

**Writing Orkney's Future:**  
Minority Language  
and Speculative Poetics

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# Abstract

This creative and critical doctoral dissertation engages contemporary Scots language writing and theory, developing an antinational approach to European minority languages. In a double methodology, creative practice informs and develops critical research, and critical research shapes and directs creative practice.

Part One, *Deep Wheel Orcadia*, is an Orcadian science fiction verse novel. Written in the Orkney language, a form of Scots, the poetry imagines a future space station as a utopian reflection of zero-world Orkney. The central characters, Astrid and Darling, offer diverging perspectives on language and belonging against a backdrop of escalating ecological and economic crisis. The language used is a synthetic, vernacularly-rooted approach to Orkney, using orthographical techniques of coherence and fluidity to construct a literary register that is neither a universalising standard nor a particularising dialect: a science fiction Orkney.

Part Two, *Writing Orkney's Future: Minority Language and Speculative Poetics*, critically investigates theoretical and creative approaches to the Scots language in specific and European minority language in general. Chapter 1 reads Edwin Morgan's and Rachel Plummer's science fiction poetry as scoping the colonised-and-colonising double bind facing Scottish writing and language. Chapter 2 argues that Scots itself is a science fiction project, using postcolonial theory to critique linguistic and narrative temporality in James Leslie Mitchell and Wulf Kurtoglu. Arguing that national approaches to Scots have trapped the language in a colonial position outside of time, this chapter advocates for porous boundaries and utopian entanglement, deploying language against the coherence of the nation. In Chapter 3, a critical history of Orkney language literature contextualises an account of minority language practice from the vowel to the plot, writing towards antinational approaches. Chapter 4 deploys Yasemin Yildiz's "postmonolingual paradigm" to critique existing Scots language advocacy, arguing in conclusion for "difficult utopia now".



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Versions of the poems in *Deep Wheel Orcadia* have appeared or are forthcoming in *Orkney Stoor*, *Multiverse*, *Shoreline of Infinity*, *The Scores*, *Poetry Wales*, *The Bottle Imp* and *Makar/Unmakar*. The full verse novel is forthcoming and is reproduced here with permission from the publisher.

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# **PART ONE.**

## **Deep Wheel Orcadia**



## **Juror's Note**

The present text appears to be poetry. One should not conclude from this that it is necessarily fictional – that is, a counterfactual depiction of a future, fufuture, fupresent, pafupresent, &c. There is now a considerable corpus of paradoxical texts which use the poetic mode to discuss various existing futures (and fufutures, &c.). Thus we cannot say with certainty whether the present text is fictional or factual, or indeed what period or possiperiod it describes from the perspective of either the time of its writing or our own.

What we can say, through content analysis, is that it depicts a human-only society of the Early Interstellar class, the primary extraction fringes thereof, at an early period of supralightspeed travel and communication. And, of course, given the text's presence in our present present, that it was authored in some variant of the post-FTL scenario, else we would of course not have intertemporal access. I have therefore classified it as Poe:eI.eFTL.FermiNeg.Agri/Extr:FP(Unc).T(Unc). Until further analysis of the poetic class establishes the truth-value of similar texts, access must therefore remain restricted.

The text belongs to that class of texts written in a language grown from Panglish roots and extensively cross-fertilised with Nordic and Celtic branches. Although potential meanings can usually be intuited by a Panglish speaker, I have, using both a semantic analysis based on the present condition of those language families and a comparative analysis with similar texts, provided a speculative translation to each text fragment, using the Jamieson-Gorman method. Pronunciation is indeterminate.

– *Giles-17, Dept. of Paradoxical Texts, Bureau of Temporal Sanitation (Earth), 2051.*





## **The Fock**

ASTRID, a airtist, comed haem tae Orcadia

INGA, her mither, captain o a lighteen yole

ØYVIND, her faither, a maet techniecian

DARLING, a visietor fae Mars

SOO, a xeno-arkaeolojist

EYNAR, owner o a bar

OLAF, a lighter wi Inga

HIGGIE, a Light refinery injineer

MARGIT, a lighter wi her awn yole

BRENNA, a young radiecal

GUNNIE, a junior techniecian an dowter o Margit

Ither Orcadians: ASLAUG, AUGA, DAGMAR, ERLEND, ERIKA, INGRID, SIG-  
URD, TORSTEN, UNN, mony more, an thair bairns.

---

## **The People**

ASTRID, an artist, come home to Orcadia

INGA, her mother, captain o a lighting boat

ØYVIND, her father, a meat technician

DARLING, a visitor from Mars

SOO, a xeno-archaeologist

EYNAR, owner of a bar

OLAF, a lighter with Inga

HIGGIE, a Light refinery engineer

MARGIT, a lighter with her own boat

BRENNA, a young radical

GUNNIE, a junior technician, and Margit's daughter

Ither Orcadians: ASLAUG, AUGA, DAGMAR, ERLEND, ERIKA, SIGURD, TORSTEN,  
UNN, many more, and their children.



## **Astrid docks**

The chime o the tannoy is whit taks her back,  
fer hid isno chaenjed, nae more or the wirds  
summonan her tae the airlock: her wirds,  
at sheu isno heard fer eyght geud year.

Sheu waatched the Deep Wheel approach, gray-green,  
hids Central Station tirlan yet  
fornent the yallo yotun, peedie  
bolas teddert aroon hids ring,

pierheids trang wi yoles, wi glims,  
an fund the gloup atween ootbye an in  
gredually clossan – but only noo,  
wi this soond, deus sheu ken whar sheu is.

Sheu leuks aroon the ither fock,  
tryan tae mind wha's uncan an wha's  
naem sheu shoud mynd. An at the screen  
a whitely body, reid hair ravsie

[...]

---

## **Astrid docks**

The chime of the tannoy is what brings her back, because it hasn't changed, and neither have the words summoning her to the airlock: her words, which she hasn't heard for eight goodlong years.

She watched the Deep Wheel approach, grey-green, its Central Station still turntwistwhirlspinning againstbefore the yellow gas giant, little bolas ropemoormarried around its ring

pierheads fullactiveintimate with small boats, with gleamspointslights, and found-felt the chasmcleft between outsidersnear and in gradually closing – but only now, with this sound, does she know where she is.

She looks around the other folk, trying to rememberknowreflectwill who is a strangerweird and whose name she should rememberknowreflectwill. And at the screen, a palewhitedelicate bodyperson, red hair roughabundantunkempt

Martian style, gappan at the sight.  
Astrid waants tae waatch an kinno  
deusno; ferfil fine an world-like  
in Mars, but here i the poly an alloy

habitats o inner space,  
hid's an aafil queerie sowl.  
The visietor luks aroon an grins  
at Astrid, at luks away, no kennan

whit wey tae meet incoman joy.  
The jaas o the transport appen, a gant  
thrumman the bonns o the ship, a kord  
whan the gangwey connecks. Astrid's browt

a peedie an weyghty life on her back,  
an whan sheu steps intae the airlock  
sheu catches the grief o whit wad come  
gin the pairts o her canno find thair piece.

\*

---

in a Martian style, gapingfoolishmindless at the sight. Astrid wants to watch and also doesn't; veryfearfully finepretty and healthynormal for Mars, but here in the plasticpolymer and alloy of inner space habitats, she's an awfulvery strangequeer soulperson. The visitor looks around and grinsyearns at Astrid, who looks away, not knowing how to meet incoming joy. The jaws of her transport open, a yawngasp thrumming the bones of the ship, a chord when the gangway connects. Astrid's brought a smallyoung and heavymeaningful life on her back, and when she steps into the airlock, she begins to feel grief about what will happen if the parts of her can't find their placedistancepart.

## **Inga an Øyvind waatch Astrid come in**

Inga is thinkan, whit wey tae explain  
the staetion nou? That scant the lighteen,

that scrimp the tithes. Øyvind is fashan  
at whether or no her vouels'll come haem.

Inga rubs her clippert heid  
an thinks: Varday is tint the haalage,

Aikeray the traed, an only  
the kirk is ivver fill, fer prayan.

Øyvind birls a pod in his lang  
fingers an waatches the ship link

intae Meginwick's muckle dock,  
a cathedral o girders an stances appenan

intae the haaf. Inga coonts  
the yoles. Øyvind mynd on his year

[...]

---

## **Øyvind and Inga watch Astrid come in**

Inga is thinking about how to explain what the station is like now. So scarceshorts-  
mall the lighting,

so meagrestinted the tithes. Øyvind is fussvexworrying about whether or not her  
vowels will come home.

Inga rubs her shorn head and thinks: Varday has lostmissedfailed the haulage,

Aikeray the trade, and only the church is ever full, for praying.

Øyvind whirlspeedrattles a pod in his long fingers and watches the ship glidetro-  
trestconnect

into Meginwick's greatbig dock, a cathedral of girders and platformsites opening

into deep space. Inga counts the boats in the harbour. Øyvind rememberknowre-  
flectwills his years

on the Mars-Orcadia shippeen reut  
an whit he kens o surface life,

whit he can share noo wi his dowter.  
An whan the airlock appens an sheu

is eyght year aalder an jeust the saem,  
Inga says “Buddo” an lifts her bags.

\*

---

his years on the Mars-Orcadia shipping route and what he knows of planetary life,  
what he can share now with his daughter. And when the airlock opens and she  
is eight years older and just the same, Inga says “FriendChildLove” and pickhelps  
up her bags.

## The visietor, Darling, luks fer a piece tae bide

“J-Just to look,” sheu says, catchan the poynt  
o the yolewife’s quaistion. Sheu’s been raedan about  
the Wrack-Hofn’s mystery, aboot the yoles  
landan thair haal o Lights, aboot the stoor  
i the gowden tide, aboot the paece o distance,

aboot a uncan wey o spaekan, o wirkan,  
o pittan up wirds, o bidan, belongan, an waantid  
tae luk. But nou sheu’s askan the first body  
sheu saa i the dock fer the first directions, an habbers,  
fer the first time no kennan hoo tae explaen hersel.

“Ir ye noo?” says sheu, no askan, a din-faced  
stuggie body, her snackie haands deep  
i the wires o her craft. “Ye’ll be waantan tae spaek tae Eynar  
at the Hoose. Whit ye’d caa wir *bar*. He’ll sort ye.  
Tell him Margit sent ye.” Lik Eynar, Margit

[...]

---

## The visitor, Darling, looks for a place to stay

“Just to look,” she says, catching the point of the boat worker’s question. She has  
been reading about the Wreck-Havenharbour’s mystery, about the boats landing their  
haulcatch of Lights, about the stormstrifestrainspeeddust in the golden seatimetide,  
about the peace of distance,

about an unknownweird way of speaking, of working, of praying, of waitstayliving,  
belonging, and wanted to look. But now she’s asking the first bodyperson she saw in the  
dock for the first directions, and stammers, for the first time not knowing how to ex-  
plain herself.

“Is that so?” says the woman, not asking, a sallow, shorttoughbutch personbody, her  
cleverquicksharp hands deep in the wires of her craft. “You should speak to Eynar at  
the Hoose. It’s what you’d call our *bar*. He’ll help. Tell him Margit sent you.” Like  
Eynar, Margit

kens the guff o traed. Sheu poynts the wey.  
Darling's waatchan the fock on the pier fae the transport –  
twa aalder fock tae meet that ither lass,  
at deusno seem tae ken whar sheu's comed an aa –  
an Margit waatches wha is haadan her ee.

“Yin,” sheu says, an looder again, “That wey.”  
Darling tries tae gaither Martian manners.  
“Thank you so so much,” says Darling. “I’m Darling.”  
But anither first: sheu blushes, seean Margit’s  
edge o smirk an hearan, “Ir thoo noo.”

\*

---

knows the stinkpuffsnortnonsense of trade. She points the way. Darling's watching the folk on the pier from the transport – two older folk to meet that other girlwoman, who doesn't seem to know where she's come either – and Margit watches who is holding her eye.

“There,” she says, and louder again, “That way.” Darling tries to gather Martian manners. “Thank you so so much,” says Darling, “I’m Darling.” But another first: she blushes, seeing Magrit's edge of smile and hearing, “Is that so.”



## Eynar an Olaf speir at the neow teknolojy

“But hoo’s hid wirk?” asks Eynar, pooran  
a beer. “A’m no sure,” says Olaf,  
“But yin arkaeolojist, ken, ach,  
whit’s her naem, telt hid lik this –”

The jimpit yoleman taks twa glesses  
an a pock o nuts an steers  
this subtle injines trow the warp  
o time, nou rings o spirit on

the binkled aluminium bar.  
“The drive maks a pock, see,  
o hyperspace tae win trow,  
tae exceed relativistic constraints.”

“Ya but,” says Eynar, “I thowt hid wis  
the haird limits wis more or jeust  
teknolojiecal. Whit wey  
are thay avoydan catastrophic

[...]

---

### Eynar and Olaf question the new technology

“So how does it work?” asks Eynar, pouring a beer. “I’m not sure,” says Olaf, “But that archaeologist, oh, you know, what’s her name, told me it was like this.”

The smallslenderneatdainty boat worker grabs two empty glasses and a packet-pocket of nuts and steers these subtle engines through the warp of time, now rings of spirit

on the bentdented aluminium bar. “The drive makes a pocketpacket, see, of hyperspace to travel through, so that it can exceed relativistic constraints.”

“Yes, but,” says Eynar, “I thought the problem was that the hard limits were more than just technological. How can they avoid catastrophic

temporal paradox, eh?" Olaf  
taks a drowt o his ael an says,  
"Ya weel. Best kens. An Best kens  
thay maan, fer hid's bad enof tae loss

the last bit o the last bit  
o wir shippeen ithoot messan wi yin  
fuckan multieversal anomalies  
an aa." An Eynar, no drinkan, says,

"A'll drink tae that", lukkan ower  
the empie poly chairs an taebles,  
Olaf's grayan hair, an weyghan  
the wirth o his business, the size

o his saeveens, the price o a ticket  
tae Ross or Alpha Centauri, an runnan  
the nummers again, an wipen away  
the trails o the hyperdrive fae the bar.

\*

---

temporal paradox, eh?" Olaf takes a draught of his beer and says, "Yes well. Gods know. And Gods know they must because it's bad enough to lose the last bit of the last bit of our shipping without messing with those fucking multiversal anomalies as well." And Eynar, not drinking, says, "I'll drink to that," looking over the empty polyplastic chairs and tables, Olaf's greying hair, and weighing of the worth of his business, the size of his savings, the price of a ticket to Ross or Alpha Centauri, and running the numbers again, and wiping away the trails of the hyperdrive from the bar.

## **Higgie Machinewife at her screens**

Aence sheu wis a packer: whan the Lights cam in sheu wirked the refractors, prismatic acceleraetors, containment dykes, birsan sometheen skare an lowse intae sometheen birnable. Hid wisno a coorse wark – buttons an levers, mostleens – sheu jeust needed care an the gy o timeen. But sheu an her pals wir aye tae loss the unavoydable race wi aatomaetion. Higgie wis lucky: sheu wis keepit on at the skeul tae ken the maths tae tak the coorse tae qualiefy fer maintenance, so sheu wis the body lukkan eftir machines lukkan eftir the Lights, an than the body lukkan eftir machines lukkan eftir machines.

[...]

---

## **Higgie the technician working her screens**

Once she was a packer: when the Lights came in, she worked the refractors, prismatic accelerators, containment fieldbarriers, squeezebruising something clear-brightcut and loosefree into something burnable. It wasn't roughhard work – buttons and levers, mostly – she just needed care and a sensecompetence of timing. But she and her friends were always going to lose the unavoidable race with automation. Higgie was luckyblessedhappy: she'd stayed at school to know the maths to take the course to qualify for maintenance, so she was the person looking after the machines looking after the Lights, and, after that, looking after machines looking after machines.

Thir aalder nou, an only Higgie steyed tae be  
an elder. Dagmar's maed a faimly on Wolf; Kari  
teuk a Martian job in maet; Torsten deed  
an naen o them ivver spaek about hid; Higgie, back  
croppen an more wi ivry year, dellt wi codd  
an solder intae machines, missan the clashan, thinkan  
in script an circuit. Sheu monietors: here at the plant,  
by screen, an eftir, i the back pew o the kirk. Sheu maks  
peedie adjustments: wha sits whar, whit wirts is needed,  
whan tae apply comfort an whan tae chide or spaek  
a truth. Sheu's no alaen. She kens sheu deusno sing  
in tune, but at the plant an wi her screens sheu sings.

\*

---

They're older now, and only Higgie stayed to be an elder. Dagmar made a family on Wolf; Kari took a Martian job in meat; Torsten died, and none of them ever speak about it; Higgie, back bendcramptwisting more with every year, delved with code and solder into machines, missing the gossip, thinking in codeprogramscripture and circuit. She monitors: here at the plant, by screen, and after, in the back pew of the kirk. She makes small adjustments: who should sit where, what words are needed, when to apply comfort and when to chide or speak a truth. She is not alone. She knows she does not sing in tune, but at the plant and with her screens she sings.

## **Astrid sketches Orcadia**

Sheu trails a finger ower her slaet i the curve  
o her planet, then wi a canny swirl bleums  
hids swalls o yallo an moorit broon. Wi shairp  
stroks, the airms o Central Staetion skoot  
atwart the screen, an peedie tigs an picks  
mairk oot the eydent piers o Meginwick  
i the corner o her careful composietion.

An Astrid luks oot the vizzie-bell,  
doon the taing o Helay, kirk staetion,  
the dammer o the Deep Wheel surroondan her,  
an feels hersel faa, an lift, an faa.

Liv oot, sheu dights away the natralism  
fae her slaet, an stairts ower again,  
abstrack, wi only the thowt o coman haem

[...]

---

## **Astrid sketches Orcadia**

She trails a finger over her slate in the curve of her planet, then with a skilledmagical flourishflounce blooms its waveswells of yellow and redwool brown. With sharp strokes, the arms of Central Station jutthrust acrossover the screen, and little taptwitchteases and tapstrokespikes markscorefind out the constantindustrious piers of Meginwick in the corner of her careful composition.

And Astrid looks out of the viewsurveystudyaiming-bubblebell, down the promontory of Helay, church station, the shockstunconfusion of the Deep Wheel surrounding her, and feels herself fall, and lifthelp, and fall. Palm flat, she brushswipes away the naturalism from her slate, and begins again, abstract, with only the thought of coming home

but odd gittan noo wi seean no odds:  
black lines fer the starns, blue dubs  
fer the tides, green aircs for the peedie skail  
o wheels an airms an bolas gaithered roond Central.  
Mindan her lessons fae college, sheu follows sense  
intae shaep, an shaep intae color, an noo hid's closser  
tae the grace ootbye, but closser maks more

o a ranyie. Again her liv. Again a blenk.  
Astrid steeks her een an haads the device  
tae her chest, lik her braethan wad lift Orcadia  
tae hids surface. But the screen bides skarpy,  
an the view bides stamagastan, an Astrid  
settles back tae waatch an braethe an mynd,  
her fingers restan jeust abeun the slaet.

\*

---

and growing strangedifferent now from seeing no difference: black lines for the stars, blue poolpuddlemuds for the seatimestides, green curvearcarches for the small scatterspreadspilleave of wheels and arms and bolas gathered round Central. Rememberknowreflectwilling her lessons from college, she follows sense into shape, and shape into colour, and now it's closer to the graceglory outsidenear, but closer makes more of a writhingpain. Again her palm. Again a blankblink. Astrid shutdarkens her eyes and holds the device to her chest, as if breathing would liftbringhelp Orcadia to its surface. But the screen waitstaylives barethinbarren, and the view waitstaylives bewildershockoverwhelming, so Astrid settles back to watch and rememberknowreflectwill, her fingers resting just above the slate.

## **The pieces Darling's been**

Fer her coman o age she asked o her faithers  
a week's residential on Aald Eart.  
Nae Ball, nae press confrence, nae giftid  
Executiveship, nae ship, e'en,  
tho aa her sibliengs haed taen the sleekest  
o near-lightspeed racers. Thay narleens  
imploded, but sheu haed inherieted airts  
an negotiated the week as traed  
fer a fill simmer o senior manajment.  
Mars simmers is ower lang.

This wis the stairt o her travaigan.  
Foo wi the guff o fifty-square mile  
o aald equatorial rainforest, no  
relandscaepid ava, sheu decided  
sheu wadno gang haem, but see as muckle  
o the seiven starns as sheu coud. Sheu peyed  
a ecogaird tae mairk her doun  
on the wrang manifest, an flew. She saa  
the Natralist munkahouses on Phobos,  
whar papar refeused ony maet traeted  
[...]

---

### **The placesdistances Darling's been.**

For her coming of age she asked from her fathers a week's residential on Old Earth. No Ball, no press conference, no gifted Executiveship, no ship, even, though each of her siblings had taken the sleekest in near-lightspeed racers. They almost imploded, but she had inherited skilldirectiongrift and negotiated the week in return for a full summer of senior management. Mars summers are very long.

This was the start of her roamingramblingtravels. Drunkmad on the smellnonsense of fifty-square miles of oldoriginal equatorial rainforest, hardly relandscaped at all, she decided she wouldn't go home, but see as muchmore of the seven stars as she could. She payed an environmental quarantine agent to mark her down on the wrong manifest, and flew. She saw the Naturalist monasteries on Phobos, whose holies refused any foodmeat treated

wi more or fire, praeched wershly beauty.  
Sheu saa a demonstraetion staetion  
o sepatist Angles: bred, snod,  
rich, blond, an weel airmed.  
Her faithers' credited wirds – first barman,  
than teely, than dortan – trackid her  
fae Europan federal mines tae stentless  
pairties orbitan Wolf. Thay'd e'en  
bowt time fer a bulletin on the ansible.  
At lang an at lent sheu tint thair trackers

on the unregistered Autonomist traeder  
whar sheu teuk her neow naem  
an body an face, whar sheu teuk time  
tae cheuss an recover, at teuk her here  
tae Orcadia, the innermost Nordren staetion,  
aence the edge, aence the centre,  
pangit an empie yet, an neow,  
an eftir bletheran her rodd ower that  
muckle a piece o space, lukkan  
fer a peedie piece tae listen an luk.

\*

---

with more than fire, preached thinwatery beauty. She saw a demonstration station of separatist Angles: genetically selected, cleanabsolute, rich, blond, and well-armed. Her fathers' moneyedrespected words – first furious, then pleadwheedling, then dis-mallonlystrangeraining – tracked her from federal mines on Europa to unrestrainedendless parties orbiting Wolf. They had even bought time for a bulletin on the ansible. At long last she lost their trackers

on the autonomist trader where she took her new name and body and face, where she took time to choose and recover, which took her here to Orcadia, the Northern station closest to the galactic centre, once the edge, once the centre, fullbursting and empty still, and new, after locquaciously talking her way across such a big distance of space, looking for a small place to listen and look.



## **Inga an Olaf at the lighteen**

Inga's at the helm waatchan  
fer lowes, fer shifts i the drifts o rouk;  
Olaf the sightsman's at the daikles,  
airtan oot a trail o Lights  
tae a dinger, a haal.

The linecrew is raedy. A fair while fae  
a geud landeen. The wind o the yotan  
is low the day: cheust a hunner  
metres per second. The yole chirps  
fae the gowd whips.

Sailan as quiet an present here  
as a meditaetion o Phobos papar,  
they wirk the wark the staetion wis biggit  
tae deu, hintan the fuel at fuels,  
the oyl at oyls

[...]

---

### **Inga and Olaf at the lighting**

Inga is at the helm, watching for flameglowflickerflares, for shifts in the drifts of fogfrost; Olaf, the screen monitor, is at the compasses, trying to find a trail of Light to a strike, a haul.

The linecrew are ready. It's been a long time since a good landing. The wind of the gas giant is low today: just a hundred metres per second. The boat creakraspcomplains from the golden gustdarttwistattacks.

Sailing as quiet and carefulpresent here as the meditation of monks on Phobos, they work the work that the station was built to do, gathergleansnatching the fuel that fuels, the oil that oils

a interstellar system o industry,  
traed, galactic expansion: Light.  
Inga an Olaf is aye a kord  
wi voltage differs, atmospheric  
jabble, mairjins.

Olaf spys a peak an mairks hid.  
Inga senses a chaenge i the petren  
o his concentraetion, an waits.  
Thir notheen tae deu but wait.  
His een spaark.

He checks his chairter anent his ladar  
anent his osc, turns – an thay aa  
see hid: black horn brakkan  
gowd, looman ower the yole.  
“Wrack! Brace!”

[...]

---

Olaf spots a peak and marks it. Inga senses a change in the pattern of his concentra-  
tion, and waits. There is nothing to do but wait. His eyes spark.

He checks his mapper against his laser radar against his oscilloscope, turns – and  
they all see it: black prow breaking the gold, looming over the boat. “Wreck! Brace!”

an interstellar system of industry, trade, galactic expansion: Light. Inga and Olaf are  
always chord with voltage differentials, atmospheric rippleagitationconfusionchoppi-  
ness, profit margins.

Inga rives the yole tae,  
the linecrew an Olaf stellt tae thair bars,  
the waa atween the crew an daeth  
gaen flinterkin. The hurlan pulse  
o thair reid alairm.

But – the yole – pulls clear! skewan  
anunder the whalman dairk o the godssend.  
Ivery een o thaim gies the golder  
o bustan braeth, an settles lik this  
wis ordinar.

An a wrack lik this will win a bounty.  
Hid's no a haal o Lights, but  
thir fock that pey fer this things nou.  
Whan Inga relays thair stance, that credit's  
anither survival.

---

Inga wrenchripbreaks the boat away, the linescrew and Olaf fixedbraced against their barsbraces, the wall between the creew and death gone flimsygaudyfrivolous. The speedthrowing pulse of their red alarm.

But – the boat – pulls clear! twistskewshunning under the overwhelming dark of the salvagewreckriches. Each gives the laughroarcry of burstescaping breath, and settles as if this were ordinary.

And a wreck like this comes with a bounty. It isn't a haul of Lights, but there are people who pay for these things now. As Inga transmits their co-ordinates, that money is another survival.

## Øyvind Astridsfaither, wirkan

The pinchers, the maet  
an the spoot is only  
visible trow

a microscopp,  
but tae Øyvind  
hid's lik he's haalan

a ship: his muscles  
is haaden i that  
tight a tension.

Brenna an Gunnie,  
young eens assigned  
tae wirk wi him,

is cheetran i the corner.  
He glowers thir wey  
an lowers the braeth-thick

shaef o protein  
intae hids piece,  
than shifts tae the next.

[...]

---

### Øyvind, Astrid's father, at work

The tongs, the meat and the syringespout are only visible through  
a microscope but to Øyvind it's like he's hauling  
a ship: his muscles are held in such a tight tension.  
Brenna and Gunnie, young ones assigned to work with him,  
are chucklinggiggling in the corner. He glaregazescowls their way and lowers the  
breath-thick  
slice of protein into its placepart, then shifts to the next.

“Smell that,” he says.  
Øyvind glories  
i the guff o the lab.

“Only hand-  
growen maet  
reeks this geud.”

Brenna comes  
aside him, asks,  
“Deusno nano-

replicaetion  
smell the saem?”  
“Wheesht,” he says.

But he’s takkan a coorse:  
communiecaetions.  
He kens his rows

o protein dishes  
maan rebrand  
as luxury.

His airms burn.  
His een tift.  
He growes shairper.

\*

---

“Smell that,” he says. Øyvind glories in the stinkpuffsnortnonsense of the lab.  
“Only the hand-cultivated meat reeks this good.  
Brenna comes beside him, asks, “Doesn’t nano-  
replication smell the same?” “Quiet,” he says.  
But he’s taking a course: communications. He knows his rows  
of protein dishes must rebrand as luxury.  
His arms burn. His eyelids throbbache He grows sharper.

## The arkaeolokist at the Wrack-Hofn

Soo steers her skift trow the voyd hulks.  
Hid's been a langersome day, the trachle o loggan  
ivery mett o the wrack, Inga's godssend.

Since sheu cam tae space sheu's fund her body  
thickenan – Orcadia's gravitaetional spin  
a drag on her meun-grown bonns – an her mynd thinnan.

Aence sheu wis yivveran tae set her diastimeter  
on the deck o a cell: sheu sneckit the laser  
an dirled wi the neow nummers: the thowt o petrens

i the teum plans o this graet black reums,  
i the shairp angles o thair slite black waas,  
somepiece a staen tae mak thaim intae meanan

Nou ivry twatree Stanart Months the Lighters  
bring anither set o raedeens tae mirk  
anither theory. The wracks she passes is silent,  
[...]

---

### Soo at the Wreck-HavenHarbour

Soo steers her skiff through the emptyabandoned wreckvessels. It has been a longtiring day, the drudgerymuddletrudge of logging the dimensions of the wreck, Inga's salvagewreckriches.

Since she came to space she's found her body thickening – Orcadia's gravitational spin a drag on her moon-grown bones – and her mind thinning.

Once she was eagerardent to set her distance measurer on the floor of a chamber, she switched on the laser and thrillpierceshakereeled to the new numbers: the thought of patterns

in the emptynonsense plans of these great black rooms, in the sharp angles of their smoothhighsteepbold black walls, somewhere a stone to make them into meaning.

Now every few Standard months brings her another set of readings to obscuredull-darken another theory. The wrecks she passes are silent,

rich wi unanswerability: ships or staetions  
or sculptures or temples or byres – sheu speeds the skiff –  
or tombs or warks – speeds faaster yet – or follies

or calculaetors or classreum exercises  
o Airkieteck-Gods. Nae drive, nae rudder, nae haert,  
nae brains, nae lungs, nae hass, nae tong, nae will,

undeeman abeun her, undeeman anunder, bund  
in orbit ahint the Deep Wheel, the Hofn  
aye growan in grandur an skrinklan in sense.

\*

---

rich with unanswerability: ships or stations or sculptures or temples or barns – she  
speeds the skiff – or tombs or factories – speeds faster still – or follies  
or calculators or classroom exercises of Architect-Gods. No drive, no rudder, no  
heart, no brain, no lungs, no throatneckpass, no tongue, no willdirection  
enormousintenseunbelievable above her, enormousintenseunbelievable below her,  
bound in orbit behind the Deep Wheel, the havenharbour slowly growing in grandeur  
and shrinkdying in sense.

## **Astrid gangs tae kirk**

“Comes thoo?” asked Øyvind, aesy enof,  
so Astrid sayed “O coorse” afore  
myndan sheu wis faithless noo.  
Sheu cam an fund sheu kent the wirds

tae ivry sang, an hoo tae speir  
this god fer saefty an that fer maet,  
anither fer wittans an feck. Awa,  
Orcadia’s history is less

a truth an more a story: the curn  
o fock fae a curn o ships an meuns  
at cam to big a curn o a staetion  
an raffled thair cultures intae a piece,

parteeclar. Thir that muckle i the mix  
fock here see hid as wan. Awa,  
sheu’s laerned tae be a cynic. Sheu slips  
intae coontan the ruives i the reuf

[...]

---

## **Astrid goes to church**

“Will you come?” asked Øyvind, casualeasily enough, so Astrid said “Of course,” before rememberknowreflectwilling she was faithless now. She came and found she knew the words

to every song, and how to ask this god for safety and that for foodmeat and another for knowledgeawareness and powerworthattention. Away, Orcadia’s history is less

a truth and more a story: the fewgrainsparticles of people from fewgrainsparticles of ships and moons that came to build a smallgrainparticle of a station, and muddled their cultures into a placedistancepart,

specificstrange. There’s so much in the mix that people here see it as one. Away, she’s learned to be a cynic. She slips into counting the rivetcoinstrikes in the roof



trow the lang an weel-kent sermon.  
An Higgie's soprano cracks the saem  
notts ahint her, an wi this truth  
Astrid finds forgiveness: a caald

waarmth at's notheen tae deu wi belief  
an aatheen tae deu wi haird pews,  
thin yarns, gray beuks,  
an so is a myndeen tae her fae the gods.

\*

---

through the long familiar sermon. And Higgie's soprano cracks the same notes behind her, and in this truth Astrid finds forgiveness: a cold  
warmth that has nothing to do with belief and everything to do with hard pews, thin stories, grey books, and as such is a giftremembrance to her from the gods.

## **Darling gangs tae view the wracks**

Sheu thowt thare'd be somethen more,  
but this black shaeps is jeust  
the waant o starns. Thay glup

the orange lowe o the yotun  
that colors aa Orcadia.  
Thay glup her geyran face.

Soo sets the skift tae drift  
an leans back in her seat,  
een closed. The wracks sloom by.

“What are they?” speirs Darling.  
an the arkaeolojist bairks  
a laaf. “Exactly,” says Soo.

[...]

---

### **Darling goes to see the wrecks**

She thought there'd be something more, but these black shapes are just the absence of stars. They swallowblackengurgle

the orange glowradianceblaze of the gas giant that colours all of Orcadia. They swallowblackengurgle her covetously staring face.

Soo sets the skiff to drift and leans back in her seat, eyes closed. The wrecks slideslinkdream by.

“What are they?” asks Darling, and the archaeologist barkscoughswarns a laugh.  
“Exactly,” says Soo.

“Exactly.” Darling is grabbid.  
“But surely – I mean – they must–”  
“Look,” says Soo, no appenan

her een. “There’s no known substance  
which can form constructions  
this vast or regular, and no

sign of a life that made them.  
So.” An Darling turns  
away. “I’m sorry,” sheu says.

\*

---

“Exactly.” Darling is angryconfused. “But surely – I mean – they must–” “Look,”  
says Soo, not opening  
her eyes. “There is no known substance which forms constructions this vast or regu-  
lar, and no  
sign of a life that made them. So.” And Darling turns away. “I’m sorry,” she says.

## **Olaf Lighter hishan his bairn tae sleep**

The sang is aald an the week by  
wis the bairn cheust takkan twatree steps:  
a hairdly-human knitch o need,  
but waakan. The bairn's een is clossan  
an unner the sang is Olaf's quaistions:

Will the bairn tak tae the ducts,  
smoo roon labs o a night, clim  
as possessed o a tail, dore tae be taen  
oot i the yoles, laern the hodden  
neuks o the staetions an naems o the Lights?

Lik him, his mither an hers,  
mixter-maxter staetion fock,  
makkan a piece taegither, sharan  
the little thir gotten, no kennan grund?  
Or will this een be somtheen neow?

[...]

---

## **Olaf the Light-gatherer lulling his child to sleep**

The song is old and last week the child just took two or three steps: a hardly-human bundletruss of need, but walking. The child's eyes are closing, and under the song are Olaf's questions:

Will the child enjoyexplore the ducts, slinksqueezenose into food laboratories at night, climb as though he had a tail, demandpesterbabble to be taken out in the boats, learn the hiddendarklonelyobscure nooks of the stations and names of Lights?

Like Olaf, his mother, and hers, a diverse mix of station people, making a placedistance together, sharing the little they have and not knowing groundearth. Or will this one be something new?

Ten year an the bairn'll be gittan taller  
as this room is wide, an laernan  
astrometry an polietics.  
The polietics thir gotten here  
is cheust enof tae dael thair maet

an finiesh a teullyo ithoot a body  
bean murdert. Thir wan planet  
tae meisur. Aa Olaf liked at the skeul  
wis history, an so he kens the warld  
is nou expandan faaster again,

an that neow ships bring neow relays,  
channels tae sype Orcadia whill aa  
that bides is history: staetions gaen  
tae bruckalaetion, black hulks.  
So mebbe this bairn'll want tae brak

the next speed barrier, or the next?  
In this peedie bed, dreaman  
o cities, dreaman o meanan more.  
Or dreaman a love fer a dwynan piece?  
Whit wan o this futurs is bruckit most?

\*

---

Ten years and the child will be growing taller than the room is wide, and learning  
astrometry and politics. The politics they have here is just enough to sharedividefate  
their foodmeat

and finish a fightbroilstruggle without anyone being murdered. There's one planet  
to measure. All Olaf liked at the school was history, so he knows that the world is now-  
expanding faster again,

and that new ships bring new relays, channels to draindry Orcadia until all that  
lifestayremains is history: stations gone to ruindestruction, black hulks. So maybe this  
child will want to break

the next speed barrier, or the next? In this little bed, dreaming of cities dreaming of  
meaning more? Or dreaming a love for a piningfadingwithering place? And which of  
these futures is the most broken?

## **Gunnie Margitsdowter nyargs at her mither**

“Ach mither!” sheu says, “Thoo kens A’m wantan  
tae sail wi thee! Whit wey will thoo  
no tell the Ting tae pit me on  
thee yole?” The Ting is meant

tae guide the staetion’s folk atween  
the wirk thay’re wantan an wirk that’s needed,  
but Gunnie’s petietioned tae tak tae the Lights  
fer a puckle o year an nivver been.

Her mither stirs the protein soup  
an says feentie-thing. “Mither!”  
Gunnie’s voyce is clangan aff  
the thin waas o the quaaters thay share.

[...]

---

### **Gunnie, Margit’s daughter, naggrumblefaulttaunts her mother’s**

“Ach, mother!” she says, “You know I want to sail with you! Why won’t you tell the Ting to assign me to your boat?” The Ting is meant to manageguidecontrol the station’s people between the work they want and the work that’s needed, but Gunnie’s petitioned to work gathering Lights for several years and never been.

Her mother stirs the protein soup and says nothing. “Mother!” Gunnie’s voice is clanging off the thin metal walls of the quarters they share.

An Margit turns. "I want gets notheen,"  
sheu says lik spittan feeskid maet.  
"An laernan the Lights gets notheen an aa.  
Hid's me at's keepid thoo fae the yole,

fer geud reasons." Gunnie's skrek  
is halfway ap her thrapple whan Margit  
lifts the speun. "Lass, stoop!  
Dinno thoo come tae me wi thee want."

Sheu ladles soup intae Gunnie's bowl  
an scrapes the pot an deusno waste  
a bit. Whan Gunnie brattles oot,  
sheu taks the bowl an stairts tae eat.

\*

---

And Margit turns. "I want gets nothing," she says like spitting putridmouldy food-  
meat. "And learning the Lights gets nothing either. It's me that's kept you from the  
boat,

for good reasons" Gunnie's yellscreech is halfway up her throat when Margit lifts the  
spoon. "Girlwoman, quiet! Don't come to me with your want."

She ladles soup into Gunnie's bowl and scrapes the pot and doesn't waste a bit.  
When Gunnie crashrushstorms out, she takes the bowl and starts to eat.

## **Øyvind Grower an Eynar o the Hoose tak an eveneen class**

Thay wir bairns at the skeul taegither,  
an noo hid's tretty year gaen,  
an thay're listenan tae this bairn

fae the bairn toons o Tau Ceti  
wi a croose reid face  
laern a class o adults

reputaetional capietal,  
brandeen niches, rare  
haaf aathenticity.

But Eynar taks notts this days,  
as geud as Øyvind's fae skeul.  
Thay dinno luk at each ither.

Eftir, whan that Brenna,  
made up lik a Martian,  
tries tae tise thaim tae

[...]

---

## **Øyvind the meat-grower and Einar the barman take an evening class**

They went to school together as children, and now it's thirty years later and they're listening to this child

from the child towncities of Tau Ceti with a smugmerrypleased face learnteach a class of adults

reputational capital, branding niches, rareunusual deep space authenticity.

But Eynar takes notes these days as good as Øyvind's were at school. They don't look at each other.

Afterwards, when that Brenna, adornedhappyinvented like a Martian, tries to coax-cajoles them to



her empie raedeen grup –  
“Revolutionary Thowt  
in Pre-Stellar Eart,”

says she, keen as tae cut –  
thay’re gled o the antic distraction  
(tho thay jentle refuse the lass)

so this twa taal men  
dinno hiv tae blether  
about the peedie chairs,

or age, or wirk, or Light,  
or whit muckle credits  
this haep o dirt is warth.

\*

---

her empty reading group – “Revolutionary Thought in Pre-Stellar Earth,”  
says she, keen enough to cut – they’re glad of the amusinggrotesqueoddr ridiculous-  
droll distraction (though they gently refuse the girlwoman)  
so these two tall men don’t have to chat about the little chairs  
or age, or work, or Light, or how manymuch credits this heap of mudshitrubbish is  
worth.

## A alt-arkaeolochist visits wi Soo

“It’s simple,” he says, his wide blue een  
ower bright, skrankie haands puskan.  
“When you look at it right. They’re not  
wrecks. Not broken. They are– they are  
a message we don’t know how to decode.”  
Soo freesks an sibbles her tea, tuinan  
her lugs tae the Varday module’s music.  
“Why else would they be here, in the path  
of our expansion? Ready for us  
to find? For us? Why else would the doors  
have been left open?” The metal cruin:  
solar plants, atmospheric  
regulaetors, gravietaetional  
spin. “And who, well, who else?  
There’s no-one else, contract, trace–”  
Whanivver sheu gaed tae a surface nou  
sheu coudno sleep until sheu’d fiegured  
whit wis missan an switched the soond  
o her pod tae *injine*. “–so it must be us!”

[...]

---

## An alt-archaeologist pays a visit to Soo

“It’s simple,” he says, his wide blue eyes too bright, his scraggyeagrespidery hands fidgetfussgustsearching. “When you look at it right. They’re not wrecks. Not broken. They are– they are a message we don’t know how to decode.” Soo smiles falsely and sipslurps her tea, tuning her ears to the Varday module’s music. “Why else would they be here, in the path of our expansion? Ready for us to find? For us? Why else would the doors have been left open?” The metal humtunesongwail: solar plants, atmospheric regulators, gravitational spin. “And who, well, who else? There’s no-one else, contact, trace–” Whenever she went to a surface now she couldn’t sleep until she’d worked out what was missing and switched the sound of her pod to *engine*. “–so it must be us!”

His face is pride an revelaeition.  
“It’s either us in the past or us  
in the future. And really, you know, that’s the same,  
I mean–” Soo taks his tagsie slaets,  
luks trow his hoppless calculaetions,  
aa the wey trow, trow  
her feet, trow the deck, trow  
the mony plies o Varday’s skin,  
trow the wracks that quietly haaden  
in tow, tae the haaf an deeper yet.  
Whit soonds sheu’d find oot thare, whit waves.

\*

---

His face is pride and revelation. “It’s either us in the past or us in the future. And really, you know, that’s the same, I mean–” She takes his shabbydisordered slates, looks through his hopeless calculations, all the way through, through her feet, through the floor, through the many strata of Varday’s skin, through the wrecks so quietly held in tow, to deep space and deeper. What sounds she’d find out there there, what waves.

## **Higgie Machinewife clocks aff**

Sheu snecks the monietors wan by wan,  
fer the plant tae idle the sleepan oors.

Sheu lillilus tae her machines,  
her face in ivry grim gless.

– but no, at's no her face. Sheu blenks.  
A karl sportan some kinno helmet

(but maed o some kinno metal? an glassless?)  
is skirlan – but silent. He chairges the screen.

Thir a flist o Light; sheu clams her een  
shut, an the Light is sair on her lids.

[...]

---

## **Higgie the technician clocks aff**

She turns off the monitors one by one for the plant to idle the sleeping hours.  
She bunglehums a lullaby to her machines, her face in each grey mirrorglass  
– but no, that's not her face. She blinks. An older man wearing a kind of helmet  
(but made of a kind of metal? and without glass?) is shrieking – but silent. He  
charges the screen.

There's a rushrageboastbang of Light; she slams her eyes shut, and the Light is  
harshdireoppressive on her lids.

But eftir a spell sheu peeks an than  
thir notheen thare. Nae willan Light,

nae fleysome man. Sheu steps ootbye  
an clams the door, an waits ahint hid,

an sings a peedie bit looder, looder  
or the hivvy clankan inby

at's no the weel-kent tick o the plant  
mairkan hid's time, but insteid –

no – ya – no – but –  
steel brakkan steel, a dream o a sword.

\*

---

But after a short while she looks and then there's nothing there. No wildwander-  
ing Light,  
No terrifyingdriving man. She steps outside and slams the door, and waits be-  
hind it,  
and sings a little louder, louder than the heavy clanking inside  
that is not the familiar tick of the plant marking time, but instead is –  
no – yes – no – but – steel breaking steel, like a dream of a sword.

## **Astrid meets the visietor, Darling**

Astrid's sketchan the yoles at a pierheid on Central,  
cosh i the neuk anunder a pilot light,  
whan Darling, no lukkan, snappers atwart her, dingan  
her styluses ower the skitey deck o pier.  
Thay waatch the gadjets hurl intae the clifts,  
Darling speldered intae Astrid's skirt.

Darling's apolojies an offers o credit  
is as gabsie as Astrid's reassurance is blate.  
"I wisno uissan thaim. Better ithoot."  
Darling trys tae mak the fykie transietion  
fae shock tae blether wi "Are you visiting too?"  
an gars sometheen a weys more precious gang.

But wi the offer o tea, Astrid gies  
tae Darling whit sheu's waantan: lowses the vouels  
in her spaekken, nods an smiles whan Darling yatters  
on aboot community, the community,  
fills the visietor's lugs wi the neow aaldness  
o her staetion haem, blidely spaeks whit sheu kens.

[...]

---

## **Astrid meets the visitor, Darling**

Astrid is sketching the boats at a pierhead on Central, snugquiethappyintimate in the nook under a pilot light, when Darling, not looking, stumblestammers across her, knockdriving her styluses over the slippery deckfloor of the pier. They watch the gadgets rolltumblespeed into the crackchinks, Darling spreadsplitted over Astrid's lap.

Darling's apologies and offers of credit are as voluble as Astrid's reassurance is shy-diffident. "I wasn't using them. Better without." Darling tries to make the trickyrestless transition from shock to conversation and asks "Are you visiting too?" and makespushes something more precious go.

But later, with the offer of tea, Astrid can perform for Darling what she wants: loosens the vowels through her speech, nods and smiles as Darling rambles about community, fills the visitor's ears with the new oldness of her station home, gladkindfondly tells her what she knows.

An eftir, eftir tea comes tae spirits, kennan  
her ploys is watched by ivry lighter an grower  
i the Hoose, cheusan no tae mynd, seean  
sheu's keepan back ower muckle fae Darling,  
carean that sheu disno care, sheu laafs  
at the dint o the invitaetion an follows the wumman.

Thair touchan's stammerie joy, trivvlan, agglan,  
airtan, error, hixan, delight. The both  
o thaim ken the meus an maan unlaern them  
fer a neow skin's waas, windows, doors.  
Astrid taks a guff o Mars again,  
an Darling, discovry. Thair tongs tak a gless.

Than eftir, whan the cruises brighten tae morneen,  
wi Darling yet sleepan, Astrid busks an luks  
fae porthole tae bed, fae the tide tae Darling's hair,  
an speirs o the gods, at dinno exist, gin  
thir both fund whit thay waant, or need, or no,  
or gin thir maed hid, or gin hid ivver maiters.

\*

---

And later, after tea becomes spirits, knowing her actionsdecisionsgames are watched by every lighter and grower in the House, choosing not to care, seeing she's held too much back from Darling, caring that she does not care, Astrid laughs at the shockchancestrike of the invitation and follows the woman.

Their touch is stumblestammering joy, fumblefiddling, messdirtconfusion, searchfinding, error, laughhiccuping, delight. They both know the moves and must-should unlearn them for a new skin's walls, windows, doors. Astrid smelltastes Mars again, and Darling, discovery. Their tongues drink.

