

## SCOTS-ENGLISH INTERACTION IN OLDER SCOTS

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### Resumen

El presente trabajo estudia la anglicización del escocés antiguo (hasta 1700). En primer lugar, se analizan las causas que propiciaron el declive de esta variedad lingüística: el frecuente contacto entre escoceses e ingleses, la libre circulación en Escocia de obras inglesas a partir del siglo XIV, la enorme influencia ejercida por Chaucer y sus sucesores, la imprenta, el triunfo de la Reforma, la Unión de las Coronas inglesa y escocesa en 1603 y, posteriormente, la Unión de los Parlamentos en 1707. A continuación, se señala la influencia del proceso anglicizador en distintos géneros literarios y niveles lingüísticos, y se concluye con un caso práctico que ilustra algunos de los puntos expuestos.

**Palabras clave:** Historia, escocés antiguo, anglicización, *Basilicon Doron*.

### Abstract

This paper studies the anglicization of Older Scots (to 1700). It first analyses the main factors underlying this process: the frequent contacts between Scots and English people, the circulation of English works in Scotland from the fourteenth century onwards, the influence of Chaucer and his successors, printing, the triumph of the Reformation, the Union of the Crowns in 1603, and the Union of the Parliaments in 1707. Then, it presents the influence of the anglicization process on different genres and linguistic levels, and finally analyses two illustrative texts.

**Key words:** History, Older Scots, anglicization, *Basilicon Doron*.

### Résumé

Nous étudions dans ce travail l'anglicisation de l'ancien écossais (jusqu'en 1700). Nous commençons par une analyse des causes qui ont favorisé le déclin de cette variété linguistique: les contacts fréquents entre les Écossais et les Anglais, la libre circulation en Écosse des oeuvres anglaises à partir du XIV<sup>e</sup> siècle, l'énorme influence exercée par Chaucer et ses successeurs, l'imprimerie, le triomphe de la Réforme, l'Union des Couronnes anglaise et écossaise en 1603 et, plus tard, l'Union des Parlements en 1707. Nous nous occupons ensuite de l'influence du processus anglicisant sur plusieurs genres littéraires et sur quelques registres linguistiques et proposons, pour terminer, un cas pratique illustrant certains des points abordés

**Mots clés:** Histoire, ancien écossais, anglicisation, *Basilicon Doron*

The history of Scots begins in the fifth century, when the Angles, Saxons and Jutes, speakers of different dialects of the same Germanic language, settled in England. The Saxons kept mostly to the South and to the West, while the Angles spread northwards, and in the seventh century succeeded in crossing the Tweed and entering Scotland. In 638 they captured the British fortress Din Eidyn, which they called Edinburgh, and this territory became the core of Anglo-Saxon Scotland.

The next important event in the history of Scots is the Norman conquest and the consequent implantation of the feudal system, since the newcomers not only introduced French into Scotland, but also furthered the expansion of English. Thus, whereas the Normans coming from northern England and settling in the lands granted by the Celtic king Malcolm Canmore and his sons spoke French, most of their servants and retainers were English. The establishment of burghs, centres of trade and industry, contributed further to the spread of this language, so that, when at the beginning of the fourteenth century French fell into disuse as the official language of Scotland, it was superseded by English or "Inglis", as it began to be called.

Apart from its official use, which reached its climax in 1398, when the Scottish Parliament began to enact its statutes in the vernacular instead of in Latin, Scots was also used as the medium of an emerging literature, which had in John Barbour's *The Bruce*, written in 1375, its earliest masterpiece. Consequently, whereas before the Norman conquest Gaelic was the dominant language in Scotland and "Inglis" was confined to the southeast, in the fourteenth century the situation was reversed, and the latter language, associated with the feudal system and with the burghs, spread throughout the Lowlands, while Gaelic was pushed back into the Highlands.

