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Literature of Scotland and Slovenia: From Devolution to Post-devolution, from Socialism to Independence and Beyond

Summary

This article looks at the situation of nationalism and literature in both Scotland and Slovenia in the 1980s and onward until the present day. In the case of Scotland the focus is on the devolution process and the literary renaissance which followed the failed referendum. The focus is also on the post-devolution literature and the challenges it faces both in terms of retrospect and the future challenges. In Slovenia in the 1980s the main points are the role of literature and culture in the process of democratisation and the reimagining of literature to reflect on the new situations. During this process comparisons as well as differences between both nations are revealed and some are specifically pointed out. Finally, there are certain concepts of how literature can advance and also hinder the development of a nation, which should be taken into consideration in the future developments.

Key words: Scotland, Slovenia, Devolution, Post-devolution, Nova revija, Mladina, Independence, Minority Literature

Literatura škotske in Slovenije: Od devolucije do post-devolucije, od socializma do neodvisnosti ter naprej

Povzetek

Članek skuša vzeti v obzir stanje na Škotskem in v Sloveniji od osemdesetih let prejšnjega stoletja do dandanašnjih dni. V primeru Škotske smo pozornost posvetili procesu devolucije in literarni renesansi, ki je sledila neuspelemu referendumu. Tu je še poudarek na literaturi post-devolucije in izzivi, s katerimi se sooča, tako v smislu retrospektive kot tudi prihodnjih izzivov. Ko gre beseda o Sloveniji v osemdesetih so glavni poudarki na vlogi literature in kulture v procesu demokratizacije ter ponovnem osmišljanju literature, da ustrezno odseva novonastale situacije. Skozi ta proces se razkrijejo nekatere primerjave kot tudi razlike med obema narodoma. Na koncu je vpogled še v nekatere idejne zasnove, ki bi jih veljajo podrobneje raziskati.

Ključne besede: Škotska, Slovenija, devolucija, post-devolucija, Nova revija, Mladina, neodvisnost, manjšinska literatura

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1. Introduction

The United Kingdom and Yugoslavia in the nineteen eighties – both can be described as a collective of nations, cultures and identities packed into an overarching super-state. In the case of Yugoslavia it was a Socialist Federal Republic, while the United Kingdom remains a constitutional monarchy. The intent of this article is to focus on only two parts of these super-states, namely Scotland and Slovenia, and to deal with a specific situation and time period, where literature, or culture in general, met with a political situation. These situations will be analysed and put into perspective from the viewpoint of both Slovenia and Scotland, while dealing with specific elements unique to each, which will be compared when so appropriate.

Initially it may seem like a long stretch to compare two nations which at first glance seem so unlike and indeed were in different political situations at the time. The core of the perceived problem, however, was quite the same in both Slovenia and Scotland. That problem was – and perhaps still is – how to maintain a national identity and culture in a country which is primarily opposed to such an idea, since one of the main points of its existence is to promote the idea of a single nation, more often than not quite irrespective of the personal aims of some of the people living therein. In Yugoslavia it was to be Yugoslavian, irrespective of the fact that the person originated from Serbia, Croatia, Macedonia, Montenegro, Bosnia and Herzegovina or Slovenia. In the United Kingdom it was to be British, regardless of which part of the Kingdom or its colonies the person came from. Literature is a strong pillar in any state, one which tries to preserve or empower its national identity and, therefore, also one which is often pressured or sometimes even misused to that very end. In the first part of this paper, the focus is on Scotland, from a political and cultural viewpoint; this it will be followed by the situation in Yugoslavia and Slovenia. The final part deals with similarities but also unique elements of both, including the concluding thoughts.

