

LOGOS

Journal of the World Publishing Community

Volume 25, Issue 1, 2014

LOGOS

Journal of the World Publishing Community

Scope

Logos is a forum for opinion and the latest research from the world of publishing. The journal is international in scope and invites contributions on authorship, readers, book publishing, librarianship, and bookselling. Articles about the related fields of journals and magazines are also welcome, as are contributions about digital developments such as blogging and multimedia. Submissions are invited from both professionals and academics, and research articles will be subject to peer review. We also encourage publishers to send us books for review.

An English-language scholarly journal, published quarterly since 1990, *Logos* provides a platform for communication between publishing professionals, librarians, authors, scholars, and those in allied professions. It features articles from and about the publishing world, illustrating the unity, commonality, and conflicting interests of those who write, edit, manufacture, publish, disseminate, preserve, study, and read published works. *Logos* is international and intercultural, bridging gaps between academia and business, the developing and developed worlds, books and digital media. The constituency comprises professional publishers and booksellers, both trade and academic; publishing studies, book history, new media and communications scholars, researchers and students; consultants, analysts, managers, and owners of publishing businesses; library managers and information professionals; as well as editors, typographers, and designers operating within the publishing industry.

Logos welcomes research articles, as well as feature articles, opinion pieces, and stories of personal experience by professionals and academics from the field of publishing and related professions. Feature articles provide professional and/or academic insight into publishing often gained through personal, real-life experience, and are accessible to a wider public. In addition, *Logos* invites analyses, reviews, book chapters, and interviews related to recent trends or important developments in publishing, librarianship, bookselling, etc.

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Logos (print ISSN 0957-9656, online ISSN 1878-4712) is published quarterly by Brill, Plantijnstraat 2, 2321 JC Leiden, The Netherlands.

Logos website: brill.com/logos

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Subscription rates

For institutional customers, the subscription price for the electronic-only edition of Volume 25 (2014, 4 issues) is EUR 260/USD 341. Print only: EUR 286/USD 375; electronic+print: EUR 312/USD 409. Individual customers can subscribe to the print or electronic edition at EUR 95/USD 124. Please check the journal homepage at brill.com/logos.

Subscriptions to this journal are accepted for complete volumes only and take effect with the first issue of the year.

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Printed in the Netherlands (on acid-free paper).

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Scottish Publishing and Independence

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In 2014, Scotland will hold a referendum on whether to remain part of the United Kingdom or become an independent country. This article examines how a transition to independence might affect the publishing industry in Scotland. It addresses some of the key considerations for publishers facing the prospect of operating in a newly autonomous country, beginning with an overview of the current state of Scottish publishing, before presenting the most relevant points of the Scottish National Party's White Paper on Independence and the results of a PESTLE (political, economic, social, technological, legal, environmental) analysis. Drawing on this information, it delineates the potential effects, both positive and negative, of independence on the Scottish publishing industry.

Keywords: books, culture, independence, independent, publishing, publishing industry, referendum, Scotland, Scottish

Introduction

... the haar' is perhaps a perfect metaphor for the independence referendum, because nothing about it—the ramifications of a Yes vote, what it'll mean for the book trade in particular, and culture and business in general—is clear.

Marion Sinclair, CEO of Publishing Scotland²

In September 2014, Scotland will hold a referendum on whether to become an independent country or to remain part of the United Kingdom. Opinion on the

potential effects of Independence varies wildly, with Nationalists and Unionists playing out their ideological clash across every possible outlet and questions still unresolved on issues such as currency and EU membership. However, it is clear that a 'Yes' vote in the referendum will trigger significant changes in how Scotland operates, both internally and in its relationships with the rest of the world. For the Scottish publishing industry, the possibility of an independent Scotland is filled with challenges, problems, and opportunities. The vision of a Scottish writing scene invigorated by a new identity and a surge of global interest in the cultural output of this emergent nation is a tantalizing one. However, it is tempered by the possibility of Scotland instead becoming an insular, parochial society, trapped by an image of 'Scottishness'.

