Language History as Charter Myth? Scots and the (Re)invention of Scotland.

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1. Language and history

In this article, I intend to concentrate on one type of process by which Scots has found new legitimation as a language, and how discourses surrounding the issue of Scots might seek to contribute to the creation of a new Scottish society. I whish to show *how* history is used as a legitimating discursive device by the various components of the Scots language revitalisation movement.

The question of the very possibility of a history of a language is in itself particularly interesting. History itself, serving as a people's grand narrative in the context of modern nation states, has been described by anthropologists as 'simply a modern myth' (Eagleton, 1991: 188). In fact, according to Woolard, "representations of the history of languages often function as Malinowskian charter myths, projecting from the present to an originary past a legitimation of contemporary power relations and interested positions" (2004: 58)

Histories of languages, as socially situated narratives, can thus be seen as a site of ideological production. Woolard thus adds that language histories project "from the past a legitimating selection of one from among contending centres of power in the present" (2004: 58).

It might seem somehow provocative to associate myth and history in a paper dealing with the history of the Scots language, since those terms "are often considered to be antithetical modes of explanation" (Heehs, 1994: 1). In this article, I wish to suggest some explanations of the significations the narratives in which the histories of Scots are embedded convey. I also ask such an analysis can be relevant to the study of the language revitalisation movement in Scotland today.

The question of power (and the legitimation of centres of power, which in Western societies at least, are deeply connected to the question of language) also introduces that of ideologies of language, defined by Kroskrity as "represent[ing] the perception of language and discourse that is constructed in the interest of a specific social or cultural group" (2009a: 72-73), itself closely related to the question of language myths (cf. Blommaert, 1999a; Lincoln, 2000).

In doing so, I hope to back Kroskrity's argument that language ideological dimensions are central to language renewal activities (2009a: 71), thus maybe contributing to "recognising and resolving ideological conflict that would impede local efforts at linguistic revitalization" (Kroskrity, 2009a: 71).

2. Histories of Scots

One striking element in the (re)presentation of Scots, either as a language or as a dialect, is the tendency for authors of various backgrounds, academic or militant, to draw on history. "Histories of Scots" abound, and in fact, Scots tends to be systematically introduced historically, thus suggesting a claim for legitimacy through a particular conceptualisation of time.

Naming practices

There are countless instances of histories of the Scots language, or Scots dialect – as some authors choose to call it. The very terminology authors may choose has direct bearings on the way history is presented. For instance, authors using the dialect terminology (such as Grant, 2006 [2000]) do not concentrate as much as others on the revitalisation phase which can be seen as taking place since the 1920s (cf. Macleod & Cairns, 1996 for an example).

Although some texts refer specifically to Scots as a dialect (Grant, 2006 [2000]) or as a language (Jones, 1997; Kay, 2006; Macleod & Cairns, 1996; McClure, 1988; Murison, 1977), most of the available documents treat Scots as a noun and not as an adjective qualifying either language or dialect: Miller (1998) simply refers to 'Scots', and introduces his historical account as 'historical facts', Templeton (1973) calls her article 'Scots, an outline history', Murison (1979), in a book called *Lowland Scots* refers to 'The historical background',

Corbett, McClure and Stuart-Smith (2003b) in the *Edinburgh Companion to Scots* call their article on history 'a brief introduction to Scots', Treffry (Treffry, 2003 [1995]), in her *Scots Dictionary*, calls hers 'The history of Scots', and (Robertson, 1996) calls his historical account 'Scots : a short history'. Aitken (2005 (1985)) calls the introduction to the *Concise Scots Dictionary* 'A History of Scots'. The same terminology is used by Corbett (1997) and Macafee (undated).

The texts mentioned above constitute my corpus of texts for the analyses which I will develop here. There are many more which could have been selected, but the chosen texts come from a range of different books and illustrate several types of motivations for using history to justify specific conceptions of Scots. In fact, as it is likely that most texts draw on the same sources, possibly Aitken (2005 (1985)), Murison (1977, 1979), and perhaps Williamson (1982/3), none of the other texts display any importantly new elements, and they are usually not meant to be presented as new scholarly research.

The status of the texts

One difficulty which arises from the choice of texts coming from such a large corpus is precisely its internal coherence, and the very possibility of deriving conclusions from their analyses.

The question of the targeted audience is of particular concern. While most authors used here come from academic backgrounds, Kay doesn't: his work is written from the point of view of an informed activist whose aim is to show the people living in Scotland that Scots is indeed a language, and one worth preserving too. McClure's *Why Scots Matters* (1988), although written by a recognised academic, was not written primarily with an academic audience in mind. A.J. Aitken and Charles Jones are both recognised authorities in their respective academic fields (lexicography and philology), but they wrote in times when regional and minority languages were viewed in very different ways.

For indeed, the legal and social situation of Scots have changed dramatically between the 1970s and our present times: Scots is now recognised as a minority language under the European Charter for Regional and Minority Languages by the British government, and has been given more and more space in schools (compare Niven & Jackson, 1998; and Williamson, 1982/3 for instance).

