

Aw Ae Wey—Written Scots in Scotland and Ulster

Introduction

Under the European Charter for Regional or Minority Languages¹ the British Government committed itself to protecting and encouraging autochthonous regional or minority languages, one of them Scots. Among the objectives were:

the facilitation and/or encouragement of the use of regional or minority languages, in speech and writing, in public and private life; (Part II Article 7, 1.d.)

Here, in particular, the facilitation of the use of written Scots in public life, especially in transactional texts intended to impart information to the general public, raises the issue of orthography. Historically Scots has never had a standard orthography in the sense that modern English does. Recent written Scots, especially in the 20th-century, encompasses a great deal of variation reflecting historical, regional, circumstantial and idiosyncratic practices. That would seem to reflect a somewhat anarchic situation, but the literary record, especially in the 18th and 19th centuries, shows this not to be the case.

In this paper the nature of Scots orthography, especially that of the 18th and 19th centuries, will be examined along with some of the more recent well-known or exhaustive suggestions for a normative orthography. The suitability of various traditional practices and the various suggestions made by others will be discussed as regards the establishing of a ‘standardised’ pan-dialectal normative orthography—although the present author prefers ‘regularised’. There is no intrinsic reason why a normative orthography should prescribe one spelling for each word if a variant pronunciation cannot be predicted from the graphemes used to represent the underlying phonemes.

An Overview of Scots Orthography

The earliest occurrence of Scots words in writing originating in Scotland was in texts written in Latin. These were usually Latinised forms of geographical names or titles.

The principle chronological periods in the history of Scots are usually defined as follows (Robinson 1985: xiii):

Old English:	to 1100
Older Scots:	to 1700
Pre-literary Scots:	to 1375
Early Scots:	to 1450
Middle Scots:	1450 to 1700
Early Middle Scots:	1450 to 1550
Late Middle Scots:	1550 to 1700
Modern Scots:	1700 onwards

¹ <http://conventions.coe.int/Treaty/en/Treaties/Html/148.htm> accessed on 16.09.06.

The fragment of the *Dream of the Rood*, carved in runes on the Ruthwell Cross in Dumfriesshire (? c. 800), might have been carved, as far as linguistic propriety is concerned, at Edinburgh or at York. (Smith 1902: xii)

THE THING WHICH most basically and consistently separates Scots and English is pronunciation. Starting from the same base as Standard English, Scots has developed along a very different phonological path beginning with the separate development of Old Northumbrian in the Old English period. (Tulloch 1980: 182)

As Murray (1873) has pointed out, Scots developed out of the Northumbrian dialect of Old English, and one should presume that it inherited the written traditions of the north as well, language developments and writing traditions which have never been seriously studied. (Kniezsa 1997: 24)

By the second half of the 15th-century all the characteristic features of Scots orthography had been developed. Those consisted of graphemes derived from forms carried over from Anglo-Saxon, general features introduced by scribes trained in the 11th- and 12th-century Norman French and Parisian traditions, forms shared with northern English and Scots innovations or archaic forms no longer used in northern English. (Kniezsa 1997)

The analysis in section 2.3 above has made it evident that all the spelling features which count as diagnostic in Scottish orthography were already found in Northern English texts, and earlier than the examples written in Scotland. [...] the Scottish scribes learned their writing tradition from the north, and it formed a spelling continuum in the first appearance of texts written in the vernacular. (Kniezsa 1997: 32)

That this is true, even as late as Late Middle English (1300–c. 1450), is shown by the comparison of the authenticated writings of John Barbour, Archdeacon of Aberdeen (? 1320–1395), and Richard Rolle, the hermit of Hampole near Doncaster, who wrote about 1340. (Smith 1902: xii)

The uniqueness of the orthography therefore lies, not so much in the invention of entirely new notational forms, but in being a special system which Scots scribes developed from shared features and the later developments of major variants out of earlier marginal ones. (Kniezsa 1997: 34)

Despite certain internal differences, which we shall see were less idiosyncracies than the sporadic effects of influences from without, the uniformity in the practice of Middle Scots is one of its most striking features. (Smith 1902: xii)

If variability was the rule in EModE before conventions became stable around 1700, then the coexistence of two largely unsettled systems in late 16C Scotland allowed for even greater variation. (Görlach 2002: 69)

Older Scots Orthography

Scots orthography had become relatively stable between 1450 and 1700, sharing many of its conventions with those of contemporary English. There was scant evidence of dialect variation in contemporary written Scots, although Müller (1908: 143), commenting on ‘dialect spellings’ in 16th-century Aberdeen documents, mentioned *fat* for *quhat* (‘what’), *quintray* for *countrie* (‘country’) and the occasional marking of the /i/ realisation of Anglo-Saxon /ō/ Older Scots /ø/, which is still current today.

Osc. seems to have had a more or less standardised orthography, in the sense that according to our present understanding, few texts give orthographic clues about the provenance of author or scribe; but did it have the first, lexicalized orthographic system, or the second grapheme–phoneme kind of system, or a system which was neither of these? The answer to this question is not immediately apparent. (Agutter 1987: 75)

The Lothian dialect had been elevated to the status of the official language of local and national government, and was the basic medium for the brilliant literary tradition of 15th- and 16th-century

Scotland. Local dialect features in Middle Scots writings (literary and non-literary) are not common, though some can be found; and if the spelling of Middle Scots was far from standardised, the language was in this respect no different from other national vernaculars of the period preceding and immediately following the advent of printing. (McClure 1995: 22)

First, just as Tudor English is, Scots is in the process of developing a standard by the beginning of the sixteenth century, based on the Mid-Scots dialects spoken in Edinburgh and other important Central Belt centres. Like sixteenth-century English, there is still a large amount of variation within it, especially in the orthography, and there are no Scots grammarians or dictionary-makers to codify what is 'proper' Scots. Indeed, it is not even certain that anyone had a notion of that would be, or even used this dialect in the spoken mode, although it certainly could have served as the sort of koiné that could be used among people of diverse origins who are thrown together, as might happen in the court, the chancery, the universities or religious houses [...] (Johnston 1997a: 50)

