3 On the Pros and Cons of Standardizing Scots

Notes From the North of a Small Island

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1. Rejecting Standardization in a World of Standards

In an article published in early 2016 in the left-wing, Glasgow-based and pro-independence newspaper *The National*, a famous Scots language advocate and celebrated novelist called for a standard form of Scots to be established. "The lack o a Standard is simply haudin the language back when it needs tae be gangin forrit,"[2] Matthew Fitt wrote, urging the various interested parties to start working at once.[3] This call was in sharp contrast to the positions he had taken up to then, as he also asserts in that same paper. The opinion voiced by Matthew Fitt also stood in opposition to the generally prevailing opinion among language advocates that Scots needs no standard since it is overly diverse dialectally for a general agreement to be reached without much conflict. From Shetland in the North Sea to the border with England, from rural areas to urban centers such as Glasgow or Edinburgh, the realities of vernacular practices in Scotland are undoubtedly complex. Whether or not this complexity impedes or, on the contrary, warrants a standard form has, however, been a matter for debate throughout much of the twentieth century—a debate that seemed settled when an anti-standardization consensus began to apparently prevail towards the end of the twentieth century, but which continues to re-emerge among Scots writers today.

Fitt himself had, until his 2016 commentary, been a strong advocate of the anti-standardization position. The Scots language, proponents of this approach generally argue, does not need a standard because, in the words of James Robertson, an internationally acclaimed novelist, "[o]ne of the language's very strengths lies in its flexibility and its less-than-respectable status: writers turn to it because it offers a refuge for linguistic individualism, anarchism, nomadism and hedonism" (Robertson 1994, xiv). In a more radical form, this view can take the shape of the words of the lexicologist Iseabail Macleod, for whom Scots "covers everything from dialects which the English—or even other Scots—wouldn't understand, to the way we're speaking just now, which is English with a Scottish Accent" (quoted in Dossena 2005, 15).

Under such conditions, it is no surprise that a position that rejects normative approaches to language should be rejected in favor of more inclusive

views. But, one may ask, does the absence of a standard make linguistic individualism possible?

Bearing Robertson's remarks in mind, consider the following event, which I will develop later in this chapter. One morning in the spring of 2015, the world of Scots language activism woke up to a change made to the Falkirk entry on the Scots language Wikipedia—Falkirk is a small town located between Glasgow and Edinburgh. It then read:

> Faukirk [. . .] is a mukil tún in Stirlinscheir, Skótlin. Faukirk is heim ti i Faukirk quheil amang iðir hings sik is i Kalanur hús an i Faukirk Fitbau teim. It wis a geȝ iȝdent airt ai i kuntrai. Faukirk is in atwein i mukil seiteis Gleska, Edinburgh an Stirlin.[4]

Until the previous day, the text had been as follows:

> **Fawkirk** [. . .] is a muckle toun in Stirlinshire, Scotland. Fawkirk itsel is hame til the Fawkirk Wheel amang ither things sic as the Callander Houss an the Fawkirk Bairns Fitbaw team. It's a gey industrial an weel-populatit airt o the kintra. Staunss an aw as the main nave atwein the ceities o Glesgae, Edinburgh an Stirlin.
>
> (https://sco.wikipedia.org/wiki/Fawkirk—the current version differs slightly)

This change prompted a series of discussions on the Wikipedia forum associated with the page, as well as among language advocates on various forums, online and offline. The previous version was swiftly reinstated by the Scots Wikipedia editor, and the author of the changes was served a warning: "If yer disruptive behavior continues much mair, ye may be blockit wioot further wairnin."[5] Linguistic individualism, it would appear, only goes so far.

This chapter is interested in how much individualism is acceptable—in other words, it is interested in how, in the apparent absence of a standard, written occurrences fall within the realm of the acceptable or the unacceptable. Doing so allows us to engage seriously with Susan Gal's (2006, 17; see also Gal, this volume) assertion that "[s]tandardization is only one kind of language regime." A language regime can be understood as a set of individually internalized rules of conduct as well as the myriad actions and ideas that govern linguistic usages. The examination of standards is a way of understanding logics of action under regimes of standardization, including contestation of such a mode of regulating language. It is useful to consider what is deemed acceptable or not in a regime, such as that of Scots, that purports to reject standards, especially given that no speaker of Scots leads a life outside the highly standardized regime of English.

The case of Scots provides insight into how much freedom a non-standard linguistic regime allows, compared to the constraints presupposed by a standard language regime. Is the absence of a standard really a way to maintain

linguistic individualism and hedonism for all? Characterizing standard language ideologies, James Milroy writes:

> The standard ideology decrees that the standard is an idea in the mind—it is a *clearly delimited*, *perfectly uniform and perfectly stable variety*—a variety that is never perfectly and consistently realized in spoken speech.
>
> (Milroy 2001, 543, emphasis in the original)

Standards, in other words, must combine the greatest possible variety of usages with the least variation in form (Mugglestone 1995). Yet, standards are linked to institutions that guarantee their value (see Gal, this volume) and require constant enforcement and policing, something that apparently juxtaposes them to the freedom granted in a non-standard linguistic regime.

