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"A small and great city": On Translating Contemporary Glasgow

Abstract

The aim of this article is to explore contemporary literary depictions of Glasgow as material for translation into Polish. Urban literature constitutes both a challenge and an opportunity for translators, due to the paradoxical nature of the modern Western city—on the one hand, culture-specific, and on the other, generic, resembling all the other Western cities. As such, urban space epitomises the ambiguous nature of contemporary Western cultures themselves, a fact that is made especially evident in translation, a process/product of cultural interaction through which matters of locality and globality unavoidably come to the fore. This analogy between urban space and culture, while universal, seems particularly relevant to discussions of *non-canonical* cities, with Glasgow being a prominent example. Since the 1980s and 90s, Scotland's largest city has been a crucial spot on the country's literary map, a territory where globalised urbanism converges with a continued quest for a distinct national, cultural, and linguistic selfhood. Drawing on works by such authors as Alasdair Gray, James Kelman, Denise Mina, and Douglas Stuart, this article explores the image(s) of Glasgow conceived in Scottish fiction of the late 20th and 21st centuries, and examines the city's renditions in Polish. By doing so, I hope to illuminate the complexities of the contemporary Scottish national self as reflected in Glasgow writing, to investigate how they have been—and can be—approached in translation, and, in the process, to shed some light on the Polish translational handling of cultural and linguistic markedness.

Keywords: Glasgow, contemporary Scottish fiction, the new Scottish renaissance of the 1980s and 90s, city in translation, cultural markedness, linguistic markedness.

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INTRODUCTION: THE SIGNIFICANCE OF THE CITY

Although literary scholarship increasingly directs its attention towards the natural world, a shift stemming from the growing consciousness of the reality and implications of the Anthropocene, we cannot escape the fact that at the beginning of the 21st century—specifically in 2005, according to Deyan Sudjic (5–6)—the world's population became predominantly urban, with more people living in cities than outside of them. Consequently, the city continues to remain a central, defining presence in the life of most societies, although one which is simultaneously becoming increasingly pluralised—as Sudjic observes, "'City' is a word used to describe almost anything" (1). It is also, arguably, a space which perfectly encapsulates the often contradictory currents and forces that define contemporary life in the age of globalisation, transnational mobility, and, at the same time, cultural and linguistic difference, as well as differentiation.

The city is culture in concentrated form, that paradoxical space where the distinct and unique organically function alongside, and as part of, the universal. When first experienced, a foreign city, especially one belonging to the same *Kulturkreis* as our own, is going to seem new and strange, but at the same time familiar, following certain patterns recognisable from our knowledge of our own cities, filled with analogous structures, and, finally, home to the same activities as any other urban centre. This duality of our urban experience is reinforced by the fact that, to use Marc Augé's terms, a contemporary city constitutes a mixture of anthropological places (specific, historically and culturally charged) and non-places (anonymous, generic, universal). As such, cities both shape and mirror the contradictory nature of our cultures. Consequently, and inescapably, they remain a crucial point of reference for many contemporary writers. In this article, I seek to explore how and why one particular city, Glasgow, figures in late 20th- and 21st-century literary negotiations of Scottish identities, and how the significance of this urban landscape translates into Polish.

GLASGOW AND THE NEW SCOTTISH RENAISSANCE OF THE 1980S AND 90S

The city—as a physical, material space that is also a space of history, politics, society, and culture—certainly lies at the very heart of contemporary Scottish literature. In fact, most major Scottish novels of the late 20th and 21st centuries can be classified as urban fiction, and then, within that category, a particularly prominent position is held by Glasgow writing.

The literary importance of this city goes back to Alasdair Gray, writer and artist, and the novel *Lanark: A Life in Four Books*, his ambitious 1981 debut and magnum opus, which took almost thirty years to complete, and which, in his own words, was meant to contain everything he knew ("The Art of Fiction"). The text, whose publication marks the beginning of the so-called new Scottish renaissance, a pre-devolution, politically-engaged revival of Scottish literature—is made up of two parts. One is a semi-autobiographical bildungsroman, based on Gray's own childhood and youth, and carrying echoes of Joyce's *Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man*; the other is a dark dystopian fantasy portraying a hellish alternative version of the protagonist's city, where he arrives having no memory of who he is, following his apparent suicide. Above all, however, it is a novel of and about Glasgow, Gray's home city, which evolves throughout the narrative, along with the changing perspective of the main character. First shown just before the outbreak of WWII, when Duncan Thaw—the protagonist—is a five-year-old boy, it subsequently becomes the primary subject for his intense imagination, as he grows into a teenager and then a young, tortured artist, consumed by his creative vision.