The fact that the aim of Jones's book is clearly stated as academic is indeed worth noting, since the status of most other texts is often unclear. Aitkens's (2005 (1985)) contribution to

the *Concise Scots Dictionary* could of course be thought of as mainly of a purely academic nature, and it certainly is, yet the aim explicitly set out indicates an aim of a different nature: "the present dictionary is intended not only as a record of the copiousness and variety of the resources of the Scots language, but also as a contribution to the self-assurance of the Scottish people about that language, which enshrines their past and lives in their daily speech" (2005 (1985): xiii). Templeton's (1973) article was presented at a conference organised by the Association of Scottish Literary Studies; and as its abundant bibliography indicates it is an academic paper, yet some aspects of the article betray a militant background: "the word *hame* has been pronounced in more or less its present way for over 400 years, *hoose* for millennia. These are not lazy or careless English. They are not familiar or slangy English. Scots is not corrupt English. In fact, what we now call Scots does not come from what we now call English at all" (Templeton, 1973: 4). Although Murison's (1979) article was presented at an academic conference at Glasgow University, sentences such as "Scots is becoming more and more confused with it and corrupted by it, and so fewer people speak it correctly, perhaps fewer than Gaelic" indicate a possible bias in terms of considering language contact which is not customary in scientific publications.

On the other hand, some books written for the general public are written by leading academics in the field. *Why Scots Matters* (McClure, 1988) and *The Guid Scots Tongue* (Murison, 1977) are good examples of this (even though only a small part of both books is devoted to history of the language), and both display a level of rigour which is not usual in books written for the general public. For instance, McClure (1988: 19-28) makes use of sociolinguistic concepts such as the Swadesh list or the notions of *ausbau* and *abstand* languages to explain the historical developments of modern Scots.

In fact, both types of literature originate in interrelated *loci* of production. I have chosen not to distinguish, in this first approach, the various audiences, *loci* of production nor the times of production of the articles in my corpus, while acknowledging that ideologies do vary according to those factors, and to many more. In fact, as Field & Kroskrity has pointed out, "we are still just beginning to fully appreciate the diversity of language ideologies within and across communities" (2009: 9). Further studies will be needed to understand how languages ideologies concerning Scots have evolved across time, and how they differ according to where they stem from. Yet, by concentrating, in this article, on commonalities, across time and spheres of textual production, I point to the fact that the divisions between linguists and militants are not as clear cut as usually believed.

Recently, some Scots language academics (cf. McClure, 2003) have nevertheless tackled specific events more in detail, examining of the history of the language from a more critical point of view.

That narratives of the history of Scots are used in so many contexts, academic as well as non-academic suggests history is likely to be used as a legitimising tool in several spheres of society to propose, or impose, a new or renewed division of the world, to use Bourdieu's (1980, 1991) terminology:

> Struggles over ethnic or regional identity - in other words, over the properties (stigmata or emblems) linked with the *origin* through the *place* of origin and its associated durable marks, such as accent - are a particular case of the different struggles over classifications, struggles for the monopoly of the power to make people see and believe, to get them to know and recognize, to impose the legitimate definition of the divisions of the social world and, thereby, to *make and unmake groups*. What is at stake here is the power of imposing a vision of the social world through principles of di-vision which, when they are imposed on a whole group, establish meaning and a consensus about meaning, and in particular about the identity and unity of the group, which creates the reality of the unity and the identity of the group (Bourdieu, 1991: 221).

If language histories can be one of those places where discourse shapes or intends to shape social structures and transforms or seeks to transform power relationships, then a closer analysis of some of those texts may reveal some of the discursive processes and strategies which are used to reinvent and at the same time promote Scots and to enhance the status of its speakers. History is one of the tools that the Scots language movement uses to legitimise its action and claims.

The history of Scots: what for?

In fact, they seem to serve a certain purpose, as their existence within a specific context would tend to show. While some introduce dictionaries (Aitken, 2005 (1985); Grant, 2006 [2000]; Macleod & Cairns, 1996; Treffry, 2003 [1995]), thus legitimising the very existence of the object they are introducing through a reminder of the antiquity of the language of the Scots, others justify the use of Scots in education (Lorvik, 1995; Miller, 1998; Robertson, 1996). Histories of Scots are also used to introduce other scholarly articles on Scots (Corbett, McClure, & Stuart-Smith, 2003a; Murison, 1979; Templeton, 1973). Robertson (1996: 25)

uses historical references to legitimise the use of Scots in the classroom, as part of a suggested 'Draft text for a leaflet to parents' and Murison (Murison, 1977), McClure (1988) and Kay (2006) use history to prove that is a language as opposed to a degenerated form of English, as many in Scotland still believe, a language therefore worthy of being saved:

> But what precisely is the status of this speech form; and how, if at all, does it deserve to be identified by the national adjective? These questions can best be answered by a summary examination of the linguistic history of Scotland" (McClure, 1988: 6).

