

*Proposal for a
Scottish Centre for Translation and Reception*

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1. Introduction

It is surprising that translation has long been the Cinderella of the literary arts in Scotland, given the importance of translation to Scottish culture. From Gavin Douglas' Scots *Aeneid* in the 16th century, through Sir Thomas Urquhart's still unequalled translation of Rabelais in the 17th century, to Edwin Morgan and Liz Lochhead's dramatic translations in the 21st century, Scotland has a rich, varied and distinguished history of literary translation. Furthermore, the earliest treatise in English on translation studies was written by a Scotsman, Sir Alexander Fraser Tytler, in 1797.

The importance of translation of Scottish literature into other languages has been demonstrated conclusively by the Bibliography of Scottish Literature in Translation (BOSLIT), until recently an AHRB-funded project hosted by the National Library of Scotland. Translations of Scottish literature have been and continue to be a key means of showcasing Scottish culture abroad; however, this activity has been undertaken unsystematically and without any public recognition or encouragement.

The BOSLIT committee consists of interested translators, librarians and academics from across Scotland. This committee believes that a national Centre for Translation and Reception is long overdue, and we propose the establishment of such a Centre.

2. Management of a Scottish Centre for Translation and Reception

The BOSLIT project has catalogued translations of major Scottish writers into other languages, and its bibliographic resource is fast becoming a major tool for research, not only into translation itself but also into the reception of Scottish literature world-wide. The BOSLIT online database is available at <http://www.nls.ac.uk/catalogues/boslit.htm> and its home page has been reproduced as Appendix A.

As BOSLIT nears the end of its current incarnation, there are strong reasons to extend its remit to form a Scottish Centre for Translation and Reception. The remit of such a national Centre will be to coordinate, enhance and promote (a) the translation of

literary works into and out of the languages of Scotland, and (b) the wider study of translation, using national research resources, in particular the BOSLIT database, and (c) 'reception studies', that is, the study of Scottish culture's impact furth of Scotland, and of other cultures' impact on Scotland.

Management structure

Initially, the management of a Scottish Centre for Translation and Reception would draw upon the current resources of BOSLIT. It could initially consist of:

- One salaried Researcher/Administrator
- A Steering Committee, with voluntary representatives from the Scottish Universities, other interested parties such as the Scottish Arts Council, the National Library of Scotland, and individuals with an interest in Scottish writing and translation.

Currently the BOSLIT Steering Committee is chaired by Professor Ronald Jack of Edinburgh University; at the end of 2004 he will be succeeded by Dr John Corbett of Glasgow University. The Steering Committee currently involves active members from Aberdeen, Heriot-Watt and Strathclyde Universities, alongside representatives of other Scottish institutions and interested individuals – see Appendix B for a full list of current BOSLIT board members.

3. Activities

The Researcher/Administrator will make contact with various individuals and institutions to establish how their activities will best be enhanced by a Scottish Centre for Translation and Reception. It is likely that a wide range of bodies will welcome such a Centre, e.g.

- Translators in Scotland and elsewhere
- Scholars of literature, language and culture with a specific interest in translation, in various departments of Universities in Scotland and elsewhere
- The Scottish Arts Council (Literature Dept)
- The British Council
- Gaelic Books Council
- The UNESCO World City of Literature project
- Scottish Poetry Library
- Association of Scottish Literary Studies (ASLS)
- Scottish Centre for Information on Language Teaching (SCILT)

It is likely that the Centre will focus its activities in three general areas.

- (a) The Centre will encourage further translation in and out of the languages of Scotland. It will:

- Act as a focus for the writing and performing of new translations of Scottish works for overseas audiences, and for the promotion of translated works in Scotland
 - Give administrative support to and/or promote writer exchange schemes such as that currently being developed between the cities of Glasgow and Bern by Dr David Kinloch, under the joint aegis of BOSLIT, Strathclyde University's Centre For Swiss Cultural Studies and Glasgow City Council.
 - Give administrative support to fellowships in translation, such as the Edwin Morgan Translation Fellowship, a new initiative by the Scottish Arts Council to sponsor the participation of a translator with an interest in contemporary Scottish writing in the Scottish Universities International Summer School in 'British and Irish Literature from 1900 to the Present' (For further details, see <http://www.arts.ed.ac.uk/suiss/>)
 - Encourage translation amongst the various languages of modern Scotland – e.g. English, Scots, Gaelic, Urdu, Chinese – thus enhancing social inclusion
 - Promote the wider appreciation of overseas cultures in Scotland e.g. through visiting writer projects in conjunction with the Scottish Poetry Library and Scottish Universities' modern languages departments
- (b) The Centre will promote the wider study of translation, using national research resources, such as the BOSLIT database, and (c) a Centre will promote 'reception studies', that is, the study of Scottish culture's impact furth of Scotland, and of other cultures' impact on Scotland. It will:
- Seek to enhance new and established University programmes that study translation and the reception of translated works of Scottish literature overseas, e.g. by identifying individual specialists who can contribute to particular modules on such courses on an inter-institutional basis
 - Maintain and expand the BOSLIT database, e.g. by integrating the findings of graduate students working on Scottish University programmes researching the reception of Scottish literary studies overseas

In addition, the Centre will:

- Ensure that translation studies has the high profile it deserves in initiatives aimed at cultural tourism, such as the UNESCO World City of Literature project
- Investigate the market for international conferences (in conjunction with the Association for Scottish Literary Studies) and short courses for Continuous Professional Development for teachers of literature and modern languages

Currently some of these activities are being undertaken on a sporadic, temporary and local basis. The agencies involved in the activities – the Scottish Arts Council, local government, the UNESCO World City of Literature project, the Scottish Universities, Universities outside Scotland, and BOSLIT – maintain some direct and indirect contact with each other, but they have no stable, sustained forum for discussing how they could contribute more systematically to translation and reception studies. The

initial task of a Researcher/Administrator would be to approach the agencies and individuals currently involved in translation and reception studies in order to:

- Collate information on local authority writer exchange programmes with overseas partners, particularly those with an actual or potential translation element
- Collate information on Scottish Universities' existing and potential postgraduate and outreach programmes with a translation/reception studies component
- Collate information on Scottish Arts Council/British Council schemes with a translation component
- Explore the possibility of enhancing provision through a national centre for translation and reception
- Explore how such a centre could integrate with the maintenance and expansion of research resources such as BOSLIT
- Explore how Scottish University courses in translation studies might be promoted, e.g. in conjunction with agencies such as the Scottish Arts Council and the British Council and other bodies such as the ASLS International Committee
- Explore how Scottish agencies and Universities might liaise with overseas partners to facilitate scholarly and creative exchanges, and recruit postgraduate research students

This initial phase will explore how current provision in Scottish translation studies, which is both patchy and fragmentary, might be more effectively enhanced and promoted by a Scottish Centre acting as a focal resource. As a matter of priority, the Researcher/Administrator will explore avenues for core and project funding for the longer-term activities of the Centre, e.g. from sources like the Scottish Arts Council, the British Council and other cultural agencies, as well as research boards.

4. Importance of the Project for Scotland

It is difficult to dispute that the international perception of Scotland has long been profoundly influenced by its literary culture being made available in translation – in ways that Scots seldom realise and undervalue. Napoleon's palace was painted with scenes from James MacPherson's Ossianic poems, which, along with the later work of Burns and Scott, effectively inspired European romanticism. Today's Scotland is seen partly through the darker lens of the many translations of Irvine Welsh, Ian Rankin and other contemporary novelists. In between, Scottish writers of different periods and characteristics have impacted on overseas readerships in ways that are under-researched and therefore little understood. The BOSLIT project has begun to suggest ways in which Scottish literature over the centuries has been received, absorbed and adapted by other cultures, but this process needs to be investigated much more fully and systematically for different places and times. Some Scottish Universities have in place postgraduate courses that address the issue of the reception of Scottish culture overseas, but there may well be room for expansion of such courses, and the provision of some key resources via a national Centre could well enhance their delivery across individual institutions.

