THE LITERARY POLITICS OF

Scottish Devolution

Voice, Class, Nation

The Literary Politics of Scottish Devolution

For Brigid

And in memory of Tom Leonard

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Voice, Class, Nation

Scott Hames

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Edinburgh University Press Ltd
The Tun – Holyrood Road
12(2f) Jackson's Entry
Edinburgh EH8 8PJ

Typeset in 11/13 Bembo by
IDSUK (DataConnection) Ltd, and
printed and bound in Great Britain

A CIP record for this book is available from the British Library

ISBN 978 1 4744 1813 3 (hardback)
ISBN 978 1 4744 1815 7 (webready PDF)
ISBN 978 1 4744 1814 0 (paperback)
ISBN 978 1 4744 1816 4 (epub)

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Preface

> *A poet is the* creator *of a nation around himself: he gives them a world to* see *and has their souls in his hand, to lead them there.*
>
> – Herder, 'The Influence of Poetry on the Customs of Modernity' (1777)[1]

> *Thanks for your letter. I'll be happy to do reviews [. . .] The one area I couldn't touch would be contemporary Scottish writers, or the recent past. The place is too small, and I like to relax when I go a walk.*
>
> – Tom Leonard, Letter to enquiring editor (1989)[2]

The Canongate Wall forms the northern edge of the Scottish Parliament building, at the very foot of Edinburgh's Royal Mile. Designed by Sora Smithson, the wall symbolically grounds the witty angles of Holyrood within local geology. Rough extrusions of dolerite burst through the façade at street level, as though enacting the architect's vision of a parliament that 'arrives into the city almost surging out of the rock'.[3] Embedded in the wall are twenty-six decorative panels of Scottish stone including Iona marble, Lewisian gneiss and Easdale slate.[4] If this motif hints at inexorable forces underpinning – and likely to outlast – the elegance and self-conscious modernity of the building, the inscriptions on each panel also gesture to a 'bedrock' of national

culture and identity. These citations gather a kind of pebbledash pantheon of modern Scottish literature, an upmarket weatherproof coverage including Robert Burns (twice), Walter Scott, Robert Louis Stevenson, Hugh MacDiarmid (thrice), Hamish Henderson, Norman MacCaig, Edwin Morgan and Alasdair Gray. The first version of Gray's stone – bearing the unofficial credo of devolutionary nationalism, 'work as if you were living in the early days of a better nation' – misspelled his first name, and had to be re-made. But the 'vernacular', hand-crafted particularities of the wall make errors of this kind seem forgivably natural. No element of the design places democracy on a solemn neoclassical pedestal, or encourages hushed reverence for governing power; indeed, the human faults and frailties of parliamentarians are a running theme. In pride of place, the left-most stone quotes Mrs Howden from Scott's *Heart of Midlothian*: 'When we had a king, and a chancellor, and parliament-men o' our ain, we could aye peeble them wi' stanes when they werena gude bairns – But naebody's nails can reach the length o'Lunnon.' A firm reminder, in demotic Scots, that the parliament is accountable to the local voices and dissenting energies of its immediate lifeworld. Far from monumentalising their power, the wall reminds MSPs of the socially limited character of their role. These Psalms, verses and songs anchor the young institution in deep folkways and geological time, but these same stones might quickly be converted to missiles for enforcing, or withdrawing, a conditional popular mandate.

Andrew Fletcher of Saltoun's inscription reads: 'If a man were permitted to make all the ballads, he need not care who should make the laws of a nation.' On these terms Scottish literature is directly incorporated into the fabric of the parliament, claiming an authority which precedes, and authenticates, that of the elected members inside the chamber. This patchwork of stone and script – including several Gaelic inscriptions, works by English authors, and religious texts – might be held to embody the 'diversity of voices' the building exists to represent, and yet it would be impossible to read the wall as democratically reflecting the nation. Of the twenty-six panels, twenty feature quotations by men. There are four authorless proverbs and songs, a Psalm, and just one stone

featuring the name of a woman, the songwriter and communist mill-worker Mary Brooksbank.[5] All the named authors are white. If we pursue this thought, and think critically about the imagery of national representation, the Canongate façade begins to take on a rather different countenance. Its oblique planes and irregular surfaces might even begin to suggest handholds and footholds: potential means of scaling the outer skin of Holyrood, perhaps to seek another point of entry, from an angle discouraged by the confident architecture. That thought is close to the impulse behind this book.

Literature and/as politics

A few weeks prior to the 2014 referendum on Scottish independence, Colin Kidd argued that 'Scottish literature is for the SNP not a frill, but a matter of central concern.'

> For [First Minister Alex] Salmond, literature is a kind of QED: Anglo-Scottish differences in diction, lilt, sensitivity and worldview prove the grand truths of nationalism. He has argued, plausibly enough, that it is impossible to mistake the differences between a Scottish novel and an English novel. Novels, he believes, reveal fundamental differences in the values and ethos of Scots and English.[6]

In the summer of 2014 one did hear such arguments, among many others. And yet few prominent Scottish writers who supported the campaign for independence would accept this firm equation between literary Scottishness and the demand for statehood, as though one predicated the other.[7] The modern SNP is noted for its 'a-cultural' nationalism, placing far greater emphasis – particularly under Salmond's leadership – on economic powers, and confining to Burns Night its appetite for literary inspiration. Indeed, Cairns Craig notes with regret 'that there is probably no nationalist party in the world that has been less focused on mobilising culture as part of its political strategy than the SNP', despite Scotland's bounteous possession of 'cultural wealth' ripe for the purpose.[8] But the minimal presence of programmatic literary

patriotism is only one part of the story, with the potential to conceal another. There really has been a complex and pervasive intermingling of Scottish literature and politics over the past few decades, with far-reaching consequences in both domains: for how we read (and over-read) the politics of Scottish writing, and for how we conceive the place of cultural and literary 'identity' within the project of Scottish nationalism. That is, broadly, what this book is about. In sketching its purview, we must begin by amending Kidd's history: it is precisely in the *absence* of an official literary nationalism that Scottish writers and artists have claimed – and been burdened with – special 'representative' clout.

This is particularly the case in the post-1979 period on which this study is mainly focused, but is also evident in earlier debates. Jack Brand's 1978 study of the *National Movement in Scotland* found, in Christopher Harvie's paraphrase,

> that although literature may have mobilized members of the party elite – and was interesting for this reason – the intellectual trend in Scotland had really been away from nationalism towards socialism. Paradoxically, Brand argued, this aided SNP organization. Political mobilization did not conflict with an existing scale of literary values – or with literary nationalists throwing their weight around.[9]

This too was only half-true: there were plenty of bellicose literary nationalists in the 1970s, many spoiling for a fight with Scotland's 'deracinated' political class, but they kept a wary distance from the SNP. For some, this was indeed an expression of socialist distrust of 'bourgeois nationalism'; for others, the SNP weren't nationalist enough (or indeed nationalist at all). But such debates occurred at the fringe of Scottish politics. They only gained purchase in the political mainstream following the failed referendum on a Scottish Assembly held in March 1979. While the SNP vote crashed following the 40 per cent rule debacle, Harvie continues, 'the 1980s saw a nationalist stance become general among the Scottish intelligentsia. [. . .] The orthodoxy now is that the revival in painting, film and the novel, in poetry and drama – staged and televised – kept a "national movement" in being.'[10]

As we shall see, this 'orthodoxy' has an extensive history of its own – Harvie was writing in 1991, at the height of its influence and plausibility – and is less a neutral historical description of how things transpired than a mobilising narrative constructed *within* the diffuse, campaign-like process and milieu it describes. As Jonathan Hearn observes in his partly ethnographic study of this world (based on doctoral research conducted in the mid-1990s), 'members of the intelligentsia have an interest in treating Scotland as an object of concern, study and discussion'.[11] The political utterances of literary figures such as William McIlvanney, James Kelman, Irvine Welsh and Alasdair Gray are thus located by Hearn within a broader 'network of intellectuals, academics, artists, writers, journalists and media figures through whom the ideas of the [self-government] movement are constantly being articulated and re-articulated'[12] in this period: the 'committed' (and preferably outspoken) Scottish writer was a key and prominent contributor to the pro-devolution social consensus which so strongly conditioned the critical reception of his or her art. Their eminent roles in the 'discursive reinforcement' and cultural authentication of devolution profoundly shaped the scholarly and journalistic perspectives through which these writers' literary output was read, as part of – or as often as not, *in place of* – that larger social articulation.[13]

Intellectuals and constitutional politics

This presents a certain dilemma, for literary critic and political historian alike. The established narrative of *literary and critical vanguardism* – in which writers, thinkers and artists established and secured the space for renewing Scottish democracy – is usually 'reported' by interested protagonists and fellow-travellers, just as much of the best writing on Scotland's nationalist intelligentsia involves a degree of self-portraiture. Few of the key scholars and commentators cited in this study have remained aloof from the events and investments at issue, but (once acknowledged) this does not diminish the interest of their reflections and analysis. On the contrary: post-war Scotland is an enormously rich and well-documented case of what Michael D. Kennedy and Ronald

Grigor Suny call the 'mutual articulation of national discourses and intellectuals'. As we shall see, a whole constellation of writers, journalists, artists and thinkers embraced their role 'as constitutive of the nation itself' during the period this book examines, with several overtly committing themselves to (re-)establishing 'the very language and universe of meaning in which nations become possible'.[14] The majority of these figures remain active in Scottish cultural debate, so it is with a degree of unease that I take up a critical stance on their work of several decades – work which I respect, whose political motivation I largely share, and the fruits of which have undoubtedly benefitted me personally. Nonetheless, there must be a space for critique 'within-and-against' nationalist intellectualism, if any of its liberating and clarifying energies are to be realised within the scholarly fields it helped to consolidate. Kennedy and Suny observe that

> intellectuals face a double risk when enveloped by the nation. On one hand, as patriots they lose their credentials as critical or independent. On the other hand, as critical intellectuals questioning the very 'authenticity' of the nation, they are either ignored, marginalized, or cast out altogether.[15]

Analysis of their role in the discursive reproduction of nationhood 'is likely to draw hostility from "true" nationalists', as many historic examples attest, but I am optimistic this study will be received in a spirit which lives up to the finer moments in the history it traces. To be clear from the outset, this study is not an exercise in debunking Harvie's 'orthodoxy' or exposing the self-interest of its proponents. It is a critical exploration of what this story – the story of 'cultural devolution' prior to the 1998 Scotland Act – means to us in devolved Scotland two decades later: as an historical account of how and why the Scottish Parliament came to be; as a paradigm guiding critical practice in Scottish literary studies (and cultural studies more generally); and as a political narrative presenting the *meaning* of devolution in culturally expressive terms.

But what is 'cultural devolution'? The concluding section of my introduction traces the hegemonic status of this notion over

the past twenty years, but as a handy starting-point, we might take the writer and activist Kevin Williamson's forthright claim that

> Scotland's musicians, singers, poets, writers and artists had paved the way for the re-opening of the Scottish Parliament. They had reasserted their sense of Scottish identity, and their democratic aspirations, and from 1999 Scots had a political structure which could begin to convey the democratic wishes of the Scottish people.[16]

I will often refer to this story as 'The Dream': a story of cultural vanguardism in which writers and artists play the starring role in the recuperation of national identity, cultural confidence and democratic agency. It contrasts sharply with the less inspiring story I will call 'The Grind': the longer, thinner political history of devolution as a shrewd and sometimes grubby saga of electoral expediency, characterised less by stirring visions of democratic rebirth than ploys of cynical circumspection (such as a Royal Commission on the Constitution appointed to do, or rather to recommend, as little as politically possible). Tellingly, it is the establishment of Harold Wilson's Royal Commission in 1969 – not any electoral breakthrough for Scottish or Welsh nationalists, or any of the constitutional novelties of the 1990s – which is commemorated in the new stained-glass tribute to UK devolution in the Palace of Westminster.[17] This book explores the difference and interaction of these parallel stories – one determinedly Scottish, the other inescapably British – with an interest in tracing moments where one seems to illuminate, puncture, or redeem the other. My aim is to critically examine the conflation of these narratives and processes, and the consequences which follow for Scottish literary history and criticism; not to throw stones at what the Canongate Wall seems to signify, but to examine the logic of its construction.

