History, Sociology, Modernity: How Connect?

Rather like some of Scottish history’s protagonists, the nation’s historiography has had more than its share of subversion, encounters between extremes and strange deaths.¹ This colourful rendering of the past sustains the current challenge, while of course, devolution has provided a certain self-confident spur to activity, and to a greater extent than previously the mediated present drives the historical agenda. We are a long way now from 1994 when, in a Special Issue of this journal containing the proceedings of a conference entitled ‘Whither Scottish History?’, Tom Devine declared that ‘there is still precious little interest in family history or popular culture’.² Since then, the advent of the Internet, genealogical tourism, a resurgent interest in the diaspora, 300 years of Union, Burns’ 250th, the Year of Homecoming and other marker-points have coalesced to provide a richly celebrated popular sense of the past.³ On the back of such populism, the mass media, including some television dons, have made hay.⁴ Yet most Scots historians are rather modest, preferring perhaps to enjoy the extended empirical reach that IT provides through access to so much potential data, rather than succumb to the hype of anniversaries. This said, many synopses, edited volumes and general histories testify not just to a millennial sense of market opportunity but also, in their very range as well as their acknowledged provisionality, to the ongoing problem of

⁴ The landmark survey series was the BBC’s In Search of Scotland (2001), presented by Fiona Watson. More recently, they have broadcast several further series, including A History of Scotland and Scots Who Found the Modern World (on explorers and adventurers), and Scotland’s Clans and Grand Tours of Scotland (based on Black’s Tours in Scotland (1820)). The Gaelic digital channel BBC Alba, which began airing in 2008, has a strong commitment to history programmes using archive footage.

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trying to make sense of modernity. A retrospective accounting mentality has prevailed via both the compendium and the pocket book. Does this mean something other than manufacturing coherence through compression (Scotland’s unique story) or, conversely, gazing bemusedly at fracture and fragmentation?

Twenty three years ago, in one of three People and Society compilations designed to ‘reveal the “state of the art” in modern Scottish history’, Chris Harvie and Graham Walker pleaded for ‘an account of the “culture” or society of Scotland’. Note the singular: it would be a tall order to expect from the manifold experiences of work, drink, sex, religion etc. then being unearthed by the ‘new’ social history that a consistent narrative of one modern Scotland might emerge. Of course, Devine has given us The Scottish Nation, in his words ‘an interpretative synthesis’ of research by many scholars, and there have been several devolution-inspired anthologies seeking to establish revised and nationally distinctive perspectives on how the country came to be as it is today. ‘Panoptic views’, ‘totalizing visions’ and ‘conflicting constructions’ there may have been. However, in celebrating difference and diversity, no one historian has been Whiggishly obsessed with the development of a monolithic national picture; quite the contrary, for that would be altogether constraining. As Robert Crawford points out, although we are indebted to the ‘work of confident consolidation in Scottish historiography’, nevertheless, ‘Scotland needs not the pursuit of some elusive echt Scottishness, but requires many reminders of its protean and plural past, present and future’. Perhaps, then, it is not Scotland but ‘Scotlands’ that we should be considering, particularly in this post-British phase of our thinking. Yet, whatever the many viewpoints now possible, it remains true that the epistemological shifts entailed in comprehending modernity as understood since the Enlightenment have provided the intellectual lens by which ‘Scotland’


9 This plurality of perceptions and constructions was recognised in the title of the journal Scotlands, ‘an international, interdisciplinary journal of Scottish culture’, although this publication subsequently merged with the Scottish Literary Journal to become the Scottish Studies Review.
is perceived as an imagined community. In this sense, it is simply our frame of reference, albeit one that must sit within a globalizing international context. Our real concern lies with how we organize the quest for understanding within this commonly acknowledged ambit.

