

# Unstated

Writers on Scottish Independence

Edited by Scott Hames



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## INTRODUCTION

### Don't Feel Bought, You're Buying

Weeks before the 1979 referendum on devolution, William McIlvanney sensed a mood of national stock-taking. 'Faced with the strangeness of where we had come to, we were perhaps more inclined to wonder about the strangeness of how we had got there.'<sup>1</sup> A similar feeling is with us now. The Free Presbyterian Kirk has just warned that Scottish statehood 'would be a provocation of God'.<sup>2</sup> Perhaps this is what Rupert Murdoch meant by arguing Scotland should be allowed to take its own risks.<sup>3</sup>

Part of the current strangeness is the murky place of 'culture' in the political shift implied by the upcoming referendum on independence. The very phrase would have sounded miraculous to cultural nationalists in March 1979, when McIlvanney lambasted 'The Cowardly Lion' who chose the feeding bowl over 'the terrible distances of freedom'. But how much distance really has been run since then, and what role have writers and artists played in crossing it?

In the years following the 1979 debacle, it is commonly argued, Scotland achieved 'a form of cultural autonomy in the absence of its political equivalent', led above all by novelists, poets and dramatists.<sup>4</sup> Writers such as Alasdair Gray, Tom Leonard, James Kelman and Liz Lochhead are held to have energised a wider cultural debate concerning national identity and self-determination, and to have exercised a quasi-democratic function in the period leading up to, and in some sense preparing the ground for, devolution. In 1998 Christopher Whyte argued that 'in the absence of elected political authority, the task of

representing the nation has been repeatedly devolved to its writers'.<sup>5</sup> So effective were Scottish writers in this symbolic role, when the new parliament finally opened Liam McIlvanney was struck by 'how little it now seemed to matter'.

Its coming was welcome, certainly, but hardly seemed critical to the nation's cultural health. Above all, it was belated: by the time the Parliament arrived, a revival in Scottish fiction had been long underway ... Without waiting for the politicians, Scottish novelists had written themselves out of despair.<sup>6</sup>

The shift from despondency to assurance in one generation of McIlvanneys is striking, but the notion of Scottish culture as a political surrogate has a longer history. 'The overwhelming tenor of Scottish nationalism was cultural rather than political', write Christopher Harvie and Peter Jones; referring not to the age of 7:84 and Runrig but that of Stevenson, Barrie and Patrick Geddes.<sup>7</sup> If the impulse toward asserting Scottish identity in the 1880-90s 'hinged on the grievances of a successful but subordinate imperial partner that its distinctiveness was not sufficiently recognised', today's cultural politics of Scottish emancipation are something like the reverse, defined against the ethic of imperial/Anglo-American partnership and, after the *Braveheart* comedown, dissatisfied by atavistic sops to 'identity'. Or so it seems: Alex Salmond spent part of the summer promoting a cod-feminist cartoon about 'lovable indigenous aristocrats', in James Kelman's description.<sup>8</sup> (According to the chair of VisitScotland, Disney-Pixar's movie 'is about changing your fate and I believe it will change the fate of Scottish tourism in a significant and positive way'.<sup>9</sup> Could there be a more servile gloss on a film entitled *Brave*?)

It wasn't fate that a nationalist government should find itself reducing Scottish culture to tourist-bait, and the arts to 'creative industries'. In other places culture is the motor of nationalism,

not the hood ornament. Murray Pittock points out that 'the shift to culturalism after political defeat had been the road taken in Ireland for twenty years following the fall of Parnell in 1891'. To the extent this path was trodden in Scotland after 1979, it seldom – despite appearances – intersected with organised political nationalism. The modern SNP, Pittock reminds us, 'was frequently almost indifferent to cultural matters', and set little store by arguments for linguistic renaissance or artistic heritage.<sup>10</sup> Unlike comparable nationalist parties in Catalonia or Quebec, 'the types of issue the SNP mobilised around from its inception revolved around self-government/independence in addition to a range of social and economic issues ... Significantly, such mobilisations seldom involved language or cultural issues'.<sup>11</sup>

