

Publishing in Scotland 1970–2020: From Cultural Heritage to Global Engagement

Alice Piotrowska

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Abstract

This study examines the history of the book publishing industry in Scotland from approximately 1970 to 2020. The main aim is to generate a history of the trade that goes substantially beyond existing literature by incorporating a business-oriented perspective and investigating how ideas of nationhood and culture interrelate with those of economics and commerce in the transition to a global marketplace. Using a combination of oral histories and archival research, the project addresses the following key questions: how has Scottish publishing developed in the past five decades, what have been its opportunities and challenges, and what is the relationship between these opportunities and challenges and the factors of conglomeration, internationalisation, and socio-political change?

The thesis traces the development of the trade by considering the impact of conglomeration, the emergence of new independent presses, and the efforts to grow and internationalise the industry. Building on detailed case studies, it narrates the history of Scottish publishing from an industry operating ‘in’ Scotland – centred in Edinburgh and Glasgow while extending its reach across the British Empire – to one reclaiming its cultural heritage and political impact by publishing books ‘for’ Scotland and, finally, to one seeking growth opportunities beyond national borders.

Overall, the study reveals the practice of cooperative competition as key in allowing the Scottish book trade to develop and withstand the political and economic turmoil of the past five decades. It emphasises the pivotal role of public subsidy in the development of publishing and examines the continued professionalisation of the trade, showcasing how the rejuvenation of the industry in the period related to ideas of publishing in national and transnational contexts.

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1. Chapter One: Introduction

This chapter introduces the project by discussing its background and aims, defining the key terms and concepts, and outlining the structure of the thesis. It considers the gap in existing scholarship that led to the development of the project in collaboration with industry partners, and provides information crucial for contextualising the study.

1.1. Background and Aims

The five decades between 1970 and 2020 were a period of dynamic change for the book publishing industry in Scotland. By the late 1960s, a new sense of cultural optimism and awareness began to take root across the country, leading to the establishment of new ventures and (re)publishing works of Scottish interest and connection. This trend was underpinned by the formation of the Scottish Arts Council as an entity separate from the Arts Council of Great Britain in 1967 – a development that, according to scholar Cairns Craig, led to ‘the devolution of culture,’ allowing publishers and cultural organisations to ‘pursue a specifically Scottish agenda’¹ rather than aim at integrating the national arts with those of the rest of the UK. By the end of the twentieth century, the combined influences of globalisation, technological development, and complex socio-political factors led to the complete transformation of the industry structure: most of the long-established companies launched in the late eighteenth and early nineteenth century were acquired by multimedia conglomerates and moved to England, replaced by a new wave of small, culturally engaged independents that often relied on public subsidy to sustain their operations. The first two decades of the twenty-first century, after the formation of the devolved Scottish Parliament in 1999, were then characterised by growing internationalisation, digitisation, and the launch of new publicly funded initiatives to nurture and promote the trade. Publishers have continued to gain notable critical and commercial success both locally and internationally, taking risks on diverse publications and launching innovative marketing campaigns in spite of limited budgets – twenty-first century Scotland is, in the words of publishing academic Alistair McCleery, ‘a nation of the book.’² Despite this

¹ Cairns Craig, *The Wealth of the Nation* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2008), 16.

² Alistair McCleery, ‘Foreword,’ in *Books in Scotland: Scottish Centre for the Book* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh Napier University, 2012), 3.

rejuvenation, however, there remain significant challenges: small independent companies, which now form the majority of the Scottish trade, face continuous sustainability issues and fierce competition from larger international players.

Despite the last five decades being a transformative period for the industry at large, there is limited literature discussing the recent history of Scottish publishing in depth. The most comprehensive volume covering this subject, *The Edinburgh History of the Book in Scotland, Volume 4: Professionalism and Diversity 1880–2000* (2007) edited by Alistair McCleery and David Finkelstein, discusses the development of the trade from 1880 to 2000, covering a broad range of areas including bookselling, library provision, and book production. More recent historical scholarship includes doctoral theses *The Saltire Society Literary Awards, 1936–2015: A Cultural History* (2016) by Stevie Marsden and *Transnational Scottish Book Marketing to a Diasporic Audience 1995–2015* (2016) by Rachel Lyn Noorda. Several articles, reports, and collections published over the last twenty years also provide valuable insights into the challenges and characteristics of Scottish publishing historically and at the time of publication. These works include *A Review of the Gaelic Publishing Sector* (EKOS, 2001), *Review of Publishing* (Sinclair, McCleery and Graham, 2004), *Thirtieth Anniversary of the Scottish Publishers Association: A Celebration* (Scottish Publishers Association, 2004), ‘Publishing in Scotland: Reviewing the Fragile Revival’ (McCleery, Sinclair and Gunn, 2008), ‘What is my country? Small nation publishing’ (McCleery and Ramdarshan Bold, 2012), *Books in Scotland* (Scottish Centre for the Book, 2012), ‘The Rights and Wrongs of Operational Practices in the Scottish Publishing Industry’ (Ramdarshan Bold, 2012), ‘Scotland and Slovenia: Making books in wee lands’ (Kovač and Squires, 2014), and *Literature and Publishing Sector Review* (Nordicity, 2015). Most of these publications, however, examine specific industry developments and practices without incorporating an in-depth historical narrative or context – a gap that this project aims to fill. The Theoretical Framework section of Chapter Two provides a more thorough discussion of available literature, situating this thesis within the interdisciplinary field of publishing studies.

In recognition of this gap in existing scholarship, this study was proposed and co-funded by the University of Stirling in collaboration with two industry partners: Publishing Scotland, the trade and network association for the Scottish book publishing sector, and HarperCollins, a global publishing conglomerate with roots in nineteenth-century Glasgow. The partnership component was a crucial element of the project, facilitating access to relevant networks and industry archives as well as providing an industrial perspective through participant observation.

Participant observation refers to the method of collecting data in which ‘the researcher is immersed in a social setting for some time in order to observe and listen with a view to gaining an appreciation of the culture of a social group.’³ As part of the industry component, I completed placements with the two partners early into the project – one day per week from January to August 2019 with Publishing Scotland, and two days per week from September 2019 to February 2020 with HarperCollins – both assisting with projects as an active member of staff and attending relevant meetings and events. The placements allowed me to become immersed in the cultures of two vastly different publishing environments, providing valuable insights into the Scottish book trade. Both organisations were also directly involved in the development of the study during the early stages, with dedicated supervisors providing industry-specific feedback.

The main aim of this thesis is to generate a history of Scottish publishing that goes substantially beyond the currently available literature by incorporating a business-oriented perspective and examining how ideas of nationhood and culture interrelate with those of economics and commerce in the transition to a global marketplace. Using a combination of oral histories, archival research, and participant observation, the thesis addresses the following key questions: how has Scottish publishing developed in the past five decades, what have been its opportunities and challenges, and what is the relationship between these opportunities and challenges and the factors of conglomeration, internationalisation, and socio-political change?

1.2. Key Definitions

This section defines the key terms and concepts referred to throughout the thesis: coopetition, globalisation, internationalisation, publisher / publishing house, Scottish publisher, small nation publishing, and SME (small and medium-sized enterprise) / publisher Tiers model. Defining these terms within the context of the study is crucial for narrowing down the focus of the research questions, specifying what this thesis refers to when discussing both publishing businesses in Scotland and broader industry concepts.

³ Alan Bryman, *Social Research Methods*, Fourth Edition (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2012), 426.

Coopetition

Discussed in more detail as part of the Theoretical Framework in Chapter Two, ‘coopetition’ is used throughout this thesis as a key term for describing the complex relationships established between new independent Scottish presses emerging from the late 1960s onwards. The term refers to the paradoxical idea of simultaneous cooperation and competition between rival businesses. As defined by Maria Bengtsson and Sören Kock, coopetition is ‘the dyadic and paradoxical relationship that emerges when two firms cooperate in some activities, such as in strategic alliance, and at the same time compete with each other in other activities.’⁴

Globalisation

When discussing the transformation of the book trade through mergers and acquisitions, this thesis refers to the process of ‘globalisation’ – defined broadly as ‘the greater interaction of the nations of the world,’ in recent decades driven by ‘information technology, multinational corporations and multilateral institutions.’⁵ As Sophia Labadi and Colin Long argue in their volume on heritage and globalisation, although both popular and academic sources tend to focus on the economic aspects of the process, globalisation has been ‘heavily imbued with ideological and cultural manifestations.’⁶ This study adopts this view, defining globalisation as the process of increased worldwide interaction and integration intrinsically linked both with politics and economics and with cultural heritage and national identity.

Internationalisation

In his book *Internationalisation and Economic Institutions*, Mark Thatcher defines ‘internationalisation’ as ‘the appearance of new or strengthened factors that put pressures on national policy makers to open up domestic markets.’⁷ Within the context of this thesis,

⁴ Maria Bengtsson and Sören Kock, “Coopetition” in Business Networks—to Cooperate and Compete Simultaneously,’ in *Industrial Marketing Management* 29 (2000), 412.

⁵ Sophia Labadi and Colin Long, ‘Introduction,’ in *Heritage and Globalisation*, eds. Sophia Labadi and Colin Long (London: Routledge, 2010).

⁶ Labadi and Long, ‘Introduction.’

⁷ Mark Thatcher, *Internationalisation and Economic Institutions: Comparing the European Experience* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2007).

internationalisation refers to the process of the Scottish book sector seeking expansion into international markets. The term is distinct from globalisation due to its focus on domestic market growth rather than on global business integration.

Publisher / Publishing House

The term ‘publisher’ can cover a broad range of individuals, companies, and organisations that engage in the production and selling of books, magazines, newspapers, audio recordings, and other content. This study applies the Publishing Scotland membership criteria to narrow this range, with ‘publisher’ defined as any trade, academic, educational, or specialist publishing company that has produced at least two written publications of a ‘professional standard,’ excluding self-published titles.⁸ ‘Publisher’ is used interchangeably throughout the thesis to refer to publishing companies meeting these criteria and to the individuals in charge of those companies. ‘Publishing house’ or ‘press’ are occasionally used as synonyms when referring to companies rather than individuals. While academic, educational, and specialist companies are mentioned throughout where there is a particular relevance to the narrative, this research focuses on trade publishers.

Scottish Publisher

As discussed in the Theoretical Framework section of Chapter Two, nationhood and national identity are complex concepts that are difficult to define without considering the many interdisciplinary theories and overlapping factors underpinning their interpretation. Within the context of this study, the term ‘Scottish publisher’ refers to the location of the company regardless of the background and publishing interests of its managing directors. This definition includes companies that operate partly outside of Scotland, as long as they maintain a Scottish-based office and strong links to the industry, for example through the Publishing Scotland membership.

⁸ ‘How to join | Publishing Scotland,’ Publishing Scotland, accessed 1 May 2022, www.publishingscotland.org/our-members/how-to-join/

Small Nation Publishing

This thesis applies the term ‘small nation publishing’ to describe the Scottish trade, particularly when examining its relation to the broader UK industry and discussing issues specific to its size and location. As Daniel Boswell notes, Scotland can be defined as a small nation both territorially and demographically, ‘through [its] land mass, domestic population and international diaspora, and also in political and economic terms.’⁹ In this study, the relative idea of a ‘small nation’ is based on this cumulative data, with the consideration of geographic, demographic, linguistic, and economic aspects. Other countries and regions that share many of the same characteristics, such as Catalonia or Slovenia, are grouped in the same category.

SME (Small and Medium-Sized Enterprise) / Publisher Tiers Model

The publishing industry in Scotland consists of almost exclusively micro, small, and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs), which the European Commission defines as ‘any entit[ies] engaged in an economic activity’ employing ‘fewer than 250 persons,’ with ‘an annual turnover not exceeding EUR 50 million, and/or an annual balance sheet total not exceeding EUR 43 million.’¹⁰ Within this category, ‘small’ enterprises are defined as entities employing fewer than 50 people and with a turnover and/or balance sheet of less than EUR 10 million, and ‘micro’ enterprises as employing fewer than 10 people with a turnover of less than EUR 2 million.¹¹ As most publishing companies in Scotland belong to the ‘micro’ category, Claire Squires and Helena Markou propose a much more detailed model of publisher ‘Tiers.’ Tier 1 includes micro businesses of turnover below £100k (‘kitchen-table’ companies that are ‘the lifeblood of the publishing industry’ in Scotland despite their numerous challenges); Tier 2 – micro businesses of £100k–£1m; Tier 3 – micro businesses of £1–£8m; and Tier 4 – small businesses of £8–

⁹ Daniel Boswell, ‘Brave Words: A Comparative Study of Small Nation Publishing: The Cases of Scotland and Catalonia,’ in *Inculturalism: Meaning and Identity*, eds. Daniel Boswell, Roger O’Shea and Efrat Tzadik (Leiden: Brill, 2013).

¹⁰ The European Commission, ‘Commission Recommendation of 6 May 2003 concerning the definition of micro, small and medium-sized enterprises,’ in *Official Journal of the European Union*, 124/36 (2003), 36–41.

¹¹ The European Commission, ‘Commission Recommendation of 6 May 2003.’

£44m.¹² Chapters Four and Five of this thesis discuss almost exclusively micro and small publishers belonging to one of the four Tiers.

1.3. Structure of the Thesis

This thesis is divided into seven chapters. Chapter One – *Introduction* has introduced the project by discussing its background, aims, and overall significance. It has also provided definitions of some of the key terms and concepts referred to throughout the study.

Chapter Two – *Theoretical Framework and Research Methodology* situates the thesis within the field of publishing studies and provides a theoretical framework underpinning the research approach. It also discusses the two key primary research methods used in this study – oral history and archival research – considering their significance and limitations.

Chapter Three – *Publishing in Scotland – From Paternalism to Mass Media* examines conglomeration and its impact on the publishing industry in Scotland from the second half of the twentieth century. To illustrate the process, the chapter includes an extended case study of William Collins / HarperCollins, divided into three main sections: William Collins before the takeover (pre-1981), the takeover process (1981–1989), and HarperCollins after the takeover (post-1989). It then discusses the overall impact of conglomeration on Scottish publishing, with examples of other companies that followed a similar trajectory.

Chapter Four – *Publishing for Scotland – The Rise of Independent Publishing* focuses on independent publishing in Scotland from around 1970 to 2020. The chapter is divided into two main sections: *The Rise of Independent Publishing*, examining the birth of new independent publishing happening parallel to the conglomeration trend discussed in Chapter Three, and *Publishing in Gaelic and Scots*, discussing companies that specialise in minority language publishing and their operations in the late twentieth- and early twenty-first century.

¹² Claire Squires and Helena Markou, 'An Ecosystem Model of Small and Medium Sized Enterprises Publisher 'Tiers': Publisher Size, Sustainability and Cultural Policy,' *Publishing Research Quarterly* 37 (2021), 420–438.

Chapter Five – *Publishing for Scotland – Case Study: Publishing Scotland* provides a detailed history of the main Scottish book trade association from 1974 to 2020, examining its background, main activities, challenges, and impact on the trade.

Chapter Six – *Publishing Beyond Scotland: Small Nation on the Global Marketplace* considers the limitations of maintaining and growing the publishing industry as a small nation operating within a broader UK economy, discussing issues such as international competition. It examines how Scottish publishing has developed its international reach in the twenty-first century, looking at literary translation, book festivals, and the role of trade organisations.

Chapter Seven – *Conclusion* summarises the findings of this study in relation to the main research questions. It also considers some of the limitations of this project and provides recommendations for future research.

As a whole, this thesis sheds light on the transformation of Scottish publishing during its rapid transition from a highly specialised, paternalistic business model to an industry embracing its national heritage, cultural impact, and international opportunities. It deepens the knowledge of the industry's challenges and opportunities, enriching the understanding of its past, present, and future and providing a foundation for further discourse.

2. Chapter Two: Theoretical Framework and Research Methodology

2.1. Theoretical Framework

This section provides a framework for the thesis, situating it within the interdisciplinary field of publishing studies and explaining the main theoretical structures that underpin the project. As Grant and Osanloo write, the theoretical framework is ‘the blueprint for the entire dissertation inquiry,’ serving as ‘the structure to define how you will philosophically, epistemologically, methodologically, and analytically approach the dissertation as a whole.’¹³ This project actively engages with previous publishing studies scholarship, both building on existing publications and using them to support original research – it is, therefore, crucial to place it within the context of the broader scholarship, demonstrating how this research contributes to and advances the field. The chapter then examines the two main theoretical structures that ‘frame’ the study – national identity and cooptation – providing a lens for understanding and defining the key areas of inquiry. The framework of national identity sheds light on how Scottish publishing responded to the cultural and socio-political changes of the period, while cooptation helps elucidate the dynamics emerging between new independent publishers discussed throughout the thesis.

2.1.1. Publishing Studies

This thesis is situated within the relatively new and ‘instinctively interdisciplinary’ field of publishing studies – one that draws, as noted by Alison Baverstock, on ‘the much older fields of Book History and Librarianship,’ as well as methodologies related to marketing and business studies, literature and critical theory, digital development, and more.¹⁴ In her influential 2007 article on book publishing research, Simone Murray notes that post-secondary education focused on the publishing industry appeared towards the end of the twentieth century as a predominantly ‘descriptive or vocational’ rather than a critical field, lacking ‘a strong sense of

¹³ Cynthia Grant and Azadeh Osanloo, ‘Understanding, selecting, and integrating a theoretical framework in dissertation research: creating the blueprint for your “house”,’ *Administrative Issues Journal: Connecting Education, Practice, and Research*, Vol. 4. (2014), 13.

¹⁴ Alison Baverstock, ‘What significance does Publishing Studies have right now?’ *Learned Publishing*. 30 June 2020.

disciplinary cohesion.¹⁵ While publishing studies as an academic field maintains strong industry links, this cohesion – or critical approach – seems to have increased in recent years, with more academic outputs and opportunities for research appearing both in the UK and internationally. Baverstock remarks that, while publishing studies ‘will probably never match longer-established disciplines for PhD recruitment’ due to its focus on producing ‘market-ready, employable students,’ there are now ‘growing opportunities for industry-based (and possibly industry-funded) research in collaboration with professional partners.’ As previously discussed, this project is both industry based and partly industry funded, developed in close collaboration with two professional partners – resulting in ‘a particular blend’ that combines ‘professional practice at the highest level with academic thinking.’¹⁶

Murray notes that, in the absence of substantial academic work, publishing studies researchers can ‘profitably mine vocational and industry-oriented discussions for quantitative data capable of supporting qualitative analyses.’¹⁷ It should be acknowledged that a lot of new academic material has been published since Murray’s 2007 remarks: in her 2021 article ‘The Luster of Studying Contemporary Publishing,’ Claire Squires observes that, despite many researchers repeating the view of publishing being an understudied field, the previous decade saw the appearance of significant new scholarship, both in the form of full-length academic volumes and journal articles.¹⁸ As an industry-focused project, this thesis utilises both vocational sources and – as discussed later – academic work. Literature review includes a number of industry reports such as *A Review of the Gaelic Publishing Sector* (EKOS, 2001), *Review of Publishing* (Sinclair, McCleery and Graham, 2004), ‘Publishing in Scotland: Reviewing the Fragile Revival’ (McCleery, Sinclair and Gunn, 2008), *Books in Scotland* (Scottish Centre for the Book, 2012), and the *Literature and Publishing Sector Review* (Nordicity, 2015). To mitigate what Murray calls ‘the chief limitation of such works from a critical publishing studies perspective,’ which is their focus on a descriptive rather than an analytical approach, data gathered from industry-oriented sources

¹⁵ Simone Murray, ‘Publishing Studies: Critically Mapping Research in Search of a Discipline,’ *Publishing Research Quarterly* 22, 3–25 (2007), 3.

¹⁶ Baverstock, ‘What significance does Publishing Studies have right now?’

¹⁷ Murray, ‘Publishing Studies: Critically Mapping Research in Search of a Discipline,’ 6.

¹⁸ Claire Squires, ‘The Luster of Studying Contemporary Publishing,’ *American Literary History*, Volume 33, Issue 2 (2021), 439–453.

is used to support the study's primary research.¹⁹ At its core, this study aims to be analytical rather than descriptive, but its strong links to industry and business practice require a continuous engagement with vocational sources.

This thesis aims to create a historical narrative of book publishing, and thus draws heavily on the book history strand of publishing studies. Recognised more broadly as an academic discipline from the second half of the twentieth century, book history is concerned with understanding 'how ideas were transmitted through print and how exposure to the printed word affected the thought and behaviour of mankind during the last five hundred years.'²⁰ Work by Robert Darnton provides an important framework for this study, with his communications circuit theory offering a model for understanding 'the way books come into being and spread through society' through a chain involving the author, publisher, printers, shippers, booksellers, and readers.²¹

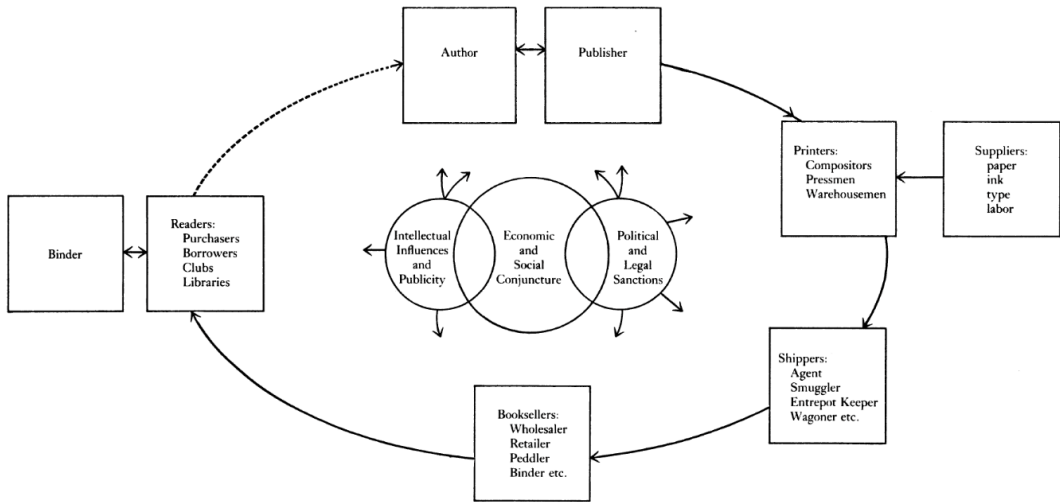


Figure 1: The Communications Circuit developed by Robert Darnton (1982).

¹⁹ Murray, 'Publishing Studies: Critically Mapping Research in Search of a Discipline.'

²⁰ Robert Darnton, 'What is the History of Books?' *Daedalus*, Vol. 111, No. 3: *Representations and Realities* (1982), 65.

²¹ Darnton, 'What is the History of Books?' 67.

Padmini Ray Murray and Claire Squires adapt Darnton's 1982 model for the twenty-first century in their 2013 article 'The Digital Publishing Communications Circuit,' noting that the way we engage with text has been 'irrevocably transformed by digital technologies.'²² The book communications circuit revised by Ray Murray and Squires demonstrates the 'radical disruptions and disintermediations that are occurring in the digital age,' acknowledging the importance of other players such as literary agents, online retailers, freelancers, and outsource agencies.²³ Fundamentally, these models emphasise the idea – adopted by this study – that books as objects (and products of the publishing process) 'do not merely recount' but influence history, and are part of an active and complex circuit full of social, political, and economic influences.²⁴

While this study uses the term 'publishing studies' to refer to book trade scholarship, it should also be noted that this designation has been criticised for its localised usage and potential lack of clarity, and that future research – including research developed outside the United Kingdom – might apply a different term. In their 2019 article, Rachel Noorda and Stevie Marsden argue that *publishing studies* is an 'unclear and underdeveloped' term that is rarely used outside of the UK and Australia, and that 'more descriptive and precise vocabulary' should be developed to describe academic research into the field. They propose *twenty-first century book studies* as a more precise term that 'encapsulate[s] the study of *recent* book history within book history more broadly';²⁵ however, a term such as *contemporary book history / studies* could also be applied to establish a model less likely to become dated in the future.

As mentioned in Chapter One, the main academic study that this project engages with and builds upon is *The Edinburgh History of the Book in Scotland, Volume 4: Professionalism and Diversity 1880–2000* (2007), edited by David Finkelstein and Alistair McCleery. As of 2023, this volume remains the most comprehensive historical account of the Scottish book trade in the twentieth century, covering subjects such as publishing infrastructure (including bookselling and library provision), production, literary culture, and readership. This thesis builds upon this influential

²² Padmini Ray Murray and Claire Squires, 'The Digital Publishing Communications Circuit.' *Book 2.0*, 3 (1) (2013), 3–24.

²³ Murray and Squires, 'The Digital Publishing Communications Circuit.'

²⁴ Darnton, 'What is the History of Books?' 81.

²⁵ Rachel Noorda and Stevie Marsden, 'Twenty-First Century Book Studies: The State of the Discipline,' in *Book History*, Volume 22 (2019), 370–397.

publishing studies research, expanding on some of its main subjects by incorporating a business-oriented perspective and discussing developments taking place over the first two decades of the twenty-first century. Additionally, an article by Alistair McCleery and Melanie Ramdarshan Bold published in the *Journal of Irish and Scottish Studies* – ‘What is my Country? Supporting Small Nation Publishing’ (2012) – provides a key theoretical framework for interrogating the distinctions between publishing ‘for Scotland’ and publishing ‘in Scotland.’ This study adopts McCleery and Ramdarshan Bold’s view that Scottish publishers can be grouped into two main categories based on their primary outputs: companies that publish *for* Scotland, embodying ‘a cultural nationalism and its literary or historiographical expression,’ and companies that publish *in* Scotland, located in the country but maintaining a more globally-oriented approach.²⁶ The thesis also engages with other academic research by Finkelstein, McCleery and Ramdarshan Bold, as well as by Daniel Boswell, Linda Gunn, Scott Hames, Stevie Marsden, Andrew Nash, Claire Squires, and other scholars who have written about Scottish and broader UK publishing and literary culture.

2.1.2. National Identity

This research examines the history of *Scottish* publishing, and thus requires a framework for understanding and defining what constitutes the Scottish national identity within the context of the study. The concepts of nationhood and national identity, as Benedict Anderson writes in his influential work *Imagined Communities* (1983), have historically been ‘notoriously difficult to define, let alone to analyse.’²⁷ In their book *National Identity, Nationalism and Constitutional Change* (2009), Frank Bechhofer and David McCrone note that national identity itself is a ‘political, sociological, cultural and psychological phenomenon,’ with each discipline bringing its own perspective that inevitably varies in ‘assumptions and approaches.’²⁸ This project adopts the theory of the nation coined by Anderson as a framework for understanding the concepts of

²⁶ Alistair McCleery and Melanie Ramdarshan Bold, ‘What is my Country? Supporting Small Nation Publishing,’ *Journal of Irish and Scottish Studies* 6 (1) (2012).

²⁷ Benedict Anderson, *Imagined Communities*, Second Edition (London: Verso, 2006), 3.

²⁸ Frank Bechhofer and David McCrone, *National Identity, Nationalism and Constitutional Change* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2009), 7–8.

nationhood and national identity. Anderson defines the nation as an ‘imagined political community’ – *imagined* because members of any nation will never know most of the other people forming it, and yet they invent a strong sense of unity and kinship with their fellow citizens.²⁹ A nation is *limited* because of its clear (if fluid) geographical boundaries, and it is ‘always conceived as a deep, horizontal comradeship’ despite the many social inequalities that exist within it, hence the word *community*. According to Anderson, underpinning this concept of the nation is the theory of print capitalism – the idea that national identity began to form as a result of printing and circulating books in the vernacular, driven by capitalist entrepreneurs who wanted to move beyond the saturated Latin-speaking markets. This process led to the development of ‘national print languages’ amongst people communicating in the same dialects, resulting in the emergence of a common discourse and thus a stronger sense of belonging to a particular nation-state.³⁰

As Michael Billig (1995) writes, having a national identity involves ‘being situated physically, legally, socially, as well as emotionally’ within a homeland that ‘itself is situated within the world of nations’³¹ – nationalism inevitably exists within an international context, with foreigners, or ‘others,’ being ‘part of the imagined universal code of nationhood.’³² Bechhofer and McCrone argue that national identity is ‘not simply a matter of individual construction and choice’ but is shaped by a number of social, political, and personal contexts, including educational systems which ‘mould people in the ways of being “national”, by forging links between identity and culture.’³³ These contexts can vary substantially even among people who share a similar set of identity markers. Although people in Scotland may ‘articulate certain common features of being Scottish,’ such as ancestry, accent, or an attachment to a particular set of cultural symbols,³⁴ their individual sense of commitment and belonging is shaped by factors including sectarianism, multilingualism, and varying attitudes towards pivotal cultural and political matters, including Scottish independence. Census data, for instance, can provide some perspective on the latter: in

²⁹ Anderson, *Imagined Communities*, 6.

³⁰ Anderson, *Imagined Communities*, 7.

³¹ Michael Billig, *Banal Nationalism* (London: SAGE Publications, 1995), 8.

³² Billig, *Banal Nationalism*, 83.

³³ Bechhofer and McCrone, *National Identity, Nationalism and Constitutional Change*, 191.

³⁴ Bechhofer and McCrone, *National Identity, Nationalism and Constitutional Change*, 89.

2011, 62.4 per cent of Scotland's population listed their national identity as 'Scottish only'; 18.3 per cent described themselves as 'Scottish and British'; and 8.4 per cent – as 'British only'.³⁵

The issue of multilingualism is also crucial to note. Language usage itself, as John E. Joseph asserts, is 'central to individual identity':

It inscribes the person within national and other corporate identities, including establishing the person's 'rank' within the identity. It constitutes a text, not just of what the person says, but of the person, from which others will read and interpret the person's identity in the richest and most complex ways.³⁶

Although predominantly English-speaking, Scotland is a nation with two distinct indigenous languages: Scottish Gaelic, which became recognised as an official language of Scotland through the Gaelic Language (Scotland) Act in 2005,³⁷ and Scots, recognised by the Scottish Government as a language rather than dialect (though without giving it an official status) in 2015.³⁸ According to census data, nearly all Gaelic and Scots speakers in Scotland can be considered multilingual: people with some Gaelic language skills represent 1.7 per cent of the population, with 0.5 per cent reporting using only Gaelic at home; around 30 per cent – or 1.5 million – can speak Scots, though only 1.1 per cent uses it at home; and 98.6 per cent of the total population speaks English.³⁹ In his article on language and national identity, Eric Hobsbawm observes that multilingualism is 'novel' as a concept: '[h]istorically, the coexistence of peoples of different languages and cultures is normal; or, rather, nothing is less common than countries inhabited exclusively by people of a single uniform language and culture.'⁴⁰ The existence of one standard national language, Hobsbawm argues, is inherently 'political and ideological,' historically becoming important only 'when ordinary citizens became an important component of the state.'⁴¹ In Scotland, over a third of the population is fluent in a national language other than the

³⁵ 'National identity,' Scotland's Census, accessed 11 June 2022, www.scotlandscensus.gov.uk/census-results/at-a-glance/national-identity/

³⁶ John Earl Joseph, *Language and Identity: National, Ethnic, Religious* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2004), 225.

³⁷ 'Languages: Gaelic – gov.scot,' Scottish Government, accessed 10 June 2022, www.gov.scot/policies/languages/gaelic/

³⁸ Scottish Government, 'Scots Language Policy,' (Scottish Government, 2015).

³⁹ 'Languages,' Scotland's Census, accessed 11 June 2022, www.scotlandscensus.gov.uk/census-results/at-a-glance/languages/

⁴⁰ Eric Hobsbawm, 'Language, Culture, and National Identity,' *Social Research*, Vol. 63, No. 4 (1996), 1065–1080.

⁴¹ Hobsbawm, 'Language, Culture, and National Identity.'

‘uniform’ English – a fact likely to impact their individual experiences of the Scottish culture and national identity.

This thesis, therefore, adopts the following framework: (1) national identity is an imagined construct, based on the limited geographical boundaries of a specific homeland; and (2) it is shaped by a complex set of social, political, and cultural influences, from ancestry and language to shared cultural contexts, and can be interpreted in various ways depending on a person’s individual background.

2.1.3. *Coopetition*

This study uses the concept of *coopetition* as a framework for understanding and defining the complex relationships between independent Scottish publishers emerging from the 1970s. As the name suggests, coopetition refers to the idea of simultaneous cooperation and competition between rival businesses.⁴² Substantial research into coopetition is a relatively recent development,⁴³ with the acceptance of the term increasing in scholarly circles throughout the last two decades⁴⁴ – historically, studies on business relationships would focus on either of the two interactions, assuming that companies ‘cooperate with one competitor and compete with another.’⁴⁵ In “‘Coopetition’ in Business Networks” published in 2000, Bengtsson and Kock define coopetition as ‘the dyadic and paradoxical relationship that emerges when two firms cooperate in some activities, such as in strategic alliance, and at the same time compete with each other in other activities.’⁴⁶

Coopetitive relationships are complex by definition, forcing the parties to navigate the paradox of ‘hostility due to conflicting interests’ on the one hand and ‘friendliness due to common

⁴² Bengtsson and Kock, “‘Coopetition’ in Business Networks—to Cooperate and Compete Simultaneously,” 412.

⁴³ Jim Crick, ‘The dark side of coopetition: when collaborating with competitors is harmful for company performance,’ *Journal of Business & Industrial Marketing*, Vol. 35 No. 2 (2020), 318–337.

⁴⁴ Maria Bengtsson, Sören Kock and Tatbeeq Raza-Ullah, ‘The coopetition paradox and tension in coopetition at multiple levels’ in *Industrial Marketing Management* (2014).

⁴⁵ Bengtsson and Kock, “‘Coopetition’ in Business Networks—to Cooperate and Compete Simultaneously,” 412.

⁴⁶ Bengtsson and Kock, “‘Coopetition’ in Business Networks—to Cooperate and Compete Simultaneously,” 412.

interests' on the other.⁴⁷ In another article published in 2014, Bengtsson, Kock and Raza-Ullah expand on their earlier study by further exploring the nature of this paradox, arguing that 'coopetition must be perceived and understood through a paradox lens':

While cooperation seeks value creation, a positive-sum game, and shared benefits, competition demands opportunistic behaviour, a zero-sum game, and private benefits (cf., Das & Teng, 2000). These opposite logics contradict each other although coopetition demands their simultaneous presence, which informs us that cooperative relationships are paradoxical.⁴⁸

In 'Benefits and Drawbacks of Coopetition,' Cygler et al. discuss three theoretical frameworks commonly used to interpret these paradoxical relationships: game theory, transaction costs theory, and the resource-based approach.⁴⁹ According to game theory, coopetition is 'a game in which the interests of the parties partially overlap,' where the competing 'players' are encouraged to apply cooperative strategies resulting in mutual benefit.⁵⁰ A well-known example illustrating game theory is the 'prisoner's dilemma' paradox. The basic model of the game assumes two hypothetical convicts who are individually presented with the option to confess to reduce their sentence. Because the prosecutors need to obtain a confession due to a lack of sufficient evidence, the most favourable outcome – that is, resulting in the lowest sentence for both parties – is for neither of the prisoners to provide a confession. Therefore, a decision that appears most beneficial individually (to confess) leads to an unfavourable result collectively, illustrating 'a conflict between individual and group rationality.'⁵¹

The transaction cost theory is based on the rationale that business owners 'structure their organizations in ways that will optimize their performance and effectiveness' – that is, a company will seek to develop a governance structure (market, hierarchical, or hybrid) that minimises transaction costs and maximises profit.⁵² As Cygler et al. write, companies might

⁴⁷ Bengtsson and Kock, "'Coopetition' in Business Networks—to Cooperate and Compete Simultaneously," 412.

⁴⁸ Bengtsson, Kock and Raza-Ullah, 'The coopetition paradox and tension in coopetition at multiple levels,' 3–4.

⁴⁹ Joanna Cygler, Włodzimierz Sroka, Marina Solesvik and Katarzyna Dębkowska, 'Benefits and Drawbacks of Coopetition: The Roles of Scope and Durability in Coopetitive Relationships,' *Sustainability* 10 (2018), 2688.

⁵⁰ Cygler, Sroka, Solesvik and Dębkowska, 'Benefits and Drawbacks of Coopetition,' 4.

⁵¹ Steven Kuhn, 'Prisoner's Dilemma,' in *The Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy*, ed. Edward N. Zalta (2019).

⁵² Suzanne Young, 'Transaction Cost Economics,' in *Encyclopedia of Corporate Social Responsibility*, eds. Samuel O. Idowu, Nicholas Capaldi, Liangrong Zu, and Ananda Das Gupta (Heidelberg: Springer Berlin, 2013).

engage in hybrid (coopetitive) relationships ‘as a response to the generation of additional transaction costs resulting from market imperfections and hierarchic structures.’⁵³

Lastly, the resource-based view assumes that access to resources is key to achieving a competitive advantage, and thus cooperating with other businesses – including rival companies – ‘may generate benefits resulting in the synergy of joint resources (which are the subject of cooperation) with the resources available to the company.’⁵⁴ Significantly, coopetitive relationships can also lead to generating new knowledge, developing innovative technologies, and gaining new skills, resulting in the joint creation of new assets in addition to sharing the ones already existing.⁵⁵ The resource-based framework is most relevant for this study, providing a model for understanding the structure and operations of companies such as Publishing Scotland and BookSource, discussed in detail in Chapter Five.

As these economic frameworks suggest, there can be numerous benefits to entering coopetitive relationships. Cygler et al. argue that the increased interest in coopetition in recent years is the result of the growing market complexity and competitiveness – in sectors particularly affected by globalisation, hyper competition, and/or technological change, developing coopetitive relationships can become the best or only way of achieving sustainability. One of the main benefits of coopetition, as outlined above, is the possibility to maximise profits by accessing and creating valuable resources that are otherwise unavailable or difficult to obtain.⁵⁶ These can include both tangible and intangible assets, such as expensive equipment that can be borrowed from a rival company, but also new knowledge, experience, and industry information.⁵⁷ Coopetition can also allow smaller businesses to ‘achieve economies of scale’ in an increasingly globalised market dominated by conglomerates, and lead to a more dynamic company development.⁵⁸

⁵³ Cygler, Sroka, Solesvik and Dębkowska, ‘Benefits and Drawbacks of Coopetition,’ 4.

⁵⁴ Cygler, Sroka, Solesvik and Dębkowska, ‘Benefits and Drawbacks of Coopetition,’ 4.

⁵⁵ Cygler, Sroka, Solesvik and Dębkowska, ‘Benefits and Drawbacks of Coopetition.’

⁵⁶ Cygler, Sroka, Solesvik and Dębkowska, ‘Benefits and Drawbacks of Coopetition.’

⁵⁷ Crick, ‘The dark side of coopetition.’

⁵⁸ Cygler, Sroka, Solesvik and Dębkowska, ‘Benefits and Drawbacks of Coopetition.’

However, as Crick argues in ‘The dark side of coopetition,’ collaborating with competitors is associated with significant drawbacks, and it can be difficult for rival companies to find a balance between ‘too little’ and ‘too much’ involvement in coopetitive relationships. With ‘too little’ coopetition, companies might be unable to access sufficient assets to make the relationship add any significant value; with ‘too much,’ the involved parties risk ‘creating inter-firm tensions with their competitors, potentially being exploited for their resources and capabilities, and losing the ability to be customer-focused’ – with important information shared with competitors resulting in ‘dilut[ing] their competitive advantages.’⁵⁹ As Cygler et al. cite, some publications have used the expression ‘sleeping with the enemy’ when describing coopetitive relationships, referring to the low level of trust and possible unethical behaviour stemming from the involved parties ultimately prioritising their individual interests.⁶⁰

As established in the following chapters, publishing is an industry particularly affected by globalisation, hyper competition, and technological advancement – i.e., all factors noted by Cygler et al. as contributing to the increased interest in coopetition. John B. Thompson touches on this idea in his book *Merchants of Culture* (2012), where he discusses the *economy of favours* – the idea that some independent publishers, believing that they fulfil a shared cultural mission that stands in opposition to their corporate competitors, are eager to support one another by providing recommendations, sharing knowledge, and even revealing sales figures.⁶¹ Within Scottish publishing research, a significant mention of coopetitive relationships appears in a 2014 study ‘Scotland and Slovenia: Making books in wee lands’ by Squires and Kovač. The report discusses the practice of ‘cooperative competition’ allowing Scottish independents to decrease overhead costs and focus on their core publishing activities by forming close business partnerships with their competitors:

When asked whether outsourcing sales representation (and hence most sales data) to a company owned by another publishing house could be seen as putting key business data in the hands of a competitor, one interviewee responded that the whole thing did not work that way and that the Faber Factory group was

⁵⁹ Crick, ‘The dark side of coopetition,’ 32.

⁶⁰ Cygler, Sroka, Solesvik and Dębkowska, ‘Benefits and Drawbacks of Coopetition.’

⁶¹ John B. Thompson, *Merchants of Culture: The Publishing Business in the Twenty-First Century*, Second Edition, (Cambridge: Polity Press, 2012).

‘connected almost as a family’, in that members shared experience and knowledge even in such competitive areas as marketing and cover design.⁶²

Squires and Kovač’s findings indicate that Scottish businesses routinely engage in cooperative relationships in areas such as warehousing, sales, distribution, and ebook conversion, all in addition to the more commonly outsourced services such as copy-editing and design. Significantly, when comparing these practices to another small nation industry in Slovenia, the authors found no evidence of similar levels of business-to-business cooperation – although Slovene publishers ‘commented that such cooperation could be very beneficial,’ most companies organised their own warehousing, sales, and distribution.⁶³

The theory of coopetition serves as a crucial framework underpinning the history of independent Scottish publishing examined in Chapters Four and Five. It provides a model for understanding the complex and evolving relationships that emerged between new Scottish companies and allowed them to gain a competitive advantage on an increasingly globalised and London-centred market. In particular, coopetition frames the history of trade and network association Publishing Scotland, covered as one of the two main case studies in this thesis, and its subsidiary distribution company BookSource.

2.1.4. Theoretical Framework: Summary

This section has framed the thesis by demonstrating its engagement with the broader academic field of publishing studies, establishing its approach of combining academic and vocational sources to both engage with contemporary research and gain an industry-focused perspective. It has acknowledged the interdisciplinary nature of the field and its growing body of research, providing a brief overview of the work consulted for the study. Establishing the Scottish context of the project, the section also explored and acknowledged the complexity of national identity with its varied social, political, and cultural influences, and introduced the concept of coopetition as a framework for understanding the complex relationships between the companies discussed

⁶² Miha Kovač and Claire Squires, ‘Scotland and Slovenia: Making books in wee lands,’ *LOGOS* 25/4 (2014).

⁶³ Kovač and Squires, ‘Scotland and Slovenia: Making books in wee lands,’ 14.

in the thesis. The next section of the chapter examines the research methodology employed in this study, outlining the steps taken to collect and analyse data.

2.2. Research Methodology

This thesis uses a multimethod qualitative research design, combining three different methods of collecting primary data: oral history and archival research, with elements of participant observation. As summarised by Nanna Mik-Meyer, the multimethod qualitative approach can ‘strengthen the quality of the research’ by incorporating different angles, creating a more nuanced and ‘richer’ narrative that provides a deeper understanding of the issue on hand.⁶⁴ This study uses multiple methods to ‘collect as many voices and features from the participants’ social worlds as possible,’ leading to a more holistic and multifaceted analysis.⁶⁵ This approach was also helpful in mitigating some of the research limitations, such as the risk of bias and fallibility – incorporating multiple methods allowed to seek confirmation of data in various places, without relying on a single source to report vital information. The following sections examine the two main methods of qualitative research used in this study – oral history and archival research – including details on their application throughout the thesis and acknowledgment of their individual challenges and limitations. Applied in this thesis to a less considerable extent, participant observation research – conducted through the industry placement component of the project – is discussed in Chapter One.

2.2.1. Oral History

A key research method used for collecting data for this study was oral history in the form of semi-structured interviews. Sometimes used interchangeably with ‘personal-testimony’ or ‘life-story research,’ oral history refers to the process of obtaining information about the recent past by conducting interviews with people who had lived through and can share first-hand experience of historical events.⁶⁶ The term can also mean the narrative result of that process,

⁶⁴ Nanna Mik-Meyer, ‘Multimethod qualitative research,’ *Qualitative Research*, ed. David Silverman (London: SAGE Publications, 2020), 357–374.

⁶⁵ Mik-Meyer, ‘Multimethod qualitative research,’ 367.

⁶⁶ Lynn Abrams, *Oral History Theory*, Second Edition (London and New York: Routledge, 2016).

incorporating ‘both the practice and the output.’⁶⁷ Due to its broad use in a variety of academic and professional disciplines, the term is sometimes applied to almost any qualitative research involving interviews; however, oral history is distinctive in its focus on remembering and reconstructing past events.⁶⁸ As a method of collecting data, oral history can ‘give back to the people who made and experienced history, through their own words, a central place’ and thus allow for a fairer, multidimensional recreation of the past that opens up ‘important new areas of inquiry.’⁶⁹

For a study aiming to provide a historical narrative of publishing, oral histories are invaluable. They capture the mood that prevailed in the industry and help examine the impact of socio-political circumstances, revealing the motivations behind certain business activities and decisions. In *The Voice of the Past*, Thompson quotes French historian Jules Michelet to illustrate the importance of using oral evidence alongside official documentation:

When I say *oral* tradition, I mean *national* tradition, which remained generally scattered in the mouths of the people, which everybody said and repeated.⁷⁰

Collecting memories, anecdotes, and personal views is a means of recreating this national tradition, providing insights into what people thought and how they felt about their environment – what ‘everybody said and repeated’ and, as a result, what could have driven certain business trends. Significantly, oral histories conducted for this project also preserve the memories and experiences of people who were central to the development of the industry but are no longer actively involved in it nor have had their voices captured in previous historical narratives. One of the key elements of this study was collecting these voices for the benefit of future research – an aspect listed as particularly important by the industry partners during early project meetings. In particular, five oral histories conducted with past William Collins / HarperCollins employees are now part of the official HarperCollins archive, in addition to being used in this research.

⁶⁷ Abrams, *Oral History Theory*, 2.

⁶⁸ Abrams, *Oral History Theory*.

⁶⁹ Paul Thompson, *The Voice of the Past: Oral History*, Third Edition (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000), 2–6.

⁷⁰ Jules Michelet qtd. in Thompson, *The Voice of the Past: Oral History*, 2.

This study incorporates oral history research in the form of semi-structured interviews. While using a predefined set of questions, the semi-structured format keeps the interview open enough to allow for new ideas to emerge. As Bryman discusses in *Social Research Methods*, in contrast to the more rigid framework of a structured approach, a researcher applying the semi-structured format ‘can keep more of an open mind about the contours of what he or she needs to know about, so that concepts and theories can emerge out of the data.’⁷¹ Following approval by the General University Ethics Panel in December 2018, I conducted and transcribed twenty-nine semi-structured interviews with thirty participants from January 2019 to May 2021, either face-to-face or – once impossible due to coronavirus restrictions – using online video conferencing platforms. Interviews lasted, on average, 55 minutes each – typically from around 50 to 70 minutes, with the shortest lasting 21 minutes and the longest one hour and 28 minutes. One participant was interviewed twice, with each oral history lasting approximately one hour; two interviews involved two participants (involved in the same company) being interviewed together; and one interview was conducted via email due to the interviewee’s preference. Predefined questions covered the professional background of an interviewee and his or her reasons for entering the industry; experiences and memories of being involved in Scottish publishing; perceived challenges and successes; as well as, depending on the participant’s individual experience, personal views on the more specific areas relevant to the project, such as the impact of conglomeration, the support of trade organisations, or approach to supporting Scottish-interest publishing.

Interviewees were selected using the purposive sampling method, based on an initial list of individuals involved in Scottish publishing over the previous five decades, developed in collaboration with the two academic and two industry supervisors. All participants had to have a significant connection to companies or offices based in Scotland, as well as meeting at least one of the following two criteria: a long-term, high-level managerial position allowing substantial insight into business operations (such as chief executive, managing director, or department director / manager), held at the time of the interview or in the past; and / or at least twenty years of experience in the sector. Both the length and scope of industry experience were significant factors in choosing the pool of participants, with the resulting oral histories

⁷¹ Bryman, *Social Research Methods*, 12.

representing independent publishers, corporate branches, trade organisations, and literary agencies. Due to their long-term and varied careers in the sector, twelve interviewees were also able to provide insights into more than one company or organisation. Some participants were open to discussing their background in detail and providing anecdotes that captured the general mood of the industry, whereas others preferred to discuss specific business issues that they had observed over the course of their careers. Both outcomes provided useful data for analysis. The semi-structured approach allowed for developing a multidimensional perspective, with new ‘important new areas of inquiry’⁷² emerging over the course of the interviews. For instance, the impact of public funding on the development of the industry had not been specified in the initial project proposal and was instead included in response to the issues arising during oral histories.

This project uses oral history research with the awareness of the limitations of the method. Bias, omission, and fallibility are inherent to working with memories and personal opinions. These issues are not exclusive to oral history: as Thompson discusses in *The Voice of the Past*, most historical sources – such as letters, social statistics, photographs, or company records – can be carefully constructed, shaped by social influence, and / or based on contemporary interviews, and thus subject to the same limitations.⁷³ As much in oral history as in any other historical research method, researchers should follow the same basic guidelines for examining evidence: ‘to look for internal consistency, to seek confirmation in other sources, and to be aware of potential bias.’⁷⁴ This project analyses oral history narratives with the awareness that bias, omission, and fallibility can be present, and thus includes a variety of views and incorporates other sources to verify facts.

Another limitation associated with oral history research for this study was the substantial amendments and redactions introduced after the interviews had been conducted and transcribed. In line with the ethics application, participants were given the opportunity to review the full transcript of their interview and request changes if needed. Fourteen interviewees requested amendments, which, in some cases, included substantial redactions of potentially useful content relating to sensitive or controversial topics, such as public funding policies or

⁷² Thompson, *The Voice of the Past: Oral History*, 6.

⁷³ Thompson, *The Voice of the Past: Oral History*.

⁷⁴ Thompson, *The Voice of the Past: Oral History*, 119.

views on Scottish independence. Additionally, five interviews conducted in partnership with HarperCollins were subject to approval by the company, and most data relating to the company takeover was redacted. In some instances, I was able to negotiate the use of paraphrased or anonymised data from the redactions, but some potentially useful content had to be redacted to ensure an ethical approach.

2.2.2. Archival Research

In addition to oral history, this study uses data extracted from two publishing archives: the Publishing Scotland collection located at the University of Dundee and the HarperCollins archive based in Bishopbriggs. As noted in Chapter One, this research was developed by the University of Stirling in partnership with Publishing Scotland and HarperCollins. The collaborative nature of the project enabled me to work with relevant archival material, which in other circumstances requires permission to access, whilst also engaging in participant observation during the doctoral placement components. The historical documents used to support and extend this study include marketing materials (such as catalogues, brochures, and illustrations), internal business documents (including meeting minutes, memorandums, and annual reports), news clippings, photographs, and correspondence. These materials have been referenced throughout the thesis by providing – if available / applicable – an archives box and folder number, document title, and date.

As Glenn and Enoch write in *Working in the Archives*, ‘the formulation of the project and concomitant research agenda’ is the first step in archival work: rather than look for a project in an archive, most researchers begin from identifying a ‘broad research question’ and considering what kind of documents would ‘support, extend, further, and energize the project.’⁷⁵ To ensure a well-structured approach to engaging with the archives, I began by identifying two broad research questions: for the Publishing Scotland collection, how has the organisation developed throughout its history and what have been its main projects and activities?; and, for the HarperCollins archive, what were the company’s main business activities between 1960 and

⁷⁵ Cheryl Glenn and Jessica Enoch, ‘Invigorating Historiographic Practices in Rhetoric and Composition Studies,’ in *Working in the Archives*, eds. Alexis E. Ramsey, Wendy B. Sharer, Barbara L'Eplattenier, and Lisa S. Mastrangelo (Carbondale: Southern Illinois University Press, 2010), 13.

1990, and how is the News Corporation takeover narrated in some of the documents produced at the time? This approach helped focus archival research and select relevant material, particularly while engaging with inconsistently catalogued content – a challenge discussed later in this section.

I worked in the Publishing Scotland archive approximately once per week from June to September 2019, reconstructing the history of the organisation and collecting objects for an external digital exhibition project.⁷⁶ Due to the relatively small size of the collection, I was able to examine every box in the archive within that timeframe, assessing its relevance for the project and taking digital records of potentially useful objects. From September 2019 to February 2020, I conducted research in the HarperCollins archive as part of my doctoral placement agreement, working twice a week to a total of 40 days. The longer timeframe was necessary due to the size of the collection, which consists of over 80,000 books from mid-1800s to the 1990s, around 9,000 boxes of semi-current and historical records, and approximately 5,000 artwork pieces.⁷⁷

The main challenge associated with archival research for this study was the lack of reliable catalogues. This issue was particularly prominent in the HarperCollins archive, where documents relevant for this study were stored exclusively in uncatalogued boxes with miscellaneous content. During my placement, my main responsibilities included cataloguing collections for the benefit of future researchers whilst also assessing their relevance for the project. Due to the lack of catalogues or descriptions, a significant part of the content I worked with proved unrelated to the study; at the same time, however, I was able to uncover documents that discussed relevant topics and had not been previously accessed by researchers. As a result of this work, all HarperCollins materials used in the thesis can now be located in the archive by using the referenced box names and numbers. The Publishing Scotland archive presented a similar issue; however, the boxes did include brief descriptions of content, and the issue was manageable thanks to the significantly smaller size of the collection.

