

*our multiform,
our infinite
Scotland*

Scottish Literature as “Scottish”,
“English” and “World” Literature

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‘Our multiform, our infinite Scotland’: Scottish Literature as ‘Scottish’, ‘English’ and ‘World’ Literature

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Writing in 2007, Richard Butt noted that, by that year, there had been twenty-three adaptations of *The Strange Case of Dr Jekyll and Mr Hyde* for the cinema. He went on:

Stevenson’s novel is not only the most frequently adapted work of Scottish literature in world cinema, it is probably the third most adapted of any works of literature, falling just behind *Macbeth* and *Hamlet*.¹

So much are the characters of Jekyll and Hyde absorbed into the imaginations of readers and audiences worldwide that it is sometimes a surprise to be reminded that they are the literary creation of a Scot. In effect, Stevenson’s Scottishness becomes airbrushed from the picture almost in proportion as his work has become perceived as part of English literature. If one accepts that world literature may be defined in terms of its commodification in production, publication, appropriation and circulation, then the global promulgation of Stevenson’s novel, not to mention its many adaptations for – besides film – stage, television, radio and comics, marks it not only as a key text of ‘English’ literature, but also a key text of world literature. It is not just a text which has become cosmopolitan in its interpretation and applications; its title has become in many languages a term for what is crudely called ‘split personality’, marking its acceptance as embodying an archetype of human experience. In this, Stevenson’s characters sit alongside Sophocles’ Oedipus or Euripedes’ Electra, or, later, Don Juan or Frankenstein, perceived as manifestations of fundamental human types or psychological states. In other words, Jekyll and Hyde are entities in the global imaginative mindscape and have been evacuated of their Scottish genesis. The richness that has grown out of Stevenson’s Scottish imagination is a reminder of the complexity of a literature emerging from and expressing the complex and multilingual cultural entity that is Scotland, of which Hugh MacDiarmid wrote, ‘Scotland small? Our multiform, our infinite Scotland small?’ The multiform, apparently infinitely adaptable, nature of responses to Stevenson’s work is only one instance of literary embodiment of MacDiarmid’s insight. This paper considers the specifics of why such a Scottish literary text, one deeply concerned as we shall see with issues that typify aspects of Scottish culture

and literature, should have become so cosmopolitan in its impact and influence. In doing so it will consider other Scottish writers and texts whose trajectory reflects that of *Jekyll and Hyde* in becoming landmarks of English and world literature and explore specifics of Scottish history, politics and culture that may explain why they have become central elements in 'English literature'.

David Brewer has of course discussed in detail the phenomenon in an earlier period of 'character migration', which he describes as follows:

Through this practice, readers imagined characters' lives as extending off-page in ways which suggested their fundamental independence and detachability, their capacity to migrate both into new texts and in the lives of the readers themselves.²

Brewer's examples include Roger de Coverley and Sir John Falstaff, and he later observes that

any text from which a character migrates is likely to be, or be on the way towards becoming, a socially canonical text [...] the more a text was disseminated (both in terms of number and variety of formats), the more potentially detachable its characters could seem.³

Certainly Jekyll and Hyde and other characters discussed in this paper, though from a later period than that Brewer considers, can be seen to be subject to character migration, and the texts from which they emerge as, in his terms, socially canonical. What this paper addresses complements much that Brewer discusses by setting aspects of the characters which 'migrate' in the context of their creation, and considering the detachability not just of characters, but of whole texts from their Scottish origins. The argument being developed is that such a process is not one that can be resisted, given the force of popular myth, but one which, nevertheless, suppresses much of the specific significance of texts and characters. Those characters and texts addressed are therefore here placed in the context of their specifically Scottish origination so as to expose and enrich rather than reduce their complexity and profounder meanings. A key theme of this paper is that what links the examples I offer is that they represent the dichotomisation, and sometimes the fragmentation, of personality in a way that, I will argue, is linked to the Scottish politico-cultural situation of their times and represents a recurrent theme in Scottish literature.

