The 1992 General Elections in Great Britain - Scotland's Hard Time

In the run-up to the 1992 General Election in Great Britain the political public in the rest of Europe realized in astonishment that a new re-awakening of a political nationalism in Scotland was taking place. This was by no means a new phenomenon, since nationalist drum beats had accompanied nearly every election of the past, but had only in rare cases reached the ears of a Continental public reared on the tourist vision of images thought to be characteristically Scottish. This time, however, the nationalist protest against the British system was also heard outside Britain which was certainly supported by Western democracies in general which had their senses for national struggles sharpened by the political upheavals in Eastern Europe. The “Scottish Question” ranked high among the Scottish parties and their conflicting models of a future Scotland - integrated part of Great Britain, Home Rule exercised by a Scottish Parliament with restricted authority or a fully independent state - met with the strong concern of the Scottish electorate.

“Europe’s nicest national movement” was ready to take on Thatcherism and its milder version, Majorism, which were considered responsible for Scotland’s industrial decline, the insidious anglicization of Scotland’s institutions and the generally disastrous effects of a conservative social and economic policy on Scottish society (Poll Tax; termination of regional industrial policy). Opinion polls of January 1992 demonstrated the extent to which the public mind was involved in such matters stating that 50 percent of the population approved of full independence of their country.

To account for this nationalist revival one has to go back to the year 1979 and the lost referendum on Scottish devolution. Although a majority (52 %) was in favour of establishing a
Scottish Parliament in Edinburgh, it never materialized since “this figure only represented 32.9% of those entitled to vote, well short of the 40% target set by the Westminster legislation which would have allowed the Assembly to be established.” The same year Margaret Thatcher was elected Prime Minister for the first time and for many Scots it came to be the most pivotal moment of their country’s recent history as it was soon felt to be the beginning of an unprecedented domination by the (British) metropolitan structures. The political divide between England and Scotland has been growing ever since then, making the northern part of the United Kingdom a labour-dominated and southern England a Tory-dominated area. A growing awareness of Scottishness among Scottish voters caused even the Scottish Labour Party to reconsider its attitude towards devolution which resulted in participating in a legislative assembly in Edinburgh in 1989 and in contributing to a constitutional draft in 1990 based on the understanding of a general re-evaluation of the relationship between the two countries, Scotland and England.

Despite a change of institutionalized responses, the basic paradox remained. This is how the Scottish writer William McIlvanney sees it: “the thing that depresses you for ever is that in Scotland we keep voting Labour and getting a Tory government.” This first all-round national renaissance in Scotland since the 1920’s appears to be more of a success, if one examines its cultural activities. The traditionally independent civil institutions of Kirk, education and law apart, the enunciation of a cultural authenticity has chiefly been the result of artistic productions in various fields. As in the 1920’s, the contemporary developments have also been created by men of letters, but are more widely spread among the arts unlike the precursors sixty years ago. Hence major Glaswegian writers as James Kelman, Alasdair Gray and Tom Leonard are joined by the sculptor Jim Currie, musicians of numerous bands of international standing (Texas, Runrig, Proclaimers, Simple Minds) or leading figures
of the Scottish film industry (Bill Forsyth). This new cultural self-awareness finds its most recent expression in the "National Theater for Scotland Campaign" stating: "the strength and legitimacy of the aspiration of the people of Scotland for their own National Theater" based on the understanding that "Scottish artists in all forms and media are turning to our distinctive Scottish cultural inheritance as the source of contemporary creativity." Taken all together the artistic manifestations are informed by the "perception of a historical and social experience in Scotland intentionally different from its English counterpart."

Despite the post-colonial nature of the recent cultural resistance there are many who fear that the spirit of "Tartanry" and "Kailyard" may retain its grip on Scottish culture. A definition of these typically Scottish cultural phenomena is given by John Osmond:

*Tartanry, associated with mythical memories of the 1745 Jacobite rebellion, is made up of Highland images concerned with epic endeavor and physical grandeur in an irrecoverable past. Kailyard, emanating initially from the work of J.M. Barrie in the 1880's, is a Lowland phenomenon concerned with sentimental characters mentally bounded by their own 'cabbage patch' - the Lowland Scots meaning of Kailyard."

The same author stresses the significance of the twin imagery for the foundation of myths of national identity and its resilience in the face of wide-ranging inquiries into its nature and position in Scottish culture.

English responses to Scottish willfulness are largely characterized by a patronizing conduct and broad hints to the many advantages Scotland has enjoyed since the Union of Parliaments in 1707. The present Prime Minister of Great Britain, John Major, did not mince his words when he said in front of a
Scottish audience more than two years ago, "It is since the Union, and because of the Union that Scottish values, Scottish traditions, the Scottish Church, are to be found around the world." Whereas English sources continue to emphasize the good the Union brought to Scotland, Scottish activists take the treaty to prove England’s long-standing hegemony over Scotland, tending to soft-pedal Scotland’s imperial role in the British Empire.

