

# A Caledonian Cacophony

## Languages and Literatures of Scotland

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Biannual Conference: Sustainable Multilingualism

Vytautas Magnus University, Kaunas, Lithuania

26-27 May 2017

◆ English

◆ Scots

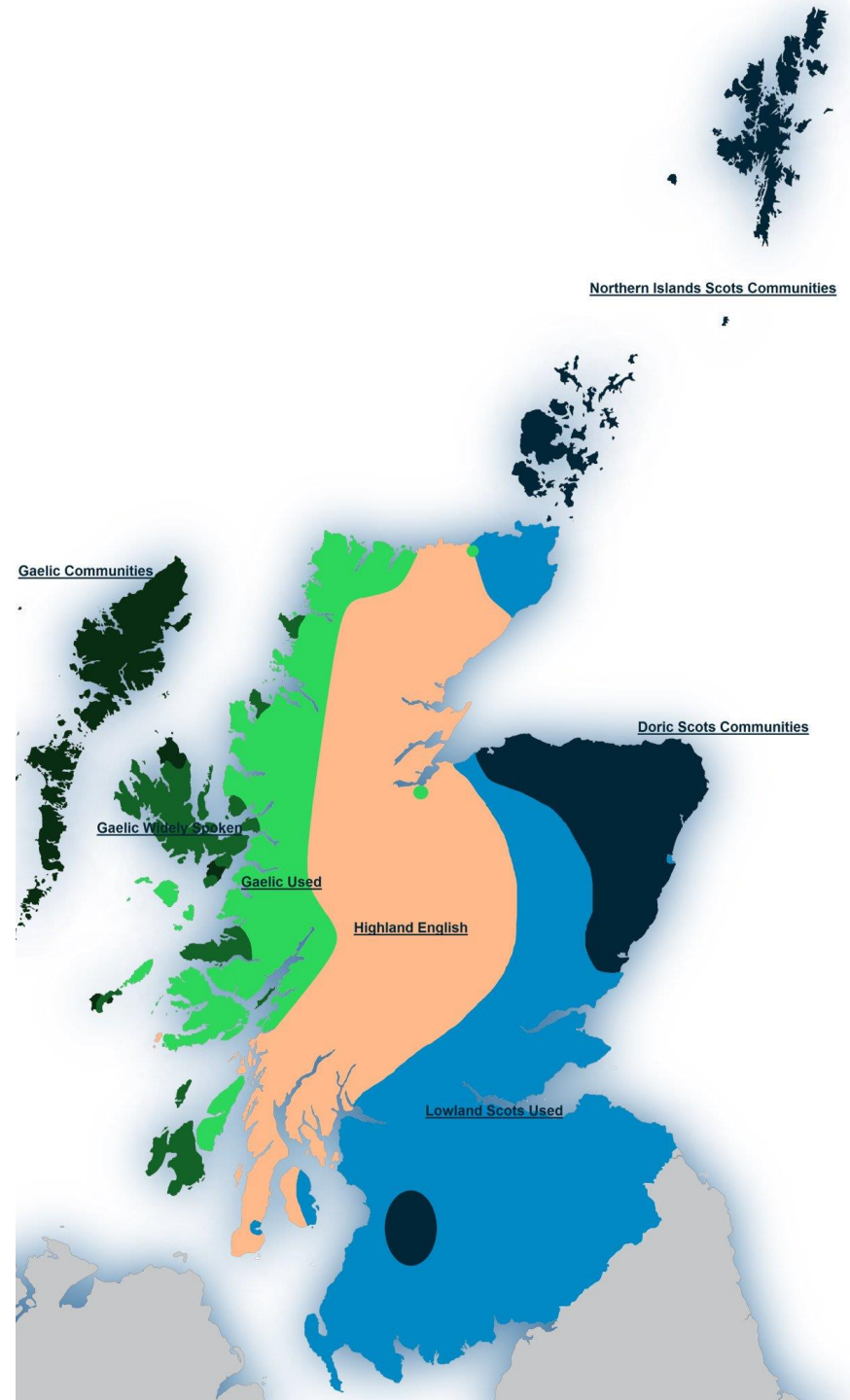
◆ Gaelic

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# Scottish Gaelic (Gàidhlig)

