

Rejecting the Knitted Claymore: the Challenge to Cultural Nationalism in Scottish Literary Magazines of the 1960s and 1970s

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The late 1950s and early 1960s witnessed a dramatic moment of change in the history and context of small magazines within Scotland and Britain as a whole. As Wolfgang Görtschacher comments, '[t]he real backbone of the British Poetry Revival [...] was provided by the numberless, hand-stapled little magazines, irregularly and cheaply produced on duplicating machines, that flooded the British little magazine scene from 1962 onwards.'¹ At the heart of this mimeograph revolution, it seems, was the need to break away from not only the financial but also from what were seen as the conservative cultural and intellectual restraints of commercial publishing, with a resultant focus on the need to find new creative outlets for expression.² In his editorial to the final edition of the Edinburgh University literary journal *Jabberwock* in 1959, Alex Neish was dismissive of much of the critical and cultural context of the Scottish literary establishment or what, after John Knox, he called the 'Monstrous Regiment':

This is the last issue of *Jabberwock* that I shall edit. It makes an almost total break with the magazine's recent tradition by jettisoning that inferior romantic drivel of misdirected Nationalism which for too long has been a mill-stone around the necks of younger Scottish writers. This will not, therefore, be a popular issue with the University's [Scottish Literary] Renaissance Society

¹ Wolfgang Görtschacher, *Little Magazine Profiles: The Little Magazines in Great Britain, 1939-1993* (Salzburg Studies in English Literature Poetic Drama & Poetic Theory) (Salzburg and Lewiston, N.Y.: University of Salzburg / Edwin Mellen Press, 1993), p. 141.

² 'By the early 1960s, the so-called mimeo-revolution had arrived. This use of office duplicating machines encouraged many writers and editors to produce their publications in the staff-rooms of schools and colleges, or in the committee rooms that their more respected friends had access to. Those who had some money bought a second-hand duplicator, often called a "Gestetner", and a box of stencils. Most already owned a typewriter, even if old and inefficient. Usually the name of this revolutionary game was not good printing but putting into print new writing that established publishers would not look at' (Duncan Glen, *Selected Scottish and Other Essays* (Kirkcaldy: Akros Publications, 1999), p. 136).

which controls the review. Nevertheless, now that the latent disagreements between myself and the Society have culminated in this issue, the freedom is available to state the reasons for including here so much of the work of the new American writers.³

According to Neish, Scottish literary culture had become increasingly inward-looking, too reluctant to move with the times and to take on board the wider sociological changes of the moment. For Neish, the Scottish scene had too strong a preference for introspection, for what he described as ‘Nationalist shibboleths’ and the need to ‘excommunicate all that is not one hundred per cent Scottish’.⁴ The key problem, he writes, is ‘whether it is welcome or not, the fact must be faced that once again Scotland lies in creative stagnation, redeemed only by the works of one or two artists’.⁵ By tracing through the polemics within many of the small literary and cultural magazines of the period (relatively overlooked in literary studies to date), from *Jabberwock* in the late 1950s through to *Scottish International* and *Lines Review* in the 1970s, it is possible to see similar signs of frustration and impatience with the direction of Scottish literary culture at the time. The focus of this essay will be on this restlessness and the push for change found in the work of many writers and artists during this period. Often recurring is a deep frustration with the legacy of the interwar Scottish Renaissance movement, and what many, mainly younger, critics perceived as its anachronistic dominance from the late 1950s onwards. For these writers, the objectives of the Scottish Renaissance, in particular Hugh MacDiarmid’s focus on the adoption of synthetic Scots or Lallans as a means of poetic expression, still loomed too large over Scottish literary culture, and so

³ Alex Neish, ‘Against the Monstrous Regiment’, *Jabberwock* 6.1 (1959), 7-9, p. 7.

⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 7.

⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 7.

became a form of shorthand for all that was wrong with it.⁶ Scottish literary culture, they argued, was clearly too imbued with tradition, which was becoming increasingly intolerable. It is the tension between these newer voices and those still sympathetic to MacDiarmid's visions for a Scots language project that so strongly inflects many of the small literary magazines of the period, capturing an impression of Scottish literary culture in an increasingly self-conscious period of transition.

