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REVIEW ARTICLE

Contemporary Scottish and Irish Studies in Language and Society

John Kirk & Dónall Ó Baoill (eds.), *Language and politics: Northern Ireland, the Republic of Ireland, and Scotland* (No. 1 in the series Belfast Studies in Language, Culture and Politics). Béal Feirste: Cló Ollscoil na Banríona, 2000. Pp. xxii + 147. Pb £9.50

John Kirk & Dónall Ó Baoill (eds.), *Language links: The languages of Scotland and Ireland* (Belfast Studies in Language, Culture and Politics, no. 2). Béal Feirste: Cló Ollscoil na Banríona, 2001. Pp. xx + 289. Pb £13.50

John Kirk & Dónall Ó Baoill (eds.), *Linguistic politics: Language policies for Northern Ireland, the Republic of Ireland, and Scotland* (Belfast Studies in Language, Culture and Politics, no. 3). Béal Feirste: Cló Ollscoil na Banríona, 2001. Pp. xvi + 258. Pb £13.50

John Kirk & Dónall Ó Baoill (eds.), *Travellers and their language* (Belfast Studies in Language, Culture and Politics, no. 4). Béal Feirste: Cló Ollscoil na Banríona, 2002. Pp. x + 196. Pb £19.50

Simone Zwickl, *Language attitudes, ethnic identity and dialect use across the Northern Ireland border: Armagh and Monaghan* (Belfast Studies in Language, Culture and Politics, no. 5). Béal Feirste: Cló Ollscoil na Banríona, 2002. Pp. xx + 281. Pb £29.95

John Kirk & Dónall Ó Baoill (eds.), *Language planning and education: Linguistic issues in Northern Ireland, the Republic of Ireland, and Scotland* (Belfast Studies in Language, Culture and Politics, no. 6). Béal Feirste: Cló Ollscoil na Banríona, 2002. Pp. xiv + 326. Pb £19.50

Edna Longley, Eamonn Hughes & Des O'Rawe (eds.), *Ireland (Ulster) Scotland: Concepts, contexts, comparisons* (Belfast Studies in Language, Culture and Politics, no. 7). Béal Feirste: Cló Ollscoil na Banríona, 2003. Pp. xvi + 254. Pb £19.50

Maolcholaim Scott & Róise Ní Bhaoill (eds.), *Gaelic-medium education provision: Northern Ireland, the Republic of Ireland, Scotland and the Isle of Man* (Belfast Studies in Language, Culture and Politics, no. 8). Béal Feirste: Cló Ollscoil na Banríona, 2003. Pp. viii + 144. Pb £12.50

Dónall Ó riagáin (ed.), *Language and law in Northern Ireland* (Belfast Studies in Language, Culture and Politics, no. 9). Béal Feirste: Cló Ollscoil na Banríona, 2003. Pp. xii + 175. Pb £12.50

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JOHN KIRK & DÓNALL Ó BAOILL (eds.), *Towards our goals in broadcasting, the press, the performing arts and the economy: Minority languages in Northern Ireland, the Republic of Ireland, and Scotland* (Belfast Studies in Language, Culture and Politics, no. 10). Béal Feirste: Cló Ollscoil na Banríona, 2003. Pp. xxii + 308. Pb £19.50

J. DERRICK MCCLURE (ed.), *Doonsin' emerauds: New scrieves anent Scots an Gaelic/New studies in Scots and Gaelic* (Belfast Studies in Language, Culture and Politics, no. 11). Béal Feirste: Cló Ollscoil na Banríona, 2004. Pp. x + 114. Pb £12.50

NEAL ALEXANDER, SHANE MURPHY & ANNE OAKMAN (eds.), *To the other shore: Cross-currents in Irish and Scottish studies* (Belfast Studies in Language, Culture and Politics, no. 12). Béal Feirste: Cló Ollscoil na Banríona, 2004. Pp. x + 166. Pb £12.50

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Dónall Ó Baoill established the Cló Ollscoil na Banríona (Queen's University Press) in 1999 as an outlet for research and writing about language in Ireland. In fact, the perspective has been broader throughout the series, which has now reached a dozen volumes (with several more forthcoming). Most are collections arising from conferences on language politics, policies, and education; all are useful and timely resources – as I hope to show in this review, which touches on all but the fourth volume (reviewed elsewhere in this issue of *Language in Society*).

