In this detailed, stimulating, and accessible book, Christopher Meir traverses the last thirty years in Scottish cinema. Over six case studies, Meir covers Scottish cinema from its emergence in the early 1980s to its decline in the latter half of the decade, and its upswing in the mid-1990s alongside developments in Scottish Cinema Studies. Though Meir examines a small number of films, his thorough and diverse investigation — which draws on “industrial, critical and cultural contexts” — supports his textual and methodological choices and allows “distinct patterns to emerge…that can then be reasonably sounded out for their applicability to the period as a whole” (p. 3).

Meir’s study is partly organized into critical and financial concerns, and encompasses a range of material related to the films’ conception, funding, in-production communication, publicity, and reception, including reviews and critical analysis. Meir’s approach captures the macro and micro factors at play in the complex environment of Scottish cinema, particularly in light of developments in public funding mechanisms during the 1980s. Funding for home-grown filmmakers is generally regarded as a crucial counterweight to the production of “ideologically pernicious representations of Scotland in the cinema” by private and international concerns (p. 4). The emergence of indigenous funding bodies is widely understood to have encouraged and enhanced Scottish film and broadened Scottish cultural representations globally. Meir’s evidence challenges the veracity of such expectations and the simplistic notion that international market concerns inevitably diminish the authenticity of “Scottish” films, whereas indigenous funding policies inevitably establish a creative environment and product that is marketable, profitable, critically acclaimed and wholly Scottish.

Meir’s opening essay on Local Hero (1993) goes a long way toward resolving the debate on whether Forsyth’s film
“succumbed to the worst kinds of regressive discourses of Scottish cultural representation” (p.14). Said to play on the conventions of tartanry and kailyardism prevalent in films like *The Maggie* and *Brigadoon* (both 1954), Meir convincingly casts *Local Hero* as a pastiche and Forsyth as a shrewd auteur who borrowed conventions in order to enjoy and subvert them. Production documents and funding applications reveal wrangling between the producer and director over artistic and market concerns: this delicate balancing act within Scottish cinema is a consistent theme throughout the book. A welcome re-evaluation of *Local Hero*, Meir draws on textual, documentary and funding material, and reveals the depth to which Forsyth reflected on Scottish cinematic conventions and the range of visual and figurative techniques he employed to undermine them. Meir’s essay puts *Local Hero* back at the centre of Scottish film.

In his essay on *Mrs Brown* (1997), Meir introduces the role of broadcasters in Scottish cinema from the mid-1990s, for example Channel Four and BBC Scotland. He also positions *Mrs Brown* against a devolutionary background to explore its representation of Scottishness in relation to its Anglo/Britishness. Meir evaluates the political and constitutional crisis of the film’s historical context against British devolutionary politics in 1997 (p.49). At this time in Scotland, several funding mechanisms were unequivocal in their commitment to supporting Scottish directors and expediting Scottish film. In his essay on the director Lynne Ramsay and her 2002 film *Morvern Callar*, Meir examines whether this was genuinely the case. *Morvern Callar*, together with Ramsay’s previous film *Ratcatcher* (1999) and Peter Mullen’s *Orphans* (1998) are typically regarded as markedly Scottish films, which are “emblematic” of Scotland’s devolutionary character and an effect of Scotland’s artistic subsidies (p.74). Both Ramsay and Mullen benefitted from directorial opportunities offered by BBC Scotland’s *Tartan Shorts* (1993-2003). Meir, however, questions the “optimistic narrative” advanced by Scottish cinema historians to depict creative conditions at this time since Ramsay’s artistic development and success was also nurtured by backing from London-based bodies such as the UK Film Council and BBC Film (p.75). Ramsay’s success therefore is not an exclusively Scottish
achievement, nor can *Morvern Callar* be considered an exclusively “Scottish” film.

The final two chapters examine multicultural Scottish cinema. Through his analysis of *Ae Fond Kiss* (2004) and its English director Ken Loach, Meir assesses how Loach’s cycle of Scottish films (1996-2012) have led to the somewhat “paradoxical” situation of Loach being deemed the “most accomplished “Scottish” film-maker of the period” (p.126). The final chapter highlights the “curious and problematic” lack of critical engagement with *The Last King of Scotland* (2006), which due to its external locale, international funding and cast, challenges “normative definitions of national cinema” (p.152). Meir uncovers an intrinsic Scottishness within the film’s multinational characteristics that reflects Scotland’s imperial past and present engagement in “post-imperial neo-colonialism” (p.152).

Meir’s study captures the multifaceted and multinational character of Scottish cinema, as well as offering an insightful look into Scotland’s contemporary cultural policies and politics. *Scottish Cinema: Texts and Contexts* is a timely and welcome addition to Scottish cultural criticism at a time when “Scottishness” requires more than a little clarification.

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