Semi-colonial Marginalisation Narratives in Scottish Language Planning and Literature

Lauren Rebecca Clark
Faculty of Humanities
Chiang Mai University
Email: laurenrebecca.clark@cmu.ac.th

Received: May 28, 2025
Revised: November 17, 2025
Accepted: November 28, 2025

Abstract

Scotland's coloniality remains a topic of scholarly debate. I advocate a semi-colonial approach to Scotland in the context of its institutional, literary and linguistic output prior and immediately following the 2014 referendum on Scottish independence (*indyref*). This heuristic can unpick narratives of marginality surrounding the country's responses to devolved powers and the legacy of its involvement with empire. Firstly, language practice, policies, and planning in Scotland (Scots and Gaelic) are complicated yet accommodated by their marginalised semi-colonial status. Secondly, select examples from the contemporary Scottish literary canon are examined considering postcolonial and semi-colonial critique amidst wider debates of coloniality and cultural marginalisation. This offers a useful corrective to postcolonialism being seen as a form of subtle cultural resistance in Scotland's case.

Keywords: Scotland; postcolonialism; semi-colonial; literature; language planning.

This paper argues that applying a semi-colonial approach informed by Max Weber's *verstehen* method, offers a more nuanced way to understand the marginalisation of Scottish language and literature than binary postcolonial/ decolonial critiques allow. Focusing on language planning and select literature in the years surrounding the 2014 independence referendum (indyref), marginalisation narratives shaped and permeate institutional operations and policy, while also asking deeper questions of Scotland's cultural identity and political dynamics. These narratives are also sustained through academic practice and literature. By reading these narratives through a Weberian lens, this paper considers how social meaning is produced and maintained in the Scottish literary and linguistic landscape and reveals the fragility of its colonial categorisation.

In scholarship about colonial legacies, the terms *postcolonial, decolonial, semi-colonial* and *internal colonialism* appear regularly. There is an overlap in their usage verging upon interchangeability which is challenging in the case of

Scotland. This country already faces questions of marginalisation and nationhood, and it is fundamental to clarify the distinction of these key terms before engaging in research that attempts to reframe them. Postcolonialism broadly refers to how nations or regions cope with the aftereffects of colonial rule in governance and culture as well as epistemologically. Applying the term to Scotland is problematic because it contributed substantially to the British Empire. However, as Homi K. Bhabha (2004) and Michael Gardiner (1996) have observed, postcolonialism also aligns itself with residual power structures that cannot be neatly mapped onto the colony-coloniser binary. There are issues of complicity and marginality which must be carefully considered if applying a postcolonial lens to Scotland.

By contrast, decoloniality emphasizes the reconstruction of epistemologies from the ground up (Mignolo, 2018; Gopal, 2021) after the dismantlement of colonial power hitherto embedded institutionally and in systemic productions of knowledge and culture. This is a radical disavowal of colonial epistemic structures. Fundamental to this paper is semi-colonialism, a paradoxical condition in which a nation or region is both imperially complicit and marginalised within its own state structure - or devolved government in Scotland's case. Both Michael Gardiner (1996) and Graeme MacDonald (2006) have highlighted this tension in Scotland's entanglements with empire. For instance, Scottish elites trained and staffed the imperial project while Scots and Gaelic languages face internal suppression and institutional manipulation. Semi-colonialism speaks to a participation in empire that is subordinate and mediated through constrained sovereignty and uneven cultural recognition. Lastly, internal colonialism was originally theorised by Michael Hechter (1975) in relation to non-English nations and regions on the periphery of the United Kingdom, often called the "Celtic fringe." Since then, it has been applied to Scotland by Tom Nairn (1977) and Cairns Craig (2018) to explore imbalanced cultural legitimacy, the suppression of languages and institutional disparities. The term thus refers to a structural imbalance within a unified nation-state (in this case, the United Kingdom) where a dominant region exercises powers over marginalised peripheries. The devolved powers of the Scottish Parliament (Scotland Act 2016) compared to Westminster's reserved are an example while Scots Law is not. Parallels can also be observed in the cases of the governance of Wales and Northern Ireland.

While the researcher employs semi-colonialism as a guiding framework, the concept of internal colonialism remains relevant to discussions of Scotland's cultural and institutional marginalisation and will be referenced where appropriate. However, semi-colonialism provides a more flexible model enabling a fuller account of Scotland's ambivalent political and cultural status within the UK and its complicity in the imperial project. There are inherent contradictions in Scotland's literary and linguistic identity, and this dual perspective will be acknowledged to better capture them. It must be mentioned that this is paper mostly substantiated in a Marxist tradition and particularly Hechter's internal

colonialism, in which power imbalances and structural inequalities are continually highlighted. Poststructuralist critiques are also implicitly utilised to examine the construction of narratives of marginalisation as a means of critical analyses of the canon and institutional rhetoric and the destabilising the rigidity of postcolonial/decolonial binaries.

Following the theoretical and methodological groundwork, this paper has two main aims and uses literature, policy, historical data as primary sources:

1. To examine the emergence and persistence of "marginalisation narratives" within Scottish-based literature, its canon, and its Higher Education culture before and after the 2014 referendum on Scottish independence.
2. To examine how the planning of both Gaelic and Scots reflects and reshapes these "marginalisation narratives" within a postcolonial context, again before and after the 2014 referendum on Scottish independence.

The Scottish referendum on independence occurred on the 18th of September 2014 and brought national identity and postcolonial critique into sharp focus. When 55.3% voted against Scotland becoming an independent country, unresolved cultural and political tensions were left in a semi-colonial hangover which continues to hamper national self-awareness to this day. To understand these tensions, the *verstehen* interpretive approach assists to uncover the meanings behind social actions including cultural representation through literature and language policy. Beginning by defining how *verstehen* can interpret marginalisation, I will then discuss postcolonial, decolonial and semi-colonial frameworks; then, how Scotland figures in postcolonial scholarship, followed by its historical and political context. The grist of my argument depends on a subsequent discussion of marginalisation narratives, Scotland's colonial foundation and applying these to the postcolonial legacies of Scotland's Language Planning and lastly the marginalisation of the Scottish canon.

Rethinking Postcolonial Scotland: semi-colonialism, *verstehen* and binary limitations

Using *verstehen* to interpret marginalisation

Max Weber's *verstehen* methodological heuristic is instrumental as it foregrounds the processes by which individuals and institutions assign meaning to their social realities. Tucker (1965) explains *verstehen* is:

> "[A] tool designed to discover the nature of the situation- including in the concept, "nature of the situation" the coercive forces (i.e. normative prescriptions, observable values held by the different individuals composing the situation, and the apparent goals of these individuals in terms of their known values and situational norms)-in which human *social* action takes place." (p. 64)

This paper adopts an interpretivist and document-based methodology which uses Weber's approach to interpret how policies and institutional patterns shape narratives of marginalisation. This analysis pulls from a range of primary and secondary materials including literary texts (e.g. Leila Aboulela's "The Museum," James Kelman's "Not not while the giro," and Scottish Gaelic poetry by Niall O'Gallagher), policy documents related to Scottish language planning (such as the Gaelic Language plan 2016-2021), census data and materials from higher education and cultural institutions (including Scottish Parliament proceedings and the University of Glasgow's reparations programme). All are interpreted through a dual sociological and literary-theoretical perspective drawing on Weber's approach. All are situated within an argument that suggests that Scotland's semi-colonial condition is the most helpful way of understanding its cultural marginalisation during the indyref period. To be clear, it will be argued that marginalisation narratives are not only experienced and interpreted, but they are also institutionalised within the semi-colonial framework of Scottish cultural scholarship.

Postcolonial, Decolonial and Semi-Colonial Frameworks

Building on these distinctions, postcolonialism as a critical concept often, though not exclusively, concerns itself with processes of colonisation executed by European empires of the 19th century. It regularly, and some would argue quite rightly, excludes colonies enacted within formerly established European empires, such as Great Britain, by its very definition. Rethinking Scotland's relationship with postcolonialism is therefore met with the quandary of both liability (was Scotland culpable for the colonial exploits of the British empire?) and location (was Scotland colonised?). Scotland may be considered semi-colonial in the Marxist sense, and indirectly echo Hechter's internal colonisation, considering its limited devolved powers. It also can be looked at from a postcolonial perspective having undergone a process of colonisation. Scotland's problematic status within the postcolonial paradigm suggests a polarised critical legacy both negating essentialised definitions of the colony and coloniser dialectic and at the same time embracing a radical reconfiguration of Scotland's nationhood. Concern with Scotland's marginalisation and blurred boundaries has inhibited sustained scrutiny of the subject on national literary and linguistic fronts where partisan critical positions have been able to explain away identity politics more readily. In exploring this phenomenon, it is thus useful to examine how Scottish studies was being viewed and was redefining the postcolonial when the school was both theoretically popular and of significance to the country in the run-up to and aftermath of the 2014 referendum on Scottish independence. Here, scrutiny is placed on postcolonial scholarship emanating from the nation from approximately 1994 to 2014 and the impact postcolonial or decolonial critique has had upon the country's language planning, curricula and literary studies. To

begin, an outline of how postcolonial is understood in the context of this article is given before outlining Scotland's potential involvement in Empire as well as being considered a colonised nation. Within a designated temporal frame of 1994-2014, the impact that indyref and national politics has had upon language planning is discussed to estimate if language planning manoeuvres in Scotland can be seen within a postcolonial framework. Finally, the representation of Scottish postcolonial literary texts within national and international conferences and curricula are briefly considered alongside a theoretical standpoint adopted by Liam Connell in 2003. This will estimate whether issues of postcolonial or decolonial debate could be determined by the representation of Scotland's literatures in the aforementioned areas.