Suggesting, as Susan Gal does, that standardization is only one type of language regime points to the fact that it is a way of policing social relations, that is to say the types of rights and obligations that individuals concerned by its jurisdiction must exert towards each other. In a standard language regime, the source of linguistic authority is supposed to rest outside the individual or the situation of communication and equal mastery of the standard should, in theory at least, position all participants in an interaction as equal. As such, standards serve as a "voice from nowhere" (Gal 2011, 34). The purported neutrality of a standard also tends to suppress certain indexicals, such as one's place of origin. In non-standard regimes of language individuals must, on the other hand, rely on other criteria to establish authority, legitimacy and to organize social positions through speech.

By analyzing a situation in which no official standard exists, but in which standardization is regularly construed as an issue, I argue that one can explore certain important aspects of language standardization, namely that beyond being a linguistic register, standards serve as organizational principles among people. In the next sections of this paper, I explore how language regimes can be understood through the case of Scots. I then return to the vignette introduced at the beginning of this paper and add another one, an analysis of an attempt by a burger restaurant chain to print a menu in Glaswegian Scots for the launch of a new restaurant in Glasgow.

This paper is informed by several years of on-and-off fieldwork in Scotland (from 2007 onward, in particular in Edinburgh and in Shetland), by several formal and informal interviews with various language advocates involved with Scots language advocacy and by participation in Scots social media networks. During fieldwork, I was particularly careful to seek the various sites in which standardization could be turned into an issue. Both of the events I look at in this paper are fairly unusual, but this uncommon aspect allows me to highlight the difficulties linked with the rejection of language standardization in a society where the presence of standard language is the norm.

2. Regimenting Scots Through History: Between Language and Dialect

By historicizing the issue of standardization of Scots in Scotland, this section seeks to show how an absence of recognized linguistic standard came to be and how a number of discussions came to shape what may or may not be done when it comes to writing down Scots. While there is no Scots standard *de jure*, numerous debates have come to shape sets of expectations, if not of norms, as to what Scots should *de facto* look like. This also explains, in part, why the writing of Scots is constrained by a number of covert rules, stratified through decades of academic and scholarly conversations. It is a game, in other words, whose rules are more complicated than the absence of a standard would have new players to believe.

An understanding of the historical distinction made in Scotland between language and dialect is essential to understand contemporary debates on the standardization of Scots. In the English-speaking world, Scotland included, a distinction has long existed between those categories, as Mugglestone (1995, 9) points out, quoting the writer George Puttenham in 1589: "After a speech is fully fashioned to the common understanding, & accepted by consent of a whole country & nation, it is called a language," he could then write. So while it is now commonplace to state that languages have usually been conceived as bounded, discrete entities since the onset of Modernity, what Puttenham alerts us to is the extent to which "doing language" is a political project—one that aims at bringing certain forms of imagined communities into being. Dialects, on the other hand, could be seen as the provincial offshoots or rejects of this project—or, alternatively, as projects on a smaller scale.

In Scotland, the politics of dialect can only be understood in relation with the political project that gave rise to the diffusion of Standard English as the normal means of communication in polite society throughout England and Scotland—a moment that occurred towards the beginning of the eighteenth century, at the very moment when Scotland was losing its political independence. While Scots is now often conceptualized by its speakers as well as by some linguists as slang or as dialect, this is the result of several centuries of a delegitimization project that originates in the sixteenth century (Bald 1926). This project was subsequently reinforced during the Scottish Enlightenment (Dossena 2005) in the eighteenth century, when Edinburgh literati such as the philosopher David Hume sought to acquire legitimate pronunciation and to rid their speech of Scotticisms (Mugglestone 1995). Over the next few hundred years, English was to become the *de facto* standard language in Scotland.

Scots is variously described in academic and non-academic literature as a dialect, a group of dialects, a language in its own right and/or as a national tongue (McClure 1984). Whichever terminology is adopted, the main issue is that of the relation of Scots to English. Their linguistic proximity is

emphasized by all commentators, who, if they favor the option that views Scots as a language, will also point to similar cases of linguistic proximity in Spain, France or Scandinavia (McClure 2009; Unger 2013): if Occitan, Catalan or Norwegian can be languages, then so can Scots, they argue. The question of whether Scots is an autonomous language or a form of English is therefore central to linguistic debates in Scotland, especially since it can never be answered due to its political nature.

The question of the Scottish vernacular cannot be separated from a wider discussion on the standardization of English, linked with a political project of linguistic unification of the British Isles. In the eighteenth century, after the Acts of Union of the parliaments of Scotland and England (1706–1707), linguistic unification came to be seen in intellectual circles in both Scotland and England as a way to promote social harmony and equality throughout the new kingdom (Mugglestone 1995, 27). Note that while differences in speech between Scotland and England are remarked upon throughout history, few in Scotland had ever considered their vernacular as a different language in the modern sense of the term. Fewer still had thought of either the vernacular of the South and the East or even of Gaelic (a Celtic tongue then widely spoken in the Highlands) as being a marker of national identity (McClure 1984).