<http://www.omniglot.com/writing/gaelic.htm>

## Scottish Gaelic at a glance

**Native name:** Gàidhlig ['ka:lik]

**Linguistic affiliation:** Indo-European, Celtic, Insular Celtic, Goidelic

**Number of speakers:** c. 87,000

**Spoken in:** Scotland, also in Canada, the USA and New Zealand

**First written:** c. 12th century

**Writing system:** Latin alphabet

**Status:** recognised minority language in Scotland and Canada

Ceud mìle fàilte.

Ciamar a tha thu?

Tha mi gu math, tapadh leat.

Am bheil Gàidhlig agad?

Tha an la fliuch an diugh.

Tha am pathadh orm.

Slàinte mhath!

Bithidh mi a' dol dhachaidh.

Oidhche mhath.

# Scots (Lallans)

<http://www.scotslanguage.com>

## Scots History

Scots originated with the tongue of the Angles who arrived in Scotland about AD 600, or 1,400 years ago. During the Middle Ages this language developed and grew apart from its sister tongue in England, until a distinct Scots language had evolved. At one time Scots was the national language of Scotland, spoken by Scottish kings, and was used to write the official records of the country.

## Scots dialects

Scots is spoken in the Northern Isles and Lowlands of Scotland



Click on the map to hear Scots speakers from across

# Scots (Lallans)

<http://www.lallans.co.uk/>

**W**alcom tae the online hame o the Scots Leid Associe which haes amang its objects tae forder an uphaud the Scots leid an tae gie a heize tae Scots leiterature an tradeitional music.

**T**he Scots Leid Associe wis foondit in 1972 an aye ettles tae pit forrit a feckfu case for the Scots language in formal, informal and ilka day uiss. Scots wis aince the state language o Scotland an is aye a grace til oor national leiterature. It lies at the hert o Scotland's heirskep as ane o wir three indigenous leids along wi Gaelic an Scottish Inglis.

<http://www.scots-online.org/>

Hou's aw wi ye?

Hou ye lestin? (Borders)

Whit wey are ye? (Ulster)

Brawly—thank ye.

Hingin by a threed.

Hou's yer dous?

Whit fettle? (Borders)

Whit about ye? (Ulster)

No bad, conseederin.

A hae been waur.

Hou d'ye fend? (SW)

Whit like? (NE)

A canna compleen.



“Toward a holistic national language policy for Scotland”  
Mark McConville, *Scottish Language* 34 (2015) pp. 42-57

“Partly as a result of the introduction of obligatory English-medium schooling in 1872, language practices across Scotland were, until recently, characterised by a kind of diglossia, with English being used in high domains, and either Gaelic or Scots being used in low domains.” (45)



*The Ring of Words. An Anthology of Scottish Poetry for Secondary Schools.*  
Ed. Alan MacGillivray and James Rankin. Edinburgh: Oliver & Boyd (1970)

God and Saint Peter was gangand be the way  
Heich up in Argyll where their gait lay.  
Saint Peter said to God, in ane sport word—  
'Can ye nocht mak a Hielandman of this horse turd?'  
God turned owre the horse turd with his pykit staff,  
And up start a Hielandman, black as ony draff.  
Quod God to the Hielandman, 'Where wilt thou now?'  
'I will doun in the Lawland, Lord, and there steal a cow.'  
'And thou steal a cow, carle, there they will hang thee.'  
'What reck, Lord, of that, for anis mon I dee.'  
God then he leuch and owre the dyke lap,  
And out of his sheath his gully outgat.  
Saint Peter socht the gully fast up and doun,  
Yet could not find it in all that braid roun.  
'Now,' quod God, 'here a marvell, how can this be,  
That I suld want my gully, and we here bot three.'  
'Humf,' quod the Hielandman, and turned him about,  
And at his plaid neuk the gully fell out.  
'Fy,' quod Saint Peter, 'thou will never do weill;  
And thou bot new made and sa soon gais to steal.'  
'Humf,' quod the Hielandman, and sware be yon kirk,  
'Sa lang as I may get gear to steal, I will never wirk'

## William Dunbar, “Dance of the Seven Deadly Sins” (ca. 1492)



Than cryd Mahoun for a heland padzane.