There are at least three other Scottish authors – J. M. Barrie, Arthur Conan Doyle and John Buchan – who, like Stevenson, generated literary creations that have been subsumed into the canon of English literature, their creations being – unlike, say, Burns’s or Scott’s – denationalised and decontextualised in the process. Stevenson himself, meanwhile, produced further landmarks of English literature including, *inter alia*, *Treasure Island* and the memorably iconic figure of Long John Silver, where both the novel and the character are widely recognised, but their Scottish origin is not. Indeed the *Pirates of the Caribbean* film franchise can be said to derive its nature, audience interest and commercial success from key tropes of Stevenson’s novel and especially his creation, Long John Silver. So much is *Treasure Island* seen as outside the canon of Scottish literature that it goes largely unnoticed that the surnames of Ben Gunn and Captain Smollett are highly localised Scottish ones, implying Gunn is from Caithness and Smollett from Dunbartonshire, both, in a stereotype, Scottish sailors. The other Scottish writers under discussion here, Barrie, Conan Doyle, and Buchan, have developed texts and characters that have been absorbed into the canon of English and world literature. Barrie created the internationally recognised and constantly re-imagined figure of Peter Pan and his counterparts Wendy in the domestic sphere and Captain Hook in the public. Doyle created the archetypal pairing of Sherlock Holmes and Dr John Watson. The former was based in part on his Edinburgh University medical lecturer Dr Joseph Bell, whose diagnostic methods anticipated the fictional ones of Holmes and whose clerk at Edinburgh Royal Infirmary Doyle for a time was, suggesting that Doyle might be in part a prototype for his own Watson. In literary terms, Holmes is surely derived from the memoirs of the real Edinburgh detective James McLevy⁴ and the fictional one James McGovan, pen-name for the musician and writer William Crawford Honeyman.⁵ Conan Doyle goes further and complements the collaborative Holmes/Watson pairing with the competitive one of Holmes and his criminal alter ego, Professor Moriarty. Buchan created the figure of Richard Hannay, whose adventures, especially in *The Thirty-Nine Steps* (1915), have led to manifold further film and stage adaptations worldwide, including, arguably, Ian Fleming’s James Bond in a less explicitly Scottish manifestation by a Scottish author (though by chance one identified in its film incarnation with the Scot Sean Connery, whose playing of the role for many remains the embodiment of Bond *par excellence*). Alan Riach emphasises the importance of the Scottish foundation for at least Holmes and Hannay and their rootedness in aspects of Stevenson’s work:

In the Sherlock Holmes stories, [Doyle] depicts a London in many respects modelled on Edinburgh, a much more walkable city. Stevenson himself enjoyed them keenly [...]. The full extent of Stevenson's influence on Doyle has yet to be explored, but Prince Florizel in *New Arabian Nights* (1878) surely prefigures a long line of independently licensed cosmopolitan heroes operating between the law and criminality, from Holmes, through Richard Hannay to The Saint and James Bond. Moreover, Stevenson's dark London in *Jekyll and Hyde* (1885) foreshadows Doyle's London in the Holmes stories both in its moral murk and its resemblance to Edinburgh. Doyle represents the evils of industrial, imperial society, repeatedly drawing upon the outposts of empire to provide villains and villainous motives [...] attacking that empire at its industrial heart.⁶

Riach's reference to 'imperial society' and the 'heart' of empire reminds us that by the end of the nineteenth century, Scotland as part of the United Kingdom was also more or less wholeheartedly an imperial partner with England in the British Empire. Often it was said England founded the empire and the Scots ran it. However that may be, as a result of diplomatic and economic *realpolitik* at the beginning of the eighteenth century, Scotland and England had come together under the terms of the 1707 Treaty of Union to create what became the imperialist state of the United Kingdom. In the minds of most English at the time, what had happened was that England had taken over Scotland, although that was neither the constitutional nor legal position. Meantime, as part of their support for the new arrangement, almost at once a number of leading Scottish writers and thinkers began to create what I have called 'The (Rule) Britannia Project'.⁷ These included John Arbuthnot, who invented the figure of John Bull in 1712, five years after the Union, and James Thomson and David Mallet, who co-wrote the 1740 *Masque of Alfred* celebrating, for their contemporary Whig purposes, an anachronistically 'British' victory of the Anglo-Saxon Alfred the Great over the Danes. In the latter, Thomson provides us with the song 'Rule Britannia', originally a duet at the end of the play between Alfred and his wife Eltruda. David Hume famously sent his manuscripts to have the 'scotticisms' removed, probably as a commercial decision to reach a wider market, and reminding us that he was brought up among Scots-speakers and was a lifelong Scots-speaker himself. In other words, many Scottish playwrights and writers in other genres, including most, if not all, of the great Scottish Enlightenment illuminati argued, or at the least seemed to accept, that after the 1707 Union it was necessary to invent the concept of an anglophone British nation to match the new British state. They did not mean the