More important is the fact that speakers of Scots had developed a separate spelling system and prescriptive norms for the language (Meurmann-Solin 1993, 1997, Kniezsa 1997), associated in the main with a metropolitan variety used in the court at Edinburgh. Other 'dialects' of English also had distinctive spelling patterns; Scots managed to maintain and propagate its system well into the age of print, however. Indeed, the middle to late sixteenth century was when this separate system was most healthy. It was broadcast through the medium of print, and written both by considerable writers, and by some of the most prominent people in the country (Jack 1997). (Millar 2005: 90-91)

Among the particularly Scottish characteristics (Smith 1902; Aitken 1977; 2002, Görlach 2002) were the representation of long vowels by an added <i> or <y> in words such as *streik* ('stretch'), *weil* ('well'), *weit* ('wet'), *foirseing* ('foreseeing'), *opteynit* ('obtained'), *weycht* ('wight'), *meteyr* ('metre'), *gairding* ('garden'), *mair* ('more'), *pairt* ('part'), *waittir* ('water'), *cloik* ('cloak'), *coill* ('coal'), *coird* ('cord'), *bluid* ('blood'), *buik* ('book'), *fluid* ('flood') *fuill* ('fool') and *puir* ('poor'). Depending on adjacent consonants, <y> and <o> were often used instead of <i> and <u> in order to aid legibility, as was a free variation between <u, v> and <w>. Vocalised <l> usually became unsounded after <ā> and <ō>, but the grapheme remained as a marker of vowel length and often occurred in words that historically had no <l>, such as *walkinit* ('wakened'), *chalmir* ('chamber') *waltir* ('water'), *rolkis* ('rocks'), *golkit* ('foolish'), *als* ('as') and *poulder* ('powder').

This is an outstanding characteristic of M.Sc. It is in reality an orthographical device to indicate a long vowel. (Smith 1902: xxiii)

When, by a sound change, the spelling *ai*, which had represented a separate diphthong in Middle English, can to have the same sound as the spelling *a* used for a long vowel, a new way of representing the length of the vowel came into being. In Middle Scots this convention was applied to *e*, *u* and *o* as well so that a following *i* or *y* became a standard indication of a long vowel. (Tulloch 1980: 200)

<oa>, which survives in a great many words in present-day English e.g. *board*, *boat*, *coat*, was introduced to distinguish the more open long vowel /ɔ:/ from /o:/, which was represented by <oo>. (Scragg 1975: 77)

[...] with the possible exception of <oa> which is a late development in southern English and did not appear in Scots earlier than the sixteenth century (Müller 1908). (Kniezsa 1997: 34)

There is a mysterious grapheme which surfaces in the sixteenth century—at least, mention is made of it in connection with texts written in this period. It is the digraph <ae>, an allograph of Scots <a>—<a-e>—<ai/y>: *maer*, *sae* and so on. [...] from the eighteenth century it gained ground and became an important part of the non-anglicised Scots orthography. (Kniezsa 1997: 42)

Among the particularly Scottish consonant graphemes were the longer retention of the characters <þ> (*th*) and <ß>, an elaborately formed <s> and <ʒ> (yogh), often rendered <z> but also used initially for /j/ in, for example, *ʒour* or *zour* for *your*. Among the particularly Scottish consonant clusters were <quh> /xw/, now <wh>, <sch> /ʃ/, now <sh>,

and <ch> for /x/, etymological <gh> in English. In written texts a number of abbreviations were commonly used, for example, *w^t* for *with* and *E^t* for *Edinburgh*.

Other common conventions were the use of <k> and <ll> in words such as *crak* ('crack'), *cukis* ('cooks'), *infekkit* ('infected'), *paddok* ('frog'), *sikkerlie* ('surely'), *stamok* ('stomach'), *angell* ('angel'), *haill* ('whole'), *littill* ('little'), *maternall* ('maternal') and *sempill* ('simple'). Further conventions included consonant doubling in words such as *crappe* ('crept'), *doubbis* ('puddles'), *innemy* ('enemy'), *lawchtter* ('laughter'), *myshappis* ('mishaps'), *proffect* ('profit'), *tcheir* ('chair') and *wyffis* ('wives'). Common word ending conventions included <-ir> and <(i)oun> in words such as *bettir* ('better'), *bittir* ('bitter'), *maneir* ('manner'), *marineir* ('mariner'), *wattir* ('water'), *commoun* ('common'), *delectatioun* ('delectation'), *inclynatioun* ('inclination') and *occasioun* ('occasion').

Plural nouns were generally formed by adding <-is> or <-ys>, probably pronounced /ɪs/ and later /s, z/ as in Modern Scots, for example, *Scottis* ('Scottish') and *Inglis* ('English')². The present participle and gerund were generally distinguished as <-and>, <-ant> and <-ing>, <-yng>, <-yn>, <-ene> or <-en> in words such as *scrapand* and *cummyng* ('coming'). The past participle of verbs was usually <-it> or <-yt> in words such as *perysit* ('perished') and *sirculit* ('encircled'). The negative particle was <-na> in, for example, *haue na* ('have not') and *mak na* ('make not').

Anglicisation occurred rapidly during the 16th-century, when in Scotland, Scots and English spellings became interchangeable, and by the end of the 17th-century Scots was virtually absent in official writing.

Among the conditions favouring this trend were the Scots' failure to produce a translation of the Bible in their own language and Protestant [...] reliance on Bibles in English, so that the Biblical language of Scotland was English. (Aitken 1992: 894)

The history of the relationship between Scotland and England is one of constant political, linguistic and cultural influence of the south upon its northern neighbour. From the sixteenth century onwards, there were some developments in Scottish writing which led away from a distinctive Scottish orthography towards a general, all-English one by the end of the seventeenth century. (Kniezsa 1997: 43)

In the late sixteenth and early seventeenth centuries, even those authors who are counted as considerably anglicised restrict the use of southern spellings to individual lexical items rather than mix the two systems [...] (Kniezsa 1997: 44)

Stylistically speaking, the appearance of anglicised spelling depends on the typology of writing; it is generally stated that the most anglicised texts were the religious treatises, while the most conservative Scottish were official papers, such as those of the Privy Council, local authorities and so on. The spelling in private papers seems to depend on the personal history of the authors, and whether and for how long they lived in England [...] and even there their early training wins considerable ground against later English influence. (Kniezsa 1997: 46)

² The modern form can still be found in surnames and place names as Ingles or Inglis [ɪŋlɪz] e.g. Ingleston or Ingliston etc.

