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## "In ane uthar leid": Reviewing Scottish Literature's Linguistic Boundaries

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R. D. S. Jack

## “In ane uther leid”: Reviewing Scottish Literature’s Linguistic Boundaries

### *Language and Nationalism*

No Scottish university has a Department of Scottish Studies, literary or otherwise. Glasgow has a readership in Scottish literature, held by Mr. Alexander Scott, attached to the Department of Scottish History. This about sums up the ghastliness of the position here in Scotland.<sup>1</sup>

These words open the first article in *Studies in Scottish Literature* and accurately describe the situation in 1964. I graduated from Glasgow University in that year and can confirm that there were no courses in Scottish Literature as such. To gain an introduction to the subject, one had to be enrolled in Scottish History and attend Alexander Scott’s lecture on Friday mornings.

The quotation is important because it reminds us of the advances which have undoubtedly been made since then and of the crucial role played by this journal in paving the way for them. Without the pioneers of the early ’60s—notably Alexander Scott himself, John MacQueen, David Daiches, Tom Crawford and Matthew McDiarmid—the discipline would not have reached its present healthy state of development. But it was this journal, under Ross Roy’s editorship, which provided a focus and a voice for the movement.

This final volume is, therefore, an appropriate place to pose the question, “Where now?” Or, more pessimistically, “Why are we currently stuck?” In Scotland itself the number of students enrolling for Scottish Literature at un-

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<sup>1</sup>Tom Scott, “Observations on Scottish Studies,” in *Studies in Scottish Literature*, 1 (1963-4), 5.

dergraduate level is, at best, static while abroad the existence of Scottish courses remains dependent on the individual enthusiasm of particular scholars. Only in these centers of interest will visiting scholars avoid the usual skepticism with which "Scottish" course proposals are greeted. The fact that Irish Studies are usually an accepted part of British Literature curricula makes the situation even more galling.

Of course, neither the creation nor the maintenance of the Scottish literary initiative was ever going to be easy. The moment one accepts the status of a minority tradition, and in that spirit, adds the national adjective "Scottish" to the disciplinary definition of "Literature," entry to the canon ceases to be determined on grounds of aesthetic quality alone. This separates that canon from the broad principles of classical rhetoric, which influenced the vast majority of Scottish writers.<sup>2</sup> Under those principles, the critic or commentator was not primarily concerned with what a poet or orator might say. His unique skills, as Aristotle had argued, were used to assess "how well" the available means of persuasion were employed, "The modes of persuasion are the only constituents of the art: everything else is merely accessory."<sup>3</sup>

As most modern criticism is more concerned with what is said than how well the text is made this prioritization gap between creators and critics, past and present, is not a problem affecting minority traditions alone. But, as I have argued elsewhere, its translation into specifically Scottish terms implies an extreme and self-conscious embracing of the thematically eclectic approach. This, in its turn, results in additional canonical restrictions being applied.<sup>4</sup> It is to Kurt Wittig's eternal credit that he provided a powerful and pragmatic critical program which met the growing nationalist concerns felt by academics at this time. The enthusiasm which greeted his *Scottish Tradition in Literature* in the late '50s can only be fully appreciated by those of us who shared that dawn.<sup>5</sup> The synchronic eclecticism of his approach, not to mention its theme-based methodology, nonetheless sought to give some Scottish writers a clearer voice by narrowing the canonical definition of Scottishness.

Those texts which were to form the basis of a canon designed to win autonomous curricular space had to meet not only the qualitative literary standards but sociological, nationalistic and topical criteria as well. Authors, however skilled, who represented the politically incorrect side of that paradigm,

<sup>2</sup>See Robert Crawford, *Devolving English Literature* (Oxford, 1992).

<sup>3</sup>Aristotle, *Rhetoric* I.1 in *The Complete Works of Aristotle*, 2 vols. ed. Jonathan Barnes (Princeton, 1984), II. 2152.

<sup>4</sup>In *The Mercat Anthology of Early Scottish Literature*, ed. R. D. S. Jack and P. A. T. Rozendaal (Edinburgh, 1997), Introduction, pp. vii-xxxix. Henceforth *Mercat Anthology*.

<sup>5</sup>Kurt Wittig, *The Scottish Tradition in Literature* (Edinburgh, 1958). Henceforth Wittig.

were given the briefest coverage in his monograph. As Wittig put it, "In expounding these values I have picked out the ones which seem to me specifically Scottish and have largely ignored the rest" (Wittig, p. 3).

In practical terms, this produced a graded canonical entrance system within which Scottish birth and rhetorical excellence became the lowest common denominator for consideration. Effective choice depended on positive answers to the following question. Does the author write in Scots? Does he or she deal with Scottish themes? Are those down-to-earth and radical attitudes which define Scotland today appropriately mirrored in the work? Obviously some writers are going to come out of this process better than others. At the highest level of popularity the radical nationalism of Burns will be preferred to the Toryism of Walter Scott. Poor Muriel Spark survived for *The Prime of Miss Jean Brodie* alone (set in Edinburgh!), while William Drummond and his fellow anglicizing mannerists of the seventeenth century passed ingloriously below the hermeneutic salt entirely.

The second extreme symptom of the Scottish case is implied by this evidence. The majority tradition which bestows minority status on Scottish writers is that of England. Both that country's closeness to Scotland and the undeniable strength of its own literary heritage make Scottish claims based on national uniqueness peculiarly difficult to establish. After all, historically, politically, geographically, linguistically and racially the stories of the two nations consistently overlap. Educationally, when Wittig was writing, Leavis and the "Great English Tradition" was being taught, via Palgrave's *Golden Treasury*, in Scottish schools. Only those Scottish authors who met English criteria for greatness were accepted into that curriculum. While this explains the need for a really radical, essentially Anglophobic, reaction such as the one Wittig proposed, its achievement implied a Scottish annexation of precisely the exclusive, Cyclopean critical vision, which, in its English form, had created the imbalance.

