The Scottish Dictionary Tradition

Introduction
There is no such thing as a Scottish Dictionary. Or, to put it another way, no dictionary functions for Scotland in the same fashion as a Canadian Dictionary or an Australian Dictionary, by covering lexis shared with other varieties of English together with lexis deemed specific to that country. Many factors have resulted in this situation, from the practical to the ideological. Large-scale projects are difficult to fund, and mixed attitudes to Scots have militated in favour of its representation as a robust, independent language, that status itself being for many metaphorically conferred by the very existence of dictionaries specifically devoted to Scots. Nevertheless, the Scottish contribution to lexicography, both within and outwith Scotland, is seminal and extensive. In the early nineteenth century, two major publishing houses were established in Scotland. Chambers Publishing (now Chambers Harrap) was founded in Edinburgh by two brothers from Peebles, in the Scottish Borders, and William Collins and Sons (now HarperCollins) was founded in Glasgow. Both took a keen interest in dictionaries. The *Oxford English Dictionary* (OED) is a Scottish product in the sense that it was pioneered by its first editor, Sir James Murray (1837-1915). Other notable historical Scottish lexicographers include Sir William Craigie (1867-1957), third editor of the *OED*, who went on to develop *A Dictionary of American English on Historical Principles* and *A Dictionary of the Older Scottish Tongue*. Indeed, Craigie's vision for a network of major historical dictionaries, addressing specific periods of time and regional usage, paved the way for many other important projects including the *Middle English Dictionary* and the *Dictionary of Old English*.

Scotland's Languages
For the first time in its history, the Scottish Census (2011) asked respondents whether they could read, write, speak and/or understand Scots, and nearly 2 million people said yes. Over 1700 languages were recorded in use across the country, the other key 'heritage' language being Scottish Gaelic, with approximately 60,000 speakers. Scottish Gaelic is recognised under Part II (Article 7) and Part III (Articles 8-14) of the Council or Europe's European Charter for Regional or Minority Languages, with support underpinned by Bòrd na Gàighlig, the Gaelic Language (Scotland) Act 2005, and local and national Gaelic Language Plans. Recognition under Part III of the European Charter is particularly significant because this section of the legislation covers activities which will actively 'promote' the language. Scots has been recognised only under the somewhat weaker Part II (Article 7) of the Charter, which puts more emphasis on 'respect' than (financial) support, but the implementation of these protections has so far been limited.

Gaelic has its own rich tradition of lexicography too, although Gaelic is beyond the remit of this essay, which, with some irony, finds included amongst a set of discussions of 'monolingual' dictionaries. Here is the dilemma. If Scots is a separate language, and thereby excluded from discussion, that has a silencing effect which sits very uneasily with anyone concerned by linguistic and cultural representation. Scots and English have a long history and a shared parentage, and although they have often been rivals in this dysfunctional and unequal linguistic family, etymology runs thicker than water, and any dictionary of English would be sorely diminished if it sought to purge any lexis claimed as Scots. Word usage is also very fluid, and many terms have passed into English from Scots over time, underlining the rationale if not the necessity to study both together.

A further note of clarification is required concerning Scots and Scottish English. This terminology has proven divisive and the most elegant solution proposed to date positions these varieties along a sliding scale known as the 'Scots continuum'. Viewing Scots as a continuum effectively mirrors actual usage; people typically code-switch between lexical, grammatical and phonological options, depending on the context. Broader Scots is associated with greater informality and with spoken rather than written discourse, although Scots is widely represented in creative works including novels and poetry. Unhelpfully, however, Literary Scots is sometimes ghettoized as 'middle-class', almost as if it were a different language from the spoken Scots of everyday life. Such fragmentary approaches may dissipate as Scots gains linguistic status. Scottish newspapers, although primarily written in Scottish English, also make liberal use of Scots words to emphasize their cultural identity. A further issue is that Scottish English, the dominant formal language variety in Scotland, is sometimes referred to as 'Scottish Standard English' (SSE), elevating its status to a 'standard' national variety. This elevation remains aspirational. The SSE dictionary does not yet exist, although SSE has been extensively discussed and documented in academic publications.