Then later, when the lamps brighten to morning, with Darling still asleep, Astrid dressesprepares and lookpeeks from porthole to bed, from the seatimetide to Darling's hair, and asks of the gods, who do not exist, if they have both found what they want, or need, or not, or if they have created it, or if it ever matters.





## **Juror's Note (cont.)**

Should any of the review panel still be reading this far, or should some future (or future, &c.) scholar be finding merit in this obscure artifact, it behooves us at this juncture in the text to consider the implausibility of the unfolding scenario, if only to reflect on the possibilities (ha!) inherent in our – or your – time. I leave this note here during my second reading of the text as both guide and warning.

To recap briefly: Orcadia operates, as described here, on some form of consensus-based communitarianism, which appears to have functioned economically up until the FTL-genic macroeconomic shocks of its present or possible present – functioning despite the general if not complete failure of such polities to persist within our present present or within hitherto documented pasts and possible pasts. Moreover, while some texts which the Bureau is asked to classify deal explicitly with the continuance or cessation of the ethno-supremacist and other supremacist conflicts which have characterised the Ages of Exploration, Industrialisation and Information thus far – at least insofar as they have been successfully sanitised – the present text has either avoided such questions (including how they pertain to numerous other categories of economised domination) – namely, how a world changed from *there* to *here*, or *then* to *then* – or seen no need to confront them. Thus we are presented with a potential society whose relative if now threatened stability is wholly inaccessible from our present stance.

Three main possible conclusions obtain: first, that in this purported future one supremacist polity has won out to the extent that others need not be described (unlikely, given the depiction of variant regions within the text); second, that such conflicts have ceased (unlikely, given the economic disparities described within the text); and third, most intriguingly, that we are confronting a text that might have already been the product of intertemporal contamination. That is to say, the Orcadia described within the text is an Orcadia that can only have been described from some point within its own past or future, and is thus not a

fully realised present to itself but rather a projection of a desired possipresent from some other point on its timeline, and one which has so contaminated the present from which it might be going to have been desired as to have been moved partly or wholly into being. Such a conclusion would require a third truth status to be applied and thus require a non-bivalent classification ontology. Naturally, this tempting conclusion depends both on extensive critical interpretation of the text and some as-yet-unproved assumptions of temporal science, but it is tempting enough to reinforce both the caution of any reader continuing their progress and the necessity of categorising the text as Restricted.

– *Giles-17, Dept. of Paradoxical Texts, Bureau of Temporal Sanitation (Earth), 2051.*

## **Darling an Astrid waatch a Lightstoor**

Darling is greetan. "I've never,"  
sheu says, "I've never." An Astrid  
kens the feeleen, but canno  
decide, seean the stoor  
o Lights, the shaeps thay mak,  
the whips, the reid rivan  
an gowd glisks, the skyran  
dancers ower the bowe  
o a roilan warld, the dillan,  
the braeth, the lithy paece,  
the dunt whan the grand planet-braid  
linkwark o Lights, togither,  
sweys in a stark straik  
ower the lip o sight,  
whither o no tae say,  
"Aye, but I mynd hid better.  
Aence they wir more."

\*

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### **Darling and Astrid watch a Lightstorm**

Darling is weepcrying. "I've never," she says, "I've never." And Astrid knows the feeling, but can't decide, seeing the stormstrifestrainspeeddust of Lights, the shapes they make, the gustdarttwistattacks, the red wrenchripbreaking and gold glimpsegleampuffthrillscares, the shininggaudy dancers over the curveknot of a roiling world, the dimfadedying, the breath, the lull of peace, the shockchancestrike as the grandbig-good planet-wide linkwork of Lights, together, swerveswings in a thickviolent streak, over the edge of sight, whether or not to say, "Yes, but I rememberknowreflectwill it better. There used to be more."

## **Inga raeds a airticle aboot the Lights**

The sweiran brings Øyvind runnan  
fae the kitcheen. “Bastards! Shite-fer-brains!  
Fuck.” He pits a muckle haand  
on her back an hings ower the screen.

The airticle sheu’s raedan’s aboot  
a submission tae the Mars Ting  
on the theoretiecal basis an  
structural possiebility o

extra-corporal photon network  
consciousness an the need  
fer furder study. The heidline raeds  
CAN LIGHTS THINK? “Can thay

fuck!” says Inga, an “I dinno  
fuckan care gin thay’re fuckan  
conscious! or fuckan dancan! or  
fuckan fuckan!” Øyvind trists

[...]

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## **Inga reads an article about the Lights**

The swearing brings Øyvind through from the kitchen. “Bastards! Shit-for-brains!  
Fuck!” He puts a biggrand hand on her shoulder and leanshangs over the screen

The article she’s reading is about a a submission to the Mars Ting on the theoretical  
basis and structural possibility of

extra-corporal photon network consciousness and the need for further study. The  
headline reads: CAN LIGHTS THINK? “Can they

fuck!” says Inga, and “I don’t fucking care if they’re fucking conscious! or fucking  
dancing! Or fucking fucking!” Øyvind squeezehugpressesthirsts

her shudder. "I ken," he says, an sheu,  
"Thay're jeuce i the drives an that's maet on the taeble  
an hid's hard enof tae land a daecent  
haal nou ithoot fuckan

studies an xenobiolojists  
an airmchair philosophers  
an Fermi fucks!" Inga's greetan  
nou, an Øyvind's fingers birse

intae her dilderan airms in comfort.  
"Alaen," sheu says. "Can thay no see  
wir aye been alaen? Will aye be alaen?"  
Øyvind can only reply, "I ken."

\*

---

her shoulder. "I know," he says, and she, "They're juice in the drives and that's food-  
meat on the table and it's hard enough to land a decent haul now without fucking  
studies and xenobiologists and armchair philosophers and Fermi fucks!" She's  
weepcrying now, and Øyvind's fingers squeezepressbruise  
her tremblingjerking arms in comfort. "Slone," she says. "Can't they see we've al-  
ways been alone? Will always be alone?" And Øyvind can only reply, "I know."

## **Higgie seeks expert advice**

“Thoo kens aboot this things,” sheu says tae Soo,  
as the arkaeolojist gans at the wracks.

“Pardon?” says Soo, than “No. I’m not a psychologist,”  
pittan Higgie’s biss up. “Hid wisno me brains.

A’m no gyte. Hid wis sometheen ither,  
sometheen scientific, lik thee ships.”

“We don’t know they’re ships,” says Soo, wishan  
sheu wis wi them noo, “and I don’t see what

they have to do with dreams of ancient swordsmen.”

“Hid wisno a dream! Gin hid wis a dream,

whit wey is me doors hammered, me screens aa smashed?

He cam fae nopiece, an back tae nopiece he gaed

[...]

---

## **Higgie seeks expert advice**

“You know about these things,” she says to Soo, as the archaeologist vacantly  
staregazeyawns out at the wrecks.

“Pardon?” says Soo, then “No. I’m not a psychologist,” raising Higgie’s hackles. “It  
wasn’t in my mind.

I’m not crazy. It was something else, something scientific, like your ships.”

“We don’t know they’re ships,” says Soo, wishing she was with them now, “and I  
don’t see what

they have to do with dreams of ancient swordsmen.” “It wasn’t a dream! If it was a  
dream,

why are my doors hammered, my screens all smashed? He came from nowhere, and  
he went back to nowhere

an I waant tae ken hoo.” Soo shrugged. “I’ve been with you here  
for over a year, and can’t tell you anything real

about my own work, let alone men  
appearing from the ether. But,” she adds,

sofnan, seean madram turn tae pickloo,  
feelan hid fillan her cramped peedie office,

no wantan tae aye be away oot the edge o this piece,  
“You’ve mynded me on about reports of not

unrelated incidents on other  
inner stations. Distance, isolation,

collective realities, etcetera.

I’ve got some papers here.” “A’m tellan thee,”

says Higgle, tight, “Hid’s no a brain thing.

Hid’s a time thing. Thoo keep thee paepers,

[...]

---

and I want to know how.” Soo shrugged. “I’ve been with you here for two years, and  
I can’t tell you anything real

about my own work, let alone warrior men appearing from the ether. But,” she adds,  
softening, seeing ragetroublegrief turn to panic, feeling it filling her cramped little  
office,

not wanting to always be away out on the edge of this placedistancepart, “You’ve re-  
minded me about reports of not

unrelated incidents on other inner stations. Distance, isolation,

Collective realities, etcetera. I have some papers here.” “I’m telling you,”

says Higgle, tight-lipped like a well-caulked boat, “It’s not a mindbrain thing. It’s a  
time thing. Keep your papers,

an tell me whar tae raed aboot time.” Sheu’s siccar  
wi a dizzen decades o haadan an spaekan her mind.

So Soo swipes ower the naems o enof paepers  
in speculative temporal mechanics

tae keep the injineer occupyd,  
tae keep her, Soo lippens, fae coman back fer weeks,

an burns a feow o thaim tae her awn pod  
tae ameuse hersel whan sheu’s notheen tae deu.

\*

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and tell me where to read about time.” Higgle’s harshseveresteadfast, with a dozen  
decades of holding and speaking her mind.

So Soo swipes over the names of enough papers in speculative temporal mechanics  
to keep the engineer occupied, to keep her, Soo expects, from coming back for  
weeks,

and downloads a few of them to her own portable media and communication device  
to amuse herself when she has nothing to do.



## **Darling an Astrid tak a waak thro the wynds o Meginwick**

The wynds is lit by cruises set  
tae Stanart Days, peedie suns

i the girders lightan thir steps as thay waak  
the nerrow weys o Astrid's myndeem.

Roon this cunyo, the skeul; roon this,  
the bruck byres, whar Astrid's blide

tae spy young fock is gloweran yet;  
further, the bell thay'd gang tae in pairs;

here, the Haa whar the wynds meet,  
whar the Ting sets fees an lots thair quaaters,

whar benks is shuitten back fer dansan.  
Darling trys tae listen, but

hid's that peedie, an bye the waas  
is the tide, the starns, an aaldwarld things.

[...]

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## **Darling and Astrid take a walk through the corridors of Meginwick**

The corridors are lit by lamps set to Standard Days, little suns  
in the girders lighting their steps as they walk the narrow ways of Astrid's memory.  
Round this cornernook, the school; round this, the rubbishscrap stores, where  
Astrid is pleasedkindhappy  
to seespot young people still glowering; further, the bell they'd go to in pairs;  
here, Hall where the corridors meet, where the Collective Council sets wagesprices  
drawallocates quarters,  
where bencheshelves are shoved back for dances. Darling tries to listen, but  
it's so small, and just through these walls is the atmosphere of the gas giant, the  
stars, and all the oldworldancient things.

Thair haands sweeng closs, touch, twine,  
pull back, touch more. An than – “Astrid?”

Thay birl, touchan yet, but Astrid  
steps awey an the uncan body

says, “Hid’s nivver thoo?” The body  
is Gunnie, at twal year syn wis Astrid’s

inseparable freend, at ten year syn  
gat nyargie, an thir no spoken ava

fae Astrid teuk the langship tae Mars.  
“An wha’s this?” speirs Gunnie, smirkan.

Thay wir snatchets o bairns, but Gunnie nou  
is bonnie wallie wi shairp dairk een

an Astrid’s forgotten hoo tae deu this.  
Sheu swanders trow speiran at Gunnie’s faimly,

gien neows o her awn, myndan on only  
tae share the things sheu deusno mind

[...]

---

Their hands swing close, touch, twine, pull back, touch more. And then – “Astrid?”  
They spinturn, still touching, but Astrid steps away and the stranger  
says, “That’s never you?” The personbody is Gunnie, who twelve years ago  
was Astrid’s inseparable friend, who ten years ago got tiregrumbleboring, and they  
haven’t spoken at all  
since Astrid took the longship to Mars. “And wha’s this?” saysasks Gunnie.  
They were punyworthlessrascally children, but Gunnie now is veryprettily  
bighealthybeautiful with sharp dark eyes,  
and Astrid has forgotten how to do this. She stumblewanders through asking after  
Gunnie’s family,  
giving news of her own, rememberknowreflectwilling only to share what she doesn’t  
mind

aabody on the staetions hearan  
in twatree oors, or mebbe less.

Darling waatches the clashan pair,  
no understandan enof tae spaek,

smilan but feelan a ropp hank aff  
as sheu faas backleens intae space.

An Astrid's soondan appen, but keeps  
her innerly nirts gairded. Sheu girns,

promieses thay'll spaek, cheerios,  
an firm taks Darling's bombazed haand.

\*

---

everyone on the stations hearing within a few hours, maybe less.  
Darling watches the noisygossiping pair, not undestanding enough to speak  
smiling but feeling a rope uncoil as she falls backwards into space.  
And Astrid sounds open, but keeps her inmostshelteredintimateaffectionate frag-  
mentsmorsels stillreservedsecret and guarded. She gringrimaces, promises they'll  
speak, says goodbye, and firmly takes Darling's bewilderedstupified hand.

## They spaek aboot Mars

“So wha’s thee fock?” speirs Astrid, but Darling’s reply is “Boring! You don’t want to know.” “Thoo kens mine!” says Astrid, but things wi them is ower caller fer her tae be a needle or a hammer. “Whar’d ye bide, than?”

Darling describes the muckle domms an tooers o Chryse, weel enof tae be convinceen, closs enof tae true. Astrid kiek an eebroo, fer Chryse wis ower gowd an Angle fer her mixter-maxter croud.

“A’m only seen hid fae ap on Ascraeus. Hid’s a peedie bit peedier fae thare.” Darling snushes. “Too peedie for me. This is more my size.” Sheu spraeds her airms, raxan oot the tap o the mintie taing o the mintie staetion,  
[...]

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## They speak about Mars

“So, tell me about your family,” asks Astrid, but Darling’s reply is “Boring! You don’t want to know.” “You know about mine!” says Astrid, but things between them are too freshcleanhealthy for her to be a needle or a hammer. “Where did you waitstaylive, then?”

Darling describes the greatbig domes and towers of Chryse, well enough to be convincing, close enough to true. Astrid kicks an eyebrow, because Chryse was far too wealthygolden and Angle for her heterogeneous jumble of a friendship group.

“I’ve only seen it from up on Ascraeus. It’s a fair bit smaller from there.” Darling snorts. “Too smallyoungminor for me. This is more my size.” She spreads her arms, stretchreachexpanding out of the top of the tiny promontory of the tiny station,

tae haad twa meuns an a normous o starns.

“I miss it,” says Astrid, an Darling’s ferly palled. “Hid’s true. No jeust me freends, but bidan somepiece I coud be...”

“Be what?” “Be onybody. Or no mesel. Or jeust no hiv tae be:

oot thare, wi that mony fock, that muckle tae deu, thoo deusno hiv tae be.” Darling haads her haand.

“But you still liked to walk all the way up the biggest mountains in the system?”

“Yass. Else hid wis gey haird tae see.”

\*

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to hold two moons and a huge number of stars. “I miss it,” says Astrid, and Darling’s very astonishedthwarted. “It’s true. Not just my friends, but waitstayliving somewhere I could be...” “Be what?” “Be anybody. Or not myself. Or just not have to be:

out there, with so many people, so much to do, you don’t have to be.” Darling holds her hand. “But you still liked to walk all the way up the biggest mountains in the system?” “Yes. Otherwise it was very hard to see.”

## **Inga an Olaf spaek business**

“Whit is it, beuy?” sheu says,  
but sheu kens whit it is.  
Olaf is by for his tea,  
an sits ithoot drinkan or spaekan.

Sheu taks charge again.  
“Thoo’re thinkan A’m wirkan the bott  
ower haird,” sheu staets.  
He spreets. “Hid’s no jeust me!

For A’m gotten me bairn,  
an jeust me nou tae mynd him,  
an Erlend is haen his third,  
an Erika’s mither’s taen ill,

an Ingrid –” “Deus thoo no think  
A’m kennan? We canno –” “We canno  
gang oot ivry day!”  
Olaf is ferly gowlan.

[...]

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## **Inga and Olaf talk business**

“What is it, friendmanboy?” she says, though she knows what it is. Olaf has come to her for a cup of tea or an evening meal, but sits without drinking or speaking.

She takes charge again. “You think I’m working the ship too hard,” she states. He startripbursts. “It’s not just me!

Because I have my baby, and only me now to look after him, and Erlend has had his third, and Erika’s mother has taken ill,

and Ingrid –” “Do you think I don’t know? We can’t–” “We can’t go out every day!”  
Olaf is really bellowcrying.

“We can an we maan,” Inga says,  
“or whit’ll thee bairn aet,  
or Erlend’s, or Erika’s mither?  
Is hid no creches an nurses

whan mithers an faithers maan wirk?”  
“Is hid no common stores  
whan thee credits is thin?”  
he snashes, an Inga gets quiet

an sad. “Hid’s no about me,”  
sheu says. “Hid’s aa Orcadia.  
The Ting kens whit’s coman.  
Gin thoo an me tak noo,

thir notheen the next year,  
or eftir, whan the Lights  
is anteran, an the shippeen,  
an aa wir needan tae bide.

Wir wirkan while we can.”  
Quiet, but haird. Olaf sibbles  
caald tea. “Hid’s no  
that bad,” he says, but hid is.

\*

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“We can and we must,” Inga says, “or what will your babychild eat, or Erlend’s, or Erika’s mother? Aren’t there creches and nurses when mothers and fathers have to work?” “Aren’t there common stores when you’re short on credits?” he snapsbites like a dog, and Inga grows quiet and sad. “It’s not about me,” she says. “It’s all Orcadia. The Collective Council knows what’s coming. If you and I take now, there will be nothing next year, or later, when the Lights are rareunusual, and the shipping, and everything we need to waitstaylive. We’re working while we can.” Quiet, but hard. Olaf slowsips slurps cold tea. “It’s not that bad,” he says, but it is.

## **Astrid vods back tae a pal fae the college**

The vod sheu wis gotten by slow packet wis pangit wi sarcasm. Hoo wis sheu deuan nou i the inner dairkness? Haed sheu been reprogrammed yet by the natives? Did sheu mynd whit like a staek, gress-fed, tastid? Whit like Mars yird felt?

Whit like caller air smelt? The wey her jack bizzed whan pluggid tae civiliesaction? Hoo tae dance? The election, the sit-in, the mairch? Her social credits wis plumman the reid; jeust whit did sheu think sheu wis deuan? Whan wis sheu coman haem?

Astrid luks intae the lens o her caster an sends afyoag o a laaf tae the funs, hersel, her haem, an yaps aboot the tarf an retro chairm o astro-industrial airkietecture an hoo the yotun's yallo swalls her braeth.

[...]

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## **Astrid vods back to a friend from art school**

The vod she got by slow packet was crammedcrushedburst with sarcasm. How was she doing now in the inner darkness? Had she been reprogrammed yet by the natives? Had she forgotten how a grass-fed steak tasted? How Mars groundworldsoil felt?

How cleanfreshnew air smelt? How her jack buzzbustled when plugged in to civilisation? How to dance? About the election, the sit-in, the march? Her social credits were plumbing the red; just what did she think she was doing? When was she coming home?

Astrid looks into the lens of her caster and sends a big laugh at the jokesgames, herself, her home, and talknagbarks about the harshbitter and retro charm of astro-industrial architecture, and how the gas giant's yellow swells her breath.



Sheu smiles an lees about the space o space,  
an hoo sheu's deuan that grand a wark oot here.  
(Her slaet bides teum yet; the vacuums atween  
the staetions o Deep Wheel Orcadia fill  
o traffic, industry, mynd, wirts and waith.)

An than sheu says "Listen" an records the deep  
mum o Aikeray's injines, the bed an baet  
o aa her life. An than sheu says "Thoo  
shoud try," gin only tae insense hersel  
thir onythen here at sheu can ivver share.

\*

---

She smiles and lies about the space of space, and how she does so much work out here. (Her multimedia composition device waitstaylives empty still; the vacuums between the stations of Deep Wheel Orcadia are full of traffic, industry, memory-thoughtmeaning, words and flotsamstrays.

And then she says "Listen" and records the deep hummumblewhisperword of Aikeray's engines, the bed and rhythm of all her life. She says "You should try," if only to convinceimpress herself that there's anything here that she can ever share.

## Darling jacks the news

Sheu'd wun tae twa days afore lukkan. Days o paece,  
forgettan, lik sheu wisno traikit by history  
(or faimly, whit's aye the saem thing). An paece is grand,  
but the coorse yeuk tae ken gin paece is true  
or no, an gin hid's gaan tae end, returns.  
Sheu digs intae her pack fer the vacuum gansey,  
unhaps her bauchelt pod an jacks hid in.

This weys in the data transfer's driltan,  
fer enerjy's dear fer aa thay mak hid here,  
an whan the infodump is deun hid's lik  
a patchwark: twa-month aald reports comed oot  
by slow packets, hallockit advertiseens  
an feenty neows by faast packets, an only  
emerjency bulletins by ansible.

[...]

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## Darling plugs into the news

She'd achievedbeaten two days before looking. Days of peace, forgetting, as though she wasn't trackprowltrudgesickenexhausted by history (or family, which has ever been the same thing). And peace is grandgoodbig, but the hardrough itch to know if peace is true or not, and if it's going to end, returns. She digs into her pack for the vacuum sweaterjersey, uncoverswraps her wornroughdiscardeddowntrodden pod an plugs it in.

This far into the galaxy the data transfer is slowdreamdawdling, because energy's expensive even though they make it here, and when the information download is finished it's like a patchwork: two-month old reports delivered by slow packets, flightygid-dynoisycrazy adverts and cursednothing news by fast packets, and only emergency bulletins by ansible.

The loup tae haaf has ferfil gien the lie  
tae infienit informaetion alwis on,  
an hid's waant. An nou sheu deusno care whit's on  
on Mars, ivry teullyo maed wanwirt  
by space an time. The rampan wirts atween  
the ooter Nordren Fed an Angle colonies  
is that closs tae clae kan sheu jeust ignores hid.

Sheu ransels insteid fer her aald naem an face.  
Whan thir notheen neow – jeust the saem  
thraets an offers tae thieves an arbitraetors,  
ithoot ony witter o roon whit o the starns  
sheu's birlan noo – sheu shills her peedie pod,  
happan hids cell in a sark, hids screen in anither.  
Hid's no paece, an but hid's sometheen closs.

\*

---

The jumpspringvault to deep space has very much given the lie to infinite information always on, and its wantneed. She doesn't care what's happening on Mars, every strugglescuffleturmoil made worthless by space and time. The simmersputtermuddle-fussing words between outer Northern Federation and Angle colonies are so close to gossipclucks she just ignores it.

She searchessnoopsransacks like a bailiff instead for her old name and face. When there's nothing new – just the same threats and threatoffers to thieves and arbitrators, without any signguideknowingfishhook of round which of the stars she's spindancing now, she husks her little pod, wraphiding its power source in a shirt and its screen in another. It's not peace, but it's something close.

## **Soo needs a drink**

“Yir no come by ower affen”, says Eynar, blyde,  
whan Soo sits hersel alaen at the bar. “My loss,”  
sheu says. “I thought I should get to know folk here  
better.” “Thir no ower muckle tae ken.” Soo flenches

an poors her discomfort intae her soor drink.

Eynar relents. “Hoo’s yir wracks, than?”

“Big,” sheu says. “Black,” sheu says. “Empty.” An flenches again  
at hoo hid feels ferfil grand tae be soor.

Abasht, sheu blethers on, sayan hoo  
hid’s gey bonnie here, hoo sheu loves it,  
the coothie fock, and Eynar listens, ooterlie  
noddan. “No bad, ya, hid’s no bad, tho.”

[...]

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## **Soo needs a drink**

“You haven’t visited much,” says Eynar, happywelcoming, when Soo sits by herself  
at the bar. “My loss,” she says. “I thought I should get to know folk here better.”

“There’s not too much to know.” Soo startsshocksthrills

and pours her discomfort into her sourbitter drink. Eynar relents. “How are your  
wrecks then?” “Big,” she says. “Black,” she says. “Empty.” And startsshocksthrills again  
at how terribly good it feels to be bitterrudemiserable.

Abashed, she talkchatrambles on, saying how it’s very beautiful here, how she loves  
it, the friendlycomfortablepleasantunthreatening folk, and Eynar listens, outwardly  
nodding. “Not bad, yes, it’s not bad thoughexcept.”

Soo deusno ken gin the “tho” means “indeed” or “except”,  
so sheu asks gin Eynar ivver thowt o flittan,  
ivver waanted tae bide somepiece ither,  
but the questin skites aff his gleg an glazie wirds.

“Hid’ll deu.” “We deu fine.” “No bad.”

Thir quiet a piece. He poors, sheu drinks, thay smile.  
An a thowt comes tae Eynar an waarms him, the thowt of sumeen  
he might want tae share wi this bonnie aakward body.

“Gin ye want tae ken fock better, come  
tae the dance Firstday next. Ye’ll see wiss thare  
at wir best.” Soo couldno, sheu wadno want tae impose,  
disno think sheu’d be walcome, canno dance,

but Eynar’s insistan wi a yivverness better  
as he’s haed aa night. Forbye, Soo wants  
tae gang, an dance. Whan sheu’s finished her drink,  
he asks “A’ll see thee thare?” an Soo says “Yass.”

\*

---

Soo doesn’t know if the “though” means “indeed” or “except”, so she asks if Eynar ever thought of leavingflyingescaping, ever wanted to be somewhere else, but the question slidebounceshoots off his alertquicksmooth and glazedsmooth words.

“It’ll do.” “We do well enough.” “Not bad.” There’s a bit of quiet. He poors, she drinks, they smile. A thought comes to Eynar and warms him, the thought of something he could want to share with this prettyattractive very awkward personbody.

“If you want to know us folk better, come to the dance next Firstday. You’ll see us there at our best.” Soo couldn’t, she wouldn’t want to impose, doesn’t think she’d be welcome, can’t dance,

but Eynar insists with more eagerardentness than he’s had all night. Besides, Soo wants to go, and dance. When she’s finished her drink, he asks “I’ll see you there?” and Soo says “Yes.”

## Øyvind's notions

Whan he's alae,  
the young eens gaen  
or no assigned,

he taks a key  
tae a private store  
pangit wi maet.

The day, he curses:  
The maet's green.  
Øyvind sceups

the protein ashets  
intae the chemiecal  
reclamaetor,

pernickety, dights  
wi sterile pads  
tae stairt again.

He smoots the maet  
against the chance  
o contamienaeion

[...]

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### Øyvind's small ideaexperimentinventions

When he's alone, the young ones gone or not assigned,  
he takes a key to a private store, fullbursting with meat.  
Today, he curses: the meat is green. Øyvind scoops  
the protein serving dishes into the chemical reclamator,  
precisefussy, wipescleans with sterile pads to start again.  
He hidesneeks the meat so there's no chance of contamination

or ony gokkan  
o his notions.  
Orcadia's maet's

weel-trusted:  
why prat wi that?  
The future's coman.

He's makkan sometheen  
neow – whan  
the mix is right.

He deusno think  
tae chaenge the warld,  
jeust waants tae plaese

his awn tongue.  
He sets tae blendan  
anither batch.

\*

---

or any mockjokepranking at his ideaexperimentinventions. Orcadia's maet's weel-trusted:  
why troubleanger with that? The future's coming.  
He's making something new – when the mix is right.  
He doesn't think about changing the world, just wants to please  
his own tongue. He starts to blend another batch.

## **Astrid laerns Darling a neow dance**

Astrid kent this steps afore sheu coud spaek  
(sheu wis a backerly spaeker): her mither held her  
in fierdy airms an bired her roon an roon  
i the center o the Haa wi couples hurlan by.

Noo Astrid's haadan Darling wi siclike a grip  
an coonts the dance's steps as music fills  
the teum Ting Haa. Thir gotten a len  
o twatree oors tae mak the visietor raedy.

Darling's laaffan. This dances is stootlie ither  
or whit she kens fae Mars, nither the perjink  
traed, traety an jenteel espionage  
o her faithers' mony corporate functions, nor  
[...]

---

## **Astrid teaches Darling a new dance**

Astrid knew these steps before she could speak (she was a lateslow speaker: her mother held her in strongstoutbrisk arms an spundanced her round and round in the centre of the Hall as couples spedrode by.

Now Astrid holds Darling with the same grip and counts the dance's steps as music fills the emptyhungry Ting Hall. They've borrowed a few hours to make the visitor ready.

Darling's laughing. These dances are very different from what she knows from Mars, neither the primprecise trade, treaties and genteel espionage of her fathers' many corporate functions, nor



The sensory-seutid low-gravity raves  
apae Olympus Mons, ivvery teen  
will-willan wi the music i thair helmet  
an hairdly teddert tae the reid grund.

Sheu's laernan noo tae meuve her feet faaster,  
wi aese an virr, an stairtan tae catch the guff  
o Astrid's sweit an her awn. *Turn*, sheu thinks,  
*one-two clap*. "That's hid," says Astrid. "No bad."

\*

---

the sensory-suited low-gravity raves up on Olympus Mons, each teenager mind-wandering in the music in their helmet, and hardlypoorly tethered to the red ground.

She's learningteaching now to move her feet faster, with ease and vigourwhirr, and she's starting to smellstink Astrid's sweat and her own. *Turn*, she thinks, *one-two clap*. "That's it," says Astrid. "No bad."

## **Astrid taks Darling haem fer dinner**

“This is me neow freend” – an the layers in “freend”  
isno sheur an willno be explained.

Darling is winsome nou; sheu’s someen ither  
or the skarr thing o a toorist Astrid met.

A smile in her fernteckled face, rorie claes,  
i the mids o this faimly hid’s like her body is lowan.

Mebbe the thowt o parents luntit performance.  
Wi Darling’s silence about her awn parents,

Astrid’s ower thankful fer Inga an Øyvind’s  
maet an kindness – until fair intae the mael

sheu hears thair vouels roondan, thair consonants clippan,  
thair wirds sweetchan tae marry Darling’s awn,

[...]

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## **Astrid taks Darling haem fer dinner**

“This is my new friend” – and the layers in “friend” aren’t sure and won’t be explained.

Darling is charmingattractivecomely now: she’s someone other than the frightened-nervous tourist Astrid met.

A smile in her fernlike freckled face, brightloud clothes, among this family it’s like her bodyperson is glorburning.

Maybe the thought of parents firedinspired performance. With Darling’s silence about her own parents,

Astrid’s very grateful for Inga and Øyvind’s meatfood and kindness – until well into the meal

she notices their vowels rounding, their consonants clipping, their words switching to matchequalmate Darling’s own,

an gits unspaeable barman. An whan her awn  
“een” becomes “one” sheu comes quiet, waantan

someen tae notiece, fer her mither tae say  
“Buddo” an wi that tak her back tae the taeble,

but the hairt o her silence haes aafil gravity,  
an so the conversaetion fags, faas,

hears hidsel, is less an less real,  
til hid’s jeust Darling at’s yet smilan an spaekan.

\*

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and becomes unspeakably seething with rage. And when her own “een” becomes  
“one” she goes quiet, needwanting  
someone to notice, for her mother to say “FriendChildLove” and with it bring her  
back to the table,  
but the heart of her silence has greathorrible gravity, and so the conversation fails-  
flags, falls,  
hears itself, grows less and less real, till it’s only Darling who’s still smiling and  
speaking.

## Young Brenna at the Ting

Brenna's spaekan. Sheu spaeks aboot the structural inequalities o the interstellar economy, hou the laebor relaetions inherent in industrial extraction an production require a radiecal reimagienation o Orcadia's pouer, aboot hou the FtL drive wisno a thraet but a opportunity tae shaa the galaxy hoo tae wirk a better wey. Sheu spaeks gey weel. Sheu wis been practiesan her argiements fer weeks.

"Lass, thanks fer that," says Unn, the aaldest thare, an aye the chair thay deusno technically hiv. "Noo, the stores --" "Haad on!" says Brenna, gittan reid aaraedy, "Ir we no gaan tae discuss whit A'm spaekan aboot?" "Yass, yass," says Unn, couthie an blide. "Wha's gotten somethen thir waantan or needan tae say cheust nou tae Brenna's clivver notions?" The fill Haa is silent, o coorse. An silent yet. Brenna didno ken tae practiese fer this, an Unn wis practiesan aa thair life. Unn hoasts. "Noo, the stores..."

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## Brenna at the Collective Council

Brenna's speaking. She speaks aboot the structural inequalities o the interstellar economy, aboot hou the labour relations inherent to industrial extraction an production require a radical reimagination o Orcadia's pouer, aboot hou the Faster-than-Light drive wasn't a thraet but an opportunity to show the galaxy hou to work a better way. She speaks very weel. She had been practising her arguments fer weeks.

"Friendgirlwoman, thanks fer that," says Unn, the oldest thare an always the chair they don't technically have. "Now, the stores --" "Hold on!" says Brenna, growing red already. "Aren't we going to discuss whit I'm talking aboot?" "Yes, yes," says Unn, friendlysnug an happykind. "Who has something they want or need to say nou to Brenna's quickintelligent ideasinventions?" The wholefull Hall is silent, o coorse. An even more silent. Brenna didn't know to practise fer this, an Unn had practised all their life. Unn coughharrumphclears. "Now, the stores..."

## **Soo an Eynar spaek Eftir the Ting**

“I sayed tae see wis at wir best,  
no this”, he says. Soo wis been watchan  
the meeteen, cheust takkan notts. She laafs.  
“It’s better than a research committee.”

Eynar’s heid is tiftan fae ringan,  
rallyan debate. “A’d tak a vott  
ower this some days,” he says.  
The twa o thaim stairt tae waak together.

“I wouldn’t,” says Soo. “At least you try  
to build consensus, to make things fair.”  
“Oh yass,” says Eynar, an Soo kens nou  
this deusno mean agreement.

“I doot thir no a system coud copp  
wi whit this days is bringan wis.”  
The Ting wis biggit fer manajan stocks,  
resolvan contracks. Hids bleudiest wark

[...]

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### **Soo and Eynar speak after the Ting**

“I said to see us at our best, not this,” he says. Soo had been watching the meeting, just taking notes. She laughs. “It’s better than a research committee.

Eynar’s head is throbfestering from circling, crowdedrestlessromping debate. “I’d take a vote over this sometimes,” he says. The two of them start to talk together.

“I wouldn’t,” says Soo. “At least you try to build consensus, to make things fair. “Oh yes,” says Eynar, and Soo knows now this doesn’t mean agreement.

“I expect there isn’t any system that could cope with what these days hold for us.” The Ting was built for managing stocks, resolving contracts. Its hardestbloodiest work-task

wis exile, no the ruinaetion  
o tekno-economic chaenge.  
“Is that why you didn’t speak?” asks Soo.  
“A’ll spaek whan A’m gotten someen tae offer,”

he says, “an that’ll no be till A’m—”  
He steps an leuks away. “Until....?”  
“Ach, na,” he says. “We’re here.” They’re by  
the Hoose. Soo feels sheu’s missan someen,

but feels that ivry day. The big man  
nou seems as lost as her. “Thoo’re no  
pit aff?” Sheu shaks her heid an smiles.  
The invitaetion is sometheen neow.

“But you’ll have to teach me the steps,” sheu says,  
an waves a cheerio. Thir fock  
waitan fer Eynar tae bring the drinks  
fer the unofficial second meeteen.

They’re aa watchan the pair. “Ach wheesht,”  
says Eynar, appenan the Hoose. The choir  
o geldereen’s aither a anchor or  
a hurlan wind. He gets the drinks.

\*

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was exile, not the ruination of techno-economic change. “Is that why you didn’t speak?” asks Soo. “I’ll speak when I have something to offer,”

he says, “And that won’t be until I am —” He stops and looks away. “Until...?” “Ach, no,” he says. “We’re here.” They’re by the House. Soo feels like she’s missed something, but feels like that every day. The big man now seems as lost as her. “You’re not put off?” She shakes her head and smiles. The invitation is something new.

“But you’ll have to teach me the steps,” she says, and waves a cheerio. There are people from the Ting, waiting for Eynar to bring the drinks for the unofficial second meeting.

They are all watching the pair. “Oh, shut up,” says Eynar, opening the Hoose. The choir of laughter is another anchor, or a drivespeedpushing wind. He gets the drinks.

## **Darling's body**

In her bed wi Astrid lyan asleep, Darling thinks  
about her body an whit sheu's waantid aa her life

an whit sheu's gotten noo. I the end hid wisno ower  
haird tae deu, aence sheu'd left her faithers. The maet

o this transietion wis kent fae syn, ordinar  
fer most o space as network jacks an limb extenders

an aa the bruck o livan i the warld; sheu wis jeust cursed  
wi the wrang kinno faimly on the wrang kinno soyl,

reclaimed fae regolith tae growe a fantasy  
o pooer an no her awn confoodan sel. But noo,

[...]

---

## **Darling's body**

In her bed with Astrid lying asleep, Darling thinks about her body and what she's  
wanted all her life,

and what she has now. It wasn't after all that hard to do, once she'd left her fathers.  
The meatfoodsubstance

of this transition was long since known, normal for most of space as network jacks  
and limb extenders

and all the rubbishnonsense of being in the world; she was just cursed with the  
wrong family on the wrong soil, reclaimed

from regolith to grow a fantasy of power and not her own confounding self. But  
now,

happan her airms aroon her nesh body sheu's feart  
sheu's dreaman yet, that whit sheu's touchan willno stey

fer whan sheu waakens, a fossil fear as oot o time  
as ony baest o ony presairve o Eart. Her body,

here, noo, shoudno be bidan in aald words,  
but hid is. Unless – an this is the true an muckle fear –

whan Astrid's touchan her, whan Astrid shifts an casts  
a airm ower her more-as-Martian skin. Whit can it mean,

tae only ken thee body whan hid's wi anither?  
An coud hid mean ony ither ting but grief?

\*

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whan she wrapolds her arms around her softtender body she's scared she's dream-  
ing still, that what she's touching won't still be here  
when she wakes, a fossil fear as out of time as any animalmonster of any preserve o  
Earth. Her body,  
here, now, shouldn't be livewaitstaying in old words, but it is. Except – and this is  
the true and great fear –  
when Astrid's touching her, when Astrid shifts in sleep and slings an arm across her  
skin. What can it mean,  
to only know your body when it's with another? And can it mean anything other  
than grief?



## **Astrid canno draa yet**

Hid's no at sheu's no makkan time.

E'en wi the neow thrill  
o Darling, sheu's as faithfu

wi her slaets as faithless  
wi the kirk, an reglar  
as the yotun's spin.

But notheen comes at.

Sheu's draan the full ring  
o the staetion, an sheu's draan

the peedie skifts at sail  
atween hids ooter airms  
an substaetion bolas:

but, puckle or muckle,  
whither sheu's ramstam or huily,  
whitivver hid is sheu's draan

hid's bruck. On Mars sheu caad  
the shaeds o the yotun, the staens  
o a meun, the dwangs o haem,

[...]

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## **Astrid still can't draw**

It's not that she's not making time. Even with the new thrill of Darling, she's as faithful

with her slates as faithless with the church, and regular as the gas giant's spin.  
But nothing works out well. She's drawn the full ring of the station, and drawn the small boats that sail between its outer arms and substation bolas:  
but, grainsmallfew or greatbigmany, whether she's carelessheadstrongspeedy or carefulslow, whatever it is she's drawn,  
it's brokenrubbish. On Mars she callherded the colours of the gas giant, the stones of a moon, the strutbartoilstrains of home,

an wun the top mairks  
an tutors' admieraetion  
Sheu canno luk at yin noo.

Sheu's nivver been een  
fer portraiture, but  
this morneen sheu's wakkened aerly

in Darling's room abeun  
the Hoose, an so sheu draas  
the bonnie visieter sleepan.

The aald exercieses  
come tae her fingers  
an sheu feels the fluency

sheu's missed aa this weeks.  
Astrid paases an pits  
aside the sketch an draas

fae memory the islans  
o the Argyre Sea.  
The more thir aesy an bonnie,

the more her uim growes  
whill the traitor stylus  
narleens snaps in her haand.

and won the top marks an tutors' admiration. She can't look at thatthose now.  
She was never one for portraiture, but this morning she's woken early  
in Darling's room above the House, and soshe draws the prettybeautiful tourist  
asleep.

The old exercises come to her fingers and she feels the fluency  
she's missed all these weeks. Astrid pauses and puts the sketch aside and draws  
from memory the islands of the Argyre Sea. The more they are easy and prettybeau-  
tiful,  
the more her madrage grows, until the traitor stylus nearly snaps in her hand.

## **Gossip is Orcadia's craesh**

thinks Margit, watchan Gunnie her dowter

an Higgie Machinewife tell her aa

sheu needs tae ken an plenty sheu deusno.

Sheu smiles an offers twatree wirds

so's hid seems sheu's gien the saem

as sheu's taen, but Margit's lang been expert

at the gaem, an Gunnie's gey young tae pley

an Higgie's gey aald tae bither nou.

Sheu drifts whan Gunnie reevles about

Astrid an the visietor, fer yin

sheu wis seen hersel, an mibbe wis kent

the meenit thay both landed. So whan

Higgie says "An hid's no jeust me,"

sheu deusno rightly ken whit sheu's meanan.

But Higgie's gittan untenty, sheu's

a waant o tellan, a waant o hearan.

[...]

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## **Gossip is Orcadia's greasefat**

thinks Margit, watching Higgie and Gunnie tell her all she needs to know and plenty that she doesn't. She smiles and nods and offers a few words so they think she's given the same as she's taken, but Margit's long been expert at the game, and Gunnie's pretty young to play and Higgie's pretty old to bother now.

She drifts when Gunnie chatterprattles about Astrid and the tourist, because she'd seen that herself, and had probably known the minute they both landed. So when Higgie says "And it's not just me," she doesn't know at first what she means. But Higgie's become unguardedwatchedcareful, she needs to tell, needs to be heard.

“Eynar is seen hid an aa, an Aslaug  
didno care tae spaek about hid  
but A’m heard her offiece wis horrid messed  
the ither day. Hid’s somethen tae deu  
wi the Lights. Wir aa seen. But dinno tell,”  
sheu says, more feart, gramsan thair airms.  
“Dinno tell, fer I canno stand fock  
sayan A’m gyte.” Her een is weet.

Margit kens her meaneen. Affens  
fock say “dinno tell” meanan  
“tell aabody, so’s I dinno need”,  
but affens “keep thee tong sneckid.”  
Margit kens whit wey hid is,  
an locks in Higgie’s neows wi ither  
neows sheu’s lockid in, so sheu  
can lock in whit the meaneen is.

\*

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“Eynar saw it too, and Aslaug didn’t want to speak about it, but I heard her office was terribly messed up the other day. It’s something to do with the Lights. We’ve all seen them. But don’t tell,” she says, more scared, snatchgrabbing their arms. “Don’t tell, because I can’t stand folk saying I’m madraged.” Her eyes are wetrain.

Margit knows what she means. Sometimes, when people say “don’t tell”, they mean “tell everybody, so I don’t have to”, but sometimes, “keep your tongue on the latch.” Margit knows how it is, and locks in Higgie’s news with other news she’s locked in, so she can lock in what the meaning is.

## **Gunnie Margitsdowter cannot keep a secret**

“Higgie’s clean gyte,” sheu says. Brenna is sair  
fae her failure at the Ting, an soor replys  
“Sheu’s no the only een. Erlend telt me  
an uncan min in some sort o siller robb  
speired him fer the time, an saantit, an Sigurd  
saa tree fock lik aalwarl cosmonaats,  
flags an aa, chappan at his airlock,  
an Auga says –” she deusno draa a braith  
“– thir seean ships i the rouk wi drives at isno  
been invented yet.” “Gyte,” says Gunnie,  
shakkan her heid lik sheu wis aafil sad,  
an Brenna says “False consciousness.” “Lass, whit?”

[...]

---

### **Gunnie can’t keep a secret**

“Higgie’s gone completely mad,” she says. Brenna is sorely tired by her failure at the Collective Council, and sourly replies “She’s not the only one. Erlend told me a strange man in some sort of silver robes asked him for the time, and vanished like a saint, and Sigurd saw three folk like old-world cosmonauts, flags and everything, knocking on his airlock, and Auga says -- ” she doesn’t draw breath “-- they’ve seen ships in the gassteamsmoke with drives that haven’t been invented yet.” “Mad,” says Gunnie, shaking her head as though she were awfully sad, and Brenna says “False consciousness.” “Friendgirl, what?”

“Thay canno right accept whit maan be deun,  
so thair tellan tails instead.” “Yass, yass,  
thir gyte.” Gunnie gies her airm a dunt,  
waantan tae haad hid, kennan sheu’s raedy tae cowp  
intae her awn kinno ree, an narleens waantan  
tae loup in ahint. Oot the screen, the spin  
o Orcadia turns thaim tae the haaf, away  
fae the gowd leam o the yotun. The wynd mirkens.  
“Hid’s lik thir waantan thair piece tae dee,” sheu says,  
an Gunnie’s birsed hersel at that. “Na na,”  
sheu says, ower quiet. “Thair jeust no sure  
whit’ll survive the chaenge.” An the staetion birls.

\*

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“They can’t properly accept what has to be done, and so they’re making up stories instead.” “Yes, yes, they’re mad.” Gunnie gives her arm a punchslap, wanting to hold it, knowing she’s ready to spilltip into his own kind of drunkstormfrenzy and nearly wanting to leapspringdive in behind. Through the screen, the spin of Orcadia turns them to deep space, away from the golden glow of the gas giant. The corridor enters twilight. “It’s like they want their placehome to die,” she says, and Gunnie bristlebruises at that. “No,” she says, too quiet. “They just aren’t sure what will survive the change. And the station spindances.

## Soo draems

Soo's quaters is oot by the Hofn,  
a peedie cell by hidsel,  
aneath the hulks sheu studies.

The night thir a ring o Light  
aroon her sleepeen-kist  
wi nae a body tae see it.

Sheu breathes; hid swalls an tirls;  
i the mids o the wheel sheu draems:

The wracks is spaekan. Thir  
unfaaldan, a hingan glimro  
o human wirts in waves  
atwart the shiftan waas:  
equaetions, errows. A reid  
mooth appens i the center  
o the center. Hid spaeks; her haands  
grip, ungrip, grip.

[...]

---

## Soo dreams

Soo's quarters are out near the HavenHarbour, a little cell off on its own, beneath the hulks she studies. Tonight there's a ring of Light around her sleeping-chestcoffin-breast with no-one there to see it. She breathes; it swellswaves and spintwists; in the centremeansagreement of the wheel she dreams.

The wrecks are speaking. They are unfolding, with a hangingwaiting ghost-light of human words in waves across the shifting walls: equations, arrows. A red mouth opens in the centre of the centre. It speaks; her hands clench, unclench, clench.

Wi morneen, sheu's breeksed, hinkid  
in sheets lik a bab or a corp,  
sleepan yet whan sheu poors  
watter on poodered maet,  
an whan sheu gethers her notts,  
pooers her skiff an putters  
oot tae the Wrack-Hofn.  
Hid's notheen ither as silent.

But thir a calculaetion,  
sheu canno shak, a nummer  
tae remak the mynd o the meisurs.  
So nou sheu's back at the godssend,  
dovened wi hunger, lik hid  
wis the first day o aa on site,  
lik sheu wisno wirked nummers  
intae unmeanan an loss.

\*

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In the morning, she is exhausted, twisted in sheet like a baby or a corpse, half sleeping when she pours water on powdered meat, and when she gathers her notes, powers her skiff and putters to the Wreck-HavenHarbour. It's nothing other than silent.