Because of its closeness to English, the Scottish vernacular thus became, in the course of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, both an object of veneration and of contempt: admiration for its capacity to express poetry; contempt because it increasingly indexed backwardness and provinciality. This ambivalence is still very much present in contemporary Scotland. J. Derrick McClure (1995c), a Scottish sociolinguist, refers to it as "the Pinkerton syndrome"—after John Pinkerton (1758–1826), a scholar of Scottish literature who published Scotland's first critical literary anthology in 1786 (a large part of which was in Scots). Pinkerton wrote:

> None can more sincerely wish a total extinction of the Scottish colloquial dialect than I do, for there are few modern Scotticisms which are not barbarisms . . . Yet, I believe, no man of either kingdom would wish an extinction of the Scottish dialect in poetry.
>
> (quoted in McClure 1995c, 57)

What appealed to Pinkerton were certain chronotopical aspects of Scots, its ability to index a mythicized Scottish past in particular—in his own words: "Remember this vulgar speech was once the speech of heroes" (*ibid.*). Scots was thus to be reserved to the higher realms of poetry, and everyday use was to be dealt with through the various forms of linguistic policing that much of Europe became accustomed to at that time: education in the national standard, in this case English (Williamson 1982), and delegitimization of the vernacular in the public domain. Throughout the nineteenth century, the use of Scots continued, even if it was only as a "dialect of English"

(in the view of speakers and non-speakers alike), as the language of "country bumpkins" (Unger 2008, 97) or as urban slang (Macafee 2002).

Those views seem to endure, and a 2010 government-commissioned survey found that 85% of the sample reportedly spoke Scots, while 64% of that same sample did not view Scots as a language in its own right (TNS-BMRB 2010, 15). Similarly, there was much anger in some sectors of Scottish society (most conspicuously in social media) when, in January 2016, *The National* published its front page in Scots to discuss a crisis within the British Labour Party. Finally, and perhaps most significantly, the continued lack of legitimacy of Scots in the public domain has resulted in the almost complete exclusion of language issues in public debates before the 2014 referendum on Scottish independence or in its aftermath.

Recent events, however, have tended to propel Scots into a much more visible position—not least through the efforts deployed in recently created media such as *The National* or online media such as *Bella Caledonia* or *Common Space*. In July 2016, Robin McAlpine, a long-term left-wing pro-independence campaigner and founder of the pro-independence movement *The Common Weal* ("Common Good"), a man not generally known for his public use of Scots, wrote:

> The official Yes campaign was constantly vigilant about the issue of identity politics, policing diligently uses of Scots language, couthy [friendly] imagery, flags and symbols. It was always worried about being tied to an impression of a "small Scotlander" mentality. So was Nicola Sturgeon [the First Minister of Scotland since 2014] who was always at great pains to claim that she was really only interested in the democratic and civic cause.
>
> ("Say it loud, we're Scots and we're proud . . . fighting against our cultural cringe" *The National*, 9 July 2016)[6]

In this opinion piece, McAlpine refers to a common trope in Scottish public life, the "cringe," in other words, the type of stigma that is attached to Scottishness in Scotland itself, something not unlike what Catalan sociolinguists once referred to as *auto odi*, or "self-hatred" (see, for instance, Kremnitz 1980). But in so doing, he moves away from the traditional associations of the cringe with "accent" to a more recent type of link with "language."

3. Standardizing Scots: A Long and Winding Road

While the current leaning of Scots language advocates is to oppose a formal standard, debates around the question of Scots orthography and standardization go back a long way—not least because of the literary tradition associated with fifteenth-century *Makars* ("Makers," i.e. poets), whose work in Scots "has come to represent [. . .] Scotland's classical literature"

(Craig 2007, 16). While Makars had developed autochthonous spelling conventions, those were gradually discontinued after the sixteenth century and the development of printing:

> In course of time Scotsmen tended to write like Englishmen even though they continued to speak in their distinctive fashion. The printed books of Scottish production were the first to succumb. They submitted to English usage some years before the death of James VI [in 1625]. It was to take another fifty or sixty years before the manuscripts written by Scotsmen were completely purged of national peculiarities.
>
> (Bald 1926, 106)

J. Derrick McClure (1995b), however, argues that the standardization of Scots was well under way by the first half of the sixteenth century, a move later thwarted by the advance of the Reformation and the use of English as a language of liturgical instruction. In effect, the eighteenth-century revival of Scottish letters witnessed no particular interest in orthographic issues—even less so in the necessity of a standard. Poets such as Robert Burns or Allan Ramsey readily adopted English conventions, "modified to a greater or lesser extent according to the preferences of the individual writer" (McClure 1995a, 35).

Some attempts at standardization were nevertheless made in the course of the twentieth century in the Modernist context of what has become known as the Scottish Renaissance—notably by the poet Hugh MacDiarmid. The choices that were made were meant to fuel nationalism through linguistic differentiation. MacDiarmid's interest in Scots was, however, ambiguous. In his own words: "[. . .] the revival of Scots is only a half-way house. It is time to conceive of Scots not as an intermediate step on the way towards English, but on the way back to Gaelic" ("Towards a Scottish Renaissance: desirable lines of advance," 1929, quoted in Calder, Murray, and Riach 1997, 79). Pending that moment, he devised for Scots a register he called "synthetic," which he used in poetry.

