White rose and *steady delete*: A historicist and ecocritical analysis of national identity in contemporary Scottish poetry, from Hugh MacDiarmid to John Burnside

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Abstract

This thesis examines four contemporary Scottish poems in order to understand how portrayals of nature and key historical events are connected to current expressions of Scottish identity. The analysis features poems from the 2000s and includes texts in English as well as in Scots in order to comprehensively map the latest developments in expressing national identity through poetry. The analysis is conducted in two stages, the first one employing a historicist approach and the second one an ecocritical approach. In the former stage, the goal is to establish a broader historical and cultural context for the poems and to draw connections to pre-2000s writers, such as Hugh MacDiarmid. The latter approach examines the type of nature relationship present in the poems. At the intersection of these two approaches lies the matter of identity. The aim of this thesis is to achieve a preliminary understanding of how literary perceptions of Scottish identity have developed in the 21st century and how they reflect the current national perception of self.

Keywords: Scottish Poetry; National identity; Nationalism; Historicism; Ecocriticism; Hugh MacDiarmid

Abstrakti

Tässä tutkielmassa tarkastellaan neljää tällä vuosituhannella julkaistua skotlantilaista runoa. Tutkimuksen päämääränä on ymmärtää, kuinka runoihin sisältyvät kuvaukset luonnosta ja historiallisista tapahtumista ovat yhteydessä skotlantilaisen identiteetin nykyilmentymiin. Runot ovat 2000- ja 2010-luvuilta ja edustavat sekä englannin että skotin kieliä tarkastellakseen monipuolisesti kansallisidentiteettiä käsittelevässä runoudessa tapahtuneita viimeaikaisia muutoksia. Analyysi on kaksivaiheinen: ensimmäinen vaihe keskittyy historialliseen analyysiin (engl. *historicism*) ja toinen vaihe ekokritiikkiin (*ecocriticism*). Ensimmäisessä vaiheessa tarkastellaan runojen historiallis-kulttuurista kontekstia ja suhdetta aiempiin runoilijoihin, kuten Hugh McDiarmidiin. Toisessa vaiheessa tarkastellaan runojen edustamaa luontosuhdetta. Nämä kaksi näkökulmaa yhdistyvät identiteetin analyysissä. Tutkielman tavoite on saavuttaa alustava ymmärrys siitä, miten näkemys skotlantilaisesta identiteetistä runoudessa on kehittynyt 2000-luvulla ja kuinka tämä näkemys heijastaa skotlantilaisten nykyistä itsekäsitystä.

Avainsanat: skotlantilainen runous; kansallisidentiteetti; nationalismi; historicism; ecocriticism; Hugh MacDiarmid

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1. Introduction

The question regarding Scottish identity is at least as old as Caledonia herself and has never in her history been simple. For many, it undoubtedly presents itself as more of a challenge than a question. Still, at the same time, many Scots display remarkable pride associated to their nationality, land, as well as their home region—for it is also important to remember that while Scots are generally known for their "us" mentality, there are marked differences in local identities, to the extent that the notion of a unified definition of Scottish identity is debatable, if not naive.

For a nation such as the Scots, national identity is an intricate structure formed out of historical events that include the nation's greatest and weakest moments. Another essential 'building block' for identity is language, or rather, *languages*: Gaelic, Scots and English, and their coexistence throughout history. Both the English and Scots language bear strong regional distinctions that contribute to Scotland's linguistic complexity; in fact, the matter of linguistic diversity in Scotland easily deserves more attention than this thesis can provide. The third consideration in the matter of Scottish identity is the role of the land, in other words, people's relationship with their environment. This thesis focusses on the historical and environmental perspectives. However, the significance of language will not be overlooked, as there is ultimately no way of separating it from the other two—or any other theme—when discussing national identity. In this case, national identity is treated similarly to individual identity. That is to say, identity is never something to be viewed in simple terms nor is it ever stagnant, but instead, multi-layered, both subjective and collective, and forever changing. My aim is to tread with this complex question with the same consideration as a psychologist might have for an individual's identity, and from roughly the same vantage points: history (cf. an individual's background) and environment.

The environmental perspective in this thesis focusses on nature. In order to consider Scotland's natural diversity as well as historical developments in land use, "nature" in this thesis refers to both wildlife and rural land. It does not, however, include cities or other strictly urban settings. Urbanity and modernity are present in the poems selected for this thesis (see Burnside's poem in 4.2.), but what matters most are the observations the speaker makes of nature as well as the role that nature plays in the poems, sometimes interacting with the urban environment. The relevance of studying the significance of history and nature to Scottish identity is adeptly expressed by Paterson (2002) as follows:

> Landscape imagery is part of daily life in Scotland. Glens and lochs and seashores have combined into an iconic national landscape, displayed everywhere with pride and affection. Only Scotland's history – or at least its more dramatic moments – appears to be as powerful a source of the Scottish sense of identity. Both historical episodes and landscape scenes are used in national marketing exercise, seemingly as effective with local people as with foreigners. (p. 1)

Paterson continues highlighting the commercial significance of Scottish natural landscape and historical events, then proceeds to make an interesting point: the Scots' actual relationship with nature or land does not seem to run as deep as touristic shortbread boxes suggest. In fact, practical engagement with nature appears to be all but non-existent, even to the extent that environmentalism and conservationism do not rouse the interest of the general population. As Paterson expresses it, there appears to be a "disconnection between image and reality" (p. 1).

In order to understand how Scottish identity is represented in literary depictions of nature, it is first necessary to consider what exactly is Scottish people's relationship with their nature. Is the average contemporary Scot indeed estranged from nature and left with a romanticised idea of their national landscape, as Paterson implies? Of course, Paterson's observations are nearly two decades old by now and environmental consciousness has taken great leaps since then. In that same time, a lot has also happened in the collective experiences and perceptions of national identity, culminating in the 2014 independence referendum. Nevertheless, Paterson's research into Scottish perceptions of environment and nature, referred to as "social representations" (p. 9), provides an important angle for this thesis. In addition to more recent examples and observations, Paterson's findings are used as the basis for literary analysis in Chapter 2.

It should be noted that while one of the keywords in the thesis is 'nature', other terms are also used, sometimes interchangeably, to refer to the natural environment, although the goal is to maintain a logical distinction between them. 'Nature' is perhaps the vaguest of these terms. It means both natural environment and wildlife that exist as an independent entity of sorts, but it also refers to the unavoidable points where nature and human come to contact. In addition, 'nature' sometimes takes on an abstract level in relation to sociocultural concepts such as romanticism and conservationism, or subjective experiences such as memories and, of course, individual relationships to nature. 'Landscape' as a term is also surprisingly challenging to define. Ingold (2001) contributes the following:

> It is not 'land', it is not 'nature' and it is not 'space'. [. . .] Land is a kind of lowest common denominator. [. . .] The Landscape is a world as it is known to those who dwell therein, who inhabit its places and journey along the paths connecting them. (p. 190)

This suggests an interpretation in which both subjective experiences and the functional role(s) of a landscape are relevant. It is due to this perspective of combined subjectivity and functionality that this term was divided into subcategories, such as ‘rural landscape’, ‘urban landscape’, ‘historical landscape’ and ‘ecological landscape’.

When it comes to ‘historical landscape’, the definition grows even hazier as it comprises both a spatial and a temporal dimension. History, although chiefly perceived from a temporal and chronological point of view, is not only about cataloguing chains of events and debating on the basis of *when*. Instead, it can also be understood as interaction and change on a spatial level. One example of this is French philosopher Henri Lefebvre’s spatial triad model, which consists of *spatial practices* (our perceived space, such as home), *representations of space* (spaces on an abstract and conceptual level, such as an architect’s blueprint) and, finally, *spaces of representation*, where lived experiences take place through symbolism and imagery (Watkins, 2005; White, 2010). On the other hand, when discussing nature in relation to humans, a ‘traditional’ historical aspect is also highly relevant for examining the effect humans have had on nature. Therefore, these two dimensions will function hand-in-hand, and at their intersection lies the question of identity.

