

Chapter 10: 'To see ourselves as others see us': constructions of Scotland's place and identity within a changing Scottish curriculum and context'.

Karen Lowing, Durham University, UK.

Introduction

Scotland has recently undergone a critical shift in its political stance within the United Kingdom. The Scottish Nationalist Party rose from a fringe group in 1934 to secure, in the 2015 general election, a landslide victory of 56 out of 69 seats in Scotland. Largely left wing but now with an evolving nationalist, rather than solely socialist agenda, modern day Scotland is increasingly distinctive in its political leanings and national identity.

Scots was acknowledged as an autonomous minority language in 2000 by the Council of Europe: European Charter for Regional or Minority Languages. In 2001 the UK Government sanctioned Scots, under Part II of the Charter, as a minority language within Britain. During the last five years, with the implementation of the new Scottish Curriculum for Excellence, the subjects of Scots Language and Scottish Studies have been incorporated within Scottish classrooms. These curricular changes resonate with recent political developments in Scotland and the country's evolving national identity.

This chapter provides an introduction to national identity construction and offers an initial broad thematic analysis of Scottish history, literature and politics, as pertinent theoretical, cultural and administrative backdrops to further appreciate Scottish education policy on studying Scotland in schools. As the Curriculum for Excellence now requires Scottish schools to incorporate Scots Language and Scottish Studies in the classroom, the chapter specifically provides a preliminary study of Education Scotland's 'Studying Scotland' school resource, with reference to the Scottish Studies Scottish Qualifications Authority (SQA) award.

National Identity Construction

Before we consider these documents and their contextual backdrop, I would like to first define and position the concept of ‘national identity’, as employed throughout this chapter.

Identity is abstract, constructed, and often contextual. Identity can be ‘achieved’ or ‘inhabited’ (Blommaert, 2006); it can suggest, ‘the identity people themselves articulate or claim – and ‘ascribed’ or ‘attributed’ identity – the identity given to someone by someone else’ (ibid.: p238). Identity through a nationalising lens can create, as Anderson (2006) suggests, ‘imagined communities’, where a unity of populace exists, boundaries have some fluidity, the people have a sense of autonomy in their future and community is present through both time and place (Billig, 2011; Benwell & Stokoe, 2006; McCrone, 1992).

A reference to Jung’s theory of the ‘collective unconscious’ is pertinent here, where a sense of community is rooted beyond the physical and across incalculable generations of a population’s psyche. This notion of a ‘collective unconscious’ is an enduring theme throughout many exemplars of Scottish literature; Gunn’s (1952) *Bloodhunt* for example, presents a more modern and yet, timeless Scotland, where the cry of the wolf and whisper of the forests and glens, contrasts with the protagonist’s harsh experiences at sea; the juxtaposition of memory (albeit elusively romantic) and experience never quite escapes the protagonist’s consciousness.

Scotland displays a strong sense of national cohesion in its demonstrations of constructed identity (McCrone, 1995). A clear unity of populace is often revealed through Scotland’s prosaic demonstrations of national signs and symbols (Billig, 2011). The Scottish heritage industry, and particularly its tourist trade, has ‘commodified’ Scotland, in portioning it out to be ‘eaten by the other’ (bell hooks, 1992). It presents images of highland ‘noble savages’, existing in a land of mystical beasts and almost fairy-tale-like terrain, an image readily sold to and eagerly consumed by visiting tourists.

Scotland has not only projected this construction of national identity towards and for the consumption of the ‘other’ but, as part of this process, created a dislocated psyche, a ‘Diasporic’ mind-set, synonymous with Scotland’s notoriety for emigration and developing a global Diaspora. Scattered physically, the Scots are also dispersed subconsciously from a

more robust multifaceted sense of self, towards a reductionist, mythical 'ideal ego' of Scotland, by means of 'tartanry' images and 'Kailyardism' (McCrone, 1995). Scotland's constructed, rather than inherent, 'collective consciousness' is therefore disaffected from any genuine notion of nationhood. A more palatable national identity would be based on a modern 'Scottish Renaissance', where 'collective' tradition and memory is reliably honoured and contemporary culture is positively acknowledged.

