'No further from the "centre of things"': Peripheral Citation in Hugh MacDiarmid's In Memoriam James Joyce

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'NO FURTHER FROM THE "CENTRE OF THINGS"': PERIPHERAL CITATION IN HUGH MACDIARMID'S *IN MEMORIAM JAMES JOYCE*

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In *Devolving English Literature* Robert Crawford locates MacDiarmid alongside T. S. Eliot and Ezra Pound as 'provincial modernists' who operated from the peripheries of metropolitan cultural centres.[1] The peripherality of Whalsay, where MacDiarmid composed much of the material that would go on to be published in 1955 under the title *In Memoriam James Joyce*, is especially marked, in the sense that it is peripheral even to Shetland's mainland. MacDiarmid's anxieties about this geographical peripherality and its potential to make him peripheral to the literary networks he had previously been closely connected with in London and Edinburgh are clear in a letter he wrote to Pound a few months after he first moved to Whalsay. MacDiarmid remarks that he is 'of course, a fraud, as you will see from my address', who 'contrive[s] by a species of magic to maintain an appearance of being au fait with all that is happening in welt-literatur' while living in an 'hyperborean preserve where I am reduced to the possession of a mere handful of books'.[2] MacDiarmid goes on to complain to Pound that he has access to 'no foreign papers and can scarcely ever afford to buy a book', nor 'get any reviewing whereby to keep in touch in a hit-or-miss sort of way'.[3] Indeed, W. R. Aitken, who began corresponding with MacDiarmid at this time, has described how MacDiarmid was 'always very conscious of […] the distance he was from books and papers'.[4]

There is a substantial irony in the fact that this became the setting within which MacDiarmid was to compose *In Memoriam James Joyce,* a text that

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[1] Robert Crawford, *Devolving English Literature*, revised edn. (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2000), especially chapter 5, 'Modernism as Provincialism'.

[2] Hugh MacDiarmid, *The Letters of Hugh MacDiarmid*, ed. by Alan Bold (London: Hamish Hamilton, 1984), p. 845.

[3] MacDiarmid, *The Letters of Hugh MacDiarmid*, p. 845.

[4] W. R. Aitken, Interview with Brian Smith, 1991, Shetland Museum and Archives, SA 3/1/331, p. 3.

is the single fullest development of what I refer to as MacDiarmid's 'citational poetics': his practice of selecting extracts from a diverse range of pre-existing texts that include book reviews, newspaper articles, works of popular science, and novels, before editing those extracts and then combining them together in his own work. In this article I offer some examples of how the geographical and cultural peripherality of Whalsay is reflected in a formal peripherality that I identify within those citational poetics. In order to make this argument I am first going to propose a way to read MacDiarmid that emphasises both the source materials he chose to incorporate into his work and the way he edited and combined those materials. This approach considers how the meanings created through those techniques reinforce and contradict the meanings that can be identified through more conventional close readings of what I refer to as the 'surface text'; that is, the 'words on the page', considered independently to the sources from which they were taken.

Reading MacDiarmid Through his Use of Citation

This way of reading a text might seem to require some justification. It is predicated, firstly, on access to so much material that is external to the text – potentially the source material for each of *In Memoriam*'s over 5,000 lines – that any reading it generates might be seen to risk becoming overly artificial. Secondly, and perhaps more obviously, this reading strategy invites accusations that in composing *In Memoriam* in this way MacDiarmid is in some sense plagiarising the work of the original authors of the texts he is including in his own work. Pre-emptively addressing each of these points in turn not only underpins my argument, but can also initiate an analysis of the *meanings* of MacDiarmid's potentially plagiaristic techniques. To address the first point: in addition to the pre-digital source hunting that has been undertaken in relation to MacDiarmid's work by several critics, we now have access to massive searchable databases of published texts – such as Google Books and the *Times Literary Supplement* Historical Archive – which allow us to find many of MacDiarmid's sources with relative ease. Yet neither MacDiarmid nor any of *In Memoriam*'s readers at the time of the text's first publication in 1955 – or, indeed, at least until 2004, when Google Books was launched – would have had access to this information. Are we running the risk of developing a reading strategy that proposes the analysis of a text that differs substantially from the text of *In Memoriam* as it was originally published?

I would contend, instead, that we can think of this approach to reading *In Memoriam* as being one that is invited by both the form and the content of the text. *In Memoriam* makes repeated allusions to the citational techniques MacDiarmid used in its composition. Examples can be found throughout the text, including:

> Yes, I will have all sorts
> Of excruciating bruitist music,
> Simultaneist poems,
> Grab-bags and clichés, newspaper clippings,
> Popular songs, advertising copy[5]

'Bruitist' here refers to the musical philosophy of bruitism, described in the 1913 Futurist manifesto *The Art of Noises* as the incorporation into musical works of sounds traditionally thought to be non-musical, such as sounds generated by machinery; and 'Simultaneist' refers to simultaneism, a kind of literary cubism developed in the 1910s by writers including Gustave Apollinaire, Henri-Martin Barzun, and Blaise Cendrars as an attempt to present multiple viewpoints at the same time. This passage is suggestive, of course, of the way in which *In Memoriam* has been composed from its source materials. But the reference to simultaneism also illustrates a key implication of the text's citational poetics. Certainly, no individual reader would have as complete a knowledge of *In Memoriam*'s sources as is now available – and any attempt to specify which sources any individual reader would be aware of would inevitably be largely speculative. But this means that the text's 'literary cubism' is not only a factor in its composition: it is also present in the *reception* of the work, with the text's different readers each bringing to the text their own distinct viewpoints as determined by their specific individual understandings of its source materials.

