# Translating Russian Literature in the Global Context

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# Scotland

## Russian Poetry and the Rewilding of Scottish Literature: 1917 to the Present

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## Introduction

In recent years, a popular response to Scotland's dwindling biodiversity has been to encourage 'rewilding' projects in which plants and animals are brought in from overseas to kickstart moribund ecosystems. In this endeavour, however, ecologists have a lot to learn from poets, since a similar regeneration programme, replenishing the resources of Scotland with an injection of new life from abroad, has been going on in literature, and especially poetry written in Scots, for the past hundred years—"a period unprecedented in the history of Scots-language writing in the quantity of work and the range of languages and genres translated".[1] Perhaps surprisingly, in this literary rewilding, one of the 'keystone species', the crucial imports that catalyse the wider process, has been the difficult, distant poetry of Russian Modernism. Poets like Aleksandr Blok, Boris Pasternak, and Vladimir Maiakovskii "have dominated a strand of 20th-century translations into Scots", providing poets with both "a wider range of voices" and "desperately needed cultural connotations".[2] In this chapter, I will trace the evolution of these voices and connotations across three distinct

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1    Bill Findlay, 'Editor's Introduction', in *Frae Ither Tongues: Essays on Modern Translations into Scots*, ed. by Bill Findlay (Clevedon: Multilingual Matters, 2004), pp. 1–14 (p. 1). The author is grateful to Professor Alan Riach for his comments on a draft of this chapter.

2    John Corbett, *Written in the Language of the Scottish Nation: A History of Literary Translation into Scots* (Clevedon: Multilingual Matters, 1999), p. 140. By my estimation, based on a limited survey, at least fourteen individuals have translated from Russian to Scots since 1917.

periods, in connection with changes both in the Scottish literary landscape and in the global standing of Russian culture. This case study will also, in so doing, demonstrate the usefulness of 'rewilding' as a paradigm able to express overlooked nuances in systems of global cultural interaction, and especially the unique role of Russia therein.

Such wider relevance notwithstanding, as with all translation histories, the development of Russian poetry in Scots is a product of the complexities of the local linguistic ecosystem. Between the late medieval decline of Norman French and Latin and the recent efflorescence of languages brought by migrants, Scottish speech and writing has been carried along by the troika of Gaelic, English, and Scots. Scottish Gaelic is a Celtic language descended from Old Irish; in the Middle Ages it was used in the courts of kings as well as in homes across much of the country, but now it thrives in only a handful of Hebridean communities. This decline is largely a result of the dominance of English, which has become ever more ubiquitous since the union of the Scottish and English crowns in 1603. This same Anglophone hegemony has also forced Scots—our focus here—to the margins. Scots, which has also variously been known as Lallans, Doric, and Braid Scots, is a descendant of Northern varieties of Old English and it has, despite three centuries of subordination to its Southern sister-tongue, maintained a distinct literary tradition and persisted as a diverse spoken idiom across Southern and Eastern Scotland.[3] Its common origin and significant overlap with standardised and officially sanctioned English has led to Scots being classed by some linguists not as a distinct language but as a dialect or language variety.[4] Instead of relitigating these debates, I want here to emphasise how the absence of a hard border between English and Scots has allowed Scottish translators both to reach heights of creativity and to call into question assumptions about Britain as a target culture and about English as a global language.[5]

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3    Fittingly for a language that has never been standardised, Scots has gone by many names. Initially it was often termed 'Inglis', to distinguish it from Gaelic, before distinction from English became more important. The name 'Doric', taken by analogy from the dialects of Ancient Greek, is now used to refer only to the Scots of Aberdeen and the North-East of Scotland. The term Lallans, derived from the 'Lowlands' in which Scots has been most actively spoken, is sometimes used to refer to Scots as a whole and sometimes to 'synthetic Scots'—an artificial poetic language that is discussed at length in this essay. 'Braid Scots' simply means 'broad Scots', that is Scots as a consistent language variety distinct from English.

4    For an overview of the different definitions of the status of Scots, and their contexts, see Johann Wolfgang Unger, *Discursive Construction of the Scots Language: Education, Politics and Everyday Life* (Amsterdam: John Benjamins, 2013), pp. 88–97.

5    The exploitation of the continuum between Scots and English has been an evergreen feature of Scottish literature, present in the eighteenth-century poetry of Robert Burns and in contemporary prose. On Burns, see Robert Crawford, *Devolving Scottish Literature*, 2nd edn (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press,

Although translations by Scottish writers from Russian into English are plentiful and often excellent and although there is even some Russian verse in Gaelic, these bodies of work do not constitute coherent traditions in the same way that translations into Scots do. This influence is reciprocated in the large corpus of Russian versions of Robert Burns, which largely do not distinguish his "Scottish dialect" from "standard" English.[6] This absence of clear water between Scots and English has not stopped Scottish writers or translators from delineating between the two when explaining their practice. Since the seventeenth century, writing in Scots has nearly always been a political act, a pointed refusal of English by people who are well capable of using it but who wish instead to underline the particularity of local voices and perspectives.[7] This has led to a comparative dearth of prose in Scots in comparison to drama and especially poetry, with their emphasis on oral expression and smaller audience—a situation that is reflected in translated texts. But the need to define Scots against English has also fostered an unusually active translation tradition: to use Scots for translation reinforces the rejection of English in a way that more locally oriented writing does not, since the translator ostentatiously spurns a wider readership in favour of strengthening the autonomous body of Scottish literature by enlarging its repertoire, by appropriating the prestige of foreign classics, and by demonstrating an independent connection to cultures beyond these islands.[8]

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2000), pp. 103–04; on contemporary fiction see Scott Hames, *The Literary Politics of Scottish Devolution* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2019), p. 240.

6     Christopher Whyte has translated Anna Akhmatova into Gaelic. See Anna Achmàtova, 'Marbhrann 1935–1940', trans. by Crìsdean Whyte, *Gairm*, 125 (1984), 74–83; Anna Akhmatova, 'Bho Stikhi i Proza (Leningrad 1976)', trans. by Crìsdean Whyte, *Gairm*, 135 (1986), 239–42. For an analytical history of Russian translations of Burns, which largely overlook the distinctiveness of his poetic language, see Natalia Kaloh Vid, *Ideological Translations of Robert Burn's Poetry in Russia and the Soviet Union* (Maribor: Filozofska fakulteta, Mednarodna založba, Oddelka za slovanske jezike in književnosti, 2011).

7     Of the close and contentious relationship between English and Scots, Derrick McLure has written: "It might be predicted that such a language conflict, in which the less prestigious form was so closely related to its rival as to be readily assimilable to it and was, if at all, only weakly supported by the patriotic loyalty attaching to a national language, would result in a quick and easy victory for the incoming tongue. This has not happened." One reason for this, he continues, is "a literary resistance movement", beginning with Allan Ramsay (1686–1758), Robert Fergusson (1750–74) and Robert Burns (1759–96) that has eschewed standard English in order "to employ their native speech in a conscious and determined attempt to raise its literary prestige". Other, more recent examples will be discussed below. See J. Derrick McClure, *Scots and its Literature* (Amsterdam: John Benjamins, 1995), pp. 10–11.

8     See Corbett, *Written in the Language of the Scottish Nation.* There has also been, of course, translation between Scotland's languages.

In this regard, translation into Scots appears to accord with the description in Itamar Even-Zohar's polysystem theory of 'peripheral' literatures that use translation to grow in scope and status.[9] Nevertheless, the case of Scotland and Russia gives us reason to question this centre/periphery model, not least because it problematises Even-Zohar's equation of Western "peripheral literatures" with "the literatures of smaller nations".[10] In the words of the poet Edwin Morgan (1920–2010), who, along with Hugh MacDiarmid (1892–1978), will be the major figure in our story, Scotland is one of those "untidy places" where "linguistic and national boundaries [...] refuse to coincide": not only is it home to multiple 'native' languages with their own power relations to each other, but it is also entangled in decidedly non-peripheral supranational entities like the United Kingdom and the British Empire.[11] This ambivalent position, which is not unique to Scotland, is one reason to take our metaphors from ecology, which is inherently non-hierarchical and tolerant of complexity—qualities which have been identified as lacking in the concentric, economics-based models of world literature proposed by Even-Zohar, Franco Moretti, and Casanova, among others.[12]

Furthermore, presenting translation as an act of rewilding allows us to extend another of Translation Studies' staple frameworks: Lawrence Venuti's celebrated distinction between "domestication" and "foreignization", whereby the former "maintains the status quo, reaffirming linguistic standards" in the translated text, while the latter "carries the potential to challenge the dominant, as well as the cultural and social hierarchies that structure the receiving situation" by "drawing on marginal resources".[13] John Corbett and Stewart Sanderson have questioned the relevance of these popular concepts to translation into Scots.[14] On

9    Itamar Even-Zohar, 'The Position of Translated Literature within the Literary Polysystem', *Poetics Today*, 11 (1990), 45–51. On the case of Scots as a peripheral literature, see Stewart Sanderson, 'Poems Chiefly in the Scottish Dialectic: Scots Poetic Translation and the Second Generation Modern Scottish Renaissance (c.1940–1981)' (unpublished MPhil thesis, University of Glasgow, 2012).

10   Even-Zohar, 'The Position of Translated Literature', p. 48.

11   Edwin Morgan, 'Registering the Reality of Scotland', in Edwin Morgan, *Essays* (Cheadle: Carcanet, 1974), pp. 153–57 (p. 154).

12   See Alexander Beecroft, *An Ecology of World Literature: From Antiquity to the Present Day* (London and New York: Verso, 2016), pp. 7–21.

13   Lawrence Venuti, *The Translator's Invisibility: A History of Translation*, 3rd edn (Routledge: New York, 2017), p. xiv.

