirable but traumatic, connected to a loss of selfhood and agency. Even after being able to turn these experiences into a productive way of thinking about the world, Garry still feels disconnected and his identity remains fragmented, and

he feels 'angry at a world that would not let him keep his straight and clean-cut standards' (118–19).

Planetarity as the fourth dimension of reality

Through his experiences as a soldier, Garry has not only lost the ability to relate to the environment in a positive way, but he also struggles to connect with other people. It is only gradually that Garry is able to reframe his clear-cut dualistic beliefs about morality, interpersonal relationships and humanity's place on the planet. At the same time, however, Garry's traumatic relationship with the earth during his time at war leads him to develop a more visceral experience of the environment which adds an important layer to his later engagement with it. It is this adding up of perspectives, a mingling of contradictions, rather than a simple sense of overcoming the association of the earth with his traumatic experiences, that make Garry a crucial figure in understanding Shepherd's planetary poetics. Garry offers the reader a new level of planetary thinking tied to dimensionality rather than scale that is not available to other characters. Garry admits to Ellen that the women of the Weatherhouse seem unreal to him after coming back from the war because they seem to be 'a dimension short':

> You have three dimensions right enough, but we've a fourth dimension over there. We've depth. It's not the same thing as height, […] It's down in – hollowness and mud and foul water and bad smells and holes and more mud. Not common mud. It's dissolution – a dimension that won't remain stable – and you've to multiply everything by it to get any result at all. You people who live in a three-dimensional world don't know. You can't know. You go on thinking this is the real thing, but we've discovered that we can get off every imaginable plane that the old realities yielded.
>
> (1930, 114)

After the horror and trauma of the trenches, Garry realizes that they opened a new perspective to him. This perspective, found in 'hollowness and mud and foul water and bad smells', captures a material, bodily dimension of reality that derives directly from the earth, its soil, water and mud. The instability, messiness and incommensurability of this four-dimensional way of seeing speak to the notion of planetarity and suggest that the planetary may be understood less as a 'scale' than a dimension with which every imaginable scale needs to be multiplied. Once again, Shepherd's focus lies on the accumulation and multiplication of

perspectives, some of them importantly invoked by the material world itself, as an integral part of the planetary imagination.

Earlier, Garry's difficulty in moving beyond black-and-white thinking is visible in his growing anger and his obsession with exposing a young woman pretending to be engaged to his friend David who fell during the war. He goes on a mission to denounce her but ultimately realizes that things are not as straightforwardly right or wrong as he had assumed, and he lets go of his rage. As he looks down at the landscape again after his realization of a fourth dimension, it is captured 'on the point of dissolution into light' and Garry is led to think about the interdependency between the land and 'the people whom the land had made', whom he imagines to be 'shaped from a stuff as hard and intractable as their rock, through weathers as rude as stormed upon their heights' (1930, 112). These thoughts allow him to acknowledge the ability of the land not just to be shaped by human actions but in turn to shape and influence human character and history. He muses that these people 'at moments were dissolved in light, had their hours of transfiguration' (112). Even though Garry at first appears deadlocked in his worldview because of his traumatic experiences, letting go of his rage allows him to experience the illumination of the landscape with a sense of wonder that had previously been foreclosed to him. Being able to open himself up allows Garry to harness the potential of the landscape to generate new perspectives: he recognizes the interdependencies between natural and human histories and begins to see the human as a part of, rather than apart from, the material world. The experience of encountering the local landscape afresh is what then allows him to reconsider the trauma he experienced in the trenches. As a result, Garry begins to think about what perspectives this other, unfamiliar and shattered landscape beyond Scotland's borders may have offered him and discovers that reality has shifted and become four-dimensional because of this encounter.

Having been able to articulate his thoughts about the four-dimensionality of reality, Garry is able to shift his worldview as a whole: after his recognition of the fourth dimension, '[l]imits had shifted, boundaries been dissolved' and he acknowledges how everything 'flowed over into something else' (118). This leads Garry to reconsider his traumatic delirium in the trenches in which he identified himself with another man's dead body and which 'haunted him like the key note of a tune' (118). The return to the sounds of the war zone through a haunting tune recalls again the connection to futurist images of an orchestra of war, though this time this experience is no longer framed as exhilarating

or liberating. The challenge for Garry in navigating his new perspective and finding a balance between dissolution and solidity is reflected in this haunting tune which is described as 'rude and perplexing, with discord unresolved and a tantalising melody that fluted and escaped' (118). Shepherd's writing again plays with contradictions, capturing the difficulties of navigating planetary realities and the necessity to look at the world in a cubist way from multiple perspectives at once, but also highlighting the material connections between the environment, the planet and individual lives. The materiality of the mud and the dissolution that characterizes Garry's fourth dimension suggest that he is beginning to recognize himself as part of the mesh in which everything is connected through flows. As a result, Garry is able to reframe his experience in a way that explains his identification with the other man's body through their enmeshment in the fourth, material dimension of reality. This helps him understand the material enmeshment of all life in a more positive way:

> [Garry] looked again at the wide leagues of land. […] He saw everything he looked at not as substance, but as energy. All was life. Life pulsed in the clods of earth that the ploughshares were breaking, in the shares, the men. Substance, no matter what its form, was rare and fine.
>
> (175)

The furrows with their clods of earth vibrating with energy recall the vibrations and the mud of the trenches in which Garry perceived himself to be making the earth. The parallels between these seemingly contradictory forms of making – furrows versus trenches – and the implication that the breaking up of the earth may bring death and destruction but also life and new growth highlight Garry's changed worldview. The paralleling of these two visions of life and death, creation and destruction, further suggests them as both contradictory and complementary. Garry's focus on dimensionality highlights once again that Shepherd's writing is not simply interested in multiscalar perspectives on a hierarchical level, scaling up and down and looking at each scale in turn. The fourth dimension Garry introduces, in being characterized by foulness, mud and bad smells, contrasts starkly with the aesthetics of wonder and light through which other characters connect to the planet and opens a bodily connection to the earth that is far from aesthetically or experientially pleasing. And yet, as Garry argues, once this dimension of dissolution is experienced it can no longer be neglected: every other experiential dimension must be multiplied by it. At the same time, the dimension cannot be understood on its own because it will not remain stable, it dissolves and shifts and with it established boundaries

and 'old realities' become blurry. Thinking back to the planetary imagination of Shepherd's other characters, it may be Garry's dimensional thinking that comes closest to a truly multiperspectival planetary practice. Shepherd's writing attends to the multiplications of overlapping scales and asks us to read all of them at once, rather than one after the other, to recognize the interconnectedness between them that is necessary for planetary thinking. Similarly, Garry claims it is impossible to understand the three-dimensional world without multiplying it by a fourth, a dimension that can never be fully understood itself and remains always out of reach in its constant state of dissolution. The planetary remains out of reach because it cannot be conceptualized in simple terms: its meaning continually deferred and slips away.

For Garry, being able to reframe his feeling of dissolution to a recognition of the energy of matter, as Walton argues, 'occasions a new kind of ethical and political relation of equality and mutual responsibility' both in terms of human and environmental relations (2020, 155). Towards the end of the novel, this recasting of the fourth dimension as one of productive flows of energy, or life, helps Garry to reach a balance between dissolution and solidity, and counteracts his felt loss of agency after the trenches. At the end, he turns to the local environment again to engender a perspective that will help him heal and reconcile the multiple dimensions of his experiences. He thinks back to the two moments of being in which the landscape revealed new meaning to him, and his visions of the land as 'dark, solid, crass; mere bulk' and later as 'irradiated by the light until its substance all but vanished' are finally reconciled when his perspective shifts towards an inclusive, multiperspectival view of the world that is 'neither crass nor rare, but both in one' (1930, 176).

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The writing of Nan Shepherd is representative of a Scottish planetary consciousness, as later described by Hugh MacDiarmid, in its method of multiplying perspectives and drawing on deep time imaginaries in order to highlight the presence of the planetary within the local. At the same time, as I have tried to show, a purely situated reading of her writing would miss the larger interventions of Shepherd's work beyond Scottish and modernist studies. Like the other writers considered in this chapter, Shepherd makes use of the affordances of Scotland to develop a planetary perspective that reaches beyond the national and historical contexts. Through her writing, Shepherd develops a literary method, a planetary poetics, that thrives on contradictions and requires continually shifting perspectives. This planetary poetics is grounded in, and can

only be understood through, her intensely local focus: planetarity, Shepherd suggests, can only arise out of local environmental, geographical, political and social contexts and needs to be understood in conjunction with them. Through formal techniques of multiplying perspectives, Shepherd involves the reader in the process of working through the questions posed by our planetary realities while simultaneously highlighting that an unequivocal understanding of the planetary ultimately remains out of our reach. The literary form of the planetary as employed in Shepherd's planetary poetics presents a practice of encountering the planet from various perspectives of local inhabitation that complements the more abstract conceptualizations offered by theory.

5

Territory

B/ordering the surface of the earth: reconceptualizing territory through the imagination

The form of territory is fundamental to an understanding of borders, from the geopolitical borders of states and district boundaries to those around farmed land and private homes. In the widest sense, territory can be understood as 'a bounded part of the Earth's surface claimed and occupied by a particular individual, group, or institution, including states' (Rogers, Castree and Kitchin 2013). Rogers, Castree and Kitchin identify three dimensions of territory: a material dimension 'as in a stretch of land or sea', a functional dimension 'meaning that some polity organizes the territory for particular ends' and a symbolic dimension 'that links the territory to social identity' (2013). Even though territory is often centrally understood through human spatial practices and power relations, this multidimensional view of territory suggests that it cannot be fully grasped outside of its material, environmental dimension. The ongoing disagreement about the etymology of territory (dell'Agnese 2013, 117) captures the relationship between the term's use in connection to bordering practice and its reference to the environment. Deriving from the Latin *territorium*, the two root words that are suggested link territory to both *terra*, indicating the earth or land, and *terrere* which means to frighten or terrify (Painter 2010, 1101) which, in the context of borders, might suggest practices of deterrence to keep people out of specific territories by fear or violence if needed. While the first definition for territory given in the *Oxford English Dictionary* highlights the centrality of jurisdiction which relies on a clear demarcation of boundaries, the second definition of territory as '[a] tract of land, or district of undefined boundaries; a region' undermines this sense of legal clarity. Even though definitions tend to focus on the bounded character of territory, new critical approaches increasingly move away from an understanding of territory as static and unchangeable and

focus instead on the processes that lead to the construction of a network of dynamic, shifting and overlapping territories that are nestled into one another. As the literary works discussed in this chapter show, the material world and its non-human agents are capable of subverting and redirecting interpretations of territory as stable, highlighting it instead as a human construction within, and cutting across, multispecies landscapes.

As in the preceding chapters, the writers discussed here make use of the special affordances of Scotland in their aesthetic and discursive exploration of the form of territory. Scotland's historically complicated relationship with territory is closely linked to the idea of land, in both an environmental and a political sense, which renders discussions of territory in a Scottish context particularly productive. As Camille Manfredi argues, 'the idea that the people of today's Scotland are still deprived of the ability to "view", "see" and imagine "their" land, and most importantly to imagine themselves as part of it' still persists today (2019, 4) and is connected to a history of territorial instability. Manfredi further highlights the importance of literature and the imagination for a decolonization, or deterritorialization, of the Scottish land from which new conceptualizations of the land, in both a territorial and an environmental sense, may emerge (4). While Manfredi focuses on contemporary literary and artistic works in the context of land, I will trace the wider form of territory through various works published since the nineteenth century and consider how writers think through Scotland in an attempt to get to the ideational foundations of the spatio-political practice of territory. While the selection of works discussed in this chapter is in no way comprehensive, I hope to show that territory as a literary, material and socio-political form is more complex and versatile than commonly assumed and that by paying attention to its structures through literary exploration we gain a new understanding of one of the most fundamental bordering concepts of human spatial practice. Before turning towards the particular situation of Scotland and its literary negotiation, I will provide an overview over the form of territory from a theoretical and a literary perspective to clarify the complexity of the form. The critical vignettes that will follow this theorization will highlight the key affordances of the form for discussions of borders and the environment from a transtemporal perspective and show how the form has been mobilized in a variety of ways by different writers. Following the theoretical and literary overviews, the case study of John Buchan's *John Macnab* (1925) pays close attention to how Buchan, as a Conservative writer who was intensely preoccupied with territory in both his political career and his literary endeavours, explores the aesthetic and discursive potential of the form of territory through the philosophy of the challenge.

Defining territory

Building on the influential terminology of Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari (1986), Joe Painter argues that 'territory today seems to be ever more important' even in light of trends towards deterritorialization and globalization that put forward ideas of a borderless world, because 'in political theory and philosophy, the fashionable notion of deterritorialisation cannot be separated from a correlative reterritorialisation' (2010, 1090). However, as Painter points out, 'the nature of territory itself – its being and becoming, rather than its consequences and effects – remains under-theorized and too often taken for granted' (1090). In the following I want to sketch out the new theories on territory that have emerged, especially with the increased interest in critical border studies, in order to situate the role of literature within these debates. While territory may have been discussed only little in theory, literary texts have been consistently engaging with territory through creative means, exploring and questioning the form of territory within their respective historical and cultural context and probing the very nature of territory as a concept, practice and structuring principle.

The risk of understanding territory as a form that brings together environmental concerns and borders lies in what John Agnew (1994) has termed the 'territorial trap'. This concept summarizes reactionary conceptualizations of territory that draw on socio-biological and ethological theories in order to naturalize it and assume territorial conflict as instinctive, natural and inevitable (Storey 2001, 13–14; Painter 2010, 1091). While territory is mainly used as a legal term defining human control over land, from the mid-eighteenth century onwards it has come to be used to describe the non-human animals' practice to demarcate an area for their group or species (OED, 'territory'). However, animal territoriality is frequently used to justify exclusionary practices and violence. Statements such as the one made by Jacob Rees-Mogg who proposed that Brexit signified the renationalization of fish, 'now British fish and […] better and happier fish for it' (*The Guardian* 2021), are an example of such practices which conflate human spatial politics with animal territoriality in an attempt to naturalize territorial borders. At the same time, this conflation highlights the importance of thinking about territory from perspectives that take the non-human world into account and counter its instrumentalization in reactionary political discourses. Research on territory has largely moved away from ethological and socio-biological theorizations but this does not mean that the environment should not matter in alternative conceptualizations of territory.

