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'Space that needs time and time that needs life': The spanning of time from the ancient to the futuristic in the poetry and plays of Edwin Morgan

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Abstract

James McGonigal in his biography of Edwin Morgan, *Beyond the Last Dragon* (2010), notes that it was in the poet's 'old age' that the nature of time, together with that of love, became 'the guiding theme[s] of his work'. This dissertation considers how time, from the ancient past to the futuristic, is explored by Morgan throughout his work, and argues that by contextualising modern ideals in prehistoric and futuristic environments Morgan is able to connect and bring together humanity from widely separate areas of time. By connecting past, present and future in a range of texts, the poet is emphasising humankind's ability for progress and regeneration. The structure of the dissertation represents the circularities of time that Morgan refers to throughout his work, starting from the final decade of Morgan's life before circling through his earlier years of writing and ending once more in the twenty-first century. Each chapter closely analyses one or two of Morgan's major texts: *Demon* (1999) and *The Play of Gilgamesh* (2005) in Chapter One, then Chapter Two: *Star Gate: Science Fiction Poems* (1979); Chapter Three: *Sonnets from Scotland* (1984); Chapter Four: 'Planet Wave' (1997) and Chapter Five: 'Cathures' (2002). The texts are used to discuss a wide range of themes that come from Morgan's exploration of time, such as personal and political identity, multiple realities, religion, science, the local and the universal. By considering the relevance of author biography when studying these texts, the dissertation argues against the Barthesian approach of separating literary work from its creator and explores how Morgan's own identity comes through in relation to particular figures in his work. Close analysis of the texts is supported throughout with contextual information from interviews with Morgan published in *Nothing Not Giving Messages* (1990), McGonigal's biography, and archival research of personal letters from the University of Glasgow's Special Collections.

Contents

Introduction

As a poet, playwright, essayist and translator in a career that spanned well over half a century, Edwin Morgan cannot be classified as a writer dedicated to only one form, subject or genre. His chosen forms range from experimental concrete poetry to free verse, monologues, narratives, dialogues and sonnets, while his subjects include space travel, war, and interpretations of language that are based within genres such as science fiction, romantic lyrics, and reconstructions from history. Diversity is widely noted as Morgan's defining trait, with Rodney Stenning Edgecombe's study on the *Aspects of Form and Genre in the Poetry of Edwin Morgan* (2003) suggesting that '[Morgan's] versatility is unmatched by his contemporaries'.[1] Despite this, it can be argued that there is a main theme of his work yet to be fully examined. Existing in his first published translation and occurring throughout the remainder of his poetry and drama, this theme is the exploration of time and the connections that exist between past, present and future.

The genre of science fiction is perhaps the most renowned area of Morgan's work, with the relatively limited amount of Morgan criticism and analysis concentrating heavily on his engagement with the genre. It is his inherent desire for poetry to 'somehow bring scientific ideas into its sphere of operations'[2] that is seen as one of Morgan's more recognisable traits, with Hamish Whyte commenting that 'science fiction became an important strand through all of Edwin Morgan's work'.[3] There is a fundamental energy of metamorphosis in Morgan's work that leans towards the future and change, revealing Morgan as a keen follower of the avant-garde art movement Futurism, founded in the early twentieth century by the Italian poet F.T. Marinetti. Morgan's late poem 'At Eighty' (2002) demonstrates his avant-garde approach succinctly in its command to 'push the boat out, compañeros […] unknown is best',[4] the vessels of movement found in his poetry, whether that be boats or spaceships, moving him ever-forward into the future throughout his career. Marinetti's manifesto declared the need for 'idealists, workers of thought, [to] unite to show how inspiration and genius walk in step with

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[1] Rodney Stenning Edgecome, *Aspects of Form and Genre in the Poetry of Edwin Morgan* (Buckinghamshire: Cambridge Scholars Press, 2003), p. 4.

[2] Edwin Morgan, 'Doing Different Things' in *Nothing Not Giving Messages*, ed. Hamish Whyte (Edinburgh: Polygon, 1990), p.31.

[3] Hamish Whyte, 'The Milk of Space' in *The Bottle Imp*, Issue 8, ed. Gwen Enstam, Duncan Jones (Association for Scottish Literary Studies, November 2010), http://www.arts.gla.ac.uk/ScotLit/ASLS/SWE/TBI/TBIIssue8/Whyte.html [accessed 26.10.2014].

[4] Morgan, 'At Eighty' in *Cathures: New Poems 1997-2001* (Manchester: Carcanet Press, 2002), p.69.

the progress of the machine'.[5] The machinery is shown to be an apparatus for destruction, projecting itself at convention and tradition. The energy that governs the futurist's work is present in Morgan's work also, and yet, where there is destruction for Marinetti, for Morgan there is regeneration.

This commitment to the idea of scientific, artistic and human progress has led to suggestions from fellow writers and critics that it is the present and future that Morgan focuses most of his work upon. Iain Crichton Smith comments that '[Morgan] doesn't seem particularly interested in the past, even his own past',[6] while Kevin McCarra argues that 'Morgan's work takes its bearings from the future'.[7] The breadth of Morgan's work that emphatically projects his 'belief in the future, of further, onward, better'[8] corresponds with this idea that the areas of time written about and explored in his work focus mainly on the present or future, especially if a play or collection of poetry is considered as a singular piece of work. I believe, however, that this is a misguided assumption. Now that we have the complete and collected *oeuvre* of Morgan, we can take a comprehensive overview and argue that Morgan continuously explores throughout his work the connections that exist between humankind's past, present and future, and that by doing this he demonstrates an underlying ambition to join together these three areas of time. This dissertation will attempt to determine the existence of these connections in Morgan's poetry and drama, before further exploring how the communication established between different periods of time in Morgan's work is used to portray a sense of growth and regeneration.

'Time' is a notoriously complex subject and so the term should be defined in the context of this dissertation. One of the many definitions given to the concept in the Oxford English Dictionary is of a 'period' of time which is 'in the past, present, or future with reference to the present moment.'[9] In a chronological, linear sense, Morgan's points of reference stretch out from the primordial past to the imagined societies of a technologically-advanced future. But when considered comprehensively, the interconnecting back and forth in his 'present moment' of writing delivers a pattern of relation rather than a single linearity. Of

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[5] Filippo Marinetti, qtd in *Futurism*, ed. Didier Ottinger (Milan: Centre Pompidou, 2008), p. 78.

[6] Iain Crichton Smith, 'The Public and Private Morgan' in *About Edwin Morgan,* eds. Robert Crawford, Hamish Whyte (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 1990), p. 39.

[7] Kevin McCarra, 'And One to Go' in *Scottish Field*, vol. 133, August 1987, p. 171.

[8] Kathleen Jamie, 'The lifeline of love' in *The Guardian*, 3 March 2007, www.theguardian.com/books/2007/mar/03/featuresreviews.guardianreview27 [accessed 28.10.2014].

[9] "time, n., int., and conj.". OED Online. June 2015. Oxford University Press, http://www.oed.com/view/Entry/202100?result=1&rskey=269GCR& [accessed 01.10.2014].

the texts chosen for this research, there is a retelling of *Gilgamesh,* the oldest surviving story in a written text known to man, alongside *Star Gate: Science Fiction Poems*, a futuristic collection described by James McGonigal as 'plung[ing] deep into outer space, but also into the inner spaces of particle theory and of time, and of personal emotion too.'[10] Similarly, another sequence to be examined in this dissertation shows a contrast of time periods but within its own arrangement, the timeline of 'Planet Wave' ranging from the universe's birth in 20 Billion B.C., to the interstellar travel of humans in 2300 A.D. While Morgan writes on areas of time millennia apart, in the primary texts selected for this dissertation I believe each poetry collection or play portrays a specific relation to his and our present, and to the decades in which they were written, be that societal or biographical.

This dissertation will focus on six groupings of poetry or drama to explore the ways in which Morgan spans areas of the past, the modern age, and the future to illustrate ideas about the era in which he was writing. While Robert Crawford has highlighted Morgan's thematic interest in the crossing of time periods by proclaiming him as 'Morgan the modern, Morgan the futurist, and Morgan the medievalist',[11] it is James McGonigal who crucially pinpoints in his biography of Morgan that it was in the poet's 'old age' that the nature of time, together with that of love, became 'the guiding theme[s] of his work'.[12] Taking this into account, the first chapter of this dissertation will be based around two texts written in or around the final decade of his life: *Demon* (1999), and *The Play of Gilgamesh* (2005). These texts show Morgan addressing the romantic, satanic rebelliousness of a principle of energy, and the oldest-known surviving text in which there is an examination of the human desire for eternity. With Morgan having been diagnosed with cancer in March 1999, these texts can be analysed with consideration to his biographical context and the poet's recognition of his own mortality, alongside the texts' own historical contexts. They are poetic responses to the lived condition, hypersensitive in personal self-realisation and also in outward literary articulation.

The following four chapters will each focus, for the most part, on earlier poetry collections or sequences: *Star Gate: Science Fiction Poems* (1979), *Sonnets from Scotland* (1984), 'Planet Wave' (1997) and 'Nine in Glasgow' (2002). While the first chapter of the dissertation addresses texts published in the final years of Morgan's life, these four chapters will be arranged chronologically in terms of when they were first published. By doing this,

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[10] James McGonigal, *Beyond the Last Dragon: A Life of Edwin Morgan* (Ross-shire: Sandstone Press Ltd, 2012), p. 256.

[11] Robert Crawford, ''to change/the unchangeable' - The Whole Morgan' in *About Edwin Morgan*, p. 11.

[12] McGonigal, p. 337.

they can be considered alongside Morgan's own biographical timeline and the societal eras in which they were produced. In Morgan's opening lecture from 'Writing Together' in April 1990, he references the Italian philosopher Giambattista Vico, who 'looked back at history and saw it as a spiral of recurring but not identical cycles or phases, *corsi e ricorsi*, over huge stretches of time',[13] before turning to his contemporary Hugh MacDiarmid who Morgan believes 'sees history as a vast slowly turning circle from which he would like to, but cannot, escape'.[14] I believe that this idea of the spheres of time, or the circularity of time, is relevant to Edwin Morgan's own exploration of it, and the structure of this dissertation is intended to represent this. The dissertation starts at the close of the twentieth century and circles back to the 1970s, before continuing forward and eventually ending in the same decade in which it began. It depicts from beginning to end a thirty-year period in Morgan's life. Considering that a collection such as *Sonnets from Scotland* consists of fifty-one poems, each chapter will address only a few poems specifically before considering them in the wider context of the sequence or collection.

Star Gate represents Morgan's most definably futuristic collection, portraying reality unconstrained and flourishing from the effects of space travel and scientific discovery. A highly relevant text in terms of future time, the collection can be regarded not just from a historical context, with the 'Particle Poems' referencing the revolutionary discoveries of the 1960s and 70s in quantum field theory, but also from a biographical one. The collection was published a year after the death of John Scott, 'the great love of EM's life',[15] and James McGonigal suggests that it has 'some of his grief poured into [it]'.[16]

Arguably the most celebrated of Morgan's work included in this dissertation, *Sonnets from Scotland* crosses the boundaries of time, Gavin Wallace suggesting that the collection reaches 'dizzying temporal extremes - not simply through past, present and future, but "future pasts" and "past futures" too'.[17] The collection has a covertly political role, and Morgan's decision to portray a vibrant history of Scotland through the sonnet form can be explicitly examined alongside the political context of the time, the failed aftermath of the Scottish Referendum of 1979.

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[13] Morgan, 'Saturn and Other Rings' in *Chapman*, ed. Joy Hendry, no. 64, Spring/Summer 1991, p. 2.
[14] Ibid., p. 4.
[15] McGonigal, p. 9.
[16] Ibid., p. 256.
[17] Gavin Wallace, 'New Currency or Old?: 'The Coin' by Edwin Morgan' in *The Bottle Imp*, November 2007, http://asls.arts.gla.ac.uk/SWE/TBI/TBIIssue2/Coin.html [accessed 25.10.14].

'Planet Wave', a collaboration project with saxophonist Tommy Smith and inspired in part by H.G. Wells' *A Short History of the World*, takes a similar approach to *Sonnets from Scotland.* Compared to the *Sonnets* there is an expansion in Morgan's poetry, both in terms of subject matter with the documentation of the earth's history rather than just Scotland's, as well as the use of the free verse poetic form.

'Nine in Glasgow' is taken from Morgan's 2002 collection *Cathures*, capturing again the personal reflections of his own mortality alongside an encompassing of wider worlds. 'Nine in Glasgow' is a compilation of monologues, based around figures connected to the history of Morgan's home city which presents a timescale of over 1,500 years. Taking characters not immediately recognisable as having a Glaswegian past, Morgan creates a connection with the city and the wider world in both time and place. It is an approach that shows similarities with *Sonnets from Scotland*, but in this later collection Morgan's focus rests solely on his home city and its place in time. While 'Nine in Glasgow' is firmly centred on individual people, a vision of the past and present is created alongside this through the ancient, changing earth of Morgan's city. The sequence is interwoven with historical references to consider time periods in terms of people and place.

While I have sought to provide a wide range of material, there are many other areas of Morgan's work that would have been suitable for this study. A sequence such as 'An Alphabet of Goddesses' (1985) portrays Morgan's reconstruction of ancient ideals, modernising notable figures of a specific culture in a way similar to that presented in 'Planet Wave'. Another potential sequence, 'Glasgow Sonnets' (1972), portrays Morgan's focus on deprivation within a modern-day Glasgow, a destitution that is similarly represented in 'On Jupiter' from *Sonnets from Scotland* in which the poet states of his home country that 'any gods there,/ if they had made the thing in play, were gone' ('On Jupiter', ll. 9-10). In comparison to texts such as *The Play of Gilgamesh* and 'Demon' which consider immortality in relation to time, Morgan's topical 'Instamatic Poems' (1972) could also have been discussed in regards to their temporary suspension of time in the captured moments of newspaper and television reports. Furthermore, while I have chosen to focus primarily on sequences and collections, a chapter could have been written addressing individual poems whose subject matter is time, such as 'In Sobieski's Shield' (1968), 'The Archaeopteryx's Song' (1977) and 'Memories of Earth' (1977). The seemingly endless options for this area of study emphasise the prominence of the theme, but I believe the poetry and drama chosen for each chapter portray specific and distinct areas of practise and concern while at the same time covering a wide span of Morgan's work.

In 1974 a collection of Morgan's essays were assembled by Carcanet, and in 'A Glimpse of Petavius' Morgan states fervently that:

> [O]ur poetry needs greater humanity; but it must be the humanity of man within his whole environment: not just the drop of dew, the rose, the lock of hair, but the orbiting rocket in Anselm Hollo, the lobotomy in Allen Ginsberg, the lunar mountains in Hugh MacDiarmid.[18]

The essay in question is addressing specifically our age of science and technology and how it should impact upon poetry, but Morgan's desire for poetry to bring together man's 'whole environment' suggests an underlying cause for the exploration and connection of past, present and future repeatedly found in his writing. Applying prehistoric and futuristic environments to modern ideals allows Morgan to connect and bring together ways of being human from widely separate areas of existence. Stenning Edgecombe argues that there is an 'urgent humanism' that is significant throughout Morgan's writing, and that in his work there is a 'reluctance to lose touch with human issues and concerns'.[19] This is something that would be embraced by Morgan as 'a *sine qua non* of satisfying literature'[20] in his later criticism and poetry, and it is a prominent factor of his interaction with time and his intent to show the possibilities of man across all ages. In an interview with W. N. Herbert, Morgan argues that 'the world, history, society, everything in it, pleads to become a voice, voices!'[21] and by crossing through realms of time, he is able to represent these voices, depicting as he does so the growth and regeneration of humanity.

There is also a consequential relation between 'space', 'time' and 'life' proposed in the closing line of 'A Home in Space' from *Star Gate: Science Fiction Poems*, which I have used in the title of this dissertation. Space 'needs' time as time 'needs' life. The meaning of these terms of necessity is an act of regeneration, or indeed creation, which is prompted by these 'needs'. This will be returned to in the conclusion of this dissertation.

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[18] Morgan, 'A Glimpse of Petavius' in *Essays* (Cheadle: Carcanet, 1974), p. 15.
[19] Stenning Edgecombe, p. 3.
[20] Ibid.
[21] Morgan, 'Poetry about anything' in *Nothing Not Giving Messages*, p. 116.

Chapter 1:
'Midnight comes; kings are clay; men are earth.'
***Demon* (1999)**
and *The Play of Gilgamesh* (2005)

In March 1999, Edwin Morgan was diagnosed with prostate cancer and, having been told he may last six months or six years, he replied 'I think I'll take the six years.'[22] The final decade of his life saw him moving ever-forward, surviving five years longer than the best outcome of his initial diagnosis and continuing to substantially deliver poetry, plays and translations. There is a rejection of tranquility in this final period of his life, and in a letter to his close friend Mark Smith, Morgan states 'sailing into calmer waters, writing *Tempests*, composing last quartets, taking a deckchair into the garden - no that doesn't seem to be me.'[23]

The historical context of this time, the end of the twentieth century and of the millennium itself and the transition into a new decade, century and millennium, registers a significant calendrical change, but this is also a transitional period in Morgan's work. The twentieth century was an accelerated era of profound technological advancement, from atomic bombs to man's first step on the moon, and Morgan celebrates this most evidently in his earlier work. Alongside an exploration of space and the future found in collections such as *Star Gate*, Morgan focused on man and the machine; he addressed the evolution of computer technology in his work and was inspired by contemporary modern developments in European and American concrete poetry. Morgan commented that through this poetic form 'the poet should be able to tap a Chomskian deep universal structure',[24] before later suggesting the need for a poet who 'put[s] the machine in its full human context'.[25]

It was in the later twentieth century that Morgan looked most fervently towards a technologically-advanced future and the possibilities that science fiction presents, but arguably by the end of the millennium and the decade which followed, Morgan had moved away from the engagement of human beings with technology and instead towards an array of universal themes including love, mortality and religion within or against a much greater backdrop or

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[22] Marty McLaughlin, 'He touched hearts - farewell to makar Edwin Morgan' in *The Scotsman*, August 26th 2010, http://www.scotsman.com/news/he-touched-hearts-farewell-to-makar-edwin-morgan-1-809514 [accessed 6.11.14].

[23] University of Glasgow Library Special Collections, MS Morgan DS/6.

[24] Edwin Morgan, 'Into the Constellation', *Essays,* p. 27.

[25] Morgan, 'Let's go', *Nothing Not Giving Messages*, p. 66.

context of time. In the two main texts examined in this chapter it is a movement back in time that brings Morgan into this quest for universal truths, addressing a malignant spirit with a history that spirals back to the Ancient Greeks and a re-telling of Mesopotamian immortality. For Morgan in this period, conscious of his own mortality, there is no desire for serenity but a focus on his work which is a chance for him, like the Demon, to 'rattle the bars' ('A Demon', l. 1).

1.i. Demon

 Demon is a 20-poem sequence that was published in the same year as Morgan's diagnosis. The titular character addresses his audience from a plethora of places, his constant geographical movement suggesting an omnipresence of mischief. In his lectures on Milton's *Paradise Lost*, Morgan presents his own preference for 'the strong dissident […] poetry of the satanic part'[26] and this resistance of the supposed good is embodied in the Demon who sardonically thanks God for there being 'no angels here [...]/ with their hymns and whips' ('Submarine Demon', ll. 35-6). Deliberately choosing the demonic path is illustrated in short stories by two writers admired by Morgan: 'The Imp of the Perverse' (1845) by Edgar Allan Poe and 'Le mauvais vitrier' (1868) by Charles Baudelaire. There are similarities between the sequence and the short stories, such as the demon's thought in 'The Demon at the Brig o' Dread' that 'the Brig o' Dread was best / for pushing people over' (ll.1-2), mirroring the spirit of the perverse found in Poe and Baudelaire's writing. However, the capricious brutality found in the two short stories can ultimately be regarded as acts of self-destruction. Baudelaire's protagonist brazenly murders his victim which, realistically, would lead to the same end as Poe's protagonist who is hanged after admitting to undertaking a murder through poisoned candlelight. In contrast, the actions taken by Morgan's demon are not there to be punished but instead serve to demonstrate his survivalist conviction.

Compared to a traditional religious reading of the demon, James McGonigal notes a link in *Beyond the Last Dragon* between Morgan's protagonist and Mikhail Vrubel's nineteenth-century paintings, *Demon Seated* (1890) and *Demon Downcast* (1902).[27] The Russian symbolist interprets the psychological intensity and claustrophobia of an otherwise majestic figure, moving away from the traditional depiction of the demon's propensity for evil. Mikhail Lermontov's Romantic poem 'The Demon' (1829), on which Vrubel's paintings

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[26] SpecColl MS Morgan B/2/2.
[27] McGonigal, p. 343.

are based, 'proposes a condemnation of complacency in all its forms'[28] and while theomachy is not necessarily an important component of Morgan's sequence, the pursuit of personal liberation found in Lermontov's demon is evident in Morgan's protagonist as well. Morgan's demon portrays an aptitude for mischief over evil, and while Vrubel's figure is depicted as trapped within its psychological claustrophobia, Morgan's demon is a celebrator of life and the pursuit of knowledge, a revolutionary of resistance as emphasised in his statement 'against is not for nothing / against is drive a nail' ('The Demon Sings', ll. 9-10).

The first poem of the sequence is entitled 'A Demon' and can be regarded as an introduction to Morgan's eponymous figure, the demon demonstrating immediately his resistance to authority in his opening statement, 'My job is to rattle the bars' (l. 1). The bars are both literal, described in a litany of monosyllabic adjectives as being 'high, large, long, hard, black' (l. 2), and metaphorical, the physical barrier portraying the demon's inherent and, in some respects, celebrated isolation. The personification of the bars 'asking to be struck' (l. 3) portrays the demon's temptation for mischief, his dismissal of 'whatever the metal is' (l. 3) highlighting that it is the action of resistance that is important rather than what it is affecting.

His proclamation that he 'can change [...] shape' (l. 5) shows the character's attributes mirroring those of the Norse god Loki, famous in mythology as a shapeshifter and divided in race as both a god, one of the Æsir, and a *jǫtunn*, often regarded as aggressors and banished from Asgard, the home of the gods.[29] Interpretations of Morgan's demon in regards to world mythologies are not limited to the Norse tales. The demon notes how 'the dog watches me' (l. 6), and when considering the later mention of Orpheus and Pluto, it could be argued that the dog that watches over the rattled bars is a representation of Cerberus, the hellhound that guards the gates of Hell in Greek and Roman mythology.

It would not be unusual for Morgan to have begun his sequence with references to the mythology of Ancient Greece. The word 'demon' derives from the Greek *daimōn* or *daimonion*, the meaning of which is attested by the writings of Homer and Philo Judeas as a 'divine being',[30] the Platonists later placing *daimonia* in an 'ontological level between gods

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[28] David Powelstock, *Becoming Mikhail Lermontov: the Ironies of Romantic Individualism in Nicholas I's Russia* (Evanston: Northwestern University Press, 2005), p. 305.

[29] Michael York, *The Divine Versus the Asurian: An Interpretation of Indo-European and Cult and Myth* (International Scholars Publication, 1995), p. 195.

[30] Georg Luck, 'Daemonology: Introduction' in *Arcana Mundi: Magic and the Occult in the Greek and Roman Worlds: A Collection of Ancient Texts*, ed. Georg Luck, 2nd ed. (Baltimore: John Hopkins University Press, 2006), p. 207.

and humans'.[31] The origin of the word 'demon' is thought to have evolved from the Greek *daiesthai*, 'to divide', and taking this into consideration, Morgan's demon can certainly be argued as a figuration of this pre-Christian division rather than the pejorative term that 'demon' is now defined by. The poet's protagonist is not an aid to the Devil, a now common viewpoint after Christian and apocalyptic writers coalesced *daimonia* with the Hebrew *malakim* to define demons as 'evil spirits'.[32] Instead, Morgan's demon moves through time, divided in his role as a mischief-maker and an encourager of life, requesting above all from his audience that they 'do not blame me for the dead' ('The Demon Winged', l. 24).

