Journal of the Short Story in English
Les Cahiers de la nouvelle

61 | Autumn 2013
Special Issue: The Transatlantic Short Story

Perilous Boundaries: Affective Experience in Three Scottish Women Writers' Short Fiction

Linda Tym

Electronic version
URL: http://journals.openedition.org/jsse/1389
ISSN: 1969-6108

Publisher
Presses universitaires de Rennes

Printed version
Date of publication: 1 December 2013
ISBN: 0294-0442
ISSN: 0294-04442

Electronic reference
Linda Tym, « Perilous Boundaries: Affective Experience in Three Scottish Women Writers' Short Fiction », *Journal of the Short Story in English* [Online], 61 | Autumn 2013, Online since 01 December 2015, connection on 03 December 2020. URL : http://journals.openedition.org/jsse/1389

This text was automatically generated on 3 December 2020.

© All rights reserved

provided by OpenEdition
View metadata, citation and similar papers at core.ac.uk
brought to you by CORE

Perilous Boundaries: Affective Experience in Three Scottish Women Writers' Short Fiction

Linda Tym

I. Affect Theory

1 In-between-ness, within the flux between a narrated past and a subjective lived experience, the ongoing nature of life as body, through body, and in body, inspires this study of Scottish women writers' short fiction. Elspeth Probyn observes that "writing affects bodies [...] writing is a corporeal activity. We work ideas through our bodies; we write through our bodies, hoping to get into the bodies of our readers" (Probyn 76). Although theoretical approaches such as psychoanalysis traditionally have been distanced from the study of the body and, instead, have focused on the psychic locus of experience, contemporary fiction remembers the body, the corpus on which both text and experience are (re)written and (re)inscribed. The short fiction of Lynsey May, Janice Galloway, and A. L. Kennedy, which will be successively examined in the final three sub-sections of this essay through the close exploration of one of their stories, direct attention to the body in narrative, character, and plot. Their stories expose and revel in the tangled tissue of internal and external experience. They illustrate how

> thought is itself a body, embodied. Cast forward by its open-ended in-between-ness, affect is integral to a body's perpetual becoming (always becoming otherwise, however subtly, than what it already is), pulled beyond its seeming surface-boundedness by way of its relation to, indeed its composition through, the forces of encounter. With affect, a body is as much outside itself as in itself–webbed in its relations–until ultimately such firm distinctions cease to matter. (Gregg and Seigworth 3)

2 Affect theory, unbound from the constraints of diagnosis, pathology, or outcome, considers how bodies live, despite and through traumatic experience or loss. Affect theory investigates life in its untidy, imperfect nature that is neither fully within nor

outwith the self and life in its constant (re)negotiation of proximity to other bodies. May, Galloway, and Kennedy demonstrate the perilous nature of boundaries that do not fully contain the self, but that instead gesture towards the ongoingness of life after traumatic experience.[1]

Transitions and Loss in Scottish Short Fiction

3 This special issue on the *Transatlantic Short Story* focuses on transnationality and on narratives of passages, transitions, and in-between-ness based upon geographic location and patriotic affiliation. The boundaries of Scottish writing have been too frequently determined by and bound to a nationalistic agenda and the upcoming 2014 Referendum has only increased the currency of such conversations. In this article, however, I wish to deterritorialize attention from the national stage to the individual. Literary discussions of the Scottish short story often place allegiance in Robert Louis Stevenson as a forefather of the expansive surge in short story writing during the late twentieth and twenty-first centuries, which has been evident in the work of prolific figures such as James Kelman or George Mackay Brown.[2] In addition to these authors, contemporary Scottish short story writing has also been inspired by the work of women writers such as Margaret Oliphant, Naomi Mitchison, or Muriel Spark.[3] Paying homage to their literary ancestors, the short stories considered in this article offer condensed, fleeting images–sounds, teeth, beaks, necklaces, blood–that simultaneously trace the fluctuating imprint of loss and the porous ongoingness of life. Just as loss is not bounded to a singular gendered experience, the characters are not fixed to the specific geographical locus of Scotland and the stories invite the exploration of experience's unboundedness after loss. Within these stories, the depiction of loss centres on the mouth as a void or a gap. As a space that is open, the mouth signifies both a literal and figurative hole, which generates discussions of the relationship between orality and identity.[4] A feeling of emptiness in the mouth may suggest a refusal to accept loss, a lack that is often masked through an attempt to fill the mouth, whether with teeth, food, objects, or words–a grotesque metonymy of body parts and inanimate objects.[5]