If one were to identify the most famous passage from *Lanark*, it would have to be the fragment in which Gray—via his protagonist—offers a self-mocking diagnosis on why no one notices that "Glasgow is a magnificent city"; the reason is that "nobody imagines living [there]," argues Duncan and then explains further: "if a city hasn't been used by an artist not even its inhabitants live there imaginatively" (*Lanark* 243). This excerpt is so widely quoted in Scottish studies that it has perhaps become slightly trite, but the very overuse is also a testament to its validity and enduring impact, as well as to Glasgow's critical significance for *Lanark* and for Scottish literature at large. In the novel, the city is not just a setting—it is the subject and the vehicle of a profoundly socially-minded treatise on the state of the country. At the same time, through *Lanark*'s evocative rendition of the urban landscape, Gray did single-handedly rediscover Glasgow and place it on the literary map.

Furthermore, as previously noted, *Lanark* is also the starting point of a crucial period in Scottish writing: the new Scottish renaissance, marked by profound explorations of the question of identity[1]—national, cultural, linguistic—as well as significant social and political engagement of its writers in the period leading up to devolution. This (trans)formative role of late 20th-century Scottish prose has been confirmed by numerous scholars

[1] While we obviously cannot propose such a notion as a singular, universal Scottish identity, I am using this phrase (as well as the analogous Scottish self) as an umbrella term, meant to encompass all the different versions of what it may mean to be Scottish.

(Craig; Brown and Riach; Hames; and others). What I postulate and hope to demonstrate, however, is that the status of this new renaissance fiction as mostly urban, conjoining the city and the Scottish self, is by no means coincidental.[2] The argument is certainly reinforced when one considers the work of another seminal author of this literary period, and Gray's friend, James Kelman.

For a long time, Kelman was the only Scot to have won the Booker Prize. He received the award in 1994, for *How Late It Was, How Late*, the story of Sammy Samuels, a working-class but mostly unemployed Glaswegian who wakes up in the street after a bout of heavy drinking, with no memory of what happened. Soon, he loses his eyesight after a beating by plainclothes police officers (whom he deliberately provokes). As a result, he has to get his bearings in this new situation and rediscover the previously familiar city now suddenly made strange, all the while making his way through a Kafkaesque world of absurd bureaucracy as he tries to register his disability. Crucially, Kelman's novel takes the form of an interior monologue, happening in the mind, and in the voice, of its blind protagonist. This narrative technique merges urban space with language, exploring the fundamental link between the two.

Thus, Kelman reaffirms the city as a linguistic space as much as a material one, which ties in with the fact that, to him, it is language that constitutes the primary vehicle of identity—of the self and the nation. This sentiment is evocatively expressed in his essay "Elitism and English Literature, Speaking as a Writer," where he details his early experiences with literature and his failure to find protagonists who sounded like him. Consequently, as a writer, Kelman unrelentingly strives for the authenticity of his working-class voice, seeking to redress the balance of power between Scotland and England.

Obviously, Kelman's is but one take on the link between the Scottish voice, or rather voices, and Glasgow. While it has certainly been formative, with numerous authors citing him as an inspiration and a precursor (including Douglas Stuart, another writer explored in this article), the city has different voices and different faces, many of which have come to the fore through its literature since the establishment of the Scottish Parliament at the turn of the 21st century. These include Suhayl Saadi, whose 2003 novel *Psychoraag*, using the voice trope and taking a Scots-Pakistani radio host for a protagonist, mixes Glaswegian with elements of Urdu, Arabic, and Gaelic; or Anne Donovan, whose *Buddha Da* (2003) is written in Scots, but also features the voices of an Indian family.

[2] I offer a broader discussion of such intersections in my article "The Self and the City in Modern Scottish Fiction."

What emerges from these works is a multilingual and multicultural urban landscape, aligning the Glasgow novel with the prevalent discourse on the linguistic nature of large, globalised metropolitan centres. However, while in no way discounting the importance of that side of the city, what I seek to argue and focus on is that, already at its core, Glasgow is linguistically complicated, fluid, and contradictory. This naturally has to do with Scotland's linguistic make-up. Even when we subtract Gaelic, which has a limited presence in the city, being mostly restricted to the Western Isles,[3] we are left with a continuum which has Standard Scottish English at one end and Scots at the other. There are three problems here that destabilise the Scottish sense of (linguistic) identity. One is that it can be unclear, even for its speakers, if Scots is actually a language or rather a dialect of English.[4] Another is that Scottish speakers are not only widely dispersed along the spectrum, but also tend to move around, shifting their position depending on the situation or environment in which they find themselves. The city is certainly a territory where such linguistic fluidity is bound to occur in concentrated form compared to rural areas, simply by virtue of the greater variety of social and professional contexts which it offers. The third problem has to do with English—while remaining Scotland's main language, it is also one that many Scots reject, turning it into a site of tension. This makes for a complex predicament that is, again, perhaps best reflected by the country's literature, with novelists often writing *against* the language they write *in*.

MOVING FORWARD, LOOKING BACK— THE GLASGOW NOVEL IN THE 21ST CENTURY

In the wake of devolution and the establishment of the Scottish Parliament, the sense of literary commitment to "the Scottish cause" may be said to have waned somewhat, and the writing, including the Glasgow novel, has begun to evolve in different and varied directions. Nevertheless, the influence of Gray and Kelman is an enduring one, and some Glaswegian writers can be seen to follow the path connected to the tradition of the

[3] According to Claire Nance, Glasgow is home to 10% of Scotland's 65,000 Gaelic-speaking population (qtd. in "Evolution of 'Glasgow Gaelic'"). While Nance notes that it is "the highest concentration of speakers of the language outside the Western Isles" (ibid.), it is still a very modest number when compared to over 635,000 people living in Glasgow City ("GCHSCP Demographics and Needs Profile").