To a degree, this means confronting history’s disciplinary closure. In acknowledging the ‘pressing need for structural analyses of Scottish society’ back in 1976, Allan MacLaren took social class as his theme, arguing that history could embrace such a concept only if it vacated the narrative tradition and established some kind of working relationship with the synthetic approach of the social sciences. Echoing E.H. Carr’s call for a rapprochement between the disciplines of history and sociology, this was scarcely a novel intervention. Indeed, far subtler relations than those between narrative and structure are embedded in the dialectics of the historian’s craft and the sociological imagination. But half a century later, when theoretical borrowing across broad areas of social sciences and the humanities is considered de rigueur, interdisciplinarity remains slow to develop, historians mostly preferring to retreat home guiltily after any brief encounters. Richard Finlay suggests that political scientists and sociologists have made significant contributions to twentieth-century Scottish history because ‘those disciplines are conceptually better equipped than historians to tackle the peculiarities of Scottish development’. Prefaces and overviews of the state of Scottish history conventionally refer to a need to deploy more techniques and insights from cognate subjects: in 1994 Devine cited sociology, anthropology and historical geography; nowadays we might call upon science and technology studies or cultural geography. Social theory has made some inroads into teaching where, for instance, Callum Brown has taken up the challenge with his provocatively entitled Postmodernism for Historians. Yet across great stretches of ocean historians and social scientists pass by one another like ships in the night. How might we strive towards greater dialogue?

What are modern Scottish historians researching? In this issue, Graeme Morton and Trevor Griffiths’ purview indicates the particular

significance of national identity and diaspora and suggests that ways forward are being glimpsed particularly through researching everyday life, personal history and relations between ourselves and others. Amongst the themes that may be identified from a trawl of Scottish history journals are subjects as diverse as: gender (now well-established), medical, military and missionary history (interestingly the old three Ms of Empire as glimpsed by the Checklands), song and performance, sport, leisure, consumption, cinema and television. Then there are what might be termed the in-between areas—neither especially ascendant nor populous nor in terminal decline—such as environmental history. Meanwhile, the agenda seems to be heading away from demographic and economic history, whose autonomous institutional decline is much lamented, and towards social and cultural themes. Yet, as Trevor Griffiths remarks, ‘the history of Scottish popular culture remains submerged in literature dominated by the travails of heavy industry’. In other words, it is difficult to disentangle social and cultural history from a particular, taken for granted understanding of our political economy. One possible solution to this conundrum is to focus on methodology; not so much on what we study but how we go about it.

After Smout, one of the upshots of the progress from the history of a people towards an anthropology of ourselves has been an appetite for ‘from below’ analysis—a focus on micro-studies and on the everyday lives of ordinary people. This has strengthened the trend for compendia, such as the massive, eclectic and topic-based *Scottish Life and Society* volumes (14 of them when the whole is eventually published), people’s biographies, and oral and picture histories, but it is sometimes difficult to see beyond the ethnological and antiquarian to the historiographic import of such. Meanwhile, the *History of Everyday Life in Scotland* project, though again near-comprehensive in scope, if chronologically structured, presents a more intellectually ambitious attempt to develop
and justify a fresh orientation.\textsuperscript{23} With a clear debt to the Annales School, and particularly the \textit{Realms of Memory/ Rethinking France} project edited by Pierre Nora,\textsuperscript{24} the exercise foregrounds continuities and shifts in how people spent their time, their daily routines, situated experiences and life course rituals. There is also an attempt to grasp past mentalities: ‘We discover how Scottish people’s fears, anxieties and perceptions of danger changed over time, we learn about the importance of gestures as well as forms of written and verbal communication and we begin to recover how ordinary Scots experienced their sensory worlds of taste, sound, sight and touch’.\textsuperscript{25} This is not a matter of discussing factoids introduced by over-imaginative theorising. In modern history, we are somewhat better placed regarding surviving material than historians of the medieval or early modern period. Foucauldians and others point to the ways in which capitalist bureaucracies generated records in a quest for knowledge quite explicitly designed to invade the personal space of individuals. Nevertheless, squeezing these already dry and abbreviated sources for evidence requires ingenuity of interpretation, while appreciating the contexts of behaviours ‘recovered’ and meanings inferred entails researching practices and networks rather than structures and ideals, linking private spaces with public worlds. And here there is a significant difference from Nora, whose project is about memories—therefore representations, signs and symbols, and to a degree ‘top down’—whereas Scottish history of the everyday has more readily retained its commitment to the workings of the social at ground level.\textsuperscript{26} It is no accident that Lynn Abrams and Callum Brown, in their introduction to the final volume in the \textit{Everyday Life in Scotland} series, use the ideas of interactionist sociology—the importance of the corporeal, paramount reality, social scripts. Such thinking has been deftly exploited in areas like gender history, which, of course, questions the official record by engaging the politics of the personal and otherwise privatised realm as well as rendering problematic received stereotypes. In the smallest aspects of everyday life may be found ‘an imprint of the whole culture’, the world in a grain of sand.\textsuperscript{27} In our search for connectivity between the local and the national we might do worse than import notions like banal nationalism which have already served Scottish sociology well.\textsuperscript{28} Certainly, for much of the twentieth century we


\textsuperscript{24} P. Nora, ed., \textit{Les lieux de mémoire} 7 vols, (Paris, 1984–92).


