Sunshine on Leith

Art, Architecture, and Film in Scottish Nationalism and Culture, 1945-1999

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Abstract

Scottish nationalism is a current and pressing issue, with the nation poised for another vote on independence after the failed 2014 referendum and the consequences of Brexit in 2016. In a long history of wars and rebellions against England, Scottish nationalists began their new drive for independence after World War Two under the Scottish National Party (SNP). The first step in this process was devolution, the granting of limited self-government through a national Parliament under the greater British Parliament in Westminster. Through political victories and collapses, the SNP finally achieved devolution with the help of New Labour, establishing the Scottish Parliament in 1999. Over this period, Scottish arts and architecture boomed in international relevance, empowering the Scottish electorate with a greater cultural awareness that helped them internalize these political changes. Scottish national identity was molded and remade by both cultural and political agents from different social strata, showing new forms of representation in a rapidly changing nation. Cultural nationalism became a key facet of Scottish politics, working to both define and appeal to the Scottish people.

I fuse film, artistic, and architectural critique with cultural study and political history to elucidate the different forms of nationalism that developed over the latter twentieth century. I look at the connections and intersections of visual culture with political events to show how the two are intertwined, influencing each other through the modern creation of pop culture. The minds of Scottish voters were swayed just as much by the built environment and popular films as the diatribes of nationalist politicians. Looking forward to the concerns of the present day, this thesis provides a new framework through which to understand the drive for independence. Cultural identity must be addressed politically to properly represent the needs of a populace, as politics become an integral part of popular culture.
Introduction – A Glimpse of Scotland

[Iain Connell and Robert Florence enter an elevator, as the doors shut behind them.]¹

Iain Connell: Where's the buttons?
Robert Florence: No, no they've installed voice recognition technology in this lift. I heard about ‘t.
Iain Connell: Voice recognition technology? In a lift? In Scotland? Ever tried voice recognition technology?
Robert Florence: Naw
Iain Connell: They don't do - Sco'ish accents
Robert Florence: Eleven
Elevator: Could you please repeat that?
Iain Connell: Eleven

…

Elevator: I'm sorry. Could you please repeat that?
Iain Connell: Eleven. If you don't understand the lingo, away back hame yer ain country.²
Robert Florence: Oh, s'tha talk nae is it? "Away back tae yer ain country"?³
Iain Connell: Oh, don't start Mr Bleeding Heart – how can ye be racist tae a lift?
Elevator: Please speak slowly and clearly.
Robert Florence: Eleven…Eleven…Eleven…Eleven
Iain Connell: Ye'r jus' sayin' it the same way
Robert Florence: I'm gonnae keep sayin' it until it understons Sco'ish, a' right?⁴
Robert Florence: Eleven…Eleven…Eleven…Eleven
Iain Connell: Oh, just take us anywhere, ye cow. Just open the doors.
Elevator: This is a voice-activated elevator. Please state which floor you would like to go to in a clear and calm manner.

¹ Skit can be viewed at: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=TqAu-DDJINs.
² “If you do not understand the dialect, go back to your own country.”
³ “Oh, so it is that kind of talk now, is it? ‘Away back to your own country?’”
⁴ “I am going to keep saying it until it understands a Scottish accent, alright?”
Iain Connell: Calm? Calm? Where's tha’ comin' fae? Why's it tellin' people ‘e be calm?  

Robert Florence: Because they knew they’d be sellin’ this tae Sco’ish people who’d be goin’ aff their nuts at it.

…

Iain Connell: Scotland, ye bastards.
Robert Florence: SCOTLAND!
Iain Connell: SCOTLAND!
Robert Florence: SCOOOOTLAND!
Iain Connell: FREEDOM!
Robert Florence: FREEDOM!
Iain Connell: FREEDOM!

As this skit from BBC Scotland comedy show *Bournistoun* (2009-12) demonstrates,

Scotland is a place infected with a curiously strong national character. Nationalism is an expression of this national character, but accelerated into a belief in self-governance for a certain group of people. Of course, how one defines this group then becomes an issue. There are several main types of nationalism that I will examine and reference in this thesis. Civic nationalism is secular and neutral. Citizens of a nation, or denizens seeking to become citizens, are counted as a part of this national group. The individual identity of these people is not important. This type tends to be more progressive, and skew left-wing. American nationalism is a commonly cited example of civic nationalism, though not free of criticism on this front. Ethnic nationalism is exclusive and hereditary. One’s ethnicity, or the group of people from which one descends, determines group membership. In this type, identity is everything. Ethnic nationalists tend to be reactionary, leaning right-wing, though many ethnic minorities and diasporas (e.g. Kurdish, Jewish, Romani) practice different forms of ethnic nationalism. While the American Ku Klux

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5 “Where is that coming from? Why is it telling people to be calm?”
6 “Because they knew they would be selling this to Scottish people who would be yelling angrily at it.”
Klan is an extreme example of ethnic nationalism, others may have less severe ideological or political goals. Cultural nationalism is a middle ground between the two, and generally considered a different form of civic nationalism. It defines the national group as those who participate in a “national culture,” the accumulation of all of the different facets of life that a group performs (e.g. dress, language, symbols). National culture is necessarily quite difficult and contentious to define, but it importantly does not use any hereditary (identarian) signifiers. Many nations are currently thought to practice cultural nationalism, including Scotland.

Nationalists allege a historical basis for their national case, and Scottish nationalism has demonstrably deep roots, having fought wars of independence from England since the Middle Ages. These ancient wars were not quite nationalist, as England and Scotland did not yet consider themselves to be nations, with most historians agreeing that distinction came in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. However, the deep rebellious spirit and desire for independence have become enshrined parts of “Scottishness” and national identity. Modern Scottish political nationalism developed through the nineteenth and twentieth century, with the Scottish National Party (SNP) formed in 1934 and winning its first election in 1945. This year is significant. As World War Two finally ended, Britain looked forward to the rest of the century as it healed from the destruction wreaked in the past six years. The nation sought to redefine itself politically and culturally for a new era, through the Cold War, rise of global capitalism, and growth of nationalism. This long process culminated in a major result for Scotland and Wales in 1999, with the establishment of the Scottish and Welsh Parliaments. Nationalist movements in both countries worked throughout the twentieth century to convince the populace to vote for home rule as a pathway to independence. By devolving significant parliamentary function to

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For further nationalist readings, see writings in bibliography by Tom Nairn, Ernest Gellner, Eric Hobsbawm, Anthony D. Smith, and Linda Colley.
Scotland, this home rule would create an easier political climate from which to push a separatist platform. The methods of this evolution lie in the types of nationalism and how national identity was depicted in popular sources.

I argue that Scotland required an evolution to cultural nationalism to achieve the goal of devolution from 1945-1999. I examine Scottish visual culture to this end, looking at national symbols, patriotic images, and depictions of Scottish identity to show how popular consciousness moved with and helped define political realities. I will first cover the midcentury, from 1945-1969, to show the state of Scottish patriotism, nationalism, and visual culture as the SNP spread its roots. The party will crystallize a civic nationalist platform over this period and identify major facets of national identity to work with in subsequent decades. Then, I will cover the rise and fall of the party from 1970-1989 in tandem with the discovery of North Sea Oil. This era showed explosive growth for the party around nationalizing oil, but failed by pushing for devolution too early on too narrow of a platform. The 1980’s and Thatcherism made nationalists reconsider the civic-ethnic divide and explore different facets of Scottish culture. My third and fourth sections both cover the 1990’s. The third revisits popular Scottish visual culture to show how politics and art became more closely intertwined as the contemporary state of Britain spurred cultural discourse. This focus engaged more Scots in a nationalist awareness, appealing to more voters and successfully awakening a national consciousness. My fourth section will examine the art and architecture of the national museum, parliament, and art festivals. I will show how at a mass cultural level, nationalists worked with patriotic centrists to accomplish devolution in the new global world of the late 1990’s. While specific social, economic, and political conditions allowed for devolution at that time, it was also indebted to the slow build of cultural nationalism. From
1945-1999, Scots identified, redefined, and appreciated their own culture separately from the other cultures in the United Kingdom.

**Section I – Background to Foreground: National(ist) Identity, 1945-1969**

In its twentieth-century incarnation, Scotland was a stateless nation—a historical national group that did not operate its own government or state. The British parliament was located and operated in England, making that nation the dominant state power in the United Kingdom over Wales, Scotland, Northern Ireland, and the smaller British Isles. As in many smaller nations following the chaos of the Second World War, Scottish nationalism grew in popularity as countries sought to navigate the new geopolitical minefield. By emphasizing nationalism in state-building, smaller nations could lay claim to the prestige of modernity and leave the newly-defined “third world.” Stateless nations like Scotland had a more complex path to nationhood, requiring devolution or separation from the parent country of the United Kingdom. In Scotland, nationalism evolved in two major recognizable forms, much as it did elsewhere. This period shows the prevailing images of Scottishness that exemplified midcentury Scottish culture, and how the nationalists worked through their confused early platform to build a foundation for later success.

Scotland has long been considered a geographic and cultural entity rather than an ethnic one, lacking major ethnic differences from England and Wales since the gradual disappearance of the Pictish Celts in the Middle Ages. It is still considered one of the remaining “Celtic Nations” alongside Ireland, the Isle of Man, Cornwall, Wales, and Brittany, but unified by Celtic languages rather than ethnicity. Scotland became more ethnically diverse with waves of immigration in the twentieth century, primarily from Eastern Europeans (mostly Poles and
Ukrainians) fleeing the USSR as well as Western Africans from Commonwealth countries, Indians, and Pakistanis following the partition of India. While ethnic nationalists in Scotland and England were inflamed by immigration, for most Scots, land-based civic nationalism took root. Scottish nationalists were not the most popular group following World War II, given their party stance of draft evasion in a so-called “English war.” Scottish identity at the time was rooted in Scots’ long history of military service to the British Empire. To understand the patriotic Scottish images that nationalists had to counter, we must study the prevailing depictions. An image of Scottishness leading into the midcentury can easily be seen in the Scottish National War Memorial in Edinburgh.

The Scottish National War Memorial is a large building in Edinburgh Castle housing sculptures, inscriptions, and stained glass. Here, the Union is ratified in cautious modernism. It was opened in 1927 to honor the dead of World War One, but updated in 1945 with the new list of soldiers from World War Two. The building is what one may consider “traditional” in

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Edinburgh; the heavy and ornate stonework mirrors the Gothic and Georgian architecture of the city center. By this point, Art Nouveau and Art Deco had grown in popularity in Scotland, bolstered by the Glasgow Four architects at the World’s Fairs, in particular Charles Rennie Mackintosh. Small touches of each style can be seen in the Memorial. Notably, Art Deco sculptures of a lion and a unicorn guard the entrance. The unicorn, Scotland’s national animal, bears a saltire, and the royal lion a Union Jack. Many of the internal sculptures and inscriptions are dedicated to Scots who achieved glory abroad for the British Empire, and the military history it glorifies is that of British service. Altogether, the Memorial is a monument to Union and the traditional status of Scotland as it was seen in 1945. It serves as a good baseline for the architectural and artistic image of Scotland leading into the growth of the nationalist movement.