Meanwhile in England, for political and economic reasons, the east Midlands dialect was developing into the standard or official national language, superseding the other dialects, including the Northern, which ceased to be used for official or literary purposes in the fifteenth century. In Scotland, however, "Inglis", originally indistinguishable from the Northern dialect of Middle English, became the official language and, as such, it was used for all kinds of purposes, including literature, with such outstanding figures as Henryson, Dunbar, Douglas, or Lyndsay. Two linguistic norms coexisted, therefore, in Great Britain in the fifteenth century: the English of England, centered on London, and the "Inglis" of Scotland, centered on Edinburgh, with significant differences between them. Only by the end of that century, however, was this linguistic disparity reflected formally, and a new term, "Scots", which had until then designated Gaelic, was used to refer to the "Inglis" spoken north of the river Humber<sup>1</sup>.

The sixteenth century can be considered a key period for the Scots language. While in the first half Scots was a national language with distinctive features, used for all kinds of purposes -literature (poetry as well as prose), public records, official documents, diaries, letters, etc.-, in the second, it began to decline, mainly because of the growing prestige of English. The first blow came in 1560 with the triumph of the Reformation, which strengthened the bonds between Scotland and England, thus severing those that the former had with its old ally, France. By a Scottish law of 1579, moreover, every householder worth 300 merks was to possess a Bible and a psalm book in the vernacular. There was a Scots version of the New Testament, but it was not printed until the nineteenth century; the Geneva Bible, written in English, was, therefore, introduced into Scotland, together with an English Psalter. This had a significant influence on the anglicization process, since the Bible was heard by everyone in church at least once a week, read by many at home, and was also the essential reading book in school. Moreover, not only the sermons, but the numerous religious pamphlets which began to circulate throughout Scotland after the Reformation, were partly modelled on the language of the Bible, that is, on English. In this way, the Scots were not only becoming familiar with English<sup>2</sup>, but also beginning to regard it as a dignified language, more

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<sup>1</sup> Adam Loutfut was the first to use this new term in 1494. Although "Scots" became dominant in the sixteenth century, the older term still survived for a considerable time.

<sup>2</sup> According to some contemporary references, even people in the Highlands were becoming familiar with English, although this is possibly an exaggeration. In Robert Pont's tract on the Union of England and Scotland (1603), for example, one of the characters says: "being on a time in Zetland driven thether by tempest I heard the ministers preach in the English tongue, well understood by the whole auditory as a language familiar unto them" (Bald (1928:172)). Sir Thomas Craig, writing two years later, is even more

appropriate for abstract thought and for solemn and formal contexts than Scots.

The Union of the Crowns in 1603 contributed further to the anglicization process, since not only the Court, but also a large number of politicians, noblemen, and men of letters left Edinburgh and moved to London. Finally, with the Union of the Parliaments in 1707, the legislature was transferred to London and, as a result, the language of the legislative capital became the official one throughout the whole country. Thus, English, politically prestigious, superseded Scots, which was confined to dialectal use.

In spite of the great influence that these three factors had on anglicization, the beginnings of this process lie elsewhere. Since quite early on in the history of Scots, Scottish people had been exposed to oral and written English. With regard to the former, the author of *The Complaynt of Scotland* (c.1549), for instance, complains about the frequent contacts between people of the two nations in the borders:

There is no thing that is occasione (O ye my thre sonnys) of your adhering to the opinione of ingland contrar your natife cuntre bot the grit familiarite that inglis men and scottis hes hed on baitht the boirdours ilk ane vitth vtheris in marchandeis in selling and bying hors and nolt and scheip out fang and in fang ilk ane amang vtheris the quhilk familiarite is expres contrar the lauis and consuetudis, baytht of ingland and scotland.

(Stewart (1979:83))

This contact increased in the seventeenth century, after the Union of the Crowns, when it became fashionable for Scots gentry to spend some time in England, particularly in London. Inter-marriage between the Scots and English aristocracy also became common at this time. According to Aitken, 13.7% of seventeenth century Scots peers married wives from South of the Border: "London was becoming a marriage market for Scotland as well as for England" (Aitken (1979:91)). On the other hand, the Scots tradition of sending children to continental universities to complete their education was now discouraged by the Reformation: in 1579, for instance, there was a petition of the general assembly prohibiting this practice, "because through foreign education 'the youth of this realme is corrupted by pestilent popery'" (Donaldson (1961:297)). As a result,

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categorical:

There is not a single chieftain in the Highlands, and Islands who does not either speak, or at least understand, English; and even in the Orkneys and Shetlands, where in the course of this very century nothing but Norse was spoken, the ministers of God's word now use English in church, and are well enough understood. (Bald (1928:174))

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some Scots began to send their children to English universities instead, thus following a practice pioneered by Knox in the sixteenth century.

