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**Poems Chiefly in the Scottish Dialectic: Scots Poetic  
Translation and the Second Generation Modern  
Scottish Renaissance (c.1940-1981)**

**A Thesis Presented by Stewart Sanderson for the Degree of  
Master of Philosophy in the Department of Scottish  
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## **Abstract:**

The modern translation of poetry into the Scots language was of central importance to the movement now known as the Modern Scottish Renaissance, presenting writers with vital opportunities to redefine canons and realise their internationalising intentions. This thesis addresses the Scots-language translation work of the neglected second generation Renaissance poets who came to prominence after World War Two. It aims to situate this corpus of translated poetry in the context of twentieth-century Scottish writing as a whole, considering it in terms of its potential for the redress of tradition and canonicity.

Tom Scott (1918-1995), William J. Tait (1918-1992), Robert Garioch (1909-1981), Sydney Goodsir Smith (1915-1975), Douglas Young (1913-1973) and George Campbell Hay (1915-1984) are the primary poet-translators with whom this thesis is concerned. Hugh MacDiarmid (1892-1978) was clearly of enormous importance as a formative influence on all the writers named above. He will therefore be referred to in terms of his interactions with his younger contemporaries and the impact of this on their Scots-language translation work. The Gaelic poet Sorley MacLean (1911-1996) becomes particularly relevant due to the large number of his poems translated by Garioch, Goodsir Smith and Young.

Why was translation into Scots so important to these writers? What opportunities did it present them with and what drives the decision to translate a particular text into a particular dialect or synthetic form of Scots? What impact do these decisions have on their nature as cultural and political artefacts? What, finally, has been the legacy of these poets' Scots translations and why are they important today? These are the core questions this thesis aims to address in terms of these texts' wider global and historical context, drawing upon post-colonial criticism and translation theory to achieve its perspective.

## I. Introduction: Poems Chiefly in the Scottish Dialectic

The Scottish Renaissance of the 1920s, 1930s and early 1940s is still seen by many commentators and writers as a moment of awakening, a sudden expansion into national territory unrealised or left unexplored beneath the shadow of other historical narratives. According to this version of events, the inter-war years were a period when Scottish writers, artists and intellectuals began to reject British cultural authority in far greater numbers than had previously done so. Many of the more important literary figures of this period, including the poets Hugh MacDiarmid and Edwin Muir, as well as the novelists Lewis Grassie Gibbon and Neil M Gunn, rightly remain among the most prominent names in any account of twentieth-century Scottish writing. On the other hand, the outstanding quality of much of their work has sometimes tended to obscure the equally important achievements of many post-World War Two writers, often typified as the second generation Scottish Renaissance.<sup>1</sup>

The 1940s, 1950s and 1960s were decades when Scottish poetry both departed from and focussed on the intentions of Hugh MacDiarmid and his immediate contemporaries; widening old pathways and opening up new avenues for creativity. Modernising literary form, liberating the language of expression and fostering an international agenda had been priorities vital to MacDiarmid's programme from the beginning.<sup>2</sup> And these were issues which continued to confront the best of the writers born a generation or two after him. Language particularly was a subject which both galvanised and united Sydney Goodsir Smith, Robert Garioch, Norman MacCaig, Edwin Morgan, Douglas Young, George Campbell Hay, Tom Scott, Sorley MacLean, Iain Crichton Smith, William J. Tait and George Mackay Brown. Similarly, all possessed definite opinions as to the necessity of drawing upon a wide range of international literary experience, with translation seen as essential if contemporary production was not to wither through lack of contact with other nations and literatures. As such it was an integral aspect of post-war poetry, especially as regards Scots, and one which we must consider central in our attempts to evaluate the literary creations of this critically neglected generation. MacDiarmid emphasised this in an extended passage taken from his autobiographical 'Self Study' *Lucky Poet*, written in Shetland and published in 1943:

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<sup>1</sup> Christopher Whyte, *Corbière, Laforgue et Goodsir Smith* in David Kinloch and Richard Price, eds. *La Nouvelle Alliance: Influences Francophones sur la littérature écossaise moderne* (Grenoble: Ellug, 2000) p.64.

<sup>2</sup> As MacDiarmid had written in the Dunfermline Press in 1922: "If there is to be a Scottish literary revival the first essential is to get rid of our provinciality of outlook and to avail ourselves of Continental experience." Christopher Murray Grieve, *Scottish Books and Bookmen* (Dunfermline: Dunfermline Press, 5 August 1922) p.6.

Nothing is more marked in the recent Scottish poetry than the keen concern of the writers involved with the whole range of welt-literatur and their many-sided knowledge of it. They have translated into Scots a great body of poetry from German, French, Russian, and other European languages. Translations from the Russian of Boris Pasternak by William Soutar, from the Russian of Alexander Blok and the German of Rainer Maria Rilke by myself, from the German of Heine and others by Professor Alexander Gray, from the Dutch of P.C. Boutens and others by Emeritus-Professor Sir H.J.C. Grierson, and from a great array of French poets from Ronsard to Baudelaire by Miss Winefride Margaret Simpson, are included in this tale of recent renderings into Scots, and healthy intromissions with the whole range of European literature, which have been a notable feature of our recent literary history, like a veritable return to the Good Europeanism of our mediaeval ancestors. The younger poets have carried the work of their immediate predecessors still further in this way. George Campbell Hay has made a great many translations from the Irish and Welsh, and Douglas Young effects translation into Latin, French, Attic Greek, Romaic Greek, German, and other tongues, and translates from the Greek, the Russian, and the Lithuanian into Scots or English.<sup>3</sup>

MacDiarmid argues for the absolutely central nature of translation to any attempt at a Scottish tradition in poetry, citing the exemplar of the Auld Makars (particularly Gavin Douglas, although he is not mentioned by name in this particular extract) to support his point. He also implies that this character underscores a radically internationalist streak in Scottish art and literature which, he will repeatedly argue elsewhere, is not to be found in ideologically British cultural products. Finally, there is never a moment's doubt as to the integral role which Scots is to play in the realisation of a suppressed Scottish tradition in the twentieth century. MacDiarmid presupposes that the Scots Language – in its many variants – is a constant, or ought to be, and the younger generation of poets now emerging onto the literary scene exemplify this with their energetic translations into it. The younger generation, indeed, had built upon the achievements of their elders to the extent that they were now by far the more energetic and assiduous Scots translators.

However critically one chooses to accept MacDiarmid's assertions of kinship with medieval writers and his literal-minded claims for the existence of an actually tangible Scottish tradition, it is nevertheless the case that the cultural processes behind these claims demand our attention. Scottish Literature when so defined by its authors was, in the twentieth century, largely concerned with the reappraisal or invention of tradition, leading towards a usable narrative with which to move forward into new territory. It therefore presents the historian of nationalism as well as the literary scholar with a fascinating opportunity to observe a variation on or continuation of the themes Benedict Anderson addresses in *Imagined Communities*:

If we consider the character of these newer nationalisms which, between 1820 and 1920, changed the face of the Old World, two striking features mark them off from their ancestors. First, in almost all of them 'national print-languages' were of central ideological and political

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<sup>3</sup> Hugh MacDiarmid, *Lucky Poet: A Self Study* (London: Methuen, 1943) p.354.

importance [...] Second, all were able to work from visible models provided by their distant, and after the convulsions of the French Revolution, not so distant predecessors. The 'nation' thus became something capable of being consciously aspired to from early on, rather than a slowly sharpening frame of vision.<sup>4</sup>

The Scottish Renaissance, though possessing an ancestry dating back to the early eighteenth century, belongs more properly to the period immediately after that which Anderson describes. As he indicates, the intention of an indigenous national language – Scots – and the historical precursor of an ancient Scottish nation were essential predicates for the modern movement. The importance of these ideas and their relevance to contemporary British cultural politics ought to need no insisting upon. Yet insistence is necessary in the absence of sufficient study, particularly of the generations coming after MacDiarmid, linking the achievements of the first wave writers with their successors.

Verse translation was an integral strategy for many modern Scots-language poets, allowing writers to sidestep an inhibiting English tradition in favour of an alternative canon – which might include all manner of foreign, generally European, poetries – happily transmuted into whichever brand of Scots, synthetic or otherwise, a particular individual favoured. To translate into Scots was, for writers like Tom Scott, Robert Garioch and Sydney Goodsir Smith, both to affect the range of Scots texts available now and to consciously participate in a long tradition of verse translation, predating the Union by centuries. As John Corbett has argued, significantly under the subtitle “The Functions of Translation into Scots”:

To survey the history of translation into Scots is to explore in microcosm the history of Scottish literature and language, and their relationship to Scottish politics, history and social identity. Arguably, the ideological implications of choosing Scots as a medium of translation are greater than those involved in choosing English.<sup>5</sup>

Corbett characterises Scots-language translation as a defining element in Scottish cultural history and identity. Certainly, for a small nation on the far north-western edge of Europe, always very aware of its immediate southern neighbour's far greater political and military power, the ability to draw upon and familiarise itself with international alternatives was an understandably attractive one. Taking advantage of this ability was not presented as a new line of development, but rather framed as a return to a pre-modern, essentially medievalist narrative. This contrasted a culturally European Scotland, francophone before it was anglicised, with the current colonial backwater; the true Scotland corrupted by modernity. Crucial to such a version of events are the great late medieval makars – especially Dunbar, Henryson and Douglas – whose poetry, achieved on the cusp of the European Renaissance, was perhaps the most important source for the modern makars' language

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<sup>4</sup> Benedict Anderson, *Imagined Communities* (London: Verso, 1991) p.67.

<sup>5</sup> John Corbett, *Topics in Translation 14: Written in the Language of the Scottish Nation: A History of Translation into Scots* (Clevedon: Multilingual Matters, 1999) p.1.

and outlook. And while Tom Scott, Sydney Goodsir Smith and Douglas Young are arguably the writers to have drawn most extensively from the Auld Makars, MacDiarmid's infamously misunderstood slogan "Not Burns – Dunbar"<sup>6</sup> bears out the enormous emotional and symbolic significance the poetry of medieval and Renaissance Scotland held for the modern Scottish cultural revival.

Returning to Corbett's point, to study the Scots poetic translation of the twentieth century is to analyse in microcosm the status of an independent Scottish literary tradition and its international relationships within the wider political and cultural realities of its time. As such this thesis deals primarily with the work of those writers of the immediately post-MacDiarmid generation, and will attempt to explore their translation activity in terms of its ideologically motivated context. Due to constraints of space and the enormous richness of neglected material this study could hardly hope to be comprehensive, but aims instead to shed some light on a period insufficiently considered by contemporary scholarship – and perhaps suggest further avenues for investigation.

Tradition and canonicity are the key themes through which to approach this corpus of translated texts and the literary milieu which produced them. The Scottish Renaissance and its successors were inextricably involved in the appropriation and rewriting of tradition – one of the main functions of poetic translation (to use Corbett's phrase) is to allow a writer to rewrite tradition through the selection of an alternative personal canon. The distinction between the purely personal, solely aesthetic choice and the text chosen for ulterior, perhaps political reasons then arises. Although in the case of an often unrecognised language like Scots there is the considerable caveat that the aesthetics of writing are inevitably politicised by the medium, meaning every translation is to an extent also a political object. As the Slovenian scholar Natalia Kaloh Vid, in her landmark study of the translation, pseudo-translation and plethora of obscurantist decisions made in the presentation of Robert Burns to Soviet readerships, writes:

For a proper understanding of the ideological approach to translation study, it should be noted that language is not only a carrier of messages but also a carrier of culture and culturally important components. The differences in the words of each language surely reflect the important cultural characteristics of the things, customs, and various activities of the society that uses this language. Consequently, translation is not only a process of language transfer but also a process of transplanting the culture.<sup>7</sup>

In terms of modern Scots translation it is undoubtedly true that the target context into which foreign cultural products are inserted is, by virtue of its non-standard, non-canonical status, always an

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<sup>6</sup> MacDiarmid, Hugh, *Albyn: Shorter Books and Monographs* (Manchester: Carcanet, 1996) p.14.

<sup>7</sup> Natalia Kaloh Vid, *Ideological Translations of Robert Burns' Poetry in the Soviet Union* (Maribor: Zora, 2011) p.21.

ideologically charged space. An understanding as to why certain texts are translated is therefore an important focus of this thesis, as is the type of Scots a writer translates into. Whether he or she employs synthetic Lallans or Shetlandic, traditional Doric or orthographically experimental Glaswegian, potentially says as much about a writer's attitude to tradition as the decision to translate modern Russian or medieval French literature. It may speak additional volumes when put in context with the rest of contemporary Scottish writing – as Corbett indicates, also in his pioneering overview of the long and distinguished history of Scots translation:

Although MacDiarmid's longed for 'Scottish Renaissance' took two decades to attain critical mass, his rallying-cry proved in time to be irresistible, and a 'coterie' of Lallans poets slowly began to evolve, though it never quite lost its heterogeneous quality [...] in the wake of *A Drunk Man Looks at the Thistle*, translation was to become one of the major projects of the Scots synthesisers.<sup>8</sup>

The present study, which deals with a comparatively tiny area out of many centuries of Scots writing, is concerned with the function of translation for the second generation of twentieth-century Scottish writers and translators. Comparison between their own cultural inheritance and that which they bequeathed their successors is therefore important, particularly in terms of the subsequent reception of their translation work and critical thinking on canonicity and tradition. Ultimately, this research aims to be aware of the status and nature of Scots language writing today, with its perspective on earlier writing naturally coloured by knowledge of subsequent developments in Scots translation. The importance of this and further scholarship is highlighted by the great quantity of unexplored material in the Scottish Poetry Library, Glasgow University Special Collections and the National Library of Scotland. Moreover, the quality of much of this material, as well as its clear bearing on our current political reality, highlights the importance of a clearer understanding of this integral strand of twentieth-century Scottish writing.

In attempting to address so large and heterogeneous a body of primary material, this thesis could clearly never hope to be comprehensive. The number of writers and texts translated is simply too great. Therefore, rather than a linear structure or blow by blow account of texts translated, it is divided into three chapters or case studies, each dealing with a particular aspect of Scots translation. To place this research firmly in the context of a putative Scottish tradition allows for detailed insights into one of the most important functions of literary translation – the establishment of a canon. To this end a descriptive methodology<sup>9</sup> drawing upon both translation studies and post-colonial

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<sup>8</sup> Corbett, *Topics in Translation 14*, p.132.

<sup>9</sup> Discussing the concept of descriptive translation studies, which emphasises the target text and its context over the source-based mechanics of the process, Gideon Toury writes: "Whether one chooses to focus one's efforts on translated texts and/or their constituents, on intertextual relationships, on models and norms of translational behaviour or on strategies resorted to in and for the solution of particular problems, what

criticism will be employed, emphasising the target text and context rather than the source, although sources will be given when appropriate. This becomes particularly pertinent when addressing the transfer of innovative poetic form, which is obviously a key concern for many translators working in minority or marginalised languages.

The first case study will address the central issue of tradition as regards translation from the classically canonical texts of European literature. The translation of texts of this type has been, perhaps unsurprisingly, a fairly common act for modern Scots poets. Understandably, if you write in an unaccepted language whose status and worth are often questioned by the central authority, then it makes sense to translate works of literature whose status as great works of art is beyond question. Examples abound, with Douglas Young's versions of Aristophanes, Tom Scott's Dante and Robert Garioch's Hesiod just a few instances of this widespread phenomenon. The implications of these texts, however, go far beyond the mere "translation of prestige literature into Lallans."<sup>10</sup> They present us with an invaluable opportunity to investigate the ways in which minority languages can be justified and traditions reconstructed – as well as the processes by which colonised intellectuals react to their subalternity. This chapter will therefore concentrate upon the considerable plurality which becomes visible through the comparison of different responses to this situation. Some of the most important, it will be argued, are a series of translations of the French medieval poet François Villon by several hands. Tom Scott, whose versions are perhaps the slightly better known, translated Villon into synthetic Lallans at the suggestion of no less central a poet than TS Eliot. Scott also received a letter of congratulations from Ezra Pound upon their publication in 1953, with the legendary American modernist (at that time incarcerated in a mental hospital for his wartime activities in Italy) apparently describing them as "the finest in existence."<sup>11</sup> His Lallans versions, although hardly famous, are consequently about as centrally accredited by the big names of twentieth-century poetry as it is possible for a modern Scots text to be. The Shetland poet William J Tait's beautiful translations of Villon into Shetlandic Scots are peripheral in comparison.<sup>12</sup> Yet the value of this comparison between Scott's Lallans and Tait's Shetlandic versions is its demonstration of the plurality of living Scots and the diverse literary traditions in which its many varieties can be used. It also intends to critique the chain of thought which led writers like Scott, whose desire for a

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constitutes the subject matter of a proper discipline of Translation Studies is (observable or reconstructable) facts of real life rather than merely speculative entities resulting from preconceived hypotheses and theoretical models. It is therefore empirical and should be worked out accordingly." Gideon Toury, *Descriptive Translation Studies and Beyond* (Amsterdam: Benjamins, 1995) p.1.

<sup>10</sup> John Corbett, *Language and Scottish Literature* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 1997) p.61.

<sup>11</sup> Stanley Roger Green, *A Clamjamfray of Poets* (Edinburgh: Saltire Society, 2007) p.61.

<sup>12</sup> Though this said, they have recently been reissued by as *Le Testament and Other Translations* (Hansel Cooperative Press, 2011) whereas Scott's have not been republished since his *Collected Shorter Poems* (Agenda/Chapman) in 1993.

highly codified literary canon seems to have developed considerably under Eliot's influence, to desire a coherent, centralised Scottish culture. The citation of unpublished letters from Eliot to Scott, now in the National Library of Scotland, allows for a fascinating insight into the two writers' relationship, and demonstrates that MacDiarmid was by no means the only titanic presence for Scottish writers at this time. Scott's work, it will be argued, entails a return to Scotland's medieval past, envisioning a centrally defined culture whose colonising function as regards its own peripheries would be analogous to Britain's own. Tait, by contrast, engages with a separate, insular tradition – practically as distant from Edinburgh as it is from London. He thus provides a powerful counterweight to certain synthesised manifestations of Scottish culture, with the two writers' versions of Villon offering an invaluable opportunity to explore this in the context of post-war Scots translation.

As well as looking outward to mainland Europe and further afield, the Scottish Renaissance writers were deeply concerned with turning inwards and engaging with those writers and traditions which, while indigenous to the territory now known as Scotland, had become inaccessible or little known due to their antiquity or the language of their composition. The second chapter will therefore engage with the modern recovery of these poems through translating them into Lallans, as well as the intellectual, artistic and political implications involved in laying claim to creations of past writers who would not have recognised the idea of modern Scotland had the concept been put to them. MacDiarmid, Robert Garioch, Sydney Goodsir Smith, Douglas Young and George Campbell Hay were among the most dedicated in their attempts to bridge the gap between idealised language and historical reality, and their efforts were far from confined to the translation of texts composed centuries before. The relationship between living Gaelic and Scots writers in the twentieth century was in many ways revolutionary, involving the collaboration of all the poets named above and amounting to an intensively productive program of internal translation between Scotland's two main minority languages. The work of MacLean in particular, arguably the greatest Gaelic poet of the twentieth century, was a catalyst for translation and re-translation into Scots. This trend continues today, if J. Derrick McClure's masterful "owersettin" (published last year) is anything to go by. McClure writes in his Scots introduction:

The owersettin o mauchtie warks in ither leids hes been a ploy o Scots makars sen the skeildest owersetter o hus aa, Gavin Douglas, pit the *Aeneid* intae the mither tung. Gin the Scots leid can gie tae Virgil, an insyne Homer, Dante, Petrarch, Villon, Ronsard, Racine, Molière, an o makars frae nearer-haun tae our ain days, Quasimodo, Apollinaire, Akhmatova,

Mayakovsky, Mandelstam, Brecht an mony anither forbye, a hameilt tung tae sing wi, it can bode a wordie welcome tae Sorley MacLean.<sup>13</sup>

McClure's prose preface begs closer analysis. It is written in a Scots which, while synthetic to a degree, reads perfectly naturally once the initial barrier of orthography – for those perhaps more used to dealing with Standard English spelling – is overcome. Yet certain aspects of this prose do require further explication. The word for translating, for example – “owersettin” – is as far as I am aware derived not from a Middle or Old Scots root, but through abstraction from the German *übersetzen*. The intention is to write a standard Scots which is as capable of dealing with such critical argumentation as a preface to a book of translations requires. The second intention is that this Scots be demonstrably Scottish, as little Anglicised as possible.<sup>14</sup> McClure's Scots derives from a spoken language, but also – and excitingly – intends one. Yet this synthetic Scots is so clearly a different language, a different type of language emerging under different sorts of conditions to modern English, that it becomes necessary to ask what sorts of vocabularies and conceptual tools are available to it. Could one write critical theory in this Scots? Could one write political bureaucracy in it? In some ways the language is too particular, too bound up in its vernacular context and chiefly addressed to those already familiar and in agreement with the speaker's point. Just as MacDiarmid turned to international scientific vocabulary and synthetic English in his later poetry, so an act of translation would be required. The results would certainly be striking; they might be jarringly unfamiliar.

The third chapter will therefore deal with those poetic translations into Scots which attempt to bring across foreign texts already involved in experimentation and the defamiliarisation of their linguistic or prosodic material. As in the first chapter, the detailed close reading of dual translations of the same poems by various hands will be developed in the context of evolving poetic form in a synthesised or minority medium. Rather than Villon, however, the French modernist and visual poet Guillaume Apollinaire will be introduced, primarily through Sydney Goodsir Smith's and Robert Garioch's versions of his poems. Goodsir Smith was on familiar ground in his translations of the macaronic, exuberant, yet always pathos-ridden Apollinaire – the stylistic excess reminiscent of original works like *Carotid Cornucopius* and *Under the Eildon Tree* standing him in good stead here. Garioch, whose own poetry and critical outlook were largely those of a traditionalist, represents an entirely different sort of poet in terms of his Apollinaire translations. The fact that both attempted to

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<sup>13</sup> J. Derrick McClure, *Sangs tae Eimhir* (Stornoway: Acair, 2011) pp.x-xi.

<sup>14</sup> As Douglas Young put it in his polemical essay, *Plastic Scots*: “If Lallans fails, coin something from Latin or Greek if you like, as King's English does; if all else fails admit a Hottentotism rather than another Anglicism. This should be our intransigent policy for the next five hundred years or so.” Douglas Young, *Plastic Scots* (Edinburgh: Maclellan, 1948) p.23.

transpose these texts into Scots is telling and suggests integral insights into the nature of synthetic Scots and, perhaps, its fundamental impossibilities. In his essay on *Plastic Scots*, Douglas Young also wrote: "If Blok and Rilke and T. S. Eliot and Paul Valéry are difficult in their own languages, even to persons well acquainted with Russian, German, English, and French, naturally they will remain difficult when translated into Lallans, and it is worth the effort to understand them."<sup>15</sup> Here Young is no doubt correct, but he ignores the effect of doubled strangeness caused by translating already difficult poetry into a synthetic language. This is linked to Scots' long term status as a non-canonical language of low status used primarily in particular contexts such as rural and urban working class life. Consequently, any consideration of the strangeness of Scots translations of Apollinaire (and comparable texts such as Edwin Morgan's versions of the Russian Futurist Vladimir Mayakovsky) must carefully weigh the political ramifications of these poems alongside their aesthetic ones. To introduce Apollinaire, as well as international kindred spirits such as Alexander Blok, Mayakovsky and Paul Éluard into the contemporary Scottish canon involves a parallel but distinct process to the introduction or re-introduction of medieval European or Gaelic verse. Ultimately the potential for incongruity, the fairly radical claims it makes and the critical coolness towards such an action has no more stopped translators of European modernist poetry than it has Scottish and Irish Gaelic,<sup>16</sup> but what do these reveal about the nature and current situation of synthetic Scots? What does the Scottish tradition do with these poems and why does it require them? Why, finally, are these texts at once the oddest and most emblematic manifestations of the modern translation tradition which created them? The fact that it is here most of all that writers attempt to develop the language is no doubt significant. The question as to whether they have been successful in doing so has potential relevance to literary production far removed both geographically and aesthetically from Scotland and Scots.

The key questions, then, which this thesis attempts to engage with are firstly, what was the relevance of poetic translation into Scots for writers' interpretations of a Scottish tradition? What, crucially, was the intention for that tradition by translating particular texts into it? Secondly, how has the translation activity of the second generation Scottish Renaissance affected that generation's relationships with its predecessors and successors? What can we do in this area to improve our understanding of the broader narrative and inheritance of twentieth-century Scottish Literature? Thirdly, what are the implications of these translations for language, particularly the Scots language, in Scotland today? How, ultimately, has the formal status and range of the Scots language changed

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<sup>15</sup> Douglas Young in Clara Young and David Murison, eds. *A Clear Voice: Poet and Polymath* (Edinburgh: MacDonald, 1974) p.63.

<sup>16</sup> Donny O'Rourke and Richard Price, *Eftirs/After* (Glasgow: Au Quai, 1996) and *Into Glasgow* (Edinburgh: Mariscat, 2006) are two anthologies which reflect this.

or expanded since Goodsir Smith, Garioch, Scott and their contemporaries began writing? More than anything, this thesis hopes to be able to explore a small part of a too little known area of literature, demonstrating the enormous worth which exists and indicating avenues where future scholarship might fruitfully proceed.

## II. Chapter One: Deconstructing Prestige Translation.

Many translators of poetry who are themselves poets, when called upon to discuss and explicate their reasons for translating and understanding of the translation process, respond with answers which, though frequently compelling, bear more resemblance to their own creative output than the analyses of stricter translation theorists. Don Paterson claims in the afterword to his version of Rilke's *Orpheus Sonnets* that "in a qualified but real sense, one can no more translate a poem than one can a piece of music,"<sup>17</sup> while in the same essay putting forward a persuasive argument for using the fabric of the foreign poem as a springboard for the creation of a new, albeit ultimately disconnected, work. Clearly, a writer concerned with producing original and, crucially, publishable literature is necessarily concerned both with the cultural value these processes of production would ideally possess and the consequent necessity of maintaining this value if the writing process is to be continually productive. The inherent danger is that these creatively necessary acts of obfuscation made by writers addressing the idea of translation acquire, through the cultural centrality their authors wield, the critical authority of truth, becoming complicit in the unequal distribution of power and knowledge in the world today.

