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Performing the Anglo-Scottish Border: Cultural Landscapes, Heritage and Borderland Identities

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ABSTRACT

Recent times have seen much reflection on the nature of the Anglo-Scottish border region; its past, present and potential future. Political concerns have rightly absorbed much of the attention, but at the same time important light has been shed on the legacy of cultural engagements and forms of interaction that might be said to perform and produce this border over time and render it particularly distinctive. A soft, internal border, the territory considered in this article is one with an ancient feudal past and a heavily conserved, preserved and, in parts, still militarized present. It is predominantly rural and characterized by large swathes of forestry, agriculture, and moorland, all of which raise issues of aesthetic and environmental, as well as social and economic sustainability. The concern in the case studies presented in this article is how, through the relational and processual perspectives of border studies and cultural landscapes, we might comprehend the over layered and sedimented histories, the nature of identities, heritage and experience of place here. I consider too the ways in which recent forms of creative practice are contributing to a wider investigation of this region and re-conceptualizing the cultural significance of the border.

Introduction

To refer to regions and identities as practiced or performed has an established context within the postmodern, relational field of border studies as developed over recent decades. Such a concept also clearly operates within cultural landscape studies, emerging from disciplines such as cultural and human geography, anthropology and broader studies of visual culture. In this regard any notion of a landscape as image, view, backdrop or scenery is displaced by the understanding of a landscape as created and recreated through use, practices and patterns of behavior. Just as Henk Van Houtum (2011, 50) speaks of the “border as a verb”, so W. J. T. Mitchell (1994, 1) speaks of landscape not as an “object to be seen or a text to be read, but as a process by which social and subjective tendencies are formed.” The focus in this article is on how relationships between a legacy of material circumstances, lived experiences and diverse cultural engagements might be

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seen to have “performed” identities within a particular section of the English–Scottish border through time.

The considerations presented here have their origins in a recent research network made up of a disciplinary “border-crossing” group of artists and academics. Under the intentionally provocative title of “Northern Peripheries,” the network’s members focussed on the extent to which “at edge” or “marginal” sites, primarily sparsely populated islands in the northern UK that are remote from centers of influence in the south, have been systematically neglected by outsiders, often locked into essentializing perceptions of insularity or, at times, exoticized as pre-modern, wild, and timeless. Concentrated on island sites such as Lindisfarne, Orkney, Skye and the Outer Hebrides, the network’s emphasis was on rethinking these “peripheral” locations as indeed:

generative, at times transgressive spaces and liminal zones where dynamic and diverse networks develop that may be at once local and global, transcultural and transnational in their connections and work to enhance positive senses, practices and performativities of place and locality (Holt and McClanahan 2013, 203).

The concern in this article is with the implications of such a rethinking of the peripheries in relation to the northern UK internal border between England and Scotland—a focus of the ESRC seminar series outlined in the Introduction to this special edition. In this context the article explores small, localized historical and contemporary case-studies, but through the perspective of larger “borderland” concerns.

Visual culture studies in general, and recent art practices in particular, have largely focussed on the performance of hard, at edge border regions, as between currently militarized nations caught up in bitter territorial struggles. Within this context we find studies such as Simon Faulkner’s of artists’ images of “The Most Photographed Wall in the World,” i.e. that between Israel and Palestine. This wall, as he writes, functions as a “significant symbol shared across different political imaginaries” and is perceived either as a reassuring icon of defence for Israelis or an icon of the occupation for Palestinians (Faulkner 2012, 224). Similarly, British artist Katie Davies’ 2008 eight minute looped film *38th Parallel*, documenting the daily ritualized behavior of guards positioned at the demilitarized zone on the border between North and South Korea, clearly underlines the extent to which hard borders are continually reaffirmed through, in Judith Butler’s terms, performative acts of repetition, ritual and protocol (Butler 1997). The title to the present article intentionally references Swiss filmmaker Ursula Biemann’s 1999 video-essay about the everyday lives and the exploitation experienced by low-paid women at Ciudad Juarez, a Mexican–US border town just across from El Paso in Texas, where US multinational corporations assemble electronic and digital equipment. Biemann’s work echoes Gloria Anzaldúa’s account of the borderland as a site of ambiguity, tension and violence (Anzaldúa 1987; Biemann 2008).

