"Focus on Scottish Studies: A New Agenda for the Field. Introduction" [pre-print]
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in *Anglistik: International Journal of English Studies* 23:2 (2012): 7-16. Special Focus on Scottish Studies, guest edited by Carla Sassi

There is no such thing as an academic discipline that represents a stable field of knowledge — on the contrary, academic disciplines always are, and arguably have to be, contested domains. To argue on similar lines, there is no such thing as an academic discipline (or indeed, an epistemological practice) that can exist in even relative isolation from the global horizon of cultural production and knowledge formation. Scottish Studies, a relatively young discipline, whose field directly intersects and partly overlaps, among others, with English, Celtic and Nordic Studies (and, through its involvement in the British Empire, with post-colonial scholarship) is no exception. And yet, it is important to acknowledge here, at the very beginning of this special issue, the specific history of this discipline, both as a contested territory, and in its changing relationship with other established or emergent disciplines — it is in fact only through an awareness of its shifting borders, and of its many fissures and tensions, and also with a memory of its past that we can gauge our present concerns and look forward. It is indeed this double intent — to engage with a critical analysis of the discipline's history and to evaluate new paths and approaches — that underlies the present collection of articles.

The interdisciplinary field of Scottish Studies — first introduced as a markedly ethnographic and folkloric field of investigation by the School of Scottish Studies of the University of Edinburgh, founded in 1951 with the aim to record the culture, customs, folklore, songs and stories of Scotland — established itself in its present inter-disciplinary set up between the 1980s and the 1990s. The European Society for the study of English, founded in 1990, and endowed with a Constitution in 1995, included Scottish Studies among the list of its area subjects, while the 3rd ESSE conference, held in Glasgow in 1995, further reinforced its institutional status by devoting a substantial section of its academic and cultural programme to Scottish writing. Since the 1980s, several Scottish Studies centres have been established in Scotland and around the world (it is worthwhile to remember here that the Scottish Studies centres respectively of the University Stendhal, Grenoble, founded by Henri

Gibault and Pierre Morère in 1979, and of the Johannes Gutenberg-Universität, Mainz, founded by Horst Drescher in 1981, were the first of their kind in 'continental Europe')[1]. Since 1999, Scottish Literature has also been listed as a Modern Language Association of America discussion group (founded by Cairns Craig, Ian Duncan and Charles Snodgrass).[2] The number of scholars who today engage with this field — either directly as area specialists, or indirectly, intersecting with their research its many subfields and topics — is possibly larger than ever before, including researchers from different disciplinary and methodological backgrounds, as well as from outside Scotland and Britain.[3] The first World Congress of Scottish Literatures will be held in 2014 at the University of Glasgow, with the involvement of the Association for Scottish Literary Studies.[4] This will no doubt represent an important step forward towards a further internationalisation of the field and a wider articulation of the critical debate.

However, as is the case with most nationally specific academic subjects, even the young discipline of Scottish Studies traces its roots back in the 19th century, at a time when the national focus became the grid through which humanistic studies were re-organised at a global level in a shift towards what has been aptly labelled as "methodological nationalism" (Conrad, 400), and which marked the consolidation of historical knowledge and "the dominance of national categories [which] reinforced a way of reading social development essentially as the result of internal dynamics," leading, *in primis*, to the institutionalisation of history as national history in countries across the globe (Germany, France, the USA and Japan, among others). Within the wider context of the national re-compartmentalisation of knowledge, however, Scotland's case presents at least one central specificity, as it involved, since the Union of Parliaments in 1707, a simultaneous engagement on a double front. Politically, it performed simultaneously a centripetal movement, by conforming to the rules and language of the new centre of institutional power (London), and a centrifugal one, by firmly protecting its national interests and networks within and outside Britain (most conspicuously within what has been aptly termed "Scotland's Empire," see Devine). An

[1] The Mainz Centre maintains a website, listing events and useful links, and publishing a *Newsletter* at http://www.fb06.uni-mainz.de/englisch/183.php. Also the The French Society for Scottish Studies maintains a website at http://sfee.univ-tours.fr/Scotland/conferences.htm

[2] See Brown, Clancy, Manning and Pittock for further analysis and details on "Scottish Literature: Criticism and the canon."