\textsuperscript{28} M. Billig; \textit{Banal Nationalism} (London, 1995); A. P. Cohen, ‘Nationalism and social identity: who owns the interest of Scotland?’, \textit{Scottish Affairs} 18 (1997).

If we want to know what the effects of industrialization and the market economy have been, perhaps we should explore more the ‘non-event-ness’ of lives overlooked because of their mundanity. J. Moran, ‘History, memory and the everyday’, Rethinking History 8 (2004) 54–7, at 55.

Most obviously, there is the continuing capacity of ‘people’s data’ to extend our conceptual reach. Twenty years ago, Ian Hutchison remarked that ‘some of the most fruitful archival sources for earlier centuries shrivel in the twentieth. Institutional records . . . show a marked proclivity to be terser and more of a formal record of decisions reached’. I. G. C. Hutchison, ‘Response: beyond the oligarchs’, SHR 73 (1994) 113–116, at 114. It is a comment reminiscent of demographers bemoaning the 100 years rule when wanting to get access to census schedules, and doubtless still applies to many political, administrative and welfare documents, although some hugely informative and easily accessible materials like Poor Law applications and registers are oddly under-utilised. But, against this, consider the greatly enhanced availability of visual and oral material via the Internet. Meanwhile, those trying to chart emotions, memories and personal identities have noted the limitations of ethnological cataloguing in that sensory experience and what Hayden Lorimer has termed the ‘more than representational’ are not readily ascertained without some imaginative brushing against the grain. H. Lorimer, ‘Cultural geography: the busyness of being ‘more-than-representational’, Progress in Human Geography 29 (2005) 89–94. Studying processes and interactions will only provide limited help in understanding the phenomenology of personal experience. Yet photographs, biographies and spoken accounts provide wonderful sources for questioning myths about ordinary lives that are often used to perpetuate stereotypes, for it is here par excellence that individuals challenge imposed scripts about collective identities and experiences. Thus are the lacunae of late-modern history being filled, alongside studies of disabilities, cultural variations in the experiences of different ethnic groups, and so on. See, for example, I. Hutchison, A History of Disability in Nineteenth-Century Scotland (Lampeter, 2007); M. Rodgers, ‘Political developments in the Lithuanian community in Scotland, c. 1890–1923’, Immigrants & Minorities 2 (1983) 140–156.
and belonging that stretch beyond the social. Each is nevertheless interpreted culturally, as research moves into a more fluid, interactive and contested realm where events, practices and processes become catalysts for multiple, emergent and hybrid dialogues. Culture is not simply a matter of exploring the social construction of iconic symbols and phatic utterances, for, following Bourdieu, it is produced and reproduced in the dispositions, habitus and fields of operation of different social groups just as readily as it may be made and revealed in literature, films and so forth. The quest to uncover everyday life conveys a plea to go beyond the convenient analysis of cultural products.

Given the contradictions of Caledonian antiszygy, it is unsurprising that in Scotland the idea that ‘identity is necessarily relational’ should pervade literary criticism as it has done philosophy (Macmurray), (anti-) psychiatry (Laing), political thought (from MacDiarmid to Nairn) and latterly history itself in ways that de-centre and disarm linear convictions. Nevertheless, both sociology and social history have witnessed powerful revisionist critiques of cultural studies approaches that, in foregrounding literary and textual sources, have marginalized tried and trusted methods of social enquiry. Rojek and Turner argue that sociologists should properly research ‘tensions between the material basis of power and the social organization of culture’, not just cultural output as the decorative dressing from which identities are adduced at the level of aesthetics. Likewise, Patrick Joyce contends that the rise of cultural history has seen a ‘partial eclipse’ of social history, inasmuch as the concern with identities, narratives and representations draws research away from hard empiricism and engagement with economic or material concerns: all is construction; every datum becomes a text, history a mere discourse or set of representations.

