Journeys into the work of Nan Shepherd

'But, of course,' she added quickly, 'one can't generalise. I hate the idea of rules and categories and schools and those sorts of terms being applied to art'[1]

[1] R.F. Dunnett 'Nan Shepherd: One of the Scottish Moderns' Interview at Shepherd's home (Approx: 1933-4) National Library of Scotland. Nan Shepherd Papers: MS.27443. Doc.59.

Nan Shepherd (1893 – 1981)[1]

[1] N.S. Papers: MS 27442. Doc.51.

Contents

Introduction

Leave to live

Nan Shepherd was born in East Peterculter, near Aberdeen in 1893. The family moved to a house in Cults a month later and Shepherd lived there, in the same bedroom, for the rest of her life.

Nan Shepherd as a baby with her brother, parents, grandmother and housekeeper[1]

All her years she 'pursued with fervour'[2] an intimate knowledge of her regional landscape, and for almost half of them she lectured in English Literature at the Aberdeen College of Education.[3] In a letter to Shepherd, the writer Jessie Kesson elucidates Shepherd's sensory experience of her landscape, and her vitality as an educator.

> I'm glad you look on Clochnaben. Your hills – and I know you do *more* than *look*. You *know* the *feel* of it, beneath your feet. The sting of its rain on your face, you *breathe* in the hill smells. I know this because I, too, can 'merge' my – being – into beloved places

[1] Photograph from Leopard Magazine. N.S. Papers: MS.27443. Doc.34.
[2] Nan Shepherd, Author's foreword to *The Living Mountain* in *The Grampian Quartet: The Quarry Wood, The Weatherhouse, A Pass in the Grampians, The Living Mountain* (Edinburgh: Canongate Classic, 1996) p.iv.
[3] Shepherd lectured at the Aberdeen College of Education for 41 years.

> All your students – all your 'young' over the years to whom you 'gave out' of yourself – would stand up and cheer and 'entitle' you to [commendation][1]

The hills were closely connected with her creativity. In 1930, Shepherd wrote to her friend Neil Gunn from the Cairngorms, describing the feverish inspiration she had been experiencing, writing a poem each day.

> I wish I could stay up here another month! … Instead of which I return to my heaven appointed task of trying to prevent a few of the students who pass through our institution from conforming altogether to the approved pattern.[2]

Ali Smith's brief biography elucidates that assault on 'the approved pattern': 'friends and former students remember a similar and joyful tenacity of spirit in Shepherd herself, as well as her sense of humour, her spellbinding teaching talent, and a feminist approach in her lectures years ahead of her time.'[3] A graduate of Aberdeen University, she always kept close ties with it, and after retiring from the staff at the College of Education in 1956, she edited the *Aberdeen University Review* until 1963. In 1964 the university awarded her an honorary degree of LLD. Writing to Neil Gunn that year, she articulates her sense of liberation upon giving up the *Review.*

> I'm finding it very good to have my thoughts to myself again after nearly seven years – I can again just *be*. A cessation of doing in which one begins to know being. Frightening sometimes. One rushes off to do things in order to escape from it.[4]

The 'cessation of doing' remained a hard thing to come by. Her home was shared with her mother and their housekeeper Mamie Lawson, and she nursed both of them through old age. Her mother died in the early 1950s when Shepherd was sixty, and Mamie in the early 1970s. Shepherd became ill in her late eighties and lived for some time at the nursing home Annesley House, in Torphins. She died in Aberdeen at Woodend Hospital on 27 February 1981, at the age of eighty-eight.

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[1] Letter from Jessie Kesson, 18 July 1980. N.S. Papers: MS.27438. Doc.36.
[2] Letter to Neil Gunn, 14 March 1930. National Library of Scotland, Neil Gunn Papers: Dep.209. Box.19. Folder.7.
[3] Ali Smith, 'Shepherd, Anna' *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*, 2004 [http://www.oxforddnb.com/view/article/59071, accessed 11 Aug 2014]
[4] Letter to Neil Gunn, 19 July 1964. N.G. Papers: Dep.209. Box.19. Folder.7.

Shepherd in her garden in the 1960s[1]

Writing and critical reception

Shepherd once said that she only wrote 'when I feel that there's something that simply must be written.'[2] What 'must be' written were three novels published in quick succession, *The Quarry Wood* (1928), *The Weatherhouse* (1930), and *A Pass in the Grampians* (1933). The novels received immediate critical acclaim on both sides of the Atlantic, and were followed by the publication of a collection of poetry, *In the Cairngorms* (1934). Then came a forty-year publication silence, with the exception of articles and reviews. In 1977 Aberdeen University Press quietly published her final prose work, *The Living Mountain*.

By the time of her death her books had long been out of print. Since the republication of the novels by Canongate in the 1980s and 1990s, critical interest in them has been revived and she has been positioned firmly within the 'Scottish women's writing' tradition. The search for academic work on Shepherd must begin within this category, where she has been brought to the surface alongside other contemporary female writers. This is the first step of a critical engagement with her work, establishing Shepherd as a contributor to a canon.

[1] Photograph from Leopard Magazine. N.S. Papers: MS.27443. Doc.34.
[2] Roderick Watson, Introduction to *The Quarry Wood* in *The Grampian Quartet* p.ix.

E. P. Dutton & Co., Inc.
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WEEKLY BOOK NEWS

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A VISIT TO A MYSTERY WORKSHOP

"When I first arranged, while in Chicago, to visit the Mystery Workshop of Harry Stephen Keeler," writes a well-known English literary agent of the author of "Sing Sing Nights," "Voice of the Seven Sparrows," etc., "I presumed that I would find one more of the many typical studios or writing nooks such as are owned by our English writing men at home; a Chippendale desk by a sunny window, a few potted plants, perhaps a globe of goldfish, a typewriter. Much to my surprise, however, for I have not been accustomed to seeing efficiency particularly tied up to literature, I found a cross between a train despatcher's tower, an office and a statistician's chamber.

"I was even further led astray in my expectations by the three large Chinese letters painted in gold and red on the entrance door, which Mr. Keeler himself explained to me later were pronounced *ji li pon jen ti shi*, and meant, 'One Who Works by the Pen is Found Here'; or it may have been the soft tinkle of melodious bells as the top of the door, in opening up, tripped into operation one of those ancient musical devices which hung over the doors of Medieval Italy. But once inside—alas for the illusions of one who considered himself, at least in Great Britain, a literary man!

"One entire wall of a very ascetic looking room, carpeted in slate grey, was entirely covered with three gigantic maps of what Mr. Keeler calls the world's mystery-story cities: Chicago, London and Paris, each fitted out with a huge battery of pins with brilliantly colored disks as beads, and capable of being inserted at any point in the maps to mark the progress of the story or the exact locale of important incidents. Convenient electric searchlights, hung from the ceiling, and actuated by a single pushbutton, focused upon these, so that on a black, rainy day the tiniest court or mew in London could be found in a second.

"A huge blackboard covered the adjoining wall, which with colored chalks and vertical and horizontally ruled lines showed evidently, as Mr. Keeler explained it, the chronological position of every character at any moment in a mystery novel he was then writing, which accorded with his exact methods which I have seen explained in some publication or journal somewhere.

"At a window looking out on a grassy court, an ordinary flat-top kitchen table stood, with wire office baskets nailed all around it, ends and backs. At the rear of the table stood an open screen of the folding type, over whose grey burlap surface were pinned scraps of papers, notes, clippings, drawings, rotogravure reproductions, all evidently fragments that would eventually be part of the warp and woof of something on which he was then engaged. When we had seated ourselves, I asked him curiously about the plethora of wire baskets attached to the table edges. Mr. Keeler smiled. 'You've heard about the man,' he said, 'who bored a large hole at the bottom of his kitchen door for his cat to get out, and six smaller holes for each of her six kittens to do likewise? His friends asked him why the large hole wouldn't do for all, and he said: 'When I say scat I mean scat!' With me, when ideas are coming fast and I want to clear my table of scissors, rulers, pastepots, pins, blank paper, thesaurus, fountain pens, correspondence, stamps, book review clippings, etc., I want to give one or two sweeps — or swoops! — and—he demonstrated. The kitchen table was clear with two wide sweeps of the hand, and the baskets caught everything.

"What was perhaps of significant interest to mystery story novelists, was the third wall of this Mystery workshop. From ceiling to floor, from end to end, it was covered completely with one gigantic filing cabinet, consisting of small horizontal drawers, all neatly tabulated as to contents. There must have been two—perhaps three hundred of these. A certain number bore also brilliantly scarlet labels of Chinese firecracker red printed in boldface type: 'Save This Drawer in Case of Fire.' As Mr. Keeler explained: 'We once had, in this building, a disastrous fire which looked as though it was going to consume the whole building, because the nearest water plugs were frozen and water could not at first be obtained. I will never forget how I looked at those four hundred absolutely similar drawers, and racked my brains to recollect which had contents that surely ought to be saved. With flames pouring out the next windows, shouts of firemen below, and hordes of occupants fleeing down the hallways to the street, it became a problem in super-high mathematics. I had to give it up. But I determined never to get caught that way again. Hence the scarlet labels here and there.'

"I glanced over the tabs showing the material classified in each drawer, material such as is found woven in Mr. Keeler's mystery novels which deal with everything from Chinese curios to such branches of science and sociology as psychiatry. In one was *'News Accounts of Secret Diplomacy'*; in another *'Lost Treasures of the World'*; In still others, in turn, *'Swindles,' 'Descriptions of Males,' 'Descriptions of Females,' 'Descriptions of Technical Processes,' 'Jewels,' 'Curios,' 'Relics,' 'Interiors,' 'Streets,' 'Foreign Cities,' 'Odd Names for People,' 'Dialects,' 'Jargon.'*

"Seven drawers in succession, all bulging, were labeled *'Maps, Guides and Timetables.'* Another bore the significant caption, *'Plot Germs,'* and another large one *'Photographs of Odd Human Types.'*

"I must have showed my surprise at the interjection of such statistical care in so-called literature, for Mr. Keeler smiled a bit wearily. 'It looks very nice all classified,' he commented, 'But it takes a tremendous lot of work keeping it thus. Never a daily newspaper or a magazine or a new textbook but that contains so many column-inches or illustrations or pages that have to be chopped out and filed away. The layman thinks that mystery novelists just write mystery novels; but I can tell you that a good part of a mystery writer's time is spent handling the material from which he makes his mysteries.'

"It was my time to go, as I was due in New York in twenty-four hours and expected to make the *Majestic* out for Southampton. As I made my adieus, a pair of long white ears popped up from a wire basket affixed to the bottom of the writing table, and a white rabbit stuck his head out, crunching away methodically with his jaws on a piece of carrot.

