Hugh MacDiarmid, Poetry

and the Idea of World Language

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Abstract

This thesis explores Hugh MacDiarmid's development of the idea of 'world language'. It does so thematically, but is organised in broadly chronological order. It maintains a sharp focus on both MacDiarmid's driving concerns and the national and international political priorities which wax and wane in importance through the changing social, cultural and material contexts of the twentieth century. With MacDiarmid's idea of 'world language' as a primary focus, the thesis also locates the poet in the context of studies in 'world literature' and the debates around the parameters and definitions of this field of scholarly enquiry.

Chapter One examines MacDiarmid's approach to 'world language' as it corresponds to the aesthetics and incentives of modernism, in the aftermath of the First World War and into the aftermath of the Second.

Chapter Two considers the impact of locality and gender upon MacDiarmid's response to social constructions of identity and the concomitant categorisations of language. These matters introduce the various individuals and communities that make up the 'world' of his world language.

Chapter Three investigates MacDiarmid's speculation and proposition of non-human forms of language as expression and sound found in nature and in music, thereby considering his navigation of world language as a challenge to the very definition of language itself.

Chapter Four explores MacDiarmid's role as a translator, studying his Scots adaptations in the 1920s alongside later commissioned translations as indicative of further enquiries into the distinctions and commonalities between different languages and cultures.

Chapter Five considers MacDiarmid's engagement with Gaelic within his affirmation of plurality and decentralisation as a viable model for the idea (or ideal) of 'world language'.

Chapter Six examines the centrality of non-translation and allusion within MacDiarmid's poetry to his construction of the bricolage poem as a hybrid space in which language is continually borrowed and repurposed, and the idea of world language fostered.

Finally, Chapter Seven scrutinises the tangible implications of MacDiarmid's world language when deployed in poetry which intervenes in the world, responding to political upheaval and injustice and offering an intrinsic imperative of change, as a demonstration or exemplification of his commitment to literature which accepts, embraces and draws attention to its social responsibility.

In examining MacDiarmid's various methods of engagement with language and languages, this thesis develops an argument that emphasises the idea of world language as a concern and priority to which the poet was committed throughout his career. The thesis thereby constitutes a fresh reading of the consistencies, as well as the irregularities, of his poetry as a whole.

Considering the 1955 publication of *In Memoriam James Joyce: from A Vision of World Language* as a culmination of MacDiarmid's ideas and approaches, the thesis takes this text as its starting point and traces these ideas back through earlier work. The enquiry is predicated on a retrospective understanding, reading back from this work into MacDiarmid's *oeuvre*. Matters of local distinction, cross-cultural collaboration, referentiality, translation and non-translation, and the seeking of commonalities and affinities despite difference recur throughout his writing, and they all come to a confluence in *In Memoriam James Joyce*, which engages with linguistic forms, categorisations and the matter of structural organisation on an epic scale. Lesser-studied texts are addressed as they signify experimental or tentative enquiries which contribute to the development of this vision.

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List of Abbreviations

Annals: Annals of the Five Senses [1923]*

CPI: Complete Poems, Volume I *

CPII: Complete Poems, Volume II *

CSS: Contemporary Scottish Studies [1926]*

GT: The Golden Treasury of Scottish Poetry (1940) (editor)

IMJJ: In Memoriam James Joyce: from A Vision of World Language (1955)

Islands: The Islands of Scotland (1939)

Letters: The Letters of Hugh MacDiarmid, ed. Alan Bold (1984)

LP: Lucky Poet [1943] *

RAF: The Revolutionary Art of the Future: Rediscovered Poems by Hugh MacDiarmid (2003)

RTI: The Raucle Tongue: Hitherto Uncollected Prose, Volume I *

RTII: The Raucle Tongue: Hitherto Uncollected Prose, Volume II *

RTIII: The Raucle Tongue: Hitherto Uncollected Prose, Volume III *

SE: Selected Essays of Hugh MacDiarmid, ed. Duncan Glen (1969)

SP: Selected Prose *

TCIK: The Company I've Kept (1966)

Thistle: The Thistle Rises: An Anthology of Poetry and Prose (1984)

* Carcanet 100 editions

Introduction

Modernism, World Language and the Universal Struggle for Expression

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'Language is the most important means of human intercourse'
- V. I. Lenin (1914)[1]

'In the lives of individuals and of societies, language is a factor of greater importance than any other. […] In practice, the study of language is in some degree or other the concern of everyone.'
- Ferdinand de Saussure (1916)[2]

The early twentieth century marked a crisis in language. Sparked globally by the devastation of the First World War, the crisis was responded to by writers, philosophers, and linguists alike, each of whom grappled with the reconciliation of former modes of expression to the breakdown which had occurred, and the rebuilding of consciousness, communication and culture which it necessitated. In Scotland it was Hugh MacDiarmid (1892-1978) who rose to the challenge of producing new art in a context where 'most of the important words were killed in the First World War' (*CPII*: 1156).[3] MacDiarmid's poetry, spanning the 1920s to 1970s, can be defined as a series of confrontations with and enquiries into language and languages which culminates in the 'vision of world language' proposed in *In Memoriam James Joyce* in 1955. [4]

Near the end of his life, interviewed by Nancy Gish in 1977, MacDiarmid remarked that 'English may have become a world language, but it has lost tremendously in the process. It has lost its availability for creative purposes.'[5] This thesis is concerned with how MacDiarmid's idea of 'world language' differed from this perception of English as a world language. Considering the vision of *In Memoriam* as a confluence of distinct ideas and priorities trialled and developed in earlier writing, the aim here is to affirm the idea of

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[1] V. I. Lenin, 'The Right of Nations to Self-Determination' [1914], *Selected Works, Volume I* (Moscow: Foreign Languages Publishing House, 1952), pp.318-19 (p.319).
[2] Ferdinand de Saussure, *Course in General Linguistics* [1916], trans Roy Harris (London: Bloomsbury, 2013), p.8. An earlier translation by Wade Baskin suggests that as 'in the lives of individuals and societies, speech is more important than anything else'. See *Course in General Linguistics*, ed. Charles Bally and Albert Sechehaye, trans. Wade Baskin (New York: Philosophical Library, 1959), p.7.
[3] Writing in *The Northern Review* (September 1924), MacDiarmid discusses how 'The chaos the war caused in the physical world has been replaced in intenser form in the spiritual and all our theatrics and all our forms are either survivals or experiments. Those who retain the old are those whom the war has passed over.' This notion of 'survival' or 'experiment' infiltrates his enquiries into language, guided both by 'precedents' and innovation. Cited in Catherine Kerrigan, 'The Nightmare of History: Hugh MacDiarmid and the Problem of the Past', *The Dalhousie Review*, 47.2 (1987), pp.306-313 (p.309).
[4] *In Memoriam James Joyce* was published with the subtitle 'from A Vision of World Language'. Whilst this text is considered as somewhat of a culmination, being the most extensive illustration of MacDiarmid's ideas on world language, the period which followed is also covered in this thesis.
[5] Nancy K. Gish, 'An Interview with Hugh MacDiarmid', *Contemporary Literature*, 20.2 (1979), pp.135-54 (pp.150).

a creative, literary 'world language' as a sustained concern throughout MacDiarmid's oeuvre. A distinctive approach to his work will be offered which recognises both its coherence and its irregularities as it responds to the changing landscape of twentieth-century society, culture and politics.

Hugh MacDiarmid was the pseudonym adopted in 1922, the 'annus mirabilis' of Western Modernism, by the Langholm-born journalist Christopher Murray Grieve.[6] MacDiarmid, an alter-ego of sorts which Robert Crawford asserts only Grieve 'would have dared to invent', dedicated himself, both on and off the page, to the revival of Scottish literature and the rousing of the nation's revolutionary spirit.[7] He was characterised by a tendency towards polemic and a propensity for provocation. His desire to be memorialised as 'A disgrace to the community' (*LP*: 426) has often been cited, as has Norman MacCaig's admonition that, in light of the poet's controversial character in life, he might be remembered in death not with the typical observation of a minute's silence but of 'two minutes pandemonium'.[8] This is the Hugh MacDiarmid who was 'Scotland's Public Enemy No.1' (*LP*: 34), whose status as an 'extremist ideologue' and 'menace to the state' saw him observed by military intelligence; he is the man who was infamously expelled from the Communist Party of Great Britain for involvement in nationalist activities and from the National party for communist sympathies.[9] This version of MacDiarmid has its value, and he has his place in a canon of Scottish literature as it is read, studied and understood today. Yet in seeking to provide a serious reassessment of MacDiarmid's poetry and ideas of world language, this thesis moves beyond the caricatures and contentious politics which have typically seen his personality and poetry defined as the meeting of 'extremes' (*CPI*: 87).[10]

With regards to language, languages and the proposition of a 'world language', MacDiarmid's writing can be characterised by its dual navigation of individual and community identities, as both diversity and unity are consistently emphasised through

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[6] On the significance of 1922 see Michael Levenson, 'On or About 1922: *Annus Mirabilis* and the Other 1920s', in *The Cambridge History of Modernism*, ed. Vincent Sherry (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2017), pp. 123-141, or *1922: Literature, Culture, Politics*, ed. Jean-Michel Rabaté (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2015). Mention of MacDiarmid is notably absent.

[7] Robert Crawford, 'MacDiarmid and his Maker', *London Review of Books*, 10.20 (November 1988), online: <https://www.lrb.co.uk/the-paper/v10/n20/robert-crawford/macdiarmid-and-his-maker>.

[8] Norman MacCaig, 'After his death', *The Many Days: Selected Poems of Norman MacCaig*, ed. Roderick Watson (Edinburgh: Polygon, 2010), pp.13-14 (p.14).

[9] Scott Lyall, '"The Man is a Menace": MacDiarmid and Military Intelligence', *Scottish Studies Review*, 8.1 (2007), pp.37-52.

[10] Taken from *A Drunk Man Looks at the Thistle* the proclamation 'whaur extremes meet' has become somewhat of a metonym for MacDiarmid's controversial character. Note Catherine Kerrigan's use of the quote as her title in *Whaur Extremes Meet: The Poetry of Hugh MacDiarmid 1920-1934* (1983). Catriona M. M. MacDonald also uses the quote in her historical study, *Whaur Extremes Meet: Scotland's Twentieth Century* (2009).

engagement with foreign and familiar linguistic forms. His project begins with a sensitivity to local dialect in the Scottish Borders, enriched by an exposure to continental polyglottery on the Western Front, before, over the course of fifty years, becoming increasingly multiple and diverse, simultaneously open and expansive yet always specific. This investigation of the consistencies and irregularities along this trajectory begins in the period preceding Christopher Grieve's adoption of the MacDiarmid pseudonym and ends in publications which follow *In Memoriam James Joyce*. Perceiving language and poetry as remedies to the destructive fragmentation of communities and cultures in the modern era, MacDiarmid fosters cultural exchange through synthesis, allusion and translation, considering aesthetic and political priorities within an ongoing and restless enquiry into the nature of language itself.

One might bear in mind W. H. Auden's remarks upon Yeats's death, that 'there is one field in which the poet is a man of action, the field of language'.[11] In his writing of poetry that 'pursue[d] real ends' (*CPI*: 325), MacDiarmid was committed, as Yeats was, to this field, and to what Alan Riach has referred to as 'building among ruins' with and through language.[12] He renegotiates the terms of poetic responsibility, taking it upon himself to actively envision a reordering of language out of the remnants of a broken culture and society. In *A Drunk Man Looks at the Thistle* (1926) he highlights his reservations about this task, recognising the accountability required by a national poet:

> A Scottish poet maun assume
> The burden o' his people's doom,
> And dee to brak' their livin' tomb. (*CPI*: 165)

MacDiarmid as the romantic rebel rejects the adoption of tradition without 'making it new', yet elsewhere he fulfils the role of the bardic witness, 'a singer after the fashion / Of my people – a poet of passion' (*CPI*: 482).[13] The anxiety of tradition is integral to the modernist impetus, captured as avidly in MacDiarmid's calls for 'Not Traditions -

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[11] W. H. Auden, 'The Public v. the late Mr. William Butler Yeats', *Partisan Review*, 6.3 (Spring 1939); reprinted in W. H. Pritchard, *W. B. Yeats: A Critical Anthology* (Penguin, Harmondsworth, 1970), p.352.
[12] Alan Riach, 'W. B. Yeats and Hugh MacDiarmid: Kingly Cousins' in *Scottish and International Modernisms: Relationships and Reconfigurations*, ed. Emma Dymock and Margery Palmer McCulloch (Glasgow: Association for Scottish Literary Studies, 2011), pp.87-100 (p.91).
[13] It is in prime modernist irony that Ezra Pound's oft-quoted slogan 'Make it new!' was in fact a deliberate example of 'historical recycling'. The phrase, which Michael North recounts as having been initially unpopular with Eliot at Faber in the 1930s, before gradually being turned into a catchphrase of modernity novelty by literary critics in the 1950s and 1960s, originates in a Chinese anecdote concerning Ch'eng T'ang, first king of the Shang dynasty (1766-1753 BC). Pound is said to have come across it in the *Da Xue,* prepared by the neo-Confucian scholar Chu Hsi (1130-1200), a text which he translated in 1928. See Michael North, 'The Making of "Make It New"', *Guernica* (25.08.13), online: <https://www.guernicamag.com/the-making-of-making-it-new/>.

Precedents!' in the *Scottish Chapbook* (1922) as in T. S. Eliot's fundamental discussion of 'the historical sense' in 'Tradition and the Individual Talent' (1919).[14] Robert von Hallberg speaks to both in his remark that 'Individual poets choose their predecessors and model their art accordingly', a conscious process which MacDiarmid sheds light on in *In Memoriam*.[15]

> The poet of the future is able to compare,
> Evaluate and relate, revise and adjust
> His private experience and observations
> With the *translated* experiences from higher abstractions
> Of many more individuals. […]
> *Creative work has begun.* (*CPII*: 784)

Language, and the shared anxiety over the capacities of existing forms and categories of language to capture, communicate and come to terms with catastrophe on a newly global scale, was at the crux of the modernist project, a concern that MacDiarmid acknowledges in the work of others as well as thematising in his own. In appealing to an increasingly diverse pool of linguistic forms MacDiarmid endeavours to envision a poetic world language that encompasses 'the whole of time from the first day to the last / Everywhere on the Earth at once' (*RAF*: 16). *In Memoriam*, that '*hapax legomenon* of a poem' (*CPII*: 755), is his attempt at evoking the babel of Eliot's *The Waste Land*, Joyce's *Ulysses* and Pound's *Cantos*, modernist epics in which Hugh Kenner claims to perceive 'the entire human race speaking, and in time as well as space'.[16]

Heading up what Corey Gibson encourages us to see as a kind of political and cultural 'vanguard', MacDiarmid saw himself, the poet, as a mediator between humanity and the world, and language as the central instrument in both his understanding and expression.[17] Appealing to both the modernist incentive and the romantic notion of *Weltliteratur* coined by Johann Wolfgang von Goethe, MacDiarmid invokes the teachings of writers including Goethe himself, whose concept of 'world literature' has been described as 'temporally dynamic and oriented toward the future', and Maxim Gorky.[18]

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[14] Cited in Alan Riach, 'C. M. Grieve/Hugh MacDiarmid, Editor and Essayist' in *The Edinburgh Companion to Hugh MacDiarmid*, ed. Scott Lyall and Margery Palmer McCulloch (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2011), pp.36-47 (p.38).
T. S. Eliot, 'Tradition and the Individual Talent' [1919], *The Sacred Wood: Essays on Poetry and Criticism* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1921), pp.42-53 (p.44).
[15] Robert Von Hallberg, *Lyric Powers* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2009), p.2.
[16] Hugh Kenner, *The Pound Era: The Age of Ezra Pound, T. S. Eliot, James Joyce and Wyndham Lewis* (London: Faber and Faber, 1975), p.95.
[17] Corey Gibson, *The Voice of the People: Hamish Henderson and Scottish Cultural Politics* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2015), p.37.
[18] John Pizer, 'Goethe's "World Literature" Paradigm and Contemporary Cultural Globalization', *Comparative Literature*, 52.3 (2000), pp.213-227 (p.224).

MacDiarmid's world language is influenced by both his nationalist and socialist politics, as are his enquiries into languages, which are both plural and distinct, and language itself, which is shared. Through these enquiries MacDiarmid constructs a poetics of interconnectedness and juxtaposition. His poetry becomes a site of experimentation and exchange in which he, the poet, acts upon the understanding that 'All living languages add to their vocabulary by importing words from other languages, or from scientific and other specialised vocabularies, or by inventing new words' (*Letters*: 372).

In negotiating with the terms of world language, MacDiarmid exploits what Nâzim Hikmet identifies as 'the language itself', 'an all-embracing unified language which is not newfangled or artificial, but vibrant, colourful, profound, utterly complex'.[19] He responds to the 'linguistic turn' of the early twentieth century with his own philosophy of language as such, as trialled through poetry, a study of which can be complemented by contextual appreciation for key linguistic philosophies of the period. Critical investigations by Ferdinand de Saussure, Walter Benjamin, Ludwig Wittgenstein, Martin Heidegger and Mikhail Bakhtin, written and published in the first half of the twentieth century, impacted the modernist preoccupation with language that MacDiarmid responds to. As MacDiarmid was not necessarily familiar with the work of these figures, limited by his lack of fluency in the languages they published in – French, German and Russian – the intention here is not to substantiate a comprehensive understanding of such philosophies but to suggest a pattern of correlations and disagreements which signal resonances between his idea of world language and a wider intellectual framework.

In the first instance, Ferdinand de Saussure's *Course in General Linguistics*, published in 1916, coincides with early initiatives in literary modernism.[20] Saussure's definition of *langue*, the linguistic system, as the outcome of successive generations of collective, consensual self-invention, emphasises the social nature of language in a manner that resonates with the poetic responsibility and anxiety that MacDiarmid promulgates.

> The community is necessary if values that owe their existence solely to usage and general acceptance are to be set up; by himself the individual is incapable of fixing a single value.[21]

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[19] Nâzim Hikmet, cited in Talât Sait Halman, 'Introduction', *Beyond the Walls: Selected Poems*, trans. Ruth Christie, Richard McKane, Talât Sait Halman (London: Anvil Press Poetry, 2002), pp.9-19 (p.13).

[20] In *In Memoriam* MacDiarmid refers to Saussure within a reference to 'Alan Gardiner's exposé of de Saussure's typical "circuit of speech"' (*CPII:* 743).

[21] Ferdinand de Saussure, *Course in General Linguistics* [1916], ed. Charles Bally and Albert Sechehaye, trans. Wade Baskin (New York: Philosophical Library, 1959), p.113.

While MacDiarmid recognises language as a social phenomenon he advocates too strongly for the influence of the individual to be considered as having taken Saussure's lead in this regard. According to Ken Hirschkop, in Saussure's theory: 'Language is constantly productive and productive in an unpredictable manner' and yet, 'unlike the products of artistic modernism […] it's a collective, the body of speakers, that's innovating, not an individual, because the true moment of linguistic innovation is the moment of collective agreement to a new mutation'.[22]

Yet, despite his emphasis on generalisation, it is worth noting that Saussure's course was developed out of a recognition of these mutations as a necessary diversification. In an early lecture, given on 4 November 1910, Saussure insisted that 'language is manifested in an infinite diversity of languages', deducing that one 'must therefore begin with what is given: languages; then, draw out what is universal: the language [la langue]'.[23] This conscious development, from looking at 'languages' to understanding 'the language', is loosely the approach that MacDiarmid pursued, and it is the approach taken here in the analysis of his work: first in the exploration of the linguistic distinctions which he engages with, and then in consideration of their lasting significance upon the teasing out of *la langue*, world language. As Alan Riach suggests, the plurality of languages present in MacDiarmid's vision is central, yet it is not the full story:

> while he recognises the plurality of languages he also longs for a metaphysical complementation, something that will not compensate for pluralities and fragmentations so much as confer upon them a more coherent significance and therefore transform them into something that might be understood as unitary.[24]

MacDiarmid navigated the pursuit of 'coherent significance' through various enquiries into languages, sub-strata within his ongoing poetic enquiry into the 'unitary' nature of language itself. His 'long[ing] for a metaphysical complementation' culminates in *In Memoriam*'s holistic consideration of 'the whole range of *Weltliteratur* on one man's brain' (*CPII*: 755). Saussure's dual concern with synchronic and diachronic approaches to language is relevant to the poem's vision of a world language that is at once spontaneous, capturing the specific moment, and that appeals to the historic processes which see that moment come into being.[25]

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[22] Ken Hirschkop, *Linguistic Turns, 1890-1950: Writing on Language as Social Theory* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2019), pp.144-5.
[23] Saussure, Lecture of 4 November 1910, *Saussure's Third Course of Lectures on General Linguistics (1910-1911)*, ed. Eisuke Komatsu, trans. Roy Harris (Oxford: Pergamon Press, 1993), p.77.
[24] Alan Riach, *Hugh MacDiarmid's Epic Poetry* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 1991), p.128.
[25] See chapter one, which examines the parameters of the poem as it is influenced, in particular, by Gorky's *One Day of the World*.

Karen R. Smith, writing on world literature, is sceptical of such a 'utopian concept of global coherence and connectivity', noting that it presents a conundrum for the twenty-first century critic, who 'operate[s] under the premise that no world unity exists or can exist'.[26] The argument offered here regards the aspirational element as central to MacDiarmid's modernist vision, but challenges the notion that such aspiration for 'global coherence and connectivity' is a limitation. MacDiarmid, arguably, sought after a sense of connectivity and 'world unity' in spite of lacking 'coherence', in spite of the pluralities, diversities and 'contradictions' which he considered to be 'inevitable' due to 'The variety and the enormity of the world and the infinite possibilities of the human mind'.[27]

The influence of Ludwig Wittgenstein upon literary modernism is also considered as MacDiarmid's ideas about language are likely to have been shaped by such philosophical thought. Wittgenstein's *Tractatus Logico-Philosophicus* was first published in English, translated by F. P. Ramsay and C. K. Ogden, in 1922, the same year as *Ulysses*, *The Waste Land*, *Jacob's Room* and MacDiarmid's first appearance in print. Alan Bold asserts the likelihood that MacDiarmid was familiar with the *Tractatus*, noting the affinity between his endeavour to express the ineffable in *A Drunk Man* and Wittgenstein's seventh and final proposition: 'What we cannot speak about we must pass over in silence'.[28] Whilst this is a valid point, and the role of silence will be returned to in chapter three, it is MacDiarmid and Wittgenstein's common faith in the world-building authority of language that is of most significance here. Wittgenstein's affirmation that '*The limits of my language* mean the limits of my world' correlates closely with MacDiarmid's much later propositions of 'word-consciousness' (*CPII*: 788) as a kind of world consciousness in which 'language [is] the central mystery / Of the intellectual life' (*CPII*: 763).[29] Wittgenstein conceptualises language as an arguably more subjective human phenomenon than Saussure does, and yet his assertion that 'The world is independent of my will' suggests a similar recognition of the limits of the individual to enact or see change.[30] If this marks a disjunction with the revolutionary spirit that courses throughout much of MacDiarmid's writing and character, it speaks to the self-conscious mortality that courses throughout *In Memoriam*, driven by an anxiety over individual limitations to which we will return.

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[26] Karen R. Smith, 'What Good is World Literature?: World literature pedagogy and the rhetoric of moral crisis', *College English*, 73.6 (2011), pp.585-603 (p.601, p.600).
[27] Walter Perrie, 'An Interview with Hugh MacDiarmid', *Montemora*, 4 (1978), pp.132-140 (p.134).
[28] Alan Bold, *MacDiarmid: Christopher Murray Grieve: A Critical Biography* (London: John Murray, 1988), p.218. The proposition is in Ludwig Wittgenstein, *Tractatus Logico-Philosophicus* [1922], trans. D. F. Pears and B. F. McGuinness (London: Routledge, 2014), p.89.
[29] Wittgenstein, *Tractatus Logico-Philosophicus*, p.68.
[30] Ibid., p.85.

Wittgenstein's later writing perhaps resonates most clearly with MacDiarmid's approach to world language. The concept of 'language games', discussed in *Philosophical Investigations* (1953), recognises a diversity of linguistic usages and contexts that extends far beyond the individualistic limits of the *Tractatus*. Wittgenstein's 'language games', developed around the concept that words, as language, acquire meaning through usage and context, function on the basis that language is constantly changing and evolving: 'this multiplicity is not something fixed, given once for all; but new types of language, new language-games, as we may say, come into existence, and others become obsolete and forgotten'.[31] MacDiarmid, recognising different forms of language with different meanings based on their context, utilises his poems as language games in themselves. Moreover, Wittgenstein's emphases upon linguistic plurality and living language echo MacDiarmid's epic propositions in *In Memoriam*: note, in particular, the similarity between Wittgenstein's proposition that 'to imagine a language means to imagine a form of life' and MacDiarmid's, that 'A language is / A form of life; but there are many forms of life' (*CPII*: 799).[32] Both Wittgenstein and MacDiarmid invoke a world *of* language in their attempt to comprehend world language: in the synchronic snapshot which MacDiarmid aspires to, it is important that he notes 'They are not endless variations of form / Though it is perhaps impossible to see them all' (*CPII*: 758). MacDiarmid's vision of world language is bound by the spatial and referential limits of the poem, an appeal to the constraints of subjectivity in tackling such a complex, vast phenomenon.

Mikhail Bakhtin's hypothesis, that language lives in dialogue, is not too far removed from Wittgenstein's 'language games', and might usefully be explored in relation to MacDiarmid's idea of world language.[33] Bakhtin explored the concept of dialogism most extensively in *Problems of Dostoevsky's Poetics*, originally published in 1929 and translated into English in 1973, and *The Dialogic Imagination*, published as four individual essays between 1934 and 1941 then as a collected volume in English in 1981. These dates, both of publication and English translation, are late enough that Bakhtin is unlikely to have had any direct influence on MacDiarmid, and yet the Bakhtinian dialogism of MacDiarmid's poetics has been discussed by critics including Peter McCarey, Roderick Watson and Laura O'Connor.[34]

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[31] Ludwig Wittgenstein, *Philosophical Investigations*, trans. G. E. M. Anscombe (Oxford: Blackwell, 1953), p.n.
[32] Ibid., p.n.
[33] This thesis refers to Mikhail Bakhtin but it should also be noted that Martin Buber published his essential work on dialogism, *I and Thou*, in 1923, translated into English in 1937.
[34] For McCarey's discussion of Menippean satire in MacDiarmid and Dostoevsky see Peter McCarey, *Hugh MacDiarmid and the Russians* (Edinburgh: Scottish Academic Press, 1987), pp.18-21; for Watson on

Bakhtin's concept of heteroglossia is particularly relevant to MacDiarmid's idea of world language. 'Heteroglossia', Bakhtin explains, refers to '*another's speech in another's language*, serving to express authorial intentions but in a refracted way'.[35] Found to be present most commonly in novels due to the incorporation of various languages or discourses in the speech of different characters, 'heteroglossia' is described by Bakhtin as a '*double-voiced discourse*', a kind of 'hybrid construction'.[36] Bakhtin explains that 'at any given moment' in the historical existence of 'every language', the language – as collectively constructed and historically evolved – 'is stratified not only into linguistic dialects […] but also […] into languages that are socio-ideological', and that this 'stratification and heteroglossia widen[s] and deepen[s] as long as language is alive and developing'.[37] As opposed to Saussure, who began with diversity and strove for unification, Bakhtin begins with the language and finds within it the diversity, which endures and which chimes with modernist notions of fragmentation and disjuncture. Stratifications – by nation, class, profession, literary context, and a host of other variables – are central to the definitive plurality of MacDiarmid's world language as it concerns 'all language' (*CPII*: 824).

The catch with Bakhtin's dialogism lies in his commitment to the novel and dismissal of poetry. Arguing that 'Poetic style is by convention suspended from any mutual interaction with alien discourse, any allusion to alien discourse', Bakhtin claims 'The world of poetry', conversely to the dialogic nature of novels, to be 'always illuminated by one unitary and indisputable discourse', 'no matter how many contradictions and insoluble conflicts the poet develops within it'.[38] Yet critics including Jahan Ramazani have supported the transferability of Bakhtin's key theoretical concepts to a criticism of poetry: Ramazani suggests that 'to adapt Bakhtin's terms for the novel, poetry dialogizes literary and extraliterary languages, intensifying and hybridizing them, making them collide and rub up against one another.'[39] In *In Memoriam*, and in other poems discussed in this study, MacDiarmid populates his poetic language with an ample variety of allusions from and to alien discourse, disseminating others' voices and

Bakhtin's 'polyglossia' as a way of reading the 'interplay of languages and dialects' in the 'modern Scottish literary imagination' see Roderick Watson, 'Alien Voices from the Street: Demotic Modernism in Modern Scots Writing', *The Yearbook of English Studies*, 25 (1995), pp.141-155; for O'Connor on linguistic hybridization and 'literary creole' in MacDiarmid see Laura O'Connor, 'Neighborly Hostility and Literary Creoles: The Example of Hugh MacDiarmid', *Postmodern Culture*, 15.2 (2005).

[35] Mikhail Bakhtin, *The Dialogic Imagination: Four Essays*, ed. Michael Holquist, trans. Caryl Emerson and Michael Holquist (Texas: University of Texas Press, 1981), p.324.

[36] Ibid., p.324, 320.

[37] Ibid., pp.271-2.

[38] Ibid., p.285, 286.

[39] Jahan Ramazani, 'A Dialogic Poetics: Poetry and the Novel, Theory, and the Law', *Poetry and its Others: News, Prayer, Song, and the Dialogue of Genres* (Chicago, University of Chicago Press, 2013), p.8.

'dialogiz[ing] literary and extra literary languages' throughout his vision via the repurpose of material borrowed predominantly from prose. Whilst MacDiarmid's subjectivity informs the world language which he envisions, it works against itself, never granted the power to dominate or suppress the elements which are found to be in existence. The wholeness that he seeks is not imposed, as in the imperial imposition of standard English as a world language, but is sought out through trial and error, through linguistic usage.

Ken Hirschkop relates the work of Bakhtin to Saussure and to Walter Benjamin, noting that each 'make diversity central to their linguistic doctrines'.[40] Most notably in *On Language as Such, and on the Language of Man* (1916), Benjamin makes the case for a broader definition of language that stretches beyond its limits as a human phenomenon, arguing that 'There is no event or thing in either animate or inanimate nature that does not in some way partake of language, for it is in the nature of each one to communicate its mental contents'.[41] In this theory, language is defined neither as a verbal or semiotic expression but as an articulation of being. Benjamin appeals to Johann Gottfried von Herder's approach to philology in *Treatise on the Origin of Language* (1772), which develops out of the affirmation that 'Already as an animal, the human being has language'.[42] As Ilit Ferber notes, Herder does not see 'the essence or origin of language' as being 'limited to the human realm', as 'original linguistic expression is not articulate or propositional in any way and has nothing to do with communication'.[43] The distinction that Martin Heidegger proposes in *Fundamental Concepts of Metaphysics* (1929-30) appears to contradict this open definition: veiled in the implication that being in the world requires language, Heidegger proposes that 'the stone is worldless, the animal is poor in world, man is world-forming'.[44] Yet Heidegger's distinction between the stone and the animal supports the interpretation that the animal has *some* world and thus *some* language. This juxtaposes Marx and Engels's argument that 'language, like consciousness, only arises from the need, the necessity, of intercourse with other men', thereby deeming language as a purely social phenomenon that remains inapplicable to the animal world.[45] Heidegger's perception, contradictory to Marx and Engels's proposition yet complementary to Benjamin and

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[40] Hirschkop, *Linguistic Turns*, p.24.

[41] Walter Benjamin, 'On Language as Such and on the Language of Man', *Selected Writings: Volume 1, 1913-1926*, ed. Marcus Bullock and Michael W. Jennings (London: Harvard University Press, 1996), pp.62-74 (p. 62).

[42] Johann Gottfried von Herder, *Treatise on the Origin of Language* [1772], in *Philosophical Writings*, ed. and trans. Michael N. Forster (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002), p.65.

[43] Ilit Ferber, *Language Pangs: On Pain and the Origin of Language* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2019), pp.15-16.

[44] Martin Heidegger, *Fundamental Concepts of Metaphysics: World, Finitude, Solitude* [1929-30], trans. William McNeill and Nicholas Walker (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1995), p.185.

[45] Karl Marx and Friedrich Engels, *The German Ideology: Part One* [1846], ed. C. J. Arthur (New York: International Publishers, 2004), pp.50-51.

Herder's philosophies, supports MacDiarmid's enquiry into non-human language, a curiosity that we shall return to in the investigation of MacDiarmid's appeal to the language of animals, nature and music in chapter three.

With regards to Heidegger, however, it is his existential masterpiece *Being and Time* (1927) and later works including *On the Way to Language* (1959) and the essays collected as *Poetry, Language, Thought* (1971) that will preoccupy us. Although MacDiarmid is unlikely to have obtained an authoritative comprehension of Heidegger, Heidegger's introduction of the role of language as an instrument with which to understand being in the world resonates with certain aspects of MacDiarmid's world language.[46]

In *Being and Time* Heidegger explores a world that is full of things, things that, unlike humans who are already in the world (in the way of *dasein*), must *show* or reveal themselves through signs. Humans then use equipment to understand these signs; language, as 'a totality of words' which 'we may come across as ready-to-hand' is what we use to do this.[47] Language is encountered *in the world*, 'in other species and in other cultures, open for inspection like any other cultural artifacts', and once encountered can then be *used*.[48] As Dror Pimentel explains, for Heidegger 'language […] plays an important, and even decisive, role, not only in how an idea is expressed, but also in its very formation'.[49] Echoes of this are present in the manner in which MacDiarmid acquires forms of language out in the wild, already existing in the world – in dictionaries, in speech, in journalism – and then trials these in poetry in order to gauge their contribution to a 'world language'. Later, in 'On the Way to Language', Heidegger also introduces the concept of 'Die Sprache' ('Language speaks'), an apparent contradiction to MacDiarmid's overt commitment to the written word. Yet speech in this hypothesis is not speech as it is typically understood:

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[46] *Being and Time* was not translated into English until John Macquarrie and Edward Robinson's translation in 1962, however anglophone discussion of Heidegger's philosophies appeared in journals, namely *The Journal of Philosophy* and *The Philosophical Review*, far earlier. See Sidney Hook, 'A Personal Impression of Contemporary German Philosophy', *The Journal of Philosophy*, 27.6 (1930), pp.141-160; Horace L. Friess, 'The Progress of German Philosophy in the Last Hundred Years', *The Journal of Philosophy*, 27.15 (1930), pp.396-415; Arthur Liebert, 'Contemporary German Philosophy', *The Philosophy Review*, 40.1 (1931), pp.32-47. MacDiarmid's engagement with Heidegger is unclear. That said, a recollection by Henry Grant Taylor, MacDiarmid's assistant in Shetland (1938-40), suggests that MacDiarmid was reading Heidegger in the German and, to a degree, understanding it: 'I would be struggling, doing a literal translation… trying to get ideas… and he would say: "Oh yes!" … And his mind had jumped away ahead of mine, you see: he knew what… Heidegger was getting at'. Cited in Brian Smith, 'Stony Limits: The Grieves in Whalsay, 1933-1942', in *MacDiarmid in Shetland*, ed. Laurence Graham and Brian Smith (Lerwick: Shetland Library, 1992), pp.42-72 (p.57).
[47] Martin Heidegger, *Being and Time* [1927], trans. John Macquarrie and Edward Robinson (London: SCM Press, 1962), p.204.
[48] Daniel O'Dahlstrom, 'Heidegger's Ontological Analysis of Language', *Heidegger and Language*, ed. Jeffrey Powell (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2013), pp.13-31 (p.14).
[49] Dror Pimentel, *Heidegger with Derrida: Being Written*, trans. Nessa Olshansky-Ashtar (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2019), p.2.

Saying is showing. In everything that speaks to us, in everything that touches us by being spoken and spoken about, in everything that gives itself to us in speaking, or waits for us unspoken, but also in the speaking that we do *ourselves,* there prevails Showing which causes to appear what is present, and to fade from appearance what is absent.[50]

And thus: language speaks, speaking is saying, saying is showing and showing is being present in the world – and poetry provides a space in which we, using language, allow 'world and things' to 'penetrate each other'.[51]

Perhaps Heidegger's thinking in this regard is more meaningful in understanding MacDiarmid's idea of the *world* than his grasp on *language*: Heidegger's commitment to seeing a world in which meaning is obtainable through language is prescient in the holistic vision of in *In Memoriam*. MacDiarmid's vision of world language is both a vision of a world *of* language – of signs, of language games, of heteroglossia – and a struggle to envision the nature of language itself – as speaking, as knowing, as showing, as being. Whilst he may not have directly engaged with or responded to the writing of these identified individuals, the context that their thinking provides at this critical juncture remains an illuminating backdrop against which to analyse the priorities and philosophies that guided his approach.

It is worth noting at this point also that, as much as Hugh MacDiarmid – or Christopher Murray Grieve – did not feign to be well practiced in philosophy or linguistics, nor was he, himself, multilingual or trained in translation. With regards to both the acquisition and citation of his references, and his lack of fluency in the languages that he translated and borrowed from, MacDiarmid was the first to confess his limitations. He acknowledges his discomfort in languages other than Scots – 'I do not know Turkish – but neither do I know English! – as well as I know Scots' (*SP*: 188) and is honest about his lack of linguistic fluency in *A Drunk Man* – '*I ken nae Russian*' (*CPI*: 151) – and in *In Memoriam* – 'But alas I can speak no Greek / And am now too old to learn' (*CPII*: 797).[52] Elsewhere he admits to organisational failings, as in the preface to *Annals of the Five Senses*, where he confesses that 'The sources of certain of my quotations I unfortunately cannot now trace' (*AFS*: 4) and in *Lucky Poet*, where he admits of 'defects that result from

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[50] Martin Heidegger, 'On the Way to Language' [1959], trans. Peter D. Hertz (New York: HarperCollins, 1982), p.126.
[51] Martin Heidegger, *Poetry, Language, Thought*, trans. Albert Hofstadter (New York: Harper & Row, 1971), p.202.
[52] The thesis returns to Gaelic in chapter five.

complexity of the nature of the tasks I set myself', conceding that 'I try to cover too much ground, repeat myself a lot' and 'am often inconsistent' (*LP*: 96).

At each point in his construction of a world-conscious poetry, his language and referentiality was constricted by the literature that he was himself able to access, practically limited by his own material circumstances. This became especially apparent during the years of physical isolation in Shetland, where Ruth McQuillan claims 'More than half of Hugh MacDiarmid's total life's work' was written.[53] Here, MacDiarmid was reliant upon the good will of correspondents on the mainland to send him reading material. W. R. Aitken, a librarian and close acquaintance of MacDiarmid's, was particularly helpful in this regard, and his ongoing provision of literature to the poet throughout these years can be traced through their correspondence.[54] MacDiarmid's frequent reliance upon second-order citations (works that he had not read himself but which had been reviewed or cited in journal articles) was, in part, due to this limited access to materials.[55] Within MacDiarmid's project, the incentive was not to achieve comprehensive fluency or authority but to envision an idea of the 'whole' of 'language', an intangible, aspirational notion of the 'whole' which was virtually unattainable. As he explains in 'The Key to World Literature' (1952), the aim was 'not to learn every language, but to acquire such a body of knowledge and understanding that I could see the poetical output of mankind as a whole' (*SP*: 189). He acted upon the 'will to get beyond what is already known', a drive which Robert von Hallberg has identified as distinguishing poetry 'from discourses that render their subjects transparent, known'.[56] In light of these parameters to the project, this thesis investigates MacDiarmid's enquiries into language and languages not as the commitment of a specialist, but as they are guided by a fascination with vocabulary – with etymology, connotation and context – and with the experience of language – as understanding, communication, and expression.

i. Methodology

While this study is primarily concerned with MacDiarmid's poetry there is a historical element to the approach. MacDiarmid's poetry was, as Alan Riach points out, 'a poetry not

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[53] Ruth McQuillan, 'Hugh MacDiarmid's Shetland Poetry', in Graham and Smith, *MacDiarmid in Shetland*, pp.4-17 (p.16).
[54] For correspondence between Grieve and Aitken see Bold, *Letters*, pp.572-592 and Manson, *Dear Grieve*, pp. 256-258. Further evidence on the exchange of books between the men resides in correspondence retained by the NLS, Acc.10488/1.
[55] This thesis has not prioritised the identification of what MacDiarmid read, how he accessed it, nor the speculation of how much he understood, however, where such information is relevant it will be noted.
[56] Von Hallberg, *Lyric Powers*, p.19.

afraid to be dated and placed'.[57] As such, the material circumstances and cultural influences which shaped it must be considered, and each chapter will devote some space to the various contexts of the texts discussed. Poetry is the primary concern, but the study does not exclude MacDiarmid's prose writing, more often published under the name of C. M. Grieve, understanding it to have been in prose that the reader is offered explicit insight into the influences, priorities and convictions which informed his creativity. Indeed, in certain instances prose becomes the focal point of the enquiry, most notably in discussion of MacDiarmid's psychological war studies and his proposition of gendered language in short stories and articles published in *Annals of the Five Senses* and the *Scottish Chapbook*.[58]

In its criticism, the thesis is structured loosely chronologically, yet subdivided thematically, as specific concerns and approaches have been signalled at the point in the timeline at which they were prioritised. In adopting such an approach, the aim is to illustrate simultaneously the cumulative, continually developing nature and broadening scope of MacDiarmid's ideas about language, and the restlessness of specific emphases which waxed and waned in significance. Particular attention has been paid to texts which have previously been critically under-researched, recognising that such texts – often the more experimental enquiries – mark imperative stages in MacDiarmid's developing vision.

Each chapter offers a focus on a certain theme or concern: language as modernist and as social, language in nature and in translation, language as plural, allusive and political. In each chapter, the significance of the theme in a selection of texts is first discussed, followed by a consideration of how such concerns impact the vision later proposed in *In Memoriam*. In this, the individual contribution of MacDiarmid's various enquiries will be scrutinised, and a sense of the enduring values and priorities that shaped his vision of world language deduced. In some instances, the commitment is resounding, as in MacDiarmid's encouragement of translation, or in his persistent commitment to practices of referentiality in the construction of an allusive, holistic poetics. In other examples, early enquiries foreground certain ideas or approaches which are then neglected, if not forgotten about entirely, in later work. This is the case in the notion of gendered language which primarily arises as a concern in early enquiries, or, conversely, the emphasis upon the use of politically charged language in polemical poetry which becomes increasingly important in the aftermath of the Spanish Civil War.[59] As such, this thesis indicates both the

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[57] Riach, *Hugh MacDiarmid's Epic Poetry*, p.15.
[58] Depictions of war in 'Four Years' Harvest', 'Café Scene' and Grieve's early English poetry from Salonika are considered in chapter one. Considerations of gendered language in 'Following Rebecca West in Edinburgh' and 'The Never-Yet-Explored' are introduced in chapter two.
[59] The former is discussed in chapter two, the latter in chapter seven.

irregularities and consistencies in MacDiarmid's oeuvre, highlighting both the priorities which fluctuate across his work and those that endure.

Chapter One, on 'MacDiarmid's Modernist Contexts', aims to contextualise Hugh MacDiarmid's writing and 'vision of world language' within the social, cultural and political developments of the early to mid-twentieth century, spanning from the First World War to the aftermath of the Second. Prior to MacDiarmid's first appearance in print in 1922, Christopher Murray Grieve's encounters with foreign languages on the Western Front are explored as they informed his earliest poetry and prose in English. The discussion will then cover MacDiarmid's activities – creative, journalistic and political – in Montrose in the 1920s, before considering his response to the rise of the international language movement in the 1930s, led by C. K. Ogden and the promotion of 'Basic English', and exploring the nature of the 'Vision of World Language' proposed in *In Memoriam James Joyce* (1955).

Chapter Two on 'Language as Social: Early Enquiries', dissects MacDiarmid's approach to language as a social phenomenon, constructed and variable due to matters of locality, community and gender. The chapter begins with MacDiarmid's experience in the Borders and introduction to distinctions of language used for different purposes, namely in the association of Scots with speech and poetry and English with education and the law. MacDiarmid's fascination with the five senses, indicative of a broader materialist approach, sees him experiment with language that depicts specific, local and communal experiences. In 'Ballad of the Five Senses', 'Scots Unbound' and 'Braid Scots and the Sense of Smell', this manifests as an appeal to vocabulary that depicts particular smells, sights, and sounds, whereas in later poetry the enquiry into language and biological specificity results in the inclusion of physiological terminology. The chapter also considers MacDiarmid's tentative suggestions of language as gendered in 'Following Rebecca West in Edinburgh' and 'The Never-Yet-Explored', both of which trial various forms of language in the depiction of a female protagonist, ultimately appealing to the idea of gender as socially constructed and reinforced. MacDiarmid's early enquiries into the social variables of language are largely exploratory and inquisitive; in attributing such considerable attention to them along these lines, this chapter aims to outline who it was, at this point, that constituted the 'world' of his 'world language'.

This investigation into the parameters of MacDiarmid's 'world' leads into Chapter Three, on 'Language in Nature and Music: Enquiries into the Non-Human'. In reference to Walter Benjamin's notion of 'language as such' and Karl Vossler's concept of 'language communities', this chapter takes a more abstract approach to language as it appears within MacDiarmid's endeavours to construct an open and holistic poetics. MacDiarmid's

concerns for the ecological world and for other art forms remains consistent throughout his career. This chapter is as interested in the fluidity of 'Water Music', 'The Waterside' and 'The Point of Honour', and the stony meditation of 'On a Raised Beach', as it is in MacDiarmid's attempts to transpose music into poetry in 'Lament for the Great Music', 'Island Funeral', and 'Plaited Like the Generations of Men'. Notions of non-human language as debated by language philosophers and critics inform the investigation of this chapter, which aims to broaden our comprehension of the ideas of language that MacDiarmid appealed to.

Chapter Four, entitled 'Task of the Modernist Translator: English Cribs and Collaborative Translation', continues this discussion of adaptation as it applies to translation between national languages. The discussion opens in consideration of the translator's role, drawing on work by Walter Benjamin, Jacques Derrida and George Steiner, before applying their theories to a comprehensive study of the poetry which MacDiarmid adapted from European languages into Scots, through the use of English cribs, in the 1920s. This chapter seeks to affirm MacDiarmid's work as a translator, despite his lack of fluency in the languages that he translated from and his resulting reliance upon such cribs as supplied by professional translators. It is the adaptations published individually in *Sangschaw* and *Penny Wheep*, alongside those incorporated within *A Drunk Man Looks at the Thistle,* which form the primary basis of this study, however his later commissioned translations of Harry Martinson's *Aniara* (1963) and Bertolt Brecht's *The Threepenny Opera* (1973) will also be considered as they suggest a commitment to international linguistic interaction and a collaborative approach to writing.

Chapter Five, on 'Pluralities and Affinities: Connections Within Scotland and Beyond', is concerned with MacDiarmid's focus upon Scotland's own multiplicities in the 1930s. Spanning from *To Circumjack Cencrastus* (1930) to *The Islands of Scotland* (1939) and MacDiarmid's editorial of *The Golden Treasury of Scottish Poetry* (1940), the chapter highlights the centrality of MacDiarmid's 'Gaelic Idea' as a bridge between his early poetry in Scots and the later poetry that uses a multilingual English. The increased integration of Gaelic language alongside recognition of other Celtic cultures in the British Isles as an alternative to an imperialist English hegemony is examined as it influences the decolonial vision of *In Memoriam* alongside a study of the two Gaelic poems which MacDiarmid translated with Sorley MacLean. The particular influence of MacDiarmid's island inhabitation and travels is also considered as it informs an increasingly archipelagic view of Scotland and the world, a heterogeneous, decentralised framework in which both distinctions and commonalities are fostered and reflected linguistically.

Chapter Six, 'Displaced Language: Non-Translation, Allusion and Repurpose', continues this investigation into the anti-imperialist plurality that MacDiarmid prefaces in *In Memoriam*, examining his practices of referentiality, allusion and non-translation as a sustained endeavour to destabilise the domination of standard English and champion, in its place, a diverse and decentralised heteroglossia. The discussion is grounded in an appreciation for such allusivity as typically modernist, and charts MacDiarmid's reliance upon the repurposing of language from the 'strong solution of books' (*AFS*: 4) which informed *Annals of the Five Senses*, through his plundering of dictionaries and periodicals, to the epic compilation of sources in *In Memoriam*. MacDiarmid's use of non-translation, which complements the focus on translation discussed in chapter four, is analysed alongside his incorporation of typically 'unpoetic' forms of language – proper names, terminology and other 'jargon' – acquired from prose sources. The particular experimental multilingualism of the collage poem is considered, as are the ramifications of such referentiality and allusiveness upon the reading experience. The chapter will argue that MacDiarmid's allusiveness in the aftermath of the First World War signals a disruption of conventional aesthetic tendencies, whereas his later work strives to emphasise the accommodation of difference within a continually developing heterogeneous construction.

In Chapter Seven on 'Linguistic Intervention: Weapon, Witness and Testimony', the discussion opens itself up to the practical and realistic implications of 'world language' in consideration of MacDiarmid's provocative poetry which directly engages with twentieth-century ideologies. Beginning with an examination of the early controversial essays, 'Plea for a Scottish Fascism' and 'Programme for a Scottish Fascism' (1923), the chapter scrutinises what it was about the aesthetic of fascism that appealed to MacDiarmid, as to other modernists, in this formative time period, and how this informed his approach to language in the 1920s. The focus then shifts to the poetry that was written in response to the Spanish Civil War, namely *The Battle Continues*, and the Second World War, poems in which MacDiarmid exhibits a sensitivity to language as an instrument of authority, power and revolution. The envisioning of a world language in this context is no avant-garde aesthetic frivolity or creative experimentalism but acts upon an impetus of social responsibility. The investigation of this thesis thus ends on a consideration of the political convictions which drove MacDiarmid's use of language and languages. Questions around the responsibilities and revolutionary, consciousness-building capacities of language and literature are addressed as they informed MacDiarmid's idea of 'world language' at various stages of its conception.

i.i. Critical Contribution

Through its thorough investigation into Hugh MacDiarmid's idea of world language this thesis builds upon existing criticism but it also recognises space within this framework for a modern reappraisal or renegotiation of MacDiarmid's work in light of present concerns and an updated understanding of the modernist period both in Scotland and beyond.

In particular, it was noted that MacDiarmid's mature work, including *In Memoriam*, remains relatively under-researched in comparison to his work in Scots. Thus, although this study considers the development of priorities and concerns throughout MacDiarmid's corpus, it is hoped that the considerable attention devoted to this text addresses this imbalance. In highlighting the consistencies of his project, as well as its specific enquiries, the thesis intends to provide a complementary approach to that which domineers much of the scholarly work on MacDiarmid, the majority of which was published in the decade following his death.

Eleven monographs were published on MacDiarmid between 1980 and 1992; in the thirty years since, there have been only two.[60] Following in the wake of a series of essay collections – K. G. Duval and Sydney Goodsir Smith's *Festschrift* (1962), Duncan Glen's *Hugh MacDiarmid: A Critical Survey* (1972) and P. H. Scott and A. C. Davis's *The Age of MacDiarmid* (1980) – these studies, with the exception perhaps of Peter McCarey's focus on the Russian influence and Alan Riach's study of MacDiarmid's 'epic poetry', share a common approach. Each, to a degree, identifies a critical distinction between MacDiarmid's poetry in Scots and English, attributing significant acclaim and focus to the former and exercising a cautious, unconvinced appraisal of the latter. Catherine Kerrigan (1983) omits work published after 'On a Raised Beach' from her study entirely, and while others do explore MacDiarmid's mature poetry, it is evidently not what draws them to his work. Kenneth Buthlay, in his contribution on MacDiarmid to David Daiches's 'Scottish Writers' series (1982), remarks in a reference to *Stony Limits* (1934) upon 'the painful crudeness and incompetence of some of his work' – meaning the later work in English.[61] Bold, similarly, in *The Terrible Crystal* (1983), devotes five chapters to the first twelve years of MacDiarmid's poetic output (up to and including *To Circumjack Cencrastus* (1930) and *Stony Limits*), but only one to the following thirty. Whilst he recognises that in thematising world language, MacDiarmid 'frequently finds it a big enough subject to

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[60] These eleven refer to empirical research into MacDiarmid's poetry by some of the foremost experts on the Scottish Renaissance and modernist poetry: Annie Boutelle (1980), Kenneth Buthlay (1982), Alan Bold (1983), Catherine Kerrigan (1983), Nancy K. Gish (1984), Harvey Oxenhorn (1984), Roderick Watson (1985), Peter McCarey (1987), John Baglow (1987), Alan Riach (1991), W. N. Herbert (1992).

[61] Kenneth Buthlay, *Hugh MacDiarmid* (Edinburgh: Scottish Academic Press, 1982), p.96.

contain many of the concerns from this thematic repertoire', hinting at consistencies, Bold dismisses *In Memoriam* as 'generally arid' and representative of 'a conspicuous absence of emotion', proceeding to dedicate minimal further attention to the text.[62]

Harvey Oxenhorn, similarly, minimises the achievement of MacDiarmid's linguistic experimentation and enquiry in comparison with the 'transmogrifying language' of *Ulysses*.[63] Yet he notes of *In Memoriam* that 'What MacDiarmid seems to be demanding in these lines […] is no less than a revision of critical values by which we define poetry, and judge it', recognising any critical dismissal of the poem as a likely outcome of its challenge to the reader to practice 'ambitions that differ from those we normally bring to verse'.[64] MacDiarmid's challenging of the parameters and expectations of poetry, particularly that of 'popular' 'anti-poetry' – characterised by 'emotion without intellect, fancy without imagination, and a tendency to bring the whole thing down to the level of entertainment' – is a point that recurs throughout this study.[65]

For many, it appears that *Cencrastus* marks the divisive point between MacDiarmid's successful lyrics constructed from a rich synthetic Scots and his decline into an overtly erudite and aggrandising English rhetoricism: as Annie Boutelle suggests, in *Cencrastus* 'The vision has been lost, and the struggle remains'.[66] Yet Alan Riach has noted that in their tendency to criticise *Cencrastus* for its 'failure as an organic unity' critics have not fully realised or addressed 'the implications of this for the poetry which follows from it' and that to do so must 'relinquish the critical idea of an organically unified poem'.[67] As in Oxenhorn's suggestion of 'ambitions that differ', Riach's recommendation emphasises the necessity of a different kind of reading and a fresh critical approach, the value of which is embedded in the arguments mapped out here. Riach's monograph, *Hugh MacDiarmid's Epic Poetry* (1991), is an essential study of MacDiarmid's later work, unearthing numerous key influences and sources used in the compilation of *In Memoriam James Joyce* and reinforcing the value of reading MacDiarmid's epic poetry within an international modernist context.

More recently, critics have turned to MacDiarmid's later poetry and his vision of world language with a keener eye, most notably James Benstead, whose doctoral study of the sources in *In Memoriam* has been an integral influence upon the approach adopted

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[62] Alan Bold, *MacDiarmid: The Terrible Crystal* (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1983), p.221, p.224.
[63] Harvey Oxenhorn, *Elemental Things: The Poetry of Hugh MacDiarmid* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 1984), p.186.
[64] Ibid., p.187.
[65] Perrie, 'An Interview with Hugh MacDiarmid', p.134.
[66] Ann Edwards Boutelle, *Thistle and Rose: A Study of Hugh MacDiarmid's Poetry* (London: MacDonald, 1980), p.155.
[67] Riach, *Hugh MacDiarmid's Epic Poetry*, p.41.

here. Benstead encourages a critical method that, in beginning with *In Memoriam,* 'reevaluate[s] MacDiarmid's earlier work in a way that emphasises the continuities that run through MacDiarmid's output and facilitates the understanding of this output as a coherent body of work'.[68] As has been outlined, this is precisely what this project intends to do, having taken as its starting point the subtitle 'A Vision of World Language' and worked backwards, tracing the various linguistic threads which culminate in *In Memoriam* through enquiries and approaches trialled in earlier work.

Within this redressed critical approach to MacDiarmid and world language, it has still been necessary to acknowledge and respond to critics' concerns. Scott Lyall, for instance, in *Hugh MacDiarmid's Poetry and Politics of Place* (2006), warns of the elitist referentiality of *In Memoriam*, noting that 'whilst it insists on the importance of knowledge to spiritual and political emancipation, the facts that it catalogues are so abstruse as to render their liberatory possibility negligible to all but the educated few'.[69] Meanwhile, Gregory Baker has suggested this difficulty as unavoidable, contending that 'given the sheer diversity of language and literatures, only a difficult synthetic medium could resist the "imperial" or broad "ascendancy" model of international language'.[70] Taking note of both Lyall's well-founded caution and Baker's sense of inevitability, the aim here is to outline a combined approach to the poetry which does not foreground full command of MacDiarmid's extensive referentiality but encourages a general appreciation for its elusive allusivity and all the curiosity which it provokes. David Damrosch's 'mode of detached engagement', recommended as an approach to world literature, is a helpful model of 'distant reading' that complements the close reading typically adopted in approach to poetry.[71]

The intention here is to contribute to the critical discussion which has centred upon the disjuncture between MacDiarmid's poetic 'vision' of world language and the logistical limitations on its manifestation in the real world. Where Carl Freedman has found it necessary to affirm that 'world language cannot […] be made only through manifest proclamation', David Murison picks up on the inspiration of MacDiarmid's world language as 'the faith that is the substance of things hoped for and the evidence of things not seen', a faith which Morag Shiach sees resulting in a 'frustrating and frustrated'

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[68] James Benstead, *A Study of Hugh MacDiarmid's 'In Memoriam James Joyce'*, PhD Thesis (The University of Edinburgh, 2019), p.13.

[69] Scott Lyall, *Hugh MacDiarmid's Poetry and Politics of Place: Imagining a Scottish Republic* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2006), p.184.

[70] Gregory Baker, *Classics and Celtic Literary Modernism: Yeats, Joyce, MacDiarmid and Jones* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2022), p.221.

[71] David Damrosch, 'World Literature, National Contexts', *Modern Philology*, 100.4 (2003), pp.512-31 (p.529).

vision.[72] Given the scale and nature of the task which MacDiarmid set himself such frustration is perhaps inevitable, however it is hoped that a deeper understanding of the stages of the vision's development will shed light on the restless and perpetually incomplete nature of *In Memoriam James Joyce* as its most extensive physical manifestation.

It is worth noting at this point what the present study owes to scholarship on MacDiarmid within the international modernist context. Studies by William Calin (2000), Matthew Hart (2010), Jelle Krol (2020) and Gregory Baker (2022) have been particularly insightful in this regard, situating MacDiarmid alongside Breton and Occitan modernisms, vernacular and postcolonial modernisms, Dutch, Welsh and Breton modernisms, and classic and Celtic modernisms respectively. Hart's focus on MacDiarmid's global-minded poetics as 'the speech of no singular person, place or nation-state' is particularly pertinent to the present investigation of the evolving, unfixed nature of MacDiarmid's world language.[73] Thematic studies which do not prioritise language, but which cover specific concerns have been similarly fundamental, helping to prompt and shape the individual enquiries which make up each chapter. Louisa Gairn's consideration of MacDiarmid in her monograph on *Ecology and Modern Scottish Literature* (2008) was largely to credit for the provocation of curiosity about MacDiarmid and the language of nature pursued in chapter three, much as Nancy K. Gish's essay on MacDiarmid in Bonnie Kime Scott's anthology *The Gender of Modernism* (1990) was key to further consideration of gendered language, as discussed in chapter two.

Furthermore, it has been necessary and enlightening to consider MacDiarmid's idea of world language within the expanding field of studies in world literature. In this, both his own comprehension of 'world literature' – of which 'world language' was a component – and subsequent developments in the field have been considered. The clearest evidence of the former comes from the prefatory 'Author's Note' in *In Memoriam James Joyce,* in which MacDiarmid recognises that 'For better or worse, world literature is at hand. Our consciousness is beginning to be planetary. A new tension has been set up between the individual and the universe' (*IMJJ*: 14). MacDiarmid's observation speaks to Franco

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[72] Carl Freedman, 'Beyond the Dialect of the Tribe: James Joyce, Hugh MacDiarmid, and World Language', in *Hugh MacDiarmid: Man and Poet*, ed. Nancy K. Gish (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 1992), pp.254-273 (p.267).
David Murison, 'The Language Problem in Hugh MacDiarmid's Work', in *The Age of MacDiarmid: essays on Hugh MacDiarmid and his influence on contemporary Scotland*, ed. P. H. Scott and A. C. Davis (Edinburgh: Mainstream Publishing, 1980), pp.83-99 (p.85).
Morag Shiach, '"To Purify the Dialect of the Tribe": Modernism and Language Reform', *Modernism/modernity*, 14.1 (2007), pp.21-34 (p.32).
[73] Matthew Hart, *Nations of Nothing But Poetry: Modernism, Transnationalism, and Synthetic Vernacular Writing* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2010), p.38.

Moretti's suggestion that literature has evolved over time into 'a planetary system'.[74] Yet the parameters of this 'system' continue to be debated. David Damrosch defines 'world literature' as referring to 'all literary works that circulate beyond their culture of origin, either in translation or in their original language', a definition that encompasses both MacDiarmid's extensive engagement with international literature and the translation of his own work into languages including Russian, German, Hungarian, Polish and Chinese. [75] The Warwick Research Collective suggests that world literature is 'A single but radically uneven world-system; a singular modernity, combined and uneven; and a literature that variously registers this combined unevenness in both its form and its content'.[76] Pascale Casanova, in her discussion of a 'world republic of letters', identifies a similar 'unevenness' in the existence of an 'opposition between a capital, [...] and peripheral dependencies whose relationship to this center is defined by their aesthetic distance from it.'[77] This interpretation of central and peripheral literatures within a world system is supported by Joe Cleary, in his recent study of the emergence of world literature in modernism as it coincides with the collapse of imperialism. Cleary suggests that in 'the most ambitious literary texts' the writer '[does] not simply seek to find a sanctioned place within stable or destabilized literary systems'; but rather, '[has] a capacity also to draw the structures and dynamics of the system into their own forms, to make them an object of their aesthetic reflection'.[78] This thesis supports the inclusion of *In Memoriam* in this company: in the global scope of its enquiry and in MacDiarmid's consistent challenge, both in this text and elsewhere, to established imperial hierarchies, the text encourages the collaboration and cultural exchange required of a work of world literature which partakes in world language, whilst struggling, as Bold notes, to escape from 'the extended paradox that enables a writer to reject the English language in a poem written in English'.[79] MacDiarmid constructs a form of poetry which promotes decentralisation and heterogeneity as the antidote to political inequality and creative stagnation, as determined by and reflected in language.

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[74] Franco Moretti, 'Conjectures on World Literature', *New Left Review*, 1 (2000), pp.54-68 (p.53).
[75] David Damrosch, *What is World Literature?* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2003), p.4. Various scholars have worked on MacDiarmid's engagement with particular cultures and translation into particular languages. For recent research on MacDiarmid and China see: Li Li and Liu Aihua, 'From Scots to Mandarin: The Translation and Reception of Hugh MacDiarmid's Poetry in China', *Translation and Literature*, 31 (2022), pp.341-357; Li Li and John Corbett, 'Representations of China in the Poetry of Hugh MacDiarmid', *Scottish Literary Review*, 15.1 (2023), pp.83-107.
[76] Warwick Research Collective, *Combined and Uneven Development: Towards a New Theory of World-Literature* (Liverpool: Liverpool University Press, 2015), p.49.
[77] Pascale Casanova, *The World Republic of Letters*, trans. M. B. DeBevoise (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2004), p.12.
[78] Joe Cleary, *Modernism, Empire, World Literature* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2021), p.47.
[79] Bold, *MacDiarmid,* p.361.

In providing a critical survey of MacDiarmid's idea of world language within the context of world literature studies, I seek to redress a broader tendency to limit the discussion of the poet's work to national parameters. As Moretti suggests, 'there is no other justification for the study of world literature [...] but this: to be a thorn in the side, a permanent intellectual challenge to national literatures – especially the local literature'.[80] Hugh MacDiarmid has an established place in the history of Scottish literature and is a recognisable influence on the Scottish literature of today; the impetus of the argument presented here is not to further elaborate upon MacDiarmid's canonicity as a national writer but to assess more broadly the major contribution he made and continues to make to international modernism, world literature, and an understanding of world language that carries resonance into the twenty-first century.

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[80] Moretti, 'Conjectures', p.68.

Chapter One

MacDiarmid's Modernist Contexts

In the First World War, on the frontline in Salonika and Marseilles, a young Christopher Grieve was exposed to unfamiliar European languages and met individuals from diverse backgrounds; upon interacting with them, and witnessing their interactions with one another, he was compelled to consider social and cultural affinities which were fostered in spite of language barriers. He returned to Scotland with a new sense of a European identity which drew both from classical precedents, dating back to the Renaissance, and from the shared modern experience of small nations. Grieve, then writing as MacDiarmid, envisioned Scotland within Europe, and encouraged increased engagement with European literature – contemporary and classical – in the renegotiation of Scottish arts and letters in the aftermath of the war. It is this vision, as it grows out of the wartime of the 1910s and into the modernist 1920s, developing through the influence of the international language movement in the 1930s into the Second World War and the compilation of *In Memoriam James Joyce*, which this chapter will chart, taking into consideration MacDiarmid's priorities and influences in these early years as well as his initiatives in cultural exchange, linguistic experiment, and travel.