History is here clearly seen not as an aim, but a medium to provide *one* answer to the question asked by the book: Why does Scots matter? It does so by integrating the language into a grand narrative stating its origins, and the main dates which are seen to have determined its present condition.

The answer that it matters because it has been around for a while clearly derives from a view which assumes that heritage matters, that languages, similarly to objects, are or should be passed on to us by previous generations, and as such, deserve to be treated with care. The intrinsic communicative value of Scots is therefore not put forward as an immediate reason for which Scots might matter.

Finally, Jones (1997: vii) justifies the publication of his edited volume on the history of Scots as somehow filling a gap, since no entire book had so far dealt with the matter. The explicit aim of the volume is clearly academic: "My main purpose in taking on what has proved to be a daunting project (for all concerned) is to encourage further study of the history of the Scots language" (viii).

Overall, history is seen as a way to give existence to Scots (and for most authors, to Scots as a *language*, as well as to legitimise both its presence on the public scene and the cultural movement that foregrounds it: "Scots is a European language like French or German and it has its own history of development" (Robertson, 1996: 25). Is it therefore *because* it has its own history that it is a language just like French or German?

2 Language history as the site of myth creation

According to Anderson (2006: 6), "communities are to be distinguished, not by their falsity / genuineness, but by the style in which they are imagined" Since the middle of the 18th century, in fact since the battle of Culloden has made possible the creation of a romantic myth out of Scotland's Celtic and Gaelic past (Trevor-Roper, 1983, 2008), the dominant myth of

Scotland as a nation has been the Celtic one with Gaelic as a focal language, despite (or maybe because of) it being very little spoken.

Yet it can be argued that in the imagining of the Scottish nation, it is Gaelic and not Scots which serves as a focal point for a national language, and it is Gaelic which is being served by the dominant myths surrounding Scottish history within and outwith the country. Like in most European countries though, "the dominant mentality in Scotland is clearly monoglot rather than polyglot" (McLeod, 2001: 14), despite the fact that European language ideologies are gradually changing[2]. This is the crucial point which makes it so difficult to create a new dominant or at least equal national paradigm. I would argue that the main competitor of Scots is not English, but in fact Gaelic, at least in terms of symbolic construction and future imagining of the Scottish nation. Hence the perceived need to propose new paradigms and frames of thought for the linguistic future of Scotland, with globalisation making it more and more difficult to rely on monoglot or monolingual paradigms.

I would argue that the recurrence of histories of Scots in various types of literature is precisely part of an attempt to propose a counter-myth, in Scotland, and interestingly one not based on monolingualism.

According to Malinowski, a charter myth is one which "conveys, expresses and strengthens the fundamental facts of local unity and of the kinship unity of the group of people", and which "literally contains the legal charter of the community" (1954: 116). In other words, charter myths can be said to "most directly express the sense of the social group's relationship, whether it be with its legendary members and those no longer living, or with the groups that surround it" (Lévy-Bruhl, 1999).

In the case of Scots, myths are not yet in a position to "justify social orders, institutions and languages" (Pennycook, 2007: 99), but their aim is to modify the current state of affairs in terms of social orders, institutions and languages, or to "[re]define not only an imagined origin but also a current status, both orthodoxy and orthopraxy" (Pennycook, 2007: 99). Such myths, indispensable to all societies, are inevitable in the case of cultural / linguistic revitalisation movements.

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[2] According to Blommaert & Vershueren, "the [dominant European] model of society is monolingual, monoethnic, monoreligious, monoideological" (1998). While the Council of Europe has been actively promoting a post-modern view on language, I believe the fabric of contemporary European language ideologies is still a modernist one, as can be exemplified by the various language conflicts across the continent (cf. Duchêne & Heller, 2007; Heller, 2007; Jaffe, 1999).

The Seven moments

I argue here that the grand narrative expressing what can be seen as a charter myth for the Scots language revitalisation movement can be split into seven different moments, which can be found, entirely or partially, in all texts, militant or academic.

In moment 1, the origins of the language are explained, and Ancestors are named. In many texts, they are clearly identified as Angles (eg. Grant, 2006 [2000]; Kay, 2006; Robertson, 1996), seemingly relegating Saxons to Southern England – although McClure carefully states that "this is, in fact, doubtfully authentic: Bede himself uses the term *Angle* and *Saxon* as if they were completely interchangeable" (McClure, 1988: 7). In terms of identification with potential Ancestors, it might in fact be easier to identify with the Angles since the term 'Saxons' is strongly connoted in Scotland (as in other Celtic-speaking countries), with 'Sassenach', its Gaelic equivalent also used in Scots, referring to the English. Moment 1 thus deals with self-definition.