"'I know you're terribly disappointed,' said the writer, 'for you hoped to find literary atmosphere here. But there it—or he—is. That's H. L. Mencken. That's the atmosphere.'

"As Mr. Mencken was now hopping menacingly out, and being myself somewhat unacquainted with rabbits brought up in mystery workshops, I hastily took my departure."

ELISABETH SANXAY HOLDING
Author of "The Silk Purse"
Drawn by Edwin Earle

DISTINGUISHED ACHIEVEMENT

Is First Novel by Nan Shepherd. Highly Praised by Critics

By COLEY TAYLOR

How may one introduce a new author of importance—a young writer of an astonishingly beautiful first novel—and be believed? The tom-toms are beaten for so many and so many are mediocre, entirely undeserving of all the fuss and commotion. But in Nan Shepherd one meets a novelist of extraordinary power. She can tell a story. She can write. She has imagination and understanding. These things have been said about many writers, but they are only true of a few of them. And Nan Shepherd is really one of the few. She has won the enthusiasm of the English and Scotch critics, and her writing more than deserves all the fine things that have been said of it.

"The Quarry Wood" is a story of country life on Lower Deeside, one of the loveliest districts of Scotland. Martha Ironside is the daughter of a ploughman who married a woman with some pretentions to gentility; she grows up in an ugly world, loving beauty, and fights for her education. When she goes to Aberdeen to the University, life becomes more intense, complex and strange, for she is growing out of adolescence. In the story of Martha and Luke, Miss Shepherd has written a most understanding chapter of youthful love, a wondrously fine love story. One regrets the words "love story," for they are among the most frequently counterfeited words in the language, so that one hates to use them, degraded as they are, for anything real.

"The Quarry Wood" is a first novel, but it is a first novel that is a distinguished achievement rather than a promise. There are here no crude infidelities to life and experience, no shoddy places in the writing. It is mature, and exceptionally fine, mature work. Miss Shepherd has become, with her first novel, an author of unusual importance, a novelist to put alongside Sheila Kaye-Smith and Mary Webb, Kathleen Coyle, Willa Cather, Virginia Woolf and Ellen Glasgow.

As the critic of *The Scots Observer* says, "her Scots is sheer delight." An effortless handling of dialect. Saltiness of phrase and word native to the Scotch men and women she portrays. In her handling of conversation in dialect one inevitably is reminded of Mary Webb and Sheila Kaye-Smith and the incomparable Hardy. For she knows her people and is sure of their ways of speech. I should like to quote at great length, but a few instances will show her delightful canniness in conversation:

"That's richt, ma dear," said Aunt Josephine, "They say trees is awfu' gweed (good) for ye."

"Temperature up again," said the doctor to Martha. "I hoped you would have managed to keep it down."

"Fat'n a way could she keep it doon?" cried Emmeline. "Wad ye expect her to haud ma big tae to keep doon ma temperature?"

"Well, mind," she said, "if you bring that child here and you fall ill again, I won't look after him. So you can please yourself. I mean it, mind."

"Ye're terrible short i' the trot the day," said Emmeline.

Emmeline drew aside the shawl that wrapped the child.

"Did ye ever see sic an imitation?" she said displaying the baby. "Ye cud haud him i' the lee o' yer hand."

They pulled out between them a long black cloak with a peaked hood falling down behind. The old lady wrapped Martha up in it, drawing the hood close round her face.

"Noo, ma dear," she said, "ye're in an' lookin' oot."

Miss Shepherd has caught beautifully the moods and enthusiasms of eager young men and women at the university; her portraits have the charm of life, and are no less in achievement than those of the indomitable Aunt Josephine, and Geordie Ironside, and truculent Emmeline. Charming Dussie, and Luke, and the intellectual Lucy Warrender are memorable as they and their complexities affect Martha's course of life. Luke is a poet, and so shrewdly has Miss Shepherd drawn him that one is aware of his poetry. It is not surprising, and his poetry is rather fine for undergraduate work—as Luke's would be. He is nothing like the strange imitations of poets and writers one is constantly coming across in the ruck of novels. He is convincingly real, a brilliant figure. Which is to say that Miss Shepherd can create characters. Not many can.

"The Quarry Wood" is as fine a novel as one can hope to read in a long season.

It is beautifully written. Miss Shepherd's style is enchantment itself.

Alice Beals Parsons writes: "'The Quarry Wood' is a gorgeous book."

The Manchester Guardian: "Miss Shepherd knows what she wants of the world; her emotional values are bright and clear-cut, and she neither experiments nor trifles."

NAN SHEPHERD, Author of "Quarry Wood"

Drawn by Sid Hydeman

ELISABETH SANXAY HOLDING

Author of "The Silk Purse," Etc.

Writes of Herself and Tells Her Favorite Story

I have two daughters, Skeffington, aged eleven, and Antonia, aged eight.

We have been living in Bermuda for the last four years, and as my husband is an Englishman, I am therefore a British subject—in the eyes of the law.

By birth and tradition I am entirely American, and pretty solidly rooted in America.

My great-grandfather, Francis Fickett, built in his shipyard at Coenties Slip, New York City, the first iron steamship to cross the Atlantic, which was the S.S. *City of Savannah*.

The American branch of the Sanxays derives from Pastor Jacques Sanxay, Huguenot refugee from France to England in the year 1685. The founder of the family in America was John Sanxay, who came to this country from England in 1772, and whose wife and children are buried in the churchyard of St. Paul's Chapel, Broadway, New York City.

I began to write as a child, sent out my first ms. when I was about sixteen, and for many years wrote with a notable lack of success or encouragement.

I should like to tell here, once more, my favorite—indeed my only story. It is very neat, very American, and—absolutely true. I read an advertisement in some magazine, which quoted, I think, Mr. Charles Schwab as saying that "If a man had not accomplished anything worth while by the time he had arrived at the age of thirty he never would." Being at that time twenty-nine and profoundly impressed, then as now, by advertisements, I was alarmed and set to work to write a novel before my thirtieth birthday. This book was "Invincible Minnie," which was accepted and published.

Besides books, I write a great number of short stories, which appear in American and English magazines.

EVERY WOMAN'S IDEAL?

Clever Novel by Elisabeth Sanxay Holding Shows How Women Often Deceive Themselves

By ANNE HAYWARD

Archie Grier, Elisabeth Sanxay Holding's principal character in "The Silk Purse," is so consistent a character that his life, as it develops, is inevitable. The opening sentence of the first chapter is "As a man of honour Grier was uneasy." This uneasiness remains with him throughout the book, and before many pages the reader is aware of the reasons for it. He is a vague, personally attractive young man whose only desire is to do "the decent thing."

He never gets what he wants because he does not know how. His invariable answer to an invitation is, "Oh—er—thanks very much." This unfortunate habit is responsible for his not marrying the girl he had thought of as his future wife. It is further responsible for his marrying a girl he did not love. He is weak, uncertain, and very simple, and Mrs. Holding shows all this, and still makes him an attractive, comprehensible person—no small achievement.

Without effort on his part, three women see in him their ideal. Kathie, the girl he had vaguely expected to marry, has no ambition for herself. She is loyal, patient, and demanding nothing, she is always there—waiting. He did marry Anthea, a willful, beautiful child, desiring a lover whose passion would sweep her off her feet. She fancied that she recognized this romantic ideal in Archie Grier—that she had married a man who would justify her choice by doing something spectacular. In her disillusionment, her attempt to keep him in the image she had created, and her final renunciation of him, she also is a consistent character.

There is also Isabelle Birch. After eight stormy years of married life she instituted divorce proceedings against her husband, the news of which reached him on his death bed. (How like Isabelle!) And Anthea's mother, whose loyalties always stood in her way, is excellently depicted.

POET DEPLORES PASSING OF MASTODON WHICH "ATE ITSELF TO DEATH"

Arthur Guiterman Says That If It Had Followed His Advice in "Wildwood Fables" It Would Be Alive Today

The Great Tyrannosaurus
Lived centuries ago;
Through marshes wet and porous
He wandered to and fro.

The most tremendous lizard
That ever browsed on meat,
His length from A to Izzard
Was forty-seven feet.

The Great Tyrannosaurus
In habitude was not
What one would call decorous;
He ate an awful lot.

Lamellibranchs in sixes,
Iguanodons to spare
And Archaeopteryxes
Comprised his bill-of-fare.

The Great Tyrannosaurus
Of all the world was king;
With trumpetings sonorous
He swallowed everything.

When everything was swallowed
Beneath the azure sky,
What naturally followed?—
The creature had to die.

The Great Tyrannosaurus
That was so blithe and free
Hath passed away before us;
Then learn from him and me:

This earth can never nourish
An appetite like his.
So if you hope to flourish
Don't gobble all there is!

—*From "Wildwood Fables," E. P. Dutton & Co., Inc.*

Contemporary advertisement (1928)[1]

[1] N.S. Papers: MS.27443. Doc.5.

Roderick Watson's essay on 'Substance and Spirit in the Work of Nan Shepherd' moves towards a fuller analysis.[1] He begins by acknowledging the substantial social foundations of Shepherd's fiction and its attention to the life of women in the rural Scotland of the early twentieth century. He goes on to explain that the 'positive value [Shepherd's fiction manages to find] even in the harshest and narrowest of rural communities she describes, [opens up] a symbolic creative space in a realistic tradition.'[2] This is where Shepherd captures the subtle interdependencies of community, transcending fixed perspectives of gossip and tale, so that we see character perceptions in process. Those perceptions are on the verge of opening up into 'metaphysical insight into the nature of being, or indeed, the puzzle of being.'[3] I want to develop Watson's analysis of those creative and symbolic spaces by locating them in the interaction of Shepherd's characters within their landscapes.

In an early interview, Shepherd discusses a novel she had read recently, 'the incidents may have been perfectly real, but that is not enough. We want to know not only what happens but what significance it has.'[4] The interviewer identifies that 'significance' as something essential to Shepherd's fiction, what 'is particularly interesting is that almost alone among younger Scottish writers, she goes beyond modern beliefs to those which have a timeless, since fundamental, significance.'[5] The landscapes of her fiction open character perception to this sense of 'timeless significance', to a multiplicity of perspective, and to the recognition of life as a process.