1.1. Grieve's Experience of Europe: 'Thistleonica' and a Post-War Revival

As a young writer navigating revolution, politics and art in the wake of the First World War, Christopher Murray Grieve imagined Europe, and he imagined Scotland's place within it, writing in 1922 that 'If there is to be a Scottish literary revival the first essential is to get rid of our provinciality of outlook and to avail ourselves of continental experience' (*RTI*: 29). The First World War provoked the revolutionary creativity of the Scottish Literary Renaissance much as it inspired comparable global movements, as Carla Sassi recognises in her claim that 'modernism is born out of colonial hybridisation and cultural syncretism/clash, articulated as either a celebration […] or as a threatening event'.[1] For MacDiarmid, war created the conditions in which such hybridisation, celebration and threat were brought together in a specifically European context. Alan Riach's suggestion that the incentive of the Scottish Literary Renaissance was 'to reach back […] into the

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[1] Carla Sassi, 'Prismatic Modernities: Towards a Re-Contexualisation of Scottish Modernism', *Scottish and International Modernisms: Relationships and Reconfigurations*, ed. Emma Dymock and Margery Palmer McCulloch (Glasgow: Association for Scottish Literary Studies, 2011), pp.184-197 (p.189).

singular vortex of British imperialism and the First World War, and attempt to bring forward a multifaceted but singular nationality from the violence that war made unavoidable' informs the approach of this chapter.[2] Scott Lyall's claim that the Scottish Renaissance was 'decidedly a modernist European revival', finding the sense of 'Europeanness' intrinsic to MacDiarmid's negotiation of post-war values and creativity, is persuasive.[3]

Tim Youngs has argued that 'Modernism was built on travel', including in this bracket 'journeys to wars – to fight them and to report them'.[4] Certainly for Grieve, travel to the frontline had been necessary for the creation of 'Hugh MacDiarmid', who himself would write that 'the full force of the War' had been necessary 'to jolt an adequate majority of the Scottish people out of their old mental, moral and material ruts' – himself included (*Albyn*: 1). On the frontline with the Royal Medical Corps in Salonika and Marseilles, Grieve was exposed to the 'force' of war on an unprecedented scale, a 'highly-coloured nightmarish reality' which he struggled to account for within his writing (*Annals*: 36). He experienced death and devastation up close, yet the horrors of war – 'that upheaval in which I/ Sodgered 'neath the Grecian sky' (*CPI*: 159) – were often counter-balanced by everyday mundanities: as he recounts in one letter, 'mostly I lie on the cliff-top' (*Letters*: 18). Writing to George Ogilvie, his former English teacher and mentor, Grieve reflects on the literature that he reads to fill his time, an internationally populated reading list of 'Turgenev, Henry James, J. M. Synge, the Georgian poets, Galsworthy's *Fraternity*, Gilbert Murray's Greek translations' (*Letters*: 19) alongside a 'consideration of Plato, Socrates, Bacon, Spinoza and Nietzsche' (*Annals*: 52).[5] Whilst in Marseilles, he confesses to having 'found time to read in the original a big anthology of contemporary French Poets' – despite little evidence elsewhere to suggest a fluency in French – and subsequently initiating correspondence with 'Paul Valéry, André Gide, Albert Samhain

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[2] Alan Riach, 'Scottish Literature, Nationalism and the First World War', *Scottish Literature and World War I*, ed. David A. Rennie (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2020), pp.21-43 (p.32).
[3] Scott Lyall, 'Minor Modernisms: The Scottish Renaissance and the Translation of German-language Modernism', *Modernist Cultures*, 14.2 (2019), pp. 213-235 (p.215).
[4] Tim Youngs, 'Travelling Modernists', *The Oxford Handbook of Modernisms*, ed. Peter Brooker, Andrez Gasiorek, Deborah Longworth and Debora Thacker (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2010), pp.267-280 (pp.267-8).
[5] Gilbert Murray (1866-1957) was a classics scholar and professor of Greek at the University of Oxford from 1908-1936. He produced popular translations of Greek dramas by Aeschylus, Sophocles, Euripides and Aristophanes. On this early influence, Gregory Baker remarks that 'MacDiarmid continued to associate a certain creative magnetism (as well as his own frustration, sexual and otherwise) with the presence of classics, Greek in particular' (Baker, *Classics and Celtic Literary Modernism*, p.225), an indication as to the appeal of such literature at this formative time. On MacDiarmid and Nietzsche see Lyall, *Hugh MacDiarmid's Poetry*, pp.158-164, which explores Nietzschean notions of the cultural aristocrat, eternal recurrence and self-realisation as they influence not only MacDiarmid but the incentives and ethos of European modernism more generally.

and a few others' (*Letters*: 33).[6] It was a plethora of continental voices who influenced his literary and intellectual consciousness in this time, correlative to the mingling of foreign and familiar accents, languages and identities that he encountered off the page:

> So many Scotsmen are here that it has been suggested that it should be called, not Thessalonica, but Thistleonica. But that would not be just to our allies. East and west meet and mingle here in an indescribable fashion. Soldiers of half-a-dozen different nations fraternize in canteens and cafés. Naturally and necessarily one picks up an incredible polyglottery. Even the coins in one's pockets are representative of almost every nation in Europe. (*Letters*: 16)

This confrontation with 'fraterniz'-ation and 'polyglottery' pre-empts MacDiarmid's incorporation of European vocabulary within his poetry, utilised as a kind of cultural currency, as his creativity was informed by the continental confluences facilitated by war and an increased need for improved transnational communication, for finding common ground.

Returning to Scotland upon his demobilisation in 1919, it was to Montrose, on the East Coast, that Christopher Grieve moved, where the North Sea introduced a new geographical frontier into his perception of Scotland as 'an island off the coast of Europe' (*RTI*: 234). Working as a journalist, Grieve procured a job with *The Montrose Review* and, besides a brief stint in Kildermorie, stayed in the provincial town until 1929. It was here that the pseudonym of 'Hugh MacDiarmid' was adopted – chosen as a 'Gaelic pseudonym' with 'traditional association and essential rightness' (*LP*: 6) – and it was here, in what Alan Riach has referred to as 'the original cultural capital of modern Scotland', that MacDiarmid's creative project of the Scottish Literary Renaissance began to take shape.[7] He was joined in his revival effort by writers, artists and thinkers who congregated around Montrose – Violet Jacob, Marion Angus, Edwin and Willa Muir – and he set to work passionately on the recovery and revitalisation of Scotland's literature and languages, a project which Roderick Watson has characterised by its 'significant commitment' to European modernism.[8] It was also in Montrose that the *Scottish Chapbook* was founded, edited MacDiarmid for its short run between 1922 and December 1923. The *Chapbook* was driven by the goal 'to bring Scottish Literature into closer touch with current European

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[6] Grieve was a great admirer of the Symbolist poet and critic Paul Valéry and wrote articles on him for *The New Age* (1927) (*SE*: 49-52) and *The Scottish Educational Journal* (1928) (*RTII*: 216-9). He elsewhere refers to Valéry as 'the greatest contemporary poet' (*RTII:* 482). In *Lucky Poet*, MacDiarmid credits Valéry's proposition of poetry as 'not an idea gradually shaping itself in words, but deriving entirely from words' (*LP: xiii*), integral to the emphasis placed upon 'words' in his idea of world language.

[7] Alan Riach, 'Modernist Montrose: Scotland's 1920's capital of culture!', *National*, 26 February 2016.

[8] Roderick Watson, 'Scotland and Modernism', *Scottish and International Modernisms*, pp.8-19 (p.14).

tendencies in technique and ideation', one contribution to MacDiarmid's vision of 'healthy intromissions with the whole range of European literature' (*Thistle*: 193).[9]

As both editor and writer, MacDiarmid engaged with European writing and upheld European ideals as a frame of reference for the Scottish revival. He recognised in vernacular Scots a storehouse of rich linguistic possibility, comparable, he argued, to the vernacular promoted by contemporary post-war movements in Ireland, Norway and France, amongst others:

> At first it may seem absurd to try to recover at this time of day the literary potentialities of a language which has long ago disintegrated into dialects. These dialects even at their richest afford only a very restricted literary medium, capable of little more than kailyard usages, but quite incapable of addressing the full range of literary purpose. They are the *disjecta membra* of a language; the question is, whether they can be re-integrated and re-vitalized. Can these dry bones live? Like feats have at all events been accomplished elsewhere – in regard to Provençal in France, Catalan in Spain, the Laandsmaal in Norway, and so on. Those who would try it in Scots must first of all recover for themselves the full canon of Scots used by the Auld Makars and readapt it to the full requirements of modern self-expression. This is no easy task. (*Albyn*: 14)[10]

Recognising that the Scottish Literary Renaissance 'will be seen to have had a genesis in kin with other post-war phenomena of recrudescent nationalism all over Europe' (*Albyn*: 1), MacDiarmid looked to European examples of literary and linguistic regeneration, and responded to them with what Patrick Crotty has deemed an 'imaginative gusto and virtuoso verbal ingenuity'.[11] Looking to achieve 'a veritable return to the Good Europeanism of our mediaeval ancestors' (*Thistle*: 193), MacDiarmid argued that 'The Scots Vernacular is a vast storehouse of just the very peculiar and subtle effects which modern European literature in general is assiduously seeking […]' (*Albyn*: 28). Subsequently, in his own poetry, he looked inwards and backwards to regionalisms of Scots which he envisioned a national collaboration or synthesis between, and to archaic forms of the language used by the fifteenth century Makars and discovered in dictionaries, as well as looking out: 'We're ootward boond frae Scotland' as the drunk man claims (*CPI*:100).

MacDiarmid most famously consulted John Jamieson's *Etymological Dictionary of the Scottish Language* (1808), considered to be Scotland's answer to the linguistic diversity of Joyce's *Ulysses*, 'A *vis comica* that has not yet been liberated' (*SP*: 20). Yet he

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[9] Quoted in *Modernism and Nationalism: literature and society in Scotland, 1918-1939: source documents for the Scottish Literary Renaissance*, ed. Margery Palmer McCulloch (Glasgow: ASLS, 2004), p.xii.

[10] See also C. M. Grieve, 'A Lesson from Provence', *Scottish Nation*, 7 August 1923, pp.96-8 and 'Arne Garborg', *The New Age*, 14 August 1924, pp.182-5, collected in *RTI*.

[11] Patrick Crotty, '"Like Pushkin, I": Hugh MacDiarmid and Russia', *Studies in Scottish Literature*, 44.1 (2019), pp.47-89 (p.56, p.52).

has also been found to have sourced vocabulary from Sir James Wilson's *Lowland Scotch as Spoken in the Lower Strathearn District of Perthshire* (1923), George Watson's *The Roxburghshire Word-Book* (1923), and Walter Gregor's *The Dialect of Banffshire: With a Glossary of Words Not in Jamieson's Scottish Dictionary* (1866).[12] In acquiring and using vocabulary from such sources, MacDiarmid unites spatially and temporally disparate vocabulary in Scots within the hybrid space of his early lyrics. In this, constructing a 'poetry of strange architecture' (*CPII*: 835), MacDiarmid follows the 'tendency in world-literature today which is driving writers of all countries back to obsolete vocabularies and local variants and specialized usages of languages of all kinds' (*Albyn*: 14). As opposed to Edwin Muir's later argument for a 'homogenous' language, MacDiarmid, through what Muir referred to as 'a series of violent shocks', united diverse forms of the Scots language with both English and European influences – examples of which this study explores – to construct a poetry which celebrated both internal and international multiplicities in its assertion of a secure sense of national identity within the continent.[13] Concepts of polyglottery, synthesis and cultural unity or exchange were central to MacDiarmid's linguistic and literary project from its earliest stages, a crucial foundation upon which he then built the idea of an increasingly open, referential world language.

1.2. Continental Perspectives and Psychological Studies: Early Poetry and *Annals of the Five Senses*

MacDiarmid's early writing in both Scots and English indicates this effort to unite the foreign and the familiar in poetic encounters with European languages and cultures. Grieve, pre-MacDiarmid, leaps into modernity and dwells in its strangeness, creating both poetry and prose that Roderick Watson has claimed 'anticipate[s] so much of what the poet's vision was to be', guided by an inquisitiveness into the world which persists throughout MacDiarmid's career (*Annals*: xvi). In particular, the poems which Grieve published in *The Broughton Magazine* in 1920 and later in *Annals of the Five Senses* (1923), act as a precursor to the linguistic plurality and confrontational nature which would characterise his modernist project.[14]

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[12] See Michael H. Whitworth, 'Jamieson, Jargons, Jangles, and Jokes: Hugh MacDiarmid and Dictionaries', *Poetry and the Dictionary*, ed. Andrew Blades and Piers Pennington (Liverpool: Liverpool University Press, 2020), pp.105-126 (p.112).
[13] Edwin Muir, *Scott and Scotland* [1936] (Edinburgh: Polygon, 1982), pp.8-9.
[14] *Annals* includes 'A Moment in Eternity', dedicated to George Ogilvie, 'The Fool', 'The Following Day', 'Spanish Girl', 'Consummation' and 'A Last Song', all written in English. The otherwise uncollected poems from *The Broughton Magazine,* 'La Belle Terre Sans Merci', 'Allegiance', 'Mountain Measure', 'To a French Girl-Friend' and 'To M.G.' have since been collected in *CPII*: 1197-1203.

These early English poems splice together the imprints of war with new impressions of sex, philosophy and physical environment. 'Spanish Girl' epitomises this intertwining of sexual and cultural liberation, in which Grieve's 'endless impotence' is contrasted with the 'surging life' of his Spanish subject (*Annals*: 69). His lack of capacity for creation is replenished by the female's boundless inspiration, a symbol of the potential enrichment of Scottish culture through exchange with continental languages and ideas. Foreign space and place are similarly integral to the experience depicted: whilst on the surface it is a poem about sexual awakening, the text's annotation as 'A recollection of Salonika' encourages the imagination of travel. The memory described, though 'disembodied' from the poet's being, remains rooted in the physical space in which it occurred (*Annals*: 69), affirmation of Grieve's belief, expressed elsewhere, that 'life as we know it is always specific – specific in time and place. It is of where and when it is, and of no other where and when' (*RTIII*: 364). 'La Belle Terre Sans Merci', again contextualised in Salonika, sees Grieve conflate time and space as real physical landscapes and coastlines are augmented both with the imprint of Greek mythology – 'See where Olympus sounding soars' (*CPII*: 1197) – and the invasion of modern war – 'High in the throbbing skies / Twinkles an aeroplane' (*CPII*: 1197). It is this approach – uniting the opposites of high and low art, tradition and modernity, foreign and familiar – that sees Baker remark on MacDiarmid's 'dislodg[ing]' of 'the classics from the once seminal role it played in enfranchising the ruling class', bringing the lofty airs of Greek and Roman literature down to the shared experience of locality in war.[15] Opposites are juxtaposed and boundaries surpassed: the geographical spaces which Grieve encountered throughout the war are depicted in terms of both their beauty – 'Worthy of Paradise' – and the destruction and exploitation which they signify – 'O prostituted skies' – a modernist clash of paradoxical impressions (*CPII*: 1199). Amidst such contrasts, Grieve has cause to contemplate his own contribution, and questions 'What have you in your heart, Scots Borderman, / Prithee, that can compare with these?' (*CPII*: 1200). War catalysed the urgency in Grieve's project to redefine Scotland's contribution to the European cultural tradition. His experience of difference, navigating foreign spaces in Salonika, Marseilles and at various points along the Mediterranean as 'the stranger' (*CPII*: 1202), exposed him to literatures, languages and ideas from outwith the British imperial narrative, encouraging the reconsideration of his own aesthetic and political boundaries.

Furthermore it was Western Europe, closest geographically and most familiar due to his own experience and reading, which exerted the most significant international influence

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[15] Baker, *Classics and Celtic Literary Modernism*, p.230.

on Grieve/MacDiarmid's vision in the 1920s. In 'Introduzione alla Vita Mediocre', published in 1922 and addressed to Arturo Stanghellini, the author of a war novel of the same title, Grieve uses the English language to depict his Italian subject.[16] Throughout the poem, he indicates a sensitivity to the rhythms and momentum of the language:

> straight from school to soldiering
> What sense of destiny and solitude
> Possessed! (*CPII*: 1219)
>
> Routines of trench-life, fitful, futile, crude,
> With Time, an epileptic, captaining! (*CPII*: 1219)

Grieve's use of alliteration in the opening lines indicates the monotony of the soldier's progression, whist his stilted rhyme scheme in the first stanza highlights both the foreignness of the English poetic form and language which he adopts, and the discomfort of the experience which he depicts. The intentional awkwardness is reinforced through the clipped, fricative sounds of routine in 'fitful, futile' and the sonic interruption of the harsh 'crude' and 'captaining', presented in 'epileptic' stops and starts. The subsequent inclusion of the non-translated '*imboscati*', an Italian term which refers in a military context to 'draft-dodgers', is an early example of Grieve's sampling from foreign vocabulary in the creation of a defamiliarizing effect: 'He is demobilised and meets old friends, / The *imboscati*' (*CPII*: 1219).[17] Here, the inclusion of an Italian term which relates to a real lived experience in war is juxtaposed with Grieve's subsequent reference to 'Lilliputian littleness' and 'Brobdingnagian memories' (*CPII*: 1219) – an allusion to Jonathan Swift's 1726 novel *Gulliver's Travels* – to signal the meeting of reality and imagination, fact and fiction. His allusion to Swift, of Irish background, further highlights Grieve's emphasis on literature from beyond England, integral to the negotiation of a decentralised cultural stance even in these early stages. 'Introduzione alla Vita Mediocre', therefore, indicates Grieve's early experimentation with the poetic form as a site of confluence. The poem acts as an interface between languages, cultures and identities which develops out of both his own experience of Europe in the First World War and his imagination – aided by literature – of what lay beyond the limits of that experience.

In 1923, MacDiarmid – no longer publishing poetry as Grieve – published 'Der Wunderrabbiner von Barcelona', addressed to Else Lasker-Schüler, whose poem, 'Sphinx',

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[16] Stanghellini's novel, published in 1920, was written out of the author's experience as a lieutenant in the war, a novel about the readjustment to post-war life after the horrors and devastation witnessed in the trenches.

[17] The use of non-translation is revisited in chapter six. This example is one of the earliest in MacDiarmid's oeuvre.

was later adapted for inclusion in *A Drunk Man Looks at the Thistle*. Again the poem borrows its title from a prose text, this time a short story by Lasker-Schüler, and again the poem responds to destructive and violent changes in Europe in the early twentieth century, here relating specifically to the experience of Jewishness.[18] MacDiarmid identifies an uneasy cross-section in the identities that the poem encounters, written in response to a Jewish German woman, who herself is in unfamiliar terrain, writing about Spain. Gender, nationality, faith and location in space and time coincide as the poet grapples with the co-existence of multiple selves within a single individual and the endurance of these selves in the face of prejudiced violence. The liminal situation of the poem's speaker 'Outwith the walls of Barcelona' (*CPII*: 1226), restricted by the city's physical boundaries, reflects this marginality, as does the isolation of the 'wonder-Rabbi'– 'humbly and alone' – despite his evident spiritual significance – 'Whose holiness through all the land was felt' (*CPII*: 1226). MacDiarmid strips all pretensions and ambiguity from his poetic language so as to lay bare the horrific realities of the event witnessed: 'There came a pogrom of the Jews at last / And naked corpses in the street were cast' (*CPII*: 1226). The simple rhyme scheme renders the meaning accessible, while the blind hypocrisy of the 'Wunderrabbiner' who has allowed such atrocities to be conducted is reflected further in the inversion of his 'eyes with radiance unearthly shone' becoming 'eyes that shone remote as th' eyes of God' (*CPII*: 1226). MacDiarmid uses poetry as a gateway to understanding, a confrontation with unfamiliar cultures and lived experiences, through which a sensitivity to difference, tension, and plural identities is developed. Such early poems are crucial indications of the priorities which informed the idea of world language being explored here.

MacDiarmid's earliest accounts of war in *Annals of the Five Senses* (1923) respond more specifically to the psychological implications of the war experience. The short stories 'Cerebral', 'Café Scene' and 'A Four Years' Harvest', the latter of which is quoted from here, foreground this struggle to depict simultaneity and destruction on an unprecedented scale:

> The story of the odd labour of these four wild years raced by him like a panorama. Such a gallimaufry as it was of all that was frivolous, absurd, luminous, suggestive, depressing, exasperating and farcical! Such a mosaic of hot haste and fatigue, overheated brains and mobs, over-produced nothingness, shams and jumbles! (*Annals*: 48)

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[18] Lasker-Schüler's short story, 'Der Wunderrabiner von Barcelona' ('The Wonder-Working Rabbi of Barcelona') was published in 1921. The story has been interpreted as a modernist rewriting of Heine, the title being an allusion to *Der Rabbi von Bacherach*, and is a historical fiction written in response to the anti-Semitism of the First World War.

The chaotic organisation of experiences and impressions conveyed here speaks to the modernist impetus to capture fragmentation, most popularly epitomised by Virginia Woolf's calls to 'record the atoms as they fall upon the mind in the order in which they fall'.[19] Watson recognises MacDiarmid's 'psychological studies' in *Annals* as 'prophetic', in this way, 'of a postmodern sense of the decentred and unstable nature of the human subject and the endless intertextuality of literary production', a mosaic of tangible experience, plural identities, acquired language and literary allusion (*Annals*: xv).

It was a referential project which came with its challenges. In 'A Four Years' Harvest', MacDiarmid writes of the immense difficulty he was faced with, in that 'For the soldier the rush of impressions had been tremendous, beyond the possibility of assimilation' (*Annals*: 35). In lieu of sense or order therefore he leans into the strangeness of war's impressions and fragments, presenting both a tentative acceptance of foreignness and acknowledgement of his detachment from those experiences in 'the regulation recognition of complexity modernity demanded' (*Annals*: 10). New and foreign impressions are illustrated as they are experienced instantaneously and simultaneously, here and in the short story 'Cerebral':

> All of them lives, and each in perfect freedom, modifying or expanding, easing off or intensifying continually. They moved freely, each in its own particular whim, and they moved also with the unity of one impression. As one thing receded into unreality, the reality of other and ever other things became newly apparent (albeit oddly familiar and repetitive) taking him like trumpets. Colours flashed in and out like trout in clear waters. […] all manner of strange things led busy but quite undisquieting existences, intricate, yet orderly. […] He was athrill with the miracle of sentience, quivering in every filament of his perceptions with an amazing aliveness. (*Annals*: 7)

Time is compressed and memory is saturated as MacDiarmid navigates simultaneity, plurality and synthesis, concepts which will characterise his enquiries into language. The fragmentary war-torn world of 'Cerebral' is reminiscent of Joyce's snapshot of Dublin as a restless cosmopolitan centre of international confluence, in which death and devastation reaffirm the fleetingness of life's moments and movements:

> Cityful passing away, other cityful coming, passing away too: other coming on, passing on. Houses, lines of houses, streets, miles of pavements, piledup bricks, stones. Changing hands. This owner, that. Landlord never dies they

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[19] Virginia Woolf, 'Modern Fiction', *Selected Essays*, ed. David Bradshaw (Oxford: Oxford World Classics, 2009), pp.6-12 (p.9).

say. Other steps into his shoes when he gets his notice to quit. […] Slaves. Chinese wall. Babylon. Big stones left. […] No one is anything.[20]

The significance of the individual is diminished, replaced by anonymity within the overwhelming urban landscape, a bleak interpretation of the modern world. Yet the reaching out of the individual to the collective of humanity beyond himself, despite disillusion, remained integral to MacDiarmid's navigation of that world: 'He started anew from himself around an anthropomorphic universe, and went in search of a larger self which was the reflection and confirmation of his own' (*Annals*: 33). Consideration of the potential requirement for violence or disruption in progress towards 'an essential and most excellent harmony' pervades MacDiarmid's writing, which is guided by internationalist socialist beliefs and the thought 'that something of everything is wanted to make a world […] So his tendency was always to the whole, to the totality, to the general balance of things' (*Annals*: 8). This pursuit of the 'the totality' recurs consistently throughout MacDiarmid's writing and is central to the conceptualisation of the vision of world language which is presented in *In Memoriam James Joyce* and the 'many-sided active delight in the wholeness of things' (*CPII*: 1020) explored in *The Kind of Poetry I Want*, an enduring priority.

Looking to Europe in light of these aims, the example of Ireland proved a critical influence – both creative and political – upon MacDiarmid's early project. In the first instance, the bloody insurrection of the 1916 Easter Rising, led by Edinburgh-born James Conolly, had illustrated the potential necessity of violence in the achievement of liberation from the Empire. At a time when Scottish denunciation of the Irish was fashionable, MacDiarmid encouraged strengthened solidarity between the nations: 'the part is not greater than the whole […] It is impossible to discriminate against the Irish in that way as long as we are co-members of the British Empire' (*Albyn*: 30).

Moreover, he saw in both the cultural nationalism of W. B. Yeats, 'my kingly cousin' (*CPI*: 185), and the cosmopolitan experimentalism of James Joyce, a modernist approach to literature and language which was guided by apathy for British rule and, as such, the imperialist English language, key to his early prioritisation of Scots. Of the two – Yeats and Joyce – it was the younger, the latter, who 'welcomes that modernity which Yeats feared', whose influence prevailed.[21] MacDiarmid and Joyce never met, despite their common acquaintances, and it is evident that MacDiarmid's reverence for the writer

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[20] James Joyce, *Ulysses* [1922] (London: Everyman's Library, 1997), p.245.
[21] Emir Nolan, *James Joyce and Nationalism* (London: Routledge, 1995), p.23.

remained unreciprocated.[22] MacDiarmid was keen to situate his early work alongside Joyce's achievements, considering their task to be 'identical' (*RTI*: 233), particularly in their 'European range in technique and ideas' (*RTI*: 237), and he appears to have read Joyce's *Ulysses* (1922) almost instantly upon its publication, 'alter[ing his] outlook on literature and life'.[23] Whilst fluent and accomplished in his command of the English language, Joyce recognised the colonial implications of English use in Ireland similarly to MacDiarmid's recognition in Scotland: note Stephen Dedalus's realisation in *A Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man* (1916) that 'The language in which we are speaking is his before it is mine'.[24] Distancing his writing and his characters from the British rule which had imposed the language upon them, Joyce chooses to highlight Europe as an alternative framework with which Ireland ought to align itself. As he writes in *Exiles* (1918), 'If Ireland is to become a new Ireland she must first become European. […] Some day we shall have to choose between England and Europe'.[25]

MacDiarmid also looked to US ex-pats T. S. Eliot and Ezra Pound as 'the growing end' (*RTIII*: 403) of Anglo-American modernism. Each had spent formative periods in Italy, Paris and London, Europeanising their approach and language. Eliot's *The Waste Land*, described by Jean-Michel Rabaté as 'a rampart of words, a tentative construction', functions much like MacDiarmid's exploratory expressionism in *Annals*, intended to help Eliot overcome 'the destruction, material and moral, brought about by European madness'.[26] As in the case of Joyce, the 'English' of Eliot's writing, as of Pound's or of Joseph Conrad's, was not 'English' in character, influenced by a diverse background of lived experience in Europe and wide-ranging reading materials. Reflective of the destructive effects of war upon continental 'Falling towers', the English of *The Waste Land* is interrupted by French, German and Russian inferences, whilst Pound's *Cantos* (first edition published 1925) similarly features sections in Italian, French and Latin.[27] Both pre-empt the epic mode of referentiality and linguistic borrowing which MacDiarmid

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[22] As MacDiarmid recalled, 'Gogarty took me round the pubs in Dublin he and Joyce used to frequent when they were medical students' (*TCIK*: 192).
Richard Barlow extensively documents the influence of Scotland upon Joyce's work and has found little to suggest that any of this came from MacDiarmid, whom he describes as 'one of Joyce's Scots protégés'. Richard Barlow, *The Celtic Unconscious: Joyce and Scottish Culture* (Indiana: University of Notre Dame Press, 2017), p.209.
[23] Bold, *MacDiarmid*, p.130.
[24] James Joyce, *A Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man* [1916] (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1960), p.189.
[25] James Joyce, 'Exiles' (1918), *Poems and Exiles*, ed. J. C. C. Mays (London: Penguin, 1992), pp.113-266 (p.158).
[26] Jean-Michel Rabaté, '"The World Has Seen Strange Revolutions Since I Died": *The Waste Land* and the Great War', *The Cambridge Companion to* The Waste Land, ed. Gabrielle McIntire (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2015), pp.9-23 (p.22).
[27] T. S. Eliot, 'The Waste Land' [1922], *The Waste Land and Other Poems* (London: Faber & Faber, 1999), pp.21-46 (p.37).

would experiment with in *In Memoriam James Joyce*, whilst Conrad, introduced to MacDiarmid in London via critic and editor Edward Garnett, wrote similarly in an 'acquired' English, influenced by his trilingualism in English, Polish and French.[28] Conrad's writing was respected amongst MacDiarmid's peers, in particular by Compton Mackenzie, who admired that Conrad had managed to 'surmount the handicap of writing in an acquired language' (*RTIII*: 373). The network of popular modernism which MacDiarmid acknowledged, engaged with and responded to in the 1920s had a distinct character to it, formed of men who wrote in the English language from non-English backgrounds, supplemented with European vocabulary and references.

Yet whilst Eliot inched gradually closer to Anglophilia – note the dismissive attitude of his 1919 essay, 'Was There a Scottish Literature?' – MacDiarmid remained committed in his opposition to the so-called 'English Ascendancy' and the imperialist and capitalist standardisation of the English language.[29] Cairns Craig writes of how, for Eliot, 'The superiority of the English language as a literary language […] lies in its inheritance of the whole spectrum of European traditions in poetry in many different languages'.[30] For MacDiarmid, conversely, it might be said that the necessity of such inheritance in the English language only highlighted its inadequacy; his recurrent appeal to 'poetry in many different languages' encouraged exploration of 'the whole spectrum of European traditions' as an alternative to English writing and tradition, not a bygone contributary to it. The international and national objectives of MacDiarmid's creative and political projects complemented, rather than counteracted, one another.

1.3. 'ootward boond frae Scotland': Europe and Beyond in the 1920s

In his early lyrics MacDiarmid references European languages and cultures with increasing frequency. As Patrick Crotty outlines, 'As his campaign for a Scottish renaissance gathered pace, a relentless stream of poems, newspaper articles and reviews complemented the editorials of his own periodicals in alluding to' a broad pool of international languages, an effort he describes as an 'attempt to jolt Scottish literary aspiration from what he saw as

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[28] Riach, *Hugh MacDiarmid's Epic Poetry*, p.28.
[29] Ironically it was in *The Criterion,* launched by T. S. Eliot, that MacDiarmid published his 1931 essay 'English Ascendancy in British Literature'. Here, he states that 'The problem of the British Isles is the problem of English Ascendancy' (*SP*: 63), thereby meaning the tendency in English literature to prioritise literature written in the English language, rather than 'broad-basing itself on all the diverse cultural elements and the splendid variety of language and dialects, in the British Isles' (*SP*: 67).
[30] Cairns Craig, *Yeats, Eliot, Pound and the Politics of Poetry* (Pittsburgh: University of Pittsburgh Press, 1982), pp.204-5.

the torpor of its default British frame of reference'.[31] What he writes *into* is as critical as what he writes *against*.

In *Sangschaw* (1925) and *Penny Wheep* (1926), the European influence infiltrates MacDiarmid's Scots lyrics in the form of short translations, dedications and allusions in epigraphs. 'La Fourmiliére' (*CPI*: 41), a short poem dedicated to Denis Saurat, is written entirely in French, whilst 'Tromp l'oeil' (*CPI*: 45), a short Scots lyric, takes merely its title from the French for 'optical illusion'.[32] Elsewhere, MacDiarmid borrows titles for his poems from Latin, as in 'Ex ephemeride mare' (*CPI*: 45), and Russian, as in 'U Samago Moria' (*CPI*: 76), dedicated to Anna Akhmatova, the innovative Russian poet. He also includes adaptations from the Russian, – 'The Last Trump', from a poem by Dmitry Merezhovsky – Cretan, – 'Under the Greenwood Tree', 'The Three Fishes' and 'The Robber', anonymous translations published without credit to either translator or original writer – German, – 'The Dead Liebknecht', written after the German of Rudolf Leonhardt – and French, – 'On the Threshold' being suggested by the French of Gustave Kahn.

In *A Drunk Man Looks at the Thistle*, the idea of Europe transpires in the drunk man's vision as a fixation on Dostoevsky, the incorporation of translations into Scots from German, Russian and Belgian, as discussed in chapter four, and the inclusion of non-translated vocabulary, discussed in chapter six. *A Drunk Man* embeds a faith in a collective European identity and culture in which Scotland ought to participate; and yet, 'Europe's far eneuch for me' (*CPI*: 97), as the drunk man admits, recognisant of the self-administered boundaries of his internationalist vision. Following this, in *To Circumjack Cencrastus*, published at the turn of the decade, MacDiarmid's references to Europe form a constellation of concerns which present themself in both contemplative and satirical passages. The speaker of the poem, emerging out of the uncertain, chaotic reconfiguration of the 1920s and faced with a surer sense of identity – both his own and that of the nation in Europe – remarks that,

> See the fog
> Is liftin' at last, and Scotland's gien,
> Nae bletherin' banshee's, but Europe's een… (*CPI*: 223)

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[31] Crotty, '"Like Pushkin, I"', p.50.

[32] The term 'Scottish Literary Renaissance' famously comes from Denis Saurat's 1924 article for *Revue Anglo Américaine* about 'Le groupe de "la Renaissance Ecossaise"'. Saurat was flattering of MacDiarmid's lyric poetry and his achievements in *A Drunk Man Looks at the Thistle.* See John Manson (ed.), *Dear Grieve: Letters to Hugh MacDiarmid* (Edinburgh: Kennedy & Boyd, 2011)*,* p.24. In a later letter (21.11.32) Saurat writes to Grieve that 'Your idea of poetry being more important than social reform is a true idea which I hope you will bring out fully' (Manson, *Dear Grieve*, p.61).

This opening up of 'Europe's een' enables, again, the incorporation of vocabulary from European languages, built into an understanding of Scotland's plural affinities to the continent. Spanish is present in the repetition of 'El Rey de Escocia no es nada' (*CPI*: 228), a recognition of Scotland's diminished autonomy, whilst French recurs in references to Stéphane Mallarmé's commemoration of Edgar Allan Poe, – 'Dans le flot sans honneur de quelque noir mélange…' (*CPI*: 234) – Louis Le Cardonnel, – 'Cette antique union du Poète et du Prêtre…' (*CPI*: 241) – Madame Ackermann, and François Villon – 'Le roy Scotiste…' (*CPI*: 236).[33] *To Circumjack Cencrastus* both begins and ends with the auld alliance, the first reference in the poem being to Comte de Lautréamont and the final lines being conveyed in French:

> *Si l'orvet voyait,*
> *Si le sourd entendait,*
> *Pas un homme ne vivrait.* (*CPI*: 292)[34]

The poem circles back upon itself in an imitation of the movements of Cencrastus, soaring up and outwards before returning back down to Scotland, looking to the past before returning to the present. Yet his movements remain close: MacDiarmid's particular emphasis on French throughout the poem, markedly more familiar to a Scottish readership than the Russian or Greek referenced elsewhere, provides an inroad to European culture and literature, harnessed so as to emphasise the international affinities of his Scots language in a non-abrasive manner. Europeanness is suggested as being accommodated within Scotland, and vice versa.

It was with the aim of increased international engagement that MacDiarmid helped found the Scottish branch of International PEN in 1927, a practical reinforcement of the continental affinities encouraged through his poetry.[35] The establishment of Scottish PEN warranted writers an excuse to travel to European countries, enabling meetings and collaborations across cultures. In Vienna, in 1929, MacDiarmid met with Karel Čapek, the Czech novelist with whom he found he 'had a great deal in common' (*LP*: 106-7) and who

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[33] 'El Rey de Escocia no es nada' roughly translates as 'The King of Scotland is nothing', a statement that highlights Scotland's lack of self-rule. The quote from Mallarmé comes from the poem 'Le Tombeau d'Edgar Poe' (1876). Louis Le Cardonnel (1862-1936) was a French Catholic priest (Prêtre) and poet (Poète). The quote from Villon, taken from the poem 'Ballade des seigneurs du temps jadis', refers to the Scots King, James II (1430-1460), within its address to former rulers. This integration of international references thus dwells on the theme of rulership and mortality.

[34] Comte de Lautréamont was the pseudonym of Isidore Ducasse, the French prose poet born in Uruguay. The final lines of *Cencrastus*, quoted here, appear to be a French proverb, included in Eugene Rolland's *Faune Populaire de la France: noms vulgaires, dictons, proverbs, légendes, contes et superstitions* (1881).

[35] PEN International, founded in London in 1921 by Catharine Dawson-Scott, had initially stood to represent 'Poets, Essayists, Novelists', however this was later expanded to include 'Poets, Playwrights, Editors, Essayists, Novelists'.

Mirna Šolić writes of as seeking 'to overcome the opposition between home and abroad, suggesting an equal and shared "Europeanness", based on artistic identity'.[36] MacDiarmid, much like Čapek, was committed to what Tim Youngs identifies as the modernist impetus for the 'crossing or dissolution of boundaries', highlighted through the poet's committed appeal to international allusion and vocabulary in the navigation of an idea of world language.[37]

The influence of Europe in the 1920s was particularly formative in the early establishment of a vision of world language which prioritised both distinct local identities and sought after such connections in the affirmation of an international network. Between Scotland and the rest of the world – which MacDiarmid's vision branched out towards in the 1930s and 40s – Europe was the bridging point, the 'een' into the world's diverse identities and languages.

The impact of a configuration of European modernism upon MacDiarmid's approach to language and world language is seen to diversify in the aftermath of the Second World War. The volume *A Kist of Whistles* (1947) alludes to minority languages and writers from beyond the comparatively Western pool of influence earlier relied upon. We see this in poems including 'Of Two Bulgarian Poets', 'In the Golden Island', 'Ballad of Aun, King of Sweden' and 'Off the Coast of Fiedeland'. The distinction of specific localities and archipelagic identities – in Europe and the world – become increasingly central, as will be discussed in later chapters.

This shifting of focus away from Western and Anglophone imperialist centres is made particularly evident in *In Memoriam James Joyce*, considered throughout this discussion as an accumulation of MacDiarmid's efforts to establish a vision of world language through extensive international referentiality and linguistic collage. Here, in the acknowledgement that 'We must respond maximally / To the whole world we can' (*CPII*: 798), MacDiarmid self-consciously strives to outgrow the Western and Eurocentric parameters of his project, shattering the boundaries which had previously constrained his vision. He emphasises the need for a reconfiguration of global hierarchies and structures of power, as revealed and reinforced through language:

> (For unlike you, Joyce, I am more concerned
> With the East than the West and the poetry I seek
> Must be the work of one who has always known
> That the Tarim Valley is of more importance
> Than Jordan or the Rhine in world history). (*CPII*: 801)

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[36] Mirna Šolić, *In Search of a Shared Expression: Karel Čapek's Travel Writing and Imaginative Geography of Europe* (Prague: Charles University, 2019), p.9.
[37] Youngs, 'Travelling Modernists', p.270.

Whilst the Rhine, the 'cultural significance' (*CPII*: 755) of which MacDiarmid refers to earlier in the poem, traditionally symbolised the centre of Western European culture and creativity, MacDiarmid now looks to alternative models and centres overlooked by Western narratives. In the poem, MacDiarmid struggles to surpass the primary shortcoming of writers of 'world literature' identified by Susan Stanford Friedman, that too much of their work is not 'sufficiently global', instead 'replicat[ing] the imperial power of the West […] by asserting Western culture as the measure of all cultures'.[38] If one only took into consideration MacDiarmid's earlier poetry, he might be accommodated comfortably within this bracket; later work, as will be explored throughout this study, however, works towards counteracting such a charge. Within this development, MacDiarmid's navigation of European identities in the wake of the First World War, encountered and engaged with through language, acts as a key stage of exploratory development in his ideas around world language.

1.4. 'Un-Basic' English: Response to the International Language Movement

MacDiarmid's recurring appeal to European 'technique and ideation' in the 1920s was formational in the establishment of linguistic plurality and cultural exchange as key priorities. Whilst this would later develop into a challenge to imperialist centres of authority and standardisation in its encouragement of multiplicity and minority languages, it can be helpfully compared, in its earlier stages, to the international language movement which gained momentum in Europe in the first half of the twentieth century.[39] I. A. Richards' and C. K. Ogden's 'Basic English' project, in particular, informed by theories put forth in their 1923 book *The Meaning of Meaning*, was driven by priorities that differed vastly from MacDiarmid's. In 1931, Richards and Ogden argued that 'The absence of a common medium of communication is the chief obstacle to international understanding, and therefore the chief underlying cause of War'.[40] Their project was centred primarily on the simplification of language for use in politics and science, and the restricted vocabulary which they compiled, elucidated in *The Basic Words: a detailed account of their uses* (1932), consisted of 850 'core' words. Michael West, English

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[38] Susan Stanford Friedman, 'World Modernisms, World Literature, and Comparativity', *The Oxford Handbook of Global Modernisms*, ed. Mark Wollaeger and Matt Eatough (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2012), pp.499-526 (p.501).
[39] See James McElvenny, *Language and Meaning in the Age of Modernism: C. K. Ogden and His Contemporaries* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2018).
[40] C. K. Ogden, *Debabelization: With a Survey of Contemporary Opinion on the Problem of a Universal Language* (London: Kegan Paul, 1931), p.13.

educator, linguist and contemporary of Richards and Ogden, explains that a world English 'must be a language of practical and formal discussion, of commerce and diplomacy', adding that it need also 'have no emotional values and nuances; on the contrary it should avoid them'.[41] He was similarly unimpressed with an auxiliary language like Esperanto, created by Ludwig Zamenhof in 1887: note his claim in the opening lines of *In Memoriam*, credited to A. G. Pape, that 'I have yet to find any creative effect from Esperanto or Ido' (*CPII:* 737). Esperanto, which derives predominantly from European languages, represented the kind of 'world-language' which MacDiarmid believed to signify 'the short-circuiting of human consciousness', opposed to 'the increasing exploitation in all literatures of dialect and archaic forms, specialised vocabularies of all kinds, and he various other sorts of linguistic experimentation so prominent today' (*RTII*: 481). MacDiarmid found no inspiration in such simplified language, rooting for the extension of vocabulary in a poetic world language rather than the limiting of it.

The incentive of existing initiatives to construct an international language, namely Basic English and Esperanto, juxtaposed MacDiarmid's engagement with distinctive local languages and dialects, discussed in the following chapter, in which he recognised the emotional, sensational and experiential significance of vocabulary and, as such, the value of linguistic diversity. Despite appeals for improved communication across borders and the pursuit of understanding 'language' as a universal phenomenon and medium, the distinctiveness of specific identities – as individuals, communities, nations and cultures – remained the priority throughout his enquiries into language and world language. MacDiarmid's opposition to the ethos of Basic English pervades the vision of *In Memoriam James Joyce* in its opening lines:

> I remember how you laughed like Hell
> When I read you from Pape's 'Politics of the Aryan Road':
> 'English is destined to become the Universal Language! (*CPII*: 737)

MacDiarmid rejects any creative commitment to expanding the imperial forces tied up in the use of a simplified or standardised English – recognising that 'the adoption of English as the supra-national language / Would imply the acknowledgment of Anglo-Saxon supremacy' (*CPII*: 789) – and instead opts for a decentralised *bricolage* model which borrows from international vocabularies and cultural references in order to deflect from the perpetuation of an unchallenged authority. Dialectics and juxtapositions are central to MacDiarmid's vision of world language, which destabilises the English used as its primary

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[41] Michael West, 'English as a World Language', *American Speech*, 3.9 (1934), pp.163-174, p.173.

medium of communication through overwhelming it with unfamiliar language forms, an indication of its inadequacy without international interaction and exchange.

Simplification or streamlining in linguistic terms, for MacDiarmid, was equated with a limitation upon creative and expressive potential, thereby restricting the transformative capacity of poetry to encourage the imagination of future potentials. This is key throughout his corpus, but most explicitly so in *In Memoriam James Joyce.*

1.5. *In Memoriam James Joyce*: Late Modernist Reconfigurations after the Second World War

Through engagement with European polyglottery, the fragmentation of war and continental affinities in the 1920s, MacDiarmid ensured that the assimilation of disparate languages and cultures, a diversity opposed to the simplification of Basic English, was an integral feature of his poetic project from its earliest stages. *In Memoriam James Joyce*, published in 1955 yet composed throughout the 1930s and 1940s, responds to the shifting of contexts in an epic negotiation of world language which places emphasis upon both simultaneity and progressivism. The aftermath of the Second World War, in which the poem is published, marks a cultural moment quite distinct from that of the 1920s previously discussed, and MacDiarmid acknowledges this whilst drawing upon approaches, priorities and formal techniques developed throughout earlier poetry, in previous decades. These distinct concerns and themes – local languages, ecology, translation, allusion, intervention – form the basis of subsequent chapters, however for the purpose of establishing the trajectory of MacDiarmid's poetry between the aftermath of the First World War and that of the Second it is beneficial here to outline the scope and achievements of the work as a culmination of sorts which directly develops out of the approaches already explored.

In *In Memoriam,* MacDiarmid emphasises the necessity of constructing 'A poetry with the power of assimilating foreign influences' (*CPII*: 1011) which also, in its language, retains local distinctions, an appeal to finding connection in a fragmented world that does not overlook or seek to overcome difference and particularity. Simultaneity is key, much as it was in the stories included in *Annals*, the layering of images, languages and identities vital to the idea of 'world language' which the poem explores:

> Everlasting layers
> Of ideas, images, feelings
> Have fallen upon my brain
> Softly as light.
> Each succession has seemed to bury
> All that went before.

> And yet, in reality,
> Not one has been extinguished… (*CPII*: 878)

Language is approached both synchronically – as existing at one moment, a snapshot of sorts – and diachronically – as developed throughout history, in line with changes in wider society and culture. MacDiarmid endeavours to engage with the world of languages in the poem much as he did with Scots in the 1920s, drawing upon references and words that are obscure or archaic (as with *Jamieson's* earlier) alongside those which are contemporary, in the appeal to a holistic understanding of what language is, how it develops and how it can be used, specifically in poetry, in the future.

In *Lucky Poet*, MacDiarmid highlights the intentional emphasis upon simultaneity in the poem as influenced by Maxim Gorky's *One Day of the World* (*Den'Mira*).

> Yes, *One Day of the World* is the nearest example of the sort of things I am after in my recent poetry – of what I mean by world consciousness in my work – that I can think of. Consider – weather conditions in Colombo, Canada, and elsewhere; the Italo-Ethiopian conflict – the resistance preparations of the Ethiopian people on the one hand, and *Italy in the Fire* showing life in the Fascist rear on the other. *England at the Cross-Roads* – economic data, a letter to a newspaper, an appeal to the magazine, the *Other World* (English spiritualist organ) calling on people to combat war by prayer, alarming items on the growth of unemployment […] Court trials. Plays and cinemas on that day in England […] On to Hungary and Poland. Then to Germany […] Following this are chapters on Latvia, Lithuania, Esthonia [sic.], Austria, and Czechoslovakia. Then come Rumania, Jugoslavia, Bulgaria, Greece, Belgium, Holland. Then France […] Then Spain, Portugal, Switzerland, Ireland, and the Scandinavian States. Then Japan. Then Indo-China, Indonesia, India, Syria, Tunis, Algiers, Morocco, Turkey, Iran, the young Tannu-Tuva and Mongolian republics, the United States of America*,* and so on to *A Day of Writers*. (*LP*: 136)

Gorky's book, co-edited with Mikhail Kol'tsov, drew upon journalistic sources in an attempt to capture a sense of the world on the day of 27 September 1935. Whilst Gorky died in June 1936, Kol'tsov had ensured that the book was published the following year, thereby retaining a sense of immediacy. As Robert Bird explains, the choice of datewas completely arbitrary: it could have been 'any day: 25 September, 7 October, or 15 December; it makes no difference'.[42] The choice resonates with Joyce's apparently random selection of 16 June 1904 as the day of *Ulysses*, though of course this date was later discovered to hold personal significance. Whilst MacDiarmid does not attribute his 'Vision of World Language' to any specific date, he evidently drew inspiration from the international scope and collaborative, referential nature of Gorky's book, which

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[42] Robert Bird, 'Revolutionary Synchrony: A Day of the World', *Baltic Worlds*, 3 (2017), pp.45-52 (p.49).

recontextualised not only literary sources but journalistic, encyclopaedic and visual ideas and language.[43]

One Day of the World began in Soviet Russia and opened itself out to the world much as MacDiarmid would do from Scotland, expanding from the local to the universal. The book, which is rarely referenced in English language sources – prompting questions about MacDiarmid's access to it – has been described by Robert Bird as having 'inadvertently framed the impossibility of ever representing socialism as a fixed reality […] socialism is always emerging and disappearing from view'.[44] It is a fact of both Gorky and MacDiarmid's projects that to capture a global plurality of possibilities was, ultimately, an ambition that would never be fully realised. Yet to commit to its attempt, in spite of that very understanding, was crucial to the restless and perpetually unfinished nature of their projects and the ongoing fight for creative values and political convictions, the spirit of permanent revolution – as in *The Battle Continues* (1957), discussed in chapter seven – which underpinned them.

The processes involved in the composition of *In Memoriam*, however, highlight the diachronic nature, partly revealed due to circumstantial constraints, of the poem's language and, thus, of world language as a concept. *In Memoriam* had been proposed as numerous different texts over the course of its composition, ultimately always intended as the first instalment in an even longer, unfinished project, *Impavidi Progrediamur*.[45] Originally entitled *In Memoriam Teofilo Folengo*, the poem was referred to in correspondence with John Purves as early as 1936.[46] By 1938, the MacDiarmid appears to have shifted focus on to Joyce, a 'memoriam' for a man who would live another three years: in this year, MacDiarmid describes the poem in a letter to William Soutar as 'an effort running to several thousand lines, and leaving Joyce at the starting-post so far as the use of multi-linguistics is concerned' (*Letters*: 168).[47] Yet in the same year he refers to it in a letter to Helen B. Cruickshank as *Mature Art*, 'a huge new poem' of 'over 10,000 lines – i.e. 100,000 words' (*Letters*: 122). In 1939 – the year in which *Finnegans Wake* was published, the Spanish Civil War ended, and the Second World War began – MacDiarmid and Obelisk Press, the intended publishers, circulated an advert for this long poem,

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[43] See Yulia Chernikova, '27 September – A Day of the World', trans. Ekaterina Kokorina, *History Lessons*, online: <https://urokiistorii.ru/article/2805>.
[44] Bird, 'Revolutionary Synchrony', p.52.
[45] Alan Riach provides a far more detailed account of the poem's development in *Hugh MacDiarmid's Epic Poetry,* pp.60-67.
[46] Folengo was a sixteenth century Italian writer. Purves, Professor of Italian at the University of Edinburgh, was an expert on his work.
[47] Joyce died in Zurich in 1941, whilst MacDiarmid was still in Shetland.

'Mature Art'. Inviting subscriptions with a provisional price of two guineas, the prospectus described the work as such:

> It is an enormous poem of over 20,000 lines, dealing with the interrelated themes of world literature and world consciousness, the problems of linguistics, the place and potentialities of the Gaelic genius, from its origins in Georgia to its modern expressions in Scotland, Ireland, Wales, Cornwall, Galicia and the Pays Basque, the synthesis of East and West, and the future of civilisation.
>
> It is a very learned poem involving a stupendous range of reference, especially to Gaelic, Russian, Italian and Indian literatures, German literature and philosophy, and modern physics and the physiology of the brain, and while mainly in English, utilises elements of over a score of languages, Oriental and Occidental.[48]

Even at this early stage, the poem that would be published as *In Memoriam James Joyce* seventeen years later was prefaced by its extensive linguistic scope and its status as a text of 'world literature'. After this point it appears that logistical difficulties halted the poem's publication: MacDiarmid reflects in *Lucky Poet* on the death of Jack Kahane at Obelisk Press, a publisher 'in a special condition to undertake' the publication of 'so enormous a poem' (*LP*: 136), and on the practical matter of paper shortages brought about by the war, as impediments to the publication of his epic. The impact of the Second World War and MacDiarmid's own relocations from Shetland to Glasgow and to Biggar, played out against international social, cultural and political changes, unavoidably shaped the resulting poem. Importantly, references to *Times Literary Supplement* articles from the early 1950s suggest that the poem was being revisited and revised in light of new sources and circumstances up until a year or two before its eventual publication.[49] The poem provides a response to the multiple contexts encountered throughout its composition and thus a suggestion of the development of language in response to material conditions within that time frame.

Yet the poem, intended as the 'first of four' epic instalments, remained unfinished in its envisioned form. As noted in a letter to F. G. Scott in 1957, MacDiarmid still intended to complete work on *Impavidi Progrediamur*, although he had considered changing the title to the Scots *Haud Forrit,* 'which means practically the same' (*Letters*: 496). Twenty years later he explained to W. R. Aitken that he had 'simply abandoned the

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[48] NLS Acc.10488/1.
[49] *TLS* articles cited in *IMJJ* include: John Russell, 'The Wisdom of Age' (14/3/52), cited *CPII*: 743-4; Erich Heller and Barrington Gates, 'Satirist in the Modern World' (8/5/53), cited *CPII*: 767-76; Hugh l'Anson Fausset, 'Fruit of Contemplation' (25/6/54), cited *CPII*: 772. There are also many other articles referenced (but uncredited) in *IMJJ* from journals and periodicals of 1950-1951; for explication of these citations, James Benstead's table of sources, as provided in an Appendix to his thesis, has been a valuable point of reference (Benstead, pp.271-295).

whole project' (*Letters*: 590). The poem published in 1955, therefore, must be read as both a coherent, unified vision, and as contributary to a bigger, unrealised vision, symbolic of an idea of world language as a dynamic, living thing; changing, adapting and developing beyond the limits of a single text or a single individual's handle on it.

The published poem is an epic project that can rightly be contextualised and read alongside Joyce's *Finnegans Wake* (1939) or Pound's *Cantos* (1915-1968), a comparable late modernist enquiry into the nature of world language achieved through allusion, collage and the destabilisation of linguistic expectations. MacDiarmid's desire to keep such company is illustrated by his inclusion of the following quote, taken from a review, in an order form for the poem:

> In justifying himself, MacDiarmid also justifies Joyce's *Finnegans Wake*, where, too, a great writer sought to break from the confines of a national language which had become characteristic into a language which, while yet hard to understand, might set the pattern for others to work on, to improve, until universality, the true internationalism, be reached…[50]

Joyce, like MacDiarmid, had promoted the study of languages as 'a very useful illustration of the effect of external influences on the very words of a race', arguing that it was only through language that one had access to 'the feelings of great writers, to enter into their hearts and spirits, to be admitted, by privilege, into the privacy of their proper thoughts'.[51] MacDiarmid admired that Joyce had 'spent seventeen years writing *Finnegans Wake*, [and] nonchalantly expected his reader to devote the same number of years to mastering the book' (*TKIC*: 53).[52] Of course, Joyce's approach to language in *Finnegans Wake* is quite different to MacDiarmid's, a prosaic patchwork dominated by puns, neologism, portmanteau words and lewd humour veiled in ambiguity. Pound, whose *Cantos* MacDiarmid claimed to be 'pointers to a similar line of development' as his own 'extremely long poems' (*TKIC*: 170) – also having been composed over decades – also illustrates quite a different approach to a multilingual English poetry. Whilst MacDiarmid frequently samples individual words from foreign languages, selective of vocabulary which indicates a national or local specificity he sought not to lose in the amalgamation of a world language, Pound's *Cantos* feature lengthy passages in foreign languages, languages in which he was fluent enough to conduct translations – at odds with MacDiarmid's lack of fluency, discussed in the introduction. Moreover, in the case of both

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[50] NLS Acc.11748/6.

[51] James Joyce, 'The Study of Languages', *Occasional, Critical, and Political Writing*, ed. Kevin Barry (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000), pp.12-16 (p.15).

[52] Note that *Finnegans Wake* was published in instalments as *Work in Progress* between 1928 and 1937, before being published in book form in 1939.

Joyce and Pound, although each wrote from a position outwith the English literary tradition each also used English as their first language, a critical difference with MacDiarmid's affinities to the Scots of his Borders upbringing as his mother tongue.[53]

Upon its publication the poem was met with mixed reviews, provoking both admiration and aversion: whilst Geoffrey Wagner, a friend of MacDiarmid's, claimed he 'couldn't stomach that thing on Joyce', R. Crombie Saunders, fellow Scottish poet, found the poem 'most exciting and impressive', noting that whilst he 'did not recognise one in fifty of the references' he 'found the book continually illuminating'.[54] Remarking upon the belief that 'The references […] don't need to be recognised to have their effect' – a suggestion that is challenged in chapter six – Saunders affirms MacDiarmid as 'undoubtedly the only man living who could have written an adequate "In Memoriam" to Joyce', being 'the only one in his class'.[55] Alexander Scott, similarly flattering, considered the poem's provocation of response to be 'a sign of vitality'. [56] Yet, as discussed in the introduction, literary criticism up until relatively recently has tended towards dismissal of MacDiarmid's epic poem, rather than appreciation for its bold linguistic scope, experimental referentiality, rhetorical composition or, as Saunders nods to, real consideration of its subtitle, 'A Vision of World Language'. As a 'Vision', the poem encourages the reader to consider not only forms of language but forms of expression, poetry and reading which are new and challenge convention, pushing us to 'ma[k]e the effort of / Imagination outside our habits' (*CPII*: 799).

Plurality is key, as is the pursuit of knowledge and the enduring value of art as a means for understanding and approaching the world. Edwin Morgan, reflecting forty years after *In Memoriam*'s publication, emphasises as much in his assessment of the poem:

> It has something to do with a man who is looking at everything and trying to find a way of talking about everything. It's important because he's looking back to the old, the very ancient and respectable idea of poetry as not just feeling but knowledge, and just because knowledge is so difficult, so specialized nowadays, doesn't mean to say that an artist, a poet, can't attempt to grapple with it. I think it's something to do with that - a man casting his eye over the available knowledge of his time, and seeing what he can make of it in poetry.[57]

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[53] Whilst this chapter has primarily focussed on early work written in English, the following chapter, on 'Language as Social', will provide a thorough investigation into the significance of Scots as a first language upon the development of MacDiarmid's enquiries into language and ideas about world language.
[54] Letter from Geoffrey Wagner, NLS Acc.9184/28.11.56.
Letter from R. Crombie Saunders (23.09.55) in Manson, *Dear Grieve*, p.414.
[55] Ibid.
[56] Letter from Alexander Scott (16.03.56) in Manson, *Dear Grieve*, p.417.
[57] Cited in Robert Crawford, 'Hugh MacDiarmid: A Disgrace to the Community', *PN Review*, 89, 19.3 (1993), online: <https://www.pnreview.co.uk/cgi-bin/scribe?item_id=3588>.

MacDiarmid oscillates between various forms of linguistic usage – address, question, catalogue, lyrical description, polemic – and context – drawing vocabulary and references from dictionaries and scientific discourse as well as journalism, literary criticism, poetry and prose – in the optimisation of his scope of approach. A more mature and more extensively researched and redrafted 'gallimaufry' than that exhibited in *A Drunk Man Looks at the Thistle*, the poet in *In Memoriam* utilises a world of language as a means for looking at, talking about and understanding 'everything', driven by an aspiration for wholeness and an appreciation for the transformative and expressive capacities of poetry.

From MacDiarmid's first appearance in print in 1922 to his final publications in the 1970s, his approach to language and the identities associated with various languages grows continually outward, from the Borders to the nation, then to an idea of Europe and a configuration of East and West. He moves from seeing the world as a conglomerate of nations, to a collection of archipelagos and then as a universal mosaic of distinct languages, cultures and identities in conversation with one another. He progresses out from the local to the global, implementing Scotland and Scottish literature as a contributory to world literature and the various linguistic forms he appealed to as contributory to an idea of world language.

With a general understanding of the impetus, achievement and scope of *In Memoriam*, and an insight into the modernist context and priorities which informed the development of MacDiarmid's poetic project, the argument offered here will progress through the following chapters by providing detailed investigations into the specific enquiries and enduring values which contribute to this poem as a culmination of concerns, each integral within his mapping of world language.

Chapter Two

Language as Social: Early Enquiries

This study has characterised Hugh MacDiarmid's earliest writing – poetry and prose alike – by its curiosity for and confrontation with difference, categorised by its exploratory enquiries into plural languages, identities and cultures. As explored in the previous chapter this pertained, in the 1920s, to a navigation of Scottish identity within Europe in the aftermath of the First World War, a regenerative attempt to forge connections across borders in the hopes of fostering a framework for linguistic and cultural restoration amid ideological disruption and change. This relates primarily to the manner in which languages and literatures were constituted and comprehended nationally, yet MacDiarmid's consideration of difference in his early writing also demonstrates a concern for distinctions of locality, community and physicality, founded upon an understanding of language as a human, social construct and thus shaped by sensory perceptions, individual biology and concepts of gender. It is to these distinctions, explored in the 1920s and as they contribute to MacDiarmid's later 'vision of world language', that this chapter now turns. Building on John Baglow's statement that 'In his early work Hugh MacDiarmid began to develop themes which form the basis of his later verse', this chapter is keen to investigate the lasting concerns upon which his poetic project was founded, in affirmation of the connectedness and commitment of his linguistic vision.[1]

In the first instance, MacDiarmid's upbringing in Langholm and resulting affinities to Scots will be considered as a formative stage in his exploration of linguistic pluralities and hierarchies, a critical precursor to his later reliance upon poetic *bricolage*. As Michael H. Whitworth has argued, 'An interest in varieties of language was almost inevitable for a poet born in the Scottish borders and raised in an environment where Scots was spoken.'[2] Secondly, the chapter will analyse MacDiarmid's enquiry into language as it relates to a shared human physicality and the five senses, relevant to the applicability of Scots to the materialist depiction of Scottish environments. Finally, gender – a key distinction in social identity – and the manner in which this impacts the language of an individual's experience and consciousness, is considered as it plays into MacDiarmid's early prose. Through consideration of these three themes, or antagonisms – language as speech and writing, language as universally physically experienced yet locally distinct, and language as

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[1] John Baglow, *Hugh MacDiarmid: the Poetry of Self* (Ontario: McGill-Queen's University Press, 1987), p.26.
[2] Whitworth, 'Jamieson, Jargons, Jangles, and Jokes', p.105.

tentatively considered along gendered lines of biological, sexual and social difference –
this chapter endeavours to provide a rich and thorough survey of the concerns which
informed MacDiarmid's earliest enquiries, foundational to his later ideas around 'world
language'.

2.1. Local Distinctions: Speech, Sound and Pronunciation

Langholm, the birthplace of Christopher Murray Grieve, recurs in MacDiarmid's poetry as
a symbol of the attempt 'No' to escape frae life – to escape / Into a faur fuller and richer
life' (*CPII*: 1423). The distinction and specificity of language associated with his
upbringing here proves an enduring influence upon his fascination with the sounds and
nuances of Scots, and its oppositional nature to the generalising tendencies perceived in the
English language. For MacDiarmid, as David Daiches has argued, 'a word is not simply a
sound which by convention has a specific denotation. It is in a way a means of physical
entry into whatever it denotes'. [3] In the 1920s, MacDiarmid experimented with the
specificity of Scots vocabulary, deployed so as to retain the distinctive particularity of
local components within the mapping of a universal whole. [4] In his decision not to fabricate
an entirely 'new' language but to instead reorder a synthetic language from existing
components acquired from dictionaries, literature and lived experience – utilised with what
Alan Bold has referred to as 'a shrewd contemporary mentality' – MacDiarmid made use
of existing connotations and extended his poetic allusiveness from its specific situation in
the modern era back through time, suggestive of a continued literary tradition.[5] Promoting
Scots as a language rich with historical and cultural associations, MacDiarmid drew upon
the manner in which language is inherited, borrowed and recycled over time; the sense in
which, as George Steiner suggests, it is 'neurophysiologically and historical-socially, given
to us'.[6] As Dorian Grieve has noted, the 'phonoaesthetic effect[s]' of the poet's Scots are
often 'still available to us because they are some part of our language structure'.[7] This
relatability appeals, therefore, to accepted notions of language as locally distinct yet

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[3] David Daiches, 'Hugh MacDiarmid and the Scottish Literary Tradition', *The Age of MacDiarmid*, pp.59-82
(p.63).
[4] MacDiarmid's 'synthetic Scots' has dominated much of the scholarly interest in his work, particularly that
written during his lifetime and in the surge of interest which immediately followed his death. For this reason,
the discussion of this chapter does not dwell on the specific characteristics or sources of his Scots poetry but
rather is concerned with the priorities which were explored and posited during this period of creative output,
which then went on to inform the parameters and priorities of his 'vision of world language'. MacDiarmid's
proposition of Scots as a coherent yet diverse national language, representative of a shared yet locally
distinctive experience and identity, is taken as a given.
[5] Bold, *The Terrible Crystal*, p.60.
[6] George Steiner, *Grammars of Creation* (London: Faber & Faber, 2001), p.99.
[7] Dorian Grieve, 'MacDiarmid's Language', *The Edinburgh Companion to Hugh MacDiarmid*, pp,23-35
(p.30).

universally engaged with, specific yet in conversation with other languages throughout space and time.

MacDiarmid reflects upon the specificity of his native Scots speech in *Lucky Poet*. He describes the Langholm dialect in particular as 'a racy Scots, with distinct variations in places only a few miles away' (*LP*: 16). Scots as a national language was recognised as being a heterogeneous language, a unity-in-diversity which his synthetic Scots sought to emulate in a condensed literary form in the early lyrics. Such diversity existed in contention with the homogenising efforts, therefore, of the standard English that the young Grieve had encountered in education and literature as a young man. MacDiarmid recounts Langholm library as being 'strangely deficient in Scottish books' (*LP*: 8), claiming only to have encountered Scottish poetry later in life when he subjected himself to 'a thorough course of reading in Burns, Dunbar, and the other Scots poets' (*LP*: 15-6). English and Scots, inclusive of their variations in dialect, had thus always coexisted in MacDiarmid's consciousness, resulting in the 'dooble tongue' (*CPI*: 182) of his creative output. Moreover, it is the sounds of Scots, in particular, which differentiated it from English, as also considered in *Lucky Poet*:

> English, I must repeat, is not my native language, and the limitations of this autobiography, written in English, may, perhaps, be realized and allowed for when it is understood how impossible it is to transmit the quality of my consciousness, the tone of my being, in a language in which, for example, '*Egypt*' spells *ee, gee, wy, pee, tee,* whereas in the speech of my boyhood (and in which all my best poetry is written) the spelling of *'Egypt'* is (I know no English equivalent for the sound and therefore use the pronunciation of the French word *'oeil',* which gives it exactly) *oeil, joeil, woeil, poeil, toeil.* (*LP*: 34-5)

For MacDiarmid language, as illustrated here, signified the existence of a specific experience and identity, categorised both locally and nationally within the developing concept of a coherent, complex world language. John Baglow picks up on this point, suggesting that 'The [Scots] vocabulary, over and above its texture of sound, carried with it overtones of culture, history, and psychology which seem to place the user within a transcending context of Scottishness'.[8] In *Sangschaw* and *Penny Wheep*, MacDiarmid explores the 'far greater psychological satisfaction' of his 'native tongue' (*LP*: 17), utilising 'forgotten shibboleths o' the Scots / [which] Ha'e keys to senses lockit to us yet' (*CPI*: 74) in the attempt to forge a national reconciliation between distinct localities and eras. His vocabulary is self-consciously rich and sedimented with historic and contextual connotation, an accomplishment which Edwin Morgan recognises particularly

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[8] Baglow, *Hugh MacDiarmid*, p.44.

in 'Garmscoile'.[9] Lyrics including 'The Bonnie Broukit Bairn', 'The Watergaw', 'Somersault' or 'Sea-Serpent' incorporate obsolete and obscure vocabulary alongside contemporary modes of expression, coherent modernist exercises in linguistic dexterity, whilst the protracted philosophical contemplation of *A Drunk Man Looks at the Thistle* (1926) indicates the flexibility of Scots expression for an even broader range of functions and emotions. Here, as Daiches has discussed, 'MacDiarmid's synthetic Scots works in his poetry as no other language could work because his imagination works linguistically; for him the proper naming of things is the revelation of their real meaning in experience'.[10] The significance of language as both a marker of community and difference remained a key concern throughout his career. This is highlighted in 'Direadh III', in the inclusion of a quote from neurologist Sir James Crichton-Browne, a fellow Lowlander:

> And remembering my earlier poems in Scots
> Full of my awareness 'that language is one
> Of the most cohesive or insulating of world forces
> And that dialect is always a bond of union,' (*CPII*: 1191)

MacDiarmid's authoritative and personal insight into the robust nature of a local and distinctive language, displayed through the poetic flourish of Scots vocabularies, plants the seed of a priority which grows out of Langholm, out of Scotland, and into the vision of a decentralised and diverse world language.

