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Samantha Walton, *The Living World: Nan Shepherd and Environmental Thought* (London: Bloomsbury, 2020), 214 pp.

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Nan Shepherd was an early twentieth-century writer who is now recognised as part of the modernist movement of the Scottish Literary Renaissance. With the increased popularity of New Nature Writing and the rise in ecocritical scholarship, Nan Shepherd's writing has been reappraised in recent years by scholars and readers alike. In particular the re-publication of her nonfiction book, *The Living Mountain*, in 2011 has brought Shepherd back into the limelight of public attention. With its focus on the local ecologies and geographies of North East Scotland, and the Cairngorms region in particular, Shepherd's work speaks to a contemporary interest in and concern for local environments and ecological writing. Samantha Walton's monograph *The Living World: Nan Shepherd and Environmental Thought* participates in this revival and contextualises the renewed interest in Shepherd's work. Walton's study forms part of a larger environmental turn in Scottish studies in the last decades, exemplified by Louisa Gairn's *Ecology and Modern Scottish Literature* (2008), Camille Manfredi's *Nature and Space in Contemporary Scottish Writing and Art* (2019) and more recently Susan Oliver's ecocritical reassessment of Walter Scott, one of Scotland's major canonical writers in *Walter Scott and the Greening of Scotland* (2021).

The chapters each tackle one of six larger themes: place and planet, ecology, environmentalism, deep time, vital matter, and being. These larger themes are used by Walton as openings to a kaleidoscope of perspectives from which Shepherd's work is examined. This approach seems very much indebted to Shepherd herself who argues for the value in shifting one's position and looking at the world from multiple perspectives at once. Within each chapter, Walton puts Nan Shepherd's creative works in dialogue with environmental theories and philosophies in order to demonstrate "how her writing might offer new ways of relating to human and more-than-human communities and reimagining humanity's place on earth in the context of the Anthropocene and the environmental and climate crisis" (Walton 2). By discussing Nan Shepherd alongside a range of environmental theories past and present, Walton allows Shepherd to emerge as an ecocritical voice herself and thereby highlights the contributions creative works can make within wider environmental discourse.

Moving through an impressively wide range of topics, Walton demonstrates not only how Shepherd speaks to the theories of her day but also how her writing

complements central theoretical and philosophical ideas about the environment in the twenty-first century. Walton outlines the influence of prominent figures such as Patrick Geddes or Hugh MacDiarmid on Shepherd, but also illustrates how Shepherd inspired later environmentalists through her writing. By locating Shepherd's voice within the environmental humanities and by doing so over the course of a whole book, Walton's monograph shows the value of revisiting the works of (Scottish) modernist women writers and broadening our theoretical perspectives beyond the still dominant categories of gender and the nation. It is to be hoped that it will inspire more scholars to revisit the works of modernist women writers, in Scotland and elsewhere, to discover how they may speak to today's environmental concerns.

The Living World is not only a study on Nan Shepherd's writing and philosophy, but it also provides a comprehensive and accessible overview and a nuanced history of environmental thought in the first half of the twentieth century. Each of the chapters presents a new set of environmental philosophies and theories and contextualises them through Shepherd's writing. The ease with which Walton breaks down often complicated theories will allow even those new to ecocriticism to follow her threads. These theories cover a large terrain of environmental thought: from the concepts of dwelling and topophilia, over considerations of deep time, to vitalism and new materialism. Even though Nan Shepherd features prominently in the book and presents a sort of guiding figure for Walton that allows her to move through a large variety of topics, these methodological choices make her study relevant to everyone interested in early twentieth-century literature inside and outwith Scotland. Walton successfully combines a reading of the work of one writer with a broader outlook and thereby highlights the value of literature, both nonfiction and fiction, in expanding environmental discussions.

While this exploratory mode is clearly a strength of the book from an environmental humanities perspective, it necessarily comes with some limitations, mainly for those who may be more interested in Nan Shepherd's oeuvre as a whole. Shepherd's poetry, her novels and shorter prose writing, do not receive the same kind of attention as *The Living Mountain*, which features prominently in Walton's study, and are addressed only marginally throughout. The risky choice of focusing a whole study mainly on one, rather short nonfiction text, however, cannot really be seen as a weakness. Instead, the result not only highlights Shepherd's impressive skill in condensing into such a short nonfiction text vast layers of meaning, but also demonstrates Walton's perceptive eye for detail and her ability to draw out these layers of meaning in a nuanced fashion while working out their connections with environmental thought.

All in all, Samantha Walton's *The Living World* presents a strong and innovative contribution to scholarship in Scottish studies, modernism, and the environmental humanities. As a well-researched study that covers a wide range of topics through a small lens, it offers something of value to everyone, whether they are already familiar with or new to ecocritical theory and Nan Shepherd's writing.