Modern Scots Orthography

Scots of course remained the vernacular of the vast majority of the Scottish population but from here on written Scots survived only in vernacular literature, usually poetry and the centuries-old ballads. By the 18th-century a revival of written Scots, based largely on contemporary colloquial Scots, occurred, and although the spellings used were highly anglicised some conventions based on 16th-century written Scots were used. This continued to the end of the 19th-century, receiving a further boost through the repeal of the Stamp Act in 1855, which led to increased availability of newspapers and magazines, many of which had some Scots content.

And the Scots tongue has an orthography of its own, lacking neither "authority nor author."
(Stevenson 1905: 152)

[...] Scots remains the one British dialect which may be represented today by a consistent (and traditional orthography). (Scragg 1975: 37)

We can be quite sure that Scott's Scots is actually thicker than it looks. As one might expect, his spellings are irregular and inconsistent but, if they have any tendency at all, it is in the direction of making it more intelligible to an English reader [...] This indeed was in the tradition of the eighteenth-century Scots writer[s] from Ramsay onwards, but it has the unfortunate effect of obscuring the proper pronunciation and rhythm which enhances the author's effects in using this broken language to its maximum capacity. (Murison 1969: 220)

Instead most use the standard form of the language as developed by Ramsay, Fergusson and Burns in the poetry of the eighteenth century. This was a descendant of the old court Scots, which was basically the Scots of sixteenth-century Edinburgh and, although some of the more distinctive old Scots spellings like *quh* for *wh* and *sch* for *sh* had been dropped, this Standard Scots had in its spelling caught up with all recent changes in Edinburgh Scots. This is evident in poetry in the rhymes. (Tulloch 1980: 249)

The mixed spelling he adopted made an Englishman's task of understanding much easier. And, apart from intelligibility, there is probably another reason why Scott wanted to introduce English spellings. He was interested in presenting his Scots-speaking lower-class characters as dignified human beings and not as ignorant, stupid and laughable fools. (Tulloch 1980: 303)

According to the prevailing view of Scottish culture, the nineteenth century after the death of Scott was a period of decline and failure in which Scottish writers, recoiling from the spectre of industrialisation, immersed themselves in rural fantasy following Sir James Barry, 'Ian Maclaren' (Dr John Watson) and other writers of the 'Kailyard School'. The present study seeks to modify this view, suggesting that Scottish culture was (and is) a popular culture, and that its major vehicle during the period was not the London-dominated booktrade, but the Scottish newspaper press, owned, written, and circulating within the country. It suggests that in the Scottish context fiction published in the press was much more extensive and important than might otherwise be concluded on the evidence of a book-culture produced for an all-UK literary market, and that during this period popular newspapers provided the environment for a vernacular prose revival of unprecedented proportions. (Donaldson: 1986 xii)

There were poems in the vernacular, novels with vernacular dialogue, editorial or near-editorial comment in the vernacular, vernacular advertisements, and quite enormous quantities of antiquarian, historical, folkloristic and musicological feature writing which dealt with every aspect of Scottish life and culture in which the vernacular also, and inevitably, figured largely. There was a growing awareness of the complexity of the language situation in Scotland which showed itself in a tendency to report Scots speakers verbatim without silently translating what they said into standard English. (Donaldson 1986: 60-61)

The book-trade had long been tied into the English market and obliged to conform to the cultural values which prevailed within it. Most of Walter Scott's readers would have been English—he could never have built that Gothic extravaganza at Abbotsford on returns from the Scottish book-trade

alone—and he had to write about things they could understand in a way that they would tolerate. And that is true for most Scottish book–novelists during the nineteenth century. But the newspaper press was wholly free from this constraint. It could address a specific audience at national, regional or local level, and this had important consequences when we consider the cultural role it came to perform. [...] Above all, they used vernacular Scots to deal with an unprecedented range of topics [...] (Donaldson 1989: 2–4)

This book presents evidence [...] of a major vernacular revival during the second half of the nineteenth century. Revival. In a sense the word is ill-chosen. How could Scots be revived? It had never declined. Not, at least, its spoken forms which continued to be the language of the people [...] (Donaldson 1989: 1–2)

If the textbooks were right, this volume would contain nothing but empty pages; because the medium in which its authors wrote—i.e. discursive Scots prose—became extinct more than two hundred years before any of them were born. (Donaldson 1989: 10)

After the Union of the Crowns in 1603, and still more after the Union of the Parliaments in 1707, the intercourse between Scotland and England became much closer, with the natural result that the influence of English spelling, then gradually becoming standardized, upon the spelling of Scotch rapidly increased; more especially as Scotch writers found it to be to their interest to secure a wider audience by making their works, even when composed in Scotch dialect, more easily intelligible to English readers unfamiliar with Scotch pronunciations. (Wilson 1926: 194)

The key achievement of Ulster–Scots literature—those works on which its claim to our attention rests—lie in this field. It is possible to extend the cannon by including, for instance, the utilitarian prose of the plantation period or the Kailyard newspaper fiction of the mid-nineteenth century. (McIlvanney 2005: 214)

By the end of the eighteenth century, any written Scots was produced in a melange of orthographical styles which lent themselves to seeing it as a corrupt English. (Millar 2005: 191)

By analysing the orthographic practices of a number of 18th– and 19th–century revival writers from various parts of Scotland and Ulster it is possible to establish which orthographic tendencies prevailed and also to identify those which may be considered typical or traditional Scots forms. The analysis of the vowels is based on the numbering scheme devised by A. J. Aitken.