Debates over language status are only resolved when a sufficient number of people advocate for a given position, and it takes time and confidence for a 'minority' language to break away from its dominant relatives—there are many examples of this, such as Luxembourgish, which was viewed historically as a variety of German, much as Scots has been viewed as a variety of English. Legal and academic positions, currently, tend to support the cultural and linguistic rights of minority languages and their speakers, but in everyday practice, opinions vary widely, and even speakers of Scots may not identify themselves by that label, sometimes for personal or political reasons. Like gender, nationality, and other matters of identity, language status is also socially constructed.

From Ruddiman to Jamieson
The earliest lexicographical work generally claimed as a Scots 'dictionary', rather than a simple wordlist, is the complex glossary Thomas Ruddiman (1674-1757) appended to his edition of sixteenth-century poet Gavin Douglas's *Eneados* (1710), a translation of Virgil's *Aeneid*. Prior to that time, Douglas's original work of 1513 had been circulated in an edition of 1553, criticised for inaccuracies, so Ruddiman wished to improve on this. He therefore appended to his edition, 'A Large Glossary, Explaining the Difficult Words : Which may serve for a Dictionary to the Old Scottish Language', containing around 3,000 increasingly detailed entries, often with notes on usage, phonology and etymology. For example, the entry for *catcluke* reads:

> Catcluke, 401, 11. S. *the name of an Herb*, Trifolium siliquosum minus Gerardi, *Birds-foot*, *Trefoil*: named from some fancied similitude it has to a *cat* or a *bird's* foot; different from what in the North of England they call Cats-foot, which *Ray* calls *Ground-ivy*.

The first Scots writer to provide an extensive glossary to his own works was poet Allan Ramsay (1686-1758), who included a detailed wordlist with the anthology *The Ever Green* (1724). Ramsay and other poets of the eighteenth-century Vernacular Revival, including Alexander Ross (1699-1784) and Robert Burns (1759-1796), who sought to rehabilitate the status and perception of Scots as a literary language, include these didactic guides to further their linguistic cause.

The eighteenth century also saw the rise of style guides intended to help writers and speakers of the rapidly standardising English language expunge any 'provincial' impurities from their lexica. Capitalising on the linguistic insecurities of the age, notable examples included James Beattie's *Scoticisms* [sic.]*, Arranged in Alphabetical Order, Designed to Correct Improprieties of Speech and Writing* (1779) and James Mitchell's *Scotticisms, Vulgar Anglicisms and Grammatical Improprieties Corrected* (1799). By this time, therefore, the language that successfully displaced Latin as the formal instrument of the Acts of the Scottish Parliament in 1424, and had been the creative instrument of court poets Robert Henryson and William Dunbar—indeed of the poet-king, James VI, before he acceded to the crown of England in 1603—was fighting for survival, no longer being accepted in all genres and contexts. This process began during the sixteenth century as several social and political factors saw English move towards successful standardisation while Scots was relegated to a lower status. Printed works were first produced in England in 1476, but their equivalents did not appear in Scotland until 1508, and their English counterparts were more prolific. Furthermore, as the Reformation drew momentum from an increasingly literate public, readers engaged in its discourse through the language of the Bible; with no widely available Scots version, this discourse was inevitably dominated by English, further elevating its power and status.

In recognition of the loss of status of Scots, and with the expressed wish to do something about it, the Reverend Dr John Jamieson (1759-1838) published his *Etymological Dictionary of the Scottish Language* in two volumes in 1808. He describes Scots as follows: 'No longer written in public deeds or spoken in those assemblies which fix the standard of national taste, its influence has gradually declined, notwithstanding the occasional efforts of the Muse to rescue it from total oblivion' (Preface, ii). The entry for *sprattle*, below, provides an indication of the attention to detail he employed, and it is noteworthy that the framework of his entry can clearly be discerned in the comparable entry in SND, which uses his two illustrative quotations and a very similar etymology:

To SPRATTLE, *v. n.* To scramble, to scrawl, S.
>   There ye may creep, and sprawl, and *sprattle*,
>   Wi' ither kindred, jumpin cattle.
>   *Burns*, iii. 229.
>   —— Why soud they then attempt to *sprattle*,
>   In doggrel rhyme ?
>   *Rev. J. Nicol's Poems*, i. 190.
>   *Sprackle* is used in the same sense.
>   Sae far I *sprackled* up the brae,
>   I dinner'd wi' a lord.
>   *Burns*, i. 138.
>   Perhaps from Teut. *spertel-en*, Belg. *spartel-en*,
to shake one's legs to and fro ; in reference to the
exertion of the limbs in scrambling.