Arguably, because we have been taken in by the representational tendencies inherent in the linguistic turn—seeing the nation, albeit sceptically, through its signs and symbols—we have, in fact, pursued lines of enquiry that have omitted vast swathes of Scotland that do not fit this tension between invented tradition as straw man and lived experience as evidence-based critique. Let us return to Griffiths’s suggestion that ‘the history of Scottish popular culture remains submerged in literature dominated by the travails of heavy industry’. One might claim that images of urban community life have become overly hegemonic in contemporary Scotland. Yet at the height

35 Houston and Knox, New Penguin History, xxv.
36 C. Craig, The Modern Scottish Novel: Narrative and the National Imagination (Edinburgh, 1999), 112. Macdonald, Whaur Extremes Meet provides the most developed recent example of such thinking in Scottish history. The title, itself borrowed from MacDiarmid, is indicative.
39 T. Griffiths, ‘Scottish history—the twentieth century’.
of the Depression, the publisher Batsford produced illustrated travel guides for the motorist keen to discover Scotland’s scenic landscapes. Unsurprisingly, these volumes focused on the Highland sublime and Lowland picturesque: they did not linger in the urban industrial heartland, its literature or imagery. Yet in challenging the face of Scotland to be consumed by visitors and instead attempting to consider how people lived and experienced ‘a consciousness of Scottishness’, one Batsford writer, George Blake, shed light on a rather different omission, that of the non-iconic, greylly banal casualties of modern industrialism:

> the lorries thunder through mile upon mile of farmland, indeed, but . . . it is obviously related to an urban economy . . . Dereliction is the word . . . The stigmata of neglect litter this highway [A80] almost all the way from Glasgow to Stirling . . . let the intelligent traveller consider as he passes through them the nature and provenance of Millerston, Mollinsburn, Cumbernauld and Dennyloanhead.40

These places do not present an edifying picture, hence no illustrations. However Blake concludes that ‘if Scotland is to be understood rather than merely seen, one may reasonably suggest that its heart is where most of its people live. The scenery will always be there, vestigial and indestructible. It is still a fact that the present state of Dennyloanhead is of much more importance to the living community of Scotland than the bloom of heather, a vegetable of barren places, on Lochnagar’.41 His commentary bears an uncanny resemblance to the words of a fictional character in James Robertson’s And the Land Lay Still (2010), who in 1985 catches a train from Glasgow to Edinburgh, ‘the slow train, the one that went through the wastelands of de-industrialised Scotland, a tour of devastation calling at Uddingston, Bellshill, Cleland, Shotts, Fauldhouse, Breich, West Calder, and all those places nobody outside Scotland thinks of as being Scottish, the Scotland so real it defies the imagination’.42 The same might apply to dozens of former pit villages, steel towns and manufacturing plants, as well as many a Postwar housing scheme or the even less researched suburban middle-class estate. In the forgetting of these ‘non-places’, neither urban horror nor rural idyll, lies a real danger of misunderstanding nationhood. Indeed, Blake was correct to remind us that much of our national distinctiveness inheres not in distinctive icons or classic urban/rural, industrial/agrarian divides, but in the social landscape of unremarkable, non-photogenic non-places, the ‘back regions’ where most Scots lived over the past two

42 J. Robertson, And the Land Lay Still (London, 2010), 358.
centuries. Similarly, in the study of change novelty ‘is often to be found in the survival of that which remained pretty much the same’. It follows also that historians should investigate domestic, parochial and informal community life rather than pursuing the old left agenda of state politics and labour history in order to get at consciousness. Yet, with the ardent exception of oral history, a thoroughgoing analysis of the social fabric of suburban Scotland is precisely what we lack. Have such places really defied the imagination or is it we, blinded by the dichotomous logic of a dramatised reading of modernity, who lack the close vision to focus on them?

In much of the foregoing, the local is heavily implicated. Its importance has been emphasized by Michael Lynch, as well as Rab Houston, whose introductory text highlights the long-held significance of devolved civil society, a phenomenon Morton considers as the backdrop to a sense of national identity: ‘it was in their civil institutions that Scotland’s inhabitants lived out their concentric identities or chose between Scottishness and Britishness’. Several decades of oral history and a turn towards the everyday allow us now to consider how local associations and imaginaries operated at informal levels beneath the institutional. Yet because inter-subjective understanding requires a shared vocabulary potential problems of representation remain, in that clichéd views are apt to prevail. For instance, myths of tenement closes and jeely pieces, steamies and hard men are as much the stuff of oral recall as they are of literary Clydesidism, the two existing in a symbiosis where one draws on the other for expressive support. Without the simplifying, fictive backdrop of collective remembrance through which, or against which, to set their own experiences how else can individuals tell it like it was? Compromises are necessarily invoked. Meanwhile, hard facts are hard to come by because not all the aggregated minutiae that with hindsight we might wish to compare were recorded. As Brown notes: ‘while we may know how many TV sets were owned by Scots, we don’t know much about their viewing routines’.