I shall not attempt to squeeze Scots phonology into the mould of Wells' (1982) keywords. This is an excellent tool for the description of Standard English and closely related varieties, but it cannot be matched up with Scots (or indeed English dialects north of the Humber) without serious distortion, because of differences of lexical incidence, going back in some cases to late OE. Here, we use instead the system of vowel numbers established for Scots by Aitken (1977), and revised by Aitken and Macafee (2002). (Macafee 2004: 63)

The Scots vowel system (Aitken 1981b: 132–133, 1984: 95–98).

Vowel Number	Vernacular Scots	Scots vowel
8a	ay 'always', gey 'very', May, pay, way	əi
10	quoit, avoid, join, point, oil, choice, poison	
1 short	bite, bide, price, wife, tide	
1 long	five, size, fry, aye 'yes', kye 'cows', fire	a·e
2	meet, need, queen, see, seven, devil, here	i
11	ee 'eye', dee 'die', dree 'endure', lee 'untruth'	
3	meat, breath, dead, head, steal, pear, mear 'mare, female horse'	(Merges with 2, 4, or 8)
4	ake 'oak', ate 'oat', bate 'boat', sape 'soap', baith 'both', hame 'home', stane 'stone', hale 'whole', tae 'toe', twae 'two' (South-eastern dialects); late, pale, bathe, day, say, away, mare 'more', care	e
8	bait, braid, hail, pail, pair	e: (in many Central Scots dialects merged with 4)
5	throat, coat, thole 'endure', rose, before	o: (merges with 18 in some e.g. Central and South Scots)
18	cot, God, on, loch, bocht 'bought', horse, Forth	o
6	about, bouk 'bulk', poupit 'pulpit', loud, powder, shouder 'shoulder', room, mouth, house, louse, cow, now, fou 'full', pou 'pull', plow 'plough', oo 'wool', hour, sour	u
7	boot, fruit, good, muin 'moon', use (n.), use (v.), love, do, moor, poor, sure	ø (North Mainland: merged with 2, Central and South Scots: merged or merging with 4 (SVLR long), 15 (SVLR short).)
9	Boyd, choice, noise, boy, joy	oi
12	faut 'fault', saut 'salt', fraud, mawn 'mown', auld 'old', cauld 'cold', hauch 'meadow', cause, law, snaw 'snow', aw 'all', faw 'fall', twaw 'two' (except in the south-east), far, daur 'dare', waur 'worse'	a: /ɔ: (in some Northern dialects merged with 17)
13	nowt 'cattle', cowl 'colt', gowf 'golf', sowder 'solder', louse 'loose', chow 'chew', grow, know 'knoll', four, owre 'over', row 'roll'	ʌu
14	duty, feud, rule, heuk 'hook', neuk, beuch 'bough', teuch 'tough', news, dew, few, blue, true, plewis 'ploughs'	iu / ju ³
15	bit, put, lid, hiss, give, gird 'hoop', his, next, whether, yird 'earth', fir	ɪ
16	met, bed, leather, meh 'cry of sheep', serve, Perth, Ker	ɛ
17	sat, lad, man, jazz, vase, warst, mar	a (see vowel 12 above)
19	butt, bud, bus, buff, buzz, word, fur	ʌ

³ Aitken included those spelled <eu> under vowel 14 although separate treatment is justified for many of them by their differing etymology (Anglo-Saxon long \bar{e} , vowel 7 before /k/ and /x/) and resulting phonetic realisations.

Written Scots from Central Scotland

FERGUSSON'S Scots poems are not purely in the Edinburgh or in the Lothian dialect, any more than Burns's are purely 'in the Ayrshire dialect.' Dialect poetry—in the sense of a deliberate effort to record the speech mannerisms of a definite locality—is relatively rare in Scotland. [...] Scots is therefore composed in some sort of a standard language rather than in dialect; or if dialect we must call it, then it is a literary dialect created by men of the pen. This is certainly true of most of the Scots prose of Sir Walter Scott and Robert Louis Stevenson. It is also true of the Scots poetry of Ramsay, Fergusson and Burns [...] (Mackie 1952: 123-124)

These observations are mainly useful as evidence for my contention that the poet, like Scott and Stevenson later and Allan Ramsay before him, is trying to write in traditional Scots rather than record something accurate for the dialect student. (Mackie 1952: 128-129)

By his rhyming in most cases Fergusson makes it clear that while he uses English spelling he intends usually Scottish pronunciations of the words that the two tongues have in common, but that are differently sounded in the sister languages. (Mackie 1952: 131)

[...] as evidently most of the writers (including of Ayrshire, like Kennedy and Nisbet) aimed at writing, not in their own local dialect, but in the then accepted literary Scots. (Wilson 1926: 168)

[...] as we have seen, Scott uses Standard Scots [...] (Tulloch 1980: 182)

Scott's answer was characteristically an inconsistent use of both [English and Scots] conventions. This was also the way most of his eighteenth-century predecessors had settled the question. (Tulloch 1980: 198)

In fact the transcriber does not seem to have made a lot of changes to Scott's spelling and the author always had a chance to approve, or even amend, the results of the transcription. In the circumstances it seems reasonable to talk of the spelling as Scott's own. (Tulloch 1980: 193)

[...] and since Ramsay at times used the spelling of an English word to represent its Scots phonological cognate—a practice current among Scottish writers since the seventeenth or even, arguably, the late sixteenth century [...] (McClure 1987: 262)

[...] His [Allan Ramsay's] glossary is not large (about 750 words); there are perceptive observations on the Scots vowel system [...] but also because the spelling provided a model for Scots poets widely followed in the eighteenth century and far on into the nineteenth. The main object seems to have been to spell identically with or as near as possible to the English spelling, e.g. <gh> rather than <ch> in *bright*, *night*, <-ed> for <-it> in past participles, <oo> representing /ø:/ as well as /u:/ as in *good*, *soon*, *poor*, <ou> and <u> for /u:/, while <ow> is sometimes the simple vowel /u:/ and sometimes the diphthong /ʌu/. The affects of this mixer-maxter of Scots and English in the minds of people accustomed to associate language with its printed form can be heard to this day in the unhappy attempts of performers to sing a Scots song or recite a Scots poem [...] (Murison 1987: 18)

Wilson's⁴ analysis showed that Ramsay, Fergusson, Burns and Scott followed the following orthographic practices.

