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Shakespeare's Scottish Play in Scottish Gaelicⁱ

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A translation into Scottish Gaelic of Shakespeare's *Macbeth*, by Iain MacDhòmhnaill (Iain MacDonald) (1946-), performed in Glasgow as *MacBheatha* in September 2013 and in Edinburgh in August 2014, will be the focus of this article. We will consider the political and cultural implications inherent in returning Shakespeare's gaze. *Macbeth* engages with histories of eleventh-century Gaelic Scotland for an early-seventeenth-century audience. MacDhòmhnaill's translation into Gaelic arguably provides an opportunity for some level of reappropriation and further levels of meaning; allowing a twenty-first-century Gaelic audience to reflect on the history of Gaelic Scotland in the eleventh century but also in Shakespeare's own day and perhaps even today. MacDhòmhnaill's occasional use of a register reminiscent of Gaelic poetic and literary traditions invites Shakespeare's characters to speak in ways that may bring to mind the early modern Gaelic poetic corpus. This type of awareness of MacDhòmhnaill's chosen register can lead to a somewhat subversive reading of the production. Shakespeare's *Macbeth*, it is argued (Highley 2004), can be seen to reflect some contemporaneous prejudice against Scottish Gaels and their language. In today's Scotland the majority of Scots are supportive of efforts to allow Gaelic a place at the table. Yet sadly, prejudice against Gaelic can still be given a very public platform, allowing continued marginalization. Therefore, a Gaelic translation of *Macbeth* creates opportunities for reflection on Gaelic's history in Scotland, past and present. Previous efforts to translate Shakespeare's works into Gaelic will be examined here, before we turn to *MacBheatha* and its echoes of the sixteenth- and seventeenth-century Gaelic song tradition.

Shakespeare in Gaelic

It has been noted that Gaelic playwriting remains a highly neglected genre of Gaelic literary studies; despite the existence of an estimated 500 plays in Gaelic, with perhaps around 100 of those in print (Macleod 2006: 1573; Macleod 2011). Translation of drama into Gaelic from other languages has received even less scholarly attention. In 1911 *Julius Caesar* was the first, and to-date only, Shakespeare play to be fully translated into Gaelic and published (MacGillelmoire 1911). The translator, Dr. Uilleam MacCoinnich MacGillelmoire (William Mackenzie Morison), born in 1866, was a native of Lewis but a resident of Annfield Plain, County Durham (MacKay 1907: 41; [Macbean] 1921: 113-14). In his introduction, he expressed his shock that none of Shakespeare's works had previously appeared in Gaelic, leaving Highland children at a disadvantage. He asks, 'C'arson a bhitheadh sinn air deireadh air sluagh dhuthchannan eile ann an eolas no oilean 'sam bith?'

['Why should we be behind the peoples of other countries in knowledge or learning?'] (MacGillemoire 1911, n.p.).

It appears that the only other Shakespeare play to have been translated, in addition to *Julius Caesar* and *Macbeth*, is *Measure for Measure*. *Measure for Measure* was translated by Iain MacCormaic (John MacCormick) (1859-1947) (MacLeod 1974: 163; MacLeod 1969: 146, 513 n.23). MacCormaic belonged to Mull, although he later worked in Glasgow. He was a prolific Gaelic writer, and author of the first Scottish Gaelic novel, *Dùn-Àluinn* (1912) (Kidd 2006). MacCormaic's *Tomhas mu choinneamh Tomhais* ('Measure for Measure'), dated to 1934, was never published but is held in manuscript (handwritten) by the Mitchell Library in Glasgow and also in manuscript (typescript) by the library of Comunn Gàidhlig Inbhir Nis/The Gaelic Society of Inverness at Inverness Library (Mac Cormaic 1934; Mac Cormaic 1934). MacCormaic also completed a translation of *Macbeth* in 1933, to be discussed in more detail below. There is also some suggestion that further copies of MacCormaic's two translations may be held elsewhere (Glasgow Herald Editorial Diary 1935: 8). Therefore, as regards plays by Shakespeare, the only published translation is *Julius Caesar* (1911). In unpublished manuscript we also have *Tomhas mu choinneamh Tomhais* (1934), and we have a number of extant unpublished translations of *Macbeth*. It will be shown here that MacDhòmhnaill's and MacCormaic's translations of *Macbeth* form part of a larger tradition of translators, playwrights and dramaturgists who have brought together Shakespeare's Scottish play and the Gaelic language.

Shakespeare's sonnets have a slightly better track record of publication in Gaelic translation. They include, but are perhaps not limited to, the following: Sonnets XVIII, XXIX, XXXIII, LXIV, LXXII, CVI, CIX by Ùisdean Laing (1889-1974) (Laing 1960: 43; Laing 1963: 67; Black 1999: 746-47; Laing 1964: 9-12); Sonnets LXIV, LXV, XXIX, CIV, & XVIII by Iain Mac IllEathain 'An t-Òban' (Mac IllEathain 1969: 356-58. This seems likely to have been the brother of the poet Somhairle; Iain (1909-1970) was rector of Oban High School; Sonnet CVI by Garbhan MacAoidh (1929-) (Mac Aoidh 1981: 325); Sonnets XVIII, XXX, LVI, LXXIII, LXXV, CVI & CXVI by Donnchadh MacIllIosa (1941-) (MacIllIosa 1988; *Transcript* 9/10); Sonnet XVIII by Ruaraidh MacThòmais (1921-2012) (MacThòmais 1990: 15). A comparative study of these, building on the work of J. Derrick McClure on Robert Burns in Gaelic (McClure 2004), would be of great interest.