So far the BOSLIT project has focused on the reception of Scottish literature overseas. What is under-researched is the reception of other literatures in Scotland, though there

is an increase in scholarly interest in this area. Key texts are Janet Smith's *The French Background of Middle Scots Literature* (1932), R.D.S. Jack's *The Italian Influence on Scottish Literature* (1972) and *Scottish Literature's Debt to Italy* (1986), John Corbett's *Written in the Language of the Scottish Nation: A History of Literary Translation into Scots* (1999), David Kinloch and Richard Price's *La Nouvelle Alliance: Influences francophones sur la littérature écossaise moderne* (2000) and Bill Findlay's forthcoming edited collection *Frae Ither Tongues: Modern Translations into Scots* (2004). A staple of the Scottish stage remains drama in translation, with Edwin Morgan's *Cyrano de Bergerac*, Liz Lochhead's *Tartuffe* and *Medea*, John Byrne's *A Government Inspector*, and Bill Findlay and Martin Bowman's versions of Michel Tremblay's plays (including *The Guid Sisters*, *The House Among the Stars*, *A Solemn Mass for a Full Moon in Summer* and *If Only*) being notable recent successes, both critical and popular. Dr Tom Hubbard's research and publication interests can be gauged by referring to the brief CV given as Appendix D. Growing general interest in Scottish translation might be gauged by a recent article by Rosemary Goring in the Arts section of *The Herald* (3rd January, 2004), which suggested that on the strength of BOSLIT's findings so far, the history of Scottish Literature might have to be completely revised.

A Scottish Centre for Translation and Reception will raise the public profile of Scotland's cultural interaction with the international community and contribute to the ongoing cultural exchange by promoting new translations, for example, via visiting writer schemes or specific commissions.

The importance to Scotland of translation is recognised by agencies such as the Scottish Arts Council, whose website makes the following statement <<http://www.scottisharts.org.uk/>>:

Scottish writing is benefiting from a heightened profile abroad, and translation plays a central role in the promotion of our culture internationally. Recent requests from overseas publishers to meet the costs of translating 20th century and contemporary Scottish work have come from Spain, Italy, Slovakia, France, Germany, Denmark, Greece, Sweden and Portugal. The initial print-run of Alisdair Gray's *Lanark*, in its first French translation, sold out within four weeks of publication. Michel Faber's *The Crimson Petal and the White*, published by Canongate, will be published in Spanish and Danish this year, while Louise Welsh's *The Cutting Room* will shortly appear in Swedish and French.

Translation obviously broadens the international market for Scottish writers. The importance of developing an international market for writers who have a relatively small domestic market – in particular, writers in Gaelic and Scots – is self-evident. That there is a mutual benefit to be gained from the interaction between home-grown and other cultures is clear from the positive Scottish response to plays such as *The Guid Sisters* and *The House Among the Stars*, translated into Scots by Bill Findlay and Martin Bowman from the Quebecois of Michel Tremblay, and the equally positive response in Canada to the Scots versions when they toured overseas.

From a scholarly perspective, Scottish Studies can learn valuable lessons from the international success of Irish Studies in raising the profile of Irish culture overseas, and so stimulating academic activity at undergraduate, postgraduate and post-doctoral levels. A Scottish Centre for Translation and Reception will explore how best to encourage links between home institutions and those overseas institutions that are interested in fostering the development of translation and reception studies with a Scottish flavour. A Centre will also explore the potential for developing Scottish translation and reception studies as a source of overseas postgraduate students, with both intellectual and financial benefits to the Scottish Universities, as well as the possibility of a distinctive international market for Scottish scholarship.

Clearly, a Scottish Centre for Translation and Reception could pull together a diverse range of activities and initiatives and by so doing achieve a level of synergy that will enhance many of them..

5. A Provisional Costing

Currently, with the completion of the AHRB grant-funded phase of BOSLIT, preparations for a successor are at a standstill. Professor Jack is currently bidding for AHRB dissemination funds to improve website access to the BOSLIT catalogue, and to add resources, possibly through EDINA, Edinburgh University's electronic portal. We are currently seeking funds from the AHRB Pilot Dissemination Scheme (£5000), the Scottish Arts Council (which has provisionally promised £3000), and Edinburgh University's Knowledge Transfer Fund (c.£2000). While welcome, this fund would support technical and administrative staff part-time for only a limited period.