4 These fleeting images, the momentary imprint of a shared affect and the shifting margins of negotiating loss, offer a point of departure for my consideration of boundaries within these stories. Escaping the bounds of a singular experience, psychological or physical loss emphasizes the shared aspect of human experience. Boundaries of affect are negotiable and porous. Emotional, psychological, and physical boundaries hinge on the peril of encounter, of interaction and engagement with another in the ongoingness of life that is scarred, but that continues despite loss. Perilous boundaries expose the dangerous hazards at the edge of affect–the fear of encounter mingled with the thrill of contact. Peril is both a noun and a verb: it *is* danger and it *exposes* danger. The archaic use of the word denoted serious danger of death and damnation ("Peril"). It is in this sense that the stories addressed in this article hold a strange affinity with peril: the stories both position an experience of loss and offer an exposition of affect. Furthermore, peril also denotes the damnation of the soul, or the eternal detachment from grace; the death of one's self, the death that occurs with the exposure of affect or the limbo of hesitation when waiting for a response from another. Peril as danger and exposure evokes the subjective experience of affect as the feeling or subjective experience that accompanies a thought or action

and "the outward display of emotion or mood, as manifested by facial expression, posture, gestures, and tone of voice" ("Affect"). A study of May's, Galloway's, and Kennedy's short stories thus reveals a renegotiation of loss through the perilous boundaries of affect.

Unbounded Affect

5 The affective boundaries between writing and reading, between author, text, and reader, are fluid and constantly in transition: the boundaries both construct and are constructed by affect, thus perpetuating a process in which an individual's experience is deterritorialized and reterritorialized through affective multiplicities.[6] In "Writing Shame," Elspeth Probyn argues that "an abstract way of approaching affect and emotion places the writing itself in an uninterested relation to affect," but she insists that "affects have specific effects...different affects make us feel, write, think, and act in different ways" (74). Not bound merely to the author's affect during the initial inscription of words on the page, affect is also bound to the transition of those words into the realm of the reader's experience. Reading, like writing, is an affective experience. By reading the actions, behaviours, and gestures of another's experience, traces of words and phrases–the stories of others–traverse personal boundedness. Short stories, particularly, are consumable in small, finite doses: the page length is manageable, the character sketches brief, the plot development curtailed. The brevity of short stories offers momentary glimpses of shared affect and mimics the open-ended reterritorialization of experience. When reading a text, there is a variety of both emotional input and output–it is a shared encounter of affects. Although an inanimate series of figures upon a page or screen, the shapes of the alphabet have meaning and thereby construct or inspire certain reactions. But according to Melissa Gregg and Gregory J. Seigworth, affect is anthropomorphic: "[a]ffect arises in the midst of *in-between-ness*: in the capacities to act and be acted upon" (1). The midst of this state of "in-between-ness" is a passage, a circulation, a transition (1).

Affect and Loss

6 In the short stories of May, Galloway, and Kennedy, there is a focus on the state of in-between-ness, the passages between emotional states, visceral reactions, and psychological attitudes. A perpetual passing between past loss and present experience, affect is a transition, unbounded by geography, between the writing of these authors and their readers. The discovery of affect occurs

> in those intensities that pass body to body (human, nonhuman, part-body, and otherwise), in those resonances that circulate about, between, and sometimes stick to bodies and worlds, *and* in the very passages or variations between these intensities and resonances themselves. (Gregg and Seigworth 1)

7 The characters in these stories experience the world's violent and sad intractability. Traces of this intractability persist in the corpus of both text and body: in words and phrases, in flesh and its sensations, in encounters in which one affects and is in turn affected, and in the objects of life and memory.[7] To the reader, each is a persistent reminder of affective experience. Sara Ahmed defines affect as "what sticks, or what sustains or preserves the connection between ideas, values, and objects" (29). While Ahmed focuses on positive affects, her definition is also useful for the study of

supposed negative affects, such as the mourning of loss.[8] If loss is apparent in affect, what occurs during the collision between a psychological state of in-between-ness and the physical, verbal, reactions of the body? How is the transfer manifested when the corpse refuses to escape the corpus of both text and individual?