In 2012 a work-in-progress Gaelic translation of *Macbeth* by Iain MacDhòmhnaill was performed at the Tron Theatre in Glasgow. MacDhòmhnaill belongs to Griomasaigh, North Uist, although he has lived in Glasgow for a number of years. He was the director of Comhairle nan Leabhraichean/ The Gaelic Books Council until 2010. The 2012 performance was a one-man-show, featuring only monologues or soliloquies spoken by King Macbeth himself. Then in September 2013 the translation was extended to become a two-person show (*Macbeth* and *Lady Macbeth*) at the Citizens Theatre in Glasgow, now also including prerecorded speeches from the witches. It was staged again at the Summerhall in Edinburgh, as

part of the Edinburgh Festival Fringe, in August 2014. MacDhòmhnail's *MacBheatha* was originally commissioned by Glaschu Beò, the Gaelic section of Glasgow Life who run cultural and sport services for Glasgow City Council. Thus, MacDhòmhnail's translation of *Macbeth* continues to grow. However, it remains, as yet, unpublished.

MacDhòmhnail's *MacBheatha* adds to the corpus of Scottish translations of *Macbeth*. Edwin Morgan's 'The Hell's-Handsel o Leddy Macbeth' appeared in *Rites of Passage* in 1976; it comprises a short translation of part of Act 1 Scene 5 (Morgan 1976: 82-83). Morgan translated Shakespeare's 'Come, you spirits that tend on mortal thoughts' as 'Cwa sightless cailleachs o the warks o daith', using the Gaelic word *cailleach* ('old woman/ hag') for spirit. 'Cailleachs' is an evocative choice and suggestive of a willingness to associate Gaelic with the exotic or otherworldly. Two different full translations of *Macbeth* into Scots both appeared in print in 1992 (Lorimer 1992; Purves 1992).

MacDhòmhnail's *MacBheatha* is not the first time that *Macbeth* has been translated into Gaelic, nor is it the first time that Gaelic has been included in productions of *Macbeth*. As noted above, Iain MacCormaic also completed a translation in 1933; an unpublished manuscript (typescript) is held in the library collection of Comunn Gàidhlig Inbhir Nis (MacLeod 1969: 146, 519 n. 13, 513 n.23; MacLeod 1974: 163; Mac Cormaic 1933). There is also some suggestion that Seumas MacGaraidh/ James Carr MacDonald Hay (1885-1966), a native of Arbroath who emigrated to California in 1923, translated *Macbeth*, although this was not published either (Coyle n.d.). MacGaraidh was a keen Scottish nationalist and Gaelic enthusiast, founding *An Sgoil Ghàidhlig, Baile Naoimh Fhraing* ('The Gaelic School, San Francisco') (MacGaraidh [1941] 5-6; Jackson Autumn 2010; Jackson Winter 2010). Furthermore, in 1974 Donald John MacLeod noted that an 'adaptation into Gaelic of *MacBeth* was staged in Glasgow in 1972' (MacLeod 1974: 163). I have so far been unable to uncover any further information about this production or the translation it might have used. In 1995 Ike Isaksen's *An Gaisgeach-The Hero*, at the Tramway in Glasgow, used both Scots and Gaelic; however, this was a play based on the biography of the historical King MacBeth rather than an adaptation of Shakespeare's play (McClure 1999: 34-35; Villiers 1995). Also in 1995 a Highland schools' production of *Macbeth* was staged by a newly formed Outreach project of Eden Court Theatre in Inverness; adapted and directed by Dominic Rickhards (*Theatre Scotland* 1995: 4). The dialogue of the witches was performed in Gaelic, as part of an otherwise English-language performance. An extant programme for the show, in this author's possession (since I performed the part of one of the Gaelic-speaking witches, as a teenager attending Inverness High School), attributes the Gaelic translation to Donald John MacLeod; this is presumably Dr. MacLeod (1943-) who was at the time the Gaelic development officer for Highland Region Education Department. To my knowledge, his translation of the witches' dialogue has never been published either. Finally, it has also come to my attention that An Comunn Gàidhealach's archive of Gaelic playscripts, held in their Stornoway offices, also includes a further unpublished translation of *Macbeth*. An Comunn's typescript manuscript of the

translation is anonymous and unfortunately no further information is known as to the date or context of the translation; it does not appear to be connected to Donald John MacLeod.

Therefore, the Gaelic language has been used in a number of productions of *Macbeth*. As far as I am aware, only three unpublished translations are extant: MacDhòmhnaill's (2013), MacCormaic's (1933) and An Comunn's (of unknown date). It has been demonstrated that further translations or part translations have been completed and staged, although it is so far unclear if any of these have survived. It seems that 2013 was the first time that the greater part of *Macbeth* was performed in Gaelic in Scotland by a professional cast. Shakespeare's corpus has scant representation in Gaelic translation, with so far only one play and a handful of sonnets rendered into the language in a published format. Yet, as we have seen, *Macbeth* has attracted the attention of Gaelic translators and dramaturgists many times. The choice of *Macbeth* may have specific implications for our understanding of the language politics surrounding Gaelic in Scotland.

MacBheatha and the politics of translation

Ton Hoenselaars (2004: 21) has noted that

Gradually readers and audiences of Shakespeare are beginning to appreciate the merits of the plays in translation. Such interest may strengthen when a Shakespeare play is translated into the very foreign culture that is portrayed within it. The translation of *Othello* into Arabic activates many unexpected issues that are both verbally and culturally relevant, as does the translation of *The Merchant of Venice* into Hebrew, or *Henry V* into French.

