

“...if we care to preserve even that”  
Scots and the question of Language Revitalization

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I surveyed the scene: a sea of white hair and grandmotherly attire greeted me as I entered the hall. On Sundays, this was the room where I attended church. Tonight, though, a stage was set up and sixteen kilted fiddlers were tuning their instruments as the rows of old friends in the audience chatted. Not only was I the youngest person there by at least forty years, I was also the only American, so any hopes I had had of blending into the crowd were effectively squelched. A kindly “gran” pointed to an empty chair next to her and I settled in for a few hours of Scottish culture.

One of the fiddlers had been elected emcee for the evening, a lady from Inverurie, not too far from Aberdeen, where the concert was being held. She stood and welcomed us all – that much I got – but for the rest of the evening my ears strained and my mind worked overtime to make sense of what this nice woman was saying. My fellow audience members hadn’t the slightest difficulty: some parts of her commentary had them nodding solemnly in agreement, others had them chortling with glee, all while I stared blankly and tried not to stick out more than I already did. “I speak English, right? And they speak English, right? Then *why on earth do I not have a clue what she’s saying?!?*” is about how my mental process was going at the moment.

I have since learned that my answer to my second question was only partially correct. Yes, people in Scotland speak English – but that is not nearly the whole picture. English only came to be the dominant form of speech in Scotland through a series of events beginning in 1603 AD with the Union of the Crowns of England and Scotland, and followed in 1707 by the Union of Parliaments. Until then, Scotland had been dominated by two distinct and unrelated languages, one Celtic and one Germanic. The Celtic language was brought to Scotland from Ireland and was the ancestor of Scottish Gaelic, still spoken today in the Highlands and Western Islands of Scotland. The Germanic language, on the other hand, was brought to Scotland by

invaders in the early fifth century and is the ancestor of not only English, but of another distinctly Scottish speech form which is, in fact, the subject of this paper. This speech form is called Scots,<sup>1</sup> and is not to be confused with Scottish Standard English. Scottish Standard English could be called simply “English with a Scottish accent” and is what people think of when they imagine a Scottish accent as heard on television or in films – its lexicon and grammatical structure are virtually the same as Standard English, but its pronunciation is distinctly Scottish. Scots, however, possesses not only a different phonology, but a vastly different lexicon and small grammatical from Standard English that have caused many to identify it as a separate, though related, entity.<sup>2</sup>

Scots has had a fluctuating and often inscrutable history, and in fact right now its very survival is in jeopardy. As it evolved from the eleventh to the fifteenth centuries, Scots rose in status and came to be the language of prestige, of court, and of literature in Scotland. Through a series of historical and political events, however, it fell from its place of honor and now finds itself a cause for shame rather than pride for many Scottish people.<sup>3</sup>

Today debates rage in an attempt to establish a consensus on what exactly Scots is. Different parties lay claim to different labels for its status – accent, dialect, language – and as there is evidence that speaks for all three, the conflict continues, leaving Scotland in the lurch as she seeks to pin down her elusive identity, of which her speech forms are an integral part. One might compare Scots to Scotland herself: both are fighting to establish an identity outside of the shadow cast by a powerful English neighbor, fervently affirming the distinctness of who they are.

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<sup>1</sup> McClure, J. Derrick. *Why Scots Matters*. W. M. Bett, Ltd; Tillicoultry, 1988 p. 6-7, 14-6

<sup>2</sup> McClure, J. Derrick. *Scots and its Literature*. John Benjamins Publishing Company; Amsterdam, 1995

<sup>3</sup> McClure, J. Derrick. *Why Scots Matters*. p. 15, 29

Something that speaks to the cultural significance of Scots is the fact that it possesses a long and rich literary tradition. As early as the fourteenth century, poetry in Scots, discrete from its English counterpart, was being composed. This tradition grew through the Middle Ages and hit a pinnacle in 1513 with Gavin Douglas's translation of Virgil's *Aeneid* into Scots, replete with borrowings from French and Latin. As external factors negatively influenced the prestige of Scots, it lapsed for much of the seventeenth century, and was revived in the eighteenth by Scots writers Allan Ramsay and Robert Burns in what has been termed a "Vernacular Revival". Since then, Scots literature has continued to be written and its direction and focus have been changed by such revolutionaries as Hugh MacDiarmid and Lewis Grassie Gibbon in the twentieth century, whose goals were nothing short of a "Scottish Renaissance".<sup>4</sup>

While the Scots literary tradition has flourished and continues to do so, the language in all other areas of Scottish life is in steady decline, largely relegated to the realm of the home, whether it be in large urban centers or the countryside.<sup>5</sup> Thus we find an odd disconnect – if writers in Scots write to promote use of the language, why is their work seemingly having no effect? Why are numbers of Scots speakers not growing?

The question of the relationship between literature and language use as it pertains to Scots can perhaps best be understood through the framework of language planning. What is the relationship of literature to the success and health of a language? What influence, if any, does literature in Scots have on the language as it stands today? What ought the role of Scots literature to be in preserving or revitalizing the tongue? I hope, through an examination of the nature of Scots, of how it is used in literature, and of how these relate to the principles and

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<sup>4</sup> McClure, J. Derrick. *Why Scots Matters*. p. 32-5, 37-8, 40-1

<sup>5</sup> Matheson, Catherine and David Matheson. *Languages of Scotland: Culture and the Classroom*. Comparative Education, vol 36, no. 2, 2000 p. 216-7

strategies of language planning, to gain insight into what has gone wrong in the history of Scots so far, and how the situation can be amended so that Scotland will not lose the treasure of something so distinctly her own. As McClure writes, "... if Scotland is not for the present able to participate on its own terms in free and mutually enriching cultural interaction with sovereign nations, we at least have in our language a memorial to the time when we were – if we care to preserve even that".<sup>6</sup>

### *A Brief History of Scots*

Many today view Scots as a debased or corrupted form of English, which is one reason that many Scottish people themselves have no particular love of or pride in the language. Yet it is evident through a look at the rise of Scots that the language itself was never in its history a dialect of a more powerful and prestigious speech form.

When Germanic invaders brought their language, which was to become Scots, to the north of Britain in the sixth century, it was a minority language, overshadowed by the dominance of the Celtic language. As these Germanic immigrants to Britain grew powerful and prosperous, so did their tongue, becoming a significant presence in the south, or Lowlands, of Scotland. Eventually, when the Celtic royal line of the Highlands of Scotland died out in 1286, the Germanic invaders had attained enough power and prestige that one of them assumed the throne and became ruler of Scotland, relocating the traditional seat of the monarchy from Perth, in the Celtic-speaking Highlands, to Edinburgh, the heart of the Germanic-speaking Lowlands. With the capital of Scotland now located in the Lowlands, and with a Germanic ruler on the throne, the time was ripe for change. The Germanic people, their culture, and their language, Early

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<sup>6</sup> McClure, J. Derrick. *Why Scots Matters*. p. 53

Scots, were on the ascent while the Celts were forced further and further to the north and west of Scotland, having to make way for the new dominant culture.<sup>7</sup>

In the early fourteenth century, we find the first occurrences of Scots lexical items in Latin legal texts – evidence of the spread of the language into all spheres of life – and in fact by 1379, we find the first legal text entirely in Scots. Scots was not confined to the realm of the law, however: by 1375, a great poetic work called *The Brus*, by John Barbour, had appeared, demonstrating clearly Scots' capacity for great "vigour and confidence".<sup>8</sup> From this period onward, Scots poetry was on a steady incline paralleled by the growing use of Scots in other domains of public life. Under the reign of James I of Scotland (1427-37), for the first time all Parliamentary records were kept in Scots and with his encouragement, Scots grew to be the official language of the monarchy and government.<sup>9</sup>

Under the reigns of the Stewart kings (1427-1542) Scotland grew in power and prestige, and was a key player in the European political scene of the time. As the Renaissance was ushered into Scotland, alliances and connections were made between Scotland and European centers of learning, helping to further establish Scotland's reputation as an independent and powerful nation. Scots literature continued to flourish as the court poets of the Stewarts were caught in the tide of Renaissance enthusiasm for the arts, and it witnessed a growth in its vocabulary as writers borrowed from French and Latin.<sup>10</sup> Works in Scots from that period testify that Scots was a

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<sup>7</sup> Voigt, E. Lindsay. *Where Is Scots Now? A Look into the Rise and Fall of a Language*. Essay written at Aberdeen University, April 2002 p. 1-2

<sup>8</sup> Meurman-Solin, Anneli. *Variation and Change in Early Scottish Prose*. Gummeris Kirjapaino Oy; Jyvaskla, 1993 p. 43

<sup>9</sup> Voigt, E. Lindsay. *Where Is Scots Now? A Look into the Rise and Fall of a Language*. p. 3

<sup>10</sup> Voigt, E. Lindsay. *Where Is Scots Now? A Look into the Rise and Fall of a Language*. p. 4

working language, capable of use in literature, in Parliament, and not “restricted to particular types of text or to particular situations...or social groups”.<sup>11</sup>

It was recognized at the time that the languages being spoken in England and Scotland were similar in many respects. Yet as Scotland grew in political prestige and allied itself with European nations, and as it developed a literature all its own, its separation from England became all the more evident. Aitken writes that between 1460 and 1550, Scots experienced a golden era in which it was recognized as “a full national language showing all the signs of a rapidly developing, all-purpose speech, as distinct from English as Portuguese from Spanish”.<sup>12</sup>

Scots seemed to be on the threshold of greatness as the language of an independent kingdom, as did English. Yet, writes Corbett, “In both realms, we can see processes of evolution towards standard written forms, but while these changes continued in England, they were abruptly curtailed in Scotland”.<sup>13</sup> What halted the process with Scots?

The first blow to Scots’ status was the Reformation, which hit Scotland in 1560. At this time, there was a move to put a Bible in every household as quickly as possible, and as there existed no Scots translation of the Bible, an English one was substituted instead, since for the large part the two were mutually intelligible. With this, a connection was drawn between the English language and the Word of God which would prove to be a subtle but greatly detrimental blow to the status of Scots in the eyes of its speakers.