Historical Survey

On the 25th of March 1707, the Scottish Parliament in Edinburgh was in session for the last time. Hundreds of pages have been devoted to the historiographical debate of the political, religious and economic reasons for this historically rare case of a non-violent "merging" of two states. Two prominent factors stand out from an ensemble of explanations of probably the most influential single event in Scottish history of the past three hundred years. Power politics had come to be an effective means of imperial powers (England, France, Spain) to develop and protect resources of men and material, territories, markets and political influence. Economic prospects promised by the Union were especially appreciated by the Scottish merchant and entrepreneur class. As a result the Union did not come as a surprise, but emerged through several stages, each of which contributed to the final outcome. The dissolution of Scotland’s political institutions originates in 1603.

James VI - King of Scotland and son of the legendary Mary Queen of Scotland - left for London to succeed the Tudor Queen Elizabeth and to become James I of England. Although this move meant the lawful restoration of the Stuart’s right to the throne, it entailed disastrous effects on Scottish culture and language. Scotland was robbed of its political and literary centre as the court poets left with James and turned to English in their writings.
Religious education had already come through the Geneva Bible in English since the days of the Reformation. From then on English was associated with superior religious and intellectual spheres. Consequently, 16th century Scotland lacked a literary focus (the Bible) and a linguistic centre (the court). Since even John Knox, the chief exponent of the Scottish Reformation, wrote most of his influential works in English (History of the Reformation in Scotland), David Daiches is right when he says that “the Reformation as well as the Union of the Crowns helped to establish English as the formal written language of educated Scots.” Politically the two countries were also drawing closer together, London’s control over Scotland being exercised by civil government officials (e.g. the Royal Commissioner for Scotland). Early English attempts, however, towards the establishment of an “incorporating union” were foiled by Scottish (religious) pressure groups (1660s, 1670s), since memories of Cromwell’s usurpation during the Civil War were still fresh in Scotland. Yet, towards the end of the century the wind of change blew stronger into the resisters’ faces when Scotland suffered from some dreadful famines between 1696 and 1703. Successive crop failures laid bare the primitive state of Scottish agriculture which was to be greatly improved only after the Union of 1707, when improving Scottish lairds traveled to England to learn about modern technology. At least in this respect the Union was of much benefit to Scotland.

Access to international markets brought further advantages for the Scottish economy. Until 1707 the monopoly of the “English East India and Africa Company” had barred Scottish merchants and traders from the lucrative trade with English overseas colonies. To by-pass English trade regulations effectively the “Company of Scotland Trading to Africa and the Indies” was established by Scottish interest groups in 1695. After the new company’s initial success, English rivals sought royal and parliamentary support to declare English shareholding in the trade
company illegal and an act of treason to be punished by
disemboweling the culprit alive. The resulting withdrawal of
English money had to be offset by Scottish capital, since financial
backing from the continent was nipped in the bud owing to open
English warning. Plans had to be modified, interests redirected
and in order to avoid clashes with English interests the Company
decided to set up its own trading station at Darien on the Isthmus
of Panama. Despite the English policy of obstruction a Scottish
merchant fleet set sail to Darien on 26 July 1698 and a second
one in 1699. Scotland’s colonial experiment, ill-fated and born
under unfavourable conditions, did not survive the following year.
English sabotage, southern climate and Spanish attacks finally
shattered all dreams of an independent Scottish trading nation.

As a result the question of access to English colonial markets
for the Scottish capital returned to the political agenda of the day,
although Scots merchants had for some thirty years been
successfully “evading the English Navigation Acts” to have their
share in the trade with Newfoundland and colonial Canada.
Influential economic circles - especially Edinburgh and Glasgow
trading companies - pressed for a British solution with reference
to Glasgow’s privileged geographical position which allowed
quicker transport to the colonies than from any English port. Many
obstacles had to be taken down before the crucial question could
be settled.

In 1701 - a year before the death of King William III of Orange
- the English Parliament had passed the Act of Settlement which
guaranteed the succession of the House of Hanover after Queen
Anne’s reign (1702 -1714). The vote carried a highly political
message as it was meant to clamp down on a possible return of
the Catholic Stuarts to the throne after King James VII/II - the
last active Stuart - had fled into French exile in the year of the
Glorious Revolution 1688. The note of repression was seriously
felt and though Presbyterianism was by then firmly rooted in
Scottish soil - apart from the Highlands where Jacobite support
was still strong - the Scottish Parliament refused to follow the English example and passed the Act of Security (1703) It specified Scotland’s right to adopt a different monarch from the English,

... being always of the royal line of Scotland, and of the true Protestant religion...providing always that the same be not Successor to the Crown of England...unless that...there be such Conditions of Government settled and enacted, as may secure the Honour and Sovereignty of this Crown and Kingdom...the Freedom ..from English or any Foreign influence....