The principle obfuscating force as regards translation is, many theorists would argue, the notion that it occurs in an actual sense, that is to say, involves a genuinely equivalent relationship between source and target text. According to Gregory Rabassa: "wishful thinking and early training in arithmetic have convinced a majority of people that there are such things as equals in the world."<sup>18</sup> If we follow this line of logic it becomes apparent, Rabassa argues, that translation is to be understood as a metaphorically rich transaction rather than an actual exchange of meaning. Himself a practising translator of Spanish language fiction, he follows the line of thought no further than this, unlike Adorno who, although discussing art generally, touches upon an integral issue for contemporary translation studies when he writes: "Art that is radically and explicitly something made must ultimately confront its own feasibility."<sup>19</sup> The implication for poetic translation being that, given the critical environment in which it now takes place, its practitioners ought to acknowledge these problematic aspects of their craft and make them explicit through their own translation practice. No single translation can ever be definitive, but must instead make decisions as to which characteristics of the source it will attempt to render, whether sound, meaning or visual appearance. The variety of language which is chosen by the translator is, crucially, always negotiable. In terms of

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<sup>17</sup> Don Paterson, *Orpheus: A Version of Rilke* (London: Faber and Faber, 2006) p.77.

<sup>18</sup> Gregory Rabassa, *No Two Snowflakes are Alike: Translation as Metaphor* in John Biguenet and Rainer Schulte, eds. *The Craft of Translation* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1989) p.1.

<sup>19</sup> Theodor Adorno, *Aesthetic Theory* (London: Athlone Press, 1997) p.26.

Scots translation this opens out a wide field of linguistic possibilities, each offering different ways in which to engage with tradition.

This brings us back to the question of why writers translate. Moreover, it begs further questions as to the sort of medium into which they translate. Generally speaking and at any given time, the majority of poetic translations will tend to be into whatever language, metric and style is currently in vogue and thus apparently natural. This state of affairs is what the American translation theorist Lawrence Venuti has angrily characterised in his magisterial book, *The Translator's Invisibility*, as "the dominance of fluency,"<sup>20</sup> angrily because of the real power relations and acts of institutional violence he detects beneath the smooth surface of apparently fluent translations and the illusion of inevitability with which they imbue their host medium. As Venuti argues:

The translator's invisibility can now be seen as a mystification of troubling proportions, an amazingly successful concealment of the multiple determinants and effects of English-language translation, the multiple hierarchies and exclusions in which it is implicated. An illusion produced by fluent translating, the translator's invisibility at once enacts and masks an insidious domestication of foreign texts, rewriting them in the transparent discourse that prevails in English and that selects precisely those texts amenable to fluent translating.<sup>21</sup>

Thus those translations into dominant languages which gloss over or otherwise attempt to ignore the contradictory aspects of their existence are to a real degree complicit in the abuses of power, whatever justifying rationales are put forward by their authors. Typical examples might include the desire to introduce a great work to a wider audience, create a new translation for our time of a previously translated classic – or simply the desire to find out how and if such a text could be translated into the target language. All of these are, undoubtedly, laudable intentions. However, as Venuti and Adorno point out, when carried out without due consideration of their environment and the malign discourses and controls in which they are complicit, they unknowingly take part in an incremental process whose long term effects include political centralisation, the loss of linguistic diversity and the prioritisation of certain sections of the world's population on the grounds of the languages they speak.

Of the three reasons for translating suggested above, only the second and third are directly applicable to the phenomenon of minority language translation, particularly when the minority language is a linguistic form like Scots, where every speaker more or less understands Standard English. There have been many efforts to make great translations in Scots, and an equally large number of attempts to introduce texts and types of texts whose formal nature offers a certain challenge to the budding translator. Post-Union at least, there have been no translations into Scots

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<sup>20</sup> Lawrence Venuti, *The Translator's Invisibility: A History of Translation* (London: Routledge, 1995) p.2.

<sup>21</sup> *Ibid*, pp.16-17.

in which the author's intention has been to reach a representatively large audience; a mass audience in the sense of the comparatively enormous reading public to whom a Standard English translation is immediately available and, equally importantly, a viable cultural proposition. Clearly, to translate poetry into a minor, frequently unrecognised language is to make a risky and emphatically political statement about the role and nature of language in the modern world. In the context of Scots it is also to invoke and lay claim to submerged tradition – indeed the Italian critic Marco Fazzini has gone so far as to describe translation as “the pivotal element of the Scottish tradition.”<sup>22</sup>

Fazzini seems to suggest that it is not so much that translation has been the central or dominant literary form in any age of Scottish literature; this is belied by the comparative routh of production in other forms. Rather we are invited to see translation, into whatever language, as the form feeding into and supporting the others; the ball on which the tradition pivots as it leans forward into each successive age. However accurate this representation is, it certainly puts forward grounds for the foregrounding of Scots translation in our assessments of twentieth-century Scottish writing. Moreover, Fazzini signals that it is imperative that this be done in the context of tradition – the idea of the Scottish tradition as recognised by MacDiarmid and his successors.

As a result of this discourse – the twentieth-century Renaissance's claims, through translation, to particular relationships, assumed or real, between themselves and the acknowledged past masters of world literature – it is rewarding to investigate the various ways in which the second generation Renaissance approached tradition, both Scottish and international, and how their translation practices were affected through these approaches. There were naturally many wholly individual responses to these things, but an important issue to address seems to be the considerably politicised choice of translated texts, in many cases chosen due to a perceived mutual isolation from England. Equally integral is a consideration of the wide variety of Scots selected or arrived at in the process of writing, and specifically as to how this relates to the markedly heterogeneous cultural and linguistic realities of twentieth-century Scotland. Both of these must be investigated in the context of their relationship to perceived notions of canonicity and tradition. These concepts, I would argue, are to be considered against the backdrop of Scotland's uncertain political status, as well as the ongoing processes of global transition and escalation at work throughout the second half of the twentieth century.

These phenomena can be productively addressed in the context of the ancestral relationship the traditionally potent figure of Gavin Douglas enjoyed with his modern successors, especially in

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<sup>22</sup> Marco Fazzini, *Crossings: Essays on Contemporary Scottish Literature and Hybridity* (Venezia: Supernova Edizioni, 2000) p.15.

light of Scottish responses to translation outwith or antagonistic to the Lallans movement. For while MacDiarmid's celebrated slogans, "back to Dunbar" and "Not Burns – Dunbar" might potentially prejudice us in favour of the older poet in our appraisals of his influence on the Scottish Renaissance, it is clear from many other contemporary sources that Gavin Douglas (c.1472-1522) was just as significant an inheritance for the modern Scots poet. As Tom Scott wrote, in his introduction to *The Penguin Book of Scottish Verse*:

With less inventiveness than either Henryson or Dunbar, he had greater linguistic and scholastic ability, and in his great translation of Virgil's *Aeneid* he raised the Scots language to a peak of fullness and brilliance never equalled before or since, and from which it has all too rapidly declined[...]This linguistic supremacy in Gavin Douglas needs insisting upon, for it marks not only his greatness as a writer, but the role of translation in a developing language: it was the superiority of Virgil's Latin as a linguistic instrument that forced Douglas to develop a greater canon of Scots than previous 'original' poets had needed.<sup>23</sup>

And a long, apparently unpublished 1947 article by Sydney Goodsir Smith<sup>24</sup> makes the author's – and contemporary Scottish writing's – debt to Douglas emphatically clear. Additionally, Douglas is a writer of great relevance for any student of literary history in general, possessing, to quote John Corbett, "a new self-consciousness about the responsibilities of the translator to the source text [...] remarkable for the translator's view of the medium of translation."<sup>25</sup> He consequently becomes an exemplary figure for the Scots translator, combining the desire to translate for a wider audience with the impetus to enhance his language in terms of its linguistic range and scope for formal variation. Crucially for Scots language activists, Douglas was also the first writer to refer to his language as *Scottis*, rather than *Inglis*. As he puts it in the prologue to the first book of his translation:

Weel at ae blenk slee poetry nocht taen is  
And yet, forsooth, I set my busy pain  
As that I should, to mak it braid and plain,  
Keeping nae southern, but our ane language,  
And speaks as I learnit when I was a page.  
Nor yet sae clean all southern I refuse,  
But some word I pronounce as neighbour does,  
Like as in Latin been Greek terms sum,  
So me behovit whilom (or then be dumb)  
Some bastard Latin, French or English use

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<sup>23</sup> Tom Scott, *The Penguin Book of Scottish Verse* (London: Penguin, 1970) p.35-36. See also: MacDiarmid, Hugh, *Albyn: Shorter Books and Monographs* (Manchester: Carcanet, 1996) p.4. MacDiarmid argues: "It is necessary to go back behind Burns to Dunbar and the Old Makars – great Catholic poets using the Vernacular, not for the pedestrian things to which it has latterly been confined, but for all 'the brave translunary things of great art.'"

<sup>24</sup> Sydney Goodsir Smith, *Gavin Douglas* (1947) MS can be consulted in National Library of Scotland Acc. 10426.12/13.

<sup>25</sup> John Corbett, *Topics in Translation 14: Written in the Language of the Scottish Nation: A History of Translation into Scots* (Clevedon: Multilingual Matters, 1999) p.41.

Where scant were Scots I had nae other choice.<sup>26</sup>

This quite literally sets out Douglas' twin intentions: to write in the vernacular tongue and through translation into it to enlarge its range and vocabulary. By implication this project also has the third function, or rather ultimate motivation, of creating a work of literature which is, by virtue of its composition in the vernacular, available to a much wider audience than the original Latin. This is all pretty familiar from what we know of many other nascent cultural movements employing languages not previously considered valid for literary purposes: the translation of canonical, unquestionably valid texts as in one sense a justifying and in another an expanding act, forcing the language into the new territory and vocabulary necessary for contemporary expression. And on another level, Douglas' foregrounding of the existence and fundamentally linguistic nature of choice in the translation of poetry represents a fascinating admission of subjectivity from so early a writer. Indeed, it might not be going too far to claim that these eleven lines, out of, of course, a much larger epic, are in themselves the first written constitution of modern Scots translation – its foundational statement, even.

The issues which we must then address, in the context of twentieth-century Scots translators and their laying claim to supposed relationships with their medieval and renaissance antecedents, are inextricably bound up with tradition – its creation and the subsequent realisation of one's right to it. In his famous essay, *Tradition and the Individual Talent*, TS Eliot writes:

No poet, no artist of any art, has his complete meaning alone. His significance, his appreciation is the appreciation of his relation to the dead poets and artists. You cannot value him alone; you must set him, for contrast and comparison, among the dead.<sup>27</sup>

This is to project a view of literature which, if not crudely linear, makes certain assumptions as to the reality of artistic succession and continuity. Eliot wishes tradition to develop not merely on the basis of particular affinities between particular artists, but on the cultural level also. The problem which then emerges is which cultural level – which culture? MacDiarmid and his successors, in their rejection of the inheritance of English Literature and attempts to re-situate themselves in closer relation to the Auld Makars, seek to set themselves up for “contrast and comparison” – but with different dead writers. This has to be seen in the context of the undoubted difficulties involved in the modern appropriation of medieval texts as justifying documents for a contemporary resistance movement, which in Scotland's case has tended to predicate itself on a binary opposition to England

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<sup>26</sup> Gavin Kendal, *Gavin Douglas, 'The Aeneid' (1513) Volume 1: Introduction, Books 1-8* (London: Modern Humanities Research Association, 2011) ll. 108-118, p.4.

<sup>27</sup> T. S. Eliot, *Tradition and the Individual Talent* in John Hayward, ed. *Selected Prose* (Middlesex: Penguin, 1958) p.23.

and 'English' cultural imperialism. For it is true that otherwise deeply intelligent and sensitive writers of the calibre of MacDiarmid, Tom Scott and Douglas Young uttered and repeatedly defended the sorts of critically reactionary statements which, if followed to their essentially racial conclusions, reveal roots in the same polluted earth as the worst outrages of continental Fascism.<sup>28</sup> This is not to suggest that MacDiarmid, Young or any of their fellow Renaissance writers would still, had they been aware of the impending reality of Mussolini's Italy or Hitler's Germany, have voiced opinions on these subjects which today require the use of the word 'problematic.' But it is true that the intellectual impulse which allows a socialist writer to cite Gavin Douglas' *Eneados* as an actual poetic relation is, taken to extremes, complicit in the same processes of justification and essentialist opposition responsible for so much darkness and tragedy in the twentieth century. As the Indian born post-colonial critic Homi K. Bhabha indicates, all countries depend on stories, are indeed potentially indispensable stories:

Nations, like narratives, lose their origins in the myths of time and only fully realize their horizons in the mind's eye. Such an image of the nation – or narration – might seem impossibly romantic and excessively metaphorical, but it is from those traditions of political thought and literary language that the nation emerges as a powerful historical idea in the west. An idea whose cultural compulsion lies in the impossible unity of the nation as a symbolic force.<sup>29</sup>

And if this is the case then it is perhaps true that not all nations are nice stories, with happy endings:

This is not to deny the attempt by nationalist discourses persistently to produce the idea of the nation as a continuous narrative of national progress, the narcissism of self-generation, the primeval present of the *Volk*. Nor have such political ideas been definitively superseded by those new realities of internationalism, multi-nationalism, or even 'late capitalism', once we acknowledge that the rhetoric of these global terms is most often underwritten in that grim prose of power that each nation can wield within its own sphere of influence.<sup>30</sup>

What thus becomes novel, considered from this sceptical attitude towards all nationalist statements, is the phenomenon of the minority culture resisting the coloniser through the deployment of just these conflicted narratives. As Robert Crawford suggests, in his seminal *Devolving English Literature*:

Often what small or vulnerable groups need is not simply a deconstruction of rhetorics of authority, but a construction or reconstruction of a 'usable past', an awareness of a cultural

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<sup>28</sup> Susan Ruth Wilson writes: "Any discussion of cultural nationalism raises difficult questions. What criteria establish national identity: race, birthplace, political citizenship, language? Is it possible to articulate such an activity in a way which is non-essentialist, non-exclusivist, neither Fascist nor proto-Fascist? If there is a cultural basis for an independent Scottish nation, wherein does it lie? Such issues are further complicated when, in terms of literary studies, notions of canonicity are brought to bear on disparate traditions." Susan Ruth Wilson, *The Correspondence Between Hugh MacDiarmid and Sorley MacLean* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2010) p.20.

<sup>29</sup> Homi K. Bhabha, *Nation and Narration* (Routledge: London, 1990) p.1.

<sup>30</sup> *Ibid*, p.1.

tradition which will allow them to preserve or develop a sense of their own distinctive identity, their constituting difference.<sup>31</sup>

It was not the intention of the Scottish Renaissance, therefore, to destroy all possibility of the acceptance of malign national narratives, but rather to achieve redress in terms of a specifically Scottish narrative's sovereign right to exist. And few rational and sympathetic parties could deny, surely, that the Scottish Renaissance writers and critics were, in the main, good and decent human beings whose ultimate imperative was the cultural and social liberation of ordinary people. Yet, this said, the very discourses and historical events which instilled these passions and aims in MacDiarmid, Sydney Goodsir Smith and Tom Scott were conducive, in other countries and circumstances, to the formation and promulgation of exceptionalism and ethnic terror. The histories of the twentieth and early twenty-first centuries require us to point this out.

With this proviso, those writers become fascinating who, while existing and working in the sorts of critical environment which allowed for the uncritical acceptance of national narratives, were to some extent suspicious, cautious or simply opposed to these forms. In the context of the translation work and critical opinions of urban, generally demotic writers like Robert Garioch (1909-1981) and his successor Tom Leonard (b.1944) this becomes particularly pertinent, the comparison allowing for a useful critique of the works of writers perhaps less critical of their cultural existence and material. Certainly it can be argued that both Garioch and Leonard are, in their use of language, reacting to what they feel to be stifling conditions of tradition and canonicity. Garioch sums up his practice thus:

I studied Honours English (we didn't 'read' in those days) and we used to stick our poems on the board of the English Library. Vexed by the Englishness of other people's poems, I reacted by presenting "Fi'baw in the Street", glottal stops and all. I thought I was being rude, but it was well received. Mr Murison's *Guid Scots Tongue* tells us how Allan Ramsay's work was one of reaction. I regard mine as a small part of that reaction, which has never quite ceased since Ramsay began it, sometime about 1720.<sup>32</sup>

Garioch claims to continue a long tradition of Scots-language poetry predicated on a process of reaction against the marginalisation of the tongue in creative and public life. His stance, evident in his enormous degree of formal skill and the conscious commitment to it evident in his work, is not quite captured by the word 'conservative.' Against that may be set his long standing attempt to engage with the scientific in his poetry. This attempt, for all the weariness and despair which

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<sup>31</sup> Robert Crawford, *Devolving English Literature: Second Edition* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2000) p.5.

<sup>32</sup> Robert Garioch, *Early Days in Edinburgh* in Maurice Lindsay, ed. *As I Remember* (London: Robert Hale, 1979) p.58.

permeate works like *The Muir*, in which the dark, atomic side of the twentieth century is counterpointed with the Enlightenment poet Robert Fergusson's descent into madness, is a world away from, say, Edwin Muir's *The Horses* or the intimately related black Pentecost invoked by Muir's pupil, George Mackay Brown. In the 1950s Muir confronted the very real prospect of nuclear cataclysm with an allegory of rejuvenation and rebirth. Garioch's scientific commitment, no matter how bleak it sometimes becomes, sets him firmly in the more pragmatic Scottish tradition of John Davidson, Hugh MacDiarmid and Edwin Morgan, only eleven years his junior. Crucially, both MacDiarmid and Morgan also translated modern poetry into Scots. This said, it is essential not to overplay Garioch's scientific interests and place him too neatly alongside Morgan (whom he admired) and MacDiarmid (towards whom he was more ambivalent) in a trio of twentieth-century Scottish poets who embraced the new in all its forms. That would be to misunderstand his largely traditionalist understanding of form and language, as opposed to MacDiarmid's modernist radicalism or Morgan's heterogeneous pluralism.

It would be misleading to say that Leonard takes up a contradictory position. In many ways his concerns are Garioch's. Both men, crucially, are committed to a relevant, modern poetry written in the spoken language of their respective cities. However, while Garioch's Edinburgh centred Scots has a long pedigree in the production of canonical verse, with verifiable links to what was once the official language of state, Leonard's Glaswegian really does have its roots in "the stigmatised speech of the working-classes."<sup>33</sup> Which is not to underplay the obstacles practitioners in more recognised forms of Scots have had to confront and, to an extent, still do face. It is, however, of some relevance to the way in which Leonard has situated himself almost in opposition to the Scottish Renaissance and Scots language movement. For it must be emphasised that, in any comparison between Leonard and Garioch, the former's emergence as part of the 1960s and 70s revival of Glasgow writing and the latter's much earlier appearance preclude too direct an equivalence. As Leonard has put it himself:

In Scotland the only poet who has had any bearing on my work has been Ian Hamilton Finlay, obviously in his *Glasgow Beasts an a Burd* but also as someone to whose work over the years I have returned, with or without direct result, simply to think about fundamentals of form. Hamilton Finlay is therefore the poet among the modern Scottish poets who has meant most intellectually to me. The one who has touched my heart most has been W. S. Graham.<sup>34</sup>

And:

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<sup>33</sup> Corbett, *Topics in Translation* 14. p.3.

<sup>34</sup> Attila Dósa, *Beyond Identity: New Horizons in Modern Scottish Poetry* (Amsterdam: Rodopi, 2009) p.175.

I didn't find any of the traditions that Lallans writers were working in meant anything to me. It's maybe to do with the fact that they were trying to present a body of language in their work as representative of a nation in a certain way, and I'm not really a nationalist. I see the history of nations as basically the story of a debate between trade and the arms industry. I tend to see myself – I suppose I have to use “-isms” – as a localist and an internationalist.<sup>35</sup>

Ian Hamilton Finlay, W. S. Graham and William Carlos Williams; emphatically not Allan Ramsay, Robert Fergusson and Robert Burns – in terms of personal canons, Leonard is reading from a different style sheet to makar-translators like Garioch, Sydney Goodsir Smith and Tom Scott. He is also, to an extent, reacting against their work, bringing to the poetic table an entirely different set of formal preoccupations. Yet it ought to be emphasised that the social commitment so abundantly present in these poets' work is in no way lessened by their having felt more with Eliot and Pound, and through them Baudelaire, Laforgue and Villon, than Finlay, Graham or Carlos Williams, a poet Leonard has (in)famously translated into Glaswegian Scots “from the American”:

ahv drank  
thi speshilz  
that wurrin  
the frij

n thit  
yiwurr probbli  
hodn back  
furthi pahrti

awright  
they wur great  
thaht strong  
thaht cawld<sup>36</sup>

In terms of tonality and register – as well as the universalising intention behind the “American” label – Leonard's poem does very different things, linguistically and intellectually, from a comparably demotic translation by Garioch, such as his *Cain* from Giuseppe Belli's sonnet, *No.180, Caino*:

Cain, dominie, I'll no speak up fir him,  
fir I ken mair nor ye dae anent Cain:  
wine, aince in a while, that's aa I'm sayin,  
can cheenge a man and mak his conscience dim.

I ken, to teer yir brither limb frae limb,  
or pash his heid in wi a muckle stane,  
is a gey keillie-mainnert wey of daein,  
a guffie bit of wark, jist sae, maist grim.

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<sup>35</sup> Ibid, p.177.

<sup>36</sup> Tom Leonard, *Intimate Voices: Selected Work* (London: Vintage, 1995) p.37.

But, seein God wes aye crabbit and dour  
whan he brocht neeps, honey and sunflure-seed,  
tho Abel's milk and yowes were Gode's pleasure,

til a man like hiz-yins, made of flesh and bleed,  
it wes eneuch to mak his bile turn sour:  
and sae, my freend, slash, slash, whan he saw reid.<sup>37</sup>

Where Leonard's *Jist ti Let Ye No* seeks to break down the orthographic value barriers between what he would argue ought to be seen simply as modes of human expression, Garioch's aims as a translator are more traditional, classical even. Leonard is perhaps appalled at the very idea of tradition and classical canons. Garioch seeks to add to them democratically through cultural realignment, alongside a persuasive restructuring of linguistic priorities. As he put it himself in *Dedication frae Chuckies on the Cairn*:

Thae twa-three chuckle-stanes  
I lay on Scotland's cairn  
biggit by men of bigger bairns  
afore I was a bairn,

and men of greater micht  
will trauchle up the brae  
and lay abuin them on the hicht  
mair wechty stanes nor thae.<sup>38</sup>

Merely by comparing these two translators then, it quickly becomes apparent that the phenomenon of twentieth-century poetic translation into Scots was a good deal more complicated than simply comprising "the translation of prestige literature into Lallans."<sup>39</sup>

Even in the comparison between Garioch and Leonard – both working class, vernacular urban poets from the Lowlands – a cultural and linguistic map of Scotland begins to emerge whose defining characteristics are plural rather than monoglot. Proceeding from this comparison, it is undoubtedly true that in terms of internal diversity and local variation in language – before Gaelic and smaller minority languages are even considered – Scotland exhibits just those diverse combinations of identities which, in Bhabha's terms, are necessarily held together by complex national narratives. In terms of twentieth-century Scottish history as interpreted through the discourses of nationalism, these narratives have generally been constructed along the lines of a

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<sup>37</sup> *Collected Poems*, p.168.

<sup>38</sup> *Collected Poems*, p.3.

<sup>39</sup> John Corbett, *Language and Scottish Literature* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 1997) p.61.

quite limited number of binary oppositions. The most important of these has been the predicate of an opposed English or British centralising force on the one hand, with the alternative construction of Scottish centralities, typically based upon Edinburgh or Glasgow, functioning as the locus for a multiplicity of deferred historical destinations. Needless to say, the occasionally expedient image of a single, culturally holistic Scotland remains as tautological, perhaps ultimately as indictable, as the imperialist narratives it attempts to dislodge. Set in this context the linguistic form of poetic translations into Scots acquires a function akin to that of a seismograph needle, indicating the writer's cultural position and, crucially, the writer's ambitions for that cultural position.

An integral force in the revival of a vision of a holistic, vitally unified Scotland has been that wave of thought characterised by Gerard Carruthers as the "Scottish constructed critical tradition". Carruthers argues that to a worrying degree our interpretations of this period of Scottish Literature continue to draw on the constructed critical tradition he identifies as extending from Gregory Smith's *Scottish Literature, Character and Influence*, through Muir's *Scott and Scotland* and finds reiterated in certain essential respects by David Daiches and Kurt Wittig.<sup>40</sup> These arguments, while certainly hard to refute, inevitably draw us into the uncomfortable paradox of any national literature or positive expression of belief in the modern or postmodern world – by its very nature it is constructed. And again if one accepts the contradiction and steps back, it is immediately apparent that a Renaissance ideology was an important reason why twentieth-century literature in Scots produced so many major writers working within a self-consciously Scottish tradition. Clearly the constructed nationalist tradition was an important catalyst to writing whether a writer kicked at or embraced it.

This complex, linguistically various situation can usefully be approached through the comparison of two very different writers, the Lowland poet-translator Tom Scott (1918-1995) and the Shetlandic William J. Tait (1918-1992). This pairing indicates that, just as Garioch and Leonard together point up deep seated ideological, dialectal and aesthetic divisions within the Scots-speaking central belt, there are potentially even greater cultural differences between the Lowland south and the extremities of the insular north.