The first volume here provides a rather broad-brush overview of some of the topics implied in its title, *Language and politics*. About half of the 16 contributions comment explicitly on the 1998 Belfast "Good Friday" Agreement, an accord arising from negotiations involving both the British and the Irish (Republic) governments, a guideline for the democratic devolution of power in Northern Ireland, and a statement of intent regarding human rights, linguistic and cultural diversity, and other important features of sociopolitical life. The cross-national discourse that led to (and is meant to be sustained by) the Agreement is of the greatest importance, and the provisions for cross-border consultation and harmonization provide a fitting point of departure for the whole series, whose primary focus on the Northern Ireland scene is appropriately intertwined with attention to the Irish Republic, to Scotland, to the Isle of Man, and, on one or two occasions, to still further fields.

The core of this first book comprises six chapters, each of which considers a particular cultural group – Irish, Ulster-Scots and ethnic-minority-group speakers, and members of the Chinese ("Cantonese is the second most spoken lan-

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guage in Northern Ireland", as Anna Watson remarks, 97), the Deaf and the gay communities – in terms of current perceived linguistic discrimination and expectations of post-Agreement improvements. Beyond this core, other chapters touch on language rights and cross-border developments in linguistic and cultural matters. On a theme that surfaces elsewhere in the series and is significant for all contexts of language-dialect relationships, Manfred Görlach discusses the status of Ullans ("Ulster Scots: A language?").

In the second volume, Ó Baoill and John Kirk present 18 chapters devoted to grammatical, sociolinguistic, and lexical features of Hiberno-English, "Irish Standard English", Irish (including Old Irish and Ulster Irish), Scottish Gaelic, and Scots (both Lallans and Ullans). At a structural level, the studies here deal with linguistic contact and borrowing, verb phrases and verb-particle combination, and phonological variation. At a sociolinguistic level, there is work on language attitudes in several parts of Scotland, as well as another interesting chapter by Görlach on historical anglophone attitudes toward Scots. Cross-border (Armagh and Monaghan) knowledge and use of several varieties of "dialect" words (e.g., *blather*, *culchie*, *eejit*, *gobshite*, *oxter*, and *yoke*, to cite some that the tourist in Belfast or Dublin might well hear) are discussed by Simone Zwickl in a contribution prefiguring her own book in this series (see below). In terms of lexical studies, the book concludes with chapters on the linkages and borrowings among Gaelic, Scots, and English in terms of both general and toponymic vocabulary.

In *Linguistic politics*, language policies for Irish, Scottish Gaelic, and Scots are discussed by two dozen contributors. Included here are three comparative pieces: on Frisian and Low German (by Görlach), on Bokmål and Nynorsk (Kevin McCafferty) and on Romansch (Andreas Fischer). The situations of Irish and Scottish Gaelic will perhaps be best known to readers of this journal, and for the latter we are given two exemplary overviews. Rob Dunbar usefully situates his discussion of Scottish minority language rights in a broader context, noting that a policy of "integration" – whereby the state accepts (and perhaps even celebrates) diversity, but generally declines to take specific measures toward linguistic preservation – is now the predominant political reflex. This occurs within the framework of the European Charter for Regional or Minority Languages, but, as Dunbar makes clear, British ratification of this document hardly means that Gaelic is now thriving in education, politics, and the media. The point is reinforced by Kenneth MacKinnon, who concludes his chapter by noting that Gaelic is now "at its 11th hour and 59th minute" (258). Irish is discussed in eight chapters, largely treatments of regulations, organizations, and commissions (including the Good Friday Agreement).

Less widely known is the case of Scots. Seven contributions deal with it here, and six of them are written in the variety itself. Dauvit Horsbroch describes "whit Scots wants fae govrenment" (132); Caroline Macafee observes that "up tae the