⁷⁶ Referring to the digital exhibition project 'Forty-Five Years of Publishing Scotland,' launched in October 2019. Funded by the Scottish Graduate School for Arts and Humanities through its Scottish Universities Research Collections Associate Scheme (SURCAS), the exhibition used archival objects to present the history of the organisation in an accessible format, supplementing it with photographs, illustrations, archived documents, and audio files. It was available until October 2021.

⁷⁷ Dawn Sinclair, 'Chronicle the past, and the future,' *The Bookseller*, April 2020.

As McKee and Porter write in ‘The Ethics of Archival Research,’ researchers should also be aware of any ethical issues that might arise from engaging with historical documents – and, consequently, of their own ‘ethical responsibilities to individuals and communities represented in the archives’:

And yet, in a way, those papers are also people. Whether the archive is a well-organized, curated collection or merely a jumble of papers, the people and the communities it represents are embodied as a living presence in the materials.⁷⁸

The authors go on to assert that ‘ethically aware reflection is necessary throughout the process,’ from the initial assessment of research motives to the questions about public / private lives and communications.⁷⁹ I engaged with these ethical questions throughout the research process, assessing each historical document individually. For instance, news clippings, marketing materials, and previously released photographs were deemed fully useable due to being previously published and distributed to the public. In contrast, documents such as meeting minutes or correspondence were included with greater care, with each material assessed individually due to its potential confidentiality or sensitive nature. In addition, the use of the selected documents was approved by company representatives.

It should also be acknowledged that a substantial portion of this project was completed during the coronavirus pandemic, which limited my access to some archival data. While I was able to work in the two archival collections as planned, the prolonged closures and restrictions hindered my ability to access the publishing archives located at the National Library of Scotland. This collection contains historical documents from companies such as Bartholomew, Canongate Books, and Chambers, and could have provided valuable information to complement the study. However, these resources became unavailable from March 2020 onwards, forcing me to adjust my research plan and proceed with writing up my findings without this additional data.

⁷⁸ Heidi A. McKee and James E. Porter, ‘The Ethics of Archival Research,’ *College Composition and Communication* Vol. 64, No. 1, Research Methodologies (2012), 60–61.

⁷⁹ McKee and Porter, ‘The Ethics of Archival Research,’ 69.

2.2.3. Research Methodology: Summary

This section examined the research approach employed in the thesis, looking at how the two main methods – oral history and archival research – allowed me to address the research questions in a comprehensive and multifaceted way. The use of oral history in the form of semi-structured interviews was instrumental in capturing the first-hand experiences and perspectives of individuals who had lived through pivotal moments in the industry, providing valuable insights into both the changes they had witnessed over time and their challenges and successes as publishing professionals. Archival research played a crucial role in supplementing the interview data, with a wide range of historical documents from the Publishing Scotland and HarperCollins archives assisting in developing a more comprehensive narrative. While not as substantial as the two main methods, the participant observation component – discussed in Chapter One – also provided an opportunity to gain a deeper understanding of the industry's culture, practices, and values.

2.3. Conclusion

This chapter has situated the thesis within the interdisciplinary field of publishing studies, looking in more detail at how this project engages with and builds upon both academic and vocational literature. It has examined the concepts of national identity and cooptation as the two main theoretical frameworks that provide a context for understanding the complex business relationships and industry trends discussed throughout the study. Other relevant concepts and theories more specific to individual chapters or chapter sections, such as internationalisation or paternalism, are outlined in Chapter One or discussed in the relevant sections of the thesis.

The chapter has also discussed the two main research methods used to collect and analyse primary data, examining their use within the project and acknowledging their individual challenges and limitations. As previously discussed, the multimethod approach was applied both to create a more nuanced narrative and to mitigate some of these limitations, ensuring that the historical account emerging from the findings is supported by a variety of sources. Some quantitative research methods are used occasionally throughout the study to support or engage with the qualitative data, particularly when the latter relates to measurable information such as book sales – however, the thesis remains focused on constructing a historical narrative based on oral histories and archives, with elements of participant observation.

3. Chapter Three: Publishing in Scotland – From Paternalism to Mass Media

This chapter examines the impact of the conglomeration trend that began to transform the publishing industry from the late 1960s, leading to mergers and acquisitions that by the start of the twenty-first century would completely change the structure of the Scottish book trade. As a whole, the chapter has two aims: firstly, by providing a historical overview of the industry and the background of the conglomeration trend, it establishes the context for the remainder of the thesis; and secondly, it builds upon existing scholarship by applying an extended case study approach to provide a Scottish-focused perspective on the conglomeration process. Using a combination of oral history and archival data, it recreates the late twentieth-century history of William Collins / HarperCollins, examining its transition from an established family-owned business to a global multimedia corporation.

In particular, the chapter adds to scholarship by incorporating the previously unpublished perspective of William Janson ‘Jan’ Collins, the last member of the family to chair the business, as well as a series of oral histories with long-standing William Collins / HarperCollins employees. The existing histories of the Collins takeover – detailed in section 3.3.2 of the thesis – focus on board-level changes, with little attention dedicated to the impact of those changes on the publishing operation and employment in Scotland. For the oral histories, the participants were selected for the length but also scope of their experience, as well as their connection with the Scottish side of the business. The interviewees include John McGeachan and Catherine McGeachan, factory employees at the Collins bindery from the late 1950s; Heather Gallacher, who worked in the Glasgow stationery department and facilities area from 1967 to 2016, assisting various directors; Donald Ralston, a management-level employee in the atlas and geography department from 1972 to 2017; and Jim Neilson, a customer service and export manager employed by the company from 1976 to 2018. All participants were based primarily in Glasgow and witnessed the transition of the company from an independent family business to a corporate subsidiary in 1989. Incorporating their views offers an additional perspective on the takeover, from the point of view of ‘regular’ employees experiencing changes to the way the company operated.

History of Publishing in Scotland: An Overview provides a brief outline of the Scottish book trade in the nineteenth and early twentieth century, establishing the context for the publishing companies discussed in the chapter. *Publishing Conglomeration: Context and Background* draws on available literature to discuss the background of the global conglomeration trend. The case study

is then divided into three chronological sections. *The Benevolent Leaders: William Collins pre-1979* examines the late twentieth-century history of the company prior to its takeover by News Corporation; *The Takeover Process: William Collins 1979–1989* discusses the context of the takeover and the two News Corporation bids leading to the formation of HarperCollins; and *The Publishing Conglomerate: HarperCollins post-1989* considers the company after the takeover. The concluding section looks at how the history of William Collins relates to some of the other long-established Scottish businesses that followed a similar trajectory.

3.1. History of Publishing in Scotland: An Overview

While the history of book publishing in Scotland can be traced back to the medieval and early modern times, Stephen W. Brown and Warren McDougall note in their historical study that the status and significance of the industry began to markedly increase by the end of the eighteenth century. Between 1740 and 1760, book trade workforce in Scotland constituted only three per cent of labourers in Edinburgh and one per cent in Glasgow; however, by the end of the century these percentages ‘would increase significantly,’ with the book industry – still concentrated in the two cities – becoming ‘a fundamental part of Scotland’s commercial coming of age’:

Glasgow and Edinburgh became hubs of publishing during the second half of the [eighteenth] century, with a commercial reach throughout Scotland and England, in Ireland, across the Atlantic, and in continental Europe . . . Owning copyrights, paying to secure Scottish authors at Scottish presses, gaining London partners and selling quality, competitive reprints at home and abroad were activities that brought some publishers wealth on a London scale.⁸⁰

After this rapid expansion of the late eighteenth and early nineteenth century, which saw the emergence of publishers like Oliver & Boyd, William Blackwood, Blackie & Son, Thomas Nelson, and William Collins, Scottish publishing entered a period of ‘consolidation and steady development’ between 1830 and 1880.⁸¹ As David Finkelstein writes, publishing companies ‘tended to be dynastic in nature, run by close-knit families who passed on responsibilities and

⁸⁰ Stephen W. Brown and Warren McDougall, ‘Introduction,’ in *The Edinburgh History of the Book in Scotland, Volume 2: Enlightenment and Expansion 1707–1800*, eds. Stephen W. Brown and Warren McDougall (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2011), 7.

⁸¹ David Finkelstein, ‘Publishing 1830–80,’ in *The Edinburgh History of the Book in Scotland, Volume 3: Ambition and Industry 1800–1880*, ed. Bill Bell (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2007), 96.

expectations to succeeding generations.⁸² Significantly, although they maintained their head offices in Scotland, many publishers would become increasingly focused on outward expansion, benefitting from Britain's ties to the imperial markets – Finkelstein observes that, by the early twentieth century, it was 'common to find most overseas libraries stocked with texts published by Scottish firms.'⁸³ As Bill Bell argues, 'it had become difficult to speak in terms of a separate Scottish book trade':

not only because of the permeation of the London trade by Scots, but because printers and publishers throughout Britain were coming to compete for the same expanding market . . . Like other entrepreneurs, Scottish publishers were capable of playing the British card when it was financially astute to do so.⁸⁴

Interlinked with the broader social and cultural trends, including urbanisation and improved literacy, the nineteenth century also brought revolutionary technological advances that would completely transform nearly every aspect of the trade. By 1880, the traditional methods of book production were becoming 'barely recognisable,' with innovations such as iron presses and steam printing changing the Scottish book trade from a 'cottage industry' to a 'large-scale manufacturing process.'⁸⁵ Bell observes that these developments led to a rapid increase in the number of people employed in Scotland's publishing and printing: by the second half of the century, 'an average of 26 per cent more of the nation's workforce was employed in the print and allied trades than in England and Wales.'⁸⁶ New, increasingly efficient communication networks also modernised and expanded book distribution, and publishing itself became recognised as a distinct industry in its own right rather than an activity grouped together with printing and bookselling. Peter Garside notes that, with Edinburgh becoming 'a major producer of books, issuing a variety of high-profile titles,' the term 'publisher' would be used more often 'to describe the activities of larger concerns and their increasingly promotional emphasis.'⁸⁷

⁸² Finkelstein, 'Publishing 1830–80.'

⁸³ Finkelstein, 'Publishing 1830–80,' 103.

⁸⁴ Bill Bell, 'Introduction,' in *The Edinburgh History of the Book in Scotland, Volume 3: Ambition and Industry 1800–1880*, ed. Bill Bell (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2007), 11.

⁸⁵ Bell, 'Introduction,' 2.

⁸⁶ Bell, 'Introduction,' 2.

⁸⁷ Peter Garside, 'Publishing 1800–30,' in *The Edinburgh History of the Book in Scotland, Volume 3: Ambition and Industry 1800–1880*, ed. Bill Bell (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2007), 79.

These revolutionary developments and rapid expansion meant that Scottish publishing entered the twentieth century as a well-established economic force, integrated into overseas markets and dominated by large-scale paternalistic businesses that often encompassed all aspects of book acquisition, production, and distribution. As established in *The Edinburgh History of the Book in Scotland, Volume 4*, the period was characterised by the increasing professionalisation of the ‘structural, vocational and organisational’⁸⁸ aspects of the book trade: between the 1890s and 1920s, new professional organisations had emerged to ‘safeguard and represent the interests of various sectors of publishing and printing,’ including the Society of Authors, the Publishers Association, and the Scottish Booksellers Association.⁸⁹ The global industry also became more standardised and regulated through international copyright treaties.⁹⁰

However, alongside this worldwide professionalisation of the book trade, the twentieth century also brought increasing competition in the form of mass media entertainment. At the beginning of the century, cinema and radio were still emerging industries that had little knock-on effect on the well-established book trade – in the next few decades, however, they would quickly develop into profound economic forces competing for the ‘leisure time and money’ of Scottish audiences.⁹¹ As discussed later in this chapter, these developments meant that by the second half of the century a growing number of companies began to consider ways to increase their market share by becoming multimedia corporations, with book publishing sitting alongside other forms of media.

The economic impact of the two world wars is also crucial to note: while the wars saw a ‘captive British audience’ looking for ‘more printed material to occupy, entertain and educate,’ wartime

⁸⁸ David Finkelstein and Alistair McCleery, ‘The Publishing Infrastructure: 1880–1980. Overview,’ in *The Edinburgh History of the Book in Scotland, Volume 4: Professionalism and Diversity 1880–2000*, eds. David Finkelstein and Alistair McCleery (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2007), 13.

⁸⁹ David Finkelstein, ‘The Professionalisation of Publishing,’ in *The Edinburgh History of the Book in Scotland, Volume 4: Professionalism and Diversity 1880–2000*, eds. David Finkelstein and Alistair McCleery (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2007), 31.

⁹⁰ Finkelstein, ‘The Professionalisation of Publishing.’

⁹¹ Richard Butt, ‘The Competitors,’ in *The Edinburgh History of the Book in Scotland, Volume 4: Professionalism and Diversity 1880–2000*, eds. David Finkelstein and Alistair McCleery (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2007), 16.

rationing and the loss of skilled workforce put a strain on book production across the country.⁹² Domestic production levels dropped significantly during the economic depression of the 1920s and 1930s, and the Second World War also saw a substantial decline in Scottish manufacture due to German bombings of important industrial centres.⁹³

As a result of these developments and external pressures, Scottish publishing entered the second half of the twentieth century as an increasingly unstable industry: standardised by international treaties and with a strong presence in overseas markets, but also facing increasing mass media competition, technological disruption, and volatile economic conditions. This combination, as examined in the next section, created a foundation that within a couple of decades would lead to a complete transformation of the trade through takeovers and consolidations.

3.2. Publishing Conglomeration: Context and Background

Although mergers, acquisitions, and takeovers have ‘shaped many an industry’ in the twentieth century, what Eric de Bellaigue considers characteristic of book publishing is how this process has been consistently sustained since it began in the 1960s.⁹⁴ In his work *British Book Publishing as a Business since the 1960s*, he recognises several phases of book trade conglomeration. The first one, lasting from the 1960s until the early 1970s, saw the mergers of major communications groups with publishing houses – UK-based examples of this phase included London Weekend Television acquiring Hutchinson, and Granada taking over MacGibbon & Kee, Rupert Hart-Davis, and Panther. This trend proved largely unsuccessful, with issues emerging due to the ‘gulf in management styles between broadcasting executives and hardware manufacturers on the one hand and the creators of intellectual properties on the other.’⁹⁵

⁹² David Finkelstein and Alistair McCleery, ‘Introduction,’ in *The Edinburgh History of the Book in Scotland, Volume 4: Professionalism and Diversity 1880–2000*, eds. David Finkelstein and Alistair McCleery (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2007), 7.

⁹³ Finkelstein and McCleery, ‘Introduction.’

⁹⁴ Eric de Bellaigue, *British Book Publishing as a Business since the 1960s* (London: The British Library, 2004), 3.

⁹⁵ De Bellaigue, *British Book Publishing as a Business since the 1960s*.

The second phase was predominantly the result of an increased interest of North American companies in extending their reach into the United Kingdom, where they already had the advantage of cultural and linguistic similarities. This trend involved, for instance, the Canadian Thomson Organization acquiring Thomas Nelson, Michael Joseph, and Hamish Hamilton. After that, the mid-1970s saw the deregulation of markets that led to buyouts and acquisitions primarily in the US; the process of publishers being taken over by larger corporations then continued ‘at a somewhat less rapid pace’ throughout the 1990s.⁹⁶ In *The Business of Books*, published in 2000, André Schiffrin writes about ‘hardly a week go[ing] by without a new takeover or amalgamation,’ citing the ten largest publishers in the US owning 75 per cent of book sales revenue in 1999.⁹⁷ As John Feather writes in *A History of British Publishing*, by the same year in the UK ‘many of the familiar historic names of British publishing’ had already become ‘merely “imprints” which served the purpose of a mega-corporation’ – if they survived at all.⁹⁸

While examining the late twentieth-century conglomeration patterns, de Bellaigue provides several reasons for publishing mergers and acquisitions. Geographic and linguistic diversification is one: in post-war Britain, exports and local publishing imprints served as a way to ‘escap[e] the limitations of [the] economy.’⁹⁹ Some international publishers were also looking to expand their operations into the English language, with prominent examples including French-based Hachette acquiring Grolier in 1988 and Orion in 1998. Market share, ‘perhaps the most cited justification in company acquisitions,’¹⁰⁰ grew in significance alongside the developments in sales measurement – and acquiring new firms could instantly increase a company’s share of the market.

What is also important to consider, however, is other media activity rapidly developing alongside book and magazine publishing. As Feather observes, anything that affects ‘the commercial provision of leisure activities and services’ has an impact on publishing, from the development

⁹⁶ De Bellaigue, *British Book Publishing as a Business since the 1960s*, 4.

⁹⁷ André Schiffrin, *The Business of Books* (London and New York: Verso, 2000), 2.

⁹⁸ John Feather, *A History of British Publishing*, Second Edition (London and New York: Routledge, 2006).

⁹⁹ De Bellaigue, *British Book Publishing as a Business since the 1960s*, 5.

¹⁰⁰ De Bellaigue, *British Book Publishing as a Business since the 1960s*, 6.

of the cinema and broadcasting to the post-war evolution of television services.¹⁰¹ In the second half of the twentieth century, television – which emerged as a mass medium in 1953 – became one of the main competitors for trade and magazine publishing. By 1970, it was a universal and widely accessible form of entertainment, with 23 per cent of the adult population in Britain citing it as their ‘chief leisure occupation,’ as opposed to five per cent of men and nine per cent of women stating the same about books.¹⁰² Television was ‘one dimension of profound social change,’ with people in Britain turning to it ‘for the entertainment which had once come from popular magazines and perhaps even from reading the classics.’¹⁰³ De Bellaigue argues, therefore, that beneath both diversification and market share was often the broader ambition to create diverse multimedia companies: large corporations where various creative industries such as television, film, and music sit alongside book publishing, under management of international media proprietors looking to expand their control.¹⁰⁴

As Andrew Nash discusses in ‘The Changing Face of the Publishing House,’ Scotland was in that respect no different from the rest of Britain, with its publishing houses being subject to the same trend of moving away from independent family ownership and becoming subsidiaries of multimedia corporations.¹⁰⁵ In fact, as Alistair McCleery writes in *The Oxford Handbook of Publishing*, the histories of Edinburgh companies Thomas Nelson and William Collins show an ‘almost identical genetic pattern’ to that of Harper & Row – a New York publisher established by the Harper brothers in 1817 that now belongs to News Corporation, the mass media company owned by proprietor Rupert Murdoch.¹⁰⁶ What is interesting to consider in Scotland, however, is that the process of conglomeration would often move the executive power of the acquired businesses to London, effectively blurring the lines between ‘Scottish’ and London

¹⁰¹ Feather, *A History of British Publishing*, 200.

¹⁰² Feather, *A History of British Publishing*, 201.

¹⁰³ Feather, *A History of British Publishing*, 201.

¹⁰⁴ De Bellaigue, *British Book Publishing as a Business since the 1960s*.

¹⁰⁵ Andrew Nash, ‘The Changing Face of the Publishing House: 1880–1980,’ in *The Edinburgh History of the Book in Scotland, Volume 4: Professionalism and Diversity 1880–2000*, eds. David Finkelstein and Alistair McCleery (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2007).

¹⁰⁶ Alistair McCleery, ‘Publishing History,’ in *The Oxford Handbook of Publishing*, eds. Angus Phillips and Michael Bhaskar (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2019).

publishing – even if the Scottish offices remained operational. The next section of the chapter illustrates the impact of the conglomeration process in Scotland by examining the late twentieth-century of William Collins, focusing on its transition from the largest independent publisher in Britain to a publishing subsidiary of News Corporation.

3.3. Case Study: William Collins

3.3.1. *The Benevolent Leaders: William Collins pre-1979*

As previously mentioned, one of the most prominent examples of the conglomeration process in Scotland is the late twentieth-century history of William Collins – a company that, prior to its takeover in 1989, was the largest independent publisher in Britain remaining under family control.¹⁰⁷ Collins was established in Glasgow in 1819 as a printing and publishing business, launched by Scottish schoolmaster William Collins in partnership with Charles Chalmers.¹⁰⁸ Its first publication, announced in the *Glasgow Courier* in September 1819, was *The Christian and Civic Economy of Large Towns* by the Scottish churchman and social reformer Thomas Chalmers – the older brother of Charles who, being a ‘somewhat feckless partner’ according to David Keir, would leave the company by 1826.¹⁰⁹ Focused mostly on religious and educational resources in its early years, Collins acquired a licence to print bibles in Scotland in 1839 and released its first series of illustrated dictionaries in 1940 – by the death of William Collins in 1853, it was a prosperous and well-established publishing business.¹¹⁰ The company continued to expand rapidly for the next century, with its first London office opening in 1917 in the prestigious St James’s district.¹¹¹ By the 1970s, the Collins Group had offices in Glasgow, London, Australia, New Zealand, Canada, South Africa, and the United States, with an annual turnover of £42.5

¹⁰⁷ De Bellaigue, *British Book Publishing as a Business since the 1960s*.

¹⁰⁸ David Keir, *The House of Collins: The Story of a Scottish Family of Publishers from 1789 to Present Day*, (London: Collins, 1952).

¹⁰⁹ Keir, *The House of Collins*, 59.

¹¹⁰ Keir, *The House of Collins*.

¹¹¹ John A. Ford, *An Historical Calendar of the House of Collins* (London and Glasgow: Collins, 1977).

million in 1975¹¹² and £63.7 million in 1980¹¹³ – benefitting, as McCleery writes, from access to imperial markets through both exports and the international branches.¹¹⁴

Throughout this time, the company remained managed by the same family. As de Bellaigue notes, the history of Collins as an independent business ‘can be reduced to a list of six near-identical names,’ from founder William Collins I to the sixth and last family member to chair the company, William Janson ‘Jan’ Collins.¹¹⁵ In the post-war era, Collins established a triumvirate management structure. In the 1950s and 1960s, it was jointly controlled by three family members from the same generation: Sir William ‘Billy’ Collins, his brother I. G. (Ian) Collins, and cousin W. Hope Collins. After the death of Hope in 1967, the retirement of Ian in 1971, and finally the death of Billy in 1976, a new triumvirate of Jan Collins, Ian Chapman, and David Nickson emerged, of which only Jan Collins was a proprietor.¹¹⁶

The large size and international presence of the Collins Group are important to consider when looking at its history as an illustration of the conglomeration process in Scotland. To what extent can the twentieth-century Collins, even prior to its acquisition by News Corporation, be considered a ‘Scottish’ publisher? Nash notes that, throughout the twentieth century, Collins ‘managed to expand and internationalise its outlook while managing to retain some of its cultural and institutional base in Scotland.’¹¹⁷ Under Billy Collins, chairman from 1945 until 1976 – who, according to John Ford, was also the first company chairman to reside primarily outside of Scotland¹¹⁸ – London became the editorial centre and the place of prestigious receptions, with Glasgow ‘encompass[ing] the more humdrum schoolbooks, dictionaries, bibles, and children’s books.’¹¹⁹ However, despite the rising profile of the London office, Glasgow remained in many ways the operational centre of the company. De Bellaigue notes that in terms of shareholdings,

¹¹² William Collins & Sons (Holding) Limited, *Annual Reports and Accounts 1975* (Collins, 1975).

¹¹³ William Collins & Sons (Holding) Limited, *Annual Reports and Accounts 1980* (Collins, 1980).

¹¹⁴ McCleery, ‘Publishing History.’

¹¹⁵ De Bellaigue, *British Book Publishing as a Business since the 1960s*, 158.

¹¹⁶ De Bellaigue, *British Book Publishing as a Business since the 1960s*, 159.

¹¹⁷ Nash, ‘The Changing Face of the Publishing House: 1880–1980,’ 192.

¹¹⁸ Ford, *An Historical Calendar of the House of Collins*.

¹¹⁹ De Bellaigue, *British Book Publishing as a Business since the 1960s*.

Ian and Hope Collins – who were both based in the Glasgow office – ‘overshadowed’ Billy.¹²⁰ In interview, Jan Collins – who worked for the company for twenty-nine years and chaired it from 1976 to 1981 – calls Billy Collins ‘the front person’ from ‘the PR point of view,’ but sees Glasgow as the centre of control of the business at the time:

I think my father’s [Billy Collins’s] plan was that I would just go to Glasgow to learn about the printing and binding and those sides of the business, for eighteen months to two years. But I stayed there for the full twenty-nine years, until 1981. Really it was the main centre of the finance and control of the business, because my uncle [Ian Collins] had really been fulfilling the role of chairman from Glasgow.¹²¹

The Glasgow branch also remained significant for the local community, particularly in terms of providing employment for the nearby areas. By the 1960s, Collins in Glasgow employed around three thousand people across its offices, factories, and warehouses.¹²² As indicated by several interviewees, most workers lived in the local area; Collins was seen as a ‘family’ company in that it would provide long-term employment for several members of the same Glasgow families, often spanning multiple generations:

Everything around Collins was all tenements. Half the employee population came from around Townhead and Sighthill – that was the area. So, everybody knew everybody else. If it wasn’t a father, a son, a grandfather, or an auntie or uncle... *Huge* families.¹²³

My daughter went into [Collins] – my grandson... As I say, almost everyone [in the neighbourhood] had an auntie who worked at Collins. Or a grandfather . . . it was a big, big family. A family of a family.¹²⁴

A memorandum available in the archive, prepared at the request of the Office of Fair Trading shortly after the first News Corporation bid in 1981, indicates that the board of directors had a similar view, describing Collins as ‘a “family” firm in a much wider sense in the West of Scotland, certainly throughout the last 100 years’:

¹²⁰ De Bellaigue, *British Book Publishing as a Business since the 1960s*, 159.

¹²¹ William Jan Collins, interview with Alice Piotrowska and Dawn Sinclair, Troon, Scotland, 4 December 2019.

¹²² Ford, *An Historical Calendar of the House of Collins*.

¹²³ Heather Gallacher, interview with Alice Piotrowska and Dawn Sinclair, Glasgow, Scotland, 3 December 2019.

¹²⁴ John McGeachan and Catherine McGeachan, interview with Alice Piotrowska, Glasgow, Scotland, 21 January 2020.

Many employees at all levels are second, third or fourth generation Collins' employees. This tradition and influence has continued and has survived the fluctuating economic fortunes of the country and the Company and the social and legislative changes.¹²⁵

In the oral histories, a clear hierarchy of this 'family' is evident. Under management of the Collins family, the company had – like most publishers of the era¹²⁶ – a paternalistic leadership structure. As defined by Farh and Cheng, paternalistic leadership refers to the approach that combines 'strong discipline and authority with fatherly benevolence and moral integrity.'¹²⁷ Pellegrini and Scandura write about paternalistic companies relying 'on values such as personal loyalty to the leader and unquestioning obedience,' with the people in authority taking interest in the personal welfare of their employees – 'not unlike the father in a family' – but with a clear hierarchical gap between the leaders and their employees.¹²⁸ All participants in this study emphasise the social gap that existed between them and higher-level management. For instance, lower-level employees – including managers of various company departments – would address their bosses only as 'Mr,' even after many years of employment, to the extent of not always knowing the full names of the people they worked for.¹²⁹ One interviewee mentions that although a few 'minor' members of the Collins family were 'in and about the place,' exchanging a few words with the higher-level directors would be a major event resembling meeting a famous person:

The first couple of days you were back after the new year, Mr Jan [Collins] – which is how they were called, 'Mr Jan,' 'Mr' – they would come around and shake your hand and wish you a happy new year . . . It was very hierarchical back in those days.¹³⁰

Similarly, Heather Gallacher, John McGeachan, and Catherine McGeachan all recall the excitement of seeing the members of the Collins family during the annual company boating

¹²⁵ William Collins Archive. Box A. C. Fyfe 33. Folder 'Offer for Collins Shares.' William Collins & Sons. (1981) William Collins & Sons (Holding) Limited ("Collins") offers by News International Limited ("News"). May 1981. 51.

¹²⁶ Finkelstein, 'The Professionalisation of Publishing.'

¹²⁷ Jiing-Lih Farh and Bor-Shiuan Cheng, 'A Cultural Analysis of Paternalistic Leadership in Chinese Organizations,' in *Management and Organizations in the Chinese Context* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2000), 84.

¹²⁸ Ekin K. Pellegrini and Terri A. Scandura, 'Paternalistic Leadership: A Review and Agenda for Future Research,' *Journal of Management*, Vol. 34 No. 3 (2008), 566–593.

¹²⁹ Heather Gallacher, interview with Alice Piotrowska and Dawn Sinclair, Glasgow, Scotland, 3 December 2019.

¹³⁰ Jim Neilson, interview with Alice Piotrowska, Glasgow, Scotland, 28 January 2020.

trips on the River Clyde. Gallacher jokes about ‘Lady Collins com[ing] on to her subjects’ at the Greenock port,¹³¹ and the McGeachan’s have similar memories of the Collins family being treated almost as royalty:

Everybody ran to the one side to see the Collins family coming on the boat. It was like Titanic! All clinging to the rails. The Collins family came on, and the Collins at that time . . . They looked different. They spoke different. Hope Collins, do you remember him? . . . I mean, you knew he was different . . . he had a kind of aura of greatness about him.¹³²



Figure 2: Glasgow, 1969: Queen Elizabeth II and chairman William ‘Billy’ Collins during the Queen’s visit in celebration of the company’s 150th anniversary. From the William Collins archive.

¹³¹ Heather Gallacher, interview with Alice Piotrowska and Dawn Sinclair, Glasgow, Scotland, 3 December 2019.

¹³² John McGeachan and Catherine McGeachan, interview with Alice Piotrowska, Glasgow, Scotland, 21 January 2020.

Significantly, the members of the Collins family would also meet the requirement of ‘fatherly benevolence,’¹³³ assuming the roles of leaders who care about the well-being of their workers. As Pellegrini and Scandura summarise, in *benevolent paternalism* ‘a leader has a genuine concern for employees’ welfare, and employees show loyalty and deference out of respect and appreciation for the employer’s care and protection.’¹³⁴ Despite the clear hierarchy, none of the research participants remembers the Collins directors as unapproachable or unkind, and they emphasise their loyalty to the company stemming from feeling that their work was appreciated by the management. Catherine McGeachan, who worked as a case maker in the Glasgow bindery in the 1960s, emphasises that the directors were ‘nice people’ who showed an interest in factory work:

[Hope Collins] was really, like, ‘How are you?’ and ‘What’s this you’re doing?’ . . . Although they were classes above you, they didn’t make you feel [inferior]. They were always very pleasant, every time they came into the factory.¹³⁵

Similarly, Heather Gallacher, who from 1967 assisted several directors as an administrative professional, mentions that although she would never know them on a personal level – ‘I worked for them, but I didn’t *know* them’ – they were ‘nice’ and ‘all really sociable.’¹³⁶ Several interviewees also have fond memories of the annual boating trips to Rothesay or Dunoon, which the company paid for – ‘that was our treat’¹³⁷ – and of other events that made them feel like the managing directors noticed and appreciated their work.

This ‘benevolent’ paternalistic management seemed to extend to some of the authors published by Collins. For instance, Jan Collins remembers that novelist Catherine Gaskin became a protégé of Billy Collins after she broke through with her first book, *The Other Eden*. As Jan recalls, Billy was ‘very fond of [Gaskin],’ acting like a fatherly figure guiding her career since she was a ‘schoolgirl’ debuting in 1948.¹³⁸ What is important to note, however, is that unlike lower-level employees, the authors were able to become ‘personal friends’ with the Collins family,

¹³³ Farh and Cheng, ‘A Cultural Analysis of Paternalistic Leadership in Chinese Organizations,’ 84.

¹³⁴ Pellegrini and Scandura, ‘Paternalistic Leadership: A Review and Agenda for Future Research,’ 573.

¹³⁵ John McGeachan and Catherine McGeachan, interview with Alice Piotrowska, Glasgow, Scotland, 21 January 2020.

¹³⁶ Heather Gallacher, interview with Alice Piotrowska and Dawn Sinclair, Glasgow, Scotland, 3 December 2019.

¹³⁷ John McGeachan and Catherine McGeachan, interview with Alice Piotrowska, Glasgow, Scotland, 21 January 2020.

¹³⁸ William Jan Collins, interview with Alice Piotrowska and Dawn Sinclair, Troon, Scotland, 4 December 2019.

seemingly enjoying a higher position in the hierarchy. For instance, Jan Collins emphasises the importance of Billy Collins having ‘considerable charisma and charm’ that led to the family maintaining lifelong relationships with several famous authors of the time – such as Agatha Christie, Joy Adamson, and Hammond Innes – and tells a number of anecdotes about the family interacting with the authors:

[Billy Collins] had this very remarkable capacity for being able to read a book and assess its selling and marketing potential. He was so absorbed in it that his interaction with authors was extremely good, and they became personal friends. He invited Agatha Christie to Wimbledon.

My visit to New Zealand once coincided with [Joy Adamson’s]. We had three hours to get to Hamilton for a lecture at eight o’clock. But we had gone only about a mile when there was a dead opossum on the road. Joy Adamson insisted on giving it a state burial. And thirty-odd dead opossums later, we were an hour and a half late for the lecture.¹³⁹

Jan recalls that although he had little to do with the editorial side of the business – and thus rarely interacted with the writers on a professional level – he ‘knew the authors personally,’ mentioning that Hammond Innes attended the office dinner to celebrate his appointment as chairman in 1976.¹⁴⁰ His memories are supported by many materials available in the archive, particularly Billy Collins’s extensive correspondence with the authors. For instance, letters from George Adamson – wildlife conservationist, author, and husband of Joy Adamson – often describe his life in the Kora National Park in Kenya in detail and suggest a friendly relationship that went beyond professional correspondence between an author and publisher.¹⁴¹

Reflecting the paternalistic structure of many publishing businesses of the era, research collected as part of this study shows William Collins as a highly hierarchical company that, despite its large size and international presence, in many ways continued to rely on the personal qualities of its family directors – a structural feature that becomes particularly significant when examining its later takeover. The oral histories and archive materials also answer the question posed at the beginning of this chapter: to what extent can the late twentieth-century Collins be considered a ‘Scottish’ publisher? This research indicates that the pre-takeover Collins remained in many

¹³⁹ William Jan Collins, interview with Alice Piotrowska and Dawn Sinclair, Troon, Scotland, 4 December 2019.

¹⁴⁰ William Jan Collins, interview with Alice Piotrowska and Dawn Sinclair, Troon, Scotland, 4 December 2019.

¹⁴¹ William Collins Archive. AC Fyfe collection. Folder ‘1982 Joy Adamson.’

ways a Scottish business, with both its major family shareholders and significant workforce located in Glasgow. As examined later in this chapter, the topic of Collins's 'Scottishness' was also an important discussion point during the takeover process, with both the Collins board and the Scottish press expressing their concern over News Corporation potentially moving the company outside of Scotland. The next section of the chapter discusses the decade leading to Collins becoming a subsidiary of News Corporation, considering both internal and external factors contributing to the process.

3.3.2. *The Takeover Process: William Collins 1979–1989*

The decade-long takeover process culminating in William Collins becoming a subsidiary of News Corporation has been widely covered in the press and some academic studies. In *British Book Publishing as a Business since the 1960s*, Eric de Bellaigue offers a case study that discusses the takeover, explaining the share structure of William Collins and providing a detailed chronological account of the events leading to the News Corporation bids.¹⁴² There are also mentions of the takeover in *The Edinburgh History of the Book in Scotland, Volume 4* edited by Alistair McCleery and David Finkelstein, and in *The Oxford Handbook of Publishing* edited by Angus Phillips and Michael Bhaskar.¹⁴³ Building upon these studies, this section adds to existing scholarship by providing previously unpublished views from William Janson 'Jan' Collins – the last member of the Collins family to chair the company – as well as including new archival material and an overview of the UK news coverage of the takeover.

As Eric de Bellaigue notes, Collins's status as the largest publisher remaining under family control in the 1970s was the result of careful succession planning paired with many members of the Collins family making their careers within the company.¹⁴⁴ On the death of Sir William 'Billy' Collins in 1976, Collins was the largest independent publisher in Britain, with an annual

¹⁴² De Bellaigue, *British Book Publishing as a Business since the 1960s*, 158–181.

¹⁴³ In *The Edinburgh History of the Book in Scotland: Volume 4* (2007), see 'Educational, Academic and Legal Publishing' by Sarah Pederson, 311–329 and 'William Collins & Sons' by Iain Stevenson, 323–325. In *The Oxford Handbook of Publishing* (2019), see 'Publishing History' by Alistair McCleery.

¹⁴⁴ De Bellaigue, *British Book Publishing as a Business since the 1960s*.

turnover of nearly £50 million.¹⁴⁵ The chairmanship of Billy's son, Jan Collins, was 'thoroughly predictable': at the time, Jan had been working for Collins for twenty-four years, 'sustaining the tradition of single-minded devotion to the family company,' and – as vice chairman from 1971 – he was also formally in line to assume the position.¹⁴⁶ As mentioned previously in this chapter, he formed a triumvirate alongside Ian Chapman and David Nickson, who had both been appointed managing directors in 1967. However, as de Bellaigue notes, major frictions within the triumvirate emerged as early as 1974, when Chapman and Nickson advised Jan to stand aside, claiming that he was ill-suited to take over the company¹⁴⁷ – in interview, Jan recalls that they suggested he should leave the board to attend Harvard Business School for a year.¹⁴⁸ However, according to de Bellaigue, Billy Collins refused to take 'any action that would mean a move away from the natural line of succession.'¹⁴⁹ As a result, despite the reservations surrounding his appointment, Jan Collins became the executive chairman of William Collins in 1976.¹⁵⁰

These board-level issues at Collins reflect what John Feather describes as the inherent vulnerability of family businesses: an 'unexpected death, a generation in which no one was interested in the business,' or even a 'family quarrel' could all be disastrous for a company that relies on family continuity to survive.¹⁵¹ In interview, Jan Collins admits that there might have been a personal factor leading to his conflicts with the rest of the management, and recognises that he might have been 'unfit to lead a company of that size':

Trying to look at it objectively – thirty-odd, forty years on – I happened to be the sixth generation with the silver spoon, and it may well be that I was unfit to lead a company of that size through the next phase.¹⁵²

¹⁴⁵ Iain Stevenson, 'William Collins & Sons,' in *The Edinburgh History of the Book in Scotland, Volume 4: Professionalism and Diversity 1880–2000*, eds. Alistair McCleery and David Finkelstein (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2007).

¹⁴⁶ De Bellaigue, *British Book Publishing as a Business since the 1960s*, 159.

¹⁴⁷ De Bellaigue, *British Book Publishing as a Business since the 1960s*.

¹⁴⁸ William Jan Collins, interview with Alice Piotrowska and Dawn Sinclair, Troon, Scotland, 4 December 2019.

¹⁴⁹ De Bellaigue, *British Book Publishing as a Business since the 1960s*, 162.

¹⁵⁰ De Bellaigue, *British Book Publishing as a Business since the 1960s*.

¹⁵¹ Feather, *A History of British Publishing*, 210.

¹⁵² William Jan Collins, interview with Alice Piotrowska and Dawn Sinclair, Troon, Scotland, 4 December 2019.

His comments on the size of the company, as well as on leading it ‘through the next phase,’ are also important to consider. When talking about Collins in the late twentieth century, Jan claims that the business ‘got far, far too big for the family to retain financial control,’ and that even as chairman of an independent company he considered internationalisation and conglomeration ‘the right course for the future.’¹⁵³ He also recalls meeting with management consultants who called Collins a ‘threshold company,’ claiming that it had reached a size ‘when it simply had to move from paternalistic tight family control to a different structure.’¹⁵⁴ These comments indicate that the last family member to chair Collins in fact endorsed the idea of the business moving away from the long-established family control – a view that might have contributed to his later decision to sell his shares to News Corporation, as discussed later in this chapter.

In addition to the internal factors, Jan Collins’s management fell within the period of domestic inflation and sterling appreciation, which was a ‘catastrophic combination’ for the publishing industry – particularly for a company like Collins, involved both in export sales and in printing.¹⁵⁵ As Sarah Pedersen writes in *The Edinburgh History of the Book in Scotland*, although the publishing side of Collins experienced ‘sustained growth’ throughout the 1960s and early 1970s, there were increasing issues with the printing side of the business.¹⁵⁶ In *The Oxford Handbook of Publishing*, McCleery notes that the company ‘misread trends’ in the late 1960s, with further investment into manufacturing ‘accentuating the existing weaknesses in the printing plus publishing structure, where the inflexibility of the former neutralised or, worse, damaged the nimbleness of the latter.’¹⁵⁷ In 1977, the company experienced a 40 per cent (£2.1 million) drop in profits, with the archived annual report citing ‘extremely difficult’ domestic and international trading conditions.¹⁵⁸ The next year saw only a minor (13 per cent) increase in profits compared to 1977,

¹⁵³ William Jan Collins, interview with Alice Piotrowska and Dawn Sinclair, Troon, Scotland, 4 December 2019.

¹⁵⁴ William Jan Collins, interview with Alice Piotrowska and Dawn Sinclair, Troon, Scotland, 4 December 2019.

¹⁵⁵ De Bellaigue, *British Book Publishing as a Business since the 1960s*.

¹⁵⁶ Sarah Pedersen, ‘Educational, Academic and Legal Publishing,’ in *The Edinburgh History of the Book in Scotland, Volume 4: Professionalism and Diversity 1880–2000*, eds. David Finkelstein and Alistair McCleery (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2007), 325.

¹⁵⁷ McCleery, ‘Publishing History.’

¹⁵⁸ William Collins & Sons (Holding) Limited, *Annual Report and Accounts 1977* (Collins, 1977), 6.

with the report again citing mainly international market issues.¹⁵⁹ By 1980, the company was forced to dispose of the World Publishing Group, which they had acquired in 1974 from the Times Mirror Group, and to make 600 redundancies – mostly in the manufacturing branch in Glasgow, which they had previously hoped would benefit from international print orders.¹⁶⁰ As McCleery argues, the company ‘had now become prey rather than predator,’ growing increasingly vulnerable to a takeover by one of the many multinational media groups that were becoming influential at the time.¹⁶¹ In August 1979, after three years of unsatisfactory financial performance and increasing conflicts at management level, the board decided to remove Jan Collins’s executive authority, marking – as de Bellaigue argues – the beginning of the end of the company’s independence.¹⁶²

The nearly decade-long acquisition process began in 1981, when Jan Collins – then remaining on the board as a non-executive chairman – unexpectedly sold his shares of the company to the News Corporation owner Rupert Murdoch. This decision resulted in Jan being voted off the board and Ian Chapman succeeding him as chairman. Now owning 30.4 per cent of the ordinary capital, News Corporation made an ‘unheralded and unwelcome’ – as described by Eric de Bellaigue – bid for the whole company.¹⁶³ An archived memorandum prepared shortly after the bid emphasises that the board was unaware of Jan Collins’s plans, and that the rest of the management – including family director Mark Collins, Jan’s younger brother – was ‘unanimous in their desire to remain independent.’¹⁶⁴ The memorandum states that one of the main reasons for the board members being firmly against the takeover was their concern about News Corporation moving the executive power of Collins outside Scotland:

¹⁵⁹ William Collins & Sons (Holding) Limited, *Annual Report and Accounts 1978*, (Collins, 1978), 6.

¹⁶⁰ Pedersen, ‘Educational, Academic and Legal Publishing,’ 325.

¹⁶¹ McCleery, ‘Publishing History.’

¹⁶² De Bellaigue, *British Book Publishing as a Business since the 1960s*, 158.

¹⁶³ De Bellaigue, *British Book Publishing as a Business since the 1960s*, 169.

¹⁶⁴ William Collins Archive. Box A. C. Fyfe 33. Folder ‘Offer for Collins Shares.’ William Collins & Sons. (1981) William Collins & Sons (Holding) Limited (“Collins”) offers by News International Limited (“News”). May 1981. 21.

The board of Collins feel strongly that a successful company like Collins should remain an independent Scottish company and that the ultimate control should not be allowed to move outside the country.¹⁶⁵

The memorandum discusses this issue further by calling Collins one of the ‘very few’ surviving independent businesses out of the ‘many proud and traditionally independent Scottish family firms for which Scotland was famous,’ emphasising that the examples of Thomas Nelson (Edinburgh) and Blackie and Son (Glasgow) ‘must not be forgotten in the context of the present bid’:

Following the takeover by Thomson Newspapers, a corporation not unlike News International in its structure, Nelson’s Book Manufacturing plant in Edinburgh was closed and all publishing transferred to London. Blackies are no longer Scottish printers and exist only as publishers.¹⁶⁶

A document urging shareholders to reject the bid also provides a number of ‘representative views’ from Collins authors expressing their support for the company’s independence. David Attenborough, for instance, is quoted as stating that a conglomerate takeover would ‘inevitably gravely diminish’ what he saw as the two most important qualities of a publishing house: ‘variety of view and independence of judgement.’¹⁶⁷ An *Evening Times* article from June 1981 claims that over a hundred authors declared they would leave Collins after the takeover:

Some of Britain’s most important and popular authors look set to split with Glasgow publishing house William Collins if a controversial takeover bid goes ahead . . . more than 100 of Collins’ writers have written to chairman Ian Chapman saying that they support the company in its present form.¹⁶⁸

¹⁶⁵ William Collins Archive. Box A. C. Fyfe 33. Folder ‘Offer for Collins Shares.’ William Collins & Sons. (1981) William Collins & Sons (Holding) Limited (“Collins”) offers by News International Limited (“News”). May 1981. 24.

¹⁶⁶ William Collins Archive. Box A. C. Fyfe 33. Folder ‘Offer for Collins Shares.’ William Collins & Sons. (1981) William Collins & Sons (Holding) Limited (“Collins”) offers by News International Limited (“News”). May 1981. 51–52.

¹⁶⁷ William Collins Archive. Box MW12. Folder ‘Register of Substantial Interests.’ William Collins & Sons (Holding) Limited. (1981) Reject the Revised News Bid. Do not sign anything. June 1981.

¹⁶⁸ William Collins Archive. Box A. C. Fyfe 33. Folder ‘1981 News Bid.’ ‘Writers may split with Collins.’ *Evening Times*. 29 June 1981.

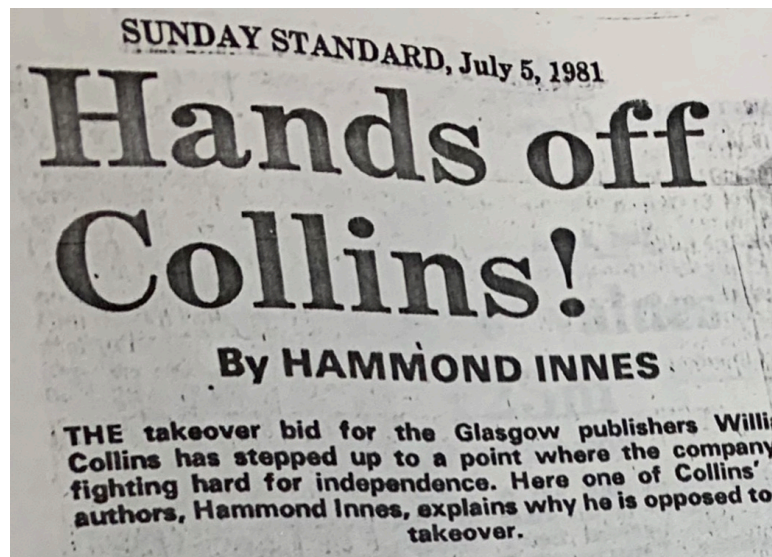


Figure 3: Sunday Standard, 1981: Collins author Hammond Innes declares his opposition to the News Corporation takeover.

Despite the odds being ‘heavily against Collins,’ the fight against the first bid proved largely successful, with News Corporation acquiring 41.1 per cent of the ordinary shares and becoming a minority shareholder with two representatives on the Collins board, Rupert Murdoch and Sir Edward Pickering.¹⁶⁹ However, although the company remained independent, it ultimately ceased to be a family business: Mark Collins resigned from his position in 1983, marking ‘the end of any direct family involvement at senior level.’¹⁷⁰ Five years later, in November 1988, News Corporation made another bid for the remainder of the shares. Although an eventual second bid was predictable from the perspective of News Corporation already owning a high voting stock, its timing was unexpected: Collins had released its ‘well received’ half-year results just two months prior and, as recalled by non-executive director Marmaduke Hussey, Murdoch had recently assured Chapman that ‘he would never make a bid for the company unless it was an agreed bid.’¹⁷¹ This time, despite the board rejecting the takeover and fighting it off for nearly two months, News Corporation was successful in acquiring the company. In January 1989, Ian

¹⁶⁹ De Bellaigue, *British Book Publishing as a Business since the 1960s*, 171.

¹⁷⁰ De Bellaigue, *British Book Publishing as a Business since the 1960s*, 172.

¹⁷¹ De Bellaigue, *British Book Publishing as a Business since the 1960s*, 176.

Chapman was replaced by Rupert Murdoch as chairman and George Craig as chief executive; merging with the New York Harper & Row also owned by News Corporation, William Collins became HarperCollins.¹⁷²

Both the 1981 and the 1988 bids were widely covered in news outlets, generally framed by the newspapers as a ‘battle’ or ‘fight’ between Ian Chapman and Rupert Murdoch.¹⁷³ In many instances, reports varied in tone and focus depending on whether the takeover was related by newspapers in Scotland or in England. The Scottish press often focused on Collins’s independence and ‘desire to remain Scottish,’ portraying Murdoch as a ‘foreign predator’ seeking to shift the headquarters from Glasgow – as evidenced by the following examples from *The Courier and Advertiser*, *Glasgow Herald*, and *The Scotsman*:

Shadow Scottish Secretary Mr Bruce Millan said the decision [not to refer the takeover bid to the Monopolies and Mergers Commission] was absolutely deplorable and there was now a **major risk that the Scottish company would go out of Scottish control**.¹⁷⁴ (Emphasis added)

[News International] closing their offer for Collins’s remaining available capital was an **emphatic victory** for a campaign which emphasised **the company’s deep desire to remain independent and Scottish**.¹⁷⁵ (Emphasis added)

Another major Scottish company came under attack yesterday from a foreign predator when Mr Rupert Murdoch’s News International made a surprising £293 million offer for the Glasgow-based publisher, William Collins.¹⁷⁶ (Emphasis added)

¹⁷² De Bellaigue, *British Book Publishing as a Business since the 1960s*.

¹⁷³ Examples of newspaper headings: ‘Fighting for independence’ (*Glasgow Herald*, July 1981); ‘Collins takeover battle comes to the boil’ (*Financial Times*, July 1981); ‘Murdoch launches attack on Collins management’ (*The Times*, December 1988); ‘The heat is on in the battle for Wm Collins’ (*The Daily Telegraph*, December 1988). William Collins Archive. Box A. C. Fyfe 33. Folder ‘1981 News Bid.’

¹⁷⁴ William Collins Archive. Box A. C. Fyfe 33. Folder ‘1981 News Bid.’ (1981) ‘M.P.s’ anger over Collins decision.’ *The Courier and Advertiser*. July.

¹⁷⁵ William Collins Archive. Box A. C. Fyfe 33. Folder ‘1981 News Bid.’ (1981) ‘Victory for campaign to keep Collins Scottish.’ *Glasgow Herald*. July.

¹⁷⁶ William Collins Archive. Box A. C. Fyfe 33. Folder ‘Offer for Collins Shares.’ (1988) ‘Collins facing new fight as Murdoch tried bid of £293.’ *The Scotsman*. November.

In contrast, *The Daily Telegraph* reported the result of the 1981 bid as less of an ‘emphatic victory’ for Collins, suggesting that it was resolved ‘in a satisfactory way to both sides,’ and that an ultimate takeover by News Corporation could be a matter of time:

Despite the present truce between the two companies, News can, in theory, buy 2 p.c. a year of Collins’ voting shares to gain control eventually.¹⁷⁷

Similarly, rather than portray Murdoch as a ‘predator’ seeking to acquire a successful foreign business, a *Financial Times* article from 1988 cited Murdoch’s claims that Collins ‘lacked direction, was suffering from low staff morale and had seen profits in its core businesses decline.’¹⁷⁸ While representing a fraction of newspaper articles reporting the events – a single folder of press cuttings from 17 November to 9 December 1988 includes over seventy pieces from most major UK newspapers¹⁷⁹ – the above examples reflect the general narrative: in Scotland, Collins was considered a renowned national business significant for the country’s economy and culture, and the previous takeovers of long-established Scottish independents increased fears that corporate ownership would weaken or sever Collins’s ties to Scotland.

The next section of this chapter examines the company after 1989, focusing on the experiences of Glasgow-based employees who worked at William Collins / HarperCollins both before and after the takeover. It also considers HarperCollins’s remaining ties to Scotland and whether there has been a significant change in the operations of the Scottish branch.

3.3.3. *The Publishing Conglomerate: HarperCollins post-1989*

Despite the concerns that HarperCollins would close its Scottish division soon after the takeover, the company continued to operate in Glasgow after 1989. As David Finkelstein writes in *The Edinburgh History of the Book in Scotland*, HarperCollins maintained ‘a link to the firm’s Scottish past’ by keeping the Glasgow branch as its ‘warehouse, reference and cartographic

¹⁷⁷ William Collins Archive. Box A. C. Fyfe 33. Folder ‘1981 News Bid.’ (1981) ‘Murdoch lets offer for Wm Collins lapse.’ *The Daily Telegraph*. July.

