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'Scotland Small? Our Multiform, Our Infinite Scotland *Small*?' Scotland's Literary Contribution to the Modern World

Hugh MacDiarmid's poem 'Scotland small?' (1943) questions the widespread opinion at the time that Scotland was only a small country geographically with 'Nothing but heather!', showing how 'marvellously descriptive' this may be, but also totally 'incomplete'¹.

Starting with Hugh MacDiarmid's immense and unquestionable contribution to overthrowing this notion of 'smallness' in reference to Scotland's linguistic and literary potential of the first half of the 20th century and by showing some of the contemporary literary 'greats' of today, who just happen to have their origins in that country, I would like to show not only how subjective the understanding of 'small' can be, but also how often the notion of 'minor' or 'minority' may turn out to be misleading.

Christopher Murray Grieve (1892-1978), who later adopted the name of Hugh MacDiarmid for his literary oeuvre, was born in Langholm, Dumfriesshire, just a few miles from the English-Scottish border. His father's untimely death stopped him furthering a university education and started him off on his long-time career in journalism, through which he was not only able to express his often highly controversial political and social views, but also thanks to which he was to launch, practically singlehandedly, what later became known as the Scottish Literary Renaissance. It was this Scottish contribution to what can be generally understood as international modernism that found Christopher Murray Grieve in the foreground.

The beginnings of this Literary Revival can be traced back to Grieve's own 1920 literary début, made as editor of the anthology *Northern Numbers*,

¹ For the whole poem see MacDiarmid 1994: 230.

in which he introduced “representative selections ... of certain Scottish poets of to-day – and to-morrow” (Grieve qtd by Riach 1994: xv). Three volumes of *Northern Numbers* were to appear within the next two years and included such names as Marion Angus, Helen B. Cruikshank, Alexander Gray or William Soutar. All were to leave a resounding imprint on the new style of Scottish poetry that was to emerge over the next few decades.

The most vociferous voice in this context was that of Grieve himself. Looking back at the position of Scottish writing at the end of the 19th century and the first decades of the 20th, with the years of World War I taking its huge toll on Europe, Scotland included, he was determined to set about reviving Scottish writing, the slogan on the cover of the first number of his magazine *The Scottish Chapbook* (on 26 August 1922) proclaiming ‘Not Traditions – Precedents!’. It was these precedents that were to start a new beginning, both literary and political. As part of ‘The Chapbook Programme’ the editor’s strong declaration was “[t]o bring Scottish Literature into closer touch with current European tendencies in technique and ideation” (in Watson 2011: 6). As Alan Riach interestingly points out, this was brought about by Grieve looking towards such American poets as Walt Whitman, Mark Twain “who legitimized the American vernacular and made literature of it, and Melville, her greatest prophet” (Riach 1994: xvi). As far as his politics are concerned, Riach goes on to explain that the precedents for Grieve lay in the 1916 Easter Rising in Ireland, the Russian Revolution in 1917, the Irish War of Independence (1919-1921), and the foundation of the Welsh National Party (cf. Riach 1994: xvi). Thus the literary and the political came together, and were to have a great impact on the different roads Grieve was to take in the future, as well as on the dynamics of his literary and political life.

However, as far as resurrecting the Scottish vernacular is concerned within this Scottish Literary Revival, C. M. Grieve, who was also working for the *Dumferline Press* at the same time he launched his ‘Chapbook Programme’, is known to have written on 5 August 1922:

Most of it [Scottish literature] is, of course, and must continue to be, written in English. But it is not English on that account, although it is denounced on that score by the ardent minority bent on the revival of the Doric² [...] It is no more English in spirit than the literature of the Irish Literary Revival, most of which was written in the English language, was English in spirit. (in McCulloch 2004: 23)

Not quite two months later, in the same paper, and clearly keeping the editor Grieve completely separate from the poet MacDiarmid, he writes:

² The name given to Lowland Scots (Lallans) but also very often used as a synonym of the Buchan dialect spoken in Aberdeenshire and named after the district of Buchan lying in the north-east of that county.

[...] although I am little interested in phonetics [...] I have strong views in regard to the literary uses of the Vernacular which I have on more than one occasion expressed at length in this column and elsewhere in the Scottish Press. At the same time I possess a great delight in words, and the obsolete, the distinctively local, the idiomatic, the unusual attract me strongly. [...] My friend [Hugh MacDiarmid – A.K.] [...] passed over to me the two sets of verses which I have pleasure in re-producing here ['The Watergaw' and 'the Blaward and the Skelly']. They serve a useful purpose, I think, in rescuing from oblivion and restoring to literary use forgotten words that have a descriptive potency otherwise unobtainable. Not only so, but apart from that philological interest they have, in my opinion, some genuine poetical merit too. (in McCulloch 2004: 24)

In this longer quoted passage we can see how Grieve, who until then had spoken out quite strongly against using the Scottish Vernacular, started as if by introducing through the back door his own poems written in Lallans. These first attempts were to open his own front door to some of the best poetry written at the time and to some of MacDiarmid's most outstanding work throughout his poetical career.

It is in the words of one of the leading specialists today of Hugh MacDiarmid's work, Margery Palmer McCulloch, that we can see how significant it was for Scottish poets of the 1920s to start writing in Scots again and not to rely only on English, even if that English was Scottish in spirit. On the above-mentioned beautiful lyric 'The Watergaw' she writes that it:

unfolds through images and sounds and sense impressions; yet it is a poem which speaks to our minds as well as our senses. In addition, it draws on the Scottish poetry tradition through its language, its enigmatic nature – which belongs to the ballad tradition as well as to Modernism – and its modified ballad verse form which allows the speaking voice to flow rhythmically. (McCulloch 2002: 518)

To fully understand what is meant here, let us have a look at the poem in question, accompanied by a literal English translation:

The Watergaw

Ae weet forenicht i' the yow-trummle
I saw yon antrin thing,
A watergaw wi' its chitterin' licht
Ayont the on-ding;
An' thocht o' the last wild look ye gied
Afore ye deed!