Scots were also growing familiar with written English, since English works had been freely circulating throughout Scotland from the fourteenth century onwards. Religious texts were the most numerous: the wills of Edinburgh booksellers, the libraries of Queen Mary and King James VI, and the University Libraries of St. Andrews and Edinburgh contain works by the most important English theologians of the time (Tyndale, Coverdale, Thomas Becon, Bishop Hooper, John Jewel, John Bale, John Bradford, Latimer, Sir Thomas More, etc.), as well as translations from continental writers (Luther, Calvin), but there are also works by Chaucer, Gower, and by Elizabethan authors such as Sidney, Constable, Churchyard, Spenser, Shakespeare, or Marlowe (Bald (1926b)). The author of *The Complaynt of Scotland* also testifies to the influence and knowledge of English literature in this country. Among his tales, the first he mentions are "the taylis of cantirberrye", and he also lists "ypomedon", "the prophysie of merlyne", "Robene hude and litil ihone", "the meruellis of mandieuel", "beuis of southamtonn", as well as some English songs such as "pastance vitht gude companye", or "greuit is my sorrou" (Stewart (1979:50-51)).

The enormous influence of Chaucer and his successors on Scottish literature is also held to have favoured anglicization. William Dunbar, for instance, addresses Chaucer as "reverend Chaucer, rose of rethoris all" and as "all the lycht" of "oure Englisch", and Sir David Lindsay refers to "Chawceir, Goweir and Lidgate laureate", whose "sweit sentence through Albione bene song" (Donaldson (1961:294)). Scots transcripts of their English poems often retained some English forms, especially in rhymes, and consequently Scots poets seem to have regarded them as alternatives to the corresponding native forms, particularly useful for rhyming purposes, and so they began the practice of introducing occasional anglicisms in their more pretentious works. Examples of this practice are already found in the fourteenth century and in one of the genres most resistant to anglicization, the plain narrative verse, such as Barbour, the *Legends of Saints*, or Wyntoun, where *one*, *allone* are found rhyming with proper names such as *Jhon*, *Sampson*, *Babilone*, and *go* with *Nero*, *Cupido*. Other poems, especially of the courtly variety, make use of a wider range of anglicisms: <o> for <a> forms even in non-rhyming position; infinitive and plural present indicative verbs ending in *-(e)n*; 3rd p. sg. present indicative verbs ending in *-ith*; Chaucerian vocabulary (*lyte*, *morrow*, *twane* for Scots *litill*, *morn(ing)*, *twa*), etc. (Aitken (1983:28-31)).

The practice of introducing anglicised forms in Scots works, which by 1540 began to occur, although only sporadically, in prose, spread quickly, so that from 1560 onwards most texts made use of a mixed diction, in which English and Scots forms

coexisted as alternative options. Sir William Alexander, for instance, prefaced the first edition of *Darius* (1603) in this way:

The language of this Poeme is (as thou seest) mixt of the English and Scottish Dialects; which perhaps may be un-pleasant and irksome to some readers of both nations. But I hope the gentle and Judicious Englishe Reader will beare with one, if *I retaine some badge of mine owne countrie*, by using sometimes words that are peculiar thereunto, especially when I finde them propre, and significant. And as for my owne countrey-men, they may not justly finde fault with me, if *for the more parte I vse the English phrase*, as worthie to be preferred before our owne for the elegance and perfection thereof<sup>3</sup>.