MacDiarmid's fascination with local specificity is an integral driving force in the exploration of language, exhibited in *In Memoriam James Joyce*. Within this, speech, sound and pronunciation are prioritised as well as written language, verbal communication a key factor within the shared human relationship to language which MacDiarmid investigates. In the following extract, for instance, MacDiarmid explores a concern for distinctive sounds and pronunciation as found in languages in China and across Asia:

> Even as we know that in B.C. 500
> The Chinese symbol meaning 'moon' was pronounced 'ngiwpt'
> But in Peiping to-day is read 'yueh', 'ut' in Canton,
> 'Ngwok' in Foochow, and 'yö' in Shanghai,
> While the Japanese read it as 'gestu'
> And it is called 'saran' in Mongolia
> And 'biya' in Manchuria,

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[9] In his analysis of the phrase 'datchie sesames', Morgan explains that 'the subtextual phrase "open sesame" helps to suggest the meaning of "datchie" ['obsolete'] while at the same time offering, in the word "open", its opposite, so that the sense of paradox ("names for nameless things") is retained'. Edwin Morgan, 'On Hugh MacDiarmid's Complete Poems 1920-1976', *Edwin Morgan: In Touch with Language*, p.319.

[10] David Daiches, 'Hugh MacDiarmid's Early Poetry', *Hugh MacDiarmid: A Critical Survey*, ed. Duncan Glen (Edinburgh: Scottish Academic Press)*, pp.55-84 (p.83).

> While in Tibet, Korea, Annam, and other places
> Still other sounds are attached to it
> But in each case the meaning is perfectly clear
> And its use through many centuries by the literate sections
> Of so many linguistically different peoples
> Surely proves there must be something in it,
> Quite aside from its sound,
> That is universally accessible; (*CPII*: 760-1)

Such consideration of local distinctions highlights the importance of language as living in speech as well as in the written word, orality integral to the expression of identity, sharing of meaning and to the social evolution of languages in line with the material contexts in which they are used. In spelling out the pronunciation of vocabulary, bringing the unfamiliar language back to the basics of sounds in relation to a key and arguably universal symbol (the moon), MacDiarmid renders the language more visually and sonically accessible, accommodating its distinctions and specificities within the polyphonic contemplation of the poem. Whilst he appears to have borrowed his spellings from an article in *The New English Weekly* (1937), the integration that these bring to the new poetic space is entirely MacDiarmid's.[11] The information is translated from one context to another, much as the language is translated from symbol to sound in the hopes of unpacking that quality in it which he believed to be present and 'universally accessible'.[12]

The eking out of universality amongst plurality is the incentive that drives *In Memoriam* onwards through its often intimidating accumulation of allusions and catalogues. In a long passage that begins with 'Ranging from the phonetic and tonal structure of Efik' and ends 'With Beethoven's "in gloria Dei patris" on high A' (*CPII*: 778-9), MacDiarmid traverses an international range of dialects, languages and pronunciations, threaded together upon the innate connection that he perceived to exist between Celtic languages abroad, elsewhere in the British Isles, and in Scotland. Here, MacDiarmid emphasises the dialectics of specificity and universality, of retaining both particular and shared aspects of language in the proposition of a world language which attempts to encompass such variations without homogenising or simplifying their distinctions. Moreover, spelling and sound is integral to the links which MacDiarmid draws, as words are associated phonetically and visually if not semantically. His specific contemplation of 'the spellings which hesitate' (779) as a precursor to a catalogue of

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[11] A Google Books search suggests MacDiarmid to have repurposed this passage from an article on page 413 of *The New English Weekly*, volume 11 (1937). *The New English Weekly* was founded by A. R. Orage in 1932, with whom MacDiarmid was acquainted and in correspondence.

[12] MacDiarmid's repurposing of material from other sources, contexts and languages is explored in depth in chapter six.

Welsh poetic terms accentuates the self-consciousness of language and its relationship to literature. Such references, more familiar to MacDiarmid's own experiences of language in Scotland indicate that whilst the vision remains outward-looking, restless and discontent to be bound, it is consistently underpinned by the formative ideas shaped by his upbringing in Langholm, his fluency in Scots and his dual prioritisation of the particular and the universal, the part and the whole.

The theme of interlingual communication across borders and boundaries (not only national but cultural, temporal and as defined by class, profession, gender and locality) recurs throughout *In Memoriam,* but most significantly so in the consideration of pronunciation and speech on which MacDiarmid brings the poem to a close:

> And so I come to the end of this poem
> And bid you, Joyce, what is the word
> They have in Peru for *adios*? – *Chau*, that's it!
>   Well, Chau for now.
> Which, as I remember it, reminds me too
> Of how in Chile they use the word *roto*
> To mean a peasant, a poor man,
> In Guatemala called *descalzado*;
> And how a man will leave an impression
> By the way he mushes his 'r's'
> Or buzzes his 'y's' or swallows his 'd's'
> So that you automatically think
> 'Guatemala' or 'Argentina' or 'Colombia.'
> They say '*bue-no*' in Mexico
> When they answer the phone.
> You can tell a Mexican every time
> If you hear him using a phone.
> And in Guatemala they use '*vos*' instead of '*tu,*'
> As they would say '*che*' in Argentina. (*CPII*: 888-9)

This passage, which runs through various greetings from Peru, Chile, Guatemala, Mexico and Argentina, is borrowed from David Dodge's 1948 novel, *The Long Escape*, a detective story about a Mexico-based PI who pursues his subject throughout Central and South America.[13] The consideration of linguistic distinctions originates in a conversation within the text, an exchange that occurs between characters in response to an admission that the suspect 'didn't speak English'.[14] Whilst knowledge of MacDiarmid's source is perhaps not necessary to appreciate this conclusion to the poem, the unveiling of its original context does highlight a crucial point: that the preservation of local linguistic variations and

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[13] David Dodge, *The Long Escape* (London: J. M. Dent & Sons Ltd., 1989), p.30. The novel was first published in Britain in 1953, two years prior to the publication of *In Memoriam James Joyce*.
[14] Ibid., p.29.

distinctions is intentionally antagonistic to the encroaching hegemony of English as a world language. As Alan Riach remarks, whilst MacDiarmid 'is not a specialist in linguistics in any academic sense', 'he frequently displays an uncanny accuracy', a statement augmented further through recognition of his extensive reliance on allusion and the manner in which he borrows the 'accuracy' or linguistic knowledge of other writers.[15] In addition to raising questions about the first person at the centre of his poetry, throwing into doubt the authenticity or singularity of the 'I', this speaks to MacDiarmid's vision of world language as a network of influence, recalibration and revitalisation in which the impact of the community takes precedence over that of the individual, and yet the individual's input and creativity remains necessary. It is key also that, with this allusion, the poem ends on a consideration of language as speech and as sound, a priority that is arguably directly influenced by MacDiarmid's earliest encounters with the distinction of local speech in Langholm.

2.2. Language and Sensory Perception

Growing out of this preoccupation with speech, sound, and communication of these speeches and sounds, MacDiarmid's poetry frequently exhibits a concern for the five senses and for language as a means with which to understand and mediate such sensation: 'we draw the supreme Source of Life / Into the kingdom of Touch and Taste and Speech' (*CPI*: 643), as he suggests in 'Song of the Seraphim'.

Indeed, the early twentieth century marked a shift in perceptive priorities, as alluded to in both T. S. Eliot's identification of a modern 'decay of the senses' and Mina Loy's calls for an awakened realisation of 'the thousands odds and ends which make up your sensery [sic] every day life'.[16] Scholars including Abbie Garrington, Sara Danius and Alison DeMaagd have explored the engagement of modernist writers with the sensory world, a discussion that MacDiarmid can be readily included in, whilst his particular preoccupation with smell might be considered alongside research by Christine O'Neill and Crispian Neill who look specifically at the prominence of smells in the work of Joyce.[17]

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[15] Riach, *Hugh MacDiarmid's Epic Poetry,* p.74.
[16] T. S. Eliot, 'Phillip Massinger', *The Sacred Wood: Essays on Poetry and Criticism* (London: Methuen & Co. Ltd., 1928), p.142. Mina Loy, 'Gertrude Stein' [1924], quoted in Allyson C. DeMaagd, *Dissensuous Modernism: Women Writers, the Senses, and Technology* (Gainesville: University Press of Florida, 2022), p.1.
[17] See Abbie Garrington, *Haptic Modernism: Touch and the Tactile in Modernist Writing* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2013); Sara Danius, *The Senses of Modernism: Technology, Perception, and Aesthetics* (New York: Cornell University Press, 2019); DeMaagd, *Dissensuous Modernism;* Christine O'Neill, '"A Faint Mortal Odour": The Elusive World of Smell in *A Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man, Dublin James Joyce Journal*, 5 (2012), pp.82-98; Crispian Neill, 'The Afflatus of Flatus: James Joyce and the Writing of Odor', *James Joyce Quarterly*, 53.3-4 (2016), pp.307-326.

Consideration of the language of sensory experience enables MacDiarmid to approach both distinction and coherence simultaneously, a 'dual approach' recognised by Holly Dugan across literature that deals with the five senses and which 'grappl[es] with perception as a subjective, lived experience and as a shared, cultural phenomenon'.[18] David Howes has suggested a preoccupation with sensation and perception to be characteristically modernist, provoked by the culmination of 'observing the effects of new technologies and urban and industrial developments on the human senses and sensibilities' and the 'encountering [of] sensory difference brought on by exposure to other cultures'.[19] Whilst both factors identified by Howes are relevant to MacDiarmid's consideration of sensory perception, perhaps more so is MacDiarmid's sustained enquiry into the particular aptitude of Scots in the depiction of such perceptions, critical as an affirmation of the necessity of linguistic diversity.

Sara Danius's proposition, that 'to chart how the question of perception, notably sight and hearing, is configured in the modernist period is to witness the ever-closer relationship between the sensuous and the technology', is perhaps contradicted, or at least challenged, then, by MacDiarmid's reliance upon older, local variations of Scots found in dictionaries and literature in his construction of a modern and particular poetic language attuned to specific sensory experience.[20] In his proposition of a synthetic literary Scots, MacDiarmid celebrates the language of a uniquely 'Scottish' aesthetic and immersive experience, focussing on the physical and mental processes of 'perception, reflection and experience' that George Steiner identifies as the components of 'grammar' in the poetic translation of colour, smell and sensation. [21] As Baglow has suggested, 'Scots vocabulary is highly particularized for smell, and for sound, as a glance through Jamieson's *Dictionary* makes evident'.[22] Drawing upon these qualities, MacDiarmid advocated for the belief that 'Words have an emotional significance, as well as a literal' (*RTI*: 74), exploring sensation and associated emotions as a form of language in poems including 'Ballad of the Five Senses', 'Scots Unbound' and 'Water Music'.[23]

In 'Ballad of the Five Senses', MacDiarmid explicitly recognises the significance of the five senses in shaping the uniqueness of human experience whilst also questioning their metaphysical limitations.

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[18] Holly Dugan, 'Literature and the Senses' (2021), *Oxford Research Encyclopaedia of Literature*, online: <https://doi.org/10.1093/acrefore/9780190201098.013.1198>.
[19] David Howes, 'Introduction" "Make it New!" – Reforming the Sensory World', *A Cultural History of the Senses in the Modern Age, Volume 6*, ed. David Howes (London: Bloomsbury, 2014), pp.1-30 (p.27).
[20] Danius, *The Senses of Modernism*, p.2.
[21] Steiner, *Grammars of Creation*, p.6.
[22] Baglow, *Hugh MacDiarmid*, p.45.
[23] Discussion will return to 'Water Music' in the following chapter, which focusses on the aptness of Scots to describe the natural world and specific environments.

> Oot o' the way, my senses five,
> I ken a' you can tell,
> Oot o' the way, my thochts, for noo'
> I maun face God mysel'.
> […]
> O gin ye tine your senses five,
> And get ony o' their instead,
> Ye'll be as far frae what ye are
> As the leevin' frae the deid. (*CPI*: 38-9)

Invocation of God acts as a reminder of 'the word that was at the beginning', and the sacred role of language beyond the realms of human comprehension, whilst the speaker aspires to the relinquishment of his corporeal experience and liberation from his human constraints. MacDiarmid, aspiring to a language and poetry which spoke simultaneously to particularism and universality, 'was not after subjective impressions and glimpses but wanted the whole "objective" truth'.[24] As Bold affirms, 'It is not enough', for MacDiarmid 'to be aware of the phenomenal world; it is necessary to transcend it and to reach, by means of an intellectual vision, to eternity in order to stand face to face with the creator'.[25] Yet, in the poem, the impressions of the world remain bound by the speaker's five senses and, within this, by the language applicable to his expression and understanding of them, 'an imperfect copy of an ideal and eternal world'.[26] In the vein of Wittgenstein, here, for MacDiarmid, the individual is all too aware that '*The limits of my language* mean the limits of my world'.[27] The language of sensation and bodily experience in the world remains an inescapable factor of human imperfection and thus bound up in the strife for an unattainable holistic poetic expression.

Sensory attention recurs in 'Scots Unbound', a prime illustration of the synthetic Scots that Scott Lyall has referred to as MacDiarmid's 'modernist undertaking to culturally legitimise and connect […] divergent, provocative vernacularism'.[28] In the poem MacDiarmid pays particular attention to the sensation of smell, alluding to the effectiveness of Scots in its depiction:

> Can you name as you turn your nose to a wind
> > Or look in the opposite airt
> This odour and that that's blended wi't
> > And hoo each plays its separate pairt?

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[24] Baglow, *Hugh MacDiarmid*, p.60.
[25] Bold, *The Terrible Crystal*, p.70.
[26] Ibid.
[27] Wittgenstein, *Tractatus Logico-Philosophicus*, p.68.
[28] Lyall, *Hugh MacDiarmid's Poetry and Politics of Place*, p.64.

> Some through the nosetirls alane and some
>   Mair through the nerves o' the mou', (*CPI*: 341)

He proceeds to incorporate examples of 'hair-splittin'' Scots words – 'natkin', 'sairing', 'foost' – which capture specific examples of smell and 'Nice shades o' meanin'' (*CPI*: 342-3). In this, MacDiarmid highlights both the self-conscious process behind his selection of poetic language – a trial in which the vernacular is found to be most appropriate – and to his vision of a language and poetry which captures or reaches for a sense of both the distinctiveness of component parts and the coherence of the 'whole'. In thematising such considerations, the poem expands upon MacDiarmid's discussion in 'Braid Scots and the Sense of Smell' (1923). Here, the relationship between the olfactory system and known terminology is contemplated, based upon an understanding that 'Words are a product of physical functioning and no mere intellectual devices' (*RTI*: 72). He draws a link between the Scots 'imrie', 'the smell of roasted meat' and the Gaelic 'innriomh' (*RTI*: 74), the act of preparation, as indication of the shared ability of Scotland's languages to capture variations in smell most relevant to the regions of their usage, remarking of his Scottish 'forefathers' that 'They thought with their noses to a much greater extent than we can' (*RTI*: 73). Whilst MacDiarmid could not be called 'an olfactorily preoccupied modernist' to the same extent that Joyce has been, the attention that he awards the sense of smell at this early stage in his career is an important indicator of priorities.[29] In acknowledging a connection between the capacities of Scots and Gaelic, the possibilities of which are explored through English, MacDiarmid alludes to the possibility of a national 'psyche' in which the Scottish people and languages are inherently linked at a physical level deeper than mere habit or taste. Their perceptions are argued to be expressible most aptly in one distinct language, yet translatable in another due to this underlying commonality that he suggests.

These early appeals to sensory experience inform the range of bodily functions later drawn upon in *In Memoriam*, in which MacDiarmid highlights sound – 'vocal chords theory' (*CPII*: 746) – alongside sight – 'the eyes' elaborate arrangements with crossed and uncrossed fibres', 'For focussing both eyes on various distances' (*CPII*: 747) – and the sensory 'Organs of skin, ear, eye, nose, tongue' (*CPII*: 886). Prior to this, touch is a primary focus in 'On a Raised Beach', as the speaker turns 'From optik to haptic and like a blind man run / My fingers over you' (*CPI*: 422), reliant upon the feel of the stones' striations as indication of their self-expression or being, a physical history of geological movement. In the poem MacDiarmid partakes in the modernist preoccupation with the

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[29] Crispian Neill, 'The Afflatus of Flatus', p.307.

haptic, identified by Abbie Garrington as a concern for how the physical body is 'intimately connected to the constitution of the self', forming a 'carnal border between self and world'.[30] In each example identified in this discussion MacDiarmid identifies the body and the senses as a physical border with the world, a border which he draws attention to and reflects upon in the hopes of achieving an improved understanding of that world. Though the primary sensory focus shifts across various poems, the recurring attention which MacDiarmid attributes to the five senses, particularly in Scots poetry and poetry that draws attention to its own language, enables a translation of specific aesthetic and bodily experience into a poetic world language that is attuned to sensory perception.

2.3. Expressions of Gender: 'Following Rebecca West in Edinburgh' and 'The Never-Yet-Explored'

The impact of both biological sex and socially constructed gender upon an individual's physical and mental perceptions of the world, as understood and expressed through language, is also explored across a number of MacDiarmid's early enquiries. In certain personal poems, the poet's bodily presence is unavoidably and self-consciously male, his gender intrinsic to his perspectives. This occurs in 'Vementry', as in 'The Point of Honour' – 'Once, with my boy's body' (*CPI*: 388) – in which immersion in the water is specifically experienced by a male body. In both poems the speaker is male whilst the surrounding water personified as female, a foreign body described in terms of the impact it has upon the biological 'maleness' of the individual. The 'Scrotum-tightening flood / Nae wumman e'er caressed like this' *(RAF*: 29), described in 'Vementry', echoes Joyce's reference to the 'scrotum-tightening sea' in *Ulysses,* the external natural landscape understood in light of gendered ideas of touch.[31]

The experience which MacDiarmid conveys in these poems highlight both sex and gender as factors which differentiate one individual's perception and experience from another's, whilst also contributing to the shared experiences of, in basic terms, women or men regardless of the local distinctions previously explored. Allyson C. DeMaagd has recognised the distinction of sensory perceptions along gendered lines as a recurring literary trope. She suggests the following:

> Sight, in particular, has long been theorized as an activity of the brain not the body and, as such, has been labelled a masculine sense. […] Because men were considered the more logical and reasonable of the sexes, they were, therefore, better

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[30] Garrington, *Haptic Modernism*, p. 17.
[31] Joyce, *Ulysses*, p,8.

equipped to see. In contrast, popular thinking maintained that women were governed by their bodies, which interfered with their ability to see clearly.[32]

MacDiarmid's informed 'vision' – in the projections of the drunk man, the transcendence of 'Ballad of the Five Senses' and, later, in the hypothesis of *In Memoriam James Joyce* – is consistently and subjectively masculine. [33] Yet in his aim to 'embody a' creation' (*CPI*: 332), MacDiarmid also set to incorporate within this vision a suggestion of those interactions, feelings and physical processes which his gender obstructed him from experiencing, sensitive to the necessity of catering for and appealing to perspectives other than his own. This led to considerations and representations of difference which were achieved with varying degrees of success.

Bonnie Kime Scott has argued that 'we cannot properly deal with gender in isolation but should see it as one of many layers of identification'.[34] This is necessary in much of MacDiarmid's earliest prose, which navigates the interplay between artistic and political priorities of nation, class, gender and language. In two short pieces, 'Following Rebecca West in Edinburgh: A Monologue in the Vernacular' (1922) and 'The Never-Yet-Explored' (1923), published in the *Scottish Chapbook* and *Annals of the Five Senses* respectively, he enquires into the impact of gender upon women's language, writing and perceptions, both inhabiting and challenging the authoritative position granted to him by patriarchal presumptions. Given the historical context of their publication, both stories respond to the relative sense of liberation, experienced differently by men and women, in the aftermath of the First World War; it is worth noting that in 1923, when *Annals of the Five Senses* was published, a third of women in the UK still did not have the right to vote.

In 'Following Rebecca West in Edinburgh', written in response to Rebecca West's recently published novel, *The Judge* (1922), MacDiarmid takes the reader out of the rural 'emotional world' and into the city, adopting Edinburgh as the setting to his story.[35] In doing so, he trials and challenges various degrees of marginalisation, West's Edinburgh recognised by Mariagiulia Garufi as a site of 'female political and sexual emancipation',

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[32] DeMaagd, *Dissensuous Modernism*, pp.4-5.
[33] Aileen Christianson argued that *A Drunk Man Looks at the Thistle* was representative of a 'negative, male tradition worth rejecting', whilst Christopher Whyte has defined the same poem as 'openly and provocatively sexist'. Aileen Christianson, 'Flyting with "A Drunk Man"', *Scottish Affairs*, 5 (1993), pp.126-13 (p.135); Christopher Whyte, 'Introduction', *Gendering the Nation: Studies in Modern Scottish Literature*, ed. Christopher Whyte (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 1995), pp.ix-xx (p.x).
[34] Bonnie Kime Scott, *The Gender of Modernism: A Critical Anthology* (Indiana: Indiana University Press, 1990), p.3.
[35] Alan Riach, 'MacDiarmid's Burns', *Robert Burns and Cultural Authority*, ed. Robert Crawford (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 1997), pp.198-215 (p.201).

'itself marginalised within the British Empire'.[36] Despite elsewhere calling the novel 'unquestionably the finest modern novel with a Scottish setting' (*RTI*: 42), here it and West are quickly conflated with modern cosmopolitan ugliness, the 'disease' of Anglocentrism and the creative inadequacy of the English language (*Annals*: 114).

The antagonism between the Scots and English languages which MacDiarmid presents in 'Following Rebecca West' implies an innate distinction along gendered lines as the male narrator and speaker utilise Scots while the sole female character of West is consigned to English, criticised for 'her bleeze an' busk o' words as if she was bagenin' wi the Almichty' (*Annals*: 114). MacDiarmid's male characters agree that the Scottish literary scene is no place for a woman, particularly one writing in English:

> Let her scuttle aff intae the appen furth. This aidle-hole's nae place for the likes o' her. It'll tak' a *man* tae write aboot Edinburgh, as it sud be written aboot an he'll need the Doric tae get the fu' aifer. (*Annals*: 116)

Initially both men are shown to be confident in the speaker's linguistic abilities, as the narrator admires 'His perfect knowledge' of the poetry, which 'stood him in splendid stead; and the dexterity with which he drew upon them delighted me immensely' (*Annals*: 114). He appeals to a traditionally male national canon, quoting extracts of verse from fourteenth-, fifteenth- and sixteenth-century poets William Dunbar, Andrew of Wyntoun and Alexander Scott (*Annals*: 113, 114, 115). Each extract is sourced from Jamieson's *Etymological Dictionary*, all included within entries for words beginning with 'A'.[37]

Meanwhile, West is viewed from a distance, spoken *about* rather than speaking for herself. Nancy K. Gish refers to the story as 'MacDiarmid's tenuous recognition of women's double marginalization', revealing his early 'ambivalent response to the notion of gendered language'.[38] What is set up as a linguistic and political disagreement based on West's un-'Scottish' representation of a Scottish space descends into a broader disagreement, in which gender becomes an unavoidable difference. MacDiarmid reveals West to be marginalised by the all-male national poetic canon which his speaker appeals to and by his own depiction of her as a subject. Gish further observes how MacDiarmid's disagreement with West 'soon shifts ground to conflate linguistic inadequacy with gender inadequacy, West's inability *as a woman* to handle the violence, ugliness, and shame

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[36] Mariagiulia Garufi, '"Places on the Map": Rebecca West's Modernist Journeys between Scotland and Europe', *Scottish Literary Review*, 3.1 (2011), pp.91-104 (p.95; 98).
[37] John Jamieson, *An Etymological Dictionary of the Scots Language* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 1808), p.98; p.52; p.50.
[38] Nancy K. Gish, 'Hugh MacDiarmid', *The Gender of Modernism*, pp.275-78 (p.278).

beneath the surface of life'.[39] MacDiarmid employs West as a symbol (*Annals*: 116), a fictionalised version of herself taken to represent ideas about class, nation, and language at odds with the male characters, who are aligned with those of James Joyce, similarly symbolic of more 'masculine' values. In contrast to Joyce's gritty realistic approach to humanity, the city and sex, West is considered to have 'made a silk purse oot o' a sow's lug', depicting an image of Edinburgh which glosses over such unpleasantness (*Annals*: 113). Yet, as Gish notes, 'no evidence is offered that men have greater linguistic force', thus '[Joyce] too fails the city, which appears as a giant woman overpowering and emasculating him or a massive apocalyptic horse he cannot ride, leaving him in an anguish of self-contempt'.[40] Whilst MacDiarmid's speaker argues that 'The verra last thing Scottish literature needs is *lady-fying*' (*Annals*: 116) – note the linguistic association here with 'gentryifying' – thus conflating femininity with artistic, linguistic and political inadequacy, there is increasing evidence as the story progresses in MacDiarmid's disillusion with the current patriarchal order, as his narrator appears to find the alternative to 'ladyfying' no more viable.

The narrator's impression of the speakers' linguistic ability deteriorates, as he becomes aware of the artifice of his speech, deeming it 'a brave effort; but his attempt to carry it off lightly was pathetic' (*Annals*: 113). Attention is brought to the awkwardness of his forced expression:

> He was purposely using many obsolete words, partly to despite me for forcing him to talk of Edinburgh, and partly because they acted as a brake on his utterance. In any case, he was deliberately inconsequent, allusive, and obscure. (*Annals*: 114)

Whilst there endures a sense of respect for the man's attempt to utilise vernacular dialect, considered to be 'all infinitely difficult work but infinitely necessary if the Doric is again to become a living literary medium' (*Annals*: 114), the speaker himself loses confidence as he progresses and inadvertently reveals further the insufficiency of his supposed linguistic expertise, thereby casting doubt over his other assumptions and prejudices.

In 'The Never-Yet-Explored', MacDiarmid similarly considers language as one of several factors bearing upon gendered consciousness and identity, offering the reader various approaches to the depiction of women through the trialling of alternative linguistic modes.

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[39] Ibid.
[40] Ibid.

MacDiarmid's consideration of the socially constructed nature of gender, as informed by media, literature and language which is catered towards a specific gender, is not dissimilar to James Joyce's characterization of women in *Ulysses*, particularly Gerty MacDowell.[41] As with Joyce's Gerty, met in the thirteenth episode 'Nausicaa', MacDiarmid appeals to stereotypes of women's emotional and romantic nature, believed to be heightened by the reading of un-'intellectual' literature. In the story the overly flowery language of 'bad poetry' presumed to be 'supported nowadays by women' (*RTII*: 515) is juxtaposed with an exaggeratedly masculine canon of reference, bringing attention to gendered distinctions of language. Whilst this might initially be interpreted as MacDiarmid prescribing to what Sandra M. Gilbert and Susan Gubar deem the 'masculinist linguistic fantasy', referring in this to the 'widely accepted contemporary assumption that "the feminine" is what cannot be inscribed in common language', his eventual adoption of a more balanced linguistic approach in the depiction of his protagonist's interiority suggests that he intended to challenge such assumptions.[42]

MacDiarmid's description of Mrs Morgan begins with the body and leads into the mind. In a scene that anticipates Lewis Grassic Gibbon's gaze upon Chris Guthrie's naked form in *Sunset Song* (1932)*,* he depicts Mrs Morgan undressing in front of a mirror. As she abandons her acceptably fashionable garments and the expectations which they carry, she sees herself visibly transform:

> Garment after garment fell until she stood almost naked – naked but for a single filmy garment, slipping slightly off her shoulders. […] Passion, self-contempt, cruelty, ruthless curiosity, humour, impotence chased one another like shadows across her cheeks. Naked flesh, her own or another's, always affected her thus. (*Annals*: 78)

Freed of the shackles of modern women's dress, Mrs Morgan is shown to morph into her true self and assume an identity untouched by social construct. Once undressed, MacDiarmid drops the flowery language so that when she analyses the aspects of herself that make her, biologically, a woman – 'Closely she scrutinised her breasts' – it is in a

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[41] MacDiarmid's admiration of Joyce has already been discussed, but in this particular context it must be noted that he particularly respected the handling of gender and sexuality in *Ulysses* over other examples, namely D. H. Lawrence's *Lady Chatterley's Lover* (1928). He argues that despite Lawrence's sufficiency in other areas of creativity he 'write[s] badly in order to describe a sexual state of affairs which he regards as horrible and hopeless' (*RTII*: 36). In contrast, MacDiarmid praises *Ulysses* alongside Compton Mackenzie's *Extraordinary Women* (1928)*,* the *Sodom and Gomorrah* section of Proust's *Recherche du Temps Perdu* (1913) (*RTII*: 35) and, later, Djuna Barnes's *Nightwood* (1936), hailed 'the most important thing in English fiction since Joyce's *Ulysses'* (*Letters*: 263). Notably each of these, besides *Ulysses,* overtly depicts homosexual rather than heterosexual relationships.
[42] Susan M. Gilbert and Susan Gubar, 'Sexual Linguistics: Gender, Language, Sexuality', *New Literary History*, 16.3 (1985), pp.515-43 (p.516).

matter-of-fact, rational manner (*Annals*: 81). This difference of self, indicated by the switch in linguistic approach, emphasises the disparity which exists between Mrs Morgan's private and public versions of self, a distinction she reflects upon as 'The reduction of the intricacy and wonder of womanhood into a "rag and a bone and a hank of hair"' (*Annals*: 80). MacDiarmid's depiction of a character divided between her psychological, biological and socially acceptable selves implies a sensitivity to the pressures of patriarchal society upon women's constructed identities, recognising 'This Mrs. Morgan that she was' as 'so aptly and economically contrived', an 'accepted fiction of herself' (*Annals*: 80). MacDiarmid emphasises the divide between this economically, socially constructed self, considered in rational language, and the women whose surest sensations are the physical – the 'impotent hungers of heart', 'the swirl of blood, the violin lay of lightning muscles' and 'her silent bones' (*Annals*: 80) – these being related to a wholly different, sensationalised register:

> Oh, merry love, strong, ravishing, burning, zestful, stalwart, unquenched! ... She saw herself again with parted lips and panting rounded reasts and a dancing devil in each glowing eye and a throbbing darting tongue and quick biting teeth, giving muscle for muscle and vein for vein, while the wild music in her heart rose, now slow, now fast, now deliriously wild, seductive and intoxicating… (*Annals*: 85)

Whilst this language is not cited as being borrowed, but attributed to Mrs Morgan herself, it is not original writing by MacDiarmid. The first list and exclamation is repurposed from the English mystic Richard Rolle's *The Fire of Love*, a text from the fourteenth century which had been translated and republished in 1914 and 1920. The second description, 'She saw herself…', is taken from George Egerton's short story 'A Cross Line', published in *Keynotes* in 1893. The stories in *Keynotes*, illustrated by Aubrey Beardsley, focus on the masculine construction of notions of feminine sexuality and purity, and have been discussed as explorations of the expression of Nietzsche's Dionysian spirit.[43] In bringing together these expressions of female liberation and sensuality, MacDiarmid provides a bridge between the fourteenth, nineteenth and twentieth centuries. Mrs Morgan is shown to clutch for appropriate language with which to express the tension between her different selves, the socially constructed and acceptable mother figure, and the freer sensual, sexual self who exists hidden beneath this.

Elsewhere, identity, language, gender and sex are interlinked through the prefacing of vocabulary relating to biological specificity: 'vitality', 'conceptions', 'rhythm',

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[43] See Daniel Brown, 'George Egerton's "Keynotes": Nietzschean Feminism and "Fin-di-siècle" Fetishism', *Victorian Literature and Culture*, 39.1 (2011), pp.143-166.

'fertilised', 'anaemic courses', 'barren continences' (*Annals*: 84, 80). Although Mrs Morgan does not define her own value by her fertility, she is aware of her 'evolutionary momentum' and the importance of this upon the world's perception of her as a cog within 'the whole reproductive mechanism of humanity' (*Annals*: 84). Here, as Sara Danius has argued with regards to the description of gendered sensory experience, 'the gaze not only operates in a gendered visual economy which determined who is to look and who is to be looked at, but also in a system which codes the visual aestheticization of the real as masculine, and organic modes of looking as feminine'.[44] The switching of registers between Mrs Morgan's gaze upon herself and the patriarchal gaze of the omniscient narrator alludes to the differentiation and disjuncture of these modes. Moreover, in referring to her only by her married title throughout, MacDiarmid highlights the impact of linguistic infrastructure upon conventions of gender identity. Even as he challenges the trappings of these social conventions through overstating and satirising them, the study of Mrs Morgan is both opened and closed with the language of men, confined with the parameters of a male gaze and patriarchal literary tradition.[45]

As noted, MacDiarmid's depiction is not dissimilar to Joyce's characterization of Gerty MacDowell. Imagining the formulation of female consciousness within Bloom's overwhelmingly masculine world, Joyce purposely parodies Gerty through deploying language found in popular 'women's' literature, set in what Danius deems to be 'a melodramatic register' – or, as Derek Attridge refers to it, 'a parodic recycling of contemporary clichés'.[46] Gerty's thought is littered with references to 'the Woman Beautiful page of the Princess novelette', the fashion pages of *Lady's Pictorial* and sentimental fiction like 'that book *The Lamplighter* by Miss Cummins', reading which is presumed to directly impact her characterisation as a whimsical, un-intelligent girl.[47] Hidden in her private self she, like Mrs. Morgan, has 'her dreams that no-one knew of', yet this exists at odds with the public self that is received.[48] Heather Cook Callow has argued that in Joyce's satirising of gender identity, as revealed through reading and language and as applicable to MacDiarmid's achievement in 'The Never-Yet-Explored', 'confidence-inspiring male voices encourage us as readers to adopt a view that female voices later call

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[44] Danius, *The Senses of Modernism*, p.176.
[45] The extract of verse on which the story ends – 'Her white breasts gleamed; […] Her heart is housing many a mad desire' (*Annals*: 85-6) – is from a poem by Gerald Cumberland, pseudonym of British author and poet Charles Frederick Kenyon. The poem was included in his 1909 biography, *Set Down in Malice: A Book of Reminisces*.
[46] Danius, *The Senses of Modernism*, p.76. Derek Attridge, 'Molly's Flow: The Writing of "Penelope" and the Question of Women's Language', *Modern Fiction Studies*, 35.3 (1989), pp.543-565 (p.562).
[47] Joyce, *Ulysses*, p.523; p.525; p.546.
[48] Ibid., p.546.

into question, a process wherein patriarchal authority *is* thereby undermined'.[49] The lens of masculine ideas and language through which both Gerty and Mrs Morgan are perceived is emphasised through the inability of either to vocalise themselves; much like West, neither speaks out loud. Gerty is repeatedly shown as stopping herself from speaking – she 'smiled assent and bit her lip', 'she fought back the sob that rose in her throat', she 'stifled a smothered exclamation' – whilst Mrs Morgan is granted language only in thought, in private.[50] Language, for each woman, proves to be a constraint more than a liberation, a reminder of the socially inferior status of their gender.

Such appeal to women's silence and modes of linguistic expression, as informed by stereotypes of women's reading material – which MacDiarmid does not reference explicitly like Joyce, but evidently taps into – juxtaposes the allusions to male writers which populate each story. Whilst Nancy K. Gish has noted that MacDiarmid's reference to Scottish poets in 'Following Rebecca West' is a nod to 'an alternative canon […] freed from English linguistic and literary hegemony', it is important to note that female poets are doubly marginalised within this.[51] In 'The Never-Yet-Explored', the canon of reference that MacDiarmid draws from is comparatively international and modern, yet women's voices remain resoundingly absent, thereby contributing to the difficulty Mrs Morgan encounters in attempting to articulate herself.

The extracts of verse which MacDiarmid quotes in the epigraph come from poems by John Masefield (1878-1967) and George Fox (1624-1691), representative of recent and historic propositions of the relationship between language and creation, followed by references to John Galsworthy, Joseph Conrad, Richard Middleton, Logan Pearsall Smith and Henri Bergson in quick succession.[52] Each reference originates no more than fifteen years before the writing and publication of 'The Never-Yet-Explored', representative of a matrix of pre-War masculine thought which proves jarring to Mrs Morgan's expressive capacities.[53] John Henry Newman, Nathaniel Hawthorne, Alexander Pope and Théophile

[49] Heather Cook Callow, 'Joyce's Female Voices in "Ulysses"', *The Journal of Narrative Technique*, 22.3 (1992), pp.151-163 (p.152).
[50] Joyce, *Ulysses*, 534; p.544; p.545.
[51] Gish, 'Hugh MacDiarmid', p.276.
[52] It is from Masefield that MacDiarmid takes his title, a masculine allusion repurposed and, inappropriately, inadequately, applied to the depiction of a female experience.
[53] 'Galsworthy's lime-tree' refers to the short story 'The Lime Tree' (1917); Conrad's discussion of existence 'Colourable and plastic, fashioned by the words, the looks, the acts and even by the silences and abstentions surrounding one's childhood' stems from his 1909 memoir, *Some Reminisces*; the Middleton quote – 'nearly all the real sorrows of youth are due to this dumbness of the emotions. We teach children to convey facts by means of words, but we do not teach them how to make their feeling intelligible' – comes from *The Ghost Ship* (1912); the Logan Pearsall Smith reference – 'the older kind of names for human passions and feelings, we may call "objective"' – is from *The English Language* (1912) and the Henri Bergson statement, 'The essence of life lies in the movement by which it is transmitted' is from *Creative Evolution,* published in 1907

Gautier are also subsequently referenced, each similarly representative of a masculine approach to writing about women. Whilst some quotes are cited, others are integrated into the narrative without credit, and there is the sense that MacDiarmid is experimenting with various linguistic approaches to the documentation of gendered experience, as provided to him by the literary tradition that he inherits. MacDiarmid tests the viability of these approaches in turn, encouraging the reader to question their suitability – or to affirm their unsuitability – for a progressive modern literature in which women are not merely subjects but agents.

Mrs Morgan struggles to conflate her intellect and emotion with this provided canon and rhetoric, mourning in response that 'language had become quite apathetic, generalised until it was without meaning' (*Annals*: 73). Blocked from a superior freedom of expression due to the masculinity of the language she is exposed to, she finds herself unable to vocalise her thoughts, 'carried headlong by the rushing rhetoric of her longings' (*Annals*: 79). Neither her or the fictionalised Rebecca West are granted the same liberation of creativity as their male counterparts, encapsulating in this imbalance a sensitivity on MacDiarmid's behalf to the very real anxieties of female contemporaries. 'Women', as Alison Smith has argued, 'are trapped in their art by their gender, by gender conventions of what they can or cannot say or do'.[54] In 'Following Rebecca West' and 'The Never-Yet-Explored' MacDiarmid explores this limitation, both women being writers whose creative success is impeded by patriarchal society. Catherine Carswell, MacDiarmid's contemporary, described the 'Inherent difficulties' faced by women in writing, questioning 'Is a women writer fundamentally handicapped in a whole important sphere of verbal expression? If so, why? […] Is there here a marked, an essential disparity between men and women?' [55] Carswell suggests that 'The woman, because she is a woman, must as an artist suppress what the man as an artist or as man is entitled to reveal', a constraint that MacDiarmid navigates through his characterisation of Rebecca West and Mrs Morgan.[56]

In keeping West silenced and at a distance, a fictionalised version of herself seen through the lens of two masculine personas, MacDiarmid satirises the role to which female writers had been traditionally confined in society. This speaks to his acknowledgement elsewhere of 'The position to which women were so long relegated' as being to blame for 'The total output of our poetesses of any quality at all' as being 'exceedingly slight' (*CSS*:

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and translated into English in 1911. Roderick Watson identifies this final reference in 'The Modern Scottish Literary Renaissance', *The Edinburgh Companion to Twentieth-Century Scottish Literature*, ed. Ian Brown and Alan Riach (Edinburgh University Press: Edinburgh, 2009), pp.75-87 (p.79).

[54] Alison Smith, 'And Woman Created Woman', *Gendering the Nation*, pp.25-48 (p.31).

[55] Catherine Carswell, *Lying Awake: An unfinished autobiography and other posthumous papers*, ed. John Carswell (Edinburgh: Canongate, 1997), p.123; p.125.

[56] Ibid., p.125.

155), an imbalance he himself had sought to marginally address through the increasingly frequent inclusion of work by female writers in *Northern Numbers*, the anthologies of Scottish poetry which he published in three volumes from 1920-22.[57]

Through his characterisation of Mrs Morgan, MacDiarmid confronts the 'handicap' described by Carswell, depicting the futility of a woman who tries to write without the language required to do so:

> She endeavoured with a conscious impossibilism to reproduce on paper, to achieve with the stub of a pencil the faintest approximation which would in any way make this feeling of hers more definite. The effort was hopeless. (*Annals*: 78)

Unable to express herself through writing, Mrs Morgan's art form is confined to 'the artistry of that life she was able to contrive under such unconscionable limitations' (*Annals:* 80), to the upkeep of a social identity rather than the creative articulation of her true self. Having highlighted her disjuncture from the available literature and language, MacDiarmid implies this inability to be a direct result of her being a woman.

DeMaagd has noted that, in patriarchal societies, as reflected in literature, women were considered 'ill-equipped for converting sensory experiences into higher knowledge and, as a result, to be destined to suffer from constant sensory bombardment'.[58] This is an unjust distinction which MacDiarmid sets up and lays bare in this story by highlighting the intelligence and thoughtfulness of Mrs Morgan before emphasising her inabilities to translate this into artful expression. Mrs Morgan's frustration at the 'impossibilism' of her task is made apparent in her question of 'Did not most artists at the end of their careers become discontented with the form in which they had worked?' (*Annals*: 81) She is 'discontented' in the role which the patriarchy has prescribed her, yet she remains confined by it. She, much as the figure of West in 'Following Rebecca West in Edinburgh', remains a character in a man's story and a subject of language rather than an agent of it.

2.4. The Language of Biological Difference

The legacy of these early prose studies in MacDiarmid's vision of world language is a sensitivity to the distinctiveness of gendered experiences and identities. The Scots poems that feature female characters draw from ballad tradition, imaginations of encounters which highlight women's shared experiences and understandings. This is present in the

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[57] Whilst only one female poet, Violet Jacob, was included in the first volume, this increased to six in the second volume and ten in the third – half of all contributors.
[58] DeMaagd, *Dissensuous Modernism*, p.6.

depictions of private interactions between women in 'The Frightened Bride', 'Sabine', 'In Mysie's Bed' and 'Servant Girl's Bed', poems which indicate gender as a bond of union in light of an unromantic perception of relationships and sex. 'The Frightened Bride' emphasises gendered knowledge and communication in its depiction of the woman who seeks comfort in the advice of other women – 'An' dinna fash, for what's i' yer hert / A' weemun ken an' nae man can' (*CPI*: 28) – whilst 'Sabine' illustrates an unspoken exchange between women which prioritises the younger woman's rights over her own body, pertaining to particularities of both sex and gender – '"Ye'd better gi'e me what I seek / Than learn what I've got to gi'e' (*CPI*: 54). In these, Scots is associated with a class and locality of women who inhabit that rural world of the lyrics to which MacDiarmid returns throughout the 1920s. The Scots poem 'Scunner', meanwhile, is a particularly unappealing representation of sex which does not appeal to gender identities, capturing the unique combination of disgust and elation associated with physical intimacy – 'And I lo'e Love / Wi' a scunner in't' (*CPI*: 65). Notably MacDiarmid's references to 'Your body' (*CPI*: 64) remain gender neutral, no objectification of the female form featuring in the poem.

In later poetry, this sensitivity to gendered difference and its reflection in language translates to the utilisation of scientific terminology about reproduction, as female biological specificity is incorporated within MacDiarmid's appeals for a world language that represents such distinctions of identity. In 'To a Friend and Fellow Poet', MacDiarmid utilises jargon to liken the supposedly masculine act of poetic creation to the reproduction of a guinea worm, a reference which Michael H. Whitworth suggests MacDiarmid to have obtained by way of Sir Patrick Manson's *Lectures on Tropical Diseases* (1905), an extract of which was included in a 1927 biography of Manson.[59] The poem, dedicated to Ruth Pitter, sees MacDiarmid posit the following hypothesis:

> It is with the poet as with a guinea worm
> Who, to accommodate her teeming progeny
> Sacrifices nearly every organ of her body, and becomes […]
> Almost wholly given over to her motherly task, (*CPII*: 1057)

Reflected in an animalistic analogy, MacDiarmid's references to gendered biology – 'the uterine tube', 'the prolapsed uterus', 'ejaculating another seething mass of embryos' (*CPII*: 1058) – are accepted as recontextualised language, inherited from scientific explanation

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[59] Michael H. Whitworth, 'Science in MacDiarmid's Later Poetry', *The Edinburgh Companion to Hugh MacDiarmid,* pp.97-110 (pp.107-9). MacDiarmid also quotes from this biography in an article of 1944 (*RTIII*: 64).

and innovatively deployed for poetic purpose. Their gendered nature is considered to be objective fact, where deployment of words such as 'blood', 'conception' and 'fertility' in 'The Never-Yet-Explored', less technical and of ambiguous sourcing, were loaded with associations to the centrality of fertility to a particular social construct of womanhood. The unromantic depiction of giving birth is similar to that evoked in 'Placenta Previa; or, The Case of Glasgow', a brief depiction of a difficult delivery likened to the rebirthing of industrial Glasgow – 'It'll be no easy matter to keep the dirt in its place / And get the Future out alive in *this* case' (*CPI*: 433).

A similar curiosity regarding creation and procreation surfaces in 'Museum Piece', a poem which MacDiarmid opens with the claim that 'I was born o' a woman', before pronouncing 'the woman in me kens / Poetry bears mair than the womb.' (*CPI*: 300). Despite his own masculine gender identity he recognises the presence of 'feminine' qualities within himself, acknowledging, in the same poem, 'the woman in me' (*CPI*: 300) and alluding to the belief that each individual is equally influenced by both parents during and following conception. As a concept this correlates closely with Lawrence's hypothesis in *Psychoanalysis and the Unconscious* (1923)*,* which MacDiarmid reviewed for *The Scottish Nation* (16 October 1923). Here Lawrence argues that the individual unconscious is influenced in equal parts by male and female nuclei at the point of conception and that it was this ungendered, 'primal' unconscious which informed the gendered consciousness, 'a web woven' from the influences of both genders. [60] This web provides an image which, to an extent, MacDiarmid's proposition of a world language acknowledges in its attempt to encompass gendered forms of language within its linguistic diversity.

MacDiarmid's insistence on harnessing the language of female biological experience within his vision, as demonstrated in the following corresponding sections in *In Memoriam James Joyce* and *The Kind of Poetry I Want*, suggests an anxiety regarding the gendered connotations of creation in life, and poetry:

> Even so long before the foetus
> Can have either sensation or motion, […]
> The various nerves which are to govern
> The perceptions and reactions essential to life
> Develop, as they shape themselves, a faculty
> For discovering and joining with their 'opposite numbers', (*CPII*: 887)

> A poetry that never for a moment forgets
> That if we study the position of the foetus

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[60] D. H. Lawrence, *Psychoanalysis and the Unconscious* and *Fantasia of the Unconscious*, ed. Bruce Steele (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004), p.38.

> As it appears in about the ninth month
> Of its development, we see the tiny body
> Curled up with its head bowed over […]
> As it was in the beginning
> So it is again at the end of life. (*CPII*: 1003)

Also in *In Memoriam,* MacDiarmid considers the implications of foetal development upon bodily processes:

> Throughout the body cell 'calls' to cell
> That the elaborate an intricate development
> Of tissues may proceed aright. (*CPII*: 887)

Here, through referencing scientific ideas, MacDiarmid includes within his proposition of world language a form of communication which applies to every individual's experience, even before the 'human' body and mind is understood to have fully developed. It is a 'call' without words and without sound, a form of physical articulation – referenced, in the word 'call', in terms of linguistic communication – that is integral to the shared human experience regardless of its situation within the gendered female body. MacDiarmid shows language, here and in examples discussed earlier, to be integral to the understanding of gender identities, biological sex and social articulations of self, be that in the description of biological processes, in specifically gendered terminology, in women's access to particular reading material, or in patriarchal oppression upon women's creativity.

The thesis returns to MacDiarmid's reference to scientific ideas and appropriation of scientific vocabulary, associated with later work but present as a concern throughout his corpus, in chapter six. With regards to the present discussion it remains most vital to indicate that such allusive practices, in which MacDiarmid appeals to distinctive and often unfamiliar forms of language so as to unsettle preconceived notions of linguistic authority or hierarchy and encourage crosspollination between linguistic forms in the fostering of a world language, are a direct development from the distinctions of locality, experience and gender which he explores in his earliest writing. MacDiarmid consistently encourages the development of a language and literature which remains open to new understanding and aligns itself with broader intellectual progress, contending that 'all parts of living beings / Are integral components of it' (*CPII*: 837) – all parts biological, regional, cultural and linguistic.

2.5. Legacies: Distinction and Plurality

This chapter has provided a discussion of MacDiarmid's early enquiries, both poetic and prosaic, into language as a social construct which is both shared – inherited through time and common across borders and boundaries due to the physicality of language as communication, as speech and sound – and individually variable – affected by specificities of local experience, sensory perceptions and differences of gender. The distinct experiences of men and women, of communities from different regions and nations, and of individuals who perceive and understand themselves and the world around them through their senses and the language which captures these, are each taken into account, inhabited and challenged, as they compile the global diversity-in-unity for which MacDiarmid's vision of world language was intended to account.

These early enquiries are amateur and uncertain at times, but they are guided by the bold curiosity which consistently characterises MacDiarmid's work. His poetry is informed by concerns and priorities in conflict; as Daiches has suggested, 'Self-contradiction is for him a mode of poetic awareness'.[61] Such contradiction is implicit in – if not integral to – the simultaneous appeals to individuality and universality, and specificity and commonality, that characterise MacDiarmid's exploration of language and 'world language'. Through his curiosity for the qualities and experiences which made language both shared and distinctive, MacDiarmid grows out from a subjective individual perception to a poetic projection of the universal; as Baglow proposes, he projects his 'own sense of potential […] onto Earth as a whole', thus 'overcom[ing] some of the loneliness necessarily associated with a struggle which is purely personal'.[62] He explores how, for humans – individually and socially – language is a means both for understanding the world, perceived by the senses and processed by the consciousness, and for expression, through the articulation of speech, the establishment of authority and the writing of literature.

While this language of 'man' is conducted through words and categorised into thought, speech or written literature, MacDiarmid's idea of world language aspires to engage with a broader holistic phenomenon. Multiplicities of human language are explored alongside speculation of geological and watery articulations, and the music of birdsong, and other forms of environmental, non-human 'expression' explored as they can be translated into words and as they evade the constraints of words altogether. Consideration of this will constitute the following chapter.

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[61] Daiches, 'Hugh MacDiarmid and the Scottish Literary Tradition', p.60.
[62] Baglow, *Hugh MacDiarmid*, p.49.

Chapter Three

Language in Nature and Music: Enquiries into the Non-Human

MacDiarmid's poetic enquiries and experimentations frequently pose a challenge to formal and linguistic boundaries, particularly as his vision expands to encompass and speculate upon forms of language and expression beyond human comprehension. Culminating in *In Memoriam'*s proposition of 'world language' as 'All language' (*CPII*: 824), his poetry is driven by curiosity and the pursuit of wholeness, language utilised as a 'literary equipment' (*LP*: 407) with which to gain knowledge, understanding, and access to the world.

This chapter will return to some language theories previously discussed in the introduction, before considering MacDiarmid's depiction of and engagement with expressive forms, akin to language, found in and applicable to nature – in geology, water, and birdsong – and in music, noise, and silence. The priorities and concerns – both aesthetic and political – which informed MacDiarmid's transposition of the ecological world into the poetic, argued to be a form of translation, are first investigated before considering the ramifications of such priorities on the vision of world language which emerged.

Complementary to MacDiarmid's investigation of language as social, discussed in the previous chapter, is his speculation of linguistic forms that lay beyond conventional categorisation, found in nature. Such openness correlates with the following hypothesis proposed by Walter Benjamin, outlined in his 1916 essay 'On Language as Such and on the Language of Man':

> all communication of the contents of the mind is language, communication in words being only a particular case of human language and of the justice, poetry, or whatever underlying it or founded on it. […] There is no event or thing in either animate or inanimate nature that does not in some way partake of language, for it is in the nature of each one to communicate its mental contents.[1]

Language, in Benjamin's view, is plural and not neatly confined, existing across multiple variations of articulation, inclusive of, but not exclusive to, human communication. His theory suggests, as MacDiarmid does and as this chapter explores, that in order for language to be understood holistically, the non-human must be considered alongside the

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[1] Walter Benjamin, 'On Language as Such and on the Language of Man', *Selected Writings: Volume 1, 1913-1926*, ed. Marcus Bullock and Michael W. Jennings (London: Harvard University Press, 1996), pp.62-74 (p.62).

human. Karl Vossler posits a similar suggestion in *The Spirit of Language in Civilisation* (1932), a text which MacDiarmid references in *In Memoriam*.[2] Vossler, not dissimilarly to Benjamin, highlights the significance of non-human elements within these communities: 'every non-human object in nature can be personified by the imagination. So it must always happen that language communities will extend beyond exclusively human societies'.[3] Such thinking aligns with MacDiarmid's open and restless approach to world language, apparent in both his consideration of expression as found in and as applicable to nature and music, and in the modification of his own formal approach to accommodate these within his vision.

Moreover, in his utilisation of the poetic space as a site for such enquiry, MacDiarmid supports Martin Heidegger's theorisation of the poem as the literary form in which the purest speech – or language – occurs, an intimate space in which 'world and things' 'penetrate each other'.[4] In this, too, MacDiarmid appeals to what Kate Rigby has referred to as 'the semiosis of the more-than-human world', an idea of the whole that encompasses the unknown as well as the familiar, and which challenges modern anthropocentric hierarchies.[5] The formulation of an ecocritical response to MacDiarmid's engagement with the non-human world is central to this chapter's enquiry, and to understanding the sustained relevance of his ecological perspectives, as revealed and communicated through language.

3.1. Nature's Spokesman: Non-Intrusive Authority and Mediation as Translation

In his appeal to both human and non-human forms of expression, MacDiarmid fulfils the role of mediator, attempting to translate the natural world into poetic language. In this he fulfils Vossler's proposition that 'The poet speaks through nature by making himself her spokesman and she in turn speaks for him', a 'mutual relation' through which 'a spiritual, artistic and aesthetic community of language grows up'.[6] MacDiarmid engages with Vossler's sense of a 'mutual relation' in poems which present the solitary individual in conversation with the natural landscape, an approach which is prevalent amongst his early

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[2] MacDiarmid references Vossler's theory of 'Metaphysical and empirical language communities, / With a continuous interweaving of threads between them' in *In Memoriam James Joyce* (*CPII*: 785).
[3] Karl Vossler, *The Spirit of Language in Civilisation*, trans. Oscar Oeser (London: Kegan Paul, Trench, Trubner & Co. Ltd., 1932), p.107.
[4] Martin Heidegger, *Poetry, Language, Thought*, trans. Albert Hofstadter (New York: Harper & Row, 1971), p.194, p.202.
[5] Kate Rigby, 'Animal Calls', *Divinanimality: Animal Theory, Creaturely Theology*, ed. Stephen Moore (New York: Fordham University Press, 2014), pp.116-133 (p.117).
[6] Vossler, *The Spirit of Language*, p.71.

lyrics, where the environment is given a voice and language, and in poems that grapple with the terminology and 'language' of particular geological and water environments, namely 'On a Raised Beach', 'Water Music' and 'The Point of Honour'.

MacDiarmid's early lyrics, published in *Penny Wheep* and *Sangschaw*, signify poetic encounters with a world in modernist crisis, apprehended in local, rural microcosm. As Louisa Gairn observes, it is in the rural lyrics and in the 'knowledge that the Earth is literally "home"' that MacDiarmid's idea of a 'planetary' consciousness originates.[7] Frequently, in these poems, the lyrical 'I' is seen in conversation with the natural environment, as MacDiarmid lends language to the non-human world and envisions how it might speak if it were to do so, thus resonating with the idea of a world language which encompasses the world, or Earth, itself.

In 'Au Clair de la Lune', it is the moon that is personified and the world addressed under her watch, the cosmos brought into play in this otherwise local, specific encounter. Calling upon the world to 'wheest!', the speaker enquires into the musicality of nature: 'Whatna music is this, / While the win's haud their breath?' (*CPI*: 24). Sounds found naturally in the environment are those which infiltrate the speaker's experience, their domination of that environment challenged as the ecological surroundings foreground their own expression and thought:

> An' the roarin' o' oceans noo'
> Is peerieweerie to me:
> Thunner's a tinklin' bell: an' Time
> Whuds like a flee. (*CPI: 24*)

With the moon brought into the equation, scales of reality collapse and the scope of the world expands beyond a humancentric perception. The loudness of modernity, echoed through the acknowledgment and subsequent diminishment of noise in a rural environment, is silenced. Amidst the comparative quietness, MacDiarmid's emphasis of a natural cacophony of sounds – the breathing of the wind, the ocean's 'roarin'', the 'tinklin'' of thunder – foregrounds non-human expression whilst highlighting, as explored in the previous chapter, the significance of sound to the specific environment.

In 'The Long Black Night', MacDiarmid includes a similar address to the environment and imagination of environmental response, although this time both parties participate in speech through the enactment of a conversation. In his questioning of the night – 'Whaur ar ye gan', O braw black nicht, / Wi' yer strawn o' beads sae fair?' (*CPI*:

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[7] Louisa Gairn, *Ecology and Modern Scottish Literature* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2008), p.83.

56) – and the night's answer – '"I dinna ken," says the lang black nicht' (*CPI*: 56) – the Scots speaker interacts with his natural environment as he might with a human. In personifying and humanising ecology, MacDiarmid closes the gap between the human and non-human, once more suggesting a relationship of equality which challenges the narrative of human domination in the Anthropocene.

In *A Drunk Man Looks at the Thistle*, it is significant that the drunk man not only looks at the thistle but speaks and listens to it, contemplating the universe from his position on the ground beside it, on its level. He addresses the thistle directly, and although the thistle does not speak back as the night did, his questioning creates the space in which he will reflect upon what the thistle's answers might be:

> Plant, what are you then? Your leafs
> Mind me o' the pipe's lood drone
> - And a' your purple tops
> Are the pirly-wirly notes
> That gang staggerin' owre them as they groan. (*CPI*: 96)

Inviting ecological apprehension into his poetic discourse, MacDiarmid alludes to a world or language in which human and non-human might interact more directly, music here indicated as mode of expression which bridges the gap and enables a translation of one to the other through it. Discussion returns to music later in the chapter.

MacDiarmid's combination in the early Scots lyrics of actual experience with imagination and speculation beyond the known, driven by the desire for a more intimate understanding of the world in its entirety, is symptomatic of a modernist drive to repair an exhausted modernity. Andrew Kalaidjian recognises this impetus, remarking that 'Read ecocritically, modernist literature presents a shift from viewing humans as transcendent and autonomous masters of nature to susceptible, immersed, and engaged with their environments'.[8] Critics including Kalaidjian, in the expansion of ecocritical literary studies, have explored the tendency of modernism to challenge these anthropocentric hierarchies and boundaries. Whilst Jon Hegglund and John MacIntyre have suggested that modernism speaks to 'a scepticism and doubt about the superiority of' humanity over nature, Carrie Rohman argues that a reading of modernist texts in the wake of postcolonial criticism reveals how they 'reentrench, unsettle and even invert a humanist relation to this non-human other', a challenging of authoritative hierarchies that recurs throughout

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[8] Andrew Kalaidjian, *Exhausted Ecologies: Modernism and Environmental Recovery* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2020), p.2.

MacDiarmid's poetry.[9] Quite significantly, as Louisa Gairn notes, MacDiarmid is 'one of the very first British literary figures to use the term "ecology", and probably the earliest Scottish creative writer to consciously and explicitly apply ecological thought to his own work'; the role of language in the application of such thought is a point worth considering closely.[10]

MacDiarmid's unsettling of relations between man and the natural environment is exemplified in the respectful mediation of a later poem, 'In Talk with Donnchadh Bàn Mac t-Saoir'. Here, he questions the nature of man's presence in or intrusion upon the ecological world:

> We have the feeling of having reached that state
> All watchers of animals desire
> Of having dispensed with our physical presence.
> Or is that it? Is not really the bottom of our desire
> Not to be ignored but to be accepted?... (*CPII*: 1101-2)

MacDiarmid's speaker exerts a physical presence – that which he feels himself 'having dispensed with' – upon his surroundings whilst wishing to maintain, not intervene in, the ecological equilibrium. His closing question suggests a hesitance to impose human authority upon a non-human environment, challenging expected power structures. In response to a Gaelic poet and Highland environment, MacDiarmid indicates regard for Gaelic culture's traditionally respectful approach to nature in which, as Meg Bateman outlines, 'there is […] little room for the ego'.[11] Here, as elsewhere, the distinction between ecology – animals, trees, botany, water, geology – and the human is important, yet so is the interdependent nature of their worlds.

Such interconnection is emphasised further in 'Diamond Body', subtitled 'In a Cave of the Sea':

> There are not two worlds,
> A world of nature, and a world of human consciousness,
> Standing over against one another, but one world of nature
> Whereof human consciousness is an evolution, (*CPII*: 1084-5)

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[9] Jon Hegglund and John McIntyre, 'Modernism and the Emergent Anthropocene', *Modernism and the Anthropocene: Material Ecologies of Twentieth-Century Literature*, ed. Jon Hegglund and John McIntyre (London: Lexington Books, 2021), pp.ix-xviii (p.ix).
Carrie Rohman, *Stalking the Subject: Modernism and the Animal* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2008), p.12.
[10] Gairn, *Ecology*, p.80.
[11] Quoted in *Window to the West: Culture and Environment in the Scottish Gàidhealtachd*, ed. Meg Bateman and John Purser (Isle of Skye: Clò Ostaig, 2020), p.150.

MacDiarmid considers how man and nature are mutually reliant upon one another, exploring the notion that 'any assemblage of things / Is for the sake of another' (*CPII*: 1085). He recognises natural pluralities that coexist within the environment, acknowledging the 'Countless millions of creatures each essential / To that other' (*CPII*: 1086). In this poem specifically, such plurality is encountered in the sea, but it speaks to the documentation of natural diversity which recurs throughout MacDiarmid's poetry, most memorably in 'Direadh' – as in the exclamation of 'Scotland small? Our multiform, our infinite Scotland *small*?' (*CPII*: 1170) – and 'Once in a Cornish Garden', which is discussed in chapter five. Each of these pre-empts the emphasis on decentralised multiplicity that characterises his vision of world language in *In Memoriam*, a vision which, much like in the delicate balance of the ecosystem, demands diversity.

Whilst the social remains important to reflections upon the constructed nature of language and linguistic categorisations, 'In Talk with Donnchadh Bàn Mac an t'Saoir' or 'Diamond Body' highlight the anti-humanism of MacDiarmid's approach, indicative of an effort to subvert anthropocentric expectations. Graeme Macdonald has recognised this approach to destabilising hierarchies as being significant within the left-politics of Scottish modernism more generally:

> The Scottish modernists of the first half of the twentieth century consisted of a group of openly leftist and internationalist writers motivated by varying degrees of nationalism, republicanism and socialism. A green re-reading of this writing sees an ecopoetics of landscape and territory that is consciously ecopolitical, connecting inequalities in land and resource use with campaigns for national independence and anti-capitalism.'[12]

MacDiarmid's suggestion of language in nature highlights the necessity of a modern holistic poetics that is informed by nationalism – in the prominence it awards the particular and specific – as much as by anti-imperialism – in its proposition of a non-intrusive authority– and socialism – in its encouragement of decentralisation and celebration of interconnected pluralities. In his approach to ecology, poetry and politics are inextricably intertwined, the natural world replete with hierarchies that are revealed, reaffirmed and challenged through language.

Challenging human authority over nature, MacDiarmid consciously alters his linguistic approach in response to different environmental settings, attempting to translate their characteristics into poetic language so as to converse with nature on a more equal

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[12] Graeme Macdonald, 'Green Links: Ecosocialism and Contemporary Scottish Writing', *Ecology and the Literature of the British Left: The Red and the Green*, ed. H. Gustav Klaus, Valentine Cunningham and John Rignall (London: Routledge, 2012), pp.221-240 (pp.227-8).

plane. In 'Whuchulls', this results in a reversion to Scots, that being the local language associated with the environment of Langholm.[13] Here, MacDiarmid illustrates a keen awareness of the specific aptness of his language to depict the forest ecosystem, recognising that 'naw man can tell / The population o' a wud like this' before speculating on how he might better estimate it regardless:

> Pile up the facts and let me faurer ben.
> Multiply my vocabulary times ten.
> Let me range ower a' prosody again. (*CPII*: 1090)

MacDiarmid alludes to the value of a closeness between form, language and subject, integral to his construction of a holistic poetics which does not impose an image or understanding *upon* the world but extracts the vision *from* it.

Elsewhere, the incentive transpires as a resort to geological terminology, as in the Shetland poems 'Stony Limits', 'Vestigia Nulla Retrorsum' and 'On a Raised Beach'; in an emphasis upon sound and onomatopoeia in the evocation of watery movements, central to the visions of 'Water Music' and 'The Point of Honour'; or in the attempt to literally, playfully translate the expression of birdsong, as in 'Farmer's Death', 'The Divided Bird' or 'On a Lone Shore'. In each case language is explored as it originates in nature, and the limits of known language are explored and challenged in the translation of these encounters into poetry.

3.2. A Stony Exterior: Geological Time and Terminology

MacDiarmid engages with deep time and geological environments through the adoption of terminology in a number of his *Stony Limits* poems, borne out of his experience in Shetland. In 'On a Raised Beach', characterised by Roderick Watson as 'an exercise in linguistic estrangement', he attempts to speak the language of the stones in order to 'get into this stone world now' (*CPI*: 426). [14] Whilst he stops short of attributing language to the environment itself, his investigation into which linguistic forms best aid an understanding of it highlights the pursuit of a vocabulary that is not imposed upon nature, but speaks through it.

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[13] As clarified in a footnote, the title refers to Whitshiels forest in Langholm.
[14] Roderick Watson, 'Landscapes of Mind and Word: MacDiarmid's Journey to the Raised Beach and Beyond', *Hugh MacDiarmid: Man and Poet*, ed. Nancy K. Gish (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 1992), pp.231-252 (p.245).

MacDiarmid outlines this aim in the unpublished manuscript version of 'On a Raised Beach' in which he explains that 'I pile these words together as Nature piles a raised beach' (*CPII*: 1460). This description is ommitted in the final published version, but the impetus remains:

> All is lithogenesis – or lochia,
> Carpolite fruit of the forbidden tree,
> Stones blacker than any in the Caaba,
> Cream-coloured caen-stone, chatoyant pieces,
> Celadon and corbeau, bistre and beige,
> Glaucous, hoar, enfouldered, cyathiform (*CPI*: 422).