There was nae reek i' the laverock's hoose
That nicht – an' name i' mine;
But I hae thocht o' that foolish licht

Ever sin' syne;

An' I think that mebbe at last I ken

What your look meant then.³

[One wet early morning in the cold July weather after sheep-shearing

I saw that rare thing,

An indistinct rainbow with its shivering light

Beyond the down-pour;

And I thought of that last wild look you gave

Before you died!

And there was no smoke in the lark's house

That night – and none in mine;

But I have thought of that foolish light

Ever since then;

And I think that maybe at last I know

What your look meant then. – trans. A.K.]⁴

Even on the basis of this philological translation we can see why MacDiarmid's chosen Scottish imagery expresses the lyrical tone of his voice both so much more concisely as well as much more melodiously than any English equivalents would in the circumstances. We are confronted with Scottish light after a cold July downpour, whereas English light after an unusually warm July day evokes totally different connotations. In the same vein, the 'watergaw wi' its chitterin' licht' reflects the Scottish spirit which the English 'indistinct rainbow with its shimmering light' unfortunately will never do. It was Grieve's own realisation that through using the Scottish-language medium he – and other poets – could reflect the true essence of Scottish writing that would make up this Scottish Literary Revival. This also corresponded with what he began to feel was needed to combine Scottish writing with the Modern Age. Illustrated by the above-quoted 'Not Traditions – Precedents!' it was in line with another of his famous slogans of the time: 'Dunbar – not Burns!'. This did not imply that he was against the famous Scottish national bard, but against the expanded sentimentality that had been so often attached to his writing since the end of the eighteenth century. In his call for a new Scottish literature, it was to such famous *makars* of the Scottish Renaissance of the 15th and 16th centuries, especially the writings of William Dunbar (c.1460–c.1513), that he was calling his contemporaries to emulate. This was the period when the language of the Scottish court and that of the poets of that time started to be seen as *Scottis* and not *Inglis*, a time when the language enjoyed high prestige and began to

³ Quoted from MacDiarmid 1994: 9.

⁴ This translation first appeared in Korzeniowska 2008: 213.

be used as a tool for translation from foreign tongues, including the classics⁵.

Within this call for a new Scottish literature, MacDiarmid started to move in a more and more pronounced manner towards also writing more extensively in Scots, this argument taking the form of a strong exposition in his "A Theory of Scots Letters" (1923), which appeared in subsequent numbers of his *Scottish Chapbook*. The need to explore new means of national self-expression⁶ led MacDiarmid both to literary and linguistic experimentation. Being influenced, on the one hand, by the work of Henri Bergson (1859–1941) and "his thoughts on the ever-changing inner flow of subjective experience [as well as] his concepts of intuition and 'duration'" (Watson 2011: 9), leading to the contemporaneous interest in psychological states and stream of consciousness writing, and on the other, by James Joyce's linguistic experimentation in *Ulysses*, MacDiarmid created one of the most outstanding works of the Modernist Age.

Hugh MacDiarmid's *The Drunk Man Looks at the Thistle* (1926), consisting of 2685 lines and written wholly in Scots, is both poetically brilliant as well as linguistically quite genuine, taking into consideration the manner in which he often created his Scots-language verse. He was frequently accused of "pillaging dictionaries" (cf. McClure 2000: 9), especially Jamieson's *Etymological Dictionary of the Scottish Language*, but his linguistic medium was in fact an amalgamation of the Scots that he had learnt as a child in the Borders as well as words and phrases gathered from a vast range of different literary sources. As Alan Riach explained, "[t]he language gave him access to feeling and emotional complexities which contemporary English writing simply could not embody" (Riach 1994: xvii). Although over the years different adjectives were used to describe his own personalised brand of Scots, e.g. synthetic or plastic⁷, it was actually thanks to his language and his reaching out to foreign influences that he managed to produce his own poetic masterpiece.

⁵ Gavin Douglas, the Bishop of Dunkeld (1476–1522), was the first to speak of the Scottish tongue in his translation of Virgil's *Aeneid*: Quhat so it be, this buke I dedicait, / Written in the language of Scottis natioun. (I, Pro; 102–103) [Whatever it is, I dedicate this book, / Written in the language of the Scottish nation.] in: Corbett 1999: 42.

⁶ He believed English culture had reached exhaustion by the 1920s (cf. Royle 2009: 49).

⁷ 'Synthetic Scots', also known as artificial Scots, was called thus by Professor Denis Saurat of the University of Bordeaux, the same scholar who gave the Scottish Literary Renaissance its name in his essay "Le groupe de la Renaissance Ecosaise", published in *Revue Anglo-Américaine* (April 1924). 'Plastic Scots' was a phrase coined much later by Douglas Young (1913–1973), an Oxford scholar, translator, and one of the leading Scottish poets of the post-World-War-II period, who met with other poets of the day in Edinburgh in 1947 to decide on spelling rules for a modern literary Scots. Young was not referring here to the language's artificial nature but to its protein qualities (cf. Watson 2007: 36, 111).