This idea can be used to reframe database-influenced readings from being in some way artificial and distanced from the readings MacDiarmid might have expected, towards a representation of the imagined communal readings that might emerge if *In Memoriam* had a sufficiently large readership that had pooled its fragmented knowledge of the text's source materials: an idea that resonates with the 'community of insight' described in *In Memoriam*'s dedication.[6] But these 'supplemented' readings also speak to a more general issue in much MacDiarmid scholarship. Critical engagements with the poetic work that MacDiarmid produced from *To Circumjack Cencrastus* (1930) onwards are limited by two related tendencies. Firstly, as Alan Riach has noted (following the observations of other critics, including Edwin Morgan and Roderick Watson[7]), criticism of *Cencrastus* 'registers the poem's failure as an organic unity but does not adequately suggest the implications of this for the poetry which follows from

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[5] Hugh MacDiarmid, *Complete Poems, Volume II*, ed. by Michael Grieve and W. R. Aitken (Manchester: Carcanet, 1994), p. 798.

[6] MacDiarmid, *Complete Poems II*, p. 736.

[7] See, for example, Edwin Morgan, 'MacDiarmid Embattled', *Lines Review*, 15 (1959), 17-25, and Roderick Watson, 'Hugh MacDiarmid: The Journey from Language', *Akros*, 5.14 (1970), 73-92.

it': that is, MacDiarmid's middle and later period work, including *In Memoriam*.[8] For Riach, addressing this problem would require a critic 'to relinquish the critical idea of an organically unified poem' and 'to admit to the failure of one kind of critical procedure': that is, the kind of critical procedure that is based on a New Critical formalism and an emphasis on close readings of 'the words on the page'.[9] Consequently, Riach argues, 'the quality and weight of criticism that has been written about MacDiarmid's poetry diminishes in authority and strength as it approaches the later work'.[10] Conversely, those texts that can be read effectively with New Critical approaches have received more positive evaluations and a greater degree of critical attention.

The break this approach imposes between MacDiarmid's earlier and later work means that critics have struggled to develop an overarching understanding of MacDiarmid's whole career. This break is intensified by the fact that much of the earlier work, to which critics have assigned a higher valuation, was written in Scots, whereas the less highly valued later work was more likely to be written in English. This has led to the field being dominated – alongside New Critical approaches – by readings that W. N. Herbert has described as 'Scottish traditionalist'.[11] These readings often privilege biographical approaches or interpret MacDiarmid's poetry as an expression of his various political positions. As with the use of New Critical frameworks, this has established feedback loops between text and critic that lead to the increasing devaluation and disregard of MacDiarmid's later work, and increase the difficulty of producing a holistic understanding of MacDiarmid's poetic output. Indeed, by critiquing these critical approaches in a series of articles published between 1952 and 1982 Edwin Morgan was able to do more than any other critic to develop a framework within which

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[8] Alan Riach, *Hugh MacDiarmid's Epic Poetry* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 1991), p. 41. For the purposes of this argument I find it helpful to think of MacDiarmid's poetic work as divided into three distinct periods: an early period, made up of the 1920s work in Scots; a transitionary middle period beginning with *To Circumjack Cencrastus* (1930) and running through until *Scots Unbound and Other Poems* (1932), during which MacDiarmid's Scots became progressively less dense and more Gaelic themes and language were introduced into his work; and a later period that begins with *Stony Limits and Other Poems* (1934) and which is exemplified by MacDiarmid's increased use of English – including a 'synthetic English' incorporating scientific or technical vocabularies – and the adoption of the distinctive prose-poem style that is used throughout *In Memoriam*.

[9] *Ibid.*

[10] *Ibid.*

[11] W. N. Herbert, 'Hugh MacDiarmid: Mature Art', *Verse*, 4.4 (1987), 29-35.

MacDiarmid's later work might be understood.[12] In so doing, Morgan locates MacDiarmid's later work – including *In Memoriam* – alongside that of D. J. Enright, Apollinaire, Brecht, and Christopher Logue, as well as modernists such as Pound and William Carlos Williams.

Rather than being a distraction from 'the words on the page', then, approaching MacDiarmid's later work through an analysis of its source materials can instead help to break MacDiarmid studies out of the limitations that have been inadvertently created through a reliance on techniques that are perhaps not best suited to the task at hand. But how can a text which repeatedly copies material that has been created by other authors not be thought of as plagiaristic, and consequently devalued? There was in fact minimal critical engagement with this aspect of *In Memoriam* – or, indeed, of MacDiarmid's other writing – in the first decade or so following the text's publication in 1955. This changed on 21 January 1965, when the poet Glyn Jones inadvertently started a debate in the Letters pages of the *Times Literary Supplement* – somewhat ironically, given that the *TLS* is the single biggest source for the material that MacDiarmid repurposed in the composition of *In Memoriam*. Jones had written to the *TLS* in response to a review in the 31 December 1964 issue that had quoted the entirety of MacDiarmid's poem 'Perfect', which he had first published in *The Islands of Scotland* in 1939. Jones claimed to have written all but the first line of the poem, albeit as a continuous paragraph of prose, and to have had it published in a volume of short stories that was released by Jonathan Cape in 1937. The debate continued in the *TLS* for six months, with a series of correspondents providing further examples of instances when MacDiarmid appeared potentially to have plagiarised the work of other writers in the creation of his own poetry. Some contributors to the debate seemed convinced that this apparent scandal invalidated MacDiarmid's work, reducing it from poetry to a mere act of plagiarism; other contributors – including Edwin Morgan – accepted that MacDiarmid did appear to have knowingly copied the work of other writers, but contended that this did not completely diminish the value of his work.

