

READING BRAVEHEART: REPRESENTING AND CONTESTING SCOTTISH IDENTITY

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INTRODUCTION

This article has emerged out of my interest in the production of Stirling as a symbolic heritage centre and particularly the centrality of the figures of Wallace and Bruce in the town's place-image, and in nationalist iconography. By focusing on tourist practices and narratives at Bannockburn Heritage Centre and the Wallace Monument, I have described elsewhere the diverse ways in which the figures have been claimed by different political projects to exemplify this or that Scottish quality (Edensor 1997). In some ways, the symbolic use of these two heroes can serve as a barometer in assessing attitudes to dominant representations of Scottishness and the tensions inherent in contestations over Scottish identity.

This symbolic importance of Wallace has been given a giant boost by the international and domestic success of the Hollywood blockbuster, **Braveheart**. In 1990, Marinell Ash proclaimed that the mythical power of the two figures had declined, yet presciently observed that any rise in nationalist sentiment would make it 'surprising if the figures of Bruce and Wallace are not invoked once more' (1990, p.92). As the success of **Braveheart** testifies, this is exactly what has happened. The upsurge in debate about Scottish identity, national autonomy and heritage in response to the film testifies to the power of the Wallace myth. The fifth biggest grossing movie in the UK in 1995, Scotland provided 28% of its national audience (its usual share of the British market averaging 8%). The movie played to packed houses throughout Scotland and was the subject of controversy in the national press, with a profusion of letters, articles and editorials. The heritage

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industry went into overdrive to capitalise on the film, university student demand to study Scottish History has increased, and the **Braveheart** site is at present one of the top 1000 sites on the internet.

Popular responses to **Braveheart** highlight many of the ambivalences and conflicts about the constitution of Scottish identity and the representation of Scotland, and these themes are far from recent. Indeed, the reactions of Scots indicate the difficulties of sustaining narratives of national identity in a globalising world. To explore the various discourses and appropriations of **Braveheart**, I will firstly contextualise the discussion by considering some debates about the representation of Scotland in film. Following a brief examination of the increasingly apparent relationship between films and the production of heritage, I will go on to reflect upon the ways in which Scotland has been presented by the heritage and tourist industries. Secondly, I will discuss how **Braveheart** has significantly heightened the profile of Scotland in the international tourist market. A sustained marketing campaign capitalising on the popularity of the film has led to an increase in visitors to Scotland, and especially Stirling, the symbolic centre of the Wallace myth. I will therefore show how the film has been used to boost the town's place-image and tourist potential. This background - the intensifying global penetration of film images and the simultaneous commodification of heritage - provides the setting within which the meaning and value of **Braveheart** has been fiercely contested in Scotland. The final, central part of this paper records and assesses the responses of politicians and commentators to the film, and highlights the themes that typify the problematic manufacture of a contemporary Scottish identity in an era in which processes of globalisation threaten the construction of national and local identity.

SCOTLAND IN FILM

Although originality and creativity are not inevitably curtailed, the subject, narrative form, pace, action sequence and dialogue of Hollywood international blockbusters are conditioned by the need to fulfil the expectations of the international markets at which they are aimed. Forming an integral part of global 'mediascapes' and 'ideoscapes' (Appadurai 1990), these regular flows of images and information persistently encoded in such films are transmitted around the world.

In one sense, because Hollywood appeals to 'fantasies, desires and aspirations that are not simply of local and national interests', it is integral to the film cultures of most parts of the world, and hence, part of their national

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cinema (Higson 1995, p.8). Whilst the majority of its films are situated in the United States, Hollywood also casts its net further, often alighting on mythical heroes and epics from other cultural locations (for instance, **The Three Musketeers**, **El Cid**, **Robin Hood**), thereby disembedding the telling of these stories from localities and encoding them with its own particular themes and versions of stylised romance, versions of masculinity and femininity, and individual courage and integrity. The circulation of these images and narratives of 'otherness' signify familiar notions of global difference.