Scottish fears of losing control over her domestic and foreign affairs (Act anent Peace and War, 1704) while in too close an embrace with England met with English fears of a Jacobite spectre, political unreliability and potential warfare at her northern backdoor. In short, whereas Scottish pressure groups favoured a union with England on economic grounds at the expense of their country’s political freedom, English pressure groups argued from a political perspective for the political and military neutralization of the Scottish State by incorporating it into a British system. Therefore England’s ruling caste would never have abandoned the concept of an “incorporating union” in favour of a “federal union” as it was suggested by a number of Scottish dignitaries. English demands were outspoken: Scotland was to retain her Kirk, her law and her education, but was to surrender her parliament and related political institutions. In the end a coalition of English politico-strategists and Scottish business gamblers managed to shape a union which would serve both ends. In addition open and covert intimidation - the Alien Act of 1705 would have entirely disrupted the trade between the two countries; massive English troop movements at the Scottish border - was used by the English and led to a heated atmosphere from which there was no escape
but to give consent to the self-elimination of the Scottish Parliament on 16 January 1707: 109 members of the Scottish Parliament voted for and 69 against an incorporating union with England. The midwives assisting to bring the United Kingdom into life can be named blackmail, bribery and downright political and military pressure.

Indignation both at English cunning and pressure and at the readiness of the majority of Scottish MPs to yield ran high among the Scottish civil society and provoked spontaneous reactions. Daniel Defoe, engaged on a secret mission in Scotland by the English Government (codename Alexander Goldsmith), eye witnessed anti-union uprisings in Edinburgh in 1706:

I have been warned that night I should take care of myself, and not appear in the street ...However, I went up the street in a friend's coach, and some of the mob, not then got together, were heard to say when I went into a house. There was one of the English dogs.‘

On his return to his lodgings he continues:

I had not long been there but I heard a great noise, and looking out, saw a terrible multitude come up the High Street with a drum at the head of them, shouting and swearing and crying out all Scotland would stand together, No Union, No Union, English dogs and like.†

Has the Union of 1707 introduced civilization to Scotland as John Major's earlier statement wants us to believe? The colonial rhetoric has even infiltrated the minds of Scottish intellectuals. Tam Dalyell, for example, describes pre-union Scottish history in his book Devolution: The End of Britain? as “a gloomy, violent tale of murders and tribal revenge…”12. Self-colonization of the mind by means of an unquestioned acceptance of an inferior
position within the concept of Britishness by Scottish evolues, i.e. by natives "who try to escape from their backwardness by desperate identification with the culture of the metropolis" has as a result dulled the view on some of the more enlightened data of pre-union Scotland: the golden age of Scots poetry of the Makars’ period, early attempts to establish a national and compulsory system of education for rich and poor alike (First Book of Discipline 1560 by John Knox) and the radical writings of the anti-unionist politician Andrew Fletcher of Saltoun.\footnote{14}...

In short, the struggle of a subordinate (Scottish) civil society for a cultural identity requires either the downright rejection or subtle subversion of inferiorising images by the British state culture and its hegemonic agencies. This implies the rejection of two ideas: that Scots were always and exclusively victims of the English dominance or that they were merely collaborators with British imperialism. In the first case Scottish history since the Union is considered to be an ever-lasting ordeal on a broad scale, in the second, the stress is put on the effective, sometimes reckless administering of the British Empire by Scottish figures which led, for example, George Orwell to despise the Scots until the end of his life.\footnote{15}

John Mackenzie has pointed to a third alternative. He argues that "Scots succeeded in transferring aspects of their civil society", that Scottish social ethics positively influenced the running of the British Empire and that Scots in general played a major part in the construction of a British culture. The dialectical process of shaping and being shaped accounts for much in the cultural formation of a Scottish identity which was sought and enlarged through the British Empire.

Still, resistance to pre-conceived or fixed images of inferiority has always to take into account the producer of such patterns. The dominant culture serves more or less as a positive or negative yardstick against which the subordinate culture tends to measure its own cultural achievements.\footnote{17} The search for a Scottish

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distinctiveness in a broader British context bears all the marks of this more general phenomenon. The major sphere of the ideological struggle over hegemony which is bound to the fight against “the bestowal of identity by the core on the periphery”\textsuperscript{18} has been the field of literature.