historical British nation whose capital was Dumbarton in Scotland and ceased to exist about the end of the first millennium, but the dream of Scotland's James VI on coming to London and the additional throne of England. There he had Inigo Jones build the Banqueting Hall in Whitehall, a theatrical and theatricalised venue with a ceiling painting depicting James's uniting of England and Scotland, in his mind and under his sceptre, into one.

Of course, James VI and the Britannia Projectors were not fully successful, not least precisely because many English contemporaries did think that what had taken place in the Union was a takeover by England of Scotland and, if that was so, what need of the newfangled idea of Britain? Certainly the Scotophobia of John Wilkes and Samuel Johnson does not suggest that there was an easy accommodation to a new entity called Britain. Yet Walter Scott continued, especially in his Waverley novels, to seek to create a synthesis of Scotland and England that preserved the identity of Scotland, and in fact that is what emerged. In the development of unionism in Scotland there was, as Cairns Craig has observed in an important article building on work by Graeme Morton, a strong streak of what Morton called Scottish 'Unionist-Nationalism', a sense of national identity in Scotland as established in the terms of the Treaty of Union.⁸ In Craig's words:

The paradox, in other words, is that Scotland's *nationalism* was already enshrined *within* [original emphases] the Act of Union, and defence of the Union was the first and immediate resort of those defending the rights of Scottish culture.⁹

This nationalism was entirely supportive of the Union, but was so by recognising that the Union guaranteed many aspects of Scottish national life, including separate laws, religion and, effectively, educational and civic institutions. In this Scottish worldview the strength of the Union lay in respecting the differing identities of England and Scotland. Scott's *Rob Roy* (1817) reflects this imaginative thinking when the Northumbrian hero Frank Osbaldistone meets the wild-ish Highland hero Rob Roy and also Rob's cousin, the canny Glasgow businessman Baillie Nicol Jarvie. The novel's accommodation of these three marks the creation of a post-Union, post-Jacobite Hanoverian settlement and a new Scottish identity within the Union. Within this line of thinking, the more Scots you were the more unionist. Yet the Union guaranteed not unity, but the difference of Scots, a difference reinforced by the fact that where England had one language, in Scotland at least three were actively in use and have been up until the present day: English, Scots and Gaelic. Indeed, in 1707, the Scoto-Latin tradition was still alive

in literature and education, while in the Northern Isles of Orkney and Shetland, Norn, a derivative of Old Norse, was still spoken. Such multiplicity of language implied multiplicity of culture, history and worldview. So for nineteenth-century Scots there was later no difficulty in the politico-cultural sphere of governance in being both Scottish and British: indeed at times Stevenson described himself as English when he appeared to be thinking of his British persona *vis-à-vis* the French in his *Travels with a Donkey in the Cévennes*.

The Scottish experience in this diverges from that of its sister nation, Ireland. The differences between the perception – and study – of Scottish and Irish literature at the beginning of the twentieth century and for many decades thereafter can be derived from their quite distinct literary and political contexts. For Scott and Barrie, and in theatre, to an extent, figures like Graham Moffat and John Brandane, the more Scots you were the more unionist, where for Ireland the more Irish you were the more you tended to a separate identity and, indeed, separatism. Irish writers by the late nineteenth century might tend to write either directly or in Celtic code about the drive to independence or at least the autonomy of the Irish, while Scottish writers on Scottish topics tended to focus on social and domestic issues which did not threaten the Union. This they saw as to a large extent protecting their very Scottishness through separate legal, religious, educational, civic and other public systems and governance. In this framework, the work of Scottish writers was either internationally successful, but not seen as particularly Scottish – certainly when one considers such work as Barrie's masterpiece *Peter Pan* – or seen as rather locally focused, not usually having much meaning beyond Scotland's borders.