On the face of it there are several important distinctions and similarities between Scott and Tait. Both were passionate advocates for Scots in their work. Both remain underappreciated figures in the generally undervalued canon of so-called second generation, post-MacDiarmid makars, with Tait particularly relegated to footnote status. Most importantly for this study, both were active

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<sup>40</sup> Gerard Carruthers, *The Construction of the Scottish Critical Tradition* in Neil McMillan and Kirsten Stirling, eds. *Odd Alliances: Scottish Studies in European Contexts*. (Glasgow: Cruithne Press, 1999) pp. 52-65.

translators into Scots from a wide variety of European languages and cultures. In addition to this both men were highly individual thinkers. Indeed, Scott's position was predicated on a personal blend of Marxism and Christianity – claiming, as with his simultaneously nationalist and internationalist positions, “you cannot be one without being the other.”<sup>41</sup> While hardly so explicitly articulated, Tait's similarly irreverent humanism is best summed up by the prose footnote to his war poem *Scorched Earth*, which realises the results of Russian Front tactics being employed in an occupied Scotland:

The genesis of this poem was a big political rally in the Usher Hall, Edinburgh, where every reference to Russia's ‘Scorched Earth’ policy was greeted with prolonged, rapturous and, I felt, unthinking applause.<sup>42</sup>

The principal division seems not to be either of their positions regarding the prior centrality of Scottish culture in a wider, intellectually Eurocentric world, but rather the centrality of separate *cultures* within that essential unit. In light of recent criticism such as Simon Hall's *The History of Orkney Literature*, which foregrounds the idea of the archipelago rather than the nation as a locus for literary identity, it may be possible to go further. Certainly Tait regarded his Shetlandic work as distinct from his poems in Scots and English, leaving the question open as to what degree he perceived each of these a foreign form. As Donald Campbell argued in a review of Tait's *Collected Poems*:

Despite its excellence, however, Tait's Scots is very much an *acquired* instrument, learned through reading and a long association with Lowland Scotland, particularly the cities of Edinburgh and Dundee. His native language is Shetlandic and in this tongue he is a horse of quite different colour.<sup>43</sup>

And examples of Tait publicly stating his Shetlandic identity are hardly difficult to find in his oeuvre, as in section III of *A Hogmanay Sermon*:

An Yoel or Christmas – tak your pick – is naethin  
O tane or tidder left bit – save wis – Santy Claus?

O Shetlan poets, **fin** your tred! Poo ower your een  
Nae mair ooey blankets<sup>44</sup>

Tait echoes Yeats' cry in *Under Ben Bulbin* – “Irish poets, learn your trade”<sup>45</sup> – presenting Shetland in implicitly national terms. Moreover, as his remonstrance emphasises finding over learning, he

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<sup>41</sup> Tom Hubbard, *Reintegrated Scots – The Post-MacDiarmid Makars* in Cairns Craig, ed. *The History of Scottish Literature Vol. 4: Twentieth Century* (Aberdeen: Aberdeen University Press, 1987) p.186.

<sup>42</sup> William J. Tait, *Collected Poems: A Day Between Weathers* (Edinburgh: Paul Harris Publishing, 1980) p.122.

<sup>43</sup> Donald Campbell, *A Day Between Weathers, by William J Tait* in *Akros* Vol.16, No.46 (Apr 1981) p.93.

<sup>44</sup> Tait, *Collected Poems*, p.43.

seems to call for a rediscovery of Shetlandic rather than the inevitably anglicised tradition written towards by Yeats. This admittedly is not an uncomplicated statement – modernity offers the Shetland poet a linguistic choice: write in Shetlandic, an increasingly idiosyncratic and diluted tongue, or write in what is essentially a foreign language. It is interesting to consider this situation in the context of Edwin Muir’s remarks in *Scott and Scotland*, to the effect that:

Scots dialect poetry represents Scotland in bits and patches, and in doing that it is no doubt a faithful enough image of the present divided state of Scotland. But while we cling to it we shall never be able to express the central reality of Scotland, as Mr Yeats has expressed the central reality of Ireland; though for such an end the sacrifice of dialect poetry would be cheap. The real issue in contemporary Scottish literature is between centrality and provincialism; dialect poetry is one of the chief supports of the second of those forces; the first can hardly be said to exist at all.<sup>46</sup>

Endlessly contestable passages such as this one were, of course, responsible for MacDiarmid’s legendarily vituperative assaults on Muir, which drove a permanent wedge between the two men.<sup>47</sup> But they are of relevance in terms of Tait’s indecision as to whether an indigenous Shetlandic Literature should be written in English, Scots or Shetlandic. Each of these decisions contains both opportunities and pitfalls – a reduced audience and range of vocabulary with Scots and Shetlandic, or else a feeling of betrayed estrangement with English. This contradictory situation is resolved, somewhat, at the end of the poem, where Tait returns to this theme and argues – with Yeats and to an extent with Muir – that as long as Shetland poets write well from a Shetlandic perspective then the worst problem will have been ameliorated.

In Scott’s case the linguistic solutions are very different, but stem from a similar need for a stable tradition and identity from which to approach the world. They are, indeed, somewhat inevitable if the circumstances of his early life and upbringing are considered. Born in Glasgow in 1918, Scott’s father was a shipyard boiler-maker forced by the depression to move the family to St Andrews shortly after Scott began secondary school, which he continued in St Andrews until he was fifteen.<sup>48</sup> Scott was thus denied the possibility of a university education in one of the oldest universities in Europe, and yet I would suggest his childhood move to St Andrews had an effect on him which is ultimately comparable to that which the journey from Orkney to Glasgow exerted on Muir, later Scott’s teacher at Newbattle Abbey. The salient difference is that if Muir’s experience was catastrophic, a fall from grace as it were, Scott was eventually awakened to the medieval, pre-Reformation culture whose traces were so much more visible in St Andrews than industrial Glasgow.

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<sup>45</sup> W. B. Yeats, *The Major Works*, ed. Edward Larrissy (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2008) p.168.

<sup>46</sup> Edwin Muir, *Scott and Scotland* (Routledge: London, 1936) p.179-180.

<sup>47</sup> George Bruce, *The Borderer and the Orcadian* in P. H. Scott and A. C. Davis, eds. *The Age of MacDiarmid* (Edinburgh: Mainstream, 1980) pp.100-101.

<sup>48</sup> Tom Scott, *Collected Poems* (Edinburgh/London: Agenda: Chapman, 1993) p.208.

This awakening informs the whole of his mature work, perhaps most thematically in what Sorley MacLean called Scott's long/short poems<sup>49</sup> – notably his *Brand the Builder* sequence but also *The Paschal Candill*. It is there most of all, however, in his language – a reintegrated Scots, to adopt Tom Hubbard's term,<sup>50</sup> which owes a great deal to the medieval makars in terms of vocabulary, idiom and syntax.<sup>51</sup>

The comparison with Muir is not an idle one – linguistic attitudes aside it can be continued in several respects. One would certainly be that both men were, at different times and to varying degrees, loosely acquainted with T.S. Eliot and drew heavily upon his influence. Indeed, it was Eliot himself who first suggested to Scott that he translate Villon. A second point of similarity is their positive reaction to European experience, with Muir's exile and travel in central Europe over a number of years paralleling Scott's visit to Italy and Sicily on a Rockefeller Award. This culminated in his supposed epiphany at Agrigento, which converted him from a dense English neo-romanticism to a Marxist blend of Scots, good Europeanism and utopian politics, all predicated on the essential base of an idealised medieval Scotland. This was, to use Muir's phrase from the Eliot influenced *Scott and Scotland* extract given above, the "central reality" towards which he wrote.

In the specific context of Tait and Scott's Villon translations, however, the point to be stressed is that while Scott's approach counters what he called "the shadow of London"<sup>52</sup> by positing an opposing cultural centrality around Edinburgh, St Andrews and other medieval centres, Tait's

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<sup>49</sup> Ibid, pp.9-10.

<sup>50</sup> Hubbard, *Reintegrated Scots*, p.187.

<sup>51</sup> The first two stanzas of Scott's Anglo-Saxon translation, *A Dream o The Rude* (*Collected Shorter Poems*, p.84) for instance, display considerable archaising trends as regards his word choice:

A dream o dreams I'll tell,  
That smooled intil my mind while I wes sleepan,  
Juist or midnicht fell,  
And cuist owre me a spell,  
When aa mankind ablow the claithes were creepan.

There seemed to come in sicht  
A selie tree that in the lift wes leamin,  
Byordinary bricht  
Of a supernal licht  
That fludit the hail carry wi its beamin.

The shape of the verses superficially reminds the reader of the Standard Habbie rhyme scheme. The first five lines, however, show Scott employing various de-familiarising tactics, such as "intil", "juist", "cuist" and "ablow" which have specific associations with the medieval past (and in the case of "juist" and "cuist" a Gaelic tinged - ui-). The second stanza makes use of Dunbar-esque aureate vocabulary ("supernal" especially) which is particularly reminiscent of late medieval Scottish poetry. This makes Scott's poetic affinities clear, but also sets the translation firmly in the context of previous Scots writing, with the effect of facilitating the text's naturalisation into the target canon.

<sup>52</sup> *Collected Shorter Poems*, p.11.

argues for a further division, one granting peripheral locations like Shetland at least an intellectual autonomy from Edinburgh and London. The situation is complicated by Scottish political reality, with Tait spending much of his life outside Shetland, and as a consequence socialising with the other second generation post-MacDiarmid makars, who were anything but the homogenous, unified group of Rose Street legend. Scott's work, of course, owes a great deal to Eliot's influence – there are religious similarities for all his Christian Socialism leant to the left, whereas Eliot's Anglican pose was obviously overtly conservative. Again, in the decision to translate Villon and Baudelaire into Scots there is an apparent debt to Anglo-American modernism.

These similarities and points of divergence are best illustrated by the comparison of a few of the Villon poems translated by both men, especially in the context of some contemporary comments. First the envoi of Scott's version of one of Villon's best known poems, the *Ballade De La Grosse Margot*:

Vyauhgly ye've made your bed, come rain or shine.  
 Is nymph wi satyr no a fair deal, syne?  
 Lecher and whure sould set ilk ither fine,  
 Like a bad rat wi a bad cat layin.  
 Ordure we love, and ordure eneuch we hain.  
 Noo honour flees us, wha frae it were fleein  
 Til this whureshop whaur, consort and queen we reign.<sup>53</sup>

Then Tait's version:

Snaa, hail, or blaa, I hae my bite o maet.  
 Sae be's A'm bitched, da bitch is still in haet.  
 Wha's wirt da maist? We baith geng da wan gaet.  
 Tane wards da tidder: da cat's as ill's da rat.  
 As we lack shaarn, shite shaests wis shoen an late.  
 We skail fae honour, an hit's joest as blate,  
 Here i dis hoorhoose whaar we hae wis at.<sup>54</sup>

And the fifteenth-century French:

Vente, gresle, gelle, j'ay mon pain cuit.  
 le suis paillart, la paillarde me suit.  
 Lequel vault mieux? Chascun bien s'entresuit.  
 L'ung vault l'autre – c'est a mau rat mau chat.  
 Ordure amons, ordure nous assuit.  
 Nous deffoyons onneur; il nous deffuit  
 En ce bordeau ou tenons nostre estat.<sup>55</sup>

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<sup>53</sup> Ibid, p.28.

<sup>54</sup> *Collected Poems*, p.71.

<sup>55</sup> Peter Dale, *François Villon: Poems* (London: Anvil, 2001) p.180.

Immediately apparent in Scott's version is the retention of the acrostic V-I-L-L-O-N signature with which the envoi is signed in the original. This is gone in Tait's poem, but it is worth pointing out that he does employ the acrostic signature elsewhere, albeit with his own name in the conclusion of his hugely confident translation of Villon's *Le debat du cuer et du corps de Villon*, which he renders into Shetlandic as *Da Kollyshang*. Amusingly enough we may also argue that Scott has not fully rendered Villon's signature, as it has been suggested that the feminine form produced by the final –e is a deliberate blurring of his gender by the medieval poet.<sup>56</sup> This is ephemeral, however, and we are on surer ground if we argue that the Shetland version makes more of an effort to preserve Villon's –uit/–at rhymes, which Scott renders –ain/–in. Similarly, the French syntax is more directly apparent underneath Tait's poem, specifically in the movement of line and caesura as a unit of sound and sense. In meaning too, it is clear that Tait has stuck closer to his model, and although this is necessarily a rather subjective judgement, it seems to me that in this case the Shetlandic captures the *Ballade de la Grosse Margot's* grotesque, Bakhtinian carnival with a greater vigour and savagery than the Scots.

Moving on to consider Scott and Tait's versions of what probably remains Villon's most famous poem, the *Ballade des Pendus*, we find again two extremely well turned translations. Scott's opening stanza reads thus:

Brither-men that eftir us live on,  
 Harden no yir herts agin us few  
 But petie the puir chiels ye gove upon,  
 And God's mair like yir ain faults ti forhou.  
 Five or sax o's strung up here ye view,  
 Our tramorts, doubtless pettit whiles wi stew,  
 Theirsels are suppit, tho gey wersh the brew.  
 When that our banes ti dust and ashes faa,  
 Dinnae lauch at the sinners dree sic rue  
 But pray the Lord has mercy on us aa.<sup>57</sup>

Tait's as follows:

O bridder men, livin as eence did we,  
 Hae nae hard herts at wis, fur as ye tak  
 Peety on wir black sowls da Loard'll be  
 Gligger ta blenk an ee sood yours be black.  
 Here see wir crangs hing, five or sax;  
 As fur da flesh we oesed ta feed ower weel,  
 Maidin wi wirms, it's scaffed noo, every peel;  
 Ta moeld an ess wir dry banes waste awa.  
 Lit nae man mock dem as dey dirl an sweel,

<sup>56</sup> J. H. M. Taylor, *The Poetry of Francois Villon* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2001) pp.152-153.

<sup>57</sup> *Collected Shorter Poems*, p.25.

Bit pray da Loard at He'll furgie wis aa.<sup>58</sup>

And Villon's original:

Freres humains qui après nous vivez  
N'ayez les cuers contre nous endurcis  
Car se pitié de nous povres avez  
Dieu en aura plus tost de vous mercis.  
Vous nous voiez cy attachez cinq, six.  
Quant de la chair que trop avons nourrie,  
Elle est pieça devorée et pourrie,  
Et nous, les os, devenons cendre et pouldre.  
De nostre mal personne ne s'en rie  
Mais priez Dieu que tous nous vueille absouldre.<sup>59</sup>

Tait, as in the *Ballade de La Grosse Margot*, seems to have been aiming for a more grotesque tone than Scott, drawing attention to the worm eaten flesh of the hanged men and the successively repulsive stages of their decomposition. Scott, whose "Brither-men that eftir us live on" is probably a better metrical translation of "Freres humains qui après nous vivez" than "O bridder men, livin as eence did we", prefers to produce a more sombre, elegiac tone in this first stanza. And although Scott's *Ballade o the Hingit* does employ some fairly grotesque language and imagery in the subsequent stanzas, I would contend that Tait's Villon has the monopoly on horror. This is supported by the first four lines of the third and penultimate stanza. First Scott:

We hae been washed and puriffee'd by rain.  
The sun has tanned our hides a leathery hue.  
Craws and pyes hae pykit out our een  
And barboured ilka stibble chin and brou.<sup>60</sup>

This, admittedly, is hardly the material of a courtly romance. But note the use of "puriffee'd by rain" in the first line, an utterance which in the hands of a Christian like Scott is surely not to be simply taken at face value. And if the purification does possess a double meaning, then in the context of Villon's own Christianity and profound fear of damnation – expressed in the *Ballade des Pendus* in the refrain "Mais priez Dieu que tous nous vueille absouldre" – it may be no bad thing for Scott's translation. Also, in light of what we know of Scott's attachment to an essential vision of medieval Scotland, the line "Craws and pyes hae pykit out our een" seems uncannily reminiscent of the ballad *Twa Corbies*, "And I'll pike out his bonny blue een."<sup>61</sup> If this is a deliberate intertextuality, rather than

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<sup>58</sup> *Collected Poems*, p.20.

<sup>59</sup> *Poems*, p.240.

<sup>60</sup> *Collected Shorter Poems*, p.26.

<sup>61</sup> Walter Scott, *Minstrelsy of the Scottish Border, Consisting of Historical and Romantic Ballads Collected in the Southern Counties of Scotland; With a Few of Modern Date, Founded Upon Local Tradition* (Edinburgh: James Ballantyne, 1803) p.242.

simply the correct use of the verb *pyke* with reference to *een*, then it is a pertinent example of how canonical Scots texts can be used to inform contemporary writing in the language – setting up a frame of reference which topicalises the primary text while setting the secondary in its context and, crucially, in continuity with it. Tait stands in stark comparison in terms of language:

Da slurd an blash is washt wir banes laek snaa;  
Wir waakit hide da sun is reestit black;  
Corbies an craas is paekit wir een awa;  
O wir dowd hair ilk swaabie got his wack.<sup>62</sup>

And Villon's original:

Le pluye nous a debuez et lavez  
Et le soleil dessechiez et noircis.  
Pies, corbeaulx, nous ont les yeux cavez  
Et arrachié la barbe et les sourcis.<sup>63</sup>

Concentrating firstly on Tait's linguistic and tonal solutions to the poem, it is immediately apparent that he has made a darker, much less elegiac translation than Scott. This is obviously not to play down the fact that Scott, too, has translated a poem about the dreadful and familiar sight (to Villon, that is) of a hanging rack of corpses; made all the more powerful by our biographical knowledge that Villon may well have ended up as such a corpse himself. But considering the harsh contrasts Tait sets up with "...banes laek snaa/ Wir waakit hide da sun is reestit black" where any note of purity and freshness introduced by the simile with snow is swiftly dashed by the evocation of the criminals' cracked and blackened hides, as well as the sheer harshness of his language here, the primacy of his translation in this respect seems fairly assured. The elegiac, dignifying note achieved by Scott is less prominent – and indeed it can be asked whether this is not an essential component of Villon's French poem – but equally we should not underestimate the sheer distancing effect of Tait's Shetlandic. On a less divisive point it is interesting to observe that in their translations of line three of the third stanza, both poets opted to carry only one of the eye-pecking varieties of bird over with a cognate term – pyes for *pies* in Scott's case, corbies for *corbeaulx* in Tait's.

Certainly, both Tait and Scott's versions of Villon occupy central positions in the collected works of both men. Scott's translations could even be described as the foundation of his poetic career, constituting as they did his first book publication. Moreover, Eliot did not forget his part in the formation of *Seeven Poems o Maister Francis Villon*:

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<sup>62</sup> *Collected Poems*, p.20.

<sup>63</sup> *Poems*, p.243.

I have your letter of the 20th. I am quite ready to stand as one of your referees for the purpose you mention. I should have written to you when I got the volume from Peter Russell, to tell you how very successful I thought your translations of Villon were, and I congratulate myself on having encouraged you to undertake this task.<sup>64</sup>

For all Eliot's subsequent inability to secure Scott a publication deal from Faber and Faber (the topic of much of the two men's correspondence, with Eliot repeatedly emphasising how impressive he finds Scott's poems before reiterating that his use of Lallans precludes a London publisher) he did help him and, to return to my argument regarding Scott's ideology of centrality within Scotland, there is much common ground between the two men in their relationships with Europe, Christianity and the idea of tradition. For Tait, however, I would argue the Villon is important because he is so successfully natural with his Shetlandic renderings of a poet whose canonical status and urban subject matter might have come across very incongruously indeed, in a language traditionally grounded in rural, insular experience. A late medieval French urban poet, subjected to canonicity for centuries, is in many ways a very central entity. His translation into a peripheral form of Scots is helped a little by Villon the constructed character's own peripheral position as he alternately presents it as lecher, murderer and thief, but more than this it is facilitated by Tait's linguistic erudition and sheer carnivalesque nerve. Robert Garioch, a perceptive critic and (as we have seen) himself no mean translator into Scots, was quick to praise:

[...] Villon's *Ballade des Pendus* translated in Shetland speech with shattering effect. Technical skill, possibly over evident on the earlier pages, now works unobtrusively to form these perfect stanzas, each word taking its place like a stone hewn for that one purpose...In the Villon translations, the Shetland speech gives that added distancing so effectively used for French of the time of the Scots makars; we feel immediate pity for those hanged men so remote from us in time and space.<sup>65</sup>

And if we take the analogy a little further and see Eliot in London as an external, generally benevolent central force as regards Scott, is it then too much to allow Garioch in Edinburgh to briefly fall into a similar, even parallel, position regarding Tait?

What the comparison between Scott and Tait makes so abundantly clear is the plastic, emphatically ideological nature of the cultural narratives feeding into the later phase of the Scottish Renaissance and its various translation projects. Scott, we feel, would be perfectly content with a linguistic situation which allowed him to exercise fluency, or in Venuti's terms the illusion of it, through his translations, a sizeable part of whose function is essentially involved in language planning. More than with most modern writers, there is a sense in Scott's work of the manifest

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<sup>64</sup> Unpublished letter from Eliot to Scott dated 21<sup>st</sup> May 1953, National Library of Scotland Acc. 11750/5.

<sup>65</sup> Robert Garioch, *A Day Between Weathers: collected poems 1938-1978*, by William J. Tait in *Lines Review*, No. 74 (Sep 1980) pp.35-36.

destiny he felt pulsing beneath the grimy surface of a colonised Scotland – the historical phantom, familiar from MacDiarmid, of a Scottish ability to bear the reality or unreality of God and, through a tortuous fumbling of metaphysics, bring about the liberation of humanity. Needless to say, this construction of language, history and the desirability of a usable past requires a certain coherence of contradictions and an insistence on the writer's actual, even proven, access to tradition, typified as regards translation by the foundational figure of Gavin Douglas. As Sydney Goodsir Smith stated in his unpublished but revealing essay on the medieval poet and translator:

To-day, when we are engaged in, as it were, creating a new literature in Scots after generations of hopeless sterility, and are still at the very beginning of that creation, it is of the utmost importance that we should be conscious of what professors call our heritage. I shall not present Douglas as a museum piece.<sup>66</sup>

But instead, he might have said, present him almost as a living writer, or at least one who, if cold in the ground, remains warm in his work – which floats just below the surface of the contemporary imagination as a tangible presence in the minds and repertoires of modern Scottish writers. Or rather if he doesn't, then he ought to, seems to be Goodsir Smith and Scott's critical and creative judgement. As regards resistance against the undoubtedly destructive agents of capital and power there may be something extremely useful in such judgements. What we cannot do is accept them uncritically, since they employ – indeed, depend upon – precisely those partial approaches to information, culture and ethnicity whose malign effects Goodsir Smith, Scott and MacDiarmid attempted to resist.

In this context the contributions of a writer like Tait take on vital aspects of hybridity, urging us to consider the plausibility of tradition and, as critics concerned with nationalism and self-definition, our complicity in its creation even as we attempt to criticise and deconstruct it. We read Tait, if we read him at all, as one of the great post-MacDiarmid generation of Scots makars and translators who in so many ways bridged the gap between the first generation Scottish Renaissance and later, perhaps more theoretically adroit writers such as Alasdair Gray, James Kelman and Tom Leonard. Yet as with the Orcadian poets Robert Rendall, Edwin Muir and George Mackay Brown, any attempt to situate Tait as an uncomplicatedly Scottish writer will immediately run into some considerable contradictions. In his own words and linguistic practice, as well as his interactions with Scandinavian culture through translation, radio broadcasts and publication, he is self-defined as a Shetlander before he is a Scot. And Shetland, we ought to remember, has long possessed a vigorous and formidable tradition all its own – often defining itself in opposition to Scottish culture and historical oppression under the Stewart Earls. As Simon Hall puts it:

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<sup>66</sup>Sydney Goodsir Smith, *Gavin Douglas* (1947) NLS Acc. 10426.12/13.

Shetland is a place with an identity quite unlike any other in Scotland, or in the UK. While Shetland culture is perhaps most easily identified with the illustrious fiddle tradition, it should not be overlooked that Shetland also possesses a rich literature, encompassing figures such as Basil Anderson, Rhoda Bulter, Haldane Burgess, Christine De Luca, the brothers John and Lollie Graham, Robert Alan Jamieson, Laureen Johnson, Jack Peterson, Frank Renwick, Jack Renwick, Jessie Saxby, Stella Sutherland, William J. Tait, and 'Vagaland' (the poet T. A. Robertson).<sup>67</sup>

This list of writers is undeniably impressive and, with a few nineteenth-century exceptions, entirely modern. This is not because there was no literary culture in Shetland before 1800 – we know from Viking fragments and later ballads that there was – and even without these it would surely be foolish to assume otherwise, given the otherwise apparently universal distribution of literature of one sort or another. It is rather the case that earlier, no less autochthonous art forms and cultures were replaced, displaced and finally all but destroyed by later incursions. To return to Bhabha's point, no nation or cultural grouping can claim priority on essential grounds without running the risk that its own narrative justifications will dissolve or be revealed for the constructed traditions and imaginary communities which they must in fact be if they are to exist at all. This is not to make value judgements or undermine the necessity, which we all feel, of a cultural worldview and identity to be at home in. But when we consider the second generation Scottish Renaissance's various cultural and translation projects, alongside the nationalist ideologies underpinning them, it is salutary to consider the degree to which these are mediated and artificially constructed. And in the case of Tait's Shetlandic culture, we remember that all versions of Scotland rely to some extent upon the medieval and renaissance expansion projects which are, perhaps, the reason we lack all but scraps of indigenous Shetlandic literature prior to the nineteenth century.

To compare the younger, Glaswegian Tom Leonard to the elder, Edinburgh Garioch is not too radical a link to make. Both are urban, working class poets concerned with the genuinely vernacular speech of their native communities. Equally, both identify with or display a certain fascination for the disaffected outsider in the city, who is subsequently empowered through the ability to disparage and otherwise comment upon his or her environment. To draw comparisons between Leonard and the Shetlandic Tait may be to make a more surprising connection between an urban, formally experimental poet and an island poet whose prosody hangs more towards the traditional than the modern. There are of course what might be termed the surface similarities between the two writers – most importantly the insistence, in their truly vital works, on the viability and deep dignity of living speech in the marginalised community. Proceeding from this is an implicit mutual acknowledgement, not uncomplicatedly, especially in Leonard's case, of the right to the parochial as defined by the great Irish poet Patrick Kavanagh. Kavanagh's work amounts to a

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<sup>67</sup> Simon Hall, *The History of Orkney Literature* (Edinburgh: John Donald, 2010) p.4.

demonstration of the individual's human imperative to live a fulfilled and intellectually developed life in a community remote or otherwise alienated from the apparently central authority, a state of affairs and natural pride which Kavanagh contrasts with the provincial mentality.<sup>68</sup> One could perhaps paraphrase and say that parochials, in Kavanagh's terms, make their own centre, whereas provincials are always looking away from themselves in search of one, defining themselves as peripheral in relation to it. Both Leonard and Tait would, one imagines, wholeheartedly agree with Kavanagh's resounding statement in his famous sonnet *Epic*, where, having questioned the validity and scope of his own rural experience, he concludes with the words, "Gods make their own importance."<sup>69</sup>

Yet beneath these surface similarities a key aspect of both Leonard and Tait's achievement is the critique – highly conscious in Leonard's case, perhaps less so in Tait's – with which, as translators and poets, they chip away at the large, holistic cultural narratives produced by British imperialism and unexamined forms of Scottish nationalism. This is an aspect of their writing which is bound up with issues of translation, language and the impossibility of defining the point at which one culture bleeds into another.