Notes

1. Cited and translated by Karl Menges, 'Particular universals: Herder on national literature, popular literature, and world literature', p. 195.
2. Tom Leonard, Letter to 'John', 12 June 1989.

3. Enric Miralles, quoted in Archello entry for the Scottish Parliament.
4. McAdam, 'Canongate Wall', pamphlet.
5. The original twenty-four quotations were chosen by a panel of three (male) MSPs, and included zero women. Brooksbank's stone was added in 2010, with Norman MacCaig's, after a public competition held in 2009, marking a decade of parliamentary devolution. Scottish Parliament, 'Canongate Wall'.
6. Kidd, 'Scottish independence: literature and nationalism', *The Guardian*, 19 July 2014.
7. For several examples, see my edited collection *Unstated: Writers on Scottish Independence*.
8. Craig, *The Wealth of the Nation*, p. 20.
9. Harvie, 'Nationalism, journalism and cultural politics', p. 30.
10. Ibid. p. 30.
11. Hearn, *Claiming Scotland*, p. 39.
12. Ibid. p. 78.
13. Ibid. p. 78.
14. Kennedy and Suny, *Intellectuals and the Articulation of the Nation*, p. 3.
15. Ibid. p. 5.
16. Williamson, 'Language and culture in a rediscovered Scotland', p. 57.
17. My thanks to David Torrance of the House of Commons Library for this detail.

Acknowledgements

This project draws on archival research and two interdisciplinary workshops supported by a British Academy/Leverhulme Small Research Grant in 2014–16 (ref. SG132334). My thanks to the writers, critics, thinkers and politicians who took part in 'Narrating Scottish Devolution: Literature, Politics and the Culturalist Paradigm'. (For a podcast based on workshop recordings, see <https://narratingdevolution.wordpress.com>.)

The analysis presented here was developed in several earlier publications, including my article 'On Vernacular Scottishness and its Limits: Devolution and the Spectacle of "Voice"' for *Studies in Scottish Literature* (2013), and in a summary of workshop findings published as 'Narrating Devolution: Politics and/as Scottish Fiction' in *C21: Journal of Twenty-First Century Writings* (2017). My thanks to their editors and publishers, especially Patrick Scott of *SISL*. Elements of Chapter 7 appeared as 'The New Scottish Renaissance?' in Peter Boxall and Bryan Cheyette (eds), *The Oxford History of the Novel in English, Volume Seven: British and Irish Fiction Since 1940* (2016), pp. 494–511, reproduced with permission of Oxford University Press.

For assistance with various sources and archives, thanks are owed to the staff of the National Archives, the National Library of Scotland, the University of Edinburgh's Special Collections, and the Scottish Political Archive at the University of Stirling. The expertise of Sarah Bromage at SPA was vital, and I am particularly

indebted to James Mitchell for his assistance navigating the Kew archival material on 1970s devolution. Thank you to David M. Black and Michael Keating for permission to quote from their unpublished correspondence.

For various prompts and helpful conversations along the way, my thanks to Eleanor Bell, Bethan Benwell, David Borthwick, John Corbett, James Costa, Cairns Craig, Stephen Dornan, Cailean Gallagher, Michael Gardiner, Ewan Gibbs, Suzanne Gilbert, Harry Josephine Giles, Gerry Hassan, Dominic Hinde, Adrian Hunter, Arianna Introna, Kathleen Jamie, Carole Jones, Karen Lowing, Peter Lynch, Graeme Macdonald, Meghan McAvoy, David McCrone, Liam McIlvanney, Tom Nairn, Laura Paterson, Douglas Robertson, Stewart Sanderson, Carla Sassi, Michael Shaw, Jim Smyth, Andrew Sneddon, Alex Thomson, David Torrance, Rory Watson, Amy Westwell, Matt Wickman, and students of Stirling's MLitt in Scottish Literature. Many of these ideas began in the classroom.

My greatest scholarly debt is to a student, Rory Scothorne, presently finishing doctoral research on devolution and the far left at the University of Edinburgh. His knowledge of the political magazines of the 1960s and 70s was indispensable, and at times he has been closer to an unpaid research assistant than a supportive friend. His enthusiasm for this project has been essential, and sometimes baffling.

This book is for Brigid, Nora, Georgina and Francis, and for my family in Canada.

Introduction

The Dream and The Grind

> *The shrinking, mouselike, shadowy figure of the goddess Devolution is not a Muse that would stir either a Burns or a MacDiarmid. So the idea tends to be itself devolved back into that unsatisfactory area of the mind where people mutter and grumble occasionally, and turn the thoughts over in a desultory way, and make half-hearted forecasts, but do not feel sufficiently moved or urged to apply the full powers of the brain to these things.*
>
> – Edwin Morgan, 'The future of the antisyzygy' (1978)[1]

A few weeks before the 2014 referendum on Scottish independence, the novelist Alan Warner predicted that

> a No vote will create a profound and strange schism between the voters of Scotland and its literature; a new convulsion. It will be the death knell for the whole Scottish literature 'project' – a crushing denial of an identity that writers have been meticulously accumulating, trying to maintain and refine.[2]

Ironically, this rhetoric had much in common with Conservative unionist arguments of 2014, and dire warnings of the cultural legacy being jeopardised and recklessly endangered by those contemplating a Yes vote. Even more striking, for all its vaunted 'confidence' since the 1990s, Scottish literary identity here finds itself on public trial: a fragile construct pleading for its life. At the

same time, writers were being credited with the dynamic cultural change which had made such a vote (and indeed such a polity) possible. What this scene manifests, I suggest, is the pervasive strength of 'cultural devolution' as an internalised folk belief, to which even shrewd and discerning Scottish writers intuitively reach in accounting for their social role. The submerged ironies of this narrative became fully visible in the wake of the No result. A year after the referendum, the novelist and playwright Alan Bissett – who had been highly active and visible as a Yes campaigner – reflected that 'the No vote, as Warner predicted, at first acted like the cancellation of a mandate, a "convulsion" in how I understood my own purpose. I'd presumed to give voice to a people, the majority of whom had turned out to be indifferent to the message.'[3] The trope of *giving voice* is central to my sense of how literary and political endeavours were brought into rhetorical and strategic alignment in the period at issue, and a considerable part of this study is spent tracing that process and its consequences. Its political efficacy is clear and impressive, but always carried certain hostages to fortune, typified by Warner's warning before the vote. It seems clear that his sense of democratic 'schism' embodies a malfunctioning sense of literature's representative role, where tallying with public opinion somehow becomes the paramount duty of the 'national' writer, and the people can be called upon to ratify the artist's sense of purpose. When public opinion shifts (or is formally tested at the ballot box), the artist's 'mandate' and representative function can be suddenly revoked. But note also the more reflective sense of disorientation on Bissett's part. Within the identitarian terms of the Dream, it is genuinely difficult to parse the popular rejection of a representative institution whose warrant, and meaning, is the validation of national identity. (Unaccountably, Scotland chose not to choose itself.)

In the years following the No result, a number of less circumspect writers followed Warner's logic through to its conclusion. In his poem digesting the outcome, 'Naw', Stuart A. Paterson takes the result as a self-cancellation of national honour, paradoxically ejecting the voting majority from any rightful claim to be 'Scotland's fowk':

> The hail world's gan baith quair & peerie,
> Heelster-gowdie, tapsalteerie.
> Ah cannae jist jalousie at a
> Hoo Scotland's fowk have votit Naw.
> [. . .]
> Yon whae wid chant the tribal sangs
> O pride o whaur they maist belong
> Maun wheesht & sing nae sange at a –
> They have nae richt. They votit Naw.[4]

But who is 'they' in this bleak conclusion, and how is it related to the Scotland on whose behalf the poet sings? In its performance of vernacular presence and vitality, the poem evokes an earlier condition of national health and pride, and a sense of 'we-ness' (the poem argues) formally disavowed in 2014, but also anchored 'beyond' the fickle tides of public opinion. These quair unravellings can easily be traced back to contradictions within the paradigm of 'cultural devolution' which emerged after 1979, which has powerfully shaped how subsequent Scottish writers conceive (and defend) their role. But we should not be too hasty in busting the vanities of a supposed literary vanguard, whose special status as 'voices' and 'representatives' of Scotland was either cancelled by direct plebiscite in 2014, or revealed to rest on a 'higher' conception of peoplehood un-testable by the electoral machinery. The special authority of cultural 'we-ness', and its symbolic guarantors, did not come only from the writers themselves: this role gained traction in a 1970s political context in which centralised state authority was also invested in a story of Scottish *identitarian empowerment* – arguably more so than the leading nationalist writers of the period.

This book traces that history and its implications for Scottish literary and cultural criticism. With the exception of Chapters 5 and 7 (on James Robertson's devolutionary epic *And the Land Lay Still*, and 1990s fiction by Irvine Welsh, A. L. Kennedy and James Kelman), it is not primarily concerned with detailed close readings of literary texts, though the discussion is illustrated with a number of key examples from novels and poems. It is equally interested in the role adopted by Scottish writers and critics as

public intellectuals, cultural guarantors, and media mouthpieces of a national 'we-ness' no vote could overturn. We are concerned here with the political leveraging of 'Scottish literature' (considered as a critical project as much as a creative endeavour), operating beyond its own bookish sphere, and intervening in public affairs with a specific 'national' weight and social authority. This enquiry almost immediately reveals the *co-constitution* of a 'revitalised' Scottish literature and Scottish democracy since 1979, and clarifies a number of the interlocking claims sedimented in the imagery of the Canongate Wall. Casting a critical light on these connections, I do not set out to disprove the 'cultural devolution' thesis surveyed below, but to trace both its power and its limitations. Whatever its truth-value, this myth has been enormously influential and reality-shaping, continuing to undergird literary and critical production in Scotland, while functioning as the predominant discursive 'frame' in which the social value of Scottish writing is asserted and evaluated.

I have elsewhere questioned the tendency to locate (and often confine) the politics of contemporary Scottish writers within the relatively narrow horizons of the constitutional debate they are credited with re-energising.[5] Tropes of 'representation' are central to what is misleading and even mystificatory in this pattern. The key Scottish novelists of the past few decades largely reject the ambassadorial politics of 'representation' enshrined in parliamentary democracy, yet they are continually presented as the models and cultural guarantors of Scottish devolution understood as the (incomplete) recovery of national agency and identity via parliamentary representation. As we shall see, it is equally possible to understand devolution as a highly conservative process, defined by established state and party interests: one that openly figures 'cultural representation' as the containment and deferral of democratic empowerment. We should be wary of the limiting and distorting effects – both critically and politically – of reading Scottish literature by the terms of a self-congratulatory circuit of 'representation' (by which formally innovative literary novels act as catalysts to a political process held to delimit 'the political' in Scottish writing; most often by fixating on the display and recuperation of 'identity'). This study is an argument for recognising

and exiting this cul-de-sac. To gain critical purchase on its contours, we must briefly revisit scholarly debates on the survival and reconstruction of Scottish political identity.

Chicken-and-egg nationhood

Alexander Smith has argued 'that the emergence of an apparently distinctive Scottish state at the turn of the twenty-first century is best understood as an outcome of the creation of a pro-devolution (Scottish) public in the 1990s'.[6] That devolution was democratically 'demand-led' is true enough, and yet only half the story. We should begin by acknowledging an important chicken-and-egg quality of the developments at issue. Atsuko Ichijo agrees with Smith in observing that the new parliament 'has secured a distinctively Scottish political discursive space'[7]: for both scholars, the state-like structures and national character of Scottish politics emerge as *outcomes* of legislative devolution. But they are equally the *ground* of the pro-devolution arguments surveyed in this book. Long before these national-political structures were achieved, key writers and thinkers spoke and behaved as though they already did – not least in the literary field – and this helped to bring them into being. As David McCrone observes, in the Scottish case 'substantial cultural capital is both the product and the driver of political change': 'having a parliament is both the outcome of a sense of identity, as well as reinforcing it in turn, bearing in mind that there is no simple relationship between preferred constitutional option and either party preference or self identity'.[8] The messy and inconclusive alignment between national self-identification and political preference – writing in 2005, McCrone cites social attitude research by Ross Bond and Michael Rosie showing that 'only about 1 person in 6 who say that they are Scottish and *not* British [. . .] support *both* Independence *and* vote SNP' – suggests that 'the density of cultural capital is such that it has no single political or social carrier', and is not 'reducible to "straightforward" cultural markers such as language, religion and ethnicity'.[9] This being acknowledged, the 'carrying-capacity' of markers such as language, in seeming to de-sublimate the very substance of nationality, should not be underestimated.

