

UNIVERSITA' DEGLI STUDI DI VERONA

*DIPARTIMENTO DI
Lingue e Letterature Straniere*

*SCUOLA DI DOTTORATO DI
Scienze Umanistiche*

*DOTTORATO DI RICERCA IN
Lingue, Letterature e Culture Straniere Moderne*

CICLO XXX

TITOLO DELLA TESI DI DOTTORATO

*“But this cliff is not dead”:
An Ecocritical Reading of Hugh MacDiarmid’s Poetry*

S.S.D. L-LIN/10

Coordinatore:

Prof. Stefan Rabanus

Tutor:

Prof.ssa Carla Sassi

Dottoranda:

Dott.ssa Jasmine Blasiotti

Quest'opera è stata rilasciata con licenza Creative Commons Attribuzione – non commerciale
Non opere derivate 3.0 Italia . Per leggere una copia della licenza visita il sito web:

<http://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-nc-nd/3.0/it/>



Attribuzione Devi riconoscere una menzione di paternità adeguata, fornire un link alla licenza e indicare se sono state effettuate delle modifiche. Puoi fare ciò in qualsiasi maniera ragionevole possibile, ma non con modalità tali da suggerire che il licenziante avalli te o il tuo utilizzo del materiale.



NonCommerciale Non puoi usare il materiale per scopi commerciali.



Non opere derivate —Se remixi, trasformi il materiale o ti basi su di esso, non puoi distribuire il materiale così modificato.

“But this cliff is not dead”: an Ecocritical Reading of Hugh MacDiarmid’s Poetry –

Jasmine Blasiotti

Tesi di Dottorato

Index

Introduction	7
“I was a bard in Alba and Eire”: Hugh MacDiarmid’s trans/national poetry of ‘nature’	13
1.1 A modern ‘Ochiltree’: Hugh MacDiarmid between tradition and modernity, nationalism and transnationalism	14
1.2 “Adventuring through the land”: from romantic nature to an ecocritical vision in MacDiarmid’s poetry	29
Green writing “in a world of wounds”: an introduction to ecocriticism and ecopoetry	41
2.1 Ecocriticism: some definitions	42
2.2 Where man and nature meet: interconnection, liminality and language	51
2.3 Ecopoetry and the “intimacy” of language	58
“Can I convey the truth / Of hill or sea?”: MacDiarmid’s ecopoetical representations of nature	77
3.1 “The point where science and art can meet”: the role of science in MacDiarmid’s ecopoetry	78
3.2 Blending nature and poem: MacDiarmid’s ‘metapoetry’	90
3.3 The ecological message of ‘little Earth’	112
Estrangement and ‘Positive Passivity’: human attitudes to the non-human world in MacDiarmid’s poems	123
4.1 Unrequited love: estrangement in MacDiarmid’s “The Point of Honour”	125
4.2 MacDiarmid’s ‘positive passivity’: “Direadh III”, “Happy on Heimaey”, “In the Foggy Twilight” and “On a Raised Beach”	129
4.3 “Diamond Body”: positive passivity as “self-relinquishment” and	139

self-awareness

“I’m amphibious still”: liminal spaces in MacDiarmid’s poetry	157
5.1 ‘Porous landscapes’	160
5.2 Where human and non-human meet: personification, reverse-personification and hybridisation	162
5.3 “Organs without bodies” in <i>A Drunk Man Looks at the Thistle</i>	176
5.4 Liminal cities	181
References	187

A Note on the thesis

All quotations from Hugh MacDiarmid's poems are from the editions listed below. References to the poems are given by volume (according to the abbreviations listed below) and page number.

CP1: *Complete Poems: Volume I*, ed. by Michael Grieve and W. R. Aitken (Manchester: Carcanet, 1993).

CP2: *Complete Poems: Volume II*, ed. by Michael Grieve and W. R. Aitken (Manchester: Carcanet, 1994).

DLT: *A Drunk Man Looks at the Thistle*, ed. by Kenneth Buthlay (Edinburgh: Polygon, 1987).

Introduction

The aim of the present thesis is to demonstrate how the poetry of Hugh MacDiarmid can be effectively read through an ecocritical perspective. Although there are no extensive studies on the topic, MacDiarmid's poetry has already been the object of a few ecocritical readings. Louisa Gairn's chapter "Local and Global Outlooks" in *Ecology and Modern Scottish Literature* (2008),¹ and her essay "MacDiarmid and Ecology" in *The Edinburgh Companion to Hugh MacDiarmid* (2011)² are, without doubt, ground-breaking critical studies. Recently, Gairn has also briefly addressed the topic in her chapter on "Nature, Landscape and Rural Life" in *The International Companion to Scottish Poetry* (2015).³ Other investigations include Alex Thomson's talk "Stony Landscapes and Radical Hopes: Hugh MacDiarmid and Scottish Ecological Imagination" at the symposium "Landscapes of Hope – Towards the Imaginary Reconstitution of Society" (University of Edinburgh, 27th February 2014), and Béatrice Duchateau's chapter "Hugh MacDiarmid and the Scottish Landscape: Landscape as Sign" in *Environmental and Ecological Readings: Nature, Human and Posthuman Dimensions in Scottish Literature & Arts (XVIII-XXI c.)* (2015).⁴

MacDiarmid's poetical activity, and especially his linguistic experimentalism in Scots place him right into the transnational modernist context, though proudly expressing a militant focus on the vernacular. The same combination of the "global" and the "local outlooks",⁵ to use Gairn's words, also applies to MacDiarmid's relationship with the landscape. While celebrating his native Scotland for the sheer beauty of its nature, the poet indeed constantly urges for a 'universal' ecological perspective, fostering a local and global coexistence

¹ Louisa Gairn, "Local and Global Outlooks", in *Ecology and Modern Scottish Literature*, Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2008, 76-109.

² Louisa Gairn, "MacDiarmid and Ecology", in Scott Lyall, and Margery Palmer McCulloch, eds, *The Edinburgh Companion to Hugh MacDiarmid*, Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2011, pp. 82-96.

³ Louisa Gairn, "Nature, Landscape and Rural Life", in Carla Sassi, ed., *The International Companion to Scottish Poetry*, Glasgow: Scottish Literature International, 2015, 132-143.

⁴ Béatrice Duchateau, "Hugh MacDiarmid and the Scottish Landscape: Landscape as Sign", in Philippe Laplace, ed., *Environmental and Ecological Readings: Nature, Human and Posthuman Dimensions in Scottish Literature & Arts (XVIII-XXI c.)*, Besançon: Presses Universitaires de Franche-Comté, 2015, 161-174.

⁵ See Louisa Gairn, "Local and Global Outlooks", 104.

between humans and their environment. The complex dialectics between global and local that permeates MacDiarmid's poetry, his vocation for liminal and experimental spaces, have also worked as a structuring principle of the present thesis, divided into five chapters.

Chapter one (“‘I was a bard in Alba and Eire’”: Hugh MacDiarmid's trans/national poetry of ‘nature’”) provides an introduction to MacDiarmid's poetry and an overview of the main critical approaches to his work in relation to his representation of nature/landscape. Drawing from Matthew Hart's definition of MacDiarmid's long poem *In Memoriam James Joyce* as “transnational”,⁶ the first section identifies the national/transnational tension as one of the main drives in MacDiarmid's creative universe. National and transnational, modernity and tradition, ecopoetical and anthropocentric stances are not irreconcilable dichotomies but indeed coexist in MacDiarmid's poetical narrative. Throughout his poetry, MacDiarmid embraces, to use Buthlay's words, “the basic philosophic stance adopted by the Drunk Man”, which is to be “‘whaur / Extremes meet’”.⁷ The tradition/modernity tension is evident in MacDiarmid's treatment of the landscape, as tradition here often emerges in the poet's use of symbolist and romantic clichés, most of which are deemed anthropocentric or unsuitable from an ecocritical standpoint. The second section of chapter one attempts to chart such traditional attitudes in MacDiarmid's poetry, as well as to account for critical responses to them, with special reference to the writings of Roderick Watson, Nancy Gish and Alan Bold. At the same time, this section reveals how MacDiarmid, even when embracing the romantic tradition, often unsettles it by subtly rejecting the picturesque and aestheticised modes of depiction of the landscape.

Chapter two (“Green writing ‘in a world of wounds’”:⁸ an introduction to ecocriticism and ecopoetry”) defines the theoretical approach of my research, first by highlighting the ecocritical concepts and key words that are most useful in my

⁶ Matthew Hart, *Nations of Nothing But Poetry: Modernism, Transnationalism, and Synthetic Vernacular Writing*, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2010, 67.

⁷ Hugh MacDiarmid. *A Drunk Man Looks at the Thistle*, ed. Kenneth Buthlay. Edinburgh: Polygon, 1987, 62 (see Buthlay's note 2).

⁸ Aldo Leopold. *Round River*. New York: Oxford University Press, 1953, 165: “One of the penalties of an ecological education is that one lives alone in a world of wounds.”

investigation of MacDiarmid’s poetry, and then by narrowing the focus on ecopoetry, the specific context of my investigation. It is in particular Jonathan Bate’s description of his own study as a work “about the capacity of the writer to restore us to the earth which is our home,”⁹ that perfectly illustrates the aim of ecopoetics. Ecopoets, in fact, have the power to ‘take us home’ – to restore us to “dwelling”, in the Heideggerian sense of “care”¹⁰ for the land. One of the most important themes I have borrowed from ecocritical and ecopoetical reflections concerns the relationship between language and nature. Like many ecopoets, MacDiarmid is aware that, despite its limitations in conveying the non-human world, language is our only instrument we have to bridge the gap with reality, or as Bate puts it, commenting on Heidegger’s thought: “language is the house of being; it is through language that unconcealment takes place for human beings.”¹¹ As far as the theme of language and nature is concerned, chapter two summarises the main critical reflections I have found most useful in my analysis: beside Bate’s re-reading of Heidegger, H. W. Mabie’s idea of language originating from man’s “intimacy” with nature¹² and Scott Knickerbocker’s theory on the “artifice” of language being “natural” for ecopoets¹³ offers a critical basis for my reflection on MacDiarmid’s ecopoetical language in chapter three.

Chapter three (““Can I convey the truth / Of hill or sea?": MacDiarmid’s ecopoetical representations of nature”) mainly explore MacDiarmid’s ecopoetical way of using language. The first section focuses on the important role of science in defining this kind of language. By offering a more ‘objective’ and detached way of looking at the landscape, science, indeed, allows MacDiarmid to move away from more conventional and over-aestheticised representations of nature. Drawing from Mabie’s idea, the second section explores how MacDiarmid constantly compares poetic language, poem and the act of poem-making to natural

⁹ Jonathan Bate, *The Song of the Earth*, ix.

¹⁰ Martin Heidegger, “Building Dwelling Thinking” in *Poetry, Language, Thought*. Trans. and introduction by Albert Hofstadter. New York: Harper & Row, 1971, 145.

¹¹ Jonathan Bate, *The Song of the Earth*, 257-8.

¹² Hamilton Wright Mabie. “The Record in Language”, in *Essays on Nature and Culture* (New York: Dodd, Mead and Company, 1896), 102, found in <<https://ia801407.us.archive.org/7/items/essaysonnaturea01mabigoog/essaysonnaturea01mabigoog.pdf>>

¹³ Scott Knickerbocker. *Ecopoetics: The Language of Nature, the Nature of Language*. Amherst: University of Massachusetts Press, 2012, 2.

manifestations of nature. It also highlights how these comparisons reveal a kind of metapoetical reflection on MacDiarmid's part who discusses poetic themes and poem-making inside a poem.

Chapter four ("Estrangement and 'positive passivity': human attitudes to the non-human world in MacDiarmid's poems") investigates in detail the different attitudes towards the non-human world the speaker in MacDiarmid's poems stages. When engaging with nature, the speaker sometimes feels a sense of estrangement either due to his own experience of otherness or to his own human limitations before mysteries he cannot fully comprehend. On the other hand, there are some cases when he successfully establishes a kind of connection with the non-human world, and that happens when he embraces an attitude I will call of 'positive passivity'. The term originates from my own reflection on eco-poetical recurring 'attitudes', as well as on scholarly appraisals of such attitudes. My idea of 'positive passivity' represents an antidote to an active and destructive behaviour towards the environment, which is not only enacted through a physical exploitation, but is also carried out in the literary text every time anthropocentrism prevails. 'Positive passivity', as we shall see, embraces all those small 'non-actions', such as listening, silence, non-acts of humility and awe, that allow us to attune¹⁴ with the non-human world. In this chapter, then, I explore how MacDiarmid's speaker engages in non-acts of 'positive passivity', and how these non-acts often trigger or are followed by eco-sensitive reflections on his part.

Finally, chapter five ("I'm amphibious still': liminal spaces in MacDiarmid's poetry") explores cases of liminality between the human and the non-human world in MacDiarmid's poems. Neil Evernden and Timothy Morton's ecocritical considerations on liminality, discussed in chapter two, reveal themselves as extremely useful here. In line with Evernden's theories on the separateness of man and nature ("Where do you draw the line between one creature and another?"¹⁵) and his focus on the notion of "intermingling",¹⁶ Morton's image of

¹⁴ The meaning of the verb "attune" is to be intended here in the way Bate intends it: "to be attuned to earth is to live in another way, to respect the difference, the 'self-concealing', of entities [...]" (Jonathan Bate, *The Song of the Earth*, 262).

¹⁵ Neil Evernden, "Beyond Ecology: Self, Place, and Pathetic Fallacy" in Glotfelty, Cheryl and Harold Fromm, eds. *The Ecocriticism Reader: Landmarks in Literary Ecology*, 95.

¹⁶ Neil Evernden, "Beyond Ecology: Self, Place, and Pathetic Fallacy", 93.

interconnection – the “mesh”¹⁷ – similarly hints at the impossibility of defining a clear boundary between organisms: “there is no definite ‘within’ or ‘outside’ of beings. [...] The mesh extends inside beings as well as among them. An organ that may have performed one function in one life form might perform a different function in another one, or none at all.”¹⁸ In MacDiarmid’s poetry cases of liminality either occur in the natural world or involve the interaction between the human and the non-human world, such as human and non-human bodies, or urban and natural spaces. The first section deals with liminality occurring in the natural world and introduces the concept of ‘porous landscapes’. Here I discuss how MacDiarmid undermines the idea of a fixed landscape by depicting permeable natural spaces. The second section of this chapter investigates liminality between human and non-human bodies and identifies three literary devices the poet uses to convey such liminality in the text – personification, reverse-personification and hybridisation. Finally, in the last section, I discuss how MacDiarmid deploys two of these devices – reverse-personification and hybridisation – to represent the liminal space between the urban and the natural worlds. The concept of ‘porous landscapes’ applies here as well, since both urban and natural spaces blend together to create a place in-between or indeed to present an unconventional perspective on the urban world.

¹⁷ Timothy Morton, *The Ecological Thought*. Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2010, 15, 28.

¹⁸ Timothy Morton, *The Ecological Thought*, 39.

Chapter 1

“I was a bard in Alba and Eire”: Hugh MacDiarmid’s trans/national poetry of ‘nature’

This chapter is divided into two sections: the first provides an introduction to MacDiarmid’s work and focuses on the double drive of modernity/tradition at the heart of his poetry, the second deals with nature as a theme in his poetic production. As far as the first section is concerned, it is important to note that modernity and tradition in MacDiarmid’s poetical world do not represent an irreconcilable dichotomy, but a continuum. The quotation that I have chosen for the chapter title, evoking a poetic community embracing Scotland (‘Alba’ in Gaelic) and Ireland, introduces the national/transnational drive which, along with the modernity/tradition double pull, is central to MacDiarmid’s creative universe. The reader can here catch a glimpse of MacDiarmid’s complex stance, as the poet here takes on both the role of ‘a’ (not ‘the’) national (Scottish) bard, and of a poet ‘in’ (not ‘of’) Ireland. The choice of using the Gaelic name for the two countries is not accidental, as it shows MacDiarmid’s need of expressing a ‘pan-national’ and ‘pan-Celtic’ identity. By considering the Celtic fringe as a poetic *koinè*, MacDiarmid also aims at stressing a sense of community, shared roots and values against contemporary homogenising Anglo-centric cultural and linguistic perspectives.

The first section of the chapter will highlight how MacDiarmid often reached beyond the boundaries of his native national community, especially in his long poem “In Memoriam James Joyce” (1955), defined by Matthew Hart as “transnational”.¹⁹ The transnational quality arises here from the encyclopaedic nature of the poem, which aims, following in the footsteps of Joyce, at ideally synthesising all the world languages and knowledge. MacDiarmid’s transnational vocation is clearly outlined also in his *Poems of the East-West Synthesis* (1946), offering a vision of the shared cultural origins of West and East. The second section provides an overview of MacDiarmid’s treatment of nature in his poetry,

¹⁹ Matthew Hart, *Nations of Nothing But Poetry: Modernism, Transnationalism, and Synthetic Vernacular Writing*, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2010, 67.

which reveals a more national take, as the poet mostly focuses on the Scottish landscape. Interestingly, MacDiarmid's approach to Scotland's natural world has been hardly touched upon by scholars and critics, who have tended to privilege the linguistic and political aspects of his work. My investigation, in this section, will highlight MacDiarmid's tendency to rely at times on romantic and symbolist clichés. Many of such clichés, as we shall see in the present chapter, are deemed anthropocentric and thus unsuitable from an ecocritical standpoint. However, it is important to stress that both a romantic attitude and an ecocritical perspective coexist in MacDiarmid's treatment of 'nature'. Although in this section I will mainly deal with the former perspective, I will devote my conclusive remarks to a brief introduction to MacDiarmid's more ecocritical representation of the environment, especially in relation to the northern landscape of the Scottish islands.

1.1 A modern 'Ochiltree': Hugh MacDiarmid between tradition and modernity, nationalism and transnationalism

The beginning of MacDiarmid's poetic career coincided with the rise of literary Modernism and thus partook in modernist ideas involving a breaking up with the past and a quest for renewal. Although MacDiarmid embraced the Modernist credo, he never broke up with the Scottish literary tradition. Even when he tried to redefine the Scottish tradition through his poetic experimentalism, he still believed that the past could offer a way towards change, in the context of a present that was miserable and hopeless.

Throughout his poetic career, Hugh MacDiarmid was constantly at odds with Scotland's modern culture and society. The intellectual inertia he ascribed to his fellow countrymen, "their lack of culture, their horrible devitalisation, their putrid superstitions, their terror of ideas" (CP1, p. 647) are effectively evoked in the poem "Glasgow". "Glasgow, *arida nutrix*" (CP1, p. 648) stands for the whole Scotland, affected, in MacDiarmid's view, by the same "aboulia", (CP1, p. 647) and desperately calling for awakening and rebirth. MacDiarmid strongly believed

that his poetic activity could help raise consciousness and trigger a change. A passage from *Lucky Poet* highlights how this change can come from the example of ancient bards, who sought the contact of people and put poetry at the service of society:

I have always wished to go up and down over the whole of Scotland as an itinerant bard, living by selling penny broadsheets of my poems speaking about them at street-corners, discussing them with the men at public-house bars, and so forth. This appealed to Burns too – he envisioned spending his ‘old age as a sort of Edie Ochiltree’, a romantic throw-back to the medieval minstrel-beggar, adventuring through the land with nothing but his wits to live on.²⁰

MacDiarmid’s stance here is significant: by taking up the role of the bard, he sees himself as heir to the same social functions, those of guardian and keeper of national knowledge. Poems easily spread across “street-corners” and “public-house bars” within everyone’s reach, but still need a guide to be understood, someone who “speak[s] about” and “discuss[es] them” — they need a modern “Ochiltree”. The idea of a modern “Ochiltree” – borrowed and adapted from MacDiarmid’s quotation — aptly conveys the tension between modernity and tradition in MacDiarmid’s poetry, his attempt at rewriting the present with the help of the past. Ochiltree is a character from Walter Scott’s novel *The Antiquary* (1816). He is one of the “King’s Bedesmen”, “an order of paupers to whom the Kings of Scotland were in the custom of distributing a certain alms, in conformity with the ordinances of the Catholic Church, and who were expected in return to pray for the royal welfare and that of the state.”²¹ In the words of the Antiquary, Ochiltree “is a sort of privileged nuisance—one of the last specimens of the old fashioned Scottish mendicant, who kept his rounds within a particular space, and was the news-carrier, the minstrel, and sometimes the historian of the district.”²² MacDiarmid upholds then a poetics rooted in the past, first of all by imagining himself as a bard, and secondly by showing an allegiance to the Scottish literary

²⁰ Hugh MacDiarmid, *MacDiarmid, Hugh, Lucky Poet: a Self-study in Literature and Political Ideas Being the Autobiography of Hugh MacDiarmid (Christopher Murray Grieve)* (Manchester: Carcanet, 1994), p. 266.

²¹ Walter Scott, *The Antiquary*, London: Adam & Charles Black, 1897, in <https://archive.org/stream/antiquary00scot_0#page/n8/mode/1up> 5.

²² Walter Scott, *The Antiquary*, 44.

tradition, represented, among others, by Walter Scott and, as we shall see, by Robert Burns (1759-1796).

MacDiarmid's relationship with Robert Burns in particular, and the Scottish literary tradition in general, was indeed complex and discontinuous. As with many other issues, his stances appeared contradictory. By referring, for example, to a correspondence between MacDiarmid and Ogilvie,²³ Margery Palmer McCulloch comments "it was with Burns's 'Tam o' Shanter' that [MacDiarmid] told George Ogilvie he hoped his long poem [*A Drunk Man Looks at the Thistle*] would be compared".²⁴ At the same time, "his slogan 'Not Burns – Dunbar' [...] was [...] a recognition that what Scottish poetry needed at the present time was a return to the spirit of confidence in the remarking of poetry in Scots in that earlier period [...]".²⁵ On the other hand, other scholars, like John MacQueen, have questioned the fact that late medieval Lowland Scottish poetry, especially William Dunbar's (ca. 1460-1520), had considerably influenced MacDiarmid. According to MacQueen, he relied more on other poets and texts, such as Langland's *Piers Plowman*, the literature of post-Reformation Scotland, eighteenth-century Scottish Gaelic poets, seventeenth-century Irish Gaelic poetry, James Macpherson's *Ossian*, and *The British Edda*.²⁶

A closer look at the above quotation from *Lucky Poet*, however, reveals not only MacDiarmid's rootedness in the literary past but also his focus on contemporary society: it is the contemporary masses that he wishes to address from "street-corners" and in "public-house bars". The poet's interest in the proletariat, and his desire to see their living and working conditions improved are reflected in his passionate political commitment, first to the National Party of Scotland, and then to the Communist Party of Great Britain. In 1928, MacDiarmid joined the National Party of Scotland, which he had contributed to found, but he was later expelled from it in 1933 because of his communist beliefs. His

²³ Hugh MacDiarmid, *The Letters of Hugh MacDiarmid*, ed. Alan Bold. London: Hamish Hamilton, 1984: 90.

²⁴ Margery Palmer McCulloch, *The Edinburgh Companion to Hugh MacDiarmid*, 152.

²⁵ McCulloch, *The Edinburgh Companion to Hugh MacDiarmid*, 152.

²⁶ John MacQueen, "The Scottish Literary Renaissance and Late Medieval Scottish Poetry", *Studies in Scottish Literature*, 26.1 (1991), 546, 548, 554, 555.

adherence to the Communist Party of Great Britain in the following year met a similar fate, as he was also expelled from it in 1938 for his nationalist beliefs.

James G. Southworth, in one of the first critical assessments of the poet, points out how MacDiarmid aimed at creating a poetry which does not eschew reality, and highlights his active “patriotism”.²⁷ According to Southworth, MacDiarmid believed that the working class does not make any effort to change, and that such inertia depends mostly on external and pressing causes: it is impossible for them to “find ways of bringing greater significance to [their lives], until they are not “free[d] from the necessity of submitting to a regimen for the sake of their daily bread.”²⁸ In his three “Hymns to Lenin”, MacDiarmid regards the Russian statesman as the only one who can save Scotland and free the masses from their “breid-and-butter problems”.²⁹ In the “Third Hymn”, after depicting the human misery of Glasgow, MacDiarmid’s desperate plea culminates in the appeal to the “Spirit of Lenin” of “light[ing] up this city”.³⁰

Glasgow, and generally the urban environment, is often depicted negatively in his poems. Béatrice Duchateau describes the gloomy atmospheres of “Glasgow 1938”, where the city is “assimilated with a corpse [...] and the smell of death perfumes [its] streets”³¹. However, amidst that oppressive scenario, Duchateau highlights how for MacDiarmid there is still “light” in the slums, the poorest parts of the city.³² With an excellent intuition, she identifies MacDiarmid’s Glasgow poems as “performative”, in a way that “‘to re-write’ Scotland means to ‘re-create’ it.”³³ This statement confirms MacDiarmid’s belief in the power of poetry as changing people’s consciousness and opening new possibilities for a Scottish renewal.

Scotland’s renewal, as envisaged by MacDiarmid, was intended to involve all aspects of Scottish life, and especially the education system, whose neglect of national culture was denounced by MacDiarmid in *To Circumjack Cencrastus*

²⁷ James G. Southworth, “Hugh Mac Diarmid”, *The Sewanee Review*, 48.1 (1940), 108-109.

²⁸ James G. Southworth, 112.

²⁹ Hugh MacDiarmid, “Second Hymn to Lenin”, 325.

³⁰ Hugh MacDiarmid, “Third Hymn to Lenin”, 901.

³¹ Béatrice Duchateau, “Urban Scotland in Hugh MacDiarmid’s Glasgow Poems”, *Études écossaises*, 15 (2012), 41.

³² Béatrice Duchateau, 47.

³³ Béatrice Duchateau, 40.

(1930). Here, the poet criticises Scottish universities for being “*Scots but in name*” and fostering students’ “*ignorance*” in matters of national “*geography*”, history, “*Arts and Letters*” – a fact that “*gar’d [him] despair.*” (CP1, p. 203) Like “a modern druid” whose wisdom – poetry – “allows for the function of education [and] historical guardianship [...]”³⁴, MacDiarmid cared for the memory of local place-names and geography, and for the knowledge of their history. In *Lucky Poet*, he pointed out that there had been “a steadily increasing flow of better writing on Scottish topography and natural history” thanks to the “Scottish Renaissance Movement”.³⁵ Here, he also celebrated “younger Scottish writers” endowed with “a full historical and scientific knowledge” and “a broad national understanding”³⁶ – the same knowledge and understanding he envisaged students acquiring at Scottish universities.

MacDiarmid’s commitment to Scotland’s cultural renewal finds its possibly strongest expression in his involvement in the so-called ‘Scottish Renaissance Movement’, a movement that, according to Scott Lyall and McCulloch, “is now increasingly being recognised as a Scottish manifestation of modernism.”³⁷ Born as a reaction to the sentimentality of the Kailyard School, the movement aimed both at revitalising Scottish literature and at counter-attacking cultural and linguistic Anglocentrism. Its ideas were promoted in *The Scottish Chapbook*, a periodical founded by MacDiarmid in 1922 and representing a turning point in the poet’s career, as he gave up his birth name Christopher Murray Grieve to take that of ‘Hugh M’ Diarmid’ in the third issue. In that occasion, MacDiarmid published his first poem in Scots, “The Watergaw,”³⁸ today considered as marking the official beginning of the Scottish Renaissance movement.

Alan Riach offers a thorough overview of the Scottish historical, cultural and literary context of the 1920’s and 1930’s, the decades which saw the birth of the movement. He focuses, for example, on the artistic innovations sparked by the

³⁴ Hugh MacDiarmid, *Lucky Poet*, 141.

³⁵ Hugh MacDiarmid, *Lucky Poet*, 282.

³⁶ Hugh MacDiarmid, *Lucky Poet*, 282-283.

³⁷ Lyall and McCulloch, *The Edinburgh Companion to Hugh MacDiarmid*, 1.

³⁸ C. M. Grieve, *The Scottish Chapbook*, 1.3 (October 1922), 61.

Scottish Colourists,³⁹ and mentions the activity of some Scottish Renaissance notable writers, such as Catherine Carswell (1879-1946), Edwin Muir (1887-1959), Willa Muir (1890-1970), Nan Shepherd (1893-1981), Naomi Mitchison (1897-1999) and Lewis Grassie Gibbon (1901-1935).⁴⁰ However, according to McCulloch, the movement did “not only seek to revitalise Scottish writing in all three Scotland’s indigenous languages, but” also “to bring these Scottish traditions into contact with modern European creative and intellectual ideas.”⁴¹

The rise of the Scottish Literary Renaissance movement coincided with MacDiarmid’s engagement with modernity and modernism. *Scottish & International Modernisms: Relationships and Reconfigurations* (2011), edited by Emma Dymock and Margery Palmer McCulloch, provides an in-depth analysis of the ways in which Scottish modernism, and especially the Scottish Renaissance, relates to international modernism. In the first chapter, “Scotland and Modernism”, Roderick Watson identifies the global drive of the Scottish Renaissance. He mainly highlights the influence of modernist artistic movements such as Fauvism on the Scottish Colourists and both Fauvism and Expressionism on MacDiarmid’s early writing. Other chapters in the book discuss the relationship between Scottish authors and international, mostly European, modernist writers, such as Muir and Franz Kafka, Gunn and D. H. Lawrence, MacDiarmid and W. B. Yeats, Gibbon and Joyce. Among these, the relationship between MacDiarmid and Yeats, which remains largely under-investigated, is examined in Alan Riach’s chapter on “W. B. Yeats and Hugh MacDiarmid: Kingly Cousins”. Here, Riach focuses, among other things, on the two writers’ encounter, on Yeats’ praise for MacDiarmid’s work, on their different attitudes towards Celtic lore, and on their political commitment to their respective

³⁹ The Scottish Colourists were four painters, S. J. Peploe (1871-1935), J. D. Fergusson (1874-1961), G. L. Hunter (1877-1931) and F. C. B. Cadell (1871-1935) who innovated the Scottish arts in the 1920’s. They were mostly influenced by the work of Monet, Cezanne and Matisse. “The Scottish Colourists”, in *Exploreart* <http://www.exploreart.co.uk/results.asp?SF1=art_style&ST1=The%20Scottish%20Colourists&SORT=sort_name> [accessed 3 June 2017]

⁴⁰ Alan Riach, “Arcades – The 1920’s and 1930’s” in *The Edinburgh Companion to Twentieth-Century Scottish Literature*, Ian Brown and Alan Riach eds. Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2009, 50-60.

⁴¹ McCulloch, *Scottish Modernism and its Contexts 1918-1959*, 16.

countries.⁴² What MacDiarmid and Yeats also share is of course the project of a national literary revival. Lyall, in his “That Ancient Self: Scottish Modernism’s Counter-Renaissance” (2014), identifies the common ground between the Scottish Renaissance and the Irish Revival as a turning to the past in order to radically renovate the present. As Lyall puts it, “like Yeats’s Irish Revival, the Scottish Renaissance, especially as envisioned by MacDiarmid, is a movement of counter-Renaissance against the cultural standardisation wrought by the European Renaissance and practised subsequently by Western European imperial cultures.”⁴³

MacDiarmid’s relationship with international modernism is thus signalled by a whole network of influences and intertextual references. Roderick Watson’s essay in *The Edinburgh Companion to Hugh MacDiarmid* mentions, for example, the influence of Shestov, Nietzsche and Spengler’s ideas on the poet’s works, the expressionist quality of his early lyrics, and his Whitmanesque “Romantic solipsism”.⁴⁴ Among the many influences, critics have also recognised the significant role that T. S. Eliot played on MacDiarmid’s poetry. For example, in her “MacDiarmid reading *The Waste Land*: the Politics of Quotation” (1992), Nancy K. Gish identifies MacDiarmid’s “three modes of ‘quotation’” – “affiliation, appropriation, and translation” – as borrowed from the *Waste Land*.⁴⁵ While Iain Crichton Smith’s in “Hugh MacDiarmid: *Sangschaw* and *A Drunk Man Looks at the Thistle*” (1969) underlines how a comparison between the two works “may not be fruitful”, as *The Waste Land* is “a distanced artefact”, and *A Drunk Man* is “much more immediate and vertiginous”,⁴⁶ Robert Crawford, who devotes two seminal articles on the topic, holds a different view. In “A Drunk Man Looks at the Waste Land” (1987), Crawford points out the influence of *The Waste Land* and other poems by T. S. Eliot on *A Drunk Man*, and identifies

⁴² Alan Riach, “W. B. Yeats and Hugh MacDiarmid: Kingly Cousins”, in *Scottish & International Modernisms: Relationships and Reconfigurations*. Emma Dymock and Margery Palmer McCulloch eds. Glasgow: Association for Scottish Literary Studies, 2011, 87-100.

⁴³ Scott Lyall, “That Ancient Self”, 77.

⁴⁴ Roderick Watson, “Hugh MacDiarmid and International Modernism” in *The Edinburgh Companion to Hugh MacDiarmid*, Lyall, Scott and Margery Palmer McCulloch, eds. Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2011, 15.

⁴⁵ Nancy K. Gish, *Hugh MacDiarmid: Man and Poet*, 220.

⁴⁶ Iain Crichton Smith, “Hugh MacDiarmid: *Sangschaw* and *A Drunk Man Looks at the Thistle*”, *Studies in Scottish Literature*, 7.3 (1969), p. 178.

similarities in themes, settings and characters, but not in the mood. Both poems share, for example, a vegetable imagery and both end with the invocation of silence. However, according to Crawford, MacDiarmid shows a more optimistic view than Eliot. Crawford also reminds us of T. S. Eliot's regard for and support of MacDiarmid's work, as well as MacDiarmid's contribution to Eliot's *The Criterion*.⁴⁷ In "MacDiarmid and his Makers", Crawford considers this relationship in the light of Michail Bakhtin's theories of heteroglossia and dialogism. As he puts it, "Both [*A Drunk Man Looks at the Thistle* and *The Waste Land*] are to an important degree 'novelized' poems, full of those clashing voices which Bakhtin sees as essentially characteristic of modern literature as manifested in what he calls the 'novel'."⁴⁸

So far, both MacDiarmid's reliance on tradition and his openness towards the polyphony of Modernist experimentalism have been discussed. We have seen how MacDiarmid, supported a Modernist-oriented movement of literary renewal in Scotland, and how he was influenced by leading Modernists. We now need to further analyse his complex drive towards tradition, evident in his work – either harmonising or clashing with Modernist innovation. The double drive of tradition/modernity in particular, finds an original synthesis in MacDiarmid's use of the vernacular in his poetry. MacDiarmid was well acquainted with the long tradition of poetry written in Scots before him, such as that of William Dunbar (ca. 1460-1520) and Burns, and used the vernacular with the aim of renovating it through linguistic experimentalism. He did not write in contemporary Scots: as Gish points out, "his literary language is not the dialect of Langholm [his birthplace] but a synthetic language drawing on all [Scots] dialects and any period – any word he could find in *Jamieson's*".⁴⁹ MacDiarmid's linguistic experiments indeed led him to rely heavily on dictionaries to compose his poetry. He drew words, idioms or phrases, mainly from *Jamieson's Dictionary*, piling them up in the text, often according to the phonetic effect.

⁴⁷ Robert Crawford, "A Drunk Man Looks at the Waste Land", *Scottish Literary Journal*, 14.2 (1987), 62-78.

⁴⁸ Robert Crawford, "MacDiarmid and his Makers", in *Identifying poets: Self and Territory in Twentieth-Century Poetry* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 1993), p. 60.

⁴⁹ Nancy K. Gish, *Hugh MacDiarmid: The Man and his Work*, 47.

There is a relatively large body of scholarship that is concerned with the matter of language in MacDiarmid's poems. For example, Gish's edited collection *Hugh MacDiarmid: Man and Poet* (1992) includes an essay on "Adventuring in Dictionaries" by Kenneth Buthlay, an outstanding analysis of the linguistic features on some of MacDiarmid's poems in Scots. In more recent times, Matthew Hart's *Nations of Nothing But Poetry: Modernism, Transnationalism, and Synthetic Vernacular Writing* (2010) dedicates a chapter to MacDiarmid, "The Impossibility of Synthetic Scots; Or, Hugh MacDiarmid's Nationalist Internationalism". In discussing MacDiarmid's compositional techniques, Hart dwells particularly on "Synthetic Scots". However, he also considers "On a Raised Beach" and the "transnational"⁵⁰ poem "In Memoriam James Joyce" as examples of "synthetic English". According to Hart, MacDiarmid did not see the vernacular as a lost language, symbol of an equally lost past to mourn over, but as a language that could engage with the present:⁵¹ his aim was to "modernize Scots and Scotland".⁵² MacDiarmid's use of Scots was indeed 'political', and aimed at challenging the supremacy of English language and culture – a form of imperialism – in the UK. As Hart puts it, "MacDiarmid often wrote as if the question of Scotland's independence was inseparable from its emancipation from Anglophone linguistic hegemony."⁵³ However, MacDiarmid's Synthetic Scots was also aimed at overcoming national boundaries, to put Scots in relation to other European languages. As Hart puts it, "only in MacDiarmid's Synthetic Scots [...] [do] we find a vernacular cosmopolitan synthesis between the values of Scottish nationalism and of socialist internationalism."⁵⁴

MacDiarmid's first poems in vernacular are the early lyrics in *Sangschaw* (1925) and *Penny Wheep* (1926), which, according to Watson, express the "paradox of MacDiarmid's modernism – that it should so fluently bring the voice and subject matter of an essentially rural dialect into contact with imagist

⁵⁰ Matthew Hart, 67.

⁵¹ Matthew Hart, 55.

⁵² Matthew Hart, 59.

⁵³ Ibid.

⁵⁴ Matthew Hart, 62.

intensity, expressionist distortion and existential daring.”⁵⁵ MacDiarmid’s most important poetic achievement in Scots is the long poem *A Drunk Man Looks at the Thistle* (1926), re-published in 1987 with Kenneth Buthlay’s notes and glosses.⁵⁶ *A Drunk Man* stands out for its complex imagery, intertextuality, and kaleidoscopic combination of styles, ranging from satire to lyric. As Buthlay notes, “the basic philosophic stance adopted by the Drunk Man” is to be “‘whaur / Extremes meet’”.⁵⁷ These lines are often quoted by critics, as they perfectly exemplify the coexistence of opposite ideas, images and themes in MacDiarmid’s poetry. An often-mentioned concept, which further illustrates this attitude, is the “Caledonian antisyzygy”, coined by G. Gregory Smith (1865-1932) in *Scottish Literature: Character and Influence*, and object of MacDiarmid’s essay “The Caledonian Antisyzygy and the Gaelic Idea”. According to Watson, “Smith’s study set out to isolate the ‘persisting traits’ of Scottish literature”, which perfectly integrate “‘actuality’ and ‘realism’” with “an equal taste for the fantastic, the grotesque or the uncanny”. “‘The Caledonian antisyzygy’ was, then, ‘coined’ ‘to describe this ‘combination of opposites’ and ‘the jostling of contraries’ in Scottish cultural production’”.⁵⁸

The same ‘contradictory’ quality characterises the central symbol (and also Scotland’s national emblem) in *A Drunk Man Looks at the Thistle* — the multi-formed thistle, whose meaning lies in the synthesis of all dichotomies:

The thistle like a snawstorm drives,
Or like a flicht o’ swallows lifts,
Or like a swarm o’ midges hings,
A plague o’ moths, a starry sky,
But’s naething but a thistle yet,
And still the puzzle stands unsolved.
Beauty and ugliness alike,

⁵⁵ Roderick Watson, “MacDiarmid and International Modernism”, *The Edinburgh Companion to Hugh MacDiarmid*, 13.

⁵⁶ Hugh MacDiarmid. *A Drunk Man Looks at the Thistle*, ed. Kenneth Buthlay. Edinburgh: Polygon, 1987.

⁵⁷ Kenneth Buthlay. *A Drunk Man Looks at the Thistle*, 62 (see note 2).

⁵⁸ Roderick Watson, “MacDiarmid and International Modernism” in *The Edinburgh Companion to Hugh MacDiarmid*, 8. G. Smith’s quotations in the passage are from: *Scottish Literature: Character & Influence*. London: MacMillan, 1919, Chapter 1, “Two Moods”.

And life and daith and God and man,
 Are aspects o' but nane can tell
 The secret that I'd fain find oot
 O' this bricht hive, this sorry weed,
 The tree that fills the universe
 Or like a reistit herrin' crines.
 (DLT, pp. 151-153)

The mystery surrounding the thistle is impossible to unveil: like a snowstorm or a swarm of insects it hides what is behind. Ambivalence is the only thing we know about its nature, as images of “beauty”, a “flicht o’ swallows” and “a starry sky”, are followed by images of “ugliness”, “a swarm o’ midges” and “a plague o’ moths”. The thistle is depicted both as a “sorry weed” and as “the tree that fills the universe”, which stands for Yggdrasil or the Tree of Life⁵⁹, yet in the last line it “shrinks” (“crines”) like a “dried herring” (“reistit herrin”).⁶⁰

Elsewhere in the poem, the thistle becomes a metaphor of “Scotland’s lost or unrealised potential”⁶¹, as well as of the country’s struggle to rise from dullness and backwardness. “If a primary theme emerges from [...] *A Drunk Man*”, Gish writes, “it is this conception of poetry as the hope for human development and the poet’s responsibility to bring it about”.⁶²

The theme of human development is also explored in the long poem MacDiarmid composed after *A Drunk Man*, *To Circumjack Cencrastus* (1930). According to Gish, “MacDiarmid sustained a belief in something resembling creative evolution – a continuing process toward greater consciousness – and a higher form of human, a superman toward whose development we are a bridge.”⁶³ Thus, the movement of Cencrastus, the cosmic serpent, expresses this never-ending process of evolution. The creature, according to Gish, “is identified with

⁵⁹ Kenneth Buthlay, *A Drunk Man Look at the Thistle*, 152 (see note 1) / 158 (see note 5).

⁶⁰ Kenneth Buthlay, *A Drunk Man Look at the Thistle*, 153 (see glosses)

⁶¹ Margery Palmer McCulloch and Kirsten Matthews, “Transcending the Thistle in *A Drunk Man* and *Cencrastus*” in Scott Lyall and Margery Palmer McCulloch (eds.) *The Edinburgh Companion to Hugh MacDiarmid*, 50.

⁶² Nancy K. Gish, *Hugh MacDiarmid: The Man and his Work*, 88.

⁶³ Nancy K. Gish, *Hugh MacDiarmid: The Man and his Work*, 95.

unity, with movement and with history's development toward some now unknown fullness of life".⁶⁴

Margery McCulloch in "The Undeservedly Broukit Bairn: Hugh MacDiarmid's *To Circumjack Cencrastus*" (1982) aims at restoring the importance of what she considers a neglected poem in MacDiarmid's corpus. She discusses the strengths and weaknesses of *To Circumjack Cencrastus*, analyses its various sections, and traces the main themes of the poem — "The Cencrastus Theme" and "The Scottish Theme". In the part dedicated to "The Cencrastus theme", McCulloch focuses, among other things, on the symbol of the snake — on the "metaphysical use of nature imagery throughout *Cencrastus*",⁶⁵ and on the theme of "self-realisation".⁶⁶ According to McCulloch, "The Scottish theme" in *Cencrastus* deals, among other things, with the role of the Gaelic idea in saving Scotland from its "cultural loss". MacDiarmid, indeed, "believed that [the] recovery [of the Gaelic heritage] would release the Scottish psyche in a way that Lowland Scots with its close relationship to English could not do."⁶⁷ "MacDiarmid", as Laura O'Connor puts it,

represents the 'Gaelic idea' as a complementary 'dynamic myth' to Dostoevski's 'Russian idea,' a 'Scotia irredenta' that he equates, on the one hand, with an exclusivist racial homogeneity among Gaels (citing Wyndham Lewis on *Blutsgefühl*) [...]. The paradoxical goal of de-Anglicization for MacDiarmid is to regain an Ur-character and to eschew all preconception of national character.⁶⁸

In "The Caledonian Antisyzygy and the Gaelic Idea" (1931-2), MacDiarmid claims that:

The importance of the fact that we are a Gaelic people, that Scottish anti-Irishness is a profound mistake, that we ought to be anti-English, and that we ought to play our part in a three-to-one policy of Scotland, Ireland, and Wales against England to reduce that

⁶⁴ Nancy K. Gish, *Hugh MacDiarmid: The Man and his Work*, 95.

⁶⁵ Margery Palmer McCulloch, 171.

⁶⁶ Margery Palmer McCulloch, 173.

⁶⁷ Margery Palmer McCulloch, 176.

⁶⁸ Laura O'Connor, *Haunted English: The Celtic Fringe, the British Empire, and De-Anglicization*, 143.

'predominant partner' to its proper subordinate role in our internal and imperial affairs and our international relationships [...]⁶⁹

MacDiarmid, then, does not only aspire to be Scotland's bard, but indeed "a bard in Alba and Eire",⁷⁰ thus articulating the idea of a 'pan-national nationalism', embracing the 'Celtic fringe'. In *To Circumjack Cencrastus* he chooses to invoke a Gaelic Muse, the Brightness o'Brightness of the Irish poet Aodhagán Ó Rathaille's *Gile na Gile*.⁷¹ The poem, in the tradition of the "allegorical *aisling*", depicts "Éire" as a "grieving widow or forlorn wife awaiting the return of her rightful partner", "the exiled Stuart claimant" who "would deliver [her] from her present affliction."⁷² As McCulloch and Kirsten Matthews suggest, the Brightness o' Brightness in *Cencrastus* "embodies a concept of racial heritage, bound together and remembered in '*the hair that's plaited / Like the generations o' men*'."⁷³ I believe that this heritage is not to be intended just as a Scottish one, but as a shared and common heritage between all the Gaels, Scottish and Irish — an expression of that "Ur-character" highlighted by O' Connor.

MacDiarmid went even further in his late poetry. From the late 1930's and especially in "In Memoriam James Joyce", his poetry shows a significant change in style: according to Gish, "lists of names with commentary predominate. Discursive, philosophical passages [...] provide definitions and justifications of the whole process. Occasional extended analogies develop the theme [...]."⁷⁴ Gish also adds that "the late poems abound in strange words, allusion, obscurity, and borrowings from other sources and languages. And it is largely a kind of 'plagiarism'."⁷⁵ The most important example of this new style, as said, is "In Memoriam James Joyce: from A Vision of a World Language" (1955) which

⁶⁹ Hugh MacDiarmid, *Selected Essays of Hugh MacDiarmid*, ed. Duncan Glen, 71.

⁷⁰ Hugh MacDiarmid, *To Circumjack Cencrastus*, 213.

⁷¹ Aodhagán Ó Rathaille. "Gile na Gile". *Dánta Aodhagáin Uí Rathaille = The poems of Egan O'Rahilly: to which are added miscellaneous pieces illustrating their subjects and language*. P. S. Dinneen, ed. London: Irish Text Society, 1900, 18-21, in <<https://archive.org/details/dntaaodhagin03orahuoft>>

⁷² Bourke, Angela, ed., *The Field Day Anthology of Irish Writing, IV: Irish Women's Writing and Traditions* (New York: New York University Press, 2002), p. 274.

⁷³ McCulloch and Matthews "Transcending the Thistle in *A Drunk Man* and *Cencrastus*" in *The Edinburgh Companion to Hugh MacDiarmid*, 64.

⁷⁴ Gish, *Hugh MacDiarmid: The Man and his Work*, 197.

⁷⁵ Gish, *Hugh MacDiarmid: The Man and his Work*, 191.

represents MacDiarmid's attempt at creating an all-encompassing and unifying "vision" of all languages. Inspired by Joyce's experimental and hybrid language in *Finnegans Wake*,⁷⁶ the poet chooses to pack foreign words (Italian, Sanskrit, Greek, Latin, German, Russian, French, Norn, Welsh, Spanish and others into the text. According to Gish, "Writing about the need for world language and world consciousness, he drew on languages from both East and West, and attempted a vast synthesis, not of a single language but of all languages."⁷⁷ "In Memoriam James Joyce", therefore, has something of the encyclopaedia in it, with broad passages listing, for example, types of dances from all over the world.⁷⁸ The poem, then, aims not only at a synthesis of all languages, but also at a synthesis of knowledge. Hart rightly defines "In Memoriam James Joyce" as a "transnational"⁷⁹ poem. MacDiarmid's transnationalist ideas can be traced already in his article "A Russo-Scottish Parallelism" (1923), "which argued", according to Watson, "that Scotland could learn from the Russian writers and critics of the nineteenth century who had exploded into the European scene with a radical remarking of the Russian identity [...]".⁸⁰ Eliot Weinberger reminds us of MacDiarmid's highly eccentric historical/mythological vision, based on the belief "that the first civilisation was Ur-Gaelic, and that it rose in Georgia, birth place of Stalin. [...] He [MacDiarmid] envisioned a Celtic Union of Socialist Soviet Republics (Scotland, Wales, Ireland, Cornwall) which would join in an 'East-West Synthesis' with the Soviet Union."⁸¹ In "The Fingers of Baal Contract in the Communist Salute", the first poem in *Poems of the East-West Synthesis* (1946), MacDiarmid argues that Basque and Georgian are linguistically related, that "the name Basque is Irish", (CP1, 677) and that Gaeldom and Georgia share common cultural/linguistic roots: "'Stalin the Georgian,' I have said. We are Georgians all. / We Gaels." (CP1, 679) The poem, then, not only reflects MacDiarmid's

⁷⁶ For the relationship between "In Memoriam James Joyce" and *Finnegans Wake*, see Carl Freedman, "Beyond the Dialect of the Tribe: James Joyce, Hugh MacDiarmid, and World Language" in *The Edinburgh Companion to Hugh MacDiarmid*.