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1990s there was naethin at could be cried a politics o Scots though there was nae want of activism. Earlier generations o activists were rappin at the windaes o the eddication system" (159); and Andy Eagle notes that, while "Scots is nou an offeecial recogneezed langage," if recognition is "tae be mair nor 'lip service', it wad implee the revival process tae be mair nor juist encouragin spoken Scots" (169). If the situations of Irish and Scottish Gaelic are parlous, that of Scots (Lallans in Scotland, Ullans in Ulster) is considerably more so, a point made by Kirk & Ó Baoill in their introductory chapter. Part of the problem is a widespread sense that Scots is not a "real" language at all, but at best a matter of "literary form and style" (10), or at worst the adopted instrument of Scottish separatist politicians. In the Northern Ireland context, a recent observation has it that "if ever there was an offspring of political correctness, Ulster Scots is it. It has sprung up as a conscious counterblast to Irish, which has for generations been hijacked by the Republicans ... the much-touted language is spurious ... a consciously Scottish construct" (Price 2005:27). Readers interested in such basic matters as language-dialect distinctions and the intertwining of language and politics could do worse than to pay some attention to the fortunes of Scots.

In the fifth volume, Zwickl expands on her earlier contribution (see above) with a fuller treatment of identity, language attitudes, and patterns of use in the Monaghan-Armagh border area. The fact that her work arises from a Heidelberg dissertation reminds us of the longstanding interest that German philologists and linguists have had in Ireland and its language varieties. (Zwickl's external examiner was Jack Chambers, and he provides a brief but laudatory preface to the research presented here; the presentation is, in fact, a little ponderous – unsurprising, given its thesis provenance.) It is interesting to note that, in the highly charged Irish context, Zwickl's Germanness was seen as a distinct advantage in the fieldwork: "The respondents did not need to be careful about expressing their views," she says – a little naïvely, perhaps – "because I did not belong to either 'side'" (41).

Using both interview and questionnaire formats, Zwickl collected usable data from 50 respondents north of the border and 45 in Monaghan. Among other breakdowns (age, gender, occupation, education, and so on), the sample was 62% Catholic and 38% Protestant; "the main focal point was on differences between the two major religious denominations" (56). As might be expected, perceptions of identity were found to be related to religious affiliation, as were attitudes toward language (local English, "proper" English, and Irish), but the findings become much richer once other variables are factored in. Some of the interactions are particularly interesting: That of religion with location, for example (19 Protestants and 31 Catholics in Armagh, 16 and 29 in the Republic), throws some interesting light on what Chambers calls "national and denominational oppositions" (xvi). Thus, while some responses (e.g., to questions about the importance of preserving local speech patterns) suggest stereotypical religious divisions, re-

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gardless of location, others (e.g., to probes about the degree of approval for "the way people talk here") reveal general agreement between Armagh Catholics and Monaghan Protestants. (The suggested commonality here, incidentally, is one that figures prominently throughout the book: The minority status – and its many ramifications – of Catholics in the north and Protestants in the south.)

In *Language planning and education*, a dozen articles deal more or less directly with educational matters; they are generally quite technical and specific in nature, and, for the general reader, are rather overshadowed by the greater number that discuss language in broader fashion. There are several pieces, for instance, that provide more detail on the history, development, and status of Scots; the short but incisive commentary by Derrick McClure ("Developing Scots: How far have we still to go?") is particularly useful, and several chapters take matters further afield. Robert Phillipson and Tove Skutnabb-Kangas make their now familiar arguments about global English and language "rights" (the spurious connections between biological and linguistic diversity are also given an airing here) – the latter at her usual wearying and repetitive length. Perhaps the most interesting piece in the collection is Anthea Gupta's "Privileging indigeneity"; terms like "indigenous", "traditional" and "authentic" have essentially been coopted within contemporary ecology-of-language models, and some critical remarks on "the ideology that sees the 'indigenous' as more worthy than the imported" (291) are therefore welcome (see also Edwards in press).

As the editors point out, the Belfast venue for the conference underpinning the seventh book in this series "implicitly dispelled any lingering romance attached to either the Celtic Twilight or, latterly, the Celtic Tiger," with the brackets in the title recognizing "that we might meet on problematic ground" (xv). The collection is very broad in scope, with eleven sections ranging from "Governance, regionalism and identity" to "Sport and sectarianism" to "Folklore and contemporary film," and the inevitable result is a production with a looser thematic coherence than most of its series mates. Nonetheless, there are some noteworthy pieces here. Rick Wilford's opening chapter, for example, discusses the troubled Northern Ireland Assembly; established under the 1998 Belfast Agreement, it was suspended in October 2002, shortly after Wilford delivered his paper to the conference. (Indeed, the editors remark in their preface that the conference dinner speaker, David Trimble, was unable to keep his engagement because of the looming suspension. It is rare that an academic conference intersects so immediately with ongoing political developments.) A number of other chapters discuss post-devolution identity, culture, and cultural policy from Irish and Scottish perspectives.