14   Corbett, *Written in the Language of the Scottish Nation*, p. 185 and Stewart Sanderson, '"Order and Adventure": Sydney Goodsir Smith's Translations', in *Sydney Goodsir Smith, Poet*, ed. by Richie McCaffery (Brill: Leiden, 2020), pp. 103–17 (p. 115). Debates about the relevance of 'foreignisation' and 'domestication' in regard to minority literatures have also been held in, for instance, the Italian context: see Elisa Segnini, 'Global Masterpieces and Italian Dialects: Eduardo de Filippo and Luigi Meneghello's rewritings of Shakespeare', *Journal of World Literature*, 2 (2017), 236–54 (p. 246).

the one hand, written Scots has never been standardised or widely disseminated, and so it can occasionally seem "not unlike a foreign language to many Scottish people", offering the sort of "resistancy" and estrangement that Venuti values in foreignising translations.[15] On the other, for Scottish readers Scots "is a language that is nominally 'theirs'" and, furthermore, given its exclusion from official discourse, it is one particularly associated with the familiar and the "homely".[16]

Venuti is not using "domestic" to mean "homely'", however, and he has also rightly pushed back against any characterisation of "foreignization" and "domestication" either as binary opposites or as "discursive strategies".[17] This clarification notwithstanding, Corbett and Sanderson are still correct to suggest that neither concept is entirely adequate in the case of Scots. First, although Venuti by no means assumes the existence of a single, uniform, and stable English, his polemic against "the hegemonic English-language nations" does not make sufficient allowance for the fact that these nations are themselves multiple, divided, and contested, with translators and readers able to align themselves with competing norms, both marginal and dominant, at the same time.[18] Second, as a term if not as a concept, "foreignization" does not fully capture the ambivalent feeling of simultaneous estrangement and rootedness that arises when reading these Scots translations, especially out loud. Many of these words may look unusual, but they sound familiar, even to monolingual English speakers, who will recognise their shape, sound, and effect even if ignorant of their dictionary meaning. And in poetry, as MacDiarmid says, "It's soon' no' sense, that faddoms the herts o' men".[19]

It is in order, therefore, to tweak Venuti's terminology for the Scottish situation (and potentially that of other "untidy places") that I interpret domestication ecologically, as an act of taming or cultivation—a contribution to the promotion of

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15 Corbett, *Written in the Language of the Scottish Nation*, p. 185; Venuti, *The Translator's Invisibility*, p. 18.

16 Corbett, *Written in the Language of the Scottish Nation*, p. 185. On the 'homeliness' of Scots in translations see Brian Holton, 'Wale a Leid an Wale a Warld: Shuihu Zhuan into Scots', in *Frae Ither Tongues*, ed. by Findlay, pp. 15–37 (p. 15).

17 Venuti, *The Translator's Invisibility*, p. xiii.

18 Ibid., p. 120. Venuti expressly states in this passage that foreignisation is "based on the assumption that [...] communication is complicated by cultural differences between and within linguistic communities".

19 "It's sound not sense that fathoms the hearts of men." Hugh MacDiarmid, 'Gairmscoile' in *Complete Poems*, ed. by Michael Grieve and W. R. Aitken, 2 vols (Manchester: Carcanet, 1993-), I (1993), pp. 72–73 (p. 73). MacDiarmid continues by explaining that his Scots will affect even those who do not know the language: "E' en herts that ha'e nae Scots 'll dirl richt thro' / As nocht else could—for here's a language rings / Wi' datchie sesames, and names for nameless things" ["Even hearts that have no Scots it will pierce right through / As naught else could—for here's a language that rings / With penetrating discoveries and names for nameless things"].

superficially productive but ultimately sterile and unsustainable monocultures.[20] The antonym of such domestication is thus rewilding—an ethical intent, if not always an effect, to undo cultural impoverishment by reasserting linguistic diversity, favouring complexity over comprehension and difficulty over utility. Such rewilding obviously overlaps with foreignisation as described by Venuti, with its valorisation of the puzzling and the marginal, but it also shifts the emphasis from international to intranational politics and foregrounds an idea of the recovery of something inherent thought to be lost.

What is more, unlike Venuti's enthusiastic advocacy of foreignisation, I would not characterise such rewilding as unambiguously positive. As our example will show, in translation as in ecology, rewilding can be criticised for overemphasising charismatic big beasts at the top of the food chain (in this instance, almost all male poets), for a nostalgic and/or utopian indifference to lived experience, and for potentially concretising a dangerous distinction between native and non-native.[21] Nevertheless, the idea of translation-as-rewilding can help to unsettle the longstanding (and justified) association between translation, imperialism, and extractive cash-crop agriculture as related instruments of domination and exploitation. This interrelation between control of language and control of land, which is signalled by the etymological connection between culture, cultivation, and colony, has long had relevance in Britain and Ireland, since, before the global expansion of the coordinated project of colonialism, it was trialled here and elsewhere on the fringes of Europe. In the sixteenth century, Edmund Spenser talked of "translatinge" Irish speakers by "planting" among them English speakers; similar processes were inflicted on Scottish Gaeldom, where land enclosure and forced migration were potent catalysts for language death.[22] To treat translation as a force not of taming but of rewilding can, therefore, serve to disrupt conventional pictures of centripetal

20   A similar reading is suggested by Kaisa Koskinen: see her 'Domestication, Foreignization and the Modulation of Affect', in *Domestication and Foreignization in Translation Studies*, ed. by Marja Jänis, Hannu Kemppanen and Alexandra Belikova (Berlin: Frank & Timme, 2012), pp. 13–32 (p. 15). The same reading is also implied in one of the possible Russian translations of the term, *odomashnivanie,* which is somewhat rarer than *domestikatsiia*. Indeed, neither is common due to the relative indifference to Venuti displayed by Russian translation studies scholars: see Alexandra Borisenko, 'Fear of *Foreignization*: "Soviet School" in Russian Literary Translation', in *Domestication and Foreignization in Translation Studies*, ed. by Marja Jänis and others, pp. 177–88 (p. 177).

21   For a summary of debates around rewilding from a sociological perspective, see John Bone, 'Rediscovering the "Noble Savage": The Rewilding Movement and the Re-Enchantment of the Scottish Highlands', *Scottish Affairs*, 27 (2018), 465–85.

22   On the relationship between translation and colonialism see Susan Bassnett and Harish Trivedi, 'Introduction: Of Colonies, Cannibals and Vernaculars', in *Postcolonial Translation: Theory and Practice*, ed. by Susan Bassnett and Harish Trivedi (Routledge: London, 1999), pp. 1–19 (p. 4). The quotations from Spenser are taken from a longer discussion of this passage by Laura O'Connor

power dynamics, allowing the 'periphery' unexpected agency. Rewilding translations can perhaps even be seen as prefiguring the future for translation desired by Walter Mignolo and Freya Schwiy, in which "the 'lower end' of the colonial difference would no longer be the place of shame and ignorance but of epistemic potential".[23]

Of course, neither Scotland nor Russia is situated at that 'lower end' of colonial difference. Rather, any unsettling of assumptions is made possible by the fact that, both on their own and as a pair, these countries do not fit easily within any dichotomous system of coloniser and colonised, centre and periphery. Thanks to Scotland's role as both a partner in empire and, in linguistic terms in particular, an object of colonisation, Scottish literature has displayed "a dual relationship of congruence and conflict centred on the form of the British empire" and as such often shares with strands of postcolonial writing the tendency to critique "the jurisdiction of the imperial mode of British state culture", including the aptly named King's English.[24] Russia too was an imperial power, at least from 1721 to 1991 but arguably for much longer, and one with only sporadic and limited tolerance for the languages and traditions of others. Nevertheless, like their counterparts in Scottish literature, in recent years scholars such as Heekyoung Cho, Jeanne-Marie Jackson, and Rossen Djagalov have successfully argued that neither influential discourses of postcolonialism nor the predominating planetary models of intellectual traffic have truly come to terms with the position of Russian culture. It presents a problem both in its internal complexity, with its much-agonised-over liminality between Europe and Asia, and in its sudden rise from relative obscurity to worldwide influence in the early 1900s.[25] For much of the subsequent century, Russia seemed to many, both at home and abroad, to be a counter-hegemonic force undercutting the cultural dominance of Western Europe and America through a series of unusual provocations: the hectic spirituality of Fedor Dostoevsky, the exoticism of the

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in her *Haunted English: The Celtic Fringe, the British Empire, and De-Anglicization* (Baltimore, MD: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2006), p. 1.

23 Walter D. Mignolo and Freya Schiwy, 'Translation/Transculturation and the Colonial Difference', in *Beyond Dichotomies: Histories, Identities, Cultures, and the Challenge of Globalization*, ed. by Elisabeth Mudimbe-Boyi (Albany, NY: State University of New York Press, 2002), pp. 251–86 (p. 251).

24 Michael Gardiner, 'Introduction', in *Scottish Literature and Postcolonial Literature: Comparative Texts and Critical Perspectives*, ed. by Michael Gardiner and Graeme MacDonald (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2012), pp. 1–12 (p. 3, p. 1).

25 Heekyoung Cho, *Translation's Forgotten History: Russian Literature, Japanese Mediation, and the Formation of Modern Korean Literature* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Asia Center, 2016); Jeanne-Marie Jackson, *South African Literature's Russian Soul: Narrative Forms of Global Isolation* (London: Bloomsbury Academic, 2015); Rossen Djagalov, *Internationalism to Postcolonialism: Literature and Cinema between the Second and the Third Worlds* (Montreal: McGill-Queen's University Press, 2020). See also Steven S. Lee, *The Ethnic Avant-garde Minority Cultures and World Revolution* (Columbia University Press: New York, 2015).

Ballets Russes, the experimentalism of the Modernist avant-garde, and, after 1917, the Soviet Union's self-appointed role as a champion of decolonising movements and their cultural output.

