

# Characteristics of non-standard grammar in Scotland

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Several years ago, I compiled a checklist of those grammatical features of Modern Scots that differ from Standard English, and from time to time I am asked for copies.<sup>1</sup> This, combined with references made to it in print, has prompted me to make it available, although it has no claims to either originality or sophistication.

[Since the last revision (c.1992), some important work has appeared, including Pavlenko (1996) on the *be*-perfect in Shetland, Häcker (1999) on adverbial clauses, Smith (2000) on negation; and overviews of Modern Scots grammar including Beal (1997), Purves (1997, rev. 2002) and Miller (2003). For Ulster Scots, see Robinson (1997). For Highland English, see Sabban (1982, 1985). For considerations of Celtic influence, see Macafee and O'Baoill (1997) and Filppula (1999).

For further references, see <http://dinamico2.unibg.it/anglistica/slin/scot-bib.htm>.]

The differences in grammar between Scots and Standard English are very numerous,<sup>2</sup> and there is considerable scope here for quantitative studies of particular variables. There is also room for more detailed and systematic investigation of specific areas of grammatical structure in Scottish speech (embracing the continuum between Scots and Scottish Standard English), following the exemplary work of Miller and Brown in Edinburgh.

Some of the points listed below are rarities, in some cases because they are peripheral to the historical corpus of written Scots (whether because very localised, or colloquial, or both), and have now become obsolescent; in others, because they are recent importations.<sup>3</sup> Any further documentation of such usages, from written sources or from speech, would be very valuable from a lexicographical point of view.

It is useful to have a historical benchmark with which to compare studies based on recent data. I hope that this checklist will provide an overview of the grammar of Scots (assuming that most of the structure not specifically dealt with below is shared with Standard English). Such an overview should be especially useful in relation to the stylistics of literature in Scots, particularly in identifying registers and in assessing the realism of purported colloquial language. It is important to be aware of those features of the grammar that might appropriately have been used in a literary representation of a given dialect, but in practice were not. In grammar more than at other linguistic levels,

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<sup>1</sup> I am grateful to A. J. Aitken and Keith Brown for comments and discussion.

<sup>2</sup> I do not intend to enter into the question of whether the differences are structurally profound enough to indicate that Scots is an autonomous language. Kirk (1986, 1987a, 1987b) demonstrates, on the basis of his work on the system of modal and auxiliary verbs, that they are not.

<sup>3</sup> Kirk (1981:174) makes the plausible suggestion that urban non-standard varieties in Britain may be converging upon each other "by establishing innovatory and apparently widespread forms".

modern written Scots tends to adhere to the model instilled by literacy in Standard English.

Standard English as written in Scotland is generally indistinguishable from other British Standard English. However, in speech, the distinction between standard and non-standard is blurred, since standard speakers, in Scotland as elsewhere, use various localised forms (lexical and grammatical as well as phonological) unself-consciously in speech – and may be unaware that some of these are scotticisms. (Aitken, 1979, calls these “covert scotticisms”.)

Not all non-standard items are highly localised. Many of those found in Scotland are widespread in English, e.g. regular inflections of verbs that are irregular in Standard English. As with localised items, the distinction between standard and non-standard is not always clear, and some items have been included that might be described as colloquial. For the description of Standard English, I have relied on Quirk *et al.* (1972).

Since traditional dialectology, which is still our main source of information, has concentrated on qualitative variation, most of our information is of this kind, with the exception of the findings of Brown, Miller and Millar, Kirk, and Romaine in various works.

## 1. Negation

### 1.1 Negative particles

The usual forms of the negative particle in Scots are:

- enclitic: /ne/, written *-nae*, *-ny* (this originally East Central Scots form appears to be spreading into West Central Scots<sup>4</sup>); /nʌ/, written *-na* (the preferred form in literary Scots);
- free-standing: *no*; North-eastern *nae*.

Grant and Dixon record an enclitic form *-nin* in the North-east, in interrogatives only:

"Divnin ye see the ships sailin' on't," said the lassie. (1921: 116).

The form *nut* (reformed on Standard English *not*?) occurs under emphasis:

"And I'm tellin' ye it was the Sixth." ... "It was *nut*," the stranger asserted. (George Blake, *The Shipbuilders*, 1935: 91)

Some auxiliary and modal verbs are phonetically modified by the addition of the enclitic negative particle, e.g. *winna* (*will* + *-na*), alongside the now more common *willnae* and the mixed form *willn't*; *sanna* (*sal* “shall” + *-na*); *dinna(e)* (*dae* “do” + *-na(e)*) and a mixed form *doannae*.

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<sup>4</sup> I owe this observation to A. J. Aitken.

## 1.2 Distribution of isolated and enclitic forms

In negative declarative sentences, SUBJECT–OPERATOR cliticisation, where it is possible, is preferred over OPERATOR–NEGATIVE PARTICLE cliticisation in Scottish speech, e.g. *they'll no* rather than *they won't*.

According to Hughes and Trudgill (1979), contraction on this pattern is also preferred in the North of England. *I'm not*, however, is usual in Standard English everywhere, and *-re not* is common. *I amn't*, by contrast, occurs in Ireland and Scotland. The peculiarly Scots form is *I amnae*.

The further north in Britain, the more likely one is to find the order OPERATOR – SUBJECT – NEGATIVE PARTICLE, in main clauses and in reversed polarity tags:<sup>5</sup>

Does he not like it? (Hughes and Trudgill, 1979: 20)

That's awfae big o them, is it no? (Tom McGrath and Jimmy Boyle, *The Hard Man*, 1977: 36)

## 1.3 Multiple negation

Multiple negation, where the negative particle is semantically reinforced by the negative determiner, *no*, and its compounds (as opposed to *any* and its compounds), is common in Scots as in other non-standard varieties:

jis shows ye, canny leave nuthin alane (Stephen Mulrine, "Nostalgie" in *Poems*, 1971)

"I shouldnae be nae company for naebody." (Bessie Whyte, "The princess and the pups", recorded by Linda Headlee (1976), *Tocher* vol.3 (1975–76): 258)

## 1.4 Scope

The free-standing negative particle is frequently used with adjectives in its scope:

Is knowledge not dependent, in important senses, on this sub-cultural variation? (university lecturer, recorded, 1979)

Likewise, the free-standing negative particle can take as its scope the main verb of the clause:

Will you not put too many on there in case they fall in the street, please? (overheard in Glasgow, 1979)

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<sup>5</sup> Millar and Brown (1979) found that the enclitic form *-nae* does not invert over the subject in their corpus of Edinburgh speech (when this less preferred order occurs it is with the standard form *-n't*), but other dialects may not be so restricted.

He's still no working yet, he got a part time job with the Council, but ... (Brown and Millar, 1979: 105)

and *not obeying* can be used instead of *disobeying*, and so on.

In the North of Scotland, *on* ("un-") is recorded by the SND as forming negatives with a following participial adjective:

Fa could be on lauch'n, Hairry Wobster, to think 'at I wad vex masel' to chise atween you and Greenmeedes? (SND, s.v. *on-*)

The two types of negation, with wide and narrow scope, can occur in the same clause. This is not multiple negation in the usual sense, since these negatives are not mutually reinforcing:

He isnae still no working. (Brown and Millar, 1978: 106)

In the case of the modal verb *must*, which cannot be negated in the sense of logical necessity, the enclitic negative particle also takes the main verb as its scope:

He mustnae have taken the money / He must no have taken the money (Brown and Millar, 1978: 110)

### 1.5 *Never*

As in other non-standard varieties, the negative adverb *never* can refer to a single occasion:

"You've some hopes o bein king, Jack." An they never peyed nae attention tae Jack, ye see, so Jack jist never heedit (Andra Stewart, "The three feathers", recorded by Hamish Henderson (1956), *Tocher* vol.2 (1973-74: 227)

### 1.6 *Ain't*

The form *int* ("ain't") occurs in Glasgow, but only in reversed polarity tags, as the present tense of *be* + enclitic negative particle (not as a form of *have*):

We're aw happy, int wi'? Ah mean we've aw earned a bit an' that's whit matters intit? (*The Hard Man*, op. cit., p.27)

This appears to be of recent occurrence in Scottish speech. The forms *wint* (past tense of *be* + enclitic negative particle) and *dint* (present tense of *do* + enclitic negative particle) also occur, again in reversed polarity tags only (cf. Yorkshire forms described by Petyt, 1985).

### 1.7 **Absence of *do*-support**

Negation of main verbs by a following negative particle (enclitic or free-standing) and without *do*-support, is now only literary:

Anent Henry, its auctor, we ken-na sae muckle as his surname (Robert Garioch, "Henry the Minstrel's 'Wallace'", *Lines Review* 13 (1957): 7)

Negation of main verbs in declarative clauses by a preceding negative particle survives in the South of Scotland:<sup>6</sup>

they no made the food verra well, but never mind, we got filled anyway (Daisy Aitchison, "Herring gutting in Yarmouth", recorded by Alan Bruford and Ailie Munro (1975), *Tocher* 19 (1975): 113)

It would be remarkable if this usage represented a survival of Early Scots negation with *ne* or *na* before the verb [but etymologically different items are involved].

