Linguistic motivation, dramatic language and Glasgow-inflected Scots in Edwin Morgan's version of *Cyrano de Bergerac* (1992)

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Introduction

Edwin Morgan (1920-2010) was appointed Makar, Scotland's National Poet, in 2004, but his greatness as a poet was complemented by his standing as a scholar and as a playwright. In fact, although he was associated for many years with poetry readings and performance poetry, he was over sixty before he began to write for the stage. Even then, he worked only on translations and he was eighty before his first original plays, the *AD* trilogy about the life of Christ, were presented in 2000. Just, however, as Morgan's poems were deeply engaged with the nature and performativity of language and his poetic translations celebrated the potential of Scots language, so did his later playwriting. After he had begun by translating two medieval plays in English for the English company Medieval Players, the opportunity to translate for the Scottish company Communicado arose. He brought to that task, the translation of Edmond Rostand's *Cyrano de Bergerac* (1897), all the depth and range of his experience of writing in Scots and translating from major European languages. He brought the vitality and dramatic skills he so profoundly demonstrated in this translation to the later task of translating *Phaedra* (2000). This article discusses the wider issues raised by Morgan's practice as a poet and translator and proceeds to consider the implications of these issues for his approach to and practice in translating *Cyrano*. It then draws on these discussions to examine in some detail the dramatic language of his version, premièred in 1992. In doing this, it addresses questions of translation in a national culture and the conception of Morgan as an international national poet.

Translation and the national international

Edwin Morgan was praised as 'the most holistic, enlanguaged and internationalist of contemporary British poets' (Walker 1996: 303). His outward-looking and cosmopolitan temperament is evident in the range of languages from which he has translated, as instanced by his *Rites of Passage: Selected Translations* (1976). At the same time, he combines his internationalism with (non-doctrinaire) Scottish nationalist sympathies, as voiced publicly on several occasions over many years. In 1979, for example, the year of the ill-fated Scottish Devolution Referendum, he wrote in a piece headed 'What it feels like to be a Scottish poet':

> I prefer being called a Scottish poet [...] I feel the present moment of Scottish history very strongly and want to acknowledge it [in my writing], despite the fact that my interests extend to languages, genres and disciplines outwith Scotland or its traditions [...] I am sure I am not mistaken in sensing [...] an awareness of such [devolutionary and political] change which in subtle ways affects creative endeavour, suggests a gathering of forces, a desire to 'show' what can be done. [...] More and more writers now take this decision. The result will be, I hope, that dedication to the art of writing will not be unaccompanied by the other dedication – to a society, to a place, to a nation.
> (Morgan 1990 [1979]: 201)[1]

As Morgan here indicates, a political, nationalist awareness, and 'dedication' to a nation, can inform, as in his case, interest in 'languages, genres and disciplines outwith Scotland'. Therefore, the creation of artistic work, including literary and dramatic translations, forms part of a more general patriotic impulse 'to "show" what can be done'. This sits with other statements by him, such as his observation that 'when states are anxious to establish their national identity and to prove the virtues of their language, they have very often in history indulged in widespread translation from other cultures' (Morgan 1990 [1976]: 234). One dimension to his perception of the importance of this to contemporary Scotland can be seen in an elucidation he offered of his own impulses as a translator of poetry – by modern writers mostly:

I have wanted this to be one of my aims: to widen the horizon by translating. Although I use translations for my own purposes in keeping my hand in when I'm not writing creatively, I've also got a kind of missionary aim too. I do want to bring this range of other European writers into the Scottish awareness. Something like Mayakovsky, which can be done in the Scottish medium, makes it a very Scottish act but in other cases it's not, it's done obliquely through English and one hopes it will be part of the air in Scotland. (Morgan 1990 [1975]: 82)

In addition to the 'fertilizing' influence on a native literary culture that translation can provide, a further dimension to the act of 'patriotic translation' (Morgan 1990 [1975}: 80-1) is the constructive challenge that the foreign work can pose to a native language – in this case Scots – in testing and stretching its capacities. Morgan wrote in the introduction to his celebrated Scots translations of the poetry of Vladimir Mayakovsky, published as a collection, *Wi the Haill Voice* (1972), that there was for him 'an element of challenge in finding out whether the Scots language could match the mixture of racy colloquialism and verbal inventiveness in Mayakovsky's Russian' (Morgan 1972: 16-17). When interviewed in *The Scotsman* in 1992 at the time of Communicado's production of *Cyrano*, he was reported to have said, as paraphrased by the interviewer, that in translating Rostand's play he was 'concerned to see whether the Scots language was flexible enough to stretch to the demands of "a very sophisticated play"' (Heavens 1992). When interviewed in *The Independent* in April 2000 about his translation of Racine's *Phaedra*, he was quoted as saying:

The idea of being able to write about anything in Scots has always struck me as being very important, because otherwise the danger is that Scotland ends up defining itself in parochial terms [...] Whereas if a Scots translation can work with the best French classical tragedy there is, then surely that proves something. (Wilson 2000)

In his decision to translate into Scots *Cyrano de Bergerac*, and other demanding texts by Mayakovsky and Racine, Morgan demonstrates this wish to test the resources of the

language through the act of translation; or, to put that another way, and using his earlier-quoted formulation, he wishes 'to "show" what can be done'. The challenge, and what it proves if successfully met, has a cultural consequence which is at once artistic and political.

In his self-awareness of this, Morgan can be placed as following a line of Scots-language writers associated with the twentieth-century Scottish Literary Renaissance. He noted in 1976 that, as a descriptive phrase, 'the term "Scottish Renaissance" […] during the half century of its use has become harder and harder to define: (are we still living in it? has it one wave, two waves, three? is it literature plus language or literature plus language plus politics?)' (Morgan 1976b: 5). Notwithstanding those difficulties of definition, Morgan can confidently be placed within that continuum of politically-informed artistic effort, instigated by Hugh MacDiarmid in the 1920s, that stimulated – and continues to stimulate – subsequent 'waves' of writers. He wrote in 1984:

> l started using Scots in translations in the late 1940s and through the 1950s – perhaps this was sparked off by the Lallans controversies of that post-war period – and applied it deliberately to a range of very different poets and poetry: Platen, Tuscan folk-songs, Shakespeare, *Beowulf* or a mystical Marxist materialist from Brittany, or a Russian futurist Communist who was remaking *his* language. [Morgan 1990 [1984]: 117]

It is, for example, not without significance that he agreed to be included in the now famous painting by Alexander Moffat, 'Poets' Pub' (1980), held by the Scottish National Portrait Gallery in Edinburgh. That painting features eight poets –writing variously in Scots, Gaelic, and English – and was inspired by a wish on the artist's part to record a generation of poets who were, in his words, 'indebted in one way or another' to MacDiarmid, who is placed symbolically at the centre of the picture (Moffat 1981: 7).[2]

Morgan has not been uncritical of some aspects of Scottish Renaissance Scots-medium writing, expressing the opinion that some writers were lacking in linguistic adventurousness, overly concerned to emphasise Scottishness, and inclined to ignore the realities of contemporary life (Morgan 1974 [1962]: 172-5). But he has excluded MacDiarmid from

those strictures, noting with appreciation that he wanted 'the movement to be *modern*, in the sense that it would risk dealing with contemporary subjects and would experiment with new forms' (Morgan 1974 [1962]: 172). In his study *Hugh MacDiarmid* (1976), Morgan specified MacDiarmid's significance for Scots-language artistic endeavour – implicitly including, it could be said, his own:

> [MacDiarmid] began to move towards the position of believing that Scots might be revived, and carried out his own experiments in Scottish poetry. What was clear to him – and it is his great historical importance to have seen this – was that the moment had come for an exploration of Scottish vocabulary and idiom quite different from the debased, sentimental, jocose, moralizing tradition of nineteenth-century Scottish verse: in other words, Scots could be placed, and worked in, against the background of European symbolism and modernism. Here, the 'national' and 'international' strands in MacDiarmid's thinking came happily together. (Morgan 1976: 5)

Those national and international impulses are at work in Morgan's oeuvre, too, in poetry and in drama. Also, a quality that he admired in MacDiarmid can be seen in him as well: 'In Hugh MacDiarmid there is a large freedom from anxiety which allows him to use Scots or English, or a mixture of the two, as he will' (Morgan 1974 [1962]: 173). That freedom encouraged MacDiarmid's unprecedented 'exploration of Scottish vocabulary and idiom', just as it did Morgan's. Thus, in the Introduction to *Wi the Haill Voice*, Morgan wrote that in testing the capacity of Scots to render Mayakovsky's 'verbal inventiveness':

> I hoped Hugh MacDiarmid might be right when he claimed in "Gairmscoile"
> that
>> .... there's forgotten shibboleths o' the Scots
>> Ha'e keys to senses lockit to us yet
>> – Coorse words that shamble thro' oor minds like stots,
>> Syne turn on's muckle een wi doonsin' emerauds lit.
>> (Morgan 1972: 17)

Morgan added elsewhere, when interviewed in 1982, that he wanted to confront the challenge not just of Mayakovsky but of MacDiarmid and of 'the MacDiarmid method' of synthetic Scots: 'Was it impossible to build on this [MacDiarmid's achievement], to accept the challenge of doing something difficult in Scots? (Morgan 1990 [1982]: 105). It is relevant to note that critics have perceived the importance of what Morgan was about here. Barry Wood, for example, has observed that, in *Wi the Haill Voice*, 'Morgan draws on a wider range of spoken and literary Scots than he uses elsewhere in his work', and has concluded that, 'as an exploration and testing of the linguistic resources of Scots, the [Mayakovsky] translations are clearly important' (Wood 1987: 343).