This also explains why that early critical revival felt the need to be parochial. Before one could open up the case for Scottish *Literature* abroad, it was necessary to define the quidditative base which gave *Scottish Literature* its autonomous right for attention. As those texts which delineated Scottish themes were generally preferred, and those which shared material or manner with England were regarded with most suspicion, *Redgauntlet* was more likely to appear than *Quentin Durward* and works with English settings like *Kenilworth*, highly unlikely to appear at all!

Wittig's case was fairly presented as a necessary interim stage in the development of Scottish Literature. Once a space had been made in the curriculum, the emphasis on nationalism could be lessened, English Literature could cease to determine canonical choice either positively or negatively and the gates of Scottish Literature could be opened up, non-defensively, to the world. Yet, when I surveyed the evidence in the mid 1990s, it seemed to me that neither at the undergraduate nor the postgraduate level had we dared to make that

leap of faith. The need to prove our own existence to ourselves still reigned supreme almost forty years after Wittig made his appeal.

In the interim, progress has been made. A survey of the same evidence today presents a more optimistic picture. There are signs that practical pedagogic attention is, at last, being paid to those critics, notably Christopher Whyte, Robert Crawford and Murray Pittock, who have defined this danger and suggested means of overcoming it. Greater interest is also being shown in translation and reception studies as the completion of that massive online resource *The Bibliography of Scottish Literature in Translation* confirms. It is, therefore, in a spirit of cautious optimism that I return to these issues.

As more theoretical work has been done in the later periods, I shall concentrate on the period from origins until the end of the seventeenth century. As this choice means that the priorities of effective persuasion dominate, I shall also confine myself to the material of making those word-bricks which are the tools of the writer-builder's trade and which he skillfully selects, when constructing his, literally art-ificial building.<sup>6</sup> By offering three alternative approaches to the nationalistic definition of Scotland's language—racial, rhetorical and international—I hope to suggest one way of broadening Scottish Literature's canonical base.

### *Reviewing Language I: Racially*

"If you are a nationalist there is one nation and it has one language."<sup>7</sup> Jacques Roubaud clearly demarcates the major linguistic danger underlying any rigorously patriotic approach to the literature of your homeland. He goes on to note that for those who make poetry subserve nationalism, poetic values cease "to be the main point of their poems" (Roubaud, p. 13). Further, as it is pragmatically more effective to identify use of one language as a sign of patriotism, a simplified linguistic paradigm supports the equally simplified pattern of true and treacherous texts. Roubaud makes the case for French Canadian writing. In a Scottish context, while lip service is paid to Gaelic, effectively it is Scots which becomes the linguistic touchstone for correctness.

It is the application of these principles—one nation, one race, one language—which makes Barbour the father of Scottish Literature. His *Bruce*, written in early Scots and describing Scotland's struggle for national identity, is an obvious choice. Departing from almost universal practice, I shall introduce that poem, not with the usual quotation "A! fredome is a noble thing"

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<sup>6</sup>See *The Didascalicon of Hugh of St Victor*, trans. Jerome Taylor (New York, 1961) VI.4, 139-44.

<sup>7</sup>Jacques Roubaud, "The Voice of Poetry," in *Translation and Literature*, 6.1 (1997), 12. Henceforth Roubaud.

from Book 1 but two books later when Bruce seeks to encourage his troops after successive defeats at the Battle of Methven and in the conflict with the Lord of Lorne:

Thusgat thaim confort the king  
 And to confort thaim gan inbryng  
 Auld storys off men that wer  
 Set in-tyll hard assayis ser  
 And that fortoun contraryit fast,  
 And come to purpos at the last.  
 Tharfor he said that thai that wald  
 Thar hartis undiscumfyt hald  
 Suld ay thynk ententily to bryng  
 All thar enpres to gud ending,  
 As quhile did Cesar the worthy.<sup>8</sup>

Book 3 has been chosen as it graphically illustrates both of the major problems, canonical and critical posed by Barbour's status as Father of Scottish Literature."

The canonical issue is glaringly obvious and particularly problematic for an avowedly competitive tradition. If Scottish literature begins in the mid 1370s with Barbour, when English literature traces its origins back to the seventh century, then seven centuries of rivalry (or 50% of the available time scale) are conceded at once. Where are the Scottish answers in the Old English period to *Beowulf*—first written in West Saxon around 700—*The Dream of the Rood* or, in the Middle English period, to *Pearl*, *Piers Plowman* or even the early dream visions of Chaucer?

The critical conundrum centers on Barbour's literary sophistication. The breadth of the archdeacon's reading is reflected throughout his poem but is particularly well exemplified in Book III, where he ostentatiously draws from a variety of different modes. Both aural and written sources are evident, for while the narrator uses his knowledge of chronicles to establish Bruce's predicament, the Lord of Lorne appeals to aural Celtic sources. At the same time Bruce is drawing on Epic, Romantic and Legendary evidence taken from classical and vernacular to prevent his troops falling into despair. Vergil, Lucan and Martinus Polinus share common ground with the matter of Rome (*Le Roman di Alexandre*) and the matter of France (*Fieribras*).<sup>9</sup>

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<sup>8</sup>*Barbour's Bruce*, ed. Matthew P. McDiarmid and James A. C. Stevenson, 3 vols., Scottish Text Society, Fourth Series, 12-13, 15 (1980, 1981, 1985), II, 55. I have normalized this diplomatic text. Henceforth McDiarmid,

<sup>9</sup>See McDiarmid, I, 72-5; *The Bruce*, ed. A. A. M. Duncan, Canongate Classics No. 78 (Edinburgh, 1997), pp. 112-32. The episode referred to in the quotation originally comes from

The idea that all poets north of the Tweed had taken a seven-hundred year vow of silence is self-evidently ludicrous. The real question is why so many critics simply excise the relevant period without explanation. The answer is obvious. While English literature does not wait until clear national entities called England and Scotland exist when searching for origins, the Scottish literary tradition in its nationalistic form does. Indeed, in these terms, Barbour's poem may be regarded as radically early. As A. D. M. Barrell argues, strict application of these criteria would delay initiation until the establishing of clear boundaries in the early sixteenth century!<sup>10</sup>