Meanwhile, one might be Scottish/British/English and yet still speak or, at least, understand (or not) three native languages, whereas writers in Ireland following the advice of Daniel O'Connell had begun to express themselves primarily in English, however inflected by Irish idiom. When in the summer of 1881 Stevenson went to Moulin, near Pitlochry, and later Braemar, he wrote the uncanny tales of 'Thrawn Janet', 'The Body Snatcher' and 'The Merry Men'. He had entered communities in which a language of general daily life was neither English nor Scots, but Gaelic. In fact it was only as late as 1895, fourteen years after Stevenson's visit, that regular Gaelic-language communion services in Moulin Kirk were abandoned when there were by that time only sixteen communicants. Indeed, in the next parish, Blair Atholl, in 1946, when the incumbent minister, a distinguished Gaelic scholar, retired, even at that late stage a live consideration was whether his successor should be, for pastoral purposes, a fluent Gaelic speaker.¹⁰ In other words, Scots of the generations of Stevenson, Doyle, Barrie and Buchan grew to

maturity in a society in which their identity was constantly split between being (potentially or actually) trilingually Scottish and monolingually British/English. Whatever their own language competence (and all four were more than competent in Scots and English and three of them wrote fluently in both languages), in their home culture there were three languages currently, and in specific regions fairly widely, spoken. Of course, there are many contexts internationally where people live in multilingual communities (when I worked for the British Council in Istanbul, my secretary spoke seven languages well). Nevertheless, the imperialist thrust of the British state, following linguistically on from James VI's 1609 Statutes of Iona, which accelerated the suppression of Gaelic, was the privileging of English as the imperial language. Linguistic splits and divisions were therefore highlighted. Stephen Arata has observed of Stevenson's Pitlochry tales that

Scottish Gothic constitutes a response to the specific trajectories of the nation's history after 1707, in which the structures and practices of Enlightenment modernity are striated by various anti-Enlightenment political and religious discourses."

That is certainly true, but it is surely also more than likely that the uncanniness discerned in 'Thrawn Janet' was at least reinforced by the fact that when Stevenson wrote it he was living in a community in his homeland whose language he could not understand and which the imperialist state was stigmatising. After all in 1872, less than ten years before his Moulin visit, one outcome of the Education (Scotland) Act, whether fully intended or not, was to repress the use of Gaelic and Scots, a language in which he was a fine poet, as a medium for education in schools.

There is a tendency in older Scottish literary criticism to relate the division of personality in *Jekyll and Hyde* to the neurotic conflict of differing perceptions of reality resulting from Calvinist conviction of election and salvation, most famously imaginatively explored in James Hogg's *Confessions of a Justified Sinner* (1824). Yet it may also be seen to arise from a more scientifically sceptical philosophical view of the nature of human identity. David Hume says of personal identity:

The identity which we ascribe to the mind of man is only a fictitious one [...] It is evident, that the identity which we attribute to the human mind, however perfect we may imagine it to be, is not able to run the several different perceptions into one, and make them lose their characters

of distinction and difference, which are essential to them. [...] identity is nothing really belonging to these different perceptions, and uniting them together, but is merely a quality which we attribute to them, because of the union of their ideas in the imagination when we reflect upon them.¹²

Susan Manning sees a possible synthesis of the Calvinist and the Humean. She begins by quoting Hume:

The mind is a kind of theatre, where several perceptions successively make their appearance; pass, re-pass, glide away, and mingle in an infinite variety of postures and situations (p. 253, *A Treatise of Human Nature*¹³).

She goes on to suggest:

To account for man's sense of personal identity, Hume adduces memory and imagination, which associate isolated perceptions to produce an illusion of coherence and continuity through time; he revitalises the Calvinist division of the consciousness into a self which perceives and acts, and a self which observes these perceptions and actions.¹⁴

She later goes on to describe Hume's general position in this respect as rigorous, but also 'joyously liveable'.¹⁵ One should, however, be wary of simply seeing Scottish consciousness in terms of Calvinism or Humean scepticism. There is a rich and continuing strand of Catholic thought that makes up an important part of the Scottish mindscape and which certainly fed directly into the thought of a Jesuit-educated and Thomist-influenced writer like Conan Doyle. But what is also true is that even Scottish Catholicism, while bringing its own conceptions and values to the mix, also draws on aspects of Calvinism and Humean thought even if reactively. Whether we look for a source in Calvinist theological separation of the elect from the damned, or in Scottish philosophical scepticism about personal identities as represented by Hume, or beyond in aspects of Scottish Catholic thought, such a division, reflecting a provisional view of the nature of identity, is seen in the relationships of Jekyll and Hyde, of Holmes, Watson and Moriarty and in another sense of Peter and Wendy and Peter and Hook.