A further minor type of negation is with the negative adverb *nane* meaning "not at all". This follows the main verb:<sup>7</sup>

Ah've nae time for punterz that swerr an' spit orratime, an' can sing nane. (Billy Connolly and Malcolm McCormick, cartoon in *Bring on the Big Yin*, 1977)

*Do*-support is not required in the second (or later) clause of co-ordinated imperatives:

Eat her up, man, an' no haiver. (SND, s.v. *no* adverb)

## 2. Imperatives

A subject pronoun can appear in negative imperatives in Standard English. In Scottish speech, this is also common in positive imperatives:

Just you go tae sleep. (*The Hard Man*, *op. cit.*, p.21)

Believe you me. (common idiom)

## 3. Passives

The auxiliary of the passive is frequently *get* in colloquial English. This is considered non-standard only when an animate agent is expressed, as it regularly is in Scots:

we just got chased by the parkies ("Gallus, did you say?", *op. cit.*, p.2)

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<sup>6</sup> Murray records the negative particle as inverting over the operator:

he no can (1873: 228)

<sup>7</sup> According to Murray, *nane* could precede the main verb:

he nane gangs; he'll nane gang (1873: 216)

and also, in the absence of a main verb, the operator:

he nane can (p.228)

The preposition governing the agent noun is commonly *fae* (“from”) or *wi* (“with”) in Scots.

#### 4. Interrogatives

##### 4.1 Pronouns and determiners

The Scots forms of the interrogative pronouns and determiners are as follows:

- *whae, wha* (“who”)
- *wham* (“whom”)
- *whase, whas* (“whose”)
- *whilk* (“which”)
- *whit* (“what”)
- *whatten, whatna* (determiner only)<sup>8</sup>

North-east dialect forms have /f/ for /ʌ/.

*Whilk* is probably obsolete in speech,<sup>9</sup> but is preserved as a literary form:

Ilka Scots author maun ane day speir tae himsel whilk o our three  
Scottish tongues he'll uis. (Kenneth Fraser, “The rebirth o Scots”,  
*Scotia Review*, 6 (1974): 32)

*Whatten* and *whatna* are reduced from *what kin (o)* (“what kind of”):

But wha were his dominies and whatna models did he follow? (Robert  
Garioch, “The Akros review of poetry”, *Lallans* 5 (1975): 9)

*Whit* (or *what*) is probably the most usual non-personal interrogative determiner in Scottish speech. It is used with definite as well as indefinite reference:

“What e'e saw du yon wi'?” enquires one of the *trows*. (SND s.v. *what*)

*Which* as an interrogative pronoun is unusual in Scottish speech. *Which* as a determiner with indefinite *yin* (or *one*) is preferred, but *whit yin* (or *what one*) is in practice more common.

In querying measurement, the construction *what* – NOUN is usual in Scottish speech:

Whit age ur you? (*The Hard Man*, *op. cit.*, p.69)

What wecht is it? (SND s.v. *what*)

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<sup>8</sup> Murray also records *whilken* (1873: 193).

<sup>9</sup> Interrogative *whilk* appears to have survived longer as a determiner than as a pronoun. Cf. the dates of the examples given under the relevant entry in SND.

The objective form *wham* is literary. It is replaced in speech by the subjective form, as in colloquial English generally.

The periphrases *whae belongs* (or *who belongs*) and (less commonly?) *whae is aucht* can be used to avoid *whase*:

Wha belongs this hoose? (Grant and Dixon, 1921: 101)

Wha is aucht the wean? (*ibid*, p.101)

## 4.2 Particles

The tag particle *e*, described by Millar and Brown, can be fronted to stand as the sole marker of interrogation:

E you've got a new bike? (Millar and Brown, 1979: 32)

The word *shair* (or *sure*) can be used in the same way:

Sure his nose is dirty? (overheard in Glasgow, 1980)

Both of these may prove to be more common in speech to or by children.

## 4.3 Adverbs<sup>10</sup>

An adjective as subject complement is queried by *whit like* (or *what like*):

Let me see whit like they ur. (*The Hard Man*, *op. cit.*, p.12)

Cause is queried by *how*, *whit wey* (or *what way*) and *whit for* (or *what for*):

'Sure!' said Shuggie. 'We'll take thum up wi us an you kin ask ur.'  
'How me?' said Aleck. (Alan Spence, *Its Colours they are Fine*, 1977: 49)

He says, "Whit wey that?" ("The princess and the pups", *op. cit.*, p.258)

Whit fur'll ye no gie's a haun?

Querying a sentence in the negative, a number of expressions with the preposition *for* are available – *whit for no*, *how for no* and *why for no*.

## 4.4 Absence of *do*-support

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<sup>10</sup> *What* is recorded querying manner:

It just cam open o' free will in my hand – what could I help it?  
(SND s.v. *what*).

The formation of yes/no questions in Scots by inversion of the subject and main verb, and without *do*-support, apparently survived widely until recently. Examples can still be found in Shetland sources:

He says, "See you aal this lyin aaround here?" (James Laurenson, "Maggie Miller's Tows", recorded by Alan Bruford (1973), *Tocher* vol.3 (1975-76): 95)

"Boy, t'inks du need we geng aff the moarn?" (*ibid*, p.97)

## 5. Exclamations

*Whit* (or *what*) is used in Scots to express degree in exclamations:

She told me what fine these pies were, and where you could get them.  
(SND s.v. *what*)

*The* is used in the same way

'Aw the nice!' said Mrs Robertson from downstairs. (*Its Colours they are Fine*, *op. cit.*, p.125)

*Whit a* (or *what a*) is used to express number:

"Losh, what a houses!" (SND s.v. *what*)

## 6. Existentials

### 6.1 *There*

Existential *there* has a reduced form *they*, *the* in Scots. The construction *there* – NOUN PHRASE at the beginning of an existential sentence can therefore be interpreted as *there* with elision of the copula verb *be*, or as *they are*, with phonetic assimilation. This occurs with singular as well as plural subjects:

"Well," he says, "there nae hairm in tryin." (Bessie Whyte, "The cat and the hard cheese", recorded by Peter Cooke and Linda Headlee (1975), *Tocher* vol.3 (1975-76: 267)

The first interpretation is supported by the elision of *be* after *there* as a place adverb:

Cos there Wee Junior, he wis up at probation (young Glasgow man, recorded 1979)

However, *are they* does appear with singular subjects in interrogatives:

"Are they any waater coming in over it?" ("Maggie Miller's Tows", *op. cit.*, p.93)

*There were* likewise appears with singular subjects:

An they were a oald män among them (*ibid*, p.93)

That year was pretty hard, the weren't much money to be made. (Bella Higgins, "The three dogs", recorded by Maurice Fleming (1955), *Tocher* vol.3 (1975-76): 184)

By contrast, *there's* and interrogative *is there* are now regular in Scottish speech with plural subjects, as in colloquial English generally:

Is there weapons? (*The Hard Man*, *op. cit.*, p.15)

and likewise *there was*:

There was very few jobs available even after the six months course (Glasgow man, recorded 1979)

## 6.2 *It*

In oral narrative, existential sentences are occasionally introduced by *it*,<sup>11</sup> a survival from Older Scots:

Well, it wis this young king an queen, ye see ("The princess and the pups", *op. cit.*, p.258)

it was a very very wild night an it was a lot of snow (Brucie Henderson, "The trow of Windhouse", recorded by Tom Anderson and Alan Bruford (1970), *Tocher* vol.1 (1971-72): 252)

## 7. **Emphasis**

### 7.1 *See*

In Glasgow and perhaps more widely in Central Scotland, the subject noun phrase can be extracted from the main clause to stand as the object of the verb *see*. Its place is then taken by an appropriate personal pronoun. This usage probably originates with asyndeton of *do you see* – NOUN PHRASE – RECAPITULATORY PRONOUN:

He knows where to stop, know? See this Rab, but? He's mean right through ("Gallus, did you say?", *op. cit.*, p.5)

A common collocation is *see you*:

"See you, Merry? Ah nivir thoat a lassie wid a hid the guts." (Alex Hamilton, "Our Merry" in *Three Glasgow Writers*, *op. cit.*, p.28)

Introductory *see* extends to other structures in sentence initial position, such as subordinate clauses and adverbials:

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<sup>11</sup> In ballads, an existential construction *it* – MAIN VERB – SUBJECT is found:  
Then out it speaks a guid auld man (SND s.v. *it*)

Oh see if this is your idea o a bloody joke! Ah'll - ... (Hector MacMillan, *The Sash*, 1974: 8)

"An see when Ah've did that? Ah'm gonnae kill yi!" ("Gallus, did you say?", *op. cit.*, p.7)

Oh but see efterwards, when they took the body away. ... (*The Hard Man*, *op. cit.*, p.7)

"Ah thoat Ah'd went aff ur afore, so Ah did. But see noo? Ah've went *right* aff ur." ("Our Merry", *op. cit.*, p.24)

## 8. Ellipsis

### 8.1 Sentence initial items

The ellipsis of recoverable sentence initial items (asyndeton) is regular in Scottish speech, as in colloquial English generally:

That's because I missed three buses. They were all off the road. So that was quite upsetting. Late for a tutorial. (Female student, recorded 1979)

You can understand how poor people really were. Was a great deal of unemployment, as you can imagine. (Glasgow man, recorded 1979)

### 8.2 Copula *be*

The present tense forms of *be* are frequently elided following *there*, and also *here*.<sup>12</sup>

Here a form - noo beat it quick. (Bud Neill, cartoon in *The Evening Times*, 1950)

### 8.3 Auxiliary *have*

Auxiliary *have* is occasionally elided in Scots following a modal verb, especially when the modal takes the enclitic negative. The unstressed form /ʌ/ of *have* is perhaps phonetically assimilated to *-na*:

O Tibbie I hae seen the day / Ye wadna been sae shy. (Grant and Dixon, 1921: 120)

*Have* is frequently elided together with a relative pronoun:

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<sup>12</sup> In the following pun, *are* is elided after *whaur* ("where"), presumably by phonetic assimilation:  
Propped up on the stove was a sign ... and beside it another which said WHERRABOOTS ... AWRERR, with an arrow pointing to a stall stacked high with work-boots and shoes. (*Its Colours they are Fine*, *op. cit.*, p.140)

I.e., "whereabouts ... over there" and "where are the boots ... all rare".