Scotland In Postcolonial Scholarship

In an incisive account, Michael Gardiner's distinction between post-colonial and postcolonial clarifies Scotland's precarious position in concrete terms prior to the 1998 Scotland Act:

> Post-colonial describes a situation where a power has retreated after a colonial period; postcolonial, in current usage, describes tendencies in cultural and institutional structures which foreground questions of race, sovereignty and nationhood, with the colonial temporality of progress readable in terms of present identifications. So post-colonial situations are often postcolonial but enquiries which try to conflate the two, as in the historical investigation of whether Scotland has ever been treated as a colony, are often harmfully substituted for the positive move of using postcolonial qualities to develop political articulations, textual strategy. (Gardiner, 1996, p. 24)

To avoid inchoate articulations and strategies then, these can be boosted with sustained critical historical scholarship across the spectrum of lived colonial experiences towards the present-day impact of its ramifications upon policies and tendencies at a cultural and structural level. This offers a useful corrective to postcolonialism being seen as a form of subtle cultural resistance. It aligns with that which Homi Bhabha offered in *The Location of Culture*. That is to say, "the effect of an ambivalence produced within the rules of recognition of dominating discourses as they articulate the signs of cultural difference and reimplicate them within the deferential relations of colonial power" (Bhabha, 2004, p. 158). The distinction that Gardiner makes in 1996 regarding postcolonial qualities can be seen as a prime mover in politics, language policies and literary texts which have emanated from Scotland ever since. This can further be appraised to consider the radical movements away from colonial heritage seen in

the decolonial. Following Gardiner's vein, the decolonial refers to the active detection and removal of colonial legacies following the retreat of power after a colonial period.

Historical and Political Context

Having outlined the theoretical framework, the following section considers Scotland's historical entanglement with empire together with its unique class stratification and political dynamics. These form an essential context for interpreting the postcolonial and semi-colonial condition the country occupies culturally and institutionally and as will be discussed later, through its canon formation and language planning. Historically Scotland contributed largely to imperial exploits in Hong Kong, India, in African colonies, and through the Ulster Plantation, both as junior partner and as pioneering force and contributor of key personnel within colonial administrations. When considering, as this paper does, the relationship that Scotland has with postcolonial studies and by contemporary extension decolonisation at a national level, factors of complicity and extrication arise. As part of the United Kingdom, Scotland's national postcolonial considerations are complicatedly entrenched in historically profound and unique contexts of class and subordination which again agrees with Hechter's internal colonialism. These aspects can be conflated, plucked from time without due consideration of the surrounding historical context or national predicament. The support for Scottish independence 1994-2014 was a byproduct of class, generational poverty as much as it was a reflection on the country's previous entanglements with the British Empire. For instance, support for the referendum on Scottish independence was noted highest among supervisors, small business owners and routine workers with intermediate workers and senior managers showing the lowest support for independence in The British Election Study (Mellon, 2014). Support for Scottish independence is also interpreted across the contemporary grassroots levels of working-class Scotland. Sir Hilary McDonald Beckles (Vice-Chancellor of the University of the West Indies) has innovatively and outstandingly linked black slavery and the indentured "oppressed landless British working class who were a critical part of Empire and of the slave societies of the British Caribbean" (Beckles, 1985, p. 30). The anti-racism Glasgow-based charity Coalition for Racial Equality and Rights (www.creor.org.uk) has employed intersectional approaches in reports since 2009 which have examined the links between poverty and ethnicity, employment, and institutional racism in Scottish society. These are but a few of many examples indicating the significant links to be forged between the contemporary legacies of the working class as established in Scotland, their colonial counterparts at home and abroad and support for independence.

Such conflation between class, independence and colonisation in a Scottish context is arguably contentious and brings about a kind of critical

paralysis from which critical commentary and creative output on postcolonial Scotland cannot emanate. Fraught with debates about resistance, denial, and assertions of dominion on the surface, over the past five years there has been emerging historical inspection of the triangular trade and reparations across British universities, with the University of Glasgow playing a lead role. Afua Hirsch (2018) stated that "avoiding them is a luxury universities can no longer afford" (para. 12). Accounting for the decolonisation of Scotland is a root and branch process which is acting retroactively through reparation and simultaneously engaging in future planning to utilise the momentum for potential political and textual movements within Scotland. Indeed, from a starting point of Oliver Crowell's despatch of a military force to colonise Jamaica (1655), Lou Dear (2019, p. 21) has observed the contemporary neoliberal western academic legacy overseas as a "branch plant industry." Investigating Scotland's relationship with the postcolonial cannot be purist in its focus. It will respect the quickly evolving historical critiques pertinent to postcolonial Scotland as well as the gaps left and its state apparatuses and languages and therefore it is not a revisionist work. To this end, it cannot be definitive in its conclusions for this requires significant unearthing of primary documents and naming of those Scottish individual institutions and companies engaging in projects of empire at home and overseas over at least a three-hundred-year legacy. The researcher takes an interdisciplinary and interpretivist approach to examining traces of postcolonialism and decolonisation in Scotland's specialist literary studies subjects within the British higher education system as well as examining what sociolinguists call language planning (LP). Louis Althusser famously considered both the higher education and language systems as examples of Ideological State Apparatuses, or as Dear (2017) puts it "imperial apparatuses" intrinsically linked to the creation, dissemination, and control of cultural meaning. For these reasons and the undeniable links between language and literature, both will be dissected as institutions and as ideologies. I will evaluate the apparent social, literary, and institutional marginalisation of Scotland's literary output and languages. Two features will be examined. Firstly, an examination of language practice, policies, and planning in Scotland (Scots, Gaelic, and English) clarifies how indigenous languages and artistic output are fostered. Secondly, Scottish literary canon at university level in Scotland will be examined considering postcolonial critique. This comparative approach will elucidate the propagation of nationhood within national university and language planning models and the relevance (if any) that postcolonialism brings to it.

Marginalisation narratives

The marginalisation of Scottish literary output and languages has been examined from a postcolonial standpoint extensively in the recent past. Liam Connell argued that the use of postcolonial theory in relation to Scottish literature formed "a strategic effort to raise the profile of Scottish literary studies within the

context of its institutional marginalisation as an area of study within British and North American universities" (Connell, 2003, p. 44). The USA-based Modern Language Association (MLA) convention's Scottish literature conference papers from 1997 and 2001 are surveyed as indicators of international interest in this field. Scottish literature was forming itself as a minority research area in 1997 without evidence of much understanding of its particularity where "only one panel explicitly addressed a Scottish author [….] and twelve panels contained 'postcolonialism' in their title" (Connell, 2003, p. 51). By 2001, there were more panels focused on postcolonialism with only two in the literary subcategory. Connell's analysis sees postcolonial studies being utilised as a tool for expanding a marginal area of Scottish literary studies. That said, postcolonialism had by 2001 become a rallying-point for Marxists and nationalists as well as anti-colonialists so it is perhaps expected that class and arguments for independence became central to discussions within the field. It is implied that this was a covert adoption of victimhood, thus "part of a strategic attempt to borrow postcolonialism's fashionability in order to provide a wider audience for Scottish literary criticism" (Connell, 2003, p. 52) but not necessarily very effective as per MLA representation. To summarise Liam Connell's sophisticated argument, Scottish critics invoke the postcolonial paradigm to draw attention to Scottish Literature, to claim a false victimhood. This proves fashionable rather than posing valid questions and comparisons around empire, the incorporation of subordinate nations into an expansionist multi-nation state and the online struggle for an independence yielded to the imperial enterprise. There is a distinction between purposefully crying wolf (mock victimhood) for aggrandisement while simultaneously riding on the coattails of postcolonialism versus crying marginalisation in support of semi-colonial positionality. This positionality also harkens more to internal colonisation that the postcolonial. Applying Weberian *verstehen* here sees semi-colonial Scotland's narratives acutely attuned to the difference of individual responses in evolving literary and cultural currents institutionally. Far from a marketing exercise it was a rallying response of individual perspectives in a confusing era when blanket postcoloniality was being applied to all and sunder in an ironically neo-imperialist manner: you know what they say, hindsight is 20-14. Seen as strategic by Connell, pseudo-victimisation in fact stultifies dialogue about Scotland's own relationship with postcolonial literature in an era where postcolonial critique was accelerating elsewhere and, as I maintain, a semi-colonial approach was more fitting.