The location of 'A Demon' is remarked upon in the second stanza, the 'grey, cold, dank [...] underworld' (ll. 12-4) presumably referring to Hades, the Ancient Greek abode of the dead. The demon is still on the periphery of this world, watching 'through the palings' (l. 13) and this suggests a litany of possibilities of what may lie in the beyond, 'villas, open caves, wildfire, / thrones, ampitheatres' (ll. 15-16). Morgan depicts a collection of 'shades' that are 'walking' (l. 16) and 'gathering' (l. 17), and Hades is suddenly portrayed as the urban underworld of street music and busking. Orpheus, the celebrated musician and poet of Greek mythology, is named as the performer playing on 'Pluto's glimmery piazza' (l. 19), his music highlighting the figure as 'the tenderer of hope, [...] / the spellbinder, / the author of what might be, surely not, / a shining wetness at the corner of Pluto's eye' (ll. 20-3).

This reference to Pluto's emotional response suggests that the scene of the poem is in part a retelling of the myth of Orpheus and Eurydice. The musician attempts to win his lover back from death by performing for Pluto and Persephone, the inscrutable king succumbing to Pluto's musical charm which led to 'iron tears down Pluto's cheeks / and made Hell grant what love did seek', as described by John Milton in 'Il Penseroso'.[33] While Morgan builds through description the beauty of Orpheus' music, Pluto's tears representing an emotional crescendo, the demon is brought back to the fore of the poem with the sudden exclamatory, 'my time has come!' (l. 24). Choosing a moment of emotional intensity emphasises most clearly the rebelliousness of the demon, the alliterative fast-paced rhythm of the demon's actions mirroring the character's own speed as he 'scramble[s] like a monkey from stake to

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[31] Jeffrey Burton Russell, 'Demons, Demonology' in *A New Dictionary of Christian Theology,* eds. Alan Richardson, John Bowden (London: SCM Press, 1983), p. 150.
[32] Jeffrey Burton Russell, *The Prince of Darkness: Radical Evil and the Power of Good in History* (New York: Cornell University Press, 1992), p. 45.
[33] John Milton, 'Il Penseroso' in *The Poetical Works of John Milton,* ed. Henry Todd, vol. VII, 2nd ed., (London: Law and Gilbert, 1806), p. 126.

stake and spar to spar and rattle / my rod, a ratchet for the rungs [...] / pungenced, punched, punctuated' (ll.24-28).

Colin Nicholson describes the actions of the demon as having turned 'street entertainment into resistance',[34] and the quick beat of the demon compared to the classical lyre of Orpheus does serve to emphasise this. However, if the poem is viewed as a reinterpretation of Orpheus and Eurydice, it shows not just resistance to the gods or authority but also resistance to a stereotypical happy ending. In the myth, Orpheus is granted his wife back to the living as long as he faces forward and never looks back into the underworld. His subsequent eternal - though periodical - loss is attributed in mythology to Orpheus responding to what he believes is the echo of Eurydice's voice, but in Morgan's poem it could be argued that it is the demon who tempts Orpheus into turning around through his heckles and the noises from the railings. The final statement, 'Orpheus is learning along' (l. 32), portrays the demon's belief in his actions serving as a life lesson, awarding Orpheus with a renewed sense of purpose and the recognition of cost when realising what is at stake, rather than an acceptance of happiness.

In her study of demonology Amy Wygant has argued that 'the demonic offers no narrative continuity, wandering in and out of the scene with no apparent motivation, its entrances and exits unaccounted for',[35] and this is evident across the trajectory of the *Demon* sequence. Morgan's protagonist is transported throughout the work from the depths of the underworld, be that religious or oceanic, to contemporary Glasgow or the tombs of old Japan. In 'The Demon in the Whiteout', this continued act of dramatic relocation pushes further its boundaries as the titular figure crosses the boundaries of time and location and is interpolated into a scene from classic literature, the demon interacting with Mary Shelley's infamous, disfigured creation from her gothic horror, *Frankenstein* (1818). Flying into the 'wild winter white' (l. 2) of Antarctica, Morgan uses simile to describe how the demon 'was clogged and stawed like Satan in Chaos' (l. 4), the comparison of the protagonist with his persistent counterpart emphasising the demon's own survivalist mentality. Shelley's monster is brought into view through the whiteout, the litany of adverbs that describe his movement as 'shadowily, / mufflingly, bulkingly' (ll. 16-7) chosen to represent the tempestuous blizzard of their meeting. The demon describes the literary mutant as something 'I'd been told I must not try to find' (l. 18), and while use of the auxiliary verb emphasises this as a specific command

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[34] Colin Nicholson, *Inventions of Modernity* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2002), p. 188.

[35] Amy Wygant, *Medea, Magic and Modernity in France: Stages and Histories, 1553-1797* (Hampshire: Ashgate Publishing, 2007), p. 122.

from an unknown source, his clear defiance ultimately makes the north for the demon 'what it was cracked up to be' (l. 1). Regardless of whether the demon is told that he must not find the monster because he personally would be at risk or because the monster would be at risk from the demon's gameplay, this action of defiance and resistance of boundaries is repeatedly shown to be a prominent character trait for Morgan's demon.

In Shelley's novel, Frankenstein the creator mourns the outcome of his monster 'whom with such infinite pains and care I had endeavoured to form',[36] and in Morgan's poem the extent of this amalgamation is drawn upon by the demon's remark on the monster's appearance as looking 'flung together / piece by piece', (ll. 21-2) his description of his lips 'as thin and taut and black as packthread' (l. 25) emphasising this idea of being sewn together, created manually. Frankenstein's description of his creation as a 'demoniacal corpse [...] a thing such as Dante could not have conceived'[37] places the monster within a history of literature's hellion horrors, connecting him with Morgan's own impish terror. When the demon states 'you [Frankenstein's monster] have been set going / I set myself going in search of you' (ll. 30-1), the bond that the demon visualises between the creature and himself is accentuated and the demon becomes fraternal in his empathy for his literary brother, 'a fellow-spirit and fellow-sufferer' (l. 37). 'You have been set' compared to 'I set myself' delineates their inherent difference, the demon free to control himself, and within this statement there is a shift as the demon becomes the encourager of rebellion.

The demon is relentless in his drive for mischief and power play, emphasised succinctly in 'A Submarine Demon' when he states 'I don't sink I drive I fin I power' (l. 6), and his interaction with Frankenstein's monster highlights his desire to transfer this momentum onto another who he deems to be alike in character. Acknowledging that 'angels / wanted him dead [...] / Science washed its clammy hands of him' (ll. 44-6), the demon portrays how his plight is not based on a traditional argument of science versus religion. Instead, his focus is on resistance against acceptance, his exclamatory urge for the monster to 'get through! get through!' (l. 39) portraying his determination for Frankenstein's creation of lost identity to fight back against the apparent 'wood of good' (l. 55). Turning again to mythology and taking elements from 'the myth of Prometheus', *Frankenstein*'s secondary title, the demon argues his case 'very steadily' (l. 52) that 'Heaven crumbles just a little - and

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[36] Mary Shelley, *Frankenstein or The Modern Prometheus*, ed. M. K. Joseph (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2008), p. 57.
[37] Ibid., p. 58.

that's great - / when the alien god staked out on the rock / discovers he can snap his chains, and does' (ll. 56-8). 'Heaven' in this context is not just a religious reference; it also comes to represent the boundaries and expectations of society. Iain Crichton Smith notes Morgan's ardent engagement with the world's 'Marilyn Monroes, its Edith Piafs, etc, those who have lived their lives fully to the point of extinction',[38] and the demon arguably becomes a part of this crowd, calling to his audience to 'study my life and set out now' ('A Little Catechism from the Demon', l. 15).

Theologically, demons are figures present throughout many religions, pagan belief deeming them in rational terms as 'entities of moral ambivalence who deceive and interfere' compared to the Christian viewpoint that they are 'doomed to eternal hell [...] attempt[ing] to subvert souls to the Devil's domain'.[39] The Christian viewpoint is just one example of a recurring connection made throughout theology between demons and death, rabbinic sources claiming them to be under the leadership of Haggadah, 'the angel of death', whilst the demonic *piśācas* of Hinduism are 'eaters of raw flesh' who plague the scenes of where violent deaths have occurred.[40]

While Morgan's demon is depicted making excursions to 'deathly' locations, the mythological underworld and the real-life war camps in Oświęcim to name but two, he is shown throughout the sequence to be wholeheartedly a promoter and challenger of life and the pursuit of knowledge. From that he brings with him an unexpected positivity, rebelling against his suppressors in the same respect as Milton's Satan in *Paradise Lost* (1667). In meeting his Japanese counterpart in 'Another Demon' who encourages our protagonist to 'help me blight crops, dry udders, bring floods' (l. 17), Morgan's demon proclaims 'a zombie / could never fathom me in a century of years' (ll. 25-6). His rejection of his species' connection with death is emphasised most fervently in the penultimate poem of the sequence, in which Morgan illustrates his journey trying to find the personified Death, proclaiming 'I will never rest until I have found her' ('The Demon Goes to Kill Death', l. 26). This conviction is only emphasised further through his frequent celebration of life, quietly acknowledging his own human side as he tells the suicidal monster of Frankenstein 'it may be a human thought to want to die / but it is more human not to' (ll. 62-3), before exclaiming in the final poem 'what a wersh drag

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[38] Iain Crichton Smith, 'Vintage Morgan', *Cencrastus*, Issue 32, 1989, p. 13.

[39] Rosemary Guiley, 'Introduction' in *The Encyclopaedia of Demons and Demonology* (New York: Facts on File, 2009), p. xiii.

[40] Alain Daniélou, *The Myths and Gods of India: The Classic Work on Hindu Polytheism from the Princeton Bollingen Series* (Rochester: Inner Traditions International, 1991), p. 143.

without it - / Life I mean!' ('The Demon at the Walls of Time', ll. 11-2). While 'The Demon at the Brig o' Dread' depicts him 'cowp[ing] you over [...] the water is coming to hit you' (ll. 21-2), this seemingly Baudelairean act of perversity is shown to be the demon attempting to illustrate the gift of life for those stuck in a quotidian existence, 'going home to set their alarms' (l. 16). By rescuing them 'just in time' (l. 26), he leaves them pondering a personified second life that 'they'd best be cradling in their arms, and fast' (l. 31), this lingering warning aimed at those dwelling in wasted time.

Morgan's demon weaves through time and place throughout the sequence, embodying Wygant's afore-mentioned description of the demon as a figuration of 'multiplicity and division'. Despite this seemingly random collection of time periods and geographical crossings, there is a clear journey that is undertaken and arguably its underlying purpose is this celebration of life, alongside a playful curiosity and the striving for survival. Passing through spheres of religion and literature which cross through from the prehistoric to the present-day, Morgan's demon encompasses world history in an attempt to garner power from the 'militant seraphs' ('The Demon Winged', l. 21) that provide a metaphor for the closed parameters of a controlled society. Just as the demon scales the gates of the underworld in the first poem of the sequence, the final poem depicts a mirror-image, the character climbing up the titular walls of time, 'zigzag but steady' (l. 14).

In this closing poem, 'The Demon at the Walls of Time', the demon asks of his audience 'is challenge the word, or is it not? / is it the climb of climbs, morning noon and night?' (ll. 9-10) before immediately answering himself, 'it had better be!' (l. 10) Considering the demon's journey throughout Morgan's sequence, the word 'challenge' could be read in this context as either a noun or verb. The protagonist both battles the challenges he meets and challenges those who attempt to control him, and there is a sense of Morgan identifying himself with his titular character, as can be seen in the following description. The demon is shown to be 'feeling and following / the life-lines of unreadable inscriptions' (ll. 15-6), and this element of challenge is entwined with the demon's quality of 'being curious (and I always am curious)' ('Another Demon', l. 2). The act of translation necessary for the demon to learn about the 'unreadable inscriptions' of 'war [...] on the wall [...], written / never to be lost, lost now' (ll. 26-7) links these qualities of challenge and curiosity directly to Morgan.

In Section D of McGonigal's bibliography in his biography of Morgan, he notes down the selection of books discovered on Morgan's desk when he died in August 2010. The quantity and breadth of subject in the assorted collection portrays the importance of

knowledge in stimulating Morgan even in his final weeks, with philosophy, history and art being just three of the subjects touched upon in the books. Among this collection lies *An Egyptian Reading Book for Beginners.* To argue that the poet had read or even begun to read this book would be speculation, but it symbolises something essential to the man. The notion that Morgan, at ninety and keenly aware of his dwindling health, still took interest in learning from the transliterations of Ancient Egyptian texts, as well as keeping up with contemporary Scottish literature as shown in the vast amount within this collection,[41] demonstrates most simply how the qualities of Morgan's demon are intrinsic to the writer himself. It could be argued that when the demon states in the final poem that 'I'll read the writing on the wall' (l.37), it is not a statement of hopelessness nor is the writing on the wall a foreshadowing of doom. The writing is of a language 'lost now', and yet the demon's own self-belief in his ability to read it, 'you'll see' (l. 37), emphasises his fervent attitude of determination and promise. As McGonigal states in his biography, 'the Demon's restless, questioning nonconformity was a quality its creator sought to embody, in his quietly defiant way, in his personal life.'[42] Nothing lies in mystery for the demon for too long, just as nothing does for Morgan.

1.ii. Gilgamesh

Despite the demon's celebration of life, a trait McGonigal links to Morgan writing the sequence 'defiantly [...] when facing death from cancer, and outfacing it imaginatively',[43] his protagonist's mission does not present itself as a quest for immortality. The flippancy of tone in his parenthesised question '(will I [die]? / I doubt it but who can tell)' ('The Demon Admires the Stars', ll. 23-4) shows no fear of death, but rather emphasises the value of shaping the time we have, querying any morbid focus on life's end in his question to Frankenstein's monster, 'what is all this about death?' (l. 67).

In contrast, the Mesopotamian poem of *The Epic of Gilgamesh* is an examination of the human longing for immortality, with the existentialist poet Rainer Maria Rilke defining the

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[41] *And the Land Lay Still*, James Roberston; *Kieron Smith, Boy*, James Kelman; *Homecoming*, Alan Riach; *Access to the Silence*, Tom Leonard; *The First Person and Other Stories*, Ali Smith; *This is Not Me*, Janice Galloway. *Beyond the Last Dragon,* Bibliography, Section D, p. 465-6.

[42] McGonigal, p. 369.

[43] James McGonigal, 'Translating God: Negative Theology and Two Scottish Poets' in *Ethically Speaking: Voices and Values in Modern Scottish Writing*, ed. James McGonigal, Kirsten Stirling (Amsterdam: Rodopi, 2006), p. 233.

poem first and foremost as 'das Epos der Todesfurcht': the epic about the fear of death.[44] Assyriologist William L. Moran has characterised *The Epic of Gilgamesh* as an 'insistence of human values' and an 'acceptance of human limitations',[45] and yet despite the demon being depicted throughout the sequence as outwardly defying dictated limitations, the two texts still share an inherently linked set of ideals. Colin Nicholson directly compares the demon to Morgan's translation of Enkidu in *The Play of Gilgamesh* 'who arrive[s] to change the order of things' with 'the force of the wilderness in his veins'.[46] Just as the demon rejects the 'hymns and whips' ('Submarine Demon', l. 36) of the angels and proclaims to Saint Anthony 'you are yourself a desert and I'm done with you' ('The Demon Judges a Father', l. 38), translator Andrew George notes that 'even for the ancients, the story of Gilgamesh was more about what it is to be a man than what it is to serve the gods.'[47]

Morgan notes in his introduction to *The Play of Gilgamesh* how 'the poem's power can still be felt after five thousand years'[48] and from this it is clear that when contemplating the notion of time, the text offers not just a thematic exploration of mortality and the individual's desire for an extension of time in relation to the self, but an insight into historical time and the preservation of literature over five millennia. The fragmentation of the original cuneiform tablets, coming from the ancient cities of Mesopotamia, the Levant and Anatolia,[49] means that the epic in its original form remains in a state of evolution. Andrew George emphasises in the introduction to his translation the necessity for the reader to 'set aside any comparison with the more complete masterpieces of Greek and Latin literature and accept those parts of text that are still incomplete and incoherent as skeletal remains that one day will live again'.[50] For Morgan, this fragmentary state serves as a tool for exploration, the text in its incompleteness leaving the story and themes open for elaboration.

Robert Crawford argues in his essay '"to change/ the unchangeable" - The Whole Morgan' that in Morgan's work 'translation is a crossover, a change, a rite of passage into something other',[51] and while Morgan's *Gilgamesh* retains the same main themes of the original text, this sense of crossover is prominent. James McGonigal comments in his

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[44] Andrew George, 'Introduction', *The Epic of Gilgamesh* (London: Penguin, 1999), p. xiii.
[45] William L. Moran, quoted in *Myth and Method* ed. Laurie L. Patton, Wendy Doniger (Charlottesville: University Press of Virginia, 1996), p. 303.
[46] Nicholson, p. 188.
[47] George, 'Introduction', p. xxxiii.
[48] Morgan, 'Introduction', *The Play of Gilgamesh* (Manchester: Carcanet, 2005), p. v.
[49] George, 'Introduction', p. xv.
[50] Ibid.
[51] Crawford, ''to change the unchangeable' - The Whole Morgan', p. 17.

biography of Morgan that 'the earliest reference in his file is a cutting from the *Radio Times* of November 1954, where D.G. Bridson introduces his own version of the story of Gilgamesh',[52] suggesting that for Morgan the story had travelled with him throughout his own timeline. Despite being published in 2005 the play was a product of the 1990s, with Morgan outlining his ideas to the artistic director of Communicado Theatre, Gerry Mulgrew, as early as 1994. The complexity of his creation that came from translating epic myth into simplified dramaturgy led to issues in the theatre workshops, and Mulgrew's suggestion to perform it in blank verse influenced Morgan's long poem of Gilgamesh, published in 2011 for *Long Poem Magazine.* In McGonigal's introductory essay to the poem for *Long Poem Magazine*, he argues:

> [T]he poetic text has more of himself in it, and more adventurous language than the play, and I like it for that. It is written for declamation by different voices, and through them the most ancient of human concerns come to life – the struggle against fate and loss; the passions of love and desire, envy, cruelty and ambition; the fearsome mystery of death; the quest for knowledge of self and of the universe. One senses the old poet's lithe poetic strength co-existing with that of his muscly characters – which are of course the ancient storyteller's characters, handed on from one narrator or scribe to the next across the centuries.[53]

While the poem and the play follow the same story, and if anything emphasise the same specific areas of the original text to portray Morgan's own attitudes, the two texts are arguably different when considering their form and style. The poem frequently repeats passages within a short space of its first occurrence, portraying what John Brockington defines as 'a mark of the oral character of the epics',[54] a feature designed to be emphatic and one that is essentially omitted from the play. By using this technique the poem shows a similarity with the Babylonian translation and through this Morgan is able to take his place as a definitive poet-narrator, textualising the story of Gilgamesh for a twenty-first-century audience while simultaneously keeping within the ancient fluidity of oral storytelling. It could be argued that by doing this, Morgan loses the emotive demonstrations of language and action that comes in

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[52] McGonigal, *Beyond the Last Dragon,* p. 419.
[53] McGonigal, 'Edwin Morgan and the road to Gilgamesh', *Long Poem Magazine,* Issue 5, Winter 2010/2011.
[54] John Brockington, 'The textualization of the Sanskrit Epics' in *Trends in Linguistics: Textualization of Oral Epics*, ed. Lauri Honko (New York: Moon de Gruyter, 2000), p. 201.

the play. After the death of Enkidu, the audience of the play witnesses Gilgamesh's impassioned reaction to the loss of his companion:

> I veiled your face like a bride's.
> swooped over you like an eagle,
> prowled about like a lioness
> whose cubs have been snatched from her.
> You were the axe at my side,
> you were the sword at my waist,
> you were the sash at my thighs
> till a demon swept that away.
> [....]
> you are dark in sleep, and your ears
> are deaf to my lament.
> Earth, hear my lament.

(Act Four, Scene Three, p. 74)

The significance of the second-person narrative in this extract, with Gilgamesh directing his speech towards the deceased Enkidu before his plea for the Earth to 'hear my lament', emphasises the protagonist's deep anguish. In comparison, the poet-narrator distances the audience from Gilgamesh's grief by depicting the same scene in third-person. Gilgamesh is again shown 'cover[ing] his friend's face like a bride's' and 'hover[ing] over him like an eagle' (ll. 1015-6), but the audience does not witness the same extent of emotional breakdown. While the Gilgamesh of the poem is composed in his reminiscences, describing how 'pastures and woods, panther and bear and deer / left their lament, and the rivers we strolled by' (ll. 1007-8), the Gilgamesh of the play cannot muse over lost times because 'I am all memory, I / shriek for you like a mother' (Act Four, Scene Three, p. 74). Gilgamesh is all-encompassing in his grief, just as he is in his anger, desire and love throughout the play. It could be argued that through these demonstrations of emotion, Morgan's poetic strength gets lost amongst it. The poem is dependent on the form of storytelling and the themes that surface through Morgan's ancient, gentle style, while the play has been described as 'a grief-struck piece of lifeforce, a roistering lyrical take on what keeps us young and what makes us mortal'.[55] Regardless of the outcome however, it serves to show how form can affect a story's backbone, and Morgan's two arrangements emphasise the different crossovers that each version brings out.

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[55] Ali Smith, 'Gold from the Old' in *The Guardian,* 14 January 2006, http://www.theguardian.com/books/2006/jan/14/poetry.alismith [accessed 25.11.2014].

As previously mentioned, *The Play of Gilgamesh* keeps within the framework of the original poem, and yet chooses to draw upon specific moments or ideas to emphasise Morgan's own set of values, and this can be seen most prominently in his portrayal of Gilgamesh's relationship with Enkidu, 'the wild man, the green man, woodwose' (p. 3). In Andrew George's standard translated version of the *Babylonian Gilgamesh Epic*, Gilgamesh's mother Ninsun states of Enkidu that 'like a wife you'll love him, caress and embrace him' (l. 271). As each standard version is technically a translation, there is always room for scholarly debate as to how each sentence can be defined. In this case, while the sexual intimacy of the men is seemingly implicit, in scholarly debate their relationship is often defined within homosocial rather than homosexual terms. In William G. Doty's study *Myths of Masculinity*, he argues that *The Epic of Gilgamesh* 'indicates just how important male friendships are, and how significant to social well-being'.[56] Similarly, David M. Halperin offers a comparison of Gilgamesh and Enkidu with the relationship of Achilles and Patroclus in the ancient Greek epic, *The Iliad.* Both sets of men partake in a relationship with 'an outward focus, a purpose beyond itself in action' and Halperin argues that they are not bound to 'some neutral or universal sociological category called "friendship" [...] but with a specific cultural formation, a type of heroic friendship which is better captured by terms like comrades-in-arms, boon companions'.[57] The ambiguity of the bond between Gilgamesh and Enkidu in the original texts is essentially dispelled in Morgan's translation, the scholarly doubt directly addressed in the stage directions that end Act Three, the two men standing 'alone at last, sweating and glistening':

> *Then GILGAMESH takes ENKIDU by the hand (no doubt about it this time), and they walk slowly to the back of the stage (backs to audience) where a curtain is drawn to reveal a bedroom - with one bed. Gradual blackout as they move towards the bed.*

> (Act Three, Scene Five, p. 59)

Morgan questions in his introduction to the play that, when considering the use of words such as 'love' and 'bride' in the original text, 'does this mean that it is not only the oldest poem in

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[56] William G. Doty, *Myths of Masculinity* (New York: Crossroad, 1993), p. 82.

[57] David M. Halperin, *One Hundred Years of Homosexuality: And Other Essays on Greek Love* (New York: Routledge, 2012), p. 77.

the world but the oldest gay poem in the world?'[58] Morgan's decision to define Gilgamesh and Enkidu's relationship as homosexual shows this sense of translation being used as a crossover, Gilgamesh defining Enkidu explicitly in Morgan's version of the text as a long poem as 'my friend, my companion, my lover' (l. 1168). A tolerance for love in whatever form it takes is implicitly imposed. Morgan chooses to make a political point in the presence of a gay morality and, as Ali Smith's review of the play in *The Guardian* (January 2006) notes, centralises the idea 'that the moderation of authoritarian behaviour begins with social and emotional inclusion of outsiders'.[59] By choosing to convey this in a translation of the oldest known poem in the world, he is suggesting that this acceptance should transcend time and history. It should not be considered simply as an autobiographical message but that which society must work towards. Morgan's original decision to change the form of the text from a poem to a play, from the private to the performed, suggests that from the conception of it in the 1990s he wanted it to be observed by crowds and for his message to reach a wider audience. In his 1952 introduction to *Beowulf,* Morgan writes that 'if poetry has no ulterior motives, the translation of it has',[60] and this notion can ultimately be transferred onto his reconstruction of *Gilgamesh*.