2. Thematic background

In this section, I will discuss the key themes behind my thesis. The first part will be dedicated to the idea of Scottish identity in general, while the second part will discuss examples of national identity in past Scottish literature. I will conclude by discussing Scottish people's nature relationship.

2.1. Scotland and the question of identity

Echoing Paterson's (2002) observations, it was established in the introduction that the way Scottish people relate to nature is not as straightforward as consumerist and entertainment imagery suggests. The same problematics can be applied further to the matter of national identity, with the keyword being 'contradiction', as in Paterson's statement: "The Caledonian identity itself is a contradictory abstraction" (p. 11).

The very concept of identity is so tightly woven into different aspects of our lives that it is impossible (and unwise!) to extract it from its context for closer examination. Scottish identity is strongly linked to geographic location, as demonstrated by 2011 data from Scotland's Census, which focussed on ethnicity, identity, language and religion in Scotland. In 2011, 83 percent of the Scottish population reported having at least some Scottish identity. 62 percent stated their identity as 'Scottish only', with this answer being the most popular among 10–14-year-olds (71%) and least popular among 30–34-year-olds (57%). Only 8 percent chose 'British identity only', with 50 to 64 being the largest age group (10%). 2 percent of the population chose Scottish in combination with some other identity. The highest percentages of 'Scottish only' identity (at least 90% of the population) were reported in the council areas of Inverclyde, North Lanarkshire, East Ayrshire and West Dunbartonshire. The lowest percentages, 70 and 75, were found in Edinburgh and Aberdeen, respectively. In addition, the relationship between national identity and ethnicity was surveyed. It was found that 34 percent of ethnic minorities identified with either 'Scottish only' or with Scottish combined with another (non-UK) identity. Of the 62 percent who reported 'Scottish only' as their national identity, 98 percent also reported their ethnicity as 'White: Scottish'. (Scotland's Census, 2014).

Language, on the other hand, is not such an evident part of present-day Scottishness. In 2011, reports Scotland's Census, only 1.1 percent (58,000 people) of the population aged 3 or above were able to speak Scots Gaelic, a small decrease from the 2001 census. Following the establishment of

the Scottish Parliament in 1999, Scots Gaelic experienced some increase in promulgation, but the number of actual speakers still remains low. However, continuous efforts are being made in education and media in order to facilitate language revival, from bilingual signs to Gaelic-only TV channels, and the language is enjoying increasing interest and popularity (Encyclopaedia Britannica, 2013; Scotland.org, n. d.). In the last centuries and decades, Scotland has also produced many writers who have, to various extents, contributed to the corpora of Scots Gaelic with their works and campaigned for the restoration and revitalisation of the language. Some of the poets mentioned in this thesis are examples of such cultural and linguistic activism. While Gaelic, native to the 'Highlands and Islands' parts of the country, is the foremost linguistic symbol of Scottish identity, the Scots language historically spoken in the Lowlands is similarly vital for expressing one's identity. In the United Kingdom, it is recognised not as a dialect of English but as a regional language of its own (Scotland.org, n. d.). In addition, the Scots language is one of the important languages of poetry in Scotland, which is why this thesis also features a Scots poem (see: 3.1. Poems).

Finally, it is necessary to consider the Scottish identity in relation to its rival or parallel, the British identity. Paterson (2002) argues that post-colonial United Kingdom has been undergoing a devolved sense of national identity and that the concept of 'Englishness' has become less consistent (p. 33). In the rapid course of events that led to Brexit, it seemed like the British (largely consisting of the English population) had regained something of their proud historical identity. Later, as the practical problems of leaving the European Union became evident, this new sense of identity found itself struggling. It is now worth asking what the British identity means today. Another relevant question is how the changing British identity, as well as developments in the UK-Europe relationship, affect Scotland. In light of these questions, it is interesting to consider these words from Paterson (2002), written some 20 years ago:

> The feeling that old England has died, and with it British national cohesion, must be a major force behind the attempts to generate new reasons for believing in Scotland. […] I think this might fail unless the Scottish can find something in their present existence – rather than their past, however colourful – that works as a unifying set of shared concepts. (pp. 33–34)

The latest developments in the UK appear to have provided the Scots with renewed faith in nationalism. Notions of independence certainly gained new momentum in the wake of the pre-Brexit debates but there were still many who disagreed: the 2014 independence referendum was won by the 'No' side 55.3 percent against 44.7 percent (*Scotland decides*, 2014), demonstrating the strong dichotomy surrounding the matter. The circumstances faced by Scotland in the early 2020s—from ongoing struggles to secure a second referendum, to the official implementation of Brexit, and to the

chaos of the COVID-19 pandemic—indicate that the future of the independence campaign will remain uncertain for the time being[1]. While Paterson (2002) characterises Scottish national identity as something that draws its strength from history (p. 34), it may now be time for the people of Scotland to look more to the future—however uncertain—for a new direction.

2.2. Literature and national identity

Starting from the 1970s, according to Paterson (2002), "literary writing has been a flagship of Scottish national consciousness and cultural renewal" (p. 2), while Carruthers (2009) states that for years some viewed it as "nationally formulated and politically loaded" (p. 1). As mentioned above, language has been a crucial tool for Scottish writers to address themes pertaining to national identity. These themes are many, ranging from subjective sentiments to socio-political critique and often including elements of both. Paterson's own research excludes writers who communicate their ideas in Gaelic or Scots, on the grounds that they are "pursuing a very special local discourse" (p. 18). My motivations are the opposite: by examining poetry in both English and Scots, I am purposefully seeking these places of "local discourse" in order to consider how the poet's choice of language determines the (implied) audience and underlines the message of the text. Furthermore, I believe that excluding these native languages would be a misguided means of conducting a literary study about national identity. In addition, English literature—and, as a result, English identity—has been the subject of study for a much longer time than Scottish literature. According to Carruthers (2009), Scottish literary studies have appeared somewhat reluctant in adapting modern (post-1980s) literary theories for self-referential study, partly because Scottish literature or Celticism in general have been considered inferior to the Anglocentric literary and cultural tradition. Carruthers suggests that this might be connected to perceptions of Scottish literary tradition as less "organically full" and lacking a national context (p. 2).

Myths and stories are the basis of Scottish literary tradition. Carruthers (2009) mentions certain mythical archetype Scots that one constantly encounters in Scottish literary history: "fighting Scot", "primitive Scot" and "freedom-loving Scot" probably remind one of a certain Hollywood production, while later centuries have produced the archetypes of "puritan Scot" and "civilised Scot" (p. 2). The freedom-loving Scottish fighter can be encountered in one of Robert Burns' (1759–1796) most

[1] At the time of writing this, the Scottish government had not yet published the newest draft bill for the referendum. The draft was published on 22 March, 2021 (*Scottish independence: Draft bill for indyref2 published*, 2021).

famous lyrics, "Scots Wha Hae"[2] (1793), which was written in the form of a rousing speech from Robert Bruce to his soldiers before the Battle of Bannockburn (see Chapter 4.1.). For centuries, Burns' song was treated as the unofficial national anthem of Scotland and is still played during the Scottish National Party (SNP) conference closings (The Scottish Parliament, n. d.; *Will Scotland ever have a national anthem?*, 2011). The importance of the self-dubbed 'Scotia's bard' to Scottish literary and cultural traditions, as well as to literature worldwide, is still significant (*Robert Burns*, 2012).

2.3. Scottish people and nature

As established earlier in the thesis, many Scots seem to have a tendency to romanticise local nature. Many parts of Scottish nature and landscape carry important symbolic meaning: thistle, lochs, red deer and Highland cattle are featured in music, poetry, art and photography. At the same time, however, Scotland is a strongly urbanised and industrial region. It may be that a part of Scotland's nature is based on ideas and ideals for the Scots who grew up close to oil terminals, chemical manufacturers, fish farms and busy highways connecting two metropolitan areas. However, this is not to say that Scots are unique in this sense: the same phenomenon is visible in most industrialised parts of the world these days.