In the early 2000s increased postcolonial critique of Scotland's stance was matched with building stamina for the Scottish referendum on independence or indyref in 2014. It then took a different direction in the years that followed in policy and academic critique. Interestingly, this trajectory from pre- and post-referendum postcolonial critique aligned with opening discussions about

decolonising the British curriculum proper. The Rhodes Must Fall movement in Cape Town University in 2015 and Oxford University in 2016 called for a reappraisal of the representation of black people in British higher education. De Souza Santos (2015) cites the financial crisis of 2008 as an indication that Europe was stagnating at the level of ideas. Scholarship such as Garrett et al. (2016) has remarked on the globalisation and internationalisation of higher education. This is conducted through establishing branch campuses overseas and the links the establishment of these have to political plantation among many other ideas as discussed by Dear and McKittrick (2019). The negative result of the Scottish Independence Referendum in 2014 perhaps called into question the status of so-called "national" museums, curricula, and literatures in Scotland, as this is something of a misnomer in a devolved state that has not yet become fully independent. This, it should be noted, is not to say that "nation" is synonymous with "independent state" for this would ignore the complexities and various definitions and theories of nationhood itself. It also, inversely, easily facilitates victimhood as a unified mass false response (Connell) argument versus the individual intricate responses seen from different authors and critics and institutions worldwide when an applied *verstehen* lens is used to understand Scotland's semi-colonial status and its articulations of marginalisation. The impact of the 2014 referendum, from a review of the literature, allowed the narrative of Scotland's postcolonial encounter to be reappraised *in medias res* as well as with backward looks to empire and its entanglements. This is not revisionism but a closer consideration of the narratives arising from Scotland's language planning, literary instruction, and canon through postcolonialism in a decolonial era. Both the theories are insufficient as is the inchoate analytical tempo which breeds stasis. Several prominent critics acknowledged Scotland's coloniality was past-the-post-, around the indyref period. For instance, Graeme MacDonald (2006) concluded that "Scotland's colonial complicity needed to be measured more against its cultural non- compliance" (p. 131). Willy Maley (2012) looked to the abolition of the Scottish Department following restructuring at Glasgow University from 2009-2010, pivoting on Ngũgĩ wa Thiong'o's postcolonial turn that proposed reframing the English Department at the University of Nairobi in 1968 (wa Thiong'o et al., 2018). The narrative is thus non-linear and can be viewed through the country's prior colonial involvement as well as some of the hangover from empire shared with many previously colonised countries, circling around issues of identity, cultural output (including literature) and language.

Colonial foundations

Colonial settlements in North America, the West Indies, and the doomed Darien scheme at end of the seventeenth century number a few known to be undertaken by Scotland with English assistance. One could also argue that in fact

English resistance to Scottish colonial ventures was key to the Union of 1707. Colonisation from within the country (Hechter, 1975) is not a recent phenomenon. It can be seen throughout Scottish history with the Picts establishing the Kingdom of Alba (800 AD) extending to the rule of Macbeth (1040-1057AD) a matter of bardic legend in Scots and Shakespearean senses. Scotland's de facto involvement in British imperial projects exists in writ since the Union of the Crowns under James VI of Scotland who became James I of a nascent British state in 1603. Scottish history, largely ignored hitherto, is now being revisited for its predominantly post-1707 involvement in slavery in a variety of scenarios including the Atlantic activities of the British Empire, monarchy, and union period. The Treaty of Union that year saw Scottish tobacco merchants shipping tobacco, cotton, and rum along the river Clyde in Glasgow. The city's streets bear the names of successful exploiters of this enterprise, self-styled "Virginia Dons", aristocratic aspirants dressed in black robes such as Andrew Buchanan and James Dunlop and former rector of Glasgow University Robert Cunninghame Graham (1785-1787), a Jamaica-returnee slave trader. Jamaica Street and Virginia Street immortalise the wealthy merchant city's involvement with the triangular trade by name and now stand as emblems to mark how the city profiteered from slavery. There has been recent critical appraisal by David Worthington (2020) of pre-1707 sugar slavery between Suriname (with English colonial involvement from approximately 1640) and elite landed families in Scotland's Highlands. Miranda Kaufmann's *Black Tudors: The Untold Story* (2017) acutely notes the presence of Africans living in or visiting the Scottish court in the early 1500s. Beyond scholarship, links to Scotland's heritage of slavery have also been acknowledged publicly in the realm of colonial redress from within or by those in executive positions at higher education level. As noted in Severin Carrell's (2019) *Guardian* article on reparation measures, the University of Glasgow was one of the first in the UK to establish an agreement of restorative justice with the University of West Indies in which 20 million pounds was promised in the form of research grants and gifts. Indeed, Beckles (1985), noted it was the "oppressed landless British working class who were a critical part of Empire and of the slave societies of the British Caribbean" (p. 30), and who resisted planter-class hegemony. The economic nature of early West Indian servitude has been critically neglected, Beckles (1985) notes, and "the rise of the plantation system, like the development of white 'proto slavery' preceded the emergence of 'sugar and black slavery'" (p. 45). These acts of redress, both contemporaneous and historic, are indicative of the fragility of a postcolonial narrative that point to but neglect to include class as a key category of inequality. A *verstehen* and poststructuralist approach to this predicament helps Beckles' intricate research resonate further because the previously accepted (and institutionalised) social realities of planter-class hegemony can be questioned on grounds of individual class rather than the planter/planted binary alone. They

support a call for further historical examination and a naming of the perpetrators of historic violence (verbal, physical, economic, and mental) as well as the partial accounts that have come to the fore of academic analysis. Maureen E. Ruprecht Fadem, & Michael O'Sullivan (2021) and their contributors have recently re-examined the capitalistic nature of postcolonial encounters from economic and political perspectives with literary inquiry and in places, with archival support. Such additions are a positive sign that the monologic nature of the postcolonial narrative of many countries' histories, shared and hidden, can become more dialogic, informed by primary historic resources (letters, advertisements, legal tracts) as well as theoretical models beyond materialist study such as environmental criticism. The social and political and class consequences and implications of Empire come to the fore in discussions of capitalist-colonialism. As opposed to vaguely registered collective guilt, which is based on conviction rather than evidence, we can work towards a scrupulous process of naming the individuals, families, institutions, and companies that profited directly from slavery and colonialism and seek appropriate reparations. With a Scottish focus, scholars can reevaluate the intricacies of its semi-colonial stance.

To return to the chronology of its colonial legacy, Scotland has been seen as both pawn and rook in Scots emigration to India in the 17th-18th centuries and in later 19th century imperialism. The country was arguably engineered by and benefitted from colonial projects as well as the works of travellers, missionaries, and explorers, particularly in Africa and in India. The former topic is the focus of National Museums Scotland's 2022 project. Scottish soldiers were active throughout the Great War and World War II in Pacific and European theatres as well as in Burma and India and other parts of Southeast Asia. Achille Mbembe's (2019) recent work *Necropolitics* puts a focus on Frantz Fanon's revolutionary call for decolonisation from the site of violence of the Algerian War of Independence in the wake of the Second World War upon which he bases "radical decolonization from the angle of a movement and a violent labour" (p. 118). This, Mbembe posits, was a functional view to create novelty and exemplified a life force. Nevertheless, Mbembe questions whether such violent forms of decolonisation were necessary and to what extent they were gratuitous. In line with colonial academic enquiries, creating a rupture by means of violence (verbal, physical, economic, and mental) to usher in a rapid rebirth can result in bloodying the narrative so gratuitously that it is denied. That is to say that egregiously violent processes of decolonisation can result in a furtherance of violence.

Regarding renewed narratives and naming individuals who profited from slavery, the historian Stephen Mullen (2023) has made several public interventions in recent years to re-evaluate the critical climate of Scottish nationalism since the establishment of the Scottish Parliament (1999), proffering deconstruction of the perceived role Scotland played in (or its narrative about) transatlantic slavery. In a pioneering case study, Mullen recently examined the

operations of Leitch & Smith and their commercial successors' operations between the West Indies and Scotland between 1800 and 1866 concluding "the Glasgow-West India elite assisted Scottish economic development as transatlantic conduits of commerce and capital." This supports the argument that slavery had an impact upon Scottish industrialisation in T.M. Devine's (2011) article 'Did slavery make Scotia great?'. Mullen (2023) has most recently examined the pro-slavery and national economic interests of the Glasgow-West India group from the American War of Independence in 1775 to the abolition of plantation slavery in 1834- 1838. Such scholarship demonstrates a deconstruction and even decolonisation of dominant rose-tinted historical narratives which shirked national interest in planting and indentured slavery, but are they necessarily decolonial? Does a semi-colonial stance hold water when applied to Scotland and in consideration of surrounding recent scholarship?