8 The fluidity of becoming *in* and *through* loss is in perpetual negotiation and is apparent in corporeal and verbal secretions, in silence and speech, blood and limbs, which disrupt and exceed the perceived boundaries of the individual.[9] As Gregg and Seigworth note, "[a]ffect's contribution to the empirical unfolds as an aesthetic or art of dosages: experiment and experience [,] the angles and rhythms at the interface of bodies and worlds" (16). Loss is inscribed on the mind and is written on the body: the visceral affects of blood, sperm, spit, and tears; the emotional affects of sadness, bewilderment, fear, and insecurity. Engraved both in moments of silence and of inarticulate vocal diversions, affect exposes and reshapes the experience of loss. Interactions often hinge on a single encounter or singular moment of engagement: brief contact inspires both reterritorialization and deterritorialization of affect. Grotesque metonymy reveals the process of negotiating loss, where "[t]he boundaries between alive and not alive and material and immaterial have become increasingly blurred, so that what is considered as alive can become thing-like and what was considered as dead is able to show signs of life" (Gregg and Seigworth 16). Although the catalogue of grotesque metonymy may appear to cement forms of pathological mourning, these short stories reveal the "inextricability of affect's promise and peril" and gesture "toward the patho-logical promise (and threat) of right now and not yet: the promise that the next set of encounters and the 'manner' in which we undertake them could always guarantee more" (17).

9 Not all characters can speak of their trauma, thus through encounters with others and with objects there is a transferral of affect. These stories both displace and replace affects of loss and subsequent incomplete encounters to share affects with others: objects stand in as grotesque metonymy for this exchange of affect. The failed engagements with other humans are displaced onto and inscribed within objects. The objects–whether it be the mouth, teeth, birds, or heirlooms–speak when characters can neither verbalize nor share emotional affects. While the mouth and teeth demonstrate the inability to vocalize or speak of loss, the fragility of birds and heirlooms expose the vulnerability of the narrator and the failure of human language to express loss. These objects offer a movement beyond the boundaries of loss and manifest the process of becoming.

II. Three Scottish Women's Short Stories

10 Three stories that expose the perilous boundaries of affect and loss are Lynsey May's "The Gull," Janice Galloway's "A Week with Uncle Felix," and A. L. Kennedy's "Story of My Life." In these stories, the female protagonists display choice, but the encounters reveal an open-ended state of in-between-ness. Through their encounters with others, the protagonists' affective boundaries of past and present experience are traversed. The encounters with others are filled with peril. In these stories, the oral cavity becomes the locus of speech, where the transfer of communication is held, but where it can also be displaced or replaced. In May's story, Joni's usual work day at a café is trespassed by the visual spectre of a dead bird and the physical presence of Edwin, a

former boyfriend. In Galloway's story, an eleven-year-old Scottish girl, Senga, who has lost her father, visits her Uncle Felix in England. Fascinated and enamoured with her uncle, she is unable to ask for much needed answers about her father, particularly after she discovers pornographic magazines in Felix's bedroom. Before she returns home, he gives her a necklace and fondles her. In Kennedy's story, a woman partially narrates a series of events that focus on bloody teeth extractions at the dental office. The narrative progression of dental extractions is fixed to the narrator's personal timeline. Although the narrator's emotional loss is never directly exposed, its gory affects are stitched into her mouth and spattered in the dentist's hair with each tooth extraction; the narrator's reliance on anaesthesia and her swollen gums gesture to her loss.

Stained Loss in Lynsey May's "The Gull"[10]

11 The image of a corpse frames the narrative of Lynsey May's story "The Gull." Lying on the pavement, a decomposing gull's feathers are plastered "so neatly [to] meet the slabs beneath them that the bird could almost have messily grown from the concrete" (May 136). Although "The Gull" centres on Joni's encounter with a former boyfriend, the bird's body–as object–points to Joni's failure to verbalise her loss and the object of her physical release. Even in death, the gull retains its symbolic affiliation with freedom and it figures as a representation of Joni's own becoming.

12 Bemoaning her current career choice in the café, Joni distracts herself by watching the reaction of people as they pass by the dead bird in the street. Visually transfixed by the "dark twines of gut and gore," Joni holds a vigil for the gull's corpse, which simultaneously fascinates and unsettles her (136). The gull maintains Joni's attention until the appearance of Edwin, a former lover, jolts Joni into "a rush of reincarnated memories" (137). Joni remembers that, as a teenager, Edwin was "always displaying the most inappropriate temperaments," but his unpredictable and erratic behaviour was an ongoing attraction for girls (137). Years later in the café, his popularity faded, Edwin's "hours and days of solitude" are exposed "in the grey and yellow swirls below his eyes and chewed-up cracks around his lips" (138). Despite his haggard appearance and attempted affability, Joni refuses to rekindle a conversation of friendship with Edwin; instead, she blushes and retreats in shame.