Ways in

My attention to the landscapes within the novels owes much to my oblique route into them: via Shepherd's prose work *The Living Mountain*. Endorsed by Robert Macfarlane, a leading voice of the 'nature writing' canon, the book has entered into the canon's vernacular. He first read it in 2003, 'and was changed […] Her writing re-made my vision of these familiar hills. It taught me to see them, rather than just to look at them.'[6]

The Living Mountain was written 'during the latter years of the Second War and those just after'[7] but it was not published until 1977, four years before Shepherd's death. The book was reissued for the first time in 2011, with an introduction by Macfarlane. Deceptively

[1] Roderick Watson, ''To know Being': Substance and Spirit in the Work of Nan Shepherd' in Gifford, Douglas and Dorothy McMillan, ed. *A History of Scottish Women's Writing* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 1997)
[2] Roderick Watson, 'Substance and Spirit' p.420.
[3] Roderick Watson, 'Substance and Spirit' p.421.
[4] R. F. Dunnett 'Nan Shepherd: One of the Scottish Moderns'
[5] R. F. Dunnett 'Nan Shepherd: One of the Scottish Moderns'
[6] Robert Macfarlane, Introduction to Nan Shepherd *The Living Mountain, A Celebration of the Cairngorm Mountains of Scotland* (1977) (Edinburgh: Canongate Books, 2011) p.xviii.
[7] Nan Shepherd *The Living Mountain (TLM)* in *The Grampian Quartet* p.iv.

simple, it breaks the mountain into its component parts, so that we move through its chapters from views of 'The Plateau', to inanimate elementals of 'Water', 'Frost and Snow', 'Air and Light', and into its animate 'Life' and metaphysical 'Being'. In attempting to categorise its subject it draws attention to the interrelatedness of its parts.

In the first, and at present, only, published critical examination of *The Living Mountain*, Gillian Carter describes Shepherd's engagement with the Cairngorm landscape as both embodied experience and textual practice. [1] This is the perspective of a native dweller constructing the Cairngorms in time and space 'by regularly walking in them and then shaping them into narrative form.'[2] Acutely aware of the inheritance of the idioms and tropes through which the landscape is typically framed, Shepherd 'upsets hegemonic ways of seeing and understanding the world […] which are perpetrated and naturalised through the discourses of history, romanticism, science and landscape aesthetics.'[3]

The novels also upset hegemonic ways of seeing. I want to connect the methods in Shepherd's fiction to the thematic and structural subversion later realised in *The Living Mountain*. A construction of parts, the form of *The Living Mountain* is there to be broken. By introducing an analogous formal constraint to my reading of the novels – of the binary oppositions they invoke (mind/body, self/other, culture/nature) – I want to show the ways they strive away from absolute definitions and towards unity, in form, theme, and purpose. A thematic aspect of *The Living Mountain* is implicit within each binary. Connecting the novels structurally and thematically with the later prose of *The Living Mountain* opens up a valuable 'traffic'[4] of comparison within Shepherd's enigmatically condensed writing career.

In her reading of Nan Shepherd's fiction, Carter draws attention to the interaction of binary oppositions as the site for the construction of meaning. She explains that it is because these binaries are not 'polarised in Shepherd but constantly interact, [that] they also encode different construction of identity to the official, authoritative versions.'[5] The interaction and deconstruction of binaries takes place most vividly within the landscapes of the novels. The landscapes invite interplay, resisting perceptual certainties. This resistance is a motif of *The Living Mountain*, where realities exists at the moment of perception of the material world, though reason counters them.

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[1] Gillian Carter ''Domestic Geography' and the Politics of Scottish Landscape in Nan Shepherd's *The Living Mountain'*. Gender, Place and Culture, Vol. 8, No. 1, 2001.
[2] Gillian Carter 'Domestic Geography' p.26.
[3] Gillian Carter 'Domestic Geography' p.27.
[4] 'Shepherd herself calls [*TLM*] a 'traffic of love' with 'traffic' implying 'exchange' and 'mutuality' rather than 'congestion' or 'blockage', Robert Macfarlane, Introduction to Nan Shepherd *The Living Mountain* (Edinburgh: Canongate Books, 2011) p.xiv.
[5] Gillian Carter 'Boundaries and Transgression in Nan Shepherd's *The Quarry Wood'* in *Scottish Women's Fiction 1920s to 1960s: Journeys into Being* (East Lothian: Tuckwell Press, 2000) p.48.

> the world had vanished. There was nothing there but an immense stretch of hummocked snow. Or was it sea? It gleamed, and washed the high hills as the sea washes rock. […] A sea of mist invading the heart of the land[1]

The empirical impossibility is structurally prioritised. This is more than the suspension of disbelief; it is belief *in* the perceptual reality (of snow or sea) that precedes the rendering of a different reality (the sea of mist).

Cairngorm plateau, June 2014

[1] Nan Shepherd *The Living Mountain (TLM)* in *The Grampian Quartet* p.14.

Between Mind and Body in *The Quarry Wood*

Touch is the most intimate sense of all.[1]

The Quarry Wood is, at a glance, a classic development novel, where the heroine, Martha Ironside grows in pursuit of knowledge, from childhood, through university, romantic love and a family death. That development is never a trajectory of progress towards a balanced and unified self, but always in process. At the centre of that process is Luke's aesthetic conception of Martha, which ignores her body and fixes her as spirit. This mind/body binary is an intrusion of conventional romantic discourse into *The Quarry Wood*. Martha is seduced by it. It suppresses her body of perception and desire, and brings her to the brink of physical collapse. Her way back to perception is through touch, 'the most intimate sense of all.'[2]

Between looking and seeing

'Martha Ironside was nine years old when she kicked her grand-aunt Josephine.' So begins *The Quarry Wood*. It is the first instance of a desire – in this case for knowledge – made physical. The action verges on instinctual, drawing mind and the body together in a moment of violence. When Aunt Josephine takes Martha away to the closer care of her house, we witness Martha's awakening to the surrounding landscape, as she enters the Quarry Wood for the first time.

> But in the wood there were powers in wait for her: the troubled hush of a thousand fir trees; a light so charged, so subdued from its own lively ardour to the dark solemnity of that which it entered, that the child's spirit, brooding and responsive, went out from her and was liberated. In that hour was born her perception of the world's beauty.[3]

This wood is rooted in the material and sensory world, in qualities of light and dark, which are stirred by perception into meaning. Whether that perception belongs to the character of the child, to the atmosphere of the wood, or to the narrative voice is difficult to say, it is suspended between them, existing for the reader without boundaries. The scene resists the fairytale '*glamourie*' that Shepherd censures in *The Living Mountain*.

> I do not like *glamourie*. It interposes something artificial between the world, which is one reality, and the self, which is another reality, though overlaid with a good many crusts of falseness and convention. And it is the fusion of these two realities that keeps life from corruption. So let us have done with spells.[4]

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[1] *TLM* p.80.
[2] *TLM* p.80.
[3] *TQW* p.6.
[4] *TLM* p.72.

The openness of the child's perception, without the marks of falseness and convention, enables Shepherd to capture and represent the 'fusion of these [three] realities'. This sensory experience draws Martha out of her indignation and compels her to pay attention to the world around her.

Martha's incipient perception of the world's beauty combines with her first sight of its spaciousness when her father Geordie takes Martha and her adopted sister Dussie outside to see the Northern Lights. 'Something inside [Martha] grew and grew till she felt as enormous as the sky […] she felt so out of size and knowledge of herself that she wanted to touch something ordinary. [1] Geordie will not frame the vision in language, but he shapes and supports their experience physically, holding each of the girls by the hand. The relation of touch and learning is recalled in *The Living Mountain,* in a scene of reminiscent dimensions, 'I was taught the art of picking these [mosses] by my father when I was a small child… I did not know it then, I was learning my way in, through my own fingers, to the secret of growth.'[2] Looking up at the Northern Lights and holding her father's hand, Martha is finding a way in to the secret of her own growth. As the Aurora Borealis illuminates the horizons of their home, fragments of a proverbial topography are drawn from Geordie's memory.

> 'Weel, I canna get a richt hud o't.' said Geordie deliberately, 'but it gaed some gait like this: On the sooth o' Scotland there's England, on the north the Arory-bory-Burnett's lassie, the reid-heided ane – Alice; on the east – fat's east o't?'[3]

When the east and west words are later positioned, Martha's mythical sense of place is complete. She '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.*'[4] This is a memory and myth in process, anchoring abstraction to familiar people and places, preventing the child Martha from getting lost in spells.

In these two formative moments, the emphasis is on the sharing of a sensory experience of the landscape, with a generosity that avoids framing it with 'crusts of falseness and convention.'[5]

In the Ironside family kitchen – where Martha's mother Emmeline veers between livid cleanliness and indifferent slovenliness, and where adopted children clamber – Geordie starts a rare argument that releases Martha from the domestic space. The way to the argument takes him to an interior, resembling the land he works each day as ploughman.

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[1] *TQW* p.18.
[2] *TLM* p.44.
[3] *TQW* p.19.
[4] *TQW* p.19.
[5] *TLM* p.72.

'There were vast enclosed tracts within him where his thoughts lost themselves and disappeared. He pursued them deep within himself, past his landmarks.'[1] Geordie's thought is a deliberate physical pursuit within that metaphoric landscape. In its vastness he finds his resolution: that Martha will study for her teaching degree at the university.

There, Martha reignites her friendship with her adopted sister Dussie, and with Dussie's medical-student-husband, Luke. His hasty account of Martha, based only on brief encounters, is in contrast to Geordie's deliberate interiority.

> 'She's so absolutely herself. There's such a white flame of sincerity in her. So still and self contained too. She's like – well, if one could imagine it – a crystal of flame. Perfectly rigid in its own shape, but with all the play and life of flame'
>
> He liked his simile and reverted more than once to it in thought.[2]

The account does not develop with knowing Martha, its ostensible subject. It develops with linguistic skill – composed and edited at the moment of articulation. Starting as a general remark of her being 'so absolutely herself', it becomes a simile that can only exist in language – a 'crystal of flame', perfectly rigid and with all the play and life of flame. This perceptual impossibility does not seek to express its subject, but to create it.

While Martha remains oblivious to Luke's aesthetic conception of her, he begins to influence her perception of the landscape. The North East weather of Martha's home is a reality she encounters every day. Its significance is signaled in the intensity of its description, 'December came with rain, black pitiless unceasing rain, that hurled itself upon the fields for days together, paused sullenly, and spewed again upon a filthy earth.'[3] Luke makes light of it as he walks Martha home from the opera, 'Just an April shower.'[4] 'Weather was a joke it seemed!' While Martha is amused by Luke's laughing approach, the narrator leads us darkly and exuberantly into the storm of noise that beats upon Martha's sleep that night.