One can extrapolate from all of this that the inspiring example of MacDiarmid's nationalist-internationalism and linguistic experimentalism, and the climate created by his Scottish Literary Renaissance 'movement' in its successive waves, have been factors informing decisions made by Morgan in his creative work generally, including the translation of verse and drama into a synthetic Scots. In this, one can see a line of continuity of sorts running from Robert Kemp with his Molière translations, *Let Wives Tak Tent* (1948) and *The Laird o Grippy* (1955) and Douglas Young's Aristophanes translations, *The Puddocks* (1958) and *The Burdies* (1959), to Morgan's translations of historic continental European dramas.

MacDiarmid's views on the expressive powers of Scots, as set out in that poem 'Gairmscoile' that Morgan cites, have become well known. In a survey essay on Scottish theatre, Randall Stevenson also quotes from those views in discussing the use of Scots in modern drama, but with reference to other lines:

> It's soon', no' sense that faddoms the herts o' men,
> [...] the rouch auld Scots I ken
> E'en herts that hae nae Scots'll dirl rich thro'
> As nocht else could.[3]

Stevenson suggests that an aspect of modern dramatists' employment of Scots, in original work and in translations, is that it helps to create a sense of 'solidarity – with a collective cocooning of stage and audience in a community of speech which often includes, by

implication, a sense of shared outlooks, values, and emotions'. He argues that Scots in the theatre has 'a peculiar hold over the emotions, a power to "faddom the hert" of audiences and draw them into [a] complicity':

> As MacDiarmid [in 'Gairmscoile'] helps to indicate, such powers exist almost regardless of audiences' ability or inclination to speak the language themselves. Probably not one spectator in ten shared the full range of vocabulary or expression so dexterously deployed by Edwin Morgan in [… his] translation of *Cyrano de Bergerac*, or by Liz Lochhead in hers of *Tartuffe* (1986). Yet this did not for a moment stop audiences laughing or weeping at attitudes and actions made to seem so immediate, so familiar, by the ways they were expressed and discussed. (Stevenson 1996: p. 5)

Morgan has himself noted a further element at work here, that 'people seem to get a disproportionate delight from hearing Scots words which they use frequently enough, but which acquire an extra dimension for them when they hear them in the theatre' (Morgan 1996a: 226).

Yet, before his Scots translation of *Cyrano de Bergerac* (1992), Edwin Morgan had prepared acting versions of two medieval plays for professional performance by The Medieval Players: a Dutch play (1982), *The Apple Tree*, and a French one (1983), *Master Peter Pathelin*,[4] which, in Morgan's words, 'were translated into standard English, although there were occasional bits of Scots, and other languages too' (Morgan 1996a, 220). This experience, he has said in an interview, 'was probably what got me interested in the stage' (Morgan 1996a: 219).[5] With the Dutch play he worked from 'a direct word-for-word translation into English', and corresponded with the translator as necessary (Morgan 1996a: 220), whereas he translated the French play himself, later commenting, 'I much prefer to work as I did with the French play, seeing it as I would see it and knowing exactly what the words meant' (Morgan 1996a: 221). (When he came to translate *Cyrano de Bergerac*, he similarly had the benefit of working directly from the French.) Though his version and translation, respectively, of those Dutch and French medieval plays significantly contrast with the translation of *Cyrano* in translation medium, all three scripts were shaped by a common consideration:

It is no use – ever – having a translation which might be pedantically accurate or scholarly if it cannot be spoken on stage. Any translator has to bear that in mind, always. As it happens, I relish thinking in those terms and working in that kind of way. (Morgan 1996a: 221)

While Morgan went on to translate Racine's *Phaedra* into Scots for the Royal Lyceum Theatre in Edinburgh (2000), *Cyrano* represented a departure for him at that time in being a translation of an entire play into Scots.

Morgan, Scots and Glasgow

Although Morgan had a middle-class Glasgow childhood and did not grow up a Scots speaker (see Morgan 1990: 49, 119-20), in his long professional and literary career as an academic and as a poet, critic, and translator, he maintained an interest in the Scots language and in Scots-medium writing. Early on in his writing career, as W.N. Herbert noted in 1990 (that is, before *Cyrano*),

he apparently took a decision to maintain a distinction between the separate languages he used, reserving English for all personal subjects or wherever a narrative voice was required. Literary Scots and the Glaswegian dialect are used exclusively for purposes of translation or in reported speech. (Herbert 1990: 71)

Morgan had earlier written in 1984:

I still think remarkable things can and will be done in Scots, as well as in local patois like Glaswegian, but I am content to keep the split in my own work between English-based original poetry and translations which may be in English or Scots. (Morgan 1990: p. 117)

On a previous occasion he had offered an explanation of his terminology; 'The "Scottish Language", for most Scots who think about the matter, is primarily Lowland Scots, or Scots, or Lallans – it is best called Scots'. (Morgan 1974 [1972]: 162)

Morgan's belief that 'remarkable things' can be done in Scots and in Glasgow-Scots must lie behind the choice of target medium he chose for his version of *Cyrano*. In his foreword to the Carcanet edition of his translation, Morgan explained the basis of his choice in more practical terms:

> I decided that an urban Glaswegian Scots would offer the best basis, since it is widely spoken, can accommodate contemporary reference, is by no means incapable of the lyrical and the poetic, and comes unburdened by the baggage of the older Scots which used to be thought suitable for historical plays. (Morgan 1992b: xi)

Further light is cast upon this decision by his fuller comments in an interview published in 1996 when asked by the interviewer, Joe Farrell, about his approach to translating *Cyrano*:

> I concluded that it should be in Scots, but not the kind of 'historical' Scots used by the playwrights of the thirties and forties like MacLellan and Kemp, which was a deliberate attempt to reproduce an older Scots language. These plays have mostly fallen by the wayside now. I felt that it would have to be a Scots which could be spoken today by actors, and since it was me who was writing it, it would need to be a Scots with a strong Glasgow basis – a Glaswegian Scots if you like. It uses words from other parts of the country, but I was not too worried about the purity of the language. I wanted something which would meet the demands of the play, while always being speakable. (Morgan 1996a: 222)

Speakability of the language by a generation of actors who were less than comfortable with a script in a classic or traditional Scots was clearly a consideration for him, hence he wished to fashion a stage-Scots whose basis was close to the kind of contemporary urban Scots speech with which they would be familiar and could more readily access. One can infer from

what he said, too, that he believed earlier plays in a historical Scots had 'fallen by the wayside' because of the problems of intelligibility that they pose for a contemporary audience. Thus, in wishing to be free to mould a flexible medium that could best 'meet the demands of the play', he also had in mind that that flexibility should extend to fashioning a Scots that would be accessible to the performers and the audience.

At the same time, there was a larger 'agenda' at work here – with a history predating *Cyrano* by twenty years or so – in his privileging of a Glaswegian Scots as the basis for a new synthetic Scots. In his 1972 essay, 'The Resources of Scotland', for example, he offered this analysis of conditions at that time:

> There is [...] a great deadlock to be broken in the theatre, where directors and managements seem to be hypnotized rigid by the polarity of received Standard versus Costume Scots -- neither of which any Scotsman actually speaks. Only rarely do Scottish theatre audiences hear that modest and unforced reflection of their own speech-habits which an English or American audience takes for granted (Morgan 1974: 163).

In the preceding year, 1971, in an essay whose concerns are flagged by its title, 'Registering the Reality of Scotland', Morgan similarly called for less prescriptiveness and greater honesty, and for the linguistic realities of contemporary Scotland to be admitted into literary and dramatic writing:

> [I] feel that heavily entrenched positions regarding language in Scotland are not very profitable. I would rather see the mixed state that exists being explored and exploited, more truthfully and spontaneously and hence more seriously than at present, by writers, and by playwrights and novelists *in particular* [my emphasis]. It may be that we have a blessing in disguise. But if we want to uncover it we shall have to use our ears more and our grammar books less. (Morgan 1974: 156)

That reference to 'mixed state' suggests that when, twenty years later, he addressed the translation of *Cyrano*, his aim was not for some kind of ideal, and therefore unreal, Scots, but for the realities of Scots speech – and most pressingly the urban linguistic realities – to be exploited by writers in naturalistic and non-naturalistic ways (*Cyrano* combining both).