Scottish nationalists had organized for decades but only formed the major Scottish National Party (SNP) in 1934, with a somewhat confused mix of ethnic and civic ideas. They slowly grew in the political periphery through the Second World War by (being arrested for) refusing conscription in a war they argued was more English than Scottish. During the war, the party solidified their platform of independence rather than home rule. The party won their first parliamentary seat in the Motherwell by-election of 1945, though losing it again three months later. They moderately rose in influence through the next two decades, and this early chapter of the SNP follows the general moderate trend of midcentury Scottish patriotism in visual culture. While nationalists were exploring what it meant to be Scottish, artists, architects, and filmmakers were creating an image of Scottishness that was still fledgling, reliant, and needed in the United

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9 A saltire is a cross on an angle, cutting from corner to corner across the flag. It is commonly read to represent the cross that Jesus Christ bore on his back to his crucifixion, and the Scottish flag is a white saltire on a field of blue. The Union Jack, the de facto flag of the United Kingdom since the seventeenth century, is formed by the superimposed English cross (red on white), Scottish saltire (white on blue), and Saint Patrick’s saltire (red on white) for Ireland and Northern Ireland.
Kingdom. Yet, those same images reveal the tensions that could cause Scotland could break away from its southern partner. This is complicated by Scotland’s historic military and economic role as the vanguard of the Empire overseas. Some Scottish nationalists may shortsightedly see Scotland as equivalent to a colonized nation like India, irrespective of Scots’ history in conquering nations like India. Much of the public visual culture in this period emphasized Scotland’s role in the British Empire, at times leaning into aggrandizing flattery but also controlling the Scottish image as a colonial subject. The Royal Scots Monument is a series of monolithic sculptures that honor the Royal Scots regiment. It suggests a connection of national identity and the land of Scotland, though filtered through artistic abstraction.

The Royal Scots Monument is a rotunda of engraved concrete and stone monoliths honoring the Royal Scots division of the military by the Princes Street Gardens in Edinburgh. It reflects nature in some ways, and architecture in others. While Princes Street may now be popularly remembered for the madcap chase in the opening sequence of *Trainspotting*, the leisurely gardens are a prominent area in the heart of the city. The monument was designed by Scotland’s lead planner, architect Sir Frank Mears, and Scottish sculptor Charles d’Orville Pilkington Jackson, a prolific artist who created dozens of public historical and military monuments across Scotland.\(^\text{10}\) He may be best known for his work on the Scottish National War Memorial and the Bannockburn monument to Robert the Bruce, but the urban nature of the Royal Scots Monument adds to its importance.\(^\text{11}\) The sculpture was unveiled in a 1952 ceremony with Elizabeth II, in the year of her coronation. It has since been reinaugurated with updates by


the Queen and other royals in several additional ceremonies. Clearly, the British crown views the military memorial as an important public fixture in Edinburgh, to remind the local populace of the achievements and sacrifices of one of their proudest detachments.

As in several of his other works, Pilkington Jackson created a rotunda of monoliths, “intended to echo Neolithic henge monuments,” continuing the tradition of stone circle architecture in Scotland. This also unifies with stone circle architecture in England and Wales, drawing a common cultural line between the nations of the United Kingdom. In accordance with that naturalistic style, sections of the monoliths are left unfinished, and the site’s lawn is dressed with fieldstone. These design choices implicitly tie the monument (and therefore the Royal Scots) to the Scottish land. The martial history of Scotland, therefore, is situated in a distinctly British and Scottish legacy. Much early modernist sculpture studied prehistoric “primitive” creations to reinvent the use of form. For example, the Spaniard Pablo Picasso emulated African artefacts from imperialist exhibitions as he developed cubism, and the Swede Carl Milles was inspired by the art of ancient Nordic peoples. In this way, Pilkington Jackson broke with conventional fashion to be both ancient and modern, while working Scottish identity into British history.

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Many of his other sculptures were directly representational, in a traditional European sculptural style that did not reflect new artistic sensibilities. The Royal Scots Monument is a rare departure from this style into a softly brutalist abstraction of forms, representing increasing state support for modern approaches. Brutalism often worked as a repudiation of the classical artistic tradition and associated power structures. Many post-colonial nations turned to this style to create their own tradition free of homage to the old European masters, artistically and politically. Yet, unlike many later post-Soviet war memorials in Eastern Europe, pure abstraction was not used to represent such themes as sacrifice and struggle.\(^\text{15}\) Rather, this state-endorsed Scottish style showed a more gradual transition from old-style remembrances of military history as well as a situation of Scottish military might in British martial history.

James Bond’s film debut in the 1960’s emphasized the presence of Scottish men in the vanguard of British military might. The ways in which Sean Connery changed and maintained different aspects of Scottishness illustrate how this identity was subsumed in a syncretic Britishness. Sean Connery’s Bond ventured into international waters in the well-reviewed *From Russia With Love*, infiltrating English-language culture with barbs of Scottishness that gradually

\(^{14}\) Image via the Royal Scots Regiment, [https://www.theroyalscots.co.uk/memorials-monuments/](https://www.theroyalscots.co.uk/memorials-monuments/).

\(^{15}\) For further reading, see: Frederic Chaubin, *CCCP: Cosmic Communist Constructions Photographed* (New York: Taschen, 2017).
syncretized into a sense of the “British military man.” Through his tenure as Ian Fleming’s secret agent and exemplified in *From Russia With Love*, Connery’s character expressed martial dominance, acerbic wit, and an uncompromised virility. The popular reception of this film iteration of Bond allows us to understand the “modern Scot” up for export in the midcentury. As in the built environment, British-registered films with American funding were pushing Scottish military identity as a core value. By incorporating the Scot as a key component of Empire, calls for independence may have been assuaged. However, this necessarily influenced Scots to draw pride from their new star. As Scotland sought to define itself as a nation, its most public son redefined the image of the British leading man.

One of the secondary antagonists throughout *From Russia With Love* is a Bulgarian killer named Krilencu (Fred Haggerty). As Connery’s Bond engages in a violent game of cat and mouse across Istanbul with Russian agents, Krilencu becomes a serious threat who must be dealt with. Bond is a Scottish soldier in British Intelligence, and Krilencu a Bulgarian killer working for the Soviet military. They form a parallel in this way, each coming from a client state (or perhaps imperial subject) of a greater state, either Empire or Union. Both states present their agents for this showdown, and the British film asserts their agent as superior in an ingratiating manner. The local head of British Intelligence, Ali Kerim Bey (Pedro Armendariz), helps Bond set a trap for Krilencu at the Bulgar’s hideout. When lining up the shot, Bond allows Kerim to assassinate the target for him. In this scenario, Bond does not lower himself to kill an imperial subject of his enemy’s state, rather using a hierarchy to assert his own power. This is both an imperial assertion and one of anti-communism during the Cold War. Turks of British loyalty would likely have been held as a lower form of imperial subject than a Scot, based on racist attitudes of the time. This is emphasized by the casting of a Mexican for Kerim’s role instead of
an actual Turk. The Turks would have been held as a client of the West, if not a junior member of the Western bloc. By allowing Kerim to take the shot, Bond not only puts the Bulgar on the level of the Turk, but asserts himself as a full-fledged Briton, a man who should be targeting Russians rather than their subjects.

This elevates the Scottish military man above imperial subject to an authoritative role in the imperial and Western project, even if Connery’s altered speech shows him bending to fit the English standard. Through the film and especially in the climactic fight, Bond is referred to as an “English gentleman.” The final battle is a hand-to-hand struggle with Donald Grant (Robert Shaw), an Irish agent for the shadowy SPECTRE organization. The national staging of these characters references building tensions between Unionist and Republican forces in Northern Ireland, leading towards The Troubles that would begin a few years after this film’s release. In this way, Scottish Bond is once again an external agent trusted with the well-being of the Empire. Yet, both characters lose much of the local inflections and dialect markers of their respective homes. This is less surprising for the character of Grant, as Shaw is English and plays his Irish character without modifying his English accent. Connery refined his typical Edinburgh accent for the film at the request of the producers, speaking more Oxbridge-styled English. One of the only vestiges of his normal accent is an alveolar trill, the rolled “r” sound common to Scots English. This contributes to his subtle identification as a Scot, adding an aggressive vocal tone to his affected aristocratic insouciance. This adds another dimension to his frequent witty barbs. His cheekiness is now an adoption or a taming of Scottish aggression into English high culture.

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This banter plays into Bond’s charm with women, and complicates the character and actor’s misogyny during the sexual revolution of the 1960’s. Connery’s depiction of Scottishness is painfully male, showing how major depictions of national identity did not move past antiquated conceptions of masculinity in a rapidly changing decade. While Irishmen in popular fiction were often shown to be drunken, rude, carousing Catholic stereotypes, fictional Scots were (perhaps also drunken and rude) dominant Protestant caricatures. Women in all of Connery’s Bond films are sexual accessories to his espionage, rarely possessing real character traits. In *From Russia With Love*, Bond girl Tatiana Romanova, a Soviet computer technician-turned false defector-turned Bond lover is successfully seduced into betraying her country by Bond. He hits her across the face and manhandles her as a part of this conversion. This violence is not unique to this film, and in a contemporary *Playboy* interview, Connery controversially endorsed some hitting of women.\(^\text{17}\) This violence is not considered at all problematic in the context of the film, and Bond attains a sort of violent hyper-heterosexuality that would reappear as an archetype in later Scottish film, namely 1996’s *Braveheart*. This is starkly contrasted by his Soviet counterparts, with the Russian SPECTRE agents Kronsteen and Klebb being read as bisexual and lesbian, respectively. This heterosexual dominance of the West over the queered Communists, punctuated by the violent sexual conquest of Romanova, situates the Scottish leading man as an agent of this sexual crusade. The modern Scot, in this case, still represented a violent heterosexuality that intertwined with the interests of Queen and Crown, dominant over Irish defectors and Soviet women. It formed a Unionist message that also alienated subcultural and minority experiences of Scottishness. This perspective explicitly supported the state of Scotland in the United Kingdom, but also allowed room for alternative narratives of Scottish

identity to clash, fueling desire for independence among some groups. These sentiments would grow when provided with fuel. It took specific catalysts to mobilize certain segments of the population, growing gradually towards a true mass appeal.

Scottish nationalists continued to push their bid for independence through the 1960’s, earning two major wins in 1967. The Council for the Encouragement of Music and the Arts (CEMA) was a government organization founded in the Second World War to drive the artistic output of Great Britain, hoping to win the war militarily and establish a subsequent cultural dominance. The council was based in England, but increased calls for devolution led to a limited 1967 reform granting Scotland and Wales their own Arts Councils. This ensured that funding for the arts in Scotland would be directed by local government, helping to foster distinctly Scottish arts and culture. This intersected with the shock victory of SNP candidate Winnie Ewing in the 1967 Hamilton by-election. The SNP has continuously held seats in Parliament ever since this victory.