⁷⁷ Nancy K. Gish, *Hugh MacDiarmid: The Man and his Work*, 182.

⁷⁸ Hugh MacDiarmid, "In Memoriam James Joyce", 761.

⁷⁹ Matthew Hart, *Nations of Nothing But Poetry: Modernism, Transnationalism, and Synthetic Vernacular Writing*, 67.

⁸⁰ Watson, *The Edinburgh Companion to Hugh MacDiarmid*, 6.

⁸¹ Eliot Weinberger, "Introduction", in Hugh MacDiarmid, *Selected Poems*, ed. by Michael Grieve and Alan Riach (New York: New Directions Publishing, 1992)

idiosyncratic vision of an Ur-Gaelic civilisation, but also opens up to embrace other countries.

In “Dìreadh III”, MacDiarmid refers to both “the Oriental provenance of the Scottish Gael”, to “Georgia” as “the first home of the Scots” (CP2, 1191) and also, indirectly, to the experience of the “East-West synthesis” in his poetical inspiration. In a passage of “Dìreadh III”, MacDiarmid sees “the mind of the poet [Euripides] reaching out / Across the centuries to touch mine. Scotland and China and Greece!” (CP2, 1189). “Scotland and China and Greece” is a refrain that appears in a similar passage where MacDiarmid highlights a similarity between Pindar and Confucius (CP2, 1190) as well as between Pindar and himself: “I in Scotland as Pindar in Greece / Have stood and marvelled at the trees [...]” (CP2, p. 1190). Finally, there is an indirect comparison between the Gaelic and the Chinese muse, when MacDiarmid inserts a passage “from a Chinese eight-line lyrics, twenty-seven centuries old” (CP2, MacDiarmid’s note, p. 1192) in his invocation to Deirdre:

How fragrant, how infinitely refreshing and recreating
Is the mere thought of Deirdre!
How much more exhilarating to see her, as now!

‘She said she at eve for me would wait;
Yet here I see bright sunrise in the sky’
(CP2, “Dìreadh III”, p. 1192)

The sense of continuity between the two passages, from the invocation to Deirdre to the “she” of the Chinese poem, seems indeed to stand for cross-cultural identification and universality. Moreover, it also takes MacDiarmid’s idiosyncratic idea of the “East-West synthesis” to a new level in terms of embracing a wider area of the East in his synthesis with the Gaeldom.⁸²

⁸² In one of the paratextual elements at the beginning of “The Fingers of Baal Contract in the Communist Salute”, L. Albert suggests that “nearly all the geographical names in Central Asia and Mesopotamia can be explained in the Irish tongue” (CP1, 675). Moreover, in a note to the title of the poem, MacDiarmid explains that “the original character of Druidism was essentially Oriental” (CP1, 675). It is suggested, then, that the relationship between the Gaelic world and the Orient is much deeper than the common roots of Gaeldom and Georgia.

On mornings when the hines were ripe but een
 Ahint the glintin' leafs were brichter still
 Than sunned dew on them, lips reider than the fruit,
 And I filled baith my basket and my hert

Mony and mony a time?

(CP1, *To Circumjack Cencrastus*, 270-1)

The typical image of the romantic man, in a Caspar Friedrich's posture, standing (in this case sitting) alone in the wilderness, dominates these lines. The speaker is caught in contemplation, as details of the landscape mirror his emotions, mixing up with nostalgic memories of a woman and a past love. Along with the "barren" "broon hill" and the "pale violets"⁸⁶ from the previous lines, the landscape, with its imagery of coldness and dim light ("sea", "nightglow", "morning-star") contrasts with the memory of red fruit/lips, shiny green and dew. The sun/night dichotomy stands also for fertility/bareness, both in reference to land and love. The spatial dimension of the passage is similarly based on a binary construction: first, vast horizons suggesting emptiness and loneliness, and then a sudden zoom onto the past, revealing the cosiness of small spaces, be it a full basket or a place "ahint the glintin' leafs".

The above passage is just one of the many instances when MacDiarmid relies on romantic clichés to depict the Scottish landscape. What all these descriptions share, as it will become clear from the examples discussed in this section, is a strong focus on the vision of nature as wild and unspoiled. This perspective brings out some attitudes marked as 'anthropocentric' by ecocritics, as a back-into-the-pure-and-wild longing betrays an anthropocentric construction of nature. When nature is idealised, it is despoiled of its specific traits, thus becoming an empty container to be filled with human emotions. In the above passage, the image of a barren hill is used to depict the speaker's sense of loneliness, while shiny memories of leaf and red fruits mirror his happiness and the fulfilment of love.

MacDiarmid's preference for the wild and 'less-trodden' landscape is also evident in a passage from "The Kind of Poetry I Want", a long poem and a manifesto of his poetics. As Gish argues, "The Kind of Poetry I Want" is "a list, a

⁸⁶ Hugh MacDiarmid, "North of the Tweed" from *To Circumjack Cencrastus*, 270.

long catalogue of analogies, often striking and suggestive”.⁸⁷ One of these analogies, that she calls “extended”, is represented by a passage where, according to her, “Poetry is compared to the strangely intricate and beautiful landscape of the American Southwest”.⁸⁸ Like in “North of the Tweed”, in “Further passages from ‘The Kind of Poetry I Want’”, MacDiarmid depicts vast and desert spaces, “canyons and ravines”, whose sublime “sinister gorges”, “overhanging walls” “up-jutting fangs of stone” (CP1, p. 613) are softened by the open horizon of the hills:

But over the outer vestibule of the hills is sunshine and peace,
 the rumble of the canyon water dulled to a musical whisper
 Rich tints of brown and chocolate and purple
 Mottle the cliffs. Long edges of soft grey
 Marbled with black and reddish-yellow
 Stripe the upper slopes. Dry washes are green and gay
 With gramma grass and flowering weeds.
 (CP1, “Further passages from ‘The Kind of Poetry I Want’”, p. 613)

The foreignness of the landscape favours here that same process of idealisation and ‘emptying’ that I have described above. However, nature in this case is not filled with the speaker’s feelings, but with alternate images of sublime beauty and of Edenic oasis. MacDiarmid’s southwestern American wilderness, then, sounds as real as Kubla Khan’s “pleasure-dome”,⁸⁹ and its description is indeed somewhat reminiscent of Coleridge’s poem.

Like the examples mentioned so far, MacDiarmid’s “Dìreadh” poems stand out for the romantic celebration of Scottish wild nature, to which they add new elements, such as the praise of a long forgotten oneness with nature, in stark contrast with the modern city life. As Gish points out, “‘Dìreadh’ means ‘the act of surmounting’, and each poem surveys the landscape of Scotland from a

⁸⁷ Nancy Gish, *Hugh MacDiarmid: The Man and his Work*, 186.

⁸⁸ Nancy Gish, *Hugh MacDiarmid: The Man and his Work*, 186.

⁸⁹ Samuel Taylor Coleridge, “Kubla-Khan” in William Wordsworth and Samuel Taylor Coleridge, *Lyrical Ballads and Other Poems*, introd. and ed. Martin Scofield, Hertfordshire: Wordsworth Editions, 2003, 254.

mountain peak.”⁹⁰ Indeed, the first two pages of “Díreadh III” (CP2, pp. 1186-7) are one of the most notable examples where a seeming romantic imagery coexist with a more unconventional depiction of nature. A first look at the text reveals a ‘crystallised’ nature where images of coldness (“water”, “ice”, “snow”), brilliance, and transparency (“crystal”, “silver”, “pellucid”, “stainless”, “dazzling”, “glass”, “agate”) both of watery and of stony nature tend to convey the purity of the landscape. Although the speaker’s statement “I am possessed by this purity here” (CP2, p. 1187) may also echo images of an idealised nature, this passage cannot be seen as totally embracing a romantic attitude. The words are limpid and with none of the lushly eloquence of clichéd language. The depiction of nature here conveys a different kind of beauty, marked by MacDiarmid’s love for geological terms, which dot the text with both literal and metaphorical references: even water takes on a rocky shape (“crystal water”), or takes the stony appearance of ice. Despite MacDiarmid’s use of a number of romantic clichés, this passage, and all the “Díreadh” poems, contain in fact, as we shall see in chapter three and four, elements that imply an ecocritical awareness. Indeed, MacDiarmid’s most explicit rejection of the picturesque can be found in “Díreadh II”:

Unlike any other parts of Scotland
 [...].
 No lush hedgerows, no flowery lanes,
 No picturesque unkempt orchards [...]. A garden of twenty- or thirty-acre fields [...]
 divided [...]
 By well-built walls or low-clipped thorn fences
 Upon either side of which no foot of space
 Was given to the unprofitable or picturesque in nature.
 (CP2, “Díreadh II”, p. 1177)

MacDiarmid here is presenting a Scottish rural and agricultural environment, free from the decorative aspects of a picturesque and aestheticised landscape. As Beatrice Duchateau comments: “[MacDiarmid’s] survey deals with a land that has been humanised through cultivation and bears the traces of the human hand,

⁹⁰ Nancy Gish, *Hugh MacDiarmid: The Man and his Work*, 203.

countering the romantic ideal of virgin natural Scotland, but it also bears the marks of history.”⁹¹ As we shall see in the next chapter, in the words of Jonathan Smith, “we believe ourselves to have stepped out of history when we step into an aestheticized landscape”⁹² or into “the world of a commercial style”, without “limits, constraints, inhibitions or consequences”.⁹³ The risks implicit in such stepping out of history – our history or the history of the place we belong to – are evident, and involve cultural amnesia and losing of sight our responsibilities. By representing a land that bears the traces of humanity, MacDiarmid rejects here the idea of purity and wildness usually associated with stereotyped representations of the Scottish landscape. Towards the ending of “Dìreadh II”, MacDiarmid addresses again the question of the picturesque: “If a vista of plain and mountain appeals solely / To his artistic sense, a man is obviously incapable / Of reading any deeper into it, or of responding / To any other appeal, and there is nothing more to be said.” (CP2, 1185) To MacDiarmid, “this is not to ‘feel’ a country, but only its physical surface”. To “‘feel’ a country”, instead, implies to come “into terms of intimacy with the local *genii*” (CP2, 1185) — to embrace the reality of a country and also the harsh reality of the hard-working fisherman or farmer, as we shall see shortly. However, the speaker’s bond with the landscape in the “Dìreadh” poems, a bond that is deeply rooted in questions of nationalism, is also one of their most strikingly romantic elements. The relationship with nationalism is noted by Louisa Gairn, when she writes that “the hillside ecosystem” in “Dìreadh II” “also functions as a symbol of ‘Our multiform, our infinite Scotland’ (CP2, pp. 1170-1)”⁹⁴ and that MacDiarmid “argued for the importance of regional and natural writing in fostering Scottish national identity.”⁹⁵ This is particularly true in “Scotland small? Our multiform, our infinite Scotland *small?*” the most famous passage from “Dìreadh I”, where MacDiarmid proudly answers to an imagined speaker, “a fool who cries” that Scottish nature is “‘Nothing but heather!’” (CP2, 1170), with a vivid and detailed description of the country’s

⁹¹ Béatrice Duchateau, “Hugh MacDiarmid and the Scottish Landscape: Landscape as Sign”, 164.

⁹² J. Smith, “The Lie that Blinds”, 79-80, in J. Duncan, and D. Ley, eds. *Place, Culture and Representation*. London: Routledge, 1993.

⁹³ J. Smith. “The Lie that Blinds”, 81.

⁹⁴ Louisa Gairn, “MacDiarmid and Ecology”, 83.

⁹⁵ Louisa Gairn, “MacDiarmid and Ecology”, 84.

natural beauty. This passage fully conveys MacDiarmid's desire of depicting a truer image of the Scottish landscape than that conveyed by most 19th- or early 20th-century representations. In "Dìreadh I, II, III", more than in any other poems, MacDiarmid restores his bardic self: the "act of surmounting" and his passionate natural descriptions, implying long-established wanderings, remind of the poet's bardic desire of "adventuring through the land". The Gaelic bard's voice, is here unequivocally romantic.

MacDiarmid's bond with the territory is, in fact, strongly rooted in his boyhood experiences, as the poet himself explains in the chapter "On Seeing Scotland Whole," in *Lucky Poet*. Here, MacDiarmid nostalgically recalls these "champagne days – these long, enchanted days on the Esk, the Wauchope, and the Ewes –",⁹⁶ the three rivers in Langholm, his birthplace. In this passage, MacDiarmid clarifies that "Scotland is not generally regarded as a land flowing with milk and honey [...] Nevertheless, it can do so at times, and probably does so far more frequently than is commonly understood. It certainly did so in my boyhood".⁹⁷ MacDiarmid's memories of that period are awash with sensorial images: the sight of "an almost tropical luxuriance of Nature"; the sound of "a multitude of rivers, each with its distinct music"; the smell of "honey-scented heather hills"⁹⁸ or "the orchid that smells like cherry-pie".⁹⁹ This representation of nature as a lost Eden or as a pure world related to the innocence of the young age is without doubt romantic.

The speaker's bond with the land is also mirrored in the figures of the farmers and the fishermen from "Dìreadh II", who MacDiarmid takes as the perfect example of an harmonious 'dwelling in the landscape': the "old fisherman" who can "approach" "the music of a moorland stream" with an "understanding" unknown to "poets and musicians" "conventional tribute" or "old gardeners and farm-hands" who "understand the personality [...] / Of individual fields and gardens" "for the constitution of a piece of land / Is more than skin-deep" (CP2, 1183).

⁹⁶ Hugh MacDiarmid, *Lucky Poet*, 219.

⁹⁷ Ibid.

⁹⁸ Hugh MacDiarmid, *Lucky Poet*, 219.

⁹⁹ Hugh MacDiarmid, *Lucky Poet*, 220.

The speaker laments that “this is a kind of knowledge / Scotland has almost lost altogether”¹⁰⁰ and, as it has already been mentioned, ends “Díreadh II” with the suggestion of “drop[ping] at once / Into terms of intimacy with the local *genii*”.¹⁰¹ The reference to a sort of *genius loci*, to a spiritual presence inhabiting and protecting the place reflects a highly romanticised vision of the landscape. As Tim Edensor puts it, “European nations [...] are clothed in this rhetoric of the rural, a rural which most frequently encapsulates the *genius loci* of the nation, the place from which we have sprung, where our essential national spirit resides. Moreover, they are the locale of a mythical [...] class of forebears, the peasants, yeoman or pioneers who battled against, tamed and were nurtured by these natural realms.”¹⁰² MacDiarmid’s farmers and fishermen belong to this “class of forebears” and it is possible to infer that it is to them, who have this strong bond with the land and sea, that the spirit of Scotland speaks. Farmers and fishermen are also that part of population who was not completely swallowed by urban alienation and was not affected by “the Fascist barracks of our universities, / The murder machine of our whole educational system”.¹⁰³ It is certain that MacDiarmid saw them, along with the poorest part of the population, as the little spark which could renovate Scotland. However, behind this demonisation of the urban world and the praise of the lower classes as closer to the natural world, and thus as untainted by vice, lurks again the romantic commonplace of Rousseau’s *bon savage*.

What emerges so far from the analysis of MacDiarmid’s tendency to romanticise the landscape and to depict it sometimes in its most sublime aspects, is a representation of nature reflecting the speaker’s feelings or, as I am now going to discuss, a nature caught in symbolism. Gish’s commentary on a particular passage from “The Progress of Poetry” casts an interesting light on MacDiarmid’s use of nature as symbol:

[...] and know I must go there,

¹⁰⁰ Hugh MacDiarmid, “Díreadh II”, 1183.

¹⁰¹ Hugh MacDiarmid, “Díreadh II”, 1185.

¹⁰² Tim Edensor. *National Identity, Popular Culture and Everyday Life*. Oxford: Berg 2002, 40.

¹⁰³ Hugh MacDiarmid, “Díreadh II”, 1183.

Not in a swift ship over the blue Aegean sea,
 Or fishing boat leaping to the flash
 Of red oars in the early sunlight
 In Phaleron Bay, but over cold knotted hacking waters where
Nap nihtscua, and not presentness, greets art.
 (CP1, "The Progress of Poetry", p. 457)

Gish points out that the poet "goes on a journey to" a "foreign place", "a move north into dark and cold away from warm beauty".¹⁰⁴ She further observes that "in taking this journey, he leaves behind all conventionally 'poetic' subjects, even his own past interests".¹⁰⁵ The landscape, then, is used symbolically to describe, through the shift warm/cold, light/darkness, the poet's movement, in Gish's words, "to a darkness of common life" away from "the imagined ideal".¹⁰⁶

Finally, Alan Bold's analysis of MacDiarmid's tribute to W. B. Yeats in "In Memoriam James Joyce" perfectly illustrates MacDiarmid's use of symbolism in his treatment of nature. What emerges from the passage is that nature is transcended, and thus deprived of its own form of immortality, and lying in the cycle of life and decay:

MacDiarmid has been fascinated by the Keatsian notion of poetry coming to the poet as leaves come to the tree. In 'A Moment of Eternity', MacDiarmid was transformed into 'a crystal trunk' and this tree through which creativity courses had 'Meteors for roots' and crystal-like stars shining on its branches. Affected by the death of Yeats, MacDiarmid returns to this tree. He wonders exactly what survives the physical death of the poem. His creative conjecture is an affirmation of poetic immortality for the leaves (poems) may have scattered and the trunk (body) may die but the creative light still dances around the tree.¹⁰⁷

As in the previous example, natural imagery becomes a poetic symbol. Although both leaves/poems and trunk/body are subject to physical decay, the creative spirit of the tree/poet cannot ever die. Bold's reference to MacDiarmid's "A Moment of Eternity", however, may suggest that this immortal spirit can transform the decaying body/trunk and poems/leaves into a "crystal trunk" and "crystal-like

¹⁰⁴ Gish, *Hugh MacDiarmid: The Man and his Work*, 163.

¹⁰⁵ Gish, *Hugh MacDiarmid: The Man and his Work*, 163.

¹⁰⁶ Gish, *Hugh MacDiarmid: The Man and his Work*, 164.

¹⁰⁷ Alan Bold, *The Terrible Crystal*, ...

stars”. The vegetable world transcends the natural cycle of life/decay and thus comes to symbolise the poet’s undying creative spirit as well as the immortality of art. Nature is, thus, ‘de-naturalised’ and fixed in the everlasting dimension of the artifact, like Yeats’s gold bird in *Byzantium*.¹⁰⁸

A completely different take on the depiction of landscape appears, to mention a notable example, in the long poem “On a Raised Beach” from *Stony Limits and Other Poems* (1934), which will be the object of an ecocritical reflection in chapter four. The period of its composition coincided with a painful moment in MacDiarmid’s private life: in 1933, he moved to the Shetland island of Whalsay, where he suffered a nervous breakdown, probably due to the stress accumulated during his separation from his first wife. Here, MacDiarmid kept working, and the island’s isolation and bareness inspired some of his best poems of this period. “On a Raised Beach” from *Stony Limits and Other Poems* (1934), for example, is set in the rocky landscape of the island and stands out for its philosophical passages as well as for the language used. MacDiarmid’s period in the Shetland is generally considered as marking a turning point in his poetic career. Here MacDiarmid developed a new style, sometimes defined in linguistic terms as “synthetic English”, consisting, according to Hart, in mixing “foreign languages, local idioms and technical jargons”¹⁰⁹ in the text. *Stony Limits and Other Poems* contains, however, also poetic gems in Scots, like the “Shetland Lyrics”, which depict moments in MacDiarmid’s everyday life in Whalsay. Some poems are dedicated to the fishing activity (“With the Herring Fishers” and “Deep-Sea Fishing”), others to the local birds (“The Bonxie”, “To a Sea Eagle” and “Shags’ Nests”); some resemble anecdotes (“Colla Firth in Winter” and “A Daughter of the Sea”), while others have a meditative character (“Gruney”, “De Profundis” and “Mirror Fugue”). These poems, as we shall see in the following chapters, can also inspire interesting ecocritical reflections.

MacDiarmid’s fascination with the northern landscape is well documented in his autobiography *Lucky Poet*, where more eco-oriented passages, such as the

¹⁰⁸ William Butler Yeats, *Byzantium*, in *The Collected Poems of W. B. Yeats*, London: Wordsworth Edition Limited, 1994, 211: “Miracle, bird or golden handiwork”.

¹⁰⁹ Matthew Hart, *Nations of Nothing But Poetry: Modernism, Transnationalism, and Synthetic Vernacular Writing*, 68.

detailed accounts on the bird and fish fauna of the Orkneys,¹¹⁰ coexist with some passages of romantic allure:

Anything pettier would be sadly out of place in these little-known and lonely regions, encompassed about with the strange beauty of the North, the fluctuation of unearthly colours at different levels of the sun, the luminous air, the gleam of distant ice, and the awful stillness of Northern fog.¹¹¹

The description of the “strange beauty of the North” is laden with reminiscences of romantic sublime beauty: modifiers such as “little-known”, “lonely” “strange”, “unearthly”, as well as the “Northern fog” add a flavour of mystery to the landscape, which seems to clash with other long and detailed accounts on the islands’ ecosystems. However, this should not surprise us anymore: as we have seen in the passage from “Dìreadh II”, it is not uncommon for the poet to mix romantic and more properly ecocritical perspectives within the same poem or work. Unlike the above passage, “On a Raised Beach”, for example, reflects indeed a more ecologically conscious perspective on the Shetlandic landscape, and the same perspective characterises also a passage from MacDiarmid’s prose work *The Islands of Scotland: Hebrides, Orkneys, and Shetlands* (1939). Here, the poet definitely breaks away from romantic models, which turned nature, to use J. Smith’s words, into an “aestheticized landscape”.¹¹² What the poet celebrates here is the seeming bareness of the rocks, now that the absence of trees, rivers and other more “pleasant” features of the landscape throw

into relief features we seldom see or underprize because of them – the infinite beauties of the bare land and the shapes and colours of the rocks, which first of all impress one with a sense of

¹¹⁰ Hugh MacDiarmid, *Lucky Poet*, 390-3.

¹¹¹ Hugh MacDiarmid, *Lucky Poet*, 49-50.

¹¹² J. Smith in J. Duncan, and D. Ley, eds. *Place, Culture and Representation*. London: Routledge, 1993, 79-80. On this regard, it seems significant to quote Timothy Clark’s reflection on A. Leopold as a writer “working towards an aesthetic of natural forms that would not be derivative from art” and thus eschewing from the “scenery” and the “picturesque” (see T. Clark, *The Cambridge Introduction to Literature and the Environment*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2011, 79-80). I will elaborate on this topic in the following chapters.

sameness and next delight one with a revelation of the endless resource of nature albeit in subtler and less showy or sensational forms [...]¹¹³

By applying the idea of beauty to the “bare land”, and by refusing to frame the landscape into a narrative of human feelings, MacDiarmid embraces thus a more ecological point of view. This is also evident when, in *The Islands of Scotland*, the poet writes that “one goes (or should go) to an island for happiness, not pleasure”.¹¹⁴ This sentence reveals his strong aversion for “touristic” ways of experiencing the island and its natural richness, as well as the unusual aim of his travelling in these barren lands — happiness. Linking such state of mind to a Zen-like return to the essential, or to a “back to the wild” whim would, however, be wrong. MacDiarmid is “all for the de-Thibetanisation of the Scottish Highlands and Islands” and points out that he does not agree with those thinking the “Hebrides” as “an arcane affair accessible only to the natives by whom they are run like the lamaseries in Thibet for the cultivation of rare states of mind, peculiar psychological powers and other high mysteries”¹¹⁵.

Some questions obviously arise as to how this state of “happiness” mentioned by MacDiarmid can be actually achieved and what it stands for. I suggest that this is a happiness without aim or end, so beautifully expressed by one simple sentence in “De Profundis” from *Shetland Lyrics*: “I delight in this naethingness”¹¹⁶. Behind this ‘nothingness’ lies the bareness of the land, the confusing mirroring of waves and gulls, the Stevensian nothingness.¹¹⁷ This delight has nothing to do with enjoying one’s own thoughts or emotions reflected in a cloud or a rock, but with the sea reflecting clouds as waves of the sky.

¹¹³ Hugh MacDiarmid, *The Islands of Scotland: Hebrides, Orkneys, and Shetlands* (London: B. T. Batsford, 1939), pp. 66-7.

¹¹⁴ Hugh MacDiarmid, *The Island of Scotland*, x.

¹¹⁵ Hugh MacDiarmid, *The Island of Scotland, The Islands of Scotland: Hebrides, Orkneys, and Shetlands*, p. 18.

¹¹⁶ Hugh MacDiarmid, “De Profundis”, 440.

¹¹⁷ George S. Lensing explains the concept of Stevensian nothingness in these terms: “In poems of winter, Stevens introduces the notion of a ‘nothing’ to describe the idealized but perfectly unified state with the other. [...] nothingness-as-something remains the only way the poet can accurately codify the pure and undistorted state of being: a condition of reality utterly independent of a perceiver who, by his very action, distorts the object in the act of beholding. If the falsifying eye is removed and the perceiver set aside, reality is then a something per se, though a nothing to any looker-on.” (see George S. Lensing, “Stevens’ Seasonal cycles” in John N. Serio ed., *The Cambridge Companion to Wallace Stevens*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2007, 122-123).

MacDiarmid's aim, though, is not a return to the core of things, as it may seem. As he writes in "A Change of Weather": "Naething o' the Earth sinks deeper noo / Aneath the canny surface o' the mind / Than autumn leaves driftin' on a lochan."¹¹⁸ He knew very well how shallowness hides infinite cores as fleeting as "autumn leaves" on a lake. The land in the Shetland, its "shapes and colors", are like the surface of these waters, "first of all impress[es] one with a sense of sameness" but next "*delight[s]* one with a revelation of endless resource of nature"¹¹⁹ and brings out its multiple hidden cores.

By refusing to experience the Shetland islands in a 'touristic' way, or to soften their landscape according to romantic clichés and human feelings, MacDiarmid takes an important step towards a more ecological thinking.

¹¹⁸ Hugh MacDiarmid, "A Change in Weather", 1159.

¹¹⁹ Hugh MacDiarmid, *The Islands of Scotland*, pp. 66-7.

Chapter 2

Green writing “in a world of wounds”:¹²⁰ an introduction to ecocriticism and ecopoetry

The present chapter aims at introducing and defining the theoretical approach of my research. The first section provides an overview of the history of ecocritical thought and focuses on the key concepts that will be addressed in chapters three, four and five. While my investigation will mostly rely on ecocritical theory, a few sources that I found relevant in my study are not strictly ecocritical, but rather related to a wider environmental sensibility. These include the theoretical reflections of writers Paul Farley and Michael Symmons Roberts, of garden designer, botanist and entomologist Gilles Clément, and of Scottish-based performing artist Hanna Tuulikki.

The second section deals with the encounter between the human and the non-human worlds, and highlights a number of concepts that will play a significant role in my ecocritical analysis of MacDiarmid’s poetry, such as interconnectedness, liminality and corporeality.

The third section narrows the focus on ecopoetry. The reflection upon the etymology of the term “ecopoetics”, adapted from Jonathan Skinner, will lead to a broader discussion of the role of language in mediating between man and nature, mainly supported by Jonathan Bate’s ecological re-reading of Heidegger in his ground-breaking *The Song of the Earth* (2000). It is in particular Bate’s description of his own study as a work “about the capacity of the writer to restore us to the earth which is our home,”¹²¹ that perfectly illustrates the aim of ecopoetics. Ecopoets, in fact, have the power to ‘take us home’ – to restore us to “dwelling”, in the Heideggerian sense of “care”¹²² for the land. The second part of this section will deal with the difference between eco-sensitive and non-eco-sensitive ways of addressing the non-human world in the poetic text. I will also

¹²⁰ Aldo Leopold. *Round River*. New York: Oxford University Press, 1953, 165: “One of the penalties of an ecological education is that one lives alone in a world of wounds.”

¹²¹ Jonathan Bate, *The Song of the Earth*, ix.

¹²² Martin Heidegger, “Building Dwelling Thinking” in *Poetry, Language, Thought*. Trans. and introduction by Albert Hofstadter. New York: Harper & Row, 1971, 145.

draw from Lawrence Buell's *The Environmental Imagination* (1995) in order to highlight this difference and to investigate a few examples of anthropocentric attitudes in literary texts. Finally, I will suggest that ecopoetry articulates a 'positive passivity' against what I define as an 'active' and destructive human behaviour towards the environment. Not only is this destruction enacted through the physical exploitation of the environment, but it can also be carried out, as we shall see, through the literary text. Ecopoetry, on the contrary, proposes different ways of 'positive passivity', which helps readers to find their way 'home', even when that home is wounded. In essence, it allows us to develop a new sensibility towards the place we live in, our Earth, and opens the possibility of healing.

2.1 Ecocriticism: some definitions

Cheryll Glotfelty, in her introduction to the seminal collection *The Ecocriticism Reader: Landmarks in Literary Ecology* (1996), describes ecocriticism in these terms:

Simply put, ecocriticism is the study of the relationship between literature and the environment. [...] Ecocriticism takes as its subject the interconnections between nature and culture, specifically the cultural artifacts of language and literature. [...] In most literary theory 'the world' is synonymous with society – the social sphere. Ecocriticism expands the notion of 'the world' to include the entire ecosphere.¹²³

Further on, she explains that the origin of the term *ecocriticism* harks back to an essay by William Rueckert, "Literature and Ecology: An Experiment in Ecocriticism" (1978), reprinted in *The Ecocriticism Reader*.¹²⁴ A close look at Rueckert's essay indeed solicits inspiring reflections. For example, Rueckert points out that "one of the most marvelous and characteristic parts of the ecological vision" is "the idea that nature should also be protected by human laws, that trees (dolphins and whales, hawks and whooping cranes) should have lawyers

¹²³ Cheryl Glotfelty, "Introduction" in Cheryl Glotfelty and Harold Fromm, eds. *The Ecocriticism Reader: Landmarks in Literary Ecology*. Athens: University of Georgia Press, 1996, xviii-xix.

¹²⁴ Cheryl Glotfelty, "Introduction", xx.

to articulate and defend their rights”.¹²⁵ This thought is even more relevant today, if we consider recent events regarding the Ganges river and its tributary Yamuna in India. The Ganges, as *The Guardian* reports, “has become the first non-human entity in India to be granted the same legal rights as people. [...] The decision [...] means that polluting or damaging the [Ganges and Yamuna] rivers will be legally equivalent to harming a person.”¹²⁶

The decision of extending human rights to the non-human world can be considered an attempt at giving a voice to a world that cannot speak for itself and thus needs to be represented by a human mediator.¹²⁷ As a matter of fact, the concept of mediation is at the heart of ecological thinking. Mediation does not only mean acknowledging the existence of other beings on the Earth, but also actively promoting their coexistence with humans and expecting an equal relationship between human and non-human beings. What is more, mediation implies a focus on communication — how human and non-human beings can effectively communicate is indeed one of the main concerns of ecocriticism and ecologically-aware literary texts. The mediating nature of ecocriticism is well expressed by Buell/Heise/Thornber, who point out that “Literature and environment studies [...] – comprise an eclectic, pluriform, and cross-disciplinary initiative that aims to explore the environmental dimensions of literature and other creative media in a spirit of environmental concern not limited to any one method or commitment.”¹²⁸ Ecocriticism is, then, ‘mediating’, in the sense that it forms a complex web of relationships among different disciplines: science, philosophy and literature, to mention but a few.

¹²⁵ William Rueckert, “Literature and Ecology: An Experiment in Ecocriticism” in in Cheryll Glotfelty and Harold Fromm, eds. *The Ecocriticism Reader: Landmarks in Literary Ecology*. Athens: University of Georgia Press, 1996, 108.

¹²⁶ Safi, Michael and agencies, “Ganges and Yamuna Rivers Granted Same Legal Rights as Human Beings”, in *The Guardian*, 21 March 2017 <<https://www.theguardian.com/world/2017/mar/21/ganges-and-yamuna-rivers-granted-same-legal-rights-as-human-beings>> [accessed 27 March 2017]

¹²⁷ The topic of extending human rights to non-humans and the possibility for them to have “advocates” is addressed here: Timothy Clark, “Liberalism and Green Moralism”, 102-105, in *The Cambridge Introduction to Literature and the Environment*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2011.

¹²⁸ Lawrence Buell, Ursula K. Heise, and Karen Thornber, “Literature and the Environment.” *The Annual Review of Environment and Resources*, 36, 2011: 418.

As a field of study, ecocriticism began to develop in America in the 1990's, although some notable works had already sowed the seeds of the discipline in the 1970's: according to Buell/Heise /Thornber, "the first significant ecocritical study" is "Joseph Meeker's *The Comedy of Survival*" (1974), "and the term ecocriticism date[s] from the 1970's".¹²⁹ Scholars also mention, among the founding fathers, Leo Marx and Raymond Williams Marx's *The Machine in the Garden: Technology and the Pastoral Ideal in America* (1964) and Williams's *The Country and the City* (1973) deal with matters of great concern among ecocritics, and are indeed considered as "influential studies [...] of pastoral traditions in American and British literatures in their ecohistorical contexts", which "spotlighted literature as crucial to understanding the environmental transformations of urbanization and techno-modernity [...]".¹³⁰ A further turning point for the development of ecocritical studies was represented by the foundation of The Association for the Study of Literature and Environment (ASLE) in 1992. Its website presents the association as "a center of gravity for ecocriticism as well as a growing international community of scholars and teachers across the humanities and arts—representing disciplines such as literature, history, philosophy, film and media, cultural studies, religious studies, cultural geography, and anthropology."¹³¹

Ecocriticism is generally divided into two waves. According to Buell/Heise/Thornber, the first wave is "marked by a commitment to preservationist environmentalism, an ecocentric environmental ethics, an emphasis on place-attachment at a local or bioregional level, a prioritization of the self-nature relation, and forms of literary imagination that especially reflect these." The second is instead "marked by a more sociocentric environmental ethics attaching special importance to issues of environmental (in)justice, to collective rather than individual experience as a primary historical force and concern in works of imagination, and (increasingly) to the claims of a global or

¹²⁹ Lawrence Buell, Ursula K. Heise, and Karen Thornber, "Literature and the Environment", 418. For the origin of the term 'ecocriticism' in Rueckert's essay see above.

¹³⁰ Ibid.

¹³¹ "Ecocriticism and Environmental Humanities", in *Association for the Study of Literature and the Environment (ASLE)* <<https://www.asle.org/explore-our-field/ecocriticism-and-environmental-humanities/>> [accessed 30 March 2017]

planetary level of environmental belonging.”¹³² The first wave of ecocriticism, which developed from the 1970’s to the 1990’s, was marked by the rise of important movements such as bioregionalism and Deep Ecology, as well as by the publication of ground-breaking works such as Lawrence Buell’s *The Environmental Imagination: Thoreau, Nature Writing, and the Formation of American culture* (1995), the already mentioned *The Ecocriticism Reader: Landmarks in Literary Ecology* (1996) edited by Cheryll Glotfelty and Harold Fromm, and Jonathan Bate’s *The Song of the Earth* (2000). Jonathan Bate’s re-reading of the Heideggerian concept of “dwelling” will become highly influential in ecocritical discourse. Indeed, the definition of “dwelling” as “the authentic form of being”¹³³ eschews a domineering attitude towards nature to embrace that of “an insistent care”.¹³⁴

The concepts of dwelling and care are also keywords in theories of bioregionalism, “a school of thought” which “emerged”, according to Lynch/Glotfelty/Armbruster, “as part of the development of the environmental movement during the 1970’s.”¹³⁵ According to the same authors, “bioregionalism proposes that human identity may be constituted by our residence in a larger community of natural beings – our local bioregion – rather than, or at least supplementary to, national, state, ethnic, or other more common bases of identity.”¹³⁶ In bioregionalism, the concept of dwelling becomes deeply interwoven with ideas of *reinhabitation*. To Peter Berg and Raymond Dasmann “*Reinhabitation* means learning to live-in-place in an area that has been disrupted and injured through past exploitation.”¹³⁷ Like dwelling, then, *reinhabitation* represents an act of care towards the land, as suggested by “reinhabitory practices” which “might involve”, according to Lynch/Glotfelty/Armbruster, “restoring native plant communities, redesigning landscaping with an eye to

¹³² Lawrence Buell, Ursula K. Heise, and Karen Thornber. “Literature and the Environment”, 433.

¹³³ Jonathan Bate, *The Song of the Earth*. London: Picador, 2000, 261.

¹³⁴ Jonathan Bate, *The Song of the Earth*, 261.

¹³⁵ Lynch, Tom, Cheryll Glotfelty, and Karla Armbruster, eds., “Introduction”, in *The Bioregional Imagination: Literature, Ecology, and Place*. Athens: University of Georgia Press, 2012, p. 2.

¹³⁶ Lynch, Tom, Cheryll Glotfelty, and Karla Armbruster, eds. *The Bioregional Imagination: Literature, Ecology, and Place*. 4.

¹³⁷ Peter Berg and Raymond Dasmann. “Reinhabiting California.” *The Ecologist* 7.10 (1977), 399.

indigenous plants and habitats”.¹³⁸ While suggesting the act of restoring, *reinhabitation* is also telling us the tale of a wounded land, whose identity has been altered by introducing foreign flora for exploitative purposes. If dwelling the land for Bate coincides with being, similarly *reinhabitation* aims at recovering the immediate relationship between land and indigenous communities that had been disrupted by exploitative practices.

So far, one of the main features of ecological thought has emerged: the necessity for human beings to move away from their destructive and dominant attitudes towards the non-human world. The Deep Ecology Movement (1972) takes this assumption further to promote, to use the words of its founder, Arne Naess, a “biospherical egalitarianism”.¹³⁹ Deep ecology recognizes the interconnectedness of all the organisms in the Earth, an assumption that excludes a supposed superiority of man over nature (“a master-slave role”¹⁴⁰), to embrace, instead, an egalitarian perspective. According to Timothy Clark, “Deep ecology [...] affirms an understanding of life in which the thinking of the ‘self’ must already include other organisms, and all that supports them, as part of one’s own identity. [...] A biocentric ethic emerges in the perception that to kill another creature is in some sense an act of violence against oneself.”¹⁴¹

The main traits of the first wave of ecocriticism, along the lines outlined by Buell/Heise/Thornber, can be summarised as follows: the “ecocentric environmental ethics”¹⁴² has been one of the utmost interests of Deep Ecology in its attempt at de-centring man from his position as dominator of all the species on the Earth; moreover, the “place-attachment at a local or bioregional level”¹⁴³ expressed by bioregionalism has enhanced the attitude of ‘care’ towards the land; and finally the “prioritization of the self-nature relation”¹⁴⁴ has been stressed by both Bate’s identification of dwelling with being, and by the bioregionalist sense

¹³⁸ Lynch, Tom, Cheryll Glotfelty, and Karla Armbruster, eds. *The Bioregional Imagination: Literature, Ecology, and Place*. 6.

¹³⁹ Arne Naess. “The Shallow and the Deep, Long-Range Ecology Movement: A Summary” in *The Deep Ecology Movement: an Introductory Anthology*. Alan Drengson and Yuichi Inoue, eds. North Atlantic Books: Berkeley, 1995, 4.

¹⁴⁰ Ibid.

¹⁴¹ Timothy Clark, *The Cambridge Introduction to Literature and the Environment*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2011, 23-4.

¹⁴² Lawrence Buell, Ursula K. Heise, and Karen Thornber. “Literature and the Environment.” 433.

¹⁴³ Ibid.

¹⁴⁴ Ibid.

of belonging. The second wave of ecocriticism, as defined by Buell/Heise/Thorner, by contrast, has been more focused on “sociocentric environmental ethics attaching special importance to issues of environmental (in)justice” and on “the claims of a global or planetary level of environmental belonging.”¹⁴⁵ Just as this “sociocentric” perspective has given rise to the ecocritical strands of ecojustice and ecofeminism, so too the global drive of this second-wave has linked ecocriticism to post-colonial studies.¹⁴⁶ Both ecojustice and ecofeminism share a desire for equality and fight against all forms of gender, social and racial discrimination. As Lawrence Buell notes, “the prioritization of issues of environmental justice—the maldistribution of environmental benefits and hazards between white and nonwhite, rich and poor—is second-wave ecocriticism’s most distinctive activist edge, just as preservationist ecocriticism was for the first wave.”¹⁴⁷ This activism marks also the ecofeminist movement, whose “defining claim”, according to Clark, “is that the destruction of the environment and the historical oppression of women are deeply linked.”¹⁴⁸

Lawrence Buell can help us clarify a third important difference between the first and second wave of ecocriticism:

First-wave ecocriticism typically privileged rural and wild spaces over urban ones. Against this, second-wave ecocriticism contended that that wall of separation is a historically produced artifact, that throughout human history nature itself has been subject to human reshaping, and that especially since the industrial revolution, metropolitan landscape and the built environment generally must be considered as at least equally fruitful ground for ecocritical work.¹⁴⁹

It seems useful here to concentrate on two points emerging from Buell’s reflection: firstly, second-wave ecocriticism has blurred the line between “rural”/“wild spaces” and “urban ones”; secondly it has stressed the necessity of giving equal importance to “metropolitan landscape” as a source for ecocritical

¹⁴⁵ Ibid.

¹⁴⁶ For more on the topic see always: Lawrence Buell, Ursula K. Heise, and Karen Thorner. “Literature and the Environment.”

¹⁴⁷ Lawrence Buell, “Ecocriticism: Some Emerging Trends” *Qui Parle*, 19.2 (2011), 96.

¹⁴⁸ Timothy Clark. *The Cambridge Introduction to Literature and the Environment*, 111.

¹⁴⁹ Lawrence Buell. “Ecocriticism: Some Emerging Trends”, 93.

study. In regard to the first point, Timothy Clark offers an interesting reflection on how “the boundaries between the natural and the artificial have become porous [...]”.¹⁵⁰ This phenomenon can be described as a “crisis of the natural” and is most evident in the case of human manipulations on nature. Clark seems to suggest that nature has become so embedded in the human world that relying on “fantasies of nature as ‘unspoiled wilderness’” may not have any sense nowadays. Most alarmingly, these “fantasies” of wilderness may show an utter disregard for humanity, as with the case of people evicted from their native lands, the “so-called ‘conservation refugees’”.¹⁵¹

Clark is not the only scholar who warns us against the risks of depicting nature as ‘pure’ and ‘wild’. “Nature”, with a capital letter ‘n’, as Timothy Morton points out in his *The Ecological Thought* (2010), “was an ideal image, a self-contained form suspended afar, shimmering and naked behind glass like an expensive painting. In the idea of pristine wilderness, we can make out the mirror image of private property [...]”¹⁵² Both Clark and Morton support one of the most important ideas of ecocriticism: nature is not a fixed pretty picture on a postcard, but is a real, dynamic and ever-evolving entity. In particular, Clark comments on Morton’s *Ecology without Nature*, “nature is already us, in mixed, uncomfortable and sometimes even disgusting ways, not something ‘out there’.”¹⁵³

For centuries, notions of nature as something separate from us have influenced our way of looking at the non-human world. The ultimate barrier for a different approach has been represented by romantic representations, surrounding nature with an aura of perfection and separateness. By putting nature on a pedestal, the Romantics widened the gap between man and nature. A similar risk was faced by the first ecocritics, who, according to Sarah Nolan, stressed the otherness of nature in their attempt to promote “ecopolitical engagement”.¹⁵⁴ However, according to Morton, “the ecological thought” eventually does sweep away both classical and romantic ideas concerning nature’s purity, beauty and perfection. By

¹⁵⁰ Timothy Clark. *The Cambridge Introduction to Literature and the Environment*, 7.

¹⁵¹ Timothy Clark. *The Cambridge Introduction to Literature and the Environment*, 7-8.

¹⁵² Timothy Morton. *The Ecological Thought*, 5.

¹⁵³ Timothy Clark. *The Cambridge Introduction to Literature and the Environment*, 70.

¹⁵⁴ Sarah Nolan, “Un-natural Ecopoetics: Natural/Cultural Intersections in Poetic Language and Form”, 97, in Serpil Opperman, ed. *New International Voices in Ecocriticism*. Lanham: Lexington Books, 2015.

defying an idea of nature as “beautiful (self-contained, harmonious)” or “sublime (awe-inspiring, open)”, “the ecological thought contemplates a subaesthetic level of being, beyond the cute and beyond the awesome.”¹⁵⁵ This is a level human beings often choose to ignore or are usually blind to, because it “doesn’t mirror ... [their] fantasies”, but rather “unsettles and disgusts” them.¹⁵⁶ The fear for what is ‘other’ and different may lie behind such overlooking of the ‘level of being’, and indeed “one of the tasks of the ecological thought” for Morton “is to figure out how to love the inhuman: not just the nonhuman (that’s easier) but the radically strange, dangerous, even ‘evil’.”¹⁵⁷ The truth is that some manifestations of nature, which man tends to judge as evil and thus “inhuman”, are just beyond our understanding. Whenever humans apply their own laws and values to nature’s ‘behaviours’, they undermine the possibility of an encounter with and an understanding of nature. “A dog might look cute until it bites into a partridge’s neck”,¹⁵⁸ Morton points out. However, the dog here is not behaving in a bad way; it is not evil. There is a reason why in re-imagining interconnectedness of all beings as a “mesh”,¹⁵⁹ Morton calls the organisms inhabiting it “strange strangers”.¹⁶⁰ As “getting to know them makes them stranger”,¹⁶¹ humans cannot but misunderstand their behaviour. A quiz from the website of the *National Geographic* inviting readers to tell monkeys’ emotions from their facial expressions deals exactly with this topic. According to Laëtitia Maréchal, one of the authors of a study mentioned in the introductory article to the quiz, men often misunderstand monkeys’ body language, because of the “human tendency to anthropomorphize animals, or attribute them with human characteristics.”¹⁶² What is more, this misunderstanding appears to be mutual, as monkeys may react aggressively to humans’ acts of “friendliness”.¹⁶³

¹⁵⁵ T. Morton, *The Ecological Thought*, 91.

¹⁵⁶ T. Morton, *The Ecological Thought*, 91.

¹⁵⁷ T. Morton, *The Ecological Thought*, 92.

¹⁵⁸ T. Morton, *The Ecological Thought*, 38.

¹⁵⁹ Timothy Morton, *The Ecological Thought* 15, 28.

¹⁶⁰ Timothy Morton, *The Ecological Thought* 15.

¹⁶¹ Ibid.

¹⁶² Gibbens, Sarah. “Quiz: Can You Tell if This Monkey Wants to Bite?” *The National Geographic*. 2 June 2017 <<http://news.nationalgeographic.com/2017/06/barbary-macaque-facial-expressions-quiz/>> [accessed 1 July 2017]

¹⁶³ Ibid.

There are many ways human beings can deal with the wide gap separating them from nature. Ignoring it, filling it, and fearing it are just some of the most common attitudes. While the first attitude is responsible for the alarmingly widespread indifference to environmental issues, the second feeds on misunderstandings, with man filling this gap by imposing human constructions and pre-conceptions upon nature. The third attitude is similar to the second, as man tries to win his fear for the other, the “strange stranger”, by shaping it into a more familiar and comforting image. As a consequence, unsettling aspects of nature disappear and we do not want to run away from it anymore. Nature inspires fantasies of escapism instead, and becomes the ultimate oasis where to take shelter and relief. Both shelter and relief are connected to the “self-contained” aspect of the “beautiful”¹⁶⁴ as highlighted by Morton, thus reminding of a domesticated idea of nature. In this sense, man is shaping nature into a submissive other, which is trapped in the “self-contained” world of the “beautiful”. We can call this world, to use Jonathan Smith’s words, “scenery”¹⁶⁵ or “aestheticized landscape”¹⁶⁶. Smith points out that “when we step” into such landscape “we believe ourselves to have stepped out of history”¹⁶⁷ or into “the world of a commercial style”, without “limits, constraints, inhibitions or consequences”.¹⁶⁸ The risk of dreaming an unspoiled wilderness is thus that of becoming detached from reality and “history”. Most alarmingly, one may even try to make the dream come true at the expense of real lives. The most significant example of this is the case highlighted by Clark about people being evicted from their lands for the sake of nature’s purity, the “so-called ‘conservation refugees’”.¹⁶⁹ Purity, in this sense, is but a product of the “self-contained” aspect of the “beautiful”. What protected areas do, in fact, is contain the “beautiful” and invite people to look at it, thus turning nature, to use Bate’s words, into “a resource for human consumption.”¹⁷⁰ Inevitably, labelling nature as ‘pristine’ and ‘pure’ fosters the myth of the

¹⁶⁴ T. Morton, *The Ecological Thought*, 91.

¹⁶⁵ J. Smith. “The Lie that Blinds” in J. Duncan, and D. Ley, eds. *Place, Culture and Representation*. London: Routledge, 1993.

¹⁶⁶ J. Smith. “The Lie that Blinds”, 79-80.

¹⁶⁷ Ibid.

¹⁶⁸ J. Smith. “The Lie that Blinds”, 81.

¹⁶⁹ Timothy Clark. *The Cambridge Introduction to Literature and the Environment*, 7-8.

¹⁷⁰ Jonathan Bate, *The Song of the Earth*, 254.

“aestheticized landscape” and excludes the role of humans in shaping the environment, whether for good or for bad. While the encounter between man and nature is denied by the “aestheticized landscape”, this encounter actually happens away from ‘purity’ and creates, as we shall see in the next section, new hybrid spaces.