Indeed the translations of *Macbeth* into Scots have garnered significant interest from scholars of literature and translation (McClure 1999: McClure 2004: 228-39; Corbett 1999: 156-58; Kinloch 2002) since they are, of course, translations into one of the languages of Scotland, the culture portrayed by the play. It will be argued here that MacDhòmhnaill's Gaelic translation naturally also gives rise to a range of 'verbally and culturally relevant' issues. The translations of *Othello* into Arabic are of particular interest in this context, since at least one twentieth-century translator appears to have consulted medieval Arabic poetry when searching for an appropriate register; Arabic turns of phrase and translation choices can remind audiences of that corpus of poetry (Ghazoul 1998: 5-8). Questions of register, and echoes of a poetic corpus, are particularly pertinent to MacDhòmhnaill's register and we will compare sections of his translation with that of MacCormaic's. It will be demonstrated here that MacDhòmhnaill's translation also has the potential to open up a whole range of inferences and allusions to Gaelic literatures and frames of reference in a similar fashion to the Arabic translation of *Othello*.

We will deal here with a number of the wider culturally relevant issues which are afforded by any Gaelic translation, before moving on to the specific issue of chosen register in MacDhòmhnail's work. *Macbeth* is a play 'in which a Scottish hero is effectually libelled' (McClure 1999: 35) and yet it is as popular in Scotland as elsewhere. In addition to the blackening of the reputation of the king it can be argued that Shakespeare also manifests a number of contemporaneous cultural prejudices and stereotypes relating to Scottish Gaels. For instance, the Scottish Highland setting of the play is a landscape in which one can encounter witches whose dialogue marks them as animalistic. Christopher Highley has argued that the witches bring to mind 'the archetypal figure of the barbarian, a figure menacingly instantiated in the Gaelic Highlander at the time of *Macbeth's* early performances' (Highley 2004: 62-63). Indeed it is also often argued that Shakespeare portrays the Scottish queen, Lady Macbeth, as a fourth witch, particularly as a result of her reference to the raven, just before her call to the 'spirits which tend on mortal thoughts' to unsex her and fill her with cruelty (Willis 1995: 221-222; Townshend 2013: 174). Lady Macbeth's call to the spirits sees her enter into a demonic pact and, of course, this was a feature of the public discourse around witchcraft at the time (Braunmuller 2008: 30). Thus, the raven may represent merely a bad omen or perhaps Lady Macbeth's witch's familiar spirit.

It is also striking that a hoarse croaking raven should appear in connection with the queen since the Gaelic language itself was also associated in the early modern period with the noise of rooks and ravens (MacGregor 2007: 20, 27 n. 65). It is thought that *Macbeth* was written around 1605 and performed in 1606; there is some debate on its status as an 'occasional' play, written and performed for the entertainment of the new Scottish king of England, King James VI and I (Braunmuller 2008: 8). In 1599, in his *Basilikon Doron* this king used bestial imagery when referring to his Gaelic-speaking Scottish subjects. The Gaels of the mainland Highlands were described as 'barbarous for the most part, and yet mixed with some shewe of civilitie' whereas the Island Gaels were 'allutterly barbares' and Prince Henry was instructed to 'thinke no other of them all, then of Wolues and Wilde boares' (Rhodes *et al.* 2003: 222). Thus, *Macbeth* clearly gives us something of a window onto the cultural and language politics of the early seventeenth century.

Portrayals of Gaelic Scots as barbaric, backward and animalistic have a long history, and the Gaelic language has long been marginalized and suppressed in Scottish society. Indeed to this day a very vocal minority of reporters at Scottish newspapers, particularly *The Scotsman*, regularly denigrate any attempt to support the continued use of what is now a minority or endangered language. Indeed within weeks of the staging of MacDhòmhnail's *MacBheatha*, in September of 2013, *The Scotsman*, a national newspaper, published a number of very anti-Gaelic articles. On the 15th of October Alan Massie did his best to portray Gaelic as futile and a lost cause (Massie 2013), claiming that the majority of Scots don't agree with public spending on Gaelic initiatives, when in fact a number of recent surveys show the opposite to be true (West and Graham 2011; O'Hanlon *et al.* 2013). On the 28th of October Hugh Reilly's article in *The Scotsman* went one step further and attempted to animalize Gaels in

Scotland today, referring to the 'slurping snouts of Gaels' as they 'struggle to stop the trough overflowing with taxpayers' cash' (Reilly 2013). Therefore, a translation of *Macbeth* into Scottish Gaelic becomes politically significant, since it might become a space in which to reflect on both historical and ongoing prejudice against the language and its culture.

Furthermore, a translation from the majority language, such as English, into the minority language, like Gaelic, is itself seen to be a political act. The motives of a translator are often called into question when the intended audience would all be perfectly capable of understanding the work in its original language. Translators and dramatists in the lesser-used language often feel the need to justify the whole enterprise. In the case of the Scots translations of *Macbeth* Derick McClure noted that part of the reason for the enterprise would be that

English is the language against which the status of Scots is measured. What clearer proof could there be that Scots is indeed an autonomous literary language than by successfully translating a great work in the language with reference to which it is defined? If Scots is sufficiently developed to encompass *Macbeth*, it is incontrovertibly a fully mature literary medium (McClure 1999: 38).

Bill Findlay felt moved to justify his Scots theatre translations in the 80s and 90s against the 'irrationally dismissive, and often snobbish attitude towards Scots' (Findlay 1993: 19). It would be undeniable that Gaelic can have the same stigma attached. The production of a Gaelic translation of *Macbeth* may evidence a similar desire to demonstrate that this much-maligned language is capable of rendering English classics. Yet, the situation of Gaelic differs from that of Scots, since Gaelic is not forced to continually prove that it is a distinct language from English, or that it encompasses an 'autonomous literary language'. Thus, if the translation and staging of *Macbeth* in Gaelic is to be considered a political act then the motivation may differ from that of a Scots translation.