[3] The website of the Association for Scottish Literary Studies offers an up-to-date list of call for papers, recent publications and upcoming conferences held worldwide at http://www.arts.gla.ac.uk/ScotLit/ASLS/index.html. Also the ezine of the ASLS, *The Bottle Imp*, whose aim is to promote and support the teaching and study of Scottish literature and language, beside articles and reviews, provides information on new developments in Scottish literature and literary criticism: http://www.arts.gla.ac.uk/ScotLit/ASLS/SWE/TBI.html.

[4] For further information, see http://www.gla.ac.uk/colleges/arts/research/scottishstudiesglobal/worldcongressofscottishliteratures/

equivalent double pull towards the same two distinct (but, at least in the 18th and 19th century, not incompatible) poles of Scottish life ('home' and London), characterised also Scotland's re-organisation of institutionalised knowledge. On the one hand, in fact, Scottish institutions became responsible for the "invention of English literature" as a university discipline, first with the establishment of the first official university course on 'rhetoric and belles-letters,' focused on modern writers in English as well as in the Classical languages, taught by Adam Smith (Professor of Logic and Rhetoric and then of Moral Philosophy) in 1751 at the University of Glasgow, and then with the establishment in 1762 of what is today regarded as the first Chair of English literature in the world, held by Hugh Blair, Regius Professor of Rhetoric and Belles-Lettres at the University of Edinburgh (see Crawford 2008). And yet, in the same period, Scotland also committed itself to the preservation of the memory of its own past, at a time when its minoritarian status within the Union posed a tangible threat to its survival as a distinct national entity. Antiquarianism — an important aspect of Scotland's cultural life between the 18th and the 19th century — was indeed "a sort of shadow-history […] created through antiquarian collections of artefacts, tales, songs, myths and legends of the nation, which brought a more diverse past into the popular present to celebrate the continuities of national identity" (Manning, 48). Given that in the antiquarian practice "conventions of evidence and authenticity were flexible," and that they "existed within a continuum of antiquarian recovery and literary impersonation," evident, for example, in James Macpherson's *The Poems of Ossian* (1760-65) or in Walter Scott's *Minstrelsy of the Scottish Border* (1802) (Manning, 48), it is indeed possible to identify in it a first nucleus of that academic construction of Scottish literature as national mythology that will establish itself (via Walter Scott) between the end of the 19th century and the early decades of the 20th century.

The first chair in the field of Scottish literary and linguistic studies was that of Celtic, founded in 1882 at Edinburgh: its establishment, however, also marked the artificial separation between Gaelic and English/Scots literature as academically distinct subjects, perpetuated to the present day in the departmental structure of Scottish universities, where 'Scottish literature' still stands for writing in English and/or Scots. Very much in line with "the consolidation of the internalist paradigm of historical knowledge" (Conrad, 400), which characterises the 19th century worldwide, but also as a response to the specific political-cultural set up described above, the first Chair of Scottish History was founded in Edinburgh in 1901, to be followed by that in Glasgow in 1903. And it was again in Glasgow that in 1913 the first chair of Scottish History and Literature was established, with the proceeds of the