Introduced through this accumulation of stony vocabulary, MacDiarmid creates the effect of an impenetrable deterrent to enlightened ecological understanding – 'I look at these stones and know little about them' (*CPII*: 423). Piling up geological vocabulary, he transforms his language to mimic the stones themselves, common language rendered unsuitable for use in interaction with the austere environment. This modification of language thus accentuates the boundary between the human and non-human, highlighting the 'difference' which Heidegger considered to be an integral feature of poetic language.[15] MacDiarmid sustains this reliance upon technical terminology throughout the poem, invoking the image of 'Fine striae, microline cross-hatchings', 'intense vibration' and 'Ratchel, striae, relationships of tesserae, / Innumerable shades of grey' (*CPI*: 426). Due to this, Julian Murphet argues that MacDiarmid 'indemnifies the poem's language against any too ready accusation of sentimental personification', particularly relevant to his linguistic focus on describing the outward appearance of the beach in scientific terms.[16] His attempt to wrestle simultaneously with the stone's physicality and its technical make-up, its external and internal realities, echoes Joyce's pun on 'astoneaged' in *Finnegans Wake,* a linguistic 'interpenetration' of geological terminology that recognises its form both immediately and historically.[17]

Moreover, it is important that the beach contemplated in the poem is 'raised', suggestive of a slow physical change over time through 'Empires, civilisations, aeons' (*CPI*: 432), and that the solitary speaker alters his movement to emulate this: 'Nothing has stirred / Since I lay down this morning an eternity ago' (*CPI*: 423). Here, 'the futile imaginings of men' (*CPI*: 425) are a feeble attempt at true understanding, and 'Even those

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[15] Heidegger, *Poetry*, p.202.
[16] Julian Murphet, 'Astonied: the mineral poetics of Robinson Jeffers, Hugh MacDiarmid, Francis Ponge and Muriel Rukeyser', *Textual Practice*, 34.9 (2020), pp.1501-1517 (p.1510).
[17] James Joyce, *Finnegans Wake* [1939] (Hertfordshire: Wordsworth Classics, 2012), p.18.

who juggle with lapidary's, mason's, geologist's words' are poorly equipped (*CPI*: 430). The inadequacy of even technical terminology echoes a similar frustration to that expressed in 'Vestigia Nulla Retrorsum':

> We cannot read this quipu of the air,
> This ogham on the stones, even as geologists fail,
> To tell from the striae which of two opposite ways
> The ice went; (*CPI*: 418)

In both examples, the environment encountered gives the speaker nothing, thus destabilising faith in human understanding and authority: 'We must reconcile ourselves to the stones, / Not the stones to us' (*CPI*: 428). As poetic mediator between the human and non-human, the trialling of various linguistic forms takes on a serious tone, incremental in matters of ecological life and death.

MacDiarmid's priorities in 'On a Raised Beach' inform those in *In Memoriam*, in which the search for a language that develops out of an environment, rather than being imposed upon it, continues. The closest he claims to have encountered to this is the language of Charles Doughty, whom he acknowledges in the opening pages of the poem:

> Doughty, by far the greatest of them all,
> […]
> Knowing that squirrel's *drey* is better than squirrel's *nest,*
> Making language at once more rich and more precise,
> And passionate for naming particular things
> And particular parts of things,
> So he writes of a *shive* of wood, *shivers* of silex,
> Of a *gripe,* a *thrave,* and a *strike* of corn
> And likes to use words for parts of the body
> Like *shanks, chine, neckbone,* and the older
> *Halse, weasand, chaps,* and *barme* (*CPII*: 740)

This is not technical terminology in the same way that modern geological jargon is, learned from dictionaries and applied to the environment without the necessity of intimate lived experience or inhabitation. Rather, it is believed to be borne out of a closeness to the environment, much as Donnchadh Bàn's knowledge of deer-stalking came from a commitment to the profession, or like the vocabulary of the Shetland herring fishers was the result of a life devoted to the sea.[18] It is not imposed upon the environment but is used in order to speak *through* the environment, a long tradition of knowledge, culture and

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[18] MacDiarmid's engagement with Donnchadh Bàn – via translation and address – and with the Shetland fishermen, will be explored in chapter five, which centres upon the Gaelic world and an archipelagic vision of language.

experience summoned in its usage. In 'On a Raised Beach and 'Vestigia Nulla Retrorsum', geological terminology is the closest MacDiarmid has to a language *of* the stones, and yet its deployment in this context does little to aid his actual understanding of or insight into their world, thus the poems' speakers remain frustrated, their curiosity unsatiated. The use of scientific language in the *Stony Limits* poems paves the way for the extensive cataloguing exhibited in *In Memoriam*, explored in chapter six, in which MacDiarmid appeals to a world of multiple languages and the knowledges and contexts associated with them.

3.3. Water Music: Sound, Movement and Momentum

In contrast to the slow movement of the world's geology, water fluctuates almost instantaneously, posing a quite different poetic conundrum which MacDiarmid confronts in the poems 'Water Music', 'The Point of Honour', 'By Wauchopeside' and the short story 'The Waterside' (1927). Each illustrates various linguistic and formal approaches which MacDiarmid trials in an attempt to engage with the fluidity of watery environments.

In 'Water Music', written in a dynamic Scots, MacDiarmid translates the movement of water into a playful language that is onomatopoeic, alliterative and evocative, reminiscent of a natural musicality. The speaker of the poem claims that 'I can listen to the waters / Lang – and no' lang – eneuch' (*CPI*: 337), his listening and hearing indicative of an active interaction and creative process which is never quite satisfied. Populated by other living creatures and their own communications, the river is a confluence of sounds which MacDiarmid transforms into the language of the poem: 'Let them popple, let them pirl, / Plish-plash and plunk and plop and plot' *(CPI*: 335). Unlike the silence and slowness of 'On a Raised Beach', here sound and speed dominate. MacDiarmid runs his words together in the poem's attempt to catch up with the water's momentum, 'Lively, louch, atweesh, atween' (*CPI*: 333), subtle variations in Scots sounds related to the distinctions of the three Langholm rivers, the 'Wauchope, Esk, and Ewes again, / Each wi' its ain rhythms till't' (*CPI*: 333). Responding to non-human sounds found in nature, MacDiarmid engages with the 'materiality of sound' that Josh Epstein has recognised as a recurring concern across modernist writing, testing its 'formal properties […] as technologies […]: tools for explaining, critiquing, and manipulating'.[19]

Attempting to bring his poetic language closer to his subject of the river, MacDiarmid utilises repetition – the first and last stanzas each beginning with 'Wheesht,

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[19] Josh Epstein, *Sublime Noise: Musical Culture and the Modernist Writer* (Baltimore: John Hopkins University Press, 2014)*,* p.xxx.

wheesht Joyce' (*CPI*: 333; 337) – in a formal evocation of the river's cyclical nature. MacDiarmid references the water cycle more directly in 'Scots Unbound', in which he distinguishes the river that 'gi'es and tak's wi' the cluds in the air' (*CPI*: 343), a symbiotic process specific in nature which he seeks to engage with and to understand through language. The poem recognises that any point in a river is concurrently representative of the specific change which the water undergoes in any isolated instance, its positioning within the river as a whole, and its contribution to the ongoing water cycle, symbolic of the emphasis upon both simultaneity and progress – or synchrony and diachrony – which characterises MacDiarmid's vision of world language.

In 'The Point of Honour', a 'restless eager poem' (*CPI*: 389), MacDiarmid brings attention to his struggle to find appropriate language and form – as in 'On a Raised Beach' – and reflects self-consciously upon the poem as an act of 'Wedding words to her waves' (*CPI*: 388).

> No more of mere sound, the least part
> I know how it acts, connecting words, implying
> A rate of movement, onomatopoeic art,
> Or making a reader start trying
> To interpret the mouth's actual movement
> As a gesture; or acting directly
> Like a tune – (*CPI*: 388)

Reflecting upon his methods, here as in 'Water Music', MacDiarmid recognises the limitations of his expressive capacity to capture the water's being, and addresses the need to adopt a new approach, one not only of emulation but of immersion. This marks his shift from the poetry of emotion, in Scots, to the poetry of knowledge, naming and fact. Describing his body in the river – an image of baptism, renewal and cleansing – he appears to arrive at a heightened understanding of the poetic impetus which 'driv[es] like your stream / Through all mere images' (*CPI*: 389), propelling him to write. Having personified the river as female – 'Would I wish to bend her / To me as she veers on her way again' (*CPI*: 391) – the imbalance of his intrusion on nature is connoted with other manifestations of social inequality, a matter of authority and respect. The inevitable lack of human control over nature and the cyclical movement of water is highlighted once again in MacDiarmid's admission of 'The free enthusiasm that carries the stream / Suddenly out of my range' (*CPI*: 391), a suggestion of perpetual change beyond the individual.

When MacDiarmid returns to the Langholm rivers in 'By Wauchopeside', it is with the distance of time, space and intellectual apprehension. Whilst the speaker acknowledges that 'Wagtail or water winna help me here' (*CPII*: 1084), the alliteration of this statement

suggests an ongoing impulse to modify language in engagement with the natural environment and its innate musicality.

The natural environment overpowers the human in these poems, or is unable to be engaged with adequately through human language, much as in the early short story, 'The Waterside'. Here, MacDiarmid depicts the inability of those who live beside the river to ignore its presence: 'the folk in the High Street couldna talk lood eneuch to forget the roarin' o' the spate. It seemed to be underminin' the toon' (*AFS*: 155). 'The Waterside folk' are distinguished from the rest of the townsfolk by the specificity of their experience: 'They could dae naething but look, or rather be lookit at, through and through, for it was the water that did the lookin' and no' them' (*AFS*: 156). The human authority of the townspeople pales in comparison to the force of the river, as MacDiarmid exaggerates the subversion of anthropocentric hierarchies, reflected through language.

In each of these examples MacDiarmid engages with the poetic representation of water through language – sounds – and form – repetition, reflection – which attempts to approximate the water's sounds and movements. As in the use of geological terminology and the adoption of a slower pace in the *Stony Limits* poems, we see how MacDiarmid modifies language in order to confront the natural environment and to enter into conversation with it on its own terms, highlighting both the authoritative capacities of language and its centrality to understanding, control, and an element of submission to the unknown and inexpressible.

3.4. Birdsong: Natural Musicality and Ecological Observation

Elsewhere, MacDiarmid populates the local ecological settings of his poems with the sounds of birdsong, an instance of non-human expression translated into poetic language through description and mimesis.

Walter Garstung, zoologist and author of *Songs of the Birds* (1922), argued that 'birds are well known to possess a vocabulary by means of which they communicate on matters of everyday interest', remarking further that 'We may distinguish it as a language of momentary emotions'.[20] His book, a combination of 'scientific analysis of written and musical transcriptions' with 'his own poetic experiments', is of interest largely due to its publication in the modernist year of 1922, an investigation into the expressive capacity of birdsong which was contemporary with MacDiarmid and which was influential upon the

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[20] Walter Garstang, *Songs of the Birds* (London: John Lane, 1922), pp.20-21.

ecological understanding of the era.[21] Garstung's emphasis on birdsong as a form of communication, a widely accepted hypothesis, has since been expanded upon by literary critics including Onno Oerlemans, who suggests that its roots 'in mimicry, rehearsal, and repetition' set an ideal precedent for poetry.[22]

MacDiarmid engages with birdsong as a foreign yet emotive expression found within the natural world, and employs it to various symbolic effects across his poetry. In 'Ex Vermibus' the young bird, the 'gorlin', is encouraged with the prospect of 'a slee and sliggy sang' (*CPI*: 23). In *To Circumjack Cencrastus*, Section XII-XVII laments the silencing of birdsong by modern industrialism and envisions an artistic, aesthetic resurgence, as the speaker addresses the bird directly:

> Did the engine's dreadful roar
> Quench awhile your glorious voice?
> Did you start your song again
> With the old assurance then? (*CPI*: 273)

In a time of social, cultural and ecological devastation, the returning of birdsong is a hopeful prospect, referenced in the poem not only as an indication of communication between species (human and bird) but of the forward momentum that the bird symbolises.

Birdsong is evoked similarly in poetry that centres on the Gaelic world, most notably 'In Memoriam: Liam MacIlle Iosa' and 'Lament for the Great Music'. In the former, the speaker envisions himself as a bird – 'Am I a nightingale to remember too / What the swallow forgets – our Itys', our Alba's death?' (*CPI*: 415) – before questioning his capacity to 'carry that supreme song' (*CPI*: 416), a recognition of his own limitations. In 'Lament for the Great Music', as MacDiarmid reflects upon the devastating neglect of Gaelic culture, the singing of birds symbolises a resurgence of creativity and strength out of the silence and 'stillness so oppressive' (*CPI*: 477):

> And instantly the silence was broken by a shower
> Of silvery notes floating down across the morning
> And looking up I saw a skurry of jackdaws
> Diving headlong for the screes – as they fell
> They caught the first sunbeams and twinkled like stars.
> But it was their sharp clear notes, softened by the distance
> Which arrested the senses as a greeting to the day,
> Like a peal of bells which glittered as they rang, (*CPI*: 477)

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[21] Michael Guida, 'Ludwig Koch's birdsong on wartime BBC radio: knowledge, citizenship and solace', *Being Modern: The Cultural Impact of Science in the Early Twentieth Century*, ed. Robert Bud, Paul Greenhalgh, Frank James and Morag Shiach (London: UCL Press, 2018), pp.293-310 (p.308).
[22] Onno Oerlemans, 'Sing and Be Heard: Birdsong and the Romantic Lyric', *Mosaic: An Interdisciplinary Critical Journal*, 51.2 (June 2018), pp.1-16 (p.5, p.11).

MacDiarmid's particular foregrounding of nature in the poems that focus on the Gaelic world adheres to conventions in Gaelic literature: Meg Bateman remarks of how, 'In Gaelic poetry nature is not seen as an object outside or different from the human environment. Nature *is* the human environment and human settlement is as much part of nature as other forms of life.'[23] Bateman's comment invokes MacDiarmid's claim, quoted earlier, that 'There are not two worlds' but 'one world of nature' (*CPII*: 1084). The music of the birds is revered as a natural art form whilst silence, which discussion returns to later in the chapter, creates the conditions under which new forms of expression can be created, representative of the modernist impetus for regeneration.

In other poetry of the time, MacDiarmid personifies birds as human, blurring the species boundary in his ongoing attempt to highlight connections and construct a holistic poetics. In 'Iolaire', for instance, Scotland is anthropomorphised as a 'mother eagle' (*CPI*: 385), whilst in 'Ode to all Rebels', a nightingale is addressed and replies as a voice of reason who warns of the world's 'ugliness' (*CPI*: 510). Birds recur as symbols of hope, progress and liberation throughout MacDiarmid's oeuvre, and their song recurs as communication between them, the world, and the human who endeavours to understand that world through language. His appeal to birdsong speaks to the romantic preoccupation of John Keats, Samuel Taylor Coleridge, John Clare or Walt Whitman, revisited under modernist priorities. He responds to such precedents and engages with 'the non-human' in a similar manner to W. B. Yeats, whom Kelly Sullivan argues encapsulates the 'shift from Romantic inflected imagery of the natural world toward an ecologically-inclusive modernist poetics'.[24] MacDiarmid oscillates between upholding birds and birdsong as symbols of emotional values – hope, loss, artistic perseverance – and their representation as tangible components within an actual ecosystem.

In this regard, it is MacDiarmid's evocation of birdsong through mimicry that is most relevant to this chapter's investigation. MacDiarmid's repetition of sounds found in nature illustrates his fascination with sound as expression and as potentially containing language: as Charles Hartshorne contends, 'A basic test of music feeling, or of interest in sounds as such, is the tendency to imitate sounds'.[25]

In 'Farmer's Death', an early lyric, this approach is indicated briefly through the imitation of 'Hen's cries': '*Ke-uk, ke-uk, ke-uk, ki-kwaik*' (*CPI*: 34). Untranslatable into

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[23] Bateman, *Window*, p.416.

[24] Kelly Sullivan, 'Yeats's Birds: Recognising the Animal', *Modernist Cultures*, 16.1 (2021), pp.114-137 (p.115).

[25] Charles Hartshorne, 'The Aesthetics of Birdsong', *The Journal of Aesthetics and Art Criticism*, 26.3 (1968), pp.311-315 (p.313).

human language, MacDiarmid transcribes the cries into an assemblage of sounds which must be read aloud in order to mimic the hen, repetition key to both the hen's sounding and to the attempt to wrangle meaning from a foreign expression elsewhere. A similar approach recurs in 'The Divided Bird', a later poem which transcribes birdsong and thematises the difficulty of achieving an ideal expression:

> Tyun, tyun, tyun, tyun,
>   Spi tui zqua
> Tyo, tyo tyo, tyo, tyo, tyo, tyo, tyo tix;
>   Qutio, qutio, qutio, qutio,
>   Zquo, zquo, zquo, zquo.
> Tzy, tzy, tzy, tzy, tzy, tzy, tzy, tzy, tzy, tzy,
> Quorrox tui zqua pipiquisi. (*CPI*: 713)

MacDiarmid provides a footnote for the articulation that explains it as the 'Song of the northern nightingale. The "tyo" is a long-drawn and plaintive note' (*CPI*: 713). With no reference as to where this suggestion originates, the accuracy of the imitation is thrown into question, it being unclear whether MacDiarmid has sourced the footnote from elsewhere or it has been originally composed. Divorced from recognisable or understandable language, the transcribed sounds offer no apparent interpretation besides the reader's subjective imagination. Meaning cannot be deduced from the context of the language, which is dominated by MacDiarmid's anxiety over 'the stupendous gulf between / This bird's song (so-called) and Webern's Das dunkle Reich' (*CPI*: 713), as he contemplates what is lost in the translation process:

> I am like one who listens to a song
> That might enter his blood and being, heard
> In terms of an instrument it was written for,
> But here to another colour medium transferred (*CPI*: 714)

The emotive impact of birdsong, comparable to that of other music, is emphasised both in spite of and due to the foreignness of its expression, unable to be translated accurately into 'another colour medium'. Frustrated at the disjuncture in communication – 'But what idealist can sing this song? / Resolve my desperate imbroglio with this bird?' (*CPI*: 716) – MacDiarmid's speaker is deeply aware of the divide between himself and the bird, and reflects upon 'What prevents me from getting close to the bird' (*CPI*: 716). He is reminiscent of the speaker in 'On a Raised Beach' who becomes increasingly exasperated at his inability to get into the stones, exasperated at language as a barrier to understanding as well as a gateway into it.

In 'On a Lone Shore', conversation is not enacted between a human speaker and a bird, but between a bird and the sea. The poem more blithely provides recreation of environmental sounds, transcribed onomatopoeically, in which the human intrusion is absent:

> *Sea* – Boomflapswirlishoo.
> Boomflapswirlishoo.
> *Bird* – Weewee. Weewee.
> *Sea* – Boomflapswirlishoo.
> Swirlishoo. Swirlishoo.
> *Bird* – Weewee. Weewee. (*CPI*: 1232)

The poem acts as a reminder of the playfulness that MacDiarmid's linguistic experimentation is infused with, driven not only by the pursuit of political affirmation or metaphysical insight but by a sometimes frivolous creativity that capitalises on the enjoyability of sound and language. The imitation of the birdsong in this context feigns no authenticity, as in 'The Divided Bird', but evokes an image of natural equilibrium and equal exchange, the interdependent nature of their relationship emphasised by the repetition that suggests a continuity beyond the snapshot of the poem. MacDiarmid's impetus in this short experimental poem echoes that discussed earlier with regards to the challenging of human authorities in nature, both the lyrical first person and his human language abandoned. Without access to meaning, the poem incorporates birdsong much as it might a foreign language, sensitive to what is lost in the translation process and yet intent on its inclusion within a holistic poetic language.[26]

Through his attempt to literally transcribe birdsong onto the page, MacDiarmid breaks from the romantic precedent and appeals to a modernist approach: the imitative approach of 'The Divided Bird' carries traces of Eliot's transposition of the nightingale's song in 'The Fire Sermon' section of *The Waste Land*: 'Twit twit twit / Jug jug jug jug jug jug'.[27] That said, Eliot's language is comprehensible, albeit recontextualised, rendering his

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[26] This use of language and this style of sound poetry provides an example of MacDiarmid experimenting with forms and approaches that he would later deride in the work of other Scottish poets, namely Ian Hamilton Finlay. *The ugly birds without wings,* the pamphlet that MacDiarmid published in 1962, attacks Finlay, who was attempting to break free from the precedent of the Scottish Renaissance writers. MacDiarmid refers to Finlay and his peers as 'whining' and 'self-pitying *jeunes refuses*', remarking that if they were not able to secure publication then it was 'simply because they were not good enough.' Hugh MacDiarmid, *The ugly birds without wings* (Edinburgh, Allan Donaldson, 1962), pp.4-6.
In concrete and sound poetry Finlay utilised language that mimicked the spoken language of Scotland, as opposed to the dictionary-sourced Scots of the MacDiarmid group. As Greg Thomas explains, 'The comic, childish mode of [Finlay's] address partly seems a conscious affront to the erudite, etymologically preoccupied variant of Scots favoured by MacDiarmid, and by later Scottish-Renaissance poets such as Sydney Goodsir Smith.' Greg Thomas, *Border Blurs: Concrete Poetry in England and Scotland* (Liverpool: Liverpool University Press, 2019), p.74.
[27] Eliot, 'The Waste Land', p.31.

transcription of birdsong comparatively more recognisable than MacDiarmid's. Eliot returns to birdsong in *Four Quartets,* though here it is only referenced rather than recreated, in his appeals to 'The unheard music hidden in the shrubbery'.[28] Meanwhile, Pound's engagement birdsong in the *Cantos* results in the following extract from Canto LXXXII:

    f f
      d

          g
          write the birds in their treble scale[29]

Each driven by curiosity to what might be recreated and revealed through a 'language of exploration', Pound's incorporation of birdsong results in an appeal to musical notation, Eliot and MacDiarmid's to phonetic recreation.[30] Despite the different approaches, each recognises the significance of incorporating non-human expression within the poetic worlds that they construct, ecology integral to their respective modernist visions. Birdsong, in particular, is referenced as a symbol of what Robert Stark has identified in Pound as an 'expressive anxiety', representative of the difficulties of engaging with unfamiliar modes of expression.[31]

 The confrontation of such anxieties through the reference and recreation of unfamiliar forms of expression and language is central to MacDiarmid's poetry and his vision of world language. In approaching the foreign and unknown and attempting to translate it onto the page, connection is sought after in spite of difference, and affinities across boundaries – here between the human and non-human – are forged. In doing so, MacDiarmid disrupts anthropocentric hierarchies which are both real and tangible, and which can be read as metaphors for the broader social frameworks and systems of control that he challenges.

3.5. Music, Noise, and the Pursuit of Harmony

The musicality of birdsong and the musicality of poetry as two specific and yet immensely variable examples of language as sound, the former without words and the latter in which words are able to be broken down, rearranged and manipulated, also have evident links to

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[28] T. S. Eliot, *Four Quartets* (London: Faber & Faber, 1944), p.13.
[29] Ezra Pound, *The Cantos* (New York: New Directions, 1996), p.545.
[30] Ibid., p.679.
[31] Robert Stark, 'Pound among the Nightingales: From the Troubadours to a Cantible Modernism', *Journal of Modern Literature*, 32.3 (2009), pp.1-19 (p.5).

MacDiarmid's engagement with the expressivity of music itself. MacDiarmid's appeal to music is not unique amongst modernists: consider Ezra Pound's famous proclamation that 'Poetry is a composition of words set to music', or T. S. Eliot's suggestion that 'a poem, or a passage of a poem, may tend to realize itself first as a particular rhythm before it reaches expression in words, and that this rhythm may bring to birth the idea and the image'.[32] Developed out of the decadence of the *fin-de-siècle*, modernism carried the traces of Walter Pater's remarks that music was the art to which all others 'constantly aspire[d]', recognised by critic Stephen Benson as 'a model, for some *the* model, of a union of form and content, and so an erasure of the apparent dualism of the artwork'. [33]

MacDiarmid's engagement with music in poetic language certainly suggests an aspiration to its expressive capacities, as music is recurrently invoked when language otherwise falters, musicality a direct response to linguistic anxiety – as in the appeal to birdsong – and the attempt to capture the ineffable. In light of Aldous Huxley's suggestion that 'Any attempt to reproduce these musical statements "in our own words" is necessarily doomed to failure', it might be considered if this failure was not inbuilt to MacDiarmid's vision which, despite its forays into the non-human, ultimately remained confined by the limitations of human language.[34] Yet he refused to let these confines limit his creativity, recognising, as Josh Epstein has argued, that 'The literary effort to reproduce the emotional or cognitive effects of dissonance […] require[d] the writer to test the limits of representational language'.[35]

MacDiarmid embodies this restless creative anxiety in the transliteration of music and sound into onomatopoeic language and in the upholding of music as a symbol of ideal and unattainable expression. In 'The Last Trump', the repetition of the trumpet sound – 'Tootle-ootle-ootle-oo' (*CPI*: 29) – suggests a musicality beyond that attainable in plain language, whilst its playfulness acts as a balance to the seriousness attributed to language elsewhere. Onomatopoeia is similarly employed in 'Gairmscoile', in which the speaker reflects on their trialling of various linguistic approaches:

> Hee-haw! Click-clack! And Cock-a-doodle-doo!
> – Wull Gabriel in Esperanto cry

[32] Ezra Pound, 'Vers Libre and Arnold Dolmetsch', *The Literary Essays of Ezra Pound*, ed. T. S. Eliot (London: Faber, 1954), pp.437-40 (p.437).
T. S. Eliot, 'The Music of Poetry' [1942], *On Poetry and Poets* (London: Faber, 1957), pp.26-38 (p.38).
[33] Walter Pater, *The Renaissance: Studies in Art and Poetry* [1873], ed. Adam Phillips (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1986), p.86.
Stephen Benson, 'Introduction', *The Edinburgh Companion to Literature and Music*, ed. Delia da Sousa Correa (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2020), pp.495-514 (p.497).
[34] Aldous Huxley, 'Music at Night', *Music at Night and other essays, including Vulgarity in in Literature* (London: Chatto & Windus, 1943), pp.28-34 (p.30).
[35] Epstein, *Sublime Noise*, p.xxi.

Or a' the world's undeemis jargons try? (*CPI*: 74)

The association of Esperanto, an auxiliary language taken seriously by politicians and theorists of the time, with the language of nonsensical sounds provides a contrast with the rich vocabulary of older forms of Scots, MacDiarmid's preferred medium at this point.

Onomatopoeia that brings attention to the diversity of MacDiarmid's linguistic approach recurs in 'To Circumjack Cencrastus':

> If I'd only had hokum, hokum,
> Juist a wee think common hokum! […]
>
> If I'd only had hokum, hokum,
> A modicum o' hokum! […]
>
> I can joke 'em and sock 'em and choke 'em
> But the a'e thing needfu' is hokum. (*CPI*: 253)

Here, in stanzas that are separated off from the main body of the text, the repetition of 'hokum' (nonsense) emphasises the sounds of the language and the intentional constructed nature of the rhyme. MacDiarmid exhibits a peculiar combination of playfulness and aggression, dissatisfied with his own nation and yet optimistic in his renegotiation of its place in the constellation of world languages, literatures and cultures that he envisions.

MacDiarmid's mimicry of non-human noise in 'In the Slums of Glasgow' might be considered alongside these recreations of sound. The poem ends on an invocation of 'the babel of Glasgow', a thrumming industrial heartbeat:

> The great heart of Glasgow is sinking to rest,
> Na nonanunno nunnononana nananana nanu,
> Nunno nunnonanunneno nanena nunnanunnanut.
> We lie cheek to cheek in a quiet trance, the moon itself no more still.
> There is no movement but your eyelashes fluttering against me,
> And the fading sound of the work-a-day world,
> Dadadoduddadaddadi dadadodudadidadoh,
> Duddadam dadade dude dadadadadadodadah. (*CPI*: 565)

On first reading, MacDiarmid's onomatopoeic language emulates the hypnotic whirring of the industrial city, its lifeless monotony a contrast to the intimate connection between two lovers, 'cheek to cheek'. The sound is not musical in the same sense that water or birdsong were depicted as being in other poems discussed, yet it provides an example of what Josh

Epstein has identified as the 'noise' that is central to modernism, without which it would be 'difficult to articulate the value of music'. [36]

Sound and music coexist in MacDiarmid's poetic world alongside forms of language and expression that are foreign and unfamiliar, the joy of being read aloud as significant as any meaning. This dual function is integral to 'In the Slums of Glasgow' as, whilst meaningless to MacDiarmid's general reader, it has been revealed that the final lines are borrowed from Sanskrit literature. As Ramkrishna Bhattacharya explains, the lines in which the consonant 'n' is repeated 'are quoted verbatim from Bhāravi's *Kirātārjuniya*, a minor epic in Sanskrit literature', the last two lines presumably having been discovered by MacDiarmid in A.B. Keith's *History of Sanskrit Literature* (1920).[37] Bhattacharya notes MacDiarmid's prioritisation of the language as sound over meaning, and even then questions the possibility of correct pronunciation: 'One may legitimately ask if any reader, eastern or western, with not even a nodding acquaintance with Sanskrit, can ever hope to read the lines as they are required to be pronounced'.[38] Whilst the expressions provide a function and an emotive response without access to meaning, attainment of this meaning adds an international and intercultural dimension to the local scene, the universal implicated in the particular. In utilising these references therefore MacDiarmid blurs the boundary between human and non-human language, disguising foreign language as unfamiliar sound. Here, meaning is uncoverable with the correct tools, at odds with the birdsong which might be mimicked but in which meaning can only be speculated, or music more generally, in which meaning is subjective.

MacDiarmid engages with forms of musical expression specific to the Gaelic world in 'Lament for the Great Music', 'Island Funeral' and the 'Plaited Like the Generations of Men' section of *In Memoriam James Joyce.* Here, without fluency in the local language, MacDiarmid utilises music as a symbol of expressing a specific community identity, history and tradition.[39] In 'Lament for the Great Music', he invokes the pibroch as the 'language where language ends' (*CPI*: 470), symbolic of music which is able to communicate feeling without words. The music memorialises collected stories of grief, as poignant in the modern day as they were in times of clearance, battle and loss. This reverence for the pipes translates in 'Island Funeral' as a feeling of satisfaction upon

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[36] Epstein, *Sublime Noise*, p.xvi.
[37] Ramkrishna Bhattacharya, 'India in Hugh MacDiarmid's Poetry'. Online: <https://www.academia. edu/11633914/India_in_Hugh_Macdiarmids_Poetry>, pp.9-10.
[38] Ibid., p.10.
[39] As discussed elsewhere in the thesis, MacDiarmid was never fluent in Gaelic and never committed to learning it, despite his collaborative translations of Gaelic poetry with Sorley MacLean in the 1930s. Unwilling to appropriate a language he was unfamiliar with or to impose an unrelated language upon such localised settings and concerns – particularly English due to its imperial connotations – MacDiarmid appears to have resorted to the summoning of music in the place of language.

hearing the 'clear old Gaelic sound' 'like a phrase from Biederbecke's cornet', which 'Will sound out every now and again / Through all eternity' (*CPI*: 581; 583). Once again it is not 'language' in the conventional sense, yet it communicates an understanding of lament, loss and collective endurance, as applicable to 'all eternity' as to the scene directly depicted in the poem, relative to history and the modern moment. Having heard it, the speaker of the poem is 'content forever' (*CPI*: 583), his longing for an expression which captures the feeling of this specific experience and tradition fulfilled without the need for wordy language.

Music recurs as a significant form of expression in 'Plaited Like the Generations of Men' in *In Memoriam*, in a passage which invites the reader to 'Come, follow me into the realm of music' (*CPII*: 871). Here, the capacities of music are identified as being central to the vibrant diversity of specific and discordant expressions and languages which he aimed to bring together in the poem's holistic vision.

> At first you hear nothing, because everything sounds.
> But now you begin to distinguish between them. Listen.
> Each star has its own rhythm and each world its beat.
> The heart of each separate living thing
> Beats differently, according to its needs,
> And all the beats are in harmony.
>
> Your inner ear grows sharper. Do you hear
> The deep notes and the high notes?
> They are immeasurable in space and infinite as to number. (*CPII*: 871)

The passage, which continues over another two pages ('Come, follow me' – 'a million beings in a million ages' (*CPII*: 871-873)), acts as a reminder of MacDiarmid's accumulation of borrowed sources, having originally appeared in a letter from Italian-Austrian composer Ferruccio Busoni to his wife (3 March 1910).[40] Versified through the introduction of line breaks, the passage is not recreated in its entirety, yet the sentiment is translated successfully, intermeshed with references to Greece, China and Aodhagán Ó Rathaille in an interpenetration of musicality, vision and expression.

MacDiarmid utilises Busoni's words on harmony to symbolise the necessity of each individual contribution to the whole, a point worth linking to Raymond Williams's

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[40] Riach discusses Busoni's letter as MacDiarmid's source material in *Hugh MacDiarmid's Epic Poetry*, p.133-135, and relates both to 'On a Raised Beach'. He suggests that 'When Busoni talks of the simultaneous separateness and unity of all things, and of the music of planets and hearts being one with each other, we may recall MacDiarmid on that beach, shedding the encumbrances that muffle contact with elemental things' (p.134).

reminder that 'Individual originally meant indivisible'.[41] This, in turn, helps to visualise the coexistence of distinct and diverse components that MacDiarmid recurrently encourages throughout his enquiries into languages and identities, central to his idea of world language. Music symbolises a harmonious plurality of sounds which does not diminish each component, as illustrated through the catalogue of musical variations referred to in 'The Kind of Poetry I Want':

> For this is the poetry I seek
> – The vividness of the orchestra in the cobbling song,
> The unbelievable control of the crescendo of the fight in the street,
> Then the decrescendo, the watchman's horn and call,
> The lovely modulation to the lyrical,
> The peaceful and the miniature, (*CPII*: 1006-7)

Here, MacDiarmid combines classical music with the sounds of the everyday, each described in the terms of the other, as he appeals to the mingling of noises, sounds and expressions found in the world. The seeking of harmony or collaboration between discordant forms of music is symptomatic of MacDiarmid's broader pursuit of a metaphysical complementation for his vision of world language. With no existing framework of universal linguistic harmony to refer to, music provided the closest standard with which to illustrate his ideal, hence its recurring significance.

In his poetry MacDiarmid engages with various forms of music and noise as non-human, non-verbal modes of expression in which sound is prefaced and which he struggles to translate into 'human' language. In the case of noise, which refers to sounds with either no meaning or obscured meaning, he resorts to poetic methods used also in the depiction of water, revelling in the playful application of onomatopoeia, alliteration and repetition which creates an effect for the reader akin to that of reading a foreign language. In the case of music, musical expression is referenced both as a lofty, revered symbol of an ideal expression, and as a real art form encountered in everyday experience, a means of connecting people, without words, across time and space. Both resonate with MacDiarmid's idea of world language which borrows from a vast diversity of vocabularies and sources and which, without demanding a fluency in all the world's languages, asks the reader to draw connections, enquire into language beyond the limits of the poem, and to approximate meaning.

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[41] Raymond Williams, *Keywords: A Vocabulary of Culture and Society* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1983), p.161.

3.6. Silence and Solitude: The Absence of Sound as an Anticipation of Language

Yet MacDiarmid also insinuates that such music or sound is only able to be articulated due to the conditions of silence as an absence and apprehension of expression. This is the case in 'Lament for the Great Music' and 'Island Funeral' both literally and metaphorically: in the former, the breaking of silence with 'a shower of silvery notes' coming from 'a skurry of jackdaws' (*CPI*: 477) corresponds to the resurgence of a culture silenced by Anglophone oppression; in the latter, the rituals of 'this funeral of one who had been "a grand woman"' (*CPI*: 578) indicate the silence of an individual in death and the mourning of a community. They mourn the loss of this individual whilst MacDiarmid mourns the loss of their identity, symbolised by 'The sound of this cornet' which 'will be heard no more' 'in the rowdy chaos of the world' (*CPI*: 582). As in *Hamlet*, death embodies a loss of self-articulation and a collective pause: 'The rest is silence'.[42] In the case of 'Island Funeral', it is notable that the music which emerges from this silence, Beiderbecke's cornet solo, originated from beyond the culture depicted in the poem, suggestion of the regenerative value of international cultural exchange and translation, both consistent priorities within MacDiarmid's linguistic enquiries.[43] In 'Stony Limits', MacDiarmid explicitly draws attention to the coexistence of silence and music, recognising each to be pregnant with the threat or possibility of the other: 'I have seen Silence lift his head / And Song, like his double, lift yours' (*CPI*: 422). MacDiarmid would later refer to this simultaneity in an interview (1968), in which he explained that 'I regard silence as the great reservoir out of which articulation and expression come […] We can always refer it back to the source and the source can accommodate anything' (*RTIII*: 569).

Such apprehension of sound recurs in *In Memoriam*, in which MacDiarmid invokes 'Silence supervening at poetry's height', a 'supreme paraleipsis' (*CPII*: 771) following discussion of the Fascist manipulation of language in Nazi Germany. Here, a return to silence is necessary to create a pause for recollection and the consideration of next steps. It is a silence that does not mark the *end* of expression but remains 'Full of potential song as a humming bird / Is full of potential motion' (*CPII*: 771). Emerging out of the ashes of the Second World War, there is hope of and determination for a reenergised culture, more to be said and done. This marks a difference in tone from the ending of *A Drunk Man*, written thirty years earlier, in which silence has the final say as the drunk man faces the

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[42] William Shakespeare, *Hamlet* [1603], ed. Ann Thompson and Neil Taylor (London: The Arden Shakespeare, 2006), p.460.
[43] Leon Bismark (Bix) Beiderbecke (1903-1931) was an American cornetist and influential jazz soloist in the 1920s.

unappealing reality of returning home – 'Yet ha'e I Silence left, the croon o' a'' (*CPI*: 166)⸳ – and MacDiarmid, the poet 'Wha's deed owre often and has seen owre much' (*CPI*: 167), faces the momentous reality of the task he has set himself. The silence invoked here has a different seriousness and necessity about it. In this sense, as Alan Bold as suggested, MacDiarmid echoes Ludwig Wittgenstein's final proposition in *Tractatus logico-philosophicus*, that 'What we cannot speak about we must pass over in silence'.[44] In the wake of the First World War and the devastation witnessed, it speaks to the ending of *King Lear,* in which it is pronounced that 'The weight of this sad time we must obey; / speak what we feel, not what we ought to say'.[45] MacDiarmid may have suggested silence as always filled with potential, 'the great reservoir', but in times of distress it says enough by itself without verbal language.

Thus, MacDiarmid employs silence within his poems as a necessary precursor to the articulation of language. It features not only as a counterbalance to the sound of music, birdsong or speech, but as it pertains to thought, writing and reading as forms of language which do not operate via sound.

3.7. All Language as Translation

Through enquiries into non-human forms of expression, as forms of language, found in nature and music, MacDiarmid constructs a proposition of world language in which the 'world' encompasses a world which is ecological as well as social. In his approach to natural environments – through personification and granting them speech, through a questioning of human domination over nature, and through the pursuit of acceptance and understanding – he promotes a respectful approach to the non-human world that challenges anthropocentric hierarchies through the deconstruction of traditional language categories, reflective of his broader socialist and anti-imperialist convictions.

In modifying his linguistic and formal approaches, MacDiarmid recognises his own linguistic limitations and endeavours, in light of these, not to impose an authoritative voice or ego upon the non-human world: this is evident in the construction of an impenetrable wall of geological terminology in 'On a Raised Beach', as much as in the reliance on repetition, alliteration and onomatopoeia to highlight the importance of sound in 'Water Music', and the phonetic transcription of a bird's call in 'The Divided Bird'. MacDiarmid encourages his reader to consider the possibility of linguistic modes which lay beyond

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[44] Wittgenstein, *Tractatus Logico-Philosophicus*, p.89.
See Bold, *MacDiarmid*, p.218.
[45] William Shakespeare, *The Tragedy of King Lear* [1608], ed. R. A. Foakes (London: The Arden Shakespeare, 2001) p.392.

human comprehension, to embrace an open definition of language which encompassed forms of expression, articulation and communication without identifiable words or recognisable meaning, integrated alongside accessible language in a merging of foreign and familiar.

Translation, here relevant to the transposition of non-human forms of expression into poetic language, forms the central focus of the following chapter, which investigates the applicability to MacDiarmid's engagement with language of Walter Benjamin's claim that 'every evolved language (with the exception of the word of God) can be considered a translation of all the others'.[46] Returning to language as categorised socially and nationally, the chapter will consider the linguistic connections and distinctions which translation reveals, a reflection upon Hugh Kenner's proposition that 'We are to think not of babelized languages, but of Language, a mesh of filaments uniting all human beings'.[47] Throughout processes of translation and engagement with translated material MacDiarmid recurrently emphasises the porous boundaries between languages and the teasing out of a world 'language' which might connect them all – human and otherwise.

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[46] Benjamin, 'On Language as Such', pp.69-70.
[47] Kenner, *The Pound Era*, p.96.

Chapter Four

Task of the Modernist Translator: English Cribs and Collaborative Translation

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Several modern Scottish writers – Edwin and Willa Muir, Douglas Young, Alexander Gray and Edwin Morgan, to name a few – are remembered as translators as well as poets. MacDiarmid's place in this category is often overlooked, and yet, as this chapter explores, translation, or adaptation, of European poetry into Scots formed a significant and foundational element of his enquiries into languages and the development of his idea of world language. As Bill Findlay has remarked, 'An aspect of the inventiveness called forth by the condition of the language', 'the practice of aggrandisement and eclecticism' – as demonstrated by MacDiarmid's successors – 'was initiated by Hugh MacDiarmid', a legacy which this chapter explores.[1]

The following discussion builds upon recent critical enquiry such as that completed by Stewart Sanderson in his 2016 doctoral thesis on Scots-verse translation. Whilst Sanderson focusses primarily on the 'Second-Generation Scottish Renaissance' – Douglas Young, Sydney Goodsir Smith, Robert Garioch, Tom Scott, William J. Tait – he recognises MacDiarmid's influence as foundational to this generation of poets and translators, who both 'followed in [his] wake' and 'diverged from his example.'[2]

As discussed in the introduction, MacDiarmid was not fluent in the languages that he borrowed or translated from, and as such he relied upon the expertise of skilled translators: Babette Deutsch, Avrahm Yarmolinsky and Jethro Bithell, for instance, who published English cribs of poetry in Russian, German and Belgian, or Sorley MacLean, who assisted MacDiarmid with the translation of Gaelic poetry in the 1930s.[3] This approach sets MacDiarmid apart from the likes of Edwin Morgan who, Sanderson notes, 'insist[ed] on direct interaction' with the root languages, yet it is not that dissimilar to the approach of Robert Garioch, who 'undertook nearly all of his translations with the help of one collaborator or other.'[4] The manner in which MacDiarmid relied upon the guidance of others has been endorsed by Peter McCarey, who argues that 'The one thing every translator has to know is when they don't know; the rest can be learned from other people,

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[1] Bill Findlay, *Frae ither tongues: essays on modern translations into Scots* (Bristol: Multilingual Matters, 2004), p.9.
[2] Stewart Sanderson, *Our own language: Scots verse translation and the second-generation Scottish renaissance,* PhD Thesis (University of Glasgow, 2016), p.9.
[3] For more on MacDiarmid's collaboration with Sorley MacLean on the Gaelic translations see chapter five.
[4] Sanderson, *Our own language*, p.189.

one way or another'.[5] In relying upon English cribs to produce his translations in Scots MacDiarmid highlights the dependency upon English that was necessitated by his own lack of multilingual fluency, whilst also affirming both the method of indirect translation as a creative process and the distinction of Scots as an autonomous literary language. The role of indirect or second-hand translation has been debated, however the present study adopts the argument put forth by critic Gideon Toury, that 'second-hand translation is not some kind of aberration, as has long been the prevailing attitude', but a viable method worth critical attention in consideration of the elements it introduces into the target language and culture.[6]

This chapter first considers the modernist priorities which informed MacDiarmid's translation approach before providing a critical context for and comparative study of his 1920s adaptations into Scots from European poetry. Including but not limited to the adaptations incorporated in *A Drunk Man Looks at the Thistle*, the discussion investigates how, as 'the old model of a self-contained national literature' became 'increasingly inadequate', international languages and texts were looked to – building upon chapter one's discussion of an idea of Europe – in the aim of cultural regeneration at home and the establishment of an idea of 'world language' that operated across borders.[7] The chapter ends on a consideration of MacDiarmid's later commissions, indicative of translation as both a committed creative concern and a practical means of income.

4.1. The Task of the Translator: Intentions and Priorities

Walter Benjamin published 'The Task of the Translator' (1923) the year after MacDiarmid first appeared in print. In the essay Benjamin emphasised the distinction of the role adopted by the poet and the translator, arguing that 'Just as translation is a form of its own, so, too, may the task of the translator be regarded as distinct and clearly differentiated from the task of the poet'.[8] Edwin Morgan, similarly, later defended the translator as 'a rather peculiar person', required to inhabit two roles simultaneously.[9] In a study of MacDiarmid's adaptations into Scots it is critical to bear in mind the distinctiveness of these roles, and to

[5] Peter McCarey, 'Poetry and the Practice of Translation', *PN Review*, 35.1 (2008), pp.19-28, online: <https://www.proquest.com/docview/214251271?accountid=14540>.
[6] Gideon Toury, *Descriptive Translation Studies – and beyond, Revised Edition* (Amsterdam: John Benjamins Publishing Company, 2012), p.161.
[7] Peter France, 'Translators and their Worlds', *Translation and Literature*, 21.3 (2012), pp.295-298 (p.296).
[8] Walter Benjamin, 'The Task of the Translator', trans. Harcourt Brace Jovanovich in *Walter Benjamin: Selected Writings, 1: 1913-1926*, ed. Marcus Bullock and Michael W. Jennings (Cambridge: Belknap Press, 2004), pp.253-263 (p.258).
[9] Edwin Morgan, 'A Translator's Notebook: III. The Performance of Translation', ed. James McGonigal, *PN Review 235*, 43: 5 (2017), pp.68-72, online: <https://www.proquest.com/docview/1906105384?accountid=14540>.

consider the impact of a translator's priorities upon his formulation of an idea of world language, navigated and proposed through poetry.

Benjamin proceeds to argue that – unlike original poetry – 'translation must in large measure refrain from wanting to communicate something', clarifying that 'A real translation is transparent; it does not cover the original, does not block its light, but allows the pure language, as though reinforced by its own medium, to shine upon the original all the more fully'.[10] He emphasised translation as a meeting point between languages, rather than a complete transformation, suggesting that 'languages are not strangers to one another, but are, a priori and apart from all historical relationships, interrelated in what they want to express'.[11] Jacques Derrida reinforces this perspective in his affirmation that 'A translation would not seek to say this or that, to transport this or that context, to communicate such a charge of meaning, but to re-mark the affinity among the languages, to exhibit its own possibility'.[12] Such claims can be reflected on in light of reading MacDiarmid's adaptations, in consideration of his enquiry into the idea of world language as a language between and across languages, not the affirmation of one authoritative linguistic form but the proposition of a common struggle for expression between multiple localities, cultures, nations and social groups.

That said, it is significant that MacDiarmid primarily translates poetry into Scots, his native language, exercising his intimate knowledge of it in order to produce poetry which resonates with the cultural and linguistic priorities of the target language as well as foregrounding the 'transparent' communication of the original text. Morgan endorsed the necessity of 'an extensive awareness of [the translator's] own language' in 'producing a poem', as has Peter McCarey, who emphasises that 'mastery of your own language is the most important skill in the process'.[13] MacDiarmid exercised his 'mastery' in Scots, guided by the aim to reinvigorate Scottish literature through increased contact with foreign elements, thereby 'gathering literary resources', 'enriching an underfunded literature' and 'diverting literary assets', processes that Pascale Casanova has recognised as integral to translation into any 'language on the periphery'.[14] Combining an appreciation for European literature and languages, discussed in chapter one, with his familiarity with the rhythms and sounds of Scots, discussed in chapter two, MacDiarmid was able to bring his

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[10] Benjamin, 'The Task of the Translator', p.260.
[11] Ibid., p.255.
[12] Jacques Derrida, 'Des Tours de Babel', trans. Joseph F. Graham, in *Difference in Translation*, ed Joseph F. Graham (London: Cornell University Press, 1985), pp.165-248 (p.186).
[13] Morgan, 'A Translator's Notebook, p.43.
McCarey, 'Poetry and the Practice of Translation'.
[14] Casanova, *The World Republic of Letters*, p.134.

translation practices in line with his poetic priorities, each guided by a restless curiosity in, and appetite for, language.

As in previous chapters, political priorities and concerns of authority and control prove similarly central to linguistic practice in the case translation. The investigation of this chapter is thus in-keeping with Susan Bassnett's argument that 'The question of power relations is fundamental to any thinking about translation' and Derrida's advice that 'One should never pass over in silence the question of the tongue in which the question of the tongue is raised and into which a discourse is translated'. [15] The cultural and political significance of the original languages of the texts that MacDiarmid adapted are considered throughout this chapter's discussion, alongside the impact of his use of English cribs, the implication of his translation into Scots upon the reframing of it as an autonomous literary language, and other creative priorities and choices that are exhibited.

4.2. Early Adaptations into Scots

MacDiarmid's earliest 'adaptations', prior to those included in *A Drunk Man Looks at the Thistle*, encompassed conflicting reactions to the First World War, reflective of his drive to recalibrate a Scottish identity within Europe.[16] These adaptations indicate the literary value of the Scots language, on par with the languages and cultures that MacDiarmid carries over into it. As John Corbett writes,

> Literary translation into Scots is a long-established practice. Gavin Douglas observed in the sixteenth century that the Scots word-stock is stretched by such projects. The desired effect of such translations is not simply that new words are created and old words revived – current words are also given new associations. For instance, a writer may take a word which is associated with a particular register of Scots, possibly a low register, and include it in a high-style passage in a translated text – and in so doing begin to change the expectations that people have of the suitability of those lexical items for particular situations.[17]

The changing and challenging of linguistic expectations is central to MacDiarmid's translation process, as this chapter explores. Whilst some adaptations were included in *Sangschaw* and *Penny Wheep*, the first examples which will be focussed on remained uncollected until the publication of MacDiarmid's *Complete Poems* in 1978.

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[15] Susan Bassnett, 'Translation' in *The Handbook of Creative Writing*, ed. Steven Earnshaw (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2007), pp.367-373 (p.368).
Derrida, 'Des Tours de Babel', p.166.
[16] Translations are primarily referred to as adaptations from this point onwards, in-keeping with MacDiarmid's use of the term in footnotes.
[17] John Corbett, *Language and Scottish Literature* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 1997), p.61.

In 1923 MacDiarmid published 'Peace', adapted from the Dutch of Pieter Corneliszoon Hooft, and 'Sorrow and Song', suggested by the Polish of Adam Mickiewicz, both in Scots.[18] There is no evidence that MacDiarmid was familiar with Dutch or Polish, just as he was not fluent in the root languages of later adaptations; whilst the assumption is that these translations also stemmed from English cribs, MacDiarmid's exact sources remain unknown.

MacDiarmid's frequent usage of elisions in the Hooft adaptation accentuates the rhythm of the Scots, whilst the thematic emphasis upon the natural 'warl', wi' […] muckle mount'ins, twined wi' streams; / Speckled wi' cities ringed aboot wi to'ers' (*CPII*: 1238) speaks to the prioritisation of rural landscapes and cosmic speculation in MacDiarmid's own early lyrics. The poem approaches the 'peace' that 'mak's little countries great' (*CPII*: 1238) in an expression of self-confidence that might as easily be applied to Scotland as any other small nation in the aftermath of war. MacDiarmid translates not only the language but also the concerns of the seventeenth-century Golden Age that Hooft responded to, into his own twentieth-century context of disruption and devastation. Adaptation offers MacDiarmid an inroad to other cultures and identities, opening up space for the suggestion of affinities and the teasing out of shared experiences between them.

'Sorrow and Song', 'suggested by' the Polish of Mickiewicz, presents a similar momentum which utilises the rolling sounds of the Scots language in emulation of the sounds of the sea:

> The black seas lounder doon upo' the san's
> An', ebbin', leave them bricht wi' shells.
>
> Sae aye the onrushin' o' dule's black tide
> A routh o' bonnie sang foretells. (*CPII*: 1239)

The assonance of 'lounder doon' and 'the san's/ An', ebbin'' acts as an echo of the waves which the words depict, repetitive, cyclical. In this depiction of the musicality of a seascape, language and landscape are intertwined, the image depicted a coherent experience. Once again, familiar and unfamiliar languages from home and abroad meet in their attempt to translate the language of the natural environment into poetic language, speaking to concerns discussed in the previous chapter.

In *Sangschaw*, MacDiarmid includes two short translations: 'You Know Not Who I Am', adapted from the German of Stefan George, and 'The Last Trump', adapted from the

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[18] Hooft (1581-1647) was a Dutch historian, poet and playwright, associated with the Dutch Golden Age in literature. Mickiewicz (1798-1855) was a Polish poet, dramatist and activist who became acquainted with Aleksandr Pushkin and other Russian writers and intellectuals in Moscow.

Russian of Dmitry Merezhkovsky.[19] Both had been translated into English by Babette Deutsch and Avrahm Yarmolinsky, included in their anthologies of *Contemporary German Poetry* (1923) and *Modern Russian Poetry* (1921) respectively.[20]

MacDiarmid's adaptation of George's 'You Know Not Who I Am' is an expressive translation which, despite the inversion of the syntax to bring it closer in line with the conventions of Scots speech, evidently endeavours to retain a spirit akin to that of the original. As Alan Riach suggests, 'the Scots is both present and somehow elusive, hard and real but also moving fast and emotionally quick'.[21]

Stefan George, 'You Know Not Who I Am'	Hugh MacDiarmid, *After the German of Stefan George*
You know not who I am … but this accept:	Ye kenna wha I am – but this is fac'.
I have not yet by earthly word and deed	I ha'ena yet by ony word or ac'
Made myself human… now the year is close	Made mysel' human … an' sune I maun tak'
Wherein I shall determine my new form.	Anither guise to ony I've yet ta'en.
I change but my true selfhood I still keep	I'll cheenge: an' yet my ain true sel' I'll hain,
I shall not be as you: the choice is made.	Tine only what ye ken as me. I' vain,
So bring the votive branches and the wreaths	Ye'll seek to haud me, an' ye needna murn,
Violet-colored pale with asphodel	For to a form ye canna ken I'll turn
And bear before you the pure flame: farewell!	'Twixt ae braith an' the neist: an whan I'm gane
The step is taken on the farther path	Ye'll ha'e o' me what ye ha'e haen o' a'
And what I would be I became. At parting	My kindred since licht on earth 'good da' –
There rests with you the gifts my kindred give:	*The braith that gi'es ye courage, an' the fain*
My breath that quickens power and courage in you	*Wild kiss that aye into yer saul maun burn.*
My kiss that burns deep inward to your soul.[22]	(*CPI*: 22)

As in the other adaptations discussed this poem chimes with consistent priorities and themes in MacDiarmid's project: in 'I'll cheenge: an' yet me ain true sel' I'll hain',

[19] George (1868-1933) and Merezhkovsky (1865-1941) were both prominent Symbolists who wrote in opposition to the 'elite' intellectuals in their respective national cultures. George is particularly interesting within the discussion on 'world language', having invented his own language, 'lingua romana', which combined Spanish and Latin words with German syntax. George translated writers including Dante, Shakespeare and Baudelaire into German. Merezhkovsky was married to Zinaida Hippius, one of whose poems MacDiarmid includes an adaptation of in *A Drunk Man*.
[20] The sources of MacDiarmid's Scots adaptations in *Penny Wheep* (1926) - 'The Dead Liebknecht', after the German of Rudolf Leonhardt, and 'Under the Greenwood Tree', 'The Three Fishes' and 'The Robber', of anonymous Cretan origins – are more obscure.
[21] Alan Riach, 'Was there ever a "British" literature?', *Association for Scottish Literary Studies* (Glasgow: 2007), online: <https://asls.org.uk/publications/books/free_downloads/was_there_ever/>, p.3.
[22] Stefan George, 'You Know Not Who I Am', *Contemporary German Poetry*, ed. Babette Deutsch and Avrahm Yarmolinsky (New York: Harcourt, Brace and Company, 1923), p.58.

MacDiarmid alludes to the contradictions and multitudes by which he, and his poetry, are characterised, whilst in 'For to a form ye canna ken I'll turn', he nods to his adaptability and his looking to new forms – of language and poetry – for cultural regeneration. In his adaptation, therefore, MacDiarmid translates concerns which are universal, shared between languages as integral concerns of the human experience.

It is a similar propulsion which results in 'The Last Trump', suggested by the Russian of Dmitry Merezhkovsky:

**Dmitry Merezhkovsky,
'The Trumpet Call'**

Over earth awakes a whirring,
And a rustling, and a stirring,
Trumpet-voices fill the skies:
"Lo, they call us. Brothers, rise!"
"No. The darkness holds unshaken.
I will sleep, and not waken.
Do not rouse me. Do not call.
Do not strike the coffin-wall."

"Now you are not sleep. Resounding
Sternly, the last trump is sounding.
They are rising from the tomb.
As from the maternal womb
Of the opened earth forth-flinging,
From their raves the dead are springing."

"No, I cannot. All unuttered
My words died. My eyes are shuttered.
I shall not believe their lies.
I shall not, I cannot rise!
Brother,—I am ashamed and shrinking,—
Dust, corruption,—rotting, stinking!"

"Brother, God has seen our prison.
All shall wake, and all be risen.
All shall yet be judged by Him.
Cherubim and seraphim
High the holy Throne are bearing!
Here our heavenly King is faring.
Brother, he must live who dies.
Glad or grieving, thou shalt rise."[23]

**Hugh MacDiarmid,
'The Last Trump'** *(Suggested by the Russian)*

Owre the haill warl' there's a whirrin'
An a reishlin' an' a stirrin'
An' a muckle voice that cries:
'Let aal men rise!'

*'Na, Na, still the nicht is black.
I'll sleep on an winna wauk.
Dinna reeze me. Dinna ca'.
Chapna' on my coffin-wa'.'*

*'Fegs, ye canna sleep, for noo
Gabriel mak's a hullaballoo.
Hark his trumpet's awfu' toot.
A' the deid maun up an' oot.'*

Tootle-ootle-ootle-oo.
Tootle-oo.

*'Gawa', gawa', an' let me lig,
Nae God 'ud awn me i' this rig
Or ha'e sic a rotten, stinkin'
Corpse as mine in's sunlicht blinkin'.*

*Gawa', gawa'.' 'Na, Na, my freen!
In yer grave ye're no' unseen.
Black affrontit tho' ye be
Up ye get - it's God's decree!*

*Up an' oot – an' say nae mair
Gleg or laith's no' here nor there.
Up – or God's begood to speir
Gin a'body's here!'*

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[23] Dmitry Merezhkovsky, 'The Trumpet Call', *Modern Russian Poetry*, ed. Babette Deutsch and Avrahm Yarmolinsky (New York: Harcourt, Brace and Company, 1921), pp.58-9.

Here, the sounds of the Scots verbs emulate the actions they denote. Displaced from the stern conventions and confines of standard English, the Scots version is playful and fun, as MacDiarmid rhymes 'noo' with 'hullaballoo' and 'tootle-oo', a juxtaposition to the seriousness of the subject matter. Through adapting the language MacDiarmid maintains the momentum of the English crib yet transforms the tone of the poem, indicating the joy to be found in sounds and words as an antidote to difficulty. The poem acts as a response to, rather than an adaptation of, Merezhkovsky's poem, a meeting point between languages which initiates conversation across boundaries of space, culture and genre.

'The Dead Liebknecht', a poem written 'After the German of Rudolf Leonhardt' which MacDiarmid originally published in *Scottish Chapbook* in 1923 then republished in *Penny Wheep* (1926), dwells in that seriousness which 'The Last Trump' moves away from. It is a poem rooted in the devastation that defined European socialism in the aftermath of war:

> His corpse owre a' the city lies
> In ilka square and ilka street
> His spilt bluid floods the vera skies
> And nae hoose but is darkened wi't. (*CPI*: 57)

Yet this loss coexists with a resilient sense of hope, as symbolised in the corpse which 'lies smilin' underfit' 'wi' his white teeth shinin' yet' (*CPI*: 57). MacDiarmid's acknowledgement in the poem of the death of Karl Liebknecht, co-founder with Rosa Luxemburg of the Spartacist League and Communist Party of Germany (KPD), highlights his awareness of the local significance of European politics, whilst speaking more generally to his longstanding belief in the potential necessity of violence in revolution.[24] His decision to republish this poem in a collection indicates an understanding of the struggle that Liebknecht had come to symbolise, and the importance of remembering – and communicating memory of – this struggle.

Whilst 'The Dead Liebknecht' is the most explicitly political of these early adaptations, each poem that MacDiarmid responds to and adapts adheres to similar priorities as those which guided his own original early poetry: a support for small nations,

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[24] Liebknecht (1817-1919) was killed in the Spartacus Revolt of January 1919, when he and Luxemburg were shot to death by counterrevolutionary volunteers. The two became remembered as martyrs for the socialist cause. Leonhardt (1889-1953) was a writer and activist who had fought alongside Liebknecht and Luxemburg with the USPD in the 1918 revolution.

a belief in the struggle of revolution, a focus on the natural environment, and the exploration of language as communicative of both local identities and shared experience.

4.3. Continental Symbolism: Adaptation in *A Drunk Man Looks at the Thistle*

A Drunk Man Looks at the Thistle (1926), described by Alan Bold as MacDiarmid's 'most sustained creative endeavour', builds upon the confidence in Scots which is illustrated in these early lyrics and adaptations.[25] It is a 2685-line exploration of the diverse linguistic possibilities of Scots in modern poetry, centred upon the symbols of the thistle – Scotland's national flower – and the poem's narrator – an intoxicated representation of Scottish masculinity. The drunk man, who lies 'deid dune' in a ditch by the roadside yet inspired as he looks up at the moon, envisions Scotland within the wider continent, world and universe, recognising that 'We're ootward boond frae Scotland' (*CPI*: 83; 100).

Amidst the drunk man's postulations, MacDiarmid incorporates Scots adaptations of poems by Alexander Blok, Else Lasker-Schüler, Zinaida Hippius and Georges Ramaekers, translated from Russian, German and Belgian using English cribs supplied by Babette Deutsch, Avrahm Yarmolinsky and Jethro Bithell. The polyglottery of the drunk man's discourse emulates the confluence of familiar and foreign that Grieve had experienced at 'Thistleonica', discussed in chapter one, inclusive of a continental framework of language and reference. The drunk man's ability to recall and translate the words of European poets, even in his inebriated declaration of national self-determination, explicitly consolidates the sense of a Scottish continental identity, or psyche, which challenges the authority of the English language and the imperial frameworks of control and hegemony associated with it.

The adaptations of poems by Alexander Blok (1880-1921) and Zinaida Hippius (1869-1945) which MacDiarmid includes in *A Drunk Man* speak to his committed interest in and engagement with Russian literature and politics, an attempt to reframe a cultural and ideological idea of 'Europe' post-war and post-1917. MacDiarmid apostrophises Dostoevsky throughout the poem, an introduction to the concept of a 'dynamic myth' (*SE*: 56) which he perceived to connect Scotland and Russia, East and West. MacDiarmid's preoccupation with Russian influence has been explored extensively by Peter McCarey and Patrick Crotty, the latter of whom notes that '*A Drunk Man*'s most significant debts to Russia are intellectual rather than poetic'.[26]

Throughout his Blok adaptations, MacDiarmid indicates an effort to localise the scenes depicted, suggestive of a desire for assimilation rather than a complete juxtaposition

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[25] Bold, *MacDiarmid*, p.180.
[26] Crotty, '"Like Pushkin, I"', p.55.

between the familiarity of the Scots target language and the comparative foreignness of Blok's language and style. As McCarey notes, the 'rendering' 'stands out as a great leap towards the sublime', but it does so within its particular context.[27]

As such, Blok's 'restaurant' becomes a 'howff' in the Scottish slums, whilst the drunk man's illusion of the 'silken leddy' are viewed in a haze of Scotland's national drink, whisky, rather than wine (*CPI*: 88-9).[28] Blok's female muse reappears as a 'strange Goddess', illustrative of MacDiarmid's struggle to grapple with an enticing unknown, alluring and wrapped in symbolism (*CPI*: 90-1).[29] Yet the framing of the translations is subtle, and MacDiarmid's adaptation of 'The Lady Unknown', the first Blok poem, is introduced effortlessly into the movement of the poem and the drunk man's inebriated discourse. A direct comparison of the English crib which MacDiarmid worked from and the resulting Scots text helps to visualise the changes that MacDiarmid made.

Alexander Blok, 'The Lady Unknown'	Hugh MacDiarmid, *Adapted from the Russian*
Of evening hangs above the restaurant A humid, wild and heavy air. The Springtide spirit, brooding, pestilent, Commands the drunken outcries there.	At darknin' hings abune the howff A weet and wild and eisenin' air. Spring's spirit wi' its waesome sough Rules owre the drucken stramash there.
Far off, above the alley's mustiness, Where bored gray summerhouses lie, The baker's sign swings gold through dustiness, And loud and shrill the children cry.	And heich abune the vennel's pokiness, Whaur a' the white-weshed cottons lie, The Inn's sign blinters in the mochiness, And lood and shrill the bairnies cry.
Beyond the city stroll the exquisites, At every dusk and all the same: Their derbies tilted back, the pretty wits Are playing at the ancient game.	The hauflins 'yont the burgh boonds Gang ilka night, and a' the same, Their bonnets cocked; their bluid that stounds Is playin' at a fine auld game.
Upon the lake but feebly furious Soft screams and creaking oar-locks sound. And in the sky, blasé, incurious, The moon beholds the earthly round.	And on the lochan there, hauf-herted Wee screams and creakin' oar-locks soon', And in the lift, heich, hauf-averted, The mune looks owre the yirdly roon'.
And every evening, dazed and serious, I watch the same procession pass; In liquor, raw and yet mysterious, One friend is mirrored in my glass.	And ilka evenin', derf and serious (Jean ettles nocht o' this, puir lass), In liquor, raw yet still mysterious, A'e freend's aye mirrored in my glass.
Beside the scattered tables, somnolent	Ahint the sheenin' counter gruff Thrang barmen ding the tumblers doun;

[27] McCarey, *Hugh MacDiarmid and the Russians*, p.72.
[28] Deutsch and Yarmolinsky, *Modern Russian Poetry*, pp.29-30.
[29] Ibid., p.128.

And dreary waiters stick around.
"In vino veritas!" shout violent
And red-eyed fools in liquor drowned.

And every evening, strange, immutable,
(Is it a dream no waking proves?)
As to a rendezvous inscrutable
A silken lady darkly moves.

She slowly passes by the drunken ones
And lonely by the window sits;
And from her robes, above the sunken ones,
A misty, faintin perfume flits.

Her silks' resilience, and the tapering
Of her ringed fingers, and her plumes,
Stir vaguely like dim incense vaporing,
Deep ancient faiths their mystery illumes.

I try, held in this strange captivity,
To pierce the veil that darkling falls—
I see enchanted shores' declivity,
And an enchanted distance calls.

I guard dark secrets' tortuosities.
A sun is given me to hold.
An acrid wine finds out the sinuosities
That in my soul were locked of old.

And in my brain the soft slow flittering
Of ostrich feathers waves once more;
And fathomless the azure glittering
Where two eyes blossom on the shore.

My soul holds fast its treasure renitent,
The key is safe and solely mine.
Ah, you are right, drunken impenitent!
I also know: truth lies in wine.[30]

'In vino veritas' cry rough
And reid-een'd fules that in it droon.

But ilka evenin' fey and fremt
(Is it a dream nae wauk'nin' proves?)
As to a trystin'-place undreamt,
A silken leddy darkly moves.

Slow gangs she by the drunken anes,
And lanely by the winnock sits;
Frae'r robes, atour the sunken anes,
A rooky dwamin' perfume flits.

Her gleamin' silks, the taperin'
O' her ringed fingers, and her feathers
Move dimly like a dream wi'in,
While endless faith aboot them gethers.

I seek, in this captivity,
To pierce the veils that darklin' fa'
– See white clints slidin' to the sea,
And hear the horns o' Elfland blaw.

I ha'e dark secrets' turns and twists,
A sun is gi'en to me to haud,
The whisky in my bluid insists,
And spiers my benmaist history, lad.

And owre my brain the flitterin'
O' the dim feathers gangs aince mair,
And, faddomless, the dark blue glitterin'
O' twa een in the ocean there.