There is also a problem of scale, although there need not be. Griffiths observes how historians of small nations and localities are obliged

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45 Oral, and to a degree visual methods allow for unparalleled access to the history of ‘new’ industries such as oil or micro-component manufacturing, and the New Towns.
46 See Angela Bartie and Arthur McIvor’s article in this volume, 108–136.
47 Although sociology rather than history, D. Wight, *Workers Not Wasters: Masculine Respectability, Consumption and Unemployment in Central Scotland: a Community Study* (Edinburgh, 1993) is a rare exception.
to identify what is distinctive about themselves while simultaneously relating their studies to universal themes,\textsuperscript{51} while Anne Crowther bemoans the disjunctions between the outcomes of microscopic approaches and attempts to gain a national picture.\textsuperscript{52} Although Griffiths argues that, ‘Scotland comes more sharply into focus in the final decades [of the twentieth century],’\textsuperscript{53} we cannot develop a rounded history of the nation without first having a coherent idea of what Scotland was, and this means taking on what we understand modernity to mean. Our commonsense view of society as an underlying structural reality (as in ‘industrial society in the twentieth century’ or whichever convenient term is chosen) may be rethought instead as an overarching collective vision, hence Charles Taylor’s conception of the modern social imaginary as a way of seeing society – as, in fact, the mental corollary of civil society – something very different from the pre-modern cosmic hierarchy.\textsuperscript{54} Many pour scorn on Arthur Herman’s vulgar conceit about Scots inventing the modern world, but the Gellnerian thesis does remain plausible: sometime during the later eighteenth century what had been regarded as dispersed local exchanges became one big debate called the nation.\textsuperscript{55} But what kind of society produced such an abstraction? In addressing this question, Taylor’s working definition of modernity as an ‘historically unprecedented amalgam of new practices and institutional forms (science, technology, industrial production, urbanisation), of new ways of living (individualism, secularisation, instrumental rationality), and of new forms of social malaise (alienation, meaninglessness, a sense of impending social dissolution)’ provides a useful reminder of the kind of issues that inform not only abstract but also concrete relations between the economy, everyday cultures and the forces of globalization.\textsuperscript{56} We have perhaps to do no less than rethink these practices, behaviours, relationships and responses – a process that betokens a shift in emphasis from representations to agency.\textsuperscript{57}

Morton talks of ‘throw[ing] the concept of civil society at the interplay of state and nation’.\textsuperscript{58} There is more to be wrung from this than perhaps even he imagines. Applying a processual and relational approach means abjuring traditional structural concerns around class, the state and the economy (as reified ‘things’) and instead considering how micro-level practices, many identifiable within everyday milieux, cohered into multi-directional macro-networks – not a history of intellectual elites inventing traditions and subverting Scotland’s history, or of the working

\textsuperscript{51} Griffiths, ‘Scottish history’.
\textsuperscript{53} Griffiths, ‘Scottish history’.
\textsuperscript{57} See Joyce, ‘What is the social?’, 190.
class making its own history, or of texts and representations, but of the mobilization of interaction between human and, indeed, non-human ‘actants’. This moves us into the heady domain of actor-network theory, to such things as the importance of running water and road paving to the emergence of liberal subjectivity; where physical landscape, environment, technical innovation and machinery enjoy their own agency; towards a history of contingent order-making, of power in practice—what is often referred to, following Foucauldian principles, as governmental.59

Thus we have to research the council schemes, not least because present-minded students today are so woefully ignorant of what social class meant or means, let alone how patterns of work, leisure and consumption have altered. And yet in 1993 Finlay concluded his remarks on the state of twentieth-century Scottish history with these words: ‘It is to civil society—the bureaucrats in local government, the lawyers, the businessmen, the financiers, the journalists, the civil servants and even the academics—that we must turn our attention, because it is they, more than the working class, who have framed the social parameters in which we now find ourselves living’.60 His sentiments remain prescient today, for understanding the contingencies of dispersed entities like the Scottish nation requires that we study not just maps and documents, but archiving systems and typewriters as well as folios and filing clerks, for, to quote Patrick Joyce (interestingly enough discussing research into the British Raj in which Scots played so prominent a part), ‘the naturalization of the technical is seen as central to the naturalization of the state’.61 However, we might also wish to re-insert the working class, at least in so far as labourers and artisans, in engaging their own skills and sensing their daily toil were just as much contributors to the nation, both materially and culturally. In this sense, Scotland is the outcome not just of intellectual invention, concerted social action or political will but also becomes a fruit of the ‘distributed cognition’ of nationhood across different social and occupational groups.62 One might therefore