MacDiarmid also contributed to the debate, in typically self-contradictory fashion. In his immediate response to Jones's allegation, published on 28 January 1965, MacDiarmid implicitly acknowledges that some form of wrongdoing has taken place when he states that 'Perfect' 'will of course not appear again over my name'.[13] However, MacDiarmid does

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[12] See, *inter alia*, 'MacDiarmid Embattled', *Lines Review*, 15 (1959), 17-25, and 'MacDiarmid's Later Poetry against an International Background', *Scottish Literary Journal*, 5.2 (1978), 20-35.

[13] Despite this assertion by MacDiarmid, when 'Perfect' was included in the *Complete Poems* published by Brian and O'Keeffe in 1978 no mention was made of

not take full responsibility, claiming never to have seen the short story that contained the material he had used in 'Perfect', and suggesting that he must have encountered the material in question in a review of Jones's book and either 'automatically memorized it and subsequently thought it my own, or wrote it into one of my notebooks with the same result', an occurrence which he claims to be common poetic practise.[14] But by 13 May 1929 – in the light of multiple further allegations of plagiarism (as well as an intervention by the Welsh poet Kiedrych Rhys, who claimed to be the originator of the plagiarism that led to the creation of 'Perfect', making MacDiarmid a double plagiarist) – MacDiarmid's tone has become more defiant. He claims that copyright is 'a legal matter and not a literary one', and goes on to contend that both Eliot and Pound had supported the use of supposedly plagiaristic literary techniques. MacDiarmid then concludes that

> I have always in such work [as *In Memoriam*] used 'a strong solution of books' and acted in accordance with what Dr. Johnson (wasn't it?) said in defending an alleged overuse of quotations from other writers, viz., that that showed a better sense of social obligation, since those who did not so use quotations (acknowledged or unacknowledged) never in fact did anything but quote all the time.[15]

While this represents a *volte-face* by MacDiarmid within the context of the debate in the *TLS*, his sentiment here echoes a key passage in the preface (titled 'In Acknowledgement') to his 1923 book *Annals of the Five Senses*: indeed, MacDiarmid uses the phrase 'strong solution of books' in both texts, extending it in the preface to *Annals* in his own words to refer also to 'magazines and newspaper articles and even [to] speeches'.[16] And the preface to *Annals* also prefigures MacDiarmid's initial defence to Jones's

the role Glyn Jones's work had played in the creation of the poem. However, when the *Complete Poems* was reissued by Penguin in 1985 'Perfect' was preceded by an editorial note that explained the provenance of the text (and also claimed that a similar note was omitted from the 1978 edition 'Through a misunderstanding'). This note was retained in the 1993 Carcanet edition of the *Complete Poems*, which appears to privilege Jones's copyright above the copyright of the many other authors and publications we now know MacDiarmid to have copied from.

[14] Edwin Morgan and Hugh MacDiarmid, 'Mr MacDiarmid and Dr Grieve', *Times Literary Supplement*, 3283 (1965), p. 67.

[15] J. D. Scott, Hugh MacDiarmid, and Glyn Jones, 'Mr MacDiarmid and Dr Grieve', *Times Literary Supplement*, 3298 (1965), p. 371.

[16] Hugh MacDiarmid, *Annals of the Five Senses* (Edinburgh: Polygon, 1983), p. 17. MacDiarmid also uses this expression in *The Company I've Kept* (1966), the second volume of his autobiography, published the year after the *TLS* correspondence took place. Roderick Watson traces the expression to the work of Oliver Wendell Holmes: Watson, 'MacDiarmid and International Modernism', in *The Edinburgh Companion to Hugh MacDiarmid*, ed. by Scott Lyall and Margery Palmer McCulloch (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2011), pp. 6-22.

allegations, when MacDiarmid states that 'The sources of certain of my quotations I unfortunately cannot now trace […]. If inadvertently I have anywhere used copyright material without the necessary permission, I err through no lack of effort to trace my quotations: and hope to have the indulgence of those upon whose rights I may have trespassed', before listing some writers and publications from whom he has quoted.[17]

MacDiarmid's inconsistent descriptions of his use of citation have contributed to the way in which it has been left unexplained. Critics, moreover, have tended not to engage directly with this aspect of MacDiarmid's work, tending instead either to take it as reason to devalue texts which MacDiarmid is now known to have composed by way of 'plagiarism' or to quietly ignore MacDiarmid's controversial working practices in order to focus instead on other aspects of his output. However, the work of Marilyn Randall can be used to engage directly with MacDiarmid's use of citation in a way that facilitates new understandings of his work. Randall has presented a more nuanced understanding of what she terms 'textual repetition' in which she argues that failing to provide attribution for a quotation is not sufficient evidence to demonstrate that plagiarism has taken place, since