> And the stormy chords from *Tannhäuser* beat upon her sleep, mingled in a colossal harmony with the beat of the elemental storm, through which his laughing voice recurred like a song.[5]

A violent subconscious fusion of her new cultural life, the elemental nature of her home, and the burgeoning of desire – this is a sensual experience that moves beyond dream, through connection to the materiality of the storm. Luke's voice is embedded in the voice of that storm, so he is connected subconsciously to Martha's perception of the landscape. This

[1] *TLM* p.34.
[2] *TQW* p.49.
[3] *TQW* p.59.
[4] *TQW* p.59.
[5] *TQW* p.60.

elemental connection will be compromised as Martha encounters Luke's construction of her and she succumbs to its romance, its '*glamourie*'.

At first Martha is genuinely astonished by Luke's romantic notions of herself. Encouraging her to stay to dinner, he ignores her refusal and alludes for the first time to his conception. 'My dear Marty, do you suppose any one would ever look at your boots who could see your eyes? […] You have stars in yours'. The stars return when he defends Martha's decision not to take Honours at the university, he explains that she will be specialising in life – illuminated by 'the sun, the moon and the eleven stars. Also by a little history and poetry and the cool, clear truths of the wash-tub.'[1] Dussie's response exposes the speciousness of his picture, 'Cool and clear indeed! Much you know about the wash-tub.'[2] On the walk home, Martha's self-consciousness threatens to dismantle Luke's version of her, 'but speedily [he] forgot it and saw her only in his own conception of her.'[3] He takes an arrogant delight in explaining what he perceives to be her 'truth',

> 'Your knowledge pervades your whole personality. It's pure spirit […] Nothing will spoil you Marty – there's a flame in you to burn the danger up'
>
> [Martha is] the woman in whom the life is so strong and powerful that it receives all experience into solution – makes a strange rich-flavoured compound of the liquor; and crystal clear. [4]

The conception is alive for Luke only at the moment of its articulation, when he can invoke the metaphors that fit his 'crystal clear' revision of Martha. As soon as he leaves, he forgets and goes home to his wife. Martha is seduced by his words, which compromise her connection to the physical world, so 'strong and bright was this interior life that the things she touched and saw no longer wore their own significance.'[5]

The body intrudes upon this new romantic interior. First, as Martha's mother, Emmeline falls ill and Martha is responsible for taking care of her. And later as the realisation that she is 'in love with Luke'[6] leads to an ironic physical development, 'the spell that was on Martha rounded her figure, filled out the hollows of her cheeks, straightened her shoulders […] she was rapidly becoming what Luke loved her for not being – a woman.'[7] Like Luke, Martha begins to ignore the movements of her body. Though we see her in a sensory, experiential world – walking out the metre of his half-formed poem in the wood,[8] discovering her love on

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[1] *TQW* p.74.
[2] *TQW* p.74.
[3] *TQW* p.75.
[4] *TQW* p.76.
[5] *TQW* p.77.
[6] *TQW* p.102.
[7] *TQW* p.111.
[8] *TQW* p.89.

a slow ascent of the brae, and then letting the rain rush upon the 'naked flesh'[1] of her upturned face and palms – these actions lead her only deeper into her mind. The focal point of Martha's wanderings is the desire growing within her. Swinging uphill on an April evening, 'Life coursed through her veins […] and she was glad of the possession of her body. It was a virginal possession.'[2] She is his Diana, his Artemis, but 'Diana would have trembled, could she have seen her votary. Such wild abandon was hardly virginal.'[3] The narrator revels in the abandon as Martha comes 'so near the discovery of her humanity'[4], in full knowledge that this is not just a spiritual seduction. Martha is settling into a damaging delusion that consigns the physical world to the background.

Between waking and sleeping

Martha takes her bed outdoors, away from what she considers to be the vulgar confines of the bedroom she shares with her adopted sisters. Martha's experience touches the contours of Shepherd's sleep in *The Living Mountain*.

> As one slips over into sleep, the mind grows limpid; the body melts; perception alone remains. One never thinks, nor desires, nor remembers, but dwells in pure intimacy with the tangible world.[5]

Perception replaces mind and body and the constructs of language are drowned out. Martha is taken in by the hushed world, 'Tranquil, surrendered, she became one with the vast quiet night.'[6] This is a return to the receptiveness of her earlier experiences of walking in the Quarry Wood, and of watching the Northern Lights. Between waking and sleeping, the landscape offers peace. Sleep will not come when she returns to the house, and she experiences the pain of physical desire.

> She moved again, tossing an arm, and her hands met and clenched. She was so sunk in her absorption that she did not realize it was her own hand she had closed upon […] she knew what it was she wanted. Luke's hand, just to touch his hand; that would allay the agony that tore her.[7]

The desire crests in the knowledge that she wants 'All of him and to be her own.'[8] Still consumed by this desire, the next night she cannot sleep so she walks into the wood, where she finds Luke. But passion does not mark her body. For Luke, she is there only in spirit. This is the culmination and proof of his conception. That spirit stumbles, so he supports her body

[1] *TQW* p.102.
[2] *TQW* p.112.
[3] *TQW* p.113.
[4] *TQW* p.113.
[5] *TLM* p.70.
[6] *TQW* p.114.
[7] *TQW* p.115.
[8] *TQW* p.115.

and kisses her. The kiss is for him a grave offering, but Martha transfigures it, it 'seemed to blaze upon her lips and run like fire through all her body.'[1] The fire of her passion exists only within; she has become Luke's impossible crystal of flame, the flame of which Luke never seeks to know.

Luke recounts the experience of that night to Dussie, in an insistent second-person narrative that is desperate to share, and by elaborate submarine metaphor,

> Seas of light washing over you, far up above your head, and all the boughs and things were like the sea blooms and the oozy woods the wear – you know. It was like being dissolved in a Shelley ode. Your body hadn't substance – it was all dissolved away except its shape.[2]

Luke seeks to dissolve the materiality of the encounter so that his romantic perception will not be altered. Even when Dussie collapses in sobbing, and his desire for Martha suddenly flares, 'Afterwards he could hardly remember that he had thought of Martha thus.'[3]

The narrative vantage point of *The Living Mountain* plunges from romantic sensibility to sensory perception, shifting its perspective as Luke refuses to do. The transcendent grandeur of the Cairngorm summits in 'The Group' chapter closes with 'the sense of being lifted, as on a mighty shelf, above the world.'[4] It gives way to the ground of the senses, 'I am on the plateau again, having gone round it like a dog in circles to see if it is a good place. I think it is and I am to stay up here for a while.'[5] The movement is from the majestic to the animal immediacy of the present tense. *The Living Mountain* performs what Luke is unable to do in *The Quarry Wood,* as he refuses to see the 'fall' from aesthetic heights into intimacy, sexuality and desire.

Between disease and desire

The blaze of desire that had 'run like fire through all her body'[6] is fiercely internalised by Martha, she 'let herself go to it. Only in its flame did she feel alive.'[7] It consumes her, triggering her physical deterioration, which is imperfectly aligned with the crippling illness Aunt Josephine gallantly endures. Martha shuts herself in to the duties of the schoolroom, Aunt Josephine's sickroom and the room of her own dark passion. The arrival of a new admirer, Roy Rory Foubister (the son of Aunt Josephine's first love) brings a promise of

[1] *TQW* p.117.
[2] *TQW* p.119.
[3] *TQW* p.120.
[4] *TLM* p.16.
[5] *TLM* p.17.
[6] *TQW* p.117.
[7] *TQW* p.125.

spaciousness, 'here was a talker who brought her light and air, space, widened horizons.'[1] The careful narration hints at Martha's misconception of the promise. Roy is a 'talker' and, like Luke, he will seek construct and control the 'horizons' of her world. His vision of Martha is of a naïve 'riderless girl […] All he need do was to mount.'[2] Their relationship is built on a horizontal and featureless plane, along which Roy's car speeds. Martha knows that 'it was only a crust and at any moment might crack and precipitate through its fissures; but its very insecurity exhilarated her.'[3] The profound internal spatiality of Martha's desire presses upon that surface, in the verticality of the 'still black depths through which she had gone down' and the 'depths of light through which her thoughts had soared and hid.'[4]

When the tale of Martha's dawn-wandering in the Quarry Wood is exposed by a neighbour at Aunt Josephine's table, Martha's relationship with Roy ruptures, and so does her romanticised desire for Luke. 'Her mind, like dead fingers, had been plunged in water too hot for them; and for a time she was conscious only of pain.'[5] When the pain ebbs, the desire is disconnected from spirit and becomes basely physical. 'And what was love really like? Not so sheerly spiritual after all.'[6] The deconstruction of Luke's romantic vision of Martha, as she moves back into the body, is redolent of Shepherd's method of unsettling habitual vision in *The Living Mountain*,

> By so simple a matter, too, as altering the position of one's head […] 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.[7]

Shepherd's knowledge comes through movement of the body, the perception is no longer of a fixed picture created by the looker, and attention is on the details of landscape, each of which 'stands erect in it own validity.'[8] This dynamic perspective is far from romantic objectification that has numbed Martha's perception of her landscape,

> The air was limpid, the hills a frail smoke-blue. She looked at them dully and told herself that the were beautiful; but their beauty did not move her. Her old vivid sense of the life of earth and sky had gone.[9]

The way out of this cold and indistinct life is through touch, 'the most intimate sense of all.'[10]

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[1] *TQW* p.145.
[2] *TQW* p.145.
[3] *TQW* p.149.
[4] *TQW* p.148.
[5] *TQW* p.158.
[6] *TQW* p.159.
[7] *TLM* p.8.
[8] *TLM* p.8.
[9] *TQW* p.184.
[10] *TLM* p.80.

Martha grasps Robin, the youngest of Emmeline's adopted children, with a violence that shocks the child and the reader, 'she clutches him fiercely, pressing him in a savage grip.'[1] It is a desire fusing mind and body, like the kick she had given aunt Josephine as a child. Robin is the child the gossips had 'mothered upon her'[2] as the product of her wood walking with Luke. 'Suddenly she thought, 'I wish he were!'[3] The desire is for independent motherhood. The 'security of her handling of Robin'[4] does not take her into a wholly physical life, the 'current of her life was running strong and sure; but underground, deeper as yet than her own knowledge.'[5] The frozen interior is replaced by a deep current, which will gradually come to be known. That current touches the surface, releasing her perception of the world's beauty, 'Martha loved the earth as she had never loved it before. Her pilgrimages in the growing and waning light, to and from school, were exquisite initiations.'[6] She regains a connection to the landscape as she watches Geordie working the land in the darkening distance, he is 'one with the earth'[7], and as she comes from him, it is part of her too.