If this political perspective is pragmatically disadvantageous, it is also historically inaccurate. Inclusion of pre-national literature demands our acceptance of a much more complex picture, racially and linguistically. In the seventh century, many tribes co-existed in the geographical space now called Scotland:

The land of modern Scotland was at one time held by the Picts, Scots, British, Angles and Norse. The Picts held the land roughly north of the Forth and Clyde; the Scots established themselves in Modern Argyll, in the fifth and sixth centuries; the British holding Strathclyde, were part of the ancient British who had been driven west by invading Angles and Saxons; the Norse established themselves in Orkney and Shetland, Caithness and Sutherland, and the Western Isles, in the ninth century.<sup>11</sup>

Many races meant many tongues, as the eighteenth-century linguist Alexander Geddes noted:

On analysing the Scoto-Saxon dialect, I find it composed; first and chiefly of pure Saxon; secondly of Saxonised Celtic, whether Welsh, Pictish or Erse; thirdly of Saxonised Norman or Old French; fourthly of more modern French Scotcized; fifthly of Danish, Dutch and Flemish occasionally incorporated; sixthly of words, borrowed from the learned dead languages.<sup>12</sup>

Once these multi-racial and polymathic paths have been opened up, a variety of voices speaking, singing or writing in these languages can be heard in

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the French Romance, *Fieribras*. While Barbour anglicizes the names of the combatants his French travels and education make it unnecessary to assume that he only knew this French Romance via an English version.

<sup>10</sup>A. D. M. Barrell, *Medieval Scotland* (Cambridge, 2000), p. 1.

<sup>11</sup>*A Source Book of Scottish History* Vol. 1, *From Earliest Times to 1424*, ed. William Croft Dickinson, Gordon Donaldson, Isabel Milne (London, 1952), p. 9.

<sup>12</sup>Alexander Geddes, "Three Scottish Poems With a Previous Dissertation on the Scottish Dialect," *Transactions of the Society of Antiquaries of Scotland*, I (1792), 415.

the area now known as Scotland.<sup>13</sup> Numerically, the surviving texts may be few but as Kathleen Hughes convincingly argues that is due to particular difficulties facing the Celtic nations during what was, anyway, a predominantly aural period.<sup>14</sup> But even the briefest of accounts, confining itself to major works and to the earliest (seventh century) and latest (thirteenth century) perimeters of the supposed silence, provides the varied modal background needed to account, in *Scottish* terms, for Barbour's confident intertwining of different literary voices.

Chronologically, this polymathic and multi-racial approach first reveals a powerful, versified account of Scottish military heroism in defeat composed originally by the Scottish bard Aneirin and later re-told by his Welsh ally and brother poet, Taliesin:

Gwŷr a aeth Gatraeth gan wawr  
Trafodynt eu hedd eu hofnawr,  
Milcant a thrychant a ymdaflawdd.  
Gwyrallyd gwynoddyd waywawr.

[Warriors went to Catraeth (Catterick) with the dawn.  
Their fears departed from their dwelling place.  
A hundred thousand and three hundred charged  
against each other.]<sup>15</sup>

*Y Gododdin* celebrates a group of warriors led by King Mynyddog, lord of Din Eidyn (Edinburgh). The racial grouping which gives the poem its name did live in the area of present-day Scotland which stretches north to Dundee. The battle of Catraeth which stands at the dramatic center of the poem was fought c. 600 A.D. and is recorded in Nennius' *Historia Brittonum*. There, the courage of the Scottish forces is confirmed and their conquest attributed to the treachery of another ruler, named Morgant. Those enemies are Saxon and based in England.

The last years of the seventh century provide the first recorded appearance of the Loch Ness Monster:

Vir tum beatus...cum salutare sancta elevata manu in vacuo aere crucis pinxisset  
signum invocato dei nomine feroci imperavit bestia, dicens: "Noles ultra progredi,  
nec hominem tangas. Retro citius revertere."

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<sup>13</sup>*The Triumph Tree: Scotland's Earliest Poetry A.D. 550-1350*, ed. Thomas Owen Clancy, Canongate Classics No. 86 (Edinburgh, 1998).

<sup>14</sup>Kathleen Hughes, *Celtic Britain in the Early Middle Ages* (Cambridge, 1990), pp. 1-21.

<sup>15</sup>Aneirin, *Y Gododdin*, ed. A. O. H. Jarman (Llandyssul, 1990), p. 8.



[The blessed man [Columba]...raised his holy hand and in the empty air made the sign of the cross and then invoking the name of God, commanded the savage beast, saying: "You will go no further. Do not touch the man; turn backwards speedily."]<sup>16</sup>

The source of this quotation is the *Vitae Columba* composed by the Saint's successor as Abbot of Iona, Adomnán in the 1690s. Both writer and subject are, therefore, Dalriadans and in that sense Scots-Irish.

In the early days, there is even a "Scottish" anticipation of the English *Dream of the Rood* on the Ruthwell cross near Dumfries.

krist waes on rodi  
hweþrae þer fusac fēarran kwomu  
aepþilae til anum ic þaet al bih[ēald]  
sarae ic waes mi[þ] sorgum gidrae[fi]d

[Christ was on the cross. And there came noble men from afar to him. I who beheld it all, was sorely affected by pains.]<sup>17</sup>

The richness in variety of even this basic evidence should be noted. Modally we move from classical panegyric in verse to prose legend and then to divine history. Linguistically, the transition is from Brythonic Gaelic to Hibernian Latin to Northumbrian runes with the first example deriving from the aural bardic tradition, the second illustrating the written monastic line and the third concretely inscribed on a cross. Geographically, the central focus moves from the home of the Goddodin on the east coast, to the Isles of the west and then to the border country around Dumfries. Racially, alliances with Wales, Ireland and England are respectively prefigured.