So can such a title—and concept of identity performance—be applied to the “soft” English–Scottish border, an area described for four centuries as at the “scrag-end of their respective countries, the frayed edges of monarchy” (Robson 2006, 51). This, now, is a fluid, permeable region without the control of walls, guards or customs, although the prospects of such were raised by some in the run up to the September 2014 referendum. It can be claimed that a strong cross-border, “borderland” identity exists here based on longstanding affiliations and the region can be considered in postmodern

geographical terms as a hybrid, third space, a space that is both/and (Massey 1995; Licona 2012). This is underlined by the example of a cross-border television franchise which, through the 1970s linked communities living on the northern English side on the border in the counties of Cumbria and Northumberland with the southern Scottish regions of Dumfries and Galloway and the Scottish Borders (Moffat 2007, 549). Nightly local news reports were broadcast across areas that shared common resources, landscape character, forestry and agriculture, and where inhabitants possessed similar skills, traditions and in many instances, a common ancestry and family names. This is not to claim any singular, homogenous identity in this region, rather to underline the existence of shared, but also distinct features.

For those however, with deep-rooted familial connections, that common ancestry stretches back through time to the politically contested Debatable Lands of the English and Scottish Western Marches, a system of land governance in operation from the 13th century to the Union of the Crowns in 1603. These Marches witnessed the murderous acts of cattle-raiding, grievance-bearing Border Reivers, or Moss-Troopers, who criss-crossed the border throughout that period, were caught up in, and exploited, long battles over sovereignty, land grabs between dynasties and governments. The Reivers ultimately intermingled and intermarried, despite still clannish identities and continual raids, and their exploits were somewhat romanticized in Sir Walter Scott's 1802–1803 collection *The Minstrelsy of the Scottish Borders* with for example, his account and reprinting of the 16th century "Ballad of Kinmont Willie." That romanticizing legacy lives on. Today their lawless and blood-thirsty deeds form a popular interactive tourist display in the Cumbrian "Border City" of Carlisle's Tullie House Museum and Art Gallery. Those historic narratives and romantic myths about the Reivers' wild untameable character and the rough terrain, the peat bogs and moorland they knew like the back of their hands, are typically conflated and, for some, the Anglo-Scottish border has always seemed "an artificial political creation, a line dividing people of the same tongue and the same stock" linked with a common past (Davies 1975, 175).

Borderland Heritage: Practices and Sites

The memorializing of historic, regional events and customs involves the continual rehearsal of a borderland identity which acquires particular meanings at different times and for different groups and individuals (Zhurzhenko 2011, 70–72). Shared traditions and cultural heritage, music, memory, and myth have a strong presence in this particular location both for local communities and for tourists too. Traditional customs and practices occur across the breadth and over both sides of the Border of course, but the geographical position of the English–Scottish, Cumbria–Northumberland borders with its specifically turbulent history and heritage makes this an especially rich area for discussion, and one to which artists were especially drawn in the period prior to the Scottish referendum. A case in point is the subject of another of Katie Davies' films, "The Lawes of the Marches," first shown at the Berwick Film and Media Arts Festival, "Crossing Borders" in September 2014, at the same time as the Scottish referendum, and again at the University of Northumbria's, "Borderlands" exhibition in April 2015.¹ A three-screen looped installation, Davies' film captures the ritualized performance of borders, the centuries old Common Ridings, that take place annually across Scottish Border towns such as Hawick, Jedbergh,

Selkirk, and Langholm, many previously textile towns. Today mostly renting out horses for the occasion, local riders ride through the towns, recite ballads and make proclamations to the gathered crowds, and ride out to mark the ancient boundaries of the common land. These are highly symbolic events, rooted in borderland sites of collective cultural memory; they provide continuity between past and present, connect communities, and draw in large numbers of visitors. The events drew particular attention in the context of the Scottish referendum, and preparations for the upcoming vote were a strong theme within Davies' production. Despite the Ridings' apparent affirmation of boundaries, however, the Scottish Border towns proved to be the least in favor of Independence, with many voters identifying themselves as "Borderers" before being Scots or English, hence reaffirming that sense of the Border not as a line or a contour against which territories meet, but a distinct place with hybrid identities. The success of the film in confirming that unique sense of place was clearly witnessed by its positive reception amongst local communities (Figure 1).