¹⁷⁸ William Collins Archive. Box A. C. Fyfe 33. Folder ‘1981 News Bid.’ Thompson, F. (1988) ‘Murdoch attacks Wm Collins record.’ *Financial Times*. 2 December.

¹⁷⁹ William Collins Archive. Box A. C. Fyfe 33. Folder ‘Offer for Collins Shares.’

base.¹⁸⁰ This focus on warehousing, reference and cartography, however, was not the result of the takeover – as previously discussed, the move of the editorial base to London happened years before the News Corporation bids, with Billy Collins being the first chairman to reside outside of Scotland. Eric de Bellaigue argues that this divide – with London managing the ‘more glamorous trade publishing’ and Glasgow publishing mainly educational and reference titles – was the cause of board-level conflicts as early as the 1960s:

When Glasgow looked south it saw a collection of long-haired publishing eccentrics. When London looked north it saw a crowd of troublesome, obdurate printers . . . These differences were enshrined at board level, where Ian Collins and Hope Collins represented the Glasgow interests and Billy Collins those of London. There were some periods of open warfare.¹⁸¹

One interviewee, who worked in sales and customer management in Glasgow from 1976 to 2018, has similar memories of London being ‘the publishing offices’ from the time he began his employment – the ‘media-driven, entertainment-type business’ – in contrast to the Scottish branch, which had been more focused on the ‘mechanics’ of publishing even before the takeover:

[Glasgow was] the nuts and bolts of lorries rumbling in and out and pallets getting put on the back of lorries, computer systems going down, and all that kind of day-to-day stuff . . . [London] had a whole different outlook on the business than we did here.¹⁸²

However, as Finkelstein notes, the overall status of the Scottish branch did change. As discussed previously in this chapter, despite the London offices being more trade focused, Glasgow was the operational centre of independent Collins: prior to the takeover, at least two of the three main directors would reside predominantly in the Scottish office, representing the Scottish interests on the board. After the 1989 buyout and the subsequent change of directors, News Corporation turned Collins into a ‘publishing heavyweight’ that was ‘headquartered in London and New York,’ with no executive power remaining in Scotland¹⁸³ – Glasgow-based chairman and chief executive Ian Chapman was replaced by Rupert Murdoch and George Craig, both

¹⁸⁰ Finkelstein, ‘The Professionalisation of Publishing,’ 34.

¹⁸¹ De Bellaigue, *British Book Publishing as a Business since the 1960s*, 160.

¹⁸² Jim Neilson, interview with Alice Piotrowska, Glasgow, Scotland, 28 January 2020.

¹⁸³ Finkelstein, ‘The Professionalisation of Publishing,’ 34.

residing outside of Scotland.¹⁸⁴ The Glasgow offices became the warehouse, educational, and reference division of a multinational corporation controlled from England and the US.

Oral histories conducted as part of this research suggest that Glasgow-based employees experienced little immediate change after the takeover. Jim Neilson remembers that although he and his colleagues were ‘all filled with fear and apprehension’ about the buyout, it was mostly caused by the media attention around it:

There was lots of publicity but, from a day-to-day operational business, it didn’t affect our lives. There was no sort of ‘big bang’ of ‘oh my god, everything is so different.’ That never really happened.¹⁸⁵

He admits, however, that ‘things changed subtly over the years,’ and that other departments – particularly printing and stationery – were directly affected by the takeover, with the company gradually becoming ‘more focused on its core publishing needs’ rather than on the ‘little bits and pieces that had been part of the company’s history for a long time.’¹⁸⁶ This claim is confirmed by HarperCollins’s activities throughout the 1990s: the long-standing diary and office stationery department was sold to Debden in 1995, becoming Collins Debden,¹⁸⁷ and the print production facilities (which had been part of the company since the nineteenth century) were gone by the 2000s, with the Glasgow printing division becoming ‘little more than a warehouse’ according to Finkelstein and McCleery.¹⁸⁸

Similarly, administrative professional Heather Gallacher jokes that the only difference she experienced after the takeover was having to change the logo on all office stationery – ‘there was a big debacle, because HarperCollins [company name] is together [and] the outside printers kept it separate’ – and that, at her level, there was no other noticeable change to everyday duties:

¹⁸⁴ De Bellaigue, *British Book Publishing as a Business since the 1960s*.

¹⁸⁵ Jim Neilson, interview with Alice Piotrowska, Glasgow, Scotland, 28 January 2020.

¹⁸⁶ Jim Neilson, interview with Alice Piotrowska, Glasgow, Scotland, 28 January 2020.

¹⁸⁷ Stevenson, ‘William Collins & Sons,’ 323–325.

¹⁸⁸ David Finkelstein and Alistair McCleery, ‘The Future of the Book in Scotland: Trends and Prospects from 2000,’ in *The Edinburgh History of the Book in Scotland, Volume 4: Professionalism and Diversity 1880–2000*, eds. David Finkelstein and Alistair McCleery (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2007), 464.

Work was just the same . . . at my level I certainly didn't see anything. I'm sure there were different ways of doing things, but I never saw anything different . . . I don't think many people of the 'general population' saw a great deal of difference.¹⁸⁹

Gallacher does recall that 'there was a big redundancy programme' after the takeover, but those employees who were not affected by it continued their work as usual, with minimal disruptions.¹⁹⁰ Her memories are confirmed by John McGeachan, who worked in the Collins bindery from 1951 until his retirement in the 1990s:

There were changes. But the way the factory worked, you didn't actually [experience them]. There was a lot of guys, sort of higher up, who would get pushed out of the company. But of course, that didn't bother *us* on the shop floor, you know. I mean, a boss is a boss is a boss . . . Nothing changed for me. I had a certain job to do, and I would just get on with it.¹⁹¹

Donald Ralston, who worked in the cartography department from 1972 to 2017, also recalls that there was no significant change to his day-to-day duties after the takeover; however, he does remember a shift in the company dynamics, with his department becoming 'a very small cog in a very large machine,' removed from the publishing and financial decisions more than before:

If the wind blew in the wrong direction at the top of the tree, it would affect you very easily. Because if you wanted to save money, you maybe just cut off a small branch – and we were that small branch. I think from that time on, we had always felt vulnerable.¹⁹²

Ralston admits, however, that it was 'the effect of a large company coming in' – 'you felt very small within it' – rather than an issue with News Corporation's management specifically. He states that his imprint was generally 'left to [its] own devices,' with the directors rarely getting involved in publishing decisions or activities unless it was for high-profile cases attracting media attention.¹⁹³ In general, as indicated by all interviewees, most post-takeover changes were noticeable mostly by senior employees who were responsible for their Glasgow imprints or

¹⁸⁹ Heather Gallacher, interview with Alice Piotrowska and Dawn Sinclair, Glasgow, Scotland, 3 December 2019.

¹⁹⁰ Heather Gallacher, interview with Alice Piotrowska and Dawn Sinclair, Glasgow, Scotland, 3 December 2019.

¹⁹¹ John McGeachan and Catherine McGeachan, interview with Alice Piotrowska, Glasgow, Scotland, 21 January 2020.

¹⁹² Donald Ralston, interview with Alice Piotrowska, Glasgow, Scotland, 26 November 2019.

¹⁹³ Donald Ralston, interview with Alice Piotrowska, Glasgow, Scotland, 26 November 2019.

departments – for the majority of the Glasgow branch, work continued as usual, with no significant disruptions in the years following the takeover.

HarperCollins has continued to expand and diversify its portfolio in the twenty-first century, acquiring publishers such as William Morrow, Avon, Ecco Press, Amistad Press, Fourth Estate, Thomas Nelson, and Harlequin between 1999 and 2014.¹⁹⁴ By 2007, the company's global revenues reached \$1.29 billion in trade and mass market publishing, 70 per cent of which came from the US – making it the third largest trade publisher in the US and the fourth largest in the UK in 2007, behind conglomerates Hachette Livre UK, Random House, and Penguin¹⁹⁵ (the latter two became one 'super-publisher,' Penguin Random House, six years later).¹⁹⁶ As of 2021, HarperCollins Publishers is 'the second largest consumer book publisher in the world,' with over 120 imprints and divisions located in 17 countries.¹⁹⁷ In the UK alone, it publishes around 1,500 books a year across twenty-eight imprints,¹⁹⁸ and has offices in London, Honley, Manchester, Glasgow, and Dublin.¹⁹⁹ On the website, the company states that it is 'keeping its historic connection to Glasgow' through the Bishopbriggs distribution centre that sends out 1.3 million books each week. In addition to the warehousing and distribution, Bishopbriggs is the office of the educational and reference imprint Collins Learning, and employs over 400 people as of 2021²⁰⁰ – a significant drop from the three thousand employed in the 1960s.²⁰¹ While

¹⁹⁴ 'Timeline – HarperCollins Publishers,' HarperCollins Publishers, accessed 18 July 2021, <https://200.hc.com/timeline/>

¹⁹⁵ Thompson, *Merchants of Culture: The Publishing Business in the Twenty-First Century*.

¹⁹⁶ Dan Sabbagh, 'Penguin merger with Random House speaks volumes about book industry,' *The Guardian*, 26 October 2012.

¹⁹⁷ 'Worldwide Publishing Divisions – HarperCollins,' HarperCollins Publishers, accessed 25 June 2021, <https://www.harpercollins.com/pages/worldwide-publishing-divisions>

¹⁹⁸ 'What We Publish – HarperCollins Publishers – HCUK Corporate,' HarperCollins Publishers, accessed 25 June 2021, <https://corporate.harpercollins.co.uk/what-we-publish/>

¹⁹⁹ 'About HarperCollins UK – HarperCollins Publishers – HCUK Corporate,' HarperCollins Publishers, accessed 25 June 2021, <https://corporate.harpercollins.co.uk/about-us/about-harpercollins-uk/>

²⁰⁰ 'About HarperCollins UK – HarperCollins Publishers – HCUK Corporate,' HarperCollins Publishers, accessed 25 June 2021, <https://corporate.harpercollins.co.uk/about-us/about-harpercollins-uk/>

²⁰¹ Ford, *An Historical Calendar of the House of Collins*.

providing some key services to the company, the Glasgow branch is part of a much larger set of regional offices, with its leadership located outside of Scotland.

3.4. The Impact of Conglomeration: Conclusion

The story of William Collins exemplifies the transformation that Scottish publishing began to undergo in the second half of the twentieth century. By the 1970s, the highly paternalistic family businesses that had dominated the industry for the previous century and a half were becoming vulnerable due to a combination of internal and external factors, finding it difficult to compete on an increasingly global and technologically advanced market. In John Feather's words, they were becoming 'ripe for takeover,' attracting international corporations looking to expand their control.²⁰² While this chapter related the takeover 'battle' between William Collins and News Corporation, as it was narrated at the time, it is likely that – if Murdoch's bid was unsuccessful – Collins would eventually become a subsidiary of another corporation, confirming Jan Collins's prediction that conglomeration was the company's inevitable future. In fact, as Alistair McCleery argues in *The Oxford Handbook of Publishing*, by 1989 the Collins board had to 'decide between being swallowed by a tiger or a hyena,' choosing News Corporation over 'the many [other] enterprises, including Pergamon Press, Macmillan Inc. (the US publisher), and Prentice Hall Information Services, of Robert Maxwell.'²⁰³

Tellingly, other Scottish businesses followed a nearly identical life cycle. Thomas Nelson was established in Edinburgh in 1798 and, alongside William Collins, quickly became one of the 'international leaders in religious and educational publishing.'²⁰⁴ Throughout the nineteenth century, Nelson was one of the main educational publishers in Britain, collaborating with educationalists and school boards to produce learning materials sold in large quantities throughout the British Empire.²⁰⁵ By 1907, the company had over 1,000 employees and a factory capable of printing up to 200,000 books a week, 'claiming by 1912 to be producing the cheapest

²⁰² Feather, *A History of British Publishing*.

²⁰³ McCleery, 'Publishing History.'

²⁰⁴ Stevenson, 'The Business of Publishing,' 55.

²⁰⁵ Pedersen, 'Educational, Academic and Legal Publishing.'

books in the world.²⁰⁶ In 1910, it launched a French-language collection that would leave ‘a lasting imprint on cultural memory in both Britain and France,’ and later opened a Paris branch, which before the Second World War employed thirty-five people.²⁰⁷ Like William Collins, Nelson benefitted from its links to the imperial market, opening branches in Australia, Canada, Kenya, Nigeria, and South Africa.²⁰⁸ By the mid-twentieth century, however, the company was becoming increasingly vulnerable to takeover: Ian Nelson, who took over the company in 1917, and his son Ronnie Nelson, who succeeded Ian in 1958, both seemed ‘less interested in the successful management of the family firm than previous generations.’²⁰⁹ In 1962, the company was sold to the Canadian Thomson Organization – while its printing division remained based in Edinburgh, all publishing activities relocated to London.²¹⁰

Though a smaller operation than William Collins or Thomas Nelson, Edinburgh-based map publisher John Bartholomew & Son followed a similar trajectory. Established as a business in 1826 and as an independent publisher in 1884, it was a family company for over a century and a half, consecutively managed by five members of the Bartholomew family.²¹¹ By the end of the Second World War, the company established itself as ‘the largest map publisher in the Western world,’ employing 140 people and producing influential cartographic publications such as the *Times Atlas* (1922) and the *Road Atlas of Great Britain* (1944).²¹² In 1980, Bartholomew was taken over by the Readers’ Digest Association, who then sold the company to News Corporation in

²⁰⁶ Siân Reynolds, ‘Nelson’s French Collection 1910–60s,’ in *The Edinburgh History of the Book in Scotland, Volume 4: Professionalism and Diversity 1880–2000*, eds. David Finkelstein and Alistair McCleery (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2007), 73.

²⁰⁷ Reynolds, ‘Nelson’s French Collection 1910–60s,’ 75.

²⁰⁸ Alistair McCleery, ‘Thomas Nelson & Sons,’ in *The Edinburgh History of the Book in Scotland, Volume 4: Professionalism and Diversity 1880–2000*, eds. David Finkelstein and Alistair McCleery (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2007), 110–112.

²⁰⁹ McCleery, ‘Thomas Nelson & Sons.’

²¹⁰ McCleery, ‘Thomas Nelson & Sons.’

²¹¹ Iain Stevenson, ‘Cartographic publishing,’ in *The Edinburgh History of the Book in Scotland, Volume 4: Professionalism and Diversity 1880–2000*, eds. David Finkelstein and Alistair McCleery (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2007), 337–341.

²¹² Stevenson, ‘Cartographic publishing,’ 339.

1985 – Bartholomew was first merged with Times Books and then became part of the Atlas and Reference Division of HarperCollins.²¹³

Other family businesses, all established predominantly in the early nineteenth-century Edinburgh and Glasgow, share a similar history. As Jane Potter writes in *The Edinburgh History of the Book in Scotland*, Glasgow-based educational, scientific, and children's publisher Blackie & Son – started in 1809 – 'dominated both the domestic and overseas educational markets' until it 'succumbed to the wave of conglomeration that had marked British publishing in the final decades of the twentieth century.'²¹⁴ After the takeover by Thomson International, Blackie moved its editorial division and distribution to England, and ceased publishing in 1991 after its titles were acquired by Thomas Nelson.²¹⁵ Similarly, Oliver & Boyd – Edinburgh-based educational and reference publisher whose history can be traced back to 1798²¹⁶ – was sold in 1962 and, as part of Pearson Longman, closed completely in 1990 'due to failure to achieve high enough profit levels for its parent company.'²¹⁷ T. & T. Clark, a religious and legal publisher founded in Edinburgh in 1821, remained a family company until 1973, when it merged with Bartholomew shortly before Bartholomew's own takeover;²¹⁸ and Edinburgh-based W. & R. Chambers, 'a major force in reference and educational publishing'²¹⁹ established in 1819, was acquired by the French company Presses de la Cité in 1989, after 'fail[ing] to renew and innovate in the 1970s.'²²⁰

Paired with the multitude of other long-established businesses losing their independence, William Collins illustrates the life cycle of a family publisher in Scotland: from a successful

²¹³ Stevenson, 'Cartographic publishing.'

²¹⁴ Jane Potter, 'Blackie & Sons Ltd,' in *The Edinburgh History of the Book in Scotland, Volume 4: Professionalism and Diversity 1880–2000*, eds. David Finkelstein and Alistair McCleery (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2007), 353–355.

²¹⁵ Pedersen, 'Educational, Academic and Legal Publishing.'

²¹⁶ Alistair McCleery, 'Conglomerates,' in *The Edinburgh History of the Book in Scotland, Volume 4: Professionalism and Diversity 1880–2000*, eds. David Finkelstein and Alistair McCleery (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2007), 348–350.

²¹⁷ Finkelstein, 'The Professionalisation of Publishing,' 33.

²¹⁸ David Finkelstein, 'T. & T. Clark,' in *The Edinburgh History of the Book in Scotland, Volume 4: Professionalism and Diversity 1880–2000*, eds. David Finkelstein and Alistair McCleery (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2007), 303–305.

²¹⁹ Nash, 'The Changing Face of the Publishing House: 1880–1980,' 193.

²²⁰ McCleery, 'Conglomerates,' 349.

expansion throughout the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, often across international markets, to increasing vulnerability due to rapidly changing global media trends and, finally, to a takeover that moved the executive power of the company outside of Scotland. By the start of the twenty-first century, nearly all traditional family publishers had either disappeared or become imprints of larger, non-Scottish structures – replaced, as Chapter Four will show, by a completely new wave of independent publishing.

4. Chapter Four: Publishing for Scotland – The Rise of Independent Publishing

As established in Chapter Three, the conglomeration process of the second half of the twentieth century brought significant structural changes to the Scottish book trade, ending the era of long-standing family businesses focused on specialist publications. Occurring parallel to conglomeration, however, was another major trend that would go on to reshape and rejuvenate the Scottish industry: the rise of new, culturally-engaged independents, small in size and often reliant on public subsidy from the newly-devolved Scottish Arts Council to produce works of Scottish interest and connection.

This chapter investigates the emergence, development, and professionalisation of new independent publishing in Scotland from the late 1960s. The main aim is to build on existing scholarship by presenting accurate and detailed histories of some of the most influential publishing companies established during the period, examining their origin and operations as well as their challenges, opportunities, and impact on the trade. *The Rise of Independent Publishing* discusses the new wave of independent presses emerging from the late 1960s to the 1990s, considering the socio-political background of the Scottish literary revival and presenting histories of some of the most influential companies of the period. *Publishing in Gaelic and Scots* examines the development of national language publishing in Scotland from the 1960s to 2020, with brief histories of the key companies and organisations. The chapter uses oral history data from twenty publishing professionals interviewed for the project, many of them with several decades of experience working across different publishing companies and organisations throughout their careers, as well as some archival sources.

4.1. The Rise of Independent Publishing

This section examines the origin and impact of the new wave of independent publishing, looking at how the ideas of nationhood and culture interrelated with those of economics and commerce during a period of rapid rejuvenation of the trade. *The Scottish Literary Revival: Context and Background* establishes the socio-political circumstances underpinning the rise of independent publishing, looking at the impact of public subsidy and the emergence of literary magazines. Building on this context, *The First Wave: Independent Publishing 1968–1978* recreates the histories of some of the most influential companies established prior to the Scottish devolution referendum of 1979: Polygon Press (established 1968), Canongate Books (1973), Floris Books

(1976), and Mainstream Publishing (1978). *Establishing the Trade: Independent Publishing 1979–1999* then discusses the growth of the industry over the last two decades of the twentieth century.

4.1.1. The Scottish Literary Revival: Context and Background

As Melanie Ramdarshan Bold notes in ‘The Rights and Wrongs of Operational Practices in the Scottish Publishing Industry’ (2012), the largest percentage of independent Scottish publishers emerged between 1981 and 2000 – a trend connected to ‘the rejuvenation of Scottish literature in the 1970s and 1980s.’²²¹ It is important to consider the socio-political circumstances of the period when analysing the origins of this rejuvenation, and to acknowledge the unique position of Scotland as a small nation within a larger unitary state. Scotland has been part of the United Kingdom of Great Britain since 1707, when the Treaty of Union merged the Kingdom of England and the Kingdom of Scotland into one.²²² As part of the UK, Scotland maintained its local government, separate legal and educational systems, and the institutions of the Presbyterian Church of Scotland.²²³ Although it became widely accepted in Scotland by the second half of the eighteenth century, the union has not been without challenges throughout its existence – the demands for Scottish self-government began to emerge in the nineteenth century and did not go away despite the establishment of a territorial department dealing with Scottish affairs, the Scottish Office, in 1885. The independence-focused Scottish National Party (SNP) was created in 1934, and the Scottish Covenant – a 1949 petition demanding a devolved Scottish parliament – received two million signatures out of the total Scottish population of around five million (though it had little political impact at the time).²²⁴ Daniel Boswell argues that this position of Scotland within a larger state that has ‘greater global cultural dissemination and recognition’ is a crucial factor shaping Scottish culture and national identity.²²⁵ While Scotland retains its distinctive culture and a degree of political autonomy, much of its economic growth

²²¹ Melanie Ramdarshan Bold, ‘The Rights and Wrongs of Operational Practices in the Scottish Publishing Industry,’ *Publishing Research Quarterly* 28:345–358 (2012). 346.

²²² Tom Devine, *The Scottish Nation: A Modern History* (London: Penguin Books, 2012).

²²³ Paolo Dardanelli, *Between Two Unions: Europeanisation and Scottish Devolution* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2006).

²²⁴ Dardanelli, *Between Two Unions*.

²²⁵ Boswell, ‘Brave Words,’ 2.

can be attributed to being part of the United Kingdom, resulting – as Boswell argues – in a conflict between ‘the battle for independence and benefit of affiliation.’²²⁶ In *The Wealth of the Nation*, which explores how Scotland retained its cultural difference despite the union with England, Cairns Craig cites Homi Bhabha’s term ‘cultures of survival’ – ‘cultures which have (so far) survived being overwhelmed by dominant powers,’ with national literature serving as ‘a means not only of generating the social cohesion which their populations lacked but also a means of winning international recognition for their cultural distinctiveness.’²²⁷

According to Dardanelli, the Scottish National Party was ‘the single most important actor in the politics of self-government’ in twentieth-century Scotland.²²⁸ In his comprehensive volume on modern Scottish history, Tom Devine argues that – although the SNP had little political impact in the Labour- and then Unionist-dominated Scotland for the first few decades of its existence – what ‘truly put the SNP on the British political map’ was its victory over Labour in Hamilton in Lanarkshire in 1967.²²⁹ The SNP grew rapidly from then on, achieving a third of all votes in Scotland and winning eleven seats in the general election in October 1974. Self-government, in the 1970s defined as ‘independence under the British Crown and within the Commonwealth,’²³⁰ was one of the core elements of the party’s ideology. The rise of the SNP put the issue of Scottish self-government ‘at the top of the UK political agenda,’ prompting the centre-left Labour Party – which had dominated Scottish politics since 1959 – to reconsider their position and include devolution in its official policy.²³¹ This policy resulted in the Scotland Act 1978 which, subject to a ‘Yes’ vote from at least 40 per cent of the electorate in a referendum scheduled for March 1979, intended to establish a devolved Scottish Assembly.

A direct link between the devolution movement and the rejuvenation of literature and publishing in Scotland has been suggested by a number of scholars. In *The Edinburgh History of the Book in Scotland*, Alistair McCleery describes the 1970s as a period of ‘cultural optimism,’

²²⁶ Boswell, ‘Brave Words,’ 2.

²²⁷ Craig, *The Wealth of the Nation*, 38–39.

²²⁸ Dardanelli, *Between Two Unions*.

²²⁹ Dardanelli, *Between Two Unions*, 574.

²³⁰ Dardanelli, *Between Two Unions*.

²³¹ Devine, *The Scottish Nation: A Modern History*, 586.

when before the 1979 referendum ‘all seemed possible and Scottish culture possessed a self-confidence and self-assurance,’ contributing to the establishment of new creative ventures.²³² Jane Potter argues that the independence debate, especially around the years of the first devolution vote, was linked to more writers and poets exploring the notion of what it meant to be Scottish:

Closely connected to the political issues of nationalism and a devolved Scottish parliament, poets and authors from the late 1970s onwards interrogated the idea of ‘nation’ as they questioned the past and tried to create a distinctive Scottish literature for the late twentieth century.²³³

Devine describes this process as a ‘cultural awakening,’ comparing it to the Quiet Revolution of the Canadian province of Quebec – an ‘increase in cultural activity’ which ‘enabled a more unified movement towards self-determination among the Quebecois.’²³⁴ The late twentieth century, Devine writes, saw ‘a new vitality in many aspects of Scottish culture,’ with distinctively Scottish-themed literature gaining international acclaim:

Novelists such as James Kelman, Alasdair Gray, William McIlvanney, Iain Banks and, later, Irvine Welsh enjoyed enormous international success with works grounded in the gritty realities of urban Scotland and often written in the working-class vernacular.²³⁵

This cultural awakening was not limited to the literary outputs but encompassed all creative activity in Scotland, including film, theatre, radio, music, television, and the visual arts. For instance, as Craig writes, the Edinburgh Festival was ‘a major inspiration to the redevelopment in Scotland’s cultural infrastructure,’ including the Edinburgh International Film Festival and the Festival Fringe, which grew from eight visiting companies in its inaugural year (1947) to nearly 500 by the early 1980s.²³⁶ In Glasgow, the Citizens Theatre in Glasgow became ‘the focus of experimental theatrical productions’ from 1969 onwards, and the 7:84 Theatre Company –

²³² Alistair McCleery, ‘Mainstream,’ in *The Edinburgh History of the Book in Scotland, Volume 4: Professionalism and Diversity 1880–2000*, eds. David Finkelstein and Alistair McCleery (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2007), 64.

²³³ Jane Potter, ‘Literary Publishing: 1945–2000,’ in *The Edinburgh History of the Book in Scotland, Volume 4: Professionalism and Diversity 1880–2000*, eds. David Finkelstein and Alistair McCleery (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2007), 250–232.

²³⁴ Devine, *The Scottish Nation: A Modern History*, 609.

²³⁵ Devine, *The Scottish Nation: A Modern History*, 608.

²³⁶ Craig, *The Wealth of the Nation*, 13.

producing radical theatre with strong political messages – started touring in 1971. BBC Radio Scotland was launched in 1978, providing ‘an alternative Scottish dimension’ to BBC broadcasts; new festivals and visual arts galleries began to emerge across the country, promoting Scottish music, literature, and the arts.²³⁷

It is crucial to consider the role of public subsidy in this cultural transformation, with financial assistance by the Scottish Arts Council facilitating many culturally significant projects of the late twentieth century. The Scottish Arts Council (SAC) was the lead public body for the funding of the arts in Scotland, with the mission to ‘serve the people of Scotland by fostering arts of the highest quality through investment, research and advocacy.’²³⁸ The organisation was established in 1942 as the Scottish Committee of the Council for the Encouragement of Music and the Arts, before becoming the Scottish Committee of the Arts Council of Great Britain in 1947.²³⁹ In 1967, the reorganisation of the Arts Council of Great Britain resulted in the establishment of the Scottish Arts Council as a separate entity – although the organisation formally remained part of the Arts Council, it enjoyed a considerable level of autonomy thanks to its arm’s length relationship with both the government and the parent organisation.²⁴⁰ In *The Wealth of the Nation*, Craig emphasises the significance of this date, connecting it to the previously discussed rise of the Scottish National Party in 1967.²⁴¹ He argues that the establishment of the Scottish Arts Council meant ‘the devolution of culture’ in Scotland:

By its separation from the Arts Council of Great Britain, Scotland was effectively allowed to pursue a specifically Scottish agenda, one which would not necessarily aim at integration of the arts in Scotland with the overarching agenda of the arts in the rest of the UK.²⁴²

This pursuit of a ‘specifically Scottish agenda’ included delivering regular financial support to Scottish publishers, ‘in the firm conviction that, for a small country, publishers have a vital role

²³⁷ Craig, *The Wealth of the Nation*, 13.

²³⁸ ‘Scottish Arts Council – Who we are,’ Scottish Arts Council, accessed 20 May 2020.

²³⁹ Susan Galloway and Huw Jones, ‘The Scottish dimension of British arts government: a historical perspective,’ *Cultural Trends*, 19:1–2, 27–40 (2010), 34.

²⁴⁰ The term ‘arm’s length’ refers to the ‘mechanism designed to distance policy or funding decisions from party politics and state bureaucracy by handing executive power over to an independent board’ (Galloway and Jones, 28).

²⁴¹ Craig, *The Wealth of the Nation*, 15.

²⁴² Craig, *The Wealth of the Nation*, 16.

in providing a written record of ourselves, both for our own needs, understanding, and enjoyment, and for the world.²⁴³ This support was primarily in the form of direct grants to cover production costs of individual publications.²⁴⁴

Craig argues that it is the rapid rejuvenation of the literary magazine industry that best illustrates the impact of the newly-devolved Scottish Arts Council, starting from the establishment of publicly funded *Scottish International* in January 1968:

[T]here was a regular complaint that Scotland had no equivalent to *The Spectator* or *The New Statesman*, a gap that *Scottish International*, with SAC support, aimed to fill.²⁴⁵

Scott Hames observes that, notably, the first issue of *Scottish International* appeared ‘only weeks after the SNP’s breakthrough in the Hamilton byelection,’ and that the magazine ‘both reflected and stimulated cultural change into the 1970s.’²⁴⁶ From 1971 until its closure in 1974, *Scottish International* appeared in the form of monthly issues ‘aimed to respond more rapidly to the changing cultural environment.’²⁴⁷ Although the generous financial support for the magazine was initially ‘met with suspicion from veteran cultural nationalists,’²⁴⁸ McCleery notes that public subsidy distributed by the SAC would become instrumental for the magazine industry as a whole: ‘pivotal’ publications launched in the following years, like the *New Edinburgh Review* (1969) and *Chapman* (1970), ‘all relied on SAC funding to make their editors’ visions a reality’:

Conditions attached to such funding ensured that contributors were paid, that production values were as high as practical, and proper attention was paid to marketing, distribution and subscription matters as well as editorial and design. These magazines were, and are, non-commercial but they made, and make, strong contributions to the public good.²⁴⁹

²⁴³ Marion Sinclair, Alistair McCleery and Mark C. Graham, *Review of publishing: A review of Scottish publishing in the 21st century – summary report* (Edinburgh: Scottish Arts Council, 2004), 2.

²⁴⁴ Alistair McCleery, ‘Role of the Scottish Arts Council,’ in *The Edinburgh History of the Book in Scotland, Volume 4: Professionalism and Diversity 1880–2000*, eds. David Finkelstein and Alistair McCleery (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2007).

²⁴⁵ Craig, *The Wealth of the Nation*, 17.

²⁴⁶ Scott Hames, ‘Scottish International.’ *FLYTE* (Edinburgh: Scottish Magazines Network, 2022), 3.

²⁴⁷ Craig, *The Wealth of the Nation*, 17.

²⁴⁸ Hames, ‘Scottish International,’ 3.

²⁴⁹ McCleery, ‘Role of the Scottish Arts Council.’

These ‘contributions to the public good’ included publishing new Scottish poetry and prose but also providing platforms for lively debates on cultural and political issues. Author and publisher James Robertson writes that the ‘intellectually stimulating and energetic small magazines’ generated ‘intense debate in the best tradition of dissent,’ paving the way for other cultural activity in Scotland:

Out of such beginnings grew a vibrant, confident contemporary literature and a level of general cultural activity that demanded to be taken seriously.²⁵⁰

Similarly, McCleery argues that the literary magazines were ‘pivotal in encouraging a diverse and lively approach to the condition of Scotland and of Scottishness and Britishness’:

They broadened and deepened the debate about cultural and political identity in Scotland by providing a focus and distribution network for contemporary writing, fiction, poetry and polemic, that defined, reflected, rebutted and amended those identities.²⁵¹

One of these influential literary periodicals, *Chapman*, was founded in 1970 by George Hardie, with editor Joy Hendry taking over in 1976.²⁵² In interview, Hendry states that *Chapman* grew out of ‘a general feeling that there were a lot of good poets in Scotland who weren’t really getting a publication shout.’²⁵³ She emphasises that above all else her aim had always been to raise the profile of Scottish writers and to contribute to the cultural revival, which she considered her professional mission carried out despite financial restrictions:

I wanted to devote *Chapman* to publishing Scottish writers and looking at what was needing done . . . *Chapman* had a job to do, and I tried to make sure it was done as completely, thoroughly and comprehensively as a magazine could, working within the financial and other restrictions that I was working under.²⁵⁴

²⁵⁰ James Robertson, ‘James Robertson,’ in *Thirtieth Anniversary of the Scottish Publishers Association: A Celebration* (Edinburgh: Scottish Publishers Association, 2004), 151–152.

²⁵¹ McCleery, ‘Role of the Scottish Arts Council,’ 69.

²⁵² Potter, ‘Literary Publishing: 1945–2000.’

²⁵³ Joy Hendry, interview with Alice Piotrowska, Edinburgh, Scotland, 11 April 2019.

²⁵⁴ Joy Hendry, interview with Alice Piotrowska, Edinburgh, Scotland, 11 April 2019.

According to Hendry, this ‘job’ – or her publishing ‘agenda’ – included providing a platform for people in Scotland to exchange ideas and respond to what was happening in politics and culture, encouraging debate and critical thinking:

[*Chapman*] was culturally important, because I had this agenda which was in addition to publishing . . . I wanted *Chapman* to be a creature with tentacles, that brought people together who wanted to change Scotland and actually got excited about ideas.²⁵⁵

She argues that one of *Chapman*’s goals was to ‘establish that literary values in Scotland were actually different from south of the border,’ partly because – in her view – Scottish writers ‘saw politics as part of everything, including poetry.’²⁵⁶

While the devolution movement of the 1970s stimulated socio-political debate in literary outputs, the ultimate failure of the 1979 referendum did not slow this momentum down. Linda Gunn and Alistair McCleery observe that between the failed devolution vote and the establishment of the Scottish Parliament in 1999

several Scottish literary magazines encouraged debate on the condition of Scotland, providing a focus and distribution network for fiction, poetry and polemic which defined, reflected and amended ideas about Scottish cultural and political identity.²⁵⁷

Literary magazines that emerged during that time included *Cencrastus* (1979), *Radical Scotland* (1982), and a relaunched *Edinburgh Review* (1984, previously *New Edinburgh Review*), all providing a platform for political debate and encouraging the belief that ‘cultural change could effect political change.’²⁵⁸ Gunn and McCleery note that *Cencrastus* was launched ‘with the express intention of perpetuating the devolution debate,’ while *Edinburgh Review* showed ‘support for more “autonomy” and criticism of Westminster . . . presented as a stance against disenfranchisement in general.’²⁵⁹ *Chapman* continued to take an active part in the debate – Hendry states in interview that the magazine ‘helped to bring it back,’ particularly its 35–6 issue

²⁵⁵ Joy Hendry, interview with Alice Piotrowska, Edinburgh, Scotland, 11 April 2019.

²⁵⁶ Joy Hendry, interview with Alice Piotrowska, Edinburgh, Scotland, 11 April 2019.

²⁵⁷ Linda Gunn and Alistair McCleery, ‘Wasps in a Jam Jar: Scottish literary magazines and political culture 1979–99,’ in *Further from the frontiers: crosscurrents in Irish and Scottish studies*, eds. Aimee McNair and Jacqueline Ryder (Aberdeen: AHRC Centre for Irish and Scottish Studies, 2009).

²⁵⁸ Gunn and McCleery, ‘Wasps in a Jam Jar.’

²⁵⁹ Gunn and McCleery, ‘Wasps in a Jam Jar.’

The State of Scotland: A Predicament for the Scottish Writer? (1983) which ‘generated a huge discussion’ and became – in her view – ‘the most important Scotland-changing edition’ of *Chapman*.²⁶⁰ The issue was a direct response to a cultural event: the relaunch of Edwin Muir’s *Scott and Scotland: The Predicament of the Scottish Writer*, organised by its publisher Polygon Press and held at the Traverse Theatre in Edinburgh in November 1982. Author Alasdair Gray, who took part in the event, recalls the ‘bland’ and ‘general’ speeches delivered by himself and the other panellists, Iain Crichton Smith, Trevor Royle, and Alan Spence, and writes:

George Byatt asked why there were no playwrights on the platform . . . Alan Massie replied that the conference has been organised by book publishers to publicise a book. Several other people made clear and necessary statements which led to no debate or exchange of ideas, because once uttered they seemed obvious. Eventually [someone] asked why there were no women on [the panel]. The chairman said nothing.²⁶¹

In interview, Hendry recalls her ‘indignation’ at the ‘waste of funding and possibility’ that the event was in her view:

There was a launch held at the Traverse, which was an absolute travesty . . . I was standing there with a group of literary radicals, and we were so angry about the waste of funding and possibility, and that the right issues were being raised entirely the wrong way. I said, ‘I’m going to do it right.’ So, I did the *Predicament* issue, out of indignation at that.²⁶²

In her introduction to *The State of Scotland* issue, she discusses the event – recalling her ‘burning frustration that questions vital to Scottish culture were being trivialised’ – and states that her intention is to ‘provide a platform for serious discussion about the Predicament of Scotland, which is that of its writers also.’ The publication includes work from over thirty contributors, including Alan Bold, Alasdair Gray (reflecting, as quoted above, on his involvement in the event), Tessa Ransford, and Iain Crichton Smith, with a number of pieces responding directly to Hendry’s prompt to ‘reflect quite uninhibitedly on the State of Scotland in [the contributors]’

²⁶⁰ Joy Hendry, interview with Alice Piotrowska, Edinburgh, Scotland, 11 April 2019.

²⁶¹ Alasdair Gray, ‘A Modest Proposal for by-passing a Predicament,’ *Chapman* 35–6, 1983, *The State of Scotland: A Predicament for the Scottish Writer?* (1990), 7.

²⁶² Joy Hendry, interview with Alice Piotrowska, Edinburgh, Scotland, 11 April 2019.

own fields.’ She notes that the community’s continuing desire for Scottish independence was the underlying message of all pieces in the issue:

The literary community had been so central in keeping the idea of Scottish independence, devolution, whatever, alive, and working with the SNP. Or not working with the SNP, but in that direction . . . I didn’t tell them to, but everybody [in the issue] said that in order to ensure the health of Scottish culture, especially literature, we see no alternative to greater autonomy.²⁶³



Figure 4: Front cover of *Chapman*, Issue 35–6. Illustration by author Alasdair Gray, one of the magazine contributors and a staunch supporter of independent Scotland.

²⁶³ Joy Hendry, interview with Alice Piotrowska, Edinburgh, Scotland, 11 April 2019.

For the independent book publishing industry in Scotland, examined from the next section of this chapter, this context of literary magazines is crucial. The culturally and politically engaged periodicals often served as the first platform for authors who would go on to become some of the most influential voices in Scottish literature, with their full-length works published by new independent presses. In interview, publisher Neville Moir argues that ‘from the magazines came the book publishing,’²⁶⁴ with the literary magazines setting the social and cultural scene for the book business. In fact, as will be discussed later in the chapter, book and magazine publishing would often be intrinsically linked, from sharing the same editors to cross-publishing work by the same authors. The next section discusses the first ‘wave’ of book publishers emerging in the late 1960s and 1970s, focusing on four case studies.

4.1.2. The First Wave: Independent Publishing 1968–1978

This part of the chapter provides detailed case studies of Polygon Press, Canongate Books, Floris Books, and Mainstream Publishing – arguably some of the most influential and enduring trade publishers that emerged in Edinburgh prior to the 1979 referendum on devolution, setting the scene for the independent companies that followed over the next two decades. Using interview data, the section provides chronological narratives of the four companies, examining their development, business operations, and role in shaping Scotland’s literary and cultural identity. It offers insights into the opportunities and challenges faced by the new independents and the relationship between these opportunities and challenges and the socio-political circumstances of the period.

Polygon Press

One of the first and most influential presses to emerge as part of the new wave of independent book publishing in Scotland was Polygon, launched in Edinburgh in 1968 as the Edinburgh University Student Publications Board (EUSPB).²⁶⁵ Like the literary periodicals established around the same time (in fact, as will be discussed later, EUSPB maintained strong links with the magazine industry for many years), the Publications Board was highly engaged in cultural

²⁶⁴ Neville Moir, interview with Alice Piotrowska, Edinburgh, Scotland, 20 February 2019.

²⁶⁵ Pedersen, ‘Educational, Academic and Legal Publishing.’

and political debate – Alistair McCleery notes that the company ‘gained a reputation for radical and forward-looking titles on topics such as land ownership and political identity.’²⁶⁶ Bill Campbell, who joined the press as publishing manager for two years in the mid-1970s, recalls in interview that the board would seek out ‘quite radical’ titles, including political dramas performed by the Scottish left-wing theatre group 7:84.²⁶⁷ Prior to joining the company, Campbell himself was commissioned by EUSPB to co-write a ‘city guide with a difference,’ *Alternative Edinburgh* (1973), with Barry Wright and future Prime Minister Gordon Brown²⁶⁸ – a pocket guide that included topics such as ‘Politics: Using the System/Abusing the System’ or advised readers where to find ‘political’ pubs in the city, with clear left-wing leaning:

Of the few ‘political’ pubs, the West End Hotel, Palmerston Pl., is a Scottish Nationalist stronghold . . . The Liberals retain their own club, 109 Princes St., sadly lacking in members and life . . . In most working men’s pubs the bias is sadly conservative.²⁶⁹

Other politically engaged publications at the time included titles such as *The Red Paper on Scotland* (1975), a ‘Socialist contribution to the present debate about Scotland’s future’ edited by Gordon Brown,²⁷⁰ or John McEwan’s *Who Owns Scotland? Study in Landownership* (1977)²⁷¹ – publications aimed at stimulating debate and providing socio-political commentary.

In addition to taking part in political debate, however, EUSPB began to publish new poetry and prose from authors who would go on to become some of the most influential and internationally recognised names in Scottish literature. Several interviewees tie these publications directly to Peter Kravitz – in the words of Neville Moir, who worked at EUSPB/Polygon from 1979 to 1987, a ‘very active and dynamic student chairman’ who joined the board in 1981.²⁷² Thanks to his involvement in the ‘mini-Glasgow literary revival’ at the time, Kravitz developed networks

²⁶⁶ McCleery, ‘Mainstream,’ 64.

²⁶⁷ Bill Campbell and Peter MacKenzie, interview with Alice Piotrowska, Edinburgh, Scotland, 4 February 2019.

²⁶⁸ Bill Campbell and Peter MacKenzie, interview with Alice Piotrowska, Edinburgh, Scotland, 4 February 2019.

²⁶⁹ Gordon Brown, Bill Campbell and Barry Wright, *Alternative Edinburgh* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Students Publications Board, 1973), 59.

²⁷⁰ Gordon Brown, *The Red Paper on Scotland* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Student Publications Board, 1975).

²⁷¹ Murdo Macdonald, interview with Alice Piotrowska, online, 20 April 2021.

²⁷² Neville Moir, interview with Alice Piotrowska, Edinburgh, Scotland, 20 February 2019.

with a number of up-and-coming Scottish writers²⁷³ – Murdo Macdonald, who joined the Publications Board in 1983, recalls it in interview as a ‘very exciting time’ for the company, with new books including debuts by James Kelman (*Not Not While The Giro*, 1983), Agnes Owens (*Gentlemen of the West*, 1984), and Ian Rankin (*The Flood*, 1986).²⁷⁴ Moir notes that these publications generated interest in the press and media, leading the company to make ‘one or two little waves’ and its publishing to increase to about ten to twelve titles a year.²⁷⁵ Journalist Jenny Turner, who was involved in the company in the early 1980s, recalls in interview how unprecedented this kind of publishing was in Scotland at the time:

I remember the day I finished *The Busconductor Hines* [by James Kelman, 1984], I caught a bus to celebrate it. I think Duncan McLean said it was the first time you ever felt that you’ve read a book where people spoke the way people spoke, and people thought about and worried about things that people thought about and worried about. It was a huge deal . . . I think it was either *Not Not While the Giro* or *The Busconductor Hines*, I can’t remember which one, but I remember sitting in the cafe in the basement of David Hume Tower in Edinburgh in George Square, and Christina coming in with a big bag of them. We all had cheap pre-orders and were just kind of giving them out like Santa Claus. That’s what it was like.²⁷⁶

Significantly, the company would also maintain strong links with the magazine industry, publishing its own journal that served as a platform for including shorter forms and testing out new ideas. In addition to running the EUSPB list, Peter Kravitz became the editor of *New Edinburgh Review* – a political magazine first published by Edinburgh University students in 1969 – in 1984, relaunching it as *Edinburgh Review*.²⁷⁷ The magazine would go on to become, in the words of Marion Sinclair – who joined the company in 1988 – the ‘Polygon house journal,’²⁷⁸ featuring short-form work by authors such as Edwin Morgan, Janice Galloway, A. L. Kennedy, or Gordon Legge, as well as features from and on visual artists.²⁷⁹ Murdo Macdonald, who worked on *Edinburgh Review* alongside Kravitz and eventually became its main editor from 1990 to 1994, remembers a ‘great deal of interaction’ between the magazine and the press, with several

²⁷³ Neville Moir, interview with Alice Piotrowska, Edinburgh, Scotland, 20 February 2019.

²⁷⁴ Murdo Macdonald, interview with Alice Piotrowska, online, 20 April 2021.

²⁷⁵ Neville Moir, interview with Alice Piotrowska, Edinburgh, Scotland, 20 February 2019.

²⁷⁶ Jenny Turner, interview with Alice Piotrowska, online, 25 May 2021.

²⁷⁷ Gunn and McCleery, ‘Wasps in a Jam Jar.’

²⁷⁸ Marion Sinclair, interview with Alice Piotrowska, online, 25 February 2021.

²⁷⁹ Gunn and McCleery, ‘Wasps in a Jam Jar.’

authors included in both outputs.²⁸⁰ Similarly, Sinclair recalls that *Edinburgh Review* ‘fed Polygon as well, in terms of offers and ideas’ – ‘you could test [ideas] out in the magazine and if they worked, you would publish them [in full-length form]’:

I suppose that the ideas that they were coming up with in *Edinburgh Review*, and the authors that they were championing, became the Polygon house style. So, radical fiction, experimental fiction, poetry, folklore, philosophy, and then Scottish [focus]... I like to think of it as kind of rescued areas of Scottish culture that had been neglected.²⁸¹

Jenny Turner also recalls that James Kelman, by then an author published by EUSPB, was ‘constantly channelling people from his writing class [at the Paisley local libraries] through to *Edinburgh Review*,’ with writers signed this way including Agnes Owens and Jeff Torrington.²⁸²

It is crucial to note the relatively unusual ownership and financial structure of the company from its launch until 1988. As the name suggests, the Edinburgh University Student Publications Board was initially a press managed entirely by students at the University of Edinburgh, who were given a fair amount of editorial freedom while being part of a larger established structure. Macdonald recalls in interview that – financially and logistically – it was a fortunate position for the press to be in, with ‘free editorial and critical labour coming in, in the form of students, and quite a lot of costs being covered by the Students Association’ – but, at the same time, with little red tape related to decision making about books:

The actual process of getting books through was pretty straightforward. Obviously, they had to be read by three or so readers and agreed by the board . . . There wasn’t much bureaucracy once something had been accepted as worth doing. People would see the value [in editorial proposals] and then we would just get on with it.²⁸³

As a result, all of the influential titles of the 1970s and 1980s were published when the company was managed mostly by students offering their services for free – Macdonald also notes that most of the 1980s board, including Kravitz, started as undergraduates, ‘which is another very interesting point about Polygon if you think about the quality of the work that came out’

²⁸⁰ Murdo Macdonald, interview with Alice Piotrowska, online, 20 April 2021.

²⁸¹ Marion Sinclair, interview with Alice Piotrowska, online, 25 February 2021.

²⁸² Jenny Turner, interview with Alice Piotrowska, online, 25 May 2021.

²⁸³ Murdo Macdonald, interview with Alice Piotrowska, online, 20 April 2021.

(Macdonald joined the press as a doctoral student).²⁸⁴ In interview, Turner recalls that the board was ‘just a bunch of ordinary undergraduate students who were given a pretty extraordinary opportunity because of the way that Pubs Board was organised.’²⁸⁵ From the business-oriented perspective, however, Neville Moir – who joined EUSPB as the only paid and permanent member of staff in 1979 and remained in post until 1987 – saw it as a ‘very odd organisation’ that was ‘*not* commercially sound,’ even while it was publishing its most successful titles:

It was a strange job in that we did look out to the commercial world, but we also had to be aware of the politics of the university. Increasingly I was looking to see ways that the imprint could be kept going.²⁸⁶

One of the aspects Moir ‘lobbied for successfully’ in the 1980s was to change the name of the Edinburgh University Student Publications Board to something more suited for the trade:

My only stipulation was that the new name had to begin with ‘P,’ because of all the publishers like Penguin and Puffin and Pelican, Panther, Pan – it seemed to be that successful publishers had a name that began with ‘P.’ After a long voting session, a new publisher called Pinnacle was formed. That lasted about a week until we had discovered that there was a Pinnacle. So we did a more thorough search the next time when we came up with Polygon. That helped our relationship – well, *my* relationship as a sales rep with the book trade.²⁸⁷

However, despite the increasing trade focus and a growing number of annual publications, both Macdonald and Moir recall that Polygon would regularly have to ‘persuade the Students Association not to close [them] down.’²⁸⁸ Moir notes that the company would be subject to constant ‘belt tightening’ throughout the 1980s:

As [EUSPB] was founded by the Student Association, they were increasingly worried about the drain on their resources, and most of the time there was belt tightening. They were constantly on our case. In fact, part of my job was to lobby student politicians to make sure that we got our funding for the year.²⁸⁹

As was the case with the literary magazines discussed previously in this chapter, the Scottish Arts Council was crucial in making many of the publications happen. Macdonald remembers

²⁸⁴ Murdo Macdonald, interview with Alice Piotrowska, online, 20 April 2021.

²⁸⁵ Jenny Turner, interview with Alice Piotrowska, online, 25 May 2021.

²⁸⁶ Neville Moir, interview with Alice Piotrowska, Edinburgh, Scotland, 20 February 2019.

²⁸⁷ Neville Moir, interview with Alice Piotrowska, Edinburgh, Scotland, 20 February 2019.

²⁸⁸ Murdo Macdonald, interview with Alice Piotrowska, online, 20 April 2021.

²⁸⁹ Neville Moir, interview with Alice Piotrowska, Edinburgh, Scotland, 20 February 2019.

the organisation as ‘absolutely fundamental’ and ‘invaluable,’ noting that even with the support of the Students Association many EUSPB/Polygon titles would not be published without external grants. He does note that some of the SAC’s decisions could be questioned in hindsight – ‘for the first two Jim Kelman books, we got Scottish Arts Council support, but then they decided that his third book, *A Chancer*, was really not worthy of support’ (Kelman went on to be shortlisted for the Booker Prize four years later, and won it in 1994) – but that the Publications Board could ‘normally assume that a serious bit of Scottish literature would get the support.’²⁹⁰

However, despite its growing influence and status as a Scottish literary fiction publisher, by the late 1980s Polygon was again facing the risk of closure by the Students Association. Martin Spencer, who had taken over Edinburgh University Press (EUP) in 1987, became a ‘key figure’ in rescuing the company²⁹¹ – in 1988, EUP took over Polygon as its literary imprint (EUP itself changed its status from a university department to a wholly owned subsidiary in 1992 and to a limited company in 1994).²⁹² Marion Sinclair, who joined Polygon as editorial and marketing assistant in 1988, recalls that the imprint structure was highly beneficial, offering the business and financial support of a bigger company but also ‘free rein’ to continue Polygon’s ‘ambitious programme’ of, at the time, 20 to 40 publications a year:

We had a blast. I have to say that we were given free rein by Edinburgh University Press. We were given quite stiff targets – 40 [books a year] was quite a lot. But at the time, the guy who was running Edinburgh University Press . . . liked the idea of having a general trade publisher attached to a university press [and] gave us a really free rein as to what we could publish. In a way, that was just a dream job, because although we had targets and we kind of fitted in roughly with the EUP system, they didn’t really have any view on what we should publish at that stage. Although we had discussions about the direction of the list with them, they just kind of let us get on with it.²⁹³

²⁹⁰ Murdo Macdonald, interview with Alice Piotrowska, online, 20 April 2021.

²⁹¹ Murdo Macdonald, interview with Alice Piotrowska, online, 20 April 2021.

²⁹² Alistair McCleery, ‘Edinburgh University Press,’ in *The Edinburgh History of the Book in Scotland, Volume 4: Professionalism and Diversity 1880–2000*, eds. David Finkelstein and Alistair McCleery (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2007), 319–321.

²⁹³ Marion Sinclair, interview with Alice Piotrowska, online, 25 February 2021.