While the sixties would end on a high, the 1969 discovery of oil in the North Sea foreshadowed serious conflict between Scotland and England. Explosive growth for the SNP coincided with a new rebellious sentiment in Scottish visual culture, climbing until the electoral crash in 1979. This conflict revived the combative and vengeful spirit of Scottish national identity, perhaps superlatively described by novelist John Walt in 1823,

An elementary difference exists in the public feelings of the two nations quite as great as in the idioms of their respective dialects. The English are a justice-loving people, according to charter and statute; the Scotch are a wrong-resenting race, according to right and feeling: and the character of liberty among them takes its aspect from that peculiarity.18

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Section II – Highlight and Lowlight: Nationalist Surge and Fall, 1970-1989

Scottish nationalism became a mainstream political force in the North Sea oil crisis of the 1970’s, redefining the terms to broaden conceptions of who belonged as a “modern Scot,” emphasizing the colonial relationship with England, and establishing firm national aspirations. This is reflected in much Scottish visual culture of the period, showing a more explicitly nationalist political bent than that of the midcentury. Amid major losses for the Conservatives in the 1974 general elections, the Scottish National Party surged from one seat to seven, doubling their vote share in Scotland. Under the leadership of Billy Wolfe during this decade, the SNP formed a much more cohesive social democratic platform focused on civic nationalism. However, after the failure of the devolution-intending Scotland Act of 1978, Wolfe stepped down and the party collapsed in the 1979 elections as the Conservatives soared under Margaret Thatcher. This electoral disaster made the party reconsider the economic and political approach they had taken, trying to find a vein of Scottish nationalism that worked.

The party fractured in the wake of this failure, forming the Wolfe-backed 79 Group, a social democratic platform, and the Siol nan Gaidheal (Seed of the Gaels), a traditionalist, proto-fascist group. The Siol nan Gaidheal was soon banned from the SNP and the party crystallized as a left-leaning big tent coalition, focusing on civic nationalism with goals of devolution and then independence. Yet, the banning of the Siol nan Gaidheal and their terrorist bombings in Scotland drew attention to escalating anti-English sentiment. The 1980’s were a decade of reckoning for Scottish nationalism and visual culture, coming to terms with the loss of the North Sea oil and the attached hopes of sovereignty. Scots like Connery’s Bond once committed violence in the name of England. Yet, such exploitation-linked loss of life as the accidental Piper Alpha oil rig disaster in 1988 can be read as English negligence for Scottish life, or even spun as English
violence towards Scots. While the SNP have never endorsed violence of any sort, they exhibited a growing hostility towards Westminster over the economic deprivation of Thatcher’s 1980’s austerity. This would influence the major diffractions in images of Scottishness through the 1990’s. To begin this long process over the two decades, the SNP focused on broadening its appeal, including more people in the portrait of Scottishness.

At the discovery of North Sea oil, the British government was struggling to modernize, with a lack of funding impairing the impact of social and economic recovery plans. This was felt especially strongly in Scotland, boasting crumbling infrastructure and one of the worst unemployment rates of any developed country. As the oil was in Scottish waters, some legal readings placed it in the jurisdiction of Scots Law (a separate legal system unique to Scotland). Westminster disagreed. Nationalism thrives in times of crisis, and this conflict with England allowed the Scottish National Party to surge in popularity by calling for repatriation of Scottish North Sea oil. These calls reached across social strata, illuminating more Scottish faces than just those military men of the midcentury monuments. A contributing factor to the 1974 parliamentary successes was the “It’s Scotland’s Oil” propaganda campaign, a series of Pop Art-infused posters. These broadened the appeal of the nationalist platform and updated the ideology with a contemporary veneer.
In a series of four posters, the SNP diversified to include women more centrally in its platform, making nationalism more inclusive. The strata of gender and age are crossed, appealing to old Scottish women and those middle-aged Scots who care for them, along with a desire to protect Scottish children, one of the most politically agreeable positions. The message is not convoluted by policy or even inclusive of a textual marker of Scottish nationalism; the SNP insignia after each caption is a cocksure statement of ownership, transcending a name. The only political claim in this propaganda is that “IT’S HIS/HER OIL,” a simplistic but honest claim for the party’s platform. By repatriating the North Sea oil, the SNP sought to fund independence. Rebuilding infrastructure and providing employment in New-Deal-styled reforms would provide the justification for devolution and eventually independence.

This claim relies on the Scots Law jurisdiction over the North Seas, and therefore, over the oil. In this way, the specific brand of nationalism formed by the SNP is land-based. This nationalism draws national identity from the land usually associated with the bounds of the nation, rather than an ethnic background. It leans towards civic nationalism in this way, defining the person’s belonging in the nation by their being in the nation’s place. This gels with the more diverse appeals of the posters, moving away from the traditionally male-dominated British political system into an era with women as Queen and Prime Minister. A land-based nationalism is potent with visual symbolism, especially in such a picturesque country as Scotland. Sculptures like the Royal Scots Monument, calling back to ancient Scottish land art, would resonate with this message. However, to maintain the timely appeal, these posters incorporated Pop Art styling.
The distinct visual style of these posters built a contemporary visual language for modern Scots to envision themselves within. Color usage is the first hallmark. There is a notable lack of the traditional blue of the Scottish saltire, as with the reds, purples, and greens typical to tartan. Traditional national symbols and colors have been dropped in favor of simple black and white, punctuated by the distinct yellow of the SNP. The choice of yellow is a clear third option to the red and blue of Labour and Conservative, the final primary color. This subliminally positions the SNP as an equally valid alternative to the old political dichotomy while also eschewing the historical trappings of Scottish identity. This new Scottish image spoke with a clean, Helvetica-styled typeface, breaking from the heavy Gothics used by older Scottish press like The Glasgow

20 The Scottish national tartan has a green base with indigo, red, and white stripes, the famous Black Watch tartan uses purple and green, and the tartan of the royal family (House of Stewart) uses red, green, and indigo. The royal tartan is the most internationally-known and famous pattern, notably sported by Formula 1 World Champion Jackie “the Flying Scot” Stewart on his race helmet and later Stewart Ford Grand Prix team from 1997-99.
21 It should be noted that the Liberal Democrats also use a darker shade of yellow (more of a golden hue). The Liberal Democrats arose after the SNP, in 1988, so I still credit the SNP with this color usage.
Herald and The Evening Times. This new land-based civic nationalism was modern, fresh, and inclusive. It positioned itself as a valid alternative to more traditional forms of Scottishness and the British mainstream. The key to its appeal was the oil, and some visual productions of the 1970’s laid the argument bare.

Tying to the developing land-based nationalism, the Norwegian War Memorial in Edinburgh reflected the national aspirations of the Scottish nationalists. The Norwegian War Memorial is a boulder inscribed and donated by Norway in 1978 in thanks for Scottish training of Norwegian partisans during the Nazi occupation in World War Two. The inscription specifically mentions the nature of the boulder as shaped by thousands of years of natural processes, and the monument is again in reference to military history. The raw nature ties to the primitivist movement in modern art, also exploited by Pilkington Jackson in the Royal Scots Monument. The piece can also be read as land art, reflecting the contemporary growth of the genre, with land art titan Andy Goldsworthy living and working in northern England and

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Scotland. The naturalistic form ties Scotland’s achievements to the land, furthering the thread of land-based nationalism. Considering the context of the gift, it takes on additional poignance. Norway is one of the few nations to successfully exploit their North Sea oil into a sovereign wealth fund. It has been smartly invested over decades, now fueling one of the most developed social democratic governments in the world. Scottish nationalists of the time looked to Norway as an example for an independent Scotland, which North Sea commercialization would not allow. Through the landmark play *The Cheviot, the Stag, and the Black, Black Oil* (1973), playwright John McGrath and the 7:84 theater company articulated the worry with commercializing North Sea oil.

*The Cheviot, the Stag, and the Black, Black Oil* (1973) is an encapsulation of the Scottish nationalist argument surrounding oil in the 1970’s. Written by English socialist playwright John McGrath and produced by his leftist 7:84 company, it had a clear ideological bent. It arose from a strong Scottish theatre scene, with set design by the famous John Byrne. He was writer of *The Slab Boys Trilogy*, one of the major dramatic works covering midcentury Scottish working-class culture, as well as the Scottish star-making shows *Tutti Frutti* and *Your Cheatin’ Heart*. The play was televised on the BBC and still tours widely, and is considered a Scottish classic of the period. It begins all the way back in the Highland Clearances in 1746, when English agents under Patrick Sellar forcibly claimed land from its ancestral holders, banning traditional hallmarks such as plaid and Scots Gaelic to suppress cultural resistance. The financial incentive for the English is Cheviot sheep, sending destitute Highlanders down to Glasgow which becomes a wretched hive of scum and villainy. It continues through to the modern oil boom in Aberdeen, showing how the cycle of English exploitation is coming back around. The play ends with a warning that the American oil magnates will prove more harmful than Patrick Sellar, and a call to action to
resist exploitation. It uses history as a political tool and is as close to explicit nationalist
radicalization as one can come before *Braveheart* (1996).

The play does not have major historical falsehoods, relying on a fair description of
English exploitation to tie the older occurrences to the North Sea oil crisis. Yet it does lack
significant coverage of the previous coercive land practices that had allowed Scottish chieftains,
usually military men, to accumulate such large Highland parcels. In this way, it overly victimizes
privileged classes in the Highlands who realistically only had their own conquests won away
from them. And importantly, the play only begins in 1746, 39 years after the Acts of Union that
brought Scotland into the new Great Britain. It is predicated on a conjoined Scotland, one that it
depicts as vassal, client, or subjugate to its partner, England. The English and Scottish crowns
had been joined in 1603, even utilizing the Scottish Stone of Destiny in British coronation
rituals. The exploitation of the Highland Clearances is not quite that of a full invading army, as
may have been the case two centuries earlier. In this way, the relationship is not structured as
that of a colonizer subjugating the colonized, but rather the sin of one brother nation against
another.

This empowers Scotland through the images of brutal exploitation, by equating it with its
southern neighbor. The nationalism, and the image of Scotland depicted in *The Cheviot* is that of
a wronged ally. An equal, forced into a lower position. By this logic, the reclamation of North
Sea oil is only a reassertion of the equality espoused before the Highland Clearances, upon which
Great Britain is still predicated. This position logically led to calls for devolution among the
burgeoning SNP. However, the 1978 attempt failed at the ballot box, showing that Scotland was
not yet committed to the nationalist project. When Thatcher arose in the 1979 elections that more
than halved SNP parliamentary seats, the conversation around the oil crisis changed. Scotland
had to reckon with the widespread privatization of the North Sea oil, and internalized this further English exploitation.

Thatcher’s relationship with Scotland demands explanation. She remains a polarizing figure in no small part due to the disparity in her economic policies’ efficacy. She aimed to deindustrialize economies and inject new, foreign capital while slashing social programs and combating trade unions. However, areas that were not fortunate enough to receive such investment simply lost their industries while Southern English Conservatives preached a simplistic self-help message rooted in the Protestant work ethic.\(^23\) South-east England and London, areas already with strong capital, experienced an economic rejuvenation from the neoliberal “common-sense” policies of her Conservative government, while northern England and especially Scotland experienced severe unemployment alongside welfare rollbacks.\(^24\) Rich natural resources, like the North Sea oil, were meant to be privatized under the Conservative government. In 2014, controversial internal government papers revealed that Thatcher’s government treated Scotland as a testing ground for policy, with an MP telling Thatcher to use “the Scots as a trail-blazer for the real thing.”\(^25\) Reduced welfare programs put many Scottish families and children into worklessness, poverty, and food insecurity, with less access to healthcare. This led to an increased mortality rate, deaths estimated in the thousands or tens of thousands.\(^26\) Many nationalists interpreted these careless attitudes and deadly results as English violence against Scotland.