There's also a fair amount of work, incidentally, been done on the kind of language that is expected at school. (university lecturer, recorded 1979)

*Have* is regularly elided in the idiom *had better*, as in other non-standard varieties:

"Well, Jack," he says, "you better go now" ("The three feathers", *op. cit.*, p.227)

*Will* may be substituted:

ah! better away (Tom Leonard, "Tea time" in *Bunnit Husslin*, 1978)

*Have* is also regularly elided in *have got to*, as in colloquial English generally:

Ye goat tae put the frighteners, right, oan them. (young Glasgow man, recorded 1979)

## 8.4 Main verbs<sup>13</sup>

Verbs of motion are frequently elided in Scottish speech, giving quasi-adverbial uses of prepositional adverbs (see below).

Verbs of saying can also be elided in narrative, or replaced by *be*:

and the cat got its back up, ye ken, like this, an "Chhhh! Pffph!" and the rat's "Tschch!" and the two o them are at each ither. ("The cat and the hard cheese", *op. cit.*, p.321)

Well they start - "Daddy, this is the day wir clicks come on [to the island]." "Maggie Miller's Tows", *op. cit.*, p.99)

## 9. Relative clauses

### 9.1 Pronouns

The Scots forms of the relative pronouns are:

- *at* ("that")
- *whae, wha* ("who")
- *wham* ("whom")
- *whase, whas* ("whose")
- *whilk* ("which")

North-eastern dialect forms have /f/ for /w/.

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<sup>13</sup> The verb expressing the request to be passed or handed something is elided in the following example:  
"Heh, Mikey! Big Mikey MacGloan! That baw, gonnae?" ("Gallus, did you say?" *op. cit.*, p.5)

As with the interrogative pronouns, *wham* and *whilk* are only literary.<sup>14</sup>

## 9.2 *That* and *wh*-relatives<sup>15</sup>

In Scottish speech, as in colloquial English generally, the indeclinable relative pronoun *that* is preferred to the *wh*-relatives. Scottish speakers regularly use *that* for personal antecedents and in non-restrictive relative clauses as well as for non-personal antecedents and restrictive uses:

An auld guy at wis drunk goat taen intae the polis boax. (young Glasgow man, recorded 1979)

A fresh shipment, that was long overdue, arrived today.

*That* is available not only as subject and object, but also with prepositions:

These are the people that we stay with.

Fronted prepositions and quantified relatives are normally unavailable in colloquial Scottish speech, but fronted prepositions do occur in literary Scots:

the developan sperit o Burns, frae whilk siccan heat was later engendrit ("Henry the Minstrel's 'Wallace'", *op. cit.*, p.7)

The possessive of *that* is expressed by the form *that's*:

The kye that's caur were born aa about the same time. (SND s.v. *that*)

or *that* is followed by an appropriate personal pronoun in the possessive form, or by a periphrastic possessive:

The crew that their boat wis vrackit are in Aiberdeen. (SND s.v. *that*)

That must be the yin that the tap o't wis chopped aff.

## 9.3 Which

Brown (1980) found that in Scottish speech, *which* is used almost exclusively in non-restrictive relative clauses with sentential antecedents:<sup>16</sup>

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<sup>14</sup> The English dialectal relative pronoun *what* is attested from Glasgow:

'like the other birds what takes Dexedrine, she disnae know whit she's dain!' (James Patrick [pseudonym], *A Glasgow Gang Observed*, 1973: 52)

<sup>15</sup> The relative adverb *where* is used not only with reference to place, but also with reference to hypothetical situations:

In schools, it is still the case where the teacher corrects the pupil if he pronounces a word wrongly. (student exam paper, 1979)

<sup>16</sup> It appears that the relative pronoun *whilk* survived longest in speech in this sense:

They're expressing themselves, which is a different thing. (Archie Hind, interviewed by Robert Tait, *Scottish International* 11 (1970): 16)

## 9.4 Zero relative pronoun

In Scots, as in other non-standard varieties, the relative pronoun is optionally deleted when it is the subject of its clause:

an it rubbed aa the rat ower wi its fingers - or its paws - wi this stuff was in the bottle ("The three dogs", *op. cit.*, p.234)

This is particularly common with an existential main clause:

"there never wis a hare," he says, "or a rabbit ever took the hills but Swift could catch." ("The three dogs", *op. cit.*, p.184)

Standard English allows the reduction of relative clauses with an equative structure (e.g. "there are people waiting outside") except that this is not usually possible with one word complements in Standard English. However, these are regularly reduced in Scots speech:<sup>17</sup>

there's some of the teachers quiet (Brown, 1980: 54)

and on the gates it says they were men wanted. ("The cat and the hard cheese", *op. cit.*, p.266)

## 10. Complements<sup>18</sup>

### 10.1 *That*

The conjunction *that* is regularly elided in Scottish speech, as in colloquial English generally:

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He said 'at he met us onna the muir whilk wasna the case. (Murray, 1873: 196)

<sup>17</sup> Brown (1980) suggests that it is not necessary to interpret such sentences as containing a relative clause, and regards them rather as transformed NOUN PHRASE – COPULA – SUBJECT COMPLEMENT structures.

<sup>18</sup> *That how, how that* and *that how that* are recorded as complementisers:

The laird himsel' said, 'at hoo the bairns had never gotten on naething like it wi' ony ither body. (Grant and Dixon, 1921: 170)  
Sic things my gude-dam tauld to me, / How that a switch o' rowan tree / Gard a' the de'ails and witches fyke. (SND s.v. *hoo*)

He said that fu that he'd been swickit wi the coo. (SND s.v. *that*)  
Grant and Dixon also record *nor* as a complementiser:

Nae won'er nor ye was obleeg't to tak yer innocent bairns awa' fae's skweel. (1921: 169)

Anyway, that's not to say I'd have helped him out even if I could have ("Gallus, did you say?", *op. cit.*, p.2)

## 10.2 *For to*

The infinitival complement is frequently introduced by *fir tae* (or *for to*) in Scots, as in other non-standard varieties:

He wis ready for tae die any time ("The three feathers", *op. cit.*, p.228)

## 10.3 *How*

*How* can be used to introduce a complement (as opposed to an interrogative clause) in Scottish speech:

You know how Ah've never had a jaicket. When Ah wis a wean Ah never had a jaicket, so it disnae really borryer me. (young Glasgow man, recorded 1979)

## 11. Comparison

### 11.1 *-er, -est*

The distribution of the comparative and superlative inflections, *-er* and *-est*, is less restricted in Scots (and other non-standard varieties) than in Standard English:

an there he's turned the beautifullest king ye ever seen in yer life ("The three feathers", *op. cit.*, p.233)

### 11.2 *-er, -maist*

The addition of *-er* and *-maist* ("most") to prepositional adverbs is less restricted in Scots than in Standard English:

at the hinner end

ye're aye better keepin the scootin-end ootmaist (Tom Scott, "Jock Tamson's bairns", *Scotia Review* 6 (1974): 7)

### 11.3 Double comparatives and superlatives

Like other non-standard varieties, Scots permits the formation of comparatives and superlatives by the simultaneous addition of *-er*, *-est* and *mair* (or *more*), *maist* (or *most*):

mair liker a laddie nor a wumman (*ibid*, p.7)

"thi most biggest thingmmi kick yiv ivir saw in hir hale thingmmi life!" ("Gallus, did you say?", *op. cit.*, p.13)

Double comparatives such as *worser* and *leastest* also arise, as in other non-standard varieties, when the inflections are added to suppletive forms.

## 11.4 Conjunctions

The conjunction of comparison in Scots is variously *nor* (the preferred form in literary Scots), *as* or *be* (or *by*):

Better you nor me. (*The Sash*, *op. cit.*, p.7)

"Osie Tait'll loss more afore the saeson's ower, he'll loss more as if he'd teen thee." ("Maggie Miller's Tows", *op. cit.*, p.93)

he's younger be ony o them (Murray, 1873: 169)

When the post-modifying element has clause structure, *what*, recapitulating the hinge element, can be found in Scots:

"When ye see that A'm as good as whit you are, will ye no leave me alane?" ("The cat and the hard cheese", *op. cit.*, p.321)

## 12. Other subordinate clauses<sup>19</sup>

### 12.1 *But what*

The subordinating conjunction *but what* may be translated "otherwise than that":

Let them never let on to my father and mother / But what I'm coming hame. (SND s.v. *what*)<sup>20</sup>

### 12.2 *For aw (that)*

The subordinating conjunction *for aw (that)* (also *for all (that)*) means "despite (the fact that)".