Sinclair took over as editorial director in 1990, replacing Peter Kravitz. As an EUP imprint, Polygon began to publish titles in series, across fiction, non-fiction, and poetry – including a debut author series, a poetry list, and series in philosophy and oral history.²⁹⁴ It also became an important reprint publisher, releasing early twentieth-century work from Scottish authors such as Lewis Grassie Gibbon and Neil M. Gunn.²⁹⁵ Although by then known mostly for its trade fiction, the company also continued to take part in political debate, publishing ‘quite a number of books on independence and constitution, and devolution’ pre-Scottish Parliament.²⁹⁶

Under direction of Marion Sinclair from 1990 to 1997, Polygon continued to publish highly influential titles, proving ‘particularly fleet-footed in spotting and publishing significant works.’²⁹⁷ Released in 1992, Tibor Fischer’s *Under the Frog* was shortlisted for the Booker Prize; Polygon’s status as a ‘cultural leader’ was then recognised in 1993 with a *Sunday Times* Small Publisher of the Year award and the Scottish Arts Council’s special award for services to publishing.²⁹⁸ However, Sinclair notes in interview that – although ‘it really felt as though [they] were at the centre of Scottish publishing’ and were ‘*the* Scottish fiction publisher,’ releasing more titles than any other independent company – they remained ‘a tiny press with tiny resources’ throughout that time, with three to four members of staff managing an ‘enormous’ list of around 40 books per year. She also discusses the constant challenge of Polygon authors being ‘snapped up by London,’ lured by both larger advances and ‘prestige’:

That was one of the main problems with Polygon. We were then, I suppose, a nursery publisher – we could hold on to our authors for maybe two books, and if we were very lucky three, but sometimes they left you after one. [One author] said to me, ‘It’s not the money at all – it’s not the marketing. It is a little bit of the prestige.’ . . . It was more the kind of imprimatur – that kind of stamp of, you are a ‘real’ writer because you’re published in London.²⁹⁹

²⁹⁴ Marion Sinclair, interview with Alice Piotrowska, online, 25 February 2021.

²⁹⁵ Murdo Macdonald, interview with Alice Piotrowska, online, 20 April 2021.

²⁹⁶ Marion Sinclair, interview with Alice Piotrowska, online, 25 February 2021.

²⁹⁷ David Finkelstein and Alistair McCleery, ‘Publishing Policies: The Literary Culture. Overview,’ in *The Edinburgh History of the Book in Scotland, Volume 4: Professionalism and Diversity 1880–2000*, eds. David Finkelstein and Alistair McCleery (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2007), 184.

²⁹⁸ Polygon, *New Books Autumn 93 – Spring 94* (Edinburgh: Polygon, 1993).

²⁹⁹ Marion Sinclair, interview with Alice Piotrowska, online, 25 February 2021.

Sinclair left the company in 1997, citing ‘a real difference of opinion in how you should publish’ between Polygon and EUP’s then-management – according to Sinclair, EUP had a more academically-focused strategy that aimed at increasing the volume of books, which for a literary publisher such as Polygon led to ‘spreading resources too thinly’ across too many authors.³⁰⁰ In 2002, EUP decided to ‘focus upon its core business of academic books and journals’ and sold the Polygon imprint to Birlinn, an independent Edinburgh publisher founded in 1992.³⁰¹ As of 2022, Polygon continues as part of Birlinn, somewhat maintaining its original incarnation as a literary fiction, non-fiction, and poetry list – releasing ‘both classic and modern’ titles from authors including Alexander McCall Smith, John Buchan, Michelle Sloan, and Jenni Fagan.³⁰² It continues, however, as Birlinn’s publishing list rather than an independent company.

Canongate Books

Canongate Books, ‘arguably the most influential late twentieth-century publishing company in Scotland,’ was established in Edinburgh in 1973 by Stephanie Wolfe Murray, Angus Wolfe Murray, and American novelist Robert Shure.³⁰³ In his article on the birth of Canongate, Angus Wolfe Murray recalls that launching the company was an entirely spontaneous decision: Shure had written a novel called *Monk*, which he could not find a publisher for, and a decision was made to set up a fiction publisher to release it alongside some works in public domain:

Stephanie thought it was a fun idea. All three of us put in £2000 and Canongate was born. It took us two weeks to come up with a name. Some of the rejects make me cringe now, like Pistol Ink. Anyway, we found premises in Jeffrey Street going cheap . . . We put together a collection of Edgar Allen Poe’s humorous stories (out of copyright) and I went on the road with that and *Monk* to flog copies to every bookshop in the land.³⁰⁴

³⁰⁰ Marion Sinclair, interview with Alice Piotrowska, online, 25 February 2021.

³⁰¹ McCleery, ‘Edinburgh University Press,’ 321.

³⁰² ‘Polygon,’ Birlinn, accessed 4 July 2022, <https://birlinn.co.uk/polygon/>

³⁰³ Zsuzsanna Varga, ‘Stephanie Wolfe Murray (1941–),’ in *The Edinburgh History of Book in Scotland, Volume 4: Professionalism and Diversity 1880–2000*, eds. David Finkelstein and Alistair McCleery (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2007), 274.

³⁰⁴ Angus Wolfe Murray, ‘Canongate: The Birth,’ in *Stephanie Wolfe Murray: A Life in Books*, ed. Rupert Wolfe Murray (Self-published, 2017), 17–18.

By 1975, Angus Wolfe Murray and Shure had both left the company, leaving the editorial chair to Stephanie Wolfe Murray.³⁰⁵ Charles Wild, who joined Canongate in 1974, recalls that ‘with only two books published, Stephanie took the brave decision to continue with the enterprise’ – Wild remained employed until 1979, recalling his years at Canongate as ‘a productive period [that] created a significant, if financially precarious, platform for what was to follow.’³⁰⁶ As Zsuzsanna Varga writes in *The Edinburgh History of the Book in Scotland*, Wolfe Murray’s ‘original intention’ was to set up ‘a publishing house in Scotland rather than a distinctly Scottish company,’ and Canongate began from publishing international authors; however, it rapidly established itself as a publisher of culturally significant – and distinctly Scottish – works, including *Scottish Love Poems* by Lady Antonia Fraser (1975), *A Sense of Freedom* by Jimmy Boyle (1977), and *Lanark* by Alasdair Gray (1981) (with *Lanark* winning the Saltire Society Book of the Year Award in 1982).³⁰⁷ Wild argues that this direction was influenced by publisher Robin Lorimer after Lorimer’s small imprint, Southside, was merged with Canongate in the early years – with Lorimer being interested in participating in ‘the revival of general publishing in Scotland’:

Southside had a small but impressive list which brought added context and substance to what was in the early days a somewhat random collection of titles. Lorimer’s vision was the revival of general publishing in Scotland (abandoned in the 1950s and 1960s) and he believed that books by Scotland-based authors should enjoy the same high editorial and production standards as those published in London or New York. Stephanie warmly embraced these principles.³⁰⁸

Like Polygon, whose editorial successes in the 1980s were closely associated with the charismatic figure of Peter Kravitz, Canongate in the 1970s and 1980s was synonymous with Stephanie Wolfe Murray. Described by Varga as ‘one of the women whose work changed the face of Scottish literary publishing,’³⁰⁹ Wolfe Murray was closely involved in the early revival of independent publishing, including becoming one of the founding members of the Scottish Publishers Association (examined in Chapter Five); in interview, Neville Moir notes that she

³⁰⁵ Varga, ‘Stephanie Wolfe Murray (1941–).’

³⁰⁶ Charles Wild, ‘Canongate: The Early Years,’ in *Stephanie Wolfe Murray: A Life in Books*, ed. Rupert Wolfe Murray (Self-published, 2017), 27.

³⁰⁷ Varga, ‘Stephanie Wolfe Murray (1941–).’

³⁰⁸ Wild, ‘Canongate: The Early Years,’ 28.

³⁰⁹ Varga, ‘Stephanie Wolfe Murray (1941–),’ 274.

‘embodied Canongate and so many people, when they thought of Canongate, thought of her,’ with the company enjoying a ‘much more prestigious reputation largely because of Stephanie’s personality.’³¹⁰ With financial support from the Scottish Arts Council, Canongate under Wolfe Murray’s direction launched two key book series in 1984 and 1987: children’s paperback list Kelpies and the Canongate Classics, respectively.³¹¹ Lorraine Fannin, who at the time owned a children’s bookshop in Edinburgh, recalls in interview that she began to collaborate with Wolfe Murray on selling the Kelpies publications:

Stephanie Wolfe Murray was toying with the idea of bringing a lot of old Scottish children’s classics back into print and also trying to get more going. She started up the Kelpies list and she came to me to work with her a bit in terms of selling them, because I had a small bookshop . . . I got very friendly with Stephanie at that time, and we did a lot of work to get children’s books in.³¹²

Fannin notes that the Kelpies served as a starting point for filling a niche that existed on the Scottish market at the time, with no content that ‘reflected life in Scotland’:

The thing that people forget now is that in those days there was virtually nothing in schools for children which described the environment they, as children in Scotland, lived in. There was no literature for Scottish children, there was nothing in school that reflected the background they lived in . . . they were all ‘John and Jane,’ children who lived in London.³¹³

In line with the idea of bringing old Scottish ‘classics’ back into print, the initial Kelpies series included mostly reprints of twentieth-century Scottish children’s authors, such as Kathleen Fidler, George Mackay Brown, and Mollie Hunter.³¹⁴ The list remained with Canongate until 2002, when it was sold to another Edinburgh company Floris Books (discussed later in this chapter) and began to include new Scottish writers and illustrators.³¹⁵

The Canongate Classics series was initiated by the Scottish Arts Council itself, with Canongate winning the funding bid and launching the list in 1987. The aim of the series, as envisioned by the SAC, was to ‘keep good Scottish work in print, thus encouraging and sustaining the teaching

³¹⁰ Neville Moir, interview with Alice Piotrowska, Edinburgh, Scotland, 20 February 2019.

³¹¹ Varga, ‘Stephanie Wolfe Murray (1941–).’

³¹² Lorraine Fannin, interview with Alice Piotrowska, Edinburgh, Scotland, 15 January 2019.

³¹³ Lorraine Fannin, interview with Alice Piotrowska, Edinburgh, Scotland, 15 January 2019.

³¹⁴ ‘About – DiscoverKelpies,’ Discover Kelpies, accessed 5 July 2022, <https://discoverkelpies.co.uk/about/>

³¹⁵ ‘About – DiscoverKelpies,’ Discover Kelpies, accessed 5 July 2022, <https://discoverkelpies.co.uk/about/>

of Scottish writing at universities.³¹⁶ ‘Good’ is an expression that suggests individual editorial decisions and, as Varga observes, it is quite telling that the series was ultimately named ‘Canongate’ rather than ‘Scottish’ Classics – indicating ‘a choice based on editorial taste rather than canon.’³¹⁷ Under editor Rory Watson, the initial paperbacks included both ‘undoubted classics’ of Scottish literature, such as Robert Louis Stevenson’s *Kidnapped*, as well as ‘forgotten’ authors such as Nan Shepherd’s *The Living Mountain*³¹⁸ – the latter would go on to become one of the constant strong sellers on the Canongate backlist and experience ‘massive, unexpected success’ after a 2008 reprint, with Shepherd since becoming the first woman to appear on a Scottish banknote.³¹⁹ Neville Moir, who worked at Canongate from 1987, recalls in interview that Canongate Classics ‘were [n]ever that hugely successful commercially, but they provided a lot of ballast to Canongate as a publisher.’³²⁰

Despite establishing itself as one of the key publishers of Scottish fiction during the first two decades of its existence, Canongate continued to face financial difficulties. Moir notes that, at the time, the company was ‘tethering on insolvency for most of its existence.’³²¹ Author Alasdair Gray remembers that ‘[w]hat sunk the plan to have Canongate publish all [his] books was Stephanie’s lack of money’ – after the release of his first book, *Lanark* (1981), he ‘gave Canongate five books and London publishers the same number’:

I needed the London money because it was paid to me steadily. Often Canongate could not pay royalties I was due. Stephanie explained that if I was paid her firm would go bankrupt because it had not enough money to pay the printers.³²²

³¹⁶ Varga, ‘Stephanie Wolfe Murray (1941–).’

³¹⁷ Varga, ‘Stephanie Wolfe Murray (1941–).’

³¹⁸ Varga, ‘Stephanie Wolfe Murray (1941–).’

³¹⁹ ‘About Canongate – independent, award-winning book publisher,’ Canongate Books, accessed 5 July 2022, <https://canongate.co.uk/about/>

³²⁰ Neville Moir, interview with Alice Piotrowska, Edinburgh, Scotland, 20 February 2019.

³²¹ Neville Moir, interview with Alice Piotrowska, Edinburgh, Scotland, 20 February 2019.

³²² Alasdair Gray, ‘Getting Lanark Published,’ in *Stephanie Wolfe Murray: A Life in Books*, ed. Rupert Wolfe Murray (Self-published, 2017), 31.

With this continuous financial precarity, the company was bought by the Oxford-based Musterlin Group in 1987.³²³ Moir, who was hired for the management team in the same year, recalls in interview that the new setup ‘almost worked’ – with Musterlin taking over accounts, sales, and distribution, Canongate could focus on the editorial and book production aspects of publishing and soon began to release titles which were ‘selling pretty well.’³²⁴ However, Musterlin itself was dealing with a number of ‘fundamental problems,’ eventually going into receivership in 1990,³²⁵ leaving Canongate – as described in a *Herald Scotland* article published in 1993 – ‘under-capitalised and ill-equipped to endure the recession which followed.’³²⁶ Moir recalls that the company ‘staggered on’ until it was sold again in 1993, to school and library supplier Albany Book Company, with the management team not realising that Albany was experiencing challenges of its own:

We were so relieved to have what we thought was a financial saviour that we didn’t do due diligence and didn’t realise that Albany Book Company wasn’t that financially sound. They put Canongate into receivership because they just did not have enough money. They went bust probably a year or so later.³²⁷

Canongate entered another difficult period and, in 1994, was bought out by Jamie Byng and Hugh Andrew, who – with ‘significant injection of capital’ – allowed the company to continue as an independent publisher.³²⁸ Andrew, who at the time was also running his own Edinburgh-based publishing company Birlinn, remained joint managing director until 1998.³²⁹ As McCleery writes, Jamie Byng was ‘an accidental publisher’ – having joined Canongate for unpaid work experience in 1992 – but became ‘instrumental’ in raising sufficient funds to buy the company out, and in developing new publishing and marketing directions that brought Canongate critical and commercial success:

His very background [he is the son of the 8th Earl of Strafford and Jennifer May, and his stepfather was the British businessman and politician Sir Christopher Bland], giving direct and indirect access to sources

³²³ Herald Scotland, ‘Book firm relishes a challenge,’ *The Herald*, 29 May 1993.

³²⁴ Neville Moir, interview with Alice Piotrowska, Edinburgh, Scotland, 20 February 2019.

³²⁵ Neville Moir, interview with Alice Piotrowska, Edinburgh, Scotland, 20 February 2019.

³²⁶ Herald Scotland, ‘Book firm relishes a challenge,’ *The Herald*, 29 May 1993.

³²⁷ Neville Moir, interview with Alice Piotrowska, Edinburgh, Scotland, 20 February 2019.

³²⁸ Varga, ‘Stephanie Wolfe Murray (1941–),’ 275.

³²⁹ Hugh Andrew, interview with Alice Piotrowska, Edinburgh, Scotland, 4 February 2019.

of funding, and an outgoing, unconventional and non-parochial perspective assisted in overcoming the two endemic weaknesses of the company that had made it vulnerable in the 1980s, under-capitalisation and under-investment in marketing its publications outside Scotland.³³⁰

McCleery argues that, over the next few years, Byng ‘strengthened Canongate by making them less a Scottish publisher and more a publisher based in Scotland’ – although this focus was shared by Wolfe Murray in the early years of Canongate, it was under Byng that the company began to work with more international authors and market them outside Scotland, looking to ‘bring fresh, original writing to the reader and not to preserve and perpetuate literature labelled solely as Scottish.’³³¹ In 1996, Canongate entered into a relatively short-lived but highly influential publishing partnership with Kevin Williamson, the editor of *Rebel Inc.*³³² Described by Joseph Ridgwell as ‘one of the most successful underground publications ever,’³³³ *Rebel Inc* was a counter-culture literary magazine that between its launch in 1992 and 1996 released five influential issues and worked with authors including Irvine Welsh, Alexander Trocchi, and Alan Warner.³³⁴ By 1996, Williamson ‘wanted to create a book imprint,’ and – after meeting Jamie Byng the previous year and connecting over their shared interest in subversive literary work – began to publish work under the Rebel Inc Classics imprint of Canongate.³³⁵ Rebel Inc Classics published a total of 52 books over the next five years, developing an eclectic list that included both international and Scottish writers, from John Fante and Charles Bukowski to Alexander Trocchi and Laura Hird – attracting publicity from media outlets across Britain, the titles helped re-establish Canongate as a highly influential literary publisher with an international outlook.³³⁶ The partnership continued for several years before coming to an ‘acrimonious’ end in 2001.³³⁷

³³⁰ Alistair McCleery, ‘Jamie Byng, publisher,’ in *The Edinburgh History of Book in Scotland, Volume 4: Professionalism and Diversity 1880–2000*, eds. David Finkelstein and Alistair McCleery (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2007), 199.

³³¹ McCleery, ‘Jamie Byng, publisher,’ 199–201.

³³² Jenni Fagan, ‘A cultural call to arms: Rebel Inc. 25 years on,’ *The Skinny*, 31 May 2017.

³³³ Joseph Ridgwell, ‘A different kind of classic,’ *The Guardian*, 18 October 2007.

³³⁴ Ridgwell, ‘A different kind of classic.’

³³⁵ Fagan, ‘A cultural call to arms: Rebel Inc. 25 years on.’

³³⁶ Kevin Williamson, ‘Rebel Inc: 20 Years On & Ready For More,’ *Bella Caledonia*, 2 May 2012.

³³⁷ Laura Hird, ‘Dear Laura,’ *3:AM Magazine*, 14 November 2006.

However, the list that began as Rebel Inc Classics remained a significant part of Canongate's publishing identity, with titles continuing to be released under the Canongate Canons series.³³⁸

Canongate has continued to expand and internationalise its publishing portfolio in the twenty-first century, with selling and acquiring international rights becoming one of its main strengths. Published in 2002, *Life of Pi* by Canadian author Yann Martel was a major breakthrough – its Man Booker Prize for Fiction win in 2002 led to an 'immediate financial boost to the company of about £2m and a great deal in terms of reputation and recognition.'³³⁹ Shortly after this success, Canongate opened an office in London in 2003 to gain 'better access to supporting services, financing, and international connections.'³⁴⁰ Two years later, the company started Canongate Myths, a new series that launched at the Frankfurt Book Fair with 34 international co-publishers.³⁴¹ The series featured authors such as Margaret Atwood, Philip Pullman, and Jeanette Winterson.³⁴² With the aim of developing a 'diverse, radical and global' list, Canongate has also published titles such as *Dreams From My Father* (2007) by Barack Obama – its strongest seller since *Life of Pi* – and *Guantánamo Diary* (2015) by Mohamedou Ould Slahi, as well as books from international activists like Rebecca Solnit and Patrisse Khan-Cullors.³⁴³ While Canongate does include a number of Scottish authors on its list, both through popular backlist reprints and new titles from authors such as Louise Welsh and Ian Rankin, it maintains an outward-looking approach to its publishing and continues to place a strong focus on international rights sales. While still a SME as defined by the European Commission, with a turnover of £13.9m in 2020,³⁴⁴ Canongate is one of the Tier 4 publishers according to the Tiers model developed by Claire Squires and Helena Markou – making it one of the largest trade publishers in Scotland.

³³⁸ 'About Canongate – independent, award-winning book publisher,' Canongate Books, accessed 25 March 2023, <https://canongate.co.uk/about/>

³³⁹ McCleery, 'Jamie Byng, publisher,' 199.

³⁴⁰ Nordicity and Drew Wylie, *Literature and Publishing Sector Review* (Edinburgh: Creative Scotland, 2015), 61.

³⁴¹ Stephanie Wolfe Murray and Jamie Byng, 'Canongate celebrates 40 years,' *BookBrunch*, 13 May 2013.

³⁴² 'About Canongate – independent, award-winning book publisher,' Canongate Books, accessed 5 July 2022, <https://canongate.co.uk/about/>

³⁴³ 'About Canongate – independent, award-winning book publisher,' Canongate Books, accessed 5 July 2022, <https://canongate.co.uk/about/>

³⁴⁴ Ruth Comerford, 'Canongate delivers record-breaking results for 2020,' *The Bookseller*, 9 September 2021.

Floris Books

Although initially a company very different to Polygon and Canongate, launched in 1976 as a small religious publisher formed from what had been the Christian Community Press, Floris Books would quickly extend its publishing focus and become closely involved in the broader independent publishing community of the 1970s. Publisher Christian Maclean, who from 1976 until 1990 ran the company from his house in the south-west of Edinburgh, notes in interview that he was interested in expanding the business and collaborating with other publishers from the beginning, becoming involved in the Scottish Publishers Association (examined in Chapter Five) as early as 1977:

I joined [the Scottish Publishers Association] because I thought it would be quite useful to have a bit of contact with other publishers. Then, before I knew it, I was on the council – and soon after that, I was the treasurer. I think I was the treasurer for . . . something like twenty-five years . . . I just found it was interesting, talking with others and seeing what areas you can cooperate in. Obviously in some areas, you are fierce competitors. But basically, once you have got an author signed up, then you don't need to be that protective anymore. We could see what the areas were, like sales and so on, that we could do together.³⁴⁵

In addition to collaborating with other independent publishers, Maclean began to look for ways to expand the publishing list at Floris and to engage in export sales. Crucially, while a company like Canongate aimed to become a general trade publisher based in Scotland and thus dealt with broader international competition, Floris found its success as a niche publisher. Although still part of the larger Christian Community structure, the company gradually branched out of religious titles to include 'several niches' around its main publishing focus, including Waldorf education books based on the spiritualist movement founded by Rudolf Steiner:

The church that we were connected with was also connected with the Steiner movement. So, there was an obvious niche to do books on Steiner-Waldorf education, and on other things that Steiner had started, like biodynamic agriculture and medicine. We've got several niches there where we know where the market is, and we could get into that.³⁴⁶

³⁴⁵ Christian Maclean, interview with Alice Piotrowska, Edinburgh, Scotland, 11 June 2019.

³⁴⁶ Christian Maclean, interview with Alice Piotrowska, Edinburgh, Scotland, 11 June 2019.

Paired with Maclean's efforts to establish relationships with international publishers and distributors – through his connection with the SPA, he attended book fairs from the United States to Russia – this knowledge of niche markets rapidly led to Floris establishing approximately half of its sales outside the United Kingdom, with 30 to 40 per cent in the United States and 10 to 20 per cent in Europe, as well as some in Australia, New Zealand, and South Africa. In interview, Maclean points out that 'the secret of Floris was always the niche' – he notes that the Steiner-Waldorf non-fiction would be easy to market and sell to, for example, Steiner education schools in the US, and that it was 'much easier to sell a reasonable number of books into a small niche than try to do a general book and think, why is nobody in America buying it.'³⁴⁷

In addition to the non-fiction titles, which had dominated the company's list for the first decade, Floris began to focus on international children's literature from the mid-1980.³⁴⁸ Although it published some children's titles as early as 1977,³⁴⁹ its major breakthrough came at the 1986 Frankfurt Book Fair, where Maclean acquired rights to publish picture books by Swedish children's illustrator Elsa Beskow, committing to a print run of three thousand.³⁵⁰ In interview, Maclean recalls that he had very limited success in selling the Beskow books to British booksellers – who considered them 'old-fashioned' – and developing international connections again became key in ensuring the viability of the project:

The British booksellers were like, 'They're too old-fashioned, nobody is going to buy them.' I was getting a bit worried – we had sold maybe fifty copies . . . some months later I was at the American Book Fair, and we had them on display there. People would be walking by, and they'd stop and go back and look at them – 'They're great, where can I get them?' One chap said he was a distributor and he'd like to distribute them . . . [The distributor] said, 'Right, we'll take five hundred of each, to start with.' And [the Beskow books] snowballed in America.³⁵¹

³⁴⁷ Christian Maclean, interview with Alice Piotrowska, Edinburgh, Scotland, 11 June 2019.

³⁴⁸ Floris Books, 'Floris Books 40th Birthday,' Floris Blog, 5 February 2016.

³⁴⁹ Charlotte Berry, 'The Wonderful Adventures of Floris Books: Swedish Children's Books from Edinburgh,' *Scandinavica* Vol 51 No 2 (2012).

³⁵⁰ Christian Maclean, interview with Alice Piotrowska, Edinburgh, Scotland, 11 June 2019.

³⁵¹ Christian Maclean, interview with Alice Piotrowska, Edinburgh, Scotland, 11 June 2019.

The popularity of these books in the US led to Floris eventually publishing thirty Elsa Beskow titles as well as calendars and gift books, and the company thrived on export sales.³⁵² Prior to the rise of Amazon, a significant portion of these sales – according to Maclean, over half at certain points – were facilitated through the American mail-order company HearthSong, with Floris opting for reprinting and sending books directly from an American printer to avoid warehousing costs in Britain.³⁵³ However, while leading to the ‘rapid expansion’ of Floris in the early 1990s, this overreliance on one client led to the company facing one of its biggest crises a few years later: when HearthSong was ‘suddenly unable to pay,’ Floris was forced to make half of its staff redundant, and relied on the financial support of the Christian Community to rebound.³⁵⁴ This reliance on a larger structure during a difficult period is crucial to note: like Polygon, Floris enjoyed the editorial freedom to develop its publishing list, but also benefitted from its connection to a larger and well-established organisation.

In addition to export sales, Floris maintained a significant – and, as explored later in this thesis, unusual for a British press – focus on works in translation, both for its non-fiction list and its children’s literature (including other Scandinavian books following the success of Elsa Beskow).³⁵⁵ Maclean notes in interview that around half of the publishing list in any given year would be books in translation, partly due to the availability of the Steiner movement books in central Europe, and partly because of his own linguistic background of growing up bilingual in German and English.³⁵⁶ However, in her examination of Floris’s Swedish children’s books, Charlotte Berry observes that translation was ‘not undertaken in a systematic way at Floris Books’:

It is often unclear whether translations or adaptations/versions have been used by Floris Books, and this fact does not appear to be an issue to the editorial staff whose prime concern is that the text becomes readable and suitable for the target child. Although the European qualities of the international picture

³⁵² Floris Books, ‘Floris Books 40th Birthday.’

³⁵³ Christian Maclean, interview with Alice Piotrowska, Edinburgh, Scotland, 11 June 2019.

³⁵⁴ Floris Books, ‘Floris Books 40th Birthday.’

³⁵⁵ Berry, ‘The Wonderful Adventures of Floris Books.’

³⁵⁶ Christian Maclean, interview with Alice Piotrowska, Edinburgh, Scotland, 11 June 2019.

books are emphasised by Floris Books, the fact that they are translations is not accentuated. Rarely is the translator cited on the title page.³⁵⁷

In interview, Maclean also recalls their occasionally unusual approach to translating the works, including the invention of ‘Polly Lawson’ – a fictional translator that included, in fact, several people working on the same text:

I [sometimes translate the work] and then get somebody else to rewrite it, and then somebody else looks at it again, and then I go and tweak it a bit. So, we never quite got a name for the translator of some of these books. We made up a name of ‘Polly Lawson,’ which is actually a Greek pun that means ‘lots of people.’ ‘Poly’ is lots and then ‘laós’ is people. There’s quite a few of the older books we did that are translated by Polly Lawson. I was a bit alarmed when the British Library contacted us one day to ask for biographic details of Polly Lawson, and what her date of birth was.³⁵⁸

In 2001, Floris expanded its children’s list by acquiring the Kelpies series of Scottish children’s books from Canongate.³⁵⁹ Initially only reissuing some of the books in new editions, the company began to build on the list from 2004, most notably by setting up the Kelpies Prize – a Scottish Arts Council-funded award seeking to ‘encourage and develop new Scotland-based talent’ by offering publication deals to the winners.³⁶⁰ The first award was made in 2005 to Mike Nicholson for *Catscape*,³⁶¹ and the Kelpies Prize has since then launched the careers of popular authors like Lari Don and Daniela Sacerdoti.³⁶² In interview, Katy Lockwood-Holmes – who joined Floris as a sales and marketing manager in 2003 and took over from Christian Maclean as the publisher in 2011 – recalls that, in addition to drawing attention to the children’s books and giving the company a ‘grassroots basis for growing the list,’ the Kelpies Prize allowed Floris to ‘tap into what was happening in Scottish children’s writing’:

It was not an area we had been in before, particularly, and so we needed to establish ourselves quite quickly . . . There was very little for Scottish children’s picture books at that point. There were a few isolated

³⁵⁷ Berry, ‘The Wonderful Adventures of Floris Books,’ 145.

³⁵⁸ Christian Maclean, interview with Alice Piotrowska, Edinburgh, Scotland, 11 June 2019.

³⁵⁹ Helen Williams, ‘Kelpies,’ in *The Edinburgh History of Book in Scotland, Volume 4: Professionalism and Diversity 1880–2000*, eds. David Finkelstein and Alistair McCleery (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2007).

³⁶⁰ The Kelpies Prize for Writing, ‘The Kelpies Prize for Writing 2023: Shortlist Announced,’ Press Release (2023).

³⁶¹ Williams, ‘Kelpies.’

³⁶² The Kelpies Prize for Writing, ‘The Kelpies Prize for Writing 2023: Shortlist Announced.’

pockets, there was Katie Morag and there was Maisie the Morningside Cat; a few other little things, which were good, but there was nobody publishing in a concerted, systematic way into that area. We just saw a real gap in the market there and we totally went for it.³⁶³

Lockwood-Holmes notes that there is ‘no checklist of formula’ for what makes the Kelpies books ‘Scottish.’ The company assesses each title on an individual basis, looking for a combination of aspects including the location of the author and illustrator – ‘if at least one of them is based in Scotland, that normally helps a lot with the promotion’ – themes, language, and settings:

If you need a picture book to be able to sell effectively by itself, particularly into the tourist market, then it’s got to be Scottish to the hilt. For us, that means Scottish animals, Scottish culture and heritage, mythology, kelpies and selkies . . . Normally, the location would be Scottish, because you really want to be reflecting a child’s world back at them. That’s one of the great things about being a Scottish child and getting to read a Scottish book: it’s really validating to see your world and your language, and your culture reflected back at you in the books that you read.³⁶⁴

The growth of the Kelpies list led to another rapid expansion of the company. In the early 2000s, Floris was still a small team of four; however, by 2019, this number had grown to seventeen members of staff, including five editors, four design and production employees, and a marketing team of five, as well as the publisher and the office manager. Lockwood-Holmes emphasises that it was the growth of the publishing list that drove this expansion in an ‘organic’ way, and that the company had strived to maintain a balance across all departments:

What I think is really important in publishing is to maintain a balance between the different departments within publishing. Some publishing companies I have worked for are very editorial driven, and the editors basically run the publishing company and everybody else works to them. We don’t work that way . . . We are very evenly balanced between editorial, design and production, and sales and marketing. Those three areas I like to think of as the Holy Trinity – the Holy Trinity of publishing.³⁶⁵

With the expansion of the Kelpies into the 2000s, Floris established itself as a publisher of several distinctive niches: the anthroposophical adult non-fiction, the international children’s books, and the Scottish children’s literature. Lockwood-Holmes notes that they market their

³⁶³ Katy Lockwood-Holmes, interview with Alice Piotrowska, Edinburgh, Scotland, 12 March 2019.

³⁶⁴ Katy Lockwood-Holmes, interview with Alice Piotrowska, Edinburgh, Scotland, 12 March 2019.

³⁶⁵ Katy Lockwood-Holmes, interview with Alice Piotrowska, Edinburgh, Scotland, 12 March 2019.

lists separately, and ‘have never been the kind of publisher that feels like [they] need to try and sell everything to everyone.’³⁶⁶ In addition to the Floris Books website and social media, the company maintains a separate Discover Kelpies website, Facebook, and Twitter accounts for its children’s books.³⁶⁷ It continues to engage in cooperative relationships with other publishers and organisations – for instance, its 2017 book *Max & Zap at the National Museum of Scotland*, a ‘treasure hunt through Scotland’s past, inspired by real museum exhibits,’ illustrated by Natasha Rimmington, was co-published with NMS Enterprises Ltd – Publishing, the publishing division of National Museums Scotland.³⁶⁸ The company also continues to emphasise export sales – as of 2019, ‘a quarter to a third’ of the company sales are in North America.³⁶⁹ Although different in structure – as of 2019, Floris operates as a registered charity with no shareholders³⁷⁰ – Floris sits alongside Canongate as one of the largest independent trade publishers currently operating in Scotland.

Mainstream Publishing

Another 1970s company that would go on to become one of the key twentieth-century trade publishers in Scotland was Mainstream Publishing, launched by Bill Campbell and Peter MacKenzie – who had both previously worked at the Edinburgh University Student Publications Board – in 1978. Alistair McCleery notes that 1978 in particular, prior to the devolution vote in 1979, was a year ‘when all seemed possible and Scottish culture possessed a self-confidence and self-assurance’:

In the absence of any ‘internal colonialist’ cringe, new ventures like Mainstream . . . appeared appropriate and robust extensions of that sense of national self-renewal.³⁷¹

³⁶⁶ Katy Lockwood-Holmes, interview with Alice Piotrowska, Edinburgh, Scotland, 12 March 2019.

³⁶⁷ ‘Kelpies – Scottish books for children everywhere,’ Discover Kelpies, accessed 10 June 2023, <https://discoverkelpies.co.uk>

³⁶⁸ ‘Max & Zap at the National Museum of Scotland – National Museums Scotland Shop,’ National Museums Scotland, accessed 27 Dec 2023, <https://shop.nms.ac.uk/products/max-zap-at-the-national-museum-of-scotland>

³⁶⁹ Katy Lockwood-Holmes, interview with Alice Piotrowska, Edinburgh, Scotland, 12 March 2019.

³⁷⁰ Katy Lockwood-Holmes, interview with Alice Piotrowska, Edinburgh, Scotland, 12 March 2019.

³⁷¹ McCleery, ‘Mainstream,’ 64.

In interview, Campbell and MacKenzie confirm that their decision to open the business in Scotland rather than London was inspired by the devolution movement:

The reason we came into being was really, at the time, Scottish politics. Scotland was going to be independent. That's what everyone thought . . . 1979, that was the controversial vote. You had to reach 40 per cent to actually devolve, but we were confident we were going to do that. So, that's why we set up in Edinburgh. We could have just as easily set up in London.³⁷²

Here, Campbell seems to echo what Alistair McCleery calls the 'cultural optimism' of the 1970s – 'everyone thought' that Scotland would become independent; they were 'confident' home rule was going to happen. This optimism about running a publishing company in Edinburgh seems reflected by Campbell and MacKenzie's initial approach to business finances and operations. MacKenzie recalls that 'neither of [them] had any money at all,' but that they 'had managed to scrape together – or borrow – about a thousand pounds each' (Campbell fills in, 'We borrowed a thousand pound each from the bank on the spurious grounds of a home improvement loan'). Initially they also worked from Campbell's flat, using it as both an office and warehouse.³⁷³

Over the coming years, Mainstream emerged – as described by Finkelstein and McCleery – as one of the 'important "incubators" of Scottish-based textual material,'³⁷⁴ predominantly within commercial non-fiction. Its first publication was *The Silverado Journal* (1978), a diary and notes collection by Scottish author Robert Louis Stevenson – a title that brought the company 'a lot of publicity,' and was acquired thanks to Campbell's connection to Canongate:

The reason we got that book was Stephanie. [She was] really enthusiastic and really generous. She said, 'We've got a book that we can't agree on and it's to republish a centenary edition of *Travels with a Donkey* with [the author's] notes.' She said, if you want that, I said yes! So, that was the first book we published. We sold Canadian rights separately; we sold American rights. It was a pretty good start.³⁷⁵

In addition to *Travels with a Donkey*, in its first year of operation Mainstream published only two more books, both of them Scottish-themed: *The Ludwig Initiative* by George Rosie and a reprint

³⁷² Bill Campbell and Peter MacKenzie, interview with Alice Piotrowska, Edinburgh, Scotland, 4 February 2019.

³⁷³ Bill Campbell and Peter MacKenzie, interview with Alice Piotrowska, Edinburgh, Scotland, 4 February 2019.

³⁷⁴ David Finkelstein and Alistair McCleery, 'Introduction: Regionalisation and Devolution,' in *The Edinburgh History of the Book in Scotland, Volume 4: Professionalism and Diversity 1880–2000*, eds. David Finkelstein and Alistair McCleery (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2007), 10.

³⁷⁵ Bill Campbell and Peter MacKenzie, interview with Alice Piotrowska, Edinburgh, Scotland, 4 February 2019.

of *The Darien Disaster* by John Prebble. By the early 1980s, however, the company was releasing around 20 titles per year, rapidly establishing itself as a leading Scottish independent focused on non-fiction titles encompassing Scottish sports, history, music, and the arts. MacKenzie notes in interview that ‘initially [they] had aspirations to be a literary publisher,’ but ‘didn’t have the money for that’³⁷⁶ – despite their precarious beginnings, they proved to possess strong business acumen and a willingness to explore profitable niches regardless of their own areas of editorial interest. As McCleery observes, ‘pragmatism lies at the heart of Mainstream’s success’:

It underpins a willingness to go where the markets are and a refusal to be tied down by an uncommercial commitment to purely Scottish fiction that has undermined some of its contemporaries founded in the same ‘white heat’ of national self-confidence.³⁷⁷

One of Mainstream’s early breakthroughs was the 1985 publication of Alex Ferguson’s autobiography *A Light in the North: Seven Years with Aberdeen* – the success of the book, with 26,000 copies sold, ‘gave Mainstream a non-Scottish, profitable niche in sports biographies and sporting books generally.’³⁷⁸ MacKenzie recalls in interview that around that point, eight years into the company’s existence, they were finally able to start paying themselves a ‘regular salary’ – the company finances became less precarious, with a ‘sufficiently large backlist to start delivering money on a year-by-year basis.’³⁷⁹ By the 1990s, Campbell and MacKenzie worked with a team of six – five company employees and one freelance person – which included ‘a complete UK-wide sales force.’³⁸⁰

Significantly, while they initially focused on Scottish interest books, Campbell and MacKenzie state that they had always envisioned Mainstream as a ‘general,’ internationally-focused company based in Scotland rather than a distinctly ‘Scottish’ publisher. In interview, Campbell notes that ‘the attitude that [they] wanted to have is in the name – *Mainstream*’ – ‘that’s where we would

³⁷⁶ Bill Campbell and Peter MacKenzie, interview with Alice Piotrowska, Edinburgh, Scotland, 4 February 2019.

³⁷⁷ McCleery, ‘Mainstream,’ 66.

³⁷⁸ McCleery, ‘Mainstream,’ 66.

³⁷⁹ Bill Campbell and Peter MacKenzie, interview with Alice Piotrowska, Edinburgh, Scotland, 4 February 2019.

³⁸⁰ Bill Campbell and Peter MacKenzie, interview with Alice Piotrowska, Edinburgh, Scotland, 4 February 2019.

always see ourselves, right at the heart of publishing. Not just Scotland – general publishers *based* in Scotland.’³⁸¹ MacKenzie adds:

Initially the books were Scottish because that was where we were. But very rapidly we got to thinking, there is a wider world out there and we wanted to be publishing not just for the UK market but for the international market as well. We wanted to be seen as a ‘real,’ serious publisher, a player.³⁸²

For Mainstream, one way of achieving this international reach was through co-publications and partnerships with corporate publishers. Rather than attempt to compete with the sales and distribution power of conglomerates like Random House or HarperCollins, they would release their titles in hardback and sell paperback rights to larger companies. They also began to branch out of the Scottish focus throughout the 1990s, publishing more general interest non-fiction including humour and true crime, as well as books by international authors. Some of Mainstream’s bestselling titles would eventually arise from their ‘Irish connection,’ which started in 1990 from *Rebels at the Double* by Eamonn Young; later on, Irish memoirs from Kathy O’Beirne and Martha Long would become some of the company’s flagship and strongest selling publications.³⁸³ In the 1980s, approximately 60 per cent of Mainstream’s sales were still concentrated in Scotland; however, this percentage decreased to around 25 by 2000, and the company broadened its distribution to include centres in North America, Australia, and Asia.³⁸⁴ As McCleery writes, ‘outside Scotland, few would have labelled Mainstream as a “Scottish” publisher’ by the 2000s.³⁸⁵

In 2005, Campbell and MacKenzie made the decision to sell 50 per cent of Mainstream’s shares to Random House.³⁸⁶ In interview, they state that by 2004 they knew they ‘needed a big brother’ to be able to maintain and grow their list – their turnover had reached in excess of £3m, but as a small publisher they faced barriers getting their titles into key bookselling chains like Waterstones and WHSmith.³⁸⁷ Campbell and MacKenzie had connections at Random House

³⁸¹ Bill Campbell and Peter MacKenzie, interview with Alice Piotrowska, Edinburgh, Scotland, 4 February 2019.

³⁸² Bill Campbell and Peter MacKenzie, interview with Alice Piotrowska, Edinburgh, Scotland, 4 February 2019.

³⁸³ Bill Campbell and Peter MacKenzie, interview with Alice Piotrowska, Edinburgh, Scotland, 4 February 2019.

³⁸⁴ McCleery, ‘Mainstream.’

³⁸⁵ McCleery, ‘Mainstream.’

³⁸⁶ McCleery, ‘Mainstream.’

³⁸⁷ Bill Campbell and Peter MacKenzie, interview with Alice Piotrowska, Edinburgh, Scotland, 4 February 2019.

through their previous co-publishing and rights sales efforts, and – as a ‘well-run profitable operation’³⁸⁸ – were able to negotiate a deal that would allow them to retain editorial control while benefitting from Random House’s sales and marketing resources.

However, after eight years as part of Random House, Mainstream Publishing ceased trading in 2013. In a *Bookseller* article published at the time, Campbell described the decision as a ‘planned and phased exit,’ emphasising that the company had been profitable, and its closure was not due to difficult trading conditions.³⁸⁹ In interview, Campbell and MacKenzie clarify that their decision was based on a number of considerations: one was feeling that, after ‘highly intense’ thirty-five years in business, they wanted to plan for their retirement; and another, that they had been experiencing the ‘constraints’ posed by being part of a corporate structure of Random House, including having ‘no control’ over the sales function:

With Random House we’d say [to our authors], ‘Look, you get the personal attention from a boutique publisher, and you get the sales of Random House behind you.’ And then increasingly, by the end, you’d have to say to one, two, three, four, five authors – having sold them at this premise – that basically we could do a really good job with their book, but Random House couldn’t sell it . . . So, there was that as well, the sort of disappointment – not just for the author, but for us, when you recognise that you have a really good book in your hands, but the sales function has been removed from us . . . We had to depend on Random House, and they couldn’t deliver.³⁹⁰

The company’s Edinburgh office closed in December 2013, leading to a loss of ten jobs. The Mainstream backlist, with authors including Carol Ann Lee and Hugh McIlvanney, continued to be published by the newly-formed Penguin Random House, with the last new title released in March 2014.³⁹¹ In a joint statement to the press, Campbell and MacKenzie said: ‘In some hopefully lengthy paragraph in the great history of publishing, there will be recognition of Mainstream’s contribution as a successful, innovative and profitable company. We’re going out on a high.’³⁹²

³⁸⁸ Bill Campbell and Peter MacKenzie, interview with Alice Piotrowska, Edinburgh, Scotland, 4 February 2019.

³⁸⁹ Katie Allen, ‘Campbell: ‘planned exit’ from Mainstream,’ *The Bookseller*, 1 March 2013.

³⁹⁰ Bill Campbell and Peter MacKenzie, interview with Alice Piotrowska, Edinburgh, Scotland, 4 February 2019.

³⁹¹ David Robinson, ‘Edinburgh publisher Mainstream to close this year,’ *The Scotsman*, 28 February 2013.

³⁹² Bill Campbell and Peter MacKenzie, interview with Alice Piotrowska, Edinburgh, Scotland, 4 February 2019.

4.1.3. *Establishing the Trade: Independent Publishing 1979–1999*

The first wave of independent publishers in the 1970s paved the way for what would become a small but dynamic industry, with a significant number of micro presses emerging over the following two decades. While not all of these ventures stood the test of time – publishing continued to be a volatile business with ongoing cash flow challenges – their collective efforts contributed to the formation of an active and internationally recognised trade. Companies like Salamander Press, Richard Drew Publishing, Luath Press, and Birlinn had an important role in raising the profile and visibility of Scottish publishing – both through culturally engaged publications that responded to the needs of the local market and through general interest books attracting international publicity.

Funding from the Scottish Arts Council continued to play a crucial part in the development of the trade. In *The Edinburgh History of the Book in Scotland*, Jane Potter notes that it was ‘due in no small part to SAC grants and subsidies’ that ‘the number of smaller publishers [had] increased enormously since the 1980s.’³⁹³ While its funding decisions occasionally came under scrutiny – for instance, the £90,000 award made to Canongate in 1999 for a series of translated fiction was met with ‘anger and consternation,’ with critics asking ‘why pay such a financially successful publisher to produce obscure works of fiction’³⁹⁴ – the SAC facilitated many culturally important publications and helped smaller publishers develop profitable backlists. Though at times expressing criticism related to individual funding decisions, most publishers interviewed for this thesis who were active between 1980 and 2000 emphasise the crucial role of public subsidy. Murdo Macdonald, for instance, recalls that the SAC rejected Polygon’s application for James Kelman’s second novel, *A Chancer*, which ‘was actually quite problematic, because we would normally assume that a serious bit of Scottish literature would get the support’; however, he adds that ‘the literary committee of the Scottish Arts Council were in general brilliant’ and ‘really did enable things to happen.’³⁹⁵

³⁹³ Potter, ‘Literary Publishing: 1945–2000.’

³⁹⁴ Potter, ‘Literary Publishing: 1945–2000.’

³⁹⁵ Murdo Macdonald, interview with Alice Piotrowska, online, 20 April 2021.

Aside from a handful of exceptions, the publishing industry continued to be concentrated in Edinburgh. In 1981, Salamander Press emerged alongside Canongate and Polygon as a noteworthy Edinburgh-based publisher of general interest poetry and fiction – established by Mary Selwyn and Tom Fenton, it was a ‘small venture [that] changed rapidly into a significant publishing house.’³⁹⁶ The company was highly involved in the Scottish literary community from the start, publishing early work from writers like Kathleen Jamie and Ron Butlin – future Scotland and Edinburgh Makars – as well as launching The Traverse Plays series, where ‘their radical tone celebrated Scotland, Scottish playwrights and the centrality of the Traverse Theatre to new productions.’³⁹⁷ Only two years into its existence, in 1983, Salamander achieved a Booker Prize shortlisting and the Whitbread Prize (later known as the Costa Book Award) for the best first novel for *Flying to Nowhere* by John Fuller. By 1984, the company had a backlist of forty ‘widely and enthusiastically reviewed’ publications, and worked with almost thirty authors.³⁹⁸ With this rapid development, however, by the mid-1980s Salamander was finding it difficult to ‘reconcile costs with revenues’ – despite various strategies and sales partnerships aimed at saving the press, by the late 1980s ‘the momentum of the first publishing successes had been lost,’ and the company ultimately ceased trading in 1993.³⁹⁹

One of the exceptions to the dominance of Edinburgh was Richard Drew, who – in the words of academic bookseller Willie Anderson – ‘singlehandedly maintained a Glasgow presence in the publishing scene.’⁴⁰⁰ Drew launched his company, Richard Drew Publishing, in 1980. In interview, he recalls that he would ‘corner the local market’ to establish a profitable backlist: ‘anything Scots, anything touristy, anything even tartan, I would do that and then reprint it and reprint it.’⁴⁰¹ Similarly to Mainstream, he published non-fiction and ‘stayed away from the literary

³⁹⁶ Rosemary Addison, ‘Salamander Press,’ in *The Edinburgh History of Book in Scotland, Volume 4: Professionalism and Diversity 1880–2000*, eds. David Finkelstein and Alistair McCleery (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2007), 62.

³⁹⁷ Addison, ‘Salamander Press,’ 61.

³⁹⁸ Addison, ‘Salamander Press.’

³⁹⁹ Addison, ‘Salamander Press,’ 62.

⁴⁰⁰ Willie Anderson, ‘Willie Anderson,’ in *Thirtieth Anniversary of the Scottish Publishers Association: A Celebration* (Edinburgh: Scottish Publishers Association, 2004), 133.

⁴⁰¹ Richard Drew, interview with Alice Piotrowska, Edinburgh, Scotland, 1 April 2019.

side of things because of the high risk,' focusing on the projected viability of publications – his focus on Scottish-interest books was often based on commercial considerations:

Anything to do with Scottish culture, I was in there . . . This spread here for *The Jacobite Cause*, that's with the National Trust of Scotland. It's not because I am particularly interested in the Jacobites – I am – but it's National Trust of Scotland. That means that they are going to have that book in every one of their properties. Therefore, it's underwritten. We sold large quantities. I did that book in French and German as well.⁴⁰²

In addition to the Scottish-themed titles, the company specialised in children's and language books – its popular Travelmate series of dictionaries with travel tips were stocked in 'all major airports and seaports' and attracted rights sales at international book fairs. Drew also mentions being 'generously treated' by the Scottish Arts Council, with several titles receiving 'very welcome support.' After ten years in business, this profitable backlist attracted an offer from HarperCollins, in part due to Drew's previous employment at the company and the resulting personal connections. Drew accepted the offer and sold his business in 1990.⁴⁰³

Established in 1981, Luath Press initially also broke the hegemony of Edinburgh – it was launched by Tom and Rene Atkinson in Barr, Ayrshire, the 'heart of Burns country',⁴⁰⁴ taking its name from Robert Burns's dog Luath.⁴⁰⁵ Like Richard Drew, the company began as a predominantly non-fiction publisher of Scottish-interest books – its Luath Guides Series of descriptive guides to popular parts of Scotland was initially both written and produced (including physically printed) in house.⁴⁰⁶ Over time, the company began to expand its list to include some poetry and fiction. Following Atkinson's retirement in the mid-1990s, the company was bought by Gavin and Audrey MacDougall and moved to Edinburgh's Royal Mile, where it continued as a small independent press publishing forty to fifty books per year across a variety of genres – from fiction and poetry to politics, history and travel, under a broad mission statement of 'publishing well written books worth reading.'⁴⁰⁷ In interview, Gavin MacDougall

⁴⁰² Richard Drew, interview with Alice Piotrowska, Edinburgh, Scotland, 1 April 2019.

⁴⁰³ Richard Drew, interview with Alice Piotrowska, Edinburgh, Scotland, 1 April 2019.

⁴⁰⁴ Potter, 'Literary Publishing: 1945–2000.'

⁴⁰⁵ 'The Luath Story,' Luath Press, accessed 15 May 2023, www.luath.co.uk/the-luath-story

⁴⁰⁶ Gavin MacDougall, interview with Alice Piotrowska, Edinburgh, Scotland, 5 March 2019.

⁴⁰⁷ Gavin MacDougall, interview with Alice Piotrowska, Edinburgh, Scotland, 5 March 2019.

notes that the company focuses on Scottish-interest titles marketed and sold predominantly within Scotland:

We are based here in Scotland, so most of the books we are approached with, or a large proportion, have a Scottish connection of some sort: whether it is a Scottish subject matter, an author based here, or an author with a Scottish connection based elsewhere. Our main market is Scotland and that is what we do best. We don't do the rest of the UK very well; it is very difficult to do that from Scotland – or from outwith London.⁴⁰⁸

The period between 1979 and 1999 also saw the emergence of what would become one of the leading Scottish independents – the 'increasingly successful and expansive' Birlinn.⁴⁰⁹ The company was established in Edinburgh in 1992 by Hugh Andrew, who – as discussed earlier in the chapter – was also involved in the 1994 buyout of Canongate, where he remained as a joint managing director until the end of 1998.⁴¹⁰ Andrew had previously worked as a bookshop manager and a freelance sales representative and, as he recalls in interview, used his networks and knowledge of the market to start his own list, beginning from the successful Para Handy series:

Many of the shops were clearly ran by very switched-on people and they kept saying that this book should be published, or that book should be published, and I thought – well, I'd give it a go myself . . . Also, one of the publishers that I worked for had gone bust and their bestselling book was a book called *The Selected Para Handy*, with notes and so on. I said to the authors of that, or the editors of that, 'Look, why don't I take this book over and we can both make some money back?' We took it over and I published the first ever complete volume of Para Handy, which was at the time one of the bestselling – regularly bestselling – books in Scotland . . . We sold ten thousand copies in the first year.⁴¹¹

Over the next decade, Andrew acquired a large backlist of both fiction and non-fiction titles by taking over several Scottish publishers, including John Donald, Tuckwell Press, and Polygon, incorporating them as imprints and establishing Birlinn as an influential press publishing authors

⁴⁰⁸ Gavin MacDougall, interview with Alice Piotrowska, Edinburgh, Scotland, 5 March 2019.

⁴⁰⁹ Duncan Glen, 'Typography,' in *The Edinburgh History of Book in Scotland, Volume 4: Professionalism and Diversity 1880–2000*, eds. David Finkelstein and Alistair McCleery (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2007).

⁴¹⁰ Hugh Andrew, interview with Alice Piotrowska, Edinburgh, Scotland, 4 February 2019.