Hugh MacDiarmid, although he lived in Shetland between the years 1933 and 1942, and wrote much of his greatest poetry there, was somewhat ambivalent towards the islands and their inhabitants. Certainly, the increasingly difficult and ideated work he began to produce in the early to middle 1930s came in a great part out of the turmoil of ill health, exile and isolation which he experienced on Whalsay. And on more than one occasion he publicly vented his spleen at the islanders' lack of education and literary intellectualism:

Lerwick, the capital of the Shetlands – a place I avoid like the plague, seldom leaving the lonely North Isles to go near it at all [...] it would be difficult to find any place where the citizens are more class conscious – though not in the Marxian sense – more purse-proud, more snooty towards their supposed inferiors, more utterly destitute of all intellectual and artistic interests – a place where [...] no poet or painter or composer could ever make himself socially acceptable to these smug *bourgeois*, or Christ himself to these self-righteous Church-goers!<sup>70</sup>

And so on. Yet reading MacDiarmid's *Shetland Lyrics* or those numerous other passages in his critical prose where he exalts the proud Old Norse links and independently minded culture of the archipelago, it would be quite possible to arrive at an entirely different perspective of his interactions with the Shetlanders. In a letter to Douglas Young, dated 6<sup>th</sup> of December 1949, he goes

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<sup>68</sup> Darcy O'Brien, *Patrick Kavanagh* (Associated University Presses: New Jersey, 1975) p.14.

<sup>69</sup> Patrick Kavanagh, *Collected Poems* (Penguin: London, 2005) p.184.

<sup>70</sup> Hugh MacDiarmid, *Lucky Poet* (London: Methuen, 1943) p.51.

so far as to urge the younger poet to include Shetlandic work in his anthology *Scottish Verse*, writing: “I hope some of the Shetland poets are represented in the Anthology – particularly (among the contemporary writers) W. J. Tait, who has done some really first-rate work both in Shetland Scots and in English.”<sup>71</sup>

Certainly, Tait was not uncomfortable with MacDiarmid’s looming literary presence in the way Robert Garioch undoubtedly was. It is true, however, that those more uncritical projects of Scottish nationalism and artistic polemic in which MacDiarmid so frequently involved himself did occasionally come into conflict with the political arguments and opinions put forward by the Shetland writer’s linguistic solutions to translating and composing poetry. Tait did not, so far as I am aware, articulate this situation critically, but contradictions nevertheless exist and take on much the same nature as those points of diversion and fissure identified through the close comparison with Tom Scott – certainly an occasionally hagiographic pundit for MacDiarmid’s work and opinions. Proceeding from this, it is such translational decisions – the text chosen, the choice of target language and the tone arrived at – which reveal so much about the intellectual prerogatives felt by the second generation Scottish Renaissance writers. The single utopian or dystopian national tradition – always an attempt at tradition rather than something secure – invariably splinters and fragments under pressure, revealing a crucial plurality which, it must be hoped, can be helped rather than hindered by the desire to replace London with Edinburgh. For it is in the context of replication rather than continual devolution that Tom Leonard’s writing becomes so adroit a corrective. Leonard is by no means hostile to many of the aims of Renaissance figures such as Scott and Sydney Goodsir Smith, but his being born a generation after them and subsequent immersion in the American and international *avant garde* have caused him to reject some of their more simplistic formulations of Scottish literature and identity. As he puts it in his note, *Pound and MacDiarmid: From a Seventies Notebook*:

So much of what used to be objectionable was to do with the corona around his work, full of folk with the most obnoxious anti-art, anti-life attitudes. People with reason not to see poetry as expression from one individual universally to another but as some kind of “contribution to Modern Scottish Literature”: often people who imagined themselves to be guardians, managers and definers of same; MacDiarmid’s work absolutely central, a foundation, to the concept they imagined they had not only to defend but to create. Or else they saw themselves as part of the second wave breaking on the shore and so on. It was pathetic, some of it at least.<sup>72</sup>

Leonard’s reaction is, ironically, somewhat reactionary. But it touches upon the issue at stake. Garioch never saw himself in this way; Sydney Goodsir Smith and Tom Scott did. Tait provides a third

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<sup>71</sup> Alan Bold, ed. *The Letters of Hugh MacDiarmid* (London: Hamish Hamilton, 1984) p.606.

<sup>72</sup> Tom Leonard, *Reports from the Present* (London: Jonathan Cape, 1995) p.235.

or fourth way – an insular voice, engaged with and seeing himself as part of a Scottish tradition, but also a Shetlandic one – mirroring Kavanagh’s identification with Monaghan before Ireland. Tait is of course no hardline Shetlandic nationalist and would not, apparently, have campaigned for Lerwick’s independence from Edinburgh come devolution. But his writing and translation work is a powerful indicator of trends in this direction which must be given serious consideration as cultural markers of plurality, hybridity and innate rights if the ultimate goal of nationalist rhetoric is not simply to replace the colonial power it purports to reject.

### III. Chapter Two: Internal Translation and the Idea of a Scottish Tradition.

Although always diverse and frequently at odds with one another, the Scottish Renaissance writers were fundamentally united in their ambition to redefine Scotland in terms of tradition and cultural canonicity. Having inherited a supposedly minor branch of English Literature, MacDiarmid and his first collaborators might profitably be seen as at first clearing the ground – making polemical statements with an often tenuous relationship to reality in the hope of achieving a kind of dialectical shift in the popular perception of Scotland. As regards translation, the three main touchstones of this project were the classical pan-European tradition foregrounded by Eliot and Pound as the foundation of the new modernism; international pioneers of formal and political literary innovation such as Mayakovsky, Apollinaire and Blok; and in a specifically Scottish context, the canonical inclusion and re-evaluation of literature written in languages other than English, most prominently Gaelic, Scots and Latin. As Eliot himself wrote in *Tradition and the Individual Talent*:

[Tradition] cannot be inherited, and if you want it you must obtain it by great labour. It involves, in the first place, the historical sense, which we may call nearly indispensable to anyone who would continue to be a poet beyond his twenty-fifth year; and the historical sense involves a perception, not only of the pastness of the past, but of its presence; the historical sense compels a man to write not merely with his own generation in his bones, but with a feeling that the whole of the literature of Europe from Homer and within it the whole of the literature of his own country has a simultaneous existence and composes a simultaneous order.<sup>73</sup>

This essay, published in 1919, therefore appeared at around the same time MacDiarmid was returning from Salonika and the First World War. Significantly, much of the Scottish poet's subsequent work could be read as an attempt to write towards an historical sense of Scotland in the modern world, especially in light of another critical work from the same year – G. Gregory Smith's *Scottish Literature: Character and Influence*, the arguments put forward in which caused Eliot, in his *Athenaeum* review of the book, to ask the infamous question, *Was there a Scottish Literature?*<sup>74</sup>

Gregory Smith's thesis was, essentially, that successive historical disruptions – the Reformation and the two Unions – had caused fundamental damage to a formerly pristine Scottish psyche; the one having inhibited freedom of thought and feeling, the other imposing a permanently subaltern status onto Scots. The psychological argument was predicated on the truism that the binary opposition of contradictory elements constituted the key component of Scottish Literature – the “absolute propriety of a gargoyle's grinning at the elbow of a kneeling saint”<sup>75</sup> – and that this

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<sup>73</sup> T. S. Eliot, *Tradition and the Individual Talent* in *Selected Prose*, ed. John Hayward (Penguin: Harmondsworth, 1958) p.23.

<sup>74</sup> T. S. Eliot, *Was There a Scottish Literature?* in *The Athenaeum*, 1 Aug 1919, pp.680-1.

<sup>75</sup> G. Gregory Smith, *Scottish Literature: Character and Influence* (London: MacMillan, 1919) p.35.

essential base had degraded due to sociolinguistic accident. As Gregory Smith wrote when he came to the question of language – or as he termed it “the problem of dialect”: “we are tempted to ask whether Scottish literature, in the more complex conditions of modern life, can recover, or should try to recover, what it has declined or forgotten. The question involves us sooner or later in the problem of dialect.”<sup>76</sup> Gregory Smith was proposing that the conditions of statehood and literature were and must be linked, placing the instability of Scottish language and culture in an implicitly political context. His arguments in 1919, though they can seem essentialist and contentious in many particulars today, were to have a considerable effect on Scottish literature and thought in the coming decades.

If Edwin Muir’s controversial but stimulating *Scott and Scotland*<sup>77</sup> was one product of Gregory Smith’s analysis, then MacDiarmid’s riposte – *The Golden Treasury of Scottish Poetry*<sup>78</sup> – was quite another. While Muir accepted the cultural status quo as he saw it – contending that the serious Scottish writer had no choice but to use English if he or she was to accomplish major work – MacDiarmid, employing frequently polemical rhetoric, took up the opposite position. In an attempt to demonstrate the supposedly inherent plurality of the Scottish literary tradition, he broke new ground in his anthologising of poetry originally composed in Latin and Gaelic alongside Scots and English:

The difference – or one of the main differences – between this anthology and all previous anthologies of Scottish poetry – is that some little effort has been made to present an ‘all-in view’ of Scottish poetry and in particular to give some little representation to its Gaelic and Latin elements.<sup>79</sup>

That the preface to this anthology was printed in 1941 is significant, since it coincides with the start of the tidal shift between generations proposed in the introduction. If MacDiarmid’s remarks on poetic translation and the younger poets, quoted earlier from *Lucky Poet*, are considered in light of the cultural argument embodied by *The Golden Treasury of Scottish Poetry*, then it is salutary to also consider how the second wave Renaissance poets dealt with the critical and creative challenge set down therein. As MacDiarmid indicates in the extract quoted above, the urge to anthologise had important precedents in the history of Scottish Literature, in late medieval compilations such as the Bannatyne and Maitland manuscripts, as well as the more politically motivated eighteenth-century volumes compiled by nationalists like Allan Ramsay, “inspired by the will to re-assert a national

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<sup>76</sup> Ibid, p.130.

<sup>77</sup> Edwin Muir, *Scott and Scotland* (London: Routledge, 1936).

<sup>78</sup> Hugh MacDiarmid, ed. *The Golden Treasury of Scottish Poetry* (London: MacMillan, 1940).

<sup>79</sup> Ibid, p. xvi.

identity seemingly lost or soon to be lost.”<sup>80</sup> The emulation of classic anthologies like Ramsay’s *Ever Green* and *Tea-Table Miscellany*, therefore, provided as much opportunity to engage with Scottish tradition as contemporary Scots translation did with Gavin Douglas – whose name, appropriately enough, Ramsay took as his literary pseudonym upon founding the subversively Jacobean Easy Club in early eighteenth-century Edinburgh.<sup>81</sup>

In 1940, one year before *The Golden Treasury’s* publication, two unknown poets, the one a Gael<sup>82</sup> and the other a native Scots speaker, had together hand printed and self-published a slim volume of poetry in three languages: Gaelic, Scots and English. For Robert Garioch and Sorley MacLean *17 Poems for 6d* was perhaps an inauspicious beginning, yet it prefigured the directions their two writing careers were to follow over the course of the next few decades. There was, from the start, a political aspect to both writers’ output; in MacLean perhaps more obviously than in Garioch, since the latter’s cautious approach to large positive statements made him inherently suspicious of propagandist or didactic art. And in both poets a profoundly human moral conscience was inextricably intertwined with the social and linguistic contexts of their very different upbringings; MacLean from a large tradition-bearing family on Raasay; Garioch from an educated working class household in Edinburgh. Both, perhaps significantly as regards the tonal soundscapes and linguistically shifting rhythms of their later poetry, had musical backgrounds.

In the context of tradition, culture and MacDiarmid’s pronouncements regarding the multifaceted, variant nature of the Scottish relation to these, *17 Poems* as a whole is a fascinating if somewhat uneven document. However, one piece in particular stands out as prefiguring much of what was to come, particularly as regards Garioch’s career as a translator. MacLean, who would not finally complete his *Dàin do Eimhir* love sequence until 1943, contributed several of the sections he had already written (III, IV, XIV, XV and XXIX) alongside Garioch’s Scots translation of III, given in full here:

I never kent sic glaumerie  
nor stauchert frae sae stark a stound  
at thocht of Christ’s dule on the yird  
or millions of the mappamound.

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<sup>80</sup> Alexander Manson Kinghorn and Alexander Law, eds. *Poems by Allan Ramsay and Robert Fergusson* (Edinburgh: Scottish Academic Press, 1974) p.xiii.

<sup>81</sup> *Ibid*, p.ix.

<sup>82</sup> MacLean had already collaborated with MacDiarmid on *The Golden Treasury of Scottish Poetry*, providing him with English cribs and advising him on which Gaelic poems to include almost since their first meeting in 1934. However, as the two men’s correspondence reveals, the Gaelic poet was irritated when MacDiarmid included (attributed to MacLean) those literal prose translations which he had not had time to turn into good English poems. See: Susan Ruth Wilson, *The Correspondence Between Hugh MacDiarmid and Sorley MacLean* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2010) pp.56-57.

I hae taen nae sic thocht of haiveral dreams,  
mirk-wrocht mirligoes of gleid  
as my dour hert hanker for the smool  
of her smile, and the glint of her gowden heid.

The shadow frae her beauty lay  
owre puirtith and a waesom scauth,  
and the warld of Lenin's intellect,  
his pouer of patience and his wrath.<sup>83</sup>

This early translation is, firstly, significant in that the language seems more reminiscent of MacDiarmid than the increasingly naturalistic diction Garioch would develop as his style matured. The phrasing is unfamiliar and much of the vocabulary apparently excavated from dictionaries. For instance, for the more exotic words found in the first stanza, my own battered copy of Jamieson's Dictionary supplies:

*Glamerie, Glaumerie, Glammerie, s.* [here we are referred to *Glamer, Glamour, Ayrs*] The supposed influence of a charm on the eye, causing it to see objects differently from what they really are. Hence, *To cast glamer o'er one*, to cause deception of sight, *S. Ritson*. – Isl. *glam*, glaucoma in oculis gestans, fascinatibus oculis.<sup>84</sup>

*Stound, stoun, s.* 1. An acute pain, affecting one at intervals, *S.* 2. Transferred to the mind, denoting any thing that causes a smarting pain, *S. Douglas*.<sup>85</sup>

*Dule, Dool, s.* Grief, *S. Wyntown*. *To sing dool*, to lament. *Gl. Shirr*.<sup>86</sup>

*Mapamound, s.* A map of the world. *Douglas*. – Fr. *Mappemond*, L. B. *mappa mundi*.<sup>87</sup>

Is it significant that Jamieson finds two of these words in Gavin Douglas rather than in vernacular usage? Coincidence or not it is certainly the case that Garioch's phrasing in this translation employs a highly localised, occasionally unfamiliar mode of expression which, although a potential stumbling block for the reader not familiar with archaic Scots, does allow him considerable room to manoeuvre towards the assonance and consonance which make this poem so effective. The sound, enhanced through cognate terms and calques, signifies and implies the intended meaning in those places where the semantic function is secondary – at least until we have acquainted ourselves with the meanings of the unfamiliar words.

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<sup>83</sup> Sorley MacLean and Robert Garioch, *17 Poems for 6d* (Edinburgh: Chalmers Press, 1940) or reprinted in Robert Garioch, *Collected Poems* (Edinburgh: Polygon, 2004) p.87.

<sup>84</sup> John Longmuir, ed. *Jamieson's Dictionary of the Scottish Language* (Edinburgh: William P Nimmo, 1885) p.231.

<sup>85</sup> *Ibid*, p.528.

<sup>86</sup> *Ibid*, p.173.

<sup>87</sup> *Ibid*, p.344.

In his version of *Dàin do Eimhir III*, his first published translation of another poet, Garioch set the tone for much of his subsequent career, not the least part of which was his activity as a translator of poetry from a great number of languages and periods. In terms of his engagement with an internal canon of Scottish texts, unclaimed by or reclaimable from English Literature, the other key strand of his achievement, apart from Gaelic, was his translation of the Latin poetry of the original sixteenth-century Renaissance in Scotland.

In contrast to Garioch's work along the interstices between Scots and Gaelic – a large part of which was more a case of interacting with and publicising poets like MacLean and Iain Crichton Smith than translating large numbers of their works – his versions of George Buchanan and Arthur Johnstone occupy more space in his published oeuvre. Indeed, it might be argued that if we are to fully appreciate Garioch's achievement and the diverse translation projects represented within it, we are forced to privilege these texts – especially the Buchanan translations. Although arguably difficult in terms of language, Garioch's versions of Buchanan's Latin dramas were his favourites amongst his own works<sup>88</sup> – and as he pointed out in a letter to Charles King, his versions of the two plays represent a rare example of his publishing a work under his given name, Garioch Sutherland:

I translated both *The Baptist* and *Jephthah* and published them under my full name, meaning to switch over to that, which seemed a good idea at the time, but remarkably little notice has been taken of this, my pet work.<sup>89</sup>

There is the suggestion that, just as Garioch was bothered by the comparative neglect of his more difficult original poems, he was equally disappointed when the plays failed to gain the wider audience he had hoped for and felt they deserved. And again it is surely significant that the only book he chose to print under his full name was a translation into Scots of a fellow teacher, and a similarly suffering fellow teacher at that. For instance, Garioch wrote to MacLean, asking him to:

Write sometime and tell me news of what is going on and being written and of what you and S. Smith are doing and writing. For my part, there is a lot of toil in proportion of time of doing as I please, but that does not greatly matter. I have taken little notice of reading and writing for a while.<sup>90</sup>

And there are many other examples in his unpublished correspondence of the 1940s and 50s, particularly, which make explicit the daily grind of his commute and the resultant exhaustion which left him unable to write for long periods. Depressed, Garioch also seems to have felt isolated from the Scottish literary scene during his years living in Kent and London, coming to greatly regret the

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<sup>88</sup> Letter to David Black, dated 26 November 1969, reprinted in *A Garioch Miscellany*, ed. Robin Fulton (Edinburgh: MacDonald, 1986) p.43.

<sup>89</sup> Unpublished letter to Charles King, 2 February 1970, National Library of Scotland Acc. 9667.

<sup>90</sup> Unpublished letter to Sorley MacLean, 17 February 1944, National Library of Scotland MS. 29539.

move south but unable to find commensurate employment at home. But as with MacDiarmid, who had his *On a Raised Beach* to show for his insular exile in the preceding decade, Garioch at least drew his Buchanan and Johnson translations from the experience of his own years away from Lowland Scotland. There was also his *Repone Til George Buchanan*, a response uttered specifically by a fellow teacher to the Renaissance poet, in the closing ‘moral’ of which he urges:

onie young poetic chiel  
that reads these lines tak tent richt weill:  
**THINK TWICE, OR IT'S OWRE LATE!**<sup>91</sup>

This, given the grim picture evoked by *The Humanists' Trauchles in Paris*, seems an appropriate companion piece to so ingenious and delightfully miserable a tale. The title is Garioch's, Buchanan's original poem being more properly referred to as *Elegy I*. Much of the incidental Scots imagery is also of modern equivalence rather than directly idiomatic translation – as is the metrical rhythm, as one would expect in the move from a quantitative into an accentual language, now set in a traditional sounding Scottish bob and wheel-esque stanza. The transition from solemnly rolling Latin<sup>92</sup> to a sprightly trochaic Scots certainly involves a little revving up of the tone:

Even the wee-est hinger-on  
or ghillie in B-Echelon  
of Calliope's ranks maun groan  
    amang lamp-soot:  
ye'd think, wi the Hesperides  
he stude on guaird aneath the trees  
to keep frae reivan Hercules  
    the gowden fruit.<sup>93</sup>

There are racier examples in the poem, but this eight line stanza is one which stands out in its accommodation of a distinctly contemporary diction (“wee-est hinger-on”, “ghillie in B-echelon”) to an immediately juxtaposed reduction of Classical imagery and those who would profess to be its guardians. The key stroke is “reivan Hercules”, couching the Roman or Greek symbol in a familiarly Scottish frame of reference – domesticating and inscribing the foreign text in its target context. This is something at which Garioch excels, particularly in those texts to which he is most attracted such as the Belli Sonnets and the Buchanan translations. With frequent deployment of the reductive idiom,

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<sup>91</sup> *Collected Poems*, p.37.

<sup>92</sup> A literal prose translation of which runs as follows: “At night the soot of the blackened lamp must be drunk by you, if only you think that the camp of Calliope must be followed: and even if you guard the bent branch with the Libyan metal, and the apple that must be borne by the Herculean hand, awake in the light you go over things already read and re-read, and you examine writings buried in crumbling decay.” David Henry Sabrio, *George Buchanan's "Elegies" and "Silviae" Translated with an Introduction and Commentary* (South Carolina: UMI Dissertation Services, 1980) p.36.

<sup>93</sup> *Collected Poems*, p.30.

he achieves a curiously polyphonic blend of different times, places and voices – all fundamentally domesticated into Edinburgh Scots. As Lawrence Venuti writes:

The domestic inscription in translating constitutes a unique communicative act, however indirect or wayward. It creates a domestic community of interest around the translated text, an audience to whom it is intelligible and who put it to various uses [...] The interests that bind the community through a translation are not simply focused on the foreign text, but reflected in the domestic values, beliefs, and representations that the translator inscribes in it [...] Because translating traffics in the foreign, in the introduction of linguistic and cultural differences, it is equally capable of crossing or reinforcing the boundaries between domestic audiences and the hierarchies in which they are positioned.<sup>94</sup>

Although Venuti is primarily discussing texts which are demonstrably foreign and lack the cultural and historical context which is perhaps the most compelling thing, for Garioch, about the Buchanan and Johnstone translations, the image of a translated text as locus for domestic, communal discourse over various hierarchical levels is a fascinating one. Garioch, by translating Scots versions of contemporary Gaelic poetry and Renaissance Latin poetry written by Scots speakers, imagines a community existing between these potentially rather disparate elements. It is, moreover, a linguistic community written into in a conscious effort to deny or even alter history. Referring back to Eliot in *Tradition and the Individual Talent*, this sort of activity – which I would characterise as internal translation – both fulfils and challenges such narratives, contending that if your tradition is colonised, discredited or otherwise compromised, it may become necessary to invent a new one. Or in terms of internal translation, to lay claim to an old, neglected one, making it the foundation of an alternative tradition which it is hoped will disrupt an oppressive cultural narrative.

The degree to which such a practice can become a programmatic commitment is taken to its logical (and perhaps illogical) conclusion in the work of Douglas Young (1913-1973). Translation, in Young's poetic world, is the rule rather than the exception, occupying a central position in his books and reflecting a real desire to redefine Scots in terms of Scottish and global literatures. This was inevitably an aesthetic tendency which proceeded from a political one (Young was wartime leader of the SNP between 1942 and 1945, combining this function with his internment in Saughton Prison for refusing to fight on the grounds that the Act of Union made no provision for the conscription of Scottish soldiers) and also owed much to Young's academic work as a Classicist. Unlike Garioch and MacDiarmid, but similar to the poly-lingual George Campbell Hay, Young had a natural flair for learning languages. He was, if not actually fluent, at the very least conversant in each of the ten or so tongues he translated from and into (including Greek, Latin, Italian, Chinese, Gaelic, French, German, Russian, Lithuanian and Scots). MacDiarmid, then, was unusually not exaggerating in the extract

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<sup>94</sup> Lawrence Venuti, *Translation, Community, Utopia* in *The Translation Studies Reader*, ed. Lawrence Venuti (New York: Routledge, 2002) p.491.

from *Lucky Poet* quoted in the introduction, though he addresses something rather different in his foreword to Young's first book, *Auntran Blads*, claiming the author placed:

a new insistence on the Scots Lallans language in the first place and, beyond that, on the need to restore Gaelic as the national language of Scotland and to resume in the fullest way the great tradition of our lost heritage of Gaelic culture, and to apply these to new creative purpose [...] the new voices in Scottish poetry to-day – notably Mr. Douglas Young himself, and the two young Gaelic poets of whose work (not yet fully available in volume form) he gives excellent translations, Sorley MacLean (Somhairle MacGhill' Eathain) and George Campbell Hay – show that these tendencies are still gathering force, reaching further and further away from the English and Anglo-Scottish literary norm, and achieving work of great aesthetic and intellectual promise.<sup>95</sup>

Although characteristically polemical and racially essentialist to a considerable degree, MacDiarmid's preface clearly indicates that, as with Garioch and MacLean's earlier collaborations, two years later it was still the case that modern Gaelic poetry was sharing a forum with Scots. This fitted with MacDiarmid's hierarchical conception of Scottish language, privileging Gaelic after Scots as the furthest possible point from English on a sliding scale – although his remarks on this subject should not be considered in isolation from his actual failure to learn the language. Young, however, although not above occasionally tenuous statements regarding politics and ethnicity, was able to read and speak Gaelic to at least a conversational level, dedicating *Auntran Blads* to MacLean and Campbell Hay alongside a self-composed Gaelic tag.