[4] While Scots is officially recognised as a language, its similarity to English and the lack of a written standard cause many to dispute this categorisation. For a discussion of the arguments offered by both sides, see for instance McArthur.

pre-devolution revival. Of those, two prominent examples are Denise Mina and Douglas Stuart.

In general, when discussing the kind of Glasgow writing that can be linked to Gray's and Kelman's perspectives, it could be argued that 21st-century urban explorations of national and cultural selfhood tend to follow two main (distinct but often converging) trajectories. On the one hand, we have the focus on the material make-up of the city—an attempt to render in writing the actual urban space, showing materiality to be a physical manifestation and determinant of history, politics, society, and culture. On the other, we have the preoccupation with Glasgow as a linguistic territory. The task of recording the city as both a setting and a spatial manifestation of the realities of contemporary Scottish urban life has been perhaps most prominently undertaken by the writers of so-called Tartan Noir, i.e. crime fiction focused on gauging the "state of the nation" through narratives that seek to shed the tag of strictly popular writing and be classified as literature proper. The genre, while sharing affinities with Gray's mapping of the city, in fact goes further back, to William McIlvanney and his 1977 novel *Laidlaw*—set, (not) coincidentally, in Glasgow—and it has been a prominent literary presence ever since. It is considered by many, including some of its authors, to be the quintessential Scottish genre of today—the kind of writing that best grasps what being an (urban) Scot is about. Tartan Noir boasts a wide range of authors, such as Ian Rankin, Val McDermid, and Chris Brookmyre. However, in the specific context of Glasgow writing, the author to focus on is Denise Mina. She is one of the most significant contemporary writers of Scottish "literary" crime fiction, but—as demonstrated by her Garnethill, Paddy Meehan, and Alex Morrow series, along with her intriguing true crime offering *The Long Drop*—she is primarily a writer of Glasgow (as indicated by the first series actually being named after a Glasgow area). All of Mina's Glaswegian narratives draw an evocative picture of the urban landscape, mapping its different parts and, perhaps most importantly, showing how they are inextricably linked with the social and cultural dynamics defining the lives of their inhabitants.

Regarding the literary descendants to Kelman's language-oriented perspective on the urban, one prominent figure to discuss is Douglas Stuart, who himself identifies *How Late It Was, How Late* as a direct inspiration for his own work ("Interview"), and who has also followed in Kelman's footsteps by becoming the only other Scot to win the Booker Prize, which he received in 2020 for *Shuggie Bain*. The novel is a poignant portrait of the titular character, a sensitive gay boy, and his family—but again, just as importantly, of 1980s Glasgow. For Stuart, as for Kelman, the life and identity of the city are predominantly about the voice, or, in

the former's case, voices, as Shuggie's journey from young childhood to early teenage years corresponds with moving through the city's different areas and accompanying vernaculars. Stuart conceptualises the spoken language as both a social marker and a tool of selfhood, with Shuggie's mother, Agnes, the crucial formative figure in the protagonist's life, instilling in her youngest child the importance of speaking "correctly," as representative of, and conducive to, a higher standing. This notion is eloquently evoked by the scene in which Agnes admonishes her son for improper pronunciation:

> "Howse aboots some light entertainment?" he asked, mimicking some nonsense from the telly. Agnes flinched. With her painted nails she cupped his face and squeezed his dimples gently. She pushed until the boy's bottom lip protruded. "Ab-oww-t," she corrected. "Ab-OU-t." He liked the feeling of her hands on his face, and he cocked his head slightly and baited her. "Ab-ooo-t." Agnes frowned. She took her index finger and pushed it into his mouth, hooking his lower teeth. She gently pulled his jaw open, and held it down. "There's no need to sink to their level, Hugh. Try it again." With her finger in his mouth, Shuggie pronounced it correctly if not clearly. It had the round, proper oww sound that she liked. Agnes nodded her approval and let go of his lip. (Stuart, *Shuggie* 51–52)

It is not just the correcting itself that is indicative of what is at work here—Agnes's actions are powerfully reinforced by her rhetoric of "sinking to their level," "them" being the low social stratum of Glaswegians. This concept of language as a crucial social determinant is further emphasised when Agnes and her children are moved by Shug, Shuggie's father, from the house of Agnes's parents and then abandoned by him in Pithead, a poverty-stricken mining area. Upon meeting her new neighbours, Agnes immediately distances herself from them verbally:

> "Ye movin' in?" said a woman from the door beyond her own. The woman's blond hair curled back on dark brown roots. It made her look like she had on a child's wig.
> "Yes."
> "All of yeese?" asked the woman.
> "Yes. My family and I," corrected Agnes. She introduced herself and held out her hand. (100)

This demeanour is met with mockery, which intensifies when Shuggie makes a comment in front of the new neighbours and is promptly labelled "Liberace" because of his way of speaking (100). Language thus becomes a source of, and a stage for, social tensions and conflict.