⁴¹¹ Hugh Andrew, interview with Alice Piotrowska, Edinburgh, Scotland, 4 February 2019.

like Alexander McCall Smith, Liz Lochhead, and Sorley Maclean.⁴¹² Significantly, while Birlinn has emerged as one of the key publishers of Scottish-themed titles, Andrew emphasises his belief – in contrast to many other Scottish independents – that Scotland being part of the UK is important to the success of local publishing, and independence could lead to creating an ‘artificial border’ across the market:

Essentially, there is a strange paradox in Scottish publishing, which is that the real success of Scottish publishing – the real success of writing in Scotland, and I am differentiating that from publishing – is within a UK cultural nexus. Writers like Ian Rankin, Chris Brookmyre, or children’s authors like Julia Donaldson: they are Scots, and it’s actually very important to them, but they are actually published in the UK world . . . So, it is always a problem – when you have Alexander McCall Smith, where do you put him? In the Scottish section or in the [general] fiction section? . . . Our bestselling books have always been UK titles such as *A Hundred and One Gins to Try Before You Die* or Sandy McCall Smith. I like to think there are two legs here: one is the Scottish backlist leg and then there is the UK frontlist leg. They both need to work to make the company work.⁴¹³

Birlinn has found its success in navigating this balance between catering to the Scottish market and promoting its titles internationally as a UK-based press – including retaining or acquiring strong-selling Scottish authors such as Alexander McCall Smith or Denise Mina for some of their titles. As of 2023, the company continues as one of the leading Edinburgh-based independents alongside Canongate and Floris, with its books receiving awards and recognition outside Scotland.

This independent publishing momentum continued towards the end of the century and into the 2000s, with the emergence of companies like Barrington Stoke (founded in 1998), Black & White Publishing (1999), and Sandstone Press (2002). By the late 1990s, Scottish publishing had an established presence on the global market; although relatively small in size, Scottish-based independents often demonstrated their ability to establish profitable backlists and attract widespread recognition. Supported by the Scottish Arts Council, new ventures continued to emerge, filling gaps in the market and building both general interest and Scottish-themed lists. Companies continued to grapple with their place within the broader UK industry: some, like Birlinn and Mainstream, strived to establish themselves as UK-based presses publishing for the

⁴¹² Nash, ‘The Changing Face of the Publishing House: 1880–1990.’

⁴¹³ Hugh Andrew, interview with Alice Piotrowska, Edinburgh, Scotland, 4 February 2019.

wider English-speaking market, while others – like Luath – focused their efforts on the Scottish market. At the end of the twentieth century, Scottish publishing was an industry markedly different from that of thirty years prior – no longer based on specialised family-owned businesses but characterised by a large number of small ‘kitchen-table’ presses that contributed greatly to the preservation and development of Scottish literary and cultural heritage.

4.1.4. The Rise of Independent Publishing: Summary

This section of the chapter showcased the transformation of the late twentieth-century Scottish book trade by examining some of the key companies of the period, presenting detailed chronological case studies that combined oral histories with existing scholarship to recreate the origins, operations, and challenges faced by the new independent presses. It has also laid the groundwork for the remainder of the chapter by considering the socio-political circumstances surrounding the trade, including the impact of the Scottish Arts Council and the emergence of literary and political magazines.

The narratives presented in this section convey an image of the industry that continuously punched above its weight: riding on the wave of cultural optimism to establish a distinctive national book trade despite limited capital, fierce international competition, and frequent financial precarity. Regardless of their main editorial focus, revenue, and business ambitions, all companies examined in this section contributed in some way to the preservation and promotion of Scottish culture: whether by nurturing new fiction writers, publishing profitable non-fiction titles on local history and sports figures, or promoting the country for the tourist market.

The next section of this chapter examines independent publishing across the two national languages of Scotland, Scottish Gaelic and Scots. It discusses the socio-political background of the sector, considers some of the key milestones, and looks at the main publishers and organisations working with Gaelic and Scots over the last five decades.

4.2. Publishing in Gaelic and Scots

This section provides an overview of the Gaelic and Scots sectors and their main developments over the last five decades, using literature, oral histories, and archival sources to discuss the major milestones and challenges of minority language publishing in Scotland. It adds to the existing scholarship by offering a chronological overview of the main publishing companies

working with Gaelic and Scots, considering their operations within the broader socio-political context of the cultural revival and changing government policies. In addition to recreating the recent history of the sectors, the main aim of this chapter is to provide a starting point for further research into some of the issues arising from the study, such as the impact of public funding and the long-term sustainability of native language publishing.

4.2.1. Context and Background

While English is the main language spoken in Scotland today, with 93 per cent of the population in 2011 reporting that they use only English at home,⁴¹⁴ there are two distinct indigenous languages spoken by various communities across the country: Scottish Gaelic and Scots. According to census data, in 2011 there were 87,100 people in Scotland with some Gaelic language skills – representing 1.7 per cent of the population of 5.4 million – and 57,600 Gaelic speakers, showing a decline from 92,400 and 59,000, respectively, in 2001.⁴¹⁵ The proportion of people with some Gaelic language skills was highest in Eilean Siar (61 per cent), Highland (7 per cent), and Argyll and Bute (6 per cent). Across the country, around 0.5 per cent of the population – or 25,000 people aged 3 and over – reported using Gaelic at home.⁴¹⁶ In the same census, the numbers were significantly higher for Scots, with over 1.5 million people – or around 30 per cent of the population – reporting that they could speak it, and with one per cent using it at home.⁴¹⁷ Scots was most commonly spoken by people in the Shetlands, Aberdeenshire, Moray, and Orkney.⁴¹⁸ Both Scottish Gaelic and Scots are classified as ‘endangered languages’ by UNESCO, with Gaelic listed as ‘definitely endangered’ (‘children no longer learn the

⁴¹⁴ ‘Ethnicity, Identity, Language and Religion | Scotland’s Census,’ Scotland’s Census, accessed 9 March 2021, www.scotlandscensus.gov.uk/ethnicity-identity-language-and-religion

⁴¹⁵ National Records of Scotland, *Scotland’s Census 2011: Gaelic report (part 1)*. (National Records of Scotland, 2015).

⁴¹⁶ National Records of Scotland, *Scotland’s Census 2011: Gaelic report (part 1)*.

⁴¹⁷ ‘Ethnicity, Identity, Language and Religion | Scotland’s Census,’ Scotland’s Census, accessed 9 March 2021, www.scotlandscensus.gov.uk/ethnicity-identity-language-and-religion

⁴¹⁸ ‘Ethnicity, Identity, Language and Religion | Scotland’s Census,’ Scotland’s Census.

language as mother tongue in the home'), and Scots as 'vulnerable' ('most children speak the language, but it may be restricted to certain domains').⁴¹⁹

The Scottish Government recognises English as the 'main language by custom and usage,' with Gaelic and Scots considered 'other main language groups' alongside British Sign Language.⁴²⁰ Gaelic became an official language of Scotland through the Gaelic Language (Scotland) Act 2005, which gave it 'greater protection and prominence' and led to the establishment of Bòrd na Gàidhlig, a public body discussed later in this section.⁴²¹ The Government supports the learning of Gaelic through its Education (Scotland) Act 2016 with provisions on Gaelic education, including 'placing a duty on education authorities to promote and support Gaelic Medium Education (GME)'⁴²² – with GME referring to delivering education through the medium of Gaelic 'through a number of policies and funding streams.'⁴²³ The status of Scots is less clear; however, following a recommendation by a Scots language working group established in 2010, the Scottish Government launched its first Scots language policy in 2015.⁴²⁴ The policy recognises Scots as a language rather than dialect – though without giving it an official status – and commits to promoting its use in education, media, publishing, and the arts.⁴²⁵ The document also includes a list of action plans for Education Scotland, including developing Scots learning resources in partnership with organisations like Historic Environment Scotland, the National Library of Scotland, and the Scottish Book Trust.⁴²⁶ Overall, while there is a more coordinated approach to regulating and promoting the use of Gaelic, the last few decades have seen positive

⁴¹⁹ 'UNESCO Interactive Atlas of the World's Languages in Danger,' UNESCO, accessed 17 March 2021, www.unesco.org/languages-atlas/index.php?hl=en&page=atlasmap

⁴²⁰ 'Languages – gov.scot,' Scottish Government, accessed 13 April 2021, www.gov.scot/policies/languages/

⁴²¹ 'Languages: Gaelic – gov.scot,' Scottish Government, accessed 13 April 2021, www.gov.scot/policies/languages/gaelic/

⁴²² 'Legislation | Policy for Scottish education | Scottish education system | Education Scotland,' Education Scotland, accessed 6 April 2021, <https://education.gov.scot/education-scotland/scottish-education-system/policy-for-scottish-education/legislation/>

⁴²³ 'Languages: Gaelic – gov.scot,' Scottish Government, accessed 13 April 2021, www.gov.scot/policies/languages/gaelic/

⁴²⁴ 'Languages: Scots – gov.scot,' Scottish Government, accessed 13 April 2021, www.gov.scot/policies/languages/scots/

⁴²⁵ Scottish Government, 'Scots Language Policy,' (Scottish Government, 2015).

⁴²⁶ Scottish Government, 'Scots Language Policy.'

developments for both languages, with the Scottish Government increasing its efforts to establish Scots and Gaelic as important elements of Scotland's cultural heritage.

Arising from these concerted efforts, the last five decades has seen the emergence of professional organisations dedicated to the preservation of Scotland's national languages.⁴²⁷ From the publishing industry standpoint, the main organisations supporting Scottish Gaelic are Bòrd na Gàidhlig and the Gaelic Books Council. Established in 2005 through the previously discussed Gaelic Language (Scotland) Act, Bòrd na Gàidhlig is an executive non-departmental public body.⁴²⁸ It has a wide national remit of seeking to increase the number of people able to use and understand Gaelic, facilitate access to Gaelic culture, and promote a positive image of the language.⁴²⁹ The organisation is required by the Act to develop a national Gaelic language plan at least once every five years, with 'Gaelic in the arts, publishing and creative industries' listed as one of its priority areas in the most recent 2018–2023 plan.⁴³⁰ One of the more specialised organisations supported by Bòrd na Gàidhlig as part of its publishing industry focus is the Gaelic Books Council (GBC). Initially funded by the Scottish Education Department and then by the Scottish Arts Council, the GBC was established in 1968 to support writing and publishing in Gaelic.⁴³¹ As of 2019, the organisation is registered as a charitable company limited by guarantee, funded by Bòrd na Gàidhlig and Creative Scotland,⁴³² and supports Gaelic-language literature through grants distribution, fund generation, promotional activities, training, advice, and collaboration with arts agencies.⁴³³ While there are other publicly-funded organisations promoting various aspects of Gaelic culture, such as Fèisean nan Gàidheal and Theatre Gu Leòr,⁴³⁴ this chapter focuses on Bòrd na Gàidhlig and the Gaelic Books Council as

⁴²⁷ Finkelstein and McCleery, 'Introduction: Regionalisation and Devolution,' 10.

⁴²⁸ 'Gaelic Language (Scotland) Act 2005,' Legislation.gov.uk, accessed 10 March 2021, www.legislation.gov.uk/asp/2005/7

⁴²⁹ Bòrd na Gàidhlig, *National Gaelic Language Plan 2018–2023* (Bòrd na Gàidhlig, 2018).

⁴³⁰ Bòrd na Gàidhlig, *National Gaelic Language Plan 2018–2023*, 16.

⁴³¹ Finkelstein and McCleery, 'Introduction: Regionalisation and Devolution.'

⁴³² Gaelic Books Council, *Comhairle Nan Leabhraichean (A company limited by guarantee) Report and Financial Statements for the Year Ended 31 March 2019* (Gaelic Books Council, 2019).

⁴³³ Gaelic Books Council, *Comhairle Nan Leabhraichean*.

⁴³⁴ Creative Scotland, 'Regular Funding 2018–21: The Network' (Edinburgh: Creative Scotland, 2018).

the two most significant institutions supporting Gaelic-language literature and publishing. Their practical impact on the industry will be examined later in this chapter.

While there are somewhat less coordinated efforts to support Scots through dedicated organisations, the Scots Language Society – aiming to show Scots as ‘a vibrant language as well as an important part of national cultural heritage’ – was established in 1972,⁴³⁵ and publishes its *Lallans* journal of Scots writing twice a year.⁴³⁶ The Perth-based Scots Language Resource Centre (or Scots Language Centre), launched in 1994, also works to promote the learning and use of the language,⁴³⁷ and has received public funding in the past.⁴³⁸ A number of other organisations, such as Celtic Connections, the Scottish Storytelling Centre, or TRACS (Traditional Arts & Culture Scotland) include a Scots focus, and have been supported by funding from Creative Scotland.⁴³⁹ Creative Scotland also provides direct funding for Scots-language projects and publications. In 2015, Creative Scotland released its Scots Language Policy, which stresses ‘the important role that Scots language has played, and continues to play, in shaping the cultural landscape in Scotland,’ and states its commitment to encouraging Scots ‘in the work of the individuals and organisations that [they] fund.’⁴⁴⁰ In addition to these increased funding efforts, one of the recent initiatives focused on the promotion of the language are the Scots Language Awards, launched in 2019 by Glasgow-based organisation Hands Up For Trad.⁴⁴¹ The Awards were established ‘with the aim of heightening the profile and promoting the Scots language to the public and media,’ and include categories highlighting Scots books, authors, and publishing companies.⁴⁴²

⁴³⁵ Potter, ‘Literary Publishing: 1945–2000,’ 268.

⁴³⁶ ‘Lallans,’ Lallans – the Scots Language Society, accessed 12 March 2021, www.lallans.co.uk/index.php/lallans

⁴³⁷ Potter, ‘Literary Publishing: 1945–2000.’

⁴³⁸ BBC News, ‘Funding boost for Scots language,’ BBC News (2009).

⁴³⁹ Creative Scotland, *Scots Leid Policie. Scots Language Policy* (Edinburgh: Creative Scotland, 2015).

⁴⁴⁰ Creative Scotland, *Scots Leid Policie. Scots Language Policy*.

⁴⁴¹ ‘About – Scots Language Awards,’ Scots Language Awards, accessed 10 March 2021, <https://projects.handsupfortrad.scot/scotslanguageawards/about/?lang=en>

⁴⁴² ‘About – Scots Language Awards,’ Scots Language Awards, accessed 10 March 2021, <https://projects.handsupfortrad.scot/scotslanguageawards/about/?lang=en>

Literature examining Gaelic and Scots publishing suggests that both areas have historically survived thanks to individual projects rather than overarching industry efforts. In *The Edinburgh History of the Book in Scotland*, Richard A. V. Cox notes that Gaelic publishing has been historically hampered by the ‘uncertain future’ of the language, surviving due to ‘the perseverance of a small number of dedicated individuals.’⁴⁴³ Similarly, writer and publisher James Robertson argues that Scots publishing in the late twentieth century was severely overlooked and underfunded, with the occasional ‘significant publications’ being ‘labours of love by individual teachers, writers, activists,’ characterised by limited budgets and, consequently, low production values.⁴⁴⁴ As Sinclair, McCleery and Graham assert in the *Review of publishing*, native language publishing is ‘heavily reliant on financial support for its survival,’ but is crucial to sustain from a cultural perspective, championing ‘areas of culture that would not in many cases be published elsewhere.’⁴⁴⁵ The next section of this chapter examines the sector of Gaelic language publishing, with a discussion of Gairm, Acair, and other presses and initiatives that have sustained the sector over the past five decades.

4.2.2. Publishing in Scottish Gaelic

As Cox writes in *The Edinburgh History of the Book in Scotland*, the Gaelic publishing sector remained small but relatively stable during the first half of the twentieth century, with an average of eight or nine titles published annually until the Second World War.⁴⁴⁶ This number dropped to four or five titles a year until the late fifties, with Glasgow-based Alexander MacLaren & Son being the biggest contributor. As Cox notes, it is also important to recognise the contribution of An Comunn Gàidhealach (the Highland Society), which produced bilingual periodicals and other Gaelic-language publications.⁴⁴⁷ Gaelic publishing then began to grow in the second half

⁴⁴³ Richard Cox, ‘The Gaelic Book,’ in *The Edinburgh History of the Book in Scotland, Volume 4: Professionalism and Diversity 1880–2000*, eds. David Finkelstein and Alistair McCleery (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2007), 280.

⁴⁴⁴ James Robertson, ‘Publishing in Scots: Discussion paper for the Scots Language Working Group’ (2010).

⁴⁴⁵ Sinclair, McCleery, and Graham, *Review of publishing*, 19–23.

⁴⁴⁶ Cox, ‘The Gaelic Book.’

⁴⁴⁷ Cox, ‘The Gaelic Book.’

of the twentieth century, as a result of the ‘long-lasting Gaelic language movement’ and the wider cultural activity of the period:

In addition to the influence of the long-lasting Gaelic language movement, the Scottish Literary Renaissance was a pivotal stimulus for much of the growth in literary creation and consequently book production in this later period.⁴⁴⁸

In an article from 2004, the then-director of the Gaelic Books Council Ian MacDonald recalls that the decades following the establishment of the Council in 1968 brought a ‘transformation’ in how Gaelic writing was perceived and promoted in Scotland:

To compare the current situation with the way things were then is to realise how much has been achieved. The number of young authors who achieve publication, the rise in poetry readings and literary festivals, and the sense that Scotland is not just about Burns and Scott, the availability of the classics and of important texts generally – there has been a transformation.⁴⁴⁹

In line with what Cox calls ‘the perseverance of a small number of dedicated individuals,’ much of this transformation can be attributed to a handful of companies and organisations. Responsible for 197 of the 427 Gaelic books produced between 1968 and 1999, Gairm and Acair were the two largest and most influential Gaelic publishers of the second half of the twentieth century.⁴⁵⁰ Gairm Publications was established in 1952 by poet, publisher, and academic Derick Thomson (Ruaraidh MacThomais) and journalist and writer Finlay J. Macdonald.⁴⁵¹ Its main and most influential output was a Gaelic-language literary and cultural magazine under the same name, published for over five decades and edited by Thomson throughout the whole period.⁴⁵² As Roger Hutchinson writes in *A Waxing Moon: The Modern Gaelic Revival*, the magazine was ‘extraordinary influential’ despite its small circulation, disseminating the work of most major Gaelic writers of the period and reaching a significant proportion of Gaelic speakers:

⁴⁴⁸ Cox, ‘The Gaelic Book,’ 286.

⁴⁴⁹ Ian MacDonald, ‘The Gaels and Scots,’ in *Thirtieth Anniversary of the Scottish Publishers Association: A Celebration*, (Edinburgh: Scottish Publishers Association, 2004), 161.

⁴⁵⁰ Cox, ‘The Gaelic Book.’

⁴⁵¹ Roger Hutchinson, *A Waxing Moon: The Modern Gaelic Revival* (Edinburgh: Mainstream Publishing, 2005).

⁴⁵² Cox, ‘The Gaelic Book.’

Much of Sorley Maclean's work . . . was published in *Gairm*, along with works by writers of the calibre of Iain Crichton Smith, Aonghas MacNeacail and Angus Peter Campbell. Hardly a single Gaelic writer of the second half of the twentieth century was not published in *Gairm* and not many literate Gaels did not at some time encounter the magazine.⁴⁵³

In addition to the literary periodical, *Gairm* began producing a range of books from the late fifties, including literary fiction, children's books, and reference publications. It also expanded its list by acquiring Alexander MacLaren & Son's titles in 1970.⁴⁵⁴ Derick Thomson, who became the sole editor of *Gairm* in the 1960s and held the post for nearly five decades, would go on to become a highly influential figure for the Gaelic sector; his other contributions included founding the Gaelic Books Council in 1968 as well as teaching and writing in Gaelic.⁴⁵⁵ Alistair McCleery remembers Thomson as 'an absolute giant in both the literary and academic spheres',⁴⁵⁶ and Ian MacDonald calls him 'the father of modern Gaelic publishing'.⁴⁵⁷ According to Allan Campbell, in an interview cited in *A Waxing Moon*, *Gairm* was 'very much a one-man show with Professor Derick Thomson,' and its ultimate closure in 2004 was due to the lack of another editor who would continue the work in the same fashion:

[Thomson] sustained something very valuable for a long period of time. I think it's always sad when you have the professional doing something over many years who doesn't have an apprentice to carry it forward.⁴⁵⁸

However, in his 2021 article for the Scottish Magazines Network McCleery argues that *Gairm* began to suffer from 'staleness' after several decades under Thomson's editorship, and that this lack of an apprentice could be the result of Thomson being reluctant to let another editor take over:

After nearly forty years, the magazine no longer seemed as – what's the right word – as exciting, innovative, leading-edge as it once was. It seemed to be only going through the motions. We [Scottish Arts Council

⁴⁵³ Hutchinson, *A Waxing Moon: The Modern Gaelic Revival*.

⁴⁵⁴ Cox, 'The Gaelic Book.'

⁴⁵⁵ 'Derick Thomson,' Scottish Poetry Library, accessed 4 March 2021, www.scottishpoetrylibrary.org.uk/poet/derick-thomson/

⁴⁵⁶ Alistair McCleery, 'Mag Memories: The Day I Received a Death Threat,' Scottish Magazines Network, 5 April 2021.

⁴⁵⁷ MacDonald, 'The Gaels and Scots,' 162.

⁴⁵⁸ Hutchinson, *A Waxing Moon: The Modern Gaelic Revival*.

committee] felt that a change of editor would likely reinvigorate it but Derick, when approached informally, was very resistant to abandoning the role, even to take up an honorary editorship.⁴⁵⁹

McCleery goes on to say, however, that the Scottish Arts Council continued to support *Gairm* financially as ‘there was no sign of any other Gaelic literary magazine on the horizon.’⁴⁶⁰ *A Review of the Gaelic Publishing Sector*, published in 2001, notes that *Gairm* was in receipt of ‘£8,750 annually for the publication of the magazine’ as well as ‘one-off grants for the publication of dictionaries [and] learning resources.’⁴⁶¹ Although the report asserts that ‘*Gairm* through the publication of their magazine have played a significant and sustained role in the development of Gaelic writers for the last forty years,’ it notably notices that ‘it is presently unclear as to the future strategy for *Gairm*.’⁴⁶² The final issue of the magazine was published just two years later, in 2003.⁴⁶³

While *Gairm* was highly influential on the Gaelic sector mainly through its literary magazine, Acair would go on to become the largest publisher of Gaelic books. *A Review of the Gaelic Publishing Sector* lists the formation of Acair in 1977 as one of the ‘milestones in Gaelic publishing,’ with the company becoming the main Gaelic-language publisher by 2000.⁴⁶⁴ Based in Stornoway, Acair was established ‘as the result of a perceived gap in the education market,’⁴⁶⁵ co-owned by Comhairle nan Eilean Siar, Highland Regional Council, the Highlands and Islands Development Board, and An Comunn Gàidhealach.⁴⁶⁶ Initially, its main aim was to provide ‘a Gaelic service to schools, with the provision of relevant, modern reading material at all levels.’⁴⁶⁷ However, the company quickly developed a broad range of Gaelic and bilingual books outside of its educational remit, including children’s fiction, poetry, and non-fiction, building its list to

⁴⁵⁹ McCleery, ‘Mag Memories: The Day I Received a Death Threat.’

⁴⁶⁰ McCleery, ‘Mag Memories: The Day I Received a Death Threat.’

⁴⁶¹ EKOS Limited, *A Review of the Gaelic Publishing Sector*, Final Report for Commun Na Gàidhlig (Glasgow: Gaelic Books Council, 2001), 24.

⁴⁶² EKOS Limited, *A Review of the Gaelic Publishing Sector*.

⁴⁶³ Hutchinson, *A Waxing Moon: The Modern Gaelic Revival*.

⁴⁶⁴ EKOS Limited, *A Review of the Gaelic Publishing Sector*.

⁴⁶⁵ Cox, ‘The Gaelic Book,’ 287.

⁴⁶⁶ Cox, ‘The Gaelic Book,’ 288.

⁴⁶⁷ Norma Macleod, ‘Norma Macleod,’ in *Thirtieth Anniversary of the Scottish Publishers Association: A Celebration* (Edinburgh: Scottish Publishers Association, 2004), 163.

over 100 titles by 1988⁴⁶⁸ and 700 by 2004.⁴⁶⁹ Director Agnes Rennie – who was employed by Acair for ten years in the 1980s and returned to manage it between 2010 and 2021 – states in interview that the company focused primarily on children’s books because, despite some activity from publishers like Gairm, there was a significant gap in the children’s market at the time:

The main thing that Acair was set up to do, really, was the publishing of attractive new *children’s* books in Gaelic. There were of course other kinds of books being published in Gaelic, and there had been for many years, but children’s books had never really been given any kind of priority.⁴⁷⁰

While Acair had been involved in leisure and educational reading from the early years, Rennie states that it increased its focus on the former after the Scottish Government had set up Stòrlann, an organisation ‘specifically tasked to produce educational materials’ – effectively leading to a ‘dividing of the ways,’ and to Acair changing its publishing focus.⁴⁷¹ While commercial, the leisure reading books are published by the company on a not-for-profit basis – in 2018, Acair was formally registered as a charity, reflecting ‘the not-for-profit principles on which the company was established.’⁴⁷² In an article from 2004, Norma Macleod – who worked at Acair from 1995 to 2002 and became its chairperson afterwards – states that ‘no profit is being made from [Acair] books, as the audience is so small,’ and recalls that ‘sometimes Acair has not broken even.’⁴⁷³ Similarly, Rennie states in interview that the company relies on financial support from Bòrd na Gàidhlig and the Gaelic Books Council to publish new titles, particularly in the contemporary adult fiction genre, and that there would be ‘very few books in Gaelic’ produced without this support. She notes that their publications ‘would be so expensive that nobody would buy them,’ and that ‘the market just isn’t big enough to ensure that you would get your money back quickly enough to take a risk on it.’⁴⁷⁴

⁴⁶⁸ Cox, ‘The Gaelic Book,’ 288.

⁴⁶⁹ Macleod, ‘Norma Macleod.’

⁴⁷⁰ Agnes Rennie, interview with Alice Piotrowska, online, 22 September 2020.

⁴⁷¹ Agnes Rennie, interview with Alice Piotrowska, online, 22 September 2020.

⁴⁷² ‘About | Acair Books,’ Acair Books, accessed 19 March 2021, <https://acairbooks.com/about/>

⁴⁷³ Macleod, ‘Norma Macleod,’ 164.

⁴⁷⁴ Agnes Rennie, interview with Alice Piotrowska, online, 22 September 2020.

In addition to Gairm and Acair, CLÀR – an independent Inverness-based company established in 1996⁴⁷⁵ – has also made significant contributions to the development of long-form Gaelic fiction, particularly through its Scottish Arts Council-funded Ùr-sgeul project.⁴⁷⁶ As Moray Watson writes in the *Introduction to Gaelic Fiction* from 2011, the establishment of Ùr-sgeul in 2003 meant ‘changes of seismic proportions in the publishing of Gaelic prose’:

Ùr-sgeul has been responsible for the biggest single publishing initiative ever seen in Gaelic fiction. In fact, Ùr-sgeul has almost exactly doubled the number of existing Gaelic novels, and has also contributed seven books of short stories.⁴⁷⁷

As well as publishing long-established Gaelic authors, such as Tormod Campbell, Tormod MacGill-Eain, and Angus Peter Campbell, Ùr-sgeul included new voices in contemporary Gaelic fiction.⁴⁷⁸ For instance, *Ath-aithne* by Martin MacIntyre – a bilingual collection of eighteen short stories, fourteen in Gaelic and four in English – won the Saltire Society First Book of the Year Award in 2003,⁴⁷⁹ establishing the author as an important new voice in Gaelic writing.⁴⁸⁰ The Ùr-sgeul project finished in 2013, but CLÀR continues to publish a small number of new titles each year, as well as an annual magazine – *STEALL*.⁴⁸¹ *STEALL* emerged in 2016 as the main Gaelic-language literary periodical, with its inaugural issue including 152 pages of Gaelic fiction, essays, poetry, and reviews.⁴⁸² As of 2021, six issues have been published.⁴⁸³ Prior to *STEALL*, *Gath* – edited by Dòmhnall E. Meek and Jo NicDhòmhnaill⁴⁸⁴ – was the main Gaelic literary

⁴⁷⁵ ‘CLÀR – Dachaigh,’ CLÀR, accessed 15 May 2021, www.clar.online

⁴⁷⁶ Moray Watson, *Introduction to Gaelic Fiction* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2011).

⁴⁷⁷ Watson, *Introduction to Gaelic Fiction*.

⁴⁷⁸ Watson, *Introduction to Gaelic Fiction*.

⁴⁷⁹ ‘Ath-Aithne,’ Gaelic Books Council, accessed 25 May 2021,

https://gaelicbooks.org/index.php?route=product/product&manufacturer_id=419&product_id=670

⁴⁸⁰ Watson, *Introduction to Gaelic Fiction*.

⁴⁸¹ ‘CLÀR – Dachaigh,’ CLÀR, accessed 15 May 2021, <https://www.clar.online>

⁴⁸² ‘STEALL 01,’ Gaelic Books Council, accessed 20 April 2021,

https://gaelicbooks.org/index.php?route=product/product&product_id=1271&search=staell

⁴⁸³ ‘Search – Staell,’ Gaelic Books Council, accessed 20 April 2021,

<https://gaelicbooks.org/index.php?route=product/search&search=staell>

⁴⁸⁴ ‘Search – Gath,’ Gaelic Books Council, accessed 20 April 2021,

<https://gaelicbooks.org/index.php?route=product/search&search=Gath>

magazine: aiming to fill the gap left by the closure of *Gairm*, it targeted ‘a similarly broad constituency,’ but with a wider focus that included other areas of Gaelic culture, such as contemporary music.⁴⁸⁵ *Gath* was published biannually from 2003 to 2008, with each issue consisting of around 90 pages of new Gaelic writing.⁴⁸⁶

The organisation that Agnes Rennie refers to as causing the ‘dividing of the ways’ for Acair, Stòrlann Nàiseanta na Gàidhlig, was established by the Scottish Executive in 1999 to ‘provide a service to all sectors of Gaelic education, and in particular, to co-ordinate the production and distribution of new Gaelic resources to schools.’⁴⁸⁷ The founding of Stòrlann marks another ‘milestone’ in Gaelic publishing, leading to a more sustained and coordinated production of Gaelic educational materials from 1999 onwards.⁴⁸⁸ In interview, Mairi Kidd notes that during her time as chief executive of Stòrlann from 2006 to 2010 she managed to secure direct Scottish Government funding for Stòrlann publications, as opposed to the Specific Grants for Gaelic Education distributed by the local authorities which the organisation had previously relied on.⁴⁸⁹ Kidd recalls that the organisation had an ‘incredibly broad remit,’ producing materials for all levels of Gaelic education, ‘from magnetic phonic letters up to the science curriculum for Higher.’⁴⁹⁰ As of 2021, Stòrlann is registered as a limited company and charity, employing sixteen people across its head office in Stornoway as well as in Inverness, Portree, Kinross, and Benbecula.⁴⁹¹ Under its publishing programme, it provides free Gaelic learning resources to nurseries, primary schools, secondary schools, and lifelong learning groups.⁴⁹² As previously discussed, the establishment of a government-funded organisation distributing free learning resources forced Acair to move away from producing educational books – future research into

⁴⁸⁵ Aonghas MacNeacail, ‘A Year in Scottish Gaelic Writing,’ *The Herald*, 29 December 2003.

⁴⁸⁶ ‘Search – Gath,’ Gaelic Books Council, accessed 20 April 2021, <https://gaelicbooks.org/index.php?route=product/search&search=Gath>

⁴⁸⁷ EKOS Limited, *A Review of the Gaelic Publishing Sector*, 13.

⁴⁸⁸ EKOS Limited, *A Review of the Gaelic Publishing Sector*, 13.

⁴⁸⁹ Mairi Kidd, interview with Alice Piotrowska, online, 17 May 2021.

⁴⁹⁰ Mairi Kidd, interview with Alice Piotrowska, online, 17 May 2021.

⁴⁹¹ ‘Stòrlann Nàiseanta na Gàidhlig – about us,’ Stòrlann Nàiseanta na Gàidhlig, accessed 17 April 2021, www.storlann.co.uk/beurla/about-storlann/index.html

⁴⁹² ‘Stòrlann Nàiseanta na Gàidhlig – about us,’ Stòrlann Nàiseanta na Gàidhlig, accessed 17 April 2021, www.storlann.co.uk/beurla/about-storlann/index.html

Gaelic publishing could consider the implications of providing free publications on the more commercial activities within the sector.

Other companies in Scotland have also included Gaelic-language publications as part of their mainly English-language lists. Edinburgh-based Luath Press has a Gaelic publishing list, with more than a dozen titles available to purchase on the website as of April 2021.⁴⁹³ While small, the list is actively promoted through a dedicated page and social media channels: the ‘Gaelic’ section on the website includes videos, event updates, blog posts published a few times a year, as well as links to active Gaelic-language Facebook and Twitter accounts.⁴⁹⁴ Luath’s director, Gavin MacDougall, states in interview that he considers publishing Gaelic books ‘a worthwhile thing to be doing’ from the cultural significance standpoint, but generally does not expect them to be commercially successful:

The reality is that it is difficult to sell enough books in Gaelic to make them viable . . . We probably shouldn’t be doing that really, commercially – but it’s part of the mix of what we do.⁴⁹⁵

Similarly, Sandstone Press includes a Gaelic fiction list, with fifteen titles published between 2009 and 2017 – including authors such as Alison Lang, Catriona Lexy Campbell, and Tim Armstrong.⁴⁹⁶ As part of the Lasag series – which translates into English as ‘a small flame’ – the company produced short Young Adult novels specifically tailored to ‘advanced learners’ of Gaelic, with glossaries and chapter summaries in English.⁴⁹⁷ In a press release from 2015, Sandstone’s managing director Robert Davidson states that the first five titles in the series had been ‘a great success and popular with both learners and teachers.’⁴⁹⁸

As discussed throughout this chapter, the Gaelic sector generally relies on public subsidy to produce both educational materials and commercial publications. Cox argues that one of the ‘most significant developments’ for the sector in the twentieth century was the introduction of

⁴⁹³ ‘Gaelic – Luath Press,’ Luath Press, accessed 17 April 2021, www.luath.co.uk/gaelic

⁴⁹⁴ ‘Gaelic – Luath Press,’ Luath Press, accessed 17 April 2021, www.luath.co.uk/gaelic

⁴⁹⁵ Gavin MacDougall, interview with Alice Piotrowska, Edinburgh, Scotland, 5 March 2019.

⁴⁹⁶ ‘Books – Gaelic Fiction,’ Sandstone Press, accessed 15 May 2021, <https://sandstonepress.com/books/genre/gaelic>

⁴⁹⁷ ‘News: Lasag Gaelic Series,’ Sandstone Press, accessed 5 June 2021, <https://sandstonepress.com/news/2015/5/25/lasag-gaelic-series>

⁴⁹⁸ ‘News: Lasag Gaelic Series,’ Sandstone Press, accessed 5 June 2021, <https://sandstonepress.com/news/2015/5/25/lasag-gaelic-series>

‘a grant to aid Gaelic publishing’ in 1968, in the form of £5,000 administered annually by the newly established Gaelic Books Council.⁴⁹⁹ *A Review of the Gaelic Publishing Sector* also stresses the importance of the Specific Grants for Gaelic Education, introduced in 1986 partly to fund the publishing of Gaelic educational materials – the grants increased from £200,000 in 1986 to £2.6 million in 2000–01.⁵⁰⁰ As of 2021, Bòrd na Gàidhlig is the main organisation overseeing Gaelic grant distribution: in 2020, Stòrlann was its second biggest grant recipient (£666,482), and the Gaelic Books Council – fifth (£375,440), with Acair receiving £127,580.⁵⁰¹ Other book trade organisations, such as the Scottish Poetry Library or the Scottish Book Trust, received smaller grants for their Gaelic-related activities.⁵⁰² The Gaelic Books Council is also in receipt of Creative Scotland’s Regular Funding, with a grant of £620,000 awarded for the 2018–2021 period.⁵⁰³ In addition to providing its marketing and training services, the Council uses the grant income to administer funding directly to Gaelic publishers and writers.⁵⁰⁴

Despite this significant increase in public funding efforts and coordinated activities in the last five decades, Mairi Kidd – who has been involved in the Gaelic sector as a publisher and writer throughout her career, and served as Head of Literature and Publishing at Creative Scotland between 2018 and 2020 – expresses a concern that the Gaelic publishing sector suffers from a ‘significant absence of strategy,’ and that the Gaelic Books Council is not doing enough to support Gaelic literacy through publishing activities:

I think there is an absolute lack of strategy [at the Gaelic Books Council]. I think that there is an absolute lack of attention to readers. Fundamentally, if Gaelic is to survive as a vernacular language, a community

⁴⁹⁹ Cox, ‘The Gaelic Book.’

⁵⁰⁰ EKOS Limited, *A Review of the Gaelic Publishing Sector*.

⁵⁰¹ ‘Bord na Gàidhlig,’ 360GrantNav, accessed 13 April 2021, <http://grantnav.threesixtygiving.org/funder/XI-PB-gb/bord-na-gaidhlig>

⁵⁰² ‘Bord na Gàidhlig,’ 360GrantNav, accessed 13 April 2021, <http://grantnav.threesixtygiving.org/funder/XI-PB-gb/bord-na-gaidhlig>

⁵⁰³ Creative Scotland, ‘2018-21-Regular-Funding-Network-updated.’ (Edinburgh: Creative Scotland, 2018).

⁵⁰⁴ Gaelic Books Council, *Comhairle Nan Leabhraichean (A company limited by guarantee) Report and Financial Statements for the Year Ended 31 March 2019* (Gaelic Books Council, 2019).

language, then one of the key tasks is to ensure literacy. In which case, where is the strategy? How do we support native speakers who cannot read their own language?⁵⁰⁵

Kidd believes that public organisations supporting Gaelic publishing should ‘encourage the entrepreneurial spirit,’ urging companies to produce more ‘strategic’ and ‘marketable’ titles: while the Gaelic market is limited, ‘the reader should feel that [the book] has come from market research,’ with a careful examination of what people read in general, and what types of books interest them in Gaelic. She also states that she would like to see Bòrd na Gàidhlig ‘apply a bit more specialism in their approaches to arts organisations’ and ‘prioritise literacy considerably higher,’ and that the industry should develop a different approach to Gaelic inclusion:

I don’t believe in a model of inclusion as ‘everyone in the same room,’ I believe in inclusion as meaningful. Just having a Gaelic category [is] not the same as inclusion . . . you need to treat [Gaelic] differently and uniquely, as in find ways to include Gaelic that recognises the particular challenges and benefits of Gaelic.⁵⁰⁶

Alongside the sustainability and market issues discussed throughout this chapter, Kidd’s comments signal that more research should be done into the public funding strategies for the Gaelic publishing sector.⁵⁰⁷

The next section of the chapter provides an overview of the Scots-language publishing sector, discussing its main challenges and developments over the last few decades – particularly the launch of Itchy Coö, a Scots-language imprint of Edinburgh company Black and White Publishing.

4.2.3. Publishing in Scots

As previously discussed, while the Scots language is more widespread, its status in Scotland is less clear – unlike Gaelic, it is not considered an official language, and historically there have

⁵⁰⁵ Mairi Kidd, interview with Alice Piotrowska, online, 17 May 2021.

⁵⁰⁶ Mairi Kidd, interview with Alice Piotrowska, online, 17 May 2021.

⁵⁰⁷ Another significant issue raised by Mairi Kidd in interview is the lack of female writers and editors in Gaelic. While there are some women writers who have enjoyed success as Gaelic authors – such as Alison Lang, Catriona Lexy Campbell, and Norma NicLeòid – there is a distinct lack of published female writers in Gaelic and, as Kidd argues, there are also ‘too many male editors,’ with the lack of gender balance not being sufficiently addressed or recognised as an issue.

been less coordinated efforts to promote its use. This issue is reflected in the history of Scots-language publishing. As James Robertson writes in *Scots: Studies in its Literature and Language*, publications ‘mainly or entirely in Scots’ have been ‘occasional and isolated events’ over the last 250 years: while some titles (not necessarily published by Scottish-based companies), such as W. L. Lorimer’s *New Testament in Scots* (1983), Irvine Welsh’s *Trainspotting* (1993), or James Kelman’s *How Late It Was, How Late* (1994) have been ‘great achievements in either commercial or literary terms,’ there were very few companies with a substantial Scots focus throughout the twentieth century.⁵⁰⁸ Those ventures that did publish in Scots, such as Merlin Press (established in 1995 by Sheila Douglas), were led by ‘dedicated activists’ doing mainly volunteer work, and suffered from a number of issues affecting their sustainability:

[E]ven those [publishers] in receipt of some funded support, tended to suffer from one or more of several problems: severely limited budgets, very little or no capital investment, necessarily short print-runs, poor distribution, little or no professional publishing expertise, and no long-term ‘list’ planning.⁵⁰⁹

In an archival document from 2010, Robertson also argues that the conglomeration process in the late twentieth century further contributed to the decline of Scots publishing, with companies like Oliver and Boyd ceasing to produce works with ‘substantial Scots content’ after being acquired by London-based corporations.⁵¹⁰ The provision of Scots-language materials for schools was, according to Robertson, similarly ‘limited’ and ‘haphazard,’ with the inclusion of Scots ‘entirely dependent on the personal enthusiasm or interest of individual teachers.’⁵¹¹

This perceived gap in the market led to the establishment of a new imprint publishing Scots-language works for young readers, Itchy Coö, in 2002.⁵¹² Launched by James Robertson, Matthew Fitt, and Susan Rennie, Itchy Coö was made possible by a National Lottery grant of £150,000, facilitated via the Scottish Arts Council. To become eligible for the grant, Robertson, Fitt, and Rennie initially formed a group called ‘Dub Busters’ and produced a ‘sampler pamphlet

⁵⁰⁸ James Robertson, ‘Pittin the Word(s) Oot: The Itchy Coö Experience of Publishing in Scots in the 21st century,’ in *Scots: Studies in its Literature and Language*, eds. John M. Kirk and Iseabail Macleod (Rodopi, 2013), 103.

⁵⁰⁹ Robertson, ‘Pittin the Word(s) Oot,’ 105.

⁵¹⁰ Robertson, ‘Publishing in Scots.’

⁵¹¹ Robertson, ‘Pittin the Word(s) Oot,’ 104.

⁵¹² Robertson, ‘Publishing in Scots.’

of Scots language educational texts' that was distributed to teachers.⁵¹³ Following a recommendation from the SAC, the founders then entered a partnership with Edinburgh company Black and White Publishing, with Itchy Coo established as its Scot-language imprint. As Robertson notes, collaborating with an existing publisher allowed them to mitigate some of the major challenges faced by the previous Scots companies, such as the lack of professional publishing skills.⁵¹⁴ He also stresses the importance of the SAC itself, with the then-Head of Literature Gavin Wallace offering 'unstinting support' and helping establish Scots as an important part of Scotland's literary culture:

The unstinting support and understanding of Gavin Wallace, Head of Literature at the SAC, was vital to the establishment of Itchy Coo, and to its development in later years. His attitude, and that of others like him, helped to bring Scots language in from the cold outer lobby of institutional Scotland, where it had languished for many years, and made it not only acceptable but necessary that, for example, literature organisations recognise and engage with Scots in their regular activities, as they were already doing with Gaelic.⁵¹⁵

The main aims of the Itchy Coo imprint were to 'raise awareness of the Scots language' and encourage its use through the provision of new Scots-language work.⁵¹⁶ The company published 35 titles over the next nine years, selling between 200,000 and 250,000 copies across the list – in the 2010 article, Robertson asserts that 'it is questionable whether a publishing house would have considered this a venture worth embarking upon' without subsidy from the SAC.⁵¹⁷ In email conversation, Robertson states that the SAC's successor, Creative Scotland, has been similarly supportive of Itchy Coo, although he and Fitt made 'a conscious decision' not to apply for the status of a regularly funded organisation, and have received only project-based grants since. He explains that, speaking personally, he took that decision to have more time for his own writing and other projects, as being a regularly funded organisation would involve a significant amount of additional outreach and education work.⁵¹⁸ He also highlights a new

⁵¹³ Robertson, 'Pittin the Word(s) Oot,' 106.

⁵¹⁴ Robertson, 'Pittin the Word(s) Oot.'

⁵¹⁵ Robertson, 'Pittin the Word(s) Oot,' 107–108.

⁵¹⁶ Robertson, 'Publishing in Scots.'

⁵¹⁷ Robertson, 'Publishing in Scots.'

⁵¹⁸ James Robertson, 'Re: Intro to our sponsored Ph.d student,' Message to Alice Piotrowska, 30 August 2020.

Scottish Government fund administered by the Scottish Book Trust – the Scots Language Publication Grant – which ‘has unlocked a lot of ideas’:

[A]lthough it is not a huge fund I think it has unlocked a lot of ideas and engaged a lot of different people who might otherwise not have thought about developing Scots language projects. And in each of its two years Itchy Coo has made an application and been successful – for projects that might otherwise have been too financially risky.⁵¹⁹

As of 2020, Itchy Coo has published 70 titles – Robertson states that, although he is now focusing on other projects, the company will continue to operate, now concentrating mainly ‘on translations from already existing books that [they] believe will sell well in Scots.’⁵²⁰ These are predominantly translations of highly commercial titles, such as the *Harry Potter* series and books by Roald Dahl.⁵²¹

Other companies that have a substantial Scots focus also publish predominantly titles for children and young adults, either original or translated. D. C. Thomson, a newspaper and magazine company based in Dundee, publishes two comic series written in Scots, *Oor Wullie* and *The Broons* – both comics, offering ‘unique slices of Scottish life,’⁵²² made their debut in the *Sunday Post* in 1936.⁵²³ The comics remain very popular in Scotland – according to Nielsen BookData, a title from the *Oor Wullie* series was the third bestselling book in 2018 (and, notably, the only top five title that was unique to Scotland compared to the rest of the UK).⁵²⁴ The main character from the series was also the basis of ‘the first ever nationwide public art trail’ in 2019, with Oor Wullie sculptures appearing across Scotland as a fundraising effort for children’s

⁵¹⁹ James Robertson, ‘Re: Intro to our sponsored Ph.d student.’

⁵²⁰ James Robertson, ‘Re: Intro to our sponsored Ph.d student.’

⁵²¹ ‘Hame – Itchy Coo,’ Itchy Coo, accessed 15 May 2021, www.itchy-coo.com

⁵²² Joseph McAleer, ‘The Dandy, the Beano and The Broons,’ in *The Edinburgh History of the Book in Scotland, Volume 4: Professionalism and Diversity 1880–2000*, eds. David Finkelstein and Alistair McCleery (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2007), 376.

⁵²³ Joseph McAleer, ‘Magazines and Comics,’ in *The Edinburgh History of the Book in Scotland, Volume 4: Professionalism and Diversity 1880–2000*, eds. David Finkelstein and Alistair McCleery (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2007), 368–384.

⁵²⁴ Steve Bohme, ‘Books & Consumers in 2018,’ (Scottish Book Trade Conference, 2019).

hospitals.⁵²⁵ Stornoway-based Dalen Alba, an imprint of Welsh company Dalen (Llyfrau) Cyf, also focuses on adapting existing graphic novel series – such as *Asterix* or *The Adventures of Tintin* – into both Scots and Gaelic.⁵²⁶ Isle of Lewis company Cranachan Publishing, established in 2016, includes occasional Scots-language publications on its children’s and young adult lists, such as or *Tam O’Shanter* by Robert Burns – adapted into a graphic novel by Richmond Clements (2019)⁵²⁷ – and *Sonny and Me* by Ross Sayers (2019).⁵²⁸ Similarly, some of the picture books published by the Wigtownshire-based Curly Tale Books, such as *Nip Nebs* by Susi Briggs and Ruthie Redden (2017), are written in Scots.⁵²⁹ Scots-language Wee Book Company was founded in 2018 ‘wi’ the aim o’ producing quality, modern non-fiction Scottish humour an’ children’s fiction.⁵³⁰ All three companies – Cranachan Publishing, Curly Tale Books, and the Wee Book Company – are small independent ventures established after 2013, and have been successful in their areas: the Wee Book Company was named the Scots Language Awards ‘Scots Business o the Year’ in 2020, with Cranachan Publishing nominated for the same awards, while *Sonny and Me* (Cranachan) and *Nip Nebs* (Curly Tale) were shortlisted in the ‘Scots Bairns Book o the Year’ category.⁵³¹

4.2.4. Publishing in Gaelic and Scots: Summary

The first two decades of the twenty-first century have seen significantly increased activity and government support for minority language publishing. While some initiatives launched in the second half of the twentieth century, such as the establishment of the Gaelic Books Council or the Scots Language Society, have been helpful in developing and maintaining the sector, most

⁵²⁵ ‘The BIG Bucket Trail – Oor Wullie’s Big Bucket Trail,’ D. C. Thomson & CO, accessed 10 April 2021, www.oorwullie.com/the-big-bucket-trail/

⁵²⁶ ‘Amdanon ni,’ Dalen, accessed 10 March 2021, <http://dalenalba.com/dalen-books-home.html>

⁵²⁷ ‘Tam O’Shanter by Robert Burns (age 10+) – Cranachan Publishing,’ Cranachan Publishing, accessed 10 March 2021, www.cranachanpublishing.co.uk/product/tam-oshanter/

⁵²⁸ ‘Sonny and Me by Ross Sayers – Cranachan Publishing,’ Cranachan Publishing, accessed 10 March 2021, www.cranachanpublishing.co.uk/product/sonny-and-me/

⁵²⁹ ‘Nip Nebs – Curly Tale Books,’ Curly Tale Books, accessed 10 March 2021, <https://curlytalebooks.co.uk/books/nip-nebs/>

⁵³⁰ ‘Aboot Us | The Wee Book Company,’ The Wee Book Company, accessed 10 March 2021, www.theweebokcompany.com/about-us

⁵³¹ ‘Scots Language Awards 2020 winners,’ Publishing Scotland, accessed 5 December 2020.

progress of the previous century was based predominantly on the efforts of a small group of dedicated individuals. In the last twenty years, however, developments such as the Gaelic Language (Scotland) Act in 2005 and the Scots language policy in 2015 initiated a more strategic approach to promoting literacy and supporting minority language work. As noted in the chapter, this support is generally more widespread and better coordinated for Gaelic than for Scots; however, with only 57,600 speakers – as opposed to Scots’s 1.5 million – Gaelic does have a more precarious future and requires immediate and concerted efforts to sustain.

This chapter has examined the development of minority language publishing in Scotland by tracing the history of the main publishers working with Gaelic and Scots, filling the gap in existing scholarship by providing an up-to-date chronological overview of the industry. Combining literature, interviews, and archival data, it also identified some of the major issues affecting the sector. Based on these findings, this study proposes three key areas for further research: the effectiveness of the current strategy by the Gaelic Books Council for sustaining and developing the Gaelic publishing sector, with an in-depth analysis of sales data and grant distribution; the impact of distributing free government-funded publications on the commercial publishing activities within the sector, and whether it can inhibit other companies achieving marketplace success; and the long-term sustainability and commercial viability of the Gaelic and Scots sectors.

4.3. Conclusion

Chapter Four has delved into the rise and development of the independent publishing sector in Scotland from approximately 1970 to 2020. Using a combination of oral histories and archival research, it discussed the socio-political background of the birth of new independent publishing, presented detailed histories of some of the most influential companies of the period, and explored the sector of minority language publishing.

On the whole, this chapter has underscored the importance of new independent publishers as contributors to the preservation of Scottish cultural heritage. Regardless of their primary editorial focus, most publishers that emerged between 1970 and 2020 contributed in some way to fostering a sense of cultural continuity and connecting Scottish readers with their literary heritage: from reissuing out-of-print classics and relaunching Scottish children’s literature to nurturing local talent and contributing to the preservation of national languages. By the 1990s, publishing in Scotland became ‘Scottish’ both through its location and its publishing efforts,

with a large portfolio of literary works by Scottish writers as well as books on Scottish arts, history, politics, and travel.

The chapter has also showcased that, as a small creative industry, the late twentieth-century Scottish publishing in particular owed much of its growth and momentum to a select group of talented and charismatic individuals. Figures such as Stephanie Wolfe Murray, Peter Kravitz, Jamie Byng, Marion Sinclair, Bill Campbell and Peter MacKenzie, and Derick Thomson became synonymous with their respective publishing companies, shaping the ethos of their presses through their own talents and editorial interests. At the same time, while individual publishers brought their unique vision to the companies they managed, many of them recognised the value of collaborative spirit and collective action – a phenomenon particularly evident in the formation and activities of the Scottish Publishers Association, examined in the next chapter.

These characteristics, while undeniably instrumental in the development of the trade and the preservation of Scottish literary culture, have been associated with some vulnerabilities and challenges. As exemplified by the histories of Gairm and Mainstream, the reliance on individual efforts meant that the retirement or departure of the directors could result in their companies disappearing from the Scottish publishing landscape, leading to a substantial loss across the sector. Most independent publishers of the period also continued to rely on public subsidy to sustain their operations, with public funding decisions occasionally coming under scrutiny.

Chapter Five provides an extended case study of the Scottish Publishers Association / Publishing Scotland, the trade, network and development body for the industry established in 1974. It provides a detailed history of the organisation and examines its background, activities, and impact on the trade.

5. Chapter Five: Publishing for Scotland – Case Study: Publishing Scotland

This chapter examines the history and operations of Publishing Scotland (PS) (previously the Scottish Publishers Association, or SPA), a trade, network and development body that supports Scottish publishers through book fair representation, marketing initiatives, information, grant distribution, and training. Despite PS being central to the development of Scottish publishing since its launch in 1974, there is very limited literature discussing its history and activities. The only available full-length publication is the *Thirtieth Anniversary of the Scottish Publishers Association: A Celebration* (2004), a self-published collection of articles, interviews, and personal essays about the organisation from its inception to its thirtieth anniversary. While a valuable source of memories from people involved with the SPA in different capacities prior to 2004, the book comes with the limitation of being an in-house celebratory publication that is not intended as a cohesive historical narrative or critical discussion. There is no other comprehensive literature focusing on the history of the organisation. *The Edinburgh History of the Book in Scotland: Volume 4* includes a two-page case study of the SPA⁵³² alongside individual mentions throughout the book.⁵³³ From a business-oriented perspective, the reports *Review of Publishing* (2004) commissioned by the Scottish Arts Council and *Literature and Publishing Sector Review* (2015) commissioned by Creative Scotland include discussions of the SPA / PS, providing recommendations for developing the service at the time.