2. Devolution and Post-devolution in Scotland

Devolution was an ongoing process in Scotland, Ireland and also Wales, the main idea was to slowly decentralise the government in Westminster and in the process grant more independence to various parts of the United Kingdom. The referendum on devolution in Scotland took place in 1979 and failed. Even though the majority was in favour, the devil was in the details, a clause added to the bill made all the difference. Peter Kravitz, the editor of *The Picador Book of Contemporary Scottish Literature*, explains it in a nutshell:

In March 1979 the people of Scotland were asked whether they wanted their own parliament separate from England. The majority said yes. However, a last minute clause added to the bill stated that 40 per cent of the total electorate had to be in favour. This took non-voters to be saying no. Governments get elected on less. (Kravitz 1997)

Through this failure, Scottish national politics took a serious blow. The political option essentially failed Scotland or at least that was the general thought at the time. This, however, proved to be an opportunity for literature to experience a so called renaissance. The Irish-Scottish writer Donal McLaughlin, who himself experienced this period in the fullest, has this to say on the situation:

The renaissance, it is often suggested, had its root in political setbacks. In the wake of both the failed referendum on devolution in March 1979 & Margaret Thatcher becoming Prime Minister in May that year, Scotland's writers – like their film-maker, painter & musician colleagues – invested in their art, rather than succumb to the double whammy delivered by the political arena.

The very considerable fruits of the artists' response to this state of affairs soon gave rise to the theory that Scotland had achieved *cultural* (if not *political*) independence. Politics, Cairns Craig even suggested, had been reduced to a mere *side-show* in Scotland.

(McLaughlin 2008, 4)

Literature replaced politics in Scotland's most desperate time of need. Scotland approached identity-building from the viewpoint of culture and to form an opposition to the predominantly British concept of the unity of all the nations living within Great Britain. While Scotland has had a great number of turbulent times throughout history it also produced some of the most well known and finest writers in the world. When one mentions Conan Doyle's Sherlock Holmes, with his famous lodgings in 221B Baker Street in London, Scotland somehow does not seem to fit in the picture. Sir Walter Scott's *Ivanhoe* deals with Saxon noble families and the protagonist, William of Ivanhoe, is also Saxon. R.L. Stevenson's *Treasure Island* tells of the high seas and exotic locations. Of course, they also wrote about Scotland – many of Sir Walter Scott's novels take place in Scotland, Robert Louis Stevenson's famous novel *Kidnapped* is also set in Scotland and yet these Scottish authors published mostly in England. The reasons for that are fairly simple, England, more specifically London, was the cultural centre. The British Empire stretched across the globe and the idea of being British was heavily advertised. "The two largest nations, Scotland and England, came together in 1707, but as commentators are becoming acutely aware this did not result in a British civil society" (Morton 1999, 6).

This union was a political construct, and to project the sense of 'unity', Crawford explains:

To play a full part, Scottish people would have to move from using Scots to using English, an English, which was fully acceptable to the dominant partner in the political union. This English, it was argued, both had to replace Scots and had to be purged of what we would now call 'markers of Scottish cultural difference', purged of Scotticisms. The growing wish for a 'pure' English in eighteenth century Scotland was not an anti-Scottish gesture, but a pro-British one. If Britain were to work as a political unit, then Scots should rid themselves of any elements, likely to impede their progress within it. Language, the most important of bonds, must not be allowed to hinder Scotland's intercourse with expanding economic and intellectual markets in the freshly defined British state.

(Crawford 2001, 18)

Language, and through it literature, were subjected to the idea of unity. There were, however, also other factors, which helped promote the idea of being British. This continued well into the twentieth century:

The Second World War had witnessed the extensive use of government propaganda to shore up British identity and the fact that half a million Scots were integrated with other individuals from the United Kingdom in the armed forces helped reinforce a sense of Britishness. The English were no longer stereotypes or caricatures, but serving comrades, and the fact that many Scots were stationed in England helped to introduce them to their fellow-countrymen and –women. (Finlay 2002, 8-9)