Conceptualizations of the border as dynamic, mobile and dispersed across society in critical border studies have been accompanied by a questioning of conventional understandings of territory (Delaney 2005, 65). Following developments in border studies, territories are now understood to be more 'more than static, inert things' (Delaney 2005, 12) and the fact that territory requires 'perpetual public effort to establish and to maintain' it has been widely acknowledged (Paasi 2003, 111). While territory is still most frequently understood in the context of states and international politics, the term is increasingly used to 'refer to any socially constructed geographical space, not just that resulting from statehood' (Agnew 2009, 746). Delaney finds that territory can assume a 'vast variety of forms' (2005, 9) and that '[t]here are innumerable complex territorial configurations and assemblages' (4–5). Similarly, Edward Said highlights that world literatures do not present territory as a bounded entity but rather suggest a world of 'overlapping territories' and 'intertwined histories' (1994, 56). This view corresponds with contemporary theorizations of space, pioneered by Doreen Massey. Massey envisions space relationally as both 'always-already territorialised' and 'a sphere of flows', and posits that 'flows and territories are conditions of each other' rather than opposites (2005, 99). Building on Massey's work, Elena dell'Agnese argues that taking relational approaches to space, place and identity seriously 'poses a philosophical challenge to some of the founding assumptions of modern geopolitical discourse' (2013, 115), including those relating to territory. D'ell Agnese suggests that these assumptions consequently need to be interrogated for a reconceptualization of territory 'as a bounded portion of relational space' (116) or 'a cluster of interrelations' (121). Rather than abandoning territory altogether, dell'Agnese suggests that 'learning how to think relationally about it may indeed prove to be a powerful political challenge' (124). Her proposition to rethink territory in relational terms as 'porous, processual and unstable' (122) easily maps onto environmental approaches that focus on enmeshment, relationality and embodiment. Taking a similar view to dell'Agnese, Painter equally urges a reconceptualization of territory along the lines of relationality, suggesting that territory may 'best be understood as the effect of networked relations' (2010, 1093) that involve 'both human and non-human actors' (1096):

> [F]rom this viewpoint territory is necessarily porous, historical, mutable, uneven and perishable. It is a laborious work in progress, prone to failure and permeated by tension and contradiction. Territory is never complete, but always becoming. (1094)

This understanding of territory as a relational mesh that emerges through the interaction between human and non-human practices beyond state power extends Delaney's view on territory as 'an aspect of how individual humans as embodied beings organize themselves with respect to the social and material world' (2005, 10) towards an inclusion of the non-human world as central to such an embodied view of territory. If territory, as Delaney suggests, 'is better understood as implicating and being implicated in ways of thinking, acting, and being in the world' (12), environmental perspectives become a constitutive part of the form of territory. Criticizing the fact that territory is conventionally understood in connection with property and ownership rather than from an ecological or democratic perspective, Paulina Ochoa Espejo suggests moving beyond oppositional and exclusionary views of borders through a place-based approach 'that focuses on place and takes the environment seriously' (2020, 3). Suggesting the watershed as a new model, Ochoa Espejo shows territory to emerge 'from located socio-natural relations, obligations, and institutions' (19). The literary texts discussed here provide some further inspiration in their attempts to understand territory from an environmental perspective that conceptualizes it as relational, processual, dynamic and interactive and complicates its political and legal frameworks.

Territory as a literary form

Like the political, social, material and aesthetic forms defined by Caroline Levine, territory can fundamentally be understood as '*an arrangement of elements – an ordering, patterning, or shaping*' (2015, 3). Examining territory not just in politico-legal and environmental terms but from the perspective of literature reveals the interaction between these different dimensions of territory and allows access to the manifold processes involved in its creation. Dell'Agnese describes territory as a 'sticky' device that remains 'the most relevant organising principle of today's international system' (2013, 116). Along similar lines, Agnew argues that, because it 'takes on an epistemological centrality', territory is 'absolutely fundamental to modernity' (2009, 746). Seeing the form as equally ubiquitous and central as dell'Agnese and Agnew, Said points towards the important role that literature plays in understanding, confirming and/or resisting the territorial orderings of our world:

> [T]he earth is in effect one world, in which empty, uninhabited spaces virtually do not exist. Just as none of us is outside or beyond geography, none of us is

> completely free from the struggle over geography. That struggle is complex and interesting because it is not only about soldiers and cannons but also about ideas, about forms, about images and imaginings.
>
> (1994, 6)

The literary texts discussed in this chapter adopt a playful attitude towards territory and explore it from a discursive and aesthetic perspective to get at the very core of our territorial practices. While conventional conceptualizations of territory as stable and fixed may come closest to Levine's form of the 'bounded whole', literary engagements with the form reveal that in literature, territory has always been understood in ways that rub up against such dominant discourses.

At the same time, the goal of these writers is not to implode the bounds of territory, even when texts present them as relational, dynamic and interactive constructs rather than stable, unmoveable frameworks. Ochoa Espejo argues that rethinking territory along environmental, place-based lines should not turn into a dichotomous choice between 'either closed borders or no borders at all' but move beyond such oppositional understandings of territory (2020, 2). Similarly, as dell'Agnese acknowledges, relational conceptualizations of territory cannot simply do away with borders altogether '[b]ut we must reconceptualise both of them, rethinking territory as a bounded portion of relational space, and boundaries as a tool to organise those relations' (2013, 124). This shift to understanding the boundaries of bounded wholes as organizing tools that might be used to organize spatial power relations differently leads us back to the affordances of territory as a literary form close to that of Levine's bounded whole. Levine finds that '[i]f we imagine that our only option is to critique, shatter, or resist them, we reinforce the idea that bounded wholes are always and necessarily dangerous and successful, on their own terms, at organizing experience' (2015, 28–9). If we instead saw them as organizing principles, Levine argues, they might be 'put […] to work for strategic ends' other than those for which they are currently used (37). In line with these arguments, the literary form of territory is not used by the writers here to create a utopian ideal of a borderless world. Instead, these writers engage critically and creatively with how territorial borders are drawn in order to suggest ways in which environmental perspectives may serve to reshape territory.

In Levine's view, we have been 'so concerned with breaking forms apart that we have neglected to analyze the major work that forms do in our world' (9).

This analysis may be especially important for such forms as territory. As Delaney puts it, because territory frequently 'appears to be self-evident, necessary, or unquestionable, it may obscure the play of power and politics in its formation and maintenance' (2005, 11). According to Delaney:

> [F]or territory to 'work' effectively the basic principles of territoriality cannot be seriously questioned. When they are, as when private ownership of land is questioned, […] then the contingencies of territory are more clearly revealed and the claims that these territorializations are necessary or natural features of our life-worlds are more easily discounted. Territorial configurations are not simply cultural artifacts. They are political achievements.
>
> (11–12)

It is in the examination of the political formation of territory that the central affordances of territory as a literary form lie, as it allows writers to question the 'basic principles of territoriality'. Literature opens a creative testing field in which fundamental examinations of territory become possible, and which may fulfil, to some degree, Delaney's call for an investigation of 'the ideological, metaphorical, or metaphysical world-views or assumptions that make certain kinds of territories intelligible and the ways in which these representations are deployed in efforts to justify (or critique) the workings of power' (17). The literary texts discussed in the vignettes and case study make use of the overlapping organizing principles of territory and narrative. They draw on the shared status of texts and territory as bounded wholes and highlight the parallels between the processual nature of reading and plotting land and text alike. They play with literary conventions to spotlight their connections with the conventions of territorial organization. Most importantly, they do this by focusing on the embodied experiences of characters moving through territory as both a politico-legal structure and an enmeshed lifeworld that is shared with other species. Most often the form of territory employed by the writers in this chapter involves an inclusion and/or negotiation of the non-human. Animals and the environment figure either centrally or marginally in these texts and attest that territory cannot be seen purely from a human perspective. The literary works discussed in the following demonstrate how the 'dense matrix of multiple overlapping territories and territorial configurations', which all have their own meanings and power relations (Delaney 2005, 31), may best be unpicked through the creative potential of literature which allows readers to follow characters as they move within, along and across these configurations.

Territory in the Scottish literary imagination

Scotland's relation with territory remains complicated. As a nation-state without clear borders, Scotland's national territory has often been perceived as instable in a geopolitical and an imaginative sense with critics and writers bemoaning the failure of Scotland to produce a unified literary tradition and sense of national identity (see Chapter 2). As already mentioned, these tensions and uncertainties should not be understood as a predicament but rather as a special affordance that allows for a rethinking of borders along more relational and flexible lines. This view is central for the form of territory which benefits from these affordances, but there are some additional issues relating to territorial conflict on various scales that are equally central for writers who aim to explore territory by thinking through Scotland: land ownership and the Gaelic notion of *dùthchas*.

What the critical vignettes discussed in this section have in common is their practice of understanding Scotland's physical, political, legal and imaginative territory through the contentious issue of land ownership. Manfredi finds that even today '[t]here are few issues as fundamental and volatile as that of land ownership and open access, particularly when set against the backdrop of Scotland's recent political and cultural re-examination, be it before or after the Scottish independence referendum' (2019, 1). The issue of land ownership is connected to debates on national territory and (de)colonization and, as the literary texts discussed here highlight, contains a decidedly ecological dimension. Land ownership in Scotland remains a contentious issue and is increasingly considered in connection with conservation debates. Within and outwith Scotland the myth of the romantic Highlands prevails and defines Scotland's territory through its environmental and geological characteristics. In literary depictions of the Highlands from the nineteenth century onwards, this distinction is often mapped onto Anglo-Scottish territorial conflicts. The forceful and violent eviction of tenants from their own land in the Highland Clearances of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries for large-scale sheep farming led to the end of shared grazing rights according to the runrig system and included the enclosure of open fields into managed territory. The connection between animals (symbolic or actual) and territory in the context of the Clearances continues to influence literary and political debates on land ownership, land use and conservation in Scotland. In this context, the Clearances equally contributed to the myth of Scotland's empty romantic landscape devoid of people which affects Scottish land relations to this day.

The Gaelic notion of *dùthchas*, even if it may not come up explicitly in all of them, informs literary texts' engagement with Scotland's territory. *Dùthchas* is a term closely connected and opposed to conventional ideas of territoriality. It is at once a legal system, a way of thinking about (national) belonging and an ecological concept. Madeline Bunting argues that the complexity of the notion of *dùthchas* makes it difficult to translate. While dictionaries propose 'place of origin' or 'homeland' as suitable translations, this only captures a small part of its actual meaning:

> It's a collective claim on the land which is reinforced and lived out through the shared management of that land. It is a right which is grounded in daily habits and activities and it is bound up with relationships to others, and responsibilities. It gives rise to the idea, identified by the scholar Michael Newton, that 'people belong to places rather than places belonging to people'. Gaelic turns notions of ownership on their head.
>
> (2016)

The organization of land ownership, or, as some would prefer, stewardship over the land, formerly grounded in *dùthchas* ended with the Highland Clearances. Because of its legal definition as 'a system of customary law or native title associated with traditional clan society and collective rights' which 'operated within Gaelic society as a form of heritable trusteeship of land, largely on the basis of communal and familial land' (MacKinnon 2018, 284), the idea often comes up in discussions of landownership that try to imagine a different, communal way of engaging with land. Manfredi cautions against discourses about land that instrumentalize the notion of *dùthchas* and present it as a 'natural' right based on blood heredity (2019, 5). Considering inclusive forms of thinking about territory, Manfredi instead suggests the potential of a 'prospective, forward-pointing Dùthchas' and how it could inform future engagements with land and its ownership in Scotland (6). In an analysis of contemporary literary texts and artworks engaging with Scotland as a place and environment, Manfredi outlines that such views are already present in the creative practice of the writers and artists she discusses who present territory as a relational meshwork from an environmental perspective (204). While Delaney argues for a historically situated approach to territory because 'seeing through territory requires that we situate its manifestations in their historical specificity' (2005, 20), Manfredi suggests that this is already embedded in post-devolution literary engagements which 'are reconciling past and present representations of territoriality, as well as questioning the origin, destination and therefore

propriety of that territory – our land, their land, everybody's or nobody's land' (2019, 7). While I do not want to trivialize the relevance of historically situated approaches to the form of territory, I want to highlight that this is not the purpose of the critical vignettes in this chapter. Through the vignettes that follow, I hope to show that while the form of territory can be configured in different ways to speak to the socio-historical contexts of the respective works, there are also some key affordances that make the form of territory transferrable across history and that are gained by the writers' commitment to think through Scotland in order to take apart and examine the very nature of territory.

The role of creaturely life for negotiations of territory within a Scottish context is visible in a number of literary texts examined here that also draw on histories of human displacement for intensive animal farming in which the exploitation of human and animal connect, including **John McGrath's *The Cheviot, The Stag and the Black, Black Oil* (1973)**. The title of McGrath's play draws on the symbolic interplay between discussions of land ownership and the figure of the animal. While for critics such as James Hunter, the 'one creature which is symbolic both of the ecological and of the social damage done to the Highlands by the clearances […] is the sheep' (2014, 92), it is not the sheep as a creature, but rather the human introduction of large-scale sheep farming to the Highlands for profit that has proven detrimental to both the Highland population and the environment. Similar to Hunter, however, the play addresses the animal as symbol on a discursive level without adopting a creaturely perspective on territory on the aesthetic level. The symbolic animal and its relevance for Scotland's landscape aesthetics come up solely as references that are voiced by an aristocratic shooting party who admire Scotland's 'rugged beauty' (1973, 123), boast about the extent of their estates and wish they could formalize the landscape into a painting following the example set by Edwin Landseer (127). Landscape aesthetics and the role of animal symbolism are referenced shortly after Queen Victoria is shown to colonize the territory of Scotland through an inversion of the song at the beginning of the play: 'These are our mountains/And this is our glen/The braes of your childhood/Are English again' (122–3). These verses highlight the territorial conflict at the heart of the play which is concerned with the emancipation of Scotland after what is portrayed as a process of internal colonization.

The hunting party's statement, 'We are the Monarchs of the Glen' (128), provides a powerful image through its reference to Edward Landseer's famous painting *The Monarch of the Glen* (1851) which connects the animal directly to debates on territorial borders. John Morrison describes how the prominence

of animals such as the stag in the national imagery of Scotland 'attests directly to the absence of the people and culture that Highlandism purported to value' and brushes over the violent territorial displacement of communities during the Clearances (2003, 109). According to Morrison, the expansion of the deer population in the Highlands reached 'almost two million acres, often occupying emptied traditional crofting counties' which 'were (and are) managed specifically to allow the very rich to indulge in a fantasy of hunting in a "natural" landscape' (109–10). With the creatures of the sheep and deer, standing in symbolically for the dispossession of the Highlanders, the shooting party's placement of themselves as the Monarchs reveals violent human territorial conflict to be the origin of a dominant landscape aesthetics that portrays Scotland as wild and empty. McGrath's play thus makes use of the non-human in a symbolic way to underline his critique of land ownership in the Highlands. However, while an inclusion of the non-human into a debate on territorial borders allows for an unfolding of human–animal relations and the conceptual border that has been structuring them in the Western world to this day, McGrath's reduction of the animal to a mere symbol precludes a post-anthropocentric perspective on territory. While the play criticizes the capitalist exploitation of natural resources and the landscape aesthetic of the tourist industry, as Silke Stroh puts it, the 'critique of environmental destruction is not the play's main concern' and 'nature is still not intended to "come into its own"' but instead 'remains a mere resource to be exploited by an industrial economy; but this time it is a native, and preferably socialist, economy, not an imperialist, foreign-dominated capitalist one' (2010, 198). While the meaning and ownership of Scotland's territory, in particular the Highlands, is criticized in the play in connection with the environment, these debates are thus not necessarily compatible with environmentalism. What McGrath's play demonstrates, however, is that territory in Scotland cannot be thought without taking into account the non-human in one way or another.