This said, the idea of nationalism per se must be presented with a caveat; the positioning of national identity should be a fluid and alterable process, avoiding essential and fixed outcomes to be adhered to (Kidd, 2002). History reminds us that essentialist definitions of nationalism are hauntingly dangerous (Joseph, 2004). Thus, when I propose that Scotland considers its 'genuine' national identity, I intend that Scotland gazes beyond its 'fixed' tartan ego and employs a credible and ever-increasing meta-awareness that supports the continual and enduring reflexive practice of positively re-positioning its identity as a nation.

Scottish Historical Context

Before specifically investigating Scottish national identity construction in Scottish schools, it is important to first consider the main themes and rhetoric arising from the archives of Scottish history, the latter of which continue to pervade the Scottish 'collective conscious' (Lowing, 2014). The historical facts here are largely a broad overview of Lynch's (2011) 'Scotland: A New History', Keay and Keay's, (1994) 'Collins Encyclopedia of Scotland' and Scott's (1994) 'Scotland: A Concise Cultural History'.

Historically Scotland is well known for its early 'Auld Alliance' with France in the 13th century; both countries agreed to support the other if the army of King Edward I of England was to invade. Such an alliance was not unusual; Scotland often gazed beyond Britain to Europe, drawing on European educational practices and also benefitting from trade links with its European cousins. In particular, St Andrews University, founded later in the fifteenth century, was partly fashioned on the Parisian higher education system. Trade routes from the fifteenth century onwards with European countries such as Belgium, Denmark, France, Russia, Poland, Sweden and Norway, were commonplace.

However, largely as a result of the Union of Crowns (1603) and Parliaments (1707), Scotland aligned with 'Britishness'; the Union of Parliaments principally helped to construct the institution we know today as Great Britain. Yet Burns argued in, 'Sic a Parcel of Rogues', that this Union was built on the bribery of the Scottish government: 'What force or guile could not subdue / Through many warlike ages / Is wrought now by a coward few / For hireling traitor's wages ... English gold has been our bane - / Sic a parcel o rogues in a nation!'

Such uneasy foundations between Scotland and England have a protracted history. In the 13th century, in order to allegedly avenge the death of his wife Marion Braidfute, William Wallace killed the Sheriff of Lanark. The events that followed, some of which were adapted and romanticised in the blockbuster *Braveheart*, encapsulate the tensions between the two countries. The Wars of Independence during the 13th and 14th centuries and The Declaration of Arbroath in 1320 were significant events; the Declaration stated (in translation): 'as long as a hundred of us remain alive, never will we on any conditions be subjected to the lordship of the English'. Many of the efforts of Wallace and Bruce led to the Declaration and resulted in a renewal of the alliance between Scotland and its European counterpart France.

The tensions between and within Scotland and England continued throughout the 15th and 16th centuries with The Stewart dynasty. However the disputes between both countries were not only concerned with territory. Differing warring Catholic and Presbyterianism factions scored the landscape of what we now know as Britain. The period largely spanning that of Mary Queen of Scots and the Covenanters in the 16th and 17th centuries, and the 17th and 18th century's rising of the Jacobites and Charles Edward Stuart: 'Bonnie Prince Charlie' or 'The Young Pretender', produced much conflict between the two countries. The defeat of Prince Charles and the Jacobites at Culloden in 1746 however, led to the Act of Proscription in 1747, where tartan and weaponry was banned in the Highlands of Scotland.

Britain thereafter found itself in the midst of the 18th century Enlightenment Period, when Scotland was celebrated for its scholarly ideas and inventions. Adam Smith, David Hume, James Hutton and James Watt for example, were highly influential in the realms of Trade and

Industry, Philosophy, Geology and Engineering respectively. Despite this period of relative calm and optimism, the Highland Clearances befell the Scottish Gaelic community through the 18th and 19th centuries. The Poor Law compounded the plight of the Highlanders in 1845 and the potato famines in 1846 did little to halt the hemorrhaging of the Highlanders from their homes.