As previously mentioned, the exploration of time covers not just the historical preservation of the text and the changing attitudes between past and present, but also the thematic backbone of both the original version and Morgan's play. Andrew George notes the poem's relation 'to the well-established literary genre of "royal counsel" in which a sagacious king distributes advice to his son or successor'.[61] In the prologue to George's standard translation, Gilgamesh is depicted as having travelled 'a far road, was weary, found peace / and set all his labours on a tablet of stone' (Tablet 1, ll. 9-10). The direct reference to the cuneiform tablets suggests the tale is one of autobiography, designed to guide and provide insight into the human condition and reflect upon the eternality of human nature. Unlike the original, Morgan does not choose to portray Gilgamesh's journey as autobiographical, dismissing the original text's immediate reference to the protagonist as 'He who saw the Deep' (Tablet 1, l. 1). For Morgan, Gilgamesh embodies the arrogance of youth on the cusp of manhood, described as 'athletic, young, with looks that sink all sexes' (Act One, Scene One, p.4). When a court official states that 'everyone knows [Gilgamesh is] like a god' (Act One, Scene One, p.4), it seems to be less of a reference to his semi-divine nature by virtue of his

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[58] Morgan, *The Play of Gilgamesh*, p. vii.
[59] Smith, 'Gold from the Old' [accessed 25.11.2014].
[60] Morgan, 'Introduction' in *Beowulf* (Manchester: Carcanet Press, 2002), p. vii.
[61] Andrew George, p. xxv.

goddess mother, and more of an illustration depicting a young man's pride and belief in his own immortality. Morgan's audience, unlike the audience of the original text, is not introduced to Gilgamesh through a depiction of his final state as being 'wise in all matters' (Tablet 1, l. 2), and therefore, despite his kingly status, Morgan's protagonist is initially portrayed as an embodiment of a flawed everyman at the start of a physical and existential journey.

This journey of personal change as one moves through time towards manhood, the search for immortality, and Gilgamesh's ultimate defeat are the central themes. In his introduction to his translation, Morgan emphasises that 'the epic is in celebration of a man and a city but it also asks questions about them both: what lasts, what changes, what survives? Is anything immortal?'[62] These questions are ultimately transferred into the play through the words of Ziusura who acknowledges Gilgamesh's reason for making the expedition to his shore: 'why do men die? do all men die? shall I?'(Act Five, Scene Four, p. 89) Explaining the scene of the Great Flood that immortalised him, a narrative that pervades many cultures and mythologies, Ziusura answers back to Gilgamesh's simple statement that 'the gods were good to you' by arguing 'it is not good / to kill a million in a petulant mood' (Act Five, Scene Four, p. 91). For the immortal man who is a pawn in the game of higher powers, he is haunted by 'the faces of the drowned [that] still accuse me', perceiving his supposed blessing as 'some horrible kudos' from the gods (Act Five, Scene Four, p. 91). David Adams Leeming argues in *The World of Myth,* 'the flood myth, like the myths of the Destroyer-Mother herself, reminds us that life depends on death, that without death there can be no cycle, no birth'.[63] Immortality is an elusive, unreachable aspiration, and Ziusura urges Gilgamesh to cling onto the physical 'beating in your breast!' (Act Five, Scene Four, p. 92). For Gilgamesh it is a chance at 'a second life, a second chance' (Act Five, Scene Four, p. 93), to use the time he is blessed with to experience the tangible world around him.

This idea of 'a second life' links Morgan's retelling of Gilgamesh to his early collection *A Second Life* (1968), the titular poem celebrating a renewal of life in middle-age as he asks of his reader 'is it true that we come alive / Not once but many times?'[64] Gilgamesh comes to realise the potentiality of life when one accepts that death is part of time's cycle, that life is a 'home to seeds' (Act Five, Scene Five, p. 95). His personal regeneration becomes

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[62] Morgan, 'Introduction' in *The Play of Gilgamesh*, p. vi.

[63] David Adams Leeming, *The World of Myth: An Anthology* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1990), p. 43.

[64] Morgan, 'The Second Life' in *Collected Poems* (Manchester: Carcanet, 1990), p. 180, ll. 35-6.

synonymous with Morgan's own awakening in 'The Second Life' as 'the old coats are discarded / the old ice is loosed / the old seeds are awake'.[65] Gilgamesh comes to understand that his story 'has no glory' (Act Five, Scene 5, p. 96) but realises the importance of what his journey has taught him, that 'whatever good can be done must be done here' (Act Five, Scene Five, p. 97). He learns the eternality of life that he longed for is an unreachable aspiration, coming to terms with the importance of the present-day and what can be achieved in the here and now.

Morgan's decision to use ancient literature could be compared to the work of his early contemporary Edwin Muir whose body of poetry displays frequent allusions to Christian and Greco-Roman mythology. However, Morgan himself argues against Muir's mythological allusion, stating 'he took to myth too eagerly. His poetry would've been strengthened by a greater realism and materiality'[66] and this is what Morgan attempts to portray in his retelling. For him, the character of Gilgamesh who is described as two-thirds god and one-third man is still 'chastened by sufferings and disappointment' that comes with the realisation of his own mortality, creating 'a more humanly, sympathetic figure',[67] especially when compared with Muir's portrayal of legends such as Hector, Achilles and Odysseus. Morgan argues that 'what Muir felt most deeply and expressed most movingly was the sense of aftermath - the slow passage of time after some great or terrible event', emphasising as he does 'the pointlessness of history'.[68]

While Muir's poetry of legend dictates his primitivist tendencies and a recognisable desire to remain firmly in the past, for Morgan his movement into the past still brings forth a vision of the future. Despite his recognition of immortality as a 'wilderness of fireflies / that dances to deceive our yearning eyes' (Act Five, Scene Six, p. 97), Gilgamesh accepts that 'you will carry your story, / if not your life, across uncounted years / like an eagle in the universe' (Act Five, Scene Four, p. 92). It becomes a story of Gilgamesh's early adolescent belief in one's own perpetuity, eventually changing into a realisation and acceptance of mortality amongst a desire to leave the best of himself within his legacy. The quality of his years and what will remain after he dies becomes the conquering aspiration for Gilgamesh by the end of the play, and in Morgan's portrayal of this there is a glimpse of the poet himself who was described in Dr George Reid's eulogy as the 'great humanist Scot who, despite all the

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[65] Ibid., p. 181, ll. 58-60.
[66] Morgan, 'Edwin Muir' in *Essays*, p. 187.
[67] Morgan, 'Introduction' in *The Play of Gilgamesh*, p. v.
[68] Morgan, 'Edwin Muir, p. 189.

pyrotechnics of his poetry, always wanted to explore existence and what it meant to be alive'.[69]

Morgan's movement back in time to the city of Mesopotamia and his movement through time with the Demon allows him to explore in the final decade of his life the energy of the spirit amongst ideologies of religion, theories of existentialism and the need for us all to, as Gilgamesh calls in his final line, 'strike off the chains!' (Act Five, Scene Six, p. 97). There is urgency in both texts to embrace the life that we are given, and Morgan shows through his characters the necessity for optimism and the importance of regeneration. As Morgan faced the reality of his own illness in his final decade, the spark of energy that appears in the Demon is embedded in the poet's own positive outlook, his letter to Gerry Cambridge in 2003 remarking that despite 'still hav[ing] some pain […] the radiographer says helpfully that "it usually gets worse before it gets better." I must keep the carrot of that firmly in my sights!'[70]

The Demon emphasises the circularity of time in 'The Demon Admires the Stars', stating to his audience that 'I've watched [the stars] being born, *lux* without *fiat*, / And it won't end, you know, / As it never began, you know' (ll. 20-2). It is an image that is returned to in Morgan's poem 'Leonids' (2002) when he speaks of 'a store / of light […] / […] spark after spark, scattering, dying, / You could send your wishes flying / In thousands, born, reborn, delighting'.[71] This emphasis on continued regeneration is evident in *The Play of Gilgamesh* as Ziusura awards the protagonist the chance of 'a second life, a second chance' (Act Five, Scene Four, p. 93), but it also comes to the fore in another of Morgan's major texts in his final decade: *A.D: A Trilogy of Plays on the Life of Jesus Christ* (2002). As Jesus comes to recognise the fateful death that awaits him in the final play, he argues to his disciples that his crucifixion is not to be seen as a disaster:

> Think of that old mustard-seed of mine. If the seed had not been covered with the darkness of the earth, and become dead to the eye, there would be neither bush nor branch, nor anything green, anything full of savour […] my words will not pass away […] they shall kick me into my second life.
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> *A.D. The Execution*, Act Three, Scene Four, p. 189.

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[69] Dr George Reid, 'Eulogy', Bute Hall, University of Glasgow, Thursday 26 August, 2010.

[70] Morgan, 'Letter to Gerry Cambridge, poet, editor and naturalist – 23-04-2003' in *The Midnight Letterbox: Selected Correspondence 1950-2010*, eds. James McGonigal, John Coyle (Manchester: Carcanet, 2015), p. 503.

[71] Morgan, 'Leonids', *Cathures*, p. 54, ll. 8-13.

There is a sense of Gilgamesh in these lines as he understands that his legacy will stand the test of time, but the language used in the passage is reminiscent, once again, of 'The Second Life' (1968), the final line of the excerpt deploying the title of the poem. Jesus's 'old mustard-seed' is Morgan's 'seed in darkness' (l. 38), and when Jesus calls out that 'I want a new order of things' (Act Three, Scene Four, p. 188), his tone evokes that of Morgan's in 1968 when he writes of how 'the caked layers of grime […] / […] will be dislodged / and men will still be warm' ('A Second Life', ll. 54-7). This idea of regeneration that creates a connection between ancient Mesopotamian civilisations, the Demon's travels across millennia, the story of Christ from two thousand years ago and Morgan's twentieth-century experiences emphasises the notion of time's circularities. Each text shows the universal truths that accompany the stories of Gilgamesh, the Demon and Jesus transcending their time periods and displaying their relevance to the present day.

Chapter 2:

'Time has entered space. / Earth is again the centre / and the favoured place.'
***Star Gate: Science Fiction Poems* (1979)**

In 1979, the Association in Scotland to Research into Astronautics in conjunction with the Third Eye Centre in Glasgow commissioned a collection by Edwin Morgan to accompany their 'High Frontier 1970-1980' exhibition and events. Morgan delivered for this commission *Star Gate: Science Fiction Poems*, showing an accumulation of his interest in the wider spheres of space and time that had been built upon within the previous decade. It was in the 1960s that Morgan's poetry 'changed and developed a new, multi-faceted, experimental character',[1] and through that *The Second Life* (1968) was produced, delivering a wide range of 'specific poems that occupy the science-fiction genre with serious intent'.[2] In Edwin Morgan's 1974 essay 'A Glimpse of Petavius', he notes that 'the poet has a social task and the modern poet's social task is to be as true and close to actual modern experience as he can'.[3] For Morgan, that meant an embracing of the scientific world that was coming to the fore. In the decade leading up to *Star Gate*, Morgan watched as humankind took its first steps on the moon, made its first impact with Mars, and attempted its first mission to enter the asteroid belt and leave the inner solar system. His work addressed the new events of the era and became an attempt to redress the situation where 'very little of twentieth-century science has been assimilated into twentieth-century art'.[4]

    Star Gate is perhaps Morgan's earliest volume of published poetry that can be seen embracing fully an exploration of time through the poet's imaginings of space, and therefore it is a logical place of investigation for this dissertation. But as previously mentioned, the collections that lead up to *Star Gate*, such as *The Second Life* (1968), *Instamatic Poems* (1972) and *From Glasgow to Saturn* (1973), depict in part Morgan's fundamental interest with time, especially future time, that would go on to become one of the leading themes of his poetry.

    Poems such as 'In Sobieski's Shield' (1968) and 'Memories of Earth' (1977) present Morgan's imaginings of humankind experiencing the future and being taken through space to

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[1] Alan Riach, 'Scottish Poetry as Science Fiction: Geddes, MacDiarmid, and Morgan's "A Home in Space"' in *Scotland as Science Fiction*, ed. Caroline McCracken-Flesher (Lewisburg: Bucknell University Press, 2012), p. 144.
[2] Ibid.
[3] Morgan, 'A Glimpse of Petavius', p. 4.
[4] C.P. Snow, *The Two Cultures and the Scientific Revolution* (London: Cambridge University Press, 1959), p. 16.

start their 'second life'. 'In Sobieski's Shield' embraces a positive optimism at its ending. The narrator chooses to reject the apprehension that naturally encompasses himself and his family in regards to the uncertainty of their future world, calling to them: 'let's take our second / like our first life out from the dome [...] it's hard / to go let's go'.[5] As Robert Crawford has noted, 'the poem [...] suggests that change itself translates endings into beginnings',[6] the hopeful imperative 'let's go' portraying the characters embracing new frontiers. In a discussion on 'A Home in Space' from *Star Gate,* Morgan spoke of:

> [Taking] up this idea, that once we land on and eventually, presumably, live in and have other children on other worlds, and then look back at earth, will we be nostalgic for it, or are we ourselves evolving into creatures who can live contentedly on other worlds? I like to think of that process going on as far forward in time as we can imagine.[7]

Although 'A Home in Space' was written at the end of the 1970s, these earlier poems portray this same interest with human life settling in the worlds of future time, carrying the past with them as they cross over previously unexplored territories. 'TRANSLUNAR SPACE MARCH 1972' (1972) has the same imprint of humankind's historic interaction with space that would later be portrayed in *Star Gate'*s 'Instamatic: The Moon February 1973'. 'The First Men on Mercury' (1973) engages with future space travel as a way to comment on the linguistic and accompanying forms of imperialism that Morgan finds in the present day. In early publications, the poet's interest in the nature of human interaction with the spheres of time and space is not overtly present. However, by acknowledging these singular poems which are scattered throughout the collections preceding *Star Gate,* the reader can recognise Morgan's curiosity and engagement with science fiction that would go on to present itself more fully in the later collections and sequences discussed in this dissertation.

Morgan comments in 'The Poet and the Particle' that 'we seem to live, today, in many worlds rather than one',[8] and while he specifies the worlds of religion, common experience, and metaphysics as examples in the essay, in *Star Gate* it is specifically the worlds of space and time that he operates within. From the 'Particle Poems' that interact with the miniscule

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[5] Morgan, 'In Sobieski's Shield', *Collected Poems,* p. 198, ll. 96-9.
[6] Robert Crawford, 'to change / the unchangeable', p. 18.
[7] Colin Nicholson, *Poem, Purpose and Place* (Edinburgh: Polygon, 1990), p. 69.
[8] Morgan, 'The Poet and the Particle, *Essays*, p. 16.

world of the quark to 'The Worlds' that considers planets yet undiscovered, Morgan opens up into the possibilities of the universe on a scale that ranges from the subatomic to the galactic. Each poem is dated in the contents of the collection with the year in which it was written, and this shows how Morgan was consistently interacting with scientific discoveries throughout the decade. The poet states: 'I count myself lucky to have lived at a time of discoveries of such far-reaching potential as space travel must be'.[9] 'Instamatic: The Moon February 1973' imagines with 'photographic immediacy'[10] the Soviet manned lunar landing while the 'Particle Poems' use religious and literary allusions in their communication with 1970s quantum field theory. While 'Instamatic' was current at the time of its writing, creating a historical imprint of earth's journey into space exploration, 'Foundation' depicts an imagining of the future from Morgan's present-day. Likewise, 'Era' bases itself in the future, portraying our time to come as apocalyptic in its vision of a 'silicon-based life' replacing the human race that 'went out in fireflauchts and gnashings of teeth' ('Era', ll. 1-2). *Star Gate* as a collection becomes a cluster of worlds on an ever-ranging scale, moving through time.

'A Home in Space' is easily the most renowned poem of the *Star Gate* collection, integrating the two kinds of poetry that Morgan states might be produced by the 'responsible poet':

> [A] romantic kind of poetry of space exploration where things would not
> be described in technical terms but where something of the epic adventure
> of exploration would come into it [...] there might also be a different kind
> of poetry which was more willing to use the specifics in the situation as far
> as possible and therefore to have to use technological language.[11]

The poem is technical in its depiction of astronaut life, the 'whitesuit riggers' (l. 8) dealing with 'food-tubes, screens, lenses' (l. 13), while also showing an engagement with Romanticism. The crystallisation that occurs outside their hatch in space becomes for the voyaging travellers 'their fireflies and larks' (l. 3), the nature of earth still remembered in the depths of space. It is, however, not simply a nostalgic remembrance; 'A Home in Space' is, in all its tenderness, an embracing of adventure and the voyage into the unknown. Just as the narrator of 'In Sobieski's Shield' urges himself and his family to 'start moving I can surely get onto my feet' (l. 46), depicting their movement into the unknown as he asks 'are the suits /

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[9] Morgan, 'From Glasgow to Saturn' in *Nothing Not Giving Messages*, p. 250.
[10] Riach, 'Scottish Poetry as Science Fiction, p. 146.
[11] Morgan, 'Let's Go', p. 67.

ready the mineral storm is quieter' (l. 97-8), 'A Home in Space' portrays its astronomic explorers 'launch[ing] themselves outwards' (l. 20). The poem has been described as a 'quintessential depiction of the rootless wandering restless instinct that seemed native to many children of the 1960s',[12] the decade 'charged by the energies of change'[13] that would affect Morgan and lead to his poetic portrayal of a voyage breaking away from earth and embracing the unknown.

'A Home in Space' is made up of a series of anadiploses, with the beginning of each line repeating the last word of the preceding clause. The first half of the poem deploys full sentences, connected with but not running on from the previous lines: 'laid back in orbit, they found their minds. / They found their minds were very clean and clear. / Clear crystals in swarms outside were their fireflies and larks. / Larks they were in lift-off, swallows in soaring' (ll. 1-4). The latter half of the poem depicts the crucial moment in which the travellers cut communication with their home-base back on earth and venture unknowingly into the abyss of space; the lines lead on from one another through the use of hyphen, becoming one elongated sentence:

> 'one night - or day - or month - or year - they all - /
> all gathered at the panel and agreed - /
> agreed to cut communication with - /
> with the earth base - and it must be said they were - /
> were cool and clear as they dismantled the station and - /
> and gave their capsule such power that - /
> that they launched themselves outwards'
>
> (ll. 14-20)

The repetition of this sentence becomes a linguistic impression of a crackling, distorted transmission, representing their departure away from the 'computers' (l. 10) and 'lenses' (l. 13) that marked their journey from earth into space. By essentially cutting the connection that they have with their home planet, the travellers become revolutionaries, choosing to adopt the exclamative imperative found in Morgan's early poem 'Islands' (1968): 'Take the voyage out then! Drink the milk of space!'[14] They are described as 'that band of tranquil defiers' (l. 22), and the placidity of the adjective 'tranquil' becomes a reminder that they are not war-like in their mutiny, but pioneers of space travel, with Marshall Walker defining their decisions as

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[12] Riach, 'Scottish Poetry as Science Fiction', p. 133.
[13] McGonigal, *Beyond the Last Dragon,* p. 128.
[14] Morgan, 'Islands', *Collected Poems*, p. 195, l. 23.

'affirming the life of quest'.[15] Just as Morgan would go back in time to write on the quests of Beowulf and Gilgamesh, 'A Home in Space' shows how this ancient motif can be transferred into future time. While the questers of folklore typically go in search of a specific object or prize, Morgan's space travellers go 'to keep a - / a voyaging generation voyaging' (ll. 23-4). The poem becomes a representation not just of the scientific world and its discoveries that characterised the 1960s and 70s, forging ahead into unexplored territories, but also of what Morgan believes the art of poetry to be: 'poetry - all poetry! - is a journey into the unknown'.[16]

It was in the year that preceded *Star Gate*'s publication that Morgan experienced two deaths that 'knocked sideways [...] all personal and professional concerns'.[17] Hugh MacDiarmid, Morgan's contemporary who similarly aspired to create a poetry that could contain the multifariousness of science and society, died aged eighty-six in the late summer of 1978. While the two poets did not have a history of close friendship, with Morgan having been 'identified in MacDiarmid's mind with all that he considered tawdry and somehow "disloyal" about avant-garde writing by Scottish internationalists',[18] in the later years of their lives they had reached reconciliation. MacDiarmid's death marked the loss of a highly influential writer of the Scottish literary canon, and yet for Morgan his death would become interconnected in memory with the far more personal and crushing bereavement of John Scott, who died two days after MacDiarmid at the age of sixty. When cancelling his place on a radio programme dedicated to MacDiarmid ten days after the death of the poet and just over a week after the loss of John Scott, Morgan wrote to his publisher Michael Schmidt, apologising for thinking 'I would be able to deal with it. I find I can't. It is partly because the two funerals were so close together that whenever I think of MacDiarmid, I think of John. And we were more than friends, so the physical separation is very hard.'[19]

Star Gate becomes in part a representation of Morgan's experience with grief at the end of the seventies. After the humour of the sequence 'Particle Poems' and the impending terror of 'The Mouth', the final poetical grouping in the collection sees Morgan setting a raw, personal grief against the 'sulphur mines' ('Io', l. 1) and the 'marbled beauty' ('Ganymede', l.

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[15] Marshall Walker, 'Edwin Morgan's Science Fictions' in *About Edwin Morgan*, p. 56.

[16] Morgan, 'Introduction' in '*Wi the Haill Voice: 25 Poems by Vladimir Mayakovsky* translated into Scots', *Essays*, p. 60.

[17] McGonigal, *Beyond the Last Dragon*, p. 253.

[18] Ibid., p. 255.

[19] SpecColl MS Morgan V/3/1.

2) of Jupiter's moons. Each poem is written in the first person, and just as Morgan would go on to personalise his grief for the loss of John Scott in 'After a Death' amongst the historical poems in the collection *Sonnets from Scotland*, it is his own voice of mourning that lingers amongst the poignant descriptions of the moons and their craters, 'so many million miles from home' ('Io', l. 15). The group of people who travel the moons are undoubtedly human, 'an old-fashioned earthly lot' ('Europa', l. 2), and the poems are scattered with references to their journey taking place in a future of space-travel and scientific discovery. Marshall Walker argues that '[Morgan's] science fiction poems delight in the ways and means of present and future science for their own special beauty'[20] and yet, despite this, each moon portrays a nostalgic reflection on the past and on loss, the future integrating with Morgan's process of grief that affected him in his state of writing in 1979.

'Amalthea' opens 'The Moons of Jupiter' and its portrayal of the narrator suffering from an inability to occupy himself with art sets the tone for what Colin Nicholson perceives in each of the Jupiter poems to be an 'engage[ment with] alterity in unfamiliar places'.[21] The moons engage with a sense of 'otherness' that was similarly found in Morgan's relationship with John Scott, a physically adept, working-class Catholic from the outskirts of Carluke. 'Amalthea' is the only poem of the five to deploy exclusively the singular pronouns of 'I' and 'my', compared to the collective pronouns used in the remaining 'Moons', and this grammatical significance creates a sense of solitude that echoes throughout this opening poem. Arguably it becomes a reflection not just on Morgan's professional demeanour in the years running up to *Star Gate*, described by the writer as 'distracting and depressing … in both the inner and outer worlds'[22] but also on the effects of personal loss after the death of John Scott.

The opening lines that state 'I took a book with me to Amalthea / but never turned a page. It weighed like lead' (ll. 1-2) depict a sense of muted despondency, the narrator unable to engage with work or art. McGonigal's biography of Morgan states that in the later years of the 1970s 'academic success gave very limited satisfaction',[23] and the monotonous repetition of the narrator's attempts to engage with the unnamed book portrays this succinctly, 'listlessly/ reading, staring, rereading listlessly' (ll. 4-5) as his sentences remain 'half-formed' (l. 12). Amalthea is coloured a deep red from the volcanic sulphur erupting on Io, and yet the vibrancy of the planet is left unmentioned in the poem. Instead the narrator depicts himself and

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[20] Marshall Walker, 'The Voyage Out and the Favoured Place' in *About Edwin Morgan*, p. 63.
[21] Nicholson, *Inventions of Modernity,* p. 128.
[22] Morgan qtd in *Beyond the Last Dragon*, p. 252.
[23] McGonigal, *Beyond the Last Dragon*, p. 253.

the book 'like a grey image / malleted into the rock' (ll. 3-4), suggesting once more a depressive undertone to the poem as he depicts his memory and imagination mirroring the 'dustbound, flattened, petrified' (l. 9) qualities of the planet. The narrator continues this sense of deficiency as he deploys a semantic field of shortcomings relating to his physical state, describing 'my tongue [...] like a coil of iron' (l. 13) and his knees like 'tombs' (l. 21) as the 'tons of pages never moved' (l. 20). His body becomes a physical representation of the melancholia he experiences, and yet it is the inertia of his mental state that is returned to and emphasised again through repetition, the narrator stating 'my very memory lay paralyzed' (l. 7) before asking a few lines later 'what did I say there? / My very memory is paralyzed' (ll. 14-5). Morgan's vocabulary and use of literary device serve to portray throughout the poem the dull weight of mental and physical grief, 'Amalthea' representing the loss of something deep within him.