Norman MacCaig, for aa that his ain wark is aye i the Sudron, ... (anonymous, "Inter alia", *Akros* 10 (1969): 59)

### 12.3 *Like as if*

*Like* and *as if* are combined in Scots as in other non-standard varieties:

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<sup>19</sup> A frequent type of subordinate clause with main clause structure, and no introductory conjunction, is exemplified by the following:

Or you'd huv tae feed them's mair likely. (overheard in West Lothian, 1980s)

Predicates similar to *is mair likely*, e.g. *is nearer the mark*, can also take a finite clause as subject. Since the subject clause could stand alone and convey most of the information, this has the appearance of an afterthought. However, the two clauses are within the same tone group, and cliticisation takes place across the clause boundary, as in the example quoted.

<sup>20</sup> This example is differently interpreted by SND.

Up he goes, like as if he's the Wee Man or somebody ("Gallus, did you say", *op. cit.*, p.2)

## 12.4 *And*

Two types of subordinate clause are regularly linked to their superordinate clause by *and* in Scots. The subordinate clause often, but not invariably, mentions a circumstance that ought to preclude the situation expressed in the main clause:

a) verbless subordinate clause

(i) *and* – OBJECT PERSONAL PRONOUN – SUBJECT COMPLEMENT

I'll soap in yer eyes ye – and it rationed! (Bill Tait, cartoon in *The Evening Citizen*, 1942)

(ii) *and* – *with* PHRASE<sup>21</sup>

An me wi ma bad leg tae. (title of a play by Billy Connolly)

b) non-finite *-ing* clause:

Her first bairn, and her nearin forty. ("Jock Tamson's bairns", *op. cit.*, p.8)

## 13. Tags<sup>22</sup>

### 13.1 Reversed polarity

In reversed polarity tags, the order OPERATOR – SUBJECT – ISOLATE NEGATIVE PARTICLE is regular in Scottish speech (see 1.2 above). Double negative tags occur following negative statements:

Your name's no Willie, isn't it no? (Millar and Brown, 1979: 27)

### 13.2 *E, e no*

Millar and Brown (1979) identify a tag particle *e* in Scottish speech, used following positive statements, to elicit confirmation:

Your name's Willie, e? (*ibid*, p.41)

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<sup>21</sup> In the following sentence, the existential *have* clause is the equivalent of a *with* phrase:

Aw'm really nae wise t' be sittin' clatterin' awa here, an' me hiz sic a lang road afore ma. (SND s.v. *I*)

<sup>22</sup> A tag particle *no*, *nae* is recorded after affirmative statements, equivalent in a sense to a reversed polarity tag. SND interprets this as a reduced form of *noo* ("now"), Grant and Dixon as the word *no* ("not") (1921: 142).

This particle can be fronted (4.2 above). A corresponding tag, *e no* occurs following negative statements:

He disnae like pictures, e no? (*ibid*, p.32)

These tags may be more usual in children's speech.

### 13.3 *So*

In Glasgow (as in Northern Ireland), a commonly used tag takes the form *so* – PRONOUN – OPERATOR. This is used to reinforce a positive statement:

youve got that weeber<sup>23</sup> / destroyed so you have (Stephen Mulrine, "the weeber bird" in *Poems, op. cit.*)

The corresponding, but less common, reinforcing tag for a negative statement is *neither* – PRONOUN – OPERATOR:

Don't answer nothin incriminatin, says the sheriff. / And that's good enough for yours truly. / And neither ah did, neither ah did, / neither ah did, neither ah did. (Edwin Morgan, "Stobhill" in *From Glasgow to Saturn, 1973*)<sup>24</sup>

### 13.4 *Like, but*

*Like* and *but* are used in Scots to ameliorate the force of a statement, the latter perhaps more commonly in the West of Scotland:

"Aye, sandpies it wis. Looked great. Tasted horrible but." (*Its Colours they are Fine, op. cit.*, p.40)

*Like* also post-modifies adjectives:

Ah'd like tae say that he was different when he wis wae me – quiet and gentle and affectionate like. (*The Hard Man, op. cit.*, p.24)

## 14. Main verbs

### 14.1 Regular and irregular

Numerous main verbs that are irregular in Standard English can be declined regularly in Scots, and vice versa. There are often further differences in treatment for verbs which both agree in classifying as regular or irregular. There would be little point in listing the verbs concerned, as there is no up-to-date information on the currency of particular forms (see Wright, 1905, SND, and, for literary Scots, Graham, 1977). Some current examples may, however, be given:

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<sup>23</sup> *Weeber* is a nonce word.

<sup>24</sup> Morgan here plays on the different stress patterns of the main clause *And neither ah did*, with stress on *did*, and the tag, with stress on *neither*.

a) past participle and past tense regular: *seed, gied* (“gave”), *gaed* (“went”), *drawed, throwed, hurtit, selt* (“sold”), *telt* (“told”), *catched, kneeled, sayed, heard, buyed*

b) past tense irregular: *brung, widd* (“waded”)

c) past participle irregular: *haen* (“had”), *load, thunk* (jocular), *drunken, satten, gotten, pitten* (“put”)

d) reduplicated past participle: *brochten, hadden, soakent, wroten*.

Like other non-standard varieties, Scots reduces the paradigm of several irregular verbs by selecting one form as both past tense and past participle, usually the past tense form, e.g. *went, broke, gave, fell, knew, spoke, wore, tore, wrote, broke, ett* [“ate”]; but also e.g. *run, gien* [“given”], *drunk, shrunk, begun*.

In the case of *come, gie* (“give”), *take, see* and *do* (main verb), generalisation of both occurs. Some of these generalisations are historical, e.g. *come* (past tense) and *fell* (past participle). Others are recent, probably representing influences from English dialects (Trotter, 1901) or from Hiberno-English, and such forms appear to be innovating while those mentioned in a-d above are declining. This is despite the fact that the innovating forms are heavily stigmatised by the education system and described by vernacular speakers themselves as “slovenly” (Macaulay, 1977: 96) and as part of the stereotype of the “rough” working-class (Hanley, 1984: 166). This is an area that deserves further investigation.

## 14.2 Inflections of the past tense and past participle

There are dialectal differences in the forms of the dental suffix in Scots, which leads to conflicting accounts in the literature.

a) *-it* is found after plosives and unstressed vowels, e.g. *wantit, soundit, jumpit, pickit, biggit, marriet, buriat*.

It is also still found, but less commonly, after fricatives, especially in literary Scots, e.g. *screivit, forcit*.

In Caithness, *-id* is regular for Central Scots *-it*, e.g. *cowpid, lookid*.

b) *-d* is regular in Scots, as in Standard English, after a stressed vowel, e.g. *caa'd, dee'd*. It also appears to be more common than *-it* after voiced fricatives, e.g. *screived*. In the South of Scotland, *-d* is also regular after nasals, /r/ and /l/, e.g. *sair'd* (“served”).

c) *-t* is regular in other Scots dialects after nasals, /r/ and /l/, e.g. *kent, flutter't, killt*, and is also common after voiceless fricatives, e.g. *wisht, laucht*.

### 14.3 Present

The distribution of the present tense inflection *-s, -es*, was governed by a particular set of rules in Older Scots, which probably survive only in variable form, co-existing with the simpler rules of Standard English.

In the traditional system, the use of the inflection or not depends on the nature of the subject. With the exception of an adjacent personal pronoun subject (see below), the inflection appears throughout:

That's the stones that sinks the line down, we caa that steedhes  
("Maggie Miller's Tows", *op. cit.*, p.97)

"Yer maw an me thinks ye canna get ony taiblet the morn." (J. J. Bell, *Wee Macgregor*, 1902: 40)  
It's me at comes first. (Murray, 1873: 212)

If the subject is an adjacent personal pronoun, the third person singular is inflected, as in Standard English, and so also is the second person singular, where it survives (see 19.3).<sup>25</sup> The first person singular and the plural are uninflected in this syntactic environment (again, like Standard English).

However, even in Older Scots (Aitken, 1978), there are traces of a narrative present tense, where the inflection was used with all persons and numbers regardless of the nature of the subject, and this is regular in Modern Scots narration:

So anyway, here now ... they shouts for Jack ("The three feathers",  
*op. cit.*, p.229)

"Naw!" I goes, near screaming, you know? ("Gallus, did you say?", *op. cit.*, p.12)

(cf. *says, sez* in colloquial English generally). This is also the pattern when the present tense is used in a habitual sense.

The third person singular forms of *be* (including the past form *was*) and *have* are likewise generalised only when the subject is other than an adjacent personal pronoun:

"... times is pretty hard on us" ("The three dogs", *op. cit.*, p.184)

an no matter how tired the fishermen was ... they had to go to the church  
("Maggie Miller's Tows", *op. cit.*, p.97)

Ladies and gentlemen, I have to announce that my brakes has went  
(heard in Glasgow, 1979).

### 14.4 Subjunctive

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<sup>25</sup> A trace of this in Modern Scots is the tag *seestu*, latterly Shetland, Orkney and Dumfries, and as a nickname for Paisley (SND).

Special subjunctive forms of verbs are on record. Wright states that main verbs are uninflected throughout the present subjunctive in Scots:

if the bird sing (1905: 298)

SND records a past subjunctive of the form *had + tae* INFINITIVE:

If she had tae recover she wad hae bin a big help tae him. (SND)

and present subjunctive forms of the verb *be*, namely *be* or *bees*, and *binna* with the enclitic negative particle.