Many landlords refused to support their Highland tenants, despite this now being their obligation, as a result of the new law. Landlords continued to evict native Highlanders from their crofts to fishing villages, cities or even to foreign climes such as America, Canada, New Zealand or Australia. These evictions were at best sanitary and at worst brutal acts of ethnic cleansing. A harsh enforcer of these practices was Patrick Sellar, factor of the Sutherland estate. In response to a plea from crofters attempting to stop him burning their elderly neighbour's croft, Sellar was famously quoted as stating, 'Damn her, the old witch. She has lived too long. Let her burn'.

The Highlanders were often required to develop a different set of working skills in their new locations, whilst the gentry gained from the crofters' eviction through lucrative sheep farming and later, stag shooting. John McGrath's play, *The Cheviot, the Stag and the Black, Black Oil*, written in the 70s, depicts this stark demise of Scotland's Gaelic culture from the 18th onwards. The text makes comparisons between the cheviot sheep, the stag and the 20th century oil industry in the North of Scotland. It suggests that the rich oil barons, and not the people of Scotland, benefited from the industry, just as before landowners such as the Duke of Sutherland, and the shooting gentry of Britain's elite, gained from the exile of the Highland Gaelic communities. The film *Local Hero* (1983), set in Scotland where a rich oil baron wishes to drill in a remote and beautiful area of the Highlands, no doubt draws from this element of Scotland's modern history. As I write, recent political events in America, with the election of Donald Trump and his commercial interests in Scotland, resonate.

The early 20th century Scotland witnessed a new renaissance, echoing James V's 16th century Renaissance Scotland, where Hugh MacDiarmid, like Gunn, wished to encourage Scottish expression through cultural pursuits. He created 'Lallans', or synthetic Scots, a Scots derived

from numerous different codes of Scots and wrote his famous work: *A Drunk Man Looks at a Thistle*. MacDiarmid was a founder of the National Party of Scotland, known today as the Scottish National Party. He believed that only Scots, albeit a synthetic Scots, could unite and express the distinctiveness and heart, or ‘collective consciousness’ of the Scottish people.

Throughout British history, the edges become blurred between there simply being a Scottish / English divide; complex conflicts of religion and wealth have acted as deciding factors for the fate of the rural or city poor in Scotland. Scotland’s global perspective has endured however. This was starkly emphasized in June 2016, following the British vote for Brexit, when the Scottish Member of the European Parliament, Alyn Smith, announced in the European Parliament that he was, ‘proudly Scottish’ but also, ‘proudly European’, not as one might imagine, ‘proudly British’. He then stated that: ‘I want my country to be internationalist ... European’ and ended with: ‘Scotland did not let you down ... do not let Scotland down now’ (YouTube, Web: accessed 29/7/2016).

In June 2016 Nicola Sturgeon, Scotland’s First Minister, suggested that a second Scottish referendum may be imminent, due to the UK vote for Brexit. This was largely fuelled by 62% of Scots voting ‘no’ to exiting Europe. The 2014 Scottish referendum for independence was also revealing; only 53% of Scots voted to stay in the UK. Whilst I prepare this chapter, Sturgeon continues to work towards ensuring Scotland remains in some form within the EU. These recent political events again emphasize Scotland’s modern sense of autonomy, identity and place beyond Britain and towards Europe.

Branding Scotland in Literature

It is worth considering the branding that sits behind and helps to construct modern Scottish national identity and the impact such pervasive mnemonics have on Scottish educational policy and practice.