\(^26\) Stephen Colgrave, “Thatcher’s Household Fallacy Led to Austerity and Killed Thousands – What was the Point of it?” (Byline Times, November 19, 2019).
This begins the split in nationalist thinking around violence, about what level was palatable and how strong the resistance to English dominance would be. Violence is inherent to military service, a role that Scots have always held in the British Empire. Nationalist images began to recontextualize the Scot’s relationship to violence. Violence against England seemed more permissible to some, given that the English Conservative austerity measures in the 1980’s killed thousands of Scots. The nationalist project escalated after this first failed attempt at devolution, branching into new alleyways as the broadened pool of the civic “modern Scot” allowed more voices to take part. These new images of Scottishness began with an acceptance of the lost national dream, and progressed through fiery tragedy to the critical period of the 1990’s.

The privatization of North Sea oil is dramatized in the 1983 film Local Hero by Scottish director Bill Forsyth. The film stars Peter Riegert as “Mac” Macintyre, an American oil man from Texas sent to Ferness, Scotland, a fishing village his company seeks to buy out to build a massive refinery. Opposite him is Scottish actor Denis Lawson of Star Wars fame (Wedge Antilles), also the uncle of Trainspotting and Star Wars star Ewan McGregor. He plays Gordon Urquhart, the hotel owner and local accountant who acts as the de facto head of the village. The story follows Mac as he slowly grows to appreciate the bucolic village life and regret his role in buying it out. Meanwhile, the villagers play coy to solicit better offers, eager to sell their town and start new lives with the profits. The film ends happily, with Mac’s sympathetic boss agreeing to build the refinery offshore and instead fund a research center in the town. It is a romantic conclusion to a humorous and feel-good film, but it illuminates some of the more saddening realizations of the 1980’s.

The main topic of the film is North Sea oil privatization. By imbuing such a positive theme and emphasizing how happy the villagers were to sell, it is a far more optimistic reading
than that of *The Cheviot* a decade earlier. This film had to rationalize the fact that North Sea oil now lay in private hands; the nationalist dream of oil wealth funding an independent Scotland was steadily evaporating. Instead of focusing on how Scots across the country were missing out on the regenerative social programs the oil wealth would fund, the film shows a small occurrence of this enrichment. The bucolic, Kailyard setting of *Local Hero* aids this reading as a re-grounding of Scottish identity in old values of individual enterprise, humble origins, and crafty male leaders. This film is by no means nationalist, and instead shows a far more moderate and palatable acceptance of the foreign oil extraction.

However, this illuminates the challenge the nationalists faced in the 1980’s: after the failure of the oil-fueled devolution attempt in 1978, a political discourse on independence surrounding oil was no longer feasible. The people did not support it. Instead, the discourse shifted from the exclusive and learned realm of politics to more symbolic cultural concerns, a position that was more understandable to the more diverse civic electorate that the SNP had embraced. Throughout history, the breakdown of political discourse often leads to violence. While this is not a notably violent movement, the theme of violence became central to the redefinition of Scottish nationalism. This violence could be physical, as more right-wing elements espoused, or more symbolic or cultural, as many of the left decried. This theme of violence and nationalism must be viewed in context of the English-Irish nationalist conflict of the period.

The 1970’s and 80’s saw a surge of English and Irish nationalism. Thatcher was a neoliberal, but also a populist and a nationalist. Many of the policies she developed and enacted were rooted in a revival of English national identity rooted in Protestantism. This was in many ways a reaction to the waves of immigration through the century. In the wake of World War II,
the 1948 British Nationality Act allowed Commonwealth citizens to freely live and work in the United Kingdom without visas, an act that created massive conflict peaking during the Civil Rights Movement in the 1960’s. Conservatives pushed to tighten immigration controls over racialized fears of criminality and worklessness, stoked by such inflammatory speech as Conservative MP Enoch Powell’s infamous “Rivers of Blood” speech. It was a speech that quite liberally used racial tropes, stereotypes, and outright hate- and fear-mongering that stoked fears of a possible race war (leading to Powell’s immediate sacking by his own party). However, it had a significant sympathetic audience, and with continued immigration from Europe and the Commonwealth, Thatcher courted such ethnic nationalist sentiments.27 This rose in concert with and in reaction to Irish nationalism and the Troubles.

Ireland and Scotland reflected one another’s nationalist ambitions. Both Celtic Nations, they have both been invaded by and subjected to the English. However, Scottish settlement in Ulster (Northern Ireland) to pacify this section of the United Kingdom shows a stark difference: Scotland’s participation in Empire, even at Ireland’s expense. While nationalists on both sides may have been sympathetic towards one another, this shows some context for Scotland’s nationalist movement. Ireland’s nationalists are proponents of independence, and most call for the reunification of Ireland with Northern Ireland. Militant branches such as the Irish Republican Army (IRA) have been active for decades, infamous for bombings of British and Irish political figures. Termed the Troubles in Britain, the decades-long strife between Irish paramilitary groups and British military forces can be seen as a war. Thatcher was even a target of one of their bombs in Brighton in 1984.28 Scottish nationalists, even if sympathetic to the Irish cause,

28 The IRA’s claim of responsibility included the now-famous quote, “Today we were unlucky, but remember we only have to be lucky once. You will have to be lucky always.” English singer Morrissey of the Smiths drew
had to navigate a climate of extreme nationalist inflammation between Ireland and England. By distancing from the physical violence of extreme nationalism in favor of a narrative of cultural violence, Scottish nationalists could present themselves as an appealing middle ground between the English and Irish parties.

Throughout the 1980’s, Conservative austerity measures crippled the Scottish economy, likely leaving thousands of vulnerable Scots dead due to a lack of work and social welfare programs. The right-wing Siol nan Gaidheal nationalists launched several terror attacks against Conservative envoys in Scotland, in their minds returning the violence done unto them. The violence seemed far too extreme for most Scots, with the Siol nan Gaidheal having already been banned from the SNP, but one deadly disaster would be emblematic of a shift in this perspective. Real-world violence would still not be palatable, but the relationship with England would be more widely perceived as a violent one.

 uncontroversy for joking that, “the only sorrow of the Brighton bombing is that Thatcher escaped unscathed” (this is now ironic given Morrissey’s evolution from a young anti-Thatcher leftist to an aging right-wing nationalist). While these remarks are askew to the popularity Thatcher enjoyed for her stoicism about the attack, they show how the terrorism hit a certain vein of discontent across the British Isles.
The deadliest offshore oil disaster in human history occurred in 1988, at the Piper Alpha platform off the coast of Aberdeen. Run by American company Occidental Petroleum, certain overlooked safety measures caused explosions and a fire that killed 167 workers, mostly local Aberdonians. Only 62 workers survived. The Piper Alpha disaster spawned a full-scale government inquiry as the nation wrestled with such a catastrophic loss of life. This complicated the dynamic established in Local Hero. While the foreign oil companies could bring wealth, they could also bring disaster. Many nationalists held Thatcher and her English Conservatives responsible for opening the door to such companies. The victims are commemorated in a public sculpture at Hazlehead Park in Aberdeen by Scottish artist Sue Jane Taylor, whose work revolves around the North Sea and Scottish industry. The sculpture was inaugurated by the Queen Mother in 1991, surely an act of respect to acknowledge the suffering Scotland had endured.

Thatcher’s Conservatives did not fare well in the year preceding and two years following Piper Alpha. The 1987 elections saw Thatcher’s Conservatives win another majority despite losing more than half of their seats in Scotland to a triumphant Labour and steady SNP in “what has to be seen as an upsurge of national consciousness.” Scotland demonstrated electorally that

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29 Image via About Aberdeen, [https://aboutaberdeen.com/](https://aboutaberdeen.com/).

they were finished with Thatcher’s administration, and the fact that she remained in power gave
fuel to the devolution/independence argument of the nationalists. It was Thatcher who demanded
that the North Sea oil be privately extracted and not nationalized, making advantageous trade
deals with foreign companies. The combination of this money not reaching Scotland, the Piper
Alpha disaster, and the introduction of the poll tax led to a thorough rejection of Thatcher in the
1990 elections. Thatcher became emblematic of England’s exploitative relationship with
Scotland, one that became characterized by real (if accidental) violence after Piper Alpha.
Thatcher is still widely disliked in Scotland, though former SNP leader Alex Salmond has
acknowledged that her mismanagement provided the fuel for devolution.

Beginning in 1990 with the departure of Thatcher, devolution began to appear as a real
possibility once again. With the 79 Group coming to power through the 1980’s, the SNP became
an appealing alternative to Labour and Conservative. The lessons learned from 1978-9 led to
changes in the platform of Scottish nationalism. However, despite the political successes to come
in the 1990’s, the modern Scot was still undefined. Scotland showed new interpretations of its
past alongside a deep-rooted anxiety about its future. For some, a deep national connection to the
land was no longer enough. Others trusted in historically powerful institutions to carry them
through. Through various cultural productions, the country came together with a new diversity of
images of what it meant to be Scottish. Alongside this and situated more as cultural nationalism
than ethnic or civic, Scottish nationalists took advantage of an age of mass culture to state their
case for devolution.

Through the 1990’s, Britain experienced a massive resurgence of essentially British culture termed Cool Britannia. Covering film, television, sports, politics, and especially music, Brits were at the forefront of global culture. Much of the popular rock music (Britpop) of this time was a reaction to the state of Britain as it was post-Thatcher, frequently expressing dissatisfaction with the torpid banality of working- and middle-class life left over from deindustrialization and globalism. However, Cool Britannia is now remembered as a final patriotic and nationalistic reaction to the dissolution of the British Empire. In many ways, it was counterculture that became pop culture. Brett Anderson, frontman of Britpop stalwart Suede, recounts that,

…what began as a frank documentation of life as a poor, white, marginal man living in rented rooms in London—and which was in broader terms an exciting rejection of American cultural imperialism—soon became a jingoistic, beery cartoon when the money moved in…the faint whiff of nationalism and misogyny…feels clumsy and almost anachronistic now. It’s fascinating how something [the Union Jack] that loaded can be interpreted completely differently depending on the context. [The Smiths frontman] Morrissey’s use of it at that Finsbury Park gig in 1992 was seen as nationalistic, whereas [Spice Girl] Geri Halliwell’s and [Oasis guitarist] Noel Gallagher’s use later in the decade was viewed as patriotic. I suppose the politically correct era of the 1980s was bound to mutate into something less woke, to use the modern vernacular.31

Cool Britannia was a cultural renaissance in the way that it revived a perceived cultural dominance of Britain over the rest of the world. The Conservative 1980’s attempted to assert a moral dominance through the supposed meritocracy of neoliberal economics and an emphasis on Christian family values. Politically, New Labour and Tony Blair countered this by embracing rock star celebrities and the hedonistic, free-thinking lifestyle they came with. Yet just as the

culture of Britpop soured into a laddish concoction of flag-waving, Blair’s progress in the 1990’s ended up looking quite similar to the previous neoliberalism.