What all the above-discussed novels reveal is a notion of Glasgow as a site which encapsulates the essence of Scottish selfhood not only by showing itself to be its natural receptacle (as any urban centre is for its society), but also by being affected by the same mechanisms, shifts, and dissonances. In this way, the largest city in Scotland, known to be a multicultural, globalised area, paradoxically proves to be also highly local, and consequently "small." In the inherent ambiguity of this metropolitan space, the Scottish national and cultural *I*, with all its internal conflict and troubled relationship with England and English (the language of the other and, concurrently, of the self), finds its reflection, and its home, making the city the natural site for what Scott Hames calls "the staging of 'Scottishness'" (2). The linguistic predicament which we witness here seems to add a new, meaningful dimension to Sherry Simon's "sensation of living among competing codes" (*Montreal* 218). Cronin and Simon rightly deem all cities "multilingual" and "translational" (Simon, *Cities in Translation*; Cronin and Simon), but in the case of Glasgow, apart from the natural and obvious presence of immigrant communities, the notion of linguistic plurality takes on another meaning, involving many versions of one language. This inevitably has important implications for its translation.

GLASGOW AS A "TRANSLATION ZONE"—THE URBAN AND THE POSTCOLONIAL

Having tentatively established what Glasgow is to its writers, it is time to explore how this image and idea of the city translates into other languages, and specifically into Polish. Scottish fiction hardly matches the status of English writing in terms of presence and visibility on the Polish market—this is perhaps best exemplified by the fact that *Lanark*, widely considered the most important Scottish novel of the 20th century, remains unpublished in Poland, despite having been translated into German, French, Spanish, Catalan, Italian, Portuguese, Dutch, Norwegian, Swedish, Czech, Lithuanian, Bulgarian, Romanian, Turkish, and Russian. Nevertheless, the last two decades have seen some Polish interest in Scottish fiction, extending to the works of several authors invoked in this article: McIlvanney, Rankin, McDermid, and—crucially for our purposes—Kelman, Mina, and Stuart.

How much, then, does this culture- and language-infused urban landscape that we find in the novels of the latter three retain and reveal of itself in translation? A particularly interesting point of reference here seems to be Maria Tymoczko's exploration of postcolonial writing as analogous to, or even synonymous with, translation. With Tymoczko's research on the subject relying heavily on Irish literature, it is arguably not

much of a leap to extend her line of reasoning to the Scottish context. The issue of viewing Scotland through a postcolonial lens has been repeatedly addressed by scholars (Gardiner; Gardiner, MacDonald, and O'Gallagher; Schoene; Lehner; Connell; Homberg-Schramm), who generally conclude that the country cannot be regarded as postcolonial since it was not invaded by England and was in fact complicit in actual colonisation as part of the British Empire. However, if we consider the problem not in historical or political terms, but purely as a characteristic of a certain cultural dynamic that Ireland and Scotland seem to share—a matter of striving for a distinct sense of self against the common dominant other—this becomes a very useful framework for a discussion of Scottish literature. It seems worthwhile to go by the sentiments of the authors themselves, and these certainly encourage employing postcolonial discourse. One example would be the famous quote from Irvine Welsh's *Trainspotting*, in which Renton proclaims that "[Scots] are colonised by wankers" (78); another—the rhetoric habitually employed by Kelman, who argues that "[o]ne shorthand definition of assimilation is somebody who denies their culture. And a shorthand definition of Britain is Greater England; somebody who is content to be labelled a 'Brit' is a Greater Englander" ("Elitism" 59).

In her article "Postcolonial Writing and Literary Translation," Tymoczko explores the parallels between translation and postcolonial fiction, demonstrating that the two types of literary production are shaped by the same preconceptions and mechanisms. Thus, both are subject to intercultural and interlingual mediation; both translate entire cultures, but must also be selective and decide which cultural elements to convey and which to forgo; both face the choice of whether to bring the text closer to the target reader or bring them closer to the text; both are shaped by norms and patronage; both are often annotated with peritextual commentary and employ innovative and experimental measures. Then, in "Translations of Themselves: The Contours of Postcolonial Fictions," Tymoczko argues that postcolonial texts *are* in fact a form of translation and, using the example of Joyce, offers a broad discussion of their inherent bilingualism. "As 'translations,'" Tymoczko posits, "postcolonial texts are communicative agents with powerful resonances, having the capacity to mediate between languages and cultures in radical and empowering ways" ("Translations" 148).