Morgan saw the crux of the problem lying with denigratory attitudes towards the working-class speech of his place of birth, upbringing, and residence; Scotland's most populous city, Glasgow. Ironically, even Scots-language exponents decried Glasgow-Scots for both its 'impure' nature and its lack of literary potential, Morgan quoted, for example, J. Derrick McClure's then dismissive reference to 'the impoverished and bastardised Scots spoken in present-day Glasgow'. He added that such views partook of 'those pro-rural, anti-urban feelings which have found it so hard to accept that whatever "Scotland" or "Scottish tradition" is, it must include Glasgow, it cannot cast it out or refuse to come to terms with it or its "case"' (Morgan, 1983: 195-6). In arguing this he was not only motivated by loyalty to Glasgow but by an acute awareness of the politics of language: 'To sweep speech under the carpet is to academise, and indeed tarmacademise, systems of stasis and control that are perpetually in need of re-examination' (Morgan 1983b: 207).

The dramatic 'shock' of Scots language

Morgan came to his theatrical task when the 1970s had seen that carpet lifted and a surge of Scots-medium poetry, fiction, and drama, which explored to an unprecedented degree the particularities of Scots speech. The development was most marked in drama, where West-Central urban working-class speech came to predominate, as reflected in key plays of the period such as Bill Bryden's *Willie Rough* (1972) and *Benny Lynch* (1975), Roddy McMillan's *The Bevellers* (1974), Hector MacMillan's *The Sash* (1974), Tom McGrath and Jimmy Boyle's *The Hard Man* (1977), and John Byrne's *The Slab Boys* (1978). Even in 1970s plays dealing with historical subject matter, such as Hector MacMillan's *The Rising* (1973), Donald Campbell's *The Jesuit* (1976) and Ian Brown's *Mary* (1977), the influence of colloquial modern urbanised, though not necessarily Glasgow-based, Scots is apparent. One notes, too, that where a non-naturalistic Scots features in some history plays, such as Stewart Conn's *The Burning* (1973) and, again, Donald Campbell's *The Jesuit*, there is an

avoidance of Costume Scots and a new stress on intelligibility. Conn explained in a note prefaced to *The Burning* that he had not attempted 'a reconstruction of sixteenth-century [Scots] speech', but had 'aimed at the idea rather than the reality; at a hardness of diction, yet suppleness of rhythm, capable of suggesting the period and coping with the play's contemporary concepts – while remaining clearly intelligible' (Conn 1973: n.p.). This open spirit of experimentalism was shared by Donald Campbell, who, in his own words, saw 'exploration of the complexities and potential of the idioms of Scottish speech' as 'one of the central concerns of my work' (Campbell 1979: 5). The sum effect of the vitality and diversity of Scots language explored and exploited by playwrights in the 1970s is that it has had a significant impact on subsequent developments in Scottish theatre.[6] Thus, Randall Stevenson concludes in his overview in *Scottish Theatre Since the Seventies* (1996) that 'it is probably Scots speech that is the most fundamental influence on the drama'. He adds: 'Variously developed in the work of Donald Campbell, Bill Bryden, Roddy McMillan, Stewart Conn and others in the 1970s, it is a resource which has greatly empowered the progress of Scottish theatre over the past quarter century' (Stevenson 1996: 4, 5).

This helps to locate in a wider context Morgan's concerns in the early 1970s about the lack of empowerment of Glasgow-Scots and the need for a more open and adventurous attitude in exploration by writers of the linguistic realities of Scotland. By 1983 he could write with satisfaction, in an essay 'Glasgow Speech in Recent Scottish Literature': 'The seventies was the decade when Glaswegian began to fight back, in fiction, drama, and poetry. The "gutter patois" [...] became both an area of experiment and a badge of pride'(Morgan 1983b: 199). Whilst he welcomed this, he urged: 'It is not reportage that is wanted, but perhaps something like what the American poet Charles Bukowski has done with American speech, using a racy and colloquial basis but deploying it with the tact and subtle movement of high art' (Morgan 1981: xi). (This statement seems to point forward to his own deployment of a 'colloquial basis' with the sophistication of 'high art' in *Cyrano*.) Morgan further drew attention to the fact that, notwithstanding the advances, more could be done, particularly in addressing 'problems of limitations of creative potential':

> Since the 1940s [he has in mind, one assumes, plays by Glasgow Unity
> writers], and more particularly since 1970, plays in Glasgow dialect and

usually with a Glasgow setting have regularly appeared, proved popular, and built up a tradition. Because of the language, the tradition has been mainly realist and working-class, and often political; strong on humour and pathos, on veracity, on the pleasures of recognition, less strong on imagination, on shock, on analogies and vistas. (Morgan 1983b: 202)

Although he did not say so there, or explicitly anywhere else, it would seem that he saw one way of extending the range of Glasgow-Scots as being by using it to supplant a country or traditional Scots as the spoken basis of a new 'standard' synthetic Scots. It is perhaps significant in this context that one of his ripostes to purists who denigrated Glasgow-Scots was to claim that 'it is the rural dialects of Scotland which are impoverished, not the thriving and inventive urban speech of Glasgow' (Morgan 1983b: 195). It is relevant to note here, too, that, in 1972, he diagnosed 'the Scottish writer's dilemma today' as being 'that while he might want to keep helping a general literary Scots to develop, whether in the eclectic or "Synthetic Scots" tradition of Hugh MacDiarmid or in some other way', he is also pulled to write in 'the actual language of men' (Morgan 1974: 162-3). One way of reconciling that dilemma was in the manner that he demonstrated – in the same year as that statement – with his volume of Mayakovsky translations, *Wi the Haill Voice*, which, in Peter McCarey's apt phrase, employs 'street-Scots stiffened with dictionary words' (McCarey 1990: 103).[7] He can be seen combining there the two impulses he highlighted, by forging a new, Glasgow-based variety of 'eclectic or "Synthetic Scots"', while still applying the principle behind 'the MacDiarmid method' – as he termed it in the introduction to those translations – but in a new way for a new age. He elaborated on this in an interview in 1982:

The only way of getting Mayakovsky into Scots is by being, to some extent, eclectic. You have to, because of his very wide vocabulary, and also because of the fact that he's creating language as he goes along to some extent. You have to use the MacDiarmid method rather than a method which would be strictly following some local dialect, whether Glasgow or Aberdeenshire or wherever. You have to use a national Scots, or synthetic or plastic Scots (various people use different terms to describe the 'full canon of Scots' as MacDiarmid would say). So you have to go to dictionaries as well as speech

[...] So there's something in there of the speaking voice as well as something that comes from dictionaries. (Morgan 1990: 105)

He adopts the same approach in *Cyrano*, and in *Phaedra*, but with more emphasis on spoken Scots to meet the demands of drama. It is a twin approach that allows him, with those plays and with Mayakovsky's poetry, to extend the creative range of Glasgow-Scots. This is done partly through aggrandisement in order to meet the respective linguistic demands of those challenging works and partly through demonstrating that, in addition to its traditional strengths of humour and pathos, Glasgow-Scots also has the capacity 'to be strong on imagination, on shock, on analogies and vistas'.

One of the first to be 'shocked' by Morgan's approach was Gerry Mulgrew, Artistic Director of Communicado Theatre Company, who commissioned Morgan to translate *Cyrano*. In fact, Morgan later wrote in the programme notes: 'To Gerry I owe a special debt of gratitude, he being the "onlie begetter" of the enterprise' (Morgan 1992a: n.p.). In offering that commission Mulgrew was perhaps influenced by his experience of having directed Hector MacMillan's Scots translation of Molière's *The Hypochondriak* at the Royal Lyceum Theatre in 1987 (which had one of his fellow co-founders of Communicado, Alison Peebles, in the cast).[8] As Noël Peacock reports, that production was a huge popular success, 'with box-office receipts marking a new record for the theatre' (Peacock 1993: 230). Although Mulgrew may have had the success of MacMillan's translation in mind in commissioning Morgan to 'Scotticise' Rostand's play, he had not anticipated that Morgan's 'Scotticisation', linguistically speaking, would be as thoroughgoing as MacMillan's. Nor could he have anticipated that Morgan would improvise a highly individualistic stage-Scots based on 'urban Glaswegian Scots supplemented where necessary [...] by other kinds of Scots and English' (Morgan 1992a). Morgan's selective deployment of Scots in original poetry and in verse translation prior to *Cyrano*, would not, on the face of it, have led anyone to anticipate how extensively he would harness the language in translating Rostand's play. Thus Mulgrew wrote:

My introduction to the play was reading the well known English translation by Anthony Burgess. At the time I thought it very good indeed […] but I was uncomfortable about the rhyming on standard English vowel sounds and asked Eddie to make a version in what I imagined would be English with Scots rhyme and rhythm.