In moment 2, 'Others' are introduced. The second moment refers to the question of other peoples who lived in Scotland prior to the arrival of the 'Angles' and subsequently side by side with them, or even among them. This is a particularly powerful myth in the creation of a contemporary multilingual Scotland, and a constant occurrence throughout the corpus. This particular moment can be subdivided into two moments: at first, it is essential to show that Gaels, or Scots, also arrived at a relatively late period, coming from Ireland: "Meanwhile the North of Britain had suffered its own invasion. Gaelic-speaking tribesmen from Ireland, called by the Romans (but not by themselves) *Scoti*, had established themselves in Argyll (...)" (McClure, 1988: 8). It is indeed essential to show that the Gaels are no more legitimate than the Angles in their claims to defining the national identity of Scotland, even though they brought along with them the current name of the nation. It also becomes essential to show that Scotland was always a multilingual country, home to many peoples speaking many languages: Gaelic, Scots, Norse, Latin, French, Flemish, and eventually English. That aspect of the myth serves to legitimise the claim of the Scots language revitalisation movements to a modern multilingual Scotland where Gaelic, Scots and English (but also perhaps Urdu, Punjabi and Arabic, among others) could live side by side or together. All texts emphasise this aspect, and also point to the fact that those other languages have had a large impact on Scots, thus differentiating it from its southern cousin. For example, let us consider the following extract:

Scots is a very old language with an interesting history, closely linked with its neighbour English. They are both descended from Old English, but Scots comes from a northern form of it which reached the south-east of what is now Scotland some time in the seventh century. By this time too the Scots had come from Ireland with their Gaelic language (...). However, from the eleventh century, strong influences came from England. Many Anglo-Norman noble families and monasteries moved up from north-east England. Although their own language was Norman-French, that of their servants and followers was a form of northern English with strong Scandinavian influence (still noticeable in modern Scots words such as *graith*, *lowp* and *nieve*). (...) There were many influences from other European languages. Norse, that is Scandinavian, words have been noted already. (...) In the Middle Ages Scotland traded a great deal with the Low Countries (...) and their language gave us words like *loon*, *pinkie*, *golf* and *scone*. French influence was very strong, especially at the time of what became known as the Auld Alliance. (Macleod & Cairns, 1996: viii-ix)

Unlike other national myths, which tend to show difference through the creation of a myth of purity and / or unity (cf. Citron, 2008; Woolard, 2004, for examples in France and Spain), the counter-myth of the Scots movement tends to construct Scotland as a nation composed of many influences. This is also apparent in the following extract:

The traditional picture of Scotland as split between Gaelic-speaking Highlands and Scots-speaking Lowlands, antipathetic and irreconcilable, is derived from a later age: the late eleventh, twelfth and thirteenth centuries showed, on the whole, a surprising lack of hostility among Scotland's various peoples, and the almost steady growth of a strong and benevolent feudal monarchy. (McClure, 1988: 11)

And also:

The practical results of all this mixing of populations can be seen in the attestations to charters, where the several signatories may have Welsh, Gaelic, Norse, Anglo-Saxon and French names. (...) The population must have become even more polyglot in the twelfth and thirteenth centuries, and we must suppose that the *lingua franca* of them all was that one that ultimately prevailed, the new, highly-Frenchified English. (Murison, 1979: 5)

The period of multicultural harmony is placed in the eleventh century, i.e. after the Picts had disappeared, and at a time when the Britons were being assimilated by (or were assimilating to) the Gaels. In any case, that particular moment of the history of Scots is of great importance, since it's aim is to show that Scotland was on the one hand never monolingual, and on the other hand that Gaelic and Scots arrived in Scotland at the same time approximately, thus denying the possibility of Scotland being an originally solely Celtic country in the sense that Wales or Ireland are seen to be. Moment 2 is thus "Self with others".

Moment 3 deals with the development and the expansion of Scots, a moment I suggest calling 'self vs. others', an expansion associated with economic development: "Anglo-Saxon was, then, associated in Scotland almost from the start with attractive new developments in trade and commerce, with enterprise and with prosperity" (McClure, 1988: 11). It is also linked with the development of the burghs and thus implicitly with urban life (cf. Aitken, 2005 (1985): ix), central to the expansion of trade. That moment is usually seen as occurring in the 12th to 14th centuries.

Moment 4 is the consecration of Scots as a national language, as in "1494 we find the national adjective *Scottis* applied for the first time to what had now become the national tongue" (Murison, 1979: 8): "the years 1460-1560 can be considered the heyday of the Scots tongue as a full national language showing all the signs of a rapidly developing, all-purpose speech, as distinct from English as Portuguese from Spanish, Dutch from German, or Swedish from Danish" (8-9). The European model serves once again as a warrant, and serves to establish differentiation from English. That moment goes hand in hand with "the Golden Age of Scottish literature" (Kay, 2006: 55), thus explicitly linking the heyday of independent Scotland with its language, and more specifically with a written language, gloriously illustrated by several writers. In fact, this particular mythified moment was, according to Kay (55) used by MacDiarmid as the main reference for the Revival he had planned: "Not Burns, back to Dunbar!". This last example exemplifies once more the necessity of a strong link between the Scots language revitalisation movement and history, or rather here, the past, and a few, carefully selected, Ancestors.