As Anderson has famously maintained, the nation as an 'imagined community' is sustained by media forms which interpellate a multitude of diverse citizens and engender a common sense of national belonging (Anderson 1983). Like television's potential for contributing to the 'constitutive dynamics of abstractions such as "the community" or "the nation"' (Morley 1991, p.12), films are also important cultural forms which reconstruct the nation through the mass shared experience of various symbolic ingredients - traditions, ways of life, landscapes, histories and myths. However, the mobilisation of strategies to cross national boundaries and create new 'imaginative territories' would seem to dilute the purely national message of Hollywood movies. According to German film-maker Edgar Reitz, Hollywood has 'taken narrative possession of our past' (Morley and Robins 1995, p.93).

To assert cultural identity in response to Hollywood's market onslaught, other independent film projects are devised specifically to articulate a more located sense of identity and repel what are perceived as the denationalising tendencies of this globalising movie culture. More particularistic films represent other identity formations within the nation such as race, sexuality, ethnicity, region and class but there are also 'heritage' films which tap into nostalgic modes of representing the past (Higson 1995).

Scotland has a particular place in the annals of Hollywood-produced mythology. According to McArthur, Scottishness in films is represented by well-worn historical stereotypes. He contends that besides informing ways in which most other cultures imagine Scots, 'the melange of images, characters and motifs consuming tartanry and Kailyard' also provides the framework within which Scots continue to construct *themselves*. Such films thereby sustain a hegemonic system that interpellates Scots with a sense of their own inferiority and suffocates attempts to produce alternative representations (McArthur 1982, p.40). Craig supports this view, asserting that the reified forms of representation are clichés which 'need to acquire a new historical

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significance before they can be released into the onward flow of the present from the frozen worlds of their myths of historical irrelevance' (Craig 1982, p.15). The conclusion of the edited collection, **Scotch Reels**, is that 'more politically progressive' representations of Scotland should be produced in Scottish film (McArthur 1982).

It is argued that the consistent and regressive forms of representation can 'slip into the national imaginary as familiar identities, and into the international image markets as tradable symbolic goods' (Caughie 1990, p.14). The key themes of Kailyard, Clydesidism and tartanry indicate the loss of identity and a removal from 'authentic' Scottishness. McArthur laments that Scotland seems destined to continually fulfil its role as 'the Romantic dream landscape par excellence' (McArthur 1994, 104).

Films such as **Brigadoon**, **Whisky Galore** and **Local Hero** perhaps fit into the whimsical yet moral stories of kailyard, and are augmented by representations of folksy Scottishness in TV series such as 'Take the High Road', 'Dr Finlay's Casebook' and 'Hamish McBeth'. The rural wistfulness and disempowering sense of loss that **Scotch Reels** emphasises seems to be evident in other recent films set in the Highlands such as **Ill Fares the Land**, **Venus Peter** and **Another Time, Another Place**. The tartan militarism of recent fantasies such as **Highlander**, **Rob Roy** and **Braveheart** appears to serve the thirst for mystical soldiery in a romantic landscape. And the recent movie, **Loch Ness**, fuels a desire to imbibe a cocktail of scenery and myth.

As far as **Braveheart** is concerned, the preoccupations of Hollywood in general and the imaging of Scottishness in particular appear to follow predictable forms. Some critics maintain that films such as **Rob Roy** and **Braveheart** are fashioned for an international audience by re-situating the ethos of the western in a Scottish setting (Royle, **Scotland on Sunday**, 10 September 1995). A central theme of the action movie is the fantasy of male control and empowerment through physical engagement (O'Shea 1996, p.244). Moreover, here, as in most Hollywood products, the heterosexual love story is a staple ingredient. Of course, the motif of freedom and the defeat of oppression (connoting democracy, individualism and a dominant American ideology) is frequently integral to Hollywood narrative and needs little further explication.

In **Braveheart**, these gendered themes are transcoded in an imaginary Scottish landscape populated by the 'wild charismatic men' and 'the fey elusive women' cited in **Scotch Reels**. Wallace and his rugged warriors are fighting to reclaim their land and their masculine dignity from their English

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overlords - whose (wholly fictitious) practice of *primus nocte* represents the emasculation of Scotland. One figure, Wallace, emerges to claim the right to liberty; the physically courageous hero must be central to the tale whilst the military tradition of Scotland is reinforced. The two chief female characters are grateful recipients of Wallace's hyper-masculine qualities. The romantic interludes are set beneath the stars in pastoral splendour midst trees and rocks. Likewise, the landscape is seen as a source of sustenance to Wallace as he ruminates atop the Cairngorms about the strategies of battle he must implement, the camera giddily swirling around him. This mapping of the bodies of the key participants onto archetypal scenery reinforces the importance of the landscape in popular fantasies of Scotland.