The translation of classics such as Shakespeare and the synthetic enrichment of a literary register are often remarked upon in conjunction with the formation of the 'national culture' of an emergent or newly formed nation state. André Lefevere and Susan Bassnett note that in some instances translation, 'becomes one of the means by which a new nation 'proves' itself, shows that its language is capable of rendering what is rendered in more prestigious languages' (Lefevere and Bassnett 1990: 8). The translation of a number of Shakespeare plays in the 1960s into Swahili by Julius Nyerere, the first president of the Republic of Tanzania, is often seen as a prime example (Mazrui 2007: 133). The translation of works from German by Czech cultural nationalists in the nineteenth century when the audience would have more easily understood the German originals is another example (Macura 1990). Indeed the translation of *Macbeth* into Irish can be seen to fit into this paradigm. The translation by S. Labhrás Ua Súilleabháin was published in 1925, early in the history of the Irish Free State (Ua Súilleabháin 1925). In November of 1941 it had a

professional run at Taibhdhearc na Gaillimhe, the national Irish-language theatre founded in Galway in 1928 (NUI Galway Archives 2013). The translator makes clear in an English-language introduction that the project is part of the movement by which Ireland might 'prove' itself as equal to other nations, ultimately helping to change the language of the nation from English to Irish:

The great continental nations, Germany, France, Italy, have long ago realised to the full the educative value of making available for their peoples, through translation, the classic literatures of foreign countries. At the particular stage which has now been reached in the cultivation and spread of our own language, I feel that the value of this phase of literary development – the translation of foreign classics – cannot well be over-estimated. In a little while, it is our hope, we shall be Irish-speaking, Irish-reading (Ua Súilleabháin 1925: 3).

Such an aim, in common with Czech and German in the nineteenth century, suggests that the majority of the Irish theatre-going population would in 1925 have been able to access *Macbeth* more easily in English, perhaps in common with a number of Irish translation projects between 1922 and 1939 (Cronin 1996: 151; O'Leary 2004: Chapters 6 and 8). Yet once again this is not an exact fit for the Scottish Gaelic situation since the linking of Gaelic with an emergent nation state is also complex. A recent study of Gaelic and national identity concluded that, 'most Scots ... do not feel they have a great deal in common with Gaels. Gaels may identify as Scots, but not many Scots identify with Gaels.' (Bechhofer and McCrone 2014: 130). The theoretical willingness to permit increased promotion of Gaelic as a potential part of Scotland's future has, in recent years, come to enjoy increased political support, leading to the *Gaelic Language (Scotland) Act* of 2005. However, it is certainly not a key issue for any of Scotland's political parties and barely featured in campaigning for the 2014 Referendum. Furthermore, the distance between political words of goodwill and real action remains vast, particularly in a situation where, as of quite recently, only 2% of Scottish children are taught Gaelic (Walsh and McLeod 2008: 25). Therefore, the translation of *Macbeth* into Gaelic in 2013 cannot easily be made to fit into the paradigm of a new or aspirant nation attempting to 'prove itself'.

The notion that a translation project from the societally dominant language into the marginalized language would only occur at a moment of crisis, such as the formation of the nation-state, is of course somewhat reductive. Furthermore, there should, in my view, be no need to justify the desirability of a Gaelic translation of *Macbeth*, even for a community of Gaelic-English bilinguals. As Maria Tymoczko quite rightly notes:

We should note the importance of translation for the linguistic expansion of any language, but particularly of minority languages; such privileging of language per se is, therefore, not to be dismissed as a useless, foolish or trivial strategy. (Tymoczko 1995: 19 n.12)

Thus, if Gaelic translations of *Macbeth* are an awkward fit into the paradigms of striving towards literary/linguistic autonomy or movements of cultural nationalism,

then perhaps the political implications might be sought in a study of the register of the translation. A focus on verbally relevant issues may teach us about linguistic expansion but may also have further resonance.

MacBheatha and the register of 'Linn nan Creach'

In the remainder of this article it will be shown that close attention to language register can indeed shed further light on the political implications or culturally relevant issues of *Macbeth* in Scottish Gaelic. It will be argued here that MacDhòmhnaill's translation does to some extent challenge the audience to expand their registers. In doing so, this in turn allows some reflection on the history of Gaelic culture in Scotland. A number of translation choices in *MacBheatha* allow a glimpse of a high literary register of Scottish Gaelic, with perhaps unexpected political implications. A review of the Glasgow two-actor production of *MacBheatha* referred to the 'sinewy and richly atmospheric Gaelic' (MacMillan 2013). During rehearsals for the performances, in September 2013, some of those involved in the production were interviewed by Cathy NicDhòmhnaill, for her BBC Radio nan Gàidheal week-day radio broadcast, *Feasgar*. Catrìona Lexy Chaimbeul, the actress who played Lady Macbeth, mentioned on air that the Gaelic translation used for the play reminded her of 'Gàidhlig a' Bhìobail' ('the Gaelic of the Bible') (*Feasgar* 19 Sept 2013). Thus, it becomes immediately clear that, at least in part, the translation has recourse to a register somewhat higher than *Gàidhlig an tac an teine* ('fireside Gaelic'), as would of course be expected of a Shakespeare translation. This article does not present any further evidence on public reception of the productions; such research would doubtlessly lead to greater insights but lies outside the focus of this article. However, in some sense, this article comprises this author's own extended personal reaction to the Glasgow performance of September 2013.