Priyamavda Gopal (2021) examines what she terms the contemporary mobilisation of the "d-word" in metropolitan universities within the wider historical and intellectual context driven by recent Black Lives Matter and Rhodes Must Fall movements (p. 873). She argues that monocultures stultify intellectual development, provoking sectarian identity politics and as a remedy to this, 'diversity' is now being gratuitously employed synonymously in university curricula and planning. Gopal (2021) suggests this fashionable turn to decolonisation and diversity will be disappointing "if all it generates is a glib pluralism that allows the centre, and its attendant orthodoxies to remain unchallenged and unchanged" (p. 878). While Gopal's argument is otherwise channelled, there is a risk that applying such rhetoric to "monolingual" and "metropolitan" cultures and institutions is equally glib. It risks a whitewashing (if one pardons the context) of the constituent players in imperial projects, such as Scotland, who have an ancient pluri-lingual and multi-cultural heritage and a history of metropolitan generational poverty. Although none of these aspects have been weaponised as 'diversity' measures, all could be sensitively considered from a semi-colonial stance.

To recentre the focus on the insufficiencies of the postcolonial categorisation of Scotland and its literature and languages over the past 29 years, the "centre" here is envisaged as comprised of ideological state apparatuses bearing influence over Scottish Literature as an academic subject and its apparently marginalised canon (fodder). Echoing Raymond Williams' contention that Irish Literature of the early 20th century arose out of poverty and aspirations to independence, Scottish Literature could also be thriving as a direct consequence of the lack of independence and the parliament of poets and playwrights. There was also arguably a centrifugal force of influence in Scottish LP in before and after the 2014 referendum, looking outwards, promoting Scots and Scots Gaelic with apparent enthusiasm. To effectively decolonise, institutions which benefited from the colonised world need to be reckoned with in economic terms, Gopal (2021)

continues and this not "a soothing process […][but] an ongoing interrogation, not a finite or final state (pun intended)" (p. 878, p. 891). Stressing the inchoate nature of decolonial approaches, I wish to add to this momentum by interrogating Scotland's postcolonial literature, canonisation, and LP from the perspective of a semi-colonial and marginalised narrative. To do so begs a series of questions, some of which are uncomfortable and will remain unanswerable without sustained archival research: How does knowledge of the economic beneficiaries of colonialism influence a postcolonial review of Scotland's LP process and literature? Does this inform Scotland's internal-coloniality or a semi-colonial status? What postcolonial legacies can be seen in LP in Scotland from 1994 to the present day? Were Scottish studies and the Scottish canon ever truly marginal? And is "postcolonial" Scottish writing a misnomer? While this paper cannot offer substantive and substantial responses to all of these, it welcomes individual contributions from critics and artists alike in the furtherance of understanding Scotland's predicament according to Weberian *verstehen*.

What postcolonial legacies were seen in LP in Scotland 1994-2016?

Silke Stroh's critical contributions towards postcolonial Scotland and Gaelic language poetry are seen in *Uneasy Subjects* (2011) and *Gaelic Scotland in the Colonial Imagination: Anglophone Writing from 1600 to 1900* (2016). With an intentional question mark on the status of Gaelic in "Scotland as a multi-fractured postcolonial go- between?", Stroh outlines why Scottish claims to postcoloniality are overlooked. Here, three contributing factors are cited: the patchiness of the postcolonial debate (as mentioned above); the relationship between postcolonial studies and national independence movements (such as those in the lead up to 2014), and the marginalisation of Scotland because of its minority Gaelic speakers (Stroh, 2007, p. 183). Stroh's point about marginalisation due to minority Gaelic speakers is circumspect. It is intrinsically linked to language planning (LP). LP is a term used only recently in the field of sociolinguistics; a discipline that is itself 80 years old. The act of planning language has been around for many hundreds of years and as John Walsh acutely notes:

> [W]as used by kings and empires to suppress languages deemed inconducive to national unity or the public good. The academic study of language planning is […], gaining ground in tandem with the waves of decolonisation in the second half of the twentieth century, newly independent countries grappled with choices over which languages to prioritise in the new order. (Walsh, 2021, p. 243)

It is a measure which can respectively protect minority languages or result in their marginalisation and potential erasure. Dialects and non-standard forms of languages can be placed in a hierarchy and eliminated through processes of standardisation. Scotland is home to three recognised languages of which

Standard (British) English is the main or prestige language in use since the eighteenth century and spoken by 98.6% of Scottish people according to the 2011 census. Scots (Scottish English) has been considered doubly a minority language and dialect in that it respects the syntactical structure of Standard (British) English but employs unique spelling and vocabulary and is pronounced differently. Its usage dates to 600AD and approximately 30% of the Scottish population use this language today. With much in common with other northern dialects (such as but not limited to those of Durham and Northumberland), literature was written in this form. See, for example, the poetry of Robert Burns (1759-1796) during the Scots vernacular literary revival and again in the 20th century the language was revived by Hugh MacDiarmid (1892-1978) amongst many other writers and speakers. In 2011, Scots was recognised in Part II of the European Charter for Minority Languages. Due to problems with the census which will be discussed later, Scots speakers could only be estimated at 1.5 million in the 2001 census and confirmed as 1.6 million in the 2011 census. The 2022 census was only recently completed, and its results have not yet been released. Liz Niven (2017) points to the potential partiality of the 2001 census (pp. 1-52). According to the General Register Office (GRO), which administers the National Census, statistics could not easily be collected for Scots, because many respondents, due to linguistic self-awareness, would not be certain how to respond to the central question "Do you speak Scots?" Many respondents were uncertain that what they speak is Scots and not grammatically inferior English.

However, for the 2001 Census the statistics from a 1996 trial survey from the GRO were used, which suggested an estimated 1.5 million speakers (7). The 2001 results revealed not only linguistic self-awareness but potential lack of confidence amongst speakers pitching Scots along a linguistic hierarchy with standardized forms placed at the top. Scottish Gaelic (Gàidhlig) is a Celtic language and is considered to have a minority or "endangered" status according to the European Charter for Regional or Minority Languages (Council of Europe, 1998; 2011) with its speakers comprising 1% of the population. From devolution onwards there has been increased national expenditure to revive the language. Regarding how these languages are used, Scots is spoken or studied in secondary, tertiary schools, arts and media with Scots literature and an unformalized acceptance of Scots as L2 among some educators. Due to the status of Scots and its similarity with Standard British English (though the conventional schema, positions Scots against Scottish Standard English, with a spectrum between them) the Scottish parliament and in the education sector features in bilingual schooling, certain universities use the language as the medium of instruction (such as Sabhal Mòr Ostaig and the University of the Highlands and Islands) and it can be studied as an L2 in private, further, and higher education institutions. Its dedicated media channel, BBC Alba (Scotland), was launched in September 2008. Considering the type of language planning that takes place (see figure 1), it is

easier to trace status, corpus, and linguistic planning of the Gaelic language with concrete measures and the funding put towards these. The Creative Scotland initiative which promotes Scots acquisition is also instructive:

Table 1:
Selected Key Language Planning Strategies since 1998: Scots and Gaelic (researcher's own)

	Status Planning	**Corpus Planning**	**Acquisition Planning**
Scots	• Decline in status from 1707 -sister language to regional languages and English. • Part II recognition in European Charter (2011)	• Scottish Corpus of Texts & Speech (SCOTS) (est. 2004) • Scots Language Dictionaries (SLD) • Issue of standardisation	• Creative Scotland
Gaelic	• Recognised minority Language in European Charter (1998) • Official (2005)	• Bòrd na Gàidhlig (est. 2005) • Digital Archive of Scottish Gaelic (DASG) (est. 2008)	• Skills Development Scotland • Scottish Funding Council

While Stroh stresses the ambivalence and complexities of Gaelic language marginalisation within the politics of postcolonial Scotland, other critics see it as irrelevant to national politics. When the "non-issue" of Gaelic in the indyref 2014 debate was raised, some questions posed deliberately avoided the argument of Gaelic being marginalised from the debate and national identity at large:

> [I]t is sometimes mistakenly thought that Gaelic or indeed Welsh is a devolved matter, but this is not the case and could not be the case. Which languages are House of Commons debates held in? Are UK income tax returns available in Gaelic? What languages do British consular staff use in their work? (McLeod, 2014)

This demonstrates a certain insensitivity over the status of Gaelic in political debate as well as the larger interweaving of national identity with the politicisation of language which is a constituent part of postcolonial and

decolonial studies. That said, neither theoretical stance fully captures the implicit marginalisation and asks if all marginalisation is semi-colonial. This begs a clarification of what typical postcolonial approaches outside of Scotland could be used as yardstick by which the Scottish findings below might be measured in terms of their postcoloniality. Since the postcolonial Scottish case is unique it is difficult to find one such indicator, but we may look to the Identity and Language (Northern Ireland) Act 2022 in which Ulster Scots was recognised as a minority language.