After 1979, the failed referendum and the rise of Margaret Thatcher, “which seemed then to be cementing Scotland’s subnational status for good” (Schoene 2007, 8), there were also positive results as it “only induced the Scottish People to pull in more closely together and develop a more clearly defined and morally superior sense of national identity” (ibid., 8). This brought about the renaissance of Scottish literature. Schoene also refers to this literature as the ‘devolutionary Scottish writing’, and it encompasses the works which were produced and published in the time period between the two referendums, the first one, which failed in 1979, and the second successful referendum in 1997. This was the period saw the works of authors such as Ian Crichton Smith, William McIlvanney, James Kelman, Janice Galloway and many others. They sought to put Scottish literature and Scotland on the world map, strengthen the Scottish identity and create a distinctive voice, the voice of Scotland. With themes that dealt with the troubles of the common people, often set in bleak suburban settings, these authors “challenge limits of language, gender, received history, and authority, be it in law, education, religion. Scottish fiction – and indeed Scottish writing generally – is now more varied in mood, more eclectic, and more willing to challenge Scotland’s traditional beliefs and values than ever before” (Gifford 2002, 980).

If the period of devolutionary Scottish writing was marked by an empowerment of the Scottish identity through the use of colloquial language, Gaelic expressions, local colour and situations specific to Scotland, there is also usually an opposing thought. The dangers of nationalism, which include also the fact that literature can become limited and that the scope in which it can operate “was always, of necessity, politically informed, or at least it was received and critiqued that way, and only considered a success if it made – or could be construed as making – some kind of case for Scotland” (Schoene 2007, 7). This raises the question of self-censorship. If the literary works authors produce are automatically judged against certain restrictions or prerequisites, even if these are merely presupposed, would they not cause the authors to gravitate towards operating within those limits? Schoene dedicates a large part of his text to this very question or whether the literature that was produced during the period of devolutionary Scottish writing had a specific purpose of promoting Scottishness and if that role is in some ways fulfilled by reintroducing the Scottish Parliament in 1999 and a successful transfer of power from Westminster to Edinburgh, what becomes of literature and can it be freed from the burden of nationalism? “Clearly, one task for critics of contemporary Scottish literature is to determine whether after devolution ‘Scottishness’ still remains a useful quality marker, viable identity descriptor, or suitable criterion for gauging the canonical eligibility of an author or text” (ibid., 8). Schoene then refers to

literature produced after 1999 as the post-devolutionary Scottish writing. This kind of shift was anticipated by other authors in the past. Gifford predicts it in *Scottish Literature in English and Scots*: “Perhaps a necessary part of this will be that Scottish writers become less ‘Scottish’ and that their writing will take on a ‘post-nationalist’ tone. If that is a feature that Scottish writers will share with other world writers, and if it is combined with an awareness of the past, then it is a development to be welcomed” (Gifford 2002, 1000).

One of the more significant elements in the post-devolutionary Scottish writing is the input and creativity of various ethnic groups within Scotland. Numerous works are being created by writers who come from intermixed ethnic backgrounds and communities, since modern Scotland is definitely multi-ethnic. They offer a wider range of what post-devolutionary Scottish literature can be, a literature that is not limited to being ‘nationalistic’, by incorporating their experiences and perceptions of the world they live in and also by reflecting the social aspects that cannot be covered by, as Gifford states, the members of the traditional Scottish community. Schoene elaborates further:

Scottish nationalism has effectively ceased to be a minoritarian counterdiscourse, raising manifold questions regarding Scotland’s internal interdependencies and alliances.

Post-devolution Scotland evidently holds postethnic potential mainly due to its relatively flexible views on what constitutes a Scottish person, as detailed by its civic citizenship legislation, which values an individual’s choice of residency as highly as their familial descent. (Schoene 2007, 10)

Literature in Scotland gains new strengths and becomes more eclectic as the voices of these minorities are heard. It also helps to move the Scottish literature away from a period, which was limiting in its scope and served only a certain purpose. Writers, such as Jackie Kay, of Scottish-Nigerian descent, Eugenie Fraser, a Russian Scottish writer, Raymond Soltyssek, David Daiches and many others are just a few of these emerging voices which will carry on the literature of Scotland in the new millennia. Suhayl Saadi tells us in his *Infinite Diversity in New Scottish Writing*:

We are dealing with people who have never known anything other than a multicultural society (and I’m talking here about Scottish writers from both Majority and Minority Ethnic groups). Scotland has actually always been a polyglot – but today perhaps it is simply that it is more visibly so.