All generally used <gh> for the older <ch> /x/ but occasionally used <ch>, <wh> for the older <quh> in words such as *whase* ('whose') and *what*, <th> for dental fricatives /θ/ and /ð/, and <sh> /ʃ/ for the older <sch>. Ramsay generally adopted <y> for the older yogh <3> but occasionally used <z> (used by early printers to replace yogh, which was not extant in contemporary printing sets) in words such as *cunzie* ('coin') and *fenzie* ('feign').

Burns [...] leaves it to be understood that the Scots pronunciation of the *gh* is the rough aspirate [...] (Wilson 1923: 37)

Fergusson would, however, use the guttural [gh], and most of his contemporaries would, including judges and other dignitaries. (Mackie 1952:127)

⁴ Wilson, James (1926) *The Dialects of Central Scotland*, London: Oxford University Press. pp. 194-221.

He [Fergusson] has a marked fondness for the old Scots 'z' which after 'n' or 'l' has the effect of the initial 'y' in 'yes,' making the 'l' into Spanish 'll' and the 'n' into French 'gn.' So we get 'cunzied,' 'fenzying', [...] 'spulzie' (for spoil, dialect 'spile'), 'tulzie,' 'brulzies,' 'ulzie' (oil, dialect 'ile'). (Mackie 1952: 138)

Apart from an archaic passage in *Chronicles of the Canongate* [...] the only survival of *quh* in Scott is, as we might expect, in the legal term *umquhile* '(the) late' [...] and even this is often spelt *umwhile* [...] Scott like Ramsay, preferred the *gh* spelling. (Tulloch 1980: 198)

All generally used an apostrophe to represent perceived 'missing letters' in the likes of *an'* ('and'), *awa'* ('away'), *mak'* ('make') *o'* ('of'), *wi'* ('with') and for root-final <l> vocalisation in words such as *a'* ('all'), *ca'* ('call'), *fa'* ('fall') and the suffix *-fu'* ('full') but in medial positions traditional graphemes were preferred in words such as *fause* ('false'), *faut* ('fault'), *gowd* ('gold'), *gowff* ('golf') and *saut* ('salt'). In older Scots the <l> represented vowel length (Smith 1902: xxiii). Scott did much the same but often used the English spelling or even inserted <l> where it was no longer usual, perhaps as a deliberate archaism, for example *almery* for *aumry* ('cupboard'), *calsay* for *causey* ('pavement'), *halse* for *hause* ('throat'), *maulkin* for *maukin* ('hare') and *nolt* for *nowt* ('cattle').

In our study of Fergusson's Scots [...] is the Ramsay trick of spelling Scots as if it were English, with occasional apostrophes to show clearly the relationship of a Scots word with its English cognate. (Mackie 1952: 130)

Scott spells relatively few words with apostrophes but his page is nevertheless dotted with them because these words include some very common ones, in particular *a'* 'all', *o'* 'of' and *wi'* 'with'. (in a few rare cases *a'* is replaced by *aw* [...]) (Tulloch 1980: 194)

All used *no* ('not') and generally used <-na> for the negative particle equivalent to <-n't> in words such as *canna*, *dinna* ('don't') and *maunna* ('mustn't').

Ramsay and Fergusson often rendered the elided terminal <d> in <nd> and <ld> as an apostrophe in words such as *an'* ('and'), *en'* ('end'), *han'* ('hand') and *stan'* ('stand'). Burns regularly used an apostrophe indicating the characteristic Ayrshire pronunciation. Scott tended to write the <d>.

Fergusson [...] drops the 'd' when it suits him for rhyming purposes. (Mackie 1952: 136)

Ramsay, Fergusson and Burns used *ae*, *ane* ('one')⁵, although they probably pronounced them [je, jɪn]. Scott used both *ane* and *yin*.

Curiously enough, although in A[yrshire]. 'one' *num.* is pronounced *yin*, 'once' *yins*, and 'one' *adj.* *yay*, Burns spells them 'ane', 'ance', and 'ae'. (Wilson 1923: 37)

Ramsay often rendered past tense of weak verbs /ət/ <-it>, but also used English <-ed> and <-d>. Fergusson was much more consistent, preferring <-it>. Scott mixed <-it> and <-ed>, along with such forms as *sell'd* ('sold') and *tell'd* ('told').

As it happens Scott, while using the *-it* ending quite frequently, rarely uses it where it has been elided to *-t*, and this may explain the *-ed* forms here. (Tulloch 1980: 305)

Ramsay often rendered the present participle /ɪn/ <-an>, or <-in'> but also <-ing>. Fergusson was much more consistent preferring <-in>. Burns used all three. Scott preferred <-ing>.

⁵ *Ane* corresponds in its usage for the most part to St.Eng. *one*, but AE (*q.v.*) is the usual Sc. form for the adj. before a noun." (SND: ane)

Throughout the M.Sc. period the distinction between the pres. Part. (verbal adj.) and the gerund (verbal noun) is generally kept, the former being in *-and* (or *-ant*), the latter in *-yng* or *-yn*, and *-een* or *-en*. (Smith 1902: xxxvi-xxxvii)

Though he [Burns] often spells the present participle with the termination *an*, he as often spells it *in* or *ing*. In his later editions he drops the distinction, and spells both the present participle and the verbal noun as ending in *in*, or the English *ing* [...] (Wilson 1923: 37)

Both are now pronounced *in* throughout Central Scotland. (Wilson 1926: 197)

[...] Allan Ramsay, not always, represented the ending of the present participle as 'an' [and] again not in every case, gives the gerundive ending 'in.' [...] Fergusson uses 'ing' and 'in' indiscriminately for both participle and gerundive. (Mackie 1952: 132-134)

Scott [...] almost invariably uses *ing* and only very rarely *in* or *in'*. (Tulloch 1980: 197)

Vowels 1, 8a and 10 were usually written <i> or <y>, with a mute <e> after a following consonant in words such as *ay* ('yes'), *aye* ('always'), *byre* ('cowshed'), *dyke* ('wall'), *fire*, *kye* ('cattle'), *side*, *syne* ('ago'), *tine* ('lose') and *tyke* ('dog'). Burns held with English spellings ending in <-ay> in words such as *hay*, *pay*, *way* and *oil*. Scott used *gey* ('very') and *quey* ('heifer') but *pay* and *way*. All used <oi> in most words with /əi/ realisations such as *boil*, *join*, *point* and *toil*.