Certainly such an analysis is persuasive, but arguably even more persuasive is understanding that the divisions within consciousness implied in these texts and their literary characters may be derived from the two dimensions of nationalist unionism and trilingualism within Scottish culture. It has even been suggested

that Scots think in English and feel in Scots. This is surely a much too simplistic way of seeing Scots and their languages. It leads to a conception of diglossia that does not hold up: Scots is entirely as capable as English of dealing with, say, academic writing or the translation of Greek tragedy. I have myself done both in English and in Scots.¹⁶ But rejecting such simplistic conceptions does not imply the need to reject a conception that the divergences and differences within Scottish identities have powerful creative implications for the work of Scottish writers. As Manning observes:

Division within the self reproduces the doubling without: confrontation becomes self-confrontation, pursuit becomes soul-searching. In their narratives of flight and pursuit Scottish and American writers give temporal extension to a state of mind. The conflict between actively rational and sympathetically responsive aspects of the self becomes dramatic as the fictions juxtapose the mutually contradictory accents of reason and of feeling [...].¹⁷

And Scottish literature's fascinations with divided, or complementary, personalities are embodied in the work of the writers under consideration.

Meanwhile, by extension, figures like Hannay and his successors, following Holmes, move beyond internal or interpersonal division and into the conception of the hero who stands inside and against society. Talking of Holmes, Colin Milton observes:

The Holmes stories have endured because they remind us that the Other is an integral part of 'civilisation' – and, of course, of each of us – standing to the commonsensical self as Holmes does to Watson or the transgressive to the law-abiding elements of the psyche.¹⁸

That position, at once inside and outside society, is the perfect model of the Scottish cultural or political leader of recent centuries, whether Walter Scott, Ramsay Macdonald or even Tony Blair, whose Scottish birth and education are truly by his act of self-will invisible. This division may underlie the concept developed, as Cairns Craig describes it, in

G. Gregory Smith's *Scottish Literature: Character and Influence* (1919), from which Hugh MacDiarmid drew a central inspiration of [Scottish Literary] Renaissance ideology – the notion of Scottish literature as

inherently 'a zigzag of contradictions' between the realistic and the fantastic, a dialectic Smith characterised as 'the Caledonian antiszygy'.¹⁹

What I am discussing here is a far more complex set of circumstances and affects than the simple-minded, and by now somewhat tired, idea of an antiszygy between conflicting concerns with the realistic and the fantastic. Yet this is not quite to discard that concept, tempting as that might be. Rather it is to develop it, enlarge it and fruitfully complicate it till the term itself falls away through its inadequacy to deal with the complexities of what we are discussing.

I suggest it is that fruitful complication that underlies the enormously powerful literary texts and characterisations involved in Stevenson's *Jekyll and Hyde*, Barrie's *Peter Pan*, *Wendy and Hook*, Doyle's *Holmes and Watson* (and, to a less developed extent as a character, *Moriarty*) and the dynamic conflictual heroes of *Buchan*. In one sense the authors are not seen as Scottish because in the politico-cultural context of the Union and the conception of the nationalist unionist described earlier, they were used to choosing how and when to foreground their Scottish identity and when not to. But there is more than even this to suggest. Often national or communal identities demand a self-imposed or state-imposed consistency in individuals, the ideal of a single personality, the following of a given party line. As against this, the invisible Scots I have discussed embed in their texts and embody in their characters a liberating complexity, a multivalent freedom of mind, spirit and personality, which follows the profoundly Scottish-sceptical thought of David Hume. One might almost use the difficult word 'truthfulness' here. Their imaginative world suggests that any attempt to impose a single 'truth' on the variety of life's truths, a single identity when all of us have many identities, is fatally flawed. Such a vision made these literary works apt for adoption within the framework of an internationalised, cosmopolitan process of literary production and consumption and their apparent absorption into English literature.