Despite the persistence of these stories and images, with the proliferation of films and TV programmes set in Scotland, and the growth of Scottish based productions, representations of Scotland are now more complex than in the recent past: 'less than a decade ago, Scottish cinema could be simplified, abstracted and categorised in critical and historical research' (Caughie 1990, p.13). The rise of an independent sector has fuelled the production of smaller scale, home-based drama which display themes and images far removed from the kinds of films McArthur et al impugn. Films like **Trainspotting**, **Shallow Grave**, and **Breaking the Waves** are morally, aesthetically and politically challenging. Moreover, although films such as **Small Faces**, and TV series such as 'Tutti Frutti', 'Taggart', 'Bad Boys', and the plays of Peter MacDougall play on themes of urban Glasgow and Clydesideism, the ways in which these programmes deconstruct and parody the themes of the Glasgow hard man, the brutal gangs and the urban culture underline the efforts being made to construct new representations.

More seriously however, insofar as 'traditional' filmic representations are concerned, Caughie argues that the rigid categories into which McArthur et al slot films about Scotland miss the contradictions and ambivalences in and across the discourses and their often knowing self-mockery. More importantly, it ignores the interpretations of audiences, and the ways such representations are reclaimed, recycled and used to express a wide range of meanings. Such analyses presume that films are unproblematically consumed by viewers, that they are encoded with dominant messages which are simply and consensually decoded.

Although it is commonly attributed to popular films that they are formulaic, market-led and predictable, it is necessary to recognise that they are consumed in particular historical contexts and specific political cultures. Drawing on the notion that popular films stimulate utopian desires through

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the structures of feeling they concoct, O'Shea suggests that audiences can imagine the transcendence of forms of oppression and thus conceive of transgressive and transformational acts. Thus the transcendence of daily life can be promised by the common filmic representational and narrative conventions around the expenditure of physical energy, around sensual viscosity, around the transparent intensity of emotion and its expression, and around the authenticity of emotional relationships and the sense of community. In this sense, the utopian possibilities suggested by the sensual and narrative intensity of movies hints at transformation. The formulaic encoding of films is enchanted with popular fantasies about 'freedom', individual accomplishment, overcoming inequality, unmasking hypocrisy and corruption, and achieving romantic fulfilment. The conventional figure of the doomed hero who 'will not settle for the world as it is' suggests the exemplary nobility of those who struggle to transcend oppression (O'Shea 1996, 245).

The obvious point raised by O'Shea is that films may be read in very different ways. Crucially, however, the political impact of a film is heavily influenced by 'which political currents are in circulation and which discursive strategies they adopt' (O'Shea 1996, 245):

whether particular film viewers connect the pleasures of communitarian transcendence they enjoy in a film to a communitarian politics will depend upon the political culture they inhabit in that historical conjuncture.
(O'Shea 1996, 259)

Although the Hollywood appropriation and reconstitution of myths exemplifies the disembedding of culture, it also provides new images and reconfigured narratives that can be reappropriated by diverse groups from the myth's place of origin. Rather than losing their significance, the global transmission of disembedded images and narratives may feed back into local discourses, even heightening their power over identity and imagination.

HERITAGE AND FILM IN SCOTLAND

The world-wide growth of the tourist industry is one symptom of global economic restructuring. Whilst 'minute spatial differentiations' are exploited (Harvey 1989, p.294) to sell 'uniqueness of place' on the global market, there is also a tendency to produce a 'recursive and serial monotony' (Harvey 1989, p.295) in the ambience, styles and narrative and visual themes in heritage

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centres, hotels and retail outlets. Thus, in the same way that the film industry is generally subject to particular commercial imperatives, so a 'commercial and institutionalised' tourist system standardises the experience of collecting cultural signifiers in a restricted period of time (Britton 1991, pp.454-5). In producing tourist space, these processes construct places not as 'foci of attachment or concern' but as 'bundles of social and economic opportunity', with the aim of attracting inward investment by companies enamoured of a place-image; fractions of the new middle class whose cultural capital can reign in a clean, cosmopolitan and cultural environment; and tourists and shoppers who are drawn to the proliferating consumption spaces of heritage cities (Kearns and Philo 1993, p.12). In one sense, local particularities are exploited and commodified for cosmopolitan consumers, 'torn out of time and place to be repackaged for the world bazaar' (Robins 1991, p.31). At this global scale, particular countries, regions or places stand as metaphors for distinct attributes where, for instance, the exotic, the sexual, the romantic or the classical may be experienced.

