**Introduction**  
Robert McColl Millar

This volume grew out of a long-standing worry: what happens linguistically with marginal varieties, varieties which, either linguistically or sociolinguistically (or, of course, both), are ‘on the edge’. This marginal nature could be analysed as being due to a language variety’s being spoken on a major linguistic frontier. On the other hand, a variety might be marginal because of social factors, such as a presiding ideology in a state or a region. In both these contexts, and also in several analogous situations, the language varieties involved have rarely been celebrated and, until recently, even more rarely analysed linguistically. It is my hope that this volume provides data and informed comment on a range of situations which may not regularly be discussed, particularly not in the same volume.

This collection deals with a range of different language contexts – English (as well as Scots in Scotland and Ireland), French, Italian, Catalan, Luxembourgish, Breton and Chinese. As the title suggests, it discusses situations in Scotland and Ireland, certainly, but also Canada and the United States, the French Caribbean, Brittany and France in general), Nigeria, Hong Kong, central Italy and Sardinia. The frameworks in which it is discussed include diachronic and corpus-based analyses, findings based on fieldwork and primary data collection but also discussions which are macrosociolinguistic at heart, being concerned primarily with the ways in which language varieties are used within a society and how this use is judged and, often, controlled. It would be true to say, however, that practically all of the essays in this volume combine elements of both viewpoints in their discussions. Despite the many disparities of place, subject and language, the essays form a whole. It is to be hoped that the synergies found in these pages will encourage further cross-pollination.

A number of people and organisations should be thanked for their help in making this volume happen. In the first place, the Editorial Board and the Steering Committee of the FRLSU must be thanked. Without their willingness to go the extra mile in reading material from outside their fields and their advice on how to approach some knotty problems, I think it likely that this volume would still be on the drawing board. Other scholars, including my
colleagues Mercedes Durham and Haisheng Jiang, helped give a clear appraisal of each essay considered for this volume. Again, their willingness to turn around an opinion on an essay quickly even at the height of teaching terms was exemplary. The authors of this essay have shown great patience, humour and (occasionally) tolerance during the editorial process. The initial call for proposals was published on Linguist List. My thanks go to the List’s staff for making this announcement (and others over the years).