For poets writing in Scots, already predisposed to reject orthodoxies, it was this apparent insurgent force above all that made Russia appealing, both as a rebuke to the complacency and conservatism of Anglophone literature and as a role-model. Here, it seemed, was another semi-peripheral place which, while never powerless politically, had nonetheless undergone a rapid transformation from cultural backwater to trendsetter. As MacDiarmid put it in 1933: "the little known language of Russian [...] has since [the turn of the century] been the paramount force in *welt-literatur* [*sic*]".[26] After the Revolution, it became impossible to disentangle this unexpected cultural pre-eminence from the appeal of the Soviet Union as a political project, especially for writers looking for a new society and a popular, socially motivated literature to go with it. Writers like MacDiarmid and Sydney Goodsir Smith adopted a policy of emulation resembling that of Socialist organiser John Maclean, who believed that "we can make Glasgow a Petrograd".[27] This is not to say, however, that Russian verses in Scots are the devotional texts of Communist true believers: while most of the translator-poets under discussion were at least sympathetic to the Soviet cause, this admiration largely derived from their notion of Russia as an alternative to the constrictive status quo, rather than conformity to the Party line.[28] Consequently, the poets most frequently translated in Scotland have not been propagandists (with the honourable exception of Maiakovskii), but simply those whose work

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26   Hugh MacDiarmid, 'The Case for Synthetic Scots', in *At the Sign of the Thistle: A Collection of Essays by Hugh MacDiarmid* (London: Stanley Nott, 1934), pp. 177–96 (p. 194).

27   William Knox, *Scottish Labour Leaders 1918–1939: A Biographical Dictionary* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 1984), p. 187.

28   MacDiarmid, typically confrontational, would occasionally describe his output as 'propaganda' but he followed only his own directives and was twice expelled from the Communist Party in the 1930s. Scott Lyall surmises that the poet "undoubtedly did not produce agitprop in the service of the Party" and cites MacDiarmid's fairly astute self-description as a *pre-revolutionary* Bolshevik, a dissident in waiting: "For I am like Zamyatin. I must be a Bolshevik / Before the Revolution, but I'll cease to be one quick / When Communism comes to rule the roost". See Scott Lyall, 'MacDiarmid, Communism and the Poetry of Commitment', in *The Edinburgh Companion to Hugh MacDiarmid*, ed. by Scott Lyall and Margery Palmer McCulloch (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2011), pp. 68–72 (p. 76, p. 81). The quotation is from Hugh MacDiarmid's 'Talking with Five Thousand People in Edinburgh', in *The Complete Poems of Hugh MacDiarmid*, II (1994), pp. 1155–1158 (p. 1158). For his part, Morgan has been described as an "engaged if lower-case sympathiser" with Communism and was certainly never a Party member. See Matt McGuire and Colin Nicholson, 'Edwin Morgan', in *The Edinburgh Companion to Contemporary Scottish Poetry*, ed. by Matt McGuire and Colin Nicholson (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2009), pp. 97–111 (p. 98).

has enjoyed the best reputation in the West—Pushkin, Blok, and Pasternak in the first half of the twentieth century, Evtushenko and Voznesenskii in the latter.

Even working within a slim canon, however, the treatment of Russian poetry in Scots has evolved. Retrospectively, this development can be said to consist of three periods that correspond with the regnant mood and personalities in Scottish literature. The first is the 'Scottish Renaissance' of the Modernist 1920s, which was spearheaded by MacDiarmid and thus informed by his passionate interrogations of and prescriptions for national identity and language; the second is the 1960s and 1970s, when Modernism slipped into Postmodernism and when the presiding figure was the prolific and playful Morgan; finally, there is the period between the fall of the Soviet Union and the present, in which no single figure or explicit ideology has dominated, except perhaps for a growing concern with the promotion of minority identities as an end in itself.

## Hugh MacDiarmid and the Scottish Renaissance

In his masterwork *A Drunk Man Looks at the Thistle* (1926), Hugh MacDiarmid appeals to Dostoevsky, asking his Russian forebear to lend him some of his "appallin' genius" as MacDiarmid must "address a similar task"—that is to say, to use literature, and the single charismatic figure of the writer, to revitalise a nation and resolve its internal tensions.[29] In the words of Peter McCarey, Dostoevsky serves as "a character and an artist who helps the drunk man [the poet's alter ego] look for the sense of life in the depths of the psyche".[30] In the poem, which is sprinkled with allusions to Dostoevsky's work, MacDiarmid treats the Russian writer sometimes as an untouchable idol—"As bairn at giant at thee I peer"—and at other times as an equal, including in matters of linguistic competence—"I ken no Russian and ye ken nae Scots".[31] Just as Dostoevsky's ignorance of Scots has not hindered his reputation, neither MacDiarmid's lack of Russian nor his output of fewer than a dozen translations from that language prevent him from being the indispensable figure in our story. Without him, subsequent generations would not have been so drawn to Scots, nor to contemporary European literature and its translation, nor to Russia. Nevertheless, these founding achievements require contextualisation, not least because, for all his cussed individualism, MacDiarmid was in many ways an exemplar of the ambitions and modus operandi of global Modernism.

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29  Hugh MacDiarmid, 'A Drunk Man Looks at the Thistle', in *Complete Poems*, I (1993), pp. 81–170 (p. 138–45).

30  Peter McCarey, *Hugh MacDiarmid and the Russians* (Edinburgh: Scottish Academic Press, 1987), p. 22. See also Catherine Kerrigan, 'Underground Men: Dostoevsky in the Work of Hugh MacDiarmid', *The Journal of Narrative Technique*, 17 (1987), 45–50.

31  Hugh MacDiarmid, 'A Drunk Man Looks at the Thistle', in *Complete Poems*, I (1993), p. 111, p. 145, p. 151.

In the 1920s, MacDiarmid set a new agenda for Scottish poetry with his programme for a so-called "synthetic Scots", a literary language derived not from any single spoken vernacular but from dictionaries and historic texts as well as speech. Synthetic Scots was part of MacDiarmid's self-proclaimed Scottish Renaissance, which was intended to reinvigorate a Scottish culture shackled by foreign rule and local pettiness, returning its lost linguistic patrimony and unleashing hidden sensory forces. There were backward- and inward-looking aspects to this renaissance, which sought to restore continuity with medieval and early modern Scottish writing, but it was also a conscious contribution to Modernist experiments in remaking word and world. In 1933, about a decade in, MacDiarmid described his ambitions for synthetic language as transcending Scots:

> By the synthetic use of a language, then, I mean 'the destruction of a toothless ratio'—'freedom of speech' in the real meaning of the term— something completely opposed to all our language habits and freely utilizing not only all the vast vocabulary these automatically exclude, but illimitable powers of word formation in keeping with the free genius of any language [...]. I go further and agree with Joyce in regard to the utilization of a multi-linguistic medium—a synthetic use, not of any particular language, but of all languages.[32]

In this vision, global and local unite. MacDiarmid shares with other Modernists a utopian optimism about the malleability of language and its world-changing power: the reference to "the destruction of toothless ratio", for instance, is taken from a description of the Russian Futurist agenda.[33] But his initial attempts to actualise this planetary potential are grounded in his own 'peripheral' locality and in usage that is counterposed to the assumed stability and pre-eminence of the 'standard' English that was itself a nascent global lingua franca. In this he recalls not only Joyce, but also Pound and Yeats—other exponents of what scholar Robert Crawford has described as "provincial modernism".[34]

The way in which MacDiarmid's synthetic Scots aspires to bridge the national and the international is replicated in his concurrent project to re-establish Scotland's connections with Europe—also held to have been severed by the Union—through translation and other cultural exchanges. MacDiarmid himself

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32   Hugh MacDiarmid, *The Letters of Hugh MacDiarmid*, ed. by Alan Bold (London: Hamilton, 1984), p. 771.

33   See Babette Deutsch and Avrahm Yarmolinsky, 'Introduction', in *Modern Russian Poetry: An Anthology*, edited and trans. by Babette Deutsch and Avrahm Yarmolinsky (New York: Harcourt, Brace and Co., 1921), pp. xi-xix (p. xviii).

34   Crawford, *Devolving Scottish Literature*, p. 217. MacDiarmid criticised English for being too international and cosmopolitan; see MacDiarmid, 'Case for Synthetic Scots', p. 181. He would later go on to write in 'synthetic English', notably in *Stony Limits and Other Poems* (1934).

presented this in ecological terms, quoting with approval the sentiment that: "If pigeon fanciers are too exclusive, and refrain from all exchange of eggs, their stock will weaken and ultimately die out. A like fate [...] awaits the literature of any country which is preserved from all foreign intercourse".[35] In the early 1920s the "foreign intercourse" MacDiarmid desired was increasingly accessible thanks to a boom in literary journalism, which made of him first a voracious reader and then a serial founder of small magazines.[36] This new publishing reality was itself driven by a general appetite, in selected circles, for thought-provoking new writing, an important part of which was an explosion of interest in Russia. This trend was sufficiently widespread and influential, especially in bohemian London, as to constitute what Rebecca Beasley has called a "Russophile modernism", the practitioners of which found English and French writing enervated and unambitious in comparison to Russian prose.[37] The Russians, with Dostoevsky foremost, seemed to offer "a model to renew and update the project of romanticism: it was read as a literature confident of its ability to express national identity, and thereby able to imagine and potentially achieve political change."[38]

MacDiarmid, always an outspoken critic of the British state, could not but be galvanised by the Russian example, especially at a time when empires appeared to be crumbling.[39] His Herderian programme for a new Scottish literature in Scots is thus framed as an emulation of a Russian culture that is the quintessence of continental vanguardism and the antithesis of English mediocrity:

> The Scottish Vernacular is the only language in Western Europe with those uncanny spiritual and pathological perceptions alike which constitute the uniqueness of Dostoevsky's work, and word after word Doric establishes a blood-bond in a fashion at once infinitely more thrilling and vital and less explicable than those deliberately sought after by writers such as D. H. Lawrence in the medium of English which is inferior for

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35  Hugh MacDiarmid, 'Swatches o' Hamespun', in *Contemporary Scottish Studies*, ed. by Alistair McIntyre (Edinburgh: Scottish Educational Journal, 1976), pp. 82–84 (p. 83).