Vowel 2 and 11 were usually written <ee>, but <ei> and <ie> also occasionally occur in words such as *brier* ('briar'), *ee* ('eye'), *flee* ('fly'), *green*, *neighbour* ('neighbour'), *slee* ('sly'), *steek* ('shut') and *wee* ('little').

Vowel 3 was usually written <ea> in words such as *beast*, *clean*, *dead*, *east*, *head*, *meal* and *meat*, but Scott also used *heid* ('head').

Vowels 4 and 8 were variously written <ai, aCe> or <ae>, for example initial and medial *ain* (ones 'own'), *braid* ('broad'), *daith* ('death'), *laid* ('load'), *skail* ('spill'), *taid* ('toad'), *yaird* ('yard'), *gane* ('gone'), *hale* ('whole'), *lave* ('rest') *nane* ('none'), *wame* ('belly'), *claes* ('clothes') and root-final *brae* ('hillside'), *flae* ('flea'), *frae* ('from'), *gae* ('go'), *sae* ('so'), *strae* ('straw').

Vowels 5 and 18 were usually written <oa, oCe> and <o> as in English cognates, in words such as *cod* ('pillow'), *corn*, *flock*, *horse* and *morn* ('morning').

Vowel 6 was variously written <ou> or <ow>, and occasionally <oo> or <uCe>, in words such as *doun* ('doun'), *fou* ('full'), *jouk* v. ('duck'), *oor* ('our'), *oot* ('out'), *pou* ('pull'), *roust* ('rust'), *south*, *sow*, *throw* ('through') and *toun* ('town'). Burns was particularly fond of the English spellings. Scott often used <ow> but also <oo>.

He [Burns] generally also follows the E. spelling in the many words which in A[yrshire]. Are pronounced with the sound of *oo*, and in E. with the sound of *ou* or *ow*, and so spelt in E. (Wilson 1923: 43)

Fergusson repeats Ramsay's inconsistency in the spelling of the 'ou' (oo) and 'ow' (diphthong) sounds. He will spell 'cow' for 'cou', 'dow' for 'dour,' and yet he will use 'loup' for 'lowp.' In one rhyme sequence he gives us 'doup,' 'coup,' 'stoup' and 'sowp' (backside, upset, draught and sup). It is evident that he, like Ramsay before him, relied on his Scottish readers knowing how the words were expected to be pronounced, but a reader not of his day might be excused for getting hopelessly bogged among these 'ou's' and 'ow's.' (Mackie 1952: 132)

The traditional Scots spelling of this sound is *ou* [...] as we shall see in the discussion of Scott's spelling he rarely uses the English alternative *oo*. (Tulloch 1980: 184)

Vowel 7 was variously written <uCe> or <ui>, but also <oo> as in English cognates, in words such as *bluid* ('blood'), *guid* ('good'), *coof* ('fool'), *loof* ('palm') and *clute* ('hoof'). Burns was particularly fond of using <oo>. Scott tended to use <ui>, but also <oo>.

[...] Burns generally follows the E. spelling or spells it with *oo*, but sometimes with *ui* or with *u* followed by a mute *e* after a consonant [...] (Wilson 1923: 42)

The 'ui' vowel of many Scots words, corresponding in sound to the German modified 'o' in 'Goethe' or the French 'œu' in '*hors d' œuvre*,' has become quite unrounded in Edinburgh and the Lothians, but the process had not gone so far in the poet's time. [...] If the unrounding was not so far advanced in Fergusson's time it would excuse his rhyming of such words as 'moon' and 'aboon' (above) with such words as 'toun' and 'doun' [...] (Mackie 1952: 127-128)

The result of vowel 7 before /k/ and /x/ was often written <eu> in words such as *beuk* ('book'), *eneugh* ('enough'), *neuk* ('nook') and *teugh* ('tough').

Me. *eu*, *eu* hat im Schott. genau dieselbe Entwicklung genommen wie in der Schriftsprache: *ĕu* > *iu* > *jū* [...] Jetzt können wir auch die Schreibung *eu* für msch. *ō* vor Guttural (§64) verstehen. Der Laut ergab nämlich in dieser Stellung ein *jū*. Da nun auch *eu* in seiner Entwicklung denselben Lautwert erreichte, vermischte man beide und gebrauchte schließlich die historische Schreibung des Entwicklungsprodukts von *eu* zur Bezeichnung für beide; und zwar *eu* wohl deshalb, weil die Entsprechungen von msch. *eu* häufiger waren und mehr gebraucht wurden, als solche von *ō* + Guttural. (Steiger 1913: 41-42)⁶

[...] in Scott's own dialect but it is not apparent in his spelling which is Standard Scots *u-e* or *ui* inherited from Middle Scots. [...] Before a back consonant [...] the *eu* spelling is used [...] (Tulloch 1980: 184)

Vowel 9 was usually written <oy> or <oi>, as in words such as *boy* and *noise*.

Vowel 12 was usually written <au> medially and <aw> initially and finally, and <a'> usually for historic <l> vocalisation (see above) in words such as *auld* ('old'), *bauld* ('bold'), *haud* ('hold'), *hauf* ('half'), *braw* ('fine'), *craw* ('crow') and *snaw* ('snow').

Vowel 13 was variously written <ow> or <ou> in words such as *gowd* ('gold'), *gowk* ('fool'), *howe* ('hollow'), *howk* ('dig'), *knowe* ('knoll'), *rout* ('roar') and *stoup* ('pitcher'). Scott was particularly fond of <ou> in medial positions.