Distinguished areas of the Scottish quest for identity

Christopher Harvie has brought the new features of the Scottish cultural nationalism of the 1980s and 1990s before our eyes:

Now at the beginning of 1992, Scotland appears to have become more Scottish\textquotesingle\textquotesingle... It goes beyond formal aspects. It correlates with a remarkable take-off of the fine arts, music, film and literature and is grounded on the perception of a historical and social experience in Scotland intentionally different from perceptions made in England.

It has come to be an acknowledged fact that Scotland's linguistic and cultural diversity, its Gaelic, Anglo-Scottish and Scots traditions have stimulated a multi-cultural identity unknown to modern nation-states like England and France and their homogeneous cultural and linguistic tradition. Fragmentation and cultural divisions often denounced as a national schizophrenia or the Dr Jekyll-and-Mr Hyde syndrome came to be seen as positive values with the emergence of the Scottish Renaissance and have since then had a major influence on the cultural articulations in Scotland. The sociologist David McCrone has put it this way:

...because Scotland ceded political sovereignty to Westminster while retaining considerable civil autonomy, its identity is much more complex (even
confused) than in those countries where state and society are one.\textsuperscript{20}

What is more, migration - both immigration and emigration apart from internal population shifts - have also left their marks on the Scottish cultural identity to date. For generations Scots were made to leave their country owing to insufficient living conditions, the Highland Clearances or a failing economy. Others at the far end of the social stratum emigrated to exploit the brilliant economic prospects the British colonies offered. Canada, Australia, the United States and several other regions all over the world attracted both impoverished and entrepreneurial Scots from all walks of life. There at a safe distance to the harsh realities of their home countries a specific expatriate identity imbued with nostalgic longings (Burns Suppers) and transfigurations found the proper climate to take shape within a process of rapid assimilation to the new circumstances. Inside Scotland mobility caused by the growing demands of the capitalist labour market was also high. Evicted Highlanders began to settle down in industrial Glasgow where they often lived door to door with Catholic Irish immigrants in the city's appalling slums. Generations later the descendants of those drawn originally from the Scottish countryside left disappointed to make their fortunes abroad. New people from the Baltic, Central Europe and even Asia took their places and brought their own cultural traditions. What can be deduced from these facts is that Scotland learned its lesson of diversity very early and strove to make it a source of creativity. William McIlvanney's definition of Scotland as a "mongrel nation"\textsuperscript{21} and Alasdair Gray's well-meaning embrace that anyone who lives in Scotland is a Scot\textsuperscript{22} not only cast light on the characteristic features of the new cultural revival, but also take Scottish openness to be in opposition to the exclusiveness of the British immigration legislation of the past decades.\textsuperscript{23} In addition to ethnic interpretations of the Scottish diversity socio-economic relations have even a greater bearing on the formation
of an authentic culture and its literary articulations.

We have already seen that the king’s move to London in 1603 marks the beginning of a cultural divide in Scotland which to the very day informs any relevant explanation of the Scottish situation. The two parties involved in this struggle over identities both social and cultural can be identified as Scottish-plebian and Anglicized-bourgeois. Three phases of Scottish literature stand for different attempts at constructing a national Scottish literature.

The decades after 1707 saw a concentration of patriotic energies in the literary discourse. Scots ceased to exist as a medium of political debates, since English was used in official writing from then on. Scots disintegrated into regional dialects, was no longer seen to be the source of a national "sophisticated" literature expressing all shades of life. Whereas the lower classes continued to speak Scots and have their folk songs and ballads in the vernacular, the genteel classes tended to submit themselves to a process of anglicization. Although the leading figures of the Scottish Enlightenment (David Hume, Adam Smith) showed their pride in and sympathy for their country’s achievements, they nonetheless were convinced that the contribution Scotland could give to the world would be greater from within the British Empire. Edinburgh was made the European centre of a cultural, intellectual and philosophical movement which believed in reason, progress and improvement. Their belief had a direct impact on the Scottish language, because the aspiration after cultivation and refined manners dictated the choice of the language and in order to get on in a British context the literati had to cope with English first. This, of course, implied the acceptance of the linguistic superiority of the English language along with each user’s willingness to improve his speech and writing abilities. Language instructions were devised and elocution classes arranged to come close to the English ideal. A contemporary noted down about these learned acts: “Nobody now doubted the possibility of a Scotsman writing pure, nay, even elegant, English, whilst he spoke
his native dialect a little diversified.” What seems to be a logical step towards English ways of speech and manners sprang from the intelligentsia’s patriotic understanding of Scotland’s new role within the newly defined British State. With hindsight, it may be considered the birth of the concept of “Britishness”. Robert Crawford has written in his recent study on this subject:

The university subject of ‘English Literature’ was born among conditions of ‘provincial’ socio economic ambition and anti-provincial linguistic prejudice. It found its voice not just in singing the merits of one dominant cultural tradition, but also in its silencing of others. First and emblematic among those silenced others were the other tongues of Scottish culture – Scots, Gaelic, and the Scotticisms which impregnated English with signs of Scottish difference. English Literature promoted an Anglocentric, even a London-centred, cultural hegemony even as it championed Britishness. If this Britishness was to allow Scotland to flourish in various ways, it seemed that she could do so only if she spoke and wrote as she was told to do. Any deviation from the model of instruction would be patronized as ethnically curious or quaint.