In a way, it’s a kind of collective identity crisis. Scots are a minority ethnic group within Britain. The English are a Minority Ethnic group in Scotland. We are all Minority Ethnic communities in the world. (Saadi 2010)

Contemporary literature seems to be holding its own as the turbulent years of the previous century have passed by; numerous young writers continue to emerge and contribute to the Scottish literature canon. Looking for new challenges and new opportunities, Scottish literature tries to rise over the self imposed boundaries of devolutionary writing and is trying to rediscover its most basic premises of representing Scotland in all its forms in the contemporary world.

Yet there are some who look at the critical side of devolution. “Following devolution, both Scottish critics and creative writers began to issue reminders that Scotland’s assumed moral superiority as a victim of historical circumstances must not be permitted to persist uninterrogated” (Schoene 2007, 2). Schoene continues to elaborate that Scotland’s part in the British imperial enterprises, such as colonisation or complicity in the slave trade as is disclosed in the award-winning novel *Joseph Knight* (2003) by James Robertson. There is also the fact that too many perceive devolution as simply a matter of Scotland, the Republic of Ireland, Northern Ireland and Wales while many forget that England is also a part of the puzzle. One of the fears is that devolution might exculpate the former British nations of historical accountability for colonial violence. Last but not least, there is the fact of long historical and economic ties of Scotland with England. Post-devolution brings responsibilities along with more freedom.

3. From Yugoslavia to Slovenia

Slovenia officially declared independence in June 1991. While Slovenia in the onset of the eighties was still a part of the Socialist Federal Republic of Yugoslavia, two events took place which shook the social circumstances on which Yugoslavia was based. Since literature was an inherent part of the social situation, it also had an impact on literary communications. The two events were the death of Edvard Kardelj in 1979, the main ideologist of communism in Yugoslavia, and the death of Josip Broz-Tito in 1980, Marshal of Yugoslavia. As discussed by Marko Juvan in his article *Iz 80. v 90. Leta: slovenska literatura, postmodernizem, postkomunizem in nacionalna država*¹, it signified the collapse of the two main ideologies which were presented in the ideology of market socialism and its myth of a unique type of socialism and the ideology of south-Slav brotherhood, unity and equality. Their charisma and presence in the consciousness of the people in Yugoslavia and their status as symbols of unity presented the main ties that bound the nations within the federation, and with their demise these ties began to loosen.

One of the things that followed was the pull towards centralisation. In order to salvage the sinking ship that was Yugoslavia, centralisation was supposed to strengthen the failing concept of unity and lessen the harsh rhetoric between nations. The consequence of such actions was that, as these concepts alluded to the solidarity of the working classes, they would also extend to the cultural and educational spheres. The idea was to have unified educational centres, which would present a unified curriculum of literature within Yugoslavia. This meant an unfair situation in which Slovenian pupils would have a significantly reduced amount of Slovene literature in their curriculums. An additional problem was the heavy taxation. “Slovenia, a republic within which lived 8.5 percent of the whole Yugoslavian national body, contributed approximately 20 percent of all its resources, while Belgrade still vehemently reproached it for selfishness and abuse of poorer republics” (Balantič 2007).²

These actions affirmed the conviction that existence in such a socialist federation would

¹ From the 80s into the 90s: Slovene Literature, Postmodernism, Postcommunism and the National State.

² Original Slovenian: Slovenija, republika, v kateri je živel 8,5 odstotka celotnega jugoslovanskega državljankega telesa, je v državni proračun prispevala kar okoli 20 odstotkov vseh sredstev, Beograd pa ji je še vedno vehementno očital sebičnost in izkoriščanje revnejših republik.

eventually no longer be possible. The eighties then saw the emergence of authors, intellectuals and collectives, who directed their actions to be more public and socially active and also more provocative.