How do these intersections figure into the discussion of Glasgow as a quintessential Scottish territory, a site where the country's complex cultural and linguistic situation comes to light? It would appear that (much of) what Tymoczko says about the nature of postcolonial literature and/as translation is equally applicable to the space of the city as a site of culture, language, and national selfhood. The city—this city—becomes

another version of a "translation zone" (Cronin and Simon), where the Scottish self constantly negotiates its own identity, being not "either-or," but always both—both distinct and non-distinct, both part (culturally, linguistically) of "Greater England," and not. Concurrently, it is also a translation zone, since the way it opens itself up to, and simultaneously resists, comprehension (in the way any foreign city does) mirrors the very mechanisms of translation. Furthermore, seeing and reading it in translational terms allows us to capture its essence through "'border' and 'in-between thinking'" (Bachmann-Medick 187). Tymoczko states that she draws her parallels and analogies because these produce meaningful insights into postcolonial writing and interlingual translation. Arguably, this dyad could be expanded into a triad, with all three components—the city, Scottish selfhood, and translation—converging and shedding light on one another.

DENISE MINA'S GLASGOW NOIR BY HANNA PAWLIKOWSKA-GANNON AND MACIEJ ŚWIERKOCKI

Of Mina's many Glasgow novels, only the three-part Paddy Meehan series, comprising *The Field of Blood*, *The Dead Hour*, and *The Last Breath*, has been rendered in Polish, with the first book translated by Hanna Pawlikowska-Gannon and the other two by Maciej Świerkocki. Set in the 1980s and 90s,[5] the novels revolve around Paddy Meehan, a young woman from an impoverished Irish-Catholic family trying to become an investigative journalist (and subsequently being one). With her, we explore the width and breadth of Glasgow, from the seedy corners to the glossy parts. The way Mina depicts the materiality of the city appears to mirror its contrary internal dynamics.

On the one hand, then, she fills her narratives with names of streets, buildings, institutions, and areas in a way that simultaneously materialises the space of the city and closes it off to readers unfamiliar with that landscape. Let us consider the following passage from *The Field of Blood*: "They passed through the Gorbals and the blazing lights of the damp Hutchie E housing scheme, past the edge of Glasgow Green and Shawfield Stadium dog track and on through Rutherglen. By the time they arrived at Eastfield the snow was at least an inch deep" (71). This bare listing of place names, which Pawlikowska-Gannon preserves in her translation,

[5] This certainly seems to reinforce the notion of Mina and Stuart following the new renaissance tradition—both writers actually set their works in that very period.

offering no contextualisation (*Pole* 74–75), renders the described route in cartographic detail without telling us anything about it.

On the other hand, however, Mina just as often contextualises the urban space in a manner that does let the foreign reader in. This is mostly achieved in two ways: the first has to do with evocative renditions of the described locations that speak to the imagination and allow us to *see* the landscape, as in this passage: "The Drygate flats looked like lost American tourists. Painted and peeling Miami pink, they were topped with jaunty little Frank Lloyd Wright hats and banded with balconies. The designer had overlooked the setting: a brutally windy Glaswegian hillside facing the Great Eastern Hotel, a soot-blackened doss house for drunk men" (*Field* 153). The other way, in turn, puts Mina's novels firmly in Tymoczko's "translations-of-themselves" territory, by offering contextualisation that would be redundant to a local. For instance, in *The Dead Hour*, we learn that Paddy and her driver "were in Bearsden, a wealthy suburb to the north of the city, all leafy roads and large houses with grass moats to keep the neighbors distant" (1). Interestingly, Świerkocki goes a little further with the contextualisation, calling Bearsden "zamożn[e] miasteczk[o], a właściwie północn[e] przedmieści[e] Glasgow" ("a wealthy town or, to be more precise, a northern suburb of Glasgow," translation mine; *Godzina* 9).

In general, Hanna Pawlikowska-Gannon and Świerkocki both seem to follow Mina's lead, sometimes keeping the depicted landscape closed off, other times bringing it closer to the target reader. In the *hermetic* passages—due to our general shared knowledge of the city as a universal concept, based on common urban principles and denominators—when an unfamiliar street name is invoked, we can visualise a street, but not the street in question. When the novels list buildings, institutions, or neighbourhoods, none of them are alien to the point of inconceivability, but none are familiar, either. This is precisely the dynamic of experiencing a foreign city, reflected in the translation.

Pawlikowska-Gannon further evokes this in-betweenness by varying her translation choices. For instance, she uses literal translation to render "Saltmarket" as "Rynek Solny" (*Pole* 62) or "Kennedy Street"—in one instance—as "Ulic[a] Kennedy'ego" (63), but then retains it as "Kennedy Street" in other places (155, 161, 163), as well as preserving "the Clyde" as just that, "Clyde" (63, 203), with no indication that it is a river rather than, say, a district of Glasgow. Nor—as previously noted—does she offer any contextualisation when dealing with other place names, such as Eastfield or Rutherglen, leaving other street names untranslated: Gallowflat Street, Queen Street, etc. Świerkocki clearly favours transference, preserving "Glasgow Benevolent Society" (*Godzina* 84) or the recurrent "Easterhouse Law Centre," and "Rutherglen Main Street," but he does translate "the

Clyde" into "rzeka Clyde" ("the River Clyde") in those places where Mina herself omits the word "river."