36  See Margery Palmer McCulloch, *Scottish Modernism and its Contexts 1918–1959: Literature, National Identity and Cultural Exchange* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2009), pp. 11–52.

37  Rebecca Beasley, *Russomania: Russian Culture and the Creation of British Modernism, 1881–1922* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2020), p. 28. Beasley acknowledges that the specifics of the Scottish Modernist reception of Russian literature are beyond the scope of her study and in need of further research (p. 33).

38  Ibid., p. 433.

39  Scott Lyall has identified this post-imperial or late-imperial moment as an important context for Scottish translations of German literature, including those of MacDiarmid. See Scott Lyall, 'Minor Modernisms: The Scottish Renaissance and the Translation of German-language Modernism', *Modernist Cultures*, 14 (2019), 213–35 (p. 213).

such purposes. [...] The Scottish Vernacular is a vast storehouse of just the very peculiar and subtle effects which modern European literature in general is assiduously seeking and [...] the resumption of the Scots Vernacular into the mainstream of European letters [...] is inevitable.[40]

By translating modern European literature into Scots, MacDiarmid could both match Scotland with Europe and demonstrate that this would be a marriage of equals, in terms of both ambition and erudition. Just as MacDiarmid treats Dostoevsky variously as mentor and mate, so he occasionally elides Russia's head start on the path out of semi-peripheral semi-obscurity in order to emphasise a bilateral "Russo-Scottish parallelism", in which the two nations' location at opposite ends of Europe empowers them to reverse the decline of the West recently diagnosed by influential German historian Oswald Spengler.[41] This essentialist underdog story is inextricable from both the rejection of (the) English and utopian aspirations for language, as the poem *To Circumjack Cencrastus* (1930) suggests:

> 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 coonter 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.
> (Time eneuch then to seek the Omnific Word
> In Jamieson yet.
> Or the new Dictionary in the makin' noo,
>     Or coin it oorsels!)[42]

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40   Hugh MacDiarmid, 'A Theory of Scots Letters', in *Selected Prose*, ed. by Alan Riach (Manchester: Carcanet, 1992), pp. 16–33 (p. 22). Although MacDiarmid's conscious bypassing of Western Europe here contradicts the Gallocentric model proposed by Pascale Casanova, the close link he implies between language and nation can be seen as evidence of what Casanova calls "the Herder effect", a trend throughout Europe, initiated by the German philosopher, for "the language of the people" to be seen as "the instrument of emancipation and means for defining a distinctive national character". See Pascale Casanova, *The World Republic of Letters*, trans. by Malcolm DeBevoise (London and Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1999), p. 78.

41   MacDiarmid, 'A Theory of Scots Letters', p. 29.

42   Hoo: how; eneuch: enough; noo: now; oorsels: ourselves. Hugh MacDiarmid, 'To Circumjack Cencrastus', in *Complete Poems*, I (1993), pp. 179–296 (pp. 222–23). Although unable to write in Gaelic, MacDiarmid was a consistent supporter of Gaelic culture as a repository of an authentic Scottish identity that transcended any Highland / Lowland division.

MacDiarmid's grandiose pronouncements on Russian and Scottish identity have led one observer to suggest that his mooted parallelism is nothing more than "a vague and overblown sense of racial affinity".[43] The same critic also makes the reasonable argument that, because of his linguistic limitations and especially because of his preference for secondary criticism over original works, MacDiarmid's knowledge of Russian culture never went beyond name-dropping, even in the case of oft-cited authorities such as Dostoevsky, Vladimir Solov'ev, and Lev Shestov.[44]

That said, it is not necessary to appreciate the intricacies of literary history to take something profound from your reading and other scholars have given more generous assessments of the autodidact MacDiarmid's motives and "magpie methods" regarding Russia.[45] Neither a mediated image of Russia nor a tendency to generalisation were unusual at the time. As Beasley argues, following Donald Davie, what Russia offered British writers at this time was not so much new content or even new forms, but rather "a challenge".[46] MacDiarmid rose to this challenge with considerable vim and, in so doing, created a legacy of enviable durability. His reliance on literary criticism, and particularly upon the work of D.S. Mirsky, in preference to translated primary texts in fact allowed MacDiarmid to look beyond the perennial touchstone of Dostoevsky and find common cause with contemporary experimentalists.[47] In making the case for synthetic Scots he cites as inspirations the *skaz* of Aleksei Remizov (translated into English in 1924) and the *zaum'* of the as-yet-untranslated Futurists, who had exploded into notoriety a decade earlier.[48] And, although misunderstandings and misspellings sometimes expose his reliance on limited sources, MacDiarmid really did have a lot in common with these writers, especially the Futurists: he too relished the articulatory jouissance of words-in-themselves and took it as the starting point in a bold bid for a more expressive language; he too combined a certain naive internationalism with a chauvinistic desire to return to a past made remote by foreign intervention; he too frequently fired off essays full of

43     Alexander Mackay, 'MacDiarmid and Russia Revisited', in *Beyond Scotland: New Contexts for Twentieth-Century Scottish Literature*, ed. by Gerard Carruthers, David Goldie and Alastair Renfrew (New York and Amsterdam: Rodopi, 2004), pp. 59–93 (p. 81).

44     Ibid., p. 66, p. 73.

45     McCulloch, *Scottish Modernism and its Contexts*, p. 107. For comprehensive analyses of MacDiarmid's relationship with Russian literature, see Patrick Crotty, '"Like Pushkin, I": Hugh MacDiarmid and Russia', *Studies in Scottish Literature*, 44 (2018), 47–89, and McCarey's *Hugh MacDiarmid and the Russians*.

46     Beasley, *Russomania*, p. 7.

47     MacDiarmid's interest in twentieth-century Russian literature was quite rare among British Modernists. See ibid., p. 353.

48     MacDiarmid, 'The Case for Synthetic Scots', p. 185.

truculent disdain for peers and predecessors.[49] Nothing could be more Futurist in spirit than MacDiarmid's iconoclastic claim that Velimir Khlebnikov was of more value to the future of Scottish letters than the sainted Burns.[50]

Nevertheless, this reliance on mediation also meant that, despite citing them as authorities, MacDiarmid probably never read a word of the Futurists Khlebnikov, Aleksei Kruchenykh, or, until years later, Maiakovskii. These poets did not feature among the translations by Babette Deutsch and Avrahm Yarmolinsky in *Modern Russian Poetry* that served as the basis for MacDiarmid's own Scots versions, such as Blok's 'The Unknown Woman' ('Predchuvstvuiu tebia...', 1901) and 'The Lady Unknown' ('Neznakomka', 1907), Dmitrii Merezhkovskii's 'The Last Trump' ('Trubnyi glas', 1901) and Zinaida Gippius's 'Psyche' ('Ona', 1905). Deutsch and Yarmolinsky instead dismiss the Futurists in their introduction and say, not without reason, that they "resist translation", forcing MacDiarmid to turn to more formally uncomplicated material.[51]

There is some irony in the fact that, in order to perform an avant-garde experiment in poetic language, MacDiarmid had not only to make use of less experimental poetry but also to submit himself to the limiting bottleneck of other translators' choices. Blok's 'I have a presentiment of you...' ('Predchuvstvuiu tebia...', 1901), for instance, gives no hint of the addressee's gender: MacDiarmid's title for it, 'The Unknown Goddess', is a direct consequence of Deutsch's and Yarmolinsky's 'The Unknown Woman'. Furthermore, we see that for all his disdain for English, MacDiarmid was nearly entirely reliant on it, seemingly vindicating Moretti's contention that "movement from one periphery to another (without passing through the centre) is almost unheard of".[52] These ironies should not be read as deficiencies, however. First, as previously suggested, nearly all writing in Scots automatically activates in the reader a consciousness of the English that is *not* being used. For MacDiarmid's synthetic Scots this is especially true: not only do his essays—written in English!—constantly reassert the ascendancy of English while bemoaning its inadequacy, but, since his words are unmoored from any specific Scottish speech community in order to profit

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49   For instance, in 'The Case for Synthetic Scots', cited above, MacDiarmid misinterprets the adjective *zaumny* (relating to *zaum'* poetry) as a noun, a mistake that he reprised in the long poem *In Memoriam James Joyce* (1955). See Hugh MacDiarmid, 'In Memoriam James Joyce', in *Complete Poems*, II (1994), ed. by Michael Grieve and W. R. Aitken (Manchester: Carcanet, 1994), pp. 737–805 (p. 745).

50   Hugh MacDiarmid, 'Towards a Synthetic Scots' in *Contemporary Scottish Studies* (Edinburgh: Scottish Educational Journal, 1976), pp. 117–118 (p. 117).

51   Deutsch and Yarmolinsky, 'Introduction', p. xviii. MacDiarmid complained about the omission of Maiakovskii: see Hugh MacDiarmid, 'Básníci Revoluchího [*sic*] Ruska—Breiz Atao', in *The Raucle Tongue: Hitherto Uncollected Prose*, I, ed. by Angus Calder, Glen Murray and Alan Riach (Manchester: Carcanet, 1996), pp. 196–98 (p. 196).