Repeated representations and narratives of nearby Hadrian's Wall (AD 128) have rehearsed various notions of borders and identities throughout history and from professional, nationalistic and touristic perspectives. Located entirely within England, despite assumptions often to the contrary, this once resistant militarized site is a symbolic boundary. In popular film and literature its "wallness" still today presents as a dividing line between countries, or ideologies at least. As Cultural Geographer Divya Tolia-Kelly has underlined, however, throughout its construction and existence as a conflict zone defence structure, the Wall was a focus of international migrant labor and an intermingling of races, so confounding any sense both of essentialized ethnic identity or notions of marginal peripherality (Tolia-Kelly 2009). From this perspective the apparently far-



Figure 1. Katie Davies, "The Lawes of the Marches", 2014.

flung border emerges as a center of power, skill, and high levels of expertise; a focus for the circulation and exchange of ideas, customs and goods. Such has been a continuous pattern across this specific border region marked by a continual influx of populations from across borders, nationally and internationally, and a persistent tension between real contemporary progress drawing on natural local resources with skill and sophistication, and residual claims made to, or projections of, a primitive, even exotic pastness in certain forms of representation.

Interwar Perspectives

A key historical moment of particular tensions between (idealized) traditions and experience of modernity emerges in popular discourse and the production of visual and material culture in the interwar period of the 1920s and 1930s. In these decades the history and customs of the Borders, such as the Common Ridings, were being copiously observed in travel and literary guide books and visually recorded by, for example, the British Documentary Movement and in newsreels. Hadrian's Wall too was filmed in 1933 for British Pathé's short production "Walls," with comparative aerial footage of the Great Wall of China. This was a period of much popular fascination for enduring ancient landscapes, relics, and monuments. Following the recent traumas of the Great War and the upheavals across Europe, these monuments were important symbols of continuity and the national past. One popular guide to Hadrian's Wall of the 1920s spoke of its "message," in drawing together, rather than dividing dwellers to the north and south, in standing for "something permanent, something eternal in the very nature of man," a vision of stability and unity (Mothersole 1922, 2). As in many instances today, interwar narratives repeatedly underlined an overarching identity of place, to the extent of disregarding any divergent voices between, for example, preservationists, land-owners and tenants, longstanding inhabitants and incomers from elsewhere.

Within this same period, ancient monuments were a particular focus for newly developing preservation and conservation societies, including the Council for the Preservation of Rural England (Matless 1998). Across subsequent decades there persists a continual tension between popular interests, specialist expertise, new forms of management and existing patterns of ownership. This situation was common to many areas of Britain of course, but with added significance in the Anglo-Scottish borderland, a predominantly rural region strewn with monuments and crumbling or ruined heritage sites—castles, fortified pele towers, abbeys, and monasteries. And through this period of economic depression and a severe agricultural down-turn, both rural workers and traditional landed estates struggled, whilst visitors in the form of tourists proliferated. Multiple and contested interests clearly undermined any overarching identity of place.

A particular interwar manifestation of tradition and modernity, of long-standing rooted identities and "incomer" encounter emerges around the small market town of Brampton in north-east Cumbria, the English county by Hadrian's Wall and the border with Northumberland to the east and Scotland to the north. This was an especially well-documented area in contemporary travel guides, all of which refer to the importance of nearby Naworth Castle, the ancient seat of the Dacre family, later the Earls of Carlisle, historic Wardens of the English West March and landowners with large estates across Cumbria and parts of the Northumbrian border, including sections of the Wall. In the

1920s their descendant, the painter Winifred Nicholson lived in a nearby farmhouse and, for a period with her then husband the Modernist abstract artist Ben Nicholson, attracted visiting artist friends from the south, all drawn in a wider spirit of cultivated, generally elite interwar ruralism to a “back to the land” “simple-life” amidst solitary, elemental fells and moorland. Their domestic living conditions, the house furnished with vernacular pots, local rag rugs and examples of modern abstract art, including a painting by the Dutch avant-garde artist Mondrian, all spoke to a utopian, ideal, international modernism and modernity (Holt 2008). A highly selective, borderland aesthetic in fact.