> 'plagiarism' is not, in fact, primarily a textual category, but a pragmatic one […] [it] is not an immanent feature of texts, but rather the result of judgements involving, first of all, the presence of some kind of textual repetition, but also, and perhaps more important, a conjunction of social, political, aesthetic, and cultural norms and presuppositions that motivate accusations or disculpations, elevating some potential plagiarisms to the level of great works of art, while censuring others and condemning the perpetrators to ignominy.[18]

Read in the context of the *TLS* debate MacDiarmid's claim that plagiarism is 'a legal matter and not a literary one' can appear to be an attempt to deflect attention from the accusations he was facing. But Randall effectively makes a similar claim, decoupling the inherent 'textual' qualities of a text – MacDiarmid's 'literary' matter – from some specific cultural contexts within which the text is interpreted – an extension of MacDiarmid's 'legal' matter. Randall goes on to substantiate this argument at length, considering the potential meanings and implications of textual repetition in the context of an abstract idea of authorship, drawing on Foucault, and in an historical sense, where Randall considers the ways in which the meaning of plagiarism has changed over time, especially as it relates to political conquest and colonisation. Both approaches have fascinating implications

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[17] MacDiarmid, *Annals of the Five Senses*, p. 17.
[18] Marilyn Randall, *Pragmatic Plagiarism: Authorship, Profit, and Power* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2001), pp. 4-5.

for the study of MacDiarmid's work. Consider, for example, Randall's assertion that the plagiaristic author can be seen as 'a "subject" striving towards the creation of an "authentic", unified identity, or one radically decanted and divided against itself'; or her argument that plagiarism can be deployed as 'a positive antidote to the evils of cultural imperialism', an idea that extends to offer 'a general critique of power and property in diverse contexts' that develops to become a new form of textual repetition deployed by the 'post-Romantic appropriative artist', even though they are aware that this is not 'the proper way to be creative': a technique which Randall terms 'guerrilla plagiarism'.[19] Randall's understanding of plagiarism is generally suggestive that engaging directly with MacDiarmid's use of textual repetition can be preferable to ignoring this aspect of his work, or seeing it as a reason for his work to be devalued and potentially disregarded.

Centre and Periphery in MacDiarmid's Citational Poetics

The idea of centre/periphery is alluded to explicitly in *In Memoriam* in a way that evokes the allusions the text makes to its citational poetics, while also providing an interesting example of those poetics. Around two thirds of the way through the first section of the text, the speaker contends that

> We are no farther from the 'centre of things,'
> No farther from the 'great warm heart of humanity'
> Or 'the general good,' no less 'central to human destiny'
> When alone with a work of scholarship
> That can only appeal to perhaps one person per million
> Than when one with the crowds in the streets
> In any of the great centres of population,
> Or in a mile-long cinema queue, or
> In a two-hundred-thousand spectatorate
> At Twickenham or Murrayfield or Ibrox
> Or reading a selection of to-days' newspapers
> Rather than Keller's *Probleme der englischen Sprache und Kultur,*
> Or Heuser's *Die Kildare-Gedichte: die ältesten*
> *mittel-englischen Denkmäler in anglo-irischer Überlieferung*
> Or Esposito's articles in *Hermathena*
> On the Latin writers of mediaeval Ireland,
> Or Curtis on *The Spoken Language*
> *Of Mediaeval Ireland,* or Heuser on the peculiar dialect
> Of English spoken less than a hundred years ago
> – Direct descendant of the language of the Kildare poems –
> In the baronies of Forth and Bargy in County Wexford
> And often (wrongly) described as a mainly Flemish speech.[20]

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[19] Randall, *Pragmatic Plagiarism*, pp. 20, 217.
[20] MacDiarmid, *Complete Poems II*, p. 780.

These lines are an example of two forms of citation that MacDiarmid uses repeatedly in *In Memoriam*. The first is 'second order citation', where MacDiarmid takes material from an intermediate source that is itself citing some other source – such as a *TLS* book review that directly cites the book that is being reviewed – in a way that incorporates material from the already-cited source. Here, the catalogue of authors and titles that begins 'Keller's *Probleme der englischen Sprache und Kultur*' is cited without attribution in MacDiarmid's intermediate source from St. John D Seymour's *Anglo-Irish Literature 1200–1582*, first published in 1929, which MacDiarmid also cites directly (and, again, without attribution) in the opening pages of *In Memoriam*. The second form is 'self citation', where MacDiarmid incorporates material from another of his own works. MacDiarmid's direct source here is the first stanza of his poem 'In the Shetland Islands', which he had published in the 'Author's Note' to *The Islands of Scotland* in 1939. MacDiarmid's use of self citation makes this passage especially interesting in the context of the difficulties involved in determining whether an individual reader of *In Memoriam* would identify a specific source that MacDiarmid had incorporated within the text, since in this instance we can assume that many readers of *In Memoriam* would be familiar with *The Islands of Scotland*. Indeed, we might imagine the experience of a reader who encounters this passage in *In Memoriam* for the first time, recognises it, and then takes a copy of *The Islands of Scotland* down from the shelf to compare the two texts side by side – a process that shares interesting similarities with how a reader might use a glossary of Scots words when reading MacDiarmid's Scots lyrics or *A Drunk Man Looks at the Thistle*.