The 'vernacular' politics of devolution have far-reaching implications for Scottish culture (including academic criticism), which this study attempts to survey both historically and theoretically.

Elie Kedourie writes that 'language is the external and visible badge of those differences which distinguish one nation from another; it is the most important criterion by which a nation is recognized to exist, and to have the right to form a state on its own'.[10] However unfashionable these investments might now seem, they are baked into the most carefully post-romantic arguments for national self-determination. Arash Abizadeh insists 'the nation has a *concreteness* that cannot be done away with', and a putatively earthy, emotive, hyper-physical language is ideally positioned to realise the 'affective mobilization' which remains necessary even to the most strenuously civic post-nationalism.[11] Indeed, appeals to the vernacular as the paradigm of authentically grounded interpersonal community have largely cast aside their ethnic-cultural accretions and been assimilated to the vocabulary of liberal multiculturalism. 'Put simply', writes the political philosopher Will Kymlicka, 'democratic politics is politics in the vernacular'. In modern societies 'we can expect – as a general rule – that the more political debate is conducted in the vernacular, the more participatory it will be'.[12] The common language of a people is an emblem not of its ethno-traditional rootedness but of its accessible civic space, apparently rinsed clean of exclusivist claims to belonging. This post-nationalist recuperation of 'Herderian' rhetoric on language and political community – explored in Chapter 6 – begins to explain why tropes of vernacular nationhood and authenticity are so prominent in the metaphorical currency of Scottish devolution and the independence debate. In announcing to the Scottish Parliament the date of the 2014 independence referendum, First Minister Alex Salmond described it as 'the day when we take responsibility for our country, when we are able to speak with our own voice, choose our own direction and contribute in our own distinct way'.[13] Grant Farred observes that the vernacular, 'though it emerges from below is considerably more than a language of subalternity. It is not a language in itself, but a form [of] public discourse.'[14] This an important context for grasping how the 'real

literary renaissance' of 1980s–90s Scottish writing, and its 'radical' politics of vocal equality, resistance and liberation, became eligible for incorporation into mainstream constitutional discourse.

Constituting devolution

In order to capture some of the complexities of the pro-devolution consensus which emerged in the late 1980s and early 1990s, and the intersection of cultural and political debates leading up to that period, I argue that a national Scottish political system, and its representative forms and discursive boundaries, were not caused by but *constituted in* devolution: called into being to give substance and reality to what pro-devolution politics assumed in advance. The features of 'an apparently distinctive Scottish state' in the early twenty-first century can reasonably be understood as the fulfilment of pro-devolutionary politics (that is, as the effectual mechanisms for 'delivering' the renewal of Scottish democracy demanded by the electorate), but this tends to obscure the most creative and interesting phase of their development. Two processes reinforced each other throughout the period at issue: the emphasis (and gradual naturalisation) of the Scottish national frame, 'dimension' or habitus (first in culture, then in politics), and the demand that Scottish political structures should evolve to a position of 'congruence', in Ernest Gellner's terms, with the palpable reality (and appealing difference) of Scottish cultural identity. (In Bourdieu's sense, habitus describes 'a set of *dispositions* which incline agents to act and react in certain ways': a repertoire of practices, perceptions and attitudes which 'are "regular" without being consciously co-ordinated or governed', and which constitute the normative structures of everyday social life.[15] For Gellner, 'nationalism is primarily a political principle, which holds that the political and the national unit should be congruent'.[16]) Thus the growing distinctiveness and 'solidity' of Scottish discursive space during the 1980s and 1990s might be understood as the 'form' of national politics crystallising out of its tacit 'content', in turn stimulating further demands for representative structuration.

As James Kellas and Lindsay Paterson (among others) argued decades ago, Scotland had many features of a distinctive political

system, and qualities of (elitist, unaccountable) semi-sovereignty, long before the upsurge of nationalism beginning in the 1960s. Strikingly, Kellas dismisses the importance of culture even in the fourth edition of his influential study *The Scottish Political System* (published in 1989):

> Cultural nationalists make a small but vociferous contribution to Scottish nationalism. They encourage the use of a Scottish means of expression in literature, and cultivate Scottishness in the other arts. A few support the SNP, or political devolution, but most are uninterested in politics, preferring to change Scottish society through education and cultural activities. The SNP, for its part, takes little interest in cultural matters.[17]

If this were broadly true at the time of the book's first edition in 1973, it seems an eccentric reading of events in the pivotal decades that followed. One reason Kellas's model is so unhelpful for understanding the cultural dimension of devolution is that it makes 'national consciousness' a primary criterion for identifying Scotland (or any nation) as a distinct 'political system', while theorising national identity in a manner that nullifies its potential to be mobilised and managed within overlapping political systems – that is, one of the predominant historic patterns we describe *as* nationalism. In framing his general argument (against a homogenously British vision of a unitary UK state), Kellas notes that:

> the criteria for nationhood are never easy to determine, and vary from nation to nation. But they ought to satisfy two broad requirements: that the members of the nation think of themselves primarily as such, and not primarily as members of another nation; and that the nation should have some objective characteristics of its own, such as language, 'complementary habits and facilities of communication', religion, territory, previous statehood, a history of common action, and so on. The first requirement is well fulfilled in the case of Scotland.[18]

Kellas appeals to a tacit sense of nationhood as a kind of genealogical proof of political distinctiveness – other-than-British national consciousness, he writes, 'came to the surface during the late 1960s with the rise of political nationalism in Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland (the last a quite separate variety). But in reality it was always there.' It is the anterior and 'inert' quality of this national consciousness – 'always there', scarcely noticed, gathering dust – which seems to consign questions of cultural identity to the background, in precisely the period they are moving swiftly to the political foreground. For Kellas 'national identification' is essentially banal in Michael Billig's sense: something children pick up at school and in the playground (in 'games of the "Scots versus the English" type'),[19] more or less unconsciously and by osmosis.[20] It is not something with any active political force or potential to alter the 'reality' of political systems and structures; seemingly it can only affirm and anchor what already obtains. Note also the disjunction between 'subjective nationality' in this scheme and the corresponding 'objective characteristics' of nationhood.[21] It seems clear in the passage cited above that national identity can exist separately from the sociological requirements of true nationhood, and in developing this model Kellas sharply distinguishes between 'subjective identification with Scotland' and its political expression. The fact that people who identity as Scots do not automatically vote Scottish nationalist (nor 'disdain cooperation with the "English" political parties') leads Kellas to conclude that 'most of the time [. . .] the political nationalism lies dormant, and the "British" pattern of political behaviour prevails'.[22] This model conflates in advance 'identity' and 'political behaviour': you are what you vote, and only wholesale electoral rejection of the British order would manifest national identity 'activated' from its default dormancy. In this model identity authenticates established political structures, but cannot really figure in their gradual transformation.

Followers of Kellas and Paterson may justly argue, *pace* Smith and Ichijo, that there was nothing truly new about the national political space constructed in the 1980s. But the active and mobilised role of cultural identity in *challenging* the existing (Scottish) political system is a signature development of that decade, which their models render illegible. Ray Ryan describes the post-1979

period as 'an obsessive quest for cultural self-definition as claims for national distinctiveness were mediated through culture rather than politics';[23] but this mediation cut both ways, with new political weight attached to matters of 'identity' in ways that belie airy 1970s gestures, both in Kellas and in the 1973 Report of the Royal Commission on the Constitution, to 'national feeling'. In most 1970s discourse national-cultural attachment operates as an anchoring residue, or as a diffuse source of potential disruption, but seldom as a *structuring principle* for the re-constitution of national political space. This is precisely what changed, and Scottish writers really did play a significant and catalysing role in the process; though not always pointed in the same direction as the political actors who stood to gain most from reinstating a Scottish politics.

David McCrone captures the complexity of this structural shift, as well as the need to grasp its 'cultural' dimension without simplifying or inflating it. Writing in 2005, he draws on Pierre Bourdieu in tracing the pivotal importance of the 'Scottish frame of reference' in the broader political shift toward devolution:

> The point is not that suddenly Scots changed their values and attitudes, but that the political prism through which they expressed these altered. [. . .] 'Scotland' rather than Britain was construed as the unit of political and economic management from the 1970s. [. . .] The emerging Scottish frame of reference fixed a new dimension to politics north of the Tweed, reflected in but by no means coterminous with the rise of the Scottish National Party. This is perhaps how one should understand Scottish-English differences, not as the result of some deep differences in social and economic structures (because there are no significant structural ones), nor because there are separate 'Scottish' and 'English' values (again, because there are few), but because the cultural prism for translating social change into political meaning and action is different, always has been, and if anything, has become more so.[24]

Thus the creeping differentiation of the Scottish 'cultural prism' since the 1970s – or in other terms, McCrone writes,

'what we mean by cultural capital [. . .] neither essentialized nor contingent, but dependent upon *habitus*'[25] – cannot simply be attributed to developments within 'culture' of the kind we might corroborate with references to literary texts; but neither can they be separated or disentangled from the growing sense of national-cultural difference and legitimacy. In the period this book explores, Scottish cultural otherness (within the UK) is overtly mobilised at the electoral level, and becomes a functional basis on which to solidify and democratise the Scottish political system, while also installing notions of cultural difference and representation at the heart of devolved common sense. It is for this reason I focus on the unusually close interplay of literary-cultural debate and hard-nosed party politics after 1979, when efforts to re-construct *national political space* were symbiotic with efforts to re-conjure *national literary space*.

These processes gave impetus to one another, and often flattered each other's claims. In 1988, a landmark achievement in Scottish criticism – the publication of Cairns Craig's four-volume *History of Scottish Literature* – was greeted by James Robertson in the pages of *Radical Scotland* as a political coming-of-age. Craig's *History*, Robertson notes, is

> informed by that great spirit of reassessment and serious self-appraisal which succeeded the Devolution disaster. Maybe future generations will decide that 1979 was *not* a disaster, that it was, for a people stripped in the industrial age of their political and cultural self-respect, yet one more necessary stagger before a firmer step. Could this unpretentious and sober, yet at the same time wide-ranging and unapologetic compilation have been produced ten years ago? I suspect not, and this is also partly why its overall political tenor – left nationalist – has also the air of intellectual maturity. There is no bowing and scraping to a Greater Lit., nor any knee-jerking in philabegs.[26]

The unapologetic assertion of a Scottish literary tradition – one liberated from the shadow of a 'Greater' (English) Lit. – is coeval with the achievement of 'mature' left-nationalism in politics.

Three areas

In the remainder of this introduction, I will foreground three areas of critical focus. The first is general and theoretical, and concerns the self-thwarting tendencies of (essentially liberal) identitarian political projects premised on 'recognition', of which Scottish 'cultural devolution' is one. The prominence and energy of contemporary debates concerning 'identity politics' is both suggestive and somewhat disheartening, when we consider that thoughtful recent critiques of identitarian social movements and leftist strategy[27] do not (it seems to me) advance significantly beyond their predecessors in the 1990s, the period in which the Scottish developments I am most concerned with reached their maturity. In 1997 Judith Butler argued that 'what we call identity politics is produced by a state which can only allocate recognition and rights to subjects totalized by the particularity that constitutes their plaintiff status'.[28] 'If we can claim to be somehow injured on the basis of our identity', explains Asad Haider,

> as though presenting a grievance in a court of law, we can demand recognition from the state on that basis [. . .] Our political agency through identity is exactly what locks us into the state, what ensures our continued subjection. The pressing task, then, as Butler puts it, is to come up with ways of 'refusing the type of individuality correlated with the disciplinary apparatus of the modern state'.[29]

This is a dense but powerful formulation of the critique I will outline (and partly 'problematise') below, and applies even more forcefully to movements centred on collective rather than individual identity. For more than two decades, the American political theorist Wendy Brown has argued that such projects inevitably end up essentialising and 're-subordinating' the very identities they understand themselves to be emancipating, particularly as they seek legitimation in some kind of secure institutional form (sanctioned by the state, or credentialing structures such as the university). This argument has much to offer a critical orientation to the project of Scottish literature, but I also mean to highlight

key factors which fall largely outside of Brown's framing, namely the special features of liberal nationalism as a statist ideology. As Kennedy and Suny have it, 'the nation as representative of the people has become in the twentieth century the principal form of legitimation of the state'.[30] This renders key elements of Brown's critique beside the present point, while (more importantly) revealing specific limits and problems that attend the instatement of a literary nationalism centred on the recuperation of identity.