2.2 Where man and nature meet: interconnection, liminality and language

One of the key concepts in ecocriticism is interconnectedness — the idea that all organisms on the Earth are deeply connected with one another. Interconnectedness undermines the idea of nature as something separate from us by acknowledging a bond that is not just ‘emotional’ but visceral and concrete. “Things are inter-related if a change in one affects the other”,¹⁷¹ Neil Evernden writes. This concept alone should prevent man from harming the Earth, as every species being endangered or every poison unleashed in the air will inevitably have serious consequences on our lives. According to Greg Garrard, “for many ecocritics” a “crucial point in the fall from grace of Western Europeans is the advent of the scientific revolution” with Descartes’ “practical philosophy” establishing knowledge and “reason” as a form of dominion over nature.¹⁷² As Garrard explains, “ecocritics attack this view as ‘reductionist’, claiming that it substitutes a fragmented, mechanical worldview for a holistic, organic one.”¹⁷³ This idea of nature as a mechanism whose secrets can be unveiled by man’s reason has indeed led to a destructive and exploitative attitude towards the environment. On the contrary, the concept of interconnectedness puts man on the same level as other living beings. Evernden describes “inter-relatedness” or interconnectedness as a “genuine *intermingling* of parts of the ecosystems”, within which “there are no discrete entities”¹⁷⁴. By questioning the concept of a fixed and single identity, Evernden’s theory undermines the separateness of man/nature and upholds the model of liminality:

¹⁷¹ Neil Evernden, “Beyond Ecology: Self, Place, and Pathetic Fallacy” in Glotfelty, Cheryl and Harold Fromm, eds. *The Ecocriticism Reader: Landmarks in Literary Ecology*, 93.

¹⁷² Greg Garrard, *Ecocriticism*. New York: Routledge, 2004, 61-2.

¹⁷³ Greg Garrard, *Ecocriticism*. New York: Routledge, 2004, 62.

¹⁷⁴ Neil Evernden, “Beyond Ecology: Self, Place, and Pathetic Fallacy”, 93.

Where do you draw the line between one creature and another? Where does one organism stop and another begin? Is there even a boundary between you and the non-living world, or will the atoms in this page be a part of your body tomorrow? How, in short, can you make any sense out of the concept of man as a discrete identity?¹⁷⁵

A re-evaluation of interconnectedness and liminality also characterises Morton's *The Ecological Thought*. In line with Evernden's privileging of the notion of "intermingling", Morton coins a specific term for interconnectedness – the "mesh"¹⁷⁶ – and one for the organisms inhabiting the "mesh" – the "strange strangers".¹⁷⁷ By underlining the "'no center or edge' aspect of the mesh", Morton points out that "there is no definite 'within' or 'outside' of beings. [...] The mesh extends inside beings as well as among them. An organ that may have performed one function in one life form might now perform a different function in another one, or none at all."¹⁷⁸ However, the impossibility of defining a clear boundary between one organism and the other does not imply the annihilation of identity: "total interconnectedness", Morton explains, "isn't holistic."¹⁷⁹ [...] Interconnection implies separateness and difference."¹⁸⁰

David Gilcrest, discussing the "nondualistic awareness" of first-century Han-shan's poetry, explains that "as many ecocritics have noted" a "relational identity" can be achieved by the "decomposition of the autonomous self".¹⁸¹ As "the distinction between inside and outside, [...] between self and other, human and nature" blurs, this "new sense of identity"¹⁸² arises and not as something fixed, but as something existing only in relationship and connection. A few practical examples of this liminal identity can be found in Lawrence Buell's *The Environmental Imagination*, which considers the corporeal aspect of identity: the body. In his analysis of Gary Snyder's poem "Second Shaman Song", Buell

¹⁷⁵ Neil Evernden, "Beyond Ecology: Self, Place, and Pathetic Fallacy" 95.

¹⁷⁶ Timothy Morton, *The Ecological Thought* 15, 28.

¹⁷⁷ Timothy Morton, *The Ecological Thought*, 15.

¹⁷⁸ Timothy Morton, *The Ecological Thought*, 39.

¹⁷⁹ Timothy Morton, *The Ecological Thought*, 40.

¹⁸⁰ Timothy Morton, *The Ecological Thought*, 47.

¹⁸¹ David Gilcrest, "Regarding Silence: Cross-Cultural Roots of Eco-poetic Meditation" in Scott J. Bryson, ed. *Ecopoetry: A Critical Introduction*. Salt Lake City: University of Utah Press, 2002, 21.

¹⁸² David Gilcrest, "Regarding Silence: Cross-Cultural Roots of Eco-poetic Meditation" 21.

explains how the shaman “has allowed his body to become permeable to the point that his bones rub against the roots, and inside and outside can no longer be distinguished. [...] As his hand ‘moves out’ [...], it takes on the look of first flowering plant and then quartz, rock.”¹⁸³ The shaman, then, has made his body porous and “permeable” to its surroundings, to the ‘body’ of nature, thus perfectly exemplifying the interconnectedness of all the beings on the Earth. Another example discussed by Buell concerns the case of David Rains Wallace “trying to reimagine the human body and mind in terms of the signs of evolutionary processes that link it to other organisms”.¹⁸⁴ Wallace observes that “lungs absorb and excrete gases as do gills and leaves” and that “no human organ would look out of place if planted in some Paleozoic sponge bed or coral reef.”¹⁸⁵ The perspective here is slightly different from that of the previous example, as the human body appears as fragmented, possibly in order to underline a certain degree of interchangeability between human parts and natural elements.

These cases of liminality involving the human body and the ‘body’ of nature, then, support the idea that man and other organisms are equal, and deeply question any form of human domination. What is more, liminality may create possibilities for encounter between the human and the non-human world. In this regard, the blurring of boundaries between wilderness and the urban world highlighted by Buell offers a further reflection on the role of the “metropolitan landscape”¹⁸⁶ in creating a hybrid, enhanced liminal space. Cases of liminality, where nature meets and intersect with human creations, are brilliantly illustrated by Paul Farley and Michael Symmons Roberts’ concept of “edgeland”. According to the authors, an “edgeland” is a space “where urban and rural negotiate and renegotiate their borders”.¹⁸⁷ Edgelands can be identified in neglected and often abandoned spaces, for example in the railways, in the landfills or in the breaker’s

¹⁸³ Lawrence Buell, *The Environmental Imagination: Thoreau, Nature Writing, and the Formation of American culture*, Cambridge, MA: Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 1995, 167.

¹⁸⁴ Lawrence Buell, *The Environmental Imagination: Thoreau, Nature Writing, and the Formation of American culture*, 157.

¹⁸⁵ David Rains Wallace, *The Klamath Knot: Explorations of Myth and Evolution*. Berkeley: University of California Press, 1983, 132, in Lawrence Buell, *The Environmental Imagination: Thoreau, Nature Writing, and the Formation of American culture*, 156.

¹⁸⁶ Lawrence Buell. “Ecocriticism: Some Emerging Trends.” 93.

¹⁸⁷ Farley, Paul and Michael Symmons Roberts. *Edgelands: Journeys into England’s True Wilderness*. Vintage: London, 2012, 5.

yards. Farley and Symmons Roberts point out that “if you know those places where overspill housing estates break into scrubland, wasteland; if you know these underdeveloped, unwatched territories, you know that they have an ‘edge’.”¹⁸⁸ The concept of “edgeland” closely reminds one of Gilles Clément’s “Third Landscape”, which “designates the sum of the spaces left over by man to landscape evolution — to nature alone. Included in this category are left-behind (‘délaissé’) urban or rural sites, transitional spaces, neglected land (‘friches’), swamps, moors, peat bogs, but also roadsides, shores, railroad embankments, etc.”¹⁸⁹ The Third Landscape also comprehends “inaccessible places, mountain summits, non-cultivable areas, deserts; institutional reserves: national parks, regional parks, nature reserves.”¹⁹⁰ From the website dedicated to Clément, it also emerges that the “Third Landscape” is celebrated, because “compared to the territories submitted to the control and exploitation by man, the Third Landscape forms a privileged area of receptivity to biological diversity. [...] From this point of view, the Third Landscape can be considered as the genetic reservoir of the planet, the space of the future.”¹⁹¹ Although Gilles Clément speaks from the scientific perspective of a gardener, botanist and entomologist, his “Third Landscape” has much in common with Farley and Symmons Roberts’ “edgelands”, as both Clément and Farley/Symmons Roberts hold in great consideration abandoned landscapes, respectively as a source of biological richness, and of unexpected poetry.

Liminality is a recurrent and complex motive in MacDiarmid’s poetry, as we shall see in chapter five. I have identified three different ways in which liminality is experienced by MacDiarmid: liminality in natural spaces; liminality involving the human body and its environment; liminality involving urban spaces and the natural world. Among these, the most original treatment of liminality, as we shall see, is represented by the second category, especially in relation to MacDiarmid’s focus on corporeality. From an ecocritical standpoint, the dimension of

¹⁸⁸ Farley, Paul and Michael Symmons Roberts. *Edgelands: Journeys into England’s True Wilderness*, 5.

¹⁸⁹ “The Third Landscape.” Gilles Clément, English translation by Suzanne Sevray, <<http://www.gillesclement.com/cat-tierspaysage-tit-le-Tiers-Paysage>> [accessed 3 April 2017]

¹⁹⁰ Ibid.

¹⁹¹ “The Third Landscape.” Gilles Clément. 2012. (English translation by Suzanne Sevray) 3 April 2017 <<http://www.gillesclement.com/cat-tierspaysage-tit-le-Tiers-Paysage>>

corporeality can help establish a more intimate connection, as well as a sense of equality between the human and the non-human world. As Clark notes, expanding upon on Gernot Böehme's notion of "green phenomenology":¹⁹² "to cultivate an ecological aesthetic necessarily entails acceptance of oneself as a finite body, one that exists in reciprocity with natural forms and processes."¹⁹³ Phenomenological thinking, and in particular the phenomenology of Merleau-Ponty, has exerted a great influence on ecocriticism, especially through David Abram's *The Spell of the Sensuous*, which, according to Clark is "perhaps the best-known and most influential application of phenomenological thinking to environmental criticism."¹⁹⁴ Clark points out that Abram "follows" Merleau-Ponty's phenomenology, "with its focus on" the body "as the primary mode in which humans find themselves in the world, as the ground of self-consciousness and in self-perception."¹⁹⁵ Furthermore, commenting on a passage from Abram's *The Spell of the Sensuous*, he highlights that "since possession of bodily sentience is a shared feature of all living things, a certain basic common intelligibility exists between creatures."¹⁹⁶ This take on phenomenology marks an important step towards an eco-sensitive perspective, in terms of a much more egalitarian and less anthropocentric view. The starting point to overcome the separation between man and the other living beings is indeed represented by this shared common ground — a "common intelligibility" based on the sensorial experience of the world. The term "intelligibility" here leaves open the possibility of finding a common 'language' between the human and the non-human world.

Similar ideas are upheld by a number of ecocritical scholars. Glotfelty, for example, defines ecocriticism as "the study of the relationship between literature and the environment."¹⁹⁷ "Relationship" here invites interdisciplinarity¹⁹⁸ as well

¹⁹² Timothy Clark "Phenomenology" in *The Oxford Handbook of Ecocriticism* Garrard, Greg, ed. New York: Oxford University Press, 2014, 279.

¹⁹³ Timothy Clark "Phenomenology" in *The Oxford Handbook of Ecocriticism*, 280.

¹⁹⁴ Timothy Clark "Phenomenology" in *The Oxford Handbook of Ecocriticism*, 280.

¹⁹⁵ Timothy Clark "Phenomenology" in *The Oxford Handbook of Ecocriticism*, 281.

¹⁹⁶ Timothy Clark "Phenomenology" in *The Oxford Handbook of Ecocriticism*, 281.

¹⁹⁷ Cheryl Glotfelty, "Introduction" in Cheryl Glotfelty and Harold Fromm, eds. *The Ecocriticism Reader: Landmarks in Literary Ecology*, xviii.

¹⁹⁸ Lawrence Buell, Ursula K. Heise, and Karen Thornber, "Literature and the Environment.", 418: "Literature and environment studies [...]—comprise an eclectic, pluriform, and cross-disciplinary initiative [...]."

as mediation. The issue of mediation, especially in relation to the way human and non-human beings can effectively communicate, is indeed the root of ecological thinking, as I have stressed at the beginning of this chapter. Abram's concern with language and, as Clark comments, with the role of "print and writing" in alienating man from "an originary reciprocity with the world known to oral culture", may provide a further example of this focus on relation and mediation.¹⁹⁹ In *The Spell of the Sensuous*, Abram observes that "reciprocity" is achieved in oral cultures through story-telling, which allows the transmission of a community's "knowledge of the diverse properties of particular animals, plants and places."²⁰⁰ In such stories, "a particular plant or a natural element" can take on "a fully animate form, capable of personlike adventures and experience",²⁰¹ thus making it easier for the members of a community to identify with them. Abram observes that "by invoking a dimension or a time when all entities were in human form, or when humans were in the shape of other animals and plants, these stories affirm human kinship with the multiple forms of surrounding terrain."²⁰²

Although it is common among ecocritics to consider human language as inadequate to express the 'inexpressible' voice of nature, Abram's investigation demonstrates how human language can indeed mediate between the human and the non-human world. As we shall see in the next section, recent studies, such as those by Nolan's and Scott Knickerbocker's, propose to transcend altogether the binarism nature/culture (with language considered as a product of culture). It may be worthwhile to remember here that a similar stance in relation to the binarism nature/culture can be traced in Hamilton Wright Mabie's "The Record in Language", an excerpt from *Nature and Culture* (1897). As David Mazel puts it, here "Mabie asserts that not only culture, but language itself is inextricably bound up with nature":²⁰³

¹⁹⁹ Timothy Clark "Phenomenology" in *The Oxford Handbook of Ecocriticism*, 282.

²⁰⁰ David, Abram. *The Spell of the Sensuous: Perception and Language in a More-Than-Human World*. New York: Vintage Books, 1996, 117.

²⁰¹ David, Abram. *The Spell of the Sensuous*, 117.

²⁰² David, Abram. *The Spell of the Sensuous*, 118.

²⁰³ David Mazel, ed. *A Century of Early Ecocriticism*. Athens: University of Georgia Press, 2001, 78.

The impress of Nature upon man is not only discoverable in the depths of consciousness and in the bases of character; it shines also on the very surface of all human speech. Men could not, in the nature of things, absorb through their senses and imagination the beauty and significance of the world about them without reproducing this pervasive influence in every form of speech. [...] For language is not only largely faded metaphor, but it is largely a product of man's thought about Nature.²⁰⁴

According to Mabie, men always looked at nature to “illustrat[e]” their inner lives, with the result that human language was deeply imbued with words “borrowed from natural phenomena or processes”.²⁰⁵ The deep bond between nature and men can be identified, then, in “the great series of metaphors which bring before the mind” human features or “higher and subtler ideas” “by reference to some appearance or fact of Nature.”²⁰⁶ Moreover, such natural metaphors are shared virtually by all languages and all cultures – for example, the wolf is a symbol of “hunger and want”, the sky “of purity, vastness, inclusiveness”, and the mountain “of solidity and majesty”.²⁰⁷ For Mabie “language is a sublime registry of an intimacy once so close and so long continued as to constitute a substantial unity between those who shared it.”²⁰⁸ Far from being a solely human construction, language originated from an intimacy between man and nature; rather than representing a barrier, language unifies them.

The idea that human language can mediate between the human and non-human world, encourages us to consider the literary text (whether oral, written or performed) as an ideal site of encounter. This view resonates with contemporary artist Hanna Tuulikki's project, “Air falbh leis na h-eòinat” (“Away with the Birds”), launched as a Wildscreen festival event in Scotland (Glasgow, May 12th 2016). As Tuulikki puts it, “our music and even our language originated and evolved from our listening to the sounds of the animate landscape, or what eco-philosopher David Abram calls 'the more-than-human world'.”²⁰⁹ The project, as presented in the artist's website, is a “body of work exploring the mimesis of birds

²⁰⁴ Hamilton Wright Mabie, “The Record in Language”, pp. 96-7.

²⁰⁵ Hamilton Wright Mabie. “The Record in Language”, 101-2.

²⁰⁶ Hamilton Wright Mabie, “The Record in Language”, 101.

²⁰⁷ Hamilton Wright Mabie, “The Record in Language”, 101-2.

²⁰⁸ Hamilton Wright Mabie, “The Record in Language”, 102.

²⁰⁹ *Wildscreen Festival*. Facebook. Video posted on 8 June 2016. [accessed on 11 May 2017] <<https://www.facebook.com/wildscreenfest/videos/10154791141219528/>>

in Gaelic song,” whose “heart” is “Hanna’s vocal composition, Guth an Eòin | Voice of the Bird” — a “music [that] emerges from, and responds to, island landscapes and lives,” “explor[ing] the delicate equilibrium of Hebridean life [...] and suggest[ing] the ever-present inter-relationship between bird, human, and ecology.”²¹⁰ Like Mabie, Tuulikki believes that music — like language for Mabie — originated with nature. “Men could not [...] absorb through their senses and imagination the beauty and significance of the world about them without reproducing this pervasive influence in every form of speech,” Mabie says. Similarly, Tuulikki’s project shows how song/music can ‘reproduce’ nature or, in her project, the voice of birds. While Tuulikki speaks in term of sounds, Mabie prefers to use visual terms. In fact, when discussing the ‘reproducibility’ of nature in human speech, Mabie uses the term “projected”, and speaks of metaphors brought “before the mind”.²¹¹ However, both music and language, in the respective views of Mabie and Tuulikki, create a sense of connection between the human and the non-human world, a sense of “intimacy”, to use Mabie’s words. Tuulikki’s speaks indeed of a similar “intimacy” when she observes that “where people have an intimate connection with the land they are also good mimics of the sounds around them, and their music seems to grow directly from this relationship.”²¹²

2.3 Ecopoetry and the “intimacy” of language

In his editor’s statement for the first issue of *Ecopoetics*, Jonathan Skinner explains the choice of the title for the new journal:

“Eco” here signals—no more, no less—the house we share with several million other species, our planet Earth. “Poetics” is used as poesis or making, not necessarily to emphasize the critical over the creative act (nor vice versa). Thus: ecopoetics, a house making.²¹³

²¹⁰ “About” in *Away with the Birds*, <<http://www.awaywiththebirds.co.uk/about/>> [accessed 11 May 2017]

²¹¹ Hamilton Wright Mabie. “The Record in Language”, 85.

²¹² Wildscreen Festival. Facebook. Video posted on 8 June 2016. Last accessed on 11 May 2017. <<https://www.facebook.com/wildscreenfest/videos/10154791141219528/>>

²¹³ Jonathan Skinner, “Editor’s Statement” *Ecopoetics*, 1, 2001, 7.

The concept of “house making” can be put in relation with the Heideggerian concept of “dwelling” appropriated by Jonathan Bate in an ecocritical perspective, and discussed in the opening section of this chapter. The meaning of “dwelling”, in fact, lies in taking “an insistent care”²¹⁴ of the land and, extensively, of the whole Earth. The act of “house making”, as synonymous with the Heideggerian notion of “dwelling”, can similarly be interpreted as a green metaphor, standing for the act of taking care of our universal house – the Earth. However, the act of “making” or building does not only imply a practical but also a creative/critical effort. In the previous section the literary text has been considered as a suitable place for the encounter between the human and the non-human world. Skinner’s definition of “ecopoetics” stresses indeed the role of eco-oriented literary/artistic works in sensitising people to environmental issues and to caring for the environment.

A close look at Bate’s re-reading of Heidegger, however, reveals that the concept of “dwelling” is far more complex than so far suggested. Bate, in fact, defines “dwelling” as “the authentic form of being”²¹⁵, thus implying an attitude, a way of being. A passage from Heidegger’s essay “Building Dwelling Thinking” perfectly illustrates this through a chain of equations between “building” and “dwelling”, “building” and “being”, and “building” and “taking care”. According to Heidegger also points out that both the High German and Old English words for “building” (“*Bauen*” and “*buan*” respectively), also “mean[t] to dwell”. However, “*buan*” does only tell us “that *bauen*, to build, is really to dwell; it also gives us a clue as to how we think about the dwelling it signifies.”²¹⁶ The term dwelling, then, is not related to “virtual inactivity”, but to an “activity that man performs alongside many other activities. We work here and dwell there. [...]”²¹⁷ In this way, the meaning of “dwelling” is put into a context, that of our lives, and is endowed with an active connotation. In the same passage, Heidegger engages with another meaning of “building” (“*bauen*”), this time related to “being”, to “the

²¹⁴ Jonathan Bate. *The Song of the Earth*, 261.

²¹⁵ Ibid.

²¹⁶ Martin Heidegger, “Building Dwelling Thinking” in *Poetry, Language, Thought*. Trans. and introduction by Albert Hofstadter. New York: Harper & Row, 1971, 144-145.

²¹⁷ Martin Heidegger, “Building Dwelling Thinking”, 144-145.

manner in which we humans *are* on the earth”, which is “dwelling”.²¹⁸ This “manner” is illustrated by the third meaning of the High Germanic word “bauen”, that is “to cherish and protect, to preserve and care for, specifically to till the soil, to cultivate the vine.”²¹⁹ The active connotation of “dwelling” here extends to include the act of taking care, and it is this connotation that informs Bate’s reading of Heidegger. When Bate argues that the word “ecopoetics asks in what respect a poem may be a making (Greek *poiesis*) of the dwelling-place”, he is considering the role of the literary text – as “poetry [here] will not necessarily be synonymous with verse”²²⁰ – in connecting man and nature. As he observes, “[*The Song of the Earth*] is about the capacity of the writer to restore us to the earth which is our home.”²²¹ The literary text, then, has the power to take us home – to restore us to our dwelling – a home whose deepest meaning is found in, and *is* connection.

Let us turn again for a moment to the word “ecopoetics”. As it has already been noted, “ecopoetics” is made up of two elements: “eco”, which stands for “house”, and “poetics” which means “making” and derives from the Greek “poiesis”. The Heideggerian “poiesis” along with “physis” are two key words in Bate’s ecological re-reading of the philosopher’s thought, as they are related to the act of “bringing-forth” the being of things – specific to art and nature – against modern technological “unconcealment” of it through exploitation. The following passage from Heidegger, as quoted by Bate, sheds light on the meaning of “physis”, as an act of “poiesis”:

It is of utmost importance that we think bringing-forth in its full scope and at the same time in the sense in which the Greeks thought it. Not only handicraft manufacture, not only artistic and poetical bringing into appearance and concrete imagery, is a bringing-forth, *poiesis*. *Physis*, also, the arising of something from out of itself, is a bringing-forth, *poiesis*. *Physis* is indeed *poiesis* in the highest sense. For what presences by means of *physis* has the irruption belonging to bringing-forth, e.g. the bursting of a blossom into bloom, in itself (*en heautoi*). In contrast, what is brought

²¹⁸ Martin Heidegger, “Building Dwelling Thinking”, 145.

²¹⁹ Martin Heidegger, “Building Dwelling Thinking”, 145.

²²⁰ Jonathan Bate, *The Song of the Earth*, 75.

²²¹ Jonathan Bate, *The Song of the Earth*, ix.

forth by the artisan or the artist, e.g. the silver chalice, has the irruption belonging to the bringing-forth, not in itself, but in another (*en alloy*), in the craftsman or artist.²²²

“*Physis*”, explains Michael E. Zimmerman, “seems to mean self-emergent coming-forth, as when a plant ‘produces’ itself by coming into bloom. Because the plant produces itself, it is a higher mode of *poiesis* than an artifact, which is produced through another.”²²³ Moreover, *physis* has both this “self-producing aspect” and a “disclosive aspect”, which find their human counterparts in *poiesis* as “the disclosiveness (art in its broadest sense) which makes bringing-forth (producing of all kinds) possible.”²²⁴ Against *physis* and *poiesis* stands “modern technology” whose “enframing” “essence”, Bate explains, “conceals the truth of things”.²²⁵ As Zimmerman highlights, “neither a poem nor a rose has any ‘reason’ for being”. Technology, instead, conceals their real being by making them “commodities”, when their being is to be “purposeless”.²²⁶ For example, this could happen, to use Bate’s example, by assigning a purpose to a “mountain” which, when turn “into a mine or a nature reserve”, “it is revealed not as a mountain” anymore “but as a resource for human consumption.”²²⁷ Here, Bate makes a very important reflection on the responsibility of ‘picturesque tourism’ for this consumption and – he seems to suggest – for fostering an objectified view of nature as well as an “enframing” way of looking at it.²²⁸ Commenting on Heidegger’s view of technology, Bate explains that technology itself is “a way of revealing”, a way of “unconcealment” and “one of the distinctively human ways of being-in-the-world”.²²⁹ Technology in this sense has been explored in the passage above, and is the “*techne* of the craftsman” which “though it was not internal to the *physis* of the chalice, nevertheless revealed the presence, the

²²² Martin Heidegger in Jonathan Bate, *The Song of the Earth*, 253.

²²³ Michael E. Zimmerman, *Heidegger’s Confrontation with Modernity: Technology, Politics, and Art*. Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1990 233.

²²⁴ Michael E. Zimmerman, *Heidegger’s Confrontation with Modernity: Technology, Politics, and Art*, 234.

²²⁵ Jonathan Bate, *The Song of the Earth*, 255.

²²⁶ Michael E. Zimmerman, *Heidegger’s Confrontation with Modernity: Technology, Politics, and Art*, 234.

²²⁷ Jonathan Bate, *The Song of the Earth*, 254.

²²⁸ Ibid.

²²⁹ Jonathan Bate, *The Song of the Earth*, 253.

shining-forth, the truth of the chalice.”²³⁰ The problem arises when man lets technology become “enframing”, as with the case of modern technology, which has moved away from the meaning of the ancient Greek word *techne*, known instead for its “attune[ment] to the natural unfolding of things.”²³¹

Is technology, then, our only “mode of being”²³²? As Bate explains, Heidegger relied on the power of poetry, as “our way of stepping outside the frame of the technological, of reawakening the momentary wonder of unconcealments.” The power of the poet lies in “language”, which is “the house of beings”, the place where the “unconcealment takes place for human beings.”²³³ The fact that poetry, like nature, has the power of revealing/“bringing forth” the being of things, confirms the strong bond between them and the possibility for poetry to mediate between the human and the non-human world. In this regard, Bate comments on Heidegger’s re-interpretation of an expression he attributed to Hölderlin: “poetically man dwells on earth”. For Heidegger “the poem is like the peasant farmhouse in the Black Forest” which “gathers the fourfold of mortals, gods, earth and heaven into its still site in simple oneness. It orders the house of our lives. By bethinging us, it makes us care for things. It overrides dualism and idealism; it grounds us; it enables us to dwell.”²³⁴ The act of dwelling, then, is synonymous with the act of caring. By dwelling “poetically” man can recover the lost sense of attune[ment] to the world and thus “live in another way, to respect the difference, the ‘self-concealing’, of entities even as they are ‘unconcealed’ in poetry.”²³⁵ And here, according to Bate, lies Heidegger’s eco-poetical message, as the act of dwelling becomes synonymous of ““saving the earth”” and respecting the ‘self-

²³⁰ Jonathan Bate, *The Song of the Earth*, 255.

²³¹ Jonathan Bate, *The Song of the Earth*, 255-256.

²³² Jonathan Bate, *The Song of the Earth*, 257.

²³³ Jonathan Bate, *The Song of the Earth*, 258.

²³⁴ Jonathan Bate, *The Song of the Earth*, 262. Frank Schalow and Alfred Denker explain “bethinging” in these terms: “The poet names **entities** in his poetry. Names are words that portray. They present what already is to **representational** thought. The word first bestows **presence**, that is, being in which things can appear as things. In this sense, the world allows a thing to be a thing. Heidegger therefore names the word the bethinging (*Bedingnis*) of a thing. This bethinging power of the word is a **mystery**. The mysterious **coming to presence** of the word explains why the poet must renounce explaining what bethinging is.” in *The Historical Dictionary of Heidegger’s philosophy*, by Frank Schalow, and Alfred Denker, Lanham: Scarecrow Press, 2010, 306, (emphasis in the original).

²³⁵ Jonathan Bate, *The Song of the Earth*, 262.

concealing' of entities, an entirely opposite attitude to the human "'master[ing]" of "the earth"'".²³⁶

The question in the title of John Felstiner's work, *Can Poetry Save the Earth? A Field Guide to Nature Poems* (2009), echoes the Heideggerian stance, adding to it a hint of "urgent hope".²³⁷ From the nature poets of early Romanticism to the ecologically oriented ones of the contemporary age, like Gary Snyder, Felstiner seems to want his readers to consider the question of the title while reading these poems: Can poetry save the Earth? "Can poems help, when the times demand environmental science and history, government leadership, corporate and consumer moderation, nonprofit activism, local initiatives?"²³⁸ The title of the introduction ("Care in Such a World") shows traces of a Heideggerian sensitivity as well. Along with the Heideggerian reference to "care", the introduction begins with a reference to the role of language in the Apache creation myth and in the story of Creation in the Hebrew Bible.²³⁹ Even though in a much smaller scale, this relationship between language and creation echoes the productive role of language/poetry in "unconcealing" the being of things in the Heideggerian philosophy. Moreover, Felstiner addresses the Biblical theme of man's "dominion" upon the Earth, defining it a "fateful gift" and adds that this "also works through naming, the heart of language, making poetry possible."²⁴⁰ The reason for this definition, probably lies in the fact that many ecocritics have seen in man's dominion the root of anthropocentric attitudes and of the consequent devastation of the Earth. However, when Felstiner mentions Adam's naming of the creatures in the Genesis,²⁴¹ he does not dwell on the negative stance of naming as an instrument of dominion. Instead he points out at the strong bond between word and nature, and at the power of words in bringing out a "brimful world" and "joy" as depicted in Psalm 104, a creation hymn, where "earth's fullness comes to mean an interconnected whole, embedding us in the midst."²⁴² Furthermore,

²³⁶ Heidegger in Jonathan Bate, *The Song of the Earth*, 262.

²³⁷ John Felstiner, *Can Poetry Save the Earth? A Field Guide to Nature Poems*, New Haven: Yale University Press, 2009, xiv.

²³⁸ John Felstiner. *Can Poetry Save the Earth? A Field Guide to Nature Poems*, xiii.

²³⁹ John Felstiner. *Can Poetry Save the Earth? A Field Guide to Nature Poems*, 1.

²⁴⁰ John Felstiner. *Can Poetry Save the Earth?*, 2.

²⁴¹ John Felstiner. *Can Poetry Save the Earth?*, 2.

²⁴² John Felstiner. *Can Poetry Save the Earth?* 2.

Felstiner highlights how “God humbles Job” in the Bible, by stressing human helplessness in front of nature.²⁴³ Humility, Felstiner seems to suggest, has the power of making man reconsider his position of centrality on the Earth²⁴⁴ and as I will show, this is one of the ways in which ecopoetry challenges anthropocentric attitudes and depictions of nature.

An important distinction must be made, however, between ‘nature poetry’ and ‘ecopoetry’. From J. Scott Bryson’s definition onwards, the term “‘nature poetry’” has “dominated English literature” “for centuries” and has been generally applied to poems having “strong doses of natural subject matter and imagery”²⁴⁵. Romantic “nature poetry” was challenged for the first time by Modernist poets such as Robert Frost, Robinson Jeffers, Marianne Moore and William Carlos Williams who, to use Langbaum’s words, “oppos[ed]” “the pathetic fallacy” and recognised “in nature an unalterably alien”.²⁴⁶ As Bryson explains, poets started composing environmentally aware poetry “in the latter half of the twentieth-century”, moved by “a growing spirit of protest” against environmental threats “such as nuclear proliferation, species extinction, and other potential disasters”. Among the dissenting voices, Beat poets – “most notably Gary Snyder – became and have remained leading voices in the environmental movement”, inspiring other poets to take up an ecological stance, thus “setting up the offshoot of nature poetry we are calling ecopoetry”.²⁴⁷ The difference between ‘ecopoetry’ and ‘nature poetry’, then, lies in the heightened awareness of environmental emergency that distinguishes ecopoets. While it is indeed possible for contemporary critics to re-read “nature poetry” or non-environmentally aware texts of all centuries from an ecocritical standpoint, and even trace ante-litteram ecological messages in them, the distinction between ‘nature poetry’ and ‘ecopoetry’ remains a central one, and one that seems to be more a matter of perspective as well as of awareness — a way of looking at the non-human world.

²⁴³ John Felstiner. *Can Poetry Save the Earth?* 5.

²⁴⁴ John Felstiner. *Can Poetry Save the Earth?* 5.

²⁴⁵ J. Scott Bryson, “Introduction”, *Ecopoetry: A Critical Introduction*. Salt Lake City: University of Utah Press, 2002, 2.

²⁴⁶ J. Scott Bryson, “Introduction”, *Ecopoetry: A Critical Introduction*. Salt Lake City: University of Utah Press, 2002, 3.

²⁴⁷ J. Scott Bryson, “Introduction”, *Ecopoetry: A Critical Introduction*. Salt Lake City: University of Utah Press, 2002, 3.

An eco-poetical awareness identifies with the need of taking on a more realistic perspective and dealing with issues “nature poems” were often blind to. In this regard, Leonard Scigaj perfectly explains the impossibility for a contemporary poet to keep depicting nature as if centuries of exploitation have never taken place:

We have despoiled nature, the necessary context for any aesthetic act, to the point where we must pause before composing poems that present nature as a benign and reliable backdrop for human quests for an authentic voice. We can no longer conceive of nature as a bucolic idyll, a type of Christian resurrection, a rational exemplar of God’s harmonious design, a romantic refuge from urban factories, an indifferent or hostile Darwinian menace, or an echoing hollow filled by poststructural language theory.²⁴⁸

Scigaj’s reflection represents an appeal for a new kind of poetry, which does not entail human appropriation of nature, and is not blind to the lie of the ‘pure and wild’ looming over centuries of massive environmental devastations: “we will need a poetry that does not ignore nature or simply project human fears or aesthetic designs on it.” “What we need is a sustainable poetry” he points out “[...] a poetry that treats nature as a separate and equal other and includes respect for nature conceived as a series of ecosystems Scigaj’s model of eco-poetry, is that of a poetry that can “offer exemplary models of biocentric perception and behaviour”²⁴⁹ through a de-anthropocentrism of the non-human world. Interestingly, Scigaj’s notion of separateness and equality seems to reflect the same two main qualities of Timothy Morton’s “mesh”, that is the ““no center or edge’ aspect of the mesh”,²⁵⁰ suggesting a certain degree of equality among all the creatures that are part of it, and the “separateness and difference” at the root of the interconnection which is the mesh.²⁵¹

Scigaj also addresses a topic that is especially relevant to this chapter, that is the role of language in conveying the non-human world. So far the examples analysed have all converged on the fact that human language can effectively

²⁴⁸ Scigaj, Leonard M. *Sustainable Poetry: Four American Eco-poets*. Lexington: The University Press of Kentucky, 1999, 5.

²⁴⁹ Leonard M., Scigaj, *Sustainable Poetry: Four American Eco-poets*, 11.

²⁵⁰ Timothy Morton, *The Ecological Thought*, 39.

²⁵¹ Timothy Morton, *The Ecological Thought*, 47.

bridge the gap between man and nature. We have considered Mabie's proto-ecocritical belief that language bears traces of a long-existing "intimacy" between man and nature²⁵² and we have addressed Tuulikki's outstanding project of reproducing the voice of the birds in music – a form of language – as to highlight the strong bond between man and his environment. Finally, we have investigated Bate's re-reading of Heidegger, and his faith in the potential of poetry to "save the earth". This, as we have seen, is due to poetry being a form of "unconcealment" which opposes the "enframing" stance of modern technology and its concealment of the true being of nature through exploitation. Scigaj sheds further light on all these issues. By explaining that eco-poets can experience "moments of non-dualistic inhabitation", "only when the noise of human ratiocination, including the fabrication of language, has been silenced".²⁵³ Instead of resorting to an "enframing" language, he proposes an alternative way for eco-poets to experience nature through the text, that is by the way of a "non-dualistic sight and silence" state — achieved, for example, by simply witnessing the phenomenon of the light. According to Scigaj, this state will lead eco-poets to consider how light, which benefits all the beings on the Earth, is a "shared medium", and that recognition will eventually enable them to reach an "ecologically interdependent vision."²⁵⁴ Although Scigaj points out that "within eco-poetry and environmental poetry, language is often foregrounded only to reveal its limitations",²⁵⁵ language nonetheless becomes an instrument to make the relationship between nature and man possible. This is for example visible in the process Scigaj calls of *référance* where "the reader's gaze is thrust beyond language back into the less limited natural world that language refers to". As he further clarifies, "language and nature under *référance* constitute two opposite but interdependent systems, with the former (language) only temporarily deferring the latter, nature, where language had its origin."²⁵⁶ While Scigaj acknowledges the limitations of language, he also recognises the strong bond between the two and, like Mabie, the

²⁵² Hamilton Wright Mabie. "The Record in Language", 86.

²⁵³ Leonard M. Scigaj, *Sustainable Poetry: Four American Eco-poets*, 8.

²⁵⁴ Leonard M. Scigaj, *Sustainable Poetry: Four American Eco-poets*, 8-9.

²⁵⁵ Leonard M. Scigaj, *Sustainable Poetry: Four American Eco-poets*, 38.

²⁵⁶ Leonard M. Scigaj, *Sustainable Poetry: Four American Eco-poets*, 38.

fact that language originated from nature. Therefore, language defines nature, as much as nature defines language.

Recent studies, such as those by Nolan and Knickerbocker, address the importance of transcending the sharp distinction between nature and culture (or between nature and language, as a product of culture). “Following” the “projects of Brenda Iijima’s *The Eco Language Reader* and Scott Knickerbocker’s *Ecopoetics: The Language of Nature, the Nature of Language*”²⁵⁷ which purposes to go beyond the binarism nature/culture, Nolan proposes an “un-natural ecopoetics” which “acknowledges the significance of bringing nature and culture in the mutuality of texts and contexts”.²⁵⁸ Nolan points out how early ecocritics, in their attempt to promote “ecopolitical engagement”, in fact widened the gap between man and nature by stressing the otherness of the latter.²⁵⁹ Imposing a distance between the human and the non-human world may indeed foster clichés of nature as unspoiled, and even undermine the main statement of ecological thinking – man’s belonging to nature and the interconnectedness of all beings on the Earth. This way of conceiving the non-human world excludes, then, any possibility of a relationship on equal terms. Knickerbocker holds a completely different view from earlier ecocritics. According to him, the gap between the human and the non-human world can be bridged by ecopoetical language:

[eco]poems undo simple opposition between humans and nature; sensuous poesis operates from the assumption that humans (and their tools, including language) are both distinct and inseparable from the rest of nature. Rather than attempt to erase the artifice of their own poems (to make them seem more natural and supposedly, then, closer to nature), ... [ecopoets] unapologetically embrace artifice—not for its own sake, but as a way to relate meaningfully to the natural world. Indeed, for them, artifice *is* natural²⁶⁰

²⁵⁷ Sarah Nolan, “Un-natural Ecopoetics: Natural/Cultural Intersections in Poetic Language and Form”, 87.

²⁵⁸ Sarah Nolan, “Un-natural Ecopoetics: Natural/Cultural Intersections in Poetic Language and Form”, 88.

²⁵⁹ Sarah Nolan, “Un-natural Ecopoetics: Natural/Cultural Intersections in Poetic Language and Form”, 97.

²⁶⁰ Scott Knickerbocker. *Ecopoetics: The Language of Nature, the Nature of Language*. Amherst: University of Massachusetts Press, 2012, 2 in Sarah Nolan, “Un-natural Ecopoetics: Natural/Cultural Intersections in Poetic Language and Form”, 97.

Laura-Gray Street, commenting on George Oppen's poem "Psalm", reflects on the fact that "language is an integral part of our biological selves. The 'roots of it / Dangle from [our] mouths.' We are language-making creatures in the same way that spiders are web-making creatures."²⁶¹ Her reflection allow us to understand why "artifice *is* natural": artifice is our way of being or, in Bate/Heidegger's words, "language is the house of being; it is through language that unconcealment takes place for human beings."²⁶² According to Heidegger, unlike nature, that has the power of "unconcealment in itself"/"produces" itself, humans must rely on the artifice of art to make unconcealment happen. Language, then, becomes for us humans a way of expressing nature²⁶³ and "producing" it. What is more, language is not only a way of expression, but part of "our biological selves", as Street suggests. In this sense, then, the artifice of language becomes "natural", because it springs from our mouths, and needs the breath coming from our abdomens, like the spiders eject silk from the spinnerets in their abdomens. And if both man and spider are part of nature, and the spider's silk is natural, why should not language be natural as well? Both language and the spider's silk build a 'place.' Not only is then language figuratively "the house" of being, but it can take a physical form through the poem. As we have seen, Bate comments on how for Heidegger "a poem is like the peasant farmhouse in the Black Forest" which "gathers the fourfold of mortals, gods, earth and heaven into its still site in simple oneness." The poem/house, then, gathers in itself the opposites of "mortals and gods" and "earth and heaven", "it overrides dualism and idealism; it grounds us; it enables us to dwell."²⁶⁴ In this dwelling "poetically", men can sense their place in the universe, that they are part of it, in a 'mesh' of different beings and organisms. Thanks to this "attune[ment]", man can "live in another way, to respect the difference, the 'self-concealing', of entities even as they are 'unconcealed' in poetry."²⁶⁵

²⁶¹ Laura-Gray Street. "The Roots of It" in Ann Fisher-Wirth, Laura-Gray Street, eds. *The Ecopoetry Anthology*. San Antonio: Trinity University Press, 2013, xxxvii.

²⁶² Jonathan Bate, *The Song of the Earth*, 257-8.

²⁶³ For "*poiesis*" as human counterpart of "*physis*" see: Michael E. Zimmerman, *Heidegger's Confrontation with Modernity: Technology, Politics, and Art*, 234.

²⁶⁴ Jonathan Bate, *The Song of the Earth*, 262.

²⁶⁵ Jonathan Bate, *The Song of the Earth*, 262.

The metaphor of poetry as a ‘place’ can offer interesting interpretations, such as the one suggested by John Elder, who compares poems to ecosystems:

Poetry itself can manifest the intricate, adaptive and evolving balance of an ecosystem. This can be true in the case of individual poems; in the sometimes surprising wholeness of a given poet’s *oeuvre*; and in the ongoing process through which long-established writers and powerful new ones enrich each others’ meanings—a process akin to the mutual honing of populations within a shared bioregion.²⁶⁶

Let us consider, for example, the device of quoting other writers’ work in a text or a poem. Poetry relying on intertextual references can indeed be considered as an ecosystem, where different sources “enrich each others’ meanings” in the text. Intertextuality can culminate in what Harriet Tarlo defines as “found poetry”, which is poetry “composed entirely of” “fragments or larger pieces of text from one source or several”.²⁶⁷ Tarlo demonstrates how what she describes as “found poetry” can have an “ecoethical significance” when it undermines the “ideas of ownership and originality” which fuel the “capitalist economy”, and are also at the root of the “commodification of poetry”.²⁶⁸ “Capitalist economy” indeed attributes a purpose to the text, in the same way as modern technology attributes a purpose to nature, as we have seen in Zimmerman’s reflections on Heidegger. The act of attributing a purpose to nature is “enframing”, because it hides its true being, which is “purposeless”.²⁶⁹ Following Tarlo’s reflections, the same can be said of poetry, which should be “purposeless” but, like nature, becomes object of “human consumption”. The problem regarding the “commodification of poetry” highlighted by Tarlo is of utter importance: if, as Heidegger claims, poetry is our only way of “bringing forth”/“unconcealing” nature, what happens when poetry becomes a commodity?

²⁶⁶ John Elder, “Foreword”. Scott J. Bryson, ed. *Ecopoetry: A Critical Introduction*. Salt Lake City: University of Utah Press, 2002, ix.

²⁶⁷ Harriet Tarlo. “Recycles: the Eco-Ethical Poetics of Found Text in Contemporary Poetry”, *Journal of Ecocriticism*, 1.2 (2009), 114-115.

²⁶⁸ Harriet Tarlo. “Recycles: the Eco-Ethical Poetics of Found Text in Contemporary Poetry”, 114 and 127-8.

²⁶⁹ Michael E. Zimmerman, *Heidegger’s Confrontation with Modernity: Technology, Politics, and Art*, 234.

A way to prevent commodification from taking over our lives is proposed by contemporary Scottish poet John Burnside, who suggests that we should retrieve that sense of awe which “is central, is vitally necessary, to any description of the world.”²⁷⁰ By depriving us of that sense of wonder, commodification acts on our brains, making everything uniform. As a consequence, we start taking things in the world for granted or worse, we become blind to their true value. Poetry and nature are thus both victims of capitalist commodification, and both are degraded to the status of ‘commercial’ objects. The outcome of this, and of the inability to experience awe, has widened the gap between the human and the non-human world, making the possibility connection even thinner. In this regard, Burnside highlights how we have become estranged²⁷¹ from nature and proposes a way back to reconnection:

our shared animal life is confined to pets and domestic creatures; we kill what we do not know and so cannot trust; we fear the earth and its creatures (or we despise them). At one level, ecological art is intended to address this problem, to restore that mystery, to put us back into the open, to make us both vulnerable and wondrous again—to reconnect us.²⁷²

For Burnside, our way back to reconnection is an “ecological art”, which does not instil fear or doubt towards other creatures, but draws instead on a sense of mystery at the root of awe. Lack of knowledge, instead, leads to destruction, as Ann Fisher-Wirth and Laura-Gray Street point out: “what we humans disregard, what we fail to know and grasp, is easy to destroy: a mountaintop, a coral reef, a forest, a human community.”²⁷³ The reason for human exploitation of nature, then, lies in the lack of awe and in the disrespect for the mystery that feeds it. “While science at its best seeks to reduce our ignorance, it cannot—and should

²⁷⁰ John Burnside. “A Science of Belonging: Poetry as Ecology” in Robert, Crawford ed. *Contemporary Poetry and Contemporary Science*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2006, 95.

²⁷¹ According to Burnside, reasons for this estrangement is due to consumerism: “At present, the version of history we are encouraged to consume is one that suits big corporations and their employees in our state governments. It is a history of conflict and consumption, of production and power that denies us elements of our very nature, as human animals.” In John Burnside. “A Science of Belonging: Poetry as Ecology”, 92.

²⁷² John Burnside. “A Science of Belonging: Poetry as Ecology”, 105.

²⁷³ Ann Fisher-Wirth, Laura-Gray Street, eds. *The Ecopoetry Anthology*, xxvii.

not seek to—eliminate mystery,”²⁷⁴ Burnside warns. In the attempt to re-establish a relationship between poetry and science, he addresses the most ancient vocation of science, which harks back to the Greek *technē*, and has deep roots in the arts:

Yet at root, science and technology are, or should be, part of a wider intellectual enterprise. We see this immediately, when we examine the etymology: *technē* Greek: skill, craft, art. It’s an interesting idea, this view of technology as art or craft. It suggests something human and holistic, rather than the mechanical and reductionist [...] From the first, humans have used *scientia* and *technē* to navigate the world—not just in the fight for survival, but also in the quest for beauty and a sense of the authentic.²⁷⁵

Burnside’s idea of science bears a close resemblance to Heidegger’s *technē*, both for its non-exploitative aspect, and for that “sense of the authentic” which reminds the Heideggerian “unconcealment” of the true being. What is more, Heidegger narrates a story about humanity’s loss of awe, which Bate addresses as the “loss of” “wonder” or “disenchantment” connected to the progressive advancement of technology in the world.²⁷⁶

A crucial question remains to be answered. We have seen how language can effectively establish a connection between man and nature, but how can this be enacted in the literary text? How can nature really “unconceal” itself in poetry? Are there non-“enframing” ways of addressing the non-human world in the literary text? According to Christopher Manes, “nature *is* silent in our culture (and in the literate societies generally) in the sense that the status of being a speaking subject is jealously guarded as an exclusive human prerogative.”²⁷⁷ Nature is not silent, but is often silenced, both in our society and in the literary text. That can happen, for example, when we use nature as a container for the speaker’s feelings, or we look at nature through the distorted mirror of atmospheres and symbols, namely through all the conventional devices of literary representation. Commenting on the poetry of Jeffers, Buell makes an important reflection in this regard: although the poet “follows romantic lyric tradition in setting up the poem

²⁷⁴ John Burnside. “A Science of Belonging: Poetry as Ecology”, 95.

²⁷⁵ John Burnside. “A Science of Belonging: Poetry as Ecology”, 94.

²⁷⁶ Jonathan Bate, *The Song of the Earth*, 256.