At times the indifference was mutual. Jack Brand spent an entire chapter of his 1978 study of *The National Movement in Scotland* contrasting literary nationalism of the inter-war period – 'for the poets and other writers of [the 1920s and 30s] nationalism was a key issue: even *the* key issue' – with the post-50s scene in which the lions of Rose Street had become an unofficial establishment with few obvious heirs. What political enthusiasm had survived into the 1960s found an outlet in New Left commitment, and for younger writers, wrote Brand on the eve of the first referendum, 'the concern with Scotland as a nation is hardly discernible. Most of them have written about persons or situations which were identifiably Scottish but this did not have the implication of being concerned with the political issue'.<sup>12</sup> Only Norman MacCaig and Nigel Tranter feature, peripherally, as literary figures directly involved in the 1979 campaigns (as members of the 'Yes for Scotland' committee), not forgetting the more diffuse but undoubtedly potent influence of Home Rulers such as Hamish Henderson.<sup>13</sup> Today a few prominent writers are, with varying degrees of wariness, taking the plunge and aligning themselves overtly with the official campaigns, while others

signal their enthusiasm or scepticism – and often both – from a distance.

In 1977 Tom Nairn traced Scotland's long, oblique tradition of *cultural sub-nationalism* within the Union:

Cultural, because of course it could not be political; on the other hand this culture could not be straightforwardly nationalist either – a direct substitute for political action ... It could only be 'sub-nationalist', in the sense of venting its national content in various crooked ways – neurotically, so to speak, rather than directly.<sup>14</sup>

Throughout the nineteenth century, Nairn showed, Scotland's deep reservoir of shallow display-identities remained largely untapped, 'latent and unexploited' as a vehicle for conventional cultural nationalism.<sup>15</sup> But in the 1960s, 'once the material circumstances for a new sort of political mobilisation had formed', the sturdy icons of Scottish sub-culture – however 'deformed', and despite the 'inexpressible pain' they cause intellectuals – were ready and waiting: 'the thistle patch proved very useful'.<sup>16</sup> The SNP were able to capitalise on the currency and emotional salience of Scottish difference, without committing to a culturalist politics of 'tradition' and revival.

After 1979 it becomes difficult to separate the politicisation of Scottish culture (that is, the electoral mobilisation of sub-nationalism) from the *culturalisation* of Scottish politics. The general election results of the 1980s made the reality of a distinct Scottish polity – one consistently voting for governments it did not get – a question not only of democratic representation but national affirmation. The 'expression of political difference' achieved by Scottish votes against Thatcher/Major, David McCrone observed in 1992, 'has developed without the encumbrance of heavy cultural baggage', and seemed not to manifest a 'specific *cultural* divergence'.<sup>17</sup> If the divergence of Scottish politics had little 'cultural' content, it undoubtedly had cultural conse-

quences. In 1993 Neal Ascherson observed that "'Scottishness" used to be a private thing. Now, under the stagnant surface, it is being steadily politicised. It has come to include the sense of being governed against one's will by the preferences of another, larger nation'.<sup>18</sup> The slow-motion legitimisation crisis by which Tory support limped toward the Doomsday Scenario gleefully forecast by *Radical Scotland* in 1987 – the election of a Conservative government with no Scottish mandate whatsoever<sup>19</sup> – encouraged the 'general elision between political and cultural representation' in Scotland. Noting this pattern in 1992, Pat Kane saw a role for Scottishness beyond that of badge or thistle-patch. 'Cultural autonomy has been a crucial substratum for political autonomy', and could be so again, but actively and on terms shaped by artists rather than politicians.<sup>20</sup> And yet artists do not choose the ideological climate in which their work is received. James Kelman's defiant acceptance speech of the 1994 Booker Prize – 'my culture and my language have the right to exist, and no one has the authority to dismiss that' – was misread as a nationalist *cri-de-coeur*. (The first question he was asked in the press conference afterward: 'why do you hate the English so much?') For the past twenty years, it has been very difficult to locate the politics of individual Scottish writers (or their artworks) in any context separable from politicised national identity – a pattern sponsoring the reduction of all politics to identity politics.