This observation forms a second strand of the book: how literary nationalism actively seeks out the 'pitfalls' of identitarian politics identified by theorists such as Wendy Brown and Nancy Fraser. In Pascale Casanova's helpful terms, the formation and reproduction of 'national literary space' in the post-romantic west involves the essentialisation and totalisation of difference/identity – above all, linguistic difference/identity – in the very logic of its instatement. National literary fingerprints and *qualia* are reified in the statist forms by which they are to be socially reproduced and institutionally anchored, a pattern readily observed in the Scottish case.

The third area of my discussion I will summarise is historical, and pervades the entire study. This revisits the cultural and political developments which guided many Scottish writers into their position of post-indyref bewilderment after 2014: the parallel stories of Scottish devolution understood as *vernacular cultural empowerment*, granting political authority to Scotland's authentic (neo-populist) voices and representatives ('The Dream'); and/or a *state-nationalist identitarian strategy* defined by electoral interests and the self-preservation of the UK constitutional order ('The Grind').

Devolution, recognition and logics of pain

Beginning in her 1995 study *States of Injury*, Wendy Brown poses the following question: 'what kind of political recognition can identity-based claims seek [. . .] that will not re-subordinate a subject historically subjugated through identity, through categories of race or gender that emerged and circulated as terms of power to enact subordination?'[31] This line of critique sharpens in *Politics*

Out of History (2001), where Brown cautions against a moralistic politics of social difference which ignores its disciplinary and historical production, thus 'mak[ing] a cultural or political fetish out of subordinated identities, out of the *effects* of subordination'.[32] 'Having lost our faith in history', she continues, 'we reify and prosecute its *effects* in one another, even as we reduce our own complexity and agency to those misnamed effects.'[33] Thus, we naturalise the 'wounds' of our historically produced identities – as gendered, raced and national subjects – in the course of constituting a politics of 'recognition' premised on their affirmation.

Pierre Bourdieu hits upon the same problem in exploring the register of difference/identity most relevant to this study, namely that of subordinated language. 'Those who rebel against the effects of domination that are exercised through the use of the legitimate language [e.g. Standard English] arrive at a sort of inversion of the relation of symbolic force and think they are doing the right thing by consecrating as such the dominated language [e.g. working-class demotic, vernacular Scots].'[34] Echoing Brown, Bourdieu insists this project of 'reversing' linguistic disesteem 'is still an effect of domination', because it can only ever affirm a condition and 'identity' of domination, popular language being recognised solely by its subordinated status. Thus, 'those who, out of a need for rehabilitation, talk about popular language or culture are victims of the logic which leads stigmatized groups to claim the stigma as a sign of their identity'.[35] ('Popular' here connotes working-class.) As Adorno puts the same point, 'glorification of splendid underdogs is nothing other than glorification of the splendid system that makes them so'; therefore 'to play off workers' dialects against the written language is reactionary'.[36] Bourdieu is less categorical, and leaves space for paradox and uncertainty in assessing the political valence of the 'quest for distinction' in which disempowered language lays claim to cultural value and representative legitimacy – a central theme, as we shall see, of the 'vernacular' cultural politics of Scottish devolution. Bourdieu is pessimistic about the forms of rebellion that may arise through identification with subjection, and relatively accepting of what in the post-Kelman Scottish literary context might be thought of as 'assimilation' to the language of domination:

> When the dominated quest for distinction leads the dominated to affirm what distinguishes them, that is, in the name of which they are dominated and constituted as vulgar, do we have to talk of resistance? [. . .] Second question: when, on the other hand, the dominated work at destroying what marks them out as 'vulgar' and at appropriating that in relation to which they appear as vulgar (for instance, in France, the Parisian accent), is this submission? I think this is an insoluble contradiction [. . .] Resistance may be alienating and submission may be liberating. Such is the paradox of the dominated, and there is no way out of it.[37]

If Bourdieu's conclusion here seems pat, even reductive, the reason lies in the rather narrow way in which 'popular' and 'vulgar' language have been constructed within his argument: solely in the matrix of disempowerment, with no autonomous basis or 'content' that does not immediately reduce to a mark of oppression. Bourdieu himself notes this circularity: 'it is indeed paradoxical to define the dominated language by relation to the dominant language which itself can be defined only by relation to the dominated language'.[38] Here is another crucial difference: in the Scottish case explored in this study, the dominated language is aligned with a cultural politics of ethnonational difference, which opens a whole other field of political contestation, and access to 'cultural capital'. We shall return at length to the class/nation valence of vernacular language in the Scottish context (both literary and political), one of the richest but most complex topics this study attempts to illuminate. Here it is enough to acknowledge, with Brown and Bourdieu, that affirmations of identity are a limiting strategy with which to challenge the power structures from which we seek 'recognition' (on some uncertain *reciprocal* basis) as a distinct group, namely one whose *historical injury* grounds and defines its *social identity,* which is in turn essentialised into its *political interest*.

Such readings overlap with Nancy Fraser's influential critique of social and cultural movements driven by 'claims for the recognition of difference', which, she argues, tend to 'drastically simplify and reify group identities'.[39] 'Stressing the need to elaborate and display an authentic, self-affirming and self-generated collective

identity', Fraser writes, such projects exert a moralising pressure 'for individual members to conform to a given group culture':

> Ironically, then, the identity model serves as a vehicle for misrecognition: in reifying group identity, it ends by obscuring the politics of cultural identification, the struggles *within* the group for the authority – and the power – to represent it. By shielding such struggles from view, this approach masks the power of dominant fractions and reinforces intragroup domination.[40]

Though not centred on projects of liberal nationalism (or 'post-nationalism'), this critique is highly pertinent to Scottish cultural and political movements. Both as a campaigning rubric and a critical heuristic, Fraser argues, the identitarian politics of recognition risks 'freezing the very antagonisms it purports to mediate'.[41] The second key term of Fraser's critique is 'displacement', whereby struggles for 'identity' both mask and de-centre 'redistributive' struggles for power and economic justice, while radically over-simplifying their imbrication. To treat identity as the product of 'free-floating cultural representations or discourses', she argues, is to neglect the '*institutionalized* significations and norms' in which unjust social divisions and exclusions are sedimented, and through which power produces and delimits 'identity' as available roles, subject positions and modes of participation.[42] The crucial error, Fraser argues, is to 'abstract misrecognition from its institutional matrix and obscure its entwinement with distributive injustice'.[43] Her proposed solution is a 'status model' that aims 'not at valorizing group identity but rather at overcoming subordination': struggling against that 'institutionalized pattern of cultural value [which] constitutes some social actors as less than full members of society and prevents them from participating as peers'.[44] 'Focused on culture in its socially grounded (as opposed to free-floating) forms', this model 'does not stop at identity but seeks institutional remedies for institutionalized harms'.[45]

The horizon of Fraser's critique, however, does not extend to the key 'institutional matrix' which grounds and governs claims to belonging, identity, participation and legitimacy in the modern west: the democratic nation-state. In an earlier version of

her critique, Fraser concedes its limited application to struggles and mobilisations premised on ethnicity or nationality, noting that 'national struggles are peculiar [. . .] in that the form of recognition they seek is political autonomy, whether in the form of a sovereign state of their own (e.g. the Palestinians) or in the form of more limited provincial sovereignty within a multinational state (e.g. the majority of Québecois)'.[46] Where the claim of 'recognition' is less for status and standing in the eyes of a consolidated institutional matrix (such as the dominant or central state) but extends to the demand for 'our own' such matrix and powers of *self-institutionalisation*, Fraser's distinction seems to run aground. Where (as with liberal nationalism) the assertion of identity is not so much 'socially grounded' as constitutive of the very arena in which representative claims can be politically legitimated, we need a slightly different vocabulary. It is less that liberal nationalism has ways of avoiding the identitarian pitfalls identified by Brown and Fraser, but that it actively cultivates and exploits them. As with Fraser, there is a nation-shaped hole in Brown's observation that 'the problem with a politics of "difference" is that it lacks a vision of the future that overcomes the political significance of such differences, and thus lacks an affirmative political collective project'.[47] Brown does attend to the 'naturalistic legitimating narratives of collective identity known as nationalism',[48] but does not dwell on its difference from minoritarian identitarian projects in that nationalism *wants* to be essentialised and reified: precisely because it seeks the solid, durable and naturalised condition of statehood.[49]

Effectively invisible within most discourse on recognition (centred on the claims of groups and subjects minoritised by virtue of their race, gender or sexuality), modern struggles for statehood are a curious omission from this school of critique, because liberal nationalism would seem to represent the quintessential paradigm of 'displacement' and 'reification'. Wendy Brown has a telling illustration from the George W. Bush administration, dismissing commentators' 'moralizing condemnation of the National Endowment for the Arts for not funding politically radical art, of the US military or the White House for not embracing open homosexuality or sanctioning gay marriage', and other cosmopolitan disappointments. Such protest, she writes,

> conveys at best naïve political expectations and at worst, patently confused ones. For this condemnation implicitly figures the state (and other mainstream institutions) as if it did not have specific political and economic investments, as if it were rather, a momentarily misguided parent who forgot her promise to treat all her children the same way. These expressions of moralistic outrage implicitly cast the state as if it were or could be a deeply democratic and nonviolent institution; conversely, it renders radical art, radical social movements, and various fringe populations as if they were not potentially subversive, representing a significant political challenge to the norms of the regime, but rather were benign entities and populations entirely appropriate for the state to equally protect, fund, and promote.[50]

For my purposes, the final irony is central: the 'radical' demand for inclusion and recognition within the 'institutional matrix' of the nation-state is ultimately premised on a profound abnegation, a kind of promise by 'radical art' to be worthy of orderly admission into the ruling logic of state power. (The conferred prestige of the Canongate Wall begins to take on a slightly different complexion.)

To apply these insights to recent Scottish developments, the politics of identitarian empowerment and inclusion – so central to the rhetoric of devolution – only reinforce the power of a centralised UK state to 'grant' recognition of a subject polity asserting its national difference. This paternalist paradigm is, accordingly, highly amenable to the deeper logics of British constitutional governance, shifting the focus of nationalist contestation to accommodation and *incorporation* within state institutions, rather than challenging the legitimacy of UK state sovereignty. In the oft-cited words of Enoch Powell, power devolved is power retained.