In contrast to the development of the genteel culture in Scotland we must place a distinct popular (plebeian) culture as the chief agent of a non-British Scottish literary revival. Anthologies and collections of sixteenth-and-seventeenth-century poems appeared. The beginning of this ‘patriotic publishing’ in the early 18th century was marked by James Watson’s A Choice Collection of Comic and Serious Scots Poems both Ancient and Modern (1706-1711). He was a printer from Edinburgh and proudly stated in the foreword to his anthology that it was the
first "which has been publish'd in our own Native Scots Dialect." Watson was followed by others among them Thomas Ruddiman (1674-1757) and, first and foremost, Allan Ramsay (1686-1758). A former wigmaker Ramsay soon turned writer "of vernacular poems of low life in urban Scots" and a collector of older Scottish poetry. In his various writing, collecting and editing activities, both popular and genteel, "Ramsay strikingly illustrates the cultural cross-currents of immediately post-Union Scotland," which he in terms of language synthesized into what he himself - probably against his original intentions - called "British" consisting of colloquial Scots, sophisticated Scots, spoken English, and literary English. He is best known for his pastoral comedy The Gentle Shepherd set against a background of rustic life, but it is the collection of songs and ballads, The Tea-Table Miscellany (1724 - 1737), which shows him as an editor fully committed to the vernacular revival. Two other names of revivalists spring to mind, Robert Fergusson (1750-1774) and Robert Burns (1759-1796). The first an Edinburgh poet praising his native city in an urban Scots, the second the most celebrated Scottish poet both in Scots and English. But even with the most Scottish poet of all (as convention goes) we discover the cultural paradox typical of 18th century Scotland and after. A pride in Scotland’s literary and cultural past alternates with the awareness of a successful - and on the side of the bourgeoisie much desired - integration into the British state dominated - politically and economically - by England. National pride, national self-doubts and unionist hopes manifested themselves in Burns’ and Ramsay’s case as a synthesis of Scots and English, namely British, but also reflected the instability of 18th century non-British Scottish literary culture. Scots could not survive though revived by the vernacular poets as a source for a national literature, since it lacked linguistic unity, social consensus and thematic coherence. Spoken solely by peasants and lower urban classes, its written version was reserved for rustic and pastoral poetry and songs, reflecting
nearly exclusively the daily lives of the ordinary people. We can thus speak of a linguistic alienation between the social classes in 18th century Scotland continuing into the 19th century. The ‘very corrupt dialect’ (David Hume on Scots), however, lived a long life in the columns of Scottish newspapers where it was turned into a proper medium of fiction.

Sir Walter Scott (1771-1832) as well as John Galt (1779-1839) drew on the Scottish line of the 18th century literary tradition in Scotland and while Scott put the narrative of his Waverley novels into English, he often made use of broad Scots in his dialogues: the vernacular for figures from lower origin, English and sometimes a refined Scots for figures from the middle class. In general Scott is seen to be the most prominent and influential author of early 19th century Scotland and at the same time the outstanding protagonist of the rise of the Scottish (historical) novel. He published his best novels between 1814 and 1824 and their tremendous success is attributed to the fact that Scott managed to combine the romance of the past with his more intellectual interest in history. To him it was a shaping force for the present and future of Scotland in a union with England. While his first narrative medium was English, Scott tried to preserve a sense of independence which gave a distinctly Scottish tone to his English prose. But apart from his merits for the development of the historical novel, as Lukacs readily concedes, the overall evaluation within a Scottish context must be more critical. As I wrote in an earlier article drawing on Cairns Craig’s inspiring insights into Scott’s standing in Scottish literature:

The result of Scott’s novels was that Scotland’s past was divorced from its present and narrative from history. Since contemporary history is (in Scott’s understanding) storyless, narration can only connect with a past isolated from the present. Industrialization, cities, social unrest, in one word
the modern experience, is absent from Scott’s literature, whereas the past is no more than a fossilized form of romanticization. As a protagonist and product of the process of dehistoricising the Scottish present, Scott not only symbolizes the cultural malaise of Scotland’s anglicized bourgeoisie, but also its half-hearted attempts to overcome the paradox of its position in the Union. Having accepted the political and economic integration in the British system, the Scottish middle class nonetheless came to notice its historical and cultural distinction from England in the first half of the 19th century. Scott responded to this deeply felt historical longing by evoking a romantic past, but as someone devoted to the established order made clear that it was lost for ever. His Waverley novels thus separated the reader’s heart from the reader’s head and paved the way for the minor writers at the end of the century and their versions of the “land of romance”.\footnote{29}