In terms of personal and national identification of the speakers of Scots and Gaelic the 2011 census identified that over 87,000 people in Scotland have some knowledge of Gaelic while in 2009 a survey of Scots (people) gave a "broad overview of the perceptions of the Scots language and attitudes towards it" (Scottish Government Social Research, 2010, p. 1). However, by 2011 the census questions again became problematic. According to the Scots Language Centre (2013), it is "the wording and positioning of questions in relation to English and assumptions being made about it and its relation to Scots, that need to be carefully examined for any future surveys." Participants did not understand the ambivalent wording of the questions well enough to be able to attest to their own proficiency of Scots. Again, this unclear identification raised political questions and identity issues as well as still inaccurately reflecting the general linguistic abilities of Scots language speakers.

Around the same period, in the aftermath 2014, the Scottish Government's Gaelic Language Plan (2016-2021) was enacted as an umbrella initiative encompassing all three forms of language planning, namely on the levels of the language's status, corpus and its acquisition. It aimed to support Gaelic Language Development in 4 ways:

1. Acquisition: enabling people to develop speaking, reading, and writing skills;
2. Gaelic Usage: enabling the use of Gaelic in a range of social, formal, and work setting;
3. Status: expanding visibility, audibility, recognition, and respect for Gaelic;
4. Corpus: developing the quality, consistency, and richness of the Gaelic language.

(Scottish Government, 2017, Chapter III)

Under the umbrella were Bòrd na Gàidhlig (BnG) which promotes Gaelic development and was allocated 5.1m GBP and Meadhanan Gàidhlig Alba (Media, Creative industries), allocated 12.8m GBP. Corpus planning initiatives included Stòrlann Nàiseanta na Gàidhlig (for developing school curricula) and funding for Higher Education research and development courses. The latter included several

interesting projects such as Corpas na Gàidhlig which oversaw the digitisation of ancient Gaelic texts; the interuniversity project Faclair na Gàidhlig ('Dictionary of the Scottish Gaelic Language', dasg.ac.uk); LEACAG Grammar Guidance for modern Gaelic speakers and historical dictionaries of Scots Gaelic. There was further budget for local authorities (local grants for Gaelic projects), economic development bodies and other sector-specific bodies. The latter bodies' funding allocations could not be sourced. Regarding Gaelic acquisition planning, Skills Development Scotland (SDS, 2018) was included in the second iteration of the Gaelic Language Plan (Scottish Government, 2017) where the Highlands and Islands Enterprise worked in partnership with BnG to enhance Gaelic Language in ways that positively impacted the labour market. It sought to enhance language education leading to employment. Therefore, enhanced employment meant more language ability was deemed necessary, and this was accompanied by a greater focus on vocational and teacher training for language teachers. It seems as if the opposite would have been better sought after here: creating training and openings for Gaelic medium language teachers. Reviewing the SDS executive summary one year later these particularly significant challenges are then acknowledged. Among the threats are "any potential future, negative policy shift" and a shortage of Gaelic Medium Education (GME) teachers "prevent further expansion of GME" with lack of coordination and concrete relations between bodies to help increase Gaelic language skills ability and employability or "desirable posts available" are cited (Author's name, 2018, pp. 1-10). After a delay during the Covid19 pandemic lockdown in Scotland, the Gaelic language plan is to be updated and recast (2023-2028) focussing on education and broadcasting and engaging young people since there has been a recent uptick in GME among Scottish pupils who do not normally use the language at home or in their communities in the Scottish Central Belt. It is anticipated that after the decline of Gaelic speakers in the 1990s there will be renewed growth especially among young people and that local authority funding will keep fragile Gaelic communities thriving economically. Writing in The New Statesman Rachel Ashcroft (2022) notes governmental prevarication, and that time is running out:

> [I]t would be useful to have an accurate picture of how the identity and location of Gaelic speakers is evolving. After all, much has changed since the 2011 census. Future policy must find a way to respond to all Gaelic identities, new and old. Unfortunately, the Scottish government's poor handling of the delayed 2021 census threatens to hamper future progress. (para. 9)

There is an internal colonial parallel with how centralised state systems privilege dominant languages and erase regional ones here. With respect to Scots language planning, there is no public body equivalent to BnG and organisations do not need to have a Scots Language Plan. It is not taught as a discrete Scottish

Higher (High School qualification equivalent to an A Level) nor as a standalone degree and, according to Davidson (2017), it is not promoted as a daily living language. In terms of corpus planning there are independent bodies such as that of the lexicographical body for the Scots language (www.dsl.ac.uk) and Scottish Corpus of Text and Speech (SCOTS, www.scottishcorpus.ac.uk). Among these bodies, the standardised variety is referred to as Scottish Standard English or Standard Scottish English, "British" being taken out of the language descriptor. Scots Language acquisition planning through Creative Scotland's 10-year plan called Unlocking Potential Embracing Ambition is funded via the Scottish Arts Council and seeks further advocacy, development, and influence. The policies relating to Scots language have been historically unprotected, but progress was made between 2007 and 2015. 2007 saw a cross-party Scots Language group in the Scottish Parliament; 2009 saw a ministerial working group formed comprised of academics, educators and, notably, activists together with an audit of the current use of Scots Language that year. Controversy and inaccuracy followed the 2011 census too for the Scots Language with unclear questions and identification. A Scots Language Policy was formed in 2015, in the wake of the 2014 referendum.

Applying Weber's *verstehen* method across a broad data set and multiple individual responses to language decline and national identity helps navigate the complexity of Scottish language planning in a way that binary colonial frameworks might not. The connection to post-colonialism and decolonisation is unclear and to impose such a framework risks reinforcing a kind of structural binary that scholarship, as has been shown, has struggled to escape from. One common discursive trope is that the marginalisation and decline of Gaelic and Scots resulted from 'British colonialism' and that efforts to revitalise them can be understood in terms of resistance or decolonisation. Being a non-independent country, Scotland's language coverage has historically extended beyond Standard British English with regards to Gaelic and Scots. The language planning policies and funding allocation supporting these two languages suggest there is cultural and financial merit to their preservation. It appears that the language planning policies from 2012 centred on the benefits of being Gaelic proficient in the labour market despite commentary focussing on the language's marginalisation. This is seen in the Gaelic Language plan (2016-2021), SDS' initiatives in 2018 as well as in the 1+2 Language Learning Report and the planning initiatives mentioned above (McLeod, 2014; Scottish Government, 2012). Yet, the minor successes of these Gaelic language policies and their slow rollout together with inaccurate (2001 and 2011) and delayed censuses (Scottish Government, 2021) all indicate a disparity between protecting marginalised languages in policy and rhetoric and putting it into action. It is little wonder that some observed debates being stoked over Gaelic's marginalisation in 2014 (Flyn, 2014). Scots language preservation was being encouraged by the previous First Minister Nicola Sturgeon

(May 18, 2021-February 15, 2023, SNP) ahead of a new prospective referendum in October 2023 (McLeod et al., 2022; Duffy 2022) while the next First Minister Humza Yousaf (March 29, 2023-May 7, 2024, SNP) faced a petition and calls to introduce a Minister for Scottish Languages in April 2023. Under the current First Minister John Swinney (May 7, 2024- present, SNP), there has been a promotion of Gaelic language initiatives such as the Strategic Leadership Forum for Gaelic Education (May 2024). However, following a reshuffle after the 2024 Scottish Parliament elections when responsibility for Gaelic was assigned to Cabinet Secretary Kate Forbes, no minister was explicitly tasked with overseeing Scots language. Opponents claimed that the absence of a dedicated minister might lead to the marginalisation of Scots language initiatives (Spowart, 2024).