(Bald (1928:173))

The portions italicised in the extract make clear how closely this mixed language resembled English rather than Scots. The same conclusion is drawn by the author of an anonymous letter written c.1571:

I haue herewith also sent you the most autentike testimonie of the three estates of Scotland assembled in parliament... I haue for your more easy understanding changed the Scottish orthography, which I would to God had been done for Englishmens better satisfaction in Maister George Buchnan's boke. Howbeit the same is not so hard but that after the reading of two leaues a man may easily enough grow acquainted with it, and doubtlesse the knowledge and monumentes therein contained are wel worth so small a trauell to understand them.

(Bald (1928:168))

Consequently, whereas in the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries Scottish texts circulating throughout England were read in editions translated into English,

in the early seventeenth century, however, the process of anglicization of Middle Scots had progressed so far for it to be possible to send Edinburgh prints directly down South, with only a cancel title-page to attract the English reader -as with the "1604" issue of the *Satyre* (really Robert Charteris's edition of 1602) and of the *Works*.

(MacDonald (1991:178))

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<sup>3</sup> The italics are mine.

Printing was also an influential factor in the trend towards anglicization. The first Scottish printing-press dates from 1508 but, before that, printed books freely circulated throughout Scotland, most of them in English, and these may have been used as models. With regard to printers, the majority had some kind of connection with England: either they were English themselves, or had worked or been trained in that country. These factors, together with the fact that books in English enjoyed wider circulation and had a larger market than books in Scots, account for the printers' practice of deliberately anglicising those texts which came their way. In the sixteenth century, this tendency was mainly confined to religious and academic texts, but in the seventeenth there is no longer any restriction in the anglicising process. Andro Hart, for instance, one of the most important printers of that century, made an exception only in the case of antique works, such as those of Blind Harry, Barbour, Henryson, etc., because, as he states in the Printer's Preface to his editions of Barbour (1616 and 1620): "Amongst all the rest, this storie of the valiant Bruce is not the least; *it speaketh the language of that time, if it spake ours, it would not be it selfe*: yet as an antique it is venerable" (Bald (1926a:114)).

Bald's figures sum up the situation for the books printed in Scotland since the establishment of printing in that country until 1625:

1508-50	-	12	Scots;	none	anglicised
1551-60	-	6	"	"	"
1561-70	-	43	"	12	"
1571-80	-	35	"	5	"
1581-90	-	10	"	13	"
1591-1600	-	18	"	38	"
1601-1610	-	7	"	25	"
1611-1620	-	3	"	47	"
1621-1625	-	2	"	21	"

(Bald (1926a:115))

The fact that by the early seventeenth century any Scots text that was to be printed was deliberately anglicised is important, not only because it shows Scottish printers' growing competence in English, but also because of its effect on the reading public. Scottish readers were constantly being exposed to English, since they now had access to it not only in the Bible and in the large number of English books which had been circulating throughout Scotland from the fourteenth century onwards, but also in works written by Scotsmen, and the result was a growing familiarity with the southern standard. Thus,

Scotland was drawn into a spiral of anglicization: with the reading of English, English form and usage became known; anglicisms entered the writing of Scotsmen; these anglicisms became still more familiar to the Scots reading public. even through the writings of their own countrymen, and they were therefore increasingly used.

(MacQueen (1957:61))

With respect to the influence of anglicization on written Scots, poetry was affected by this process earlier and to a greater extent than prose: as mentioned previously, instances of anglicised forms were already to be found in the vernacular poetry of the fourteenth century, but they did not occur in prose until the middle of the sixteenth. On the other hand, whereas James VI wrote *Essays of a Prentise* (in verse) in almost pure English, his *Reulis and Cautelis* (in prose), in the same volume, are in pure Scots; William Fowler wrote prose in Scots and poetry in English, and the poets William Alexander and William Drummond used English almost exclusively (Donaldson (1961:293-4)).

Different genres were affected, however, in different degrees by the process of anglicization. Within poetry, anglicised forms were especially frequent in elaborate narrative and courtly poetry, whereas plain narrative and comic verse tended to cling to the vernacular (Aitken (1983)). With regard to prose, religious treatises and national public records lay at opposite poles with respect to the anglicization process. The former were usually directed at a Scottish and English audience, they were modelled on a text written in English -the Bible-, and were usually printed: all these factors tend to favour anglicization. Public records, on the other hand, were aimed at a Scottish audience, they had a long tradition in Scotland and had developed a formulaic style; this, together with the formal, conservative and nationalistic nature of this genre, may have discouraged anglicization (Devitt (1989:62-66)).