History plays an enduring role in the construction of Scottish identity. Highland ‘nobles savages’, wild and brutal figures yet with honorable morals, have languished in Scottish history to emerge later fully-formed in Scotland’s literature. MacPherson’s *Ossian* (1762) and Scott’s *Rob Roy*

(1818) are just such examples. Scottish history and politics are also often depicted in film. Movies such as *Braveheart* (1995), *Highlander* (1986) and *Rob Roy* (1995) portray such 'noble savages' in glorious Technicolor. With *Local Hero* (1983), although the film offers a beguiling depiction of Highland life amid a robust political undercurrent, it unmistakably draws from the Kailyard tradition, again romanticizing rural Scottish life.

Scottish literature has proved to be a willing conduit to less positive productions of Scottish national identity, with some of its re-creations of Scotland evidently being only loosely derived from Scottish history. Indeed, there endures a tension in Scottish literature between soporific and disingenuous 'Kailyardism' for example, and the often raw, honest and yet inescapably idealistic literature of the modern 'Scottish Renaissance'. This juxtaposition can also be found in film, where romantic depictions of Scotland, as above, are contrasted with realism, in the stark and violent representation of Scotland within productions such as *Trainspotting* (1996), *My Name is Joe* (1998) and *NEDS* (2010).

McCrone (1995), in his text, 'Scotland the Brand', suggests that naïve but ubiquitous constructions of Scottish national identity were immortalised during the Romantic period. Influential texts such as MacPherson's *Ossian* (1762), Boswell and Johnson's *Journal of a Tour to the Hebrides* (1785) and Scott's many publications including *Waverley* (1814), *Rob Roy* (1818) and *Redgauntlet* (1824), helped to create a Scotland of: 'kilts, tartan, heather, bagpipes ... romance, sadness, defeat' (McCrone, 1992: p18). When George IV visited Edinburgh in 1822, Scott was at the forefront of re-constructing Scottish identity. His novel *Waverley* and his staged production of a 'tartanry' Scotland, harbouring Highland 'noble savages', had much to answer for in presenting to King and country a mythical version of a romantic Scotland (ibid.). Later Queen Victoria's procurement of Balmoral in 1848 helped to link 'tartanry' to royalty and eventually the military. As McCrone (1995) states, this was, 'a master-stroke by the British state in literally stealing its enemy's clothes' (p52).

The Celtic Twilight and Kailyard movements in Scottish literature: Sharp's *Pharais: A Romance of the Isles* (1855-1905) and Barrie's *Auld Licht Idylls* (1888) for example, embedded the notion of a romanticised northern land, separate from newly industrialised

Britain (Keay & Keay, 1994). In part this was a reaction, embodied in Romanticism, to such swift change to workplace and landscape in the United Kingdom. Nevertheless Scotland is often depicted as possessing an, 'aggressive spirit of independence and egalitarianism' (Wittig, 1958: p95), autonomous to the developments of Britain at large. As such, it is not unanticipated that Scotland's literary tradition presents this forte for individualism.

Interestingly, the idea of Scotland claiming to own an egalitarian national character largely derives from the 'lad o' pairts' ideal, a mythical belief, which can be traced back to McLaren's (1894) Kailyard text, *Beside the Bonnie Brier Bush* (McCrone, 2008:). The Kailyard, or 'cabbage patch' literary tradition presented Scotland as provincial and insular, yet interspersed with wise characters in high standing within small towns. 'Domsie' from *Brier Bush* for example, was a schoolteacher who uncovered shrewd routes to send his talented boys of little means, his 'lad o' pairts', to university. No 'lass o' pairts' however, appeared to exist in this scenario (ibid.).