### More route than destination

And today? Two of the histories cited above are called *The Road to Home Rule* and *The Road to Independence?* We are running out of road, and approaching a major junction. But the object of all this heady momentum, frequently disparaged as a mere 'vehicle', remains mysterious. Would the SNP's sort of independence be a platform for wider social transformation, or a self-serving

end in itself? In 1979, McIlvanney described the SNP as ‘more route than destination’; in 1989 Nairn expressed his fear that SNP-ism amounted to a ring-road of deliverance, in which the self-appointed party of destiny was perpetually enacting liberation simply by remaining in power.<sup>21</sup> A qualified distrust of the SNP remains strong among the writers I’ve contacted in the course of assembling this book.

And on the other side? At the launch of the ‘No’ campaign Alistair Darling warned against ‘going on a journey with an uncertain destination’. But if the destination is known in advance, it is not a journey at all. If going nowhere is the essential message of ‘Better Together’, it could do worse than to hop aboard the Inverness bus-route noted in John Aberdein’s essay. ‘Culloden via Tesco’ has a suggestive bathos as we approach an historic crucible by way of retail politics. *Buy autonomy get equality half-price. Premium defence contracts while supplies – and the Union – last.* This cheapness found its cultural level at the ‘No’ launch when pro-Union celebrity Miss Inverness 2010 let it be known that ‘there is nothing I like better than donning my tartan mini-skirt’.<sup>22</sup> Emphasis on the *sub*-nationalism, then. Are we really back to the thistle patch, and has any distance been covered at all since the 1970s?

Were Scottish cultural figures really in the driving-seat of devolution, or were they just impressive passengers, adorning a process fuelled by concerns quite different to their own? Holyrood has its Makardom and the Canongate Wall, honouring the symbolic role played by Scottish writers in bringing the parliament into being, but the selfsame writers seem largely ornamental in the current debate, politely revered when wheeled-on as ciphers of Scottishness but whose views are not expected to set the agenda. It is difficult to imagine a writer of McIlvanney’s moral seriousness being invited to address a major party’s annual conference today, as the SNP did in 1987. (McIlvanney took the opportunity to dub Mrs Thatcher a ‘cultural vandal’, strengthening the notion that Thatcherism was fundamentally at odds with Scottish

communitarian traditions.) His shift in alignment from Labour to SNP in 1996 was a front-page splash;<sup>23</sup> by contrast the National Makar’s speech at the official launch of the ‘Yes’ campaign was barely covered by media more interested in the endorsements of Hollywood actors.<sup>24</sup>

Recalling the strangeness of Scotland’s organised political nationalism, decried by Nairn as ‘an apolitical and anti-cultural nationalism unique in the world’, it might be fairest to say that ‘culture’ contributed a great deal to the formation and recognition of a mobilisable Scottish identity, but the electoral beneficiaries of that mobilisation had little firm interest in culture as an end in itself. Their actions in office bear this out, and here history repeats itself. In that infamous year of civic boosterism, Glasgow’s 1990, Angus Calder questioned the cash-value of Scottish left-wing culturalism:

Even if you throw in a few anti-apartheid songs and musical contributions from Chile and Nicaragua, what have the *uses* of popular culture which have been *made* by the labour movement in Scotland helped to achieve? Total Labour Party dominance in Lowland Scotland voting patterns and the yuppification of central Glasgow and the Old Town of Edinburgh, that’s what, if anything, they have helped to achieve.<sup>25</sup>

This is a valuable reminder. Writers, musicians and performers may have articulated a sense of Scottish disenfranchisement in the 1980s and 90s, and brought the ‘substratum’ of cultural autonomy to the electoral surface. But the conservative political process we call ‘devolution’ – no more or less than an effort to re-legitimise the UK state – was, in the end, not meaningfully shaped by them. To read some cultural histories of the past few decades, you would think Holyrood was dreamed into being by artists. It wasn’t. That the name of ‘Alisdair Gray’ is misspelled on the Canongate Wall is fitting, and installs a necessary distance

between the cultural and political processes at issue. Make no mistake: the Scotland Act was the outcome of decades' worth of short-term electoral venality by the major UK parties, realised only via anti-democratic machine politics of sometimes breathtaking cynicism.<sup>26</sup>

The one writer who is making an impact on the current debate is doing so via his estate, rather than his art. On his death in 2010 Edwin Morgan bequeathed nearly a million pounds to the SNP, which the party ring-fenced for a referendum campaign following its victory in the 2011 Holyrood elections. This direct alignment between literature and nationalism makes it all the more important to attend to the ambivalence of what Morgan actually wrote. In 1991 he penned 'A Warning' to jubilant ex-citizens of the Soviet Union, fearing that liberation might amount to no more than a retro-fitting of what came before, and the resurrection of forces 'that never will grow freedom'.

