
Emilia Di Martino, *Celebrity Accents and Public Identity Construction: Analyzing Geordie Stylizations*
(London and New York: Routledge, 2019), 159 pp., ISBN: 978-0-367-22680-0

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In this volume, Emilia Di Martino investigates the dimension of Geordie dialect and identity by turning a lens on the linguistic strategies adopted (and adapted) by a number of public figures. The scope of this innovative study does not merely concern the exploration of a particular dialectal variety, commonly associated with the city of Newcastle upon Tyne and the north-east of England, but rather it extends to include and examine the efforts that the exponents of various domains, in particular music, make in order to forge, popularize and commodify identity traits and discursive practices. Here the author applies a range of different analytical tools and frameworks to the emergence of new linguistic repertoires produced and circulated by singers, actors and others, and successfully demonstrates how this type of analysis has a great deal of insight to offer to understand the multiple correlations between language and identity. Di Martino's goal is to map out the complex processes by which high performances of a Geordie identity, i.e. public and planned interactions, become sociocultural models of being and belonging, for example by constructing and disseminating sentiments of coolness, desirability and innovation.

The first chapter provides a general frame for the research, clearly defining objectives, materials and approaches and methods employed by the author for the investigation. Within the background of Bakhtinian stylistics, for example, the author stresses the dialogic nature of linguistic performance and specifies that "the perspective is constructionist (rather than constructivist) in the sense that the focus is on the peculiarity of each individual's (verbal and non-verbal) product rather than on the individual itself" (4). Such a premise fully justifies and reinforces the important analytical work applied, in particular, to the field of music, seen as a social and emotional dimension through which individuals interact with each other, construct narratives and appropriate linguistic forms to reshape their own identity.

Chapter 2 specifically focuses on high performance of Geordieness by considering the BBC children's show *Dick and Dom in da Bungalow* with its carnivalesque dimension, "a world upside-down where good manners and polite language were tested and contested, and bad manners and bad language demanded equal dialogic status" (21, emphasis in the original). A number of passages from the TV programme are subjected to close reading and scrutiny with the aim to trace the indexical power of language to mark meaning making and meaning breaking processes. But the chapter also introduces the singer Cheryl, whose marked Geordie accent has received much public attention over the years. The artist is here viewed as a characterological agent, namely a public figure that is capable of manipulating a regional dialect, originally considered in mere geographical terms, and of recasting it in a social guise that conveys coolness and attractiveness. Such an operation of endorsement is grounded upon a number of strategies and modes, of course also with regard to the use of American English as the typical voice in the world of pop music.

Detachability of Geordie elements constitutes the core of the following chapter, which illustrates how Cheryl has managed to creatively transform dialectical features and enregister new identity makers. In particular, the chapter takes into account lexical items such as vernacular personal pronoun 'me' replacing the Standard English form 'my', the spread of connoted epitaph 'chav' and the traditional key

reference to social class overlapping images of Geordie and working-class members. Before the emergence of Cheryl, the manifestations of this accent were frequently related to a few creative contexts and genres such as music, sitcom series and films. In more recent times, Cheryl's performances and appearances have opened up and disseminated debates about the representational nature of language, thus "generating a chain of popular metadiscourses on accent in the public sphere, in which Geordie and coolness seem to have slowly become binomial and gradually turned into a winning pair" (59). In this light, the singer's repertoire comes to the fore as a sort of linguistic bricolage through which the value of authenticity is rewritten and goes in tandem with the sense of coolness.

Naturally, the reshaping, circulation and innovation of accent, dialect and voice foreground inner techniques of commodification, a theme which is dealt with in chapter 4. After examining materials from fields and genres as diverse as the reality TV show *Geordie Shore*, a Royal Navy TV advert and music, Di Martino returns to the central notion of authenticity, and brings in the example of the term *Brown*, "the semi phonetic spelling reflecting monophthongal pronunciation of the word *brown* used to refer to Newcastle Brown Ale" (91, emphasis in the original). The local dimension of a specific community leads to the marketization of a product and the creation of a revised token of authenticity in spite of the inner dynamics of globalised industries and businesses.

Chapters 5 and 6 are respectively dedicated to public acceptance in the creation of Geordie identity and local meanings and politics of Geordie styling. The former highlights the characterological figure of Cheryl, and the mediatized public responses to her performance, for example the parodic staging of a spoof Cheryl Tweeter account, triggered by John Duff and replete with phonetic Geordie, or the matching between fake and real forms of Geordie that eventually signals the production of effective expressive means. As the author argues, "social affiliation is a continuous process of relating to stances and perspectives displayed by co-participants in interaction, and expressing one's affiliation or disaffiliation also becomes a locus for creating and negotiating one's own identity" (108). In chapter 6, the focus is still on Cheryl's linguistic and semiotic manoeuvres, but at the same time attention is paid to the figure of Sting, whose vocal quality has shifted between different accents and levels in a broader reflection on dialect, perception and imagination.

The last chapter recapitulates the main issues that have been investigated, suggesting how the metamorphosis of Geordie and the acts of appropriation and abrogation operated by various celebrity figures, Cheryl *in primis*, in reality may be compared and contrasted with other linguistic scenarios in the world. The cases tackled by the book exhibit "a break in the links between Geordie and its geographical coordinates" (144), thus demonstrating how the astute handling of dialect and other semiotic resources may generate a deep impact on society in terms of mobility, innovation and performance, metaphorically applying centrifugal and centripetal forces to a cultural context. Emilia Di Martino's volume, thus, skilfully unfolds a number of sociolinguistic complexities and illustrations of identity, and as such contributes to a better understanding of some of the aspects of the intricate world we live in.