The drunk man of the poem is lying in a highly intoxicated state and looking in the light of the moon at a wild, multi-branched and menacing thistle⁸, that takes on innumerable different shapes throughout the night. The odyssey he sets forth on is both amusing and serious, philosophical and political, universal and specific, international and national. Analysing the human psyche in general and the Scottish in particular, MacDiarmid wrote in a style that is often satirical, but also quite brilliant in his masterful application of the Scottish vernacular (cf. Korzeniowska 2008: 219). The poet's full linguistic range is reflected, as J. Derrick McClure described it:

not only [in] the phonetic power of the words and idioms but [in] the whole set of habits of Scots speakers. [It] is drafted into the task of expounding one of the most wide-ranging and most challenging poetic visions in all Scottish literature – arguably in all the literature of twentieth-century Europe. After this poem, the status of Scots as a poetic medium was changed irrevocably. (McClure 2000: 99)

Although a great deal of MacDiarmid's poetic work, among others also the telling poem 'Towards a New Scotland' (1934)⁹, expresses his long-reaching aim to bring Scottish writing in line with contemporary European thinking, his dreams for Scotland and the underlying potentials of the country, it is primarily *The Drink Man Looks at the Thistle* that should be read on a par with such other modernists as Yeats, Pound, Eliot and Joyce.

Hugh MacDiarmid was undoubtedly *the* literary figure of Scottish Modernism and of the Scottish Literary Renaissance, also paving the way for many – both poets and novelists – whose writing went far beyond the boundaries of that 'small' country. As it is impossible to discuss at the very minimum all who actually deserve a mention, I would at least like to bring to the foreground those whose work either became well known far beyond Scotland's borders or have shown that their literary contributions are neither small, nor minor¹⁰, whether they write in the minor language known as Scots or the major English tongue.

⁸ We must remember here that the thistle is the emblem of Scotland.

⁹ Originally published in *Stony Limits and Other Poems* (1934); slightly more recently in his *Complete Poems* (MacDiarmid 1993: 450–453). Another of his great works that appeared in the same 1934 collection was his English-language 'On a Raised Beach', acknowledged to be one of the finest philosophical poems of the century (cf. Watson 2011: 20). In an earlier work, Roderick Watson compares it to T.S. Eliot's *Four Quartets* and describes it as "a meditation on death, truth and the 'bedrock' of the world, and one of the finest existential poems in modern literature" (Watson 2007: 46).

¹⁰ It needs to be stressed that 'minor' is understood here as referring to something that is unimportant or having no significance, hence the disagreement to using it in reference to Scottish letters. Being sometimes less known does not mean it does not have importance for the wider world and the international literary scene.

One such writer is Muriel Spark (1918–2006). Born Muriel Sarah Camberg of an English mother and Scottish-Jewish father, she spent the first eighteen years of her life in Edinburgh. It was her experiences and observations as a young girl in the Scottish capital and her years spent at James Gillespie's High School for Girls that gave her the model for her most famous literary character Miss Jean Brodie. *The Prime of Miss Jean Brodie* (1961) was her sixth and most renowned novel, bringing its author even more fame when it was made into a highly successful film starring Maggie Smith in 1969. Starting her literary career in 1957 in London, in all she wrote twenty-one novels, four short story collections, three volumes of poetry, and several collections of critical essays (McGuire 2009: 155).

Although she started writing when she was in her late thirties, she became the most internationally known Scottish writer of the post-war era. Her literary output received, according to the 2005 BOSLIT Catalogue¹¹, the record number of 360 translations (Ashley 2007: 351), thus topping the list of Scottish living prose writers in translation that year. She also gained a faithful readership in Poland, starting with the publication of her earlier novels in Polish translation in the 1970s. These include, for example, *Memento Mori* (1959) with its Polish translation appearing in 1970, *The Ballad of Peckham Rye* (1960) [*Ballada o Peckham Rye* (1974)], and *The Prime of Miss Jean Brodie* (1961) [*Pełnia życia panny Brodie* (1972)]. It is interesting to note that *The Mandelbaum Gate* (1965) [*Brama Mandelbauma*] did not appear in Polish translation until 1997. It was a novel characterised by acute political awareness and as Roderick Watson described it, “[s]et in Jerusalem it explores the meeting and crossing points and the political tensions between Christian, Arab and Jew” (Watson 2007: 157). It can be presumed that such a theme had to wait here for better times than the post-war Communist era.

Looking at the two literary figures presented above, one may wonder what they had in common. MacDiarmid was the big modernist man of letters who worked towards and spoke out very loudly for a rejuvenation of Scottish literature, that included Scots as a national language, and of Scottish political and social life – he was both the co-founder of the Scottish National Party and a member of the British Communist Party¹². The paramount aim here was to bring Scotland and its culture back onto the international arena, making his own immense contribution to that very arena. Unfortunately, it also has to be said that although he has been translated, or selections of his poetry have even found their way into the eighth edition of the American

¹¹ Bibliography of Scottish Literature in Translation (BOSLIT) is a free online resource that was set up in 1994 by the University of Edinburgh and the National Library of Scotland.

¹² He would experience being thrown out of both as the two ideologies were not exactly compatible.

*Norton Anthology of English Literature*¹³, the only MacDiarmid poems to be rendered into Polish and published in the prestigious literary periodical *Literatura na Świecie* were examples of his English-language poetic output. They were translated by Jerzy Jarniewicz (cf MacDiarmid 2001: 83–95). Spark, on the other hand, as a leading representative of the post-modern era, wrote outside Scotland – London, New York and finally Tuscany in Italy – with her writing achieving, via translation, its own quite singular position.