Much has been written about Synthetic Scots (e.g., McClure 1990; Purves 1997; Hart 2010), which was in effect an attempt at standardizing the vernacular in order to confer attributes of languageness upon it and make it appropriate for literary usage. Synthetic, however, soon came to index artificiality (Aitken 1980), rather than the type of neutrality or "voice from nowhere" that standards should embody. This disputation was followed by many other debates, which drew on similar patterns. As Margery Palmer McCulloch, a specialist of Scottish literature, recounts about a later exchange of views on the matter:

> One dispute which did reach the public stage in 1946 was a re-run of the "synthetic Scots" argument of the early 1920s, when a writer in

> the Glasgow Herald, complaining about the Scots-language poetry of MacDiarmid and his younger associates, gave their writing the inspired description of "Plastic Scots" on the grounds that they made use of "any gobbets of language, which, once thrown together, can then be punched into any shape the poet likes."
>
> (Palmer McCulloch 2009, 204)

MacDiarmid's Synthetic Scots never gained currency beyond a small circle of writers and never achieved the type of institutional legitimacy necessary to back an effective standard. More recently, in 1947, an attempt was made by a group of writers to propose a set of unifying rules to subsume various forms of spelling and idiosyncratic styles in a document known as the Makar's style sheet (McClure 1995b). The proposal remained largely unused, but they were taken up again at the end of the twentieth century by a group of nine writers, language advocates and academics. The group worked between 1996 and 1998 to produce a set of rules, based on phonological data in a way that could accommodate the various dialects of Scots.[7] This document is known as *Scots Spellin Comatee Report an Recommends*, or RRSSC. It is, however, not widely used either in education, publishing or official usage.[8]

Scots remains, however, and to this day, tied to its capacity to index locality and provenance. Forms of written Scots are loosely united by a set of more or less accepted rules, often based on the 1947 document, such as the rejection of the "apologetic apostrophe"—the use of an apostrophe where English has a consonant, said to construct Scots as a form of defective English (hence <aa> or <aw> rather than <a'>, "all").

The absence of an agreed Scots standard parallels, paradoxically perhaps, a rich lexicographic tradition in Scotland. There have been extensive dictionaries of Scots since the eighteenth century at least, including remarkable ones, such as the Reverend John Jamieson's (Rennie 2012). The *Scottish National Dictionary* project was initiated in the early twentieth century by a number of Scottish scholars to "capture a dying language before it disappeared" (Macleod 2012, 145). While there is no dearth of Scots Language dictionaries, including some designed for school usage and published by the Scots Language Dictionaries (SLD) organization, none claims any sort of orthographic authority. As Christine Robinson, a linguist and the head of SLD for many years, indicated when I asked her about the principles of their main everyday dictionary, the *Concise Scots Dictionary*, the organization's aim is to record usage, including orthographic usage, rather than to prescribe one single spelling form. While the line between description and prescription is of course always thin, at best, it is important to note that no Scottish dictionary consciously intends to impose one particular orthography over another. Consequently, dictionaries perpetuate the types of spelling inspired from English and developed after the eighteenth century.

4. Making Scots Public—or Not: Who Gets to Decide How?

The elements outlined above help understand why the vignette from Wikipedia presented at the opening of this paper was problematic. In this section, I will review this particular case in detail, as well as another in which the use of Scots by an international burger restaurant chain for the new opening of a branch in Glasgow, the most populated city in Scotland, was at stake. What I am particularly interested in is the chasm between the promotion of Scots as a tool for the expression of individual freedom and the ways in which particular usages are policed and regimented in a non-standard regime.

4.1 A Mukil Tún or a Mukkil Toun? A Town, by Any Other Name, Might Not Smell as Sweet

Luke,[9] the author of the changes to the Wikipedia page mentioned in the introduction, was 19 at the time he chose to change the Scots Wikipedia page for his hometown, Falkirk. A self-trained linguist and, at the time, a farm laborer, he had obtained much of his linguistic knowledge from conlanging (devising constructed languages)—he has up to now invented several, together with proto-versions for each of them. With this background, he set out to draw up what he called a standard for Scots, the language he speaks at home with his family. He had previously used this standard, which he called SSS (*Staunirt Scóts Screivin*, "Standard Scottish Writing"), to compose a dictionary and to write short stories. It is the story of the reception of this standard upon its first public display that I wish to recount and analyze here.

In its current form, this is what SSS looks like (this is taken from a Facebook post which Luke wrote on a dedicated SSS group in 2015):

> A stairteid screivin a stóre in Scóts (we a Ingils ersetin), av nó feinischt ȝit bit heirs quhit a screivit fur nú, a macit a pucil misscreivins se tac tent.
>
> I started writing a story in Scots (with an English translation), I haven't finished yet but here's what I have for now, I made a few typos so beware.

Based on the Falkirk dialect of Scots, SSS drew on a number of inspirations, in particular Scandinavian languages and Middle Scots. The former is manifest in his choice to use the Icelandic letter <ð> for /ð/, or in the choice, in this instance, of <ú> for /u/. The latter is particularly salient in the use of <quh>, an Old and Middle Scots solution for what became <wh> in English, or in the adoption of the letter yogh, <ȝ>. Yogh was used in Old English and in Middle Scots until the seventeeth century to represent /j/ (it ultimately derives from the Old English way of rendering the letter <g>).