Scottish Exhibition held at Kelvingrove in 1911 — a child of the Empire as much as of a nationalist *and* unionist middle class. This does not seem so distant (either in time or space) from England's institutionalisation of its own national literature — the first Chair of English Literature being established in 1828 at University College, London, followed by Oxford only in 1904. Yet, the institutional knot binding Scotland's literature to its national history (which lingered at least until the creation of two separate departments for Scottish history and Scottish literature in Glasgow in 1971 — the first Chair of Scottish literature here was established only in 1995) is meaningful, and it signals the two very different (and yet related) ideological lines along which the academic constructions of, respectively, Scottish and English literature developed in the course of the 20th century: the former explicitly and firmly inscribed with (local) historical and social meaning, the latter shaping itself as a 'great tradition,' in theory detached from local or national concerns, in practice generating a subtle conflation between a notion of English literature as a 'local' expression, conveying nationally-specific values and perspectives, and a 'cosmopolitan' one, embracing selectively (and by criteria that remain largely undefined to the present day) authors and texts from the English-speaking regions and nations of the British-Irish archipelago, as well as from the (ex-)British Empire. While it is a common practice among scholars to investigate the strategies and ends underlying each of such constructions separately — each seen as largely independent from the other — it is only fair to claim that the births of both English and Scottish literature as academic subjects are deeply intertwined — developing in the same cultural and ideological climate (i.e. under the shadow of the British Empire, to whose construction both countries, in different ways, contributed) and in a close and complex dialectic relationship with each other, made up of antagonism as much as of collusion. This complex dialogue is possibly best represented through the inter- and intra-textual dialogue between Samuel Johnson's *Journey to the Western Islands of Scotland* (1775) and James Boswell's *Journal of a Tour to the Hebrides* (1785), both accounting the same event — the tour of the Hebrides and Western Islands of Scotland which the two had undertaken in 1773 — and engaging with or referring to a number of contemporary issues and events which both divided and united the two authors and the two nations they represented: the transformation of the Highlands in the years after the second Jacobite rising, the legacy of Jacobitism, the might and prospects of the British Empire, the impact of the Scottish Enlightenment, among others. That the focal place (both physically and discursively) of this dialogue should be the western islands of Scotland — 'primitive' and 'picturesque' Scotland, marginal and yet seductively at the centre of Romantic imagination, remote and yet attracting a new brand of middlebrow, "antiquarian

tourists," searching "for the unsophisticated culture of declining rural localities" at a time when the traditional practice of the aristocratic grand tour was declining (Pittock 1999, 39) — is in itself meaningful of the complex relationship that binds the new centre to the new periphery. And while the periphery resists its peripherality by asserting (like Boswell) its own relevance in the new British order, the centre is not always so self-confident about its own centrality, as several waves of virulent anti-Scottish feeling in this historical period (as that staged by the popular London newspaper the *North Briton,* see Crawford 2000, 63-4) witness.

Within the dynamics of the Union, Scotland is indeed "always at least two places at the same time: both Scotland and Britain, an ancient or imaginary space and a modern political force, synecdochal for northerness in general and a singular position generating its own national character" (Fielding, 38-39). Such 'duplicity' can, however, be seen as having two conflicting outcomes: empowerment and subordination, as effectively illustrated by Britain's first 'political novel,' John Galt's *The Member: an Autobiography* (1832), a first-person account of the adventure of a Scottish nabob, newly returned to Britain from India — Archibald Jobbry — who decides to become an MP at Westminster by scruplelessly availing himself of the iniquitous rules and practices that the political system, in this historical period, codes as legal. His mixed strategies and role playing, involving both assimilation and resistance (in)to the British parliamentary system, first secure his success, then seal his failure and definitive marginalisation (see Sassi 1999).

While, arguably, representations of Scotland and England's relationship in the course of the 18th and 19th century oscillate from a discourse of sameness and identification with the British and imperial super-identity, to a discourse of difference, within which each nation becomes each other's Other — and there is no doubt that literary representations as well as constructions of national literary traditions held a central role in this complex dialectical process — it would be certainly naive to see this as a game played fairly and on equal terms, and with the same impact on both nations. The unbalanced relation of political power between the two nations is clearly mirrored in the different fate of English and Scottish Literature as academic subjects, which unfolded in the course of the 20th century, after the 1921 Anglo-Irish War of Independence ended with the establishment of the Irish Free State and with the 'devolution' of Irish culture and literature, thus reinforcing "'little Englandism' [… and making] it easier to think of 'Britain' as England writ large" (Kerrigan, 245). A pivotal role in the definition of the role and status of both fields was no doubt played by T.S. Eliot's re-definition of 'tradition' and of the role of the literary critic. As postcolonial