At the other end of the pre-national scale comes the thirteenth century and with it the French and Scandinavian influences noted linguistically by Geddes. The first illustrative quotation I have chosen comes from Part II, Book 1 of the *Karlamagnús Saga*. It demonstrates how the Scottish aural tradition might influence the Old Icelandic saga tradition in days when mercantile and regal links with Scandinavia were particularly close:

Saga þessi...sem síðar mun birtast. Fann þessa sögu herra Bjarni Erlingsson úr Bjarkey, ritada og sagða í ensku máli, í Skotlandi, þá er hann sat þar um veturinn eftir fráfall Alexandri konungs.

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<sup>16</sup> Adomnán's *Life of Columba*, ed. with translation and notes by Alan Orr Anderson and Marjorie Ogilvie Anderson. (Oxford, 1961), p. 337.

<sup>17</sup> *The Dream of the Rood*, ed. Bruce Dickins and Alan S. C. Ross (London, 1934) p. 28.

[This saga...tells the truth, as will be apparent later. Lord Bjarni Erlingsson of Bjarkey found this saga written and told in the English language in Scotland, when he stayed there during the winter after the death of King Alexander.]<sup>18</sup>

The particular reference here is to the negotiations conducted on behalf of the Maid of Norway. The second draws in Anglo-Norman and the Romance mode. Written by a clerk based in Scotland, *Fergus* tells the tale of a rough Galloway farmer cum knight errant who lays down his plough to follow King Arthur:

Quant li fius au vilain le voit  
 ..... se li dist:  
 'Biaus dols frere, se Dius t'aît,  
 Ne me celer, di moi qui sont  
 Cil chevalier qui par chi vont.'

[When the peasant's son saw [Arthur and his knights]...he said to [the squire], "my dear brother in God's name tell me honestly—who are those knights passing this way?"]<sup>19</sup>

By moving from a view of language which highlights Scots in terms of modern concepts of patriotism and nationhood to one which reflects the country's racially diverse origins, we most obviously broaden the linguistic base. But we do so in social and historical terms shared by the early makars themselves and restore a voice to seven hundred years of putative silence. Crucially, such a move explains away the otherwise unanswerable questions posed by Barbour's subtlety and modal virtuosity.

### *Reviewing Language II: Rhetorically*

The uthir cause [for writing a guide to Scottish vernacular poetry] is, That, as for thame that hes written in it of late, there hes never ane of thame written in our language. For albeit sindrie hes written of it in English, quhilk, is lykest to our language, yit we differ from thame in sindrie reulis of Poesie, as ye will find be experience.

(James VI)<sup>20</sup>

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<sup>18</sup>*Karlamagnús Saga og Kappa Hans*, ed. Bjarni Viljálmsón, *Islendingasaganautgáfan* Kaukadalsútgáfan, 3 vols. (Rejkavik, 1961), I, 101.

<sup>19</sup>Guillaume le Clerc, *The Romance of Fergus*, ed. Wilson Frescolin (Philadelphia, 1983), p. 42.

"Scottish vernacular prose as well as poetry virtually terminates with James VI."  
(T. F. Henderson)<sup>21</sup>

The contradiction revealed by setting Henderson's view of James VI as "traitor" against the king's own expressed desire to create a peculiarly Scottish and Scottis Renaissance aptly introduces the second kind of linguistic revision needed. The earlier racial re-definition established a broader linguistic foundation and restored seven hundred years of literary endeavor. The conflict between these two quotations, on the other hand, springs from different attitudes to Scottis and Inglis alone and restores the later Scottish Renaissance (c. 1580-c. 1700) to national respectability.

Henderson follows the nationalistic view of language described by Roubaud and imposes that idea of linguistic patriotism upon an earlier, literary world, which did not share it. As this logic is still surprisingly prevalent and as another hundred and twenty years are denied Scottishness because of it a more detailed understand of the situation faced by James is required. If one returns to the late fifteenth and early sixteenth centuries, it becomes clear that a decorous rather than a patriotic view of language choice dominates. The great makars—Henryson, Dunbar and Douglas—were all aware of Scotland's multi-racial origins and the Northumbrian foundations of our language. As a result they never retreated to simplistic oppositions between Scots and English. Both nationally and linguistically they saw a much more complex picture than that implied by Henderson's neat antitheses.

Indeed, as makars, their starting point is rhetorical rather than nationalistic. The rules of decorum, as delineated by Horace in his *Art of Poetry* and developed by the medieval Scholastic commentators, governed their approach. Dunbar's derivation of Scottish writing from Chaucer rather than Barbour follows from this non-nationalistic premise:

O reverend Chaucere, rose of rethoris all  
(As in oure tong ane flour imperiall)  
That raise in Britane evir, quho redis rycht,  
Thou beris of makaris the tryumph riall;  
Thy fresch anamalit termes celicall  
This mater coud illumynit have full brycht.  
Was thou noucht of oure Inglisch all the lycht,  
Surmounting eviry tong terrestriall,  
Alls fer as Mayes morow dois mydynycht? (*The Goldyn Targe*, ll. 253-61)

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<sup>20</sup>James VI, *Ane Schort Treatise Containing some Reulis and Cautelis to the Observit and Eschewit in Scottis Poesie* in *The Poems of James VI of Scotland*, ed. James Craigie, 2 vols. Scottish Text Society, Third Series, Nos. 22, 26 (1955, 1958), I, 63. Henceforth *Poems*.

<sup>21</sup>T. F. Henderson, *Scottish Vernacular Literature: A History* (London, 1900), p. 333.