In an essay suitably titled **'The Land' (1934), Lewis Grassic Gibbon** sets out to explore and define Scotland's territory against Northern England's 'tortured wastes of countryside', 'alien geology' and 'deplorable methods of ploughing' (81–2). Attempts to claim Northern England as part of Scotland, Grassic Gibbon complains, present a 'geographical impropriety' that has 'no aesthetic claim' (81). As a countermeasure, the essay proposes how The Land of Scotland Proper, both in capital letters, should in fact be understood:

> *That* is The Land out there, under the sleet, churned and pelted there in the dark, the long rigs upturning their clayey faces to the spear-onset of the sleet. That is The Land, a dim vision this night of laggard fences and long stretching rigs. And

> the voice of it – the true and unforgettable voice – you can hear even such a night as this as the dark comes down, the immemorial plaint of the peewit, flying lost. *That* is The Land – though not quite all. Those folk in the byre whose lantern light is a glimmer through the sleet as they muck and bed and tend the kye, and milk the milk into tin pails, in curling froth – they are The Land in as great a measure. Those two, a dual power, are the protagonists in this little sketch.
>
> (82–3)

The dual power described here resists a reading of the environment in its own right. Even though the sleet and the voice of the peewit contribute to an understanding of the land in this passage, it is ultimately the peasants working the land and the agricultural landscape characterized by clayey rigs and laggard fences that are identified as the dual powers that define The Land. The land described by Grassic Gibbon in this essay is to be understood in a territorialized rather than an environmental sense. Despite his criticism of destructive environmental/agricultural change that is detrimental to both humans and their environment, including large-scale sheep farming, it is the 'rank cow-dung' of animal husbandry that for Grassic Gibbon 'is the smell that backgrounds existence' (86) and which can only be spread and cultivated in an authentic form by 'the aristocracy of the earth, the ploughmen and the peasants' who are 'the real rulers of Scotland' and 'of the earth' as a whole (86–7).

Even though non-human animals form part of the definition of the land in this essay, they do so only marginally: birds provide the background music to human action, farm animals provide the basis for peasants' livelihood, but may also disrupt it (rabbits) or fully replace humans (sheep). Grassic Gibbon is not interested in developing a perspective on the land as a multispecies territory. Instead, his aim is for this essay to reflect his wider interests in promoting cultural nationalism and the rights of the rural working class in Scotland. At the same time, the way that the non-human sneaks into this essay, even if it is confined to the margins, almost suggests that writing about the land without taking the non-human into account in some way is impossible. Grassic Gibbon appears to notice these non-human intrusions into his narrative mid-way through the essay when he suddenly, and forcefully, tries to regain control of his narrative by declaring that, while he does not endorse cruelty towards animals, human interests should always come first. Without the presence of the non-human, this essay would be a different one. But even though Grassic Gibbon acknowledges the essential presence of animals in agricultural practices in Scotland, notes the way the fauna defines the region as much as its flora and cultivation through humans,

and describes the cruelties of meat eating, he denies non-human animals the serious ethical considerations granted to humans. While the non-human world is thus essential to defining The Land of Scotland Proper, non-human animals are allowed to exist only as a de-individualized mass at its margins, a backdrop to the human action that classifies them, changes their habitat and leads to their (local) extinction.

With a view of the Grampians, however, Grassic Gibbon concedes that this 'untouched' environment may represent 'the real land' in lower case letters, a land that is understood not by 'ploughing or crops or the coming of the scythe' but on its own terms (90). Such insights, while important, only last a moment before they are turned around and linked to ancient civilizations and their 'great agricultural gods' (90). Acknowledging the pre-existence of the non-human on what is now Scotland's territory – the bear, the eagle and the wolves who witnessed the first migratory movements (88) – Grassic Gibbon counters romanticized perspectives of the Scots as particularly close to nature and highlights that Scotland is not as conducive to 'the wild' as it is often understood. Calling himself 'a jingo patriot of planet earth' who is 'mulishly prejudiced in favour of [his] own biological species' (95), Grassic Gibbon argues fiercely that 'Scots have little interest in the wild and its world' (94–5) and proudly stresses that what should be remembered of humanity is not our relationship to and care for the natural world but rather 'our great victory over nature and time', the achievement of 'the men who conquered the land and wrung sustenance from it by stealth and shrewdness' (96). 'Land' is then not an environmental term but understood from a territorial perspective in the traditional sense. Grassic Gibbon's focus in (re)configuring the land lies on class relations in the context of land ownership and national identity in the emphatic delineation of Scotland's national territory rather than moving beyond these categories altogether. While it is impossible for Grassic Gibbon not to acknowledge the non-human world in some way when defining the land, his essay also highlights the limitations of the form of territory when it comes to fostering creaturely perspectives and providing post-national perspectives based on place relations rather than identity categories. At the same time, the contradictions in Grassic Gibbon's essay highlight how the form of territory intervenes in curious ways. In both McGrath's play and Grassic Gibbon's essay, it appears that the form of territory necessitates a way of thinking through Scotland's environment that disrupts the ideological intentions of authors. Even though neither of these writers could be described as environmentalist because they utilize the environment in an anthropocentric way to promote a socialist sense of the land as belonging to the

Scottish people, these socio-political intentions clash with the formal effects that arise from thinking territory through Scotland.

In contrast, **Kathleen Jamie's poem 'Here Lies Our Land' (2013)**, commissioned to be placed on the historical site of the Battle of Bannockburn, explicitly presents the land as a meshwork. Focusing on an environmental outline of the land's four cardinal points, the wind, sun, clouds, ferns, Northern Lights and the sea come to define the land as Jamie's poem creates an environmental map of Scotland akin to the alternative map in Nan Shepherd's *The Quarry Wood* (1928) discussed in Chapter 4 section 'Borders "dissolved in light": Nan Shepherd's planetary poetics'. Jamie's map, however, is also a literary map of Scotland as each of the qualities and expressions used to capture a cardinal point is taken from its literary tradition. The poem subtly maps Scotland's territory on a literary level beyond the poem's surface description of the environment and as a result recalls other literary configurations of Scotland's territory. As Jamie explains in author's note, a mythical perspective on Scotland as the door to the fairy world is meant to be evoked by Thomas the Rhymer's expression of the magic road of 'the fernie brae' and the phrase 'siller tides' is to be understood as a reference to Violet Jacob. **Violet Jacob's 'The Wild Geese' (1915)** in particular adds another dimension to the territorial perspective of Jamie's poem. The speaker of 'The Wild Geese', a native of Angus who has been in England for many years, asks the 'roarin' norlan' Wind' to tell them of their home country. The wind presents a view of the country from a perspective devoid of human interference, telling the speaker about the 'siller tides' of the Firth of Forth, the 'rovin' gulls that sail abune the Tay' and the 'Angus braes' over which the wild geese fly towards the sea (226). The longing and homesickness the speaker expresses are directly evoked by and directed at Scotland's environment rather than the people who inhabit or own the land.

Jamie's poem, by stating that the land belongs 'to none but itself' with the small folk being only 'transients' in its existence (2013), recalls Grassic Gibbon's protagonist Chris Guthrie who, in *Sunset Song* (1932), reflects that while its people 'lasted but as a breath, […] the land was forever' (126). Contextualizing the lines, Jamie explains that 'the Scots may have "won" Bannockburn, but not the land itself' (2013), meaning that while the land may endure human influence and even abuse, it cannot be owned in the sense of conventional territoriality. Instead, Jamie offers an inclusive, relational perspective on territory by letting the personified country itself speak: '*You win me, who take me most to heart*'. The land must be 'won' then not in the territorial sense of ownership, but in the building of a reciprocal relationship. Even so, Scotland's territorial conflicts are

embedded in the poem which was commissioned for the 700th anniversary of Bannockburn and is carved on the rotunda of the moment and looking out to the Robert the Bruce statue on its battlefield (Figure 1). But instead of presenting us with a traditional territorialist poem that would fit the occasion of the anniversary of a Scottish national hero, Jamie opts for an inclusive perspective on territory as place-based that defies exclusionary nationalist agendas. The contentious debates of land ownership, which Jamie thematizes more explicitly in other works such as her essay 'In Fife' (2015), resonate more softly in this poem in accordance with its shift towards an environmental perspective on territory that is both inclusive and relational. The form of the poem, carved on the rotunda, and its title, 'Here Lies Our Land', situate it within the land itself as it becomes a physical, material presence that both marks and defies the idea of territory, creating a field of tension for the visitors of the site and the readers of the poem to entangle during their encounter.

Jamie's physical poem raises questions about what poems are and what they can do in the context of territory, a question that may be transferred also to

Figure 1 Photograph showing a section of Kathleen Jamie's poem 'Here Lies Our Land', engraved on the oak beams of the rotunda on the site of the Battle of Bannockburn, with the Robert the Bruce statue in the background. © all rights reserved Doug Houghton.

one of the literary genres that is conventionally seen as most close to territory due to its close association with national identity: the historical novel. **Walter Scott's *Redgauntlet* (1824)** engages with issues of territory by projecting these debates onto the formal level and experimenting with the generic form of the historical novel. While still following a main plot that is resolved, if somewhat clumsily, at the end to tie the narrative together into what seems to be a bounded format that provides closure, the jumble of forms and uncertainty of narration in *Redgauntlet* runs counter to the neat organizational structure of the historical novel. Beginning as an epistolary novel, the plot eventually forces the narrative first to turn to diary entries and ultimately to authorial narration without, however, resolving any of the temporal jumps and perspectival shifts introduced by the epistolary form until the very end. Even then, the tensions are not resolved but the conclusion reveals the narrative to be a curated collection of documents to illuminate the history of the Redgauntlet family provided to the author of Waverley. The admission of the antiquary that the narrative must remain incomplete and fragmentary despite the apparent closure provided by the final chapter contradicts the idea of the novel as an organic whole complete within itself and points to the possibility of further narrative strands existing outside of its bounds.

In line with its formal indecisiveness, *Redgauntlet* presents territory as a concept that is plural, dynamic and uncertain on the discursive level. The negotiation of territory takes into account the multiple overlapping levels of territorial borders from the national territory demarcated by the overlapping of the Anglo-Scottish border with the Solway Firth and the jurisdictional questions and territorial conflicts that drive the plot. Tired of the study of law, the young Darsie Latimer leaves his adoptive family in Edinburgh to travel the Scottish Borders only to involuntarily become involved in a Jacobite plot. Darsie's familial relations are unclear from the beginning of the novel and only resolved towards its end when it turns out that Darsie has both English and Scottish relations. Besides inheriting the English estates of his deceased birthmother, Darsie is revealed to be the heir and representative of his biological father's house, the Scottish House of Redgauntlet. The uncertainty about Darsie's identity and his family relations are projected onto notions of national belonging that are negotiated throughout the novel in the opposition between belief in the Hanoverian establishment, shared by Darsie and his friend Alan, and support for the Jacobite cause that can be found on both sides of the border. Aside from the legal consequences for Darsie should he enter England before he is of age, which would put him under the guardianship of his Jacobite uncle, the Anglo-Scottish border is presented as

a moving, dynamic border that is crossed for various reasons in both directions by the characters of the novel. The instability of the Solway Firth, introduced in the early chapters of the novel, underlines the instability of the national border and symbolizes the fluidity of identities. The blind fiddler Wandering Willie ascribes his (trans)national identity to the proximity of the Solway: 'I am of every country in broad Scotland, and a wee bit of England to the boot. But yet I am, in some sense, of this country; for I was born within hearing of the roar of Solway' (1824, 95). Place and environment rather than geopolitical frameworks become markers of territory for Willie, but for Darsie the conceptual distance and physical closeness to England clash in his desire to get to know the country in which he was born but which he is forbidden to enter:

> There lay my native land – my own England – the land where I was born, and to which my wishes, since my earliest age, had turned with all the prejudices of national feeling – there it lay, within a furlong of the place where I yet was; that furlong which an infant would have raced over in a minute, was yet a barrier effectual to divide me for ever from England and from life. I soon not only heard the roar of this dreadful torrent, but saw, by the fitful moonlight, the foamy crests of the devouring waves, as they advanced with the speed and fury of a pack of hungry wolves.
>
> (175–6)

The threatening instability of the Solway corresponds to the threat awaiting Darsie should he cross the border and expresses his strong feelings in relation to the national border. Despite the possibility of crossing that is exercised without much trouble by everyone else in the novel, the Anglo-Scottish border and Solway present an effectual territorial limit for Darsie. This is not, in the end, because he would not be able to cross physically or legally (even though he almost drowns both times he enters the Firth), but because, conceptually, Darsie has been taught all his life to regard territorial borders as fixed, stable and dangerous to cross. The contrast between Darsie and Wandering Willie, who, as his nickname suggests, is a wanderer within and across territories, shows that territorial borders must ultimately be understood as human constructs reliant on consensus, constant performance and the belief that they matter. At the same time, Darsie's identity, as much as we may expect it to waver, remains stable against his uncle's attempts at persuading him to join the Jacobite cause, suggesting that familial ties, hereditary rights and national affiliation by birth do not have to determine territorial identities but that allegiances may be built just as firmly on less rigid ground.

The sub-plot of the fishers' revolt through which Darsie's kidnapping is achieved opens another dimension of conflict connecting territory with rights around natural resources, and the locals' concerns about fishing rights are embedded in larger discourses about agricultural improvements in eighteenth-century Scotland. The fishers are observed by Darsie in his first encounter with the Solway when he perceives their indigenous hunting practice, describing them akin to 'hunters spearing boars in the old tapestry' (32). Later, the fishers' identity is linked to the liminality of the Solway itself when they are described as 'amphibious deevils, neither land nor water beasts – neither English nor Scots – neither county nor stewartry' (228). Their indigenous practices and in-between status clash with the more industrialized fishing of a Quaker whose installation of tidal fishing nets enrages the local population because it reduces their yield. The Quaker likewise condemns the indigenous hunting practices whose goal he understands to be not sustenance but an enjoyment of needless slaughter, which causes a fight about who is allowed to fish in the border territory, by what means, and for what reasons: a conflict that remains unresolved until the end. The debate around ownership, fishing rights and the use of natural resources in connection with territory opens up a creaturely perspective that enjoys brief elaboration in Darsie's discovery of the Quaker's love for animals. The Quaker's garden is inhabited by tame game animals who, as Darsie is surprised to learn, are not meant for consumption but seen as pets that enjoy the protection offered by the walls around the garden. The garden is therefore another territory in miniature that adds an additional level of tension to the territorial struggle over fishing rights which the Quaker exercises for sustenance only. The garden's walls highlight the potentially protective function of borders in keeping the Quaker's animals safe just as the Anglo-Scottish border serves to protect Darsie from the dangerous guardianship of his uncle.