scholarship has highlighted, T.S. Eliot's theorisation of tradition, and his famous request that a writer should write with an historical sense, involving "a perception, not only of the pastness of the past, but of its presence [...] not merely with his own generation in his bones, but with a feeling that the whole of the literature of Europe from Homer and within it the whole of the literature of his own country has a simultaneous existence" (Eliot 1952, 14), put firmly the European tradition at the centre of academic knowledge, and within this, it inevitably privileged those countries which could boast a continuous and consistent narrative of their own past. Eliot thus embraces the national taxonomy of literatures, and identifies a national tradition worthy of this name as endowed with universal value. It is 'universality' then — articulated largely in Eurocentric terms and ambiguously defined — that represents the measure of literary greatness. An exhaustive reading of Eliot's essay, which should certainly be evaluated in its complexity, is beyond the scope of the present article, yet it is worthwhile to point out that "Tradition and the Individual Talent" (1919) — Eliot's possibly most canonical critical text — was instrumental in re-defining English literature as both a national and a 'cosmopolitan' construct, thus authorising the conflation between the two terms. In the same year of the publication of "Tradition and the Individual Talent," Eliot also published an article virtually unknown beyond the 'borders' of Scottish Studies: in "Was There a Scottish Literature?" (*Athenaeum*, August 1919) he responds to G. Gregory Smith's *Scottish Literature: Character and Influence* (1919) by firmly denying Scottish literature the status of tradition. Interestingly, his effort here is not so much aimed at evaluating Scottish writing along 'universal' aesthetical criteria, but rather at assessing the consistency and quality of Scotland's nation-ness: by drawing on 19th-century defining criteria (among which language unity, 8) he argues that Scotland as a nation does not satisfy the pre-requisites necessary for the building of a proper literary tradition. Its writers, therefore, are either identified as Scottish, and therefore as "provincial," or assimilated into the English tradition, and therefore metropolitan and universal. The language of literariness is, especially in the conclusive part, entirely subsumed by the utterly pragmatic language of the imperial vision, which informs the article:

> A literature does not maintain itself simply by a continual production of great writers. The historian of literature must count with as shifting and as massive forces as the historian of politics. In the modern world the struggle of capitals of civilization is apparent on a large scale. A powerful literature with a powerful capital, tends to attract and absorb all the drifting shreds of force about it. (Eliot 2004, 10)

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This "power of attraction" is also seen as a powerful shield against "the danger of disintegration of English literature and language" posed by the English-speaking (ex)colonies — "people too remote (for geographical or other reasons) to be able to pool their differences in a common metropolis" (Eliot 2004, 10). The close nexus between Empire, Union and the construction of English literature is here fully revealed, even though not for the first time — Eliot, after all, had followed into Matthew Arnold's footsteps in this and other matters — providing an extraordinarily sharp illustration of its pervasive and yet elusive power in this historical period.

Much of the history of the intertwined constructions of English literature and Scottish literature in the 20th century can be seen as a development of, or a response to such imperial instrumental view of literature. And so can the 'hostility' which has often permeated their dialogue. Both constructions, in fact, have attracted deserved criticism, especially starting from the 1980s, after the cultural turn, for different and yet connected reasons: 'EngLit' has been attacked by postcolonial and archipelagic scholars as promoting imperialist and Anglocentric values; 'ScotLit' has been accused of constructing itself narrowly along stifling nationalist lines — of subordinating literariness to nation-ness, crystallising the role of literature to the preservation of cultural memory and to the staging of political resistance. As Bell has aptly observed:

> There has been a tendency in Scottish Studies to equate history with literature, so that literature tends to be regarded as the *effect* of cultural processes, rather than as an intervention in those processes, or indeed as a relatively autonomous act of aesthetic, ethical or political engagement. Subsequently, there is a certain factor of reducibility at work, where texts produced by Scottish authors must in the first instance be explained in terms of their Scottishness. (2)

Both fields, since the 1980s, have gone a long way to reshape their respective methodological and disciplinary set-ups.[5] No doubt the gradual devolution of Scottish literature and the consolidation of the more articulated and self-confident field of Scottish Studies have contributed indirectly also to the re-articulation of English Studies (in an archipelagic direction, for example) and to a further questioning of its literary canon, but they are also having an impact on other theoretical/comparative fields. Research on Caribbean-Scottish post/colonial relations, for example, opened new methodological perspectives and investigative paths in both fields, either by "mapping a transnational Circum-Atlantic in