The next event in the decline of Scots was the Union of the Crowns of Scotland and England in 1603. The Scottish king, James VI, became the king of England as well, and with that, left Edinburgh for London, taking his court with him, where English was adopted as their primary

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<sup>11</sup> Meurman-Solin, Anneli. *Variation and Change in Early Scottish Prose*. p. 41

<sup>12</sup> Voigt, E. Lindsay. *Where Is Scots Now? A Look into the Rise and Fall of a Language*. p. 4

<sup>13</sup> Corbett, John. *Written in the Language of the Scottish Nation: A History of Literary Translation into Scots*. Multilingual Matters; Clevedon, U.K., 1999 p. 74

tongue, thereby establishing English as the language of high society. Finally, in 1707, the Scottish Parliament was united with the English Parliament, and representatives and legislators went south to London as well, there establishing English as the language of law, government, education, and church. Scots was left in Scotland and as English pervaded Scottish society more and more, Scots was pushed out of public life, one sphere after another, eventually leaving it to be seen as a quaint dialect spoken only in the home or among friends, and certainly not used to discuss the lofty ideas of the law or the church.<sup>14</sup>

Since the 1700s, Scots has remained alive in Scotland, being spoken in the home of many families and among the older generations. It has remained alive in literature, largely through the works of Sir Walter Scott and the beloved Robert Burns. There have also been vigorous efforts by twentieth-century writers and intellectuals to pull Scots, sometimes kicking and screaming, out of the past and to make it applicable to modern life and literature. However, the influence of these efforts has been limited in terms of the revitalization of the language, and if younger generations do not start to integrate it fully into their everyday lives, its hope for survival is truly called into question.

### ***Linguistically, What Exactly Is Scots?***

Now that some history has been laid out, we should not proceed further without some clarification of what Scots *is*. As mentioned earlier, defining and identifying Scots has been and continues to be a challenge to scholars, writers and linguists because of its close relation to English and because of the fact that over the centuries it has become highly anglicized within Scotland, creating a spectrum of speech forms with fuzzy boundaries as to what is Scots and what is not. It should be noted also that Scots forms vary greatly from region to region within

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<sup>14</sup> McClure, J. Derrick. *Why Scots Matters*. p. 52-3



Scotland; the following are some characteristics of Scots that can be taken to be more or less universal.<sup>15</sup>

The most readily apparent differences between Scots and English are phonological. For example, where Standard English words have /t/, Scots words have /tu/: thus, /taʊn/ (town) becomes /tu:n/. The /o/ phoneme in Scots, when next to a labial consonant, becomes /a/; thus, /tɒp/, /drɒp/ and /sɒft/ become /tʌp/, /drʌp/ and /sʌft/. Further, whereas in English an /e/ followed by /r/ is typically lowered, in Scots the /e/ remains high, rendering pronunciations like /hɛrt/ (heart), /stɛrv/ (starve), /fɛrm/ (farm). Another distinctive feature of Scots phonology is that the phoneme /ɪ/, when in contact with a nasal, is raised to /i/, giving pronunciations like /sɪmɪr/ (summer), /hɪne/ (honey) and /wɪnɪr/ (wonder). In consonant clusters where a homorganic nasal and plosive are present, the plosive is always omitted; therefore land becomes /lan/, sound becomes /sun/, candle becomes /kanl/, finger becomes /fɪŋr/. There are also consonants present in English which are not pronounced in their Scots cognates: for example, the words /fal/, /cal/, /al/ are pronounced /fa/, /ca/, /a/ in Scots. And finally, Scots contains a phoneme now long vanished from English, the velar fricative /x/ still seen in Scots in such words as /nɪxt/ (night) and /daxtɪr/ (doctor).<sup>16</sup>

The lexicon of distinctly Scots words is vast, warranting numerous Scots-English dictionaries over the years. The Scots lexicon also shows great variety, containing items for use in all registers and all situations. Though there have been studies on the diminishing of the Scots vocabulary among younger speakers, largely due to industrialization and urbanization over the last centuries, many lexical items remain in common use. Görlach (1987) posited a useful

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<sup>15</sup> Burchfield, Robert, ed. *The Cambridge History of the English Language*. Cambridge University Press; Cambridge, 1994 vol. 5 see pp. 65-9

<sup>16</sup> Burchfield, Robert, ed. *The Cambridge History of the English Language*. vol. 5 p. 64-5

categorization scheme of Scots lexical items as follows: in the minds of living Scots speakers, terms are generally “unknown,” “known as probably obsolete,” “known exclusively from literature,” “not common in speech but regular in literature,” “common in Scots,” “can be used in Scottish English,” “not used except when forced by context, such as rhyme,” “used only in writing,” “used in speech only as a conscious Scotticism,” “used regularly in speech”. Some of the more widely-used Scots words today include *wee* (small), *muckle* (great, much), *yird* (earth), *lug* (ear), *ben* (mountain), *craig* (neck), *reek* (smoke), *ettle* (to strive, work for), *ken* (to know). There are extensive vocabularies of fishing and farming terms: some examples include *brecham* (horse-collar), *cavie* (hen-coop), *quey* (heifer), *nickie-tams* (straps tied below the knees), *ruskie* (basket for seed corn), *cran* (barrel of fresh herring), *rouse* (to cure fish with salt), *scauder* (jellyfish), though many of these are falling out of use as agricultural and fishing lifestyles give way to larger-scale industrial operations.<sup>17</sup>

Finally, there are small grammatical differences between Scots and Standard English. In Scots, for example, there is a second-person plural form distinct from the second-person singular form: *thou* versus *ye*. There is also a triple distinction between *this*, *that*, and *yon*, which has not been retained in Standard English. Further, in Scots the use of double negatives is perfectly grammatical (*ye never telt me naethin about it* = you never told me nothing about it), and there is often no distinction between the past participle and the past tense (*I done it, we havena went* = I done it, we have not went). Common auxiliary verbs in Scots include *is, wis* (was), *were, bein* (being), *been, be, am, are, hae* (have), *haein* (having), *dae* (do), *daein* (doing), *can, cud* (could), *will, wad* (would), *sud* (should), *micht* (might), *maun* (must). Auxiliary verb constructions can vary significantly from those in English and still be considered grammatical: for example, *they used tae could dae it* (they used to could do it), *they micht no would like tae come wi us* (they

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<sup>17</sup> Burchfield, Robert, ed. *The Cambridge History of the English Language*, vol. 5 p. 75-9

might not would like to come with us), *I'll no can come* (I'll not be able to come), *the teacher'll can tell ye* (the teacher will be able to tell you), *he used to would drink black coffee late at night* (he used to drink black coffee late at night) are all perfectly acceptable constructions.<sup>18</sup> Writes McClure, "There is no sense in describing these usages as 'ungrammatical': this simply means that they do not conform to the grammar of standard literary English, and as they are *not* standard literary English there is no reason why they should...."<sup>19</sup>

One point that perhaps warrants further clarification is the definition of Scottish Standard English as differentiated from Scots. During the Enlightenment, speakers of Lowland Scots made concerted efforts to rid their speech of all distinctly Scottish elements in order to conform to the speech of upper-class Londoners. Their attempt was only partially successful and resulted in a speech form whose lexis is almost totally English but whose pronunciation is very much Scots. This hybrid is today established as Scottish Standard English, one of the many varieties of English world-wide, and is used all over Scotland by "the professional and business classes... who use it either exclusively or as an alternative to Lowland Scots".<sup>20</sup>

In light of this explanation, how then can the relationship between Scots and Scottish Standard English be described? This is an issue of intense debate among many scholars because a substantial part of Scotland's identity depends on how she defines herself linguistically: is Scots merely an accent, a set of phonological deviations from Standard English? Is it one of the many dialects of the overarching structure called English? Or is it in fact a language in its own rite? Different groups have claimed all three points of view.

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<sup>18</sup> Burchfield, Robert, ed. *The Cambridge History of the English Language*, vol. 5 p. 69-74

<sup>19</sup> McClure, J. Derrick. *Why Scots Matters*. p. 24-5

<sup>20</sup> McClure, J. Derrick. *Scots and its Literature*. p. 10

Perhaps a useful tool to examine this question is Aitken's classification of Scots speakers into four different categories based on the frequency of variety markers in their speech. Group 1 speakers he identifies as speaking Educated Scottish Standard English, which is marked by use of one of the Scottish accents, by which he means an accent typical of a certain region of Scotland, and sporadic use of other markers identifying speech as Scottish. Speakers in the second group employed those markers in a more consistent manner, often making use of a Scottish form over and English one – for example, the use of *-na* or *-nae* instead of *-n't*, or the use of *no* for *not*. These markers, though they are not Standard English, cannot be labeled as strictly Scots; Aitken has therefore termed them “covert” Scotticisms. The third group of speakers even more consistently made use of covert Scotticisms and regularly chose Scottish forms as content words – i.e, *hame* for *home*, *puir* for *poor*. The fourth group of speakers consistently failed to use Standard English options in their speech and employed the greatest number of covert Scotticisms of all the groups.<sup>21</sup>

The third and fourth groups of speakers are those identified by fellow Scotsmen and by themselves as “speakers of ‘Scots,’ of ‘broad Scots,’ even of ‘good Scots’ or, sometimes, simply as ‘broad’ speakers”. But the spectrum of speech forms makes it clear that it is not possible to distinguish between accent and dialect in reality, and that any distinction between them would be arbitrarily imposed. Yet the very thought that one might have a “Scottish accent” implies a standard language from which the accent is deviant. In the case of Scots, this must either be a standard variety of Scots or Scots must be understood to be an accent of Standard English.<sup>22</sup>

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<sup>21</sup> Dósa, Atilla. *Language, Dialect or Accent? Some Contemporary Perceptions of the Present Status and the Potential Uses of Scots*. Scottish Language, no. 18, 1999, Association for Scottish Literary Studies p. 73

<sup>22</sup> Dósa, Atilla. *Language, Dialect or Accent? Some Contemporary Perceptions of the Present Status and the Potential Uses of Scot*. p. 73

But what of the claim that Scots is a language unto itself? To identify Scots as only an accent or a dialect certainly has implications for its prestige within Scotland, and in turn, in the way Scotland perceives and projects itself to the rest of the world. Is Scots a native speech form for Scotland to be proud of or simply a dialect of the language of its prosperous cousin to the south? In the light of such salient questions we can understand why some so strongly promote Scots as a distinct language:

It is the status of Scottish culture that is at risk in the language question: if Scots forfeited its claim to the status of a national language and were considered as linguistically subordinate to English, the cultural heritage in Scots would reduce itself to an outpost of English culture; if Scots were treated as a dialect of English instead of being regarded as two indigenous though closely related languages, literature in Scots would be reduced to one of the many dialectal literatures of English. This may explain why literary critics affirm fervently the equal language status of Scots and English.<sup>23</sup>