Crucially, the late medieval Scottish makars—in direct contrast to their twentieth century successors—believed their linguistic inheritance to be particularly rich. They found it easy to translate that hierarchical system of differentiated styles and topics precisely because Middle Scots was the product of multiple sources. A preference for Latin and French forms marked out the sonorous rhythms of the High Style. In moving to the Low Style, they did not need to rely on the fall from sonorous Ciceronian to rhythms, the predominance of Dutch and Old Norse loanwords signed the chosen level as well. Dunbar as the most virtuosic of the three illustrates the method most clearly, from the topical heights of “Ane Ballat of our Lady” via the middle style of “To the Merchantis of Edinburgh” down to the couthy invective of his flyting with Kennedy,

The alternative, patriotically distinct, view of language is less common. Gavin Douglas is the first to argue that case:

And yit forsuyth I set my bissy pane  
 As that I couth to mak it braid and plane,  
 Kepand na sudron bot our awyn langage,  
 And spekis as I lernyt quhen I was page.  
 Nor yit sa cleyn all sudron I refus,  
 Bot sum word I pronounce as nyghtbouris doys:  
 Lyke as in Latyn beyn Grew termys sum,  
 Some behufyt quhilum (or than be dum)  
 Sum bastard Latyn, French or Inglys oyss,  
 Quhar scant was Scottis—I had nane other choys.  
 (*Eneados*, Prologue, ll. 109-118)

Characteristically, he does so only in his translation of Virgil's *Aeneid*. As Matthiessen notes, Renaissance translation was viewed as “an act of patriotism,” colonizing words as adventurers colonized lands.<sup>22</sup> The medieval and renaissance translator colonizes words from other languages to increase the subtlety of the national vernacular.

Within the comprehensive dialectic of the period, these two models were not seen as mutually exclusive; the decorous and nationalist models co-existed within a modally and persuasively differentiated agenda. And it was this flexible, essentially pragmatic, view of language which James inherited and manipulated. The quotation which heads this section was written in 1584 when the young king was beginning his personal reign at the Edinburgh court. Wishing to proclaim the uniqueness of Scotland's cultural position at a time when anglicizing forces, including the invention of printing and English translations of the Bible, were drawing Scots ever closer to English, he used his rhetorical treatise to emphasize the nationalistic side of the argument.

<sup>22</sup>F. O. Matthiessen, *Translation: An Elizabethan Art* (Cambridge, MA, 1931), p. 3.

Henderson's claim that James killed vernacular writing seems even stranger when one takes into account the fact that the *Reulis* are overtly designed to make a general case for vernacular composition and a particular one for maintaining the distinctiveness of "Scottis." Accordingly writers at the Scottish court were directed to use distinctively Scottish word forms wherever possible. Meanwhile new words should be invented and translations attempted so that the language might extend some frontiers while others were closing down.

In this climate, a poetic anglicizer such as William Alexander was properly rebuked by his monarch for his "harshe vearses after the Inglishe fasone" (*Poems*, II, 114). When political circumstances altered, however, so did the king's linguistic policy and Alexander soon found himself a model for the new age and one of the king's collaborators in composing an English version of the Psalms. In the 1590s, as the likelihood of James's accession to the throne of Great Britain increased, linguistic politics also changed. To anglicize while retaining some distinctive Scotticisms now became the name of the poetic game. In urging this new course, James is neither a traitor to Scotland nor indeed to his earlier linguistic policy. Both the defense of Scots and the new Anglicizing policy remain true to the rhetorical principles of decorum and to the principle that one's linguistic policy should serve the country's best interests. It is these interests which have changed due to the Union of the Crowns. Now that a Scottish king is to become King of Britain and Ireland, Scottish writers are willing to make greater accommodations to the "Inglis" side of their linguistic inheritance than in the past. They do not anglicize in the craven, apologetic manner attributed to them by Henderson, rather, as the Latin panegyric verse of the *Delitiae Poetarum Scotorum* reveals, they do so in a spirit of almost chauvinistic condescension.<sup>23</sup> Just as James descends to teach peaceful, philosophical government to war-torn England, so Scottish poets condescend to Anglicization so that their message may be clearly transferred to their new allies. Only if you assume that a patriotic definition of language dominated at this time, that Scots and English were separate tongues, and that Anglicization meant root and branch deletion of Scots words, can the assumption of linguistic treachery validly be leveled against James and the Scoto-Britane poets. But the decorous and racial arguments undermined the first two premises while the third can be negated empirically.

First, we are still concerned with a primarily aural culture; Scots pronunciation will distinguish origins, even in the most radical of anglicizations. Second, as Charles I confirms, James urged the retention of Scottish words whenever their sense could not be exactly duplicated in English. And finally,

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<sup>23</sup>See *Delitiae Poetarum Scotorum Huius Aevi Illustrium*, ed. Arthur Johnston, 2 vols. (Amsterdam, 1637).

as the revisions of Robert Ayton demonstrate, Late Middle Scots was significantly anglicized already.<sup>24</sup>

In eighteenth-century Scotland, the leaders of what is misleadingly termed "The vernacular revival" (Which pure vernacular? Had Latin been compulsory for seventeenth-century Scots poets?) adopt the same linguistic models and espouse the same optimistic view of their linguistic heritage. Otherwise, why would the architect of that movement, Allan Ramsay, proudly take two pseudonyms, adding Gavin Douglas to the English neoclassical, Isaac Bickerstaff, when claiming membership of the Easy Club?<sup>25</sup> Or how could Burns honestly salute the Muse of Scotland in the Latinate English of the high style?

Her *Mantle* large, of greenish hue,  
My gazing wonder chiefly drew;  
Deep *lights* and *shades*, bold-mingling, threw  
    A luster grand;  
And seem'd, to my astonish'd view,  
    A *well-known* Land.<sup>26</sup>

Freedom of choice is made available by having not only two national definitions to work with but two linguistic logics. If decorum produces this rhetorically-appropriate English eulogy, patriotic fervor may alternatively be expressed in Scots:

Fareweel to a' our Scottish fame,  
    Fareweel our ancient glory;  
Fareweel even to the Scottish name,  
    Sae fam'd in martial story!  
Now Sark rins o'er the Solway sands,  
    And Tweed rins to the ocean,  
To mark whare England's province stands,  
    Such a parcel of rogues in a nation!  
    (Burns, II, 643).