There is, however, a strong juxtaposition at play when considering how the Scots relate to their nature and how their relationship with nature and environment is manifested in practice. Paterson (2002) states that "identification with the landscape is as old as mankind" (p. 5). This suggests that the Scots, just like any other people or nation, have an innate need to relate to and identify themselves through their environment. However, Paterson continues to argue that the use of nature imagery is further evidence of contradiction, of "the divide between reality and patriotic invention", in which reality is the "cityscape" and the latter consists of "the wilderness visions of the calendar and the inward investment literature" (p. 34). Paterson also speculates that this disconnected relationship with nature and environment may have hindered Scotland's inventiveness with "green technology" and "caused a people that loves literature to have so few writers with nature as a main subject" (p. 11). Although the latter point is extremely interesting, it will not be discussed in further detail this time. Instead, this section will explore Scotland's connection to green technology.

Again, it is worth remembering that Paterson's thoughts originate from approximately two decades ago and are based on Scotland's environmental politics and policies in the late 20th century. Similar

[2] The complete name of the poem is "Scots Wha Hae, or, Robert Bruce's Address to His Troops at Bannockburn".

to many other countries, Scotland underwent a reformation of environmental politics in the 1970s. The Scottish Green Party was founded in 1990. However, in its early years the party received less than 10% of the votes. The conservation agency Scottish Natural Heritage (SNH) was founded no earlier than in 1992, while Scottish Environment Protection Agency (SEPA) was founded in 1996 (Paterson, 2002, pp. 6–7). Scottish Environment LINK commissioned a review to examine the gap between intention and reality in environmental legislations of the 2000s (Bailey, 2010). Among the legislations reviewed were National Parks Act 2000, Land Reform Act 2003, Water Environment and Water Services Act 2004, Environmental Liability Regulations 2009 and Marine Act 2010. Most of these legislations sparked criticism, such as disappointment at the neglect of already existing national parks in favour of new ones, or creating land for recreational use at the expense of wildlife. Concerns were also voiced about inadequate actions to prevent further pollution and about too much time spent planning instead of making concrete efforts. The two first issues named in the review addressed the facts that the Parliament uses environmental rhetoric which does not translate into deeds, and that the government must include a "strong voice" to advocate for the environment (p. 6). The report also called for "genuine sustainable development", more protection of Scottish nature and more strategic land use that considers the ecosystem as a whole (p. 7).

In recent years, Scotland has come forward with ambitious green initiatives. The 2009 climate change legislation was the world's most ambitious one yet, resulting partially from the SNP's and then-First Minister Alex Salmond's motivation to create an impact early in the term of his minority government (Nash, 2020). According to Nash (2020), the legislation was "tied up in attempts to position Scotland, a sub-state nation, on the international stage, with the legislation framed not only as necessary in the face of climate change, but an opportunity for Scotland" (Abstract). In other words, environmental matters are not only tied to politics, but to the Scots' national ambition.

3. Methods and methodology

3.1. Poems

The analysis is based on four contemporary Scottish poems. Contemporary literature generally constitutes literary works written after World War II. However, this thesis only includes poems written and/or published in the 2000s. The oldest poem included in the analysis was published in 2000. In addition, Hugh MacDiarmid's "The Little White Rose" from 1931 is briefly discussed to establish a historical foundation for the analysis. The selection includes two poems written in English and two poems written entirely or partially in the Scots language in order to provide a more realistic and just representation of Scottish identity. Information on the authors is embedded in the analysis (Chapter 4). For copyright reasons, the poems are not quoted entirely. Instead, publisher information and links for free access courtesy of Scottish Poetry Library can be found in the Appendix (p. 36).

Despite the narrow scope of a bachelor's thesis, I have chosen to include several poems due to a motivation to form a more diverse and inclusive report on the theme at hand. By selecting poetry from two decades, I attempt to form a tentative chronological overview, although with only a few poems included, the analysis will only be able to map indications rather than actual tendencies. The second aim of this analysis is to bring forward very distinct Scottish voices and stories, concluding in a preliminary understanding of the status of contemporary Scottish poetry and of the larger theme at play, namely, identity. Including two poems from the 2010s emphasises the recent developments in a new wave of Scottish nationalism and plays a vital part in understanding the matter today. The source of the poems is mainly the Scottish Poetry Library website (scottishpoetrylibrary.org.uk) which also provides information about poets and tags poems with keywords. These tags have been used to help select suitable poems. In addition, the staff of Scottish Poetry Library have kindly offered assistance in finding suitable material for analysis.

3.2. Methods of analysis

The analysis consists of two perspectives: historicist analysis and ecocritical analysis. As suggested by the title, the first stage studies the poems hand-in-hand with their historical and cultural contexts, employing the historicist approach of analysis. The goal is to consider the poems as products of their own time, but also to elaborate on how the lives and ideas of their respective authors may be reflected in the texts: in other words, the two contexts to consider are the collective (history of a nation) and

personal (history of an individual). Identity as a concept is likewise discussed both from a collective and a personal viewpoint using the sociocultural linguistic model of identity. The historicist analysis also discusses some of the recent developments regarding Scottish independence and identity. The second stage of analysis addresses the complex and conflicting relationship that the Scots tend to have with their national landscape by attempting to identify the author's or speaker's relationship to nature. The analysis is conducted through an ecocritical lens. In both sections, the poems are contrasted with each other. Each theoretical framework is discussed in more detail below.

Historicism as an approach for studying texts is an old tradition. Before the dawn of actual historicism, there existed a sort of "old historicism" in the form of literary history, which in turn was, in the context of English studies, often a "gentlemanly practice of amateur history" (Gallop, 2011, p. 5). The significance of historicism grew during the modern era until it became the most prevalent form of study, *the* literary theory (Coiro & Fulton, 2012). Ultimately, this meant that historicism also began to receive vocal criticism, such as accusations of growing too dominant in the field of literary analysis, of dismissing the interaction between literature and the present time (an approach known as presentism), as well as of "forgetting that the formal analysis of deliberately wrought texts is fundamental to literary analysis" (Coiro & Fulton, 2012, p. 1). While Coiro and Fulton rightfully question the usefulness of historicism in today's rapidly changing world, they also point out its value to critically editing historical texts that are so vital to English Studies. In the 1980s and 1990s, a reactionary trend based on Stephen Greenblatt's rejection of New Criticism emerged under the name of new historicism to address the faults of the traditional historicist movement, such as the ahistorical treatment of English language literary canon (Gallop, 2011; Parvini, 2012). However, new historicism in turn has been criticised for its obsession with higher societal institutions, such as monarchies (Parvini, 2012). At present, in order to conduct a more critical and well-rounded study of literary texts, historicism is combined with other approaches, such as feminist and Marxist criticism. It is also my own aim to avoid the traditional pitfalls of both historicist and new historicist approaches, which is why the analysis is founded on close reading and two distinctly different theoretical approaches. Furthermore, the analysis is guided in part by how presentism considers the relevance of literary works to present day readers and contexts. The ecocritical approach also ensures that the analysis stays anchored in the present day.

Ecocriticism is a study of literature that considers how humans relate to the environment and how our actions affect it (James & Morel, 2018; Glotfelty, 1996). Ecocriticism is a relatively young field, having been formed during the second half of the twentieth century and surfaced in the 1980s, yet its significance has increased exponentially in only a couple of decades (Zapf, 2016). Zapf (2016) maps

the development of ecocriticism as something that started as romanticised nature narratives and has now grown into an interdisciplinary approach with the potential to bring new relevance to the humanities in a competitive world of hard sciences and utilitarian values (p. 1). On the other hand, gaining fast popularity has come at a cost, as ecocriticism currently lacks a "comprehensive overview" (Zapf, 2016, p. 1) since the field continues to divide itself into countless subfields, such as material ecocriticism, affective ecocriticism, ecofeminism or econarratology (James & Morel, 2018).

Finally, I will introduce the sociocultural linguistic model of identity (Bucholtz & Hall, 2005). As suggested by its name, this model examines identity equally from a sociocultural and a linguistic perspective. Sociocultural linguistics constitutes many different subfields, which is beneficial for approaching such a complex theme as identity. Bucholtz and Hall (2005) have formed a set of five principles for the study of identity. The first one, called *the emergence principle*, challenges the traditional conception of identity as something exclusively intrapersonal and argues for acknowledging the importance of "the social ground on which identity is built, maintained, and altered" (p. 4). This social ground of dialogue and other forms of interaction—whether spoken, written or something else—is what allows identity to emerge, and the same idea applies to the emergence of culture (Mannheim & Tedlock, 1995; Bucholtz & Hall, 2005). Based on this idea, Bucholtz and Hall outline identity in the following way: "[i]dentity is best viewed as the emergent product rather than the pre-existing source of linguistic and other semiotic practices and therefore as fundamentally a social and cultural phenomenon" (p. 5).