Musty but indefatigable reaction  
 stirs half-incredulously on one elbow  
 in another tomb as the bells clang, whistles,  
 laughs, clacks his grubby bones and orders suitings,  
 modest, subfusc, meeting the *novus ordo*  
 with decency. What, a republic a kingdom?  
 No no, there's nothing waiting in the wings, it's  
 early days. Take your string bag. An orange  
 will appear by magic, steaks, heroin, tickets  
 for strippers. Don't feel bought, you're buying, buying.  
 — And if, oh, if any should stint the euphoria  
 for a moment, watching the snow falling softly  
 over shot-pocked facades, there'd only be some  
 muffled echo of the better life that  
 never seems to come, like a faint singing  
 heard in the pauses of snoring out of cardboard  
 or waiters' shouts from bursting blood-red kitchens.  
 They must listen so very hard, the freed ones!<sup>27</sup>

Post-communist caution gains another resonance in Scotland today. Seeing huge crowds celebrate the collapse of the Soviet empire, Morgan 'felt like warning them through the television set – do you really know what you've done ... do you really know what problems lie ahead for you? I felt this very strongly just because I had hoped so much when I was young, I suppose'.<sup>28</sup> It would be absurd to map this scenario directly onto the current state of Scottish culture and politics, but both the hope and the warning seem pertinent as the referendum on independence draws near. We should listen very hard to what is being muffled and suppressed in the clamorous debate over Scotland's future. Despite his direct posthumous contribution to the fortunes of political nationalism, Morgan himself was neither buying nor bought when it came to cut-price visions of liberation, nor doom-mongering about its economic cost. The relevance of his poem to our present circumstances, to be clear, is not its note of ca' canny hesitation in the face of dramatic change, but its warning not to mistake the true nature of the choices and freedoms in prospect.

Even at this early stage of the referendum campaign, we are deluged by facile arguments and factoids designed to 'manage' debate, or to rig the terrain on which it is contested. As the politicians sharpen their messaging and reduce the discussion to slogans, fantasies and nightmares, it is increasingly apparent that the truly thorny, exciting and difficult questions about self-determination – including the basis of that national 'self' – will be submerged and hidden from view. Before the party machines and newspapers settle the parameters of a bogus debate, there must be room for more radical, more honest and more nuanced thinking about what 'independence' means in and for Scottish culture. The aims of this collection are two-fold. First, to set the question of Scottish political independence within the much wider and often radical horizons which inform these writers' work, both as artists and public intellectuals. Second, to document the true relationship between

the official discourse of Scottish nationalism, and the ethical concerns of some of the writers presented as its guiding lights and cultural guarantors.

The political significance of these writers' work is also at stake in the deepening of the conflation that equates Scottish identity with nationalism. 'If Scotland voted for *political* devolution in 1997', argues Cairns Craig,

it had much earlier declared *cultural* devolution, both in the radical voices of new Scottish writing – from James Kelman to Matthew Fitt, from Janice Galloway to Ali Smith – and in the rewriting of Scottish cultural history that produced, in the 1980s and 1990s, a new sense of the richness and the autonomy of Scotland's past cultural achievements.<sup>29</sup>

It sometimes sounds as though the dissenting energies of post-1979 Scottish literary culture can only find political realisation when subsumed within the discourse of liberal nationalism. Such readings risk the silent appropriation of more radical currents in the writing at issue, re-channeling them toward debates which exclude in advance any alternative to neoliberal capitalism and parliamentary democracy. More politically adventurous and provocative moments in recent Scottish writing – moments unmistakably rejecting this neutered political vision – are quietly omitted from this uplifting story, in which the political relevance of Scottish literature is delimited in advance to the affirmation and recuperation of 'identity'.