The passage can be divided into three subsections. The last subsection – the eleven lines that make up the catalogue of names and titles that is ultimately sourced from Seymour – is unchanged from its appearance in *The Islands of Scotland*. The most extensive changes made during the incorporation of this material within *In Memoriam* occur in the passage's first five lines, which map onto the first six lines of 'In the Shetland Islands' as it appears in *The Islands of Scotland*:[21]

> I am no further from the 'centre of things
> In the Shetlands here than in London, New York, or Tokio,
> No further from 'the great warm heart of humanity,'
> Or the 'general good,' no less 'central to human destiny,'
> Sitting alone here enjoying life's greatest good,

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[21] The most extensive changes, that is, other than the omission of the two further stanzas that followed this stanza in the version of the poem that was published in *The Islands of Scotland*.

> The pleasure of my own company[22]

In both the 1939 text and the 1955 text the speaker appears to rebut the idea that they are cut off from something that is in some sense 'central' – or, at least, 'centred'. Both texts locate themselves on some sort of periphery, and then speak from that periphery in order to call into question the abstract idea of 'the centre' by referring to it through a series of clichés that are marked out as such using quotation marks: 'the centre of things', 'the great warm heart of humanity', 'the 'general good', and 'central to human destiny'. But the process through which the speaker is cut off from this central or centred thing differs between the two texts. The speaker has, firstly, transformed from the lyric (or quasi-lyric) 'I am' present in the 1939 text into a diffused, communal 'We are' in the 1955 text. And this change is concomitant with the elimination of the idea of physical, geographical location. This effect is achieved through the deletion of the second line in the 1939 text and the editing of the last two lines: we lose the reference to the speaker being 'In the Shetlands' (and being absent from the metropolitan centres of 'London, New York, or Tokio'); but we also lose the *idea* of the speaker being in any physical location, as the image of the speaker 'Sitting alone here' – and also 'now', implied by the 'I am' of the first line – is replaced with the abstract 'When alone with a work of scholarship'. Indeed, the speaker in *In Memoriam* is never identified as being present in a physical location: as readers, all that we know is that the text intends to transport us to the *aonach* – or solitary place of union – that the speaker welcomed Joyce to a few hundred lines into the poem, where its description as 'our *aonach*' suggests that it is already populated with multiple voices.[23] The physical peripherality evoked in the 1939 text certainly implies an intellectual peripherality, but the way in which that text is transformed to arrive at the 1955 text removes the physical origins of this peripherality so that only its intellectual component remains.

The point of comparison for the speaker's position is the same in both texts: anonymous and anonymising 'crowds' and 'queues', and the 'spectatorate / at Twickenham or Murrayfield or Ibrox' – suggestive of the crowds traveling to Ibrox to witness the 'debate on "la loi de l'effort converti" / Between Professor MacFadyen and a Spanish pairty"' in MacDiarmid's poem 'Glasgow, 1960', first published in the *London Mercury* in 1935 – that reduces the individual to 'a unit' adrift in a modern mass culture represented by 'a selection of today's newspapers'.[24] Those newspapers are then themselves counterpointed by the introduction into the

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[22] Hugh MacDiarmid, *The Islands of Scotland: Hebrides, Orkneys, and Shetlands* (London: Batsford, 1939), p. xv.

[23] MacDiarmid, *Complete Poems II*, p. 746.

[24] MacDiarmid, *Complete Poems II*, p. 1039.

text of a catalogue of academic titles and their authors. In the 1939 text, then, the speaker's physical isolation is contrasted with the absence of physical isolation when in a crowd in an urban centre; whereas in the 1955 text it is the speaker's intellectual isolation that is contrasted with the subjective experience of being an individual within such a crowd. In *In Memoriam*, the geographical peripherality of Whalsay evolves into a sense of peripherality that is found within the text itself.

This idea of textual peripherality – and of challenging and potentially inverting the centre-periphery opposition – can also be identified in the opening pages of the second section of *In Memoriam*, 'The World of Words'. The third stanza of this section is 220 lines long, and is largely made up of a catalogue of author-title pairs. The first seventeen lines of the stanza is representative of its overall style:

> We have of course studied thoroughly
> Alspach, English, and the others who have written
> On 'Psychological Response to Unknown Proper Names,'
> Downey on 'Individual Differences In Reaction to the Word-in-Itself,'
> Bullough on 'The Perceptive Problem
> In the Aesthetic Appreciation of Single Colours,'
> Myers on 'Individual Differences in Listening to Music,'
> And Eleanor Rowland on 'The Psychological Experiences
> Connected with Different Parts of Speech,'
> Know Plato in 'Cratylus' on the rhetorical value
> Of different classes of consonants, and Rossigneus's
> 'Essai sur l'audition colorée et sa valeur esthétique,'
> Jones on the 'Effect of Letters and Syllables in Publicity,'
> Roblee and Washburn on 'The Affective Value of Articulate Sounds,'
> And Givler on 'The Psycho-physiological Effect
> Of the Elements of Speech in Relation to Poetry,'
> Downey on 'Emotional Poetry and the Preference Judgment'[25]

This catalogue is an extended version of the technique that MacDiarmid had used in the second half of the 'centre of things' stanza, and which he uses throughout *In Memoriam* in order to introduce a multiplicity of thematically connected ideas that are often expressed tersely and which run into and crowd in upon each other. In 1956 Morgan compared these catalogues to the quasi-academic bibliographies in *Finnegans Wake*, arguing that, unlike Joyce, MacDiarmid did not recognise the 'cumulative comic effect' created by this technique,[26] an assessment he revisited in 1982 when he concluded that MacDiarmid was 'more aware of the comic potential of