 When the first act arrived I was shocked. I had Burgess so firmly implanted in my head that reading Morgan was like having a lovely little minuet by Haydn suddenly interrupted by a Charlie Parker solo. As more acts arrived I started to get into it. We worked on the text, rehearsed and rehearsed it until, by the time it opened two months later, that first translation felt as old as the Dead Sea Scrolls. I re-read Burgess last week. It probably still is a good translation, but compared to Eddie's it now sounds to me like polite conversation at a dinner party. (Mulgrew 1992: 30)

Mulgrew's description communicates clearly both his initial 'shock' at discovering that Morgan's translation medium was more radical in nature than merely 'English with Scots rhyme and rhythm', and his growing persuasion, through the rehearsal, process, of the performance merits of Morgan's unorthodox approach. His jazz analogy draws attention, too, to the excitement engendered by the improvisatory qualities of Morgan's theatrical Scots. The experience of that 'shocked' reception – felt by audiences, too – may partly explain Morgan's choice of words in the Preface to the published version of his second Scots translation for the stage, *Phaedra*, which again adopts a similarly radical approach in language:

In this translation I have used a Glaswegian-based Scots (but using Scots words from other parts of the country on occasion), partly hoping that the non-classical shock of it will bring the characters back alive, and aiming also, since the translation is quite close (though it may seem strange to pure anglophones) to find out what there is in this most remarkable play that survives and transcends a jolt into an alien register. (Morgan 2000: 8)

'Shock', 'jolt', 'alien', are all words that could have been used by Mulgrew and audiences in their initial exposure to Morgan's translation of *Cyrano* before adjusting, pleasurably, to its linguistic delights. And it was a 'shock' that was greater than that applied by Liz Lochhead's radical version of *Tartuffe* in 1986. Unlike with Molière, who before Lochhead had been translated in Scots by Robert Kemp and others, there was no precedent for Rostand's play being treated in such a way; nor had a play of quite that kind been translated into Scots before. Moreover, the eclecticism that marked Lochhead's demotic-based Scots was in *Cyrano* pushed onto a higher, even more linguistically inventive level.

Morgan, Mayakovsky and *Cyrano*

When interviewed by Joe Farrell in 1996, Morgan confessed that, while he was familiar with the story, he had never read Rostand's *Cyrano de Bergerac* prior to being invited to translate it by Mulgrew. He then read an American version and decided that he would like to accept the invitation. He remarked that Mulgrew

> wanted a Scottish version, although he did not specify it absolutely. There was no time for theorising about the type of Scots to be employed, because it had to be done very quickly. Rehearsal schedules meant that I only had three months to do what was a full five-act play. (Morgan 1996a: 222)

Given what Morgan says, and the pressure of the time-scale that he was working to, it may seem wilful and crude to look for motives beyond the obvious one that, put simply, having been asked to translate the play, he read it and liked it, and accepted the translation commission. However, the validity of attempting to identify other motivational factors, both overt and covert, is confirmed by Morgan's own awareness of the matrix of conscious and subconscious considerations informing *Wi the Haill Voice*, his Scots translations of Mayakovsky (1972). That volume represented his most extended work in Scots before *Cyrano*, and is linguistically similar in some ways as regards both the source text and the translation medium. He wanted to see 'whether the Scots language could match the mixture of racy colloquialism and verbal inventiveness in Mayakovsky's Russian' (Morgan 1972: 16-17), and whether, in the later case of Rostand's French, Scots likewise could be as 'racy' and

'linguistically sparkling' (Morgan 1996a: 223). Both works called forth an inventive Scots that involved aggrandising, in a highly individualistic manner, a Glaswegian-Scots base with borrowings from Literary Scots and from English; and although *Cyrano* is a play, and *Wi the Haill Voice* poetry, there are certain points of overlap allowed by the fact that the former is a *verse*-drama and the latter draws heavily on 'spoken language' (Morgan 1972:10).

In a 1975 interview about his motivations in translating Mayakovsky into Scots, Morgan comments:

> [...] like most Scottish writers, you do certain things because you are Scottish. It's a mixed thing. The actual decisions you make as to what you're going to write about or what technique you are going to use are not always recoverable afterwards. I'm not *quite* sure why I translated Mayakovsky into Scots. I do give reasons in the book itself and I'm sure these are true, but I'm not sure whether they're the whole truth. [...] I think that probably there's a mixture of artistic and national or patriotic motives at work. There was the challenge of the difficulty of doing it: is it possible to translate into Scots a poet like Mayakovsky who is a very inventive, accomplished, unusual user of his own language, extending it in all sorts of directions into great sophistication but also into demotic and slang and so on? [...] It's a mixture of things, but the patriotic thing is there to some extent. It's mixed up with other things, of course, the local as opposed to the national. I feel very strongly about the immediate environment of Glasgow, you see, and have written often about that. [...] Someone who is living in an unsatisfactory unfinished environment will feel pressure within himself to keep writing about it in some kind of way, but hopefully not in ways that force him to write against his own grain. My own grain is much more open and flexible. (Morgan 1990: 80-1)

(Morgan elaborated elsewhere on what he meant by an 'unfinished environment': 'No country which has once been independent, and is then overshadowed in union with a more

powerful partner, can develop happily and naturally. Its political history is officially closed, but emotionally it remains unfinished' (Morgan 1974 [1962]: 166).

Revealingly, Morgan's attempt to pin down here the factors motivating his translation of Mayakovsky into Scots highlights his awareness of 'a mixture of things' at work, and the difficulty of getting at 'the whole truth'. This difficulty is partly because of the elusive and subconscious nature of influential considerations and partly because decisions made in the heat of the creative flux, before and during the translation, are 'not always recoverable afterwards'. At the same time, he expresses a clear apprehension of a number of governing considerations, which, it will be argued, can also be applied to his translation of *Cyrano*. These shaping factors can be identified in heading form as follows:

> (a) nationalist/patriotic/political;
> (b) local as opposed to national (Glaswegian);
> (c) challenge of using Scots;
> (d) artistic;
> (e) temperamental affinity with writer.

The significance of these general categories of factors as applied to *Cyrano*, too – all of which being held in balance by a spirit of openness and flexibility on the translator's part, as just indicated -- will emerge in the discussion below.

Celebration of an indigenous tongue and of a shared sense of national community can be seen at work in Morgan's choices with *Cyrano*. In part it is a reflection of a larger impulse found within his work as a whole which is bound up with issues of linguistic and national status. This has been diagnosed by W.N. Herbert as, principally: '[...] a response to a long-term oppression so invidious as to have become a sub-conscious habit in the Scots themselves. Morgan's search for voices represents an enormous freedom from that oppression' (Herbert 1990: 73). It also links in with that more directly political dimension to Morgan's work that was noted earlier when, in 1979, the year of the Devolution Referendum, he expressed an awareness of how the demand for devolution, and the attendant mood of heightened national identity, affected creative endeavour in subtle

ways. The impact on Morgan's work was more overt after the failure of that Referendum and the coming to power in the same year of the first Thatcher Government. His *Sonnets from Scotland* (1984) gathered together poems written, he said,

> as a kind of reaction [...] to the failure of the Referendum to give Scotland political devolution and any idea of a Scottish Assembly [...] There was this great deflation [...] I had very strong feelings about Scotland at that time [...] It's a kind of comeback, an attempt to show that Scotland was there, was alive and kicking. (Morgan 1990: 141)

That reaction, and its attendant assertion of Scottish identity, proved a distinguishing characteristic of much cultural activity in Scotland throughout the Thatcher-Major years in the 1980s and early 1990s when, as evidenced by consecutive General Election results, the Conservative Party achieved in Scotland only minority electoral support. (Indeed, Lochhead's *Tartuffe* (1985) and *Mary Queen of Scots Got Her Head Chopped Off* (1987) can both be placed within that political context, too.) The sense of disenfranchisement that arose extended to disaffection from the constitutional status quo and greater solidarity in pressure for devolution of powers from Westminster. Morgan wrote in 1991 of how 'the circle of empire is breaking, the satellites are escaping': 'If the 1990s are going to be the age of the periphery, Scotland too may take the plunge; not before time' (Morgan 1991: 10).

Communicado's production opened soon after the 1992 General Election, when the Conservatives were returned to power for an unbroken fourth time since 1979, while Scotland had voted in an opposite direction in the same four elections. David Kinloch has suggested that the reception given *Cyrano* derived in pan from how well Morgan's gallus and swashbuckling translation chimed with the political moment – and in part from how, vide above, the speaking of Scots on stage can create in audiences a sense of solidarity:

> It would be a crude and unjust interpretation that attributed his translation's immediate success simply to the prevalent political atmosphere of gloom and recrimination but there can be no doubt that the elation experienced at the first performances had something to do with this. It wasn't just card-carrying

Nationalists that felt a certain satisfaction that Morgan should confine De Guiche and the foppish marquises to the English language while Cyrano was allowed to soar in Scots. [...] Morgan provided us, on cue, with a 'heroic comedy' whose mixture of passion and passionate self-deflation was both balm and irritant to that unheroic Scottish summer. Indeed it was as if his desire to transpose as acutely as possible had extended even to the conditions of reception prevalent at the time of the premiere of Rostand's play in 1898. For the original French play [and 'the perceived patriotism of its hero'] did much to cheer up contemporary theatre-goers still smarting from a succession of military defeats. (Kinloch 1998: 34)

In his introduction in the programme for that first, 1992 production, Morgan wrote: 'The time seemed ripe for a Scottish version' (Morgan 1992a). He did not elaborate on that tantalising statement, but in a promotional interview for the production before it opened, he said: 'I wanted, if possible, to make it a play that would appear to belong to the country, to Scotland, as well as being a translation of a famous French play'. That Cyrano's words have a political force, and that he should audaciously speak out in Scots to challenge figures of conventional authority was, to Morgan, an 'attractive idea'. He acknowledged that there could be seen in this a reflection of the relationship between England and Scotland, and confirmed that '[t]he fact that the translation has been done in a kind of Scots has got some kind of political implications, obviously' (Heavens 1992). A theatre reviewer in *The Scotsman* tellingly observed of Morgan's translation when staged by Communicado: '[...] the Scottishness sits well enough: Cyrano is not French but *Gascon* and there's a subtext of the prickly nationalist defying his foppish political superiors which feels distinctly familiar' (Lockerbie 1992). This perception adds weight to Kinloch's analysis and his suggestion that there is a political dimension to Morgan's language choice:

It is easy enough to forget – until Cyrano reminds you – that, in standard English versions, Cyrano is a Gascon from Gascony and not Parisian. Morgan's decision to let him speak mainly in Scots is tantamount to giving his Gascon identity and voice back to him. Much of the pleasure and shock we get from Rostand's play comes from the pressure Cyrano puts on standard French.