The journal *Nova revija* (*New Review*) has its origins in the year 1982. It was published by a collective of liberal and conservative intellectuals. They were allowed to publish the *Nova revija* journal after a petition to the authorities of the then Socialist Republic of Slovenia, in which they explained the need for an independent critical journal, which was lacking in the cultural environment at the time. The petition included a letter signed by Tine Hribar, Niko Grafenauer, Andrej Inkret, Svetlana Makarovič, Boris A. Novak and Dimitrij Rupel. Over sixty cultural workers also signed the petition, and it was published in the national daily broadsheet *Delo*. Still, two years had to pass before the journal could see the light of day. It provided a voice necessary for the intellectuals and authors to express their ideas, which would culminate in the publication of the notorious volume 57 of *Nova revija*. This issue declared an open proposal of the possibility that Slovenia should become independent as one of the options for the future:

In its 57th issue, published under the title Contributions to the Slovenian National Programme, a number of Slovenian writers, poets, lawyers, sociologists and philosophers (mostly belonging to the Heideggerian circle) expressed concern about the 'crisis' (a label widely used to describe the situation in Yugoslavia in the 1980s) and discussed options available to the Slovenian nation. (Kramberger et al. 2008, 2)

However, there were other publications with a national political agenda in the Socialist Republic of Slovenia. *Mladina* was one such magazine. It was a magazine of the Slovenian Communist Party youth. In 1982 on the 11th Congress of the Alliance of Socialist Youth of Slovenia a decision came to change *Mladina*, giving it additional editorial autonomy and it became one of the main oppositions to the regime in Slovenia. It was in a sense an internal opposition, since they originated from the same position and were able to expose political conflicts.

In 1984 the emergence of a controversial political art and music collective called NSK, or *Neue Slowenische Kunst*, added their part to the existing social circumstances. Through provocative art, which used symbols derived from totalitarian regimes and music produced by arguably the most prominent part of NSK, *Laibach*, they managed to ridicule and challenge the powers and at the same time reach an audience beyond the boundaries of Yugoslavia.

It was typical that the main artistic and political charges of the eighties were discharged especially through activities of the retrograde collective Neue Slowenische Kunst, which, through a unified creative concept ('art as a state'), saturated rock music, artistic collages and installations, poster designs, theatre and architecture. NSK, which in the second half of the eighties began a relatively striking march across Europe and the USA, as it was more radical and more total than, for instance, the Russian soc-art. It challenged the official party politics (Slovenian and Yugoslavian), scandalised traditional artistic circles and the taste of supporters of modernism.³ (Juvan 1995, 6-7)

³ Značilno je tudi, da so se poglavitni umetniški in politični naboji 80. let sproščali zlasti v dejavnosti retrogardistične skupine Neue slowenische Kunst, ki je z enotnim ustvarjalnim konceptom ('umetnost kot država') prežela rokovsko glasbo, likovne kolaže in insta-

The literary and artistic movements in the period of eighties and beginning of nineties were marked by the changes in the social structure, the oncoming democratization of Slovenia and the advent of consumer society. These affected the perceptions on the role of literature in our society. Marko Juvan puts forward two concepts of ideologies on the roles of Slovenian literature, inherited from the romantic and post-romantic periods, which fell to pieces. The first one is the concept of domestic literature as “privileged or perhaps even the single institution, which – due to the missing political, economic, jurisdictional and cultural organisational forms – establishes, affirms, keeps and develops the ‘non-historical’, stateless nation on the path to its emancipation; writers, not politicians or generals are in this view the nation’s consciousness, visionaries, leaders and victims, who are establishing the community⁴” (Juvan 1995, 2). The second ideology is the “concept that literature or culture is the only authentic (and relatively tolerated by the authorities) reserve of an individual’s identity and freedom of thought, especially when all other ways of expressing political opinions and unwanted messages are disabled”⁵ (ibid.).

This departure from the old ideologies inescapably brought along the change in roles that authors have in our society. Since there was a direct challenge to the authorities through the referendum on independence and also the first democratic elections, political content in literature was transposed into direct political discourse. Some of these authors later became co-creators of the new Slovenian state. Drago Jančar is one such example, who as the president of the Slovene PEN centre in the years between 1987 until 1991 made a significant contribution to the independence of Slovenia.