I met Luke in Falkirk for the first time in the spring of 2014. He explained to me that he had come to realize the necessity for a standard form of Scots when he noticed that his younger siblings spoke less Scots than he did, a shift he attributed to the language's lack of societal prestige. According to him, if Scots was to survive as a living tongue, it required a standard—one as different as possible from English, a move he thought would facilitate the identification of Scots as a language in its own right. A recognizably different written language would make it easier, he said, for people to take pride in speaking it and to promote it in public life.

The first steps towards proposing SSS were taken on Facebook, where Luke set up a group dedicated to discussing various possible options. Luke regularly posts proposals to reform the standard and gets members to vote on them (in August 2016, the group counted 99 members). For example, <k> (/k/) was changed to <c> after such a vote. Accordingly, <Skóts> became <Scóts>, and <Faukirk> is now spelt <Focurc>. But a suggestion to change <ȝ> to <j> (e.g. <Ȝúl>, "Christmas," becoming <Júl>) for practical reasons was rejected by Facebook group members on the grounds that <ȝ> was distinctively Scots and should be maintained. The "Falkirk" change in Wikipedia can thus be read as a further experiment, a real-life test, as it were.

The attempt, however, was swiftly rebuked and quickly made unwelcome in various sectors of the Scots language movement—and not just on the Wikipedia page itself. The activists I spoke to, mainly writers and advocates connected with the Scots Language Centre (SLC), unanimously condemned both the initiative of proposing a standard and the orthographic choices made by Luke, in particular the use of <ȝ>. But it was on the SLC's Facebook page that the discussions, involving both well-known language advocates, published authors and Luke himself, were the most active.

The SLC is the main organization for the promotion of Scots, but it operates mainly on an online basis through its webpage and Facebook discussion group. Its website acts as a resource center for those interested in the language, and its (part-time) employee is also active on a political level, campaigning for greater official recognition for Scots. The SLC's Facebook page is followed and used by most of the language advocates that I was in contact with during fieldwork and serves as a forum for the discussion of ideas and for the diffusion of political or cultural information. Among the topics debated online, the issue of standardization is recurrent but usually ends in the recognition that such an option is unrealistic or not desirable.

The main arguments deployed against SSS revolved around ideas of authority and authenticity, as is usual in minority language standardization: first, SSS was said to be unrecognizable to speakers; second, no single person has, or should have, the right to propose a standard. In fact, many instead underlined the fact that Scots already has a standard, albeit an irregular one. Those pointed for instance to the recommendations of the Scots

Wikipedia itself, to the several Scots language dictionaries or to the more recent attempt RRSSC (see above). Indeed, Wikipedia specifies that:

> Here at Wikipaedia it's recommendit that fowk uises "*tradeetional*" pan-dialect spellins. Awtho thir isna sae strict as in Inglis we ettle tae come up wi writin that's easy tae read an can be soondit bi readers in thair ain dialect. Ae thing tae mynd is that maist fowk that kens better disna uise the apologetic apostrophe onymair. Mair oot ower evite slang in an encyclopaedia.
>
> O coorse maist awbody haesna been teached siclike at the schuil but wi practice it shoudna be ower deeficult. A wheen resoorces is aboot that expounds on whit "*tradeetional*" spellins is an hou tae applee thaim in a conseestant mainer.
>
> We ettle tae follae the wey set oot bi the Report an Recommends o the Scots Spellin Comatee, itherwise kent as the RRSSC.
>
> https://sco.wikipedia.org/wiki/Wikipedia:Spellin_an_grammar

> Here at Wikipedia we recommend that people use "traditional" pan-dialectal spellings. Although they are not as strict as in English, we seek to come up with writing that is easy to read and can be sounded by readers in their own dialect. One thing to remember is that most informed people do not use the apologetic apostrophe anymore. Also, avoid slang in an encyclopedia.
>
> Of course most people have not been taught this in schools but with practice it should not be overly difficult. Many resources are available that explain what "traditional" spellings are and how to apply them in a consistent manner.
>
> We seek to follow the way set out by the Report and Recommendations of the Scots Spelling Committee, otherwise known as the RRSSC.

For many contributors, SSS was not Scots at all, raising the idea that despite the absence of a standard, there is a general semiotic type (or abstraction) that can be exemplified through a number of possible tokens or concrete particulars. Tokens rely on certain factors that maintain an iconic link, one that ensures some resemblance between all tokens. Habitually, both <mouse> and <moose> (for Scots /mus/, "a mouse") can be found in writing, but <mús> is not usual. Iconicity, in this case, is mainly based on familiarity: <mouse> is visually the same as in English; <moose> because <oo> is a familiar rendering of /u/ for readers of Standard English.