Vowel 14 was usually written <ew> in words such as *brew*, *dew*, *few*, *grew*, *spew* and *new* but <ue> was also used in words such as *blue* and *true*.

Vowel 15 was usually written <i> in words such as *sic* ('such'), *clim* ('climb'), *fit* ('foot'), *ingan* ('onion'), *night*, *rigg* ('ridge'), *rin* ('run') and *simmer* ('summer').

Vowel 16 was usually written <e> in words such as *het* ('hot'), *snell* ('severe') and *yett* ('gate').

Vowel 17 was usually written <a> in words such as *aff* ('off'), *drap* ('drop') *saft* ('soft'), *sang* ('song') and *wast* ('west').

⁶ Middle English *eu*, *eu* developed the same way in Scots as it did in the written language [Standard English]: *ĕu* > *iu* > *jū* [...] We can now understand the spelling *eu* for Middle Scots *ō* before a guttural (§64). In this position the realisation resulted in *jū*. Now that *eu* had developed the same realisation, the two were merged and finally the historical spelling of the historical outcome of written *eu* came to represent both; particularly *eu* because the equivalents of Middle Scots *eu* occurred and were used more frequently than those from *ō* + guttural. [Present author's translation]

Vowel 19 was usually written <u> in words such as *curn* ('a few'), *lug* ('ear'), *lum* ('chimney') *muckle* ('much') and *wud* ('mad') but <u> was also often used for vowel 15 after /w/ and /m/.

Fergusson's spellings closely followed those of Ramsay. Burns was clearly influenced by both but used anglicised spellings much more often. Scott was influenced by all three but also regularly used anglicised spellings. Like Burns, Scott was inconsistent but often much more idiosyncratic, using for example, six different spellings for the cognate of dovecote—*doucot*, *doocot*, *dooket*, *dookot*, *dow-cote* and *dukit*.

Written Scots from North–East Scotland

A selection of writing by north-eastern writers taken from McClure⁷ shows a similar pattern, though a few spellings representing the local pronunciation do occur.

In view of Murray's enduring local popularity and well-established reputation as the archetypal poet of the North–East, it is somewhat surprising to observe that the distinctive linguistic features of the "Doric" are much less conspicuous in his poetic language than that of Mary Simon, and often absent altogether. (McClure 2000: 44)

Soon after the Vernacular Revival had been initiated in Edinburgh [...] the North–East made the first of its many and distinctive contributions to Scotland's literary culture; and though local dialect features were less conspicuous in poets of the eighteenth century than in the more deliberately regional literature of later times, they were sufficiently in evidence to establish an unmistakable local identity. (McClure 2002: 79)

All these writers draw on existing literary models [...] (McClure 2002: 80)

All generally used either <gh> or <ch> for /x/ but Ross used both. Murray used <ch>, except in *mith* ('might'), which indicates the dialect realisation.

All generally used <wh>. <quh> never occurred but occasional forms showing the local pronunciation /f/ did occur, for example, Ross's *fump'ring* ('whimpering') and *fustle* ('whistle'), Burness's *fan* ('when'), Symon's *fa* ('who'), *faur* ('where'), *fulp* ('whelp') and *futtled* ('whittled'), and Caie's *fan* ('when') and *fat's* ('what's'). Skinner also used *fow* ('how').

All used <th> for /θ/ and /ð/ except in dialect forms with /d/ such as *swidder* ('dither') and <sh> for the fricative /ʃ/.

The older yogh <ȝ> occasionally occurred as <z> in words such as *broolzied* ('brawled') and *gaburlunzie* ('beggar').

All generally used an apostrophe to represent perceived 'missing letters' in words such as *an'* ('and'), *awa'* ('away'), *mak'* ('make') *o'* ('of'), *wi'* ('with') and for root-final <l> vocalisation in words such as *a'* ('all'), *ca'* ('call'), *fa'* ('fall') and the suffix *-fu'* ('full') but in medial positions traditional graphemes were preferred in words such as *hauf* ('half') and *saut* ('salt').

The negative *nae* for ('not'), instead of *no*, occurred as is usual in the north-east.

The negative particle was always <-na> in words such as *canna* ('can't'), *didna* ('didn't'), *haena* ('haven't'), *wadna* ('wouldn't') and *winna* ('won't').

⁷ McClure, J. Derrick (2002). *Doric: The Dialect of North–East Scotland*. Amsterdam: Benjamins. pp.21–152.

Simplification of <nd> to <n> generally did not occur except in *norlans* ('northlands'), though examples of <ld> simplification to <l> did occur, as is typical in the north-east in words such as *aul'* ('old') and *caul'* ('cold').

All used *ane* ('one'), although they probably pronounced it /in/.

The past tense of regular verbs /ət/ <-it>, was usually written <-ed> and <-’d> but Murray did use *chappit* ('knocked') and *happit* ('covered').

The realisation /ɪn/ for the gerund was usually written <-in’> ('-ing'), though <-in> and <-ing> did occur.

Vowels 1, 8a and 10 were usually written <i> or <y> with a mute <e> after a following consonant in words such as *bide* ('stay'), *blythe* ('cheerful'), *by*, *cry*, *fire*, *hynd* ('farm labourer') and *tyne* ('loose') but <ay> and <oi> were used in words such as *may*, *pay*, *stays* ('steps') *way* and *doited* ('foolish').

Vowel 2 and 11 were usually written <ee>, but <ei> and <ie> also occasionally occur in words such as *chiel* ('fellow'), *dreep* ('drip'), *green*, *feet*, *free*, *leefu'* ('sorrowful'), *neiper* ('neighbour'), *see*, *speel* ('climb'), *speer* ('enquire') and *weel* adj. ('well').

Vowel 3 was usually written <ea> in words such as *beast*, *clean*, *dead*, *east*, *head*, *meal*, *meat* but Mary Symon also used *deid* ('dead').