[5] For an exhaustive investigation of the history and recent developments of "The Study of Scottish Literature," see Craig.

which widely complex conflicts, connections, and interferences are accounted for — a map showing colonial inscriptions, social contrasts, cultural interconnections, and lived relations between the Caribbean and Scotland" (Covi, 13), or by performing a "displacement of Scottishness" through a focus on the West Indies as "a powerfully destabilising *lieu de memoire*" (Sassi 2007, 135), while Silke Stroh and Stephanie Lehner's challenging studies have undertaken for the first time a sustained gauging of postcolonial theories against, respectively, Scotland's and Scotland and Ireland's complex relation with the centre of empire, also investigated through a comparative approach in Michael Gardiner, Graeme Macdonald and Niall O'Gallagher's volume of collected essays.

The post-devolution decade, in particular, has released energies that were for a long time repressed by a defensive (and yet necessary and, for a long time, even radical) nationalist stance. This 'post-nationalist turn' has been heralded and welcome by many scholars in the past ten years: Christopher Whyte, one of the first voices in Scotland to denounce the restrictions of a nation-oriented criticism, in his *Modern Scottish Poetry* sets out "to reclaim a degree of autonomy for the creative […] Reclaiming such autonomy means that both history and politics must renounce any privileged status as tools for the interpretation of Scottish literature" (7, 8), along similar lines, Gavin Miller and Eleanor Bell's volume of collected essays purports to draw "attention to new types of criticism which are able to challenge the cultural-nationalist paradigm, and which also reflect the sociological and intellectual changes now taking place" (11). As Berthold Schoene has aptly put it, "undeniably […] devolution has changed and will continue to change Scotland's structure(s) of feeling, and the nation's present preoccupations and priorities are bound to differ markedly from late 20th-century political concerns" (2007b, 4).

And yet, it is foreseeable that the national question will remain *one* of the strands of Scottish Studies, even though freed from the intra-British hegemonic discourse of sub/national traditions and re-visioned through the lens of contemporary theorisations that reconcile the nation with cosmopolitan practices by maintaining, for example, that global democracy is best achieved through the strengthening of local and nationally based democratic citizenship (Thompson), or by identifying in patriotic sentiment the basis for global concern (Nussbaum). A sense of (partial) continuity with the past, for example, has been recently implied by Caroline McCracken-Flesher in her prediction that Scottish Studies' "disciplinary boundaries [will] bend and shift; history and culture will fold together but oppositions multiply; presents and pasts will connect to futures" (2011b, 18), while a more explicit re-evaluation of "the matter of the *nation* […] and the value of national identity" is

articulated by Alan Riach, who reframes nationalism post-modernly "as a curious unanswered question, the unfinished business of home" and points out how "in a world of globalised interest, self-determined nationality may be the only viable opposition to imperial power" (240).

The present collection is of course not the first to attempt to provide an agenda for Scottish Studies for the 21st century (see, among others, Schoene 2007a and McCracken-Flesher 2011a), furthermore, a sense of innovation and renovation has indeed inspired most critical works published in the past decade or so — the three-volume *Edinburgh History of Scottish Literature* and the series of the Edinburgh Companions to Scottish Literature (which, starting from 2013, will be continued by ASLS, under its newly launched academic imprint, Scottish Literature International) provide ample illustration of this. And it is equally obvious that eleven articles may only represent the tip of the iceberg: the exclusions, motivated only by reasons of space limitations, outnumber here the inclusions, both in terms of fields of investigation represented (Linguistics and Medieval Studies being among the most notable ones) and of theoretical approaches. Yet, some sort of inclusivity is achieved in the micro- and macro- mapping of focuses and trends offered, and *inclusivity* is indeed a keyword here, as the collection purposes to chart the diversity of scholarly interests and approaches and to inscribe them on the same standing in the new agenda for the field, beyond the somewhat simplified anti/nationalist diatribe that has too often stifled or sidelined other important investigative paths.