Two other novels set against the backdrop of the First and Second World Wars respectively, address the animal in connection with territory by exploring human creatureliness and animality. In **Ian Macpherson's *Wild Harbour* (1936)** an elderly couple flees their village to live in a cave near Ben Alder in the Scottish Highlands when a war breaks out. In diary form, Hugh details how he and his wife Terry manage the life in their cave from spring to winter after which they are killed by a group of hostile men. Conceptions about the remoteness and wildness of the Highlands are picked up at the beginning of the novel to be at once simultaneously denied and confirmed when Hugh describes their situation in relation to the traditional Robinsonade. While the heroes of the Robinsonade have the advantage of being situated in 'tropical fertile countries', however,

'[s]peed and strength and alert senses wouldn't avail a man much if he were flung out in the Grampians to live by what he could kill and grow' (12). Like Crusoe, Hugh and Terry attempt to enclose the land surrounding their cave, but since the Highlands are not a desert island but thoroughly inhabited and cultivated, with their cave being surrounded by farmed plots of land, they face the danger of being detected and their enclosure is necessarily limited. The conflict between wilderness and habitation structures the couple's relationship with the land as they negotiate the meaning of ownership and territory. The obscure threat of a war that looms largely in the distance is reflected in the plot through the killing of animals and the evasion of other human beings who are universally perceived as enemies. The rejection of human society and jurisdiction allows them to understand the land as existing outside the politico-legal framework of territory: 'the callous earth, unchanged in war and pestilence, occupied time as if there were no men' (6). As they continue to build their domestic enclave in the landscape, Hugh reflects that they are unable to assert ownership over the land in any way: 'We occupy, but it is not occupied, nor ever will be occupied' (44). At the same time, they are unable to enter into an intimate, embodied relationship with the land:

> [The land] lies before me and my eyes that see it, and my feet that walk on it, mark what we see and feel upon my brain, but what they view and what they touch is not changed by them, nor aware of them. We are in the wild land, but not of it; winds and beasts and the brown cladding moor are of it; to day and every day they go, they return, and we, who shift and go, have comfort and protection but no home.
>
> (44)

Unlike the non-human animals they encounter, the couple cannot move beyond the intellectual divide between nature and culture and conceive of themselves as part of the world they inhabit. The loss of home and belonging caused by the war is expressed through the self-chosen exile of a couple who cannot let go of their cultural preconceptions even as they decide never to return to human society. Even though there are signs of habitation everywhere around them, Hugh perceives the environment as categorically separate from society and entirely untouched, and unchanged by its malevolent influence: 'We escaped into the country where the sun and the moor existed by themselves; and in this place, divorced from the land of men, we escaped from fear and unhappiness. We were as the wild creatures of our wild country' (89). As the story progresses then, the couple feel themselves come closer to creaturely existence in a positive sense

which Hugh describes in the final pages of his diary in which he expresses what may come closest to a relational reframing of territory in the novel: 'this land, is ours, and we, tied to it as the wild creatures are, cannot escape from it by going. […] we belong to it, we have given ourselves up to it; no other abode can ever break this strange allegiance' (148). However, even as Hugh desperately tries to find solace in peaceful fantasies about a primordial nature, his final reflections before they leave the cave throw a romanticized light on the experience that does not fit the tension that runs through the rest of his narration up to this point. As much as Hugh may pretend otherwise, the war has destroyed any sense of security and as desperately as he tries to access a world in which fear of territorial violence and death can be escaped through a deeper connection with nature, this ideal remains always just out of reach.

Like Macpherson's novel, **Robert Jenkins's *The Cone Gatherers* (1955)**, as an allegorical portrayal of the Nazis' persecution of disabled persons, is concerned with ideas about human morality and cruelty. During the Second World War, the McPhie brothers are employed by the forestry commission to gather fir cones on the Scottish country estate of Lady Runcie-Campbell. The novel begins with a description of the estate's environment and the brothers' role as cone-gatherers. At first, the estate is described not in property terms but from an environmental perspective that takes into account the sounds, fauna, flora of the multispecies mesh. Calum McPhie is not only able to climb the trees in the most agile manner but can tap into an environmental consciousness and feel himself to be part of the meshwork surrounding them: 'He became an owl himself, he rose and fanned his wings, flew close to the ground, and then swooped, to rise again with vole or shrew squeaking his talons' (9). This affinity with the non-human world also induces him to share in the suffering of any creature and to free animals from the gamekeeper's traps, which forms part of the territorial conflict on which the novel centres.

Even though the novel appears removed from the conflict of the war, (territorial) violence enters the estate through the gamekeeper Duror's deep-seated hatred for Calum. Duror's hatred is grounded in feelings and beliefs that closely correspond with the justifications of eugenic violence of the Nazi regime. Calum McPhie's is disdained for his vaguely described physical and cognitive impairments: the gamekeeper describes Calum as 'half-man, a freak, an imbecile' (21) and believes both brothers to be 'sub-humans' deserving of violence and death (22). Gavin Miller connects Jenkins's novel with Giorgio Agamben's notion of 'homo sacer', arguing that the subhuman status of the brothers turns them into zoological 'bare' life that is in turn managed by Duror

as the embodiment of the biopolitical power over their bodies (2008, 24). Building on the notion of biopower and concepts from disability studies, Miller suggests that Jenkins creates a world which 'constructs sympathy as disability' by allowing Calum's empathetic character to challenge heteronormative patriarchal ideals (28). The ideals of able-bodied masculinity that Calum contradicts are upheld desperately by Duror whose incapacity for sympathy, as Miller points out, 'is the real cognitive impairment in the text' (27). Outwardly denying an approval of the Nazis' persecution of the disabled, 'inwardly, thinking of idiocy and crippledness not as abstractions but as embodied in the crouchbacked cone-gather', Duror admits he approves of the barbarity of the gas chambers (1955, 21–2).

The power Duror exercises over the two cone-gatherers is rooted in his position as the gamekeeper of a privately owned estate and his ability to convince the landowners to share in his disgust for Calum in particular. Lady Runcie-Campbell, initially reluctant to manage the cone-gatherers too closely, begins to assert her right over the estate, asking the brothers to remove themselves from the shelter of her beach hut during a heavy storm. Duror's open accusations about Calum's allegedly 'impure' behaviour and abject body reach their climax when he claims to have seen him masturbating in the woods. Duror's actions invite direct comparison with the Nazis' Blut und Boden ideology as an attempt to 'purify' the territory of the estate according to his beliefs, not just in terms of religion and race but also able-bodiedness, health, sexual orientation and gender identity. The figure of the animal and the notion of creatureliness of humans are used by Jenkins to criticize violence against bare life in an allegorical fashion, of which violence spurred by feelings of power based on territorial rights forms a part. As a conscientious objector who gathered cones during the war, Jenkins shows how rigid notions of territory, which regard it as a space to be kept homogeneously 'pure', in a geographical but also politico-legal and nationalistic sense as the parallels with the Third Reich are meant to express, ultimately lead to political and eventually fatal physical violence. Within the larger, international contexts of the wars, Macpherson and Jenkins retain an intensely local focus on Scotland and explore how the historical and political configurations of territory of the Highlands influence the lives of their protagonists.

A more recent novel, **Mandy Haggith's *Bear Witness* (2013)**, equally moves between international and local debates, but does so in the context of wildlife conservation and environmental land use. Set in an alternative future of Scottish independence, Haggith's novel details the efforts of Callis MacArthur to reintroduce bears to the contested territory of the Scottish Highlands.

Building on the connection between animal imagery and national symbolism, Callis attempts to present Scotland's independence as a reawakening from a 'great political hibernation of hundreds of years' (115) for which the bear could become a fitting national symbol 'signalling Scotland's rebirth, embracing natural diversity, symbol of courage and perseverance' (205). Scottish independence, as Timothy Baker points out, is a necessary precondition for the action of the story which posits that 'only an independent Scotland can make room for an independent population of nonhuman animals' (2019, 10–11). As the novel suggests, the territorial reconfiguration of Scotland's national borders after independence allows for a wider reframing of other territorial bounds such as those of private property which determine the use of land in Scotland. In order to accommodate the wild, Haggith's novel suggests, humans must renounce their claims to the land and reconsider territorial relations from a multispecies perspective.

As Callis quickly realizes, however, land relations remain a contentious issue in Scotland and the environment can only be accessed through the mediation of tourist guides and benevolence of sympathetic landowners. Callis's proposition to reintroduce bears to sparsely populated areas of the Highlands meets with deep-seated resentment over past colonial disenfranchisement by local politicians: 'We don't want to drive even more folk out of the Highlands due to fear of bear attacks. We've had quite enough of Highland Clearances, or hadn't you heard?' (2013, 206). The emotive arguments of politicians and farmers that there is no space for predatory animals in the 'already crowded landscape' of the Scottish Highlands (206) reveal the image of Scotland as a nation particularly conducive to the wild, an image that dominates contemporary rewilding discourses,[1] as fraught. Rather than being hindered by environmental conditions, the success of Callis's rewilding project depends on her ability to deconstruct dominant ideas and mindsets about the meaning of Scotland's territory and how it should be used. The dependence on sympathetic landowners for the success of small-scale rewilding projects on individual estates is portrayed as insufficient and fuels further disputes around access rights as right-to-roam activists protest the (en) closure of an estate through fences and walls erected for the reintroduction of lynx and bear. As an increasingly enthusiastic wildlife activist, however, Callis is deterred neither by private landowners nor the politico-legal frameworks of environmental policy and conservation and she resorts to direct action, first attempting to smuggle a bear from Norway to Scotland and eventually cutting the fence of the private wildlife estate which allows one of the bears to escape into the Highlands. The existence of bears in Assynt a thousand years earlier

convinces Callis further that territorial relations in Scotland need to be rethought along environmental lines. As she looks 'out of the window not just at hills and moors, but at potential bear habitat' (180), the landscape is reconfigured and the territories that characterize it in the twenty-first century are highlighted as recent constructions. This alternative view of territory is reflected through the form of the novel itself which plays with the merging of human and non-human referents and shifts from third person to first person narration as Callis connects with the living world around her and feels part of a multispecies meshwork.

While the examples discussed here cannot provide a comprehensive picture of the treatment of territory in Scotland's literary history, they indicate a continuous concern with territory as a politico-legal and environmental form. Across the diverse literary formats of poetry, drama, essayistic and novelistic writing, the key affordances of the form of territory are mobilized in the texts to unpick real-world territorial configurations. By highlighting the overlapping of various territories, they make legible the power relations and politics that condition territory and allow for a questioning of the legitimacy of territorial configurations by thinking through the specific situation of Scotland with its histories of national territorial conflicts and the contentious issues of private landownership that persist into the present. Animals and the non-human world are highlighted as essential to any understanding and negotiation of territory in most texts, while some adopt an environmental perspective to suggest a reconceptualization of territory by taking the environment into account. The case study for this chapter, Buchan's *John Macnab* (1925), is a particularly curious novel that may appear as a surprising choice. However, Buchan's adventure novel merges many of the concerns that characterize the critical vignettes and manages to explore the ontology of territorial borders through the environment by probing at the discursive and aesthetic configurations that underlie its construction.

Land ownership, adventure and the non-human: challenging territory with John Buchan

Despite holding a number of political and diplomatic roles and writing not just novels but also poetry and short fiction, John Buchan is mainly remembered as a writer of popular fiction. Most of Buchan's novels display elements of the adventure story and are concerned in some way with the struggle over territory. In Buchan's *John Macnab* a group of successful, middle-aged gentlemen discover their collective boredom and need for excitement and decide to plot a poaching

challenge in the Highlands. Ex-Attorney General and Conservative MP Sir Edward Leithen, banker John Palliser-Yates and Conservative Cabinet Minister and Earl Charles Lamancha all complain that the war has left them with a deep feeling of ennui, a tiredness of life. Sir Archie Roylance, a disabled veteran who is pursuing the path of becoming a Conservative MP himself, tells them about Jim Tarras who, equally bored by his dull life, used to challenge the owners of deer forests to prevent him from killing one of their stags between certain dates. Inspired, the three friends decide to draw up a very similar game: under the collective nom de guerre John Macnab they write letters to three landowners in the Highlands, informing them that they will poach a stag or a fish from their estates on certain dates and challenging them to stop them. Like Tarras, they would return the dead animal by the next day and the losing party would be expected to pay £50 to a charity of their choosing. They decide on Glenraden, owned by the Raden family; Strathlarrig, owned by the American Bandicotts; and Haripol, owned by Lord Claybody. Reluctantly, Sir Archie Roylance offers Crask, his holiday estate in the Scottish Highlands, as their headquarters.

Alan Riach finds that Buchan's novels are frequently situated within political and physical borderscapes, 'always on the edge of things, on borderlands between nations, in remote valleys giving rare access to different political states' (2009a, 172). Rather than focusing on state borders, *John Macnab*'s interest is in the microscalar territorial borders of the Scottish hunting estate. While the larger geopolitical border structures of the nation-state are implied throughout the story, the main focus of *John Macnab* lies on an embodied experience of borders. This experiential level is highlighted through the environmental encounters of the characters who, even as they pay attention to the borders that cut across the environments through which they move, are enmeshed in the land as a shared lifeworld. The close attention to the non-human world in the novel creates a perception of land from within, which leads to a questioning of the nature of territory that is more subtle and flexible than it might be expected from a novelist mainly associated with imperial adventure stories. While I do not mean to claim Buchan as an environmentalist writer with progressive ideas about borders,[2] Buchan's weaving together of environmental and bordering concerns in *John Macnab* through aesthetic and social forms reveals a complexity of political thought that deserves renewed attention, not least because of what it can tell us about the form of territory.

This complexity is captured by the philosophy of the challenge that structures the novel on both a formal and a discursive level: territory here is not understood as a static category but as a construct that needs to be continuously (re)examined

through acts of (environmental) borderscaping. Engaging with borders through a borderscape lens, according to Brambilla, focuses the attention on 'practices through which fluctuating borders are imagined, materially established, experienced, lived as well as reinforced and blocked but also crossed, traversed and inhabited' (2015, 30). Buchan's novel can be understood as an example of experimental, literary borderscaping in imagining territorial borders as dynamic and permeable and inviting his readers to traverse and inhabit b/ordered environments through his characters' experiences. The relationship between politics and aesthetics can be found at different levels of the novel's borderscaping that not only contrasts the bordering conventions of adventure fiction with an embodied experiencing of the material world of the Highlands, but also provides a discursive political borderscaping in relation to Scotland's territorial histories that highlights the affordance of thinking through Scotland.

I want to begin by outlining the novel's playful engagement with the adventure mode to show how, by playing with the literary conventions of the adventure narrative, *John Macnab* merges a number of concerns relating to territory in the context of Scotland, its environment and its borders: land ownership and management, bordering and access, environmental aesthetics and the materiality and physical experience of the environment. Following from this, I will propose a focus on the narrative middle of the novel which will allow for a reassessment of its environmental character by highlighting how Buchan's use of the adventure mode produces contradictory readings of the Highland land and its creatures. The final sections of this chapter will then focus on practices of political and physical borderscaping that both highlight the affordances of thinking through Scotland in connection with territory, as a category that is both political and environmental, and the role of the non-human in the b/ordering processes of the novel. As I hope to show, *John Macnab* provides a perspective on territory that makes us rethink its structures and meanings as continually up for debate and reconsideration.

'It can't be done – not in this country anyway': Adventure and disillusionment

Adventure fiction is often dismissed in literary studies as 'formulaic genre fiction which any self-respecting literary culture leaves behind' rather than something to be taken seriously: 'full of clichés, bogus action, silly heroes, and cheap thrills' (Döring and Kübler 2021, 15). This can lead to an underestimation of the genre's potential affordances which is especially striking given its widespread appeal

with the reading population. As Tobias Döring and Martina Kübler find, the central element of transgression 'allies the adventure quest not just to fantasies of conquest, dominance, and power but potentially also to more subversive ventures that renegotiate the bonds and bounds that make up our daily world' (2021, 21) – and this includes the bonds and bounds of territory. As the case of *John Macnab* shows, adventure, and maybe even more so a playful engagement with adventure, may serve as a vehicle to discuss issues of land ownership and to explore characters' relationships with the local environment. The genre, therefore, demands careful examination. The adventure mode through which *John Macnab* is framed is crucial to how Buchan structures the relationship between borders and the environment in the novel, both in the context of the Scottish land question and in relation to the broader form of territory.