But there is a calculation she cannot shake, a number to remake the meaning-memory of the measurements. So now she's back at the salvagewreckriches, numbdazed with hunger, as if it were her very first day on site, as if she hadn't worked numbers into unmeaning and loss.



## **Darling catches wurd fae haem**

The bulletin's chaenged. Thir charted her cors  
someweys ower the galaxy,  
this wey. Whit wey deu thay ken? Whit nummers  
is on the timer coontan doun?

Foo an birlin roon Wolf, mebbe  
someen wis matched her face tae the caa,  
her styman bletheran tae the face,  
pitten face an story taegither,

an cashed thaim in. That, or else  
Autonomist polietics isno as geud  
as thay say. No matter whit wey: her faithers  
noo ken sheu's oot i the inner Nord.

So nou the aafil grave questin:  
Tae bide i this orbit, or get enof  
o a pin tae flit the sistem, lik  
a rogue commet? Agalis

[...]

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## **Darling catches word from home**

The bulletin has changed. They have charted her course some distance across the galaxy in her direction. How do they know? What numbers are on the timer counting down?

When she was drunkfullmad and spindancing round Wolf, maybe someone has matched her old face to the calldriveherd, her staggeringblinddrunk nonsensespeech to the face, put face and story together,

and cashed them in. That, or else Autonomist politics aren't as good as they say. No matter how: her fathers now know she's out in the inner North.

So now the veryawful serious question: to livewaitstay in this orbit, or to get enough speedfeet to leavemovefly the system, like a rogue comet? Extraordinarily difficult

whan thoo're peedie tae win tae escaep  
velocity, an sheu's some tired,  
an faimly's gotten ferfil weyght.  
An here there's Astrid, a thing at's mebbe

growan hid's awn gravity.  
Bide, than, an hopp sheu's chaenged  
enof tae no be aesy spyed  
in her faithers' wirds? That whan thay come –

they will, for whit can gowd no deu –  
thay willno waant whit sheu's become,  
or that some wey Orcadia  
willno waant tae lat her gang?

\*

---

when you're small young to achieve escape velocity, and she's very tired, and family is very frighteningly heavy. And here there's Astrid, a thing that's maybe growing its own gravity. Livewaitstay, then, and hope she's changed enough to not be easily seespotnoticed in her fathers' words? That when they come – they will, because what can't money do – they won't want what she's become, or that somehow Orcadia won't want to let her goleave?

## **Eynar sneaks up**

The widden worm sailed trow the Hoose's waas.  
No wi a skirpan o steel an a sprettan o clinks,  
but trow, lik a laser wi flesh, a neutrino wi  
a planet, a ganfer wi a iron door.

Eynar wis stackan chairs an moppan the floor.  
The baest cam fae ahint. Hearan a knark,  
he goldert "Closed!" an turned an saa the mulls  
shaan the teeth. The worm wis broun an shinan,

an on hids back twa dizzen golderan fock.  
Hids face wis frozen. Hids reid weengs dunderert.  
An Light maed reefu plays alang hids lent,  
hids shields an graith an reeg an fock alowe.

Eynar skrekkid. The sealess ship fled trow  
the next waa, no laevan a sign the Hoose  
an hids man wis wildert at haem: notheen unless  
a cuppit bucket an a reek o saalt.

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## **Eynar closes up**

The wooden snakedragonworm sailed through the wall of the House. Not with a ripsqueaktearing of steel and a burstjumping of rivets, but through, like a laser with flesh, a neutrino with a planet, an omenghost with a door.

Eynar was stacking chairs and mopping the floor. The animalmonster came from behind. Hearing a creakcrackcrunch, he shoutbarked "Closed!" an saw the lips baring the teeth. The snakedragon was dark brown and glistenshining,

and on its back were two dozen shouting people. Its face was frozen. Its red wings rumblethunderbeat. And Light made madfurioushysterical plays along its length, its shields and gear and rigging and people glowingaflame.

Eynar screeched. The sealess ship flew through the next wall, leaving no sign the House and its man were lostwild at home: nothing except an overturned bucket and a stink of salt.

## **Inga taks her yole oot**

Sheu canno ask her crew tae wirk ony hairder,  
an canno bide haem whan sheu's browt in notheen  
fer three lang days: so here sheu is, alaen  
abeun the swall ithoot a peek o Light.  
Sheu's chairtan the whirls, the lins, the mains an the birts  
o the yallo yotun's flowan sphere, an whar  
thay'll hopp tae find a sign o Lights the morn,  
whan the oscilloscop skreks lik a bairn.

Inga kens sheu canno tak in the Lights  
alaen, but: days ithoot a keek  
an nou a mense o Light, the most fer months,  
jeust whan sheu canno tak it. Sheu dives in,  
doon intae the upper tides, intae  
the ayebidan stoor o a stoor planet,  
skittran atween helm, daikles, lines,  
thraan a grin atwart her luntit face.

[...]

---

## **Inga takes her boat out**

She can't ask her crew to work any harder, and can't stay home when she's brought in nothing for three long days: so here she is, alone above the swell without a point-flamechirp of Light. She's charting the whirls, the lulls, the main currents and the back currents of the yellow gas giant's flowing sphere, and where they'll hope to find a sign of Lights tomorrow, when the oscilloscope screeches like a babychild.

Inga knows she can't bring in the Lights by herself, but: days without a peep and here a vast amount of Light, the most for months, just when she can't take it. She divesargues in, down into the upper seas of gas, into the everlasting strongstormdust of a strongstormdust planet, darting about between helm, dials and lines, twistthrowing a hardharsh grin across her glowingburning face.

Hid wisno possieble. Sheu shoud been wrackid.  
Wi whit sheu did, Orcadia shoud been murnan  
But luck o the fell gods is wi her (an yass,  
sheu pits up a prayer a second doon i the stoor),  
so whan at last sheu docks at Lightness Wheel,  
weel past the turnan o the Stanart Day,  
sheu's browt tae haem three days or more o Light,  
an sets aboot unloddan hid by hersel.

\*

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It wasn't possible. She should have been wrecked. With what she did, Orcadia should have been mourning. But luck of the cruelclever gods is with her (and yes, she says a prayer a second down in the strongstormdust), so when she comes to dock at Lightness Wheel, well past the turning of the Standard Day, she's brought to home three days or more of Light, and starts to unload it by herself.

## **Astrid taks Darling tae a meun**

Thay step intae a bruckit domm,  
aa the poly taen fae the reuf,  
an most o the struts an aa: liftid  
back tae space tae big more bolas  
an wheels whan Orcadia wis growan.  
Darling laens hersel intae Astrid –  
touchan trow seiven layers  
o waakan claes – an luks ap  
at tree more meuns. Or is it doon?  
“I can see why they gave up.  
It’s gorgeous but I’m sick already.  
It’s all too fast.” “Faaster or whit?  
Fock is meuvan faaster on Mars,  
relaetiv tae the centre.” “But then  
I couldn’t see! And my feet mostly stayed  
on the ground.” She haps her airms aroon  
Astrid’s waist an kieks aff  
intae space. The both o thaim

[...]

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## **Astrid takes Darling to a moon**

They step into a brokenruinedrubbish dome, all the polymerplastic taken from the roof and most of the struts as well: lifted back to space to construct more bolas and wheels when Orcadia was growing. Darling leans herself into Astrid -- touching through seven layers of spacewalk clothes -- and looks up at three more moons. Or is it down? “I can see why they gave up. It’s gorgeous but I’m sick already. It’s all too fast.” “Faster than what? People move faster on Mars, relative to the centre.” “But then I couldn’t see! And my feet mostly stayed on the ground.” She wrapcoverbundles her arms round Astrid’s waist and kicks off into space. Both of them

flee a piece whill thair tethers catch.  
Darling golders; Astrid, quiet,  
tweegs thaim doon. “Dinno,” sheu says.  
“Fock dee that wey.” “But we –” “Jeust ken,  
fock dee. Jeust ken. Noo waatch.” Orcadia  
toors intae view, an the yotun,  
an three, an sax more meuns, an the tirlan  
mathematics is a dose more  
or Darling can compriehend, fer aa  
sheu wis been three year coman closser,  
closser tae the galactic centre.  
Sheu kens, then, hoo faast tings is,  
hoo faast, an hoo the staetion, spinnan  
hidsel but stilled sicweys fae hids planet,  
sicweys fae hids starn, the three o them  
a godless grand an trig triangle,  
is noo an aye the only lin.

\*

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flyflaredash some distance before their tethers catch. Darling laughyells; Astrid, quiet, gently tugtwitchpulls them down. “Don’t,” she says. “People die that way.” “But we--” “Just knowrememberunderstand, people die. Just knowrememberunderstand. Now watch.” Orcadia turntourtravels into view, and the gas giant, and three, and six more moons, and the spinscrewtwiststripping mathematics is far more than Darling can comprehend, for all she has been, for three years, coming closer, closer to the centre of the galaxy. She knowrememberunderstands, then, how fastfixed things are, how fast-fixed, and how the station, spinning itself but pausedlulledtaciturn a specific distance from its planet, a specific distance from its star, all three making a very bigfancygood and neatcleverbrisk triangle, is now and always the restpauseelull there is.





## **Juror's Note (cont.)**

It is necessary to insert further warning at this stage, for, as I trust that any reviewers, archivists, scholars and/or terrorists reading this far have already learned, the very act of reviewing a paradoxical text – not least of which a paradoxical text fully entangled with the anxieties of temporal desire – plants the seeds of the paradox one has committed oneself to suppressing (or, in the case of terrorist elements, bringing about). As I reread now I begin to question whether this is not precisely the intention of the text's author(s). That is, to read of future or possifuture paradox is to risk creating present paradox by desiring said future or possifuture paradox within the present (or past, &c), unless one is fully dedicated to the rigorous self-discipline, purging and meditation required of myself and my fellow jurors, which fact should only underline the folly of those of my colleagues who regard the daily meditation regime as merely a “box-ticking exercise”. I do wonder if this reduction of temporal sanitation to a mundane bureaucratic routine is what will itself lead to the very paradoxical corruption so thoroughly and unremittingly depicted in the texts to which we are tirelessly committed, rather than any sociopathic actions of the criminal element.

After all, the results of paradox are – insofar as they have been observed in the possipresents we have thus far been successful in sanitising – unreliable. Should some terrorist, by chance or mishap, acquire this text, just as an arbitrary example, who is to say whether its dissemination would even bring the text's possifuture into that present's future, instead of, say, collapsing a textual future which should have been going to happen into, as a result of paradoxical anticipation, mere possibility.

And so, as I confront my own growing intertemporal desire upon my fifth reading of this text, and as I am revolted by such a contaminating reversal of the sanitation work to which I am so tirelessly committed, I redouble my efforts to purge myself of that desire, knowing that only such a cleansing can reliably bring about a desired future if that future is meant to be, and that any active at-

tempt to bring about a desired future is as if not more likely to negate the desired possibility. I am at ease with this and only this paradox. I trust that my taking the unusual step of recording these words is enough to convince any reader that even innocuous and obscure texts such as this must be Restricted, if only to bring some other future out of obscurity.

– *Giles-17, Dept. of Paradoxical Texts, Bureau of Temporal Sanitation (Earth), 2051.*

## **Astrid shaas Darling her wark**

“It’s beautiful!” says Darling. “Bonnie,” sheu says,  
cooriean in, gien Astrid a smuthick,  
missan her teum luk. “The yellows and greens,  
the way you’ve caught the movement of the planet.

How small the station seems in the corner. There’s so much  
feeling.” Astrid canno spaek. Sheu spaeks:

“But A’m no feelan hid.” Darling laafs,  
happan her ap again. “I think you are,

somewhere. Honestly, this is fantastic.” The airtist  
wheenks an graabs her claes, waantan layers  
atween her spacer skin an Darling’s scunneran  
enthusiasm. “Thoo deusno unnerstand.”

Darling sees the ranyie noo, stairts  
tae compriehend the scael o hid, her piece  
in hid, the fear o hid. “Tell me?” But Astrid’s  
buskit an oot the door, laevan her slaet.

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## **Astrid showpasses Darling her workfussthings**

“It’s beautiful!” says Darling. “Prettybeautifuldreadful,” she says, snugglenestlehud-  
dling close, giving Astrid a kisscaresscuddle, missing Astrid’s hungryemptied look. “The  
yellows and greens, the way you’ve captured the movement of the planet.

How small the station seems in the corner. There’s so much feeling.” Astrid can’t  
speak. She speaks: “But I can’t feel it.” Darling laughs, tuckcoverwrapping her up. “I  
think you are

somewhere. Honestly, this is fantastic.” The artist shrugtwitchflounces off and grabs  
her clothes, wantneeding layers between her spacer skin and Darling’s sickspoilboring  
enthusiasm. “You don’t understand.”

Darling sees the acute and writhing pain now, starts to comprehend the scale of it,  
her placedistancepart in it, the fear of it. “Tell me?” But Astrid’s dressedready and has  
left, leaving her slate.

## Inga is leukan fer pey

Whan Inga cams oot tae Soo tae pit a fingerprent  
tae a slaet tae confirm the salvage – the data tae be turst  
intae the next shaef fer the next Autonomist ferry  
tae tak tae a bankeen staetion, an fae thare furder oot  
the galactic airm til hid wins tae a piece whar data traivels  
better by waevs o light or by ony kinno injine,  
an twatree months hid'll be afore ony record comes back  
that on a muckle net o sairvers on some planet,  
a piece sheu'll nivver gang, the nummers at track whit credits  
sheu can carry here is ap, an hid yeussed tae tak years,  
an thay didno yeussed tae need ooter credits ava,  
but the less Orcadia maks, the more thir gotten nummers –

the arkaeolojist's sheuched i a bing o slaets an mummlan  
nummers an formulae, flippan fae slaet tae slaet.

“Thir a livveen i this?” speirs Inga, an whan Soo turns her een  
is focussed a lightyear away. “In what?” sheu says. An Inga  
waffs ower the blinkan gear, an, dootsome, oot the screen.

Soo cheeters. “In studying persistently impenetrable galactic mysteries

[...]

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### Inga is looking for pay

When Inga comes out to Soo to put a fingerprint to a slate to confirm the salvage – the data to be trussbundlegrappled into the next sheafslice for the next Autonomous ferry to take to a banking station, and from there farther out along the galactic arm, until it reaches the point where data can travel better by waves of light than by any kind of engine, and it will be a few months until any record comes back that, on a bigimportant net of servers on a random planet, a placedistancepart she'll never go, the numbers that track the credits she can use here are up, and it used to take years, and they didn't use credits from the outer galaxy at all, but the less Orcadia makes the more there are numbers –

The archaeologist's buriedtrenchedguttered in a heapbin of slates and mumbling numbers and formulae, slipping from slate to slate. “Is there a living in this?” asks Inga, and when Soo turns her eyes are focussed a lightyear away. “In what?” she says. And Inga signalgesturhintwaves at the flashingcursed equipment, and, uncertain, out of the screen. Soo gigglechuckles. “In studying persistently impenetrable galactic mysteries

without commercial use?" "Ya," says Inga, shruggan.  
Soo distracted picks at a slaet fer the docket. "For now,  
though the whims of academic funding might summon me home  
at any moment." Sheu leuks til a wrack. "Even now."  
Hid's chirkan on hid's tedder. The soond cracks the spaekers.  
The wrack laeves the screen. "Right enof," says Inga.

"Me coseen is wi a college roon Alpha Centauri, wirkan  
wi archives o 21<sup>st</sup> C intertextual narrative,  
an sheu says someen lik that. Right enof. An if  
more o thee fock cam in this wey, thay'll be needan  
fock lik wiss, at kens botts?" Soo sees the waant  
i the quaistion. Hid's ferly the saem as the waant sheu's gotten whan fleean  
roon wracks, the waant sheu's gramsan again nou: no jeust  
tae bide, tae hae enof maet, but tae bide wi uiss.  
Sheu haands the salvage docket tae Inga. "Here," sheu says,  
an "Maybe. If..." The yolewife waits. "If what I think  
I've found..." Soo shaks her heid an fires a peedie freesk.  
"I'll ask," sheu says. The wracks pass by. "I'll certainly ask."

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without commercial use?" "Yes," says Inga, shugging. Soo distractedly tappicks at a  
slate for the docket. "For now, though whims of academic funding might summon me  
home at any moment." She looks over at a wreck. "Even now." It's creakgnawcomplain-  
ing on its tether. The sound cracks the speakers. The wreck leaves the screen. "I see,"  
says Inga.

"My cousin works at a college orbiting Alpha Centauri, working on archives of 21st  
Century intertextual narrative, and she says something like that. OK then. And if more  
of your people travel into the galaxy, will they need people like us, who knowunder-  
stand boats?" Soo sees the wantlackneed in the question, because it's the same want-  
lackneed she has when flyragescaping round wrecks, the wantlackneed she's  
grabsnatching again now: not just to waitstaylive, to have enough meatfoodsustenance,  
but to waitstaylive with use. She hands the salvage docket to Inga. "Here," she says, and  
"Maybe. If..." The yolewife waits. "If what I think I've found..." Soo shakes her head and  
chuckthrowfires a little false smile. "I'll ask," she says. The wrecks pass by. "I will cer-  
tainly ask."

## **Darling peys Olaf fer a hurl**

“I’m interested,” sheu says, “in how you work.”

Olaf is dozent, hingin atween blaetness,  
twartieness an his awn restless birr  
fer the botts an the Lights. He kinno waants tae tell  
ivrytheen tae someen, but deusno ken  
whit like a someen sheu is, but is fyarmt,  
but deusno waant tae disappoynt, but  
is prood, but is feart, so says “Oh yaas,”  
coorse-faced, lukkan oot, an notheen more.  
The yole sails oot the hairbour ferfil quiet.

Darling’s peyed him, tho, an wisno born  
tae walth or comed atwart the galaxy  
ithoot laernan somtheen about tisan  
a faevor: sheu luks fer less o the suspiecion  
an more o the desire. Sheu speirs him slaa  
an huily, piece an piece, laevan space  
tae luk at space, draas oot a bit wittans,  
here an thare, on hoo tae steer an hoo  
tae luk an whit tae waatch an whar tae ken  
the mony daenjers o the yotun bide.

[...]

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## **Darling pays Olaf for a tripspeedride**

“I’m interested,” she says, “in how you work.” Olaf is stymiestupefied, dangled-shaken atween bashfuldiffidentsheepishness, perversegrumpiness and his own restless forceenergyenthusiasm for the boats and the energylights. He sort of needwants to tell everything to someone, but doesn’t know what sort of someone she is, but is flattercajoled, but doesn’t want to disappoint, but is proud, but is afraid, so says, “Mhm,” rough-hardstormy-faced, looking out, and nothing more. The small boat sails out of the harbour with a greatterrible quiet.

Darling has payed him, though, and wasn’t born to wealth or come across the galaxy without learnteaching something about coaxwheedling a favour: she looks for less of the suspicion and more of the desire. She questions him slow and gentlesteadycautiously, bit by bit, leaving space to look at space, draws out a little wisdomknowledge-news, here and there, on how to steer and how to look and what to watch and where to know the many dangers of the gas giant livestayremain.

So whan Olaf says “Whit i the naem...”  
an draps the drive o the yole tae a tentie putter,  
sheu deusno speir right awey an deusno mak  
a panshite, but luks oot whar he luks an waits.  
Abeun the yotun afore them the Lights is biggan  
a face. Thir nae ithar wurd fer hid. I the rouk  
thir twatree thoosan poynts o Light biggan  
a face the size o a meun: aald, aald,  
lang beard, ae ee appen, ae ee puckered,  
ae mooth appen, appen an rashan forrit.

This god swallaes the yole. Aa’s dairk: nae light,  
nae Lights. A notion o speed, o weyght, an than  
thay spret intae the starns, oot the pug  
o the planet. Olaf’s screens bleusk, blacken,  
sprout, staedy – an he haals them intae orbit  
ahint Orcadia. Darling’s grip relaxes:  
sheu’s cloort the aald black poly o her saet,  
ten white lines doon aither side. Sheu hosts.  
“That doesn’t usually happen?” sheu says, ithoot  
a moot o a smile, an Olaf says, “Na.”

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So when Olaf says “What in the name...” and drops the drive of the boat to a careful-circumspect putter, she doesn’t ask right away and doesn’t cause a panicfussflurry, but looks out where he looks and waits. Above the gas giant before them the Lights are building a face. There’s no other word for it. In the smokefogcloud there are several thousand points of Light building a face the size of a moon: old, old, long beard, one eye open, one eye puckered, one mouth open, open and rushraining forward

The god swallowdrinks the boat. All is dark: no light, no Lights. The ideahint of speed, and then they burstjump into the stars, out of the belly of the planet. Olaf’s screens flash, blacken, sparkspit, steady, and he hauls them into orbit behind Orcadia. Darling’s grip relaxes: she’s clawscratched the old black plastic of her seat: ten neat white lines down either side. She clears her throat. “That doesn’t usually happen?” she says, without a tinyhintwhisper of a smile, and Olaf says “Nope.”

## **Astrid speirs her faither fer advice**

Thay spaek aboot his year o relativistic speed, haalan bits o staetions an Light atween Mars an the inner staetions: the distance, the thrill, the kinno fock on langship freighters, the needle o haem. Twinty-fower year, twa return trips, than a stop. A freighter's a puckle o fock an a demption o noyse, but no a histry, an that wey's no that far fae free.

Thay spaek aboot Orcadia's histry, the thraan mixter-maxter o fock at biggit the staetion, the trachle tae cheuss an ither wey o cheussan, the hunder o year o bean a piece at fock fae grander pieces cam fer somepiece ither, the fock at steyed, the fock at flit. The chaenges. Whit haesno chaenged. Whit shoudno. Whit might. Whit maan. Whit will. The speed at's noo catcht up wi thaim.

[...]

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## **Astrid askquestions her father for advice**

They speak about his years of relativistic speed, haultransporting pieces of stations and Light between Mars and the inner stations: the distance, the thrill, the types of people on freighters taking interstellar journeys with significant time dilation effects, the needle of home. Twenty-four years, two return trips, then a stop. A freighter's a few-many people and an inundation of noise, but not a history, and being like that is not very far from free.

They speak about Orcadia's history, the tossedawkward muddleblend of people that built the station, the struggle to choose a different way of choosing, the hundreds of years of being a place that people from biggrander places went to go somewhere else, the people that stayed, the people that moved away. The changes. What hasn't changed. What shouldn't. What might. What must. What will. The speed that's now caught up with them.



They speak about Mars. The things on the surface. About  
the weight of a planet. About how a star looks  
from other stars. About what they've seen and Inga  
isn't. About what Inga knows from never leaving and what from leaving they'll  
never know. They don't speak about Darling at all, and they don't speak about direction,  
and they don't speak about Astrid staying remaining home or not, but they do.

\*

---

They speak about Mars. The busythinging of the surface. About the weightgravity  
of a planet. About how a star looks from other stars. About what they've seen and Inga  
isn'thasn't. About what Inga knows from never leaving and what from leaving they'll  
never know. They don't speak about Darling at all, and they don't speak about artdirec-  
tion, and they don't speak about Astrid livestayremaining home or not, but they do.

## **Darling gies Eynar the tael**

“And then the face just spat us out!”  
The tick o daeth haes her smilan wide.  
“Olaf steered us home safe,  
but wouldn’t say another word,

like the Light had taken his tongue.”  
Eynar haads her glentan een.  
“Fine tael,” he says, an notheen more.  
“Oh come on!” Sheu’s aafil fasht.

“It’s more than a tale. And I know we’re not  
the only ones. I heard –” “Whit  
did thoo hear?” Darling spies the danger  
this time. “Oh,” sheu says, “Just

[...]

---

### **Darling tells Eynar the story**

“And then the face just spat us out!” The touchtimefleck of death has her smiling wideopenfrank. “Olaf steered us home safe, but wouldn’t say another word, like the Light had taken his tongue.” Eynar holds her sparklespeeding eyes. “Good story,” he says, and nothing more. “Oh come on!” She’s exasperated.

“It’s more than a story. And I know we’re not the only ones. I heard –” “What did you hear? Darling senses danger this time. “Oh,” she says, “Just

that other folk had seen strange things.  
That folk are talking.” “Aye weel,” he says,  
“Fock spaek a lot o guff.” An he gangs  
tae the back reum, whar surely thir wark

tae be deun. Darling leuks about her.  
Thir a puckle o fock i the Hoose. “It’s not  
just me,” she says tae naen o thaim. “I know  
you’ve seen it too.” Thir no a reply.

\*

---

that other people had seen strange things. That folk are talking.” “Yes, well,” he  
says, “People say a lot of nonsense.” And he heads to the back room, where there’s  
surely work

to be done. Darling looks around. There’s a few people in the House. “I know you’ve  
seen it too.” There’s no reply.

## The Dance

Aence, the fock at first cam here  
kent a planet's elliptiecal orbit,  
seasons an a almanac,  
Noo thir cruises an year-roond wark.

But thay keepit the aaldwarld calendar  
an cruises is set tae Standart Days,  
whitiver thair staetion's spin: thir dances,  
preens tae string the yearless year.

So Brenna and Higgie is stringan a line  
atwart the Haa wi light-ap letters  
spellan in a tong thay dinno  
ferly spaek, "Harvest Home".

Ithers is clearan an sweepan the floor.  
Eynar is settan a bar i the corner.  
On stage, the band raedy instruments:  
hand-held sinths an tings tae bang,

[...]

---

## The Dance

Once the people who first came here knew a planet's elliptical orbit, seasons and an almanac. Now, they have sun-lamps and year-long work.

But they kept the old world's calendar, and sun-lamps are set to Standard Days, whatever their station's spin: there are dances, pins along which to string the yearless year.

So Brenna and Higgie are stringing a line across the Hall with light-up letters, spelling in a tongue they don't really speak, "Harvest Home".

Others are clearing and sweeping the floor. Eynar is setting up a bar in the corner. On stage, the band ready instruments: hand-held synths and things to hitbang,

an ae body o wid an wire  
at's aalder or twatree hunder o year,  
ower on a aerly ship.  
The soond thay mak taegither is wyld.

~

Afore the dance, thir bairns unnaemed.  
Astrid explains the service tae Darling:  
at seiven or eyght Standart Year,  
whan raedy an chossen, thay tak a naem,

or, as thay say here, gie a naem,  
a naem an sel tae the staetion's care.  
Thir three this night, an parents an elders,  
an ither fock at cheuss tae waatch,

lik Darling, quiet at the back.  
This year Øyvind's taen the role  
o Naemer. He haads a gless o bleud.  
(Hid's synthesised, no oot o shaem,

[...]

---

and one objectperson of wood and wire that's older than a few hundred years, come here on a ship early on. The sound they make together is wild.

~

Before the dance, there's the unnamed children. Astrid explains the service to Darling. At seven or eight Standard Years, when they're ready and have chosen, they take a name,  
or, as they say here, give a name, a name and a self to the station's care. There are three tonight, along with their parents and elders, and people that chose to watch,  
like Darling, quiet at the back. This year Øyvind's taken the role of Namer. He holds a glass of blood. (It's synthesised, not because of shame

but fer the bleud o a lamb is haird  
an ower dear this lang weys in. )  
Erlendsbairn hitches thair sark,  
steps apae the aald wid altar

an harks in Øyvind's lug. The Naemer  
draas a ring on the bairn's broo,  
haads skinnymalinky airms, an cries  
“Haelga!” Sheu steps doon. An “Haelga!”

cries the croud, hintan this naem.  
Darling's voyce is brakkan noo.  
Sheu speirs o Astrid – a seicont bairn  
steps ap – “But what if she's got it wrong?”

Astrid's a bittie bombazed. “Thir aye  
anither year,” sheu says, vexed.  
Darling's een is wheels. “How often  
are you allowed to take a name?”

[...]

---

but because the blood of a lamb is difficult and too expensive such a long distance into the galaxy. Erlendsbairn lifts up the hem of their shirtsmock, steps up to the old wood altar,

and whisperwishes in Øyvind's ear. The Namer draws a ring on the child's forehead, holds very skinny arms, and callnameproclaims “Helga!” She steps down. And “Helga!” callnameproclaims the crowd, gathering her in. Darling's voice is breaking now. She asks – the second child steps up – “But what if she's got it wrong?”

Astrid's a little bewilderconfounded. “There's always another year,” she says, irk-confused. Darling's eyes are wheels. “How often are you allowed to take a new name?”

Astrid: “Wheesht!” The naem comes: “Kit!”  
“Thir nae a rule,” sheu murmles, thight.  
Darling thinks fer a peedie blink.  
“Could I give a name?” sheu speirs, saft.

Astrid deusno reply, an waatches  
the last o the bairns spaek tae the Naemer:  
Erikasbairn, sibleen o Brenna.  
Øyvind stairts whan he hears the naem.

Thir a still. “Astrid!” he cries, an Astrid  
hears the Haa cry oot her naem,  
kennan that hid’s no fer her,  
but thinkan that hid shuirly is.

~

The dance begins. The band gets gaan,  
neesteran a bittie at first, lik an injine  
sat fer a year, but seun enof  
runnan clear. They caa the dance:

[...]

---

Astrid shushes Darling. The name comes: “Kit!” “There’s no rule,” she murmurs, mouth tight. Darling thinks for a little momentflash. “Could I give a name?” she asks, softgentlestupid.

Astrid doesn’t reply, and watches the last child speak to the Namer: Erikasbairn, sibling of Brenna. Øyvind starts when he hears the name.

There’s a pauselullsilence. “Astrid!” he shouts, and Astrid hears the Hall shout her name, knowing that it’s not for her, but thinking that it surely is.

~

The dance begins. The band gets going, creaksqueaking a little at first, like an engine left to sit for a year, but soon enough running clear. They call out the names and steps of the dances:

a three-step first, tae rax oot limbs  
an find the yivver feet thair baet  
an dancers thair pairtners, a set-dance next  
tae frapp them ap, an than a waaltz.

Darling's practiesed, an waants tae be  
first tae the floor. But Astrid haads  
her back, mebbe oot o waantan  
tae see the aald eens' exemple first,

mebbe more oot o fear, or jeust  
a curn o shaem. But wi the waaltz  
sheu finds hersel an lifts Darling  
ap tae the floor. Thir plenty wi them.

~

Eynar's waatchan fae ahint his bottles  
fer Soo tae come. No that he shows hid.  
No that he kens hoo he's bithert, or mebbe  
he deus: he's mebbe no gaan tae see

[...]

---

a three-step first, for limbs to stretchreach out and hungryeager feet to find their beat,  
and dancers to find their partners, then a set-dance, tae mixtanglethem up, and then a  
waltz.

Darling's practiced, and wants to be first to the floor. But Astrid holds her back,  
maybe out of needwanting to see the old people's example first,

maybe more out of fear, or just a moteseed of shame. But with the waltz she finds  
herself and pulls Darling up to the floor. There are plenty of people with them.

~

Eynar's watching from behind his bottles for Soo to come. Not that he shows it. Not  
that he knows why he's worried about it, or maybe he does: perhaps he's not going to  
see



anither o this, an waants tae share hid  
wi someen at'll mak more meaneen.  
He grins at Olaf birlan his bairn,  
liftan them aff o the floor ivry roond,

an at the neow-naemed youngsters dansan  
aafil sollemn, tentie noo  
as aald fock, but ithoot age's  
grace an spreets o scarsome speed.

An at the pairtners, futurs telt  
i the wey o thair grip: ower closs  
or ower lowse or glydan by  
wi the aese o binary starns. (Ya but,

Thir aye anither body coman  
on anither curve tae mak  
a fankelt problem, an gods ken  
whit wey the calculaetion will come.)

~

---

another of these, and wants to share it with someone who'll make more meaning.  
He grins at Olaf spinning his child, pulling and carrying them off the floor each  
round,

and at the new-named youngsters dancing very badly solemnly, carefully watching  
now as the old people, but without age's grace and bursty jumps of terrifying speed.

And at the partners, futures told warned in how they hold each other: too close or  
too loose or gliding by each other with the ease of binary stars. (Yes, but

there's always another person/object/body on another curve to make a tricky tangled  
problem, and gods know how the calculation will come out.)

~

An Soo's no coman. Sheu's at the godssend,  
no myndan, mummlan tae hersel,  
testan equaetions, ransellan  
the most obscure airticles

i the laest reputable journals  
fer ivry uncan formula  
tae shaep aroon the shaep o the wracks.  
Ayont her een the Lights is gaitheran;

ahint her, paitrens sheu canno see.  
Sheu's pittan her hands tae the black waas:  
no clift tae rive at or kneb tae press,  
but sheu's pressan, room by room.

Pick that, feel this, kick yin, caam doon.  
Sheu kens no hou desire is comed,  
an kens hid'll faa intae notheen again,  
but bides wi the dream an no wi time.

~

---

But Soo's not coming. She's at the salvagewreckriches, not remembering, mumbling to herself, testing equations, ransackinquiring the most obscure articles  
in the least reputable journals for every strangeunknown formula to shape around the shape of the wrecks. Out of her eyeline the Lights are gathering,  
behind her patterns she can't see. She's putting her hands on the black walls: without a single crackrevicechink to tugtear at or a knobbeakpointbutton to press, but she's pressing, room by room.

Tap that, feel this, kick that, calm down. She doesn't know where the desire's come from, and knows it'll fall into nothing again, but livestayremains with the dream and not with time.

~

Thair dance is oot the ither side  
o night: the cruises gien the wynds  
a dairk reid fer fock gaan haem.  
But plenty's left fer dansan yet.

Brenna becks tae Higgle wi aa  
the coortesy o young tae aald.  
Sheu whups her away. Gunnie's lifted  
her sleapan sister tae a sleepy birl.

Inga an Øyvind is comed laet  
tae hae the virr fer the best o the dance:  
fock drucken an lippan wi haanless joy.  
Thair steps an skips is naet an queek.

birlan ilk ither wi weel-kent airms.  
Olaf an Erlend tummle afore them:  
thay loop the footers no brakkan thair baet.  
Øyvind wis taen ower lang tae win haem

[...]

---

Their dance has come out the other side of night: the sun-lamps giving the corridors a dark red light for people going home. But there are plenty is still left for dancing.

Brenna curtsybows to Higgle with all the courtesy of young to old. She whisks him off. Gunnie's pullraisecarryhelped her sleeping sister for a sleepy spin.

Inga and Øyvind came late to have enough energyvigour for this best part of the dance: everyone drunken and fullspilling with clumsyuseless joy. Their steps and skips are neat and quick,

turnspinning each other with familiar arms. Olaf and Eyrik fall over in front of them: they leap the clumsyfools without breaking their beat. Øyvind had taken too long to reach home,

fae ooter space, an Inga wis born  
an wun ages wi him in his final run,  
but thair dansan wis this fae the stairt. The Haa  
maks a muckle set an thay hurl doon the centre.

~

But Darling an Astrid isno thare.  
Thir comed oot the back o the Haa tae a bell  
tae braethe an waatch anither stoor,  
the Lights' antics in time wi the meusic.

Anunder the glamour Darling speirs  
again: "Could I take a name?" An Astrid  
turns. "Wha'd thoo gie hid tae?  
Wha kens thee enof tae gie hid back?"

Thoo canno jeust tak whit thoo waants." "What I need,"  
says Darling, wi peedie voyce, but this  
is warse. "Yin's whit I sayed," spits Astrid,  
een reflectan the skyran Lights.

[...]

---

from outer space, and Inga was born and grew up to his age during his final run, but their dancing was like this from the beginning. The Hall forms a set and they speedtravelride down the centre.

~

But Darling and Astrid aren't there. They've come out to the back of the Hall to a transparent dome to breathe and watch another stormduststrife, the Lights' antics in time with the music.

Under the magicdelight Darling askquestions, "Could I give a name?" And Astrid turns. "Who would you give it to? Who knows you enough to give it back?"

You can't just take what you wantneedlack." "What I need," says Darling, with a smallyoung voice, but this is worse. "That's what I said," spits Astird, eyes reflecting the glittering Lights.

Darling's no deualess. Wi feck o her awn,  
sheu pelters Astrid. Sheu naems the dreids  
at Astrid thinks is darnt but lie  
ower closs tae the skin. Sheu fires:

“Just because you lost your home,  
doesn't mean the rest of us  
can't look for ours,” an “Some of us never  
had a piece.” The pun is cruel

But Darling's no telt enof o her life  
tae Astrid fer ony o this tae laand  
ither or cruel, Darling's waants  
fankled wi the voyce o pooer.

So Astrid's playan still, playan  
the dour local, an nou hid's Darling  
at's peltan doon the set's centre,  
the dansers aesy sweengan by.

~

---

Darling's not feebleuseless. With strength of her own, she pelthammers at Astrid. She names the dreadfearanxieties that Astrid thinks she's hiddennestled but which lie too close to the skin. She throwburncasts:

“Just because you lost your home, doesn't mean none of the rest of us can't look for ours”, and “Some of us never had a pieceplace.” The pun is cruel.

But Darling hasn't told enough to Astrid about her life for any of this to land any other way than cruel, her needwantlacks tanglepuzzled with the voice of power.

So Astrid's playing quiettaciturn, playing the dour local, and now it's Darling that runpunchthrowing down the centre of the set, the dancers easily swinging to let her by.

~

Thir jeust the ae dance nou: a waaltz.  
The dansers is breeksed. Some can luk  
at thair pairtners' een, but mosst is jeust  
heids on shudders an shucklan feet.

Thir ither fock in uncan claes,  
an Light is gaitheran roon the girders.  
Aabody's on the floor, no seean,  
or mebbe thir seean an irno fasht.

A airy pair in oo waaltz roon  
a transparent pair in poly, a threesome  
in cotton gang trow a fowersome in siller.  
Roon an trow, ganfer or maet

or light or Light: dansers dansan.  
Is hid meusic or no? Wha's body meuves  
whit body's body? Roon an trow,  
Deus feet write answers on the floor?

[...]

---

There's only one dance left now: a waltz. The dancers are exhaustedbroken. Some are able to look into each other's eyes, but most are only heads on shoulders and shuffle-limping feet.

There are other people in other clothes, and Light is gathering round the girders. Everybody's on the floor, not seeing, or maybe they're seeing and aren't botherworried.

So an airy pair in wool waltz round a transparent pair in polymerplastic, and a threesome in cotton go through a foursome in silver. Round and through, ghostomen or meatfood

or light or Light: dancers dancing. Is there music or not? Whose personbody moves which personbody's personbody? Round and through, do feet write answers on the floor?

The fock o the staetion gang oot the door.  
Eynar an Margit wis rota'd on cleanan.  
Thay sweep an swabble an dight oot the Haa.  
Eynar haes a sit whan thir deun.

“Did thoo see that?” Sheu sits hersel.  
“Weel, did thoo no?” An Eynar nods.  
“Thinks thoo will we see hid again?” he speirs  
lik a bairn. “A’ll no,” sheu says. “We might.”

\*

---

The people of the station leave. It was Eynar and Margit’s turn to clean. They sweep and swillmop and clearclean out the Hall. Eynar sits down when they’re done.

“Did you see that?” She sits down. “Well, did you or not?” And Eynar nods. “Do you think we’ll ever see it again?” he asks, like a child. “I won’t,” she says. “We might.”

## **Gunnie an Brenna imajin futures**

Thir cooried in Gunnie's reum  
the eftirneun eftir the dance:  
thir no left yet. A day

for raxan, rowan an restan  
the both o thair bodies. Her haand  
in her hair, her heid on her chest,

Gunnie thinks on whit sheu waants.  
A piece wi her mither, yass,  
but a yole o her awn wad be better.

Inga's ower wabbit:  
thir livveens tae be gotten,  
wi a puckle o chaenges.

[...]

---

### **Gunnie and Brenna imagine futures**

They're cuddlenestled in Gunnie's room the afternoon after the dance: they haven't left yet. A day

for stretchreaching, rolling and resting both of their bodies. Her hand in her hair, her head on her chest,

Gunnie thinks about what she wants. A placepart with her mother, yes, but a boat of her own would be better.

Inga's too tiredbroken: there are livings to be had, with fewmany changes.



Brenna can hiv her races  
tae Muckle Tings, as lang's  
sheu brings back better daels;

fer aa her haivers sheu kens  
gowd an refeuses tae leuss.  
Yaas, thir aye a wey.

Brenna, fer her pairt, is slippan  
fae the ae dream tae the tither,  
fae crisis tae revolution.

In waarm wakkan, sheu  
thinks on organisan  
an reorganisan,

coories closs, fer in  
this theoretiecal bed  
thir futures tae be maed.

\*

---

Brenna can have her little trips to the Great Collective Councils, as long as he brings back better deals;  
for all her noisy nonsense she knows about money and refuses to lose. Yes, there's always a way.

Brenna, for her part, is slipping from one dream to the next, from crisis to revolution.

In warm waking, she thinks about organising and reorganising,  
cuddlenestles close, because in this theoretical bed there are futures to be made.

## Astrid, Oot

A peedie beeteen's needed  
on a peedie module oot  
the end o Aikeray:

a Papa, monietoran  
micro-waith, the scows  
at murder-speeds at driv

on Orcadia ivry day.  
Ithoot defense, the staetion  
wid be wrack hidsel in seconds.

Astrid needed oot  
her heid, so teuk a wark  
fae the Ting's duty-boards.

The repair wis coman at.  
This wis the kinno wark  
thay yeused tae laern bairns.

[...]

---

A small repairpaintimprovement is needed on a small module attached to the far end of Aikeray:

a Papa, that monitored micro-debris, the fragmentsruin travelling at murder-speeds that raindrive

on Orcadia every day. Without defense, the station would be a wreckruin in seconds.

Astrid needed to get out of her head, so took a jobtask from the Thing's duty-boards. The repair was progressing. This was the sort of work they used to teach children.

The wrench kent her haand,  
her haand kent the turn.  
Aroon her wis a murgis

o starns an instruments,  
but Astrid kept her een  
on the haand, the wrench, the wark.

Wi ivry rive her hairt  
wis ruggid further appen.  
Ony tear wid bide

at the buddom o her mask  
til sheu wis back inby,  
an so sheu didno greet.

Beeteen deun sheu lay,  
mask tae the metal,  
braethan wi the staetion.

\*

---

The wrench knew her hand. Her hand knew the twisttaskchange. Around her was a riotcrowdmud  
of stars and instruments, but Astrid kept her eyes on the hand, the wrench, the job-  
task.

With every pulldragwrench her hairt was torngnawedknotted further open. Any tear  
would waitstaylive  
at the bottom of her mask until she was back inside, and so she didn't cry.  
Repairmendingpainting done she lay, mask to the metal, breathing with the station.

## **Darling meets Margit Lighter for bisness**

Sheu's no spokken tae Astrid  
fae the dance twa days by,  
but sheu's maed ap her mynd.  
Sheu wis maed ap her mynd i the mids  
o the canglan, the meenit sheu ran,  
wi ivry ee on her back.  
Yestreen sheu wis gotten a meeteen  
wi Margit tae mak the proposal;

the day thay'll shak hands.  
Sheu's sat at the waa o the bay,  
waatchan twatree yoles  
laanch fer the yotun,  
whan Margit wags a haand  
afore her. "Whar wis thoo!"  
"Oot there," says Darling, poyntan  
trow the containment dyke.

[...]

---

## **Darling meets Margit the light-gatherer for business**

She hasn't spoken to Astrid since the dance two days ago, but she's made up her mind. She had made up her mind in the middle of the argumentwrangling, the moment she ran, with every eye on her back. Yesterday she had a meeting with Margit to make the proposal;

today they'll shake hands. She's sitting against the wall of the hangar, watching a few boats launch for the gas giant, when Margit waveshakesignals a hand in front of her. "Where were you!" "Out there," says Darling, pointing through the containment wallfield.

“Thir time fer that,” says Margit.  
Sheu’s blide, an Darling didno  
think sheu’d be blide.  
Sheu wis jubish, than ootward, an nou  
sheu’s blide. Whan Darling’s aald naem  
is pitten tae the chit,  
sheu’s happier yet. “Dinno fash,”  
says the ex-yolewife.

“I willno tell a sowel.  
No wi that muckle o credits.  
Thoo kens whit thoo’re deuan?”  
“No yet, but I’ll learn.” “Hid’s chancy.”  
“I’ve seen. I’d like to see more.”  
“Thoo kens the Light’s cheengan.”  
Darling’s surprised tae hear  
someen admit it. Tae her.

“I ken. And maybe that’s what  
I want to see. I’ll learn.”  
“Thoo will.” Darling replies,  
“What will you do?” An Margit’s  
dairk een lowe  
Sheu’s three times Darling’s years  
but nou seems younger.  
“Bairn,” sheu says, “whit’ll I no?”

\*

---

“There’s time for that,” says Margit. She’s gladpleasedkind and Darling didn’t think she’d be gladpleasedkind. She was suspiciousanxiousdoubtful, then reservedcolddistant, and now she’s gladpleasedkind. When Darling’s old name is put to the credit agreement, she’s even more happy. “Don’t worrytroublefuss,” says the ex-boat worker.

“I won’t tell a soul. Not with that many credits. Do you know what you’re doing?”  
“Not yet, but I’ll learn.” “It’s riskyunlucky.” “I’ve seen. I’d like to see more.” “You know the Light’s changing.” Darling’s surprised to hear someone admit it. To her.

“I know. And maybe that’s what I want to see. I’ll learn.” “You will.” Darling replies,  
“What will you do?” And Margit’s dark eyes burnglowflame. She’s three times Darling’s age, but now seems younger. “Childfriend,” she says, “What won’t I do?”

## **Eynar pits oot a advert**

But Eynar writan his wirds luks grim.  
“Bar”, hid raeds. “Going Concern.”  
He checks his skeulbeuk. “Get Away  
From It All. Opportunity  
For Fantastic Growth.” He adds  
exclamaetion mairks, than hits  
delete. He adds a dose o hashtags  
an thinks on wha might saerch thaim oot.

The text’s gaan oot tae the center o tings:  
Alpha Centauri, than Sol, fer Mars.  
An than fae thare back intae the haaf.  
Muckle orbital fock first,  
than muckle grunders wi fantasies  
o fock lik him. Than peedier pieces,  
peedier fock at canno thole  
thair haem an canno thole a dreef.

[...]

---

## **Eynar sends out an advert**

But Eynar writing his words looks grimgrey. “Bar”, it reads. “Going Concern.” He checks his textbook. “Get Away From It All. Opportunity For Fantastic Growth.” He adds exclamation marks, then hits delete. He adds a lot of hashags and thinks about who might search for them.

The text is heading out to the centre of things: Alpha Centauri, then Sol, for Mars. And then from there back in to deep space. Manygrand orbital people first, then manygrand planet-dwellers with fantasies about people like him. Then smallyounger placeparts, smallyounger people who can’t tolerate their home and can’t tolerate a crowdherd.

Can Eynar thole a dreef? Weel,  
he's got time. Months, likely,  
afore thir ony replies. Can aye  
chaenge his mynd. He luks aboot  
his Hoose, hids chairs an taebles, hids waas  
hung wi viddies, print-oots, bruck.  
He pits a simpler message tae Soo:  
“Coman oot. Waantan onytheen?”

\*

---

Can Eynar tolerate a crowdherd? Well, he has time. Months, likely, before there are any replies. He can always change his mind. He looks around his House, its chairs and tables, its walls hung with video screens, print-outs, rubbishnonsensestuff. He sends a simpler message to Soo: “Coming out. Do you wantneed anything?”