So extensive was Jamieson's research that he later published an extensive two-volume *Supplement* (1825), with subsequent editions of the dictionary combining these four volumes together (1840-41). Several single volume dictionaries were to follow, some liberally copying Jamieson, such as *A Dictionary of the Scottish Language* (1845) by Thomas Brown. Others, however, including *A Dictionary of Lowland Scotch* (1888), by Charles Mackay, and *A Scots Dialect Dictionary* (1911),

by Alexander Warrack, were editorially distinctive, while acknowledging their debt to Jamieson; they employed elements of his work as scaffolding for their endeavours (as is evident from a comparison of the dictionaries' headwords), and noted their thanks to him openly. If Ruddiman paved the way for Scots lexicography, Jamieson demonstrated the breadth and depth of coverage that could be achieved, thus setting the stage for the two major twentieth-century dictionaries.

DOST and *SND*

1931 was a momentous year for Scots Dictionaries as it saw the publication of the first fascicles of *A Dictionary of the Older Scottish Tongue* (*DOST*) and *The Scottish National Dictionary* (*SND*), which remain the definitive standard reference works. Roughly speaking, *DOST* documents Scots from its beginnings until the year 1700, while *SND* covers Scots from 1700 to the present day. Both include illustrative quotations, variant spellings and etymological data on word histories. The dictionaries differ in their scope, however, with *DOST* including terms that are also shared with English, while *SND* excluding such words unless they had some particular meaning, spelling or usage particular to Scotland or Scottish culture. Being a dictionary of the living language, *SND* also made use of both written and oral sources, with Scots speakers contributing as volunteer linguistic 'informants', sourced through local newspapers and organisations.

The twelfth and final volume of *DOST* provides several detailed additional texts addressing the 'History of *DOST*', its 'Editorial Philosophy', and 'A History of Scots to 1700', the last of these written by eminent Scots scholar Caroline Macafee and including unpublished work by A. J. Aitken. While Craigie was the instigator of *DOST*, and a key driver of the project, A. J. Aitken, who joined the team as an assistant in 1948, becoming editor in 1955 and retiring in 1986. Aitken introduced several key improvements to the development of *DOST*, more than doubling the historical sources read for the project by the volunteer team, and creating the Older Scottish Textual Archive, in collaboration with Paul Bratley (1964). By setting up this corpus he brought the project in line with key developments in digital humanities technology and increased the extraction speed and quality of illustrative quotations for the dictionary.

When Craigie started his editorial work for *DOST* in 1925, he focused so extensively on linguistic details that his methodology advocated the splitting of entries based on spelling and phonology to the point where anyone wishing to follow the history of a term through its variant forms had to first locate all relevant entries. For example, the Scots equivalent of English *battle* is covered under two entries, **Batalie**, **Batale**, **Batell**, *n*. and **Batalȝe**, **Batalȝe**, *n*., splitting the materials based on forms with or without <lȝ>. Aitken moved away from this principle, taking criticism of Craigie's approach on board, and variant spellings continued to be grouped under single headwords under the editorial direction of Marace Dareau, who guided the project through to completion from the mid-1980s onwards. Under Dareau's stewardship, the former exclusion of terms found only after 1600 was reversed, and the content of the dictionary was refocused to provide greater coverage of the social as well as the linguistic history of Older Scots terms.

