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USE OF SCOTS IN INSTITUTIONAL DISCOURSE: EXAMPLES FROM THE POETRY OF MACDIARMID, LEONARD, LOCHHEAD AND MORGAN

Abstract: The paper focuses on the work of several twentieth century Scottish poets, MacDiarmid, Leonard, Lochhead, and Morgan, who regard creative writing and speaking in public as a political act. This idea will be further exemplified in the research through the analysis of their selected poetry that deals with the presence of the Scots language, one of the most relevant features of Scottish national heritage, within the institutional discourse, the form of expression used in institutional settings, e.g. the media, workplace, courtroom, academia. The common ground for these rather diverse artists is that Scots is being constantly neglected and discarded as a valid form of official public expression; unfortunately, it has remained reserved for the unofficial and informal private events. The critical insights of these poets will be combined with the theoretical framework provided by Scottish history and culture scholars, Devine and Finlayson, in order to emphasize their continuing concern with the relevance of Scots for the understanding of Scottish identity.

Key words: Scots, institutional discourse, Scottish identity, national heritage

The opening of the Scottish Parliament by the Queen on 1st July 1999 was indeed a memorable occasion. Although devoid of the pompous spectacle typical of the Westminster formal etiquette for state and diplomatic ceremonies, the proceedings were rather solemn and dignified. As a renowned Scottish history scholar T. M. Devine claims, it seemed that the monarch and her consort listened attentively as the folk singer, Sheena Wellington, gave a "powerful rendition" of Burns' great hymn to democracy, *A Man's a Man for a' That*, that fervently condemned the existence of rank and privilege (Devine, 2006: 631):

Ye see youn birkie (i.e. fellow) ca'd a lord,
Wha struts, and stares, and a'that:
Though hundreds worship at his word,
He's but a coof (i.e. fool) for a' that,
The man of independent mind,
He looks and laughs at a' that!

Although the Queen seemed to enjoy the ceremony, Devine emphasizes the fact that her reaction to the impertinent and insolent language of the Scottish Bard had not been recorded. In any case, this symbolic protocol implied the notion that a new Scottish Parliament intended to make political decisions and act in a different manner than its older counterpart in London. The intentional use of Scots in an official public ceremony finally placed it within the recognized institutional discourse and, additionally, marked its long-awaited legitimacy.

Spoken mostly in Lowland Scotland, Scots belongs to the German language group and has been generally mentioned in terms of frequent linguistic disputes alluding to its ambiguous status: on the one hand, there is a powerful linguistic faction that perceives Scots as one of the ancient varieties or dialects of English, with its own distinct dialects and, on the other, there is a linguistic faction, equally potent as the latter, that treats Scots as a distinct Germanic language. According to the *Dictionary of the Older Scottish Tongue*, prominent scholars of the Scots language, James Murray, William Craigie and A. J. Aitken, emphasized the limited range of uses of Scots today and its geographical linkage to the dialects of the north of England, so they fervently opposed the idea of a language status for Scots. Aitken was perhaps the most prominent critic of Scots of them all since he was passionately claiming that the possible language status for Scots would basically mean "the institutionalization of shame" (Aitken, 1979: 85). However, the linguists David Murison and J. Derrick McClure, although taking into account the continuous historical dependence of Scots and English, emphasized Scots' specificity and dissimilarity in relation to the dominant neighbouring language. They even made a proposition for Scots to be treated as a minority European language and thus contributed to creating a new range of scholars interested in extending its forms of expression by translation from and to other languages (DOST, vol. 12: xxxvi).

Apart from this dichotomy, linguists in general have been reluctant to use the term Scots, being afraid of introducing nationalist issues in their work, especially if the scholars were Scottish themselves. However, all these confusions regarding the terminology and status of Scots officially ended in 2001, when the intention of the UK government to sign the European Charter for Regional and Minority Languages was finally ratified. Although Scots is listed under a section in the Charter that imposes no actual obligations on governments, its mere inclusion in this document, limited and belated for sure, but inclusion nevertheless, represents the official recognition of its language status, bearing in mind the fact that dialects are excluded from it.