## Stoor

The yotun wis still whan thay launched, or seemed  
still: hid's swalls o gas more gless  
or birlan wind. But fae this distance  
wind is apaece an fire is cowl'd.

So, eftir jeust a day o rest,  
Inga, Olaf an the three o thair crew,  
breeksed yet fae the muckle dance,  
sail the rouk in sairch o Light.

Øyvind choss the kirk an no  
the laancheen bay, preferran prayer  
tae seean them aff: an aald wint  
he thowt he'd tint at ruggit him

the day: some imp o fear demandan  
his holy time an holy wirts.  
He asks the gods tae mynd them on.  
He nivver asks fer ower muckle.

[...]

---

## Stormduststrife

The gas giant was calmquietlulled when they launched, or seemed calmquietlulled:  
its rollswirlwaves of gass more glass than spinturning wind. But from their distance,  
wind is peacefulstill and fire is cold.

So, after only one day of rest, Inga and Olaf and all three of their crew, still ex-  
haustedbroken from the bigimportant dance, sail the smokestenchgas in search of light.

Øyvind chose the church and not the launchbay, preferring prayer to seeing them  
off, an old habitcustompractice he thought he'd lost that tugdragged

today: some devil of fear demanding his holy time and holy words. He asks the gods  
to remember them and look after them. He never asks for very much.



Whan Inga sails an Øyvind prays,  
teddert tae the staetion's tide,  
a play o Lights nou taks tae tirlan  
i the yotun's brist an hoved haert.

~

Higgie's deep i the codd whan thay sail,  
an deeper yet whan the screens ahint  
is stairtan tae shaa the aerly signs  
o a stoor at naebody shoud be oot in.

Hid's no her job: thir fock i the bays  
aaraedy pittan wird tae ivry  
yole at's oot tae come back in  
whan the alairm skreks in her offiece

an ivry screen at aence aizes  
in error-light, an afore sheu can see  
whit's whit a muckle golder braks  
fae the deck o the plant. Sheu rins oot.

[...]

---

As Inga sails and Øyvind prays, tethered to the station's tidetime, a play of Lights begins turnspinnwheeling in the gas giant's squeezebruised and swollenrisen heart.

\*

Higgie's deep in code when they sail, and deeper still when the screens behind her start showing the early signs of a stormduststrife that nobody should be out in.

It's not her job: there are people in the hangars already sending word to every boat that's out to come back in when the alarm screechwails through her office.

And every screen at once blazes in error-light, and before she can see what's what a huge roarscreamshout breaks from the floor of the plant. She runs out.

The faalds o pooer aroon the bots  
is buljan an thratchan lik a seck  
o rattans, refractors bustan wi light,  
an light lipperan oot the connectors

Whan sheu draps her hand, the Lights  
is maed a spinnan triple helix  
i the center o the plant. Sheu canno hear  
alairms noo. Sheu only waatches.

~

Darling's at the bays whan thay laanch,  
watchan hoo hid's deun. Sheu's thinkan  
on tellan Astrid aboot the yole.  
Will hid haad her, will hid gar

her gang? Darling kens whit futur  
sheu wants, but aither's a futur. An than  
the first inkleen o the stoor comes  
tae the bays. Seun, thir nae a doot

[...]

---

The fieldstrandfolds of power around the automated machines are bulging and twistturnthrowing like a sack of rats, refractors burstbreaking with light, and light overflowing from the connectors.

When she drops her hand, the Lights have made a spinning triple helix in the centre of the plant. She can't hear alarms now. She only watches.

~

Darlings in the hangar when they launch, watching how it's done. She's thinking about telling Astird about the boat. Will it hold her, or will it makeforce her  
to goleave? Darling knows which future she wants, but either's a future. And then  
the first inkling of the stormduststrife comes to the bays. Soon, there's no doubt

this een couldno be warse. Sheu mynd  
some aald emerjency on Mars,  
some mairket crash, an whit like her faithers  
wis that night: skaeliement,

lampan an yappan intae screens  
whill thay thowt thay'd taen control.  
But here the fock is naet o feet  
an only spaek wi quiet voyces:

aa the rhythm o the dance,  
an naen o the joy. Sheu offers tae help  
an gits a piece tae stand. Sheu kens  
enof by nou tae wait an haad

whit sheu's gien tae haad, an pull  
whan telt tae pull. Sheu coonts the yoles,  
coonts the fock coman aff the yoles.  
Sheu kens the coont gey weel the day.

An aa this time, ayont the dyke  
that haads the air an separaets  
the bay fae space, the Lights is hurlan  
ower the yotun's faem: colour

[...]

---

this one couldn't be worse. She remembers some old emergency on Mars, some market crash, and what her fathers were like that night: scattersmashdisorder, stridepacelurching and yapping into screens until they thought they'd taken control. But here folk are neat of foot and only speak with quiet voices:

all the rhythm of the dance and none of the joy. She asks to help and gets somewhere to stand. She knows enough by now to wait and hold

what she's given to hold, and pull when told to pull. She counts the boats, counts the people coming off the boats. She knows the count very well today.

And all this time, beyond the containment barrier that holds in the air and separates the hangar from space, the Lights are speedtravelflinging over the gas giant's foam-frothsea: colour

an patren ayont a airtist's mare.  
Helix, heid, matrix, mooth:  
Darling pits her back tae space  
an begs the coont tae come oot right.

~

Thay wirno chansan. Olaf taks  
a haad o Inga's yivveran,  
haads them tae whit's aye been sure.  
But first oot means thir mosst deep.

Hid deusno deu tae mak a coont  
o whit's mistek an whit's mischance:  
thir no a puckle o meaneen atween them  
whan plenty year o skeel is meetan

the cast o time. The yole deus  
whit hid can whan the wind an the clood an the Lights  
is a wheel birlan the peedie fock  
roon an roon a empie center.

~

---

and pattern beyond an artist's nightmare. Helix, head, matrix, mouth: Darling puts  
her back to space and begs the count to come out right.

~

They weren't taking risks. Olaf keeps holds back Inga's eagerness, holds them to what's  
always been sure. But being first out means they are the deepest in.

It's no use tallying what's a mistake and what's bad luck: there's not that much  
meaning in the difference between the two, when many years of skill come up against  
the luckthrowchance of time. The boat does what it can as the wind and the cloud  
and the Lights are a wheel spinturning these small people round and round an empty  
centre.

Eynar is comed tae Soo at the wracks,  
waitan in her offiece. An oor  
till sheu arrives, seeman wild  
an peelie-wally. He's maed tea.

"We missed thee the ither night at the Haa,"  
he says. Sheu tirvs the pilot glivs  
an vacuum-insulaeted gansey,  
taks her tea an luks tae him.

"The Dance?" sheu says. "Oh. I'm sorry.  
I lost track of the days." He shrugs.  
"I doot hid's ferly busy oot here."  
Sheu haals her mynd intae the reum.

"Listen," sheu says, "I think I've found...  
There's something... the station... there's something changing--"  
"Yass weel," says Eynar, unaesy. "That's why  
A'm here. A'm waantan advice, fae someen--"

[...]

---

Eynar has come to Soo at the wrecks, waiting in her office. An hour until she arrives, seeming wild and sickfeebleplain. He's made tea.

"We missed you the other night at the Hall," he says. She strips off the pilot gloves and vacuum-insulated suit's top half, takes her tea and lookstareglares at him.

"The Dance?" she says. "Oh. I'm sorry. I lost track of the days." He shrugs. "I think-suspectexpect it's very busy out here." She hauls her mind into the room.

"Listen," she says, "I think I've found... there's something changing --" "Yes well," says Eynar, uneasy. "That's why I'm here. I'd like advice, from someone--"

(the wirds is tuiman oot) “–at’s mebbe  
traivelled a bit, so A’m here, an mebbe–”  
“No,” says Soo, “I mean the Lights,  
it makes sense now, the wrecks, I mean–”

But Eynar’s een is coman wide.  
His cup draps down tae the deck  
an lands in sic a wey hid spins.  
the nott o hid’s skuther o poly on metal

risan as it settles. Sheu waits  
fer the cup tae stop, an kens, an turns.  
An ivry wrack ootbye is appenan.  
More flooer or door. Fractal lines

in reid an gowd spraed ower the waas  
the black plaens faaldan intae –  
petals? Gangweys? Soo sees the laefs  
(trees? beuks?) wis hadden by

[...]

---

(the words are pouremptying ourt) “ –who’s maybe travelled a bit, so I’m here, and  
maybe –” “No,” says Soo, “I mean the Lights, it makes sense now, the wrecks, I mean–”  
But Eynar’s eyes are going wide. His cup drops down to the floor, and lands in just  
such a way that it spins. The note of its skimskip of plastic on metal  
rising as it settles. She waits for the cup to stop, and knows, and turns. And every  
wreck outside is opening. More like a flower than a door. Fractal lines  
in red and gold spread over the walls, the black planes foldstrandfielding into –  
petals? Ramps? Soo sees the leaves (trees? books?) were held by

the maesures sheu maed. Eynar is yatteran.  
Sheu canno hear. Sheu's ferfil caam.  
Anunder ivry laef anither.  
An than inside? Soo drinks an waits.

~

Whan Darling's waitan fer the last,  
an Inga oot i the last is fightan  
wind an tide, an Higgie an Soo  
is waatchan thair unfaaldan Light,

Astrid haes the shutters doon  
an cruises slockit. Anunder her blanket,  
ower thin, sheu's tryan tae haad  
the pivveran pairts o her taegither.

This morneen sheu peyed her ticket back  
fae haem tae haem, tae flit as suin  
as the morn's morn, an sheu's no telt  
anither saal. Sheu deusno hiv

[...]

---

the measures she made. Eynar is yammering. She can't hear. She's veryfearfully  
calm. Beneath each leaf another. And then inside? Soo drinks and waits.

~

When Darling's waiting for the last, and Inga out in the last is fighting wind and tide-  
time, and Higgie and Soo are watching their unfoldfielding Light

Astrid has the shutters down and solar lamps turned off. Under her blanket, too  
thin, she's trying to hold the shakeragethrobbing parts of herself together.

This morning she bought her ticket back from home to home, to leaveflymove as  
soon as the next morning, and she hasn't told another soul. She doesn't have

tae gang. Hid's her fock here. Hid's Darling  
here. Thir maan be a wey tae bide.  
Sheu deusno hiv tae gang, but that  
wis the last o her credit fae Mars i the ticket,

so noo sheu's stuck flittan or stuck  
here: sheu's ferly stuck hersel  
i the saem bed sheu's gret in fae  
sax year aald. Hid deusno ken

the answer aither. Mebbe sheu'll plan  
tae loop fae ship tae ship an quyte  
this notion o haem, lowse hersel  
intae meuvan, find anither

staetion, twatree ither planets,  
a galaxy. Thinkan this  
stills her skin fer a peedie while.  
Sheu mynd on than at e'en a comet

[...]

---

to leave. Her people are here. Darling is here. Thir must be a way to waitstaylive.  
She doesn't have to leave, but that was the last of her credit from Mars in the ticket,  
so now she's stuck leaveflymoving or stuck here: she's very much stuck herself in the  
same bed she's wept in since she was six years old. It doesn't know  
the answer either. Maybe she'll plan to jump from ship to ship and quit this ideah-  
intinvention of home, loosefreeunsettle herself into movement, find another station,  
a few other planets, a galaxy. Thinking this calmpausequiets her skin for a short  
while. She remembers then that even a comet



is rived by the weyght o whit hid passes,  
an whan hid's fired ootower the starns,  
the starns is tirlid by thair awn wheel,  
an that wheel tirlid in anither wheel,

til ivry escaep is anither orbit,  
an ivry orbit anither still  
an ivry still aye makkan the promiese  
that wi a tirl sheu'll win tae free.

\*

---

is pulledtornwrenched by the weight of what it passes, and when it's thrownfired  
across the stars, the stars are turnedspun by their own wheel, and that wheel turned-  
spun in another wheel

until every escape is another orbit, and every orbit a calmpausequiet, and every  
calmpausequiet forever making the promise that with another turnspinwheel she'll get  
to free.



## **Juror's Note (cont.)**

It's no use. I have now read the text seven times, over twice the maximum allowed by the Review Panel, which grave misjudgement I can only attribute to a slip of the mind. It is not that I am in any way obsessed. It is merely that, following the purge and meditation required after the third reading, I found myself still considering a few incidental technical questions of the text's provenance, language, content, &c., and, having discovered that further meditation could not put them to rest, decided – against all training and prior inclination – that repeating the process might yield better results. This cycle I repeated a further three times with, of course, worse results each time. The traces of the text are now irredeemably lodged in my mind: they have carved neurological pathways in multiple and unconnected regions of my consciousness which only severe trauma could erase.

I leave this note here, then, as warning and explanation, before encrypting the file and delivering it to the Review Panel with as wide a range of warning tags as I am permitted, and then committing myself to temporal isolation where I can do no further harm. The warning is that even texts such as this, with no obvious seditious content, no ostentatious paradoxing, nothing remarkable to draw the attention of either Juror or anarchist, can be the seed of temporal undoing. As I consider the isolation chamber, with its multiple layers of Neo-Faraday distributed singularity shielding ensuring that communication can only occur in the one direction, I gather to myself the comfort that there, at least, I can read in peace.

– *Giles-17*



## **PART TWO.**

### **Writing Orkney's Future: Minority Language and Speculative Poetics**



# Chapter 1. Introduction: Scotland's Colonial Encounters

## I. Double Language

In Edwin Morgan's poem "The First Men on Mercury" (Morgan 1973:63-64), would-be space explorers meet indigenous Mercurians and lose their language, gaining another. Told entirely through dialogue, the poem parodies classic science fiction tropes of the alien encounter, parodying also their historical source, the colonial encounter with Indigenous peoples (Langer 2011, discussed in detail in Chapter 2). The "earthmen" declare that they come in peace, ask, assuming that local social structures are as hierarchical as Earth's own, to be taken to the Mercurians' leader, and use "a little plastic model of the solar system, with working parts" to explain in English the relation of Men and Earth to Mercury.

But the colonial desires of the Earthmen are hampered by two problems. The first is the Mercurians' resistance: they declare there will be "no more talk" and demand that the Earthmen "must go back to your planet. Go back in peace, take what you have gained, but quickly." The second is a rapid and radical linguistic transformation: over the course of the poem, which has an imagined timescale of five minutes at most, the Mercurians learn to speak English and the Earthmen learn to speak Mercurian. In the centre of the poem the languages are entangled:

– Men come in peace from the third planet  
which we call 'earth'. We are earthmen.  
Take us earthmen to your leader.

– Thmen? Thmen? Bawr. Bawrhossop.  
Yuleeda tan hanna. Harrabost yuleeda.

– I am the yuleeda. You see my hands,  
we carry no benner, we come in peace.  
The spaceways are all stretterhawn.

– Glawn peacemen all horrabhanna tantko!  
Tan come at'mstrossop. Glawp yuleeda!  
(63-64)

By the end, it is ambiguous whether either still understands their original language, or rather lost it in the encounter. At the start of the poem, the Mercurians speak an evocative language reminiscent of Morgan's sound poems (e.g. 'The Loch Ness Monster's Song', Morgan 1973:35); at the end of the poem, the Earthmen are using the same sounds, but haltingly and questioningly. Where the Mercurians' lines use declarative full stops and exclamation marks, the Earthmen, using the same language, question ("Gawl han fasthapper?") and trail off in plaintive syllables ("Stretterworra gawl, gawl..."). The reader's own difficulty in understanding the Mercurian in turn renders the Earthmen less agential, more lost. The poem ends with a portentous pronouncement from the Mercurians: "Of course, but nothing is ever the same, now is it? You'll remember Mercury."

This poem is rich with meaning within the contexts of science fiction, Scotland and minority language. Its short dialogue suggests a key and inevitable dynamic of the colonial encounter: both colonised and coloniser are irrevocably changed. "Nothing is ever the same." This change is shown and experienced through language, which itself is transformed through the moment of encounter, here compressed from the centuries of zero-world<sup>1</sup> colonisation into eighteen lines.

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1

"Zero world" refers in science fiction to the "real world" of the author. From Suvin 1972:377, this is the world of "empirically verifiable properties around the author (this being "zero" in the sense of a central reference point in a coordinate system, or of the control group in an



If we read Scotland into Morgan's poem, is the nation best represented by Mercury or Earth? During the period of European state-formation and colonial expansion, Scotland experienced the dramatic erosion of two languages, Gaelic and Scots, and their associated power-bases, through an encounter with English and England. At the same time, Scotland played a key role in the British colonisation of six continents, leaving behind and taking home deep linguistic traces. The long incorporation of Scotland – and particularly the Gàidhealtachd – into the Union involved political processes of displacement and minoritisation that have been called colonial (Mackinnon 2017), and Scottish settlers, forcibly displaced or otherwise, were also central to the British colonial project (Calloway 2008). This led to the formation of Scottish identities in settler states and in the UK that were constructed as both colonised and colonising, and hybrid languages, such as an anglified Scots in Scotland and creoles like Bungi in Canada (Blain 1994), that were also shaped by the encounter. And so in the poem Scotland figures in both Mercury and Earth, both landing zone and mission control, both colonised and colonising. Morgan's poem plays across these boundaries, with the would-be colonisers meeting a greater power and losing their agency and their language in the encounter. It presents a wishful inversion of Scottish history in which, instead of successful integration into a genocidal project, the colonisers are given an opportunity to learn.

A similar reversal takes place in Rachel Plummer's contemporary narrative poem, *The Parlour Guide to Exo-Politics* (2017). Here, the alien encounter takes place in Scotland, and the central character is not the coloniser but the refugee. Aliens land in a forest in Scotland and communicate with humankind through a girl called Preeta. Local authorities attempt to process their arrival through the available structures of power, particularly the asylum system, and the poem builds to a refusal of incorporation and subordination, with no certainty about what will happen next.

---

experiment)".

The poem, from its opening, refuses the classic science fiction tropes with which Morgan plays.

Whatever you're imagining is wrong.  
There was no flying saucer  
hovering over the White House  
No small green men or black-eyed beings  
touching down in Nevada.

(5)

“wecomeinpeace” and “*take me to your leader*”, which Morgan subverts, are also directly denied, as are “space hop time warp”, “military”, “President Prime Minister Chancellor”, “treaties”, “warp engines” and “ray guns”, along with multiple other direct references to contemporary state powers and to the science fiction canon, which are here implicitly interwoven. There is also a denial of the imperial masculinity of a so-called “hard science fiction” concerned with the technical details of future science: instead “There was only a girl / coming out of the woods” (6). With no less scientific knowledge or sociological accuracy, the feminine, the young and the ecological are here centred.

Here, the aliens are not presented as a radical Other, speaking a different voice, but as already interwoven with the earthlings: they speak through an earthling and, indeed,

They came to us transparent,  
shone through with loch. They came with a tongue  
full of granite. [...]  
They came emptied of all but midge and cricket,  
the music of insects.  
The language of kittiwakes.

(8)

That is, when the aliens arrive, they are already both Scotland and Scottish: Scotland sees itself through them. Because they are interpretable through the knowledges, powers and languages of Scotland, “They flickered as something almost. // Earth filled with the not-quite of them, / [...] Ripples on the millpond of us” (7).

The action of the poem thereafter is concerned with the attempts of Scotland (the nation, as distinguished here from the land) to successfully define and process the aliens. First, “Holyrood sent scientists up to the Highlands” (10), then “Tourists came in their thousands” (11), and then social worker-cum-bureaucrat figures ask questions: “We need to know why you came here” (16) and “What gender are you” (20). Their logic is made clear: “Without forms you cannot be registered. // Unregistered means not to exist” (20). Within the bureaucratic power systems of the capitalist nation-state, the excessively ambiguous aliens literally cannot exist. As with Morgan’s Mercurians, they refuse the roles they are given, whether through deliberate strength or uncertain understanding. When asked bluntly why they have arrived, they reply elliptically:

Why does a swallow show its pale belly  
to the land year by year with no thought  
of boundaries? Why can it not respect  
borders? [...]

Why does the tide show no  
decency towards the coast, always crossing  
and recrossing the edges of things until  
the edges blur into beach, a rude erosion?  
(16)

Thus to cross borders is to be natural and earthy, and as such also to be rude and indecent. The aliens are equally perplexed by and perplexing of the idea of nationhood:

How can you not know what a country is? A country is something you die for. It is a space of land delineated by markings on a map. A map is a kind of drawing. You understand, such things are important.”

(22)

Throughout the poem, language is the medium through which power's exercise and refusal are made: not only the terms and categories of the social worker's forms, but also the very words used in the encounter between Preeta and the aliens. Preeta begins the book entering the woods “with a basket full of her grandmother's words / picked from the verge of a dark path / stretching back through generations” (a metaphor which, in this context, suggests the aliens might be a wolf-like threat trying to consume her, through glottophagy<sup>2</sup> or otherwise) and then leaving the woods “like a colony / of bees swarming to its new hive – each drone alive, but giving itself up / to synchrony” (6). Preeta goes into the encounter historical and singular, and leaves the encounter collective and new. The hinge of the long poem is around the moment of Preeta's speech, the world waiting for the aliens to speak through her, and when she does speak:

Ptarmigans lost their colour.  
Her voice bristled with feathers, and their pallor  
gave each word whiteness. Unfamiliar.

(13)

The hybrid Preeta-alien language is both iconically native to Scotland and impossibly strange, a decoloured ptarmigan; the hybridity is defamiliarising, a process which retains its relation to the familiar while also continually becoming

---

2 This term, from Calvet 1974, describes the consumption of a minority language by a dominant language as part of colonisation, a process whereby the dominant language incorporates some of the words and features of the minority language while eliminating its community of speakers and status as a language.

strange. It is not the impossible-to-parse alien (like the Mercurians' first words in Morgan's poem) but something which is perceptible by its hybrid proximity to the human (like the hybrid Mercurian-Earthling sentences of the middle section of Morgan's poem). Preeta, the human speaking as the alien, understands the responsibility she now carries:

In her dreams she is still a child,  
responsible for no nations,  
ambassador of nowhere,  
mouth full of nobody's words  
but her own [...]  
(25)

As a child Preeta is no-one's representative, but the encounter that makes her a hybrid also gives her the duty to speak. When she speaks, she cannot be fully understood by those she speaks to:

She picks up the word and skims it  
over the surface of the water  
that the men move clumsily under  
and the word  
grows the wings of a dipper, the beak,  
the voice.  
(25)

The *men* are moving clumsily, submerged, prevented from seeing the natural language of the dipper that *she* speaks: above their limited language, her speech flies. But she is also not simply the transparent alien through whom nature can be seen: she is a hybrid, and must thus "with my deaf tongue, / wait at the border like a guard / on the brink of desertion". The poem leaves Preeta and the earthlings to whom she both does and does not belong in this moment of unresolved possibility. As a hybrid child with a hybrid language, gifted or

imposed by the aliens, she offers Earth a new beginning: “The story starts a universe from you / with a light that is not yours” (31).

Both Morgan and Plummer thus offer hopeful inversions of Scotland’s imperial story through science fiction poetry: in both, the Anglophone speakers attempt to take a hegemonic colonial role (as imperial colonisers, or as begrudgingly benevolent home to refugees), and in both, the alien Other flips the script, refuses to be colonised, and instead teaches a new language which brings with it a new beginning. Yet, as a Western European nation, Scotland still occupies a hegemonic colonial position in world politics, and Scotland’s incorporation into the Union, however colonial, is by no means an equivalent process to Scotland’s co-leadership of genocidal empire (Calloway 2008, Giles 2018), as will be further discussed below. These stories thus risk being mere generic transpositions of the native guide trope, with helpful aliens who teach the white colonisers something about themselves (Tahmakera 2014, Buntun 2015). Nevertheless, in both poems the Anglophone speakers are made not newly strong, but newly vulnerable and uncertain, giving questions rather than answers, and in both poems they are denied access to alien space and the alien body, rebuffed from Mercury in one case and left with empty woods in the other. Writing new rules for both the colonised and colonising position, both poems display a linguistically speculative longing for new roles for Scotland.

## **II. Halfway Science Fiction**

It is not surprising to encounter these issues of language and colonisation in science fiction, or to encounter such science fiction in Scotland. Indeed, science fiction plays a peculiar role in Scottish literature, often half-appearing in the canon and frequently disappeared from it. While Otherworlds, whether faerie or sci fi, are a staple of the Scottish canon from Macpherson’s Ossianic “discoveries” (1761-65, 1996) to Gray’s *Lanark* (1981), science fiction itself seems to be the otherworld of Scottish literary fiction. James Leslie Mitchell and

Iain Banks both chose different authorial names for their science fiction and for their more social realist fiction, though where Mitchell chose greater Scottification for the social realism as Lewis Grassie Gibbon, Banks adopted an additional Scottifying Menzies for the science fiction. Both Naomi Mitchison and Margaret Elphinstone are known more for their historical fiction than their less extensive science fiction output, a distinction which is not ungendered in its relationship to canon. One contemporary field of science fiction in which Scottish writers have achieved outsize prominence and influence, through the work particularly of Grant Morrison and Mark Millar, is comics (Grove 2019), still often peripheral to the 'literary'. AL Kennedy, meanwhile, has written a Dr Who novel (2016).

But if science fiction is almost-but-not-quite the mainstream of Scottish literature, then narratives of colonisation and its linguistic effects are certainly the mainstream of science fiction. As Kerslake (2007) has it, "The theme of empire [...] is so ingrained in SF that to discuss empire in SF is also to investigate the fundamental purposes and attributes of the genre itself" (191). This preoccupation is in the historical roots of science fiction: Rieder (2008) argues that science fiction as a recognisable genre emerges precisely at the moment of "most fervid imperialist expansion" in the late nineteenth century (3). Smith (2012) glosses this genealogy thus: "SF [...] must be contextualised as a product of imperialist culture, finding its original expression in late-nineteenth-century British and French fantasies of global conquest before emerging in the 'new' imperialist cultures of Germany, Russia, the United States, and Japan in the twentieth century" (1-2). The result is that the dominant tropes of science fiction are those of empire: first contact with aliens, with the colonial fiction of race reified as the alien species; heroic exploration, with James Cook's *Endeavour* reappearing as James T. Kirk's *Enterprise*; and a host of technological, epidemiological, philosophical, martial, economic and other such plots that remap and replay the historical processes of imperialism onto interstellar space.

Given this firm imperial foundation, as Smith (2012) argues, science fiction has now experienced a postcolonial turn:

SF need not mechanically replicate imperialist ideological structures. The genre may also, in its deployment of globalizing modes of Empire, provide the means for us to detect and decipher the ideological mystifications of global capital, the unique manifestations of globalization in particular national cultures, the emergence of technology as a cognitive mode of awareness, and the processes whereby individual national cultures exist alongside and engage the polymorphous bad infinity of the new global habitus” (Smith 2012:2, glossing Csicsery-Roay 2003).

The result is a recent profusion of books recentring the Others of science fiction’s empires. *So Long Been Dreaming: Postcolonial Science Fiction and Fantasy* (Hopkinson and Mehan, eds, 2004); *Walking the Clouds: An Anthology of Indigenous Science Fiction* (Dillon, ed., 2012); *Mothership: Tales from Afrofuturism and Beyond* (Campbell and Hall, eds, 2013); and *Octavia’s Brood: Science Fiction Stories from Social Justice Movements* (Brown and Imarisha, eds, 2015) are a sampling of these approaches.

Hopkinson (2004) positions this postcolonial turn as an appropriation of science fiction, stealing an imperial form to “take the meme of colonizing the natives and, from the experience of the colonizee, critique it, pevert it, fuck with it, with irony, with anger, with humour, and also, with love and respect for the genre of science fiction that makes it possible to think of new ways to do things” (9). Using the terminology of Audre Lorde’s question of revolutionary strategy, Hopkinson suggests that “massa’s tools don’t dismantle massa’s house – and in fact, I don’t want to destroy it so much as I want to undertake massive renovations – they build me a house of my own” (8). Here Hopkinson’s utopian temporality runs similarly to that of Womack (2013), who in writing on Afrofuturism imagines the life of an African American schoolchild she met:



Maybe, as she's mapping out her Mars trip, she'll write a story about her future, her interstellar travels, and the life force she brings to this red planet neighbour. Perhaps, with a desire to improve the world's conditions, she'll link into a larger group of people in a shared vision of sustainability and equality. Starting with her imagination and implementing ideas through her actions, she'll live the future (193).

Here, African and African American-centred postcolonial science fiction restores future to a population disenfranchised by empire, beginning with acts of imagination and proceeding into a utopian future.

Afrofuturism and other postcolonial science fiction also offer contesting temporalities, however. One of the founding approaches of Afrofuturism, as modelled by the musician Sun Ra, is to mingle the imagery of precolonial African societies with that of science fiction. In 1974's *Space is the Place*, "Sun Ra sits in a multihued garden in his new colony wearing Egyptian sphinx head garb and states that time is officially over. He 'works on the other side of time'" (Womack 2013:61-62 quoting Ra 1974). Sun Ra thus collapses past and future together, defying teleological history and science fiction utopianism as if they were part of the imperial ontology in themselves. As Jessica Langer puts it, writing after Milojevic and Inayatullah 2003, we can "identify the cyclical concept of time as in direct opposition to the Western colonial paradigm of linear time", examining "non-Western conceptions of time, which centre on the past, or a cycle or spiral metaphor rather than on a linear progression from past to future" (2011:141). In this reading, Afrofuturism does not appropriate imperial fiction's temporality for its own ends but rather recovers its own long history: "Afrofuturism has always been part of our culture" states Wanuri Kahiu (2012), discussing African science fiction. Similarly, Dillon (2012) argues that a Native approach to time travel fiction restores Indigenous scientific temporality to science fiction. "Native slipstream views time as pasts, presents and futures that flow together like currents in a navigable stream. It thus replicates nonlinear thinking about space-time" (3). This thinking, "which has been around for millennia, anticipated recent cutting-edge physics" (4), says Dillon,

suggesting here that decolonising writers are not reappropriating science fiction but rather recovering the science and science fiction of their own history and disrupting imperial, utopian temporality in the process.<sup>3</sup>

Fully interrogating these claims for the emerging post- and de-colonial science fiction canon is outside the scope of this introduction; this very brief survey serves only to outline the approaches within the field, and the following chapters more thoroughly examine how Scots and Scottish fiction may engage related concerns. For it is into this field of post-colonial contestation that Scottish science fiction is now written. What positions can it take, and how does it appear? Introducing the only current survey of the literature, McCracken-Flesher (2012) accounts for the half-in-half-out nature of Scottish science fiction through Scotland's own double-perspective on coloniality:

Superficially, this nationally marked literature is subsumed by the terms of both the universal and the global. Considered part of anglophone science fiction because British, Scottish science fiction is thus “universal,” but as “not English,” it perversely cannot rise to the level of the “global”. (1)

Published post-devolution but before 2014's failed bid for Scottish independence, for McCracken-Flesher Scotland's political situation is an inevitable analogue for this literary predicament:

Is Scotland regaining political self-determination because, as different, it poses a challenge to imperial ideas of the unified and universal – a resistance to the present from the past that is ‘futures forward’? Or is Scotland merely indulged according to the incidental functions of global power? [...] Does the nation fall subject to grand narratives of progress which can afford the window-dressing of devolution because it means nothing in terms of actual power and Scotland's independent progress? (6)

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3 My reading of liberal and alternative temporalities throughout this thesis is heavily indebted to Leigh (2015), and to our personal conversations.

This political problematic has its roots in the same colonised-and-colonising doubleness discussed through Morgan’s and Plummer’s poetry above. Whereas McCracken-Flesher asks whether wee Scotland might be “merely indulged” by “global power”, I would argue that, insofar as Scotland can be imagined as a unitary historical agent,<sup>4</sup> Scotland’s participation in global power should not be underplayed. Far from being merely subaltern, Scotland’s willing participation in colonisation, indeed its shaping role in colonisation, is part of what constitutes contemporary Scotland. Any contemporary account of Scotland’s role in settler-colonial processes would require an analysis of the Scottish Government’s contemporary support for the NATO military alliance (Carrell 2012), the role of Scottish banking in neocolonial resource extraction and climate crisis (Evans et. al. 2010), Scottish financial support for the international arms trade (Briggs 2019 [1] and Briggs 2019 [2]), and Scotland’s integration of and support for colonially extractive neoliberal economics (Davidson, McCafferty and Miller 2010). The predicament of Scottish literature in general, and Scottish science fiction in particular, is thus not just that Scotland has been subordinated to the Anglophone mainstream, but that radical desire within Scotland is also constituted through the nation’s participation in the ongoing colonial dynamics of “global power”. That is, it is hard to have a radical imagination about the future of a nation when that nation’s constitution is that of a coloniser.

In the poem “Geographical Exclusions Apply”, Pàdraig MacAoidh (2018) captures this predicament as a site of grief, entangling tourist nostalgia and double colonial brutality as causing and caused by the same linguistic and cultural loss:

and it was lovely to hear the Gaelic at a red  
light in Glencoe when a car stopped and a man  
wound down his window and dropped –  
gently – a sop of cotton that had been

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4 The following chapters will trouble the unity of Scotland, not least from my own Orcadian subject position, but also along lines of class, gender, race, and so forth.

stopping a hole in his mouth where once  
there'd been a tooth [...]  
[...] it was lovely to hear  
the Gaelic at the setting of the sea, when the day  
breaks, till the day of the moon, at the top  
of the cliff in Gippsland where the Sgitheanach  
Alasdair Mac a' Mhaolain threw aborigines  
over the edge, having shot them in the legs  
as if they were a plague [...]

(47-48, translation from Gaelic by MacAoidh)

The Glencoe massacre, of course, has iconic status as a symbol of Highland and Gaelic oppression, but resulted from intra-Scottish conflicts as much as from Scottish-English conflict; today as a tourist site it drives international income for Scotland. The Gippsland massacres against Gunaikurnai Indigenous nationals in so-called Australia were perpetrated by men from Skye who were themselves displaced by economic deprivation and/or forced clearance. For MacAoidh these entanglements are the essential affective ground of contemporary Gaelic through which any purported resurgence must write. An implication is that local loss is inextricable from global colonisation, and that only an excavation of these memories can enable Gaelic to recover from stultifying, tokenising,<sup>5</sup> nostalgic loveliness.

Thus the ambitions for Scottish language are themselves constituted by the boundaries of the European colonial nation-state, whose languages and their literary registers were constructed through specific historical processes of centralisation, homogenisation, internal and global resource extraction, hierarchical racialisation, cultural extermination and genocide (Brathwaite 1984:6-7; Rothschild 2005; Phillipson 2014). To be clear, the argument here, developed in Chapter 2, is not that these nation-state languages merely carry the moral taint of a disreputable past, nor that empire is the only shaping force on

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5 In the otherwise Gaelic original, the repeated refrain “it was lovely to hear the Gaelic” is in English.

language, but simply that the construction of a standardised nation-state language is a technology of empire, and thus that such language cannot be fully extricated from ongoing colonisation. Is imperial science fiction thus the limit of Scottish writing, and is the standardised register as a technology of the colonial nation-state the limit of Scots? Or is a postcolonial science fiction available to Scots, perhaps with the polymorphic possibilities of postcolonial language? Or, as a junior partner in empire, are both possibilities permanently foreclosed for Scots? And finally, to bring the current project into focus, if Scots is a minority language, how are we to conceive of and write through the Orkney language, a minority of a minority, and what is Orkney's position anent these national and supranational dynamics?

The positive spin on this situation is to fill it with critical possibility: McCracken-Flesher argues that her edited collection “suggests that this oddly imperial yet strangely subaltern literature, positioned both inside and outside the grand literary and critical narratives of the genre, thus operates as a form of criticism at once geographic and political” (2). This argument positions Scotland as an ideal place to work through the problematic produced by the colonial binary, as a site in which the binary is intertwined and complicated. My discussion of Scots language literature starts from the same point of analysis, and is at once more pessimistic and more utopian. My argument is that the colonial double-bind traps the language, the literature and the criticism within the same recurring dynamics, and that Scotland's positionality alone is not enough to ensure critique of the cage of the nation-state language. Rather, what is required is a rigorous and critical writing through that language explicitly against and beyond colonial dynamics, in order not to discover a lost pre-existing language but to create new possibilities of language. If Scots is dying in its cage, then we must find new and speculative ways to write Scots that confront its past, negotiate its present and bring its future into being.

### III. Entangled Methodology

This thesis thus arises from twin desires. First, I seek to support the resurgence of an Orkney language literature, and so to successfully negotiate the many complexities of European minority language work. Second, I am developing a critical language and practice for European minority language literature which engages the field of postcolonial studies while accounting for the ways in which European minority languages are constituted as partners in the European colonial project – that is, a theory which begins to account for the double colonial position of Scots and of European minority language more broadly.<sup>6</sup>

My methodology proceeds as a creative practitioner, a poet and a critical reader. This thesis is a joint creative and critical project, with the two strands of the work intertwined in their theoretical and creative approaches. This critical essay, *Writing Orkney's Future: Minority Language and Speculative Poetics*, investigates minority language theory and Scottish science fiction, and uses these to reflect on the technical and creative aspects of my own practice. The creative project, *Deep Wheel Orcadia*, is an Orkney language science fiction verse novel, written into the critical space described by the essay, working to negotiate new forms of practice for Orkney language in specific and European minority language in general. The theory has shaped the interests of the poetry, and the practice of writing the poetry has informed the theory.

My critical argument, in summary, is this: (1) That Scottish nationhood, literature and language are all shaped by double colonial processes in which Scotland and Scottishness are both colonised and colonising; (2) That science fiction is a means of both replaying colonisation and imagining decolonisation, and so has particular critical relevance to subjects negotiating those dynamics; (3) That writing in the Scots language necessarily involves the science fictional

6 The construction “European minority language” is itself unstable and worth troubling, and shall be discussed in Chapter 2. I use the term repeatedly in order to de-universalise my theoretical approach: while I am in dialogue with postcolonial theory from multiple regions, I intend my conclusions to be specific to the situation of minority languages constructed as belonging to Europe, particularly languages (and their peoples) which are incorporated into imperial European nation-states. I name this border in order to undo it.

imagination, in that it involves creating a future for Scots in the present; and (4) That writing in Scots should critically engage the colonial-decolonial intertwining found in Scottish nationhood itself, in the science fiction canon, and in minority language practice. Through this argument, the initial strangeness of the concept of an “Orkney language science fiction verse novel” becomes less outlandish and more pointed, precisely as science fiction always appears first to be out-of-this-world and then emerges as a critique of the world of the present.

In Chapter 2, *The Scots Language is a Science Fiction Project*, I discuss different approaches to the Scots language in literature, and then investigate the temporalities of Scottish language through the perspective of Scottish science fiction. Establishing *Deep Wheel Orcadia* within a canon of Scots and Scottish science fiction, I outline the vernacular-vs-literary binary, and use the perspectives of postcolonial literary theory to argue for alternative, speculative approaches to the Scots language through a science fiction imagination. In Chapter 3, *Orcadian Speculation*, siting my creative project within an Orcadian literary canon, I use critical reflection on my own work to write an account of how I have approached *Deep Wheel Orcadia* as a creative project. Using a technical investigation of minority language writing, I give one example of how a writer might negotiate the theories and problematics outlined in the preceding chapters to speculate for new language work and new worlds.

A key figure throughout the critical and poetic work is entangled temporality, the way past, present and future necessarily shape each other in theories of language, in science fiction narratives and in grappings with de/colonisation. In Chapter 4, my conclusion reflects on this temporal entanglement, writing theoretical speculation alongside my speculative poetry to begin to build a case for an “antinational” approach to European minority language. My methodology is a critical literary and linguistic utopianism, writing towards the future through a consciously politicised examination of the present. My approach to Scots centres the regional and specific, not as a means of building new linguistic borders, but precisely in order to open up horizons for language: the vision of

*Deep Wheel Orcadia* is of an entangling of times, worlds and languages, a past-present-future that supports the flourishing of linguistic variety, and thus a flourishing of liberatory being.



## **Chapter 2.**

### **The Scots Language is a Science Fiction Project**

Scots has a living spoken vernacular, a well-established and historically continuous poetry tradition, and a vanishingly small corpus of contemporary prose. (Millar 2018) The absence of a broad and continuous prose tradition, either fiction or non-fiction, means that Scots is a national language without a well-established narrative or formal prose register (McClure 1993:1-2). If a specific register of a language requires common usage and understanding in order to exist, then this absence of a historically continuous prose register goes some way to explaining why attempts at journalism in Scots, such as in the recent pages of *The National* and *The Herald*, have been met by opposition and derision (Hames 2018:72-3): the understanding is not there, so the register does not exist, so the understanding is prevented. Nonetheless, novelists continue to attempt the work of Scots prose – so what happens when you attempt to write in a language that doesn't exist? My argument is that, if you want to write in a language without the appropriate register, you have no option but to continuously invent it, and that this continuous invention is a science fiction project.

I begin by outlining contrasting approaches to Scots prose, examining the political temporalities they pose. I then turn to postcolonial literary theory in order to understand and critique the ways in which Scots is constructed as a language, and in turn to understand and critique the limits of postcoloniality's applicability to European minority languages. This theoretical interlude provides the critical and affective ground for an understanding of my own work, which I expand through a reading of national and linguistic temporality in Scottish science fiction narratives. I argue that, if the Scots language is a science fiction project, then this project is both what enables Scots to be written now and what limits the possibilities for Scots in the future. I conclude with a

speculative reading of the very beginnings of science fiction, imagining an alternative canon from an Orcadian otherworld.

## I. Imagining Scots Prose

There are two major approaches to Scots language narrative prose (Tulloch 1985). The first is the vernacular, represented, for example, by James Kelman's *How Late It Was, How Late* (1994), Irvine Welsh's *Trainspotting* (1993), Alison Miller's *Demo* (2005) and Jenni Fagan's *The Panopticon* (2014). These novels, with greater or lesser fidelity and naturalism, and with greater or lesser proximity to the acrolect of Standard English,<sup>7</sup> seek to put on the page the Scots language as it is spoken in their author's time and locale. *Demo* opens thus:

It was dead good they let me go. I've never went abroad before except Majorca or Tenerife. And only in the summer to lie about on the beach and that. This was November and I'm like, will I take my big coat or will it still be warmer than Glasgow? My ma didny know. (3)

Linguistic features here include: first person narration; lexical items belonging to particular local vernacular ("dead"); a spoken grammar marked by its difference from Standard English written grammar ("I've never went"); filler and phatic speech ("and that", "I'm like"); and eye-dialectal phonetic spelling ("didnny"). The result is to summon not a generalised Scots language but a

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The term "acrolect" is from Stewart (1965)'s analysis of the creole continuum, referring to the most prestigious variety of a language on a continuum of languages. In this case, on a continuum from working-class Glaswegian vernacular Scots to formal literary Standard English, the former is the basilect and the latter the acrolect.

specific Scots speaker, whose speech contains personal, local and national features.

The contrasting second approach is the literary and formal, represented, for example, by Iain W.D. Forde's *The Paix machine* (1996), Matthew Fitt's *But n Ben A-Go-Go* (2005), and Wulf Kurtoglu's<sup>8</sup> *Braken Fences* (2011).<sup>9</sup> Here is a representative sample from Fitt's novel:

Glowerin numbly throu the keek panel o Omega Kist 624 up on Gallery 1083 on the fifth anniversary fae the day his life pairtner Nadia wis Kisted, Paolo had nae choice but tae acknowledge his thrawn pedigree. The langer he gowked at the recumbent figure ahint the reekit gless panel, the mair he felt the Klog cauldness tichten roon his hert. As he watched fae the view gate in the Rigo Imbeki Medical Center high up on Montrose Parish, the threid-thin voice o his grandfather kittled in his mind. (4)

Linguistic features here include: third person narration; a lexis that mixes archaic (“kittled”), contemporary (“thrawn”) and science fictional neologistic (“Kisted”); a written grammar consonant with that of Standard English and without filler speech or other markings of spoken language; consistent spelling as of a standardised language, including choices which mark difference from English even where there is not specific phonetic difference (“throu”).

Thus, where the vernacular Scots writers are ostensibly recording Scots as it is spoken, the formal Scots writers are attempting to adhere to and/or create the standardised formal register of a nation-state language in the European imperial mould. But despite the comparison made above, these distinctions are marked as much by metatextual elements as by the linguistic aspects of text. Fitt and Forde both open their books with extensive notes on what Scots is, how it

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8 Kurtoglu is, in contrast to Banks and Mitchell discussed in Chapter 1, the de-Scottified pen-name of Scots linguist Caroline Macafee.

9 Each of these novels is first published a bright blue cover: the colour of the sky, blue sky thinking, and the Scottish national flag.

has been written, and how to read it, and to my knowledge the same is true of all but one of the published canon of formal Scots novels: alongside the above, William Graham's *Scorn, My Inheritance* (1997), Sheena Blackhall and Hamish MacDonald's *Double Heider: Twa Novellas in Scots* (2003), James Andrew Begg's *The Man's the Gowd for a' that* (2012), and Bjorn Sandison's *Mystery at da Laird's Haa* (2015), with only *Braken Fences* declining such comment. I am not aware of any book marked as vernacular which makes any such opening to the reader; thus, while "Scots" is always taken as requiring introduction and justification, "vernacular" arrives as transparently understood for what it is.

The distinction is maintained and policed by authors and critics. Millar (2018) admits that *Trainspotting* is "perhaps the most famous literary exploitation of Scottish vernacular", but adds that "Most of the apparent disruptions of Standard English represent eye dialect; Scots lexical features are unusual" (171). Kelman is not mentioned by Millar's "Analytical Survey" at all, despite this purporting to be a complete survey of Scots prose,<sup>10</sup> while Tom Leonard, to a chagrin that will be discussed below, is unproblematically claimed for Scots. Forde, in the précis of his book, published the year after Kelman's Booker victory and two years after *Trainspotting's* commercial success, claims that "There are no contemporary novels in Scots" and thus that his is the first such book "to provide enjoyable thoughtful Scots prose" (2019). What counts as Scots, and what is "merely" dialectised English, is thus always contested, and that contestation is marked by a continually constructed literary-vernacular binary.

But while there is some linguistic ground for these distinctions – the proportion of uniquely Scots lexical features, as opposed to those shared in English; the degree to which consistent orthographies are used; the deployment of the grammatical and lexical markers of spoken speech – I would argue that the divide is primarily one of *intention* rather than one of linguistics. That is, it is the diavowal of Scots by vernacular writers that marks the separation – a

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10 Neither, it must be admitted, are Begg, Forde, Graham or Sandison, or, on the other side of the divide, Fagan, Miller and numerous others.

disavowal present not just in political statements but in the orthographic choice of eye-dialect, just as standardised orthography proclaims an aspiration to Standard Language. After all, these books are, indeed, books: none of them are orature, and even those purporting to be vernacular are a literary rendition of the vernacular. Equally, those purporting to be Scots frequently lean on the grammatical and phraseological features of speech in order to construct an independent Scots grammar and voice. The first promotional blurb on the dust jacket of *Scorn, My Inheritance*, by Dr Brian Boyd of the University of Strathclyde, is “It makes me want to read it out loud!”