This project emerges from a conviction that the relationship between contemporary Scottish literature and contemporary Scottish politics is much more ambivalent, charged and complex than this critical narrative would suggest. The politics of Scottish devolution, and the contemporary debate over political independence, are self-evidently far less radical, passionate and imaginative than the politics of the writers most often invoked as symbols of their 'cultural' rootedness and legitimacy.

## Independence from the independence debate

The idea for this book assumed that prominent Scottish writers would feature in the rhetoric of both official campaigns, but also that the views of individual writers would be managed, 'storied', inflated and filtered in various distorting ways. It's early days, but it seems the views of writers may not be sufficiently influential to warrant such interference. It was, however, front-page news when 'Nobel Laureate Mario Vargas Llosa warned independence could produce a provincial vision of the world's social and political problems and claimed it would be sad if it goes ahead'.<sup>30</sup> This statement prompted a vigorous series of letters arguing for and against Llosa's rather vague impression of Scottish nationalism as 'tribal', but – curiously to me – none of the letter-writers countered or even contextualised a story headlined 'Writer blasts nationalists' by referring to the known views of *Scottish* writers. (The conspiratorially minded will have noticed that these stories omitted to mention Llosa's own political alignment with 'Andean Thatcherism'.)

Perhaps it is better to be ignored than to be manipulated. A week after the announcement of McIlvanney's SNP 'conversion' in 1996, he documented the embellishment and exploitation of his response to a journalist's question.

I find offensive the extent to which this basic message ['I have no alienation now to the thought of voting SNP'] has been distorted into whatever people who seem to think only in sound-bites want it to mean. It seems almost impossible in the petrified forest of party politics here to make a statement that doesn't harden instantly into being merely part of a moribund set of preconceptions. Anything you say will be misconstrued and used in evidence against you at the drumhead court of mindless party dogma. I think I have had enough of this.<sup>31</sup>

Small wonder that later writers have steered clear of party-political entanglement. Both out of curiosity and in the interest of posterity, I wanted to circumvent such worries and record what various Scottish writers really thought about the independence question, in a context free from the noise and enforced concision of the media debate. A second motivation was to construct a space in which the questions, priorities and histories likely to be studiously avoided in the official campaigns could be properly explored by Scottish writers and activists with something to say. This book attempts to stand back from both official campaigns on the independence question – indeed, to win a degree of independence from them – and to set the choices before us within parameters chosen by writers themselves.

What of the choice of writers for this book? This is no attempt to constitute a pantheon of ‘authors whose voices must be heard’ – plenty of writers not in this book should be and are being heard. Neither was there any particular attempt to be ‘representative’ (canonically, sociologically, politically), or to achieve a ‘balance’ of opinions and identities. Because academics and journalists are finding their own ways into the ‘official’ debate, we’ve focused on novelists, poets, playwrights, editors and translators. There is an unembarrassed bias towards people actively engaged in the politics of Scottish culture. Fewer than half the writers who accepted our invitation and sent us an essay are women (10 of 27). About two-thirds of the male writers we invited, accepted; for women it was about half. The collection is very, even uncomfortably white, but then so is the culture it’s talking about.

### Early days?

Morgan’s ‘nothing waiting in the wings, it’s / early days’ cannot but recall the unofficial credo of Scottish cultural nationalism, Alasdair Gray’s ‘work as if you were living in the early days

of a better nation’. Those imagined early days have a history all their own. As Gray has grown tired of acknowledging, this resonant phrase derives from the Canadian poet Dennis Lee. Considerably less sunny than Gray’s slogan, Lee’s long 1972 poem *Civil Elegies* is no encomium to nation-building, but a tormented meditation on voided citizenship. Far from the promise of a clean slate, the poem dwells on national defeat, ‘honour[ing] each one of my country’s failures of nerve and its sellouts’.<sup>32</sup> But even knowledge of its own abnegation is worthless ‘in a nation of / losers and quislings’ content ‘to fashion / other men’s napalm and know it’.<sup>33</sup> (Officially, Canada abstained from the US war on Vietnam.)