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[25] MacDiarmid, *Complete Poems II*, p. 805-6.
[26] Edwin Morgan, 'Jujitsu for the Educated: Reflections on Hugh MacDiarmid's Poem *In Memoriam James Joyce*', *Twentieth Century*, 160 (1956), 223-31 (p. 229).

such lists' than he had previously taken him to be.[27] An analysis of the opening pages of 'The World of Words' supports Morgan's later evaluation, and identifies a comically playful impulse that is present in both the surface text and also in how *In Memoriam* selects, transforms, and combines its source materials and which contributes to the way in which the text complicates the idea of textual peripherality. The long catalogue stanza retains the diffused, communal speaker used elsewhere in *In Memoriam*, and can be seen to resonate thematically with the experience of reading the poem. 'Downey on "Individual Differences In Reaction to the Word-in-Itself"' suggests, for example, the highly individuated, quasi-cubist reading experiences generated by the way in which different readers will bring with them different understandings of the source materials that have been used in the composition of the text. And this idea is then reinforced by the assertion that we have 'pondered the differences in imagination related / To variations in psychical temperament and differences in imaginal type'.[28] However, the way in which the catalogue is introduced mirrors the formal processes that MacDiarmid uses to incorporate *In Memoriam*'s source materials. The speaker initiates the catalogue with a statement that misdirects readerly expectations: 'We have of course studied thoroughly / Alspach, English, and the others who have written / On "Psychological Response to Unknown Proper Names"'.[29] In the previous section of the text the speaker engages with ideas relating to constructed languages such as Basic English, Occidental, Interlingua, and Novial, and sets the challenge of constructing a new language that maintains a cultural neutrality by drawing on the entirety of 'the vast international vocabulary'.[30] Taken in isolation, on a first reading the meaning of 'Alspach' is not clear. However, when placed next to 'English' it becomes a name for one of these constructed languages, potentially a play on 'all speak'. But the second half of the line undermines this reading, with the phrase 'who have written' recontextualising 'Alspach' and 'English': these are not, in fact, languages – constructed or otherwise – but are the names of authors. And these authors are cited as having 'written / On "Psychological Response to Unknown Proper Names"' – precisely the phenomenon experienced by a reader when encountering the names Alspach and English in this new context.[31] This 'reveal' uses the structure of a simple joke, a paraprosdokian, where the reader has assumed a specific contextual

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[27] Edwin Morgan, 'James Joyce and Hugh MacDiarmid', in *James Joyce and Modern Literature*, ed. by W. J. McCormack and Alistair Stead (London: Routledge, 1982), pp. 202-17 (p. 181).

[28] MacDiarmid, *Complete Poems II*, p. 806.

[29] MacDiarmid, *Complete Poems II*, p. 805.

[30] MacDiarmid, *Complete Poems II*, p. 790.

[31] MacDiarmid, *Complete Poems II*, p. 805.

frame for the first few words of the catalogue's opening lines only to realise that this context was incorrect.

This resonates, of course, with the humour that Morgan ends up identifying in the repetition of the catalogue structure. But it also alludes to the shifts in context that are playing out in the formal processes that are at work in the construction of the catalogue from its source materials. Most of the long second stanza of 'The World of Words' is taken from a single source: the American psychologist June Downey's 1929 book *Creative Imagination: Studies in the Psychology of Literature.* But while Downey's text is the main source for this passage, the references to authors and titles that appear in *In Memoriam* are taken from that text's footnotes. The speaker sometimes appears to jump from page to page in the selection of footnotes, and at other times the selection of footnotes follows a discernible pattern. And while most of the author-title pairs are presented without further reference to or description of the work in question, on some occasions the inclusion of information from a footnote in Downey's book is coupled with the section of the main text that refers to that footnote. Where the catalogue does incorporate material from the main text of Downey's work it does so only having first cited the text of a corresponding footnote, thereby giving that footnote precedence. *In Memoriam* refers to

> Ribot's 'L'Imagination Créatrice' with its distinction between
> The plastic versus the diffluent imagination,
> And pondered the differences in imagination related
> To variations in psychical temperament and differences in imaginal type,
> And recorded reactions to the degree of tolerance or liking
> For the exciting or for the depressive emotions[32]

Page 2 of Downey's *Creative Imagination* refers to 'a difference that Ribot describes as the plastic imagination versus the diffluent or emotional imagination' and, around thirteen lines later, how 'these typical differences in imagination are related to variation in psychical temperament as well as to differences in imaginal type'; and on page 4, Downey claims that 'Very definite reactions have been recorded as to the degree of tolerance or liking for the depressive emotions […] and the exciting emotions'.[33] However, the title 'L'Imagination Créatrice' is referred to only in a footnote which is indicated with a superscript '1' immediately following the word 'Ribot' in the main body of the text of *Creative Imagination*. Overall, the effect here is that the centre and the periphery of the texts have been inverted, so that the context within which the reader encounters this text is suddenly changed, in a way that evokes the paraprosdokian that underpins the humour in the

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[32] MacDiarmid, *Complete Poems II*, p. 806.
[33] June Downey, *Creative Imagination: Studies in the Psychology of Literature.* (Kegan Paul: London, 1929), pp. 2, 4.