Having been granted the official status of a separate language, Scots should rightfully and legally be immersed into the institutional discourse in the UK. However, it seems that this has not been such an easy task to achieve. Surprisingly, the public surveys of the Scottish Government in 2010 and 2011 regarding the issue of the Scots language were not helpful – namely, with 64% of respondents, around 1,000 individuals representative of Scotland's adult population, who did not perceive Scots as a language at all, it comes as no surprise that Scots experiences tremendous difficulties in entering the conventional field of the institutional discourse (The Scottish Government 2010/11, *Public Attitudes Towards the Scots Language*: 3).

In her study *Language and Power: An Introduction to Institutional Discourse* (2008), Andrea Mayr defines the institutional discourse as the form of expression used in institutional settings, e.g. the media, workplace, courtroom, academia, prison, military, etc. Mayr is predominantly concerned with the way language is used in institutions, emphasizing the difference between, on the one hand, the forms of expression people use in institutional settings and, on the other, in ordinary conversational situations. Mayr's book actually represents an investigation of the discourses that dominate institutions and which they themselves promote. These institutions "seek to legitimize their own interests and existence through discourses through which they seek to transform or re-contextualize social practices" (Mayr, 2008: 2).

In the majority of linguistic and sociological approaches to the study of institutions and their discourses, Mayr perceives that language is usually regarded as constitutive of institutions. Thus, the role of language is of essential importance to the institutions in the process of generating coherent social reality that frames their identity. Hence, it logically follows that institutions are being constantly constructed and reconstructed in discourse practices:

> This view of discourse as constituting social reality does not necessarily lead to the view that discourse is all there is, but assigns discourse an important role in shaping reality, creating patterns of understanding, which people then apply in social practices (Mayr, 2008: 5).

By referring to the study of Mumby and Clair (1997: 182), Mayr defines the institutional discourse as the site of struggle where different social groups compete to give shape to the social reality in ways that serve their own interests (Mayr 2008: 5). For example, the use of Scots in the institutional discourse is supposedly a matter of one's individual choice, bearing in mind that Scots is officially recognized as a distinct language; however, the mere fact that its use seems to be rather unexpected and, ultimately, misplaced within the institutional means of communication—as previously evidenced in the official Scottish Government's public surveys from 2010 and 2011 and anecdotal silence of the Queen after hearing Scots' song in the public ceremony celebrating the opening of the Scottish Parliament in 1999—would reinforce the idea of official institutions' potential for domination and, quite likely, manipulation in and through the domain of language.

This is the notion that the literary figures of the Scottish Renaissance of the 20th century, precisely referring to the timeframe of the 1920s and 1930s, a period nowadays considered to be vital in the process of reawakening and recreating a firm and stable Scottish national identity, were acutely aware of and constantly warned their fellow compatriots about. One of the most prominent artistic voices of this period was that of a prolific novelist, literary critic and passionate spokesman of Scottish nationalism, Neil Gunn, who in his essay *On Tradition* (1940) claimed the following:

> Only inside his own tradition can a man realize his greatest potentiality; just as, quite literally, he can find words for his profoundest emotion only in his native speech or language. This admits of no doubt, and literature, which is accepted as man's deepest expression of himself, is there to prove it (Gunn in Stokoe, 1987: 56).

His contemporary, a poet Hugh MacDiarmid, also dedicated to the idea of Scottish nationalism, ironically commented on the same theme in his famous poem entitled *The Caledonian Antisyzygy* (1949):

> I write now in English and now in Scots
> To the despair of the friends who plead
> For consistency; sometimes achieve the true lyric cry,
> Next but chopped-up prose; and write whiles
> In traditional forms, next in a mixture of styles.
> So divided against myself, they ask:
> How can I stand (or they understand) indeed?" (MacDiarmid, 2004: 230).