²⁷⁷ Christopher Manes, “Nature and Silence”, in Glotfelty, Cheryll and Harold Fromm, eds. *The Ecocriticism Reader: Landmarks in Literary Ecology* 15.

as a scene of instruction in which nature provides a moral mirror of the human condition”, he does not fall under this evoking tendency. In fact, “the mirror it holds up is not symbolically significant (like Emerson’s rhodora, symbol of beauty [...]) but simply its isness, its materiality.”²⁷⁸ Ecopoetry does not ‘use’ nature to indicate something else, but represents it in its reality. That is the reason why ecopoets may recur to scientific vocabulary, pay attention to indigenous species of flora and fauna, and even take into consideration historical landscapes. In the previous chapter, we have considered the risks of “step[ping] into an aestheticized landscape”²⁷⁹, an unreal world with no consideration for history, without “limits, constraints, inhibitions or consequences”.²⁸⁰ Sometimes the aestheticized landscape goes hand in hand with the idea of nature as “setting”, a term Buell criticises, because it “deprecates what it denotes, implying that the physical environment serves for artistic purposes merely as a backdrop, ancillary to the main event.”²⁸¹

All these representations of nature have contributed to silence the non-human world. According to Manes, “it is within this [...] silence that surrounds our garrulous human subjectivity that an ethics of exploitation regarding nature has taken shape and flourished, producing the ecological crisis that now requires the search for an environmental counterethics.”²⁸² The first step for a “counterethics” is to make distinction between what I call a ‘positive passivity’, and an active and destructive behaviour towards nature. Destruction does not only affect the non-human world in the form of anti-environmental actions, such as spoiling and polluting the Earth. That process of destruction also takes place in the literary text. The process of ‘emptying’, that I have described in the previous chapter, is at work here, since nature is emptied out or made silent, and filled with a “garrulous human subjectivity” or with human voices of different speakers, like a mere container or a blank canvas. I derive the idea of basing “counterethics” on a

²⁷⁸ Lawrence Buell. *The Environmental Imagination: Thoreau, Nature Writing, and the Formation of American culture*, 163.

²⁷⁹ J. Smith. “The Lie that Blinds” in J. Duncan, and D. Ley, eds. *Place, Culture and Representation*. London: Routledge, 1993, 79-80.

²⁸⁰ J. Smith. “The Lie that Blinds”, 81.

²⁸¹ Lawrence Buell. *The Environmental Imagination: Thoreau, Nature Writing, and the Formation of American culture*, 84-5.

²⁸² Christopher Manes, “Nature and Silence” 16.

‘positive passivity’ from Scigaj’s observation that ecopoets experience nature through the text. As we have seen, this alternative comes by the way of “non-dualistic sight and silence”, which will lead the ecopoet to assume the role of a witness, for example, of the phenomenon of the light. Such role makes her/him acknowledge that light is a “shared medium”, and that recognition in turn “enables [his] ecologically interdependent vision.”²⁸³ To sum up, by choosing the role of a ‘passive’ witness of the non-human world, the ecopoet acquires a special insight into his being in nature, and into the interconnection of all living and non-living things, thus achieving and “ecologically interdependent vision”. Another expression of ‘positive passivity’ seems to be suggested again by Manes, who proposes to learn “a new language free from the directionalities of humanism [...] the language of ecological humility that deep ecology, however gropingly, is attempting to express.”²⁸⁴ The term “humility” also appears in J. Scott Bryson’s article on Yi-Fu Tuan’s concepts of “place” and “space” in W. S. Merwin’s poetry. According to Bryson, the concept of “spaciousness”, that would be “criticize[d]” by “environmentally minded poets” as an “attempt to transcend our present situation”, is seen by Yi-Fu Tuan as revealing “the extent of our limitations”.²⁸⁵ In this regard, Bryson interestingly comments that “the more we move into space, the more we recognize its vastness as it expands before us, helping us to understand our own smallness and producing an attitude of humility.”²⁸⁶

Humility, then, is the most important attitude of the counterethics that I have named ‘positive passivity’, because it de-centres humans and fosters a more biocentric behaviour. “Biocentrism,” according to Manes, “brings to bear the science of ecology upon the exclusionary claims about the human subject. From the language of humanism one could easily get the impression that *Homo sapiens* is the only species on the planet worthy of being a topic of discourse. Ecology paints quite a different, humbling, picture.”²⁸⁷ Manes suggests another possible

²⁸³ Leonard M. Scigaj, *Sustainable Poetry: Four American Eco-poets*, 8-9.

²⁸⁴ Christopher Manes, “Nature and Silence”, 17.

²⁸⁵ J. Scott Bryson, “‘Between the Earth and Silence’: Place and Space in the Poetry of W. S. Merwin”, in *Ecopoetry: a Critical Introduction*. J. Scott Bryson ed. Salt Lake City: University of Utah Press, 2002, 104-5.

²⁸⁶ J. Scott Bryson, “‘Between the Earth and Silence’: Place and Space in the Poetry of W. S. Merwin”, 105.

²⁸⁷ Christopher Manes, “Nature and Silence”, 24.

expression of ‘positive passivity’, by arguing that “some strains of deep ecology have stressed the link between listening to the nonhuman world (i.e., treating it as a silenced subject) and reversing the environmentally destructive practices modern society pursue.”²⁸⁸ Instead of silencing the voice of nature, then, an eco-oriented narrative will focus on listening as a more effective practice to engage with the non-human world. In his analysis of a passage from Snyder’s “Cold Mountain Poems”,²⁸⁹ Terry Gifford seems to suggest a similar relationship between humility and the act of listening:

The next two lines clinch a deeply felt humility that is to be learned from tuning in to the energies of nature: “Today I’m back at Cold Mountain: / I’ll sleep by the creek and purify my ears’ (26). The ascetism by which purification comes through sleep on the ground of Cold Mountain is a learned discipline of openness toward the energy of the creek.”²⁹⁰

The act of listening here is presented as an act of “tuning in to the energies of nature”. The speaker’s attitude can be seen as a supreme act of ‘positive’ passivity, as his narrative expresses both the humility of the poet’s silence in the face of nature, and his listening posture as an attunement to the natural surroundings. Humility is also physically represented here through the act of lying on the ground, as a way to establish a total connection, both mental and bodily, with nature. A similar attitude of ‘positive passivity’ is articulated by Heidegger, who, according to Peter Critchley, “achieves something closer to a passive and receptive opening of oneself to Nature”. Moreover, when Critchley remembers that Heidegger “urged people to listen to the soundless voice of being”,²⁹¹ he implicitly reminds us that for the German philosopher the act of listening and the role of silence – two examples of ‘positive passivity’ – were essential in retrieving the true being of nature. In this regard, Critchley cites a further illuminating quote

²⁸⁸ Christopher Manes, “Nature and Silence”, 16.

²⁸⁹ The “Cold Mountain Poems” are, according to Gifford, “more than simply translations from the first-century Chinese of Han-shan”, as “these poems represent Snyder’s process of absorbing the Asian influences that have dominated his work to the present day”. Terry Gifford. *Gary Snyder and the Post-Pastoral in Ecopoetry: a Critical Introduction*. J. Scott Bryson, Salt Lake City: University of Utah Press, 2002, 80.

²⁹⁰ Terry Gifford. *Gary Snyder and the Post-Pastoral*, 81.

²⁹¹ Peter Critchley. “Martin Heidegger: Ontology and Ecology.”, 2004. Web. 27 March 2017. <https://www.academia.edu/705387/Martin_Heidegger_Ontology_and_Ecology>, 10.

from Heidegger, addressing “the meditative man” as the one who “is to experience the untrembling heart of unconcealment’ in ‘the place of stillness’”.²⁹² As poetry is endowed with this power of “unconcealment”, “the meditative man” par excellence may indeed be represented by the poet, who is warned on the way to let “unconcealment” happen. As far as the notion of ‘stillness’ is concerned, it reminds us of Snyder/Han-shan’s proposal of lying on the ground and “purify” the “ears”, as well as of Scigaj’s “non-dualistic sight and silence” to gain an “ecologically interdependent vision.”²⁹³ Stillness is then the ‘non-act’ of the ecopoet. An example of this kind of ‘positive’ passivity is represented by W. S. Merwin’s ecopoems, which, according to Bryson, “exhibit a fervent appreciation for silence, and the conclusion of many poems find the speaker sitting in silence, listening, waiting, not speaking.”²⁹⁴

In conclusion, ecopoetry largely feeds on acts of ‘positive passivity’ – silence, listening, humility and awe – which counters active and destructive attitudes of domination over nature, both on a physical level and in literary texts. On a physical level, we witness reckless domineering attitudes such as acts of exploitation of the environment also through aesthetic consumption. On a literary level, the same domineering attitudes are conveyed by an imposition of human feelings on nature, or by representing nature as a mere backdrop to human actions. We indeed achieve the same level of exploitation whenever the non-human world is textually depicted in a ‘picturesque’ fashion, and we accomplish the same destruction of nature every time poetry gives up on the only human possibility of “unconcealing” the being of nature through the text.

²⁹² Martin Heidegger, “The End of Philosophy and the Task of Thinking”. *Basic Writings*. David Farrell Krell ed. Routledge & Kegan Paul 1978, 387, in Peter Critchley, “Martin Heidegger: Ontology and Ecology.” 2004, 10.

²⁹³ Leonard M. Scigaj, *Sustainable Poetry: Four American Ecopoets*, 8-9.

²⁹⁴ J. Scott Bryson, *The West Side of Any Mountain: Place, Space, and Ecopoetry*. Iowa City: University of Iowa Press, 2005, 114.

Chapter 3

“Can I convey the truth / Of hill or sea?”: MacDiarmid’s ecopoetical representations of nature

The quotation from MacDiarmid’s poem “Pathetic Fallacy” in the title sums up one of the core problems in ecocriticism and environmental writing: the limitation of human language when it comes to express or represent the non-human world in the text. By and large, it would seem that the further the poet moves from anthropocentric ways of thinking, the closer he gets to “convey the truth / of hill or sea” (CP1, p. 1221) However, as the speaker of the poem implies, language is indeed a trap, marking human condition and preventing us from genuinely representing reality. A more optimistic idea, however, dominates MacDiarmid’s poetry. While MacDiarmid often depicts the creative act as fraught with suffering and sacrifice, he also significantly represents his poetry, for example, as a hawthorn tree whose glaring “ruby” fruits shine through the frost (CP2, “In Memoriam James Joyce,” p. 756), representing a symbol of persistence through time and immortality. Despite its limitations, language is our only way to bridge the gap with reality, or as Bate puts it commenting on Heidegger’s thought: “language is the house of being; it is through language that unconcealment takes place for human beings.”²⁹⁵ Ecopoetical language, in particular, as it has already been widely discussed in the previous chapter, functions as the meeting point between the human and the non-human world.

The aim of this chapter is to explore MacDiarmid’s ecopoetical language and also the way such language blends poem and nature together through metapoetical reflections. Both the titles of the first and the second sections – ““The point where science and art can meet’:²⁹⁶ the role of science in MacDiarmid’s ecopoetry” and “Blending nature and poem: MacDiarmid’s ‘metapoetry’” -- convey an idea of synthesis between two seemingly opposite ideas: on the one hand, science and art, on the other, nature and poetry (artifice). I will try to demonstrate how such apparent dichotomies are undermined by both MacDiarmid’s effective blending of

²⁹⁵ Jonathan Bate, *The Song of the Earth*, 257-258.

²⁹⁶ Hugh MacDiarmid, “In Memoriam James Joyce”, p. 782.

science into his ecopoetry (first section) and his systematic comparing poetic language, and the act of poem-making to natural manifestations (second section). In this regard, the theoretical concepts I have discussed in the second chapter, such as H. W. Mabie's idea of language originating from man's "intimacy" with nature²⁹⁷, or Scott Knickerbocker's theory on the "artifice" of language being "natural" for ecopoets,²⁹⁸ will be extremely useful. The title of the third and last section of this chapter, "The ecological message of 'little Earth'", evokes, like the previous titles, an apparently contradictory idea. To call our planet 'little' may indeed raise eyebrows in surprise, but ultimately – as we shall see – it is just a matter of perspective. MacDiarmid's considers the Earth from a cosmic perspective and uses the ecopoetical language as a reducing glass, revealing the vulnerability of our planet and undermining the foolish anthropocentric myth of Earth's centrality in the universe.

3.1 "The point where science and art can meet":²⁹⁹ the role of science in MacDiarmid's ecopoetry

The world of nature is frequently adopted in [MacDiarmid's] later work as a metaphor for poetic language, political commitment and national identity. MacDiarmid, though, goes further than that, arguing for the value of nature-writing and study as analogous to poetry. As with the botanist's minute observation of a plant's structure in 'Poetry and Science' (1943), which 'Enriches and makes three-dimensional / His awareness of its complex beauty' (CP1, p. 630), so too can an exquisitely attentive, exhaustive 'poetry of facts' reveal the truth as well as the beauty of reality.³⁰⁰

Louisa Gairn's statement perfectly accounts for MacDiarmid's alignment with some of the ecocritical and ecopoetical theories that I have explored in the second chapter. In his attempt to make poetic language an instrument analogous to science, MacDiarmid looks for a truer depiction of nature, which eschews aestheticisation and other "enframing" literary devices. As the example from

²⁹⁷ Hamilton Wright Mabie. "The Record in Language", p. 102.

²⁹⁸ Scott Knickerbocker. *Ecopoetics: The Language of Nature, the Nature of Language*. Amherst: University of Massachusetts Press, 2012, 2.

²⁹⁹ Hugh MacDiarmid, "In Memoriam James Joyce", 782.

³⁰⁰ Louisa Gairn, "MacDiarmid and Ecology", 83.

“Poetry and Science” quoted by Gairn shows, MacDiarmid argues for a poetry expressing the reality of the natural world. By referring to plants with their scientific names, or listing their features like a botanist, he replaces the ‘nice’ and flat backdrop of picturesque depictions of nature with “three-dimensional” representations. MacDiarmid thus deploys the botanist’s knowledge to enrich “enormously” “the aesthetic appreciation of flowers” (CP1, p. 630) and “replace” the “stupefied sense of wonder” (CP1, p. 631) generated by an irrational response to nature, with a deeper form of understanding. As MacDiarmid writes in the same poem: “Nature is more wonderful / When it is at least partly understood” (CP1, p. 631).

Gairn observes how “in his later work” MacDiarmid “conceived” the “poet’s role” “as that of a keen-eyed observer and synthesiser of knowledge, much like a scientist or naturalist”.³⁰¹ As a consequence, his rendition of the non-human world is often very detailed: every specimen of rock or plant is thoroughly looked into and classified, as if the landscape were being dissected under the reader’s eyes. This approach is evident, for example, when the poet surveys the Scottish landscape from above in the *Dìreadh* poems, describing close and far-away details of mountains, islands and sea.³⁰² More often than not, MacDiarmid indulges in a kind of ‘cartographic poetry’, which examines and classifies in a way that is more typical of scientific writing. This does not only apply to the *Dìreadh* poems, where the surveying intent is most evident, but to many of his later works focusing on the observation of landscape. Moreover, some passages from his poetry and prose, those more rich in details and refined descriptions of the natural world, could easily feature in an amateur naturalist’s journal. MacDiarmid, indeed, often relies on obscure and technical terms, mostly from botany and geology, and sometimes arranges them in long lists, echoing scientific catalogues. At times this device becomes prominent, informing whole poems, as it happens with the long list of rocks and minerals in “Once in a Cornish Garden”.

As Gairn makes clear, MacDiarmid’s use of scientific methods and vocabulary is functional to achieving a “poetry of facts” in his later work. The very notion of a ‘poetry of facts’ is in fact an expression of MacDiarmid’s ‘antysyzygy’, his life-

³⁰¹ Louisa Gairn, “Nature, Landscape and Rural Life”, 140.

³⁰² See *Dìreadh* I, CP2, 1169; *Dìreadh* II, CP2, 1174, 1180-81; *Dìreadh* III, CP2, 1186.

long attempt to reconcile opposites, which here takes the shape of a synthesis of poetry and science. In this regard, titles like “Poetry and Science” (CP1, pp. 630-1) and “Science and Poetry” (CP2, p. 1220) are very telling, along with MacDiarmid’s explicit statements such as “I achieve the ideal of so many poets, / The union of poetry and science” in “Dìreadh I” (CP2, p. 1167) or “[...] Scientific data and aesthetic realisation, And I seek their perfect fusion in my work” in “In Memoriam James Joyce” (CP2, p. 782).

Gairn also points out that MacDiarmid was inspired by the work of “botanist, geographer and city planner Patrick Geddes (1854-1932)”,³⁰³ and remembers how he praised him for his “striving towards synthesis, his blurring of disciplinary boundaries in an attempt to achieve comprehension and insight.”³⁰⁴ It was especially Geddes’s eclectic journal *The Evergreen* that attracted MacDiarmid’s attention. Published in four issues between 1895 and 1896, it included essays, poems and other pieces of writings on the most disparate topics, such as nature, science, sociology and nationalism. Contributors also included artists who illustrated and decorated the journal, such as Celtic revival painter John Duncan (1866-1945), and who significantly contributed to the eclecticism of the journal. In *The Evergreen*, Geddes “wr[ote] of the essential unity of the arts and the environmental sciences”,³⁰⁵ thus providing the perfect example of that synthesis between poetry and science that MacDiarmid was so eager to achieve. Geddes’s essay “The Sociology of Autumn” in the second issue of the periodical engages exactly with his desire for a “synthesis” of all disciplines. As the “argument” section announces, the first section of the essay deals with “how everyday experience differentiates into the Arts and Sciences; yet how their progress is not only towards diversity, but towards Unity”.³⁰⁶ Although Geddes welcomes “the marvellous heterogeneity of contemporary Art and Science”, he asks at one point:

³⁰³ Louisa Gairn, “MacDiarmid and Ecology”, 84.

³⁰⁴ Ecology and Modern Scottish Literature, 86. In *The Company I’ve Kept*, MacDiarmid wrote the following passage to describe Geddes’s character: “his constant effort was to help people to think for themselves, and to think round the whole circle, not in scraps and bits. He knew that watertight compartments are useful only to a sinking ship, and traversed all the boundaries of separate subjects”. In *The Company I’ve Kept: Essays in Autobiography*. London: Hutchison 1966, 83.

³⁰⁵ Louisa Gairn, *Ecology and Modern Scottish Literature*, 86.

³⁰⁶ Patrick Geddes, “The Sociology of Autumn” in *The Evergreen: a Northern Seasonal*. “The Book of Autumn”. Edinburgh: Lawnmarket of Edinburgh, 1895, 27, from <<https://archive.org/details/evergreenorther02gedd>>

“Who now speaks of Leonardo’s, Dürer’s dream of reuniting Art and Science, save as a mere echo of the days of alchemy?”³⁰⁷ Geddes shows how all disciplines are highly interconnected, how “physics and aesthetics, economics and ethics are alike steadily recovering their long-forgotten unity.”³⁰⁸ In a prophetic mood, he also announces that “the age of mechanical dualism is ending; materialism and spiritualism have each had their day; that of an organic and idealist Monism is begun.”³⁰⁹ The unity of all disciplines, then, is a means to soar above fragmented perspectives and to acknowledge the existence of the whole: “For there is a larger view of Nature and Life, a rebuilding of analyses into Synthesis, an integration of many solitary experiences into a larger Experience [...]”³¹⁰ MacDiarmid’s “In Memoriam James Joyce” pays a glowing tribute to Geddes’ gift of synthesising the most disparate “experiences” and of concentrating meaning into few words:

[...]

– A completeness of thought,
 A synthesis of all view points,
 No one brain could otherwise grasp.
 Geddes worked out in this way
 A description of living
 That included or could include
 Every act and fact,
 Dream and deed,
 Of all mankind on this planet,
 Revealing more on one sheet of paper
 Than whole volumes of science or philosophy.
 (CP2, “In Memoriam James Joyce”, p. 802)

Geddes’s inclusive approach indeed reminds us of the comprehensive view MacDiarmid wished to achieve in his late ‘encyclopedic poems’, such as “In Memoriam James Joyce”, where the passage above is taken from, and “The Kind of Poetry I Want”. According to Gairn, MacDiarmid “was in accord with Geddes, who had critiqued the study of ‘dead anatomy’ he found in the conventional

³⁰⁷ Patrick Geddes, “The Sociology of Autumn”, 28.

³⁰⁸ Patrick Geddes, “The Sociology of Autumn”, 29.

³⁰⁹ Ibid.

³¹⁰ Patrick Geddes, “The Sociology of Autumn”, 28.

science classroom, and later tried to reform the way biology and geography were taught in Scottish schools and universities [...]”³¹¹ MacDiarmid’s encyclopedic poems are probably driven by the need for renewal in the contemporary education and meant to supply those knowledges and methods contemporary education was failing to provide. As Gairn suggests, the character Tam “(and by inference, MacDiarmid)” from “Tam o’ the Wilds” is “an antidote to ecological ignorance”, as he “demonstrates an encyclopaedic knowledge of Scottish wildlife and landscape similar to the observational practice celebrated in *Dìreadh*.”³¹² “Tam o’ the Wilds and the Many-Faced Mystery” tells the story of “Tam, ‘a common workin’ man’” with “an all-consuming interest in natural history which alienates him from his peers”,³¹³ and Gairn also suggests that in the same poem “[MacDiarmid] is [...] drawing a parallel between the self-sacrifice and dedication of the ideal poet (himself) and the ideal naturalist (Tam).”³¹⁴ Tam’s example is, then, functional to identifying the connection between poetry and science that MacDiarmid valued so much in his work. Through Tam, Gairn adds, “MacDiarmid” also “reveals his own interest in (and parades his knowledge of) zoology, botany and geography, chanting the diversity of the Scottish wildlife and landscape, the names of moths, birds, fish and mountains, and suggesting that this sort of complex regional knowledge is of more value than that transmitted by the Scottish educational system.”³¹⁵ MacDiarmid’s criticism in this regard is expressed in the ironical evocation of the outrage that a workman into sciences would spark among his peers:

[...] but what could he want
 Wi’ this passion for nature and science?
 It was sheer presumption in a man o’ his class
 – Settin’ human nature, in fact, at defiance !

³¹¹ Louisa Gairn, “MacDiarmid and Ecology”, 87. The quote from Geddes is from: Patrick Geddes, *Cities in Evolution*, ed. by Edinburgh Outlook Tower Association and London Association for Planning and Regional Construction (London: Knapp, Drewett and Sons, [1915] 1949), 16.

³¹² Louisa Gairn, “MacDiarmid and Ecology”, 87.

³¹³ Louisa Gairn, *Ecology and Modern Scottish Literature*, 94-5.

³¹⁴ *Ibid.*, 95.

³¹⁵ *Ibid.*

[...]

It wasna canny that the likes o' him
Should be pokin' his neb night in night out
Into things that teachers and ministers even
No' to speak o' the gentry kent naething about.

Kent naething aboot and, fegs, cared less!

(CP1, "Tam o' the Wilds and the Many-Faced Mystery", p. 369)

By highlighting the dumb outrage of Tam's peers, MacDiarmid sends a powerful message against cultural hegemonies. In the end, if Tam's peers think that it is not appropriate for workmen to engage in cultural activities, this is also because society and institutions have inculcated this belief into them. It is not convenient for institutions to have people exploring on their own, acquiring knowledge and even sharing it, without a 'guide' that imposes control over the information. Through Tam's words, MacDiarmid expresses the strong belief that knowledge should not be a luxury for few people, and that class or wealth do not automatically endow with the qualities of a good scientist: "I've strength and patience and a pair o' gleg een, / And it isna education, riches, or good birth / Advances science maist – else lang syne / A'd ha'e been learnt that's so learn on earth." (CP1, p. 371)

While MacDiarmid attacks cultural, social and economic hegemonies, he also shows an elitist attitude that Gairn has identified in the same poem, "Tam o' the Wilds", as well as, for example, in "In Talk with Donnchadh Bàn Mac an t'Saoir". Gairn sees "elitist intellectual heroism" and "the continuing influence of Nietzsche in MacDiarmid's dismissal of the 'masses' in these poems. Like the ideal poet", she adds, "Tam takes a solitary path, which is incomprehensible to society at large."³¹⁶ Tam's character, then, is expressive of MacDiarmid's position on social matters, such as education and human relationship with the environment. MacDiarmid, indeed, presents a model of ecological behaviour through Tam, whose attitude towards the animal and the vegetal world is markedly different from that of his peers. While Tam sits and studies innumerable species just for the sake of "knowledge" (CP1, p. 371), his peers know only the fishes they can eat:

³¹⁶ Louisa Gairn, "MacDiarmid and Ecology", 87.

“Wha kent ocht o’ fish alang that grey coast / Save herrin’ and haddock and cod
and a wheen mair / That folk could eat – the only test applied?” (CP1, p. 374).
Tam’s attitude is not exploitative or dominant towards nature, and this probably
surprises his peers who cannot make any sense of Tam’s “tireless” (CP1, p. 369)
activity: “Whiles a workmate tackled him bluntly and speired / ‘What’s the use o’t
a’? – what dy’e hope to get?” (CP1, p. 371). Tam’s quiet and humble answer to
such questions is: “‘Naithing, except the joy o’t, / And mair knowledge o’ wheen
things than ony man yet.” (CP1, p. 371)

Tam’s sense of “self-sacrifice and dedication” highlighted by Gairn is evident in
the poem when he is described as wandering “tireless” “alang the seashore / Or
inland owre field and forest and ben.” (CP1, p. 369), lying out in the cold all night
 (“Mony an ill gruize he got lyin’ oot / A’ nicht in snell winds or on water-logged
grun”, CP1, p. 370), and despite bad weather “on the wonders o’ nature still
intent.” (CP1, p. 373) Among other qualities, Tam possesses also a sense of awe
towards the natural world: “Every wave o’ the sea, every inch o’ the land / Was
fu’ o’ a thousand ferlies to him [...]” (CP1, p. 372). Gairn also highlights that
“Tam’s passion for nature and science’, a motivation which few understand, leads
to an acuteness of attention and observation which few share”.³¹⁷ She then quotes
the beautiful passage about Tam’s incredible gift, “the seein’ eye”, which notices
things which others are usually blind to:

He had the seein’ eye frae which naething could hide
And nocht that cam’ under his een was forgotten.
Fluently and vividly he could aye efter describe
The forms, and habits o’ a’ the immense
Maingie o’ animals he saw – an incredible tribe !
(CP1, “Tam o’ the Wilds and the Many-Faced Mystery”, p. 377)

Tam’s observation is not an act of dominance towards the natural world. A close
look at two passages describing Tam’s encounter with a badger and a heron shows
that the speaker is very keen on offering the animals’ perspective on the encounter
as well. Animals are indeed no passive recipients of Tam’s gaze, but are described

³¹⁷ Louisa Gairn, *Ecology and Modern Scottish Literature*, 95.

in the act of studying (the badger) or looking at their observer (the heron). By integrating a new perspective, the speaker successfully decentres man from his position of dominance. Indeed, both the badger's and the heron's behaviour or gaze are inquisitive, and they interrogate Tam on his presence in their world. Tam, on the other hand, is not depicted as bragging about human control and using knowledge as a form of power to claim ownership of the natural world. He approaches the animals with humility, awe and curiosity. Curiosity, in particular, marks the badger's reaction at finding Tam sleeping in "its lair": "whiles when he dozed in the sea-caves or woods / He was waukened – never in the least bit feart – / By something pit-pattin' against his legs / And f'und a rat or a foumart there / Or even a badger as curious as he / To study what this could be in its lair" (CP1, p. 374). As a result of this shifting perspective, it is the badger who takes on the naturalist's qualities of curiosity and observation. On the other hand, Tam becomes the badger's object of study. While an equal relationship is established, the speaker does not elaborate much on a possible connection or understanding between Tam and the animal. A sense of estrangement, instead, is expressed by the unwelcome look of the heron, which perceives Tam's stepping into and lingering in its world as an invasion: "A heron stared at him wi' its bright yellow e'e / Fu' in the face as if askin' what right / He had in solitudes where the human form / Is sae seldom seen [...]" (CP1, p. 376). The choice of the word "right" here is very significant, as it works on the assumption that human actions towards nature always result in appropriation. It is no wonder that the heron is so wary of men, and probably feels that Tam's presence represents an act of invasion. Moreover, through the heron's question, the speaker is bringing up the interesting ecocritical issue on whether humans can have a right over nature. In this regard, the question of nature's rights, as discussed in chapter two, emerges. Since humans have laws that punish burglars or whoever breaks in their properties and houses, should nature have the right to protect itself from undesired guests too, especially when their intention is nothing but to take from it?

Another important example of an effective way of relating to the non-human world is the poem "In Talk with Donnchadh Bàn Mac an t'Saoir". Natural history as a theme underlies both "Tam o' the Wilds" and "In Talk with

Donnchadh Bàn Mac an t'Saoir”, but while it features as the main interest of Tam in the former poem, in the latter appears as an intertextual element intertwining with the poetical world of Duncan Bàn McIntyre. Indeed, an important influence on MacDiarmid’s use of science in poetry, according to Béatrice Duchateau, are “his translations of 18th century Gaelic poetry: Duncan Bàn McIntyre’s *The Praise of Ben Dorain* (1940), an elegy for this mountain³¹⁸, consisting mostly in a botanical catalogue, and Alasdair MacMhaighstir Alasdair *Birlinn Chlann Raghnaill / Clanranald’s Galley* (1935) an oar song ‘filled with exact technical detail’.”³¹⁹ MacDiarmid’s admiration for McIntyre and Alasdair is evident, as he addresses them directly in some of his poems. In a passage from *To Circumjack Cencrastus*, for example, MacDiarmid praises Alasdair’s all-comprehensive “genius” which “copes wi’ a’ that is / In endless ecstasies” (CP1, p. 211). Alasdair does not strive to search a connection with nature, rather, it is nature that spontaneously tunes to his poetry through the voices of animals:

The blythe broon wren and viein’ linnet
Tune up their pipes in you,
The blackcock craws, the reid hen’s in it,
Swan and cuckoo;
Fishes’ and bees’ and friskin’ calves’
Acutes and graves!...
(CP1, *To Circumjack Cencrastus*, p. 211)

Towards the end of this passage, MacDiarmid’s expresses the wish to “inherit, / and manifest in a’ my rhymes” MacMhaighstir Alaisdar’s “spirit” and, we can safely assume, also that spontaneous connection with nature that MacMhaighstir Alasdair voiced in his poetry.

McIntyre is mentioned in two poems: “In Talk with Donnchadh Bàn Mac an t’Saoir” and “Further Talk with Donnchadh Bàn Mac an t’Saoir”, “written”, according to Gairn, “after working on his verse translation of ‘Ben Dorain’.”³²⁰

³¹⁸ Beinn Dorain is a Scottish mountain in the Bridge of Orchy Hills.

³¹⁹ Béatrice Duchateau, “Hugh MacDiarmid and the Scottish Landscape: Landscape as a Sign”, 167. Gairn quotes: Roderick Watson, *The Literature of Scotland: the Middle Ages to the Nineteenth Century*. Basingstoke: Palgrave MacMillan, 2007, 23.

³²⁰ Louisa Gairn, “MacDiarmid and Ecology”, 94.

An example of powerful connection between human and non-human world is offered in the poem “In Talk with Donnchadh Bàn Mac An t’Saoir”, which along with “Further Talk with Donnchadh Bàn Mac An t’Saoir” “incorporate material borrowed from the ecologist Frank Fraser Darling’s pioneering ecological study, *A Herd of Red Deer* (1937)”,³²¹ Gairn notes. Gairn also points out that “MacDiarmid, having mined Fraser Darling’s work for technical information as well as poetic imagery, addresses Macintyre on matters of effective deer stalking, the influence of environmental conditions and aspects of animal biology.”³²² If Tam’s relationship with nature, however full and a model of ecological behaviour, was marked

by estrangement, MacIntyre, the great eighteenth-century Gaelic poet, is described as successfully mediating between the human and the non-human world. As Gairn notes, Macintyre is “cast as a kind of Gaelic ‘Pan’” who “is capable of expressing ‘The speech of one neither man nor animal – or both – / Yet not monster; a being in whom both races meet / On friendly ground’.”³²³ MacIntyre’s gift is that of understanding both human and non-human language, as the spokesman of a long lost time of harmony, “when man’s affinity with nature was more strict / And his fellowship with every living thing more intimate and dear”. (CP2, p. 1099) More than ever, nature feels a desperate need for this quality to be found in poets, for its language to be translated and its voice be heard:

Nature needed, and still needs, this beautiful creature
 Standing betwixt man and animal, sympathising with each,
 Comprehending the speech of either race, and interpreting
 The whole existence of one to the other.

(CP2, “In Talk with Donnchadh Bàn Mac An t’Saoir”, p. 1099)

Gairn sees this creature as a “symbol for *poiesis* itself”. In this sense, it is “poetry” that “can fulfil this function as the point of connection or translation between humans and the natural world, a liminal ‘beautiful creature’, positioned ‘on the verge of nature’ (CP2, p. 1099).” As Gairn points out, this “is the central idea of

³²¹ Gairn, “MacDiarmid and Ecology”, 94.

³²² Gairn, “MacDiarmid and Ecology”, 94.

³²³ Gairn “MacDiarmid and Ecology”, 95. The quotation is from MacDiarmid, CP2, p. 1099.

ecopoetics, what Bate, after Heidegger, describes as ‘the song that names the earth’.³²⁴ Both ecopoets and their poems are “liminal” creatures able to mediate between the human and non-human world and restore a deeper “fellowship” “with every living things” in the humanity. As the quotation above from *To Circumjack Cencrastus* demonstrates, such “fellowship” was well known to Alasdair, who, like MacIntyre lived in a time where “man’s affinity with nature was more strict” (CP2, p. 1099) and poetry was akin to the natural language of the animals. MacDiarmid uses the term “intimate” to define this “fellowship”. Significantly, this is suggestive of Mabie’s theory on language originating from man’s “intimacy”³²⁵ with nature. As we have seen in chapter two, Mabie states that primitive men always looked at nature to “illustrat[e]” their inner lives, with the result that human language was deeply imbued with “words” “borrowed from natural phenomena or processes”.³²⁶ MacDiarmid’s Alasdair cannot even tell the difference between poetic language and natural language, as the animals “tune up their pipes in” his poetry. Such kinship is echoed by MacIntyre’s liminality, which helped him achieve the impossible ecopoetical dream of understanding the mind of a non-human creature:

[...] It is almost
 As if to know the life of a deer one must become a deer
 And live among them ; and as your life showed
 That is not so impossible as it may sound.
 You got near enough to such an imaginative identification
 To know that your life and theirs were part of one plan.
 (CP2, “In Talk with Donnchadh Bàn Mac An t’Saoir”, p. 1101)

MacIntyre goes so near to an “imaginative identification” with the deer, as to gain and directly experience the ‘ecological insight’ of the interconnection, thus taking on the role of mediator. As we have seen the “beautiful creature / Standing betwixt man and animal [...] And interpreting / The whole existence of one to the other” (CP2, p. 1099) stands for the poet but also for poetry itself, as Gairn

³²⁴ Gairn, “MacDiarmid and Ecology”, 95. The quotation is from Bate, *The Song of the Earth*, 175.

³²⁵ Hamilton Wright Mabie, “The Record in Language”, 102.

³²⁶ Hamilton Wright Mabie, “The Record in Language”, 85.

suggests. Poetry is “the point of connection or translation between humans and the natural world”³²⁷ as the poet is. Both are mediators. Both are that “beautiful creature” “nature” “needs” (CP2, p. 1099). MacIntyre’s gift, then, is that of translating his “imaginative identification” (CP2, p. 1101) with the deer into a ‘physical’? connection with the deer through poetry. This process is beautifully described by MacDiarmid at the end of “In Talk with Donnchadh Bàn Mac an t’Saoir”. Here, MacIntyre’s poetry is seen as the key to enter the non-human world of deers and live a half-mystical experience informed by contact and fulfilment:

– But only in *your* poetry can we feel we stand
 Some snowy November evening under the birch-trees
 By a tributary burn that flows
 Into the remote and lovely Dundonnell river
 And receive the most intimate, most initiating experience,
 When three hinds and a stag approach where we stand,
 Rise on their hind legs, and browse on the twigs above us.
 We could touch them ; their breath comes into our faces.
 Many more of the herd are within a few yards from us.
 We have the feeling of having reached that state
 All watchers of animals desire
 Of having dispensed with our physical presence.
 Or is that it? Is not really the bottom of our desire
 Not to be ignored but to be accepted? ...
 (CP2, “In Talk with Donnchadh Bàn Mac An t’Saoir”, p. 1102)

MacIntyre’s poetry recreates the experience of connection, thanks to a vivid and realistic description of the natural world. Gairn makes a point on this topic, reporting Sorley MacLean’s statement that “Macintyre’s genius consisted in his ‘objective naturalist realism.’”³²⁸ Staying true to the natural world, instead of layering it with human projections, allows a more genuine connection, which is the basis for ecopoetry. And Macintyre’s poetry, indeed, makes the readers

³²⁷ Louisa Gairn, “MacDiarmid and Ecology”, 95.

³²⁸ Gairn, “MacDiarmid and Ecology”, 94. Gairn quotes: Sorley MacLean, “On Realism in Gaelic Poetry”, in William Gillies (ed.), *Ris a’ Bhruthaich: Criticism and Prose Writings*. Stornoway: Acair, 1985, p. 34.

literally enter the world of deer, touch them, feel “their breath”: it is a physical and sensorial experience. Clark’s reflection on the passage from Abram’s *The Spell of the Sensuous*, quoted in chapter two, is very fitting here as it illustrates this experience: “since possession of bodily sentience is a shared feature of all living things, a certain basic common intelligibility exists between creatures.”³²⁹

Physicality is the language humans and other living beings share, it is the language both man and deer talk, a means of mutual recognition leading to acceptance: “Is not really the bottom of our desire / Not to be ignored but to be accepted?” (CP2, p. 1102) are the final lines of “In Talk with Donnchadh Bàn Mac An t’Saoir”. The speaker’s experience here is very different from Tam’s relationship with the heron, whose questioning look showed no sign of welcome. However, Tam’s experience is no less eco-sensitive, as it offers a model for a non-exploitative way of relating to the natural world. Showing an example of eco-sensitive behaviour like Tam’s, or connecting readers with the non-human world in Macintyre’s poems is what ecopoetry has the power to achieve.

3.2 Blending nature and poem: MacDiarmid’s ‘metapoetry’

In “Talk with Donnchadh Bàn Mac an t’Saoir” MacDiarmid interestingly uses the term “intimate” twice to define man’s relationship with the natural world. First, he tells about a time “when man’s affinity with nature was more strict / And his fellowship with every living thing more intimate and dear” (CP2, p. 1099). He then promises the readers that they would “receive the most intimate, most initiating experience” (CP2, p. 1102) through MacIntyre’s poetry. The term “intimate”, in this context, echoes Mabie’s idea of language originating from man’s “intimacy” with nature. The fact that language, according to this theory, owes nature its existence, is manifest in ecopoetry, where poetic language draws directly from natural images. Such connection is indeed significantly suggested in many poems of MacDiarmid, where the act of poem-making is compared to physical expressions of nature. For example, the “kandym”, a plant surviving the desert, becomes a metaphor for the poet’s “songs” in the poem “My Songs are

³²⁹ Timothy Clark “Phenomenology” in *The Oxford Handbook of Ecocriticism*, 281.

Kandym in the Waste Land”. It is one of the many examples of metapoetry connected to the natural world we can find in MacDiarmid’s poems.

A first look at the title of “My Songs are Kandym in the Waste Land” reveals an intertextual reference to T. S. Eliot’s *The Waste Land*. The first section, however, shows that the “waste” MacDiarmid refers to is exclusively that caused by the capitalist exploitation of the environment:

Capitalist culture to the great masses of mankind
 Is like the exploitative handling in America
 Of forest, grazing, and tilled lands
 Which exaggerates floods and reduces
 The dry-season flow of the rivers to almost nothing.
 [...]

 Forests slashed to the quick
 And the ground burned over,
 Grazing lands turning into desert,
 The tragic upsetting of the hydrologic cycle
 [...]

 Problems of erosion control, regulation of river-flow,
 Flood control, silt control, hydro-electric power.
 I turn from this appalling spectacle
 Of illimitable waste [...]

 (CP2, “My Songs are Kandym in the Waste Land”, p. 1142)

The passage clearly illustrates how MacDiarmid was fully aware that, by ruthlessly pursuing its exploitative aims, capitalism was making a wasteland of our planet. Indeed, as Béatrice Duchateau highlights, “in the 30s, MacDiarmid had thus *already* taken the full measure of the environmental problem in modern society.”³³⁰ Duchateau points out that MacDiarmid addresses here the main devastating consequences of human manipulation and activities on the environment: some of them concern river regulation, deforestation, climate change, the desertification of the land because of grazing, and the “upsetting of the hydrologic cycle”. However, the first lines of the passage disclose a far more

³³⁰ Béatrice Duchateau, “Hugh MacDiarmid and the Scottish Landscape: Landscape as a Sign”, 162.

alarming reality as “the capitalist system exploits both land and man, threatened alike and united in a de-romanticised scenery”³³¹. In this bleak scenario, MacDiarmid wishes for his poetry to be like “the kandym”, a plant surviving the desert and, metaphorically, the “wasteland” that capitalism is inflicting on the human and the non-human world alike. As Duchateau effectively explains:

The ‘kandym’ is a tall shrub that prevents the dune from crumbling down and creates vegetation on its soil. Poetry, too, can prevent humanity from murdering its natural surroundings. MacDiarmid’s definition suggests dreams of a new type of poetry that would be both communist and ecologist. Caring for humanity equals caring for the earth. Nature and man are one in a poetry that shows an incredible love for both.³³²

This perspective is furthered in “The Kind of Poetry I Want”, where MacDiarmid expresses his wish for a poetry “finding its universal material in the people” (CP2, p. 1011) and, as we shall see shortly, speaking the Earth’s true language. The second section of “My Songs are Kandym in the Waste Land” deals with the meta-poetical meaning of the “kandym”, whose life cycle, from seed taking root in the sand to shrub stopping “sand waves”, may symbolise the birth of the “song” (p. 1143)/poem and its struggle to thrive. It may even hint at MacDiarmid’s difficulties with contemporary critics of his work, or at the struggle for his communist/ecological poetry to take roots in the “waste land” of capitalism. From plants to rocks, MacDiarmid’s chosen natural images often convey ideas of resilience, strength and resistance. Along with this imagery, poetry is also associated with the idea of brightness, as in the beautiful Shetland lyric “To a Sea Eagle”, where the poet’s “song” attunes to the brilliance of the sun and even “outshines” it:

I used to walk on solid gr’und
Till it fell awa’ frae my feet
And, left in the void, I’d instantly

³³¹ Béatrice Duchateau, “Hugh MacDiarmid and the Scottish Landscape: Landscape as a Sign”, 163.

³³² Béatrice Duchateau, “Hugh MacDiarmid and the Scottish Landscape: Landscape as a Sign”, 163.

To get accustomed wi't.

Watchin' your prood flight noo I feel
 As a man may dae wi' a bairn,
 For withoot ony show at a'
 In deeper abysses I'm farin'.

Aye, withoot any show at a',
 Save whiles a sang I may sing
 Gets in resonance wi' the sun
 And ootshines't like a turning' wing.
 (CP1, "To a Sea Eagle", p. 440)

The first two stanzas of the poem are dominated by a spatial dichotomy based on the upward movement of the eagle and the downward movement of the speaker. Caught up in a sudden shift of space, the former experiences a state of physical and emotional disorientation that is loosely defined as "void". At this point of the poem, the indeterminacy of the term and the reference to an "eagle" in the title could offer misleading information about the speaker's position. The reader, indeed, may be under the impression that the speaker cannot feel the ground under his feet, because he is falling down from a considerable height. The downwards/upwards dichotomy becomes clear in the second stanza, when the speaker sees the eagle soaring above, while he is sinking deeper into "abysses". His feelings towards the bird are of admiration, as evident from the modifier "proud" that he chooses for the eagle's "flight". However, this sight makes him feel "as a man may dae [do] wi' a bairn [child]". This could mean that as a man is envious of the child's blissful ignorance of the world, so the speaker is envious of the eagle's obliviousness to human misery ("the abysses"). The third stanza functions as a turning point, as the speaker is offered the chance of soaring above through his poetic art. This happens when "a sang" he "may sing / gets in resonance wi' the sun", that may be described as a kind of attunement between poetry and the sun. Again, this sparks an interesting metapoetical reflection: poetry – metaphorically the "sang" – here is not just drawing images from the natural world, but is getting in tune with it and finally speaking the same

language. However, the last line clarifies that the speaker's "sang" does not only soar above human misery, but even "outshines" the sun. Does this suggest that the "sang"/poetry can speak the language of the natural world more effectively than its 'natives'? Does this mean that poetry as an artifice can enact the attributes of a flower, a bird or, as in this case, the sun, better than flower, bird and sun themselves? Or, to borrow Heidegger's concepts, is the "bringing forth" of poetry superior to "*physis*"³³³ (the "bringing forth" of nature)? Heidegger's view, as Michael E. Zimmerman explains, was in fact the opposite: "*Physis* seems to mean self-emergent coming-forth, as when a plant 'produces' itself by coming into bloom. Because the plant produces itself, it is a higher mode of *poiesis* than an artifact, which is produced through another."³³⁴ Has then poetry the power of getting so in tune with the natural world as to become a product from both worlds that eventually outperforms nature? Not exactly. In the second chapter I have mentioned Knickerbocker's interesting theory on the "artifice" of language being "natural" for ecopoets:

[eco]poems undo simple opposition between humans and nature; sensuous poesis operates from the assumption that humans (and their tools, including language) are both distinct and inseparable from the rest of nature. Rather than attempt to erase the artifice of their own poems (to make them seem more natural and supposedly, then, closer to nature), ... [ecopoets] unapologetically embrace artifice—not for its own sake, but as a way to relate meaningfully to the natural world. Indeed, for them, artifice *is* natural³³⁵

The "sang"/poem and the artifice underlying its creation are, indeed, the only way the speaker can "relate meaningfully" to the sun. In the end, then, MacDiarmid's poem/"sang" does not outperform the sun, but "outshines" it 'naturally', which is "like a turnin' wing".

Another interesting metapoetical passage is contained in "Stony Limits", a poem that functions as an "elegy for Charles Doughty", the poet, traveller and

³³³ Martin Heidegger in Jonathan Bate, *The Song of the Earth*, 253.

³³⁴ Michael E. Zimmerman, *Heidegger's Confrontation with Modernity: Technology, Politics, and Art*. Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1990, p. 233.

³³⁵ Scott Knickerbocker. *Ecopoetics: The Language of Nature, the Nature of Language*. Amherst: University of Massachusetts Press, 2012, 2 in Sarah Nolan, "Un-natural Ecopoetics: Natural/Cultural Intersections in Poetic Language and Form", 97.

author of *Travels in Arabia Deserta*, as Michael H. Whitworth reminds us.³³⁶ As Whitworth puts it, MacDiarmid considered Doughty’s linguistic experiments as “a precedent for his own work”. He also points out that in *The Modern Scot* MacDiarmid “explicitly linked Doughty’s defiance of conventional ideas of poetic diction with ‘the urgent and inescapable necessity of the poetic use of the full range of modern scientific terminology’”.³³⁷ The passage in object represents another example of MacDiarmid’s meta-poetical reflection on the interconnection between poetry and the natural world. In reference to the same passage, Whitworth points out that it “hints at the poems about poetry that MacDiarmid would later create in ‘The Kind of Poetry I Want’ (1960), in which an encyclopaedic range of discourses provides the basis for similes about poetry. In ‘Stony Limits’, however, MacDiarmid draws exclusively on geology”.³³⁸ As in the previous examples, the literary device of the simile stresses an inherent similarity – a kindredness – between poem and the natural world, in this case “the stone world”³³⁹. The outcome is the ‘naturalness’ of poetic language, turning the poem into a rock or into a whole section of lunar landscape:

The poem that would praise you must be
 Like the glass of some rock, sleek brown, crowded
 With dark incipient crystal growths, we see;
 Or a glimpse of Petavius may have endowed it
 With the tubular and dumb-bell-shaped inclusions surrounded
 By the broad reaction rims it needs.
 I have seen it in dreams and know how it abounded
 – Ah! would I could find in me like seeds! –
 As the north-easterly garden in the lunation grows,
 A spectacle not one man in ten millions knows.
 (CP1, “Stony Limits”, p. 421)

³³⁶ Michael H. Whitworth, “The Use of Science in Hugh MacDiarmid’s Later Poetry”, 101 in *The Edinburgh Companion to Hugh MacDiarmid*.

³³⁷ Michael H. Whitworth, “The Use of Science in Hugh MacDiarmid’s Later Poetry”, 101. MacDiarmid’s quotation is from: “Charles Doughty and the Need for Heroic Poetry” from *The Modern Scot in Selected Prose*, ed. Alan Riach. Manchester: Carcanet, 1992.

³³⁸ Michael H. Whitworth, “The Use of Science in Hugh MacDiarmid’s Later Poetry”, 101.

³³⁹ Hugh MacDiarmid, “On a Raised Beach”, 426.

