**Notes on editing Scots**

**A few thoughts on creating consistency**

**What is meant by “consistency”?**

The desire for the same words to be spelled the same way across a publication (or at least within the same work). This is not the same thing as imposing a standard orthography: it’s just an attempt to make things easier for the reader – like choosing (and sticking with) –ise endings over –ize endings in English.

NB: lacking a standard orthography can allow Scots to be more flexible, and more creative, and more responsive to the needs of the author and the sense of the language. There are legitimate reasons for choosing variant spellings, and not just in reported speech. “A foolish consistency is the hobgoblin of little minds”.

**Ditch the apologetic apostrophe**

Scots is a language, not mis-spelt or mis-pronounced English. There is no need to pretend that a letter has been “missed out”. Words such as *gie*, *wi*, *reekin*, etc. should not be spelled *gi’e*, *wi’*, *reekin’*, etc.

**Capitalising the first-person singular personal pronoun**

In English, the first-person singular personal pronoun is “I”. This – unless you’re e e cummings, or maybe archie the cockroach – is always capitalised, for a variety of reasons dating back to the thirteenth century. Other European first-person singular personal pronouns – je, ich, yo, etc. – are not capitalised. Many people writing in Scots, and choosing e.g. “Ah” for “I”, feel the need to capitalise this, because the English equivalent would be capitalised. Personally, I think this is unnecessary – although if the author wished to use the single letter “A” for “I”, then it would probably be worth capitalising it to avoid confusion with the indefinite article.

**Edit with a light touch**

There is no standard for written Scots. If you wish to create one for your own use, do so; but don’t expect others to adhere to it. For many people, writing in Scots is difficult, especially at first, and it is all too easy – especially in the era of autocorrect – to write the English equivalent of a word by mistake. Authors, editors, and proofreaders all need to be careful. As mentioned above, there are legitimate reasons for choosing variant spellings, and indeed for choosing standard English spellings, especially in reported speech. “Naw” and “No” both have the same basic meaning, but, in context, each can carry a different shade of sense and emphasis. The same author can use both versions, knowingly, for effect. This is true in prose, and even more so in poetry!