The second principle, known as *the positionality principle*, promotes the idea that identity is not only constructed around macro labels, such as gender or socioeconomic class, but is also dependent on localised labels (ethnographic identities), and finally, on temporary participatory roles assumed during interaction. The third principle, *indexicality*, focusses on the mechanism of identity construction, whereby language and identity combine with cultural ideology that dictates the guidelines or requirements of language production for a certain identity. This is followed by *the relationality principle*, according to which "[i]dentities are intersubjectively constructed through several, often overlapping, complementary relations, including similarity/difference, genuineness/artifice, and authority/delegitimacy" (p. 15). The fifth and final one, *the partialness principle*, is founded on the ideas of relationality and indexicality, as it takes identity beyond the concept of 'self'. In other words, the relational nature of identity assures the partiality of identity in terms of situatedness and ideological framework.

The recognition of identity as something that emerges from sociocultural interaction is crucial for this thesis. The analytical focus is on the literary work and how it interacts with its author, reader and

context, reflecting the model of literary study by M. H. Abrams (1953). The analysis occurs within a larger dimension of the "social ground", that is, the sociocultural interaction of a sub-nation. This thesis focusses on national identity, but it is also important to consider other identities implied in the positionality principle. There is no such thing as *the* Scottish identity, otherwise this study would serve no purpose. Instead, the collective national identity could be seen as consisting of numerous individual identities in all their diversity—and somewhere among all those different identities exists a 'cross-section', a 'keyhole' into a common perception of the Scottish national identity. The indexicality principle is relevant for considering how literature is used for linguistic production of one's identity. The relationality principle recognises the potential contradictions or dichotomies sustaining the identity: nation vs. sub-nation, historical vs. contemporary, traditional vs. reforming, insular vs. European, and so on.

4. Analysis

4.1. Auld Sang, New Song: A historical perspective

Before proceeding to the analysis proper, let us briefly examine a poem that is not part of the analysis, but rather points towards the thematic centre of this thesis. The poem in question is “The Little White Rose” (1931) by Hugh MacDiarmid, which was the pen name of Marxist-nationalist writer C. M. Grieve (1892–1978). The poem was published in *Selected Poetry* (Riach & Grieve, 1992). MacDiarmid’s poem features a white rose, which is often interpreted as the white rose of the Jacobite movement and hence, strongly associated with ideas of independence and freedom. However, according to Cairns (2015), it is possible that MacDiarmid in fact refers to several poems by W. B. Yeats, most notably “The Rose of Battle” which contains the line “Rose of all Roses, Rose of all the World”. MacDiarmid’s speaker expresses a sentimental attachment to the “white rose”, which has a smell both “sharp” and “sweet”. A rose traditionally represents love and there are other romantic allusions in the poem, such as the white rose having the power to break one’s heart (the speaker’s, it seems). Hence, the poem displays tones of bittersweet longing, with perhaps a hidden sense of pride as well: Scotland has its very own rose, to which “the rose of all the world” is no match. Nevertheless, the rose remains at least partially outside the speaker’s grasp, like a dream unfulfilled, and that is the cause of the heartbreak. This dream may be one of love, freedom and independence, which together could signify love for one’s country and a desire to see it ‘freed’, although it does not sound like the speaker believes it possible. These four lines appear to capture a complex and personal sentiment that only MacDiarmid himself can comprehend. This poem may also be a reference to the many historical challenges that Scotland has faced in its struggle towards independence. The poem, as well as the symbolism it is built on, still bears significant weight in modern Scotland: “The Little White Rose” can be found inscribed on the Canongate Wall of the Scottish Parliament. Furthermore, during the Queen’s Speech at the state opening of the parliament on May 27, 2015, all 56 SNP members wore a white rose—a tradition, according to the party statement released afterwards (*Why the SNP wore white roses at Parliament*, 2015).

From now on, the analysis will proceed thematically rather than chronologically. The first poem examined here is “The Beginning of a New Song” (2000) by Iain Crichton Smith, OBE. Crichton Smith (Gaelic: Iain Mac a’ Ghobhainn) was born in Glasgow in 1928 and was raised in poverty in Lewis by a widowed mother. This had a profound effect on his works. He worked as a teacher for over 20 years and married upon retirement (Clark, 2003). Crichton Smith died in 1998 (Mackay, n.

d.). “The Beginning of a New Song” was published in the anthology *Variations on a new song* (Philip, 2000) as part of the Scottish Poetry Library project called Holyrood Poetry Link. Philip’s footnote (p. 7) reads: “This poem was read at the opening of the Scottish Parliament on 1 July 1999.” The opening of the parliament by the Queen was followed by “well-known Scottish broadcaster Tom Fleming [who] stood to recite The Beginning of a New Song, a previously unpublished poem by Iain Crichton Smith which calls for Scotland to "sing in a new world"” (*Beginning of a new song*, 1999).

The poem opens with “Let our three-voiced country / Sing in a new world”. The three voices of the country are most likely those of its English, Scots and Gaelic speaking inhabitants. The “other rivers” could refer to Scotland’s neighbours—England, Wales and Ireland—as well as other nationalities and ethnicities calling Scotland home. Furthermore, “other rivers” is likely to be a reference to the many voices within Scotland herself, since throughout history, the nation has been far from homogeneous in its opinions on various matters. The word “dogma” is an interesting lexical choice for which the online version of Collins Dictionary (n. d.) lists the following synonyms: “blind faith”, “unquestioning belief” and “arrogant conviction”. The two example sentences provided are “Their political dogma has blinded them to the real needs of the country” and “He stands for freeing the country from the grip of dogma”. The dogma in the poem could indeed be a political one and—if we consider the wider historical context—a religious one as well, as both have been playing a key role in the history of Scotland and its relationship to its neighbours for many years. As opposed to the ideas of “arrogant conviction” or “blind” and “unquestioning” trust in something, being “without dogma” could then stand for a sort of humbled open-mindedness and a readiness for change, which allows for a freed state of mind—and perhaps also a freed nation or country, echoing the Collins Dictionary example above.

Moving on to the second stanza, “Let her new river shine” introduces the idea of a united Scotland “on a day” described as “contemporary”. The third stanza urges: “Let it be true to itself and to its origins”, emphasising the message of originality and perhaps further encouraging Scotland to break free from the “dogma” that seems to prevent it from being “true to itself”. “Inventive, original, philosophical”, the sentence continues, erupting into an affectionate ode of some of the remarkable things that Scotland is known for: the many innovations of Scottish individuals, the uniquity of its culture, as well as a long tradition of famous thinkers and writers. Clark (2003) calls this line “a fitting description for the man himself” (p. 1). “Let (…) Its institutions mirror its beauty” could refer to Scotland’s universities, the Church of Scotland, cultural institutions, as well as institutions of law and the Scottish Parliament. Even under the Parliamentary Union, many of these institutions have

remained uniquely Scottish (as opposed to English or British), yet Crichton Smith's lines also express a wish or an invitation for people to continue to care for these traditional institutions in the future.

Finally, the poem concludes: "Then without shame we can esteem ourselves". This is one of the most interesting lines in the poem. The message suggests that once united, free from any dogmas and having acknowledged their origins, people of Scotland can finally have genuine respect for themselves, unburdened by shame. There are several possible historical origins for this collective feeling of "shame", such as recurring strife and conflict among Scots, a central motif in the nation's history. "Without shame" can, at the same time, simply refer to the ability to display genuine self-esteem without feeling ashamed about it. Overall, the poem manifests a hopeful outlook of the future, as is already suggested in the title. The speaker remains aware of some of the mistakes of the past and the "shame" that remains but urges the audience to look beyond it. It is not difficult to imagine the sort of impact this poem must have had on the listeners sitting at the Parliament on 1 July, 1999.