Scottish Affairs journal saw a hue and cry in a series of articles about Conchúr Ó Giollagáin and colleagues' study *The Gaelic Crisis in the Vernacular Community: A Comprehensive Sociolinguistic Study of Scottish Gaelic* (2020) in 2021 and 2022. In Ó Giollagáin and Caimbeul (2021)'s article "Moving Beyond Asocial Minority-Language Policy" two of the report's authors called for a root-and-branch review of Gaelic Language Planning suggesting that efforts to reverse ethnolinguistic decline among indigenous Gaelic speakers has not been cultivated effectively. They claim neoliberal language policy and the inefficiencies of Bòrd na Gàidhlig propagates a "symbolic future oriented" aspect of state language planning "as an empty, official gesture" (Ó Giollagáin & Caimbeul, 2021, p. 187) and a form of state rhetoric which deliberately paints GLP into a corner of erasure. Wilson McLeod et al. (2022) responded to their article and the report stating its claims were sensationalistic, "risking the demoralization of Gaelic speakers and the weakening of social or political support for the language" (p. 85), lacked definition of key terminology, had a deficient policy analysis and that their advocacy of a Gaelic community development trust 'Urras na Gaidhlig' does not mitigate the effectiveness of existing state bodies (McLeod et al., 2022, p. 98). Here some parallels could be drawn between the domineering hegemonic powers of state institutions and those countries involved in colonial processes which (inadvertently or not) are complicit in the erasure of native languages and cultures. In a rebuttal, Ó Giollagáin et al. (2022) criticize this for its sociolinguistic-theoretical approach and for attempts at dominating academic debate over the topic by "whataboutery" (p. 128) and requests of redefining terminology common to the field already.

Without overlooking the delicacies of the report, Ó Giollagáin et al's article, McLeod and colleagues' response and the rebuttal, Gaelic and its planning is still steeped in sensitive debate today. Much critique looks to whether Bòrd na Gàidhlig's language acquisition and protection measures are functional, meaningful, effective, and exclusively top-down. There is a politicisation of GLP discussion amongst leading Gaelic sociolinguists and scholars who, as has been intimated by the *Scottish Affairs* articles are engaging in research supportive of

and instrumental to existing state policies. Debate is stoked by the reach of Bòrd na Gàidhlig's as a state planning institution established in 2005. A fact that is not explainable with reference to post-colonialism or nationalism is that the key period for modern Gaelic revitalization was the 1980s. Minority languages (de facto or de jure) are thus subject to politicisation in countries where the colonial legacy has been patchy as with Scotland or outright as with the treatment of Afrikaans in South Africa. Political protest about Scots and Gaelic linguistic marginalisation is not always linked to debates on nation independence. The majority of Scottish independence supporters did not link their nationalism to linguistic issues. Scottish language planning in and of itself does not constitute an argument for postcoloniality. The argument here is that attachment to minority Scottish dialects or languages which were overrun by a long involvement in processes of Scottish colonisation seem to heighten the threat of their erasure or assimilation into grander material cultural narratives. The reasons for this range from speculative on conspiratorial without an in-depth examination of the Scottish Nationalist Party's manifesto during the indyref era and the subsequent policies from coalition parliaments since 2014 which may or may not have directly led to the neglect of Scotland's languages. What remains apparent is the credence Hechter's (1975) "fringed" internal-colonial debates and the multi-fractured (Stroh, 2007, p. 183) even fractious light a semi-colonial positionality brings on the predicament of Scotland's language planning.

Were Scottish studies and the Scottish canon ever truly marginal?

If marginalisation of language and identity works as deliberate provocation for political ends, the result seems to be a short circuiting of critical and educational junctures on the topic of Scotland's postcolonial heritage and identity. A reactionary stance, it breeds stasis. As previously stated, Liam Connell noted the scant representation of Scottish studies in 2003 at MLA conferences particularly during the devolution period (1997 onwards). An examination of Scottish studies panel presentations at the 2020 and 2021 MLA conferences reveals that only two are concerned with Scottish studies: one on Scottish literature and the Highland Clearances (panel 304, 2020), a topic scrutinised via a postcolonial theoretical scaffold. These presentations seem to adopt a cultural and environmental focus on literature through its historical legacies and in their scope are suitable examples for the *verstehen* interpretative direction. In 2021, the only MLA panel featuring Scottish literature examined identity relations through Scottish- Canadian cultural relations (panel 457, 2021; https://www.mla.org/Convention/Convention-History/Past-Conventions) A comparison of basic MLA panel presentation data and the limited number of presentations suggests that Scottish literary studies is not actively engaged self-marginalisation. Moreover, the MLA is not representative of Scottish studies within the global academic landscape with weakens the foundation of Connell's

claim. In fact, Scottish literary studies is historically rich and continues to thrive with contributions from figures such as Sir Walter Scott, Robert Louis Stevenson, Scottish 'renaissance' modernist writers such as MacDiarmid, Neil Gunn and Lewis Grassic Gibbon, post-war writers like Muriel Spark, James Kennaway and Alexander Trocchi, as well as the resurgence of Scottish writing since 1979 (the date of the first referendum on devolution) through James Kelman, Alasdair Gray, Liz Lochhead, William McIlvanney, Irvine Welsh and tartan noir exponents such as Denise Mina. This is by no means an exhaustive list and does not take stock of the many writers who situate themselves and their writing in Scotland. One such author is Sudanese Egyptian writer Leila Aboulela. Her work which makes for an appropriate case study of a writer based in Scotland writing about its academe and heritage with colonial commentary. Aboulela's short story "The Museum", first published in 1997, is a fascinating postcolonial piece which appears on the syllabi of several universities internationally as well as being featured on Project Myopia which was awarded an Innovation Initiative Grant by the University of Edinburgh Development Trust to develop decolonised curricula. The protagonist Shadia is engaging in studies at the University of Aberdeen and together with international students is having a great deal of trouble assimilating. She is invited to visit a national museum with her Scottish friend Bryan and shocked at the glorification of previous colonial exploits, Shadia remarks "they're telling lies in this museum" (Aboulela, 1997, p. 248), distressed by the exhibits which glorify the violent domination over her Ethiopian friend Asafa's heritage and country. This bewilders Bryan who fails to grasp the false narratives presented in the museum around pilfered artifacts and takes it to heart emotionally as something he can resolve personally for Shadia: "Museums change, I can change" (Aboulela, 1997, p. 258). Anupama Arora (2021) has acutely observed the necessity of reading this story within "the context of post-devolution Scotland" and, in agreement with Schoene (2007) stresses that the coinciding "recasting, re-imagining, reflection creates possibilities for interrupting a narrative of "Scottish exceptionalism" (p. 7). Elsewhere within the same short story, the difficulties international students at the university face assimilating into Scottish culture or feeling welcome in Scotland are noted:

> [T]he glossy handbook for overseas students had explained about the "famous British reserve" and hinted that they should be grateful, things were far worse farther south, less "hospitable." In the cafeteria drinking coffee with Asafa and the others, the picture of "hospitable Scotland" was something different. Badr, the Malaysian, blinked and whispered, "Yesterday our windows got smashed; my wife today is afraid to go out." (Aboulela, 1997, p. 242)

This story is arguably a canonical feature on the postcolonial literature reading lists of literature programmes at Scottish higher education institutions and perhaps within Scottish studies courses also. It can be re-examined through the lens of the westernisation of higher education systems and the impact that has on incoming international students over the past 25 years. The challenges faced by students who come to Scotland include adjusting to the curriculum and the culture of the country itself. There is also a vivid sense of displacement and hostility due to local social and class concerns and racism faced by the students intimated in the quote above. Lou Dear (2018) extends this discussing the threats and monitoring of international students occurring within British universities as part of T4 visa enforcement. A trifecta critique occurs in Aboulela's postcolonial reverse narrative pointing to colonial curation in Scottish Museums, inhospitable environments for migrants within Scottish culture and points to the need for a decolonisation of its higher education system. The story does not offer a simplistic binary of victim and oppressor. In "The Museum" the semi-colonial stricture is apparent in the Bryan's apparently naïve remarks about change. He reflects Scotland's "multi-fractured go-between" (Stroh, 2007, p. 183) status and is caught between complicity and marginality. His temporal and epistemic dislocation suggests that attempts at reconciliation are constrained by dominant imperial narratives. In turn, the value of a *verstehen*-guided analysis for grasping how cultural meaning and marginalisation are sustained in post-devolution Scotland is revealed in this story.

This short story is not the only one by Aboulela to address international students in higher education abroad facing colonial legacies in cultural and institutional settings. Her short story "Missing Out" (2010) follows Majdy, a Sudanese doctoral student of mathematics isolated in London while Sudan is undergoing civil unrest. Majdy's colonial hangover is articulated as a quiet estrangement: "London became more familiar to him. He thought of it as his new home, and it was as if the city responded. He could feel it softening around him, becoming genial in its old age" (2010). Though gradually "softened" by progressive impulses during his time in London he is bound by a pattern of regular phone calls to his mother in Khartoum, obligations to his family, rites and religious traditions to marry Samra. Majdy's story can also be understood according to the *verstehen* paradigm: how individuals meaning making must be considered within overlapping systems of influence just as Scotland's language policies exist within a similar dynamic. The tensions Majdy experiences echo the Scottish context as he faces estrangement and divided loyalties much like the semi-colonial condition.