Familiarity, a form of iconic relation between signs, is one of the main principles that tend to preside over spelling usage. The resemblance of most Scots writing to English is emphasized for this reason: it allows people with no particular training in reading Scots to access texts in the vernacular. Writing about SSS, one commentator on the SLC's Facebook page, a well-known Scots language poet, stated: "Oh dear, just exactly what will kill the language stone dead. I'm fae Fawkirk. Thon's no it."[10] Most interestingly

however, other commentators focused on the fact that Scots already had accepted spellings and that no single person could declare a standard. Variation is acceptable, but only if it fits the loose pattern of familiarity—while forms can differ, they should look familiar.

What was thus emphasized was the collective nature of standards. As one participant posted:

> PS: It's wrong to say Scots has no standard orthography. Most people write it much the same way. Sure, some people prefer "faw" to "faa" same way in English some prefer "realize" to "realise." But there are regular and known underlying systems.

Whereas <realize> and <realise> index stabilized (national) usages backed by institutions, the use of <faa> or <faw> ("fall") relies on personal preference as well as local traditions of spelling. They are nonetheless viewed by this writer as equivalent, representative of collective practice and deserving of recognition.

Writers of Scots thus have a duty towards other writers of Scots if tokens are to be considered instances of a type—instances of the same thing, written Scots. What Luke failed to take into account in this case is precisely the type-token relation of his spelling, which constitutes the social relations in an implicit contract: one writes so that more or less defined others can read one's production. Luke, however, contended that his sister could read SSS without difficulty, despite having no prior knowledge of it. The argument was thus that even though SSS was unfamiliar to readers used to written Scots, it was accessible to native speakers with no particular background in written Scots.

In Luke's case, the difficulty to impose a standard could also stem from his being unknown in the Scots language milieu. Idiosyncrasy, combined with the will to create a standard for the language, here betrayed the basic premise of writing Scots today: that it is a closely monitored communal undertaking, one which leaves little room for individual attempts despite the claims to hedonism and freedom mentioned at the beginning of this chapter. As the case of Hugh MacDiarmid showed, even poetic genius was not enough to generate belief in the value of the standard he established in the early twentieth century. A proposal by an unknown, young speaker with no other credentials than nativeness and perhaps the enthusiasm of youth had no chance to convince.

What, then, does this episode tell us about minority language standards? First, the absence of a central authority or of generalized models of minority language standardization allow for loose forms of standards to function as types, as long as tokens are recognized by those who use the language and authorize its public usage as iconically linked, whatever element might be chosen as basis for resemblance: custom, or similarity to (or distance from) the dominant language for example. The argument that

Scots does in fact have a standard is most interesting, for as we have seen with Matthew Fitt's call in *The National*, many would claim that it does not. However, when presented with a form of writing that is markedly different, writers of Scots recognize what does, or does not, fit within the standard type. As one commentator on the Scots Language Centre wrote in response to Luke's claim that current Scots spellings were inconsistent: "And yet, even without an official standard, I could still point out errors in your spelling . . . " Second, minority language advocates and users cannot escape the standard language debate because of the model imposed by the dominant language. In a standard language regime, ideological options are greatly reduced and impose a reflection in terms of standards vs. non-standards. While there is room for maneuver with regard to what standards should look like, as with Corsica's polynomie (see Jaffe 2003), how one writes, and spells, matters.

In the case where standards are rejected for a minority language but where standard language is nevertheless the norm because of the presence of a standardized dominant language such as English, not addressing the issue results in its cyclical return to the front of the scene, as in Scotland. The claim that Scots is a refuge for hedonists and anarchists is thus, sadly perhaps, an illusion maintained only by those who have mastered the semiotic type of written Scots, or whose intrinsic characteristic and position of authority make it possible to play around with that type—in a way not dissimilar to poetic license in standardized languages. The spirit of the standard haunts non-standardized languages because their speakers are *de facto* part of a standard language regime, one that classifies linguistic resources in terms of publicly available, purportedly neutral rules. The next example will illustrate further the complexities of operating according to a non-standard regime within a powerful standard language regime.

4.2 How Dependent Is Food on the Language Used to Talk About It? Selling Burgers Through Scots

In December 2014, a few months after Luke proposed his language standard on Facebook, another controversy involving language arose in a different sector of Scottish society—this time with no direct connection with the Scots language movement. The controversy occurred when a London-based burger restaurant chain opened its first restaurant in Glasgow, thus adding to its other Scottish venue in Edinburgh. In order to demonstrate commitment to Glasgow's original character, the chain commissioned a local comedian to translate its menu into Glaswegian—something it had not done in Edinburgh. Glasgow is well known for its particular vernacular (Macafee 1994), a form of urban Scots locally known as the Patter (a term possibly derived from the word "patois") and for its working-class sociological fabric (see Macaulay 1975 for an analysis of some forms of linguistic insecurity potentially linked to language use in Glasgow). The menu was promptly

removed after dozens of people complained at the restaurant, in newspapers and in social media.