This does not mean that 19th century Scottish literature of the post-Scott era came entirely under the influence of a nostalgic, sentimental and escapist prose (Kailyard) as has been so often maintained. William Donaldson has shown for instance that the popular Scottish press of the late 19th century carried fiction written in Scots and dealing both with change in urban and rural environments. A genuine organ of Scottish issues in contrast to the London-centred book market of the Kailyard had finally found its place in Scottish culture. Apart from that, an exact re-estimation of the last quarter of the 19th century would include Robert Louis Stevenson’s prose (e.g. Dr. Jekyll and Mr Hyde) with its serious attempts to invent new psychological designs and to take up cross-cultural issues.
Still, the cultural and literary phenomenon of the Kailyard dominates contemporary academic discussions about the 19th century and I therefore would like to illuminate this curious product of literary stereotypes and cultural domestication in some detail.

Sentimental heroes and romantic adventures had been known to “Ian Maclaren” (John Watson), J.M. Barrie and S.R. Crockett, the leading figures of the Kailyard period (1888-1898), through the literature of... Walter Scott. What happens now is a radicalization of the basic patterns towards the unbearable. Virtuous peasants, backward in terms of intellectual capacities but affable, inhabit idyllic villages far removed from urban and industrial disturbances, unaffected by social change and contended with a hierarchical social order dominated by the minister, the dominie and the doctor. Intellectual inertia, linguistic deficits and general backwardness are attributed to Scotland by these writers... Culturally, the Kailyarders epitomize the specific Scottish paradox of a colonized culture.\(^30\)

These writers are evolues, emigrants from Scotland who share along with other intellectuals the fate of not being needed as leaders of a nationalist movement in their home country. Since Lowland Scotland’s economic and political integration into the English domestic productive system had been quick, smooth and irreversible, there was no material necessity of a national-romantic movement as in other smaller European countries of the 19th century. Resulting sentiments of a certain cultural and historical distinctiveness among the Scottish middle classes had thus to be gratified through the channels of a cultural “sub-nationalism” by emigree authors. This is how Tom Nairn in his influential study
of Scottish cultural affairs has defined the term:

It was cultural because of course it could not be political; on the other hand, this culture could not be straightforwardly nationalist either – a direct substitute for political action, like, for example, so much Polish literature of the 19th century. It could only be ‘sub-nationalist’ in the sense of venting its national content in various crooked ways – neurotically, so to speak, rather than directly.\(^{31}\)

Kailyard fiction written by Scottish exiles was published in London-based magazines (British Weekly) owned by another Scottish exile, William Robertson Nicoll. As a response to the Scottish cultural dilemma by estranged Scottish intellectuals it reflects the stereotypes typical of the attitude a metropolitan culture towards a colonised one. The rhetoric of colonialism embraces the English interpretation of “Scotland” – that is its inferior status in relation to “London” - and through the evolues’ ready acceptance of its major definitions or rather distorted images (self-colonization) it infiltrated Kailyard fiction. Consequently, a ‘foreign’ misperception of the Scottish national character has been fostered and prolonged.

The end of the First World War made many intellectuals face the disastrous state their country was in. Christopher Murray Grieve (“Hugh MacDiarmid”, 1892-1978) appeared on the Scottish scene and fought for the cause of Scots and Scotland. The mastermind of what was soon to be called the Scottish Renaissance, he went back to the language of the Makars and synthesized the older Scots of the poets and the modern vernacular (Synthetic Scots). More than a simple language revival movement the Scottish Renaissance was born out of a new wave of nationalist feelings among the intelligentsia, but it was by no means geared
to a naive rebirth of literature and nation. Instead Scotland was to be given a new identity and new value system in strict opposition to English definitions. Though “Scotland” ranked high among the novelists, poets and playwrights the notions of “internationality” and “universality” added their own sophisticated flavour to the Scottish stew. MacDiarmid pointed in many of his publications to the comprehensive character of the Renaissance.