Referring back to *The Prime of Miss Jean Brodie*, undoubtedly her most famous work, it is necessary to stress how very Scottish it actually is, although written in English¹⁴. Being brought up in Edinburgh, still a highly straight-laced Presbyterian-Calvinist city in the 1920s and 30s, and as Spark said herself when speaking about her native city: “I think the puritanical strain of the Edinburgh ethos is inescapable” (qtd in Sellin 2009: 128), her two main characters, Miss Jean Brodie and Sandy Stranger, epitomise not only what Watson calls the clash of authority, but also indirectly the difference between Calvinism and Catholicism (Watson 2007: 153). It has to be remembered that Spark, brought up in the Presbyterian faith, converted to Catholicism in 1954 and it was her new faith that was to be such a mainstay throughout the rest of her life. It was Roderick Watson in his discussion of Muriel Spark and the links between her own life, including her religions, and her writing, and the influence one had on the other, that shows this extremely clearly:

...while one cannot deny the Catholic faith's commitment to the fallibility of humankind, and the blessed release of confession, one is equally struck by the ruthless clarity of Spark's intelligence and her sense that human life and all its failings can only be absurd *sub specie aeternitatis*. The Scottish Presbyterian tradition will concede to no one in its sense of the immanence of evil in the world, but Spark's response to it is ironic, even light-hearted, as her fiction manages an extraordinary dance between the devil and the deep blue sea. (Watson 2007: 153)

This dance can be observed in how her writing reflected her involvement in many of the most serious intellectual issues of the time and how her extremely sparse, concise narrative became highly representative of the post-modern era.

¹³ It would be interesting to know what somebody who is known to have claimed openly that his main hobby was Anglophobia would think about being classified within English literature.

¹⁴ Although we may talk about yet another literary revival in the post-war era in Scotland that has brought many interesting and highly significant works – both poetic and prose – written in different varieties of Scots as well as translations into Scots, Spark was brought up in the Edinburgh variety of Standard Scottish English and it was the English language she was faithful to throughout her writing career.

Another writer, of a different generation to that of Muriel Spark but also coming from Edinburgh and who has become a best-selling author within the crime fiction genre world-wide, is Ian Rankin (b. 1960). However, it is interesting to note the comparison that has been made by literary critic Michael Gardiner to Spark¹⁵ and another widely read contemporary Scottish writer William McIlvanney: "Ian Rankin ... mixes the visceral social realism of William McIlvanney (1936–) (*Docherty*, 1975; *The Big Man*, 1985) with the rhetorical sophistication of Spark, and has enjoyed a huge dispersal, adding to Edinburgh's moody northern reputation" (Gardiner 2009: 189)¹⁶. In writing about Ian Rankin, Watson also recalls McIlvanney's *Laidlaw* novels, featuring many characteristics of detective fiction, and to Spark's Miss Jean Brodie, whose scandalous ancestor Deacon Brodie¹⁷ is the epitome of one of Scotland's famous traits: duality or what is known as 'Caledonian Antisyzygy'¹⁸. Watson quotes Rankin talking about the city where much of the action of his crime fiction takes place:

Edinburgh is the perfect setting for crime writing. It has a split personality – on the one hand it is the city of history and museums and royalty, but at the same time there is this feeling that behind the thick walls of those Georgian townhouses there are all sorts of terrible things happening (qtd in Watson 2007: 175).

However, Rankin's first published novel *The Flood* was, to quote the author himself, "not a crime novel, though it contains secrets and revelations. Nor is it a thriller. Fair warning: it's a young man's book, all about the perils and

¹⁵ This influence may be understandable due to the fact that Rankin had been working on Muriel Spark as part of his PhD programme when at Edinburgh University in the 1980s. He started writing short stories when still at university and his first published novel, though not a crime story, was *The Flood*, which appeared in 1986. He also contributed an article on Spark's fiction, "The Deliberate Cunning of Muriel Spark", to one of the most important collections of contemporary Scottish criticism *The Scottish Novel since the Seventies: New Visions, Old Dreams*, edited by Gavin Wallace and Randall Stevenson (1993).

¹⁶ In the same article, Michael Gardiner also wrote how Spark's "earlier critiques of gentility, classism, empire-building and sectarianism continued to influence writers as disparate as Ian Rankin and Margaret Elphinstone" (Gardiner 2009: 185). Elphinstone (b. 1948) is known, among others, for her historical fiction, e.g. *The Voyageurs* (2004) and her ability to mix realism and magic realism in her earlier short stories in *An Apple from the Tree* (1991).

¹⁷ Deacon William Brodie was an Edinburgh town council member by day and burglar by night. He was caught after an unsuccessful break-in at the Excise Office in Chessel's Court, which led to his final execution in 1788 (cf. Buchan 2003: 314).

¹⁸ A term borrowed by Gregory Smith from Sir Thomas Urquhart of Cromarty (1611–1660), a highly inventive Scottish writer, translator and eccentric, and introduced in his *Scottish Literature: Character and Influence* (1919). The word 'antisyzygy', meaning a yoking together of opposites, was what Smith and many future writers, especially Hugh MacDiarmid, were to use to describe the Scot who has "a large capacity for containing in himself elements that contradict each other" (MacCaig in MacDiarmid 1972: v).

pitfalls of growing up” (Rankin 2006: xi). He was soon though to embark on his Inspector Rebus series that between 1987 (*Knots & Crosses*) and 2007 (*Exit Music*) encompassed seventeen novels and one novella, and which brought him fame far beyond his native city. Translated into twenty-six languages – Polish included – Rankin not only introduces us to a new style of genre fiction achieving long overdue literary respectability, but also shows Edinburgh and its wide spectrum of society in all its convoluted complexity, reflecting the times in which the given novel is written. To quote Marie-Odile Pittin-Hédon in her article “Scottish Contemporary Popular and Genre Fiction”:

Rankin conveys the transformation of the genre over the years spanning the publication of his novels. *Knots & Crosses* (1987) takes in the evolution of gangsterhood from the 1950s to the 1980s, from the Gorbals-type gangs to the ‘dope scene’. *Mortal Causes* (1994) describes the way the underclass in Edinburgh has been moved out of sight to the schemes, a motif which Rankin shares with Irvine Welsh¹⁹. *Dead Souls* (1999) expands on the theme of the Scots as glorious failures, while taking up that of independence. *Set in Darkness* (2000), opening the new millenium, turns to the inclusive, gentrified image Scotland has been building for itself since devolution ... (Pittin-Hédon 2009: 198)

After retiring John Rebus in *Exit Music* (2007), Rankin started a new series with *The Complaints* (2009) and a new police inspector, Malcolm Fox. In many ways, similar to his predecessor, this time, however, he is investigating the murky side of the Scottish Police Force itself.

Moving east from Scotland’s capital to Glasgow, it is necessary to point out that it is this city that in the last half-century has brought forth some of the best Scottish, not to say British, writers of our contemporary times. This concerns both poets and writers of prose as well as dramatists. It also concerns not only what they wrote about, their often innovative narrative styles, but also how they wrote, which oftentimes was not in Standard English or even Standard Scottish English.

One of the best-known names to pave the way for new literary possibilities that included the Glasgow speech was Ian Hamilton Finlay (1925–2006), who was later to become a world-famous concrete poet and artist. From 1969 he lived in a hill farmhouse at Stonypath in Lanarkshire. It was here that he created his extraordinary garden landscape that also included carved inscriptions, sundials, pieces designed in stone, wood and glass, reflecting his own unique vision (cf. Finlay 2006: 43–53). It was,

¹⁹ Irvine Welsh (b. 1958), also from Edinburgh, whose first novel *Trainspotting* (1993) brought him instant fame, has with this novel and all his subsequent works touched upon what we could call the seedy side of society, bringing the ills of our contemporary world screaming to our attention.

was to address were to be of primary importance both to him as a writer as well as to the whole rich vernacular literary output that was to emerge from the city of Glasgow over the next decades. Also thanks to such writers as his contemporary James Kelman, who formed his own characteristic Glaswegian style and introduced the Vernacular into prose, linguistic and narrative experimentation was to go far beyond their own home town, e.g. the introduction of the Leith version of urban Scots by Irvine Welsh in his novels that were to appear in the last decade of the 20th century. This in turn was to have its reflection outside Scotland, with more and more writers using their own local or regional speech varieties in their prose and poetic writings²⁰.

Leonard's choice of writing in his own phonetically transcribed Glaswegian speech, which is different to Ian Hamilton Finlay's and will also differ to Kelman's when he starts writing in the same linguistic medium, was first illustrated in his *Six Glasgow Poems* (1969). Undoubtedly the most famous out of this sequel was the first one 'The Good Thief'. For illustration, let us just look at its first stanza:

heh jimmy
yawright ih
stull wayiz urryi
ih

(Leonard 1995: 9)

It was the promotion of his language and his belief that 'all livin language is sacred' (Leonard 1995: 120)²¹ that did not quite correspond with MacDiarmid's enthusiasm for a recreated Lallans. His very ambivalent attitude to the subject was because he saw the latter primarily as a middle-class representation of the language. John Corbett's observation on the issue is worth quoting here:

On the one hand, he acknowledges that MacDiarmid's obsession, in both Scots and English, with testing the boundaries of lexis corresponds to Carlos Williams's

²⁰ It is impossible not to think here of the Polish writer Dorota Masłowska who, with her highly controversial first novel *Wojna polsko-ruska pod flagą białą-czerwoną* (2003), translated into English two years later by Benjamin Paloff and first to appear as *Snow White and Russian Red* (2005), not only touches upon the Polish 'dope scene', but also brings to the foreground many aspects of the social ills of present-day society, also using non-standard varieties of speech in her writing. Actually, the similarities between Kelman, Welsh and Masłowska are quite striking. For the sake of clarity, it is necessary to add that the English – or rather American – title was changed the very same year to the rather neutral *White and Red*.

²¹ Taken from his poem 'right inuff' from the sequel *Ghostie Men*, in which there is specific reference to the status of the language of Glasgow and how it is even perceived by the people of the city themselves.

concern with language as object; on the other hand, he sees the obsession as partly a desire to appropriate cultural property by the process of naming. Leonard's antipathy to such appropriation by any dominant class is at the foundation of the rejection of Lallans. (Corbett 1999: 171-172)

Writing in one's own speech form was what governed the above-mentioned James Kelman. As he himself said in his essay "And the judges said...":

In prose fiction I saw the distinction between dialogue and narrative as a summation of the political system; it was simply another method of exclusion, marginalising, of disenfranchising different peoples, cultures and communities. I was uncomfortable with 'working-class authors who allowed 'the voice' of higher authority to control narrative, the place where the psychological drama occurred. How could I write from within my own place and time if I was forced to adopt the 'received' language of the ruling class? ... This meant I had to work my way through language, find a way of making it my own. (Kelman 2003: 40)

Kelman's 'working [his] way through language' started with his first attempts at writing and appears in his story "Nice to be Nice" about which he writes in the Afterword to the second edition of his collection of stories *An Old Pub Near the Angel*, first published in 1973:

'Nice to be Nice' was my earliest attempt at the literary or phonetic transcription of a speaking voice. It so happens that the voice belongs to a working-class man from Glasgow. The story is told in the 'I-voice', a first-person narrative. It was difficult to do. I spent ages working on it but learned much from the process. (Kelman 2007: 127)