Not only are territory and the transgression of its borders a major driver of the adventure plot in general (Döring and Kübler 2021, 19), but the borders to be crossed are often marked by environmentally inflected discourses about 'wild' and 'civilized' nature. As Döring and Kübler outline, adventure fiction always involves 'the crossing of a threshold and departure into some uncharted, unknown space, wild and open, full of hope and promise, and beyond the strict confines of everyday routines' (2021, 15). This unknown space is usually portrayed as 'wild' or 'primitive' in relation to both the environment and the indigenous population. Margaret Bruzelius goes so far as to argue that 'adventure as a genre is unimaginable without an exotic "elsewhere" in which to locate the plot' (2007, 40), an elsewhere that is usually presented as 'a wasteland as poor and harsh as it is beautiful, a place in which only a poor and hardscrabble existence is possible' (41). This, of course, feeds into imperial ideologies and as Döring and Kübler point out, 'the adventure novel in anglophone literature proliferated especially via the imperial and male quest romances of the nineteenth century' (2021, 18). Both the quest narrative and the imperial romance suggest a structural and discursive telos that informs the forward thrust of the adventure novel to this day and places a special importance on narrative endings. The journey developed by the adventure plot often follows 'the disruption of the ordered home society' with the aim to return it to its usual order and characteristically leads 'through a hostile natural world' (Rigby 2005) which is perilous and full of 'trials and tests of courage' (Döring and Kübler 2021, 23). It requires the hero to survive 'amid unexpected dangers' (Baldick 2015) and to overcome serious 'obstacles and dangers' to accomplish 'some important and moral mission' (Cawelti 1976, 39).

By the beginning of the twentieth century, the popular adventure narrative was increasingly seen as 'a tale of the past: archaic, conservative, colonial, conventional' (Döring and Kübler 2021, 15) and to some degree, and maybe not entirely unjustifiably, these labels have also been attached to John Buchan and his work as a whole. As most of Buchan's novels, *John Macnab* could be read as such a typical adventure narrative in which the characters venture out on a journey into the unknown (the 'wild' Highlands) to meet a challenge (poaching a stag or a fish) and win a prize (fifty pounds). However, it is clear from the outset that *John Macnab* is indeed not a typical adventure novel. The Highlands of the novel are no longer understood as 'wild' or unknown but are represented as thoroughly 'civilized' and managed, and there is no real danger as the poaching challenge turns out to be no more than a game with no real stakes at the end of the novel. The three Macnabs are already wealthy gentlemen with a solid position in society which protects them from any legal, social or monetary consequences. Neither is there a threat to the British social order as is the case for many of Buchan's other novels. The perceived threat to property and land ownership promised by John Macnab is revealed to be a farce when the Macnabs are discovered to be renowned members of the British establishment. The lack of a larger purpose means that there is no opportunity for heroic achievement or noble self-sacrifice for the collective of 'heroes' which puts the novel in a stark contrast with Buchan's individual nationalist heroes such as Richard Hannay: rather than being part of some bigger scheme with a moral goal, the call to adventure in *John Macnab* consists in a self-interested desire for a relief from boredom that has no deeper meaning. What *John Macnab* provides is thus not a conventional adventure tale but a subtly satirical, tongue-in-cheek inversion of the adventure novel.

This generic play has significant consequences for the debate over territory that is of central importance for the traditional adventure novel. Over the course of the story, the Macnabs are gradually found out by the landowners but, as Lord Claybody, the owner of the last estate on which they are all caught explains to them, they were never in any real danger, neither from the others nor him: 'I couldn't give you away. […] I am out to support anything which buttresses the solid structure of society. You three are part of that structure' (1925, 234). This final 'revelation' shocks the Macnabs but is of no surprise to readers. Instead, a number of self-reflective passages in the novel foreshadow and almost ridicule the characters' expectation of a real adventure when Sir Edward Leithen, exasperated by his boredom, compares himself to a worker on strike: 'I know

now why workmen strike sometimes and can't give any reason. We're on strike – against our privileges' (9). Tongue-in-cheek declarations such as this one are complemented by more open discussions about the unassailable stability of British society by the American Mr Bandicott:

> In this country, once you start in on politics you're fixed in a class and members of a hierarchy, and you've got to go on, however unfitted you may be for the job, because it's sort of high treason to weaken. […] I deplore criminal tendencies in any public man, but the possibility of such a downfall keeps the life human. It is very different in England. The respectability of your politicians is so awful that, when one of them backslides, every man of you combines to hush it up. There would be a revolution if the people got to suspect. Can you imagine a Cabinet Minister in the police court on a common vulgar charge?
>
> (103–4)

What Bandicott complains about here fits with the philosophy of the challenge that is advocated for by several of the characters, most prominently Janet Raden who argues fiercely that 'people should realize that whatever they've got they hold under a perpetual challenge, and they are bound to meet that challenge' (126). Only if people take up the philosophy of the challenge, Janet proposes, will they be 'living creatures instead of mummies' (126). The challenge to territory and the transgression of its borders are depicted as a vital element for keeping society from stagnating and ultimately serve to stabilize property rights. Even though there is a tinge of nostalgia in the loss of real adventure, the novel equally ridicules such nostalgia, pointing towards what is needed in the present and future – a strike against one's privileges in order to secure them.

The ending of Buchan's novel, like the typical adventure novel, contains the radical potential of the action and restores social order: the frame narrative reveals the journalist Crossby to be the author of the novel's narrative who aims to tell the 'real' story of *John Macnab* which had been changed and fabricated into a benign and safe version of the truth for the wider public. However, the conscious and explicit play with features of the adventure novel makes us question the relevance of this ending. Caroline Levine suggests that, rather than overdetermining narrative endings and turning texts into unified wholes, it may be more productive to focus on narrative middles which reveal 'the ways in which social forms bring their logics with them into the novel, working both with and against literary forms and producing unexpected political conclusions out of their encounters' (2015, 42; cp. 40–1). By resolving the plot in an absurdly pointless manner that questions the very idea of plot, and by foreshadowing this

pointlessness through self-reflective passages at the beginning, Buchan's novel equally suggests we pay less attention to the ending and directs our attention instead to the muddled action in its narrative middle. While narrative middles may appear 'undecided, transitional, vacillating, even cowardly' (Levine and Ortiz-Robles 2011, 2), in *John Macnab*'s case the narrative middle is the most productive space to look for moments of transgression and disruption of form and content. It is in the narrative middle that the novel moves beyond human politics by bringing the environment into play, and it is here that the philosophy of the challenge is thoroughly explored. By focusing on borders and the environment on an experiential level of immediate and bodily encounters, the novel presents territory not as an immutable structure with clear borders determined by the imperial centre, but as the result of living border zones inhabited and shaped by human and non-human agents alike. By attending to the narrative middle, territory is revealed as a meshwork that is brought into being, and is continually remade, through the (inter)action between humans and the non-human world. While Buchan's *John Macnab* does not attempt to provide an environmental view of borders in the post-national sense and indeed closes off the potential of such a reading through its ending, the novel nevertheless offers moments of disruption that challenge the logics of territory and the legitimacy of turning parcels of land into private property.

(De)territorializing the Highland landscape of adventure fiction

In his memoir *Memory Hold-the-Door*, Buchan describes a nightmare of his in which the whole planet has yielded to the capitalist imperatives of the machine age, and questions whether these developments will lead to a 'perfecting of civilisation' or end in 'de-civilisation, a loss of the supreme values of life' (1940, 283). In a disenchanted modern world, traditional adventure no longer has a place:

> New inventions and a perfecting of transport had caused the whole earth to huddle together. There was no corner of the globe left unexplored and unexploited, no geographical mysteries to fire the imagination. Broad highways crowded with automobiles threaded the remotest lands and overhead great-airliners carried week-end tourists to the wilds of Africa and Asia. Everywhere there were guest-houses and luxury hotels and wayside camps and filling-stations. What once were the savage tribes of Equatoria and Polynesia were now in reserves as an attraction to trippers, who bought from them curios and holiday mementoes.

> The globe, too, was full of pleasure-cities where people could escape the rigour of their own climate and enjoy perpetual holiday.
>
> (283–4)

As John Miller points out, these speculations about the future read like 'a remarkably prescient account of twenty-first-century globalized economies, overexploited land and homogenized experience that offers only the dismal consolation of ecotourism as an ersatz, degraded simulation of romance' (2009, 204). The anxieties central to this account can be detected in many of Buchan's works, including *John Macnab*. It is not the desire of the protagonists to venture on a heroic quest to save the country or a damsel in distress that leads the protagonists to begin their poaching challenge, but a shared feeling of '*taedium vitae*' (1925, 2), a special kind of post-war ennui that leads them to seek an adventure to stir up their comfortable metropolitan lives. This adventure is ultimately impossible to realize in a world in which 'wild' places no longer exist, at least not in Scotland.

The premise of the story, in which a few bored gentlemen in want of excitement select the Highlands for their adventure, appears to frame the Highlands as a theme park fit for the amusement of the upper classes. Even before the characters arrive in Scotland, common notions about the Highlands are rolled out for the reader in the style of the traditional adventure romance: Scotland is presented as a remote location, an empty landscape devoid of people 'where you can do exactly as you like' (10), which is 'mighty hard to get to' and offers 'nothing to see when you get there' (11). The 'colonial aesthetic' in which 'land [is] kept wild for the benefit of the white adventurer' which Miller (2009, 205) recognizes in Buchan's novels informs the adventure mode of *John Macnab*. Throughout the story, however, it becomes clear that this representation of Scotland is misleading. As Riach argues, even though 'Buchan implicitly endorses imperial authority' throughout his writing and this is often the focus of critical assessments of his work, 'there are other ways of reading Buchan' that take into account his love for the Scottish Borders and the Scots language (2009a, 179). These loyalties, Riach suggests, highlight Buchan's 'deeper connections to an earth he knew he could never completely leave behind' and provide a more complex picture of Buchan and his work which shows that 'his fictional creations open up the imagination to the exploration of possibilities, loyalties that sometimes pull against the centralizing authorities of imperial command' (179). These self-conflicted tendencies explain why the distinction between the representation and reality of the Highlands remains riddled with contradictions. If the protagonists could

indeed do exactly as they liked, there would be no thrill in the poaching challenge. In the end, however, they are able to do exactly as they like, not because Scotland is a lawless country in which everyone can do whatever they like, but because the protagonists' standing in society protects them from any consequences. It is only for the rich and powerful that the Highlands can be turned into a theme park, whether in the form of the sporting estate or other endeavours. Rather than fully subscribing to this idea, however, the novel plays with such conceptions of the Highlands in order to worry them. Despite the initial claim that the Highlands are devoid of people that could bother them, Sir Archie has to invent a case of smallpox soon after they arrive to keep their neighbours away from the house. When he travels to Muirtown after Sir Leithen's successful poaching of the salmon from Strathlarrig, the story of John Macnab is on everyone's lips:

> The fishmonger pointed to a fish on his slabs, and observed that it would be about the size of the one taken at Strathlarrig. The bookseller, who knew his customer's simple tastes in letters, regretted that no contemporary novel of his acquaintance promised such entertainment as the drama now being enacted in Wester Ross. Tired of needless lying, Sir Archie forsook the ships and went for a stroll beside the harbour. But even there John Macnab seemed to pursue him. Wherever he saw a man with a paper he knew what he was reading; the people at the street corners were no doubt discussing the same subject.
>
> (1925, 138–9)

The reference to the bookseller's desire for a popular contemporary novel suggests the poaching challenge as both adequate material for an adventure fiction and different from such novels, which suggests they may have fallen out of fashion. Rather than undertaking a challenge in a 'remote' part of the world, the protagonists are consciously made aware of the social networks in the Highlands in which stories are not kept secret but instead spread quickly as is also demonstrated by the heightened presence of journalists. The fact that Sir Leithen can easily invent the fake persona of a tourist looking for beauty and camouflage himself as a naturalist to mislead the post-mistress further shows that the Highlands have long become a popular tourist destination rather fulfilling the promise of being a 'wild' and undiscovered place.

Though Buchan was not unsentimental about the loss of 'wild' places, as his nightmarish vision of a world without mystery indicates, there is more to the novel's engagement with discourses of wilderness, environmental encounters and the non-human world than mere escapism, a simplified accusation often made about adventure fiction. Terry Gifford's reading of the novel as a classic example

of the pastoral, and his conclusion that Buchan uses landscape descriptions only for two purposes – when 'necessary to the terms of action' or 'to advance his romantic sub-plot' (2013, 168) – cannot fully capture the complexities of the novel's engagement with the environment. Neither 'the tidal waters of the river and the yellow sands on which in the stillest weather the Atlantic frets' that can be seen from Crask (1925, 15), nor 'the scent of wet bracken and birches and bog myrtle, the peaty fragrance of the hills salted with the tang of the sea' (16) are necessary descriptions for the advancement of the story or its romantic sub-plot. To get at the complexity of Buchan's inclusion of the environment and its non-human agents, it is necessary to pay attention to what Amy King describes as 'dilatory descriptions' that '[owe] little or nothing to the advancement of plot but that instead might even be said to still narrative progress' because they move 'against the headlong thrust towards closure' (2011, 163). Because adventure fiction is often centred on the suspenseful forward movement of its plot, such dilatory descriptions, that are very frequently landscape descriptions, may seem to run counter to the general structure and aim of the adventure narrative. This disruptive capacity makes them particularly interesting to look at in a novel that does not take the structure of the adventure narrative all too seriously. Buchan strategically uses descriptive passages to feed into his satirical provocation and to deconstruct the idea of wild nature in the Highlands. The above description of the environmental character of the land, including the weather and its scent, creates an atmospheric environment of sensations as experienced by the characters and shared affectively with the readers that diverts from the forward thrust of the adventure plot.

Looking for subversive, environmentalist qualities in the novel, Gifford finds it to be centrally concerned with the conflict between an 'authentic' experience of nature and its cultural construction and Gifford diagnoses a disappointment in the novel that 'nature cannot be conceived except through the frames of culture' (2013, 166). Examining the novel's engagement with these frames of culture through a focus on the tropes of the adventure novel, however, reveals how Buchan consciously employs them to subvert dominant landscape aesthetics which depict Scotland as a country defined by 'wilderness'. There are indeed echoes of an adventurous 'wilderness' border between Scotland and England in the contrast between Lady Claybody's carefully designed garden 'which with crazy-paving and sundials and broad borders was a very fair imitation of an old English garden' and the 'primitive walled garden, planted in the Scots fashion a long way from the house' which 'was now relegated to fruit and vegetables' (1925, 198). The description of the walled garden as more 'primitive' evokes the binary

between civilization and wilderness which has frequently been mapped onto the distinction between England and Scotland. Both gardens, however, are cultivated for domestic purposes, albeit for different ones, and they are contrasted with the Highland environment of the estate. Lady Claybody's superficial interest in the environment as a source of artificial aesthetic pleasure is criticized by the novel when Janet notes that she 'was an inaccurate enthusiast' (198) and forgivingly accepts the garden only because 'in that glen the environment of hill and wood was so masterful that the artifices of man were instantly absorbed' (199). Janet's musings put a special emphasis on the absorption of the influence of humans on the glen. Even though it is less visible, the environment of the glen is, however, in private hands which not only regulate its access but also change the character of the landscape through their activities, most strikingly through the keeping of deer. Just like the juxtaposition of the two gardens, the difference between here is one of degree and not kind. Rather than constituting any form of untouched wilderness, the novel raises the question whether such perceived wilderness can ever exist. As the disappointment about the impossibility of a wild adventure at the ending reveals, 'authentic' wilderness does not exist – at least not in Scotland. In the context of the Scottish Highlands, the discourse of wilderness opens a contentious debate about land use and reinforces the idea of Scotland as a country that is somehow particularly fit for wilderness. As his engagement with wilderness makes clear, Buchan was aware of these constructions of the Scottish environment but rather than taking them on uncritically, he includes them in a self-conscious way that makes us rethink the structures of meaning-making that constitute the idea of wilderness and its transformation into territory.