*Auntran Blads*, in fact, contains seventeen translations from Gaelic originals, no less than thirteen of which are from MacLean – and only one of which is from Campbell Hay. This is not, presumably, because Young valued MacLean's work so much higher than Campbell Hay's, but was more likely a direct result of MacLean's having placed the manuscripts of *Dàin do Eimhir* and *An Cuilithionn* in his safekeeping in anticipation of his departure for the desert in World War Two. Campbell Hay was also inevitably in more intermittent contact with Young owing to his fugitive status in remote parts of Argyll, before he was arrested and eventually persuaded to go to Africa. It is therefore interesting, considering the priority of MacLean's poetry in *Auntran Blads*, to find Young almost dismissing the project in a letter sent to him three years earlier. This letter is made even more significant by Young's remarks comparing MacLean and Campbell Hay, and also his references to his close contact with the Muirs in St Andrews:

I have been amusing myself trying to turn some of [your poems] into Scots, without much success, but I send some efforts in the hope they will interest you [...] You will see also an attempt in the style of the Anglo-Irish Aisling poem, a scrap in the style of Robert Frost, two versions from German, which Edwin Muir rather approves. The Hofmannsthal states the

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<sup>95</sup> Hugh MacDiarmid, *Foreword* in Douglas Young, *Auntran Blads* (Glasgow: Maclellan, 1943) pp.5-7.

doctrine that all poets are children, a view I had tumbled to in connexion with Deorsa and MacDiarmid. It is not true of you, however.

Then there is the lump of the Iliad in Scots, in the original metre more or less. It illustrates the fact that dactyls in Scots are colloquial, whereas iambics would be stately; in Greek the emphasis is the other way. I believe it shows the capacity of Scots; I was never at a loss for a word over a fair extent of diction, and of course I don't know much Scots. A translation can on occasion put the original in a new perspective; Willa Muir said this version completely revitalized Homer for her. And I find myself that the Greek word "phaidimos" is somehow enriched when you learn that it is the Scots "begesserant", and vice versa.<sup>96</sup>

Clearly by 1943 Young had come round to the view that his MacLean translations were more than mere "efforts" and were worth publishing. And it is certainly amusing to find MacDiarmid and Campbell Hay being characterised as children, while MacLean is tellingly drawn as an adult. Again, Young's literary association with Edwin and Willa Muir during this period is a clear indication of how dogmatically Muir had approached his own arguments in *Scott and Scotland* from a few years earlier, which if carried to their logical conclusion might well have precluded his fraternising with a Scots activist of Young's fanaticism. Finally, Young's admission as to the real extent of his working knowledge of Scots is revealing, if hardly surprising upon a cursory perusal of his early oeuvre. He was clearly as much of a dictionary dredger as Garioch, at this early stage in his career, appears to have been.

With the close reading, in light of their correspondence, of a few of the MacLean poems translated by Young, several things become clear. Young, although he has a certain amount of Gaelic by this point, is apparently proceeding from English cribs supplied by MacLean, at least in the first instance.<sup>97</sup> Secondly, Young's great debt to MacDiarmid as a poet and language maker is made abundantly clear by his choices of form and vocabulary – as in this, his translation of the first stanza of *Dàin do Eimhir XLIII*, which he gives the Scots subtitle *Were't No For Ye*:

Were't no for ye the Cuillin wald be  
a sharp machicolate blue waa  
girdan in wi its merch-dyke  
my ramstam hert's ilka thraw.<sup>98</sup>

As with Sydney Goodsir Smith and the younger Garioch, there is an almost disconcerting artificiality to the language and metrics of this quatrain. Garioch avoids this, in his best work, through the rootedness of his Scots in a version of everyday speech, and perhaps also through a growing confidence as to the precise scansion of the words he uses. In the best of his Scots lyrics MacDiarmid

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<sup>96</sup> Douglas Young, letter to Sorley MacLean dated 29<sup>th</sup> July 1940, National Library of Scotland MS 29540/3.

<sup>97</sup> These and drafts of translated poems at various stages in their transposition, can be consulted in National Library of Scotland MS 14978.

<sup>98</sup> *Auntran Blads*, p.12.

also bypasses this metrical stumbling block through his rhythmic facility and peculiar genius for knowing exactly how far it was possible to push unfamiliarity in the foreignisation of his poetic through language. The second line, particularly, with the use of “machicolate”, which is glossed as “indented, serrated (like battlements)”, is reminiscent of passages from MacDiarmid’s Shetland period, where the actual incongruity of his scientific vocabulary provides an eerily lyrical quality most effective in the representation of an alienating insular landscape. “Machicolate”, certainly, is not to be found in the Scottish National Dictionary – which, considering that Young glosses it like a Scots word at the end of the poem, leaves us several options with which to explain its presence. Young, quite possibly, is attempting to enlarge the range of spoken Scots by the incorporation of Latinate scientific vocabulary. There is also the plausible explanation that, as with various other features of his style, he is inspired by MacDiarmid’s poetry of ideas and its revolutionary claims for language, without following these through to his mentor’s admittedly rather extreme lengths. Then again, he may simply have felt the Romance word, perhaps familiar from his considerable experience as a linguist and obsessive learner of languages, was the best possible solution for conveying a line MacLean glosses as “an exact and serrated blue rampart”<sup>99</sup>, translating the whole stanza thus:

But for you the Cuillin would be  
 an exact and serrated blue rampart  
 girdling with its march-wall  
 all that is in my fierce heart.<sup>100</sup>

From the Gaelic original:

Mur b’e thusa bhiodh an Cuilithionn  
 ‘na mhùr eagarra gorm  
 a’ criosladach le bhalla-crìche  
 na tha ‘nam chridhe borb.<sup>101</sup>

MacLean’s English gloss is typically stark and stripped of the regularity of metre and ornate vocabulary which characterise both the original and Young’s translation. The first and third lines reflect similarly in both the English and the Scots, whereas with the second and fourth lines Young takes more liberty, perhaps as a result of the rhyme scheme, which seems to be a translational choice (it is not present in the rest of MacLean’s poem) active in the target version rather than the source. As Katharina Reiss argues, TL and SL denoting target and source languages respectively:

*Intentional changes* frequently occur in translating, if the aims pursued in the translation are different from those of the original; if, besides the language difference of the TL readers,

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<sup>99</sup> Sorley MacLean, *Dàin do Eimhir*, ed. Christopher Whyte (Glasgow: Association for Scottish Literary Studies, 2002) p.94.

<sup>100</sup> *Ibid*, p.94.

<sup>101</sup> *Ibid*, p.95.

there is a change in the reading circle, etc. Since this will entail a change of function in the act of communication, there is now no attempt any more to strive for a functional equivalence between the SL and TL text.<sup>102</sup>

This line of reasoning, wherein Young's Scots translation is considered within the formal and linguistic context of Scots language writing in the 1940s, brings us into a productive dialogue with those features of the text (the MacDiarmid style scientific vocabulary, the ballad metre) which are absent from MacLean's poem. Young is concerned with the interchange and confluence between Gaelic and Scots, as well as the wider Scottish tradition which he constructs in a binary opposition to British ideology. He wishes to enhance the prestige and linguistic variety of this tradition and, through the internal translation of its various elements, weave it into a more cohesive whole. There is, therefore, a real sense in which the close analysis of his translations and original poetry has ramifications for his political and intellectual position – as well as the wider cultural context in which these existed and functioned as literature.

Having raised the issue of the naturalisation of a translated text versus its utilisation through the formal medium of the translation act, and hopefully shown that Young (as translator) inevitably imposes his own modern, synthetic Scots on MacLean's text, it is important to consider the action from the opposite viewpoint, as it were, and examine a few cases where MacLean's personal vision exerts a controlling influence on his translator. These examples, rather than the formal or linguistic choices already considered, tend towards the specifics of meaningful content, particularly as regards MacLean's politics – which are far from identical with Young's, as their correspondence shows.

Both Young and MacLean's politics were, unsurprisingly, Scottish Nationalist, as well as left wing to varying degrees, with MacLean far more sympathetic to revolutionary communism than Young, who held more reactionary opinions regarding language and culture. Both are expressed in this extract from a letter to MacLean, dated 17<sup>th</sup> of June 1943:

Perhaps a fundamental cause of your unease with regard to Gaelic is this, that the rehabilitation of Gaelic is not universalisable [sic], & you have that desire for the absolute & the universal, which characterises the higher human types, & therefore is a factor in the material political decline of all higher cultures, including the Hellenic, Celtic, & Chinese.

Your Communism is a universal creed, to some extent in conflict with your Gaeldom & Scottish feeling. On tactical grounds Marxism-Leninism-Stalinism finds a place for all Nationalism but denies the ultimate absolute universal value of all Nationalism.<sup>103</sup>

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<sup>102</sup> Katharina Reiss, *Type, Kind and Individuality of Text: Decision Making in Translation* in Lawrence Venuti, ed. *The Translation Studies Reader* (New York: Routledge, 2002) p.491.

<sup>103</sup> NLS MS 29540/1.

Young’s insistence on the actually provable existence of higher and lower cultures (even “human types”) and his finding fault with universal socialism on the grounds that it must eventually reject a purely national formulation of politics are both, of course, opinions of their time. They are, however, potentially – even tragically – problematic considering the date on the letter. Nevertheless, it is extremely interesting to find MacLean’s ability to maintain the triple identity of Gael, Scot and universal socialist being questioned by one of his closest friends and collaborators – on the grounds that there may be conflict between his various ideals. Three years earlier Young was no less willing to write his mind, asking MacLean on the 29<sup>th</sup> July 1940: “How do you know the Red Army is not to come across & clean up Mararaulin with a super purge? I quite expect it.”<sup>104</sup> And a month later, on the 29<sup>th</sup> of July, he suggests that MacLean has, like so many others, been deluded by the tinsel rhetoric of the USSR and that the resultant ideology mars *An Cuilithionn*: “you may one day change your mind whether Dimitrov, Stalin, etc really are symbols for what you think they are symbols for.”<sup>105</sup> Although, this said, it should be made clear that Young clearly praises figures like John MacLean and Toussaint L’Ouverture in his letters to MacLean, indicating that his public position as sometime breakaway leader of the SNP did not entirely preclude an admiration for the historical heroes of the hard left.

Aware, then, of Young’s reservations regarding MacLean’s politics and his own sometimes difficult political and racial views, it is certainly interesting to read those MacLean translations of his which endorse Russian communism. For instance, *Dàin Eile XVII* and *Dàin do Eimhir LIII*, respectively subtitled (in *Auntran Blads*) “*Wald ye be atween a lassies*” and “*I fashna mase for the grand revolution*”, both make specific reference to the USSR and the fight against fascism and global capital:

Wald ye be atween a lassie’s houghs  
 wi yir mou on her breists sae fair and sauchin,  
 and the Reid Army warsslan to daith,  
 jurmummlit and forfochen?<sup>106</sup>

From the Gaelic:

‘N d’ mhiann bhith eadar slèistean nìghne  
 ‘s do bheul air blàth a cìochan  
 ‘s an t-Arm Dearg an èiginn àraich  
 air a shàrachadh ‘s a riasladh?<sup>107</sup>

Which MacLean glosses:

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<sup>104</sup> NLS MS 29540/2.

<sup>105</sup> NLS MS 29540/3.

<sup>106</sup> *Auntran Blads*, p.14.

<sup>107</sup> Sorley MacLean, *Caoir Gheal Leumraich: White Leaping Flame*, ed. Christopher Whyte and Emma Dymock (Edinburgh: Polygon, 2011) p.180.

Is it your desire to be between a girl's thighs,  
your mouth on the bloom of her breasts,  
and the Red Army in the throes of battle,  
harassed and harried?<sup>108</sup>

And:

I fashna masel for the grand revolution  
that'll redd up the puirtith o the human race,  
nou I've seen the picture o aa nobilitie  
wrocht out i the glister o a bonnie face.<sup>109</sup>

Whose Gaelic original reads:

Gur suarach leam an t-ar-a-mach mòr  
a dh'fhòghnas do chor nan daoine,  
on chunnaic mi ìomhaigh na tha còir  
's i dealbhte 'm bòidhchid aodainn.<sup>110</sup>

And MacLean's English crib:

I lightly hold the great revolution  
that will suffice the lot of man  
since I have seen the image of all that is generous  
fashioned in the beauty of a face.<sup>111</sup>

Both quatrains exploit a Yeatsian paradox whereby a man's supposed moral or political duty is opposed to his desire for his idealised beloved. Without going too far into the romantic genesis of the *Dàin do Eimhir*, which is known to have been composed for several women rather than a single lover, this conceit is one of the principal themes of MacLean's great sequence, contrasting his inability to fight fascism while "the Red Army of humanity is/ in the death struggle beside the Dnieper" with "the triumphant face of a girl/ that is always speaking."<sup>112</sup> The paradox of duty and honour versus romantic passion is, presumably, unproblematic for Young in this context (although arguably sexist in that it is necessarily predicated on the objectification of the female figure). However, considering Young's significant reservations regarding MacLean's socialist beliefs, it is clear that just as Young imposed his own formal and linguistic subjectivity in his translation of the text, so there is a retention of content, as it were. In other words, while Young is able to take certain liberties with the format and aesthetic tenor of these poems, he is unable to make MacLean's poems voice his own thoughts and maintain the conceit – just as artfully constructed as MacLean's idealised and

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<sup>108</sup> Ibid, p.179.

<sup>109</sup> Auntran Blads, p.16.

<sup>110</sup> *Caoir Gheal Leumraich: White Leaping Flame*, p.157.

<sup>111</sup> Ibid, p.156.

<sup>112</sup> *Dàin do Eimhir LVII*, p.118.

courtly love affair – of translation. He attempts to make MacLean speak as if he had grown up talking synthetic Lallans. Lawrence Venuti, who has argued that translation can be fruitfully envisaged through this paradigm of domestication and foreignisation, foregrounds the importance of transparency to a successful naturalisation. It should be stressed that in this Venuti presumes that translation is not the inexplicable equation of essentially equal parts, but rather a cultural phenomenon whose workings are, if essentially subjective, nevertheless scientifically observable:

transparency is an illusionistic effect: it depends on the translator's work with language, but it hides this work, even the very presence of language, by suggesting that the author can be seen in the translation, that in it he speaks his own voice. If the illusion of transparency is strong enough, it may well produce a truth-effect, wherein the authorial voice becomes authoritative, heard as speaking what is true, right, obvious.<sup>113</sup>

It is debatable whether transparency of this sort is entirely achievable in a synthetic language or a dialect – in both the shock of the unfamiliar is left intact, even consciously retained. Whereas with a globally used, systematically standardised language like official English or French the formal conventions are so familiar, even to speakers of non-standard forms, that the conceit that this is the 'natural' mode of writing can be preserved. Venuti, in the same article, proposes the concept of "resistancy" as a counterweight to this capitulation to the target context:

I have been unfaithful to – and have in fact challenged – the dominant aesthetic in the target-language culture, *i.e.*, Anglo-American culture, becoming a nomad in my own language, a runaway from the mother tongue. At the same time, however, implementing this strategy must not be viewed as making the translation more faithful to the source-language text.<sup>114</sup>

Thus it cannot be the case that Young's Scots translations are, in any real sense, any more or less faithful to MacLean's poems than the author's own English transcriptions (which, it should be emphasised, do not attempt to be fully poems in their own right). Such a formulation defies what we, in the twenty-first century, understand poetic translation to be – that is to say, a context of literary form, not a fundamental truth. Rather, they are, in Venuti's use of the word, unfaithful to the Anglophone dominance of British literary production. They challenge its hegemony by positing an alternative language in a formal context which, given the subjective nature of the translation act, cannot simply be dismissed out of hand as a bad work of art. The criteria for translation success shift demonstrably – and if we do not feel we hear MacLean in his natural voice, so much as we are able to convince ourselves is the case with his own English cribs, this should be interpreted as a cultural and formal phenomenon rather than an essential point of difference between Gaelic, synthetic Scots and English.

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<sup>113</sup> Lawrence Venuti, *Simpativo* in *SubStance* Vol.20 No.2 (University of Wisconsin Press, 1991) pp.5-6.

<sup>114</sup> *Ibid*, p.10.

George Campbell Hay (1915-1984), as with Young, was a writer and prodigious linguist with primary access to all three of MacDiarmid's contemporary Scottish languages. The two men were also friends and contemporaries at Oxford, both studying Classics (although Young was a postgraduate student with a gleaming academic record from St Andrews, whereas Hay, though assiduously developing his knowledge of a plethora of modern languages, would eventually scrape a fourth in his finals). Again unlike Young, Campbell Hay's relationship with Gaelic was both fluent and rooted in his childhood. Although actually born in Renfrewshire in 1915 and privately educated in Edinburgh, the happiest parts of Campbell Hay's childhood were spent in the residually Gaelic speaking environment of Tarbert, Loch Fyne. There were also, again unlike Young and Garioch, various family members of a generation or two older than him to speak the language. This background, on the shadowy edge between the residual Gaelic of his familial environment and the Gaelic inflected Scots and English which were displacing it, allowed Campbell Hay to exploit the area of confluence between all three languages (and many others) in a similar manner to what William Neill, a generation later, was able to do in Ayrshire.

Hay, again as with Young, was a poet for whom multi-lingual writing, political engagement and nationalism were linked aspects of a single impulse. His refusal to compartmentalise or compromise led him, shortly after his departure from Oxford in 1938, to become a conscientious objector, retreating to the *maquis*, as it were, and hiding out in the Argyll mountains for eight months until his capture and subsequent arrest by the military police.<sup>115</sup> Young was in contact with him at certain points throughout this experience, writing a sympathetic if clumsily versified four stanza epistle entitled *Tae Deorsa i the heather, back-end o 1940*, which nevertheless shows genuine feeling for his fellow poet and emphasises the degree to which Young was an invaluable friend, enabler and correspondent for Scottish Gaelic poets in the 1940s:

Ye first inciteit me tae sclim  
 oor Scottish Helikon,  
 an shared wi me ilk ploy an whim  
 in Gaelic poetry or in Scots;  
 forbye kept me on  
 the anely course for patriots.

I ken weel gin I dinna see  
 yersel onie mair  
 the lave o ma life canna be  
 crouse as it has been sae lang,  
 blithe an free o care,

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<sup>115</sup> Michel Byrne, ed. *Collected Poems and Songs of George Campbell Hay* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2003) p.470 cites Hay's diary notebook: NLS MS 26728, 31r.

like the overcome o an auld song.<sup>116</sup>

Faced with prison following his arrest, Hay ultimately agreed to serve, joining Garioch, Hamish Henderson, Edwin Morgan and Sorley MacLean as one of a number of major Scottish poets stationed at various points around the Mediterranean at the height of the war. Surprisingly enough, Hay found Africa at once aesthetically agreeable and creatively stimulating, writing to Young on 20 April 1943:

Africa is admirable, and there is a general air of life and a tolerance in small details (probably due to poverty) which are lacking in industrialised N.W. Europe. There is none of the ugliness which is the rule by the Clyde or the Tyne; there is more of natural good manners and less of convention and there are also some very bizarre smells to be dodged here and there.<sup>117</sup>

And it was in Africa, out of his wartime experience, that Hay was to begin making and translating the poetry which today stands securely as one of the most original and enduringly powerful artistic responses to the globalised conflict of the Second World War. From the African poems, which offer a remarkable engagement with Arabic – even non-European – culture unparalleled in Scottish poetry until the publication, thirty years later of Edwin Morgan’s *The New Divan*, among the most widely praised is *Bisearta* (which MacDiarmid translated into Scots). A part of Campbell Hay’s longer *Atman* series of poems, *Bisearta* confronts the bombing and subsequent inferno which consumed the Tunisian town of Bizerta – an event which Campbell Hay witnessed at first hand. As Ronald Black puts it:

It took little imagination to see in Bizerta the image of Clydebank, to see in *Atman* the image of the Gael, to see in Tunisia or Algeria the colonial experience of Scotland or to find among the Arabs some of the lost world of the Highlands that was so dear to Hay. This is the inspiration of *Mochtàr is Dùghall*.<sup>118</sup>

The last poem mentioned, *Mochtàr is Dùghall*, is often considered to be Campbell Hay’s unfinished masterpiece, comparing the lives and fates of two soldiers, the African Arabic speaker Mochtàr and the Gael Dùghall, both of whom have met their end in the desert at German hands. Through an extended dialogue the poet considers their respective genealogies and cultures, linking – as with *Bisearta* – the North African Arab and the Gael and opposing them to the forces of industrialised warfare and modernity which threaten to obliterate both. It has been described as “one of the great sustained achievements of Gaelic literature [with a] philosophical depth, music, humour, atmosphere, colour, excitement, metrical variety and a conceptual richness that takes the breath

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<sup>116</sup> NLS MS 29540/121 (sent in a letter to Sorley MacLean).

<sup>117</sup> Michel Byrne, op cit, p. 474 cites NLS Acc. 6419/38 (a).

<sup>118</sup> Ronald I M Black, *Thunder Renaissance and Flowers: Gaelic Poetry in the Twentieth Century* in Cairns Craig, ed. *The History of Scottish Literature: Vol.4 Twentieth Century* (Aberdeen: Aberdeen University Press, 1987) p.199.

away.”<sup>119</sup> Michel Byrne goes so far as to argue that if, as a result of its having been published late and in fragmentary form – thirty five years or so after its original point of composition – its impact has been slower than, say, MacDiarmid’s *Drunk Man* or MacLean’s *Dàin do Eimhir*, then it is still the case that:

One can only speculate what impact Hay’s magnum opus would have had on the Gaelic world had it been completed and published in the immediate post-war years. Would the depth of his imaginative engagement with Islamic North Africa and the broad eclecticism of his work have been as startling to the public and as liberating to younger poets as the passionate syntheses of Sorley MacLean’s poetry?<sup>120</sup>

Whether it would or not remains a tragically moot point. For after a transfer to Italy, shortly after the war Campbell Hay found himself in Greece. He found the post to his liking in some respects, relishing the scenery, the history and the company of peasants and communist partisans, whom he seems to have simultaneously identified with the figures of Classical antiquity brought to life and the vividly buoyant characters of his own Gaelic background. However, he was deeply affected by the news of frequent atrocities and general atmosphere of civil war, brought to its head by an incident whereupon a group of fascists, having observed Campbell Hay’s familiarity and sympathies towards the communists, made an attempt on his life. Campbell Hay emerged alive and physically unscathed, unlike MacLean in Africa, but as with Garioch’s experience of Italian and German prison camps, the event was to stay with him, having a prolonged and tragically deleterious effect. Campbell Hay would suffer from nightmares, profound spells of depression and periods of alcoholism for the remainder of his life. Abandoning *Mochtàr is Dùghall*, he returned to Scotland. Dying prematurely in 1984, he left one of the largest and most impressive collections of original poems and translations in Scots, Gaelic and English (as well as Norwegian, French, Italian and many other tongues) of any modern Scottish poet.

The Scots poet, apart from Young, most active in the popularisation, promulgation and promotion of Campbell Hay’s verse in the 1940s was probably Hugh MacDiarmid. This is evident in his critical and autobiographical writing – such as the extract from *Lucky Poet*, quoted in the introduction, as well as elsewhere in that book, in which this passage appears at least twice, first described as an excerpt from a letter and later presented as a section of an essay entitled *Gaelic and Literary Form* published in MacDiarmid’s periodical, *The Voice of Scotland* (June-August 1939). It is well worth reproducing once more:

The slash at the “general stream of European Literature” might be shocking if misunderstood. I do not mean that Gaelic should not widen its contacts. It must. But “European Literature”

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<sup>119</sup> Ibid, p.200.

<sup>120</sup> *Collected Poems and Songs*, p.498.

as understood by people like Quiller-Couch (whom I choose as a particularly horrible example) and as embodied in tomes with that title, a selected list of countries and a selected list of names from each of these countries, starting of course with the Greeks, well-bowdlerized into “Christian gentlemen”, is a ramp that no longer impresses – like “Western Europe”. I am all for the “minor literatures” and the “backward races” whose literatures have not been “etherealized” out of life. Our contacts might as well be with the Islaendings or with those grand rascals the Serbs as with Bloomsbury or the Seine. The big countries share a common foreign-ness and repulsiveness to me, and like Blunt I sometimes wish they would destroy one another.<sup>121</sup>

Campbell Hay is responding to one of MacDiarmid’s basic tenets, namely that Scottish Literature must, if it is to achieve contemporary relevance, engage with and translate from the great literatures of the world. What is original and striking about Hay’s contribution is his use of the term “minor literature” without diminutive intent. Rather, he politicises it, dialectically opposing it to the creations and practices of so-called major literature and attributing a revolutionary function to the politicised culture of the periphery. This liberating use of minority status is similar to that theorised by Deleuze and Guattari when they argue:

There is nothing that is major or revolutionary except the minor. To hate all languages of masters. Kafka’s fascination for servants and employees (the same thing in Proust in relation to servants, to their language). What interests him even more is the possibility of making his own language – assuming that it is unique, that it is a major language, or has been – a minor utilization.<sup>122</sup>

Campbell Hay’s work (and that of the other Renaissance writers) becomes extremely exciting when considered in light of this idea of the role minor literature can play in terms of major artistic achievement and the disruption of cultural hegemonies. Deleuze and Guattari propose minority as French nationals – and thus as manifestations of the majority against which they are writing – in the context of Kafka’s German language works, written as a Jew living in early twentieth-century Prague. The three characteristics of minor literature upon which their argument is predicated are, respectively, its deterritorialisation, its political character and its function as the utterance of a coherent, definable community.<sup>123</sup> In terms of what MacDiarmid and his successors were attempting to achieve, some aspects of these characteristics are immediately relevant, while others require reformulation if they are to become useful theoretical models. The deterritorialisation which Kafka and other German speaking, Central European Jewish intellectuals of his generation experienced is of use in terms of the Scottish uncertainty of political or national status, but is somewhat altered by the new context. Deleuze and Guattari argue: “A minor literature doesn’t come from a minor

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<sup>121</sup> George Campbell Hay, quoted in Hugh MacDiarmid, *Lucky Poet* (London: Methuen, 1943) p.167 and p.354.