Valuable work on registers of Scottish Gaelic outlines the continued, although increasingly rare, existence of a number of high registers of the language (Lamb 1999: 142-43; Lamb 2008). Donald MacAulay noted that Modern Gaelic's prestige domains include 'both the religious and 'literary'' (MacAulay 1982: 39-40). Both of these registers, the religious and literary, owe something of their genesis to the conservative late-medieval and early modern literary register used in both Ireland and Scotland; referred to, in Scotland, as 'Classical Gaelic' or 'Classical Common Gaelic'. This was the language register codified in Ireland for bardic poetry and it continued to be used in Scotland for poetry and prose into the seventeenth century. In addition to this, Donald Meek has noted the likelihood that a 'type of Classical Gaelic, strongly influenced by the spoken language, had emerged in Scotland by the end of the Middle Ages' (Meek 1990: 6). Thus, Meek delineated a strict 'Type A' literary Classical Gaelic and a less strict and more vernacular Scottish 'Type B' literary Classical Gaelic, both in use in Scotland for literature into the early modern period. Therefore, when Shakespeare was writing, Gaeldom had its own very formal high register used for literature. While it would be an interesting experiment to have something performed in that register of Gaelic today, one might imagine, that given that it has been largely ignored since the seventeenth century, audiences in

Scotland would have some difficulty with it, as they do of course with Shakespeare's English.

The modern religious register of Scottish Gaelic is greatly influenced by the language of the Bible, as translated between 1767 and 1801; the register used is seen to mix vernacular Scottish Gaelic with Classical Gaelic, perhaps closer to Meek's 'Type B' (Meek 1990: 10; Meek 2002: 90). The modern literary register of Scottish Gaelic, although there is arguably more than one, also owes something to Classical Gaelic. The centuries following the forfeiture of the Lordship of the Isles (1493) are often referred to in Gaelic as *Linn nan Creach* ('the era of plunder') due to the instability caused by Crown-promoted forfeiture, plantation, feud and strictures in the Gaelic world. During this period we first start to see poetry and song in something other than Classical Gaelic. For instance, we have the work of professional vernacular poets such as Eachann Bacach (d. *post* 1651), Iain Lom (d. *post* 1707), Màiri nighean Alasdair Ruaidh (d. *c.* 1707), and An Clàrsair Dall (d. 1713/14), and the work of noble non-professionals such as An Ciaran Mabach. The register used in this corpus is influenced by Classical Gaelic. It is, however, far closer to vernacular Scottish Gaelic, although still a literary register and not, presumably, the vernacular low-register of Gaelic as spoken in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries. We might say that this literary register, the register of vernacular Gaelic song, changed but also remained in use over a long period; intertextuality allowing various turns of phrase to be retained in the massively popular more recent Gaelic song and township poetry traditions.

It is arguable that MacDhòmhnaill's occasional recourse to high registers of Scottish Gaelic has the potential to remind the audience of the identifiably Scottish literary register of Gaelic (post Classical Gaelic) which first emerges in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries and was used for both religious and secular purposes. A number of examples will be discussed below and both MacDhòmhnaill's and MacCormaic's translations given for comparative purposes. The original English in each case is taken from the *New Cambridge Shakespeare* edition (Braunmuller 2008).

Lady Macbeth's speech in Act 1 Scene 5, in which she calls on the 'spirits that tend on mortal thoughts', is rendered as follows:

MacDhòmhnaill

Tha 'm fitheach fhèin is tùchadh air
Tha gràgail air teachd marbhtach Dhonnchaidh
Fom bhaideal-sa. Thigibh, a spioradan
A tha a' freagairt smaointean dhaoine,
Is thoiribh bhuan mo bhanalachd,
Is le an-ìochdmhorachd ro bhorb, Ò, lìonaibh mi!
Tiughaichibh m' fhuil. Dùinibh an t-slighe
A-steach gu truacantas is iochd, air chor
'S nach bacar mi le bioraidhean cogais
Bho mo rùn uabhasach a choileanadh
'S gun a bhith a' gabhail smaoin mu na thig às.

Shakespeare

The raven himself is hoarse
That croaks the fatal entrance of Duncan
Under my battlements. Come, you spirits
That tend on mortal thoughts, unsex me here
And fill me from the crown to the toe topfull
Of direst cruelty; make thick my blood,
Stop up th'access and passage to remorse
That no compunctious visitings of nature
Shake my fell purpose nor keep peace between
Th' effect and it. Come to my woman's breasts
And take my milk for gall, you murd'ring ministers,

A sheirbheisichean muirt, ge brith cò 'n t-àit'
 Sa bheil sibh frithealadh air dosgairn dhaoine,
 Thigibh-se gu mo chiochan boireann
 Is atharraichibh gu domblas am bainne.
 Thig, oidhche dhùmhail, is bi air do chòmhdach
 Sa cheò as duirche 'n Ifrinn, gus nach fhaic
 Mo sgian gheur an lot a nì i, 's gus
 Nach seall Nèamh tro phlaide dhubh na h-oidhch'
 A dh'èigheach, "Stad, Ò, stad!"

Wherever in your sightless substances
 You wait on nature's mishchief. Come, thick night,
 And pall thee in the dunnest smoke of hell,
 That my keen knife see not the wound it makes,
 Nor heaven peep through the blanket of the dark,
 To cry, 'Hold, hold.'

MacCormaic

Tha tùchan air an fhitheach fhein a' goracail mu theachd neo-shealbhach
 An rìgh fo'm bharrabhallachan-sa
 Thigibh: thigibh a thaibhsean a tha frithealadh do smaointean saoghalta.
 Di-bhanailibh mi far am bheil mi' m sheasamh: lìonaibh mi
 Bho mhullach mo chinn gu bonn mo chas, làn de'n olc as motha
 Deanaibh slaman de' m fhuil dùinibh suas an t-slighe
 air an treòraich aithreachas a chum 's nach cum faireachduinnean[n]
 Nàdurra bhuam an nì sam bheil mo shùil: agus nach cum iad
 Ceum eadar sin agus an gnìomh.
 Thigibh agus deoghailibh mo bhroilleach banail, agus biodh
 Mo bhainne-cìch dhuibh mar phuinnsean, sibhse a sheirbheisich
 Mhortaireach; C'ait 'sam bith, ('n ar cuim dhoille) am bheil sibh a' frithealadh do'n olc.
 Tiugainn, oidhche nan neul dubha, agus cuir sgàil ort fhéin
 Leis an toit a's duirche a thig ás an t-sloc iochdarach:
 A chum' nach faic mo lann gheur an lot a nì si,
 'S na toireadh flaitheanas priob troimh chleoca an dorchadais
 a' glaothaich "Stad!" "Stad!"