The “you” in the passage refers to Doughty, to whom the poem is dedicated. As Whitworth points out, the geological references are meant as “a tribute to Doughty” and are drawn from the *Geological Magazine*:³⁴⁰ “the name of the lunar crater Petavius”, for example, comes from an article by E. H. L. Schwartz. Moreover, the “north-east easterly garden is part of crater Alphonsus, which the turn-of-the-century astronomer William Henry Pickering had suggested contained vegetation, an idea that Schwartz cautiously endorsed and developed.”³⁴¹ Whitworth’s comments are very valuable, as they shed light on the complexity of the passage, which develops into three main interwoven clusters of images: light, rocks and plants. The “poem” here, unlike the “sang” from “To a Sea Eagle”, does not “outshine” the sun, but radiates a dim, intimate and lunar light: no bright skies or the eagle’s dazzling flap, but the “dark” “crystals” of the rock, its “sleek brown” “glass” and moon craters. The poet sets the tone for an elegy. A close look at the passage reveals that the imagery of rocks is inextricably intertwined to vegetal imagery. Here, rocks are indeed connected to ideas of growing and abundance: “the glass of some rock” is “crowded with” “crystal growths” and “a garden” “grows” in the ground of a lunar crater. What is more, the speaker mentions that “it” (probably the rock surrounded by crystals) “abounded”, and wishes to “find” the rock in himself, “like seeds”. The ambiguity of the pronoun “it” makes the interpretation of the two lines rather difficult. However, if “it” refers to the rock, the comparison with “seeds” conveys the image of rocks that are capable of reproducing and proliferating. The theme of ‘life’ inside the rocks is recurrent in MacDiarmid’s poetry and will be further explored in the last chapter of the present thesis. As Whitworth noted, this passage is very suggestive of what MacDiarmid would accomplish in “The Kind of Poetry I Want” in terms of discussing poetry inside a poem. “The Kind of Poetry I Want” is, indeed, the most important example of meta-poetry in MacDiarmid’s work, as a well as manifesto of his poetics. The poem is composed by a long list whose points are long passages, each beginning with phrases like “A poetry...”, “A poetry that...”, “A poetry like”, “A poetry with” and followed by the qualities poetry should have

³⁴⁰ Michael H. Whitworth, “The Use of Science in Hugh MacDiarmid’s Later Poetry”, 101.

³⁴¹ Michael H. Whitworth, “The Use of Science in Hugh MacDiarmid’s Later Poetry”, 102.

for MacDiarmid. Among these are multiculturalism, erudition, interest in people, interdisciplinary drive, universality, engagement with science and nature. The meta-poetical aspect of “The Kind of Poetry I Want” is then enacted on many levels, as it contains MacDiarmid’s reflections on poetic language and on other theoretical questions such as his aims, his models, his way of representing landscape in the literary text, and the themes that should feature in his poetry.

Interestingly, MacDiarmid’s meta-poetical reflections most of the times revolve around the role of the natural world in his work, as the following passage from “The Kind of Poetry I Want” perfectly illustrates:

A poetry – since I was born a Scottish Gael
 Of earth’s subtlest speech, born with a clever tongue,
 Moving one’s tongue and lips and throat
 In bird-sounds, mocking the chewing of the joree,
 The belly-hoot of the great horned howl –
 To put the skids under the whole of modern consciousness
 [...]
 (CP2, “The Kind of Poetry I Want”, p. 1009)

Meta-poetical reflections on poetic language and literary influences appear here deeply interwoven with the natural world. There is a striking resemblance to Mabie’s proto-ecocritical theories, as language and natural sounds are an essential tool in MacDiarmid’s attempt to shape a poetry speaking the tongue of the Earth. We can once more observe that MacDiarmid takes as a model seventeenth-century Gaelic poetry, whose “descriptive power”, as Gairn suggests, he considers as “akin” to “scientific enquiry and painstaking field observation”.³⁴² MacDiarmid, then, wishes for his poetry “to put the skids under the whole modern consciousness”, and certainly for a poetry following the example of great Gaelic poets with their realism and semi-scientific observation of nature. This is much clearer when MacDiarmid adds that he does not want a poetry “ignorant like those who prate of ‘empty air’, / Unaware of its ceilings and vaults, the Heaviside Layer and the Appleton Layer” (CP2, p. 1009). The opposition between Gaelic poets and the ignorance surrounding scientific matters of some of his contemporaries

³⁴² *The Edinburgh Companion to Hugh MacDiarmid*, “MacDiarmid and Ecology”, 94.

emerges. For MacDiarmid, “modern consciousness” is most certainly to blame for such ignorance. Therefore, these lines may also be read in terms of MacDiarmid’s commitment to a Scottish cultural renewal and his disapproval of the contemporary education system. As discussed in chapter one, MacDiarmid wanted students at Scottish universities to acquire the same “full historical and scientific knowledge” and “broad national understanding” that “younger Scottish writers”³⁴³ had. In his view, “scientific knowledge” had indeed to be cultivated along with a study of national culture and matters.³⁴⁴

The first chapter has highlighted how MacDiarmid was eager to take up the role of the ancient bard as a guide and keeper of national knowledge. It is probably the urgency for a Scottish cultural renewal that prompted MacDiarmid to express his bardic role in terms of a comprehensive and encyclopedic poetry. This is indeed the trait of many late poems, such as “In Memoriam James Joyce” and, to a lesser extent, “The Kind of Poetry I Want”. Both poems, in fact, are expressive of MacDiarmid’s drive for synthesising knowledge, and are thus characterized by a display of virtuosity and erudition, such as the use of quotes and words in foreign languages. “The Kind of Poetry I Want” explicitly articulates MacDiarmid’s desire for “a poetry concerned with all that is needed / Of the sum of human knowledge and expression” (p. 1004). He also wishes for his poetry to be “μυριόνοῦς” (“murionous”) and “visvato-mukha” — terms that MacDiarmid claims to “have borrowed” respectively “from a Greek monk, who applies it / To a Patriarch of Costantinople”, and from “the *Bhagavad-Gita*” (p. 1016), a famous and ancient Hindu text in Sanskrit. As MacDiarmid explains in the notes, the terms mean respectively “myriad-minded” and “facing in all directions”, thus clearly indicating a kind of poetry which relies on an interdisciplinary drive. Most importantly, they are suggestive of MacDiarmid’s global drive³⁴⁵ and his desire to express his bardic role on a transnational level as well.

³⁴³ Hugh MacDiarmid, *Lucky Poet*, 282-283.

³⁴⁴ Hugh MacDiarmid, *To Circumjack Cencrastus*, 203.

³⁴⁵ For MacDiarmid’s double local and global drive see Gairn, *Ecology and Modern Scottish Literature*, 104.

Furthermore, some passages from “The Kind of Poetry I Want” cast a light, as it has already been hinted, upon MacDiarmid’s metapoetical reflections on the use of science in his poetry. His disapproval of the ignorance concerning scientific matters and his admiration for realistic Gaelic poetry are just some of the possible examples. Significantly, in “The Kind of Poetry I Want” MacDiarmid transcribes verbatim an entire passage from “Poetry and Science”. Some lines from this passage have been partly discussed at the beginning of the first section, and have been quoted by Gairn to stress how MacDiarmid intended his “poetry of facts” to be akin to the botanist’s power of observation in terms of disclosing reality.³⁴⁶ As it has already been noted, this is a poetry which is ‘eco-sensitive’ par excellence, as it eschews shallow and “enframing” descriptions of the landscape. “Specialist knowledge”, in this case botany, endows man with a deeper understanding, as it makes “three-dimensional / His awareness of” “the complex beauty” (p. 1005) of nature. The botanist’s expertise and the “poetry of facts” alike, then, have the power of providing a “three-dimensional” representation of a seemingly flat landscape, in a process similar to the Heideggerian “unconcealment”. MacDiarmid’s vision of science, here, is not “enframing”, in the sense of objectifying and commodifying nature, but coincides with the Greek *technē* – a non-“enframing” technology. As we have seen in chapter two, Burnside beautifully highlights how the ancient meaning of science (*technē*) was “skill, craft, art”, thus suggest[ing] something human and holistic, rather than the mechanical and reductionist [...]”.³⁴⁷ He, then, points out that “from the first, humans have used *scientia* and *technē* to navigate the world—not just in the fight for survival, but also in the quest for beauty and a sense of the authentic.”³⁴⁸ MacDiarmid indeed recuperates this meaning of “*technē*”=“art”, by comparing his poetry to science. What is more, the power of the botanist’s expertise in providing man with enriched aesthetic dimension bears a striking resemblance to the role of science in ancient men’s “quest for beauty”. A meta-poetical passage from “The Kind of Poetry I Want” shows how such aesthetic dimension inevitably escapes the writer who lacks skills of observation and does not stick to “bare facts” (p.

³⁴⁶ Louisa Gairn, “MacDiarmid and Ecology”, 83.

³⁴⁷ John Burnside. “A Science of Belonging: Poetry as Ecology”, 94.

³⁴⁸ John Burnside. “A Science of Belonging: Poetry as Ecology”, 94.

1026). In this passage, MacDiarmid identifies the obstacles of achieving a vibrant and real depiction of the countryside whose “elusive spirit” “Alive and deeply felt in the mind / [...] dies on the pen, / Slain by the cold winds of propaganda, / The mists of exaggeration, / The warm fog of sentimentality.” (p. 1026) It is interesting to note how MacDiarmid expresses here his disapproval towards those writers who consider the landscape as merely subservient to political messages or distort it with excesses or sentimentality. The ideal attitude of a poet, MacDiarmid suggests, would be that of Mary Webb’s, whose descriptions of nature relies on such “rare powers of observation” (p. 1025) that can “capture / the elusive spirit of the countryside” (p. 1026). More than most writers, she understood how the natural world is not a mere scenery assigned to stasis and death, but how “the story of a flower” is “not one of stillness, / But of a faint gradations of movement that we cannot see”. (p. 1025) Mary Webb’s sensitive eye to nature and its reality is praised by the poet along with her “deep kinship” and “her intuitive sympathy with leaf and flower” (p. 1026). Among the many qualities a writer should have to really “capture the elusive spirit of a countryside”, MacDiarmid mentions “humility” and “simplicity”(p. 1026). Mary Webb indeed shows this attitude by not dismissing flowers as mere decorative elements in a landscape, and by attributing them a kind of agency of their own, that usually escapes men. Recognising the extent of human limits when dealing with nature is a great sign of humility. And humility, as it has been suggested in chapter two, fosters that ‘positive passivity’ that ecopoetry utilises to both undermine notions of human supremacy on the planet and promote non-destructive ways of relating to the non-human world. Mary Webb has ‘simply’ chosen a very eco-poetical way of observing and treating the natural world in literary texts. MacDiarmid’s word choice for Webb’s relationship with the non-human world is very telling on this regard. Terms like “deep kinship” and “intuitive sympathy” hint at a bond even deeper than interconnection — this is more a blood tie, where understanding needs no logic or words, but develops on an intuitive and empathic level. As MacDiarmid writes, Webb’s “deep kinship” and “intuitive sympathy” have the power of “extending without a break into the human kingdom” (p. 1026). This is a powerful statement which suggests MacDiarmid’s alignment with the ecocritical

idea that the human and the non-human world are not separate. As a consequence, nature is not considered as other, but as kindred, and similarly man is no other from nature, but part of it.

The passages from “The Kind of Poetry I Want” discussed above include both MacDiarmid’s ideas of bad and good ways of representing the landscape in the literary text. Further moments of meta-poetry that focus on the natural world appear when MacDiarmid pinpoints the themes that will feature in his poetry. For example, in the passage before his praise of Mary Webb, MacDiarmid wishes for his poetry to be “full as the countryside” and then, surprisingly, gives a clichéd description of the natural world inhabiting it. Despite being awash with threadbare images, such as a “twilight” in a “savage orange light”, “cuckoos contradicting nightingales”, “pheasants travelling on fast, dark wings” (p. 1025), the passage unexpectedly takes on a different turn, as it often happens with MacDiarmid’s work, and tunes in with the eco-poetical vision of Mary Webb. As it has been partly illustrated in chapter one, passages that contradict the eco-poetical discourse can be found elsewhere in his poetry and, as “The Kind of Poetry I Want” has perfectly exemplified, even within the same poem.

Another passage dealing with the content of his poetry in “The Kind of Poetry I Want” is very worth mentioning as it sheds a light on MacDiarmid’s admiration for female genius and female achievements in every field. As with Mary Webb for literature, here he chooses scientist Marie Curie to make an interesting reflection on poetry:

A poetry that speaks ‘of trees,
 From the cedar tree that is in Lebanon
 Even unto the hyssop that springeth out of the wall,’
 And speaks also ‘of beasts, and of fowl,
 And of creeping things, and of fishes,’
 And needs, like Marya Sklodowska at her laboratory table,
 For its open-eyed wonderment at the varied marvels of life,
 Its insatiable curiosity about mainspring,
 Its appetite for the solution of problems,
 Black fragments of pitch-blende from Saxony and Bohemia,
 Greenish-blue charcolite from Portugal and Tonkin,

Siskin-green uranium mica from France,
 Canary-yellow veined carnotite from Utah,
 Greenish-grey tujamunite from Turkestan,
 Pinkish-grey fergusonite from Norway,
 Gold-tinted Australian monazite sand,
 Greenish-black betafite from Madagascar,
 And emerald-green tobernite from Indo-China [...]
 (CP2, "The Kind of Poetry I Want", pp. 1019-20)

Marie Curie is significantly referred to by her maiden name "Skłodowska" and her Slavic first name Marya. It is not far-fetched to assume that the reason for this may lie in MacDiarmid's strong nationalism and thus in his respect for Curie's attachment to her home country, Poland. A close look at the passage reveals, however, also a striking juxtaposition of religious and scientific discourses: the first quotation, a passage from King James Bible (1 Kings 4) entitled "Solomon's Wisdom", is followed by the reference to Marie Curie's scientific achievements and the articulation of a long list of minerals. Again, this choice should not surprise readers acquainted with MacDiarmid's style, as it may be considered part of his philosophy and in line with the spirit of the so-called "Caledonian antiszygy". MacDiarmid, then, wishes for a poetry both speaking the wisdom of King Solomon, and thus expressive of his bardic function of cultural guide for his nation, and sharing some qualities of the scientific mind, such as "wonderment", "insatiable curiosity" and "appetite for the solution of problems" (p. 1019). In the end, the reason for that long list of minerals is MacDiarmid's argument that poetry shares science the same object of research. The primary importance of landscape *per se* and not as a backdrop or mirror of human feelings is pointed out in a very fitting passage from "The Kind of Poetry I Want":

And a poetry in which as in a film
 Pure setting – the physical conditions
 Under which action takes place – is extremely important,
 So important, in fact, as to make us sometimes impatient
 With a tale that is but crudely attached to it.
 (CP2, "The Kind of Poetry I Want", p. 1022)

The term “setting” here should not be interpreted as a subservient feature of the work of art, but as one holding such great importance as to overshadow the “tale”. What MacDiarmid illustrates in the passage is exactly the opposite of non-ecopoetical writings, where the plot or the lyrical I take over the literary text at the expense of the landscape. In the same passage MacDiarmid wishes for his poetry to be “like that great Sheep Dog Film / Whose setting is in my own countryside” (p. 1022), and plunges us into the landscape of the Scottish Borders. The reference is meant to celebrate his native region and the bond between the place and its inhabitants:

The landscape and the people match perfectly.
 The slow roll of the Border valleys,
 The timeless fells and the ledges of rough rock,
 The low dark sky and the hard going of the ground
 Are an environment for no other human beings
 Than those seen in this film.
 (CP2, “The Kind of Poetry I Want”, p. 1022)

MacDiarmid’s description infuses an unnatural fixity and a sense of timelessness into the landscape, as reflected by expressions like the “slow roll of the Border valleys”, the “timeless fells” and the looming “low dark sky”. The bleak atmosphere, the stark environment of the place evoked in the passage are no match for outsiders but something that only “those seen in this film”, namely natives, can fit in. However, this is more than a question of human adaptability, which would tilt the balance in favour of anthropocentrism and confine the place to a subsidiary role. As MacDiarmid’s puts it, “The landscape and the people match perfectly”, thus highlighting a sense of “deep kinship” (p. 1026) that the camera helps to single out: “the first sequence / brings men and stones together in one meaning.” (p. 1022) These very powerful lines suggest that this kind of cinema is able to bring forth the affinity between man and the natural world. Considering that the film is but an example to express a meta-poetical reflection, it is implied that MacDiarmid wishes for his poetry to achieve the same power.

Depictions of Scottish natural places as inhospitable or unwelcoming are not so uncommon in MacDiarmid’s poetry. As he points out in *Lucky Poet*: “Scotland is

not generally regarded as a land flowing with milk and honey – and I have lived in diverse parts of it long enough now to know that it is seldom, perhaps, that it presents itself in that guise.”³⁴⁹ “The North Face of Liathach” perfectly illustrates this idea, by depicting the stern landscape of the Liathach mountain and underlining that “Scotland is full of such places”, although “few (few Scots even) know them” (p. 1055). As the “environment” of the Borders is “for no other human beings / Than” the natives, so is the mountain a place for few and definitely not a touristic destination: “This is no place for children / Or for holiday dawdling. / It has no friendly sand or cove. / It is almost frightening [...]” (p. 1055). The modifier “frightening”, along with expressions such as “sheer cliffs”, “spurs”, “pinnacles” and “jagged teeth” (p. 1055) form a common vocabulary for the experience of the sublime. The romantic halo surrounding MacDiarmid’s depiction is also stressed by the mysticism he attaches to the experience of the mountain: “Every Scot should make a pilgrimage here / Just once, and alone.” (p. 1055) Along the lines of the powerful expressionism of his early lyrics, the mountain suddenly appears as a threatening entity endowed with destructive force and elemental violence:

Seen through a murky patch of fog,
Violent, ruthless, incalculable.
I have seen a head blood-drained to this hue.
But this cliff is not dead.
It has an immense life of its own
And will loom, as if it could come rushing
To beat, to maim, to kill
(Damned anti-climax of a notion!)
Just as it looms to-day
After every human being now alive
Has returned, not to rock but to dust.
(CP2, “The North Face of Liathach”, p. 1056)

The mountain’s majestic and threatening shape, rearing above humans, is a strongly apocalyptic image. Interestingly, the dichotomy articulated in the passage

³⁴⁹ Hugh MacDiarmid, *Lucky Poet*, p. 219.

– eternity (mountain)/transience (human being) – has a familiar ring, as it echoes the central tension underlying “On a Raised Beach”: human finitude and the immortality of the rocks. The difference lies basically in the mood the two images are dealt with: in “The North Face of Liathach”, the reader perceives the devastating fury of the mountain, in “On a Raised Beach” he observes the inhuman and “adamantine” (p. 429) calmness of the rocks. The speaker’s attitude is also different in the two poems: while in the first he looks at the mountain with frightened awe, the first two lines of the passage suggesting a sense of physical distance and perhaps an impossible connection, in the second he looks at the rocks with longing and wishes to emulate them. Intriguingly, this enacts a language of desire, which contrasts with the detachment of the rocks he is so eager to achieve: “Bread from stone is my sole and desperate dearth” (p. 423), the “world” of the rocks is “austerely intoxicating” (p. 428), and “I am enamoured of the desert at last” (p. 431), he declares. This last line introduces a highly significant passage concerning the not-so-slightly love relationship the speaker engages with the natural world of the rocks:

I am enamoured of the desert at last,
 The abode of supreme serenity is necessarily a desert.
 My disposition is towards spiritual issues
 Made inhumanly clear; I will have nothing interposed
 Between my sensitiveness and the barren but beautiful reality;
 The deadly clarity of this ‘seeing of a hungry man’
 Only traces of a fever passing over my vision
 Will vary, troubling it indeed, but troubling it only
 In such a way that it becomes for a moment
 Superhumanly, menacingly clear – the reflection
 Of a brightness through a burning crystal.
 (CP1, 431)

Some lines and expressions in the passage adopt, without doubt, that language of desire I have identified as emerging from the whole poem: phrases such as “I am enamoured of the desert” or word-choices such as “fever” or “hungry man”, and the speaker’s desire of being one with “barren but beautiful reality” create a love

and sexual imagery that ultimately hints at consummation. The word “fever” can be interpreted in two ways: it may hint at the blurry vision upon reality the speaker has as a human and thus limited being, or also at the speaker’s burning desire towards knowledge of reality. The “hungry man” longs for “bread from stones” (p. 423), which metaphorically stands for clarity of vision. It is implied, indeed, that the speaker’s hunger can be satisfied only when knowledge of reality is grasped, when he has “nothing interposed between” his “sensitiveness and the barren but beautiful reality”. It is a very powerful way of getting to know reality, as intimate and intense as making love. However, this state of clearness he would eventually achieve has all the earmarks of an epiphany – a quick and fleeting look into the truth, as clear as “a burning crystal”. This “superhumanly” and “menacingly clear” kind of “clarity” is opposed to the “deadly clarity” which is inherently human, with “deadly”, then, suggesting the mortality and limits of their possessors. Nonetheless, “super humanity” is not inherently human at all. This kind of vision is deeply unsettling and threatening, as the modifier “menacingly” and ominously announces. In “Burnt Norton” from the *Four Quartets*, T. S. Eliot writes that: “[...] human kind / Cannot bear very much reality.”³⁵⁰ Thomas Howard gives a beautiful interpretation of these lines:

We know, for example, that we cannot bear very much of the reality of flames. We need a hearth between us and the fire. [...] Or the vision of God, which is the ultimate Reality [...] But thank heaven that the heavens don’t split open and allow us to gaze straight at the Sapphire Throne. Everyone in the Bible who found himself facing a mere angel – only a messenger of the holy – fell on his face in fright. Human kind, it seems, cannot bear very much reality.³⁵¹

The phrase “menacingly clear” in “On a Raised Beach”, then, sounds as if the speaker could peer through the keyhole of reality for a brief moment, but the vision of what lies behind it is too powerful and does allow him bear it longer than a glimpse.

³⁵⁰ T. S. Eliot. *Four Quartets in The Complete Poems & Plays*. London: Faber and Faber, 1969, p. 172.

³⁵¹ Thomas Howard, *Dove Descending: A Journey into T. S. Eliot’s Four Quartets*. San Francisco: Ignatius Press, 2006, pp. 37-8.

As the examples discussed so far show, MacDiarmid's late poetry offers glimpses of a sense of awe in front of the mystery of the natural world that echo his early lyrics. Mystery and awe are often expressed in late poems by the use of obscure and technical words, which serve the same function as the vernacular in early poems. As Whitworth has noted, the obscurity of scientific language "verbally dramatise[s] the strangeness of the non-human world".³⁵² I would argue that the use of scientific language is a sign of reverence towards the non-human world. The meaning of reverence lies in a depiction which stays true to nature: technical terms serve well the purpose of conveying accuracy and realism. However, there is another side to the 'realism', conveyed by the obscurity of technical terms. As the real essence of the non-human world cannot be fully expressed by human language, obscure terms can help convey such mystery. As Gairn has commented, "when MacDiarmid says 'I will have nothing interposed / Between my sensitiveness and the barren but beautiful reality' (CP1, p. 431), he highlights that essential paradox of ecopoetics: language is both a barrier and a conduit to our experience of the natural world."³⁵³ In another meta-poetical poem, "The Pathetic Fallacy", MacDiarmid discusses how the common literary device in the title may be a barrier to this experience. He asks: "Can I convey the truth / Of hill or sea?" and answers immediately "Nay, if I speak, they turn to parts of me" (CP2, p. 1221). MacDiarmid's refusal to project human feeling onto the natural world is suggestive of an eco-poetical approach to the landscape. In this sense, MacDiarmid is very Heideggerian, as he wants to stay true to the essence of the natural world, and wants his poetry to enact that "unconcealment" Heidegger talks about – "bringing forth" the essence, the being of the non-human world. Pathetic fallacy, in this case, would be an "enframing" device, as it does not convey the true being of the natural world. However, the third stanza points out at the fact that men cannot "escape" "pathetic fallacy" (CP2, p. 1222) and, by extension, human language and its limitations. "Pathetic fallacy", then, is not a choice anymore, but ineluctably marks human condition. It is our way of looking at the world, it pervades our self-centred perspective, and we cannot help it. As a consequence, human language functions here, to use Gairn's words, as a "barrier"

³⁵² Michael H. Whitworth, "The Use of Science in Hugh MacDiarmid's Later Poetry", 110.

³⁵³ Louisa Gairn, "MacDiarmid and Ecology", 91.

“to our experience of the natural world”. The thought of men being trapped in this sad and inescapable condition strikes the speaker with the force of an appalling epiphany:

It is a monstrous thing
That Earth can be
No more to me than what
My thoughts decree [...]
(CP2, “Pathetic fallacy”, p. 1222)

As discussed above, MacDiarmid’s expressions of nature to represent poetry often suggest ideas of resilience, strength and resistance, as the “kandym”-poem in the desert, the “wing”-poem “outshining” the sun, the “rock”-poem and its lunar beauty convey. In “Pathetic Fallacy”, instead, such qualities become useless, and man is represented as trapped in an inescapable condition which prevents him from genuinely representing reality into language and consequently into poetry. The creative act is here depicted by MacDiarmid as an experience fraught with hardship, suffering and sacrifice. A further example of this perspective can be identified in MacDiarmid’s use of the mountain as a metaphor for poetry in two passages respectively from “To Circumjack Cencrastus” and “In Memoriam James Joyce”, as observed by Duchateau. The first passage she examines is from “The Mavis of Pabal”, a section from “To Circumjack Cencrastus”. Here “the narrator, the Mavis, a common type of bird”, which “sings on the top of a hill but feels unsteady”, becomes a metaphor for the poet himself. The “crest” where the bird is standing, then, “is also the standing point where the poet surveys his poem, ‘this bricht impossible hill’. The poem slowly begins to become mountain.”³⁵⁴ The second example Duchateau analyses is from “In Memoriam James Joyce”:

We come on ice-fields like mammoth ploughlands
And mountainous séracs which would puzzle an Alpine climber.
That is what adventuring in dictionaries means,
All the abysses and altitudes of the mind of man, [...]

³⁵⁴ Béatrice Duchateau, “Hugh MacDiarmid and the Scottish Landscape: Landscape as a Sign”, 171-2.

(CP2, “In Memoriam James Joyce”, p. 823)

As Duchateau highlights, “the climbing process described here establishes [...] the synthesis of language and natural scenery, made possible both by lexis, metaphor and syntax (in the list). Mountain is made list, landscape language, and *vice-versa*.”³⁵⁵ In both the examples, the image of the mountain or the act of climbing are related to poem-making, and the stress is on the struggles and the strenuous efforts behind this hard process. In this case the qualities of resilience, strength and resistance highlighted above characterise more the poet than the poem, and are instrumental to the creative act. There are two poems where the creative process seems to require more than a titanic amount of strain, and becomes an act of self-sacrifice. An example is “To a Friend and Fellow Poet” that, according to Whitworth, “presents an astonishing analogy between the reproductive processes of a parasite, the female guinea worm, and the creative processes of a poet.”³⁵⁶ The poem indeed opens with a kind of gruesome but perfectly fitting simile: “It is with the poet as with the guinea worm / Who, to accommodate her teeming progeny / Sacrifices nearly every organ of her body [...]” (CP2, p. 1057). The analogy between the worm’s sacrifice and the poet’s creative act becomes clearer at the end of the poem, where poetry is significantly described as a “suicidal art” (CP2, p. 1058). As Whitworth has highlighted, “the account of the guinea worm is not MacDiarmid’s”, but is one of his “adaptation[s]” of scientific “sources”. It is “drawn from a description by the physician and parasitologist Sir Patrick Manson (1844-1922) in his *Lectures on Tropical Diseases* (1905)”.³⁵⁷ Whitworth’s comparison between the original source and MacDiarmid’s appropriation focuses especially on the depiction of the guinea worm. “MacDiarmid’s text” Whitworth points out, “removes the patient and the [doctor’s] daily visit” of the original source “and allows the reader a narrower focus and an almost exclusive concentration on the worm”.³⁵⁸ Although

³⁵⁵ Béatrice Duchateau. “Hugh MacDiarmid and the Scottish Landscape: Landscape as a Sign”, 172.

³⁵⁶ Michael H. Whitworth, “The Use of Science in Hugh MacDiarmid’s Later Poetry”, 106.

³⁵⁷ Michael H. Whitworth, “The Use of Science in Hugh MacDiarmid’s Later Poetry”, 106-7.

³⁵⁸ Michael H. Whitworth, “The Use of Science in Hugh MacDiarmid’s Later Poetry”, 109.

both texts “share” an “anthropomorphic perspective”,³⁵⁹ Manson’s is “so implausible as to be ironic”, with the effect of “remind[ing] us of the distance between worm and man”. On the other hand, MacDiarmid’s “anthropomorphism” of the worm is deprived of the “self-aware, ironic tone of Manson’s”.³⁶⁰ There is something heroic about the guinea worm’s act depicted by MacDiarmid, and certainly the poem’s anthropomorphic perspective makes the reader sympathise with the worm. Moreover, it may also help to enhance the parallel between the worm and the poet. On this regard it is worthwhile to quote Serenella Iovino and Serpil Opperman’s observations on anthropomorphism in material ecocriticism:

[...] the humanization of things, places, natural elements, nonhuman animals, is not necessarily the sign of an anthropocentric and hierarchical vision [...]. If conceived in this critical perspective, anthropomorphizing representations can reveal similarities and symmetries between the human and the nonhuman.³⁶¹

We may thus infer that the anthropomorphism of the guinea worm emphasises the similarity between the parasite’s and the poet’s sacrifice. However, there may be a chance that the guinea worm’s depiction has been ‘elevated’/’ennobled’ to be compared to the poet’s creative act.

The theme of sacrifice connected to poetic creation is also present in a beautiful passage of “In Memoriam James Joyce”, where the speaker wishes for his poetry to achieve the kind of immortality the seasonal cycle of birth, transformation and regeneration grants the natural world:

Let the only consistency
 In the course of my poetry
 Be like that of the hawthorn tree
 Which in early Spring breaks
 Fresh emeralds, then by nature’s law
 Darkens and deepens and takes

³⁵⁹ Michael H. Whitworth, “The Use of Science in Hugh MacDiarmid’s Later Poetry”, 107.

³⁶⁰ Michael H. Whitworth, “The Use of Science in Hugh MacDiarmid’s Later Poetry”, 109.

³⁶¹ Iovino, Serenella, Serpil Opperman, “Material Ecocriticism: Materiality, Agency, and Models of Narrativity.” *Ecozon@: European Journal of Literature, Culture and Environment*, 3.1 (2012), 82.

Tints of purple-maroon, rose-madder and straw.

[...]

And when the leaves have passed
 Or only in a few tatters remain
 The tree to the winter condemned
 Stands forth at last
 Not bare and drab and pitiful,
 But a candelabrum of oxidised silver gemmed
 By innumerable points of ruby
 Which dominate the whole and are visible
 Even at a considerable distance
 As flames-points of living fire.
 That so it may be
 With my poems too at last glance
 Is my only desire.

All else must be sacrificed to this great cause.
 I fear no hardships. I have counted the cost.
 I with my heart's blood as the hawthorn with its haws
 Which are sweetened and polished by the frost!
 (CP2, "In Memoriam James Joyce", p. 756)

The image of the hawthorn tree is here a metaphor for the immortality of poetry, that can be achieved in two different ways: through transformation or through memory. The first type of immortality involves resistance over transformation: although the hawthorn undergoes "all the changes", it "shines ever more ruddily bright". In this case, though, resistance is not so much a matter of endurance, but of keeping up "consistency" despite "all the changes" and transformations. It is the immortality of the seasonal cycle, which keeps renewing the natural world without changing its 'essence': green-leafed in Spring or fruit-laden in Winter, the hawthorn remains the hawthorn. Moreover, the seasonal cycle endows nature with the immortality of transformation. It is in his search for immortality that the poet wishes for his poetry to follow "nature's law", and last like the hawthorn tree, which does not die during the winter, but bears fruit instead. Another perspective is however possible. The hawthorn tree does not resist winter, but shines through

winter, as poetry shines through “hardships”. The poet does not fear them as, like winter for the hawthorn, they offer a chance for transformation: “I with my heart’s blood as the hawthorn with its haws / Which are sweetened and polished by the frost!” In these lines, the blood is linked to the haws through the chromatic imagery of red, which stands out from the white palette of “oxidised silver” and frost. This imagery helps introduce the second kind of immortality the speaker wishes for his poetry to achieve: immortality through memory. As the hawthorn’s “haws” amid the frost can be “visible” “even at a considerable distance”, so the speaker wishes for his poetry to be seen “at last glance”, which means to be remembered through time. What is more, the reference to “the heart’s blood” is uncannily suggestive of a sacrifice necessary to achieve these kinds of immortality. With the poet’s self-immolation, time will be ablaze with his blood, as the frosty branches are with “ruby” haws. Only then the poet and his poetry will leave their mark, as the haws are “visible” and shine from afar.

It is not far-fetched to identify a common thread between the poet’s sacrifice in the passage discussed above and the idea of poetry as “suicidal art” articulated in “To a Friend and Fellow Poet”. In both poems, the speaker addresses corporeality and relates the human body to the animal body or other physical expressions of nature: on one hand the poet’s blood and the red haws; on the other, the Guinea’s worm sacrificing its organs for its offspring and the poet’s sacrificing himself for his poetry. This comparison may also hint at a kind of corporeality that involves all beings, thus blurring the boundaries between human and non-human.

3.3 The ecological message of ‘little Earth’

As a word suggesting both endearment and decrease, the adjective “little” can perfectly fit in depictions of the Earth in MacDiarmid’s poems. There are at least three different types of representations and all focusing on Earth’s vulnerability: representing the planet as smaller in scale or as a child; mocking it through a grotesque miniaturisation; and showing its devastation at the hands of humankind. The first type of representation concerns a group of poems, which share what

Gairn has identified as “a striking characteristic of MacDiarmid’s initial poetic output”: “the frequent appearance of the planet Earth viewed from outer space.”³⁶² The first poem I want to discuss is “The Bonnie Broukit Bairn”, from *Sangschaw* (1925), where the Earth is presented, to use Gairn’s words, as “lively yet all too vulnerable”.³⁶³ As vulnerable as a “broukit bairn” (“neglected child”³⁶⁴), while other planets are too engaged in their nonsensical chattering (“blether”³⁶⁵) to even care. Another meaning of the Scots word “blether”, is “to brag”,³⁶⁶ which perfectly describes the pompous attitude of Mars, Venus and the Moon. However, as Gish suggests, “the italicized last lines turn the tables, showing up the heavenly pretense as comic despite its bright magnificence.”³⁶⁷ The lines Gish refers to are “– But greet, an’ in your tears ye’ll drown / The hail clanjamfrie!” (CP1, p. 17). Gish observes that “On a literal level, it says simply that when it rains you cannot see the stars”,³⁶⁸ but also reminds us that “According to William Tait, MacDiarmid had remarked to him that he had this literal meaning in mind though no one had then pointed it out.”³⁶⁹ The turning point is represented by the moment when all the nonsensical chattering and majestic poses of the planets are overwhelmed and washed away by the Earth’s cry. “Figuratively”, Gish suggests, “it acknowledges the triumphant importance of the small, human, and earthly in the face of cosmic self-assertion.”³⁷⁰ In the end, then, the Earth is not so vulnerable, but the sense of fragility conveyed in “The Bonnie Broukit Bairn” is undeniable, and recurs in the depiction of the Earth in other poems, like “The Man in the Moon”, “Gildermorie (October)”, and “Science and Poetry”. A look at the lines below will highlight the striking similarity between these poems in terms of their way of representing the Earth or the world:

³⁶² Louisa Gairn, *Ecology and Modern Scottish Literature*, 80.

³⁶³ Louisa Gairn, *Ecology and Modern Scottish Literature*, 80.

³⁶⁴ The translation of the two terms is from the “Glossary” in Hugh MacDiarmid. *Complete Poems: Volume I*, xxv and xxiii.

³⁶⁵ According to the “Dictionary of the Scots Language”, “blether” means “to talk foolishly, or loquaciously” and “bletherin” is “nonsense, verbosity” and “stammering”. In *Dictionary of the Scots Language*. (Scottish Language Dictionaries Ltd.) 22 Aug 2017 <http://www.dsl.ac.uk/entry/snd/blether_v_n1_interj>

³⁶⁶ *Dictionary of the Scots Language*. (Scottish Language Dictionaries Ltd.) 22 Aug 2017 <http://www.dsl.ac.uk/entry/snd/blether_v_n1_interj>

³⁶⁷ Gish, *Hugh MacDiarmid: the Man and his Work*, 39-40.

³⁶⁸ Gish, *Hugh MacDiarmid: the Man and his Work*, 40.

³⁶⁹ Gish, *Hugh MacDiarmid: the Man and his Work*, n. 16, 218.

³⁷⁰ Gish, *Hugh MacDiarmid: the Man and his Work*, 40.

An' Earth, the bare auld stane, / Glitters beneath the seas o' Space
 ("The Man in the Moon", CP1, p. 24)

And all that all men are and have / Is one green-gleaming point of light / In infinite night.
 ("Science and Poetry", CP2, p. 1220)

I see the world as the Gods may, / Like a grey boulder drowned beneath / A shining pool of Space
 [...]
 ("Gildermorie (October)", CP2, p. 1223)

By zooming out the Earth till it becomes nothing but "a boulder", a "point of light" and a "stane" ("stone"), MacDiarmid represents it as a point in the universe. As a consequence of this miniaturisation, the Earth appears vulnerable and lost "beneath the seas o' Space", "in infinite night" or "drowned beneath / A shining pool of Space". This representation is very significant and may be read as an attempt to question man's certainties and power: in the end, MacDiarmid says "all that all men are and have / Is one green-gleaming point of light / In infinite night." Quite little, if compared to the whole unknown universe. A possible key to the reading of this poem is offered in Morton's brilliant analysis of a passage from Milton's *Paradise Lost*, which he identifies as "an extraordinary moment in the history of the ecological thought".³⁷¹ "Raphael is warning Adam against the dangers of speculation", writes Morton, "but [...] uses the form of a negative injunction, like the modern-day equivalent, 'Don't think of a pink elephant!' Too late: we, and Adam, have already thought of it. What is the pink elephant? It's an image of other possible Edens on other planets, other atmospheres [...]. Raphael points to the stars and the Moon."³⁷² According to Morton, Raphael "offers a negative image of human location suggesting that humans shouldn't think that their planet is the only important one."³⁷³ However, "Raphael's injunction not to think of other planets" is what makes Adam think of the possibility of their existence: "it opens the capacity for fantasy while restraining it".³⁷⁴ What is more,

³⁷¹ Timothy Morton. *The Ecological Thought*, 22.

³⁷² Timothy Morton. *The Ecological Thought*, 21-2.

³⁷³ Timothy Morton. *The Ecological Thought*, 22.

³⁷⁴ Ibid.

Raphael's narration makes the reader go back and forward "into the space": "we're placed in the position of one of the far-off worlds, gazing back at Earth."³⁷⁵ Milton, Morton writes, "would have liked" "the image of Earth from space taken by Apollo 11 mission", he "would have enjoyed how it displaces our sense of centrality, making us see ourselves from the outside."³⁷⁶ MacDiarmid's depiction of the Earth has the same de-centering function. Our planet, as the center of man's dominion, is but a shivering light, overwhelmed by its dark and "infinite" surroundings. Undermining phantasies of human centrality not only on the Earth, but also in the universe means challenging anthropocentrism on a larger scale. MacDiarmid's interest in global perspectives as well as in local issues has been highlighted by Gairn: MacDiarmid's "swoop from the universal to the particular and *vice-versa*" in his early poems "indicates a recognition of what Geddes identified in early twentieth century geography as a central axis of world-knowledge, with 'two poles of thought, cosmic and regional'."³⁷⁷ "MacDiarmid's poetry", Gairn explains, "speaks of his attempts to integrate these apparently oppositional ways of seeing into his own world-view"³⁷⁸

Ambiguity and oppositions are two common traits of MacDiarmid's poems, and they coexist in many of his poems. The statement "And all that all men are and have / Is one green-gleaming point of light / In infinite night" in "Science and Poetry" is a fitting example of such co-existence: it can both stress man's limits in terms of knowledge and power, as suggested above, and, on the contrary, represent science as a certainty to hold on to. If we add the preceding lines this hypothesis seems to make sense:

All-conscious Earth serenely swinging
 In its appointed place
 Is flawed by no least trace
 Of chaos to it clinging;
 And all that all men are and have

³⁷⁵ Timothy Morton. *The Ecological Thought*, 23.

³⁷⁶ Timothy Morton. *The Ecological Thought*, 24.

³⁷⁷ Louisa Gairn, *Ecology and Modern Scottish Literature*, 104. The quotation from Geddes is taken from: Patrich Geddes, "Nature Study and Geographical Education", *Scottish Geographical Magazine*, 19 (1903), 526.

³⁷⁸ Louisa Gairn, *Ecology and Modern Scottish Literature*, 104.

Is one green-gleaming point of light
 In infinite night.
 (CP2, "Science and Poetry", p. 1220)

The Earth, or rather, significantly, the Earth considered scientifically as a planet rotating on its axis, stands out as a certainty among "chaos". The Earth, then, becomes a metaphor for science – the "point of light", the certainty or hope against the "infinite night" of chaos. The modifiers "serenely" and "appointed" here also seem to convey this idea, suggesting something which cannot be shaken, and thus secure and reliable. Moreover, the last lines speak loudly on MacDiarmid's sense of globality. When he writes that "all that all men are and have / Is one green-gleaming point of light", that "point of light" could be also literally intended as the Earth. With the verb "are" establishing a relationship of identity between "all men" and the "point of light"/Earth, MacDiarmid hints at the global identity of humanity. As men identify with their nation, so they should identify with the whole Earth. Men are citizen of the Earth. Their identity is thus 'global.'

The second representation of the Earth has the same de-centring function, but adds a touch of mocking and grotesque to the device of miniaturisation. In "Jimsy: an Idiot", "Whip-the-World" and "Breaking the Ice", the Earth is de-magnified, proportions are inverted, as the world is swallowed up by an idiot or controlled by a bird. In "Whip-the-World", as Kenneth Buthlay writes, the "bird imagines that it whips the world into a spin not only with its wings but with its song."³⁷⁹ It has "mountains and seas" on its string, as they "birl under his wings" (CP1, p. 35). These images reminds of the ominous bird ("a ghaist o' a bird") in the ghostly scenario of "Breaking the Ice", as he similarly "gar'd / The hail world shift, / And the sun was a ring roond ane o' its legs / Hyne awa' in the lift" (CP2, p. 1289). The sun, being just a ring around the bird's leg, metaphorically undergoes the same miniaturising process of the Earth. It also echoes the image of the eagle's wing outshining the sun in "To a Sea Eagle". In both poems, the Earth, its vast spaces like "mountains and seas", or even "the sun", are de-magnified, in a

³⁷⁹ Kenneth Buthlay, "Adventuring in Dictionaries", 156 in Gish, *Hugh MacDiarmid: Man and Poet*. Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 1992.

process that shifts perspectives and undermines the power of what is big. In “Jimsy: an Idiot”, the effect is even more unsettling, as the strange and grotesque Jimsy “owre’s the Earth as a snake / Swallows an egg” (CP1, p. 65). The poem, according to Gish, “is” “one of the most striking” in *Penny Wheep*, “with its images of enclosing all heaven and earth in Jimsy’s laughing mouth and swallowing even God.”³⁸⁰ A “point of light”, a “boulder”, a “stane”, under a bird’s control, and an egg, the Earth seems vulnerable and frail in every case, despite the ironic or serious intent of the speaker. At the same time, the Earth, as man-made site of anthropocentrism, is de-centred and mocked in its claims of greatness.

The last group of poems I am going to analyse point at the vulnerability of the Earth in more straightforward ways: they show the devastation of the Earth at the hands of humankind, warn the readers of the risks of underestimating the power of nature or of not caring for the Earth. In some cases, the poet imagines apocalyptic scenarios or projects the serious consequences of harming the environment. “In the Pantry”, in *Sangschaw*, conveys the image of an ill Earth, which would make even Jimsy lose his appetite. The poem, indeed, is based on the metaphor of consumption and imagines the whole world as a pantry where the ‘food’ stored (land, sea, sky, sun, and moon) is apparently not edible anymore. The metaphor is further expanded in the image of the starving reader: “I’m famished, but fegs! / What’s here for a man / But a wheen rubbish that’s lain / Sin’ Time began?” (CP1, p. 33). There is nothing left for him to eat, as the land is “knedneuch” (“sour”) and the sea is “loppert” (“coagulated”³⁸¹). The Earth is a waste land, where the sea has dried up. The Moon and the Sun seem polluted as well: “the sun has a goût / And the mune’s hairy-mouldit” (CP1, p. 33). In what seems a fit of exasperation and disgust, the speaker asks: “And wha but auld Daith / Has a stummack to hold it?” These lines conjure up the frightening image of Death swallowing up an already-ill Earth, and putting an end to all form of life on it. “One of these Days” shares with “In the Pantry” the same unsettling tone, though

³⁸⁰ Gish, *Hugh MacDiarmid: the Man and his Work*, 56.

³⁸¹ The translation of the two terms is from the “Glossary” in Hugh MacDiarmid. *Complete Poems: Volume I*, eds. Michael Grieve and W. R. Aitken. Manchester: Carcanet, 1993, p. xxix and p. xxx.

the threat for humanity is expressed in a more explicit way from the very beginning. The first line sounds indeed as threatening as the promise of a revenge from nature could be: “One of these days”, the poem begins, “The very sea will turn against you” (CP1, p. 556). The reason why the sea will turn against humanity is not mentioned in the poem, but the last lines possibly hint at men’s underestimating of the power of nature and at their foolish attempt to control it. The phrase “One of these Days” sounds like the beginning of a prophecy, whose looming threat is made even more frightening by its vagueness: the danger will arise at an unforeseen time and humanity will not be able to shelter from it. The poem is indeed set in an apocalyptic scenery, and imagines the sea unleashing its destructive fury on the whole humanity:

it [...] will come like a thousand storms
 Crashing over the cliffs and over the land
 Carrying your homesteads with it,
 Your ricks, your boats, your cattle, your children
 Engulfing them, choking them in its green belly,
 Tossing them abroad like straws,
 Casting their pitiful corpses
 Hugh up upon the inland moors [...]
 (CP1, “One of These Days”, p. 556)

The poem projects horrifying consequences, as the sea ruthlessly wipes out everything on its way “Leaving a featureless land behind, / Stript naked of every sign of human life, / Nothing but a vast mudbank”. (CP1, p. 557) The final lines seems to represent the perception of those who underestimate or decide to be blind to the power of the sea: “In the meantime it flickers below you / Like a little methylated spirits / Set alight in a bowl” (CP1, p. 357). Men deceive themselves into thinking they can entrap the sea or establish a dominion over it. The bowl is a symbol of this entrapment and control — it is the symbol of the human claim over the sea, that ultimately proves to be a fatal illusion.

In other poems, like the already mentioned “My Songs are Kandym in the Waste Land”, MacDiarmid reflects upon the consequences of human ruthless exploitation of natural resources. In a passage from “Direadh III” the speaker

clearly warns that energetic sources are “ephemeral” and sooner or later we will run out of them:

Even as we know our fossil chemical accumulations
 Of energy in coal, peat, oil, lignite and the rest
 Are but ephemeral, a transitory blaze
 Even on the small time-scale of civilized man,
 And that running water, though eminently convenient and practicable
 For the present, will give us a mere trickle
 Of energy we shall demand in the future.
 (CP2, “Dreadh III”, p. 1188)

Like in “In the Pantry” and in “One of These Days”, MacDiarmid’s concerns here are projected into the future and, even if less explicitly than the other two poems, he conjures up a very unsettling possibility. He does not say the consequences of our reckless demands of energy in the future, but the mere suggestion should be enough to scare us. Like in “One of These Days”, where the vagueness surrounding the moment of human extinction, created a frightening suspense, here the omission of said consequences, leaves a sense of hanging threat in the reader.

The vulnerability of the Earth in MacDiarmid’s poems may then be a question of perspective. First of all its miniaturisation depends on a shift in the point of view of the speaker, who projects an unusual and estranged vision of the Earth into the reader’s mind. Milton, Morton writes, “would have liked” “the image of Earth from space taken by Apollo 11 mission”, he “would have enjoyed how it displaces our sense of centrality, making us see ourselves from the outside.”³⁸² The effect in MacDiarmid’s poems is the same kind of displacement, as the Earth suddenly appears smaller, even smaller than us — a “stone” or a “point of light”. Through this depiction of the Earth, the speaker re-shapes the way we perceive ourselves and our planet: not any longer at the centre of the universe, and very vulnerable. To borrow and adapt Morton’s words this “is supposed to make us feel humble, not proud.”³⁸³ By contextualising the Earth and acknowledging its spatial surroundings, the speaker, then, triggers the “thinking big” process

³⁸² Timothy Morton, *The Ecological Thought*, 24.

³⁸³ Timothy Morton, *The Ecological Thought*, 23.

described by Morton in the reader's mind. A similar idea is expressed by Bryson's applying Yi-Fu Tuan's concepts of "place" and "space" in his reading of W. S. Merwin's poetry, as I have written in the previous chapter. In this regard, Bryson interestingly comments that "the more we move into space, the more we recognize its vastness as it expands before us, helping us to understand our own smallness and producing an attitude of humility."³⁸⁴ Humility, as chapter two has highlighted, is an act of 'positive passivity' and an essential attitude within ecological and eco-poetical thinking. Undermining the centrality of the Earth in the universe metaphorically means crushing the anthropocentric dream of man's dominion over other beings on the Earth. In this sense, miniaturisation makes the Earth vulnerable only from a conventionally anthropocentric perspective. From the perspective of ecological thinking, miniaturisation is a form of strength, as it humbles us and makes us aware of the existence of other worlds, from the unknown worlds in the universe to the non-human world on the Earth.