Alex Neish was involved in editing and contributing to the last few editions of *Jabberwock* in the late 1950s, after which it ceased publication. For Neish, what 'effectively killed' the publication was its final American edition (of which he was sole editor).⁷ This included work by writers including Allen Ginsberg, Gary Snyder, Robert Creeley, Jack Kerouac and Charles Olson. Notably, it also included a section of William Burroughs' *Naked Lunch*, which Allen Ginsberg audaciously sent to Neish without either the author's knowledge or approval (this being only the second time that Burroughs' work had been published in Britain).⁸ It was impossible, it seems, for the magazine to recover its previous, largely Scottish-focused identity after this radical change of emphasis and direction. While Neish publically expressed his respect and

⁶ Another important debate surrounded the fierce reaction to Norman MacCaig's publication of *Honour'd Shade: An Anthology of New Scottish Poetry To Mark the Bicentenary of the Birth of Robert Burns* in 1959. This became known as 'Dishonour'd Shade' amongst younger writers who felt that it was too elitist and conservative in nature, too focussed on the work of Hugh MacDiarmid and on the aims and objectives of the Scottish Literary Renaissance movement or the 'Lallans boys' as Tom Wright referred to them in 1962 (see Eleanor Bell, "'The ugly burds without wings?': Reactions to Tradition since the 1960s", *Modern Irish and Scottish Poetry*, ed. Fran Brearton, Edna Longley and Peter Mackay (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2011), 238-250: p. 242. For more on the 'Dishonour'd Shade' debate, see Duncan Glen's *Selected Scottish and Other Essays*).

⁷ In interview with Graham Rae, Neish commented that '*Jabberwock* was an introspective political and literary magazine that had been going irregularly since the early 1950s. In the late 50s and early 60s I formed part of a small group that ran all the student publications and was asked to take it over. I edited around four issues before deciding to do the American issue in Autumn 1959. This effectively killed it off and then led to *Sidewalk*' (<http://realitystudio.org/interviews/interview-with-alex-neish-editor-of-jabberwock-and-sidewalk/>, accessed 21 April 2016).

⁸ Burroughs was first published in *New Departures* magazine in 1959, the publication edited by Mike Horowitz.

admiration for many of the older, established Scottish writers, he was nonetheless determined to redress what he perceived as the ‘limited vision’ of Scottish literary culture in general at the time. ‘I did not wish to kick against their writing,’ he said later, ‘I just viewed it as being a limited vision of modern literature.’⁹ Immediately after *Jabberwock*, Neish set up *Sidewalk*, a short-lived publication which only ran to two issues. As with the final *Jabberwock*, what was significant about the first edition of *Sidewalk* was its international reach, the placing side-by-side of Scottish writers with a wide range of other British, European and American writers, in ways which presumed their natural allegiance. These included Marguerite Duras, Alain Robbe-Grillet, Alan Ginsberg, Charles Olsen, Christopher Logue, Iain Crichton Smith, Edwin Morgan and Ian Hamilton Finlay. No attempt was made to explain or justify this selection: the implicit suggestion was that such rationale was unnecessary. Nonetheless, the first issue of *Sidewalk* advertised its key focus as ‘Anti-parochialism’—‘putting you in the forefront of developments at home and abroad’—and promised to ‘lead the way with its vigorous writing on the social and literary problems of today and tomorrow’.¹⁰ In a similar vein, *Sidewalk 2* contained work by Gary Snyder, William Burroughs, Robert Creeley, as well as Scottish writers including Edwin Morgan and J. F. Hendry. The focus of *Sidewalk 2* was on firmly ‘placing Scotland in the international scene’.¹¹ This was clearly expressed in the Editorial, which centered around the seizing of two copies of Francis Pollini’s novel *Night* by Scottish postal authorities (*Night* was published by Olympia Press, Paris, the publisher of Vladimir Nabokov’s *Lolita*, in 1955 and banned by the French Government in 1956). The two copies in question were sent to Neish and

⁹ <http://realitystudio.org/interviews/interview-with-alex-neish-editor-of-jabberwock-and-sidewalk/>, accessed 21 April 2016. Neish added: ‘[s]ome of the early poems of MacDiarmid and Goodsir Smith were polished works but with their advancing age their writing deteriorated. MacCaig was outstanding as a writer and as a human being.’

¹⁰ Advertisement, *Sidewalk* 1.1 (1960), p. 4.