The 'lad o' pairts', an inherently virtuous working class boy of rural or small parish life, was robust and moral. He was a form of Scottish 'noble savage', empowered through education to escape his apparent 'barbarity'. Yet, that such a process occurred is somewhat lacking in credibility (ibid.). Although this tale of egalitarianism is admirable in its aim for educational furtherance, it still implies the need to 'remedy' the uneducated poor and therefore became allied with notions of Anglicisation and colonialism (ibid.). However, such inequity arose from class structures rather than simply as a result of Anglicisation. Anderson (2008) suggests that Scotland did not as much demonstrate a 'classless society' but instead a society where talent was valued above class, a 'meritocracy'. The egalitarian ideal of the 'lad o' pairts' endured; it was a valued part of Scottish identity, immortalised in *Brier Bush* and employed by Nationalists to help distinguish between Scottish and English national identities (ibid.). Indeed, the Scottish education system largely appears to maintain, 'a wider tradition of social egalitarianism' (McCrone, 2008: p226), a remnant of the 'lad o pairts' (ibid.).

Emerging Themes

The creation of Scottish national identity through history, literature and politics, produces

numerous emerging themes. These themes are useful when considering the educational policy surrounding Scottish studies in Scotland's Curriculum for Excellence:

1. Scotland largely and historically maintains a European perspective.
2. Tensions persist between British or Scottish Nationalist campaigns
3. Religious divide, mostly between Protestant and Catholics, endures in Scotland. Commonly known as 'Scotland's shame', in 2005 The Guardian wrote about 'the dark side' of Scottish football when, as a result of a player's religion, death threats were made from opposition Scottish supporters, and the footballer was forced to seek refuge in a safe house.¹ The foundations of such political and religious conflicts, two of the six themes I discuss here, are no doubt linked to the Scotland's troubled past, as outlined above.
4. Scotland maintains its 18th century reputation as a place of enterprise. However, ongoing tensions regarding the ownership of Scottish oil and the very much dwindling .semi-conductor industry of 'silicon glen', the basin between Glasgow and Edinburgh, present a different picture.
5. The theme of Romanticism sustains in, for example, tourist towns such as Edinburgh, Stirling, Fort William, Aviemore and Inverness. It can be seen in the banal mnemonics of flags, tartan and shortbread, readily sold in such locations (Billig 2011).
6. Egalitarianism endures in the Scottish psyche, despite (as Scottish writer Hassan (Scotsman, 2013) notes in his article) that, 'this is most definitely not who we are in reality: whether it be educational apartheid, health inequalities, or the 1:273 ratio between Scotland's wealthiest and poorest households in wealth'.²

Earlier I supported a more persuasive national identity for Scotland, founded on a contemporary 'Scottish Renaissance', where the 'collective conscious' reliably draws from tradition and memory and where contemporary culture is acknowledged and respected. As a nation and particularly in schools with young people, these persistent themes of Europeanism,

¹ The Guardian at: <https://www.theguardian.com/commentisfree/2011/mar/20/celtic-rangers-football-religion-sectarian> (Accessed 23/12/2016).

² The Scotsman at: <http://www.scotsman.com/news/opinion/gerry-hassan-equality-must-begin-before-it-goes-on-1-3248831> (Accessed 22/12/2016).

‘Britishness’ vs Nationalism, Sectarianism, Enterprise, Romanticism and Egalitarianism need to be challenged and problematized.

With these emerging themes and issues in mind, I return to Education Scotland’s ‘Studying Scotland’, with reference to the SQA Scottish Studies Award document. Here we discover that on initial analysis, at least some of these themes become apparent. With particular regard to the guidelines on Scots language within the former document, I would like to focus mainly on theme 2, with some mention of theme 6.

Scottish Studies in Scottish Classrooms

When referring to Scottish Studies here, I allude to both the study of Scotland and its languages. The new ‘Studying Scotland’ school resource and Scottish Studies Award have gained a tenuous place in Scotland’s schools (Lowing, 2014). Education Scotland’s ‘Studying Scotland’ resource places weight on developing a sense of nationhood in Scottish children: ‘Scottish young people should have a clear understanding of the forces and events that have shaped our national identity’ (Education Scotland, Web: accessed 17/9/2016). The Scottish Government’s creation and implementation of Scottish Qualification Authority’s Award (SQA) in Scottish Studies is based on a belief that:

understanding Scottish history, language and culture and connecting with Scotland as a place through our landscape and natural heritage are an important part of developing a sense of identity, confidence and wellbeing (Scot Gov 1, Web: accessed 26/8/2016).