The declared purpose of the Scottish Renaissance movement was to revive these elements which had been more and more lost in the process of assimilation to English standards, to which Scotland has been subject since the Union. The elements in question may be listed as internationalism; wide-ranging linguistic and scholarly interests; an intense concern with the crucial problems, needs and potentialities of Scotland; and, along with that, a thorough knowledge of Scottish history, psychology, and the whole of the country from Maidenkirk to John o’Groats. With these characteristics went a thorough-going critical revaluation of the Scottish past in all its aspects, and a new insistence on the Scots Lallans language in the first place and, beyond that, on the need to restore Gaelic as the national language of Scotland and to resume in the fullest way the great traditions of our lost heritage of Gaelic culture, and to apply these to new creative purpose.32

Another Scottish writer experimenting with Scots as a literary medium was James Leslie Mitchell, better known under his pseudonym Lewis Grassic Gibbon, author of the world-famous trilogy A Scots Quair. In particular Sunset Song, first part of the trilogy,
bears every mark of a subjective, synthetic Scots, Gibbon created among other things for the purpose of an enhanced notion of utopia by directing the words to the reader’s subconscious level and to mould the English language into the rhythms and cadences of Scots spoken speech, and to inject into the English vocabulary such minimum number of words from Braid Scots as that remodelling requires.33

Gibbon cherished his doubts about the political nationalism of the Scottish Renaissance “What a curse to the earth are small nations!” Still, he could ponder on the Scottish author’s dilemma when writing in English: “… it is as though the writer did not write himself, but translated himself.” And he realizes:

Often the Scots writer is quite unaware of his essential foreignness in his work; more often, seeking an adequate word or phrase he hears an echo in an alien tongue that would adorn his meaning with a richness, a clarity and a conciseness impossible in orthodox English. That echo is from Braid Scots, from that variation of the Anglo-Saxon speech which was the tongue of the great Scots civilization, the tongue adopted by the basic Pictish strain in Scotland as its chief literary tool. Further, it is still in most Scots communities... the speech of bed and board and street and plough, the speech of emotional ecstasy and emotional stress. But it is not genteel.35

Gibbon’s scepticism, MacDiarmid’s political aestheticism, Gunn’s mythical visions and MacColla’s radical Celticism represent the broad spectrum of the movement. United in their efforts to make Scotland the focus of their works and to give
their culture a due place among the European cultures, each of them follows a different path to accomplish the common aim. Post-World-War II literature in Scotland has maintained its variety of themes and styles. A search for identity linked up with a sense of disillusion was the outstanding feature of the fifties (Jenkins) and sixties (Sharp). Scotland is regarded to be a sick place peopled with lifeless creatures and dominated by rigid doctrines (Puritanism, Capitalism). Two of the crucial events in Scottish cultural life after 1945 – the lost referendum on Scottish devolution (home rule) in 1979 and the beginning of Thatcherism the same year – made possible the second “golden era” of Scottish literature in the 1980s. Mainly Glaswegian authors – poets and novelists – made themselves known as new forces in literary Scotland: Tom Leonard, James Kelman, Alasdair Gray, William McIlvanney. They are all rooted in a Glaswegian, proletarian environment as most of their protagonists are. They take sides with their anti-heroes in their struggle against the depressing situation in industrial Scotland and for their survival as human beings. Along with their authors the figures have grown sceptical about any broad class concepts or collective solutions: working-class urban realism as well as working-class socialism have been replaced by a mixture of postmodernist writing and realism on the one hand and existentialism and anarchistic spontaneity on the other. The focus is always on social groups ignored or misrepresented in an all-British context, the working class or out-of-work-sections of the population. Within this group of writers we can distinguish a sub-group concerned with experimental forms of writing (Kelman, Gray, Leonard) used in a way to confirm the thematic emancipation from English literary culture and indicating the “growing convergence of recent developments in Scottish writing and the literatures of other ‘colonised’ countries.” Bound up with the dissociation from an English-dominated British literary culture these writers also continue the tradition of the Scottish working-class novel since the 1960s. Each of them responds to the urban experience in contemporary
Scotland, but although the perspective is from the bottom of society, social realist writing has become an outmoded strategy for the characters’ new plights. The notions of class, masculinity and resistance are still there but subverted by means of irony and self-mockery. Politics are written into the very text as it were in Kelman’s case where vernacular speech patterns are employed to blur the distinction between narrative and dialogue and a third-party narrator is abolished for greater immediacy. Instead the narrative is communicated through the consciousness of the protagonist by interior monologues and even “interior dialogues” between the various subconscious levels of his mind. The reader is made to follow the figure’s rambling thoughts, his invectives, his radical rejections of any authority. Help will come from nowhere, since the traditional conspiracy between middle-class narrator and middle-class reader at the expense of a non-middle-class protagonist has been broken: the hero, dispossessed and sometimes inarticulate, must be taken seriously, unless reading is given up altogether. Technically, Kelman’s narrative strategies seem to make use of patterns we find outside European literary devices as they clearly show analogies to the Blues idiom (“situativity”) and the oral literature of the Afro-Americans as a whole. 