The matter of identity is present in nearly every word of "The Beginning of a New Song". The national identity is described as "three-voiced". In addition to the earlier interpretations, these three voices could represent those of Scotland, Britain and Europe—a further allusion to the multi-layered, positional nature of the Scottish sense of self. References to "a new world" and "a day that is fresh" suggest that the national identity portrayed in this poem is (or should be, according to the speaker) built on the nation's future rather than its past. This is a powerful message for a nation that tends to prefer defining its identity through history, as suggested by Paterson (2002, p. 34). It may then sound even contradictory when the poem declares: "Let it be true to itself and to its origins". However, here the underlying message appears to be that instead of forgetting or relinquishing their identity, Scots should embrace their origins, and this, combined with a future-oriented mindset, is what the nation needs.

It is unclear when exactly "The Beginning of a New Song" was written; most likely very soon after the referendum in September, 1997, in which the decision to establish the Scottish Parliament was sealed. In any case, what makes the poem significant is that it was posthumously featured at the opening ceremony of the Scottish Parliament in 1999, the year following Crichton Smith's passing. Clark (2003) mentions that the title of the poem is an allusion to the 16th of January, 1707, when the Kingdom of Scotland gave way to the Union and Lord Seafield spoke the words "Now there's the end of an auld sang" (p. 6). This poem is, therefore, a strong symbol of a nation's turning point. However, as is the case with most Scottish matters, opinions differ radically: as former Scottish Conservative leader David McLetchie jested in the opening ceremony of 1999, "[s]ome of us thought

we would never see this day - some of us hoped we would never see this day" (*Scotland's day of history*, 1999).

The next poem to be analysed in this section is "Here lies our land" (2013) by Kathleen Jamie. Commissioned for the 700th anniversary of the Battle of Bannockburn (1314), the poem can be found carved on the statue of Robert the Bruce on the battlefield (*Here lies our land*, n. d.). The poem was also featured in the 2013 and 2019 Best Scottish Poems online anthologies by Scottish Poetry Library. "Here lies our land: every airt […] [b]elonging to none but itself", reads the opening stanza, evoking a strong sense of self. In doing so, the poem echoes the weight of the historical event it refers to: a significant battle fought early in the First War of Scottish Independence where King of Scots Robert the Bruce defeated King Edward II of England (Manning, n. d.). The war was fought over the right of a people to gain independence, in other words, to belong to "none but itself". "Beneath swift clouds, glad glints of sun" is an interesting description for a land known for its constant rainy weather. The purpose of this line may be to contrast shadow with light, in other words, to refer to both the bad and the good in life. By ending the line with "glad glints of sun", Jamie finishes on a positive and hopeful note—and that is the overall goal of the poem.

"We are mere transients, who sing" is where a temporal shift occurs. The poem begins firmly with "here", suggesting a present temporal perspective; in contrast, the second stanza appears somewhat hesitant, suggesting that "we" (the Scots) are more at the mercy of time than the land they inhabit. At the same time, there is a tone of acknowledgement: knowing that one's life is limited, making them a visitor in time. A temporal visitor's perspective also applies whenever someone visits a historical site and attempts to relive or reconstruct historical events, and it is worth considering whether this transient status is a significant aspect of Scottish identity. There is a growing sense of voiced identity through increasing Scots vocabulary, as the poem proceeds with "Its westlin' winds and fernie braes, / Northern lights and siller tides". There is also a suggestion of identity being tied to nature and land, but at the same time, a shared identity that seems to focus on the present, while possibly still alluding to roles inhabited by people in the past: "Small folk playing our part." With "westlin' winds", Jamie also includes a reference to Robert Burns, one of her literary exemplars for this poem (*Here lies our land*, n. d.). In the final two lines, the land returns as a personified 'character' with an appealing message: "*'Come all ye'*, the country says, / *You win me, who take me most to heart*." The message appears welcoming, with another literary nod, this time towards Hamish Henderson (*Here lies our land*, n. d.). However, in order to "win" her over—and here the true meaning of the word "win" is revealed—one must be sincerely devoted to and in love with the land. The last stanza offers further closure by featuring the only full rhyme pair of the poem: "part" and "heart". This rhyme pair is a

reference to MacDiarmid's "The Little White Rose", in which "part" and "heart" are also the only full rhymes to be found.

Scottish Poetry Library quotes author Jamie's own thoughts on the writing process. According to Jamie, her goal was to make a "profound bow" towards the "Scottish literary tradition", referring to writers such as John Barbour, Robert Burns and Sir Walter Scott, who are the most notable poets to have written about Bannockburn. Jamie crafted the tone of the poem to match that of the place it would be displayed at. She sees the statue rotunda as a "place of relative peace, contemplation, space and fresh air". Jamie also elaborates how one of the central messages in the poem is in the line "Belonging to none but itself": Scots may have fought wars over the ownership of this land and over the right to cultivate and shape it, but at the end of the day and at the end of every human lifespan, the land always reasserts its self-ownership. (*Here lies our land*, n. d.).

Despite its foundation on a central historical event, "Here lies our land" is ultimately a poem about the future of the land and the people who love it, thus echoing the sentiment of "The Beginning of a New Song", where the nation is encouraged to both remember their roots in the past and draw inspiration from the future. It is therefore rather fitting, and possibly a calculated choice, that the Scottish Government announced that the Scottish independence referendum would take place on 18 September, 2014, shortly after the Bannockburn anniversary. The efforts of the Yes Scotland campaign to secure a 'No' result have been dubbed by media as a modern re-enactment of the Battle of Bannockburn (*Battle of Bannockburn Echoes in Scotland's Independence Fight*, 2014). On the other hand, medieval historian West (2014) cautions against such a simplified comparison, arguing that "the only 'lessons' it offers for today are that power and identity have long been fought over on this island" (para. 10). Crawford (2014) expresses it more firmly: "Yoking the medieval battle of Bannockburn to Scotland's 2014 political arguments is asking for trouble" (p. 1). Ironically, however, Crawford's choice to include the pluralised form "Bannockburns" in the title of his work is precisely that: an acknowledgement that Scotland's history may indeed consist of more than just one Bannockburn (p. 4).

The 2014 Scottish independence referendum posed the question: "Should Scotland be an independent country?" The 'No' vote won with 55.3 percent against 44.7 percent for 'Yes' and voter turnout was almost 85 percent. The main players of the referendum campaign were Yes Scotland (pro-independence) and Better Together (pro-Union), with the latter receiving donations from prominent supporters, such as J. K. Rowling (*Scottish independence: Who are the big and small money referendum donors?*, 2014). However, the defeat in 2014 did not weaken the Yes campaign. In their 2016 election manifesto, the SNP argued that a second referendum is justified in case of a

"significant and material change in circumstances", one of those changes being Brexit (*Holyrood 2016: SNP manifesto at-a-glance*, 2016). On 13 March, 2017, Scottish Government reported First Minister Nicola Sturgeon's statement, according to which "the people of Scotland must be offered a choice between a hard Brexit and becoming an independent country". The statement was given during the preparations to seek the Scottish Government's approval to "open discussions with the UK Government on the details of a Section 30 order" under the Scotland Act 1998 (*Scotland must have choice over future*, 2017). In January 2020, however, the request for a second referendum (IndyRef2) was denied by Boris Johnson's government (*Scottish independence: Johnson rejects Sturgeon's indyref2 demand*, 2020). The referendum was momentarily put on hold in March due to the Covid-19 pandemic, but by September, a new draft bill was already in progress (Mitchell, 2020; *Plans for independence vote to be published in draft bill*, 2020). An October 2020 poll by Ipsos MORI reported an all-time high for 'Yes' with 58% of respondents in favour of independence, and according to a statement by the managing director of Ipsos MORI Scotland, should the SNP gain a majority at the Scottish Parliament election in May 2021, "[o]ur poll suggests that there will be significant public pressure for the UK government to transfer powers to the Scottish Parliament to hold a second independence referendum" (Cowburn, 2020, para. 11). However, 'No' votes have been narrowly leading the polls since the end of February 2021 ("Opinion polling on Scottish independence", 2021). Upon writing this, the latest poll by Savanta ComRes from 4–5 March, 2021, shows 'No' with a narrow lead: 46% for 'No' and 43% for 'Yes' (Matchett, 2021)[3]. The latest poll was conducted amidst the inquiry into harassment allegations against former first minister Alexander Salmond, with First Minister Sturgeon providing evidence. According to *The Scotsman*, the poll shows "the scandal (…) is driving mistrust in the SNP and Ms Sturgeon, with almost half saying they trust the First Minister less due to the inquiry" (para. 7). Furthermore, the Scottish government have published a new indyref2 draft bill prior to the conclusion of the inquiry, with leader of Scottish Conservatives Douglas Ross criticising it as a "reckless distraction" from the "Sturgeon-Salmond scandal" (*Scottish independence: Draft bill for indyref2 published*, 2021, para. 21).