This intentional approach to Scots as a national language is maintained in critical work. Examining Scots, Breton and Occitan, Calin (2000) says:

Intellectuals in all three regions called for the creation of a high-culture tongue that would be capable of functioning in all ways that English and French are wont to do. It would be more learned and, at the same time, more all-embracing. On the agenda were the following: lexical enrichment of the vernacular [...]; a bridging of the dialects and the attainment of a form of linguistic unity by adopting a uniform, unified, ‘rational’ orthography[...]; the creation of scholarly, standardized dictionaries and grammars [...]; and use of language as an arm in the struggle for cultural and, if possible, political autonomy. (7-8)

Here the status distinction constructed in the vernacular-vs-literary binary is reinscribed, with unity against dialect and rationality against particularity. This distinction is intensified in the subjects of the novels themselves: all of the vernacular novels discussed above are social realist narratives of working class characters. But if literary Scots is constructed as high status, it is more surprising that three of the Scots novels (Forde, Fitt and Kurtoglu, forming nearly half the canon) are science fiction.<sup>11</sup> I would argue that this is precisely

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11 Begg and Graham are historical novels; Blackhall, MacDonald and Sandison are young adult adventures – but these neat genre categories are also unstable. Blackhall features supernatural intervention, and Forde is a form of a historical social realism intertwined with science fiction.

because the Scots language novel, and the project of a national literary register for Scots as a whole, should be understood first as a science fiction project. That is, the situation of a language without a prose literature, a language that thus both does and does not exist, requires a science fictional imagination.

Ashcroft (2008) argues that literature in postcolonial languages, especially when deploying variant orthography against the background of colonial language dominance, “constructs a reader for whom its variations pose no serious obstacle” (153). The unstated shadow of this claim is that such a reader does not yet exist: as Corbett (2012) admits, a “disincentive to writing science fiction in Scots is the perceived or actual incomprehensibility of the written language. [...] Extended prose in dense broad Scots represents a risk that few commercial publishers are prepared to take” (120). On Forde’s novel, Corbett adds that “Not surprisingly, given that the imagined reader needs to be conversant with science fiction, classical mythology, a touch of history, and unremittingly dense Scots, Forde’s novel has never achieved wide distribution”. Given that vernacular Scots novels featuring working class protagonists, also sometimes with “unremittingly dense” language, are able to achieve such a distribution and, in Kelman’s case, a Booker Prize win, I would argue that the obstacle is not that the prose is dense but that the prose is being transmitted and received as a separate Language. That is, while the reader of Welsh or Kelman is given the understanding by the metatextual frame that they are being spoken to by another person they should be able to understand, the reader of Forde or Fitt is given the understanding that they are reading another Language that they must first learn. These understandings are built by the introductions (or lack thereof) as well as by the orthographical and lexical features of the language, but most of all by the class-ridden construction of the literary forms themselves. This problem is then exacerbated by the additional absence of a widely-used Scots prose in official contexts and registers (e.g. academia, judiciary, government, journalism): there is no established societal linguistic context for the literary register. Thus, because the corpus of contemporary Scots language literature and formal Scots itself does not fully exist in their time, the fluent reader of Forde, Fitt and Kurtoglu also does not exist in their time, and so

these authors write science fiction in order to imagine (“construct”, in Ashcroft’s terms) the world in which that reader already exists.<sup>12</sup>

This science fictional leap also frees Scots novelists from the cultural baggage of a language that “signifies the old, traditional language of childhood and past generations” and the resultant “sentimental, nostalgic stance” (Corbett 2012:118). I would add that conscious separation from a vernacular voice can also construct a more purportedly universal narrator – specifically one that is not unavoidably marked as working class. That is, in order to construct a national literary language of the present, Scots science fiction novelists imagine a future in which that language exists, shorn of the assumption that it will die and of the connotations of nostalgia, and constructed around commonality of nation rather than commonality of class.<sup>13</sup> Here, Fitt and Kurtoglu part ways in a key technical sense: while Fitt’s written register also has a spoken register in his character’s dialogue (that is, his Scottish characters speak in a register of the language in which the novel is written), Kurtoglu’s Scots narration is extradiagetic, in that her Scottish characters’ dialogue is rendered in English, while her non-Scottish characters’ dialogue is rendered in Scots. These distinctions are made clearer in extract:

“Dinna move, Lars,” Paolo began cantily. “Right nou, ten snipers are checkin your loser’s coupon for plooks, their fingirs juist yeukin tae pit you intae a six-month sleep.”

Lars Fergusen boued his heid tae the gless an keeked up at the balconies o the hooses opposite. He chapped a metallic object aff the unnerside o the table an Paolo kent he had a pistol pointed atween his hurdies. “I could kill you, Scotman, afore their vee tranquiliser guns get me.” (Fitt 2000:59)

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12 As an interesting counterpoint, outside the scope of this work, Jenni Fagan’s second novel, *The Sunlight Pilgrims* (2016), is shorn of the vernacular Scots of her first novel, and is set in an apocalyptic cooling Scotland which, by the end of the novel, has no future.

13 Hames (2019) discusses how, despite this purported ambition, both Scottish national identity and Scottish or Scots language often make reference back to the class connotations of the vernacular in order to cohere difference.

“Ye ken, Beatrice,” he sayed in Chinese, “Ye sud chuse yer friens wi care.” She scanced ower his shoother at the wild-leukin fowk wha had arrived earlier.

[...] As she rubbit awa the bruises in private later, she thocht o the auld Black-and-White film o Devdas, wi Dilip Kumar [...] She gied a guff. “Sweet little Paro I am *not*.” (Kurtoglu 2011:37)

In both cases, the diagetic status of Scots is made clear in the contrast between the languages and orthographies of narration and character dialogue. In both cases, Scots is the language of narration. But in Fitt’s novel, set in a future Scotland, both Scottish and non-Scottish characters speak Scots: Paolo, the Scot, fluently, while Lars, the immigrant, in broken grammar (“get me”) and with a stereotypical accent (“vee”). It is thus implied that the future Scots of narration is also the language characters speak in the future world: there is a universal standard of Scots which individual speakers interpret in their own vernacular dialects, with corresponding comic and stereotyping effects. In Kurtoglu’s China-based novel, in contrast, a Chinese character, Hsien, speaks diagetically in Chinese, rendered by the author in Scots, while a Scottish character, Beatrice, thinks diagetically in English, and speaks with the other Scottish character, Bill, in English, both rendered by the author as English. Moreover, most of the dialogue in the book takes place diagetically in Chinese (rendered extradiagetically in Scots), meaning that English is here the marked language, showing the characters’ difference from the cultural norm of the setting, in which the language of dialogue is also again the language of narration.

A second linguistic distinction also takes place in the Kurtoglu: Neanderthal characters speak the “Auld Language”, which is marked in its difference from the Chinese dialogue by using an older form of Scots, as in “Quhit wey fer thee?” (40) and “Cud thoo no jüst cover thine een?” (41). Here, the “auldness” of the language is marked by features such as the use of a strong voiceless labiovelar fricative with the spelling of medieval Scots (“Quh”); the close-mid front rounded vowel with the spelling sometimes found in contemporary Orkney and



Shetland language (“ü”); and the ye/thee pronoun distinction, again contemporary in Orkney and Shetland, not used in the Chinese-rendered-as-Scots. This linguistic dexterity (the author is an editor of Scots language dictionaries and thesauruses) portrays cultural and linguistic distinctions between the characters, and also, as in Fitt’s novel, serves to normalise Scots as the language of narration.<sup>14</sup>

Another technical distinction between the authors is the use of neologism. While Kurtoglu generally avoids creating new words for her narrative prose, and is also not engaged in the project of creating a Scottish cultural future, Fitt is prolific in the creation of words and ideas: “cyberjanny”, “plastipoke”, “incendicowp”. As Corbett notes, this “compounding of disparate elements has long been recognized as a staple of science fiction” (2012:122), while it is also at once the “flamboyant adoption of linguistic strategies favored by the modernist makars” (125). Indeed, by fusing Scots with science fiction, Fitt is taking the modernist synthetic project to its logical conclusion: linguistic futurism.

The novels thus suggest two different futures for Scotland and for the Scots language. In Fitt’s novel, England has been entirely submerged by global warming-related flooding, and Scotland exists, independently, as a place of island cities; the tempting suggestion is that it is the very submersion of England that has allowed the Scots language to flourish. In Kurtoglu’s novel, where the Scots is not diagenetic and the Scottish characters speak English, the suggestion is that Scotland’s ongoing participation in the British project, which becomes in the novel the globalising project of the “Rational World”, means the extinction of Scots in favour of global English. Thus while Fitt is projecting the Scots language’s continuation into the future from its existent present, Kurtoglu imagines a world in which Scots does not exist in order to write Scots into the present. Both authors, however, are continuing the project Calin reads into MacDiarmid: staking the claim that Scots can be a literary language, in the

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14 Interestingly, the English-language edition of the novel erases all linguistic distinctions between characters, meaning that they are an extra layer for the Scots language reader, an extra element for that edition of the book.

present, as part of a global literature. My argument is not that science fiction as a genre is the only possible home for this claim, but that, because the imagining of a Scots language future in the present is a science fictional imagining, the generic appeal of science fiction does provide fertile ground for making – and critiquing – Scots’ claim to a literature.

## II. Scots and Postcolonialism

Before continuing to analyse language as a figure within Scottish science fiction narratives, I will outline critical approaches to minority and postcolonial languages, problematising both the national and postcolonial frames for Scots. The aim of this theoretical interlude is to outline my critical and affective territory. My insistent critique of the frames offered to Scots language writing is itself a means of opening up new possibilities for thinking about and in the language: again, my writing of Scots changes my ways of thinking about Scots, and so too the thinking changes the writing. Such a critique is necessitated not just by the always questionable status of Scots itself, but by the doubly questionable status of Orkney within Scots: the Orcadian position by itself problematises what Scots is, how to write in it, and how to think about it.<sup>15</sup> Thus I turn to theory to chart potential flightpaths.

The “minority language” frame deployed by Calin (2000), as referenced above, refers to the European Charter for Regional and Minority Languages (Council of

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15 Orkney is considered a form of Scots, and among Scots language linguists and advocates, a general term for the language is “Insular Scots”, encompassing both the Orkney and Shetland varieties. (Scots Language Centre 2019 [1 & 2]). In Orkney, in my experience, the language has no one established name: it is usually either “Orkney”, “Orkney dialect” or just “the way we spaek”. “Orcadian” as a term is increasing in currency but tends to connote an academic or incomer usage, while “Orkney language” or “Orkney Scots” is used mostly by those with a special language interest (Giles 2019). I choose in this thesis to avoid naming Orkney a “dialect” to counter the idea that the way of speaking is in anyway subordinate to another language. Instead I use “Orkney”, or “Orkney language” when grammatical distinction is necessary, and “Orkney Scots” when a distinction from Norn is necessary. Note that the use of “Orkney” for both region and language creates precisely the conflation of geography, culture, language and political formation that this thesis discusses.

Europe 1992, 2018). This definition through governmentality is, in the European Charter, “languages that are: i) traditionally used within a given territory of a State by nationals of that State who form a group numerically smaller than the rest of the State’s population; and ii) different from the official language(s) of that State; it does not include either dialects of the official language(s) of the State or the languages of migrants”. “Minority language”, at least as a legal term, is thus defined in terms of the state, and positioned against “dialect” and “the languages of migrants”, but these terms are themselves not strictly defined except by such opposition. The problems are immediately apparent for my language, Orkney: (a) Orkney could only be a minority language within the frame of reference of the Scottish or UK state, as it is the majority language within Orkney; (b) but if it is a dialect of Scots then it cannot be a minority language at all, even though “dialect” is not itself defined in the charter; and (c) if an Orkney speaker migrates to Edinburgh or London, does the type of migration exclude the language from minority status, defining “migrant” by the borders of the state signatory, thus disallowing Orcadians from migrant status by assumed state or ethnic affiliation beyond Orkney itself? Beyond the problems for Orkney, is the legal and conceptual framework of a minority language applicable outside of Europe or the European settler-state context?

“Minority language”, then, discloses assumptions about the status and value of languages within the European state and in turn about the national and ethnic communities of that state. In the UK, languages coded as indigenous to the UK, and therefore as white, are afforded such status, while languages such as Yiddish and Anglo-Romani are not, even when they have forms unique to these islands. Yiddish is also not protected in Germany,<sup>16</sup> but is protected in Ukraine, which in turn does not, unlike its neighbours, recognise Rusyn. Everywhere in the Charter are the traces of political and identity formations, and which languages count as “migrant” depends on the historical and political moment by

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16 Yildiz (2013) discusses the particular history of Yiddish in Germany as a means of troubling the homogenising effects of monolingualism, and critiques the uses of certain language diversity practices as a means of reifying monolingualism, in line with my critique here.

which the language is measured. When I speak about “European minority language”, then, I am speaking of a construction in which race and identity are already encoded and in which national political formations are privileged, and the diversity recognised by the Charter appears as a means of strengthening rather than undoing borders.

The process of forming European nation-states in the 18<sup>th</sup> and 19<sup>th</sup> centuries was fully intertwined with the process of forming universalising national languages (Fishman 1972), and both are entangled again with the process of European colonisation (Brathwaite 1984:6-7, Phillipson 2011). The standardised French language, for example, was conceived of as a part of the revolutionary construction of the nation-state that enabled global colonisation. As Rothschild (2005) glosses the Jacobin Bertrand Barère:

“We have revolutionized government, laws, habits, morality, customs, commerce, and thought itself; let us therefore also revolutionize the language which is their daily instrument.” His proposal, in particular, was to eradicate, successively, the Breton idiom in the north and the west; the Basque idiom in the south-west; the use of Italian in Corsica; and the use of German in the east, where the “empire of language and of intelligence” was incontestable [...]. France could be liberated from these “barbaric jargons and gross idioms” with the appointment of instructors in the French language. Only then would French be prepared for its global destiny. (219, quotations from Barère 1792:5,8,11)

Similarly, speaking of English in the context of the American Revolution, the editor of David Ramsay’s *History of the American Revolution* (1789) claimed that “the western world will have possessed no language so uniform and so universal as our own is likely to be”, making a fateful prediction that “the colonists had attained a remarkable perfection in [Standard English]; and consequently there is no probability that any dialect can hereafter arise in either side, as was common in the barbarous ages” (I, vi-vii).

Blommaert and Verschueren's empirical analysis of early European nationalist texts demonstrates how language is constructed as a "unifying force" that "implies separability, a natural discontinuity in the real world" (1992:358-359). For early nationalism the "ideal model of society is mono-lingual" and "pluri-lingual societies are seen as problem-prone" (362). Contemporary liberal or "civic" nationalisms, meanwhile, seek to actively foster some forms of diversity within the overarching structure of the nation-state while still maintaining national power dependent on a substrate of ethnic division (Brubaker 1999; Smith 2005; Xenos 2008). In Stiliz (2009), for example, "a civic nation should not aim at complete linguistic homogeneity. Instead, it should promote rationalization in a common language at *least cost* to its citizens' other language interests, by allowing minority languages to be promoted alongside the common language", with the proviso that "Minority language(s) are expensive public goods, not all of which can be provided at once", here sublimating the rule of the dominant ethnos into the ostensibly liberal language of majoritarian efficiency.

Scotland and Orkney, again, usefully problematise this nation-state-language complex. Scotland's potential constitutions as a nation, a state or a nation-state proceeds anent the colonial nation-state of the UK, and its languages likewise. Scotland's construction as a nation is within or against the larger nation of the UK, and its incorporation into the UK state also maintained quasi-separate legal and state institutions, strengthened again by 1997 devolution (Devine 1999:288-289). Meanwhile, Orkney as a cultural and legal power formation raises unanswerable questions as to the applicability of these forms to Orkney language: how can an Orkney language be maintained in a civic nationalist state when, as a language of only around 10,000 speakers,<sup>17</sup> it is so dramatically minoritarian, without appeal to and incorporation in the "sufficiently large" (Stiliz 2009) minority of Scots? How can the liberal rationality of the civic nation-state even account for the natural variety of language as it is spoken, which "tends to cast doubts on the legitimacy of claims to nationhood"? (Blommaert and Verschueren, 1992:359).

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17 The Scottish Census 2011 puts the Scots language speaking rate at 41%, and Orkney's population at the same point at 21,349.

As histories of Scots describe (e.g. Kay 2009, Millar 2018), Scots was minoritised within the UK and in favour of English through active political processes, including ongoing elimination from legal and education systems by physical force and judicial power, and ongoing elimination from cultural spheres through snobbery and neglect. Politically, it can be argued that the colonisation of the Celtic Fringe established precisely the model of multi-layered colonial processes which were then exercised throughout European empires, and that this model continues in ongoing internal colonisation of the Celtic Fringe (Hechter 1998). Here “linguicide” – the killing of language at a social level – is considered as one strategy within the “logic of elimination” (Wolfe 2006:388) that characterises colonisation, effected through education policy regarding supposedly superior and standardised language, socioeconomic stratification rooted in language competence, cultural dominance of the colonising language, and so forth (Mufwene 2002, Léglise and Migge 2007). But there is no neat separation of the internally colonised minority European and the colonising imperial settler: the individual actors, across class levels, are often precisely the same people. That is, Scottish, Welsh and Irish settlers – and their languages – led British settler-colonialism as farmers, soldiers, workers, administrators, slavers, plantation owners, industrialists and politicians (Calloway 2010). Thus Scots influences languages formed through Scottish-led colonial processes, such as Jamaican patois (Patrick 2004) and Bungi (Blain 1994), and to the degree that there is an internally colonised present, Scots and Gaelic can to some degree benefit from European minority language status in a way that “migrant” languages cannot, leading to further inequalities of internal colonisation (Riaz 2018). Similarly, diversity within Scots itself represents a problem for the construction of Scots as a coherent nation-state language: would Orkney be subject to Scots glossophagy? That is, would a tolerant, civic nationalist approach to Scots, with a broad common standard but sanctioned diversity, tend inevitably towards the erasure of a distinctively Orkney variant through the incorporation of a few salient features? Or could the same be feared of Scots anent English without such a civic nationalist revival of Scots?

Calin's model of European minority language cuts through these problematics by advocating for the recentering and recreation of the European nation-state-language model. This, in essence, theorises that these minority regions of Western Europe – those which lost power to the metropolitan political centres represented by e.g. Paris-French-France and London-English-UK – were seeking in the early 20<sup>th</sup> century to re-enact for their own cultures the process of nation-state formation undertaken by the existing states in the 18<sup>th</sup> and 19<sup>th</sup> centuries. The problem of the internal colonisation of the regions by the metropole, or the Fringe by the nation-state, would thus be solved by a recentring of power on, for example, Barcelona-Catalan-Catalonia, or Edinburgh-Scots-Scotland. Rather than opposing the nation-state and its monolingualism as such, language revival is intertwined with new forms of nationalism for new nation-states. Central to this project, for Calin, is a purportedly high-culture project of literary and language creation. Thus the majority of Calin's work focusses on a literary reading of major texts, arguing in that each case has quality and range commensurable with majority-language work of the period, in order to conclude that "It is possible to justify the moderns' claim to have created a modern literature. In all three regions, in all three languages [...] we find writers and books of the very first rank" (301). Again, rather than questioning the hierarchies of the literary as such, these languages and literatures work to set up a competition of equals within existing terms of power.

As part of this project, Calin describes in each language a process of making a decisive break from dialect, provincialism, the rural and the particular in favour of language, cosmopolitanism, the urban and the universal. He writes, "the moderns in Scotland and Occitania proclaimed their modernity by thrusting away from Burns and Mistral – fathers whose weight threatened to be mortal – and by rehabilitating an older, more authentic cultural past, closer to the totality of life and to the language in its vital totality" (7). It is hard to miss the Oedipal overtones of the deployment of "fatherhood" here, or indeed the phallic imagery of the modernist thrust. And indeed, of the 21 writers surveyed in the book, 20 are male. It is straightforward feminist criticism to point out the gendering of

the binaries mapped on to urban/rural here; more subtle is how this plays through the binaries of dialect/language, diversity/rationality, and particular/universal. These binaries are apparent even in MacDiarmid's first Scots writing, a review of Rebecca West's *The Judge*, in which he says that the "verra last thing Scottish literature needs is lady-fying" (MacDiarmid [1922] 1990). Here, the rural, traditional and feminine are rejected in favour of a muscular, thrusting modernism of language which breaks free from the regional into the new intellectual nation. As O'Connor (2006) writes, "For Yeats and MacDiarmid alike, the 'masculinity' of Joyce's and Synge's harsh disillusionment and saeva indignatio appeased their gender anxiety about aligning themselves with the victimized subject position" (102). Modernist nationalism again seeks consolidation around a new masculinist power centre to resolve the anxieties and deprivations of subaltern status.<sup>18</sup>

Brathwaite (1984) articulates an alternate vision of postcolonial nationhood. His vision of "nation language" seeks not a total separation from English through the boundaries of a new European nation-state,<sup>19</sup> but rather a resistance through and against English itself. "Nation language is the submerged area of that dialect which is much more closely aligned with the African aspect of experience in the Caribbean. It may be in English: but often it is in an English which is like a howl, or a shout or a machine-gun or the wind or a wave. It is also like the blues. And sometimes it is English and African at the same time" (13). Nation language is thus both new and disruptive, in that it is born of and refers to the historical experiences of enslaved cultures within the Caribbean, breaking through colonial English to speak them, and also ancient and traditional, in that

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- 18 My analysis is not intended to imply that modernism is uniformly male or masculinist in ideology: Felski 1995 and others have argued persuasively for feminist modernisms. Nor am I necessarily identifying the postmodern with the feminist, especially given the dominance of vernacular masculinity in contemporary Scottish fiction (Whyte 1998). Instead, I outline the intertwining of strands of modernism with nationalist approaches to language and power, further explored in the next chapter. Any periodisation must necessarily concede that even dominant trends are defined against Others that are just as essentially periodical.
- 19 Hart (2010) places Brathwaite in direct lineage with MacDiarmid, saying that "there is also something MacDiarmidian about the term 'nation language'" (133), but I would argue this lineage must be resisted due to the markedly different historical situations and political orientations of the two languages: as discussed throughout this essay, Scots is never unproblematically colonised or post-colonial.



it is born of a range of prior African languages and also of the environmental background of Africa and the Caribbean. Through both of these aspects it is distinguished from the capitalised nation-state Language of Empire as a lower case *language*<sup>20</sup> of a speech community:

Reading is an isolated, individualistic expression. The oral tradition on the other hand demands not only the griot but the audience to complete the community: the noise and sounds that the maker makes are responded to by the audience and are returned to him. Hence we have the creation of a continuum where meaning truly resides. [...] [The community depends] on *immanence*, the power within themselves, rather than the technology outside themselves. (19)

Nation language is thus created not by Empire's cultural technologies, but by the continuous interactions of community; it is not purely literary, but relies on the immanence of orality. This is not to define nation language as purely oral, however, because "To confine our definitions of literature to written texts in a culture that remains vital in most of its people proceedings, is as limited as its opposite: trying to define Caribbean literature as essentially orature" (49). That is, nation language disputes the boundary between the oral and the literary: it is both. The use of a "continuum" of people here is also notable, as "continuum" is also used to describe the range of expression within "the idea (and reality) of Caribbean speech as continuum: ancestral through creole to national and international forms" (49). The continuum is an alternative to both the prescriptions and oppressions of imperial nation-state language and to the administrative technologies of the state: nation language expresses itself

20 To begin making the connection to different Scots practices, a useful citation here is Tom Leonard (2009:178):

lower case listens to the voice of the people  
lower case is not Edict  
lower case is the kinesis of democracy  
CAPITAL is stasis  
CAPITAL is closure of the business in hand  
CAPITAL is the cumulation of reified density  
CAPITAL has no being at its centre  
CAPITAL is without breath

through a continuum of forms and is created through the democratic interactions of a continuum of people. But while this continuum may not have precise and defined borders, it does still have significant political limits and is not intended to be universal: “We *want* to be universal, to be universally accepted. But it’s the terrible terms meted out for universality that interest me” (20). Pretensions to universality here define of the imperial project, whereas nation language requires a continuum of expression, a continuum of people, and also sufficient historical and environmental specificity to dissent against a universalising Empire. Throughout, nation language is both both/and and neither/nor: both idea and reality, both continuous and specific, both orature and literature, neither dialect nor imperial nation-state language, neither ancient nor modern, neither state nor not-state. This construction of nation-language is appealing to any writer facing the binary problems discussed above, but however applicable the analysis is to the Caribbean context – itself a necessary area of critique – it hits definite limits in the European minority language context of Scots.

As Gardiner 2010 notes, a Scots analogue to Creole and nation language is not the “nativist model” of MacDiarmid, not necessarily Scots at all, but rather the self-consciously “broken English” of James Kelman, placed in a “struggle to occupy Standard English as a literary form” (106). Alison Miller and Jenni Fagan, as discussed above, sit in a related position; Alison Flett’s “ahm rytin like a basturt” (2004:31) is here both manifesto and critique. But whereas Brathwaite’s nation language is located within a particular decolonising historical and geographic context, Gardiner claims Kelman for a resistant internationalism that “has more to do with [...] affiliations across peripheries than nativist belonging” (104). While the parallels at a linguistic level are clear – the blurring of oral and literary, and of class-based forms with authorised language – there is nevertheless a break here between Brathwaite’s nation language and a linguistic internationalism founded on shared subalternity. This analysis risks, I would argue, glossing over the specificities of class, gender and race at play in different broken Englishes, but is nonetheless founded on

Kelman's own interests and practical solidarities with decolonial practitioners (Kelman, 1992; Kelman 2019).

A curious and productive contradiction, though, is found through the attempted inclusion of one of Kelman's literary contemporaries and linguistic parallels, Tom Leonard, in a Scottish Qualifying Authority exam paper on "The Use of Scots in Contemporary Literature" to which Leonard replied with characteristic force:

I do not grant permission for my work to be used. It is not an example of "Scots" whatever that highly politicised term means, and I will not allow any of my phonetic work to be used as a false aunt sally within such a defining context. (Leonard 2014 [2])

Despite Leonard's resistance, his work is also still named by the Scots Language Centre as a form of "West Central Scots" (SLC 2019). This points towards an ideology of Scots that is neither nativist nor nation language nor subaltern English but rather *civic nationalist Scots*: a model of Scots that self-consciously absorbs difference and dissent, models standardisation while accepting variation, and constructs a nation and language through the practice of concealing the border guards.<sup>21</sup> That is, this "late liberal" model of Scots which "care[s] for difference without disturbing key ways of configuring experience" (Povinelli 2011:26) contains multiple internal contradictions – such as practitioners of working class vernacular refusing the name "Scots", or forms of Scots that are racialised or marked as migrant – which are invisible until the very moment they are policed. Such a mutation of liberalism raises considerable problems for literary practitioners seeking to use such difference to organise and speak anent coloniality. The promise of civic nationalism is to successfully incorporate these problems through toleration of difference, but that toleration

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21 To make Leonard's position on such language nationalism yet more abundantly clear, the March 14<sup>th</sup> entry from the same journal quoted above is a screenshot of the Scottish Parliament's webpage on the Scots language, written in Scots, over which Leonard has pasted SNP logos and, in lurid blue and green type, the words "FUCKING NATIONALIST NUTS".

itself is restricted, even if only by the economic terms suggested by Stilz. Fundamentally, liberalism cannot tolerate that which does not tolerate liberalism – and minority language may see liberal inclusion itself as a glossophagic threat.

Transplanting Brathwaite’s “nation language” into the European minority language context, already a move across the power dynamics of colonisation, thus reaches certain limits. On the one hand, the resistant power of nation language in this context becomes incorporated into liberal nation-state dynamics; on the other, practitioners of related linguistic strategies themselves resist any national framing of their work in favour of other solidarities. Furthermore, without the cohering power of the national frame, particular and individual linguistic strategies risk becoming, as in the title of the popular handbook in which both Scots and Orkney have been discussed, “varieties of English” (Kortmann and Upton, 2004). In the same journal entry in which he refused inclusion in the question on Scots, Leonard accepted the use of his work in an English literature exam.<sup>22</sup>

Ashcroft (2008) demonstrates further risks of centering commensurability with English within postcolonial language politics. Throughout *Caliban’s Voice*, a text in which Ashcroft argues for the political value of “a multiplicity of English variants” (46), Ashcroft centres English and access to its global resources, and decentres separatism from English and from language choices which are non-contiguous with English. Writing in dialogue with Brathwaite, he uses the metaphor of a colonised Caliban revolting against a colonising Prospero, using a language drawn from both his own island’s magic and the colonial magic learned from Prospero. Ashcroft considers Caliban’s negotiation of Prosperan English and Calibanian nation language:

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22 Leonard discusses his reasoning as not merely being about the contending national frames, but because the English exam correctly described his primary concern as *sound* rather than *nation*. Nevertheless, the gesture is significant.

Suppose [...] Caliban carries out his revolt relying on his own resources rather than on the buffoons. [...] In that event [...] the music of his island [...] might be considered the voices of his culture rather than the voices of his nature. Or perhaps Caliban's culture is immersed in nature, in place, and therefore sows a different relationship possible between the two, a less hierarchic, un-European possibility. (32)

This is how Caliban breaks free from the oppressive practice of Prospero's language, but he does so by fusing his pre-Prosperan (pre-colonial) language with Prospero's own to produce a postcolonial language. What then happened to the pre-colonial music? Or to a postcolonial language which makes itself forcibly separate from Prospero's? Within the colonial imagination, the "music" is just natural noises, but from a decolonial perspective the music is also language, or something that unmakes stable and bordered language as a category of analysis.

The decolonising possibility worries Ashcroft: "The option of violent political resistance to colonial control simply invites the exertion of an even greater force. But the capture of the source of Prospero's power offers the true means of social and political transformation. In this one fact we discover the very centre of the postcolonial method of transformative resistance" (34). That is, working with and within English is "true" and "central", whereas separatism from English is both undesired and impossible. Fanon's key insight that "decolonization is always a violent phenomenon" (1963:99) is outright rejected.<sup>23</sup> Postcolonial English, instead, "has an *almost* unparalleled political agency" (96, emphasis mine) – but even the concession within that "almost" is unexplored. (What is parallel in agency? What surpasses?) There is an

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23 This is the Marxist insight that "decolonization is the meeting of two forces, opposed to each other by their very nature" and the historical view that these forces' "first encounter was marked by violence" (Fanon 1963:36), but also suggests that *whatever* a decolonial project does will be marked as violence because "la décolonisation n'est jamais le résultant d'un fiat de la conscience du colonisateur. C'est toujours le résultat d'une lutte, toujours le résultat d'une poussé. Même la plus pacifique d'entre elles est toujours le résultat d'une rupture. [Decolonisation is never the result of a fiat of the coloniser's conscience. It's always the result of struggle, always the result of pressure. Even the most peaceful of them is always the result of a rupture]" (Césaire 1959:116, translation mine). Perhaps for Ashcroft the "true" method of post-colonial English is preferred because anything that is sufficiently not-English to be more than post-colonial is just such a violent rupture.

equivalent statement in Calin, who says: “Nativism occurs when the postcolonial writer or politician, having accepted the binomial opposition between centre and margin, responds to it simply by reversing the value judgement and exalting the margin. The danger is, of course, reverse ethnocentrism, which can be as provincial, exclusionist and doctrinaire as the original colonial stereotype” (2010:316).

Any avoidance of intelligibility within English or elevation of colonised to the exclusion of the coloniser, such as wa Thiong’o’s insistence on using African languages in preference to English as a means of decolonisation (1986), thus immediately raises the spectres of Calin’s reverse racism and Ashcroft’s bloody rebellion – both charges which expose the white, Anglophone, settler-colonist standpoint of the authors and their theories. Even if bloody rebellion is not desired, there must surely be a spectrum of possibilities before that spectre is invoked. What happens when the postcolonial speaker or writer refuses to be understood by English or incorporated into its newly liberal, newly diverse sphere of influence? But of course, decolonial violence appears very differently between contexts: “decolonisation” is differently meaningful in nations which have been enslaved and which have experienced genocide than in European minority nations like Scotland which profited from and are constituted through enacting slavery and genocide. Insofar as “decolonisation” is possible within Scotland, a decolonial approach to language, I argue, requires a refusal of the technologies of the European nation-state. In my work this engages a strategic deployment of language itself against nation.

On the one hand, then, linguistic separatism risks revivifying the imperial technologies of the nation-state, including the linguicide of variety implied by the construction of national standards, in service of a new nation-state power centre; on the other hand, linguistic pluralism, including the elevation of class vernaculars into a broad national language continuum, risks an easy incorporation into and reinforcement of the globalised English which now liberally tolerates internal variation. Similarly, discussing language in Scotland is difficult to make coherent without reference to the national linguistic frame of

Scotland, making no small difficulty for the aim of deploying language against nation. It seems that, for languages anent English, escape from power structures is foreclosed in both directions.

These are paradoxes of subjectivation, Judith Butler's term of translation and interpretation for Michel Foucault: "The paradox of subjectivation (*assujettissement*) is precisely that the subject who would resist such norms is itself enabled, if not produced, by such norms" (1993:15). But as Butler also has it:

If the subject who speaks is also constituted by the language he or she speaks, then language is the condition of possibility for the speaking subject and not merely its instrument of oppression. This means that the subject has its own "existence" predicated in a language that precedes and exceeds the subject, a language whose historicity includes a past and a future that exceeds that of the subject who speaks. And yet this "excess" is what makes possible the speech of the subject. (1997:28)

Thus to speak of and in an Orkney language is already referencing the Scots language (and in turn the English language) against which Orkney (and in turn Scots) has hitherto been defined as a dialect: to declare that this way of speaking and writing is a "language" is to deploy the technology of the nation-state against the technology of the nation-state. In the postcolonial context, Spivak (1988) critiques this problematic as itself as a double silencing of the Subaltern. She argues:

It is impossible for contemporary French intellectuals to imagine the kind of Power and Desire that would inhabit the unnamed subject of the Other of Europe. It is not only that everything they read, critical or uncritical, is caught within the debate of the production of that Other, supporting or critiquing the constitution of the Subject as Europe. It is also that, in the constitution of that Other of Europe, great care was taken to obliterate the

textual ingredients with which such a subject could cathect, could occupy (invest?) its itinerary. (75)

Thus even critique of the coloniser centres the coloniser and is formed around or in response to coloniser subjectivity. Moreover, there is a second side to this silencing, which is that “even when the subaltern makes an effort to the death to speak, she is not able to be heard, and speaking and hearing complete the speech act” (Spivak [1993-94 [2]] 1996:292). The suggestion here is that, though the subaltern works to talk through the subject conditions imposed by the coloniser, the coloniser is incapable of hearing the subaltern apart from those conditions, apart from anything other than colonising subjectivity: “‘The subject’ implied by the texts of insurgency can only serve as a counterpossibility for the narrative sanctions granted to the colonial subject in the dominant groups” (1988:82).

The potential solution to this silencing that Spivak later suggests is a “strategic essentialism”, in which the subaltern appeals to or constructs an innate quality of subjectivity existing prior to or independent from colonial subjectivity. Although this essentialism is in some sense known as in some sense artificial, or at least as constructed, it is nonetheless both descriptive of and transformative for historical circumstances. The primary analogy used is that of class within Marxist theory, in which the proletariat’s consciousness of their production and being as a class provides the foundation for a liberatory project of abolishing class itself, along with its subject conditions:

I would read [the work of Subaltern Studies] as a *strategic* use of positive essentialism in a scrupulously viable political interest. [...] For class-consciousness does not engage with the ground level of consciousness – consciousness in general. ‘Class’ is not, after all, an inalienable description of a human reality. Class-consciousness on the *descriptive* level is itself a strategic and artificial rallying awareness which, on the *transformative* level, seeks to destroy the mechanics which come to construct the outlines



of the very class of which a collective consciousness has been situationally developed. ([1985] 1996:214)

This necessarily requires a kind of irony about the deployment of essentialism. A double sense of “self-consciousness” is used, meaning both an ironical awkwardness and a truthful apprehension of one's conditions of subjectivity. Speaking on the Pale/Fringe context of Joyce's and Yeats's Anglo-Irish, and preferring the doubling humour of the former to the national earnestness of the latter, Spivak says “It has to be self-conscious or nothing” ([1993-4 [1]] 1996:20). That is, to be strategically essential about one's subalternity requires an ironic stance towards that essentialism, a denaturalising irony which prefigures class abolition.

This abolitionist approach to subalternity also requires a restless and uncertain critique of the processes of strategic essentialism themselves, given that they are liable to reproduce the very dynamics which gave birth to subalternity. Thus “On the broad scale, nationalism, for example, fetishizes the goal of winning, decolonization. Once it is won, the people want really an entry into the haunted house inhabited by the colonizers. [...] Deconstruction, if one wants a formula, is, among other things, a persistent critique of what one cannot not want.” ([1993-94 [1]] 1996:27) To be strategically essentialist as a class is to some degree to seek elevation through the ontology of power defined by class oppressors, the occupation of their haunted house, but the construction of class through power means that one cannot not want this. A strategic essentialism occurs because of what one cannot not want, but what one cannot not want must nonetheless be consistently critiqued, and through that consistent critique the haunted house itself may begin to crumble. To be strategically essentialist about language might be to, for example, make use of standardisation as a means of language education, or make use of state funding through defined language categories as a means of strengthening a language's material resources. A thoroughly decolonial approach to such processes, however, could further use decolonial language as a means of undoing the very power structures of language.

These provocations have difficult implications for Scots literature, especially considering the tensions between the synthetic minority language of MacDiarmid and the working class vernacular of Flett and Leonard. In which of these languages does the Scots subaltern writer – especially when further subaltern through class, race, gender or sexuality – choose to write, and why? Can Scots be strategically essentialist, or is it plain old essentialist? Can a postcolonial analysis offer anything to working class vernacular Scots, or are other approaches to orature and literature required? Does Orkney adopt a position anent Scots that Scots adopts anent English? And what do various forms of Scots imply about postcolonial, decolonial or national separatist intentions towards England and English? What seeks to inhabit the haunted house of English, and what might bring it to the ground? My own critical and creative project provides one way of writing through these dynamics. The project is always to write for Orkney a linguistic future that exceeds the linguistic possibilities of the present: English’s paradox of subjectivation creates the conditions in which that future is written, but the excesses of science fiction begin to shift the conditions of linguistic subjectivation themselves. That is, by writing a future for a language that exceeds the possibilities of the present, the possible language begins to come into being.

### **III. Language as Temporal Ligature**

I turn now to the science fictional imagination in Scottish narrative fiction. As I have shown, the technical deployment of language itself implies a temporality, a political orientation towards the future and the past, entangled with constructions of identity and nation. In this section, I discuss how these temporalities are made literal in narratives of time travel, which have recurred throughout Scottish science fiction.<sup>24</sup> I will examine the role the figure of time

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24 Another notable example not discussed here, as it is less immediately relevant to the question of language, is Ken MacLeod’s *Intrusion* (2012), which also features the post-historical quasi-Indigenous figures discussed below. Naomi Mitchison’s science fiction also features similar colonial figures of the Indigenous and of transformation through language,

travel itself plays in constructing a national temporality for Scots and Scotland, and begin outlining alternative pasts and futures.

An early instance of Scottish time travel is in the work of James Leslie Mitchell. While Mitchell's social realist fiction as Lewis Grassie Gibbon uses Scots phrasing in the narrative and Scots language in the dialogue, Mitchell's science fiction is written in English. However, this English language science fiction is a vehicle to explore the role of language in history, subjectivation and social change, and so critique thereof exposes the imaginative ground of racialisation and colonisation in European minority language discourses.

In both *Three Go Back* ([1932] 2009) and *Gay Hunter* ([1934] 1989), a trio of 1930s Europeans and Americans are transported through time to a primitivist culture. In the former book, they travel to the past, to an Atlantis inhabited by Cro-Magnons and Neanderthals; in the latter, they travel to a future Britain, where a military cataclysm has wiped out most of human culture and the island is inhabited by low-technology tribes. In both past and future, the imagined low-technology tribes are idealised, in particular through their peaceableness, connection to nature and sexual freedom. This is a conception of pre- and post-historic humanity that is fully independent of accurate paleoanthropological study and rather entirely shaped by Western ideas about Indigenous peoples developed during the eras of colonial expansion (Deloria 1998, Moreton-Robinson 2004, Harding 2006, Nakata 2007, Goggin 2010).

Indeed, the colonial dialectic between the two novels exactly follows that classically set up for Indigenous peoples by Jean-Jacques Rousseau's foundational *Discourse on the Origins of Inequality* ([1754] 1984). In *Three Go Back*, the antagonists to the idealised primitives are Neanderthal "Beast-Men", far more violent and animal-like than the Cro-Magnons (and a genetic line which became extinct, unlike the *Homo sapiens sapiens* Cro-Magnons); in *Gay Hunter*, the antagonists are contemporary self-identified Fascists who seek to

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though she does not make use of time travel.

civilise the post-historic humans. Thus, just as in Rousseau's assessment of Indigenous peoples of Turtle Island / so-called North America, "man's good lay in departing from his 'natural' state – but not too much; 'perfectability' up to a certain point was desirable, though beyond that point an evil. Not its infancy but its *jeunesse* was the best age of the human race" (Lovejoy 1923:177). Mitchell's utopian primitivists are therefore not "noble savages" (a term which Rousseau never used), but rather peoples who have just enough "civilisation" and "technology" to improve them from animal nature, as represented by the Neanderthals, but not so much that they become fascists. In Mitchell, the signifier of this dialectic is language.

In *Three Go Back*, the time-travellers first identify the Cro-Magnons as such, and thus also identify the time period in which they find themselves, by identifying their language:

"It's Basque—an elementary and elemental form of Basque. My mother was Basque. I haven't spoken the language since childhood, but last evening found myself speaking and thinking in it half unconsciously.... It's the loneliest language in twentieth-century Europe, as I suppose you know. No affinities to any other, just as the Basques have no apparent racial affinity to any existing group. It's been speculated that they're the pure descendants of the Cro-Magnards." (40)

Thus pre-historic humans are connected to "pure" European minorities, themselves internally colonised by the French and Spanish states in the early period of nation-state language-formation, through their language. Basque is figuratively connected to childhood and the unconscious, and as a "lonely" language it is also intertwined with a "pure" race, the implication being that an uncontaminated genetic line has somehow transmitted an uncontaminated language. It is this connection through language that allows the travellers to enjoy their time with the Cro-Magnons and appreciate them as "not savages; they're clean and kindly children" (42). Despite this assessment, they are also deemed human and adult enough for the travellers to enjoy their sexual

freedom. One character puts the philosophical thesis clearly, idealising them as “absolutely without culture and apparently absolutely without superstitious fears, cruelties, or class-divisions. It means that Rousseau was right” (43).

It is again language that distinguishes the Cro-Magnons from the Neanderthals: where the former have speech and can be communicated with, the latter never give more than “a strange moaning cry” (61). Without communication, the encounter soon becomes armed conflict. There is also a notable distinction made through physicality, fully imbued with racist divisions: whereas a Neanderthal is described as having “the bigness of a gorilla and something of its form” and as “a strange, strayed, hungry, pitiful beast” (61) with “an odd *black* resentment against life” (63, emphasis mine), the Cro-Magnons first appear “tall and naked, the sunshine glistening on *golden* bodies, their hair flying like the horses’ manes. *Golden* and wonderful” (33, emphasis mine). This goldenness is the adjective often used for the people, and the characters repeatedly describe their time as the “Golden Age of Mankind”. Through Basque, this Paradise is identified with European minority language, and the Fall is identified with the rise of civilisation and genocidal European empire. One character makes a prediction: “the descendants of those people—the descendants of your children —will have drifted across to the fringes of Europe. [...] In Tyre they’ll burn alive those children of yours inside the iron belly of Baal. Rome will crucify them in scores along the Appian Way. They’ll chop off their hands in hundreds when Vercingetorix surrenders to Caesar” (51).

But through Mitchell’s second act of time travel the Golden Age is given a second chance, after civilisation authors its own collapse. In *Gay Hunter*, the eponymous and euonymous American heroine travels through time with two English self-identified Fascists, Ledyard Houghton and Lady Jane Easterling. Whereas Gay is portrayed as quickly able to adapt to her technology-free surroundings, shedding her clothes and foraging for food, the Fascists, highly attached to their symbols of civilisation, are incapable and must be taught how to survive. Thus “They were two people clad, with responsibilities and already poise, even while they stood and sucked raw eggs” (36). Lady Jane’s first act on

arriving is to weave herself a skirt; Gay, meanwhile, tames a wolf. So when Gay meets the post-historic Folk she immediately fits in, while the Fascists are first frightened by and second seek to civilise the temporal natives. As with the Cro-Magnards, the Folk are, in Gay's eyes, "naked, rosy-brown children" (73), while Lady Jane sees them as "Filthy savages!" (74). As with the Cro-Magnards, the Folk speak a "Tongue" which has a "vague, far trace of familiarity here and there" and which is in its syntax similar to pre-imperial languages as Mitchell imagines them: "a simple agglutinative tongue, without tense or time, such a tongue as the Europe of her day had long abandoned" (60). This adds to the description of *Three Go Back's* pre-historic Basque by imagining the post-historic Folk as being outside of imperial temporality, and again connected to European minority language prior to the imperial nation-state.

In this novel, the Tongue is contrasted with imperial English, which certain Singers of the folk can still understand and speak. Rem, a Singer, explains that "Only the dying Voices speak this speech. And they go fainter every hunting season as we come back to the Place of Voices. The Old Singer says that when he was young the Voices were still very loud. None care to listen to them now. But I" (51). The Old Singer later adds that "Rem and I are the last of the Folk to learn the tongue of the Voices. When we pass, that will also pass" (81). Gay travels to the Place of Voices, where she finds a dusty machine, pulls a lever, and listens to the English-language recording of a "tale of the culmination of the world's civilisations and their last downfall in war and riot" (85). Horrified by this narrative, and driven to rescue the Folk from any cycling of history, any rebeginning of the imperial thrust through time, Gay destroys first the Place of Voices and second the Fascists' attempt to torture the Folk into a new civilisation, the two civilisational threats to the idyll of the Folk. Shortly after this a mystical experience removes the final threat: in a song, Gay herself is transported back to her own time.

Here, language links times through carrying information and story, as well as by carrying Gay across as a traveller. Language creates alternative lifeworlds, or is what constitutes such a lifeworld. The Voice, however, is not merely an

antagonist, but also what has enabled the Folk's idyll. Following Rousseau's argument, remembering the language and story of civilisation is what has enabled the Folk to be civilised *enough* to raise them above an animal state, and only when that idyll is safely established can the imperial Voice be destroyed and the Tongue be safe to flourish outside of time. The two acts of time travel in the book are also related to language, though not so directly: it is a joint attempt by the three travellers at a kind of lucid dreaming that transports them forward through time, and a similarly intense dream under the influence of Rem's singing that transports Gay back. Here it is imagination, in one case guided by song, that makes time travel happen. Language is thus a temporal ligature, conjoining temporalities just as the pair of books link past and future together to make Mitchell's argument about the present. In Mitchell this ligature is a threat, a contamination of utopia that must be erased. For Mitchell, while we may learn from the past (or the future), we cannot be there, and we civilised and historical humans cannot get outside of the dialectic of history, outside of time.