A seemingly opposite view emerges in the previously discussed "The Bonnie Broukit Bairn", where, according to Gish's interpretation, real power is in the hands of little Earth and not in the surrounding planets. As we have seen, the Earth's cry wipes away all the pompous chattering of vain Mars, Venus and Moon. "Figuratively", Gish suggests, "it acknowledges the triumphant importance of the small, human, and earthly in the face of cosmic self-assertion."³⁸⁵ Here, the miniaturisation of the Earth – this time in the form of a child – stands as a synonym for human strength. As little Earth in "The Bonnie Broukit Bairn" is underestimated, so is the sea in "One of these days" which "flickers [...] / Like a little methylated spirits / Set alight in a bowl" (CP1, p. 357). The miniaturisation of the sea stands here as an expression of human foolishness and distorted perception, as humans remain blind to the power of nature and wallow in their illusion of supremacy. The image of the "bowl" containing the sea – a metaphor of human control – has then an undertone of mockery. Humans make fools of themselves, every time they attempt to control nature, and every time their

³⁸⁴ J. Scott Bryson, "'Between the Earth and Silence': Place and Space in the Poetry of W. S. Merwin", 105.

³⁸⁵ Gish, *Hugh MacDiarmid: the Man and his Work*, 40.

attempts fail, they waste energies that could be more profitably employed in establishing a more positive relationship with nature.

As we shall see in the next chapter, building a positive relationship with nature is not an easy task. When one of the participants in a relationship concentrates too much on mutual differences, or on the contrary identifies with the other to the point of annihilation, the relationship becomes impossible: in the first case, there is no point of contact, in the second, one of the two participants disappears. However, in-between these extremes, as we shall see, a third stance also emerges, one characterised by a new-found balance between the speaker and nature, and one that speaks of a relationship on equal terms.

Chapter 4

Estrangement and ‘positive passivity’: human attitudes to the non-human world in MacDiarmid’s poems

The two keywords in the title of the present chapter – estrangement and ‘positive passivity’ – sum up the relationship with the non-human world articulated in MacDiarmid’s poems. Expressions of estrangement, as we shall see, mainly concern those moments in which the speaker becomes aware of his own otherness in relation to the environment, and those in which he acknowledges his limitations and expresses the impossibility of accessing the secrets of nature. These two expressions are deeply interwoven, as the sense of frustration and loss before the inexplicable non-human world is sometimes the cause for the sense of otherness experienced by the speaker. Estrangement dominates, for example, Tam’s encounter with the heron, as seen in chapter three, and the speaker’s awareness of his own limitations ends in estrangement in the encounter with the blackbird in “By Wauchopside”, as we shall see in chapter five. On the other hand, the attitude of ‘positive passivity’, discussed in chapter two, foregrounds an idea of interconnection, as envisioned by Morton:

The ecological thought imagines interconnectedness, which I call *the mesh* [...] Each entity in the mesh looks strange. [...] Our encounters with other beings becomes profound. They are strange, even intrinsically strange. Getting to know them makes them stranger. When we’re talking about life forms, we’re talking about *strange strangers*. The ecological thought imagines a multitude of entangled *strange strangers*.³⁸⁶

Morton’s mesh is not a “superorganism”³⁸⁷ as “total interconnectedness isn’t holistic”,³⁸⁸ and the mesh is defined by the “strange strangers” inhabiting it: “there would be no mesh if there were no strange strangers.”³⁸⁹ Consequently, according

³⁸⁶ Morton, *The Ecological Thought*, 15.

³⁸⁷ Morton, *The Ecological Thought*, 35.

³⁸⁸ Morton, *The Ecological Thought*, 40.

³⁸⁹ Morton, *The Ecological Thought*, 47.

to Morton, “interconnection implies separateness and difference”,³⁹⁰ as the “strange strangers” are separate and different, although connected. Instead of a single and disconnected estrangement, Morton, then, proposes a single and connected strangeness.

In a number of MacDiarmid’s poems, the speaker achieves a sort of balance between assimilation and estrangement in relation with nature. In these poems, however, neither assimilation nor estrangement lead to a better connection and understanding. If a relationship requires at least two partners in order to be effective, losing oneself in a relationship, identifying with the other to the point of self-annihilation undermines the very concept of relationship, as indeed the relationship no longer exists when one of the partners disappears. Similarly, relationship is impossible when the two participants are estranged from each other. By expressing the speaker’s desire of being into nature to the point of dissolving, assimilation imposes a kind of identification between speaker and nature. In this way, the “strangeness of nature”, to borrow Morton’s phrase, is negated, and the mesh, based on “separateness”, is also discontinued. Some of the speaker’s attitudes, such as the act of “lying [...] like greenery” in “Dìreadh III” and other poems, as we shall see, could be easily mistaken for acts of assimilation, but are in fact acts of ‘positive passivity’, where the identities of the speaker and nature are always clearly defined – separate but connected, like “strange strangers” in the mesh.

The present chapter will discuss the speaker’s attitudes of estrangement or ‘positive passivity’ as he engages with the non-human world in MacDiarmid’s poems. A large part of the discussion will be dedicated to examples of ‘positive passivity’ and to how it is enacted by the speaker in the poems. ‘Positive passivity’ represents a form of resistance against an active and destructive behaviour towards the environment, which is not only enacted through physical exploitation, but is also carried out in the literary text every time anthropocentrism prevails. ‘Positive passivity’ upholds ‘non-actions’ such as listening, silence, and all those non-acts of humility and awe that foster attunement between the human and the non-human world. MacDiarmid’s speaker sometimes engages in ‘positive

³⁹⁰ Morton, *The Ecological Thought*, 47.

passivity', for example when he is described as sitting, lying and waiting in a natural landscape. Such acts often trigger or are followed by an eco-sensitive reflection on the speaker's part, concerning, for example, the interdependence of all organisms ("Dìreadh III"), or the necessity for a sustainable living ("Happy on Heimaey"). In "On a Raised Beach" 'positive passivity' is mainly expressed by the speaker's act of surrendering to the stones, that also creates an extraordinary love-death dynamic between speaker and stones inside the poem.

4.1 Unrequited love: estrangement in MacDiarmid's "The Point of Honour"

The speaker in MacDiarmid's poems sometimes experiences a sense of estrangement from nature, mostly due to its elusiveness and to human limitations in understanding its innermost secrets. In another poem, "Ode to the North Wind", the speaker perfectly voices this feeling when stating that "the external aspect of Nature / Does not permit us sufficiently / To penetrate its sudden depths" (CP2, p. 1075). The illusion of accessing nature can only be generated by moments of ephemeral understanding, as in "Dìreadh III", where the speaker "For an instant [...] seemed to see into the bird's mind" (CP2, p. 1189). Full access to the bird's mind is something beyond human experience, and the speaker is left with the impression of peeping into a world, which does never reveal itself entirely.

Such impression is the underlying theme of "The Point of Honour", a poem that debunks the romantic anthropocentric myth by expressing the impossibility of participating in nature's secrets. As the subtitle ("on watching the Esk again") reveals, the poem deals with the speaker's relationship with the river of MacDiarmid's boyhood, in his home town, Langholm. The poem deals with two different moments and attitudes: the speaker's remembrance of his youthful days and the passionate vitality then animating his spirit, and the more mature recollection of a speaker who can no longer identify with his younger self. Gish gives a brilliant interpretation of these two moments, suggesting that they represent two different moments in MacDiarmid's poetical career.³⁹¹ She observes how the final "farewell" of the speaker is not only a farewell "to the vivid,

³⁹¹ Gish, *Hugh MacDiarmid: The Man and His Work*, 146.

impulsive splendour of youth”, but also “marks a recognition of a new search for the ‘point of honour’ no longer available in ‘old safe ecstasies’.”³⁹² However, according to Gish, MacDiarmid does not intend to give up his observation of the “physical world”, but rather wishes to seek for “new modes of poetry”³⁹³ that combine “life and thought”, “sensual passion and crystallized finality”.³⁹⁴ As far as the representation of the Esk is concerned, Gish highlights its sexualisation, as the speaker addresses the river as ‘her’ and identifies it as “a woman once loved”.³⁹⁵ To support this idea, Gish quotes the opening lines of the poem, where the speaker expresses the desire of “once more [...] blend[ing] her / With my own self as I did then” (CP1, p. 387). The speaker’s wish of becoming one with the river/woman, as he did when he was a boy in Langholm, contains a clearly sexual reference. Such desire is expressed in a more intense way at a later point, when the poem articulates a more ‘bodily’ dimension, with references to the senses of touch, sight and hearing:

Once, with my boy’s body little I knew
 But her furious threst on my flesh ;
 But now I can know her through and through
 And, light like, her tide enmesh.

Then come, come, come, let her spend her
 Quivering momentum where I lie here,
 Wedding words to her waves, and able to tend her
 Every swirl and sound with eye and ear.
 (CP1, “The Point of Honour”, p. 388)

As Gish notes, two different attitudes can in fact be identified here, “the child’s and man’s response”, since “as a boy he only felt ‘her furious threst on my flesh’, but now he can ‘know her through and through’”.³⁹⁶ So we have an approach to the river-beloved that is sensuous and carefree, and typical of boyhood, and an

³⁹² Gish, *Hugh MacDiarmid: The Man and His Work*, 146.

³⁹³ Gish, *Hugh MacDiarmid: The Man and His Work*, 145.

³⁹⁴ Gish, *Hugh MacDiarmid: The Man and His Work*, 146.

³⁹⁵ Gish, *Hugh MacDiarmid: The Man and His Work*, 143.

³⁹⁶ Gish, *Hugh MacDiarmid: The Man and His Work*, 144.

attitude that implies a deeper knowledge of the river-beloved as well as a desire for commitment (“wedding words”).

The vivid description of the river as seen from the young self, and the speaker’s boyish amazement at its nearly untameable force indeed reminds one very closely of the Wordsworthian speaker’s in “The Prelude”. Furthermore, the feverish imperatives of MacDiarmid’s poem (“Then come, come, come [...]”, CP1, p. 388) and the speaker’s burning sense of longing recall Shelley’s invocation to the West Wind. Notwithstanding these romantic echoes, however, as Gish suggests, MacDiarmid here is trying to shape a new kind of poetry, that distances itself from the sensuous world of youth and metaphorically from an old way of making poetry (such as the lyrics in Scots), and achieves a “union that retains both sensual passion and crystallized finality”.³⁹⁷ Such ideal union, to be achieved in MacDiarmid’s late poetry, can be perfectly summed up by the expression “emotions forgotten in tranquillity” the speaker uses in the poem (CP1, p. 389). The phrase is of course a reversal of Wordsworth’s famous notion of “emotion recollected in tranquillity”, and perfectly conveys what Gish identifies as MacDiarmid’s desire of distancing from “old safe ecstasies”.³⁹⁸

The poem can be read in at least another way. The speaker’s desire of “blending” with the river can also hint at his desire of controlling and of “blending” it into a poetical frame. Similarly, the “free enthusiasm” in “the eyes of the young” “that carries the stream suddenly out of [his] range” can certainly be read as a sign of the speaker’s abandoning his former self’s sensuousness, but may also suggest his lost connection with the river. Many images convey a sense of disconnection, estrangement and confusion, from the line “I watch your quick tumblers in vain” (CP1, p. 390) to the powerful identification of the speaker with landed fishes:

Or comes the disturbing influence with which I tingle
 Only from the shoals of fishes that seem
 As though they’d be stranded there on the shingle
 From the swaying waters they teem?

³⁹⁷ Gish, *Hugh MacDiarmid: The Man and His Work*, 145-6.

³⁹⁸ Gish, *Hugh MacDiarmid: The Man and His Work*, 146.

[...]

Stranded. I with them !

(CP1, "The Point of Honour", p. 391)

The speaker's relationship with the river, then, like the one between a fish with the river, is essential and vital. Moreover, the metaphor also identifies the river as home, like water is home for a fish, thus stressing the speaker's bond with it. Such bond is severed when the speaker is stranded on the land and experiences a sudden sense of loss and rejection.

In the lines preceding the above quotation another image suggests even more clearly the speaker's estrangement from the river, whose "unwearing flood" appears as "inexplicable, alien!" to him (CP1, p. 390). The exclamation mark, repeated in "Stranded. I with them!", evokes a desperate cry, which remains unanswered. Significantly, each stanza, from the one mentioning the "unwearing flood" onwards, ends with a question, thus signalling the speaker's need for explanations and emphasising the elusiveness of the river. The same need is expressed in the speaker's address to the water: "Water, wither away / In a flight that passes and stays forever?" (CP1, 390). There is a hidden plea behind this question, as if the speaker hoped that the water's withering away could shed a light on the mystery of the flood. This stanza, then, centres on and develops the dichotomy hidden/disclosed through the image of the covering flood and the withering water. The following stanza shows the consequences of such disclosing, with the flood gone and the bed of the river finally visible under crystal water and revealing the glistening pebbles at its bottom:

Full from the rains, but the flood sediment gone;

Under the brace of the glancing current

Each pebble shines as with a life of its own,

Electric, autonomous, world-shaking divergent.

(CP1, "The Point of Honour", p. 390)

The flood clearing out the tumultuous river is a metaphor for the speaker acquiring vision and thus accessing the mystery of the river. Such mystery is embodied in what lies beneath the murky water, and that is now finally visible – the pebbles. However, it is not just the pebbles that the speaker discovers, but also their liveliness or, more precisely, he achieves an *awareness* of their liveliness, which is the ultimate knowledge of the natural world human beings have access to.

Similarly, in another poem, “The North Face of Liathach”, the speaker acknowledges that life exists even in the seemingly lifeless manifestation of the non-human world, as is this case with Mount Liathach: “But this cliff is not dead. / It has an immense life of its own” (CP2, p. 1056). If in “The North Face of Liathach” the liveliness of the mountain is conveyed through powerful and terrifying images (see chapter three), in “The Point of Honour” the pebbles are depicted in a similarly vivid and striking way. They are “electric”, buzzing with “a life of [their] own” and, despite their size, their stoic appearance reminds one of the stones in “On a Raised Beach”. In a further, contradictory shift, however, this revelatory stanza is followed by the moment where the speaker feels again at loss and stranded like a fish (CP1, p. 391). This seems to suggest that the disclosing of the river’s mystery in “The Point of Honour” is just temporary, and nothing more than a fleeting glimpse, like the moment in “Dìreadh III” where the speaker “For an instant [...] seemed to see into the bird’s mind” (CP2, p. 1189).

4.2 MacDiarmid’s ‘positive passivity’: “Dìreadh III”, “Happy on Heimaey”, “In the Foggy Twilight” and “On a Raised Beach”

In chapter two, I have identified an attitude of ‘positive passivity’ as a distinctive feature of MacDiarmid’s poetry – an alternative to the active and, most of the times, destructive attitude human beings display towards the non-human world. I have also tried to define, drawing from the reflections of ecocritics and eco-poets, the ‘eco-significant’, positive meaning of a term that is often used in a negative sense. Passivity is non-action, but there are moments when non-action is a positive attitude, especially when it shifts our attention away from ourselves and

towards the non-human world. Examples of positive passivity include all those ‘non-actions’ that foster openness, such as the exercise of silence and humility, listening and the experience of awe.

MacDiarmid’s speaker often embraces non-action in order to establish a deeper connection with the non-human world. A recurrent non-action involves lying or sitting on the ground, a posture that closely echoes the attitude of the speaker in a passage from Snyder’s English translation of Han-shan’s “Cold Mountain Poems”, as discussed in chapter two. Gifford records the speaker’s act of humility, as he lies on the ground and opens himself to nature, with the following words:

The next two lines clinch a deeply felt humility that is to be learned from tuning in to the energies of nature: “Today I’m back at Cold Mountain: / I’ll sleep by the creek and purify my ears’ (26). The ascetism by which purification comes through sleep on the ground of Cold Mountain is a learned discipline of openness toward the energy of the creek.³⁹⁹

The speaker here embraces ‘positive passivity’ through silence, listening and humility, that combine to generate a deeper connection with the creek. The acts of keeping silent and listening, as well as that of lying on the ground are all expressions of humility and openness that allow the speaker to sense the “energy of the creek” and tune to it.

MacDiarmid has his speaker lie or sit on the ground in other poems, with no other purpose than trying to blend with his surrounding, like in “Dìreadh III”, or just observing them, like in “Happy on Heimaey”. In “Dìreadh III”, the poet imagines the speaker to be alone “near the summit of Sgurr Alasdair” – “a place of clean rock and crystal water” (CP2, p. 1186). The first two pages of the poem create an imagery of cold brightness and transparency, from the speaker’s defining the place as possessing “something of the cold purity of ice in its appearance”, to the “brilliant silver background” behind “the Outer Isles” in the horizon, and the sea reflecting the “glass image” of the sun. A section of the opening part of the poem is worth quoting in full, as the speaker here explains that

³⁹⁹ Terry Gifford. *Gary Snyder and the Post-Pastoral*, 81.

this landscape cannot be compared to human art, as it retains its “inhuman” essence and hence is beyond sublime or picturesque depictions:

Here in this simple place of clean rock and crystal water,
 With something of the cold purity of ice in its appearance,
 Inhuman and yet friendly,
 Undecorated by nature or by man
 And yet with a subtle and unchanging beauty
 Which seems the antithesis of every form of art.
 (CP2, Dreach III, p. 1186)

The speaker here overturns the cliché notion of the immortality of art, by suggesting that art, as a human artefact, is not as enduring as nature, and therefore is not endowed with the “unchanging beauty” nature possesses. This kind of landscape is stern (“undecorated by nature”) and eludes any attempt at aesthetisation (“undecorated [...] by man”). However, it is neither alien nor threatening, but willing to engage with humans. The modifier “friendly” in line 30 (“inhuman and yet friendly”) echoes the “friendly ground” (CP2, p. 1099) over which the encounter between human and non-human took place in McIntyre’s “In Talk with Donnchadh Bàn Mac an t’Saoir”. Although in the latter poem it is the mediating role of the poet that enables the encounter, and “friendly” here refers to nature’s attitude, the modifier emphasises a similar mood in both poems. “Friendly” means that the non-human world is open to humans, if they are willing to listen and participate. In “On a Raised Beach”, however, MacDiarmid writes that “the widest open door is the least liable to intrusion” and adds that the “gates” of the stones “are open too / always open [...] though through them no man can see” (CP1, p. 423). These two opposite ideas concerning the non-human world seem to coexist in MacDiarmid. Although the gates of the non-human world appear inaccessible to humans, and its innermost secrets remain elusive, acts of ‘positive passivity’ can help humans to peer inside those gates. If the gates are open, but “no man can see” through them, then the problem lies in a human ‘visual defect’: a change of perspective is needed and ‘positive passivity’ may offer one.

The speaker of “Díreadh III” does not only observe nature through an eco-sensitive perspective, but looks for a more intimate connection with the non-human world, that is symbolically suggested by his imaginary streaming like “the water-crowfoot” plant in the rivers:

I lie here like the cool and gracious greenery
 Of the water-crowfoot leafage, streaming
 In the roping crystalline currents,
 And set all about on its upper surface
 With flecks of snow blossom that, on closer looking,
 Show a dust of gold.

(CP2, “Díreadh III”, p. 1186)

The imagery of snow and ice characterising the first two pages of the poem is echoed here in the white colour of the blossoms, which, as the speaker observes in the following lines, retains great “strength and elasticity”, despite their fragile appearance (CP2, p. 1187). However, the speaker does not only dwell on the beauty of the flowers, but also stresses their vital importance for the ecosystem of rivers, which “would lose much if the snowy blossom / And green waving leafage of the water-crowfoot / Were absent – aye, and be barer of trout too !” (CP2, p. 1187). The imaginary act of streaming in the currents like the water-crowfoot, and thus ‘becoming’ the water-crowfoot may symbolise the speaker’s identification with the plant’s perspective. The act of streaming in the currents is then an act of ‘positive passivity’ that signals the speaker’s opening up to the natural environment. This act, then, triggers an ecological reflection on the speaker’s part, who recognises the interdependence of all living things and understands how the balance of an ecosystem can be profoundly affected by the destruction of one single species.

“Happy on Heimaey”, a sort of reverie with the speaker imagining to live on this Icelandic isle, also contains an example of ecological posture:

Lying at the foot of the black volcanic cliffs
 In the shadow of dead Helgafell,
 And watch a few farmers scything

(Careful of the little birds' nests.
 Iceland wheatear, snow bunting, white wagtail, meadow pipit,
 And leaving clumps of grass to protect them)
 A sweet but slender hay-crop
 [...]
 (CP2, "Happy on Heimaey", p. 1044)

Again the act of lying is linked, even though not as directly as in "Díreadh III", to an expression of ecological awareness. Whereas in "Díreadh III" the speaker defines the core concept of ecology – the interdependence of all living beings – here the depiction of the thoughtful farmers' consideration and protection of the bird's nests provides a practical example of sustainable living.

At the end of the poem, the speaker imagines to rely on small acts of contemplation, and the focus is again on the act of watching: "And watch a few farmers scything [...] Or look out of my bedroom window / [...] On a garden planted with angelica, / Red currant, rhubarb, and the glower of Venus" (CP2, pp. 1044-5). In the closing lines, the speaker expresses his wish for a slow-paced life-style: "It is a far better thing to be sitting / Alive on Heimaey, bare as an egg though it were, / Than rolled round willy-nilly with yonder sun." (CP2, p. 1045). The act of lying, of watching and of sitting, as in the above lines, are very telling of the speaker's desire for a quiet life in a quiet place, where he can relish the contact with the natural world.

This reverie is triggered by a gloomy reflection at the beginning of the passage, where the speaker criticises the scientists' mania of cataloguing and classifying nature, to the point that even "our sense of smell [...]" – "the one little refuge / In the human mind still inviolate and unshareable" is violated and "laid bare too" (CP2, p. 1044). The speaker pictures a world where the scent of flowers and fields is only described in terms of synthetic and chemical combinations: "Hayfield will be explained in terms of Coumarin, / Beanfields in Ionone, hedge-roses in Phenyl-Ethyl-Propionate, / Hawthorn as Di-Methyl-Hydroquinone." (CP2, p. 1044) While the speaker harshly criticises the human desire of controlling the natural world by means of classifications, he is nonetheless certain that human beings "will [...] never capture the scent of violets". (CP2, p. 1044) Despite the speaker's

reflections end on a note of hope, as science and artifice will never compete with nature, they nonetheless evoke the unsettling feeling that human limitations seem what really prevent us from destroying nature completely.

The poem “In the Foggy Twilight”, here quoted in full, captures a slightly different mood, and the speaker’s act of lying on the ground turns out to be a never-ending wait for revelation:

I lay in the foggy twilight
 In a hollow o’ the hills and saw
 Moisture getherin’ slowly on the heather coves
 In drops no’ quite heavy eneuch to fa’.

And I kent I was still like that
 Wi’ the spirit o’ God, alas! ;
 Lyin’ in wait in vain for a single grey drop
 To quicken into perfect quidditas.
 (CP1, “In the Foggy Twilight”, p. 387)

The speaker seems to embrace positive passivity, in his act of lying and surrendering himself to the slow rhythm of the heather. However, when the second stanza compares the speaker’s state to that of the drop hanging from the heather coves, we realise that his waiting will be eternal, as the drop is indeed “not quite heavy eneuch to fa’”. The speaker’s act of positive passivity, then, may appear “vain”, as no revelation will come from a frozen time. He seems to live a non-human or eternal time: the hollow where he lies may well stand for a grave, as his being with the spirit of God may be suggestive of death. The last two lines, then, may be a metaphor for this state, with the images of waiting in vain and the never-falling drop hinting at the crystallised time of death. The revelation the speaker was waiting for, in the end, turns out to be his own very never-ending wait – a symbol of death and eternity. Positive passivity, in this case, helps the speaker to sense the final revelation and *is* itself the final revelation. This is also the leading theme of “On a Raised Beach”, where the speaker’s act of positive passivity coincides with his surrender to the non-human world of the stones, where the mystery of life and death – the final revelation – is hidden.

“On a Raised Beach” develops three main motives: the eternal nature of the stones, the speaker’s desire of being like the stones, and the speaker’s acts of positive passivity. The first motive develops into further sub-motives, such as the mystery and indifference of the stones; the second motive develops into the speaker’s desire of abandoning all human and trivial matters; the third motive concentrates on his acts of humility towards the stones. The stones have existed, without ever changing, since the beginning of time, “one with the stars” (CP1, p. 425), “unmoved” even “by [evolution]” (CP1, p. 424), and they will stay like this for all eternity. The lifespan of the stones, indeed, goes from one “side of eternity” to “the other”, as the speaker beautifully suggests: “The moon moves the waters backwards and forwards, / But the stones cannot be lured an inch farther / Either on this side of eternity or the other.” (CP1, p. 427) The “detachment” of the stones indeed “shocks our instincts and ridicules our desires” (CP1, p. 426) and makes everything concerning human beings appear petty and trivial. While everything human can be replaced, “[the stones] alone are not redundant. Nothing can replace them / Except a new creation of God.” (CP1, p. 426)

The halo of mystery surrounding the stones is created in the poem through the use of scientific language, which, as Whitworth notes, “dramatise[s] the strangeness of the non-human world”.⁴⁰⁰ Such mystery is also suggested through the reconciliation of opposite images and ideas in the stones, as when the speaker observes that “the widest opened door is the least liable to intrusion”, and makes a reference to the “gates” of the stones, that “are always open” “though through them no man can see” (CP1, p. 423). As Watson notes, “paradoxically, it is the very *openness* of the stones’ that defies understanding”.⁴⁰¹ Using the device of paradox is indeed an effective way to unsettle the reader’s expectations and convey the elusiveness of the stones. Another paradox is reflected in the Janus-faced nature of the stones, which are depicted as embracing both life and death: in the bare stony landscape, the poet becomes aware of “the end seen from the beginning”, “the beginning and end of the world” and the “Alpha and Omega”

⁴⁰⁰ Michael H. Whitworth, “The Use of Science in Hugh MacDiarmid Late Poetry”, 110.

⁴⁰¹ Watson, “Landscape of Mind and Word: MacDiarmid’s Journey to the Raised Beach and Beyond”, 246.

(CP1, p. 428), and when he “grasp[s] one of [the stones]” he feels like he “ha[s] in [his] grip / The beginning and the end of the world” (CP1, p. 432).

Throughout the poem, the speaker insistently expresses his wish to emulate the stones’ detachment, an emulation that indeed borders with an act of love, as seen in chapter three. Watson’s reading seems indeed to support this interpretation, as he observes that “the poem is half in love with that ‘more than Roman peace’”. The speaker’s desire for the still peace of the stony world could well be described as an act of love-like surrender, that has, however, an unsettling undertone. As Watson points out, the speaker’s “longing for the ultimate stability of rock, [...] is no less than a longing for death itself”, that “takes him [...] to the very threshold of extinction”.⁴⁰² The embrace the speaker desires is the embrace of peace and death, as his withdrawal into the world of the stones – “a simple, sterner, more beautiful and more oppressive world” (CP1, p. 428) – seems to suggest. The modifiers used to describe this world – beautiful, yet oppressive and also “austerely intoxicating” – are very telling of the ambiguous nature of the stones. While the intoxicating effect the stones have on the speaker reinforces the motive of desire, the statement that “The first draught is overpowering, / Few survive it.” (CP1, p. 428), may be seen as subtly echoing the speaker’s longing for death.

Love and death are, then, combined in the same motive, as the world of the stones overwhelms and annihilates the speaker like a destructive and yet alluring force he cannot resist. The same motive is to be found in the passage from “On a Raised Beach” (CP1, p. 431, ll. 318-28) I have analysed in chapter three in terms of the speaker’s love-like relationship with the stones. There, the “‘hungry man’” “enamoured of the desert” (CP1, p. 431) can satisfy his hunger only when he can access the knowledge of reality, that is, only when he has “nothing interposed between” his “sensitiveness and the barren but beautiful reality” (p. 431). The “hungry man” longs for “bread from the stones” (p. 423), and then for the mystery lying behind them. At the same time, the modifier “hungry” suggests the speaker’s burning desire towards such knowledge. The erotic imagery continues as the “hungry man” has “fever”, which is suggestive of both his blurry vision

⁴⁰² Watson, “Landscape of Mind and Word: MacDiarmid’s Journey to the Raised Beach and Beyond”, 246.

upon reality and his ardent desire for reality. Therefore, the act of having “nothing interposed between” his “sensitiveness and the barren but beautiful reality” (p. 431) suggests a kind of consummation that finally allows the speaker to come to know reality. However, the “superhumanly” and “menacingly clear” kind of “clarity” (p. 431) that such act seems to promise sounds ominous and threatening. Howard’s beautiful interpretation of the line “[...] human kind / Cannot bear very much reality”⁴⁰³ from T. S. Eliot’s “Burnt Norton”, as seen in chapter three, suggests that humankind would be destroyed by a sudden epiphany of the divine.⁴⁰⁴ The phrase “menacingly clear” in “On a Raised Beach”, then, contributes to the evocation of a speaker who cannot bear and could even be destroyed by the epiphany of reality. Notwithstanding the fact that he will never get to look directly at the “burning crystal”, but only at “the reflection of a brightness” (p. 431), the speaker’s desire of accessing “barren reality” and facing the risks of annihilation, is suggestive of his longing for death.

The death-love motive also underlies the speaker’s act of lying down and forgetting the world to be with the stones: “I too lying here have dismissed all else. / Bread from stones is my sole and desperate dearth” (CP1, p. 423) However, even though the speaker’s longing for the stones can at times imply assimilation and self-effacement, in many cases such longing can be read as an expression of ‘positive passivity’. The key phrase, in this regard, is the speaker’s plea “we must be humble” (p. 425), implying that men are often unable to look beyond appearances, and thus remain blind to the beauty of the stones: “[we] do not realise that these stones are one with the stars.” (p. 425) Humility, then, allows man to see beauty in the most overlooked parts of the non-human world. Another act of humility is represented by the speaker’s wish to learn from the stones, and thus to achieve a stoic dignity, an “inconceivable discipline” and “self-purification” (p. 429). Such attitude can be compared to that of the speaker in Snyder’s “Cold Mountain Poems”, who intends to “sleep by the creek and purify [his] ears”, thus seeking the help of the creek to achieve purification.⁴⁰⁵ Similarly,

⁴⁰³ T. S. Eliot. *Four Quartets in The Complete Poems & Plays*. London: Faber and Faber, 1969, p. 172.

⁴⁰⁴ Thomas Howard, *Dove Descending: A Journey into T. S. Eliot’s Four Quartets*. San Francisco: Ignatius Press, 2006, pp. 37-8.

⁴⁰⁵ Terry Gifford. *Gary Snyder and the Post-Pastoral*, 81.

the speaker of “On a Raised Beach” chooses the stones as his guide in his journey towards self-discipline and “self-purification” (p. 432).

Another important act of positive passivity is represented by the speaker’s “accepting the stones” (p. 425), which may be interpreted as an act of openness towards the non-human world on the speaker’s part. Such acceptance does not imply assimilation to the stones or, on the contrary, assimilation of the stones to human beings. Through acceptance, coexistence is indeed possible, in a way that is reminiscent to Morton’s “mesh”, where each “strange stranger” is interconnected but separated from the other.⁴⁰⁶ MacDiarmid, indeed, speaks of reconciling, not of absorbing the stones to our identity: “we must reconcile ourselves to the stones, / Not the stones to us” (CP1, p. 428). The lines immediately preceding explain the reason for this, and implicitly suggest again that humans should be humble: “What happens to us / Is irrelevant to the world’s geology / But what happens to the world’s geology / Is not irrelevant to us.” (p. 428) Conservation International, a non-profit environmental organisation, has had famous actors voice nature in a series of videos called “Nature is Speaking”, and at the end of each video this message appears on the screen: “Nature doesn’t need people. People need nature.”⁴⁰⁷ Similarly, MacDiarmid’s lines cast a light on human vulnerability in the face of nature, with the speaker implying that whatever happens to us, even as a consequence of our actions against nature, this will be irrelevant to the non-human world.

The stones, then, may be seen as a metaphor for the non-human world or “the mesh”. The speaker indeed seems to understand, to use Morton’s words, that “All life forms are the mesh, and so are all dead ones”,⁴⁰⁸ and in a landscape where no being is present, apart from speaker and birds, the stones, symbolise both life and death, becoming a metaphor for all “the mesh”: “– I lift a stone; it is the meaning of life I clasp / Which is death, for that is the meaning of death” (p. 432).

⁴⁰⁶ Morton, *The Ecological Thought*, 47.

⁴⁰⁷ “Nature is Speaking” in *Conservation International* <<https://www.conservation.org/nature-is-speaking/Pages/default.aspx>> [accessed 15 Jan. 2018]

⁴⁰⁸ Morton, *The Ecological Thought*, 29.

4.3 “Diamond Body”: positive passivity as “self-relinquishment” and self-awareness

Another interesting example of positive passivity, from MacDiarmid’s experience in the Shetland Islands, is contained in the long poem “Diamond Body”. MacDiarmid in *Lucky Poet* provides an interesting background for the study of the poem and identifies its setting on the island of Whalsay. According to MacDiarmid, “the closing lines of [his] poem” – from “And now I am in the cave” till the end (CP2, p. 1088, ll. 116-138) – are indeed a good example of that “intimate relationship” he established with the sea during his stay in Whalsay.⁴⁰⁹ Here, for example, he affectionately refers to the beach as “my beach” (CP2, p. 1088) — another clear sign of his attachment to this island.

Significantly, the passage in object describes a moment of deep connection with the sea and sea-life, and ends elusively, with the speaker declaring: “I have achieved the diamond body” (CP2, p. 1088). Such achievement appears indeed to be the outcome of the speaker’s extraordinary connection with the sea, as implied by MacDiarmid’s reference to his knowledge of “marine life”⁴¹⁰ at the end of the quotation. However, the achievement of the “diamond body” suggests more than this connection, as the expression itself is deeply imbued with Jungian thought and Taoist philosophy. One of the key terms in the title of the present section – self-awareness – indeed refers to a Jungian re-reading of the Taoist “diamond body” in terms of the “individuation process”, as we shall see shortly. The whole poem, then, can be seen as charting the speaker’s journey towards the achievement of a “diamond body”/self-awareness. I have identified three stages in this journey, corresponding to three sections into which I have divided my discussion of the poem, respectively from lines 1 to 87; from lines 88 to 112; and from lines 113 to 138.

The first section contains both descriptive passages illustrating the natural setting of the poem, and philosophical passages where the speaker expresses his ambiguous relationship with the non-human world. This part is characterised by glaring contradictions, with the speaker both staging ideas at odds with ecocritical

⁴⁰⁹ Hugh MacDiarmid, *Lucky Poet*, 61.

⁴¹⁰ Hugh MacDiarmid, *Lucky Poet*, 62.

thought and showing ecological sensitivity, and thus alternating anthropocentric views (prevailing in this section) and eco-sensitive attitudes. The anthropocentric drive can however be contextualised within the speaker's journey towards the achievement of the "diamond body", and explained with the fact that such journey has not already started or is only at the beginning in this part. In the second and third parts of the poem, indeed, such attitude disappears as a sign of the speaker's progress in the journey. The second part draws from Jung's "Commentary" of *The Secret of the Golden Flower*,⁴¹¹ a Taoist text of meditation, and illustrates in full the process of the achievement of the "diamond body". Such process will be completed only at the end of the third section, as the last line of this part anticipates (l. 138). It is worthwhile to remember that Jung's influence on MacDiarmid is not limited to "Diamond Body". As Catherine Kerrigan, for example, has highlighted, "Jung's representation of consciousness as an evolutionary process, based as it was on a study of comparative philology, was directly complementary to MacDiarmid's own etymological interest in the Scots language and to his developing ideas about the vernacular [...]".⁴¹² Moreover, Lyall notes that MacDiarmid "was influenced by the psychoanalytical work of Freud and Jung and their respective theories of the unconscious",⁴¹³ while McCulloch and Matthews discuss MacDiarmid's modern "preoccupation with duality in a psychological as opposed to a religious context" as in line with the psychoanalysts' new theories.⁴¹⁴ Finally, in the third part, MacDiarmid adopts an eco-sensitive perspective, as he embraces, to use Buell's words, "the aesthetic of relinquishment".⁴¹⁵ The "more radical" kind of relinquishment, Buell writes, consists of "giv[ing] up individual autonomy itself, to forgo the illusion of mental

⁴¹¹ Richard Wilhelm, trans. *The Secret of the Golden Flower*. Translated and explained by Richard Wilhelm with a Foreword and Commentary by C. G. Jung, and translated into English by Cary F. Baynes. San Diego: Harvest/Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, 1962, in <<https://archive.org/details/TheSecretOfTheGoldenFlowerByRichardWilhelmAndCarlJung>>

⁴¹² Catherine Kerrigan. *Whaur Extremes Meet: the Poetry of Hugh MacDiarmid 1920-1934*. Edinburgh: James Thin, The Mercat Press, 1983, 41.

⁴¹³ Scott Lyall. *Hugh MacDiarmid's Poetry and Politics of Place: Imagining a Scottish Republic*. Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2006, 89.

⁴¹⁴ Margery Palmer McCulloch and Kirsten Matthews. "Transcending the Thistle in *A Drunk Man and Cencrastus*", 51, in Scott Lyall and Margery Palmer McCulloch, eds. *The Edinburgh Companion to Hugh MacDiarmid*. Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2011.

⁴¹⁵ See Lawrence Buell, *The Environmental Imagination: Thoreau, Nature Writing, and the Formation of American culture*, Chapter 5: "The Aesthetics of Relinquishment", 143-179.

and even bodily apartness from one's environment."⁴¹⁶ Buell also notes that such relinquishment "calls into question the authority of the superintending consciousness",⁴¹⁷ thus implying that eco-sensitive literature also fosters "self-relinquishment".⁴¹⁸ It is Buell's concept that has inspired my choice of "self-relinquishment" as the second key-word in the title of the present section, as it effectively illustrates the speaker's attitude in the last part of "Diamond Body". The speaker indeed experiences an effacement of his persona, as his gaze becomes an instrument for nature to express itself, and not the other way around.

To sum up, both self-awareness and "self-relinquishment" are expressions of 'positive passivity', as they favour non-active and eco-sensitive behaviours. Self-awareness, as we have seen, seems to be linked to the speaker's abandoning his anthropocentric view and, as we shall discuss shortly, to his act of contemplation of the non-human world. Similarly, "self-relinquishment" enables the speaker's I to step back and nature come into the foreground.

The first part of the poem opens with a philosophical statement, where the human and the non-human world are not set apart but presented as part of the same continuum: "There are not two worlds, / a world of nature, and a world of human consciousness, / Standing over against one another, but one world of nature / Whereof human consciousness is an evolution" (CP2, p. 1084). After suggesting the interconnection between the human and the non-human world, the poem seems to introduce a powerful metaphor for the interdependence of all things on the Earth:

Because, I reminded myself, any assemblage of things
Is for the sake of another, [...]
[...] as Gaudapada says,
As a bed, which is an assemblage
Of bedding, props, cotton, coverlet, and pillows
Is for another's use, not for its own

⁴¹⁶ Lawrence Buell, *The Environmental Imagination: Thoreau, Nature Writing, and the Formation of American culture*, 144.

⁴¹⁷ Ibid.

⁴¹⁸ Lawrence Buell, *The Environmental Imagination: Thoreau, Nature Writing, and the Formation of American culture*, see the section "Self-Relinquishment" from Chapter 5: "The Aesthetics of Relinquishment", 156-167.

[...]

Thence it is concluded that there is a man
 Who sleeps upon the bed
 And for whose sake it was made
 So this world, which is an assemblage
 Of the five elements is for another's use,
 And there is another for whose enjoyment
 This enjoyable body of mine,
 Consisting of intellect and all the rest,
 Has been produced.
 (CP2, "Diamond Body", p. 1085)

A close look at the passage reveals that this is in fact a quotation from Gaudapada's commentary of the Sāṅkhya Kārikā, the oldest text of the Samkhya school of Hindu philosophy. The Gaudapada mentioned in the passage is a medieval scholar of the Vedanta school of Hindu philosophy. The passage is clearly taken out of its original context, a passage where Gaudapada gives "arguments for the existence of soul", as H. H. Wilson comments.⁴¹⁹ However, a close look at the passage above reveals that it is not an example of ecological interconnection, but that the speaker uses Gaudapada's comment for his own ends, and to claim that everything in the world has been created for the sake of man: "And all I see and delight in now / Has been produced for him" (CP2, p. 1085). This statement is immediately followed by the description of the sea-life surrounding the speaker, as a sign that the surrounding environment has been created for him and the delight of his senses. This is, then, an example of MacDiarmid's embracing a markedly anthropocentric view. Although the speaker does not directly state that the world has been created for man to exploit, an unsettling element of aesthetic consumption sometimes infiltrates the poem, as for example with the use of the term "delight". The theme of aesthetic consumption has been extensively discussed in chapter two, through Bate's reflection on the responsibility of picturesque tourism for the "human consumption" of nature. It is

⁴¹⁹ Krishna, Íswara. *The Sankhya karika, or Memorial verses on the Sankhya philosophy*. Trans. from the Sanscrit by Henry Thomas Colebrooke. Also the *Bhāshya, or Commentary of Gaurapāda*. Trans. and Ill. by an original comment by Horace Hayman Wilson. London: A. J. Valpy, 1837, 67, in <<https://archive.org/details/snkhyaarikormem00colegoog>>

worthwhile to remember here that Bate also suggests that tourism fosters an objectified view of nature as well as an “enframing” way of looking at it.⁴²⁰ In the anthropocentric view of the speaker, Gaudapada’s previously quoted expression (“this world, which is an assemblage / Of the five elements is for another’s use”), then, sounds like ‘this world exists and is for the use of humanity.

The following lines of the first section of the same passage provide another example where MacDiarmid is at odds with ecocritical thought while showing ecological sensitivity at the same time:

And the smooth-bodied sand eels and the shrimps
 And sea-weeds attached [...]
 [...] to the rocks or boulders,
 Brown masses a host of small animals
 Grow on or shelter amongst, protected here
 From the buffeting of the sea when the tide is in
 When the tide is out.
 [...]
 And in a rock pool, ‘crumb of bread’ sponge,
 Hydroids red, green, purple, or richly patterned
 Like the dahlia anemone, yellow sea-lemon, and now and again
 A rapidly moving snail shell which shows me
 It is inhabited by a hermit crab
 Much more active than its original occupant.
 Countless millions of creatures each essential
 To that other, and precisely fashioned
 In every detail to meet his requirements.
 (CP2, “Diamond Body”, pp. 1085-6)

The passage opens with extraordinarily ecopoetic lines, where the speaker beautifully celebrates the interdependence of the sea-life surrounding him with an attentive and sensitive eye. “Small animals”, all depending on the rocks for protection and survival, and a “snail shell” where a crab has homed, are perfect examples of the mutual dependence of these species. At the same time, this passage is a celebration of dwelling: “the brown masses” are “a host of small

⁴²⁰ Jonathan Bate, *The Song of the Earth*, 254.

animals” and sea-weeds, “the rock pool” are the home for a sponge, colourful hydroids and a crab, while the crab also settles into a “snail shell”. However, while gradually acquiring awareness of the world’s interconnectedness, the speaker still believes that living things are “precisely fashioned / In every detail to meet his requirements” – this represents indeed the ultimate objectification of nature. The same dynamic is revealed in another passage, where the speaker recognises that “our minds already sense that the fabric of nature’s laws / Conceals something that lies behind it, / A greater unity” (CP2, p. 1086), but then celebrates the power of science in disclosing the secrets of nature: “Today we are breaking up the chaste / Ever-deceptive phenomena of Nature / And reassembling them according to our will” (CP2, p. 1087). Such science as invoked by the speaker is nothing like the self-taught naturalist’s observation performed by Tam in “Tam o’ the Wilds and the Many-Faced Mystery”, but is violent and controlling – a ruthless instrument for exploitation and spoiling. Even the modifiers attributed to nature here are very telling: “chaste”, indeed, reminds one of imperial tales about the violation of pristine nature or land at the hands of the rapers/conquerors. In this sense, the act of “breaking up” is an act of violation of the natural world – probably an act of frustration leading to violence in front of the “ever-deceptive” and sometimes hermetic “phenomena of Nature”. Such approach is completely different from that of the sensitive and attentive lover of nature, be it a scientist or a common man.

At this point, it may be useful to introduce a comparison with another poem that expresses a similar idea about the superiority of humans over nature. In “Ode to a North Wind”, nature appears as something to be shaped and controlled through human achievements in science and art:

Our task is not to reproduce Nature
 But to create and enrich it
 By methods like musical notes, mathematical tables, geometry,
 of which Nature knows nothing,
 Artificially constructed by man
 For the manifestation of his knowledge
 And his creative will.

(CP2, “Ode to the North Wind”, p. 1075)

Again, in the speaker's mind nature is both an object of knowledge and an object of art – a mere projection of man's narcissism and desire to “create and enrich” his own “knowledge” and “creative will”. In “Diamond Body”, the speaker believes “creatures” to be “precisely fashioned / In every detail to meet his requirements”, and records our human “reassembling” of the “phenomena of Nature” “according to our will”. Similarly, in the above passage from “Ode to the North Wind”, nature is “artificially constructed by man”. “Fashioned”, “reassembling” and “constructed” are all verbs that significantly reduce nature to a passive state or to the object of human action. Interestingly, however, in the second part of “Diamond Body”, the anthropocentric views of the speaker completely disappear. Here the reader learns that “the mandala is almost complete” (CP2 1087) and that the speaker has apparently been on a journey towards deeper understanding. It is MacDiarmid's himself that suggests the main source for this part of the poem by inserting an explanatory note to the word “mandala”:

In ‘The Secret of the Golden Flower’, symbols having the form of mandalas are reproduced. Mandala means circle, specifically ‘magic circle’: (Jung has published the mandalas of a somnambulist in his *Collected Papers on Analytical Psychology*). [...] (CP2, “Diamond Body”, p. 1087)

The other concepts discussed in the note seem to draw on Jung's “Commentary” of *The Secret of the Golden Flower*, a Taoist text on meditation. It is very likely that MacDiarmid had access to *The Secret of the Golden Flower*, as this was first translated into German by Richard Wilhelm, and published with a “Foreword and a Commentary by C. G. Jung” in 1929, while its English translation, by Cary F. Baynes, was published in 1931.⁴²¹ It seems possible that MacDiarmid drew most of the ideas for the second part of “Diamond Body”, including the very concept of “diamond body”, on Jung's “Commentary”. In the commentary, Jung identifies a

⁴²¹ Richard Wilhelm, trans. *The Secret of the Golden Flower*. Translated and explained by Richard Wilhelm with a Foreword and Commentary by C. G. Jung, and translated into English by Cary F. Baynes. San Diego: Harvest/Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, 1962, in <<https://archive.org/details/TheSecretOfTheGoldenFlowerByRichardWilhelmAndCarlJung>>

“parallel” between the Taoist concepts in *The Secret of the Golden Flower* and his own “practice of psychiatry and psychotherapy”.⁴²² As Carl A. Meier noted, the mandala “could only be a symbolic expression of the objective in the personality development of the analysand”, a “development” Jung called “the individuation process.”⁴²³ Anthony Stevens states that “individuation” for Jung “involves the progressive integration of the unconscious timeless self in the personality of the time-bound individual [...]”⁴²⁴ The “diamond body” “which develops in the Golden Flower”⁴²⁵ may represent the achievement of individuation. In Jung’s “Commentary”, it is described as the product of an alchemical process, during which “consciousness” and “life” unite to produce “conscious life”⁴²⁶ that eventually leads to the Tao.⁴²⁷ The “diamond body” symbolises, then, the achievement of a “superior personality”, “out of reach of intense emotional involvement and therefore safe from absolute shock”.⁴²⁸ With this in mind, let us now look in detail at a passage from the second part of “Diamond Body”, describing the speaker’s journey towards such achievement:

Here in the brilliant light, where the mandala is almost
complete,
The circumference of a blinding diamond broken
Only by a few points and dashes of darkness yet,
The shapes and figures created by the fire of the spirit
Are only empty forms and colours. It is not necessary to confuse
The dull glow of such figures with the pure white light
Of the divine body of truth, nor to project
The light of the highest consciousness into concretized figures,
[...]
(CP2, “Diamond Body”, p. 1087)

⁴²² Jung’s “Commentary”, in Richard Wilhelm, trans. *The Secret of the Golden Flower*, 86.

⁴²³ Carl Alfred Meier (1977), *Personality: The Individuation Process in the Light of C. G. Jung’s Typology*, David N. Roscoe, trans., Einsiedeln: Daimon, 1995, 69.

⁴²⁴ Anthony Stevens, *On Jung: an Updated Edition with a Reply to Jung’s Critics*, Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1999, 188. Anthony Stevens also disagrees with the definition of individuation process as “self-realization” or “self-actualisation” of some theorists, such as Charlotte Bühler, Erik Erikson, Kurt Goldstein and Abraham Maslow, because he argues that Jung believed this process to be not just “peculiar to humans”. (187)

⁴²⁵ Jung’s “Commentary”, 130-1.

⁴²⁶ Jung’s “Commentary”, 98.

⁴²⁷ Jung’s “Commentary”, 99.

⁴²⁸ Jung’s “Commentary”, 124.