Scottish injury and nationalist imaginaries

Profoundly naturalised as the legitimating basis for modern political authority, it is difficult to maintain a critical view of nationality as a *subjected* condition. Whether affirmed or suppressed (or both) by state power, nationhood is clearly not synonymous with

freedom, for it enjoins particular duties, responsibilities and limits on the individual *as well* as securing various forms of belonging, community and protected rights. I highlight this elementary observation only because it becomes highly elusive when we enter the terrain of injured or subjugated nationhood. For Wendy Brown, the self-subverting qualities of identitarian politics follow directly from their 'logics of pain': identities premised on states of injury and suffering 'do not adequately articulate their own condition' because they figure 'suffering lived as identity rather than as general injustice or domination – but suffering that cannot be resolved at the identitarian level'.[51] Instead of seeking (with Fraser) 'institutional remedies for institutional harms', Brown writes, 'such political formations at times appear more invested in amassing and citing continued evidence of the injury justifying their existence than in figuring alternatives to these conditions'.[52] Viewed in the nationalist frame, however, this criticism overlooks the special value of injury as birthright and inheritance, the indispensable starting point of the nationalist 'salvation drama' – whether or not 'awakened' nationhood is restored to some lost wholeness.[53] The articulation of pain, loss and grief can be a nationalist end in itself, the re-animation of inherited postures of anguish and defiance which are *themselves* experienced as a condition of affective solidarity (injured nationhood), irrespective of the success, or even the conception, of some ameliorative path toward national redemption. To what extent can we understand Scottish literary nationalism within this paradigm? Allow me to cite the first page of the first issue of the first journal in the field, *Studies in Scottish Literature*, published in 1963, in which Tom Scott is admirably candid about the final vocabulary of the Scottish Literature project as he conceives it:

> Perhaps I had better make it clear from the outset that I have no pretensions to academic detachment in this matter [of Scottish Literature]. I am as disinterested as a husband who sees his wife slowly flogged to death under his captive eyes. Since the late 13th century, Scotland has been oppressed by a neighbour, England, whose amiable intentions towards Scotland have been, and are consistently, those of cultural and political genocide.[54]

The 'Scotland' produced in this tellingly gendered construction of national suffering is an absolute victim, devoid of agency except in the act of bearing emasculated witness to its own dishonour and degradation. Whether vengeful, restorative or otherwise, any national 'awakening' founded on this state of 'genocidal' injury will figure identity as a lurid scar, and conceive the national past as a record of humiliation. A political movement seeking not to valorise but to 'de-subordinate' this identity is not pleasant to contemplate. Scott, to be sure, is a provocative figure in the truculent MacDiarmid mould; surely this victimology went out with 'tartan terror'?

Not according to Andrew O'Hagan, writing in 2002. The intervening period – 1963–2002 – is roughly the period of salutary Scottish renewal familiar from many respected histories: so, having regained a measure of its democratic agency and self-respect, has Scotland managed to heal its old injuries? For O'Hagan, reviewing Neal Ascherson's *Stone Voices: The Search for Scotland*, the answer is a resounding no: the 'new', semi-autonomous Scotland has simply incorporated new, politically specific wounds (not England but Thatcher) into the Auld Enemy folkways frequented by Tom Scott and his unfortunate bride. A 'proud country mired up to the fiery eyes in blame and nostalgia', writes O'Hagan, devolved Scotland continues to articulate and understand itself via logics of pain – a pain that lies *beyond* any possible democratic recovery:

> A half-hearted nation will want to hold fast to its grievances, and in that sense Scotland has done well. [. . .] Scotland is a place where cultural artefacts and past battles – the Stone of Destiny, Robert Burns, *Braveheart*, Bannockburn – have more impact on people's sense of moral action than politics does. The people have no real commitment to the public sphere, and are not helped toward any such commitment by the dead rhetoric of the young parliament. Yet the problem is not the parliament, it's the people, and the people's drowsy addiction to imagined injury – their belief in a paralysing historical distress – which makes the country assert itself not as a modern nation open to progress on all fronts, but as a delinquent, spoiled, bawling child, tight in its tartan Babygro, addled with punitive needs and false-memory syndrome.[55]

O'Hagan recanted this view in 2017, declaring at the Edinburgh International Book Festival that 'Scotland itself, these last 15 years, has moved on from the old stasis I used to criticise', and reverted to 1990s devolutionary rhetoric in stressing the power of literary imagination to endow 'an open space of fresh possibility' in which Scottish writers can help 'constitute the nation' anew.[56] What had changed between these interventions? Politics more than culture: the Yes campaign of 2014 awakened O'Hagan to weaknesses in his own sceptical view of nationalism (given full rein in his 2002 article), and attuned him to the extent to which Scotland had already moved beyond the moth-eaten cultural Union articulated by the No campaign: 'It hardly matters whether or not I wanted the Nationalists to win, it was more that I felt they already had. [. . .] As I drove away from the count in Glasgow in the middle of the night I felt the Union wasn't saved, it was in fact over.'[57]

It is a sense of living injury that seals O'Hagan's reversal: outrageously casual disrespect for Scottish opinion displayed by both Labour and Tory leaders in 2014 – David Cameron's pledge to introduce 'English Votes for English Laws' the morning after the indyref result – followed by the unfolding disaster of England's Brexit in 2016–17, leave an utterly blighted future for Britishness, 'a black hole of impertinence and impossibility' for the unionist imagination. 'Now that the picture is clearing, we are left with an image of a belated Little England posing an existential threat to a Scotland that has seen itself for years as European. [. . .] Britain has mismanaged itself out of existence, and Scotland may not be the beneficiary, but it can certainly be the escapee, free to succeed or to fail in its own ways.'[58] The sense of intolerable captivity, and urgency of the 'existential threat', are not entirely different to Tom Scott's grisly fable from 1963. Viewed from a certain angle, O'Hagan's trajectory arcs back to the traditional folkways of mobilising grievance, though actuated by painful direct experience (of UK 'democratic deficit') rather than medieval victimology. The personal freshness of the wound alters all. These are indeed 'live' debates, which have continually shifted and evolved during the period I have studied them; but key features of the terrain remain fixed in place.

Pitfalls and parliamentarism

The cultural re-making and re-production of Scottish nationhood operates within a British constitutional order of a very specific character. Here I turn to the work of Tom Nairn, who observes of the post-devolution UK that 'the habits and instinctive assumptions of sovereignty' endure, but what they manifest 'has been a state-way rather than a folk-way [. . .] there has never been a British nation underpinning the state'.[59] In the freakish 'Ukanian' polity this implies – Nairn's name for the ersatz state-nation which would correspond to British constitutional tradition – there has been no mechanism of 'state-sponsored acculturation' imposing British unity, or assimilation of competing sub-British nationalisms. There has been no need, because peoplehood counts for so little in a constitutional order where the sovereignty of *parliament* is sacrosanct, and any retro-fitting of the state armature (and its legitimising alibis) can be more or less painlessly fudged and finessed from within the ambit of parliament's supremacy, without troubling the folk and their ingrained commonalities.

Thus, spectacles of official Ukanian unity – such as the famous opening ceremony of the 2012 London Olympics, a condensed historical pageant of post-imperial diversity – are the exception and not the rule. There has been no cause to ratify changes in UK territorial governance via top-down meddling with the culture-fabric of local/provincial/national identities. The machinery of parliament is where real power and authority reside, so constitutional change (Nairn argues) has been managed via Westminster's established mechanisms and traditions of elite consent. From the early 1970s, devolution represents an important but superficial shift in this continuum. A weakened central government sought to preserve its parliamentary mandate by re-figuring the relationship between sub-British peoplehood ('national feeling' in Scotland and Wales) and state sovereignty, seemingly acknowledging the centrally-legitimating role of popular, identitarian consent in the British peripheries: the notion that London rule was in some general sense dependent on its acceptability to the Celtic fringe. But the *expression* of this concession took the convenient form of an extra layer of parliamentary apparatus, leaving the nucleus of

UK sovereignty undisturbed and indeed symbolically strengthened: precisely by 'modernising' the outward manifestation of (pluralist, inclusive) parliamentary 'representation' had the elusive core of the *ancien régime* (on Nairn's account) re-consecrated its deeply undemocratic, crypto-feudal basis. Thus devolution as the reinvention of provincialdom, in Nairn's terms: the granting of a 'new' importance to expressions of sub-British identity within constitutional governance ended by affirming – and reproducing – the supreme, reality-making powers of central authority.

The ultimate problem in any de-centralising British scheme is, Nairn has argued for five decades, England: 'over-identified with a single but extruded institutional form' – that is, Anglo-Britain and its imperial residues – 'English nationality has consequently little political horizon beyond that.'

> When summoned to present its credentials at a deeper level it has normally resorted to literature: English literature has often been made the vehicle of a national *Geist*. The latter grew less accessible in the narrower terms of territory and institutions, after the overwhelming expansion of the 18th and 19th centuries. Such habituation to a wider – at one time almost global – mode of political expression led to a compensatory internalization, a falling back on the spirit. The animating nation, when required, could now most easily be evoked via culture – by the English Word rather than the old English state.[60]

Though Nairn does not pursue the parallel, with Scotland something like the opposite has transpired: the lopsided cultural solidity and political vacancy of Scottish nationhood gave a different impetus to the presentation of those deeper credentials. Literature has been made to figure not as the animating 'soul' inside the hyper-diffused institutional machinery (as in the English case), but as a means of collapsing this very dualism: both as cause and folk-way, 'Scottish literature' operates as a direct analogue for statehood, a cultural bone marrow seeking to calcify into a sturdy institutional skeleton in which nationhood would be affirmed, concretised and secured.

And what of the political scaffolding that would guide and support this structuration of Scottish sovereignty? The cultural importance of the *parliamentary form* remains to be fully interrogated in the Scottish context, and indeed broader political and sociological study of devolving Britain. The ideological significance of parliamentarism extends well beyond its own ceremonies and procedures, securing a much broader societal fiction well captured by Perry Anderson:

> Parliament, elected every four or five years as the sovereign expression of popular will, reflects the fictive unity of the nation back to the masses as if it were their own self-government. The economic divisions within the 'citizenry' are masked by the juridical parity between exploiters and exploited, and with them the complete *separation* and *non-participation* of the masses in the work of parliament. This separation is then constantly presented and represented to the masses as the ultimate incarnation of liberty: 'democracy' as the terminal point of history.[61]

This teleology is a frequent presence in devolutionary discourse of the 1980s and 1990s, where the prospect of 'self-determination' does double-duty in signifying both the reality of a 'deliverable' devolutionary settlement (a directly elected Scottish parliament with limited powers, explicitly framed as a subset of those exercised by the British state) and a more exhilarating ideal which combines a sense of cultural liberation with notions of existential self-realisation. The hegemonic importance of the parliamentary form extends well beyond the politics of culture and identity. As Anderson argues, 'the existence of the parliamentary State thus constitutes the formal framework of all other ideological mechanisms of the ruling class. It provides the general code in which every specific message elsewhere is transmitted.'[62] Thus, forcing the ethical and aesthetic specificities of Scottish literary texts into the mould of parliamentarism deeply limits their potential autonomy and counter-hegemonic force.[63]

A voice of our own

A recurring focus of the present study is the symbolic importance of distinctively Scottish language and 'voice' in the rhetoric of cultural empowerment and national self-representation. David McCrone cites Bourdieu in specifying the special value of language in claiming national space: 'cultural capital in its objectified state presents itself with all the appearances of an autonomous, coherent universe which, although the product of historical action, has its own laws, transcending individual wills'.[64] Thus, writes McCrone,

> cultural products objectify difference, both reflecting and reifying it in turn. One does not require the existence of a state in order to have this level of cultural objectification, although it is most obvious where a language maps on to a national discourse. As the Yiddish linguist Max Weinreich put it in 1945: 'a language is a dialect with an army and a navy' (Weinreich l945: 13). One is Irish because the language is 'Irish' (once called simply Gaelic) even though English is the *lingua franca* of everyday life. One does not question that 'the Irish' are a distinct people; they have a state to prove it. Scotland is another matter. At best, it is an understated nation. There is debate north of the border about language, not about Gaelic, now confined to the North West and spoken by less than 2 per cent of the Scottish population, so much as whether 'Scots' is sufficiently distinctive from 'English' (language), which, ironically, is no longer the property of the English (people).[65]

Chapters 6 and 7 attend to linguistic nationalism and rhetorics of 'voice' in devolutionary discourse, exploring the shifting political context in which urban Scots took over the symbolic capital of Gaelic in earlier cultural nationalism. Throughout this study, we find that questions of 'voice' are central to very different strategic framings of devolution – whether viewed as a containment measure by central government, or as a channel of liberated vernacular

identity – and 'voice' serves as the key trope by which these contrary meanings became fully compatible and mutually reinforcing.

