

NATIONAL IDENTITY IN A POPULAR SCOTTISH COMIC

Anne Hoyer

Marburg University, Germany , hoyera@staff.uni-marburg.de

Abstract:

The present paper summarises the results of my Ph.D. thesis “The Scottishness of Oor Wullie” (Ruprecht-Karls University of Heidelberg, unpublished), which analysed a Scottish comic series from a cultural and sociolinguistic perspective. Oor Wullie, also known as “Our little William” is a series of comics which has been published by the Scottish Sunday Post since 1936. It is a central element of Scottish popular culture: “Reading Oor Wullie is among the 100 most important things to do in Scotland before dying” (Glasgow Herald, 28 March 2004). Dudley Watkins, the original artist, was not drafted for military service because the nation profited enormously from Oor Wullie, which served not only an entertaining, but also a unifying and supportive function. As part of the Tartan Day festivities in April 2004, Oor Wullie, the protagonist, was voted the most important Scottish icon of the year.

With its Scottish themes, language and humour, Oor Wullie appeals to the entire social and age spectrum. The partly nostalgic representation of the Scots language supports the group identity of the nation by reminding its readers of their cultural good, which was once a full working language. The contact between Scots and Scottish English becomes apparent.

Keywords: *National identity; Stereotypes; England; Scotland; Scottish comics.*