My soul stores up this wealth unspent,
The key is safe and nane's but mine.
You're richt, auld drunk impenitent,
I ken it tae – the truth's in wine!

(*CPI*: 88-9)

MacDiarmid maintains the quatrain structure and regular iambic tetrameter of the English crib, adhering to the traditional form in his adaptation of its visionary symbolism. Certain lines are barely altered other than the compression of expression: as in the change from 'And in my brain the soft slow flitting' to 'And owre my brain the flitterin'' or from 'Ah, you are right, drunken impenitent!' to 'You're richt, aul drunk impenitent'. Here, the drunk man's desire to make sense of the situation is evident in how such ideas are conveyed more succinctly, with less time to pause, the endeavour to get to the root of the vision almost

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[30] Ibid., pp.129-30.

uncontrollable as it occurs to his restless mind. MacDiarmid adherence to the rhyme scheme highlighting the conscious enforcement of form as a kind of order imposed upon an otherwise untethered or uncontrollable vision. As McCarey recognises, MacDiarmid's adaptation, as Blok's original poem, 'begins in everyday life and only returns to it after a mystical journey', the movement and direction carried over.[31]

In his most significant adaptations to the poem MacDiarmid introduces vocabulary and imagery with sinister and surreal undertones, reflective of the strange interface between inner vision and outer reality that occurs through the layers of borrowed and translated language. Amidst a darkened vennel, filled with the shrieks of 'bairnies', MacDiarmid replaces Blok's bakery with an inn, suggestive of night-time drinking, whilst the washing hung out to dry denotes a familiar image of Scottish slums. The drunk man spectates upon but does not intervene in the scene which he sees illuminated by the light of the moon, 'dimly like a dream wi'in', incapable of action as he feels held 'in this captivity' by the silencing force of the silken leddy's apparition and the contemplation of its occurrence inside his mind rather than out in the world. In MacDiarmid's poem, as in the original, 'Irony, blasphemy and parody express the difficulty these poets had in relating a vision of universal harmony to the chaos of life around them', chaos that was represented by 'the city'.[32]

Yet despite this stasis, MacDiarmid's adaptation exhibits a quiet determination which sustains the poem's momentum and priorities despite the drunk man's faltering confidence. This is encapsulated in MacDiarmid's assertiveness in the eleventh stanza ('I guard dark secrets' tortuosities…'/ 'I ha'e dark secrets' turns and twists…'), in which not only is the rhyme scheme simplified so as to emphasise the meaning but the drunk man's ownership of these 'dark secrets' indicates the reclamation of agency over his own history. Elsewhere, MacDiarmid's specification of 'Elfland' in the tenth stanza – 'hear the horns o' Elfland blaw', adapted from 'an enchanted distance calls' – carries ambiguous connotations, suggestive of Scotland's connections to the 'Elfland' of Norse and Celtic mythology as well as *The King of Elfland's Daughter* (1924), by Anglo-Irish writer Lord Dunsany (Edward Plunkett), and Alfred Tennyson's 1847 poem 'The Princess': 'O sweet and far from cliff and scar / The horns of Elfland faintly blowing'.[33] In such a reference, which initially appears minor yet gains resonance upon realisation of it being an intentional addition rather than a faithful translation, the reader is reminded of the plurality of

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[31] McCarey, *Hugh MacDiarmid and the Russians*, p.74.
[32] Ibid., p.78.
[33] Alfred, Lord Tennyson, 'The Princess' (1847), online: <https://www.gutenberg.org/files/791/791-h/791-h.htm>.

languages and cultures which meet and interact in the adaptation, an indicator of both local and international significance. Whilst the inclusion of adapted poetry within *A Drunk Man* appeals to the significance of international poetry and creative appropriation across borders and languages – collaborative between Blok and MacDiarmid as the poets and, in this case, the translators, Deutsch and Yarmolinsky – the importance of national and individual particularity, of vision, vocabulary and priorities of expression, is retained throughout.

Moreover, it is worth noting the impact that the translation choices of Deutsch and Yarmolinsky had on the text that MacDiarmid produces, particularly given the alternative interpretation offered by Dina Belyayeva in a more recent translation of 'The Lady Unknown'. Whilst Deutsch and Yarmolinsky translated the final line of the poem as 'the truth lies in wine', Belyayeva suggests it as 'the truth resides in guilt', pointing out that the words 'wine' and 'guilt' are homonyms in Russian.[34] Whilst inebriation is a more explicit theme in the poem, guilt is also present; in the drunk man's recognition of Scotland's wasted potential, in his own individual misgivings, and in his remembrance of Jean's waiting at home for his return. The detachment from reality which he achieves through his fixation on the vision of the silken leddy enables the drunk man temporary ignorance of this guilt, yet it remains evident beneath the surface, leading the reader to consider his underlying reluctance towards sobriety and accountability.

MacDiarmid sustains the themes and imagery of 'The Lady Unknown' in the adaptation of a second Blok poem, 'The Unknown Woman', consulted in the same Deutsch and Yarmolinsky anthology:

Alexander Blok, 'The Unknown Woman'	**Hugh MacDiarmid, *Adapted from the Russian***
I have foreknown Thee! Oh, I have foreknown Thee, Going, The years have shown me Thy premonitory face. Intolerably clear, the farthest sky is glowing. I wait in silence Thy withheld and worshipped grave. The farthest sky is glowing: white for Thy appearing. Yet terror clings to me. Thy image will be strange.	I ha'e forekent ye! O I ha'e forekent. The years forecast your face afore they went. A licht I canna thole is in the lift. I bide in silence your slow-comin pace. The ends o' space are bricht: at last – oh swift! While terror clings to me – an unkent face! Ill-faith stirs in me as she comes at last, The features lang forekent … are unforecast.

[34] Alexander Blok, 'The Lady Unknown', trans. Dina Belyayeya, *RuVerses*, online: <https://ruverses.com/alexander-blok/unknown-woman/487/>.

And insolent suspicion will rouse upon Thy nearing.	O it gangs hard wi' me, I am forspent.

And insolent suspicion will rouse upon Thy
nearing.
The features long foreknown, beheld at last,
will change.
How shall I then be fallen!—low, with no
defender:
Dead dreams will conquer me; the glory,
glimpsed, will change.
The farthest sky is flowing! Nearer looms
the splendor!
Yet terror clings to me. Thy image will be
strange.[35]

O it gangs hard wi' me, I am forspent.
Deid dreams ha'e beaten me and a face
unkent,
And generations that I thocht unborn
Hail the strange Goddess frae my hert's-
hert torn!...

(*CPI*: 90-1)

Once again MacDiarmid's adaptation retains the metre and sestet format of the English version, yet the organic sounds and rhythms in the Scots suggest a closeness with the original Russian sentiment. The 'strange Goddess', a transmutation of the 'silken leddy' referred to previously, continues to swim in and out of the drunk man's vision, prompting a questioning of reality – 'Were you a vision o' mysel' / Transmuted by the mellow liquor?'. The idea of the 'vision' juxtaposes reality, as seen in the external world, with an imagination which is internal, occurring in the mind only. In his intoxicated, despairing state, MacDiarmid's drunk man confuses the two, crossing between one and the other without registering the shift, much as he crosses between original and borrowed, or adapted, language without recognition.

As opposed to the first hazy appearance of the female figure, here the 'Goddess' moves with purpose, from a 'slow-comin' pace', to 'oh swift!', and 'she comes at last'. Meanwhile, the poem's ruffled speaker is aggravated by her display of dream-like femininity, resulting in a brash overcompensation of his performed masculinity: 'dost thou mak' a thistle o' me, wumman?'. In this retort he highlights his own symbolic appropriation of her figure, recognising that he has been fixated on her just as he was fixated on the thistle; she does not exist outside of his symbolism of her, just as the thistle of the poem is no longer the thistle on the side of the road but a national symbol, packed with very specific connotations, and the 'Drunk Man' himself is a symbol too, of Scottish guilt and masculinity. Aileen Christianson has argued that the narrow portrayal of female figures in *A Drunk Man* is confined to lazy stereotypes:

> We have to have our own Caledonian Antisyzygy, where one part of us spins off
> with the hero, empathising and identifying, while the other irritably stamps the foot

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[35] Deutsch and Yarmolinsky, *Modern Russian Poetry*, p.128.

and says 'Hang *on* a minute. *I'm* the Jean, the Muse, I'm drawn by his eyes, his words, seen from the outside, *I'm* not included in *his* "I".[36]

In *A Drunk Man'*s exploration of the linguistic and literary possibilities of Scots MacDiarmid's focus on the female figure proves fleeting amidst the prioritised eroticisation of a masculine freedom to drink, philosophise, write poetry and address the nation. Christianson's criticism is echoed by Kirsten Stirling who finds MacDiarmid and the drunk man's perception of the nation as 'necessarily female' uncomfortable, particularly as he not only draws upon reductive representations of the female muse but, going further, 'superimposes the female onto the map of Scotland', rendering the idea of the nation a feminised symbol that might be attributed more space and attention than women themselves.[37] The centrality of the drunk man's subjectivity in the poem suggests that each aspect of the vision, each icon, is utilised as a representation of a fragment of his self, the ego that drives the vision forward, and is a liability which must not be ignored or downplayed in any scrutiny of the language used to do so.

In ending his adaptation of 'The Unknown Woman' on an exclamation – 'Hail the strange Goddess frae my hert's-hert torn!...' – MacDiarmid highlights the revelatory impact of the vision and brings the focus back to the speaker. The final ellipsis introduces pause for reflection and recollection as the discourse returns to the drunk man's original thought and the main body of the poem, ensuring that the adaptation sustains rather than interrupts the central momentum of the poem. The supplementation of Scots with European influence is not disruptive, as in later poetry which destabilises the hegemony of standard English as a world language, but is ultimately accommodating of continental thoughts and ideas. Under the guise of drunkenness, the speaker's language becomes uninhibited, enabling the interaction with borrowed and translated language in a syncretism of cultures which engages with plurality whilst ultimately always returning to the individual ego, much as, in the poem, MacDiarmid engages with internationalism whilst ultimately returning to the nation. 'Both Blok and MacDiarmid', McCarey writes, 'took on themselves the task of showing their country in place in the cosmos'; and between the nation and the cosmos were the international links and affinities which connected their country and culture to others.[38]

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[36] Aileen Christianson, 'Flyting with "A Drunk Man"', *Scottish Affairs*, 5 (1993), pp.126-13 (p.127).
[37] Kirsten Stirling, *Bella Caledonia: Woman, Nation, Text* (Amsterdam: Rodopi, 2008), p.15.
[38] McCarey, *Hugh MacDiarmid and the Russians*, p.92.

Similar priorities are evidently at play in MacDiarmid's adaptation of Zinaida Hippius's 'Psyche', also included in *A Drunk Man*.[39] Here, the inward gaze of the adaptation appeals to the drunk man's soul-searching as he navigates the forging and reclamation of individual and collective identities within the world, engaged with and revealed through language.

Zinaida Hippius, 'Psyche'	**Hugh MacDiarmid, *Adapted from the Russian***
A shameless thing, of every vileness capable, It is as drab as dust, as earthly dust. I perish of a nearness inescapable; Its fatal coils about my limbs are thrust.	A shameless thing, for ilka vileness able, It is deid grey as dust, the dust o' a man, I perish o' a nearness I canna win awa' frae, Its deadly coils aboot my buik are thrawn.
A shaggy poulp, embracing me, and pricking me, And as a serpent cold against my heart, Its branching scales are poisoned arrows sticking me; Worse than their bite: repulsion's horrid smart.	A shaggy poulp, embracin' me and stingin', And as a serpent cauld agen' my hert, Its scales are poisoned shafts that jag me to the quick - And waur than them's my scunner's feerfu' smert!
Oh, were its sting a veritable knife in me! But it is flaccid, clumsy, still and numb. Thus sluggishly sucking the very life in me, A torpid dragon, dreadful, deaf, and dumb.	O that its prickles were a knife indeed, But it is thowless, flabby, dowf, and numb. Sae sluggishly it drains my benmaist life, A dozent dragon, dreidfu', deef, and dumb.
With stubborn rings it winds in mute obscurity And clings caressingly, its purpose whole. And this dead thing, this loathsome black impurity, This horror that I shrink from – is my soul.[40]	In mum obscurity it twines its obstinate rings And hings caressin'ly, its purpose whole; And this deid thing, whale-white obscenity, This horror that I writhe in – is my soul! (*CPI*: 94)

In MacDiarmid's adaptation, the shapeshifting and suffocating presence of the poem, described in the English crib as 'A shameless thing, of every vileness capable', 'A shaggy poulp ' and 'A torpid dragon', assumes the form of the thistle itself, first overpowering,

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[39] Hippius, with husband Merezhkovsky, opposed Bolshevism, leaving Soviet Russia for Poland in 1919. The inclusion of Hippius's poem in *A Drunk Man* suggests a willingness to engage with European creativity and aesthetics regardless of ideological difference of political or moral priorities. Hippius's poetry was deeply religious and responded to an evolving social conscience about the morality of sexuality, discourse which is relevant to MacDiarmid's engagement with the 'silken leddy' here and which speaks to many of MacDiarmid's early poetic concerns, explored in some depth in chapter two.
[40] Deutsch and Yarmolinsky, *Modern Russian Poetry*, p.70.

prickly and painful – 'Its scales are poisoned shafts that jag me to the quick' – then diminished and weak, contemptuously helpless – 'thowless, flabby, dowf, and numb'. MacDiarmid barely tampers with form, structure or imagery, carrying over alliteration and rhyme, and substituting individual words for close correlatives of Scots vocabulary, seen in the replacement of 'torpid' with 'dozent', 'still' with 'dowf' or 'very' with 'benmaist'.

However, there are a few key alterations worth pausing on. MacDiarmid's substitution of 'limbs' for 'buik' in the first stanza, for instance – in which 'Its fatal coils about my limbs are thrust' becomes 'Its deadly coils aboot my buik are thrawn' – indicates a prioritisation of the literary over the corporeal, the physicality of 'my buik' affected by the smothering force, as his speaker's body has been temporarily abandoned by the side of the road. The word 'buik' also carries connotations of the Bible, significant both within MacDiarmid's translation of a poet renowned for her religiosity and within the context of a poem which posits certain idols – spiritual and secular – in the pursuit of truth or meaning. Meanwhile, the use of 'thrawn' in place of 'thrust' suggests particularly Scots connotations of distortion or deformity, indicative of an 'other'-ness which defamiliarizes the symbol depicted through shrewd alienation rather than force. This resonates with MacDiarmid's choice to include the foreign-language poetry in an adapted Scots form, rather than in their non-translated original language or even in the English crib version, subtle integrations which suggest difference without disrupting or contradicting the central ethos and progression of the poem.

As in the previous adaptations discussed, MacDiarmid also utilises 'Psyche' as an opportunity to suggest the speaker's reclamation of authority. In changing the final line from 'This horror that I shrink from – is my soul' to 'This horror that I writhe in – is my soul!', again an exclamation, the speaker moves from fear to confrontation, despite discomfort. In doing so, he acknowledges writing – language – as the means by which repressive circumstances will be overcome and progressive change will be achieved.

MacDiarmid's adaptation of Georges Ramaekers's ode to a thistle speaks to this idea of creation and regeneration on a national scale. In the aftermath of the First World War, MacDiarmid recognised Ramaekers's Belgium as a country 'comparable in size' to Scotland and yet aggravatingly more successful in the development of a national literary revival, setting an example of sorts for Scotland and Scottish literature to aspire to.[41] MacDiarmid had previously responded to the Belgian literary and artistic renaissance of

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[41] Georges Ramaekers wrote poetry in French and edited the journal *Le Catholique.* His volumes of poetry include *Les Chant des Trois Règnes* (1906).
From a letter to *Aberdeen Free Press* (30.01.22), in McCulloch, *Modernism and Nationalism*, pp.21-23 (p.22).

the 1890s in a 1922 essay on 'Scotland and Belgium' with the conviction that 'What Belgium could so achieve, Scotland can also achieve' (*RTI*: 29). MacDiarmid's response to the Belgian revival has been criticised by Sascha Bru being guided by a 'badly informed understanding of Belgian literature', informed disproportionately by one particular study, Maurice Gauchez's *Histoires des lettres francaises de Belgique a nos jour* (1922), whilst Michael Shaw has similarly critiqued MacDiarmid's assessment as 'reductive'.[42] Each casts doubt over MacDiarmid's authority to draw international comparisons between the situation in Belgium and that in Scotland, a point worth bearing in mind when considering his prose on the matter; in the context of the adaptation of Ramaekers, however, the fact of Belgium's influence upon MacDiarmid's approach to national revival is perhaps enough.

As in the previous examples discussed, MacDiarmid consulted an English crib in the composition of his adaptation, here supplied by Jethro Bithell, as published in *Contemporary Belgian Poetry* (1911). Very little is changed, as a comparative reading indicates:

Georges Ramaekers, 'The Thistle'	**Hugh MacDiarmid, *From the Belgian***
Rooted on herbless peaks, where its erect And prickly leaves, austerely cold and dumb, Hold the slow, scaly serpent in respect, The Gothic thistle, while the insects' hum Sounds far off, rears above the rock it scorns Its rigid virtue for the Heavens to see. The towering boulders guard it. And the bee Makes honey from the blossoms on its thorns.[43]	Rootit' on gressless peaks, whaur its erect And jaggy leafs, austerely cauld and dumb, Haud the slow scaly serpent in respect, The Gothic thistle, whaur the insect's hum Soon's fer aff, lifts abune the rock it scorns Its rigid virtue for the Heavens to see. The too'ering boulders gaird it. And the bee Mak's honey frae the roses on its thorns. (*CPI*: 92-3)

The distinction of the Scots and English languages as they look and sound is evident, however MacDiarmid is less reliant on the specific nuances of Scots vocabulary and more focussed on the production of a literal translation, thus emphasising commonality over

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[42] Sascha Bru, 'The Prism of Propaganda: Hugh MacDiarmid's Modernism and the Belgian Literary Revival', *Scottish Literary Review*, 3.1 (2011).
Michael Shaw, *The Fin-de-Siècle Scottish Revival: Romance, Decadence and Celtic Identity* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2019), p.98.
[43] Georges Ramaekers, 'The Thistle', *Contemporary Belgian Poetry*, ed. Jethro Bithell (London: Walter Scott Publishing Co., 1911), p.124.

difference. MacDiarmid's clearest digression from the crib is in the substitution of the word 'roses' in place of 'blossoms' in the final line: 'the bee / Mak's honey frae the roses on its thorns'. Such a change, although subtle, indicates the conscious selectiveness behind his word choice: the 'rose', symbolic of England and Englishness, is loaded with connotations beyond the implications of the Belgian poem, enabling MacDiarmid, once again, to contextualise Ramaekers's poem more locally and translate the sentiment into one with specific relevance for the drunk man's consideration of Scotland's subjugation within the United Kingdom.

MacDiarmid accommodates Ramaekers's poem, deemed a 'Belgian refugee' (*CPI*: 93), within *A Drunk Man* self-consciously and critically, following the adaptation with a disparaging response:

> And sall a Belgian pit it into words
> And sing a sang to't syne, and no' a Scot?
> Oors is a wilder thistle, and Ramaekers
> Canna bear aff the gree – avaunt the thocht!
>
> To meddle wi' the thistle and to pluck
> The figs frae't is *my* metier, I think. (*CPI*: 93)

As the drunk man's bruised nationalist ego once again intrudes, he mocks his own reliance upon European poetry as fuel for linguistic and cultural regeneration in Scotland. It is important that MacDiarmid's inclusion of adaptation from Ramaekers introduces this critical element. Whilst it maintains the project of collaboration and conversation between minority European languages and cultures, this ensures that the concerns and achievements of Scotland are asserted as a priority, a reminder of the specific perspective that MacDiarmid was writing from and of the endeavour to maintain this subjectivity within his appeal to internationalism. This is a fundamental distinction which repeatedly informs and shapes his ideas around world language which, whilst being a vision of connectedness and affinities across borders, retains within its multiplicities the distinctiveness of each component identity, a vision of collage rather than uniformity.

The final adaptation which MacDiarmid includes in *A Drunk Man* is that 'Suggested by' the German of Else Lasker-Schüler's 'Sphinx'.[44] Here, MacDiarmid builds further upon the poem's symbolism of the thistle and moon, once again localising the unfamiliar language within the drunk man's immediate context and concerns.

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[44] See chapter one for discussion of MacDiarmid's poem 'Der Wunderrabbiner von Barcelona', a response to Lasker-Schüler's short story of the same title.

The adaptation, not a literal translation like that of Ramaekers's poem, is also worked from an English crib supplied by Deutsch and Yarmolinsky in *Contemporary German Poetry* (1923). Comparison of the English and Scots versions offers insight into the creative liberties which MacDiarmid took in his approach:

Else Lasker-Schüler, 'Sphinx'	**Hugh MacDiarmid, *Suggested by the German***
She sits upon my bed at dusk, unsought,	The Mune sits on my bed the nicht unsocht,
And makes my soul obedient to her will,	And mak's my soul obedient to her will;
And in the twilight, still as dreams are still,	And in the dumb-deid, still as dreams are still,
Her pupils narrow to bright threads that thrill	Her pupils narrow to bricht threids that thrill
About the sensuous windings of her thought.	Aboot the sensuous windin's o' her thocht.
And on the neighbouring couch, spread crepitant,	But ilka windin' has its counter-pairt
The pointed-patterned, pale narcissus fling	– The opposite 'thoot which it couldna be –
Their hands toward the pillow, where yet cling	In some wild kink or queer perversity
	O' this great thistle, green wi' jealousy,
His kisses, and the dreams thence blossoming, –	That breenges 'twixt the munelicht and my hert…
On the white beds a sweet and swooning scent.	
	(*CPI*: 95-6)
The smiling moonwoman dips in cloudy swells,	
And my wan, suffering psyches know new power,	
Finding their strength in conflict's tortured hour.[45]	

MacDiarmid transfigures the subject of Lasker-Schüler's poem, the 'moonwoman', into the moon itself, personified with feminine qualities, and shortens the text from four stanzas to two, significantly modifying the form of the poem. The substitution of 'dumb-deid' for 'twilight' and 'nicht' for 'dusk' indicate the setting of the poem as being darker and later at night, corresponding to the descriptions of the drunk man's surroundings which precede it.

Whilst little is altered in the first stanza, in the second stanza MacDiarmid breaks from the form and imagery of the crib, re-emphasising instead the drunk man's preoccupation with the symbolic thistle and moon. The consideration of opposites, highlighted in the proposition that 'ilka windin' has its counter-pairt / – The opposite

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[45] Deutsch and Yarmolinsky, *Contemporary German Poetry*, p.110.

'thoot which it couldna be', suggests the centrality of dialectics to progressivism, relevant to the poem's movement between Scots and adapted European languages, and to the drunk man's switching between outside reality and inner vision, each necessary to the poem's direction.

MacDiarmid's substitution of 'this great thistle, green wi' jealousy' for the 'pale narcissus' of the English crib is a critical assertion, once again, of the national perspective, as he replaces the narcissus's Greek connotations of vanity and early death with the thistle's symbolism of resilience, determination and the overcoming of adversity. Local and national concerns are made more immediate, despite the international wanderings of the drunk man's mind.

As in the other adaptations discussed, whilst engagement with European literatures and languages is evidently prioritised within MacDiarmid's endeavour to construct a notion of a Scottish continental identity, this is never overshadowed by the subjectivity of the vision. His inclusion of translated German, Russian and Belgian poetry within *A Drunk Man Looks at the Thistle* indicates foundational approaches and concerns – internationalism, engagement with unfamiliar languages, dialectics, discomfort, and the pursuit of affinities alongside the assertion of distinction – which went on to inform and shape his ideas of world language as much as they informed his project to establish a Scottish literary revival in the 1920s, the former very much growing out of the latter.

4.4. Translation After 1930: *To Circumjack Cencrastus* and Beyond

In 1930, MacDiarmid includes an English adaptation of Rainer Maria Rilke's 'Requiem for a Friend' (1908) in *To Circumjack Cencrastus*. *Cencrastus*, which features allusions that will be discussed in chapter six, sees MacDiarmid explore Scotland's plural languages, traditions and cultures, with particular emphasis on Scottish Gaelic. Unlike the suggestion of assimilation implicit in the Scots adaptations in *A Drunk Man*, MacDiarmid's inclusion of the Rilke translation in this context highlights his intention to, paradoxically, distance himself from the English language whilst inhabiting it and utilising it, an outcome of 'my dooble life and dooble tongue, / – Guid Scots wi' English a' hamstrung' (*CPI*: 236). This apparent contradiction proves a vital foundation to the study of later poetry, in which English is used as the primary language yet continually defamiliarized and destabilised through interaction with other languages. As with earlier adaptations, MacDiarmid's Rilke adaptation was also worked from an English crib, provided by J. S. Buist.[46] Without access

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[46] Margery Palmer McCulloch and Kirsten Matthews, 'Transcending the Thistle in *A Drunk Man* and *Cencrastus'*, in *The Edinburgh Companion to Hugh MacDiarmid*, pp.48-68 (p.62).

to Buist's manuscripts, it is not possible to fully determine how much MacDiarmid changed, however the suggestion is that the text was altered very little.[47]

The poem is an elegy for Paula Modersohn-Becker (1876-1907), artist and close friend of Rilke, who died young and tragically in childbirth. The figure of Modersohn-Becker provides MacDiarmid with a rare opportunity to confront human intimacy, emotion and a female subject quite different to the juxtaposed symbols of the muse-like 'silken leddy' and the domesticated Jean in *A Drunk Man*. As the speaker mourns the loss of both personal and artistic potential brought about by Modersohn-Becker's death – 'And so you have died, as other women die' (*CPI*: 201) – the lament is both painfully personal and simultaneously generalised, the specific tied into recognition of a universal experience. The vulnerability of the poem sits uncomfortably within the Scots text which frames it, the use of English and adaptation of another's words inserting distance between MacDiarmid and the sensitivity of the subject. Margery McCulloch suggests that the choice to include such an intimate interjection is indicative of 'the Scottish poet's struggle to maintain his artistic equilibrium in the face of a hostile society', suggestive of a faltering confidence in the face of the immense task he has set himself.[48]

That said, in its confirmation that 'You were both woman and poet, and both form part / Of what our memories distort as you' (*CPI*: 202) the poem indicates a willingness to recognise the complexity of identity, with gender, sex, profession and creativity acknowledged as being equally central to Modersohn-Becker's life and the loss of that life. Within the context of *To Circumjack Cencrastus,* the notion of identities as multifaceted and multiple is integral, central to the increasingly significant role of Gaelic within his regenerative vision for the nation, as eventually for the idea of world language, as a 'diversity-in-unity' (*Albyn*: 4).

MacDiarmid's role as a translator in the Rilke adaptation, as in the earlier adaptations into Scots, is contestable given his reliance upon English crib texts. The intention of this discussion has been to redress the contribution of these adaptations to his developing ideas about plural identities and languages, communication across borders, and confrontation with the unfamiliar, and, as such, to restate the process of translation as any adaptation of linguistic form and context. This is particularly relevant to the affirmation of

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[47] MacDiarmid does not credit Buist, yet nor did he credit Deutsch and Yarmolinsky or Bithell. The viability of deeming a poem adapted *from* English *into* English is dubious, and raises questions over to what degree this might be regarded as a translation, however this thesis would argue that the recontextualization of the poem and any degree of change to its presentation makes it such. MacDiarmid later referred to 'Translations from […] the German of Rainer Maria Rilke by myself' (*GT:* xxiv), a claim that presumably includes the present text.

[48] Margery Palmer McCulloch, 'The Undeservedly Broukit Bairn: Hugh MacDiarmid's To Circumjack Cencrastus', *Studies in Scottish Literature*, 17.1 (1982), pp.165-85 (p.173).

Scots as a modern literary language in the adaptations in *A Drunk Man* but applies also to the Rilke text and to earlier adaptations in which engagement with foreign language literature enables MacDiarmid to introduce unfamiliar or uncomfortable sentiments into his poetry in order to challenge preconceived limitations such that his vision was enabled to continually grow outwards and progress onwards, revitalised through contact with other forms of language throughout the world.

4.5. Commissions: Translation as a Committed Concern

Following the publication of *A Drunk Man* and *To Circumjack Cencrastus*, however, MacDiarmid's approach to translation changed: a plurality of languages was prioritised and the adaptation of entire poems was replaced by extensive referentiality to international cultures and non-translated vocabulary, as discussed in chapter six. Other than a handful of adaptations included in later volumes, the translation that MacDiarmid undertook in subsequent years was confined to the translation of Gaelic poetry, explored in chapter five as a distinct priority, and the completion of commissioned translations, discussed in the remainder of this chapter.[49]

The *Handmaid of the Lord* (1930), a translation of Ramon Maria de Tenreiro's Spanish novel *La esclava del Señor* (1928) which MacDiarmid makes dubious claims to being responsible for, will first be considered, followed by a study of the 1963 English translation of Harry Martinson's Swedish science-fiction poem, *Aniara: Review of Time and Space* (1956), and the 1972 English performance (and 1973 publication) of Bertolt Brecht's *The Threepenny Opera* (1928).

In a list of works provided in *Second Hymn to Lenin* (1935), MacDiarmid includes Martin Secker's 1930 publication of Tenreiro's novel *The Handmaid of the Lord*, an anonymous translation which he credits himself as being responsible for.[50] On the publication itself, and in later lists of works, MacDiarmid's name is credited nowhere, throwing doubt upon his contribution to the translation. While the present study encourages a cautious approach to accepting MacDiarmid's claim, the possibility is worth considering as the project corresponds to broader trends in his engagement with international literature and language being explored.

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[49] Other adaptations include: 'Killing No Murder', published in *Second Hymn to Lenin* (1935), cited as a 'free translation' of Erich Mühsam's 'Die Stimme des Gemordeten' (*CPI*: 536); adaptations from the German of Rilke, 'To Make One Thing' (*CPI*: 662-4) and 'The Young Audh' (*CPI*: 666-7), included in *Lucky Poet* (1943); and Scots versions of Stefan George's 'My Sailor Son Comes Home' (1936) and Guiseppe Ungaretti's 'Contrite' and 'Weep and Wail No More' (1970) (*CPII*: 1433).

[50] Martin Secker was one of the biggest British publishers of translated material in the 1920s and 30s, who had close ties to D. H. Lawrence, George Orwell, Edwin and Willa Muir and Compton Mackenzie.

There are reasons to be doubtful of MacDiarmid's claim, and yet it is not impossible that he was involved in the translation at some stage. Whilst Alan Bold notes that 'Spanish was not a language that MacDiarmid knew well', nor were the other languages which he translated from. [51] Bold also highlights that Secker had offered MacDiarmid a £50 payment to complete the translation; this, and the project itself, are referenced in letters to George Ogilvie (January 1928) (*Letters*: 94), Roland Muirhead (November 1928) (*Letters*: 295) and Oliver St. John Gogarty (*Letters*: 379). In the last of these letters, MacDiarmid refers to Dr. Walter Starkie, Professor of Spanish at Trinity and proclaimed translator of Spanish literature whom MacDiarmid had met through Gogarty and George Russell (A.E.) in Dublin (*Company*: 192). It is possible that Starkie offered guidance on the Tenreiro translation, much as it is possible that J. B. Trend, the Professor of Spanish at Cambridge who wrote the introductory note to the 1930 publication, also provided input, however without correspondence to evidence either of these speculations they remain impossible to confirm.

The likelihood of MacDiarmid's influence upon the resulting novel is evident only in the inclusion of a short Scots poem on the final page, translated from Rosalia de Castro's 'A Certain Cure':

Rosalia de Castro	Hugh MacDiarmid (?)
Morte negra, morte negra,	O Death's a black, camsteerie wight,
Cura de dôres e enganos,	A sairtain cure for ilka ill;
Por qué non mata-las mozas,	He winna tak' the lasses bright,
Antes que as maten os anos?[52]	But leaves auld Time alane tae kill![53]

The use of 'camsteerie' (unmanageable, riotous, wild) and, in particular, the spelling of 'sairtain' (certain) in the translation are distinctive and are not used by MacDiarmid elsewhere, not that this rules out his input given his propensity for the acquisition and trialling of new vocabulary across texts.

Moreover, Trend, in the introduction, explains that this translation had been 'turned into a North British dialect by one who has it as her native tongue', suggesting the translator, at least of the poem, as a woman.[54] Trend elsewhere refers to de Castro, with whom he had corresponded, as 'the poetess of our countryside', the implication being that

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[51] Bold, *MacDiarmid*, p.454.
[52] Ramon Maria Tenreiro, *The Handmaid of the Lord* (London: Martin Secker, 1930), p.330.
[53] Ibid., p.331. The poem is also included in *CPII*: 1452, though this offers no further insight into, or confirmation of, MacDiarmid having translated it.
[54] Ibid., p.1.

it was her rural background which influenced the distinction of the poem from the main body of the novel, hence its inclusion in Scots rather than English.[55]

The anonymity of the novel's translator renders it impossible to credit to MacDiarmid but it is also impossible to rule him out, given the trail of correspondence which signals his consultation. No definitive conclusions can be made regarding the priorities or tastes which are present in the translation, yet if MacDiarmid had been involved, it signals the importance of considering commissioned translations as an economic activity as well as a creative one, a means of income more so than an impassioned project. This applies to the following commissions discussed, in which the credibility of MacDiarmid's involvement is sound.

The collaborative processes behind MacDiarmid's English translation of Harry Martinson's Swedish science-fiction poem *Aniara: Review of Time and Space* (1956), published in 1963 by Hutchinson, are thoroughly documented in comparison. It is known that this commission was proposed as a joint project to Elspeth Harley Schubert and MacDiarmid in 1960, each offered 'approx. £150 per head' by the Council of Europe and a bonus payment were the book to sell over 3000 copies.[56]

Aniara is an epic poem, consisting of 103 cantos, which centres upon a tragedy in space. Martinson described the work as 'a tragedy about modern man's situation and about man's hybris before matter. He has reached further than he can grasp, but is still insatiable'.[57] It resonates with the continual, restless development of MacDiarmid's vision, never content to be confined or complete but always evolving in response to an ever-changing, unpredictable world. Much as in the differences traversed in *A Drunk Man Looks at the Thistle* – between languages and cultures, between vision and reality – *Aniara* recounts a journey not only through space but through 'the gorge' 'between fact and illusion', immediacy and imagination both equally important to the onward momentum of the poem, to the journey of the space-ship, and to the adaptation of language to the new and unprecedented environment.[58] Linguistic limitations are thematised in the poem in a manner that echoes MacDiarmid's expression of his own anxieties and concerns in *In Memoriam James Joyce,* published a year prior to Martinson's poem.

Martinson, through the unfamiliar environment of space, explores the limits of human expression, and the applicability and exhaustibility of familiar language:

[55] Ibid., p.330.
[56] Letter from Elspeth Schubert (26.02.60) in Manson, *Dear Grieve*, p.441.
[57] Quoted in Leif Sjöberg, 'Harry Martinson: From Vagabond to Space Explorer', *Books Abroad*, 48.3 (1974), pp.476-485 (p.484).
[58] Harry Martinson, *Aniara,* trans. Hugh MacDiarmid and Elspeth Harley Schubert (London: Hutchinson, 1963), p.123.

> I mean just that languages do not suffice
> to express everything contained in that spectacle.
>
> The richest of the languages we know,
> Xinombric, has some three million words,
> but the galaxy you are watching now
> contains far more than ninety billion suns.
> Has any human brain ever mastered all the words
> in the language of Xinombra?
> Not a single one!
> Now you understand?
> And yet – do you?[59]

Out in the unfamiliar territory of space, the individuals on the spaceship find that their old language is no longer suitable to the new conditions that they must adapt to. Their struggle captures the difficulties intrinsic to regeneration and modernisation, social and cultural projects which, in *Aniara* as in MacDiarmid's vision, are deemed the responsibility of writers, namely poets. In *Aniara* it is the poetess who assumes this task:

> All our words, worn out by use
> and employed to describe mountains,
> expanses of water, and landscapes
> to which they were never adequate
> have been exhausted by a race
> which could not foresee a time would come
> when these words so carelessly squandered
> would be needed just where they really apply
> – on this space-ship bound for the Lyra.
>
> What then is left to us, who need
> every word we can find to express
> these boundless reaches of the autumn of space?[60]

The idea of words being 'worn out by use' and 'so carelessly squandered' is reminiscent of MacDiarmid's consideration of silence, Karl Kraus and the fascist weaponization of language – 'the impotence of language / In the face of the event' (*CPII*: 776) – in *In Memoriam*, a frustration at the failures of writers and thinkers to recognise the potential for action that lay latent in language.[61]

In the face of language that fails to correspond to the new phenomena and ideas which must be named or communicated, Harry Martinson coins neologisms such as

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[59] Ibid., pp.112-13.
[60] Ibid., pp.13-14.
[61] This, and its implications as a poetic response to the ideological weaponization and manipulation of language is explored in chapter seven.

'Mima', 'Karelia', and 'Douris'. Tord Hall identifies these as 'symbols which conjure up pictures of objects and happenings beyond the range of the reader's imagination'.[62] This has implications upon the translation of the text, in which specific vocabulary has no equivalent in English and must be carried over, or the omission of an entire canto, as in the case of Canto 42.[63] Martinson also utilises portmanteau words to allude to futuristic technology, terms which William Jay Smith and Leif Sjöberg have argued 'can usually only be hinted at in English without destroying the balance of the poem'.[64] MacDiarmid suggestively translates such vocabulary into English as 'phonoglobe', 'sensostat', 'Photophag' and 'gondilder', as well as providing an index of 'interpretations' at the end of the text.[65] In doing so, sensitively, he affirms the flexibility of language to translate both meaning and form – the terms are connotative yet remain unfamiliar – across boundaries.

Martinson himself expressed uncertainty about the prospect of translation, concerned of the space it introduced for meaning to be lost, 'partly because human feeling in its more refined expressions can never be completely internationalized'.[66] In light of this concern he offered MacDiarmid input and guidance throughout the translation process, so as to ensure certain priorities were maintained; as Schubert recounts, 'Harry Martinson has emphasised over & over again that the "narrative lilt" of the poem must be strictly adhered to (most of it is in iambic verse, ten beats to a line)'.[67] Schubert's own input was critical to the resulting translation, as she provided MacDiarmid with a literal translation of the poem which he then transcribed into verse.[68] Their collaborative process is documented in correspondence, comparable to the process adopted between himself and Sorley Maclean which is discussed in the following chapter, and which makes evident the concerns about 'the best way of tackling our collaboration' that guided their approach.[69]

As in the analysis of earlier adaptations, a comparative study of Schubert's prose translation and MacDiarmid's published verse, enabled through the consultation of manuscripts in the National Library of Scotland, offers insight into MacDiarmid's input, for instance in Canto 1, Verse 1:

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[62] Tord Hall, 'Introduction', Martinson, *Aniara*, pp.vii-xviii (p.xii).
[63] The translation of this canto for inclusion in a subsequent edition (1998) by Stephen Klass and Leif Sjöberg affirms MacDiarmid's decision to omit this canto as being guided by priorities other than the mere difficulty of translation. It suggests that MacDiarmid could have translated the canto but *chose* not to. See: <https://gsproject.edublogs.org/gs-texts/texts-used-in-2017/aniara-by-harry-martinson-3/>.
[64] William Jay Smith and Leif Sjöberg, 'On Harry Martinson', *The American Poetry Review*, 14.4 (1985), pp.25-6 (p.26).
[65] Martinson, *Aniara*, p.33; p.35; p.74; p.79; pp.132-33.
[66] Quoted in Sjöberg, 'Harry Martinson', p.482.
[67] Letter from Elspeth Schubert (28.02.60) in Manson, *Dear Grieve*, p.441.
[68] Schubert translated other works from Swedish including Olle Hedberg's novel *Animals in Cages* (1962 [1959]), Eyvind Johnson's *The Days of his Grace* (1968 [1960]) and Ragnar Sohlman's book on *The Legacy of Alfred Nobel: the story behind the Nobel prizes* (1983).
[69] Manson, *Dear Grieve*, p.441.

Elspeth Harley Schubert	Hugh MacDiarmid
My first meeting with my Doris glows with light that can /may outshine the light itself. But let me say quite simply that this first and just as simple meeting with my Doris is now a daily sight which anyone can see, in the transit halls which hustle/pass along refugees to starting fields/points of embarkation, for emergiency [sic] flights up to the tundra planet (Mars) – now that Earth has reached the point/come so far that she, because of radiation poisoning, must have a time of peace and rest and quarantine.[70]	The occasion I met my Doris first Sometimes outshines light's self altho' That experience, so simply too, Can now be anyone's any day In every transit hall from which Forced emigrants are bundled away To taking off points for the desolate Tundra-planet of Mars, now Earth, Through radiation poisoning, Must rest in quarantine awhile.[71]

MacDiarmid's verse retains all the major points of reference in Schubert's literal translation, ensuring that the subject and themes which are introduced at the opening of the poem are carried over. No unfamiliar vocabulary is introduced, the only linguistic point to note being his substitution of 'refugees' for 'Forced emigrants', in which the 'Forced' adds emphasis to the lack of agency in the circumstances of those depicted. Lineation is evidently the priority, as MacDiarmid illustrates how language need not necessarily be transformed via translation at the level of individual words, but reorganised, the change in form still irrevocably impacting the communication of ideas and images.

In another example taken from later in the poem, the glossaries provided by Schubert to explain Martinson's neologisms can be analysed as they assisted MacDiarmid in the translation of meaning where there was no clear substitution in English. Schubert's extra clarification, as well as her literal translation, is therefore vital in shaping the published verse, as exemplified in the following comparison of Canto 12, Verses 3-5:

Elspeth Harley Schubert	Hugh MacDiarmid
you gammar ner dej and get jail and dori. But do as I/like me, I'm never sitting lori. Here never slumbers chadwick, putar Daisi, I am moved/pushed in gejdern, I am vlamm and gondel, my dejd is gander and my fejd is rondel and vept in taris, gland in deld and yondel. And daily swings the yurg, I feel bewildered,	"You'd go rotten, jail-bound and lazy But be like me – I'm never still. My thread never goes slack. I'm fed Into the gaily moving piston all the time, Heedless and at home, rounded and sleek". Gaily swings the yurg – and I'm bewildered.

[70] National Library of Scotland, MS.27012/27.
[71] National Library of Scotland, MS.27012/35.

the grief I nourish threatens to be dispatched with/in the company of this human child who baffles space with slang from Dorisburg.[72]	The grief's nourish threatens to disappear In the company of this human child Who baffles space with Dorisburg slang.[73]

As illustrated, MacDiarmid chose not to coin an English equivalent for the underlined neologisms, nor to leave them in their non-translated form – as he did so often in his own work, discussed in chapter six – but instead used the definitions supplied by Schubert so as to explicate the meaning of the word, unpacking the unfamiliar language without the retention of its alienating effect in the poetic context.[74] The distinction between this creative decision and that repeatedly displayed in his own work, where specific and specialist forms of language were deployed with the intention of defamiliarization, is suggestive of the different priorities at work in his role as translator as opposed to those that informed his own poetry.

The various constraints of the collaborative translation evidently put pressure on MacDiarmid, who wrote to Ian Milner in 1960 of the publishers 'clamouring for its completion' and the fact that 'that's not a thing that can be hurried' (*Letters*: 661). Yet his concern and conscientiousness appears to have paid off, as the translation proved generally favourable, with Schubert herself deeming it 'liberal and sensitive'.[75] MacDiarmid responded to criticisms from English writer and critic Alfred Alvarez – who called the translation 'a Harris Tweed version of the poem… simple, unpretentious and serviceable' – and from a reviewer in *The Times Literary Supplement*, by defending his creative liberties, arguing 'what is poetic license for, if it is not permissible to call a planet a star' (*Letters*: 588-9).[76]

MacDiarmid's translation of *Aniara* highlights the difficulty of navigating translation as both a poet, with original and subjective approaches and concerns, and a commissioned translator, intended to fulfil objectives and meet the expectations of others invested in the project: whilst his influence is palpable throughout, as highlighted in the

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[72] National Library of Scotland, MS.27011/37.
[73] National Library of Scotland, MS.27012/53.
[74] The definitions that Schubert provides MacDiarmid with include the following: 'gamma ner dej': go to pieces, get sloppy, degenerate; 'jail': assoc. with prison, jailbird; 'dori': lethargic, lazy, without guts; 'lori': a dozing posture, arms crossed, taken from the picture of a Madagascar ape with the same name; 'chadwick': assoc. with the discovery of the neutron (Sir John C.), sewing thread; 'gejdern': regularly moving piston, a pivot in its groove, assoc. with the English word 'gay'; 'vlamm': 'don't-carish'; 'gond': sinful, assoc. with goldonda, the land of Gond. Accessible in manuscript in National Library of Scotland, MS.27011/37.
[75] Letter from Elspeth Schubert (16.10.61) in Manson, *Dear Grieve*, p.454.
[76] Alfred Alvarez, '"Aniara" Pa Engleska', *Dagens Nyheter* (06.05.63)*,* article retained in EUL MS.2973-2974. Quoted in Graeme D. Eddie, '"ANIARA: en revy om människan i tid och rum" – 60 years since its publication by Bonniers, Stockholm- 1956-2016', *Archives at University of Edinburgh* (blog), online: <https://libraryblogs.is.ed.ac.uk/edinburghuniversityarchives/tag/hugh-macdiarmid/>.

accessibility of his versification and the commitment to questions around the capacities of language and the task of poetry, the economic circumstances which partly saw the translation into fruition are also crucial to understanding the place of the text within his corpus.

MacDiarmid's translation of Bertolt Brecht's *The Threepenny Opera* (1928), first performed at The Prince of Wales Theatre in London in 1972 and published by Eyre Methuen in 1973, was a similar commissioned project.[77] Here, his agreement to translate Brecht, an orthodox Marxist and experimental playwright who developed his art form to incorporate the promotion of leftist ideologies, adheres to his own political sensibilities; as with *Aniara,* whilst the translation was a financially-incentivised commission, MacDiarmid's overarching priorities and vision – political and creative – appear to have informed his participation in the project.[78]

The play itself, based upon John Gay's 1728 play *The Beggar's Opera*, is centred upon a group of individuals living in poverty at the time of a royal coronation.[79] Brecht had retained Gay's plot and characters, primarily adapting the music in his modern take on the opera, working from a translation provided by Elisabeth Hauptmann. Although MacDiarmid's 1972 translation is a rendition of the Brecht play, it is likely also to have been informed, to a degree, by Gay's original play, that being in English and, notably, having had a new version published by Martin Secker in 1930, when MacDiarmid and Secker were in contact regarding *The Handmaid of the Lord*.[80] MacDiarmid later claimed to have been in contact with Brecht's family following his death in 1956 (*Company*: 16), the year in which Stefan Brecht suggests it as a 'great pleasure' to hear that MacDiarmid was working on the Opera translation.[81] There is the possibility, as in his Scots adaptations and translations of *Aniara* and Gaelic poetry, of input from a third party with fluency in German – a figure such as John Willett, for instance, a translator of Brecht who was working for Alan White and Eyre Methuen at the time the copyright of the *Opera* was secured – however, as in some previous examples, such collaboration remains unproven.

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[77] Bold, *MacDiarmid*, p.428. The manuscripts of MacDiarmid's translation, as with *Aniara*, have been retained by the National Library of Scotland. The archives include copies of the German text from which he translated and notes of his changes to proofs (MS.27048-27050). Norman MacCaig also produced a translation of *The Threepenny Opera*, which can be consulted in Edinburgh University Library (MS 3204/1/1).

[78] MacDiarmid would later review *Bertolt Brecht's Poems 1913-56*, also published by Eyre Methuen, for the *Guardian* (6 May 1976) (*SP*: 286-88).

[79] MacDiarmid responded to the coronation of Queen Elizabeth II (1952) in 'A Coronation Dream' (*CPII*: 1379-1382).

[80] In a letter to Alexander Scott (1969) MacDiarmid refers to the play as 'a sort of conflation of Brecht's *Threepenny Opera*, Gay's *Beggar's Opera*, Burns' *Jolly Beggars*, Graham's *Skellat Bellman* and Chambers on the Lord of Misrule' (*Letters*: 719). The prospect of collaboration is raised but doesn't appear to have been followed up.

[81] Letter from Stefan Brecht (12.04.65) in Manson, *Dear Grieve*, p.479.

Unlike Tom Leonard's translation of Brecht's *Mother Courage and her Children* published in 2014, in which Scots was utilised as a marker of 'working class idiom', rich with 'phrases and turns of speech, sardonic humour and class-rooted comment to parallel […] the original', MacDiarmid does not use Scots at all, presenting the play fully in English.[82] This suggests, as in his translation of *Aniara*, the constraints likely put upon his approach by others invested in the project and provides further evidence of the comparatively objective task of the translator which he assumed. Indeed, consultation of both the German and English manuscripts in the National Library of Scotland reveals little about his input.

It is worth noting though that in the original English manuscript (MS.27048) of *The Threepenny Opera*, certain songs are omitted, marked only by brief comments where they would be included ('Ballad in which…' or 'text to come'), signalling the likelihood of the lyrics being translated separately, possibly by songwriter Keith Hack. The annotated typescript copy (MS.27049) also suggests that changes were made by either MacDiarmid or a third party between this version and that eventually performed and published.

Whilst these are predominantly minor word changes, Peachum's final monologue poses one example where more substantial alterations have been made to the syntax, illustrated through a comparison of the MS and the published text:

Manuscript (MS.27049/81)	Published edition
Stand fast then, all of you, and let us raise our voices in the Choral Anthem of the poorest of the poor, into whose difficult life we've had some glimpses today. This is all very well in an opera, but in real life, of course, it's a different story. Royal messengers don't often appear in the nick of time. So pursue injustice, but not too eagerly.	Therefore let all men stand where they are standing And sing the chorale of all the downtrodden Whose difficult life we have acted for you today. In reality their fate's not like that at all. The Queen's riding messenger comes in time very rarely And those who're kicked, all they can do is kick back. Therefore man should never fight too hard against injustice.[83]

[82] Tom Leonard, 'Preface', Bertolt Brecht, *Mother Courage and her Children*, trans. Tom Leonard (Middlesbrough: Smokestack Books, 2014), p.6.
[83] Bertolt Brecht, *The Threepenny Opera* (London: Eyre Methuen, 1973), pp.66-7.

Word choice, rhythm and lineation are adapted, the movement of the monologue primarily altered through the replacement of enjambment and caesurae with end-stopped lines. The defeated air of the monologue is retained and broadened to encompass not only the 'poorest of the poor' but those more generally described as the 'downtrodden', the disillusion in progress and change evident in the increased regulation of the prosodic rhythm. As mentioned previously, however, particular priorities – linguistic or ideological – which might be expected of MacDiarmid's input as translator are absent, subsumed within the content and message of Brecht's original text.

The Brecht translation thus provides further evidence of the distinction between the practice of producing a commissioned translation as opposed to that of earlier adaptations, completed with the intention of independent publication or inclusion within the body of an original poem. The commissions, being so few, are also, however, an indication that despite financial incentivisation they involved a commitment on MacDiarmid's behalf to certain values and to the value of translation itself. Published later in his career when the publication of his own poetry had dwindled, *Aniara* and *The Threepenny Opera* both speak to aesthetic and political concerns which had proven to be consistently central within his enquiries into language and ideas around world language. His translation of the Marxist Brecht, in particular, completed in a time when support for communism had massively waned, acts as an indication of a sustained convicted faith in creative and ideological disruption and provocation, and the powers of translation to enable the revisitation of such provocation, through language and across borders, for new contexts and new audiences or readerships.

4.6. Translation and World Language

As this chapter has discussed, translation recurs throughout MacDiarmid's engagement with international languages and, subsequently, contributing immensely to the developing ideas around world language explored here.

In MacDiarmid's earliest adaptations into Scots from languages including Polish and Dutch, the emphasis appears to be on the translation of international poetry which explores similar themes to those centred in his own early lyrics: the natural world, the sounds of language, the effort of small nations to rebuild themselves in the aftermath of war. Translation opens up avenues via which to tease out and highlight commonalities across borders throughout Europe, yet the details of his translation process – namely, the specific English cribs which MacDiarmid relied upon or the translators who provided him with assistance – remain unknown at this point.

In *A Drunk Man Looks at the Thistle*, the continental reach of MacDiarmid's allusions are central to the internationalisation of the drunk man's vision for Scotland, the incorporation of poems adapted from German, Russian and Belgian an indication of his confrontation with unfamiliar language and ideas and the forging of a continental Scottish identity. The adaptations of poems by Alexander Blok, Zinaida Hippius, Else Lasker-Schüler and Georges Ramaekers each correlate with the poem's recurring symbols – the moon, the thistle, the muse – thereby implicating their significance both universally and locally. MacDiarmid's adherence to Scots in the adaptations highlights the specificity of the resulting context whilst retaining a degree of unfamiliarity, in recognition of the regeneration to be achieved through increased contact with a multiplicity of cultures and languages.

Subsequently, it is significant that *To Circumjack Cencrastus* includes a translation from the German of Rainer Maria Rilke into English, rather than Scots, indicative of the role that the English language would have in his navigations of world language from this point onwards. The decision is foundational to the discussion in chapters six and seven, which focusses on poetry in which the use of English granted MacDiarmid a creative stance of both advantage and opposition, enabling him to challenge and destabilise the hegemony of standardised English whilst benefitting from its existing 'world' status.

The commissioned translations which MacDiarmid undertook later in his career – given the dubious nature of his involvement in Ramon Tenreiro's *The Handmaid of the Lord* (1930) this primarily refers to the 1963 translation of Harry Martinson's *Aniara* and 1973 translation of Bertolt Brecht's *The Threepenny Opera* – indicate both a shift in his approach to engagement with foreign languages, and a maintenance of key priorities. Whilst world language as a theme is engaged with in *Aniara*, in which linguistic anxieties and expressive capacities are explored in line with the traversal of spatial boundaries, in *The Threepenny Opera* it is the experimental Marxism of Brecht which MacDiarmid appears to be responding to, a revisiting of modernist literature ripe with political conviction. As MacDiarmid's own poetry became increasingly referential and multilingual in character in the 1930s and beyond, culminating in the epic sprawling vision of *In Memoriam James Joyce*, the necessity of adapting the works of others became less of a creative priority and more driven by ideological or financial incentive, hence its separation from his own poetry.

In each period and example explored in this chapter, MacDiarmid's commitment to foreign and unfamiliar forms of language and literature, engaged with through the mode of translation, speaks to his wider enquiries into the specific and universal qualities of world language, a navigation of ideas, expressions and symbols which might be shared across

borders, made more specific in line with national and local distinctions or made strange in new contexts. The commonalities and differences which MacDiarmid's adaptations and translations set up and scrutinise are integral to the tensions which characterise his poetic navigation of an idea of world language.

The specific instance of MacDiarmid's translations from Gaelic in the 1930s, completed in light of his compilation of *The Golden Treasury of Scottish Poetry* (1940) and achieved through close correspondence and negotiation with Sorley MacLean, has been purposely omitted from the present chapter. Discussion turns to these translations in the following chapter, whilst chapter six pursues a complementary avenue of enquiry, focussing on MacDiarmid's use of non-translated language and allusions and the implications of this.

Chapter Five

Pluralities and Affinities: Connections Within Scotland and Beyond

In the late 1920s and 1930s, subsequent to the publication of the early lyrics in *Sangschaw* and *Penny Wheep*, MacDiarmid's project was driven by a heightened sensitivity to Scotland's pluralities. His outwards looking curiosity about the linguistic and cultural diversities in Europe, explored in previous chapters, turned back in on the nation, as his work increasingly engaged with the Gaelic language and culture that connected Scotland to other Celtic and minority cultures within the United Kingdom and further afield.

In the 1930s MacDiarmid exhibited an interest in Gaelic both as Scotland's oldest language and as representative of an alternative local – and markedly anti-imperial – tradition and identity that he was unfamiliar with. Writing in 'Albyn: or Scotland and the Future' in 1927, MacDiarmid emphasised the link between this and his earlier enquiries (discussed in chapters one and two) into the viability of Scots as a literary language:

> The Scottish Renaissance Movement is even more concerned with the revival of Gaelic than of Scots. It regards Scotland as a diversity-in-unity to be stimulated at every point, and, theoretically at any rate, it is prepared to develop along trilingual lines. (*Albyn*: 4)

MacDiarmid's subsequent attempts to grapple with Gaelic offered an in-road to new modes of expression and understanding which complemented the priorities of locality and particularity, linguistic diversity and cultural exchange that have already been explored as defining characteristics of his poetry in Scots. In turning to Gaelic language and culture MacDiarmid perpetuates a faith in the necessity of increased translingual collaboration, arguing in 'Towards a "Scottish Idea"' (1927) that any 'antagonism' between the Scots and Gaelic traditions is 'false': 'They depend upon each other. Without a higher synthesis of the two a Scottish cultural unity is impossible' (*RTII*: 38). MacDiarmid reasserts the necessity of achieving a synthesis which retains the distinctiveness of each tradition, a balance that is reflected through his dual approach of translation and allusion, embedding Gaelic within his increasingly multilingual poetry in the 1930s and beyond, and further establishing the need to represent intra-national diversity within a world language.

This chapter explores the various approaches by which MacDiarmid engages with Scotland's pluralities through Gaelic referentiality and translation, and through the adoption of an archipelagic perspective. In first considering *To Circumjack Cencrastus* (1930) as the text which bridges Scots, Gaelic and English, the chapter analyses how

increased engagement with the Gaelic world impacted MacDiarmid's approach to multiplicities of language and identity, before turning to the translations of poetry by Donnchadh Bàn Mac an t-Saoir and Alasdair Mac Mhaighstir Alasdair that MacDiarmid completed with the aid of Sorley MacLean. The incorporation of non-translated Gaelic vocabulary and allusions in his own poetry is then analysed as indication of MacDiarmid's commitment to diversity as an alternative to English standardisation and its imperialist connotations. Finally, the impact of MacDiarmid's inhabitation of Shetland during this period is considered as it informed the development of an archipelagic perspective of Scotland and the world which, in turn, helped to shape the world language that he envisions, characterised by pluralities, contestable boundaries and the dialectics of local and global attachments.

5.1. *To Circumjack Cencrastus*: MacDiarmid's 'dooble tongue' and the 'Gaelic Idea'

In *To Circumjack Cencrastus* MacDiarmid navigates the synthesis of his 'dooble tongue', a challenge to linguistic standardisation which justifies his usage of both Scots and English. The poem switches between English, printed in roman font, and Scots, in italic font, each section in conversation with the other but existing in a kind of parallel, distinct despite their common aim and direction.

> A' this is juist provisional and 'll hae
> A tea-change into something rich and Scots
> When I wha needs use English a' the day
> Win back to the true language o' my thochts. (*CPI*: 239)

The languages are likened to stars, 'equal in wecht / Tho' they differ in size' (*CPI*: 239). Each is valued in a different realm, its popularity or frequency of usage no indication of its poetic significance. Yet his use of the two languages is tested and proven inadequate to understanding the multiplicity of Scottish identity, thus making space for the introduction of a third tongue, as MacDiarmid affirms Gaelic as a critical component within the nation's diverse linguistic make-up. He laments the loss of 'Some Gaelic strain' in 'my yokel words' (*CPI*: 225), a tragedy which the poem attempts to redress. In endeavouring to secure a firmer grasp on his national linguistic roots, and to 'find in Scotland some / Bricht coil o' you that hasna yet uncurled' (*CPI*: 288), MacDiarmid incorporates Gaelic references alongside Scots, French and German, integral within the European patchwork of languages throughout which the figure of Cencrastus winds.

Unlike the European references, however, MacDiarmid provides explanation and clarification for the Gaelic references in the endnotes to the poem.[1] Whilst this indicates the research involved in the composition of the poem's referentiality, suggestive of the wish to be better informed about a culture he was relatively ignorant about, Douglas Sealy has noted MacDiarmid's disproportionate reliance upon Aodh De Blácam's *Gaelic Literature Surveyed*, 'an excellent book but definitely propagandist'.[2] Kenneth Buthlay has also critiqued MacDiarmid's lifting of these references as a weakness which, he argues, only further expounds cracks in the poem's vision and the 'Gaelic Idea' it introduces, 'a more or less isolated and eccentric political puzzle.[3]

In this puzzle, Gaelic is both the problem and the solution, as MacDiarmid looks back to the 'great poets o' Gaelic Ireland' rising out of 'the muckle grey mist o' Englishry' (*CPI*: 210) in tackling his poetic task. References invoke sixteenth-, seventeenth- and eighteenth-century bards, the Gaelic language associated with an era perceived as being untainted by modernity and preoccupied with classical culture and renaissance, in-keeping with the priorities of Dunbar's Scotland which had inspired his regeneration of Scots in the 1920s. MacDiarmid recognises the significance of Alasdair mac Mghaistir Alasdair, in particular, who is acknowledged as a contemporary of 'Burns and Tannahill / Wha kenna you' (*CPI*: 210) and thus complements the symbolism of Burns in *A Drunk Man Looks at the Thistle*. The poem advocates for a prioritisation of 'MacMhaighstir's fire', 'Prood, elegant and mettled' over 'Burns' clay' (*CPI*: 225) and the former narrow vision of Celtic Twilight romanticism. MacDiarmid calls to 'hear nae mair o' Tir nan Og / Or the British Empire!' (*CPI*: 223), implicating anti-imperialist and anti-sentimental values within his modernist redress of Gaelic language and literature.

The interconnectedness of Irish and Scottish Gaelic, representative of a Celtic culture entirely antithetical to the English tradition, also recurs throughout *To Circumjack Cencrastus* and subsequent poems. MacDiarmid references Aodhagán Ó Rathaille, the Irish language poet (1670-1726), in both *Cencrastus* and *In Memoriam*, published twenty-five years apart:

Aodhagán Ó Rathaille sang this sang
That I maun sing again;

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[1] The endnote begins as such: 'I do not consider any explication of my references to Valéry, Husserl, Leontiev, Tyutchev, and many others necessary here, but the following notes on a few of my more obscure allusions may be useful to certain readers' (*CPI*: 293). This distinction, an assumption of shared knowledge – or lack thereof – amongst the readership, sheds light on the exposure to culture and literature which MacDiarmid expected of his readers.

[2] Douglas Sealy, 'Hugh MacDiarmid and Gaelic Literature', *Hugh MacDiarmid: A Critical Survey,* pp.168–83 (p.175).

[3] Kenneth Buthlay, 'The Scotched Snake', *The Age of MacDiarmid*, pp.122-156 (p.139, 129).

For I've met the Brightness o' Brightness
Like him in a lanely glen,
And seen the hair that's plaited
Like the generations o' men. (*CPI*: 224)[4]

All the knowledge is woven in neatly
So that the plaited ends come to the hand.
Pull any of the tabs, and a sequence
Of practical information is drawn. (*CPII*: 872)

The recurrence of Ó Rathaille across both poems accentuates not only the critical role that MacDiarmid grants Celtic languages and literature within his poetry but the manner in which terms, references and imagery also reoccur intermittently across his corpus, representative of a weaving in and out of priorities and concerns in the construction of a directed vision, coherent despite its contradictions.

MacDiarmid's turn to Gaelic and Celtic language and literature can largely be explained by the introduction of his 'Gaelic Idea', a theory which Patrick Crotty deems 'a pseudo-geometrical vision of Europe that grandly enhances Gaeldom's position in the scheme of things'.[5] It signals the international framework of reference which he draws from in poetry as being increasingly constructed and curated, intentional in its rejection of imperialism and English standardisation and its recognition of the emergence of the USA and USSR as global powers:

If we turn to Europe and see
Hoo the emergence o' the Russian Idea's
Broken the balance o' the North and Sooth
And needs a counter that can only be
The Gaelic Idea
To mak' a parallelogram o' forces,
Complete the Defence o' the West,
And end the English betrayal o' Europe. (*CPI*: 223)

The approach, which Annie Boutelle describes as 'a quadrilateral paradox', was an ambitious attempt to unite 'the Gaelic language, European civilization, politics, and literature, all in an attempt to create a new world by repossessing the lost Eden'.[6]

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[4] Daniel Corkery included a chapter on Ó Rathaille in his 1924 study *Hidden Ireland*, a book which MacDiarmid cites on occasion throughout his prose, most notably in 'English Ascendancy in British Literature' (1931) (*SP*: 61-80). Corkery's study was evidently influential upon MacDiarmid's comprehension of the Celtic connection between Irish and Scottish histories and cultures, particularly with regards to the role of the poet.

[5] Crotty, '"Like Pushkin, I"', p.60.

[6] Boutelle, *Thistle and Rose*, p.159.

MacDiarmid explains his theory in 'The Caledonian Antisyzygy and the Gaelic Idea' (1931-2), an essay which argues for 'the decentralization of literature' (*SE*: 60) and the reassertion of Scotland's contribution to European 'literary development' (*SE*: 61).[7] MacDiarmid contends with the 'culturally sterilizing' conventions of 'the main English tradition' which excludes vernacular literatures and led to the 'extirpati[on of] their racy native dialects', arguing that, in prioritising 'selfish imperialism', the 'English ascendancy' has neglected the 'vitality' and 'variety' required of a truly representative ('*British*') tradition (*SE*: 62). The priorities of decentralisation and plurality which shape his ideas around world language are introduced as they apply particularly to the subjugated position of Gaelic, understood on these terms before later being explored as they apply to suppressed or minority languages elsewhere in the world.

The essay illustrates MacDiarmid's earliest attempts to fully consider Scotland's place within world systems and hierarchies, and Scott Lyall has remarked on it as an illustration of 'the extremes that MacDiarmid will go to in order to find a place for his self-confessedly playful vision of the Scottish genius as a balancing mechanism in world affairs during the thirties'.[8] Yet the 'Gaelic Idea' was not wholly 'playful', as language was increasingly recognised as an instrument of power and weapon of oppression, as much as a liberating marker of identity.[9]

MacDiarmid's translation of this 'Gaelic Idea' into the language and ideas of his poetry has proven to be contentious. Comparing *Cencrastus* with his earlier Scots poetry, Boutelle concludes that 'The theory behind the adoption of Gaelic is much more grandiose, the results much less impressive'.[10] W. N. Herbert has picked up similarly on the idealistic nature of MacDiarmid's 'Gaelic Idea', arguing that that 'The revival of Gaelic may seem as impossible as that of Lallans, but it is the very hopelessness of the position that defines it as uniquely MacDiarmid's'.[11] Michael Byrne finds the pursuit of such an impossible goal to be misguided, remarking that MacDiarmid's 'sheer presumption' was just 'the latest in a longline of alien appropriations of the language and its culture', whilst Kenneth Buthlay has commented that even in this appropriation, MacDiarmid failed to meet his

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[7] The 'Caledonian Antisyzygy', a term borrowed from Professor G. Gregory Smith's *Scottish Literature: Character and Influence* (1919) which has become generally synonymous with the reconstructive efforts of MacDiarmid and the renaissance, refers to the reconciliation of contradictions, that harmonisation of 'The restless spirit of Man' (*CPI*: 285) which proved particularly relevant to the balancing of linguistic opposites in *Cencrastus.*

[8] Lyall, *Hugh MacDiarmid's Poetry and Politics of Place*, pp.130-1.

[9] It was also in 'The Caledonian Antisyzygy and the Gaelic Idea' that MacDiarmid explored notions of racial purity, most controversially engaging with Hitler's concept of 'blutsfgefühl'. This is discussed in line with MacDiarmid's response to fascism in chapter seven.

[10] Boutelle, *Thistle and Rose*, p.160.