Through the Britpop ties in films like *Trainspotting*, the success of Scottish actors like Ewan McGregor, the influence of Scottish bands like the Proclaimers, Belle & Sebastian, Primal Scream, and Teenage Fanclub, and the burgeoning Scottish arts scene, Scotland included itself in this larger British culture. Such contributions to this British renaissance could be recognized by any Scottish voter, given the mass visual culture the modern citizen was now participating in. Direct SNP campaigning at *Braveheart* screenings drove voter engagement, leading to an SNP surge and Labour recession in 1995. This aggressive nationalistic call of the Scottish National Party led more patriotic centrist Scots to support devolution. This display of strength forced some cooperation, particularly with Blair’s Labour, and is how the SNP achieved devolution without an electoral majority in Scotland. The 1997 referendum returned a “Yes” vote, Labour introduced and passed the 1998 Scotland Act, and the Scottish Parliament was formed in 1999 to close out the century.

Through the 1990’s, Scottish civic nationalism grew in popularity as Thatcher was ousted in 1990 and New Labour heralded a general centrist shift. With this increased popularity, nationalism became a reappraisal of Scotland’s place in the United Kingdom. During this decade, depictions of Scottishness became identity-defining reactions to both current events and re-readings of history. As momentum built towards devolution in 1999, Scots across the nation articulated different forms of Scottishness based on their experiences and viewpoints. They centered around the question of Union with England, and how Scotland should see itself in the United Kingdom. A first strand emphasized cooperation with England as a historic partner. A

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second drew on the history of Scottish militance to present England as a colonial oppressor. The final looked at Scotland from a more purely cultural angle, reading Scottishness as a subculture to the increasingly homologous Britishness.

The first strand built on the idea that Scottishness was a part of Britishness, looking to mainstream culture and institutions for validation. It continued the Unionist themes of Pilkington Jackson’s public sculptures from the midcentury, emphasizing the role of Scotland in the British Empire. Sir Eduardo Paolozzi’s 1993 *The Wealth of Nations* shows the continuation of popular reimaginings of modern Scottish identity and anticipated the progressive optimism of Tony Blair’s Labour takeover in 1994. Paolozzi was a Scot, native to Edinburgh and born to Italian immigrant parents. He was a direct result of the waves of immigration in the twentieth century, and studied with other Scottish modernists in London and in Paris with the wider European arts scene. He was effectively an artistic ambassador for Scottish modernism. Paolozzi, being a Royal Fellow (exclusively selected for state support), worked along mostly acceptable social lines. His early graphic and collage work is incredibly influential, as he was one of the first in the world to create the style now known as Pop Art.  

It is fair to say that his works align with the Scottish cultural mainstream. Commissioned by the National Bank of Scotland to adorn their new Drummond House headquarters in Edinburgh, *The Wealth of Nations* is a massive and abstract monument to progress and legacy. Large blocks form a snaking robotic human form with an inscribed quote: “KNOWLEDGE IS WONDERFUL/BUT IMAGINATION IS EVEN BETTER,” from Albert Einstein. The name and content of the work attest to the shifting progressive interpretations of Scottish history and future.

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The Wealth of Nations is of course not just a sculpture, but also the founding text of capitalism by Scottish intellectual Adam Smith. Along with the empowering quote from Einstein and the banking commission, it points to the power of capital in defining modernity. These both draw on Scottish intellectual history, as Paolozzi himself stated: “The whole represents a strong belief in optimism and progress […] It’s a sculpture that contains shadows of the past to create images of the future.” This sentiment points to Blair’s New Labour and its embrace of liberal capitalism. The constructive nature of the sculpture imparts a sense of humanistic progress and achievement in Scottish history. These blocky forms could be read to harken to the geometric monolithic forms of the Royal Scots Monument in a new context. Reading the cubist forms as

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“building blocks” interprets the modern, robotic human form as a construction of the modern Scot. Current Scottishness was the culmination of a long historical project that was inextricable from the institutions built by the British Empire, and thus Scotland belonged in the United Kingdom.

Together, the sculpture can be taken as a pre-manifesto of New Labour in Scotland. Through responsible capital, Scotland could recover from the economic disaster of de-industrialization in the 1980’s under Thatcher. However, this was not the only proposed method. Blair’s neoliberalism aligned with the contemporaneous Clinton administration in America, softening the conservative focus on free markets with limited social protections. Meanwhile, the Scottish National Party stuck to a firmer social democratic stance of strong welfare and state-supported enterprise but focused appeals on their cultural differences from England. They argued that this cultural difference necessitated a different path for Scotland’s future (evidenced by their different political platform), especially in light of a perceived history of violence by England against Scotland. This position was given the biggest stage possible in the hands of American actor-director Mel Gibson.

Mel Gibson’s 1995 pseudo-historical epic Braveheart uses inspirational fabrications to create a misleading yet influential sense of nation and identity. Gibson directs and stars in this thoroughly rewritten version of the Scottish noble William Wallace’s rebellion against the English. Wallace was a Scottish knight who fought the English during the First War of Scottish Independence. He was one of several Scottish nobles who defeated the English army at Stirling Bridge in 1297, but was captured and executed, quickly reaching martyrdom.

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37 He was hanged, drawn, and quartered, a torturous execution for high treason that contributed to his martyred remembrance among Scots. The method involved hanging until just before death, then almost entire dismemberment.
Hollywood film institutions, directed by and starring an American actor, and filmed in Ireland, *Braveheart* shows an American perspective on Scottish history and conflict with England. The film is unabashedly anachronistic and inaccurate, with entire storylines, romances, and conflicts omitted or fabricated. *Braveheart*, the nickname, actually referred to Robert the Bruce, not Wallace. Wallace also never had a romance nor a child with Princess Isabella. They never met, as she did not marry Prince Edward until after Wallace’s death in 1305, at which point she would have still been a child.\(^3^8\) Even such simple material choices as woad (a blue plant) face-painting and tartan (plaid) kilts are fabrications. Blue face paint had not been used since the Picts reigned in the early Middle Ages, and tartan kilts would not be widely worn for another several centuries.\(^3^9\) Yet, none of these inaccuracies have had an effect on the film’s popularity. Rather, it is precisely these inventions and fabrications of Scottish history that have created the nationalistic cult of *Braveheart*, likely the most influential nationalist film of recent Scottish memory.

Alex Salmond, the leader of the SNP during the critical 1990’s, has effusively praised *Braveheart* and situated the film as a partial impetus for the 1999 devolution of the Scottish Parliament. He most certainly would not have been fooled by the inaccurate props and story, having earned a joint degree in Economics and Medieval History at the University of St. Andrews. Nonetheless, he declared in 2005 that, “the story of Wallace – and the release of *Braveheart* – was certainly a factor in spurring Scotland on to the restoration of our national


Parliament.” Salmond also chose a promotional poster for the film to represent twentieth-century Scotland in the national museum. The popularity and importance attached to the film can be understood in a legacy of historical reimaginings of Scotland as well as a contemporary reaction to the Thatcher years.

Specifically, the film’s material fabrications update and advance the notion of “twee” Scotland in the kailyard school of fin de siècle fiction. Such authors included J.M. Barrie, creator of Peter Pan, George MacDonald, mentor of Lewis Carroll (author of Alice’s Adventures in Wonderland in 1865), and Gabriel Setoun, author of the book Robert Urquhart (1896), a possible inspiration for the character of Urquhart in Local Hero (1983). A “kailyard” is a kitchen garden as in picturesque Scottish cottages, and the term evokes Scottish Jacobite revolutionary culture. Kailyard fiction created an image of Scotland as rural, backwards, but quaint, typically focusing on scrappy young men enterprising their way into romance and success. The genre, as with its image of spades and tartans, bucolic hamlets, and Christian sentimentality, was heavily criticized for syncretizing and stereotyping Scottish culture to a mass audience. I argue that Braveheart creates a similarly harmful stereotype of Scottish history and national character. Rather than the Christian idyllic tone of the kailyard novels, Braveheart advances a militant and hypermasculine Christianity. Much of the material trappings remain, specifically those that call on martial history: highland warrior tartans, Pictish war paint, claymores, and dirks. This masculine militant Christianity responds to the domination of Westminster (and two women, the

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42 The term was used in the Jacobite song “There grows a bonnie brier bush in our Kailyard.”
44 Claymores are ancient Scottish greatswords like that used by Wallace in Braveheart, and the dirk is a long Scottish dagger used in close combat, often hidden in the long socks worn under kilts.
Queen and Thatcher) over Scottish political and economic affairs in the 1980’s. Rather than being passive recipients of the unpopular Conservative reforms, Scots could now view themselves as powerful, righteous avengers against English colonialism. Braveheart’s popularity, despite its problematic historical imaginings, can be explained as an empowering interpretation of popular historical myth. This problematic reinterpretation of history can also be extended to religion, sexuality, and gender.

The character changes to William Wallace represent a new Christian hypermasculinity in contrast to the conniving and sometimes effeminate Englishmen. Mel Gibson, rather than relying on the complicated historical reasoning for the war between Scotland and England, painted Wallace as the avenger of his imagined wife, Marron. English king Edward Longshanks is falsely described as a pagan to create a heathen foe for the crusader Wallace to defeat. Edward II is depicted as homosexual and weak, and Longshanks murders his own son’s male lover in an attempt to remove his weakness, preparing for war. This situates the war with England as a battle for family and women, for this vision of a Christian masculine ideal, which the Scottish symbol, Wallace, necessarily then represents. The apocryphal romance of Wallace and Princess Isabella acts as a symbolic battle between the Scots and English over women as property, which the hypermasculine Scots naturally win. This grimly echoes Salmond’s desire for victory over Thatcher and the Queen. Salmond has since been deposed as the leader of the SNP in 2014 and disgraced in the wake of many controversial allegations of sexual misconduct, though he was cleared of all charges in March of 2020.45 Despite his acquittal, this tie of Salmond and the 1990’s SNP to misogyny may persist in some cultural awareness.

This revisited emphasis on virulent masculinity in Scottishness (evoking Connery’s Bond) stands in contrast to previous diversity appeals to women, and may explain why the party has since moved on to Nicola Sturgeon as leader (a woman). The film creates a permissive environment for heterosexual male violence, domineering, and sexuality, yet never outside of a Christian morality. Despite his extreme violence, Wallace always acts in duty to his wife, community, and country. Though the film is widely popular in Scotland, in America the film is popular with adult, white, male Christian audiences, as, “despite its graphic violence, Braveheart and other films like it are more acceptable to this audience than many ‘sexualized’ films because films like Braveheart are perceived as morally instructive and ‘real.’” So, the popularity of the film to a historically male-dominated, Christian country like Scotland is no surprise. It called upon popular myth to create an image of a militant, masculine Christian past. Rather than allow Thatcher’s Conservatives to own the moral superiority of Christian faith, Braveheart reclaims this in line with the old Protestant idealism of kailyard fiction.

Those who achieved devolution believed in the film’s power and representation of the time’s sentiment. By combining political concerns over government representation and sovereignty with cultural appeals based on historical revisionism, Scottish nationalism hit its mark. Nationalists moved past the typical civic-ethnic divide to create a compelling cultural narrative for Scottish independence. It was one necessitated by the Scottish national character that the film also so conveniently provided. It is a simple call for “FREEDOM,” and shows how many Scots now defined themselves in opposition to the British. While many Scots did not consider themselves British, this was not always a positive thing. This heroic narrative of

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Scottish history, as well as the patriarchy and hegemony it implies, would be challenged the next year in Danny Boyle’s cult classic adaptation of Irvine Welsh’s *Trainspotting*. This would not rely on ancient history to justify its vision of Scottishness, rather relying on the recent past and grim present to look warily into the nation’s future.