Gray’s is the more attractive vision, but Lee’s poem is a reminder that it is entirely possible to remain dominated, and complicit, from behind your own ‘sovereign’ borders. If that was true four decades ago, it is all the more so today. ‘The trajectory of even the most heroic nationalist movement’, Alex Callinicos argues, ‘is to carve out its own space within the capitalist world system and therefore ultimately make its peace with that system’.<sup>34</sup> This is a criticism from the radical left, but comes suggestively close to the SNP’s rhetoric of ‘normalisation’.

A year before Lee’s poem was published in its final form, the Edinburgh poet Alan Jackson argued that the individual freedom of the writer was partly at stake in the debates of a renascent Scottish literary nationalism. With a tang of hippy individualism, Jackson argued that the price of the liberation promised by nationalism was ‘continu[ing] the myths by which a few can act on behalf of many’.

Are we too to have *our* frontiers and passports, our *own* call-up papers and definition of undesirable aliens? A new form of loyalty and so a new form of surrender?<sup>35</sup>

To put Jackson’s reminder another way, the fulfilment of nationalist desire lies not in ‘un-neurotic’ cultural Scottishness, but

political statehood, including its unlovely apparatus. (Look closely at Chad McCail's cover.) Others will insist the status quo can hardly be preferable, when the broken democratic machinery of the UK guarantees rule by a 'few' elected by a different 'many', depriving Scotland of responsibility as well as agency.

Many would argue that new forms of artistic loyalty and surrender are being enforced already. If devolution is the child of Scottish cultural radicalism, a terrible revenge has been visited on the parent. In 2003 Cairns Craig presciently noted 'the threat of a culture of compliance' as Scottish Executive strategic plans fully integrated arts policy with wider government aims, nowhere acknowledging the good and necessary function 'of *critique*, of *opposition*, of *refusal*, of *challenge* ... The arts, it seems, produce only harmony and inclusiveness'. The Scottish Arts Council of the 1970s and 80s, wrote Craig,

found itself playing a disruptive role in the British body politic and assisting in a flourishing culture of resistance to the established political structure. The question is whether such a Scottish culture can survive the managerial harmonisation of its purposes *within* government policy.<sup>36</sup>

By a grim irony, the cultural sector held to blaze the trail for Scottish political autonomy now finds itself dominated by home-grown governmentality, valued chiefly as an economic resource, a lever of public policy, and as a 'service' to be effectively and efficiently delivered. Craig makes his disgust plain in noting that the 'National Cultural Strategy' for 2002-2007 envisions literature solely as 'a means to the fulfilment of the general government policy of making Scotland fit for globalised capitalism'.<sup>37</sup> As this book goes to press a number of writers involved in it have united to protest the vision of 'culture' evident in the conduct and remit of Creative Scotland.<sup>38</sup>

There is a rich history of critical debate concerning the relationship between Scottish culture and Scottish nationalism. This is only a brief sketch of some of the positions and narratives which have informed the debate over the past few decades. Writers unable to align their nationality with an existing state – the un-stated – will, I am sure, be keeping all these questions on the table. Let it remain their table. The passions, queries and visions of the essays collected in this book seem likely to remain largely 'outside' the official discourse on independence, but here they are, stated in their own space.

Scott Hames  
Stirling, November 2012

#### A note on timing

This book was assembled in the spring and summer of 2012, with the majority of essays submitted between May and July. Needless to say, the referendum debate has not stood still during this time, and developments after August 2012 are not reflected or rebutted.

#### A note on texts

Douglas Dunn's poem appeared previously in *New Poems, Chiefly in the Scottish Dialect*, ed. Robert Crawford (Polygon, 2009); Janice Galloway's essay expands on a piece written for the *Guardian* in August 2011; James Kelman's essay first appeared in *NY Arts* magazine; Tom Leonard's second image previously appeared in his collection *outside the narrative* (Etruscan/Word Power, 2009). Our thanks to Edwin Morgan's Literary Executors, and to Carcanet, for permission to cite Morgan's poem 'A Warning'.