52   Franco Moretti, 'More Conjectures', *New Left Review*, 20 (2003), 73–81 (p. 76).

from "the free genius of any language", the reader is invited to make linguistic connections and comparisons where she finds them, including, naturally and easily, with English.[53]

Second, MacDiarmid's willingness to rework existing translations without understanding the source text was shared by contemporary "provincial modernists" like Ezra Pound, W. B. Yeats, and James Joyce.[54] Like MacDiarmid (and Samuel Beckett too), these writers were conscious of their position at once inside English and outside it, or at least outside its notional centre. Accordingly, as Daniel Katz argues, they turned to translation, even when it was not readily available to them, because it could help prove their wider point that "there is no 'English' but only 'a series of Englishes'".[55] MacDiarmid might have baulked at having his Scots reduced to a subspecies of English, but, whatever its name, the destabilising effect is the same: the centre cannot hold; in fact, the centre might not even exist.[56]

Whereas Pound chose to describe his verses in *Cathay* as "translations" from Chinese, MacDiarmid not only avoided this term, using coy formulations such as "suggested by the Russian", but also omitted all mention of intermediaries and integrated his versions of Blok and Gippius into *A Drunk Man* almost seamlessly.[57] In comparison with Pound, therefore, MacDiarmid's appropriations might appear at first to be a less effective subversion of translation norms. Nevertheless,

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53  On the relationship of MacDiarmid's Scots poetry to English, see Matthew Hart, *Nations of Nothing But Poetry: Modernism, Transnationalism, and Synthetic Vernacular Writing* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2010), p. 10: "its undeniable Scottishness has to be read [...] against the spectral body of English: the language that remains unseen, that the phonemic riches of Scots exceeds, and yet—like the Derridean supplement—that it cannot help referring to and, referring to, affirm".

54  See Steven G. Yao, *Translation and the Languages of Modernism: Gender, Politics, Language* (New York: Palgrave MacMillan, 2002), pp. 10–11 and Venuti, *The Translator's Invisibility*, pp. 164–78.

55  Daniel Katz, 'Ezra Pound's Provincial Provence: Arnaut Daniel, Gavin Douglas, and the Vulgar Tongue', *Modern Language Quarterly*, 73 (2012), 175–99 (p. 181).

56  Not without good reason Casanova treats Irish writers working in English like Yeats, Joyce and Beckett as paradigmatic of the "rupture with the literature of the centre" and a "model of the possibilities contained in outlying spaces". Her analysis has, however, been criticised for a narrow conception of Irish literature and an overemphasis on the importance of the capital of her 'world republic', Paris—a place that MacDiarmid's engagement with Russia, like Pound's engagement with China, entirely bypasses. As such, our example lends weight to Michael Malouf's proposal to "salvage her theory for inter-peripheral comparativism, not by taking the cent out of her system, but rather, by redirecting her system of literary networks as they function  through and around a multiplicity of centers)", amongst which, for MacDiarmid, not only London but also Moscow must feature. Michael Malouf, 'Problems with Paradigms: Irish Comparativism and Casanova's "World Republic of Letters"', *New Hibernia Review / Iris Éireannach Nua*, 17 (2013), 48–66 (p. 62).

57  See, for instance, Hugh MacDiarmid, 'The Last Trump', *Complete Poems*, I (1993), p. 29.

MacDiarmid's light touch in reworking his precursors' ponderous English into lively memorable Scots—and the versions have been described as "virtually identical"—can be seen as equally radical since it shows how far the short step from English to Scots can take us.[58] A comparison of stanzas from 'The Lady Unknown' ('Neznakomka', 1907) can demonstrate both this derivativeness and this deviation.

| *Deutsch and Yarmolinsky* | *MacDiarmid* |
| --- | --- |
| I guard dark secrets' tortuosities. | *I ha'e dark secrets' turns and twists,* |
| A sun is given me to hold. | *A sun is gi'en to me to haud,* |
| An acrid wine finds out the sinuosities | *The whisky in my bluid insists,* |
| That in my soul were locked of old. | *And spiers my benmaist history, lad.*[59] |

MacDiarmid achieves the kind of equivalence that Deutsch and Yarmolinsky lack: not of meaning or even tone—Blok's original is less spirited and demotic— but of poetic impact. Furthermore, much of the force of Blok's poem comes from the juxtaposition of a longing for sublimity with semi-squalid suburban setting. Likewise, MacDiarmid's use of minoritised Scots, and its inclusion in *A Drunk Man*'s longer stream of whisky-fuelled philosophising, grounds the narrative of his poem, and its philosophical allusions, in a locality (albeit an unspecific 'Scottish' one) and a less than refined milieu.[60]

The success of MacDiarmid's translations inspired other poets in the 1920s and 1930s and their versions of Russian verse exhibit a similar blending of the foreign and the familiar. In 'Poem' William Soutar lights on the contrast of urban and rural in Sergei Esenin's 'Yes, now it is decided. Without return…' ('Da, teper' resheno. Bez vozvrata…', 1922) to tell a very Scottish story of forced migration and the ruination of the countryside, using distinctive terms of landscape and cityscape that fix both the location and the subaltern perspective:

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58   J. Derrick McClure, 'European Poetry in Scots', in *Scotland in Europe*, ed. by Tom Hubbard and R. D. S. Jack (Leiden: Brill, 2006), pp. 89–104 (p. 93). Fuller analyses of this translation, including its similarities to the intermediary, can be found at McCarey, *MacDiarmid and the Russians*, pp. 72–76; O'Connor, *Haunted English*, pp. 138–40; Crotty, '"Like Pushkin, I"', pp. 55–57; Catherine Kerrigan, *Whaur Extremes Meet: The Poetry of Hugh MacDiarmid, 1920–1934* (Edinburgh: Mercat Press, 1983), pp. 116–18.

59   "I have dark secrets' turns and twists, / A sun is given to me to hold, / The whisky in my blood insists, / And questions my innermost history, lad." Russian: "Glukhie tainy mne porucheny, / Mne ch'e-to solntse vrucheno, / I vse dushi moei izluchiny / Pronzilo terpkoe vino". Aleksandr Blok, *Polnoe sobranie sochinenii i pisem,* ed. by M. L. Gasparov and others, 20 vols (Moscow: Nauka, 1997-), II (1997), 122–23 (p. 123).

60   According to Alan Bold, "Much of the tension of *A Drunk Man* derives from the conflict between the physical and the metaphysical aspects of humankind." Alan Bold, *MacDiarmid: Christopher Murray Grieve, A Critical Biography* (London: Murray, 1988), p. 200.

> The fower thackit wa's I was born in.
> Are stanes on a brae:
> And here in the yowtherin' vennel.
> I am weirded to dee.[61]

As befits a narrative poem about a world-historical event, Goodsir Smith's 'The Twal'' (1959), his version of Blok's 'The Twelve' ('Dvenadtsat'', 1918), preserves more of the specifics of the Russian setting. Nonetheless, his use of Scots and its marked vocabulary—the atheistic refrain "Eh, eh, no cross!" ("Ekh, ekh, bez kresta!") becomes "Nae Kirk for me!"—compels us to reimagine the Revolution as a Scottish affair in a way that neutral, international English never could. Here is Mclean's desired Scoto-Russian revolutionary parallelism in reverse: Petrograd has become a Glasgow.[62]

We see in these examples how synthetic Scots translations frustrate a clear distinction between foreignisation and domestication. These versions, all mediated by an unseen English, have a foreignising effect for speakers of English by estranging our language, using 'marginal resources' to challenge hierarchies. At the same time, despite MacDiarmid's forays into the recherché and the fantastical, these translations use language that projects an image of anti-elitist authenticity, in so doing achieving a certain 'domesticity', not in the sense used by Venuti of replicating hierarchies but rather by promoting the local and 'homely' over the standardised and official. What is more, by combining subversion and 'provincial' familiarity in this way, these translations sublate their own marginality. Far from being the province of unlettered peasants, Scotland is shown to possess a language and a people capable of thinking the thoughts of distant Russian geniuses as their own and even of reincarnating a revolution. Within these translations, Scotland is anything but the periphery of

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61 "The four thatched walls I was born in / Are stones on hillside: / And here in the reeking alleys / I am fated to die." William Soutar, 'Poem', in *European Poetry in Scotland: An Anthology of Translations*, ed. by Peter France and Duncan Glen (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 1989), pp. 18–19 (p. 18). Soutar compresses the first two stanzas of the Russian: "Yes! Now it is decided. Without return / I have quit my native fields. / No longer, with winged foliage / Will the poplars ring over me. / My low house stoops over, / My old dog has long since died. / On the windy streets of Moscow, / Know, God has fated me to die." ["Da! Teper' resheno. Bez vozvrata / Ia pokinul rodnye polia. / Uzh ne budut listvoiu krylatoi / Nado mnoiu zvenet' topolia. // Nizkii dom bez menia ssutulitsia, / Staryi pes moi davno izdokh. / Na moskovskikh izognutykh ulitsakh / Umeret', znat', sudil mne Bog."] Sergei Esenin, *Polnoe sobranie sochinenii*, ed. by Iu. L. Prokushev, 7 vols (Moscow: Nauka-Golos, 1995–99), I (1995), pp. 167–68 (p. 167).

62 Sydney Goodsir Smith, 'The Twal'', in *European Poetry in Scotland*, ed. by France and Glen, pp. 64–73 (p. 67); Blok, *Sobranie sochinenii*, ed. by Gasparov and others, V (1999), pp. 7–20 (p. 11). This same poem has also been translated into Scots by Frances Robson: see Alexander Blok, *The Twelve, Owerset Intae Scots*, trans. by Frances Robson (Edinburgh: Mossrig, 2017).

Europe and still less of Britain; instead, it is in direct and equal communion with a great power that itself has become a new global centre.