A key cross-border interwar designer who brought Modernist credentials was Alistair Morton, who also moved sections of his Scottish family firm of Edinburgh Weavers across the Border to Carlisle—another central site for textile production in this period. Morton commissioned contemporary artists, including the Nicholsons, to design Constructivist fabrics for the firm’s London showrooms. Trade struggled at moments throughout the Depression however, with local textile workers highly dependent on real, rather than utopian, international conditions. Business survived nonetheless, and in the later 1930s Morton commissioned London-based Modernist architects Leslie Martin and Sadie Speight to design a house, “Brackenfel,” on the outskirts of Brampton, near Carlisle, using Constructivist forms and simple materials, concrete and glass; all intended to merge with local vernacular and landscape character.

The Anglo-Scottish Borderland as an Experimental Site

Decades on and a very different example, but again with specific implications for thinking the relationship between borders, centers and peripheries, tradition and modernity, notions of past, present and future, and for evidence of that borderland intermingling of populations, is located in the barren moorland area some 20 miles to the east of Brampton, Spadeadam Waste. While the Anglo-Scottish border is today a soft border region, like many such it also contains bounded territories, much harder border areas within geographically isolated locations; heavily regulated sites of experimental testing or militarized operations. Spadeadam was the futuristic location of the Blue Streak rocket development in the late 1950s, where possibilities were explored for defying international borders and pushing out into space. Blue Streak was the code name given to the intercontinental ballistic missile then intended as a center-piece for Britain’s Cold War era nuclear delivery system. Employing at one point 1000 workers, the site drew to it, as had close-by Hadrian’s Wall, skilled and semi-skilled workers from across the UK and abroad, Spadeadam transformed the landscape, the heritage and the nature of the existing population and local economy. As Hunter Davies remarked in the 1970s, the venture extended “the military tradition of the Border area, begun by Hadrian, continued by the Border wars, exemplified by the medieval castles and fortified churches you still find every few miles” (Davies 1975, 202).

This specific geographical location was chosen as the engine test site because of its remoteness, deemed essential for security and safety. It was an uninhabited 10,000 acre site, mostly blanket bogs, known now the “Border Mires” that had been drained earlier in the 1950s in preparation for Forestry Commission planting. Those borderland natural resources were key—hard bedrock where the massive test rigs were built to support the weight of the rocket and the thrust generated during firing trials; bogs to

absorb sonic fall-out and a large water supply pumped up from the River Irthing to cool the test stands (Wilson, 2009, 156). The challenging terrain meant newly built roads soon disappeared into the bog, requiring the construction of “floating roads,” using the same model as the Romans 2000 years earlier. Like Hadrian’s Wall, these roads were built by large numbers of migrant workers, this time many from Ireland. They were housed in the locally named “Paddies Camp,” temporary huts with their own specially constructed Roman Catholic Church, and worked alongside recently unemployed miners from a struggling coal town in nearby Northumberland. In a quest for orderly “border-liness,” many of these workers were soon banned from public houses in local villages.

Artist/filmmaker Patrick Keiller has pointed out that Spadeadam began construction just before Val Guest’s 1957 film adaptation of *Quatermass II* in which signs point to Quatermass’s rocket research establishment as located somewhere near Carlisle (Keiller 2013). Today this largely featureless northern moorland with its still remaining concrete test-pads shaped rather like the ancient Border pele towers suggests a futuristic dystopia suffused with Cold War anxiety, resonating with the sedimented histories of ancient conflicts and ghostly battalions of Roman Legions and Moss-Troopers.