### 14.5 Inflection of the present participle

The distinction between the present participle inflection *-an(d)* and the verbal noun inflection *-in(g)*, which was apparently lost in Central Scots in the sixteenth century, survives in Caithness and in parts of the South of Scotland:

Lekly them in 'e Sooth'll be findan' 'e same / Wi' aal 'iss up-till-  
deite farin', / Bit A'll warran' there's hantle 'at's thinkan' o'  
hom' / An' longan' for tatties an' herreen'. (Castlegreen  
[pseudonum], "Tatties an' Herreen'" in *Tatties an' Herreen'*, 1961: 6)

This distinction was also briefly revived in literary Scots under the influence of the Scots Style Sheet (1955):

the Inglis, wha heidit an hangit throu ilka airt o Scotland, fleggin  
[sic] what seelie folk they micht find gangan abraid. ("Henry the  
Minstrel's 'Wallace'", *op. cit.*, p.11)

### 14.6 Progressive aspect

Several verbs that are stative in Standard English take progressive aspect in Scots, namely *think*, *want*, *forget*, *remember* and *hear*:

"Ah wis thinkin ... Jack, ye widnae come" ("The three feathers" *op. cit.*, p.232)

An indiscriminate use of the progressive aspect with stative verbs is a feature of the Highland stereotype in Scottish literature, and it may be that there is a Celtic influence here.

### 14.7 Transitivity

Some verbs that are intransitive in Standard English can be transitive in Scots, notably *talk*, *learn* (meaning "teach") and *look*:

Everybody says ah need me heid looked going about wae him. (*The Hard Man, op. cit.*, p.24)

Conversely, some verbs that are transitive in Standard English can be intransitive in Scots, *offer* being a particularly common example:

A offerred - bit a room in kitchin isny much better (James Kelman, "Nice tae be nice", *The Glasgow Review* IV:3, 1973, 42-7)

#### 14.8 *Be*

In Glasgow, and probably more widely, a form *mur* is found for the first person singular form of *be*. It is used under emphasis and avoids the awkward sequence *Ah am*, which can however occur:

That's whit thair sayin is it? That ah'm a lunatic? That's awright then isn't it? Ah ahm a lunatic. (*The Hard Man, op. cit.*, p.16)

If Ah dae it, if Ah mur stealin ... (recorded by Haig Gordon for BBC Scotland, 1980; quoted in Macafee, 1983: 68)

*Mur* can take the enclitic negative particle:

"Aw, yir jokin," I goes. "Aw naw Ah'm urnae," he says. ("Gallus, did you say?", *op. cit.*, p.22)

It appears to be a blend of *am* and *are*. Notice that the need for emphasis is often produced by contrast with *you are* in the preceding context.

The form *was* is sometimes found with the second person:<sup>26</sup>

say you wis a recruit, you wis a prospective recruit (John Keith "The Laird o Udney's fool", recorded by Hamish Henderson (1952), *Tocher* vol.3 (1975-76), p.245)

#### 14.9 Prepositional adverbs as verbs of motion

Several prepositional adverbs can occur as defective verbs in Scots, with the sense of motion or the imparting of motion:

a) infinitive:

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<sup>26</sup> *Was* with the third person plural in the following example, if it represents a genuine observation by the writer, may be an assimilation to the preceding context:

"The Ack-an'-Ess-Aitch was *there*. An' the 6<sup>th</sup> H.L.I. was *there* in reserve. See?"

"They was not," said his friend. (*The Shipbuilders, op. cit.*, p.91)

'Ah'll just away an have a look.' (*Its Colours they are Fine*, *op. cit.*, p.162)

b) imperative:

OK Renfrew, outside. I'll deal with this. (*The Hard Man*, *op. cit.*, p.52)

c) past tense:

an he come up, pit the flagstane doon, an back intae the kitchen.  
("The three feathers", *op. cit.*, p.227)

d) past participle. The auxiliary is *be*:

So this dog's away an it's through the water and through the water  
("The princess and the pups", *op. cit.*, p.260)

The verbs *want* and *need*, which take the past participle as complement in Scottish speech (rather than the present participle), can also take such prepositional adverbs:

Jenny, are ye wantin' oot / Mang the knowes to frisk about? (SND s.v. *out*).

When the sense is of the imparting of motion, the preposition *wi* (or *with*) governs the object:

Up wi yer claymore an intae the folk that are rinnin doon the mountain side. (song lyric, Roger Waters, "Several species of small furry animals gathered together and grooving in a cave with a Pict" on Pink Floyd, *Ummagumma*, 1969)

Occasionally the verbal status of these adverbs is confirmed by the use of verbal inflections:

So he oots wi his wee box, ... ("The cat and the hard cheese", *op. cit.*, p.270)

## 15. Modal and auxiliary verbs

### 15.1 Auxiliary of perfective aspect

In Orkney and Shetland dialect, *be* is the regular auxiliary of perfective aspect:

"Yes, well," he says, "we're gotten no fish" ("Maggie Miller's Tows", *op. cit.*, p.95)

They were given up fishin at Urie then (*ibid*, p.99)

An when owld Maggie Miller heard 'at her spell was been broken, ... (*ibid*, p.100)

*Be* is also the regular auxiliary in Scots generally with a small group of verbs including *start* and *come*:

when I was just started school in the babies class, ... ("Our Merry",  
*op. cit.*, p.15)

an when the dog wis come tae its pup - ... ("The princess and the  
pups", *op. cit.*, p.260)

## 15.2 *Do*

Auxiliary *do* has an emphatic form *div* in Scots, occurring for *dae* (i.e. with all persons and numbers except the third singular), probably modelled on the *hae* and *hiv* forms of *have*:

Will ye say 'at ye div tak' thought, George? (Grand and Dixon, 1921:  
116)

## 15.3 *Have*

Scottish (together with Northern English) speakers treat *have* (main verb) like the auxiliary in the following respects:

a) it can take an enclitic form:<sup>27</sup>

He'd a good time last night. (Hughes and Trudgill, 1979: 25)

b) it takes part in SUBJECT – OPERATOR inversion in interrogative sentences:

Have you any money? (*ibid*, p.24)

However, in the sense of possession, *have* is frequently replaced by *have got*.

In Scottish speech, as in American English, there is a sequence *had* – (ENCLITIC NEGATIVE PARTICLE) – *have* PAST PARTICIPLE. The identity of the second *have*, which appears as a weak or enclitic form, is problematic (as witness the writers who spell it *of*):

'Ah wouldnae of came if Ah had of knew,' he insisted (Helen W. Pryde,  
*the First Book of the McFlannels*, 1947: 24)

Adams (1948) suggested that it was a survival of English dialectal *y-* before past participles, reinterpreted as *have* via the latter's weak form *a*. The occurrence of the form in Scotland and the USA is compatible with diffusion from Ulster. Fodor and Smith (1978) offer a purely synchronic analysis, seeing the first *have* as a modal and the second as the auxiliary of the perfect.

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<sup>27</sup> Brown and Millar (1980) consider that 's for *has* is inhibited by possible ambiguity with *is*, but this is not my experience as a native speaker.

## 15.4 Semi-modals

Brown and Millar (1980: 86) found that *need to*, *used to* and *dare*, which have been recorded as semi-modals in Scots, are now treated as main verbs in East Central Scotland.

## 15.5 Obligation

Scottish speakers avoid *must* in the sense of obligation, reserving it to express logical necessity. The semi-modals *have to*, *have got to* and *will have to* are used instead, and in Scots, *maun*:

there comes a passage that maun be quoted at some length ("Henry the Minstrel's 'Wallace'", *op. cit.*, p.8)

In negative declarative sentences with *have to*, Scottish (together with Northern English) speakers can negate the main verb:

You've no to go (Brown and Miller, 1975: 164)

i.e. "you are obliged (NEGATIVE you go)", whereas Southern English speakers would use *mustn't*.

Negation of the auxiliary requires *do*-support:

You don't have to go.

In negative interrogatives, the construction with *do*-support is accordingly ambiguous:

Do you no have to go? (*ibid.*, p.169)

i.e. "QUESTION (NEGATIVE you are obliged (you go))" and "QUESTION (you are obliged (NEGATIVE you go))". Like main verbs, *have to* takes *do*-support in the emphatic positive construction with *so*:

He *does so* have to go! (*ibid.*, p.170)

## 15.6 Logical necessity

Since *must* is reserved to the sense of logical necessity, *mustn't* occurs freely in this sense in Scottish (together with Northern English) speech:

He *mustn't* be in. (Hughes and Trudgill, 1979: 23)

## 15.7 Hypothetical statements

In common with most of the English-speaking world, Scottish speakers reserve *should* for the sense of moral obligation. In hypothetical constructions, *would* is used:

till eventually if the ... thing would upset, the boat at sea would be doing the same thing. ("Maggie Miller's tows", *op. cit.*, p.94)

### 15.8 Polite *will*

*Will* is used in Scots, as in other non-standard varieties, in sentences that are predictive statements in construction, questions with positive expectation in intonation and sense:

And this will be your brother?