It is both clear in his recollections in the above mentioned Afterword concerning his writing decisions and his search for the right voice, as well as his discussion on language and narrative style as presented in "And the judges said...", that as a working-class writer from Glasgow his Glaswegian characters were to speak in their own Glasgow voices that included not only characteristic turns of phrase and linguistic inventiveness, but also musicality and rhythm. Hence, in his short stories and novels where "he writes with a Glasgow accent" (MacDougall 1989: 637)²², we have Kelman's own phonetic transcription of Glasgow working-class speech and also his own personal use of punctuation – or sometimes lack of it – where it happens to be in correspondence with the rhythm and melody of his characters' narrative voices. Kelman, as a working-class author, was determined to write from the experience of his own world, from his own culture and

²² For more on this subject see Korzeniowska 2007: 93-102.

language, and within the time he knew best. He was also determined to do it in prose that included a narrative style not practised before.

However, it was not till his fourth novel was published in 1994, for which he was awarded the highly prestigious Man Booker Prize, that all hell was let loose. The controversy was centred around *How late it was, how late*, with some members of the jury officially speaking out in public against the decision. Here one can differentiate three main issues that appeared to be so controversial, that of his chosen linguistic medium, i.e. English written with a Glasgow accent, his narrative style which involved stream of consciousness or what I would prefer to call main character Sammy Samuel's interior monologue that quite naturally included the third controversy, his somewhat crude language, which was simply a reflection of his everyday speech. Apart from slang and colloquialisms, the bulk of the criticism was hurled at two four-letter words, *fuck* and *cunt*, the former being decidedly more frequent and used in its different grammatical forms, which simply appears in Glasgow working-class speech on an everyday basis and does not necessarily have the same impact, significance or even meaning every time it happens to be used. Let us look at one short example here:

Fuck it.

Ye fall by the wayside.

Fuck it. Sammy had nay regrets. Ye try to work things out. When ye go wrong; ye get yourself the gether; ye give it another go; ye hope it works out. But if it doesnay it fucking doesnay. What can ye do. Same auld fucking process. It can be damaging for the nut but that's the fucking problem. Plus the physical side of things man the disintegrating process, ye have to face up to it, ye dont need the fucking sodgers to give yer body a battering, ye perform the job yerself. (Kelman 1994: 28)

Since 1994 a lot has changed. James Kelman and his literary output has become one of the leading subjects within Scottish Studies and works that have been devoted to him alone are worth highlighting (cf. Klaus 2004, Kövesi 2007, Hames 2010), besides many chapters, subchapters, etc. that have been written on his literary output. Although by 2005, according to the above mentioned BOSLIT catalogue, there were thirty-three translations of his works (Ashley 2007: 351), it was not till 2011 that a Polish rewriting appeared on the publishing market. Interestingly, it was not a rendering of his most recent novel at that time (*Kieron Smith, Boy* 2008), but of *How late it was, how late* from 1994. The Polish version, *Jak późno było, jak późno*, is the work of Jolanta Kozak, one of Poland's leading translators of English-language literature. It is a pity, however, that it has taken so long to introduce a writer acknowledged to be one of the most outstanding Scottish *literati* of today (cf. Oramus 2011).

The above representatives of the Glasgow literary scene are significant for both Scottish culture and cultures far beyond, whether they were translated widely or not. This is because of their linguistic and stylistic experimentation, done in the conviction that it is through language that they can fully and expressively manifest their views on what the contemporary world holds for us. Both Leonard and Kelman's political and social views are not only expressed for a local audience and are not solely written for entertainment. All their works, both in verse and prose – and not only the few presented above – touch upon issues that may concern all of us, depending on where we happen to be at a given moment in time.

While still in Glasgow, though, attention has to be turned to "Professor Edwin Morgan: writer celebrated as one of the finest Scottish poets of the 20th century". This is how Angus Calder titled his article that appeared as an obituary in *The Independent* on Morgan's death on 17th August 2010, going on to call him "the mightiest Scottish writer since Hugh MacDiarmid" according to the view of "some good judges" a long time before the end of the millenium (Calder 2010).

Born in Glasgow in 1920, Edwin Morgan came to be one of the most prominent and internationally renowned poets of the 20th–21st century²³. He was appointed Glasgow's first Poet Laureate in 1999, an honour he held till 2005, also becoming National Poet for Scotland in 2004. In the year 2000 he received the Queen's Gold Medal for Poetry. He was also commissioned to write a poem for the opening of the new Scottish parliament building in 2004, which he simply entitled 'For the Opening of the Scottish Parliament, 9 October 2004'²⁴.

Edwin Morgan taught at the Department of English at Glasgow University, becoming Titular Professor in 1975. It was, however, not only as Professor in English literature that he showed his versatility and widespread knowledge in his chosen field of studies, but through his unquenchable interest in the world, in new discoveries and technologies that found expression in his amazingly vast poetic output. He was also a translator from many languages

²³ In reference to Polish interest in Edwin Morgan, it can be observed in translations of his works (Morgan 1982: 9–13; 1995: 252–255) and in a section of the Polish translation journal *Przekładaniec* (Morgan 1998: 8–41) that was devoted to him as a poet and translator. Jerzy Jarniewicz's extremely insightful article "Między Glasgow a Saturnem czyli archipelag poezji szkockiej" (Jarniewicz 1992: 234–246), devoted to twentieth-century Scottish poetry, draws attention to the significance of Morgan's writing, among others, in creating a literature that has its own distinctive 'Scottishness', even when he happens to be writing in English. The Polish title of Jarniewicz's article refers to Morgan's collection of poems published in 1973 *From Glasgow to Saturn*. One of Morgan's leading Polish translators is the Katowice-based Andrzej Szuba. For a collection of the latter's translations see *Interferencje* 1990.