For economic reasons and the vulnerability of the site to pre-emptive strike, Blue Streak was converted in the very early 1960s from a missile launcher to the first stage of ELDO, the Europa launch vehicle that would hurl satellites into space. The Rolls Royce rocket engines were test fired on the stands at Spadeadam, but transported out to Woomera in the south Australian desert for launching; an extraordinary journey to another remote, perceivedly peripheral location. To take up work on the project large numbers of skilled personnel and their families moved north, some from the post war New Town of Stevenage, 30 miles from London (site of Hawker Siddeley, aircraft manufacturers) and others from Derby in the East Midlands (Rolls Royce). In later recorded interviews, one of these incoming workers from Stevenage remembered arriving in Brampton with his family on a Sunday afternoon in 1958. In an entirely different take on that rural “simple life” or primitive pastness, he recalled that the town “was empty, the pubs closed at twelve, there was nothing, and it was drizzling, cobbled streets and I thought where the hell have I brought my family.” The northern border periphery clearly perceived here as remote from contemporary progress (Figure 2).

To accommodate some of the 800 new workers, two housing estates were built, totally transforming the small market town whose only real modern intrusion had been that tasteful architectural modernity of Brackenfel some 20 years before. To maintain clear class-borders or boundaries, one estate was for general workers and the other for the chief engineers and senior staff. Many of these were ex-military service and so an army, navy or air-force culture spilled over into civilian life. Appropriately rural, borderland recreation and sporting pursuits evolved: shooting clubs, sailing on a nearby lake, and a competitive obsession with fishing with officer class rights courtesy of Naworth Castle. And throughout this period, as separate later interviewees recorded, the conviction amongst these men and women was that they were working at the forefront of technological knowhow: “You felt as though you were part of the space community,” “the place was just amazing ... this was the white heat of technology.” In 1968, however, Tony Benn, then Government Minister of Technology announced the cancelation of Blue Streak, facing the realization that the UK was financially unable to maintain the project, despite its success developmentally. All eventually led in the early 1970s to unemployment



Figure 2. Spadeadam Under Construction (collection, Tullie House Museum and Art Gallery).

and much bitterness on the Northumbrian–Cumbrian border with little alternative employment for either incomer skilled staff or the local population who had found work and training there. Another example, like that of textile manufacture, of the impact of fluctuating international fortunes on the economy and social life at the margins.

Borderland Re(collections)

These excerpts from employee interviews above all derive from oral history interviews related to a documentary project developed in 2002–2003 at Tullie House in Carlisle. These contributed to a successful exhibition bringing together information, objects, images, and interviews from a number of those men and women who worked at the site, by then typically in their mid to late 60s. Their voices provide crucial insight into the lived reality of the period and perceptions of the region. The resulting archive, a collection of cardboard boxes, files, tapes and objects in the museum stores witnesses an extraordinarily strong sense of pride and belonging for the incomers who arrived at Spadeadam and settled into the surrounding region. Alongside vivid memories of extreme winter weather and harsh conditions on the site, and the general sociability, interviewer requests for special memories invariably yielded accounts of the spectacular rocket test firings and a fascinating record of a felt, qualitative sense of place; “one of the most

awesome things I have experienced. You could feel the vibration in Brampton, you could hear it in Carlisle and you could see the smoke for miles around”, and

if you were motoring along the main road between Brampton and Greenhead all of a sudden you'd hear the ripping sound, it was just like a cloth bag being torn and then a plume of steam used to belch out of the hillside among the greenery and frighten the life out of the motorists.²

To avoid, it was noted, too much of an exercise in nostalgia and mindful that the museum is also an art gallery, the project commissioned two artists, Louise K. Wilson and John Kippen, to respond to the site as it was then in 2002. John Kippen produced a set of color photographic prints exploring the relationship between landscape, history, memory, and experience in what amounted to a Cold War pastoral. Wilson explored the “perceptual, social and transformative aspect of science and technology” through a video piece documenting a series of visits there over a 2-year period in what she termed a “layered visualisation of diverse relationships to a militarised landscape” (Wilson 2003). This was at the same time that English Heritage (now Historic England), the national buildings and monuments preservation organization, was trying out a methodology for detailed archaeological and topographical recordings of 20th-century military sites using GPS equipment; a more recent and yet further shift from a gentlemanly antiquarianism.