Moment 5 is seen by Murison as a brutal one (others vs. self): "But in 1560 came the first great setback to Scots; the Reformation had the effect, politically, of swinging Scotland away from France into the Protestant and English camp, and, linguistically, of introducing literary English into every home in Scotland through the reading of the Bible" (1979: 9). Moment 5 is thus the moment of the beginning of a perceived decline for the language, going together with the decline of other national symbols: Catholicism, the alliance with France, and in 1603 the King and later, the Scottish Parliament. Scots is thus discursively gradually equated with Scottishness and Scottish independence. Not all authors follow this analysis:

"Unquestionably, these events (...) strongly reinforced the impulse to Anglicisation. But they did not initiate the process. Literary influence of English writings long predated the Reformation" (Aitken, 2005 (1985): x). Aitken here introduces a breech in the narrative, since he proposes here to partially deconstruct a seemingly already well-established belief. Yet, this aspect of scholarly research was, interestingly, not often retained in later texts, at least in shorter ones written for the general public. Thus, according to Robertson (1996: 25), "several things happened to make the Scots want to learn English. The Bible was translated into English not Scots. The Union of the Crowns in 1603 meant royalty and rich people started going to London. The Union of Parliaments in 1707 meant all the official documents started to come out in English instead of Scots".

Moment 6 is the revival, or revivals, i.e. a moment / moments which could be termed 'self despite others'. The issue of the revival is in fact not an easy theme to deal with, for there are two movements or rather moments in history which could be termed 'revival'. The first one is obviously the 18th literary revival, involving Fergusson and Burns among others. Yet that century is seen as negative by Murison: "The eighteenth century saw the disappearance of Scots as a full language" (1979: 11). It therefore seems difficult to unanimously see Burns and his times as synonymous with a great literary revival, in the way that, say, Provençals might view Mistral and the 19th century literary revival. Grant, who introduces a dictionary whose title refers explicitly to Scots as a dialect, concludes his history of Scots with that first moment of literary revival, without a word about what happened afterwards. He does however explicitly refer to a revival, albeit a "revival *of interest* which is associated with the names of Ramsey, Fergusson, Burns and Scott" (Grant, 2006 [2000]: 7) (my emphasis). On the other hand, Murison and Kay, to name but two, use the term 'Renaissance' to qualify the movement which emerged in the early 20th century, although here again limited to literature, it would seem.

There are thus several (at least two) competing types of discourse regarding the revival or Renaissance *moment* of Scots, according to the type of message and ideological background which different authors seek to promote: a vibrant modern language or a *guid auld tongue* which used to be spoken *auld lang syne*, in a Golden Age idealised Scotland.

Finally, moment 7 is the present time, self *with* others once again. What is happening now, or rather, what the effect of that long history is on modern Scotland in terms of language and society choices. Here too, several competing discourses are at play. While some authors (Corbett, et al., 2003a; Grant, 2006 [2000]) choose not to talk about the present period, and

while others (Aitken, 2005 (1985); Templeton, 1973) choose only to allude to it, others still consider the present to be an integral part of the history of the language, and choose to express various opinions of different kinds on its present state and future outlook. If, according to Templeton, "the story this century is one of continuing decline in the use of Scots" (Templeton, 1973: 11), Miller in contrast considers that "a large majority of the population [in Scotland] speak a variety of English that differs considerably from standard English in pronunciation, grammar, and vocabulary" (Miller, 1998: 45), and Robertson writes that "despite media saturation in Standard (and American) English, Scots continues to be the evolving and developing language of some five million speakers, showing a rich and varied social, geographical and cultural diversity" (Robertson, 1996: 27). Over thirty years ago, Murison wrote: "as the national language fades out, a series of dialects supersedes it all over Scotland" (1977: 7).

In order to convince parents that Scots is legitimate in schools, Robertson homogenises the community of Scots speakers, whatever reality those terms may actually designate, and when Scots is presented as a national language in the 16th century, it is to show first of all that it could become that once again, and also that Scotland is a nation in its own right, entitled to all the national symbols that other European nations have.

Yet, I argue that the most important part of the narrative is the mythical account of a multilingual (yet mono-national, thus partly modernist still – for instance, nothing is said of the Kingdom of the Isles) Scotland, which may serve as a tool to raise the status of Scots so that it equates that of Gaelic in the representations of the linguistic future of Scotland.

That myth alone, although still a minority myth in Scotland itself, is worth identifying and analysing, if only because precisely as a national myth it constitutes not an excluding and narrowly nationalist myth, but one of plurality.

3   Language history as a site for ideological affirmation

When a social movement tries to modify the structure of society – which is always, directly or indirectly, a consequence of linguistic movements since they tend to modify the structures of power relations, it needs to impose a new or modified national, or at least linguistic, mythscape, "conceived of as the discursive realm, constituted by and through temporal and

spatial dimensions, in which the myths of the nation are forged, transmitted, reconstructed and negotiated constantly" (Bell, 2003: 75).

In fact, the narrative, is one of differentiation with the English (Angles vs. Saxon, more foreign influences in Scotland than in England) and of identification with other European languages, French and German through the very fact of having a language history, and Catalan, Portuguese, Dutch through the fact that they are considered to be languages despite their closeness to Spanish and German. Those elements, put together in a single narrative, do seem to constitute a charter myth readily usable by the Scots language movement.