Nevertheless, in transcending Scotland's marginality, synthetic Scots and MacDiarmid especially could be said to be guilty of 'domestication' in the Venutian sense of concretising hierarchies, since they risk undermining both Scotland's particularity and its internal heterogeneity—the different dialects that people actually speak—in favour of the poet and his exalted, holistic vision. Emulating Dostoevsky, the unifying figure of *A Drunk Man's* protagonist smooths over Scotland's conflicts and contingencies ("and I in turn 'ud be an action / To pit in a concrete abstraction / My country's contrair qualities, / And mak' a unity o' these") and, with tongue in cheek, reveals even its most distinctive-sounding localities to be avatars of a global *Geist* ("I wad ha'e Scotland to my eye / Until I saw a timeless flame / Tak' Auchtermuchty for a name, / And kent that Ecclefechan stood / As pairt o' an eternal mood").[63] Just as MacDiarmid's synthetic Scots treats minoritised lexis as the nucleus of a world language, so his remaking of Russian poetry in Scots as a deliberate manifestation of the hidden kinship of the two nations can be seen as an attempt to expedite a universal state of oneness uniting humanity. In this longing for transcendent connection, MacDiarmid deliberately echoes Dostoevsky's famous address at the opening of the Pushkin monument in 1880, which was quoted at length both in Alexander Brückner's *A Literary History of Russia,* which came out in English in 1908, and in Janko Lavrin's *Dostoevsky and His Creation* (1920).[64] The Russian author then proposed an altogether more mystical model of intercultural contact than that proposed by Casanova and co.: one in which through the agency of a poet of genius equipped with a unique cosmopolitan sympathy and the capacity to be "reincarnated in the spirit of another nation", along with his God-bearing (in the sense of '*narod bogonosets*') people (be they Scots or Russians), all nations may be translated into one.[65]

## Edwin Morgan and Mid-century Modernism

While it has become a central pillar of not only MacDiarmid's personal canon but that of twentieth-century Scottish literature, with annotated editions and extensive scholarship, *A Drunk Man* was initially a commercial and critical failure, with fewer than 100 copies of an initial print run of 500 sold in its first year. From the early 1930s MacDiarmid turned away from both Scots and from translation, but in his long search for inspiration and expression he

63   MacDiarmid, 'A Drunk Man Looks at The Thistle', p. 145, p. 144.

64   Alexander Brückner, *A Literary History of Russia*, ed. by Ellis H. Minns, trans. by H. Havelock (New York: Scribner's, 1908), pp. 407–08. See also Crotty, '"Like Pushkin, I..."', p. 56. On Lavrin see Bold, *MacDiarmid*, p. 201.

65   Fedor Mikhailovich Dostoevskii, 'Pushkin (Ocherk)', in Dostoevskii, *Polnoe sobranie sochinenii*, ed. by V. G. Bazanov and others, 30 vols (Moscow: Nauka, 1972–86), XVI, pp. 136–49 (p. 146, p. 147).

never gave up on Russia or the revolutionary possibilities which it offered and which its Caledonian counterpart seemed continually to spurn. One of these wishes did come true, however, although perhaps not as he had hoped. In 1926 MacDiarmid said that "A Scottish Mayakovsky would be a godsend"; in 1972, he got one—with the publication of Edwin Morgan's *Wi' the Haill Voice*, a collection of twenty-five Maiakovskii poems in Scots.[66]

In some ways, Morgan was heir to MacDiarmid's Russophile tradition: not only did he use a dictionary-derived Scots in a significant minority of his translations from Russian, but he also saw in the translation of Russian poetry a chance to unsettle Anglophone complacency. In other ways, however, Morgan was very different: he was equivocal about the merits of synthetic Scots vis-à-vis both English and more localised Scots dialects—a debate that had become so rancorous by the 1950s that a young Morgan described it as an "incubus"—and in a long career of translation he took as his aim "conscientious faithfulness" to the original.[67] He could do this because, along with French, Italian, and German, he had a thorough knowledge of Russian.

The circumstances in which Morgan was working also differed. On the one hand, Modernism as a global literary movement had lost much of its impetus and the invasion of Hungary and revelations about Stalinism in 1956 had taken the gloss off the Soviet project for many (not MacDiarmid—his response was to rejoin the Communist Party).[68] On the other, for some Scots, the Cold War had made both Scottish nationalism and internationalism seem more urgently necessary than ever. Morgan explained the importance of his mission in the introduction to his *Sovpoems* (1961), a collection of translations of poets from the Communist world which featured his first published translations into Scots—of three Maiakovskii poems:

> These translations are issued with the desire to redress a balance—to open the door slightly on a world which political (and in part linguistic) considerations have kept too remote from Western writers and readers— to show, if not throw, a few of the lifelines that have been preserved within the European tradition: lifelines which are now as perilous to refuse as they have usually been thought naïve to accept.[69]

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66 MacDiarmid, 'Towards a Synthetic Scots', p. 188.

67 Morgan, 'The Beatnik in the Kailyard', in *Essays*, pp. 167–76 (p. 172); Morgan, 'Introductory Note to *Rites of Passage*', in *Collected Translations* (Manchester: Carcanet, 1996), p. 185. On Morgan's language choices, see W. N. Herbert, 'Morgan's Words', in *About Edwin Morgan*, ed. by Robert Crawford and Hamish Whyte (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 1990), pp. 65–74 (p. 71); Peter France, 'Edwin Morgan and Russian Poetry', *Slavonica*, 25 (2020), 52–61 (p. 54); Colin Nicholson, *Edwin Morgan: Inventions of Modernity* (Manchester and New York: Manchester University Press, 2002), pp. 16–45.

68 Bold, *MacDiarmid*, p. 409.

69 Edwin Morgan, 'Introduction to *Sovpoems*', in *Collected Translations*, pp. 27–31 (p. 27). The translations from Maiakovskii are 'Whit mair?' ('What more?', 'Nu chto

Morgan distances himself from any political motivation—plausibly enough, considering he showed the same enthusiasm for American poetry. Rather, he is excited by the continued ingenuous Modernist optimism that he identifies in Russia's poets, as well as its architects and engineers, and that he hopes to reintroduce to Scotland. For Morgan, Maiakovskii in particular possesses an "unusual combination of wild / *avant-garde* leanings and flashes and something of central human concern".[70] Once again the antagonist is staid English literature, which is said to have lost whatever experimental spark it might have had. In his *Sovpoems* essay, Morgan compares Larkin unfavourably to Evtushenko and proposes that the long-dead Maiakovskii has more vitality than the still extant Eliot.[71]

For his own part, Morgan was more open to linguistic experimentation than his English contemporaries, and, although his poetry as a whole shows ample 'human concern', his most formally unconventional works, including his translations into Scots, exhibit a sort of playful, post-modern detachment that is rare in the almost monomaniacal mythopoesis of Maiakovskii and MacDiarmid. His choice of poems to translate into Scots, for instance, displays a wry awareness of the histories of English, Russian, and Scottish literature: among his first translations in the 1950s were excerpts from *Macbeth* and *Beowulf* in Scots and Burns in English.[72] Working from Russian, he uses Scots for a poem by Vladimir Solov'ev (a nod, surely, to the philosopher's great admirer MacDiarmid), for Pushkin's 'Twa Corbies' ('Two Crows', 'Dva vorona', 1828) itself a translation via French of a Scots ballad, and for Khlebnikov's 'Gaffin-cantrip' ('Laughing-incantation', 'Zakliatie smekhom', 1913), an etymology-obsessed *zaum'* poem. He also employs Scots for famous poems such as Blok's 'Nicht, causey, leerie, pothicar' ('Night, street, lamp, chemist...'; 'Noch', ulitsa, fonar', apteka...', 1912) and Pushkin's 'I loed ye' ('I loved you'; 'Ia vas liubil', 1830), as if deliberately

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zhe?', 1927), 'Aye but can ye? ('A vy mogli by?', 1913) and 'Wi' the haill voice' ('With the whole voice', 'Vo ves' golos', 1930).

70   Morgan, 'Introduction to *Wi' the Haill Voice: 25 Poems by Vladimir Mayakovsky*', in *Collected Translations*, pp. 105–13 (p. 110). Original emphasis.

71   Morgan, 'Introduction to *Sovpoems*', p. 28. Morgan's negative assessment of the state of English literature is shared by his publisher, Michael Shayer, who in a letter of 5 December 1960 says of Morgan's translations: "there is the missing link!—this is what has been happening since Lawrence died, and Eliot became an English gentleman. This is what we can pick up from." Glasgow, University of Glasgow Archives and Special Collections, MS Morgan, E.7. In a later interview Morgan said that "[...I]n Russian Futurism, perhaps especially in Mayakovsky, there's a sense that the experiment in art—the modernistic experiment in art—is to be linked up with the future, not with the past, and I'm drawn more, in that sense, to European modernism, especially Russian modernism, than to the modernism of Eliot and Pound." Edwin Morgan, *Nothing Not Giving Messages*, ed. by Hamish Whyte (Polygon: Edinburgh, 1990), p. 106.

72   Glasgow, University of Glasgow Archives and Special Collections, MS Morgan, E.1.1 Translated Poems 1937–59.

testing Scots against the very best. Scots is used most commonly and most effectively, however, for poems with a comic or semi-comic sensibility, such as Maiakovskii's 'Maykonferensky's Anectidote' ('Prozasedavshiesia', 1922), or with a distinctive first-person perspective, like the same poet's 'Fiddle-ma-gidgin' ('Violin and a little nervous', 'Skripka i nemnozhko nervno', 1914).[73]

In *Wi' the Haill Voice*, Morgan argues that Scots is well suited to Maiakovskii's vital exuberance because its literature has historically possessed "a vein of fantastic satire".[74] Despite this appeal to literary tradition, however, Scottish and English readers agree that it is in the poet's evident delight in manipulating language as an oral and aural phenomenon that Morgan's versions best capture Maiakovskii's Russian, reproducing its dense consonantal texture and declamatory tone.[75] Indeed, by making the reader sound out unfamiliar words, Morgan's unfamiliar but richly expressive vocabulary resists quiet, contemplative reading and demands to be read aloud, achieving the orality, immediacy, and estrangement that Futurists considered fundamental to good poetry.[76] In fact, critics have suggested that Morgan's vivid text even "overshoots Mayakovsky's wordplay".[77] A related weakness is that, with the possible exception of 'A Richt Respeck for Cuddies' ('A Proper Respect for Horses', 'Khoroshee otnoshenie k loshadiam', 1918), Morgan's consistently boisterous Scots fails to replicate Maiakovskii's ability to juxtapose verbal fireworks with lines of childlike simplicity. Take, for instance, the opening of 'Forcryinoutloud' ('Poslushaite', 1913), in which Morgan's neologism "starnhuid" (starhood) is too elaborate for Maiakovskii's plangent and prosaic rhetorical question "Does it mean that someone wants them to be there?":

> Forcryinoutloud!
> The starns licht up—aa richt:
> does that prove some loon hud to hae it?
> Does it prove some loon mun want their starnhuid?[78]

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73 Morgan, *Collected Translations*: 'The Wintry Loch o' Saimaa' ['Na Saime zimoi', 1894], p. 334; 'Twa Corbies', p. 325; 'Gaffin-cantrip', p. 335; 'Maykonferensky's Anectidote', pp. 129–31; 'Fiddle-ma-gidgin', pp. 115–16.