13 Returning to Sara Ahmed's discussion of the body's encounter with affect, or with "what sticks, or what sustains or preserves," I posit that Joni fears the affective connection, for "feelings can get stuck to certain bodies in the very way we describe spaces, situations, dramas. And bodies can get stuck depending on what feelings they get associated with" (Ahmed 29, 39). Refusing to preserve the tenuous verbal and emotional encounter with Edwin, Joni physically retreats, shuffles "backwards," and shares "nothing more with him, not even a glance" (May 138). Verbally unable to traverse the boundary of shared affect, Joni permits her feelings to be stuck, to be fixated on the physical body not of Edwin, but of the bird. Passing out of the café and into the street, she kicks the gull. The bird's bloated body and "congealing guts," an object of loss and death, uncannily mirrors the description of Edwin's "paunchy and unnaturally swollen" body; therefore, the bird's corpse serves not only as a physical reminder of the loss of life, but also as a visual indicator of Joni's loss of youthful friendships and dreams (138). In the street, she "nudges it, [the gull,] again and again, more gently now, until it rolls heavily into the gutter. A few feathers escape to trickle

down the street and a brown stain is left behind" (138). A physical manifestation of her emotional and verbal retreat, Joni's repeated kicking reveals the seeping boundaries between the gull's carcass and the memory of her youth: only the trace of a stained affect remains.

Mouthed Loss in Janice Galloway's "A Week with Uncle Felix"[11]

14 In Janice Galloway's story "A Week with Uncle Felix," Senga's mouth not only acts as the passageway for her affect, but also reveals the peril of boundary. Her mouth reveals her inability to speak of the loss of her father and her reaction to Felix's affect; her mouth is also the locus of speech, saliva, and blood. Senga's father is dead. Although her mother insists that Senga is "just his spit, his bloody spit," her physical similarity to her father belies her emotional affinity (Galloway 173). Her only memories of him include excessive drinking and illness. Despite her yearning to learn more about her father, she is unable to ask her father's siblings. When attempting to speak of him, her chest constricts and she is unsure what to say; after all, "[y]ou couldn't ask what was he like: that was the kind of question you never got much of an answer for" (169). For Senga, her mouth not only exposes her lack of knowledge of her father, but also her complex relationship with Felix.

15 In addition to the loss of her father, Senga also experiences the loss of her patriarchal surrogate. Upon discovery of Uncle Felix's pornographic magazines, Senga retracts from verbal engagement with Felix. The transmissions of speech, Senga's verbal communication of affect, is tightened, restricted. Her mouth refuses to share her affect with Felix: she is left speechless and her mouth refuses to engage with Felix. Her "throat constricted sharply" and her mouth "wouldn't open, that knot in her throat like sickness rising till it hurt" (159). She struggles "not to be angry. It was worse than shouting. It was terrible, so embarrassing you wanted to faint just to escape from it, you wanted to die" (159). Despite her disgust, Senga is determined to retain the secret of Felix's pornographic stash.

16 Longing to share her emotional affective experience with her family, Senga defers to Felix. The night before she leaves to return home, Felix enters her bedroom to offer her a necklace, a string of pearls, that belonged to his deceased wife. While in Senga's room, he fondles her, but retracts quickly, mumbling "a mistake. Mistake" (176). Felix's ambiguous statement suggests both that Senga's existence is in error and that his behaviour is at fault. Felix's incestuous embrace expresses his desire for his dead brother and his attempt to shift Senga's position within the family sphere. Susan Stewart suggests that desire is objectified through the souvenir, which strives–unsuccessfully–to collapse the distance of time and space *into* or *with* the self.[12] In this way, the necklace acts both as a souvenir and as a collectable object. As a souvenir of her visit, the necklace becomes a symbol of Felix's attempt to construct a narrative of belonging and of shared affect. The necklace serves as a token to link Senga tangibly to Felix and his deceased wife and, simultaneously, to allow him, as author of the narrative, to control the nature of Senga's becoming and belonging. The necklace thus holds a dual function: it is a totem, symbolizing her adoption into Uncle Felix's collection and reminding her of his position as "the ancestral father of the clan, but also its protecting spirit and helper"; however, the necklace is also a symbol of the taboo against naming her deceased father (Freud "Totem and Taboo" 6, 59).[13] If Senga

accepts his narrative of familial history, then she shares Felix's affective emotional space and becomes his property. She is purchased. Unable to verbally construct a narrative of her familial relationship, Senga is left with merely a token, a totem, of her familial affiliation.