*Will* is also used to ameliorate direct statements and questions:

A female acquaintance, following a common Scotch idiom, said one day - "Jock, how auld will you be?" "I ken weel enough how auld I am ... but dinna ken how auld I'll be." (SND s.v. *will*)

*Would* is used in the same way:

I could tell you when this would ha' been. This would ha' been i the year o Waterloo ("Maggie Miller's tows", *op. cit.*, p.100)

### 15.9 Prediction and intention

Scottish speakers follow the colloquial practice of using *will* with all persons and numbers. *Shall* can however be used, again with all persons and numbers

a) as a formal form:

A reader failing to produce a Token ... shall produce proof of identity (notice, Glasgow, 1979)

b) to express intention emphatically:

this is a bloody democracy, and these ... morons shall be forced to make a choice (graffiti, Glasgow, 1979)

*Sal* (also *shall*) remains generally available in Shetland:

"Oh," he says, "thu sanna wänt that." ("Maggie Miller's tows", *op. cit.* p.97)

An as they're sittin wonderin whät's wrong or where they shall move to or whät they shall do or whät they shan't do (*ibid*, p.95)

### 15.10 Possibility

*May* is avoided in Scottish speech, except as a formal alternative to *can* in the sense of permission. In the sense of possibility, *could* and *might* (Scots *micht*) are used. In the negative, *can't* is preferred for the sense "it is not possible that"; *might not* for the sense

“it is possible that not”. However, the Scots form *michtnae* (below in the mixed form *mightnae*) also occurs in the former sense:

“But,” he says, “if I wis to ... take the dog fir ma cow,” he says, “I mightnae go home,” he says, “fir ma sister would kill me.” (“The three dogs”, *op. cit.*, p.184)

In the interrogative, possibility is expressed by *will* or *could*, with *might* only in the interrogative, and only with the main verb as its scope, thus, whereas the following means to an English speaker “is it not possible that it might be broken?”, to a Scottish speaker it is more likely to mean “is it possible that it might still be whole?”:

Might it no(t) be broken? (Brown and Miller, 1975: 168)

### 15.11 Double modals

In Central and Southern Scotland, *can* and *could* are found as the second element in double modal constructions. *Can* is regularly used as an infinitive, without *to*, following *will*.<sup>28</sup> Brown and Miller (1975) tested the responses of Edinburgh speakers to sentences containing *will can*, and found the following order of acceptability:

a) negative declarative:<sup>29</sup>

He'll no can come this week (Brown and Miller, 1975: 174)

b) positive declarative:

The manager will can tell you if it's come (*ibid*, p.174)

c) negative interrogative:

Will he no can mend them? (*ibid*, p.174)

*Could* likewise appears as an infinitive, following *would*:

In a crisis, what would a wee lassie like that could dae for me? (heard in West Lothian, 1979).

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<sup>28</sup> However, I heard the following in West Lothian:

The boays are auld enough to can make theirsels a bit i toast. The other non-finite forms of *can* are also on record. Murray (1873: 216) gives an example of *could* as a past participle:

they haenae could get ane  
and SND gives an example of *can* in the present participle:

“Wi' him no cannin' wun hyim wi' the railway strike”.

<sup>29</sup> The syntactic sequence exemplified is the normal one, but the following was heard in West Lothian (from a different speaker from the one quoted in note 28):

E'll cannae be bothered wi weans  
possibly as a result of the internal coherence of the idiom *cannae be bothered*.

Less common are other modals with *could*:

Yince an A'd wun there, A thocht, A micht mebbies cood geet a hurl  
the lenth of Hawick (SND s.v. *can*)

I didn't used tae could tak them at aa. (SND s.v. *can*)<sup>30</sup>

Other double modals occur occasionally:

They should ought to make the rules clear. (Brown and Miller, 1975:  
174)

He used tae widnae let me up the brae: Ah wis terrified i im. (heard  
in West Lothian, 1979)

## 16. Adverbials

### 16.1 Formation of adverbs

Like other non-standard varieties, Scots regularly forms manner adverbs without the addition of a suffix:

yi canny talk / right (Tom Leonard, "Unrelated incidents 3" in *Three Glasgow Writers, op. cit.*, p.36)

Ah wid huv arranged the furniture different. (*The Hard Man, op. cit.*, p.52)

ye could easy tell by the size o his nose. ("Jock Tamson's Bairns", *op. cit.*, p.7)

Scots has an adverbial suffix *-s*, used with certain sentence adverbs, particularly *mebbies* ("maybe"), *whiles* ("sometimes") and *nae wunners* ("no wonder"). This also occurs in combination with *-ly*, e.g. *readilies*, *geylies*.

More archaic, and less productive, is *-lins*, as in *aiblins* ("maybe") and *nearlins* ("nearly").

A group of prepositional adverbs are compounded with *by(e)*, thus *ootbye* ("outside there"), *doon by* ("down there"), etc.

### 16.2 Position of adverbs

In some cases, restrictions on the position of adverbs are different in Scots from Standard English:

he got paid overtime for just checking a bunch of boys ("Gallus, did you say?", *op. cit.*, p.2)

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<sup>30</sup> Notice that *do*-support is involved in the negation of *used to*. *Could* is here approaching the status of a main verb. In a later example, the problematic negation of *used to* is solved by negating *would* instead.

Up he goes, flying almost this time ("Our Merry", *op. cit.*, p.28)

she near about massacred him ("The three dogs", *op. cit.*, p.186)

### 16.3 Noun phrases

A wider range of noun phrases occur as adverbials in Scots than in Standard English:

though it normally seems there's twice as many lassies the noise they make ("Our Merry", *op. cit.*, p.16)

they were haertbroken about their bairn, an thocht they would never get it back, the size o this man. ("The princess and the pups", *op. cit.*, p.258)

and you can see he's concentrating, on his face, the way his tongue curls away round about his earhole, ... ("Gallus, did you say?", *op. cit.*, p.3)

A don't know how the poor soul managed tae pick hissel aff the ground the state he wis in. (*The Hard Man, op. cit.*, p.22)

Ah could a been there an back, the time ye took.

## 17. Prepositions

### 17.1 Position

Constructions involving the movement of prepositions tend to be avoided in Scottish speech. Fronted prepositions in relative clauses occur only in literary texts (see above). According to Hughes and Trudgill (1979: 25), speakers in Scotland and the North of England prefer not to postpone the prepositional adverb in phrasal verbs:

Same thing again, up tae the tap o the tower, an threw off their feathers ("The three feathers", *op. cit.*, p.232)

This preference persists even when there is a pronominal object:

Mum, do you have anything to wipe up that with? (overheard in Edinburgh, 1980)

### 17.2 Selection

There are numerous instances in which prepositions are used with different senses or in different lexical environments in Scots than in Standard English, including:

a) *intae* (or *into*) is used as a preposition of place north of the Forth:

"A wonder would there be any tobaccae," he says, *intae* that wee box?" ("The cat and the hard cheese", *op. cit.*, p.269)

b) *aff o* (or *off of*) expresses various senses of “from”:

“Now this is pluckit aff o the enchantit knowe” (“Maggie Miller’s tows”, *op. cit.*, p.97)

an everybody’s gettin their money aff i the Social Security, right?  
(young Glasgow man, recorded 1979)

c) *on* is used to express the relationship between a part of the body and the whole:

an this was a giant right enough, three heids on him. (“The cat and the hard cheese”, *op. cit.*, p.270)

d) *oot* (or *out*) is equivalent to “out of”

Oh ye cannae fling pieces oot a twenty storey flat ... (Adam McNaughton, “Skyscraper wean” in Norman Buchan and Peter Hall, eds., *The Scottish Folksinger*, 1973: 23)

e) a noun phrase expressing constituent elements is post-modified by a phrase with *o* (or *of*) expressing the whole (rather than vice versa)

That any man alive could give Young Cecil thirty of a start ... sounded ridiculous to our way of thinking. (James Kelman, “Young Cecil” in *Three Glasgow Writers*, *op. cit.*, p.60)

an wi this young man of a crew (“Maggie Miller’s tows”, *op. cit.*, p.94)

f) *outwith* “without, outside” is normal usage in Scottish legal terminology.

## 18. Nouns

### 18.1 Formation

The suffix *-ie* is used freely to form nouns from monosyllabic adjectives and other monosyllabic nouns, e.g. *daftie*, *sweetie*, *kiltie*.

### 18.2 Regular and irregular

A small number of nouns take an irregular plural in Scots differing from their (regular or irregular) plural in Standard English, particularly *een* “eyes”, *shuin* “shoes”, *caur* “calves”, *kye* or *kine* “cows”, *childer* “children”, *galluses* “braces” (literally “gallows”).

Regular plurals sometimes occur, as in other non-standard varieties, where Standard English has an irregular form, e.g. *louses* “lice”.

### 18.3 Inflection of plurals and possessives

Where other varieties of English voice /f/ and /θ/ finally in nouns such as *wife* and *path* before the –s inflection, as well as before the /s/ of *house*, no such change takes place in Scots, or, for the most part, in Scottish Standard English.

As in other non-standard varieties, the inflection of the possessive can be added to a regular plural, e.g. *bairns's*.