In recent work exploring the politics of the 'Scottish Literary Field', the sociologist Bridget Fowler locates the class trajectories of individual writers within a broader reading of language, habitus and state culture. Rehearsing Bourdieu, she writes:

> The state devalues 'regional' or popular languages and cultures [. . .] [and] canonises as 'legitimate' certain arts and sports, classifying some forms through Royal or National Academies, national anthems, national ballet companies, etc. Further, the State is present at the genesis of a *national* habitus, thus forging certain points of social identification. Shakespeare becomes key for creating 'Englishness' rather than Renaissance humanism, Racine and Molière for 'Frenchness'.[66]

For Fowler, the political valence of 'Scottish Literature' in post-devolution culture is a proof of how Bourdieu's model does not insist on a strictly reproductive role for the State; that it can also harbour and support energies against itself, including the work of social critics, prophets and revolutionaries. She examines the work of several major figures of the 'new renaissance' in this vein, suggesting that recent Scottish writing has astutely managed to invert the terms of official State culture, successfully penetrating the regulated and regulating terrain of official art and establishing a Scottish national habitus coded in the reverse terms (valorising non-standard and popular language, celebrating working-class and marginal identities, articulating cultural Scottishness as dignified moral resistance to illegitimate authority). Thus, Fowler traces the class experience of the most politically consequential west of Scotland writers born in the 1930s and 40s (Alasdair Gray, Tom Leonard, James Kelman, Liz Lochhead), noting that 'these members of the restricted literary field came chiefly from working-class origins, specifically, from the unfashionable districts of Paisley, Glasgow and Motherwell'.[67] While a sense of exclusion from 'the linguistic hegemony of the standardised language'[68] is another area of common ground, each of these writers was

able to secure a degree of cultural capital (such as subsidised university education, other small and irregular grants of public arts funding) via the 'distinct enabling conditions' of the post-war welfare state.[69] In this perspective, the rising children of clerks, train-drivers, picture-restorers and clerical workers are the product of a specific historical niche in the social formation, and the success of their work partly expresses the structural conditions which made it possible (a grant-assisted pathway from Riddrie or Motherwell to the Glasgow School of Art). Their prominence and political importance during the period of welfare-state retrenchment is at once more complex than a heroic outsiders' narrative – involving the potential for 'split habitus', that is, estrangement from their earlier social background and its cultural codes – and inseparable from this specific history, which is sedimented in many of their characteristic aesthetic tendencies. As Fowler observes,

> They are more experimental [than the Renaissance of MacDiarmid and Grassic Gibbon] in their use of modernist devices, sometimes alternating these with realist narratives (as in Gray's *Lanark*). In particular, they have reappropriated Kafka's and Beckett's worlds through the prism of Scotland's housing schemes, job-centres and Council bureaucracy. If, given the flight of shipbuilding, car manufacture, iron and steel, Caterpillar tractors and mining, the collective heterodoxy of these writers' socialist fathers and mothers can no longer be taken for granted, it has not stemmed the abundant representations of the subtle structures through which economic power and gender divisions continue to be renewed, written indelibly onto the body.[70]

Ironically, the enabling social structures which made possible the success and impact of these writers' work – and with it, Fowler argues, made Scottish independence politically possible – are those signature 'British' achievements of the post-war welfare state. Nonetheless, the claims to *Scottish* national representation attributed to these writers and their linguistic and aesthetic strategies

is the key element of their social impact, the factor which secured political 'traction' for the rest of what they were saying and doing, even while delimiting its political meaning to national space. Their rebellious street-cred vis-à-vis British state culture could be comfortably incorporated into the preferred self-image of the devolved semi-state, affirming the moral authority of a 'restricted' local institution.

We now turn to the dominant critical narrative in Scottish literary politics to examine these claims, their influence, and their limitations. This final section of the introduction establishes the literary-historical context for much of the critique that follows.

'A parliament of novels': The Dream

In a *Scottish Educational Journal* essay published in August 1925, Hugh MacDiarmid remarks that 'it may be that effective cultural devolution will precede rather than follow political devolution. If so, the latter will, of course, inevitably follow, and not until it does will the former be freed of very serious and otherwise insurmountable handicaps.'[71] A prescient forecast, to be sure, but from a rather fickle prophet. In 1923 MacDiarmid had argued 'mere parliamentary devolution is useless [. . .] *the only thing that will preserve our distinct national culture*' is a Fascist programme adapted to 'Scottish national purposes'.[72] We are concerned here not with schemes and predictions, but 'cultural devolution' as an historical explanation of a particular kind: this holds that the path-breaking work of Scottish writers and artists after 1979 helped to recover national cultural confidence, stimulating a renewed appetite for democratic agency. By this story, writers, artists and cultural activists undertook the task of national self-representation (and, by some accounts, national re-invention) for which the political institutions proved inadequate, operating as trail-blazers and place-holders for the later parliament. 'If Scotland voted for *political* devolution in 1997', Cairns Craig argued in 2003,

> it had much earlier declared *cultural* devolution, both in the radical voices of new Scottish writing – from James Kelman to Matthew Fitt, from Janice Galloway to Ali

> Smith – and in the rewriting of Scottish cultural history that produced, in the 1980s and 1990s, a new sense of the richness and the autonomy of Scotland's past cultural achievements.[73]

'It is tempting', wrote Douglas Gifford in 1990, to see the affirming 'confidence' of recent Scottish fiction 'as somehow related to the 1979 Devolution referendum and the growing assertion of Scottish identity and its varieties that emerged almost in defiance of that quasi-democratic debacle'.[74] The temptation quickly proves overwhelming as Gifford asserts a transformative, quasi-constitutional role for Scottish fiction:

> With this new confidence, Scottish fiction approached the millennium as a standard bearer for Scottish culture, arguably even supplying the most successful explorations of changing Scottish identities, in a rich variety of voices and genres. The new complexities in novelistic vision relate dynamically to the changes taking place in Scottish society at large, not only reacting to them, but influencing the framework of thought in which they took place.[75]

But the dynamic character of this pattern – responding 'reflexively' to ongoing developments – is so marked it begins to dissolve the historical specificity of the 'new renaissance' Gifford described and consolidated in another 1990 essay:

> There's no mistaking the present revival of hopes in the political and cultural scene. There's much of the heady atmosphere of the thirties [. . .] when our poetry and fiction offered folk epics and Scottish mythology to remind us of our roots and ancient separateness. And before that there was a revival of a different kind, of Celtic awareness, in the eighteen-nineties [. . .] Perhaps we should read all our 'revivals' as progressions; necessary stages of self-therapy which pull our introspective intensity out towards a wider light.[76]

Conceived as the latest instalment in Scotland's perpetual revival, the 'political and cultural scene' both reflected and shaped by 'new renaissance' writing is swiftly incorporated into 'our' innate psychic conditions, effectively de-historicised.

Parliamentary metaphors for literary representation pervade the discourse of the Dream. A 1999 issue of *Edinburgh Review* entitled 'New Writing for the New Parliament' carries an indicative quotation on its cover, as Duncan McLean declares: 'There's been a parliament of novels for years. This parliament of politicians is years behind.'[77] Reflecting on his pre-devolution anthology *Dream State: The New Scottish Poets* (1994), Donny O'Rourke declares that 'Scotland's artists did more than its politicians to dream up a new Scotland.'[78] In 1996 Keith Dixon heralded a 'radical cultural *neo-populism*' centred on 'authentic new representations of the people':

> It is now generally agreed that since the early seventies, Scotland has been experiencing something of a cultural revolution. A revolution which, perhaps unsurprisingly, has accompanied the remapping of Scottish political space resulting from the rise of political nationalism, the rearticulation of Scottish politics around the issues of political autonomy or independence, and the corresponding decline and more recent marginalization of the only party to actively promote the idea of continuing and unchanging union, i.e. the Conservative Party. [. . .] this movement has been about exploring new senses of community in the Scottish context after the general post-imperial breakdown of Britishness. It has since been to such an extent preoccupied with the need to provide authentic new representations of the people, that, were it not for the pejorative connotations that the term sometimes evokes, one is tempted to talk in terms of the emergence of a radical cultural *neo-populism*.[79]

This account leaves the class character and composition of the 'cultural revolution' somewhat ambiguous, and the present study engages this question only tangentially. But it is worth noting the prominence of class in the *rhetoric* of cultural devolution,

particularly in concert with claims to 'cultural representation'. Beyond gestures and bromides in this direction, the class orientation of 'cultural devolution' and its protagonists is seldom foregrounded in its self-talk, except in broad and mythic terms treating Thatcherism as alien to Scottish cultural and political values.

For Robert Crawford, writing in 2000, 'devolution and a reassertion of Scottish nationhood were imagined by poets and writers long before being enacted by politicians'.[80] Michael Gardiner's 2005 primer on *Modern Scottish Culture* installs the post-Kelman novel at the heart of this process: 'dissatisfied with being politically silenced in the 1980s and 1990s, [Scots] had to find a creative solution [. . .] Kelman's rise came at a time when Scots were literally finding a political "voice" in the form of the new Parliament.'[81] Literature functioning as a 'vocal' surrogate for democracy has become a commonplace of Scottish literary studies. In 1998 Christopher Whyte argued that 'in the absence of elected political authority, the task of representing the nation has been repeatedly devolved to its writers'.[82] So effective were these unelected and far-from-unacknowledged legislators, when the new parliament finally opened Liam McIlvanney was struck by 'how little it now seemed to matter'.

> Its coming was welcome, certainly, but hardly seemed critical to the nation's cultural health. Above all, it was belated: by the time the Parliament arrived, a revival in Scottish fiction had been long underway [. . .] Without waiting for the politicians, Scottish novelists had written themselves out of despair.[83]

In an April 1999 item for television news, the broadcast journalist Sarah Smith interviewed Scottish writers and intellectuals on this very phenomenon. Pictured in a colourful Edinburgh wine bar, Smith claims that 'the huge change in Scottish attitudes towards self-government since the failed referendum of 1979 has largely been brought about by cultural changes – it's an artistic movement, one which politicians will find very difficult to control or to contain'.[84] An interview with A. L. Kennedy corroborates the

'enormous cultural explosion' since the 1970s, 'and that's meant that people on the ground will go with the idea of Scotland being a feasible identity. Because you've had Scottish television, Scottish models of success in visual art, in film, in books, and when you see yourself portrayed as a real place you begin to get confidence in a wider identity.'[85]

Perhaps the earliest articulation of this view is George Kerevan's contribution to a 1983 *Chapman* roundtable on 'The Predicament of the Scottish Writer'. The left-wing economist – then a Labour councillor, much later (2015–17) an SNP MP – observed that 'an explosion of cultural activity in Scotland in the Seventies and Eighties' represented 'a declaration of cultural independence'.[86] Consolidated as a grand narrative of cultural vanguardism, Alex Thomson traces its emergence to Cairns Craig's editorial foreword to the *Determinations* series published by Polygon beginning in 1989 ('the 1980s proved to be one of the most productive and creative decades in Scotland this century – as though the energy that had failed to be harnessed by the politicians flowed into other channels'). On close inspection, Thomson argues, this narrative of devolution as 'the metaphorical sublimation of political energy into literary production' appears 'not so much an argument as an immense rumour'.[87] Pointing out that 'circulation of the claim itself [is held to supply] evidence of the cultural revival to which it purports to attest', Thomson charts the repetition and (more cagy) corroboration of this narrative by critics such as Douglas Gifford, Duncan Petrie and Berthold Schoene, before emerging in its fullest articulation in Robert Crawford's *Scotland's Books* (2007). By Thomson's reading:

> [Crawford] links the international recognition by which he judges the success of Scottish writing to the decentralization of legislative control over a limited range of policy areas by Westminster to an elected body at Holyrood: 'there are connections between the recovery of a Parliament in Edinburgh and the ambitious course of modern Scottish literature [. . .] Though the word is a slippery one, a "democratic" urge within Scottish writing has grown in strength, going

> beyond the boundaries of conventional politics, and beyond Scotland itself'. Indeed, 'literature has operated in advance of political structures'. It's an uplifting story. The vitality of contemporary Scottish writing, stemming from its concern 'to give voice to those apparently sidelined', has helped Scotland overcome alienation and disenfranchisement, and foster a positive 'reassertion of national identity' whose outcome is a 'people's Parliament' which was 'long imagined throughout the twentieth century'.[88]