Though some argue that Scots today is not functionally different enough from English to be called a language, others fear that to designate it a dialect has inescapable negative connotations in the mind of the general populace. Many have pointed out the close similarities between other languages – Dutch and German; Swedish, Norwegian and Danish – and the fact that each of these speech forms is designated a “language”. Language status, then, is a political designation depending on extra-linguistic factors, be they political, cultural or social. Though linguists understand this truth, to the layperson, the term “dialect” implies a subordinate form of speech. Thus if Scotland is seeking to establish herself linguistically, we can understand why she would lay claim to Scots’ status as a language, and we can see how such a claim would in fact be justified.<sup>24</sup>

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<sup>23</sup> Dósa, Atilla. *Language, Dialect or Accent? Some Contemporary Perceptions of the Present Status and the Potential Uses of Scot.* p. 75

<sup>24</sup> Dósa, Atilla. *Language, Dialect or Accent? Some Contemporary Perceptions of the Present Status and the Potential Uses of Scot.* p. 79

This said, however, all attempts to designate Scots an official language of Scotland will fall short if Scots speakers themselves do not embrace and esteem Scots as their own language. It is the speakers of a language variety who truly determine its status.<sup>25</sup> If, in their estimation, Scots is something that represents their identity as a nation and which differentiates them from the English, something which makes them proud and to which they lay claim as their own language variety, then let them proudly declare Scots a language. If not, all outside attempts to designate it so will fall short. As it stands today, most Scots speakers believe themselves to be speaking faulty Standard English when they speak in Scots and therefore see no reason why they should be proud of their language variety or term it a “language”. Even today there is a move afoot to set this misconception straight; more on this to come.<sup>26</sup>

### ***Scots and the Literary Tradition***

Even as the debate over Scots’ status persists today, there nevertheless continues a legacy of Scots writing and literature which finds its roots in a centuries-old tradition of Scots poems, prose, ballads and novels. Scots finds itself in an interesting position as a struggling language: while many endangered tongues seek to establish a literary tradition to bolster their strength and ensure survival, Scots already possesses a substantial body of literature. A look at the history of written Scots will prove useful in our examination of the present status of Scots and its prospects for the future.

Before the late 1300s, all that exists of Scots literature are snatches of larger works; a line here and there, a lament for the death of King Alexander III. The first major work still extant in Scots *The Brus* by John Barbour, dates from between 1371 and 1390 and is an epic adventure

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<sup>25</sup> Hinton, Leanne and Ken Hale. *The Green Book of Language Revitalization in Practice*. The Academic Press; San Diego, 2001 p. 5

<sup>26</sup> McClure, J. Derrick. *Scots and its Literature*. p. 7

relating the life and achievements of Robert Bruce, the hero under whom Scotland gained independence from England in the 1310s and 20s.<sup>27</sup> *The Brus* establishes many themes which reappear in Scottish literature throughout the ages: “patriotic pride, confidence in the God-given right of the Scottish nation to maintain its integrity, and above all a sense of the ‘community of the realm’: of Scotland as belonging to, even consisting of, not only the ruling classes but the common people.” Linguistically, Barbour’s orthography and grammar do not differ vastly from those of his English contemporary, Chaucer, though in *The Brus* are lexical items not found in English works. Yet it is clear that “details of spelling and grammar show that the independent development of Scots as a language has unmistakably begun”.<sup>28</sup>

The next noteworthy piece of Scots literature is Andrew Wyntoun’s *Original Cronikyl of Scotland* (c. 1420). Though not outstanding in terms of literary skill, this tome “demonstrates the growing confidence of Scotsmen in their vernacular tongue” in a time when all works of historical narrative would have otherwise been done in Latin.<sup>29</sup>

During the reigns of the Stewart kings (James I-IV, 1406-1542), the Scots literary tradition was nourished and encouraged to grow. James I, himself an accomplished Scots poet, initiated the keeping of all Parliamentary records in Scots, making it the official language of the monarchy and government, while his courtly poetry also proved Scots fit to express lofty literary themes.<sup>30</sup> As Scotland grew to be an international power under his reign, the increased prominence of the Scots language was all the more significant: it was “the national language of the then independent kingdom of Scotland”.<sup>31</sup>

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<sup>27</sup> Mackie, J. D. *A History of Scotland*. Penguin Books Ltd; Harmondsworth, Middlesex, England, 1964 p.81-3

<sup>28</sup> McClure, J. Derrick. *Why Scots Matters*. p. 32-3

<sup>29</sup> McClure, J. Derrick. *Why Scots Matters*. p. 33

<sup>30</sup> McClure, J. Derrick. *Why Scots Matters*. p. 32

<sup>31</sup> Jumperz-Schwab, Cornelia. *The Development of the Scots Lexicon and Syntax in the 16<sup>th</sup> Century under the Influence of Translations from Latin*. Peter Lang GmbH; Frankfurt am Main, 1998, p. 1-2

The court poets of the Stewarts continued to develop the Scots poetic tradition, among them Robert Henryson, the great medieval poet, and William Dunbar, court poet to James IV, both of whom demonstrated Scots' full potential for expression and its wide range of uses while exhibiting great technical skill.<sup>32</sup>

Scots was truly coming into its own as a medium for letters, assisted in its development by numerous vocabulary borrowings from French and Latin. Scots' range of use expanded with its vocabulary, and early in the 16<sup>th</sup> century, Gavin Douglas undertook the ambitious project of translating Virgil's *Aeneid* (1513) into Scots. This feat not only demonstrated Scots' capacity for use in high culture, but signified the attitude to Scots and its literature at the time, not as a quaint and undeveloped language variety but as a vehicle fit for the classics.<sup>33</sup>

Scots poetry continued to flourish through the early and mid-1500s as James IV and V encouraged their poets to write, and as the kings themselves led by example, writing poetry and conducting all the affairs of the kingdom in Scots. As this crucial time, just as Scots literature was coming into its own, the European phenomenon of the Reformation reached Scotland and exerted a lethal influence on Scots literature. A major concern of Reformers was the adoption of vernacular Bibles in religious use, and thus, in the 1550s and 60s, there was a push in Scotland to replace the Latin Bible with the vulgate. At this time, there did exist a Scots translation of the Bible, made by Murdoch Nisbet in 1520, but as it had not yet been published, Scottish Reformers saw no problem with using an English translation instead. This makes sense for various reasons: first, because of their common ancestry, it was possible at this point that Scots could be written in an orthography very similar to that of English, though it would still be pronounced as Scots, the spoken form of which had diverged significantly from spoken English by this time. Second,

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<sup>32</sup> McClure, J. Derrick. *Why Scots Matters*. p. 34

<sup>33</sup> McClure, J. Derrick. *Why Scots Matters*. p. 34-5



the importance in the Reformers' eyes of which translation of the vulgate Bible to adopt paled in comparison to the overall Reformation goal of replacing the Latin Bible. Thus, the concern over which translation to use was of no consequence to them. Third, at this time, Scots was the language of government and the arts in Scotland, and there was therefore no sense that it was something that needed preserving. The Reformers had no way of foreseeing the deleterious influence this seemingly inconsequential act would have on the language.<sup>34</sup>

After the adoption of the English Bible in Scotland, the deadly correlation was made between the English language and the Word of God, effectively excluding Scots from the realm of the sacred in Scottish life. Thus, in the eyes of Scots themselves, their language fell in stature and came to be seen as vulgar and unfit for the things of God.<sup>35</sup> The Reformers in Scotland are well-known for often being content with adopting previously extant religious documents rather than creating original Scottish ones, thereby fostering in the church a sentiment of Scottish inferiority.<sup>36</sup>

The strict Calvinism of the Reformation had put a damper on not only Scots religious writing, but on other genres as well. In 1603, a further blow came to Scots writing with the accession to the English throne of James VI of Scotland, which united the two kingdoms under one crown. Prior to 1603, James VI had written in Scots. Post-1603, however, he wrote in English, and Scots writers for the most part followed his lead.<sup>37</sup> Scots writing languished for much of the rest of the seventeenth century, marked by a "limited vocabulary, a grammar wavering inconsistently between Scots and English, and an ambiguous orthography which failed

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<sup>34</sup> McClure, J. Derrick, ed. *Scotland and the Lowland Tongue*. Aberdeen University Press; Aberdeen, 1983 p 75, 59

<sup>35</sup> Letley, Emma. *From Galt to Douglas Brown: Nineteenth-Century Fiction and Scots Language*. Scottish Academic Press; Edinburgh, 1988 p. 6

<sup>36</sup> McClure, J. Derrick, ed. *Scotland and the Lowland Tongue*. p. 59

<sup>37</sup> Letley, Emma. *From Galt to Douglas Brown: Nineteenth-Century Fiction and Scots Language*. p. 5

utterly to indicate the Scots pronunciations”.<sup>38</sup> In the 1660s, one Scotsman, Sir George Mackenzie, wrote that English had become “the acknowledged literary standard of the educated gentry in Scotland,” and Letley continues to say that, “English superseded Scots not only in literary contexts: inevitably, the spoken language is subject to parallel influences....”<sup>39</sup> Through the 1600s, Scots’ status changed dramatically, and English became the language through which Scotland now had to relate to European culture. By the end of the century, bilingualism in Scotland was prevalent and English was considered the more polite language to use. Thus, the act of writing in Scots had “overt and inescapable cultural, even political, implications....”<sup>40</sup>

By the arrival of the 1700s, the Scots literary tradition had run dry for nearly a century. When poets again began to write in Scots, they had lost much contact with the tradition of the great Scots writers of the middle ages. Therefore, as inspiration for their work, 18<sup>th</sup>-century writers drew heavily from the reservoir of traditional Scottish ballads, folklore and literature which provided much of the impetus for what has now been termed the “Vernacular Revival” of Scots literature.<sup>41</sup>

In 1707, Scotland and England joined their Parliaments into one governing body, creating the United Kingdom of Great Britain. In the years that followed, many Scots felt that Scotland had been “sold to the English,” and as dissatisfaction with the Union grew, a movement of Scottish national pride and independence surged.<sup>42</sup> The literary side of this movement, spearheaded by poet Allan Ramsay, made use of Scots as an indicator of Scottish patriotism, and the “Vernacular Revival” was begun.<sup>43</sup> During the 1700s, a craze for collecting old Scots ballads and poetry