This section fills this gap in existing scholarship by combining oral histories, archival documents, and elements of participant observation to recreate the history of the organisation and showcase its impact on the trade. It examines some of the key opportunities created by the organisation and the way its strategy had evolved over the years. *Background, Structures, and Finances* looks at the inception of the SPA in 1974 and discusses its membership offer, organisational structure, and finances. *Early Challenges* considers some of the issues faced by the organisation in the early years, looking at how these challenges relate to the Scottish publishing industry as a whole. The

⁵³² Helen Williams, 'Scottish Publishers Association,' in *The Edinburgh History of the Book in Scotland, Volume 4. Professionalism and Diversity 1880–2000*, eds. David Finkelstein and Alistair McCleery (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2007), 34–35.

⁵³³ Significant mentions include a discussion of the Books from Scotland website on page 82, a mention of the Scottish Book Marketing Group on page 87, and a paragraph on the importance of the SPA on pages 474–475.

next four parts (*Book Fair Representation, Marketing Initiatives, Information and Training, and Distribution*) then focus on outlining the main activities of the SPA / PS and its trading subsidiary, BookSource. Finally, *Challenges and Criticisms* discusses some of the issues faced by the organisation in its current form.

5.1. Background, Structures, and Finances

In the late nineteenth and early twentieth century, the British publishing industry was becoming increasingly professionalised – shifting, as described by David Finkelstein in *The Edinburgh History of the Book in Scotland*, ‘from a static, paternalistic system of operations to one incorporating transnational activities and complex levels of professionalised organisations and players.’⁵³⁴ As part of this process, new external associations emerged to protect and represent the interests of authors, publishers, booksellers, and printers, including the Society of Authors (established in 1884), the Associated Booksellers of Great Britain and Ireland (1895), and the Publishers Association (1896).⁵³⁵ While Scotland had its own Booksellers Association (also founded in 1896), there was no separate organisation to represent publishers. Large Scottish-based companies such as Constable, Blackie, and Thomas Nelson joined the UK-wide Publishers Association (PA), and William Blackwood of Blackwood and Sons was one of the members of the first PA council.⁵³⁶ Scotland would not have a separate publishing association until the 1970s. As previously discussed, the late 1960s and early 1970s marked the beginning of significant structural change in the Scottish book trade, with new presses emerging partially in response to the changing socio-political environment in Scotland. The Scottish General Publishers Association (SGPA) was launched in 1974 predominantly to protect and represent the interests of these new companies.

Grzegorz Boguta proposes that a publishing association has four key aims: one, to provide publishers with services that are not directly related to their main commercial activities; two, to serve as a source of information; three, to ensure that the industry promotes its interests in an increasingly competitive environment; and four, to provide a link between the trade and the

⁵³⁴ Finkelstein, ‘The Professionalisation of Publishing,’ 31.

⁵³⁵ Finkelstein, ‘The Professionalisation of Publishing.’

⁵³⁶ Williams, ‘Scottish Publishers Association,’ 34.

government.⁵³⁷ The Scottish General Publishers Association had similar goals in mind, aiming to ‘collaborat[e] on gathering information, marketing, and on exhibiting at book fairs’⁵³⁸ – and growing, as described in the *Thirtieth Anniversary of the Scottish Publishers Association* by its then-chief executive Lorraine Fannin, ‘from necessity, energy and conviction, ambition, and the wish to fan what then looked like the dying embers of a once-important industry in Scotland.’⁵³⁹ The organisation was launched in 1974 by a group of independent publishers who had the idea of ‘forming some sort of publishers’ union’ to establish a collective voice and to share resources with one another – in a 2004 interview printed in the *Thirtieth Anniversary*, for instance, Stephanie Wolfe Murray of Canongate recalls how, before the SGPA brought small Scottish publishers together, she was ‘constantly trying to get access to Paul’s [Harris, of Paul Harris Publishing] greatly superior mailing list.’⁵⁴⁰ The founding publishers, as recalled by Wolfe Murray, included herself, Paul Harris, Norman Wilson of Ramsay Head Press, Robin Lorimer of Southside, Simon Berry of Molendinar Press, and Gordon Wright of Gordon Wright Publishing. Although Angus Wolfe Murray (co-founder of Canongate) was the one to put forward the idea for a book trade body around 1973, the organisation launched shortly after he had left the publishing industry.⁵⁴¹

For a number of years, the organisation’s Board of Trustees consisted of ten members, elected at the Annual General Meeting and serving for an initial period of two years, with the opportunity to offer themselves for re-election afterwards.⁵⁴² After the organisation was rebranded as Publishing Scotland (discussed later in this chapter), the board grew to include up to twelve members serving for three years (eligible for re-election for a further three years): ‘five

⁵³⁷ Grzegorz Boguta, ‘The Organisation of the Work and Activities of Publishing Associations. A Summary of the seminars held in Bratislava, Kiev, Almaty and Ulan Bator in 1999,’ *Centre for Publishing Development* (1999).

⁵³⁸ Lorraine Fannin, ‘Scottish publishing: 30 years of change – the statistics,’ in *Thirtieth Anniversary of the Scottish Publishers Association: A Celebration* (Edinburgh: Scottish Publishers Association, 2004), 11.

⁵³⁹ Lorraine Fannin, ‘Introduction,’ in *Thirtieth Anniversary of the Scottish Publishers Association: A Celebration* (Edinburgh: Scottish Publishers Association, 2004), 9.

⁵⁴⁰ Stephanie Wolfe Murray, ‘The early days,’ in *Thirtieth Anniversary of the Scottish Publishers Association: A Celebration* (Edinburgh: Scottish Publishers Association, 2004), 14.

⁵⁴¹ Wolfe Murray, ‘The early days.’

⁵⁴² Scottish Publishers Association, ‘Scottish Publishers Association,’ *Directory of Publishing in Scotland* (Edinburgh: Scottish Publishers Association, 2002), 10.

directors drawn from the publisher membership; two from the network membership; and up to four co-opted members plus the Chief Executive [of Publishing Scotland].⁵⁴³ In addition to the Board of Trustees, the organisation established sub-committees for the Trade, Marketing, and Training areas, discussed in the relevant sections of this chapter.

As explained by the organisation's then-executive administrator Janis Fox in 'The Scottish General Publishers' Association – a profile' from 1978, the word 'General' in the initial name was 'argued for strongly by the founder members as indicating a change in direction away from educational, religious and reference book publishing towards re-establishing a foothold for Scottish publishers in the book trade.'⁵⁴⁴ However, Wolfe Murray suggests in her article that the 'General' part was advocated for mostly by the first chair, Robin Lorimer, and the board soon 'managed to get rid of the G'⁵⁴⁵ – becoming the Scottish Publishers Association (SPA). A relatively early membership list found in the archive, dated at 1982, confirms that the organisation offered its services to the educational, religious and reference as much as trade publishers: its members included, for instance, John Bartholomew (map publisher) and Teviot Scientific Publications.⁵⁴⁶ By 1985, the SPA membership had expanded to include 'virtually every Scottish publishing house,' with members 'vary[ing] in size from very small presses to large companies involved in almost every kind of publishing activity' – and the organisation was, in fact, chaired by Colin Kirkwood of Bartholomew.⁵⁴⁷ The organisation has maintained this diversity of membership throughout its existence, as confirmed by the *Directories of Publishing in Scotland / Publishing Scotland Yearbooks* produced from 1988 to 2011 (discussed later). A 2020 list of PS publisher members includes 70 companies, with a variety of trade, academic, educational, reference, and religious publishers⁵⁴⁸; the organisation's Articles of Association, amended in December 2015, indicate that the publisher membership is open to

⁵⁴³ 'Governance,' Publishing Scotland, accessed 10 June 2022, www.publishingscotland.org/about-us/governance/

⁵⁴⁴ University of Dundee Archive Services, Acc2011-471 Box 1, SPGA Profile, 1978.

⁵⁴⁵ Wolfe Murray, 'The early days,' 15.

⁵⁴⁶ University of Dundee Archive Services, Acc2011-471 Box 1, SPA List, 1982; *The Edinburgh History of the Book in Scotland, Volume 4: Professionalism and Diversity, 1880–2000*, (2007), eds. Finkelstein and McCleery.

⁵⁴⁷ University of Dundee Archive Services, Acc2011-471 Box 1, SPGA Profile, 1978.

⁵⁴⁸ Publishing Scotland, *Publisher Members: April 2020* (Edinburgh: Publishing Scotland, 2020).

all Scottish book and print-based, online, electronic (including digital) publishers (i.e. publishers based in Scotland or publishers of predominantly Scottish material), as defined in membership information; content providers, packagers and organisations or institutions who produce or trade in books, and in intellectual property, including libraries, museums and galleries who publish in any format.⁵⁴⁹

This variety of membership, as discussed later in this chapter, has led to some challenges in managing the organisation over the years.

In 2007, the Scottish Publishers Association changed its name for the second time, becoming Publishing Scotland (PS). The current chief executive of PS, Marion Sinclair, indicates in interview that the rebranding was aimed predominantly at ‘go[ing] fully down the charitable status route’ after being advised that becoming a charity would make ‘financial and regulatory sense,’ especially for the PS-owned distributor BookSource (discussed later).⁵⁵⁰ According to an archival document outlining the plans for the structural change, the rebranding also intended to increase the organisation’s ‘remit and outreach’ by offering services to a broader scope of trade professionals – allowing PS to ‘play a nation-wide developmental role in Scotland with all organisations, companies and individuals who wish to develop and expand their publishing.’⁵⁵¹ As Sinclair notes, particular attention was paid to selecting the new name, ensuring that it reflected this developmental role of the reformed organisation – with ‘Publishing Scotland’ sounding ‘more like a charitable, sectoral agency’ rather than a trade association.⁵⁵² In addition to its publisher membership, the organisation in its current form offers network membership that is

open to institutions, service providers such as agents and freelancers, proofreaders and editors who deal with creative content and/or supply publishers with goods or services [as well as] non-publishing libraries,

⁵⁴⁹ Publishing Scotland, The Companies Act 2006. Company Limited by Guarantee and not having a Share Capital. Articles of Association of Publishing Scotland. Adopted by Special Resolution dated 9 December 2015 (Edinburgh: Publishing Scotland, 2015).

⁵⁵⁰ Marion Sinclair, interview with Alice Piotrowska, online, 18 June 2020.

⁵⁵¹ University of Dundee Archive Services, Acc2011-471 Box 1, Restructuring SPA, 2006.

⁵⁵² Marion Sinclair, interview with Alice Piotrowska, online, 18 June 2020.

museums, galleries, heritage and other organisations, literary agents, companies and individuals working in the literary and artistic sectors in Scotland⁵⁵³

A PS network members list published in November 2019 includes 31 members representing a variety of institutions and service providers, including libraries, universities, printing companies, and individuals providing editorial, design, and typesetting services.⁵⁵⁴

Throughout its history, the organisation had changed premises several times but remained based in central Edinburgh. Until 1991, the SPA operated from an attic office at South West Thistle Street Lane – a venue remembered by many employees and board members as precarious and posing many logistical challenges.⁵⁵⁵ Lorraine Fannin describes it in interview as ‘utterly haphazard’ and recalls that one of her priorities after taking over in 1987 was to ‘get [the SPA] out of that attic room.’⁵⁵⁶ In 1991, the organisation relocated to the much larger Fountainbridge Library in Dundee Street which, after major renovations, became known as the Scottish Book Centre, housing the SPA alongside the Edinburgh International Book Festival and the Scottish Book Trust.⁵⁵⁷ The new venue was a significant improvement in that it allowed the organisation to expand on its services to members – especially, as will be discussed later, on training courses.⁵⁵⁸ From 2012, the Publishing Scotland office is based at Scott House on South St Andrew Street, with the offices including additional space for events and training courses.⁵⁵⁹

Despite its broad remit, Publishing Scotland remains a small organisation of less than ten full- and part-time employees. For the first twelve years after its launch, the Scottish (General) Publishers Association formally employed only one person, with Janis Adams (Fox) hired in

⁵⁵³ ‘Network members,’ Publishing Scotland, accessed 15 June 2022, www.publishingscotland.org/our-members/network-members/

⁵⁵⁴ Publishing Scotland, *Network Members: November 2019* (Edinburgh: Publishing Scotland, 2019).

⁵⁵⁵ The *Thirtieth Anniversary of the Scottish Publishers Association* volume (2004) includes numerous anecdotes about the rickety wooden staircase or a cramped ad-hoc meeting room in the first SPA office.

⁵⁵⁶ Lorraine Fannin, interview with Alice Piotrowska, Edinburgh, Scotland, 15 January 2019.

⁵⁵⁷ University of Dundee Archive Services. Acc2011-471 Box 1. Scottish Book Centre, 1992.

⁵⁵⁸ Joan Lyle, interview with Alice Piotrowska, Edinburgh, Scotland, 25 July 2019.

⁵⁵⁹ ‘About our training,’ Publishing Scotland, accessed 15 June 2022, www.publishingscotland.org/training/about-our-training/

1978 as the first full-time executive administrator.⁵⁶⁰ Judy Moir managed the SPA from 1981 to 1986, initially as the only paid employee and then with one full-time assistant, Alison Rae, and two part-time staff: freelance London-based publicist Steven Williams and assistant Alison Harley.⁵⁶¹ Under Lorraine Fannin, who replaced Moir as chief executive in 1987 and remained in post until 2008,⁵⁶² staff numbers rose to five between 1992 and 2002 – the demise of a side SPA venture, the Scottish Book Marketing Group (discussed later), brought this number back to four.⁵⁶³ By 2004, the organisation employed six people full or part time, plus ‘one or two on an occasional basis’ – Fannin indicates in interview that during her twenty-one years of managing the organization, employee numbers would vary slightly but never exceed six employees.⁵⁶⁴ In 2008, the *Publishing Scotland Yearbook* listed seven contacts, including Fannin who would retire in the same year.⁵⁶⁵ Fannin was replaced by Marion Sinclair. By August 2020, PS employed six people: three (chief executive, training and information manager, and marketing and events manager) full time and three (member services manager, finance officer, and programme support officer) part time, for the equivalent of three days per week.⁵⁶⁶ At the time, Sinclair indicated in interview that the salary bill had not increased during her time with PS, with a similar balance of full- and part-time employees keeping it at a relatively stable level.⁵⁶⁷

The Scottish Publishers Association has been in receipt of public subsidy through the Scottish Arts Council (SAC) since inception – its first grant (c. £400) was awarded in January 1975 for the production of a joint catalogue.⁵⁶⁸ In the *Thirtieth Anniversary*, Janis Adams recalls that in the early years of the SPA, the SAC’s Literature Director Trevor Royle ‘recognised [their] youthful

⁵⁶⁰ Janis Adams, ‘Janis Adams,’ in *Thirtieth Anniversary of the Scottish Publishers Association: A Celebration* (Edinburgh: Scottish Publishers Association, 2004), 21.

⁵⁶¹ Judy Moir, interview with Alice Piotrowska, Edinburgh, Scotland, 11 June 2019.

⁵⁶² Lorraine Fannin, interview with Alice Piotrowska, Edinburgh, Scotland, 15 January 2019.

⁵⁶³ Scottish Publishers Association, ‘SPA Staff,’ in *Thirtieth Anniversary of the Scottish Publishers Association: A Celebration* (Edinburgh: Scottish Publishers Association, 2004), 13.

⁵⁶⁴ Lorraine Fannin, interview with Alice Piotrowska, Edinburgh, Scotland, 15 January 2019.

⁵⁶⁵ *Publishing Scotland Yearbook*, ‘Publishing Scotland’ (Edinburgh: Publishing Scotland, 2008), 14.

⁵⁶⁶ ‘Our staff,’ Publishing Scotland, accessed 10 May 2020, www.publishingscotland.org/about-us/our-staff/

⁵⁶⁷ Marion Sinclair, interview with Alice Piotrowska, online, 18 June 2020.

⁵⁶⁸ Trevor Royle, ‘Trevor Royle,’ in *Thirtieth Anniversary of the Scottish Publishers Association: A Celebration* (Edinburgh: Scottish Publishers Association, 2004).

enthusiasm and paved the way within the Scottish Arts Council for the Association’ – while his successor Walter Cairns ‘reinforced this and made the Scottish Publishers Association stronger.’⁵⁶⁹ As recalled by Royle, the ‘big breakthrough’ in terms of the SAC’s financial support of the SPA came in 1978, when the SAC’s Literature Committee met with the SPA Council ‘to find ways and means to “increase the professional work of the publishing industry in Scotland”’ – as a result, the SPA received an award of £5450 towards the costs of attending book fairs and £5850 towards appointing a full-time employee.⁵⁷⁰ Judy Moir indicates that during her time managing the SPA (1981–1986), the organisation’s grant from the SAC ‘more than trebled.’⁵⁷¹ In interview, Moir’s successor Lorraine Fannin remembers the SAC as ‘always a tremendous help’ – when talking about accessing funding, she notes that the Council would ‘indicat[e] areas they would like to see developed, and [SPA] would look at what we were wanting to do and see how we could fit it around what they would like.’⁵⁷² The SPA had maintained its relationship with the SAC throughout the years; many materials in the archive acknowledge subsidy from the Scottish Arts Council.⁵⁷³

In its current form, Publishing Scotland is a company limited by guarantee and, as previously discussed, a registered charity, with its operations partly funded by the Scottish Arts Council’s successor, Creative Scotland.⁵⁷⁴ The organisation receives subsidy through the Creative Scotland Regular Funding scheme that provides direct financial assistance to organisations for a minimum of three years, with PS receiving £923,500 for the 2018–21 period and £840,000 between 2015–18.⁵⁷⁵ PS makes its annual reports, with a summary of income and expenditure, available online in PDF format; the organisation ‘acknowledges the generous support from Creative Scotland, and is also funded partly by annual subscriptions from the membership, and

⁵⁶⁹ Adams, ‘Janis Adams,’ 25.

⁵⁷⁰ Royle, ‘Trevor Royle,’ 92.

⁵⁷¹ Judy Moir, ‘1982: Judy Moir,’ in *Thirtieth Anniversary of the Scottish Publishers Association: A Celebration* (Edinburgh: Scottish Publishers Association, 2004), 29.

⁵⁷² Lorraine Fannin, interview with Alice Piotrowska, Edinburgh, Scotland, 15 January 2019.

⁵⁷³ For instance, the Scottish Book Marketing Group materials, the New Book Scotland catalogues, or the Scottish Books Direct and Books from Scotland marketing materials.

⁵⁷⁴ Publishing Scotland, *Publishing Scotland Annual Report 2018 to 2019* (Edinburgh: Publishing Scotland, 2019).

⁵⁷⁵ Creative Scotland, ‘2018-21-Regular-Funding-Network-updated.’ (Edinburgh: Creative Scotland, 2018).

by earned income from activities and revenue from the trading subsidiary, BookSource.⁵⁷⁶ The 2018/2019 summary reports the company's total income as £1,994,713, with £36,270 in voluntary income, £15 in investment income, £1,489,100 from commercial trading and £469,328 in resources from charitable activities.⁵⁷⁷ In interview, Marion Sinclair asserts that PS 'absolutely need[s] the public funding,' and there is 'no way' the organisation could operate on the money it earns through member subscription and other activities.⁵⁷⁸

5.2. Early Challenges

In its early years, the Scottish Publishers Association faced two significant challenges related to changing the mindset of the publishing industry. One of them was establishing itself as a professional organisation that was worth joining and listening to, but another was broader and even less quantifiable – to make Scottish publishing recognised nationally and internationally as a valid industry in its own right. When asked in a 2004 interview whether creating a separate association was 'an absolute necessity for Scottish publishers,' Stephanie Wolfe Murray argued that it was 'hard to imagine now how important it was':

We couldn't have become international if we hadn't had a collective base . . . In the 70s, the big, more established Scottish publishers belonged to the PA [Publishers Association] and it was somehow a sign that you'd arrived; why join this worthy provincial association when you belong to the proper one? But in time they all came to join.⁵⁷⁹

According to Wolfe Murray, being a member of the UK-wide Publishers Association meant that one had 'arrived' as a publishing company and, to some, the SPA seemed unnecessary and 'provincial' in comparison. Bill Campbell of Mainstream Publishing echoes this view when he notes that he did not consider the SPA particularly important back when he launched his company with Peter MacKenzie in 1978:

⁵⁷⁶ 'Governance,' Publishing Scotland, accessed 27 November 2019, www.publishingscotland.org/about-us/governance/

⁵⁷⁷ Publishing Scotland, *Publishing Scotland Annual Report 2018 to 2019* (Edinburgh: Publishing Scotland, 2019).

⁵⁷⁸ Marion Sinclair, interview with Alice Piotrowska, online, 18 June 2020.

⁵⁷⁹ Wolfe Murray, 'The early days,' 17.

[The SPA] was very nascent then . . . I remember going to board meetings of what was then called the Scottish Publishers Association and it was only a handful of publishers, really.⁵⁸⁰

Campbell goes on to say that, while he and MacKenzie considered Scotland their home and wanted to be based in Edinburgh, ‘London was the centre of publishing and [they] were up and down to London all the time’ – they wanted to be ‘right at the heart of publishing’ and seen as what they described in interview as ‘a real, serious publisher’ rather than a ‘Scottish’ press.⁵⁸¹

This mindset reflects a broader challenge that Scottish publishing faced in the late twentieth century – of not being seen as an industry separate from the rest of the UK, with its own distinct needs and characteristics. Fannin recalls this issue in interview when discussing her early years at the SPA. She remembers, for instance, being ‘patronised’ by the committee of the British Council – an organisation specialising in promoting cultural relationships and encouraging educational collaboration between the UK and other countries⁵⁸² – with one member calling Scotland ‘a tiny fraction of what matters in Britain.’⁵⁸³ Fannin talks about author tours as an example of the Council discriminating against Scottish publishers. While the organisation was ‘obliged in the interest of diversity’ to take Scottish writers on tour, the Council’s requirement for having books for sale was that they had to be produced by a London publisher. According to Fannin, the justification for that was the alleged unreliability of Scottish publishers and the lower production quality of the books, compared to those published by their London equivalents. The SPA addressed this issue with the Council multiple times and finally resolved it with the support of Tim Rix, the chief executive and chair of Longman, who used his influence to convince the committee. As Fannin asserts, while it was ‘brilliant’ to receive the help of influential people to tackle similar challenges, ‘you shouldn’t have *had* to find somebody’:

There were so many times we were slapped down and told, we really were only there on sufferance, because the industry wasn’t big enough in Scotland to merit their attention . . . There were a lot of meetings about

⁵⁸⁰ Bill Campbell and Peter MacKenzie, interview with Alice Piotrowska, Edinburgh, Scotland, 4 February 2019.

⁵⁸¹ Bill Campbell and Peter MacKenzie, interview with Alice Piotrowska, Edinburgh, Scotland, 4 February 2019.

⁵⁸² British Council, ‘How we work | British Council,’ British Council, accessed 19 December 2023, www.britishcouncil.org/about-us/how-we-work

⁵⁸³ Lorraine Fannin, interview with Alice Piotrowska, Edinburgh, Scotland, 15 January 2019.

what would happen with culture and how culture would be recognised, and there was an undervaluing of Scottish culture *constantly*.⁵⁸⁴

Janis Adams presents a similar view of Scottish publishers being ‘slapped down’:

In the early days [of the SPA] Scottish publishers needed every ounce of their persuasive powers to get people to take them seriously . . . it is a testament to their persistence and to the strength of the [Scottish Publishers] Association that nurtured them that many have survived.⁵⁸⁵

Having a ‘collective base’ in the form of the SPA meant that Scottish publishers benefited from the support of an external organisation advocating for Scottish culture and representing their interests in London. The SPA itself grew in significance over the years, establishing itself as a professional organisation rather than a ‘provincial’ set-up – as discussed in an interview with Judy Moir:

We went to more book fairs than before, and we did additional events . . . I also developed contacts abroad, got to know people at the [Publishers Association]. We began to be taken more seriously as a valid organisation within the British and indeed the international publishing community.⁵⁸⁶

The growth of the SPA was reflected in its membership, increasing from thirty-two publishers in 1978⁵⁸⁷ to nearly sixty in 1986 – ‘virtually every Scottish publishing house, as well as a few English publishers whose lists [were] primary Scottish.’⁵⁸⁸ Marion Sinclair indicates in interview that raising and maintaining the profile of Scottish publishing remains a major focus – and challenge – of Publishing Scotland:

Often, we can be seen as regional, small – irrelevant, at times . . . Our members are small and struggle for shelf space. I think that’s probably one of our biggest challenges – for PS – trying to think of ways to counteract that.⁵⁸⁹

The ways in which the organisation supports Scottish publishers have also expanded over the years. The following sections provide a historical overview of the main services offered by the

⁵⁸⁴ Lorraine Fannin, interview with Alice Piotrowska, Edinburgh, Scotland, 15 January 2019.

⁵⁸⁵ Adams, ‘Janis Adams,’ 23

⁵⁸⁶ Judy Moir, interview with Alice Piotrowska, Edinburgh, Scotland, 11 June 2019.

⁵⁸⁷ University of Dundee Archive Services, Acc2011-471 Box 1, SPGA Profile, 1978.

⁵⁸⁸ University of Dundee Archive Services, Acc2011-471 Box 15, SPA Directory, 1986.

⁵⁸⁹ Marion Sinclair, interview with Alice Piotrowska, online, 18 June 2020.

SPA / PS and their significance for the development of Scottish publishing, focusing on book fair representation, marketing initiatives, information and training, and distribution.

5.3. Book Fair Representation

Representing Scottish publishers at international book fairs has been one of the main aims of the Scottish Publishers Association since its inception. One of the founding members, Paul Harris, recalls that the first book fair attended by the organisation was in Montreal in 1975 or 1976 (he is uncertain about the exact date)⁵⁹⁰ – and, as mentioned previously, in 1978 the organisation received a substantial grant from the Scottish Arts Council specifically towards book fair attendance. By 1991, the SPA had hosted exhibition space at eight national and international fairs, including London, Frankfurt, and Moscow⁵⁹¹; the organisation did ‘all booking and administration, planning and organising of displays,’ organised shipment, and sent SPA staff ‘to maintain an appointments system, to provide information and to entertain guests.’⁵⁹² The organisation has attended a variety of book fairs across the years, including those less popular among British publishers, such as the Jerusalem Book Fair.⁵⁹³ By 2020, it had narrowed its focus on organising collective stands at the three main European fairs: London, Frankfurt, and Bologna (children’s book fair).⁵⁹⁴

The International Publishers Association lists three key functions of book industry fairs: one, they serve as a marketplace, allowing ‘publishers, agents, distributors and retailers to meet and do business,’ often around the buying and selling of publication rights; two, they play an important marketing role, drawing ‘media and public attention to the book industry,’ with trade companies having the opportunity to showcase their products and services; and three, they

⁵⁹⁰ Paul Harris, ‘Paul Harris,’ in *Thirtieth Anniversary of the Scottish Publishers Association: A Celebration* (Edinburgh: Scottish Publishers Association, 2004), 43.

⁵⁹¹ Numerous anecdotes about visiting international book fairs are available throughout the *Thirtieth Anniversary of the Scottish Publishers Association* (2004); *Stephanie Wolfe Murray: A Life in Books*, a tribute to Wolfe Murray published in 2017, also includes Judy Moir’s humorous recollection of the SPA visiting Moscow Book Fair in 1983.

⁵⁹² University of Dundee Archive Services, MS 337 Box 20, SPA Newsletter: Book Fairs, 1991.

⁵⁹³ Christian Maclean, interview with Alice Piotrowska, Edinburgh, Scotland, 11 June 2019.

⁵⁹⁴ ‘Book Fairs and Events | Publishing Scotland,’ Publishing Scotland, accessed 5 May 2023

www.publishingscotland.org/what-we-do/book-fairs-and-events/

provide a platform for industry events, allowing for an exchange of ideas through seminars, presentations, and panel discussions.⁵⁹⁵ These functions make book fair attendance vital for many publishing companies whose operations can benefit from international networks and rights sales. Publishing Scotland charges a subsidised rate for a table on its collective stand, allowing publisher members to display their products and hold business meetings in a professional setting without having to pay a far higher rate for an individual stand.⁵⁹⁶ With financial support from Creative Scotland, PS also offers the biannual Go-See Fund (established in 2018) that enables Scottish-based publishers to attend fairs for the first time – in the first round of 2019, for instance, the grant helped six publishers visit fairs in Shanghai, Brooklyn, Shrewsbury, Cracow, Taipei, and Beijing.⁵⁹⁷

When asked about the main benefits of being a member of the Scottish Publishers Association, several interviewees instantly mention book fair representation. Christian Maclean, the previous managing director of Floris Books as well as treasurer of the SPA for over twenty years, recalls that ‘in those days’ attending fairs was ‘prohibitively expensive’ for Scottish publishers, and many – including Floris – would be unable to benefit from them without the help of an external association.⁵⁹⁸ Katy Lockwood-Holmes, the current head of Floris, confirms this view, and discusses how some of the relationships developed during the early fair attendance continue to benefit the company to this day:

The ways that Floris has specifically benefitted [from SPA membership] in the early days, it was absolutely the book fairs . . . There were some retail relationships that we established [in New York] in like 1982; they are still really valuable relationships for us now . . . The SPA and Publishing Scotland gave Christian the opportunity to go out and meet people and build relationships: sales relationships, rights relationships that we would never, ever have been able to afford to do by ourselves.⁵⁹⁹

Similarly, although – as previously discussed – Bill Campbell and Peter MacKenzie of Mainstream talk about the SPA being ‘very nascent’ back when they first established their

⁵⁹⁵ International Publishers Association, *The Future of Book Fairs: An IPA Special Report*, 27 January 2015, 1.

⁵⁹⁶ ‘Book fairs,’ Publishing Scotland, accessed 22 November 2019, www.publishingscotland.org/what-we-do/book-fairs-and-events/

⁵⁹⁷ ‘Funding Information,’ Publishing Scotland, accessed 10 October 2019.

⁵⁹⁸ Christian Maclean, interview with Alice Piotrowska, Edinburgh, Scotland, 11 June 2019.

⁵⁹⁹ Katy Lockwood-Holmes, interview with Alice Piotrowska, Edinburgh, Scotland, 12 March 2019.

company, they admit that the SPA was ‘helpful in terms of book fairs.’⁶⁰⁰ Neville Moir also talks about Frankfurt Book Fair attendance when asked about the key benefits of the SPA membership back in the 1980s, when he worked at Polygon.⁶⁰¹ The overall perspective gathered from the research interviews is that book fair representation and attendance organised by the association allowed smaller publishers to develop international contacts and capitalise on opportunities that would have been inaccessible to them individually. This benefit seems to continue to this day, with some of the recent recipients of the Go-See Fund talking about an ‘enriching trip [to the Buenos Aires Book Fair] which could not have taken place without the help [of the fund]’ (Carolina Orloff from Charco Press) or about ‘relationships that [they] wouldn’t have been able to manage otherwise’ (Heather McDaid from 404 Ink)⁶⁰² – indicating that smaller Scottish publishers today might still find it challenging to afford fair attendance or promotion without the help of an external organisation.

5.4. Marketing Initiatives

In addition to book fair representation, one of the key activities of Publishing Scotland is the promotion of Scottish publishing and literature through marketing initiatives, including print catalogues, events and collaborations, and digital activity. The New Books Scotland catalogue is a major publication that has been released regularly since the early days of the Scottish Publishers Association – using, over the years, different variations of the name, such as New Books from Scotland or New Books from Scottish Publishers.⁶⁰³ A 2001 information flyer to members describes New Books Scotland as ‘a full-colour leaflet’ with a total print run of seven thousand, produced every two months and distributed via bookshops, library suppliers, wholesalers, and tourist outlets; as well as sent directly to one thousand ‘private individuals’ who had bought books through the previous leaflets.⁶⁰⁴ By 2020, the New Books Scotland promotion had evolved from a leaflet into a full-colour, professionally printed catalogue of around sixty

⁶⁰⁰ Bill Campbell and Peter MacKenzie, interview with Alice Piotrowska, Edinburgh, Scotland, 4 February 2019.

⁶⁰¹ Neville Moir, interview with Alice Piotrowska, Edinburgh, Scotland, 20 February 2019.

⁶⁰² ‘Funding Information,’ Publishing Scotland, accessed 10 October 2019.

⁶⁰³ University of Dundee Archive Services. MS337 Box 2.

⁶⁰⁴ University of Dundee Archive Services. MS337 Box 20. New Scottish Books, 200.

pages, released twice a year in Spring and Autumn editions. In contrast to their historical versions, these publications serve a more international role – they are designed predominantly as rights catalogues to be distributed at the major European book fairs (London and Frankfurt), and include international rights details about each individual title. In addition to the print version, the catalogues are available on the Publishing Scotland website in a PDF format and promoted online.⁶⁰⁵

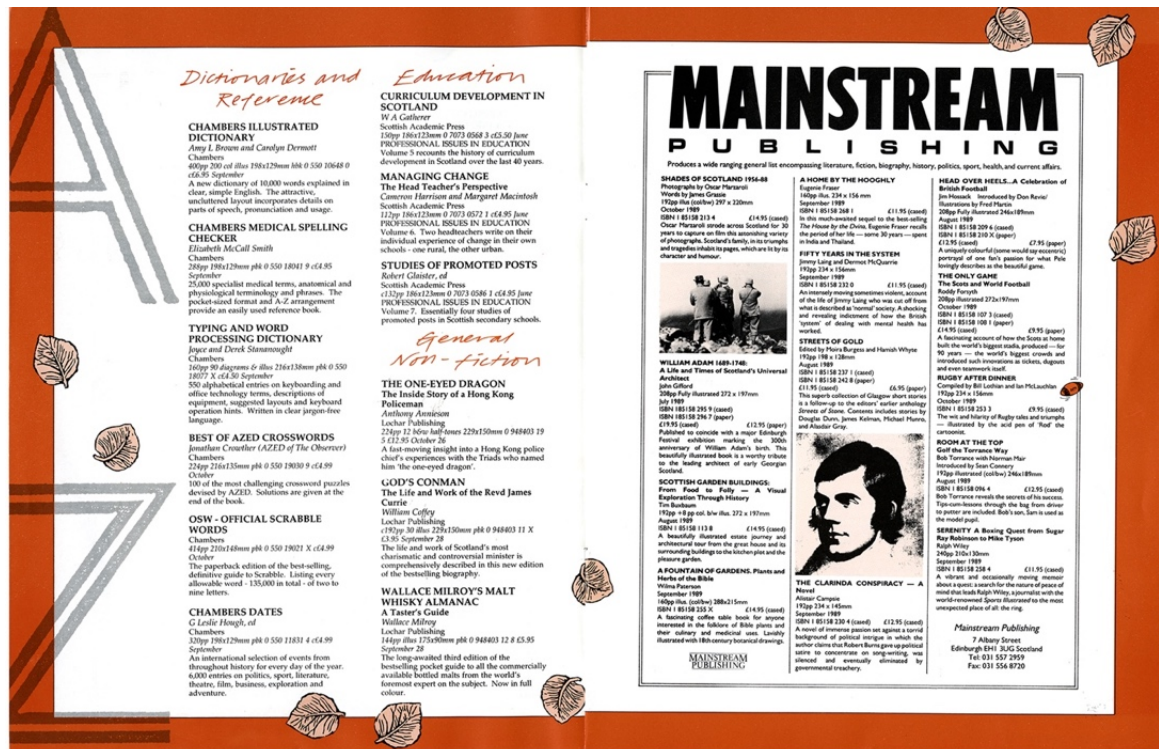


Figure 5: Inside pages of a 1989 copy of the New Books Scotland catalogue (University of Dundee Archive, MS337 Box 2).

In addition to the print and online catalogues, the organisation has supported publishers through various promotional events and collaborations. In 1986, the SPA partnered with the Scottish branch of the Booksellers Association to launch an initiative called the Scottish Book Marketing Group, dedicated to the promotion of Scottish books 'through Scottish bookshops,

⁶⁰⁵ 'Our Publications,' Publishing Scotland, accessed 16 June 2022, www.publishingscotland.org/what-we-do/our-publications/

to create a wider public awareness of their quality, range and availability.⁶⁰⁶ By 1998, the Group had over forty-five bookseller members and its regular activities involved events, newspaper collaborations, advisory services, fortnightly *Bestseller Lists for Scotland*, and the Contribution Awards designed to ‘recognise the outstanding contribution made by an individual, body or group’ to the Scottish book trade.⁶⁰⁷ One of the Group’s main initiatives was Scottish Book Fortnight – a two-week celebration of Scottish books and authors that took place every year in October and involved collaborating with booksellers and librarians to deliver a programme of author events happening across the country.⁶⁰⁸ The Scottish Book Marketing Group operated until 2002. According to its first employee, Prue Borthwick, closing the initiative was the result of the changes in the retail trade that had seen the emergence of bookselling chains and the closure of many independent bookshops.⁶⁰⁹ Judy Moir, however, argues in interview that the closure was also the result of the marketing subgroup becoming too large and ‘eventually [running] out of steam,’ with fewer publishers willing to ‘get involved and make use of the services.’⁶¹⁰

⁶⁰⁶ Scottish Publishers Association, *Directory of Publishing in Scotland* (Edinburgh: Scottish Publishers Association, 2002), 59.

⁶⁰⁷ Scottish Publishers Association, *Directory of Publishing in Scotland* (Edinburgh: Scottish Publishers Association, 1998), 47.

⁶⁰⁸ University of Dundee Archive Services. A029-5-28 Box 17.

⁶⁰⁹ Prue Borthwick, ‘Prue Borthwick,’ in *Thirtieth Anniversary of the Scottish Publishers Association: A Celebration* (Edinburgh: Scottish Publishers Association, 2004), 35–36.

⁶¹⁰ Judy Moir, interview with Alice Piotrowska, Edinburgh, Scotland, 11 June 2019.



Figure 6: Costume promoting the Scottish Book Fortnight in the 1980s, with the event's official slogan 'For Books Read Scottish!' (University of Dundee Archive)

The organisation, however, continued to run and collaborate on promotional events after the closure of the Scottish Book Marketing Group. As discussed in more detail in Chapter Six, Publishing Scotland has been 'closely involved' with the largest book festival in Scotland, the Edinburgh International Book Festival, promoting its members by co-organising a main programme event, hosting an annual members reception at the festival venue, and securing shelf space for Scottish books in the on-site festival bookshops.⁶¹¹ PS also regularly organises events as part of Book Week Scotland – an annual week-long celebration of books and reading that was initiated by Scottish Book Trust in 2012 and, with its robust programme of events and projects happening across the country, can be considered a later incarnation of Scottish Book

⁶¹¹ 'Edinburgh International Book Festival,' Publishing Scotland, accessed 21 November 2021.

Fortnight.⁶¹² As of 2022, the organisation continues to organise and partner on promotional events online and across the country – notable examples include the Scottish Books Long Weekend 2021, an experimental online-only festival of author and publisher events streamed live on YouTube across four days,⁶¹³ and events organised as part of the Visit Scotland Year of Stories 2022, with partners including the Paisley Book Festival, Granite Noir (Aberdeen), Aye Write (Glasgow), and Boswell Book Festival (Ayrshire).⁶¹⁴

With the digital developments of the 1990s and early 2000s, the Scottish Publishers Association also increased its focus on promoting Scottish publishers online. Its major ‘e-commerce initiative,’ BooksfromScotland.com, was launched in 2005 in response to a 2004 consultancy report produced by the Scottish Arts Council.⁶¹⁵ Alongside other initiatives, the report recommended creating a website to ‘accelerate the adoption of e-commerce’ and help Scottish publishers sell their products more broadly.⁶¹⁶ Lacking employee capacity to take this initiative forward, the SPA offered a part-time business development position to one of the authors of the report, Marion Sinclair (now the chief executive of PS), who began developing the project alongside editor Liam Davison and an external IT specialist.⁶¹⁷ The resulting website, BooksfromScotland.com, was initially designed predominantly as an online bookshop where visitors could browse and purchase Scottish-interest titles. As described in the early archival materials discussing the initiative, the ambition was to create a resource where ‘a consumer or librarian or bookseller [could] find out when every Scottish-interest title is coming out, whether it’s available, what other books are available in the genre, and buy backlist too, long after bookshops have cleared it from their shelves.’⁶¹⁸ However, as indicated in interview by Sinclair, the ‘initial sales projections didn’t work out well as [they] thought,’ mostly due to ‘the increasing

⁶¹² ‘About Book Week Scotland – Scottish Book Trust,’ Scottish Book Trust, accessed 20 June 2022, www.scottishbooktrust.com/book-week-scotland/about-book-week-scotland.

⁶¹³ ‘Scottish Books Long Weekend – Books from Scotland,’ Books from Scotland, accessed 25 June 2022, <https://booksfromscotland.com/2021/06/scottish-books-long-weekend/>

⁶¹⁴ ‘Event Partners | Publishing Scotland,’ Publishing Scotland, accessed 25 June 2022, www.publishingscotland.org/feature/events-partners/

⁶¹⁵ University of Dundee Archive Services, MS337 Box 2, Scottish Books Online Initiative, 2004.

⁶¹⁶ Sinclair, McCleery and Graham, *Review of publishing*, 21.

⁶¹⁷ Marion Sinclair, interview with Alice Piotrowska, online, 18 June 2020.

⁶¹⁸ University of Dundee Archive Services. MS337 Box 2. Scottish Books Online Initiative, 2004.

might of Amazon’ – BooksfromScotland was not successful as a retailer and instead became an online catalogue of Scottish-interest books.⁶¹⁹ In its current form, the website also features a monthly digital magazine with book reviews, excerpts, articles, and author interviews.⁶²⁰ Although Sinclair notes that there is limited marketing budget for the website and she ‘would like to see it have more reach,’ she cites BooksfromScotland as one of the most important projects developed by the organisation, noting that it fills a major gap in the market:

I remain really proud of BooksfromScotland.com. I think it’s got some fantastic content in it and nobody else is doing that of behalf of publishers. There are obviously review spaces [in traditional publications], but sometimes reviews are not very positive, and a lot of the time they’ll not take the content that a lot of our members are publishing.⁶²¹

As an online showcase, BooksfromScotland.com attracts a growing audience: in 2020, its website visitors increased by 76 per cent from 2019 and its Twitter following ‘reached the benchmark’ of 10,000 followers, with most users coming from outwith Scotland.⁶²²

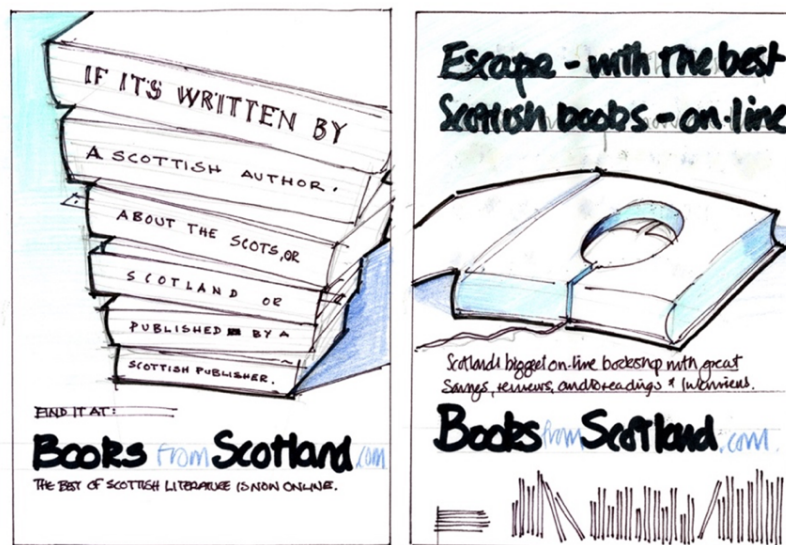


Figure 7: Early promotional illustration drafts for BooksfromScotland.com (University of Dundee Archive, MS337 Box 2).

⁶¹⁹ Marion Sinclair, interview with Alice Piotrowska, online, 18 June 2020.

⁶²⁰ ‘Home – Books from Scotland,’ Books from Scotland, accessed 25 June 2022, <https://booksfromscotland.com>

⁶²¹ Marion Sinclair, interview with Alice Piotrowska, online, 18 June 2020.

⁶²² Publishing Scotland, *Publishing Scotland Annual Report 2019 to 2020* (Edinburgh: Publishing Scotland, 2020).

To help coordinate marketing activity, Publishing Scotland facilitates a Trade and Marketing Sub-Committee. In 2020, the group consisted of nine members representing a variety of publishing and book trade businesses: Fiona Brownlee of Brownlee Donald Associates, Naomi Farmer of Edinburgh University Press, Suzanne Kennedy of Floris Books, Gavin MacDougall of Luath Press, Jethro Lennox of HarperCollins, Nadine Luchsinger of Canongate Book, Kirstin Lamb of Barrington Stoke, Ceris Jones of Sandstone Press, Miriam Rune (Freelance PR), as well as Marion Sinclair and Vikki Reilly as Publishing Scotland representatives.⁶²³ The committee meets quarterly and aims to bring together publisher members to ‘advance matters of mutual interest in sales, marketing and promotion and how they affect publishing in Scotland and [PS] membership.’⁶²⁴ The organisation’s 2018–19 annual report describes the committee as the ‘main forum for discussion and future planning in these [trade and marketing] areas of business,’ and notes that some of the 2019 activities implemented through the committee included Open Book sessions (such as an audiobook session, a visit to the Amazon warehouse in Dunfermline, and various pitching sessions open to publisher members) and publicity sessions with the BBC, *The Times / Sunday Times*, *The Mail / Mail on Sunday*, *The Herald*, *The National* and the *Big Issue*.⁶²⁵

Launching and facilitating marketing initiatives to increase the visibility of Scottish publishers has been a significant focus for the organisation throughout its history, and it remains one of the main activities offered through Publishing Scotland’s membership. In a 2019 membership survey, 80 per cent (or 36 out of 45) respondents said that they submit their new titles for the New Books Scotland catalogues and / or BooksfromScotland issues – those publishers who see these activities as irrelevant indicate that the promotions are not applicable to their non-trade books.⁶²⁶ In general, initiatives such as rights catalogues, event collaborations, and online features offer additional promotional space and facilitate opportunities for Scottish publishers to display their work for audiences both in Scotland and internationally.

⁶²³ Publishing Scotland, *Publishing Scotland Annual Report 2019 to 2020*.

⁶²⁴ ‘Trade Liaison,’ Publishing Scotland, accessed 30 November 2019.

⁶²⁵ Publishing Scotland, *Publishing Scotland Annual Report 2018 to 2019* (Edinburgh: Publishing Scotland, 2019), 20.

⁶²⁶ Publishing Scotland, ‘Annual membership survey for publishers,’ SurveyMonkey (2020).

5.5. Information and Training

As previously discussed, serving as a source of up-to-date information for the industry is one of the key activities of a trade association. From 1988, the Scottish Publishers Association provided this service through its annual *Directory of Publishing in Scotland* (later, after the 2007 rebranding, *Publishing Scotland Yearbook*) – launching it, according to the organisation, ‘to answer the many daily queries received.’⁶²⁷ Growing ‘from a basic information booklet about the Scottish publishing industry, to [an] expanded volume,’⁶²⁸ the directory included detailed information on Scottish publishers, booksellers, libraries, and cultural organisations, as well as on publishing resources and skills training. Some editions also included advice for job seekers, such as how to get a first job in publishing, choose the right career path, or become a freelancer.⁶²⁹

While activities such as book fair representation or promotional catalogues remain mostly in the same format since the early years of the organisation, the information service is what best reflects the impact of digital change on the company operations. After twenty-three years, Publishing Scotland ceased to produce its *Yearbook* in 2011. The Publishing Scotland training and information manager, Joan Lyle, indicated in an informal conversation during the doctoral placement that this decision was made predominantly because of the growing prevalence of the internet: with most Scottish publishers having their own comprehensive websites, and with an abundance of articles on publishing available online for free, continuing to compile and print an annual information guide became redundant. The Publishing Scotland website now serves as a resource similar to the *Yearbook*, but with a frequently updated news section, jobs advertisements, calendar listing publishing events, and an up-to-date list of all publisher and network members.⁶³⁰ In interview, Lyle notes that the ‘big draw’ for visitors is the job vacancies page that consistently gets the highest number of views per month.⁶³¹

⁶²⁷ Scottish Publishers Association, *Directory of Publishing in Scotland*. (Edinburgh: Scottish Publishers Association, 1998),

4.

⁶²⁸ Scottish Publishers Association, *Directory of Publishing in Scotland*.

⁶²⁹ Scottish Publishers Association, *Directory of Publishing in Scotland*.

⁶³⁰ ‘Home | Publishing Scotland,’ Publishing Scotland, accessed 25 June 2022, www.publishingscotland.org

⁶³¹ Joan Lyle, interview with Alice Piotrowska, Edinburgh, Scotland, 25 July 2019.

In addition to providing information, the Scottish Publishers Association has been organising skills development courses since the early years, recognising that the costs of going to the training centres in London were prohibitive to many Scottish publishers.⁶³² This service was significantly expanded upon in 1991, when the organisation moved from the attic office in South West Thistle Street Lane in Edinburgh to the much larger Fountainbridge Library,⁶³³ as discussed earlier in this chapter. Housing also the Edinburgh International Book Festival and Book Trust Scotland (now Scottish Book Trust), this space became known as the Scottish Book Centre. It allowed the three organisations to collaborate and share information, and provided a well-sized venue for conferences, industry meetings, book launches, and training courses – responding, at the time, to ‘the needs of the growing publishing industry and the development of literary promotions in Scotland.’⁶³⁴

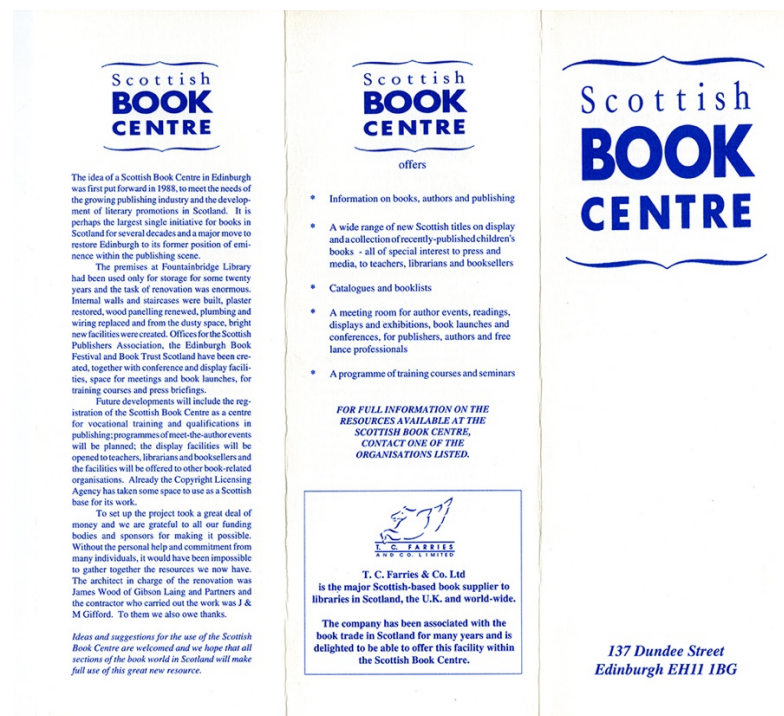


Figure 8: 1991 brochure promoting the Scottish Book Centre (University of Dundee Archive, Acc2011-471 Box 1).

⁶³² Joan Lyle, interview with Alice Piotrowska, Edinburgh, Scotland, 25 July 2019.

⁶³³ Joan Lyle, interview with Alice Piotrowska, Edinburgh, Scotland, 25 July 2019.

⁶³⁴ University of Dundee Archive Services, Acc2011-471 Box 1, Scottish Book Centre, 1992.

As Joan Lyle discusses in interview, the course offerings have significantly expanded since then, building on what was predominantly editorial training in the early years and responding to the various trends emerging in the industry:

In 2007, websites for companies were becoming the norm – they hadn’t been before that. So, we were getting asked about writing for the web training . . . Social media: in 2010–11 that was becoming the norm, so we were getting asked for training in that. InDesign, which is now the industry standard, wasn’t always industry standard . . . so, again, round about 2011 we were starting to get asked for InDesign training.⁶³⁵

By 2020, Publishing Scotland had developed its training programme to include around twenty publishing and business courses per year, across editorial, copywriting, marketing, and publishing rights.⁶³⁶ Most courses are open to both members and non-members, with the latter charged a higher fee.⁶³⁷ In addition to its main offering, the organisation collaborates with Scottish law firm Harper Macleod for a programme of free legal webinars, and commissions marketing courses from publishing agency BookMachine. It also partners with Book Industry Communication (BIC) to provide subsidised BIC training rates for PS members.⁶³⁸ As with the Trade and Marketing area of the business, PS also hosts the Training Sub-Committee that meets twice a year and serves as ‘the main forum for discussion of current and future training programmes and training needs generally.’ In 2019, the committee included Ann Crawford of National Galleries of Scotland, Leah McDowell of Floris Books, Sarah Mitchell of HarperCollins, Susan Pacitti of Glasgow Museums Publishing, and Christine Wilson of Historic Environment Scotland, in addition to Publishing Scotland’s Marion Sinclair and Joan Lyle.⁶³⁹

⁶³⁵ Joan Lyle, interview with Alice Piotrowska, Edinburgh, Scotland, 25 July 2019.