As for the language of her characters, Mina uses dialectal markings sparingly—so sparingly that at first glance, and especially compared to the works of Kelman or Stuart, her writing may actually seem linguistically neutral. In fact, however, when these markings do occur, their presence is highly ideological. The novels certainly engage with the social dimensions of language, especially in the context of belonging to a certain community and the conjunction of voice and identity. Paddy Meehan often reads people not so much based on what they say as on how they say it, and she herself adopts certain linguistic poses to stress her social and cultural background or, conversely, to hide it. These dialectal shifts, together with the consistent use of typical Scots words such as "aye," "ye," "wee," or "lassie," are foundational in terms of what and who these novels are about.

In this context, both Polish translators resort primarily to neutralisation and occasional colloquialisation.[6] Thus, most of the "ayes" become standard "yeses" (with the exception of Świerkocki's rather subversive use of "owszem," a more formal word that would translate back into "indeed"); the "wees" are consistently rendered as "mały/a," a standard word for "small," which, arguably, largely misses the point of the Scottish "wee-ness" and often simply does not work in the target text; the "lassies" become the unmarked "dziewczyn[y]" ("girls") (with the exception of Pawlikowska-Gannon's surprising use of "dziewucha" [*Pole* 16]—a markedly pejorative term), while "Ya wee bissom!" (*Breath* 77) turns into a standardised "Ach, ty mały łobuziaku" ("You little rascal!", translation mine; *Tchnienie* 97). That said, the culture-specific items in these novels are so numerous—and these *are* preserved in the translations—that both translators likely decided that the Scottishness carries across regardless of what was or was not done with the linguistic marking. While understandable, the problem with such a perspective is that it erases the whole fundamental concept of Scottish voice as Scottish identity.

JAMES KELMAN'S VOICE OF GLASGOW BY JOLANTA KOZAK

Even though, as previously indicated, Kelman's *How Late It Was, How Late* won the 1994 Booker Prize (which typically entails swift translation into several languages, including Polish), it took no fewer than seventeen years

[6] I am drawing here on Leszek Berezowski's classification of strategies used in the translation of dialects.

for the novel to be published in Poland. The translation, by the prominent and celebrated Jolanta Kozak, received very little attention in the press or from readers, and the few reviews that were published focused more on Kozak's skill in rendering the colloquial, working-class vernacular of Sammy Samuels than on the fact that Kelman's work is, by many accounts, one of the most important Glasgow novels of the 20th century.

The narrative, imbued with the voice of its protagonist, perfectly epitomises what Cronin and Simon call "the sensory landscape" of the city, as by removing the one sense that most consider primary in the context of experiencing an urban landscape, namely sight, Sammy, and the reader with him, is left with experiencing it through the remaining senses, especially touch and hearing. The former is evocatively rendered in a passage in which we suddenly return to the very elementary materiality of the urban space, as the now blind protagonist first rediscovers the suddenly estranged streets as tangible structures and textures:

> There was the steps. He poked his foot forwards to the right and to the left jesus christ man that's fine, to the right and to the left, okay, fucking doing it ye're doing it; okay; down the steps sideways and turning right, his hands along the wall, step by step, reminding ye of that patacake game ye play when ye're a wean, slapping yer hands on top of each other then speeding it up. (Kelman, *How Late* 33)

This *sense* of the city naturally lends itself to translation, as Sammy's experience is highly uncanny, but at the same time just as conceivable through its elementality, and may not seem culture- or place-specific. As an auditory landscape, too, the city becomes a compilation of various familiar sounds—the "roaring" traffic (54), which becomes "ogłuszający" ("deafening") in the translation (*Jak późno* 62), the "mutter mutter" (*How Late* 41, 54) of passersby, effectively rendered in Polish as an onomatopoeic "mrumrumru" (*Jak późno* 48, 62), "the punt of a football" (*How Late* 77) being kicked by local boys, translated into "odgłos kopania piłki" ("the sound of a football being kicked," translation mine; *Jak późno* 85)—all of which, arguably, can be heard just as well by the target reader.

The same can be said of the social dimension of Sammy's urban experience, as the absurdity of the protagonist's encounters with "the system" when he is trying to register his disability is something a Polish target reader may easily grasp. While the institutions that Kelman seeks to critique are obviously Scottish, their failings may be viewed as a relatively universal phenomenon. Moreover, although Sammy faces some complications that have to do with his language, the issue is with the register, which is again something that can be successfully conveyed

in the target text. This is demonstrated by the following passage, in which Sammy is interviewed by the police and the officer taking his statement demands: "Don't use the word 'cunts' again, it doesnay fit in the computer" (*How Late* 160). Kozak renders this in Polish as "Proszę nie używać więcej słowa 'chuj', komputer je odrzuca" ("Sir, don't use the word 'dick' again, the computer rejects it," translation mine; *Jak późno* 160), which may not be quite as amusing as the word not fitting in the computer, but preserves the general linguistic dynamic and politics of the scene.