17 The gifted necklace demonstrates the deterritorialization and reterritorialization of affect between Felix and Senga. In her emotionally and physically confused affect, Senga appears to accept Felix's token and wishes to fulfill his expectations. According to Sara Ahmed, "expectations can make things seem disappointing. If we arrive at objects with an expectation of how we will be affected by them, then this affects how they affect us, even in the moment they fail to live up to our expectations" (41). In her fear that Felix will discover her knowledge, Senga conforms to his expectations. Refusing to share affect verbally, she uses her mouth to physically transfer emotional affect, according to Felix's expectations. But the power Felix exudes, Senga, in turn, manipulates. Externally, she appears to conform to his expectations, but internally, she retracts, becoming an "affect alien" in her disappointment (Ahmed 37). She simply smiles "because it was what he wanted. That way he might leave her alone... She nodded to let him know that's just what she was. Just his girl" (Galloway 164). Her perception of him shifts from one of admiration and idolisation to one of fear and conformity. Failing to condemn his actions or to dispute his bequeathed gift, Senga simply tries "hard to smile" as she says goodbye and returns home (178). Her behaviour, however, exposes the nature of affect as both contagious and contingent (Ahmed 36). The transfer of affect (re)centres on Senga's mouth: having encountered the perilous boundary of shared affect with her uncle, she reterritorializes herself both physically by returning to Scotland and emotionally by refusing to succumb to his claim of control.

Extracted Loss in A. L. Kennedy's "Story of My Life"[14]

18 As in Janice Galloway's story, A. L. Kennedy's "Story of My Life" renders the boundaries of affective experience in the text, where "every surface communicates" to "build extra facets of 'you'" (Thrift qtd. in Gregg and Seigworth 16). This 'you' challenges boundedness of the reader and narrator. This forces, then breaks, an affective connection to create a multiplicity of encounters. The deliberate invocation of empathy commences when the unnamed narrator informs the reader that "[i]n this story, I'm like you. Roughly and on average, I am the same: the same as you. The same is good. The same is that for which we're meant" (Kennedy 139). Entirely narrated in the first-person, the reminder of similarity and familiarity in the story allows the reader to identify with the narrator, but also to feel at home: if they are the same, then the narrative is known and understandable.

19 The story centres on a retelling of the narrator's oral obsession, suggesting her inability to share emotional affects. Unable to identify her affective emotional loss, the narrator relies on grotesque objects–her teeth–to speak for her. A traumatic visit to the dentist when she was five years old has perpetuated a vicious fearful affect that is directed towards her oral cavity. Seeking to reconstruct her experience, the narrator's detailed catalogue of visits to the dentist points to her inability to articulate the unclaimed experience, while the circular structure of the story mimics her verbal inarticulacy. Her emersion is in the incapacity to articulate her pleasure–she escapes

desire because she does not yet "tell what they mean," but even as a child she was aware of her "not unjustifiable sense of loss" (Kennedy 141). She attempts to convince the reader that her trauma and loss is inconsequential and that she has managed to accept it; however, just as the traces of emotion remain in the memory, so the stitches in her mouth are a dull reminder of her loss. Obsessed with the appearance of her mouth, the narrator describes her oral discomfort and anthropomorphizes her enamels. "My teeth," she maintains, have "always been ambitious, problematic, expansive"; they are "forceful. They insist" (140, 142). Likewise, the narrator forcefully insists on retaining the reader's attention. Despite her inability to narrate her loss, she desires affective engagement with the reader.

20 In seeking a shared affect with the reader, the narrator encourages reminiscence on personal loss. Her loss centres on the fear of oral lack and on the inability to control the extraction of her teeth. Imagining reclaiming control of both her affect and her mouth, she wishes she had no teeth at all. Filled with anxiety, she explains how the dentist "then injects you with terror–pure fear–you feel it rush your arms, cup its lips hard over that bird inside your chest" (Kennedy 143). To escape this transferred affect, the narrator wishes that she could replace her mouth with a bird's beak. To her, a beak is a reasonable alternative to a mouth: it would make her "happy, quite extraordinarily content" and would release her to be "free from teeth" (139, 140). Furthermore, "beaks come in different sizes: that's a plus, along with the range of designs. The toucan would be good for parties, shouting, grievous bodily harm. Ibis: mainly funerals and plumbing. Sparrow: best for online dating and eating crisps" (139). The range of prosthetic beaks gesture not only to the narrator's lost teeth, but point to loss of relationships. Although she does not confirm her loss, her references to bodily harm, online dating, and funerals suggests the loss of a partner. As alternatives to her own mouth, beaks would, as she notes, be useful. The invocation of oral transfer–from teeth to beaks–permits the narrator to imagine an escape beyond the boundaries of her own emotional and physiological affective experience.