The influence of the anglicization process on the different linguistic levels was not uniform either. Syntax was the most resistant, whereas flexive morphology lay at the opposite pole. Inflections marking the plural of nouns and the present indicative and the present participle of verbs were the first to yield significantly to English influence. Thus, instances of the use of the allomorphs *-es* and *-s* in nouns and verbs and *-ing* for the present participle (instead of the native forms *-is* and *-and* respectively), which were already present, albeit sporadically, in the fifteenth century, became the norm in the seventeenth (MacQueen (1957:71)). The same is true for the use of <o> for <a> forms (*fro*, *go*, *more*, *most*, *no*, *none*, *quho*, etc. instead of native *fra*, *ga*, *mair*, *maist*, *na*, *nane*, *quha*. etc.), of which there were already some instances in Early Scots. Anglicization,



moreover, spread with considerable speed as a result of all the factors outlined above, so that by the end of the seventeenth century there is very little distinctively Scots even in official records, one of the genres most resistant to English influence. In MacQueen's words:

Most of the readily anglicizable material had already anglicized before 1700, i.e. most of the inflections, the spellings, and those forms whose correspondence with English cognates could be most readily recognised. These, incidentally, are the aspects of language most readily acquired through reading.

(MacQueen (1957:90))

### Illustrative texts

I would like to finish this paper with a practical example which serves to illustrate some of the points I have been making. The following extracts have been taken from King James VI's *The Basilicon Doron*: the first one belongs to the original MS in the king's hand (c.1595), the second to the printed edition of 1603, which had apparently been revised by the king himself for an enlarged audience<sup>4</sup>.

#### 1. (ON CONDUCT IN WAR) MS<sup>5</sup>

... Choose aulde experimentid captaines & young abill soldatis,  
be extreamlie straitte & seuere in discipline alsuell for keiping  
of ordoure (quhilke is als requisite as hardiment in the uarres)  
for punishing of sleuth (quhilke at a tyme maye putte the haill airmie  
5 in hazairde) as lykeuayes for repressing of mutinies (quhilke in uarres  
is uonderfullie dangerouse, & looke to the Spangnoll,  
quhaise greate successe in all his uarres hes onlie cumd throuch  
straitnes of discipline & ordoure, for sicc errouris maye be comitted

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<sup>4</sup> There had been an earlier printed edition of this text in 1599, although only for private circulation, which had already been anglicized by the printer

<sup>5</sup> Both texts have been taken from Görlach (1991:310-11).

10 in the uarres as can not be gottin mendit againe: be in youre awin person  
ualkeryfe, diligent, & painfull, using the aduyce of thaim that are  
skilledest in the craft as ye man do in all craftis, be hamlie uith  
youre soldatis as youre compaignons for uinning thaire hairtis,  
extreamlie liberall, for then is na tyme of spairing...

2. 1603

... Choose olde experimented Captaines, and young able souldiers.  
Be extreamlie straitte and seuere in martiall Discipline, as well for keeping  
of ordour, whiche is as requisite as hardinesse in the warres,  
& punishing of slouth, which at a time may put the whole army  
5 in hazard; as likewise for repressing of mutinies whiche in warres  
are wonderfull dangerous. And looke to the Spaniard,  
whose great successe in all his warres hath onely come through  
straitnesse of Discipline and ordour: for suche errors may be committed  
in the warres, as cannot be gotten mended againe. Be in your owne person  
10 walkrife, diligent, & painfull; vsing the aduce of suche as are  
skilfullest in the craft, as ye must also doe in all other. Be homelie with  
your souldiers as your companions, for winning their harts;  
& extreamlie liberall, for then is no time of spairing...