Such peripheral, militarized places, including Orford Ness, the atomic weapons research establishment built on reclaimed marshland on the Suffolk coast in the late 1950s and 1960s, now an Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONB), speak to a poetics of decay. This encompasses the ruins of failed projects, relics of overblown ambitions, the remains of structures built to withstand major blasts and assaults and therefore resistant to picturesque decay, to simply sliding back into the bog. Wilson’s film of the present-day site of RAF Spadeadam, now a BAE Systems electronic warfare testing range, documents the longevity of those concrete rocket launch pads amongst a terrain littered with targets, “realistic threat emulators” used to simulate a hostile ground to air attack for RAF and NATO pilots. On the ground, today, Royal Marines yomp through the night on maneuvers over the waste from the remote Kielder Forest, like the marauding Reivers, or Moss Troopers from past centuries (Figure 3).

Visitors to Spadeadam are now encouraged, bearing passports. In a particular brand of tourism they can walk over harsh moorland in the damp and the cold amidst still seemingly lethal, toxic ruins, faked up targets and old tanks from the Falklands and other recent conflicts. In a typically borderland and post-pastoral soundscape, curlews compete with the chinook helicopters overhead.

At this point the author’s own personal history—and memory of place—contributes another voice, another borderlands case study. My father was one of those who went to Spadeadam as a Rolls Royce test engineer having left the Royal Navy around 1960. Few references and no photographs of him were found in the archive at Tullie House, and he died just before the oral history project. There were familiar names there however, especially of one who went with Blue Streak to Woomera around 1964 and brought back a gift of a toy koala bear. I learned later that Louise Wilson’s father was also an engineer for the MoD in Woomera. She, too, was “metaphorically peering in the attic cupboard.” Hers too was “a magpie method,” “in which theory and anecdote collide” (Wilson, 2009, 156). I well remember hearing that long low rumble and explosion of



Figure 3. John Kippen, “Blue Streak Spadeadam”, 2002.

the rocket engine on those test days from my school playground in a village some 18 miles away. In addition to a degree of personal fascination here, one of the reasons why research into the nature and everyday experience of borders and borderlands is so important is because, as Catherine Nash and Bryonie Reid have written in relation to new approaches to the Irish border, it brings to the fore work that challenges the borders between scholarship, autobiography, and imaginative cultural forms (Nash and Reid 2010). Such research draws connections, it involves degrees of collaboration, a “bordering” sensibility perhaps.

The Borderland as Bio-region

So what might such a collaborative, connection-drawing model suggest in terms of thinking about the Anglo–Scottish borderland today, and about contemporary creative practices in this context in particular? One impact of the referendum for thinking about the future in a devolution agenda was the prospect of greater cooperation, new partnerships, new cross-border opportunities, including the possibility of working collaboratively across skills and disciplines in relation to shared values, natural and environmental resources. All of this speaks precisely, on one level, to the history and lived experience of many who inhabit the border region. It connects too to a relational concept of landscape and to the possibilities for a reframing of place. One example of this, as witnessed through the Louise K. Wilson/English Heritage connections is the now common practice of artists working alongside environmentalists or archaeologists, say, with shared interests in

cultural landscapes and in new or creative methodologies; all with a focus on the nature of interactions between people and place.

Spadeadam Waste, as noted, annexes the Border Mires, including the Irthing Heads Ramsar-designated site, an internationally significant wetland with extensive deposits of peat, spreading over to the World Heritage site of the Roman Wall, so lying across the borders of the two counties, Cumbria and Northumberland and so two particular preservation/environmental schemes. This is the unpredictable terrain traversed by those Moss-Troopers who with their long-practiced knowledge expertly navigated the bogs on their nightly raids. Recently there have been collaborations between artists, geomorphologists, ecologists and environmental scientists in devising methods not just to preserve and conserve but also to interpret such 12,000-year-old peat bogs, as typically found in remote, “peripheral” locations, but all crucially linked to the global biosphere. In terms of the broader interest in this article in over-layering experiences, sedimented narratives and interpretations of place, peat bogs themselves function as “archives of change,” repositories of past histories, containing traces of centuries of interaction. One artist, Laura Harrington, has worked recently in the nearby English North Pennines, collecting film footage produced over the period of a year, and culminating in a sonic and visual essence of peat bogs, framing their environmental importance. Across the Border, artist Kate Foster investigates through drawings and archiving practices the endangered species of Sphagnum moss at the Scottish National Nature Reserve of Kirkconnel Flow, now regarded as crucial in ecosystem terms for its carbon-sink properties. Through focusing on wetlands



Figure 4. Kate Foster, “Sphagnum Moss”, 2015.

and water, typically borderland issues such as the need to connect to distant places and to times past and future are raised (Figure 4).