However, there is the matter of Sammy's Glaswegian vernacular, which, as previously established, is of primary significance to Kelman himself, and, arguably, of primary significance for this novel's rendition of Glasgow—after all, *this* is the main sound of the city, both for the protagonist, whose urban experience is filtered through and rendered in his (mostly inner) voice, and, naturally, for the reader. Thus, while the narrative's depiction of this urban space universalises it and gives us a sense of the city that is stripped down to its basics, at the same time, through the vehicle of Sammy's voice, this account takes us back to the specificity of the place, which, despite or in its elementality, also becomes completely personal. Let us consider the following passage: "He was near the centre of the town; that was where he was. He was alright. Just a couple of more roads. This first yin then the next yin and maybe another yin, afore the big yin, the bridge, and once ower the bridge, / that was him" (*How Late* 55). The depiction of Sammy's route is both general in its omission of any actual street names, and specific, due to his Glaswegian vernacular. In Kozak's translation, however, Sammy speaks in highly colloquial and vulgar Polish (thus matching the source text),[7] but one which is dialectally and phonetically unmarked. Consequently, the elementality filtered through his distinctly Scottish consciousness and voice goes back to being just elemental, the experience of Glasgow becoming an experience of a city, as the abovementioned couple of streets become the non-specific and standard "ta pierwsza, następna i następna, i może jeszcze jedna przed tamtą główną. . ." (*Jak późno* 62).

The translation met with approval from Aniela Korzeniowska, a scholar specialising in Scottish literature, including Kelman's oeuvre. In her article on the subject, Korzeniowska concluded that Kozak had made the right choice by not attempting to account for the Scottishness of Kelman's speech. Indeed, although the decision does erase the dialectal specificity of the novel, it can be justified on an ideological level: after all, Kelman's novel makes Sammy's Glaswegian voice the predominant one—this is

[7] This particular journey, for instance, is called "a fucking nightmare" (*How Late* 55), which Kozak translates into "najgorszy kurwa koszmar" (*Jak późno* 63).

nearly the only voice we hear. As such, it occupies a position of power—no longer the other, it has been relocated to the centre. Consequently, it could be argued that Kozak's decision was not due to a lack of better options, but actually a deliberate move. If, following Kelman's own reasoning, his vernacular is to be recognised as equal in standing to standard English, then it only makes sense to translate it as you would any *standard* language. The problem with this interpretation, however, is that Kelman advocates for the Scottish voice to be both made equal *and* recognised as distinct. Here, this latter aspect clearly gets lost in (the) translation.

Overall, then, although Kelman's narrative is, in obvious ways, vastly different from Mina's novels, they do prove to share the same space—not just the same city, but the same set of concerns: the actual lived experience of the urban, the social entanglements, and the city as language. Moreover, these intersections seem to confirm the meaningful interplay of Glasgow, Scottish selfhood, and translation, with the latter here, too, revealing an urban landscape that both lends itself to, and resists, transfer into another culture.

DOUGLAS STUART'S LANGUAGE MAP BY KRZYSZTOF CIEŚLIK

As we have established, for Stuart, as for Kelman, the portrayal of his home city is all—or at least primarily—about the authentic Glaswegian voice(s). Unlike *How Late It Was, How Late*, however, *Shuggie Bain* boasts an array of speakers whose diversity testifies not only to their individual identities, but also, as previously indicated by the excerpts featuring Shuggie's mother, their social status and interrelations. This dialectal differentiation, especially when restricted to dialogue and contrasted with standard-English narration, could hardly have been left unaccounted for in translation. Indeed, Krzysztof Cieślik put considerable effort into conveying the markedness of the novel's voices. Additionally, and helpfully, he contextualised his choices via an epitext (Genette) in the form of an extensive interview, in which he discussed his approach and process. Thus, we learn that the translator sees the novel's characters as speaking differently depending on which part of Glasgow they are from and how poor they are; he also notes that, for instance, the language, or languages, of Agnes, Shuggie's mother, are conditioned by "how drunk she is, whom she is talking to, and whether she is furious" ("jak bardzo jest pijana, z kim rozmawia i czy jest wściekła," translation mine; Cieślik).

Cieślik chooses to render this plurality in highly colloquial Polish embellished with lexical, syntactical, and phonetic regionalisms, but not

belonging to any specific dialect. That said, the translation does rely more on Silesian than any other variety, which Cieślik justifies by pointing out that much of the novel involves a mining community, and Silesia is the mining region of Poland. By his own admission, his general aim is to offer a credible, convincing mix, created intuitively rather than methodically, and one that represents what the book would sound like if it had originally been written in Polish (Cieślik). It should be noted, however, that this mix does not amount to a total, comprehensive linguistic vision, but deals more in signalling the markedness.