The religious connotations of much of the vocabulary in this speech pertain also to the original English. However, MacDhòmhnaill and MacCormaic differ quite substantially in their treatment of this vocabulary. For instance, for Shakespeare's 'heaven', 'hell', 'gall' and 'spirits' MacDhòmhnaill gives us the literal expected religious usages: *Nèamh* ('heaven'), *Ifrinn* ('hell'), *domblas* ('gall'), *spioradan* ('spirits'). However, MacCormaic differs on each giving *flaitheanas* ('sovereignty/Heaven'), *an sloc iochdarach* ('the lower pit'), *puinnsean* ('poison'), *taibhsean* ('vison/ghost'). Thus, MacDhòmhnaill's translation more immediately resonates with Biblical or liturgical usage. Indeed, MacDhòmhnaill arguably extends the use of a high religious register of Gaelic. For instance, he translates 'compunctious visitings of nature' as *bioraidhean cogais*; this would translate the English phrase 'pricks of conscience', as it does in the Gaelic translations of the sermons of John Welsh (1568/69-1622) (Munro 1841: 11; Welsh n.d.: 190). We can note here that MacCormaic gave *faireachdainnean nàdarra* ('natural feelings') for this phrase which may not have the same echo of the Gaelic religious corpus.

The marked difference in use of register can also be seen in MacDhòmhnaill's use of the Gaelic word *dosgairn* to translate 'mischief', compared with MacCormaic's *olc*. The word *dosgairn* has a number of dialectal variants, such as *dosgaich* or *dosgaidh*. Its range of meaning includes: calamity, damage, misfortune and mischief. This word would appear to be somewhat unusual in colloquial contemporary Gaelic and it is a

translation which has resonance with the Gaelic song tradition. For instance, the Lewis poet born around 1656, known as An Clàrsair Dall ('The Blind Harper'), uses the word in the first verse of 'Creach na Ciadaoin' ('Wednesday's Plundering'), a lament for John MacLeod of Dunvegan (Matheson 1970: 46-47):

Thromaich sac air mo ghiùlan,
le dùmhladas dòrainn,
Dh'amais dosgaidh na bliadhna orm –
Creach na Ciadaoin seo leòn mi

('A growing heaviness oppresses me – it comes from intensity of grief. This year's calamity has chanced to fall on me- it is this Wednesday's bereavement that has wounded me.')

Sìleas na Ceapaich also uses the term in the first verse of her 18th-century lament for Alasdair Dubh, 11th chief of the MacDonalds of Glengarry, 'Alasdair à Gleanna Garadh' (Ó Baoill 1972: 70-71):

'S beag ionghnadh mi bhith trom-osnach,
'S meud an dosgaidh th' air mo chàirdibh;
Gur tric an t-eug uainn a' gearradh
Rogha nan darag as àirde

('Small wonder that I am filled with deep sighing, considering all the misfortune that has befallen my friends. Death is constantly cutting off from us the best of the tallest oaks.')

A lament for one of the MacLeans of Duart calls his loss 'ar dosgainn' ('our plunder/calamity') (MacKenzie 1841: 70). Therefore, *dosgainn* appears in a number of lament poems of *Linn nan Creach*. There are more recent recorded uses of the word, also in the Gaelic song and poetry tradition, for instance in the Skye song 'Coileach Peigi'. (BBC Bliadhna nan Òran). However, one French translator of Shakespeare has written that:

La longue phrase de Shakespeare en sa course libre est jalonnée de mots rayonnants qui éclatent soudain, riches de sens divers, d'images, de parfums différents. Il semble que chacun de ces mots soit un carrefour dans un tourbillon. (Carrière 1974: 9-10)

("The long, free-flowing sequence of a Shakespearean sentence is punctuated with radiating words that suddenly burst into different meaning, images and scents. It seems that each one of those words is a crossroads in the middle of a whirlwind.") (Déprats 2004: 145)

One road at this *carrefour dans un tourbillon* in MacDhòmhnail's translation can lead us to Gaelic Scotland's tradition of clanship poetry from a time of huge turmoil for the Highlands and Islands. Such usage allows a Gaelic audience to contemplate

the regicide of a Gaelic-speaking king that Lady Macbeth is plotting, whilst also calling to mind the early modern Gaelic song tradition of lament for the Gaelic chief.

A further instance of MacDhòmhnail's translation containing echoes of the Early Modern song tradition occurs in Lady Macbeth's speech, immediately after the receipt of the letter relaying the message of the witches that he will be king (Act 1, Scene 5). This is before arrival of news that the actual king, King Duncan, will arrive there that night.

MacDhòmhnail

Glàmais is tu, is Caladair, is fhathast
Bi thu mar a ghealladh dhut. Ach tha iomagain orm
Rod nàdar. Tha thu ro làn de bhainne coibhneis
nàdarra,
'S cha ghabh thu 'n t-slighe 's giorra. Dh'iarradh tu
Bhith mòr, 's chan eil thu gun ghloir-mhiann, ach
Chan iarradh tu an t-olc a tha na chois.
Dh'iarradh tu mòrachd, ach a faighinn gu h-ionraic;
Cha chluicheadh tu gu meallt', ach an dèidh sin
Bhuannaicheadh tu le foill.
A Ghlàmais mhòir, gun iarradh tu na chanas,
Ma tha e dhith ort, 'Seo a thig ort a dhèanamh',
Is e na rud tha eagal ort a dhèanamh
Seach rud a b' fheàrr leat e a bhith gun dèanamh.
Thig thusa thugamsa, is dòirtidh mi
Mo spionnadh na do chluais, is sgaoilidh mi
Le gaisge gheur mo theanga gach aon rud
A tha gad bhacadh bhon a' chearcall òir,
'S am freastal agus cumhachd os-nàdarra
Is iadsan mar gum bitheadh iad mu thràth
Air thus' a chrùnadh.