Even though there are descriptions of the environment as 'wild', these are explicitly filtered through the perception of individual characters. Janet Raden, lying quietly in wait to catch John Macnab, feels Carnbeg sleeping 'in a primordial peace' in which '[o]nly pipits broke the silence, only a circling merlin made movement in a spell-bound world' (71). However, the circumstances of her presence contradict this view: she is patrolling among a dozen ghillies in order to catch a poacher who is out to catch one of the stags that are at the centre of the estate's economic management. By contrasting the reality of the Highlands with its private estates, local inhabitants and tourist economy, with the romantic ideals of a primordial wilderness portrayed in adventure fiction, the novel not only highlights 'wild nature' as a cultural and literary construct, but also asks us to reflect on its own portrayal of the environment as a novel that consciously draws on such literary and aesthetic traditions. The literary traditions that inform characters' attitudes towards the environment help the Macnabs in their

endeavour. Janet's perception of the tinker boy Benjie corresponds with both her romantic views of Glenraden and stereotypical representations of the Scottish tinker as closer to nature. Janet looks over the landscape including Benjie and his grey pony, perceiving it as 'a scene of utter loneliness and peace' in which the two figures 'seemed to have become one with nature, and to be as much part of the sleeping landscape as the clump of birches whose leaves did not even shimmer in that bright silent noontide' (65–6). The integration of Benjie as part of the landscape fits with his portrayal throughout the novel as one of two figures who can move unseen through the land and across its borders because of their thorough and embodied understanding of the environment. However, Janet's perception soon turns out to be an illusion: 'Janet turned homeward with a feeling that the world had suddenly become dispeopled. She did not turn her head once, and so failed to notice first one figure and then another, which darted across the high road, and disappeared in the thick coverts of the Crask hillside' (66). As part of the landscape, Benjie and his pony are turned into the lifeless figures of a pastoral painting, living in a peaceful landscape devoid of people. The reality behind this imagery is different, however, and Benjie is already part of the ploy of the Macnabs moving behind Janet's back rather than part of an innocent background of landscape aesthetic.

Even though they cannot fully capture the material reality of the environment, the novel suggests that literary representations can still express some truth about our relationship with the environment. As Janet looks over Carnbeg, she thinks back on her luncheon during which Junius Bandicott and her sister Agatha took to quoting poetry and retelling local fairy tales, which 'all seemed wrong' to her at the time because 'this was not an occasion for literary philandering' (72). And yet, Janet feels that these tales also express a material reality and an affective response to the environment when she is 'forced to confess that nothing was astir in the mossy wilderness' as 'except for more hinds and one small knobber, living thing there was none' (72). In line with Riach, Miller suggests that it may be Buchan's ambivalence that characterizes his work and 'that provides the most telling contribution of his political ecology' (2009, 205). Buchan's writing, Miller argues, oscillates between 'the contrary impulses to prune and contain nature in making a home in the world alongside the desire for a broader imaginative home beyond the confines of habitation, depicting the ongoing, urgent negotiation of the human place in the biosphere' (205). Attending to territory through the lens of the adventure narrative with which Buchan plays further reveals that the frames of culture, which Gifford finds to be a hindrance to 'authentic' environmental encounters, are conscious reconstructions of the adventure tale,

turned on their head in a playful manner. Rather than moving beyond those cultural frames, Buchan works through them and reveals the processes of their literary and cultural construction. It is those cultural frames that crucially define territorial debates in Scotland in which the environment is turned into plots of land to be owned, managed and cultivated according to aesthetic and economic viewpoints. As a result, environmental tropes are re-examined and the borders of territory are shaken up, even if only temporarily or partially.

The territorial borders transgressed in the novel do not demarcate unknown places in which wild nature abounds, but the idea of entering into an unknown and wild space appears to have been the fantasy of the three friends who, in the end, realize that true adventure 'can't be done', at least 'not in this country', a Scotland that is thoroughly managed and in which there is no true peril for them as upstanding members of society (1925, 234). Instead of simply reproducing the adventure novel's frameworks, the environment in Buchan's novel lies somewhere in between the magical landscape of poetry, romance and fairy tale, the economically and aesthetically managed territory of the estate, and the physical reality of the material world. In merging those different categories and blurring their borders, the narrative opens patches for alternative readings that show how the novel pushes against narrative tropes about the environment even as it makes use of them. The juxtaposing of wilderness ideals and economic management, remote emptiness and networked locality, literature and physical environment leads to a blurring of the ideological borders that are necessary for the working of conventional adventure fiction.

Mapping Scotland's territory: history, politics and the environment

The novel resists a reading that underestimates the relevance of Scotland's history of territorial conflict as a crucial affordance for its debate on land ownership and territory by turning Janet Raden into a central figure that not only voices the philosophical underpinning of the novel's treatment of territory but is also thoroughly connected to Scotland through her family history. We are told in great detail that the Radens are connected to Scottish history as far back as the time of Norse settlers in the eighth and ninth centuries, according to the older Mr Bandicott and a Professor Babwater who, in a very loosely linked subplot, are excavating and examining the remains of the fictional ancestor of the Radens, the Viking Harald Blacktooth. Janet explains her lineage to Archie in connection with Scottish history, which is, significantly, a history of territorial conflict. From the First War of Scottish Independence under Robert the Bruce, to the Battle of

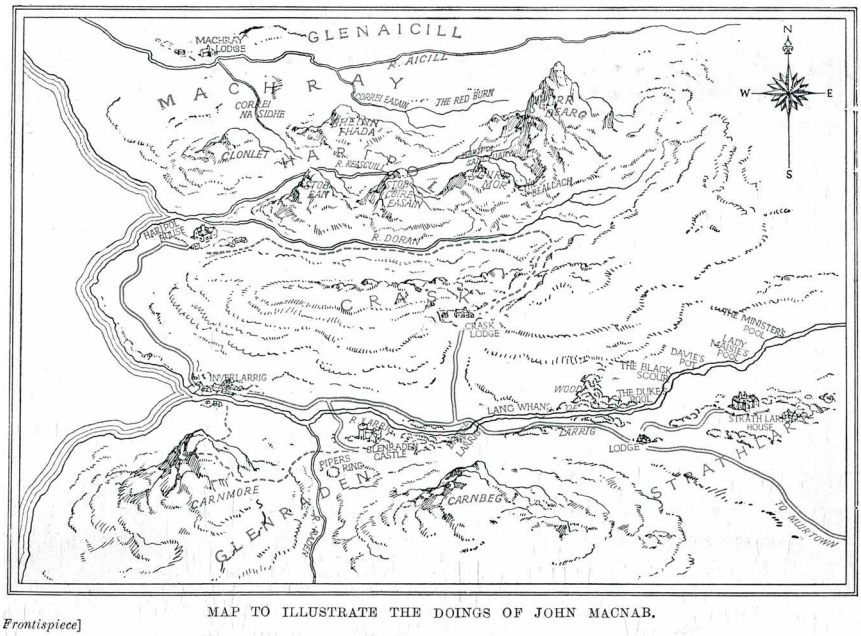
Flodden under James IV, to the Jacobite rebellions in the eighteenth century, Janet recounts, the Raden family was involved directly in the territorial conflicts between England and Scotland until 'civilisation killed them' and 'the fire went out of the blood, and they became vegetables' (1925, 125) because the territorial conflicts were settled and their only claim, in the end, 'was the right of property, which is no right at all' (125). Instead of hereditary rights, it is the history of territorial conflict, adventure and (male) heroism that Janet glorifies when she argues that 'people should realise that whatever they've got they hold under a perpetual challenge' because '[n]obody in the world today has a right to anything which he can't justify' (125).[3] Taking her lessons from Scottish history, Janet proposes that on a fundamental level, territory is a cultural construct subject to decay and needs to be continually justified, renewed and performed in order to function, with 'all power and property held on sufferance' (145).

Despite her lineage and the curious subplot of archaeological excavation which suggests the family's history, and by extension the history of Scotland's transnational history as embedded in the local landscape, Janet does not regard history as sufficient justification of their rights to own the land. Antiquarianism and the search for an authentic Scottish history are connected to the fabrications of James Macpherson's Ossian poems when it is revealed that Janet's grandfather spent a fortune on the hunt for additional Gaelic manuscripts (101). The novel explicitly undertakes its own fabrication of national and world history through the invention of Harald Blacktooth who is said to have obtained his treasures in Greenland and North America before the time of Columbus, a discovery that would significantly rewrite world history. Instead, Bandicott's findings are entirely inconsequential and the pointless search for an authentic Scottish identity reflects the pointlessness of the adventure plot. Once the newspaper stories claim John Macnab to be the ghost of Harald Blacktooth, the ridiculous nature of the archaeological endeavour is made obvious and the novel's rejection of the notion of authenticity revealed. Through the Raden's family history and the excavation plot, the novel rejects the idea of a 'natural', identity-based right to own land and criticizes attempts to legitimate territory through antiquarianism or inheritance: territory cannot be understood by digging into or even blasting the soil with explosives in the search for truth, but only through a borderscaping practice that involves an active, embodied engagement with the environment. Archie's impression that Janet 'fitted most exquisitely into the picture of rock and wood and water, that she was, in very truth, a part of [t]his clean elemental world of the hill-tops' (126) does not ascribe her with any natural right of ownership,

then, but positions her as a negotiating figure between politico-legal frameworks and an environmental perspective on territory.

In the novel, territory is understood in a double sense: as a humanly defined, geopolitically or legally bordered entity, and as a process in which land is composed through the interaction of human and non-human agents. The delineation of the estate territories is crucial for the poaching challenge of the Macnabs: by constituting unauthorized hunting on private land, poaching only becomes possible through the transgression of territorial borders. The territorial b/ordering of the estate further creates a legal framework which prohibits the free movement of the characters allowing land owners to classify any crossing of their borders as aggravated trespass, a criminal offence as opposed to poaching which, as Sir Edward Leithen explains, does not constitute an actual crime: 'Deer being *ferae naturae*, there is no private property in them or common law crime in killing them, and the only remedy is to prevent trespass in pursuit of them or to punish the trespasser' (22). These legal circumstances highlight the limits to land ownership in regard to the environment, in particular its fauna, while also stressing that the story relies on the b/ordering of land in order for its fundamental concerns, the poaching of game, the excitement of the adventure, the questioning of territorial rights and the ownership over the environment, to work.

This convergence of environmental and legal perspectives on territory is negotiated throughout the novel and is introduced by the map preceding the first chapter (Figure 2). The map situates the story within a mountainous area of the Highlands near the sea (the Atlantic as later detailed in the narrative) but resists any real location outside the fictional world. While Sgùrr Dearg, Sgùrr Mòr and Stob Bàn do exist in Scotland, the actual mountains are located in different regions from Skye to the Grampians and most of the other place names are entirely fictitious, though inspired by actual place names. While the Highland location is crucial to the functioning of the hunting, or rather, poaching plot, the adventure mode, and the negotiation of land ownership, real locations are purposely left out, as are the borders demarcating the different estates. At first sight it appears as if natural features – the rivers Raden, Larrig and Doran – may give some indication as to where the borders of the estates may be situated, but the location of Haripol House south of the river, and of Inverlarrig at their crossing refute this idea. The overlapping between Glenraden Castle and the valley, equally named Glenraden, which, as follows from the narrative itself, reaches into the territory of Inverlarrig, equally confounds a clear location of their borders. Instead, the map shows the estate territories as flowing



MAP TO ILLUSTRATE THE DOINGS OF JOHN MACNAB.

Frontispiece]

Figure 2 Map of the Highland setting of the novel. From 'Map to Illustrate the Doings of John Macnab' (1925). Reproduced with the permission of the National Library of Scotland.

into one another by having the landscape join rather than divide the estates. Criticizing the Desert Island model of territory which suggests that land can be owned 'by a unified people' with the 'unilateral right to control everything that happens inside it and at its edges' (2020, 6), Ochoa-Espejo argues that natural features present a place-based counter-argument to territorial rights: 'Looking at territory through the lens of its natural features, it becomes difficult to think of it as analogous to private property – or to simply state that a people "own" the land, and therefore they can rule over it and exclude others' (30). The map highlights the environmental character of the narrative space: its cross-hatchings create a mountainous relief that highlights the topographical features of the landscape the characters will later traverse and reveal as uneven, steep and boggy. Like the narrative, Buchan's map asks us to imagine the 'feel' of the landscape on a visceral level and understand the environment depicted as lived in, rather than bordered. Rather than presenting readers with stable borders that are marked on the map and on the ground through fences, walls, or other constructs, the map foreshadows the representation of territorial borders as borderscapes in which characters experience territory on the ground through encounters with the non-human world.

Creaturely transgressions: Non/human borderscaping

Non-human animals are both central for and peripheral to the bordering work of the novel: they are at once the primary objects of the adventure plot, directing the action of the human protagonists, objects to be killed and traded for pleasure, symbols for the construction of masculinity (in the form of sportsmanship), and agential creatures that resist and derail the plans of the characters and adventure story alike. In the context of the poaching challenge, animals are objects to be owned and slaughtered for pleasure and excitement. As Gifford points out, however, 'their role as property is challenged' by practices of poaching, and the lack of clearly delineated borders or a legal framework beyond trespass reveals the sporting estates' management of animals 'as redundant artifice' (2013, 167). While animals are discursively framed as objects and symbols, they emerge in sometimes contradictory ways in the narrative middle of the story. While this text neither advocates for animal rights, nor attempts to get at an understanding of the animal from a post-anthropocentric perspective, it does asks readers to reflect on the construction of the symbolic animal, in particular in a national context, and suggests the potential unruliness of animals in relation to human b/orderings.

As with the rest of this novel, these constructions are engaged more playfully than seriously, as in the description of Crask as an estate with 'the air of a West Highland terrier' (1925, 15). Beyond symbolic and prey animals, animals abound in the narrative and are involved in the action in a variety of ways. The animals inhabiting the Highland hills and glens appear more marginally, but curious passages paralleling human and non-human action give a hint of an understanding of an enmeshed landscape in which human and non-human lives intersect. The chapter that details the very first poaching attempt on Glenraden opens with a longer dilatory description of the patrol assembling at the gamekeeper's cottage, going out into the night, before switching to the non-human inhabitants with which they share the landscape:

> Darkness gave place to the translucence of early dawn: the badger trotted home from his wanderings: the hill-fox barked in the cairns to summon his household: sleepy pipits awoke: the peregrine who lived above the Grey Beallach drifted down into the glens to look for breakfast: hinds and calves moved up from the hazel shows to the high fresh pastures: the tiny rustling noises of night disappeared in that hush which precedes the awakening of life: and then came the flood of morning gold from behind the dim eastern mountains, and in an instant the earth had wheeled into a new day. A thin spire of smoke rose from

> Mrs Macpherson's chimney, and presently the three wardens of the marches arrived for breakfast.
>
> (1925, 63)

The majority of the animals described in this passage are in some way connected to hunting practices, either as prey or hunting companions, which links them to the main action of the plot. The limits of this enmeshment are, however, highlighted by the punctuation in the passage, which connects animal lives through colons but closes off the human action by a full stop. These textual borders between human and non-human animals show that while animals are central to an understanding of land as a shared lifeworld, they are not always allowed to partake in the human action in any significant way.