What about the younger generation of writers? Since the independence of Slovenia, literature had to redefine some of its roles. Due to the loss of a giant market in the former Yugoslavia, which also provided a common pool for intellectuals and authors to meet, publish and share their ideas and works in, there was really only one place to go – west. The west presented – and still represents – a different kind of cultural and economic situation. Since Slovenia was now facing democracy and economic liberalisation, some of these effects became evident also in authors and literature.

The market is, therefore, necessarily commercialised, dispersed over several smaller publishing houses, but is also becoming more flexible and sensitive to the needs of readers. Due to such circumstances, the young writers especially have well secularised the concept of being an author: they do not comprehend it so much as a mission, but rather as a vocation, a skill, not only of writing, but also of recognition.⁶ (Ibid., 3)

lacije, plakatno oblikovanje, gledališče in arhitekturo. Skupina NSK, ki je v 2. polovici 80. let začela razmeroma odmeven pohod po Evropi in ZDA, saj je bila radikalnejša in totalnejša od, recimo, ruskega soc-arta, je izzivala uradno partijsko politiko (Slovensko in Jugoslovansko), škandalizirala tradicionalistične umetnostne kroge in okus zagovornikov modernizma.

⁴ Pojmovanje domače književnosti kot privilegirane ali celo edine ustanove, kida – zaradi manjkajočih političnih, gospodarskih, pravnih in kulturnih organizacijskih oblik – vzpostavlja, potrjuje, ohranja in razvija “nezgodovinski”, nedržavni narod na poti njegove emancipacije; pisatelji, ne pa politiki ali vojskovodje so v tej luči narodova vest, vidci, voditelji in žrtve, ki vzpostavljajo skupnost;

⁵ Predstava, da je leposlovje oz. umetnost edini pristni (in s strani oblasti še razmeroma tolerirani) rezervat posameznikove identitete ter mišljenjske svobode, zlasti kadar so druge poti za izražanje političnih mnenj in nezaželenih sporočil onemogočene.

⁶ Ponudba se zato nujno komercializira, razpršuje po številnih manjših založbah, vendar pa postaja tudi bolj prožna in občutljiva za interese bralcev. Zaradi takšnih okoliščin so zlasti mladi pisatelji dodobra sekularizirali pojmovanje pisateljstva: ne dojemajo ga več (toliko) kot poslanstvo, temveč kot poklic, večščino, ne le pisanja, ampak tudi uveljavljanja.

There are plenty of more marginalised types of texts, such as regional, dialectal literature and poetry, which receive surprisingly little attention despite the incredible richness of dialects and provincial life, folk tales and legends that can be found in Slovenia. Intellectual and cultural centres and institutions, which are usually positioned in larger urban areas, tend to give the impression of ignorance about or at least disinterest in such types of literature and poetry. If their voices are still waiting for sufficient recognition in Slovenian cultural consciousness, there is one marginalised category which took a long time to receive any spotlight at all, and that is the literature of minorities in Slovenia. This trend was slightly reversed by the publication of *Čefurji raus!*⁷, a novel by Goran Vojnović. The novel won the Prešeren Fund award and most recently, at the 25th Vilenica International Literary Festival, Vojnović received the Vilenica Crystal for the best contribution to the Vilenica Almanac after he read an excerpt from *Čefurji raus!*. Additional exposure for minority literature in Slovenia is also the many contributions within the UNESCO World Book Capital Ljubljana programme, one of them being the *BuQue* project, which deals with the LGBTIQ (lesbian, gay, transsexual, intersexual and queer) themes.

The fact that Ljubljana was the World Book Capital from April 23rd 2010 until April 23rd of 2011 gives recognition to and a nod towards the efforts and attempts of post-independence literature and the book industry in Slovenia. Despite this, there is still much to be done and although the book market is small and the chances of larger recognition minuscule, the language and culture still offer infinite possibilities that can and have to reach even farther beyond the received notions and borders of what we now perceive as literature ‘proper’.