Below we give a provisional costing of the initial phase (1 year) of the establishment of a Centre for Translation and Reception Studies, based on 2003-4 figures, and assuming that the Researcher/Administrator would be based at the National Library of Scotland in premises currently donated to the BOSLIT project. The costings are the minimal sum required to establish such a Centre; we propose that they form the initial core funding until such times as additional funding streams are identified. We foresee core funding coming from the Scottish Executive, either directly or via the Scottish Arts Council or the proposed Literature Council.

(a) Funding for the initial phase:

The estimated setting-up costs are:

Researcher's salary:	£26 270 (ARIA grade 8)
Travel costs:	£ 2 000
Printing and distribution of annual report: (500 copies)	£ 1 250

Travel costs are based on the assumption that the Researcher/Administrator will have to travel extensively within Scotland to make personal contact with representatives of various agencies, as well as individual translators and academics.

(b) Sustainability of the Centre beyond the initial phase:

Future funding for the Centre will depend on the strategy emerging from the initial phase. It is envisaged that a salaried Researcher/Administrator will remain necessary, alongside a voluntary Steering Committee that will probably extend more widely than the current Committee. Likely sources of core and/or project funding will be:

- Scottish Arts Council
- British Council and/or other international cultural agencies
- Conference and Continuous Professional Development Activity
- Research board applications for specific academic projects
- Contribution to postgraduate programmes across different Scottish Universities

6. Outcomes of initial phase

The BOSLIT Steering Committee wishes the Centre to be inclusive and active both in showcasing Scottish culture and promoting Scotland's interaction with other cultures. In the initial phases, the Centre would explore the following key issues:

- how the various bodies and individuals with an interest in a Scottish Centre for Translation and Reception see themselves contributing to a national Centre, and what benefits they would expect to derive from it
- the management structure of such a Centre: e.g. the roles of full-time and/or part-time staff in relation to Steering Committee drawn from interested parties such as the Scottish Arts Council, the Scottish Universities, Local Government, etc
- how the research generated by established and new postgraduate courses in translation and reception studies might continue to contribute to central research facilities such as BOSLIT
- potential sources of core and/or project funding from agencies within the UK such as the Scottish Arts Council, and other research funding bodies
- potential overseas sources of core and/or project funding, such as Goethe Institut, Alliance Française, overseas university partners, etc

In conclusion, it is evident that Scotland has a long and distinguished – if largely invisible – tradition in translation and translation studies. This tradition is being carried on through a number of small-scale initiatives and independent research programmes. A national Centre for Translation and Reception would best promote and substantially enhance these activities in a sustainable manner in the long term..

7. Contacts

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8. Appendices

A: About BOSLIT

B: Current BOSLIT Board

APPENDIX A

The Bibliography of Scottish Literature in Translation

*What has been the world-wide impact of **Treasure Island** or **The Prime of Miss Jean Brodie**?*

What poems by Norman MacCaig have been translated into Italian, Polish, Hebrew or Ukrainian?

Which European countries have shown a strong interest in the Scottish ballads?

BOSLIT is developing as an invaluable tool for teachers and students of Scottish culture and of modern languages; for the study of comparative literature and of cross-cultural “reader reception”; for all those with an intelligent curiosity as to why a particular work was translated into a particular language at a particular time.

BOSLIT has a particular appeal to those who feel that Scottish literature cannot be fully appreciated within narrowly Scottish, British or anglophone contexts.

BOSLIT is an online bibliography-in-progress of translations of Scottish writing, including not only books but also items published in journals and anthologies. It was founded in 1994 following discussions between a number of bodies and individuals who felt that information about translations of Scottish writing should be more widely disseminated.