> That pressure is a Gascon one. It is the instinctive, subversive revolt of a
> tongue that does not quite recognize itself in standard French just as Cyrano
> does not entirely recognize his true self when he looks in the mirror and his
> nose looks back at him. His virtuosity and ventriloquism is in part the product
> of a suppressed regional identity. (Kinloch 1998: 46)

Conveying that identity through language choice can be seen as one of the reasons why Morgan strove, as he wrote in programme notes, 'to meet the range of tones and tongues in the original' and why 'the time seemed ripe for a Scottish version' (Morgan 1992a).

At the same time, it must be said that he was moved to do so, too, out of a more general, principled desire to honour Rostand's intentions: 'I do try to be fair to the other writer, to reproduce the effects of his or her style as far as I can' (Morgan 1996a: 226). Therefore, what has been said so far about his motivations should be kept in balance with the simple artistic imperative articulated in that statement As a translator he must remain open and flexible in his approach and not do damage to the source text through some kind of manifesto-driven set of motivations. As we have seen at the end of his statement setting out the various motivational factors, artistic and political, at play in translating Mayakovsky's poems into Scots, he concluded that his 'own grain is much more open and flexible' than having politics dictate his artistry with language (Morgan 1990: 81). Just as Kinloch cautioned that it would be 'crude and unjust' to impose a heavy-handed political interpretation on the translation, Morgan, while acknowledging the 'political implications' of the play and translation, added that 'ultimately I don't think that's why we're doing it'. (Heavens 1992) It is, he wrote, 'one of those rich and challenging works which need to be translated again and again, in different circumstances and for different purposes, readerly and actorly' (Morgan 1992b: xi). Inevitably, then, the appeal of the play for him personally, and his admiration for its qualities, had to be the primary impetus behind deciding to translate it (though stating this does not, of course, obviate the need to take account of the contribution made by other motivational factors such as those just discussed). That *Cyrano de Bergerac* proved an attractive translation project for intrinsic reasons is apparent from the enthusiasm running through Morgan's comments on the success enjoyed by Rostand's play in its own day:

Its hero was a poet, and the brilliant verse of the play, full of pyrotechnics and wit, but racily colloquial too, and capable of moving lyricism when the need arose, was a reminder of what poetry can do in the theatre. The play was robust and boisterous, yet sad also, and it at once inhabited a territory of its own, escaping both gritty naturalism, and fin-de-siècle decadence. That robust quality, theatrical yet human is what keeps the play alive today. (Morgan 1992a)

Coupled with that enthusiasm for the play, he relished accepting the technical challenge that it brought him as a translator and poet, and as, on this occasion, a Scots-medium writer:

Cyrano de Bergerac offers a huge challenge to the would-be translator. It's a very theatrical play, yet it's also lyrical and poetic. It has many transitions from hilarious fun to piercing sadness. And it has a range of language, from the racy and colloquial, through wit and word-play, to high poetry. [...] I wanted [...] to recreate, through metre and rhyme, the poetry of the original, and it was a joy to discover the use of Scots was no hindrance. (Morgan 1996b)

Motivation and method

Turning to the specifics of Morgan's method, as influenced by the contexts and factors discussed so far, we find that, just as the opening line of his *Phaedra*, spoken by Hippolytus, initially jolts one with its disorientatingly Glaswegian

Nae merr pussyfootin. Ah'm aff, Theramenes. (Morgan 2000: 11)

one's first encounter with *Cyrano* has the same arresting effect:

THE DOORMAN

> Stoap! ye've no peyed!

FIRST CAVALIER

> Ah'm free!

THE DOORMAN

> Naw ye're not (2000: 1)[9]

The effect is intensified on first meeting Cyrano, who vents his ire at the actor Montfleury's performance of a play in standard English, of which we are given a flavour:

> Happy is he who leaves the courts behind,
> In solitude communing with the wind,
> And who, when Zephyr breathes about the woods […] (2000: 14)

The impact of an interruption of this by an anonymous voice in the crowd is heightened by the register clash: 'Eejit, Ah gave ye wan month [to get] aff the boards!' (2000: 15). It is Cyrano, who heckles Montfleury's stuttering efforts to continue with 'Get doon, ya clown ye!' (2000: 15). A Fop – English-tongued – urges Montfleury to continue, to which Cyrano, now named for the first time, responds with a threat:

> You, ya tube,
> Ah'll skelp yer lugs if ye do, ya fat jujube! (2000: 16)

Cyrano thus announces himself with the verbal and attitudinal gallusness of the stereotypical Glasgow hardman.

His linguistic persona, however, is more heavily complicated than these examples of naturalistic Glaswegian speech suggest (just as his persona is revealed to be more complex than first impressions suggest). We get a glimpse of this from another of his heckling interjections:

> Well, king a the bampots, ur ye fain

Fur ma shillelagh on yer shouther-bane? (2000: 15)

The word 'bampots' and the phonetic renderings convey that this is Glasgow-voiced, but the older Scots forms 'fain' and 'shouther-bane', and to an extent the Irish 'shillelagh', signal that a non-naturalistic and synthetic medium is also being employed. At times Cyrano's language alternates between naturalistic and non-naturalistic utterances, as instanced by the contrasting nature of the interjections cited above; at other times it is more consistently synthetic but achieves a sense of continuum with his more naturalistic speech by means of the spoken Glaswegian base to which Morgan applies his synthetic method.

Of course, Morgan's method applies not just to Cyrano but to the majority of characters in the play, who are Scots speakers. The following exchange – whose focus is the anticipated first appearance of Cyrano and his 'gallus Gascon swagger' – illustrates both this and the general applicability of those preliminary remarks about Cyrano's diction to the other Scots-speaking characters, too. The passage also provides a convenient means of identifying key aspects of Morgan's approach generally:

GUIGY

       Ye lookin fur Bergerac?

LE BRET/CARBON

              Aye, all day...

GUIGY

       Is he no the maist byordnar son-of-a-gun?

LE BRET/CARBON

       Ah, he's the best, the first under the sun!

RAGUENEAU

       A rhymer!

CUIGY

        A fechter!

BRISSAILLE

        A scientist;

LE BRET/CARBON

<center>A musician!</center>

LIGNIERE

<center>And whit a presence, whit an apparition!</center>

RAGUENEAU

<center>True. An auld fart like Philip of Champagne</center>

<center>Will niver pent his portrait. Agin the grain!</center>

<center>But auld Emilio Coia, therr's the boay who'd</center>

<center>Huv fixed this heich-skeich wild ootlandish dude</center>

<center>Oan a canvas. Yon hat wi its triple plume,</center>

<center>The six-flapped doublet, the cape that swalls back roon</center>

<center>His stickie-oot sword like a cock's pawky tail,</center>

<center>That gallus Gascon swagger, the niver-fail</center>

<center>Buckle-swash, the birse and brangle, the birkie</center>

<center>Breengin fae a line o birkies, the quirky</center>

<center>Ruff at his neck, sae Punchinello-teuch,</center>

<center>And above that ruff – fellas, it's eneuch</center>

<center>Tae get ye gibberin – a nose, a neb, a niz –</center>

<center>The hooter-bearer passes – 'Cannae be!' – 'It is!' –</center>

<center>'It's no. He'll take it aff, jist wait.' They laugh.</center>

<center>But Bergerac will niver take it aff. (2000: 9-10)</center>

This passage provides a convenient means of identifying key aspects of Morgan's method, therefore initial identification of and brief comment on characteristic elements of Morgan's practice, as seen in this specific example, will be offered before turning to a consideration of those same features in broader terms.