²⁴ For the whole poem see: Morgan 2007.

that covered the verse of such literary figures as Mayakovsky, Montale, Voznesensky, Quasimodo, Brecht, Neruda, Weöres, Juhasz, among others (cf. Watson 2007: 203). Although he primarily wrote in English and translated into that language, we can find 25 poems by Mayakovsky translated into the Glasgow variety as well as Rostand's *Cyrano de Bergerac* (1992) and Racine's *Pheadra* (2000). Roderick Watson goes on to describe him thus:

Where other writers see only confusion, decay or empty technology, Morgan discovers growth, change, flux and delight. He uses his poetry to report back on these discoveries or to push our imagination a little further beyond them. With over 600 pages (excluding six volumes of poetic translations), Morgan's *Collected Poems* of 1990 was followed by four further substantial collections²⁵ in a body of work that testifies to the poet's lifelong engagement with imaginative dramatic and experimental verse. He has written love poetry, science fiction poetry, sound poetry and concrete verse, as well as many memorable poems on his home city of Glasgow and on Scotland. (Watson 2007: 203–204)

As we can see, Morgan's widespread interest in the world, in culture, in European literature, especially in Russian modernism, resulted in a quite amazing creative diversity that gave back to the postmodern, or even post-postmodern world, poetry that indeed is worthy not only of Scotland, but also of the lands that lie beyond it.

So far, all the writers presented have been male, but it is one of the leading female literary figures of Scotland – based throughout her whole adult life in Glasgow – who, after Edwin Morgan's death, was made second Scots Makar, or National Poet in January 2011. Liz Lochhead (b. 1947) is yet one more highly versatile voice in contemporary Scottish letters, a voice that can be heard through her poetry, plays, sketches, songs, monologues, translations (into Scots) and adaptations, having worked for all the major Scottish and some of the English theatre companies. One of her best known and most popular plays written in modern idiom is *Mary Queen of Scots Got Her Head Chopped Off* (1987), while her translation into contemporary Scots of Molière's *Tartuffe* (1985)²⁶ played to general acclaim. Another

²⁵ Apart from the above-mentioned *From Glasgow to Saturn* (1973) and *A Book of Lives* (2007), as well as his collected works (1990 and 1996), Morgan's other major collections of poems are: *The Second Life* (1968), *The New Divan* (1977), *Sonnets from Scotland* (1984), *Themes on a Variation* (1988), *Virtual and Other Realities* (1997), and *Cathures: New Poems, 1997–2001* (2002). His *Collected Translations* appeared in 1996.

²⁶ It is worth mentioning here literary scholar and critic Randall Stevenson, whose essay entitled "Triumphant Tartuffication: Liz Lochhead's Translation of Molière's *Tartuffe*, that is part of Bill Findlay's *Frae Ither Tongues* (2004), shows his full appreciation of her work as a playwright and translator.

more recent translation of the same Molière, this time his *Le Misanthrope*, appearing as *Misery Guts* (2002), was set in the new Scottish Parliament.

A work devoted to Lochhead and edited by Robert Crawford and Anne Varty (1993) is entitled *Liz Lochhead's Voices*. This title tells us a great deal about what is characteristic about her writing, the different genres she has become involved in, and what her different voices represent. To quote Colin Nicholson:

By virtue of her theatre-work as a dramatist, and her extraordinary success as public performer of her own material, sometimes appearing as a home-grown rap artist²⁷, Liz Lochhead is a natural inheritor of the imaginative space Morgan has helped to establish ... (Nicholson 2007: 164)

Liz Lochhead has over the years filled this 'imaginative space' with her different voices, which are highly perceptive, sometimes ironic, often hilarious, expressing her perspicacity and ability to present her reflections on the state of humankind surrounding her. Her interest in different forms of power relations, whether they are between the sexes, social classes, or languages (in this case English and Scots), is reflected in her choice of the appropriate medium. Her collection of poetry *The Colour of Black and White. Poems 1984–2003* (2003), for instance, covers not only a selection of her work from the two decades appearing in the title, but is an excellent example of how acute her powers of observation are and how, over the years, she has managed to pass them on in her wide range of literary genres to both her immediate Scottish audience, as well as to those a little further afield.

This survey of selected Scottish 20th-century literary 'greats' within the world of literature would not be complete without Jackie Kay (b. 1961) and Carol Ann Duffy (b.1955), the former born in Edinburgh but brought up in Glasgow, the latter, born in Glasgow but from the early 1960s living and going to school in Stafford, England. Their respective origins and where they grew up were to have an enormous influence on their lives, which in turn has had its reflection in their writing, both poetry and prose.

Jackie Kay is of Scottish-Nigerian descent but having been given up for adoption, was brought up by a white working-class, leftist-oriented couple from Glasgow. Starting with her first poetic work, a partly autobiographical collection entitled *The Adoption Papers* (1991), and going on to one of her more recent publications, *Red Dust Road* (2011), we can trace one of the most important themes that appear and reappear throughout her writing, i.e. of her search for identity and sense of belonging. It also addresses the very difficult issue of race relations, and not only in Scotland. In the latter

²⁷ A good example of her rap poetry is 'Men Talk' (Lochhead 1985: 134–135).

work, however, she shows how her search for her Scottish-Nigerian roots corresponds to the Scottish nation's acceptance of its new multiethnic shape of today. Where there is often a lot of pain, sorrow and even bitterness in her earlier works, we can now see optimism when "crossing racial frontiers in [her] quest for cultural acceptance" (Korzeniowska 2013: 421) in reference to her own acceptance of herself, and also in the acceptance of herself in a nation that has changed from rejection to a more open-minded acceptance of diversity. It is this diversity, albeit in reference to slightly different issues, that was so much part of Hugh MacDiarmid's philosophy all those decades ago²⁸.