One simply changes from the artificial decorous code to its naturalistic equivalent.

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<sup>24</sup>See R. D. S. Jack, "The Language of Literary Materials: Origins to 1700" in *The Edinburgh History of the Scots Language*, ed. Charles Jones (Edinburgh, 1997), p. 256.

<sup>25</sup>*The Works of Allan Ramsay*, ed. Burns Martin, John W. Oliver, Alexander M. Kinghorn, Alexander Law, 6 vols., Scottish Text Society, Third Series, Nos. 19, 20, 29; Fourth Series, Nos. 6, 7, 8 (1944-74), V, 28.

<sup>26</sup>"The Vision," Duan 1 in *The Poems and Songs of Robert Burns*, ed. James Kinsley, 3 vols. (Oxford, 1968), I, 105. Henceforth Burns.

The powerful and distinctive contribution made by the Scottish rhetoricians in the eighteenth century meant that the decorous approach to language continued more powerfully (and for longer) north of the border. Indeed, when Masson introduced the first university course dedicated to literature in the late nineteenth century, it was called "Rhetoric and Belles Lettres" and began with an introduction to Aristotle's principles. The first lectures explained the figures of style and thought<sup>27</sup>—a method still employed in the 1950s when I began my own senior secondary education. This, predominantly classical, training led to a Higher Certificate which did not separate Literature from Language as in England. When one considers how many of the leading twentieth-century Scottish makars—including Douglas Young, Sydney Goodsir Smith, Sorley MacLean, Norman MacCaig and Edwin Morgan—shared and employed that training in their writing one might even argue that the rhetorical approach becomes a distinctive sign of Scottishness itself.

### *Reviewing Language III: Internationally*

For all the current rhetoric about "Scotland in Europe" relatively little attention is paid—at least within Scotland itself—to our literary dialogues with our mainland neighbours.<sup>28</sup>

If scholars become too concerned with defending and defining their own national identity they are liable to forget the crucial issue of outreach. Tom Hubbard, the senior researcher for the second phase of *The Bibliography of Scottish Literature in Translation*, is in a particularly good position to assess how much attention home scholars currently pay to the reception of Scottish literature abroad. Unfortunately his pessimism mirrors my own experience. When I sat for ten years on the Scottish Office's postgraduate awards committee I counted the number of thesis proposals in the Scottish Literature area which were concerned with defining our own perceptions. An amazing 80% fell into the first category, rising to 85% for the second. When this is set against the 5% which had any comparative bias a disturbing obsession with self-definition emerged.

There are major ironies here as well. First of all, the early Scottish makars were among the most polymathic of European writers. Those tendencies were more than confirmed by their sixteenth- and seventeenth-century successors.

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<sup>27</sup>David Masson, "Theories of Poetry" in *Essays Biographical and Critical* (Cambridge, 1856), pp. 409–46. See also the University Notebooks of J. M. Barrie, National Library of Scotland, ADV MS 6652.

<sup>28</sup>Tom Hubbard, "Early Scottish Internationalism through Translation: Landmark Records in *The Bibliography of Scottish Literature in Translation* (BOSLIT)," in *Scottish Language*, 22 (2003), 36. Henceforth Hubbard.

In the polymathic climate of the Renaissance, it is no surprise to find Scottish libraries including many more works in foreign languages, classical and modern, than in English.<sup>29</sup>

Secondly, translation skills were highly regarded throughout the period. Douglas's *Eneados* provided a particularly brilliant focus for such acts of linguistic patriotism. His successors enthusiastically built upon his example with James VI, foreseeably including a translation program into his plans for a Scottish literary Renaissance. Poets at the Scottish court before the Union were ordered to draw on the works of European vernacular poets in particular. When the king himself translated Du Bartas or Saint Gelais, Alexander Montgomerie turned to Ronsard, William Fowler sought out Petrarch and Machiavelli or Stewart of Baldynneis turned to Ariosto and Desportes, expanding the resources of the Scots tongue through coinages was a major part of that poetic game. After the Union of the Crowns, the Scoto-Britanes pushed the linguistic boundaries even further back with Drummond of Hawthornden fully justifying his status as "first among literary chameleons" by translating from a wide range of tongues including Spanish and Portuguese.<sup>30</sup>

Major efforts to correct this imbalance are now being made. The web site of the Scottish Arts Council highlights the importance of paying attention to Reception Studies while the creation of a Scottish Centre for Translation Studies is being actively considered. Without such advances, our chances of establishing Scottish Literature on syllabi abroad will remain diminished. As Dante reminds us, the border between Scotland and England may be a matter of intense importance to the Scots and English; viewed from abroad such conflicts on a tiny island become farcical signs of materialistic self-absorption.<sup>31</sup>

The potential value of the online resource mentioned above cannot be overestimated. *The Bibliography of Scottish Literature in Translation* is a convenient and universally accessible database.<sup>32</sup> It provides comprehensive coverage of all translations of Scottish Literature into any and all languages. The word "literature" is understood in a broad sense, especially for the earlier centuries. This means that devotional treatises, law books and works on philosophy are included with Michael Scot, the alchemist, currently being the first Scottish author to be translated (see Hubbard, pp; 36-7). The linguistic definition of the word "Scottish" follows the racial logic argued above; Scots,

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<sup>29</sup>See John Durkan and Anthony Ross, *Early Scottish Libraries* (Glasgow, 1961).

<sup>30</sup>For a fuller analysis see my article, "Translating the Scottish Renaissance" in *Translation and Literature*, 6 (1997), 66-80.

<sup>31</sup>Dante, *La Divina Commedia*, Paradiso, XIX, 121-3. 'Li si vedrà la superbia ch'assetta, /che fa lo Scotto e l'Inghilese folle, / sì che non può soffrir dentro a sua meta.'