21 The narrator's fear of shared affect is exposed through her horror of the seepage of blood from within her body to outside her. During her visits to the dentist, the sight of her own blood is a "surprise"; however, besides her teeth, the sight of her blood terrifies her. The exposure of her "inside being outside" is a surprise: it is "thick and live and oddly tasty," but gradually fades into the absence within her mouth that exposes "the coppery taste of absence, liquid heat" (Kennedy 141, 142). Blood "can halt and then amaze" her (141). Just as blood can escape the bounds of the body, the narrator's reaction to a physical affect exposes her fearful traversal of emotional boundaries.

22 By relating the story of her life–with particular attention to her teeth–the narrator is desperately seeking to share affect with the reader through communication. Although she narrates the entire story–a catalogued monologue of her experience–she fears the rejection of the reader. An injection of terror–"pure fear"–overwhelms her: the fear that she will lose the reader's interest descends onto her in a visceral state (143). As Elspeth Probyn writes, "[t]he specter of not interesting readers and the constant worry about adequately conveying the interest of our chosen topics should send a shiver down the spines of all writers [...] The body of the writer becomes the battleground where ideas and experiences collide, sometimes to produce new visions of life" (89). Begging for connection, the narrator shares stories of the physical loss of teeth;

however, in her attempt to share affect with the reader, she pre-empts the process of engagement. Shifting between anecdotes of dental and dating experiences, the narrator interrupts her own story because "[t]his way you'll stay with us. With me. Which is the point. You staying with me is the point" (Kennedy 142). Exposing her shame, she admits: "And what if your life is, in some degree, wrong or maladjusted when hauling a live tooth raw from the bone leaves you and your state no worse than an average night, a convivial night, a pace or two along your path of joy. Sensitivity, you see? It causes thoughts" (144).

23 As the narrator's affect filters through the narrative boundaries of her singular experience, the open-endedness of a shared understanding gradually diminishes from "a lot–very often–almost all the time" (139). The narrator's confidence in her ability to maintain her audience's attention likewise decreases: with exposition, comes exposure. The verbal disintegration of anaesthesia prevents her from communicating. She seeks a flat affect and aims "for numb, for numb of any type–but pain has found" her (143). Oral extraction is "horror combined with paralysis–only very minutely exaggerated paralysis. I can't see to hit him, I can't fight him off and he's digging and drilling, drilling and digging and the extraction takes forty-five minutes" (148). In the satisfying limbo of anaesthesia, she is able to experience "the freedom of incapacity. That swoop and rock and thunder of delight. It's always best to meet your pleasure before you can tell what they mean" (140-141). She is unable to fill her mouth with words, but begs the reader to believe "[t]he story that kept you here with me and that was true. In its essentials it was never anything other than true" (149). Truth, however, fails to build the shared affect that she desires.

24 Despite her insistent narration of loss and shared affect, the narrator's stories serve to deterritorialize and reterritorialize an affective connection with the 'you' that is neither fully herself nor the reader. Through her act of narration, she is able to construct the version of herself that she prefers: "you find it difficult to name what else you have done, or who is yours. After so many years you are aware of certain alterations, additions, the ones that would make you like everyone else, that would join you, tie you gently, allow you to fit" (147). Although she admits that "[p]eople like it when you listen. They have stories, too," the narrator is unwilling to engage by listening. She desires an audience, but is interested only in orating a monologue–not in participating in a dialogue. She insists that others do not give her "anything to hear" (146).

25 The affective connection, once shared and reterritorialized, is deterritorialized. The narrator tires "of speaking languages that no one understands and I have only these words and no others and this makes my stories weak, impossible [...] They are impossible as hiding the so many ways that my insides leak out, show in my hands, my face" (150). The unhappy objects of her narrative, the extraction of teeth and unspoken words, gesture to loss. Having told "the story that kept you here with me," the litany of dental procedures is finished, as is the story (149). While the catalogue of grotesque metonymy and experience to follow may appear to cement the mourning of her loss, they also gesture 'toward the patho-logical promise (and threat) of right now and not yet: the promise that the next set of encounters and the 'manner' in which we undertake them could always guarantee more' (Gregg and Seigworth 17). The narrator reminds the reader that "every pain is survivable, although it may leave us different, more densely ourselves" (Kennedy 150). She encourages an emerging future of

boundaries unbound from peril, where "we would be unafraid and we'd have stories and every one of them would start with. In this story, you are not like me. All of my life I'll take care we are never the same" (150). In this future, the narrator seeks a shared affect that does not centre on loss.