[11] Herbert, *To Circumjack MacDiarmid*, p.73.

theoretical ambitions, 'the Celtic polarity' of *Cencrastus* being 'symptomatic of a wider 'lack of confidence in himself, a failure of nerve'. [12]

MacDiarmid's attempts are judged to have gone too far in some instances, to have faltered in others, but what undoubtedly emerges is that whilst the 'Gaelic Idea' was not without its limitations and problems, it remains a critical stage within MacDiarmid's developing ideas around world language. Through exploration of the 'Idea', introduced in *To Circumjack Cencrastus* and 'The Caledonian Antisyzygy and the Gaelic Idea', MacDiarmid developed priorities which informed his translation of Gaelic texts and the increased incorporation of Gaelic vocabulary within his own multilingual poetry in the 1930s and beyond, enabling him to retain a sense of local, national diversity within the global vision which he developed.

5.2. Translations of Donnchadh Bàn Mac an t-Saoir and Alasdair mac Mhaighstir Alasdair and *The Golden Treasury of Scottish Poetry*

Through his friendship with Sorley MacLean, began when MacLean was an unpublished undergraduate in Edinburgh, MacDiarmid was introduced to a more intimate understanding of Gaelic language, literature and culture, a development upon the comparatively limited grasp of his earlier 'Gaelic Idea'. The poets corresponded, met in 1934, and collaborated on a number of translations which MacDiarmid would include in *The Golden Treasury of Scottish Poetry*, edited for publication in 1940.

Tom Scott has judged the poetic tasks of MacDiarmid and MacLean to be quite different, based upon the distinction that 'the Scot writes in both Scots and English and/or an amalgam of the two, whereas the Gaelic poet must choose between Gaelic and a translator's English or Scots'.[13] Susan Wilson, however, highlights the commonality, deducing that both 'can be read as linguistic expressions of cultural resistance'.[14] Working collaboratively, as they did on a number of translations throughout the 1930s, MacLean and MacDiarmid bridged these problems, finding a shared response across the Highland/ Lowland boundary to the preservation of national linguistic plurality. Wilson describes their process as such:

> MacLean also taught MacDiarmid about the history, metrics, forms and idioms of Gaelic poetry through extensive notes and annotations which accompanied each

[12] Michael Byrne, 'Tails o the Comet? MacLean, Hay, Young and MacDiarmid's Renaissance', Scotlit No. 26 (2002), pp. 1-3, p. 2. Buthlay, 'The Scotched Snake', p.129, 131.
[13] Tom Scott, 'Lament for the Great Music', *Hugh MacDiarmid: A Critical Survey*, pp.184-191 (p.184).
[14] Susan R. Wilson, *The Correspondence Between Hugh MacDiarmid and Sorley MacLean* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2010), p.43.

> translation. […] MacDiarmid's task was then to versify the translations by MacLean, attempting to capture the metre and word music of the originals using a mixture of Scots and English, with the odd Gaelic expression thrown in for good measure.[15]

As Wilson suggests, 'their collaborative process compels us to question what the practice of "translating" actually entails'.[16] Whilst MacDiarmid thus completed these translations via a similar method to his Scots adaptations in the 1920s, discussed in chapter four, the Gaelic poems benefitted enormously from the additional cultural and formal insight which MacLean provided, comparable to that later provided by Schubert in the translation of *Aniara*.

The translations completed by MacDiarmid and MacLean include, most notably, English language versions of Alasdair mac Mhaighstir Alasdair's 'The Birlinn of Clanranald', published in a limited release of 100 signed copies in 1935, and Donnchadh Bàn Mac an t-Saoir's 'The Praise of Ben Dorain', included in *The Golden Treasury of Scottish Poetry* (1940).

'The Birlinn of Clanranald', written in 1751-55 and published in 1776, is an ode to the sea and the waves, to the component parts which make up a working ship, and to the expertise of its crew in navigating a tempestuous storm. Alasdair was well versed in the classical European tradition, familiar with poetry in Scots and English as well as Gaelic. This familiarity with classical culture and literature is evident in the allusions and imagery of the poem, employed within a context which is both familiar, being rooted in Scotland, and yet unpredictable, governed by the changeable weather. Alan Riach writes that 'The original Gaelic poem is both traditional and radical', a meeting of priorities which MacDiarmid's version retains in its endeavour to adhere to the rhythmic movement of the Gaelic original.[17]

MacDiarmid's English is assured in its depictions of the birlinn, sea and crew, knowledgeable about the infrastructure of the boat and confident in the guidance of the men. Yet the decision to leave individual words in Gaelic whilst incorporating others in French and Scots, alongside the sparing inclusion of footnotes which clarify certain definitions, reminds us of MacDiarmid's inexperience with the root language and indicates his sensitivity to producing a translation that respects and honours a culture and language that was not his to appropriate.

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[15] Ibid., p.53.
[16] Ibid., p.64.
[17] Alan Riach, 'Location and Destination in Alasdair mac Mhaighstir Alasdair's "The Birlinn of Clanranald"', *The Poetics of Space and Place in Scottish Literature*, ed. Monika Szuba and Julian Wolfreys (Cham: Springer Nature Switzerland, 2019), pp.17-30 (p.20).

MacDiarmid emphasises the influence of Alasdair's classical education through a range of mythical and European referentiality which complement the local, as in the second section, entitled 'The Blessing of the Arms'. Here, 'God's blessing' is wished upon both 'our claymores / And flexible grey toledos' (*CPI*: 516), referring to weapons of Scottish Highland and Spanish origins. Also blessed are 'our gleaming bows of yew-wood / Good to bend in battle-mêlée' (*CPI*: 516). Yew-wood for longbows was traditionally obtained from European forests until the end of the sixteenth century, whilst the French loanword here signifies a hand-to-hand combat or struggle, mêlée used to refer to a mixture or medley (i.e. of tactics, weapons, fighters). In the fourth movement MacDiarmid deploys another French loanword:

> Give a rocking pointedly,
> Without lapse or lack of netteté,
> So all sea-problems set yet be
> > More than met. (*CPI*: 519)

The word 'netteté' might refer to clarity, crispness or sharpness, here used to denote the weather and visibility conditions most desirable to the journey. In fulfilling the rhyme of the verse, the incorporation of French vocabulary suggests both the limitations of the English to adequately and accurately represent certain Gaelic concepts, and a prioritisation of the poetic form. MacDiarmid's sampling of other languages is sparse in 'Birlinn', particularly so in comparison with his own poetry, a reservation measured by his primary role as translator, rather than poet, and his respectful duty to Alasdair, MacLean and to the Gaelic language.[18]

Elsewhere, MacDiarmid offers justification for his translation decisions in footnotes. In the eighth part, MacDiarmid explains his translation of the Gaelic 'cluas' as 'the tack' (*CPI*: 523), highlighting that whilst the word is typically used to denote the ear, it also might refer to an ear-shaped object, here the lower foremost corner of a sail (or the phonetically similar 'clew'). In the ninth part, entitled 'There was ordered to the prow a pilot', MacDiarmid justifies his translation of 'màirnealach' as 'a pilot chiefly of observing the weather from the look of the skies' (*CPI*: 523). The compulsion for justification or clarification in such footnotes emphasises the subjectivity of the translation process and the importance of context to the navigation of ambiguity, highlighting once more both MacDiarmid's obligation to explain what is not familiar to himself or his reader, and the collaborative nature of the interpretation. Footnotes in the sixteenth and final part, 'The

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[18] The sampling of non-translated vocabulary from other languages forms the focus of the enquiry in the following chapter.

Voyage', meanwhile alert the reader to the specificity of Gaelic vocabulary in its depiction of the natural environment and climate of the Highlands and Islands, revealing a 'dog's tooth' (*CPI*: 527) to be a broken bit of a rainbow – resoundingly similar to the Scots 'watergaw', despite there being no equivalent in English – and explaining 'shower-breeze' to be an interpretation of 'Fuaradh-froise', 'the breeze that precedes a shower', particular to the changing North-Western climate that the sailors experience.

Later in 'The Voyage', MacDiarmid keeps the line 'Fise. Faise' in the Gaelic to denote 'Sounds of tearing' (*CPI*: 531) experienced in the storm, the onomatopoeic impact of the original irreplicable in English. Note also that names are left in the Gaelic spelling – 'the Canna men, Donnchadh Mac Chomaig / and Iain Mac Iain' (*CPI*: 526) – asserting the untranslatability of proper names, a fact which becomes ever more significant to his own referential poetry in the 1930s and beyond, as will be returned to in chapter six. The Gaelic complements and augments the English, as MacDiarmid prioritises cooperation and cohesion between languages and cultures rather than the hegemony of any one over another.

Generally, MacDiarmid's 'Birlinn' translation appears to have been respected amongst Gaelic speaking readers. MacLean, upon reading the final poem, remarked in a letter that it was 'far nearer the spirit of MacDonald than any translation of Gaelic poetry is to the spirit of the work translated'.[19] He further comments that 'All the Gaelic speaking people to whom I have shown it have expressed great approval', a testament both to MacDiarmid's open mind and commitment, and to his own influence upon the informed and respectful approach of the translator.[20] Naturally, however, it was not without criticism: as a *Times Literary Supplement* review of 4 January 1936 determined, whilst MacDiarmid's translation was 'undoubtedly the most successful so far', 'in some ways it is not entirely satisfactory'.[21] The reviewer finds fault in MacDiarmid's apparently limited understanding of Alasdair's metre and in particular interpretations, remarking that certain Gaelic compound words are 'almost impossible to translate'.[22] The matter of MacDiarmid's own style impedes, the reviewer judges, upon the translation, observing that 'some of the expressions used by the reviewer elsewhere will probably jar on readers who are acquainted with the original, but not with the translator's own highly individual style'.[23] Without returning to debates around the contested 'task of the translator' previously alluded, it might be deduced that the translation, neither a literal reproduction or

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[19] Wilson, *Correspondence*, p.127.
[20] Ibid.
[21] Ibid., pp.293-4.
[22] Ibid., p.294.
[23] Ibid.

an entirely flamboyant reworking, contains something each of MacDiarmid, MacLean and Alasdair in its adapted form, its language symbolic of collaborative priorities, understandings and personalities at work in the kind of cross-cultural dialogue required of world literature and, consequently, of a world language.

In *The Golden Treasury of Scottish Poetry* (1940)*,* in which 'The Birlinn of Clanranald' was reprinted, MacDiarmid also included his translation of Donnchadh Bàn Mac an t-Saoir's 'The Praise of Ben Dorain'. Whilst John MacInnes regarded Donnchadh Bàn's poem to be 'a visual documentary, invented before the camera', Garry MacKenzie has written of 'the relatively unmediated access it gave to the phenomenal world through its combination of orality and unsentimental observation'.[24] The environmental intimacy of the poem, which MacDiarmid engages with further in 'In Talk with Duncan Bàn Mac an t'Saoir' (discussed in chapter three), is essential to its significance, representative of a Gaelic world in which landscape, culture and people are instinctively interconnected.

> It is almost
> As if to know the life of a deer one must become a deer
> And live among them; and as your life showed
> That is not so impossible as it may sound. (*CPII*: 1101)

Composed orally due to the poet's illiteracy and published in 1768, the movements of 'Ben Dorain' are formally influenced by the rhythms of the pibroch, a musicality which MacDiarmid, again assisted by MacLean, endeavoured but struggled to recreate in his own version. MacLean predicted difficulty in the process, remarking in a letter of May 1935 that 'the very syntax of the thing is so remote from anything in English; indeed, it is difficult enough to put into Gaelic prose'.[25] The resulting translation, MacLean judges, is 'wonderfully good, although not in the whole so good as that of the "*Birlinn*"', the specific cadences and tempo of the original are ultimately irreplicable.[26]

Yet in its precise illustration of the natural environment, a herd of deer and their movements through the landscape, as depicted by an invisible speaker, there is much that MacDiarmid accomplishes. Particularly in the second section, 'Siubhal', which MacLean

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[24] John MacInnes, 'The Gaelic Literary Tradition', *Dùthchas Nan Gàidheal: Selected Essays of John MacInnes*, ed. Michael Newton (Edinburgh: Birlinn Ltd., 2006), pp.163-181 (p.172).
Garry MacKenzie, '*Ben Dorain:* An Ecopoetic Translation', *Humanities*, 8.113 (2019), online: <https://mdpi-res.com/humanities/humanities-08-00113/article_deploy/humanities-08-00113.pdf?version=1560510989>.
[25] Wilson, *Correspondence*, p.65.
[26] Ibid.

considered to be 'wonderfully successful and very near the Gaelic rhythm', the momentum of MacDiarmid's consecutive verbs emulates the building of pace and energy:[27]

> Keenest of careering
> Of smelling and hearing
> Is the little hind rearing
> Among the peaks, peering (*CPI*: 588)

The continual action and reaction which defines the movements of the deer is implicit in the rhythmic rhyme sequence, changing mid-verse before alternating from line to line and then presented in rhyming couplets, a structured inconsistency which turns back on itself before cantering on.

> I love when she stretches
> Her breath and the wind fetches
> A ghost of her bellowing,
> But it's not for us wretches
> Of men that the mellowing
> Call sounds o'er the vetches
> As she seeks her listening
> Lover in rutting-time, glistening
> With loving-kindness. (*CPI*: 589)

MacDiarmid translated Donnchadh Bàn's attention to environmental detail into an era of modernity in which such values appeared to have been mislaid, interpreting thus not only the language for a national readership in the twentieth century but the social and cultural ethos which he believed to be associated with it too.

MacDiarmid's inclusion of these translations in *The Golden Treasury of Scottish Poetry* (1940) was a significant step in the improvement of Gaelic representation in national literary anthologies. As stated in the introduction, the endeavour was to present an '"all-in view" of Scottish poetry' (*GT*: *x*), Latin poems by George Buchanan and Arthur Johnstone also included alongside the Scots, Gaelic and English – a direct rebuke to Edwin Muir's call for a 'homogenous' Scottish language. MacDiarmid's editorial and publication of the anthology was a vital stepping stone within the development of his ideas around world language and world literature, in which plurality and cooperation were sought after and connections drawn between autonomous components within a diverse anti-hegemonic framework, here configured within the nation but applicable internationally and to an idea of the world.

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[27] Ibid., p.139.

Not all of the Gaelic translations in *The Golden Treasury* were met with the high praises of 'The Birlinn of Clanranald' and 'The Praise of Ben Dorain'. MacDiarmid published seven of the poems in prose form, choosing not to versify the versions supplied by MacLean, a decision that MacLean was unhappy with.[28] MacDiarmid's oversight has had a lasting bearing upon the cultural impact of the anthology: Wilson cites Ronald Black to this effect, writing in 1999 that these translations to 'neither do justice to the originals, nor fulfil their potential as poetry in English'.[29] The intention was there but MacDiarmid's translations were impacted by logistical and creative limitations – time, skill, resources, ego – and guided by an ambitious vision which was not always accurately translated onto the page or seen through to publication.

Through his translations, MacDiarmid promoted the reclamation of values which he perceived as being implicit to the Gaelic language and culture, and which he believed ought to contribute to both a diverse national literature and, in turn, an idea of world literature and world language. Sorley MacLean, for the role he played in these translations is much to credit for MacDiarmid's recognition of the importance of Gaelic within Scotland's linguistic and cultural diversity, and to the increasingly informed and respectful approach which he took to incorporating it within his vision.

5.3. Celtic Connections: Gaelic Vocabulary in 'Cornish Heroic Song for Valda Trevlyn' and 'Direadh'

Writing to MacLean in 1938, MacDiarmid declared that 'the time is ripe for a united Celtic Front of Welsh, Irish and Scottish writers'.[30] In his increasingly referential poetry of the 1930s and beyond, MacDiarmid further explored the affinities of such a 'Celtic Front' through the incorporation of non-translated vocabulary and allusions to Gaelic, Cornish and Irish culture, illustrative of the poem as a hybrid space in which cross-cultural, cross-lingual connections could be suggested, recreated and affirmed.

He does so most notably in 'Cornish Heroic Song for Valda Trevlyn', 'Once in a Cornish Garden' and the 'Direadh' trilogy, poems which prioritise the illustration of the rich vibrancies and 'Shibboleths of infinity' (*CPI*: 414) innate to the Gaelic language. MacDiarmid's incorporation of non-translated language suggests the untranslatability of specific terms into the English of the poem, important as indication of his belief in the retention of distinct languages within a world language and comparable to his emphasis upon particularity in Scots, discussed in chapter two. As ever, it is important, as Douglas

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[28] Ibid., p.56.
[29] Ibid.
[30] Ibid., p.177.

Sealy has suggested, 'to separate what is of great value from the merely silly' in MacDiarmid's allusions and vocabulary, recognising that 'He imaginatively grasps the need for a renaissance of Gaelic and in order to present a case the world is then ransacked for supporting materials, not all chosen with equal care'.[31] The present enquiry into MacDiarmid's integration of Gaelic vocabulary and references does not claim to be exhaustive but cautious, selective focus has been attributed intentionally to that which has been deemed to carry the greatest implications for the present investigation into his idea of 'world language'.

In poetry dedicated to his second wife, Valda Trevlyn, MacDiarmid colours his use of Gaelic and Cornish vocabulary and allusions with a warm intimacy, their relationship invoked as a symbol of the 'pro-Celtic ideas' (*LP*: 7) that he sought to foster. Such ideas are revealed, in the first instance, through the language of 'Cornish Heroic Song for Valda Trevlyn', published in *A Kist of Whistles* (1947).[32] In the poem, MacDiarmid's primary focus is Scotland's affinities – cultural, historical, social and linguistic – with Cornwall, yet he explores these in light of broader Celtic implications:

> Cunningly contrived as the prehistoric communications
> Between our peoples were – between
> North Scotland, Ireland, and Cornwall, (*CPI*: 705)

MacDiarmid's adoption of the first-person plural – 'being Celts / We' (*CPI*: 707) – sees him fulfil the role of the bard who speaks on behalf of his ('our') people. Cornwall, to a greater degree even than Ireland or Scotland due to its comparative lack of autonomy, provides MacDiarmid with a striking example of the English, or British, suppression of Celtic cultures – 'Cornwall and England, David and Goliath!' (*CPI*: 706) – thus further fuelling his challenge to the 'English Ascendancy' outlined in earlier poetry and prose. He suggests a united Celtic identity in antagonism to 'the indiscriminate English who make / A bolus of the whole world' (*CPI*: 706), lending emphasis to a sense of community between Celtic nations and languages:

> Yet to-day we laugh gaily and show our healthy red tongues,
> Red rags to John Bull – the Celtic colour flaunting again
> In a world where the ravening sub-fusc more and more
> Prevails. We young Celts arise with quick tongues intact
> Though our elders lie tongueless under the ocean of history. (*CPI*: 709)

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[31] Sealy, 'Hugh MacDiarmid and Gaelic Literature, p.177.
[32] 'Cornish Heroic Song' was proposed as the title of an epic poem, however this never appeared independently, being subsumed within *In Memoriam James Joyce.*

Within the structure of the English poem, MacDiarmid calls upon Gaelic vocabulary alongside Cornish as evidence of 'the Celtic colour', reflective of particular and untranslatable aspects of the 'Celtic' consciousness and identity that ought to be preserved. Appealing to Celtic specificity and 'quick tongues', it is a 'slàinte chùramach' ('A very important toast') (*CPI*: 705) which MacDiarmid states his intention to give, and it is as 'Cuireideach' ('Full of turns and twists; tricky') (*CPI*: 705) that he describes 'the difference of one man's blood and another's'. Meanwhile, the Cornish 'scat bal' ('Disused mine') and 'cleghty' ('Belfry') (*CPI*: 708) are clustered alongside references to Arthurian legend, the Norse Edda and Scandinavian mythology, and the 'fogous' (an underground Iron Age structure, like a cave, found in Cornwall) is linked with the Gaelic 'aonach', defined as both 'a solitary place, a mountain top, a hill' and 'a place of union' (*CPI*: 705). The 'aonach' recurs memorably in *In Memoriam James Joyce*, as MacDiarmid welcome's Joyce 'to our *aonach* here, / Here where alone we can live' (*CPII*: 746), indicative of his enduring commitment to the reinforcement of Celtic affinities within the proposition of world language.

In 'Once in a Cornish Garden', MacDiarmid returns to 'the Celtic colour flaunting again'. Rich visuals are illustrated through the running together of accumulated adjectives, used to intensify colours – 'These are your colours' (*CPII*: 1103) – and immerse the reader in the vividness of the natural setting. The aesthetic focus alludes to the propensity of Gaelic to differentiate between shades of colour in a way that English does not, a feature which Meg Bateman has explained as such: 'scales of saturation, patterning and shininess reflect the pastoral and martial life of the Gaels. These scales reflect and reinforce aesthetic and evaluative considerations which amount to a Gaelic way of seeing'.[33] Vibrancy and variation occurs throughout the garden scene depicted and in Valda's cosmetics, artificial yet as integral to MacDiarmid's vision of her as the flowers and foliage. Once again, his focus on Valda's appearance is important: Bateman highlights the significance of physical appearance to people's identification in Gaelic-speaking communities, noting that 'In Gaelic, people are frequently referred to by terms describing their appearance […] One may go through life spoken of in terms which recall one's grandfather's hair colour or his mother's squint eye, characteristics which become codified as surnames'.[34] A concentration upon Valda's beauty, therefore, is not only pursued in satisfaction of MacDiarmid's own personal sentiment but in homage to a characteristically Gaelic linguistic and literary predisposition.

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[33] Bateman and Purser, *Window to the West*, p.192.
[34] Ibid., p.141.

Returning to the sensory engagement of earlier poetry in Scots, MacDiarmid imbues sights, sounds and tastes with memories and emotion so as to reflect Valda within her garden, and vice versa:

> Even as in our garden all the flowers have
> Colours like these and look
> Like isolated moods of yours, particular memories of you,
> Gestures and smiles of yours that have somehow taken root
> And flourish here for ever. (*CPII*: 1104)

The poem then turns to Gaelic vocabulary so as to highlight the innately Celtic character of the illustration:

> In so far as earth-speech may avail,
> That sight or sound of you always
> May conjure up without fail –
> Cinnealta, solasta, croidheard, cunbhalach,
> Eireachdail, taiceil, clòir-ghlestua, fionghuil, gnìomh-luaineach, (*CPII*: 1104)[35]

MacDiarmid's reliance upon Gaelic here reinforces the capacities of the language – intentionally comparable to Scots or Cornish – to capture subtle, locally specific variations of vibrancy, character and experience. His reference to 'earth-speech' alludes to the limitations of human language, contested also in earlier poetry which focussed upon the 'non-human' language of the natural environment and of music, discussed in chapter three. Recognising these boundaries, MacDiarmid draws upon a plurality of languages so as to challenge them and work within his individual capabilities, harnessing the strengths of multiple vocabularies, idioms and literatures within his construction of a world language in which particularity and locality is retained, rather than oppressed or homogenised.

A similar preoccupation with Gaelic vocabulary, particularly as it depicts specificities in the environment, reoccurs in MacDiarmid's 'Direadh' trilogy, published in full in 1973 but drafted throughout the 1930s and 1940s. 'Direadh I' opens by listing examples of Gaelic subtleties of colour, shape and sound, distinctly applicable to the Highland landscape which the speaker surveys: amidst this, 'àrbhuidhe' is glossed as 'gold-yellow' and 'storach, tomanach, cuireideach, tromdhaite' as 'Rugged bushy-haired, intricate vividly-coloured' (*CPII*: 1164). Distinctive Gaelic sounds are also emphasised with references to 'ard-ghaoir', 'A clear, thrilling sound'; 'móramh', 'the longest note in music'; 'brasphort', 'swift-going tune' and 'biofhuaim', 'unceasing sound' and 'Pìob as

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[35] MacDiarmid's footnote glosses this Gaelic vocabulary as such: 'bright, brilliant, blood-red, constant, handsome, staunch, of tuneful speech, of deft deed, and "wine-blood" (i.e. noble).'

dìonach nuall', 'a music without breaks' (*CPII*: 1164-5). For MacDiarmid the Gaelic language connotes an intimacy between the human and non-human worlds, a point, like poetry or music, at which the boundaries of 'earth-speech' seem most transparent, its interpretation ambiguous, subjective, multiple:

> I covet the mystery of our Gaelic speech
> In which *rugadh* was at once a blush,
> A promontory, a headland, a cape,
> *Leadan,* musical notes, litany, hair of the head,
> And *fonn,* land, earth, delight, and a tune in music, (*CPII*: 1191)

The vocabulary sampled, again, aids in the sensory engagement of the poem, the language rich with colours, sights and sounds alongside descriptions of the land that can be touched and environments that smell. MacDiarmid's provision of English translations for the Gaelic words and phrases included – a feature not provided for Scots elsewhere – accentuates the comparative ineffectiveness of English whilst acknowledging the lack of understanding of Gaelic amongst his readership.

By deploying Gaelic vocabulary and references alongside Scots, Cornish and Welsh in these poems, MacDiarmid recreates a united Celtic front through illustrating collaborations and connections between languages, suggestive of a linguistic, cultural and authoritative framework with the power of opposing and potentially destabilising English hegemony. Interviewed in 1968, MacDiarmid confirmed the centrality of this 'diversity-in-unity' (*Albyn*: 4) to the priorities of plurality and decentralisation which informed his work:

> ['Celtic-ness'] is so utterly different in its values from Anglo-Saxondom you know, and even if it is not superior – and one wouldn't assert that – it is essential, as Eliot pointed out, to maintain it as an alternative to the other because it is all part of the richness of life – variety, you know. (*RTIII*: 561)

In MacDiarmid's persistent encouragement of variety, illustrated through the increased multilingualism and international referentiality of his poetry, the capacity of one element to dominate the rest is continually tested. Stasis, staleness and oppression is rejected, and progress – in the sense of continual change, exchange and adaptation – is stimulated. The influence of the Gaelic language and world upon 'the richness of life' that he sought to recreate and foster in his poetry proved integral to the vision of world language which developed out of these formative enquiries. The Gaelic world represents what John Brannigan refers to as a geographical area which has 'remained remote from the encroachments of a debilitating (English) modernity', symbolic, therefore, of values which

MacDiarmid sought to preserve within the weaving together of a global network or system of languages.[36]

5.4. Linguistic Islands: An Archipelagic Way of Seeing [37]

What becomes evident through a study of MacDiarmid's engagement with Gaelic in the 1930s and beyond is the extent to which he was committed to constructing a literary world language in which particularity and multiplicity were advocated for, and the dominance of a homogenous imperial English challenged. Repeatedly, he subverts existing hierarchies and dismantles faith in any one centre of cultural or linguistic authority. MacDiarmid suggests boundaries between languages, contexts and cultures as being fluid and porous, and his poetry as the hybrid space in which exchange across these boundaries can be facilitated, as cultures and languages are brought into contact with one another.

As MacDiarmid's poetics become increasingly archipelagic in form, comprised of collage, juxtaposition and catalogues of referentiality, so do his ideas of world language as reflected in this. In presenting distinct components within such poetic collages, he both preserves their distinctions and challenges their categorisations, encouraging 'fluid movement across porous margins'; margins which, whilst initially linguistic, increasingly come to symbolise structures of world power and influence that his poetry challenges.[38] Whilst each language or mode of language represents the individuality and distinct identity of an island, the world language which MacDiarmid envisions resembles the archipelago, a collection of plural identities and linguistic forms which is defined by its commonalities as much as its divisions. In this sense, the period of productive isolation which MacDiarmid spent on Whalsay in Shetland (1933-42) becomes more pertinent, as his experience here offered insight into and familiarity with an archipelagic model which informed the translation of earlier linguistic enquiries into the proposition of a world language that grew directly out of engagement with Scottish islands from both within and beyond the Gaelic world.

In 1924, under the pseudonym of J. G. Outterstone Buglass, MacDiarmid had quoted himself as writing as if 'there was no England and never had been, and Scotland was, like Ireland, an island off the coast of Europe' (*RTI*: 234). 'Scotland', he continues,

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[36] John Brannigan, *Archipelagic Modernism* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2015), p.163.
[37] Just prior to the submission of this thesis, this section of the chapter was revised for an article which is upcoming with *Studies in Scottish Literature* on 'Linguistic Islands: Archipelagic Perspectives in Hugh MacDiarmid's "Vision of World Language"'.
[38] Lanny Thompson, 'Heuristic Geographies: Territories and Areas, Islands and Archipelagoes', *Archipelagic American Studies*, ed. Brian Russell Roberts and Michelle Ann Stephens (Duke University Press: 2017), pp.57-73 (p.57).

'is coterminous with the universe' (*RTI*: 234), foregrounding, through the over-accentuation of Scotland's archipelagic nature and its coastal border with Europe, the intrinsic universality of island experience, defined less by its isolation and more by its cultural, linguistic and political connections. Yet it was not until the 1930s and his 'virtual expatriation' (*LP*: 41) in Whalsay that MacDiarmid's keen perception of the archipelago really began to impact his vision. Having inserted physical distance between himself and the nation as he knew it, MacDiarmid's time on Shetland was an opportunity to immerse himself in an alternative manifestation of Scottish experience and culture – alternative, even, to that explored under the guise of the 'Gaelic Idea' – which was divorced from his prior understanding and yet sustained the same central ethos, 'no further from the "centre of things"' (*CPI*: 574).

Shetland, 'that burnt-out star' (*RTII*: 510), introduced MacDiarmid to distinct forms of Scottish language which had evolved and existed separately from Scots, Gaelic or English. His poetry of the time, particularly that included in *Stony Limits* (1934) and *The Islands of Scotland* (1939), reflects this, emphasising the significance of Scandinavian influence upon Scotland's Northern peripheries. Norn language is deployed in 'On a Raised Beach', as MacDiarmid trials various linguistic approaches, discussed in light of its use of geological terminology in chapter three, in the attempt to better understand the austere natural environment of Shetland's rocky landscapes.

In adopting Norn, which declined following Scotland's acquisition of Shetland and Orkney from Norway in the mid-fifteenth century and was considered to be extinct by the mid-nineteenth century, MacDiarmid acknowledges the scale of deep geological time across which the environment had adapted and shaped itself. Attempting to comprehend this timeframe and the cultural, social and linguistic shifts which accompanied such ecological changes, MacDiarmid recognises and utilises the specificity of meaning prevalent in Norn vocabulary much as he had done with Scots and Gaelic before it:

> I try the with the old Norn words – hraun
> Duss, rønis, queedaruns, kollyarun;
> They hvarf from me in all directions
> Over the hurdifell – klett, millya hellya, hellyina bretta,
> Hellyina wheeda, hellyina grø, bakka, ayre, -
> And lay my world in kolgref. (*CPI*: 427)

MacDiarmid does not supply a translation for these words – believed to have been borrowed from Jakob Jakobsen's 1897 study of the Norse language in Shetland – thereby accentuating their foreignness to the reader, as to himself and to modernity. As such, an element of distance is retained, despite the poem's pursuit of closeness, alluding to the

poet's responsibility in defining language and making it accessible within the context of the poem. Without the provision of definitions, the vocabulary – in which local authority is implicit – becomes subjective, musical, a language without recognisable meaning. MacDiarmid plays with the poetic qualities of unfamiliar language, comparable to the repurposing of Sanskrit references in 'In the Slums of Glasgow', discussed in chapter three or the inclusion of non-translated vocabulary, discussed in chapter six. In each case, sound and rhythm prefaces meaning and assumptions of understanding are challenged, the reader never granted comfort or ease but encouraged to question the function of the language encountered and its place both in the poem and in the world.

In *In Memoriam James Joyce*, which also features Norn vocabulary within its global plethora of languages, the context is not local and yet the poem is propelled by the same desire to move beyond oneself and to attune to a cacophony of unfamiliar voices, tongues and materials. Here, however, the individual perspective from which MacDiarmid projects his vision is more secure, evident in the provision of definitions for the Norn words, a display of attained knowledge, if not intimate familiarity:

> Or even as, in the Shetland Islands where I lived,
> I know, in the old Norn language, the various names
> Applied to all the restless movements of the sea
> - *Di*, a wave; *Da mother di*, the undulations
> That roll landward even in calm weather;
> *Soal*, swell occasioned by a breeze,
> *Trove,* a short, cross, heavy sea,
> *Hak*, broken water, *Burrik*, a sharp sea or 'tide lump,'
> *Bod,* a heavy wave breaking on the shore,
> *Brim,* sound of sea breaking on the shore,
> Especially when land could not be seen, as in a fog,
> *Brimfooster*, sea breaking on a sunken rock or *baa*,
> *Faxin*, a *baa* threatening to break,
> *Overskud* or *votrug*, broken or spent water or backwash,
> *Gruttik*, ebb-tide, *Grinister*, ebb during spring tide,
> *Draag*, the drift of a current,
> *Roost*, a rapid flowing current,
> And the several names applied to the sea bottom
> *Flör*, *maar*, *jube*, *graef* and *ljoag* (*CPII*: 763-4)

Once more the relationship between language, landscape – in this case seascape – and local knowledge is emphasised, illustrated through the use of Norn as example of the minority languages which MacDiarmid maintained ought to be preserved within the collation of a world language.

MacDiarmid's experimentation with Norn is complemented by his evident reverence for the working-class locals of Shetland, whose language in modernity continued to reflect a deep love of the place and authority to speak on it.

> I like these Shetland fishermen [...] and I have dreamed of poetry that would do them justice; poems so accurate both in their boat-handling and racing strategy that only one who knew all the intricacies of sailing and racing (which I have been steadily learning all these years) could do them; poems that all who like small-boat sailing will delight in, full of thumb-nail sketches of local characters (*LP*: 52).

Such characters pervade MacDiarmid's 'Shetland Lyrics', included in *Stony Limits*, as snapshots of island living and contemplation. MacDiarmid includes the dialogue of the fishermen, which he would have encountered whilst out on their boats, in 'With the Herring Fishers' – '"Soom on, bonnie herrin', soom on" they shout, / Or "Come in, O come in, and see me,"' (*CPI*: 437) – recalling, through their language, the men in 'Deep-Sea Fishing' 'wha's coarser lives / Seemed proof to a' that appealed to me' (*CPI*: 438).

In other lyrics, namely 'Colla Firth in Winter' and 'De Profundis', MacDiarmid captures the barrenness of the seascape when not in the presence of these Shetlanders.

> I delight I this naethingness
> Mair than ever I did
> In the creation it yielded
> And has aince mair hid. (*CPI*: 440)

In the absence of locals – their experience, their speech, their language – MacDiarmid's Shetland is populated by birds and the movements of the seas, a distance from human culture which sees it better suited to his familiar Scots, but not a complete isolation or silence.

In his Shetland poems MacDiarmid writes from an attachment to place that Nicholas Allen considers to be symptomatic of the archipelago, 'locally grounded but at the same time involved in a network of cultural exchange'.[39] The seas and oceans, as well as the coasts and the land, serve as integral spaces within MacDiarmid's assertion of a holistic national identity, literature and language, and, by that means, the proposition of a holistic planetary consciousness, guided by 'the connection between solitude and universality' (*Islands*: 6). John Brannigan encourages the reader to think of the sea as a 'space of connection and communication', a key perspective within the framing of

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[39] Nicholas Allen, 'Introduction', *Coastal Works: Cultures of the Atlantic Edge*, ed. Nicholas Allen, Nick Groom and Jos Smith (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2017), p.12.

MacDiarmid's experience in Shetland and the understanding of spaces between islands as representative of journeys, outlooks and the means by which to travel to and imagine the rest of the archipelago, Europe, and the world.[40] Encounters with such fringes and tidal movements, enabling interaction, transition and confluence, encouraged a deeper consideration of hybridity, decentralisation and synthesis within MacDiarmid's vision of a world language, driving its commitment to both the conservation of diversity and the proposition of coherence, or unity.

MacDiarmid's visits to islands, documented in his 1939 Batsford travel guide, *The Islands of Scotland*, reinforced the significance of archipelagic plurality within the development of a world vision. As Alexandra Campbell considers, 'Through patterns of transmission and travel, the island becomes a porous and interconnected space and for MacDiarmid fuels an emergent archipelagic poetics that emphasises interconnection and interaction'.[41] The experience of travel, accompanied by short periods of inhabitation, extensive reading and interactions with new people and landscapes, affirmed an archipelagic model of understanding and seeing within MacDiarmid's perspective, in which 'Scotland is broken up into islands other than, and to a far greater extent than merely, geographically' (*Islands*: 8).

Research by Campbell, Brannigan and others – including Nicholas Allen and Andrew McNeillie – who themselves have built upon and around J. G. A. Pocock's coining of the 'Atlantic archipelago' (1975) and John Kerrigan's notion of 'Archipelagic English' (2008), encourages the application of an archipelagic model in the framing of MacDiarmid's vision of world language, particularly in its simultaneous emphasis upon specificity and commonality.[42] It was through experience of the archipelagic that MacDiarmid's earlier linguistic methods and enquiries were refocussed and streamlined.

Brannigan has studied the appeal of island spaces to modernist writers as 'distinctively local, and yet bound up with intrinsically internationalist perspectives on the human race and its planetary habits'.[43] He recognises their duality, the simultaneity of which resonates with MacDiarmid's interest in dialectics and contradictions, as does Chris Bongie, who describes the island as

> a figure that can and must be read in more than one way: on the one hand, as the absolutely particular, a space complete unto itself and thus an ideal metaphor for a

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[40] Brannigan, *Archipelagic Modernism*, p.11.
[41] Alexandra Campbell, 'A World of Islands: Archipelagic Poetics in Modern Scottish Literature', *The Poetics of Space and Place*, pp.165-185 (pp.169-70).
[42] See John Kerrigan, *Archipelagic English: Literature, History Politics 1603-1707* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2008).
[43] Brannigan, *Archipelagic Modernism*, p.150.

traditionally conceived, unified and unitary, identity; on the other, as a fragment, a part of some greater whole from which it is in exile and to which it must be related – in an act of (never completed) completion that is always also, as it were, an ex-isle, a loss of the particular. The island is thus the site of a double identity – closed and open.[44]

Both 'closed and open', equal parts 'absolutely particular' and 'a part of some greater whole': such descriptions might be attributed to MacDiarmid's idea of Scotland or Europe, his suggestion of a United Celtic Front or, most crucially, his vision of world language, in which both individuality and universality are emphasised concurrently.

Whilst MacDiarmid concentrated primarily on the Shetlands, Orkneys and Hebrides in *The Islands of Scotland*, his study extends beyond these to acknowledge the 800 odd distinct islands which make up the Scottish archipelago. The islands are surveyed in and of themselves, and considered as they compare or relate both to one another and to the 'whole' nation which they belong to:

> They are of all shapes and sizes. No symmetry of effect is obtainable. She seems to have no control over them. Several groups appear to have escaped from the concerted movement of which she is the centre altogether. And while some remain in groups others are isolated stragglers. It is a chaotic spectacle seen from above. (*Islands*: 1)

Authority is not imposed upon the islands from above, which remain 'a chaotic spectacle' despite belonging to a wider system. The islands, therefore, represent decentralised power and autonomy, symbolic of a model which MacDiarmid envisioned for Scotland and which many writers across the Commonwealth were beginning to secure in the secession of imperialist powers. Their alternative structures of order represent within MacDiarmid's vision 'the original impetus to civilisation', symbolic of 'an Ur-Gaelic initiative' (*Islands*: ix), causing a link to be drawn between his earlier 'Gaelic Idea' and an archipelagic perspective. Each retains their distinctiveness, the archipelago thus representative of a plurality that 'flatter[ed]' MacDiarmid's 'Scotist love for minute distinctions' (*Islands*: 26). He expresses fascination at the fact that 'nowadays an island is an almost startlingly entire thing, in these days of the subdivision, of the atomisation, of life' (*Islands*: 26). 'By remaining attentive' to these distinctions, Campbell argues, 'MacDiarmid avoids the production of homogenising narratives of place', retaining the kind of local particularity which would be celebrated within his vision of world language.[45] MacDiarmid also

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[44] Chris Bongie, *Islands and Exiles: The Creole Identities of Post/Colonial Literature* (California: Stanford University Press, 1998), p.18.
[45] Campbell, 'A World of Islands', p.169.

proceeds to assert that 'in order to know any island it is necessary to know many islands' (*Islands*: 25): the islands are considered within their archipelagic and global networks, and their cultures – no matter how small – are considered as they contribute to 'the wider realms of global systems of communication and culture'.[46]

Through this the Scottish archipelago represents, in microcosm, the 'richness of life' which MacDiarmid strove to retain within a world language and literature. Such diversity and variety, experienced locally but envisioned globally, was pursued with a greater insistence in the later poetry, imagined beyond the Scottish archipelagos which MacDiarmid visited.

It is in this vein that the plural languages navigated in *In Memoriam James Joyce*, are presented as individually distinct and yet connected, autonomous and yet cooperative, identified within a diverse and fluctuating network:

> They are not endless these variations of form
> Though it is perhaps impossible to see them all.
> It is certainly impossible to conceive one that doesn't exist. (*CPII*: 758)

The smallest are incorporated and celebrated alongside the most expansive, languages 'of all shapes and sizes' brought together in the 'vision of world language' which resembles a 'chaotic spectacle seen from above' much like an archipelago of languages, vocabulary, idiom, understanding and perspective:

> Concerned at one moment with the whole of *Weltliteratur*
> And equally concerned the next with Vogul,
> The smallest of the Finno-Ugrian language group,
> Spoken by only 5000 people, (*CPII*: 748)

Size and popularity or frequency of usage are not taken as indicators of value, the smallest components representative of the most specific, most distinctive experiences and identities which MacDiarmid argued ought to be preserved in the face of English hegemony. The commonalities of the languages referenced are suggested by the manner in which MacDiarmid collages them together, accentuating both their similarities and distinctions through their physical closeness on the page. *In Memoriam James Joyce* is an epic appeal to the specificities and pluralities encompassed within the bracket of 'world language', their diversities and irregularities sustained by his commitment to negotiating an understanding of language itself.

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[46] Ibid.

In presenting his vision of world language as he does, MacDiarmid engages with the priorities and approaches of postcolonial writers and theorists who have recognised islands as the sites of intrinsically hybrid, synthetic and multilingual cultures, 'vital and dynamic loci of cultural and material exchange'.[47] It might be noted that MacDiarmid includes 'Papiemento, mixture of half the languages on earth' (*CPII*: 755) in *In Memoriam*. Papiemento, a Portuguese creole language used in the Caribbean islands, features influence from Spanish, English, Dutch and African languages, a confluence of imperial powers at the centre of the Dutch slave trade; MacDiarmid's reference to it here indicates his conscious nod to the significance of islands as sites of innovation and flux, particularly contestable and central within the forging of imperial, and subsequently postcolonial, networks and cultures.

Whilst, as Elizabeth Deloughrey suggests, 'colonial writers imagined the island as a European world in miniature, a discursive space in which to perform and experiment with the material realities of colonial expansion' – an imposition from outside – MacDiarmid saw the island as distinct within itself, an autonomous space from which to approach and engage with the outside world.[48] Linguistically, this meant promoting the survival of individual dialects and languages rather than submission to homogenous English – consider Caliban in *The Tempest*, who famously retorts 'you taught me language, and my profit on't / Is, I know how to curse'.[49] The reclamation of language was integral to the recalibration of authority as addressed by and reflected in postcolonial literatures, an issue which MacDiarmid engages with in his politically-conscious poetry, discussed in chapter seven.

5.5. 'invisible bridges': Border Crossings from the Archipelago to the Postcolonial

To consider Scotland, Europe and the world in archipelagic terms was to redefine the notion of a border as not only a national, political boundary but an ecological, cultural, or mental frontier. MacDiarmid reveals these boundaries to be porous and contestable, framed within an open vision of shifting centres of power. Movement occurs across and through them, in both directions, and it does so through language. Commonly, MacDiarmid's work is discussed in light of its 'dialectics', the discourse of opposites in the investigation of

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[47] Elizabeth Deloughrey, 'Island Writing, Creole Cultures', *The Cambridge History of Postcolonial Literature, Volume II*, ed. Ato Quayson (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2012), pp.802-832 (p.802).
[48] Ibid., pp.806-7.
[49] William Shakespeare, I.ii.366-8, *The Tempest* [1611], ed. Virginia Mason Vaughan and Alden T. Vaughan (London: The Arden Shakespeare, 1999), p.198.

truth, however perhaps more apt to his treatment of Scotland's pluralities and the archipelago is Barbadian poet Kamau Brathwaite's notion of 'tidalectics', by which he refers to 'the movement of the water backwards and forwards as a kind of cyclic […] motion, rather than linear'.[50] MacDiarmid's languages and linguistic approaches weave a course towards the culminating poetic vision of *In Memoriam James Joyce* yet the trajectory is not wholly linear: priorities disappear and recur across various points in his career in different forms, trialled by different methods. Single poems function individually and enact quite distinct impressions, whilst remaining connected to one another through the common pursuit of better understanding the world and the connections between its distinct categorisations of identity, nation, culture and language.

MacDiarmid ends *The Islands of Scotland* on an affirmation of such connectivity, cultural affinities reflected within an imaginary infrastructure:

> There are invisible bridges from every one of the Scottish islands, I think, that cross as far as the mind can go and reach across whatever space lies between us and anything that has ever been or ever will be apprehensible by the minds of men. (*Islands*: 136)

Poetry enabled MacDiarmid to explore the unknown, to stretch his consciousness 'as far as the mind can go' and to build bridges. He built invisible bridges between languages, people, cultures and literatures, and he did so through translation, allusion and experimentation, continually enquiring into linguistic commonalities as well as their distinctions.

The 1930s, which this chapter has focussed on, was a pivotal period in MacDiarmid's translation of earlier curiosities and enquiries into a more assured and directed project with an increasingly global focus. Through recognition of Scotland's own multiplicities and the proposition of a 'Gaelic Idea', through translation of Gaelic poetry and the exploration of Celtic languages and cultures as an alternative to English standardisation and imperial oppression, and finally through the opening up of an archipelagic perspective, the defining characteristics of MacDiarmid's vision were redefined and refined: plurality, decentralisation and individuality in a framework which catered to both particularity and commonality, both simultaneity and change.

It is MacDiarmid's commitment to these aims and priorities, namely in the use of non-translation, allusion and recontextualised language in his later English poetry, which

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[50] Kamau Brathwaite, *ConVERSations with Nathaniel Mackey* (New York: We Press, 1999), p.44.

the following chapter explores, before considering the political and aesthetic implications of this referential approach.

Chapter Six

Displaced Language: Non-Translation, Allusion and Repurpose

> The answer is Hamlet's: 'Words, words, words!',
> And the commas between them
> And the deeds they beget
> And the deeds they leave undone;
> And the word that was at the beginning,
> And, above all, the words that were at the end. (*CPII*: 768)

In Memoriam James Joyce: A Vision of World Language was published in 1955. In the above extract from the poem, Hugh MacDiarmid cites Erich Heller, writing on Karl Kraus in 1952. Heller quotes Shakespeare's *Hamlet,* written around 1600. The repurposed nature of language, shared throughout time yet adapted in each context, is explicit, each level of the allusion a specific interpretation of linguistic possibility which is vital to MacDiarmid's proposition of a world language. Kraus satirised Fascist linguistic manipulation, 'transform[ing] language and defeat[ing] "normal" expectations'.[1] *Hamlet* illustrated the capacities of speech as 'an instrument of power'.[2] Invocation of 'the word that was at the beginning' highlights the centrality of language to religious and literary understanding and creation and, for the modern reader, foreshadows Tom Leonard's later deconstruction of 'in the beginning was the word', a secular reclamation of sacred language which highlights language as spoken and thus as sound.[3]

Such was the significance of language for MacDiarmid. Inherited through writing and speech, language was understood to be adaptable in response to social and cultural change, and it was representative of authority, intrinsic to both the upholding and dismantling of power structures.

Fuelled by what Edwin Morgan has deemed a 'verbal hunger', MacDiarmid sought to create a poetry which was 'the reverse of what it is usually thought to be; not an idea gradually shaping itself in words, but deriving entirely from words' (*LP*: xxiii).[4] MacDiarmid drew upon varied and particular stratifications of language – local, specific, and specialist – with increased frequency throughout his career, responding to the post-war

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[1] Marjorie Perloff, *Edge of Irony: Modernism in the Shadow of the Hapsburg Empire* (London: The University of Chicago Press, Ltd., 2018), p.30.
[2] Madeleine Doran, 'The Language of *Hamlet*', *Huntington Library Quarterly,* 27.3 (1964), pp.259-278 (p.259).
[3] Tom Leonard, *Intimate Voices: Selected Works, 1965-83* (London: Vintage, 1995) (front cover).
[4] Edwin Morgan, 'The Case of Hugh MacDiarmid' (1962), *Edwin Morgan: In Touch with Language*, p.31.

anxieties of the early twentieth century and engaging, as many modernists did, with the challenging of linguistic boundaries.

Richard Sheppard describes the aftermath of the First World War as a point of crisis in which language 'cease[d] to be a means of communication and becomes an opaque and impenetrable wall', whilst Christopher Butler notes that, in the rebuilding of culture and society from the ruins, 'language bec[ame] more and more elliptical', turning 'to juxtaposition and the alogical, to the simultaneous and the collaged'.[5] In response to the war's destruction, modernists including MacDiarmid struggled through fragmentation in search of a new order, increasingly leaning into the idea of a language which reflected 'the entire human race speaking, and in time as well as space', utilised in a poetics which strove for universality, to speak for a common humanity.[6] Repurposing non-translated language and allusions from other cultures and contexts for use within English, these writers – most famously Eliot, Pound and Joyce – portrayed 'languages that were neither fully English nor fully foreign', incorporating what Tom Leonard would later refer to as an 'international pattern' of literary insurgency that challenged the dominance of standardised English.[7]

From the 'strong solution of books' (*AFS*: 4) which informed MacDiarmid's first volume in print, *Annals of the Five Senses*, to the vocabulary borrowed from dictionaries used to compile his synthetic Scots; from the allusions to European languages in *A Drunk Man* to the piling up of rocky terminology in 'On a Raised Beach'; and from the plagiarism scandal of 'Perfect' to the epic repurposing of journalism, literature and vocabulary in *In Memoriam James Joyce,* synthesis, borrowing and allusion were consistently key to MacDiarmid's experimentation with language.[8] This chapter explores MacDiarmid's contribution to the construction of a multilingual modernist poetics, in

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[5] Richard Sheppard, 'The Crisis of Language', *Modernism*, ed. Malcolm Bradbury and James McFarlane (London: Penguin, 1976), pp.323-336 (p.328).
Christopher Butler, *Early Modernism: Literature, Music and Painting in Europe, 1900-1916* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1994), p.10.
[6] Kenner, *The Pound Era*, p.95.
[7] John Marx, *The Modernist Novel and the Decline of Empire* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2005), p.2.
Tom Leonard, *Radical Renfrew: Poetry from the French Revolution to the First World War*, ed. Tom Leonard (Edinburgh: Polygon, 1990), p.xxvi.
[8] The incident regarding 'Perfect', included in *The Islands of Scotland* (1939) encapsulates MacDiarmid's magpie-like eye and his blasé attitude to the borrowing of language and text, whilst demarcating the legal implications of his practices. Following publication of the poem, Welsh poet Glyn Jones published a public statement in the *Times Literary Statement* arguing that 'These words […] were written by me – except the first line – as prose in a volume of short stories entitled *The Blue Bed* and published by Cape in 1937' (*Letters*: 828-9). MacDiarmid – armed with T. S. Eliot's defence that 'major poets steal' – denied deliberate theft, suggesting that 'I either automatically memorized it and subsequently thought it my own, or wrote it into one of my notebooks with the same result' (*Letters*: 829). His argument that 'Any plagiarism was certainly unconscious' (*Letters*: 829) remained unconvincing to critics and readers who deduced numerous other examples of repurposed material in his poetry.

which the poem was utilised as a hybrid space wherein a diversity of languages could interact, fostering a cross-pollination of cultures, ideas and strands of knowledge with aesthetic and political implications.

Discussion first focusses on the linguistic implications of modernist allusiveness and the collage poem before turning to 'non-translation' as it complements the study of MacDiarmid's translation in chapter four. The significance of catalogues and lists is explored as a means of suggesting order and association, and the specific role of scientific terminology and 'jargon' is considered as an example of MacDiarmid's repurposing of specialist vocabulary in English poetry.

6.1. Modernist Multilingualism

While the Russian Formalists advocated for *zaum*, a 'new ungrammatical combination of words, *even from languages unknown to the poet*' which sought to 'reclaim a power for poetry', T. S. Eliot argued for the regeneration of language and poetry through the introduction of unfamiliar elements: 'The poet must become more allusive, more indirect, in order to force, to dislocate if necessary, language into his meaning'.[9] In his poetry Eliot gestured to the influence of predecessors through allusion, much as Pound did in 'borrow[ing] what pleased him from regional dialects throughout Italy' to construct a 'synthetic language', so-called by Samuel Beckett.[10] Daniel Katz, who explores this practice, highlights the prominence of Joyce, Eliot, Pound and MacDiarmid's shared interests in 'nonstandard vernacular, synthetic languages, and modes of transfer, translation, and interference between idioms and the spaces they imply', interests which this chapter focusses on in its consideration of allusion and non-translation.[11]

The centrality of allusion to *The Waste Land*, an amalgam of 'These fragments I have shored against my ruins', has been widely documented within modernist studies, as it has in Pound's *Cantos* and Joyce's *Ulysses*, a scholarly discourse that ought to more readily include MacDiarmid.[12] Whilst Jean-Michel Rabaté describes *The Waste Land* as 'a

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[9] Velimir Khlebnikov, *The King of Time: Poems, Fictions, Visions of the Future*, ed. Charlotte Douglas, trans. Paul Schmidt (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1985), pp.113-14.
Quoted in Jason Harding, '"Making Strange": Non-Translation in *The Waste Land*', *Modernism and Non-Translation*, ed. Jason Harding and John Nash (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2019), pp.117-136 (p.118).
T. S. Eliot, 'The Metaphysical Poets' [1921], *Selected Prose of T. S. Eliot*, ed. Frank Kermode (New York: Harcourt Brace, 1975), p.65.
[10] Daniel Katz, 'Ezra Pound's Provincial Provence: Arnaut Daniel, Gavin Douglas, and the Vulgar Tongue', *Modern Language Quarterly*, 73.2 (2012), pp.175-99 (p.181).
Samuel Beckett, 'Dante . . . Bruno. Vico.. Joyce', *Disjecta: Miscellaneous Writings and a Dramatic Fragment*, ed. Ruby Cohn (London: J. Calder, 1983), pp.19-34 (p.30).
[11] Katz, 'Ezra Pound's Provincial Provence', p.181.
[12] Eliot, *The Waste Land and Other Poems*, p. 39.

rampart of words, a tentative construction' designed to help Eliot overcome 'the destruction, material and moral, brought about by European madness', Ruth Alison Clemens's recent study of *The Waste Land*'s paratext offers valuable insight into the significance of translation – and non-translation, or poor translation – in modernist literature which is paratextual as well as being intertextual and multilingual. [13] Meanwhile, Eliot is known to have acknowledged the allusiveness of Joyce's *Ulysses*, having remarked in a review that this marked 'a step toward making the modern world possible for art'.[14] Here, Joyce's Dublin is populated with references to classical and popular forms of language and literature, depicted in a hybrid English that John Nash argues 'underlines the impression of the impermanence of English as the dominant world language'.[15] Non-translated vocabularies and intertext commingle in Bloom's consciousness as he navigates the city's diversities, his recognition of 'there being more languages to start with than were absolutely necessary' ringing true with the modernist anxiety of linguistic multiplicity, fragmentation and an urgency for improved communication in the aftermath of war.[16] Reflecting on his own appropriation of foreign vocabulary Joyce would refer to himself as a 'scissors and paste man', satirising the centrality of the 'pelagiarist pen' in a work like *Finnegans Wake*, in which language is recycled and repurposed within a literary context which is, on the surface, nonsensical.[17] Pound's *Cantos,* meanwhile, incorporate allusive fragments from discordant national cultures and traditions, representative of 'a formidable variety of sources' and an ambition to harness the modern belief that, as Rebecca Beasley recognises, 'all world culture, all "civilization" […] is available to write with, to think with'.[18]

Working contemporaneously with Eliot, Joyce and Pound, MacDiarmid engaged with the repurposing of language on a similar scale as he appealed to vocabulary, facts and ideas from a diverse pool of sources in time and space. MacDiarmid envisioned a language capable of 'Wandering from subject to subject / And roaming back and forth in time' (*CPII*: 797), an ambition which is captured in 'The Whole Keyboard' as he imagines 'The

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[13] Rabaté, '"The World Has Seen Strange Revolutions Since I Died", p.22.
See Ruth Alison Clemens, 'Bombast and Sesquipedalian Words: Translation, Mistranslation, and the Epigraph to *The Waste Land', Modernist Cultures*, 17.1 (2022), pp.109-126.
[14] T. S. Eliot, 'Book Reviews: Ulysses, Order, and Myth', *Selected Prose of T. S. Eliot*, pp.175-78 (p.178).
[15] John Nash, '"There being more languages to start with than were absolutely necessary": James Joyce's *Ulysses* and English as a World Language', *Modernism and Non-Translation*, pp.172-91 (p.184).
[16] Joyce, *Ulysses*, p.826.
[17] James Joyce, letter to George Antheil (1931), *Selected Letters of James Joyce*, ed. Richard Ellmann (London: Faber & Faber, 1975), p.125.
James Joyce, *Finnegans Wake* (Hertfordshire: Wordsworth Classics, 2012), p.182.
[18] Mark Byron, 'Between Apocalypse and Extinction: Eschatology in Ezra Pound's Poetry', *Studia Neophilologica*, 88.1 (2016), pp.19-32 (p.19).
Rebecca Beasley, 'The Direct Method: Ezra Pound, Non-Translation, and the International Future', *Modernism and Non-Translation*, pp.67-85 (p.85).

whole keyboard' which runs 'all the way / From *le mot juste* to the Omnific word' (*RAF*: 16). MacDiarmid's appeal in this poem to a language of 'the whole of time', 'Everywhere on the Earth at once' (*RAF*: 16) encapsulates the visionary comprehensiveness of the world language imagined in *In Memoriam James Joyce*. The ambition resonates with the linguistic practices of much of his later poetry, in which allusion, intertextuality and non-translation sees a plurality of contexts and cultures invoked, his web of referentiality continually reaching beyond the confines of the text into language itself.

This emphasis upon diversity and synthesis which MacDiarmid integrates in his poetry sees him take on the role of 'bricoleur', a role that Jahan Ramazani identifies as the poet who 'enfold[s] varied temporalities in the radially vectored language, techniques, forms, and rhetorical strategies of their work'.[19]

In doing so at his particular historical moment in the mid-twentieth century, guided by anti-imperialist principles and a support for minority languages, MacDiarmid bridges the modernist pursuit with later postcolonial or decolonial approaches to language exemplified by the Caribbean poet Édouard Glissant. Glissant, in *Tratado del Todo Mundo* (1997), echoes MacDiarmid's commitment to linguistic plurality through his calls for an 'exten[sion of] the imagination by an infinite bursting forth and an infinite repetition of the themes of hybridity, multilingualism and creolization'.[20] Glissant recognises the irreplaceable value of distinct languages, arguing 'For with every language that disappears a part of the human imagination is lost forever', recognising in light of this that 'our use of the language can no longer be monolingual'.[21]

For Glissant, as for MacDiarmid, linguistic diversity was necessary to preserve the distinctness of the world's multiplicities. Whilst MacDiarmid frequently adopts a synthetic language in his poetry, 'synthesizing the language of the future from the debris of the past', he does so in the aim of sustaining the unique, individual languages which he synthesises, utilising the poem as a space in which to envision interaction and exchange between these languages that does not result in the domination of one over the rest.[22] As MacDiarmid quotes David Daiches as having said in an article of 1949, 'much of the world's great literature has been written in synthetic languages', and yet 'Language is never a serious barrier to those who really wish to understand each other' (*RTIII*: 148).

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[19] Jahan Ramazani, *Poetry in a Global Age* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2020), p.2.
[20] Édouard Glissant, *Treatise on the Whole-World*, trans. Celia Britton (Liverpool: Liverpool University Press, 2020), p.10; p.16.
[21] Ibid., p.52.
[22] Hart, *Nations of Nothing But Poetry*, p.59.

John Baglow considers MacDiarmid's modernist task in this manner as one of 'recreat[ing] a smashed universe' and proposing a new order.[23] The 'mosaic' or 'patchwork' poem, of which *In Memoriam* is an example, illustrates how 'textual *appropriation*' might be considered 'a mode of fresh creation', enabling as it does both the 'smashed'-ness and the act of 'recreat[ion]' to be centralised thematically within the text.[24] Whilst the multilingual form challenges the standardisation of English as a world language, it simultaneously engages with the idea of language which *uses* English to *become* global. As Susan Stanford Friedman has suggested, the literary collage has a capacity to '[negotiate] between sameness and difference by setting up a relational structure in which neither is privileged over the other', thus 'defamiliariz[ing] what we take for granted as "universal"'.[25] Defamiliarization is key throughout MacDiarmid's use of the English language as he consistently relies upon a broad international pool of allusions and vocabulary to supplement its creative expressive potential. In suggesting a heterogeneous world language MacDiarmid draws upon the hybridity already existent in the world's languages as made up of multiple dialects, jargons and specialist terminologies. The bringing together of such pluralities within the space of the poem constructs a poetry that, through its form, challenges the notion of linguistic hegemony, thereby posing a challenge also to the authoritative structures – often imperial – which support such standardisation.

Through the supplementation of English with various vocabularies acquired from literary sources – poetry, prose and drama as well as dictionaries and newspaper articles – and from speech – as in Shetland – MacDiarmid emphasises the value of diversity within a world language. Frequently, in order to respect such specific knowledge and expressive capacity, and to illustrate the limitations of English as a world language, MacDiarmid includes this vocabulary in non-translated form.

Jason Harding and John Nash define 'non-translation' as the inclusion of 'words or brief phrases' from other languages in a text which 'clearly has a dominant, or primary language'.[26] They identify the practice as prevalent in modernist literature which 'reflects the technical linguistic probing of philosophical investigations into the complexities of language use and translation', exhibiting an interest in 'the resistance of words (or signs) to fixed meanings irrespective of cultural context' and 'the creative-destructive potentialities of strategic detonations of those incorporated "non-translated" fragments'.[27] In including

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[23] Baglow, *Hugh MacDiarmid*, p.16.
[24] Paul K. Saint-Amour, *The Copywrights: Intellectual Property and the Literary Imagination* (New York: Cornell University Press, 2003), p.47.
[25] Susan Stanford Friedman, 'Towards a Transnational Turn in Narrative Theory: Literary Narratives, Traveling Tropes, and the Case of Virginia Woolf and the Tagores', *Narrative*, 19.1 (2011), pp.1-32 (p.7).
[26] Harding and Nash, *Modernism and Non-Translation*, p.2.
[27] Ibid., p.10.

non-translated language, as many of MacDiarmid's poems do, the text is marked 'as a site of confrontation, not just of tongues but of interpretative dilemmas', prompting enquiry into why the 'possibility' of translation has been hinted at and 'declined', leaving a visible imprint on the text.[28]

Confrontation with non-translation thus generates an active role for the reader who, as Jane Hiddleston and Wen-chin-Ouyang argue, is not 'excluded by the use of foreign languages but whose role is subversively reconfigured to involve a form of co-creation based at once on partial understanding and her own creative imagination'.[29] They must take on the role of the '"competent" reader', referred to by John Corbett, who 'is willing to work hard at constructing a reading when texts seem to be obscure, to hold multiple possible interpretations in mind, and to evaluate their likelihood on a variety of criteria', an act of 'engagement with, rather than passive absorption of, a literary text'.[30] This idea of active engagement and 'co-creation' is key to MacDiarmid's poetry, which incorporates non-translated language and referentiality in its provocation of curiosity and learning. Moreover, Jahan Ramazani has recognised non-translation to work, primarily in one of two ways, both of which are present in MacDiarmid's work:

> On the one hand, a poem that appears to be rooted in a singular culture and history may have world-traversing strands that should be teased out. On the other, an apparently global poem may relocalize once distant realities, indigenize once alien influences, or vernacularize the once foreign as mother tongue.[31]

The first classification might apply to *A Drunk Man Looks at the Thistle* or *To Circumjack Cencrastus* which reach outward from their roots in Scottish culture, whilst the latter might apply to *The Poems of the East-West Synthesis*, *The Kind of Poetry I Want*, or *In Memoriam James Joyce*, epic poems which dwell in the constructed hybrid space of the international, then universal, vision, yet remind the reader of the importance of localised distinctions of identity, knowledge and belonging within this.

This achieves a different impact from that of translation, which works primarily to highlight the transferability of expression and meaning from one language into another. MacDiarmid's use of non-translation, conversely, emphasises the distinctive individuality of each language, culture and experience. The effect is less one of subtle defamiliarization

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[28] Ibid., p.2.
[29] Jane Hiddleston and Wen-chin Ouyang, 'Introduction', *Multilingual Literature as World Literature*, ed. Jane Hiddleston and Wen-chin Ouyang (London: Bloomsbury, 2021), pp.1-10 (p.6).
[30] Corbett, *Language and Scottish Literature*, p.213.
[31] Ramazani, *Poetry in a Global Age*, p.10.

and more one of unsettling or destabilising any preconceived faith in the power of linguistic standardisation or hegemony.

6.2. 'All vocabularies are hopelessly hybrid': Non-Translation in MacDiarmid's Poetry[32]

MacDiarmid first utilises non-translated words and phrases extensively in *A Drunk Man Looks at the Thistle*. Here, these are deployed to complement the passages of translation, previously discussed, as further indication of the drunk man's continentally-minded nationalism. [33] Throughout the poem, MacDiarmid highlights the difference of non-translated words and phrases by including them in italic, as opposed to roman, font, physically distinguishing them from the dominant Scots.

Latin is repurposed in the first instance, appearing nine stanzas in, as MacDiarmid alters the familiar phrase *'Sic transit gloria mundi'* to read '*Sic transit gloria Scotiae*' (*CPI*: 84) – 'Thus passes the glory of Scotland'. The localised allusion relates to the shared international experience of decay and rebuilding in the aftermath of the First World War, a reminder of the specific Scottish perspective he writes from which appeals to both the modern context and the classical era connoted by Latin. MacDiarmid uses Latin again following the translation of Georges Ramaekers's ode to the thistle:

> But that's a Belgian refugee, of coorse.
> *This* Freudian complex has somehoo slunken
> Frae Scotland's soul – this Scots aboulia –
> Whilst a' its *terra nullius* is *betrunken.* (*CPI*: 93)

The Latin phrase '*terra nullius*', meaning 'nobody's land' – associative of the First World War and 'no man's land' as well as a more general feeling of rootlessness and contested identity – is incorporated seamlessly into the Scots poem as the message of the stanza remains semantically clear despite the unfamiliar vocabulary. MacDiarmid creates a sense of continental familiarity and affinity which links the unfamiliar Latin and the 'Belgian refugee' (the extract from Ramaekers) with Freud (who was Austrian); 'aboulia' (a psychiatric term referring to the lack of willpower related to mental illness); and 'betrunken' (German, meaning drunk).[34] Non-translation in this instance fuses seemingly disparate concerns of the poem: literary allusion, linguistic synthesis, the post-war context,

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[32] Hugh MacDiarmid, 'Problems of Poetry Today' (1933), *RTII*: 484-5.
[33] This is not the first poem where MacDiarmid uses non-translated vocabulary, only the first in which its inclusion appears to be prioritised. For earlier examples see discussion in chapter one on 'Introduzione alla Vitta Mediocre' (1922).
[34] 'aboulia' stems from ancient Greek.