While animals move between subject and object positions, their capturing requires significant creaturely adaptation and attentiveness by the human characters which in turn involves animals in the borderscaping process. While the normative dimension of borders is discussed discursively in the novel, the embodied encounters of the protagonists with their environment highlight in particular the strategies and the connections between in/visibility, space and power which Brambilla and colleagues identify as central to borderscaping (2015, 2). Adaptation and in/visibility are central to Leithen's endeavour of poaching a fish on the Bandicott estate which begins with him pretending to be a naturalist taking photographs of the estate and ends with him locked in the Bandicottses garage in the disguise of a tramp. More significantly, however, the challenge of poaching from well-guarded estates requires a change of strategy. Involving Benjie in the ploy because of his ability to merge with the environment and move freely and invisibly within and across estates is a crucial part of this new strategy. Benjie is described not only as having a thorough understanding of the Highland environment and its non-human creatures but also as an expert in strategies of creaturely adaptation: Benjie is an expert in reading the land and his skills extend to predicting the weather based on animal behaviour and crafting whistles that can imitate the sounds of a variety of animals. His thorough knowledge of the environment and its non-human inhabitants allow him to blur into the landscape, making him the perfect accomplice for the Macnabs.[4] Aside from Benjie's assistance, the mission also depends on Leithen's ability to read the environment and observe creaturely behaviour rather than relying on previous knowledge. Acute attentiveness to the salmon's actual movement patterns leads Leithen to identify a stream for his endeavour which, at first sight, had 'looked

oily, stagnant, and unfishable' but turns out to be 'one of those irrational haunts which no piscatorial psychologist has ever explained' (1925, 106). When Leithen appears just about to fail the challenge, it is the unexpected appearance of an otter in the stream that changes the outcome: Leithen cuts a wedge out his salmon to give the impression that the otter had come back to claim his prize, assuaging the suspicions of the landowners. The success of the challenge is owed to a combination of the skill to pay close attention to the non-human and the ability for creaturely adaptation: the discovery of the unexpected movements of the salmon makes the poaching possible in the first place, while the presence of the otter, together with Benjie's invisibility, is vital in making it a success.

Another kind of adaptation and in/visibility tactics is required of Charles Lamancha whose poaching of a stag in the final challenge relies on the expertise in creaturely adaptation of his stalking guide Wattie Lithgow which Lamancha is required to mimic. Wattie, like Benjie, is able to move unseen by both human and non-human animals: when Lamancha sees 'nothing human in the sopping wilderness', Wattie perceives the navvies and stops before they are detected (167). The real danger of detection, however, is posed by the deer themselves who are much more perceptive of their surroundings than the navvies. Moving close to them can only be mastered with a guide like Wattie who moves instinctively along fox's tracks and who, 'by his sense of the subtle eddies of air', is able to 'shape a course which prevented their wind from shifting deer behind them' (170). While they remain undetected from the ghillies and navvies, it is a hind that threatens to reveal their presence, acting as a non-human border guard of sorts. The continual need to adapt their movements to avoid raising the hind's suspicion presents 'one of the severest bodily trials which Lamancha had ever known' which requires them to move 'on their bellies like serpents' (170) and to distract the hind by barking sounds from opposing directions (171). The challenge reaches its climax when Wattie and Lamancha reach a waterfall, the crossing of which almost spoils their hunt. Traversing the waterfall first, Wattie seems to turn into an amphibious creature, submerging almost fully into the water and, when moving through the peat wallow on the river's bank, 'his face seemed to be ground into the moss, and his limbs to be splayed like a frog's and to move with frog-like jerks' (174). In an attempt to master an imitation of Wattie's expertly performed creaturely adaptation, Lamancha fully immerses himself into the terraqueous environment around the waterfall, first 'dipp[ing] his face so deep in the black slime that his nostrils were plugged with it' and, when the hind is alarmed by the sounds, lying down in the stream 'choking, with the water

running up into his nose' (175). Together with the misty weather which clears up during their stalking and descriptions of the terrain as precipitous, rough and wet, the novel's attentiveness to bodily sensations, to wind, soil and water and its vivid description of creaturely mobility draws its readers into the land itself and presents territory from within planetary habitation rather than from an imperial cartographical view. Lamancha fails to translate his memory of the map into the moving, living lifeworld of his surroundings in which borders are constituted through rocks, water and the movement of animals rather than abstract legal frameworks. Through their creaturely movement, the characters realize an understanding of territory in an environmental, rather than a legal sense and the detail with which their embodied immersion into the land is narrated serves to blur and fade the relevance of political and legal borders against the immediacy of the living world.

As these examples show, strategies of adaptation, including creaturely adaptations, are necessary in navigating the territory of the estate and moving across the dispersed territorial borders of land ownership. The close encounters with the environment these strategies include highlight territory once again in a double sense: as a politico-legal structure defined by borders, and as a living environment. Animals do not adhere to these borders, nor do borders appear as significant categories when viewed from within the land where the immediate experience of the environment takes over the story. The encounter with the 'auld hero', whom Lamancha and Wattie stalk, equally highlights borders as human constructs that may overlap but are not congruent with animal territoriality: as Wattie explains, the old stag is 'no a Haripol beast' but 'a traiveller, and in one season will cover the feck o' the Hielands' (172). Similarly, even though the deer in the sanctuary are said to be as safe 'as inside a barb-wire fence' (183), there are no physical borders such as deer fences to keep the animals on one estate or another in this novel. The territorial defence of the estate centres not around its outer borders but is determined by the animals' movements, centring on the spots in which they are found or can be moved. This dispersal of the border demonstrated through the positioning of the ghillies across the estate, guarding rivers and deer forests, is also revealed as destabilizing the actual borders of the estate when Leithen is caught out by navvies on Haripol. Pretending to be a landowner out for a walk on his own land, he accuses the navvies who are not local to the area to be trespassing on Machray instead of admitting to his own trespass. The casual nature with which Leithen succeeds in his deception reveals territory and its borders as largely illusory, discursive constructs built upon consensus. This is supported by the ending in which there are no ramifications

of the protagonist's border transgressions, and (estate) borders are ultimately revealed as inconsequential.

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Almost a hundred years after its publication, Buchan's *John Macnab* (1925) enjoys a surprising and remarkable legacy. In 1976 the novel was adapted into a television series written by John Prebble, and in 1996 Andrew Greig published *The Return of John Macnab*, an updated version of the story which speaks to the politics of Greig's time by including debates about devolution, globalization, the rise of animal rights activism and the right to roam movement.[5] Besides such thoughtful engagements with the story, Buchan's novel also lives on outside the realm of fiction in the form of the hunting challenge. Stripping the original story of its political implications, commercialized versions of the 'John Macnab challenge' provide a hunting experience in which the Highlands actually become like a theme park in which the wealthy pay for access to participate in the killing of animals. Today's classic Macnab challenge requires the killing of a fish, grouse and stag on one day and is offered on a number of Highland sporting estates for prizes of £3000 per 'sportsman', often in collaboration with the British Association for Shooting and Conservation. International organizers of shooting trips like Delaney and Sons further increase the popularity of the challenge beyond the UK where it flourishes in various adaptations, including the 'Ladies Macnab challenges', 'The Ferrari Macnab' or the 'Royal Macnab' hunting safari in South Africa.[6] The advertising of the challenges on *YouTube* highlights the difference from John Buchan's critical engagement with (Highland) territory. Discursive celebrations of romance and adventure are accompanied by dramatic music and visuals of hunters moving through rough environments to highlight that physical endurance and sportsmanship are the main features of the challenge. At the end, the successful hunt is celebrated in extravagant black-tie events at traditional hunting lodges which evoke an air of nostalgia for a past age of aristocratic and imperial glory (SauerundSohn 2016; *The Field* Magazine 2017).

Even though the modern challenges reference Buchan's novel, and the 2021 Game Fair festival offered a screening of John Prebble's television adaptation of *John Macnab* (1976), the philosophy of the challenge is exchanged by a focus on the Macnab as 'a thrilling test of sporting skill' (*The Field* 2021). The commercialized legacy of Buchan's novel that is created by hunting associations, game fairs and Highland estates inherits little if anything of the subtle interrogations of territory and critical potential of the original text by reducing it to a story about a hunting adventure. Like the critical vignettes discussed

earlier in this chapter, however, *John Macnab* actively engages with Scotland's political situation through an environmental lens. Buchan's novel uses hunting and adventure as vehicles for a discussion of larger issues such as modernization, land ownership, the representation of the Highlands and the nature of territory itself through an attentive merging of legal, political and environmental perspectives. Buchan's understanding of territory as not just a legal framework but a dynamic and shifting lifeworld experienced through mobile engagements with the natural world does not strive to the completion of the challenge or even a specific political agenda. The fact that the modern Macnab challenges simplify Buchan's engagement with territory in the way they do highlights even more that, even if his tongue-in-cheek play with literary conventions may not present a real challenge to the status quo, literature may be able to create fictional versions of what Fiona Mackenzie terms 'places of possibility' in which 'norms that had previously confined political possibility are now unsettled and new imaginaries configured' (2013, 4). The manifold tensions that characterize Buchan's *John Macnab* highlight its potential as an experimental playing field in which settled ideas about territory may be challenged and new perspectives may be tested out.

6

Conclusion

Reflecting on the persistence of borders across history and how they shape our perspectives on the world in fabricating truth and presenting us with an invented version of reality, Henk van Houtum (2011) wonders how, instead of trying to do away with borders, we might begin to remake them. Rather provocatively, van Houtum asks us to reflect on our ability to dream borders differently:

> Do we dare to de-border ourselves, do we dare to embrace the untamed freedom but with the preservation of certainty, comfort and ease? Do we dare to cross the border of the imagined dark forest out there and enter the forest without fear, or does the forest precisely exist because of our stories about it? Is a road to a familiar openness thinkable, dreamable?
>
> (2011, 59)

Literature dares its readers to do exactly this. While providing us with a space that allows us to experience the freedom of de-bordering ourselves by entering and immersing ourselves in the lifeworlds of a fictional realm and its (human and non-human) characters, the storiness of literary works also gives us comfort and certainty. By inviting us to reflect on our assumptions about the world, our own enmeshment within it, and the borders we draw, not just between us and the world but between one another, literature has the power to offer us thinkable, dreamable alternatives to the way borders, the environment and the relationship between them are commonly understood.

As I have tried to show, the literary texts discussed in this book enter into dialogue with the Scottish environment in order to probe at the b/ordering structures that shape our world(views). By looking at three literary forms mobilized by writers from the nineteenth century to the present – the littoral, planetarity and territory – I detailed how writers make use of the geographical, environmental and political affordances of Scotland to examine and reconfigure geopolitical and social borders. By focusing on literary works that think *through*

Scotland, rather than *from* or *about* Scotland, I have tried to highlight the literary affordances of a Scottish context for addressing the confluence between borders and the environment without falling into methodological nationalism. By reading borders through Scotland's environment, I have argued, such literary works can help us better understand borders as construed and maintained through our stories and show us that they are consequently open to a shared reimagination.

In proposing that literature can present a critical intervention in debates on the relationship between borders and the environment, I draw on Robert Eaglestone's definition of literature as '*a living conversation*' (2019, 6). In treating literature as a living conversation, we allow it to enter into multiple dialogues. I have focused on creating a dialogue between theory and literature to highlight the contribution literary works can make to debates on borders and the environment. Through the combination of critical vignettes and case studies spread across two centuries of literary history, I have also tried to establish a dialogue between literary works across periods and genres based on their formal characteristics. What results from this, I have tried to show, is not a one-sided conversation (in the sense of a development of each ancillary form over time) but one that goes both ways: we can read Buchan's mobilization of territory through Scott, just as much as we can read Scott's territories through Buchan. The acknowledgement of this reciprocal relationship between literary works requires another kind of dialogue: between the text and the reader. In this Conclusion I will briefly elaborate on these multiple overlapping conversations, enabled by literary form, that have structured my research.

Exploring theoretical challenges by putting theory into dialogue with literature has helped me better understand some of the intellectual, political and moral challenges of our time in relation to both borders and the environment. While theory provides us with useful frameworks for an understanding of borders and the environment, theoretical debates often tend to remain on an abstract level that is largely removed from real-world experiences. Literary scholars like Robert Eaglestone and Terry Eagleton have proposed ways to bridge this gap and highlight the value of literature to complement abstract thought with experiential knowledge. Eaglestone's builds on Terry Eagleton's argument that '[p]oetry is concerned not just with the meaning of experience, but with the experience of meaning' (2013, 192). This, of course, depends on how we approach and read literature. In contrast to theoretical classifications, Eaglestone argues, we might understand literature as 'an action or craft that we *do*' rather than something we know: 'Enjoying a walk is different from following

the map of its route; appreciating the flowers of the hedgerow is not the same as knowing their formal botanical names' (2019, 5). Literature translates theoretical challenges into experiences and infuses them with meaning. In contrast to theory, as Wolfgang Funk, Irmtraud Huber and Natalie Roxburgh argue, literary '[f]orm makes experience relatable; it translates our being-in-the-world' (2019, 8). Imaginative experiments with literary form can provide us with an additional and versatile toolbox to broaden our understanding of borders and provide us with imaginative visions of how borders might be construed differently in connection with the environment.

By combining critical vignettes with longer case studies in all of my chapters, I have aimed to highlight the portability of literary forms and show how these forms may speak to our present concerns about borders and the environment even when they are found in texts published two hundred years ago. Rather than tracing a teleological development, I was more interested in how literary forms resonated with writers at different points in time. The constellations that resulted allow literary works of different genres and periods to enter into a conversation because of their use of form. These constellations, as I suggested in the introduction to this book, are not meant to be exhaustive but rather serve as a starting point for an open-ended conversation. Reading literary works through form, rather than socio-historical contexts, allows them to be put to work in other contexts and to speak to our present moment. As Michaela Bronstein has argued, literary forms make 'an aesthetic appeal to the future […] that has political uses' and for that reason they 'are often precisely the most useful things about the texts of the past for the readers of the future' (2018, 8). For this aesthetic appeal to be harnessed for our present and for its political uses to emerge, however, literary forms demand creative readerly collaboration.