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<sup>38</sup> McClure, J. Derrick. *Why Scots Matters*. p. 36

<sup>39</sup> Letley, Emma. *From Galt to Douglas Brown: Nineteenth-Century Fiction and Scots Language*. p. 5

<sup>40</sup> McClure, J. Derrick. *Why Scots Matters*. p. 37

<sup>41</sup> Ferguson, William. *The Identity of the Scottish Nation: an Historic Quest*. Edinburgh University Press; Edinburgh, 1998 p. 251

<sup>42</sup> Mackie, J. D. *A History of Scotland*. p. 260-1

<sup>43</sup> Letley, Emma. *From Galt to Douglas Brown: Nineteenth-Century Fiction and Scots Language*. p. 6

spread all over Scotland and involved the leading Scottish literary figures of the day: Allan Ramsay, Robert Burns, and Sir Walter Scott. All participated to some extent, many writers composed ballads that were then passed off and sold as ancient, and many refurbished ancient ballads for the contemporary market.<sup>44</sup> In the midst of this wave of Scottish pride, though, there still lay the inevitable correlation between Standard English and material prosperity and wealth, which worked to subvert the advances being made by Scots writers.<sup>45</sup> One man, Jerome Stone, in 1755 translated passages of Gavin Douglas's *Eneados* into Modern English, and the 18<sup>th</sup> century condescension toward Scots is attested in his observation that Douglas's description has had its beauties obscured by the 'rubbish of antiquated orthography and an obsolete dialect'.<sup>46</sup>

The major leaders of the Vernacular Revival in Scotland – Allan Ramsay, Robert Burns and Sir Walter Scott – persisted in their work of promoting Scots in the face of such scoffing and criticism. Allan Ramsay was a poet with a great gift for satire and whose works have had more influence in Scotland than any poet until Hugh MacDiarmid of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, whose influence will be discussed presently. Robert Burns, from the borderlands of Scotland and England, is perhaps the most famed and most beloved by the Scottish. This was made particularly clear to me one May evening in Edinburgh when my parents and I entered a crowded pub for dinner. The only empty table was next to a man in a plaid hat who, after seeing we were settled in our seats, decided to strike up conversation. His first line was not "hello," "where are you from?" or "My name is..." it was "D'ye like Rabbie Burns?" My father stared at him blankly. Our friend decided to clarify: "Rabbie Burns, the poet? He's brilliant!" After a few uneasy nods of agreement from my parents, we decided to move to a table outside, uncertain how many pints

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<sup>44</sup> Ferguson, William. *The Identity of the Scottish Nation: an Historic Quest*. p. 251

<sup>45</sup> Letley, Emma. *From Galt to Douglas Brown: Nineteenth-Century Fiction and Scots Language*. p. 6

<sup>46</sup> Ferguson, William. *The Identity of the Scottish Nation: an Historic Quest*. p. 217

our friend had had. My point is, though, to illustrate the importance of the figure of Robert Burns in the Scottish collective consciousness, or at least in the consciousness of the Lowlands.

Burns, born in 1759 in the border country, grew up steeped in the tradition of Borderland Scots ballads and poetry. As he grew as a writer, these ballads provided much of the impetus for his creativity, whether he was updating them, collecting them, refurbishing them, or composing his own.<sup>47</sup> Because of their folk roots, Burns' works have a propensity for sentimentality that has been harshly criticized by many, yet has hardly stunted his popularity among Scotsmen.<sup>48</sup> Burns' use of Scots in his works is not as pure as that of his contemporaries – he tended to mix Scots and English within a single poem, some would argue to great effect. His Scots tended to be more Anglicized, at least in its orthography, so that he wrote pure English verse, but his Scots verse was actually a mix of Scots and English. The following sample contains clearly Scots elements, like *wha* (who), *wad* (would), *whase* (whose), *faute* (fault), *na* (not), *gie* (give), *canna* (cannot), but there are items that can be identified as “clearly English” as well; for example, *heart* and *love*.

O Mary, canst thou wreck his peace,  
Who for thy sake wad gladly die!  
Or canst thou break that heart of his,  
Whase only faute is loving thee!  
If for love for love thou wilt na gie,  
At least be pity to me shown;  
A thought ungentle canna be  
The thought o' Mary Morison.<sup>49</sup>

Some have claimed that Burns' “vernacular” works look more English than they are intended to because, after the Union of Crowns in 1603 and the ensuing Anglicization of the Scottish Press,

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<sup>47</sup> McClure, J. Derrick. *Why Scots Matters*. p. 38

<sup>48</sup> McGuirk, Carol. *Robert Burns and the Sentimental Era*. The University of Georgia Press; Athens, 1985 p. xxv

<sup>49</sup> Burns' *Mary Morison* cited in McGuirk, Carol. *Robert Burns and the Sentimental Era*. p xxiii

Scots writers would never argue with an English spelling of a word but would simply adopt it when it was an obvious cognate of a Scots word, thus “pretending” to be writing in Scots. The works would have been read aloud very differently by a Scots speaker and an English speaker, but over time, many of the hidden Scots items have simply been forgotten.<sup>50</sup>

Despite his wild popularity and great fame, persisting even until today, Burns’ use of Scots in his works has had subliminally detrimental effects in terms of the way Scots is perceived not only by outsiders but by Scottish people as well. One factor which is so small it seems it would be negligible is Burns’ use of the apostrophe in his Scots poetry. He uses it in words such as *wi’* (with), *o’* (of), *e’en* (even), implying that these words are missing phonemes. The truth is that in Standard English, these words would in fact be missing phonemes, but in Scots, these phonemes were never present to begin with. Thus Burns is portraying his own speech form to his readers as a failed attempt at Standard English. Perhaps perceptions of Scots had so changed since its golden age in the 14-1500’s that Burns himself believed Scots to be only poor standard English, or perhaps he was pitching his writing to wealthy English consumers; in any event, the use of the apostrophe in Burns’s “vernacular” works has only helped to enforce misunderstandings of the nature of Scots and contribute further to its image as a quaint and rustic tongue in the eyes of the Scottish.<sup>51</sup>

Sir Walter Scott, who followed on Burns’s heels, was a prolific writer of novels and was, like Burns, greatly successful and popular in his day. Like Burns, however, we have to evaluate whether his use of Scots in his fiction was necessarily a positive one. Born in the 1770s in Edinburgh, Scott developed an interest in the Scottish traditions of balladry and poetry early on in his life when he was sent as an invalid child to live on his grandparents’ sheep farm in the

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<sup>50</sup> Allan, Alasdair. *Scots Spellin: Ettlin efter the Quantum Lowp*. English World-Wide, vol. 16, 1995 p. 67

<sup>51</sup> Allan, Alasdair. *Scots Spellin: Ettlin efter the Quantum Lowp*. p. 68

border country. There he was surrounded with Scots speakers whose language would influence him and feature prominently in his later works. It is noteworthy also that Scott spent one year as a child in the fashionable English resort town of Bath, there becoming familiar with English modes of expression as contrasted to the Scots he had known all his life. These Scots and English speech communities he witnessed as a child are reflected in his novels: often, all of Scott's narrative is English while dialogue, at least that of Scottish characters, is in broad and vivid Scots, especially for "rustic and old-fashioned types" like those he would have known from his youth on his grandfather's farm.<sup>52</sup>

Scott's influence on the formation of Scottish identity from the mid-1800's onward cannot be overestimated: he has been called by some a "mythmaker".<sup>53</sup> His novels, widely acclaimed and even more widely read, presented a Romantic image of Scotland to the world, idealizing both the Gaelic culture of the Highlands (of which he had no real knowledge but only a vivid imagination) and the Scots culture of the Lowlands.<sup>54</sup> His use of Scots in prose fiction, though strictly relegated to dialogue, has had lasting effect on the status of the language and on how it and its speakers are perceived. Sorensen (1999) describes Scott's *Waverly* novels and their influence:

Appearing after a century of efforts to repress the "other" – non-English – languages of Lowland and Highland Scotland, Walter Scott's *Waverly* novels both reflect and intervene in the ongoing contests around language that adumbrated the cultural and political interaction of England and Scotland in the wake of their 1707 union. Aspiring, English-assimilating Scots men of Scott's father's generation had sought to purge their written and spoken English of Scotticisms, those remnants of Scots infiltrating their Standard English with visible and audible signs of social inferiority. Yet Scott's *Waverly* novels unabashedly showcase Scots, highlighting cultural difference through often colourful depictions of this "other" language. His use of Scots marks a shift in its conception; no longer a harbinger of political subversion – the English had overcome the threat of Scottish rebellion by the nineteenth century – and no longer an equal competitor in the struggle for linguistic dominance, Scots became a

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<sup>52</sup> Young, Douglas. *Edinburgh in the Age of Sir Walter Scott*. University of Oklahoma Press; Norman, 1965 p. 122

<sup>53</sup> Kidd, Colin. *Subverting Scotland's Past*. Cambridge University Press; Cambridge, 1993, prologue

<sup>54</sup> Ferguson, William. *The Identity of the Scottish Nation: an Historic Quest*. p. 313

free-floating signifier, pointing to a traditional Scots culture without threatening the hegemony of English language usage.<sup>55</sup>

Thus Scots becomes the speech form of Scottish characters portrayed as “honest,” and whose Scots is linked to “transparent meaning,” “purity,” “unerring morality,” “intimacy and feelings”. So, while Scots is used in Scott as a means of creating a sense of intimacy between characters, at the same time Scots becomes a “sign of inferiority, inappropriate for expressing more dignified sentiments and unavailable as a sign of authority and composure”. Further, as his Scots dialogue is written on the page amid the Standard English narration and speech of other characters, it is “depicted as a distorted, homely version of print English”, enforcing the notion that Scots is merely a failed attempt at Standard English. Scott’s wide readership, consisting mostly of English and upper-class Scottish, assured far-reaching propagation of these images of the Scots language; Scott’s influence on the history of Scots, therefore, was vast, and vastly destructive.<sup>56</sup>

As Scottish Literature continued to develop in the 19<sup>th</sup> century, the notions of sentimentality ushered in by Burns and Scott gave way to an entire genre of Scottish fiction known as the “kailyard” school. “Kailyard” is a Scots word meaning “cottage garden” or “kitchen garden”,<sup>57</sup> and came to represent a body of Scottish literature that exoticized Scotland and her residents for curious English readerships. Letley describes Kailyard writing as “limited, derivative, repetitive, at worst a kind of debased Highland Tourist Board dream, quaint and travelogueish, but it was extremely successful and [it] gratified a widespread popular taste”. Kailyard writers made much use of Scots in their dialogue, appealing to the English audience’s desire for Scottish exoticism, though the English readers would hardly have been able to understand “one word in three of

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<sup>55</sup> Hoenselaars, Tom and Marius Buning, eds. *English Literature and the Other Languages*. Rodopi BV; Amsterdam, 1999 p.