Orthography: While some spellings are shared with traditional Scots, such as 'maist', 'wi', 'o', 'sae', 'aff', others signal a modern urban Scots: 'fur', 'whit', 'niver', 'boay', 'huv', 'oan', 'fae', 'jist'. **Glaswegian**: This overlaps with the former, as instanced by the Glaswegian sound-system of 'therr's the boay'. One notes, too, 'gallus', a Scots word but generally associated with Glasgow usage. **Central-Belt Scots**: Many, and perhaps most of the forms

signalled by the orthography are shared by Central-Belt Scots generally (though 'therr' is a distinctive Glaswegian one). Some of the words chosen have a more general Central-Belt currency, too, such as 'stickie-oot', 'breengein', 'neb', 'pawkie'. ***Older Scots***: Morgan's mixing-in of older, or more traditional Scots is apparent not just in the choice of individual words – 'byordnar', 'heich-skeich', 'birse', 'brangle', 'birkie' – but in the choice of forms such as 'fechter', 'swalls', 'teuch', 'eneuch'. ***Modern Idioms***: A feature of the synthetic medium created by Morgan is the admixture of strikingly modern idioms (sometimes Scotticised) from British standard or American English, such as 'son-of-a-gun', 'an auld fart', and 'wild ootlandish dude'. ***Anachronisms***: Just as some of the aforementioned elements run counter to the original play's seventeenth-century setting, the insertion of anachronisms confuses our sense of time and of this being a period play, whether of the seventeenth century or its time of composition in the late nineteenth century. An example is the reference to 'auld Emilio Coia', who would have captured Cyrano's likeness 'oan a canvas'; Emilio Coia (1911-97) being a Scottish cartoonist and painter who was alive when Morgan made his translation. ***Poetic Verve***: Morgan remarked that with the play, and with Cyrano the poet, 'the translator must address himself to the problem of getting the poetic verve across' (Morgan 1996a: 224). He added, 'never were rhyming couplets used with such boldness and verve, sometimes greatly broken up by the quick cut-and-thrust of dialogue, sometimes deployed in formal banks of love poetry or satirical comment' (Morgan 1996c: n.p.). The above passage from the play gives a flavour of Morgan's inventiveness in seeking to convey that verve, in both metre and rhyme, while ensuring the speakability of his verse-dialogue. In accepting the challenge of honouring Rostand's use of rhyming couplets, his rhymes are often audacious: 'who'd'/'dude', 'pawky tail'/'niver-fail', 'the birkie'/'the quirky', 'niz'/ '"It is"', 'laugh'/'aff'. One notes, too, the use of poetic methods such as the inventive and humorous inversion 'Buckle-swash', and the employment of alliteration at times to drive the dialogue on in a surge:

[…] the niver-fail
Buckle-swash, the birse and brangle, the birkie
Breengein fae a line of birkies.

Registers: Ragueneau's extended dialogue illustrates Morgan's synthetic approach, with its aggrandisement of a colloquial urban-Scots base with traditional Scots words and forms, modern English-language idioms, anachronisms, and poetic/literary inventions. That dialogue also offers a small illustration of a characteristic feature of Morgan's method in the play, in the register contrast provided by embedding within Ragueneau's synthetic Scots quotations of direct speech in a naturalistic urban Scots spoken by anonymous observers in the street who gawk at Cyrano's nose: '"Cannae be!"' … '"It's no. He'll take it aff, jist wait"'.

Specific approaches throughout the play

The observations made on a specific passage of dialogue in the previous section can now be broadened out to allow examination of how these same elements in Morgan's approach are at work in the play as a whole.

Orthography. Morgan's orthography draws on standard Scots spelling and, more markedly, on what have become 'conventional' spellings in modern urban-Scots writing as well as personal, idiosyncratic ones that have something in common with efforts in the late 1960s and through the 1970s by Glasgow writers such as Tom Leonard, James Kelman and Alex Hamilton, to represent Glasgow speech realistically through phonetic spelling.[10] Examples of the latter in *Cyrano* are 'gote', 'boax', 'hod', 'hon', 'huv', 'wahnts', 'firget', 'sumhm' [something], 'wae' [*wi*=with], 'brote', 'ur' [are], 'a' [*o*=of], 'awe' [*aw*=all], 'ivrywan', 'twinty', 'wanny uz', 'wurd by wurd', 'fulla' [full of], 'goany' [*gonnae*=going to], 'kin' [can], 'foallyin', 'coansciousness', 'doactor', etc. The insistent effect of these kinds of spellings throughout the play is of course intensified when they become collocations in phrases and lines, such as,

> Whit a duffer!
>
> Furst he hiz too much hert, than nut enough,
>
> Kin he no work oot whit he wahnts'? (2000: 76)

or:

LE BRET/CARBON

   Open that hon wae the hanky in it.

LE BRET/CARBON

ROXANE

         Whit fur?

LE BRET/CARBON

   Ma troops had nae flag. Noo madame, noo sur,

   By Christ we've gote the best flag in two ermies! (2000: 125)

Part of 'the baggage of the older Scots which used to be thought suitable for historical plays' (Morgan 1992b: xi), to quote Morgan, was adoption of the recommendations of *The Scots Style Sheet* (1947) by writers such as Robert Kemp and Douglas Young, his predecessors in dramatic translation. In shaking off that 'baggage' by using Glasgow-Scots as his basis, Morgan's 'liberation' is further signalled by his individualistic blend of traditional and non-traditional Scots spellings. This not only makes an ideological point in regard to both rejection of a Classical or Costume Scots and assertion of the linguistic realities of modern urban Scotland, but it has performance implications, too. While on the one hand Morgan's spelling represents a kind of freedom, ironically, it is also, for actors, prescriptive – or, at least, directional. However, it is difficult to see what other option he had if he wanted to ensure the underpinning of his synthetic Scots with urban-Scots and its characteristic pronunciations. Also, as will be discussed below, the precise sound of a word was an important means by which he could ring the changes with rhymes and allow himself a wider range of options between, for example, standard English and Glaswegian pronunciations of the same word. Moreover, his orthographic practice retained a strong awareness of the practicalities of performance. His aim throughout, he said, was for 'a Scottish version [...] that would be thoroughly stageworthy, and not incomprehensible to audiences' (Morgan 1992b: xi); and he was mindful that his playtext should be speakable by, and intelligible to, the actors: 'I was there during rehearsals, and if they felt I had used a word which was too obscure, I met their objections. There is no point in being too precious about this' (Morgan 1996a: 223). This pragmatism doubtless extended to his response to actors' reception of and feedback on his spelling practice and its clarity for them.

Glaswegian (subsuming **Central-Belt Scots**). Morgan remarked of the role of Cyrano:

> The main part is very long and demanding, so it was vital that the actor
>
> playing the part had a language he was at ease with, Tom Mannion is from
>
> Glasgow, and that did work for him, We experimented with the first act, and
>
> it was felt to be successful. (Morgan 1996a: 222-23)

Implicit in this statement is that Morgan's unusual dramatic language seemed initially challenging (as it did to the director, Gerry Mulgrew, as noted before). Ensuring that it was rooted in a Central-Belt urban Scots generally, combined with the particularities of a Glasgow sound-system and lexis, provided a comforting degree of familiarity as a launch-pad to the actors achieving a confident ease (particularly in the case of the actor playing the demanding part of Cyrano). Examples of specific Glasgow pronunciations signalled by Morgan are 'Zat so?', 'Zat true?', 'Blushes sperd', 'Howzit gaun, hey?', 'Wanny uz!', 'Ston therr'. As regards the last cited, Caroline Macafee, in her study of Glasgow speech, states that there is 'a distinctive Glasgow orthography' to represent typical Glasgow pronunciations, one of whose features is 'the use of <err> to spell the /ɛr/ which develops from /er/, e.g. <squerr>' (Macafee 1983: 39). In Morgan we thus find: 'Hullo therr', 'An auld perra thaim', 'Aye, all squerr', 'Sweep the flerr', 'He's a berr', 'Whit a right terr', and so on. Glaswegian lexical items that he uses include the alcohol-related ones 'blootert', 'stocious', 'steamboats', and 'alky' (although the first two may be more widely prevalent in Scottish dialects), and terms of abuse like 'bams', 'bampots', 'keelie', and 'chanty-wrassler'. There are expressions closely identified with Glasgow speech, too, such as 'pits the hems oan', 'pure deid brilliant', and 'shoot the craw'; and distinctive discourse markers, as in the sentences 'Ah hope he hasnae seen the poster, but!', and 'Nae messin wi yon guy, tell ye!'.[11] The sum effect for a Scottish audience is that Morgan's synthetic stage-language has a marked and pervasive Glasgow-Scots quality.

Older Scots. In 1983, in arguing the case for equal rights, as it were, for Glaswegian as part of the larger Scots-language family, Morgan affirmed:

> Even if we accept the arguments put forward for a modern generalised
>
> literary Scots, as against a naturalistic locally-based Scots, such a Scots ought

to include a significant admixture of Glaswegian forms and idioms if it is to be true to the linguistic realities of the country. (Morgan 1983b: 196)

Morgan's approach in Cyrano can be seen as offering a kind of 'modern generalised literary Scots', with the 'significant admixture of Glaswegian' that he saw as necessary to achieve that modernity; but, unconventionally, his generalised medium is achieved by the addition of older Scots to Glaswegian, placing Glasgow-Scots at the heart of the enterprise. Morgan adopts this strategy partly out of an ideological pro-Glasgow-Scots motive, and partly because he is concerned to avoid the excesses of many Lallans practitioners and the attendant problem of audience intelligibility. Hence, as John Corbett points out, Morgan's medium in *Cyrano* is more reminiscent of 'the synthesis of colloquial and literary found in the *lower* [my emphasis] registers of LaIlans' (Corbett 1999: 175).