<sup>32</sup><http://boslit.nls.uk>.



Gaelic, Latin and English are, therefore, included. Begun in 1994 under the direction of Professor Peter France, with Dr. Paul Barnaby as a senior researcher BOSLIT was, from the outset, a long-term project. Its successful completion introduces the third comparative irony into the disciplinary equation. No other national literature possesses such a research too. Yet few other literary traditions remain so unconcerned with the areas of research which this unique database is designed to support.

The practical research potential of the resource is self-evident. Currently, there are over 25,000 recorded translations covering 104 languages.<sup>33</sup> Basic authorial searches permit the enquirer to extricate evidence for individual authors and texts and to organize material in ascending or descending order of publication. Simple Keyword and Boolean procedures make it possible to narrow the research focus. For example one can isolate German translations of pre-1900 Scottish writers, all Swedish translations from Burns or Finnish translations of twentieth-century short stories. Many overseas scholars have testified to the value of the database in aiding their research on translation practice and theory. But scholars at home are still less ready to use the resource as a means of re-focusing their teaching and research.

To gain some idea of the difference between current evaluations of Early Scottish Literature and assessments from a European perspective in its own day, I shall return to the Golden Age of the late fifteenth and early sixteenth centuries and its leading poetic trio—Henryson, Dunbar and Douglas. Currently there are only thirty records of translations from Dunbar, fourteen from Henryson and five from Douglas and only two of these—George Buchanan's late sixteenth-century version of Dunbar's "Somnium" and Sir Francis Kynaston's 1638 rendering of Henryson's *Testament*—appeared before 1700. One can conclude that the impact of these poets on the outside world was practically zero. Indeed as both Buchanan and Kynaston translated into Latin, credit for the first recorded vernacular advertising of Scotland's big three goes to the nineteenth century Serbo-Croatian poet, Stanko Vraza, who included translations from Dunbar and Douglas in an 1868 anthology published in Zagreb.<sup>34</sup>

Although a 1541 Danish version of Lindsay's "The Monarche," "The Dreame," "The Testament of the Papyngo" and "The Tragedy of David Beaton" exists, he is no more attractive in general terms as a model for translation. Indeed it is only the much maligned later vernacular makars James VI and William Drummond, who amass a respectable number—twenty-one and thirty-six respectively.

In the latter case, however, all but the Croatian anthology have been produced in the twentieth century. Drummond's presence in the Leavisite an-

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<sup>33</sup>The database is constantly expanding; the figures given are those of October 14, 2004.

<sup>34</sup>*Dela: cetvrit dio: Razlike pjesme: prevodi*, trans. Stanka Vraza (Zagreb, 1868).

thologies made him more accessible in Europe, as did his anglicized medium and chameleon muse,<sup>35</sup> but he cannot claim to be any better known in his own time than Henryson or Dunbar. James's fame furth of Scotland obviously stems from his political importance. But he alone of Scottish vernacular poets and prose writers can claim to have exerted an influence on his contemporaries abroad. Thirteen of the entries under his name belong to the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, with the *Lepanto* being the poetic favorite, and the *Dæmonologie* ranking with the *Basilicon Doron* as favored models in prose.

Two names dominate these early translation records. Identifying them will also introduce the fourth irony into the comparative equation as they write in Latin. The irony here is that while not even the most blindly Anglophobic Scot would argue that Scottish vernacular writers of the Renaissance ranked qualitatively with the Golden Age of Shakespeare, the nationalist equation of Scottishness with "Scottis" prevents them from making the obvious counter-case. While Scotland in the Renaissance might lag behind England in terms of vernacular writing, the Scottish Neo-Latinists enjoyed a European reputation second to none.

The first of the two names, George Buchanan (1506-1582), was widely recognized as—*poeta sui saeculi facile princeps*—the sixteenth century's finest poetic practitioner in that tongue. Given that Latin was the *lingua franca* of learned communication throughout the Renaissance, it should come as no surprise to find over fifty translations of Buchanan's works in BOSLIT. One lesser known seventeenth-century Neo-Latinist, however, currently boasts sixty-five. Clues to his identity are few, but they do exist. William Alexander's critical coverage of the finest classical and vernacular texts in *Anacrisis* may confirm the linguistic versatility of seventeenth-century criticism ranging from Virgil and Lucan to Philip Sidney, Montemayor and Tasso, but only one Scot warrants mention at this, the highest, level of artistic skill. Rounding off his overview of European Pastoral and Romance, Alexander comments,

This kind of invention in prose hath been attempted by sundry in the vulgar languages ... as Sanazarius's *Arcadia* in Italian, *Diana de Montemajor* in Spanish, *As-trea* in French, I have lately seen my country-man Barclay's *Argenis*, printed at Rome, though the last in this kind, yet no way inferior to the first.<sup>36</sup>

It is worthwhile discovering whether Buchanan and John Barclay (1582-1621) have more in common than a shared medium. Biographical evidence

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<sup>35</sup>Arguably he produced more lyrical translations from a wider range of foreign languages than any of his British contemporaries. Sources include Petrarch, Marino, Tasso, Guarini; Guevera, Granada; Du Bellay, Du Bartas, De Tyad; Spenser, Daniel, Sidney; Fowlër, Alexander.

<sup>36</sup>Sir William Alexander, *Anacrisis*, (c. 1635), in *Mercat Anthology*, p. 478.

provides the first positive evidence, revealing that they were both in a real sense, Europeans. Buchanan may have been born in Stirlingshire and educated at St Andrews University but he followed his tutor, John Major, to France in 1527. He taught at the Collège de Sainte-Barbe for a time and only returned to Scotland with his pupil, Gilbert Kennedy, in 1536. Barclay was also heavily involved in European academic life. The son of a Scot who had become Professor of Civil Law at the recently established Collège de Saint-Mousson, he was actually born in France, only crossing the Channel to join James's London court around 1606. As there is no definite record of his ever having journeyed north of the Tweed, only his expressed pride in his Scottish lineage and Alexander's acceptance of him on those terms mark him out as a Scottish writer. He left Britain for the Papal Court in 1615 and died in Rome.