4. Conclusion

Trying to compare two nations and cultures, which seem so far apart geographically, in terms of language and history would seem a daunting task, yet there are as many similarities as there are differences. Both Scotland and Slovenia found themselves in a similar situation at end of the seventies and the beginning of eighties. Politically, they both tried to achieve a greater deal of independence. In the case of Scotland it was to gain more power in decision-making and restoring its parliament through devolution and in the end to establish a form of home rule. The failure of the referendum and subsequent rise to power of the conservative party headed by Margaret Thatcher consolidated the centralist tendencies in Britain. Scotland turned to culture and literature as a way of reaffirming their identity and to find their voice; the publication of *Lanark: A Life in Four Books* by Alasdair Gray in 1981 was crucial and “his work has been credited with spurring a renaissance in Scottish literature” (James Procter, 2008). In Slovenia, the beginning of the eighties was preceded by the deaths of two most influential figures in Yugoslavia at the time, Josip Broz-Tito and Edvard Kardelj. Similarly, the centralist tendencies arose as the socialist republic was trying to reassert itself. The literature and cultural circles in Slovenia actively started to get involved with the political situation in Slovenia. Through the inception of the *Nova revija* journal and the opposition voiced through the *Mladina* magazine, political elements and voices became predominant. These intellectual circles later gave rise to

⁷ In Vojnović’s novel, the word ‘čefur’ denotes a specific minority within Slovenia, often hailing from the former states of Yugoslavia and the term frequently carries a derogatory meaning; ‘čefurji’ is the plural version. A possible translation, since an official translation of the title is not yet available, could be *Čefurji get out!*.

many people who helped develop national programmes and legislations. The result was the independent democratic Republic of Slovenia.

While Scotland has an abundance of critical literature that deals with devolution and the later post-devolution, in Slovenia there is a general lack of relevant literature for the period of the 1980s and onwards. According to Kramberger et al., some of this can be attributed to the general regard of Slovenia's process of achieving independence as a *success story*, especially when considering the other nations within Yugoslavia. Just as Scotland was a part of the British Empire so was Slovenia irrevocably a part of Yugoslavia. At the same time it played a key part in Yugoslavia's dissolution. It is something for the future writers to consider.

Only recently have books dealing specifically with Slovenia's early phase of the exit from communism been appearing, yet they still remain scarce and – apart from a handful of articles in collective volumes – fail to provide a critical examination of ethno-nationalist conceptions of state and territory and their gradual rise throughout the late 1980s. Historians are particularly reluctant to treat these issues; if they do address them, they tend to avoid labelling various phenomena in Slovenia as nationalist, stressing that they were simply reactions to Serbian hegemony. (Kramberger et al. 2008, 7)

Bearing in mind the new developments also in the minority literature, be it from ex-Yugoslav immigrants, LGBTIQ elements, dialectal-provincial, minorities within or just beyond our borders or any other voice that functions, lives and operates in Slovenia and can thus be heard, Slovenia should continue to expand its literary horizon, while also bearing in mind its history and heritage, for better or worse. There is always the danger of writers becoming complacent, not exploring new possibilities, themes and especially there is the fear of avoiding certain subjects and self-censorship. There is subject matter, such as the entire process and the circumstances of Slovenia's independence that has so far received far too little attention from authors and is quite crucial to understanding our own history as well as an important pillar for future writers to build upon. It needs to be approached from a neutral viewpoint to ensure a bias-free retrospective on that period of time.

Scotland is already looking beyond the literary confines of devolution. "It is imperative that post-devolution Scotland cease once and for all to identify itself in opposition to all things English; not only were the histories of the nations intimately entwined for almost 300 years, they continue to be so" (Scheone 2007, 2). There are certainly many familiar aspects in development of literature and identity in the two nations and the way the 1980s moved on to the new millennia and beyond. With the knowledge of what lies behind and the possibilities of the future, both Scotland and Slovenia have the potential and the means to continue developing their cultures and literature.

The Canongate Wall, positioned under the Canongate building in the Scottish parliamentary complex, has quotations inscribed onto pieces of rock imbedded into the wall. One of the quotes, belonging to the famous Scottish writer Alasdair Gray, has this to say: "Work as if you live in the early days of a better nation." It is a statement that should be heeded; both Slovenia and Scotland need to continue to try and better themselves also through culture and literature and not rest on the laurels of complacency.

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