¹¹ *Ibid.*, p. 4.

MacDiarmid respectively. MacDiarmid's copy was 'not only seized but burned and the poet himself interrogated'.¹² Although *Sidewalk* 3 was advertised in the second edition, it never appeared in print form as Neish, by that point feeling stifled by Scotland, had moved to South America. No one else, it appears, was either willing or able to carry on the magazine.

Despite the end of *Jabberwock* and the short existence of *Sidewalk*, both clearly tapped into the need to resist the Calvinist, morally conservative culture of Edinburgh of the early 1960s (not for nothing did Neish turn arch-Puritan John Knox's phrase, the 'Monstrous Regiment', against the literary establishment in his valedictory *Jabberwock* editorial). In this sense both were moving with broader cultural shifts of the time, a process of 'awakening' in which Knox's 'long shadow' was beginning to be 'shaken off'.¹³ This need to move the Scottish literary scene on from within permeates many of the short-lived, energetic magazines of this period. While some contained lively, combative editorials, the rebellion in others was more implicit, allowing the works simply to speak for themselves. Notable here is *Gambit*, another University of Edinburgh publication. *Gambit* was published from 1956 to 1965, becoming increasingly experimental in the early 1960s. In the editorial of the Autumn 1961 edition, for example, Mike Shea defends the publication against the charge that it was 'sinking on the rocks of Rose Street parochialism'¹⁴ (a reference to the street in Edinburgh well-known for its public houses, often frequented at that time by several prominent Scottish writers and poets, most notably MacDiarmid). The Spring 1961

¹² Alex Neish, 'Editorial', *Sidewalk* 1.2 (1961), p. 5.

¹³ Angela Bartie, *The Edinburgh Festivals: Culture and Society in Postwar Britain* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2014), p. 227. Bartie adds: 'Edinburgh's reputation as puritan, stifled by its Presbyterianism, persisted among many journalists, critics, visitors and residents throughout the 1960s and into the 1970s (and hangs around still). But it was undoubtedly undermined, sometimes by events at the Festivals and other cultural ventures in Edinburgh, and sometimes by broader cultural shifts' (p. 227).

¹⁴ Mike Shea, 'Editorial', *Gambit* (Autumn 1961), 3-4, p. 3.

edition of the magazine contains the following poem by Alan Jackson, in which a sense of this energetic demand for change is captured.

Poem

I hate circles,

Haloes, hats, the lot.

I'm going to smash 'em

With all I've got.

I'm coming out.

I've got a right to birth;

To air and sun,

As well as earth.

I'm gorged with the ancient

Goody foods.

Time now for fighting

And the seven league boots.

Time for the Mother

To get a big kick;

To scatter the dark

With a swipe of my stick.¹⁵

Both Alan Jackson and Alex Neish are therefore central figures at the heart of these early 1960s interventions into Scottish culture. In his Editorial of the summer 1962

¹⁵ Alan Jackson, 'Poem', *Gambit* (Spring 1961), p. 30. Quoted with permission from the author.

issue of *Gambit*, for example, Bill McArthur laments the fact that Neish ‘has departed for the Argentine’, continuing, ‘[s]how us who else here has his ability with words, whether chips on his shoulder stick out or not. Let us see if anyone else “fills” the very real gap which we consider that he has left behind. Scotland—is she alive, or has Alex Neish beetled off before the undertaker comes?’¹⁶

Following his involvement in *Gambit*, McArthur went on to edit *Cleft* magazine from 1963 to 1964. With an irreverent sweep he downplayed the very function of small magazines in the first issue’s Editorial:

The field of the small literary magazine is, generally speaking, one of sequestered obscurity. It emanates a wilful negation of commercial contact; an opting out of the monetary contract. Drabness of intention and presentation characterize the production. Little attempt is made at communication and they tend to reflect, to a crippling extent, the particular predilections of the current editor. This opting out of the commercial aspect of magazine production has a useful side-kick in that it ensures the brevity of their existence. As a medium of communication they are of doubtful value.¹⁷

While McArthur’s prophecy may have been fatefully correct in certain respects, as the magazine itself was only to survive two issues, the publication was certainly anything but drab. The first edition contained contributions from a range of international writers including Norman Mailer, Eugene Ionesco, William Burroughs, Andrei Voznesensky, Anselm Hollo and Louis Zukofsky. The second edition once again contained work by Burroughs and Mailer, as well as the first two paragraphs from the Noigandres Group’s *Pilot Plan for Concrete Poetry*.