Anxiety over the vulnerability of these fragile and globally significant peat bogs has led to understandable frustration at the private companies still engaged in the commercial extraction of peat for horticultural or energy use, as at one particular site, Nutberry Moss, visible from the A75 before crossing the border from Scotland into Cumbria. Local knowledge and personal memory add further texture here, however. Having operated since before the Second World War that site has been a source of work for many under-employed local people. Once again, regional concerns, just like regional identities are never entirely homogenous and the values associated with particular landscapes vary continually in relation to shifting social and economic, aesthetic and environmental priorities.

Such broader perspectives and a focus on the lived connections between people and the environment they inhabit, including the example of Nutberry Moss, have preoccupied Scottish Borders' filmmaker John Wallace. His "Tweed-Sark Cinema" was shown on four large screens with found soundscape at the 2014 Berwick Film and Media Arts festival in a space next to Davies' "Lawes of the Marches." Developed from an earlier installation "Sark Cinema," 2013 shown on screens hung underneath a motorway bridge crossing the river Sark, a watery border between England and Scotland, his is a study of work, place and ecosystems along the Sark in the west and the river Tweed in the east. The images on the screens result from accumulated historic archive materials, documentary footage and overlaid visual narratives, involving a process of depositing and sedimenting, producing something of a palimpsest, like a peatland in fact.

Wallace's "Tweed-Sark Cinema" was the result of a successful long-term collaboration with a biological scientist from the University of Aberdeen. Such a pattern of collaboration between artists and others working in specific environments and communities; local people, conservationists, academics from pertinent disciplines etc., as in the network model described at the beginning of this paper, creates opportunities for "bordering" in the best sense of the term. Recent regional examples of participatory projects include "Working the Tweed," a collaboration between performers, musicians, writers and communities looking at the role of the Tweed river catchment in the daily lives of Border people, and the biennial Environmental Art Festival that takes place across Dumfries and Galloway. Both of these demonstrate ways in which recent forms of arts practice have been concerned to contribute to and inform wider processes of re-use and regeneration involving local populations and with a clear sense of both tangible and intangible heritage, of historical and contemporary experience. All of these acquired powerful impetus, and wider attention, as a result of the Referendum debates.

Monuments, "Un-monuments" and Divergent Narratives

Not all recent examples of cultural engagements in this borderland have so clearly underlined the texture, diversity and richness of environments, and deep pasts, however. As noted earlier, in the 1920s, Hadrian's Wall was held up as a model of reconciliation for people still reeling from the aftermath of war. A present-day version of this symbolism of the Wall has certainly witnessed some large-scale and spectacular visual performances in recent years. In 2010 its 84 mile route was lit by 500 gas beacons, flares, and torches to

celebrate the 1600 year anniversary of the end of Roman rule, and in 2012, an American company, YesYesNo, was commissioned as part of the London Olympic Games celebrations to install interactive, giant, pulsating LED powered balloons. Entitled “Connecting Light,” their project explored “opposing ideas of borders and connection through landscape art installation, open-source electronic hardware and software, and networks” (YesYesNo 2016). The damp and murky conditions along the Wall on that occasion in 2012 meant the spectacle as a whole was underwhelming, but the large ambition of both projects was to present the monument as a focus for communication, community and greater understanding, in the latter context in relation to a larger national event of international significance.

In a similar vein, in July 2014 the Conservative politician, Rory Stewart, Member of Parliament for Penrith and the Borders, urged constituents to hold hands along the “old border” of Hadrian’s Wall to dissuade Scotland from voting for Independence. In an entirely partizan, instrumental assertion of a unified shared identity, the MP called upon those gathered to “show the love that exists between the four nations of the union” (BBC News 2014). Intended as symbolic, this was also an ironic gesture, for at the very same time that World Heritage symbol for world peace lost the funding that had enabled the small team that made up the Hadrian’s Wall Trust to carry out their regular maintenance work. Despite the MP’s gesture, the Anglo-Scottish borderland is not all mutual interchange, consensual collaboration and cooperation. Despite some shared cross-border identities, throughout the centuries, as these case studies have demonstrated, wider agenda have often been imposed on inhabitants through contested ownership, temporary priorities, the ramifications of national and international circumstance, or of decisions made elsewhere. Actual lives are often lived uncomfortably too amidst misrepresentations of place that are frequently projected by outsiders.