Aboulela's is among several Scottish-recognised texts that reflect the institutional struggles rooted in imperial legacies and Scotland's condition of internal-coloniality. James Kelman is widely regarded as a canonical figure in Scottish literature. He is noted for his institutional defiance and commitment to

representing working-class Glaswegian voices through demotic language. His use of vernacular English resists standard literary norms thereby foregrounding the semi-colonial marginalisation of Scottish identity and speech. In 1994, Kelman was the first Scot to win the Booker Prize for his novel *How Late It Was, How Late…* an event he marked by refusing to attend the award ceremony. In an interview afterwards, he was unapologetically critical about the institutional erasure of linguistic culture in education:

> "You're stamped upon as a child," he says. "Purely standard English is taught in Scottish schools. When you go through the education system, you're taught what you're not. You learn your inferiority: You come out of there knowing you're no good, and that your culture and your songs are no good--they're not real. There's no possibility of your culture producing real art." (King, 1995, para. 21)

Kelman's rejection of Standard English and embrace of Glaswegian vernacular underscores the ways in which language planning policies in Scotland have historically functioned as tools of internal colonialism, delegitimising local identities and dialects as culturally and politically inferior. Such creative impulse is not merely stylistic but reads as tantamount to decolonising the literary canon. The story "Not not while the giro" from his 1983 short story collection *Not Not While The Giro* is a day-in-the-life survival narrative of an unnamed working-class Glaswegian man who collects his giro (unemployment allowance), "[t]oday the streets were crowded as was the broo [unemployment bureau]" (Kelman, 1983, p. 185).[1] Asked to babysit for a neighbour, his interior monologue shifts toward class anxiety and self-deprecation:

> Aye of course I'll keep the kid for another bastarn half hour. Good christ this is pathetic. The damn parent has to go further messages [shopping]. […]I could hardly reply for rage and noises from the belly and sweet odours from the room of a certain tenant whom I have yet to clap eyes upon though I hear she's a young lady, a student no doubt, with middle class admirers or fervent working-class ones or even upper-class yacht drivers. I cannot be expected to compete with that sort of opposition. (Kelman, 1983, p. 186)

The Standard English should be read as "compete with that kind of competition." Here though, Kelman employs an oppositional binary based upon class and educative distinctions so apparent throughout working class urban areas of the United Kingdom. Kelman's narrator is engaging in a personal life

[1] The difference is capitalisation is consistent with the 1983 edition published by Polygon Books, Edinburgh.

philosophy. The character visits the library and is interested in self-education and is unimpressed by materialism. This resistance on the levels of culture, class and language continues as the narrator fulminates later in mock-pretension, with the airs and graces of a middle-class Englishman: "Coherence is attainable as far as the learned Hamish Smith of Esher Suffolk would have us believe. I am no Englishman. I am for nationalization on a national scale and if you are a smalltrader well" (Kelman, 1983, pp. 188-189). The last sentence is deliberately unpunctuated, and it is unclear whether the narrator is being sarcastic or cynical. In the early 1980s under the Thatcher government, economic decline was negatively impacting Glasgow and the failure to reach a Scottish Assembly after a vote in 1979 left many Scots jaded, without aspirations for devolution by a narrow margin of the vote. Kelman's narrative while acting as an apparent mouthpiece for the marginalised functioned as an outlet for otherwise inexpressible cultural nationalism.

Additionally, the work of Gaelic language poet Niall O'Gallagher further illustrates the cultural and political stakes of language representation in Scotland. O'Gallagher was a journalist before studying at the University of Glasgow. He uses classical Gaelic forms and has worked as a translator of poetry in Gaelic, Irish and Catalan. Contentiously, he decided not to translate his own work. In 2019 the poet was named the city of Glasgow's first Gaelic poet laureate. Writing in contemporary urban Gaelic, O'Gallagher normalises Gaelic in everyday themes. His debut collection *Beatha Ùr: Dàin* (A New Life) was published by the Gaelic publisher *Clàr* in 2013 on the brink of the indyref. One poem in the collection speaks profoundly to cultural and linguistic state dissonance in Scotland: "Scots National Dictionary." The poem laments the subjugation of Glaswegian as a dialect "left in the gutters" (O'Gallagher, 2013, line 5) an echo of Oscar Wilde's adage from Lady Windemere's fan.[2] Later the dialect's omission from the dictionary is described as a removal of agency: "left the people without the power of speech/poor wanderers without a voice, without a home/their language too brutish for the fine fabric of words." (O'Gallagher, 2013, lines 9-11).

This is a reminder that language planning at state and corpus level must reckon with linguistic survival as well as with lived, evolving identity.

The decolonisation of language, literature and the academe are evidently problematic in Scotland which provides avenues for extensive historically informed research. This may also be the case for other countries in which the postcolonial legacy is less clear but what is particularly helpful to understand Scotland's case is its semi-colonial stance. Scholarship might consider language planning and the status of minority languages more seriously by questioning the validity of marginalisation narratives as they pertain to identities, languages and

[2] "We are in the gutter but some of us are looking at the stars." This quote was also politicised during the Irish Celtic Revival period of the 1890s.

canons as well as evaluating the national and international literary canon. In this era of westernised and internationalised branch universities this would be doubly fruitful. Scrutinising the inclusion of international students in branch universities in policies as well as in their representations and international canons is significant. A *verstehen* approach to the internationalisation of the academy itself has brought about a need for further 'diversity' in this area though, I would argue this is intrinsically and internally motivated by individual considerations in Scotland over Gopal's previous charge of its glib pluralism throughout the United Kingdom. Together, the works of Aboulela, Kelman and O'Gallagher show how marginalisation due to postcolonial predicaments can be conveyed through language and culture as well as institutionally. The characters and the authors themselves are individually negotiating Scotland's semi-colonial condition. Adopting a *verstehen* approach appreciates the diverse range of emotional and intellectual nuances to this condition on the individual level. The findings of this paper have revealed that semi-colonialism for Scotland engenders liminality. It refers to a condition in which a nation is both entangled in the operations of external imperial power and subject to internal cultural and linguistic marginalisation, all while governing itself through a state apparatus that lacks full sovereignty.

Acknowledgements

I would like to acknowledge the feedback received from participants of Chiang Mai University's international symposium "Decolonising Language, Literary, and Cultural Studies" on the 26th and 27th June 2021 where an earlier version of this paper was presented. I would also like to express my sincere thanks to Prof. Willy Maley, whose generous reading and insightful suggestions helped shape this paper in new and more developed directions. All remaining errors and oversights are my own.

References

Aboulela, L. (1997). The Museum. In N. Obradovic (Ed.), *The Anchor book of modern African stories* (pp. 242-258). Anchor Books.

Aboulela, L. (2010, July 12). Missing out. *Granta*, *111*. https://granta.com/missing-out/

Arora, A. (2021). Decolonizing the museum: Leila Aboulela's "The Museum." *Journal of Postcolonial Writing, 57*(1), 121-134. https://doi.org/10.1080/17449855.2020.1847171

Ashcroft, R. (2022, June 19). *Time is running out to save Gaelic*. The New Statesman (UK). https://www.newstatesman.com/culture/2022/06/time-running-out-save-scottish-gaelic

Beckles, H. M. (1985). Plantation production and white "proto-slavery": White indentured servants and the colonisation of the English West Indies, 1624–1645. *The Americas, 41*(3), 21-45. https://doi.org/10.2307/1007098

Bhabha, H. K. (2004). *The location of culture*. Routledge.

Carrell, S. (2019, August 23). *Glasgow University to pay £20m in slave trade reparations.* The Guardian. https://www.theguardian.com/uk-news/2019/aug/23/glasgow-university-slave-trade-reparations

Connell, L. (2003). Modes of marginality: Scottish literature and the uses of postcolonial theory. *Comparative Studies of South Asia, Africa and the Middle East, 23*(1-2), 41-53. https://doi.org/10.1215/1089201X-23-1-2-41

Craig, C. (2018). *The wealth of the nation: Scotland, culture and independence*. Edinburgh University Press.

Council of Europe. (1998). *European Charter for Regional or Minority Languages*.

Council of Europe. (2011). *European Charter for Regional or Minority Languages*.

Davidson, J. (2017, March 3). *Taking the leid: Scots needs more promotion at a national level.* Holyrood. https://www.holyrood.com/comment/view,taking-the-leid-scots-needs-more-promotion-at-a-national-level_13188.html

Dear, L. (2017). Epistemology and kinship: Reading resistance literature on Westernised education. *Open Library of Humanities, 3*(1), 10, pp. 1–22. https://doi.org/10.16995/olh.123

Dear, L. (2018). British university border control: Institutionalization and resistance to racialized capitalism/neoliberalism. *International Education Journal: Comparative Perspectives, 17*(1), 7-23.