#### 18.4 Collective and segregate

Several groups of nouns regularly take zero plural marker in Scots when used in a collective sense.<sup>31</sup>

a) nouns of measurement and quantity, e.g. *eight year*, *six pound*;

b) names of large domestic animals

an he got the ither yin that wis the thief tae kill twa big ox fir him ("The princess and the pups", *op. cit.*, p.259)

c) the compounds *theirsel* "self" and *their lane* "lone":

so they sat an gorged theirsel wi this cheese. ("The cat and the hard cheese", *op. cit.*, p.321)

Syne he gaed oot an left the twa o them theirlane for a wee bit ("Jock Tamson's bairns", *op. cit.*, p.11)

#### 18.5 Possessives

When a possessive noun is post-modified, the possessive inflection can be postponed, as in other non-standard varieties:

that's the man at ye met yesterday's dochter (Murray, 1873: 166)

#### 18.6 Gender

In Insular Scots, certain nouns referring to inanimate objects take gender marked pronouns:

Now there were no doubt about the ranksman [i.e. a boat] now: he wäs deep. ... "He's deep: yon boat looks as if shö was load wi fish." ("Maggie Milleer's tows", *op. cit.*, p.95)

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<sup>31</sup> Murray (1873: 161, fn.2) records double plurals expressing collective and segregate senses simultaneously:

Now, scrape yer feets weel, and pit off aa o' yer shuins i' the passage!

an they would tak up the fire-kaettle, you know, i the middle of the boat: you häve her standing on stons (*ibid*, p.98)

a sae [a water butt carried on ropes or poles], that's the name o it. He was half filled with waater (Maggie Miller's tows", *op. cit.*, p.95)

## 18.7 Diminutives

The diminutive suffix *-ie* is used freely, as in colloquial English generally, sometimes in combination with *-ock*, which is especially productive in the North of Scotland, giving *-ockie*. In Caithness, *-ock* takes the form *-ag*, e.g. *Cheordag* "Geordie".

## 18.8 Indefinite nouns

The usual Scots indefinite term for a person is *a body*. Compounds with *-body* are preferred over compounds with *-one*, e.g. *awbody* "everyone". *Aw* "all" combines with *-body*, *-thing* and *-where* in place of *every*. The Scots equivalent of *-body else* is QUANTIFIER – *ither body*, e.g. *ony ither body*.

*Ane* "one" can stand alone as the indefinite term for a person:

But there were eens 'at was yondrawa, they caa'd them Spences to neem ("The trow of Windhouse", *op. cit.*, p.252)

## 19. Personal pronouns

### 19.1 First person singular

Scots forms of the first person singular pronoun are:

Nominative: *Ah*

Accusative: *me*

Possessive, determiner: *ma*, Insular Scots *me*

nominal: *mines*

*Us* is regularly used with singular reference in Scots as in colloquial English generally.<sup>32</sup>

### 19.2 First person plural

Scots forms are:

Nominative: South and East of Scotland *oo*

Accusative: *huz*

Possessive, determiner: *oor*, unstressed *wir*

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<sup>32</sup> In the following Shetland example, the possessive form *wir* ("our") is used with singular reference:

"By Jove, yes, wir ködha" (that was the name ... they couldna say 'wife' at sea, ...) "wir ködha is right efter aal ..." ("Maggie Miller's tows", *op. cit.*, p.95)

nominal: *oors*.

### 19.3 Second person singular

The second person singular pronouns survive in spoken Scots only in Insular Scots,<sup>33</sup> where the local dialect forms have /d/ for /ð/. The forms are:

Nominative: *du*, also *thoo*

Accusative: *dee*, also *thee*<sup>34</sup>

Possessive, determiner: *dee*, also *thee*.

As in Older Scots, regular verbs take the *-(e)s* inflection in the present tense when there is a second person pronoun subject, and likewise *is* and *has*.<sup>35</sup>

### 19.4 Second person plural

The distinction between nominative *ye* and accusative *you* has not survived in Modern Scots, although in Ulster Scots, and perhaps in other dialects, *ye* does occur as a stressed form (in either function).

Second person plural forms, recorded as Hiberno-English by Wright (1905), are now regular in Glasgow dialect, and widespread in Central Scotland. These forms, nominative and accusative alike, are *youse* and unstressed *yiz*.

### 19.5 Third person singular

Although h-dropping is not a feature of Scottish speech (except in the fisher dialect of the Cromarty Firth), /h/ is elided in unstressed forms of *he*, *him*, *his* and *her*. Conversely, /h/ is added to the emphatic forms *huz* “us” and *hit* “it”. Other Scots forms are *he’s* “his” and *shae* (Insular Scots *shö*) “she”.

The possessive determiner *its* is avoided in Scots, as in other varieties of non-standard English, but is of course available from Standard English.<sup>36</sup>

*One* is virtually unavailable as an indefinite human pronoun in Scottish speech, and is a stereotype of the English of England. Colloquial *you* is used instead.

### 19.6 Third person plural

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<sup>33</sup> The nickname for Paisley, *seestu* (“do you see”), captures the memory of this surviving as an archaism in idiomatic use there.

<sup>34</sup> SND also records an accusative form *thoo*.

<sup>35</sup> SND also records *are* and *have*, as with *you*.

<sup>36</sup> SND records *it* for the possessive:

See at the cat pittin up it paw an clawin it head.

The forms of the third person plural pronoun are as in Standard English, except accusative *thaim*. *They* is also used as an indefinite subject in Scottish speech, without any explicit antecedent, as an alternative to impersonal constructions:

When I lived in the East End, when they used to have the May Day Parade ... (retired man, recorded in Glasgow, 1979)

### 19.7 Periphrastic possessives

*Its* (see above) can be replaced in Scots by *o it* (also *of it*), and reduced forms *o't*, *o'd*.

The periphrastic possessive *o me* (or *of me*) is part of the Highland stereotype in Scottish literature. Periphrastic possessives occur regularly in the idioms *for the life o(f) + ACCUSATIVE PERSONAL PRONOUN* and *be the death o(f) + ACCUSATIVE PERSONAL PRONOUN*.

### 19.8 Accusative pronouns

Like other varieties of colloquial or non-standard English, Scottish speech employs the accusative forms of the personal pronouns in the following circumstances:

a) conjoined subject:

But hooever, him an the three dogs is away again ("The three dogs", *op. cit.*, p.187)

b) in apposition to a noun:

I mean there are only the three of us kids in our bit, right? ("Our Merry", *op. cit.*, p.17)

Scots also has the accusative forms of the plural pronouns in apposition to the indefinite pronoun *yins* (also *ones*), e.g. *you yins*.

c) when the pronoun is separated from the verb, for instance by a relative clause:

"Them at'll go an bring back the best ring ... 'll get my whole kingdom" ("The three feathers", *op. cit.*, p.230)

d) as the subject of verbless or non-finite *-ing* clauses (see above);

e) in denials:

She's a pious wife, sir. Me ca' her a witch! (SND, s.v. *I*)

f) as a postponed subject:

nae need o a tit-halter her ("Jock Tamson's bairns", *op. cit.*, p.7)

g) as a subject complement:

it was really me that caused the bother ("Our Merry", *op. cit.*, p.15)

## 19.9 Order of pronominal objects

In Scottish speech, the order of pronominal objects is usually INDIRECT – DIRECT,<sup>37</sup> even when this means that a pronoun follows a noun:

gie the bairn't (SND s.v. *it*)

## 19.10 Reflexives

Like other non-standard varieties, Scots bases all reflexive forms with *sel* (also *self*) on the possessive forms of the personal pronouns, thus *hissel* and *theinsel(s)*.<sup>38</sup>

The adjective *ain* (also *own*) can be inserted between the pronoun and *-sel(s)* for emphasis, e.g. *their ain sels*. *Twa(e)* (also *two*) is also common in this position:

Gang away yer twae sels (Murray, 1873: 197)

The reflexive pronouns can function as adverbials in Scottish speech, with the sense "by REFLEXIVE PRONOUN":

You see, a boat didn't go itself to the far out grounds: there were always two 'at went together ("Maggie Miller's tows", *op. cit.*, p.94)

*Yoursel(f)* as an emphatic alternative to *you* is associated with Highland English, but is more general in the greeting:

Oh, it's yersel.

## 20. Determiners

### 20.1 Indefinite article

The form *a* occurs before vowels as well as before consonants in Scots:<sup>39</sup>

she would get a assistant ("Maggie Miller's tows", *op. cit.*, p.94)

*Ae* or *ane* (also *one*) is used emphatically in place of the indefinite article:

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<sup>37</sup> Grant and Dixon (1921: 98) have an example of pronominal objects in DIRECT – INDIRECT order, without *to*, as in the North of England:

I'll show it ye some of thir days if ye're good.

Grant and Dixon (1921: 99) record *the sell o't* ("itself"):

Kirkcaldy, the sell o't, is langer than ony town in England.

<sup>39</sup> Conversely, the adverbial *hellova*, which is lexicalised as a single item, as in colloquial English generally, occurs with a final /n/, e.g. *hellovan expensive*.

Sir, my lord, if ye'll believe me, there was no ae single ane,...  
that would gie your lordship a bawbie for auld lang syne. (Grant and  
Dixon, 1921: 76)

I've got one hell of a sair heid.

## 20.2 Definite article

The definite article is used in Scots with exophoric or homophoric reference before various categories of nouns where Standard English employs no determiner, including:

### a) diseases:

He's aw choked up wi the cauld.

### b) trades, sciences and branches of knowledge:

Good joab A hid tae oan the long distance. (James Kelman, "Nice tae  
be nice", *The Glasgow Review* IV:3, 1973:42)

### c) names of days:

It'll be ready by the Monday of next week.