MacDiarmid's allusion to the historical animosity between English and Scots, as two divided forms of expression, the first mostly reserved for public and formal events as an official means of communication, the second for private, informal, unofficial occasions, presented in the poem as his inner artistic struggle, has gradually been evolving into a dominant feature of the Scottish national myth. This division, ultimately contained within the poet himself, further illustrates his inability to opt for one option only, reflected even in the case of the poet's own stylistic preferences – whether to settle for traditional forms or a mixture of styles? This inner split represents a good example of what the literary critic G. Gregory Smith termed "The Caledonian Antysyzygy" that MacDiarmid symbolically refers to in the title of his poem, or the Scottish Antithetical Mind, the term based on the merging of opposing or paradoxical viewpoints. Although this national trait is not unique to the Scots, it is definitely among the Scots that this contradiction becomes apotheosized, claims a Scottish culture scholar, Finlayson, and quotes from Smith:

> Perhaps in the very combination of the opposites, 'the Caledonian Antysyzygy', we have a reflection of the contrasts which the Scot show at every turn, in his political and ecclesiastical history, in his polemical restlessness, in his adaptability which is another way of saying that he has made allowance for new conditions, in his practical judgment, which is the admission that two sides of the matter have been considered. If therefore Scottish history and life are, as an old northern writer said of something else, 'varied with a clear contrair spirit', we need not be surprised to find that in his literature the Scot presents two aspects which appear contradictory. Oxymoron was ever the bravest figure, and we must not forget that the disorderly order is order, after all. (Finlayson, 1988: 22).

Whereas Hugh MacDiarmid honestly admits that the core of his 'Scottishness' lies in his inner incongruence reflected through the personal inability to choose between the sole use of English or Scots in his poetry, thus frequently combining these two means of expression, Tom Leonard, a renowned Scottish poet from the second half of the 20th century, seems to have no problems in choosing the single option. He opts for Scots, the Glaswegian dialect of Scots, to be precise.

In Leonard's poetry one can easily detect the main postulates of Althusser's influential theory on ideology and Ideological State Apparatuses. Unlike the repressive structures of the state, e.g. Heads of State, police, army, courts, Government,

whose function is to intervene and act in favour of the ruling class and repress the ruled class by violent and coercive means, the main function of Ideological State Apparatuses (ISA) has literally been the colonization of the mind through the process of "interprellation" (see Althusser, 2001: 121□176). Althusser uses the term "interpellation" to describe ideology in action: the process by which individuals are constructed into the obedient subjects. Althusser basically divides citizens into good and bad subjects. The good ones give confirmation to the dominant ideology, without the need to penetrate deeper into its meaning and to foresee the personal consequences it can entail. Hence, they prioritize any form of authority to free will, individual contemplation and creativity. In this manner, individuality is successfully suppressed and a successful mind control over the population is finally achieved by the Ideological State Apparatuses – the family, the media, the religious organizations, the education system, that is, by the discourses they propagate.

The discourses of the Ideological State Apparatuses that Tom Leonard strongly criticizes in his poetry are the official discourses of the education system and the media. In the collection of poetry entitled *Intimate Voices: Selected Poetry (1965-1983)*, Leonard pleads for the general idea of polyphony, the recognition of the existence of the plurality of voices, in the modern Scottish society, instead of concentrating on the ideologically, all-powerful monophony. Unlike MacDiarmid who struggles with the literary traditions and alternative creative visions, with English and Scots in his writing, Leonard openly states in *Poetry* that although he himself had undergone the formal education and had been taught the classical rules of writing poetry, these could not convey the inner core of his artistic being: "that was my education/ and nothing to do with me" (Leonard, 1984: 62). In Althusser terms, therefore, Leonard is a bad subject.

In the poem *right inuff ma language is disgraceful*, Leonard complains about the contempt that the use of Scots in his poetry provokes among the representatives of the previously mentioned Althusser's Ideological State Apparatuses—"maw, techer, doactir, boss, literati, even the introduction to the Scottish National Dictionary". However, unlike the good subjects, he does not compromise with his individual choices and in the manner of Blake's proverb from *The Marriage of Heaven and Hell* that 'everything that lives is holy' concludes:

> ach well
> all livin language is sacred
> fuck thi lotta him (Leonard, 1984: 65).