Syne ran a feynd to feche Makfadzane,

Far northwart in a nuke.

Be he the correnoch had done schout

Erschemen so gadderit him abowt,

In hell grit rowme thay tuke.

Thae tarmegantis with tag and tatter

Full lowd in Ersche begowth to clatter

And rowp lyk revin and ruke.

The devill sa devit wes with thair zell

That in the depest pot of hell

He smorit thame with smvke.



## Derick Thomson, “Cisteachean-Laighe” — “Coffins” (1982)

<http://www.scottishpoetrylibrary.org.uk/poetry/poems/cisteachan-laighe>

And in the other school also,  
where the joiners of the mind were planing,  
I never noticed the coffins,  
though they were sitting all round me;  
I did not notice the English braid,  
the Lowland varnish being applied to the wood,  
I did not read the words on the brass,  
I did not understand that my race was dying.



## Christopher Whyte, “Against Self-Translation”

*Translation and Literature* 11-1 (2002), pp. 64-71

<http://zsdh.library.sh.cn:8080/FCKeditor/filemanager/upload/jsp/UserImages/1142297867406.pdf>



“Self-translation for me has been an activity without content, voided of all the rich echoes and interchanges I have so far attributed to the practice of translation. It is almost voiding the poem of its content, which may, indeed, be the language in which it was written.” (68)

## Robert Burns, “Address to Edinburgh” (1786)



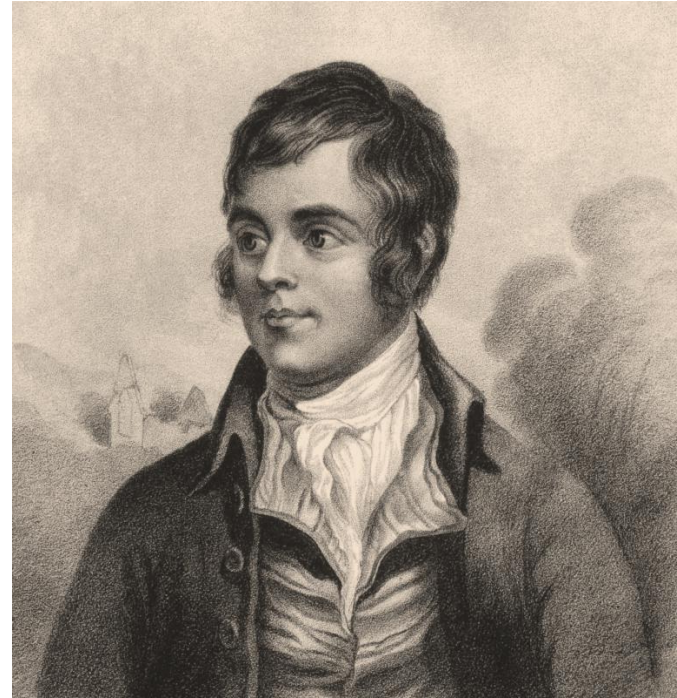
Thy sons, *Edina*, social, kind,  
With open arms the Stranger hail;  
Their views enlarg'd, their liberal mind,  
Above the narrow, rural vale;  
Attentive still to Sorrow's wail,  
Or modes merit's silent claim;  
And never may their sources fail!  
And never envy blot their name!

## Robert Burns, Letter to George Thomson

In David Murison, "Robert Burns and the Scots Tongue" (1959)

[http://www.robertburns.org.uk/scots\\_tongue.htm](http://www.robertburns.org.uk/scots_tongue.htm)

“If you are for English verses, there is, on my part, an end of the matter [...] I have not that command of the language that I have of my native tongue. In fact, I think my ideas are more barren in English than in Scottish.”