The collection opens aptly with Dafydd Moore's investigation of 18th-century Scotland's most internationally renowned writer — James Macpherson — aimed at re-assessing his work in a wider, European context, and also at raising methodological issues which are relevant not only to the study of the writer in object, but to the understanding of British Romanticism at large. Pauline Anne Mackay undertakes an original investigation of the uses of Robert Burns (a writer firmly and controversially at the centre of the Scottish literary canon) as a cultural icon, unveiling a continuum linking the Bard's poems as 'objects' of cult to the material culture of male and patriotic social circles. Caroline McCracken-Flesher delves into an equally original revisitation of Walter Scott as an aging man/writer by strategically reconsidering old age "as the site of unpredictable power," and thus disclosing a new autobiographical and meta-literary facet of one of Scotland's most polyhedric and complex writers. Oliver S. Buckton articulates a challenging re-reading of R.L. Stevenson's work from a queer theory perspective by focusing on recurrent same-sex erotic figurations,

and by revealing how Stevenson often subverts the hierarchy of gender roles (based on the binary of masculine/feminine) coded by 19th-century law and social conventions. Emma Dymock provides a new historical and theoretical framework for the critical appreciation of one of Scotland's greatest 20th-century poets: Sorley MacLean's work is here revisited in its complex affiliations with the Scottish Renaissance as well as with transnational political and philosophical currents. Scott Hames's probing assessment of Alice Munro and Alistair MacLeod's representations of diasporic Scottishness engages with issues of (diasporic) memory and rememorisation as well as with dis-placed identities, thus unsettling Scotland's established narratives of national identity. Suzanne Gilbert engages with the notion of tradition by charting and analysing the recent developments of one of Scotland's quintessentially traditional genres, the ballad, highlighting its intrinsically polymorphic and adaptable quality: "the ballad's paradoxical conjunction of stability and variation" becomes therefore a key to revise the very notion of tradition as a fixed and ritual practice. Ian Brown's retrieval of the lost sense of importance of drama in Scottish society provides evidence of the significant 'archaeological' work awaiting scholars in the re/writing of whole chapters of Scottish cultural and literary history; furthermore, by focusing on the notion of theatre "as crucible of change," it foregrounds an idea of tradition that is — as above — dynamic and fluid. Glenda Norquay in her article provides an up-to-date state of the art of the controversial relation between Gender and Scottish Studies: her critical reconstruction of the different stages and voices in the process of "gendering the nation" opens new, exciting investigative paths to the understanding of Scottish literature, and suggests the possibility of a radical re-mapping of the canon. Donna Heddle articulates both a regionalist and a transnational approach by reporting on the development of the new field of Northern Scottish Studies at UHI: the 'militant' attention to native communities here combines with a conventional activity of empirical and theoretical research and reminds us of the often radical role of the 'local' within Scottish Studies. Finally, Alan Riach's important article aptly closes the collection by alerting us to what is indeed a central issue in contemporary Scotland's cultural debate: the lack of institutionalisation of Scottish literature in Scottish schools and the consequent difficulty at defining a shared core literary canon. Riach also reminds us how the role of a canon — even when defined, as it should be, in a flexible and pluralistic way — remains an important tool in cultural transmission, as well as a form of cultural empowerment.

By way of conclusion, I would like to suggest an ideal subtitle for this Focus on Scottish Studies: 'making the connections' — that is, engaging Scottish Studies in a fruitful dialogue

with other disciplinary fields and theoretical perspectives. I am borrowing the image from James Robertson's latest novel, *And the Land lay Still* (2010), an 'epic' novel whose subject is Scotland itself, from 1950 to the present day. Here, Robertson sounds the depths of his country's complex recent history through the disconnected lives and voices of several characters. At the end of the novel, the main character takes on the task of connecting them — connecting lives and stories is not the same as creating a homogeneous unity, as the act of connecting is respectful of individual features and local specificities:

> He thinks, where do you begin? How do you tell a man that he has a granddaughter he never knew existed? How do you introduce someone who never knew her father to her grandfather? How do you make the connections between Don and Marjory and Ellen and Kirsty that must be made, that will be made? He doesn't yet know. But the connections, more of them even than he can know or imagine at this moment […] the connections will be made, and he understands that it has fallen to him to make them. (671)

The time has indeed come to make the connections, it has fallen on us to make them.

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