European and national identity, art which engages with science, and drunkenness, in an accommodation of difference which unsettles the hegemony of the Scots, a reflection of shifting contexts and conditions and the struggle of national revival. MacDiarmid's decision not to translate the non-Scots words that he includes is a decision to highlight the distinctiveness of each contributary to this confluence, a decision against the assimilation of translation which might lose something of each connotation in the process. Such a conscious creative choice prefigures priorities later demonstrated in his vision of world language, namely the preservation of plurality and the autonomy of minority literatures, languages and nations in opposition to the hostile giantism of standardised English.

MacDiarmid returns to the German language in *A Drunk Man* in the repurposing of technical terminologies. Unlike the previous example, MacDiarmid does not include the vocabulary in italics, yet their incongruent strangeness remains resoundingly visual, the prevalence of long compound words and the running together of consonant sounds unfamiliar within the surrounding Scots diction:

> Type o' the Wissenschaftsfeindlichkeit,
> Begriffsmüdigkeit that has gar't
> Men try Morphologies der Weltgeschichte,
> And mad Expressionismus syne in Art. (*CPI*: 94)

Included immediately following his dismissal of T. S. Eliot – 'it's a Scottish name' (*CPI*: 94) – non-translation here illustrates an attempt, perhaps, to grapple with allusive difficulty and 'keep pace' with his contemporaries.[35] It is possible to gloss the stanza, with 'Wissenschaftsfeindlichkeit' denoting science denialism, 'Begriffsmüdigkeit' referring to concept fatigue, 'Weltgeschichte' to world history, and 'Expressionismus' to Expressionism. Yet immediate semantic resonance is obstructed by the specificity of the terminology, which stems from a more technological, scientific context within the (already unfamiliar) language and is thus devoid of any recognisable connotations. Through the revealing of meaning – left to the initiative of the reader – MacDiarmid's suggestion of a turn to art and literature as remedy to the Victorian focus upon science and technology, of which the Drunk Man, is 'Type' (tired or weary), becomes clear. It is an explicit instance of the reader being encouraged to assume a more active role in their approach to the poem, to navigate strange terrain and to find meaning that is not explicit within the poem beyond the limits of the text.

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[35] Dorian Grieve, 'MacDiarmid's Language', *The Edinburgh Companion to Hugh MacDiarmid*, pp.23-35 (p.33).

Preceding as it does the Scots translation of Zinaida Hippius's 'Psyche', adapted from the Russian, MacDiarmid's use of non-translation introduces unfamiliarity while providing an affirmation of art, literature and language, foregrounding the necessity of discomfort in the achievement of change. Scott Lyall cites the influence of Oswald Spengler's *Der Untergang des Abendlandes* ('Decline of the West', 1918) upon MacDiarmid's inclusion of German here, building upon Kenneth Buthlay's annotations to *A Drunk Man* which identify Carl Dyrssen's *Bergson Und Die Deutsche Romantik* (1922) as the source of these repurposed terms.[36] Lyall suggests that 'MacDiarmid found in Spengler's cyclical history a means to suggest a new beginning for Scottish culture once it was released from the linearity of Whig progressivism and British imperial universalism'.[37] Again, the application of German philosophies to a poem centred upon the mediation of Scotland's national identity foregrounds the necessity of engagement with foreign concepts and approaches to the regenerative process – politically, as well as culturally – as insinuated through the injection of foreign vocabularies. The strangeness and difficulty of the changes which MacDiarmid saw as being necessary for Scotland and for the world – albeit limited here to Europe – are highlighted through the inclusion of non-translation.

Following the Hippius translation, MacDiarmid includes Welsh as an example of 'foreign' vocabulary, representative of a coherent Celtic culture and language which, like the Scots he uses, undermines 'use o' England whaur the U.K.'s meent' (*CPI*: 95). The interjection of a non-translated loan-word here alludes to the generally perceived uncanniness of Celtic cultures, unwelcome and physically awkward to pronounce even in the environment of the Scots poem:

> The devil's lauchter has a *hwyl* like this.
> My face has flown open like a lid
> – And gibberin' on the hillside there
> Is a' humanity sae lang has hid!... (*CPI*: 95)

'Hwyl', Laura O'Connor notes, is glossed as 'ululation', 'connoting a reverberating pure sound that spans the gamut of triumph, grief, despair, degradation, defiance, revenge, and mockery', whilst Roderick Watson refers to the term as a 'virtually untranslatable mixture of inspiration and ecstasy'.[38] It also carries a stark phonetic resemblance to the English

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[36] Lyall, 'Minor Modernisms', p.226.
[37] Ibid.
[38] O'Connor, 'Neighborly Hostility and Literary Creoles'.

'howl', an unignorable (visual and sonic) association of animalistic pain which taints the reception of the word and which MacDiarmid would have been aware of.[39] O'Connor argues that MacDiarmid's use of the term 'offloads it onto a neighbouring language without relinquishing a remote Celtic kinship with it'.[40] MacDiarmid plays with perceptions of linguistic difference; while there is a historic affinity between Scots and Welsh, one which increasingly features within his ambition for a united Celtic front in the 1930s, the language is removed and strange enough to unsettle the discourse of the poem and be associated with a fiendish scene that ought to be distanced from the drunk man's serious attempt to grapple with Scotland's future. At this point, MacDiarmid prioritises Scotland and the Scottish perspective within his emerging vision, even when that vision emphasises connections and affinities with other nations and cultures.

Elsewhere, MacDiarmid includes non-translated vocabulary from Russian, the source of which he reveals as being D. S. Mirsky's *Modern Russian Literature* (1925). In footnotes which MacDiarmid quite unusually provides, 'nadryy' is glossed as Dostoevksy's term for a 'tragical crack' (*CPI*: 111), while 'Narodbogonosets' is glossed as 'God-bearers', and 'vse-chelovek' as 'The All-Man' (*CPI*: 134), both also associated with Dostoevsky. MacDiarmid's subsequent deployment of the French 'cafard' – 'A *cafard* in a brain's despite' (*CPI*: 112) – is not glossed, yet suggests a similarly specific source. Having first entered the English language in the early twentieth century, the term was often seen translated as 'melancholia', despite its literal translation of 'cockroach'.[41] This distinction stems from the colloquialism, 'avoir le cafard', which was translated as 'to have the blues' after Charles Baudelaire used the expression in *Les Fleurs du mal* (1857)*,* a critical precursor to the evolution of modernism and symbolism which MacDiarmid appears to allude to in his use of the term 'cafard' within a discussion of lunacy in *A Drunk Man*.[42] This brief foray into etymology highlights the centrality of literature in the

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Roderick Watson, 'MacDiarmid and International Modernism', *The Edinburgh Companion to Hugh MacDiarmid*, pp.6-22 (p.15).

This is not the only instance of devilish laughter in MacDiarmid's poetic universe; consider the opening of *In Memoriam,* in which 'you laughed like Hell' (*CPII*: 737).

[39] Marjorie Perloff's discussion on the 'infrathin' in 'micropoetics' is useful in this context. Perloff explores the ways in which modernists played with 'infrathin shades of meaning' in their linguistic experimentations. She writes that 'To be a poet […] is to draw on the verbal pool we all share but to choose one's words and phrases with an eye to unexpected relationships – verbal, visual, sonic – that create a new construct and context – relationships that create infrathin possibilities'. Marjorie Perloff, *Infrathin: An Experiment in Micropoetics* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2021), p.16; p.6.

[40] O'Connor, 'Neighborly Hostility and Literary Creoles'.

[41] Stéphane Bern, '"Having the cockroach", a melancholic expression born of Arabic and Charles Baudelaire', *Europe 1* (16 March 2021), online: <https://www.europe1.fr/culture/avoir-le-cafard-une-expression-melancolique-nee-de-larabe-et-de-charles-baudelaire-4031854>.

[42] MacDiarmid references Baudelaire's *Les Fleurs du mal* in second-order citations in 'Burns and Baudelaire', published in *The Scottish Nation* (15 May 1923) and 'Beyond Meaning', published in *The New Age* (26 June 1924), indicative of at least a general awareness and rudimentary knowledge of the poem.

evolution of language, a theme which MacDiarmid intentionally explored in his own repurposing of international, specific and specialist forms of vocabulary. Within MacDiarmid's project of 'workin' oot mankind's great synthesis' (*CPI*: 134) non-translation is used to emphasise both difference and commonality, guided by the renegotiation of priorities in response to the ever-changing fabric of a global network of influence and authority.

In *To Circumjack Cencrastus* (1930), *A Drunk Man*'s Celtic successor of sorts, MacDiarmid also engages with non-translation as his attention turns back inward, from Europe to Scotland's own multiplicity, with a particular emphasis on Gaelic. MacDiarmid's provision of endnotes in this poem, unmatched across his repertoire, signifies the lack of understanding he perceived his reader to have regarding the Gaelic language and culture.

Yet, as in *A Drunk Man*, the first example of non-translation in the poem is Latin, not Gaelic. '*Contra nando incrementum*', which appears in the third stanza (*CPI*: 181), is the Latin motto of the Borders town of Peebles, a familiar neighbour of MacDiarmid's own native Langholm. Translated as 'Against the stream they multiply' (*CPI*: 181), the motto is introduced within the context of fishing, both literally – as on the River Tweed – and metaphorically, evoking those 'Poets in throes o' composition' (*CPI*: 181) who search for the inspiration of Cencrastus amongst literature and art. This language and motif of local significance is spliced with European classical connotations before the focus shifts to the Gaelic world and the reinforcement of its comparable perception and value as a classical language, eking out cross-cultural connections that are important to MacDiarmid's developing idea of a diverse, dynamic world language.

Referenced in recognition of 'The Gaelic sun' that 'swings up again' (*CPI*: 207), the Gaelic words, phrases and allusions that MacDiarmid includes supplement his Scots with a fuller, richer appeal to the nation's linguistic multiplicity. When the language is made the subject of the poem, MacDiarmid slots the untranslated vocabulary into the verse with particular ease, as in the following example:

> Clear elemental shapes wha's sma'est change
> A subtler language wi' owre muckle *blas na beurl*',
> A' tangled up in their *o-hill-i-ha's*,
> Can never seize on! (*CPI*: 187)

In 'owre muckle *blas na beurl*' MacDiarmid constructs a coherent bilingual phrase which might be glossed in English as 'plentiful linguistic flavour', an invocation of the richness and nuance which MacDiarmid saw as existing in both Scots and Gaelic. Elsewhere in the

poem, non-translation, included in italics to highlight difference, alludes to particular poets or texts:

> At every Cross in Scotland I pause,
> Crying (in Scots) like O'Heffernan
> *Ceist cia chinneochadh dàn*?
> Or – *Ionmolta malairt bhisigh*! (*CPI*: 213)

The name of Manon O'Heffernan, a Munster poet (1585-1624), recurs in *Direadh*, listed alongside MacCruitin and O'Hosey (*CPII*: 1167) as representatives of the bardic culture which MacDiarmid endeavoured to reach back to, through language, to reclaim their Celtic cultural values and identity. Taken from a specific context, the lines in Gaelic have no immediate meaning to non-Gaelic speakers, including MacDiarmid himself, thus rendering the notes supplied at the end of the poem critical to understanding. These endnotes identify the full names of the numerous (Scots and Irish) Gaelic poets referenced in the poem as well as providing translations of the Gaelic segments, although it is notable that no credit is given to any translator. Regarding the above example, the notes clarify that only the first line in Gaelic stems from O'Heffernan, translated as 'who would desire a poem?', the second being from 'Eochy O'Hosey's satire on the simpler poetry in time of bardic decay', meaning 'A change for the better deserves praise' (*CPI*: 291).[43] MacDiarmid's Gaelic allusions emphasise the common values which he saw as existing across the Celtic tradition and which he sought to engage with, however this accentuation of commonality ran the risk of conflating distinct writers, texts, time periods and localities in the very kind of simplification which he elsewhere advised against.

Non-translation here thus highlights MacDiarmid's own reliance upon external sources and research as much as it speaks to the unfamiliarity of Gaelic language and culture amongst a broader Scottish readership. His inconsistent provision of annotations raises questions around the necessity of context which illuminates his references to diverse cultures; understanding of the Gaelic is evidently prioritised over that of other languages deployed similarly in other poems, Scotland's multiplicities prioritised over a suggestion of global plurality. Meanwhile, the selection of endnotes over footnotes indicates an impetus to preserve the momentum of the poem. Whilst the reader is encouraged to take on an active role in their engagement with the poem's language, the unpacking of context, clarification and meaning remains sidelined by the immediate linguistic effect of the poem itself.

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[43] The son of a known poet, O'Hosey (Eochaidh Ó hEodhasa) died in 1612.

Other examples of non-translation abound throughout MacDiarmid's poetry, representative of new ideas, forms and modes of expression. 'Depth and the Chthonian Image' for instance, published in *Scots Unbound and Other Poems* (1932), is a restless meditation on cultural evolution which features non-translated phrases in Latin and German. Alan Bold writes of this poem that 'the movement of MacDiarmid's verse is by creative conflation; a many-layered notion is set up, examined, and then slowly stripped down to a quintessential core'.[44] This conflation works at the level of the imagery, as Bold discusses, as it does at the level of the language: MacDiarmid selects language which is packed with connotations of previous usage, presenting unfamiliar vocabulary and allusion before sorting through them in the seeking of truth.

The poem's title, firstly, is borrowed from a section in Eugène Jolas's *The Language of Night* (1932), a rumination on the staleness of modern creativity which asks, 'What is creative expression today other than cowardly genuflection before positivist dogmas and social idols?'.[45] Jolas, an American writer, translator and critic who was instrumental both in supporting James Joyce through the writing of *Finnegans Wake* and as cofounder and editor of the experimental Paris journal *transition* (1927-38), had advocated for the literary overhaul of language in his 1929 manifesto, 'Revolution of the Word'. Here, he had argued that 'The literary creator has the right to disintegrate the primal matter of words imposed on him by text-books and dictionaries', elsewhere claiming to have 'dreamed a new language, a super-tongue for intercontinental expression'.[46] The inspiring energy of Jolas's reconstructive ambition is prevalent in 'Depth and the Chthonian Image' and its comprehension of 'Universal life, like an autonomous tongue' (*CPI*: 351), as is the alienation caused by commitment to this aim, the poet left 'alane wi' the alane' (*CPI*: 349). Amidst this solitude and drive, MacDiarmid repurposes Latin – '*Absolvitur ab instantia*' (*CPI*: 347) – from the etymological definition for 'Absolvitor' in *Jamieson's* dictionary, the classical roots of Scots once more emphasised in the consideration of its present and future states. Meanwhile, the German '*Ein Mann aus dem Volke*' (*CPI*: 351) invites scrutiny of calls upon the poet to be 'a man of the people'. As MacDiarmid expresses, this was a role which he considered to be useless without the implementation of momentum beyond the poet as an individual:

> *Ein Mann aus dem Volke* – weel I ken
> Nae man or movement's worth a damn unless

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[44] Bold, *MacDiarmid: The Terrible Crystal*, p.4.
[45] Eugène Jolas, *The Language of Night* (The Hague: The Servir Press, 1932), p.40.
[46] Marjorie Perloff, *Differentials: Poetry, Poetics, Pedagogy* (Tuscaloosa: University of Alabama Press, 2004), p.84; p.82.

> The movement 'ud gang on withoot him if
> He de'ed the morn. (*CPI*: 351)[47]

MacDiarmid's facilitation of the interaction between cultures through the juxtaposition of non-translated phrases within the Scots, conducted in the dynamic space of the poem, alludes to a network which extends his ideologies and approach beyond himself, inclusive of figures such as Jolas – or the translators in *Cencrastus* – who are not credited but whose influence is palpable. The incorporation of two German terms borrowed from Jolas – '*Elschaddai*' and '*Emelachan*' (*CPI*: 352), repurposed from Jolas's translation of Justinus Kerner's 'The Inner Language' and accompanied by a footnote which lifts the definition straight from Kerner's text – completes the circle, bringing the poetic replication of this imagined network to a close.[48] Non-translation in this instance illustrates the accretion of meaning and connotation imbued in words and phrases through multiple stages of reading, translating and borrowing, connecting MacDiarmid in twentieth-century Scotland with literature throughout space – here Europe and America – and time, reaching back to the nineteenth century of Kerner. The tensions between specificity and universal applicability, between isolation and connection, and between synchronic and diachronic approaches to language, are continually played out and traversed in the restless navigation of a world language.

In this vein, it was in his later and longer poems in English that MacDiarmid began to integrate more diverse references, developing outwards from Scotland, through Europe, to *In Memoriam*'s culminative engagement with the whole gamut of world languages. As MacDiarmid's thematic focus homed in on the matter of language itself, however, non-translated words or phrases were no longer deployed so as to shock or recharge, but were given a new context and purpose, indicative of an intimidating erudition and ambitious curiosity. As the abundance of references multiplies, the idea or vision of the 'whole' is prioritised over each contributary and footnotes which gloss or explain individual allusions are included more sparingly, leaving the reader to navigate the unfamiliar language and make 'sense' of the poem themselves.

In 'The Fingers of Baal Contract in the Communist Salute', the language itself is the clue. The poem, included in *Poems of the East-West Synthesis* (1946), maps a route

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[47] This passage is adapted from Wyndham Lewis's book, *Hitler* (1931): 'One feels, should he fall tomorrow, the movement could still proceed without him'. Wyndham Lewis, *Hitler* (London: Chatto & Windus, 1931), p.49. MacDiarmid reviews John Gawsworth's study of Hitler, published shortly after this book, for *The Free Man* in 1932. See p.197 for discussion of this.

[48] Jolas's translation of Kerner was published in *Transition: An International Workshop for Orphic Creation*, 21 (March 1932), pp.299-301. Kerner's original text was published in *The Seeress of Prevorst: being revelations concerning the inner-life of man, and the inter-diffusion of a world of spirit sin the one we inhabit* (London: J. C. Moore, 1845).

between disparate cultures and locations through the tracing of etymological affinities in place names:

> The original Irish form of Devon is *Dun-mianac*,
> The mining enclosure; *mian* – mine, pronounced *veen*.
> *Dun-veen* to Devon: here again
> The infallible truth of Eolus is seen. (*CPI*: 677)

There are words on the page which are foreign to the English of the poem, but their explanatory context aids a familiarisation. MacDiarmid takes his prompt from L. Albert's *Six Thousand Years of Gaelic Grandeur Unearthed* (1936), in which Albert writes of the significance that 'nearly all the geographical names in Central Asia and Mesopotamia can be explained by the Irish tongue', arguing that 'the very ancient connection between the Gaelic stock and the cradle of civilisation really existed' (*CPI*: 676).[49] Albert's theory provides MacDiarmid with an alternative framework of language history to that of the Western linguistic imperialism, resonant with his efforts to emphasise connections between East and West, and the anti-imperialist calls to 'Lift every voice!' (*CPI*: 682) in *In Memoriam James Joyce* and *The Kind of Poetry I Want*.

MacDiarmid's use of non-translation in these poems methodically constructs new contexts for unfamiliar language and references, thus giving the illusion of accommodation in, rather than disruption of, the 'whole' of world language that his poetry envisions. In *The Kind of Poetry I Want*, specific terminology is adopted in the suggestion of affinities between cultures and languages, as in the following passage which focusses on rhythm and music practices:

> Swift songs, in keeping with the ever-expanding
> And accelerating consciousness Březina has sung so nobly,
> *Sdrucciola* – swift and utterly unEnglish,
> Songs like the transition from the *ùrlar* to the *crunluath*, (*CPII*: 1007)

MacDiarmid appeals to distinct forms of art and expression, in this case from Italy and Scotland, within his polyphonic framework. The musicality of the unfamiliar language is highlighted, in line with the meaning of the words used, as he creates a function for the language which exists outside of immediate access to meaning or context, 'unEnglish' language united in the unsettling of English dominance in the poem.[50]

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[49] MacDiarmid uses the extract that these quotes are taken from as an epigraph to the poem.
[50] 'Sdrucciola' refers to a rhyme formed of words which feature a stress on their antepenultimate (last but two) syllable. The term is Italian in origins but applicable to prosody in English. Meanwhile, 'ùrlar' refers to the air or theme of a piece of pibroch music, and the 'crunluath' to the climax of the piece.

Elsewhere, the method continues to be similarly self-conscious, as MacDiarmid envisions a poetry which makes use of

> a language *serré*, quick with Ithuriel's spear,
> With no thought *sine mucrone*,
> And all its sword-play with a *ricasso* edge
> To let my thumb rest on the blade,
> A language like '*mar léine-chneas aig a bràthair*' (*CPII*: 1010)[51]

Constructed from such a language, MacDiarmid 'wants' 'A poetry like Pushkin's in the morning sky of Russia, / *Prédestiné, lumineux, et insolent de bonheur*' (*CPII*: 1017) and 'A poetry full of *cynghanaedd*' (*CPII*: 1017).[52] The proposition of a language in which terminologies from French, Italian, Gaelic, Russian and Welsh are equally applicable captures the simultaneity at the centre of MacDiarmid's multi-pronged approach, whilst the decision not to translate individual words and phrases illustrates the need to retain specificity and reject any homogenisation. His language here accommodates difference without smoothing over its strangeness, the process of becoming comfortable with unfamiliarity a challenge which his reader must also partake in.

In *In Memoriam James Joyce*, MacDiarmid expands his scope once more, turning to scholarly work and journal articles as sources for his world language, sources which have helpfully been identified by James Benstead's recent doctoral study (2020).[53] MacDiarmid highlights the acquisition of language both in translated and non-translated form as having been achieved through the navigation of 'a gigantic maze / Of faulty knowledge, indirections, and distortions of all kinds' (*CPII*: 852), having become increasingly reliant upon the knowledge and insights of others as the project grew to incorporate elements from further beyond the limits of his own understanding and experience.

Repeatedly throughout the poem he illustrates both specificity and difference through the grouping together of related vocabulary, related generally in their meaning despite the nuance they capture, having originated in distinct and separate cultures. This is exemplified in the following passage, a self-reflexive meditation which attempts to define

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[51] A quick gloss reveals this passage to describe language in the terminology of various weaponry: 'serré' in French means close, compact, or tight; Ithuriel is an angel in *Paradise Lost*; 'sine mucrone' in Latin means 'without a blade'; 'ricasso', from the Italian, refers to an unsharpened length of blade just above the handle on a knife or dagger; 'mar léine-chneas aig a bràthair', in Scottish Gaelic, is used to denote a bodyguard or confidante.
[52] 'Prédestiné, lumineux, et insolent de bonheur' is borrowed from the French of *Le Roman Russe* (*The Russian Novel*) (1886) by Eugène-Melchior Vogüé. The Welsh term 'cynghanaedd' refers to a concept in Welsh-language poetry of basic sound arrangement within a line.
[53] Benstead credits digitisation and tools including Google Books in his approach to excavating MacDiarmid's source material in *In Memoriam James Joyce*.

the purpose and function of the poem using non-translated references to multiple languages and cultures:

> Hence this *hapax legomenon* of a poem, this exercise
> In schablone, bordatini, and prolonged scordatura,
> This *divertissement philologique*,
> This Wortspiel, this torch symphony,
> This 'liberal education' this collection of *fonds de tiroir*,
> This – even more than Kierkegaard's
> 'Frygt og Baeven' – 'dialectical lyric,'
> This rag-bag, this Loch Ness monster, this impact
> Of the whole range of *Weltliteratur* on one man's brain,
> In short, this 'friar's job', as they say in Spain (*CPII*: 755)

The non-translated words and phrases which MacDiarmid uses here are repurposed from nine countries in ten lines. [54] Alan Riach provides a helpful gloss to the passage which explains each reference as it relates to literature and the arts, and suggests that, presented as they are, MacDiarmid's language is 'let loose from any imperial centrality and occur in a free, but not directionless movement'.[55] While the terms and colloquialisms supplied are not quite synonyms, due to the distinctive differences of the cultures and contexts from which they are borrowed, the consistencies in their meanings are highlighted in this proposition of cross-cultural affinities. It is not universally representative – the poem is acutely aware of its own limitations and the potential futility of its task – yet it aspires to be so, representative of an ongoing ambition and struggle beyond the text. Pre-existing connections between the world's languages are emphasised as points of contact which might be focussed on in the construction of a world language which capitalises upon commonalities as well as preserving distinctions.

MacDiarmid features non-translation in order to achieve various effects. It is hoped that through the consideration of some prominent examples in both his foremost poems in Scots – *A Drunk Man Looks at the Thistle* and *To Circumjack Cencrastus* – and English – *Poems of the East-West Synthesis*, *The Kind of Poetry I Want*, *In Memoriam James Joyce* – a sense of the disruptions, defamiliarizations and implications of affinities that he instils in these texts has been conveyed in some depth.

It must be noted that in studying how the scope of MacDiarmid's non-translated language became more diverse throughout his career, as the idea of a world language became an established priority, the approach of analysis in this thesis has shifted from the close scrutinization of individual words and stanzas to a broader consideration of their

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[54] Riach, *Hugh MacDiarmid's Epic Poetry,* p.71.
[55] Ibid. p.73.

place within the whole. As Harding and Nash have noted, 'By and large […] criticism has treated multilingual terms and quotations as allusions to be glossed […] or as a difficulty that can be resolved by scholarship'.[56] This is the result of what Michael Riffaterre refers to as a 'compulsory reader response', triggered by 'Unignorable illusion', the automatic reaction to unfamiliar language being a desire to understand or to translate.[57] This is intentionally present in MacDiarmid's poetry, which challenges its reader to reconsider preconceived notions of understanding and to pursue the curiosity for knowledge which his allusions encourage. Ron Bush's suggestion, that 'Allusions in modernist writing are often designed to tell us more about the voice that sounds them than about the literary texts they invoke', is also resonant.[58] MacDiarmid's allusions to languages and cultures beyond those from within which he writes offer insight into the priorities which guided his vision, as well as revealing the limiting circumstances which often determined his own access to such references.

The accessibility of these references and languages when deployed in his poetic context is debatable. Whilst Phillip Collins has suggested of Eliot's allusiveness that his 'austere reputation' stems from his writing of 'poetry so complex that it requires explanatory footnotes', Alan Bold proposes a helpful distinction regarding MacDiarmid that does not dwell on austerity or erudition as an impediment to understanding or enjoying his referential work:

> Although he gleefully introduced an element of intellectual ostentation into his poetry, Hugh MacDiarmid was not a wilfully obscure poet. When a MacDiarmid poem is difficult or inaccessible it is generally because the concept is complex, elusive or unfamiliar.[59]

Bold highlights the significance of context to understanding MacDiarmid's 'difficulty', which is playful at times as well as seriously driven by an appetite for knowledge. Given his concern for the accommodation of unfamiliarity, the vision is organised to a degree but simultaneously gives itself over to the innate uncontrollability of the world and the languages that it wrestles with. The argument here is that obscurity and complexity was essential to MacDiarmid's project, a reminder that one reader's obscurity was another's

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[56] Jason Harding and John Nash, *Modernism and Non-Translation*, p.3.
[57] Quoted in ibid., p.105.
[58] Ron Bush, '"Intensity by association": T. S. Eliot's Passionate Allusions', *Modernism/modernity*, 20.4 (2014), pp.709-727 (p.709).
[59] Phillip Collins, 'Young Eliot; from St Louis to The Waste Land by Robert Crawford', *The Times* (31 January 2015), online: <https://www.thetimes.co.uk/article/young-eliot-from-st-louis-to-the-waste-land-by-robert-crawford-dl3jrbrpfn8>.
Bold, *The Terrible Crystal*, p.1.

local lexicon and vice versa, difficulty thus acting as a reminder of the multiplicity necessarily at work in an idea of a heterogeneous, dynamic world language.

MacDiarmid's own argument that 'The multiplicity of quotations, references and allusions [in *In Memoriam James Joyce*] must be completely understood' because 'they constitute the *language* in which it is written' highlights his own belief in the inevitability of difficulty as it does the importance of reading his poetry as provocations of intellectual and creative curiosity, as he encourages a reading process which extends beyond the words on the page.[60] While acknowledging MacDiarmid's insistence that the allusions 'must be completely understood', the argument offered here also recognises that this completeness of understanding must not always constitute an instant recall or expertise of each individual quote or reference but an ability also to consider the overarching aims, priorities and enduring struggle that fed into the whole that he envisioned, a whole that was subject to change.

6.3. Rhetorical Language: Proper Names, Terminology and Science

In his later poetry MacDiarmid increasingly includes catalogues of proper names and 'jargon', representative of accumulated 'fact', through which the language of the poem reaches outwards into a diversity of cultures, contexts and branches of specialist knowledge.

Many of the items in these lists are necessarily included in non-translated form, the proper name being, as Jacques Derrida has argued, 'utterly resistant to translation since, while it remains a basic element or inscription of language, it seems in its irreplaceability to stand outside the linguistic system of differential-exchangeable values'.[61] MacDiarmid's inclusion of the names of individuals, places and texts in their original form highlights the limitations of the transformative capacity of translation, and thus the necessity of multilingualism in a world language which caters to a multiplicity of identities.

Out of his approach to cataloguing the world that he knew – as in his documentation of Scotland's 'multiform', 'infinite' (*CPI*: 652) ecological variations – MacDiarmid developed an approach to confronting such variation in the world that he didn't know, extending his vision to encompass cultures and languages that were less familiar to him. Extensive catalogues and lists thus first appear as a priority in the Eastern-focussed poems included in *Lucky Poet*: 'The East', 'The Kind of Scot I Want', 'Learned Poetry' and 'So Here I Hail All the Fellow-Artists I Know'. In foregrounding

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[60] Quoted in Riach, *Hugh MacDiarmid's Epic Poetry*, p.52.
[61] Simon Morgan Wortham, *The Derrida Dictionary* (London: Bloomsbury, 2010), p.230.

MacDiarmid's shift to the Eastern world, looking beyond Anglocentric, European and Western tradition, these poems disperse foreign words and names throughout a more familiar language in the emulation of understanding, paving the way for the accommodation of these cultures and language and their integration, or retention, within a world language.

In 'The East', MacDiarmid's listing of Indian place names achieves this effect:

> The Watch Tower at Mandalay,
> The Dragon Pagoda at Amarapura,
> Sagaing!
> The pottery houses at Bandigarampudur,
> The Yanesh Temple at Vijayanagar,
> The Rock Temple at Kondane,
> The Buddhist cave at Nasik,
> Champener, Dwarka, and Yirnar!... (*CPI*: 605)

These names are associated with one another through their close proximity in the poem, despite their distance in geography, the places referenced conflated with a simplistic and appropriative idea of the 'East' which runs similar risks to the accumulation of Gaelic references in *Cencrastus*. Unlike in *Cencrastus*, however, no explanation is supplied for each reference, the reader's understanding of context left down to their own initiative or sense of responsibility. Instead, MacDiarmid revels in the foreign sounds of the words: as Ramkrishna Bhattacharya notes, the misspelling of 'Yanesh' and 'Yirnar' as mistaken transliterations of Ganesh and Girnar, suggest that it was 'the musical quality of the exotic names', not an accuracy of knowledge, which appealed to MacDiarmid in this poem.[62]

Similarly, in 'Learned Poetry', the catalogue of Indian literature which MacDiarmid references speaks more to an accumulation of unfamiliar sounding names than it does any attempt to grapple with or understand the individual writers or texts alluded to. Linguistic communities are constructed through the grouping of names with Mazumdar, Goswani, Taraporewala, and 'the writings of Vidyapati, / Malik Mohammad Jaisi, Keswara Das, / Rahim, Raskhan, Ninbarak, Usman Senapati' (*CPI*: 632) listed alongside numerous other figures, a list in which Bhattacharya identifies academics, poets and biographers from medieval Bangla, Gujarati, Hindi and Oriya literatures; a conglomeration of localities, languages and genres.[63] Ending the poem with a reflection upon his own role, MacDiarmid refers to Krisnadasa Kaviraj who 'quotes freely, as I do, from all classes of books' (*CPI*: 632). The approach to reading, learning and the

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[62] Bhattacharya, 'India in Hugh MacDiarmid's Poetry', p.10.
[63] Ibid., p.12.

acquisition of knowledge and language illustrated here is relevant to MacDiarmid's extensive repurposing of various sources and forms of language more generally, in which authority is decentralised and hierarchies of importance or influence hang in the balance.

In *In Memoriam James Joyce*, MacDiarmid exercises a similar cataloguing approach on a new scale. Diverse writers are listed throughout, as in references to 'Ivar Aasen, Elizabeth Elstob, Rabelais, Browning, Meredith, Remizov, / Gjerg j Fishta and Avetik Isaakyan' (*CPII*: 741), as are places, 'In London, Paris, Baghdad, Spitzbergen, / Bassorah, Heligoland, the Scilly Isles, / Brighton, Cincinnatti [sic], and Nijni-Novgorod' (*CPII*: 743). Elsewhere, the names for languages themselves are catalogued – 'the American-Indian languages, / The Algonquian, Athabascan, Iroquoian, Miskogean and Siouan groups (*CPII*: 751) – as well as names which refer to both indigenous groups and the languages which they use – 'Aztecs, Mixteks, Zapoteks, / Aimaras, Quechuas, Araucanians, Guaranies and Tagálogs' (*CPII*: 759). Scientists and sciences are also referenced – 'The Richards effect, the Dulong-Petit law, / The Pauli exclusion principle, […] Cantor on the theory of sets, / The Dedekind 'cut' (*CPII*: 802) – as are linguists and philologists – including the Hungarian and Czech linguists Nicholas Revay (Miklós Révai) and *Elaboratior Grammatica Hungarica* (1803), John Sajnovic (János Sajnovics) and *Demonstratio Idioma Ungarorum et Lapponum idem esse* (1707), Dobrentei's *Régi Magyar Myelvemlélek* (1838) and Dobrovsky's *Institutiones linguae Slavicae veteris* (1822) (*CPII*: 803-4). 'The World of Words', the second section of *In Memoriam*, consists almost entirely of lists which incorporate the names of texts about linguistics and literary techniques, philologists and phonologists, German terminologies and Italian studies. To pursue the aim of understanding MacDiarmid's illustration of plurality on such a scale is not to endeavour for meaning through the research of each individual item listed, but to recognise the aspirational illustration of global diversity which is bound, as far as can be, within a coherent artistic form – similar to that exhibited in Gorky's *One Day of the World*, as discussed in chapter one. That said, this boundedness, this supposedly fixed completeness of the textual artefact, is consistently challenged as the reader is redirected elsewhere, into the world of references, to broaden their own understanding beyond MacDiarmid's poem.

In the examples discussed here, as in numerous others which exceed the bounds of this study, the familiar and unfamiliar are brought into close proximity, whilst MacDiarmid's presentation of them in catalogue form suggests the existence of a commonality between them, associated within the context of the poem. His accumulative approach appears to be a means of seeking out order, an intention which Michel Foucault explores in *The Order of Things* (1966):

> We are all familiar with the disconcerting effect of the proximity of extremes, or, quite simply, with the sudden vicinity of things that have no relation to each other; the mere act of enumeration that heaps them together has a power of enchantment all its own.[64]

Foucault writes in response to Jorge Luis Borges, and whilst MacDiarmid brings together allusions in quite a different manner, the association of 'things that have no [obvious, meaningful] relation to each other' recurs throughout his referential poetry, suggestive of the multiplicities that pre-exist in an idea of world language. MacDiarmid's use of lists also accentuates the potential within language for words to be repeatedly reordered, speaking to a sense of Neitzschean eternal reoccurrence and the argument that 'There lie hidden in language elements that effectively combined / Can utterly change the nature of man' (*CPII*: 781). The real-life implications of this transformative capacity are discussed in the following chapter.

MacDiarmid's inclusion of technical terminology and 'jargon' within these catalogues provide a further example of 'non-translated' language which is recontextualised within the space of the poem, divorced from its original context and thus from any meaning that might be immediately attained from this. 'Even if they're not foreign, they *sound* foreign', as Derek Attridge indicates: 'Not only do these obscure terms balk comprehension, they clog and clot the limpid flow of easy prose' – or poetry.[65] For MacDiarmid, the balking of comprehension appears to have been the intention, not to obstruct it but to highlight knowledge beyond the reader's presumed comprehension and to provoke curiosity and engagement with the language beyond its immediate appearance on the page.

The understanding of 'jargon', after all, is fully dependent upon context. As Raymond Williams highlights in his *Keywords* definition of 'jargon', the word originates in the fourteenth century, used to denote the 'warbling of birds, chatter'; not a particular specialism but a more general sound which is nonsensical without access to meaning.[66] Williams goes on to define the term in more recent usage as referring to 'a confident local habit which merely assumes its own intelligibility and generality'.[67] It speaks to the stratifications of language identified by Mikhail Bakhtin in *The Dialogic Imagination*, in which Bakhtin identifies all words as 'hav[ing] the "taste" of a profession, a genre, a

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[64] Michel Foucault, *The Order of Things: An Archaeology of the Human Sciences* (New York: Random House, 1994), p.xvi.
[65] Derek Attridge, 'Arche-Jargon', *Qui Parle*, 5.1 (1991), pp.41-52 (p.42).
[66] Williams, *Keywords*, p.175.
[67] Ibid., p.176.

tendency, a party, a particular work, a particular person, a generation, an age group, the day and hour'; all words are familiar to one and 'jargon' to another.[68] MacDiarmid plays with the different 'tastes' and 'tendencies' required of various forms of language, trialling scientific terminology in his poetry so as to 'extend the general vocabulary and make it more adequate to the enormous range and multitudinous intensive specialisations of contemporary knowledge' (*RTIII*: 485). His approach resonates with that considered by Mark S. Morrisson to be characteristic of modernists, who strove to match 'the dizzying pace and nature of change in the early twentieth century', through a language which reflected 'the unsettling nature of fundamental change itself'.[69] Peter Middleton argues that poets who incorporate scientific language within their creative work do so because 'they share a conviction that poetic inquiry is as valid as scientific inquiry', a conviction which is present in MacDiarmid's continual championing of the transformative power of literature.[70]

MacDiarmid first prioritises the incorporation of scientific terminology and 'jargon' in *Stony Limits*, most notably in 'In the Caledonian Forest', 'Ephphatha', 'Vestigia Nulla Retrorsum', 'Stony Limits' and 'On a Raised Beach'. In 'Ephphatha', vocabulary including 'piaffer', 'palaeocrystic', 'phengites', 'panopticon', 'pellagra', 'paxwax', 'phosphene', 'photopsia', 'pasilaly' and 'pamphract' (*CPI*: 393) invoke a variety of specialist knowledges from horse dressage to glacial geography, and social theory to vitamin deficiency, yet the specific origins are inconsequential in the new context. Alliteration is commonly a feature in MacDiarmid's grouping of unfamiliar vocabulary, an aesthetic means by which to order it: in this poem it is the recurrence of the 'p' sound which is the common factor between the words, not their meaning. Associated thus through phonetics rather than semantics, the words take on a new poetic function, undefined yet capable of propelling the poem from 'sheep's fodder' to God, using science to comprehend the sacred. MacDiarmid's invocation of the Gospel of St. Mark (7:34) – in which Jesus heals a deaf-mute man so that he can, for the first time, hear and speak – uses language to bridge the material and spiritual. Amidst this, the consideration of a universal language is present in the word 'pasilaly', 'a form of speech adapted to be used by all mankind' (Websters), hinting within this experimentation at the aspiration of universality and ideas of world language which were yet to be developed at this point. As Michael H. Whitworth writes, 'the poem's own gloss or pseudo-gloss on *ephphatha*, "which means

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[68] Bakhtin, *The Dialogic Imagination,* p.293.
[69] Mark S. Morrisson, *Modernism, Science, and Technology* (London: Bloomsbury, 2016), p.2.
[70] Peter Middleton, 'Strips: Scientific language in poetry', *Textual Practice*, 23.6 (2009), pp.947-958 (p.954).

nothing", works like a reflexive joke on the reader', asking of us 'whether the sound of the word might not contribute as much to its meaning as its dictionary definition'.[71]

When 'removed from the institutional framework that guarantees their effectiveness', Whitworth has elsewhere suggested that the 'validity' [of 'scientific ideas'] as science comes to rest increasingly on whether the poet understands them', highlighting in this the 'questions of authority' that are made central to MacDiarmid's repurposing of specialist language.[72] Whitworth argues that MacDiarmid engages with science in a Wordsworthian fashion, 'as a system of ideas, not as a specific jargon carrying the flavour of a particular profession'.[73] The contention here is that he does both at various points: in 'On a Raised Beach', he engages intentionally with the specific terminology of geology in a directed effort to better understand the Shetland environment; in 'Ephphatha', conversely, the approach is more abstract, and scientific terminology represents a system of ideas and approaches to be learned about and trialled in response to unfamiliar subjects. Each approach however highlights the central role that language held in MacDiarmid's aspiration for an improved understanding about the world, and a poetry which reflected this. The space of the poem provides a context in which scientific language could operate at multiple levels in implying knowledge and specialism whilst also fulfilling an aesthetic function, its authority purposely dubious in the endeavour to challenge frameworks of linguistic authority more generally. This applies to the repurposing of specialist terminology and references in later poetry, including *In Memoriam*, as much as to the *Stony Limits* poems. In 'The World of Words' sections of *In Memoriam*, MacDiarmid references psychological studies (*CPII*: 805-7) and 'Acoustic terms' (*CPII*: 808) alongside Korzybski on semantics (*CPII*: 814), fencing terminology (*CPII*: 827) and consideration of 'the space-time continuum' (*CPII*: 836), an immense catalogue of specific knowledge and expertise. Here, as the languages referenced increase in number and scope, the emphasis becomes even less so on individual specialisms invoked and more on the comprehension of how these interact and overlap within a notion of world language, made up of a rich multiplicity of identities and strands of knowledge.

Proper names, catalogues, terminology and jargon represent forms of language that challenge the transformative capacities of translation, referenced within MacDiarmid's poetry in the endeavour to appeal to the distinctness of the various dialects, languages and specialisms which communicate in a world language. Not only do his practices of allusion

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[71] Whitworth, 'Jamieson, Jargons, Jangles, and Jokes', p.122; p.123.
[72] Whitworth, 'Science in MacDiarmid's Later Poetry', p.98.
[73] Michael H. Whitworth, '"Strange Synthetic Perfumes": Investigating Scientific Diction in Twentieth-Century Poetry', *Science in Modern Poetry: New Directions* (Liverpool: Liverpool University Press, 2012), pp.87-100 (p.96).

and non-translation centralise and thematise notions of juxtaposition, disruption, hybridity and defamiliarization in his poetry, but they challenge the parameters of language – vocabulary, influence and ideas – that is considered worthy of inclusion in poetry at all, suggesting a new form of both writing and reading.

6.4. The Task of Poetry

This chapter has explored MacDiarmid's multilingualism as indication of his challenging to linguistic boundaries and contexts, integral to his idea of a world language which prefaced plurality over homogeneity, specificity over simplicity and prioritised the retention of local experience and knowledge within a blossoming international framework of reference.

MacDiarmid's inclusion of non-translated vocabulary from languages including French, German and Latin in the 1920s – most notably, as discussed, in *A Drunk Man Looks at the Thistle* – indicates his impetus to highlight and encourage affinities between Scots and the European literary tradition. This builds upon his suggestion of a continental Scottish identity and the translation of European poetry, discussed in chapters one and four respectively. Meanwhile, his later incorporation of international, unfamiliar and specialist vocabularies within poems in which English is the main language works in two ways: to construct a framework of 'world language' which accommodates plurality, and to undermine English as a standardised, imperial language with existing 'world' status.

Increasingly, as MacDiarmid's frame of reference turned farther outward into new realms of reading and knowledge, he utilised a *bricolage* form of poetry which brought together diverse and unfamiliar linguistic forms. This invites the reader to explore new methods of reading. On the one hand, it demands a degree of close reading into individual words and allusions, on the other asking for a distant form of reading which enables appreciation for the vision without the need for scrutiny of each individual component. This duality relates directly to MacDiarmid's idea of 'world language' which emphasised both the specificity and expertise of individual dialects and languages whilst appealing to the whole global linguistic system.

Whilst aesthetically experimental and modernist in character, this form also proved vital as a conscious poetic response to the fluctuations and tensions which MacDiarmid witnessed unfold throughout the mid-twentieth century. His poetry, and the ideas of world language which informed its increasingly hybrid, multilingual form, indicates a consciousness and conscience about its transformative capacity. Language indicated communication, expression and an upholding of identities and values, but it was also used

to oppress people and cultures and to enact injustice and violence, a fact that became increasingly more pertinent through the rise of fascism and the Second World War, and which MacDiarmid intervenes in through the writing of poetry that draws attention to its sense of social and political responsibility. It is this, and the implications of this, on the idea of world language that he envisions, that the final chapter considers.

Chapter Seven

Language as Intervention: Weapon, Instrument, Witness and Testimony

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> We live in a world that has become
> Intolerable as the subject of passive reflection.
> What is our response to the unescapable reality?
>
> - 'To the Younger Scottish Writers' (*CPI*: 637)

In *The Witness of Poetry* (1983) Czesław Miłosz marked the twentieth century as 'the crossing of a certain threshold', the political witness and intervention of poetry necessitated by the fact that 'things too atrocious to think of […] proved to be more and more possible'.[1] Whilst too atrocious to be thought of, these events – colonialism, revolution, war, fascism, and the violence provoked by processes of decolonisation – proved vital fuel for literary response and testimony which MacDiarmid, as many others, went on to provide, developing out of the horror a politically engaged poetics, written in a world-conscious language.

Whilst, thus far, the thesis has primarily prioritised the aesthetic aspects of MacDiarmid's engagement with ideas of world language, this final chapter confronts his political provocation head-on. It considers MacDiarmid's poetry as the poetry of 'witness' which 'reclaims the social from the political and in so doing defends the individual against illegitimate forms of coercion', a reclamation in which language proved to be central.[2] Carolyn Forché writes of such poetry which, 'in order to be the witness of lived experience', had 'to resort to a language more suitable to the time', remarking that 'Extremity […] demands new forms or alters older modes of poetic thoughts', resulting in poetry that 'seeks to register through indirection and intervention the ways in which the linguistic and moral universes have been disrupted by events'.[3] MacDiarmid, in this vein, uses language as a means of understanding and communication, and as a weapon with which to attack authority, engaging with the real life implications of an idea of world language.

As he responds to the rise of fascism, the decline of Empire and other conflicting and changing ideologies, MacDiarmid addresses the fact outlined by Umberto Eco that 'behind a regime and its ideology there is always a way of thinking and feeling, a group of

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[1] Czesław Miłosz, *The Witness of Poetry* (Massachusetts: Harvard University Press, 1983), p.51.
[2] Carolyn Forché, 'Introduction', *Against Forgetting: Twentieth-Century Poetry of Witness*, ed. Carolyn Forché (New York: W. W. Norton & Company, 1993), pp.29-47 (p.45).
[3] Ibid., p.42; 45.

cultural habits, of obscure instincts and unfathomable drives. […] Linguistic habits are frequently important symptoms of underlying feelings'.[4] MacDiarmid demonstrates an awareness of this, particularly in his later work, capturing the political potential of language and poetry which might be manipulated both for harm and for revolution. His poetry of intervention prompts consideration of what Duncan Gullick Lien deems a 'way of happening', wrestling with ideologies in order to shake the reader out of a state of political neutrality or stasis and encourage them to challenge the status quo, to dare to imagine an alternative.[5] This chapter first considers MacDiarmid's different responses to fascism in 1923 and *The Battle Continues*, marking the Spanish Civil War as a critical turning point, before turning to his poetry of the Second World War and to the opposition to fascism and imperialism which shapes the politically convicted vision of *In Memoriam James Joyce*, each examples of poetry 'related to the central issues of life' (*CPI*: 634).

7.1. An Early Appeal: Fascism and Nationalism in 1923

In the wake of the First World War, that devastation in which 'most of the important words were killed' (*CPII*: 1156), Europe, and the wider world, were in a state of flux and instability, as reflected in the characteristic fragmentation and defamiliarization of modernist aesthetics, including MacDiarmid's synthetic regeneration of the Scots language. The Russian Revolution had sparked support for Bolshevism but elsewhere it was a flame for fascism which was ignited by the devastation and widespread dissatisfaction with the current order. MacDiarmid's own response to fascism changed significantly between the early 1920s – as he began to explore the relationship between land and language, engaging with regional articulations in the shadow of Mussolini's rise to power and perceived fascist priorities of nature – and the 1930s, when the true face of fascist dictatorship and totalitarian authority was laid bare by Hitler's rise to power (1933) and the Spanish Civil War (1936-39), when his response turned to testimony, polemic and attack. This chapter charts the shift in MacDiarmid's response to fascism through a study of his sympathy for agrarian reform in 'Plea for a Scottish Fascism' and 'Programme for a Scottish Fascism' (both published in *The Scottish Nation* in 1923) and the vehemence of *The Battle Continues,* written in 1939 but not published until 1957.[6]

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[4] Umberto Eco, 'Ur-Fascism', *The New York Review of Books* (22 June 1995), online: <http://www.nybooks.com/articles/1995/06/ 22/ur-fascism/>.
[5] Duncan Gullick Lien, 'Rehearsing Better Worlds: Poetry as A Way of Happening in the Works of Tomlinson and MacDiarmid', *Philosophy and literature*, 42.1 (April 2018), pp.185-200 (p.186).
[6] Gavin Bowd offers an account of MacDiarmid's articles on fascism in *Fascist Scotland: Caledonia and the Far Right* (Edinburgh: Birlinn Ltd., 2013), pp.131-135.

In 1922, the year that 'Hugh MacDiarmid' was first seen in print, Benito Mussolini marched on Rome and seized power in October, becoming the youngest Prime Minister in Italian history. In 1923, English translations were published of Odon Por's book on *Fascism* and Dr. Pietro Gorgolini's study of *The Fascist Movement in Italian Life* (1923); in May, the British Fascisti were founded; the following month, MacDiarmid published his articles on Scottish Fascism in *The Scottish Nation*.[7] It is largely due to the ideas set forth in these articles – reinforced by their provocative titles – that MacDiarmid has been deemed a 'proto-fascist' by critics, leading Bob Purdie to suggest that if they 'had not been published it is unlikely that anyone would have thought of MacDiarmid as a fascist'.[8] Neal Ascherson proposes that 'there is certainly no evidence that his brief expedition among fascist ideologies had any lasting effect', continuing to remark that 'the fact that MacDiarmid did not become, even for a time, a fascist is remarkable in itself'.[9] While the impact of these 'brief expedition[s]' may not have been profound *politically*, there were arguably aspects of the fascist aesthetic which quite notably influenced MacDiarmid's *stylistic* priorities throughout the 1920s.

MacDiarmid's 1923 articles are heavily informed by Por and Gorgolini's studies, each of which explore the advent of fascism as an opportunity for nationalism.[10] MacDiarmid appears to have been influenced by this correlation, remarking in 'Plea for Scottish Fascism' (5 June) that 'Scotland today is tinder awaiting the spark of genius to become ablaze with a new national conscience and will' (*RTI*: 83). He evidently perceived fascism as a form of nationalism which 'will spring naturally from the Left' (*RTI*: 84), a union of political priorities. Lending the discussion a supportive intellectual basis in the expectation that 'no doubt at first glance readers of my title will conceive of Fascism as something quite other than that to which I would seek to direct their attention' (*RTI*: 83), MacDiarmid cites discussion on fascism in *The Glasgow Herald* and the *Edinburgh Evening Dispatch*, including a quote from R. T. Clark, who highlights the prospect of fascism as a merger of '*a wide agrarian policy to restore the land to the people* and *a foreign policy* which defends Italian interests everywhere *against internationalism of any sort which cuts at the roots of nationalism*' (*RTI*: 84). In the Scottish context, MacDiarmid

[7] Por's book was translated into English by E. Townsend and Gorgolini's by M. D. Petre.
[8] Bob Purdie, *Black, Green, Red and Tartan* (Welsh Academic Press, 2012), p.1. Scott Lyall debunks Purdie's argument, contending that MacDiarmid's later adoption of the term 'blutsgefühl' (1931, discussed in chapter five), suggests a continued sympathy for fascist concepts. Scott Lyall, 'Hugh MacDiarmid and the British State', *The Bottle Imp*, 18 (June 2015), online: <https://www.thebottleimp.org.uk/2015/06/hugh-macdiarmid-and-the-british-state/>.
[9] Neal Ascherson, 'MacDiarmid and Politics', *The Age of MacDiarmid*, pp.224-237 (p.234).
[10] It appears that MacDiarmid read Gorgolini's study in his editorial role for *The Northern Review*, in which he published a review of the book in May 1924 (*RTI*: 207-11). The book is positively reviewed alongside three other texts, published under the title of 'Connolly, Bakunin, Mussolini and Others'.

appears to have been drawn to this dual emphasis on agrarian reform and nationalism as a potential antidote to the government's failure to follow through on promises to compensate Scottish veterans with land in the Highlands and Islands.[11]

In 'Programme for a Scottish Fascism' (17 June) MacDiarmid reasserts these objectives, arguing of 'the need for the development of a new national *will*' which might right Scotland's present inability 'to make our representations effective, to get wrongs righted, to devise a reconstructive national policy' (*SP*: 35). Agrarian reform again dominates as a resounding priority and a widespread problem to which fascism posed a potential solution with its policy of '*the land for those who work it*' (*SP*: 37). MacDiarmid argues that 'Fascism understands the immense social importance of land' (*SP*: 37), an objective which resonates with his own emphasis upon the rural world elsewhere, in journalism and in his early contribution to Henry Devenish Harben's study of *The Rural Problem*, the first publication he had contributed to as a young Chris Grieve in 1913.[12]

Moreover, MacDiarmid uses the article as an opportunity to reaffirm the influence of Gorgolini's study, in which the primary aim of fascism had been highlighted as being 'To prepare the peasants, by a gradual process and through their own labour and thrift, without violent measures, for eventual possession of the land, and to encourage scientific cultivation to the fullest possible fruitfulness and utility'.[13] Gorgolini presents fascism as a socialist ideology with a national focus, which aimed to regenerate social and economic conditions of the rural classes first, and to revitalise a sense of national identity.

These national and agrarian focusses correspond with MacDiarmid's concentration in *Sangschaw* and *Penny Wheep* on rural and domestic spheres, lyrics of fleeting images and communal understandings in balance with the endurance and symbolism of landscapes and local labour. Capturing such scenes in the rich syncretism of his synthetic Scots, MacDiarmid imposes a disruptive modernity upon traditional settings, bringing together

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[11] Prime Minister David Lloyd George had promised ex-servicemen in Scotland land as a reward for their service, and the 1919 Land Settlement (Scotland) Act aimed to resettle populations through the establishment of new crofts. These promises were never fulfilled, resulting in land raids. Lewis, as MacDiarmid refers to, was the site of extensive land raids in 1919-20, carried out in response to the landlord Lord Leverhulme's hostility to land settlement initiatives, hence the significance of it being visited by prominent members of the ILP. See Leah Leneman, 'Land Settlement in Scotland after World War I', *The Agricultural History Review*, 37.1 (1989), pp.52-64; Ewen A. Cameron, 'Freshness, Freedom, and Peace?: Land Settlement in Scotland after the Great War', *Northern Scotland*, 11.2 (2020), pp.161-175.
[12] Harben credits Mr. C. M. Grieve in his introductory acknowledgements. Primarily built around figures pertaining to rural employment and tenancy in England and Wales, the study offers an insight into the poor standard of living for agrarian workers, and proposes the introduction of a decent minimum wage and community land ownership. Harben was a politician with the Liberal Party before he joined the Labour Party, and a vocal supporter of women's suffrage. *The Rural Problem* was published with the Fabian Society, on behalf of the 'Committee to Inquire into Land Problems and Rural Development'. Grieve had joined the Fabian Society, along with the Independent Labour Party, in 1908.
[13] Doctor Pietro Gorgolini, *The Fascist Movement in Italian Life*, trans. M. D. Petre (Boston: Little, Brown, & Company, 1923), p.49.

the disparate appeals of 'technocratic or urban utopianism' and 'celebrations of rural life' which Roger Griffin suggests fascism to have united under the common purpose of 'the rebirth of the nation'.[14] What becomes clear in these early articles is the particular interpretation of fascism that MacDiarmid adopts and supports; much as Cairns Craig has remarked with regards to Yeats, Eliot and Pound, 'The real problem lies in the problem of defining Fascism itself', a definition which 'We have tended to refuse to attempt'.[15] Griffin's description of the fascist appeal, that 'The prospect of participating in national rebirth could prove irresistible to idealists and activists in all walks of life', speaks to both MacDiarmid's creative tendencies and political sympathies in the early 1920s.[16] In his project to establish a Scottish literature – and language – which borrowed from tradition yet remained dynamically modern, MacDiarmid was drawn to the 'two different impulses' of fascism that Craig recognises as the drive for 'dynamic transformation', pursued 'under the control of the desire to retain the traditional values of the past that contributed to national greatness and a healthy community'.[17] Italian Fascism in particular, the focus of MacDiarmid's articles, has been described by Paul Morrison as 'ambiguously both'; both resistant 'to modernization' and 'an agent of it'.[18]

While avoiding the generalising condemnation of MacDiarmid as a 'fascist' himself due to the enquiries of his 1923 essays, such early perceptions of fascist priorities in nationalism, socialism and rural problems did arguably influence the sense of national exceptionalism that pervades his work, particularly in the 1920s, as revealed through his focus on Scots language, landscape and culture, before he diversifies his poetic form and language in the decades that followed. As MacDiarmid's loyalty to communist ideology heightened and endured through the 1930s and beyond – he joined the Communist Party of Great Britain in 1934 – fascism became the enemy, in line with the Marxist view that it was 'Capitalism in its most desperate, violent form', and that 'The front must now be directed against Fascism.'[19] This shift is reflected in the disjuncture that exists between MacDiarmid's early articles, which advocate for fascism, and the later poetry which

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[14] Roger Griffin, 'Modernity, modernism, and fascism. A "mazeway resynthesis"', *Modernism/modernity*, 15.1 (2008), pp. 9-24 (p.18).
[15] Craig, *Yeats, Eliot, Pound*, p.262.
[16] Griffin, 'Modernity', p.19.
[17] Craig, *Yeats, Eliot, Pound*, p.274; p.274; p.275.
[18] Paul Morrison, *The Poetics of Fascism: Ezra Pound, T. S. Eliot, Paul de Man* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1996), p.9.
[19] J. T. Murphy, *Fascism! The Socialist Answer* (London: The Socialist League, 1935), online: <https://www.marxists.org/archive/murphy-jt/1935/x01/fascism.htm.>; Leon Trotsky, 'For a Workers' United Front Against Fascism' (December 8, 1931), *The Struggle Against Fascism in Germany* (New York: Pathfinder Press, Inc., 1971), pp.132-141 (p.137).
On Marxist accounts of fascism, see David Beetham (ed.), *Marxists in the Face of Fascism: Writings by Marxists on Fascism from the Inter-War Period* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1983); David Renton, *Fascism: History and Theory, New and Updated Edition* (London: Pluto Press, 2020).

condemns it, poetry that Duncan Gullick Lien has suggested is not intended 'as revolution itself, […] but as part of an effort to build revolutionary consciousness'.[20]

7.2. The Rise of Fascism: Ignorance, Contention, Opposition

Following the publication of the 1923 articles, MacDiarmid does not vocalise further support for fascism as an ideology, yet nor does he condemn it. That is, until the Spanish Civil War, to which he responds through 'Scotland; and the Question of a Popular Front against Fascism and War' (1938), and *The Battle Continues*. Focussed inwardly on the regeneration of a Scottish literature and language, MacDiarmid appears to have turned a blind eye to concerning shifts in European politics such as Stalin's establishment of a dictatorship in the USSR in 1929 or Hitler's achievement of power in 1933. His writing – both journalism and poetry – also features a conspicuous silence regarding developments closer to home, for instance Oswald Mosley's rectorial campaign – run against Compton Mackenzie – at the University of Glasgow in 1931, or the establishment of the British Union of Fascists in 1932 and the foundation of the Scottish Democratic Fascist party in 1933.[21]

   Prior to the Spanish Civil War it is only through his support of *The Modern Scot*, the periodical edited and published by J. H. Whyte in St. Andrews between 1930 and 1936, that MacDiarmid's development of an anti-fascist sentiment is indicated.[22] Contributors to *The Modern Scot* responded to the rise of fascism across Europe as indication of all that Scottish nationalism was not and did not wish to be: as Compton Mackenzie warns in an article on 'The National Party' (Volume 1.4, Winter 1931), 'the danger of turning into a fourth political party is always present and the rate of progress warns us to beware', or as Whyte argued in his editorial of Volume 3.3 (Autumn 1932), 'the two chief Nationalist movements in Europe – Hitlerism and Fascism – are a menace to the peace of the world'.[23] Volume 2.2 (Summer 1931) includes a scathing review of Wyndham Lewis's *Hitler* (1931), whilst in Volume 4.4 (Winter 1934), Whyte dismisses 'the tragic farce of Herr Hitler's *Judenfrage*', further distancing Scottish Nationalism from fascist theories of racial

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[20] Lien, 'Rehearsing Better Worlds', p.195.
[21] For a history of Fascism in Scotland, see Gavin Bowd, *Fascist Scotland: Caledonia and the Far Right.* Of MacDiarmid's detachment from developments in fascism, Bowd remarks the following: 'the BUF does not seem to have attracted the support of Scottish intellectuals. Hugh MacDiarmid followed a distinctive path of Scottish national-communism, while John Buchan's early admiration for Mussolini did not detach him from mainstream conservatism.' Bowd, *Fascist Scotland*, p.49.
[22] J. H. Whyte (1909-1962) was an American who moved to St. Andrews in 1930, where he owned a bookshop and founded *The Modern Scot.* He encouraged artists, writers and musicians involved with the Scottish Renaissance to embrace nationalism and an internationally minded modernism.
[23] Compton Mackenzie, 'The National Party', *The Modern Scot*, 1.4 (1931), p.29; J. H. Whyte, *The Modern Scot*, 3.3 (1932), p.194.

purity.[24] MacDiarmid – or Grieve – was closely acquainted with Whyte and contributed both essays and poetry to volumes including 1.2, 1.3, 1.4, 2.1, 2.2, 2.4 and 4.4, the frequency of his involvement an indication of his support for the perspectives bolstered by the journal.

MacDiarmid engaged again with fascism more explicitly in his own writing in the mid-1930s. In an article for *The Free Man* on 'Scotland, Hitler and Wyndham Lewis' (July 1932), Grieve reviewed *Apes, Japes, and Hitlerism: A Study and Bibliography of Wyndham Lewis* by John Gawsworth.[25] Alex Thomson has remarked that MacDiarmid – or Grieve – perceived Lewis as a 'figure of intellectual integrity', an opinion that infiltrates his review.[26] Gawsworth's study, the first book written on Lewis, was written in the aftermath of Lewis's controversial publication of *Hitler* (1931), the book from which his reputation as a Nazi sympathiser would never quite recover.[27] Grieve uses the review as a platform via which to engage not with the specific ideologies explored in the book but to complain about the censorship of literature, quoting Gawsworth's argument that 'The work suffered the fate all books suffer that raise questions unpopular with the political viewpoints of the Press' (*RTII*: 406). MacDiarmid's opposition to literary censorship is Leninist in character, Lenin having argued in 1905 that 'Every artist, everyone who considers himself an artist, has the right to create freely according to his ideals, regardless of anything'.[28]

Artistic censorship, an impediment to liberated creative expression, inhibited the freedom of dialectics and debate, that force which MacDiarmid believed to propel change. The emphasis of this narrative in the review was evidently intended to provoke reaction, as MacDiarmid quotes Gawsworth's statement that 'Hitler is as much a prophet as Mahomet, Mussolini, or Lenin, but he is an armed prophet' (*RTII*: 407), an opinion he would surely have expected to be intensely disagreeable.[29] The aggrievement with censorship which he expresses appears to have been, whilst principled, a conscious instigation of controversy intended to spark debate, rather than any indication of commitment to the particular opinions being censored. There is no evidence that MacDiarmid supported Hitler's Nazism

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[24] J. H. Whyte, *The Modern Scot,* 4.4 (1934), p.271.

[25] Gawsworth was the pseudonym of Terence Ian Fitton Armstrong. Gawsworth later helped MacDiarmid publish his anti-fascist pamphlet 'Scotland; and the Question of a Popular Front Against Fascism and War' (1938).

[26] Alex Thomson, 'The Asymmetry of British Modernism: Hugh MacDiarmid and Wyndham Lewis', *Modernist cultures,* 8.2 (2013), pp.252-271 (p.255).

[27] It was in this book that Lewis included a chapter on the doctrine of 'blutsgefühl', or 'blood-feeling', the concept which MacDiarmid wrongly applies to the Gaelic world.

[28] V. I. Lenin, quoted in Clara Zetkin, 'My Recollections of Lenin', *On Literature and Art* (Moscow: Progress Publishers, 1970), pp.249-255 (p.250).

[29] Gawsworth writes this in response to Lewis's statement that 'Hitler is a prophet, like Mahomet, Mussolini, or Lenin.' Lewis, *Hitler*, p.48.

in any sustained way beyond this review and beyond the 'Gaelic Idea' essay written in immediate response to Lewis's *Hitler*.[30]

MacDiarmid introduces a more vocal stance of fascist opposition from 1935, first highlighted in an article on 'Scotland, France & Working-Class Interests', published in *New Scotland* (October 1935). Here, MacDiarmid recognises fascism as 'the antithesis of the Scottish genius', arguing that it would only be through 'Continued association with England, either in the present relationship or any other' (*RTII*: 540) that it would be warranted any authority in Scotland. Were this position not committed to in subsequent writing, it might be interpreted that MacDiarmid merely instrumentalised the increased popularity of fascism in England at this point as an identifiable reason to advocate for independence. However, the conviction which dominates MacDiarmid's writing in the years that followed suggests a complete overhaul of his attitude to fascism from that of 1923 and a total commitment to the rejection of any ideology which oppressed minority voices, cultures and nations.

7.3. Response to the Spanish Civil War: *Authors Take Sides* and 'the Question of a Popular Front'

The disruption of the Spanish Civil War (1936-9) presented MacDiarmid with a critical opportunity to express such commitment, to instil in his poetry a rejection of fascism that was complemented by support for communism and republicanism as liberating forces. His contribution to the 1937 pamphlet *Authors Take Sides on the Spanish War*, organised and published by the *New Left Review*, indicates a conscious attempt to engage with and support the international collective of writers and artists who united in opposition against Franco's regime. In his response MacDiarmid states 'I AM A MEMBER of the Communist Party and wholly on the side of the legal Government and the People of Republican Spain', indicating that 'Practically all the Scottish writers of any distinction to-day are of the same way of thinking'.[31] He utilises the platform to highlight his belief, once more, that 'But for the connection with England, Fascism would never be able to raise its head in Scotland itself'.[32] Unlike his closest modernist contemporaries T. S. Eliot and Ezra

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[30] In this essay MacDiarmid draws upon Wyndham Lewis's application of Hitler's term 'blutsgefühl', defined as 'a true bodily solidarity' leading to 'a passionate exclusiveness' (*SE:* 70). In doing so, introducing notions of racial purity and eugenics into his advocacy for nationalism, he treads upon what Lyall has argued to be 'indefensible fascist terrain'. See Lyall, *Hugh MacDiarmid's Poetry and Politics of Place*, pp.130-1. Alex Thomson has argued, however, that MacDiarmid's response to Lewis poses 'not the assertion of ethnic difference, so much as the exploitation of that rhetoric to open a space for total spiritual revolution'. Thomson, 'The Asymmetry of British Modernism', p.266.