¹⁶ Bill McArthur, ‘Editorial’, *Gambit* (Summer 1962), 3-4, p. 4.

¹⁷ Bill McArthur, ‘Editorial’, *Cleft* 1.1 (June 1963), p. 3.

As small magazines developed during the 1960s, in certain publications there were a series of more direct debates and confrontations surrounding the perceived constraints of Scottish culture and Scottish cultural nationalism at the time. *New Saltire*, initially edited by Giles Gordon and Michael Scott-Moncrieff (1961-62) then later Magnus Magnusson (1962-1964), contains several pieces which display a similar rebellious energy and in some ways an impatience with the legacy of the Renaissance project. Several infamous ‘flytings’ took place within this magazine, notably a series of public arguments between Ian Hamilton Finlay and those sympathetic to his experimentalism (in concrete poetry as well as his *Glasgow Beasts an a Burd Haw an Inseks an Aw a Fush* (a short collection of playful animal poems, written in Glasgow dialect, based on the Japanese tanka form) and those loyal to the legacy of Hugh MacDiarmid’s Scottish Literary Renaissance.¹⁸

In one of his best-known essays from the time in *New Saltire* 3, ‘The Beatnik in the Kailyard’, Edwin Morgan draws attention to the legacy of the Scottish Renaissance movement and the danger of what he describes as an inherent ‘narrowing of outlook’ at the heart of it. ‘Too many heads have been attracted by the sand’, he writes, ‘leading to a new and worrying “provincialism” in Scotland.’¹⁹ What Scotland now needs to do, he suggests, is shed its protective layer in order to open itself up to the possibility of engagement with other cultures and languages and with artistic developments on the Continent and in the United States. He writes: ‘Well, there is a time for gathering up one’s history and traditions, and there is a time for showing the face of the present and

¹⁸ Elsewhere I have discussed particular strands of these debates in more detail, especially the tensions between the legacy of the Scottish Renaissance movement and vocal resistance to this from younger writers and critics, primarily Edwin Morgan and Ian Hamilton Finlay. See Eleanor Bell, ‘Experimenting with the Verbivocovisual: Edwin Morgan’s Early Concrete Poetry’, *Scottish Literary Review*, 4.2 (2012), pp. 105–21. See also Bell, “‘The ugly burds without wings?’”.

¹⁹ Edwin Morgan, ‘The Beatnik in the Kailyard’ *New Saltire* 3, (Spring 1962), 65-74, p. 74.

looking forward. The second of these is what is needed now.’²⁰ In this publication there is a recurring pattern of writers feeling restricted by aspects of Scottish tradition, often manifest as a knee-jerk need to break from its confines.

While *New Saltire* contained some reflections on Scottish culture, politics and society (for example, in the long editorial entitled ‘Into Europe’ of the first edition),²¹ it was primarily a literary magazine, with affiliations to the Saltire Society. Moving towards the end of the decade, however, with the appearance of *Scottish International*, Scottish magazine culture arguably became more noticeably polemical, politically and culturally engaged. While much of the previous disgruntlement surrounded the Scottish Literary Renaissance (or anti-Renaissance movement as some critics termed it), with the arrival of *Scottish International* there was a clear agenda to examine the interconnections between Scottish literature and culture in a more directly political, hands-on way.²²

The editorial of the first edition of *Scottish International* begins somewhat experimentally on the front cover of the magazine:

²⁰ Ibid., p. 74.

²¹ The editorial of the first edition reflects on the uncertainty of the United Kingdom joining the European Economic Community and the future prospects for Scotland under the Common Market. The preference for Scotland joining is clear: ‘if we are not fit to take this chance, which seems to be coming to us, we may be forgotten altogether, and will deserve to be. Our English neighbours may slide reluctantly into Europe: their greatest days were those in which England stood apart as a unique World Power. But we should go in eagerly, convinced that Europe is our home. Our way of life and most of our institutions should be able to draw new strength from contacts with countries which share the same historic experiences’ (Giles Gordon and Michael Scott-Moncrieff, ‘Editorial’, *New Saltire* 1, (Summer 1961), 1-6, p. 3).

