

Chapter 7

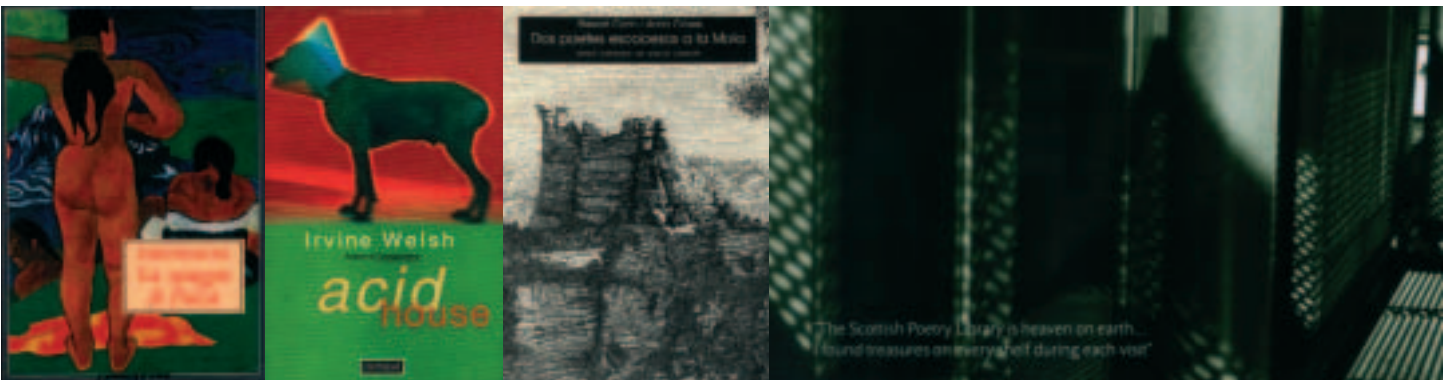
An international literary profile

Edinburgh's literary activities extend far beyond Scotland. International interest in classic Scottish literature continues to thrive, and there is also a keen and growing readership for contemporary Scottish writing.

BOSLIT, the Bibliography of Scottish Literature in Translation, has already recorded over 20,000 Scottish titles translated into over 100 languages worldwide. Contemporary Scottish works authored by Ian Rankin, Iain Banks, Alasdair Gray, Michel Faber and Louise Welsh have been translated into a range of languages from Czech to Catalan. Scottish publishers export almost a quarter of their total output overseas, demonstrating the international interest in books from Scotland.

As Scottish authors have been translated and disseminated widely across the world, foreign works have, in turn, been translated and brought to the attention of English-speaking audiences. Key among such translators is poet Alastair Reid. A son of the manse from Wigtown, he was a staff writer on the *New Yorker* magazine for many years. He has spent much of his life immersed in other cultures and languages and is the foremost translator of Latin American writers Pablo Neruda and Jorge Luis Borges.

The Scottish Publishers Association co-ordinates the activities of members in marketing their books overseas. The SPA also shares its expertise with publishing bodies all over the world. Delegations from these bodies regularly visit Scotland to learn from Scottish publishers; recent delegations coming from Sweden, China, Norway and Canada.



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In turn, the Edinburgh International Book Festival attracts authors from over 20 countries and visitors from all over the world, and creates opportunities for authors to foster international connections. Bookcase, a joint venture with the British Council and Scottish Arts Council, introduces international literature event organisers to new Scottish and global writers and has led to readings in Colombia, Bulgaria, Brazil and Argentina.

Poetry, storytelling and education

‘Minds fructify across generations and oceans, otherwise literature and art and music would be empty interludes and ornament’
George Mackay Brown.

The Scottish Poetry Library has always aimed to place Scottish Poetry in an international context, representing many languages and countries in its collection. Recent events, workshops and readings have further strengthened global connections. The Japanese collection has recently been extended, and haiku workshops were run in primary schools as part of a Japanese festival; Northern Lights celebrated Norwegian poetry, featuring lament and laughter alike; EPIC (European Poetry Information Centre) links dozens of European Poetry websites; and the New Alliance project brought both French and American poets to Scotland to read and discuss their work.

1. Italian translation of *The Beach of Falesa* by Robert Louis Stevenson
2. Italian translation of *Acid House* by Irvine Welsh
3. Catalan translation of *Two Scottish Poets*
4. One of a series of postcards produced by the Scottish Poetry Library

The Scottish Storytelling Centre acts as an important channel for diverse world cultures as well as a celebration of Scotland's own traditions. Besides an annual festival in Edinburgh, events worldwide celebrate the tradition of the spoken story. Regular exchanges take place between Perm, Russia, and Scotland; 'Destination Viking' aims to link local and minority cultures across the northern hemisphere; and 'This Earth for Us' presented the tradition of telling stories in sand by women in southern Australia.

Intercultural relationships between Scotland and other countries are enriched through exchanges between schools. These range from friendship links between Edinburgh and Kenyan schools, to cultural exchanges with schools in Tanzania, Malawi and Madagascar. Closer to home, the EU Comenius Programme links several Edinburgh schools with schools across Europe in themed exchanges.

The Pushkin Prize, established in Scotland in 1987 by the great-great-grand-daughter of the Russian poet and writer Aleksandr Pushkin, encourages creative writing among young people in state schools throughout Scotland and in St Petersburg, Russia.

Initiatives such as these should provide the foundations of the exchanges of ideas, partnerships and understanding which Edinburgh World City of Literature seeks to promote.