This has its downside in that such work can then be globalised into a simulacrum or perceived as a simple commodity – think, for example, of Walt Disney's version of *Peter Pan*. Yet it also allows these works to survive across borders that, were they seen simply as the great Scottish works they undoubtedly are, might limit their perceived relevance or accessibility. As it is, their position as key texts in the modern world engages an underlying richness that remains accessible and richly varied, challenging any simple value system and celebrating human multiplicity. And to resituate them in the study of Scottish literature reveals even greater complexity and richness in their work, as it does in the work of, say, Byron – 'half a Scot by birth and bred a whole one' (*Don Juan*, X 17) – or Tobias

Smollett, whose middle name, George, marks in a Scottish context a deliberate placing of him by his parents within a Hanoverian political and constitutional worldview.

The contemporary assertion of the significance of Scottish literature as an important literature in global terms, and the current rise of Scottish literary studies, bear a family resemblance to the earlier recognition of its sister, Irish literature. And contemporary Scottish views of the world have changed, partly under artists' influence. In a seminar for artists during the 1999 Edinburgh Festival, Scotland's first Minister of Culture in the newly re-established parliament, Sam Galbraith, asserted that the parliament would never have been re-established without the influence and impact of the artists. If a literary critic or a writer makes such a remark one might ascribe the motivation to self-importance or even wishful thinking, but when a senior (and unionist) politician makes such a remark, not even claiming credit for himself, one must at least speculate that the political insight expressed might carry weight.

The kind of impact of Scottish writers – and artists in general – to which Galbraith paid tribute has a long pedigree. The Treaty of Union was driven forward by Queen Anne's desire to ensure a single Protestant succession and by the Scottish and English landed and merchant classes: two-thirds of its clauses are financial or economic. Scotland's commitment to unionism arose, one must be honest, largely from her ability – and, following the Darien economic experience, compulsion – to participate through the Union as the smaller but equal partner in the process of looting the world through the institutions and practices of the British Empire. In this, Scotland was a full, and shamefully and shamelessly free, partner: Scotland was never colonised as Wales and Ireland sadly were. The interest of many Scots, therefore, even in the first part of the twentieth century, was still in empire and Scotland's ability to benefit from imperialism and colonialism. And many writers, including Scott, Conan Doyle and Buchan, explored and effectively promoted imperialist-unionist themes, even if at times quizzically. But, after World War One, and arising from the post-war focus on the rights of small nations, new ways of seeing Scotland within the Union and a new literary focus arose. A body of Scottish writers began to conceive of a Scotland that reclaimed its independent identity and their work became increasingly interested in Scottish issues within an international perspective. Writers like Hugh MacDiarmid, while joining in modernist experimentalism, argued for a Scottishness that accorded not with unionist imperialism, but with something more akin to the assertion of anti-imperialist national cultural identities causing (and arising from) the breakup of the larger mainland European continental empires, whether Russian

or Austro-Hungarian. Nearer home too, of course, MacDiarmid had the example of Ireland and its artists' contribution to the events leading up to Irish independence. This process was, however, slow-burning in Scotland. MacDiarmid and many of his colleagues were high modernists who, despite their radical politics, were not really of the people.

What then took forward this process were two aspects of World War Two's impact. The first was that in this war, effectively for the first time, Scotland began – in wartime planning – to be identified not as a constituent nation within the Union, but as a region within the British state. This had longer-term consequences, as Murray Pittock has reminded us;

The creation of a unified British social and economic policy on an unprecedented scale after 1945, combined with the greater mobility attendant on the early stage of modern globalisation and the decline of the influence of the Kirk on domestic social mores, undermined the domestic bargain of Union as surely as withdrawal from Empire undermined the imperial bargain. The nationalisation policies of the 1945–51 Labour Government had the effect of centralising at a rapid pace the control of industries in which Scotland had long been a leader (e.g. railways, mining) in the south-east; the creation of the National Health Service in 1948 and the nationalisation of the Bank of England in 1946 alike served to set a unitary British policy agenda increasingly determined from London. No longer was the capital an economic magnet only; it was now also a social master.²⁰