The first text already contains some anglicisms: with regard to spelling, for instance, English <ea> occurs in *extreamlie* (l.2) and *greate* (l.7), instead of native <e, ei, ey>. In morphology, some unstressed inflectional endings have the English vowel -e instead of Scots -i: *captaines* (l.1), *uarres* (l.3, 5, 7), *comitted* (l.8); and the present participle follows the English usage: *using* (l.10), *uinning* (l.12) (for Scots -and).

The second text, on the other hand, is almost pure English. With regard to spelling, <gh> has replaced native <ch> in *through* (l.7) (cf. *throuch*), and <w> has superseded <u> in those instances in which the latter stood for /w/: *warres* vs. *uarres* (l.3, 5, etc.), *likewise* vs. *lykeuayes* (l.5), *wonderfull* vs. *uonderfullie* (l.6), *walkrife* vs. *ualkeryfe* (l.10), *with* vs. *uith* (l.11), *winning* vs. *uinning* (l.12). The Scots spelling convention of signalling a long vowel by adding <i> is also done away with in text 2: *keeping* (l.2), *whole* (l.4), *army* (l.4), *hazard* (l.5), *whose* (l.7), *owne* (l.9), *harts* (l.12), *sparing* (l.13) (cf. *keiping*, *haull*, *airmie*, *hazairde*, *quhaise*, *awin*, *hairtis*, *spairing* in text 1).

Spelling practices reflecting phonetic differences between the two languages have

also been made to accord with English usage in the second text. Thus, <o> forms have replaced native <a> in *olde* (1.1), *whole* (1.4), *whose* (1.7), *owne* (1.9), *homelie* (1.11), *no* (1.13) (cf. *aulde*, *haill*, *quhaise*, *awin*, *hamlie*, *na* in text 1). English <wh> is used instead of Scots <quh> in *whiche* (1.3, 4, 5, etc.) and *whose* (1.7) (cf. *quhilke*, *quhaise* in the MS), and the palatal consonant in *suche* (1.8) and *whiche* (1.3, 4, 5, etc.) has replaced the velar in the native forms *sicc* and *quhilk*.

With regard to morphology, all unstressed inflectional endings now have the English vowel *-e*, or no vowel at all, instead of Scots *-i*: *experimented* (1.1), *souldiers* (1.1), *errors* (1.8), *gotten* (1.9), *mended* (1.9), *harts* (1.12) (cf. *experimentid*, *soldatis*, *errouris*, *gottin*, *mendit*, *hairtis* in the MS). English *-th* for the 3rd p. sg. present indicative has also replaced native *-s* in *hath* (1.7) (cf. *hes* in text 1). On the other hand, typical Scots forms for verbs (*cumd* (1.7)) and pronouns (*thaire* (1.12)) are done away with in the second text in favour of their English counterparts: *come* and *their* respectively.

Vocabulary has also been anglicized: *souldiers* (1.1), *hardinesse* (1.3), *Spaniard* (1.6), *companions* (1.12) occur in text 2 instead of the more native *soldatis*, *hardiment*, *Spangnoll*, *compaignons* of text 1. More significant is the fact that even non open-class items, such as auxiliaries, have been anglicized: an instance of this is the replacement of Scots *man* (1.11) for English *must* in text 2. Finally, even syntax, the linguistic level most resistant to foreign influences, has been affected by anglicization. Thus, the only instance of the northern rule for the inflection of the present indicative occurring in text 1 is done away with in text 2<sup>6</sup>: "*quhilke [mutinies] in uarres is uonderfullie dangerouse*" vs. "*whiche in warres are wonderfull dangerous*" (1.5-6).

A number of factors may account for the degree of anglicization of the second text: the fact that it is printed is, doubtless, significant, but there are some features, such as the syntactic ones, which must be attributed to the author himself. Although James VI may not be a good example of the extent to which Scots were familiar with English, it is clear that by the early seventeenth century the anglicization process was so far advanced that those Scots intending to be read by a larger audience had no difficulty in using a mixed language in their works, and that the Scottish reading public had no difficulty in understanding it.

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<sup>6</sup> According to this rule, the verb is uninflected in the plural when immediately adjacent to a subject personal pronoun; otherwise, it takes *-s*.

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