<sup>122</sup> Gilles Deleuze and Felix Guattari, *Kafka: Toward a Minor Literature* trans. Dana Polan (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1986) p.26,

<sup>123</sup> *Ibid*, pp.16-18.

language; it is rather that which a minority constructs within a major language.”<sup>124</sup> Whereas for literature written in Scots and Gaelic to be considered a cohesive minor tradition, the fact that it is written in minority languages must first be taken into account. Again, if Scottish Literature is taken to consist of three main languages – Gaelic, Scots and English – the model has to be rewritten slightly, acknowledging the plurality, as opposed to the singularity, of the Scottish “minor” utterance. MacDiarmid signals the failure of criticism in this respect, somewhat exasperatedly, in his *Scottish Eccentrics*: “It is a ridiculous state of affairs that the representation of Scottish poetry [...] is confined to poems written in Scots or English but leaves out of account work written in Gaelic and in Latin [...] failing which no all-round view of Scotland’s contribution to poetry can be had.”<sup>125</sup>

As if in redress, in Volume II of MacDiarmid’s *Complete Poems*, in the chapter of uncollected poems from 1946, there are three Scots translations from modern Gaelic poets (one from Donald Sinclair and two from Campbell Hay). The pair of Campbell Hay poems, *Bizerta* and *The Auld Hunter*, represent an instance of MacDiarmid directly interacting with Gaelic and its relationship with Scots, as well as a creative collaboration with one of the younger generation of Scots writers. It is interesting, considering that it has been asserted that Campbell Hay often attained an effect akin to Gaelic in his original Scots work,<sup>126</sup> to compare these two translations with a few of his own Scots poems in light of their language and metricality. The opening stanza of MacDiarmid’s *Bizerta* reads thus:

While I’m standin’ guard the nicht I see  
 Awa’ doon yonder on the laich skyline  
 A restless lowe, beatin’ its wings  
                   and scatterin’ and dimmin’  
 A’ the starns abune wi’-in reach o’ its shine.<sup>127</sup>

Immediately, for the reader familiar with MacDiarmid’s Scots poetry and especially longer works like *A Drunk Man Looks at the Thistle* or *To Circumjack Cencrastus*, which employ variable line length and liberal use of the glottal stopped apostrophe, it becomes apparent that MacDiarmid has performed a highly successful naturalisation. Moreover, if MacDiarmid’s version is compared to Campbell Hay’s Gaelic original it becomes clear that he felt within his rights in taking certain formal liberties with the

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<sup>124</sup> Ibid, p.16.

<sup>125</sup> *Scottish Eccentrics*, p.257.

<sup>126</sup> Hay himself described his poems written in the Tarbert dialect as “neither Scots, English or Gaelic, but all three”, *Collected Poems and Songs*, p.512.

<sup>127</sup> Hugh MacDiarmid, *Complete Poems, Vol.II* (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1985) p.1328.

first stanza, increasing four lines to five and imposing his own, almost Burns-like metrical rhyme scheme on the original:<sup>128</sup>

Chì mi ré geard na h-oidhche  
dreòs air chrith 'na fhroidhneas thall air fàire,  
ag clapail le a sgiathaibh,  
a'sgapadh s ag ciaradh rionnagan na h-àird' ud.<sup>129</sup>

This is a highly successful naturalisation, then, in the sense that MacDiarmid has turned Campbell Hay's Gaelic into a Scots poem with the same metrical, metaphorical and musical characteristics as his own Scots verse. Certainly the heavenly imagery contrasted with the catastrophic human spectacle of a burning city – especially the insistence on the observer's culpability in this – chime thematically with much of MacDiarmid's early Scots writing. This, I would argue, is also the case with MacDiarmid's versions of the continental European poets he translated, which generally started out as English translations by other hands but tended to finish up nigh indistinguishable from the original Scots lyrics he was working on at the same time.<sup>130</sup> The target text is, however, rather different in tone from many of Campbell Hay's Scots poems, which incline less towards a synthetic Lallans (or even a MacDiarmid influenced dialect poetry in the manner of William Soutar and early Garioch) than a Scots reflection of the sound and rhythms of Gaelic verse. In places this verges on the sound poetry of mouth music, as in the multilingual sea poem, *Seeker, Reaper*:

She's a wake-plough, foam-plough, spray-hammer, roarer,  
she's a wind-anvil, crest-batterer, deep-trough-soarer,  
she's a dance-step-turner, she's a broad-wake-scorer,  
she's a sound-threider, bight-stringer, her hert runs oot afore her.  
When the big seas come on lik walls, cold-white-heided,  
she doesna flinch a point for them. Straight her wake is threided.<sup>131</sup>

The use of language in this passage – although semantically coherent and generally nautical – comes closer to the purely aesthetic in terms of sound, is distanced from much of MacDiarmid's output in this. Certainly, compared with his *Bizerta* translation, which is mostly iambic with the occasional anapaest at the start of a line, *Seeker Reaper's* great variety of metrical measures, employing effects akin to Gerard Manley Hopkins' sprung rhythm in the extract quoted, makes a more conscious effort to reflect the highly wrought, alliterative measure of classical Gaelic verse in Scots. Furthermore, the Scots character of *Seeker, Reaper* is indicated in light touches – woven in via particles and occasional

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<sup>128</sup> Michel Byrne (*Collected Poems and Songs*, p.593) quotes Hay, indicating that the metre and rhyme scheme of *Bisarta* are derived from the Italian medieval poet Girolamo Savonarola, whom Hay was reading in Italy in 1944.

<sup>129</sup> *Collected Poems and Songs*, p.176.

<sup>130</sup> John Corbett, *Topics in Translation 14: Written in the Language of the Scottish Nation: A History of Translation into Scots* (Clevedon: Multilingual Matters, 1999) pp.127-130.

<sup>131</sup> *Collected Poems and Songs*, p.241.

vagaries of spelling – rather than embedded in the very fibre of the piece as it is with MacDiarmid’s translation.

Moving onto *The Auld Hunter*, we are presented with a translation which represents a definite genre in Campbell Hay’s work. That is, a brief lyric poem in short stanzas, typically quatrains, describing the emotions, thoughts and accumulated memories of an elderly Gael. More to the point, the characters in these poems are generally those inhabitants of the southern Highlands and Argyll who have lived active and hard outdoor lives – fishermen, crofters and hunters predominate. Given Campbell Hay’s passion for the culture of this area and his experiences growing up, living and hiding out as a fugitive from the law in the remoteness of Argyll, as well as the tragedy of his mental breakdown and keen awareness of the area’s enormous cultural loss over his own lifetime, it is probably not unreasonable to propose a certain autobiographical character as regards these works. I give the final two stanzas of MacDiarmid’s four quatrain translation:

My narrow gun and the paths o’ the cruach  
Eild has stown, wha’s deaf and heeds nae grief;  
My hand and my foot, this Blear-eyed’s stown them  
And a’ my cheer, like a hertless thief.

But gin Eild were a man that hauns could grapple  
And I could come on him secretly  
Up there on the hill when naebody passes  
Certes! grass ‘ud be trampled or he gat free!<sup>132</sup>

The voice here is, simply in terms of meaningful content and point of perception, entirely different from that of the observer in *Bizerta*. Rather than a vatic welling up of horror and indignation at the ravages of war on a civilian population, there is a quietly pellucid and contemplative tenor to the poem, turning suddenly to the hunter’s formerly dangerous vitality in the final stanza. As with other Campbell Hay poems in the same genre, it is not difficult to link the sentiments to an ongoing commentary on the condition of Gaelic culture – in MacDiarmid’s translation the language seems to fluctuate almost in sympathy with the meaning of the lines, from the retained Gaelic of “cruach” into a heavier Scots section, then falling back into English for the penultimate two lines. Finally, the last line of the poem rises up with its (momentarily) reinvigorated Scots and pair of exclamation marks, a dying show of defiance perhaps, with a morbid vigour and gallows humour worthy of MacDiarmid’s own output. It is useful to compare MacDiarmid’s *The Auld Hunter* with Campbell Hay’s own *The Fisherman*, a Tarbert Scots poem very much concerned with the same themes and topographies, albeit seen from a slightly different tonal and temporal perspective:

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<sup>132</sup> Hugh MacDiarmid, *Complete Poems*, pp.1329-30.

This is aye the way I kent you,  
that had the fishing for school and learning,  
the sea's scholar, the gale's apprentice [...]

[...] Many a wave with spindrift sweeping,  
gales, calm, black tempest, pale haar creeping  
have set their stamp upon your cheek, man.<sup>133</sup>

Having left out the middle three stanzas of the poem, which describe the man, it is clear that the Scots aspects of this poem are indicated in extremely light touches indeed. The note of keening remembrance is present, making clear that this poem documents, however obliquely, the demise of an organic community, as is the alliterative decoration and metrical adornment familiar from *Seeker, Reaper*. In the last stanza this effect is gently heightened, lending the language a gestural quality of statement leading up to the final address of "man", which closes the poem, signifying the simultaneously Gaelic and Scots linguistic environment, earlier suggested with "kent", intermingled with the English which is replacing both. The tone is reminiscent of speech as rendered in the works of Neil M. Gunn, Lewis Grassie Gibbon and George Mackay Brown, where the Gaelic, Scots and Orcadian vernaculars, respectively, are suggested with deft brushstrokes; implied rather than directly stated.

What, essentially, these interactions with tradition and plurality amount to is an attempt to simultaneously earn and redefine tradition – to modify Eliot's dictum. This attempt was, whether to a greater or lesser degree, conscious and essentially revolutionary in that it proposed a redefinition of culture which would reject Britain and align itself with an imaginative vision of an independent Scotland. This is true whether the writer in question espoused the perhaps more culturally conservative, even reactionary politics of a Douglas Young or a Campbell Hay, the reserved, but hardly apolitical views of a Garioch, or the radical socialism of a MacDiarmid, a Sorley MacLean or a Sydney Goodsir Smith, who, in an unpublished early translation of Sorley MacLean's *Dàin do Eimhir LVII* wrote, without irony:

Tho the Reid Army o Mankind  
fechts to daith i the Ukraine,  
it isna its hero deed  
liggs neist this hert o mine.  
But a face haunts me ilk wey,  
follows me nicht and dey,  
the triumphant face o a lass  
that talks eloquentlie aye.<sup>134</sup>

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<sup>133</sup> *Collected Poems and Songs*, p.217.

<sup>134</sup> NLS Acc.10397/3 (August 1941).

That this translation was accomplished when Goodsir Smith was twenty six – and in the same year as his first book of poems, *Skail Wind*, was published – is significant. For all that both the translation and slim volume would be bettered, perhaps expanded upon formally speaking, by Goodsir Smith's later works, it is nevertheless the case that the radical content and political commitment of these poems were aspects of his project which were to remain unchanged for the rest of his career as a writer. Moreover, at this early date Goodsir Smith was already concerned with poetic translation as a literary device which could be used to redefine canons, emphasise sympathies and bring the relationship between Scots and Gaelic – as well as English – further into the eye of the Scottish (poetry reading) public.

In making this commitment Goodsir Smith and his generation of Scottish poets were of course heavily indebted to MacDiarmid's occasionally inhibiting example, both in criticism and poetry. It is therefore extremely significant to find MacDiarmid translating a much younger poet such as Campbell Hay into Scots, a creative transaction signifying a degree of cross pollination, as it were, between generations and, again, the very real desire on the part of the Scottish Renaissance writers to write towards a coherent and politically viable tradition. As the editors and translators behind *The Triumph Tree*, an anthology of early "Scottish" poetry, put it:

This book has an ambitious aim. We wish to restore eight centuries of Scotland's literary heritage, lost or neglected by modern scholars and anthologists, and virtually unknown to the general public. Most anthologies of Scottish poetry, and indeed most discussions of Scottish literature, begin with the 14<sup>th</sup> century. They do this largely because the approach to our literary history has for long been Anglocentric, concentrating on the English-language tradition of Scotland, and that of its northern cousin, lowland Scots. Only in the 14<sup>th</sup> century, with the work of John Barbour and his contemporaries, does Scots begin to be recorded and used as a major literary language in Scotland.<sup>135</sup>

This is an ambitious aim indeed. What it requires, essentially, is the anthologist or translators' ability to imagine a version of Scotland – or Scotland(s) – predating the conception of the lowland Scottish nation. It is a project which only becomes possible in opposition to British cultural hegemony and the resultant subaltern status imposed on these variously "Scottish" traditions. The idea of Scotland – a single Scotland, with a history and contemporary literary production combining Gaelic, Scots, English, Latin, Welsh and Norse – then becomes an attempt to foster a revolutionary cultural space; a conscious alliance of disparate elements, often mutually hostile in the past, gathered together in acknowledgement of an intended plurality. This, arguably, is the vision of a remade Scottish tradition which the modern Renaissance proposed and which has, in the intervening years, never quite been

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<sup>135</sup> Thomas Owen Clancy, ed. *The Triumph Tree: Scotland's Earliest Poetry AD550-1350* (Edinburgh: Canongate, 1998) p.5.

abandoned by nationalist intellectuals and artists. Certainly, while it may well be neither multiform nor infinite, it is not a small vision of what a supposedly minor literature is capable of accomplishing.

#### IV. Chapter Three: Translation as an Experiment with Canonicity and Form.

One of the most interesting aspects of poetic translation is the opportunity it presents for redefining cultural canons and extending their formal reach. Put simply, if the desired technical apparatus are absent in one language and apparently present in another, it makes sense to translate. The grafting of one plant stem onto another to achieve a new breed is an obvious analogy, and examples abound in virtually every literature, from medieval translations of Greek and Latin texts to the Anglo-American modernist use of French Symbolism.<sup>136</sup> In such a context it is salutary to consider the development of translation studies over the past few decades. The comparatively recent rise of translation theory in the academy has led to increasing recognition of the plurality of strategies and writing techniques covered by the term. One side effect of this has been the widespread realisation that it may be possible to affect the formal possibilities of a target context through the presentation of a revolutionary 'translated' text, notwithstanding the actual relationship the text in question bears to its 'original.' André Lefevere, discussing Ezra Pound's notoriously inventive relationship with his source texts, addresses this point:

Faced with Victorian/Edwardian poetics, Pound manufactured the Chinese T'ang dynasty poets as an 'authoritative' countercontext, one that did, as if by miracle, fit all the requirements of the new poetry he, Pound, was trying to create. Since translation awards some kind of limited immunity to those who write it (after all, they are not responsible for what others wrote), attacks on the dominant poetics of a literature often pass themselves off as translations.<sup>137</sup>

Lefevere foregrounds a key concept. Translation equals changing the canon. Or rather to translate a new type of text into a new context can equal change in the canon. And in such a situation the crime of being unfaithful to one's source text, whatever that happens to mean, is ameliorated if the target fulfils other criteria appropriate to this context.

This interplay between essentialism and experimentation is addressed, pertinently enough, in the diverse solutions arrived at by the various translators who have carried poets such as the French modernist and surrealist Guillaume Apollinaire (1880-1918) into whichever of the many languages his work has been put. To translate poetry with a high degree of experimentalism, which

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<sup>136</sup> To quote translation theorist Itamar Even-Zohar: "In the first case translated literature simply fulfils the need of a younger literature to put into use its newly founded (or renovated) tongue for as many literary types as possible in order to make it serviceable as a literary language and useful for its emerging public. Since a young literature cannot immediately create texts in all types known to its producers, it benefits from the experience of other literatures, and translated literature becomes in this way one of its most important systems." Itamar Even-Zohar, *The Position of Translated Literature Within the Polysystem* in Lawrence Venuti, ed. *The Translation Studies Reader: Second Edition* (New York: Routledge, 2005) p.201.

<sup>137</sup> André Lefevere, *Translation: Its Genealogy in the West* in Susan Bassnett and André Lefevere, eds. *Translation, History and Culture* (London: Pinter, 1990) p.23.

retains its shock factor nearly a century after the writer's death, is to engage with forms which prioritise creativity and subjectivity to a greater extent than, say, the Edwardian rhyming couplets which Pound felt it necessary to reject. For one thing solutions must be found, particularly for the more abstract of the poems, which require – required for the first time in those contexts where such poems had not been attempted before – a level of formal flexibility and ingenuity sometimes incompatible with total piety towards the source's literal meaning. As the editors of a recent volume of Apollinaire translations by several hands, all of his poem 'Les Fenêtres', argue: "The degree to which translation has been perceived as a creative activity throughout the history of its practice, at least in the field of literary translation, is diametrically opposed to the responsibility of linguistic fidelity translators have felt towards their own task."<sup>138</sup> And in formally motivated translation the creative potential of the enterprise is surely the most vital element in its execution. Certainly it is if the criteria of the act's success are the introduction of innovative technique and the restructuring of tradition. Alongside this it could be argued that, if the translator's intention is to transplant form, this will be best accomplished by a vigorously subjective work which inspires its readers to investigate the source, rather than an academically precise but castrated hostage to fidelity.

In a Scottish context, Apollinaire has been lucky in that his translators have consistently been among the more prominent poets of their day, including Robert Garioch, Sydney Goodsir Smith, Edwin Morgan and Ian Hamilton Finlay as well as, more recently, Richard Price. Moreover, with the exception of Garioch, Apollinaire's translators have largely been drawn to him by his capacity for experimentation, and as the list above shows, have themselves been among Scotland's most exciting and innovative writers. He has, however, been unlucky in that these writers have not translated a great number of his poems. Criticism has also been slower to address these translations than, say, Garioch's *Belli sonnets* or Morgan's *Mayakovsky*. In the case of Goodsir Smith Apollinaire is less lucky still, since his translations are not available in book form, but languish virtually unread in manuscript and obscure periodicals. This situation is particularly disconcerting considering the quality of some of these translations, alongside the often unacknowledged questions they pose for Scots language poetry. Reading and translating highly innovative writers like Apollinaire was to have a considerable effect on the poetries of Garioch (1909-1981) and Goodsir Smith (1915-1974), effects, moreover, which have great relevance within the wider context of Scottish poetry. In terms of their translations, however, Apollinaire's continuing contemporary force as an exciting, daringly creative poet cannot be considered in isolation from the largely declined opportunity experimental writing has offered Scots language poetics.

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<sup>138</sup> Eugenio Loffredo and Manuela Perteghella, eds. *One Poem in Search of a Translator: Rewriting 'Les Fenêtres' by Apollinaire* (Bern: Peter Lang, 2009) p.13.

It might seem incongruous to insist on such contemporary relevance – indeed to claim retained *avant garde* status – for a poet born in 1880 and who died in 1918. Yet it seems increasingly clear that this is a reasonable position to take up, for Apollinaire’s extraordinarily foresighted blend of visual art and lyric poetry exhibit a more adventurous understanding of form than many poets writing today. As Mary Ann Sullivan suggests in her provocatively subtitled article, *Guillaume Apollinaire: The French Poet Who Predicted Digital Poetry*, his status as an innovator has grown rather than diminished with the intervening years:

Our new century and its surge of poetic activity resembles the turn of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, a time when [Apollinaire] influenced by cinema and telegraphic technologies, carefully sketched by hand, and then had typeset, poetry that used letters and words in a new way, one that suggested moving images. His courageous poetry formed pictures by means of the placement of letters and words on the page. Those images, though immobile, brimmed with movement, action waiting to happen, and Apollinaire predicted it was only a matter of time before poets would incorporate genuine motion and sound in their poems.<sup>139</sup>

Sullivan’s critique presents us with a double-edged sword. Apollinaire seems to embody the spirit of exuberant invention – his, like Mayakovsky’s, was at first a truly optimistic response to modernity – and the start of the twenty-first century can certainly be construed as reiterating the threats and opportunities proffered by Apollinaire’s Paris. However, it can be questioned whether these undeniably challenging options have really been considered by the mainstream of subsequent Scottish writing.

In Garioch’s case, it seems likely it was his capacity to consider his formalism with an open mind which attracted him to Apollinaire – and Morgan and Finlay to the older Scottish poet. In Finlay’s case there is also the suggestion that he and Garioch were united by a shared antipathy to MacDiarmid. If Garioch can seem conservative beside poets like Morgan and Finlay, we ought to remember that he was hardly above experimentation, on occasion. Older than Morgan by a decade, by fifteen years in Finlay’s case, Garioch’s translations and original poems employ a great variety of metrical effects – from Anglo-Saxon-esque sprung rhythm to visual diagrams. He was by no means a prisoner of the pentameter. Yet beyond these instances of open-mindedness there may be more serious determinants than mere personal preference, with Garioch’s formal concerns instead revealing more troubling aspects of his chosen medium and the inevitably fragile literary tradition which informed it. Christopher Whyte suggests regarding his Belli translations that:

Garioch’s preoccupation (one might almost say obsession), with metrical skill may well be an aspect of his reaction to the status of Scots at the time he was writing... There is therefore a

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<sup>139</sup> Mary Ann Sullivan, *Guillaume Apollinaire: The French Poet Who Anticipated Digital Poetry* In: *The French Literary Review* No. 12 (Oct. 2009) accessed: <http://www.poetrymagazines.org.uk/magazine/record.asp?id=24227> on 22/02/2012.

very real sense in which the Belli translations are an investigation of the Scots language, of its possibilities of regulation and codification. The presence of an original meant that Garioch was able to focus more closely than anywhere else in his work on this investigation.<sup>140</sup>

This, if true, implies that in addition to his intentions regarding canonicity and tradition, Garioch was engaged in setting up a counterpoint between languages. Whyte argues that this was an attempt to test the nature of Scots – its feasibility as a living medium – by comparison with other tongues. This is nothing less than to continually repeat the question: *does my language work now?* It is consequently something with fairly dramatic implications for how we read Garioch as a poet. Rather than cautiously conservative, considered from this perspective he becomes a highly radical writer, whose work affords us an intimate access to the ways in which minority cultures react to their marginality. This relates compellingly to the Palestinian-American critic Edward Said's thinking on the phenomenon of "late style" in art. Departing from Theodor Adorno's aphoristic 1937 essay *Late Style in Beethoven*,<sup>141</sup> Said illustrates his arguments with a number of case studies of artists and intellectuals whose work, rather than representing a harmonious progression, makes visible a process of decline. As he puts it himself: "Only certain artists and thinkers care enough about their metier to believe that it too ages and must face death with failing senses and memory."<sup>142</sup> This is in direct opposition to the vision set out in TS Eliot's *Tradition and the Individual Talent*, wherein the sum total of art is added to and consequently modified by new developments – a process of incremental growth, not death. Yet Garioch always insisted that the language of his poetry was the everyday speech of contemporary Edinburgh, albeit with certain graftings from Jamieson and Chambers' dictionaries. Edwin Morgan, for one, agreed with him, linking Garioch with the much younger Tom Leonard in terms of their faithfulness to specific urban environments<sup>143</sup> and arguing, a decade earlier, that:

He has a fine ear for what remains of spoken Scots, and has had more success than most modern Scottish poets in building unobtrusively on this speech basis, though not without some archaism: but at least the archaism is constantly being corrected by a nice colloquial accuracy, and the over-all tone is unusually acceptable.<sup>144</sup>

This sets him at a far remove from Sydney Goodsir Smith, whose explosively Rabelaisian inventions really did constitute an originally synthetic language. Rather it was Garioch's intention to familiarise

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<sup>140</sup> Christopher Whyte, *Robert Garioch and Giuseppe Belli* in Bill Findlay, ed. *Frae Ither Tongues: Essays on Modern Translations into Scots* (Clevedon: Topics in Translation 24, 2004) p.195-6.

<sup>141</sup> Theodor Adorno, *Essays on Music* ed. Richard Leppert, trans. Susan H. Gillespie (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2002) pp.564-568.

<sup>142</sup> Edward Said, *On Late Style: Music and Literature Against the Grain* (New York: Pantheon Books, 2005) p.7.

<sup>143</sup> Edwin Morgan, *Scottish Poetry in the 1960s* from *British Poetry Since 1960* in Michael Schmidt and Grevel Lindop, eds. (Cheshire: Carcanet, 1972) reprinted in *Essays* (Cheshire: Carcanet, 1974) pp.178-9.

<sup>144</sup> Edwin Morgan, *The Poet and the Particle* from *New Saltire*, 8 (June 1963) reprinted in *Essays*, p.17.

the archaic and obscure – which makes his decision to translate Apollinaire, a writer whose work can seem idiosyncratic and disjointed even today, all the more striking.

To better understand the genesis of the Apollinaire poems translated by Garioch, a few points ought to be made regarding the sort of relationship Garioch came to enjoy with his French predecessor. This is illustrated in two letters to the poet Sydney Tremayne, in which Garioch discloses his uncertainties as well as his great enthusiasm for Apollinaire's work. The earlier correspondence reveals Garioch's reservations regarding Apollinaire's occasionally dogmatic experimentalism:

I have become interested in Apollinaire, in my usual haphazard manner [...] I really did pay attention to this extraordinary poet, who was being 1968ish about the year I was born. But he was surely too worried about not getting old-fashioned, i.e. not introducing new ways. I wonder if the habit of mind caused by science and machinery, which much concerned him, does not make people think too much in terms of Mk I and Mk II.<sup>145</sup>

It is worth remembering Garioch was a poet very much concerned with "the habit of mind caused by science and machinery." The second letter reveals a characteristic concern with poetic technique:

I don't know all that much of Apollinaire, of course, because of the language difficulty, but I can see that often he is being drawn back to the Alexandrine and diverging from it, but without this going on he would be writing much more loosely and not so well.<sup>146</sup>

Just as Garioch's radical properties have become more apparent with the passage of time, so too have the traditional elements in Apollinaire. Paramount among these, as Garioch sees it, is his use of the Alexandrine – the six beat line whose ubiquity in French poetry is the equivalent of the iambic pentameter in English and Scots. According to the Scottish poet, nowhere more so than in his continued deployment of traditional prosody does Apollinaire's real place in the great French tradition of the shocking outsider, posthumously taken up by the establishment, stretching all the way back through Baudelaire to Villon, become apparent.

Of the five Apollinaire translations reprinted in Garioch's *Collected Poems*, it is significant that none of them are calligrammes, Apollinaire's visual poems whose name he derived through a combination of the words 'calligraphy' and 'telegram.' Four, however, are from the collection titled *Calligrammes* (1918) the other being taken from the earlier, arguably more transitional *Alcools* (1913). But all five employ a conventional typography, rather than the direct confrontation of space and thematic content evinced by the visual works in the *Ondes* section of *Calligrammes*. They are, in the order of their presentation, a *Deleted Passage* from *Zone*, *Autumn – Automne*, *Victory – La*

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<sup>145</sup> Garioch's letter to Sydney Tremayne, 29 Sep 1968 in Robin Fulton, ed. *A Garioch Miscellany* (Edinburgh: Macdonald, 1986) p.41.