In short, the Union had, at least in some respects, ceased being the guarantor of Scottish legal, social, national and cultural identity. Rather, the British government was beginning to act as if Britain were, as it had never truly been even after the Union in 1707, a unitary state, what Tom Nairn has called the state of 'Ukania'. A second aspect of World War Two's impact was the decline of the British Empire, partly as a result of economic factors, and partly as a result of the development of anti-colonialist independence movements. The supra-British phenomenon of 'The Empire', offering outlets for Scots, English, Welsh and Irish, then Northern Irish aspirants – what Pittock calls 'the imperial bargain' – faltered and found a moment of truth in the 1956 Suez debacle. Then it was suddenly clear that British imperial power was no more, or at least in terminal decline.

These developments meant that the exploration of Scottish identities became more and more a matter of understanding Scotland's place in a changed post-imperialist world rather than accepting and even celebrating its distinctiveness

and role within the imperial Union. Scotland's history since around 800 C.E. as one of Europe's more successful small nations, retaining its own national identity even within the Union, meant Scottish writers, seeing other European writers managing to explore, interrogate and celebrate their cultures and identities, while still achieving international perspectives, could seek to emulate them. And they could do so by freeing themselves of the constraints of a unionist view of Britain, one very often expressed through a conception of English literature as hegemonic and acquisitive, subsuming within itself Scottish, Irish and other literatures. That conception, sometimes expressed in terms of F. R. Leavis's 'Great Tradition', dismissed such great artists as Scott, who could not easily be assimilated into the imperialist trajectory. In that, 'English literature' seemed to parallel in its hegemonies British imperial appropriation of other cultures and their resources. And, in several cases like those we have mentioned of Stevenson, Barrie, Conan Doyle and Buchan, their very Scottishness was elided or ignored, much undermining understanding of their richness and complexity. The development of the internationally aware, post-imperial and increasingly significant separate study of Scottish literature is liberating for the study of contemporary Scottish writing. It is perhaps even more liberating for the re-evaluation of those post-1707 generations who worked within a unionist-imperialist vision where Scottish writers might be invisible – indeed seemed to make themselves invisible – except as part of 'English' literature. In that narrower monolingual context, writing in Scots was, at best, tolerated and often ignored, while that in Gaelic was represented as part of a different literary tradition.

A major excitement in contemporary study of Scottish literature lies in understanding that the interactions within a culture writing in Scots, Gaelic and English, not to mention the influences of an earlier Scoto-Latin tradition and the developing strand of writing which draws on new immigrant languages like Urdu,²¹ have given rise to a complex web of creative relationships, hybridity and subtle cultural interactions. These in turn raise important questions of the definition of what Scottish literature comprises which in their turn illuminate wider questions of the definition of literatures more generally.²² To see Scottish writers as part of English and world literature retains some interest, and that aspect of their study should not be lost. Even more interesting, though, is to understand the articulations, compromises, creative fusions and resistances that derive from such writers as Stevenson, Barrie, Conan Doyle and Buchan, not to mention their predecessors and successors, being firstly practitioners in Scottish literature.²³