Thus, the voice of Mr Darling—the first character with whom Shuggie interacts in the novel, and who in the source text uses the Glasgow vernacular, saying: "Ah jist chapped to see if ye were around the day?" (Stuart, *Shuggie* 13)—in Cieślik's rendition reads as "vaguely rural": "Tak żem właśnie zapukał, coby sprawdzić, czyś dzisiej na miejscu" (*Shuggie* [translated by Cieślik] 21), with "żem," "coby," and "dzisiej" all testifying to its regional character. As the narrative progresses, we encounter inhabitants of various parts of the city whose voices range from standard English to Scots, as in the case of the cab driver Shug's passenger asking: "Dae ye ken the Rangers bar on Duke Street?", which he then follows up with another question: "Did ye see the game the day, son?" (*Shuggie* 40). In the translation, both utterances contain Silesian markers: "Znasz ty bar Rangersów przy Duke Street?" (*Shuggie* [translated by Cieślik] 52) and "Mecz żeś dziś widzioł, synek?" (53).

What seems curious is that Cieślik's reliance on Silesian, while potentially understandable in the "Pithead" part of the narrative, set in a fictional mining scheme, is in fact apparent throughout the novel. This is especially striking in the "East End" section, the East End being where Agnes and Shuggie move in an attempt to leave behind their life among the mining community and start afresh. When Shuggie goes to his new school and a teacher, who by Stuart's own description "spoke with a very loud Glaswegian accent," says in the original: "Right, shut yer faces, youse lot. Let's go fur the record and then youse kin all get back to talking aboot earrings and perms an' that" (*Shuggie* 378), in the translation that teacher, too, speaks Silesian: "Dobra, zawrzeć mi tu gymby, ale już. Przelecimy listę, a potem se możecie na powrót godać o kolczykach, trwałych i takich tam" (*Shuggie* [translated by Cieślik] 458).

Beyond the consistent recurrence of these markers, Cieślik holds true to his proclaimed agenda, offering a heterogeneous rendering of the novel's voices, sometimes neutralising them, sometimes introducing dialectal markers where there are none in the source text. On the one hand, such deliberate variation on the translator's part likely makes the narrative more readable than it would have been had Cieślik committed to a consistent

linguistic vision. On the other, it means that we are reading this language, or languages, as if in inverted commas, unable to immerse ourselves in the novel's voices completely.

Finally, all these voices are inherently linked with specific parts of the city, evocatively rendered by both Stuart and Cieślik. Stuart paints a detailed picture of these different landscapes, occasionally offering specific topographical information, but predominantly relying on creating a sense of place through vivid imagery. As such, from Shug's night shift in his cab, we learn that the drive from Sighthill

> . . . was like a descent into the heart of the Victorian darkness. The closer you got to the river, the lowest part of the city, the more the real Glasgow opened up to you. There were hidden nightclubs tucked under shadowy railway arches, and blacked-out windowless pubs where old men and women sat on sunny days in a sweaty, pungent purgatory. (*Shuggie* 38)

Pithead, in turn, is shown to be made up of "three or four streets that . . . branched horizontally off th[e] main road. Low-roofed houses, square and squat, huddled in neat rows," accompanied by "identical patchy garden[s] . . . dissected by the identical criss-crossing of white washing lines and grey washing poles" and "surrounded by the peaty marshland," some of it "blackened and slagged in the search for coal" (94). Then, "after the isolation of the slag hills," the East End is pictured as "a thriving hub of life," "lined with thick sandstone buildings" and filled with all sorts of shops and other amenities (373). Such views, visually and emotionally evocative yet unladen with hermetic cultural or historical detail, carry naturally into Polish, offering the target reader a sense of the different topographies of 1980s Glasgow.

Overall, what we find in Cieślik's rendition is a vivid portrayal of the city within which, arguably, the primary role is played by its linguistic make-up, one that is strongly marked, sometimes unpredictable, somewhat familiar, but certainly not recognisable as specifically Scottish, nor necessarily urban. The effect is curious, as it appears to subvert the very concepts of domestication and foreignisation by showing them to be deeply subjective. Whether we consider Stuart's Glasgow domesticated in the translation because of Cieślik's use of a mixture of existing Polish vernaculars, or whether we view it as foreignised because these familiar elements are made strange by their unexpected juxtaposition and recontextualisation in an urban setting seems very much a matter of one's personal response to the translated voices. While in the source text, the city and the language are inextricably and naturally conjoined—a conjunction that forms their shared identity—translation complicates this connection, yet also proves that it is necessary. If we are to *see* this landscape and read it as Glasgow, we

must accept the voices of its inhabitants as representative of that particular space. And perhaps, against the odds, we just might—by virtue of their being validated by the Glasgow setting.

CONCLUSION

It would seem that translating Glasgow, this "small and great city" (McIlvanney 197), is very much like the entity in question—complex, layered, partly familiar, partly strange, allowing us to understand and, at the same time, setting strict limits to that understanding. In that, it evocatively reveals the fundamental paradox of Scottish selfhood (in all its plurality) as viewed in the context of the country's cultural relationship with England. Cronin and Simon postulate that "translation can be considered a key to understanding urban life" (119). What, hopefully, emerges from this discussion is that depictions of urban—Glaswegian—life can also be the key to understanding Scotland and the mechanisms of its translation.

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