<sup>56</sup> Hoenselaars, Tom and Marius Buning, eds. *English Literature and the Other Languages*. p. 66, 69

<sup>57</sup> Warrack, Alexander. *Chambers’s Scots Dialect Dictionary*. W & R Chambers, Limited; Edinburgh, 1911 p. 229

[the] dialogue”.<sup>58</sup> Notions of sentimentality surrounding Scottish culture were fed by the reigning British monarch, Queen Victoria, and the wild success of her own publications about Scotland, *Leaves from the Journal of Our Life in the Highlands* (1868).<sup>59</sup> The Queen vacationed with her family yearly at their Scottish estate, Balmoral, where she developed a great love of Scottish, and more particularly Highland, culture. Her publications helped to make Scotland a popular tourist destination among the English, no doubt spurred by their desire to meet their strange neighbors to the North and to hear their peculiar speech.<sup>60</sup>

A decided sentimentality toward Scotland and all things Scottish had arisen by the end of Victoria’s reign (1901) which, though it seemed harmless enough, has proven as incapacitating for Scotland as the harshest attack from enemy forces. To put Scotland and her culture (or for that matter, any culture) in a box is to rob her of intellectual potency and political viability, and to prevent her from being taken seriously by other nations. Early in the twentieth century, some young and radical Scottish intellectuals recognized this truth, and set out to re-appropriate the dignity of the Scottish intellectual and academic tradition by first reclaiming the dignified use of their own mother tongue, Scots. These radicals, led by C. M. Grieve (alias Hugh MacDiarmid) had visions of nothing less than a “Scottish Renaissance,” and to some extent, they were successful. “The unbounded ambition of MacDiarmid [was] to expand the intellectual range of poetry, and of Scottish poetry in particular, to embrace all knowledge, all experience, and all space....”, namely, to bring Scots out of the sentimentality in which it had languished so long, and to make it an intellectual force to be reckoned with.<sup>61</sup>

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<sup>58</sup> Letley, Emma. *From Galt to Douglas Brown: Nineteenth-Century Fiction and Scots Language*. p. 219

<sup>59</sup> <http://www.camelotintl.com/heritage/rulers/victoria.html>

<sup>60</sup> <http://www.royal.gov.uk/textonly/Page583.asp>

<sup>61</sup> Davis, A. C. and P. H. Scott. *The Age of MacDiarmid*. Mainstream Publishing; Edinburgh, 1980 p. 11



MacDiarmid, a journalist and poet, said of his own goals, “I want to escape from the provincializing of Scottish literature – I wanted to carry on the independent Scottish literary tradition...I wanted to carry forward the re-integration of the Scots language, taking it a good deal farther than Burns had taken it....”<sup>62</sup> MacDiarmid wanted nothing less than to see Scotland on the cutting edge of European thought, as an entity moving forward and not just “a poor intellectual pensioner of England”.<sup>63</sup> As a vehicle for his writing, MacDiarmid appropriated Scots, but his Scots was not of one particular dialect or region – MacDiarmid wrote in what he called a “synthetic” Scots, or “Lallans”. Taking Scots lexical items from all regions and all time periods, and even inventing some of his own, MacDiarmid fused them into a version of Scots unlike any spoken variety and used this new “literary” or synthetic Scots for his writings. The following poem, one of MacDiarmid’s most famous, is a sample of what this synthetic Scots with its quasi-invented words looked like:

<p><b>The Bonnie Broukit* Bairn</b></p> <p>Mars is braw and crammasy*,  Venus in a green silk gown,  The auld mune shak’s her gowden* feathers,  Their starry talk’s a wheen o’ blethers*,  Nane for thee a thochtie sparín’,  Earth, thou bonnie broukit bairn!  – <i>But greet*, an’ in your tears ye’ll droun</i>  <i>The haill clanjamfrie*!</i></p>	<p><i>smudge-covered child</i></p> <p><i>crimson</i></p> <p><i>golden</i>  <i>[lot of nonsense]</i></p> <p><i>weep</i>  <i>[whole rabble of them]</i><sup>64</sup></p>
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This synthetic Scots was roundly critiqued by many precisely because it did not reflect any spoken version of the language. MacDiarmid replied, however, that his synthesis of Scots was perfectly in keeping with his own vision for a modernized and intellectual Scotland in that no

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<sup>62</sup> Morgan, Edwin. *Hugh MacDiarmid*. Longman Group LTD; Harlow, Essex, 1976 p. 6

<sup>63</sup> Davis, A. C. and P. H. Scott. *The Age of MacDiarmid*. p. 21

<sup>64</sup> Crawford, Robert and Mick Imlah. *The New Penguin Book of Scottish Verse*. The Penguin Press; London, 2000 p. 407

language develops a high literary tradition until it can move away from folk and grassroots traditions. He wrote, “I know no literature of any value that uses the language in which it is written, as that language is used by the man in the street. All living languages add to their vocabularies by importing words from other languages...or by inventing new words....Certainly I myself have no interest whatever in writing for the minimally literate”.<sup>65</sup> In response a criticism of the artificiality of Lallans poetry, Sidney Goodsir Smith, a follower of MacDiarmid, wrote *Epistle to John Guthrie*, of which this is the first verse:

We've come intil a gey* queer time	<i>very</i>
Whan scrievin* Scots is near a crime,	<i>writing</i>
“There's no one speaks like that”, they fleer*,	<i>jeer</i>
– But wha* the deil* spoke like King Lear?	<i>who, devil</i> <sup>66</sup>

Goodsir Smith's point is clear: if Shakespeare did not make use of his language just as it was spoken on the street, why should Scots writers, or writers of any other great tradition for that matter, be expected to do the same?

By writing in this elitist or academic Scots, then, MacDiarmid and his contemporaries hoped to restore the language to its capacity as a language of intellectuals, academics and artists and to thereby re-attribute to Scots some of the prestige is lost over the course of its history. To an extent, MacDiarmid and his followers had success.

MacDiarmid has been described as “transforming the political and social atmosphere in Scotland – the vision which the Scottish people have of themselves” and has been likened to John Knox in his fervor and his absolutism. The post-MacDiarmid Scotland, writes Scott, is “more assertive of its identity, more intellectually alive, more conscious of its past, and more optimistic and self-confident towards the future...the theatre, literary and artistic endeavor, the

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<sup>65</sup> Davis, A. C. and P. H. Scott. *The Age of MacDiarmid*. p. 26

<sup>66</sup> Goodsir Smith, Sidney. *Collected Poems*. John Calder (Publishers) Ltd.; London, 1975 p. 13

publishing of magazines and books, the study of Scottish history and of all aspects of Scottish life, are now all flourishing to a degree that no one would have thought possible when MacDiarmid began to write”.<sup>67</sup> MacDiarmid and his followers succeeded in the twentieth century in raising the awareness of the Scottish to the perilous state of their culture and identity, and of course, their language. Though many today feel that the “Lallans” movement has failed in giving Scotland a national language, the surge of literary activity following in MacDiarmid’s wake has at least kept Scots in the public eye. Scots writers today generally tend toward one of two poles: those who continue to develop synthetic Scots as a language of high culture, such as Douglas Young, or those whose focus is on regional or local dialects of Scots. Among the most famous of these is Irvine Welsh, whose international bestseller *Trainspotting* is written in Edinburgh Scots, while Edwin Morgan explores Glasgow dialects through his translations.<sup>68</sup> Other writers are trying to put Scots on stage through modern theatrical works written completely in Scots, like Robert McLellan’s *Jamie the Saxt* (James the Sixth), a widely acclaimed and greatly popular Scots comedy about the life of King James VI, written in 1937 and later performed at the Edinburgh Festival.<sup>69</sup> Thus Scots literature continues to develop and to adapt itself to life in the twenty-first century, painfully aware of its past and hopeful for new life in the future.

### ***Scots and Language Planning***

Thus far we have seen the long history of Scots, its rise and fall as the language of prestige in Scotland, and the depth and breadth of its literary tradition. But how is Scots faring today?

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<sup>67</sup> Davis, A. C. and P. H. Scott. *The Age of MacDiarmid*. p. 11, 12

<sup>68</sup> Corbett, John. *Written in the Language of the Scottish Nation: A History of Literary Translation into Scots*. p. 4-5

<sup>69</sup> <http://www.slainte.org.uk/Scotauth/mcleldsw.htm>

What can be done and what is currently being done to ensure the survival of this language variety native to Scotland? What is its hope for the future? To answer these questions let's take a look at the concept of language planning and then examine Scotland's own position in relation to it.

To the best of our knowledge, there are between five thousand and 6,700 languages spoken in the world today. Yet in a mere hundred years, if language death continues at its current rate, half or more of those will be extinct. The linguistic diversity of our planet is a marker of its cultural diversity; as each speech form passes away, it indicates the death of a culture or a way of life. This cultural/linguistic death can be called nothing less than tragic.<sup>70</sup> If a language “is not a language of government, nor a language of education, nor a language of commerce or of wider communication...[its] very existence is threatened in the modern world.” Thousands of minority and indigenous people groups fall under social, cultural, economic and even military pressure from a dominant culture and are forced to abandon their languages in a process known as language shift. Language shift can be involuntary (forced upon a group) or it can be voluntary. When a speech community realizes that it will be better off speaking another language over against its own indigenous form, it will voluntarily abandon the old and make concerted efforts to learn the new. Often when an indigenous group does not speak the language of the government, their native tongue will take on inferior status in the eyes of its speakers, inspiring in them the wish to abandon it in favor of the language of prestige; for children, it can take only one demeaning comment against their mother tongue to cause them to wish to abandon it forever.<sup>71</sup>

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<sup>70</sup> Nettle, Daniel and Suzanne Romaine. *Vanishing Voices*. Oxford; Oxford University Press, 2000 p. 7

<sup>71</sup> Hinton, Leanne and Ken Hale. *The Green Book of Language Revitalization in Practice*. p. 3

When a language ceases to fulfill a function (as when it ceases to be the language of government) it slowly gives way to another, which will come to replace it in domain by domain. Language shift starts slowly with one group and then spreads to others, carrying prestige with it as it goes. As a language leaves official institutions like the court and church, it becomes limited to use in the home and between friends, and often, older generations who know the language best will cease to teach it to younger ones who are largely fluent in the new language to which the community is shifting.<sup>72</sup> These processes of language shift can be seen in the story of Scots, in which the monarch and court first began to speak English, followed shortly by the Parliament and then the upper classes of society. From this nexus the wave of English-speaking spread over Scotland and people sought to rid themselves of the Scots elements in their speech, hoping to adopt the more prestigious speech form.<sup>73</sup> Writes McClure, “As Scotland progressively lost its status as an independent nation, its language was first assimilated to English and then replaced by it in one field of usage after another, leading eventually to its present virtual restriction to domestic conversation and literature.”<sup>74</sup> The processes of voluntary language shift are clearly evidenced in Scots.