Perhaps the most poignant criticism of the Ideological State Apparatuses is presented in Leonard's poem *thi six a clock news* in which the poet strongly protests against the uniformity of truth seen through the powerful media of the BBC. The poem is based on the outburst of a representative of the Glaswegian working class, stating that the truth that is being daily broadcast via the BBC at six o'clock definitely cannot be the truth about his language, class and ultimately, culture:

> this is thi
> six a clock

news thi
man said n
thi reason
a talk wia
BBC accent
iz coz yi
widny wahnt
mi ti talk
aboot thi
trooth wia
voice lik
wann yoo
scruff. If
a toktaboot
thi trooth
lik wann yoo
scruff yi
widny thingk
it wuz troo.
jist wanna yoo
scruff tokn.
thirza right
way ti spell
ana right way a spellin. this
is ma trooth
yooz doant no
thi trooth
yirsellz cawz
yi canny talk
right. this is
the six a clock
nyooz. belt up. (Leonard, 1984: 338).

The tone that permeates the whole poem is that of anger of the representative of the Scottish working class because of the way he speaks, which is constantly being undervalued and regarded as inferior or second-rate by the British society. The poem is based on the hypothetical situation in which a BBC newsreader explains that if he read the news in Glaswegian dialect, no one could believe that what he had been informing the people about was true. According to this BBC newsreader, there is a single proper way of speaking and spelling, so the people who are not capable of the correct, standard, expression, clearly do not know the truth and cannot be trusted. The potent irony that Leonard uses here—the message of the poem is exactly the opposite of what the newsreader claims—is based on the seemingly strong criticism of the people who speak Scots, whereas the poem itself is written in Scots.

Leonard is infuriated with the 'toffs' for looking down on his working class compatriots, but at the same time he is also infuriated with the working class people

for allowing the 'posh' representatives to dismiss them as inferior on the basis of their accent, which is probably best illustrated in the poem in the finishing line 'belt up', an example of atypical colloquial usage, prohibited on the BBC, meaning 'shut up', implying his firm determination about the necessity of change. The poet also feels enormous class pride and perceives his regional working class dialect as a mark of his working class background: he intentionally refuses to 'talk posh', which would initially mean to 'sell out' to the establishment. Quite the contrary, the poet insists on the idea that his dialect is proper for reading the news and strongly opposes the implications of Scots being 'the language of the gutter', reserved for the ignorant and uneducated masses, fit only to be ignored or used for humorous and comic effect: truth is truth whatever accent or language you say it. With the structure of the poem, based on a single, unbroken verse, without any punctuation except a few full stops, and the use of the Scots language based on slang and 'uncouth' words, Leonard makes an effect of an angry rant that has the underlying message to challenge the readers' prejudices about the standardized version of a proper accent/language.[1]

Like Leonard, Liz Lochhead has always insisted on the idea of creative writing and speaking in public as a political act, so through her works she actually gives the voice to the marginalized groups – her language is female-coloured as well as Scottish-coloured. For instance, 'Kidspoem/Bairnsang' in her 2003 collection *The Colour of Black and White*, quite significantly dedicated to Tom Leonard, exposes Lochhead's continuing concern with the presence and importance of the Scots language as one of the most relevant facets of her country's national heritage. This is the reason for writing the poem both in Scots and English, which is conspicuous even in the language duality of the poem's title. Again like Leonard, Lochhead's impression is that Scots is constantly being neglected and discarded as the valid form of both written and spoken expression – unfortunately, it has remained unofficially reserved only for the informal, spoken events. Although the poem is mostly written in Scots, Lochhead feels a necessity to conclude it in English, so that her message can properly get through to the people/institutions she criticizes:

> Oh saying it was one thing
> But when it came to writing it
> In black and white
> The way it had to be said
> Was as if you were posh, grown-up, male, English and dead. (Lochhead, 2003: 25).

Unlike Leonard, though, who proudly and unequivocally remains loyal to the Glaswegian version of Scots, Lochhead makes experiments with diverse language options, in the manner of the first 'Scots Makar' (a position created in 2004 to recognize Scotland's rich history of poets, since 'makar' is a Scots word for poet), Edwin Morgan, whom she succeeded at this function after his death, in 2011. Morgan, usually perceived by literary critics as the poetry's ambassador for multilingualism, enjoyed playing with diverse languages, various words and sounds which was the

[1] A considerable part of the poem's close reading was based on John D. Clare's interpretation of *thi six a clock news*. For a more detailed analysis see http://www.johndclare.net/English/Leonard_Intro.htm.

reason for writing the so called "concrete poetry", whereby he attempted to recapture the way different words and sounds looked on the page. Famous for giving voices to unexpected objects, as disparate as computers and apples, and a distinct language to the Mercurians and Loch Ness Monster, Morgan was pleading for the plurality and heterogeneity of diverse language experiences. Although he translated a number of poems from German, Hungarian, French, Spanish, Latin, Italian and English into Scots, the poem that will be included in this paper is the science-fiction poem, *The First Men on Mercury* (1973), in which the humans and Mercurians exchange their languages. It does not specifically deal with the position of Scots within the institutional discourse, but is of vital importance for the understanding of the previously discussed issue of the recognition and acceptance of language diversity.