Colin Nicholson has suggested 'Amalthea' portrays the condition of 'writer's block'[24] and yet the narrator of the poem is not looking for the distraction of writing but instead of reading. The first sentence of the untitled book that becomes the object of his frustration is delivered in the poem: '"The local train, with its three coaches, pulled up / at Newleigh Station at half-past four …"' (ll. 18-9). It is not an opening line devised from the imagination of Morgan but is instead the beginning to David Lindsay's 1923 novel, *Sphinx*. While 'Amalthea' never engages with Lindsay's text further than the first sentence, the narrator unable to get past it and thus '[it] never came to anything' (l. 17), it is interesting to consider Morgan's decision to reference this particular novel. David Lindsay (not to be mistaken with sixteenth-century makar Sir David Lindsay of the Mount) was a twentieth-century novelist, publishing five books in his lifetime of which none 'brought him any reasonable sum of money, or received adequate recognition from the critics'.[25] J. B. Pick's description of his life and work as 'a most arduous pilgrimage in search of ultimate truth - an unfashionable adventure that prevented his books from ever being popular'[26] suggests a link to Nicholson's reading of 'Amalthea'. Lindsay's unappreciated efforts show, in a sense, a case of writer's block; Lindsay does not show an inability to produce work, but an inability to produce work that can be admired and elevated. The book, 'weigh[ing] like lead' is heavy with the weight of gravity, but also with the knowledge that it represents substandard work of the striving artist.

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[24] Nicholson, *Inventions of Modernity*, p. 128.

[25] J. B. Pick, 'A Sketch of Lindsay's Life as Man and Writer' in *The Strange Genius of David Lindsay: An Appreciation by J.B. Pick, Colin Wilson & E.H. Visiak* (London: John Baker, 1970), p. 3.

[26] Ibid.

It is in the 'Moons of Jupiter' that we see the prevalence of Marco Fazzini's argument that 'it is particularly in the science-fiction poems that Morgan engages in keeping the worlds of art and science in contact and in transfiguring them both'.[27] The 'book in the dust' ('Amalthea', l. 28) and 'the weird planetman's flute' ('Io', l. 13) show the arts altered in time and space.

    Sphinx is one of Lindsay's lesser-known novels, with *Voyage to Arcturus* (1920) and *The Haunted Woman* (1922) eventually gaining some critical attention in the latter half of the twentieth century. It tells the story of Nicholas Cabot, who moves to Newleigh to live with a family while working on his invention of a dream-recording machine. The Sphinx in question is a musical composition admired by Nicholas and leads onto a debate between himself and his landlord's daughters Evelyn and Katherine as to the meaning behind the mythical creature:

> 'Surely the Egyptian Sphinx was a personification of Nature?' she said,
> not looking at her sister, but at Nicholas. 'The question which she asks,
> and which no one can answer, is, "Why are you living in the world?" As
> none of us can answer it, we all have to die.'[28]

Evelyn's interpretation of the Sphinx is dismissed by Nicholas, who views the creature as a goddess of the 'dreams we dream during deep sleep and remember nothing of afterwards'.[29] Both interpretations can be perceived as particularly poignant when considering Morgan's biographical context. Evelyn's statement that 'we all have to die' shows an acceptance of mortality that Morgan, in his year of grief, shows signs of struggling with throughout the 'Moons'. For him, 'the stupid moon goes round' (l. 23), Amalthea's natural orbit bringing with it a reminder that for people, unlike the planets, the rotating time of our life will eventually come to an end.

    In 'Europa', the narrator describes how 'on that smooth moon / men would be driven mad with many dreams' (ll. 22-3) and Nicholas' description of dreams that we 'remember nothing of afterwards' is again rejected by Morgan, sleep bringing with it instead echoes of loss as our minds are brought into an unconscious reality in which those who are deceased are still with us, 'as if a curtain could be drawn / to let the living see even the dead' ('Europa', ll. 26-7). For Morgan's protagonist who is experiencing loss, he is mentally stuck within his grief and the convolutions of time, moving between the past and the present as he goes between his

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[27] Marco Fazzini, 'Alterities from Outer Space: Edwin Morgan's Science-Fiction Poems' in *Resisting Alterities: Wilson Harris and Other Avatars of Otherness* (Amsterdam: Rodopi, 2004), p. 227.
[28] David Lindsay, *Sphinx* (New York City: Carroll and Graf, 1988), p. 33.
[29] Ibid.

conscious and unconscious state. The inability to move forward in time after experiencing loss bears similarities with Morgan's '13' from his long poem *The New Divan* (1977): 'you're where I do not know, time is / the drooping shadow on the vine, suddenly / I lift my head to think of anything / that might be steps, a voice, but only time / scrapes like a dragging kite'.[30] The image of the lifting head before the dull sense of realisation that there is no way back into the past shows the same sense of grief that envelopes the narrator of 'Amalthea', the future without his partner seen as prolonged, earth-bound and rooted 'like a dragging kite'.

When the narrator in 'Amalthea' is eventually rescued, he is described as being 'plucked [...] / like dislocated yards of groaning mandrake' (ll. 26-7). The hallucinogenic qualities of the plant suggest that amongst the wearisome monotony of depression and grief, he has experienced these visions of loss, himself one of those being 'driven mad by many dreams'. Of *Sphinx*, Bernard Sellin argues that 'the only glimmer of hope in this sombre book was the reunion in death of the lovers who had been separated in life',[31] and once more we are reminded of Morgan's personal grief and the haunting of an argument between himself and Scott in 1977 which meant 'they would not meet again before John's death one year later'.[32] *Sphinx*, in all of its obscurity, is a carefully chosen reference, depicting monotony, grief, and the philosophies of life.

While 'Amalthea' is ambiguous in its portrayal of grief, the depression felt by the narrator implied but not explicit, the final poem of 'The Moons of Jupiter' and of the collection as a whole depicts unequivocally the sense of loss Morgan experienced at the time of writing. 'Callisto' combines futuristic space exploration and the alterity of the moon with an inevitable presence of regret and lamentation for past events, and yet within the poem there still lies a sense of hope that is characteristically Morgan.

The opening of the poem personifies the moon, with Callisto being described as a 'scarred, cauterized, pocked and warty face' (l. 1) in direct opposition to the pre-Hellenic goddess after whom the moon was named, 'from "Kalliste", meaning "most beautiful".'[33] There is a sense of inhospitality that emanates from the 'brown and cold' (l. 4) moon, and the alliterative description of it 'grin[ning] and gap[ing] and gawk[ing]' (l. 2) seems almost taunting, Callisto holding onto its secrets as the explorers attempt to discover 'the record of

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[30] Morgan, '13', *The New Divan* (Manchester: Carcanet, 1977), p. 13.

[31] Bernard Sellin, *The Life and Works of David Lindsay,* transl. Kenneth Gunnell (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1981), p. 211.

[32] McGonigal, *Beyond the Last Dragon,* p. 252.

[33] Janet Parker, Alice Mills and Julie Stanton, *Mythology: Myths, Legends and Fantasies* (Cape Town: Struick Publishers, 2006), p. 36.

your past' (l. 7). In 'Ganymede', the narrator asks himself 'is it excitement, or power, or understanding, or illumination / we take our expeditions for? Is it specimens, / or experiments, or spin-off, or fame, or evolution / or necessity we take our expeditions for?' ('Ganymede', ll. 12-6). 'Callisto' shows no sign of definitively answering these questions, but presents humankind engaging with its new environments, marking the moon's 'dust and ochre' (l. 12) with 'our feet, our search, our songs' (l. 18). There is a sense of community that repeats itself throughout the 'Moons of Jupiter', emphasised by the frequent plural pronouns, and yet just as 'Io' portrays the solitude of the planetman who 'must shoulder sorrow, great sacks / of pain, in places with no solace but / his own' (ll. 26-8), the portrayal of camaraderie in 'Callisto' is interrupted as the narrator distances himself from the songs of his fellow explorers and states 'I did not sing' (l. 19). For him, he experiences a sudden association between the 'slaty chaos' (l. 17) of Callisto and that which he lost on earth, the landscape becoming a physical reminder of his loss.

It is in the latter half of the poem that the narrator experiences this trigger of grief, the 'mounds and pits' of the moon described as 'grave-like' (l. 19) as he re-lives the loss of his long-term partner. In the years that followed, Morgan would write of John Scott with the same fondness found in his 1968 poem 'From a City Balcony', which describes in exclamation how 'when I think of you the day grows bright!'[34] In his 2007 collection *A Book of Lives*, he relives their final holiday, asking 'what did I care? What did you care? We were in such happiness',[35] omitting from the poem any recollection of the raw pain that underlies 'The Moons of Jupiter'. 'Callisto' arguably distances itself from reality through the Greco-Roman mythology that surrounds the moons and their namesakes, and the setting of an astronomical plain with 'elephant-hide seas' (l. 5). This disassociation with the real world saves 'The Moons of Jupiter' from the sentimentality of confessional poetry, despite the reality of Morgan's underlying loss. Leaving John unnamed throughout the moon sequence emphasises the universality of grief and yet from the desolate landscape of Jupiter's moon the reader does get a sense of the earthly reality that surrounds the poem, Morgan painting a scene of the 'high Lanarkshire wind / [that] whipped out the tears men might be loath to show, / as if the autumn had a mercy I / could not give to myself' (l. 21-4). Lingering in these personal lines is the sense of self-blame that would reappear in his 1984 poem 'After a Death', Morgan's grief metamorphosing into 'shame' (l. 24) after dwelling on 'thoughts / that left us parted on a

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[34] Morgan, 'From a City Balcony', *Collected Poems*, p. 183, l. 1.
[35] Morgan, 'John 2', *A Book of Lives* (Manchester: Carcanet, 2007), p. 97, l. 2.

quarrel' (ll. 25-6), their final argument and meeting leaving Morgan 'haunted by it for the rest of his life'.[36] In 'The Clone Poem' and its proverbial repetitions, a sense of this self-blame is characterised in the final lines as Morgan learns to understand 'you can have too much of a good thing too much of a good thing too / much you can have too much you can you can' ('The Clone Poem', ll. 35-6).

The feeling of shame could also be argued as a comment on Morgan's feelings surrounding his homosexuality. At the time of writing *Star Gate*, it had only been just over a decade since a UK opinion poll found 93% of its respondents believing homosexuality was an illness that required medical treatment,[37] and it would be another year before legislation decriminalising homosexual acts would be put forward in Scotland, even then requiring it to be 'private' between two men of or over the age of twenty-one. The image of the narrator sitting in solitude 'listening in shame / to the perfunctory priest' (ll. 24-5) portrays the reality of homosexuality in the 1970s. McGonigal describes John Scott's burial in *Beyond the Last Dragon*: 'nothing was said openly about their friendship. It was a Catholic funeral, and a cold day',[38] and yet even this is euphemistic in its description, the term 'friendship' arguably chosen by McGonigal to relate how Scott and Morgan's relationship was perceived in this time period. For Morgan, it would not be until an interview with Christopher Whyte, published in 1990, that his sexuality would be publicly confirmed. The ambiguity of the pronouns deployed throughout his poetry, and seen here in 'The Moons of Jupiter', portrays the 'sheer difficulty'[39] Morgan felt in regards to writing openly about his sexuality. As a professor of the University of Glasgow, Morgan notes how he was 'very much aware of the fact that I was going to these places and having activity, in public sometimes, and yet at the same time I had to keep up this respectability thing'.[40] It seems apt that Morgan came out in the same year that Glasgow was made the European City of Culture, the poet negotiating time alongside cultural awareness, and yet the grief that is contained within the 'Moons of Jupiter' is made more sombre still by the knowledge of its necessary concealment due to the context of the era.

Despite the presentation of Morgan's personal grief, it could be argued that the poem

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[36] McGonigal, *Beyond the Last Dragon*, p. 253.
[37] 'LGB&T: History, Challenges and Successes: A brief history of the involvement of lesbian, gay, bisexual and trans people in medicine and healthcare through the ages', NHS North West Timeline Exhibition, June 2012, p.17.
[38] McGonigal, *Beyond the Last Dragon*, p. 254.
[39] Morgan, 'Power from things not declared', *Nothing Not Giving Messages*, p. 144.
[40] Ibid., p. 164.

and the collection still end with a sense of closure. The final line draws on his recollections, stating his belief that 'these / memories, and love, go with the planetman / in duty and in hope from moon to moon' (ll. 26-8). For the planetman, his human experiences of love and loss become a part of who he is. To foresee that he will keep travelling 'from moon to moon' suggests they will not destroy him but instead make him, like the awnings set out upon desolate Callisto, 'frail and tough as flags' (l. 13).

While McGonigal notes that Morgan perceived the 1970s to be '"a blank" in his mind, compared with the marvellous 1960s',[41] *Star Gate* symbolises the start of 'the real and more far-reaching work'[42] that came from Morgan in this decade and would continue as he progressed into the latter half of the twentieth century. The collection immerses itself in questions of identity, existence and our material and atomic world through an engagement with multiple realities. By embedding his biography into the worlds of cosmic exploration, Morgan emphasises the collection's focus on the postmodern exploration of how subatomic and galactic worlds can relate to our existing reality. The range of tones and forms that are found in *Star Gate* serve to emphasise the possibilities of science fiction that Morgan would continue to explore in his later collections, showing how the genre can be both apocalyptic and forward-looking. As Janine Rogers argues in her text *Unified Fields: Science and Literary Form* (2014), Morgan's work shows how 'forms of different types, including our bodies and our texts, are patterns of space and time; they are the ways in which space and time are experienced - the boundaries that are placed on space and time to create discrete entities.'[43] The collection defines the beginning point of Morgan's extended interest in the possibilities of our universe, the relation between space and time, and how these fields of thought concern us as human beings. It becomes an embodiment of Morgan's belief that 'science must investigate, but man must be the judge of what is relevant to him as a human being'.[44]

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[41] McGonigal, p. 23.

[42] Ibid., p. 202.

[43] Janine Rogers, *Unified Fields: Science and Literary Form* (Montreal: Mcgill-Queen's University Press, 2014), p.84.

[44] Morgan, 'The Poet and the Particle', p. 19.

Chapter 3:

'*Respublica Scotorum,* sent across such ages as we guessed but never found'

***Sonnets from Scotland* (1984)**

Following the proposal of the Scotland Act 1978 in which the outlines for a separate Scottish Assembly were made, in March 1979 a post-legislative referendum was held in Scotland with the electorate being asked 'do you want the provisions of the Scotland 1978 Act to be put into effect?'[1] The referendum came out of a surge of support for the Scottish National Party in the 1960s and 70s, the SNP having contested sixty-five out of the seventy-one Scottish seats in the 1970 general election. Despite Scotland having always been a Labour stronghold, the aggregation of centralised government and economic decline in the United Kingdom contributed to 'modern Scottish nationalism [taking] off in the mid-1960s, fired by disillusionment with Labour and an increasing sense of economic backwardness relative to England'.[2] The SNP garnered support by being seen 'not so much as the party of independence or separatism, but as the party that could speak for Scotland against the London parties, the party of Scottish identity'.[3]

The passing of the Cunningham Amendment in 1978 required 40% of the Scottish electorate to support the referendum, and those not voting would be considered a 'no'. Scotland lost its chance of devolution, with the 'yes' vote only representing 32.9% of the registered electorate despite its 51.6% majority. Within four weeks the Motion of No Confidence had been called against James Callaghan's Labour government. Within two months Margaret Thatcher of the Conservative party was in power, with Duncan Petrie arguing that this was 'a result emphatically not endorsed in Scotland where the Tories polled less than one-third of the vote'.[4]

In Scottish literature from this era, there were a number of reactions to the result of the referendum and what it represented for the country, Berthold Schoene defining the event as

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[1] House of Commons, Scottish Affairs Committee, *The Referendum on Separation for Scotland: making the process legal: Second Report of Session 2012-2013*, 17 July 2013.

[2] Dr Bart Moore-Gilbert, 'Introduction: Cultural Closure or post-avantgardism?' in *The arts in the 1970's: cultural closure?,* ed. Dr Bart Moore-Gilbert (London: Routledge, 1994), p. 6.

[3] Vernon Bogdanor, *Devolution in the United Kingdom*, (New York: Oxford University Press, 1999), p.124.

[4] Duncan Petrie, *Contemporary Scottish Fictions: Film, Television and the Novel* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2004), p. 2.

'cementing Scotland's subnational status for good'.[5] Alasdair Gray's novel *1982 Janine* (1984), described by Karina Westermann as 'perhaps his most overtly political novel'[6] portrays a vitriolic response to the outcome of the referendum through his protagonist, Jock McLeish, who must consider Scotland from the viewpoint of the colonised:

> 'If you win the race by a short head you will have lost it', we were told,
> and so we won the race by a short head and lost the race. Then came the
> cuts in public spending, loss of business and increased unemployment and
> now Westminster has decided to spend the North Sea oil revenues building
> a fucking tunnel under the English Channel. If we ran that race again we
> would win it by a head and neck, and so we won't be allowed to run it again.[7]

Jock dwells in the year 1982 on failed devolution and the Winter of Discontent while simultaneously living in another era of political turmoil due to Thatcher's decision to go to war with the Falkland Islands. The class discord that resonates in his speech portrays a similarity with Hugh MacDiarmid's *A Drunk Man Looks at the Thistle* (1926), the poem projecting MacDiarmid's frustration at the Labour government's failure to promote Home Rule in Scotland in 1924. Both the poem and the novel portray the internal manifestation of politics, 'attentive to the personal politics of inner place'.[8] In Douglas Dunn's poem 'St Kilda's Parliament 1879-1979' (1980), the nature of the personal is addressed again in a more covert manner than attempted by Gray and MacDiarmid. A contrast is made between the 'remote democracy'[9] of St Kilda in 1879 in which each inhabitant was represented, and Scotland in 1979 and its decision to deny the nation a chance for devolution. Dunn's narrator, a photographer reflecting on his captured moment of the St Kilda inhabitants, states that 'on St Kilda you will surely hear Gaelic / Spoken softly like a poetry of ghosts / By those who never were contorted by / Hierarchies of cuisine and literacy',[10] suggesting modern Scotland and the United Kingdom's tendency to under-represent minority cultures in their political concerns.

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[5] Berthold Schoene, 'Going Cosmopolitan: Reconstituting Scottishness in Post-devolution Criticism' in *The Edinburgh Companion to Contemporary Scottish Literature*, ed. Berthold Schoene (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2007), p. 7.

[6] Karina Westermann, 'That Dear Green Place Rewritten: Alasdair Gray and Scottish Literary Independence' in *Angles of the English-Speaking World V.7: The State of the Union: Scotland 1707-2007*, ed. Jorgen Sevaldsen and Jens Rahbek Rasmussen (Copenhagen: Museum Tusculanum Press, 2007), p. 122.

[7] Alasdair Gray, *1982 Janine* (London: Jonathan Cape, 1984), p. 66.

[8] Scott Lyall, *Hugh MacDiarmid's Poetry and Politics of Place*: *Imagining a Scottish Republic*, (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2006), p. 2.

[9] Douglas Dunn, 'St Kilda's Parliament 1879-1979' in *New Selected Poems 1964-2000* (London: Faber and Faber, 2003), p. 70, l. 42.

[10] Ibid., ll. 50-53.

Cairns Craig suggests a link between 'St Kilda's Parliament' and Hugh MacDiarmid's early poem 'The Eemis Stane' (1925), with Dunn's archaeological language and exploration of natural meaning 'echo[ing] one of MacDiarmid's greatest lyrics - as though the cultural beginning of the Scottish nationalist movement in the 1920s is contained and continued into the present in defiance of this moment of political failure'.[11]

Despite an overall sense of defeat emanating from those who would, like Jock, 'consider it a luxury to blame ourselves for the mess we are in instead of the bloody old Westminster parliament',[12] culturally the 1979 referendum has since been considered a catalyst for the 'unprecedented explosion of creativity' in Scottish literature and art.[13] Considered a 'direct response to specific political events, in particular to the disastrous "double whammy" that had been inflicted upon the Scottish people in 1979',[14] the cultural revival of Scottish literature and art in the 1980s is, on the whole, regarded as another renaissance, 'intellectually and culturally comparable not only with the 1920s but with the high years of the Scottish Enlightenment'.[15] While this statement is a fairly bold claim, the restored faith in national identity that came out of this political event is evident in Edwin Morgan's reading of these years, alongside his own fervent sense of optimism. Regardless of Morgan's own contributions to this period, the poet acknowledged 'Alasdair Gray and James Kelman and Tom Leonard and Liz Lochhead' when describing 'the kind of books that were available' in the post-referendum years, this range of writers denoting 'a surprisingly good decade from that point of view.'[16]

What came in part as a result of the referendum in Morgan's own *oeuvre* was *Sonnets from Scotland*. Like his contemporaries, Morgan was connecting through poetry with Scotland's identity and place, and the collection is often heralded as Morgan's crowning achievement. While only one poem out of the fifty-five in the collection makes overt reference to the referendum, *Sonnets from Scotland* serves to show that, as a whole, 'Scotland was there

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[11] Cairns Craig, 'From the Lost Ground: Liz Lochhead, Douglas Dunn, and Contemporary British Poetry' in *Contemporary British Poetry: Essays in Theory and Criticism*, eds. James Acheson, Romana Huks (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1996), p. 359.
[12] Gray, p. 66.
[13] Petrie, p.2.
[14] Ibid.
[15] Christopher Harvie, *Scotland and Nationalism: Scottish Society and Politics, 1707 to the Present,* 3rd ed. (London: Routledge, 1998), p. 200.
[16] Morgan, Tape 5 in interview with James McGonigal, *Beyond the Last Dragon* (Ross-shire: Sandstone Press, 2010), p. 258.

and that one mustn't write it off just because it had not come into being.'[17] Morgan's statement emphasises Scotland being defined throughout history as a sub-nation, the forgotten sister to imperial England. His collection comes out of an urgency to show that the country was relevant and thriving from its beginning and that regardless of its perceived status as a secondary nation, 'no voice was lost' ('The Ring of Brodgar', l. 2). Speaking to Robert Crawford in an interview included in the 1990 publication *Nothing Not Giving Messages*, Morgan notes a feeling of 'nevertheless' that came out of the initial deflation rendered after the referendum.[18] *Sonnets from Scotland* can ultimately be regarded as a physical embodiment of Morgan's desire to 'make this "nevertheless" feeling quite tangible and palpable'[19] and create a vibrant new beginning for Scotland, both in the context of the poem and its imagined explorations of time and as a poet contributing to the country's cultural revival.

