

## Thesis Evaluation

Miroslava Holečková: SCOTS A LANGUAGE OR A DIALECT?, 75pp.,  
submitted December 7th 1999

The thesis contemplates the position of the present day Scots, examining various linguistic, historical, political and cultural data and considerations.

Apart from the Introduction and the Conclusion, the main body of the project consists of four parts (I. History of Scots; II. Scots Grammar (Morphology), Spelling, Vocabulary and Pronunciation; III. The Grammatical - Morphological, (Syntactic), Lexical, Orthographical, Phonetical and Phonological Analysis of the Poems Written by Robert Burns, Hugh MacDiarmid and Burns Singer; Summary - The Results of the Analysis). In the first part the author strives to look into the historical background of Scots and its contemporary situation. Part Two, based on secondary sources [J.D. McClure's Why Scots Matters (1997); D. Purves's A Scots Grammar (1997)], gives a thorough description of the systemic features of Scots. The author predominantly examines individual parts of speech and their categories, accompanying the examples with her own translations into their nearest systemic English counterparts. Moreover, she tries to survey some of the most conspicuous features of the Scots spelling, pronunciation and word stock.

The merits of the project cannot be reduced just to a successful compilation intended to cover the discovered niche. The author has clearly shown independent efforts, not only through her critical evaluation of the sources, but particularly in her authentic analysis of a limited sample of Scots in use. Various styles could have been examined, but the author has selected an area perhaps most notoriously associated with Scotland, namely Scottish poetry. The practical analyses are based on three typed and recorded Scottish poems (a taped version is enclosed), by three representative poets of three different centuries. The author enlists and discusses all types of differences from Standard English (phonetico-phonological, orthographical, grammatical and lexical ones). Despite the limitation of her sample, the author found considerable differences among other things in the poets' views on the position Scots takes, ranging from mere accent to a full-fledged, authentic dialect or even a language. The reader might only wonder whether the author could not have obtained more from the meticulous analyses of the poems, whether more profound conclusions and/or perhaps even quantification could not have been obtained even from such a limited sample.

Creatively employing the criteria and views of the world leading sociolinguistic authorities the author carries out an independent sociolinguistic examination of the position the present-day Scots takes among world languages in her Conclusion.

With the final project covering a relatively topical, though often neglected field of research, the specialized primary and even secondary sources must have been rather difficult to obtain. Nevertheless the bibliography appended testifies to

a convincing survey of accessible contemporary sociolinguistic secondary literature, featuring predominantly Trudgill's, Bach's and Crystal's frameworks. The layout of the thesis satisfies standard requirements. The approach adopted results in a clearly structured and well-founded research which reveals the author's genuine interest in the disputed and complicated process of Scots emancipation, a fascinating sociological issue.

For all the above mentioned reasons I recommend that the thesis be accepted for defense and passmarked "výbořně - velmi dobře".

January 2nd 2000