His characteristic style is to add older Scots items to his Glaswegian basis with varying degrees of restraint, as if it were seasoning. His mode of approach can be seen in his selective employment of the older, now shibbolethic-*ch* sound in Scots. He uses a scattering of words such as 'lichtsome', 'wechty', 'fecht', 'dicht', 'richt', but these are very much the exception rather than the rule, as the *-gh* spelling characteristic of present-day standard English and contemporary urban Scots, signalling a change in the quality of the preceding vowel, predominates. In her analysis 'The Use of Obsolete Scots Vocabulary in Modern Scottish Plays', Katja Lenz, in discussing the dramatic functions of such words, suggests that they can 'represent a welcome additional source of "exotic" and (ironically) "fresh" word material from the respectable end of the stylistic scale, which is apparently accepted by modern audiences – if used sparingly' (Lenz 2000: 6). Just as Morgan uses the *-ch* sound sparingly, he draws selectively on older Scots words in order to extend and enliven his urban Scots base, and he does so in a way that both 'refreshes' the older words through their unlikely appearance amidst colloquial Glaswegian speech, as in these examples

Zat so? Jist see's a grup o yer jaw-bane. (17)

Sic pure deid brilliant whigmaleeries. (25)

Some kinna big Rambo, tae cause sic a steir! (45)

It's pang-fu wi things ye didnae know. (57)

> Ya snubby-honkered bap-faced nyaff, this thing
>
> Ah cairry is a thing Ah'm proud tae sing,
>
> For a big nose is ay a sign o wan
>
> That's guid and croose and guid tae ivrywan [...] (23)

and exploits their 'exotic' qualities for dramatic and poetic effects (Lenz 2000: 4) noting that 'archaic vocabulary may also be employed to achieve certain poetic effects in the stage language'):

> [...] Christ though,
>
> The gloamin winkles oot some weel-faur'd show
>
> Of feelin, when Ah dauner by the trees
>
> [..,] and watch a perr
>
> Stravaigin in the muinlicht, (33)
>
> …
>
> Naw, niver that! Naw, naw, it wid be wrang
>
> Tae greet, and weet this nose, this auld lang whang. (34)
>
> …
>
> Ye're shair tae be defunct, at an early age,
>
> By corrieneuchin the fatal cartilage. (65)

Modern Idioms and Anachronisms. Morgan's regular and sometimes arresting use of modern idioms and anachronisms reflects his belief that Cyrano is a play which needs 'to be translated again and again, in different circumstances and for different purposes' (Morgan 1992b: xi). His stage language is very much of its own time, both in its flexible and individualistic approach to Scots and in its incorporation of contemporary words, idioms, and references. Of the latter he wrote; 'To add some spice for the audience I introduced a few anachronisms (milk shakes and crisps, Gucci and the Body Shop, Rambo and Rupert Murdoch), in what I hope was the inventive and flamboyant spirit of the original' (Morgan 1996c: n.p.). One can add to those examples references to 'Perrier', 'Amtrak', 'Lanliq', 'Hermes', 'Elephant Man', 'supergun', 'jeeps', 'tanks', 'yuppie', 'pyrotechnic engineer', 'pie

and beer', 'nuclear fission', etcetera. Words with contemporary resonances include 'foodies', 'blowback', 'supersnack', 'cheapo', 'a buzz', 'mega', 'ego-trip', 'body-scans', 'hype', 'a pundit', 'shair issues'; and expressions such as 'It's kebab time now', 'Yer haill life-style's challengin fate', 'Hiv ye iver sussed', 'Ye're so macho', 'Yer stoap-them-in-their-tracks boady-line', 'They'll beam me up intae ma paradise'. Such usages are also, of course, part of his technique of aggrandising his Glasgow-Scots, and of holding his older Scots importations in a creative and energized balance which tempers their traditional associations with a borrowed modernity, from Glaswegian and from standard English and American words and idioms, as in these examples:

> – And you, at that endless spit, a touch a class'll
>
> Alternate cheapo chicks and burstin bubblyjocks,
>
> Jist as, ma son, auld Malherbe amazed folks
>
> wae alternatin lang and shoart verse-lines.
>
> Turn yer roast stanzas in sic skeely designs! (40)
>
> …
>
> Weer oot ma wame wae crawlin? Fudge and forage
>
> For favours on a hackit glaury knee-cap?
>
> Bend backwards tae Ah need a spinal tap'?
>
> Naw thanks. […] (62)

Poetic Verve. The linguistic variety arising from this gave Morgan an invaluable resource which he could exploit for rhyming purposes in the difficult task of conveying the vitality of Rostand's rhyming couplets. There are outrageous rhymes on 'slicerama/Drama', 'tootsies/Guccis', 'scenario/Lothario', 'slutettes/cadets', 'edit/Geddit?', 'syllable/killable', 'tarmacadam/Madam', 'the willies/Achilles [, and so on, all of which serve the humour of the piece. There are rhymes involving French words (Morgan puts a scattering of French words and expressions through his text to remind of its origins). These range from French-French ('Lignière/derrière'), through French-English ('D'Assoucy/anti-boozy', 'Porchères/ever and ever', 'd'heure/stir'), Scots-French ('cundy/Burgundy', 'braw/Arbaud', 'no bad/ballade'), and French-Scots ('d'Assoucy/use ae'). The following categories of rhymes also feature: Scots-English ('introduce ye/dishy', 'slurp fae/survey', 'guidsakes/milkshakes',

'boke/stroke', 'gless/less', 'drapped/trapped', 'freen/tureen', 'wabbit/rabbit', 'gabby/tabby'); Scots-English homophones ('moarnin/mournin', 'waur/war'); English-Scots ('tank/stank', 'rookie/stookie', 'universe/erse'); Scots-Scots ('toty/photy', 'rowp/stowp'); Glaswegian-Glaswegian ('loat'll/boattle', 'Quiet therr!/all squerr!', 'morra/borra'); Glaswegian-English ('hons/pawns', 'chitterin-fit/that's it'); English-Glaswegian ('sonnet/bunnet', 'greater/theayter', 'boast/loast'). The Scots and Glaswegian nature of the text is emphasised by the attention drawn to end-line rhymes like these. The range and flexibility that Morgan achieved with those rhymes, and their success with audiences, as substantiated by the public and critical reception given Communicado's production and revival of *Cyrano*, together provide validation of the creative capacities and performance effectiveness of Morgan's synthetic Scots in translating a prestige play such as Rostand's classic.

Registers. Complementary to that range of rhyming options is the range of registers available to Morgan through alternating between the component parts of his synthesis – Glaswegian, traditional Scots, and standard English – and through modulating the density and style of any of those individual parts at any given time. It was noted earlier that Cyrano first announces himself in colloquial Glaswegian:

> You, ya tube,
> Ah'll skelp yer lugs if ye do, ya fat jujube. (16)

Thereafter he doffs and dons language styles frequently. One moment he slips into North-East Scots

> Fat's a dae wae noses? Na, na!
> A muckle neep or a scrunty melon, hah? (25)

or into a 'functional Scots', here serving, stylistically, to suggest a gazette of events

> Setterday nineteen:
> Eftir eight dollops a Mediterranean fruit –

> Preserved – the King wis feverish; the brute
>
> Of a fever wis lanced – twice – fur lèse-majesté,
>
> And the noble pulse wis restored tae febricity. (155)

and on other occasions he lapses into French

> Ma freen, mony a *mauvais quart d'heure*
>
> Ah've spent, ill-faur'd, alane   (34)

or parodies Shakespeare's Pyramus

> See how this nose has blasted the harmony
>
> Of its master's features! It blushes wretchedly! (25)

This multivocal quality also serves to mark different moods, ranging from the angry colloquial riposte of 'Oh shut it! Greetin-face!', to the lyrical poetry of place:

> – Ah! ... Paris, dark, dim, distant as an omen,
>
> Muinlicht seepin doon blue roofs, a frame
>
> Ower fine fur scenes that huv nae hamely name:
>
> Doon therr, beneath the slanty mists, the Seine
>
> Trummles like a keekin-gless, as fly as Zen […] (38)

In his telling of a space fantasy, he begins his zany account of his setting out 'tae shaft the virgin sky' with a humorous, mock-learned explanation that

> Ah didnae reinvent automata –
>
> Regiomontanu's daft eagle, gone at a
>
> Flap, Archytas's wee widden doo […] (103)

In acting as a ventriloquist for Christian in his surrogate wooing of Roxane, he becomes transported by being unseen and thereby able to voice his secret love for her, which he does in language suggestive of formal love-poetry:

> Oh if we could jist escape the torches a Cupid.
>
> The arras and quivers – tae somethin fresh, no stupid!
>
> Insteed a sippin, drap by drap, wersh watter
>
> Fae fikey golden thimbles of clichéd matter,
>
> We could get the haill soul tae slake its thirst,
>
> Slorpln love's river in a thunderbust! (91)

In her infatuation with words, Roxane asks if he might also use wit in wooing her. His answer reveals his knowingness in donning and discarding different styles of language:

> Well, Ah used ma wit tae win ye,
>
> But wit wid noo be the wrang tale tae spin ye.
>
> It wid insult the daurk, the earth, the scents,
>
> Tae utter euphuistic sentiments.
>
> – Let the sky pour doon wan look tae its stars,
>
> And artificiality's a farce.
>
> Ah doot oor subtle chemistry creates
>
> Forms where real feelin – whoof! – evaporates.
>
> Ah doot the soul weers thin wi verbal bushido,
>
> And finest finesse is finally *finito*. (91)

The sophistication of this utterance, and the revealing sincerity of the tone, are at a far remove from the colloquial bluster of Cyrano as Glasgow hardman. Its sophistication is also in contrast, very soon after, with Cyrano's urgent outpouring of love in the directest of language, devoid of any 'verbal bushido':

> [...] Ah love ye, Ah'm chokin, Ah know
>
> Ah'm crazy, Ah love ye, Ah'm at the end a ma tether;

> Ma hert's a bell, yer name's there in aw weather,
>
> It hings and shivers as Ah shiver, Roxane.
>
> It rings oot, bell and clapper, *Roxane*, *Roxane*! (92)

In baring his soul to her, he has also bared his language and is exposed at his most vulnerable.