As for Bannockburn, its symbolic significance for pro-independence campaigners appears to remain as strong as ever: on the 2018 anniversary, around 8,000 independence supporters participated in a commemorative march from King's Park, Stirling, to Bannockburn in an event organised by All Under One Banner, a pro-independence group established in 2014 (Greenfield, 2018; All Under One

[3] At the time of editing, the latest poll by Savanta ComRes/Scotsman (16–20 April, 2021) shows 48% for 'No' and 45% for 'Yes'. A YouGov/The Times poll from the same days concluded 45% for 'No' and 39% for 'Yes'. Prior to this, seven polls between 16 March and 12 April showed 'Yes' on the lead with 45–49% of the answers. In addition, the 2–7 April Savanta ComRes/Scotsman poll showed a tie of 45 against 45 percent. The sample sizes mostly range between 1,000 and 2,000. ("Opinion polling on Scottish independence", 2021).

Banner, n. d.). However, it is difficult to determine whether the special anniversary year of 2014 significantly benefited the pro-independence campaign or not: as is the case with politics, many factors influenced campaign success and, ultimately, the referendum outcome. However, Bannockburn's special status is not only limited to nationalist circles. It is, after all, a major battle in Scottish history and features an appealing story where the underdog cunningly defeats the oppressor, not unlike David and Goliath. For Scottish people, The Battle of Bannockburn may be a moment of resilience similar to 'The Miracle of Winter War' for Finnish people, although the former took place hundreds of years ago and is romanticised and mystified accordingly.

Examined side by side, the two poems have elements in common. Both poems open with a possessive reference to the land: "our three-voiced country" (Crichton Smith) and "our land" (Jamie). Crichton Smith's "a new world" resonates nicely with Jamie's "glad glints of sun", creating a hopeful mood. Crichton Smith's "contemporary" perspective provides an interesting counterpart for Jamie's "we are mere transients". On the other hand, Crichton Smith's use of the river metaphor also functions as an excellent allusion to transience, a state of constant change. Furthermore, "part" in Jamie's "small folk playing our part" is elaborated by Crichton Smith's "inventive, original, philosophical". Crichton Smith and Jamie both recognise the weight of historical events in their poems, but referencing the past serves to direct the audience's attention to the future. Both poems conclude with an invitation to further cherish Scotland's traditions with an open mind and to devote oneself to the country: perhaps in order to join Crichton Smith's invitation to "esteem ourselves", it is necessary to follow Jamie's advice of "*You win me, who take me most to heart*". Both poems introduce identity through geographic belonging to "our land" or "our country". Crichton Smith's poem emphasises the importance of a united people, while Jamie focusses on asserting a message of dignified independence. Crichton Smith's temporal situatedness is firmly rooted to present day. Jamie, in contrast, focusses on how identifying with and owning the land is not a permanent state. This suggests a relational perspective to identity: on one hand, this is "our" land, indicating ownership and authority, on the other hand, time prevents humans from exercising this authority permanently, resulting in a type of delegitimisation (Bucholtz & Hall, 2005, p. 603). Positionality is present in how the poems suggest different identity labels. Both ethnic and geographic identification are explicit and in addition, identity is connected to cultural institutions and symbols, shared historical events and language. Furthermore, the poems enable the emergence of the audience's micro-level identities resulting from temporary roles upon 'interacting' with the text.

4.2. Nature in the eye of the beholder: An ecocritical reading

This section analyses poems through an ecocritical lens. The two poems featured here are “Beaver” by Tom Hubbard and “Travelling South, Scotland, August 2012” by John Burnside. The analysis demonstrates how each poem—and poet—has their own way of observing and relating to nature. I will begin with “Beaver” (2004), which was published in the collection *From Soda Fountain to Moonshine Mountain: American poems*. A librarian alumnus of Scottish Poetry Library himself, Hubbard hails from the town of Kirkcaldy close to Edinburgh on the east coast of Scotland. His long career with literary studies and criticism culminated in being nominated the Honorary Fellow of the Association of Scottish Literary Studies in 2017. (*Tom Hubbard*, n. d.).

The fact that this poem was published in a collection titled “American poems”, as well as its allusion to indigenous Americans (“Indian hunter”), suggest that the subject of the poem is not native to Scotland. The poem may originate from Hubbard’s years spent lecturing in the United States or it may be a combination of his observations in both Scotland and North America, as beavers can be found in both regions. However, what is of interest here is not the geographic location so much as how Hubbard, a Scot himself, relates to his surroundings in the poem, whether real or fictitious. Written in Scots, Hubbard’s poem invites us to marvel at one of nature’s creations: a beaver. This is already evident from the poem’s name, a simple statement of the subject matter. The title, as well as the opening line “Eident indwaller o that wilderness” invite the reader to, first and foremost, observe. The first line communicates that we have entered the native place of this ‘industrious inhabitant’ of the wilds, suggesting that this is not our (human) world anymore. However, in the second line Hubbard directly addresses the beaver that we as readers are observing: “Reddin and guidin it fir your domain:”. The poem then erupts into a praise: “Smaa pioneer, makar miraculous”. In Scots, *makar* means ‘maker’ or ‘creator’ of a variety of things, as well as ‘Creator’ or ‘God’. It is also an old Scottish synonym for ‘poet’. (Dictionaries of the Scots Language, n. d.). This single word can thus be interpreted in multiple levels to describe a busy beaver whose astounding ability to build and create is a manifestation of the power of God, the original Creator, and whose skill in weaving his materials together is much like the craft of a poet weaving words together (and who eventually becomes the source of inspiration for a poet). The first stanza concludes: “Frien beaver: tak this haun’s-turn o my ain.” In other words, Hubbard continues with an amicable address and offers his own “haun’s-turn”, or ‘a stroke of work’. The same line is also repeated at the very end of the poem, suggesting that Hubbard refers to the poem itself as his “haun’s-turn”. Indeed, the poem seems to depict a meeting of two *makars*.

The second stanza is a detailed description of the beaver at work: chewing through “birk or sauch, poplar or quakin-esh”, and assembling it all together, “A routh o logs and brainches, ticht and neat”. This attention to detail further highlights the observer’s interest in the beaver’s life and at this point the poem quite resembles reading the notebook of a biologist. Our observer could indeed be a wildlife aficionado—at the very least, Hubbard delivers a very conservationist perspective to nature much echoing that of Sir David Attenborough. By the third stanza, Hubbard provides a closer look at the beaver’s dwelling and family: “A crannog reeks intil the winter air: / Your fowk byde in their chaumer het and hale.” It is curious that the beaver’s nest is now referred to as a “crannog”, an ancient lake dwelling used by prehistoric inhabitants of the British Isles, that “reeks” (emits smoke), making it resemble a human dwelling. This is possibly meant as a reminder to us readers that we once lived very close to the nature ourselves, not so different from the wild animal we are now observing. “Swimming up throu a bore ti jyne thaim there”, the beaver then fights the strong waves to join its family and, in doing so, “You beat a ferlie music wi thon tail.” This last line adds an element of mysticism and mystery to the animal: “ferlie” signifies ‘marvellous’ or ‘strange’. “Ferlie” and ‘fairy’ both seem to date back to Old French *faerie*, ‘land of fairies’ (Etymonline, n. d.). In Scottish folklore, fairies are often considered something wondrous, yet also strange or dangerous, and they have been known to occasionally assume an animal form.