This, in Mitchell's other work, is taken up as a major Scottish theme, particularly in the more well-known trilogy *A Scots Quair*, published contemporaneously with the science fiction in 1932, 1933 and 1934. Here, a related dialectic is set up: Chris and the Scottish land as outside of time on the one hand, and Ewan and the Scottish people as subjects of history on the other. As Silver (2015) puts it, writing after Cairns Craig, "Chris' view of history is cyclical, in contrast to her husband and son who become, through war and political agitation, lost in external historic events" (116). Whereas "Chris Caledonia", as one of her husbands calls her, becomes one with the land in death (Baker 2015:56), her son Ewan is "condemned to a struggle he cannot see as ever being finished, a dilemma offering no adequate resolution of the novel's central question about the possibility of living fully within historical time" (Shiach 2015:14). The rupture which brings about this dilemma, in which neither escape from time nor fully living in time is possible, is described early in the first novel as a dilemma of language, as a learned break from

Scots words to tell to your heart how they wrung it and held it, the toil of their days and unendingly their fight. And the next minute that passed from you, you were English, back to the English words so sharp and clean and true – for a while, for a while, till they slid so smooth from your throat you knew they could never say anything that was worth the saying at all. (Gibbon [1932] 2008:32)

That is, it is the learning of civilised English which breaks Chris as the signifier of Scotland from her land and language, from her being. For Mitchell, who mistakenly believed in a genetic reality of race, this rupture is historically repeated: not just English/Scottish but also Celtic/Pictish. As with Chris Caledonia in *A Scots Quair*, Gibbons' writing "asserts that his own Mearns 'peasant stock' is significant in being the remnant of what he took to be, in line with the historiography of the time, a pre-Celtic Pictish people" (Silver 2015: 111-112). Writing elsewhere, Mitchell puts this (false, racist) history bluntly: "the Kelts are a strain quite alien to the indubitable and original Scots. They were, and remain, one of the greatest curses of the Scottish scene, quick, avaricious, unintelligent, quarrelsome, cultureless, and uncivilisable" (Gibbon 1934: 6). It is easy here to see the identification between Mitchell's self-identified Pictishness and the Cro-Magnards' proto-Basqueness: Mitchell's lost Golden Age is also a vision of a lost Scotland and a losing Scots. The theories of history underpinning Mitchell's writing are of a piece with the contending fascist and socialist modernisms of his time (Hewitt 1996, Linehan 2012), which also underpin the modernist language politics of MacDiarmid discussed above (see also Hart 2013), including the famous disagreements between Muir and MacDiarmid on the languages for modernist Scotland (Muir 1936). That is, Mitchell is subscribing to a common modernist temporality of human history as progressing from an animal state to utopia, and articulating his own vision of at what point utopia occurs – and what languages are utopian. For Mitchell, language is the temporal ligature that brings the subject into utopia, but subjects and languages that risk the stability of that utopia must be removed. Mitchell's imagined utopia of pre-civilisational Europeans can be glimpsed but not lived in by contemporary Scots, and it is the very temporality by which



utopia is constructed that makes it inaccessible. The ligature in Mitchell is tied and then unbound.

This figure of language as a temporal ligature is by no means unique to Scottish science fiction; indeed, my use of “ligature” is derived from Smith (2012), in his analysis of language in Nalo Hopkinson’s *Midnight Robber* (2000), in which a magical-technological<sup>25</sup> tonal language “provides the potential means of communication between the discrete mirror-worlds” and “thereby functions as the persistent ligature between the two otherwise discrete dimensions” (64-65). *Midnight Robber* is itself written in languages hybridising Trinidadian Creole, Standard English, French, Spanish, Jamaican Patois and science fictional neologisms, and the narration of the novel itself creates a lifeworld – a future planet called Toussaint colonised by Caribbeans – that fulfils the Afrofuturist promise of creating a Black future entangled with a Black past. Zobel Marshall (2016) explicitly names this science fictional language as “a reworking of Brathwaite’s concept of nation language”. Another key example is Suzette Elgin’s *Native Tongue* (1984), in which women in an extreme patriarchal future create a new feminist language as a means of revolution. As Elgin’s character puts it, “The hypothesis was that if we put the project [of creating a new language] into effect it would *change reality*” (296, emphasis original). And as a final case, Ursula Le Guin’s *Always Coming Home* (1985) writes songs and poems from a people in a language that “might be going to have lived” (quotation in front matter pre-pagination). Le Guin puts the ligature, the means by which the future is instantiated through writing in the present, in poetry: “we were among you: / the hungry, / the powerless, / in your world, coming closer, / coming closer to our world” (405). The ligature is named in Le Guin’s language as the “heyiya-if”, the English homograph surely non-coincidental: it is drawn as a double spiral, its two arms extending into the past and future, spinning around the empty centre of the present.

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25 As Elgin (1984:242) has it, “Magic is quite ordinary and simple. It is simply language.” Thus to rework Arthur C Clarke (1973): Any sufficiently advanced language is indistinguishable from magic.

These feminist and postcolonial science fictional languages can thus disrupt the utopian temporality of the imperial project, promiscuously collapsing and teasing apart possible pasts, possible presents and possible futures.<sup>26</sup> When we read a science fiction novel written wholly or in part in a constructed or non-standard language, multiple linguistic temporalities are interwoven. Diagetically, within the world of the novel, the language is a language of the future – that is, a development of the languages that currently exist in the zero world of the author into the future world of the novel, shaped by social change, cataclysm, scientific advancement, and so forth. Extradiagetically, the language of the novel exists now, in the book we are reading: it is not a future language but another language of the present, albeit one restricted in scope to that novel.<sup>27</sup> As such, the language is a permutation of and reflection on languages that currently exist: in each of the cases mentioned, English.

In the Scottish case, another act of time travel through language is found in Kurtoglu's Scots language *Braken Fences*. Here, the dialectical opposition is between the "Rational World" (RW), a globe-spanning culture of liberal scientism, and the "Fundamentalist Zone" (FZ), confined by a militarised border to Central Asia. Wandering in this distinctly post-9/11 dialectic are a group of lost Neanderthals, who it transpires have wandered out of their own time, the imagined past of the zero world, into the time of the novel, the imagined future of the zero world. The choice of Neanderthals as pre-historical ideal may be a deliberate response to Mitchell/Gibbon: it is notable in this regard that Beatrice

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26 These arguments are more literary than sociolinguistic. While Elgin is explicit in endorsing a variant of linguistic relativism – the idea that the structure of language shapes cognition itself (Swoyer 2003) – others may be more circumspect, making a more limited argument about what imagination can accomplish. My argument here tends more towards the latter approach: I am discussing the dynamics of different and contesting stories, asking what telling stories differently can accomplish. Here, "imperialism" is as much a narrative as a historical process. Nevertheless, discursive critique has sociolinguistic implications, and sociolinguistic understanding shapes discursive analysis. While describing a specific language promotion project is beyond the scope of this thesis, it is worth holding in mind how such a project might grow from these critical roots. This will be lightly touched on in Chapter 3.

27 The constructed languages of popular culture, such as Star Trek's Klingon or JRR Tolkien's Elvish, frequently take on vastly expanded scopes as developed by their fans: any novel's language can very easily become a more fully-established and wide-ranging language of the present. Klingon has a success that Scots language novelists are clearly dreaming of.

and Bill first land among the Neanderthals due to a crashing flying machine, which is the inciting incident of *Three Go Back*, and that Beatrice later travels back in time through an act of singing, as with the concluding incident of *Gay Hunter*. If this is a riposte, it is deepened by Kurtoglu giving the Neanderthals far greater character differentiation, narrative agency and cultural depth than anything in Mitchell: her primitivism is a great deal less idealised and more believable. In any case, the choice of Neanderthals as a figure also enables a conclusion to the novel that places the protagonists once more outside of historical time: because Neanderthals are an evolutionarily extinct line, the choice to travel back with the Neanderthals removes Beatrice and her partner Hsien from the human genetic line and narrative of civilised progress.

Kurtoglu's RW is the culmination of 21<sup>st</sup> century late capitalism, here represented not by the West but by an ascendant coalition of India and China. There are, on the one hand, measures of gender equality (female and male characters share the same economic roles and privileges) and racial equality (the Scottish protagonist, Beatrice Varshini, is of mixed heritage, and again white characters and characters of colour share in economic privilege); on the other hand, these equalities are maintained and enabled through a militarised border wall with the patriarchal and racially-divided FZ, across which migration is entirely forbidden. The RW's tentative equality thus depends on racialised cross-border violence, such as a subjugated Tibetan population. Similarly, while the RW exhibits technological superiority and economic abundance, this is regulated and maintained by the omnipresence of Welfare Officers, including Beatrice, who have unmitigated access to characters' lives and are able to wield coercive power against them, which Kurtoglu calls "soft totalitarianism" (Kurtoglu 2012). Its peace is called the "Pax Scientifica" (52), a reference to the "Pax Romana" which was brought about by the aforementioned genocides of the Roman Empire. Its freedoms are distinctly bound:

Eugenics wis aye a gey sair pynt – the richt tae chuse yer ain mairraige pairtner, especially the wumman's richt, wis yin o thair vauntit freedoms, in contrast tae the FZ. Nanetheless, the Eugenics Law wis designt tae

discourage fowk, nae twa weys aboot it, fae haein bairns wi expensive medical problems. Parents that deleeberately incurrt costs for an avoidable genetic ill or disabeelity got nae benefits, nae maternity leave, nae schuill place for the bairn, naethin. (198)

Trapped between these two options, Beatrice – who spends most of the novel wandering, with and without direction, along the border – is attracted to the communalism and nature-connection of the Neanderthals. This is not presented as a resolution of the dialectic, however, but an option which is threatened by it: the Neanderthals are enslaved and persecuted by the powers in the FZ, and would be killed, or subjected to experimentation, if they attempted to cross its border. What they want, and what Beatrice chooses, is:

the world that human beins will ne'er see again [... W]haur there are hirds that muckle that fill the view tae the horizon, thair hoofs shak the erd, the beasts taks days tae gang by. [...] We want forests fu o game an wild berries an hinny, forests that ... yer bairns growes up an haes bairns o thair ain afore ye can reach the ither side o thaim. We juist want tae gang hame. (216)

It is language that gives Beatrice access to this vision, and which denies such access to Bill. She learns the Auld Language, but he does not and so “can’t get into this nostalgia for the primal ooze” (183). The language also brings with it distinct lifeworlds, as the Neanderthals are in regular contact with the voices of their ancestors, which Beatrice interprets as simply a naive account of thought itself. She is similarly sceptical of their own understanding of their history: they believe that their ancestors crossed over a river from a land of mammoths into what is now the FZ; Beatrice thinks they were created by a Chinese genetic experiment, a theory that gives the Neanderthal the same doubled past-and-future signification as Mitchell’s tribes. In both cases, problematically informed by Indigenous critique of colonial epistemology (Agrawal 1995, Wilson 2008), the plot functions as a riposte to Beatrice’s scientism: the Neanderthals are right, and Beatrice is dead wrong. Significantly, and again magically, language is

once more what enables transition between times. Bill and Beatrice find a rupture in space-time which can be opened by particular kinds of sung tone known only to the Neanderthals. As in Hopkinson and Mitchell, Indigenous, pre-historic and post-historic people sing a ligature in time through a techno-magic unknown to the novel's colonial present. In Kurtoglu, as with Mitchell, this techno-magic is also connected to traditional Scottish culture and its own otherworlds, which thus also become marked by the same imaginary.<sup>28</sup> As Bill says:

“Ah’ve heard the Auld People [the Neanderthals] nicht efter nicht ettlin for tae reproduce that soon. Ah didna recognise it richt aff, bit Ah’ve been thinkin on it aa day an it finally came tae me. [A]n ancestor o mines, a Shetlan man, made a tune – it’s aye a popular fiddle tune – bit *he* sayed that he heard it, comin fae unner the grun.” He leukit at Beatrice.

“Fae a Faerie Hill?” she speirt. [...]

“Exackly.” (169)

Beatrice then compares this to “Ossian – or Thomas the Rhymer hissel. They thocht days had passed an it wis years back on Earth” (169). But in order for time travel to happen, this tone must be made only in specific places where borders can be open, where place and time are interwoven. Thus the narrative brings together rationalist science, Indigenous knowledge and Scottish folk tradition into one linguistic act of time travel.

But to fully embrace the language and its time comes at a cost, both immediate and more deeply temporal. Beatrice's partner, Hsien, himself a genetic “chimera” created through experiments which give him both blindness and second sight, has a condition which could be treated in the RW's present but not in the Neanderthals' past. Thus, in choosing to cross over together, they choose Hsien's early death. More deeply, Beatrice discovers a quirk of Neanderthal

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28 The same figure appears in MacLeod's *Intrusion*, referenced above, in which a Leosach inherits the genetic ability to see into the future, and Hebridean music and landscape enables bridges between worlds.

genetics which limits their reproduction, and is used by Kurtoglu to explain their eventual outbreeding or extinction by Homo Sapiens. The Neanderthals have no future. “History doesn’t have to repeat itself,’ [Beatrice] said, but she knew she was lying” (180). The Neanderthals do not have a future and so are outside of human history; because they have no historical temporality, they are, like Mitchell’s post-historic Folk, outside of time. It is possible for a historic human to hybridise and to cross that border, but it is difficult and costly. For the highly Rational Bill, “Only yae species can be human. It’s a monotheism thing. There can only be yae planet that the sin an muin revolves aroon, only yae fowk chosen by God tae receive his revelations. Bit it’s a species barrier aa richt. An it’s a Border that canna be sealt” (198). This Border that for some cannot be crossed and that for all cannot be fully sealed is the border between languages: always divided, always permeable.

Langer (2011) dissects these colonial approaches to time in science fiction, equally applicable to Mitchell’s time travel narratives, thus:

Cultural difference, therefore, is predicated not only across space but also across time. The colonial ideology of progress includes the drive for technological process, and figures time as linear, with technologically progressive societies pushing forward and leaving others behind. [...] The dynamic of past and future is therefore complicated and folded over on itself: the colonized are seen almost literally as not only figures from history but as figures from the colonizer’s own past, objects of simultaneous reverence as ancestors and scorn as primitives. (130)

That is, the colonial construction of the Indigenous in science fiction, through both the pre-historic and the post-apocalyptic, the Neanderthal and the genetically-modified chimera, folds colonial time over on itself. But in Scottish science fiction this is complicated by Scotland’s double-vision, the seeing of Scotland as simultaneously colonised and colonising, space alien and space explorer, Cro-Magnon and time traveller. Trapped within colonial temporality and the colonial construction of the primitive, these Scottish writers long to

escape back into that primitive space outside of time, which is also a space of pure Scottishness and Scots, a Scots free of English, and free of the imperial-genocidal British nation-state. Indigenous in these novels is figured as prehistoric and posthistoric, a racist colonial construction which erases the ongoing survivance (Vizenor 2008) of Indigenous peoples in the present, and, in so doing, prevents Scots – both people and language – from accessing its and their own imminent present. In both Mitchell and Kurtoglu the full potential of the temporal ligature is thus foreclosed: possible worlds visit the present, and the present visits other worlds, but the integrity of the colonial timeline and historical progression is ultimately preserved by placing possibility outside of time. As Indigenous and decolonial scholar Glen Coulthard (2014) has it, “This developmentalist ontology” which ranks societies as more or less developed depicts “those non-Western societies deemed to be positioned at the lower end of this scale of historical or cultural development as people without history.” The argument here is not that Indigenous societies do not change, but precisely that a narrow ontology with a deterministic view of social change places Indigenous societies outside of time.

To contrast such analogues of the Indigenous in Scottish science fiction with the more critically and commercially successful Scots vernacular novels is clarifying. Vernacular social realism is attendant to an existing register of individual Scots’ linguistic existence in the present. But Kurtoglu, with the construction of a literary prose register post-interruption, and Mitchell, with the construction of a contemporary Scottish identity post-union, both rely on the construction of a pure, pre-colonial Scots and Scottishness which never achieved nation-statehood in the past and so does not exist in the present. These Scottish science fiction novels, using the out-of-time figure of the Indigenous, have also placed Scots outside of history and thus inaccessible to the present.

Langer describes this double-bind, replicated exactly in Beatrice’s “haurd choices” of whether to stay in a time where Hsien can be treated or instead to travel back to the Golden Age, whether to use her genetic knowledge to save the Neanderthals or let history happen:

This conflict, between the colonizer's desire to keep indigenous culture's 'pure' for the colonizer's own consumption and observation, and the desire of those colonial subjects to partake of the usually technological benefits brought by the coloniser, is familiar to historical colonialism and makes up part of a complicated problem of conflict. The opposite but corresponding conflict is between the colonizers' desire to "civilize" and bring their colonial subjects into what it perceives as the temporal present – and the resulting indigenous drive towards "nativism", the desire to keep one's own culture pure and to go back to an idealized precolonial cultural state. (133)

With a history and a present of colonising and being colonised, this conflict is also the impossible choice that Scotland and Scots has set up for itself. Scots cannot be kept pure if it is to exist in the present and develop into the futurity, and indeed an ideology of Scots purity has shaky ontological foundations as discussed above, but without an appeal to some form of separate Scottishness the foundations of language are even shakier. Similarly, Scotland's attempts to form a civic nationalist nation-state still arguably rely on neoliberal and neocolonial policies, including in language development (McEwan-Fujita 2005, Scott and Mooney 2009; Davidson, McCafferty and Miller 2010), but attempts at other means of organising Scottishness as a counter to imperialism may be in decline or infancy (Scothorne 2019). An alternative model would be to fully embrace precisely those disruptions that the temporal ligature enables, entangling the past and future of language in the present. Thus I propose neither a Scots that transcends time through the colonial constructions of ethnic coherence and imperial nation-state language, nor a Scots unable to speak beyond the particularities of the individual and so limited in its responses to English dominance, but a fluid, communal and resistant Scots that provides plural modes of belonging and imagination.

Where these Scottish science fiction novels imagines a utopia for Scots and Scottishness as impossibly outside of time, my critique attempts to lay a foundation of antinational approaches to country and language in the immanent



present. My argument is that the colonial double-bind is what places Scotland and Scots outside of time in the first place, and so that it takes a disinvestment from national coherence in order to create a different future for Scots. I describe this approach as “antinational”, most frequently used as a term of legal prejudice in state language policy: minority languages are cast as against the nation itself (Pattanayak 1988, Brown and Ganguly 2003). In the Scottish context, I want to deploy a Scots that is not for but against the nation in order to bring Scots language reality into being: I claim Scots’ antinationality as its futurity. This requires emotional, structural and narrative disinvestment from the coherence of the Scottish nation and the Scots language,<sup>29</sup> and instead: (1) a reinvestment in linguistic specificity that is neither class-confined nor universal; (2) an interest in class and cultural forms beneath and beyond the nation-state; and (3) a celebration of narratives that do not simply replay colonialism or neocolonialism but rather structure alternative temporalities. Just as another world is not merely possible but actual (Tully 2008: 301), so too another language is actual. This tentative antinational approach cannot fully escape Scotland’s colonial double-bind to a utopia outside of time, and so my work in Scots and in Scotland is of course constituted through Scottish coloniality’s particular paradox of subjectivation. My critical and artistic work does seek, however, to exceed the terms of the paradox in an effort to reshape those very colonial conditions. Chapter 3 investigates my approach to the verse novel *Deep Wheel Orcadia* through this lens, but I first turn to a final and surprising Orcadian science fiction figure who could give birth to such antinational possibilities.

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29 My language of “emotional disinvestment” anent Scotland and the nation-state owes much to Raha (2019) writing in different but not unrelated fields, and to our personal conversations.

## IV. Frankenstein in Orkney

“Science fiction begins with Mary Shelley’s *Frankenstein*” (Alkon 2002:1), and the narrative crisis of *Frankenstein* takes place in Orkney. The European doctor, Frankenstein, has reached the cutting edge of new science and creates life from hybridised parts. He is horrified by his creation, names it a monster, and flees. The abandoned creature sets out on his own, acquires language, is brutalised by his interaction with a prejudiced society, and seeks revenge on the doctor: he demands that the doctor make him a bride, and threatens death on all the doctor loves if he does not comply. To make the new bride, the doctor travels to the edge of Europe: Orkney.

Not only is Orkney the geographical fringe of the European continent, it is also the point in Europe from which colonial voyages would leave to explore and colonise Europe’s new worlds. *Frankenstein* was first published in 1818; Hudson Bay Company ships departed and were staffed from Stromness from 1670 on, James Cook’s ships would make first landfall there in 1780, and Franklin’s expedition to find the Northwest passage would leave from there in 1845 (McGoogan 2003). When Shelley takes Frankenstein to Orkney, she is not merely locating him somewhere remote, nor merely giving him a stormy and sublime geographical setting, but also taking him to the fringe between colonialism’s old and new worlds. It is here that Frankenstein creates the bride, and here where, unable to countenance allowing his creations to breed and bring their own world into being, Frankenstein destroys his second creature.

From this point the gothic horror of the novel unwinds: the creature kills Frankenstein’s best friend, then his wife, framing Frankenstein for the deaths and destroying his career. Frankenstein pursues the creature to the North Pole where, in the ice, both are left to die. Frankenstein’s destruction of the creature’s future is the destruction of his own future: destroying the creature’s social and biological reproduction means that the creature destroys Frankenstein’s. I am unable to add critically to the vast scholarship on such a foundational text, but I want to use it as a point to conclude with a question about Scottish science

fiction: in Orkney, Frankenstein aborts the future, so what would happen if instead in Orkney the monsters were to live?

Frankenstein's creature is canonically hybrid, and, as Langer (2011) notes in reference to Shelley's novel, "the spectre of the intersection and/or combination of the familiar and the foreign has long haunted the science-fictional imagination" (107); postcolonial literature also has this canonical hybridity, though which "colonized peoples have embraced hybridity and created what Ashcroft et al. call 'new transcultural forms': an attempt to both synthesise the disparate cultures and traditions and to subvert the rule, both political and cultural, of the colonizer" (108). Thus "all postcolonial science fiction – indeed all postcolonial cultural production – is about hybridity" (125). And yet do such statements offer a hybrid postcolonial (or decolonising) future free from the depredations of colonialism, or is such hybridity all too easily incorporated into liberalism's heterogeneous ontology and linear-progressive temporality?

Suppose Frankenstein did not abandon his first creature and abort his second, but rather saw potential in their grotesque hybridities. We can imagine Frankenstein caring for his creature, teaching him English voluntarily (rather than forcing Caliban to steal Prospero's spells), gently introducing him to polite European society, advocating for monsters' rights... but, of course, now we are reincorporated back into a liberalism which wilfully forgets the essential violence that maintains its progressive temporality. Instead, then, we could imagine Frankenstein failing to destroy his second creature, and the two creatures forming a relationship of loving solidarity, creating new hybrid children in secret, and waging guerilla war against Europe from their base in Orkney. Would they succeed in building a new postcolonial world, or would that world require dependence on a new subaltern: is it true, as Spivak says, that "once [decolonization] is won, the people want really an entry into the haunted house inhabited by the colonizers" ([1993-4 [1] 1996:27). Or is that alternative itself a colonial failure of imagination, again rendering the subaltern speechless? Could a bridge to freedom be built between the worlds? Is the ligature itself freedom?

Suppose Frankenstein were not born in Naples and educated in Ingolstadt, shaped by the metropolitan centres of Europe's emergent nation-states, but born in Orkney and educated in the medical schools of Edinburgh. She<sup>30</sup> could still very easily situate herself in European colonial modernity, as many who followed that non-fictional route did, but her "oddly imperial yet strangely subaltern" origins might also give her different insights. She might then not create a monstrous hybrid other against which to define herself, but rather experiment with her own already-present hybridity, grafting on a new arm here, a new tongue there. What stories could she then tell?

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30 *Pace* Stryker (1994), my Frankenstein is both doctor and monster.

## **Chapter 3.**

### **Orcadian Speculation**

*Deep Wheel Orcadia* is the creative project at the centre of my thesis research. It is an Orkney language science fiction verse novel – that is, it is written in the Orkney variant of Scots, in a fluidly metred poetic diction and format, and is a continuous narrative set in a speculative future scenario that deploys classical and contemporary science fiction tropes. This hybridisation of literary modes – science fiction, poetry and minority language – is not as unusual as it first appears, as the foregoing critical work has established; rather, I would argue, generic hybridisation is a logical and productive response to the layered challenges of writing in a minority language. My research methodology began with this creative work, writing into the space that is minority language speculative poetry, and then analysing the intention, process and results to develop a theory of minority language literature and practice. This chapter recounts the creative aspect of the methodology and explores the results. Rather than a full critical analysis of the creative project itself, which is work better left to other scholars, this chapter recounts my reasoning: Why did I want to write this way? In what literary genealogy am I writing? What linguistic and creative decisions did I make to facilitate the work, and how do those decisions reflect the larger political dynamics at play?

I first discuss my aims and intentions in the writing of *Deep Wheel Orcadia*: why an Orkney language science fiction verse novel, and why the particular story I have told? I then provide a critical history of Orkney language literature, establishing a literary genealogy for my own work, and also the problematic space into which I am writing. As the core of this chapter, I provide a deep discussion of my choices regarding grammar, lexis and orthography, showing how micro-level linguistic choices negotiate macro-level linguistic power relations. To conclude, I explore what I think some of the limitations of this

work might be, and how this creative project could point the way to future speculations.

## **I. Approaching *Deep Wheel Orcadia***

My task with *Deep Wheel Orcadia* is to write for the present in a language many see as long past, to bring into being a literature that as yet only half exists, and to imagine a future when that future is most at risk of being denied. My creative approach has evolved in tandem with my critical research, and my critical research with my writing: some of the impulses behind the verse novel are more instinctive than theoretical, and my hunches have directed my critical research as much as my critical research has directed my writing. My exploration of the Scots and science fiction canons was plotted as much by my desires as it provided new flightpaths for those desires to follow. As such, this section is not a scholarly analysis of my approach, but an introspective interlude in which I outline the intentions and approaches that have shaped my work.

My first encounter with the idea of writing science fiction in Scots was Matthew Fitt's *But n Ben A-Go-Go* (2000). I was struck by the fact of the novel's existence, in itself striking down many of the prejudices attendant to Scots. By writing in a populist genre in an accessible way, Fitt demonstrated that Scots was neither archaic nor academic; by writing in the future, Fitt demonstrated that Scots was not merely suitable for writing nostalgically about the past; by constructing a language from contemporary usage, synthetic borrowing and sci fi neologism, Fitt actively imagined what a future for Scots could look like. Most of all, I was struck by the sense that the book was neither about Scotland nor not about Scotland: the idea that Scots was only suitable for Scottish topics was refuted, ironised, played with. All these approaches seemed full of potential.

Beginning to write *Deep Wheel Orcadia* came after five years of writing poetry consistently in a rough standard Scots, and after two years of attempting to

adapt the principles of Scots writing to Orkney language, the language with which I grew up. I was frustrated by the limitation of the Orkney language canon to restrictively Orcadian themes and settings, by the way much of the best writing in my language was all writing from or about the past, and by the lack of any widely-understood approach to the language in which to write and to find a readership. Following Fitt in making my own peculiar science fictional leap freed me from these constraints. I chose to set my work on a space station mirroring contemporary Orkney so that I could write about my home while writing about something entirely other. I chose to write in a future language that was rooted in both present and past, as a way to escape the confounding problem of how to write in a language that had no established canon or readership. That is, if it's a future Orkney language, it doesn't have to be completely loyal to contemporary vernacular, can mine both past usage and future neologism for artistic purposes, and can through its speaking constitute a future that might otherwise not exist. I chose to write a future society so that I could celebrate what was meaningful to me about Orkney while also liberating my characters from what I found constraining. I chose to use genre conventions as a means of enticing different readerships into the language and themes of Orkney, making science fiction a trojan horse for the Orkney language, and the Orkney language a trojan horse for science fiction. And most of all I chose to write an extended narrative in order to disprove any notion that it could not be done – aiming to make the doing of it enjoyable, possible, desirable. To bring into being both a language and a form of book which does not yet exist itself requires science fictional imagination.

Linguistically, the challenges have been many. Orkney language has no widely available grammar, and no consistent standard orthography. Because until recently the language has not been taught in schools, I have also met numerous Orkney speakers who find it insurmountably difficult to read Orkney language as it is written down: if they hear the work read they can understand every word, but lack of established spelling conventions means that they cannot understand it or hear it internally when they read it from the page. This creates yet another double-bind: the closer an Orkney orthography moves towards Standard

English (or, more tentatively, Standard Scots), the more people are able to understand the meaning and the fewer people are able to understand the sound; the closer the orthography moves to reflecting only Orkney pronunciations, the more the sound has the potential to be captured for both speakers and non-speakers, but the fewer have the potential to understand it. The eye-dialectal approach, in which sound is conveyed not through consistent orthography but through phonetic marking of major variations from English, tends to increase intelligibility for both speakers and non-speakers, but is limited in its scope over a longer text and in conveying deeper aspects of language.

My experience entirely bears out Ashcroft's line that the writing must speculatively construct "a reader for whom its variations pose no serious obstacle", in full knowledge that those obstacles are, in the zero world, very much there. Furthermore, the increasing bidialecticism of Orkney speakers, to the point where English and Orkney are interpenetrated at the level of the sentence and "pure" Orkney language is rarely heard (if it can even meaningfully exist), means that the more authentically to Orkney language a piece is written, the more it is subject to the charge common to all Scots writing, "But that's no hou we spaek." That is, the assumption that minority language writing should always mimetically reproduce local speech prevents a literary form from developing as it has for English. On the other hand, if a literary form for a minority language does not already exist, then what basis does the literary form have except for a reproduction of speech? And if a uniquely Orcadian element is separated linguistically from the English and Scots elements in contemporary vernacular in order to establish an authoritative and separate Orkney, how is that separation to be made? I have attempted such a separation in order to construct the language of my verse novel, and in so doing I am, just as national language is co-constituted with nation-state, constructing a coherent Orkney that does not, cannot and should not, in my political analysis, exist. Every individual decision of spelling, grammar and word-choice has to negotiate these necessarily competing concerns – authenticity vs syncretism, consistency vs adaptability, useability vs fidelity, readability vs comprehensiveness, vernacular vs literary, contemporary vs archaic, preservationist vs futurist, regionalist vs



nationalist – while also, centrally, making for good poetry. The dynamics of how I made these decisions is detailed in the third section; the intention which gave me the impetus to push through the contradictions was science fictional. If the Orkney language is too hard to write now, I have to imaginatively constitute a future in which writing the language, in Le Guin’s utopian tense, might be going to have been possible.

This is another version of what I have called in this thesis a “temporal ligature”: Le Guin’s heyiya-if, a double spiral from past and future around the empty centre of the present. The language and the plot of *Deep Wheel Orcadia* binds different timelines together in a necessarily unstable way. This is then reflected in the setting and story of the verse novel, which is a difficult utopia. Within the central narrative, the space station is a diasporic communitarian collective: community is founded on geographic commonality rather than constructed ethnos, resources are shared equitably and without impoverishment, decisions are democratic, care is co-operative, government is non-coercive. But the change brought about by faster-than-light (FtL) travel threatens the economic foundation of the station, as does the ecological and existential threat brought about by the exploitation of the planet’s “lights” (a resource or a consciousness?) as fuel for FtL travel. Furthermore, as ghosts and visions of past and future begin to appear in the space station, the suggestion is that FtL travel itself is creating temporal ruptures, mangling timelines.<sup>31</sup> This story, along with its polyvocal presentation of interacting characters, is strongly influenced by George Mackay Brown’s prose work, particularly *Greenvoe* (1972), with a few crucial differences. Orcadia’s community is not ethnic and bounded, but diasporic and borderless; it does not reproduce conservative social structures, but fosters queer and fluid forms of being and belonging; it is not threatened by external exploitation, but is complicit and agential, the author of its own threats.

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31 The science fictional foundation for this is the observation that travelling faster than light means breaking linear causality: if a message were sent from Earth to Mars and back again all at lightspeed, it would arrive before it left. This central problem of interstellar science fiction is largely ignored in the canon, with maintenance of causality despite FtL travel accepted as a genre convention just as anatomically-impossible fire-breathing flying dragons are accepted in fantasy, or writing dialogue in a formal register is accepted in so-called social realism, and while my plot acknowledges and plays with the problem, it doesn’t offer any rigorous solution either.

This Orcadia is a fantasy, but one which links a nostalgic past to a utopian future through the present of the novel.

This plot is then given the secondary framing device: an agent of the “Bureau of Temporal Sanitation” who is themselves reading the novel and judging whether or not it should be restricted due to the risks it poses to time. This ironical framing foregrounds the science fictional work of the language and the story, the work I am trying to do in the novel. My argument throughout this thesis, and throughout the creative project, is that science fictionally writing minority language as though it already exists is what makes it exist, that contaminating<sup>32</sup> contemporary standard language through the vigorous writing of minority language creates new linguistic and political reality in the present. To speak of utopia *then* constitutes change *now*: to speak the language of *then* is to construct the language of *now*. All language is the ligature between past and future that changes the present.

My antinational approach is thus woven through my choices of plot, setting and language. First, I have attempted to avoid or undermine the traditionally colonial narrative of galactic-scale science fiction. There is no clash of races-reified-as-species, but rather only humanity’s ongoing encounter with itself. Insofar as there is an alien in the novel, it is just as likely to be another version of the human. The process of societies influencing each other is problematic and contested, and is, through the dramatic device of FtL time disruption, taking place across time as well as space. Nevertheless, the colonial dynamics of space exploration itself are not denied: Orcadia is an extractive and ecologically destructive economy, and its dependence as a community on imperial economy is what undermines its own existence. The novel concludes not with liberal incorporation, not with out-of-time utopia, but with an ecological resistance that troubles space and time.

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32 I reclaim “contamination” as a positive process from Samuel Johnson and his followers. Johnson described dialectal influence on his attempted standardisation of English as “spots of barbarity” in the language which “criticism can never wash [a]way” (Johnson 1755:3). My “Bureau of Temporal Sanitation”, the *Académie française* of time itself, is similarly doomed.

Second, I have divested the verse novel from emotional commitment to any existing Scotland, and even from Orkney as such. Scotland does not appear, and the analogue of Orkney is given diasporic and constructed history rather than ethnically-rooted coherence. The Orcadia I have written is intended to trouble as much as it celebrates the zero-world Orkney, with utopian social and political forms that challenge Orkney as it exists: in particular, a communally queer construction of social relations that undermines the gendered and family-based division of labour and land that constitutes Orkney's agrarian economy. I examine and critique my own emotional attachments to both Orkney and utopia: both are, in the novel, a source of trouble.

Third, I have taken an antinational approach to the level of language. I have constructed an Orkney language against both the limitations of vernacular and the conventions of such Scots standards as have been attempted. The language adopts a frame of standardisation – consistent orthography and grammar, spelling based in phonology rather than eye-dialect reference to English, both formal and spoken modes – without pretences to wider applicability beyond the novel itself: it is not commensurable with Scots, nor is it even suitable to every Orkney speaker. And for all that my Orkney distinguishes itself from the vernacular through its presentation, the language is also built on an understanding of contemporary spoken Orkney. My Orkney language is thus neither my personal “voice”, nor not my voice: it is one writer's science fictional imagining of what a local language could look like in a multilingual commons.

Underscoring these theoretical and linguistic commitments, and underscoring their emotional impact, is a strong desire to write through my own emotional conflicts around Orkney and belonging. The two central characters, Astrid and Darling, represent different problematic relationships to the intense and belonging-driven community of the space station: Astrid was born there, speaks the language, but is returning after a long period studying art in the Martian metropolitan centre; Darling, speaking English, is from a wealthy and coercive Mars family, and has fled to Orcadia looking for a different kind of life and somewhere to belong. I was born in London, moved to Orkney when I was two

years old, grew up speaking the language, left for university and an arts career, and am now finding my own way back to my own confused form of belonging: I'm both Astrid and Darling. This doubleness is reflected in my own vernacular, bidialectal, and not wholly comfortable in either English or the Orkney language, with accent, grammar and word choice that mark me in both. By the end of the novel, Astrid cannot find a way to belong and plans to leave, while Darling is making a new economic commitment to the station through its economic changes; their relationship breaks under the tension of looking for – and worse, finding – what they need in each other. Writing this story, and writing in this language, is another ligature: the process of writing this book has been a process of writing my way back to Orkney and its language, and finding my own form of belonging.<sup>33</sup>

I began writing *Deep Wheel Orcadia* needing to write about Orkney but not knowing how. Taking a science fictional approach to setting, plot and language gave me the necessary freedom and constraints: through this method, I could write about Orkney by writing about anything and everything else. All science fiction is already metaphor, and to write science fiction is to say as much about the tenor as about the vehicle: the ground of my metaphor is the Orkney language, about and in which I am writing, speculatively, in the present.

## II. Orkney Language Literature

The contemporary Orkney language in which I am writing is a variant of Scots “with a substratum of Norn” (Ljosland 2012). Norn itself is a descendent of Old Norse, spoken fluently in Orkney and Shetland up until the 19<sup>th</sup> century, and

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33 Although this is for me a minor theme of the novel, this has also been a distinctly queer process: establishing a queer Orkney voice has been difficult in a community and language without any such representation. In 2018, as part of the development, I performed an extract of *Deep Wheel Orcadia* in Papa Westray, telling a queer love story in a two hundred-year-old kelp store in an island of 80 people in that island's own language; afterwards, an older Orcadian artist in a same-sex relationship told me that she never thought she'd hear anything like that in Orkney. This, too, is a utopian desire brought into the present.

now surviving only in textual fragments and in lexical and grammatical forms of the contemporary Orkney and Shetland languages (Barnes 1998). The language consolidated as a distinct variety of Scots at some point between the 15<sup>th</sup> and 18<sup>th</sup> centuries, fully supplanting Norn to the point of extinction by the end of the 19<sup>th</sup> century (Ljosland 2012, Millar 2010). While the dynamics of this process are a matter of some debate – did Orkney Scots evolve from Orkney Norn, or did Scots and Norn exist in collaboration and competition, with Scots eventually winning out, though with considerable Norn glottophagy? – what matters for my purposes is that a distinct variety of Scots, influenced strongly by Norn and in turn Old Norse, is predominantly spoken in Orkney by the 19<sup>th</sup> century.

The first published work in Orkney language is Walter Traill Dennison’s *The Orcadian Sketch-Book* (1880). The book combined local orature, folk poetry, and Dennison’s own short story writing into an anthology of “Traits of Old Orkney Life”, alongside both commentary on the language and its second published glossary (following Edmonston 1866). Dennison constructs the language, at this moment of its first publication, as already dispreferred and already dying: “a rude dialect, now fast becoming obsolete” (xi), but a brief look at his own text gives the lie to that statement.

Aye bairns, he’s jeust fower scor’ an’ fifeteen year sin’ de Forty-five. Sheu wus a sair ga’n year amang the gentry. The’ wur t’ree ha’ hooses brunt i’ the Nort Isles. An’ I’m ga’n tae tell you why de hoose o’ Hellsness wus aen o’ them. (1)

This is, in accent, vocabulary and grammar, entirely in keeping with how an older person brought up in the Isles would begin a story today, 140 years after publication. Although language erosion and a second competition with English is taking place, with considerable generational difference (Rendall 2013), and although orthographical conventions have changed, notably with far less use of apostrophisation, this passage is still readily comprehensible to those familiar with contemporary Orkney speech. The lexical items special to Scots (“bairns”, “sair ga’n”) and those similar to English terms (“hoose”, “aen”), the accentual

features (e.g. “jeust”, “de”) and the grammatical features (e.g. gendered pronouns in place of “it”) are all still extant to greater or lesser degrees.<sup>34</sup> Dennison thus inaugurates a peculiar double-role common to Orkney language linguists, ostensibly conducting work simply to record a language, otherwise regarded as rightfully dying, so as to “not be altogether uninteresting to the philologist” (xi), but in so doing laying the groundwork for language preservation and revitalisation. Dennison at least may have been conscious of this irony and thus deliberately exploiting it, for his introductory notes are also concerned with uplifting the perception of Orkney language speakers: “The Orcadian peasantry are surpassed by none of their class in Europe for general intelligence, and are equalled by none in gentleness of manner and natural politeness” (xi-xii), he writes, and “Prior to its impignoration,<sup>35</sup> Orkney had attained a higher point of civilization [...] than any other country in the three kingdoms”.<sup>36</sup> By transforming orature into literature, even as he condemns the language, Dennison is working to raise the status of the language and the people, with his work evidencing the ethnic political claims he wishes to make. Just as the later MacDiarmid would use language as a vector of Scottish nationalism, here Dennison is explicitly making an argument for Orcadian autonomy through a celebration of autonomous language.

The ontological stance of “recording a dying language” is maintained through the first rigorous study of the language, Hugh Marwick’s *Orkney Norn* (1929), which firmly allies the contemporary tongue to the extinct Norn: “Sometimes he is referring solely to the dead North Germanic variety. At other times, however,

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34 There is as yet no compiled corpus of spoken or written Orkney language to which I can reference claims such as these. They are rooted in the source material discussed below, and fundamentally in my own experience of the language. If a corpus were compiled that could question my claims here, I would be delighted.

35 By “impignoration” I believe Dennison means not simply the defaulted mortgage by which Orkney was annexed from Christian I, King of Denmark, Norway and Sweden, by the Scottish Crown in 1468, but ongoing feudal relationships between Orkney tenants and Scottish and British lairds: that is, a situation of ongoing indebtedness and minoritisation designed to prevent local development.

36 Note the foundational connection here with Mitchell’s view of the Picts, the link made between an ethnic stock marked by language and an innate social good – and in both cases it is a rustic form of society (civilised enough, primitively agrarian enough) that is valorised. This is not unique to Mitchell or Dennison, but quite common to both Victorian and modernist periods.

he appears to mean the surviving Norn element in the present Orkney Scots dialect; on occasion, he may even be using the term to refer to the Scots dialect as a whole” (Millar 2010). Similarly, Ernest Marwick, who further glossarised and analysed the Orkney language in his writings and anthologies, wrote that “our language in the Twentieth Century is English; we think in that language” (1949:77). Marwick’s Orkney-born contemporary, Edwin Muir, took up the same position against the Scots language renaissance in *Scott and Scotland* (1936), with Muir and MacDiarmid here representing diverging but entangled approaches to the political and artistic problems of Scottish literary modernism. The close parallel between Muir and Marwick’s arguments suggests that the opposition to the Scots language, though derived from modernist literary politics, may be rooted in a common Orcadian sensibility: at a purely psychological level, Henderson Scott (1991) describes Muir as “an Orkney man who never quite felt that he was Scottish”. Muir did not use the Orkney language in his work, and his mentee George Mackay Brown used it only very occasionally and without consistency in prose dialogue: Orkney’s literary fame did indeed, as a result, come through English.

But as both Hall (2010) and Ljosland (2011) note, two contemporaries and friends of Marwick and Mackay Brown, Robert Rendall and CM (Christina) Costie, were writing Orkney language literature precisely as Mackay Brown was choosing not to and Marwick was declaring it defunct. Rendall wrote considerable original poetry in Orkney language as well as “Orkney versions” of classical poetry, and Costie wrote two books of “folk poetry” alongside one of “dialect tales”. While the strategies here represent different positionings, with Rendall placing Orkney language work in a self-consciously literary sphere and Costie speaking to the folk-dialect constituency, both Hall’s and Ljosland’s critical treatments establish the literary worth and impact of the writers. As discussed in Chapter 2, the distinctions made between the literary and the vernacular should be problematised, and Rendall and Costie make clear how they are constructed as much through metatextual presentation as through the linguistic aspects of the text: Rendall’s classical “versions” versus Costie’s “dialect tales”, Rendall’s sonnet forms versus Costie’s ballad metre, and so on,

but also Rendall's more formal syntax versus Costie's use of vernacular markers in narration. Similarly, in critical treatments we do not have to make the defensive argument that the vernacular work is "just as good" as the literary, but can instead describe the so-called vernacular as an experimental rupture of literary space. While this argument is often made of urban working class male contemporary novelists,<sup>37</sup> it is rarely made of rural female writers, who are more likely to be seen, as with MacDiarmid, as the "ladyfying" problem posed to Scots.

Costie has the single largest body of Orkney language writing to date, but is almost unknown outside of Orkney and often unknown within Orkney. As well as being considerable in output, her work is also remarkable for being the most consistent record of 20<sup>th</sup> century Orkney speech, and a major corpus for linguistic study. One exceptional element, as Ljosland notes, is that she "uses variations in dialect and style as part of her characterisation: The way that a character speaks becomes a very effective shortcut to saying something about their position, outlook, self-view or their geographical location" (2011:34). That is, rather than a simple Orkney/English dichotomy, Costie uses variants within Orkney language to denote class position, island origin, and so forth.

She thus represents a central problem for Orkney language literature: at the moment of literary emergence, the author for whom the Orkney language was most central was the author least central to the canon. This problem is reflected in Costie's positioning as dialect and folk (against the literary and universal), in the Orkney language's positioning as rural and dying (as opposed to national and modernist), and indeed in the gender relations of the literary set, with Rendall commenting on another poet that she wrote "quite good poetry for a woman" (1953, quoted in Ljosland 2011:16). Any reclaiming and revitalisation of Orkney language literature must struggle with these dynamics, because to write

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37 This is a position that has been won against precisely the same dynamics, however, as McGlynn 2002 notes of Kelman: "working-class fiction is presumed to be realist, not experimental. So while scholars are more than willing to accept the literary value of Kelman's oeuvre, he feels they do so in part by conforming his works to their own pre-existing value system rather than noting his challenges to such systems" (25).



in the Orkney language is immediately to be cast as folk, nostalgic, historical, dying, marked and inferior. One strategy, taken by Hall and Ljosland, is to assert the literary merit of Orkney language work against these prejudices. Another, which I think is the strategy adopted by Costie in her presentation of her work, and which links back to the ironies in Dennison, is to forcefully inhabit the subaltern position of the Orkney language and forge its own rules of value. In my estimation, this strategy is most effective in Costie's story "Waa's Folk", which occupies the format of a folksy, gossipy account of a local party in order to offer an existential meditation on poverty, danger and death:

Wattic wis thin as thin, wae twa burnan spots apae the top o' his cheeks.  
His eyes wis glessy, an' his voice haerse.

"A'll deu that," he said. "Tell thee boy A'm coman ower the morn for the len' o fish heuks." He moved aff tae the door, an' Jeanic wha hid saesed the cup o' life wae baith haan's an' druken 'id tae hids bitterest dregs, wis a' at eence cowld sober an' silent i' the face o' Daith. The weemen sat quiet a peerie while, every ane wae her ain thowts. Than Jeanic said, "Lasses, Wattic's deean." "Aye." ([1956] 1976:29)

The dense language, the off-hand ironic narration, the sudden shifts between viewpoints, registers and temporalities in the story – all are in one sense strategies of literary modernism, and in another ordinary aspects of orature, and in both senses are highly effective means of communicating emotion and critique.

There is, however, a decades-long gap between Rendall's and Costie's work and the next book-length approaches to the Orkney language. From the 1960s to 2000s, the promise of an Orkney language literature is maintained only by folklorists, memoirists and writers of popular verse such as Jack Cooper, Hazel Parkins, RT Johnson and David Sinclair.<sup>38</sup> Here, Orkney language is used in the poetry, extensively in dialogue, and only very occasionally in narration. In all

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38 For a full bibliography of the Orkney language literature, see Appendix II.

cases it is mixed considerably with English as bidialectal writing. Publication is entirely through newspapers such as *The Orcadian* and magazines such as the *Orkney View*, with *The Orcadian*'s press also printing collections of the more popular authors; to my knowledge there is no publication outwith Orkney using the language. The themes of these works are predominantly comic and nostalgic, recording "bygone days" and telling anecdotes of contemporary life. While it would again be a mistake to reify a folk/literary divide, it is nonetheless the case that the Orkney language in these decades is confined to specific themes and registers: there is no novel, or indeed extended narrative prose; no published play; and very little poetry beyond the comic. The point is not that these works are not literature – I would be far more inclined to argue that they self-consciously disrupt the domain of the literary in a way vital to Orkney culture – but that the use of Orkney language is limited in both scope and genre: if a novel is written, it must be written in English.