As a modern narrative, that is to say one created or put together from the 1970s onward, and a socially situated narrative, the history of Scots reveals much about the way language is being imagined in contemporary Scotland. And interestingly, while the general narrative does tend to present an alternative societal myth for Scotland, one based on plurality, on diversity, of multilingualism, the ideas about language it illustrates, or in fact the language ideologies it conveys, are themselves very much based on the same dominant language ideologies which English relies upon to maintain its own domination.

Myth and Ideology

I will here rely on Woolard's (1998) second strand of definitions, "a conceptualization of ideology as derived from, rooted in, reflective of, or responsive to the experience or interests of a particular social position, even though ideology so often (in some views, always) represents itself as universally true" (1998: 6). The link between ideology and social position, hence with power, and it's acceptance of a universal truth are the important elements here.

As far as the formation of ideologies is concerned, Irvine & Gal (1995; 2000) have identified three processes, which characterize the formation of language ideologies: iconicity (or iconisation), recursivity and erasure. Those processes are important in the construction of linguistic difference.

> *Iconization* involves a transformation of the sign relationship between linguistic features (or varieties) and the social images with which they are linked. Linguistic features that index social groups or activities appear to be iconic representations of them, as if a linguistic feature somehow depicted or displayed a social group's inherent nature or process.
> (…)

13

Fractal recursivity involves the projection of an opposition, salient at some level of the relationship, onto some other level. For example, intragroup oppositions might be projected outward onto intergroup relations, or vice versa.
(…)
Erasure is the process in which ideology, in simplifying the sociolinguistic field, renders some persons or activities (or sociolinguistic phenomena) invisible. (Irvine & Gal, 2000: 37-38)

While Irvine & Gal's model accounts for the formation of linguistic difference, I have argued above that the Scots language movement not only constructs *difference*, but also *sameness* as a process to prove individuation and to give Scots a separate identity. One could therefore add *identification* to those three processes, or more specifically in such a case, identification in terms of comparison with other similar or supposedly similar linguistic situations.

The various texts identified above were defined as several actualizations of one charter myth. For the purpose of this demonstration, I will use Lincoln's characterization of myth as "ideology in narrative form" (Lincoln, 2000: 147). The next sections will examine how ideologies are present in the main narrative, and what those main ideologies are.

A national language?

Ideologies of language are present throughout the text, whether integrated to the narrative through a specific choice of terms, or as separate shorter narratives within the main narrative, thus creating an interesting web of narratives.

In several texts, Scots is variously presented as a national language in the 16th century, "a full national language" according to Murison (1979: 9), "a national language used in all circumstances" for Robertson (1996: 25), a national language again for Grant (Grant, 2006 [2000]), "an all-purpose national language" (Macleod & Cairns, 1996: ix), or, in a lighter version, "the chief administrative and spoken language of Scotland" (Treffry, 2003 [1995]), an "autonomous language" for Lorvik (Lorvik, 1995). On the Internet, where histories of Scots also flourish, Peter Constantine writes that "until the political union with England in 1707, Scots was the language of state and education, but its literary heyday was coming to an end" (Constantine, 2007). Interestingly, the idea that Scots was used in education is not confirmed by Williamson (1982/3), as it is likely that the main language of instruction was Latin.

14

In other words, what this seems to imply is that Scots was *then* a national language in the same way that English is *now* the national language of England, French the national language of France, or German the national language of Germany. The present is projected onto the past to legitimise present claims in terms of language status in Scotland.

The expression 'full national language' is particularly interesting, as it echoes another concept used by Murison, that of Scots as a part-language (1979: 11): "the eighteenth century saw the disappearance of Scots as a full language (...); not only its vocabulary and grammar, but also its pronunciation was displaced by English". "English" is here essentialised as an entity, and one capable of displacing another entity, thus removing responsibility from the speakers themselves or even from any human agent. Yet what does the concept of full national language refer to exactly in this case? Does it refer to the functions a language might or might not have, on a macro level? Or, more specifically, to the existence or not of specifically Scots features? In a typically 'allocational' fashion, the functions of a language would thus be seen as automatically determining its domains and ranges of use, and consequently whether its vocabulary is complete or not. Similarly, and more recently, Treffry has argued that "the language of modern Scotland remains distinct from that of England, with its own words, idioms and grammar" (2003 [1995]: ix), granting it the qualities of a "full language", despite not being official. The focus seems here to have changed since the 1970s: the language, as presented by Murison, was then no longer thought of as a "full language", and would therefore have necessitated some amount of corpus planning in order for it to become a national language again. On the other hand, Treffry presents it as being ready for official use. I would argue that the assigned status of Scots as a national language or not in the past by contemporary authors is in fact very much linked to present debates, as exemplified in Aitken (1980, 1990), McClure (1980), Lorvik (1995) or Niven & Jackson (1998) or even more recently on various websites.