The collection portrays a group of time-and-space travellers, moving from the 'thunder / and volcanic fires' ('Slate', ll. 2-3) of Scotland's imagined beginning through to the 'heliport-towers' and the 'mile-high buildings' ('Clydegrad', ll. 4-5) of a futuristic Glasgow. Quoting from Bertolt Brecht's 1948 play *A Caucasian Chalk Circle*, Morgan's epigraph for his collection exclaims '*O Wechsel der Zeiten! Du Hoffnung des Volks!*' Its translation, 'O changing times! Hope for the people!', serves to emphasise the optimistic tone Morgan attempts to convey in his reinvention of the past, present and future of his home country**.** The temporal dimensions portrayed in the sequence are metaphysically challenging. Morgan initially examines the early geological land of Scotland that was there before the 'memory of men' ('Slate', l. 11). He goes on to imagine Scotland in eras far beyond the time period in which the sequence was written but which are perceived as the past by the time travellers who are presumably travelling back in time from the future. Morgan creates what Gavin Wallace has termed 'conjectured "past futures" and "future pasts"'.[20]

Sonnets from Scotland corroborates Morgan's post-referendum feeling of change and renewal, a common theme throughout his work, with his desire for poetry to embrace the technological advances of the twentieth century. Both *Star Gate: Science Fiction Poems* and *Sonnets from Scotland* become literary embodiments of Morgan's argument in his 1972 essay, 'A Glimpse of Petavius'. The poet emphasises how 'science must be humanised', with people learning to recognise that 'it is man himself who sends up and travels in rockets and who

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[17] Morgan, 'Nothing is not giving messages' in *Nothing Not Giving Messages,* p. 141.
[18] Ibid.
[19] Ibid.
[20] Gavin Wallace, 'New Currency or Old?: The Coin by Edwin Morgan'. [accessed 13.6.2015].

makes and watches television sets'.[21] In the sonnets humankind is inextricably present throughout, despite the pre-glacial or post-apocalyptic eras the time travellers appear to find themselves in. The first poems of the sequence comment on the 'memory of men' ('Slate', l. 11) and the 'apes / and men [and] their teeming heads' ('Carboniferous', ll. 13-4). Although the travellers are writing of a time that predates humanity's beginning, the recognition of humankind and its importance in history is recognised and anticipated, the travellers describing 'our immoderate delight / wait[ing] to see them, and hear them speak, again' ('Silva Caledonia', ll. 13-4).

The changing geology of a prehistoric Scotland begins the sequence, the 'rains, blizzards, sea-poundings' ('Slate', l. 9) portraying a dramatic tempestuousness that mirrors the political horizon of Scotland at the time of Morgan's writing. The middle-class district of Bearsden in Glasgow is illustrated as a pre-glacial underwater haven in 'Carboniferous', and the nest of sharks that inhabit the waters are heralded as portraying 'an unsinister / ferocious tenderness of mating shapes' (ll. 9-10), emphasising their difference from the 'apes / and men' (ll. 13-4). One of the marine predators speaks to the time-travellers, quoting the title of Nicolas Poussin's 1639 painting, '*Et in Arcadia,* said the shark, *ego*' (ll. 5-6), which translates as 'Even in Arcadia, there am I'. Colin Nicholson argues that Morgan's revision of the Latinate phrase portrays the 'fear of difference [...] reconfigured to measure the self-doubt signalled in the recent vote',[22] Arcadia used as a symbol of a lost Eden alongside the shark that can be seen as a personification of Death. As the sonnets rest on this initial geological focus, the post-glacial age experienced by the time-travellers becomes a symbol of hope and change through Morgan's semantic choices that are used to denote new life, portraying Scotland as a 'fresh drained greenness [...] like a world first seen' ('Post-Glacial', l. 8), the 'new world' (l. 10) appearing after the 'bright straths unfreeze' (l. 14). While the remaining sequence still bases itself around the changing earth of Scotland, Morgan becomes focused on man and the philosophy, literature and history that shape both his imagined and realistic history of the country.

Just as his later sequence *Nine in Glasgow* (2002) depicts figures who are ostensibly linked to Glasgow sharing monologues on their life, Morgan delivers a similar technique in *Sonnets from Scotland* in regards to his presentation of historical figures of whom he considers to be inherently related to Scotland. Over a third of the poems from the collection focus

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[21] Morgan, 'A Glimpse of Petavius', p. 5.
[22] Nicholson, *Inventions of Modernity*, p. 138.

specifically on figures that stretch across millennia, from the Biblical prefect Pontius Pilate to the twentieth-century Greek poet-diplomat Giorgos Seferis. The figures that are drawn upon by Morgan are not always overtly connected to Scotland, but his decision to include them in the collection as focal points emphasises his desire to portray Scotland as playing a central role in the events of history and musings of philosophy and literature, defying the sub-national status that writers such as Morgan and Gray believed had been put upon them after the failed referendum.

Despite this interpretation, it would be limiting to suggest that the collection relates exclusively to the political era in which it was written. While the referendum can be considered as a prompt for *Sonnets from Scotland*, there are glimpses of the universal truths that Morgan is seen investigating in *Demon* and *The Play of Gilgamesh*. Prefixing the poems that solely depict a range of historical figures and events, Morgan's sonnet 'The Mirror' contemplates the human psyche and its relation to humankind, commenting on the effect it has on man's humanity.

The poem opens with the statement 'There is a mirror only we can see' (l. 1). A recurring concept throughout the sequence, this initial line suggests the notion of 'us and them', the time-travellers reflecting on humanity and earth from an outsider's perspective. The mirror is often used throughout literature as a symbol of both physical and spiritual reflection, the potentiality of its clarity emphasised in Cassius' speech to Brutus in Shakespeare's *Julius Caesar* when he states: 'I your glass / Will modestly discover to yourself / That of yourself which you yet know not of'.[23] The mirror is seen throughout literature as both a clarification and a distortion of truth, projecting antithetical themes of illusion and reality, candour and deception, symmetry and imbalance. In Morgan's poem, the mirror that 'hangs in time and not in space' (l. 2) can be read as an embodiment of the 'mirror phase', a theory conceptualised out of Sigmund Freud's notion of the ego by twentieth-century French psychoanalyst Jacques Lacan.

In Freud's studies on hypnotism, he notes the attempt at rationalisation given by his patients for the actions they undertook in their post-hypnotic condition. Leading on from Freud's theory that 'in cases in which the true causation evades conscious perception one does not hesitate to attempt to make another connection, which one believes, although it is false',[24]

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[23] William Shakespeare, *Julius Caesar*, ed. Arthur Humphries (Oxford: Oxford Paperbacks, 2008), Act 1, Scene 2, ll. 70-2.
[24] Madan Syrup, *Jacques Lacan* (Hertfordshire: Simon & Schuster, 1992), p.63.

Lacan argues that the ego is governed by compelling false connections, defining this occurrence as *méconnaissance*, or 'misrecognition'. The mirror phase in which this misrecognition is predominant comes in the first six to eighteen months of a child's life when it is first able to envisage itself as a comprehensible and self-governing individual, portrayed in the poem when 'the newborn climb through [the mirror] to be free' (l. 3). Madan Syrup argues that:

> [T]he mirror image is central to Lacan's account of subjectivity, because its apparent smoothness and totality is a myth. The image in which we first recognise ourselves is a misrecognition. Lacan's point is that the ego is constituted by an identification with another whole object, an imaginary projection, an idealisation which does not match the child's feebleness.[25]

What the time-travellers suggest in their reflections is that this mirror phase, a moment of self-delusion, does not rest exclusively with the 'newborn' and is not limited to one moment. The narrator states that 'the multitudes of the world cannot know / they are reflected there' (ll. 5-6), and in the use of the term 'multitudes', Morgan is implying that human beings are continually enthralled with an illusion of themselves. The mirror 'hang[ing] in time' (l. 2) implies that both future and past are based on illusion. The 'multitudes' are further described as 'glass' (l. 6) and 'shadows' (l. 7) to emphasise their own sense of false connection.

Agricola, a historical work written by the Roman orator Publius Tacitus, comments on geography, ethnography and matters of state. Quoting Calgacus, the chieftain of the Caledonian confederacy, Tacitus writes 'Auferre, trucidare, rapere, falsis nominibus imperium; atque, ubi solitunem faucient pacum appellant,' translated in the Oxford edition as: 'to ravage, to slaughter, to usurp under false titles, they call empire; and where they make a desert, they call it peace'.[26] 'The Mirror' quotes in Latin the latter half of the quotation and, when read in context with Lacan's theory of the mirror phase, it could be argued that the poem becomes a comment on how mankind views itself and its actions. Throughout time, humanity suffers with the *méconnaissance* of itself, with wars and death being viewed as evidence of power and strength. Lacan's theory emphasises that debility rests at the heart of humankind, who inherently try to make false connections and explain away reason behind action. The closing line to the poem states that 'Ages / drum-tap the flattened homes and slaughtered

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[25] Ibid., p. 66.
[26] Cornelius Tacitus, *The Works of Tacitus: The Oxford Translation, Revised with Notes, Volume 2*, (London: Bell and Daldy, 1872), p. 372.

rows' (ll. 13-4), portraying the reality of the wasteland, or desert, and the apparent 'peace'. Morgan's decision to separate 'ages' from the remainder of the line serves to emphasise that this act of misrecognition is a fundamental flaw to the human psyche throughout time, the time-travellers with their omniscient perspective identifying it as a deep-rooted occurrence.

To read 'The Mirror' in this context suggests a movement away from the positivity that is often heralded in the work of Morgan, both in regard to this particular collection and to his body of work as a whole. Despite this initial interpretation, it could be argued that Morgan uses this poem as a prefix to the sonnets that portray historical figures as a way to extend an empathetic view on human flaw and folly. Arguably throughout Morgan's portrayal of people in *Sonnets from Scotland*, he explores their weaknesses or pitfalls with the same sense of humanity that resonates throughout his work. The Daedalean tale of John Damian in 'At Stirling Castle, 1507' relays the physician's failed attempt to fly, but the mockery that infused William Dunbar's poetry written on the event is absent in the sonnet. Morgan's focus rests not on the fall but on the flight, just as his retelling of the story of Lady Grange does not emphasise her apparent insanity as described in many historical accounts but instead permits her a voice, allowing her to recount her tale rather than leaving her as a dismissed footnote in the biography of her celebrated husband, James Erskine. Iain Crichton Smith writes of Morgan's work in *The Second Life* (1968) that 'they are not poems of ideas but of empathy and suffering. The poet lives in a harsh but beautiful world from which the glow of God is absent',[27] and arguably this is what can also be taken from *Sonnets from Scotland*.

Morgan himself is analysed in this same manner of empathy, the writer in 'After a Death' portraying Morgan five years after the death of John Scott. Writing in the third person, Morgan notes that 'the one who died, he is the better one' (l. 5) before providing a litany of his own downfalls, describing himself as 'selfish, ruthless [...] call[ing] out for help he will not give' (l. 6-9). Despite the exclamatory command for the writer to 'examine yourself!' (l. 10), Morgan extends the collection's sense of empathy even to himself, remarking that his inability to recognise his own failings 'is not quite true, I saw him look / into that terrible place, let him live / at least with what is eternally due / to love' (ll. 11-14). Morgan uses the historical figures of his collection to portray the same gentle encouragement that *Sonnets from Scotland* attempts to show towards Scottish culture and history. The 'nevertheless' feeling that Morgan used to define the collection shows a 're-imagining of the possible'[28] and this is evident

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[27] Iain Crichton Smith, 'The Public and Private Morgan', p. 42.
[28] Wallace, 'New Currency or Old?' [accessed 15.6.2015].

throughout, despite his own recognition that mankind, including himself, is stuck predominantly within its 'mirror phase'.

Like much of Morgan's poetry, *Sonnets from Scotland* does not deploy many Scots words when compared to a poet such as MacDiarmid who spoke of writing in Scots as 'an experience akin to that of religious conversion'.[29] While MacDiarmid declared that his employment of Scots was used 'for effects which are unobtainable in English',[30] in Morgan's poem 'Theory of the Earth' his adoption of Scots interweaved with standard English has been argued as turning the two languages into 'a single cultural truth [...] asserting the natural continuity rather than the opposition of Scotland's divided linguistic inheritance.'[31] Imagining a conversation between the chemist and geologist James Hutton and Scotland's heralded poet Robert Burns, 'Theory of the Earth' collects together the arts, philosophy and science in a unity of contrast, creating the notion of totality rather than fragmentation.

James Hutton is described in the first line of the poem as 'that true son of fire' (l. 1), Morgan referencing Hutton's Plutonist theory in which it was proposed that 'fire, rather than water, was the key to the origin of primitive igneous rocks'.[32] Taking a line from Burns' acclaimed song 'A Red, Red Rose' (1794), Hutton states to the poet that 'aye, man, the rocks melt wi the sun' (l. 2). While Burns' poem is a tribute to eternal love, Morgan's reference of it in the context of James Hutton changes its meaning, the theme of love being replaced by geology and earth's creation. It is particularly relevant that the initial symbolism of the line is one of eternity; Hutton is seen as one of the founding fathers of uniformitarianism, the theory that 'geological processes are uniform through all time',[33] with geologist Charles Lyell having concluded in regards to the theory that 'the present is the key to the past'.[34] It is an idea that corresponds well with Morgan's collection as a whole, the poet considering Scotland in time and exploring how our history affects the present and future. Concluding their conversation, Hutton is seen quoting from his 1788 paper on the subject that 'we find no vestige of a beginning / no prospect of an end' (ll. 9-10). The circularity of time proposed by the geologist complements not only Burns' view on the eternality of love presented in 'A Red, Red Rose', but also Morgan's opening line to the collection: 'There is no beginning' ('Slate', l. 1).

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[29] Kenneth Buthlay, *Hugh MacDiarmid (C.M. Grieve)* (London: Oliver and Boyd, 1964), p. 8.
[30] Ibid., p. 118.
[31] Craig, 'From the Lost Ground', p. 349.
[32] Harold L. Levin, *The Earth Through Time*, 9th ed. (Hoboken: John Wiley & Sons, 2010), p. 18.
[33] Ibid.
[34] Charles Lyell, cited in *The Earth Through Time*, p. 18.

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It has been noted that the temporal perspective and symbolism of Burns' love song may well have been inspired by Hutton's theory of deep time,[35] and Morgan's emphasis on this shows his affinity with Burns in his decision to 'select, juxtapose and brood on interesting features of the scientific scene, [...] trying to relate these to human experience'.[36] Burns' famous song becomes an emblem of Morgan's desire to bring poetry and science together, the eighteenth-century poet discovering a way past that which Morgan argues as poetry's 'main problem - how the faculty of imagination is to gain entry to a world of fact'.[37] The imagination and ingenuity that characterises literature and the arts but is not always necessarily linked to science is drawn upon again in 'Theory of the Earth' in response to Hutton's discoveries, asking 'what but imagination could have read / granite boulders back to their molten roots?' (ll. 4-5) The poet and geologist are pictured having 'died almost / together' (ll.10-1), and the imagery of their death surrounded by the 'crinkled sand and pungent mist' (ll. 14) of Scotland's coast emphasises once more Morgan's unity of contrasts. 'Theory of the Earth' shows a conviction of the connection between art and science, land and sea, imagination and fact, and 'the English of the Enlightenment and the Scots of the plowman poet',[38] portraying Scotland's history and future as fundamentally fused together rather than one of a fragmented state.

After the collection of poems that focus on people and their connection to Scotland and to wider European culture and history, *Sonnets from Scotland* portrays the country's imagined future. It stretches out into time and space as Scotland is, one day, 'found on Jupiter' ('On Jupiter', l. 1). It is a science-fiction fantasy that 'becomes a metaphor for questions about the reality of Scotland, its gods, its people, and the sea of self-doubt that encircles it',[39] the apprehension of the post-referendum era still relevant at the periphery of this imagined time period. These remaining poems depict the ages of Scotland and Earth in an unknown future, the 'ovens of death' ('The Target', l. 4) depicting the death of a city as war takes over, 'a shadow on dead Glasgow's stone' (l. 7), before dissolving into the changing ages of jungles, deserts, and machinery. 'Computer Error: Neutron Strike' depicts a particular brutality in its graphic portrayal of technology's takeover, with Aberdeen's fishing industry reduced to a

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[35] Cairns Craig, 'The Literary Tradition' in *The Oxford Handbook to Modern Scottish History*, ed. T.M. Devine, Jenny Wormald (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2012), p. 129.
[36] Morgan, A Glimpse of Petavius' in *Essays,* p. 10.
[37] Ibid.
[38] Craig, 'From the Lost Ground', p. 349-50.
[39] Walker, 'The Voyage Out and the Favoured Place: Edwin Morgan's Science Fictions', p. 62.

'corpse-clogged harbour' (l. 3) and 'boiling fish-floating seas' (l. 9) as the time travellers attempt to comprehend 'horrors we were slow to understand / but did' (l. 8-9). One of the final poems in *Sonnets From Scotland* is 'The Coin', and despite its placement in the collection as coming after the post-apocalyptic wasteland caused by the perils of technology as 'no one was left to hear the long All Clear' ('Computer Error: Neutron Strike', l. 1), there is an underlying vision of hope for what the titular coin symbolises.

The opening line depicts the time-travellers 'brush[ing] the dirt off' (l. 1) a coin that is 'worn' (l. 9), the engraving of a red deer on one side of it having lost the 'antler-glint' (l. 3) after having been 'gripped hard' (l. 10). It could be argued that this poem is in essence a cross-reference to the coin 'that clattered at the end of its spin' (l. 14) in the closing line of 'Post-Referendum'. Its deteriorating condition suggests that the coin is a relic of a state that may, or may not, have experienced its downfall. Just as it remains unclear as to why people from a presumably post twenty-first century Scotland would choose to define themselves in the archaic language of Latin as 'Respublica Scotorum' (l. 7), the time-travellers are, like the poem's audience, unsure as to whether the 'silent race had lost or gained' (l. 11). An independent Scotland has occurred long enough for its currency to corrode under the generations of hands which have clasped it, but whether or not the state itself has faced the same abrasion is a different question.

'The Coin' is a good example of what Gavin Wallace terms as Morgan's 'formal and technical brilliance' that rests amongst his 'hyper-imaginative inventiveness'.[40] In a collection that pushes the limits of generic science fiction through its extended use of meta-narrative, Morgan's poetic technique is to juxtapose theme with form, articulating his imagined pasts, presents and futures in sonnets. Deploying the Petrarchan model of the sonnet Morgan follows the structure and division of the classical poetic form, the rhyming pattern and octet/sestet division corresponding with the traditional Italian arrangement. In her book *The Art of Poetry* (2001), Shira Wolosky discusses the dynamism of the sonnet, stating that each form 'is a kind of historical field, or archaeological site, in which the traces of past forms remain but take on new shapes or functions',[41] and Morgan's usage presents exactly this. Just as the subject of his collection is, in essence, a historical or post-historical site to be explored and examined, his deployment of the sonnet shows how a conventional and historic form can be used to present the postmodernity of his chosen subjects. While most of Morgan's poems in the collection

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[40] Wallace, 'New Currency or Old?', [accessed 15.6.2015].
[41] Shira Wolosky, *The Art of Poetry: How to Read a Poem* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2001), p. 55.

could not be defined under the subject of love, a theme the sonnet is often chosen to depict, *Sonnets from Scotland* is borne out of Morgan's faith in change and an understated devotion to his home country amidst the politics and decisions of Westminster. 'The Coin' is no different; despite the unknown state that the 'Respublica Scotorum' (l. 7) and its 'silent race' (l. 11) are left in, the closing lines depict the same sense of belief that runs throughout the collection. The time-travellers note that, despite 'the marshy scurf [that] sucked at our boots' (l. 12), suggested by Wallace as 'a post-apocalyptic/nuclear wasteland',[42] 'nothing seemed ill-starred. / And least of all the realm the coin contained' (ll. 13-4). The Italian sonnet typically presents a conclusion in its latter half, the sestet, but Morgan reduces his summation to these final closing lines, serving to emphasise their impact. In the suggestion of hope that is delivered in these two sentences, that the imagined future of Scottish independence is not necessarily a lost battle before twentieth century Scotland even gets to fight for it, Gavin Wallace argues that the closing lines 'offer a perfect structural and enactive reflex not simply for the sonnet's theme, but for the nature of the sonnet form and for the poetic act itself'.[43] Wallace is commenting here on how poetry establishes a totality that can capture a 'realm' of thought, emotion or debate. In Morgan's poem, 'the sonnet contains the coin that contains the realm; the realm contains the coin that contains the sonnet'.[44]

Both 'Clydegrad' and 'A Golden Age', the antepenultimate and penultimate poems of the collection, portray Scotland in a recovering state, delivering the promise of a future for the country which the time-travellers believed in when they remarked that 'nothing seemed ill-starred'. What once was presumably Glasgow is transformed into Clydegrad, portrayed as a futuristic and Soviet-like rendering of 'mile-high buildings' (l. 5) positioned alongside 'the old twilight river' (l. 10), depicting a fusion of postmodern architecture with the naturalistic setting of a pre-industrial world. The time-travellers consider it 'so fine we lingered there for hours' (l. 1), and the 'boat / of students' (l. 11-2) that rows along the river suggests a generation rising out of the previously-depicted wastelands and 'into the blaze' (l. 13) of their future. The pastorality of 'A Golden Age', in which 'the Campsie Fells had vines / Dirigible parties left soft sky-signs / and bursts of fading music' (l. 2-4) portrays even more succinctly a post-historical world that thrives in a future built on stability and harmony. The Golden Age traditionally refers to a period of Greek mythology, illustrated in bucolic literature such as

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[42] Wallace, 'New Currency or Old', [accessed 16.6.2015].
[43] Ibid.
[44] Ibid.

Daphnis and Chloe (1587) and Christopher Marlowe's poem 'The Passionate Shepherd to His Love' (1599). Morgan's decision to name an era in the imagined future after a period already experienced in history suggests again the idea of time as circular, the future becoming a repeat of history in its triumphs and failings. This is emphasised further in the time-travellers' worldly statement that 'the bougainvillea millenniums / may come and go' (ll. 12-3) before recognising that 'a strengthened seed outlives the hardest blast' (l. 14). Morgan's characteristic faith is in the future embodied in this analogy. It becomes a poetic rendition of his own belief that 'I don't think it's entirely irrational that one can have a hopeful or even a very hopeful long-term view of the possibilities of the human race'.[45]

'The Summons' delivers the time-travellers' farewells to the Earth. In its opening statement, the poem declares that 'the year was ending' (l. 1), serving as a final example of Morgan's presentation of temporal extremes throughout the collection. Were the time-travellers given a year of their time to pass through the collected ages of Scotland's past, present and future, or does the year refer to a period of Scotland's own time, with the time-travellers leaving their temporary home at the brink of a new year in the Gregorian calendar? Perhaps it suggests one year of experiencing all the seasons? Whatever the answer, whether they have lived a year or multiple years on earth, the time-travellers are depicted as reluctant: 'despite our countdown, we were loath to go' (l. 2). The time-travellers have experienced the very depths of humanity's despair, both in a history the audience recognises such as the 'fly-buzzed grey-faced dead' ('North Africa', l. 7) of modern war and in the post-apocalyptic imaginings of a country where 'Rhu was a demon's pit, Faslane a grave' ('The Target', l. 9). In spite of this, their unwillingness to depart suggests their understanding of mankind's potential and what can be forged in a society willing to cooperate. Speaking of his time-travelling creations, Morgan states that they 'become more involved than they thought they would. They don't understand their emotional reaction. They take with them perhaps a kind of love'.[46]

Sonnets from Scotland has been argued as 'the turning point of Morgan's career',[47] the collection exploring the circularities of time through a multitude of viewpoints that extend across the history of a nation. Scotland becomes the focal point amongst the fifty-one poems that range through the changing worlds of history, geology and the cosmic universe to connect

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[45] Morgan, 'Edwin Morgan: an interview'. Interview by Marshall Walker, *Akros* 11:32, December 1967, published separately in 1977 (Preston: Akros Publications), p. 22-3.
[46] Lesley Duncan, 'Poet's place for looking out at the universe', *Glasgow Herald*. 1 December 1984, p. 7.
[47] Riach, 'Scottish Poetry as Science Fiction', p. 147.

the country with the wider contexts of 'European learning and world culture'.[48] As described by Slawomir Wacior, there is a 'polyvocality' that resonates throughout the collection, the range of voices 'contribut[ing] to the reconstruction of Scottish identity by telling their own episode, a fragment of their life.'[49] Each perspective emphasises the relevance of Scotland as a nation to be recognised and appreciated throughout its changing history, its 'sub-nation' status rebutted as Morgan revels in the country's poets, religious figures, scientists and philosophers that exist amongst the pre-glacial and post-atomic states of its geological history. In the fifty-one poems, the time-travellers bear witness to the poignancy of grief, the joy of curiosity and creativity, the imagined futures of a nation liberated and a nation set before apocalyptic technology. It is a kaleidoscope of personal feeling that the time-travellers observe throughout their journey, and it has been argued by Marco Fazzini that 'their strange feelings of fastidiousness and love for the Other enact a personal and enriching acceptance of the hybridization of the self'.[50] By writing Scotland's history from the perspective of those from an external reality, Morgan creates 'an awareness that we must be subject to the same criticism and interrogation to which we subject other ages'.[51]

In 'Colloquy in Glaschu' St Columba states that '*à l'horizon lointain* is paradise' (l. 8), and as the time-travellers leave Scotland for the galactic world, there is a sense that this is how they view the nation that they are leaving behind: 'we were loath to go / kept padding along the ridge, the broad glow / of the city beneath us, and the hill / swirling with a little mist' ('The Summons', ll. 2-5). As much as Morgan portrays Scotland across time in all of its highs and lows, this image of paradise at the horizon underlies the collection. The feeling of 'nevertheless' that came out of the 1979 referendum is continually present throughout the collection, depicting Morgan's steadfast belief in Scotland's ability to survive and thrive as a singular nation, and this vision of hope is succinctly depicted in the closing lines of 'A Golden Age': 'in thistle days / a strengthened seed outlives the hardest blast' (l. 13-4). Scotland in Morgan's eyes is 'the strengthened seed', able to overcome and learn from the political obstacles that defined the end of the 1970s. His contribution to the literary scene in this era expresses this belief and becomes emblematic of his own statement that 'each generation

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[48] McGonigal, p. 280.