Orkney, then, despite having among the strongest speech communities of Scots according to the 2011 Census (Scots Language Centre 2011),<sup>39</sup> has one of the weakest literary canons. A marked contrast is with Shetland, where the *New Shetlander* magazine actively encouraged Shetland language writing from 1947 onwards, precisely when Marwick was arguing against a literary Orkney language. Similarly, John J Graham and T A Robertson published their scholarly *Grammar and Usage of the Shetland Dialect* in 1952, and argued for their language within the education system, while Orkney lacked a dictionary until Gregor Lamb's 1988 *Orkney Wordbook* and a grammar until his *Whit Like the Day?* in 2005, the latter of which is already out of print; Orkney also had far fewer defenders in the education system until much later. As a result, Shetland ForWirds (2019) is able to document an unbroken canon across poetry, fiction and drama, tackling a range of themes, with nearly 40 writers showcased on their website spanning a 150 year period.

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39 "The local authority areas with the highest proportions of Scots-speakers were Aberdeenshire and Shetland Islands (49 per cent each), Moray (45 per cent) and Orkney Islands (41 per cent). The lowest proportions reported were in Eilean Siar (7 per cent), City of Edinburgh (21 per cent), Highland and Argyll & Bute (22 per cent each)." The national average was recorded in the Census as 30%.

A 21<sup>st</sup> century shift is beginning to occur, however. Fiona MacInnes' *Iss* (2013) is the first novel to include extensive and consistent Orkney language in its dialogue throughout, and is a rich investigation of social dynamics in Orkney in the 20<sup>th</sup> and 21<sup>st</sup> centuries. Breaking thoroughly with the mythical and spiritual vision of Brown, MacInnes writes through class conflict and economic precarity, and through the dramatic social changes of an increasing population of English- and Scots-speaking new islanders,<sup>40</sup> into a tapestry of contemporary social life. There are similar concerns in the work of Morag MacInnes, published in *Alias Isobel* (2008) and *Street Shapes* (2013): this Orkney language poetry does explore memory and history, but through a wide lens and alongside a contemporary setting. Simon Hall and Alison Miller, also known for her novel *Demo* (2005) written partly in a mainland vernacular Scots, have published poems and short stories using Orkney language in chapbooks from Abersee Press (2015, 2017, 2018), again moving the language into a contemporary setting.

This flourishing is supported by a range of work at the local and national level. Alongside Abersee's work, which puts Orkney language writing in an international setting, Hansel Co-operative Press, based in Orkney and Shetland, has produced multiple anthologies featuring Orkney and Shetland languages together. (Cumming 2008, 2018). The Shetland connection is significant, with mutual interest and support between the islands strengthening the literature: projects such as *Writing the North: Archipelagos* (2014) have both supported a joint literature and engaged academic research. At an educational level, the University of the Highlands and Islands' Institute for Nordic Studies incorporates Orkney and Shetland language literature into its research and into its MLitt Orkney and Shetland Studies. At the governmental level, the Scots Language Ambassadors scheme placed Simon Hall in Orkney for a year to work on language promotion, and the Orkney Islands Council Culture Fund enabled the digitisation of Gregor Lamb and Margaret Flaws' *Orkney Dictionary* (1997)

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40 "New islanders" is a term I was taught by Nancy Scott, also the editor of the new editions of CM Costie for the Westray Heritage Centre, as a less pejorative alternative to the dominant "incomers", or the even more pejorative but now rarely heard "ferry-loupers".

at [orkneydictionary.scot](http://orkneydictionary.scot). Again setting the Orkney language in a context of plurality and internationalism, Scottish PEN's 'Many Voices' project funded workshops in Orkney language writing, led by Alison Miller, with literary results published in *Gutter Magazine* (2017).

This amounts to an Orkney language literature renaissance, with a collaborative network of writers producing new work across a newly wide range of genres and styles, supported at multiple levels of power. The editor of *Abersee*, Duncan McLean, states the mission plainly:

Our task is to mould the Scots and English languages into the rhythms and cadences of Orcadian spoken speech – the speech of the street, the council office, the hotel bar, the farmhouse kitchen and the foodbank – and to inject into it whatever number of words from Orcadian that remodelling requires. Such an attempt would create a literary form quite new in this country. (2017: 8)

McLean is stating both a mission and a methodology, arguing that an Orkney literary renaissance requires a polymorphous, cross-border approach to language – one that is rooted in both historical knowledge and contemporary space, and that pursues authenticity not through linguistic border-policing but a close attention to vernacular. The proposal here is another kind of temporal ligature, which can connect the Orkney language of Rendall and Costie to the present, and in so doing project the Orkney language into the future. McLean celebrates not the historic status of the language but its newness, and sees Orkney literature not as preservation but as experimentation and innovation. The ligature is explicitly between vernacular and literary as much as between times, and it is also set within an internationalist outlook – this introductory essay is to a chapbook of Orkney and Maori writing. I have suggested in this thesis that this approach is “antinational” in outlook, and that claim is as founded as much in my Orkney double-position as Muir's was in his. But whereas Muir sought Orkney incorporation into English, I seek the promotion of the Orkney language as a wide-ranging language of literature and orature, as

a language both spoken and written, and as a language of contemporary concerns. A deeper sociolinguistic question is whether such a mission can be best achieved through an incorporation into the national project of Scots, or whether instead a greater variety of local standards might achieve stronger minority language flourishing, or indeed whether, as I have argued, a consistent troubling of these binary oppositional frames is required. Different Orkney language authors certainly take diverging positions on this question, and on the political questions raised by ongoing constitutional political changes. The space of contestation is, at least, creatively productive.

It is into this literary and imaginative space that I am writing: the space in which the Orkney language is most at risk, and has the most potential to thrive. My work is a speculative attempt to project that language into the future, taking the past as a launching pad. The route is guided and obstructed by a literary history of half-fulfilled promise, by the binary problematics of minority language, and by the difficulty of writing in a language which has not yet been fully written. Any attempt to do so is thus already science fictional, but it is through the genre of science fiction that I chart my own course.

### **III. Writing Orkney language**

I move now to my specific method and decisions in writing the Orkney language, my own process of negotiating between the language as it is spoken and the language as it might be going to have been written. My process began with two simultaneous forms of research: reading Orkney language writing and listening to Orkney language voices on the one hand, and experimenting with forms of writing the language on the other. These processes were necessarily interdependent: the more I read and listened, the more effective my means of writing the language became, but equally the more I wrote the language, the better attuned was my attention when reading and listening.

Having outlined above the basic challenges, I now discuss the different areas of language writing, in each case showing the more specific challenges and how my intentions negotiated their tensions. First, I detail the Orkney language sources; second, I move through orthography, grammar and word choice; and finally I discuss my choice of form, also considering the ethics of translation.

### **a) Sources**

The sources for developing an Orkney language are threefold. First, the dictionaries and grammars: Edmonston's 1866 *Etymological Glossary of the Shetland & Orkney Dialect*, Marwick's 1929 *Orkney Norn*, Lamb's 1988 *Orkney Wordbook* (revised 1995 and 2012), Flaws and Lamb's 1996 *Orkney Dictionary*, and Lamb's 2005 *Whit Like the Day?* Each of these has its own limits: Edmonston and Marwick are both concerned primarily with recording only those language elements unique to Orkney (and in Edmonston's case Shetland), largely leaving out elements common to Scots<sup>41</sup> and/or English, which also involves leaving out local variations, pronunciations and derivations of words from Scots and/or English sources, or which have etymological routes common to Scots and/or English. Of the four dictionaries, only Marwick has a rigorous approach to phonology and etymology. Lamb 1988 is more comprehensive in its word-gathering, but no consistent orthography is offered. Flaws and Lamb 1996 present only the words in common contemporary use and propose an orthography, but this also excises a great deal of the word-hoard. Lamb 2005 provides the only grammar. These Orkney sources are supplemented by the *Dictionary of the Scots Language*, which includes more thorough sourcing and usage, and allows comparison with Scots, but which takes a descriptivist approach and does not allow easy identification of the items unique to Orkney. Another supplement is the Shetland dictionaries and grammars, which provide a useful comparison as the closest linguistic analogue and as a model for

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41 In this chapter as elsewhere, when I use "Scots" I mean a putative "Standard Scots", and when I use "Orkney" I mean "Orkney Scots". While I acknowledge that the contemporary Orkney language is, like Standard Scots, a dialect of Scots, the political implications of the elision are half-intended.

standardisation: Robertson and Graham (1952), Graham (1979), and Christie-Johnston and Christie-Johnston (2010, revised 2014).

The second source is the published Orkney language literature, as outlined above and detailed in Appendix I. In the absence of standardisation, and acknowledging inter-parish variation as discussed below, each writer takes their own approach to the language. In general, the older sources tend towards a more separate Orkney language, and the newer sources tend towards more interpenetration of Orkney, Standard Scots and English.

The third source is the language as it is spoken. Alongside each author's own listening, knowledge and experience, this is supplemented by the (largely unindexed) archives of Radio Orkney, which contain thousands of hours of Orkney speech at various points on the continuum between Orkney and English. Mediating between the second and third sources is the Orkney Reevlers Facebook Group, which, as a community dedicated to Orkney language with 1514 members (as of 4<sup>th</sup> July 2019) is the most extensive archive of written-spoken Orkney language in any time period, and is also entirely unstudied.<sup>42</sup>

These sources underly all my choices but do not define them: ultimately, I base the choice in my experience and instinct, as developed iteratively through experimentation, performance and consultation with other Orkney language speakers. This last factor is the most important: when my work is read or heard, I can ask other speakers "Does this sound right? Does it sound Orcadian? Which bits sound wrong to you and why?" Those unrecordable conversations are the best possible source.

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42 My view, in line with with Chi'en 2004, is that the forms of language used on social media are frequently closer to the oral than the written, or perhaps are a specific written form strongly influenced by oral aspects. This again requires further study beyond the scope of this thesis, and should be of particular concern to dialect and minority language studies.

## **b) Orthography**

As discussed, there is no standard orthography for the Orkney language. While shorter work in the language does not place high demands on standardised orthography, and an improvised approach has much to recommend it as a means of facilitating writing and of adapting flexibly to needs, a longer-form work requires more consistency. This is for the simple reason that if a word is spelled multiple ways over the course of a novel, or if the same spelling indicates multiple phonemes over the course of a novel, then the reader will struggle greatly to understand and hear the work. Such an approach also tends to connote the vernacular frame of eye-dialect as a variation of English rather than the literary frame of standardisation as a separate language. But developing an orthography also faces (a) the technical difficulty of the variation of the language over time, with increasing Scots and English influence, and between parishes; (b) the political difficulty of its proximity to English and Scots (“Why deus thoo no jeust spell it the normal wey?” and “Why are ye no supportin Scots Standardisation?” respectively); and (c) the artistic difficulty of writing in a way that multiple readerships can understand, if one even wants to.

The basic technical difficulty is best illustrated by the following chart from Marwick (1929), illustrating vowel sound variation between parishes.









APPENDIX IV  
VOWEL SOUNDS IN DIFFERENT PARISHES

	tang (sea-weed)	long	tangle (sea-weed)	sang	ran	came	bone	stone	home	one (in combination— not one) (no e:n ə'va)	kale	ale	whole	tale	shame	Skail
No. Ronaldsay	tə:ŋ	lɔ:ŋ	tɔ:ŋl	sɔ:ŋ	rɔ:n	kɔ:m	be:n <sup>1</sup>	ste:n <sup>1</sup>	he:m <sup>1</sup>	e:n	tje:l <sup>2</sup>	e:l	he:l	te:l	fe:m	stje:l <sup>2</sup>
Sanday	taŋ	laŋ	taŋl	saŋ	raŋ	kaŋ	bi:n	sti:n	hi:m	in	kil	il	hi:l	te:l	fi:m	skil
Eday	"	"	"	"	"	"	"	"	"	"	"	"	hi:l	te:l	"	"
Stronsay	"	"	"	"	"	"	"	"	"	"	ke:l	"	"	til	"	"
Westray	"	"	"	"	"	"	"	"	"	"	kjil	"	"	"	"	"
Rousay	tɔ:ŋ	lɔ:ŋ	tɔ:ŋl	sɔ:ŋ	rɔ:n	kɔ:m	be:n	"	"	in, wan	"	"	"	"	"	skjil
Deerness	taŋ	loŋ	taŋl	saŋ	raŋ	kaŋ	be:n, bɔ:n	"	"	" "	kil	"	"	te:l, til	fi:m	skil
Tankerness	"	"	"	"	"	"	bɔ:n	stɔ:n	"	" "	"	e:l	he:l	te:l	"	ske:l
Holm	"	"	"	"	"	"	be:n	ste:n	he:m	in	ke:l	"	"	"	fe:m	"
Orphir	"	"	"	"	"	"	bɔ:n	stɔ:n	hɔ:m	wan	"	"	ho:l	"	"	"
Birsay	"	lɔ:ŋ	tɔ:ŋl	"	"	"	be:n	ste:n	he:m	e:n	"	"	he:l	"	"	"
Evie	tɔ:ŋ	"	"	"	"	"	"	"	"	"	"	"	"	"	fi:m	"
Firth	taŋ	loŋ	taŋl	"	"	"	"	stɔ:n	hɔ:m	wan	"	"	ho:l	"	fe:m	"
Harray	"	laŋ	"	"	"	"	"	ste:n	he:m	"	"	"	he:l	"	"	skje:l
Stromness	"	"	"	"	"	"	"	"	"	e:n	kje:l	"	"	"	"	skel
So. Ronaldsay	"	loŋ	"	"	"	"	"	ho:m	wan, in	wan, in	ke:l	"	ho:l	"	fi:m	"
Burray	"	"	"	"	"	"	"	"	"	wan	"	"	he:l	"	fe:m	"
Walls	"	lɔ:ŋ	"	"	"	"	bɔ:n	"	"	"	"	"	"	"	"	"

<sup>1</sup> NOTE.— In all districts there is a tendency for bɔ:n, stɔ:n, hɔ:m, to supplant the other forms.  
<sup>2</sup> After 'k', there is always and everywhere a tendency to interject a 'j' sound when a front vowel follows, but in some islands it is more marked than in others.

Fig 1.: 'Vowel Sounds in Different Parishes', Marwick 1929:228.

Studying the column for *home* demonstrates the problem. In North Ronaldsay the word is pronounced /hem/ to rhyme approximately with the Standard English *dame*, as in the majority of Scots. In Westray, it is /him/ (rhyming *deem*), a pronunciation special to Orkney. In Burray it is /hom/, (rhyming *dome*) as in English. And in Orphir it is /hɔm/ (rhyming *domme*), again special to Orkney. These variations are stable, and are all Orcadian variations, not imports from Scots or English, as demonstrated by their phonological consistency with words from multiple etymological sources (i.e. a Burray speaker is not saying /hom/ in order to sound English, but because that's how it's said in their Orkney speech). While these variations are diminishing over time as travel and intermarrying between parishes becomes normalised, they are still very much present. As there is no one spelling which could communicate or ambiguate between this range of sounds, for a consistent orthography a choice must be made. In my case I chose *haem*: first, because I am from Westray and this favours the /him/ pronunciation; second, because it usefully ambiguates between the two most common pronunciations, /him/ and

*/hem/*; third, because it most marks difference from both English and Standard Scots and so the reader is less likely to collapse their imagined pronunciation into either. This decision was also influenced by its ramifications for other spellings: in Westray, *tale* [/*til*/], *home* [/*him*/] and *meat* [/*mit*/] all tend to converge on the same */i/* sound: using *ae* for both *haem* (*home*) and *maet* (*meat*) communicates this convergence, and allows for some accurate ambiguity.

That is a single word case. The following is a set of possible orthographical renderings of a sentence of CM Costie:

(i) He moved aff tae the door, an' Jeanic wha hid saesed the cup o' life wae baith haan's an druken 'id tae hids bitterest dregs, wis a' at eence cowl'd sober an' silent i' the face o' Daith.

*(Original)*

(ii) Hi møvt af te ðə dɔr, an tʃɪnɪc ma hɪd sest ðə kʌp ɔ laɪf we beθ hans an drʌkən ɪd te hɪds bɪtərəst dregs, wɪs a at ɪns caʊld sɔbər an saɪlənt ɪ ðə fes ɔ deθ.

*(approximate IPA)*

(iii) He meuvt aaf tae the dor, an Cheenik whaa haed saest the cup o lyf wae baith haans an druken hid tae hids biterest draegs, wis aa at eens cowl'd sober an sylent i the faes o Daeth.

*(IPA translated into English phonetic spelling)*

(iv) He muived aff tae the door, an Jeanic that haed seized the cup o life wi baith haunds an drunken it tae its bitterest dregs, wis aw at ance cauld sober an seelent i the face o Daith.

*(Scots in the Eagle 2019 orthography)*

(v) He moved off to the door, and Jeanic, who had seized the cup of life with both hands and drunk it to its bitterest dregs, was all at once cold

sober and silent in the face of Death.

*(English.)*

(vi) He meoved aff tae the door, an Jeanic that haed saesed the cup o life  
wi both haans an drucken hid tae hids bitterest dregs, wis aa at aence  
cowl'd sober an silent i the face o Daeth.

*(My Orkney orthography.)*

A version of IPA offers the best communication of pronunciation, but reduces readability to nil, and additionally implies a false definitiveness given the variation of Orkney language between speakers (and indeed within one speaker's speech). A phonetic or eye-dialect spelling of IPA improves readability somewhat by sacrificing some subtlety (e.g. English lacks a spelling to distinguish /ð/ (the *th* of *the*) from /θ/ (the *th* of *both*)). Moreover, even using the full range of five vowels, fifteen diphthongs and *y* and *w* as modifiers in this system is unlikely to encompass the full vowel range, and the more it does so the less readable is the result. In a sentence with few unique Orkney words, English captures some of the syntax and rhythm of the Orkney language but none of the pronunciation, and its use risks relegating the language to a mere accent rather than a language with a diverging etymological and phonological history, with all the political implications that entails. Scots captures much of the Orkney pronunciation but misses key elements, such as by conflating /ø/ with /u/, which Costie distinguishes as *eu* and *ui*, and by separating /s/ and /z/, where in Orkney only /s/ is present. It also introduces crucial confusions: in Scots, *cauld* and *haunds* take the same vowel, but in Costie *could* and *haan's* are very distinct. In addition, its vowel choices favour Southern pronunciations: while *aw* could reasonably be interpreted as the Orkney /a:/, it tends to read more as /ɔ:/. While all of these sacrifices may be worthwhile in the name of Scots national standardisation, in my experience the more they pile up the more an attempt at rendering Orkney speech in this orthography distances the Orkney reader and speaker from their own language, a gulf of experience and sensibility which poses a fundamental (though not necessarily irreconcilable) problem to standardisation. It also, again, has political implications anent the nation and

what language is or could be. I rejected all of these options, then, in favour of developing an orthography, based on extant forms like Costie's, that is specific to Orkney.

It is illustrative to explain some of my departures from Costie, detailing specific and sometimes contradictory decisions. The simplest and only fully necessary adaptation is to remove the apologetic apostrophes, as common to contemporary Scots, in order to prevent the implication that there are "missing letters" rather than equally valid phonological histories. In contrast, where Costie uses both *'id* and *hid*, the apostrophe indicates a dropped consonant not from English but within Orkney language. I have chosen not to mark this difference in order to improve sentence flow and to avoid the implication that I am rendering speech as text, instead trusting the reader to drop the *h* sound as necessary, as in English conventions. This decision then has a further implication: should I (a) use both *i* and *in*, given that in Orkney the *n* is dropped before a consonant, as in the English *a/an* convention; (b) only use *in* just as I have only used *hid*; or (c) or apostrophise to *i'* where necessary. I have chosen to use both *i* and *in*, again and not unproblematically following an English orthographic convention.

In a more complex spelling difference, I use *ae* where Costie uses *ae*, *ee* and *ai*. This is due to my Westray heritage, to seeking a simpler spelling system, and to scepticism as to whether these are clearly different vowels. However, the more this spelling is used, the more obstructed the English reader. A secondary problem is that a strict Orkney language spelling will sometimes produce what looks like entirely the wrong English word. These problems have led to me using different spellings for the same vowel where necessary, as does Costie. The best illustration is that, while the sound in *tae* and *face* is the same, using the same spelling in the singular would require either *faec* or *faes*, neither of which read easily, and in the plural would give the unfortunate, though in Orkney indeed homophonic, *faeces*.

Tracking one final example illustrates the way that orthographic decisions in one word impact on another. First, the Orkney cognate of the English *just* is /tʃøst/, and its usual spelling, *cheust*, used by Costie and many others, is iconic to the point of shibboleth. The word is common enough to be spoken regularly, and includes two very Orkney sounds (the /tʃ/ used wherever English or Scots would use /dʒ/, and the /ø/ not found in Standard English) which mark its Orcadianness while still being understandable to English speakers. Any departure from this spelling would be discomfiting for Orkney readers. The Scots *ui* or the Shetland *ö*, which mark the same sound, are equally serviceable, as is the *ø* of IPA and Norwegian, but the *eu* is firmly established for Orkney writers. *Eu* has the additional advantages of not requiring a new symbol, not being used elsewhere in English for other sounds, and so to English speakers being most familiar as the French vowel, which is roughly the same. /tʃ/ as *ch* presents a greater problem, however, when considering the Orkney translation of the English *technology* (which occurs as often as expected in a sci fi book), pronounced as /teknɔltʃi/. An English-style spelling would only convey the sounds to Orkney speakers, but substituting *ch* for *g* to *technolochy* creates a confounding use of *ch* for two different sounds, while additionally substituting *k* for *ch* gives *teknolochy*, now distant enough from English to obstruct sense even though the words are entirely cognate. (The additional use in English of *ch* for /x/, as in *loch*, is also an issue.) Compromising, and using *j* always and only for /tʃ/ gives the – to my eyes more readable – *teknolojiy*, suggesting different sound without obstructing sense, but then requires a *jeust* which may be anathema to Orkney readers, and prevents English readers from fully hearing /tʃøst/. This is, however, the compromise I chose to make. That choice then further influenced my decision as to whether to use the English *-y* or Scots *-ie* for [i] word endings: I eventually chose *-y*, because my orthography was already dangerously ornate. And then this in turn influenced where else I could use the letter *y*, especially whether or not I would use it to distinguish *mynd* [/mamd/] from *bind* [/bmd/], and so forth.

As full an account I can give of my spelling system is in Appendix II. Each decision is my own, negotiating between existing usage, coherence, readability,



English and Scots in/compatibility, fidelity to sound, artistic interest, political ambition and science fictional desire in the ways described above.<sup>43</sup> I have laboured to make the spelling in the verse novel consistent and accurate, but there will be errors and inconsistencies, as in all language. This concern is eased by knowing that my orthography, while I think it charts a potential path for the Orkney language, is certainly not intended as a solution or a prescription: rather, it shows one way of negotiating the difficulties influenced by one person's speech and interests, and thus that negotiating the difficulties is possible.

### **c) Grammar**

Alongside the Orkney grammar detailed in Lamb 2005, my understanding is strengthened by Robertson and Graham (1952) on Shetland grammar, and sources such as Purves (2002), Wilson (2014) and Eagle (2019) on Scots grammar: identifying how grammar has developed in different dialects of Scots helps to identify how Orkney has developed both by association and in contrast.

Orkney has grammatical features distinct not only from English but from other forms of Scots. As an example of the most striking, Orkney maintains a difference between the present participle and the gerund form of a verb: the former takes *-an* [/an/ or /ən/] and the latter *-een* [/in/], as in “A’m knittan me knitteen.” The uniqueness and persistence of this form – in my experience Orkney speakers continue to use it even when their word-base and accent are highly English-influenced – makes a strong case alone for divergent spelling, as the Standard Scots *-in* elides the difference.

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43 It is a tendency of Scots standardisers such as Andy Eagle (2019) and John M Tait (2019) to argue against distance from English and phoneticism (i.e. spelling “sound” as “soond” to mark difference) as significant concerns, preferring instead etymological and phonological rigour. They make a strong case both linguistically and socially, and I am not intending to argue against it; my role, however, is primarily as a poet, which means writing in a way that my desired audience can understand, or at the very least carving a gap between writer and reader that is interesting for enough readers to cross. I have at points been sorely tempted by rigorous neo-orthographies that are not so compromising, and perhaps my eventual choices reflect a lack of science fictional imagination, or too much.

There are other notable features. Orkney maintains a familiar/formal distinction in the second person singular pronoun, as *thoo/thee* and *ye* (*you* in the emphatic) respectively, with *thee* also serving as the possessive (“Is thoo haen thee dinner?”). As noted above, many nouns take a gendered third person pronoun. The relative pronoun is always *at* (“That’s the man at cam tae the door”), the indefinite article always *a* and never *an* (“He’s a aafil aakward airticle”). The auxilliary verb is always “to be” and never “to have” (“A’m been fer the messages”). Verb and noun forms are frequently different to those found in English and Scots cognates, and prepositions vary widely.

Additionally, there are grammatical preferences, some common to Scots, which distinguish the language. Present continuous is used far more frequently than present simple (“A’m waantan a walk” rather than “I want a walk”). This in turn leads to preferences in negation, such as “He’s no wantan peyan” rather than “He doesn’t want to be payed”. Differing grammatical preference then shades into styles of phrasing, such as the prevalence of emphasis through understatement and negation, as in “Hid’s no ferfil bad the day” which will be heard in Orkney far more often than its literal meaning, “Hid’s a fine day”.

At a certain point the identification of common phrasing raises the question of what is the language’s grammar and what is merely a spoken style – and in turn, whether a language without an established literary form does indeed have a grammar that is not simply a rendering of its spoken style. The more that vernacular forms are used, the more the text tends towards the “Aye bairns” of Traill Dennison’s opening: that is, what is written begins to proclaim itself as a written form of spoken speech, rather than as a literary language. But my purpose in creating a literary form of Orkney is precisely to entangle the vernacular and the literary, to take apart the vernacular/literary distinction itself.

The difficult negotiation of these binaries is then compounded by the contemporary erosion of some Orkney grammatical forms. For example, I hear “Sheu wis a sair year” (gendered pronouns for non-living nouns) far less often

than “A’m haen me breakfast” (*to be* as auxilliary verb), and indeed the gendered pronouns are not mentioned at all in Flaws and Lamb’s 1997 grammatical summary of common features. The result is that to use gendered pronouns marks the speech as archaic, or suggests a speaker who is older and/or from the outer isles: gendered pronouns are marked more as “dialect”, and thus spoken, while the unique auxilliary verb can pass more easily into the “literary”. “Thoo” sits, in my mind, between the two in its degree of problematisation; I no longer hear it commonly, and it tends to be used self-consciously rather than casually, but it persists in the speech community and is still strong in the neighbouring Shetland.

In grammar itself, then, temporality is entangled, and so too is the ontology of language: different choices of grammatical feature suggest different speakers, and are oriented differently to questions of literary and vernacular style. In keeping with my aims, I blend approaches in an entangled compromise between diverging needs. The vernacular intrudes on the literary, the future on the past, and the English into the Orkney. I am guided throughout by aesthetic aims as the ground: whether one character addresses another as *thoo*, *you* or *ye* communicates social relationships, whether the grammar of a poem uses more English or Orkney tendencies speaks to its subject. Throughout, also, I am guided by the aim of creating an Orkney language that works for multiple readerships, and still succeeds in communicating the central rhythms of Orkney.

#### **d) Word choice**

Orkney language was formed through interaction between Scots and Norn, but the point at which it became recognised as a language co-constituted with an identity – around the time, I estimate, that Traill Dennison was writing – fixes a local distinction between what is “Orkney” and what is “Scots”. That is, if a Scots word entered the language prior to the 20<sup>th</sup> century, such as *redd*, it will be

regarded as Orcadian, but if it did not, such as *seelie*, which I have never heard an Orcadian say, then it will be regarded as alien. Compounding this, if a word shared with Scots was previously common in Orkney but is no longer widely used, it will also be perceived as not Orcadian, and an alternative English word naturalised into Orkney will be perceived as more Orcadian in character.<sup>44</sup> This creates an unusual problem: if there is no unique Orkney word for a concept, is the word we know from Scots or from English more suitable? In my experience, Orkney speakers in the 21<sup>st</sup> century are far more comfortable using words from English than from Scots: *lucky* sits more happily in an Orkney sentence than *seelie*, and is less likely to elicit the response “But that’s no Orkney!” This includes the case of Scots terms that emerge in the 20<sup>th</sup> and 21<sup>st</sup> century: *bangin* sits less comfortably than the English *excellent* (though *partieclar* is likely better than either). There may be generational difference in this: I have, for example, heard people from the youngest generation with strong Orkney accents use the 20<sup>th</sup> century Scots *youse* as a second person plural, with or without fricative voicing (see Appendix II).

There are exceptions to this tendency, equally fraught with political concerns. As with *cheust*, another common Orkney shibboleth, discussed recurrently in the Orkney Reevlers Facebook group, is the preposition used in conjunction with islands: do you live *in* Westray or *on* Westray? To contemporary speakers, the former is Orkney and the latter incomer: one group commenter put this metaphysically, saying “Tae me ‘in’ suggests integration, and ‘on’ soonds as if yir landed bae helicopter fur a few ooers” (2019). A similar shibboleth is saying “Orkney” as opposed to “the Orkneys”, with the former local and the latter

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44 Yildiz (2012) makes a related observation of the German *Fremdwort*: “A *Fremdwort*, literally “foreign word”, is a German word of non-German derivation whose foreign origin is still perceptible to most speakers. The *Fremdwort* is distinguished, on the one hand, from linguistically unintegrated foreign words and, on the other hand, from words whose foreign origin is no longer perceived. No average speaker would suspect that *Fenster* (window) and *Käse* (cheese) are Latin entries into the German language. [...] Because a word is no longer considered a *Fremdwort* as soon as it is assimilated, this category, by definition, designates a segment of the lexicon that most visibly carries the trace of other languages. It is this visibility of otherness, gathered into a handy linguistic category, that has been taken as a provocation and met at times with an aggressive reaction.” (68) Pleasingly, the Orkney translation of “foreign word” is *fremwird*, and is itself a *fremwird*, because “frem” has declined in Orkney usage to the point where it is now seen as Scots, and “uncan” is more popular. “Unco wirds”, however, are magic spells.

incomer, but older texts written by Orkney speakers suggest that this local/incomer distinction is far more recent (Anderson 2019). My instinct is that – and thorough linguistic research on questions like this would be valuable – distinctions like this, as with the resistance to Scots words not previously imported, emerge in response to perceived threats to identity: that is, as the proportion of English speakers has increased and the proportion of Orkney speakers has declined, shibboleths gain a political urgency. More speculatively, as fluency in the Orkney language declines, shibboleths serve as essential markers of Orkney identity: you might not say *atgyong*, but you certainly know when to say *in*.

Apart from political and identitarian questions, there are additional practical concerns when considering using words from other dialects of Scots in an Orkney text, most significantly, as noted above, that sometimes the same combination of sounds might have entirely different meanings, whether through etymological divergence or through entirely separate but phonologically coincident etymologies. One such example is *mense*: I have not heard an Orkney speaker use it in the Scots sense of *dignity*, but it is used as an aphetic form of *immense*, as in “A mense o starns”.

For all of these reasons, and because my desires are to strengthen the usage of Orkney language, to be read by Orkney readers, and to communicate something of Orkney language to non-Orkney readers, I have, despite my strong synthetic and dictionary-diving tendencies as a Scots writer, and despite my sympathy for the synthetic standardisation project and desire to trouble linguistic nativism, generally limited my word choice in this work to established Orkney words, and where borrowings are needed I tend to use English loans rather than Scots loans. I make occasional exceptions, as long as no semantic confusion is possible, for poetic reasons of euphony and productive ambiguity (i.e. when it sounds really good or creates a really tempting double-meaning), as long as the meaning of the Scots word is clear from context and/or when the Scots usage is broad enough to be familiar. In these cases I am more likely to borrow from

Shetland and Caithness dialects, which are closer to Orkney linguistically, than from more urban dialects and dialects further south.

Contradicting all of this is the science fiction case. New technologies require new names, and the tendency in all minority languages is to naturalise the terms of the dominant language. There are exceptions, as in the Orkney name for wind turbines, *tir'lo*, derived from an Orkney word for spinning. So when describing fictional technologies, I can use the established English science fiction term (*ansible*, a supralightspeed communication device), adapt an Orkney language term (*yole*, a small spaceship, using the word for a small fishing vessel), neologise (*vod*, a video message) or combine approaches (*contaenment dyke*, a forcefield). If I am importing, creating and adapting words in these cases, why not in the general case of the Orkney language? While I do think that would be a reasonable approach, I would answer that again I am shaped by the science fictional intention of the heyiya-if, past and future spiralling around the empty present text: that my choices are more about contradiction and compromise held in tension than about any definitive systematic solution, because that approach reflects how language and speculation truly works.

### **e) Form**

Beyond sentence-level decisions, I have also decided to write an Orkney language verse novel, which raises the questions: Why poetry? And why a novel? And why a verse novel in this form? A fundamental answer to all of this is and should be “Because I like it”, but there are linguistic concerns underlying and motivating my desire.

Poetry intensifies language (Paterson 2017:312). To make a text poetry, whether by declarative fiat or through conventions of lineation, is to ask the reader to pay particular attention to it, to frame it as a text worthy of intensified attention that will return intensified meaning. As Paterson also notes, this has sonic

effects when the poem is read: the poetic line when spoken tends to contain a higher proportion of stressed syllables and lengthened vowels than the prose sentence, which tends to have more syllables per heavy stress and more vowels tending towards schwa (1137-8). At a basic level, this means that the lineated poem, with its relatively slow pace and relatively high degree of stressed sounds, offers closer enunciation of and attention to the phonological aspects of language: that is, you hear the Orkney more. This in turn helps to root a greater tolerance in the reader for sonically and semantically dense language. Language which would be felt as overly flashy or dense to the point of impenetrability in prose can be sustained in poetry, where the reader already expects to take a little more time. In my experience, this allows for a higher density of words, spellings and grammatical forms that may be unfamiliar in some way to the reader, whether English- or Orkney-speaking. In short, in poetry the reader is already expecting to have to, in some degree, figure out what it all means, and so they should be more willing to figure out the language as well.

Conversely, the general expectation of fluidity and transparency in the prose sentence places demands on the Orkney language that it can, in the 21<sup>st</sup> century, generally only meet by greater convergence with English. That is, because Orkney prose has no established form and no wider readership, because the reader of the language has not yet been constructed, any prose which loyally renders Orkney orthography, grammar and vocabulary will present a “serious obstacle” (Ashcroft 2008) to the reader, even if it is not “unremittingly dense” (Corbett 2012). Even Traill-Dennison and Costie, who did write consistently in an Orkney narrative voice, lean on the conventions of vernacular storytelling in order to lower the readers’ defenses and support their understanding: their stories are punctuated with markers of orature so that the reader experiences “I’m being told a tale” rather than “I’m reading a short story”, and thus accepts the vernacular language. Both a century of language change and the pressures of formal prose are evident in the next most prolific writer of Orkney prose, Simon Hall, whose blog *Brisk Northerly* (Hall 2019) records an approach to the language that is far closer to English linguistically than either Traill-Dennison’s or Costie’s. All of these problems can be met by multiple strategies – proximity

to English is an entirely valid approach for Orkney, as is voice marked as vernacular, as would be dense experimental prose – but my own approach, I think, has advantages for someone with my aims: to strengthen the use of Orkney language, to be read by Orkney readers, and to communicate something of Orkney language to non-Orkney readers.

Writing a verse *novel*, then, rebalances the scales. If the verse form allows for an intensification of language, the novel form, I think, commands a loyalty of prolonged attention. Put simply, my hope is that the pleasures of character, plot and genre give a wider readership reasons to keep reading. The question “What will happen next?” offers a driving impetus to the work. More deeply, I want the possibility of immersion in the world of the novel to support immersion in the language of the verse. In a book of poetry, language is remade and relearned anew with each poem: in this book, I want the reader to feel that they have learned one language over the course of the story. Part of the work of the book, for me, is to teach readers how Orkney is spoken and how it might be written. For the language of a book to take place in one coherent world constructs it as a coherent language, and maintains attention to it as one body of work.

An additional aspect of this is my choice of metred verse, and metre that varies from poem to poem. As narrative has its own drive, so too does metre. My intention is that the familiarity and forward motion of metred verse pulls the reader through the work, and that its beat provides a grounding for understanding the rhythm of the language. Like any language, Orkney has its tendencies and peculiarities of rhythm (its tonal lilt and tendency towards dactylic and other high unstressed syllable count rhythms are two of the most pronounced), but unless the reader already knows them they may not be able to hear them. The overdetermining aspect of metre, whereby establishing a clear pattern pushes the reader towards hearing that pattern as repeated (Paterson 2017: 6090), to an extent teaches the reader how to time and stress the language. Thus the novel opens with a strong dactylic line – “The chime o the tannoy is whit taks her back” – which admits more variation as the poem progresses, moving between metres to vary pace. Using varied metres



throughout the book, in contrast, allows different aspects and registers of Orkney's rhythm to be explored: the poems focussed on Øyvind use a short but loose two-stress line that reflects his character and focussed action.

This indicates a further aspect of the polyvocal vignette approach to the writing: once a linguistic frame has been established, it can also be played with. In the novel form, different characters can more clearly speak different forms of the language. When the frame or register of language is shifting from one poem to another across the course of a poetry collection, it can cause productive confusion as to what the entity called "a language" is, but *Deep Wheel Orcadia* is actively constructing a putative stable language as the ground against which variation figures. As in Kurtoglu (2011), when the language of narration is Orkney, some characters' language of speech (such as Darling and Soo) can be English, and some poems (such as 'Flora taks Darling haem fer dinner') can explore a single character's slippage between languages and registers. This polyvocal vignette approach, heavily indebted to Mackay Brown, means that multiple viewpoint characters use multiple forms of language, also demonstrating complexities of sociology and interrelationship. Again, this approach swings the pendulum back in the other direction: a story told in vignettes is more fragmentary and unstable, with more lacunae into which the reader can think, than continuous narrative, just as narrative is generally more semantically stable than verse. As with each of my linguistic decisions, I am once more balancing and negotiating in an effort to link different worlds together, in an effort to make a new world that does not yet exist.

## **f) Translation**

The final choice worth discussing is my inclusion of English glosses alongside the Orkney texts, a question which cuts deeply into issues of power and language status. Minority languages frequently have their status as languages disputed, and both Scots (Kay 2006) and its Orkney variant (Towrie 2019) are

no stranger to this charge. This means that minority language writers are often sensitive to structures and terms which demote their language, or which imply that their language is subordinate to or otherwise reliant on English for its own coherence. On the other hand, it is a reality of population and power that writing in a minority language without making some concessions to the dominant language – English in both the global sense and Orkney’s local sense – greatly restricts readership, which in turn can restrict opportunities to promote the language. In the Orkney case in particular, the lack of a standard and of an established readership also means that unsupported Orkney texts may present high barriers to Orkney speakers themselves.

On the one hand, then, including English glosses or translations risks suggesting that Orkney is subordinate to or reliant on English, and on a practical level risks the reader familiar with English simply reading the English version rather than working to read and understand the Orkney text. On the other hand, not including English glosses risks erecting high barriers to readership and restricting understanding.

A common solution to this problem is to include a page-foot or book-end glossary rather than an English version or translation. While this approach has much to recommend it in terms of widening readership and teaching the lexical aspects of language, I find that its utility is restricted over book-length work: the longer the text, the more extensive the glossary, and the more extensive the glossary the harder it is to use for any given page. Moreover, flicking back and forth between a poem and a glossary makes for a highly interrupted reading experience. Most concerningly for me, the glossary approach privileges the lexical aspects of language over the grammatical and phonological; that is, glossaries only teach words, and not how language is put together. In my experience, words are the least difficult aspect of a minority language for a reader passingly familiar with that language or a close linguistic cousin, as English is to Orkney, to understand: context, etymology and onomatopoeia all support understanding a word, or at least making a good guess at it. Grammar, phonology and idiom are all harder to glossarise, but are also harder to

understand from context, because they are precisely what determines context. Thus it is easier for a reader to guess what the “yoles” of “Inga coonts the yoles i the hairbour” might be than it is for them to understand the sentence “The week by wis the bairn stairtan tae waak”, with its idiomatic phrasing (“The week by” meaning “Last week”) and unfamiliar verb forms (“wis the bairn stairtan” meaning “the child began to learn”). For all these reasons, I have chosen to use English versioning rather than a glossary as a way to promote wider readership.

I have, however, used two strategies to ameliorate the minoritising effect on Orkney language of including English translation. The first of these, borrowed from Robert Alan Jamieson’s Shetland work (2007), is to visually minoritise the English by using a smaller point size and by rendering it as prose paragraphs rather than lineated verse, clearly indicating that it is intended as a subordinate language to the Orkney. The second of these, borrowed from Rody Gorman’s Gaelic work (2011), is to use run-together alternative translations of a word to convey its full ambiguous sense, so in my work “tirlan” is translated as “turntwistwhirlspinning”, and “mynd” as “rememberknowreflectwill”. Both of these strategies also serve to deliberately erect obstacles to the otherwise received English. Orkney is assumed to be problematic, and so I am working to make it more normalised, and English is assumed to be transparent, and so I am working to make it problematic. Moreover, this allows for an additional measure of poetry to enliven the otherwise dry prose English rendering, whereby the choice and ordering of translations can create new euphony, dissonance, contradiction and indeterminacy. I am also seeking to demonstrate how both English and Orkney are already multiple and unstable, the true meaning of a word always indeterminate, a spectrum between connotation and denotation. Thus “guff” is “stinkpuffsnortnonsense”, each of which meanings is appropriate in context, but only some of which are maintained in the English sense: this is an interlingual translation.

This final aspect is both aesthetic and practical, and as such is a determining factor between the disadvantages of minoritisation and the advantages of accessibility when deciding whether or not to include English access to the text.

If part of the work of the book is to construct an Orkney language readership and to support an Orkney language future, then including a clear indication of how I used the language and what I mean by a given word strengthens every reader's understanding of the language itself. This is not intended to be definitive, but quite the opposite: when a word may have multiple meanings and when pronunciation may vary across islands, including a version in a common referent specifies what *I* mean and what decisions *I* have made, which enables others to more clearly see their differences and make different choices. With an eye to the future, this strengthens the work's contribution to the corpus by providing usage examples readily accessible to non-Orkney scholars, while also clearly outlining the work's limits and dimensions as a reference. One way to bring a half-real language into being is to assert its being with full confidence, but another is to provide every possible route for every possible reader to understand and use it as a language.

#### **IV. Limitations**

I have discussed my aims, my reasoning and my decisions in writing this particular form of Orkney language. My overarching desire is to bring the language fully into being through science fictional work and imagination, and I aim to do this by strengthening the usage of Orkney language, by being accessible to multiple readerships, and by communicating something of Orkney language to non-Orkney readers. My decisions have struck balances and negotiated compromises between contradictory aims and effects, bringing different worlds together through the work of the minority language speculative verse novel. I have outlined what I think are the advantages of my approach, but I conclude now with some deeper discussion of the potential limitations, particularly through the frame of my antinational ambition.

First, I am concerned that my decision to work in a literary form restricts my ability to strengthen the preservation and resurgence of Orkney vernacular, and that the more I write to be read the less I am able to be accurate to spoken Orkney. My speculation here is not merely that I have leaned too far towards the wrong side of a binary, but that the literary/vernacular binary itself remains too problematic a reinscribing of language status. On the one hand, it is a common feature of languages to have differing spoken and written registers, with English being no exception, so it makes sense to desire a written register for Orkney. On the other hand, when one form of language is marked as high status and another as low status, and when that marking maps onto the literary/vernacular binary, there is a risk that seeking a higher status for Orkney through the creation of a formal written register reinscribes that binary, and further demotes the status of Orkney as it is spoken. While a single poetic effort cannot be held solely responsible for such effects, it should nonetheless concern minority language promoters how these dynamics play out over time. There is further work to be done here in investigating how the very concept of “a literature” constructs the nation, and how an “orature” offers an alternative construction. As much as I am writing against the political construction of national language, or at least exploring the artistic possibilities of an antinational stance, I am curious about problematising national literature as such.

Second, my equivocation on the question of standardisation may have its limits. Minority language standardisation does often have political and nationalist aims, as discussed earlier: constructing a language constructs a nation along the European nation-state model, with bordered standard language mapping on to imperial nation-state. But standardisation also has practical effects: if there is a standard spelling and grammar, is it not then easier to teach the language? Conversely, the promotion of variety and regionalism maps easily on to anti-national and autonomist politics (see Giles 2014 for an example of my early writing on this), with a vision of many voices jostling alongside each other, co-operating for understanding, against the dominance of one over many. But what would teaching Scots as plural entail, and is there a risk, as critics such as John Tait (2019) identify, that such an approach actually deepens minoritisation by

maintaining the equivalence between Scots and disreputability? These questions are fractal: in *Deep Wheel Orcadia* I have developed a standardised form of Orkney in divergence from standardised Scots, but that standardisation elides the differences between Orkney dialects and makes decisions that prefer my own Westray form of the language. Like the literary/vernacular binary, the standardise/regionalise binary is itself problematic, constructed through the very process of standardisation that is definitional for European nation-state politics; regionalism is only possible when there is a standard to be a regionalism against. So once more this is a question of how that binary can be deconstructed, and what political and linguistic forms can do that work. With Orkney, I am curious about the affective potential of taking a standardisation approach to a regional language, one that does not lean into the language's "less-than-respectable status" (Robertson 1994: xiv) but which also does not seek the reputation of a nation.

With all these concerns, my partial justification is that I am working for *Deep Wheel Orcadia* to be one text among many, and the science fictional work of minority language authorship and promotion must necessarily be a plural work. That is, what I would like this text to support is not more texts that are like it, but more texts taking diverse and outright contesting approaches to the language. A single fiction, like a single dictionary, cannot make a language: only a speech community using that language for a wide array of purposes can do that, and strong and supported disagreement within a language may be one of its best indicators of health. This justification, too, then easily collapses precisely into the "civic nationalist Scots" liberalism which I have been at pains to critique: without a thoroughgoing analysis of power relations, and how to build resistance to power through material linguistic formations, any art will struggle to be truly antinational.

My deepest concern, then, is that my negotiated approach to language may reflect too much compromise and too little confidence. As with the adjectival-noun pile-up of "Orkney language science fiction verse novel", I am concerned that trying to do too much may have led to not doing enough of any one thing.

With that concern in mind, throughout the actual writing process I have continually reminded myself to do more and push my desires further. Science fiction is already the genre of excess, of too much imagination, and that itself is what carries rich potential. Rather than risk not doing enough, I would instead risk doing, writing and bringing into being an abundance of excess.