Irvine Welsh’s groundbreaking 1993 novel *Trainspotting* sparked a renewed interest in contemporary Scottish literature. Danny Boyle’s 1996 postmodern film adaptation was nothing short of a sensation. The film’s popularity launched the career of Scottish actor Ewan McGregor during the Cool Britannia movement of the 1990’s. McGregor starred as Mark Renton, one of a group of Edinburgh heroin addicts following a disjointed narrative on addiction, relationships, subculture, and the state of Scotland. Boyle crafted an enduringly popular soundtrack including major contemporary British acts New Order, Blur, Brian Eno, Pulp, and Primal Scream, as well as American Iggy Pop’s recognizable opener “Lust for Life.” The soundtrack became emblematic of the youth-driven Britpop movement of the mid-nineties, only lacking Mancunian heavyweights Oasis because guitarist Noel Gallagher thought the movie covered literal train-watchers. While the darkly comical and often-unnerving Edinburgh of *Trainspotting* would not reflect reality for most Scots, it exposed the underbelly of post-Thatcher Scotland and the crises present at the end of the century. Rather than redefining history to influence present conceptions of Scottishness, *Trainspotting* juxtaposes mainstream culture and counterculture to examine alternative narratives of Scottish identity.

*Trainspotting* is inextricable from post-Thatcher Scotland and the consequences of the 1980’s economy. Specifically, the film focuses on the narrative of youth and the disenchantment

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with the family-based economic and social structure that Thatcherism espoused. Rooted in her own childhood experiences, Thatcher favored a godly, traditional, and industrious household with male breadwinners and well-mannered children.\(^\text{49}\) White, middle-aged Christian men, the popular demographic for *Braveheart’s* hypermasculine moralism, would be the leaders of these family economic units. *Trainspotting’s* Mark Renton pays little heed to this figure, his father, during attempts to wean Mark off of heroin. Youth, punk rebelliousness, and heroin are central to the film’s dissolution of the Thatcherian (and British) institution. Importantly, neither the novel nor the film situates the Scottish addicts as direct victims of the Thatcher years, but rather as members of an unprecedented generation of mass culture and disillusionment. The social conditions these youths rebelled against were products of the worklessness, banality, and deprivation in Scotland caused by Thatcher’s economic policies. Yet Irvine takes care not to view them as just “children of Thatcher,” but as individuals shaped by the time they lived in. Irvine explains that,

> [The film did not see] the characters as victims of society, because my view of it is that they weren’t. They were people in a transition, who got the shitty stick in de-industrialisation, but still had their humanity and were still trying to get on and do something. I saw the heroin as basically just something people were doing in the absence of anything else to give their lives compelling drama; to give their lives, ironically, some kind of fucking structure.\(^\text{50}\)

In the dilapidated towers of Leith, Edinburgh, Boyle shows the British public the consequences of the austere 1980’s on Scotland. If the soul of Thatcherism was a faithful family, Renton’s substitute was a loaded needle. The scene of Renton’s near-fatal overdose emphasizes the failure of family as the social unit in post-Thatcher Scotland.

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\(^{49}\) Smith, “Margaret Thatcher's Christian Faith,” 234.

\(^{50}\) Matt Glasby, *Britpop Cinema: Trainspotting to This is England* (Bristol, UK: Intellect Books, 2019), 43.
Mark Renton shoots up, falling backwards onto a red carpet. The carpet falls away beneath him into a crimson chasm, symbolically labial. He sinks into the metaphorical womb to Lou Reed’s “Perfect Day.” Renton reverses the process of birth, showing the mental and social regression caused by heroin. With heroin as a substitute for family, the un-birth also acts as a renunciation of the traditional Thatcherian Christian family in Scottish sub- and youth culture. By being un-born through heroin, Renton detaches himself from his filial bonds. Unceremoniously dragged downstairs by his dealer, thrown in a taxi to the hospital, Renton is carried through the skeletal ruins of Edinburgh’s industrial district. Near-death as he is, the trip amounts to a journey into the afterlife, Renton becoming one of the cadavers of the Scottish working class left behind in the 1980’s. His resuscitation amounts to rebirth and a new chance to “choose life,” which Renton attempts. But having severed his ties to the Christian family unit, and therefore to acceptable, moral British culture, Renton relapses. Scotland still feels the opioid-

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fueled ramifications of the 1980’s and 1990’s heroin epidemic. However, it is reasonable to assume most Scots in 1996 would have viewed this movie having already “chose life.”

*Trainspotting* resonated because it articulated a popular discontentment with an overbearing Westminster, and broadly, an out-of-touch older generation. Mainstream nationalists at the SNP favored Gibson, while the “new cool” artists and stars backed Boyle. Instead of the blatant anti-English violence of *Braveheart* or the historical optimism of *The Wealth of Nations*, Boyle’s film situated Scottish identity as counterculture to the English mainstream. It was not anti-English as much as it recognized Scotland’s equal role in developing the broader force of Cool Britannia.

*Trainspotting*’s apathetic and nihilistic view of Scottish national identity was not necessarily presented as a *correct* view, rather simply as a justifiable one. Through the eighties and nineties, the consumer culture of Great Britain increased in homogeneity and banality, seeming to worry the British creatives. Many musicians of the Britpop movement, such as Damon Albarn of Blur and Jarvis Cocker of Pulp, critiqued this generic mass culture in their music. Both bands were included on the soundtrack. Main character Mark Renton’s (Ewan McGregor) opening monologue decries these creature comforts and shallow state of modern life. Emblematic of *Trainspotting*’s approach to modernity is the message of Blur’s “End of a

53 *Trainspotting*’s screenplay was written by John Hodge; citations will reflect this.
54 The first big Britpop album was Blur’s aptly titled *Modern Life is Rubbish*, a repudiation of middle-class banality that would continue with later tongue-in-cheek hit singles like Blur’s “Parklife” and Pulp’s “Common People.” This, of course, was complicated by Britpop acts like Oasis who had very little political content.
55 “Choose Life. Choose a job. Choose a career. Choose a family. Choose a fucking big television, choose washing machines, cars, compact disc players and electrical tin openers. Choose good health, low cholesterol, and dental insurance. Choose fixed interest mortgage repayments. Choose a starter home. Choose your friends. Choose leisurewear and matching luggage. Choose a three-piece suit on hire purchase in a range of fucking fabrics. Choose DIY and wondering who the fuck you are on Sunday morning. Choose sitting on that couch watching mind-numbing, spirit-crushing game shows, stuffing fucking junk food into your mouth. Choose rotting away at the end of it all, pissing your last in a miserable home, nothing more than an embarrassment to the selfish, fucked up brats you spawned to replace yourselves. Choose your future. Choose life... But why would I want to do a thing like that? I chose not to choose life. I chose somethin’ else. And the reasons? There are no reasons. Who needs reasons when you've got heroin?”
“Century” (charting eighteenth in Scotland) foreseeing the coming digital mass culture age with trepidation and cynicism. Albarn sings, “We all say ‘don't want to be alone’ / We wear the same clothes 'cause we feel the same / We kiss with dry lips when we say goodnight / End of a century, oh, it's nothing special.”

Literature and film critic Bert Cardullo follows the same theme in discussing the main character, “the only real choice for the cinematic Renton being between a speedy if euphoric death from heroin and a slow death—punctuated by bouts of sexual stimulation—from bourgeois stupefaction. For in his mind, the two lives are equally meaningless… each is its own kind of inane trainspotting, and the sole issue becomes how much you can, or want to, take of either.”

One of the gang of addicts, Sick Boy, is the would-be philosopher of the group. Through comparison to Sean Connery, he paints a wasting and morally bankrupt vision of modern Scottish masculinity. His opening scene in the film sees him pontificating about the merits and failings of certain James Bond films. This first reference is not random; in fact, he talks about Bond films in many of his scenes. The James Bond films are one of the most recognizable British cultural exports, and the 007 character is an icon of British film. However, the Bond franchise has become a commercial behemoth, far distanced from Ian Fleming’s original novels. The late Sean Connery’s first depiction of the character is still rated as one of, if not the, best version. This version of the character has lasting popularity, certainly through the era

56 Blur, “End of a Century,” performed by Albarn, Coxon, James, and Rowntree, lyrics by Albarn, recorded October 1993-January 1994, Food Records, track number three on Parklife, 1994, CD.
57 Bert Cardullo, “Fiction into Film, or Bringing Welsh to a Boyle,” Literature/Film Quarterly 25, no. 3 (1997): 161.
in question. Sean Connery, of course, was an Edinburgh native, as were the characters of *Trainspotting*. But they could not be any more different. This even comes up in conversation between the dealer, Swanney (Peter Mullan), and Renton.\(^{60}\)

Renton: Sick Boy is seriously lacking in moral fiber.
Swanney: But he knows a lot about Sean Connery.
Renton: That's hardly a substitute.\(^{61}\)

Connery’s version of the secret agent is suave, handsome, clever, and athletic. He likely represented the ideal British and Scottish gentleman, though as I have shown, this also played into gender politics of the time. Sick Boy emerges as this film’s analogue to Connery’s Bond. While 007 was a womanizer, Sick Boy became a pimp. Bond’s laconic wit is balanced by Sick Boy’s self-important ramblings on his vague unifying theory of life. Sick Boy even goes as far as to start dressing in a suit and tie, clearly becoming a Bond-like character, but his clothes are untailored, and one hollow heel of his oxfords contains a heroin bag and syringe.

Boyle presents Sick Boy as the reality of modern Scottish masculinity, in comparison to the alpha-male dominance of this fictitious past. Yet importantly, Boyle makes no overt claims to the truthfulness of this idealized Scottish man. Connery’s own misogyny had already been exposed by 1996, and while still beloved, he was criticized.\(^{62}\) Boyle was under no illusions about the historical nature of Scottish masculinity in film, unlike Mel Gibson. As I have previously explored, *Braveheart* created a historical illusion of the ideal Christian Scottish man in William Wallace. Virtuous hyperviolence, moral sexuality, and righteous rebellion defined the character. The conflict with the English was an opportunity to repel imagined pagans rather than a noble

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\(^{60}\) Coincidentally, Peter Mullan also had a small role in *Braveheart*.


revolt, and thus rewrites history to favor the Scottish rebels. *Trainspotting* engages in no such revisions, nor in corrections of Scottish male actions and attitudes. Rather, I think that Boyle specifically did not seek to correct the past through the sins of the present. This facet of the national character was criticized through Sick Boy. His character shines a new light on the Scottish male figure shown in such popular media as James Bond and *Braveheart*.