The postscript to the book, by Hugh Kearney, is an interesting one. He points to the "bracketed Ulster" and the "Ireland" of the title. Should the former be understood as the six counties in Northern Ireland, or as the nine-county entity that also includes Monaghan, Cavan, and Donegal (in the Republic)? Is "Ire-

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land" the whole island, or just the 26 counties of the Republic? Kearney's note that "to raise these points is to recognise that there were inevitable political overtones to our conference" (251) is surely an understatement. Indeed, when he goes on to mention one of the central sections of the meeting, that devoted to "Old and new British histories," he clearly illustrates his own point. The use of the term "new British histories," he says, "aroused the fury of Dr Micheál Ó Siochrú" (I have restored the *síneadh fada* – the acute accent – omitted by Kearney), a "lone voice" advocating "a return to a nationalist version of Irish history" (250–51). "Looking back," Kearney says, "I would like to have seen more discussion of the merits and drawbacks of 'the new British History' " (254).[1]

In *Gaelic-medium education provision*, four authors provide overviews of the settings listed in the subtitle; all are presented in bilingual format. With one exception, Wilson McLeod, the writers are politicians or functionaries of one stripe or another. Their chapters are pedestrian, if useful for the reader who wants some very basic demographic and statistical information, supplemented by brief introductory notes on historical background.

With *Language and law in Northern Ireland*, we turn to a book whose title suggests a rather tight geographical and thematic focus; the latter, however, is quite broad. Its valuable opening chapter considers Northern Ireland as part of the jurisdiction covered by the European Charter for Regional or Minority Languages, the (European) Framework Convention for the Protection of National Minorities, and the Belfast Agreement. The author, Fernand de Varennes, is well placed to discuss these matters. Toward the end of the book, Niamh Nic Shuibhne in "European community law and minority languages" brings us back to the wider perspective. It is surely of the greatest importance that all situations be seen in their relationship to the bigger picture, since, whatever one's assessment of the likelihood or the desirability of any minority-language outcome, an isolated approach must always vitiate understanding, implementation, and so on. In similar though slightly more specific fashion, Dunbar discusses the "historical legacy of British unilingualism" (138) and its present-day consequences for minority language rights and legislation in Scotland and Wales.

Other useful discussions of language legislation issues in this ninth volume include those by Dónall Ó Riagáin, Philip Blair, Patricia McAlister, and Séamus de Napier, the last placing current regulations in a historical context extending back to the Brehon Laws. Two chapters, by Hilary Avery and Andrea Gilbert, discuss Ulster Scots educational provisions and practices in the light of current regulations. Aodán Mac Póilin and Nelson McCausland describe the contemporary situation of Scots and Irish in the broadcast media, particularly television; in all cases there are grounds for concern, and McCausland's statement "the BBC must now take *urgent* action to make *adequate* provision for Ulster-Scots broadcasting on radio and television" (119) can be taken as representative of the tone.

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Towards our goals in broadcasting, the press, the performing arts and the economy is an ambitious title for what is, indeed, a rather full basket. The 14 chapters in the "Broadcasting" section focus largely on BBC provisions in Scotland and Ulster, and Raidió na Gaeltachta and Radio [sic] Telefís Éireann (RTÉ) in the Republic of Ireland. The survey chapter by Dunbar, "Gaelic-medium broadcasting: Reflections on the legal framework from a sociolinguistic perspective," is particularly useful. The following section, "The press," comprises six chapters and, given that a free-standing and REGULAR media presence is a very important thing for minority languages, the contributions by Ciaran Ó Pronntaigh ("*Lá*: A daily newspaper in Irish") and Mike Cormack ("The case for a weekly Gaelic newspaper in Scotland") are central here. Providing some useful background to these two, as it were, are the pieces dealing with the symbolic and nationalistic aspects of language and language visibility: "The symbolic value of Gàidhlig in the Scottish Sunday newspapers" (by Charles MacDonald) and "Language and the press in Scotland" (Alex Law). There are a dozen chapters in the next two sections ("The performing arts" and "The public sphere"), outlining the place of Irish and Scottish Gaelic in theater, cinema, radio, and television. Gordon McCoy's chapter is devoted to the popular Irish soap opera *Ros na Rún* (Sweetheart's Cape), filmed in Spiddal, near Galway.