59 Joyce, ‘What is the social?’, 192. Actor-network theory originates in the work of the Centre de Sociologie de l’Innovation, École Nationale Supérieure des Mines de Paris, and B. Latour, Reassembling the Social (Oxford, 2005) is perhaps the most cited introduction to the approach, one that attempts to synthesise technological and human systems rather than assuming some systems to be technologically determined and others social constructed. Thus arrangements that appear to be wholly technical may be socially influenced and vice versa. Each actor or ‘actant’ is considered not just as an individual subject or object but as an association of elements within the overall network.


61 Joyce, ‘What is the social?’, 207.

62 Ibid., 194. The concept of ‘distributed cognition’ originates in research of Edwin Hutchins, Cognition in the Wild (Cambridge, MA, 1995)—an ethnography of a naval crew—while the most interesting application in historical sociology may be found
consider the artisanal consciousness of making the nation amongst, say, the engineers or shipyard workers so vividly dramatised by artists from Stanley Spencer to Peter Howson. Indeed, considering the relationship between representations or cultural products (rather than just the origins or meaning of the images themselves) and the worlds of work and leisure draws us back to the material world, in that instead of simply appearing, these symbolic images were created through social practices that themselves require examination.\(^{63}\) Or again, studying visual sources prompts researchers to question not just how relations between people, place and power have been configured, but also to problematise and rethink the roles of objects, machines and technologies in establishing civil society and statehood. John Grierson was remarkably prescient in forging, indeed founding, a documentary style of film-making three-quarters of a century ago that sought to convey these relationships and interdependencies. The present task is to situate and understand his practice and the social reception of his output.\(^{64}\)

The records, like the people, are scattered far and wide. Given the significance to Scotland of emigration and to a lesser extent immigration, the processes and networks that characterised social change must also incorporate communities on the move.\(^{65}\) A growing awareness of globalized and hybrid identities, fields and processes makes understanding the part played by the nation and its peoples in the development of multiple modernities a more layered and complex task. For scholars and researchers this should suggest reorientation: from seeking connections between disciplines to interpreting the meanings and effects of connections between sources.\(^{66}\) Of course, modern Scottish history is about rather more than a set of obsessions with national identity. Again, though, having a notion of what Scotland means is critical in framing historical studies. The nation is a negotiated entity, rather than a thing in itself; it should be understood as a measure of the plural relationships that construct it at all sorts of different levels and via all manner of localised networks. The idea of Scotland

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\(^{62}\) (Continued)\) in the research of Chandra Mukerji into the construction of the Canal du Midi, a process that she argues depended upon the shared intelligence of peasant women, local artisans, military strategists and academic supervisors—see C. Mukerji, *Impossible Engineering: Technology and Territoriality on the Canal du Midi* (Princeton, NJ, 2009).

\(^{63}\) Stressing representations would appear to privilege the visual, or, at least, visualisation, but in the analysis of visual sources what should be important are the contexts of their generation and reception.

\(^{64}\) See Blakie, *The Scots Imagination*, 53–94.


\(^{66}\) This exercise is complicated in the electronic era where digitisation dematerialises those very sources. Carolyn Steedman’s peroration on the archive (*Dust: The Archive and Cultural History* (Manchester, 2001)) stresses that the resources of history cannot simply be erased. Nevertheless, mediation in this way makes historical information far more accessible but at the same time less emplaced or tangible.
represents an abstraction, owing as much to ‘from below’ struggles as impositions ‘from above’, but it has also been produced according to technologies of power—statistics, administrative systems, the changing media—that reflect the science and material forces of capitalism. It follows that if we are to move on into a twenty-first century of greater self-government, we should understand how, by what and by whom, we have been governed in the past. This might provide an appropriate rhetoric, if not role, for Scottish history in the age of impact assessment.