Jung writes in his “Commentary” that the “mandala” depicts a circle, the “sacred precinct” “of the innermost personality” which prevents “‘flowing out’, or [...] guard by apotropaic means against deflections through external influences.”⁴²⁹ Jung describes it as “a kind of spell on one’s own personality”, during which “the attention [...] is brought back to an inner, sacred domain [...] which contains the unity of life and consciousness.”⁴³⁰ In the above passage from “Diamond Body”, the speaker mentions “the brilliant light, where the mandala is almost complete”, and a diamond still affected by “few point and dashes of darkness” (CP2, 1087). As Jung explains, the Tao, which is “the unity of [life and consciousness]”, is symbolised by a “central white light”.⁴³¹ The fact that the diamond body is not entirely invaded by light means, then, that unity is still to be achieved. At this point, the speaker mentions “shapes and figures” (CP2, 1087) and warns that these are just “empty forms and colours”, whose “dull glow” should not to be “confuse[d]” with “the pure white light” (CP2, 1087). Again, the explanation for these “Empty forms and colours” is to be found in Jung’s “Commentary”. As Jung notes during the “Chinese yoga practice” described in the *Hui Ming Ching*, “individual consciousness meets the immense expansion of the collective unconscious”.⁴³² Such “phenomenon” is described in the Chinese text with these words: “Every separate thought takes shape and becomes visible in colour and form.”⁴³³ Jung notes that, as the collective unconscious poses a risk for the consciousness, “the text returns to the protective figure of the ‘enclosing circle’” that “prevent[s]” the consciousness “from being split apart by the [collective] unconscious.”⁴³⁴ It appears, then, that such “‘though-figures’”⁴³⁵ represent the images of the collective unconscious, whose “disintegrating effect”⁴³⁶ is diminished in the Chinese text as they are defined just “‘empty colours and

⁴²⁹ Jung’s “Commentary”, 103.

⁴³⁰ Ibid.

⁴³¹ Ibid.

⁴³² Jung’s “Commentary”, 108.

⁴³³ Richard Wilhelm, trans. *The Hui Ming Ching: The Book of Consciousness and Life in The Secret of the Golden Flower*, 76.

⁴³⁴ Jung’s “Commentary”, 108.

⁴³⁵ Jung’s “Commentary”, 109.

⁴³⁶ Jung’s “Commentary”, 108.

shapes””.⁴³⁷ Jung also explains in psychological terms that “fragmentary psychic systems appear spontaneously in ecstatic states”⁴³⁸ as the one experienced in this yoga practice, with consciousness being split apart by the collective unconscious. However, if it “were to become a permanent state”, Jung explains, it “would be a schizophrenic process”.⁴³⁹ The poem continues with the speaker describing what happens in the process of achieving the “diamond body”:

[...] to have the consciousness withdrawn, as if
 To some sphere beyond the world where it is
 At once empty and not empty,
 The centre of gravity of the whole personality
 Transferred from the conscious centre of the ego
 To a sort of hypothetical point
 Between the conscious and the unconscious,
 The complete abolition of the original
 Undifferentiated state of subject and object
 [...]
 (CP2, “Diamond Body”, 1087)

This description mirrors accurately Jung’s explanation of a passage from the *Hui Ming Chin*,⁴⁴⁰ (an eighteen-century Buddhist text written by the monk Liu Huayang) where “the pupil is taught to concentrate on the light of the inmost region and, while doing so, to free himself from all outer and inner entanglements.”⁴⁴¹ Jung describes such state as “a detachment of consciousness from the world, and a withdrawal of it to an extramundane point” and adds that “consciousness is at the same time empty and not empty”,⁴⁴² a statement that reverberates in the first three lines of the above passage.

From Jung’s explanation of what happens when the “diamond body” is formed, it may be safely assumed that the “diamond body” represents the achievement of the “individuation process”: “But if the unconscious can be recognised as a co-

⁴³⁷ Jung’s “Commentary”, 109.

⁴³⁸ Ibid.

⁴³⁹ Jung’s “Commentary”, 108.

⁴⁴⁰ Richard Wilhelm, trans. *The Hui Ming Ching: The Book of Consciousness and Life in The Secret of the Golden Flower*, 77-8.

⁴⁴¹ Jung’s “Commentary”, 122.

⁴⁴² Ibid.

determining quantity along with the conscious [...]”⁴⁴³ if, then, individuation takes place, “the centre of gravity of the total personality shifts its position [...] and [...] is located in a hypothetical point between the conscious and the unconscious, which might be called the self.”⁴⁴⁴ These passages from Jung echo MacDiarmid’s lines, where the “diamond body” “symbolize[s] a consciousness detached from the world” which does not experience negative or positive emotions, and therefore does not suffer.⁴⁴⁵ In the moment of enlightenment, the speaker of the “Diamond Body” acquires “the certainty that *something lives through me / Rather that I myself live*, which echoes the sentence “‘It is not I who live, it lives me’”⁴⁴⁶ in Jung’s “Commentary”. Jung, indeed, explains this as an effect of the “detachment of consciousness, through which the subjective ‘I live’ becomes the objective ‘It lives me’”.⁴⁴⁷ Such “change in inner feeling”, as Jung explains, and MacDiarmid’s note refers to, “is [...] also known to us through the testimony of the Apostle Paul: ‘Not I (live), but Christ liveth in me.’”⁴⁴⁸ Christ, then, is a “higher, spiritual being of human form” who “is invisibly born in the individual, a spiritual body”,⁴⁴⁹ responsible for “the transformation of inward feeling”, as MacDiarmid comments (CP2, p. 1087). Equally important, this is also, as Jung notes, “a feeling of reconciliation with all that happens, and that is the reason why, according to the *Hui Ming Ching*, the glance of one who has attained fulfilment returns to the beauty of nature”.⁴⁵⁰ Significantly, this is also what happens in the last part of “Diamond Body” (p. 1088), when the speaker turns back to his surroundings with heightened awareness.

In the light of this interpretation of “Diamond Body”, the “rock pool” which housed a sponge, the colourful “hydroids red, green, purple”, a crab living in a “snail shell”, and the “snail shell” itself (p. 1086), which we encountered in the first part of the poem, can all be seen as mandala symbols, helping the speaker to bring balance between the conscious and the unconscious, and thus to attain unity.

⁴⁴³ Jung’s “Commentary”, 124.

⁴⁴⁴ Ibid.

⁴⁴⁵ Ibid.

⁴⁴⁶ Jung’s “Commentary”, 131.

⁴⁴⁷ Jung’s “Commentary”, 132.

⁴⁴⁸ Ibid.

⁴⁴⁹ Ibid.

⁴⁵⁰ Jung’s “Commentary”, 133.

As H. G. Coward notes, “in terms of Eastern yoga” the mandalas are “drawn, painted, danced, or enacted for the purpose of assisting meditation or concentration.”⁴⁵¹ For Jung, the mandala has a healing function, as it “unite[s] states of psychic dissociation so that the focal point of personality is shifted from the conscious ego to the self”, which comprehends all the aspects of psyche and not just the conscious one.⁴⁵² “Thus, with the self as the focus, both the conscious and the unconscious are brought into harmony and balance.”⁴⁵³ Such process, as we have seen, is also described in “Diamond Body”. It is not far-fetched to claim that the speaker finds the natural mandalas represented by the forms of life in the “rock pool”, and the snail as the source of the same process of healing and enlightenment. The pool crawling with colourful sea-species resembles indeed the vivid drawings of mandalas, and so does the snail shell because of its circular shape. Natural mandalas also appear in the last part of the poem, as replicated in the countless pebbles of the shingle beach, in the “lace-stencil” that “tangleweed” seems to draw on the “shingle”, in the “bead-shells”, or in the cave, where the speaker takes shelter:

Crossing the island I see the tail of my coat
 Wave back and forth and know
 It is the waves of the sea on my beach.
 And now I am in the cave. A moment ago
 I saw the broad leather-brown belts of the tangleweed.
 And the minute forms that fix themselves
 In soft carmine lace-stencils upon the shingle.
 The notched wrack gemmed with lime-white bead-shells
 Showing like pearls on a dark braid,
 And minute life in a million forms.
 (CP2, “Diamond Body”, p. 1088)

This section from the last part of the poem, as already noted, marks the speaker’s heightened consciousness and the moment when he shows “his reconciliation with

⁴⁵¹ Harold G. Coward, *Jung and Eastern Thought*. Albany: State University of New York Press, 1985, 49.

⁴⁵² Harold G. Coward, *Jung and Eastern Thought*, 50.

⁴⁵³ *Ibid.*

all that happens” through a more intimate connection with the surrounding environment. At a first glance, this part is not so different from the vivid description in the first part of the poem, with sea creatures seeking protection in the “rocks or boulders” or dwelling in the “rock pool”, and with the “hermit crab” finding a further home in the “snail shell” (pp. 1085-6). This depiction, as we have seen, conveys the interdependence of all living creatures, since the speaker realises that the forms of sea-life surrounding him are “each essential to that other” (p. 1086). If this vivid depiction from the first part of the poem and the above passage are considered together, such interdependence is also symbolically suggested by a kind of spatial ‘Chinese box’, with the cave containing the speaker and the “rock pond”, and the “rock pond” containing the “snail shell”, which also contains the crab. However, what has changed in this last part is the speaker’s attitude to the non-human world and his relinquishment of the anthropocentric stance he expresses in the first part. The idea that “any assemblage of things / Is for the sake of another” (p. 1085) in the first part of the poem, supporting the objectification and exploitation of nature at the hands of man, is completely absent here. On the contrary, in light of the speaker’s transformation, the same line may take a whole new meaning in terms of equality between the human and the non-human world. As the “rock pond” in the first part of the poem has been created for the sake of hydroids, sponge, crab and other sea-creatures, so the cave, for example, may well have been created for the sake of the “rock pond”, as well as of man. Similarly, as sea-creatures, the sea and the whole natural world may have been created for the sake of man, as much as man has been created for their own sake, to protect and take care of them. In this context, the idea that “any assemblage of things / Is for the sake of another” closely reminds us of the speaker’s awareness that “*something lives through me / Rather than I myself live*”. All living creatures live through other creatures, in terms of interdependence.

From a literary point of view, then, MacDiarmid achieves in the third part of “Diamond Body” one of his arguably most convincing eco-poetical expressions, as the non-human world becomes the protagonist of the poem. The lyrical I indeed takes on a secondary role, as the poet embraces, to use Buell’s concept, “the

aesthetic of relinquishment”⁴⁵⁴ that allows the natural world to come forth. Buell has identified “two forms of relinquishment” in American nature writers, with the “more radical” form consisting of “giv[ing] up individual autonomy itself, to forgo the illusion of mental and even bodily apartness from one’s environment.”⁴⁵⁵ While “Diamond Body” does not show the speaker’s corporeal assimilation with the surrounding seascape, it certainly challenges man’s “illusion of mental [...] apartness from [his] environment” by suggesting the speaker’s awareness of the world’s interconnectedness. Buell further points out that a literature supporting this kind of relinquishment “abandons or at least questions, what would seem to be literature’s most basic foci: character, persona, narrative consciousness.”⁴⁵⁶ In the last part of “Diamond Body” the speaker experiences, as we have seen, the effacement of his persona, whereas his agency, his gaze, becomes an instrument for nature to express itself and not the other way around. Buell also notes that such relinquishment “calls into question the authority of the superintending consciousness”,⁴⁵⁷ thus implying that eco-sensitive literature also fosters “self-relinquishment”.⁴⁵⁸ This is exactly what happens in the third and last part of “Diamond Body”, where the self almost disappears and the landscape comes into the foreground. The “superintending” and narrow-minded “consciousness” is thus annihilated and replaced by the new, heightened consciousness of the “diamond body”, which stands for a newly achieved unity and balance and, in Jung’s words, “a feeling of reconciliation with all that happens”.⁴⁵⁹ Such feeling allows “who has attained fulfilment” to “return” his “glance” “to the beauty of nature”.⁴⁶⁰ The poem does not just turn to the description of the environment after the passage describing the speaker’s newly

⁴⁵⁴ See Lawrence Buell, *The Environmental Imagination: Thoreau, Nature Writing, and the Formation of American culture*, Chapter 5: “The Aesthetics of Relinquishment”, 143-179.

⁴⁵⁵ Lawrence Buell, *The Environmental Imagination: Thoreau, Nature Writing, and the Formation of American culture*, 144.

⁴⁵⁶ Lawrence Buell, *The Environmental Imagination: Thoreau, Nature Writing, and the Formation of American culture* 145.

⁴⁵⁷ Lawrence Buell, *The Environmental Imagination: Thoreau, Nature Writing, and the Formation of American culture* 144.

⁴⁵⁸ Lawrence Buell, *The Environmental Imagination: Thoreau, Nature Writing, and the Formation of American culture*, see the section “Self-Relinquishment” from Chapter 5: “The Aesthetics of Relinquishment”, 156-167.

⁴⁵⁹ Jung’s “Commentary”, 133.

⁴⁶⁰ Ibid.

attained fulfilment: the speaker literally ‘returns’, in the sense of giving back, his gaze to nature, and avoids filling the landscape with his persona. The speaker’s act of ‘returning’ his gaze to nature is symbolically suggested by the emphasis on phrases like “I see” and then “I saw”, that do not focus on the ‘gazing I’ but on what is gazed at. These expressions discreetly signal the presence of the speaker, who is not considered as a whole, self-contained ‘I’ anymore, but just as a contemplating eye, to be impressed with images of the cave. While the lyrical I is still perceptible, it is emptied out of its power, as natural images come forth and take over. The speaker becomes so embedded in the environment he is describing that his identity loses its privileged position as source of meaning. This may be a consequence of achieving the “Diamond Body” and a different perspective on the world. Even the first lines of the above passage (“I see the tail of my coat / Wave back and forth and know / It is the waves of the sea on my beach”, p. 1088) seem to anticipate the speaker’s self-effacement. The speaker’s coat shares indeed the same billowing movement of the waves, thus conveying a sense of continuity between the coat and the waves. Moreover, the coat may indicate the speaker through synecdoche, and so the juxtaposition between coat/speaker and waves may hint at the fact that nature is starting to taking over the speaker.

The closing section of the last part of “Diamond Body” has a mystical and elusive allure. The sea is not considered any longer as host to “countless millions of creatures” (CP2, p. 1086), and a more metaphysical dimension takes over the physical descriptions of nature in the first and second part of the poem. The sea appears in its most elemental form and is water, wave and tide:

And I saw the tide come crawling
 Through the rocky labyrinths of approach
 With flux and reflux – making inch upon inch
 In an almost imperceptible progress.
 But now I know it is the earth
 And not the water that is unstable,
 For at every rise and fall of the pellucid tide
 It seems as though it were the shingle
 And the waving forest of sea-growth
 That moves – and not the water!

And, after all, there is no illusion,
 But seeming deception prefigures truth,
 For it is a matter of physiographical knowledge
 That in the long passages of time
 The water remains – and the land ebbs and flows.

I have achieved the diamond body.
 (CP2, “Diamond Body”, p. 1088)

In the cave, surrounded only by rocks and water, the speaker finds himself in a purely elemental space, where the passing of time is measured by the natural rhythms of the tide. The contemplation of the ebbs and flow of the tide makes him reflect upon the real nature of the two elements in the cave – earth and water. To the speaker, the respective qualities of these two elements – stability and variability – are reversed: “it is the earth / And not the water that is unstable”. In line with MacDiarmid’s ideal of a “poetry of facts”, the speaker clarifies that the ebbing and flowing of the land “is no illusion”, but “a matter of physiographical knowledge.” It is as if he said to his readers: “Look, there is a rational and scientific explanation for that.” The speaker, is indeed referring to the natural phenomena of erosion and sediment that inevitably affect the landscape.

Finally, the speaker does not say how long he stays in the cave, but it is certainly quite a long time, as he can witness the movement of the tide. His reflections transform a few hours in “long passages of time”, and one wonders if he is still living a human time, as he seems to see the shingle moving under his eyes. Time in the cave seems to have stretched out, as if following the pace of the speaker’s mind, that has now entered an eternal dimension. According to Jung’s “Commentary”, “the diamond body” “is a natural preparation for death, and sets in after middle life”. “Chinese yoga philosophy” Jung adds “bases itself upon the fact of this instinctive preparation for death as a goal, and [...] the begetting and perpetuation of a psychic spirit-body (“subtle body”), which ensures the continuity of the detached consciousness”,⁴⁶¹ achieved through the diamond body. This means that “the detached consciousness” coincides with “timelessness”.⁴⁶²

⁴⁶¹ Jung’s “Commentary”, 124-5.

⁴⁶² Jung’s “Commentary”, 125.

The speaker's contemplation of the hypnotic movement of the tide, echoing the "wav[ing] back and forth" (CP2, p. 1088) of the sea, then, sparks a revelation. The final statement ("I have achieved the diamond body") seems thus to signal the speaker's entering a non-human dimension.

Chapter 5

“I’m amphibious still”: liminal spaces in MacDiarmid’s poetry

The theme of liminality, foregrounding a continuum between the human and the non-human world, is a recurring one in ecopoetry. As noted in chapter two, Evernden describes interconnection as a “genuine *intermingling* of parts of the ecosystems” and adds that “there are no discrete entities”⁴⁶³ inside them. Evernden, then, questions the separateness between man and nature and supports a case for liminality: “Where do you draw the line between one creature and another? Where does one organism stop and another begin? Is there even a boundary between you and the non-living world, or will the atoms in this page be a part of your body tomorrow?”⁴⁶⁴

An interesting case for liminality is also made by Scott Bryson in relation to contemporary American poet Mary Oliver. Bryson draws from Abram’s phenomenological approach and reflection on the “‘reversibility’ of subject and object”⁴⁶⁵ in our relationship with the world. Commenting on Abram’s words, he points out that “I and the world around me exist as a part of an ‘ongoing reciprocity with the world’”.⁴⁶⁶ Such “intersubjective reciprocity”, he observes, “is central to Oliver’s poetry of the body.”⁴⁶⁷ The way such reciprocity manifests itself in Oliver’s texts is undoubtedly an example of liminality blurring human and non-human physical boundaries: “Often, in fact, the poet’s body and that of the world are depicted as being so interrelated that they easily become confused with one another.”⁴⁶⁸ This is what the speaker of Oliver’s “White Flowers” experiences, Bryson notes, when sensing “near / that porous line / where my own

⁴⁶³ Neil Evernden, “Beyond Ecology: Self, Place, and Pathetic Fallacy”, 93, in Cheryll Glotfelty and Harold Fromm, eds. *The Ecocriticism Reader: Landmarks in Literary Ecology*. Athens: University of Georgia Press, 1996.

⁴⁶⁴ Neil Evernden, “Beyond Ecology: Self, Place, and Pathetic Fallacy”, 95.

⁴⁶⁵ Abram, David, *The Spell of the Sensuous: Perception and Language in a More-Than-Human-World*, New York: Vintage, 1997, 67, in Scott J. Bryson, *The West Side of Any Mountain: Place, Space, and Ecopoetry*. Iowa City: University of Iowa Press, 2005, 84.

⁴⁶⁶ Scott J. Bryson, *The West Side of Any Mountain: Place, Space, and Ecopoetry*, 84.

⁴⁶⁷ Scott J. Bryson, *The West Side of Any Mountain: Place, Space, and Ecopoetry*, 84.

⁴⁶⁸ Scott J. Bryson, *The West Side of Any Mountain: Place, Space, and Ecopoetry*, 84.

body was done with / and the roots and the stems and the flowers / began”.⁴⁶⁹ Bryson points out that the acknowledgement of this “porous line” between natural and human body in Oliver’s poems expresses her desire of “a reciprocal and intimate relationship with nature”.⁴⁷⁰

A notion of liminality similar to that articulated by Bryson has been discussed in chapter two, as emerging from Buell’s analysis of Gary Snyder’s “Second Shaman Song”. Here, the shaman “has allowed his body to become permeable to the point that his bones rub against the roots, and inside and outside can no longer be distinguished. [...] As his hand ‘moves out’ [...], it takes on the look of first flowering plant and then quartz, rock.”⁴⁷¹ In both Oliver and Snyder’s poetry, liminality between human and non-human indeed takes on a corporeal dimension. Oliver’s “porous line”, which itself suggests a potential for liminal experiences, echoes Snyder’s shaman, who opens his body to a dynamic relationship with the natural world. One of the core elements of Oliver’s poetry, according to Bryson, lies in her phenomenological stance and her attitude towards the body, which she describes “as the connecting phenomenon uniting human and nonhuman physical forms”.⁴⁷² A similar stance characterises Snyder’s “Second Shaman Song”, where the shaman connects on a deeper level with rocks and plants through his body. The body plays a very important role also in MacDiarmid’s poetry, and is a recurring element in every shade of liminality the poet explores.

The present chapter will explore four clusters of liminal expressions in MacDiarmid’s poetry, one for each of the four sections into which it is divided: ‘porous landscapes’, encounters between the human and the non-human, ‘organs without bodies’ and liminal cities. Section one will explore how episodes of liminality occur in the natural world of MacDiarmid’s poetry through the concept of ‘porous landscapes’. ‘Porous landscapes’ undermine ideas of fixed spaces and imply a dynamic interplay between them: landscapes, then, are porous in terms of their being constantly shaped by the blending of different spaces. The second

⁴⁶⁹ Scott J. Bryson, *The West Side of Any Mountain: Place, Space, and Ecopoetry*, 84. Oliver’s quotation is from: *New and Selected Poems*. Boston: Beacon Press, 1992, 58.

⁴⁷⁰ Scott J. Bryson, *The West Side of Any Mountain: Place, Space, and Ecopoetry*, 85.

⁴⁷¹ Lawrence Buell, *The Environmental Imagination: Thoreau, Nature Writing, and the Formation of American culture*, 167.

⁴⁷² Scott J. Bryson, *The West Side of Any Mountain: Place, Space, and Ecopoetry*, 88.

section deals with liminality involving the interaction between human and non-human world. Such liminality is conveyed in MacDiarmid's poetry through the use of three main literary devices: personification, reverse-personification (i.e. when a human is assigned non-human characteristics) and hybridisation (i.e. the creation of a continuum between human and non-human), all focusing on the more corporeal aspects of both man and nature. For example, as we shall see, in the poem "Flamenco", which presents an example of personification, the focus is on the body of rain as compared to that of a female dancer; in "Shetland Fisherman", an example of reverse-personification, a human body part is compared to that of an animal's; and finally in "Daughter of the Sea", Jeannie MacQueen's seemingly human shapes mix with non-human physical traits. The third section explores a kind of liminality which comes very close to the idea of porous body expressed by Oliver's poetry and by Snyder's "Second Shaman Song". The idea of "organs without bodies", borrowed from Morton, will be applied to analyse examples of liminality in *A Drunk Man Looks at the Thistle*. Here, human body parts and organs are often compared to plants or parts of plants, thus suggesting kinship and interconnection between human and non-human. What Bryson observes about Oliver's poetry on the body being "the connecting phenomenon uniting human and nonhuman physical forms",⁴⁷³ then, also applies to MacDiarmid's eco-poetical take on the human and non-human connection. Finally, the last section explores two cases of liminality involving the urban and the natural spaces, respectively in relation to the poem "Glasgow" (1962), that evokes a space in-between, half human/urban and half non-human/natural, and to the poem "Glasgow is Like the Sea", staging a de-humanisation of the city through its comparison with the sea. The kind of liminality described here is defined on the basis of the idea of porous spaces emerging from section one, which involves the interaction between two or more natural spaces. This last section, however, focuses specifically on the concept of 'liminal city', where the urban space opens up to and blends into the natural world. Buell's interest in the urban world, particularly relevant in second-wave

⁴⁷³ Scott J. Bryson, *The West Side of Any Mountain: Place, Space, and Eco-poetry*, 88.

ecocriticism,⁴⁷⁴ and Clark's statement that "the boundaries between the natural and the artificial have become porous [...]"⁴⁷⁵, as seen in chapter two, have further shaped the concept of 'liminal cities' in the present chapter.

The central idea of a deep bond, or a continuum uniting humans to their environment/the place they live in, is possibly most effectively expressed in MacDiarmid's poem "Water of Life", representing MacDiarmid's relation with his hometown, Langholm. The quotation in the title of this chapter, taken from this poem, foregrounds the speaker/poet identifying himself as a liminal creature ("I am amphibious still", CP1, p. 314), reflecting in his own body the liminal state of Langholm, a town surrounded by water. The same image effectively encompasses the different expressions of liminality investigated in the present chapter.

5.1 'Porous landscapes'

An interesting case of liminality in MacDiarmid's poems involves natural spaces that are sometimes depicted as blending together. This suggestion of a 'porous' nature undermines the notion of landscape as a fixed entity, and foregrounds the idea of a liminal space, constantly re-shaped by the interaction of different spaces. In MacDiarmid's eco-poetical world, a 'porous landscape' occurs when two spaces, more often the sea and the sky, permeate each other and form a completely new landscape. Sea and sky in particular are sometimes marked by interchangeability, like in "Water of Like", where they seem to "swap places a' thegither" (CP1, p. 315) or in "Mirror Fugue" where their merging gives life to powerful imagist-like lines:

Whiles I've seen a wheen gulls
Seem to equal the croods
O' the white waves by joinin'
Hands wi' the clouds,

⁴⁷⁴ Lawrence Buell. "Ecocriticism: Some Emerging Trends." 93.

⁴⁷⁵ Timothy Clark. *The Cambridge Introduction to Literature and the Environment*, 7.

Till atween them they've made
 A complete and clear
 Heavenly facsimile
 O' the hydrosphere
 – Till the shapes in the lift
 And the seas' wild smother
 Seemed baith to mak'
 And to mirror each other.

(CP1, "Mirror Fugue", p. 441)

The reference to a "fugue" in the title is not random but underlies a musical structure to be found in the poem. This passage is organised in three sections that are all variations on the same theme: the first goes from "Whiles I've seen" to "clouds"; the second from "Till atween" to "hydrosphere"; and the third from "Till the shapes" to "mirror each other". The first section presents sea and sky blending together through synecdoche, with the waves standing for the sea, and the gulls for the sky. The gulls, with their undulating movement, join the whiteness of the clouds and are thus to the sky what the waves are to the sea. The effect is so powerful as to trigger the second variation of the theme, in the second section, with the sky reflecting a "heavenly facsimile/O' the hydrosphere". The third variation, in the third section, introduces the word 'mirror', that both stands for the literal mirroring each other of sea and sky, and also for the metaphorical mirroring of themes in a fugue. Interestingly, the mutual mirroring of sea and sky, with the sky mirroring the sea being a very unusual image, also suggests their mutual liminality: part of the sky is in the sea, and part of the sea is in the sky. However, as with the mirror staying a mirror, although its glass blends with the reflected image, sea and sky remain separate spaces, despite their liminality. The mirroring of sea and sky is also echoed in two other poems: in the image of salmon "slip[ping]" "like flight of birds" (CP1, p. 553) in "The Salmon Leap", and in "Bracken Hills of Autumn", where foliage possesses the same reflecting qualities of the sea and of "steel or glass" (CP2, p. 1151). "Bracken Hills of Autumn" in particular is built on the imagery of the mirror, which the bracken and its related metaphors (steel, glass, and sea) all stand for:

These beds of bracken, climax of summer's growth,
 Are elemental as the sky or sea.
 In still and sunny weather they give back
 The sun's glare with a fixed intensity
 As of steel or glass
 No other foliage has.
 (CP2, "Bracken Hills in Autumn, p. 1151)

The bracken takes here centre-stage: it is compared to the sky, to the sea, and then to steel or glass. Of the three similes, only the first two are further developed in the poem. In the second stanza, the theme of the mirror emerges from the bracken's "redoubl[ing] "the sky", that anticipates the comparison between bracken and water in the fifth stanza. The fifth stanza opens with the bracken being compared to "grey-green seas" and the watery imagery is further expanded, as the speaker seems to spot "bog gardens" or a "struggling water-spring" (CP2, p. 1151) among the foliage.

What is striking in the lines discussed above, is the poet's physical rather than abstract sense of space. Interestingly, when imagining sea and sky blending together, the poet focuses on the individual physical components of those landscapes, such as the salmons populating the sea or the clouds and the birds in the sky. Similarly, in "Bracken Hills in Autumn" the stress is on the sensorial dimension of the bracken, with their steely or glassy mirroring of light, and their watery appearance, all contributing to a physical evocation of the landscape.

5.2 Where human and non-human meet: personification, reverse-personification and hybridisation

As we have seen, the corporeal dimension plays a very important role in every shade of liminality the poet explores and is also the site of the encounter of the human with the non-human. The present section deals specifically with examples of liminality involving the interaction between the human and non-human worlds. Such examples are conveyed in MacDiarmid's poetry through the use of three main rhetorical strategies: personification, reverse-personification and hybridisation. The relevance of these three strategies in relation to liminality is

effectively illustrated by Iovino and Opperman who, in their reflection on anthropomorphism in material ecocriticism, point out how a figure of speech “can reveal similarities and symmetries between the human and the nonhuman.”⁴⁷⁶ Personification, reverse-personification and hybridisation in MacDiarmid’s poems suggest indeed connection and similarity between humans and nature. Moreover, in the poems analysed in this section, the use of these literary devices often conveys a deep bond between man and place. In particular, the poems illustrate the bond islanders have with the island they live in and with the sea, or the bond the speaker has with his birthplace, which generally reflects MacDiarmid’s own bond with his hometown Langholm and its surroundings. While examples of the bond MacDiarmid-Langholm appear both in poems featuring personification and hybridisation, examples of the bond islander-island appear only in poems featuring reverse-personification.

The examples of personification in the poems I have chosen to analyse both show similarities between humans and nature, and convey the deep bond the speaker has with his birthplace. MacDiarmid, then, uses personification as a way to humanise physical expressions of nature, such as the sea (in “Hungry Waters”), the rain (in “Flamenco”), a bog (in “Tarras”) and a mountain (in “The North Face of Liathach”). “Hungry Waters” offers an example of anthropomorphism in MacDiarmid’s poetry. In the poem, fishermen appear in the form of “the auld men o’ the sea / Wi’ their daberlack hair” and “yowlin’” (CP1, p. 52) voices. A close look at the text, however, reveals that these men of the sea are but personified enraged sea-waters, as their hair recalls the waves of the sea and their voice the howling⁴⁷⁷ of the wind.

With the exception of “Hungry Waters”, all the poems mentioned above – “Flamenco”, “Tarras” and “The North Face of Liathach” – do not just humanise nature, but sexualise it or compare it to a female figure, be it an object of desire, a beloved or a mother. The kind of similarity personification conveys here, then, is

⁴⁷⁶ Iovino, Serenella, Serpil Opperman, “Material Ecocriticism: Materiality, Agency, and Models of Narrativity.” *Ecozon@: European Journal of Literature, Culture and Environment*, 3.1 (2012), 82.

⁴⁷⁷ “Yowling” is the Scots word for “howling”. The translation of the term is from the “Glossary” in Hugh MacDiarmid. *Complete Poems: Volume I*, eds. Michael Grieve and W. R. Aitken. Manchester: Carcanet, 1993, p. xxxiv.

that between the body of nature and the female body. In “Flamenco”, which presents another example of personification of a natural object (water), the protagonist is not the sea, but the rain, whose movements are compared to those of a female flamenco dancer. In the first lines of the poem, the speaker announces that “there can be nae true Scot wha disna ken and lo’e / Rain in a thousand forms” (CP2, p. 1362). Then, the poem indulges in rich sensorial images dealing with the colour of the rain, its smell and taste (CP2, p. 1362), until the rain is compared to a dancer, and sound and sight dominate the description:

Look at her owre the hills yonder noo !
 Whaur else in the wide world could you see
 A dancer to manage hauf sae weel as yon.
 Her trailin’, frothin’, mony-tiered skirt
 Wi’ serpent-like movements, explosive claps, sudden
 Twists o’ her hail bouk,
 And ever and again a diamond-bricht shake,
 A’ keyed to the clatter and stamp o’ her feet?
 (CP2, “Flamenco”, p. 1363)

Like the waters in “Hungry Water”, rain here seems to possess an agency of its own and stands out for its powerful presence. Rain is described as one dancing body of light (hail=whole;⁴⁷⁸ bouk=body⁴⁷⁹), whose serpentine movement combined with “twists” and “shake[s]” produces “explosive claps” along with the clattering and stamping sounds “o’ her feet”. Furthermore, the speaker gives other details on the sound of the rain which “passes through a’ the gradations / Frae a faint purrin’ to a dynamo throbbin’” (CP2, p. 1363). From the pronoun “her”, one infers that the rain is identified as a female dancer, and the closing lines of the poem giving further account on “the prood pillar o’ her neck”, “the intense fixed

⁴⁷⁸ In *Dictionary of the Scots Language*. (Scottish Language Dictionaries Ltd.), 5 Nov. 2017, <http://www.dsl.ac.uk/entry/snd/hail_adj_n1_v1>: hail means both “whole” and “in perfect health condition, strong, unbroken”.

⁴⁷⁹ In *Dictionary of the Scots Language*. (Scottish Language Dictionaries Ltd.), 5 Nov. 2017, <http://www.dsl.ac.uk/entry/snd/bouk_n2>

fire o' her een" and "her laicher⁴⁸⁰ limbs" (CP2, p. 1363) adds a slightly erotic tone to the description.

It is not uncommon to find representations of nature as female in MacDiarmid's poems. Beside "Flamenco", "Tarras" is a good example of how the poet sexualises parts of the landscape or natural phenomena. As Gish notes, "'Tarras'" is "a place-name from" an "area near Langholm" and is "drawn from MacDiarmid's boyhood experience."⁴⁸¹ The protagonist of the poem, however, is a specific feature of the landscape – a bog which, as Gish notes, "becomes" the speaker's "beloved, a new form of woman whose attraction carries even more fully the contradictory exaltation and loathing of sexual love".⁴⁸² The bog-woman, indeed, is far from being depicted as a sweet and warm lover:

Ah, woman-fondlin'! What is that to this?

Saft hair to birssy heather, warm kiss

To cauld black waters' suction.

Nae ardent breists' erection

But the stark hills'!

(CP1, "Tarras", p. 338)

As highlighted in chapter three when discussing the poem "The North Face of Liathach", MacDiarmid's depiction of the Scottish landscape as stark and unwelcoming is not uncommon as, to use his words, "Scotland is not generally regarded as a land flowing with milk and honey".⁴⁸³ The woman-landscape in "Tarras" possesses, indeed, the same harshness and aloofness – with "birssy heather" suggesting "bristle"⁴⁸⁴ hairs, the cold and wet "suction" of "black waters" standing for a kiss, and "stark hills" for breasts.⁴⁸⁵ Gish points out a

⁴⁸⁰ "Laicher" is the comparative form of "laich" which means "low". In *Dictionary of the Scots Language*. (Scottish Language Dictionaries Ltd.), 5 Nov. 2017, <http://www.dsl.ac.uk/entry/snd/laich_adj_adv_n1_v1>

⁴⁸¹ Nancy K. Gish. *Hugh MacDiarmid: The Man and his Work*. London: Macmillan Press, 1984, 129.

⁴⁸² Nancy K. Gish. *Hugh MacDiarmid: The Man and his Work*, 129.

⁴⁸³ Hugh MacDiarmid, *Lucky Poet*, 219.

⁴⁸⁴ In *Dictionary of the Scots Language*. (Scottish Language Dictionaries Ltd.), 6 Nov. 2017, <http://www.dsl.ac.uk/entry/snd/birsie_adj>

⁴⁸⁵ Although pointing out, like Gish, MacDiarmid's eroticisation of the bog, Gairn suggests that "the gender of the bog-land is ambiguous, the speaker seeing at times his own bodily likenesses in the tangle of the heather and moss, where 'laithsome parodies appear / O' my body's secrets in this

further identification between the “woman’s body / land and water with ‘the masses’” in the opening stanza.⁴⁸⁶ With the final lines warning that “only the strong, who can accept and appreciate her are called to love her”, these “three primary images” “– masses, nature, and woman” – are “tie[d] together” and signify that “all three [...] are most living and creative in their wild, crude, physical form.”⁴⁸⁷ In “Tarras”, then, the eroticisation of the landscape and the bog/beloved-speaker dynamic are functional to the expression of MacDiarmid’s strong bond with his birthplace. As we shall see shortly, the islanders’ deep bond with the sea is conveyed, through a reverse personification, that is by their resemblance to marine creatures. In a similar way, in “Tarras”, the masses are connected to the landscape as they both share, to use Gish’s words, that “wild, crude” and “physical form”.

Beside being sexualised into the speaker’s object of desire, parts of the landscape are also compared to different female figures. It is the case of “The North Face of Liathach”, where the mountain’s “tremendous face” is compared by the speaker first to his mother, and then to other women, possibly lovers or beloveds:

No flower, no fern,
 No wisp of grass or pad of moss
 Lightens this tremendous face.
 Otherwise it might remind me of my mother.
 The education she gave me was strict enough,
 Teaching me a sense of duty and self-reliance
 And having no time for any softness.
 Her tenderness was always very reserved,
 Very modest in its expression
 And respect was the foremost of my feelings for her.
 No. Not of my mother.
 But of many women I have known
 As I could not know her.
 It is with them I have found the soul most exposed,

oorie growth’.” (Louisa Gairn, *Ecology and Modern Scottish Literature*. Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2008, pp. 99-100; MacDiarmid’s quotation is from CP1, p. 338).

⁴⁸⁶ Nancy K. Gish. *Hugh MacDiarmid: The Man and his Work*, 130.

⁴⁸⁷ Nancy K. Gish. *Hugh MacDiarmid: The Man and his Work*, 130-1.

Something not of this world,
 Which makes you tremble with delight and repulsion
 When you see it so close.
 (CP2, “The North Face of Liathach”, pp. 1056-7)

As discussed in chapter three, “The North Face of Liathach” contains a powerful depiction of the rough, frightening and elemental force of this mountain. The passage quoted above, however, is softened by the speaker’s reference to his mother, possibly a projection of the relationship between MacDiarmid and his mother. Once more, a feature of the landscape is personified into female figures, and once more, like in the closing lines of “Tarras”, the speaker’s feelings towards his lovers are contradictory, and his desire mixed “with delight and repulsion”.

Like most of the examples of personification discussed in this section, the cases of reverse-personification I am going to analyse are both expressive of the connection between humans and nature, and of the bond uniting them with the land they inhabit — with special reference to the relationship between islanders and their islands. In order to understand how this bond is represented through the device of reverse-personification in the poems, it is useful to quote John R. Gillis’s reflection on the relationship between islanders and island. As Gillis notes, while islanders shape their environment by physically bringing their imprint on it,⁴⁸⁸ they are also shaped by it: “in the past, both islanders and coastal people qualified, along with the flora and fauna they depended on, as *edge species*, people capable of exploiting the possibilities of ecotones they occupied.”⁴⁸⁹ “Living an ecotonal existence”, islanders have indeed become “amazingly sensitive and adaptable to the conditions of both land and water.”⁴⁹⁰ They, indeed, qualify as liminal beings, adapting their lives and their jobs to the possibilities offered by an equally liminal space.

Interestingly, in MacDiarmid’s poems the islanders’ connection with the place they live in is significantly conveyed by their physical resemblance to marine creatures, as if they had taken up the same traits of the surrounding environment.

⁴⁸⁸ John R. Gillis, “Not Continents in Miniature: Islands as Ecotones”, *Island Journal Studies* 9.1 (2014), 158.

⁴⁸⁹ John R. Gillis, “Not Continents in Miniature: Islands as Ecotones”, 158.

⁴⁹⁰ John R. Gillis, “Not Continents in Miniature: Islands as Ecotones”, 158.

The experience of being shaped by the environment is represented in these poems by the use of “reverse-personification” or “dehumanisation”, a literary device whereby, according to Killingsworth, “people are deprived of their humanity and made to appear as animals or objects”.⁴⁹¹ However, in MacDiarmid’s poems this device is deprived of its original sense of “diminishment”⁴⁹², and is instead used to stress a sense of kinship between the human and the non-human worlds within the islanders/island bond.

As one may infer from Gillis’ interesting reflections on the nature of islanders’ connection with the island, such bond goes deeper than affection, as islanders take on one of the distinctive traits of islands: liminality. Gillis explains that islands should not be considered as “continents in miniature” but as “ecotones”, “places where ecosystems intersect, overlap and exist in creative tension with one another”.⁴⁹³ From this definition, then, islands appear as liminal spaces *par excellence* and, as Gillis observes, “never the clearly bounded entities we imagine them to be”.⁴⁹⁴ Gillis also investigates the role of islanders in “shaping their own environments”, thus underlining a further shade of liminality pertaining to island-space, which is both non-human and human made: “Nature has shaped islands, but islands also bear the imprint of humankind.”⁴⁹⁵

The kind of relationship islanders have with their island is mutual. This means that while islanders are shaped by the environment they live in, they also shape their environment in many ways. MacDiarmid’s account of the life of islanders in *Lucky Poet* offers an example of one of the ways islanders symbolically shape their island, that is by the act of naming its components and aspects. Islanders indeed

are in the habit of talking to, every bird and beast and insect in the place, just as on the little island of Eynhallow in the Orkneys, which is a sanctuary of sea-birds, the keeper knows, and has a pet

⁴⁹¹ M. Jimmie Killingsworth, *Appeals in Modern Rhetoric: an Ordinary Language Approach*. Carbondale: Southern Illinois University Press, 2005, 100.

⁴⁹² *Ibid.*

⁴⁹³ John R. Gillis, “Not Continents in Miniature: Islands as Ecotones”, 155.

⁴⁹⁴ John R. Gillis, “Not Continents in Miniature: Islands as Ecotones”, 155.

⁴⁹⁵ John R. Gillis, “Not Continents in Miniature: Islands as Ecotones”, 158.

name for, every one of the nesting birds, while in the Shetlands and the Orkneys the older people at any rate have similar names for every movement of the wind and sea.⁴⁹⁶

MacDiarmid learnt these ‘local’ names while in the Shetland Islands, as the passage from *In Memoriam James Joyce*, featuring a list of Norn names for “the restless movements of the sea” (CP2, p. 763), testifies. Islanders, then, seem to symbolically shape the environment they live in by naming natural elements and animals. The act of giving a name, in this case, does not imply an act of dominance upon nature, but a sign of intimacy and an act of recognition towards the many and sometimes overlooked forms nature can take: the different names for the movements of the sea in the Shetlandic language is a good example of such recognition. Language is very telling of a community’s relationship with its own environment. Sometimes, the special connection between islanders and their island can be even passed on to the ‘foreigner’, as a passage from *Lucky Poet* testifies. Here, MacDiarmid writes of “the very intimate relationship I have had with [the sea] during these past six years on this little island”, and points out that he did not have the same experience in the town of Montrose, despite its being “at the seaside”.⁴⁹⁷ It seems that the island, in this case the little Shetland island of Whalsay, is a special place that fosters a deeper connection with the natural environment. However, the passage also reveals MacDiarmid’s deep aversion for the urban world – a theme which will be explored in the last section of this chapter.

MacDiarmid’s sojourn in the Shetland clearly inspired the two poems I have chosen to analyse as meaningful examples of reverse-personification: “Deep-Sea Fishing” and “Shetland Fisherman”. In both poems, the islanders’ connection with the island is mainly conveyed by their physical resemblance to marine creatures. In this sense, the use of reverse-personification here reverberates Iovino and Opperman’s reflections on the bond between human and non-human. By taking up the same traits of the surrounding environment, islanders become part of it, exactly like a fish or any other living being inhabiting the island or the

⁴⁹⁶ MacDiarmid, Hugh. *Lucky Poet: a Self-study in Literature and Political Ideas Being the Autobiography of Hugh MacDiarmid* (Christopher Murray Grieve), 390.

⁴⁹⁷ Hugh MacDiarmid, *Lucky Poet*, 61.

surrounding sea. In “Deep-Sea Fishing” from the series of “Shetland Lyrics”, for example, the fishermen appear as having non-human traits, with their minds and bodies taking on something from the wild and elemental environment of the sea: “I kent their animal forms / And primitive minds, like fish frae the sea” (CP1, p. 438). “Shetland Fisherman” is similar to “Deep-Sea Fishing”, in that it also deploys a kind of reverse-personification to stress the fishermen’s blending with the sea-scape. The poem, described by MacDiarmid in *Lucky Poet* as an example of those “poems” “full of thumb-nail sketches of local characters”,⁴⁹⁸ features a brief sketch of a fisherman who “would look / like a walbuis peering from an island nook” (CP1, p. 604) because of the icicles in his moustache.

Although already emerging through the comparison of the non-human to the human (personification), and of the human to the non-human (reverse-personification), the theme of liminality is even more effectively expressed by examples of hybridisation between the human and the non-human. In MacDiarmid’s poems, hybridisation often implies a combination of terrestrial (human) and marine (non-human) elements. In particular, the poems I have selected can be divided in two groups – the first including examples of hybridisation involving half-human, half-marine creatures (“Daughter of the Sea” and “Excelsior”, the last section of “Water of Life”), and the second comprising cases where the speaker identifies with hybrid or sea-creatures (“Water of Life”, “Gruney”, “The Bonxie”). As with examples of personification and reverse-personification, hybridisation is a way to represent in the text the strong bond humans have with the place they live in.

The first example from the first group of poems I am going to discuss is “A Daughter of the Sea”, from the series “Shetland Lyrics”. The brief poem, here quoted in full, presents a liminal creature whose both terrestrial (human) and marine (non-human) traits create an uncanny effect:

A wumman cam’ up frae the blae deeps o’ the sea
And ‘I’m Jeannie MacQueen,’ she said, lauchin’, to me.

But it’s ‘Gi way wi’ your oyster-shine, lassie, gi way’

⁴⁹⁸ Hugh MacDiarmid, *Lucky Poet*, 52.

– For she'd a different colour in the nail o' each tae.

(CP1, "A Daughter of the Sea", p. 439)

The woman introducing herself as "Jeannie MacQueen" turns out to be a marine creature. The speaker soon notices that parts of her body are uncannily non-human: apart from the fact that she suspiciously comes from "the blae deeps o' the sea", her strange "oyster-shine" and the colour of her toenails alarm him. She indeed appears to be a marine creature, possibly a female selkie, a mythological creature found in the folklore of the Scottish Islands, Ireland and Faeroe Islands, trying to lure the speaker into the sea. According to Scottish folktales, selkies are "seal-like men and women" who sometimes, especially on Midsummer Eve, come on land, take off their seal-skin and dance on the shore. Many stories tell of a man stealing the skin of a female selkie, as this is the only way to hold her on land and eventually marry her. However, if the selkie finds her seal-skin, which is usually locked away by the husband, she returns back into the sea.⁴⁹⁹

The second example of liminality from the first group of poems is that presented in "Water of Life", and particularly in the final section of the poem, "Excelsior". Here, the speaker mentions a strange kind of people, a river folk, whose physical traits have been completely shaped by water:

Weel the Waterside folk kent what I mean;
 They were like figures seen on fountains whiles.
 The river made sae free wi' them – poored in and oot
 O' their een and ears (no' mooths) in a' its styles,
 Till it clean scooped the insides o' their skulls
 O' a' but a wheen thochts like gulls.

(CP1, "Water of Life", pp. 318-9)

Water has been digging out the Waterside folk's skulls so much that no trace of human thought is left in their brains. They are indeed liminal creatures, who have been shaped by the riverine environment. However, this case is different from other examples discussed in this sections, where liminality originates from

⁴⁹⁹ Cassandra Eason. *Fabulous Creatures, Mythical Monsters, and Animal Power Symbols: A Handbook*. Westport: Greenwood Press, 2008, 147-8.

similarity between the human and the non-human world, with human traits being attached to nature (rain as flamenco dancer), or with natural features being attributed to humans (fisherman as walbius). In “Excelsior”, like in “A Daughter of the Sea”, the encounter between human and non-human results into something new – a hybrid creature which is neither human nor non-human, but goes beyond both states. The Waterside folk, indeed, are compared to non-living “figures on fountains”, on which water “poored in and oot”, possibly suggesting the control water has on them and their lives.

As Gillis highlights, islanders, and we can also add by extension sea- or river-dwellers, are highly dependent on the environment they live in and have learned to be adaptable and take the most out of both land and water.⁵⁰⁰ However, as Gillis notes, one of the main traits of islanders is their realism, their knowing that “sea is both friend and enemy”. “Seafarers”, he also writes, “are sea fearing, fatalistic but not passive.”⁵⁰¹ This applies to river-dwellers as well, but the Waterside folk appear more passive than active. Their being just “figures on fountains”, with water passing through them, may symbolise the condition of risk and uncertainty they face as river-dwellers and their being at the mercy of the river. “Water of Life” also fits into the second group of poems I have identified as dealing with the speaker’s self-identification with hybrid creatures. Gish points out the connection between the Waterside folk and the speaker/poet, who identifies himself as a liminal creature: “the queer stone figures [“queer stane faces” (CP1, 319)] with water flowing through them link to earlier images of water [in “Water of Life”] as [...] the poet as an amphibious creature living half in, half out of water.”⁵⁰² In these lines, as Gish notes, the poet recollects his childhood in Langholm and how water was all around the town:⁵⁰³ “I was sae used to water as a loon / That I’m amphibious still. A perfect maze / O’ waters is about the Muckle Toon” (CP1, p. 314). The speaker, or, given the autobiographical strain of the passage, the poet, identifies himself as a liminal creature, reflecting in his body the ecotonal nature of his birthplace. It is arguably the bond with the

⁵⁰⁰ John R. Gillis, “Not Continents in Miniature: Islands as Ecotones”, 158.

⁵⁰¹ John R. Gillis, “Not Continents in Miniature: Islands as Ecotones”, 160.

⁵⁰² Nancy K. Gish. *Hugh MacDiarmid: The Man and his Work*, 141.

⁵⁰³ Nancy K. Gish. *Hugh MacDiarmid: The Man and his Work*, 141.