This article examines the potential impact of Scottish Independence on the country's publishing industry. It focuses on some of the key considerations for publishers facing the prospect of operating in a newly autonomous country, beginning with an overview of the current state of Scottish publishing, before presenting the most relevant points of the Scottish National Party's (SNP) White Paper on Independence and the results of a PESTLE (political, economic, social, technological, legal, environmental) analysis. Finally, drawing on this information, it will look at the potential effects, both positive and negative, of independence on the Scottish publishing industry.

An Overview of Scottish Publishing

According to Publishing Scotland, over 110 publishers are currently operating in Scotland (Publishing Scotland, 2012), from huge commercial businesses like HarperCollins to ambitious independents like Canongate and tiny operations like Freight Books. The industry employs around 1500 workers (excluding freelancers), produces approximately 3000 titles a year, and has an average yearly turnover of around £343 million (Publishing Scotland, 2012, p. 9).

There is much to be positive about in the current state of Scottish publishing. Scottish authors are at the forefront of contemporary writing, both fiction and non-fiction, boasting such names as Ian Rankin, A. L. Kennedy, and Alistair Moffat.³ There is a sound structure of support bodies for writers and publishers, from

the funding body Creative Scotland to the Scottish Book Trust, Publishing Scotland, and the Scottish Poetry Library. Scottish publishers are finding success with major literary awards, both Sandstone Press and Canongate having had authors listed for the Man Booker Prize in recent years.⁴ Moreover, a thriving and innovative body of independent publishers have contributed to a new buzz about the country. Cargo Publishing founder Mark Buckland (himself a young, progressive publisher in Scotland) claims that, 'now, there's a new generation of Scottish publishers like Freight, Backpage and Saraband burning down the "conventions" we're all supposed to adhere to' (Buckland, 2013).

However, there has also been much discussion recently of the 'decline of Scottish publishing', the country having suffered the movement or closure of some major publishers. For instance, Mainstream Publishing—formerly one of Scotland's largest independent publishers—was subsumed into the giant conglomeration Random House, its Edinburgh office subsequently closing at the end of 2013, causing the loss of 10 jobs (Williams, 2013). Meanwhile, academic publishing—traditionally a strong sector in Scotland—has been greatly depleted over the last few years, particularly with the closures of the Scottish offices of Wiley (Page, 2012) and Chambers,⁵ leaving Edinburgh University Press (EUP) as the country's last major academic publisher (though it too is showing the effects of difficult trading conditions, having posted drops in profits over the last three years).⁶

There have also been serious problems associated with the support bodies for publishing in Scotland. Creative Scotland faced particular criticism. In 2012, an open letter bearing the names of 100 signatories—including prominent Scottish writers like Ian Rankin and Liz Lochhead—was sent to Sandy Crombie, Chairman of Creative Scotland. The letter expressed 'dismay' over the organization's management, stating that 'We observe an organization with a confused and intrusive management style married to a corporate ethos that seems designed to set artist against artist and company against company in the search for resources' (*BBC News Scotland*, 2012). This has since led to the resignation of Creative Scotland's Chief Executive Andrew Dixon (*BBC News Scotland*, 2013a), as well as a number of reforms in the way the organisation works, especially

in terms of the input from working artists (Creative Scotland, 2012). During a parliamentary question session, organized in response to the debate that followed this open letter, playwright David Greig—a signatory of the letter—noted that improvements were beginning to be seen in the operation of Creative Scotland but ‘There is still some way to go on one or two issues’ (Scottish Parliament, 2013).

Framework for the Future: The SNP’s White Paper

In November 2013, the SNP published its White Paper on the forthcoming referendum. Entitled *Scotland’s Future: Your guide to an independent Scotland*, this 650-plus page report lays out in detail the SNP’s arguments for independence and their plans for the country should their campaign be successful. In short, this is the roadmap for Scotland’s transition from devolution

to independence and, as it is a product of the SNP (and therefore as much a piece of propaganda as a source of information), it projects an optimistic and positive image of this outcome.