The Dream attains semi-official status in James Robertson's *Voyage of Intent: Sonnets and Essays from the Scottish Parliament*. Published by the Scottish Book Trust 'to mark the first ever writer's residency at the Scottish Parliament', this project seems to enact the symbolic centrality of Scottish literature to the new institution. Enric Miralles' first architectural sketches are included alongside poems about the parliament building by Robertson, Kathleen Jamie and Edwin Morgan (appointed Scots Makar by First Minister Jack McConnell in 2004). The included text of a 'masterclass' Robertson delivered to MSPs and parliamentary staff figures devolution as a fundamentally artistic and imaginative project:

> In the 1980s and 1990s, partly in response to the immense sense of political failure and cultural insecurity felt around the 1979 devolution referendum, a wave of writers – far too many even to list here – began to do what those characters in Alasdair Gray's *Lanark* discuss: to use Scotland imaginatively, to reassess and repossess it imaginatively.[89]

These developments are understood to anticipate and even spearhead the political process that ultimately resulted in the parliament itself. Indeed, on being appointed the first culture minister of the new Scottish Executive in 1999, Sam Galbraith MSP – a Labour MSP and a confirmed unionist – told a meeting of senior arts figures that 'in his view, the artists had made devolution possible'.[90] In just these terms, Robertson explains to MSPs the backstory of the parliament in which they serve, and subtly claims, on behalf of

Scottish writing, prior authorship over their democratic warrant. After 1979 there was

> a resurgence of interest in the Scottish literature of the past, a renewed commitment to writing in Gaelic and Scots, and a wave of new writers, most of whom wanted some change in Scotland's political status. Much of the cultural regeneration of Scotland that preceded the referendum vote of 1997 – which made it quite clear that, in John Buchan's words, a substantial majority of the Scottish people desired their own parliament – was instigated by writers.[91]

The primacy of literary activism here positions the people as receptive *readers* moved by their true representatives, the poets and novelists. As Aaron Kelly argues, this 'standard critical narrative positions the post-1979 cultural realm as the space wherein authority and identity are devolved in a manner that actually anticipates the institutional devolution of power through the Scotland Act'.[92] It should be noted that evidence of Scottish writers embracing their new political burdens is highly variable, both in this period and later. Indeed, editing a 1979 issue of *Aquarius* dedicated to Hugh MacDiarmid, the poet Douglas Dunn argues the contrary, observing that 'as political nationalism has moved into realms of reality and possibility, literary nationalism, at one time more conspicuous than any other, has declined in force'.[93] In the same article Liz Lochhead comments: 'I'm scared to say I don't give a damn about whether or not I'm a Scottish poet [. . .] I don't feel that being Scottish has been nearly as important as being urban, working-class, or a woman.'[94] Exactly two decades later, Janice Galloway responded to a similar state-of-literary-nationhood prompt in a number of the *Edinburgh Review* marking the arrival of the new parliament. 'I don't think of myself as enmeshed in questions of national consciousness', she wrote, while hoping the parliament might provide practical help for writers (such as tax rebates on the Irish model, which would mean 'more women with talent *and* children could write'), and support for cross-cultural activity that might 'get us off some of the rather tedious single-track

roads this country's writers are often expected to go down. Who wants to write about *nation* all the bloody time?'[95]

But such voices have been largely drowned out by the general chorus tendency traced above. For Douglas Gifford, writing in 1999, the Scottish Parliament arrived in tandem with

> a clear sense of bold new possibilities of Scottish identities [. . .] a sense of constant experimentation and rising confidence, devoid of political reticence. The reasons for this are many and complex, ranging, I believe, from the belated fruiting of the Welfare State to the singular success of the Scottish Arts Council, as well as the dawning recognition by Scots that they are in danger of being left behind, economically, culturally and historically, if they don't at last speak out.[96]

There is a problem with the Dream narrative, and not only, as Aaron Kelly demonstrates, its suppression of class politics. Paradoxically, the literary nationalism imagined to blaze the trail for political devolution aims not at a political outcome (constitutional change), but the 'curing' of the abnormal cultural condition of which it is a symptom. This *nationalist culturalism* reaches its fulfilment not in home rule or independence, but in the attainment of a 'healthy' (imaginative) condition of Scottish nationality – one relieved of the burdens of self-assertion and agonised self-examination, and embracing new expressive possibilities for 'identity'.[97] This exactly mirrors the conception of 'national feeling' evident in the 1970s governmental discourse responding to rising votes for the SNP and Plaid Cymru: electoral behaviour is regarded as a barometer of 'discontent' that betokens anything but a serious desire to contest UK state sovereignty. Instead, the growth of sub-British nationalism is understood as a circular pathology, where nationalist success at key by-elections is interpreted as a symptom of pent-up national consciousness, but of a deeply limited character spent by its own expression, and seeking no more than recognition and visibility. To neutralise the potential threat of 'national feeling', it was argued, central government need only witness and acknowledge it. On just these terms, the existence

of the post-1999 parliament is held to end national malaise, and the venting of the cultural-political pressures which created it. Figured as the expressive release and 'resolution' of the problem of Scottishness, devolution is locked into a 'representative' orientation to culture limited in advance to *display and recognition*, and the channelled release of 'national feeling' away from political agency and toward the play and display of 'identity'.

Michael Gardiner's 2004 study *The Cultural Roots of British Devolution* argues 'that devolution represents the endgame of a growing ambivalence deep in the British management of culture'[98]; his *Modern Scottish Culture* presents the 1997 devolution referendum as 'the conclusion of a long period of mixed, and often vague, cultural demands for increased democracy'.[99] As we shall see, there is significant merit in this thesis – at the governmental level, devolution really is about the management of cultural difference – but surely 'increased democracy' is a *political* demand. Eliding culture and politics is a recurring feature in the Dream discourse, and a more recent Gardiner essay surveys the post-1979 era as follows:

> A new 'Britishing' period emerged, but without the cohesive pride of Blitz, the Welfare State, or industrial expansion. The new [Thatcher] administration faced a downturn while maintaining a combination of monetarist control over public finances and a popularising of social-Darwinist metaphors in business; unemployment more than doubled between 1979 and 1983, and social inequalities became broadly acceptable for the first time since before the war. Not only Wales and Scotland, but England's industrial north and rural edges felt disenfranchised, and even Londoners protested through the Greater London Council, and more than ever the UK state seemed less a form of representation than an oligarchy of financial management. National contexts became increasingly distinct from, and *opposed to*, those of the UK. As Scottish literature enjoyed a revival, Britain as an idea was collapsing more rapidly than at any time since the eighteenth century. Culture was behind this process.[100]

I cite this passage at length in order to highlight its notable avoidance of the *electoral* context and party politics which incontestably prompted and defined devolution. No reason is given why Wales, Scotland and the industrial north of England 'felt disenfranchised'; election results and patterns of party allegiance go without saying. It is not that Gardiner is unaware of these factors, or wishes to minimise them, but even the tacit understanding at work here – the common knowledge that Labour-voting areas of Scotland and Wales 'felt disenfranchised' by Tory rule – seems to figure elections as a simple mechanism of representation and protest. Electoral politics are a kind of second-order 'process' which merely reflects what lies 'behind' it, namely the primary realities of 'culture'. But this is to overlook the profoundly mediating role of party politics on that substrate of cultural allegiance and discontent, in two senses: the constitutive role of electoralism in *making* and *reproducing* those primary lines of affiliation, and the significant *autonomy* of parliamentary politics in the UK system – the sense in which party (and intra-party) jockeying is a realm unto itself, only vaguely and sporadically determined by 'outside' forces such as public opinion, let alone feats of literary dissidence.

Marie Hologa partly addresses this issue in her recent study of nationalism in contemporary Scottish novels, where she acknowledges that 'a literary text with its ambiguous meanings and functions both reflects *and* affects its historical and political contexts'.[101] Her view that contemporary Scottish literature 'serves as a discursive space that allows for alternative constructions of devolution' is easy to accept, though (like many such studies) a degree of circularity attends critical readings of novels held to contest political phenomena for which they are also the primary evidence; that is, artefacts of *literary nationalism* whose relationship to 'extra-literary' politics are not – and perhaps cannot – adequately be articulated.[102] Seemingly mindful of just this difficulty, Hologa cites Cairns Craig's influential argument that the 'tradition of the Scottish novel is [. . .] an index of the continuity of the nation' but adds that 'the very literary tradition also *produces* and *re-produces* these forms of national imagining in the first place'.[103] And yet, to conceive the Scotland of *Scotland the Brave* not 'as the actual, devolved political entity within the multinational state of the UK,

but more as a discursive construction, a national "imagining" and historical narrative itself' imposes significant limits on what this approach can reveal about the ultimate 'product' or political/sociological outcome of these literary imaginings. In setting aside the political and electoral context *in which* the reproduction if 'ImagiNation' takes place, we are somewhat stranded in the domain of Nancy Fraser's 'free-floating cultural representations'.

It is simply impossible to make an intelligible explanation of Scottish devolution without attending to these electoral factors and their profoundly mediating role. To a very large extent, 'devolution' names a process constituted within the horizon of government, responding to unexpected but ambiguous electoral signals with the potential to disrupt the UK party duopoly, which parties, politicians and officials interpret, ventriloquise and 'manage' according to an established nexus of interests. Accordingly, this book attempts to integrate historical awareness of the party politics of devolution with critical attention to the self-image of Scottish literary nationalism. Writing on the cusp of the Dream's fruition in 1999, Douglas Gifford poses 'one of modern Scotland's outstanding paradoxes':

> Why was it that, in the 1920s and 1930s with the Scottish Renaissance in full flight, and Scottish culture vigorous in assertion of ancient identity and political rights, no political gains resulted in terms of membership of parliament? Yet, in the 1970s, when Scottish writers from McIlvanney to Mackay Brown were repudiating Scottish literary traditions and insisting on the non-Scottish and international roots of their work, nigh a dozen Scottish nationalist members of parliament resulted?[104]

At one level, this book is an attempt to answer this question, extending the story beyond the 1970s to the establishment of the Scottish Parliament. At another, it rejects the premise of this 'paradox'. The key word in Gifford's formulation is 'resulted', as though there is some direct causal relationship between literary production and electoral behaviour. Even to 'surface' this assumption is to expose it; this implied equation can only hold

within a wider identitarian discourse of national representation, in which the *voicing* of Scottishness is the tacit meaning of writing and voting alike. The apparent 'paradox' of opposed elements held in tension is itself the product of assuming their prior unity. Gifford continues: 'is it perhaps the case that Scottish culture and Scottish politics are doomed forever to be at loggerheads, or – at last – are we witnessing the reintegration of all the many split and divided traditions of our cultural and social life?'[105] But looking 'beyond' this illusory divide between culture and politics, and towards their 'reintegration', is to name not the hopeful future made possible by Scottish devolution, but the logic of its historical emergence.

Contradictory directions

Though emphasising electoral interests largely ignored in the literary field surveyed above, I do not suggest a tidy determinism between party strategies of the 1960s–90s. In a recent essay Cairns Craig makes the striking observation that in 1990 'no political party in Scotland was in favour of the Parliament that actually came into existence in 1999'.[106]

> Despite that oft-quoted appeal to the 'settled will of the Scottish people', there had been, in fact, no Scottish political consensus on the form that devolution should take. The Parliament happened, if not quite by chance, then through a series of apparently accidental and certainly unpredictable intersections of trains of events running in often contradictory directions.[107]

We begin to sense the challenge of imposing a narrative teleology on these developments, key episodes having been driven (quite nakedly) by short-term electoral calculation. Thus, Craig argues, an historical account centred on political parties and positioning will take us only so far. After a precis of the Campaign for a Scottish Assembly (from 1980) and its successor the Scottish Constitutional Convention (from 1989), and the emergence of a pro-devolution consensus in Scotland during the

Major government, Craig draws a clear and even provocative conclusion: 'if politics and votes were the means of bringing the parliament into existence, they were not its direct cause'; the parliament 'has been built on the foundations of a revolution in the nation's culture'.[108] This is the culturalist case at its strongest, and accords a position of tremendous influence to the artists and intellectuals who led this 'revolution'. Why should this be, and what can it tell us about the longer trajectory of Scottish nationalism? In his classic study *The Break-Up of Britain*, Tom Nairn observes that Scotland departs from the modern norm of the 'age of nationalism' in which 'the standard function of an intellectual class' was to construct and valorise (while seeming to 'recover' or awaken) 'the distinctively modern consciousness of nationality'.[109] 'A "national culture", in the sense which had become newly important' in the nineteenth century, Nairn writes, 'entailed an intellectual class able to express the particular realities of a country, in a romantic manner accessible to growing numbers of the reading public – a class operating actively in the zone of general and literary culture (rather than the specializations Scots became celebrated for)'.[110] This group (and class) typically 'became vital elements in the cohesion of society as a whole', except in Scotland: because 'the relationship between civil society and the State in Scotland precluded a fully national culture',[111] the intelligentsia were left 'unemployed on their home terrain'.[112]

Why, then, were Scottish intellectuals able to successfully assume (approximately) this role in the 1970s and 1980s? This is an introduction and not a conclusion, but the answer has more to do with British than Scottish political dynamics. Quite simply, the demands of nationalist intellectuals in the post-1967 period were politically aligned not with a disruptive, still less a 'revolutionary' movement seeking to overthrow the established order, but with a strategy to re-secure UK sovereignty in an upgraded, 'modernised' form. The Dream played out within the political logic and electoral boundaries of the Grind, and would not otherwise have passed from the terrain of imaginative literature to the affable stones of the Canongate Wall.