Notes

- 1 Richard Butt, 'Literature and the Screen Media since 1908' in Ian Brown (ed.) *The Edinburgh History of Scottish Literature* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2007), vol. 3, pp. 53–4
- 2 David A. Brewer, *The Afterlife of Character, 1726–1825* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2005), p. 78
- 3 *Ibid.*, p. 95
- 4 His memoirs were first published in 1861 under the title *Curiosities of Crime in Edinburgh in the last thirty years* (Edinburgh: W. Kay, 1861). A second volume was published almost at once, *The Sliding Scale of Life; or Thirty years' observations of falling men and women in Edinburgh* (Edinburgh: 1861).
- 5 The first collection of short stories featuring McGovan, *Strange Clues*, appeared in 1881 (Edinburgh: Edinburgh Publishing Company, 1881), followed by *Traced and Tracked* (Edinburgh: J. Menzies & Co, 1884). Both collections were clearly highly popular, rapidly going into multiple editions: by 1885, the year after first publication, the latter was in its sixth edition! *The Invisible Pickpocket* (London: Herbert Jenkins, 1922) followed.
- 6 Alan Riach, 'The Literature of Industrialisation' in Susan Manning (ed.) *The Edinburgh History of Scottish Literature* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2007), vol. 2, pp. 241–2
- 7 See Ian Brown, 'Literary pilgrimage as cultural imperialism and "Scott-land"' in Ian Brown (ed.), *Literary Tourism, the Trossachs and Walter Scott* (Glasgow: Association for Scottish Literary Studies, 2012), forthcoming.
- 8 Graeme Morton, *Unionist-Nationalism: Governing Urban Scotland, 1830–1860* (East Linton: Tuckwell Press, 1995)
- 9 Cairns Craig, 'Constituting Scotland', *The Irish Review* (Winter, 2001), p. 5
- 10 I am grateful to Gordon Dilworth of the Moulin Kirk Trust for providing me with information from the Moulin Kirk Session records through the good offices of the Rev. Bill Shannon, formerly minister at Pitlochry, and for information about the considerations for the appointment of a new minister in Blair Atholl in 1946 from his personal knowledge. (Telephone interview, 25 June 2011)
- 11 Stephen Arata, 'Stevenson and Fin-de-Siècle Gothic' in Penny Fielding (ed.) *The Edinburgh Companion to Robert Louis Stevenson* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2010)
- 12 David Hume, *A Treatise of Human Nature, Book One*, ed. D. G. C. Macnabb (London: Collins, 1962), pp. 308–9.
- 13 The edition Manning uses is edited by L. A. Selby Bigge, 2nd edition, text revised by P. H. Nidditch (Oxford, 1978)
- 14 Susan Manning, *The Puritan-Provincial Vision: Scottish and American literature in the nineteenth century* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1990), p. 40
- 15 *Ibid.*, p. 44
- 16 Ian Brown, 'The Scots leid in modren Scots drama: "World Drama" an "our national peculiarities"', *Lallans*, No. 70 (Ware 2007), pp. 33–44, and 'Drama as a Means fir Uphaudin Leid Communities', in John M. Kirk and Dónall P. Ó Baoill, *Sustaining Minority Language and Economic Development: Northern Ireland, the Republic of Ireland, and Scotland*, Belfast Studies in Language, Culture and Politics (Belfast: Cló Ollscoil na Banríona, 2011), pp. 243–8. Strathclyde Theatre Group presented my Scots-language version of *Antigone* in 1969, while Prospect Theatre Company toured my English-language version of *The Bacchae* in 1971.
- 17 Manning, *The Puritan-Provincial Vision*, p. 71

- 18 Colin Milton, “Half a trade and half an art”: Adult and Juvenile Fiction in the Victorian Period’ in Susan Manning (ed.) *The Edinburgh History of Scottish Literature* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2007), vol. 2, p. 299
- 19 Cairns Craig, ‘The Criticism of Scottish Literature: Tradition, Decline and Renovation’ in Ian Brown (ed.) *The Edinburgh History of Scottish Literature* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2007), vol. 3, p.42
- 20 Murray Pittock, *The Road to Independence? Scotland since the Sixties* (London: Reaktion Books, 2008), p. 16
- 21 See for example Suhayl Saadi’s *Psychoraag* (Edinburgh: Black and White, 2004)
- 22 See for example James N. Alison, ‘Choosing and Using Scottish Texts’, in Alan MacGillivray (ed.) *Teaching Scottish Literature: Curriculum and Classroom Applications* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 1997), pp. 31–45, Carla Sassi, *Why Scottish Literature Matters* (Edinburgh: Saltire Society, 2005) or Ian Brown et al (eds.) *The Edinburgh History of Scottish Literature*, 3 vols. (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2007). While Alison focuses on Scots and English texts, the other texts cited range wider in Scottish literature’s linguistic variety.
- 23 This paper represents a substantial rewriting and extension of the paper, “Scottish invisibility” in classics of World Literature’, presented at the First Congress of the World Literature Association, ‘The Rise of World Literatures’, Beijing, June 30–July 3 2011. I am grateful to James Alison, Gerard Carruthers, Ted Cowan and Ian Duncan for their helpful comments on the revised paper.

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