For the publishing industry, the most relevant sections of the report deal with Business and the Economy, International Relations, and Culture. These will be dealt with in more detail below, but the following are some of the more interesting points made in the section entitled ‘Gains from Independence—Whichever Party Is Elected’:

- An economic policy aimed at economic stability and job security in Scotland will replace an economic policy which disproportionately benefits London and the South East of England
- Access to our own resources—for every one of the last

POLITICAL

- Highly likely change from conservative to social-democratic, left-leaning government
- Government would reflect Scotland only, rather than whole of UK—which is currently ruled by Conservatives though they have only one MP in Scotland
- Culture (including literature) as a marketing tool for a new Scottish image
- Possibility of increased government spending on/support for the arts and culture—though culture is already devolved, so likelihood of change is questionable

SOCIAL

- National pride will increase?
- Rise in global interest/visibility?
- Greater connection with diaspora?
- Over-reliance on kitsch, parochial ‘Scottishness?’— no longer able to draw on depth of British culture
- English-speaking country—larger potential marketplace than countries using less dominant languages

LEGAL

- Definition of borders—export/import
- Tax implications
- Independence affects EU membership, travel between territories, visas

ECONOMIC

- Still dealing with effects of recession
- Full control over economy—lower corporation tax?
- Currency—would Scotland want to/be allowed to keep the pound or join the euro?
- Cheap international labour = decrease in Scottish labour market?

TECHNOLOGICAL

- Sound infrastructure
- Good track record with tech industries (e.g. Silicon Glen, videogames industry)
- Remote areas have poor access—would an independent government attend to this?
- Ease of communication means that business can be done anywhere—removes one barrier to businesses entering Scotland
- Digital publishing provides a global platform for even remote publishers

ENVIRONMENTAL

- Increased importance of Scotland’s landscape as an attractive destination for tourism and business
- Control over own resources will create greater wealth?

Table 1. PESTLE analysis of key factors potentially affecting the Scottish publishing industry in an independent Scotland.

32 years estimates show Scotland has generated more tax per head than the UK as a whole. With independence, decisions about the level and allocation of public spending will be taken here in Scotland

- A timetable for reducing the rate of corporation tax by up to three percentage points to counter the gravitational business pull of London
- Examination of further help for small businesses, for example with national insurance costs to encourage them to create more jobs (Scottish Government 2013, pp. xii–xiii)

Scottish Independence and the Publishing Industry: PESTLE analysis

When one considers the current state of Scottish publishing alongside the most relevant points of the SNP's stated plans for the future of the country, a picture of the potential effects of independence on the industry begins to emerge. The PESTLE analysis in Table 1 outlines the factors that influence the publishing business in Scotland and the effects and considerations that independence might create.

Business and the Economy

The recurring refrain of Nationalists is that independence will grant Scotland full control of its own affairs, allowing the government to 'pursue a Scottish tax and economic policy to boost jobs, growth and social justice' (Scottish Government, 2013, p. x). For instance, one of the headline features of the SNP's independence campaign has been the promise of a cut in corporation tax in order to aid Scotland's businesses, as per the White Paper. The government's analysis forecasts that, over 20 years, a three per cent cut could result in a 1.4 per cent expansion in the economy and the creation of 27 000 jobs (Marsh and Nicol, 2014, p. 11); the Scottish Parliament corroborates this: 'It is reasonable to suggest that in most plausible scenarios a 3% cut in corporation tax will expand the economy, create jobs and increase investment. Exports would also be expected to rise in absolute terms and as a share of Scotland's economy' (Marsh and Nicol, 2014, p. 11). The ability to make decisions like this would, theoretically, allow an independent Scottish government to make the country an appealing prospect for business and investors. For the Scottish publishing industry, such improvements

might help to keep publishers in the country at a time when closures and cutbacks have become common.