Yet as language shift and death take their toll on the linguistic diversity of the earth, there are efforts to counterbalance these forces through the medium of language planning. If language revitalization is the overarching goal of those wanting to preserve their native language, language planning is the practical mechanism by which that goal is attempted. Language planning involves deliberation and decision-making about which language is best for which speech community, formulation of strategies and plans designed to bring that language into common

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<sup>72</sup> Nettle, Daniel and Suzanne Romaine. *Vanishing Voices*. p. 91-2

<sup>73</sup> Eastman, Carol M. *Language Planning: an Introduction*. San Francisco; Chandler & Sharp Publishers, Inc., 1983 p. 55-6

<sup>74</sup> McClure, J. Derrick. *Why Scots Matters*. p. 52-3

use, and implementation of those plans through pre-existing structures such as the government or education system of that community. Language planning requires cooperation between political, educational, economic and linguistic authorities and by necessity must take into account delicate and controversial matters such as, for example, the presence of a minority group speaking another language than the majority group. It is crucial that language planners take into account all the “socio-cultural and psychological factors associated with the use of each language variety” in a speech community before recommending a language plan to that community. Thus, language planning is largely about the “interplay of sociological/political/linguistic issues.”<sup>75</sup>

Though many countries or communities have official language plans, such as the plan to sustain Gaelic in Scotland or to revitalize Maori in New Zealand, *every* country has an implicit language policy, whether it has been articulated or not. For example, in the United States, although no official language policy exists, the norm of American Standard English (otherwise referred to as “CNN English”) is enforced constantly through television, the radio, and the media. No society is free from a language policy.<sup>76</sup> To promote or discourage use of speech varieties within a community, therefore, will inevitably be at least partially political, and certainly no language planner can please every speaker in a community. But while language revitalization is always difficult and fraught with controversy, it is also always possible to some degree, as long as there is one person firmly committed to seeing a language revitalized.<sup>77</sup>

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<sup>75</sup> Eastman, Carol M. *Language Planning: an Introduction*. p. x, 1, 3, 32

<sup>76</sup> Eastman, Carol M. *Language Planning: an Introduction*. p. 6, 10

<sup>77</sup> Hinton, Leanne and Ken Hale. *The Green Book of Language Revitalization in Practice*. p. 6, 400

### ***Big Principles of Language Planning***

To create a successful language revitalization program is a complex and arduous procedure. However, even the most meticulous and well-thought-out plan will fail if a few factors are not first in place; it is these principles that drive a successful language plan.

The first of these is the fact that unless a speech community intensely desires the revitalization of its language, a plan to revive it is destined to fail. “It is only if an indigenous speech community itself desires and initiates efforts toward language survival that such programs should exist or would have any chance of success.”<sup>78</sup> Many a plan has failed because it has been imposed on a speech community from above when in fact the speech community in question had no motivation or desire to learn or keep using their native speech form. The question of desire on the part of the speakers to preserve their language is often a question of the “intrinsic social value” of their language, and this is often a function of the way in which the language was acquired by that society: is it indigenous? Is it standardized? Is it dying or expanding? Does it have a writing system? A published grammar? A literary tradition? Or, is the language associated with a sense of national pride or patriotism by its speakers? This too can be a strong motivation for speakers to sustain their native speech form. (Conversely, modernizing/preserving a language can also lead to a stronger sense of national identity among its speakers.) If a language is not valued by its speakers, motivating them to want to keep it will be the first hurdle for those who wish to see the language revived.<sup>79</sup>

A second principle crucial to successful language planning is the idea that the impetus for language revitalization must come from “the minds, mouths and hands of the native speakers.” Work for the revitalization of a language must be done *by* speakers of that language, *for* speakers

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<sup>78</sup> Hinton, Leanne and Ken Hale. *The Green Book of Language Revitalization in Practice*. p. 5

<sup>79</sup> Eastman, Carol M. *Language Planning: an Introduction*. p. 5, 31, 53

of that language, *in* that language, and for an audience that speaks that language. That language revitalization work be done *in* the language in question is essential. The work will give the language a “growing edge,” pushing and expanding the range of the language’s capabilities and thereby making it more capable of being used in all spheres by its speakers. It is contradictory to simultaneously promote a certain language while conducting all affairs concerning it in another.<sup>80</sup>

A third idea key to successful language revitalization is that the language in question “needs to be associated with the whole spectrum of national life and not merely with selective or ‘high culture’ activities.” That is, the language must be able to be used robustly in all spheres of life, whether in the home, at school, at church, in the office, in the government, at the theater, or among friends. The language must show itself capable of use in all situations and in all registers; otherwise, its chances of success and sustainability are greatly diminished.<sup>81</sup>

Fourth, language revitalization plans often fail because they are political in nature or because they focus on procedures such as codification of a language’s grammar or creating dictionaries of the language. In reality, a language plan ought to be socio-economic, not political; it should undergird and strengthen the culture that fosters use of a certain language rather than trying to impose efforts onto the language from above. According to Hinton and Hale, the “minimal nexus for retention of a language is home-family-neighborhood-community”<sup>82</sup>: in other words, the focus of a language plan ought to be on bottom-up growth, not top-down, beginning with the strengthening of a community.<sup>83</sup>

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<sup>80</sup> Hinton, Leanne and Ken Hale. *The Green Book of Language Revitalization in Practice*. p. 390, 402, 408

<sup>81</sup> Eastman, Carol M. *Language Planning: an Introduction*. p. 11

<sup>82</sup> Hinton, Leanne and Ken Hale. *The Green Book of Language Revitalization in Practice*. p. 402

<sup>83</sup> Nettle, Daniel and Suzanne Romaine. *Vanishing Voices*. p. 91, 178-9



Finally, revitalization of a language cannot happen until that language is spoken in the home. It is when parents cease to transmit a language to their children that that language dies and is replaced by another. Efforts such as trying to establish a language as the language of the workplace, government, or church are going to be fruitless if that language is not spoken in the home.<sup>84</sup> Even drastic innovations such as an immersion program in a school will fall short if the family does not play an active role in the promotion of that language among their children. “The family,” writes Hinton,

is the last bastion against language loss, once the language of schools, public affairs, the marketplace, and the workplace has shifted to the dominant language of the region. But, interestingly, the family household may also be the last to regain use of the language when it is revitalized....Only when a minority language has a measure of strength outside the home will families who have gone through a generation or more of speaking some other language feel sufficiently secure about the language to bring it home again.<sup>85</sup>

Thus, any effort to revitalize a language should divert serious energies toward an effort to promote use of the language in the home.

### ***Strategies of Language Planning***

With these principles in mind, by what strategies do language planners go about effecting change in the linguistic situation of a speech community? Several components come together to form the mechanism by which language revitalization can occur.

One component of language revitalization theory is that of standardization. A standard language can be defined as a language whose grammar, spelling, and vocabulary have been codified in grammars, dictionaries and reference books and which is “widely accepted by society as the ‘natural’ form of written discourse in formal and public situations, and which is disseminated as such through a mass education system.” Standardizing a language that is

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<sup>84</sup> Nettle, Daniel and Suzanne Romaine. *Vanishing Voices*. p. 7, 178g

<sup>85</sup> Hinton, Leanne and Ken Hale. *The Green Book of Language Revitalization in Practice*. p. 9, 415

composed of varying and disparate dialects can strengthen that language's position by making it easier to teach. When a language is standardized, it creates a norm to which language learners can appeal and gives the speech community a sense of linguistic solidarity, both of which can perpetuate the survival of the language.<sup>86</sup>

For a language to survive it must be teachable; education, as has been hinted at already, is perhaps the most important factor in language revitalization plans. It is at school that children spend much of their time, where they learn conversation and language skills, and where they absorb the attitudes that others, whether it be their peers or their teachers, hold toward their language. Often, teachers are not well-educated about their students' indigenous language forms and may be hostile to their presence in the classroom, a factor that can certainly be an obstacle to language revitalization efforts.<sup>87</sup>

In terms of language revitalization in the classroom, several methods have potential for success. Bilingual education, in which all students speak two languages, is important because it often expands the ranges of use for a language; it demands that there be written material and vocabulary that can handle topics such as current events or science. This ensures that a language is applied to all fields or realms of life, one of the key concepts for successful language revitalization. Immersion education, in which all classes and lessons are conducted in one language (the language trying to be revitalized), is another method employed to get children to use an endangered language and ensure its survival. When there is no strong speech community for a language, any teaching program must focus on creating a situation in which the language can be used: "the language has to be brought into real communication situations if it is to survive." Immersion learning is promising in that it can combine language learning with other

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<sup>86</sup> Corbett, John. *Written in the Language of the Scottish Nation: A History of Literary Translation into Scots*. p. 44

<sup>87</sup> McClure, J. Derrick. *Why Scots Matters*. p. 58

activities, bringing the language out of the classroom and into real life, incorporating speaking, listening, reading, writing and thinking in projects “that address real (as opposed to school only) audiences.” Immersion learning can be fun, too! In Hawaii, for example, a group committed to reviving Hawaiian held volleyball matches and cookouts where only Hawaiian was spoken. Language learners got to see and use Hawaiian in a “real-world” setting while also enjoying themselves. Not only did this strengthen the speakers’ language skills, it also helped strengthen the community of Hawaiian speakers and helped them catch a vision of what it would look like to have Hawaiian spoken in all of life – to help them believe that revitalization is actually possible.<sup>88</sup>