If one focuses on the specific texts which were most enthusiastically received in Europe, further parallels are revealed. Translators were attracted to a number of works in the canon of both authors, but Buchanan's dramas, *Baptistes* and, more especially, *Jephtha*<sup>37</sup> attract most attention. By far the most widely translated early text, however, is Barclay's prose Romance, *Argenis*. No fewer than forty-six translations of this work have been traced in thirteen different European languages.<sup>38</sup> Interestingly, all three were composed abroad. Buchanan composed these plays in the early 1540s while at the Collège de Guyenne in Bordeaux, while the *Argenis* was written and published at the end of Barclay's life in Rome.

Alexander's rhetorical treatise suggests a further link. While Barclay's Romance must first meet all of the necessary tests of style, its author ranks as a supreme artist because "his work whether judged of in the whole or parted in pieces, will be found to be a body strong in substance and full of sinews in every member."<sup>39</sup> The opening of *Argenis*, first published in 1621, helps to explain the depth and breadth of its message more precisely:

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<sup>37</sup>There are four early translations of *Baptistes* and eighteen of *Jephtha*. In the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, *Jephtha* is rendered into French, German, Hungarian, Italian and Polish.

<sup>38</sup>Of these, twenty-five belong to the seventeenth century; versions in English, French, German, Greek, Italian, Polish and Spanish belong to that period. The eighteenth century adds Danish, Hungarian, Russian and Swedish and has eighteen entries. One German translation in the nineteenth century and one German and one Spanish translation in the twentieth century complete the records to date.

<sup>39</sup>*Mercat Anthology*, p. 479.

Nondum Orbis adoraverat Romam, nondum Oceanus decesserat Tybri, cum as oram Siciliae, qua fluvius Gelas maria subit, ingentis speciei juvenum peregrina novis exposuit.<sup>40</sup>

[This world had not yet come to adore Rome nor the ocean bowed to the Tiber, when a young, well endowed man embarked from a foreign ship on the shore of Sicily.]

Set in Italy, the literal story of the Romance tells of rivalry in love. Different suitors strive to win the hand of an idealized princess. Allegorically, however, the tale foreshadows the political map of Europe in the late sixteenth and early seventeenth centuries while lengthy and direct discussions on key political issues regularly interrupt the narrative. Foreseeably, readers and later editors sought out tee actual names behind the romantic figures. In the 1637 English translation, a long list of identifications follows the text. Both the "well endowed man" whose journey opens the text (Archombrotus) and one of the suitors, Poliarchus, are usually equated with Henry IV, Hyanisbe becomes Elizabeth I and Radirobanes, Phillip II.<sup>41</sup>

Other keys offer different solutions because "[He] is not writing a political tract but a work of the imagination and the [work] is far greater and of more lasting significance than any set of exact identifications would allow."<sup>42</sup> Significantly, while this quotation exactly applies to *Argenis*, it originates in the editorial introduction to Buchanan's plays and specifically refers to *Baptistes*. In that drama, the broad theme is political tyranny and religious oppression. The narrative shell which persuasively encloses that thematic kernel is the Biblical story of John the Baptist. Again particular identifications were made, with Herod variously being seen to stand for Charles I or James VI or even Henry VIII. In short, both are pièces à clef where universally applicable issues, imaginatively presented, tempt the audience to draw particular, contemporary solutions from the action.

*Jephtha* follows the same model but addresses an even more ambitious topic in that it resurrects Boethius's hydra theme of liberty and justice, temporal and divine, using the limitations of the vow as the fulcrum for analysis just

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<sup>40</sup>Joannis Barclaii, *Argenis* (London, 1621), p. 1.

<sup>41</sup>*Barclay his Argenis*, trans. Sir Robert le Grys and Thomas May (London, 1628), pp. 486-9.

<sup>42</sup>George Buchanan, *Tragedies*, ed. P. Sharratt and P. G. Walsh (Edinburgh, 1983) p. 13. Henceforth Buchanan.

as Beatrice had done for Dante.<sup>43</sup> Dramatically and openly presented by the Chorus in the manner shown below, however, it was inevitable that a French audience or reader would transfer the groves of Jerusalem on to French soil while Scots would need no prompting to think of their own regal rivalries and religious revolutions:

formosum Solymae palmiferae nemus  
en unquam miserae candidus adferet  
curarum vacuae Lucifer hunc diem  
cum cernam patriam libera liberam  
quae nunc servitii vincula barbari  
infelix patitur? (ll. 151-156)

[O grove of Jerusalem clad in palm-trees, so beautiful since you never shed your foliage through the cold; will the bright Light-bearer ever bring this day before our wretched eyes so that we are bereft of cares, when we shall be free and see our land free—our land which now endures unhappily the bonds of slavery beneath the barbarian—Buchanan, p. 67].

The marrying of rhetorical skills to powerful story lines and universally applicable topics certainly proved a winning formula for both authors.

The purpose of this article has not been to deny the value of a nationalistic approach to literature but to offer alternative ways of looking at Scotland's linguistic heritage. Not only is this consistent with Scholastic dialectics, which were at once comprehensive and quidditative, it is the way in which a self-confident literary tradition builds upon its foundations. Allowing racial, rhetorical and international view of "Scottis" and "Scottishness" to influence critical analysis and therefore canon formation is at once a historically valid and pragmatically effective way of moving forward.

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*Emeritus*

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<sup>43</sup>As defined by Boethius in *De Consolatione Philosophiae* Bk. IV Pr 6. See Dante, *La Divina Commedia, Paradiso*, Cantos II-V which concern the disparity between the mysterious perfection of divine order and justice and the measures taken by fallen man to draw them closer. The vow stands at the center of this analysis, as Beatrice points out—"Or ti parrà...l'alto valor del voto." (V, 25-6).