[1] *TQW* p.187.
[2] *TQW* p.187.
[3] *TQW* p.187.
[4] *TQW* p.197.
[5] *TQW* p.197.
[6] *TQW* p.204.
[7] *TQW* p.204.

Between Self and Other in *The Weatherhouse*

Our habitual vision of things is not necessarily right[1]

In *The Living Mountain*, Shepherd depicts man's scientific approach to reading the landscape, as he 'watches, he ponders, [and] patiently he adds fact to fact.'[2] The mountain may be watched but the interdependencies of its life cannot always be fathomed. And so 'the alpine milk-vetch, its delicate pale bloom edged with lavender, [is] haunted by its red-and-black familiar the Burnet moth: why so haunted no one knows'.[3] For Shepherd, this partial knowing, that allows us to see a ghost of its colour, comes through close attention to the material and its connections. It is more valuable than fact alone. The deepening knowledge of not knowing is a central theme of *The Living Mountain* where the 'more one learns of this intricate interplay of soil, altitude, weather, and the living tissues of plant and insect […] the more the mystery deepens.'[4]

This concept is at the centre of Shepherd's construction of *The Weatherhouse,* where our knowledge of the characters, and their knowledge of each other, is always in process. And where it is not – this is a point of delusion and fragmentation into the binary of self/other. It occurs most damagingly where perspective is fixed, where there is no attempt to know oneself or another, to see beyond the tales that are told of them, or the tales you tell of yourself. Our deepening knowledge of character in *The Weatherhouse* is structured first through those tales, and then in the complication of tale, as we find the characters alone in landscape and in imagination. Here they are no longer the subject of tale, but a complex subjectivity.

Other distractions

The opening lures us into the tale of Garry Forbes. His name 'has passed into proverb in Fetter-Rothnie'. The promise of folklore is cut short, and we see him 'gaunt, competent, a trifle anxious, the big fleshy ears standing out from his head […] hardly a figure of romance.'[5] We are ushered down to the village of Fetter-Rothnie, into the Weatherhouse where the Craigmyle ladies reside, and where Garry Forbes is no longer our protagonist, but one of the many tales told.

[1] *TLM* p.77.
[2] *TLM* p.44.
[3] *TLM* p.44.
[4] *TLM* p.44.
[5] Nan Shepherd *The Weatherhouse (TW)* in *The Grampian Quartet* p.1.

The tales shared in the Weatherhouse kitchen are not malicious. They become destructive only when they are *no*t told, when they remain a solitary pastime. The spider-like matriarch of the Weatherhouse, old Mrs 'Lang Leeb' Craigmyle, and her widowed daughter Ellen 'Nell' Falconer are most susceptible to such pastimes, inspired by local stories that can be transformed, so that they themselves become the focal point.

'Leeb treated the life around her as though it were already ballad. She relished it, but having ceased herself to feel, seemed to have forgotten that others felt.'[1] Leeb had 'obeyed [her husband] and bided her time', and after his death, she determines to exercise absolute control over her place and mind. She designs the Weatherhouse in preparation for an end to labour. When it was finished she 'did no more work. Dismissing her husband in a phrase, 'He was a moral man – I can say no more,' she sat down with a careless ease.'[2] Her action is a post-mortem revelry in dissent and control, that will extend to consume the lives of others in balladry. Ellen, to whom 'Mrs Craigmyle had bequeathed the wild Lorimer heart'[3], had escaped the restrictive rules of her father's house, to 'a fantastic world of her own imagining.'[4]

Unlike Leeb, Ellen never attains control over place. Coming to live in the Weatherhouse after the death of her own husband, she is tolerated and put into a contingent, accidental space: the 'daft room at the head of the stairs.' 'Ellen loved the many-cornered room with its irregular windows […] The room seemed not to end with itself, but through its protruding windows became part of the infinite world.'[5] For Ellen the room's architecture transcends its boundary and connects it to the 'infinite world', not to the landscape. Ellen's experience of the landscape is always transgression, disconnected from materiality. 'It was a country that liberated. More than half the world was sky […] Ellen lost herself in its immensity.'[6] Ellen's niece Lindsay Lorimer will also be lost in the immensity of light and space, but only momentarily as she rails against the distraction and determines to move toward definition.

Defining connection

The arrival of Lindsay Lorimer is preceded by a discussion at the Weatherhouse of her proposed marriage to a 'Captain Dalgarno', of which her parents do not approve.

[1] *TW* p.6.
[2] *TW* p.6.
[3] *TW* p.8.
[4] *TW* p.8.
[5] *TW* p.8.
[6] *TW* p.9-10.

> This shy and undeveloped girl at nineteen had the Lorimer passion, exemplified in Mrs Falconer's day-dreams and the balladry of Lang Leeb her mother, for a romantic enlargement of life.

The romantic enlargement Lindsay seeks is tied always to the end she pursues – her marriage to Garry Forbes. Her desire to be a part of Garry's world drives her to leave the warmth of the Weatherhouse kitchen in pursuit of his aunt, Barbara Paterson, to see Knapperley, the house that may one day be his.

> The night astonished her, so huge it was […] she felt that see must topple over into that reverberation of light. Her identity vanished. She was lost in light and space.[1]

The night dissolves her, entering her vision, burning down into a perception, which is open in uncertainty, like the child Martha Ironside when she watches the world expand under the movements of Northern Light. Lindsay's wants to escape the uncertainty, so the perception is brief. Steadied by the sight of Miss Barbara's heavy bulk swinging up the field, she follows through the deep snow towards a tangible connection. The vision of Knapperley alight does not offer that, 'from every window of the tall narrow house there blazed a lamp.'[2]

> 'But the Zepps,' she gasped.
> 'They don't come at this length.'
> 'But they do. One did. And anyway, the law.'[3]

Where there should be darkness in the wartime blackout, there is light, which dares death, just as the blazing expanse of night had tempted Lindsay to fall into 'that reverberation of light.'[4] She will not lose herself to this absurd nighttime of negative capability. She flees, closing herself to its mystery. Her return to Fetter-Rothnie the following spring is the start of a new structured learning as she seeks to identify the specimens of the natural world she finds around her. Lindsay's list making is evoked in *The Living Mountain* as Shepherd seeks to assemble and represent its birdlife, 'But why should I make a list? It serves no purpose, and they are all in the books. But they are not in the books for me – they are in living encounters, moments of their life that have crossed mine.'[5] Shepherd seems to express what Ellen cannot when Lindsay asks her to identify a certain bird.

> 'I hardly know their names, Linny.'
> 'But don't you love birds?'

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[1] *TW* p.29.
[2] *TW* p.30.
[3] *TW* p.30.
[4] *TW* p.29.
[5] *TLM* p.52.

> 'Oh, yes.' Ellen paused, gazing at the eager girl. 'They are part of myself,' she wanted to say; but how could one explain that? […] Mrs Falconer longed to tell her of the secret of life – how all things were one and there was no estrangement except for those who did not understand.[1]

Ellen approaches connection, but there is a critical flaw – that 'those who did not understand' signify everyone but herself. The birds are part of her story, but she has no interest in knowing them. Ellen's remoteness and the consequent failure to communicate, connects her poignantly to Garry Forbes, who returns to Fetter Rothnie on sick leave from the front.

Delirious connection

Before we walk with Garry through the war time darkness, we hear of his trauma in the trenches. In 'some queer way he was identified with this other fellow, whom he had never seen before, whose body he had thrust with so little ceremony under the slime.'[2] To rescue himself he had to rescue this corpse too, so that he was found dragging 'a grotesque bundle at his heels.'[3] His delirium gives way to an existential despair that he tries to explain to one of the nurses.

> 'Yes, I know,' she said, pressing his hand.
> Of course she didn't know. It wasn't the war that was big, it was being alive in a world where wars happened – that was to say, in a world where there were other people, divinely different from oneself.[4]

Garry's recognition of the chasm between self and other brings this binary most keenly into the narrative, where the conflict between good and evil has subsided into a world of individual suffering. The depiction of his walk from Fetter-Rothnie station is reminiscent of an essay written by Shepherd in 1915, 'On Noises in the Night'.

> The long-suffering world has witnessed a crescendo of Night Noises – the grating of steel, the thud of the baton, the rattle of chains, the click of the pistol, the policeman's whistle, the shriek of the locomotive, the screech of the motor-siren, the brrr-r-r of the aeroplane – all the braggadocio and pomposity of supercivilisation. [5]

Garry has returned from a land where those artificial noises have become for him the marks of a world alive. The landscape he walks into is dead. Into the primordial darkness he imagines a history of civilisation gathering in glens and on hills. Their old knowledge of the

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[1] *TW* p.47.
[2] *TW* p.54.
[3] *TW* p.54.
[4] *TW* p.55.
[5] Nan Shepherd, 'On noises in the night'. *The Saturday Westminster Gazette* Prize Essay. Nov 27 1915. N.S. Papers: MS.27443. Doc.2

land is so much deeper than the 'hapless, misdirected, individual lives'[1] of this backward modernity. Shepherd's essay similarly connects the night listener to her ancestry.

> It was wrong to assume that the cavemen slept soundly in the dark. They listened to noises, if they did not make them; we are usually so busy making them that we forget to listen. When we do listen, we too are cavemen, re-living part of our telescoped experience. Night, that sets the puny world in its true perspective with regard to the illimitable universe, shatters the illusion of modernity and reveals us to ourselves in our primeval agelessness.[2]

Garry's perspective of the vast indifference of the landscape, 'shatters the illusion of modernity', so that time and the individual cease to matter. He 'felt for a moment as though he had ceased to live at the point in time where all his experience had hitherto amassed.'[3] Night is, in *The Weatherhouse,* a matter of the mind, a quality that reveals, focuses the senses and exposes the self to new perceptions. Lindsay has approached this sublime dissolution, vanishing into its light, but she has since steeled herself against it. Ellen is determinedly lost in its vastness; the land and the light backdrops, supporting the versions of self she imagines. Like Lindsay, Garry wants to restore certainty, and the opportunity to do so presents itself as the lovers walk the next day in the wood.