[49] Slawomir Wacior, 'From Slate to Jupiter: Poetic Patterns of Edwin Morgan's *Sonnets from Scotland*' in *Scottish Literary Review,* vol. 5, Iss: 1, May 2013, p. 50.

[50] Fazzini, 'Alterities from Outer Space: Edwin Morgan's Science-Fiction Poems', p. 238.

[51] Amy Houston, 'New Lang Syne: *Sonnets from Scotland* and Restructured Time', *Scottish Literary Journal*, vol. 22. iss. 1 (1995), p. 69.

ought to have a chance of fulfilling its ambitions and shaping the world in its own way.'[52] *Sonnets from Scotland* is Morgan's dedication to his home country, showing the poet shaping Scotland's past, present and future as a way to express his belief in the possibilities that the small nation can offer to the wider world, the arrangement of temporal setting aspiring to 'a unique poetic treatise of national heritage and future.'[53]

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[52] Morgan qtd. by Kevin McCarra, 'Edwin Morgan: Lives and Work', *About Edwin Morgan*, p. 3.
[53] Wacior, p. 55.

Chapter 4:

Worlds were being lost, were being born. / I tingled at news of an expedition.'

'Planet Wave' (1997)

In 1922, the 'father of science fiction'[1] H.G. Wells published *A Short History of the World*, described by its author as a text to be read as 'a preparatory excursion'[2] to his more detailed work *The Outline of History* (1920), despite the latter having been published two years before. *A Short History of the World* documents the earth through time, beginning with 'The World of Space' and Earth's place in the universe before moving forward through history, chronicling the world and its events. The work crosses through millennia portraying the ages and wars of humanity before eventually finishing up in Wells' own time frame, the post-WWI era. In his desire for world unification, Wells' two period-pieces serve to demonstrate that 'it [is] possible to relate "the human adventure" as a single continuous narrative'.[3]

In a Lett's Pocket Diary started in 1933, Morgan noted amongst many other authors twenty-two texts written by H.G. Wells in his list 'Books I Have Read (1927-1940)'.[4] It would be safe to speculate that Morgan admired Wells to some degree, and in talks with saxophonist Tommy Smith in 1996 they were inspired by a Wellsian desire to document not just a nation's but the world's history.[5] 'Books I Have Read' similarly shows Morgan's interest in Olaf Stapledon, whose novel *Last and First Men* (1930) was mentioned by the poet in an interview for *Akros* magazine, Morgan stating that 'I think it goes without saying we shall go to other environments and adapt to other environments and adapt to them perhaps physiologically like in Stapledon's *Last and First Men*'.[6] Stapledon's novel charts an ambitious journey of the human race, focusing on the themes of evolution, the fate of mankind, and eschatology. It could be argued that both the period-piece and the novel contributed to the lasting effect of 'Planet Wave', a sequence of twenty poems that depicts a similar all-encompassing vision of mankind through the eyes of an unseen observer. The traveller moves through time, perusing ancient, modern and futuristic events that portray the lives of humanity in different ages.

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[1] Title of 2005 documentary, dir. Byron Hansen (Paramount Pictures).

[2] H.G. Wells, 'Preface' in *A Short History of the World* (London: Cassell and Company, 1922), p. v.

[3] J. R. Hammond, *An H.G. Wells Companion: A guide to the novels, romances and short stories* (London: MacMillan Press, 1979), p. 17.

[4] Morgan, 'Books I Have Read (1927-1940)' in *Nothing Not Giving Messages,* pp. 264-272.

[5] McGonigal, *Beyond the Last Dragon,* p. 351-2.

[6] Morgan, 'Let's go', p. 85.

Unlike *Sonnets from Scotland* that depicts a group of time-and-space travellers who witness the evolution of Scotland both geologically and with regards to mankind, 'Planet Wave' broadens this idea further by crossing the breadth of not just Scotland's history, but of Earth's as well. Just like the travellers from the *Sonnets*, it is never specified to the audience who or what the singular observer of 'Planet Wave' is, only that 'I don't know / what went before [the Big Bang], I came out with it' ('In The Beginning (20 Billion BC)', ll. 2-3). He 'discover[s] man' ('In the Cave (30,000 BC)', l. 1) and later flies alongside the first artificial Earth satellite, becoming 'the sputnik's sputnik' ('The Sputnik's Tale (1957 AD)', l. 15). He is both an actor and an observer throughout the sequence, portraying the same balanced quality found in Morgan as a poet. The traveller is quite clearly non-human and yet, as many of Morgan's characters do, he portrays an inherent sense of the humane in his observations of mankind on Earth, commenting that 'there is a soaring thing / you will never stunt or stamp into the earth' ('The Twin Towers (2001 AD)', ll. 27-8) after witnessing one of the modern catastrophes of the twenty-first century.

It could be argued that within the sequence itself there are a number of sub-sections in which each poem can be categorised, such as natural disaster, astronomy, and the strength of humanity. Two conflicting groups depict religion across the ages, and the depiction of scientific discovery. These poems are a clear example of Stenning Edgecombe's comment in *Aspects of Form and Genre* that 'later in his career, Morgan would become highly critical of organised religion'.[7] In 'Planet Wave', the poems 'On the Volga (922 AD)', 'The Mongols (1200-1300 AD)' and 'Juggernaut (1600 AD)' each portray specific events from separate religions: Norse, Catholicism, Tengrism, and Hinduism. In each of them, especially 'On the Volga' and 'Juggernaut', Morgan turns 'religious images into an image of discomfort'[8] in a similar manner to that found by Stenning Edgecombe in '37' from Morgan's collection *The New Divan*, published twenty years prior in 1977. '37' questions 'where can love, in the world, ever lodge?'[9] amongst its depictions of Hindu and Christian mythology and this idea comes to the forefront of 'Planet Wave' and its religious poetry. Morgan questions the human place amongst religion's unfaltering dedication to fixed tradition, and from this it could be argued that the three poems of religion become, in part, oppositional to the poems of scientific discovery such as 'Magellan', 'Copernicus' and 'Darwin in the Galapagos'.

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[7] Stenning Edgecombe, p. 6.
[8] Ibid., p. 62.
[9] Morgan, '37', *The New Divan,* p. 24, l. 1.

When Morgan was put in the position of the Scots Makar, he was asked to name his book and top man or woman of the millennium. His choices, Darwin's *On the Origin of Species* (1859) and Galileo,[10] show the extent to which Morgan merits the scientists across the ages with deciphering the Earth's secrets and sharing their knowledge with the world, and this becomes a recurring theme of the sequence: 'the world's unlocked and you gave us the keys' ('Magellan' l. 39). Similarly, when the National Museum of Scotland encouraged Morgan to select an item that he deemed to be definitive of the twentieth century, he chose a recording of Yuri Gargarin's voice transmitting back from outer space.[11] For Morgan, science signals progress, the methodical studies interacting with the world in an attempt to advance towards revelatory conclusions. Religion, in contrast, is an observation of the perpetual, an attempt to preserve the entrenched ideals that have lasted through millennia. The systems of belief show little attempt at regeneration and as the reader moves through time with the sequence, Morgan puts subtle emphasis on the lack of progress or change that is made in regards to religion's treatment of humanity.

'On the Volga (922 AD)' shows the traveller moving over three thousand years into the future from the previous poem 'The Great Pyramid (2500 BC)' in which he witnesses the construction of the oldest human-made world wonder. The traveller takes delight in the mathematics and logic that led to 'the first mass effort to say / we're here, we did this, this is not nature / but geometry, see it from the moon some day!' ('The Great Pyramid (2500 AD)', ll. 18-20). It is a movement forward in time to the Viking age and yet 'On the Volga', in contrast to the preceding poem, feels almost like a step backwards for humankind as it depicts the ritualistic sacrifice common in Norse religion. It depicts a vision of religious immolation that Morgan had previously explored in 'The Ring of Brogdar' from *Sonnets from Scotland*, the poem describing the drawn-out desperation of Neolithic ritual felt years later by the travellers who hear a 'groan [that] fought the wind that tugged the stones / it filled an auditorium with pain' (ll. 10-1). The sacrificial altar of the Ring of Brodgar is thought to have been constructed as early as 2500 B.C., and while 'On the Volga' is set over two centuries later, the similarities between the ring and the Volga's torched ship emphasises the fixity of religious tradition. Despite the traveller from 'Planet Wave' experiencing 'breath like steam,

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[10] Robert Thomson, 'From Byres Road to Damascus: Jesus as Leader and Lover: prepare for the gospel according to Edwin Morgan' in *The Herald*, 19 September 2000, http://www.heraldscotland.com/news/12159696.From_Byres_Road_to_Damascus__Jesus_as_leader_and_lover__prepare_for_the_gospel_according_to_Edwin_Morgan/ [accessed 8.7.2015].

[11] Riach, 'Scottish Poetry as Science Fiction', p. 144.

blood on the go, / ready for anything, you know the feeling' ('On the Volga', ll. 3-4), he admits in retrospect 'I was not as ready as I thought' (l. 5) for the act of religious sacrifice that is illustrated in the poem.

In regards to Norse religion, there is evidence of sacrificial rituals in both literary and archaeological documents. H. R. Ellis Davidson in her essay on Germanic religion states that 'sacrifice to Wodan and Odin included human victims, dispatched by strangling and stabbing, and there is evidence for this form of sacrifice continuing up to the tenth century',[12] with Morgan's poem being based in this era. 'On the Volga' depicts the customary procedure that followed the death of a Norse chief, the traveller there 'to witness / the ritual of cremation' ('On the Volga', ll. 9-10). It is in fact a poetic rendition of an account made by the tenth-century Arab Muslim writer Ahmad Ibn Fadlan, who witnessed first-hand the event of a Viking ship burial.[13] While Morgan does not directly quote from Fadlan's account in his poem, there are clear similarities made between the two texts. Morgan alludes to the reality of the events in the last stanza of 'On the Volga', urging his audience to 'feel you must. My story's real' (l. 38).

It is, at first, a litany of actions illustrating the formalities of the ceremony: 'a boat was dragged on shore, faggots were stacked, / they dressed the dead man in cloth of gold, laid him / in a tent on deck' (ll. 12-4). Morgan quickly moves into a depiction of the poem's main focus, a nameless girl described as 'a true volunteer' (l. 15) when enlisting herself as the human victim, who becomes in part a representation of all the anonymous victims of religious sacrifice strewn through history. Ibn Fadlan describes her for the first time in his account as 'the maiden who wished to be put to death',[14] and in Morgan's poem she is pictured 'singing, not downcast, stood / sometimes laughing, believe me, talking to friends' (ll. 16-7). The traveller's statement 'believe me' within his description of the girl's nonchalance when awaiting her death suggests his underlying incredulity in regards to the clan's steadfast belief in their devotion to Odin, the 'God of the Hanged', as well as a subtle rhetorical move to persuade his audience to view this event in the same light. His preference to put faith in humanity rather than in religion links itself to the statement he later makes to the victims of a natural disaster: 'power is yours, not up there' ('The Lisbon Earthquake', l. 30). The questions

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[12] H. R. Ellis Davidson, 'Germanic Religion' in *Historia Religionum, Volume I Religions of the Past*, eds. Claas Jouco Bleeker, Geo Videngren (Leiden: E.J. Brill, 1969), p. 618.

[13] Ibn Fadlan, *Ibn Fadlan and the Land of Darkness*: *Arab Travellers in the Far North,* transl. Paul Lunde, Caroline Stone (London: Penguin, 2012).

[14] Ibid., p. 68.

he asks about the girl's reaction to the similarly horrific animal sacrifices, 'what did she think of the dog that was cut in two, / thrown into the ship? [...] the horses?' (ll. 18-20), are answered in a simplistic tone, the acceptance in the girl's reply that 'that was what was done' (l. 19) suggesting religious devotion becoming cult-like in its compliance with brutality.

The remainder of 'On the Volga' becomes a horrific portrayal of the girl's final treatment before being put to death. In keeping with the ritual, the maiden first 'went into six tents / one by one, and lay with the men there' (ll. 22-3). The description of the men 'enter[ing] her gently, saying "Tell your master / I did this only for love of you"' (ll. 24-5) creates an uneasy tone of false tenderness, the rape of a maiden given an apparent purpose and justification by word of their god. Ibn Fadlan notes in his account that before the maiden entered the tents, 'I saw how disturbed she was', being guided through her actions by 'an old woman [...], whom they called the angel of death',[15] and who is identified in Morgan's poem as 'a grim crone' (ll. 28). Morgan's traveller does not overtly note the girl's documented agitation, and instead relies on his depictions of the girl being given 'strong drink [...] cup after cup' (ll. 25-6), before being 'laid down' and 'held' (l. 27) to portray the coercion used by the clan. Actions of the ritual are returned to as the traveller describes how 'shields were beaten with staves to drown her cries' (l. 30) as she is stabbed and strangled by those around her, enforcing the belief behind the act of sacrifice that devotion to a god by way of religious gesture is far more valuable than the singular death of an unnamed, dispensable slave. The ancient vision is given right over the individual, Morgan emphasising in his poem the religious attitude of what is considered dispensable and what is considered valuable.

Religious idolatry is a theme similarly portrayed in 'Juggernaut (1600 AD)', the poem set over six hundred years later than 'On the Volga' and depicting the Hindu festival Ratha-yâtrâ, which still takes place in the modern-day. As with 'On the Volga', 'Juggernaut' is preceded by a poem of a revolutionary scientific discovery in 'Copernicus (1543 AD)', remarking on the Renaissance astronomer developing a model of the universe in which the sun rather than the earth is shown to be at its centre. 'Planet Wave' was initially split into two halves, the first commissioned by the Cheltenham International Jazz Festival and put to music by the saxophonist, Tommy Smith.[16] It is 'Copernicus' that Morgan chooses to end the first half with, and his decision to reopen the sequence with a later portrayal of religious sacrifice accentuates the waves and circularities of time for humankind by emphasising the different

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[15] Ibid.

[16] McGonigal, *Beyond the Last Dragon*, p. 351.

eras in which science or religion is revered.

In the opening of the poem, the traveller claims 'I had had enough of stars and silence' ('Juggernaut', l.1), referring to his previous dealings with Copernicus and his astronomical discovery. As is prevalent throughout Morgan's work and in the characters of whom he takes the voice, it is humankind and their actions that interests him most of all. The traveller recognises India as a place of ever-growing population, and notes that 'if I wanted people, there were plenty of them, / tens, hundreds of thousands, filling the streets / with chatter and movement and colour' (ll. 9-11). The 'clustered jostling [...]/ with a rumble, with shouts, with drums, with blowing of shells' (ll. 13-4) depicts in its repetitive recital his initial expectation of the country, asking himself in the opening stanza 'where would I get life but India?' (l. 3). His search for this vibrancy and celebration of life brings him to Ratha-yâtrâ, the 'chariot festival', in the city of Puri, with the first European report of the festival having been recorded in the fourteenth century.[17] It is a festival that still takes place today in modern-day Puri, and yet the documented history of encouraged meritorious suicide alongside the accidental crushing of other worshippers ingrains the festival with a narrative of death and demolition, rather than the life that Morgan's traveller is searching for.

In 1638, W. Bruton in his *Newes from the East Indies or a voyage to Bengalla* documented the Ratha-yâtrâ festival from his Western perspective, stating that:

> Unto this Pagod … doe belong 9000 Brammines or Priests, which doe dayly offer Sacrifice vnto their great God Iaggarnat … And when it [the chariot] is going along the City, there are many that will offer themselves a sacrifice to this Idoll.[18]

It is the first known record of the word 'Juggernaut' according to the Oxford English Dictionary, and shows the initial definition of the word that in modern terms specifies 'an institution, practice, or notion to which persons blindly devote themselves, or are ruthlessly sacrificed'.[19] While the vehicle was described as a 'coach' in 1727 by A. Hamilton and then a 'car' in 1825 by A. Stirling, it is in 1827 that the chariot is specified as a 'juggernaut', with Poynder stating that 'about the year 1790, no fewer than twenty-eight Hindoos were crushed

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[17] "Juggernaut | Jagannāth, n.". OED Online. June 2015. Oxford University Press. http://www.oed.com.ezproxy.lib.gla.ac.uk/view/Entry/101949?rskey=sPe2Kw&result=1 [accessed 01.07.2015].
[18] Ibid.
[19] Ibid.

to death … under the wheel of Juggernaut'.[20] The meaning of the word has, over time, transformed from its original religious title of the god Krishna into a description for reckless self-immolation, similar to the Asian practise of *sati*, 'the Hindu practise of widow-burning, the burning of the living widow with the corpse of her husband'.[21] This etymological process suggests a conclusion of religion: an initial portrayal of power and wonder that may inevitably lead onto the deaths of the innocent.

Like the drink that sedates the female Viking slave into stupor as 'the ship was torched, caught quickly, spat, crackled' ('On the Volga', l. 32), the traveller in 'Juggernaut' notes that the worshippers surrounding the chariots 'dragged as if drugged, they were high on devotion' (l. 19). The continued use of a semantic field of narcotics suggests religion being seen by the traveller as an addiction, a dependence on an unreachable higher being used by the communities to escape their own tangible world. The fast-paced rhythm of the litany of verbs used to describe the people 'milling, chanting, pushing, stumbling, trundling' (l. 20) becomes a lingual rendition of the crowds, recklessly crushing one another in an attempt to touch the juggernaut, the physical embodiment of their god. The repetitive chant of 'Who is Lord of the Universe? Jagganath! / Who is Jagganath? Lord of the Universe!' (ll. 25-6) is described by the traveller as that which could 'curdle blood / or […] twine your roots with the roots of the world' (ll. 23-4). Religion can repel or allure, depending on how you choose to view it.

The juggernaut is pictured 'roll[ing] on' as it 'made its path / over so many bodies' (ll. 27-8), and this depiction of the relentless man-made machine crushing those beneath it in the name of a god shows the brutality of the religion as recognised by Western travellers. Thomas Bowrey in the seventeenth century witnessed a sati and wrote in his journals that:

> '[To] make the ceremonie seeme more pleasant, they at that instant tuned up severall sorts of musicke, vizt. Pipes, drums, trumpets, accompanied with shouting in such measure, that not one screech of the woman in torment could be heard.'[22]

The monstrosity of what was witnessed arguably contributed to the Western condemnation of non-Christian martyrdom, and yet Morgan's repeated portrayal of different religions and their

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[20] Ibid.

[21] V. N. Datta, *Sati: A Historical, Social and Philosophical Enquiry into the Hindu Rite of Widow-Burning* (New Delhi: Manohar Publications, 1988), p. 1.

[22] Thomas Bowrey, qtd. in Pramod K. Nayar, *English Writing and India: 1600-1920: Colonizing Aesthetics* (Oxon: Routledge, 2008), p. 59.

treatment of humankind in the name of a deity suggests it is the wider context he is trying to address. The traveller steers clear of outright definition as to how he feels, remarking to his audience in 'On the Volga' 'do you want to know what you should feel? / I can't tell you but feel you must' (ll. 37-8), while his witness of the bodies at the Ratha-yâtrâ leads to him commenting 'I could not say. I did not want to say' (l. 32). However, his urge for the audience to understand 'my story's real' ('On the Volga', l. 38) as he tries to make sense of the 'incomprehensible abyss' ('Juggernaut', l. 37) of religion suggests Morgan's work relaying the problems of an organised system of beliefs that encourages the deaths of its innocent worshippers, especially when compared to the wonders of science.

Despite Stenning Edgecombe's remark that Morgan can be highly critical of organised religion, his work does not show an outright condemnation of it. In September 2000 in an interview with *The Herald*, Morgan commented on his own upbringing and the 'ingraining' of sermons from the Bible: 'many of the things become a part of your inner vocabulary. Whatever your beliefs may be, it is still a kind of bedrock.'[23] Morgan defines his faith as 'floating', 'a flux', 'not a hard-and-fast tightly controlled thing', stating that his grasp on theology throughout university and in his later years meant 'I was never, as it were, out of touch, or out in the cold, in the wastes of atheism'.[24] There is throughout Morgan's work an understanding and tolerance of religion and faith, but as poems such as 'On the Volga' and 'Juggernaut' show, his problem lies with how it can negatively affect those who devote themselves to it.

As previously mentioned, 'Copernicus', alongside poems such as 'Magellan (1521 AD)' and 'Darwin in the Galapagos (1835 AD)', can be considered in the collection as a portrayal of scientific discovery through the ages. It could be argued that the scientific poems show a direct contrast to the poems of religion, the celebratory tone and language used by Morgan when describing humankind's revolutions in the field of science reflecting away from the underlying concern he shows when discussing humanity and their dealings with their gods and monsters. The portrayal of religion repeating itself, allowing worshippers time and time again to sacrifice themselves in the name of a god, shows these cultures of beliefs clinging to a steadfast past and tradition. Science, in contrast, is in a constant state of metamorphosis. Throughout the collection, the audience witnesses the first circumnavigation of the earth, a

[23] Morgan, ~~'From Byres Road to Damascus'~~,
http://www.heraldscotland.com/news/12159696.From_Byres_Road_to_Damascus__Jesus_as_leader_and_lover__prepare_for_the_gospel_according_to_Edwin_Morgan/ [accessed 10.07.2015].
[24] Ibid.

proposal for the heliocentric model of the universe, and the discovery of evolution, before propelling humanity into space to explore further the worlds that lie beyond. As Morgan commented in his essay 'The Poet and the Particle', 'if it is not the duty, it should at least be the delight of poets to contemplate the world of science',[25] emphasising Marshall Walker's observation that while 'machines may malfunction or be mischievous [...] they are not the bad guys of Morgan's world'.[26]

'Copernicus' illustrates one of the major events in the history of science, describing the Prussian mathematician and astronomer's discovery of the earth's place within our solar system. Morgan references the Ptolemaic model at first, 'Moon and sun / swung round the earth, unless you were blind' (ll. 9-10), with geocentrism proving a common belief in astronomy up until this time period, based upon Claudius Ptolemy's conviction of it in 100 AD. Morgan follows this information with a singular determiner portraying the revolutionary change that came with Copernicus: 'No. Earth and moon swung round the sun / and earth swung round itself. Mars, Venus, / all, a family, a system, and the system was solar' (ll. 11-3).

While 'On the Volga' and 'Juggernaut' suggest the dangers of religion within the context of itself, 'Copernicus' portrays religion in direct opposition to science. The traveller remarks that 'Luther called [Copernicus] a fool' (l. 16), a quote often brought up in the histories of the cosmological revolutionary and the denying theologian. History depicts how Luther considered Copernicus 'an upstart astrologer' who wanted only to turn 'the whole science of astronomy upside down' by having 'the earth revolve rather than the heavens or the firmament, sun and moon'.[27] As suggested by I. Bernard Cohen, despite Luther's vehement attack that implies his concern rested with the legitimacy of this new model of the universe, 'Luther's sole concern was the plain and literal interpretation of the Bible. He said that Copernicus was putting things upside down because "the Holy Scripture tells us that Joshua commanded the sun and not the earth to stand still".'[28] Similarly, the first systematic theologian of the Protestant Reformation, Philipp Melanchthon, outwardly rejected 'such unbridled license of mind'.[29] He claimed the physical argument that 'when a circle revolves the centre remains unmoved; but the earth is the centre of the world, therefore it is

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[25] Morgan, 'The Poet and the Particle', p. 17.
[26] Walker, 'The Voyage Out and the Favoured Place: Edwin Morgan's Science Fictions', p. 54.
[27] Copernicus qtd in I. Bernard Cohen, *Revolution in Science* (Belknap Press: Cambridge, 2001), p. 496.
[28] Cohen, *Revolution in Science*, p. 496.
[29] Ibid., p. 497.

unmoved.'[30] The extent of Luther and Melanchthon's animosity can be regarded as 'a gauge of their commitment as Protestants to the literal interpretation of Scripture, rather than a gauge of the revolutionary quality of the Copernican cosmological doctrine.'[31] In recognising their ideals rested within religious determination rather than in acknowledgement with Copernicus' scientific advancements, the traveller remarks 'Luther was the fool' (l. 16).