While there has been much talk of bilingual and immersion education in the primary school years, there has also been a recent thrust to promote advanced scholarship in endangered languages, thus continuing expansion of those languages into all realms of life and proving them capable of handling weighty or intellectual subjects. Advanced scholarship continues to push a language’s “growing edge” and to give it, bit by bit, viability in the eyes of its speakers and the world. Navajo and Gaelic enthusiasts have made it possible to continue higher education in either language today.<sup>89</sup>

Language learning can also be a powerful tool in mending the generational and geographic rifts that can separate members of a speech community. As a language dies, younger generations abandon it while the older generations continue to speak. If, however, young learners of a language seek to engage the older generations by speaking their language, they hold the key to getting older members to speak their endangered language again. Simple, small overtures such as a greeting or conversational opening can get an older language speaker to open up to using the

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<sup>88</sup> Hinton, Leanne and Ken Hale. *The Green Book of Language Revitalization in Practice*. p. 7, 8, 10

<sup>89</sup> see Slate essay in *The Green Book of Language Revitalization in Practice*, p. 389

language again, and perhaps even to teaching others about the language from their rich stores of knowledge.<sup>90</sup>

Essential to any plan of revitalization is the development of a corpus of literature in the endangered language. Some argue that developing the written form of a language is as important as promoting the spoken form of the language because it is from the written forms that literacy in a language can develop. In fact, scarcity of written materials in a language can be a real stumbling block in attempting to teach it; literature of all genres is necessary if the goal of fluency in speaking and writing is to be attained. Building a literature is so important to language revival that at Diné College in Tsaile, Arizona, the Navajo Language Project offers courses to Navajo teachers on how to enhance literacy among Navajo students, with the vision that one day, these very students will be the writers in the emerging Navajo literary movement. Literature in an endangered language must “fulfill the needs of an audience” while at the same time working to build that audience through such means as, for example, newspaper pages, posters, greetings in a letter, bumper stickers and even t-shirts written in the endangered language. In accordance with the principles mentioned above, writing in the endangered language must be adaptable to all registers and ranges of use and to all spheres of life if it is to have an effect on the survival of a language.<sup>91</sup>

### ***Scots and Language Planning***

Now that we have an idea of what Scots is, where it stands in Scotland today, and what the large principles of language planning are, we can assimilate the three to address the question of where Scots is headed. Will Scots survive into the twenty-first century? Have its supporters reached

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<sup>90</sup> Hinton, Leanne and Ken Hale. *The Green Book of Language Revitalization in Practice*. p. 14, 395, 397

<sup>91</sup> Hinton, Leanne and Ken Hale. *The Green Book of Language Revitalization in Practice*. p.

critical mass to bring about its promotion within Scotland? Will Scots speakers be able to run with the momentum of the Scots Literary Revival of the twentieth century and bring Scots into all areas of national life? Let's take a look at efforts currently under way in Scotland and their relation to the key principles of language planning.

If spoken Scots is to be revitalized on any level, the first step toward that end is eliciting a desire to speak Scots from the Scottish populace. This goal, however, is formidable given the attitudes of Scottish people toward Scots. As has already been mentioned, Scots today is viewed as something of which to be ashamed, a failed effort to speak Standard English. Scots has never been seen as the national language of Scotland in the eyes of Scotsmen, nor has it ever taken on the role of a national or patriotic symbol within Scotland. According to McClure, peoples' attitudes toward Scots fall into one of several broad categories: 1) Those who insist on the idea of Scots as the national language of Scotland, past, present, and future, and who tend to be highly educated literati and *not* (significantly) speakers of Scots; 2) Those Scots speakers who are proud of their own regional variety of Scots but are not much interested in the concept of Scots as a national symbol; 3) Those who respect rural varieties of Scots but demonstrate no tolerance for the urban varieties; 4) Those who vigorously maintain their urban Scots dialects as a sign of defiance against the "establishment," manifested largely through the education system; 5) Those who view anything other than Scottish Standard English as wrong.<sup>92</sup> It is crucial here to note that those most passionately concerned with the promotion of Scots are themselves not speakers of Scots; this must be remedied if an effort to bring Scots into the forefront of Scottish national life is to succeed, for, as we have already discovered, any effort to revitalize a language that does not come from the minds and hands of the language's speakers is destined to failure. The breach

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<sup>92</sup> McClure, J. Derrick. *Scots and its Literature*. Amsterdam; John Benjamins Publishing Company, 1995  
p. 13

between the Scots literati and the bulk of Scots speakers must be mended before efforts to promote Scots can advance.

Token advances have in fact been made for Scots: in 1998, the British government signed the European Charter for Regional or Minority Languages with a promise to ensure equal opportunities for all minority language speakers in Britain, yet so far as Scots is concerned very little has changed and prejudices against Scots still exist. Between 1994 and 1997, there were efforts by lobbying Scots groups to get a question on the 2001 Scottish census about Scots language use within Scotland, but these efforts were not recognized by officials and no question was included.<sup>93</sup> Scots was recently recognized by the European Bureau for Lesser-Used Languages,<sup>94</sup> and efforts have been made to grant Scots official status within Scotland, though these efforts have failed also (though, interestingly, status was granted to Gaelic, which is now zealously promoted in the Highlands and Islands of Scotland).<sup>95</sup> Although some of these symbolic efforts have had success, none of them will secure the aims of Scots promoters if the movement is not appropriated and forwarded by the bulk of Scots speakers.

Central to the question of Scots' status and survival is the question of education in Scotland. Although Scots is in theory to be tolerated in the classroom today, in reality it is often suppressed and disdained by teachers, who find themselves surprised when their students leave the classroom speaking Scottish Standard English and once on the playground immediately begin using Scots.<sup>96</sup> However, there are reasons for hope: "It [Scots] has no formally defined place in primary or secondary education, either as a subject or as a teaching medium; though the flexibility of the system offers quite considerable opportunities, of which some individual

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<sup>93</sup> The Scots Language Society: <http://www.lallans.co.uk/info.html>

<sup>94</sup> European Bureau for Lesser-Used Languages: <http://www.eblul.org/>

<sup>95</sup> Millar, Robert McColl. Personal communication

<sup>96</sup> McClure, J. Derrick. *Why Scots Matters*. p. 58

teachers avail themselves to at least a token extent, to devote attention to such topics as local dialects or Scots poetry.” It is becoming increasingly clear that Scots has a place next to English in the school curriculum, and that “Any decisions affecting Lowland Scots will be made and put into operation in the first instance within Scotland...through the agency of the Scottish educational system....”<sup>97</sup> Thus, if the government of Scotland were ever to make an official statement or to create a policy regarding Scots, the education system would be the means through which that plan would be implemented.

Even now, exciting developments in Scottish Education are giving Scots reason for hope. Opportunities for advanced scholarship in Scots are growing: Glasgow University has a department of Scottish Literature, and a study of Scots is an integral element of the English Language courses at Aberdeen and Edinburgh Universities, where students can pursue their Scots studies to the highest levels.<sup>98</sup> Scholarly writing in Scots is also showing the first signs of growth; in 1997 Alasdair Allan wrote his doctoral dissertation, “Leid-plannin fer Scots” (Language Planning for Scots) at Aberdeen University. Allan wrote the entire dissertation in Scots, putting into practice the very principles that he was trying to convey through his writing: that if language revitalization in Scots is to succeed, the movement must be carried by Scots speakers *in* Scots, expanding the language to every possible domain.

Other notable educational developments include the founding of the Scottish Consultative Council on the Curriculum, designed to aid in decisions regarding the Scottish classroom, and under whose realm of expertise undoubtedly falls the question of Scots at school. Further, the creation of several texts designed to teach Scots and Scots literature offer a faint hope that one day both could be a part of Scottish children’s education. *Teaching Scottish Literature:*

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<sup>97</sup> McClure, J, Derrick. *Scots and its Literature.* p. 13, 15

<sup>98</sup> McClure, J, Derrick. *Scots and its Literature.* p. 15-6

*Curriculum and Classroom Applications* has potential to bring Scots literature into the awareness of students, making it clear to them that the rich Scots literary tradition is something to be treasured.<sup>99</sup> Another text, *The Grammar Broonie* (The Grammar Brownie) is a guide to Scots grammar for children, including classroom exercises. The idea that Scots can be taught is promising because it is evidence that some view it as a valid enough speech form to be shared, learned and spread.<sup>100</sup> A third volume, *The Kist/ A'Chiste*, published by the Scottish Language Project, is an anthology of Scots and Gaelic texts to introduce to the classroom, all of them either translated or glossed, in order to share with students the riches of the Scots and Gaelic literary traditions. The truly exciting thing about *The Kist/ A'Chiste* is that its illustrations are highly modern, not quaint and rural like many other Scots texts. *The Kist/ A'Chiste* is serving to break away from long-held stereotypes about Scots and show that it is a language fit for use in the modern world.<sup>101</sup>

Educational developments are evidently a matter of some import to Scots promoters: recently, the Scots Language Resource Center hosted a day-long conference on teaching resources available for Scots. The conference focused especially on curriculum development for ages five to fourteen since higher-level opportunities for the study of Scots already exist (such as those mentioned earlier in Scottish Universities). Conference speakers were well aware of the vast importance of education in the question of Scots language revitalization; several criticized the organization Learning and Teaching Scotland for not having resources such as tapes, worksheets and teachers' notes available for teaching Scots. The key to the success of the conference, however, was that all proceedings were carried out in Scots, and that attendees enjoyed themselves dancing, eating, and socializing, all the while speaking Scots and bolstering

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<sup>99</sup> Corbett, John. *Language & Scottish Literature*. Edinburgh; Edinburgh University Press, 1997 p. ix-x

<sup>100</sup> <http://www.sldl.org.uk/scuil/index.html>

<sup>101</sup> Corbett, John. *Language & Scottish Literature* p. ix



the Scots-speaking community. Many commented that they left the conference re-enthused to use, learn and teach Scots.<sup>102</sup>

Intimately linked to the issue of Scots in education is that of standardization in Scots. Scots today has no generally accepted, codified grammar, nor does it have a systematic orthography, but rather it uses a slightly modified English one that makes Scots look considerably more like English than it actually is.<sup>103</sup> Though there have been attempts to standardize Scots, no variety has been accepted and taught in schools. English standardization ended in the mid-1700s with the publication of Samuel Johnson's *Dictionary* (1755) and Robert Lowth's *Short Introduction to English Grammar* (1762), and these volumes "established and popularized norms which could then be disseminated through education." In both Scotland and England, writes Corbett, "...we can see processes of evolution towards standard written forms, but while these changes continued in England, they were abruptly curtailed in Scotland." While Scotland remained her own independent nation, there was no sense of patriotic urgency in spurning the use of English and promoting Scots; after the Union of Crowns, however, this changed as the Anglicization of Scots began and the move toward a Scots standard was halted. Lack of an official Scots standard keeps Scots language instruction, for now at least, out of the classroom, and until this changes, Scots' position remains precarious.<sup>104</sup>