Shakespeare

Glamis thou art, and Cawdor, and shalt be
What thou art promised; yet do I fear thy nature,
It is too full o' th' milk of human kindness
To catch the nearest way. Thou wouldst be great,
Art not without ambition, but without
The illness should attend it. What thou wouldst
highly,
That wouldst thou holily; wouldst not play false,
And yet wouldst wrongly win. Thou'dst have, great
Glamis,
That which cries, 'Thus thou must do' if thou have
it;
And that which rather thou dost fear to do,
Than wishest should be undone. Hie thee hither,
That I may pour my spirits in thine ear
And chastise with the valour of my tongue
All that impedes thee from the golden round,
Which fate and metaphysical aid doth seem
To have thee crowned withal.

MacCormaic

Glamais is tu, agus Caladair: agus bidh tu fhathast mar a ghealladh duit.
Ach tha teagamh agam ann an ad nàdur: tha thu tuilleadh a's làn
de bhainn-cioch a choibhneis a chum ath-ghoirid a ghabhail.
'S e do mhiann a bhi mór: cha'n 'eil thu gun chur-romhad,
Ach tha thu as eugmhais na ceilg a dh'fheumas a bhi an cois do dhùrachd.
Ged is aill leat a bhi àrd an inbhe, 's math leat
An inbhe a ruigheachd gu h-ionraic.
Cha toigh leat a bhi carach, ach aig an àm cheudna
Gabhaidh tu seilbh ann an ni an dòigh chli.
Ghabhadh tu, a Ghlamais mhóir, a tha 'g éigheach riut, "mar so
ni thu, mas math leat e."
Agus a' cheart ni sin a tha eagal ort làmh a chur ann,
Chan e do mhiann e bhi dèante.
Greas ort an so, gus an taom mi mo dhùrachd ann ad chluasan,
Agus an toir mi achain, le sgairt mo theanga, air gach ni a tha na chnap-starra duit,
Air an t-slighe oirdheirc, oir tha e an dàn duit, 's air do
Mhanadh, thu bhi air do chrùnadh gu buadh-mhor.

It is the translation of ‘Hie thee hither, that I may pour my spirits in thine ear’ as ‘Thig thusa thugamsa, is dòirtidh mi mo spionnadh na do chluais’ (in MacDhòmhnail) that we will consider. Neither MacCormaic nor MacDhòmhnail translate ‘spirits’ with its Gaelic cognate *spioradan*. MacDhòmhnail has chosen *spionnadh* and MacCormaic *dùrachd* (‘intention/wish’). The translation of ‘spirits’ by a word other than *spioradan* has the downside of obscuring Shakespeare’s foreshadowing here of the ‘spirits that tend on mortal thoughts’ in the next speech. In both Gaelic translations that link is lost. In fact the pun of pouring evil spirits as liquid spirit is also lost by the use of *spionnadh* or *dùrachd*. MacDhòmhnail’s *spionnadh* is not necessarily particularly unusual in colloquial contemporary Gaelic. *Spionnadh* means ‘strength’ or ‘might’ but is also used often to mean something akin to ‘vigour’, ‘gumption’, ‘mettle’ or ‘spirit’. However, the use of *spionnadh* does open up other allusions. For instance, the wish that the *spionnadh* of one person could be transferred to another, between a married couple in this instance, can take us back to that crossroads leading to the earlier song tradition, specifically to poetry attributed to Mòr Chaimbeul/ Marion Campbell in the sixteenth century. In this instance we know that her husband, MacGregor of the MacGregors had been executed by the Campbells near to the beginning of their campaign against the MacGregors in the central Highlands in 1570. In the song known as ‘Griogal Cridhe’ Marion laments as follows (MacGregor 1999: 142-43):

Is truagh nach robh mi an riochd na h-uisge,
 Spionnadh Ghriogair ann mo làimh:
 Is i a’ chlach a b’ àirde anns a’ chaisteal
 A’ chlach a b’fhaisge do’n bhlàr.

(‘If I were in the lark’s shape,
 Gregor’s strength in my hand,
 The highest stone of the castle (would be)
 The stone nearest the ground’)

Marion wishes she had her husband’s *spionnadh* in order to tear down a castle, Lady Macbeth wants to pour her *spionnadh* (in MacDhòmhnail’s translation) into her husband’s ear so that he might have the courage to murder. Thus, once again MacDhòmhnail’s translation, here the use of *spionnadh*, has the potential to bring to mind a corpus of Gaelic literature in which we see the impact of turbulent times for Highland Scotland. It is somewhat poignant to recall that the king for whom *Macbeth* may have been originally performed in the early seventeenth century had himself overseen some of this chaos.

Finally, the last excerpt to be considered here occurs in Act 1 Scene 7 and has Lady Macbeth castigating Macbeth for doubting the plan:

MacDhòmhnail
 ‘N e daorach bha san dòchas ud
 San do chòmhdach thu thu fhèin?

Shakespeare
 Was the hope drunk
 Wherein you dressed yourself? Hath it slept since?