III. Conclusion

26 The short stories of Lynsey May, Janice Galloway, and A. L. Kennedy feature the process of becoming as an unbounded sharing of affect, where interactions between characters diffuse the apparent trajectory of narrative. Despite loss, the characters search for encounters with others in the attempt to share proximity through the transfer of affect. Multiple and generative, these affective encounters simultaneously deterritorialize and reterritorialize the individual in relation to loss. Each story portrays emotional and physical emissions from the body that seep through the transitions to show the unbounded nature of loss; teeth that gnaw on life and birds that reveal this becoming-ness. Each story also exposes the peril of deterritorializing affective boundaries: through the porous borders of the self, emotional and physical affect is shifted and renegotiated. It is, however, within the in-between-ness of experience that a disregard for the peril of affective boundaries not only inspires a revel in the multiplicity of life, but also inspires a traverse across peril-less boundaries. [15]

BIBLIOGRAPHY

Abraham, Nicolas, Maria Torok, and Nicholas T. Rand. *The Shell and the Kernel: Renewals of Psychoanalysis*. Chicago: U of Chicago P, 1994.

"Affect, n." *OED* Online. March 2013. Oxford: Oxford UP. 10 April 2013. Web.

Ahmed, Sara. "Happy Objects." *The Affect Theory Reader*. Eds. Melissa Gregg and Gregory J. Seigworth. Durham, N. C.: Duke UP, 2010. 29-51.

Baker, Timothy C. *George Mackay Brown and the Philosophy of Community*. Edinburgh: Edinburgh UP, 2009.

Christianson, Aileen, and Alison Lumsden. *Contemporary Scottish Women Writers*. Edinburgh: Edinburgh UP, 2000.

Deleuze, Gilles and Felix Guattari. *A Thousand Plateaus: Capitalism and Schizophrenia.* Trans. Brian Massumi. London: Athlone, 1988.

Freud, Sigmund. *On Murder, Mourning and Melancholia*. London: Penguin, 2005.

Galloway, Janice. *Blood*. London: Vintage, 1999.

Gregg, Melissa and Gregory J. Seigworth. "An Inventory of Shimmers." *The Affect Theory Reader*. Eds. Melissa Gregg and Gregory J. Seigworth. Durham, N. C.: Duke UP, 2010. 1-25.

Hunter, Adrian. *The Cambridge Introduction to the Short Story in English*. Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 2007.

---. "Kelman and the Short Story." *The Edinburgh Companion to James Kelman*. Ed. Scott Hames. Edinburgh: Edinburgh UP, 2010. 42-52.

Jones, Carole. *Disappearing Men: Gender Disorientation in Scottish Fiction* 1979-1999. Amsterdam: Rodopi, 2009.

Kennedy, A. L. *What Becomes*. London: Jonathan Cape, 2009.

Macarthur, John Douglas. *Claiming Your Portion of Space: A Study of the Short Fiction of James Kelman*. Tokyo: Hokuseido, 2007.

Macdonald, Kirsty A. "Writing the Supernatural." *The Edinburgh Companion to Scottish Women's Writing*. Ed. Glenda Norquay. Edinburgh: Edinburgh UP, 2012. 94-102.

May, Lynsey. "The Gull." *The Flight of the Turtle*. Spec. issue of *New Writing Scotland* 29 (2011): 136-138.

McGlynn, Mary M. *Narratives of Class in New Irish and Scottish Literature: from Joyce to Kelman, Doyle, Galloway, and McNamee*. New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2008.

Mitchell, K. R. *A. L. Kennedy*. New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2007.

"New Writers Awards 2012/13." *Scottish Book Trust*, n.d. Web. 1 Aug. 2013.

"Peril, n." *OED* Online. March 2013. Oxford University Press. 10 April 2013. Web.

Probyn, Elspeth. "Writing Shame." *The Affect Theory Reader*. Eds. Melissa Gregg and Gregory J. Seigworth. Durham, N. C.: Duke UP, 2010. 71-90.

Stewart, Susan. *On Longing: Narratives of the Miniature, the Gigantic, the Souvenir, the Collection*. Durham, N.C.: Duke UP, 2005.

Tym, Linda. "Forms of Memory in Twentieth and Twenty-First Century Scottish Fiction." PhD Thesis. University of Edinburgh, 2011.

NOTES

1. See Deleuze and Guattari's "1730: Becoming-Intense, Becoming-Animal, Becoming-Imperceptible [...]" in *A Thousand Plateaus: Capitalism and Schizophrenia* (232-309).

2. For studies on Kelman's short stories, see: Adrian Hunter's "Kelman and the Short Story" (42-52); John Douglas Macarthur's *Claiming Your Portion of Space: A Study of the Short Fiction of James Kelman*; and Carole Jones' *Disappearing Men: Gender Disorientation in Scottish Fiction 1979-1999.* For a full-length study of Mackay Brown, see: Timothy C. Baker, *George Mackay Brown and the Philosophy of Community*.