<sup>146</sup> *Ibid*, p.41.

*Victoire, Ferlie of the Weir – Merveille de la Guerre* and *A Phantom of Haar – Un fantôme de nuées*.

Several extracts, in particular, beg for closer reading in the context of poetic form and canonicity.

Firstly, the *Deleted Passage*, quoted in its entirety:

I bidit in Auteuil twa months or three  
Atween the twa reivers like Jesus deid on the tree  
And yin, the criminal, he wes the guid reiver  
Wanchancie he sall be, and dee of jyle-fever  
The bad yin wes a wumman, tho nae gudwyf  
Hers wes a shamefu theft, she tuke frae me ma life<sup>147</sup>

With the French lines running as follows:

J'ai vécu à Auteuil pendant près de trois mois  
Entre les deux larrons comme Jésus mourut en croix

Et l'un, le criminel, ce fut le bon larron  
Il sera malheureux, et mourra en prison

L'autre, le mauvais larron, c'était une femme  
Elle m'a pris ma vie, ce fut un vol infâme<sup>148</sup>

As indicated above, this short six line poem was omitted from the final version of *Zone* which opens *Alcools* with the line 'A la fin tu es las de ce monde ancien' (At last you are tired of the old world).

The poem goes on to develop a fractured and disconnected style, linking modernity with the dissipation of Christianity, held together by the narrative conceit of a stroll around Paris. This persona of the *flâneur*, the stroller through the urban environment, was familiar from nineteenth-century French poetry – especially Baudelaire. The salient difference between the *flâneur*, as characterised by Walter Benjamin in his discussions of Baudelaire, and the pedestrians thoughtlessly going about their business, is the degree to which the *flâneur* is alienated from society by modernity. Or rather, the degree to which he is aware of his alienation. In his painful self-awareness the *flâneur* gains the power to observe and comment upon the city as an outsider. Benjamin goes so far as to claim that Baudelaire's development of this particular image, the alienated wanderer through the streets, was the birth of the city as the subject for a really lyric – that is to say individualised – poetry:

Baudelaire's genius, which drew its nourishment from melancholy, was an allegorical one. With Baudelaire, Paris for the first time became the subject of a really lyrical poetry. This poetry is no folklore; the allegorist's gaze which falls upon the city is rather that of an alienated man. It is the gaze of the *flâneur*, whose way of living still played over the growing destitution of men in the great city with a conciliatory gleam. The *flâneur* still stood at the

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<sup>147</sup> Robert Garioch, *Collected Poems* (Edinburgh: Polygon, 2004) p.118.

<sup>148</sup> Michel Décaudin, *Le Dossier D'Alcools* (Paris: Société de Publications Romanes et Françaises, 1960) p.80.

margins, of the great city as of the bourgeois class. Neither of them had yet overwhelmed him. In neither of them was he at home. He sought his asylum in the crowd.<sup>149</sup>

Consumed by sensory experience, the *flâneur* is the ultimate romantic, adrift in the sublime and horrifying world of the modern city. There are compensations; experiences to be marvelled at through a bewildered and neurotic haze. This marvelling, marvellous persona is intensified and valorised in Apollinaire. As Scott Saul has argued:

Like Baudelaire, Apollinaire is a poet of the city, a man who refigures the pastoral tradition ironically. In the city the author cannot hope to isolate his voice in the silence of the woods. Instead, he must compete with the cacophony of the streets, the “posters which shout aloud” [...] In the opening lines of *Zone* the reader is introduced to the shock-system of the city, and made to feel its reverberations in the unsettling of poetic form.<sup>150</sup>

Saul then quotes the first two lines of *Zone*, running (and I continue beyond them):

A la fin tu es las de ce monde ancien  
Bergère ô tour Eiffel le troupeau des ponts bêle ca matin  
Ici même les automobiles ont l’air d’être anciennes  
La religion seule est restée toute neuve la religion  
Est restée simple comme les hangars de Port-Aviation<sup>151</sup>

In English these lines run:

At last you are weary of the ancient world  
Shepherdess O Eiffel Tower the flock of bridges bleats at morning  
Even the automobiles have an air of antiquity about them  
Religion alone stays new religion  
It stays simple like the hangars of the airport

The first line is, perhaps ironically, a perfect Alexandrine, the rhythm and rhyming cadences of the opening three lines providing a somewhat ironic counterpoint to *Zone*’s rejection of the antique. The opening syntax, too, stands in stark contrast with wrenched and disconnected word order of the coming lines as they slip into a bouncy, syncopated *vers libre* which abandons traditional sentence structure and punctuation. This, along with the valorising references to modernity typified by the Eiffel Tower and the aeroplane, shows – in *Zone* and in other non-typographically realised poems such as *Fenêtres* from *Calligrammes* – that a more or less traditionally lineated poem can still

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<sup>149</sup> Walter Benjamin, *Paris: Capital of the Nineteenth Century in Perspective: The Yale Architectural Journal*, Vol. 12 (Yale: MIT, 1969) pp.169-170.

<sup>150</sup> Scott Saul, *A Zone is a Zone is a Zone* in Stamos Metzidakis, ed., *Understanding French Poetry: Essays for the New Millennium* (New York: Garland, 1994) pp.159-160.

<sup>151</sup> Guillaume Apollinaire, *Alcools* (Cher: Gallimard, 1994) p.7.

embody a fairly radical break with the formal and thematic straitjackets bequeathed by establishment poetics.

Returning now to Garioch's *Deleted Passage*, we ought to inquire as to what extent the more radical aspects of *Zone* are conveyed. Clearly, the passage has not entirely abandoned punctuation. Full stops have been expunged, but commas are present – which they are not in Apollinaire's final draft. Looking now at Garioch's metrics, the lines can perhaps be interpreted thus:

1. straight iambic pentameter
2. pentameter with anapaestic variation
3. pentameter with dactylic/anapaestic variation
4. pentameter with anapaestic variation
5. pentameter with anapaestic and trochaic variation
6. pentameter with anapaestic variation.

Only if the term is taken literally, then, can the passage be interpreted as free verse. Garioch stays closer to traditional metre than Apollinaire, though it is interesting that the first line is the only straight pentameter, analogous to the opening alexandrine of Apollinaire's poem. There is the hanging suggestion that as this was an expunged section of *Zone* Garioch may have felt more entitled to eschew the true free verse found elsewhere in that poem than he might in his dealings with more canonical and thus more strictly codified examples.<sup>152</sup> This is borne out by his versions of other works, as in the opening passage of *Ferlie o the Weir* which reads:

Hou bonnie thae rockets are that illumine the nicht  
They ascend to their ain summit and lean owre to hae a luik  
They are braw leddies that daunce aye luikan for een airms and hairts

I hae kenn'd in them your ain smile and your liveliness

Forbye it is the ilka-day apotheosis of aa my Berenices ilkane wi the hair of her heid changit  
intill a comet  
Thae skire-gowden dauncers hae their being at aa times and amang ilka folk  
They mak short wark of getting bairns that hae barely time eneuch to dee

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<sup>152</sup> Indeed when we return to the French original, we find that Apollinaire, in addition to retaining elements of punctuation, for extended passages in the deleted sections of *Zone*, employs a more regular structure of rhyme and lineation than in the final draft of the poem. Why Garioch felt driven to translate and publish only this particular expunged and rather obscure passage from one of Apollinaire's most famous poems remains mysterious. Without correspondence or manuscript evidence this must remain conjecture, but it seems plausible that Garioch did at some point translate more extensive passages of *Zone*, evidence of which may emerge as a result of future archival research.

Hou bonnie aa thae rockets are  
 But thae wad be faur bonnier gin there were even mair of them  
 If there were millions of them aa sortit in complete and relative order like the letters in a  
 buik  
 And yet as bonnie as tho life itsel cam out frae the deean<sup>153</sup>

*Ferlie o the Weir*, then, represents a clear example of Garioch writing a genuinely free verse which conveys the rhythms and layout of the original. *Merveille de la Guerre* reads thus:

Que c'est beau ces fusées qui illuminent la nuit  
 Elles montent sur leur propre cime et se penchent pour regarder  
 Ce sont des dames qui dansent avec leurs regards pour yeux bras et cœurs

J'ai reconnu ton sourire et ta vivacité

C'est aussi l'apothéose quotidienne de toutes mes Bérénices dont les chevelures sont  
 devenues des comètes  
 Ces danseuses surdorées appartiennent à tous les temps et à toutes les races  
 Elles accouchant brusquement d'enfants qui n'ont que le temps de mourir

Commes c'est beau toutes ces fusées  
 Mais ce serait bien plus beau s'il y en avait plus encore  
 S'il y en avait des millions qui auraient un sens complet et relatif comme les lettres d'un livre  
 Pourtant c'est aussi beau que si la vie même sortait des mourants<sup>154</sup>

In fact, when we compare the opening lines of each version, we find that it is Garioch who employs the freer form, declining the opportunity to mirror the original alexandrine. As with *Zone* the first line is a hexameter, comparable to the retained pentameter beneath the apparent freedom of so many modernist poems. Following Garioch's metrical solutions through these poems, we find him adapting and departing from his preferred techniques in his original verse, underlining the idea that a true formalist – as Garioch always was – may be capable of thinking through striking fluctuations in style and method, when required. In this context *The Waste Land* is an appropriate parallel, crying out from amidst the ruins which are the end result of the conflict praised in poems like *La Petite Auto*, *La Victoire* and *Merveille de la Guerre*. This most problematic aspect of Apollinaire's career is not so much a praise of war for its own sake as for the processes of change and mechanisation involved in and systematised by modern warfare. Although we cannot abnegate the poet's illusion of pre-war modernity – Apollinaire, though born Wilhelm Apolinary Kostrowicki in Italy to a Polish mother and (most probably) a Swiss Italian aristocratic father, later became (possibly because of his outsider status) a strident French nationalist. This prejudice arose, it seems, from a combination of aesthetic and political sympathies as Apollinaire conflated the essentially cosmopolitan art world of pre-war Paris with its location – France – and his beloved new age with its ultimate antithesis and

<sup>153</sup> *Collected Poems*, p.121.

<sup>154</sup> Guillaume Apollinaire, *Calligrammes* (Floch à Mayenne: Gallimard, 1986) p.137.

logical conclusion: mechanised warfare. We may compare Apollinaire's jingoistic criticism of German art with his war poetry:

In fact, the Germans have distinguished themselves very little in modern art; confining oneself simply to the field of painting and, within that, to its most avant-garde movement, cubism, one cannot cite a single German name worth mentioning. And yet before the war, there were a great many boche painters in Paris, but none of them succeeded in making even a minor name for himself in the modern school that was flourishing in France.<sup>155</sup>

It could be argued that for Apollinaire, the quintessential artistic exile in search of a home, that to fight for France against these German philistines was to fight for modern art itself. And fight he did, receiving a head wound in 1916 which would plague him until his death from the Spanish Flu two years later. Despite this traumatic experience, *Calligrammes* presents war as beautiful, using the same vocabulary as the representations of light, perception and technological advancement so prevalent in the pre-war Paris poems. If *Les Fenêtres'* closing cadence – *Le beau fruit de la lumiere* – is a moving expression of love for Paris, modernity and Robert Delaunay's paintings of the Eiffel Tower, then this is directly linked with *Merveille de la Guerre's* imagery of comets and destruction prefiguring a resurrection:

Among other things, then, the war is personified as a woman. While Apollinaire provides few clues to her identity, we are free to imagine her as a *femme fatale* [...] Transferred to the European conflict, her association becomes highly ironic. Whereas war is the agent of death and destruction, it is associated here with (re)birth. Against all expectations the Grim Reaper proves to be the custodian of *l'esprit nouveau*.<sup>156</sup>

Reminiscent as this disconcertingly logical development is of *Zone's* prophetic concatenations, it is clearly at a fair remove from Garioch's gentle personality (perhaps, significantly, Apollinaire's too). Certainly, if he considered this, it is fairly likely that Garioch might have expanded his reservations about Apollinaire's attitudes to technology to include his beliefs regarding war, nationalism and art's relationship to progress. However – to return to Whyte's critique of the Belli Sonnets – it is apparent that Garioch was attracted to translation as a formalist, and if the strident tone and loosely waving line of *Ferlie o the Weir* and other free verse translations seem incongruous in his oeuvre, this is perhaps the reason why they were attempted. It may also be the reason why so few of them – compared with the far more numerous Belli sonnets – were finally printed.

Yet there appear to be subtle attempts to naturalise in terms of the long tradition of Scots language writing. As seen with Tom Scott's Villon translations, Garioch translates lines where

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<sup>155</sup> Guillaume Apollinaire, *Apollinaire on Art: Essays and Reviews 1902-1918* (London: Thames and Hudson, 1972) p.448.

<sup>156</sup> Willard Bohn, *Apollinaire, Visual Poetry and Art Criticism* (New Jersey: Associated University Presses, 1993) p.86.

intertextual references to older, often canonical Scots texts seem to serve as signifiers of intention and sympathy. In *Deleted Passage*, compare:

Atween the twa reivers like Jesus deid on the tree

With Robert Henryson's *The Abbay Walk*:

Thy power and thy warldis pelf  
Is nocht but very vanitie.  
Remember him that deit on tre;  
for thy saik taistit the bitter gall.<sup>157</sup>

Or the lines in *Ferlie o the Weir* running:

They mak short wark of getting bairns that hae barely time eneuch to dee

And later on:

If there were millions of them aa sortit in complete and relative order like the letters in a  
buik  
And yet as bonnie as tho life itsel cam out frae the deean

With MacDiarmid in *A Drunk Man Looks at the Thistle*:

Millions o' wimmen bring forth in pain  
Millions o' bairns that are no' worth ha'en.  
  
Wull ever a wumman be big again  
Wi's muckle's a Christ? Yech, there's nae sayin'.<sup>158</sup>

While, in the case of the second example, recognising Garioch's noted antipathy towards MacDiarmid, I would suggest that the shared vocabulary and tone, alongside the strong concern with Christian symbolism provide a powerful case for intentional intertextualities. As well as the translation from source to primary, then, there is a secondary transaction apparent within the target canon. The function of these transactions may be to ease the passage of the unfamiliar, unpunctuated French poem into its Scots context, while still achieving the desired unsettlement of context intended by the translation. With his versions of Apollinaire, Garioch seems to wish to contribute to tradition as well as, implicitly, make it clear that he remains equivocal about the actual possibility of doing so.

With Sydney Goodsir Smith, Apollinaire finds a translator drawn to him by a rather different route. While Garioch was essentially a traditionalist, driven to experiment by his desire to test the

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<sup>157</sup> Tom Scott, ed. *Late Medieval Scots Poetry* (London: Heinemann, 1967) p.65.

<sup>158</sup> Hugh MacDiarmid in Michael Grieve and Alexander Scott, eds. *The Hugh MacDiarmid Anthology* (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1972) p.42.

degree to which Scots could be controlled,<sup>159</sup> Goodsir Smith's work tended in exactly the opposite direction. Anarchically Rabelaisian, the younger poet was drawn to literary tinkering as a matter of course. This is most evident in his prose work *Carotid Cornucopius* – or to give its full title – *Carotid Cornucopius: Caird of the Cannon Gait and Voyeur of the Outlook Tower. His Splores, Cantraips, Wisdoms, Houghmagandies, Peribulations and All Kinna Abstrapulous Junketings and Ongoings About the High Toun of Edenberg, Capitule of Boney Scotland*.<sup>160</sup> But the carnival, Bakhtinian side of Goodsir Smith's writing and life (he died in 1974 at fifty eight, a tragically early death caused by a lifetime's heavy drinking on the Edinburgh literary scene) is expressed throughout his oeuvre. The other significant strand is the romantic late modernism<sup>161</sup> of his celebrated sequence, *Under the Eildon Tree*, which is frequently combined with his linguistic effusions to achieve a perspective unique in modern Scottish writing. He is the perfect *flâneur*.

Goodsir Smith was the first major Scottish poet after MacDiarmid to write a significant amount of *vers libre* – in Scots at least. And since MacDiarmid's most powerful '30s free verse tended to be in English, with ballad metres and other rhyming stanzas more prominent in his dwindling Scots output, the younger man's decision to make Scots the focus of his linguistic and formal experimentation becomes even more remarkable.<sup>162</sup> Goodsir Smith's work in free forms owes far less to the retained invisible pentameter than the majority of contemporary Scots writers who experimented in this area. The result of this unusual facility has been, unfortunately, that a broad understanding and appreciation of his work has been slow to appear in the decades since his death – his reputation has in fact suffered rather than grown with the intervening years. One reason for this might well be his language, which is certainly unusual – a macaronic invention in many pieces, ubiquitously enhanced by grafts from archaic Scots texts. However, which modern Scots writer, no matter how apparently faithful to the living language, wholly eschews this practice? Perhaps we

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<sup>159</sup> Christopher Whyte, *The Poetry of Robert Garioch* in Marco Fazzini, ed. *Alba Litteraria: A History of Scottish Literature* (Venezia Mestre: Amos Edizioni, 2005) pp.536-538.

<sup>160</sup> Sydney Goodsir Smith, *Carotid Cornucopius* (Edinburgh: M. Macdonald, 1964).

<sup>161</sup> Margery Palmer McCulloch, *Scottish Modernism and its Contexts 1918-1959: Literature, National Identity and Culture Exchange*, (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2009) pp.7-8.

<sup>162</sup> That Goodsir Smith was a New Zealander by birth, as well an upper middle class English speaker is at first perplexing. It does, however, go some way to explaining the exuberantly synthetic flavour of his Scots poetry, which hardly attempts to disguise its somewhat contradictory genesis. George Mackay Brown records both his personal kindness and linguistic individuality – as well, ultimately, as his work's real value: "Outside of Scotland his poetry is hardly known, because it was written entirely in Scots, in the language of Dunbar and Henryson and Burns and early MacDiarmid. His best lyrics are magnificent. He wrote a sequence of love poems, *Under the Eildon Tree*, that is one of the great works of the twentieth century. In any other culture, those poems would have brought him instant lasting fame [...] It seems strange that he, who spoke in an upper-class English voice, wrote his poetry in Scots. Language and genius have their own mysterious ways with a poet and Sydney must have drawn his poetry from deep ancestral roots." George Mackay Brown, *For the Islands I Sing* (Edinburgh: Polygon, 2008) pp.112-113.

ought to ask whether it is not Goodsir Smith's compositional technique – certainly unique in Scots – which has alienated potential readers?

Stephen Mulrine, for one, has expressed comparable reservations regarding Garioch's Apollinaire translations and original verse in English:

What [the *Collected Poems*] shows, certainly, is how consistently good Garioch's Scots poetry is [...] That should surprise no-one, but Garioch does not carry on his day-to-day living in Scots, any more than the next educated North Briton, and until this collection I had not realised how downright *bad* most of his poetry in English is [...] This is the other side of Garioch's accessibility, of course, and one occasionally wishes he could close *both* eyes, and defy meaning, with something like the recklessness of the Apollinaire he has translated, or indeed his first collaborator, Sorley MacLean.<sup>163</sup>

In a similar vein, Iain Crichton Smith was of the stated opinion that while his Scots was a fine instrument for the translation of formal, traditionally lineated poetry, it was not so capable of containing Apollinairian free verse: "[free verse] certainly doesn't suit Garioch whose translation of Apollinaire seems really to come from another country."<sup>164</sup> The obviously pithy response is that this is perhaps because it does. Yet beyond personal taste and subjectivity, both Mulrine and Crichton Smith (remembering Whyte's opinions on Garioch's metrical obsessions) appear to be addressing something extremely significant – specifically the degree to which the Scots language can be claimed to have assimilated modernist verse technique. According to these critics, the answer is that it has not successfully achieved this.

However, I have attempted to demonstrate that Garioch's Apollinaire translations are successful. And following a close reading of Goodsir Smith's translation of the French poet's *La Jolie Rousse (The Bonnie Reidheid)* in the light of his original *vers libre* and poems in translation, I hope to demonstrate the comparable ingenuity and achieved pathos of his translations. Firstly, the opening stanza of *The Bonnie Reidheid*, given in full:

Here's me fornent the warld, a mensefu man  
Kennan life, and daith's as far's a livan bodie can  
Haean preed the dules and joys o luve  
And whyles haean gart fowk think a bit  
Kennan monie leids  
And travelled a fair bittock  
And seen war as gunner and P.B.I.  
Skaitht i the heid and under chloriforme trepanned  
I' the gastrous stour his best friens tint  
I ken new and auld as weill as ae bodie can  
And wiout fashan myself wi war the-day

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<sup>163</sup> Steven Mulrine, *Collected Poems, by Robert Garioch* in *Akros* Vol.12, No.36 (Dec. 1977) p.39-41.

<sup>164</sup> Iain Crichton Smith, *Translations* in *Cencrastus* No.39, Spring 1991, p.43.

Atween and for wirsels, my fieres  
I judicate the lang tulyie atween tradition and invention  
Atween Order and Adventure.<sup>165</sup>

And the source French:

Me voici devant tous un homme plein de sens  
Connaissant la vie et de la mort ce qu'un vivant peut connaître  
Ayant éprouvé les douleurs et les joies de l'amour  
Ayant su quelquefois imposer ses idées  
Connaissant plusieurs langages  
Ayant pas mal voyagé  
Ayant vu la guerre dans l'Artillerie et l'Infanterie  
Blessé à la tête trépané sous le chloroforme  
Ayant perdu ses meilleurs amis dans l'effroyable lutte  
Je sais d'ancien et de nouveau autant qu'un homme seul pourrait des deux savoir  
Et sans m'inquiéter aujourd'hui de cette guerre  
Entre nous et pour nous mes amis  
Je juge cette longue querelle de la tradition et de l'invention  
De l'Ordre de l'Aventure<sup>166</sup>

The first two lines of Goodsir Smith's translation are straight iambic pentameters, imposing a metrical regularity on Apollinaire's poem absent in much of the original – as well as a rhyming couplet not present in the French. Although internal and end rhyme do occur elsewhere in the passage and Goodsir Smith's man/can construction reflects the original in this respect, with Apollinaire employing *devant/sens/connaissant/qu'un/vivant* internally in the first couplet. Beyond this, however, Goodsir Smith escapes into *vers libre* – with the occasional flicker of ballad metre or iambic phrasing to smoothen the passage. There is also the interesting parallelism of *ayant* in Apollinaire's version and *haein* in the Scots (which also retains the Francophone spelling of *chloriforme*, albeit with what Goodsir Smith might have characterised as an 'Oddanbeery' vowel change from –o– to –i–). Compared to Garioch, the tone is wilder, the lyricism in some ways more desperate. Goodsir Smith, as one would expect considering his English speaking background and tragicomic reputation, stands at a greater remove from his own writing process than Garioch. Much of the exuberant melodrama of his work comes from the reader's alienation in watching him watching himself use Scots words from dictionaries in a self-consciously excessive manner. Tellingly, Apollinaire in the original is much the same, deploying surrealist imagery and frenetic lineation to achieve a comparably distanced effect.

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<sup>165</sup> Sydney Goodsir Smith, *The Bonnie Reidheid* in *The Voice of Scotland, Vol.5, No.1* (Voice of Scotland: Whalsay, 1948) p.28.

*The Voice of Scotland* was a MacDiarmid periodical current in the years 1938-58.

<sup>166</sup> *Calligrammes*, p.183.

Goodsir Smith's intentions are eloquently set out in his early, apparently unpublished essay on the medieval Scots translator and poet Gavin Douglas. This essay was written in 1947 – the year after the publication of *The Deevil's Waltz*, Goodsir Smith's first mature collection, and five years before *So Late into the Night*, where he concentrates most fully on the short love lyric after *Under the Eildon Tree's* (1948) investigation of the extended elegy. It thus prefigures many of his longer, more linguistically experimental works – as well as celebrated translations such as his versions of Alexander Blok's *The Twal* and Tristan Corbier's *The Gangrel Rymour and the Pardon of Sanct Anne*, both from *Figs and Thistles* (1959). However, since Goodsir Smith published translations of Apollinaire and Paul Éluard in *The Voice of Scotland* in 1948, we can perhaps take his pronouncements here on experimental writing, the large scale work and the possibilities of translation as having a fairly direct bearing on his thinking on these subjects at this time. The major part of the article concerns itself with relating Douglas' translation of the *Aeneid* to G. Gregory Smith's theory of the Caledonian Antisyzygy and the history of Scottish Literature as constru(ct)ed therein. Goodsir Smith then reaches the following conclusion:

As far as Scots literature is concerned we are likely to see a progressive switch-over from the use of English to Scots and Gaelic; at the moment of writing (1947) most of the promising young writers are so doing. As yet this tendency has touched only verse and drama, but we can hope for, if not expect, a like development in prose within the next generation or sooner. It is, of course, quite essential that this should happen if Scots literature is to regain the European stature it had in the time of Douglas, or, in fact to become anything more than it has been for the last four or five hundred years – a succession of isolated oases planted by lonely giants surrounded by an increasing and encroaching desert. We are also likely to see further developments in the experimental use of language and if this should prove to be a correct prognosis Scottish writers will be well in the forefront of the battle, for the condition of the Scots language today is a state of flux that is ideally suited for and extremely sympathetic to revolution, invention and experiment.<sup>167</sup>

This last clause is important if we are to explicate Goodsir Smith's attempt to foster in Scots the same sort of disjointed, disconnected style which so distinguishes Apollinaire's poetry. Goodsir Smith believed that it was necessary to reject the English language in favour of Scots and Gaelic if a modern Scottish literary tradition was to prosper. He would add to this that, if such a change was to be achieved, it must be by revolutionary experiment as regards form and content. Scots must not be treated as a dying or decayed language, suitable only for a limited range of subject matter and formal devices – on the contrary Scots and Gaelic must out-modernise English. This attitude to language, while it has its roots in the same depleted earth from which grew Garioch's formal obsession, presents us with a proposition to the opposite effect. Both aesthetics amount to a denial

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<sup>167</sup> Sydney Goodsir Smith, *Gavin Douglas* (1947) National Library of Scotland Acc. 10426.12/13.

of history; a refusal to acknowledge the actual dominance of English in terms of its power over government, broadcast media and global language.