Chapter summaries

The first two chapters of the book survey competing narratives of developments prior to 1979. Chapter 1 explores the backstory of 'cultural devolution' – the Dream – through small magazines of the post-Hamilton scene, where *Scottish International* and its literary-nationalist rivals tussle over the mantle of Scottish renewal. In Chapter 2 a very different process is traced through the 'machine politics' of 1970s devolution, dominated by state and party interests. This is the Grind at its most grinding, as successive proposals, White Papers and Bills are debated, supplemented, 'fixed', abandoned, filibustered, guillotined and sabotaged. The ultimate failure of this governmental process created the vacuum into which Scottish writers and critics were able to offer 'vision', feeling and afflatus after 1979; but on terms largely continuous with the cultural logic of devolution established by the Royal Commission on the Constitution (1969–73), namely the *management of national feeling*.

After 1979, these divergent stories (the Dream, the Grind) were strategically yoked together in the re-construction of national political space. In Chapters 3 and 4 we trace the legacies of this paradigm in the 1980s and 1990s, notably in the burgeoning print culture of the Edinburgh intelligentsia (including *Radical Scotland*, *Cencrastus* and *Edinburgh Review*). In the emergence of a vanguard cultural elite ready to claim national moral and political leadership, the valorisation of Scottish 'voice', difference, injury and authenticity take increasingly solid form: the tactical promotion of 'the Scottish dimension' (grounded in culture, unrepresented in government) swiftly blossoms into a 'claim of right', a self-limiting demand for *distinctive government* phrased in the logic of popular sovereignty. Chapter 5 examines the most significant literary realisation – and self-portrait – of 'cultural devolution', James Robertson's epic historical novel *And the Land Lay Still*. Here we consider a series of narrative dilemmas in the conjunction of journalistic reportage and nationalist teleology, as Robertson assembles a Story of Scotland commensurate with the higher, unifying meanings of constitutional change. Drawing on the work of Pascale Casanova, Chapter 6

examines the constitution of 'national literary space' in the logic of vernacular Scottishness, a claim to limited autonomy in which the 'social-and-national' valence of Scots is inseparable from English, but required to signify the condition of ethno-cultural separateness traditionally evoked by Gaelic. Left-nationalist debates of the 1970s–80s clearly show the shifting strategic value of urban Scots, and the refashioning of *class speech* into a quasi-ethnic signifier of suppressed nationality. The final chapter returns to the parliamentary form, and the prominence of vernacular literary politics in Holyrood's own ceremonies and spectacles of representation, with direct resonances in some of the most influential Scottish literary texts of the 1990s. In the writing of Irvine Welsh, A. L. Kennedy and James Kelman, the liberation and commodification of Scottish 'voice' highlights a range of social contradictions entailed by the 'cultural devolution' thesis, and the limits of an identitarian politics of 'representation'. None of these chapters is as long or demanding as this Introduction.

A note on historical coverage

This study is focused almost entirely on literary and political developments leading to the implementation of legislative devolution in 1999, the key strategic and rhetorical bridgeheads having been secured in the 1970s and 1980s. Thus I do not closely examine the 1999–2014 period between the establishment of Holyrood and the referendum on Scottish independence.[113] The parameters of this study are more limited partly for reasons of space, but mainly because the pivotal debates which enabled, delimited and shaped Scottish devolution must be traced to this earlier period.

Notes

1. Edwin Morgan, 'The future of the antisyzygy', *Bulletin of Scottish Politics*, 1.1 (1980), pp. 7–29 (p. 17). From a conference speech delivered in June 1978.
2. Warner, 'Scottish writers on the referendum – independence day?', *The Guardian*, 19 July 2014.
3. Bissett, 'Scotland's no vote has forced its artists to rediscover ambiguity', *The Guardian*, 15 October 2015.

4. Paterson, 'Naw', *The Poets' Republic*, 1 (May 2015).
5. See Hames, 'The new Scottish renaissance?'
6. Smith, *Devolution and the Scottish Conservatives*, p. 4.
7. Ichijo, 'Entrenchment of unionist nationalism: devolution and the discourse of national identity in Scotland', p. 25.
8. McCrone, 'Cultural capital in an understated nation', p. 80.
9. Ibid. p. 80.
10. Kedourie, *Nationalism*, p. 58.
11. Abizadeh, 'Liberal nationalist versus postnational social integration', p. 240.
12. Kymlicka, *Politics in the Vernacular*, pp. 213–14.
13. Salmond, Official Report (Scottish Parliament), 21 March 2013.
14. Farred quoted by Hart, *Nations of Nothing But Poetry*, p. 12.
15. Bourdieu, *Language and Symbolic Power*, p. 12.
16. Gellner, *Nations and Nationalism*, p. 1.
17. Kellas, *The Scottish Political System*, p. 129.
18. Ibid. p. 5.
19. Ibid. p. 5.
20. Billig, *Banal Nationalism*.
21. Kellas, *The Scottish Political System*, p. 6.
22. Ibid. p. 6.
23. Ryan, *Ireland and Scotland*, p. 39.
24. McCrone, 'Cultural capital in an understated nation', pp. 78–9.
25. Ibid. p. 79
26. James Robertson, 'A culture of diversity', *Radical Scotland*, 31 (February–March 1988), p. 32.
27. See Michaels, *The Trouble with Diversity* and Haider, *Mistaken Identity*.
28. Quoted in Haider, *Mistaken Identity*, p. 10, citing Butler, *The Psychic Life of Power* (1997).
29. Haider, *Mistaken Identity*, pp. 10–11.
30. Kennedy and Suny, *Intellectuals and the Articulation of the Nation*, p. 1.
31. Brown, *States of Injury*, p. 55.
32. Brown, *Politics Out of History*, p. 26.
33. Ibid. p. 30.
34. Bourdieu, *In Other Words*, p. 154.
35. Ibid. p. 155.
36. Adorno, *Minima Moralia*, pp. 28, 102.
37. Bourdieu, *In Other Words*, p. 155.
38. Ibid. p. 154.
39. Fraser, 'Rethinking recognition', p. 108.
40. Ibid. p. 112.

41. Ibid. p. 108.
42. Ibid. pp. 114, 110.
43. Ibid. p. 110.
44. Ibid. p. 114.
45. Ibid. p. 116.
46. Fraser, 'From redistribution to recognition?', p. 69.
47. Brown, *Politics Out of History*, p. 40.
48. Brown, *States of Injury*, p. 53.
49. But note also that 'nationalism was precisely the epistemological obstacle' early proponents of 'identity politics', such as the Combahee River Collective, were seeking to navigate; with mixed results. See Haider, *Mistaken Identity*, pp. 24–5.
50. Brown, *States of Injury*, p. 36.
51. Ibid. p. 39.
52. Ibid. p. 40.
53. Smith, *National Identity*, pp. 19–20.
54. Tom Scott, 'Observations on Scottish Studies', *Studies in Scottish Literature*, 1.1 (1963), pp. 5–13 (p. 5).
55. O'Hagan, 'Scotland's old injury', p. 21.
56. O'Hagan, 'Scotland your Scotland'.
57. Ibid.
58. Ibid.
59. Nairn, *After Britain*, p. 177.
60. Ibid. pp. 177–8.
61. Anderson, 'The antinomies of Antonio Gramsci', p. 28.
62. Ibid. p. 28.
63. Of course, this problem attends national literary history as such, and is not particular to the Scottish case. See Thomson, '"You can't get there from here"'.
64. McCrone cites Bourdieu, 'The forms of capital', p. 50.
65. McCrone, 'Cultural capital in an understated nation', p. 73.
66. Fowler, 'Pierre Bourdieu', p. 74.
67. Ibid. p. 83.
68. Ibid. p. 73.
69. Ibid. p. 72.
70. Ibid. p. 79.
71. MacDiarmid, *Contemporary Scottish Studies*, p. 68.
72. MacDiarmid, 'Programme for a Scottish Fascism', p. 38.
73. Craig, 'Scotland: culture after devolution', p. 39.
74. Gifford, 'Breaking boundaries', p. 237.
75. Ibid. p. 237.

76. Gifford, 'At last – the real Scottish literary renaissance?', *Books in Scotland*, 34 (1990), pp. 1–4 (pp. 1, 3).
77. The cover shows a pull-quote from McLean's contribution to Various, 'Poet's Parliament', *Edinburgh Review*, 100 (1999), pp. 71–7.
78. O'Rourke, *Dream State*, p. 2.
79. Dixon, 'Notes from the underground', pp. 118–19.
80. Crawford, *Devolving English Literature*, p. 307.
81. Gardiner, *Modern Scottish Culture*, p. 155.
82. Whyte, 'Masculinities in contemporary Scottish fiction', p. 284.
83. McIlvanney, 'The politics of narrative in the post-war Scottish novel', p. 183.
84. Smith, ITN News broadcast, 29 April 1999.
85. Ibid.
86. Kerevan, 'Labourism revisited', *Chapman*, 35–6 (1983), pp. 25–31 (p. 26).
87. Thomson, '"You can't get there from here"'.
88. Ibid.
89. Robertson, *Voyage of Intent*, p. 55.
90. See Brown, 'Processes and interactive events' and Brown '"Arts first; politics later"'. Ian Brown adds: 'worth noting here that the claim is made by two very experienced and hard-nosed politicos [George Reid and Sam Galbraith], not artists claiming to be unacknowledged legislators!'
91. Robertson, *Voyage of Intent*, p. 33.
92. Kelly, 'James Kelman and the deterritorialisation of power', p. 175.
93. Douglas Dunn (and others), 'What it feels like to be a Scottish poet', *Aquarius*, 11 (1979), pp. 62–79 (p. 67).
94. Ibid. p. 71.
95. Various, 'Poet's Parliament', pp. 71–2.
96. Gifford, '"Out of the world and into Blawearie"', p. 300.
97. See Kelly, 'James Kelman and the deterritorialisation of power'.
98. Gardiner, *The Cultural Roots of British Devolution*, p. x.
99. Gardiner, *Modern Scottish Culture*, p. 133.
100. Gardiner, 'Arcades – the 1980s and 1990s', p. 181.
101. Hologa, *Scotland the Brave?*, p. 16.
102. To be sure, this problem is not confined to Hologa's study, but to the dearth of inter-disciplinary models in the field; Hologa's study is based on PhD research on Scottish literature and it would be churlish to insist her book incorporate a parallel study of Scottish politics, as the present volume nervously attempts.
103. Hologa, *Scotland the Brave?*, pp. 16–17.

104. Gifford, '"Out of the world and into Blawearie"', p. 300.
105. Ibid. p. 300.
106. Craig, 'Unsettled will', p. 10.
107. Ibid. p. 10.
108. Craig, 'Unsettled will', p. 12; Craig, *Intending Scotland*, p. 73.
109. Nairn, *The Break-Up of Britain*, pp. 153–4.
110. Ibid. p. 155.
111. Ibid. p. 155.
112. Ibid. p. 154.
113. See Pittin-Hedon, *The Space of Fiction*.