One final example of an artwork, a video-installation by artist Sally Madge, underlines the deeply complex nature of cultural heritage, collective memory and the impossibility of assuming singular or essential regional identities. The installation, conceived for the Northumbria exhibition, comprises a monitor resting on a “cairn”-like structure of locally sourced rocks. On the screen we see footage of a large brown bear, a male figure dressed in a bear suit, stumbling forlornly around a now semi-derelict, once militarized location, a displacement camp, at Winfield airbase in the Scottish borders near Berwick upon Tweed. The work forms an “alternative” monument, or “un-monument”, as it’s described, to the experience of Wojtek, a Syrian brown bear, another incomer to the borders, a migrant, enlisted in the Polish army as a mascot in the Second World War and demobilized at this peripheral location in 1946, before finally ending his days in Edinburgh zoo (Jennings 2015). Another take on ruins and the poetics of decay as well as on notions of mobility and the nature of bounded territories (Figure 5).

Above all, the melancholic imagery of Wojtek haunting his former home in the Borders challenges us to keep attending to alternative histories, personal narratives and accounts of everyday life if we’re to have any real sense of the complexities, conflicts, and the textural character of this particular Anglo-Scottish borderland, or any other. The case studies outlined here require us to acknowledge the multiplicity, fragmentation, and the generally dynamic nature of identity, and to remain sceptical of any monolithic assertions of, for example Anglo-Scottish “borderlandness.” Real lives and everyday realities are denied by overt proclamations of sameness, such as Rory Stewart’s. Similarly the implications



Figure 5. Sally Madge, “WOJTEK”, 2015.

of the understandably widespread environmental concerns raised by commercial peat-cutting require consideration. The cutting threatens the fragile ecosystem that exists across this region, but has also traditionally provided work in a struggling economy remote from more affluent areas with more diverse forms of employment. There are many more examples such as these for further examination. There are questions here too in terms of the now prevalent arts and culture projects employing oral history techniques and other forms of ethnography. Whose voices are listened too, whose are not sought out, and with what results? What divergent accounts might be being suppressed as a consequence? Whose interests, funders’ and so on, will the resulting narratives serve? These of course are not questions unique for this geographical borderland, but the nature of such a location, its common resources, its legacy of shared experience, and its distinct differences, provide a particularly strong lens for examination. As the debate raised by the Scottish referendum clearly indicated across the breadth of the north of England, the grounding and the potential is certainly here for experimental and collaborative models of partnership and mutual advantage.

Notes

1. The “Borderlands” exhibition at the University of Northumbria’s Gallery North was curated by Ysanne Holt and Mark Jackson in April 2015 and supported by the ESRC “Close Friends” seminar series. It presented works by artists engaged with issues of boundaries and border

zones. It explored both hard and soft borders—hard territorial zones which circumscribe mobility and enforce separation, and more symbolic regions such as the Anglo-Scottish border. As stated, the gallery re-installed Katie Davies’ “Lawes of the Marches” and included works by several others discussed in this article—John Kippen, Sally Madge and Laura Harrington. In addition, Allan Hughes was represented by a video installation based on the problems of visualization of Greenham Common, a once militarized site and now an unstable ground, heavily overlaid with meaning. It also included art works emerging from Mike Collier’s “Referendum Walks” focussing on the historical and cultural natural and man-made environment around Berwick, and Sandra Johnston’s performance piece based on personal memory and experience of Border “troubles” in northern Ireland.

2. “Blue Streak! A Rocket Legacy,” curated by Fiona Deal, opened at Tullie House Museum and Art Gallery in September 2003, supported by the Heritage Lottery Fund, Arts Council England and Carlisle City Council. The Blue Streak Rocket Programme archive and oral history project is contained within the Tullie House social history collection. My thanks to Edwin Rutherford, Curator of Social History at Tullie House for his assistance in this research.

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