²² In ‘The Anti-Renaissance Burd, Inseks and Haw’, Maurice Lindsay wrote a stinging critique of the younger generation of ‘upstarts’ and what he described as their ‘emotional measles’: ‘Young writers in Scotland now have no real grounds for complaint and no justification for becoming attitudinising antis. The hostile “Renaissance establishment” is a complete myth. Individual rebuffs provoked by dotting older writers on the nose are inevitable but do not imply collective hostility. The young writers’ work gets published, and they themselves are given far more personal publicity than any young Scottish writers have ever had before. More power to their pens, say I, so long as they employ them creatively. But for their own good, let them lay aside this silly anti-Renaissance nonsense and get on with the business of carrying the Scottish literary tradition, of which the Renaissance is now a part, a stage further along the way of achievement. They should be writing now for all they are worth, while their youth assures them of a sympathetic hearing. They may later discover that however much their talents may develop in middle age, fickle Scotland will be much less willing to display a practical interest in their mature achievement’ (*New Saltire* 4 (Summer 1962), 61-67, p. 67).

[A] self-conscious cultural nationalism can lead to bad habits of stereotyped thinking and unwillingness to look at the situation as it really is. Our policy will be to look for what is really there, and to call people's attention to it. Everyone is aware, to a greater or lesser extent, of how cultures other than Scottish impinge upon us, through publishing and the mass media. It is important that this awareness should be sharpened and extended critically, so that more opportunity can be given to compare Scottish work with work done elsewhere. To define ourselves, we believe it is necessary to define many other things, for that is the nature of the world we live in.²³

In a similar vein, the editorial of the second edition begins with an especially unusual call to arms for a literary magazine: 'If there are going to be changes in this country, writers and artists had better start asking what kind of place people will have to live in [...] We are deeply concerned about the present nationalist controversy and welcome discussion from every political angle.'²⁴ In this magazine there is both an inherent critique of the potential pitfalls of nationalism and yet also a growing awareness of the distinctiveness of Scotland from the rest of the UK. In this sense the magazine trod a delicate balancing act between interrogating aspects of cultural nationalist complacency and acknowledging a deep need for cultural and political change in Scotland.

Scottish International marked a change in direction in Scottish cultural and literary magazines. Yet, as John Herdman has pointed out, this was not without controversy either, especially as the publication was supported by the newly formed Scottish Arts Council (1967).²⁵ While the magazine sought to ask fundamental questions about the nature and direction of Scottish culture and politics at the time,

²³ Bob Tait, 'Editorial', *Scottish International* 1 (January 1968), 1-3, p. 3.

²⁴ Bob Tait, 'Editorial', *Scottish International* 2 (April 1968), p. 2.

²⁵ See John Herdman *Poets, Pubs and Pillar Boxes: Memoirs of an Era in Scottish Politics and Letters* (Kirkcaldy: Akros Publications, 1999), p. 24.

Scottish International set out to interrogate instances of cultural nationalism and introversion as well as to look outwards in its investigation of Scotland of the period. Broadly concerned with a variety of issues such as the prison service, education, the Common Market, Scottish investment and industry, it was viewed with suspicion from some literary quarters, including many of those still loyal to MacDiarmid's Renaissance project. As Herdman notes:

The principal bugbear of the nationalist writers at the close of the sixties was Bob Tait's *Scottish International*. It has been set up in 1967 with substantial backing from the Scottish Arts Council, and its editorial board included Robert Garioch, a master of demotic Edinburgh Scots associated with the Scottish Renaissance but determinedly apolitical in stance, and the eclectically intelligent, experimentalist and internationally-minded Edwin Morgan. Hugh MacDiarmid was convinced that the whole project had been set up to counter the literary national movement.²⁶

This tension between loyalty to MacDiarmid's project and the need to break away from it to reflect more deeply on the changing nature of modern Scotland is also strikingly evident in *Lines Review*, published from 1954 to 1998. In 1971, Alan Jackson published a long essay in a special issue of this magazine entitled 'The Knitted Claymore: An Essay on Culture and Nationalism'. Extending the spirit of *Scottish International*, Jackson takes a deep look at the nature, and what he sees as the restrictions of nationalism on Scottish identity, culture and tradition:

The Idea of tradition has always befogged me. It is constantly brought forward by scholars, critics, propagandists, politics. It sounds solid, almost inescapable. And, in a tribe, it may well be. But in a civilization with its centuries of history,

²⁶Ibid., p.28.

its varieties of movements, rebellions, changes, reactions, and continual modifications, what can it be? It is either the sum of all that went before oneself, in which case it is meaninglessly large, cancelled by its own contradictions; or else it is a matter of rival assertions and choices within that sum, in which case one is back where one should be- with the individual and his interpretation of the past and the present. A new writer may be so untypical of what has gone before that reviewers scream in agony; a hundred years later he is part of everybody's 'tradition'. This means that traditional and non-traditional can only be value words for conservatives.²⁷

Throughout the essay Jackson taunts those loyal to the culture of nationalism in Scotland, in particular those affiliated forms of literary nationalism which he views as largely anachronistic and debilitating ('Presumably because of nationalist success at the polls, men I thought had slunk away to prickly sulks on couches of thistle or even to realize which decade of which century they lived in, came breengin' hurriedly back, reknitting their half unravelled claymores and pulling behind them pramfuls of young poets waving tartan rattles.'²⁸ One of the key targets at the heart of Jackson's acerbic attack is the notion of imposed frontiers: he repeatedly focuses in on the ways in which he feels that Scottish writers and critics have limited their work through acquiescence to supposed boundaries of Scottishness and Scottish identity, forms of thinking veering on exceptionalism. Following a discussion of Tom Scott's reading of a Scottish Jungian unconscious, for example, Jackson goes on to spell out what he regards as fundamentally wrong with such an approach:

²⁷ Alan Jackson, 'The Knitted Claymore: An Essay on Culture and Nationalism', *Lines Review* 38 (1971), 3-38: p. 25.

²⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 11.

The works of Jung have been the main influence in my life since I was twenty. I'm now asked to relate him to Scottish nationalism and the use of Lallans. Jung's concept of the collective unconscious is an important one, but I always understood that it showed the underlying unity of the human race, not its divisions. Nor do I remember him saying that the collective unconscious, so deep and normally so silent, was given to attaching itself to particular languages or national frontiers.²⁹

For Jackson, the idea that Scottishness was somehow attributable to a way of being or a way of feeling, limited by national borders, was simply preposterous and therefore to be challenged at all costs.

While Jackson's call for the separation of nationalist sentiment from the literary sphere was attractive to many, it also generated a great deal of outrage, direct reverberations from which were played out for some time afterwards. Many arguments were followed up in the subsequent edition of *Lines Review*, and other small publications such as *Scotia* and *Scotia Review* (it being no surprise that the critiques often came from those that Jackson had been scathing towards in his essay). In the second edition of *Scotia* magazine, for example, William Neill published his response to Jackson, 'The Knitted Claymore and Fake Gurus', in which he comments that 'Mr Jackson may not like nations, but they will continue to exist for a long time for they are features of the real world, and not of some private Middle Earth in a Utopian head. They are not necessarily undesirable because Mr Jackson says so.'³⁰ Similarly, in *Scotia* 26, K. C. Fraser published his response to Jackson in the form of 'The Knitted Boomerang: Or, Alan Jackson in Wonderland'. In this essay, Fraser similarly defends

²⁹ Jackson, 'The Knitted Claymore', p. 28.

³⁰ William Neill, 'The Knitted Claymore and Fake Gurus', *Scotia* 20 (1971), 1-3: p. 3.

the legitimacy of the nation ('I can only say that the great majority of people in Europe still appear to believe in the national identity of their own country. Some of the more sophisticated might contend that the need for the nation to form an absolutely sovereign state was gone: but they would be unlikely to deny the existence of the nation itself'), going on later to ask, defensively, 'why should it be any worse for Hugh MacDiarmid to be a Scottish Nationalist than for Brecht to be a Communist?'³¹