In order to unfold their political potentialities, literature needs readers that are open to taking part in their meaning-making because, as Rita Felski reminds us, '[a] text's formal properties […] cannot single-handedly decide or determine its cross-temporal reach, which also pivots on the vagaries and contingencies of its relations with many other actors – humans, other texts, institutions' (2011, 588). While I have tried to demonstrate the portability of the literary forms that I have discussed, what we make of them and how we harness their political potential to speak to the conditions of our present depends on our creative engagement with literature through our reading practices. If we let them, literary forms can help us better understand our present and shape our future. Felski tries to get at this when she invites us to see literary works as co-actors in their own meaning-making and asks us to inquire: 'What does this text create,

build, make possible?' (2015, 182). As I have argued, allowing the literary forms and works discussed in this book to enter into dialogue with theory provides a more nuanced perspective on the complex relationship between borders and the environment than a purely theoretical or historicist approach. Even though I open each chapter with theory, it is not theory that has led the conversation, but literary form itself. Focusing on form has helped me to see the possibilities that unfurl from aesthetic engagements with these topics and revealed the strange agency of these forms in the often-surprising effects they produce. Literary form is only fully able to exert its agency and demonstrate its potentiality in relation to other forms and to the reader. However, for this to happen, we need to give literary form room to breathe.

When I began working on this research project, I thought it would turn out completely different. With my background in cultural studies, I believed that the most productive way to analyse the relationship between borders and the environment would be a historicist approach. I wanted to find out about the history of this relationship and how it had developed since the nineteenth century in relation to emergent structures of feeling and socio-political changes. The decision to begin in the nineteenth century resulted from this historicist framework. I wanted to include the works of Walter Scott, which I felt must be formative for conceptualizations of borders as dynamic constructs in Scotland and internationally, because that was what the scholarship I had read claimed. At the same time, I always felt a slight discomfort with structuring my book, containing research that was centrally concerned with the non-human world, according to arbitrary human period markers. I struggled with seeing the connection between bordering processes and environmental politics reflected in the literary works that I read. When I came across Caroline Levine's *Forms* (2015), I was therefore immediately taken by how literary forms allowed me to see these connections in ways that theory and history did not. I went back to literary works that I had previously dismissed because I was now able to see how they drew directly on the affordances of Scotland's environmental, political and geographical situation in order to reconfigure geopolitical and social borders. Stepping back from the comfort zone of historicist analysis allowed me to see the 'surprising and unintentional political effects' that, as Levine argues, forms produce (2006, 627).

At the same time, adopting a new formalist approach, and combining it with Felski's postcritical reading practice (2015), required a different kind of reading and researching than I was used to or trained for. Many of the literary works I discuss in this book were serendipitous finds because looking for forms that

would articulate the relationship between borders and the environment would not allow me the same kind of systematic compilation of a corpus that historicist approaches would have. This does not mean that I did not have a (very extensive) reading list, but it meant that I was required to take a step back from classifying the works into neat categories. Rather than structuring my book according to literary or historical periods, I now wanted to structure it according to literary forms and I speculated upon which forms I might find, basing these ideas again on what I had learned from theory and history. As a result, I came up with forms that I thought I might most likely encounter: periphery, scale, temporality, land and the creaturely. As will be clear by now, these are not the forms that I ultimately ended up with, even though some elements of them are visible in the chapters. Again, I had made the mistake of structuring and predetermining my reading, and when I turned to the literary texts that I had selected, they resisted the categories that I had set for them. This meant that I had to take a step back from the frameworks that had structured my reading and let the literary works speak for themselves, to enter into dialogue with them to find out which forms (if any) they were making use of and how they were drawing on Scotland's affordances in the process. This led me to recognize that Willa Muir's use of temporality was part of a larger aesthetics that might best be described as littoral. It made me listen to the resistance in Nan Shepherd's writing to scalar reading practices and to understand that what emerged from her works could more accurately be described as a planetary form of writing. And it let me to see that rather than employing a creaturely form of writing, or simply a form that would express ideas about land, Buchan was merging those concerns through the form of territory. By treating literary form as a method of thought, I allowed room for forms to breathe and to lead the conversation into unexpected and unforeseen directions.

Once I could identify a literary form, I was able to see it unfold in a range of other works. There are many literary works that I read which did not make it into the book, even though they have very interesting things to say about either borders or the environment. Most often this was because they did not develop a form that would articulate the relationship between borders and the environment. Sometimes they did develop fascinating literary forms, but these were not reflected in any of the other works that I read. There are other texts that I put down because I could not see what forms were emerging from them until I picked them up again later, having read the works of other authors whose writing mobilized the same form in similar ways. As in John Buchan's *John Macnab*, discussed in the final chapter of this book, there was no truth

to be gained in trying to excavate hidden meanings. Instead, I had to give the literary works I was reading the space to unfold their meaning or, in van Houtum's words cited earlier, I had to de-border myself and let go of my critical assumptions. This process, which asked me to continually reflect on the stories and fictions that I brought to the texts I was reading, made me wonder how often our scholarly reading practices preclude the possibility of un-bordering ourselves and of dreaming different borders. At the end of this process is a book that presents a methodological intervention in (Scottish) Literary Studies and the environmental humanities that I hope demonstrates the political and literary merit of methodological approaches beyond historicism. This is an intervention that I did not quite intend or foresee myself at the beginning and I was only able to make it because I let the literature take me with it in a collaborative process. But, as I like to believe, it was this approach that yielded the most productive understanding of Scotland's affordance for fostering literary imaginaries that worry at and reshape the relationship between borders and the environment.

Notes

Introduction

1 For a documentation and critical reflection of the new geographies created by border closures during the Covid-19 pandemic which also highlight how the new border geographies created by pandemic measures affected the drawing of social boundaries, see Fall (2020) and Wille and Weber (2021).

2 For a discussion of the future of the UK in the aftermath of Covid-19 and Brexit, see Behr (2020) and Lane (2020).

3 For a critical discussion of climate migration that attends to imperial legacies and capitalist systems of circulating movement, see Nail (2020).

4 Notable examples of this desire to make sense of the pandemic through creative engagement by Scottish writers include the *Write Where We Are Now* project launched by Carol Ann Duffy, the blog *A Plague of Poetry: 50 Days of Poems* (https://pestilencepoems.blogspot.com), the National Theatre of Scotland's *Scenes for Survival* series, and various contributions by Scottish writers such as Kevin MacNeil ('Hebridean Moon', 2020), Kevin Reid ('If I Get to Scotland', 2020) or Sarah Cameron ('Fenced in', 2020) to the *Pendemic* journal (http://pendemic.ie).

Chapter 2

1 Despite these new lines of inquiry, the arbitrary distinction between borders and boundaries remains and poses terminological difficulties, especially when considered in relation to the environment. Since there is no consensus on the differences between these two terms, suggestions abound. Most often, borders are regarded as more stable and boundaries as more flexible and liminal constructs (Viljoen 2013). Considering the connections between bordering and environmental discourses, Casey (2017, 2020) and Fall (2011) distinguish between borders (human-made) and boundaries (rivers, mountains). This is an understandable but unhelpful distinction when trying to make sense of the correlation between borders and the environment. The most productive approach for an environmental reading of borders appears to be Rosello and Wolfe's border aesthetics approach which considers borders as functioning on layered, overlapping and interacting topographical, symbolic, temporal, epistemological and textual planes (2017, 14).

By incorporating the complexities inherent in definitions of borders and boundaries alike, this approach renders a distinction between those terms superfluous and I will consequently use them as synonymous.

2 In outlining the new agenda of critical border studies, Parker and Vaughan-Williams further explicitly urge an inclusion of, amongst others, environmental planning, adding an environmental subdimension to the approach (2009, 583).

3 I am using the term 'deconstructive ecocriticism', rather than 'eco-deconstruction' because I want to highlight a deconstructive methodological approach within ecocriticism conducive also to the methods of new formalism and postcritical reading that I see in particular in the work of Clark and Morton. While deconstructive ecocriticism destabilizes, I believe, conventional ecocritical methods and terminologies, the term 'eco-deconstruction' feels less disruptive to ecocritical thinking and more attuned to an ecological turn in deconstruction akin to developments such as eco-phenomenology or eco-hermeneutics. Nevertheless, the theorizations of eco-deconstruction by David Wood (2019) Timothy Clark (2012) and Clark's work with Philippe Lynes (2023) inform my approach.

4 For a discussion of ecological reading as a critical practice that considers all texts as potentially environmental, see Kern (2000) or Morton (2014). Clark himself agrees that reading such texts that do not have a clear environmental(ist) focus may be precisely what is needed to tackle the 'unreadability' of the Anthropocene (2015, 63).

5 Seminal studies combining an examination of borders and the environment in literature through an implicit or explicit archipelagic perspective include, for example, Glissant (1997), Baucom (1999), Norquay and Smyth (2002), Smith (2013), Brannigan (2014), Allen, Groom and Smith (2017), Noudelmann (2018) and Ritson (2019). In an article focusing on the travel writing and fiction of Robert Louis Stevenson, I discuss the affordances of mobility for fostering an archipelagic perspective which reveals the porosity of geopolitical borders (Ditter 2021).

6 Muir follows in the footsteps of G. Gregory Smith who, in 1919, developed the concept of the Caledonian Antisyzygy to describe the contradictory nature of a split Scottish psyche. While concepts like G. Gregory Smith's Caledonian Antisyzygy (1919) and the discussion of Scottish culture as a minority culture can be productive in certain contexts, they simultaneously continue to pathologize it as essentially schizophrenic and inherently lacking and inferior. Davis (1998) discusses the roots of such predicament thinking in the Union of 1707; Bell (2004), Schoene (2007) and McGuire (2009) all offer summaries and criticism of the debates over these perceptions of Scottish culture. Published at the time of the 2014 Scottish independence referendum, the first Supplement to *The Bottle Imp* is dedicated to these discussions and explores new approaches to national literary histories through cultural studies, area studies and transnational theories.

7 See, for example, Parker and Vaughan-Williams (2009), Brambilla (2015) and Bossong et al. (2017).
8 Shaw discusses the renewal of debates on Scotland's borders in the context of the 2014 referendum for Scottish independence which brought the border itself back into focus (2018, 8).
9 MacLachlan criticizes Scottish writers' instrumentalization of nature for nationalist purposes and argues that Scottish literary depictions of the environment find themselves in a struggle between complying with and resisting a sentimental national myth of a harmonious coexistence between land and people (1998, 189). Withers (2001) shows how geography has shaped the Scottish nation through territorial and historical knowledge and everyday acts that give shape to the territory. Womack (1989), Jonsson (2013) and Hunter (2014) discuss the role which the Highlands play in these constructions and how they were simultaneously representative of an understanding of Scotland through its environment and excluded from nation-building projects through internal processes of colonizsation under the guise of improvement.
10 Romanticism was long regarded as a domain of English literature. Scottish Romanticism, by contrast, has been defined as inauthentic, with Scotland being regarded solely as the object, but not the producer of Romanticism (Duncan, Davis and Sorensen 2004, 1–4).
11 For a historical perspective on the origins of environmental consciousness in the Scottish Highlands, see Smout (2009) and Jonsson (2013).

Chapter 3

1 For a more detailed discussion of access regulations, surveillance practices and attempts at segregation on the beach, see Kluwick and Richter (2015).
2 I borrow this term from Penny Fielding, who in turn borrows it from Walter Scott. Fielding uses it to describe the coastal geographies, economy and social practices of Shetland and the amphibious writing style of Shetlandic literature (2021, 275).
3 For a more detailed discussion on traditions of writing on the Solway, see Stafford (2017) and Stewart (2021).
4 The literary works that come to mind here include Jessie Saxby's *Rock-Bound: A Story of the Shetland Isles* (1877), John Buchan's *The Island of Sheep* (1936), George Mackay Brown's *Vinland* (1992), Margaret Elphinstone's *The Sea Road* (2000) and Malachy Tallack's *Sixty Degrees North* (2015). For an overview on Scandinavian perspectives in Scottish literature see, for example, Margaret Elphinstone (2006), Michael Stachura (2013) or Claire McKeown (2017).

5 Muir not only studied, researched and taught psychology, but she was also a translator of German-language writing. Given that *Civilisation* was one of Sigmund Freud's most widely read works, it can be assumed that she would have read the book when it was published in German and that this passage is a conscious reference to the work. This is far from the only possible reference to *Civilisation*, and the concept of 'oceanic feeling' as a source of non-institutionalized, instinctive religiosity which Freud develops at the beginning of this book might have inspired Muir in her representation of Elizabeth's spiritual engagement with the sea.

6 For a discussion on the homogenizing tendencies of absolute time that replaced local times and obscured the connection between temporality and natural processes, see West-Pavlov (2013, 23; 78–9).

7 In advocating for a view of time as a multiplicity of 'immanent, entity- and material-inhabiting temporalities' (2013, 141), West-Pavlov builds upon the work of Bergson and Deleuze and Guattari's reworking of his theories. Being familiar with Bergson's concept of *durée*, Muir was able to transform his ideas creatively by demonstrating how these temporalities may collide and redirect one another in the lifeworlds of her characters.

8 Through this debate, Muir anticipates early ecofeminist debates about the histories behind the association of women and the environment that can be found in the early studies of Caroline Merchant (1983) and Val Plumwood (1993), whereas Muir's narrative interventions can be seen to anticipate more recent theories such as those offered by Stacey Alaimo (2008) and Astrida Neimanis (2017).

Chapter 4

1 Heise operates with a method of moving between scales akin to Clark's multiscalar reading practice. While productive in some contexts, the term 'glocal' which Heise employs, and which is often used in Scottish studies to highlight the manifold interrelations between local and global perspectives, thus cannot capture the complexities of the planetary form developed by the writers discussed in this chapter any more than the concept of scale. Its reiteration of distinct and scalable categories such as the global prevents it from fostering the productively disruptive collisions and achieved by planetary theorizations and writings.

2 I discuss this in more detail in an article for *Nineteenth-Century Contexts* in which I examine the archipelagic quality of Robert Louis Stevenson's writing by focusing on the potential of mobility as another literary form that allows writers to reconfigure borders through a mobile engagement with the (Scottish) environment (see Ditter 2021).

3 This includes cultural nationalist readings of Scottish national identity which, as Bell argues, paradoxically tend to simultaneously condemn and claim parochialism as a characteristic of Scottish literature (2004, 50). Central to this is Cairns Craig's assertion that Scottish literature is haunted by the threat of its own parochialism which leaves writers and critics alike with a feeling of inadequacy (1996, 11–12; discussed by Bell 2004, 50–1).

Chapter 5

1 See, for example, George Monbiot's argument that the Highlands are uniquely suited for rewilding projects exactly because of the Clearances and Scottish laws on land ownership (2014, 99).
2 I agree with John Miller who argues that even though the careful attentiveness to the environment in Buchan's fiction shows 'an environmentalist at work' (2009, 195), it nevertheless needs to be approached with caution because reading Buchan's novels 'as a template for environmentalism would be deeply problematic in terms of environmental and social justice' (204).
3 This, of course, raises some questions and highlights the moral contradictions in Buchan's political views about imperialism which he believed was justified (see, for example, Macdonald and Wadell 2013, 4).
4 While Benjie is one of the most active and central characters of the novel, it is important to note that his representation is not always unproblematic, for example when Benjie's status as a Scottish tinker is described in some length and with distinct racist undertones when Buchan firmly distinguishes Benjie, a white tinker, from 'gipsies' who have 'Romany speech or colouring' (1925, 47).
5 For a comparison of Buchan's novel and Greig's rewriting from an ecological and political perspective, see Gifford (2013).
6 See, for example, SauerundSohn (2020), Fieldsports Channel (2012) and Bayly Sippel Hunting Safaris (2020).

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