At a time when Scottish literature is increasingly read and studied throughout the world, and when there is a growing recognition of the part played by translation in creating world literature, **BOSLIT** aims to provide a convenient and comprehensive resource for the reading public, translators and researchers. In doing so, it is intended to foster scholarly links, enhance the cultural prestige of Scotland and encourage international interest in Scottish literature from its beginnings to the present. Response so far suggests that considerable progress has been made towards meeting these aims.

BOSLIT defines “literature” broadly, and records translations of material from the oral tradition, as well as writings by historians, philosophers, scientists, explorers, theologians and others whose work is considered to possess aesthetic, intellectual and cultural significance beyond its immediate content.

BOSLIT is housed in the National Library of Scotland and has been supported by the Humanities Research Board of the British Academy, the Carnegie Trust for the Universities of Scotland, the Scottish Library and Information Council, the Scottish Arts Council and the Arts and Humanities Research Board. Under the supervision of a Steering Committee co-chaired by Professors Peter France and R.D.S. Jack of the University of Edinburgh, the Bibliography is being compiled in close co-operation

with the existing Bibliography of Scotland, which is maintained by the National Library of Scotland.

The first major phase of the project (1994-1999) was devoted to recording translations of Scottish literature, whether in English, Scots or Gaelic, published in the 20th century.

Beginning in 2000, the second major phase of the project will be devoted to finding and cataloguing translations of Scottish literature, whether in English, Scots, Gaelic or Latin, published before 1900. If funding is available it is hoped that this phase will be completed by the year 2004; thereafter, **BOSLIT** will be periodically updated.

In addition, since the poet's bicentennial year in 1996, a special effort has been made to record all translations of the works of Robert Burns regardless of date of publication. By December 1999, over 21,000 translations of fiction, poetry, drama, children's literature and literary non-fiction had been traced through catalogues and databases, and by inquiries to authors, publishers, translators and Scottish Studies centres abroad. Works have been recorded in over seventy languages, ranging from Albanian to Yakut.

For further information, please contact:

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APPENDIX B: Current BOSLIT Board

- Professor Ronald Jack [Executive Director & AHRB Fundholder] Professor of Scottish and Medieval Literature at the University of Edinburgh and holder of the 2004 W. Ormiston Roy Fellowship in Scottish Poetry at the University of South Carolina at Columbia
- Dr Tom Hubbard [Editor and Senior Researcher] Founding Librarian of the Scottish Poetry and subsequently a Visiting Assistant Professor at the Universities of Connecticut and North Carolina at Asheville; he has also taught for substantial periods at the Universities of Grenoble and Budapest.
- Dr Zsuzsanna Varga [Assistant Editor] A graduate of the Universities of Budapest and Edinburgh
- Dr John Corbett, Senior Lecturer in English Language at the University of Glasgow, convener of the ASLS Language Committee, member of the ASLS International Committee, and Principal Investigator of the SCOTS project
- Professor Peter France, Emeritus Professor of French, University of Edinburgh
- Dr Donal McLaughlin, full-time writer and former Senior Lecturer in German at Heriot-Watt University
- Dr David Kinloch, Senior Lecturer in creative writing in the English Department of the University of Strathclyde, and a former Senior Lecturer in French at that University
- Mr Ian Rankin, novelist, whose work has been translated into various languages
- Ms Cate Newton, Director of Collections Development at the National Library of Scotland
- Mr Dennis Smith is Head of the Scottish Bibliography Unit at the National Library of Scotland
- Dr Ann Matheson, former Keeper of Printed Books at the NLS and is currently Secretary to the General Council of the University of Edinburgh and Chair of the Scottish Arts Council's Literature Committee
- Dr Christopher Whyte, Reader in Scottish Literature at the University of Glasgow
- Dr Paul Barnaby, BOSLIT's founding Researcher and Bibliographer; he currently directs Edinburgh University Library's Walter Scott project
- Dr Tessa Ransford, the founding Director of the Scottish Poetry Library, and currently President of Scottish PEN
- Mr J. Derrick McClure, Senior Lecturer in English Language at the University of Aberdeen, an authority on Scots language and on Scottish literature in translation.
- Dr Gavin Wallace, Literature Director, Scottish Arts Council
- Ms Sophy Dale, Literature Officer, Scottish Arts Council