While clearly provocative within many quarters of Scottish literary culture, Jackson's special edition of *Lines Review* at the beginning of the 1970s could nonetheless be said to reflect a consolidation of the various arguments challenging cultural nationalism throughout the 1960s. What becomes evident is that 1960's Scottish small magazine culture actually provided an important bedrock for the opening out and reconceptualization of the boundaries of Scottish identity that were to go on to inform a variety of cultural debates in the 1970s and beyond. Just a few years later, in 1977, for example, Tom Nairn published his seminal *The Break-Up of Britain: Crisis and Neo-Nationalism*, within which he launched scathing attacks on what he described as 'cultural sub-nationalism' and 'nationalist neuroses' which, in the absence of political nationalism, he viewed as permeating Scottish cultural identity.³² For Nairn, many aspects of Scottish culture had become too complacent and backwards-looking: 'Kailyard is popular in Scotland' and 'is recognisably intertwined with that prodigious array of *Kitsch* symbols, slogans, ornaments, banners, war-cries, knick-knacks, music-

³¹ K. C. Fraser, 'The Knitted Boomerang: Or, Alan Jackson in Wonderland', *Scotia* 26 (1972), 1-3, p. 3. In response to Jackson's critique of the appeal of Scottish tradition, Fraser goes on to state: 'We should not appeal to national tradition, Mr Jackson says, because nowadays all have access to the traditions of the whole world. If one is born in Scotland, one is not restricted to the Scottish tradition. But in practice, men are conditioned by their education, and do not have real access to all these traditions. What Scottish pupils are taught is not the cultural heritage of the whole world, but largely the English tradition, instead of their own. Arguably, the loss of the identity and cultural heritage of a single nation, be it ever so small, is an irreparable loss to the world in general, and we should encourage the maintenance of national traditions at the same time as contacts with other cultures' (p. 3).

³² Tom Nairn, *The Break-Up of Britain: Crisis and Neo-Nationalism* (London: NLB, 1977), p. 129.

hall heroes, icons, conventional sayings and sentiments which have for so long resolutely defended the name of “Scotland” to the world’.³³ Such *Kitsch*, for Nairn, is simply ‘ridiculous’ but ‘ridiculous or not, it is extremely strong’ and ‘has evolved blindly’.³⁴ In 1981, Barbara and Murray Grigor famously put together an exhibition on ‘Scotch Myths: An Exploration of Scotchness’ at the University of St Andrews, which also aimed to interrogate what they viewed as the overreliance on cultural and nationalist stereotypes in Scottish culture.

Such cultural interrogations have continued to cause controversy in Scottish literary and cultural studies. Cairns Craig, for example, has been one of the most vocal critics on this topic, often regarding such critiques as a relatively cheap form of debasement and emptying out of Scottish culture, a form of what he describes as ‘nostophobia’ (or fear of returning home).³⁵ While every key moment in literary studies may wish to carve out its own niche, interrogating the past at the expense of their particular moment, it is clear that many of the debates taking place in the small magazines of the 1960s and early 1970s were to generate a series of debates within Scottish culture, the legacy of which is still being unfolded. In short, from tracing the central debates through Scottish literary magazines of this transitional period we can discern a fierce reaction to insularity at the start of the 1960s, moving into a more

³³ Ibid., p. 162.

³⁴ Ibid., p. 162.

³⁵ “‘Nostophobia’ peaked in Scotland in the years after the 1979 referendum: those who had been in favour needed an explanation of why the rest of the population had been so lacking in enthusiasm; those who were against needed to justify that the country was not up to governing itself. In 1981, the self-abasement was focused by Murray and Barbara Grigor’s *Scotch Myths* exhibition, which presented kitsch images of Scotland as farce, and then by Grigor’s film of the same name, parodying the ways in which Scotland’s national identity had been perverted by the romantic fictions of James Macpherson and Walter Scott. Scotland, according to Tom Nairn, represented a “freak by-product of European history”. Normal societies went through a “nationalist” phase in the nineteenth century: because of Empire, Scotland did not, and as a result failed to produce a “real” national culture, giving birth, instead, to a “tartan monster”” (Cairns Craig ‘The Case for Culture’, *Scottish Review of Books* 10.3 (<http://scottishreviewofbooks.org/index.php/back-issues/2013-03-27-15-25-27/volume-ten-issue-three/630-the-case-for-culture-cairns-craig>, accessed 20th April 2016).

confident, yet still sceptical vision of cultural nationalism towards the end of the 1970s.

Within these critiques there is often passionate focus *on* Scotland, yet simultaneously a

deep suspicion of complacent forms of thinking that may hold such visions back.