However, there are doubts over whether the SNP will be able to fulfil such promises and even whether they would prove advantageous. Regarding corporation tax, economist Gavin McCrone points out that,

if the Scottish government tried, as is its stated aim, to reduce the rate of tax to a very low level, it could be seen as an attempt not just to help companies in Scotland but to attract economic activity that might otherwise go elsewhere in the UK or to other member states of the EU. That would raise problems both with the European Union and the remainder of the UK. As it is, several EU countries have taken issue with Ireland's low 12.5 per cent rate of corporation tax, notably at the time of the Irish financial bailout, arguing that it was unacceptably distorting. While Ireland has, so far, managed to resist this pressure, it is unlikely that a newly independent Scotland, seeking to establish itself within the EU, would be able to do so. (McCrone, 2013, pp. 37–38)

All businesses, publishing included, function in an interconnected world, particularly given the ease of communication and distribution through digital channels. Moreover, as McCrone points out, 'This would be especially so for Scotland, given its relatively small size, the fact that the rest of the UK would be its dominant trading partner and that freedom of movement of both capital and labour throughout the single market of the present UK would continue' (McCrone, 2013, pp. 36–37). Given that 79% of Scottish publishers sell their titles overseas (Publishing Scotland, 2012, p. 9), any obstacles to trade with other countries would be disastrous and publishing could find itself threatened by a post-'Yes' Scotland trying to tread a fine line between establishing attractive conditions for its businesses and too aggressively competing against countries with which it is still establishing relationships.

Culture

There is a long history of bad feeling about British publishing's attitude towards its Scottish sector, with an overriding sense that Scottish publications are overlooked and neglected. In a speech on his publishing

house Freight Books and Scottish publishing in general, Adrian Searle noted that there is great difficulty in getting Scottish books reviewed by British critics (Searle, 2013). Mark Buckland goes further:

[London's] media decides what is important to London and publishes accordingly. Its publishers follow that tact [sic], and inevitably, the artists there dance to the tune played by those with the purses-strings. It has little to no interest in Scottish writing, outwith a few, rightly celebrated authors—but there should be far more beyond that. Should Scottish authors be changing their work and deracifying themselves so that they can fit into the London literary parties? I would hope not. I've been to those parties; they're not a marker of success, they're just the dull-est £10 Martini you'll ever buy. (Buckland, 2013)

There is a long history of bad feeling about British publishing's attitude towards its Scottish sector, with an overriding sense that Scottish publications are overlooked and neglected.

The hope of commentators like Buckland is that an independent Scottish government will show more interest in promoting and protecting Scotland's culture. The pre-referendum rhetoric of the SNP certainly supports this: Fiona Hyslop, Scotland's Cultural Secretary for Culture and External Affairs, states that 'an independent Scotland will be a place where our arts, our creativity and our heritage is collectively celebrated, valued, nurtured and supported across the public, private and third sector. Culture will flourish in an independent Scotland' (Hyslop, 2013). However, there are those who are not convinced that much change will occur at all, particularly in a political sense. Cultural policy is already dealt with under the auspices of the Scottish Parliament, having been one of the powers transferred completely during devolution, which leads

publishers such as Timothy Wright, CEO of EUP, to note,

We work with partners such as the National Trust of Scotland, Historic Scotland and Visit Scotland, which are separate from their English counterparts. Creative Scotland is devolved. Publishing Scotland is expanding and already works closely with the Publishers Association. It makes you wonder what effect an independent Scotland would have for us. Quite frankly, whichever way the referendum goes, I don't think it will make a huge difference. (Tivnan, 2012)

It is worth noting that matters such as the problems with Creative Scotland—established in 2010—and publishers pulling out of the country have occurred under the control of Holyrood, not Westminster.

There is also a question over the level of interest Scotland's readers have in reading overtly Scottish texts, since books classified as 'Scottish' account for just five per cent (according to best estimates) of the country's retail market (Andrew, 2013). Add this to the possibility of alienating readers in the UK (particularly the English, who, according to Adrian Searle (2013), 'get sick of Scotland going on about Scotland') and the possibility arises that an increase in the 'Scottishness' of Scottish books might be to its detriment rather than its advantage.