⁶³⁶ ‘Training | Publishing Scotland,’ Publishing Scotland, accessed 25 June 2022, www.publishingscotland.org/training/

⁶³⁷ ‘Available Courses | Publishing Scotland,’ Publishing Scotland, accessed 25 June 2022, www.publishingscotland.org/training/available-courses/

⁶³⁸ ‘Available Courses | Publishing Scotland,’ Publishing Scotland, accessed 25 June 2022, www.publishingscotland.org/training/available-courses/

⁶³⁹ Publishing Scotland, *Publishing Scotland Annual Report 2018 to 2019*.

5.6. Distribution

In addition to the standard trade association activities discussed throughout this chapter, the mid-1990s saw the Scottish Publishers Association take on a major project in response to a warehousing and distribution challenge faced by independent Scottish publishers. Before the 1990s, there was no third-party book distribution service in Scotland. Distributing books was a ‘back-room function’ for many publishers and, although a dedicated service was ‘much-wanted,’ ‘[c]ritical mass and a willing operator were missing.’⁶⁴⁰ In the early 1990s Albany Book Company, a library supplier who at the time owned Edinburgh publisher Canongate Books, put forward a proposal to form a distribution subsidiary. By 1993, up to eight Scottish publishers signed distribution contracts with Albany, but almost immediately encountered issues with the service – the system being ‘in-house work, unsatisfactory, with poor reporting and unreliable cash reconciliation.’⁶⁴¹ Christian Maclean of Floris Books – one of the companies that signed up for the service – recalls in interview that the monthly sales reports they received from Albany were ‘works of fiction’ due to numerous system errors. By 1994, there were also signs that Albany was struggling financially.⁶⁴² According to Lorraine Fannin, the SPA had been aware of these issues from the beginning, and prepared a rescue plan in case the company went into receivership:

We knew that Albany was struggling [and] realised that something very drastic had to be done . . . So very clandestinely, we set up a system whereby we could take over in a very ad-hoc basis at a moment’s notice. We actually had the mechanics and place to do so, should that be needed.⁶⁴³

This plan came into fruition in 1995, through an ad-hoc rescue operation facilitated by the SPA. As Maclean recalls in interview, it was crucial to ensure that the receiver did not freeze the assets, which could be disastrous for the publishers involved:

One of the chaps working at the warehouse had phoned through to the Scottish Publishers Association to say, ‘We’ve just heard the receivers have come in.’ So, Lorraine [Fannin] phoned me up – mainly because I was the closest publisher – and said, ‘I’m coming around in ten minutes, we’re going to Glasgow to make

⁶⁴⁰ University of Dundee Archive Services, A0-29-6-18 Box 11, For PUBLISHING NEWS, Lorraine Fannin.

⁶⁴¹ University of Dundee Archive Services, Acc2011-471 Box 1, Scottish Book Source, 2002.

⁶⁴² Christian Maclean, interview with Alice Piotrowska, Edinburgh, Scotland, 11 June 2019.

⁶⁴³ Lorraine Fannin, interview with Alice Piotrowska, Edinburgh, Scotland, 15 January 2019.

sure that the receiver doesn't grab all our books.' . . . we did manage to make it quite clear to the receivers then that the books which were in the warehouse actually belonged to the publishers and that they couldn't have them.⁶⁴⁴

Using the pre-developed system, the SPA managed to retain the distribution service, minimising disruption to publisher clients by keeping the Glasgow warehouse.⁶⁴⁵ Significantly, both Fannin and Maclean emphasise that setting up the new service was possible thanks to the collaboration between some of the publisher members (namely Keith Whittles of Whittles Publishing, Mike Miller of Blackie's, and Maclean himself) who 'realis[ed] that the whole community would be diminished if anybody failed'⁶⁴⁶ – again highlighting the importance of the 'collective base' of independent publishers sharing resources and advice instead of competing against each other. Maclean recalls, for instance, that Miller 'had a great interest in helping others' and, shortly before Albany collapsed, provided Maclean with 'exactly the steps [he'd] have to take' to take over distribution – advice that 'would have probably cost [Maclean] a few hundred pounds if [he] had gone to a lawyer.'⁶⁴⁷ Fannin also notes that the SPA used its networks to find the right people to run the administrative side of the service – for instance, Lavinia Drew, who had worked on distribution with Chambers and Richard Drew Publishing, was put in charge of the finance.⁶⁴⁸

The company that resulted from the rescue operation, BookSource, continues to this day as a major warehousing and distribution centre in Scotland. By 2020, its list of clients had grown to around one hundred publishers, based both in Scotland and in the rest of the UK. The company remains based in Glasgow, though it moved to different premises in Cambuslang (south-east of Glasgow) in 2006.⁶⁴⁹ From the beginning, it has been the company policy that only BookSource clients can become shareholders – as indicated by the current managing director of BookSource, Davinder Bedi, this structure was put in place by Lorraine Fannin after the company launched:

⁶⁴⁴ Christian Maclean, interview with Alice Piotrowska, Edinburgh, Scotland, 11 June 2019.

⁶⁴⁵ Christian Maclean, interview with Alice Piotrowska, Edinburgh, Scotland, 11 June 2019.

⁶⁴⁶ Lorraine Fannin, interview with Alice Piotrowska, Edinburgh, Scotland, 15 January 2019.

⁶⁴⁷ Christian Maclean, interview with Alice Piotrowska, Edinburgh, Scotland, 11 June 2019.

⁶⁴⁸ Lorraine Fannin, interview with Alice Piotrowska, Edinburgh, Scotland, 15 January 2019.

⁶⁴⁹ Davinder Bedi, interview with Alice Piotrowska, Glasgow, Scotland, 6 August 2019.

Lorraine felt that for the company to succeed, it needed buy-in from its clients. Not necessarily a financial buy-in, but a heart and soul buy-in. Bearing in mind how BookSource started – it was because the distributor that was based in Glasgow at that time was about to go bust . . . Lorraine recognised this has got to happen and got the approval from what was then called the SPA Council. But in order to get the buy-in from client publishers, she felt they needed to have some ownership of the business.⁶⁵⁰

As of 2019, Publishing Scotland owns about 89 per cent of the issued shares of the business; the next highest shareholder is Edinburgh-based Floris Books (six per cent), with the other companies – Birlinn, National Museums of Scotland, Hawthorn Press, and Whittles Publishing – holding around one per cent each.⁶⁵¹ Out of these, three (Floris, National Museums, and Whittles) are Publishing Scotland members.⁶⁵²

5.7. Challenges and Criticism

As discussed throughout the chapter, the Scottish Publishers Association / Publishing Scotland has implemented a variety of services and projects that have had a positive impact on the development of the trade, working with member publishers to establish new strategies for supporting the sector. One recurring challenge for the organisation, however, is having to develop services for a broad range of companies regardless of their size and focus. As mentioned previously, the publishing membership of the organisation ranges from small one- or two-person ventures such as Charco Press to branches of international corporations like HarperCollins. The same membership category covers a diverse range of publishers, including trade and educational companies as well as university presses and publishing divisions of museums and galleries.⁶⁵³ John Mitchell, the past managing director of Hodder Gibson (Scottish educational imprint of Hachette), recalls that his company ‘negotiated a reduced entry rate’ when it joined Publishing Scotland around 2008:

⁶⁵⁰ Davinder Bedi, interview with Alice Piotrowska, Glasgow, Scotland, 6 August 2019.

⁶⁵¹ Davinder Bedi, interview with Alice Piotrowska, Glasgow, Scotland, 6 August 2019.

⁶⁵² Publishing Scotland, *Publisher Members: April 2020* (Edinburgh: Publishing Scotland, 2020).

⁶⁵³ Publishing Scotland, *Publisher Members: April 2020*.

Partly because of our English ownership, but also partly because all of Publishing Scotland's activities are geared towards the trade and they really were of no significant help to us.⁶⁵⁴

While Mitchell talks very positively about the current chief executive of PS, Marion Sinclair – 'she made great attempts to include us and Leckie and Bright Red [two other educational Scottish publishers]' – he sees no immediate benefit of being a member of the organisation as an educational publisher:

We get to a drinks party once a year and that seriously was and probably remains the case . . . It was good to be aware – it gave us leads into bookshops and buyers and whatnot, and other publishers, but if you put me up against the wall, I will have to say that it was not worth the money we were paying.⁶⁵⁵

Mitchell admits that there was a benefit that was 'difficult to quantify' – of being 'part of the Scottish creative community' – but, in general, sees Publishing Scotland as more helpful to trade publishers.⁶⁵⁶ A similar opinion – that aside from attending an annual networking reception to feel part of the community, Publishing Scotland was unable to offer a real benefit to her business – is voiced by Joy Hendry, the publisher of literary magazine *Chapman*:

I was a member [of Publishing Scotland] for many years, but I stopped doing it . . . They couldn't really do a lot for me. They were always very sympathetic . . . there is a difference in the worlds that we live in, and I think that's part of the reason.⁶⁵⁷

Neville Moir of Birlinn, the Edinburgh-based press that opted to resign from its Publishing Scotland membership, also argues that the organisation is unable to offer significant advantages once a member company reaches a certain size:

I think that the problem with the organisation was that it represents such different levels of membership. There are government organisations, there are tiny publishers, there are huge corporate publishers. It is very difficult to represent all of these people properly.⁶⁵⁸

In interview, chief executive Marion Sinclair acknowledges her awareness of these issues, citing them as 'one of the biggest challenges' faced by the organisation. However, she also sees it as

⁶⁵⁴ John Mitchell, interview with Alice Piotrowska, Glasgow, Scotland, 8 April 2019.

⁶⁵⁵ John Mitchell, interview with Alice Piotrowska, Glasgow, Scotland, 8 April 2019.

⁶⁵⁶ John Mitchell, interview with Alice Piotrowska, Glasgow, Scotland, 8 April 2019.

⁶⁵⁷ Joy Hendry, interview with Alice Piotrowska, Edinburgh, Scotland, 11 April 2019.

⁶⁵⁸ Neville Moir, interview with Alice Piotrowska, Edinburgh, Scotland, 20 February 2019.

an inherent problem associated with some areas of the industry – such as educational publishing, which as of 2020 consisted of only one independent company and two corporate imprints – being poorly represented:

It's difficult being all things to all members. I think that we would struggle if we attempted to make everything we do relevant to absolutely everybody . . . We can only go with the majority view and then, with certain other publishers, if they've got issues that they want to raise, we try and be really supportive with what they're doing as well . . . Educational publishers *will* feel – I'm sure they do feel – that they get much less out of it. But if there were another, say, three or four, I think that might make a bit of a difference.⁶⁵⁹

Sinclair notes that the strategy of PS is to 'have a notion of a core member,' 'steer[ing] a middle path' between very large companies and very small start-ups – with the core member described as a publisher with 'the ambition to grow,' of a certain number of employees, and 'fulfilling a really important role':

I suppose we have an ideal company in mind, and then we just programme for that kind of company. It is challenging, though . . . I suppose that it's the same as any other sector body, in that it doesn't matter how much you do – it will never be enough.⁶⁶⁰

Another criticism of Publishing Scotland raised during the interviews is that it acts as an unnecessary intermediary between publishers and funding bodies, and that better investment of public money would be to give it directly to publishing companies. Talking about Publishing Scotland as well as Creative Scotland and Edinburgh City of Literature, Hendry sees it as a general issue with offering paid positions at non-profit structures without developing practical ways of supporting writers and editors:

One thing that I always bear in mind about all of these organisations is that they eat up a huge amount of funding that really should be going to the practitioners . . . It's definitely, I think, a problem that it seems to be very easy to create new structures with £35k salaries for young hopefuls . . . but they still haven't found the right ways of giving money to hands-on writers and editors.⁶⁶¹

⁶⁵⁹ Marion Sinclair, interview with Alice Piotrowska, online, 18 June 2020.

⁶⁶⁰ Marion Sinclair, interview with Alice Piotrowska, online, 18 June 2020.

⁶⁶¹ Joy Hendry, interview with Alice Piotrowska, Edinburgh, Scotland, 11 April 2019.

As Lorraine Fannin recalls in interview, Hendry is not alone in her opinion – according to Fannin, the issue of paid employees at the SPA / PS had always been ‘a tricky one,’ with publishers not necessarily understanding why the organisation would need to employ more than one or two people:

Publishers wanted us to do a lot of things, but they didn’t necessarily want us to have a lot of staff, because they saw that as being expensive . . . a lot of them saw it as ‘their subscription is going on staff.’ There was a lot of what we would call ‘lifestyle publishers’ then, who were just publishing because they wanted to have the books in print. They saw themselves as doing everything, so why should we have four or five staff to do it all?⁶⁶²

In interview, Marion Sinclair acknowledges that she has ‘heard that [criticism] before’; however, she clarifies that the salaries offered to Publishing Scotland employees are ‘average for the charity level and the third sector,’ and not at the level suggested by Hendry.⁶⁶³ Sinclair also emphasises that comparing these salaries to those within publishing companies may not be appropriate, as the roles and responsibilities differ significantly:

It is I think a *different* job from being a publisher. We have jobs that are either full time or part time, and I think they are average for the charity level and for the third sector. They may be not corresponding to some of the average salaries in publishing – which are far too low, and I think everybody recognises that . . . But our salaries are consistent across charities and bodies in Scotland, and they lag behind other industries.⁶⁶⁴

In the interview, Sinclair also reveals that several previous employees of Publishing Scotland have left to pursue higher-paying positions in other industries, citing salary as their primary motivation for moving on from the role.⁶⁶⁵ These findings indicate that concerns about the organisation’s use of public subsidy may stem from issues related to communication and pay transparency, rather than suggest disproportionately high salary levels. Sinclair’s emphasis on Publishing Scotland’s distinct role is also noteworthy. As discussed throughout this chapter, the collective nature of the organisation enables it to provide services that individual publishers

⁶⁶² Lorraine Fannin, interview with Alice Piotrowska, Edinburgh, Scotland, 15 January 2019.

⁶⁶³ Marion Sinclair, interview with Alice Piotrowska, online, 18 June 2020.

⁶⁶⁴ Marion Sinclair, interview with Alice Piotrowska, online, 18 June 2020.

⁶⁶⁵ Marion Sinclair, interview with Alice Piotrowska, online, 18 June 2020.

would struggle to deliver on their own: Publishing Scotland's job is 'different' to that of a press and more aligned with the third sector than with the publishing industry.

5.8. Conclusion

Starting as a small volunteer network of publishers in 1974 and evolving into a professional trade organisation over the following decades, Publishing Scotland has been instrumental in establishing and nurturing a publishing community across Scotland. With a membership that encompasses the majority of Scottish publishers, the organisation facilitates cooperative relationships by hosting regular meetings and events, providing a venue for sharing information and resources, and collectively addressing broad industry challenges – from limited marketing opportunities to a lack of Scottish-based distribution. As a trade body, Publishing Scotland also supports business growth by providing opportunities for Scottish publishers to improve industry-specific skills, foster international relationships, and promote their publications in Scotland and overseas.

Blending oral histories and archival data, Chapter Five has added to the existing scholarship by recreating the history of Publishing Scotland, examining its impact on the Scottish publishing landscape, and considering some of the main challenges faced by the organisation both historically and in recent years. It discussed some of the key initiatives and their aims, and addressed the critical voices arising from research interviews. The next chapter of this thesis builds on this discussion further, examining the role of Publishing Scotland in the internationalisation of the trade through targeted funds and internationalisation strategies.

Chapter Six discusses the development of the trade in the twenty-first century, focusing on Scottish publishing in relation to the increasingly globalised worldwide market. It considers the opportunities and challenges faced by Scottish publishing as a small nation operating within the larger UK economy, including issues such as global competition, rights sales, the 'London pull,' the translation market, the role of external publishing organisations in developing international relationships, and the impact of book festivals.

6. Chapter Six: Publishing Beyond Scotland – Small Nation on the Global Marketplace

Chapters Three to Five of this thesis focused predominantly on the transformation of the publishing industry within Scotland, examining the impact of conglomeration, the rise of new independent publishing, the history of the minority language sector, and the support of public organisations. It is also crucial, however, to examine Scottish publishing in relation to the increasingly globalised worldwide market, considering the benefits and challenges of its position as a small nation operating within the larger UK economy. While some of these issues – such as moving decision-making functions outside of Scotland after mergers and acquisitions – have been discussed throughout the study, this chapter examines them in more depth.

The first section considers the limitations of growing and maintaining the publishing industry as a small nation operating within the United Kingdom, discussing issues such as global competition, rights exploitation, and the ‘London pull.’ Looking at how Scottish publishing has been developing its international reach in the twenty-first century, the second section then examines the current state of literature in translation, the role of external publishing organisations in developing international relationships, and the impact of book festivals. Using a combination of literature review, research interviews, and statistical analysis, it aims to answer the following key questions: what are the main opportunities and challenges for Scottish publishing arising from its geographic and linguistic position, and how has the industry been developing its international reach in recent years?

6.1. Growing Publishing as a Small Nation

6.1.1. *Global Competition*

Constituting around 30 per cent of the total area of the United Kingdom and with its population estimated at approximately 5.47 million in 2020,⁶⁶⁶ Scotland can be defined as a ‘small nation’ in both geographic and demographic terms.⁶⁶⁷ As discussed in Chapter Four, a crucial factor

⁶⁶⁶ National Records of Scotland, ‘Mid-2020 Population Estimates, Scotland,’ (National Records of Scotland, 2021).

⁶⁶⁷ Boswell, ‘Brave Words.’

shaping the cultural outputs in Scotland is its position as a small nation within a larger state that has ‘greater global cultural dissemination and recognition.’⁶⁶⁸ While Scotland retains its distinct culture, much of its economic growth can be attributed to being part of the UK, resulting – as argued by Daniel Boswell – in a conflict between ‘the battle for independence and benefit of affiliation.’⁶⁶⁹ As discussed by McCleery and Ramdarshan Bold in ‘What is my Country? Supporting Small Nation Publishing,’ Scottish publishers tend to reflect this dichotomy, and can often be distinguished by their main outputs: companies that publish specifically *for* Scotland, reflecting ‘a cultural nationalism and its literary or historiographical expression,’ and companies that publish *in* Scotland, with their offices based in the country but their operations maintaining a more international outlook.⁶⁷⁰ Each focus is associated with its own challenges and vulnerabilities, whether it is facing competition from the larger players or losing independence to conglomerates.

As Miha Kovač and Claire Squires write in their 2014 study on small nation publishing in Scotland and Slovenia, Scottish companies that publish in English have ‘an enormous and global book market potentially at their reach’ – in theory, most Scottish publishers can export their work to the broader Anglophone market, taking advantage of the similar cultural and linguistic settings.⁶⁷¹ In a 2019 Publishing Scotland member survey, 87 per cent (or 40 out of 46) publishers responded that they sell their titles overseas, and 98 per cent (45 out of 46) to the broader UK trade,⁶⁷² confirming the ‘extrovert nature of Scottish publishers’ that Kovač and Squires discuss⁶⁷³ – however, no specific data has been gathered on the level of profit coming from export sales. Most Scottish publishers interviewed for this thesis indicate that, aside from some Scottish-interest books that are more strongly marketed to the local audiences, they intend to sell their books to the wider English-speaking market. Some actively develop international connections to facilitate export sales. Floris Books, for instance, although best known in Scotland for its range of Scottish children’s fiction published through the Discover Kelpies

⁶⁶⁸ Boswell, ‘Brave Words.’

⁶⁶⁹ Boswell, ‘Brave Words,’ 2.

⁶⁷⁰ McCleery and Ramdarshan Bold, ‘What is my Country? Supporting Small Nation Publishing.’

⁶⁷¹ Kovač and Squires, ‘Scotland and Slovenia: Making books in wee lands,’ 10.

⁶⁷² Publishing Scotland, ‘Annual membership survey for publishers,’ SurveyMonkey (2020).

⁶⁷³ Kovač and Squires, ‘Scotland and Slovenia: Making books in wee lands,’ 16.

imprint, has a list of ‘anthroposophical adult non-fiction’ that has found a ‘huge market’ in North America – as discussed in interview by publisher Katy Lockwood-Holmes, ‘a quarter to a third of [their] sales’ are in the US.⁶⁷⁴

However, as found in studies by both Melanie Ramdarshan Bold (2012) and Kovač and Squires, this theoretical linguistic advantage and willingness to publish for the global market do not necessarily translate into successful worldwide sales. Although ‘very strong globally,’ English-language publishing is dominated by a few large conglomerates controlling most of the market – as Ramdarshan Bold writes, the technological and marketing investment necessary to compete with the major players can be difficult to achieve for smaller companies:

While the potential to sell English language books worldwide offers a lot of opportunities it requires strong investments in technology and advertising, and links with agents and publishers overseas. This can prove difficult and costly for SMEs.⁶⁷⁵

Kovač and Squires come to a similar conclusion, with their research indicating that ‘financial and marketing power present a barrier almost as sizeable as language.’⁶⁷⁶ As discussed throughout the thesis, some small publishers in Scotland attempt to increase this financial and marketing power through co-competition, sometimes directly in the form of co-publications with their competitors, as well as through innovative financing methods such as crowdfunding. For instance, companies 404 Ink and BHP Comics partnered in 2017 on co-publishing *We Shall Fight Until We Win*, a graphic novel anthology in celebration of women gaining the right to vote in the UK⁶⁷⁷ – in an interview with *The List*, 404 Ink publisher Heather McDaid states that they ‘knew [they] could bring extra marketing clout through running another Kickstarter similar to what we did with *Nasty Women*.’⁶⁷⁸ Nonetheless, publishing in English means a broader potential market, but also fiercer competition – often against companies that benefit from the economies of scale, dedicating significant resources to marketing campaigns and global distribution.

⁶⁷⁴ Katy Lockwood-Holmes, interview with Alice Piotrowska, Edinburgh, Scotland, 12 March 2019.

⁶⁷⁵ Ramdarshan Bold, ‘The Rights and Wrongs of Operational Practices in the Scottish Publishing Industry,’ 346.

⁶⁷⁶ Kovač and Squires, ‘Scotland and Slovenia: Making books in wee lands,’ 17.

⁶⁷⁷ Natasha Onwuemezi, ‘404 Ink and BHP Comics join forces on graphic novel anthology,’ *The Bookseller*, 7 November 2017.

⁶⁷⁸ Linsey May, ‘404 Ink and BHP Comics celebrate 100 years of political pioneering women,’ *The List*, 30 March 2022.

Some Scottish-based independents have attempted to mitigate this issue by seeking expansion through London. Daniel Boswell notes that, while larger Scottish publishers are seen as ‘most representative of Scottish publishing culture, publishing works with a Scottish character for an international market,’ they have in the past ‘sought expansion through mergers and offices in London’ after encountering issues with accessing a broader market.⁶⁷⁹ This is true for Canongate Books which, as discussed in Chapter Four, established a London office in 2003 to gain ‘better access to supporting services, financing, and international connections.’⁶⁸⁰ Similarly, the founders and directors of Mainstream Publishing (discussed in Chapter Four), Bill Campbell and Peter MacKenzie, purchased a house in London – to use as part-office, part-accommodation – around 1990. In interview, they discuss being ‘up and down to London all the time,’ as their goal of becoming a ‘mainstream’ company required making connections through London-based publishers like HarperCollins, Penguin, and Random House. They would publish their new titles in hardback, selling paperback rights to the larger companies – reaching the global market by partnering with their corporate competitors rather than attempting to manage worldwide marketing and distribution themselves.⁶⁸¹ While profitable for Mainstream – and, as discussed later in this chapter, rights exploitation can be an important source of revenue for Scottish publishers – this approach raises a question as to whether the international reach was still being achieved by a Scottish company. As discussed in Chapter Four, Mainstream Publishing was finally sold to Random House in 2005, ceasing to exist as an imprint in 2013.

It is also significant that both Mainstream and Canongate Books were relatively large businesses at the time of their expansion through London, with Mainstream producing around 90 titles per year by 1990⁶⁸² and Canongate opening a London office shortly after the success of their Booker Prize-winning publication *Life of Pi* by Yann Martel (2002).⁶⁸³ As discussed in Chapter Four, few other Scottish-based independents operate on the same scale – smaller companies are unlikely to have the resources to open an office abroad in order to reach wider audiences. Neville Moir,

⁶⁷⁹ Boswell, ‘Brave Words,’ 6.

⁶⁸⁰ Nordicity and Drew Wylie, *Literature and Publishing Sector Review*, 61.

⁶⁸¹ Bill Campbell and Peter MacKenzie, interview with Alice Piotrowska, Edinburgh, Scotland, 4 February 2019.

⁶⁸² Bill Campbell and Peter MacKenzie, interview with Alice Piotrowska, Edinburgh, Scotland, 4 February 2019.

⁶⁸³ The Bookseller Editorial Team, ‘Canongate to open London office,’ *The Bookseller*, 15 September 2003.

publishing director at Birlinn discusses in interview that, for many small trade publishers in Scotland – including Birlinn – ‘there was always this dilemma about whether they are going to be Scottish facing or international facing’:

Do you want to be a local publisher? Concentrate your strengths on that? That debate has been going on for years and years – still does in this company. ‘Why are we spending time trying to get foreign distribution when we are losing money on it?’ Others would say, ‘Well, if you are going to pay large advances to people, if you want to get bigger-name authors, they want to be sold internationally, you need to have infrastructure that will be able to sell abroad.’⁶⁸⁴

As Moir notes, concentrating on the domestic market can be both financially and logistically easier for a smaller company – focusing on Scottish-interest publications aimed at the local market is, as Ramdarshan Bold writes, a ‘low-risk strategy’ that can be suitable for some companies.⁶⁸⁵ However, it can potentially mean foregoing the idea of being – in the words of Campbell and MacKenzie – a ‘real player,’ or a publisher able to attract international attention and retain successful authors. This issue of potentially lacking appropriate infrastructure to get – or keep – stronger selling authors as an independent Scottish publisher is explored in more detail later in this chapter.

6.1.2. Rights Exploitation

As Melanie Ramdarshan Bold argues, this increased global competition from other English-language publishers has ‘emphasised the importance of Scottish publishers looking at alternative methods of creating revenue.’⁶⁸⁶ These methods can include licensing and selling rights, which can be ‘particularly lucrative’ as secondary sources of income, allowing publishers to increase the value of their existing titles – as well as to reach broader markets worldwide.⁶⁸⁷ In *The Edinburgh History of the Book in Scotland*, Alistair McCleery observes that, towards the end of the twentieth century, licensing rights ‘in different territories or in different formats’ had become a

⁶⁸⁴ Neville Moir, interview with Alice Piotrowska, Edinburgh, Scotland, 20 February 2019.

⁶⁸⁵ Ramdarshan Bold, ‘The Rights and Wrongs of Operational Practices in the Scottish Publishing Industry,’ 349.

⁶⁸⁶ Ramdarshan Bold, ‘The Rights and Wrongs of Operational Practices in the Scottish Publishing Industry,’ 353.

⁶⁸⁷ Ramdarshan Bold, ‘The Rights and Wrongs of Operational Practices in the Scottish Publishing Industry,’ 353.

new way of ‘selling to the world’ – increasing international reach without the need to develop the infrastructure for managing physical exports:

[T]his arrangement [of licensing rights] represents an acknowledgment that selling to the world today involves not the large-scale export of physical books, as it did previously for [Thomas] Nelsons and their contemporaries, but the sale of intellectual property rights for the physical books to be reproduced elsewhere.⁶⁸⁸

As mentioned in the previous section, Mainstream Publishing engaged in this practice relatively early on – by 1990, they were producing their main titles in hardback and selling paperback format rights to larger London publishers.⁶⁸⁹ Similarly, Polygon would retain hardback rights to the popular and widely translated *No. 1 Ladies’ Detective Agency* series by Alexander McCall Smith (first published in 1998), with UK paperback rights sold to Little, Brown – an approach that allowed Polygon to remain the primary publisher of a commercially successful author despite lacking a large budget for marketing or advances.⁶⁹⁰

In addition to licensing other formats, selling translation and adaptation rights can be equally lucrative sources of secondary income and a way to bring existing publications to a global audience. However, as Ramdarshan Bold reports in her 2012 article, half of the publishers surveyed ‘did not have any staff trained or experienced in selling rights’ or any plans to hire new staff in the near future – confirming that ‘small publishers deal with rights on an ad hoc basis.’⁶⁹¹ Significantly, the study found that out of over 32 per cent of Scottish publishers who ‘earned nothing from right sales,’ over a fifth were in control of all publication rights:

Of the publishers who earned no income from rights sales, just under nine tenths (88.9%) . . . said that rights potential was either unimportant or irrelevant when taking on a project. Despite this, over a fifth (22.2%) of the publishers who earned no income from rights sales controlled all the authors’ rights,

⁶⁸⁸ Alistair McCleery, ‘The No. 1 Ladies’ Detective Agency,’ in *The Edinburgh History of the Book in Scotland, Volume 4: Professionalism and Diversity 1880–2000*, eds. David Finkelstein and Alistair McCleery (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2007), 81.

⁶⁸⁹ Bill Campbell and Peter MacKenzie, interview with Alice Piotrowska, Edinburgh, Scotland, 4 February 2019.

⁶⁹⁰ McCleery, ‘The No. 1 Ladies’ Detective Agency,’ 80.

⁶⁹¹ Ramdarshan Bold, ‘The Rights and Wrongs of Operational Practices in the Scottish Publishing Industry,’ 353.

including the lucrative translation, electronic, and television and film rights, so these rights are lying dormant.⁶⁹²

A decade later, this ad hoc approach to selling rights seems to continue. According to the rights catalogue released by Publishing Scotland in March 2022, out of 29 Scottish publishers featured, only seven – Barrington Stoke, Birlinn (Polygon), Canongate Books, Cranachan Publishing, Little Door Books, Luath Press, and Sandstone Press – have dedicated staff dealing with rights or, more frequently, use the services of freelance rights professionals.⁶⁹³ The remaining publishers list their managing directors or other employees as the main rights contacts.⁶⁹⁴ Significantly, more than half of Publishing Scotland members do not participate in the biannual collective rights catalogue (which is a free service for all members) at all – in a 2019 survey by Publishing Scotland, some indicated that the service is irrelevant to their publications.⁶⁹⁵ These comments seem to confirm Ramdarshan Bold's findings: despite being in control of rights for most of their titles, many Scottish publishers see rights exploitation as 'peripheral' or not applicable to their business.⁶⁹⁶

Among independent Scottish publishers, Canongate is again cited in reports and studies – including Sinclair, McCleery and Graham (2004), Feather (2006), Ramdarshan Bold (2012), and Nordicity (2015) – as a company with a 'distinctly international outlook'⁶⁹⁷ achieved by 'placing a strong importance on rights within their publishing strategy.'⁶⁹⁸ In interview, Neville Moir – who worked at Canongate from 1987 until 2000 – notes that, although the company has had an international outlook from the beginning, rights sales have become its major strength post-1994, after a management buyout by Jamie Byng:

One of the things that Jamie was so good at was selling rights to foreign publishers. That has become a major strength of his business, I think. That has enabled him to fill out some quite big deals as well and

⁶⁹² Ramdarshan Bold, 'The Rights and Wrongs of Operational Practices in the Scottish Publishing Industry,' 353.

⁶⁹³ Publishing Scotland, *New Books Scotland Spring 2022* (Edinburgh: Publishing Scotland, 2022).

⁶⁹⁴ Publishing Scotland, *New Books Scotland Spring 2022*.

⁶⁹⁵ Publishing Scotland, 'Annual membership survey for publishers,' SurveyMonkey (2020).

⁶⁹⁶ Ramdarshan Bold, 'The Rights and Wrongs of Operational Practices in the Scottish Publishing Industry,' 354.

⁶⁹⁷ Nordicity and Drew Wylie, *Literature and Publishing Sector Review*, 56.

⁶⁹⁸ Ramdarshan Bold, 'The Rights and Wrongs of Operational Practices in the Scottish Publishing Industry,' 349.

get some quite big authors. Again, Stephanie [Wolfe Murray] was pretty good at it, but she never really did that many deals – not like Jamie does, maybe 30 deals per title for the right book.⁶⁹⁹

As of 2022, Canongate has a dedicated, Edinburgh-based rights department that deals with audio, translation, and adaptation rights, as well as with artwork and permissions.⁷⁰⁰ The department runs a separate ‘Canongate Rights’ Twitter account and releases regular rights guides, and many of their titles have been sold to multiple territories across the world.⁷⁰¹ As Ramdarshan Bold writes, Canongate ‘has proved that a high-risk strategy, which targets national and international markets, is possible for an independent Scottish publisher.’⁷⁰²

Regardless of the level of internal staff involved in rights sales, international book fairs remain one of the key ways for publishers to facilitate the buying and selling of rights, offering a platform for publishers to connect with their international counterparts as well as with agents and distributors.⁷⁰³ As discussed in Chapter Five, Publishing Scotland has been vital in helping Scottish publishers access these opportunities, both by hosting a collective stand at the three main European book fairs (Frankfurt, London, and Bologna) and, more recently (from 2018), by providing a dedicated fund to help publishers travel to international fairs for the first time. Most participants interviewed for this study indicate book fair representation as the main benefit of having a Publishing Scotland membership, with some noting that fair attendance would be ‘prohibitively expensive’ without the collective stand option.⁷⁰⁴ In the 2019 member survey, book fair representation was also one of the highest rated Publishing Scotland activities, with around 81 per cent (or 22 out of 27) publishers rating it as either ‘very good’ (37 per cent) or ‘excellent’ (44 per cent).⁷⁰⁵ The second part of this chapter (*Scottish Publishing and*

⁶⁹⁹ Neville Moir, interview with Alice Piotrowska, Edinburgh, Scotland, 20 February 2019.

⁷⁰⁰ ‘Canongate Rights and Sales teams, and permissions,’ Canongate Books, accessed 3 April 2022, <https://canongate.co.uk/about/rights-permissions-sales/>

⁷⁰¹ ‘Canongate Rights and Sales teams, and permissions,’ Canongate Books, accessed 3 April 2022, <https://canongate.co.uk/about/rights-permissions-sales/>

⁷⁰² Ramdarshan Bold, ‘The Rights and Wrongs of Operational Practices in the Scottish Publishing Industry,’ 349.

⁷⁰³ International Publishers Association, *The Future of Book Fairs: An IPA Special Report*. 27 January 2015.

⁷⁰⁴ Christian Maclean, interview with Alice Piotrowska, Edinburgh, Scotland, 11 June 2019.

⁷⁰⁵ Publishing Scotland, ‘Annual membership survey for publishers,’ SurveyMonkey (2020).

Internationalisation) examines the support of Publishing Scotland in more detail, looking at its recent activities aimed at increasing the international reach and visibility of Scottish authors.

6.1.3. *The Pull of London*

A major tendency for Scottish writers is to move to a larger, typically London-based publisher after achieving initial success in Scotland. The *Literature and Publishing Sector Review* notes that some bestselling authors are still inclined to work with local publishers ‘partly [because of] national sentiment, partly . . . geographic accessibility, and partly because the publishers are often best placed to serve Scottish writers.’⁷⁰⁶ A good example of this local ‘loyalty’ is Alexander McCall Smith, who – despite achieving significant international success – continues to work regularly with publishers such as Birlinn, Canongate Books, and Barrington Stoke, in addition to his London publisher Little, Brown.⁷⁰⁷ Nonetheless, many authors feel inadequately supported by their local publishers, and Scottish companies face the issue of what the report calls the ‘London-pull effect’: commercially successful authors leaving Scottish independents for large, typically London-based houses who can offer higher advances and larger-scale marketing and distribution.⁷⁰⁸

This issue is not exclusive to Scotland, and rather seems to reflect the overall tendency in independent publishing. For instance, the *Literature in the 21st Century* report by Arts Council England notes that ‘independent publishers complain of taking risks building new literary writers only to see them poached by larger houses as soon as any success is achieved’:

While potentially a very good thing for the author in question, it creates difficulties for those smaller publishers and the role they play in the ecosystem of literary fiction.⁷⁰⁹

However, this trend can be particularly striking in Scotland, where – as established in Chapter Four – small independents have been forming the majority of the publishing ecosystem for the past four decades, and those corporate publishers that have Scottish branches are headquartered

⁷⁰⁶ Nordicity and Drew Wylie, *Literature and Publishing Sector Review*, 26.

⁷⁰⁷ Nordicity and Drew Wylie, *Literature and Publishing Sector Review*, 42.

⁷⁰⁸ Nordicity and Drew Wylie, *Literature and Publishing Sector Review*.

⁷⁰⁹ Arts Council England, *Literature in the 21st Century: Understanding Models of Support for Literary Fiction* (Arts Council England, 2017), 23.

outside the country. The proximity and similarity of the wider UK market means that it can be relatively easy for authors to transfer their work to a London publisher with minimal disruption – some bestselling authors, such as Ian Rankin (whose first novel was published with Polygon in 1986), are published by a London company while still residing in Scotland.⁷¹⁰ As Kovač and Squires write in their report on small nation publishing, while Scottish authors enjoy the benefits of the global dominance of English, ‘it is Scottish *publishers* who face barriers to reaching global audiences’:

One interviewee drew an analogy with football, where all the best players leave Scottish clubs for England when their prices start to grow. Similarly, the strongest-selling Scottish writers sign up with London publishers when their writing starts to reach a broader audience.⁷¹¹

The *Literature and Publishing Sector Review* finds that Scottish publishers tend to have ‘two reactions’ to this issue:

The first is: ‘if we can just get one high profile writer to do one title with us that would be huge for us’.
The second is: ‘let’s nurture new Scottish – or other new – talent and publish alongside London’.⁷¹²

The latter approach is evidenced, for example, by a company like Fledgling Press, who – as indicated by its name – has made ‘work by debut authors, emerging talent and new voices’ its primary publishing focus. Fledgling has been critically successful within that niche, with its authors achieving several Saltire First Book Award shortlistings.⁷¹³ Some publishers do manage to sign ‘high profile’ authors for single titles – such as Birlinn’s publication of *Rizzio* by Denise Mina, an award-winning Scottish crime fiction writer who typically works with London publishers⁷¹⁴ – and others sign authors who had been dropped by larger companies. Matt Haig, for instance, moved to Canongate in 2009 after being let go by Jonathan Cape (imprint of Penguin Random House), becoming one of the strongest-selling authors on their list.⁷¹⁵ In

⁷¹⁰ ‘Ian Rankin – About | Hachette UK,’ The Orion Publishing Group Ltd, accessed 5 March 2022, www.ianrankin.net/landing-page/ian-rankin/ian-rankin-about/

⁷¹¹ Kovač and Squires, ‘Scotland and Slovenia: Making books in wee lands,’ 10.

⁷¹² Nordicity and Drew Wylie, *Literature and Publishing Sector Review*, 61.

⁷¹³ ‘About Us | Fledgling Press,’ Fledgling Press, accessed 10 March 2022, www.fledglingpress.co.uk/about-us

⁷¹⁴ ‘Rizzio | Birlinn Ltd – Independent Scottish Publisher,’ Birlinn, accessed 10 March 2022, <https://birlinn.co.uk/product/rizzio-3/>

⁷¹⁵ Stephen Moss, ‘Matt Haig: There was a day when I woke up and thought: I’m going to die,’ *The Irish Times*, 6 July 2021.

interview, publisher Moira Forsyth notes that Sandstone Press works with a number of writers who have not had their contracts extended at one of ‘the Big Five publishers, and also publishers like Bloomsbury’ because ‘they were selling fine, but not brilliantly’:

But quite often, these are *superb* writers. Really good writers. You can have greater or lesser success with them. We’ve just published a memoir by Michèle Roberts, *Negative Capability*, which sold out in hardback even through the Covid crisis. It got fantastic publicity . . . And we’ve published *The Testament of Jessie Lamb* by Jane Rogers in 2011. Little, Brown, her publisher, had turned it down. Then it was longlisted for the Booker, and immediately Little, Brown sent an offer to buy it from us [which we refused]. In the end, we did a very good deal with Canongate, because we were at that stage that if it had gone to the shortlist, I think we would have been a bit stumped.⁷¹⁶

Forsyth’s comment about potentially being ‘stumped’ by too much success highlights another issue that small Scottish independents can encounter when attempting to keep pace with commercially successful authors. Gavin MacDougall, publisher at Luath Press, felt the need to partner with a London publisher Picador (imprint of Pan Macmillan) after the success of *Poverty Safari* by Darren McGarvey (published in 2017) – after the book’s critical and commercial success in Scotland, the company encountered obstacles in bringing it to a broader market, and decided to collaborate with a company that offered ‘a stronger and better reach UK-wide’ and ‘more access to the key people in bookselling’:

For whatever reason, we were unable to persuade WHSmith to take a single copy of the book. Picador were able to persuade them to take x thousand on day one . . . If you’re not one of those big six, or whatever the number of the major publishers are, it’s a lot more difficult to really break books out.⁷¹⁷

Other obstacles can stem from the size of business operations themselves, with most independent publishers having limited ability to finance and store large print runs, particularly when – as mentioned by several interviewees – they manage their own warehousing. Similarly, for those companies without dedicated marketing and publicity teams, staff levels might prohibit the planning of robust promotional campaigns with international author tours.

The issue of the London pull is, therefore, two-fold: while Scottish independents refer to losing successful authors as one of their key challenges, many also admit to potentially being unable to

⁷¹⁶ Moira Forsyth, interview with Alice Piotrowska, online, 16 September 2020.

⁷¹⁷ Gavin MacDougall, interview with Alice Piotrowska, Edinburgh, Scotland, 5 March 2019.

offer adequate levels of support and promotion to those authors who decide to stay. As a result, the strongest selling authors tend to gravitate towards London, following ‘the lure of bigger advances and larger marketing budgets’ – most commercially successful Scottish authors are currently published outside Scotland.⁷¹⁸

This section has examined some of the key challenges faced by independent publishers seeking to internationalise their business and market their titles outside Scotland, associated with both the size of the industry and its proximity to London. The second part of this chapter discusses ways in which Scottish publishers have been developing their international connections and global reach despite these challenges, examining topics such as literary translation, the support of trade organisations, and book festivals.

6.2. Scottish Publishing and Internationalisation

6.2.1. *Foreign Literature in Translation*

As a predominantly English-language industry, publishing in Scotland faces the same issue as the wider UK market: a very poor representation of foreign literature in translation, commonly known as the ‘Three Percent Problem.’⁷¹⁹ In their 2015 report, Büchler and Trentacosti calculate that the percentage of all literary works in translation published and/or distributed in the United Kingdom and Ireland between 1990 and 2012 ‘indeed oscillates around 3%’ – a number significantly lower than in other European countries, such as Poland (33.19 per cent of translated works in 2011), Italy (19.7 per cent), or France (15.90 per cent).⁷²⁰ As Jasmine Donahaye notes in her 2012 report, research by organisations including English PEN and Literature Across Frontiers has revealed several possible reasons for this ‘relative paucity’: the dominance of the English language across the world; the ‘certain entrenched attitudes to other

⁷¹⁸ Ramdarshan Bold, ‘The Rights and Wrongs of Operational Practices in the Scottish Publishing Industry,’ 351.

⁷¹⁹ Victoria Morrison, ‘The Three Percent Problem: Why do English Speakers Read So Few Books in Translation?’ (Montreal: Concordia University, 2016).

⁷²⁰ Alexandra Buchler and Giulia Trentacosti, *Publishing translated literature in the United Kingdom and Ireland 1990–2012: statistical report*, Mercator Institute for Media, Languages and Culture (Wales: Aberystwyth University, 2015).

languages’ among native English speakers; and ‘a persistent problem with the uptake, promotion and reception of translated literature’:

Publishers are often reluctant to take up foreign titles, citing the difficulty of promoting, marketing and selling titles by ‘unknown authors’ in a country that is largely self-sufficient with respect to literary book production. Publishing literature in translation is therefore seen as a risky commercial venture, and consequently it is heavily reliant on subsidy.⁷²¹

The same issue – with similar numbers oscillating around three per cent of translated works – has been observed in other major English-language markets, such as the United States.⁷²² This statistic, however, has been reported as changing in recent years: in 2019, Nielsen BookData found that the overall volume of translated fiction sales in the UK had risen to 5.5 per cent in 2018, the highest level since they began tracking sales in 2001; and the co-chair of the Translators Association, Charlotte Collins, noted in 2019 that ‘the amount of international fiction now available for sale in the UK has almost doubled in recent years, now accounting for 5.63% of all published fiction.’⁷²³ Even with these rising numbers, however, the percentage of translated literature in the UK remains relatively low compared to other European nations.

While there are no statistics available specifically for Scotland – and analysing annual publication lists in detail is outside the scope of this project – the Scottish publishing market reflects that of the rest of Britain. Few Scottish companies publish literature in translation and, aside from a handful of exceptions discussed in this chapter, those who do feature translated works as rare additions rather than a regular publication focus. For instance, two recent catalogues from Canongate Books – one of the largest literary independents in Scotland – list only one book in translation among 77 hardcover and paperback titles, making it little more than one per cent of books coming out between July 2021 to June 2022.⁷²⁴ Another Scottish independent, Sandstone Press, has been enjoying substantial success with their translated fiction in recent years: Volker Kutscher’s detective novel *Babylon Berlin*, translated from German by Niall Sellar and published

⁷²¹ Jasmine Donahaye, *Three percent? Publishing data and statistics on translated literature in the United Kingdom and Ireland*, Mercator Institute for Media, Languages and Culture (Wales: Aberystwyth University, 2012), 6.

⁷²² Donahaye, *Three percent?*

⁷²³ Alison Flood, ‘Translated fiction enjoys sales boom as UK readers flock to European authors,’ *The Guardian*, 6 March 2019.

⁷²⁴ ‘Canongate catalogues,’ Canongate Books, accessed 4 January 2022, <https://canongate.co.uk/about/catalogues/>

by Sandstone in 2016, became a major TV show and led to the company translating four more of Kutscher's books by 2022; and Jokha Alharthi's *Celestial Bodies*, translated from Arabic by Marilyn Booth, was the winner of the Man Booker International Prize 2019.⁷²⁵ As of February 2022, the company has sold 13,810 print copies of *Babylon Berlin* and 25,582 print copies of *Celestial Bodies* in the UK: a significant number for a small independent that sells, on average, less than two thousand print copies of its leading titles in original English published in recent years, such as *The Crown Agent* by Stephen O'Rourke (published in hardback in 2019 and in paperback in 2021, 1427 total sales to date), *Negative Capability* by Michèle Roberts (2020, 513 print sales to date), or *Cairngorm John* by John Allen (2019, 2098 print sales to date).⁷²⁶ Despite this success, however, Sandstone Press publishes only one or two translated books per year, with three foreign-language authors listed on its website.⁷²⁷ In interview, publishing director Moira Forsyth notes that, for Sandstone, one of the challenges of acquiring more foreign literature is the lack of in-house editors who can read in another language:

With *Celestial Bodies*, there was already a translation. Marilyn Booth had loved the book so much that she translated it . . . it meant we could assess it completely ourselves – read the whole thing ourselves. The problem, as I'm sure you understand, is that quite often what you get is [only] an English language sample . . . So, it's always a bit of a risk.⁷²⁸

Forsyth mentions that, with their other translated titles, they 'mitigated the risk' by looking at the current fiction trends and choosing authors who had already been successful in their own countries: for instance, they chose to publish a Norwegian crime author Jorn Lier Horst due to the success that Horst had already had in Norwegian and the popularity of Scandinavian crime

⁷²⁵ 'Sandstone Press,' Sandstone Press, accessed 6 January 2022, <https://sandstonepress.com/books/genre/translated-fiction>

⁷²⁶ Nielsen BookScan Database. User Report (UK) on Lifetime Sales for *Babylon Berlin* (ISBN 9781910124970), *Celestial Bodies* (9781912240166), *The Crown Agent* (HB 9781912240760, PB 9781913207328), *Negative Capability* (9781913207144) and *Cairngorm John* (9781912240647), generated on 8 February 2022. Please note that at the time of generating the Nielsen BookScan data, sales for weeks 13–24, 46–49 and 53 of 2020 and weeks 1–10 in 2021 were not included in the database – therefore, lifetime sales for these titles might be impacted.

⁷²⁷ 'Sandstone Press,' Sandstone Press, accessed 6 January 2022, <https://sandstonepress.com/books/genre/translated-fiction>

⁷²⁸ Moira Forsyth, interview with Alice Piotrowska, online, 16 September 2020.

fiction in the UK at the time.⁷²⁹ She notes that both Horst and Kutscher have continued to be ‘steady sellers’ for Sandstone.⁷³⁰

As discussed in Chapter Four, Edinburgh-based Floris Books also includes a robust backlist of translated titles, although in two very specific niches. From the mid 1980s, the company has established itself as an English-language publisher of popular Swedish books for children, including titles by Elsa Beskow and Astrid Lindgren;⁷³¹ due to many Waldorf education books originating in central Europe, the company also publishes a significant number of non-fiction titles in translation. However, as discussed by Charlotte Berry, translation is ‘not undertaken in a systematic way at Floris’: ‘it is often unclear whether translations or adaptations/versions have been used by Floris Books,’ and ‘the fact that they are translations is not accentuated,’ with translators rarely cited on the title page.⁷³²

In addition to Floris, there are two independent Scottish publishers – both established in the last fifteen years – that have a specific focus on translated fiction. Launched in 2008 in Glasgow, Vagabond Voices describes itself as ‘an independent publisher that is both Scottish and fervently European in its aims,’ dedicated to ‘introducing new titles from Scottish authors and translating fiction from other languages.’⁷³³ Its list includes mostly literary fiction with some poetry, drama, and non-fiction, including a number of politically engaged works (‘Rants’).⁷³⁴ Out of the literary fiction titles available to purchase on the publisher website, 40 per cent (or 18 out of 45) are works in translation (‘Changelings’), with a focus on European literature translated from Estonian, German, Italian, Latvian, Lithuanian, and Swedish.⁷³⁵ Some of these languages, as Büchler and Trentacosti note in their report on literary translation, are ‘very poorly represented’ in the UK, with less than ten translations between 1990 and 2012 from languages such as Latvian

⁷²⁹ Moira Forsyth, interview with Alice Piotrowska, online, 16 September 2020.

⁷³⁰ Moira Forsyth, interview with Alice Piotrowska, online, 16 September 2020.

⁷³¹ Berry, ‘The Wonderful Adventures of Floris Books.’

⁷³² Berry, ‘The Wonderful Adventures of Floris Books,’ 145.

⁷³³ ‘About Us – Vagabond Voices,’ Vagabond Voices, accessed 4 January 2022, www.vagabondvoices.co.uk/about

⁷³⁴ ‘Rants – Vagabond Voices,’ Vagabond Voices, accessed 4 January 2022, www.vagabondvoices.co.uk/rants

⁷³⁵ ‘Full Catalogue – Vagabond Voices,’ Vagabond Voices, accessed 4 January 2022, www.vagabondvoices.co.uk/bookshop

or Lithuanian⁷³⁶ – meaning Vagabond Voices are publishing into a largely neglected niche. Several translated books on the list, such as *White Shroud* by Antanas Škėma (translated from Lithuanian by Karla Groudís) or *Vargamäe* by A.H. Tammsaare (translated from Estonian by Inna Feldbach and Alan Peter Trei) are well-established twentieth-century European works – *Vargamäe*, part of a series tracing the development of Estonian society in the nineteenth- and early twentieth-centuries, has – according to Vagabond Voices – ‘for too long been neglected in the English-speaking world,’ not appearing in translation despite its decades-long popularity in other countries.⁷³⁷

Vagabond Voices founder and publisher Allan Cameron echoes the issues discussed in Jasmine Donahaye’s report when he states in interview that ‘translated fiction is very difficult to sell,’ admitting that he felt he needed to switch his focus to English-language works to be able to sustain his company in the early years:

What we started off by saying was that we believed in supporting Scottish writers . . . and being ‘fiercely European’ in what we’re doing. What happened in practice was that my first batch of translations lost a huge amount of money, particularly the German one [*Stillness of the Sea* by Nicol Ljubić]. So, I tended to concentrate a bit more for a few years on Scottish writers, which are easier to sell.⁷³⁸

However, he goes on to note that publishing translated fiction has been ‘getting better’ in recent years, ‘partly because more people who are interested in European literature are aware that [Vagabond Voices] exist[s]’⁷³⁹ – as the company became more established, it was able to reach the specific target audience of people interested in international literature in the first place. According to data available via Nielsen BookData, however, the UK sales of Vagabond’s translated fiction remain low compared to their non-translated titles: as of February 2022, the total lifetime sales of ‘Changelings’ in print are an average of 87 per title, with most books selling between 40 and 160 copies. Their bestselling title in translation, *The Garden* by Magnus Florin (translated from Swedish by Harry Watson), sold 235 print copies from its publication in May

⁷³⁶ Buchler and Trentacosti, *Publishing translated literature in the United Kingdom and Ireland 1990–2012: statistical report*, 5.

⁷³⁷ ‘Changelings – Vagabond Voices,’ Vagabond Voices, accessed 4 January 2022, www.vagabondvoices.co.uk/changelings

⁷³⁸ Allan Cameron, interview with Alice Piotrowska, online, 15 September 2020.