To round up the discussion on the significance of Scottish writing in our world today, I would like to end with the above-mentioned Carol Ann Duffy whose "finest work comes from her engagement with the debatable lands of identity and desire" (Watson 2007: 316) that take in such issues as feminism, masculinity and national identity²⁹, all being subjects that are so much part of our modern world. Her vast literary output that consists of poetry collections, books for children and plays, her academic post as Professor of Contemporary Poetry at Manchester Metropolitan University, the honorary doctorates and different literary awards and prizes received for her work over the years, together with being made Officer of the Order of the British Empire (OBE) in 1995 and Commander of the Order of the British Empire (CBE) in 2002 are a reflection of acknowledgement of what she has written and achieved, and of the very popularity of her literary work. Of significance to the subject discussed here is also the fact that Carol Ann Duffy is the first woman, the first Scot, and the first openly LGBT³⁰ person to be made Poet Laureate of the United Kingdom. She has held this position since 1 May 2009.

Referring back to Hugh MacDiarmid's irritation concerning how Scotland was perceived when he wrote his poem 'Scotland small?' in 1943 and how he understood the adjective 'small', it needs to be said today that as far as land and population are concerned, it is indeed small. Gaelic and Scots, as two of the three languages spoken there are undoubtedly minor due to the number of people using those tongues, but its people and culture, which includes its literature, cannot be classified in this manner. The issues addressed by its writers and their intellectual capacity – and not only of

²⁸ In his essay 'MacDiarmid on MacDiarmid' we can read: "I'm looking for a diversity in unity, and not for a unification in languages. We have a great tradition in Scotland of linguistic ability. It's a facet of our internationalism as compared with English insularity" (MacDiarmid 1968: 171).

²⁹ Exemplified by such poetry collections as *Feminine Gospels* (2002), *The World's Wife* (1999), *Mean Time* (1993) or one of her earlier publications *The Other Country* (1990), dealing with one's origins, childhood emigration, and fantasies of that other country.

³⁰ This stands for lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender, in use since the 1990s.

those highlighted above – correspond with American historian Arthur Herman's perception of Scotland and the Scots as illustrated in his work entitled *How the Scots Invented the Modern World* (2001) with the telling subtitle: The True Story of How Western Europe's Poorest Nation Created Our World & Everything in It. So, to repeat Hugh MacDiarmid's question: Scotland small? Yes, but not minor.

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„Szkocja mała? Nasza wielopostaciowa, bezmierna Szkocja mała?”

Literacki wkład Szkocji do współczesnego świata

Wiersz Hugh MacDiarmid'a „Szkocja mała?” (1943) kwestionuje ogólnopaniującą opinię w pierwszej połowie XX wieku, że Szkocja to tylko mały kraj, gdzie „nie ma nic innego poza wrzosem”, pokazując jednocześnie, że „opis może i jest wspaniały”, ale także wielce „niekompletny”.

Temat niniejszego artykułu opisuje jak literatura szkocka, poczynszy właśnie od wybitnej i wielorakiej twórczości MacDiarmid'a (Christopher Murray Grieve [1892–1978]), a kończąc na międzynarodowym znaczeniu takich współczesnych poetów jak Carol Ann Duffy (ur. 1955), pierwsza kobieta piastująca funkcję nadwornego poety brytyjskiego monarchy, przyczyniła się do rozwoju i różnorodności literatury daleko poza granicami Szkocji. Uwypuklając osiągnięcia tak różnych powieściopisarzy jak Muriel Spark, James Kelman i Ian Rankin, czy takich poetów jak Ian Hamilton Fin-

lay, Edwin Morgan, Jackie Kay czy Liz Lochhead (aktualnie nosząca tytuł Narodowego Poety Szkocji), widzimy jak ważna jest ich twórczość dla lepszego zrozumienia współczesnego świata. Ich wkład do literatury światowej pokazuje, iż powierzchnia Szkocji może jest rzeczywiście mała, ale to, co pochodzi z tego małego kraju na pewno nie jest bez znaczenia.

‘Scotland Small? Our Multiform, Our Infinite Scotland *Small*?’ Scotland’s Literary Contribution to the Modern World

Hugh MacDiarmid’s poem ‘Scotland Small?’ (1943) questions the widespread opinion at the time that Scotland was only a small country geographically with ‘nothing but heather!’, showing how ‘marvellously descriptive’ this may be, but also totally ‘incomplete’.

The issue addressed in this article is how Scottish letters, starting with the outstanding and multiform writings of the same Hugh MacDiarmid (Christopher Murray Grieve [1892-1978]) and ending with observations of the international significance of such contemporary Scottish poets as Carol Ann Duffy (b. 1955), the first female to become British Poet Laureate, have contributed to the development and diversity of literature far beyond the borders of Scotland. It is also in looking at the achievements of such diverse writers as Muriel Spark, James Kelman and Ian Rankin as well as poets Ian Hamilton Finlay, Edwin Morgan, Jackie Kay, or the present Scottish Poet Laureate Liz Lochhead, among others, that we can see how significant their literary oeuvre is for a better understanding of the modern world. Emphasis is also placed on the fact that although Scotland is undoubtedly a small country geographically, we can never – in reference to the title of this volume – say it is minor.

Key words: Scottish Literary Revival, international modernism, Scottish Vernacular, translation, linguistic/literary experimentation, small, minor