## Chapter 4. Conclusion: Antinational Futures

Yasemin Yildiz's *Beyond the Mother Tongue* (2012) offers a thorough critique of a contemporary language politics founded on a constructed and coercive monolingualism. At the foundation of her work is the insight that monolingualism – the presumption that each person has a single, original, natural language the binds them to core kinship networks and nation-state formations – is not an essential truth but a historically contingent product of the age of imperial expansion. She writes:

Emerging only in the course of the eighteenth century at the confluence of radical political, philosophical, and cultural changes in Europe, the notion of monolingualism rapidly displaced previously unquestioned practices of living and writing in multiple languages. [...] With the gendered and affectively charged kinship concept of the unique “mother tongue” at its center, however, monolingualism established the idea that having one language was the natural norm, and that multiple languages constituted a threat to the cohesion of individuals and societies. Even as they supported the study of other languages, late eighteenth-century German thinkers such as Johann Gottfried Herder, Wilhelm von Humboldt, and Friedrich Schleiermacher spearheaded the view that one could properly think, feel, and express oneself only in one’s “mother tongue.” This notion of the mother tongue has in turn been a vital element in the imagination and production of the homogeneous nation-state. (6)

These dynamics appear not just in the promotion of the dominant nation-state languages of the European metropolises, however, but also in the promotion of minority languages against linguistic hegemonies. Billy Kay's *The Mither Tongue* (1986/2006) is the most important and popular of books arguing the



case for a vibrant Scots language, and it begins its case through precisely these terms. Kay's Scots is "fundamental to my family, my local and national identity and an integral part of my sense of selfhood" (31), and is "the historic national tongue of the children and the language in which much of the great literature is written" (37). The threat to Scots is described as the "omnipotent standard of having one correct way of speaking" (32), but the answer that Kay gives is that there should be multiple correct ways of speaking, not an attack on "correct speech" itself. Thus it is cast as a "disadvantage" that Scots is "broken up into dialects which often express a strong regional rather than national identity" (39). At a purely strategic level, there is an argument to be made that minority language revitalisation may require the power formation of national language to succeed, but the argument here is not strategic but affective: it is that Kay feels his language to be at once the language of the family and the language of the nation. The ultimate terror for Kay is explicitly that he will be "deracinated" through loss of language (41): language is family is nation is race, and identity depends on their mutual cohesion.

Yildiz refers to this as a "family romance" with a "complex imbrication of the mother's body with language and male authority" (11). That is, the mother tongue is partnered with a Daddy Language:<sup>45</sup> the natural, nurturing, bodily tongue is partnered with the firm rules and power plays of nation-state standard Language. If Yildiz's argument is that the monolingual political dynamic emerges through the construction of states and capital, then I would also resist the suggestion that this family romance is itself psychoanalytically essential rather than historically contingent. We could, for example, source imperial language's family romance in the privatisation of social reproduction into the nuclear family during the emergence of imperial capitalism (Engels 1902, Raha 2018). In such a reading, the gendered pairing of native tongue with official Language, the argument that monolinguality is both *natural* and *right*, is produced by the very privatisation and fragmentation of plural community that imperial capitalism demands. Thus stable monolinguality is taught in the stable

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45 This is my term, not Yildiz's, but it does draw on her use of psychoanalysis as a frame of critique.

home and then further embedded through the educational and legal power structures of the state.

Anent these dynamics, Yildiz describes and valorises a contemporary postmonolinguality that offers plural, multilingual, multiethnic and communal forms of speaking and belonging, a language that “is not tied to nationality or ethnicity, but rather constitutes a movement in which [...] oppressive ethnic ascriptions [...] are held at bay in utopian fashion” (211). It is this vision of language, and of Scots, that inspires me: strength in language not through building nation-state power, but through deterritorialisation, communisation, subaltern organisation and plurilingual difference.

That utopianism is the constructive half of the vision with which I wish to conclude. The entangled destructive half arises not from academic analysis but from online debate. The morning after the death of Tom Leonard, the second comment in the Scots Language Forum, the largest public forum for online discussion and promotion of the language, was a criticism that “democratisation of (written) language also radically reduces its suitability as a ubiquitous medium of mass transactional communication thus ultimately helping to marginalise Scots”. This was followed by the comment that “Leonard’s position as a great Scottish poet is unquestioned, but his impact regarding the Scots language is perhaps more ambivalent.” Leonard, and linguistic democratisation itself, was positioned as an active threat to a necessary coherence of language – an antagonism which, I suspect, Leonard himself may have angrily embraced. Seeing the position against democratisation of language laid out clearly, my destructive impulse in response was to commit myself wholly to antinational language. I choose “antinational” as a term precisely because it is a legal pejorative in postcolonial situations: I seek to embrace the threat that communal Scots can pose to Scotland.

I have charted my own eccentric course towards antinational language in the foregoing chapters. First, I critiqued minority language and postcolonial theory, and the position of Scots and Scotland within these theoretical frames. I

suggested my own “antinational language” as an approach rooted in the European minority language historical context, and informed by varieties of postcolonial theory: antinational language opens up a critical space to consider Scots through Scotland’s double position anent coloniality, to push for a full apprehension of the language and nation’s role in ongoing colonialism, and for a decolonial resurgence within the territory of the language itself. I then critiqued the Scots language and Scottish science fiction through these frames, using postcolonial analysis to identify the temporalities which animate Scottish and Scots utopian imaginings. I pushed for a Scottish utopianism that moved beyond the coherence of modernist and liberal temporalities of progression, that sought not a utopia that lies outside of time but one that is imbricated in and emerges through the present. This utopianism is enacted through the temporal ligature of science fictional language: language that spirals past and future around the empty present to constitute different ways of speaking and being. I then explicated and critiqued my own antinational approach to writing in the Orkney language, identifying the decisions from vowel to plot which each made their own negotiations of Scots’ and Scotland’s many double-binds. My own approach cannot fully bring into being an antinational language: rather, it indicates one imaginative linguistic flightpath among the excessive plurality of speculative flights that are required.

The antinational futurism which I am imagining, or journeying towards, comprises three core strategies. The first is an affective strategy of emotional divestment: divesting from the coherent belonging offered by the imperial nation-state and the colonial mother tongue. This requires seeking out power formations beneath and beyond the nation-state, and forming plural solidarities across difference as well as through commonality. This in turn requires denaturalising language, seeking neither the essential truth of vernacular nor the rational right of standardisation, but a contingent and immanent form of speaking, rooted in deep linguistic understanding, that offers one uncertain voice among many. Just as my characters find they cannot truly belong to a place, and that the ideology of coherent belonging itself represents an insurmountable and destructive problem, I am always uneasy in my own

languages, and seek to trouble others' constructed ease. It is through an honest apprehension of the very difficulty of speaking a minority language that a stronger, prouder and more vibrant speech can come.

My second strategy is linguistic, requiring the negotiation of agency at every linguistic level. This recognises that, within an English-dominant nation-state, English can never be entirely escaped, but it can be worked through. Individual choices of word, spelling, grammar and phrase must each be aware of their specific negotiations of language power. English interpenetrates Scots, but so too does Scots interpenetrate English: there is often as much agentic potential in claiming and destabilising English as a form of Scots as there is in building a notional separate Scots. This negotiation does not seek stability in one coherent answer as to how to do Scots, but rather wages a guerrilla campaign through a diversity of tactics: offering a compromise here, conducting an unintelligible assault there, suggesting mutual conversation here, establishing spaces of linguistic separation there. Each speech act occurs through language's paradox of subjectivation, but the speaking alters the conditions of subjectivation. The argument is that any one negotiation can be captured within the flexibility of English's liberal hegemony, but that a sustained speaking and writing of plurilingual difference undermines the foundation of linguistic hegemony itself.

And my third and final strategy is the speculative. I write in a speculative language that both does and does not exist, because to do so is to bring future possibility into present actuality. I construct a reader for whom my language is no obstacle, and want that reader to be a hybrid monster. Speculative language requires speculative imagination – not necessarily science fictional, but at least a form of thinking that does not take the present conditions of language as given and stable, but as something malleable, that can be formed and reformed in the present through ligatures to past and future. Antinational language collapses temporality, seeking not constant and gradual progression towards a better present, but rather speaking a difficult utopia now.



## **Appendix 1.**

### **Orkney Language Literature**

This is as complete as possible a picture of the use and analysis of the Orkney language in poetry, stories, novels, and memoirs. Alongside personal knowledge, the primary mode of gathering material is use of the Orkney Room in the Orkney Library and Archive, which collects material published in Orkney, by Orkney writers, or about Orkney. All likely sources were investigated for use of dialect, and their own references followed to widen the search. Because dialect use is often fragmentary or intermittent, perhaps only occurring on a few pages of a novel, it is likely that some has escaped my attention. I have also included all the academic studies specifically of the Orkney language known to me, which highlights the relative lack of research in the field. Studies of Shetland language are much more extensive and are of significant relevance to Orkney language, but are beyond my scope here. I have not included references to Orkney Scots in broader analyses of Scots as these are unlikely to include original research not documented in the references here. Other areas beyond the scope of this research at present are:

- *Periodicals*: The Orkney View, The Orcadian, Orkney Today and the Orkney Herald all published dialect work, and not all of it was republished in book form. The Orkney View in particular ran both a regular Orkney language poetry feature and dialect competitions. The New Shetlander has run articles on Orkney language from Margaret Flaws, and may have published Orkney language material. The full archives of these publications are available in the Orkney Room but are largely unindexed. Some such material is collected in the Orkney Language and Culture Pack, available in the Orkney Room and from school archives. National

magazines will have occasionally published Orkney language material but this is also beyond the scope of this research; I have listed only the contemporary publications I already know of.

- *Pamphlets and Uncatalogued Material*: Local museums, heritage centres and community groups all regularly produce small publications, primarily for locals and the tourist market, often without ISBN or submission to library catalogues. It is likely that there is further dialect material among this, as with the Doondie Dialect publication.
- *Archive Papers*: There is likely to be important dialect material in the papers of local literary figures and others, lodged in the Orkney Archive, and further research is essential: Tom Muir and James Irvine’s work on George Marwick has already unearthed highly valuable material.
- *Websites*: Cataloguing the use of Orkney language on the internet is beyond the scope of this research. Four sources are of particular importance: Orkneyjar (<http://www.orkneyjar.com/orkney/dialect/index.html>), the Orkney Heritage Society (<http://www.orkneycommunities.co.uk/ohs/index.asp?pageid=592592>), Simon Hall’s blog brisknortherly featuring original Orkney language non-fiction (<https://brisknortherly.wordpress.com/>), and the Orkney Reevlers Facebook Group (<https://www.facebook.com/groups/1829905093932477/>), which is the largest single corpus of written Orkney language.

- *Song*: I have not attempted an analysis of Orkney language used in music and song. Gibbon’s work is listed as one route in to Orkney language in folk music, but it is also used in popular song.
- *Sound Archive*: The single biggest Orkney language resource is the Orkney Sound Archive, which, alongside the Radio Orkney tapes, which regularly use Orkney language, includes audio ethnography, language collection and other sources of Orkney speech. I have confined this research to print material, noting where that material is also available as audio.

I am grateful to anyone who can bring to my attention items which I have, as is inevitable, missed.

- Key:** A: Orkney language throughout, in narration and dialogue, or poetry using dialect throughout;  
 B: Consistent Orkney language in speech, but not narration;  
 C: Fragments of Orkney language, usually individual words used in speech and local names;  
 D: Dictionary, glossary or study of dialect in English;  
 \*: Book contains multiple languages; letter refers to the Orkney language element.

This key is not intended as a hierarchy but as a description of different approaches to Orkney language. Notably it is only in the mid 20th century that the C-type approach of including a few Orkney language words in the dialogue of novels and stories emerges: earlier novelists and story writers either used B-type full Orkney language for dialogue (e.g. Campbell) or “translated” all dialogue fully into English.



Author	Title	Year	Publisher	Type	Genre	Notes
Andersson Burnett, Linda (ed)	<i>Archipelagos: Poems from Writing the North</i>	2014	University of Edinburgh	A*	Poetry	Orkney language poetry from Morag MacInnes and Alison Miller
Baikie, R.M.	<i>Hid's Aal in a Day's Wark</i>	1997	Bert Baikie	A*	Memoir, Poetry	The memoir is consistently English, the poetry consistently Orcadian.
Baikie, R.M.	<i>Mair Farming Tales</i>	2000	Bert Baikie	A*/B*	Stories, Poetry	The poetry is consistently Orcadian; two of the stories are Orcadian, and the rest English with Orkney language dialogue. A preface by B. Thomson praises the dialect aspects.
Baldwin, Norman	<i>Fae Abune th'Hill</i>	1987	Orkney View	B	Memoir	
Barnby, Gabrielle	<i>The Oystercatcher Girl</i>	2017	Thunderpoint	C	Novel	
Barnes, Michael P	<i>The Norn Language of Orkney and Shetland</i>	1998	The Shetland Times	D	Essay	Study of the Orkney and Shetland languages' source language, Norn
Campbell, H	<i>Island Notes in War Time</i>	1918	The Scottish Chronicle Press	B	Memoir	Published in the <i>Anthology of Orkney Verse</i> as Harriet Campbell; an author not discussed anywhere else, though one of the very earliest writers of Orkney language.
Campbell, H	<i>Island Folk Songs</i>	1920	W.R. Mackintosh	A	Poetry	Although described as folk song, this appears to be original Orkney language poetry, sometimes informed by folk rhymes.
Campbell, H	<i>Jean's Garden and How it Grew</i>	1927	W.R. Mackintosh	B	Stories	
Cooper, Jack	<i>A Pot of Island Broth</i>	1988	The Orkney View	C	Memoir	

Cooper, Jack	<i>Anither Pot o' Broth</i>	1989	The Orkney View	C	Memoir	
Corrigall, George	<i>The Bard of Ballarat</i>	1999	The Orcadian	A	Poetry	Published with audio recordings. As noted in Gregor Lamb's introduction, although written and performed in the early 20th century, Corrigall's poetry fluidly interpenetrates Orkney language, Scots and English.
Costie, Alex and Drever, Myrtle	<i>Memories of Westray</i>	2017	Sound Snapshots	A	Memoir	Released as Audio CD only. Produced by Hamish Guthrie.
Costie, C.M.	<i>Orkney dialect poems</i>	?	Westray Heritage Trust	A	Poetry	Recordings of the <i>Collected Orkney Dialect Poems</i> read by Westray voices.
Costie, C.M.	<i>Benjie's bodle, and other Orkney dialect tales</i>	1956	The Kirkwall Press	A	Stories, Poetry	
Costie, C.M.	<i>The Collected Orkney Dialect Poems</i>	1974	The Kirkwall Press	A	Poetry	Reprints the earlier <i>But-end Ballads</i> with other material.
Costie, C.M.	<i>The Collected Orkney Dialect Tales</i>	1976	The Kirkwall Press	A	Stories	Reprints the earlier <i>Benjie's bodle</i> alongside other work. The most consistent and wide-ranging published work of Orkney language currently extant.
Costie, C.M.	<i>Wullie o' Skipigoe, or, The true story of the Harray crab and other Orkney dialect poems</i>	1997	Westray Buildings Preservation Trust	A*	Poetry	Reprints the earlier <i>Collected Orkney Dialect Poems</i> alongside English juvenilia.
Costie, C.M. (Christina McKay)	<i>But-end Ballads : Orkney folk poems</i>	1949	The Kirkwall Press	A	Poetry	

Cumming, John, Cumming, Fiona, and MacInnes, Morag (eds)	<i>Working the Map: islanders and a changing environment</i>	2015	Hansel Cooperative Press	A*	Poetry, Memoir, Essay	
Edmonston, Thomas	<i>An etymological glossary of the Shetland and Orkney dialect, with some derivations of names and places in Shetland</i>	1886	A and C Black	D	Glossary	
Esson, Karen and Giles, Chris (eds)	<i>Orkney Language and Culture</i>	1993	Orkney Education Department	A*	Poetry, Songs, Stories, Essays	Produced as a guide to schools, and available in three volumes: Orkney, Stories and Plays, Poems and Music. An extensive compendium of writing in Orkney language to that date, including considerable material from periodicals and otherwise rare or unpublished. Each school was given a copy, and one is lodged in the Orkney Room.
Fenton, Alexander	<i>The Northern Isles: Orkney and Shetland</i>	1978	John Donald	D	Essay	Detailed ethnography, placing dialect words in context and etymology, but with no glossary.
Finlay, Alec	<i>minnmouth</i>	2017	Morning Star	A*	Poetry	One Orkney language poem from Giles and more poetry from Finlay strongly influenced by Orkney
Finlay, Alec, Peebles, Alistair and Watts, Laura	<i>ebban an' flowan</i>	2015	Morning Star	A*	Poetry	One Orkney language poem from Giles and more poetry from Finlay strongly influenced by Orkney
Firth, Howie (ed)	<i>In from the Cuithes</i>	1995	The Orkney Press	C	Stories, Poetry	

Firth, John	<i>Old Orkney Words, Riddles and Proverbs</i>	1918	W.M. Peace & Son	D	Glossary, Poetry	As well as an early glossary, contains riddles and proverbs not elsewhere printed.
Flaws, Margaret	<i>Kitty Berdo's book of Orkney nursery rhymes</i>	1994	Pinnsvin	A	Poetry	Children's rhymes and riddles, including several not collected anywhere else.
Flaws, Margaret	<i>Teeos and tea-floors: Orkney bird and flower names</i>	1997	Pinnsvin	D	Glossary	Collects and gives an etymology for many dialect names, including rare ones.
Flaws, Margaret and Lamb, Gregor	<i>The Orkney Dictionary</i>	1997, 2001	Orkney Language and Culture Group	D	Glossary	Reduces the Wordbook to commonly-used words and normalises spelling, with a short grammar.
Gibbon, Sarah Jane	<i>Voices in Chorus: Songs and their stories from The Big Orkney Song Project</i>	2012	Northings	A*	Songs	Although few are written down in Orkney language, this is a particularly significant route in to Orkney folk song, as it focusses on songs specific to Orkney and gives songs their full history and context.
Giles, Harry Josephine	<i>Tonguit</i>	2015, 2018	Freight, Stewed Rhubarb	A*	Poetry	One sequence in Orkney language and some poems in Orkney-influenced Scots. I have not listed previous periodical publications of these poems here; these are noted in the book.
Giles, Harry Josephine	Five poems in <i>Gutter 16</i>	2017	Gutter	A	Poetry	Five translations of Aurelia Lassaque into Orkney language, as part of a joint translation project into the languages of Scotland.
Giles, Harry Josephine	Six poems in <i>Northwords Now 33</i>	2017	Northwords Now	A*	Poetry	Three Orkney language poems, one not yet elsewhere published.
Giles, Harry Josephine	Four poems in <i>Irish Pages 10.1</i>	2018	Irish Pages	A	Poetry	Not yet elsewhere published.

Giles, Harry Josephine	<i>The Games</i>	2018	Out-spoken	A*	Poetry	One sequence in Orkney language and some poems in Orkney-influenced Scots. I have not listed previous periodical publications of these poems here; these are noted in the book.
Giles, Harry Josephine	<i>Deep Wheel Orcadia</i>			A	Poetry	Elements of the work have been previously published in Orkney Stoor, The Scores, Shoreline of Infinity, Multiverse, and Poetry Wales, and are forthcoming in Makar/Unmakar.
Hall, Simon, Donaldson, Julia, and Schleffer, Alex	<i>The Orkney Gruffalo</i>	2015	Itchy coo	A	Poetry	Children's poetry translated as part of a mass Scots translation project.
Hall, Simon, Donaldson, Julia, and Schleffer, Alex	<i>The Orkney Gruffalo's Bairn</i>	2016	Itchy coo	A	Poetry	Children's poetry translated as part of a mass Scots translation project.
Hatakka, J. J. M.	"To have and have not. Conditional slips of the ear in Orkney dialect presentation." in <i>The New Courant</i> , March 1995	1995	University of Helsinki	D	Essay	
Headley, Margaret	<i>The Voldro's Nest and other Orkney Stories</i>	1986	The Orkney Press	C	Stories	
Hedde, Donna.	"The Norse element in the Orkney dialect" in <i>Northern Lights, Northern Words</i>	2010	FRLSU	D	Essay	

Hewitson, Jim	<i>The Last Tree in Orkney</i>	2016	The Accidental Wordsmith	C	Poetry	
Horne, David	<i>Songs of Orkney</i>	1923	Orkney Herald	A*	Poetry	Mostly in English, but with some Orkney language poems.
Hume, Caroline, Grieve, Ingrid, and Johnston, Barbara	<i>Five Poems in Gutter 18</i>	2018	Gutter	A	Poetry	Published as a result of Scottish PEN's Many Voices project, which led to an ongoing Orkney language writers' group facilitated by Alison Miller.
Johnston, R.T.	<i>Orcadian Nights</i>	?	Orkney Herald	B	Stories	
Johnston, R.T.	<i>Stenwick Days</i>	1984	The Orkney Press	B	Stories	Also released as an audio CD narrated by Graham Garson and Emma Grieve.
Killick, Joyce	<i>Orkney Norn: the language which refused to die</i>	2003	Humanities and Allied Research Press	D	Essay	Study of contemporary usage of Norn words collected by Hugh Marwick.
Lamb, Gregor	<i>Nivver Spaek</i>	1980	The Kirkwall Press	A	Poetry	
Lamb, Gregor	<i>Come Thee Wiz</i>	1982	The Kirkwall Press	A	Poetry	
Lamb, Gregor	<i>Hid kam intae words</i>	1986	Byrgisey	C	Glossary	Orkney language is only used in the headwords, but this is a detailed etymology and usage of select Orkney words.

Lamb, Gregor	<i>The Orkney Wordbook</i>	1988, 1995, 2012	Byrgisey	D	Glossary	The most comprehensive study of the Orkney language.
Lamb, Gregor	<i>Lamb's Tales: Gregor's Concert Stories</i>	1997	Byrgisey	B	Audio	
Lamb, Gregor	<i>Whit Like the Day? Understanding Orkney dialect</i>	2005	Bellavista	D	Essay	The only full grammar of Orkney language, and a teaching guide. Published with audio CD.
Leask, J.T. Smith	<i>A Peculiar People and Other Orkney Tales</i>	1931	W.R. Mackintosh	A*/C*	Stories, Folklore, Essay	One full Orkney language story, "Tales of the Pressgang", and fragments in dialogue and rhyme.
Leonard, Alex	<i>The Giddy Limit: Fifth Anniversary Book</i>	2010	The Orcadian	A	Cartoons	Across the two volumes this is the most extensive use of Orkney language (and depiction of contemporary Orkney life) in contemporary publishing.
Leonard, Alex	<i>The Giddy Limit: Not Quite Tenth Anniversary Book</i>	2010	The Orcadian	A	Cartoons	
Ljosland, Ragnhild	"The Establishment of the Scots Language in Orkney" in <i>New Orkney Antiquarian Journal 6</i>	2012	New Orkney Antiquarian Journal	D	Essay	
Ljosland, Ragnhild	"'I'll cross dat brig whin I come til him': grammatical gender in the Orkney and Shetland dialects of Scots" in <i>Scottish language 31 &amp; 32</i>	2014	Association for Scottish Literary Studies	D	Essay	

Ljosland, Ragnhild	“The be-perfect in transitive constructions in Orkney and Shetland Scots” in <i>Before the storm. Selected Papers from the FRLSU Conference</i>	2016	FRLSU	D	Essay	
MacInnes, Fiona	<i>Iss</i>	2013	Stromness Books and Prints	B	Novel	The only extant full-length novel to use Orkney language consistently in dialogue; also particularly significant for narrating changes in Orkney culture and language over the modern and contemporary periods.
MacInnes, Morag	<i>Alias Isobel</i>	2008	Hansel Cooperative Press	A	Poetry	
MacInnes, Morag	<i>Street Shapes</i>	2013	Blurb	A	Poetry	
MacInnes, Morag (and others)	<i>Mailboats: playing with wind and tide</i>	2008	Hansel Cooperative Press	A*	Poetry	Eight poets; MacInnes is in Orkney language, the others in Shaetlan, Scots and English.
MacInnes, Morag (and others)	<i>the crow in the rear view mirror</i>	2018	Hansel Cooperative Press	A*	Poetry	Four poets; MacInnes is in Orkney language, the others in Shaetlan, Scots and English.
Mack, Molly	<i>The Storm Witch</i>	2019	Molly Mack	C	Novel	
MacNeil, Jevin (ed)	<i>These Islands, We Sing</i>	2011	Birlinn	A*	Poetry	Orkney language poetry from Morag MacInnes, set in a useful anthology context across languages and times.



Marwick, Ernest W. (ed)	<i>An Anthology of Orkney Verse</i>	1949	The Kirkwall Press	A*	Poetry	Three poems from Harriet Campbell, two poems from Walter Traill Dennison and two from Robert Rendall in Orkney language, all previously published in their own books, and 25 pages of folk poetry largely in Orkney language not published elsewhere.
Marwick, Ernest W. (edited by John D M Robertson)	<i>An Orkney Anthology (Volumes I and II)</i>	1991	Scottish Academic Press	D	Essay, Folklore, Glossary	Studies of language appear throughout Marwick's work.
Marwick, George, edited by Tom Muir and James Irvine	<i>George Marwick: Yesnaby's Master Storyteller</i>	2014	The Orcadian	C	Essay, Folklore, Glossary	The dialect includes, glossarised and highlighted, an extensive lexicon not previously collected anywhere else, and places the words in a detailed context of local knowledge. Marwick lived 1836-1912: these 28 collected papers are among the earliest writings on Orkney folklore, custom and language.
Marwick, Hugh	"Weather Words in the Orkney Dialect" in <i>Weather, Vol. VIII, No. 11</i>	1921, 1953	Weather	D	Glossary	Short glossary with explanatory notes.
Marwick, Hugh	<i>The Orkney Norn</i>	1929	Oxford University Press	D	Glossary	Early study of the Norse element in Orkney language, attempting to exclude the Scots.
McLean, Duncan	<i>Dark Island</i>	2016	Abersee	B	Stories	
McLean, Duncan (ed)	<i>Orkney Stoor</i>	2015	Abersee	A/B	Poetry, Stories	

McLean, Duncan (ed)	<i>Speak for Yourself</i>	2017	Abersee	B*	Stories	Orkney language dialogue in stories from Simon Hall and Morag MacInnes, and essays on dialect writing from MacLean and Alison Miller.
McLean, Duncan (ed)	<i>Swiet Haar</i>	2017	Abersee	A*	Poetry	Orkney language poetry from Kevin Cormack.
Melchers, Gunnell	“English spoken in Orkney and Shetland: phonology.” in <i>Varieties of English, vol.i</i>	2008	Mouton de Gruyter	D	Essay	
Melchers, Gunnell and Sundkvist, Peter	“Orkney and Shetland” in <i>The Lesser-Known Varieties of English</i>	2010	Cambridge University Press	D	Essay	
Millar, Robert McColl	<i>Northern and Insular Scots</i>	2007	Edinburgh University Press	D	Essay	
Millar, Robert McColl	“The death of Orkney Norn and the genesis of Orkney Scots” in <i>Scottish Language</i> 29	2012	Association for Scottish Literary Studies	D	Essay	
Miller, Alison, with Kevin MacNeil and Roseanne Watt	<i>A Collection of Short Stories on the theme of Between Islands</i>	2016	An Lanntair Arts Centre	A*	Story	Miller’s short story is in Orkney language.
Morrison, Tim	<i>Queerbashing</i>	2016	ThunderPoint	C	Novel	

Muir, J.W.	<i>North Ronaldsay: Island Stories</i>	1979	W.R. Rendall	B	Memoir	
Nicol, Thelma A.M.	<i>Tales from Eynhallow</i>	1992	Caledonian Books	B	Stories, Poetry	
Orkney Writing Fellowship	<i>Poetry in Place: An Orkney Anthology</i>	1999	The Orcadian	A*	Poetry	Four poems in Orkney language, all by school pupils (though adult English poetry is also printed here).
Orten, Elise	<i>The Kirkwall Accent</i>	1991	MA thesis, University of Bergen	D	Essay	
Parkins, Hazel S.	<i>Seven Year o Yule Days</i>	2002	H & M Parkins	A	Poetry	A good example of the full interpenetration of Orkney language and English in the 21st century – not as code-switching, but as a fluid continuum of language.
Parkins, Hazel S.	<i>The long, long night</i>	2005	H & M Parkins	A	Poetry	
Rendall, Robert	<i>Country sonnets and other poems</i>	1946	Kirkwall Press	A*	Poetry	
Rendall, Robert	<i>Orkney variants and other poems</i>	1951	Kirkwall Press	A*	Poetry	
Rendall, Robert	<i>Orkney shell names and shell games</i>	1954	Kirkwall Press	D	Glossary	
Rendall, Robert	<i>Collected Poems</i>	2012	Steve Savage	A*	Poetry	Includes the small but significant body of Orkney language work previously published in the other listed collections here.

Rendall, Thomas	<i>Perceptions of the Social and Cultural Factors which have influenced the use of dialect in Orkney</i>	2013	Open University (Doctoral thesis)	D	Essay	A comprehensive analysis of changing usage and attitudes.
Rendall, Tom	<i>Voices around the Flow</i>	2012	Scapa Flow Orkney Dialect Project	D	Essay	A crucial study of changing language use in relation to identity.
Scott, John W.	<i>Orkney and Shetland Weather Words: A Comparative Dictionary</i>	2017	The Shetland Times	D	Glossary	As well as collecting the words, it provides a useful comparison of how they are rendered in and vary between different sources.
Sinclair, David	<i>Willick o' Pirliebraes</i>	1981	The Orkney Press	B	Stories	
Sinclair, David	<i>Willick and the Black, Black Oil</i>	1994	The Orkney Press	B	Stories	
Skea, Bessie	<i>Waves and Tangles</i>	1964	The Kirkwall press	C	Stories	
Skea, Bessie	<i>A Countrywoman's Diary</i>	1983	Gordon Wright	C	Memoir	
Skea, Bessie	<i>Island Journeys: A Countrywoman's Travels</i>	1993	The Orkney Press	C	Memoir	
Spence, Ned	<i>I Mind Hid All Fine</i>	1997	The Orcadian	A	Memoir	A rare example of memoir in full Orkney language, obtained because it is transcribed from audio recordings by dialect expert Gregor Lamb. It's thus a strong example of Orkney language as it is spoken. The recordings are also kept in the Orkney Sound Archive.

Stevenson Headley, Margaret	<i>Mixer-Maxter: Fireside tales from Orkney</i>	2006	Margaret Stevenson Headley	C	Stories	
Stevenson Headley, Margaret	<i>Footprints in the Dew</i>	2011	The Orcadian	C	Stories	
Tait, Margaret	<i>Poems, Stories and Writings</i>	2012	Fyfield	A*	Poetry	There are at least 4 poems using Orkney language mingled with Scots and English.
Tamminga, Meredith	<i>Variation and Change in a Peripheral Dialect: Evidence from Westray Vowel Phonology</i>	2008	Unpublished Honours Thesis, McGill University	D	Essay	
The Papay Community Association	<i>Doondie Dialect</i>	2019	The Papay Community Association	D	Glossary, Essay	Documents the specifically Papay variant of Orkney language, with unique spellings and words. Includes an introductory essay and a sample of Doondie, both in variants of Orkney language.
Towrie Cutt, Nancy, and Towrie Cutt W. (William)	<i>The Hogboon of Hell and other strange Orkney tales</i>	1979	André Deutsch	C	Stories	
Towrie Cutt, W.	<i>On the Trail of Long Tom</i>	1970	André Deutsch	C	Novel	
Towrie Cutt, W.	<i>Message from Arkmae</i>	1972	André Deutsch	C	Novel	

Towrie Cutt, W.	<i>Seven for the Sea</i>	1972	André Deutsch	C	Novel	
Towrie Cutt, W.	<i>Carry My Bones Northwest</i>	1973	André Deutsch	C	Novel	
Traill Dennison, Walter	<i>The Orcadian Sketch-book: being traits of old Orkney life: written partly in the Orkney dialect</i>	1880	W.M. Peace & Son	A*	Poetry, Stories, Glossary	The first publication in Orkney language.
Traill Dennison, Walter (compiled by Tom Muir)	<i>Orkney Folklore and Sea-Legends</i>	1995	The Orkney Press	A*	Folklore	Contains a ballad, The Pay o' De Lathie Odivere, omitted from other collections, and a few folk rhymes and spells in Orkney language.
Traill Dennison, Walter (edited and introduced by J Storer Clouston)	<i>Orcadian Sketches</i>	1904	William Peace and Son	A	Folklore	Reprints the purely Orkney language material from The Orkney Sketchbook.
Traill Dennison, Walter, edited by Ernest Marwick	<i>Orkney Folklore and Traditions</i>	1961	The Herald Press	C	Folklore	Unlike Traill Dennison's other work, this does not use full Orkney language, but does use and explain fragments of the language for an English reading audience.

Tudor, John R.	<i>The Orkneys and Shetland: Their Past and Present State</i>	1883	W.M. Peace & Son	D	Glossary	Small and partial but early glossary.
Twatt, Kim	<i>Straight from the Horse's Mouth: The Orkney Herald 1950-1961</i>	1996	The Orcadian	B*/C*	Essay, Folklore, Stories	A very few of the articles use Orkney language.
van Leyden, Klaske	"The Relationship between Vowel and Consonant Duration in Orkney and Shetland Dialects" in <i>Phonetica</i> 59:1-19.	2002	Phonetica	D	Essay	
van Leyden, Klaske	<i>Prosodic Characteristics of Orkney and Shetland Dialects: An Experimental Approach</i>	2004	Thesis dissertation, Proefschrift Universiteit Leiden	D	Essay	

## Notes

GMB: George Mackay Brown's bibliography is compendious, including many stories reprinted in other volumes. His use of Orkney language, however, is extremely rare and fragmentary, occurring only ever in the speech of occasional characters, usually in a highly fragmentary form. A full analysis of the occasional use of dialect in Mackay Brown is outside the scope of this research, and so I have not

catalogued it here, although other authors do use the same C-type approach. Similarly, I am not aware of Muir, Linklater or Storer Clouston using Orkney language at all, but further research may yield some results.

Publishing: Books published or printed by the *Orkney Herald* and the *Orcadian* may appear as published by “Herald Publications”, “The Herald Press”, “The Orkney Herald”, “The Orcadian”, “The Orcadian Press”, “The Kirkwall Press” or “The Orkney Press”. I have used whatever is listed in the book, but it may appear otherwise in catalogues. The majority of the other books listed here were, while published by individual authors or their imprints, also printed by the same press. In these cases the line between “published” and “printed” is blurry: most of these texts have been fully typeset by the authors, though sometimes by the press or other collaborators, and bringing them into print is often a collaboration, artistically and financially, between the authors and the printers.

Availability: A significant proportion of Orkney language material is now out of print, and much is available only in the Orkney Room or national library archives. This is more likely to be true of early dialect writers such Campbell and Leask, and even Dennison’s *Orcadian Sketch-book* is not available in full, but it is also the case of contemporary writers, especially when printed by private presses: both Lamb’s *Whit Like the Day?* and Flaws’ *Kitty Berdo’s book of Orkney nursery rhymes*, the only published Orkney language grammar and the only original Orkney language children’s book respectively, are now only available direct from the author, if at all. Bringing work back into print is of vital importance in establishing the Orkney language canon.





## **Appendix 2.**

### **An Orkney Orthography**

This appendix is a guide to the orthographic conventions I have used for *Deep Wheel Orcadia*. As discussed in Chapter 4, these represent just one approach to Orkney orthography, particularly influenced by my own language use, and guided more directly by artistic than linguistic concerns

The aim is to use a consistent and understandable orthography for Orkney language that is familiar to Orkney readers and communicates the phonology of the language to a reader familiar with English. While as far as possible each symbol consistently denotes a single sound, with other symbols consistently applying modifications, each sound may have more than one symbol, often used in order to prevent confusion with English spellings and pronunciations. Conversely, when a word is spelled as in English it is generally pronounced as in English: English spellings can be naturalised into Orkney in order to aid fluidity of reading.

## I. Single Vowels

Vowel	IPA	SE ex.	Notes
a	ɑ	cat	Shades towards /ɑ/ in some accents. Can be lengthened in stressed vowels. <i>aa</i> is used where the lengthening is usually pronounced (e.g. <i>haand</i> ), or where other vowel sounds (e.g. /ɒ/) would be contraindicated (e.g. <i>waan</i> ). Scots and English cognates with /ɒ/ sounds tends towards this vowel.
e	ɛ	led	Shades towards /e/ in some accents. <i>ai</i> is used for the same sound where other vowel sounds (e.g. /ə/) would be contraindicated, particularly before an <i>r</i> and when the English cognate is spelt with an <i>e</i> (e.g. <i>haird</i> , <i>thaim</i> ).
i	ɪ	fit	-
o	ɔ	top	Shades towards /ɔ/ in some accents. Can be lengthened in stressed vowels. Is never modified into /oʊ/ by the vowel-consonant-vowel rule. Is followed by a double consonant for clarity when /o/ or /oʊ/ would be contraindicated (e.g. <i>bonns</i> , <i>pock</i> ). <i>oa</i> is used, rarely, for the same purpose. Scots and English cognates with /o/ or /oʊ/ sounds tends towards this vowel.
u	ʌ	but	-
y	1. j 2. aɪ 3. i	1. yes 2. by 3. any	Pronunciation determined by word position: 1. /j/ at the start; 2. /aɪ/ in the middle; 3. /i/ when following a consonant at the end of a word.

a,e,i,o, u,y	ə	the	All vowels may tend towards schwa in unstressed syllables, as in English, particularly when followed by an <i>r</i> (e.g. <i>thir</i> , <i>thair</i> , <i>thare</i> ), and particularly for <i>e</i> , <i>i</i> and <i>o</i> .
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## II. Double Vowels

Vowel	IPA	SE ex.	Notes
aa	a:	-	Used where the lengthening of <i>a</i> is usually pronounced (e.g. <i>haand</i> ), or where other vowel sounds (e.g. /ɒ/) would be contraindicated (e.g. <i>waant</i> ). Frequently occurring where the Scots or English cognate is spelt <i>aw</i> or <i>au</i> .
ae	i,e,ei	encyclop aedia	Varies by accent. Scots and English cognates with <i>ae</i> and <i>ea</i> spellings (e.g. <i>mate</i> , <i>meat</i> ) tend to converge on this sound in Orkney, as do some <i>ee</i> and <i>ai</i> words.
ai	ɛ	air	Used instead of <i>e</i> where other vowel sounds (e.g. /ə/) would be contraindicated, particularly before an <i>r</i> and when the English cognate is spelt with an <i>a</i> (e.g. <i>haird</i> , <i>thaim</i> ).
ao	-	-	Would only appear in proper names and imported spellings, with pronunciation varying accordingly.
au	-	-	Only appears in proper names and imported spellings, with pronunciation varying accordingly (e.g. <i>Aslaug</i> ).

ea	i	year	Used instead of <i>ee</i> where spelled and pronounced as in English or Scots cognates, for fluidity of reading. (e.g. <i>near</i> , <i>learn</i> ). Shades towards /e/ in some accents.
ee	i	feet	The preferred spelling for words unique to Orkney, but <i>ea</i> and <i>ei</i> may also be used to avoid confusion with English or Scots homonyms. Shades towards /e/ in some accents.
ei	i	conceit	Used instead <i>ee</i> where spelled and pronounced as in English or Scots cognates, for fluidity of reading. (e.g. <i>heid</i> , <i>protein</i> ). Shades towards /e/ in some accents.
eo	-	-	In Orkney, only used in the <i>eow</i> spelling (pronunciation discussed in that entry). Otherwise only appears in proper names and imported spellings, with pronunciation varying accordingly.
eu	ø	de rieur	In some accents, <i>ui</i> denotes the same sound, but <i>eu</i> is stable in pronunciation.
ia	-	triangle, social	Only appears in proper names and imported spellings, with pronunciation varying accordingly.
ie	i	field	Unlike <i>ea/ee/ei</i> , pronunciation is stable. Used by prior convention (e.g. <i>piece</i> ), in word endings (e.g. <i>peedie</i> ), and when English cognates take <i>i</i> pronounced as /ɪ/ on unstressed syllables (e.g. <i>visietor</i> , <i>radiecal</i> ).
ii	-	-	Would only appear in proper names and in spellings imported from English or other languages, with pronunciation varying accordingly.

io	-	station, biology	Only appears in proper names and imported spellings, with pronunciation varying accordingly.
iu	-	premium	Only appears in proper names and imported spellings, with pronunciation varying accordingly.
oa	ɒ	no example	Shades towards /ɔ/ in some accents. Used, rarely, when <i>o</i> would contraindicate the wrong sound and a double consonant is not possible, or by prior convention.
oe	ɔɪ,ɔɪə	no example	Only appears in proper names and imported spellings, with pronunciation varying accordingly, usually by Scots rather than English convention (e.g. /ɔɪ/ in <i>onomatopoeia</i> , /ɔɪə/ in <i>poem</i> ).
oi	-	-	Would only appear in proper names and imported spellings, with pronunciation varying accordingly. For /ɔɪ/, <i>oy</i> is used, usually only at word endings.
oo	u	food	Strongly preferred to <i>ou</i> as fewer ambiguities result.
ou	u	soup	Only used for /u/ when an incorrect homonym or misleading pronunciation would result (e.g. <i>rouk</i> , <i>loup</i> , <i>gloup</i> )
ua	-	gradual, quarter	Only appears in proper names and and imported spellings, with pronunciation varying accordingly.

ue	-	blue, fuel, tongue	Only appears in proper names and imported spellings, with pronunciation varying accordingly.
ui	u,ø	juice	In some accents, distinguished from /ø/ as /u/, in others not.
uo	-	-	Would only appear in proper names and imported spellings, with pronunciation varying accordingly.
uu	-	-	Would only appear in proper names and imported spellings, with pronunciation varying accordingly.

### III. Vowels Modified by Consonants

Vowel	IPA	SE ex.	Notes
ay	i,e,eɪ	-	Equivalent to <i>ae</i> and similarly varies by accent. Primarily used in word endings.
ey	əi	-	English cognates spelled <i>-ay</i> are often spelled and pronounced <i>-ey</i> in Orkney, and vice versa. /aɪ/ as in <i>aye</i> approximates this sound but it is distinct.
iy	-	-	Would only appear in proper names and imported spellings, with pronunciation varying accordingly.

oy	1. ɔɪ 2. aɪ, øi	1. ploy 2. -	1. At word endings, pronounced as in English (e.g. <i>joy</i> ). 2. Otherwise, pronunciation varies by accent between /aɪ/ and /øi/ (e.g. <i>oyl</i> , <i>poynt</i> ).
uy	øi	-	Only found as <i>-euy</i> as in <i>beuy</i> . Unlike <i>oy</i> , never pronounced as /aɪ/.
aw	-	-	Would only appear in proper names and imported spellings, with pronunciation varying accordingly.
ew	-	crew	Only appears in proper names and imported spellings. Some <i>-ew</i> spellings in cognates become <i>-eow</i> in Orkney language.
iw	-	-	Would only appear in proper names and imported spellings, with pronunciation varying accordingly.
ow	aʊ	how	Sound is stable. English <i>-ow</i> cognates pronounced /oʊ/ are always <i>-ae</i> in Orkney, and English cognates pronounced /aʊ/ are always /u/ in Orkney.
uw	-	-	Would only appear in proper names and imported spellings, with pronunciation varying accordingly.
eow	jəaʊ	-	/aʊ/ approximates this sound and is increasingly used, but a distinct and unique sound is maintained (e.g. <i>neow</i> )
a[c][v]	i,e,ei	face	When followed by a consonant-e pair, <i>a</i> is pronounced as <i>ae</i> , varying by accent the same way (e.g. both <i>face</i> and <i>careful</i> ). This spelling is dispreferred in favour of <i>ae</i> or <i>ay</i> where possible.



e[c][v]	ai	here, prefer	Only appears in proper names and imported spellings, with pronunciation varying accordingly.
i[c][v]	ai	wire, bide	When followed by a consonant-e pair, <i>i</i> is pronounced as word-middle <i>y</i> . This spelling is dispreferred in favour of <i>y</i> or <i>oy</i> where possible, except by prior convention.
o[c][v]	-	love, more	Only appears in proper names and imported spellings, with pronunciation varying accordingly.
u[c][v]	-	tune, measure	Only appears in proper names and imported spellings, with pronunciation varying accordingly.

#### IV. Consonants

Vowel	IPA	SE ex.	Notes
c,k,ck	k,c	-	The use of <i>c</i> for /s/ or /ʃ/ pronunciation is not usually used in Orkney, but may appear in imported spellings. The velar plosive becomes palatal in some accents at word beginning, so <i>c</i> and <i>k</i> may be pronounced /c/ (e.g. /cetl/ for <i>kettle</i> , sometimes rendered as <i>tyettle</i> .) This is less likely in contemporary accents and more likely at word beginning.

j	tʃ	-	Always pronounced as /tʃ/, so for imported words where <i>j</i> is pronounced otherwise alternate spellings are used. <i>j</i> is used where <i>g</i> on a cognate would be pronounced /dʒ/ in English or Scots.
r	r,ɾ	-	Orkney is rhotic, so <i>r</i> is always tapped, or trilled when emphasised.
s,z	s,ʃ	see	The alveolar fricative is not usually voiced in Orkney, so both <i>s</i> and <i>z</i> spellings are usually pronounced /s/. Voicing is more likely in more contemporary accents and at word end. An exception is when <i>r</i> precedes <i>s</i> or <i>z</i> , in which case the fricative becomes /ʃ/ (e.g. /warʃ/ for <i>warse</i> , sometimes rendered as <i>warsh</i> ). This is less likely in contemporary accents.
v	f	fit	The labiodental fricative is not usually voiced in Orkney, so <i>v</i> spellings are usually pronounced /f/. Voicing is more likely in contemporary accents and less likely at word beginning and end.
ch	tʃ	chair	The use of <i>ch</i> for /x/ is avoided in favour of <i>kh</i> , and for /ʃ/ in favour of <i>sh</i> , and for /k/ in favour of <i>k</i> .
kh	x	-	This spelling is favoured in order to lend clarity to the pronunciation of <i>ch</i> .
gh	x,∅	-	Whether <i>gh</i> is silent or /x/ varies from accent to accent. If /x/ and following an <i>i</i> , the <i>i</i> remains /ɪ/, but if silent the <i>i</i> is modified to /aɪ/ (e.g. <i>night</i> ).
qu	kw,ʌ	-	<i>qu</i> is sometimes pronounced like <i>wh</i> , as the fricative /ʌ/. This is more likely at word beginning and less likely in contemporary accents.

th	1.ϕ,t 2.β,d	1. pith 2. the	<i>th</i> varies between /ϕ/ and /β/ as in English, but in some accents the /ϕ/ becomes /t/ (e.g. /ɛrt/ for <i>earth</i> ) and the /β/ becomes /d/ (e.g. /də/ for <i>the</i> ). This is maintained in spelling for proper nouns (e.g. <i>Ting, Aal Eart</i> ). This pronunciation is more likely at word beginning and end, and less likely in contemporary accents.
wh	ʍ	-	<i>wh</i> is always the fricative /ʍ/ and never the approximant /w/, as in Scots.

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