François Grin ("From antagonism to convergence: Economics and linguistic diversity") opens the six-chapter section on "The economy," making the case that there is "strong circumstantial evidence" (222) that the benefits of linguistic diversity are greater than its costs. Of the remaining contributions, two – "Not such a big deal? The economy-language interaction" (Esmond Birnie & Steven King) and "The economic impact of Gaelic arts and cultures" (Douglas Chalmers) – relate themselves to Grin's analysis. The cautionary observation of Birnie & King is worth quoting here:

> Language skills are not just economic capabilities but also a reflection of individual cultural preferences. How far is the state duty-bound to underwrite diverse cultural preferences? The response might be that language is a matter of fundamental human rights. Yes, that is true, but how far are those rights to be applied in the economic sphere, given that there is a cost. . . ? There probably are political and cultural benefits from linguistic diversity. Whether there is an equally strong economic case is much less clear to us. (227)

The book concludes, a bit haphazardly, with two chapters on problems associated with the interpretation of minority-language census data, and four comparative pieces that bring Basque and Walloon into the picture. These chapters are not without interest, but they are tangential to the stated themes of the volume, which are already more than broad enough.

The penultimate title in the series is taken from a poem by Hugh MacDiarmid, suggesting that the studies of Scots and Gaelic presented here are

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themselves "sparkling emeralds." They certainly make for a mixed bag of gems, with chapters on Scottish toponymy, a Celtic cognate database, demonstrative forms in Northern Scots, issues in Scots–English translation, and other topics. MacKinnon briefly discusses the 2001 census data on Scots Gaelic speakers; he provides comparative data, both chronologically (going back to the 1881 census) and cross-nationally (with Welsh). Like most who are concerned with the dynamics of language maintenance and revival, MacKinnon stresses the centrality of intergenerational transmission.

The final volume in the series returns to a common theme – comparisons and contrasts in Irish and Scottish studies – but the "cross-currents" of the title reflect future possibilities more frequently than they do existing connections. There are 18 chapters in fewer than 200 pages, which gives some indication of the very limited depth of the contributions. As well, the range of topics is exceedingly broad. They are all "literary" in one way or another, but a collection that includes "Being Sir Rogered: George Bernard Shaw and the Irish rebel," "The maddest of companies: Joyce and the occult," "Obliquity in the poetry of Derek Mahon," and "Short films in the Irish language since the advent of TG4 [the Irish-language television channel launched in 1996]" – the last two are subtitles, incidentally – must obviously be something of an olla podrida. Yet the collection remains valuable: first, because it gives a good, if brief, sense of themes of current interest; and second, because almost all the contributors are postgraduate students, mainly at Scottish and Irish universities. This at once contextualizes the range and quality of the chapters and, more important, justifies the title's hope for future collaborative and cross-fertilizing undertakings.

The books reviewed here present a large number of valuable perspectives on current linguistic conditions in the British Isles. Of special significance is the central focus on Northern Ireland, since material dealing with (southern) Irish language, culture, and politics has typically been more available; this focus is a reflection of contemporary trends within Britain and, in larger context, within the European Union. Overall, it is hard to think of a more immediate and up-to-date introduction to Scottish and Irish sociolinguistics and the sociology of language than that provided by this fine and expanding set of volumes. And, as with all significant discussions of particular contexts, the coverage here also offers insights whose value extends in much more general directions. On both counts, the series editors, John Kirk and Dónall Ó Baoill, deserve our thanks.

NOTES

[1] I have had the advantage here of reading Ó Siochrú's conference paper (2002), which he declined to publish. He strongly objects to the "new British History": It is not new, he suggests, it is not (in its chronological context) British, and it is more political agenda than history. He has told me, moreover, that his interpretation, far from being a "lone" one, has the support of many Irish historians (and, more specifically, of most of those who listened to his talk); it is an argument for a more fully fleshed European perspective rather than for any return to "nationalist" theory. I mention all

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this because it further illustrates Kearney's "political overtones," and, more generally, because it suggests a moral: the need for some caution when reading the brief and personal summations that so often appear in volumes of proceedings.

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