The process through which Scots is equated to the national language of Scotland is itself interesting. In the narrative depicting a multilingual Scotland, several languages are referred to, but some, such as Pictish, are usually left out. The erasure of Pictish thus potentially constitutes the necessary first step in the establishment of Scots as a national language. The second step is the erasure of Gaelic, or its marginalisation, and its association (*identification*) with Irish: "to some degree, it [Scots] is the native language of virtually all locally-educated people in this area and it has also influenced the English speech of the Highlands and Islands, where the first language once was, and for many people, especially in the Outer Isles, still is,

Gaelic" (Aitken, 2005 (1985): ix). Scots is iconically identified with a significant part of the Scottish people.

The erasure of the other languages (French, Flemish) coincides with the 16th century, precisely the age of glory of Scots. The next competitor is no longer Gaelic, but English. For obvious reasons, it is more difficult to erase the now dominant newcomer, but the marginalisation of Gaelic symbolically ensures (now as it did then) that Scots is associated with the national adjective, and the simplification of the language scenery with two languages in competition, with Gaelic as a non-threatening language in the West. A new emphasis is set on the 'real' national language, Scots, the language of "some five million speakers" (Robertson, 1996: 27) in Scotland.

With this last sentence, and with the various demonstrations showing how Scots gradually got its name, and how Gaelic gradually lost that very same name, Scots becomes associated with the land and with the people. The age of Scots as the language of the nation thus replaces an age where various linguistic communities lived side by side in Scotland, and this is confirmed by what I would call the myth of the Spanish ambassador. In the 16th century, a Spanish ambassador is supposed to have equated the distance between Aragonese and Spanish with the one between Scots and English. Yet, this assertion, used by Murison (1979: 9) as well as McClure (1988: 28), is questioned by Dossena (2005: 43). Other less favourable – or adverse – witnesses quoted by Dossena, such as Scaligerus (43), are left out the "ambassador narrative".

In other words, Scots is put forward as the national language of Scotland and *iconised* as an index of Scottishness, and Gaelic as well as other languages are gradually *erased* from the main picture. Recursively, Scots becomes the language of the Scottish population, although most authors do not go as far. Through *identification* with other language situations such as that of Aragonese (which, in fact, according to McClure (1988: 28), means Catalan), French, German, Scots is made one of the languages of Europe at the time.

I argue this constitutes a re-imagining of the linguistic past of Scotland from a modernist, and in fact English-dominant, point of view. The very concept of language as we know it today in Europe, with languages as discrete objects, possessing written standards for most of them, does not seem to have existed before the 17th or the 18th century (cf. Anderson, 2006: 43-46; Makoni & Pennycook, 2007), and the very fact that forms of speech were assigned an ethnonym does not mean either that they were seen as constituting discrete and separate entities nor that the forms of speech thus named were seen at the time in terms of languages as

we know them today in Europe, i.e. as entities defining peoples with clear borders and specific characteristics (Laurendeau, 1994). It is in fact likely that the term Scots probably simply described, whenever necessary, the speech spoken north of the Scottish border, but this did not necessarily mean that it was perceived as another language (or as the same language for that matter).

Language was then probably not essentialised and iconically equated with Scotland as a separate nation, whatever those terms might have meant then. The essential connection between language and nation was only completed in the 18th century, at a time when Scots could no longer be seen as a full national language in the modern sense of the term. A full study would therefore be required to examine the history of the link between Scotland as a nation in the modern sense and language in general. In such circumstances, the associations projected in the literature concerning the history of Scots can be interpreted as modern projections of modern language ideologies on past events, in order to discursively justify or legitimate modern revitalisation movements.

Standardisation as ideology

Another instance of modern ideological projection onto past events is the role attributed to the written medium in the history of the language.

Language is viewed as being able to be either 'full' or partial (Murison, 1977: 7), both terms pointing to an essentialised conception of language. Scots did not cease to be a 'full' language after the 16th century, in the sense that people in Scotland were quite able to function as normally as their ancestors had done, linguistically speaking. Grant writes that Scots was "destroyed" (2006 [2000]: 6) while for Templeton, Scots gradually became "infiltrated" by English and "sabotaged from within" (1973: 7). This recontextualisation of war vocabulary also indicates the same phenomenon of iconisation: the texts assign a specific identity to Scots, and thus, through defining what Scots is, they tend to define what it isn't. The original myth of a multiligual Scotland is here challenged by modernist attitudes to language, with both aspects competing today in a dialectical way.

Such attitudes, linked to structuralist attitudes to language in terms of language as systems rather than language as practice, can hinder revitalisation efforts (cf. Jaffe, 1996), and in their extreme form, might even forbid any revitalisation attempt: "the language has thus been

excluded from the general trend of our modern European culture, and can never regain what it has lost" (Grant, 2006 [2000]: 6).