## NOTES

- <sup>1</sup> William McIlvanney, 'Before: February 1979 – Referendum' in *Surviving the Shipwreck* (Edinburgh: Mainstream, 1991), pp. 17-22 (p. 18).
- <sup>2</sup> Alasdair Munro, 'Scottish independence: Self rule would be a "provocation of God" say Wee Frees', *Scotsman*, 19 June 2012.
- <sup>3</sup> On 20 February 2012, Murdoch tweeted 'Let Scotland go and compete. Everyone would win'. This followed a message declaring Alex Salmond 'clearly most brilliant politician in UK'. Simon Johnson, 'Rupert Murdoch takes to Twitter to back Scottish independence', *Telegraph*, 21 February 2012.
- <sup>4</sup> Murray Pittock, *The Road to Independence?* (London: Reaktion, 2008), p. 114. See also Pittock, pp. 114-35; Michael Gardiner, *Modern Scottish Culture* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2005), pp. 144-61. For a deft critique of this narrative see Alex Thomson, "'You can't get there from here": Devolution and Scottish literary history', *International Journal of Scottish Literature* 3 (2007) [www.ijsl.stir.ac.uk].
- <sup>5</sup> Christopher Whyte, 'Masculinities in Contemporary Scottish Fiction', *Forum for Modern Language Studies* 34.2 (1998), 274-85 (p. 284).
- <sup>6</sup> Liam McIlvanney, 'The Politics of Narrative in the Post-War Scottish Novel' in *On Modern British Fiction*, ed. Zachary Leader (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2002), pp. 181-208 (p. 183).
- <sup>7</sup> Christopher Harvie and Peter Jones, *The Road to Home Rule* (Edinburgh: Polygon, 2000), p. 25.
- <sup>8</sup> James Kelman, 'The British Council and the Edinburgh Writers Conference', 13 August 2012 [www.word-power.co.uk].
- <sup>9</sup> 'Alex Salmond attending US premier of Disney film Brave', BBC News online, 18 June 2012 [www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-scotland-scotland-business-18467968].
- <sup>10</sup> *The Road to Independence?*, p. 114.
- <sup>11</sup> Peter Lynch, 'The Scottish National Party: The Long Road from Marginality to Blackmail and Coalition Potential' in *Autonomist Parties in Europe: Identity Politics and the Revival of the Territorial Cleavage, Vol I.*, ed. by Lieven De Winter et al (Barcelona: Institut de Ciències Polítiques i Socials, 2006), pp. 227-51 (p. 231).
- <sup>12</sup> Jack Brand, *The National Movement In Scotland* (London: Routledge, 1978), p. 90.
- <sup>13</sup> Allan Macartney, 'The Protagonists' in *The Referendum Experience: Scotland 1979* ed. by John Bochel, David Denver and Allan Macartney (Aberdeen: Aberdeen University Press, 1981), pp. 12-42 (p. 26).
- <sup>14</sup> Tom Nairn, *The Break-Up of Britain* 2nd edn (London: Verso, 1981), p. 156.
- <sup>15</sup> *Ibid*, pp. 141-2.
- <sup>16</sup> *Ibid*, p. 131.
- <sup>17</sup> David McCrone, *Understanding Scotland: The Sociology of a Stateless Nation* (London: Routledge, 1992), pp. 195-6.
- <sup>18</sup> Neal Ascherson, 'The warnings that Scotland's patient nationalism could turn nasty', *Independent*, 21 November 1993.
- <sup>19</sup> See *Radical Scotland* 25, Feb/March 1987.
- <sup>20</sup> Pat Kane, 'Artistic Rage That Cultivates the Scottish Consensus', *Guardian*, 6 February 1992.
- <sup>21</sup> Tom Nairn, 'The Timeless Girn' in *A Claim of Right for Scotland*, ed. by Owen Dudley Edwards (Edinburgh: Polygon, 1989), pp. 163-78.
- <sup>22</sup> Magnus Gardham, 'United for Scotland; Labour, Tories and Lib Dems Say We're Better Together', *Daily Record*, 26 June 2012.
- <sup>23</sup> Robin Dinwoodie, 'New chapter as McIlvanney endorses nationalists', *Herald*, 6 April 1996.
- <sup>24</sup> Brian Currie, 'A-listers and well-wishers line up for independence', *Herald*, 26 May 2012; Severin Carrell, 'Alex Salmond predicts million-strong movement for Scottish independence', *Guardian* online, 25 May 2012 [www.guardian.co.uk/politics/2012/may/25/alex-salmond-yes-scotland-independence]. It should be noted that Liz Lochhead spoke in a personal capacity.
- <sup>25</sup> Angus Calder, 'Worker's Culture – Popular Culture – Defining Our Terms' in *Revolving Culture: Notes from the Scottish Republic* [1990] (London: I.B. Tauris, 1994), pp. 229-242 (p. 232).
- <sup>26</sup> See, among other sources, Vernon Bogdanor, *Devolution in the United Kingdom* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2001), pp. 110-143, 166-200; T.M. Devine, *The Scottish Nation 1700-2000* (London: Penguin, 1999), pp. 574-590; James Kellas, 'On To An Assembly?' in *The Referendum Experience: Scotland 1979* ed. by John Bochel, David Denver and Allan Macartney (Aberdeen: Aberdeen University Press, 1981), pp. 147-52; Graham Walker, 'The "Scotland is British" Campaign, 1976-8' in *Scottish Affairs* 61 (2009): 74-100.
- <sup>27</sup> *Sweeping Out The Dark* (Manchester: Carcanet, 1994). First published in *Hold Hands Among the Atoms* (Edinburgh: Mariscat, 1991).