⁷³⁹ Allan Cameron, interview with Alice Piotrowska, online, 15 September 2020.

2014 up to February 2022. In contrast, the literary works in original English ('Vagabonds') sell on average 167 print copies per title, with the bestselling one (*Potter's Field* by Chris Dolan) reaching 653⁷⁴⁰ – although the quantities are low across the board, there is a clear difference between fiction in translation and fiction in original English. It should also be acknowledged, however, that Nielsen BookData measures only retail sales, and publishers may sell more titles directly to consumers – with more people being aware of Vagabond Voices' international work, some may purchase books directly on the website.

Another Scottish publisher with a translated fiction focus is Charco Press, a small Edinburgh-based company established in 2016. In the Scottish market, Charco is unique in its exclusive focus on translation as well as a relatively niche area of literary interest: the company publishes contemporary Latin American literature translated from Spanish and Portuguese, with the aim to 'act as a cultural and linguistic bridge' that introduces English-speaking readers to 'a brand new world of fiction.'⁷⁴¹ With five to seven annual publications, Charco was quick to establish itself as an important publisher within that niche: its 2017 title *Die, My Love* by Ariana Harwicz (translated by Sarah Moses and Carolina Orloff) was longlisted for the Man Booker International Prize 2018 and shortlisted for the Republic of Consciousness Prize 2018, with another Man Booker International shortlisting coming in 2020 for *The Adventures of China Iron* by Gabriela Cabezón Cámara (translated by Fiona Mackintosh and Iona Macintyre).⁷⁴² In Scotland, Charco Press was named the Saltire Society Emerging Publisher of the Year in 2018 and shortlisted for their Publisher of the Year award in 2019 and 2021 (highly commended in 2021).⁷⁴³ As of February 2022, the sales volume of Charco books is high compared to Vagabond Voices: according to Nielsen BookData, each book sells an average of 444 print copies in the UK. Not surprisingly, *Die, My Love* and *The Adventures of China Iron* are the company's bestselling titles, at 1494 and 1638 print sales, respectively; however, several other titles, such as *Elena Knows*

⁷⁴⁰ All sales data is based on User Reports (UK) Nielsen BookScan data available via <https://online.nielsenbookscan.net>. At the time of generating the reports, sales for weeks 13–24, 46–49 and 53 of 2020 and weeks 1–10 in 2021 were not included in the database – therefore, lifetime sales for some of the titles might be impacted.

⁷⁴¹ 'About – Charco Press,' Charco Press, accessed 15 January 2022, <https://charcopress.com/about>

⁷⁴² 'Bookstore – Charco Press,' Charco Press, accessed 15 January 2022, <https://charcopress.com/bookstore/?category=All>

⁷⁴³ 'Pages | The Saltire Society,' The Saltire Society, accessed 15 January 2022, www.saltiresociety.org.uk/pages/category/scotlands-national-book-awards-21

by Claudia Piñeiro (translated by Frances Riddle) or *Dead Girls* by Selva Almada (translated by Annie McDermott), have achieved sales of more than 500 print copies.⁷⁴⁴

Significantly, in contrast to companies like Canongate or Sandstone which omit any information about the translator on the front cover, both Vagabond Voices and Charco Press are transparent about working with translated fiction. All titles include the name of the translator or translators on the cover – in a 2018 article published on the Books from Scotland platform, Charco Press co-founder Samuel McDowell calls it the company ‘mission’ to ‘bring the very important role of the translator to the fore,’ emphasising rather than obscuring the role of translation in the publication process.⁷⁴⁵ Similarly, Vagabond Voices includes a ‘Remember the Translator!’ note in its publications, stating that the company ‘continues to celebrate translations and its translators’ and that it is ‘proper that the reader recalls the presence of this intricate and generous craft.’⁷⁴⁶ Both companies have also launched digital projects promoting the work of literary translators: Vagabond Voices ran the ‘Think in Translation’ podcast interviewing international authors, translators, publishers and booksellers on ‘all things translation,’⁷⁴⁷ and Charco Press published a journal series detailing Daniel Hahn’s work on the translation of Diamela Eltit’s *Never Did the Fire*.⁷⁴⁸ In both cases, publishing translated fiction is a core part of the company identity.

⁷⁴⁴ All sales data is based on User Reports (UK) Nielsen BookScan data available via <https://online.nielsenbookscan.net>. At the time of generating the reports, sales for weeks 13–24, 46–49 and 53 of 2020 and weeks 1–10 in 2021 were not included in the database – therefore, lifetime sales for some of the titles might be impacted.

⁷⁴⁵ Samuel McDowell, ‘Translating Latin America: Spotlight on Charco Press,’ Books from Scotland (2018).

⁷⁴⁶ ‘Literary Publisher in English & Translation | Vagabond Voices,’ Vagabond Voices, accessed 10 January 2022, www.vagabondvoices.co.uk/blog/remember-the-translator

⁷⁴⁷ ‘Think In Translation: Home – Vagabond Voices,’ Vagabond Voices, accessed 10 January 2022, www.vagabondvoices.co.uk/think-in-translation-home

⁷⁴⁸ ‘Danny’s Translation Diary,’ Charco Press, accessed 10 January 2022, <https://charcopress.com/dannys-translation-diary>



Figure 9: Translated fiction by Vagabond Voices and Charco Press, with the names of the translators featured prominently on the front cover.

A handful of other small Scottish independents, including Luna Press Publishing and Scotland Street Press,⁷⁴⁹ have occasionally published translated fiction – in the case of Luna Press, a fantasy and science fiction independent established in Edinburgh in 2015, the books are often translated by the publisher, Francesca Barbini, who has connections to the Italian publishing market and works as a translator herself.⁷⁵⁰ Their translated literature output, however, remains very small, with only one or two publications a year.

As noted by Jasmine Donahaye, publishing literature in translation in the UK tends to rely heavily on public subsidy – however, due to the lack of any consistently gathered and analysed statistics across the years, it is impossible to accurately assess ‘what is in fact supported’ or how

⁷⁴⁹ ‘Scotland Street Press | Books By Category | Translation,’ Scotland Street Press, accessed 22 Feb 2022, www.scotlandstreetpress.com/category/translation

⁷⁵⁰ ‘Luna Press Publishing: WIP,’ Luna Press Publishing, accessed 22 Feb 2022, www.lunapresspublishing.com/booksintranslation

this support impacts the translation industry as a whole.⁷⁵¹ Both Vagabond Voices and Charco Press have received public funding for their translation work. In interview, Allan Cameron states that Vagabond Voices began to receive Creative Scotland grants after a few years in operation, but this support has been irregular – relatively significant in some years, but much lower in others – and that he finds their decision process unclear:

I did get good funding in 2015, because I had a very successful year in 2014, and I think I did 11 books. I think they gave me something like £2,500. They did give a generous increase, but then they just chipped away at it, and it got very low. Currently, they have funded me very generously again [over £3,000]. Exactly why they make these decisions, I don't know . . . I don't see why some people are cut out and some people are getting £4,000 per book.⁷⁵²

Cameron agrees that, in general, public funding is necessary to sustain the literary translation industry, which he sees as an inherent issue with the publishing ecosystem in the UK – arguing that it is partly the result of the collapse of the Net Book Agreement in 1997. He notes that in France and Germany, where fixed book price agreements are still in operation (as *Lang Law* and *Buchpreisbindung*, respectively), publishers are more willing to take risks – also on books in translation – without being as reliant on government support, which is not always regular or accessible.⁷⁵³

Similarly, Charco Press acknowledges the support of Creative Scotland, Arts Council England, and English PEN, stating that the financial assistance from the three organisations ‘helps make what [they] do possible.’⁷⁵⁴ The company has been awarded significant funding towards delivering its publishing programme through the Creative Scotland Open Project Fund – £14,560 in 2018,⁷⁵⁵ £22,000 in 2020,⁷⁵⁶ and £16,725 in 2021.⁷⁵⁷ In November 2020, they also received an additional £15,000 through the Creative Scotland Culture Organisations and Venues

⁷⁵¹ Donahaye, *Three percent?* 7.

⁷⁵² Allan Cameron, interview with Alice Piotrowska, online, 15 September 2020.

⁷⁵³ Allan Cameron, interview with Alice Piotrowska, online, 15 September 2020.

⁷⁵⁴ ‘Acknowledgements – Charco Press,’ Charco Press, accessed 2 March 2022, <https://charcopress.com/acknowledgements>

⁷⁵⁵ Creative Scotland, ‘FINAL-Open-Project-Funding-Awards-March’ (Edinburgh: Creative Scotland, 2018).

⁷⁵⁶ Creative Scotland, ‘OPF-Mar-20-Final’ (Edinburgh: Creative Scotland, 2020).

⁷⁵⁷ Creative Scotland, ‘Open-Fund-Awards-February-2021’ (Edinburgh: Creative Scotland, 2021).

Recovery Fund, introduced to support the sustainability of organisations and venues impacted by the Covid-19 pandemic – the only publishing company to receive support in that round of funding.⁷⁵⁸ Based on the level of regular financial assistance, it is fair to assume that Charco Press's publishing output would be significantly reduced without public subsidy.

On the whole, the Scottish literary translation industry has a structure similar to the Gaelic and Scots sectors discussed in Chapter Four: maintained by a handful of dedicated individuals who rely heavily on public subsidy to be able to publish more work and are unable to grow their business on book sales alone. This model, with only two small companies responsible for most of the translated literature output in Scotland, raises long-term sustainability concerns – in fact, Allan Cameron states that he is 'cutting down on the publishing' to focus on his own writing and translating, indicating no plans for further business growth or change of management for Vagabond Voices.⁷⁵⁹ Further down the line, more research should be conducted into the growth and sustainability of the sector, particularly from the perspective of effective support from public organisations.

6.2.2. The Role of Literature and Publishing Organisations

The idea that Scottish publishing requires a coordinated approach from external organisations to grow its international presence has been recurring since the 1970s. The need for representation at international book fairs was one of the main reasons for establishing Publishing Scotland in 1974 and, as discussed earlier in this thesis, the organisation has allowed many independent Scottish publishers to develop and benefit from international connections by hosting collective book fair stands. Other Publishing Scotland initiatives launched in the 1970s and 80s, such as the *New Books Scotland* catalogue, have also been aimed at promoting Scottish literature outside Scotland.⁷⁶⁰ In 2004, the *Review of Publishing* report commissioned by the Scottish Arts Council also suggested developing more coordinated international activity via public bodies: most notably, its recommendations for marketing initiatives included the

⁷⁵⁸ Creative Scotland, 'Further awards from the Culture Organisations and Venues Recovery Fund,' 19 November 2020.

⁷⁵⁹ Allan Cameron, interview with Alice Piotrowska, online, 15 September 2020.

⁷⁶⁰ Book fair representation and marketing initiatives by Publishing Scotland are discussed at length in Chapter Five, Publishing for Scotland – Case Study: Publishing Scotland.

establishment of a new *Books from Scotland* magazine, to be distributed ‘as widely as possible but primarily outside Scotland,’ negotiated ‘through the Scottish Arts Council with Scotland International, the British Council, and other agencies promoting Scotland and the UK overseas.’⁷⁶¹

In 2015, the *Literature and Publishing Sector Review* commissioned by Creative Scotland reported that despite the ‘growing international profile’ of Scotland, not enough was being done to create a ‘strategic and coordinated international presence’ for the Scottish publishing and literary sector:

[T]here is a widely held feeling across the sector that not enough is done to coherently showcase, champion and build on [Scotland’s literature] in international terms. This view was widely expressed by individual writers, publishers and organisations alike.⁷⁶²

In response to these findings, the report recommended establishing ‘an international literature promotion organisation,’ referred to in the report as Scottish Literature International, with the aim of supporting ‘a range of activity related to Scotland’s literary presence internationally.’⁷⁶³ The proposed organisation was to ‘develop a wide range of international contacts and opportunities,’ with its main activities including increasing the level of travel for Scottish writers, developing a database of opportunities and resources, and advocating for Scottish literature internationally.⁷⁶⁴ This recommendation resulted in the establishment of Scottish Books International (SBI) – an organisation that ‘takes a strategic and co-ordinated approach to showcasing and championing Scotland’s writers, publishers and festivals overseas,’ launched at the 2019 Frankfurt Book Fair.⁷⁶⁵ Jointly owned and funded by Publishing Scotland and the Edinburgh International Book Festival, the service is managed by a steering group from the two organisations as well as Creative Scotland and literary agency Jenny Brown Associates.⁷⁶⁶ One

⁷⁶¹ Sinclair, McCleery and Graham, *Review of publishing*, 24.

⁷⁶² Nordicity and Drew Wylie, *Literature and Publishing Sector Review*.

⁷⁶³ Nordicity and Drew Wylie, *Literature and Publishing Sector Review*, 11–12.

⁷⁶⁴ Nordicity and Drew Wylie, *Literature and Publishing Sector Review*, 12.

⁷⁶⁵ ‘Scottish Books International,’ Scottish Books International, accessed 11 Nov 2021, <https://scottishbooksinternational.org>

⁷⁶⁶ ‘Scottish Books International,’ Scottish Books International, accessed 11 Nov 2021, <https://scottishbooksinternational.org>

of the key services offered by Scottish Books International is the Author International Travel Fund, funded by subsidy from Creative Scotland and developed to support Scottish-based writers who have been invited to promote their work overseas. In its first year of operation, the fund supported 13 authors to travel to countries including Australia, China, New Zealand, Japan, and the United States, with the recipients reporting that participating in worldwide events allowed them to establish valuable contacts and market their work more broadly. Some of the authors, such as Michael Pedersen, Kevin MacNeil, and Helen McClory, are published by Scottish independents. The fund is open throughout the year and aims to support five to ten writers per quarter, allocating a maximum of £1000 per application to support travel costs.⁷⁶⁷

Other activities developed by Scottish Books International aim to support and promote Scottish publishers and organisations as well as writers, and to create a database of opportunities and resources. These activities include, for instance, online events providing advice for organisations and individuals wishing to increase their international presence; a digital showcase of Scottish publishers presented at the 2021 Frankfurt Book Fair, which took place as a hybrid event; and thematic promotional series that highlight new and upcoming titles from Scottish companies. The Scottish Books International website, scottishbooksinternational.org, also aims to provide up-to-date information on opportunities and funding sources available for Scottish publishers, organisations, writers, and translators. In 2023, the service launched the Scottish Books Showcase: Year of Focus – an international exchange programme that aims to create opportunities for Scottish publishers and writers to attend promotional and exchange events overseas, with a different country of focus each calendar year.⁷⁶⁸

In addition to suggesting the establishment of Scottish Books International, the *Literature and Publishing Sector Review* put forward several recommendations for Publishing Scotland itself, aimed at addressing the international development of the Scottish publishing sector. The report identified three main needs of Scottish publishers looking to increase their international presence: ‘exposure to relevant literary ecosystems abroad’; financial support to access book

⁷⁶⁷ ‘Author International Travel Fund,’ Scottish Books International, accessed 3 February 2022, <https://scottishbooksinternational.org/doanything/>

⁷⁶⁸ I have been working for Scottish Books International since February 2021 and am directly involved in the development of new projects, including event organisation and website management.

fairs and other international opportunities; and improved contacts with ‘foreign distributors, agents, and publicists.’⁷⁶⁹ Publishing Scotland have since responded by establishing an exchange programme – the International Publishing Fellowship – and two funds, the Translation Fund and the Go-See Fund. In interview, Publishing Scotland chief executive Marion Sinclair states that the organisation has ‘tried really hard in the past few years to major on [its] international strategy,’ building their international focus on ‘Scottish national identity’:

If you go via London, you get swallowed up. You have to do it yourself, and you have to present yourself as something different. [Scotland has] enough of an identity for us to be able to do that. The voices that come out of Scottish publishing are sufficiently different from English publishing.⁷⁷⁰

Sinclair notes that this approach was the basis for the 2015 launch of the International Publishing Fellowship – an annual exchange programme in which eight to ten publishers from different countries are invited to travel to Scotland for a week in August to ‘visit publishing houses and agents, see market presentations, have match-making events and dinners, and many more networking opportunities in Edinburgh, Glasgow and the Highlands.’⁷⁷¹ She asserts that Scotland can use the small nation aspect to its advantage, connecting with other nations that have similar publishing structures:

That’s what we’re trying to do with the Fellowship. We recognise that we have things in common with Finland, with the Netherlands, with Denmark, with New Zealand – even with Canada. That we have small nation publishing, however that’s defined: it could be economic; it could be identity; it could be through voices or genres. We feel that is a good, valid tact to take, and that’s why we have gone down that road . . . we can play on the fact that we have got more in common with small nations than we do with France or Germany.⁷⁷²

As of 2022, the Fellowship programme has facilitated exchange with 45 international publishers, with ten new Publishing Fellows scheduled to arrive in August 2022 (postponed from 2020 due to coronavirus restrictions).⁷⁷³ In interview, Allan Cameron from Vagabond Voices notes that,

⁷⁶⁹ Nordicity and Drew Wylie, *Literature and Publishing Sector Review*, 12.

⁷⁷⁰ Marion Sinclair, interview with Alice Piotrowska, online, 18 June 2020.

⁷⁷¹ Publishing Scotland, ‘The inaugural Publishing Scotland Fellowship’ (Edinburgh: Publishing Scotland, 2015).

⁷⁷² Marion Sinclair, interview with Alice Piotrowska, online, 18 June 2020.

⁷⁷³ ‘Publishing Fellowship,’ Publishing Scotland, accessed 11 Nov 2021, www.publishingscotland.org/what-we-do/publishing-fellowship/

for him, the Fellowship programme is the most useful and ‘enjoyable’ programme offered by Publishing Scotland.⁷⁷⁴ He does believe, however, that the programme invites ‘too many English-language publishers,’ and that he would like to see more language variety.⁷⁷⁵ For reference, the 2022 Fellows include three publishers from the United States, two each from Germany and France, and one each from Czechia, Israel, and the Netherlands.⁷⁷⁶ Previous editions included publishers from Argentina, Australia, Canada, Denmark, Finland, Italy, Norway, Poland, Portugal, Spain, Sweden, and more.⁷⁷⁷ In a 2019 Publisher Members Survey conducted by Publishing Scotland, 18 out of 45 Scottish publishers (40 per cent) responded that they found the Fellowship useful, noting that they ‘have sold rights for a number of titles as a direct result of [the programme]’ or it ‘helped establish connections with international publishers [they] would have otherwise had no idea of or contact with.’⁷⁷⁸ Those publishers who responded that the Fellowship is of no direct benefit or interest to them commented that it ‘need(s) to have more representatives from children’s publishing,’ is ‘too literary’ to be of use to them, or is helpful ‘in terms of meeting people, but no business for [them] as [it is] geared more towards traditional book publishers.’⁷⁷⁹ These responses suggest that the Fellowship programme is currently of most benefit to trade publishers and not necessarily relevant to scholarly, educational, or technical/professional publishers that are included in the Publishing Scotland membership.

Also launched in 2015, the Translation Fund is administered twice a year by Publishing Scotland on behalf of Creative Scotland, with the purpose to ‘support publishers based outside the UK to buy rights from Scottish and UK publishers and agents.’ Publishers receive the funding in the form of a grant covering the cost of translation, with priority given to contemporary

⁷⁷⁴ Allan Cameron, interview with Alice Piotrowska, online, 15 September 2020.

⁷⁷⁵ Allan Cameron, interview with Alice Piotrowska, online, 15 September 2020.

⁷⁷⁶ ‘The 2020 Fellows,’ Publishing Scotland, accessed 11 Nov 2021, www.publishingscotland.org/what-we-do/publishing-fellowship/the-2020-fellows/

⁷⁷⁷ Publishing Scotland, ‘Publishing Scotland International Publishing Fellows 2015 to 2019’ (Edinburgh: Publishing Scotland, 2019).

⁷⁷⁸ Publishing Scotland, ‘Annual membership survey for publishers,’ SurveyMonkey (2020).

⁷⁷⁹ Publishing Scotland, ‘Annual membership survey for publishers.’

literature of any genre.⁷⁸⁰ In a press release announcing the Fund, Aly Barr – then-Head of Literature, Languages and Publishing at Creative Scotland – describes it as an ‘exciting new fund to support Scottish writing and publishing on an international stage,’ delivered ‘following the recommendations in the recent *Literature Sector Review*.’⁷⁸¹ As of 2021, the Translation Fund has supported 160 translations of Scottish books into foreign languages. The Fund adopts a broad definition of a ‘Scottish’ book, with the list including both Scottish writers published by London-based companies and imprints, such as Faber and Faber, Hamish Hamilton, or Picador, as well as books by Scottish-based independents such as Birlinn, Canongate Books, Floris Books, and Luath Press.⁷⁸²



Figure 10: Korean translation of *His Bloody Project* by Graeme Macrae Burnet (Saraband), one of the 160 translation projects funded by the Publishing Scotland Translation Fund as of 2021.

⁷⁸⁰ Publishing Scotland, ‘Press Release: Publishing Scotland launches a new Translation Fund – an opportunity for Scottish writing to reach an international audience’ (Edinburgh: Publishing Scotland, 2015).

⁷⁸¹ Publishing Scotland, ‘Press Release: Publishing Scotland launches a new Translation Fund.’

⁷⁸² Publishing Scotland, ‘Recipients to date of funding from the Publishing Scotland Translation Fund’ (Edinburgh: Publishing Scotland, 2021).

The Go-See Fund, established in 2018 in response to the ‘financial support’ need identified in the *Literature and Publishing Sector Review*, aims to enable publishers based in Scotland to attend book fairs for the first time, assisting with the costs of travel to any national or international book fair.⁷⁸³ As discussed previously in Chapter Five, participating in book fairs remains vital for publishing companies interested in buying and selling rights and in developing international connections. While Publishing Scotland organises a collective stand at the three major European book fairs – Frankfurt Book Fair, London Book Fair, and Bologna Children’s Book Fair – the Go-See Fund supports publishers to visit any international fair that might be of benefit.

Compared to the previous four decades, there has been a significant increase in coordinated international programmes since 2015. These are developed and facilitated mostly by Publishing Scotland – who are also the parent organisation of Scottish Books International – with a growing strategic focus on promoting Scottish publishers abroad and facilitating international exchange. As of 2022, most international programmes are still in their early years – with some, including the Scottish Books International activity, disrupted by coronavirus restrictions for a substantial period – and, further down the line, more research will be needed into their effectiveness on increasing the international profile of Scottish publishing.

6.2.3. The Emergence of Book Festivals

As David Finkelstein notes in *The Edinburgh History of the Book in Scotland*, although one-off literary events were organised ‘sporadically’ in Scotland from the early 1960s, the Edinburgh International Book Festival – launched in 1983 – was the first major long-term event dedicated solely to books.⁷⁸⁴ Using an ‘unusual’ venue of tents and marquees set up in Charlotte Square Gardens in Edinburgh, the festival was ‘conceived as a temporary experiment,’ initially receiving financial support from the National Book League (now Scottish Book Trust) and the Scottish

⁷⁸³ ‘Funding Information: Go-See Fund,’ Publishing Scotland, accessed 22 Oct 2021, www.publishingscotland.org/about-publishing/funding/go-see-fund/

⁷⁸⁴ David Finkelstein, ‘Edinburgh International Book Festival,’ in *The Edinburgh History of the Book in Scotland, Volume 4: Professionalism and Diversity 1880–2000*, eds. David Finkelstein and Alistair McCleery (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2007), 452.

Arts Council for only one year.⁷⁸⁵ The event took place in August, coinciding with the larger Edinburgh Festival. As discussed in interview by Jenny Brown, the Edinburgh International Book Festival director from 1983 to 1991, the initial sponsors ‘felt that the Edinburgh Festival had a focus on every single art form except literature’ – the Book Festival was meant to fill that gap by providing a ‘celebration of books and the written word’ that would also be accessible to the wider population:

The idea was to have it somewhere unexpected which didn’t have an association with books already – research at the time had shown that sixty-something per cent of population will never cross the threshold of a bookshop. So, that’s why Charlotte Square Gardens were a really good choice.⁷⁸⁶

Millicent Weber also mentions the importance of the venue in her book *Literary Festivals and Contemporary Book Culture*, noting that while the Festival required tickets to access individual events, the space itself was freely accessible to the public, offering ‘a literary atmosphere that is valuable in its own right.’⁷⁸⁷ As Finkelstein writes, the Book Festival was meant to combine this ‘literary atmosphere’ and the promotion of writers through public-facing events with the more ‘commercial’ activities characteristic of trade book fairs, such as selling and exhibiting books and offering meeting space for trade representatives.⁷⁸⁸ The inaugural 1983 programme offered thirty author events across two weeks, with 6,000 books exhibited. It proved very successful, with more than 30,000 visitors and £60,000 in book sales, and its popularity encouraged the sponsors to renew their support for the coming years.⁷⁸⁹

As indicated by its name, the ‘international’ aspect was associated with the festival from the beginning. Jenny Brown recalls in interview that the first board of directors was determined to have ‘an international programme’ with a ‘balance’ of both home-grown and international talent, which was a challenge to achieve in the early days of the festival:

We had John Updike that very first year, and Anthony Burgess . . . we would post these letters [author invitations] and maybe for every five letters we would get one positive response. Whereas now, of course,

⁷⁸⁵ Finkelstein, ‘Edinburgh International Book Festival.’

⁷⁸⁶ Jenny Brown, interview with Alice Piotrowska, Edinburgh, Scotland, 11 April 2019.

⁷⁸⁷ Millicent Weber, *Literary Festivals and Contemporary Book Culture* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2018), 128.

⁷⁸⁸ Finkelstein, ‘Edinburgh International Book Festival.’

⁷⁸⁹ Finkelstein, ‘Edinburgh International Book Festival.’

everybody wants to come. But it took time, because there was only one other literary festival in the UK then – that was Cheltenham which had just started. There wasn't a culture that people went out to hear an author speak.⁷⁹⁰

The festival grew its international presence quickly, attracting an increasing number of international authors and visitors. Its 1997 programme, directed by Jan Fairley, had a specific focus on South Africa and South America, with an opening event with Peruvian author Mario Vargas Llosa.⁷⁹¹ The festival also increased in size, hosting 350 authors and attracting 70,000 visitors annually by the end of the twentieth century; in 2000, English author Malcolm Bradbury called the Edinburgh International Book Festival 'the best of all the international gatherings of writers.'⁷⁹² Weber notes that the 'size and prestige' of the festival was cited as one of main reasons for Edinburgh becoming the first UNESCO City of Literature in 2004 – a designation that 'recognises the commitment of both private and public organisations within a city to fostering creative and cultural diversity through promotion of literary culture.'⁷⁹³ Created to 'promote cooperation with and among cities that have identified creativity as a strategic factor for sustainable urban development,' the UNESCO Creative Cities Network (UCCN) includes 246 cities as of 2022, of which 42 are named Cities of Literature – giving Edinburgh an ongoing international reach and access to a large creative network abroad.⁷⁹⁴ The Book Festival continued to grow in size and prominence in the first two decades of the twenty-first century, with over 200,000 annual visitors by 2012⁷⁹⁵ and 250,000 by 2020⁷⁹⁶ – making it 'the world's largest public celebration of the written word.'⁷⁹⁷ As summarised in the *Books in Scotland* report from the Scottish Centre for the Book, the 2012 edition included authors representing 44 different countries, 'from Australia to Russia, Argentina to Nigeria.'⁷⁹⁸

⁷⁹⁰ Jenny Brown, interview with Alice Piotrowska, Edinburgh, Scotland, 11 April 2019.

⁷⁹¹ Finkelstein, 'Edinburgh International Book Festival.'

⁷⁹² Finkelstein, 'Edinburgh International Book Festival.'

⁷⁹³ Weber, *Literary Festivals and Contemporary Book Culture*, 63.

⁷⁹⁴ 'Creative Cities | Creative Cities Network,' UNESCO, accessed 5 Jan 2022, <https://en.unesco.org/creative-cities/home>

⁷⁹⁵ Scottish Centre for the Book, *Books in Scotland: Scottish Centre for the Book* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh Napier University, 2012).

⁷⁹⁶ 'About Us,' Edinburgh International Book Festival, accessed 21 Nov 2021, www.edbookfest.co.uk/about-us

⁷⁹⁷ Scottish Centre for the Book, *Books in Scotland: Scottish Centre for the Book*, 25.

⁷⁹⁸ Scottish Centre for the Book, *Books in Scotland: Scottish Centre for the Book*, 26.

At the same time, the Book Festival became ‘a major fixture on the publishing circuit,’ providing ‘high visibility and marketing opportunities’ for Scottish publishers.⁷⁹⁹ In interview, Jenny Brown notes that publishers had been closely involved in the development of the festival ‘from the very outset,’ with Stephanie Wolfe Murray of Canongate Books and Bill Campbell of Mainstream Publishing joining the board of directors in the early days.⁸⁰⁰ She mentions receiving ‘a lot of support from publishers,’ as well as benefitting from a ‘spirit of cooperation’ that helped the festival succeed in the early years: as discussed in more detail in Chapter Five, the festival shared office space and resources with the Scottish Publishers Association (now Publishing Scotland) for a few years from 1991, and there was a sense of mutual benefit arising from the relationship:

There’s always been a close relationship and I think the [Scottish Publishers Association] always saw the Book Festival as a great showcase for what their members were doing. There has always been panel displays of Scottish publishers’ work at the Book Festival from that time on.⁸⁰¹

Lorraine Fannin, the chief executive of Publishing Scotland from 1987 to 2008, also recalls in interview that she ‘worked on the first Book Festival committee’ and had been ‘involved in the Book Festival ever since.’⁸⁰² On its website, Publishing Scotland state that they have been ‘closely involved with the Festival from its inception,’ taking part in three main ways: by organising shelf space for their publisher members in the on-site festival bookshops; by collaborating on a main programme event; and by hosting a reception for their members at the festival venue.⁸⁰³ In 2021, the Book Festival also launched ‘The Business of Books,’ a new programme of ‘free events dedicated to all those interested in the business of the book world,’ including events ‘championing Scotland’s independent publishers.’⁸⁰⁴ As part of the inaugural programme,

⁷⁹⁹ Finkelstein, ‘Edinburgh International Book Festival.’

⁸⁰⁰ Jenny Brown, interview with Alice Piotrowska, Edinburgh, Scotland, 11 April 2019.

⁸⁰¹ Jenny Brown, interview with Alice Piotrowska, Edinburgh, Scotland, 11 April 2019.

⁸⁰² Lorraine Fannin, interview with Alice Piotrowska, Edinburgh, Scotland, 15 January 2019.

⁸⁰³ ‘Edinburgh International Book Festival,’ Publishing Scotland, accessed 21 Nov 2021, www.publishingscotland.org/what-we-do/edinburgh-international-book-festival/

⁸⁰⁴ ‘The Business of Books,’ Edinburgh International Book Festival, accessed 21 Nov 2021, www.edbookfest.co.uk/the-festival/whats-on/the-business-of-books-2021

Publishing Scotland co-organised a Scottish Publisher Showcase event highlighting the work of eight independent Scottish publishers.⁸⁰⁵

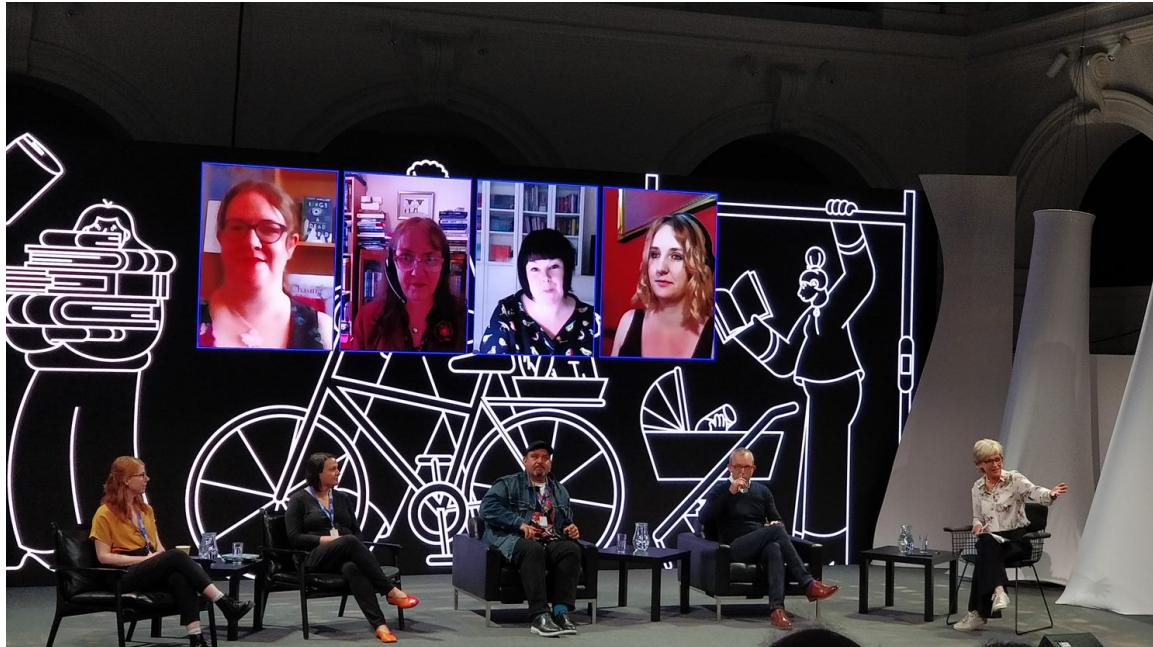


Figure 11: Scottish Publisher Showcase 2021: a hybrid Edinburgh International Book Festival event highlighting the work of eight Publishing Scotland members. Photo by Publishing Scotland.

As Finkelstein writes in *The Edinburgh History of the Book in Scotland*, the success of the Edinburgh International Book Festival ‘inspired’ the emergence of similar ventures around Scotland over the next few decades.⁸⁰⁶ By 2012, Scotland was home to around 40 book and literary festivals – the largest number per capita in the world⁸⁰⁷ – and by 2020, this number had grown to over 60 festivals held throughout the year in various parts of the country.⁸⁰⁸ While many of these festivals

⁸⁰⁵ ‘The Business of Books,’ Edinburgh International Book Festival, accessed 21 Nov 2021, www.edbookfest.co.uk/the-festival/whats-on/the-business-of-books-2021

⁸⁰⁶ Finkelstein, ‘Edinburgh International Book Festival.’

⁸⁰⁷ Scottish Centre for the Book, Books in Scotland: Scottish Centre for the Book.

⁸⁰⁸ ‘Find a Book Festival,’ Literature Alliance Scotland, accessed 23 Nov 2021, <https://literaturealliancescotland.co.uk/events/find-a-book-festival/>

are small local events, often run by volunteer committees, some have built a significant international presence and attracted worldwide audiences. Notable examples include StAnza, Scotland's International Poetry Festival launched in 1998, which takes place in St Andrews each spring and has since 'grown to be recognised as the major poetry event in Scotland, attracting visitors from across the country and beyond'⁸⁰⁹; Wigtown Book Festival, established in 1999 in Wigtown, 'Scotland's National Book Town,' which has since become the second largest book festival in Scotland after the Edinburgh International Book Festival⁸¹⁰; and, more recently, Bloody Scotland, Scotland's International Crime Writing Festival established in 2012.⁸¹¹ They serve as an active showcase for work published by many Scottish-based independents, offering sales and marketing opportunities and increasing the visibility of their authors during internationally recognised events.

While outside the scope of this study, it is also worth noting that the recently changing landscape of Scottish festivals – with many delivering online or hybrid programmes due to coronavirus restrictions – can bring its own opportunities for international dissemination. In a 2021 report commissioned by Creative Scotland, *Exploring the post-pandemic landscape of Scottish literary festivals*, Lee Randall discusses some of these opportunities: for instance, a significant shift in the international reach of the Edinburgh International Book Festival, whose international audience went from four to 50 per cent after offering their programme online, tuning in to watch the online events from 'every continent except Antarctica.'⁸¹²

6.3. Conclusion

In general, English-language publishers in Scotland have an extrovert nature, with many small- and medium-sized independents actively seeking ways to market and sell their titles overseas. However, the potential to export publications to the broader Anglophone market goes hand in

⁸⁰⁹ Scottish Centre for the Book, *Books in Scotland: Scottish Centre for the Book*, 24.

⁸¹⁰ Yu Tonia Lu, *Lost in location: arts development and policy in rural Scotland* (Glasgow: University of Glasgow, 2015).

⁸¹¹ 'About Bloody Scotland,' Bloody Scotland, accessed 23 Nov 2021, <https://bloodyscotland.com/about-us/about-bloody-scotland/>

⁸¹² Lee Randall, *Exploring the post-pandemic landscape of Scottish literary festivals: where do we go from here?* (Creative Scotland, 2021), 30.

hand with the challenges associated with both the size of the industry and, significantly, its proximity to London. In addition to competing against larger companies when attempting to market their books to a wider audience, Scottish publishers continue to face the issue of losing their commercially successful authors to London-based companies that can offer higher advances and robust marketing campaigns. Some independents have attempted to mitigate these issues by increasing their presence in London or placing more focus on rights exploitation – however, they remain a challenge for smaller companies without the financial resources to expand their operations. Most independent publishers also deal with selling and licensing rights on an ad-hoc basis, taking limited advantage of the rights they hold.

Despite these challenges, Scottish publishers have been finding ways to develop their international reach in recent years. The support of Publishing Scotland has been instrumental in offering new opportunities for growth and increasing the international profile of Scottish publishing, with dedicated funds and services – including the International Publishing Fellowship, the Translation Fund, the Go-See Fund, and the Scottish Books International service – emerging between 2015 and 2019, supported by public subsidy from Creative Scotland. Creative Scotland has also been responsible for supporting a lot of the translated literature output from the two translation-focused publishers established in 2008 and 2016, which – despite their small size and relatively modest output – have become the leading publishers of international literature in Scotland. In addition, a robust programme of literary festivals across the country has attracted growing international attention over the last two decades, serving as an active showcase for publishers to display their work and increase the visibility of their authors.

At the time of writing this study, Publishing Scotland remains in the early stages of developing its international strategy. Further down the line, more research should be conducted into the effectiveness of programmes and services such as the International Publishing Fellowship and Scottish Books International, measuring their impact on rights visibility and export sales. Similarly, more research is needed into the long-term sustainability of the literary translation sector, particularly from the perspective of developing an effective public funding strategy that supports the sector while encouraging further growth. A new report commissioned by Creative Scotland, similar to the 2015 *Literature and Publishing Sector Review*, would be beneficial in evaluating these issues and offering recommendations for improved business practice.

7. Chapter Seven: Conclusion

This thesis traces the development of the Scottish book trade during an era of rapid cultural, political, and economic transformation of the late twentieth and early twenty-first centuries. By delving into the operations of key companies and organisations of the period, it presents a detailed history of Scottish book publishing that incorporates a business-oriented perspective and goes substantially beyond existing literature. The three main chapters narrate the history of Scottish publishing from an industry operating ‘in’ Scotland – centred in Edinburgh and Glasgow while extending its reach across the British Empire – to one reclaiming its cultural heritage and political impact by publishing books ‘for’ Scotland and, finally, to one seeking growth opportunities beyond national borders.

The concluding chapter provides a summary of findings in relation to the main research questions and theoretical frameworks discussed at the beginning of the thesis, outlining the key opportunities and challenges faced by Scottish publishers over the past five decades. It then acknowledges some of the limitations of this research related to the methods of data collection as well as external constraints. Lastly, the conclusion provides a list of specific recommendations for future study, aimed at both academic researchers and professional industry organisations.

7.1. Summary of Findings

Cooperative Competition

This thesis has emphasised the practice of cooptation as key in allowing the Scottish book trade to develop and withstand the political, economic, and technological turmoil of the past five decades. Scottish publishers are, for the most part, highly collaborative: despite competing for the same or similar markets, they demonstrate a willingness to share knowledge and resources with one another, particularly in areas such as sales and distribution. The smallest companies in particular are inclined to support their Scottish competitors, exhibiting a certain ‘us vs them’ mentality – Scottish publishing is viewed as a collective force competing against larger international players, with the success of any Scottish business contributing to the increased publicity and recognition for the industry as a whole. Publishing Scotland plays a vital role in facilitating and supporting this approach through various collective activities, including networking and advisory meetings, book distribution services, and collective stands at international trade fairs. While competition still exists within this collaborative framework,

independent Scottish publishers are in general eager to create opportunities for growth and mutual success by pooling their resources and expertise to overcome some of the challenges they face individually.

Finding the Niche

Although most independent publishers in Scotland share the ambition to market and sell their titles broadly, competing for reader attention – both in Scotland and overseas – with larger English-language publishers remains a significant challenge. Small publishers tend to lack both the resources to reach global audiences with their general fiction titles, and the facilities to manage unexpectedly successful publications. While this issue is not unique to Scotland – any small independent company operating both in and outside of large cultural centres faces the challenge of competing with multimedia corporations – it is a significant industry-wide issue for two reasons: firstly, the Scottish book trade is made up almost exclusively of small independents, with the two corporate branches (HarperCollins and Hachette) headquartered outside the country; and secondly, as summarised later in this chapter, the proximity of London leads to many successful authors taking their work outside of Scotland after achieving commercial success. The growth of companies like Floris Books and Charco Press indicates that concentrating on niche publishing areas can be an effective business model, allowing for targeted export sales, tailored promotional efforts, and more sustainable development. While this publishing strategy is not without its challenges – as discussed in the thesis, Floris has in the past faced issues related to export sales, while Charco continues to receive public subsidy to sustain its operations – it can help publishers establish a readership base and carve out a specialised place in the global literary landscape.

Further Professionalisation of the Trade

As established in *The Edinburgh History of the Book in Scotland, Volume 4*, the twentieth century was characterised by the growing professionalisation of publishing, with new organisations and policies emerging to manage and standardise the industry. This trend has continued into the twenty-first century and proved particularly important for the minority language publishing sector, with developments such as the Gaelic Language (Scotland) Act in 2005 and the Scots language policy in 2015 prompting the industry to adapt a more strategic and coordinated approach to publishing minority language work. For the broader independent trade, official industry reports commissioned by the Scottish Arts Council and later Creative Scotland, *Review*

of Publishing (2004) and the *Literature and Publishing Sector Review* (2015), helped recognise the opportunities and challenges faced by the industry, with their specific recommendations leading to the development of new services such as Books from Scotland (established in 2005) and Scottish Books International (2019). Dedicated funds distributed by public sector organisations have also helped publishers expand their operations and access international opportunities. While the effectiveness of some of the newly implemented strategies is yet to be evaluated, the continued professionalisation has led to generally positive developments across the sector, creating new resources and opportunities for publishers to develop and promote their work.

Individual Impact and Editorial Focus

This study reveals independent Scottish publishing emerging from the late twentieth century as highly editorially driven, often dependent on the efforts and perseverance of a small number of dedicated individuals. This aspect is particularly prominent within the relatively niche sectors of the trade, such as minority language publishing (examined in Chapter Four) and literary translation (Chapter Six), where the efforts of a small group of professionals – predominantly editors – sustain the majority of the sector. However, as discussed in Chapter Four, the same is true for many of the general trade publishers established from the 1970s onwards, where publishing companies were often synonymous with their charismatic leaders. The importance of individual impact on independent publishing in Scotland cannot be overstated: as examined throughout the thesis, publishers like Derick Thomson or Stephanie Wolfe Murray have made significant and lasting contributions to the trade. However, while allowing for nimbleness and editorial freedom, this aspect is associated with a number of challenges: a decision of one person to close their business, or their lack of succession planning, can lead to a significant loss for the entire sector, as evidenced by the history of Gairm; overreliance on the skills of one small group can limit the representation of diverse voices in the works being published; and the focus on editorial considerations can lead to neglecting other crucial aspects of the publishing process, such as marketing and rights sales.

Internationalisation

If the twentieth century was characterised by the globalisation of the trade that led to the loss of many well-established Scottish names, the twenty-first century has witnessed increased and strategic efforts to expand Scottish publishing beyond its national borders. Initiatives such as the Translation Fund, International Publishing Fellowship, the Go-See Fund, and Scottish

Books International, coordinated by Publishing Scotland with the financial support of Creative Scotland, have aimed to facilitate rights sales and create opportunities for Scottish publishers to network with their international counterparts. While all of these initiatives are relatively new and their long-term effectiveness has yet to be measured, they have shown promising signs of success in expanding the reach of Scottish publishing on the international stage. Trade publishers also continue to participate in international book fairs and collective rights catalogues – although, as discussed in the thesis, smaller companies tend to have an ad hoc approach to rights selling. The past two decades have also seen the emergence of new companies focused on works in translation, Vagabond Voices and Charco Press, as well as increased interest from other trade companies in publishing international fiction; while most Scottish publishers continue to view translation as high-risk and not associated with significant returns, there is some indication of companies being increasingly willing to diversify their lists as well as explore international markets.

National Identity

As examined in Chapter Four, nationalism had a crucial role in the revival of Scottish publishing in the 1970s, with the cultural optimism of the period leading to the establishment of new ventures and (re)publishing works of Scottish interest and connection. Interestingly, however, most trade publishers examined in this thesis – including those that publish works of distinctly Scottish interest – show a degree of reluctance in describing themselves as ‘Scottish.’ Several interviewees indicate that they see it as a restrictive term that can suggest an unwillingness to engage in broader international markets or cater their work to the broader English-speaker audience. Scottish publishers, on the whole, have an extroverted nature: even the smallest companies are generally willing to engage in export sales and reach the broader Anglophone readership, preferring to be described as general publishers based in Scotland rather than publishers of Scottish-interest work. It should be noted, however, that this willingness does not necessarily translate into effective export or internationalisation strategies – many Scottish independents lack the resources to compete with larger players or retain successful authors. In some cases, publishing works of Scottish interest can become a more lucrative niche, as evidenced by Floris Books and its series of Scottish children’s books.

Public Subsidy

Though attracting some criticism and scrutiny among publishers over the years, public funding distributed through the Scottish Arts Council / Creative Scotland has been key in the development of the publishing industry between 1970 and 2020. As discussed throughout the thesis, government support has facilitated the publication of numerous works of cultural significance that would be unlikely to have been realised otherwise due to their limited commercial viability, including children's books and reprints of Scottish classics. The Scottish Arts Council also supported book trade organisations such as the Gaelic Books Council and the Scottish Publishers Association / Publishing Scotland from their inception, and continues to do so as Creative Scotland through its Regular Funding scheme. Through Publishing Scotland, it has funded initiatives that directly support the development of the industry, such as the Go-Digital Fund or the Go-See Fund, and – as established in Chapter Five – plays a pivotal role in sustaining the association and its numerous trade activities. In general, public funding has created and facilitated opportunities for development and growth across the sector, and helped preserve and promote Scotland's literary heritage. However, this thesis also revealed potential issues with the current funding policies, with the findings indicating that some of the decisions – such as distributing free government-funded publications in Gaelic – can inhibit companies from achieving commercial success and in some instances lead to an overreliance on public subsidy. As detailed later in the conclusion, more research into this topic is needed to assess the current public funding strategies and their effectiveness going forward.

Sustainability and Long-Term Viability

A challenge nearly universally encountered amongst the small and micro businesses examined in this study is that of sustainability and long-term viability. The issue is cited by independent Scottish companies regardless of their type and focus: publishers with international ambitions struggle to compete on an oversaturated English-language market and retain successful authors, while those concentrating on niche areas of Scottish interest are faced with limited opportunities for growth. Financial aspects are one facet of the issue. Small publishers often grapple with securing sufficient funding to support and expand their operations, dealing with limited access to capital, high overhead costs, and fierce competition from publishing corporations. Adapting to the ever-changing market dynamics poses an additional challenge, with companies lacking the human and financial resources to explore new markets or diversify their revenue streams.

These challenges are often applicable to independent publishing more generally, and not necessarily unique to small nations; however, as touched on previously in this chapter, they can disproportionately affect an industry comprised of almost exclusively small independents. The findings of this study indicate that fostering a supportive ecosystem that provides mentorship, training, and promotional opportunities can significantly contribute to the long-term sustainability of small businesses. Similarly, public subsidy offered through dedicated project and development funds can help publishers expand their operations – although, as discussed in this thesis, overreliance on public funding can lead to its own sustainability challenges in the long run.

The London Pull

For Scottish publishing, the geographical and cultural proximity to London remains both an advantage and a challenge. Publishers in Scotland can benefit from easier access to London-based events and networks – in some cases, as evidenced by Mainstream Publishing and Canongate Books, going to the extent of establishing a London branch of their business to facilitate connections and increase their visibility on the British market. However, the ‘pull’ of London continues to be a persistent challenge – Scottish authors gravitate towards publishing houses in the south as soon as they achieve success under a local press, with most Scottish-based publishers unable to compete with the book deals and marketing resources offered by larger companies. This tendency means that, as much in 2020 as in 1980, Scottish publishers invest substantial time, effort, and resources into nurturing talented authors only to see them leave after one or two successful titles. As discussed in Chapter Six, publishers tend to be most successful at retaining authors when, instead of attempting to compete with corporate resources, they emphasise the advantages of collaborating with a small press – from building a supportive local community to cultivating strong relationships with authors based on tailored support. Engaging in partnerships with larger publishers can also be an option, enabling authors to benefit from the resources and reach of larger players while still maintaining a connection to their Scottish roots. In general, though, while many Scottish authors enjoy international success, it is Scottish publishers that continue to face barriers at accessing the broader market.

7.2. Research Limitations

While this thesis has met the aims and objectives set out at the beginning of the project, it is important to acknowledge several limitations that may have impacted the research process and findings. As discussed later in this chapter, some of these limitations highlight areas where future research could further expand upon the knowledge presented in the thesis.

One of the main limitations of this project is associated with its main topic and scope. While this thesis examines Scottish publishing from around 1970 to 2020, it is important to recognise that it is impossible to capture every aspect and detail of a complex industry within the timeframe. As a result, some of the trends and publishing sectors discussed in this thesis are presented as overviews or summaries that establish a broader context and complement the more detailed examinations. These sections can serve as a useful starting point for future researchers looking to investigate more specific areas of Scottish publishing.

As examined in more detail in Chapter Two, there are also inherent limitations associated with the research methods applied in this study. Oral histories are subject to the biases and interpretations of the participants: the accuracy of the information obtained through interviews can be influenced by the passage of time and the fallibility of human memory. While efforts have been made to corroborate oral accounts with archival evidence, the possibility of inaccuracies or omissions remains. Similarly, while archival work provides valuable sources for historical analysis, it needs to be acknowledged that the availability and completeness of archival records can vary significantly.

This study was also developed in collaboration with industry partners and thus was subject to some limitations related to the use of research data in the final outputs. In particular, any data obtained through the partnership with HarperCollins, including five oral histories with past HarperCollins employees, was subject to approval by the company. HarperCollins was reluctant to make data relating to the 1989 takeover available for this thesis and in some cases requested substantial redactions to the oral history transcripts, leading to the loss of potentially useful content. While I was able to negotiate the use of paraphrased data from some of the redactions, this posed an additional challenge in developing a balanced argument and led to additional time pressures in developing Chapter Three.

Lastly, restrictions posed by the Covid pandemic starting in March 2020 had an impact on the final shape and focus of this project. While I had completed most of my primary research by

that date, I was unable to access the publishing archives located at the National Library of Scotland, which had the potential to add valuable data to the case studies. Additionally, the requirement to conduct the remaining oral histories online presented some limitations, with not all interviewees being comfortable with video meetings. As a result, this project had to adapt and make the best use of available resources while considering time constraints, placing greater emphasis on the data gathered prior to the implementation of lockdown measures.

7.3. Recommendations for Future Research

Based on its main findings and research limitations, this thesis proposes the following set of recommendations for future publishing research both on an academic and professional level:

1. Examining the minority language (Gaelic and Scots) publishing sector from 2000 onwards, with a focus on developing sustainable business models and public funding strategies. In particular, future research could consider the implications of distributing free government-funded learning resources on the commercial viability of the sector, as well as the effectiveness of the Gaelic Books Council.
2. Developing a new industry report similar in scope and format to the *Review of Publishing* (2004) and the *Literature and Publishing Sector Review* (2015) that examines the effectiveness of the new internationalisation strategies established from 2015 onwards. This report should include quantitative research into rights sales as well as evaluate the effectiveness of initiatives such as the International Publishing Fellowship and Scottish Books International.
3. Conducting detailed quantitative research into the level of profit coming from export sales. As discussed in the thesis, most Scottish publishers researched and interviewed for this project either sell or intend to sell their titles overseas. Gathering specific data on these sales could provide valuable insight into the current export strategies of Scottish publishers, with the potential to assess their effectiveness and generate industry-applicable recommendations.
4. Building on the historical account presented in this thesis by researching the extensive printing and publishing industry archives based at the National Library of Scotland (NLS). Entering into an industry partnership with the NLS by a doctoral researcher could be of significant mutual benefit, with the potential of developing extended case studies and digitising archival data.

5. Examining the sector of literary translation, with a detailed analysis of sales data and public funding strategies. In particular, this research could benefit from a comparative approach that considers publishers of translated works in other small nations as well as in Anglophone countries.
6. Conducting more robust and industry-wide research into public subsidy and its importance for the development of the Scottish book trade. The research would benefit from collaborating with Creative Scotland on analysing public funding data and evaluating the long-term financial sustainability of the supported companies, as well as from conducting a comparative study with public funding models in other small nations.

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