Dear, L. (2019). The university as branch plant industry. In J. Cupples & R. Grosfoguel (Eds.), *Unsettling Eurocentrism in the Westernized university* (pp. 23-41). Routledge.

Dear, L., & McKittrick, K. (2019). Plantation futures. *Small Axe, 23*(3), 1-15.

de Souza Santos, B. (2015). *Epistemologies of the South: Justice against epistemicide*. Routledge.

Devine, T. M. (2011). Did slavery make Scotia great? *Britain and the World, 4*(1), 40-64.

Duffy, J. (2022, March 30). *Nicola Sturgeon's support for Scots language teaching welcomed.* The National. https://www.thenational.scot/news/20032600.nicola-sturgeons-support-scots-language-teaching-welcomed

Flynn, C. (2014, March 6). *Language as activism: The big Gaelic comeback*. The New Statesman (UK). https://www.newstatesman.com/politics/2014/03/springtime-gaelic

Gardiner, M. (1996). Democracy and Scottish postcoloniality. *Scotlands, 3*(2), 24-41.

Garrett, R., Kinser, K., Lane, J. E., & Merola, R. (2016). *International branch campuses: Trends and developments, 2016*. The Observatory of Borderless Higher Education and C-BERT. https://www.academia.edu/30219182/International_Branch_Campuses_Trends_and_Developments_2016

Gopal, P. (2021). On decolonisation and the university. *Textual Practice, 35*(6), 873-899.

Hechter, M. (1975). *Internal colonialism: The Celtic fringe in British national development, 1536–1966*. University of California Press.

Hirsch, A. (2018, September 18). *Universities must follow Glasgow and own up to their role in the slave trade*. The Guardian. https://www.theguardian.com/commentisfree/2018/sep/18/universities-glasgow-slavery-pasts-legacy

Kaufman, M. (2017). *Black Tudors: The untold story*. Oneworld Publications.

Kelman, J. (1983). Not not while the giro. In *Not not while the giro and other stories* (pp. 182-206). Polygon Books.

King, J. (1995, April 6). *Fighting words: Yes, his book is raw. But Booker Prize winner James Kelman says that's his native tongue.* Los Angeles Times. https://www.latimes.com/archives/la-xpm-1995-04-06-ls-51632-story.html

MacDonald, G. (2006). Postcolonialism and Scottish studies. *New Formations, 59*, 116-131.

Maley, W. (2012). On the abolition of the Scottish department. *Studies in Scottish Literature, 38*(1), 35–40.

Mbembe, A. (2019). *Necropolitics*. Duke University Press.

McLeod, W. (2014, September 5). *"The non-issue of Gaelic in the indyref debate."* Bella Caledonia. https://bellacaledonia.org.uk/2014/09/05/the-non-issue-of-gaelic-in-the-indyref-debate/

McLeod, W., Dunbar, R., Macleod, M., O'Rourke, B., Dunmore, S., & Armstrong, T. C. (2022). Against Exclusionary Gaelic Language Policy: A Response to Ó Giollagáin and Caimbeul. *Scottish Affairs 31*(1). 84-103. https://doi.org/10.3366/scot.2022.0399

McLeod, W. (2014, September 5). *The non-issue of Gaelic in the indyref debate*. Bella Caledonia. https://bellacaledonia.org.uk/2014/09/05/the-non-issue-of-gaelic-in-the-indyref-debate

Mellon, J. (2014, June 14). *Class divisions and the Scottish referendum*. British Election Study. https://www.britishelectionstudy.com/bes-resources/class-divisions-and-the-scottish-referendum/

Mignolo, W.D & Walsh, C.E. (2018). *On Decoloniality*. Duke University Press.

Mullen, S. (2023). Proslavery collaborations between British outport and metropole: The rise of the Glasgow–West India interest, 1775–1838. *The Journal of Imperial and Commonwealth History, 51*(4), 601-643. https://doi.org/10.1080/03086534.2023.2166390

Nairn, T. (1977). *The break-up of Britain: Crisis and neo-nationalism*. New Left Books.

National Museums Scotland. (2022). *Scottish collectors and collecting in Central Africa, 1870–1930*. https://www.nms.ac.uk/collections-research/collections-departments/global-arts-cultures-and-design/projects/scottish-collectors-in-central-africa/

Niven, L. (2017). *Scots: The Scots language in education in Scotland* (Regional Dossiers Series). Mercator European Research Centre on Multilingualism and Language Learning.

O'Gallagher, N. (2013). Scottish National Dictionary. In *Beatha Ùr: Dàin*. Clàr.

Ó Giollagáin, C., Caimbeul, I., Ó Curnáin, B., Camshron, G., & Moireach, P. (2022). Including the threatened first-language Gaelic vernacular community in Gaelic promotion and protection: A rebuttal to McLeod et al. *Scottish Affairs, 31*(1), 122-132. https://doi.org/10.3366/scot.2022.0402

Ó Giollagáin, C., Camshron, G., Moireach, P., Ó Curnáin, B., Caimbeul, I., MacDonald, B., & Péterváry, T. (2020). *The Gaelic crisis in the vernacular community: A comprehensive sociolinguistic survey of Scottish Gaelic*. Aberdeen University Press.

Ó Giollagáin, C., & Caimbeul, I. (2021). Moving beyond asocial minority-language policy. *Scottish Affairs, 30*(2), 178-211. https://doi.org/10.3366/scot.2021.0360

Ruprecht Fadem, M. E., & O'Sullivan, M. (2021). *The economics of empire: Genealogies of capital and the colonial encounter*. Routledge.

Scots Language Centre. (2013, September). *Scots Language Centre welcomes census figures*. https://media.scotslanguage.com/library/document/SLC%20Analysis%20of%20Census%202011%20for%20Scots.pdf

Scottish Government Social Research. (2010). *Public attitudes towards the Scots language.* The Scottish Government. https://d3lmsxlb5aor5x.cloudfront.net/library/document/Public-Attitudes-Towards-the-Scots-Language.pdf

Scottish Government. (2012). *Language learning in Scotland: A 1 + 2 approach* (Modern Languages Excellence Report). https://www.gov.scot/publications/language-learning-scotland-12-approach

Scottish Government. (2017). *Scottish Government Gaelic language plan 2016–2021*. https://www.gov.scot/publications/scottish-government-gaelic-language-plan-2016-2021

Scottish Government. (2021). *2011 census results at a glance: Languages*. Retrieved January 25th, 2024 from https://www.scotlandscensus.gov.uk/census-results/at-a-glance/languages

Schoene, B. (2007). Going cosmopolitan: Reconstituting 'Scottishness' in post-devolution criticism. In B. Schoene (Ed.), *The Edinburgh companion to contemporary Scottish literature* (pp. 7-16). Edinburgh University Press.

Skills Development Scotland. (2018). *The Gaelic language labour market – The evidence: Executive summary*. https://www.skillsdevelopmentscotland.co.uk/media/44717/gaelic-language-executive-summary-lb-180511.pdf

Spowart, N. (2024, May 12). *John Swinney urged to commit to culture as brief scrapped in reshuffle*. The National. https://www.thenational.scot/news/24314122.john-swinney-urged-commit-culture-brief-scrapped-reshuffle/

Stroh, S. (2007). Scotland as a multi-fractured postcolonial go-between? In A. Bartels & D. Wiemann (Eds.), *Global fragments: (Dis)orientation in the new world order* (Cross Cultures, Vol. 90, ASNEL Papers 10, pp. 181-195). Brill.

Stroh, S. (2011). *Uneasy subjects*. Brill. https://doi.org/10.1163/9789401200578

Stroh, S. (2016). *Gaelic Scotland in the colonial imagination: Anglophone writing from 1600 to 1900*. Northwestern University Press.

Tucker, W. T. (1965). Max Weber's "Verstehen." *The Sociological Quarterly, 6*(2),157-165.

wa Thiong'o, N., Ngugi, J., & Owuor-Anyumba, H. (2018). On the abolition of the English department. *Présence Africaine, 197*, 103-110. https://www.jstor.org/stable/26759823

Walsh, J. (2021). 'Real' language policy in a time of crisis: Covid-19, the state and the Irish language. In E. Maher & E. O'Brien (Eds.), *Reimagining Irish studies for the twenty-first century* (pp. 229-246). Peter Lang.

Worthington, D. (2020). Sugar, slave-owning, Suriname and the Dutch imperial entanglement of the Scottish Highlands before 1707. *Dutch Crossing, 44*(1), 3-20.