Despite the newly-won self-confidence Scottish intellectuals keep proving that their country’s dilemma cannot be solved in one go. A deep-seated cultural insecurity reveals itself as they tend to side-glance at London’s literati for acceptance. What can be considered a well-meaning go at crude stereotyping by English critics carries notions of longing for serious treatment by the dominant culture:

If only (London, U.Z.) critics would pay more attention to the linguistic implications of much contemporary Scottish writing, we could get away from the reductive stereotype of the Scottish writer as working-class bruiser.
The present remarkable burgeoning of the Scottish culture applies to nearly all artistic manifestations of Scotland’s civil society. The Scottish film industry has received a fresh impetus and some critics have come to identify characteristic features of an original Scottish film genre: eccentric humour coupled with a sense of uneasiness beneath a smooth surface. Bill Forsyth’s “Local Hero” is among the foremost products of a new cultural awareness as this all-Scottish film not only captured the attention of a mass-audience in Scotland but also met with international acclaim. It remains an object of contention if it contributed to the perpetuation of Tartanry and Kailyard and a prevailing sense of inferiority; its formal significance for a regeneration of the Scottish film industry is undisputed (other Scottish film directors include Ian Knox, Michael Caton-Jones, Gillies MacKinnon, Bill Douglas and Timothy Neat). Especially the latter one sees his work spring from a Celtic appreciation of the world. I cannot feel things in separated categories... the lifestyle being the culture, and the culture being the lifestyle. For me, film is the art form most like life, and for the Celtic peoples, life and culture are very closely related.

The quest for cultural authenticity characterizes the music of a great number of Scottish rock groups. The Celtic rock of “Runrig”, the aggressive Blues of “Texas”, the folk tale tradition of the “Silencers” or the political rock of the “Simple Minds” – they all denote a deliberate secession from the inferiorising concepts of the coloniser’s culture. A sampler produced in 1991 gives clear evidence of the new confidence: eleven rock groups spent their takings on the foundation of an photographic archive holding the pictures of the late Glaswegian documentary photographer Oscar Marzaroli.
Conclusions and Utopian Prospects

I would like to stress three points with regard to Scottish studies and Scotland’s role in Europe:

- traditional English studies have tended to submit Scottish literature to the English canon without acknowledging its specific rootedness. T.S.Eliot’s question of 1919 “Was there a Scottish Literature?” appears still to hold a certain value for British traditionalists.

- the metropolitan culture considers the “peripheries” as deviants from its own superior norm: from this results an inferiorisation of the “other”.

- cross-cultural reading and learning are crucial for a new Europe of regions. The other’s otherness is the foundation of my freedom, but to understand it well, we have to synthesize our different perceptions without robbing them of their specific singularity.

What can Scotland do? Paul H. Scott has pointed to one possibility:

As many...know only too well the British system is now so antiquated, perverse and corrupt that it cannot be saved by minor readjustments. England, like Scotland, needs radical constitutional reform. We are in a good position to give a lead.41

First and foremost, Scotland should take the road to Europe. It could revive its European leanings (Andrew Fletcher; The “Auld Alliance” with France) and as a ‘colonised’ country it could activate its tradition of resistance (Cameronians, Covenanters, crofters’ movement, Red Clydesiders, Scottish Renaissance) for the shaping of a de-centralized concept of Europe in opposition to a bureaucratic supra-state. It would not only signify the growing significance of Europe’s peripheries, but also encourage the nation’s independence from pre-conceived foreign images. I
entirely agree with Christopher Harvie’s statement that “Imagination matters as much as market forces”. Scotland’s chance lies with a re-discovery of its community-oriented ways of thinking in the fields of education (Robert Owen, A.S. Neill) and economy (Ferguson, Smith) as well as with its knowledge of how it feels to be assigned to an inferior position. Independence in Europe on the one hand would unfold the country’s hidden potentialities for its own material and mental good, on the other it would strengthen the chorus of small voices singing the song of a democratic Europe of the people. It is to be doubted, if Scottish independence will be achieved by statehood, because the present absence of it, at least spells one advantage: the non-existent needs not be abolished.

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Notes:

1. Christopher Harvie “Die Schotten auf dem Marsch” in Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung. 10 February, 1992. Harvie has been an expatriate Scots and a professor of cultural and Scottish Studies at Tubingen University, Germany for ten years.
3. Ibid. P. 72.
5. Osmond, op. cit., p. 72.


14. *An Account of a Conversation Concerning the Right Regulation of Governments for the Common Good of*


30. Ibid., P. 123; 124.

37. See the “Talking blues” - tradition and the impromptu confessions of the singer’s state of emotion.
38. See Crawford. “Northern Exposure.”