Related to the question of standardization and education is the issue of Scots literature and writing today. Though writing in Scots is flourishing to a degree no one would have thought possible before the time of Hugh MacDiarmid and his followers, their writings have had no influence whatsoever on the spoken language and its use day-to-day. However, the works of

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<sup>102</sup> Scots Language Resource Center: <http://www.pck.gov.uk/slrc/nwbtconf.htm>

<sup>103</sup> McClure, J. Derrick. *Why Scots Matters*. p. 25

<sup>104</sup> Corbett, John. *Written in the Language of the Scottish Nation: A History of Literary Translation into Scots*. p. 74-5, 44

giants like MacDiarmid have helped to gain further acceptance of Scots in the classroom because they have shown Scots to be a language fit for literature. Recent decades have witnessed the publication of drama, short stories, poetry and non-literary Scots writing, and the movement of writing shows no signs of abating. Writers continue experimentation in MacDiarmid's "synthetic" Scots and in regional varieties, and continue to push the boundaries of Scots into other academic fields, though admittedly non-literary Scots writing is very "limited, experimental, and restricted to a tiny handful of enthusiasts."<sup>105</sup> However, the fact that writers are seeking to expand the limits of Scots writing is reason for hope.

Another milestone in the history of Scots is William Lorimer's 1983 translation of the Bible into Scots. This highly acclaimed work opens up great possibilities for Scots; many have called for it to be adopted in worship thereby bringing Scots into the church where, currently, it is completely excluded. Will the Scots Bible be adopted for worship? And if it is, will it influence the language's status? In any event, the Scots Bible is another cause for optimism in the revitalization of Scots.<sup>106</sup>

Other developments in Scots writing include the ten-volume Scottish National Dictionary, completed in 1976, the establishment of the Scottish Poetry Library Association in 1985<sup>107</sup>, and the formation of the Bibliography of Scots Language<sup>108</sup>, a repository of books and articles in and about Scots which is still in its early stages of development. All of these have potential to make Scots ever more a part of national life and to keep Scots in the public eye to a greater extent than it has been.

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<sup>105</sup> McClure, J, Derrick. *Scots and its Literature*. p.11-12

<sup>106</sup> McClure, J, Derrick. *Scots and its Literature*. p. 16

<sup>107</sup> McClure, J, Derrick. *Scots and its Literature*. p. 17

<sup>108</sup> Bibliography of Scots Language: <http://boslan.nls.uk/>

As Scotland enters the twenty-first century, it is imperative that Scots keep pace with technology if it is to subvert stereotypes and defy its traditional categorization as a rural, quaint tongue fit for use only in the home and in literature. The presence of Scots on the web, therefore, is crucial to its revitalization efforts and it is gratifying, after a quick search on Google, to recognize that Scots is maintaining a large and ever-growing web presence. An online Scots Dictionary brings Scots into the computer age while the Scots “Scuil Wab” (School Web) targets young children learning Scots. Not only is the Scuil Wab site completely in Scots, it also includes links to dictionaries, grammars, crossword puzzles, pictures, contests to find and learn words, and a spellchecker for children learning to read and write Scots. The web is fully modern and intended to be fun, both of which elements are key to changing perceptions toward Scots, and it aims to start such a goal with that vitally important group, children.<sup>109</sup> Perhaps the Scots spellchecker will even be a force in the evolution of a standard Scots orthography over the coming decades.<sup>110</sup>

Other Scots websites of note include the Scots Language Wabring (Webring) which includes links to Scots chat rooms, mailing lists, and other websites, like those of the Scots Language Association, The Scots Language Resource Center, and Scots-Online, where one can hear audio files of Scots speakers reading from texts from Burns to MacDiarmid to Lorimer’s New Testament. Most of the sites are not only in Scots, but also include extensive bibliographies of writing on and in Scots, resources for those wishing to learn Scots, and explanations of what Scots is, its history, and its place in Scottish national life. Several organizations are passionately committed to seeing Scots a fully revitalized language; the Scots Language Resource Center in Perth exists to “support and assist in the implementation of any national, regional, local or other

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<sup>109</sup> <http://www.snda.org.uk/scuil/>

<sup>110</sup> Thanks to Eric Raimy for this idea

scheme for training teachers, actors, broadcasters or others engaged in public uses of the Scots language.”<sup>111</sup> These websites pool rich resources of information and ideas and will undoubtedly prove instrumental in efforts to bring Scots into all of Scottish life.

In keeping with the idea of bringing Scots use not only into all realms of the national life but into modernity as well, there has been great pressure mounted of late for Scots television and radio broadcasting. The Gaelic speech community has been granted large subsidies for broadcasting and has used the funds creatively and well. To date, Scots has received shamefully little funding for broadcasting but hopefully as pressure increases, so will the funds for such efforts.<sup>112</sup>

### ***What Remains to be Done?***

Often, a stigmatized language variety becomes a symbol of unity among its speakers when it is repressed.<sup>113</sup> Thus far, this has not been true of Scots. Yet as an awareness of Scots and its history is slowly awakening within the Scottish populace, through media like the internet and Scots publications, a sense of unity and pride in Scots is slowly fomenting. Writes McClure,

The long-term future of [Lowland Scots], not as a field of study nor as a medium for letters but as a spoken language, depends on the outcome of a conflict between the traditional forces...of standardization and conformity to Anglocentric norms, and the efforts of informed and concerned people to enlighten the populace, both directly and through the schools and colleges, regarding the true nature and importance of the dialects. The mere fact that there is such a conflict shows that the situation is more hopeful than it was even twenty years ago.<sup>114</sup>

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<sup>111</sup> McClure, J, Derrick. *Scots and its Literature*. p. 19

<sup>112</sup> McClure, J, Derrick. *Scots and its Literature*. p. 19

<sup>113</sup> Nettle, Daniel and Suzanne Romaine. *Vanishing Voices*. p. 90

<sup>114</sup> McClure, J, Derrick. *Scots and its Literature*. p. 19

In my view, the key to changing the future of Scots lies in a change in the attitudes of Scots speakers toward the language. If Scottish people were aware of the history of Scots, if they knew the truth that it evolved not as a corrupted version of English but as an independent language variety with its own copious and brilliant literature, that it was the language of a powerful and influential European monarchy in its heyday, then perhaps they would be less loath to adopt it as a national symbol. The Scottish certainly are not lacking in national pride; it is my wish, however, that their concept of national pride be expanded to include the Scots language, and this will only happen when they are fully aware of its history and origins. The crux of the matter, it would then seem, lies in a significant change in Scotland's education system. To initiate the kind of bottom-up change necessary to revitalize Scots, children must be raised with a vastly different attitude toward Scots than the one with which they are currently raised: Scottish children today are told by parents and teachers not to speak "English", but to speak "properly" when Scots phrases leave their mouths,<sup>115</sup> and a professor of mine vividly recalls being admonished sharply by his mother when he told her in front of the minister that he wanted to go "hame" instead of "home". If children are raised believing their mother tongue to be improper for public use, there is certainly no reason they would adopt it proudly later in life.

Essential also to Scots' survival is its expansion into all realms of life. Corbett expresses this very idea in his study of the history of literary translation into Scots:

Furthermore...it is fair to say that a poem in a given variety counts for much less than the adoption of that variety as the medium of education, or as the medium of communication by the governing bodies. The Lallans promoters will not have succeeded when the world's great literatures are translated into Scots, but when the Scottish Parliament debates its business in Scots and when its proceedings are minuted in Scots and reported in Scots by the country's media."<sup>116</sup>

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<sup>115</sup> McClure, J, Derrick. *Scots and its Literature*. p. 9, 18

<sup>116</sup> Corbett, John. *Written in the Language of the Scottish Nation: A History of Literary Translation into Scots*. p. 4-5

Perhaps now that Scotland has its own independent Parliament, which in 1997 separated from England's,<sup>117</sup> efforts to revitalize Scots will have a greater chance of success and will be more readily promoted by those in positions of great power.

Let us not forget also that Scots possesses a rich and varied literature, a resource which has yet to be tapped to its fullest. The fact that Scots is already in possession of such a store puts it at an advantage in relation to so many other minority languages that are struggling to begin development of a corpus of literature. Certainly the mere possession of such a literature cannot revitalize Scots on its own, but at the same time, the existence of this literature provides Scots a solid foundation on which to build teaching and other revitalization efforts. Scots has already proven itself a viable conduit for high culture and is daily being expanded to other uses; Scots language planners now need to focus on the development of audiences for such writings.

Scots is a national treasure, capable of conveying the Scottish character as nothing else can, yet over time, it has been allowed to “deteriorate in status and in scope, to occupy an ever-diminishing place in the national life, and in our time to come under the threat of actual extinction.”<sup>118</sup> As this language variety finds itself in an uncertain position, we are reminded of the thousands of other languages and cultures that teeter on the edge, struggling to survive under the weight of cultural hegemony and the pressures of globalization and mass media, all bowing to the consuming tide of English. In the face of such a dismal prospect for endangered languages, what can we remember as we fight against the destruction of these riches?

A language cannot be saved by singing a few songs or having a word printed on a postage stamp. It cannot even be saved by getting “official status” for it, or getting it taught in schools. It is saved by its use (no matter how imperfect), by its introduction and use in every walk of life and at every conceivable opportunity until it becomes a natural thing,

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<sup>117</sup> [http://www.bbc.co.uk/history/timelines/scotland/scot\\_parl.shtml](http://www.bbc.co.uk/history/timelines/scotland/scot_parl.shtml)

<sup>118</sup> McClure, J. Derrick. *Why Scots Matters*. p. 63

no longer laboured or false. It means in short a period of struggle and hardship. There is no easy route to the restoration of a language.<sup>119</sup>

The route is never easy, but as long as there are those who believe in the reasons for and means of language preservation in Scotland, Scots will never be without hope.

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<sup>119</sup> Nettle, Daniel and Suzanne Romaine. *Vanishing Voices*. p. 176