I wish to use this example to analyze another instance of a body, here a restaurant, being denied the use of Scots in public life on the grounds that the language it uses is not right—recall the comment stating that Luke's version of the language: "Thon's not it." The public outcry resulting from this usage was linked by some Scots language advocates to the absence of a standard. The "Glaswegian menu," as it was named on the printed version, presented a variety of food items and phrases in what was assumed to be the local vernacular. The "While yer waitin" ("While you wait") section thus offered "Mixed olives £2.45," "Hamemade onion rings £3.35," "Chargrilled chikin skewers £4.25." Other examples include the "Cheese & Baucon" burger, as well as a variety of burgers under the following rubrics: "Chickin," "Speicials" or "Veggie." The "Bevy" section contained "hoat" or "cauld" drinks, "posh ginger made wae fresh mint, lemon & lime," as well as various beers, presented as "oor pick ae craft beers fae wee-er breweries."[11] Finally, under the "Sweets" ("desserts") heading, the menu suggests: "Hid enuff? Room fur mair? Juist ask wan ae oor troops."[12]

Readers unfamiliar with Scots might be struck by an impression of mixture of English and something else—a combination of English, localized dialect respellings and eye dialect, i.e. "forms which reflect no phonological difference from their standard counterpart" (Preston 1985, 328). This impression derives in part from a habit in Scots language lexicography that states that whenever a word is identical in phonological and semantic terms to its English counterpart, it should be spelt as in English (Robinson 1985). While this is meant to facilitate reading and intercomprehension, it also generates the idea that Scots uses many English words because those are missing in Scots—that it is, in effect, a *halbsprache*, a half-language in the terminology of the infamous Heinz Kloss (1968, 70). This terminology was also used by Scots scholars such as A.J. Aitken (1990).

The launch of the restaurant, along with the menu, could well have gone unnoticed: after all, other restaurants have or have had Scots language menus—an Indian restaurant in Edinburgh had one for years without causing any concern. But the burger chain advertised their initiative on social media. On Twitter, they posted: "And as a special Glasgow thing? We commissioned this—our full menu, instore, in Glaswegian. Avacada baucon,[13] anyone?" This caused uproar in social media; when I visited the place some days after the events had taken place, all signs of the menus had vanished. One waitress said that they had been removed since they had only been designed for the opening weekend.

The event was, however, recounted in the press—in *The Scotsman*, an Edinburgh-based daily newspaper, and on the website of the Scottish television channel STV. On 11 December 2014, STV thus reported: "Pure mince:

burger restaurant apologises over 'patronising' Glaswegian menu." In her article the journalist, Mary McCool, added:

> Gourmet Burger Kitchen on St Vincent Street printed a set of Glaswegian menus, hoping to entertain diners with some of the local parlance. Some enjoyed a chuckle over the quirky idea, while others felt it hadn't quite hit the mark. The burgers themselves don't have distinct Glaswegian ingredients—the restaurant simply altered a few key spellings. So "chicken" became "chickin," "salad" became "salid" and "bacon" became "baucon." Oh, and "water" becomes "cooncil juice."[14]

Many on social networks indeed felt patronized, although by no means all. One tweet stated: "Well this is up there with the U2 iTunes fiasco. How to insult your customers in one easy lesson (for dummies). Not a great PR move." Another wrote: "I'm not going to a restaurant that canny spell bacon," while yet another wrote that "Nobody in Glasgow speaks like that."

On the other hand, a supporter of the Scottish National Party wrote, also on Twitter: "Finally a menu I can read." Likewise, the menu generated a long discussion on the SLC's Facebook page. The discussion there focused on putting Scots out in the public sphere and on the difficulties in doing so. The discussion can be summarized by quoting from a well-known language advocate, author of a teach yourself Scots method: "Gin we hid an approved generic written Scots, oniebodie sayin its uise wis "patronizing" culd be dismiss't oot o haund."[15] In a standard language regime, it would thus appear that the authority resides in the language itself, rather than in the people who use it.

The data are problematic in the sense that, in ethnographic terms, it is not possible to account for who most of the people who commented on the event are, or if they would have boycotted the restaurant or if they even went themselves. Those data, however, remain valuable in the sense that they point to fundamental characteristics of non-standard language regimes in terms of language ownership. The comments mirror common reflections I repeatedly heard with respect to Scots in Scotland, and in many ways they echo the Pinkerton syndrome, that capacity to love and hate the vernacular simultaneously. Scots, then, is a valid medium for humor, for nostalgia and maybe for local poetry—but only under certain conditions, in particular in-groupness: not anybody can use Scots, especially not a large English company.

Several remarks can be made with respect to the burger case in order to understand why this public use of Scots was rejected. Those remarks will help understand what it means to live in a double linguistic regime: the non-standard for the vernacular, and the standard for English. First, it appears that dialect respellings and eye dialect forms were in fact understood as what Dennis Preston calls allegro speech forms. Such forms, Preston writes "attempt to capture through the use of nonstandard spellings (some more

traditional than others) the fact that the speech is casual, not carefully monitored, relaxed-perhaps slangy" (Preston 1985, 328). This would account for the understanding of the menu as patronizing: in that sense, the menu echoes other types of Scots usage in written form and indexes sloppiness (e.g., "canny spell bacon") through an iconic form of relation linking speakers and spelling.