Goodsir Smith's work has not, generally, met with the posthumous acclaim which it deserves.<sup>168</sup> Sadly, critics have tended to relegate him to footnote status; either as one of many post-MacDiarmid minor poets writing in Scots, or simply as an oddity to be dismissed for his linguistic verve and considerable appetite for ridiculous statements. Colin Milton, writing in 2005, argues: "...for all its local felicities and gestures towards the contemporary, Goodsir Smith's poetic idiom is essentially a pastiche 'historic' Scots; concocted largely from literary sources, it never comes convincingly to life."<sup>169</sup> And Barry Wood, some years earlier in 1987, maintained that many of Goodsir Smith's poems: "...despite displaying a certain energy of personal feeling, are flawed by a too easy assumption of modernist technique and a tendency to rhetorical excess and fanciful sub-Joycean neologising."<sup>170</sup> There are others, however, who have taken up a contrary position. MacDiarmid, for instance, paid Goodsir Smith the following, somewhat fraught compliment after his death:

Poetry of any quality in Scotland has about as much chance of osmosing as mercury through rhyolite. But that is not the only reason for the failure of the poems of Sydney Goodsir Smith to achieve among the Scottish reading public at least a measure of the recognition and appreciation they deserved. The main reason was the language in which Sydney wrote. This was a language he invented and which no one else ever wrote or spoke or could conceivably have done.<sup>171</sup>

The reader notes MacDiarmid's startling (perhaps inadvertent) decision to begin an obituary with the mention of a friend's failure, as well as the past tense of "deserved." MacDiarmid is undoubtedly correct, however, to underline the inevitably linguistic divisiveness of Goodsir Smith's poetry. Tom Hubbard, writing in the same volume as Wood, is also full of enthusiasm for the excessively exuberant and macaronic character of Goodsir Smith's work:

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<sup>168</sup> Although as early as 1952, we find no less reputable a writer than Edith Sitwell introducing Goodsir Smith's poetry, stating that in her opinion: "I believe such poems as 'The Mandrake Hert,' 'Ye Spier Me,' 'Saagin,' and, above all, 'Defeat o the Hert,' with its magnificent last stanza, to be amongst the few poems by a poet now under forty to which the word 'great' can be applied. (Is not 'Defeat o the Hert' a great poem? If it is not, then I do not know what great poetry is). These particular poems have a concentration so intense, that the poem seems to be a flame, a quintessence of all the poet's powers of living. The wrappings of the world fall away, only the essence is left, only the fire of the spirit, the greed 'o the cormorant heart.'" Sydney Goodsir Smith, *So Late into the Night* (London: Peter Russell, 1952) p.7.

<sup>169</sup> Colin Milton, *Scots as a Literary Medium 1870-2000* in Marco Fazzini, ed. *Alba Litteraria: A History of Scottish Literature* (Venezia Mestre: Amos Edizioni, 2005) p.457.

<sup>170</sup> Barry Wood, *Scots, Poets and the City* in Cairns Craig, ed. *The History of Scottish Literature: Vol.4 Twentieth Century* (Aberdeen: Aberdeen University Press, 1987) p.340.

<sup>171</sup> Hugh MacDiarmid, *Sydney* in *For Sydney Goodsir Smith* (Edinburgh: MacDonald, 1975) p.43.

This kind of thing can be 'modern' in a truer sense than any shallow trendiness. Our current poetic climate is dominated by the thin-lipped, the bland, the fear of going over the top; Smith, however, revelled in a Dionysian exuberance of language and life. He combined the personae of gangrel and scholar: *Under the Eildon Tree* juxtaposes the booziness and randiness of the howff with a grand allusiveness to world culture.<sup>172</sup>

Hubbard's remarks concerning *Under the Eildon Tree* provide a useful link back to the Apollinaire, which we know Goodsir Smith was reading and translating at around the same time he wrote his great series of elegies. If we compare the lineation, linguistic invention and subject matter of the final lines of *Under the Eildon Tree* with *The Bonnie Reidheid* the parallelism is immediately apparent. Firstly, the end section of *Under the Eildon Tree XXIV – Fareweill*:

Syne the hill opened  
And the licht o' the sun beglamert  
The een like the leam o' virgin snaw,  
And the derkenin and the dawin  
Were the sevinth year.

A lustrum endit.

Bards hae sung o' lesser luves  
Than I o' thee  
O, my great follie and my granderie.<sup>173</sup>

Then the last lines of *The Bonnie Reidheid* as translated by Goodsir Smith:

Ye'd say her hair was the richt gowd  
A bleeze o Levin that winna dee awa  
Or maybe thae lowes dansan their pavanne  
In tea-roses that are dwynan  
Lauch, ay, fleer at me  
Men aawhar and in perticlar the fowk round here  
For there's feck o things I daurna tell ye  
Feck o things ye'd no let me tell ye  
Hae pitie for me.<sup>174</sup>

Juxtaposing these two poems reveals a clear relation between Goodsir Smith's appreciation of European poets like Apollinaire and the modernist affiliations of his own, original poetry. *Under the Eildon Tree's* variable line length, shifting typographical layout and the surrealist conjunction of incongruous images have clear parallels in Apollinaire. And again, on a level beyond the formal there are certainly deep similarities between the two men's boisterously exuberant poetics and appetites

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<sup>172</sup> Tom Hubbard, *Reintegrated Scots: The Post-MacDiarmid Makars* in Cairns Craig, ed. *The History of Scottish Literature: Vol.4 Twentieth Century* (Aberdeen: Aberdeen University Press, 1987) p.183.

<sup>173</sup> Sydney Goodsir Smith, *Collected Poems* (London: John Calder, 1975) p.187.

<sup>174</sup> *The Bonnie Reidheid* in *The Voice of Scotland, Vol.5, No.1* (Voice of Scotland, 1948) p.29.

for life and love. In the final three lines of *The Bonnie Reidheid*<sup>175</sup> Goodsir Smith seems to speak not in Apollinaire's voice, but his own – revealing the vatic, even tragically heroic side of the explosive *bon viveur*. The position adopted here is, naturally, quite at odds with the persona of coolly detached civility which, for so much of the twentieth century, presented itself as the dominant poetic in an emphatically British (that is to say, Anglophone) arena.

Goodsir Smith and Garioch's translations of French modernist poetry, both in terms of critical neglect and their own linguistically heterogeneous, even incongruous natures, are products of their environments. They test the possibilities of a non-official language, now synthetic, which is both oral and historicist in its vocabulary and grammar; medieval and modern experienced, not as a smooth chronological progression, but two extremes thrust together in the act of translation. Returning to Goodsir Smith's essay on Douglas, he addresses the almost uniquely close relationship the Scottish Renaissance, as a modernist literary movement, seemed to enjoy with the medieval poetry of the Auld Makars:

Confronted with Gawin [sic] Douglas I cannot treat of him as objectively as a modern Frenchman might treat of Villon. I find it necessary to link Douglas with our position today and the cultural position of Scotland today is inextricably melled with the political position, as it was for the Irish in 1904, as it certainly was not for Douglas and his generation, but as it was to a certain extent for Ramsay and Burns and Walter Scott and any other post-Union writers of the first or second rank. To me, this is no disability in the least, but because the cultural movement in Scotland is the spearhead and seminal point of a political movement so a number of my remarks will inevitably have more than a flavour of propaganda about them – just as the remarks of previous generations of Scottish literary pundits (not that I claim to be a pundit) have had a contrary political flavour.<sup>176</sup>

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<sup>175</sup> The French text of this poem (*Calligrammes*, p.184) reveals that Goodsir Smith has, in this case, been somewhat free in his translation. The lineation is compressed, with the break between the two stanzas in the source removed in the target. Ironically, Goodsir Smith's light, oblique use of rhyme and half-rhyme – implied rather than baldly stated in the translation – is exceeded by Apollinaire's original. In any case, the Scots poem builds convincingly on its French source to produce an authentic, pathos filled expression which blends seamlessly with Goodsir Smith's own macaronic, surreally kiltering style:

Ses cheveux sont d'or on dirait  
Un bel éclair qui durerait  
Ou ces flammes qui se pavanent  
Dans les roses-thé qui se fanent

Mais riez riez de moi  
Hommes de partout surtout gens d'ici  
Car il y a tant de choses que je n'ose vous dire  
Tant de choses que vous ne me laisseriez pas dire  
Ayez pitié de moi

<sup>176</sup> Sydney Goodsir Smith, *Gawin Douglas* (1947) National Library of Scotland Acc. 10426.13.

What Goodsir Smith is addressing here is the insecurity of tradition and canonicity with which so many modern Scottish writers have been concerned. Faced with an established, almost unassailable English tradition, writers like MacDiarmid, Garioch and Goodsir Smith were necessarily oppositional in their foregrounding of influences like the Auld Makars and the revivalists of the eighteenth century. Thus, while it would be an eccentric English poet who placed a similar emphasis on the centrality of Chaucer to his or her work, it is easier to accept Goodsir Smith's admission of his subjective, inevitably involved relationship with Douglas.<sup>177</sup> Beyond this, I would extend the case to suggest a similarly singular relationship with European *avant garde* poets like Apollinaire, whose formal departures and innovations could be translated directly into English due to the existence of a codified medium against which to rebel. In terms of Scots, there were attempts at such, but the looser nature of central control – in many ways a desirable situation – meant that, arguably, experimental forms of writing sat at a double remove from the mainstream which might otherwise have given them definition. The involvement is reversed: the poetry upon which the Scottish Renaissance claimed to build as opposed to a poetic hitherto foreign but now desirable to the Scots language. Both the forward (in terms of global modernism) and the backward (in terms of Scottish history) impulses, I would argue, confront and reveal the same general tendencies – the same destabilised tradition – in the works of the writers who engaged with them.

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<sup>177</sup> Robert Crawford, *Devolving English Literature: Second Edition* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2000) p.18.

## V. Conclusion.

The history of twentieth-century Scottish writing is currently being subjected to a degree of renewed critical enquiry which, while necessarily preliminary in nature, offers opportunities to foreground neglected names, uncover hitherto unsuspected affinities and realign our understanding with the wider narratives at work on a global level. This is typified by such recent scholarship as Emma Dymock and Margery Palmer McCulloch's *Scottish and International Modernisms: Relationships and Reconfigurations*, which explores the wider relationships of the first generation Scottish Renaissance in the context of global modernism. In their introduction, they write that:

Periods of significant literary achievement in Scotland have most often been related to an increased sense of nationhood in the country. In the late medieval period of Henryson, Dunbar and Gavin Douglas, for example, the literary flowering which took place out of a desire to enrich the Scots language and make it an instrument fit to challenge the southern 'rose of rhetoric', as Dunbar characterised Chaucer, and also to translate a classic text such as Virgil's *Aeneid*, as did Douglas in his *Eneados*.<sup>178</sup>

Their collection of essays considers various aspects of the post-war growth of Scottish cultural nationalism in terms of international modernist parallels. Unsurprisingly, foreign languages and translation are unifying themes, binding disparate figures and the various fields of literature, music and the visual arts. It is clear that this was also the case for the second generation writers, some of whom – MacLean, Goodsir Smith and Garioch, for instance – were already emerging before the Second World War, but whose most definitive and accomplished works are to be located in a post-war context. Garioch's atomic pessimism, Tom Scott's enormous pronouncements on divinity and socialism, Goodsir Smith's frenetic outpourings – these utterances find their true historical moment in the paranoiac shadow of the Cold War. The recent memory of Nazism presented a moral challenge to the security, of sorts, a Scottish national vision might have afforded in the 1920s and 1930s. Douglas Gifford stresses the necessity, for the second generation writers, of expanding this response when he writes:

With hindsight it can be argued that the values and aims of the Renaissance movement were doomed to failure, given the ideological fall-out of the Second World War. Too much based on Irish Revival, by drawing inspiration from Yeats' astonishing creation of an essentialist rural tradition and mythology for Ireland, and with too great a pre-occupation with rural and traditional Scotland, and too little relationship with the urban and industrial realities of a very different and economically suffering Scotland, it simply didn't connect.<sup>179</sup>

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<sup>178</sup> Emma Dymock and Margery Palmer McCulloch, eds. *Scottish and International Modernisms: Relationships and Reconfigurations* (Glasgow: Association for Scottish Literary Studies, 2011) p.1.

<sup>179</sup> Douglas Gifford, *Re-mapping Renaissance* in Gerard Carruthers, David Goldie and Alastair Renfrew, eds. *Beyond Scotland: New Contexts for Twentieth-Century Scottish Literature* (Amsterdam: Rodopi, 2004) p.27.

Whatever your opinion as to the failure or success of the first generation Renaissance, the situation was clearly of a different character in 1945 or 1946 than it had been in 1925 or 1926. As regards the Scots language, the climate of increased scepticism, suspicion of nationalism and general atmosphere of insecurity posed difficult, though unarguably compelling, questions. On the other hand, the intellectual possibilities and formal opportunities which the second generation of Scots-language writers inherited had, undoubtedly, been expanded. Tom Scott, surveying the recent decades' achievements in 1970, wrote:

Those Scottish poets who have grown up since the first or second world wars inherit a very different poetic climate from the one in which the young MacDiarmid and Muir grew up. The latter inherited a claustrophobic kailyardism, a Scots so limited in range and debased in mind that no serious poet could use it at all, a mental climate so moribundly provincial that the universal mind of the great European tradition was as remote from ordinary life as were Asia and atomic physics. They changed all that, and we today take the whole world for our proper hunting-ground, the whole range of human history and experience.<sup>180</sup>

In such a globalised climate, a writer's rejection of received opinions as to the impossibility of a real relationship with tradition acquires a powerfully symbolic character. The choice to translate poetry into Scots becomes metaphorically significant, with a writer like Sydney Goodsir Smith refusing to accept the apparent impossibilities of his self-created literary language – instead attempting to strengthen it through international reinforcement. Moreover, he did this in the genuine belief that Scots would replace English within the next few decades, retaking its place as the state language of a nation somewhat akin to a communist version of late medieval Scotland.

This was, necessarily, an engagement with tradition – the very feasibility of an independent Scottish literary tradition, and by extension an independent Scotland, in a world which had so recently felt the first rumblings of nuclear warfare. To jump forward a few decades, to translate into Lallans would become to test an essentially local Scottish tradition against a world in which Americans raced Russians to walk on the moon. In some ways, it is remarkable that so positive a minority nationalism was attempted in the first place. That it was so successful in terms of the quality of texts written and the ultimately affirmative statements embodied therein is startling. What is less surprising, perhaps, is the quantity of valuable literary and biographical material unknown to scholarship in archives and libraries. To this might be added the sobering proviso that just because material is technically in the public domain does not necessarily mean that it is accessible to a wide reading audience. Attitudes towards language and education in Scotland have no doubt improved since 1940. But until the Scots language is recognised and, crucially, taught on a

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<sup>180</sup> Tom Scott, *The Penguin Book of Scottish Verse* (London: Penguin, 1970) p.53.

much wider scale than at the present time, the poets this thesis deals with will inevitably be read by a handful of those who might potentially profit and receive enjoyment from their writing.

The externalisation of the Scottish tradition, as exemplified by Tom Scott's and William J. Tait's versions of Villon, was clearly anything but a one-sided, linear process. The language of Scott's translations was naturally inherited, to an extent, from MacDiarmid and the Auld Makars. It was also a reflection of Scott's considerable reading of and dialogue with Eliot, which seems to have led him to the opinion that if a Scottish tradition were to be sustained then it must be centrally administered. The young Eliot had deliberately rejected America in favour of Europe, going into exile in the belief that it was necessary to abandon the periphery and occupy the centre. He would be central, European, more-English-than-the-English. But he would inevitably also be an outsider, whose contribution, as he saw it, to the great tradition of European letters depended in no small part upon his alienation from it. Robert Crawford considers Eliot's reading of G. Gregory Smith in this context:

Eliot responded with pleasure to the glimpse of Edinburgh around 1800 which Gregory Smith offered, writing that Edinburgh around this time was analogous to Boston around 1850, since both had momentarily challenged London as centres of cultural importance. In making this connection, Eliot links the earlier predicament of Edinburgh to the cultural milieu of his own roots. But Eliot also stressed that challenges could not be sustained in the provinces, where there was not a continuous supply of 'important men', and that it was inevitable that, after such moments passed, important men would turn to the metropolis again.<sup>181</sup>

That the young Tom Scott – who saw himself as a very important man indeed – would turn to Eliot in the 1940s and 1950s would seem to justify the American's point of view. In practice, however, it could never have been quite so simple. The tradition Scott was attempting to write towards and translate into was Scottish, not British or English, and though he lived in London for some years there is no indication that his loyalties were in any way affected. Eliot was, indeed, particularly useful to Scott as a literary mentor and figure of admiration precisely because his position as the great resident alien of British letters allowed him to represent a far broader spectrum of concerns and international affiliations than English writers like Auden or Spender could conceivably have done. Edinburgh was hardly a metropolis, but it provided Scott with a good enough repository for the national narrative which was, for him, the conduit to a wider European tradition comprising many such narratives. We must see his Villon translations as products of this worldview; even as attempts to refigure Anglo-American modernism in a Scottish context.

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<sup>181</sup> Robert Crawford, *Devolving English Literature: Second Edition* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2000) p.255.

William J. Tait remains one of the least well-known figures in a generation of underappreciated writers. His sustained use of the Shetlandic dialect, in addition to the near inaccessibility of his work due to his *Collected Poems* (the only volume published in his lifetime) not being reissued in the past thirty two years, has not led to mass acclaim. This is hardly surprising, sobering as it undoubtedly is. Yet in his brilliantly ironic translations of Villon, Tait not only achieved one of the high points in the distinguished canon of modern Scots poetic translations – he also demonstrated that canon’s potential for plurality. Scott’s translations attempt a synthesis, a literary Lallans which symbolically unites words of diverse origin to intend a coherently independent Scotland. Tait’s translations make a virtue of that diversity and leave it intact. The latter solution is not unproblematic in itself – it takes place in the context of Scottish nationalism, despite the use of Shetlandic language. But in the event of Scott’s centralising nationalism succeeding politically, work like Tait’s would inevitably become all the more important. It contains crucial lessons as to the primacy of no one tradition, and urges the sympathetic reader to think deeply about the multiple subjectivities involved in defining language, nationhood and identity.

The internal re-examination of the Scottish literary tradition was no less complicated a procedure, involving much the same sorts of contradictory tendencies. In terms of Scots translation, the refashioning of poetries written in Gaelic, English, Old English and Latin presented an opportunity to stake a claim to artistic and cultural territory which made potentially powerful statements as to the translator’s political intentions. Sorley MacLean had collaborated with MacDiarmid on *The Golden Treasury of Scottish Poetry* in the 1930s, which included Gaelic and Latin poetry in English translation. But it was arguably his slightly later work with Robert Garioch on *17 Poems for 6d* which was the more significant statement in this respect, since the two writers were both young, unknown and, as a result of their obscurity and minority status, equal. As Christopher Whyte writes on the subject of English translations of Gaelic poetry:

The function of a translation is not to obliterate the original and substitute for it. Unfortunately, the relations of power and usage subsisting at present between English in Scotland and Scottish Gaelic make this not only possible but an ever-present danger. Under more favourable circumstances, a translation will enrich and deepen our understanding of the original on which it is based, while the function of the original will be, in time, to generate repeated, new and fresh translations. Rather than of translation, one is tempted to speak of a wholesale transportation of MacLean into the new language, as a result of which his poetry came to be identified with what he had himself put into English.<sup>182</sup>

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<sup>182</sup> Sorley MacLean, *Caoir Gheal Leumraich: White Leaping Flame*, ed. Christopher Whyte and Emma Dymock (Edinburgh: Polygon, 2011) p.xxix.

There may therefore be an opportunity, for the Scots translator, to make versions of Gaelic poems which will remain versions of them – for they stand so much closer to the marginalised situation of their originals than the English cribs which threaten to displace them.

MacLean's correspondence and interaction with Douglas Young is a comparable instance of a Scots-language poet collaborating, whether as translator or safe-guarder of manuscripts, with a Gaelic writer. Young was, some would say, "probably more important to the renaissance movement as a propagandist than as a poet."<sup>183</sup> There may be some truth in this statement. Even so, we ought not to dismiss his other talents, which were various. As notoriously divisive leader of the SNP, public intellectual and distinguished classicist, Young possessed a degree of industrious national fervour which many of his colleagues lacked. In addition to this, he was both gifted and generous in his Scots renditions of poems out of many languages and an invaluable help to MacLean and Campbell Hay in the completion of their own most celebrated works. All literary movements require enablers almost as much as they need important original writers and translators to enable; Young was at least the first and third of these three things.

Sydney Goodsir Smith, also, should not be overlooked in the roll call of Scots writers who played an important part in the internal redefinition of the priorities and antecedents of twentieth-century Scottish literature. His translations of Gaelic are not numerous (numbering two from MacLean that I am aware of, only one of which was published) but are significant works nonetheless, especially given what we can piece together of their genesis. It has been suggested that Goodsir Smith's published translations often seem to have been very carefully chosen so as to fit the subject matter and style of a particular volume of poetry.<sup>184</sup> If this is the case, then it is surely significant that the book where he engages most with World War Two, *The Devil's Waltz* (1946) in which set-piece translations from both Polish and Gaelic figure prominently, would be the last Goodsir Smith volume to contain them until *Figs and Thistles'* inclusion of poems by the Russian Alexander Blok and the Breton Tristan Corbière in 1959. The most important of the intervening collections, *Under the Eildon Tree* (1948) and *So Late into the Night* (1952) focussed more extensively on the extended love elegy and short lyric respectively. They therefore involve a more personal, less public incarnation of the poet as spokesman for the body social. In the context of the tradition of Scots translation as Goodsir Smith understood it, this suggests that for him translation was a key part of the makar's role as regards the communal utterance. For we know from manuscript and periodical sources that Goodsir Smith was translating poetry into Scots at this time – significantly those versions of Apollinaire and

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<sup>183</sup> Duncan Glen, *Hugh MacDiarmid and the Scottish Renaissance* (Edinburgh: Chambers, 1964) p.189.

<sup>184</sup> J. Derrick McClure, *European Poetry in Scots* in Tom Hubbard and R.D.S Jack, eds. *Scotland in Europe* (Amsterdam: Rodopi, 2006) pp.97-98.

Paul Éluard which appeared in *The Voice of Scotland* in 1948. That more translations did not appear in his collections would seem to suggest a far more partial, even *ad hoc* approach to the act than that displayed by Young or Campbell Hay, for whom translation was as important an act as the writing of original poetry. Given Young's avowed role as an agitator and preparer of ground this preference is appropriate – indeed the redefinition of canon which his work as a translator allowed him to do may, ultimately, have allowed him to achieve far more than he might have as a poet had he not translated. In Campbell Hay's case, his singular ability to straddle languages and multiple international affinities with ease fed back into his own poetry, with the interplay of Gaelic and Scots in his work being only one of the many interrelations at play there. This made him, despite the tragedy of his later mental illness, a prolific and linguistically various poet whose popularity has perhaps suffered due to the inability of most readers to appreciate the full range of his writing in the multiple languages in which it takes its form.

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All literary translation is an experiment with canonicity, one which argues for the inclusion of a text in the target canon. This may extend to an argument in favour of the acceptance, not simply of the text itself, but also of its affiliations, whether political, philosophical or aesthetic. To translate a twentieth-century Russian poet like Mayakovsky into Scots, for example, makes a clear statement as to the translator's left wing sympathies. To translate Dostoyevsky<sup>185</sup> is to make an equally important statement about the moral condition of the contemporary novel in Scotland. Both acts challenge and re-contextualise literary production at the time of these works' creation, comparing MacDiarmid and the first generation Renaissance to the Russian Futurists, and putting the nineteenth-century Scottish novel into dialogue with Marx and Orthodox mysticism. Works of this sort, which include Garioch and Goodsir Smith's translations of French surrealist and modernist verse, often remain shocking long after their original authors' deaths. This is certainly the case with Apollinaire in Scots, the jarring, disconnected character of which toys with unreadability, at least until the reader accepts the poem as an attempt to engender new forms in the language. For poetic translation, particularly in a minority and developing tongue, is inevitably formally motivated to an extent.

Ultimately, the Scots-language translation work of the post-MacDiarmid makars was one part, albeit a vitally important one, of the literary achievement of a remarkable generation of poets whose full merits remain to be recognised. Their role in bridging the divide between the immediately post-World War One writers and those Scottish poets, dramatists and novelists who came to

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<sup>185</sup> Colin Donati, *Raskolnikov's Dream from Crime and Punishment, 1.v by Fyodor Dostoevskysy* in Chapman 110, pp.91-96.

prominence in the 1960s and 1970s would, if it were their only claim to fame, be sufficient reason for their wider study and appreciation. However, writers such as Garioch, Goodsir Smith, Tom Scott, William J. Tait, Douglas Young and George Campbell Hay consistently produced work of genuine quality. Moreover, they did this out of a distinctive sense of a Scottish tradition and with a generally affirmative and democratic attitude towards a plural society and sense of nationhood. Their translation work, as this thesis has attempted to demonstrate, was crucial to the construction of a poetic canon to support this tradition. As the Hungarian scholar Attila Dósa wrote when introducing Edwin Morgan in *Beyond Identity*, his 2008 volume of interviews with contemporary Scottish poets, translation can be:

a sort of playing field for the extrovert mind: it is a spiritual reality, a virtual adventure, perhaps a useful sublimation for emigration, and presumably a version of what Kenneth White has called 'intellectual nomadism'. It may not reach as far as Saturn, but certainly crosses political and linguistic borders.<sup>186</sup>

For the second generation Scottish Renaissance poets it was also, by virtue of ancestral figures such as Gavin Douglas, a metaphorically charged act which, before the text was even translated, presented writers with an avowedly ideological evocation of history. More than anything, these works demand to be better known and more widely available in print than at the present time – for their artistic value and because of the many compelling questions and critical problems with which they continue to confront us.

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<sup>186</sup> Attila Dósa, *Beyond Identity: New Horizons in Modern Scottish Poetry* (Amsterdam: Rodopi, 2009) p.36.

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