While the third stanza closes with a possible allusion to fairies, the fourth stanza continues with the supernatural theme much more explicitly: “The Indian hunter kent you fir a God”. Again, the poem plays with the double meaning of *makar* as ‘creator’ as well as ‘Creator’. The poem proceeds with “His squaw has taen your kitlins ti her breast …” Hubbard seems to invite us to consider what he views as the respectful and intimate nature relationship of indigenous peoples, where a woman is said to nurse an animal’s offspring. The language used here points to the fact that the poem was likely written in the 1980s or 1990s, since words like “Indian” or “squaw” in reference to indigenous (woman) North Americans are now recognised as racist slurs. The poem proceeds by drawing further connections between the lives of the beaver and the indigenous people: “Your clan – and his – were bi the mongers caa’d / Doon fir mass slauchter. Few wad spear, wha’s neist?” Both the animal and human “clans” were called to be slaughtered by, essentially, the same humans: the indigenous by European colonists and the beavers by those Europeans who went on to pursue fur trade, a business that nearly caused a local extinction. However, beaver fur trade was a historically significant trading tool between the European and indigenous communities, resulting in both alliances and warfare and later contributing to political events that would lead to American independence (Feinstein, 2006). In addition, during population peaks beavers themselves have been known to significantly affect and

alter their environment (*Beavers have an impact on the climate,* 2018). Finally, "Few wad spear, wha's neist?" contains a gloomy reference to the fact that not many survived and worries what the future will bring.

Hubbard then appears to introduce some remorse to the fourth stanza: "Syne we hae cried you back: oor governaunce / Had fund a gairden, left it as a muir." Assuming that the poem still refers to colonialist pre-independence North America here, "oor governaunce" could represent the English. In the new continent, the English had discovered a "gairden", a place of abundance and beauty, and claimed so much to themselves that it was depleted into a moor. Moors are a dominant element in Scottish landscape. The stunted grass, protruding rocks and heather bushes make the land difficult to travel across and cultivate. From an environmental perspective it is worth considering whether Hubbard could in fact be making a nod to his native land to criticise how people have been using the land over the course of time (while at the same time, he presents a romanticised view of North America through an indigenous narrative). According to Scotland's Nature Agency, the Scottish woodlands were drastically reduced as early as in the 17th century due to growing charcoal and timber industries, and by the 20th century, woodland had shrunk to 5% of Scotland's land area (Scotland's Nature Agency, n. d.). Hubbard then returns to addressing the beaver about its mystical qualities: "Whit is your secret, beaver, as you daunce / At the lochside wi your feres? Whit is your pouer?" Again, we are invited to marvel at this creature that Hubbard finds so fascinating. Finally, the last stanza is a repetition of the first one almost word for word, with Hubbard repeating the offer of his own "haun's-turn", the poem, as a tribute to the beaver.

As stated before, the poem asserts the beaver as the main character, while the reader remains a keen observer. By addressing the beaver directly, Hubbard creates an intimate and respectful atmosphere, almost as if he had accidentally chanced upon the beaver's homeplace and is now enjoying the privilege of witnessing this wild animal from a close distance. The poem appears to be, for the most part, constructed around a non-anthropocentric view of nature. The only times that humans or human presence are referred to are Hubbard's allusions to himself in the first and last stanza, the mention of indigenous peoples as well as an allusion towards European (English) colonists. It is therefore interesting that the beaver itself is given some anthropomorphic qualities when its nest is referred to as a "chaumer" and a "crannog" that "reeks intil the winter air". However, this does not necessarily mean that the poem is actually non-anthropocentric: after all, we are observing the beaver through Hubbard's very human eyes. Nevertheless, the beaver is shown in a very active role, constructing and remaining busy, with the diversely interpretable word *makar* providing further agency and possibly a further level of anthropomorphism. Amidst all the wonder

and enjoyment of wildlife, Hubbard also offers indications of environmental criticism of the way both the indigenous Americans and the American beaver were treated in the past, and of how the wild nature of Scotland has been treated.

A similar environmentalist perspective is featured in the next poem, John Burnside's "Travelling South, Scotland, August 2012", originally published in *Black Middens: New Writing Scotland 31* and featured in Best Scottish Poems 2013. Burnside is largely driven by ecological themes both in poetry and prose (*John Burnside*, n. d.). The poem opens with a quote by Ian D. Suttie: "*'Necessity is not the mother of invention; play is.'*" Ian D. Suttie (1889–1935) was a Scottish psychiatrist, whose posthumously published book *The Origins of Love and Hate* (1935), with its emphasis on addressing the "taboo of tenderness" in Western culture, is regarded as a fundamental influence on modern British psychoanalysis (Suttie, 1935/2005; Cassullo, 2010). This quote is rephrased by Burnside at the very end of the poem, giving it a closed thematic structure similar to "Beaver".

The ecological and environmental point of view in Burnside's poem is strong in contrast to "Beaver" where Hubbard assumes a subtler critical stance. The first stanza begins with "It gets late early out here / in the lacklustre places", followed by descriptions of wind and rain, rendering the poem an almost tangibly melancholy mood. Again, this is in contrast to Hubbard's admiring tone and playful mood. The poem also indicates quickly that the "lacklustre places" belong to an urban landscape: "foodstalls", "ricepaper lamplights", "wire fence" and "polythene wrapping" are among the key descriptive elements, while "marrowfat clogging the drains" underlines the filthiness, unpleasantness and roughness of the setting. As suggested by the poem's title and "the road that runs out to the coast", this is Burnside's account as he travels down south across a land that does not invoke beautiful experiences or a sense of awe, unlike Hubbard's poem. Instead, the sun sets on a rough urban landscape. In the second stanza, Burnside remarks: "The animals are gone / that hunted here", with mentions of wolves, bears and martens. There is a lack of animal presence in a place that used to belong to animals, reminding us again that we are in an anthropocentric environment where humans expect nature and wildlife to adapt to their needs. Like Hubbard, Burnside invites the reader to observe, but what is seen through his eyes is drastically different: "The rain is darker now", we observe, noticing that it is "oil-iridescent, streaked with the smell of lard". The mood grows quite literally darker. The oily quality of the rain could represent criticism towards Scotland's oil industry, which will be briefly discussed below. Interestingly, the rain is described to have "the smell of lard" while the first stanza mentions "marrowfat". These motifs of oil, fat and grease are present throughout the poem.

Scotland's history with black gold began in 1969 when the Amoco Corporation made its ground-breaking discovery. As a result, Scotland's economy was fortified and began growing, leading many to believe that this was the necessary boost to achieve status as an independent state. Indeed, through their *It's Scotland's Oil* campaign, the SNP gained significant success in the 1974 February and October general elections. Oil is a continuous talking point in Scottish politics vis-à-vis topics of independence and nationalism, though increased focus on clean energy and climate themes has forced the nation to readjust its views. The government's 2018 Climate Change Bill was, on the surface level, surprisingly ambitious, aiming for a 90% reduction in emissions by 2050. This, in addition to blundering oil prices, has led many nationalists to re-evaluate the decades-spanning significance of oil industry to both economy and national identity. (Maxwell, 2019, 2020).

Returning to the poem, we notice Burnside repeating an earlier phrase at the end of the second stanza: "*– it gets late early out here*; though *late*, out here, / has a different meaning:". The third stanza then elaborates on this observation: "stars in the road / and the absence of something more / than birchwoods and song". Again, the poem articulates the theme of absence, although it is not further specified what is absent besides trees and (assumably) the birds singing in them. Perhaps the speaker themself is not capable of verbalising it, or perhaps it is something private that is not meant to be shared with the reader and instead, the reader can fill in the blank for themself. Nevertheless, in that place now are "pallet fires", "grubbed fields clouded with grease / and palm oil, hints / of molasses and lanolin, tarpaper, / iron filings". The image evoked is that of an agro-industrial environment. The lines quoted here also contain more references to oil, grease and fat-like substances (lanolin being a type of wax, although sometimes referred to as 'wool grease').