In *The First Men on Mercury*, Morgan describes a hypothetical dialogue between the explorers arriving to the planet Mercury and the Mercury natives. The leader of the expedition from the Earth approaches the Mercurian leader, attempts to explain their peaceful intentions, describe the planet Earth and all the technological gadgets that make the Earth men seemingly superior to the Mercurians. The natives are not overwhelmed with this rather dignified and high-flown account of the planet Earth; furthermore, they reply in nonsensical sounds that pose a communication problem to the Earth men. Although the poet does not directly reinforce this idea, the readers can easily notice that the Earth men feel superior to the civilization of the strange planet Mercury. However, the incomprehensible language of onomatopoeic sounds gradually infects the Earth men, whereas the natives seem to shift towards a more meaningful expression by adopting and applying English words and phrases in communication. Here is the poem:

– We come in peace from the third planet.
Would you take us to your leader?
– Bawr stretter! Bawr. Bawr. Stretterhawl?
– This is a little plastic model
of the solar system, with working parts.
You are here and we are there and we
are now here with you, is this clear?
– Gawl horrop. Bawr Abawrhannahanna!
– Where we come from is blue and white
with brown, you see we call the brown
here 'land', the blue is 'sea', and the white
is 'clouds' over land and sea, we live
on the surface of the brown land,
all round is sea and clouds. We are 'men'.
Men come –
– Glawp men! Gawrbenner menko. Menhawl?
– Men come in peace from the third planet
which we call 'earth'. We are earthmen.
Take us earthmen to your leader.
– Thmen? Thmen? Bawr. Bawrhossop.
Yuleeda tan hanna. Harrabost yuleeda.

– I am the yuleeda. You see my hands,
we carry no benner, we come in peace.
The spaceways are all stretterhawn.
– Glawn peacemen all horrabhanna tantko!
Tan come at'mstrossop. Glawp yuleeda!
– Atoms are peacegawl in our harraban.
Menbat worrabost from tan hannahanna.
– You men we know bawrhossoptant. Bawr.
We know yuleeda. Go strawg backspetter quick.
– We cantantabawr, tantingko backspetter now!
– Banghapper now! Yes, third planet back.
Yuleeda will go back blue, white, brown
nowhanna! There is no more talk.
– Gawl han fasthapper?
– No. You must go back to your planet.
Go back in peace, take what you have gained
but quickly.
– Stretterworra gawl, gawl…
– Of course, but nothing is ever the same,
now is it? You'll remember Mercury. (Morgan, 2000: 69).

In conclusion, the natives from the planet Mercury clearly state that the Earth men are not welcomed on their planet. Although this poem belongs to Morgan's science fiction poetry and the poet himself never read and interpreted it from the perspective of the burning Scots question, a certain similarity with the issues discussed in this paper can be easily traced. Namely, although the smallest and closest to the Sun of the eight planets in the Solar System, Mercury has often been used as a setting in science fiction with a recurring theme of autocratic governments, possibly because of it being frequently associated with hot-temperedness. These facts seem to, more or less, describe the position of Scotland in the UK, as well as the key feature of the Scottish stereotype – the Scottish ungovernable temperament.