74 Morgan, 'Introduction to *Wi' the Haill Voice*,' p. 113.

75 McClure, 'European Poetry in Scots', p. 99; George Hyde, 'Mayakovsky in English Translation', *Translation and Literature*, 1 (1992), 84–93.

76 Maiakovskii explains the importance of spoken performance to his poetry in his manual 'How Verses Are Made' ['Kak delat' stikhi']. See Vladimir Maiakovskii, *Polnoe sobranie sochinenii*, 13 vols (Moscow: Khudozhestvennaia literatura, 1955–61), XII (1959), 81–117 (p. 113).

77 France, 'Morgan and Russian Poetry', p. 53. See also Stephen Mulrine, 'Mayakovsky and Morgan', in *Frae Ither Tongues,* ed. by Findlay, pp. 146–79 (p. 156).

78 "For crying out loud! / The stars light up—all right: / does that prove some wrong had to have it? Does it prove some rogue must want their starhood?" Russian: "Poslushaite! / Ved', esli zvezdy zazhigaiut—/ znachit—eto komu-nibud'

For Morgan as for MacDiarmid, English plays the part of unspoken intermediary and interlocutor: he translated 'A Proper Respect for Horses' into English some fourteen years before its publication in *Wi' the Haill Voice*.[79] But the fact that Morgan is using Scots in a playful search for equivalence, not, like MacDiarmid, as a way of inaugurating a new literary epoch, means that he is less dismissive about English, both using it within his Scots versions to ventriloquise negative characters or pastiche hackneyed poetry and acknowledging that, for much of his audience, it is the norm. Both *Sovpoems* and *Wi' the Haill Voice* were published in England and featured glosses of Scots vocabulary (although so did the first edition of *Drunk Man*).[80] Indeed *Wi' the Haill Voice* served as the foundation for a long and fruitful relationship with the poetry press Carcanet (based first in Oxford and then Manchester) and its publisher Michael Schmidt, who would later acknowledge Morgan's considerable contribution to the press's survival and success.[81] One sign of the collection's influence and enduring popularity (amongst a select readership) was its reissue in 2016, to positive notices in *The Guardian* and elsewhere.[82]

In his willingness to speak to both English and Scottish audiences in this way, Morgan could be said to anticipate in part the instrumental adoption of vernacular modes in Scottish fiction of the 1990s, which often "ducks the question of separateness (from English/English literature), to cultivate linguistic and literary difference as a flexible end in itself".[83] But the slipperiness of Scots in relation to Venutian foreignisation and domestication also has a different, if no less significant, function for Morgan. First, writing in Scots allows him to remain true to his professed "sense of close and deep obligation" to the original (a sympathy to the source text that Venuti would scorn) while still producing poetry that effects a Modernist estrangement of its own.[84] Given Morgan's willingness to translate Maiakovskii's later, less verbally experimental

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nuzhno?" Maiakovskii, *PSS*, I, pp. 60–61 (p. 60). A more literal rendering of the full Russian quotation would be: "Listen! / So, if the stars light up / Does it mean that someone needs that? / Does that mean someone wants them to exist?"

79   Glasgow, University of Glasgow Archives and Special Collections, MS Morgan E. 1.1.1—Translated Poems 1937–59. Most of the poems published in *Wi' the Haill Voice* were translated between 1959 and 1961 (not coincidentally, the peak of Soviet success in the space race). See Nicholson, *Edwin Morgan*, p. 66.

80   Morgan argued unsuccessfully for the glossaries to be omitted when his Maiakovskii translations were reprinted in *Collected Translations*, describing such annotations as "fussy information-bytes [that] take away from the poetry". Quoted in Robyn Marsack, 'Publishing Edwin Morgan', *Scottish Literary Review*, 4 (2012), 35–52 (p. 47).

81   Marsack, 'Publishing Edwin Morgan', p. 51.

82   'Poem of the week: "Aye but can ye", by Vladimir Mayakovsky, *The Guardian*, 16 October 2017, https://www.theguardian.com/books/2017/oct/16/poem-of-the-week-ay-but-can-ye-by-vladimir-mayakovsky.

83   Hames, *Literary Politics*, p. 248.

84   Morgan, 'Introductory Note to *Rites of Passage*', p. 185.

verse, one might even object that by "outmaiakovskii-ing Maiakovskii" Morgan creates complexity where there is none in the Russian.[85] But in this way Morgan, who frequently cited the Futurists as inspiration for his own poetry, can display fidelity not only to the literal meaning of Maiakovskii's words but also to the Russian avant-garde's commitment to linguistic innovation and the disruption of convention.

In accordance with the Futurist preference, readers of *Wi' the Haill Voice* are encouraged by the strangeness of the words on the page to read them aloud and get a sense of the poem by ear alone. They have another option too, however: they can also use the glossaries diligently to decode its mysteries. In both cases, the reader acts just as a language-learner would. In this way, as Peter McCarey observes, Morgan "gives us not Mayakovsky as the ideal Russian reader would understand him, but Mayakovsky as Morgan found him—full of strange invention, glinting with unfamiliar words."[86]

For a moment, Morgan's Scots allows even monolingual English-speakers, used to understanding and being understood, to experience both the discomfort of incomprehension, or near-comprehension, and its potential rewards. Although this dislocation effect is achieved by much difficult poetry, the cross-cultural context adds further complexity. Morgan's Scots could be compared to the imaginative use of language by writers in 'English' from Africa and the Indian subcontinent and be ascribed to Rey Chow's category of "the xenophone", that is writing that emerges from the experience of colonisation and which embraces its divergence from 'standard' English to form "a creative domain of languaging [...] that draws its sustenance from mimicry and adaptation and bears in its accents the murmur, the passage, of diverse found speeches" and which as such produces "linguistic multiplicities" that serve "as unmistakable clues to a collective refashioning of that mass experience known as postcoloniality".[87]

What is more, by refusing to treat equivalence with 'native speaker' perceptions as the gold standard in translation, Morgan not only frees the reader from the narrow confines of English, but also liberates Maiakovskii from Russia. This deterritorialisation is fitting for a poet who, thanks to his close relationship with the Soviet project, became a global export. Far from making a Scottish Maiakovskii, in fact, Morgan's Scots allows the English-speaker to see the true face of the multinational Maiakovskii revered by non-Russians—the

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85  Mulrine, 'Mayakovsky and Morgan', p. 156.

86  Peter McCarey, 'Edwin Morgan the Translator', in *About Edwin Morgan*, ed. by Crawford and Whyte, pp. 90–104 (p. 101).

87  Rey Chow, *Not Like a Native Speaker: On Languaging as a Postcolonial Experience* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2014), p. 59, p. 60. For a discussion (that shares with Chow a sensitivity to global power relations) of the potential benefits of failing to understand, see Alison Phipps, 'Linguistic Incompetence: Giving an Account of Researching Multilingually', *International Journal of Applied Linguistics*, 23 (2012), 329–41.

revolutionary soul who inspired Julia Kristeva, Diego Rivera, and Frank O'Hara; the anti-racist icon translated by Langston Hughes; the gnomic sage encountered by William Carlos Williams in New York intoning "words that could be felt, if not understood, and that could cross cultural and linguistic divides".[88]

# The Post-Soviet Period

The prominence of MacDiarmid and Morgan can obscure the fact that "synthetic Scots", their inventive invented language, was not the only game in town for translators into Scots. Alongside it was the work of speakers of Scots who brought international poetry into local idioms such as Shetlandic, Doric, and Glaswegian. By analysing the work of poets such as Robert Garioch, Tom Scott, and William Tait, Sanderson has shown that the triadic model of Scottish literature "has to be rewritten slightly, acknowledging the plurality, as opposed to the singularity, of the Scottish 'minor' utterance"—a plurality that runs counter to the risk inherent in the synthetic Scots agenda that local linguistic diversity might be suppressed and that an anti-colonial linguistic project might metamorphose into a "quasi-colonial situation, in which individuals continue to find themselves in an unsatisfactorily peripheral relation to the new centre".[89] Until the twenty-first century, these localised versions seem to have been less popular when working from Russian but something of their effectiveness—and their distance from the exuberance of Morgan's Maiakovskii—can be found in the translations of Alastair Mackie (1925–95). As in his own verse, Mackie makes use of the "inspiredly plain authenticity of his own working-class, or perhaps lower middle-class, Scots utterance" to capture the simplicity and occasional solemnity of poets Osip Mandel'shtam, Fedor Tiutchev, and Anna Akhmatova.[90]

This embrace of diversity within Scots has become increasingly prominent with the waning of MacDiarmid's influence since the 1970s. Accordingly, dialectal variety represents one of the more salient trends in translation from Russian in the past thirty years (although translations into English still predominate), as a number of recent initiatives show. A sonnet exchange in 2016–17 organised by the British Council, in which Scottish and Russian poets translated each other's work (via a bridge translation) showcases Christine De Luca's distinctive Shetlandic, although it does not announce it as such.[91]

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88   Quoted in Lee, *Ethnic Avant-garde*, p. 52.
89   Stewart Sanderson, 'Poems Chiefly in the Scottish Dialectic', p. 53. See also Stewart Sanderson, 'Peripheral Centre or Central Periphery: Two Approaches to Modern Scots Translation', *Comparative Critical Studies*, 11 (2014), 93–108.
90   Roderick Watson, 'Scottish Poetry 1987–1989', *Studies in Scottish Literature*, 25 (1990), 218–45 (p. 223); for Mackie's translations, see *European Poetry in Scotland*, ed. by France and Glen, pp. 129–37.
91   A description of this event may be found here: https://literature.britishcouncil.org/blog/2016/to-russia-with-poets-sonnet-exchange/.