Vowels 4 and 8 were variously written <ai, aCe> or <ae>, for example, initially and medially *ain* ('own'), *aith* ('oath'), *bairn* ('child'), *braid* ('broad'), *care*, *claith* ('cloth'), *faith*, *graith* ('equipment'), *hame* ('home'), and root-finally *fae* ('foe'), *frae* ('from'). Murray used *fae*, *hae* ('have'), *sae* ('so') and *strae* ('straw'). Note the cluster <ane>, usually /i/ in this dialect. All used *ane* ('one'), *ance* ('once'), *bane* ('bone'), *gane* ('gone'), *lane* ('lone'), *nane* ('none') and *stane* ('stone') but Symon used *aince* ('once').

Vowels 5 and 18 were usually written <oa, oCe> and <o> as in English cognates, in words such as *bonny* ('beautiful'), *cogue* ('bowl'), *cost*, *mony* ('many'), *on*, *road* and *roast*.

Vowel 6 /u/ was often written <ou> and <ow> as in English cognates but also <oo> or <uCe> in words such as *about*, *broo* ('brow'), *down*, *drouked* ('soaked'), *drouth*, ('thirst'), *drown*, *gown*, *now* | *noo*, *power*, *shoud* and *sude* ('should'), *shower*, *south*, *stout* and *town* | *toon*.

Vowel 7, in this dialect, usually /i/ and after /g/ and /k/ rendered /wi/, was often spelled as in English cognates *aboon* ('above'), *do*, *good*, *soon*, *mools* ('mould') *smoor’d* ('smothered') and *sure*. Among the Scots forms used were *fuish* ('fetched'), *guid* ('good'), *muir* ('moor'), *puir* ('poor') and *shuitit* ('shot') but forms indicating the local pronunciation also occurred such as *beets* ('boots'), *bleed* ('blood'), *eese* v. ('use'), *fleer* ('floor'), *gweed* ('good'), *leems* ('looms'), *queet* (*cuit* = 'ankle'), *reets* ('roots'), *sheen* ('shoes'), *squeel* ('school') and *teem* ('empty').

Vowel 7 before /k/ and /x/ was often written <eu> in words such as *aneugh* | *eneuch* ('enough'), *beuk* ('book'), *cook*, *feugh* ('puff'), *leugh* ('laugh') *nook* and *pleugh* ('plough').

Vowel 9 usually written <oy> or <oi> was only found in *coy*, James Beattie's *capernoited* ('crazy') and *doited* ('crazed') may represent vowel 10.

Vowel 12 was usually written <au> medially and <aw> initially and finally, and <a'> usually for historic <I> vocalisation (see above) in words such as *aumry* ('pantry') *auld* ('old'), *aw* ('all'), *cauld* ('cold'), *chaumer* ('chamber'), *claught* ('seize'), *fauld* ('fold'), *faw* ('fall'), *flaucht* ('a flash'), *hauf* ('half'), *haul*, *hauld* n. ('hold') *lauchin* ('laughing'), *maun* ('must') *snaw* ('snow') *taunty* and *vaunty*. Burness also used *tald* ('told').

Vowel 13 was variously written <ow> or <ou> in words such as *couped* ('overturned'), *fouk* ('folk'), *hows* (hollows), *knows* ('knolls'), *ower* ('over'), rows ('rolls') and *trow* ('believe').

Vowel 14 was usually written <ew> in words such as *new*, *spew* and *clammyhowat* ('a heavy blow')⁸.

Vowel 15⁹ was usually written <i> in words such as *anither*, *ilka* ('every'), *him*, *lingle* ('cord'), *mids* ('middle'), *night*, *sic* ('such'), *stirk* ('bullock'), *swidder* ('dither'), *will* and *wind* n.

Vowel 16 was usually written <e> in words such as *bend*, *ettle* ('endeavour'), *flegs* ('frights'), *geld*, *kent* ('known'), *set*, *sneck* ('latch') and *snell* ('severe').

Vowel 17 was usually written <a> in words such as *alang* ('along'), *back*, *canna* ('can't'), *crack* ('chatter'), *dang* pt. ('beat'), *lat* ('let'), *mak* ('make'), *man*, *sang* ('song'), *shak* ('shake') and *thrang* ('busy').

Vowel 19 was usually written <u> in words such as *bums* ('buzzes'), *burn* ('stream'), *but*, *muckle* ('large'), *smush* ('grime'), *unco* ('strange') and *up*.

As can be seen, 'phonetic' representations of the dialect were the exception rather than the rule, even for such 'marked' features as /f/ for <wh> and /jʌu/ for <ew>. Ellis (1890: 155), commenting on the [a(:)] realisation of vowel 12, wrote "The sound au' does not occur, but dialect writers have a habit of using 'au, aw' for au'."

Written Scots from Ulster

A selection of Rhyming Weaver¹⁰ poetry taken from Hewitt¹¹ and the dialogue in the novels of W. G. Lyttle¹² paints a similar picture. Poets such as Thomas Beggs, David Herbison, Robert Huddleston, James Orr, Hugh Porter and Samuel Thomson were clearly part of the same tradition as Ferguson and Burns.

[...] it would be fair to suggest that the Ulster vernacular bards were in much the same relationship to Burns as he had been to his predecessors, and were working free-handedly within the same tradition [...]. (Hewitt 1974: 6)

⁸ McClure's note "[...] The more usual spelling is clamihewit: Skinner's <ow> suggests the NE [jʌu] corresponding to [ju] in other dialects."

⁹ A few spellings showed the merging of this with vowel 19 after /w/ and /m/, /f/ in the NE. e.g. *fumper* ('whimper').

¹⁰ Many of these artisans were often self-employed in the linen weaving industry. These independent thinkers published their poems in newspapers and books which were paid for by subscription. They often wrote in support of the 1798 rising of the United Irishmen and the American Revolution.

¹¹ Hewitt, John (1974) "Rhyming Weavers and Other Country Poets of Antrim and Down", Blackstaff Press, Belfast

¹² Lyttle, W.G., 1890, *Daft Eddy or the Smugglers of Strangford Lough*. Republished with appendix 1979, Newcastle NI, and Lyttle, W.G. 1896, *Betsy Gray or Hearts of Down*. Republished 1970 with other stories and pictures of '98, Newcastle NI.