Scots is clearly not freely available to all, whether in spoken or written form. In the absence of a standard construed at least potentially as a voice from nowhere, using Scots is always a display of number of voices from somewhere: in this case, it was the patronizing voice from a London-based chain who had no ultimate linguistic authority to rely on to legitimate its claims to locality. The absence of a publicly available standard makes the use of Scots tied to who the user is, and to where they originate—socially as well as geographically. Given that the menu is obviously not poetry, the language used in this case becomes an icon for humor and possible self-deprecation—a genre which can be legitimate when developed by a local comedian but which takes on a different meaning when it becomes the voice of an English company: mockery. One may, of course, also ask why the burger chain hired a comedian and not a linguist, an act that betrays the general association of Scots and humor.

In the menu, the use of non-standard language was inevitably viewed as a token of a different type to the one identified in the previous section—not as a token of a legitimate written type, but a token of a genre type: humor. The menu displays an interesting type of disjuncture that delegitimizes it, because of the status of Scots as non-standard English: while the comedian recruited by the restaurant may be the author of the words, the burger chain takes credit as principal and animator (Goffman 1981, 144–145), a position which its geographic externality to Glasgow does not permit.

5. Concluding Remarks

This chapter asked whether living in a regime of non-standard language was a way to ensure more freedom to language users (speakers and non-speakers)—hedonism and anarchism, in the words of the novelist James Robertson (1994). The questions raised here are thus whether standards are necessarily heavy constraints on individual language usage and whether they inevitably impinge on people's right to poetic license and idiosyncrasies. The answer is, naturally, not clear-cut. What the two examples developed above do show, however, is that there is no clear link between the absence of a standard version of a language and the right to use language for any purpose, in any idiosyncratic way. In Luke's case in particular, the will to propose not just an idiosyncratic way of speaking but also a standard for everyone brings out claims that there is in fact an established common way of writing, based on covert, but well entrenched, ideas about what type Scots writing should follow. While standards attempt to codify use by providing purportedly

public and widely available models, in the case of Scots, the absence of a standard tends to result in the limitation of the scope of possible usage not only based on context, but also on the origin of the use. Not only can Scots not be used for any purpose, whether in oral or written form, and not only can it not be spelt in any way, but it appears that not anyone can use Scots. The absence of a standard makes it more difficult for purportedly unmarked uses to exist—uses that would perhaps index authority and academic normativity but that would also be decoupled from the social and geographic origins of the animator of a particular written discourse.

While this text neither advocates nor discourage the implementation of a standard form of Scots, it points to the difficulties for non-standard forms of language to exist alongside standardized languages, in particular if there are claims, in certain sectors of society, to ascribe features of languages to the non-standard vernacular. This is certainly the case of Scots, which is increasingly gaining institutional recognition and which is also being increasingly considered for educational purposes. In Scotland, the question of the standard then needs to be raised not for the sake of standardization, but as part of a wider reflection on how the public space is changing after the 2014 referendum on independence, on who has access to it and under what conditions.

Notes

1. This work as supported by the Research Council of Norway through its Centers of Excellence funding scheme, project number 223265. It is a contribution to the STANDARDS project (*Standardising minority languages*, chaired by Pia Lane, project number 213831), funded by the Research Council of Norway and the University of Oslo. I am much indebted to Haley De Korne for her thorough and insightful comments on an earlier draft of this chapter. Any shortcomings remain, naturally, entirely my own responsibility. This chapter also benefited from the support of COST project IS1306, "New speakers in a multilingual Europe."
2. "The lack of a standard is simply holding the language back when it needs to be going forward."
3. See the full article on *The National*'s website (11 February 2016): www.thenational.scot/comment/matthew-fitt-we-maun-tak-a-tip-fae-the-klingons-for-futur-o-scots.13563.
4. "Falkirk [. . .] is a large town in Stirlingshire, Scotland. Falkirk is home to the Falkirk wheel among other things such as Callander House and the Falkirk footfall team. It used to be a very industrial part of the country. Falkirk is located between the large cities of Glasgow, Edinburgh and Stirling."
5. "If your disruptive behavior continues much more, you may be blocked without further warning."
6. Robin McAlpine, 'Say it loud, we're Scots and we're proud . . . fighting against our cultural cringe', 9 June 2016: www.thenational.scot/comment/robin-mcalpine-say-it-loud-were-scots-and-were-proud-fighting-against-our-cultural-cringe.18556
7. I owe this information to John Magnus Tait, a language advocate from Shetland and a specialist of Shetland Scots, who was part of the commission that established those recommendations. The full RRSSC report is available from Tait's

website at the following (shortened) address: http://goo.gl/eOw6tI [link verified on 09/10/2016].

8. Official usage remains minimal and symbolic despite Scots being recognized and protected under the Council of Europe's European Charter for Regional or Minority Languages. Public use of Scots is confined to the translation of some static pages on the Scottish Parliament website. Some public bodies, such as Creative Scotland, a body that caters for the arts in Scotland, have recently launched policies indicating a commitment to greater usage.
9. Names have been changed in this chapter.
10. "I'm from Falkirk, that's not it."
11. "Our pick of craft beers from smaller breweries."
12. "Had enough? Room for more? Just ask one of our troops [staff]."
13. "Avocado bacon."
14. Literally, "council juice."
15. "If we had an approved generic written Scots, anybody saying its use was patronizing could be dismissed straight away."

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