Conclusion

One could instance a much wider variety of voices and related moods in Morgan's *Cyrano* than it is possible to cite here. Suffice to say that his exploitation of registers has been remarked on by others. Lindsay Paterson identifies the translation as containing 'a great variety of rhetorical registers – action, politics, religion, but above all love and death' (Paterson 1996: 81). He instances Cyrano's bravura speech in Act I, Scene 4, (pp. 24-25) which offers twenty styles of insults that Valvert, who has been taunting him about his big nose, could have used. David Kinloch offers analysis of that speech, too, as part of his extended analysis of Morgan's translation in relation to the original French. He similarly describes Morgan's Cyrano as 'a kaleidoscope of styles and registers', and he places that aspect of his approach, with the assistance of examples drawn from elsewhere in the play, as a technique at the heart of both Rostand's play and Morgan's (in his estimate) masterly translation:

> This play is a play on words, of words, for words; it is theatre about theatre [...] The mirror of an continually acknowledging its presence, fragmenting, doubling, suggesting that the true pain and loss experienced by Cyrano, the extremity of his love, may only momentarily be glimpsed in the ceaseless movement of the play's myriad textures, as style after style is taken up and Iain down. (Kinloch 1998: 38, 43-4)

In the translation, that movement of 'myriad textures', it can be suggested, draws on hose linguistic realities of Scotland that, as noted before, Morgan had long urged be admitted to literature and drama; for it chimed with what Morgan described as 'the complexities and

ambiguities of the language situation in Scotland', with its 'latent bilingualism in which accents and vocabularies can be quickly trip-switched to meet matters and encounters as they arise' (Morgan 1974: 155). Morgan built on that reality, just as he built on the reality of Glasgow-Scots, to forge the subtlety of medium required to render what he described as 'the range of tones and tongues in the original' (Morgan 1992a: n.p.).

Finally, mention should be made of Scottish references within the text, such as 'Muckle Flugga', 'Freuchie', 'Lawlanders', 'Scoatch snap', 'strathspey', 'Grampian lairds and Morvern caterans'. When asked in an interview what his feelings were about adapting, say, plays by Molière or Goldoni to Scotland, he replied: 'At times it can be illuminating to have the play in a very different setting, but on the whole I prefer to respect the original'. Of his practice with *Cyrano*, he said:

> I decided not to change the main setting of the play. It was tempting to switch the action to Scotland, and make it a Scottish historical play, but the work needed its French environment. Cyrano, after all, was a character from history, his life is documented so it seemed to me important to respect that element. The play remained set in seventeenth-century France, even if the language used was Scots. (Morgan 1996a: 225)

The incorporation of Scottish allusions seems to run counter to both his general principle and his stated practice with *Cyrano*. Moreover, because there is essentially just a scattering of such references within the translation, they take on at times an incongruous quality – notwithstanding that it could be argued they are no more incongruous than Morgan's insertion of anachronisms and markedly contemporary idioms. Perhaps that very incongruity signals something about their function in flagging up a Scottish dimension to the play. This possibility returns us to the discussion of motivation and the question of Cyrano's Gascon identity having a Scottish and political resonance for Morgan.

Towards the end of the play, in Act IV, the Gascon soldiers are besieged and starving in Arras. To take their minds off their plight, Cyrano seeks to raise their spirits by having the old shepherd, Bertrandou, play 'auld folk tunes' on his flute. As Bertrandou plays an emotive

Gascon air, Cyrano accompanies with an equally emotive word-picture, which we are told makes the Cadets 'greet' with homesickness:

> Soonds a loved voices hauden in their phrases,
> Airs as sleepy as the smeek that lazes
> Up fae clachan roofs and chimley-taps,
> Music that prees its dialectal staps! ... (Bertrandou plays)
> – Let the fife forget its fechter's skirlin
> Wan moment, while yer fingers dae their whirlin
> Like a fine dance a livin wings oan the stem,
> A reed the reality, ebony the stratagem:
> And the sang pricks the ears a the reed, tae recaw
> Its sowl, its youth, its glens, its peace an aw...
> – Listen, Gascons! His fingers'll no pley
> The sherp fife a the camps, but the flute's wey
> A the foarests; nae whusslin up the clans
> But dreamy goatherds pipin slaw pavanes …
> – Listen … This is the glen, the wids, the hill-tap,
> The sunbrunt herd-laddie wae'z rid cap,
> The gloamin ower Dordogne, its dear green mastery ...
> Listen, Gascons: it's here, it's yours, it's Gascony! (113)

The traditional Scots vocabulary in Cyrano's nostalgic, lyrical vision here is both insistent and of a kind that invites a close association in a Scottish audience with Scotland: 'smeek', 'clachan', 'chimley-taps', 'glens', 'clans', 'the wids, the hill-tap, / The sunbrunt herd-laddie', 'the gloamin'. One notes, too, the deliberate echo of Scotland's national lament, 'The Flowers o' the Forest', in 'The flute's wey / a the foarests', and of Glasgow's sobriquet, 'The Dear Green Place', in 'its dear green mastery'. The mood of sentimental exile conjured by Cyrano's speech is a familiar one for Scots, as is the assertion of identity through folk-tunes and folk-language (even if, as here, sometimes with 'Kailyard' features). When the drummer strikes up and breaks the mood, Cyrano says: 'Ye see? It only takes a drum-roll, and adieu / Tae dreams, love, but-and-ben, and saft-regret.' (114)

That 'but-and-ben' betrays again both the Scottish dimension to his word-picture of Gascony and his self-awareness, as highlighted before, of his capacity to find language styles to suit a mood and function. What the passage demonstrates is that Morgan's translation is on occasion double-visioned in representing a Gascon identity while speaking in a linguistically coded manner to Scottish identity – perhaps with an eye on the political juncture in Scotland when the translation was written, as discussed earlier. Certainly, in this last respect, reading a parallel with Scotland becomes firmer when, very soon after, the Count de Guiche describes the besieged and starving Gascon Cadets as 'malcontents […] / mountain tribes, / Grampian lairds and Morvern caterans […] / The anti-shabbies of the Gascon nation' (115).

Cyrano responds defiantly to the Count's scorn by taking his scarf to use, as he says, 'When Ah lead today's Cadets tae the thick a the fire'; the scarf, he asserts, will be their 'saltire' (117). That last word has an unmistakeable Scottish resonance, confirming one's analysis of a double-visioned, Gascon/Scottish function sometimes being served in the translation by Scottish references and Scots words. One can see in this an instance of motivation and method meshing, for it recalls the revealing quotation from Morgan cited earlier, where he said, in his attempt to recover the impulses behind his translation work, that 'there's a mixture of artistic and national or patriotic motives at work'.

Endnotes.

[1] For other statements by Morgan indicating his support for Scottish independence, see, e.g., Morgan 1990: 40, 142.

[2] The painting, 'Poets' Pub', is reproduced on p. 6.

[3] 'Gairmscoile' is published in full in MacDiarmid, H. 1978. *Complete Poems 1920-1976*, Vol. 1. Grieve, M. and Aitken W. R. eds. London: Martin Brian & O'Keefe, pp. 72-5.

[4] Morgan's translation of *Master Peter Pathelin* is discussed in McCarey 1990: 99-100.

[5] There is discussion of his translations of *The Apple-Tree* and *Master Peter Pathelin* – and of *Cyrano de Bergerac* – at different points throughout this interview (219-227).

[6] For further discussion see Paterson 1996: 75-83.

[7] Strictly speaking, Morgan did not first demonstrate this in 1972, when the book was published, as he had been working on the Mayakovsky translations in the 1950s and 60s, and had been publishing them in literary magazines. See Crawford, R. 1991. The Gutter and the Dictionary: Some Contemporary Scots Poets. *Verse*, 8 (2) Summer, p. 69.

[8] Details of the director and cast are given in Peacock, N. 1993. *Molière in Scotland 1945-1990.* Glasgow: University of Glasgow French & German Publications, p. 223. (A selection of press reviews of that 1987 Royal Lyceum production, co-directed by Mulgrew, is given on pp. 224-7.)

[9] Morgan 1992b. All subsequent page references are to this text.

[10] See, for example, *Three Glasgow Writers: Alex Hamilton, James Kelman, Tom Leonard.* 1976. Glasgow: Molendinar.

[11] Macafee 1983 identifies, and gives examples of, distinctive Glaswegianisms in phonology, orthography, lexis, and grammar, pp. 31-53.

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