The difference between Connery’s Bond and Miller’s Sick Boy come not from nature, but from circumstance. It is the general Scottish degeneracy which some counter-culture Scots perceived that determined (yet did not excuse) Sick Boy’s reality. Renton acts as a kind of foil to the underlying misogyny of Sick Boy. In an alternative club, Renton is drinking and smoking in his skintight jeans and a shirt two sizes too small, looking at the diverse crowd in front of him. In his typically callous manner, he declares, “In a thousand years, there will be no men and women, just wankers. And that’s fine by me.”63 This sentiment seeks to transcend gender binaries, a debate that still rages twenty-five years after release. It treats the traditional gender politics and cautious feminism of New Labour, Conservatives, and the SNP as a mere stepping-stone to proper equality. Boyle’s new framing of Scottishness suggests that the nation will soon be seen as culturally regressive or degenerate, rather than the positive spin shown by Gibson. Renton puts this degeneracy in no uncertain terms during his speech in the Scottish countryside.

Dragged out by their friend Tommy for a mountain hike, the gang rebels against his idea, Spud calling the nature walk “unnatural.” Presented with a picturesque, tourist-bait view of their

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63 “Wanker” is a British insult meaning someone who masturbates instead of finding a sexual partner, but is used generally for someone distasteful or disliked. The sexual subtext of the club certainly explains the usage of this specific insult, possibly attempting to predict how sexual tastes will change over time. It is also just a simple insult towards strangers for whom Renton has no particular fondness. Hodge, *Trainspotting*.
country, they are repulsed. Tommy asks, “Doesn’t it make you proud to be Scottish?” Renton, between swigs of vodka, replies,

It's SHITE being Scottish! We're the lowest of the low, the scum of the fucking earth, the most wretched, miserable, servile, pathetic trash that was ever shot into civilization. Some people hate the English, I don't. They're just wankers. We, on the other hand, are colonized by wankers. We can't even find a decent culture to be colonized by. We are ruled by effete arseholes. It's a shite state of affairs to be in, Tommy! And all the fresh air in the world won't make any fucking difference!\textsuperscript{64}

This diatribe evokes vague agreement from the gang, and encapsulates the film’s attitude towards traditional twentieth-century forms of Scottish nationalism. Rather than spur a dedication to bettering themselves through plucky and intelligent diligence, as the protagonist of a kailyard novel would have, Renton explains that the group, “made a healthy, informed, democratic decision to get back on drugs as soon as possible.”\textsuperscript{65} This existential despair also informs Sick Boy’s status as a smooth-talking addict rather than a suave spy. Rather than anger towards the English for the colonial relationship, the counterculture youth are more disgusted by their countrymen’s meek acceptance. They are repulsed by the British mainstream consumer culture that has seduced Scotland into becoming a nation of postcards and ineffectual cliches, at the expense of its most vulnerable. This acts to pressure the Scottish people to take action and assert their own culture over American cultural imperialism and the British institution of Christian family life espoused by Thatcher. In essence, it challenges Scots to “do better,” or perhaps to choose a new kind of life.

The romanticized and idealistic view of Scottish nationalism meets a similar fate as the view of history: it crashes headlong into the realities of post-Thatcher Scotland. The heroin

\textsuperscript{64} Hodge, \textit{Trainspotting}.
\textsuperscript{65} Hodge, \textit{Trainspotting}.
epidemic of the eighties and nineties, spurred by the economic collapse, robbed a generation of Scots of the land-loving, combative nationalism of previous decades.66 The year after the film was released, soundtrack band Blur released the single “Beetlebum” (charting number one in Scotland) about their heroin experiences in this exact period, summing up this very same sentiment. Albarn sings in a sickly-sweet chorus, “And when she lets me slip away / She turns me on, all my violence is gone, nothing is wrong / I just slip away and I am gone.”67 The numbing and life-halting power of heroin sharply contrasts with the ardent fervor of Braveheart, showing how many young Scots did not feel represented by such fiery decolonial sentiment. As expressed by film critic Harlan Kennedy, Trainspotting speaks to, “a large and vibrant existential distemper; of orphaned street lives striving for their self-enfranchisement, however brief or adventitious, from parent surrogates or imposed social commandments.”68 This film spoke to and gave voice to the youth counterculture of the mid-late nineties, realistically dealing with the repercussions of post-1979 Scotland.

The way Scots thought of themselves and their own stateless nation took several forms until devolution in 1999, and Trainspotting forms one of the final links in this chain. While earlier forms were more romantic, cautiously modern, or optimistic, they all rewrote history to serve their own narrative. Trainspotting was a critical reappraisal of the twentieth century’s revisionist history and its attached nationalist production. Rather than reaching backwards for identity, the film was grounded firmly in the gritty present, as shown in the jaded example of masculinity and Renton’s acerbic monologue. It was a final interrogation of Scottish national

66 Allison McCann and Mary Turner, “As Scotland's 'Trainspotting' Generation Ages.”
67 Blur, “Beetlebum,” performed by Albarn, Coxon, James, and Rowntree, lyrics by Albarn, recorded 1997, Food Records, track number one on Blur, 1997, CD.
identity before devolution and the end of the century, as Scotland looked forward into an uncertain future.

Through the boom in visual media following World War II, the image of Scottish identity diffracted. Scotland experienced massive socio-economic changes that complicated its status as a stateless nation. Before 1979’s electoral shift, Scotland’s nationalism and national identity were cautiously optimistic. Public sculptures showed a gradual shift towards the futuristic ideals of modernism. To do this, artists reached backwards to link with ancient Scottish art, and thus creating a through-line of Scottish history to their own end product. This would legitimize their depictions of Scottishness as the results of a long historical process. Scottish nationalism’s massive defeat in the 1979 and the beginning of the harmful Thatcher years was an inflection point. Some threads of more optimistic Scottishness in the 1990’s saw a way to recovery through faith in institutions, such as Paolozzi’s *The Wealth of Nations*. Others leaned into antagonism with the English and a colonial, nationalist struggle, like *Braveheart*. A third strand lacked an anti-English sentiment beyond simple distaste, instead presenting the new youth-driven Scottish scene as a counterculture foil to normative British social order. These diffractions represent shifts in popular thought – Scottish national identity could remain British and establishment, nationalist and hostile, or firmly local and fatalistic. Through all of these methods, Scots had to be engaged at a cultural level, rather than the older methods of civic and ethnic nationalism.

**Section IV – Image Synthesis: National Unity, 1993-1999**

As we have seen, the 1990’s were a decade of reappraisal for Scottish identity. Beyond the explicitly political concerns of previous decades, Scots moved to incorporate cultural concerns, especially those about their relationship with England. The success of Scottish
nationalists lay in a push past the simple ethnic/civic divide of nationalism. The visual culture of the period shows the incorporation of civic and cultural identity from various viewpoints as Scotland began to agree on devolution. Scottish nationalists diversified their appeals in the 1970’s and 1980’s, including more people into conceptions of Scottish identity. By expanding to appeal to women and different age groups, the nationalist platform developed more from closed politics to open civic culture. National identity became less politically defined and more cultural, especially as discourse emphasized the cultural and historical violence in their relationship with England. Given the strength of these nationalist claims, patriotic Scottish Labour voters could agree with devolution, and New Labour was willing to work with the nationalists as they grew in popularity.

This alliance was a fusion of different perspectives on Scottish identity. These visions can be seen in the Scottish arts scene, through governmental and public institutions. The National Museum of Scotland, the National Galleries of Scotland, references to Charles Rennie Mackintosh, and Richard Demarco’s contributions to his Traverse Gallery and the Edinburgh Fringe Festival show this plurality of images of Scottishness as devolution became a reality. The National Museum of Scotland represents this first official step into devolved nationhood. To understand the contributions of the museum, we must understand the role of Scotland in the world and the state museum in nation-building.

Scotland’s devolution comes in an international wave of nationalist separatism. Through the 1990’s, the fall of the USSR saw nationalist revolutions across Eastern Europe and particularly in the Balkans (some leading to wars such as the Bosnian War from 1992-5 and Kosovo War 1998-9). The Troubles in Ireland continued until the Good Friday Agreement in 1998, with sporadic continuations of nationalist violence in Ulster. Ethnic strife intersected with
nationalism in the Rwandan Civil War and Genocide. We can understand the devolution as Scotland joining the international arena as a sovereign state, dependent on international capital to develop. The development of liberal, globalist capitalism during and after the Cold War has dissolved some of the national barriers to legitimacy. Smaller nations are now given enough room to grow without imperial economic pressure because it is more beneficial to the current economic system. According to historian Eric Hobsbawm, “the optimal strategy for a neo-colonial transnational economy is precisely one in which the number of officially sovereign states is maximized and their average size and strength—i.e. their power effectively to impose the conditions under which foreign powers and foreign capital will have to operate—is minimized.”69 Though he was referring to earlier dissolution of the British Empire in 1977, he foresaw the power of neoliberal capitalism in transnational development, looking towards the failed Scottish devolution referendum the next year. This reading of separatist nationalism shows how Scotland would not be debuting on a tense international stage as in the nationalist revolutions of nineteenth century Europe. Rather, the nation would be enjoying foreign investment as a new area for development, joining local, national concerns with a global economy.

This further explains the political alliance between the SNP and New Labour. The SNP is a social democratic party, not Marxist, but certainly promoting nationalization of resources rather than exploitation by transnational companies. The alliance with Labour’s neoliberalism, and its support of global capital, shows Scotland accepting a policy compromise to progress towards their nationalist ambitions. Devolution is a step towards independence and full international credibility. We may infer that official displays of this new form of nationhood would reflect both

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domestic and international qualities, given that domestic politics would be handled by the Scottish Parliament, whose members can also decide on the British Parliament’s international politics. In several places throughout the 1990’s, Scots re-evaluated and began to emphasize the works of the Glasgow Four artist-designers, particularly Charles Rennie Mackintosh. As a part of their own cultural awareness, they championed his homegrown contributions to Art Nouveau and international modernism alongside their own nationalist aspirations. The new Scottish Parliament building attempts this and may overstep its bounds as a unifying piece of architecture with Westminster. The National Museum of Scotland accomplishes this more smoothly, both through architecture and exhibition.

The Museum is a cultural project, meant to exhibit both the history and progress of Scotland alongside its grand new Parliament. The Parliament sits in the Holyrood neighborhood.

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of Edinburgh, a short trip from the National Museum in Old Town near the University of Edinburgh. In this historic city center, both buildings float out of the impossibly heavy neo-gothic stonework. The Parliament is a stunning (if over-budget) expression of abstract modernism, liberally using glass and steel alongside traditional granite and oak in an organic growth through the old city. The architect was the Spanish-Catalan Enric Miralles, nodding to a fellow separatist-aspiring state and showing an international fellowship. This also may reference Catalan modernist architect Antoni Gaudi, a contemporary of Mackintosh. Miralles paid homage to traditional Scottish architectural motifs in his design, including the organic forms of Charles Rennie Mackintosh. 71 However, the Parliament is a divisive building, splitting public opinion in its boldly contemporary design. It may be seen to impose on the public space of Edinburgh, echoing the extremeness that some Scots still felt the nationalist project expressed. The Museum, as a symbolic meeting ground of old and new, has a more unifying presentation.