Lewis Grassic Gibbon (James Leslie Mitchell), *Sunset Song* (1932)  
*A Scots Quair*. Edinburgh: Polygon (2006)



You saw their faces in the firelight,  
father's and mother's and the  
neighbours', before the lamps lit up,  
tired and kind, faces dear and close  
to you, you wanted the words they'd  
known and used, forgotten in the  
far-off youngness of their lives, Scots  
words to tell your heart how they'd  
wrung it and held it, they toil of  
their day and unendingly their fight.



Lewis Grassic Gibbon (James Leslie Mitchell), *Sunset Song* (1932)  
*A Scots Quair*. Edinburgh: Polygon (2006)

And the next minute that  
passed from you, you were  
English, back to the English  
words so sharp and clean and  
true—for a while, for a while,  
till they slid so smooth from  
your throat you knew they  
could never say anything that  
was worth the saying at all. (41-42)

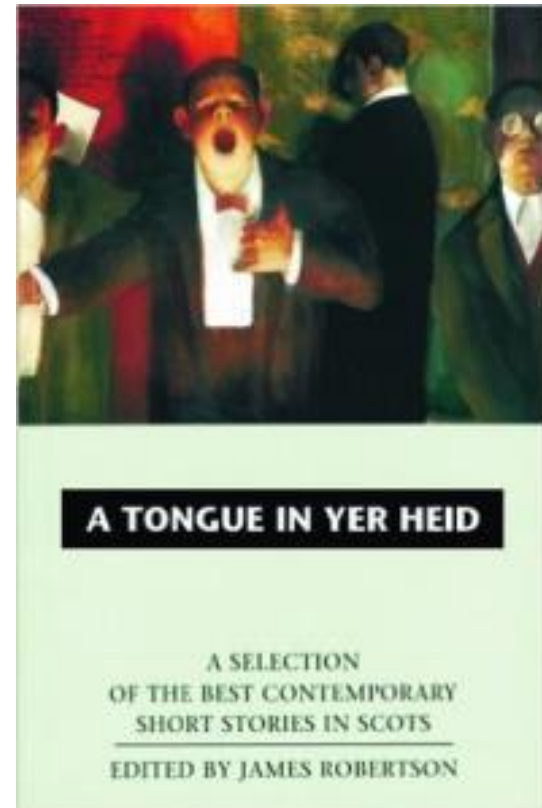


## J.E. MacInnes, “Wee Peachy”

*A Tongue In Yer Heid. A Selection of the Best Contemporary Short Stories in Scots*

Ed. James Robertson. Edinburgh: B&W Publishing (1994)

I dinny mind my first love. I wis ower young and huv hud ower minny, but I dae mind the one that gied me the maist actual physical pain. It wis comin oan fur the summer holidays an I must hae been near fourteen an I'd be jist at the en o second year an still interested in academic things, still “quite good at the school”, “one of the bright ones”, but I had an infatuation, a deep and I knew permanent and lasting love fur the art teacher—Wee Peachy. We aw loved him, the lassies in my class, but I knew my love wis the best love. (13)



## Tom Leonard, "Unrelated Incidents – No. 3"

<http://www.tomleonard.co.uk/11-online-poetry-a-prose/39-the-6-oclock-news.html>



this is thi  
six a clock  
news thi  
man said  
thi reason  
a talk wia  
BBC accent  
is coz ye  
widni wahnt  
mi ti talk  
about thi  
trooth wia  
voice lik  
wanna yoo  
scruff. If  
a toktaboot

thi trooth  
lik wanna yoo  
scruff yi  
widni thingk  
it wuz troo.  
jist wanna yoo  
scruff talkn.  
thirza right  
way ti spell  
ana right way  
to tok it. this  
is me tokn yir  
right way a

spellin. this  
is ma trooth.  
yooz doant no  
thi trooth  
yirsellz cawz  
yi canny talk  
right. this is  
the six a clock  
nyooz. belt up.

# Hugh MacDiarmid, *Sangschaw* (1925)

## The Eemis Stane

I' the how-dumb-deid o' the cauld hairst nicht  
The warl' like an eemis stane  
Wags i' the lift  
An' my eerie memories fa'  
Like a yowdendrifi.

Like a yowdendrifi so's I couldna read  
The words cut oot i' the stane  
Had the fug o' fame  
An' history's hazelraw  
No' yirdit thaim.