[31] Hugh MacDiarmid, in *Authors Take Sides on the Spanish War*, ed. Left Review (London: Purnell and Sons Ltd., 1937).

[32] Ibid.

Pound, who pledged neutrality, MacDiarmid recognised the importance of vocal political engagement.[33] He publicly distances himself, as a cultural representative of the Scottish people, from both fascism and the British union, systems which he perceived to be comparably oppressive.

His argument in 'Scotland; and the Question of a Popular Front against Fascism and War' builds upon this synthesis of ideological perspectives, constructing a narrative which highlights the significance of events in Spain upon Scotland's understanding of itself. Here, MacDiarmid restates that 'But for the English connection, fascism would have little chance of raising its head in overwhelmingly radical Scotland' (*Albyn*: 353), before arguing in principle against Scottish involvement in 'another great Imperialist War' (*Albyn*: 353). As Alex Thomson has argued, 'MacDiarmid's central focus on the demarcation of Scotland from England […] runs against the mainstream of British and Scottish fascism, which is interested in hierarchy, centralisation, and Unionism.'[34] Whilst the pamphlet highlights MacDiarmid's sustained prioritisation of the national question, it indicates also that whilst previously his nationalism had prompted a sympathetic attitude to fascism, here it is perceived as the enemy, diametrically opposed to popular opinion in Scotland.

It is such conviction that lays the foundations of MacDiarmid's vehement attack against fascism and fascist sympathisers in *The Battle Continues*. Fuelled further by events which unfolded in the lapse of time between the poem being written (1939) and its publication (1957), *The Battle Continues* constructs an account of witness which combines the immediacy of an impassioned response with the clarity of hindsight and reflection, reinforced by extensive borrowing from other writers.[35] Opening the poem with a nod to the delay in its publication, MacDiarmid's question of 'Anti-fascism is a bit out of date, isn't it?' (*CPII*: 905) acts as a reminder of the importance of ideological commitment regardless of changes in context or popular opinion. Whilst Neal Ascherson has suggested that 'MacDiarmid in the main stood aside from the central experience of a whole generation of Scottish socialists: Spain and the defence of Europe against fascism', his response to the Spanish Civil War in *The Battle Continues* suggests otherwise. [36] The poem

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[33] Eliot responded that 'While I am naturally sympathetic, I still feel convinced that it is best that at least a few men of letters should remain isolated, and take no part in these collective identities'. Meanwhile, Pound demarcated the pamphlet's 'Questionnaire' approach as 'an escape mechanism for young fools who are too cowardly to think'. In his pro-government support, MacDiarmid sides with writers including Mulk Raj Anand, W. H. Auden, Nancy Cunard, Samuel Beckett, Aldous Huxley and Naomi Mitchison.
[34] Thomson, 'The Asymmetry of British Modernism', p.258.
[35] Events include the rise and fall of fascism, the Second World War, socialist uprisings in Bulgaria (1944) and Czechoslovakia (1948), revolution in Cuba (1953-59) and Hungary (1956), and the outbreak of war in Vietnam (1955-75).
[36] Ascherson, 'MacDiarmid and Politics', p.229.

is, intrinsically, an engagement with this defence, and indicates a commitment to the political responsibility of poetry, published in a time when fascism continued to be no less of a threat.

In *The Battle Continues*, a verbal confrontation with Roy Campbell, MacDiarmid attacks the poet with biting satire, reinforced by a sensitivity to both the playfulness and authoritative implications of language. Campbell, full name Ignatius Royston Dunnachie Campbell, was a South African poet and critic with Scottish heritage, vocally supportive of Franco and ardently anti-Communist, and it was his publication of *Flowering Rifle: A Poem from the Battlefield of Spain* (1939) which sparked MacDiarmid's attack. [37] C. S. Lewis wrote a similarly incensed retaliation to Campbell in a poem entitled 'To the Author of *Flowering Rifle*', in which he condemned Campbell as a 'Loud fool'.[38]

In his response, MacDiarmid opens with recognition of the importance of a name. Offering a translation of Campbell's surname, in the Gaelic, as 'crooked mouth' (*CPII*: 905), he suggests this as an indication of Campbell's betrayal to his culture and people. The extraction of this meaning, enabled through an appreciation for language, then prompts the comparison which MacDiarmid draws between Campbell's wrongdoings and the historic aggressions of his clan – 'The foulest outrage his breed has to show / Since the massacre of Glencoe!' (*CPII*: 905) – thereby linking home and abroad, and past and present, in his scathing refutation of the repetitions of history. His description of Campbell as 'speaking with a voice not only banal / But absolutely anal' (*CPII*: 905) links dullness and vulgarity, an appeal to the disagreeability of both his fascist sympathies and his poetic form, a fitting and witty response to Campbell's own reliance upon heroic couplets and satire in *Flowering Rifle*.

MacDiarmid repeatedly refers to imagery of excretion, obscenity and decay throughout the poem in the sustained suggestion of a correlation between repulsive forms. In the assertion that 'His ear / Poetry from borborygymy cannot tell' (*CPII*: 910) MacDiarmid compares Campbell's writing to the rumbling of a stomach, whilst a direct reference to the title of Campbell's poem likens the text to a sexually transmitted disease: 'While if his rifle flowers it only bears / Such roses as in syphilis a penis wears' (*CPII*: 910). MacDiarmid intentionally dehumanises Campbell, likening him to a preying animal – 'Birds of a feather flock together, / - And you consort with vultures and carrion crows!'

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[37] Campbell later published a study of the poetry of Federico García Lorca, the Spanish poet and playwright executed by Franco's authorities – *Lorca: An Appreciation of this Poetry* (Cambridge: Bowes and Bowes, 1952) – which undermines the popular presentation of Lorca as a political 'martyr' (p.7). He also planned to publish a book on Robert Burns which never materialised.
[38] C. S. Lewis, 'To The Author of *Flowering Rifle*', *Curtana: Sword of Mercy: A Journal for the Study of the Military Chaplaincy*, 4.2 (2013)*,* p.78.

(*CPII*: 951) – and fascism to a parasite which feeds upon society, like 'the hellish power of a plague / Carried by lice on rats' (*CPII*: 950).

The dark humour which propels MacDiarmid's polemic in *The Battle Continues* balances the poem's serious discussion of fascist violence and injustice, an attack on 'All the hellish wrong of human history' (*CPII*: 909), with satire as comedic relief. This is present in the playfulness of his description of Campbell as

> A "poet" devoted not to composition
> But to decomposition,
> And if to the lyre, not
> Spelled that way! (*CPII*: 911)

Through an appreciation for the details of language MacDiarmid plays with shades of meaning and illustrates how a minor change to a word – the addition of a prefix or the different spelling of homophones – can utterly change its impact. The joke here operates at multiple levels, contradicting the crassness of its subject with his own craftiness.

Switching from dead seriousness to such satire, MacDiarmid juxtaposes the reality of the war's horrors with the perceived absurdity of support for fascism, as echoed in the following parodical call to arms:

> See Life! Visit sunny Spain!
> Mobilise the idiots!
> Form fours, the insane!
> Follow the Furor!
> Field-Marshall Campbell leads the charge in person.
> – The charge of the Gadarene swine! (*CPII*: 944)

The ambiguity and layered connotations of MacDiarmid's language here lay bare the irony of the situation. Firstly, his capitalisation of 'Life' suggests its function as a proper noun or desirable destination, a tongue in cheek suggestion given the frontline being where life ends, rather than where it begins. Moreover, his alliteration of the fricative 'F' sound instils an exasperation in the raised voice of the speaker, whilst the use of the world 'Furor' invokes both the German 'Führer' ('leader' or 'guide', used in reference to Hitler) and the English 'furore', defined as an 'outbreak of public anger or excitement' (OED). 'Gadarene', similarly, suggests both an immediate definition – a headlong or disastrous rush to do something – and a deeper etymological resonance, 'Gadarene swine' stemming from biblical verse in the Gospel of Mark 5:1-20.[39] Each implicates Campbell as

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[39] After the herd of 'Gadarene swine' take on demons cast out by Jesus from a man they meet their demise, the spirits inside them leading them to run wildly down a hill and into the sea, shortly drowning.

responsible for the deaths of innocent people. MacDiarmid's foregrounding of linguistic connotation and ambiguity here sees him reject Leonard Forster's assertion that 'Poets need to operate with clean words', rather than those which are 'dirty because of their associations', such saturation of meaning and 'association' key to the poem's achievement of a tone that is simultaneously humorous and deadly serious. [40]

Despite its mocking imagery and satirical wordplay, *The Battle Continues* remains driven by a belief in the social responsibility of literature, particularly poetry, as MacDiarmid continually reasserts that art, which 'cannot flourish in the atmosphere of duress' (*CPII*: 915), ought to intervene in political realities.

As such, the poem remains unswerving from its opposition to imperialism and capitalism as well as fascism, challenging the status quo in its argument that 'all the good things in the Capitalist system / Like all the evil are founded on a gigantic crime' (*CPII*: 929). MacDiarmid dares to draw connections between the war in Spain and international political trends, linking the atrocities committed by fascist governments with those conducted by imperialist, capitalist governments, closer to home:

> There is nothing the Nazis and Fascists have done
> That the English haven't done again and again
> In the *name* of very different ideals, of course,
> And are not repeating or trying to repeat
> Continually. (*CPII*: 935)

His reminder of the manipulative tendencies shared by 'The capitalist Press of the world' and 'Hitler's propaganda as he declares / 'Lying and fraud' (*CPII*: 965) acts as a precursor to the discussion on Karl Kraus which MacDiarmid later includes in *In Memoriam James Joyce*, an ode to the centrality of language in both the perpetuation and dismantling of populist ideologies.

MacDiarmid provides support for his opposition to fascism and capitalism through reference to an international community of writers and texts. In the first instance, this includes Federico García Lorca, a figure juxtaposed with that of Roy Campbell: 'Lorca, dead, lives forever. / Campbell, living is dead and rots' (*CPII*: 918). Quoting from tributes to Lorca by Pablo Neruda and Luis de Tapia, MacDiarmid invokes a base of pro-republican support, supplementing his voice with theirs and writing into the precedent established by the anti-nationalist writers who W. H. Auden had described as 'poets exploding like bombs'.[41]

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[40] Leonard Forster, *The Poet's Tongues: Multilingualism in Literature* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1970), p.93.
[41] W. H. Auden, 'Spain', Forché, *Against Forgetting*, p.163.

Yet these references to poets who personally experienced or responded to the violence in Spain are outnumbered by allusions to those who did not, as MacDiarmid draws upon a firmly established European tradition. Quotations from Adam Mickiewicz and Mikhail Lermontov, William Wordsworth, Thomas Carlyle, Vladimir Solovyov, and Saint John Henry Newman, are brought together as emblems of the values which had preceded the moral corruption of modernity and fascism. Similarly, Johann Wolfgang von Goethe and Heinrich Heine, who are cited in non-translated German, represent a romantic tradition which set the precedent for poetic discourse, expectations that Campbell then fails to live up to: 'But then, Campbell, Heine's a poet, / That's where the difference is' (*CPII*: 958). MacDiarmid's inclusion of two uncited, untranslated quotations from Blaise Pascal (1623-62), in French, and Rainer Maria Rilke (1875-1926), in German, symbolise the manner in which he collated allusions in the attempt to forge a synthesis across time, borders and forms of writing and specialism (*CPII*: 914).[42] The inclusion of the quotations in their non-translated form, distinct from the main body of the poem, accentuates their difference, rather than their commonality, reflective of the disruption which MacDiarmid responds to.

Moreover, MacDiarmid draws upon modern allusions which highlight the specific urgency of the contemporary moment. His reference to Wilfred Owen's 'Dulce et decorum est' (1920) relates the violence witnessed in Spain to that of the First World War, whilst references to Robert Musil's unfinished modernist novel *Der Mann ohne Eigenschaften* (1930) (912), Liam O'Flaherty's autobiographical book *Shame the Devil* (1934), and a poem by Count Alexis Tolstoy affirm the poem's specificity to the political instability of the 1930s.[43] In the inclusion of prose quotes by Lenin, Dr. Hugo Eckener and Wener Sombart, MacDiarmid unsettles the poetic form further, emphasising the distinction of their political discourse (*CPII*: 977).[44] In disrupting the momentum of the poem, the quotes mimic the potential of language, when used in such a way, to unsettle the status quo and provoke action. The quote from Lenin in particular, taken from his 1922 Comintern

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[42] Pascal was a French mathematician, philosopher and Catholic theologian; Rilke, writing poetry in the early stages of modernism, wrote in the German language but was Austrian by birth, an important distinction.
[43] Liam O'Flaherty also provided a response to *Authors Take Sides* which, not dissimilarly to MacDiarmid's, foregrounded his Irish experience as a factor to his support for the Republican side: 'As an Irishman I realise that the toiling masses of Spain are waging the same struggle which we have waged for centuries in Ireland against landlordism and foreign Imperialism. Long live the Republic in Spain and all over the Earth' (1937).
[44] Aeronautical engineer Dr. Hugo Eckener (misspelled by MacDiarmid as Eckner) (1868-1954) and sociologist Werner Sombart (1863-1941) had expressed anti-Nazi opinions in the 1930s. The quote accredited to Eckner was cited in a review by Indra D. Sharma of Henry Wickam Steed's BBC Pamphlet entitled *India and the Four Freedoms* (Oxford University Press: 1944), published in *The Indian Journal of Political Science* in 1946. Given that MacDiarmid was revising various long poems throughout the 1940s, it is not unlikely that MacDiarmid came across the quote from Eckener (misspelled identically by Sharma) in this journal.

Congress speech and also referenced twice in *Lucky Poet,* sees MacDiarmid appeal to an immediate response to Mussolini's March on Rome, representative of a critical early confrontation between communism and fascism and thus crucial to reflect on at this later point.[45]

In each instance, the incongruence of MacDiarmid's allusions is central to their function in the poem. As Edwin Morgan suggests,

> The function of the frequent quotations and translations is an extension of the principle of analogy; they are deliberately *not* worked into the texture of the poem, because in their jutting unassimilated state they make more of an intellectual appeal – their edges are not melted off by being forcibly fused into some pattern either of verse or of "poetry".[46]

In implicating commonalities across references where the commonality is not explicit, MacDiarmid's poetry encourages its reader to consider what Lien regards as 'the fundamental unity of the apparently disparate aspects of social reality', aiming to 'activate the latent intellectual potential of all people to perceive the inherently oppressive nature of capitalist society and thus trigger revolutionary social change'.[47]

Bringing the poem's web of knowledge further up to date and relevance in a direct confrontation with fascist dictatorship, MacDiarmid quotes Hitler on two occasions. In the first instance, *Mein Kampf* (1925) is referenced in a footnote, with specific mention of its theory of the 'big lie' (*CPII*: 951). The marginalisation of the citation ensures that Hitler's words are not awarded the platform of incorporation into the main body of the poem, and, beyond it, there is no evidence that MacDiarmid was actually familiar with *Mein Kampf,* it being highly likely that the quotation was obtained from another text.[48] The inclusion of another quote by Hitler, 'Fetzen Sie aus Mussolini heraus, was Sie können!' (*CPII*: 970), functions similarly. Translated from the Austrian German in a footnote as 'Rip out of Mussolini whatever you can!' (*CPII*: 970), the quote acts as a reminder of dictators who maintained their domination purely through violence and tyranny – a stark contrast to the sympathies expressed in 1923. It is likely that this reference too stemmed from a contemporary study or review, potentially Kurt G. W. Lüdecke's *I Knew Hitler* (1938).[49] These references are supplemented further by allusions to studies of fascism including Jean

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[45] See *LP*: xxxi; 152-3.
[46] Edwin Morgan, 'MacDiarmid Embattled', *Essays* (Cheshire: Carcanet, 1974), pp.194-202 (p.200).
[47] Lien, 'Rehearsing Better Worlds', p.198.
[48] The quote is possibly borrowed from Rudolf Olden's anti-Nazi study *Hitler the Pawn* (1936), which includes the quote. See Rudolf Olden, *Hitler the Pawn* (London: V. Gollancz Ltd., 1936), p.105.
[49] It must be noted that in the suggestion of such sources the methodology is primarily speculation, however given existing research into MacDiarmid's reading habits and referential practices such conjectures are not entirely unfounded.

Cassou's *Les Massacres de Paris* (1935), André Malraux's *Days of Contempt* (1935), G. T. Garratt's *Mussolini's Roman Empire* (1939) and, perhaps most significantly, Dionisio Ridruejo's *The Victors are Vanquished: A Spanish Testament* (1957).[50] This clear indication of research supports the conviction of the poem as an important anti-fascist text which responds not only to Roy Campbell but to 'mass-murderers like Hitler, Mussolini and Franco' (917), and rejects them all.

MacDiarmid's rejection of political neutrality in *The Battle Continues* makes it an integral, if comparatively little-known, poem of the Spanish Civil War, reflective of a particular faith in socialism – increasingly unfashionable in 1957– and in the potential of poetry to provoke a reaction and encourage engagement with the real issues of the age. The sensitivity to the social responsibility of art that MacDiarmid advocates in the poem evidently influenced the approach of his Second World War poetry which, similarly, intervened in an unjust world as he refused to be a bystander in art, as in politics.

7.4. Challenging Neutrality: Provocation in MacDiarmid's Second World War Poems

MacDiarmid's Second World War poems are dominated by satire and polemic, fuelled by anger and injustice. They build on the approach taken in *The Battle Continues*, most of which was written before the war, targeting not only fascism but intervening in the wider failings of global structures, governments, and patterns of imperialism.

His poems of the 1940s, including those posthumously recovered and collected in *The Revolutionary Art of the Future* (2003), are unafraid to confront unpleasant political realities head on, considered by Richie McCaffery to be 'directly polemical, incendiary and shocking'.[51] McCaffery has recognised the primary importance of these poems as provocations, affirming that whilst 'To try and defend these poems would be foolhardy and misguided […] it would also be a great mistake to dismiss them as mere misanthropic doggerel: they demand a response, they are calculated to provoke and challenge political stasis'.[52] He builds upon Peter McCarey's suggestion that in both the First and Second World Wars MacDiarmid saw a choice to be made between 'status quo or the apocalypse', opting 'of course […] for the apocalypse'.[53]

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[50] Ridruejo's study was published in same year as *The Battle Continues*, suggesting that MacDiarmid redrafted the poem right up until its publication.
[51] Richie McCaffery, 'A Man in Constant Revolt: Hugh MacDiarmid's Poetry of World War Two', *International Review of Scottish Studies*, 43 (2018), pp.41-74 (p.48).
[52] Ibid., p.47.
[53] Peter McCarey, 'Mungo's Hat and Maxwell's Demon', *Find an Angel and Pick a Fight* (Geneva: Molecular Press, 2013), pp.75-102 (p.75).

In the poems MacDiarmid reiterates his faith in the necessity of complete upheaval. He criticises British complicity in fascist crimes, namely Hitler's 'callous and irresponsible betrayal' in Czechoslovakia, remarking in 'Like a Particle of Bone' that 'Never were accessories to a crime more cold-blooded' (*RAF*: 36). In response to such unforgivable actions MacDiarmid forces his poem to take on an active oppositional role, perpetually on the offensive. The language which he uses is not permitted to be neutral, instead charged with a bold conviction. This is demonstrated in the self-assured provocation of 'Surely It Were Better', in which MacDiarmid asks if 'a Mussolini or a Hitler' is 'Worse than a Bevin or a Morrison' (*RAF*: 50), highlighting the hypocrisy and deception of the British government which veils its intentions and the realities of its actions. Words, and the honest expression of identity and intentions which they contain, are central to MacDiarmid's antagonism to political systems and his poetic reclamation of a politicised, intentional world language.

MacDiarmid directly criticises imperialist attempts to justify violence in 'The War Memorial' and 'Five Minutes' Silence' and builds upon reflections on the First World War in 'At the Cenotaph', 'Another Epitaph on an Army of Mercenaries' and 'In the Slaughterhouse'. In 'Five Minutes' Silence' MacDiarmid remarks upon the loss of individual agency in the conscription of young, naïve soldiers, like 'countless hordes of gnomes' in 'drab ill-fitting uniforms' (*RAF*: 46-7). The reproach is informed by his own experience of being 'one man in a similar horde' 'A quarter of a century ago' (*RAF*: 47-8). Contemplation of the similarities witnessed in the First and Second World Wars highlights the repetitive nature of history which will continue indefinitely if the cycle is not abruptly broken. The poems reject the capitalist and imperialist society of 'The Civilised West' that sends young men to be killed in war and then disingenuously celebrates their lives as 'valiant and brave' – or, as suggested in 'The War Memorial', as 'immortal heroes', the dead memorialised entirely differently to 'the worthless, the unemployables, the scum' who have been 'spared to come home again' (*RAF*: 39-40). Satire is critical to the poems as attacks: as McCaffery suggests, in reference to 'While Goering Slept', MacDiarmid understands how 'in times of oppressive earnestness, the most effective weapon is laughter'.[54] This poem introduces a lightness into what is otherwise a very serious affirmation of Goering's death as retribution for fascist crimes, presented as a joke in which the punchline brings attention to the physicality of his suicide whilst simultaneously desensitising it, a purposely controversial approach.

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[54] McCaffery, 'A Man in Constant Revolt', p.65.

MacDiarmid's Second World War poems are entirely reflective of the attitudes and priorities which informed his thinking in the 1940s and 50s and which would later shape the anti-fascist, anti-imperialist approach of *In Memoriam James Joyce.* This poem, emerging out of the aftermath of the Second World War acts as a lengthy retort to the violence, manipulation and oppression – linguistic and otherwise – that had been witnessed in the war, events that MacDiarmid argued poetry ought to engage with.

7.5. *In Memoriam James Joyce:* Language, Authority and Postcolonial Identities

In Memoriam James Joyce alludes to Karl Kraus's satire on National Socialism as one of its numerous references to German language, literature and philosophy, integral to the poem's aims to respond to the instabilities and tensions of the contemporary political moment.[55] Cited almost verbatim from an article by Erich Heller for the *Times Literary Supplement* in 1953, the extract which MacDiarmid repurposes in *In Memoriam* addresses Kraus's condemnation of Hitler's speeches and their manipulation of language. Kraus utilised satire in his recontextualization of 'everyday' language, borrowed from journalistic and documentary sources, to emphasise the impact of the mass media upon social understanding of political issues. He did so in *The Last Days of Mankind* (1918), a play which repurposed uncited sources to such an extent that it was virtually untranslatable and which Marjorie Perloff suggests as being guided by 'The transformation of language and defeat of "normal" expectations […] at every level', an exercise in the challenging of linguistic boundaries and contexts.[56]

It is in a similar manner to that exemplified by Kraus that MacDiarmid recontextualises the *TLS* article. Unlike the prose extracts which interrupt *The Battle Continues,* here MacDiarmid transposes the rhetorical language of Kraus, as sifted through Heller's subjective discourse, into the poetic form. Stylistically, MacDiarmid changes little from the original extract, challenging the viability of 'creating another context' (*CPII*: 769) for journalistic rhetoric alongside the other forms of language. His exclusion of citations invokes a response in his reader similar to that of Kraus's audience, who are made aware of their existence as an 'individual […] at the mercy of a chain of events'.[57] Moreover,

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[55] Scott Lyall notes that whilst other writers – such as Edwin and Willa Muir – distanced themselves from the German language following the Second World War, MacDiarmid did not. In the poet's attempts to encompass the linguistic fabric of the world in *In Memoriam*, the centrality of German to the European tradition and to present politics proved more important than its unfavourable perception. Lyall, *Hugh MacDiarmid's Poetry and Politics of Place*, p.222.
[56] Perloff, *Edge of Irony*, p.30.
[57] Ibid., p.35.

within his repurposing of the Heller article, MacDiarmid includes extracts of verse by Kraus which Heller quotes in the original German, an example of non-translation in which MacDiarmid takes on a role of organising, rather than intervening, so as to accommodate the original language in its new context. The quote from *Zwei Läufer* ('Two Runners') – 'Und dieser, dem es ewig bangt / ist stets am Ursprung angelangt' (*CPII*: 773) – is particularly relevant as an allusion to the cyclical or repetitive nature of existence and human history in its evocation of 'ewig' ('forever' or the 'eternal') and 'Ursprung' (the 'origin' or 'source'), suggestive of the permanent revolution and the role of literature within this. MacDiarmid's recontextualization of both journalistic language and poetry in this section of *In Memoriam* is intentionally ironic, his tampering with language being reflective of the ways in which Kraus had exposed fascism as using popular language in its manipulation of the media and mass consciousness.

Primarily, however, if *In Memoriam James Joyce* is to be characterised by its rejection of an ideology then it is its anti-imperialism that dominates the narrative. Responding to the world's disrupted political and cultural landscape in the 1940s and 1950s, *In Memoriam* bears witness to imperialism, colonialism and capitalism as the root causes of global violence, inequality and the suppression of free expression. Through the *bricolage* approach of the poem MacDiarmid, building upon his understanding of Scotland's experience, reaches out to a plurality of other minority language and cultures which he affirms the autonomy of within a world language defined by diversity rather than homogeneity.

The message of *In Memoriam* 'Loath[es] all Imperialisms, colour-bars, and class-distinctions' (*CPII:* 782), envisioning a world language in which 'No voice [is] not fully enfranchised, / No voice indispensable or indistinguishable' (*CPII*: 786-7). His demands that 'All dreams of "imperialism" must be exorcised, / Including linguistic imperialism, which sums up all the rest' (*CPII*: 790) invoke theories later advanced by Robert Phillipson, who defines 'linguistic imperialism' as the trend in which '*the dominance of English is asserted and maintained by the establishment and continuous reconstitution of structural and cultural inequalities between English and other languages*'.[58] Responding to the perpetuation of such inequality and suppression, MacDiarmid champions multiplicity and celebrates 'the vast international vocabulary which already exists' (*CPII*: 790). The resulting collage-like assembly of diverse allusions, vocabulary and quotations echoes Glissant's theories of multilingualism, discussed earlier in the thesis, as it does Ngũgĩ wa Thiong'o's 'Globalectic' theory that 'there is no one center, all points are

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[58] Robert Phillipson, *Linguistic Imperialism* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1992), p.47.

balanced and related to one another by the principle of giving and receiving'.[59] Whilst the poem is written in English, the continual destabilisation of this English through the interjection of unfamiliar elements ensures its authority is decentralised, shared amongst the various components which contribute to its richness.

The anti-imperialist stance of *In Memoriam* marks a considerable shift from earlier perspectives expressed by MacDiarmid. Initially, he appears to have viewed imperialism as a necessary evil. This was suggested in 1923, when he wrote of hopes for the 'fair treatment' of the 'component members' of the Empire 'and the reconciliation of [their] interests' (*RTI*: 116). Here, he appears to support the making of improvements within the imperial structure rather than its entire upheaval. Writing in 'Albyn: or Scotland and the Future' (1927) that 'Scotland has contributed far too much to the upbuilding of the Empire to want to withdraw from it' (*Albyn*: 24), MacDiarmid remained fixated on the supposed prospect of imperial gain for Scotland in the 1920s, even as he was elsewhere demanding to support 'forces which / Were subjugated to mak' way for England's poo'er' (*CPI*: 57).

As his disillusion grew, however, so did his demand: in an article written for *The Stewartry Observer* the following year (1928), entitled 'Scotland as a Colony', MacDiarmid expresses support for independence from the Empire, recognising that 'all the Colonies are demanding – and securing – self-government along similar lines' (*RTII*: 111). MacDiarmid's suggestion of Scotland as a 'colony' here, thus inviting it to be considered within discussions of 'postcolonial' literature is one which continues to prove contentious. Yet, in referring to accepted definitions of 'colony' – i.e. 'a country or area under the full or partial political control of another country and occupied by settlers from that country' (OED) – and 'postcolonialism' – defined by the authors of *The Empire Writes Back* as denoting 'all the culture affected by the imperial processes from the moment of colonization to the present day' – this thesis supports MacDiarmid's observation.[60] Whilst scholars and historians have criticised the tendency of twentieth-century nationalist narratives to exaggerate Scotland's oppression, it remains true that, following the Union of Parliaments in 1707, Scotland had been under the political rule of Westminster, subject to restricted autonomy and, particularly in the Highlands and Islands, a suppressed expression of identity (language, dress and culture).[61]

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[59] Ngũgĩ wa Thiong'o, *Globalectics: Theory and the Politics of Knowing* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2012), p.61.

[60] 'Introduction', *The Empire Writes Back: Theory and practice in post-colonial literatures, Second Edition*, ed. Bill Ashcroft, Gareth Griffiths & Helen Tiffin (London: Routledge, 1989), pp.1-13 (p.2).

[61] Liam Connell has argued that Scotland retained considerable autonomy through the preservation of its religious and educational institutions and thus cannot and should not be compared to the experience of other colonies. He maintains that any inequalities faced by Scots in the aftermath of the union were a result of class

In his intervention in 'linguistic imperialism' in *In Memoriam*, then, MacDiarmid predates Phillipson's theory of the 'internal colonisation of the British Isles' within its study of European 'linguicide'.[62] Phillipson built his theory upon the basis that, whilst 'Functional bilingualism or multilingualism at the individual and societal level is common throughout the world', 'the pattern in core English-speaking countries has been one of increasing monolingualism […] at least so in official statistics'.[63] *In Memoriam* rejects such monolingualism, acting as an epic illustration of the values of multilingualism within a world language that was sensitive to the processes of colonialism, decolonisation and anti-colonial action.

Whilst the English language provides MacDiarmid with a secure and privileged position from which to write, his injection of foreign elements persistently destabilises its imperially standardised form, thereby challenging its authority from within. He does so having misguidedly been influenced by what he understood to be a Stalinist policy of 'encourag[ing] native languages and literatures', translated here into the context of a challenge to standard English, rather than 'Great Russian' (*RTIII*: 241). The diverse pool of languages and cultures which MacDiarmid draws from in the vision of world language proposed in *In Memoriam* indicates a conscious effort to include and appeal to those which

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difference rather than national difference and that the branding of Scotland as a British colony is 'problematic, tending to perceive "colonialism" as an easily defined systemic practice rather than as *ad hoc* and heterogeneous processes of settlement and economic extraction'. Liam Connell, 'Scottish nationalism and the colonial vision of Scotland', *Interventions,* 6.2 (2004), pp.252-263 (p.253).
Ellen-Raïssa Jackson and Willy Maley reject this, contending that due to 'the complexities around class, colonialism and colloquialism' that existed in Scotland, as in Ireland, the two were intrinsically linked. They note that imbalance of authority in the union contributed to the maintenance of imperially-established hierarchies of language and culture, which unfairly disadvantaged Scots. Ellen-Raïssa Jackson & Willy Maley, 'Celtic connections: colonialism and culture in Irish-Scottish modernism', *Interventions*, 4.1 (2002), pp.68-78 (p.76).
Michael Gardiner, in *Scottish Literature and Postcolonial Literature* (2011), outlines the editorial objective of this volume to leave behind 'the wearied and misleading [question] of whether Scotland "is postcolonial"', and instead identify 'in literary history and criticism a dual relationship of congruence and conflict centred on the form of the British empire', complexity and nuance intrinsic to the discussion. Michael Gardiner, 'Introduction', *Scottish Literature and Postcolonial Literature,* ed. Michael Gardiner, Graeme Macdonald and Niall O'Gallagher (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2011), pp.1-12 (p.1; p.3)
Carla Sassi and Theo van Heijnsbergen similarly identify the helpfulness of aiming not to argue whether or not Scotland was a 'colony' or is 'postcolonial', but to 'articulate a "conversation"'. They do however acknowledge the 'writers of the twentieth-century "Scottish Renaissance," and Hugh MacDiarmid in particular, as the establishers or at least the initiators of such a national master narrative, focused on a re-evaluation of the local, the peripheral and the vernacular as a line of resistance against the metropolitan (and anglocentric) language and culture of Empire'. Carla Sassi and Theo van Heijnsbergen, 'Introduction', *Within and Without Empire: Scotland Across the (Post)colonial Borderline*, ed. Carla Sassi and Theo van Heijnsbergen (Newcastle upon Tyne: Cambridge Scholars Publishing, 2013), pp.1-13 (p.10; p.2).
This thesis, in exploring MacDiarmid's ideas about imperialism, follows in the footsteps of these editors. Whilst I engage with *In Memoriam* as a text that is attuned to narratives and histories of Empire and (post)colonialism, the objective is not to justify or debate the accommodation of Scotland within postcolonial studies more broadly.
[62] Robert Phillipson, '*Lingua franca* or *lingua frankensteina*? English in European integration and globalisation', *World Englishes*, 27.2 (2008), pp.250-267 (p.251).
[63] Phillipson, *Linguistic Imperialism*, p.17.

had been oppressed – previously and contemporaneously – by imperial structures of oppression and standardisation, capturing the poem's critical significance, at its moment in time, as a response to 'the opening of a new era' (*CPII*: 837).

The Second World War acted as catalyst for the breakup of Empire, resulting in Britain and Western Europe's domination of world power being largely handed over to the USA and USSR. The 1940s and 1950s saw the gaining of independence by nations formerly under British rule – India in 1947; Pakistan and Sri Lanka in 1948; Egypt in 1952 – and the crowning of a new monarch in 1953, the coronation of whom contributed further to MacDiarmid's vitriol for the inequalities of the imperial structure. Simultaneously, regions of the USSR were also calling for autonomy, raising questions around the viability of Stalin's model of authoritarian communism as an alternative to Western imperialism. Stalin's death in 1953, the Warsaw Pact of 1955 and the Hungarian Uprising in 1956 all contributed to the volatile and politically tumultuous international environment in which *In Memoriam James Joyce* was revised, published and received. The poem engages with this changed and changing global landscape through its referentiality to minority and postcolonial cultures, selected with the intention of recalibrating the hierarchies of power that informed the world's freedom of political and creative expression.[64]

Amidst the international references and phrases which MacDiarmid uses to supplement his English, MacDiarmid invokes various African, Indian and South American languages and dialects, representative of diverse cultures which had been suppressed and silenced in varying degrees by colonialism.

Alluding to one example of the multilingualism extant in South Africa, MacDiarmid cites 'Notando [sic] Jabavu and her native Xhosa', referring here to the successful writer and journalist Noni (Helen Nontando) Jabavu (*CPII*: 755).[65] Xhosa is a Nguni Bantu 'click' language still spoken in South Africa and Zimbabwe, which MacDiarmid was likely exposed to through a series of talks done by Jabavu on 'My Mother Tongue' for the BBC Third Programme radio service in 1951, a programme that MacDiarmid also contributed to.[66] The reference acts as evidence that South Africa was on MacDiarmid's radar prior to

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[64] This is a highly simplified timeline, provided as a basic outline of the drastically shifting political contexts of the time.

[65] One of the earliest Xhosa linguists had been a Scot, John Bennie, who had worked as a missionary in the Eastern cape where Jabavu attended a Free Church of Scotland mission school. Jabavu later moved to Britain as a teenager, before working for the BBC and for the literary magazine *The New Strand* in London, living and working here in the 1940s and 50s. In 1951 she did a series of talks on 'My Mother Tongue' for the BBC Third Programme radio service, a programme to which MacDiarmid also contributed.
See Meghan Elisabeth Healy, 'Jabavu, Noni', *Dictionary of African Biography*, ed. Emmanuel Kwaku Akyeampong and Henry Louis Gates (Jr.) (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2012)*, pp.182-3.

[66] Most notably, a section of 'Impavidi Progrediamur' was broadcast on 19 December 1956 (*Letters*: 496).

its achievement of republic status and independence from the Commonwealth in 1961 (one milestone in a complex story of colonisation and struggle).

Later, MacDiarmid would contribute a foreword to Barry Feinberg's anthology of South African poetry, *Poets to the People* (1974), in explicit support for anti-colonial voices. In his foreword, MacDiarmid quotes George Campbell Hay, the Gaelic poet, who stated that 'I am all for the "minor literatures" and the "backward races", whose literatures have not been etherialized out of life' (*RTIII*: 534). His opinion that 'The big countries share a common foreignness and repulsiveness to me, and like Wilfred Scawen Blunt I sometimes wish they would destroy one another' (*RTIII*: 534) chimes with MacDiarmid's championing of minority languages and cultures, his rejection of English imperial hegemony, and the recurrent advocacy of violent, permanent revolution, integral to his idea of world language.[67]

In Memoriam also engages with India as a recently postcolonial nation. MacDiarmid includes numerous references to India in the poem*,* which Ramkrishna Bhattacharya helpfully discusses in his study of 'India in Hugh MacDiarmid's Poetry'. Bhattacharya finds that Indian and Oriental allusions were incorporated in MacDiarmid's writing with increasing regularity between the 1930s and 1950s. Following the partition of India and Pakistan, demarcating their achievement of independence from the British Empire in 1947, this carried particular resonance for the linguistic diversity of the regions:

> Or even as we know the Brahui language, closely allied
> In grammatical structure to the far-off Dravidian tongues
> Of Southern India, and with a small core of Dravidian words
> 'Expressing the fundamental and elementary concepts of life,'
> Though, in general vocabulary, polyglot in the highest degree
> With elements derived from Arabic, Persian, Balochi,
> Pashto, Sindhi, Jatki, Urdu, and even English; (*CPII*: 800)

James Benstead notes that the quote which MacDiarmid includes here originates in an article on 'The Brahui Language' by Lieutenant-Colonel Charles Archer in the *Times Literary Supplement*, published 25 April 1936.[68] Whilst this was originally written prior to India's seccession from the Empire, MacDiarmid repurposes it with a retrospective appreciation for the endurance of expression despite changing contexts. The plurality of languages and dialects which India hosted made it rich for plumbing in MacDiarmid's pursuit of references to include in the poem's international catalogues:

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[67] Wilfred Scawen Blunt (1840-1922), the English poet, became known for his anti-imperialist views, particularly his opposition to imperial expansion in Africa, on which he published three books between 1907 and 1920.

[68] Benstead, *A Study*, p.283.

> the Indian scene of proper pronunciation,
> The laws of euphony peculiar to the Veda,
> The knowledge of letters, accents, quantity,
> The right use of the organs of articulation,
> And phonetics generally – (*CPII*: 810)

The source of this reference has been uncovered as Sir Monier Monier-Williams' 1875 work *Indian Wisdom: Examples of the Religious, Philosophical, and Ethical Doctrines of the Hindus*, which MacDiarmid appears to have relied on quite heavily in the composition of *In Memoriam*.[69] In his endeavour to construct a vision of world language which encompassed languages, cultures and experiences unfamiliar to him, MacDiarmid had to rely on such studies that he was able to access. His research using these sources was then complemented by interactions with acquaintances including figures Mulk Raj Anand, the internationally prominent Indo-Anglian novelist, and Harindranath Chattopadhyaya, the poet, dramatist and actor (*CPII*: 817).[70] Both wrote in English and yet their Indian roots remained integral to their creativity; it would be fair to assume that this complexity of identity contributed to MacDiarmid's understanding of Indian cultures.

From South Africa to India, MacDiarmid moved, in *In Memoriam*, to South America, composed of nation states which had mostly achieved independence from the Spanish and Portuguese Empires in the early nineteenth century, thus appealing to historic imperial processes beyond the Scottish or British experience. MacDiarmid emphasises these commonalities through the grouping together of distinct languages or groups with shared histories:

> Even as in our own Europe we know
> How what was once the dialect of Burgos
> Was acquired by Aztecs, Mixteks, Zapoteks,
> Aimaras, Quechuas, Araucanians, Guaranies and Tagálogs,
> And we know the clear, well-balanced Castilian,
> The explosive concentration of Portuguese and Extremenan, (*CPII*: 759)

The plural possessive pronoun ('our', 'we') here indicates a link between that which is comparatively familiar – Burgos, a region in Spain – and that which is distant or foreign, in

[69] Benstead, *A Study,* p.285. Monier-Williams was born in Bombay to a Colonel, educated at private English schools, and taught Asian languages at the East India Company College. He represents a particular brand of imperial intellectualism, bred from the upper classes, whose work was revisited eighty years later in the vastly changed context of a decolonising world.

[70] MacDiarmid and Anand moved in similar circles in London in the 1920s. MacDiarmid reflects upon their friendship in *The Company I've Kept* (1966), where he recounts 'the joy of meeting again after over thirty years […] We embraced in these terrible surroundings' (*TKIC*: 197); they met at Buchenwald in Weimar, Germany following a trip to Berlin for the International Writers' Conference of 1965.

this instance referring to regions and indigenous groups with links to the Spanish Empire. The Spanish language, believed to have originated in Burgos, was spread globally by the colonisation of the Americas, resulting in the creolisation of languages and the suppression of indigenous groups which MacDiarmid includes in the list, 'Aztecs […] Guaranies'. 'Tagálogs' refers to a language strain from the Philippines, whilst Castilian and Extremenan are provincial forms of Spanish. MacDiarmid draws a connection between location, language and collective identity, alluding as he does to the significance of imperial movements and historic passages as means of spreading, preserving and disrupting such identities.

The discussion of South American Spanish pronunciation with which MacDiarmid brings *In Memoriam* to a close – 'what is the word / They have in Peru for *adios*?' (*CPII*: 888) – is indicative of his commitment to the representation of local diversity and language as living communication, as discussed in chapter two. His attention to the nature in which languages historically interacted and intersected, recognised as being largely a result of the world's imperial history, is integral to the reality which *In Memoriam* intervenes in and the vision which it proposes. The poem is explicitly opposed to the suppression of plural voices and languages, oppression that is initially encountered in Scotland, but which is explored here on an epic scale. Themes and experiences which are shared across borders, and which resonate between minority nations and languages worldwide are centralised.

MacDiarmid evidently remained committed to the values of *In Memoriam James Joyce* far beyond its publication, as suggested by his contribution to *Poets to the People* and as captured in an interview given in 1978, mere months before his death. Here, asked about the future of the Empire, MacDiarmid suggests that the only solution might be 'get[ting] rid of the whole thing' (*RTIII*: 591). He uses the interview as a platform to reflect upon his life and career, taking the opportunity to highlight his opposition to systemic creative, linguistic and political oppression as a sustained priority:

> But as time went on – naturally I was seeking for a sort of unified view of life, a sort of philosophy of life – I came to realise that the principle [sic] element in my developing philosophy of life was the realisation that the greatest attribute of the human race was its flexibility. The death of any language, obliteration of any culture, any form of imperialism became anathema to me. So I've been consistently since then on the side of any suppressed languages, any suppressed minority cultures, and I still am. (*RTIII*: 592)

Imperialism, as an oppressive system and global institutionalisation of inequality, and language, as key to communication, expression and understanding, are integral concerns

within MacDiarmid's enquiry into the world, his advocation for poetry, and his vision of a world language.

This chapter has explored how MacDiarmid, through bearing witness to, protesting, and expressing outrage against the atrocities and inequalities of the twentieth century, constructed a politically charged poetry that dared to intervene in the world. It has charted his beginnings in the rural and nationalist prospects of fascism, and the possibility of a gain for Scotland through involvement in Empire, through the tunnel vision on Scotland and unwillingness to engage explicitly with the realities of fascism in the 1920s and early 1930s, into the ideological conviction of *Authors Take Sides*, *The Battle Continues* and the Second World War poems, provoked largely by the Spanish Civil War. MacDiarmid's poetry and vision in the 1940s and 1950s became increasingly satirical and confrontational, driven by polemic and outrage regarding the events borne witness to across Europe and beyond. The decentralisation of imperial hierarchies in *In Memoriam*, achieved through naming and lending space to small nations and minority languages and literatures, provides an epic vision of a postcolonial, or decolonial world language. The poem captures, at the heart of it, the universally human struggle for expression, and the value of plurality and multilingualism within this. The fact that *The Battle Continues* was not published until 1957 and that so many of MacDiarmid's Second World War poems were never published in his lifetime is indicative, perhaps, of a trepidation to release such vitriolic discourse into the world; the publication of *The Battle Continues* along with *In Memoriam James Joyce* and *The Kind of Poetry I Want* in the aftermath of the Second World War signifies the necessity of doing so despite such concerns.

The inconsistencies in MacDiarmid's thinking, evolving from a naïve optimism for fascism and Empire – comparable to Yeats's longing for violent change – to a complete rejection of both, are reflected through the aesthetic development of his poetry as its scope grows outward from Langholm and Scotland to comprehend the world. Importantly, however, the inconsistencies in his ideological and creative approach are balanced by his *consistencies,* primarily in the committed robust challenging of personal frameworks of understanding and socially accepted ideals, and the use of poetry as a means by which to envision an alternative future through language, to intervene in the present moment and to provoke a reaction and response amongst his readership.

MacDiarmid recognised the oppressive imperialist processes that had shaped the world's inequalities and silenced its diversity up to the point of modernist crisis which he found himself addressing. He marks his point within the narrative of history and highlights the role that a poet, and poetry, ought to assume, as socially responsible for contributing to change, both politically and artistically. The idea of a world language which exercised

social responsibility as well as creative initiative, was central. MacDiarmid's vision of world language encompasses the priorities which he believed would be vital in the achievement of real change and improved egalitarianism in the world, simultaneously supportive of distinction and commonality, of locality and universality, of originality and repurposing, and of a respect for tradition with an impetus for innovation.

Conclusion

Hugh MacDiarmid: World Language, World Poetry

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The more a poet can open himself to the world
The more he can embrace life directly,
The better poetry he is likely to write.[1]
(*CPII*: 749)

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As a study of the idea of 'world language' in the poetry of Hugh MacDiarmid, the primary aim here has been to provide a comprehensive, coherent overview of MacDiarmid's corpus, as mapped out against the contexts of twentieth-century Anglophone modernist culture, philosophy and ideology. It has proven 'language' – both plural, in the sense of the world of languages, and singular in the sense of a renegotiation of the concept of language itself – to be the central concern that is consistently threaded throughout the thematic and formal irregularities of his poetic output.

We began in the First World War and ended in the aftermath of the Second, considering primarily poetry yet also looking into the prose and polemic which complements the ideas around language and 'world language' that MacDiarmid aestheticized and experimented with. Each chapter follows a particular line of enquiry into language by which various points in MacDiarmid's career, or various collections of texts, might be characterised. The discussion is organised in a loosely chronological order yet is intent on highlighting the commitments and consistencies across those categorisations: it is for this reason that *In Memoriam James Joyce*, recognised as the most complete illustration of MacDiarmid's ideas and concerns, has recurred as a focus in each chapter.

It is these concerns and themes, broadly defined as MacDiarmid engages with and responds to them in local, national and global spheres, which form the structure of this study: Chapter One investigated language as fragmentary, Chapter Two language as social, Chapter Three language as natural, Chapter Four language as translation, Chapter Five language as multiple, Chapter Six language as allusive and Chapter Seven language as political. Inevitably the concerns overlap, manifesting as a cross-pollination of ideas which intersect across texts and, as such, unavoidably recur across chapters. Referentiality, for instance, proved integral throughout the analysis, a consistent practice within MacDiarmid's poetry as he continually negotiated with 'world language' that was

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[1] This extract of verse is taken as it appears in *In Memoriam James Joyce.* However, as James Benstead has identified, the quote (which appears in quotation marks in the poem) originates in the Winter 1953-4 issue of the journal *Nine*, in a review by Phillip Sherrard of David Gascoyne's 1950 collection *A Vagrant and Other Poems.*

borrowed, adapted and recharged in step with new literary and historical contexts. Translation, similarly, recurs as languages from these different contexts are brought into contact with one another and transformed in the poetic space, as MacDiarmid sought to capture a sense of the common 'world language' that united distinct forms. Susan Bassnett has argued that 'we cannot conceive of World Literature without translation', a claim which this thesis has argued ought to include MacDiarmid's translation not only from one language into another (as in chapter four), but the transposition of 'language' found in nature and music into the language of poetry also, as discussed in chapter two.[2] Conversely, the concept of 'non-translation' and the ineffable, that which could not be expressed in one language as it was in another, proved likewise central within MacDiarmid's engagement with local distinctions and unfamiliar linguistic forms, each representative of a respect for knowledge and experience beyond his own. Related to this concern, the notion of boundaries and categorisations, and the crossing or overcoming of these, recurs throughout the research as it recurred throughout MacDiarmid's development of a vision of 'world language' which honoured both particularities and affinities. Responding to Stefan Helgesson and Christina Kullberg's suggestion that 'the translingual making and unmaking of boundaries is a central feature of the formation of world literature', this study of MacDiarmid's poetry and ideas of 'world language' reaffirms his place as a writer of major significance in any consideration of 'world literature'.[3]

In the introduction, I outlined a selection of early twentieth-century language philosophies which provides the theoretical context against which MacDiarmid confronts and challenges the idea of language 'as such'. From this selection there are two key hypotheses which seem worth reemphasising: Ludwig Wittgenstein's assertion in 1921 that '*The limits of my language* mean the limits of my world', and Martin Heidegger's invocation in 1927 of language as a 'totality of words' encountered in the world as 'ready-to-hand', open to utilisation as a means by which to understand our being in the world.[4] Repeatedly, throughout the various enquiries which he enacted and presented in diverse aesthetic forms, MacDiarmid returned to the concept of language as being present in the world as a material to be translated into poetry, not dissimilar to Paul Valéry's claims that '*poetry is a language within a language*', and as a tool with which to grapple with understanding of that world.[5] His early remark, in an article of 1928, that 'language not

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[2] Susan Bassnett, 'The Figure of the Translator', *Journal of World Literature*, 1.3 (2016), pp.299-315.
[3] Stefan Helgesson and Christina Kullberg, 'Translingual Events: World Literature and the Making of Languages', *Journal of World Literature*, 3 (2018), pp.136-152 (p.138).
[4] Wittgenstein, *Tractatus Logico-Philosophicus*, p.68.
Heidegger, *Being and Time*, p.204.
[5] Paul Valéry, 'Poetry and Abstract Thought', trans. Gerard Hopkins, *Essays on Language and Literature*, ed. J. L. Hevesi (London: Allan Wingate, 1947), p.86.

only expresses but to a large extent determines thought' (*RTI*: 67) captures the centrality he ascribed to language. Moreover, '[r]eflection', as Svend Erik Larsen suggests, is 'always connected to certain media through which it can be communicated, especially language, and it is therefore indissolubly linked to forms of communication', a proposition that is prefaced through MacDiarmid's recurring struggle to reconcile truth and representation with language to hand, resulting in the gradual accumulation and trial of more distant and unfamiliar linguistic forms.[6] Walter Benjamin's claim, that 'Language […] communicates the particular linguistic being of things, but their mental being only insofar as this is directly included in their linguistic being, insofar as it is capable of being communicated', is also relevant, reflected in MacDiarmid's conscious recognition of the limitations of known language and that which remains ineffable, that 'Silence', the 'croon o' a'' (*CPI*: 166).[7] MacDiarmid takes Benjamin's assertion a step further in his open interpretation of 'mental being', exploring as he does forms of language that are found in the natural world, thereby approaching the 'world' of language as an entire ecosystem, fully accepting of all experience and language that exists beyond human comprehension. His investigation into language takes an ecological approach, which seeks to diminish the anthropocentrism of modern capitalist individualism. And yet, even in this, in his pursuit of a potentially ever-unattainable 'world language', 'language remains the master of man', as Heidegger states .[8] MacDiarmid's goal of coherence and unity is perpetually out of reach. In 'The Key to World Literature' (1952) MacDiarmid reflected on his limited capabilities, responding to a statement of Moray MacLaren's that 'Poetry above all demands an absolute and intimate knowledge of the medium in which it is composed' by asking in turn, 'Who possesses such a knowledge of any language? Has it ever been possessed?' (*SP*: 188) Or, as David Damrosch has asked of world literature scholars, 'who can really know enough to do it well?'[9] Such questions course throughout MacDiarmid's confrontation with ideas of world language.

The thesis ends on a study of the texts in which MacDiarmid's engagement with 'world language' was most overtly political, responding to the rise of fascism, populism and ongoing linguistic imperialism which carried very real implications for the oppression of minority languages and the standardisation of English, a framework of world systems which he reimagines in his vision of a decentralised plurality.

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[6] Svend Erik Larsen, *Literature and the Experience of Globalization: Texts Without Borders* (London: Bloomsbury, 2017), p.73.
[7] Benjamin, 'On Language as Such and on the Language of Man', p.63.
[8] Heidegger, *Poetry, Language, Thought*, p.215.
[9] Damrosch, *What is World Literature?*, p.514.

In investigating MacDiarmid's idea of 'world language' thoroughly, this thesis has uncovered the poet's concern with structures of control and authority as being consistent throughout his career. He identifies language as the means by which these structures are both upheld and challenged, and uses it accordingly in response to the changing world.

MacDiarmid can thus be read as a poet primarily concerned with language, but in being so he is also a poet concerned with all that language represents and offers insight into. In terms of language as a marker and negotiating point of authority, therefore, his poetry ought to be read in light of its ecological and postcolonial implications, sensitive to culturally constructed hierarchies and injustices in the world which he perceived literature as being responsible for intervening in and offering an alternative to.

MacDiarmid's trialling of new and unfamiliar linguistic forms, drawn from a range of reference which became increasingly expansive in terms of genre, space and time, lends weight to sources of authority beyond his individual knowledge and subjective input as the poet and the constructor of poetic worlds. As a *bricoleur*, MacDiarmid 'enfold[s] varied temporalities in the radially vectored language, techniques, forms, and rhetorical strategies' of his work, bringing multiple languages into conversation with one another as different strands of the hybrid concept of 'language' itself'.[10] He provides, as such, a poetic interpretation of Mikhail Bakhtin's theory of 'heteroglossia' as '*another's speech in another's language*', discussed in chapter six.[11] He embodies George Steiner's figure of the 'extraterritorial' twentieth-century poet as an 'unhoused' wanderer 'across languages' – yet only to a degree. [12] The significance of his local and national perspectives are never entirely 'unhoused' or overcome. MacDiarmid's multilingual referentiality, an intentional defamiliarization and destabilisation of the English adopted as the core language of his later poetry – adopted as '*another's language*' – is indicative of his search for a sense of 'world language' or 'language as such' amidst the pluralities, a true sense of what language means which aspires to a reconciliation between, without homogenising or washing over, the multiple distinctive cultures and identities brought into play. Hence the centrality of authority and control to the vision, which seeks a greater equalisation of points of reference rather than an assertion of hegemony in the case of any single 'world' language.

In his construction of a new form of English, constructed through allusion, non-translation and hybridity, MacDiarmid's practice in later poetry speaks to Evelyn Ch'ien's

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[10] Ramazani, *Poetry in a Global Age*, p.2.
[11] Bakhtin, *The Dialogic Imagination*, p.324.
[12] George Steiner, *Extraterritorial: Papers on Literature and the Language Revolution* (New York: Atheneum, 1971), p.11.

suggestion that 'weird English constitutes the new language of literature'.[13] His ideological and aesthetic discomfort with the English language, frequently referenced, might fruitfully be explored in relation to the postcolonial writing which flowered in the second half of the twentieth century, and the debates around the use of English which emerged alongside it. Consider Nigerian novelist Chinua Achebe's argument that, whilst 'the English language will be able to carry the weight of my African experience', 'it will have to be a new English, still in full communion with its ancestral home but altered to suit its new African surroundings'.[14] The 'new English' of MacDiarmid's 'world language' appeals to worldliness through its rejection of imperial standardisation and the simplification of Ogden and Richards's 'Basic English', for example, drawing from a broad scope of languages not only to destabilise that hegemony through accentuation of its limitations but to celebrate the multiplicity of global voices, cultures and experiences whose expressions ought not to be silenced moving forward. This sustained emphasis on the retention of distinct local dialects and national languages fits with a statement made by Danish critic Georg Brandes in 1899: 'The world literature of the future will become all the more captivating the more the mark of the national appears in it and the more heterogeneous it becomes, as long as it retains a universally human aspect as art and science'.[15]

Commitment to the uncovering of such a 'universally human aspect' is crucial to MacDiarmid's 'vision of world language', characterised by its pursuit of common expression or understanding, 'A synthesis of all view points, / No one brain could otherwise grasp' (*CPII*: 801). Responding to MacDiarmid's aspiration for the realisation of Russian philosopher Vladimir Solovyov's 'true unity of languages' as 'an all-embracing language, an interpenetration of all languages' (*CPII*: 738), Edwin Morgan suggests that the achievement of *In Memoriam* is that of 'collage' rather than 'interpenetration'.[16] This thesis supports Morgan's clarification, recognising the importance that MacDiarmid lent to the distinctiveness of each element, his poetry thematised by the kind of 'discrepant encounters, alienation effects […]' and 'unlikely likenesses' which the Warwick Research Collective recognises as formal qualities of 'world literature'.[17] Equally important to the development of his idea of world language, however, is the pursuit of or speculation about the thread that unites these discrepancies, a faith in cohesion that sustains his vision.

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[13] Bold, *MacDiarmid*, p.361.
Evelyn Ch'ien, *Weird English* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2004), p.4.
[14] Chinua Achebe, 'English and the African Writer', *Transition*, 18 (1965), pp.27-30 (p.30).
[15] Georg Brandes, 'World Literature', *World Literature: A Reader*, ed. Theo D'haen, César Dominguez and Mads Rosendahl Thomsen (London: Routledge, 2013), pp.23-27), p.28.
[16] Edwin Morgan, 'James Joyce and Hugh MacDiarmid', *James Joyce and Modern Literature*, ed. W. J. McCormack and Alistair Stead (London: Routledge, 1982), p.216.
[17] WReC, *Combined and Uneven Development*, p.17.

MacDiarmid's 'vision of world language' is a vision both of simultaneity and progress, driven by the impetus to emphasise world language as both synchronic – as in 'One Day of the World', discussed in chapter one – and diachronic, taking into account the historic developments of language in response to ever-changing social circumstances and conventions, cultural dispositions and progressive politics. There is an onward momentum, yet a momentum that must be directed, intentional and informed: as MacDiarmid proclaims, 'Force without direction is Chaos' (*CPII*: 738), and chaos was not the aim.

Yasemin Yildiz has argued that the existence of multiple languages within a text 'does not simply constitute a straightforward expression of multiplicity, but rather a *malleable form* that can be put to different, and contradictory uses', further highlighting that 'the configuration of languages in aesthetic works shapes *how* social formations are imagined'.[18] This is crucial to MacDiarmid's vision, which develops across his corpus as various aesthetic meditations on the transformative capacities of language and poetry, yet remains firmly embedded as a response to real conditions and change in the world. Pre-empting Édouard Glissant's emphasis on hybridity and creolisation in his *Treatise on the Whole-World* (1997), MacDiarmid, too, repeatedly makes evident his consciousness and anxiety of writing 'in the presence of all the world's languages', 'shar[ing] them without knowing them' and 'invit[ing] them to join the language that we use'.[19] This sharing and invitation, and the crossing over between languages in the tracing of what Glissant refers to as '*langage*' ('the poetics of our relation to the words'), or what Ferdinand de Saussure earlier referred to as 'la langue'*,* is implicated in the consistent collage-work of MacDiarmid's poetry, translingualism actively replicated and fostered by the concurrent presence of multiple languages within singular texts.[20] As Danish semiotician Svend Erik Larsen observes: 'We talk about the whole world, but use a local language to do so, and this world permeates our language'.[21] Such permeations and border crossings occur continuously throughout MacDiarmid's engagement with 'world language', in early enquiries into distinctions, categorisations and the shared experience of language, as much as in translations and later, referential poetry.

Contrary to Russian philosopher Mikhail Bakhtin's assertion that 'Language – like the living concrete environment in which the consciousness of the verbal artist lives – is never unitary', the pursuit of coherence is definitive to MacDiarmid's project, which

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[18] Yasemin Yildiz, *Beyond the Mother Tongue: The Postmonolingual Condition* (New York: Fordham University Press, 2012), pp.24-5.
[19] Glissant, *Treatise*, p.52.
[20] Ibid.
Saussure, *Saussure's Third Course*, p.77.
[21] Larsen, *Literature and the Experience of Globalization*, p.12

speaks to 'world language' as an envisioned future affiliation or arrangement of language to be realised through literature, more specifically, poetry.[22] Naoki Sakai, a pioneering figure in Asian Studies, neither subscribing to or rejecting the inexistence of language as unitary, suggests that while '[i]t is not possible to know whether a particular language as a unity exists or not', 'subscribing to the idea of the unity of language, it becomes possible for us to systematically organize knowledge about languages in a modern, scientific manner'.[23] Sakai refers here primarily to distinct individual languages and their definition as such. I would argue that the suggestion carries weight in an assessment of MacDiarmid's emphasis upon the organisation of a unified concept of 'world language' into subdivisions or stratifications which complement and converse with one another in a universal Babel. Jacques Derrida has described Babel as the name that 'at once translates and does not translate itself, belongs without belonging to a language and indebts itself to itself for an insolvent debt'. [24] The contradictory nature of Babel that Derrida picks up on is emulated in the contradictions that course throughout MacDiarmid's idea of world language, concerned with both the local and the universal, with both simultaneity and change. His world language seeks to affirm the connections between the diverse languages which constitute it whilst highlighting the distinctions, the national being sustained within the international and the multiplicity of identities of each nation that are introduced being secured and protected within the proposition of their common impetus or struggle for expression.

Whilst various linguistic forms are bundled together in each of the texts discussed in this thesis, MacDiarmid's reasoning behind such selections and groupings is omitted, context and annotation insignificant in light of the common understanding between languages that is implied. MacDiarmid's vision in this vein speaks to Theodor Adorno's argument, in 'Words from Abroad' (1959), for the writer's usage of 'a hidden language that is known in the positive sense, a language that overtakes, overshadows, and transfigures the existing one as though it were getting ready to be transformed into the language of the future'.[25] In its forward-looking imagination and momentum MacDiarmid's 'vision of world language' captures the perpetual pursuit of improved understanding, not merely an erudite proliferation of knowledge, vocabulary and 'jargon' acquired from dictionaries, literature and scientific sources, but an endeavour to truly understand the ways in which language is used and features in expression and identity,

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[22] Bakhtin, *The Dialogic Imagination*, p.288.
[23] Naoki Sakai, 'How Do We Count a Language? Translation and Discontinuity', *Translation Studies*, 2.1 (2009), pp.71-88 (p.73).
[24] Derrida, 'Des Tours de Babel', p.175.
[25] Theodor Adorno, 'Words from Abroad' (1959), quoted in Yildiz, *Beyond the Mother Tongue*, p.82.

integral not only in social and cultural identities but in configurations and understandings between the human and non-human worlds.

Stasis or staleness, caused by the rejection or refutation of permanent change (including continual self-growth and expansion of consciousness through learning), was anathema to MacDiarmid's project and 'vision of world language'. The research undertaken here situates MacDiarmid in his specific historical context of the twentieth-century modernist language crisis between the First and Second World Wars and beyond. I have taken into account the contexts of historical developments including the rise of fascism, the Spanish Civil War, decline in support for communism and the breakdown of the British Empire, ushering in the decolonisation of nations worldwide. Within these contexts, the nuance and debates around definitions of 'world literature' which precede, are contemporary with, and postdate MacDiarmid's enquiries into 'world language' have been shown as subject to both self-conscious renegotiation, and to have been shifting at the behest of various, sometimes manipulative, sometimes unconscious priorities. In 1827, German poet Johann Wolfgang von Goethe made the oft-quoted statement that 'the epoch of world literature is at hand, and everyone must strive to hasten its approach'.[26] In 1848, German philosophers Karl Marx and Friedrich Engels predicted in *The Communist Manifesto* that, as 'National one-sidedness and narrow-mindedness become more and more impossible', 'from the numerous national and local literatures, there arises a world literature'.[27] These articulations of 'world literature' set the precedent to which MacDiarmid responded in the 'Author's Note' of *In Memoriam James Joyce: from a Vision of World Language* (1955), in which he stated that 'For better or for worse, world literature is at hand. Our consciousness is beginning to be planetary' (*IMJJ*: 14). MacDiarmid's 'planetary' consciousness pertains to the recognition, through naming in language, of the multiplicity of identities that constitute localities, nations and the international world, and to the recognition also of connections, affinities, distinctions and translations between these identities, also enacted through language.

At each point, in each statement, the writer expresses their belief in being on the brink of something transformative, world-changing, appealing to a future world literature which they envision but which never quite manifests; world literature is intrinsically forward-looking, and MacDiarmid's poetry is likewise future-oriented and open-ended, representative of a visionary framework of what world language and world literature might look like and how it might adapt to continually changing environments and circumstances.

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[26] Johann Wolfgang von Goethe, quoted in Damrosch, *What is World Literature?*, p.1.
[27] Karl Marx and Friedrich Engels, *The Communist Manifesto* [1848], online: <https://www.marxists.org/archive/marx/works/1848/communist-manifesto/ch01.htm>.

As Larsen argues, 'Texts do not become world literature by being incorporated into a canon of world literature but by shifting the border markers of the language in which they are written'.[28] In confronting 'world language' from a local perspective and accentuating the borrowing that occurs in each direction between various linguistic forms, MacDiarmid does this continually.

In Memoriam, MacDiarmid's anti-fascist, anti-imperialist response to the world which emerged out of the Second World War, recognises both the romantic origins of the concept of 'world literature', and the socialist, anti-imperialist urgency of repairing modern breakdowns in cultural and social understanding across borders, aestheticized through a conscious and responsible literature. MacDiarmid's openness to change and to engaging with that change through poetry, with language as a key marker of understanding, communication and expression within this negotiation between art and the world, locates him as a writer of world literature, if not more specifically world poetry.

Moreover, what MacDiarmid's poetry and ideas of 'world language' leaves the reader with are frameworks and approaches for engagement with a rapidly globalising world, prompting a curiosity which exceeds the bounds of the text that points outward into the world, encouraging continual discovery, learning and further visions of change.

As Duncan Gullick Lien has suggested, MacDiarmid's poetry is to be read as a 'way of happening', its reception 'an exercise in consciousness building' in which 'the aim is not merely to seek the hegemony of his own ideology in the cultural field but to create the social conditions necessary for a revolutionary intervention in history'.[29] Engaging with MacDiarmid's poetic language prompts consideration of language 'as such' and of 'world language' as the fabric of understanding and action, the basis not just of contemplation or artistic expression but intervention and worldmaking. Undoubtedly, reading MacDiarmid's poetry in the twenty-first century is a vastly different experience to reading it in the twentieth; poring over *In Memoriam James Joyce* equipped with internet search engines and a world of knowledge at our fingertips, for instance, opens up avenues for research into the individual languages, texts and writers referenced in a manner unforeseen at the time of its composition. The contemporary reader is in a position to know more and to understand more about each reference than MacDiarmid and his contemporary readership could have done, and to question what role that lends us; what authority, and what responsibility.

so this world

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[28] Larsen, *Literature and the Experience of Globalization*, p.22.
[29] Gullick Lien, 'Rehearsing Better Worlds', p.186, p.197.

Of words, thoughts, memories, scientific facts, literary arts
Is for another's use. Ah Joyce, enough said, enough said!
Mum's the word now! Mum's the word!
Responsibility for the present state of the world
And for its development for better or worse
Lies with every single individual; (*CPII*: 884)

MacDiarmid's poetry, as characterised by the development of his ideas around 'world language', illustrates the necessity of acknowledging the uncontrollable and of embracing the unknown and the wilderness as well as that which can be controlled through learning, communication, and literature. His poetry, the poetry of world language, provides a sustained negotiation with potential futures, enacted through the transformative organisation of language in a creative space. Pluralities are suggested, and yet the action, the decision, remains with us: MacDiarmid leaves us with that responsibility, and that freedom.

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