### d) institutions:

aye hungry comin hame frae the schule (J. K. Annand, "Me and ma  
grannies, I", *Lallans* 7, 1976:18)

Landit up in the hoaspital way it tae. ("Nice tae be nice", *op. cit.*,  
p.42)

wi their poke o pan-draps for the kirk in the mornin (J. K. Annand,  
"Me and ma grannies, II", *Lallans* 8, 1977:24)

'Ah've seen um with ye at the burroo. Nice wee fella'' (*Its Colours  
they are Fine, op. cit.*, p.147)

### e) means of public transport:

Are there ony like her oan the buses the day? (Adam McNaughton,  
"Where is the Glasgow?" in *The Scottish Folksinger, op. cit.*, p.56)

### f) languages:

and him a guid hand at screivan the Scots ("Inter alia", *Akros*, 10,  
1969:59)

### g) family members:

In comes the lassie. Eywis comes roon fir a blethir wi the maw in that whin the auld yins oot it his work. (James Kelman, "The hon" in *Short Tales from the Night Shift*, 1978)

#### h) parts of the body:

but you can tell by the sound of it that the bloke's lost the head ("Gallus, did you say?", *op. cit.*, p.6)

Says wän o the young chaps wi the sharp eyes, he says, ... ("Maggie Miller's tows", *op. cit.*, p.94)

#### i) miscellaneous

Things hae no improved tae ony extent worth the mentioning. ("A muckle steer", *Akros* 10, 1969:8)

Grannie and her unmarriet dochter baid up the stair. ("Me and ma grannies, I", *op. cit.*, p.16)

"and gets stuck right in wi thi baith a is hauns" ("Gallus, did you say?", *op. cit.*, p.13)

and the sett-makkers that aince paved the maist o the streets in the toun (Alastair Mackie, "My grandfather's nieve", *Lallans* 5, 1975:9)

"Well," she says, "... there's just the wän way" ("Maggie Miller's tows", *op. cit.*, p.96)

j) with the names of various periods of time, including those with *to-* in Standard English, thus *the day*, *the nicht* (also *the night*), *the morn*, *the streen* "yestreen", *the noo* (also *the now*), *the year*.<sup>40</sup>

### 20.3 Possessive pronouns

Possessive pronouns are used before certain nouns in Scots where other varieties have no determiner, including names of meals and the noun *bed*:

My grandfaither had taen his breakfast (Robert McLellan, "The robin", *Lallans* 4, 1975:10)

I'm away tae ma bed.<sup>41</sup>

### 20.4 Demonstrative

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<sup>40</sup> By analogy with *the day* etc., *together* is also remodelled as *thegither* in Scots.

<sup>41</sup> But *the* in this Shetland example:

the hoosekeeper fand this tablemaid dead i'tö the baed ("The trow of Windhouse", *op. cit.*, p.252).

*That* has the reduced form *at*. There are distinctive forms of the plural demonstratives: *thir* "these" and *thae* "those". *Them* "those" occurs occasionally, as in other non-standard varieties:

an Jack follae't them ... doon the steps. (Stone steps in them days in the old castles). ("The three feathers", *op. cit.*, p.230)

In Northern Scots, and formerly more widely (DOST f/c), *this* and *that* are used for both singular and plural:

They would say this wirds when they were haalin up the line. ("Maggie Miller's tows", *op. cit.*, p.94)

Iv coorse 'e fowk chist shook thur heids, / They'd heard 'at tales afore! ('Castlegreen', "The ghost of the hill o' Forss" in *Tatties an' Herreen'*, 1961)

Scots has an additional distinction in the demonstrative system: *yon* (singular and plural) expresses a further degree of physical or conceptual distance than *that* and *thae*:

We got yon way we'd started just going round to the wee school ("Gallus, did you say?", *op. cit.*, p.2)

*Yon* also has the form *thon* by analogy with the rest of the paradigm.

Scottish speakers tend to avoid demonstratives in nominal function antecedent to a relative clause:

Ah think who don't realise it, an should, is aw the supposed authorities an aw that. (young man, recorded in Glasgow, 1979)

However, demonstratives can be found in this position in literary Scots:

but thae that find it hard to appreciate their excellence may be left nane the wiser (Robert Garioch, "The Akros Review of Poetry", *Lallans* 5, 1975:23)

*That which* is not available in colloquial Scottish speech, and is replaced by *what*:

I'm but a bederal, sir, but week out an' week in, it's liker twenty shillin's, what I can mak atween that an' my tred. (SND s.v. *what*)

Rather than use *thae* and *thir* in nominal function, Scottish speakers prefer DEMONSTRATIVE – *anes* (or *ones*):

Ah'll tak thae yins.

or, when the demonstrative would be the object of the sentence, the personal pronoun *thaim* (also *them*):

Ah'll tak thaim.

As in colloquial English generally, *these* (Scots *thir*) is used in narratives with reference to past time:

Now the poverty wasn't so obvious in these days. It's only when you look back in retrospect (retired man, recorded in Glasgow, 1979)

Conversely, *thae* (also *those*) is occasionally found with reference to time continuing up to the present of the speaker:

There is a muckle steer on thae days ("A muckle steer", *op. cit.*, p.6)

*This* is usual in Scots in adverbials expressing time since, e.g. *this wee while*, *this day or two*.

*That* and *thae* occur with cataphoric reference:

I will say that for the English, that they are a ceeveleesed people. (SND s.v. *that*)

But when aa's duin, we come upon thae words, prentit wi legitimate pride, "Quod S. G. S., Makar." (Robert Garioch, "Under the Eildon Tree", *Akros* 10, 1969:47)

*This* and *that* are used elliptically for "this/that time/place/person":

I'll hae plenty adae atween this and Whitsunday. (SND s.v. *this*)

Bit fricht or no, a week fae 'at, a nicht o' win' an' rain, / 'Ere's Cheordie coman' fae 'e seile [sale] an' blazan' drounk agian! ("The ghost of the Hill o' Forss", *op. cit.*)

"Go on", she says, "wi yir three dogs out o this, don't enter my door." ("The three dogs", *op. cit.*, p.186)

Jimmy happent to be makkin his wey atween Udney and that ither place ... Knockha': he used tae visit atween that and the Laird o Udney's a lot (John Keith, "The Laird o Udney's Fool", recorded by Hamish Henderson, 1952, *Tocher* vol.3, 1975-76:244)

an he was catchin up on them almost, spoolin an wydin through this water ... an this wis approachin the boat. ("The princess and the pups", *op. cit.*, p.261)

Oh, but she's the clever one, that! (SND s.v. *that*)

## 21. Numerals

### 21.1 Cardinals

The numeral *ane* (*yin*, *een*, etc.) “one” has contrasting nominal and determiner forms in traditional Scots, with *ane* etc. for the nominal, and *ae* (*yae*) for the determiner. The same distinction is found in the co-ordinate construction *the tae / the tane ... the tither*:

The tae half o' the gillies winna ken. (Grant and Dixon, 1921:105)

for twa reasons, the tane o whilk concerns us the nou ... the tither we sall leave for a later paragraph (“Henry the Minstrel’s ‘Wallace’”, *op. cit.*, p.8)

However, *ane* etc. is now usually generalised to both functions in speech:

The door blew doon yin nicht in the wun. (SND s.v. *yin*)

## 21.2 Ordinals

The Scots form of the ordinal suffix is *-t*, thus *fourt*, *fift*, *saxt*, etc.

## 22. Other modifiers

### 22.1 Formation of adjectives

There are some differences between Scots and Standard English in the distribution of the suffix *-en*, e.g. *beecheen* but *wood* and *wheat* (alongside *wheaten*).

The names of places can be used as adjectives:

the glottal stop, once thought of as being peculiarly Glasgow (student exam paper, Glasgow, 1979)

### 22.2 Open class quantifiers

There are a number of open class quantifiers in Scots that act as pre-modifiers of nouns (but not of pronouns) rather than as heads followed by an *of* phrase containing the noun, including *plenty*, *bit*, *pickle*, *drap* (also *drop*) and *when*:

Grannie had a when ither ploys (“Me and ma grannies, I”, *op. cit.*, p.16)

Conversely, *eneugh* (also *enough*) takes an *of* phrase:

Now they had enough o baet an that (“Maggie Miller’s tows”, *op. cit.*, p.99)

## 23. Pro-forms

### 23.1 That

*That* generally replaces *so* (Scots *sae*) in Scottish speech:

a) as direct object:

A tellt ye that. (Wilson, 1915:94)

*It* can also be used:

She's fifty come February - you'd never think it.

b) as predicate of a modal verb:

"dae you think," he says, "that you could get the princess?" "Oh fine that," he says ("The princess and the pups", *op. cit.*, p.260)

*That* can be fronted without inducing SUBJECT – OPERATOR inversion:

"Promise me ... that ye'll read out o' that book every night at worship ..." "That I will, sir," responded Annie earnestly. (Grant and Dixon, 1921: 138)

c) as a subject complement:

"Good morning, sir," he says. "It's a fine mornin." "It is that," he says. ("The three dogs", *op. cit.*, p.194)

d) *that* is also used instead of *so* as an intensifier:

ma manz thaht difffrint ... / hizthaht indipehhhhndint (Tom Leonard, "Tea time" in *Bunnit Husslin*, 1978)

## 23.2 *So*

*So* is used as a pro-form by Scottish speakers in the following constructions:

a) emphatic sentence fragments:

He isnae coming. He *is so*. (Brown and Millar, 1980:115)

b) in apposition to the predicate in emphatic replies:

He *is so* coming. (*ibid*)

This is an innovatory usage, and is not recorded with Scots *sae*. There is a form *sut*, probably confined to children's speech, which appears to be influenced by *nut*, an emphatic form of "not" (see above):

"Ah'm no a bampot." "Ye are *sut*." "Ah mur *nut*."

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