Thus, through the communication between the Earth men, symbolically the dominant English, and the Mercurians, the alien Scots, one can perceive the literal process of the evasive colonization of the weaker party by the superior one. This colonization is in Morgan's poem depicted as 'the colonization of the mind', or 'interpellation', in Althusser's terms (Althusser, 2001: 121□176). However, the last stage of the colonial project shows that even the master plans for ambitious and daring conquests can ultimately fail. By exposing two distinct cultures to one another, two kinds of language to one another, a sudden fusion happens—the representatives of both cultures seem to unconsciously acquire the traits of the other culture thus ultimately creating a specific cultural mosaic. Although the Earth men finally grasp the message of the Mercurians, the final point of not being welcome there is less relevant in comparison to the very last words the poet utters: "You'll remember Mercury" (Morgan, 2000: 69). What is there for both parties to remember is the fact of mutual cultural dependence. The concepts of the English and Scottish identity, respectively, have been created throughout the centuries of historical, political, eco-

nomic and ultimately, linguistic animosity; nevertheless, the fact that both cultures acquired specific linguistic traits from each other in Morgan's poem, the language of the Earth men changes under the influence of the Mercurians and becomes more incomprehensible as well, testifies to the mutual cultural bond, or interdependence, difficult to be broken or annihilated.

The relatively recent translation of the Bible in Scots (1963) and the decline of influence the standard Oxford English in the media, regional accents are acceptable on radio and television nowadays, represent just a few among many attempts to insert Scots within the field of the institutional discourse that the Scottish poets mentioned here—MacDiarmid, Leonard, Lochhead and Morgan—were pleading for in their poetry. These attempts have undermined the status of the Standard English in Scotland in the 21st century by giving the Scots a more conscious awareness of their own language.

In his study *The Scots* (1988), Finlayson refers to MacDiarmid's statement in which he claims that "we have a great tradition in Scotland of linguistic ability… it's a facet of our internationalism as compared with English insularity" and then to the statement of another Scottish Renaissance poet, Edwin Muir, who claims that "the Scottish ability to speak English is an accomplishment…however, it does not involve any wish or any intention of becoming English or denying the Scottish tradition. And besides, English as it is spoken is Scotland is very different from English, and certainly very full of Scottish character" (Finlayson, 1988: 113, 114). In addition, Finlayson honestly admits that a Scotsman, however anglicized, will undoubtedly change his accent once he crosses the border and finds himself back in Scotland:

> The Scots, adept mimics of modes of speech, perhaps do not confine their natural impressionism to language – the Scots are 'sedulous apes' of manners that they adopt superficially for a particular purpose but which do not profoundly alter their basic Scottishness. (Finlayson, 1988: 114).

The language issue is just one among numerous cultural and political issues that the Scots will have to take into consideration as the announced Scottish National Referendum is approaching due to take place on 18th September, 2014, when they would finally have to decide on two options: to remain a constituent part of the UK or to strive towards the national independence. In case the majority of the Scots votes for independence, the question relevant for the further study of Scots would eventually concern the necessity of its official status change, its irrevocable application in practice and perhaps a potential shift with English within the field of the institutional discourse. At the moment, these ideas seem to be rather far-fetched, unsustainable and remote. However, after the 2014 Scottish National Referendum, they will definitely represent the burning issues for the future positioning of Scots within the field of the institutional discourse, thus inevitably enriching the existing features of Scottish national myth and identity.

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UPOTREBA ŠKOTSKOG JEZIKA U INSTITUCIONALNOM DISKURSU: PRIMERI IZ POEZIJE MEKDARMIDA, LENARDA, LOHIDOVE I MORGANA

Rezime

Rad se zasniva na analizi poezije nekoliko savremenih škotskih pesnika (Mekdarmida, Lenarda, Lohidove i Morgana) za koje bilo koji vid kreativnog pisanja i javnog izlaganja predstavlja politički čin. Ovaj umetnički stav se u radu obrazlaže kroz analizu pesama koje se bave idejom prisutnosti škotskog jezika, jedne od najvažnijih karak-

teristika škotskog nacionalnog nasleđa, u domenu institucionalnog diskursa (oblika izražavanja u institucijama sistema). Zajednička polazna tačka u poeziji ovih umetnika jeste da se škotski jezik konstantno zanemaruje i odbacuje kao punovažan oblik oficijalnog izražavanja. Njihovi kreativni uvidi kombinovaće se sa teorijskim okvirom koji daju škotski eksperti iz oblasti kulture i istorije, Divajn i Finlejson, kako bi se naglasila ideja kontinuiranog interesovanja za relevantnost škotskog jezika u procesu razumevanja škotskog identiteta.

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