The suggestion in these two extracts is that understanding one’s national identity, having a ‘place’ of ‘our’ belonging, by means of ‘landscape’ and ‘natural heritage’, creates assured and healthy young people. This statement follows the publication of such populist texts as Craig’s (2011) *The Scot’s Crisis of Confidence*, which highlights the ‘pessimistic’, Anglophobic Scot.

These references to national identity in the Scottish curriculum are in no small way related to the Scottish Nationalist Party’s victory in 2015 and its influence on Scottish policy and

practice thereafter. A resilient sense of national identity is also shared in Scotland's developing policy and practice for the Arts and its Heritage industry; patrons and consumers are encouraged to understand art and culture as, 'sit[ting] at the heart of who we are as a nation' (Scotland's 2016-17 Arts Strategy, Creative Scotland, Web: accessed 26/8/2016). An increasing sense of national place and identity, nationally and internationally, in the rhetoric of Scotland's municipal workings, appears to indicate the significance of national identity construction, its place and positioning, in an evolving post-2015 Scotland.

Nonetheless, it is worth considering in further depth 'Studying Scotland' and specifically its approach to Scots Language. This is not to exclude Scots Gaelic however, also a very important language of the Scottish classroom, but for the purposes of this chapter, I focus on Scots.

The application of language in educational policy can reveal much with regard the governmentally endorsed and constructed national identity of a country (Hornberger, 2008). When introducing Scots Language, the document states:

Scots is the official name for all of the dialects of Scotland (eg Glaswegian, Doric, Ayrshire, Shetland, Lallands). Scots is recognised as a language in its own right by the Scottish and UK governments as well as the European Union (Education Scotland, Web: accessed 17/9/2016).

By referring to Scots as a 'dialect', the article infers that Scots is a dialect of an established language, i.e. English. Scots and Gaelic are Scotland's national languages, being recognised by the Council of Europe: European Charter for Regional or Minority Languages.

This initial passage of the text creates a tension between historically conflicting linguistic positioning in Scotland. The language required until recently in Scottish schools has generally been Standard English, the formally recognised language of much of Britain; the language employed beyond the confines of the classroom however has largely been Scots, the language of many Scottish people (Loving, 2014). This expectation of English being the

lingua franca in Scottish schools has tended to remain despite changes to the contrary within the New Curriculum for Excellence (ibid.). As language and identity are irrefutably linked (Joseph, 2004), the contradictory positions offered within just this one piece of Scottish educational text, projects confusing messages for Scottish teachers and school children alike with regard the topic of national identity construction.

Active in overseeing the implementation of Scots, the Committee of Experts are a European Charter for Regional or Minority Languages group of independent specialists, required by the Council of Europe: European Charter for Regional or Minority Languages to be effective in, ‘the adoption of protective and promotional measures’ (European Charter for Regional or Minority Languages, Web) for regional or minority languages. They ensure such languages are adopted and implemented by respective governmental bodies but in the case of Scots, experts noted in their 2007 report that, ‘the situation of the Scots language in Scotland however, remains unsatisfactory’ (p8). As McColl-Millar (2006) notes, Scots is included in Part II of the European Charter for Regional or Minority Languages. This allows for government discretion in the application of Scots language provision, particularly in schools; McColl-Millar states, ‘the implementation of language policy on Scots at all levels of government ... has been half-hearted, ill thought-out and buried in a swathe of other ‘cultural’ issues (ibid.: 63). One of these ‘cultural issues’ may very well involve language choice and the positioning of national identity between British and Nationalist locations in Scottish schools; this is despite the landslide victory of the Scottish National Party in 2015 and their impact on educational policy thereafter.