Built off of the old Edinburgh Museum of Science and Art, the National Museum of Scotland is indebted in its design to international modernism but situates itself within Scottish

vernacular architectural history. British architectural firm Benson & Forsyth handled the Museum that opened in 1998, alongside a very similar redevelopment of the National Gallery of Ireland. They patterned the new building on Le Corbusier’s modern style, but used ancient Scottish Morayshire sandstone to unify with the other historical architecture of the city. The cylindrical structure at the front, with irregular windows, evokes Scottish lowland castles as well as the Iron-age brochs (stone towers) of early Pictish people in Scotland, the Orkneys, and the Shetlands. It also echoes the semicircular rear sections of House for an Art Lover in Glasgow, the unrealized 1901 project of Charles Rennie Mackintosh that was finally completed in 1996 amid new appreciation of his work. Where the Museum connects to the older, Victorian museum building, a glass corridor presents a symbolic gap between old and new, between subject and sovereign nation. However, a stone pilaster (ornamental column) continues on the new building, showing that this gap does not imply historical discontinuity.73 The Museum stands in the heart of Old Town as a union of new and old, showing the international aspirations of the fledgling state while maintaining the historical course that it displays in its galleries.74 In this way, it can be read as a continuation of nationalist imagery from previous decades.75 The Early Peoples Gallery is a prime example of the dignification of Scottish culture, showing how it deserved equal status with England in historic British culture.

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Sir Eduardo Paolozzi was brought in to design the Early Peoples Gallery, a section of the museum with four ideas to impart: “a generous land, exploring natural resources; wider horizons, tracing the movement of objects, ideas and people; them and us, exposing the central role of power and status; and in touch with the gods, delving into worlds of belief, superstition and religion.” These four markers combine to explain early Scottish identity, parsing the ever-shifting definitions of who a “people” is over time and how these groups relate to one another. This gallery is an apotheosis of the many changing images of Scottish identity. Abstracting the figures much as he did *The Wealth of Nations*, Paolozzi shows how despite the best efforts of researchers, the exact identity markers of early Scots are unknowable. This perspective counters the historical revisionism of *Braveheart*, rather displaying the archaeological records in this gallery as an equal but distinct part of British pre-history. It avoids judgements or claims about these early peoples, rather focusing on their relationship to the land of Scotland and the British

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76 Image via National Museums Scotland, [https://www.nms.ac.uk/](https://www.nms.ac.uk/).
Isles. This meshes with the new 1990’s nationalism of the SNP, that had moved beyond ethnic concerns into cultural, removing identarian factors. By foregoing ethnic identity signifiers in favor of an open culture defined by the land in which it resides, the gallery aligns with the contemporary brand of nationalism that had led to devolution. In line with this focus, British sculptor Andy Goldsworthy’s contributions and career evidence the elevation of Scotland to a more equal party within the Union.

Andy Goldsworthy is an acclaimed land artist from Cheshire, England, who now lives and works in Scotland. His environmental sculptures are fleeting, often quickly destroyed by weather, and usually just preserved in photographs. However, he has created many permanent works for both the National Museum and National Galleries of Scotland, some of which form a part of the Early Peoples Gallery. Tasked with using ancient materials (clay, slate, whale-bone) to create a dialogue with artefacts of similar composition, Goldsworthy created cracked clay wall coverings, a great sphere of whale bone pieces, and tall, curving slate walls reminiscent of Pictish round-houses from the Iron Age. His pieces show a long continuity of creative expression using the native materials of the British Isles. By juxtaposing new and old creations in the same medium, they show certain material characteristics that degrade over time, illuminating some qualities that may be lost from the artefacts. This symbolically fills in the gaps in knowledge of ancient ethno-cultural history with modern productions made from the same land by an Englishman. It emphasizes how the identities of these ancient peoples are stored in some implicit qualities of the Scottish land, and how it is a part of the wider British land. This image of Scottish identity works for both the nationalists and the patriotic centrists. Goldworthy’s presence in Scotland and the Museum speaks to the larger cultural relevance of the nation within the United Kingdom.
The major Scottish artists of the midcentury (e.g., William Turnbull, Eduardo Paolozzi) went to the Slade School of Fine Art in London for their education, migrating to what was then the creative capital of Great Britain. This represented the cultural preeminence of England at the time, as it is still rightfully recognized for today. As I have previously mentioned, arts funding was devolved to Scottish authorities in 1967, restructured into the Scottish Arts Council in 1994. Goldsworthy’s move to Scotland and works for these nationalist projects shows how the nation could now be considered a viable destination for the arts. Especially with the continued growth and appreciation of the Glasgow School of Art, the architectural masterpiece of Charles Rennie Mackintosh, Scotland now boasted a significant amount of homegrown talent and attracted English artists, rather than the other way around. Earlier images of Scottish identity certainly helped build this vibrant arts scene, as must have the specific attention of nationalist politics to the development of distinct Scottish culture. The new role of Scotland as a nexus for visual culture, and a meeting ground for different visions of national identity, has no better examples than the Edinburgh Festival Fringe and the work of Richard Demarco.

In 1947, the state, local government, and the church collaborated to produce the Edinburgh International Festival. Seeking to become the “Athens of the North,” the Edinburgh authorities wanted to create an international artistic hub in the city.\(^79\) This intersected with the original founding of the Council for the Encouragement of Music and the Arts (CEMA), the cultural funding center that devolved into the Scottish Arts Council. It evidenced a renewed British focus on cultural matters after the war, but was still a state institution that abided by government standards on the acceptability of art. It was partially included even in \textit{Trainspotting}, where the characters spot an American festival tourist in a pub, and wordlessly follow him into the restroom to rob him. The juried approach of the official festival led to the immediate establishment of a festival for those on the artistic “fringe,” the Edinburgh Festival Fringe. Because of its open entry process, loose structure, and encouragement of diverse and international artists, it has become far more successful than the original. The Fringe is the largest arts and culture festival in the world, surpassed by only the Olympics and World Cup (each quad-annual events) in tickets, and truly succeeding in making Edinburgh a global arts center.\(^80\) Both festivals, however, can be read as nation-building projects. They both incorporate the elevation of local arts and culture while legitimizing the host by presenting renowned international work. Richard Demarco, CBE is a representative figure of the cultural behemoth that is the Fringe, as well as its importance to Scotland’s national-cultural development.

Demarco is a Scottish gallerist, curator, producer, and artist. He was a co-founder of the Traverse Theatre, a main venue of the Fringe from the 1960’s through the 1990’s. He has produced exhibitions for the official and Fringe festivals, and brought in international artists,

particularly from Eastern Europe, all while running the Richard Demarco Gallery (Demarco European Art Foundation from 1990’s). Especially in the context of the European Union, established in 1993, Demarco acted as a unifier of Scotland with modern Europe’s art scene. He worked closely with acclaimed German artist Joseph Beuys and helped elevate the careers of Eastern European artists like Tadeusz Kantor (Polish) and Marina Abramovic (Serbian). This kinship with the continent, and particularly with the beleaguered small new nations of Eastern Europe, evidenced Scotland’s view of itself as a small, fledgling nation-state. Demarco did not shy away from presenting political art in his gallery, and he eventually involved Beuys’ work with Scottish sculptor and convicted murderer Jimmy Boyle in 1980. This lost him funding from the Scottish Arts Council, and that crucial line of official support. He was still awarded his Commander of the British Empire, but he has had to present his art by accumulating funds from various private means.

Demarco’s continued presence through the 1990’s and early twenty-first century at the largest arts festival in the world evidences the Scottish appetite for arts and culture, whether curated from abroad or created at home. Scotland has become a nation with a strong visual culture, one that developed alongside its nationalist project, intersecting and influencing one another along the way. As the global landscape changed over the course of the twentieth century, Scotland had to resituate itself politically, economically, and culturally. By accommodating these shifts, Scottish nationalists developed a specific type of romantic cultural nationalism that allowed for a compromise with Labour. This achieved a major step on the road to independence,

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81 Boyle is a former Glaswegian gangster convicted of murder, though he maintains his innocence of that crime. He began an artistic and authorial practice while in prison as he reformed himself, and has practiced these after release. He has launched popular philanthropic efforts for ex-convicts and addicts but remains controversial for the perception that he is capitalizing on his crimes. Jim Haynes and Richard Demarco, “What Is the Demarco Archive and Why Is It Such an Important Asset for European Culture?,” Demarco Archive, 2019, https://www.demarcoarchive.com/history.
with the devolution of the Scottish Parliament and attached works of nation-building like the Parliament, Museum, and Festivals. These would lay the symbolic cultural and literal architectural groundworks for the drive to independence in the twenty-first century, a debate that seems headed towards referendum once again.

**Conclusion – Seeing Scotland Anew**

Scotland traversed a long road to reach devolution. Home rule was granted two hundred and ninety-two years after the Act of Union was passed in 1707. This long road may be growing shorter, though. Within the past hundred years, Scotland’s national character has been revitalized and its nationalism has exploded in popularity. The cultural nationalism established in the 1990’s has continued today as the SNP has progressed to become the most popular party in Scotland. Its social democratic platform is strong and popular, and the nation has diversified to develop strong renewable energy and foodstuffs sectors alongside stalwarts like tourism. Growing under Alex Salmond, the SNP formed a minority government in 2007 and then the first majority government of the Scottish Parliament in 2011. In 2014, the nation held the momentous independence referendum after reaching an agreement with Westminster.

The referendum increased the electorate to include 16- and 17-year-olds, and fielded almost an eighty-five percent turnout, unprecedented in Britain since universal suffrage. It returned a “No” vote, Scotland electing to remain a part of the United Kingdom on a roughly fifty-five percent to forty-five percent split. Salmond resigned in the wake of this failure and his sexual scandal, with Nicola Sturgeon leading the party as it became a minority government once again. However, the United Kingdom has exited the European Union due to the Brexit vote in 2016, leading to renewed calls for an independence referendum in Scotland. Salmond has taken
over a breakaway Scottish nationalist party, the Alba Party. It has poached two former SNP MP’s despite criticism for false, socially regressive statements on trans rights and continued scrutiny of Salmond’s own reputed sexist behavior. The new SNP platform, in the context of fears of resurgent fascism in other Western countries like the United States, Brazil, and France, would be for a left-wing nationalist Scotland to rejoin the European Union as a sovereign nation. The question arises: will this be enough?

Scottish nationalists failed once in devolution before succeeding. Does independence require the same persistence? Or, as devolution required the development of cultural nationalism, do Scottish nationalists require another national-cultural element to sway them towards independence? The economic incentive to stay in the European Union and maintain access to migrant labor may be a major part of this decision. The uncertainty is evidenced by the results of the May 6, 2021 parliamentary elections. The SNP failed to secure a clear majority in the Scottish Parliament by one seat, though they have formed an alliance with the pro-independence Scottish Greens. This is a failure to claim a strong symbolic mandate, though the alliance means there is still a coalition majority for independence. Conservative Prime Minister Boris Johnson strongly opposes Scottish independence, especially with the economic and political pressure of Brexit on the United Kingdom. In the wake of wide Conservative victories in England, he will likely latch onto the SNP’s shortcoming to deny an independence referendum.

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85 Boris Johnson has claimed Scottish independence would be “irresponsible and reckless” while Nicola Sturgeon has put Covid-19 pandemic recovery first. However, after recovery, Sturgeon has claimed a mandate for
Delaying the referendum could spur anti-English sentiment in Scotland much as a previous Conservative PM did in the 1980’s, or it could deflate the sails of the separatists. The question of independence has come forward without a clear or definitive answer, so Scotland must once again create an image of the nation they want to be. Beyond the politics, Scottish culture may provide insights, as visions of Scotland refocus.

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