- <sup>28</sup> Unpublished interview, quoted by Colin Nicholson in *Edwin Morgan: Inventions of Modernity* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2002), pp. 157-8.
- <sup>29</sup> Cairns Craig, 'Scotland: Culture After Devolution' in *Ireland (Ulster) Scotland: Concepts, Contexts, Comparisons*, ed. Edna Longley, Eamonn Hughes and Des O'Rawe (Belfast: Cló Ollscoil na Banríona, 2003), pp. 39-49 (p. 39).
- <sup>30</sup> Victoria Weldon, 'Writer blasts nationalists', *Herald*, 9 June 2012.
- <sup>31</sup> William McIlvanney, 'Country Before Party', *Herald*, 13 April 1996.
- <sup>32</sup> Dennis Lee, *Civil Elegies and Other Poems* (Toronto: Anansi, 1972), p. 55.
- <sup>33</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 44, 48.
- <sup>34</sup> Alex Callinicos, 'Marxism and the National Question' in *Scotland, Class and Nation*, ed. Chris Bambery (London: Bookmarks, 1999), pp. 37-50 (p. 47).
- <sup>35</sup> Alan Jackson, 'The Knitted Claymore', *Lines Review* 37 (1971): 2-38 (p. 8).
- <sup>36</sup> Craig, 'Scotland: Culture After Devolution', p. 43.
- <sup>37</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 42.
- <sup>38</sup> Don Paterson's essay for this volume was published online by *The Herald* on 14 September 2012. In the weeks following, the Scottish arts community applied significant pressure to the management and ideology of Creative Scotland, to what effect remains to be seen.

## JOHN ABERDEIN

I have contracted an aversion to *hype*. It is a bog-standard Rannoch Moor aversion, neither world class nor premier league. And so, if the Electoral Commission sanctions the extra box, I might not vote in the referendum *Yes* – but merely *Uhuh*. Imagine, if you will, a tottering pile of *Uhuh*s. Because we have had a measure of independence for quite some time – but what have we done with it?

We have had powers over primary and secondary education for donkeys' years, yet our education system is confounded by hype. *Quality Assurance*, *Higher Still*, and now *Curriculum for Excellence*. Cream is not enough for the mandarins: they must churn the schools till they get butter. The perfectability of children – or the system – lies within our grasp, it is implied, just a couple of documents off. I enjoyed teaching in Scotland for nearly thirty years, but to re-enter the classroom under such pressures would do my nut. We don't need independence to sort this: we need to let a whole variety of teachers with high commitment – and proper pay and pensions – proceed with the professional confidence that accords and comes with democratic power. See the Kirkland Five. See Finland.

Similarly, we have had serious devolution for a while now, with control over our National Health Service, yet much of our individual health is raddled. We gollop fast food down, we drink like whales. Pigging and whaling it because we are not independent? Perhaps with independence – and Trident gone – we could create a new defence policy, winching our more