> in a sheltered clearing, the sun blazed upon a woman, picking gleams from her feathery yellow hair. She was kneeling on the ground, her hands clasped together and her head thrown back. They could see that her eyes were squeezed close and her lips were moving.[4]

Louie Morgan is discovered as a picture of romance, at prayer. Though the words she speaks to the wood disrupt the picture, 'I'm on the Fetter-Rothnie Committee – may I introduce myself?' The lovers suppress their laughter and go unnoticed by Louie. As they continue their walk, Lindsay tells the tragic story of Louie's betrothal to Garry's now dead friend, David Grey. The gossip in the Weatherhouse kitchen has already raised and quashed doubts about the truth of the tale, 'queer you must allow she is, but bad she couldna be.'[5] But for Garry, this tale of engagement is a vile deception, poisoning the memory of his friend. They stumble again on Louie's ludicrous exhibition. It has become, for Garry, deeply 'offensive.'[6]

As Louie eventually realises she is watched, she raises herself gracefully to her feet. Time pauses and her fantasy roles assemble before us. She is 'a good girl, a charitable Princess […] a missionary in a dangerous land […] a nurse in a hospital.'[7] In each version she is vital and

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[1] *TW* p.56.
[2] Nan Shepherd, 'On noises in the night'
[3] *TW* p.57.
[4] *TW* p.60.
[5] *TW* p.34.
[6] *TW* p.60.
[7] T*W* p.61.

admired. Being discovered at prayer in the wood makes her flush with satisfaction, and unaware of their laughing appraisal, she privately gives voice to their thoughts, 'Her face is shining. It is by such devotion that the world is saved.'[1] She holds out her hand, 'I am so glad. And what was doing at the front?'[2] She asks him to speak at the community concert she is organising, on some 'aspect of life at the Front. Of course we want to know the truth.'[3] Astonished at Louie's nonchalance, Garry firmly refuses. This 'creature'[4] is asking him for 'the truth' of which there is no single version at the Front. But 'the truth' *can* be cut out of this poisoned tale of engagement. 'Here was a small but definite engagement in the war against evil […] It was not often one could deliver so clear a blow against falsehood.'[5]

Lindsay watches the shifting definitions of her world as this spring takes 'away the shapes to which one was accustomed.'[6] The new definitions settling onto the landscape are disturbing, making abstractions into actuality. 'Evil and wrong – one knew there were such things in the world, but to find them in people, that was different […] Garry cruel, and Louie false.'[7] Looking out at the night she tries to make sense of this new order and her attention is drawn to another night wanderer, 'Cousin Ellen! Why should anyone walk in the night but the young and the untranquil and the lovers who cannot wait for morning?'[8]

Haunting

Ellen does not feature in Lindsay's personal tale of romance, but the irony is that Ellen has become another desperate lover of Garry's ideal. She joins Garry's mission to add 'fact to fact'[9], in exposing Louie's falsehood, imagining it to be her call back into the 'throng and business of life. She who had been content to dream must now do.'[10] Her sympathy had begun as a vivid perception of his truth, 'she was sure that was it, that haunted look of his betrayed a soul unhappy over the torment and mystery of life.'[11] She seems to detect the secret haunting he had been unable to express to his nurse. But the insight is absorbed into the profoundly disconnected world of her imaginings, which does not touch compromise, and so brings her without deviation to the public exposure of Louie's lie.

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[1] *TW* p.62.
[2] *TW* p.62.
[3] *TW* p.64.
[4] *TW* p.62.
[5] *TW* p.66.
[6] *TW* p.82.
[7] *TW* p.82.
[8] *TW* p.82.
[9] *TLM* p.44.
[10] *TW* p.78.
[11] *TW* p.78.

Garry, in contrast learns that the borders between truth and tale are necessarily fragile – just as he had identified himself with the body of another in his delirium. He is haunted by doubt in the pursuit of truth. First by the gossip of his madness, as he brings the accusation (that Louie has fabricated the engagement to David Grey) to the men of the village, 'Went queer, they said. Left out in a shell-hole and brought back clean off – raving mad. A corpse bumping at his heels that he insisted was himself.'[1] And again as Louie tries to explain her story, '[Garry] felt surges of pity where he had thought to feel only disgust; but it was a pity that it hurt him to give, as though some portion of himself had been rent to make the pity possible.'[2] His certainty is broken and he emerges from the interview blinking into the 'pure sweet morning.'[3] Garry's growing sense of human complexity is far from the erasure of the individual in his first walk across the fields. This new land trembles with a human-like vitality, its stones, 'like lines upon a weathered countenance', its 'Birches like tangles of shining hair'[4]. It is 'essentialised'[5], a feminine landscape that combines in Garry's thought with visions of human transfiguration – where his aunt had danced her wilful reel on the kitchen floor, and when Lindsay had 'grieved for Louie's hurt.'[6]

Despite his connection to these two women, it is with Ellen that Garry speaks most openly about his experience at the Front. Their communication flickers in misperception and misunderstanding. When Ellen asks Garry whether the Weatherhouse women seem unreal to him, he cannot know 'all that she had put into that word.'[7] She wants reassurance that she is now part of something real. But the word 'unreal' plunges Garry into expression of the alternative reality at the Front, where another dimension exists, 'Not common mud. It's dissolution […] that won't remain stable.'[8] If you try to get to the real nature of things, he explains, they laugh at you, call you 'cracked', but 'I'm convinced I saw clearer then than in my right mind.'[9] Ellen is focused purely on her task of unmasking wrong so the words 'bubbled in her ears',[10] she cannot hear their theme of connection. But years after exposing Louie's deception, this conversation returns to Ellen, she 'remembered Garry's tale of his delirium in the shell-hole.' [11] She fixates on the idea that she has been responsible for Louie's

[1] *TW* p.96.
[2] *TW* p.111.
[3] *TW* p.112.
[4] *TW* p.112.
[5] *TW* p.112.
[6] *TW* p.113.
[7] *TW* p.114.
[8] *TW* p.114.
[9] *TW* p.115.
[10] *TW* p.115.
[11] *TW* p.185.

suffering, 'I thrust her in, I am rescuing myself.'[1] Ellen visits Louie, interrupting an absurd tea party where Louie serves imaginary guests. Ellen tries to explain, 'You are entertaining ghosts, demons, delusions, snares, principalities and powers. You are entertaining your own destruction.'[2] It's too late to help Louie 'find the truth',[3] her connection to the world has been fractured and she screams until Ellen leaves her. Faced with this ultimate performance of delusion, Ellen is haunted as she has never been before, 'I pushed her in, you see – '[4] 'Nothing was in her head but the horror and sharpness of truth.'[5] Under its weight Ellen weakens and dies.

Shepherd's portrayal of the relations between characters in *The Weatherhouse* reveals subtle connections where at first there seemed to be only distance. Enclosed in their self-made tales of others, Ellen and her mother Lang Leeb have both appeared to be so remarkably alone. Only in death is the deep connection between them acknowledged. Leeb emerges from her complex web of distance, many years in the making, into troubled mourning where her ballads dry up and her ironic distance dissolves in tears. This discreet interdependency requires close attention, it is one of the 'subtleties of character presentation [that Shepherd suggests] wouldn't strike the average reader, at any rate at first reading',[6] and it is one of the reasons why 'the Weatherhouse demands closer reading than many of its readers will give it.'[7]

As Ellen mutters on her death-bed, her sister Annie explains to Lindsay,

> 'She's been talking a lot to your husband, my dear'
> 'To my – to Garry? But how strange! Why, she hardly knows Garry. Talking to Garry?'[8]

Lindsay is unaware of those tentative communications between Garry and Ellen. In Lindsay's tale, Ellen is 'a horrid old woman, thrusting herself into the limelight.'[9] But the sharp definition falters as she remembers walking with Louie and her dog, Demon, through the woods. Louie has never owned a dog. The narrative does not dispel the mystery of this slip: why Lindsay is 'so haunted no one knows.'[10]

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[1] *TW* p.185.
[2] *TW* p.188.
[3] *TW* p.188.
[4] *TW* p.190.
[5] *TW* p.190.
[6] Letter to Neil Gunn Neil 14 March 1930. N.G. Papers: Dep.209. Box.19. Folder.7.
[7] Letter to Neil Gunn Neil 14 March 1930.
[8] *TW* p.197.
[9] *TW* p.158.
[10] *TLM* p.44.

Between Culture and Nature in *A Pass in the Grampians*

As the way of life changes, and a new economy moulds their life, perhaps they too will change. Yet so long as they live a life close to their wild land, subject to its weathers, something of its own nature will permeate theirs[1]

In a letter to Neil Gunn in 1931, Shepherd talks blackly of her creative struggle, 'I'm not writing just now at all. I've gone dumb […] the book I began nearly two years ago. I want to write it. I know its people, its place, its theme. But I can't write it.'[2] The book she is speaking of is her final novel, *A Pass in the Grampians* (1933). She goes on to explain,

> I have now and then glimpsed something of that burning heart of life – have intimations and hauntings of its beauty and strangeness and awe – always when I try to put these things into words they elude me. The result is slight and small.[3]

When the words no longer elude her, the result is a novel that is at once sharply focused and descriptively expansive. The focus is on a single place that has formed its characters, but her knowledge of those characters combines with her knowledge of their landscape (and her own), so that they become elemental symbols. The old respected sheep farmer, Andrew Kilgour 'had identified himself with the land'[4], he is the 'mountain [that] holds [his granddaughter Jenny] by its vast serenity'[5], Dorabel 'Bella' Cassidy who returns from a life of singing and dancing, to the Kilgour house where she had grown up is the 'tumultuous, cruel, endlessly altering ocean.'[6] Between these two elementals, sixteen-year-old Jenny, 'like a flame, like a jet of water'[7], 'is blown by contrary winds from her true shape.'[8]

In repetition, the symbolism can read as a weight, a language that controls rather than expresses the characters. This is the novel Shepherd could not write, though she knew 'its people, its place, its theme.' It is that intense knowledge that seems to be its constraint. This gets close to Neil Gunn's composite praise of the novel, (communicated in their correspondence) which reads Shepherd's treatment as 'detachment',

> You are surer here than ever before, you are indeed so sure (out of long thought processes) that your detachment at moments may have the air of intricate analysis (i.e. of difficulty) and even almost of coldness as of an exercise. Accordingly a statement of passion in the character does

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[1] TLM p.69.
[2] Letter to Neil Gunn, 2 April 1931. N.G. Papers: Dep.209. Box.19. Folder.7.
[3] Letter to Neil Gunn, 2 April 1931.
[4] Nan Shepherd *A Pass in the Grampians (APG)* in *The Grampian Quartet* p.26.
[5] *APG* p.99.
[6] *APG* p.99.
[7] *APG* p.99.
[8] *APG* p.99.

> not carry warm conviction, because the reader (usually spoon-fed or shovel-fed) has not made the subtle intuitive imaginative effort that leaves him susceptible[1]

The narrative control is, for Gunn, a conscious stylistic challenge to the reader, so that when they make the necessary 'subtle intuitive imaginative effort', the coldness of character thaws. What those efforts amount to remains vague, though the opening of the letter (which defends the novel against a far more specific criticism) can provide some insight into his analysis.