Another collaborative Russo-Scottish production, also making use of bridge translations—a practice that is still the norm, if not the rule—was 2014's *After Lermontov: Translations for the Bicentenary,* which, as MacDiarmid had once done, used the Russian Romantic's Scottish roots as a point of departure for closer connection between the two countries.[92] Here too the numerous Scots translations interspersed among the English are presented as "Scots", but their varied lexis and orthography reflect both the translator's personal preference (an inevitability in an unstandardised language) and, at times, their different regional origins, for instance in the Ayrshire Scots of Rab Wilson.[93] Many of the Scots poets featured in these collections (as well as this author) also took part in a 2020 event, 'Dr Chekhov's Prescription', in which the playwright—who, as a staple of the English stage is perhaps the Russian classic most thoroughly domesticated in Britain—was thoroughly defamiliarised by versions in Gaelic and in regionally specific varieties of Scots from Fife, Ayrshire, and the North-East (Doric).

The diversity of dialect has been accompanied by a slight broadening of generic range in the past thirty years. Like poetry, drama has been more frequently translated into Scots and Scotticised English than prose, particularly in the latter part of the twentieth century.[94] In the Russian context, while broadly 'in English', versions of Anton Chekhov's *Three Sisters* (*Tri sestry*, 1901) by Liz Lochhead and John Byrne, as well as Byrne's version of Nikolai Gogol's *The Government Inspector* (*Revizor*, 1836) have used Scottish settings and accompanying linguistic touches in part as a way of interrogating Anglo-Scottish relations.[95] Even narrative prose has made an appearance, with Colin Donati's translation of a chapter of *Crime and Punishment* (*Prestuplenie i nakazanie*, 1866)—a somewhat inevitable choice, perhaps, given the importance of Dostoevsky in Scots-language Russophilia.

Increasing dialectal diversity is a product not only of the fading influence of synthetic Scots, but also of related changes in Scotland's cultural politics. New authorities have emerged with new ways of expressing Scotland's specificity—its singularity in Britain and the world, as well the internal variation between classes and regions. Among others, the poets Liz Lochhead and Tom Leonard and the prose writers James Kelman and Irvine Welsh have catalysed the wider shifts in thinking about language and national identity that have accompanied

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92   Peter France, 'Introduction' in Mikhail Lermontov, *After Lermontov: Translations for the Bicentenary*, ed. by Peter France and Robyn Marsack (Manchester: Carcanet, 2014).

93   See Lermontov, 'Ma Kintra', trans. by Rab Wilson, in *After Lermontov*, p. 105. The author is grateful to Dr Tom Hubbard for private correspondence related to regional variations in this volume.

94   A good overview of twentieth-century translations of classical drama into Scots is available in *Frae Ither Tongues*, ed. by Findlay.

95   See Ksenija Horvat, 'Scottish Demotics and Russian Soul: Liz Lochhead's Adaptation of Chekhov's *Three Sisters*', *Studies in Scottish Literature*, 44 (2018), 29–36.

the rise of Scottish nationalism as a political force and, consequently, devolution as a constitutional reality and the 2014 independence referendum as a historical moment. The complexities of these changes are beyond the scope of this essay, but one can see how translation from Russian, in its gradual move away from the separatist (but internationalist) project of a single synthetic Scots and towards a celebration of internal diversity, coincides with the emergence in Scottish literature of what scholar Scott Hames has called "a new idiom of national subalternity combining the demand for autonomy with the recognition of difference". This celebration of "authenticated marginality" is also evident in the Scottish National Party's promotion of a multiracial, multilingual civic nationalism and, Hames argues, shares with the politics of devolution a willingness to accept representation instead of actual power.[96]

Hames contextualises this self-confident but ineffectual marginality within two global trends: "the postmodern valorisation of 'difference' and marginality" and a post-Cold War shift in "the nationalism of the stateless", in which "stateless nations and regions came to be identified with the modern and even post-modern".[97] This new valence was itself partly precipitated by the break-up of the Soviet Union, an event which terminated any lingering sentimental connection between the Russian language and emancipatory politics, not least because the emergence of (more or less) linguistically autonomous states out of the former USSR made obvious the extent to which in its own region, despite its association with revolution and with anti-hegemonic internationalism, Russian had continued to be a language of imperial domination. Historically, many Scottish writers have chosen to overlook the awkward fact that, in geopolitical terms, Russian's closest linguistic counterpart is English, not Scots.[98] This may now be changing, as Scottish translators begin to find more compelling parallels with nations whose political and linguistic sovereignty has been infringed by Russia and Russian. In 2021, for instance, an event at the StAnza poetry festival in St Andrews featured translations into English, Gaelic, and Shetlandic of poetry written in Ukrainian and the related language/dialect Hutsul (we note the characteristic attentiveness to intranational diversity). While Russian here is, for good reason, ignored, the opposite is true of *Alindarka's Children* (2021) (*Dzetsi Alindarki*, 2014) by the Belarusian author Alhierd Bacharevič, a complex tale of linguistic and cultural oppression and resistance in which Russian is used for the dominant *iazyk* and Belarusian for the forbidden *mova*. In their recent

96   Hames, *Literary Politics*, p. 267, p. 295, p. 271.

97   Michael Keating, 'Nationalist Movements in Comparative Perspective', in *The Modern SNP: From Protest to Power*, ed. by Gerry Hasan (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2009), pp. 204–18 (p. 206).

98   This observation is also made in Mackay, 'MacDiarmid and Russia Revisited', p. 67. Steven Lee uses the example of Maiakovskii to explore Soviet-era tensions between Russian linguistic chauvinism and internationalism. See Lee, *Ethnic Avant-Garde*, p. 55.

translation of this novel, Jim Dingley and Petra Reid replicate this relationship, using English as the *lingo* and Scots as the minoritised *leid,* interlarding the text with quotations from Scots poetry, including MacDiarmid's *Drunk Man.*[99] In some ways, indeed, this translation marks a return to the cultural and linguistic inclusivity of synthetic Scots, if not its universalist ambitions: Reid, who was responsible for the Scots elements of the translation, describes her omnivorous approach to the language as "MacDiarmid lite".[100]

These recent developments show a welcome tendency to engage with Russia and Eastern Europe as real, untidy places, rather than as ideological caricatures. As such, we can see the potential , as yet largely untapped, for a bilateral process in which translation helps to rewild Russia—revealing its internal diversity and supranational entanglements, to foreign and domestic audiences. They also show that the meaning of Russia has changed. In Scotland as elsewhere, Russia's role as an abundant source of wild rebukes to conventional taste—Lermontov's fusion of "romantic imagination and stern reality", Dostoevsky's "confused, diffuse, tumultuous" soulfulness, Maiakovskii's optimistic Socialism—belongs to history.[101]

Nevertheless, translation involves borrowing from the past as well as from other cultures, and these living fossils, can, like their descendants, still find new niches in Scotland's changing literary ecosystem, if translators do their job right. And, as *Alindarka's Children* suggest, the Scots translations of the twentieth century have left behind a strong legacy. First, as with *Wi' the Haill Voice* and Carcanet, a small publisher can have a big impact: *Alindarka's Children* was one of only five books released by Edinburgh's Scotland Street Press in 2020, but it won an English PEN award for translation and was reviewed in the *New York Review of Books.* Second, all the texts discussed above have shown that wildness comes not just from *what* you translate, but *how* you do it, and that a translator sensitive to her linguistic environment can transform it: not only by nurturing endangered diversity, but also by challenging the 'naturalness' of assumptions about languages' boundaries and capabilities. This has profound implications

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99   *Iazyk* is Russian for 'language', like *mova* in Belarusian, *leid* in Scots, and 'tongue' in English.

100  Petra Reid, 'A Note from the Scots Translator', in Alhierd Bacharevič, *Alindarka's Children* (*Things Will Be Bad*), trans. by Jim Dingley and Petra Reid (Edinburgh: Scotland Street Press, 2020), pp. xiii-xiv (p. xiii). Reid says she wants "to explore 'Scots' in different cultural contexts by moving freely between centuries and genres". See also blog post XI at https://scotlandstreetpress.com/alindarkas-children-blog/.

101  Virginia Woolf, 'The Russian Point of View', in Woolf, *Collected Essays*, ed. by Leonard Woolf, 4 vols (Hogarth Press: London, 1966), I (1966), pp. 238–46 (p. 242); Hugh MacDiarmid, 'Lermontov: A Scoto-Russian Genius', in *The Raucle Tongue: Hitherto Uncollected Prose*, ed. by Angus Calder, Glen Murray and Alan Riach, 2 vols (Manchester: Carcanet, 1996), I (1996), pp. 60–64 (p. 60). MacDiarmid is here quoting Maurice Baring.

for ongoing debates about language and identity in Scotland—and beyond. The standard English that was attacked by MacDiarmid and then slyly undermined by Morgan is now, in its internationalised form, more dominant, more 'central', than ever. The example of Russian poetry in Scots tells us that a creative attentiveness to overlaps and intersections both between distant cultures and between contiguous tongues can, on paper at least, help to redraw global maps of influence and make the whole wild world an untidier place.