'Alspach, English' joke. Moreover, when a passage in *In Memoriam* is composed from material that is taken from a single source – as is the case with how the opening 220 or so lines of *In Memoriam* are taken almost exclusively from Downey – it can be helpful to examine when and how the text then deviates from its main source to incorporate material from other sources. With the Downey passage, a deviation of this kind occurs when fifteen lines taken from the 'New Foreign Books' section of the *TLS* of 18 September 1937 are spliced into the text. This splicing is achieved in part by moving from a German-language footnote title taken from Downey to the title of a German-language work that is being reviewed in the *TLS*. But the inclusion of this material facilitates a reference to the humourists Edward Lear, Wilhelm Busch, and Lewis Carroll, thereby reinforcing the idea that this passage should be read as being tongue-in-cheek.

One of the most surprising examples of the way in which *In Memoriam* recontextualises peripheral source materials can be found in the passage that immediately precedes this catalogue:

> Easy – Quick – Sure – The exact word
> You want – when you want it.
> Elusive words easily captured and harnessed.
> New ideas spring to your mind.
> Your imagination is stirred by this simple
> But wonderful Idea and Word Chart.
> It puts words and ideas at your finger tips,
> It will enable you to open the flood-gates of the mind
> And let the torrent of drama and tragedy –
> Human strife, flaming love, raging passion,
> Fiendish onslaught, splendid heroism –
> Flow from your pen, leap into type
> And fly to your readers, to grip them and hold them
> Enthralled by the fascinating spell of your power.
> Gilbert Frankau says: '… it is
> The best adjunct I have so far discovered.'[34]

In the context of the constructed language the speaker proposed in the previous section of the text the 'Idea and Word Chart' described in this stanza seems to suggest a technique or device that can facilitate the work of constructing this language – one that is related, perhaps, to the 'thinking graphics' outlined in the previous section of the text, with which Patrick Geddes 'juggled words like algebraic terms / To gain a clearness of idea impossible / To get through prose exposition alone' in order to arrive at

> A description of living

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[34] MacDiarmid, *Complete Poems II*, p. 805.

That included or could include
Every act and fact,
Dream and deed,
Of all mankind on this planet[35]

However, MacDiarmid's source here is in fact an example of the 'advertising copy' that the speaker of *In Memoriam* had described as a potential source for his 'Simultaneist poems'.[36] The material is taken from a print advertisement, presented in *In Memoriam* more or less in its original form, for a vocabulary aid – branded as an 'Idea and Word Chart' – which was produced and sold by the Psychology Publishing Co., Ltd, of Marple, Cheshire. Rather than being some sort of Geddesian tool intended to navigate the intricacies of MacDiarmid's proposed 'world language', the Idea and Word chart was in fact designed to encourage readers to pay the Psychology Publishing Co. to send them a 'descriptive brochure' (Fig. 1).

The nature of print advertising means that this source appeared in multiple issues of several different publications in the second half of the 1940s, including many publications that MacDiarmid is likely to have read, such as *The Spectator*, *The Scottish Educational Journal*, the *London Mercury*, and *The Welsh Review*. This makes it relatively difficult to determine precisely where MacDiarmid took this material from – and, indeed, he may have encountered it on multiple occasions, in different contexts, before deciding to incorporate it within his own work. But this perhaps means that MacDiarmid's initial readership would have been relatively more likely to identify this source, having potentially seen it repeated in print in multiple publications on a weekly basis. This identification creates a striking effect, with peripheral, paratextual material being centred in a way that invites a potentially knowing readership to read that material in new ways. Riach has described, for example, how the 'tone and syntax of the verse combine to effect a spontaneity of announcement and affirmation'.[37] Read in this way, this stanza seems most similar to reflective lyric passages of *In Memoriam*, such as the 'hawthorn tree' passage in the first section of the text, the 'harebell' passage in 'The Snares of Varuna', and the 'realm of music' passage at the start of 'Plaited Like the Generations of Men'.[38]   But while each of these cases involves the transformation of prose into verse, they are all derived from descriptive, linguistically rich prose sources: a novel, a newspaper article about visiting the English countryside, and a letter from the Italian composer Ferruccio Busoni to his wife describing a transcendent 'realm of music'. Here *In*

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[35] MacDiarmid, *Complete Poems II*, pp. 801-2.
[36] MacDiarmid, *Complete Poems II*, p. 798.
[37] Riach, *Hugh MacDiarmid's Epic Poetry*, p. 94.
[38] MacDiarmid, *Complete Poems II*, pp. 756-59, 844-45, 871-73.
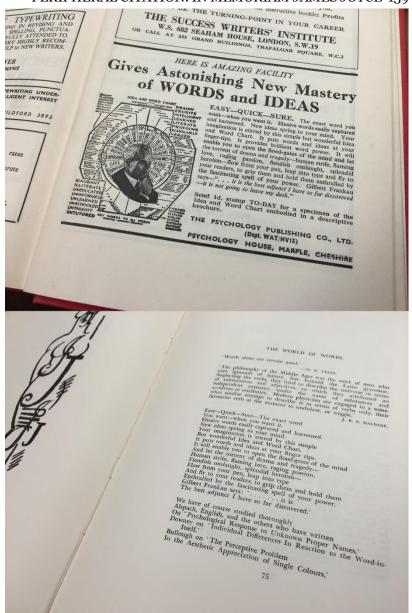
Fig. 1: The Idea and Word Chart, from advertisement for The Psychology Publishing Co., and page from *In Memoriam James Joyce*.