A Local and Global Scotland: Borders, territories, and relationships

One of the biggest sticking points in the campaign to convince voters to choose independence has been the uncertainty over the official relationships a newly independent Scotland would have with the rest of the world. From the most basic question of which currency the new country would use, to complex debates over visas and passports, voters do not yet have any clear sense of the global position of an independent Scotland. For example, the SNP has been bullish over any question that the country would not easily gain membership of the EU: Alex Salmond states that 'Scotland is a European nation. Resource-rich Scotland would be welcome [in the EU]. Anybody with an ounce of sense knows that' (*BBC News Scotland*, 2013b). However, the certainty in this statement is misleading, and many commentators

believe that an independent Scotland's membership of the EU would be in question, most notably José Manuel Barroso, President of the European Commission, who claims that it would be 'extremely difficult, if not impossible' (Barroso, 2014) for the new country to join the EU. Barroso's words are borne out by comments from Prime Minister Mariano Rajoy of Spain—a country keen to curb the independence movement in Catalonia, its own semi-independent region—who has warned that

It's very clear to me, as it is for everybody else in the world, that a country that would obtain independence from the EU would remain out of the EU, and that is good for Scottish citizens to know and for all EU citizens to know ... [EU treaties] apply only to member states that have agreed and ratified them, and if a part of one member state cleaves from the member state, it converts itself into a third part with relation to the EU. That is the law and that law applies. (Carrell and Kassam, 2013)

This uncertainty is indicative of the anxiety associated with the future of an independent Scotland. Would the country be accepted into the world as a player in its own right, or face obstacles and obfuscation from its peers?

This is an issue with particular resonance for Scottish publishers—for them, the ideal outcome of independence would be a combination of localization and globalization, with Scotland gaining a stronger local identity and a more direct connection to the global book market. The industry can only speculate as to the likelihood of this situation transpiring, though, and some fear that independence might lend itself more to a promotion of parochial 'Scottishness' than a reinvigorated and confident writing culture. Writer Magi Gibson vividly articulates this fear:

Is that the Scotland we have today? A nation happy

to package up and sell its sense of self in couthy tartan shortbread tins and tartan tammies and faux-fur sporrans? To peddle a plastic-heather-kitsch-and-keech culture while its young people develop an alarming sense of victimhood, and despite (apparently) better education than ever before, confuse nationalism—with all its negative connotations of nasty and nazi—with national pride? (Gibson, 2012, p. 98)

In striking out alone, Scotland might end up turning in on itself, ghettoizing its business and returning its culture, literature included, to the Kailyard.⁷

Conclusion

We do not know. Through thousands of opinions and millions of words, the one thing that becomes obvious is that, until Scottish independence actually comes to pass, nobody will know exactly what its effects will be. That has not stopped an entire cottage industry of speculation springing up, with Scottish publishers like Birlinn and EUP producing books dedicated to independence⁸ (indicating that the industry will be able to capitalise on the novelty of its new identity, for a while at least). Still, the SNP's promises of benefits for businesses and greater protection and support for Scottish culture are just that—promises. It remains to be seen whether they will be fulfilled.

Perhaps the most important aspect of becoming independent is that Scotland will be turning its back on one connection for another. No longer directly connected to the UK, it will instead have the opportunity to be directly connected to the whole world, rather than trading at one remove as part of a larger whole. Whether this will prove to be the imagined opportunity to become an equal player on the global stage is a question that will only be answered in the past tense, while, for now, we can only speculate and speak of the future. ■

Notes

- 1 The Scots word for a thick, heavy fog
- 2 Quoted in Tivnan (2012).
- 3 It should be noted that many of these authors are not published by Scottish publishers, including Rankin (published by Orion) and Kennedy (published by Vintage). Moffat is published by Edinburgh-based Birlinn.
- 4 Sandstone Press's Jane Rogers was longlisted in 2011 for *The Testament of Jessie Lamb* (see *Man Booker Prize*, 2011). The novel also won the Arthur C. Clarke Award (see Flood, 2012). Canongate's Ruth Ozeki was shortlisted in 2013 for *A Tale for the Time Being* (see *Man Booker Prize*, 2013).
- 5 See Neilan, 2009; Donnelly, 2012.
- 6 See *Duedil*, 2013; Edinburgh University Press 2013, p. 17; 2013b.
- 7 The term for a particular movement in Scottish fiction, now used as a general term for a twee or kitsch image of Scottish culture. See Scott (2013).
- 8 Birlinn publish Gavin McCrone's book (2013) referenced in this report, and EUP has a range of books on Scottish independence, including *Scotland's Choices: The referendum and what happens afterwards* by Iain McLean et al. (2013) (see Edinburgh University Press, 2013c).

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