It was of course inevitable that some elements of editorial policies and practices would evolve as the staff teams and their respective leaders changed over the decades. Projects of this scope cannot retain full continuity, and may need to alter as technologies, personnel and social and linguistic attitudes change. Innovative urban Scots and Scots slang was largely ignored by *SND* which paid significantly more attention to rural Scots vocabulary, despite seeking to include 'Scottish words

gathered from the mouth of dialect speakers' (Introduction, xlv). The 1931 Introduction has continued to meet with criticism for the unfortunately judgemental assertion that, '[o]wing to the influx of Irish and foreign immigrants in the industrial area near Glasgow the dialect has become hopelessly corrupt' (xxvii). So notorious has this example become that it even featured in a poem by Tom Leonard in his collection, *Intimate Voices* (1984, 120): 'right inuff / ma language is disgraceful […] even the introduction tay thi *Scottish National Dictionary* tellt mi'. As recently as 1980, even Aitken himself was writing academic commentaries that separated 'Urban Scots' from 'Good Scots', and even questioned whether Urban Scots should be regarded as a variety of Scots at all. Such attitudes are linguistically untenable relics of a former, more prescriptive age. The key legacy of *SND* and *DOST* was their totemic platforming of Scots through 22 dictionary volumes.

Scottish Language Dictionaries
The future of Scotland's dictionaries also deserves some mention here, and further work on Scots and Scottish English currently continues under the stewardship of Rhona Alcorn, Chief Executive Officer of Scottish Language Dictionaries (SLD). This new organisation was formed in 2002, combining the editorial teams from *SND* and *DOST*. Continuity was therefore maintained by this new staff team which included Iseabail Macleod, Pauline Cairns Speitel, Marace Dareau and Eileen Finlayson. A separate project based at the University of Dundee under the direction of Viktor Skretcowicz produced digitised editions of *SND* and *DOST* which became available online under the banner of the *Dictionary of the Scots Language* (*DSL*) in 2004. SLD added a second *SND Supplement* to *DSL* in 2005, and further updates and improvements to the search facilities and digital structure of *DSL* are ongoing at the time of writing. The *SND* and *DOST* teams had notably collaborated before on the creation of the one-volume *Concise Scots Dictionary*, derived from the parent dictionaries and first published in 1985. This work has also been taken forward by SLD, with the second edition of the *Concise Scots Dictionary* being released in 2017 providing an important update reflecting research facilitated by the advances in available digital humanities resources such as online newspaper corpora, as well as ongoing reading programmes. Further projects are currently in the works, notably a dictionary of the language of Scottish Travellers, which has been a long-term project led by Cairns Speitel. It may also fall to SLD to answer the call for a dictionary that covers both Scots and Scottish English—their inclusion, together, perhaps on the more modest scale of a single volume dictionary, would realise the ambition of former *SND* editor David Murison who envisioned this as a 'Dictionary for Scotland'. In my own five years as an SLD editor (2003-2008), I had the good fortune to discuss such ideas with the late Iseabail Macleod, who told me of Murison's vision. May it come to pass, drawing lexicography across the full spectrum of the Scots continuum, for a more complete linguistic story.

Concluding Thoughts
The primary purpose of a dictionary may be to teach a language to new learners, or to help advanced users of that language decode and further appreciate its literature. Perhaps the dictionaries of the future will be partly crowd-sourced as they attempt to improve their coverage of living, evolving languages. In that regard they would not be so different from the major historical dictionaries that came before them, including *DOST* and *SND*, which are also the work of many hands, with armies of silent lexicographers, quotation excerpters, and volunteer readers standing in the shadow of the named editors who took centre stage. As an increasing range of diverse Scots literature continues to be published, with creative work such as Matthew Fitt's science-fiction novel *But-n-Ben A Go Go* (2000) demonstrating the ludic and imaginative potential

of the language, lexicographers will have to decide how to respond, and which terms to include to assist their users. Simultaneously, as an increasingly sociolinguistically-informed approach to Scottish slang and to multicultural and urban varieties of Scots establishes itself within academia, resources for studying the Scots language will continue to evolve. Since the development of the Scottish 'Curriculum for Excellence', early in the current millennium, Scots has been openly recognised by the Scottish Government as one of the nation's languages, marking a sea-change in official attitudes. SLD has already produced a version of the *Essential Scots Dictionary* (2005) as a mobile phone app to help students engage with Scottish materials in the classroom, and as these inventions and experiences become normalised in the educational life of Scottish schoolchildren, future generations may be encouraged to understand, celebrate and curate their Scots language.

Further Reading
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