Memoriam demonstrates that the same effect can be achieved with supposedly utilitarian material like advertising copy, once it is decontextualised and re-centred. And it does so in a humorous way, with the forceful change of context that underpins the construction of this stanza prefiguring the 'Alspach, English' joke that immediately follows.

Approaching *In Memoriam* through an analysis of its source materials – and undertaking this approach alongside more traditional readings of its 'surface text' – highlights formal aspects of *In Memoriam* that reflect the cultural and geographical peripherality within which MacDiarmid composed the text, and which are both highly experimental and playfully comic. But perhaps a more generally important point here is the value of this reading strategy itself, facilitated as it is by the ease with which we can now locate many of MacDiarmid's sources. As Patrick Crotty has discovered, the *Continental Sonnets* – published in *The Scottish Chapbook* under the name C. M. Grieve in 1922 and 1923 – were each sourced from material that had appeared in the *Times Literary Supplement* between September 1921 and November 1922.[39] The *TLS* is by far the most common source in *In Memoriam*, which suggests that we might think of the massive citational work that MacDiarmid undertook following his relocation to Whalsay as a return to or continuation of Grieve-MacDiarmid's earlier strategies, rather than as an inferior deviation from the Scots work of the 1920s. Indeed, the defence MacDiarmid made against the accusations of plagiarism he faced in the Letters pages of the *TLS* in 1965 echoes the way in which Grieve introduced his first book, *Annals of the Five Senses*, in 1923, which he compares to the work of Shakespeare in the sense that both are 'full of quotations'.[40] The 'Dedication' to John Buchan at the start of *Annals* in fact specifically stops short of claiming that Grieve has 'written' the main part of that text, referring instead to 'these poems and these […] psychological studies, essays, mosaics (call them what you will) which I have (perhaps the best word in the meantime is) "designed"'.[41] As a deliberate literary technique Grieve-MacDiarmid's citational poetics therefore predate not only the version of Scots he would use in those texts – *Sangschaw*, *Penny Wheep*, and *A Drunk Man Looks at the Thistle* – that have received the greatest amount of sustained critical attention, but also, since *Annals* was written in 1921 (two years before its publication), Grieve's creation of the MacDiarmid persona itself, which occurred in 1922.

While MacDiarmid's contribution to the debate in the *TLS* in 1965 echoes some of the ideas expressed in the front matter included in *Annals*, the way in which he presents those ideas is more reactive and defensive, and

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[39] Patrick Crotty, in conversation with James Benstead, 25 April 2019.
[40] MacDiarmid, *Annals*, p. 17.
[41] MacDiarmid, *Annals*, p. 15.

shows far less willingness to take ownership of them as a literary technique. Indeed, much of this change of view (or, at least, presentation) had developed by the time *In Memoriam* was published in 1955. In the 'Author's Note' that prefaces the first edition of the text MacDiarmid alludes to the citationality of his later work, which he describes as being exemplified by 'very long poems, abounding in phrases from many foreign languages and packed with literary and scientific allusions of all kinds'; MacDiarmid also quotes from David Daiches's description of this work as including a 'great range of allusions and references', but he does not make any statement comparable in tone or content to that made at the beginning of *Annals*.[42]

All of this suggests that while I have developed my approach to MacDiarmid's poetics in relation to his later work, it could also be applied to his earlier work. Citation of one form or another was present in MacDiarmid's work before the experiments with Scots begin with the lyrics of *Sangschaw*, and, going by the dates of the source material MacDiarmid used in the composition of *In Memoriam*, seems to return – in terms of composition, if not, immediately, publication – as MacDiarmid's Scots becomes less concentrated in the early 1930s at the start of MacDiarmid's transition to various forms of English, Synthetic and otherwise. But we might easily take this further. MacDiarmid does not write the poems of *Sangschaw* in Scots in the same way that he writes the prose of *Scottish Eccentrics* in English. MacDiarmid's Scots is 'synthetic', a word with unhelpful overtones of 'fake' or 'false' but which has its origins in the Greek *suntithenai*, or 'to place together'. It might be better described as 'Synthesised Scots', as in the Scots that has been 'placed together' from Jamieson's and various other dictionaries and phrase books. This resonates, of course, with the way in with MacDiarmid's Synthetic English was 'placed together' from, inter alia, Chambers's *Twentieth Century Dictionary*, the meaning of 'synthetic' there being confused even further, in the context of the way in which Synthetic English makes use of scientific and technical vocabularies, by the association with chemical synthesis. But the approaches that gave rise to MacDiarmid's Synthetic Scots and Synthetic English share significant common features with the version of the citational poetics that MacDiarmid deploys in *In Memoriam*. The sources that MacDiarmid used were different, and the way that MacDiarmid made use of them gave rise to work that can appear radically different, but at the most basic level of their implementation all three approaches share the same processes, taking material from a range of contexts and bringing it together in a new, common context. In a career that critics have characterised as including a series of breaks and interruptions, MacDiarmid, amongst his many inconsistencies,

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[42] Hugh MacDiarmid, *In Memoriam James Joyce* (Glasgow: MacLellan, 1955), p. 11.

consistently returns to his citational approach to poetic composition. We might therefore think of MacDiarmid primarily as a 'citational poet' and engage with different parts of his oeuvre on that basis.

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