Copernicus is depicted in the poem as being as steadfast and secure in his person as is shown in his theory of the universe. The historical context of his era is drawn upon, with the traveller noting that 'war swirled round his enclave, peasants starved, / colleagues fled, he stayed in the smoking town - / something of iron there' (ll. 22-4). This feat of determination to continue his life work among the tribulations of earth that surrounded him is remarkable, and yet despite his completion of *De revolutionibus* in 1530, it would not be until the year of his death in 1543, in which Morgan's poem is set, that the text would be published. Copernicus himself admitted that 'the scorn which I had reason to fear on account of the incomprehensibility and novelty of my theory, had almost persuaded me to completely abandon the work which I had begun'.[32] The traveller makes mention of 'a play [that] lampooned him' (l. 24), referencing a 1531 satirical production performed in Elbing that openly ridiculed his work as a scientist. In his Preface to *De revolutionibus*, Copernicus references the Pythagoreans 'who were accustomed to transmit[ting] the secrets of Philosophy not in writing but orally'.[33] For Copernicus, he understands this was not done 'because of a certain selfish reluctance to give their views to the world'. Instead it was a necessity, so as:

> […] not to expose these beautiful things, the fruit of long and tedious research
> by great men, to abasement and contempt on the part of those who either
> resent the expenditure of honest effort for any science that does not bring
> them gain or [...] who are dull witted and have blundered among true scientists
> as drones among bees.[34]

The publication of his text came to embody science's defiance of religion's restrictions, undoubtedly inspiring scientists such as Galileo who was put under house arrest for the last

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[30] Ibid.

[31] Ibid.

[32] Nicolaus Copernicus, *Letter of Dedication*, qtd. in *The Scientific World of Copernicus: On the Occasion of the 500th anniversary of his Birth: 1473-1973*, ed. Barbara Bienkowska, (Dordrecht: D. Reidel Publishing, 1973), p. 26.

[33] Copernicus, 'Preface' to *On the Revolutions of the Heavenly Spheres*. http://www4.ncsu.edu/~kimler/hi322/Copernicus_Preface.pdf [accessed 10.07.2015].

[34] Copernicus, *Letter of Dedication*, p. 26.

decade of his life after championing the heliocentric model of the universe but whose work has been suggested by Stephen Hawking as bearing the responsibility for the birth of modern science.[35] Morgan issues a celebratory tone, suggesting that through Copernicus' conviction of his revelations, 'the universe would no more stand still / than the clouds forming and re-forming / over Copernicus's tower' (ll. 33-5). The universe having now stopped 'stand[ing] still' alludes not just to Copernicus' theory of the universe and its movements, but also to the progress of science pushing itself into the future rather than remaining in the hindrance of religion.

The final poem of the collection takes place in 2300 AD, Morgan imagining once again a future of space exploration that takes place over three centuries after Sputnik, who was 'the first: man-made, well-made / a who-goes-there for the universe!' ('The Sputnik's Tale', ll. 5-7). Instead of remaining a singular explorer as he is throughout the rest of the sequence, 'On the Way to Barnard's Star' places the traveller in 'a band bound for [...] / the smouldering ruby, second nearest to earth' (l. 8-9). The poem is reminiscent of 'Travellers (i)' in *Sonnets from Scotland* when the group of voyagers 'chose a springy clump near Arrochar / and with the first jump shot past Barnard's Star' (l. 2-3). In this later poem, Morgan personifies the constellations of Ophiuchus and Serpens just as he does with the earth in 'The Lisbon Earthquake (1755 AD)' when it 'dreams like a dog in the basket / twitching, it likes to show it is alive' (ll. 9-10). The traveller describes Ophiuchus as 'the spreadeagled hero' that 'clutch[es] his serpent' ('On the Way to Barnard's Star', ll. 2-3), the nearby constellation of Serpens often represented as a snake. The stars play out this mythological scene as 'worlds were being lost, were being born' (l. 7), the constellation described through simile as 'pulsing and blushing / like a giant squid' (ll. 3-4). Space, like science, is depicted as being in a constant state of metamorphosis, the energy of the universe envisioned in the meteors that 'swept past us like battle-shot' (l. 20). By placing his traveller within these surroundings of space, Morgan shows us that 'he is very much more than a citizen of the world - he sees himself and the human race as citizens of the cosmos'.[36]

Time itself is remarked upon directly, the traveller's entry into space leaving him with the question 'who can say what time is at such distances?' (l. 13). The 'six years' (l. 15) of travelling from Earth to the red dwarf lends to the protagonist and his fellow travellers the

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[35] Stephen Hawking, *A Brief History of Time: From the Big Bang to Black Holes* (New York City: Bantam Books, 1990), p. 179.

[36] Stenning Edgecombe, p. 43.

chance to reflect upon philosophy and mankind, the query 'what did we talk of?' rebutted with its own question: 'what did we not?' (l. 17). The summary of their discussions, 'destiny and will, great darkness and great light, / the fiery train of knowledge, the pearl of hope' (ll. 18-9), becomes a synopsis of the collection as a whole, with each poem depicting at least one of these in their content. The traveller describes how the 'clouds of gas were almost forms' (l. 21), suggesting how one could view them as deities of the sky, and yet the traveller remarks that for his band in space 'there were no gods' (l. 22), choosing to rest upon the 'good / blood in our veins, in our good brains' (ll. 22-3). Once more it is the potential of mankind and its achievements that are celebrated, the travellers 'dr[inking] to the dead [...] bl[essing] the unborn' (l. 27) while 'the computer blew its extraordinary horn' (l. 28) as human life and machinery are intertwined together. The 'waves of grass' (l. 33) and the 'river / in the distance' (ll. 34-5) brings the unknown world of the star into our own frames of context, the potential of life and existence suggesting the traveller continuing his journey through time. There is a paused moment of trepidation as the traveller remarks 'the powerless stillness was waiting' (l. 37) before, in typical Morgan fashion, the end becomes a beginning and a source of exploration as his protagonist calls to his companions to 'open the hatch' (l. 38).

In 'The Sputnik's Tale', from the second half of the sequence published after the millennium, Morgan's conversation between the traveller and the satellite can be seen embodying the diagnosis of his cancer:

> 'you have three months to live
> in this orbit and then you are a cinder.'
> He darkened. 'You may well be right.'
> But remembering Widsith he flushed into tremendulous light,
> 'We'll see. *Beep.* We'll see. *Beep.* We'll see.'
>
> (ll. 34-8)

The reference to Widsith, Sputnik claiming to have been the 'bard in the barbarous times' (l. 26), shows the regeneration of poetry into machinery, connecting together art and science in a way that emphasises Morgan's own belief that 'the future of poetry [...] is bound up not only with the very slowly evolving nature of man but also with the very quickly evolving relation of man to his environment'.[37] The travelling bard of medieval heroic legend regenerates into the world's first artificial satellite, still travelling but now in circulation around the earth. It

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[37] Morgan, 'A Glimpse of Petavius', p. 14.

once again shows Morgan's belief in the metamorphosing energies of science and the circularities of time as the spirit of Widsith repeats his journey of exploration, but this time in space.

The animated belief of Sputnik to survive past its predicted date of decay becomes a representation of Morgan's own optimism, the poet finding his voice in an aphasic object. *Planet Wave* does not shy away from the human atrocities that have occurred throughout our history, 'The Lisbon Earthquake', 'The Siege of Leningrad', and 'The Twin Towers' depicting the natural disasters and catastrophes of war, each occurrence making humanity feel like 'there was suddenly no more time, my friends, / there was suddenly no more space' ('The Twin Towers', ll. 6-7). Despite the recognition given to these events, the optimism of Morgan that is represented in Sputnik is arguably a stronger force that repeats itself throughout the sequence. The 'End of the Dinosaurs (65 Million BC)' brings with it an earth 'left for the inheritors - / my friends, that's you and me' (ll. 35-6). Humanity is given its starting step, and the possibilities of man are recognised by the traveller as he asks his audience 'what shall we do, or be?' (l. 38) Life as a source of opportunity is returned to over again, the Great Flood viewed by the traveller as a chance to 'rebuild, but build!' (l. 38), the destruction bringing with it a cleansing and the freedom to start over.

When the traveller converses with Darwin in the Galapagos, the naturalist describes the development of man, and indeed the history that comes with it, to the traveller with exclamative enthusiasm: 'I can hardly sleep for excitement! / Nothing is immutable, life changes, we evolve./ Process is gorgeous, is it not! / Process is progress, don't you see!' (ll. 29-32). Morgan's protagonist, who witnesses throughout *Planet Wave* this notion of 'process', finds himself agreeing with Darwin, and as 'time breaks in great waves as we speak' (l. 34), there is a recognition of the positivity that comes with the circularities of time.

At the end of the poem one of Darwin's finches 'begins a singing / so piercing it gives no end to that beginning' (ll. 37-8), and as would be expected in a sequence set to composition, music becomes an embodiment of the positivity ingrained throughout the sequence. In 'The Great Pyramid', the traveller hears 'the bursting wave of music, the brilliant discords, / the blare, the triumph' (l. 36) that accentuates the wonder of the Egyptians' momentous construction. Four and a half thousand years later, the counterculture generation of Woodstock is depicted in their festival of music and peace in which 'something good was breathing there' (l. 6). Just as the festival would come to represent something almost mythological in the decades to come, the music described is embedded with the same folkloric

mysticism, the traveller asking if the music was 'the magic' (l. 7) as 'an instrument rose like a dragon / [...] when Hendrix plucked, it was the mane of a lion' (ll. 26-33). Just like the ascendency of the Egyptians' music, at Woodstock 'the tune kept surfacing / almost heartbreaking, / bright and fighting' (ll. 38-40), the description of the harmony mirroring Morgan's depiction of humanity that is found throughout the sequence. It becomes a poetic rendition of Stapledon's own declaration in *Last and First Men* that 'man himself, at the very least, is music, a brave theme that makes music also of its vast accompaniment, its matrix of storm and stars.'[38]

'Planet Wave', through all of its movement through time, is a vision of humanity as it circles through the ages of religion, science, catastrophe and celebration. Making his unnamed traveller a detached person, Morgan brings to his sequence a sense of comprehensible overview. In Stephen Fox's essay 'Edwin Morgan and the Two Cultures', he notes Morgan's 'championing of science, change, and newness against history and tradition',[39] and it is this which comes through most profoundly throughout 'Planet Wave'. While history is observed as the protagonist travels through time, it is the future, innovation and the benevolence of humanity towards which Morgan is aiming. In a sequence that pits religion and science against one another, it becomes clear that there is no group identity that Morgan over-values; it is humanity as a whole that piques Morgan's interests and to which he offers his characteristic compassion.

By crossing through the centuries and witnessing the same repeated problems that come with religion and organised systems of beliefs, Morgan uses this motif to emphasise the value of science and what *can* be done, compared to religion's orthodox deliverance of what *must* be done. 'On the Volga' is characteristic of Morgan's early 'Instamatic' poetry, and by 'taking up the challenge of documentary'[40] Morgan does not overtly state his viewpoint, instead using the form to allow the audience to make their own judgment on the events that unfold. It could be argued that by doing this, Morgan is not showing a desire to dictate steadfast opinion upon his audience, but instead is using the device to open up debate on the issue with tradition, the difference between religion and faith, and the benefits of a world that defies boundaries and supposed fixities. Through his traveller's narration, Morgan's own voice comes through with a sense of urgency for man to understand that whilst 'you have a

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[38] Olaf Stapledon, *Last and First Men: A Story of the Near and Far Future* (London: Metheun & Co), p. 366.
[39] Stephen Fox, 'Edwin Morgan and the Two Cultures', in *Studies in Scottish Literature*, Vol. 33: Iss. 1 (January 2004), p. 82.
[40] Morgan, 'Doing Different Things', p. 27.

long trek, and tears [...] / it is your own trek, your own tears, / you must never freeze-frame your fears' ('The Lisbon Earthquake', ll. 31-3). 'Planet Wave' shows how it is the journey of man that interests Morgan most definitively, and in its movement through time the sequence becomes an embodiment of Morgan's own belief that poetry should be seen as 'an instrument of exploration like a spaceship, into new fields of feeling and experience (or old fields which become new in new contexts or environments).'[41] By writing of people and events from across the world, 'Planet Wave' is an example of Robert Crawford's statement that Morgan 'was to later 20th-century Scottish poetry what MacDiarmid had been half a century earlier: the central energising force, utterly international in vision'.[42]

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[41] Morgan, qtd. in Marshall Walker, *Scottish Literature since 1707* (London and New York: Longman, 1996), p. 304.

[42] Robert Crawford, 'My hero: Edwin Morgan by Robert Crawford', *The Guardian*, 21 August 2010, http://www.theguardian.com/books/2010/aug/21/my-hero-edwin-morgan [accessed 13.07.2015].

Chapter 5:
'I Morgan, whom the Romans call Pelagius,
Am back in my own place, my green Cathures'
'Nine in Glasgow' (2002)

The living and unbounded cosmos that underlies *Planet Wave* as a collection is returned to again in *Cathures*, the final text to be analysed in this dissertation. In Morgan's note to the collection, he quotes the Roman poet and philosopher Lucretius:

> It does not matter in what part of the universe you live:
> Nec refert quibus adsistas regionibus eius:
> usque adeo, quem quisque locus possedit, in omnis
> tantendum partis infinitum omne relinquit.[43]

It is a reference that Morgan would later comment on 'Poetry and Virtual Realities', an essay published in Robert Crawford's *Contemporary Poetry and Contemporary Science* (2006). His translation of the Latin states that 'it does not matter in what regions of the universe you set yourself: the fact is that from whatever spot anyone may occupy, the universe is left stretching equally unbounded in every direction.'[44] For Morgan in his final decade, *Cathures* defines his place in the universe, amongst the land and cityscape of Glasgow, 'the dear green place', while continuing to stretch through time and history as he incorporates the universe that stretches out for him.

Cathures is the earliest recorded name for the city of Glasgow, with Jocelyn of Furness' twelfth-century text *Life of Kentigern* making reference to it when describing the patron saint of the city and his first arrival there in the sixth century. Stephen Terry and Len Murray suggest that 'Glasgow' may have derived from the amalgamation of Cathures and Deschu, the two villages on the site of the city.[45] It would become Cleschu, and later Glaschu, translating in Gaelic to mean the 'dear green place'. Morgan initially intended to write an epic poem that moves from the historic past into the modern-day present of the city, but as shown

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[43] Morgan, 'Preface' in *Cathures,* p. 6.
[44] Morgan, 'Poetry and Virtual Realities' in *Contemporary Poetry and Contemporary Science*, ed. Robert Crawford (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2006), p. 28.
[45] Len Murray, Stephen Terry, *The Glasgow Almanac: An A-Z of the City and its People* (Glasgow: Neil Wilson Publishing, 2006), p. 3.

throughout this dissertation this device had already been used a number of times in *Sonnets from Scotland*, 'Planet Wave', and can also be found in the song 'Millennium Suite' (2000). *Cathures* draws on the history of Morgan's home city through depictions of the landscape and its community, with stand-alone poems such as 'Madeleine Smith', 'Helen Adam' and the sequence 'Changing Glasgow 1999-2001' resting alongside 'Nine in Glasgow' and 'Cathurian Lyrics' in their portrayals of people and place in the changing world of the city. Morgan portrays an increased sense of personal identification with the themes and characters of the collection, using his home city to explore the wider themes of history, philosophy, and time.

Alongside the poems that deal specifically with Glasgow and its present and historical world, the collection shows Morgan dealing with the notion of his own mortality in the final decade of his life, similar to that which is presented in the texts focused on in the first chapter of this dissertation. The poem 'Grey' deals with the importance of being, asking its reader to 'sit still, and take the stillness into you' (l. 10) before proclaiming there is 'no need to wait for a fine blue / to break through. We must live, make do' (ll. 24-5). The melancholic tone that is rendered in its depiction of life and absence is continued in the subsequent poem '21 June', Morgan recognising that while light may fade, the 'longing never will' (l. 1), leaving you 'back among the black, the black, / you're down and fit to drown, to drown, / you're padding into nightmare town' (ll. 6-8). The hallucinatory quality to the poem bears similarities to Morgan's dealings with a series of recurring bad dreams in his final years, describing to James McGonigal in his biography that 'through the darkness, he heard with pounding heart the noise of hoof beats moving off'.[46] It is not so much a fear of the dark and what it brings as much as it is the desire, described in the final line of his poem 'Seven Decades' (1990), that 'when I go in I want it bright / I want to catch whatever is there / in full sight'.[47] It shows that amongst his dealings with mortality, Morgan still returns to face forward into the future, '21 June' ending with his proclamation that he wants 'the morning, perhaps, / and then I want the day, another day' (ll. 19-20).

'Nine in Glasgow' is the first sequence of the collection, showing a series of monologues based upon the lives of people who visited or who were located in Glasgow. The timeline of the figures written about crosses over 1500 years, and through this we see the changing landscapes and attitudes of the city stretching out among time. The sequence draws upon figures that are not typically identified with Glasgow, and by doing this Morgan

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[46] McGonigal, *Beyond the Last Dragon,* p. 5.
[47] Morgan, 'Seven Decades', *Collected Poems*, p. 595, ll. 68-70.

connects himself with both the natives of his birthplace and those based in the wider world, representing in a sense the breadth of his work and how Glasgow connects to the wider world in terms of time and place. James McGonigal argues that 'each of these voices convey a dimension of the poet's mind and experience',[48] and the act of reconstruction that takes place in Morgan's monologues shows the poet entering part of himself into each of the identities.

Roland Barthes' essay 'The Death of the Author' (1967) argues against the identification of the author with his or her text, stating that 'the reader is the space on which all the quotations that make up a writing are inscribed without any of them being lost; a text's unity lies not in its origin but in its destination'.[49] This essay is a landmark in post-structuralist theory and centralised the idea of reader-response, and yet Morgan states in *Nothing Not Giving Messages* that 'I don't think critics will ever really get away from [author biography]'.[50] 'Nine in Glasgow' reinforces this through Morgan's identification with his characters, prescribing to his own belief that:

> I don't see why every aspect of a poem couldn't be investigated and, as, eventually, when you pop off and people begin to wonder about you, and perhaps to think about your life, and ask questions, and trace you up and so on, they *will* go back to the poetry and they will see things that weren't immediately clear perhaps at the beginning [...] I think that the poetry *is* a man's life as well as being whatever else that clearly would be to an analytical critic. [51]

In the sequence, he becomes in part not just a poet of the twentieth and twenty-first centuries, but identifies with those who have their own place in Glasgow's history, such as a bard, a balloonist and the mother of Glasgow's patron saint. Like the travellers of *Sonnets from Scotland* and 'Planet Wave', Morgan becomes a part of and a witness to the timeline that connects his city together.

The first poem of the sequence, and of the collection as a whole, is the monologue of Pelagius, an ascetic moralist and a 'reluctant heretic'[52] from the fourth century. B. R. Rees in his text *Pelagius: Life and Letters* states that 'for centuries now the adjective "Pelagian" has been a convenient term of abuse in the Christian Church and Pelagius himself a bogyman for

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[48] McGonigal, *Beyond the Last Dragon*, p. 392.
[49] Roland Barthes, *Image-Music-Text*, trans. Stephen Heath (New York: Hill and Wang, 1977), p. 148.
[50] Morgan, 'Nothing is not giving messages', p. 143.
[51] Ibid.
[52] B.R. Rees, *Pelagius: Life and Letters* (Suffolk: Boydell Press, 1991), p. v.

upright clerics to evoke when wanting to frighten wayward members of their flock'.[53] His religious work, promoting the belief that Adam's original sin did not corrupt human nature and that mortal discipline is still capable of separating and selecting good over evil without divine aid, goes against the traditional Augustinian reason that 'no good human action is possible without the grace of God to inspire and sustain it'.[54] As antithetical contemporaries of one another and with Pelagius having suffered from misinterpretation and simplification of his writings, Augustine and Pelagius have often been regarded throughout history as black and white, the condemned heretic against the sanctified orthodox follower of the Christian doctrines. In the context of this and his attitude towards religion as a whole, it is unsurprising that Morgan chooses to identify with Pelagius. In the teachings of the ascetic moralist, there is an underlying faith in humanity that is an integral factor in Morgan's own beliefs.

'Pelagius' begins with the poet's own initial identification with the theologian, stating 'I, Morgan, whom the Romans call Pelagius' (l. 1). *The General Biographical Dictionary* from 1815 states that the real name of 'PELAGIUS (the Heresiarch) [...] is said to be Morgan, which signifying in the Celtic Languages *sea-born*, from *Mór,* sea, and *gan* born, was translated into *Πελάγιος,* in Latin Pelagius'.[55] Believed to have been born on the British Isles, the monologue of Pelagius shows him to be 'back in my own place, my green Cathures' (l. 2). The repetition of the possessive pronoun 'my' shows Morgan placing the theologian directly within Glasgow's history, and by identifying himself with Pelagius it simultaneously becomes Morgan's own affectionate dedication to the city where he himself spent the majority of his life. The link between location and surname, 'by the frisky firth of the salmon, by the open sea / Not far, place of my name' (ll 3-4), emphasises the poet's decision to connect Pelagius with the West Coast near Glasgow, his namesake portraying him as the 'seafarer', travelling away and back again to project his religious beliefs, reaching the twilight years of his life as 'my hair grew white at the tiller' (l. 6). Like Morgan, old age does not signify an end to the embracement of life, Pelagius calling with exclamation to the audience for them to 'keep the lid on [the sarcophagus], I am not stepping into it yet!' (l. 10).

The description of 'that sarcophagus by the Molendinar' (l. 9) is an example of the poem's contrast of the foreign and local, the Egyptian tomb by the Glaswegian stream where the city's patron saint was born depicting in its disparity a connection with the wider world for

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[53] Ibid., p. ix.
[54] Ibid., p. x.
[55] Alexander Chalmers, *The General Biographical Dictionary: A New Edition,* Vol. XXIV. (London: Bodleian Bibliotheca, 1815), p. 258.

Glasgow and Pelagius. When contemplating his wider travels, Pelagius reminisces about how 'I used to think of the grey rain and the clouds' (l. 11) that exemplify typical Scottish weather 'from my hot cave in the Negev' (l. 12), the Israeli desert. Morgan playfully toys with the image of Pelagius as a stereotypical Brit abroad figure, 'I had a hat - / you should have seen me -' (ll. 13-4), before describing the reactions of the crowds when in his presence. Pelagius states 'I spoke; I had crowds; there was a demon in me' (l. 16), and this alongside his determination to 'take heart. In a time of confusion / You must make a stand' (ll. 36-7) shows an underlying similarity between the theologian and the demon of the 'Demon' sequence, published in the same collection, who comes 'to rattle the bars' ('A Demon', l. 1).