This arose, it seems, from the confusion between written language and language itself, and such conceptions are variants of a type of ideology which Milroy & Milroy (1991 [1985]: 22-23) call an ideology of the standard: "(...) it seems more appropriate to speak more abstractly of standardisation as an *ideology*, and a standard language as an idea in mind rather than a reality – a set of abstract norms to which actual usage may conform to a greater or lesser extent". Views on literacy and written standards are transposed to the spoken medium in a recursive manner; if no recognised or acclaimed written text can be assigned to Scots, and exclusively to Scots, on whatever criteria, then the same must be true of the oral language, and the same phenomena must therefore apply to the spoken medium, hence the very possibility of Scots being a half-language (Eagle, 2000; Murison, 1979: 11).

Histories of Scots are in fact essentially histories of written Scots, written from a literary point of view, with a list of its greatest literary achievements: *The Dream of the Rood*, the Makars, Fergusson and Burns, MacDiarmid, with an emphasis on either Burns or MacDiarmid, depending on what positions the authors take on language revitalisation.

I am once again not suggesting that a process of language standardisation might not have happened in Scotland in the case of Scots, or for that matter that it was not actually taking place. Yet, Scots became marginalised precisely at a time when language standards were being created, imagined in the rest of Western Europe, and in particular in northern France (Lodge, 1993), parts of Spain (Woolard, 2004) and England (Milroy, 1984; Milroy & Milroy, 1991 [1985]; Tieken-Boon van Ostade, 2006).

What I am suggesting is that the modern conception of language at work in the various texts considered here displays various ideological views on Scots, and ones that are in fact based on the dominant conceptions of language, those of the Standard-English speaking world. It is a conception based on the fact that a 'full language' is a written language, and on the idea that without a written standard, languages degenerate into *patois* or dialects: thus, Milroy & Milroy's assertion that "if the forms of a language are not validated in some way by some authority or authorities, the language would break up into dialects that would sooner or later become mutually incomprehensible" (1991 [1985]: 23), is paralleled in Grant's analysis of the history of Scots: after the 18th century revival, a literary revival of course, the language breaks up into several dialects (Grant, 2006 [2000]: 7) and therefore ceases to be able to be considered as a relevant tool for communication. Murison (1977) also stipulates, while talking

about literature, that "as the national language fades out, a series of dialects supersedes it all over Scotland" (1977: 7).

The ideology of the standard is clearly present in the way that renaissance or revival movements, as well as the heyday of the language, are systematically presented as being times of great literary achievements: movements led by an elite, or an aspiring elite, rather than popular movements. Very few authors refer to Scots as a spoken medium, or when doing so, it is always mixed with elements pertaining to Scots as a written medium:

> Much is made of the claim that from the sixteenth century onwards, Scots had become increasingly anglicised, notably through the influence of English literary and liturgical forms. While there may be some truth in such an assertion, as it relates to the ways in which the language was coming to be spelt and in some innovative vocabulary it was coming to incorporate, it seems doubtful that the user of vernacular Scots was influenced by the linguistic norms of Metropolitan London. (Robertson, 1996: 26)

When Murison, for instance, refers to a full canon of Scots, or to Scots as a full language, he implies that Scots needs the same attributes as other European languages to be considered a language in its own right. Hence also, it would appear, the discussion about whether Scots is a language or not in Lorvik (1995) and McClure (1988), backed by historical arguments. Such a vision may thus be analysed not only as ideologically construed, but also, perhaps more importantly, based on language ideologies imposed from centres of power in London, which the current revitalisation movement seeks to challenge.

4   Conclusion

Periodisations (Woolard, 2004: 58) with regard to histories of language are always posterior (later) reconstructions – like all reconstructions, they are socially situated. One cannot but ask how they are situated, and what cause they serve.

What is presented in the various histories of Scots, which, as I suggest, constitute a single more or less unified narrative legitimising not only the demands for more recognition for Scots as a language but also the Scots language movement as an organised and recognisable force, are really histories of Scots as a written and a standardised language, despite clear signs of other potential narratives, such as an emphasis on Scotland as a multilingual nation.

This narrative is a charter myth for the current Scots revitalisation movement, and is based on a vision of a primeval state of Scotland as a multilingual nation, in which Gaelic had no more rights than Scots as the language of the nation. Subsequently, Scots, or Inglis, gained a new name, which now enables some modern language activists to (at least partly) iconize the language and to associate it with the nation. Those elements put together constitute the new proposed mythscape for Scotland, at least as far as language is concerned.

The recurrence of the historical narrative ritualises the practice of legitimising Scots and the Scots language movement through history (Silverstein, 2003: 203) – a key element in the diffusion and spread of a new mythscape.

The charter myth of Scots can be read as a site for ideological debate, to use Blommaert's (1999b) terminology, a debate which potentially opposes views of Scotland as a multilingual country with modernist opinions on language which make strong connections between nation and language. Further research is needed to identify all discourses at play in the histories of the Scots.

Ideologies of language are always multiple (Kroskrity, 2009b: 6-7), in Scotland as elsewhere, and the surface of the subject has only just been scratched here, but this article interestingly shows how the history of Scots still betrays what Dorian (1998), referring to dominant language ideologies, an "ideology of contempt" towards small languages, of self-contempt in the present case.

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