> the criticism I've seen dealing with your singer-artist is wrong (on the lines that you've succeeded with your natives but not with her) because you have realised her not only completely but symbolically (if you'll let the word pass). In this sense the conception of the whole thing is clear and integrated […] you balance her reality by giving the old man not only austerity but kindliness.

Part of that 'imaginative effort' is to read the characters as integral parts of the whole. Like *The Living Mountain*, *A Pass in The Grampians* is constructed of parts – the chapters take us into the life and relationships of a single eponymous character. That arrangement is interrupted by the arrival of Bella, the 'singer-artist' who brings event into the narrative, upsetting the novel's structural control. For the unnamed critics she also upsets the content, in the 'native' reality portrayed by the novel. But for Gunn, Bella's character of exuberance and vulgarity vividly *balances* Kilgour's austere kindliness. The characters are formed in relation, thus realised symbolically. This way of seeing symbolic balance within the novel, of reading *interrelation*, rather than isolating and extracting the 'disruptive' pieces, is the 'imaginative effort' Gunn proposes.

A Pass in the Grampians is deeply concerned with the difficulty of expression and those 'disruptive' pieces are structural and thematic manifestations of that struggle. The difficulty exists at the level of narrative, where the novelist seeks to bring her characters to life in a language that gets to their essence but does not tire in symbolism – and in a place where expression is in action, in labour, where words are difficult. The difficulty is characterised in Bella who is a subject of disorder. She challenges the possibility of expression within the narrative (as muse to a struggling artist). At the same time as she draws profound and previously inexpressible reactions from those whose stability she disrupts.

[1] Letter from Neil Gunn, 24 August 1933. N.G. Papers: MS.26900. Doc.116.

The Laird

Andrew Kilgour, the old 'Laird' is connected most directly with the land, 'seventy years of intercourse had made the moor sit to him more closely than the most supple of garments.'[1] His knowledge of it has come through his skin,

> it had bogged him and drenched him, deceived, scorched, numbed him with cold, tested his endurance, memory and skill; until a large part of his nature was so interpenetrated with its nature that apart from it he would have lost reality[2]

The symbolism that expresses KIlgour's natural, dynamic connection to his land is subtle – it is to him the 'most supple of garments'. The expression, related directly to his material knowledge and experience of the land, captures the fluid vitality of that interaction.

It is the pressure of change that seems to fix Kilgour as a symbol of the old order, as the new age inevitably changes the 'relation between man and the great elemental background of his existence.'[3] Kilgour comes to be read by other characters as a symbol of stability. His daughter Mary lingers beside him, 'There he stood, vast and stable as a hill. Where he was, the bases of life seemed so sure.'[4]

As Kilgour considers the bungalow being built on the edge of his land by Bella, he 'remembered her ungoverned and blatant nature, her terrible vitality, how she had snatched at life'[5]. The disruption Bella will bring to the 'bases of life'[6] is signaled in the noise, acceleration, abstraction and hyperbole of the closing lines of his chapter.

> The demons of speed and din would come with Bella, the dreadful tides of a new and incomprehensible life, that had already, he knew, submerged the cities, would rise pounding against the hills.[7]

The hyperbole seems uncharacteristic of Kilgour, displaying neither 'austerity' nor 'kindliness.'[8] Bella's ocean symbolism does not develop like Kilgour's through subtle connection with the elementals, so the symbolism proceeds absolutely from her own tumultuous and destructive nature. That nature has taken root in Kilgour's mind, breaking through in the dark premonition that she will flood the natural creative indifference of his hills with a destructive modernity.

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[1] *APG* p.19.
[2] *APG* p.20.
[3] *APG* p.26.
[4] *APG* p.55.
[5] *APG* p.28.
[6] *APG* p.55.
[7] *APG* p.28.
[8] Letter from Neil Gunn, 24 August 1933.

Bella

In our first encounter with Bella, her nature is momentarily stilled by the presence of Kilgour. Her memory of Kilgour had 'solidified into a symbol in the likeness of Andrew Kilgour, farmer at Boggiewalls, among the Grampian mountains, but so much more real than the actual man who bore that name.'[1] Her first instinct is to read him as symbol, but her concerted effort to see him alongside other men – to attend to his physicality – dissolves his distinction, 'the sharp solidity […] began to melt. He was like other men again.'[2] In this way, Bella brings an implicit challenge to the novel's symbolic order. The value of that challenge had been disregarded in Bella's childhood, as Kilgour pitied her 'vulgar excitements and ostentations.'[3]

> He had no idea that her nature demanded a kind of life quite alien from his; that art, of which he knew nothing, and the sparkle of busy intercourse, the headlong rapture of creation, though higher in degree, were yet the same in kind as the things that Bella craved.[4]

Compassion is for the child, whose 'nature demanded' an alternative life, though neither Kilgour, nor Bella comprehend the validity of that desire. The sensitivity of this portrayal is developed in insight into the depths of Bella's character, unseen by others, and unknown to herself, 'deep and recalcitrant lay a respect for the man of which she herself had hardly gauged the strength.'[5] She wants to show him that her way of life is as good as his, and that intention 'had all the tenacity and strangeness of love.'[6] It is this restraint and balance that is recognised in *The New York Times Book Review* of the novel in September 1933.

> Miss Shepherd writes with such restraint that it never touches upon melodrama. It is a tribute to her art – since one cannot help knowing where her sympathies lie – that she presents one way of life as fully and fairly as another. *A Pass in the Grampians* is a study in artistic contrast, with the old order and the new set side by side and no burden of argument for either.[7]

Mary

The 'burden of argument' does have a voice in the character of Mary, Kilgour's daughter who determines to fight the threat of the new. She has 'the natural goodness of the Kilgours, as of apples, or well water' and 'the perfect Kilgour assurance that their values were right.'[8] The purity seems to undermine itself. The apple flavour seems bound to sour.

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[1] *APG* p.33.
[2] *APG* p.34.
[3] *APG* p.34.
[4] *APG* p.34.
[5] *APG* p.35.
[6] *APG* p.35.
[7] New York Times Book Review of *APG*, 3 September 1933. N.S. Papers: MS.27443. Doc.19.
[8] *APG* p.36.

The sourness swells below consciousness, 'where the dark tides run.'[1] It derives in the pain of jealousy where Gib Munro, who had been Mary's 'play-fellow […] then married Bella.'[2] The resentment surfaces on the borders of sleep and waking in shivering thought, 'How could he have married her? How could he? Bella, that lump.'[3] Mary marks the change in Gib when they meet,

> Mary's face remained smiling and her voice light; but something darkened far within, like the darkening on the face of a deep pool in the forest. No one knows that it is there, nor why its face has darkened.[4]

Mary's failure to know or express these depths becomes a narrative limitation, where the subconscious is contained in the imagery of darkness. It is a convention that is made new in the picture of the deep forest pool, but loses its potency in repetition. As Mary tries to defend the apple goodness of the Kilgour family against the pressure of change, these depths are stirred into new life. The casing that protects Mary from full knowledge of them ruptures, raising them from darkness, into conscious thought and expression.

Barney

Bella draws expression too from Barney, Shepherd's fraught young painter. His toil seems to parallel Shepherd's own as he leaves his landscape work behind and tries to capture Bella's essence, 'he had only one subject: Dorabel, and still Dorabel; as though in reading her riddle he would read the riddle of himself and of the universe.'[5] She becomes his muse because of her brazen artlessness, she never sits for him, never poses, 'here was a woman wholly herself.'[6] His action is a revolt against the 'gentle tyranny'[7] of his family who expected him to become an art teacher to repay them for his freedom to study. Bella had been brought up 'under the same code' but 'the code just doesn't exist for'[8] her anymore. Hers is a boldly rootless voice, 'Nobody cares [who your parents are, she explains] when you can sing like me – that's enough.'[9] Barney is inspired by Bella's autonomy, unaware of her yearning for Kilgour's acceptance, and her distant belief in the (false) rumour that she is his daughter. His vision of her echoes Shepherd's ocean symbolism,

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[1] *APG* p.37.
[2] *APG* p.36.
[3] *APG* p.52.
[4] *APG* p.51.
[5] *APG* p.49.
[6] *APG* p.48.
[7] *APG* p.47.
[8] *APG* p.50.
[9] *APG* p.38.

> she stretched her arms with a movement lazy and ample as the sea. It surrounded and engulfed all the Durnos [the family working for the Kilgours, to which Bella truly belongs] and the Kilgours of the worlds, leaving only Dorabel riding its crest in careless supremacy.[1]

This image haunts Barney as he races his car, with Jenny (Kilgour's teenage granddaughter) as passenger, up to the Pass to see sunrise. They are drowned in that metaphoric sea, the 'sky was like a wave that creamed above them and rolled them under. Their summit was far under the seas and they walked heavily, as though their drowned bodies clung on them.'[2] After the exhilaration of the journey, the world stills, time and identity slacken – unreal like the nighttime Quarry Wood, and Garry's haunted walk across the dark fields. For Barney the way back into a tangible reality is through his art; he shows Jenny his sketch of Bella, 'It's a picture of Venus.'[3] Jenny saw the 'likeness of a naked woman, superb, enormous, an incarnation of brute force.'[4] Barney needs her to understand that he has captured Bella's 'soul. The principle of her life'[5], but Jenny is overwhelmed, her landmarks are 'swamped.'[6] Without her reassurance, Barney tears the sketch into pieces. For Jenny, the way back into reality is not in symbol, 'quite unconscious of herself as an instrument of destiny, and less spiritual than she looked, [she] wanted noise and food. She wanted the full-blooded life that Dorabel held out.'[7] She departs from his torment, 'If you think your silly picture of Dorabel is better than Dorabel herself, I'll leave you to it.'[8]

Out of his torment, Barney decides to find a new way to draw Bella, 'this symbolic stuff's no good.'[9] He focuses again on the landscape, and as Bella marches through it, she becomes a part of his scene, her 'leg wasn't a branch, it was a leg. It moved. Moved of its own volition as branches didn't unless you got right insight their identity and surprised them.'[10] To capture the movement of the natural world of branches and trees remains beyond Barney, so Bella must remain an element of his work, 'He began drawing Bella's leg on the edge of his canvas.'[11] In *The Living Mountain*, the movements of nature are perceived so closely, and depicted so vividly that Shepherd attains the clarity of capture Barney could not.