There is a deep conviction in Pelagius to spread his beliefs with this audience, recalling in his monologue that 'I did not keep back what I had to say' (l. 19), and yet the preaching of Augustine is shown to have made its mark, the crowd described as 'alarmed. They did not like my red hair' (l. 20). The colour of his hair is a nod towards Pelagius' apparent Scottish heritage, a rare sight in the Middle-Eastern setting, but also links the theologian with the devil. The colour red is often 'associated with evil in ancient Egypt as the colour of the sterile desert and of blood', with the typical iconography of the Devil in medieval art depicting him with flaming hair.[56] Like the demon of Morgan's sequence and Satan in Milton's *Paradise Lost*, Pelagius shows himself to be one of the underdogs, fighting against the 'oppression and pessimism, / Proscription, prescription, conscription, / Praying mantises' (ll. 38-40) of religious orthodox teachings. While Milton's Satan, and to some extent Morgan's demon, portray an arrogance within their charismatic rebellion, Pelagius relays a compassion for humanity and its path that forms the basis for his teachings and actions. Augustine is described as 'ex-Manichee, ex this and that, / Preacher of chastity with a son in tow' (ll. 42-3), the hypocrisy of his actions made acceptable through his belief in predestination, and Pelagius understands that for now '[Augustine] can win, / Will win, I can see that, crowd me out / With power of councils' (ll. 57-9). While his opposer would have the protection of the Church and his followers to make sure Pelagius would be perceived as a heretic for the centuries after their meeting, Pelagius' belief that time would eventually shed light on his teachings is made clear. For him, salvation is a path that can be earned, steadfastly believing that 'no one will suffer the elect without merit / To lord it over a cringing flock, and no one / Is doomed by Adam's sin to sin for ever' (ll. 66-68). This statement embodies the shift in religious belief against

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[56] Jeffrey Burton Russell, *Lucifer: The Devil in the Middle Ages* (New York: Cornell University Press, 1984), p. 69.

predestination that Pelagius was attempting to address, showing a rejection of tradition that could change the way in which the moral nature of humanity could be understood. While Morgan has shown himself to be far from following a set of religious beliefs as deeply as those shown in 'Pelagius', his interaction with religious concepts allows him to 'focus on the humanity of the situations',[57] as is similarly shown in his poem 'Message Clear' (1967). Through Pelagius, he shows how optimism can be taken from the rejection of tradition, allowing new contexts and ideas to emerge through the positive reconstruction of previous ideas. Just as Morgan would ask in his own voice later on in the *Cathures* collection 'who says we cannot guide ourselves / through the boiling reefs' ('At Eighty', ll. 3-4), Pelagius recognises that 'it is for the unborn, to accomplish their will / With amazing, but only human, grace' (ll. 86-7).

In the final stanza of the poem, Morgan portrays Pelagius as an old man, looking out on the city of Glasgow in its past and present state:

> Sometimes when I stand on Blythswood Hill
> And strain my eyes (they are old now) to catch
> Those changing lights of evening, and the clouds
> Going their fiery way towards the firth,
> I think we must just be ourselves at last
>
> (ll. 71-75)

There is a lyrical tenderness in these reflective lines that depict the theologian in his final years, similar to that seen in 'Thennoch' when the mother of Glasgow's first bishop states 'I love to clamber up Gilmore Hill - / My joints complain but I can do it' ('Thennoch', ll. 59-60). The old age of Morgan's protagonists shows the temporality of life in all of its 'crutches, threats, vain promises' (l. 78) being juxtaposed against the permanence of the universe, the sky and the sea. The future tense that is used to predict how 'Cathurian towers will ring this hill. / Engines unheard of yet will walk the Clyde' (ll. 81-2) shows the merging of Glasgow as Pelagius knew it with its post-industrial state in the modern age. Morgan brings together the city's past, present and future to be considered in its entirety, encompassing the opening statement of 'Merlin' in which the figure of medieval Welsh legend states 'what time, what year, what universe, all's one' ('Merlin', l. 1).

Pelagius sees the changing of the city in the same way Morgan himself did throughout

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[57] Fox, p.78.

his life, Kevin McCarra commenting that for the poet 'as life changed so, too, did the city in which [his work was] set [...] When the dust cleared, the very skyline had altered'.[58] As ever, Morgan does not see the modernisation of the future as something to reject or be fearful of, but instead as a place where still 'a gulp swoops; man is all' (l. 81), bringing with it a hopeful acceptance for the future. 'Pelagius' becomes an embodiment of Morgan's own statement that 'each generation ought to have a chance of fulfilling its ambitions and shaping the world in its own way'.[59] The poem shows through its engagement with faith and humanity how by 'speaking for open doors of perception against premature closure in the distant past [Morgan] generates pressing relevance in our immediate presence'.[60]

Moving on from the fourth-century theologian, Morgan travels chronologically through the remaining monologues of 'Nine in Glasgow' that represent the lives of pioneering scientists, aeronauts and political revolutionaries. It is a collection of figures with connections to Glasgow, be that deep-rooted or short-lived, and each member offers a dimension of history and biography that can be argued as pertinent to Morgan's own self. 'Merlin' is a contemplative reconstruction of Myrddin Wyllt, a figure of Welsh legend who lived a hermetic existence in the Caledonian forests, his isolation defined in the poem as a reaction to the horrors of war and humanity. Morgan's own experience in the Royal Army Medical Corps and 'the difficulty of social adjustment'[61] that he dealt with after his service creates an affinity with the sixth-century bard. Merlin suffers from 'the pain that rises to the grand indifference / of clouds' (ll. 20-1) as he tries to come to terms with the ceaselessness of war throughout history. Paired with 'Pelagius', William Wootten argues that these figures of the early Middle Ages display Morgan deciding whether he belongs 'alone in the fen or with the lutanist in the hall'.[62]

Moving into the modern period, the monologues show aspects of Morgan's philosophies and interests as the figures react to the changing world around them. 'John Hunter' incorporates Morgan's enthusiasm for science, the distinguished surgeon and his anatomist brother creating a 'Hunterian Pandora's box' (l. 21) as they transformed the bodies of knowledge in physiology, medicine and pathology. Hunter recognises that 'my mind is not

[58] Kevin McCarra, 'Edwin Morgan: Lives and Work' in *About Edwin Morgan*, p. 6.
[59] Morgan, quot. in 'Edwin Morgan: Lives and Work', p. 7.
[60] Matt McGuire, Colin Nicholson, 'Edwin Morgan' in *The Edinburgh Companion to Contemporary Scottish Poetry* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2009), p. 104.
[61] Morgan, 'Look outwards' in *Nothing Not Giving Messages*, p. 47.
[62] William Wootten, 'Watermonster Blues', *London Review of Books*, vol. 26, No. 22, Nov. 2004, p. 27.

a standing loch, it churns, / it throws up roots and vestiges of things' (ll. 3-4), the image of convulsing knowledge and imagination mirroring Morgan's own interest in a seemingly infinite range of subjects and ideas. In 'Louis Kossuth', Morgan's socialist sentiments are made prominent through the monologue of the political revolutionary. While Kossuth's time period meant his priorities lay with the mid-nineteenth century Hungarian revolution, there is a fleeting nod to more recent political movements. Kossuth's desire 'for my small country' to be given 'the right to look after our own affairs' ('Louis Kossuth', ll. 49-50) echoes the sentiments of the Scottish Nationalist Party and the question of Scottish independence, with Morgan himself stating in an interview with Robin Hamilton that 'I think I got very interested in Hungary because I saw it as a sort of parallel to the Scottish situation'.[63]

In recognition of Morgan's own health problems at the time of writing the sequence, it could be argued that 'Vincent Lunardi' is perhaps the most relevant poem amongst the monologues set in the modern period. The balloonist's address takes place from his death-bed in 1806, the aeronautical pioneer balancing between life and death as 'the sun goes down. Another world / Is not yet closed' (ll. 8-9). The opening stanza is despondent in Lunardi's realisation that 'I am so poor I have nothing. / I have nothing and I am nothing' (ll. 5-6), and in these lines there is an echo of Morgan's own voice from another *Cathures* poem, 'A Gull', in which the 'cold inspection' (l. 3) of the bird makes the poet aware that 'I knew nothing' (l. 18) of the impending death that the bird symbolises. From the opening of 'Vincent Lunardi', the reader could be forgiven for thinking the poem is disconsolate and bleak compared to the other monologues, showing belief that 'the world has shrunk to a bowl of gruel' (l. 7). Despite this beginning, the energy and heart of the poet is revived as Lunardi states in exclamative realisation: 'I am not talking about death! / I am talking about life and life abundant!' (ll. 28-9) The memories of the balloonist are given vitality through kaleidoscopic technicolour as Lunardi recalls 'happy Glasgow' (l. 32) where 'the hydrogen roared, the flaccid silk blossomed / To a great pod of pink and yellow and green / stretch taut and shimmering into the blue' (ll. 35-6). The shift in focus from mortality to the celebration of life and Lunardi's accomplishments shows the principle essence of Morgan, the 'personal, internal victory of belief and hope over despair and doubt'.[64]

The final poem of the sequence brings 'Nine in Glasgow' into the modern day, focusing on the Glaswegian filmmaker Enrico Cocozza, described as 'Wishaw's answer to

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[63] Morgan, 'Doing Different Things', p. 38.
[64] Fox, p.83.

David Lynch',[65] who engaged with the experimental and avant-garde strand of cinema in the mid-twentieth century. Engaging with 'differently historicised political imperatives'[66] when compared to the preceding monologues, 'Enrico Cocozza' presents the context of homosexuality in the era of 'Fifties forbiddenness' (l. 64), the alternative filmmaker working outside the Scottish professional filmmaking community to create what was arguably the first instance of 'queer' cinema in the country. Just as Morgan speaks of homosexuality in 1950s Glasgow as 'being discussed slightly more openly but still with very great disapproval',[67] the monologue projects the reality of 'the fugitive experiences of gay cinema-goers'[68] in this era, the poet and the filmmaker connected together through their creation of art and the 'power [that] comes from things that are not in fact declared and open'.[69]

The opening stanza of the monologue presents to the reader the contemporary uniqueness of Cocozza's art, resisting against the traditional Scottish filmmaking of the time which dealt primarily with the documentary or actuality style. Cocozza 'point[s the camera] in ways unwhirred before' (l. 8), the transformational potential of film shown to be seen as a reaction against the 'clodhopping storytelling' (l. 11) of established practise. Just as Morgan often subverts and rejects tradition in favour of experimentation, for Cocozza 'this is the century of *this*, not that' (l. 12), declaring a refusal to follow the beaten path of traditional filmmaking.

While Cocozza and other experimental filmmakers like Margaret Tait were 'celebrated by critics and savants of the avant-garde',[70] they were predominantly overlooked when compared to their more major contemporaries, such as Bill Forsyth, Bill Douglas and John Grierson. It is the latter figure, often dubbed 'the father of documentary' in his dealings with 'the creative treatment of actuality',[71] who Morgan's Cocozza chooses to rile against, Grierson becoming a physical embodiment of the documentary tradition that overshadowed the practises of the avant-garde. There is an instance of dismissive repetition as Cocozza admits 'sure, Grierson was worthy, Grierson was great' (l. 15), voicing with a lack of conviction the

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[65] Mitch Miller, *Discover NLS*, Iss. 10, Winter 2008, front cover. http://www.nls.uk/media/22286/discover-nls-10.pdf [accessed 29.08.2015].
[66] McGuire, Nicholson, 'Edwin Morgan', p. 105.
[67] Morgan, 'Power from things not declared' in *Nothing Not Giving Messages*, p. 156.
[68] McGuire, Nicholson, 'Edwin Morgan', p. 105.
[69] Morgan, 'Power from things not declared', p. 160.
[70] Sarah Neely, Alan Riach, 'Demons in the Machine: Experimental Film, Poetry and Modernism in Twentieth-Century Scotland' in *Scottish Cinema Now*, ed. Jonathan Murray, Fidelma Farley, Rod Stoneman (Newcastle: Cambridge Scholars Publishing, 2009), p. 2.
[71] Judith Kriger, *Animated Realism: A Behind the Scenes Look at the Animated Documentary Genre* (Waltham: Elsevier, 2012), p. 1.

popular opinion that 'Grierson [...] was one of the twentieth century's most influential personalities in film culture'[72] as he flippantly refers to the documentary-maker as a 'Scottish hero [...] aye aye right' (ll. 16-7). Through homophonics Cocozza playfully suggests the tedium that envelopes Grierson's 1929 documentary *Drifters,* the film being 'shown to the Herring Board: / Even the herring were bored. Sorry John!' (ll. 18-9). Film is argued by Morgan's protagonist as a way to embrace the 'not worthy' (l. 22), and while *Drifters* was made with a 'definite purpose dreamed up by the head of the Empire Marketing Board',[73] the experimentalism of Cocozza served to show social reality and oppression, and the conclusion that 'you have to live it / If you want to shoot it' (ll. 32-3).

While Morgan and Cocozza share the same desire to experiment with the forms and genres of art, Sarah Neely and Alan Riach suggest in their essay 'Demons in the Machine' that the poet and the filmmaker are comparable in their shared 'celebration of creativity in a specific time and place'.[74] Both men lived through the repressive atmosphere of the 1950s, in which homosexuality held a 'hideous aura of criminality and degeneracy and abnormality [that] surround[ed] the matter',[75] creating progressive forms of art in a period of restriction. For Morgan, who would not come out as gay until his 70th birthday, there is a link between sexuality and creativity that comes through in his work, the poet stating in the interview in which he confirmed his homosexuality that the frustration of it can 'give rise to quite strong poetry'.[76] In the monologue, Cocozza asks 'problems? You name it I have them. / But you will not find me bent over a tear bottle. / I am hardly alone' (ll. 34-6). There is a sense of the shared experience, inevitably linked to Morgan himself but also to Sergei Eisenstein, the father of montage, who was a prominent cinematographer in the first half of the twentieth century. For Eisenstein, he would not live through the century to witness the changing perspectives on homosexuality and the monologue argues that 'he was ashamed of it, / Afraid of it, it was all pathology, pathetic' (ll. 38-9). This reference to pathology depicts the attitude of homosexuality as a disease, Eisenstein having consulted a psychiatrist who told him 'he had to make a choice between his sexuality and his art; Eisenstein allegedly chose to repress his sexuality and indulge in his art'.[77] George E. Haggerty argues there are only 'scattered clues'

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[72] Gary Evans, *John Grierson* (Montreal: XYZ Publishing, 2005), back cover.
[73] Bryony Dixon, *100 Silent Films* (London: Palgrave MacMillan, 2011), p. 64.
[74] Neely, Riach, p. 9.
[75] Antony Grey, qtd by Geraldine Bedell in 'Coming Out of the Dark Ages', *The Guardian,* June 2007 http://www.theguardian.com/society/2007/jun/24/communities.gayrights [accessed 18.08.2015].
[76] Morgan, 'Power from things not declared', p. 183.
[77] Richard Taylor, *Gay Histories and Cultures: An Encyclopedia*, Volume 2 (New York: Garland, 2000), p. 271.

left in Eisenstein's creations such as 'the high camp of *Ivan the Terrible* [...] to the numerous phallocentric drawings of this time in Mexico',[78] the cinematographer unable to come to terms with this part of himself before his death in 1948. In comparison, Morgan and Cocozza deliver in their work the creative power of resistance, the poet and the filmmaker linked by the 'paradoxically shared isolation'[79] of their social oppression.

This period of 'Fifties forbiddenness' that is highlighted in the final stanza of the poem is directly linked to the experience of gay cinema-goers, the 'picture-palaces' (l. 67) described as 'glittering but filled with shadows' (l. 70). Just as Morgan would be described as leading a 'double life'[80] in the 1950s through his furtive meetings in the secret gay bars and cafés of Glasgow, this sense of secrecy is portrayed in Cocozza's final stanza. He connects this environment to the fourteenth-century poet Dante Alighieri, who would 'sigh to see / Those lost ones sitting in the smoky dark / With their *mal protesi nervi*' (ll. 79-81). The Italian quote is taken directly from Dante's seminal work *The Divine Comedy* (1321) in which the seventh circle of Hell is reserved for 'sodomites', amongst others. Dantean scholar John Ciardi argues that '*nervi* may be taken as 'the male organ' and *protesi* for 'erected'; thus the organ aroused to passion for unnatural purposes (*mal*)'.[81] It is a translation that aligns with readings of *The Divine Comedy* which suggest 'Dante means to teach that unrepented acts of sodomy are enough to damn someone',[82] the 'unnatural purposes' of homosexuality leading to the sodomites of the poem left to 'run naked over burning sand under a steady rain of fire'.[83] Morgan's reference to the fourteenth-century poem emphasises just how out-dated the persecution of homosexuality in the 1950s really was, the group described in the poem as 'the lost ones' (l. 80) left in their 'shame' (l. 78), despite living over six hundred years later than Dante and his circles of Hell. Cocozza depicts urgency in his final line, declaring that 'to be free, you must show it, oh you must let it run' (l. 86), suggesting the necessity of those oppressed by public stigma to overcome and embrace the hidden parts of them. In the interview with Christopher Whyte that confirmed the poet's homosexuality, Whyte finishes by stating 'I think you can afford not to be apprehensive now'[84] in regards to Morgan's coming

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[78] Ibid.
[79] Neely, Riach, 'Demons in the Machine', p. 9.
[80] Christopher Whyte, 'Power from things not declared', p. 164.
[81] John Ciardi, *The Inferno* (New York: New American Library, 1954), p. 79.
[82] Mark D. Jordan, 'Dante Alighieri', *Encyclopedia of Lesbian and Gay Histories and Cultures*, ed. George E. Haggerty, Bonnie Zimmerman (New York: Garland, 2000), p. 379.
[83] Ibid., p. 378.
[84] Whyte, 'Power from things not declared', p. 187.

out. Morgan's reaction, 'you think so?',[85] suggests the lingering apprehension that pervaded him throughout his life was still present, despite the changing attitudes of the late twentieth century. His portrayal of Cocozza allows him to embrace his sexuality in a way that he refrained from until the later years of his life, experimenting with poetry in decades where he experienced 'hardly any solidarity at all'[86] in regards to his hidden persona.

In 1971 in an interview with David Smith for the *Glasgow University Magazine*, Morgan spoke of how he 'would like to see more poetry about Glasgow - reflecting the life of the city' and argued that it 'does not have to be written in a grey naturalistic William Carlos Williams style'.[87] While a poem such as Williams' 'Flight to the City' (1923) has been argued as embodying the poet's direction 'towards a view of the city as sham - empty and sterile',[88] for Morgan his city is 'a place where things happen, it's a large place with a great variety of human experience going on in it'.[89] In 'Nine in Glasgow', the cityscape moves through the waves of its history in a state of lyrical reflection. Just as the reader is invited by one of the characters to 'watch us change' ('Merlin', l. 64), so too are we invited to consider the changing environment of Glasgow. From the 'sweet green hollows' ('Merlin', l. 53) and the 'green glade in the city [with] a single ancient tree' ('Thennoch', l. 67-8) of its past, to the 'smoky city' ('John Tennant', l. 94) and the 'masts and sails' ('John Tennant', l. 97) of its industrial present, Morgan brings life through his figures to the city's scenery as it changes through time. Glasgow becomes the focal point, a localised portrait that still stretches out into the wider world. Incorporating aspects of each figure in the sequence, Morgan reconstructs himself repeatedly, just as Glasgow is depicted in each stage of its regeneration. In an interview with *The Independent* in 1997, five years prior to 'Nine in Glasgow', Morgan spoke of how 'by belonging to the city, I am able to renew myself too, and keep extending out into some new area', becoming an extension of the city and its ability to 'get over its difficulties and transform itself'.[90] 'Nine in Glasgow' is in essence Morgan's tribute of his later years to the city that shaped him as a person and poet, embedding himself in both the city and the universe that stretches unbounded for him in every direction.

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[85] Morgan, 'Power from things not declared', p. 187.

[86] Ibid., p. 165.

[87] Morgan, 'When poets get up in space' in *Nothing Not Giving Messages*, p. 19.

[88] James Breslin, qtd by Peter Halter in *The Revolution in the Visual Arts and Poetry of William Carlos Williams* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1994), p. 115.

[89] Morgan, 'Doing different things', p. 28.

[90] Morgan, 'Interview: the many realities of Edwin Morgan' in *The Independent*, interview with Judith Palmer, November 1997, http://www.independent.co.uk/life-style/interview-the-many-realities-of-edwin-morgan-1296087.html [accessed 19.08.2015].

Conclusion

In 2010 Mariscat Press and Scottish Poetry Library published *Eddie@90*, a collection of tributes to Edwin Morgan to mark his ninetieth birthday. Poets, novelists, critics and friends are amongst the eighty who write to Morgan of their memories that surround the celebrated Makar, each of them emphasising in their own way the impact that he makes on individual lives and on the wider society of Scotland and its surrounding universe. Ian Campbell reflects on Morgan's own statement that 'he left pessimism to others, he himself was still an optimist',[1] while Douglas Gifford remarks on how Morgan is 'indefatigable in his regenerative visions of Scotland and the Western world yet endlessly compassionate towards the human condition'.[2] The tributes are a celebration of a restless spirit; of Morgan's innate benevolence for humanity and his limitless urge of curiosity, and in all of these characteristics we find the energy that guides Morgan's exploration of time and his movement through from the ancient past to the science-fiction world of the future.

As stated in Chapter One, Morgan spoke in his lectures on *Paradise Lost* about how he admired the dissentient Satan of John Milton's poetry and it could be argued that elements of the Romantic sinners that are found throughout literature share characteristics with Morgan and his own poetic figurations. Milton and Herman Melville are noted as two of Morgan's favourite authors,[3] and the two major sinners of their work, Satan of *Paradise Lost* and Captain Ahab of *Moby Dick,* both grapple with non-conformity and a defiance of limitations in a way similar to that found in Morgan's figures, such as the Demon, Gilgamesh, Copernicus, Pelagius and Cocozza. There is a rejection of convention that connects these characters and yet there is an important distinction between Morgan's sense of rebellion and that which is found in the Romantic sinners. Satan and Ahab are defiant and yet simultaneously they are doomed, their actions leading to their ill-fated endings. For Morgan, self-annihilation is not an end for his characters. Morgan moves through time from the Big Bang to the ancient city of Mesopotamia, across the scientific revolutions of previous centuries through to the changing world of modern-day Glasgow. The figures that are drawn upon from these moments of time all seethe with a sense of regeneration and the possibility of the future. While Pelagius is made aware that 'the dark is not far off' ('Pelagius', l. 53) and

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[1] Ian Campbell, *Eddie@90*, eds. Robyn Marsack, Hamish Whyte (Edinburgh: Scottish Poetry Library, Mariscat Press, 2010), p. 11.
[2] Douglas Gifford, *Eddie@90*, p. 27.
[3] McGonigal, *Beyond the Last Dragon*, p. 408.

that his opposition to pre-destination will be disregarded for centuries to come, he knows too that 'it is for the unborn, to accomplish their will / With amazing, but only human, grace' (ll. 86-7). In his obituary for the poet, David Robinson suggested that 'all Morgan's faith in human possibility is in this ancient benediction, given from Glasgow to the world and its future possibilities.'[4]

The circularity of time, how humanity makes and repeats its mistakes and triumphs through the centuries, is made evident in *Sonnets from Scotland* and 'Planet Wave', and yet Morgan's exploration through time emphatically suggests humankind's ability for progress and rejuvenation. Just as the Demon 'rattles the bars of convention and complacency', Marshall Walker argues that so too do we 'take the infection of [Morgan's] curiosity, his faith in the future, his holistic relish of life, his devilish optimism.'[5] Morgan's faith in humankind echoes the sentiments made in the final chapter of another novel revered by Morgan, Olaf Stapledon's evolutionary tale of man *Last and First Men* (1930):

> Man himself in his degree is eternally a beauty in the eternal form of things. It is very good to have been man. And so we may go forward together with laughter in our hearts, and peace, thankful for the past, and for our own courage. For we shall make after all a fair conclusion to this brief music that is man.[6]

The title of this dissertation comes from the closing line of 'A Home in Space': 'space that needs time and time that needs life'. There is a question that arises from this statement: what sort of time does life need? In Morgan's work we bear witness to life in the individual and in singular historical identities, and life in society and the context of social conditions. Time and space are abstracts of the universe, and yet they become particularised when they are teamed with 'life'. Time 'needs' life so that it can become a context for value, valuable or worthwhile arts, and Morgan's work demonstrates a comprehensiveness that incorporates smaller stories which together create a panoramic vision of the past, present and future, and the strengths and vulnerabilities are inherent to life of all kinds. In Liz Lochhead's poem '5th April 1990', there is a desire shown to make sense out of the supposedly inharmonious complexity of past and present. To make sense of time and all of its convolutions is an intimidating task, and

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[4] David Robinson, 'Obituary: Edwin Morgan OBE, poet' in *The Scotsman,* http://www.scotsman.com/news/obituaries/obituary-edwin-morgan-obe-poet-1-821900 [accessed 18.09.2015].
[5] Marshall Walker, *Eddie@90*, p. 84.
[6] Stapledon, p. 355.

Lochhead asks herself 'who could make sense of it?'[7] It seems relevant to note that it is her preceding Makar that she looks towards, concluding with a line of resounding admiration that 'Morgan could, yes Eddie could, he would.'[8]

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[7] Liz Lochhead, '5th April 1990', *Bagpipe Muzak* (London: Penguin, 1991), p. 79.
[8] Ibid.

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