The ‘Studying Scotland’ article contradicts itself further however by refuting Scots as being ‘slang’; it instead provides an etymology of the language, which imbues the tongue with significant standing. Yet thereafter the article suggests that during the 17th century, ‘Scots began to decline. The Southern English language became the most popular written and spoken form. However, Scots was retained in the oral traditional tales and songs which provide a backdrop for the history of creativity in Scotland’. The article also states: ‘In Curriculum for Excellence, Scots language is referred to both explicitly and implicitly’ (Education Scotland, Web: accessed 17/9/2016).

This section is particularly damning of the Scots language and wholly inaccurate; that the article does not present further information regarding the standing of Scots beyond its decline as the language of officialdom is misleading; Scots has remained a spoken language to the present day (Lowing, 2014). As a language still employed freely throughout Scotland, academics such as McClure (2009), Macafee (2003) and McColl-Millar (2006) remain active in the field of Scots. In addition, that it is referred to ‘implicitly’ throughout Scottish educational policy, is somewhat ironic: Scots does indeed remain very much unspoken in many Scottish classrooms (Lowing, 2014).

‘Studying Scotland’ also claims that the 2011 Scots census results are not yet available. The resource is outdated; the Scots census results are now accessible and they indicate that at least 30% of Scottish people speak Scots in Scotland today. ‘Studying Scotland’ is undoubtedly questionable; the reader is left with the worrying realisation that its representation of the Scots language is problematic and unsound but yet is currently being utilised in Scottish schools.

Acknowledging Scots as a minority language the European Charter for Regional or Minority Languages pointedly highlights that language rights are a matter of social justice (see Madoc-Jones & Buchanan, 2004). Maintaining equality and diversity in schools is not only a central component of social justice, but is also a sound model for developing positive citizenship in children. Unfortunately, however, ‘Studying Scotland’s’ message to schools with regard to the Scots Language cannot draw on the Scottish egalitarian ideal. The document fails to fully support the collective voice and identity of Scotland that the Scots language is integral to. This is particularly concerning when Scots is often associated with working-class and / or rural areas in Scotland. It seems the Scottish speaking ‘lad o’ pairts’ is not as welcome in Scottish schools as the Scottish egalitarian ideal might suggest.

Conclusion

The protagonist in *Trainspotting* (1996), Renton, is famous for his diatribe regarding a colonised Scotland. Unmistakably Renton wishes to be ‘ABE’, ‘anything but English’ and solidly places himself in the Scottish Nationalist camp. Being ‘ABE’ is many steps beyond

being anything but British and is a contentious and complicated area that requires not only a separate chapter but also a stand-alone text, in order to do this worrying subject justice. Renton in his controversial tirade, however, does pose a critical question: who are the Scottish nation? Renton here urges national meta-awareness and reflexivity in Scotland and it does seem that the national consensus is moving towards a more confident and self-aware national identity. The Independent on 25th September, 2015 noted that:

While the national psyche of Scotland may have shifted, recent political polling has suggested that the way in which people describe themselves has stayed fairly stable. In an ICM poll in March, 62 per cent of Scots said they would describe themselves as Scottish rather than British, with 31 per cent stating the opposite – much the same as in previous years.³

A sense of ‘Scottishness’ before ‘Britishness’ generally remains in Scotland. However repeated themes found in Scotland, clustering around place and national identity, require further consideration. So too do many of these recurring themes in Scottish educational policy. The accuracy of such documents and the nation’s ‘shifting psyche’ and sense of nationhood therein necessitates change, change for the sake of a new Scotland where, through politics, there’s a more positive and constructive outlet; where it’s OK now to ‘have a Saltire in your window’³ and where it’s okay to celebrate a positive Scottish national identity, and a myriad of languages in the Scottish classroom, including Scots and Scots speaking children.

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³ The Independent (25/9/2015) at: <http://www.independent.co.uk/news/uk/politics/scottish-referendum-the-snp-and-identity-where-the-country-is-headed-as-the-dust-settles-from-a-10516590.html> (Accessed 2/01/2016)

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