Muckle Toon that helped him develop a special fondness for the sea, as is evident in the immediately preceding lines, where he says: “I’m whiles glad when a less shoogly sea / Than ithers cradles me” (CP1, p. 314). Such fondness is echoed in the “very intimate relationship”⁵⁰⁴ MacDiarmid established with the sea in Whalsay, and accounted for in *Lucky Poet*. However, there is more. Gish interestingly comments that the speaker’s “memories of childhood are like recollections of living in the sea before life emerged on land: ‘Ah, vivid recollection o’ trugin’ that / Crab-like again upon the ocean-flair! –’”.⁵⁰⁵ Water, then, outweighs the land and thus becomes the dominant element in the speaker’s identity. It also worth observing that although crabs, like other amphibious creatures, live both on the land and in the sea, the speaker highlights here the crabs’ watery nature, associating them with the early stages of the evolutionary process. This reference to evolution is identified by Gish, who explains that in “Excelsior” water is described as “the force that brought life from seas and jungles to ‘the present stage’”.⁵⁰⁶ The crab metaphor, consequently, suggests a kind of ‘devolution’, a return to the origins, to the speaker’s childhood, and, metaphorically, to the ‘childhood’ of living beings. When the speaker suddenly starts reflecting on the possibility of a second flood, he envisages it, as Gish points out, as a return to a new Langholm – “both his origin and his source of renewal”.⁵⁰⁷ As personal and universal origins overlap, MacDiarmid’s local and global drive, as highlighted by Gairn (see chapter three), emerges again and becomes the underlying focus of the whole poem.

The speaker’s identification with liminal creatures from the animal world, as seen in “Water of Life”, is recurring in other poems, where the speaker focuses his attention on another dweller of both land and seascapes – the bird. As islanders have been defined as “living an ecotonal existence”, and therefore as “amazingly sensitive and adaptable to the conditions of both land and water”⁵⁰⁸ by Gillis, so can birds be defined as ecotonal creatures. MacDiarmid’s interest for birds is evident, both in poems (see for example “The Puffin”, “Gruney”, “The Bonxie”,

⁵⁰⁴ Hugh MacDiarmid, *Lucky Poet*, 61.

⁵⁰⁵ Nancy K. Gish. *Hugh MacDiarmid: The Man and his Work*, 141.

⁵⁰⁶ Nancy K. Gish. *Hugh MacDiarmid: The Man and his Work*, 142.

⁵⁰⁷ Nancy K. Gish. *Hugh MacDiarmid: The Man and his Work*, 142.

⁵⁰⁸ John R. Gillis, “Not Continents in Miniature: Islands as Ecotones”, 158.

“Shags’ Nest”, “To a Sea-Eagle”) and in a passage from *Lucky Poet*, where he writes extensively of the bird species to be found on the Scottish islands.⁵⁰⁹ In “Gruney” and “The Bonxie”, both from “Shetland Lyrics”, the speaker identifies with birds from the surrounding landscape — ecotonal creatures set in an ecotonal environment. In the seeming bareness of the landscape of “Gruney”, where snow and sun appear to be the speaker’s only companions, the gap separating the human from the non-human appears thinner:

You say there’s naething here
 But a bank o’ snaw?
 But the sun whiles shows in’t
 Gleg een ana’.

I’ll be like these white birds
 Sittin’ facin’ the ocean
 Wi’ here and there in their stillness
 Vigil’s pin-point motion.
 (CP1, “Gruney”, p. 439)

The speaker here opposes his vivid perspective on a landscape, whose beauty his eye has been trained to detect, to an imaginary external voice commenting on the starkness of the same landscape. This imaginary ‘dialogue’ echoes MacDiarmid’s vision of the rocky landscape of the Shetland in *The Islands of Scotland*: “the infinite beauties of the bare land and the shapes and colours of the rocks, which first of all impress one with a sense of sameness and next delight one with a revelation of the endless resource of nature albeit in subtler and less showy or sensational forms [...]”.⁵¹⁰ Similarly, the speaker of “Gruney” can find beauty behind the seeming uniformity of the snow. It is as if he replied to the external voice: ‘look, the bank is not bare or dull, as the sun shines on the snow now and then, and on top of that, there are so many living beings dwelling around here.’ The speaker thus records common people’s blindness to the several expressions of

⁵⁰⁹ Hugh MacDiarmid, *Lucky Poet*, 390-1.

⁵¹⁰ Hugh MacDiarmid, *The Islands of Scotland: Hebrides, Orkneys, and Shetlands*, 66.

natural beauty, be it the light of the sun, the birds on a beach, or all those vital and significant parts of the natural world that often go unnoticed.

Along similar lines, the speaker of “The Bonxie” announces from the very first line that he “’ll be the Bonxie, that noble scua” (CP1, p. 440). The following lines, however, mark an unexpected turn and mood. The speaker concentrates on the intimidating presence of the skua and on the uneasiness it causes to other birds:

I’ll be the Bonxie, that noble scua,
That infects a’ ither birds wi’ its qualms.
In its presence even the eagle
Forbears to pounce on the lambs.
(CP1, “The Bonxie”, p. 440)

Another significant relationship between bird and speaker is that highlighted by Gish in her analysis of “By Wauchopside”. One of the images of the poem is that of a blackbird singing alone in the night, which, according to Gish, comes to symbolize the speaker’s self:⁵¹¹

I used to hear a blackie mony a nicht
Singin’ awa’ t’an unconscionable’ oor
Wi’ nocht but the water keepin’ t’ company
(Or nocht that ony human ear could hear)
– And wondered if the blackie heard it either
Or cared whether it was singin’ tae or no’!
O there’s nae saying what my verses awn
To memories like these. Ha’e I come back
To find oot? Or to borrow mair? Or see
Their helpless puirness to what gar’d them be?
 Late sang the blackie but it stopt at last.
 The river still ga’ed singin’ past.
(CP2, “By Wauchopside”, p. 1083)

⁵¹¹ Nancy K. Gish. *Hugh MacDiarmid: The Man and his Work*, 137.

At a first reading, the main tension appears to be between the speaker and the bird, with the passage stressing the limitation of humans in accessing the non-human world. This is evident, for example, in the statement about the limited range of human hearing, or in the speaker's wondering what is in the blackbird's mind. However, Gish's reading identifies another central dichotomy in the passage – the one between bird/self and the sea:

the bird is also a metaphor for himself, a singer who hears the water's own music and may recognise a fellow singer, may hear something beyond human sound. The two songs continue late into the night, but the bird stops at last. It is the water that runs on without end. In a reversal of meaning, the, it is nature that is eternal, its song going on whether heard or not.⁵¹²

The first lines of the passage – “I used to hear a blackie mony a nicht” (CP2, p. 1083) – may be reminiscent of the Keatsian speaker's “Darkling I listen”⁵¹³ in “Ode to a Nightingale”. However, unlike Keats's nightingale, MacDiarmid's blackbird sings a mortal song, as suggested by its sudden stop, while the song of the sea – the song of nature – continues. The speaker's identification with the blackbird, then, is also significant as foregrounding his own mortality against the immortality of nature.

5.3 “Organs without bodies” in *A Drunk Man Looks at the Thistle*

In order to understand Morton's concept of “organs without bodies”, around which the present chapter is structured, we first need to briefly explore his reflections on the relationship between interconnection and liminality. When “thinking the mesh” or thinking interconnection,⁵¹⁴ Morton notes, “nothing is complete in itself.”⁵¹⁵ In this regard, he invites the reader to think about the case of symbiosis between two organisms in the lichen, or between fungi and roots of a plant in mycorrhizal relationships, or about the case of bacteria living in our

⁵¹² Nancy K. Gish. *Hugh MacDiarmid: The Man and his Work*, 137.

⁵¹³ John Keats, “Ode to a Nightingale”, in *Bright Star: The Complete Poems and Selected Letters*. Jane Campion, ed. London: Vintage, 2009, 237.

⁵¹⁴ For the meaning of mesh as “interconnection” see Timothy Morton, *The Ecological Thought*, 15, 28.

⁵¹⁵ Timothy Morton, *The Ecological Thought*, 33.

stomachs.⁵¹⁶ Apparently, liminality is an important trait of the mesh, as stressed by Morton's invitation to consider the mesh as composed by parts rather than as a whole: "what the ecological thought is thinking isn't more than the sum of its parts."⁵¹⁷ He thus questions holistic representations of nature, where the whole prevails on the parts, and that is typical of what Morton calls "Nature", with a capital 'N'⁵¹⁸ — an image of nature as pure and wild and thus aestheticised.⁵¹⁹ As Morton's emphasis is not on the whole, but rather on parts, we are encouraged to see a human being as not entirely human because, for example, of the bacteria living in her/his stomach, and a plant as not entirely a plant because, for example, of the fungi living in its roots. Notions of identity as monolithic are also questioned, as Morton's focus on parts casts a light on the liminal identity of all living things and on their interconnection.

The quote I have chosen for the title of this section is suggestive of such perspective. "We consist of organs without bodies",⁵²⁰ Morton notes, reversing Deleuze's famous figure of the "body without organs".⁵²¹ Instead of the whole (the body) as a single entity, there are only parts (organs), without fixed or clear boundaries (bodies) separating or enclosing them. The idea of "organs without bodies" can also become a metaphor for the "relational identity"⁵²² articulated by Gilcrest, that is achieved by the "decomposition of the autonomous self"⁵²³ and exists only in connection (see chapter two). Similarly, the concept of "organs without bodies" undermines notions of an "autonomous self" by suggesting the dissolution of the body/whole and focusing on interdependent and interconnected parts.

A similar idea is conveyed by Buell in his analysis of contemporary American writer David Rains Wallace, who "tr[ies] to reimagine the human body and mind

⁵¹⁶ Timothy Morton, *The Ecological Thought*, 34.

⁵¹⁷ Timothy Morton, *The Ecological Thought*, 35.

⁵¹⁸ Ibid.

⁵¹⁹ Timothy Morton, *The Ecological Thought*, 5.

⁵²⁰ Timothy Morton, *The Ecological Thought*, 34.

⁵²¹ Morton refers to the concept as expressed in Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari, *Anti-Oedipus: Capitalism and Schizophrenia*, trans. Robert Hurley, Mark Seem and H. Lane. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1983, 1-8.

⁵²² David Gilcrest, "Regarding Silence: Cross-Cultural Roots of Eco-poetic Meditation" in Scott J. Bryson, ed. *Eco-poetry: A Critical Introduction*. Salt Lake City: University of Utah Press, 2002, 21.

⁵²³ David Gilcrest, "Regarding Silence: Cross-Cultural Roots of Eco-poetic Meditation" in Scott J. Bryson, ed. *Eco-poetry: A Critical Introduction*. Salt Lake City: University of Utah Press, 2002, 21.

in terms of the signs of evolutionary processes that link it to other organisms”.⁵²⁴ Wallace seems in line with the “organs without bodies” perspective when he observes that “lungs absorb and excrete gases as do gills and leaves”, and that “no human organ would look out of place if planted in some Paleozoic sponge bed or coral reef.”⁵²⁵ As noted in chapter two, the fragmentation of the human body may indeed suggest a possible interchangeability between human and natural parts. Interestingly, MacDiarmid’s poems often feature organs or parts of the body, like the “shinin” “white teeth” of a corpse in “The Dead Liebknecht” (CP1, p. 57), the blue eyes compared to five eggs in “Trompe l’oeil” (CP1, p. 45), or finally the “stomach”, the “wame”, the “palate”, and the “guts” in “Your Immortal Memory, Burns!”, where Burns is ironically addressed as “Poet Intestinal” (CP1, p. 77). However, it is in *A Drunk Man Looks at the Thistle* that the “organs without bodies” perspective emerges more clearly. Throughout *A Drunk Man*, plants or parts of plants often appear connected with parts of the human body like, for example, brains swelling like seaweeds (DLT, p. 81, l. 377), or blood running from “stems” (DLT, p. 165, l. 1559). In the example of the brain compared to seaweeds, the vegetal imagery evokes ideas of dryness and sterility, ideas which also characterise other “organs-without-bodies” passages in the poem:

My harns are seaweed – when the tide is in
 They swall like blethers and in comfort float,
 But when the tide is oot they lie like gealed
 And rankled auld bluid-vessels in a knot!
 (*A Drunk Man Looks at the Thistle*, 81, ll. 381-4)

A close look at modifiers such as “gealed” (“congealed”⁵²⁶) or “rankled” (“wrinkled”) reveals a central element of tension – dryness as opposed to the water of the tide. Overall, the passage is fraught with images of parts of the

⁵²⁴ Lawrence Buell, *The Environmental Imagination: Thoreau, Nature Writing, and the Formation of American culture*, 157.

⁵²⁵ David Rains Wallace, *The Klamath Knot: Explorations of Myth and Evolution*. Berkeley: University of California Press, 1983, 132, in Lawrence Buell, *The Environmental Imagination: Thoreau, Nature Writing, and the Formation of American culture*, 156.

⁵²⁶ All the translations of Scots words in *A Drunk Man* are taken from Buthlay’s notes in Hugh MacDiarmid. *A Drunk Man Looks at the Thistle*, ed. Kenneth Buthlay. Edinburgh: Polygon, 1987. For the meaning of “gealed”, see notes, p. 81.

human body and organs, that are all connected to the seaweed: on the one hand, seaweed-“harns” (“brains”) and seaweed-“blethers” (“bladder”) floating in the water; on the other, dry seaweed-“bluid-vessels”. The connected images of blood and seaweed also appear in another passage, where “clots o’ bluid” first “loup oot frae stems” (p. 165, l. 1559) and then “kilter like seaweed” (“undulate⁵²⁷ like seaweed”) in the water (p. 165, ll. 1561-2). Like in the previous example, the “clots o’ bluid” here remind us of the “bluid-vessels” lying like dry seaweed. Both examples, indeed, convey an idea of exsiccation and sterility, as opposed to the idea of fluidity and life conveyed by water.

The connection between plant and body is even more intense in the passage where “the poet”, according to Buthlay, “imagines himself as resurrected in the form of the thistle.”⁵²⁸ In the lines before such identification, as noted by Buthlay, the speaker’s connection to the thistle is described as not only spiritual but also eminently physical, as if to each inner transformation would correspond a physical metamorphosis:

My knots o’ nerves that struggled sair
 Are weel reflected in the herb;
 My crookit instincts were like this,
 As sterile and acerb.

My self-torment spirit took
 The shape repeated in the thistle;
 Sma’ beauty jouked my rawny banes
 And maze o’ gristle.

(*A Drunk Man Looks at the Thistle*, 105, ll. 679-86)

Physical and spiritual identification with the thistle go hand in hand: as the speaker’s nerves are compared to the thistle (“the herb”), so his instincts appear “as sterile and acerb” as the plant. Similarly, in the second stanza, as his spirit is seen as akin to the thistle, so his bones and cartilage (“gristle”⁵²⁹) lose their beauty and take the homely appearance of the plant. Such connection between human

⁵²⁷ Hugh MacDiarmid. *A Drunk Man Looks at the Thistle*, see notes, p. 165.

⁵²⁸ Hugh MacDiarmid. *A Drunk Man Looks at the Thistle*, see note n. 2, p. 104.

⁵²⁹ Hugh MacDiarmid. *A Drunk Man Looks at the Thistle*, see notes, 105.

body and plant takes on a universal turn when the speaker acknowledges that “his sinnens and veins” (“his sinews⁵³⁰ and veins”) are not only intertwined with the vegetal world but with all the living things – both human and non-human – on the Earth:

My sinnens and my veins are but
 As muckle o’ a single shoot
 Wha’s fibre I can ne’er unwaft
 O’ my wife’s flesh and mither’s flesh
 And a’ the flesh o’ humankind,
 And reveled thrums o’ beasts and plants
 [...]

(*A Drunk Man Looks at the Thistle*, p. 161, ll., 1493-8)

These lines suggest the interconnection of all creatures, also in terms of a flesh and blood kinship, in line with the corporeal strain identified so far. This passage is taken from a section fraught with eco-sensitive insights, like, for example the speaker’s reflecting on how difficult it is for humanity to abandon an anthropocentric view: “O hard it is for man to ken / He’s no’ creation’s goal nor yet / A benefitter by’t at last” (p. 161, ll. 1470-2). These lines echo another powerful statement within the same poem, one that undermines the supremacy of humanity over other living things, and fosters a more egalitarian perspective: “And Man [...] / Ane o’ the countless atoms is!” (p. 161, ll. 1491-2). These lines conform indeed to the “organs without bodies” perspective, with the body, the single identity in this case – man – depicted as less important than the parts, or indeed as just one of the parts.

Man, with a capital ‘M’, is, then, de-magnified and represented as not different from animals, plants or stones, which are equally composed by atoms. Under this light, man is not superior to other living and non-living things, but equal to and part of the same universal body. The biocentric view is further carried out by the metaphor linking humankind to coral insects, when the speaker suggests that the former should follow the example of the latter: “And we must braird another tip / Oot owre us ere we wither tae / And join the sentrice skeleton / As coral insects

⁵³⁰ Hugh MacDiarmid. *A Drunk Man Looks at the Thistle*, see notes, 161.

big their reefs” (p. 163, ll. 1512-5). Buthlay suggests that the source of these lines that may help us understand their meaning. The source identified by Buthlay is a comment on Russian philosopher Vladimir Solovyov by J. N. Duddington: “Nature goes on building life upon dead bones – for ever, but in vain.”⁵³¹ By deploying another vegetal image, the speaker invites humanity to “braird (“germinate”⁵³²) anither tip”, with tip referring to the tip of the “whuppin’ sooker” (163, l. 1507) mentioned in the previous lines. Buthlay translates “sooker” with “sucker”,⁵³³ which has to be intended in its vegetal meaning as “a shoot springing from the base of a tree or other plant”.⁵³⁴ While metaphors of growing overlap with metaphors of death, thus evoking the rules of the natural cycle, the speaker urges us to keep creating life upon death, like coral insects do.

5.4 Liminal cities

This last section explores two cases of liminality involving the urban and the natural spaces as represented in two poems – “Glasgow” (1962, CP2, pp. 1048-52) and “Glasgow is Like the Sea” (CP2, pp. 1348-51). This last type of liminality is largely based on the idea of ‘porous spaces’ examined in section one, that involves the interaction between natural spaces. The idea of porosity, however, involves also human-made spaces that should not be considered as separate from nature, in the same way as humans should not be considered as separate from it.

MacDiarmid engages with the interaction of the urban world with the non-human world in the two poems discussed in this section in a very different way. While in “Glasgow” (1962) the city opens up and blends into the natural world, in “Glasgow is Like the Sea” the city ‘becomes’ the natural world. These two different ways of representing liminality can indeed be seen as further examples of, respectively, hybridisation and reverse-personification. Hybridisation is clearly exemplified in “Glasgow” (1962), as the poem evokes a space-in-between – half-

⁵³¹ The source as reported by Buthlay in a note is: “J. N. Duddington on Solovyov, *Hibbert Journal*, April 1917, p. 442”, in Hugh MacDiarmid, *A Drunk Man Looks at the Thistle*, 162.

⁵³² Hugh MacDiarmid. *A Drunk Man Looks at the Thistle*, 163.

⁵³³ Hugh MacDiarmid. *A Drunk Man Looks at the Thistle*, 163.

⁵³⁴ *Oxford Dictionaries*. (Oxford University Press.), 10 Jan. 2018, <<https://en.oxforddictionaries.com/definition/sucker>>

human/urban, half-non-human/natural. Reverse-personification, instead, is illustrated in “Glasgow is Like the Sea”, as the whole poem subtly foregrounds a de-humanisation of the city through its comparison with the sea.

Before exploring in detail how liminality is articulated respectively in “Glasgow” (1962) and “Glasgow is Like the Sea”, it is worthwhile to consider briefly MacDiarmid’s relationship with the urban world. Although these two poems identify glimpses of hope and light in the urban environment, MacDiarmid often depicted the city as a dark and alienated world. His aversion for the urban world is possibly best articulated in the comment he made in *Lucky Poet* about that “intimate relationship with the sea” he had in Whalsay, where he explains how such relationship was non-existent in the urban environment of Montrose, the coastal Scottish town where he lived for nine years. By excluding the possibility of connecting with nature in an urban environment, MacDiarmid, then, perpetuates the binary of nature as connection and city as alienation. Such binary also emerges whenever MacDiarmid refuses to identify Scotland with its urban reality: “When I think of Scotland”, he writes in *Lucky Poet*, “I do not think of Edinburgh or Glasgow or the Forth Bridge and other well-known places so much as of out-of-the-way and little-known places”.⁵³⁵ Similarly, in a passage from *Direadh II*, MacDiarmid praises “the Scotland of the leaping salmon, / The soaring eagle, the unstalked stag [...]” claiming that “this” “is the real Scotland” and “not Edinburgh and Glasgow, which are rubbish, / The Scotland of the loathsome beasties climbing the wall / And the rats hunting in the corners” (CP2, p. 1175). Darkness is a recurrent element in the poems dedicated to Edinburgh and Glasgow: in “Edinburgh” (1943) “the darkness of industrialism” (p. 646) hovers over the city, and in a 1921 poem by the same title, the nocturnal Scottish capital is described as “a mad god’s dream / Fitful and dark” (CP2, 1204), while “Glasgow is null, / Its suburbs shadows / And the Clyde a cloud” (CP2, p. 1204). “Glasgow” (1923) is similarly built on an imagery of darkness, with the night setting, the dim light of the stars (“waugh⁵³⁶ white starns”) and the “black craw[s]” (CP2, p. 1240). The choice of the bare names of the cities as titles for

⁵³⁵ Hugh MacDiarmid, *Lucky Poet*, 309.

⁵³⁶ “Waugh” means “faint, weak”, in *Dictionary of the Scots Language*. (Scottish Language Dictionaries Ltd.), 22 Nov. 2017, <http://www.dsl.ac.uk/entry/snd/wauch_adj_n>

these poems is also very telling, as it is suggestive of the anonymity of the urban world.

Béatrice Duchateau's analysis of the original manuscript of "Glasgow 1938" – that incorporates three poems with the title "Glasgow" (CP1, p. 647; CP2, p. 1048 and p. 1333) and other unpublished material⁵³⁷ – casts a further light on the perceived decadence of the city. Duchateau points out that the Scotland depicted in the poem is "urban hell where filthy disease and dirty capitalism spread around, murdering creation and culture."⁵³⁸ She also highlights the similarity "Glasgow 1938" and "Third Hymn to Lenin" share in terms of "sensory disgust", as the first poem depicts Glasgow as a corpse with "the smell of death perfum[ing] [its] streets" and the second describes the urinal smell of the slums.⁵³⁹ That is why in the last lines of "Third Hymn to Lenin", the speaker begs the "Spirit of Lenin" to "Light up this city now!" (CP2, p. 901). The plea for light here is a consequence of the spiritual and material darkness looming over Glasgow, and reverberates the imperative of the line "Open Glasgow up!" in "Glasgow" (1962). It is the same need of light that prompts the speaker in "Glasgow" (1962) to propose a renovation of the urban architecture of the city, to have "windows for walls" to let light enter and "waxed floor" to "reflect the window vista" (CP2, p. 1051). Every change in the furniture must meet this need for light, and so reflecting surfaces like "metal ornaments and glass shelves" should be built to "catch and multiply the floods of light everywhere" (p. 1052). The meaning of "Open Glasgow up! Open it up. It is time / It was made sun-conscious" is undoubtedly also symbolical, and sounds as a plea for renovation and renaissance. However, this need for opening up urban architecture to nature, to "let great steel-framed windows bring the blaze / of the sky into every room", also conveys a moderately eco-sensitive perspective. The poet here presents an interesting alternative to the conventional nature/city dichotomy by evoking a space in-between that calls for less fixed boundaries —a space that is both man- and nature-made, and therefore liminal.

⁵³⁷ Béatrice Duchateau. "Urban Scotland in Hugh MacDiarmid's Glasgow Poems." *Études écossaises*, 15 (2012), 39.

⁵³⁸ Béatrice Duchateau. "Urban Scotland in Hugh MacDiarmid's Glasgow Poems.", 40.

⁵³⁹ Béatrice Duchateau. "Urban Scotland in Hugh MacDiarmid's Glasgow Poems.", 41.

MacDiarmid's descriptions remind us of certain houses described in Bachelard's *The Poetics of Space* — houses like Annie Duthil's "Japanese print" where "the sun is everywhere, for everything is transparent",⁵⁴⁰ or the house dreamt by René Cazelles, "similar to that of the ocean wind, all quivering with gulls."⁵⁴¹ In Annie Duthil's house in particular we recognize MacDiarmid's "steel-framed windows" (CP2, p. 1051) which let the sun inside and remind one of those "sunny houses [in the prints] in which, at all the seasons, it is summer, houses that are all windows" Bachelard writes about.⁵⁴² In a similar way, MacDiarmid's poem urges for "windows for walls" (CP2, p. 1051) to let the natural light and world penetrate the human building. This same invitation is also echoed in "Glasgow" (1962) ("Every room will be enlarged / To huge dimensions by the windows" CP2, p. 1052), where it suggests an opening up to the outside world, that allows people inside to *feel* nature invading the room. Any obstacle, represented by walls and windows, seems to disappear, as walls and windows become porous: light and sky will enter the room and "[...] the rippling foliage / Of the trees will dapple [the] tables" (CP2, p. 1052). Such expansion or opening, then, seems to suggest that no fixed boundary separating the inside from the outside, and by extension the city from nature, actually exists.

"Glasgow is Like the Sea" also presents the creation of a liminal space, although in a more implicit way. The poet here uses the device of reverse-personification to dehumanise the whole city of Glasgow. It would appear that, because Glasgow is here compared to the sea, and thus the urban world *is* the natural world, then the very notion of liminality has become redundant. However, it is worthwhile to observe that in the poem the urban world never disappears entirely, and does not even really turn into something different. The 'transformation' of the city into the sea is in fact only implied in the perspective of a very unusual speaker, introduced in the subtitle of the poem — "A Hebridean Speaks" (CP2, p. 1348). Glasgow, to the eyes of a Hebridean observer, "is like the sea", "greater" "than that which surges about" his "native isles" (p. 1348). According to the islander, Glasgow shares such watery nature with the Hebrides,

⁵⁴⁰ Gaston Bachelard, *The Poetics of Space*. Trans. Maria Jolas. Boston: Beacon Press, 1969, 50.

⁵⁴¹ Gaston Bachelard, *The Poetics of Space*, 51.

⁵⁴² Gaston Bachelard, *The Poetics of Space*, 50.

represented imaginatively as waves: “Nor are we fixed Hebrids here ourselves, / But waves, each of us” (p. 1348). The use of ‘we’ in this line is very significant, as it suggests the Hebridean’s and, by extension, the islanders’ strong sense of place through their complete identification with the “Hebrids”. The subsequent lines provide a key to the seeming transformation underwent by Glasgow, as discussed above. The Hebridean explains that the “we”/“Hebrids” “in this ceaseless tide / Change shape and colour in countless ways and yet / Keep our identity through all” (p. 1348). As the Hebrides do not change their identity or their being ‘islands’, despite their constant transformation, so the city of Glasgow stays the same despite its ‘turning’ into the sea. The poem is then not about the dissolution of the city, which retains, after all, its identity, but about its encounter with the sea, and about the creation of a liminal space in-between. As the city is compared to the sea, so its inhabitants (and possibly, by extension, the whole humanity) are seen as “human waves” (CP2, p. 1349). Such expression seems to suggest that people too have turned into hybrid creatures, half human and half-waves. People’s ‘half-humanity’, along with the physical absence of the actual city in the poem, that does not describe its external aspects, such as buildings, streets and parks, further enhance the watery appearance of Glasgow.

It is of some interest that “Glasgow is Like the Sea” contains one of the few positive representations of Glasgow by MacDiarmid. Duchateau suggests that “the Hebridean speaker describes the potential offered by [the city]”, and quotes the following lines to support her view:⁵⁴³

Here I am filled with subtle knowledge
Of ways more intricate human lives possess,
[...]

I’d lack this in another city perhaps;
[...]
The sea is always water, Glasgow life [...]
(CP2, “Glasgow is Like the Sea”, pp. 1349-50)

⁵⁴³ Béatrice Duchateau. “Urban Scotland in Hugh MacDiarmid’s Glasgow Poems.”, 47, endnote 17.

The beauty of Glasgow is also conveyed by the description of humans as waves in the act of exploring the sea, of “plung[ing] to brief glimpses of the ocean floor”, “lapping a golden shore”, “spraying the sky” (p. 1350), and being “filled with a whale, a mackerel, a gannet, / Or dark tangle in a rocking mass” (p. 1350). On the one hand, the speaker suggests that by taking another shape humans can change their perception of the world and learn to appreciate the beauty of the sea-world. On the other hand, not only does the speaker highlight the richness and beauty of waves – carrying fish, sea-plants and sunrays – but also emphasises the beauty of Glasgow. As Glasgow is like the sea and its waves, so the richness of each individual wave/person constitutes the city’s richness and beauty – its hope and potential future.

References

Abram, David, *The Spell of the Sensuous: Perception and Language in a More-Than-Human World* (New York: Vintage Books, 1997).

Away with the Birds (website dedicated to Hanna Tuulikki's creative project *Away with the Birds*) <<http://www.awaywiththebirds.co.uk/about/>> [accessed 11 May 2017]

Bachelard, Gaston, *The Poetics of Space*, trans. by Maria Jolas (Boston: Beacon Press, 1969).

Bartie, Angela, and Eleanor Bell, eds, *The International Writers' Conference Revisited: Edinburgh, 1962* (Glasgow: Cargo Publishing, 2012).

Bate, Jonathan, *The Song of the Earth* (London: Picador, 2000).

Becket, Fiona, "Ecopoetics and Poetry", in Edward Larrissy, ed., *The Cambridge Companion to British Poetry, 1945-2010* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2016).

Berg, Peter, and Raymond Dasmann. "Reinhabiting California." *The Ecologist* 7.10 (1977): 399-401.

Bold, Alan, *The Terrible Crystal* (London: Routledge, 1983).

Bourke, Angela, ed., *The Field Day Anthology of Irish Writing, IV: Irish Women's Writing and Traditions* (New York: New York University Press, 2002).

Boutelle, Ann E., "Language and Vision in the Early Poetry of Hugh MacDiarmid", *Contemporary Literature*, 12.4 (1971), 495-509.

Branch, Michael P., and Scott Slovic, eds, *The ISLE Reader: Ecocriticism, 1993-2003* (Athens: The University of Georgia Press, 2003).

Brown, Ian, and Alan Riach, eds, *The Edinburgh Companion to Twentieth-Century Scottish Literature* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2009).

Brown, Ian, ed., *The Edinburgh History of Scottish Literature, III: The Edinburgh History of Scottish Literature: Modern transformations: new identities (from 1918)* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2007).

Bryson, Scott J., ed., *Ecopoetry: A Critical Introduction* (Salt Lake City: University of Utah Press, 2002).

Bryson, Scott J., *The West Side of Any Mountain: Place, Space, and Ecopoetry* (Iowa City: University of Iowa Press, 2005).

Buell, Lawrence, "Ecocriticism: Some Emerging Trends", *Qui Parle*, 19.2 (2011), 87-115.

Buell, Lawrence, *The Environmental Imagination: Thoreau, Nature Writing, and the Formation of American culture* (Cambridge, MA: Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 1995).

Buell, Lawrence, Ursula K. Heise, and Karen Thornber. "Literature and Environment." *The Annual Review of Environment and Resources*, 36, 2011: 417-40.

Burnside, John, "A Science of Belonging: Poetry as Ecology", in Robert Crawford, ed., *Contemporary Poetry and Contemporary Science* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2006), pp. 91-106.

Buthlay, Kenneth, *Hugh MacDiarmid (C.M. Grieve)* (Edinburgh: Scottish Academic Press, 1981).

Clark, Timothy, *The Cambridge Introduction to Literature and the Environment* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2011).

Clément, Gilles, *Il giardino in movimento: da La Vallée al giardino planetario*, trans. by Emanuela Borio (Macerata: Quodlibet, 2011).

Clément, Gilles. *Manifesto del terzo paesaggio*, ed. by Filippo de Pieri (Macerata: Quodlibet, 2005).

Corbett, John, *Language and Scottish Literature* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 1997).

Coupe, Laurence, ed., *The Green Studies Reader: from Romanticism to Ecocriticism* (London: Routledge, 2000).

Coward, Harold G., *Jung and Eastern Thought* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1985).

Crawford, Robert, "A Drunk Man Looks at the Waste Land", *Scottish Literary Journal*, 14.2 (1987), 62-78.

Crawford, Robert, ed., *Contemporary Poetry and Contemporary Science* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2006).

Crawford, Robert, *Identifying poets: Self and Territory in Twentieth-Century Poetry* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 1993),

Critchley, Peter, "Martin Heidegger: Ontology and Ecology", 2004 <https://www.academia.edu/705387/Martin_Heidegger_Ontology_and_Ecology> [accessed 27 March 2017]

Daiches, David, "Hugh MacDiarmid and Scottish Poetry", *Poetry*, 72.4 (1948), 202-218.

Deleuze, Gilles, and Félix Guattari, *Anti-Oedipus: Capitalism and Schizophrenia*, trans. by Robert Hurley, Mark Seem and H. Lane (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1983).

Dictionary of the Scots Language (DSL), <<http://www.dsl.ac.uk/>>

Duchateau, Béatrice, "Urban Scotland in Hugh MacDiarmid's Glasgow Poems", *Études écossaises*, 15 (2012), 39-58.

Duncan, James and D. Ley, eds, *Place, Culture and Representation* (London: Routledge, 1993).

Duron, Nicholas, “‘But Aye Be Whaur Extremes Meet’: Hugh MacDiarmid’s Poetics of Rhyme in His Early Lyrics’, *Sigma Tau Delta Review*, 11 (2014), 16-27.

Dymock, Emma, and Margery Palmer McCulloch. *Scottish & International Modernisms: Relationships and Reconfigurations* (Glasgow: Association for Scottish Literary Studies, 2011).

Eason, Cassandra, *Fabulous Creatures, Mythical Monsters, and Animal Power Symbols: A Handbook* (Westport: Greenwood Press, 2008).

“Ecocriticism and Environmental Humanities”, in *Association for the Study of Literature and the Environment (ASLE)* <<https://www.asle.org/explore-our-field/ecocriticism-and-environmental-humanities/>> [accessed 30 March 2017]

Edensor, Tim, *National Identity, Popular Culture and Everyday Life* (Oxford: Berg, 2002).

Elder, John, *Imagining the Earth: Poetry and the Vision of Nature* (Athens: The University of Georgia Press, 1996).

Eliot, T. S., *The Complete Poems & Plays* (London: Faber and Faber, 1969).

Farley, Paul, and Michael Symmons Roberts, *Edgelands: Journeys into England’s True Wilderness* (Vintage: London, 2012).

Felstiner, John, *Can Poetry Save the Earth? A Field Guide to Nature Poems* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2009).

Fisher-Wirth, Ann, and Laura-Gray Street, eds, *The Ecopoetry Anthology* (San Antonio: Trinity University Press, 2013).

Gairn, Louisa, “Nature, Landscape and Rural Life”, in Carla Sassi, ed., *The International Companion to Scottish Poetry* (Glasgow: Scottish Literature International, 2015), pp. 132-143.

Gairn, Louisa, *Ecology and Modern Scottish Literature* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2008).

Garrard, Greg, *Ecocriticism* (New York: Routledge, 2004).

Garrard, Greg, ed., *The Oxford Handbook of Ecocriticism* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2014).

Geddes, Patrick, "Nature Study and Geographical Education", *Scottish Geographical Magazine*, 19 (1903), 525-36.

Geddes, Patrick, *Cities in Evolution*, ed. by Edinburgh Outlook Tower Association and London Association for Planning and Regional Construction (London: Knapp, Drewett and Sons, [1915] 1949).

Geddes, Patrick, *The Evergreen: a Northern Seasonal*. "The Book of Autumn" (Edinburgh: Lawnmarket of Edinburgh, 1895) in <<https://archive.org/details/evergreennorther02gedd>>

Gibbens, Sarah, "Quiz: Can You Tell if This Monkey Wants to Bite?", in *The National Geographic*, 2 June 2017 <<http://news.nationalgeographic.com/2017/06/barbary-macaque-facial-expressions-quiz/>> [accessed 1 July 2017]

Gillis, John R., "Not Continents in Miniature: Islands as Ecotones", *Island Studies Journal*, 9.1 (2014), 155-156.

Gish, Nancy K., ed., *Hugh MacDiarmid: Man and Poet* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 1992).

Gish, Nancy K., *Hugh MacDiarmid: The Man and his Work* (London: Macmillan Press, 1984).

Glen, Duncan, "Hugh McDiarmid in Our Time", *Studies in Scottish Literature*, 35.1 (2007), 202–212.

Glotfelty, Cheryll, and Harold Fromm, eds, *The Ecocriticism Reader: Landmarks in Literary Ecology* (Athens: University of Georgia Press, 1996).

Goldie, David, "Hugh MacDiarmid, Harry Lauder and Scottish Popular Culture", *International Journal of Scottish Literature*, 1 (2006), 1-26.

Hames, Scott, "On Vernacular Scottishness and its Limits: Devolution and the Spectacle of 'Voice'", *Studies in Scottish Literature*, 39.1 (2013), 203-224.

Hart, Matthew, *Nations of Nothing But Poetry: Modernism, Transnationalism, and Synthetic Vernacular Writing* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2010).

Heidegger, Martin, *Poetry, Language, Thought*, trans. and introduction by Albert Hofstadter (New York: Harper & Row, 1971).

Heidegger, Martin, *Saggi e discorsi*, ed. and trans. by Gianni Vattimo (Milano: Mursia, 1976).

Herbert, W. N., *To Circumjack MacDiarmid: the Poetry and Prose of Hugh MacDiarmid* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1992).

Hiltner, Ken, ed., *Ecocriticism: the Essential Reader* (London: Routledge, 2015).

Howard, Thomas, *Dove Descending: A Journey into T. S. Eliot's Four Quartets* (San Francisco: Ignatius Press, 2006).

Hume, Angela, "Imagining Ecopoetics: An Interview with Robert Hass, Brenda Hillman, Evelyn Reilly, and Jonathan Skinner", *Interdisciplinary Studies in Literature and Environment*, 19.4 (2012), 751-766.

Iovino, Serenella, and Serpil Opperman, "Material Ecocriticism: Materiality, Agency, and Models of Narrativity", *Ecozon@: European Journal of Literature, Culture and Environment*, 3.1 (2012), 75-91.

Keats, John, *Bright Star: The Complete Poems and Selected Letters*, ed. by Jane Campion (London: Vintage, 2009).

Kerrigan, Catherine, *Whaur Extremes Meet: the Poetry of Hugh MacDiarmid 1920-1934* (Edinburgh: James Thin, The Mercat Press, 1983).

Killingsworth, M. Jimmie, *Appeals in Modern Rethoric: an Ordinary Language Approach* (Carbondale: Southern Illinois University Press, 2005).

Knickerbocker, Scott, *Ecopoetics: The Language of Nature, the Nature of Language* (Amherst: University of Massachusetts Press, 2012).

Kolocotroni, Vassiliki, Jane Goldman, and Olga Taxidou, eds, *Modernism: an Anthology of Sources and Documents* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press; Chicago: Chicago University Press, 1998).

Krishna, Íswara, *The Sankhya karika, or Memorial verses on the Sankhya philosophy*, trans. from the Sanscrit by Henry Thomas Colebrooke. Also the *Bháshya*, or *Commentary of Gaurapáda*. Trans. and Ill. by an original comment by Horace Hayman Wilson (London : A. J. Valpy, 1837) in <<https://archive.org/details/snkhyakrikormem00colegoog>>

Laplace, Philippe, ed., *Environmental and Ecological Readings: Nature, Human and Posthuman Dimensions in Scottish Literature & Arts (XVIII-XXI c.)* (Besançon: Presses Universitaires de Franche-Comté, 2015).

Leopold, Aldo, *Round River* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1953).

Lyall, Scott, *Hugh MacDiarmid's Poetry and Politics of Place: Imagining a Scottish Republic* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2006).

Lyall, Scott, and Margery Palmer McCulloch, eds, *The Edinburgh Companion to Hugh MacDiarmid* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2011).

Lynch, Tom, Cheryll Glotfelty, and Karla Armbruster, eds, *The Bioregional Imagination: Literature, Ecology, and Place* (Athens: University of Georgia Press, 2012).

Mabie, Hamilton Wright. 'The Record in Language', in *Essays on Nature and Culture* (New York: Dodd, Mead and Company, 1896), in <<https://ia801407.us.archive.org/7/items/essaysonnaturea01mabigoog/essaysonnaturea01mabigoog.pdf>>

MacDiarmid, Hugh, *A Drunk Man Looks at the Thistle*, ed. by Kenneth Buthlay (Edinburgh: Polygon, 1987).

MacDiarmid, Hugh, *Complete Poems: Volume I*, ed. by Michael Grieve and W. R. Aitken (Manchester: Carcanet, 1993).

MacDiarmid, Hugh, *Complete Poems: Volume II*, ed. by Michael Grieve and W. R. Aitken (Manchester: Carcanet, 1994).

MacDiarmid, Hugh, *Lucky Poet: a Self-study in Literature and Political Ideas Being the Autobiography of Hugh MacDiarmid (Christopher Murray Grieve)* (Manchester: Carcanet, 1994).

MacDiarmid, Hugh, *Selected Essays of Hugh MacDiarmid*, ed. by Duncan Glen (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1970).

MacDiarmid, Hugh, *Selected Poems*, ed. by Michael Grieve and Alan Riach (New York: New Directions Publishing, 1992).

MacDiarmid, Hugh, *Selected Prose*, ed. by Alan Riach (Manchester: Carcanet, 1992).

MacDiarmid, Hugh, *The Company I've Kept: Essays in Autobiography* (London: Hutchison, 1966).

MacDiarmid, Hugh, *The Islands of Scotland: Hebrides, Orkneys, and Shetlands* (London: B. T. Batsford, 1939).

MacDiarmid, Hugh, *The Letters of Hugh MacDiarmid*, ed. by Alan Bold (London: Hamish Hamilton, 1984).

MacQueen, John, "The Scottish Literary Renaissance and Late Medieval Scottish Poetry", *Studies in Scottish Literature*, 26.1 (1991), 543-555.

MacLean, Sorley, "On Realism in Gaelic Poetry", in William Gillies, ed., *Ris a' Bhruthaich: Criticism and Prose Writings* (Stornoway: Acair, 1985).

Mazel, David, ed., *A Century of Early Ecocriticism* (Athens: University of Georgia Press, 2001).

McCulloch, Margery Palmer, and Liam McIlvanney, *Modernism and Nationalism: Literature and Society in Scotland 1918-1939 Source Documents for the Scottish Renaissance* (Glasgow: Association for Scottish Literary Studies, 2004).

McCulloch, Margery Palmer, *Scottish Modernism and its Contexts 1918-1959: Literature, National Identity and Cultural Exchange* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2009).

McCulloch, Margery, "The Undeservedly Broukit Bairn: Hugh MacDiarmid's To Circumjack Cencrastus", *Studies in Scottish Literature*, 17.1 (1982), 165-185.

McGuirk, Carol, "'Nocht Sae Sober As a Man Blin' Drunk': MacDiarmid's Transformations of Burns in 'A Drunk Man Looks at the Thistle'", *Studies in Scottish Literature*, 30.1 (1998), 209-218.

Meier, Carl Alfred, *Personality: The Individuation Process in the Light of C. G. Jung's Typology*, trans. by David N. Roscoe from the German [Olten: Persönlichkeit, Walter Verlag, 1977] (Einsiedeln: Daimon, 1995).

Morton, Timothy, *The Ecological Thought* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2010).

Naess, Arne, "The Shallow and the Deep, Long-Range Ecology Movement: A Summary", in *The Deep Ecology Movement: an Introductory Anthology*, ed. by Alan Drengson and Yuichi Inoue (North Atlantic Books: Berkeley, 1995), pp. 3-9.

"Nature is Speaking" in *Conservation International* <<https://www.conservation.org/nature-is-speaking/Pages/default.aspx>> [accessed 15 Jan. 2018]

Ó Rathaille, Aodhagán, *Dánta Aodhagáin Uí Rathaille = The poems of Egan O'Rahilly: to which are added miscellaneous pieces illustrating their subjects and language*, ed. by P. S. Dinneen (London: Irish Text Society, 1900) in <<https://archive.org/details/dntaaodhagin03orahuoft>>

O' Connor, Laura, *Haunted English: The Celtic Fringe, the British Empire, and De-Anglicization* (Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 2006).

Oliver, Mary, *New and Selected Poems* (Boston: Beacon Press, 1992).

Opperman, Serpil, ed., *New International Voices in Ecocriticism* (Lanham: Lexington Books, 2015).

Oxford Dictionaries, <<https://www.oxforddictionaries.com/>>

Riach, Alan, *Representing Scotland in Literature, Popular Culture and Iconography: The Masks of the Modern Nation* (Basingstoke: Palgrave, 2005).

Riach, Alan, *The Poetry of Hugh MacDiarmid* (Glasgow: Association for Scottish Literary Studies, 1999).

Safi, Michael and agencies, "Ganges and Yamuna Rivers Granted Same Legal Rights as Human Beings", in *The Guardian*, 21 March 2017 <<https://www.theguardian.com/world/2017/mar/21/ganges-and-yamuna-rivers-granted-same-legal-rights-as-human-beings>> [accessed 27 March 2017]

Schalow, Frank, and Alfred Denker, *The Historical Dictionary of Heidegger's philosophy* (Lanham: Scarecrow Press, 2010).

Scigaj, Leonard M., *Sustainable Poetry: Four American Eco-poets* (Lexington: The University Press of Kentucky, 1999).

Scott, Lyall, "That Ancient Self" *European Journal of English Studies*, 18.1 (2014), 73-85.

Scott, Walter, *The Antiquary* (London: Adam & Charles Black, 1897) in <https://archive.org/stream/antiquary00scot_0#page/n8/mode/1up>

Shiach, Morag, “‘To Purify the Dialect of the Tribe’: Modernism and Language Reform”, *Modernism/Modernity*, 14.1 (2007), 21-34.

Skinner, Jonathan, “Editor’s Statement”, *Ecopoetics*, 1 (2001), 5-8.

Smith, G. Gregory, *Scottish Literature: Character & Influence* (London: MacMillan and co., 1919) in <<https://archive.org/details/scottishliteratu00smitiala>>

Smith, Iain Crichton, “Hugh MacDiarmid: Sangschaw and A Drunk Man Looks at the Thistle”, *Studies in Scottish Literature*, 7.3 (1969), 169–179.

Southworth, James G., “Hugh Mac Diarmid”, *The Sewanee Review*, 48.1 (1940), 105-118.

Stevens, Anthony, *On Jung: an Updated Edition with a Reply to Jung’s Critics* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1999).

Tarlo, Harriet, “Recycles: the Eco-Ethical Poetics of Found Text in Contemporary Poetry”, *Journal of Ecocriticism*, 1.2 (2009), 114-130.

“The Scottish Colourists”, in *Exploreart* <http://www.exploreart.co.uk/results.asp?SF1=art_style&ST1=The%20Scottish%20Colourists&SORT=sort_name> [accessed 3 June 2017]

“The Third Landscape” in *Gilles Clément*, English translation by Suzanne Sevray, <<http://www.gillesclement.com/cat-tierspaysage-tit-le-Tiers-Paysage>> [accessed 3 April 2017]

Wallace, David Rains, *The Klamath Knot: Explorations of Myth and Evolution* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1983).

Watson, Roderick, “Alien Voices from the Street: Demotic Modernism in Modern Scots Writing”, *The Yearbook of English Studies*, 25 (1995), 141-155.

Watson, Roderick, *MacDiarmid* (Milton Keynes and Philadelphia: Open University Press, 1985).

Watson, Roderick, *The Literature of Scotland: the Middle Ages to the Nineteenth Century* (Basingstoke: Palgrave MacMillan, 2007).

Whitworth, Michael H., "Culture and Leisure in Hugh MacDiarmid's 'On a Raised Beach'". *Scottish Studies Review*, 9.1 (2008), 123-143.

Whitworth, Michael H., "Forms of Culture in Hugh MacDiarmid's 'Etika Preobrazhennavo Erosa'", *International Journal of Scottish Literature*, 5 (2009), 1-18.

Whitworth, Michael H., "Three Prose Sources for Hugh MacDiarmid's 'On a Raised Beach'", *Notes and Queries*, 54.2 (2007), 175-177.

Wildscreen Festival. Facebook. Video posted on 8 June 2016. <<https://www.facebook.com/wildscreenfest/videos/10154791141219528/>> [accessed on 11 May 2017]

Wilhelm, Richard, trans. *The Secret of the Golden Flower*. Translated and explained by Richard Wilhelm with a Foreword and Commentary by C. G. Jung, and translated into English by Cary F. Baynes. San Diego: Harvest/Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, 1962, in <<https://archive.org/details/TheSecretOfTheGoldenFlowerByRichardWilhelmAndCarlJung>>

Wordsworth, William, and Samuel Taylor Coleridge, *Lyrical Ballads and Other Poems*, ed. and intro. by Martin Scofield, Hertfordshire: Wordsworth Editions, 2003.

Yeats, William Butler, *The Collected Poems of W. B. Yeats* (London: Wordsworth Edition Limited, 1994).

Zimmerman, Michael E., *Heidegger's Confrontation with Modernity: Technology, Politics, and Art* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1990).