> Birch, the other tree that grows on the lower mountain slopes needs rain to release its odour. It is a scent with body to it, like old brandy, and on a wet warm day, one can be as good as drunk

[1] *APG* p.48.
[2] *APG* p.62.
[3] *APG* p.63.
[4] *APG* p.63.
[5] *APG* p.64.
[6] *APG* p.64.
[7] *APG* p.65.
[8] *APG* p.65.
[9] *APG* p.71.
[10] *APG* p.72.
[11] *APG* p.72.

> with it. Acting through the sensory nerves, it confuses the higher centres; one is excited, with no cause that the wit can define.
>
> Birch trees are least beautiful when fully clothed. Exquisite when […] the thinning leaves turn them to a golden lace, they are loveliest of all when naked.[1]

The way in to perception of the birch comes through the senses. The mind tries and fails to fathom the effect of its scent and so turns to the visual sensuality, which sees its exquisite undressing. These perceptions come of a long and intimate knowledge of place. Barney has watched Bella for a short time only, he sees exuberant surface, but he cannot know the secret self. Bella herself is only on the brink of knowing it, as she dances with Barney through the night, 'her whole will turned to flesh',[2]

> A part of her secret self was being drawn out after the retreating form of Kilgour. Her superb self-hood was invaded; and the invader was love. For the first time in her life, Bella found herself loving against her inclinations and desires.[3]

Bella ends the dance at dawn the next morning once she sees Kilgour has witnessed her endurance. Barney has survived her strength, though he does not know its origin in love.

Jenny

Jenny, who was taken home by Mary before the dance had ended, listens to the music from her bedroom window. She is aroused as 'with every wave of pain that swept her she mounted higher and higher to an intolerable crest that would not break.'[4] Bella's ocean symbolism is embodied in Jenny's experience of desire. 'Clenching her hands, she beat them on the ledge of the window, mechanically keeping time to the jig of the tune.'[5] The noise of her response is an echo of Kilgour's premonition. It is a part of that incomprehensible life which has risen, 'pounding against the hills.'[6]

Listening to Jenny's response, Mary's anger surges. The following day she races to escape the 'black storm'[7] of hatred that had 'swept up and enveloped her again.'[8] She tries to force the blackness of feeling back under, but crashes with the thought of losing Jenny to Bella, just as she had lost Gib Munro. In this symbolism of storm, the rupture of the depths of Mary's character begins. Her 'apple' Kilgour certainty is gone, 'Bella's violent contact had ruptured the protective casing in which Mary lived.'[9] The heavy symbolism of subconscious

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[1] *TLM* p.40.
[2] *APG* p.76.
[3] *APG* p.77.
[4] *APG* p.78.
[5] *APG* p.78.
[6] *APG* p.28.
[7] *APG* p.85.
[8] *APG* p.85.
[9] *APG* p.109.

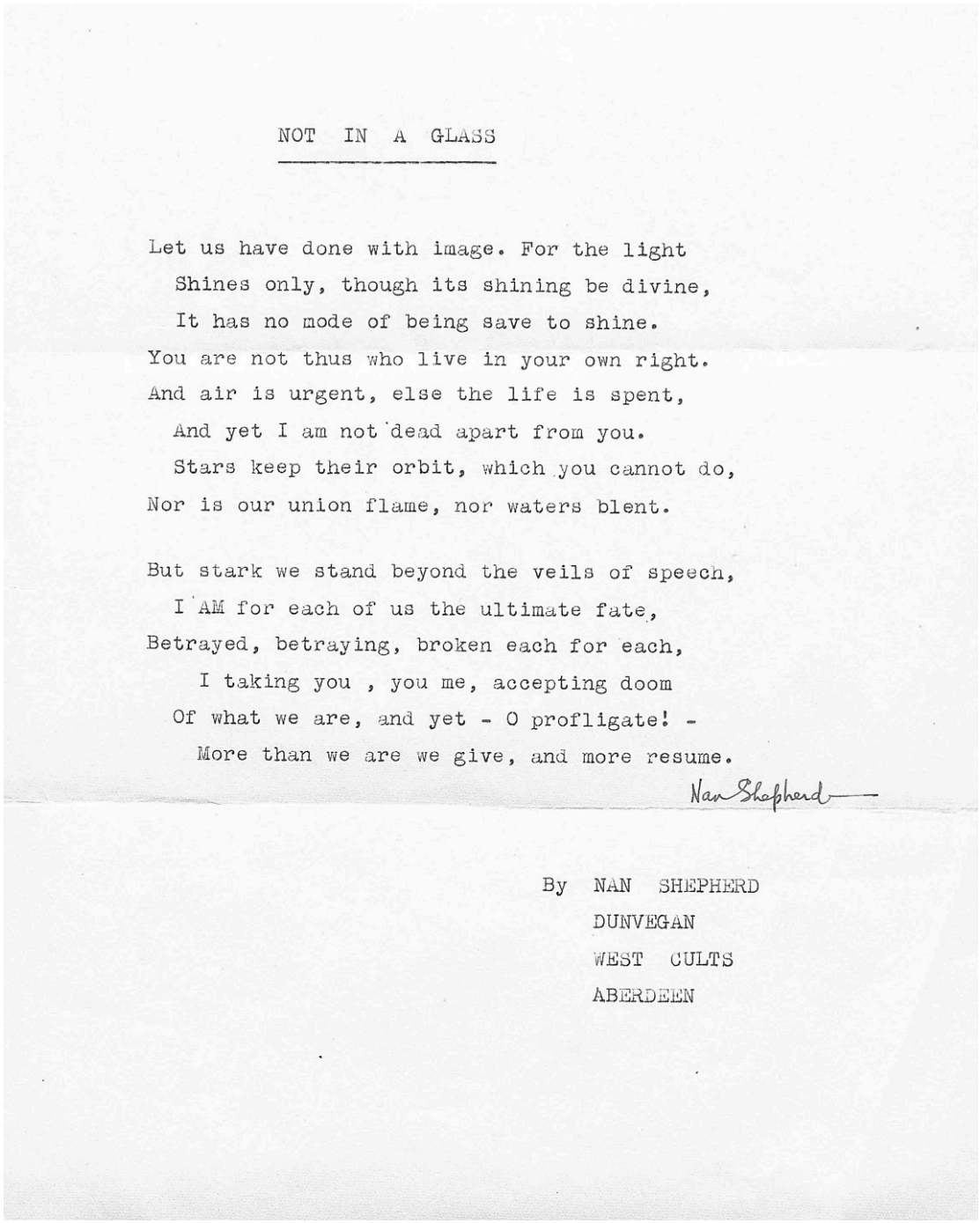
black depths is replaced by knowledge; one 'black night she recognised that it was for her own need as much as Jenny's that she wanted to help her.'[1]

Jenny is capable of finding her own way. She had 'trembled there between two loves – the mountain grandeur of her grandfather's, and Dorabel's encroaching, tumultuous cruel, endlessly altering ocean-love.'[2] Her loyalty is to both of them, not as codes of a way of life, but as the elementals of her lived experience. When Dorabel discovers the truth of her kin, she leaves in a 'diabolic madness'[3] after setting fire to her house. But Jenny is still intent on continuing her education, the 'thrawn refusal of her whole being to accept what she is told and does not apprehend'[4] demands that she 'get beyond the Pass.'[5] She sits beside her grandfather, knowing that she will soon go,

> not speaking at all, her body just touching his: as though in touching him she touched an elemental virtue.
>
> Jenny has no such thought. He is merely her grandfather […] she knows that if she loses touch with him she loses a portion of her own identity; and she knows this by virtue of the dark unconscious forces that are perceived in reverie and apprehended through the breathing and the blood. Of these it is not well to speak. For the only words that can express them are dark words, without profit to the reason.[6]

Jenny does not seek to frame her experience in symbolism. The depths of 'dark unconscious forces' are perceived, but they are not exhumed. Jenny 'touches her grandfather for reassurance. Kilgour 'knows more than she dreams of what is passing in that bright head, but he does not speak.' The knowledge that passes between them is fluid in silence.

[1] *APG* p.109.
[2] *APG* p.98-99.
[3] *APG* p.102.
[4] *APG* p.111.
[5] *APG* p.111.
[6] *APG* p.115.



NOT IN A GLASS

Let us have done with image. For the light
  Shines only, though its shining be divine,
  It has no mode of being save to shine.
You are not thus who live in your own right.
And air is urgent, else the life is spent,
  And yet I am not dead apart from you.
  Stars keep their orbit, which you cannot do,
Nor is our union flame, nor waters blent.

But stark we stand beyond the veils of speech,
  I AM for each of us the ultimate fate,
Betrayed, betraying, broken each for each,
    I taking you , you me, accepting doom
  Of what we are, and yet - O profligate! -
    More than we are we give, and more resume.

Nan Shepherd

By NAN SHEPHERD
DUNVEGAN
WEST CULTS
ABERDEEN

Signed manuscript[1]

[1] N.S. Papers: MS.27442. Doc.5.

In Process

Since beginning this research, Shepherd's prose and landscapes have been explored on national radio[1], and her poetry has been reissued for the first time since 1934. It is a critical acclaim she is likely to have shrugged off, as she had dismissed that of 'over 40 years ago', in an interview in 1976,

> 'That's what you call a passing reputation,' shrugs Miss Shepherd [83] […]
> Reluctantly, she brings out cuttings of reviews which appeared in the 1920s and 1930s. 'My mother kept them all. I haven't even seen some of them.'[2]

In a letter to Neil Gunn in 1930, she admits to writhing 'under some of the too too flattering ejaculations of the Scots Press.'[3] Shepherd understood 'how minute, precise and particularised knowledge had to be'[4] and praise too often depends on generalisation. Reading her work closely in its (albeit small) entirety yields a broader and deeper knowledge, discerning subtle interrelations and connections. She gave her regional landscape to the novels, and she gave her knowledge of it to her characters. They thus form part of her journey into *The Living Mountain*.

[1] BBC Radio 4 Documentary: Robert Macfarlane embarks on trip into Shepherd's favourite wild places. First broadcast: 30 December 2013. Latest broadcast: 31 Jul 2014. [http://www.bbc.co.uk/programmes/b03mfndd] accessed 20 Aug 2014.
[2] 'Writer of genius gave up' *Evening Express*. 15 Dec 1976. N.S. Papers: MS.27443. Doc.33
[3] Letter to Neil Gunn, 14 March 1930. N.G. Papers: Dep.209. Box.19. Folder.7.
[4] Shepherd, quoted in Louise Donald, 'Nan Shepherd', *Leopard Magazine* (October 1977) p.20-21.

Portrait of Nan Shepherd[1]

[1] N.S. Papers: MS.27442. Doc.52.

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