3. See the work of Macdonald as well as Christianson and Lumsden. Kaye Mitchell's book-length study of A. L. Kennedy was published before the short story collection *What Becomes*, while longer studies of Janice Galloway, such as Mary M. McGlynn's *Narratives of Class in New Irish and Scottish Literature* (2008), focus on the nationalistic concerns of her writing.

4. For full theoretical context and additional research, see Abraham and Torok's chapter "Mourning or Melancholia: Introjection versus Incorporation" (125-138); and Tym's chapters "Transmitting Memory in George Mackay Brown's Greenvoe" (29-58) and "Reviving History: Sensory Experience and Memory in Emma Tennant's *Wild Nights* and Elspeth Barker's *O Caledonia*" (59-94).

5. Here, I refer to Susan Stewart's discussion of "Grotesque Body" (104-110).
6. See Deleuze and Guattari "Introduction" (3-28).
7. In addition to Sara Ahmed's work, which is quoted throughout this article, Susan Stewart's *On Longing* is particularly useful in its investigation of the relationship between objects and identity.
8. Here, I am referring specifically to Sigmund Freud's discussion of mourning and melancholia and to Nicolas Abraham and Maria Torok's study of introjection and incorporation.
9. See Susan Stewart's "The Imaginary Body" (104-131).
10. Awarded the Scottish Book Trust "New Writers Award 2012-2013," Lynsey May is an emerging talent in the Scottish literary scene. Her writing has been published in her online blog, in her chapbook *It Starts So Sweetly* (2010), and in magazines such as *Gutter, New Writing Scotland, and Stinging Fly.*
11. Janice Galloway has established herself as one of the foremost Scottish women's writers and has published since the 1980s. In addition to her most well known novel, *The Trick is to Keep Breathing* (1990), Galloway has also published two collections of short stories. In her short story collection *Blood* (1991), Galloway explores the shifts between the Self and Other. Although she does include Scots words, such as in "Plastering the Cracks" or in "A Week with Uncle Felix," her concern is not particular to Scottish nationalism; rather, she explores the permeability of identity.
12. See Susan Stewart's "Objects of Desire" (132-170).
13. According to Freud, "the fear of uttering a name that previously belonged to a dead person also extends towards the avoidance of any mention of anything to do with that deceased" ("Totem and Taboo" 59).
14. A. L. Kennedy, although born in Dundee, now lives in London. Her first collection of short stories *Night Geometry* and the *Garscadden Trains* (1990) received several awards and she remains one of Scotland's most well known writers. In addition to writing fiction, Kennedy has also written non-fictional prose, radio and screenplays, and comedy. Kennedy's work disrupts nationalistic and gender classifications and focuses on the ambiguous nuances of identity.
15. I am grateful to Laurie Ringer for her helpful comments on this essay. I would also like to thank Susan Manning and Héliane Ventura for having encouraged Transatlantic connections.

ABSTRACTS

Cet article se concentre sur la négociation de la perte dans les nouvelles des écrivaines écossaises Lynsey May, Janice Galloway et A. L. Kennedy. Au lieu d'orienter la perte vers des préoccupations nationalistes, elles la déterritorialisent et la reterritorialisent en déplaçant l'attention vers les affects partagés. A travers le corps du texte, Lynsey May, Janice Galloway et A. L. Kennedy proposent le corps — la bouche de leurs protagonistes — comme source de l'exploration d'une expérience sans limite. Dans chacune des nouvelles, l'utilisation d'un objet métonymique met en lumière le danger qu'un affect partagé peut constituer. Dans la nouvelle de Lynsey May « The Gull », les sentiments de violence que Joni éprouve à l'égard de l'oiseau témoignent indirectement de la violence de son rejet de son ancien petit ami. Dans la nouvelle de Janice Galloway intitulée « A Week with Uncle Felix », l'impossibilité qu'éprouve Senga à mettre en mots la perte témoigne de la complexité de sa relation avec Félix. Un collier, offert en guise de souvenir, est utilisé pour construire artificiellement une narration familiale mais surtout pour

créer un attachement émotionnel à une lignée. La narratrice d'A. L. Kennedy dans « Story of My Life », recherche une rencontre affective avec le lecteur à travers la relation de son trauma oral chez le dentiste mais en dernière analyse utilise la forme de la nouvelle pour reconfigurer l'expérience de la perte.

AUTHORS

LINDA TYM

Linda Tym is a Postdoctoral Tutor in English and Scottish Literature at the University of Edinburgh and Director of Scottish Universities' International Summer School. Her research focuses on theories of memory, psychoanalysis, and transnationality in contemporary Scottish and Canadian literature.