An do chaidil e on uair sin? Is a-nis
 Bheil e air dùsgadh is air sealltainn
 Air dhòigh cho breòite is cho fann
 Air na bha roimhe cho fearast? Bho seo a-mach
 Sin mar a bhios mo ghaol-sa ort's.
 Bheil eagal ort a bhith nad ghnìomh 's nad ghaisge
 Mar a tha thu na do mhiann? An iarradh tu
 An nì a mheasar leat mar mhaise mhòr na beatha
 'S a bhith gad mheasadh fhèin mar ghealtair,
 A' leigeil le 'Cha dùraig dhomh' bhith 'n cois 'Bu
 mhiann leam',
 Cleas a' chait bhochd san t-seanfhalcal?

And wakes it now to look so green and pale
 At what it did so freely? From this time,
 Such I account thy love. Art thou afeard
 To be the same in thine own act and valour,
 As thou art in desire? Wouldst thou have that
 Which thou esteem'st the ornament of life,
 And live a coward in thine own esteem,
 Letting I dare not wait upon I would,
 Like the poor cat i'th'adage?

MacCormaic

An ann air mhisg a bha an dòchas anns
 An d'èid thu thu fhéin? An do chaidil e 'uaithe sin?
 'S am bheil e nis air dùsgadh, 'n uair tha e a nis a'
 Sealltainn cho amh glas, mu'n nì a rinn e cho toileach?
 bhuaithe so a mach, sud mar a sheallas mi air do ghràdh.
 Am bheil oillt ort fhéin a ghiùlan gu fearail, duineil,
 Mar is se do mhiann? An e gu'm bu mhath leat an nì anns am
 bheil do shùil fad do bheatha, agus aig an àm cheudna,
 A bhi 'g ad chunntas fhéin mar ghealtair? A' leigeil le
 "Cha'n urrainn mi" a bhi frithealadh air "b' e mo mhiann"?
 Coltach ris a' chat bhochd anns an sgeul.

Both MacCormaic and MacDhòmhnaill provide masterful translations of the end of this speech: 'Letting I dare not wait upon I would, like the poor cat i'th'adage'. The use of *bu mhiann leam* or *b' e mo mhiann* for 'I would' here is skillful since the adage in question is, in English, 'The cat would eat fish but will not wet her feet' (Braunmuller 2008: 150). This reference may be largely opaque to a contemporary audience hearing Lady Macbeth's speech in the original English, since the English saying in question is only alluded to. The still current Gaelic equivalent is *Miann a' chait san tràigh is cha toir e fhèin às e* ('The desire of the cat is at the shore but he himself won't retrieve it'). Thus, the use of *miann* to translate 'I would', immediately prior to this gives the Gaelic audience the clue they need to the adage in question. *Miann* directly before *cat* awakens the memory of the proverb in question for Gaelic speakers and this can be compared with Shakespeare's more opaque reference to it. The translators, in this instance, translated in such a way as to both draw on the resources of Gaelic and simultaneously provide further clarity to a reference in Shakespeare's English that is most likely impenetrable for a modern English-speaking audience.

MacDhòmhnaill's use of *cha dùraig dhomh* also causes pause for thought in this speech, and can be compared with MacCormaic's *cha'n urrainn mi* ('I'm not able'). In modern colloquial Gaelic the most common translation of 'I would not dare' would be *cha ghabhainn orm* and the use here of *dùraig* is somewhat similar to the use of *dosgainn* to translate mischief, as discussed previously. The use of *cha (bu) dùraig dhomh* or *cha dùraiginn*, is certainly not completely obsolete in modern speech and may indeed be more prevalent in certain dialects. However, once again we can easily

link it to a higher register of Gaelic, and the term is represented well in song and poetry. Indeed, another of the songs thought to have been composed by Marion Campbell on the tragedy of her love match with Gregor MacGregor uses the word. The song is ‘Rìgh gur Mòr mo chuid mhulaid’ (‘Lord, how great is my sorrow’) and was apparently composed sometime before her suitor’s eventual execution. She begins the song by stating (MacGregor 1999: 140-41):

Rìgh gur mòr mo chuid mhulaid,
On chiad là thrumaich do bhròn orm
On a ghlac mi ’n ciad iùl ort
'S nach do dhùraig mi pòsadh.

(‘Lord, how great is my sorrow,
From the first day your grief oppressed me,
Since I caught the first sight of you
And I did not dare (? to contemplate) marriage’)

In conclusion, *Macbeth* may be a popular choice for the Gaelic stage due to opportunities for re-appropriation. When watching Shakespeare’s *Macbeth* in English we are at once transported to eleventh-century Scotland but also to very early seventeenth-century England and a play often thought to pay tribute to the Scottish king who was now also king of England. Shakespeare arguably reflects contemporaneous views on Gaelic barbarity. Anti-Gaelic prejudice, although not the view of the majority of Scots, is unfortunately still on occasion given a very public platform in Scotland. Thus, a production of *Macbeth* in Gaelic today may provide a space in which to reflect upon Gaelic’s socio-linguistic position past and present. MacDhòmhnail’s *MacBheatha* taps into a high literary and religious register with a history stretching back to the sixteenth century. Occasional use of a conservative vocabulary and other, perhaps unintentional, allusions to a literary corpus add a further level of meaning to the work. The careful selection of this vocabulary, on a low-level frequency not jarring for the audience or actors, is truly fascinating. MacDhòmhnail’s translation at once allows us to meet an eleventh-century Gaelic-speaking Scottish king but it can also remind us of the late sixteenth- and seventeenth-century turbulent period in Highland history overseen by the very king for whom *Macbeth* may have been first performed. This, in turn, for a Gaelic audience can also allow the whole play with its tales of struggles, treachery and slaughter between Gaelic rulers in Scotland, to become something of a metaphor for the chaos encouraged in the Highlands, and indeed Ireland, during Shakespeare’s time. MacDhòmhnail’s *MacBheatha* highlights the potentially subversive results of any foreign culture refurbishing Shakespeare’s portrayal of themselves with their own linguistic and literary resources.

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