The fourth stanza then jumps to a very different setting where Burnside expresses nostalgia: "I remember a meadow at dusk / in another rain". "I stood in a wind like gossamer and watched / three roe fawns and a doe" suddenly takes us to a situation very similar to the one in Hubbard's poem: we are, in fact, observing nature and wildlife. "Gossamer" is a term for a type of very fine spider silk, as well as fabric of a similar quality. It may signify the feeling of vulnerability that a person often experiences when encountering wild animals, and Burnside later describes the animals as "giving me just enough space / to feel safe". He continues: "their watchfulness reminding me of something / lost, a creaturely / awareness I could only glimpse / in passing." Once again, we return to the idea of something being missing. There is a certain depth that Burnside observes in the animal but only "in passing", perhaps because such an encounter with a wild animal is rare and grows rarer still as humans expand their urban territories. Burnside then returns back to present day by stating "That meadow is gone and dusk / isn't dusk anymore"; instead, what is left is the industrial gloom of "junkyards and

dead allotments" and the miserable sight of "the half-light of ersatz dairies petering out / on rotting fields / of rape and mustardseed". Burnside likely ended the line and stanza deliberately with "rape and mustardseed", as the polyseme "rape" functions as a powerful metaphor for what has been done to the land.

The next stanza elaborates on the abusive treatment of the land: "We've been going at this for years: / a steady delete / of anything that tells us what we are". In the process of land development, the Scots have also committed to a "steady delete" of the source of "what we are", suggesting how vital Burnside believes land is to identity. Burnside describes the long alienation from "local fauna", and how "ritual and lust" "surrendered where they fell, beneath a fog / of smut and grime and counting-house / as church", and how "the old gods" were "buried undead underneath the rural sprawl / that bears their names". The old rituals and beliefs surrendered at the face of industrialisation ("smut and grime") and a world where economic growth became the new religion ("counting-house as church"). What remained of the old times were place names like "Lammermuir" and "Whitelee". However, these "undead" gods are still "waiting out / the rule of Mammon, till the land returns / – with or without us –". *Mammon* is an old Aramaic word that appears in the New Testament to refer to the greedy pursuit of material wealth (Petruzzello, n. d.). The last line is significant, as demonstrated by the hyphens: it changes the course of the poem and, suddenly, nature is winning. We see "chainlink going down to bindweed" and "goldfinch on the dead estates", as well as "fat clusters of moss and gentian". The phrase "broken tarmac" is nicely cut in half between the two remaining stanzas to introduce us to the finale. "Tarmac with new shoots of coltsfoot breaking through" is a powerful image and a prime example of nature's resilience and adaptability. A leaf "unfurls into a light we could have known / but failed to see / by choosing not to find / the kingdom-at-hand:". The new leaf then reveals the truth that we have been ignorant to for so long. Our "kingdom" is not built on "smut and grime" or "factory outlets", but on "this order; / this dialectic; / this mother of invention, / ceaseless play." In other words, it is *mother* nature whose order and logic we are subject to and who is the ultimate source of our inventions in the form of "ceaseless play". This could be interpreted as a reference to childhood, when most individuals have a very innocent relationship to nature, seeing it as a source of endless innovation and creativity instead of an object of exploitation.

The overall mood of the poem is a range of disappointment, sadness, anger and loss. There is a glimpse of something more hopeful at the end; however, it is implied that since we "failed to see" the value of our land before, we are not necessarily entitled to witness it reclaim its original glory (a notion that perhaps echoes Jamie's view of humans as transient habitants of the land). The setting is

like that of a present-day dystopia, as pointed out by Best Scottish Poems 2013 editor David Robinson (*Travelling South, Scotland, August 2012*, n. d.). As the poem started to take form, Burnside had just heard of his sister's car accident and was further upset during his drive to the hospital "from having to witness yet again the damage that is being done to land we should have treasured and defended, damage inflicted over a long period by short-termism". Burnside admits to sharing his feelings of anger openly in the poem by stating that "anyone […] that could desecrate this land deserved, not our subsidy handouts, or our votes, but our contempt" (*Travelling South, Scotland, August 2012*, n. d.).

4.3. Summary

While each poem is distinctively different, their themes also overlap to some extent. In one way or another, each poem identifies with land. This also appears to hold true for "The Little White Rose". In MacDiarmid's famous poem, the land of Scotland is symbolised by the white rose and is the object of love and yearning. It is a powerful declaration of belonging to a land or of the land belonging to the speaker and is further endorsed by Crichton Smith's "our country" and Jamie's "our land". Crichton Smith's country is "new" and "fresh" and full of hope and the poem is symbolic of a significant change, which in turn alludes to national identity entering into a state of transition (albeit one could argue that identity is always in a state of change). In addition to land, identity as voiced by Crichton Smith emerges in association with institutions which presumably have a long history (excluding the Scottish Parliament, for obvious reasons).

Crichton Smith's situatedness is firmly rooted in present day, while Jamie emphasises temporariness. Jamie also expresses identity through geographic situatedness and the use of nature imagery, such as "northern lights and siller tides". Her line "small folk playing our part" refers to the Scots having an active role in their history, suggesting the significance of temporary participant roles in forming the identity of not only an individual but an entire people (Bucholtz & Hall, 2005, p. 591). Jamie's land that belongs to "none but itself" is a strong affirmation of identity for the people, but above all, a declaration of the land's own independence. With this line, Jamie also introduces an ecocritical perspective to her poem. In Hubbard and Burnside's poems, the primary focus is on identifying with the land. Hubbard identifies with both nature and animals and goes so far as to observe similarities between human and beaver. The beaver is referred to as *makar*, giving it anthropomorphic qualities and likening it to a poet. The beaver may in fact serve as a metaphor for a Scot, sharing further similarities such as being hard-working and resourceful, living in harsh conditions ("crannog"), possessing mythical qualities (historical Scottish figures tend to achieve

mythical qualities) and having faced hardship and trauma (similar to wars, famine and illness). Burnside's identification, on the other hand, is expressed through anger for the mistreatment of environment and displays his deep care for the land. The motif of travelling could be read as a metaphor of identity undergoing transformation or change, much like the river in Crichton Smith's poem. Burnside's "till the land returns / – with or without us –" perfectly expresses Jamie's idea of the land reclaiming itself. Finally, Burnside's criticism of capitalist and consumerist lifestyle in "the rule of Mammon" leads us back to the words of Paterson (2002) quoted in the introduction, describing how the Scottish perception of identity seems to have been affected by the "national marketing exercise" of including Scottish cultural symbols everywhere (p. 1).

5. Conclusion

This study has demonstrated that both history and land (environment) play a vital role in the emergence and maintenance of Scottish national identity. All five poems feature these two themes to an extent. These themes are often intertwined, interacting in various contexts—not only in literature, but also in politics, media, popular culture and private discourse. However, history and environment are extremely broad themes and including both of them into this thesis meant that the number of analysed texts was reduced to a minimum. Due to this, the results of this analysis can only be considered preliminary and used for guidance when planning further research that can either focus on its topic in more detail or accommodate more material for analysis.

The importance of language for expressing identity should not be forgotten and it is unfortunate that it was not possible to include proper linguistic discussion within the scope of this thesis. The relationship between identity and language of expression is arguably a relevant topic for further literary study. For a more in-depth historical analysis, it may be necessary to address the importance that Scots place on certain historical events and the way these events are discussed in media and literature. Such an analysis could benefit from an approach that relies more on presentism rather than historicism. Scottish nature relationship and its role in identity formation also warrants further studies that would ideally utilise multidisciplinary approaches. A more extensive ecocritical study could be conducted on how literary depictions of Scottish nature have changed (or not changed) over a longer period of time and how these developments reflect changes in Scottish environmental politics. Finally, it must be stated that examining such a complex and dynamic phenomenon as identity, especially when it functions on both individual and collective levels, is always a challenging task, regardless of approach, methodology or available resources. At the same time, due to the changing nature of both identity itself and the world around it, this topic is guaranteed to always remain relevant for future study.

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Appendix: Poems and their sources

The poems are listed alphabetically according to the author's name. The original print source is named first when possible, followed by a link to the website of Scottish Poetry Library or Poetry Foundation where the poem can be accessed and read in its entirety.

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