Tourism is the fastest growing sector of the Scottish economy. In 1995, after a period of decline, tourist revenue increased by 7% to £2.2 billion. Besides the rather predictable Scottish images and narratives produced in Hollywood, Scotland also has a distinct niche in the international tourist market. Subject to a romantic tourist gaze since the early 18th century (McCrone et al 1995, p.60), Scotland's rich iconography provides a repertoire of images with which to attract the foreign tourist. The selling of Scotland abroad tends to rely on stereotyped images such as kilted warriors, Highland scenery and romantic castles, constructing what Rojek calls 'an enchanted fortress in a disenchanted world' (1993, 181). Womack has commented that

all Scots wear tartan, are devoted to bagpipe music, and are moved by the spirit of clanship ... all these libels live on as items in the Scottish tourist package of the Twentieth century.
(Womack 1989, p.25)

These representations emerged in the eighteenth century. Serving as an 'other' realm on the margins of the United Kingdom, a rugged and 'sublime' Highland landscape, with its wild clansman garbed in tartan and kilt, Scotland was a romantic dreamscape tailored by and for metropolitan desire. These fantasies were served by MacPherson's **Ossian** epic; the Sobieski Stuarts invention of tartan styles (Withers 1992; McCrone et al 1995, p.51); the vast pageant of Scottishness put on for the visit of George IV to Edinburgh (Withers 1992, pp.152-3); and the romantic impressions of the Highlands produced by Landseer for Queen Victoria (Pringle 1988). The

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military significance of tartan was reinforced by its appropriation as battledress for Scottish regiments. To this day, a large proportion of Scotland's tourist sites, like many cinematic portrayals, are military, and, as Nairn laments, Scottish popular militarism is 'far more strident than anything found in comparable levels of culture in England' (Nairn 1977, p.165).

Pat Kane laments this preoccupation with what he calls 'claymore culture', and he maintains that the construction of Scotland as 'an elemental land of warrior men and wan maidens, of breast beating heroes fighting the overly rational English' disempowers identity production whilst, at the same time, these tales of 'authentic, primitive redemption, of direct passions expressed in natural surroundings' serve the 'tourist agencies perfectly' (*Guardian*, 18 May 95). Similarly, Tom Nairn has attacked the production of the 'tartan monster', that 'prodigious array of kitsch symbols, slogans, ornaments, banners, war-cries, knick-knacks' (1989, p.162). Of course, any trip to a tourist centre sees the consumption of such objects in full flow.

I will now consider the growing nexus between internationally transmitted movie images and the production and marketing of the tourist and heritage industry. This increasing interconnectedness and intertextuality can be identified in four ways. Firstly, tourist marketing campaigns frequently plunder the images and narratives of popular films. For instance, a quarter of a million copies of a movie map devised by the British Tourist Association where tourists can 'follow in the footsteps of their screen heroes' was produced in 1996. In such campaigns, touristic landscapes are promoted as theatres and stage-sets where movie episodes can be re-imagined. Popular films can provide important resources in promoting attractions and boosting the place-images of localities, as I will show in the case of **Braveheart**. Secondly, as part of what Appadurai (1990) calls global 'mediascapes', films also transmit notions of difference and stimulate the 'desire for acquisition and movement'. This conjures up the capacity for films to stimulate fantasies of the 'other' and spark tourist trends. The influx of American tourists to Australia following the commercial success of the film **Crocodile Dundee** testifies to this power.

Thirdly, however, the emotive charge of these disembedded and then reclaimed myths can also appeal to contemporary formations of identity framed in terms of heritage and tradition. As Higson remarks, the construction of a national identity via the 'heritage film' involves 'the transference of present values on to the past as imaginary object' (Higson 1995, p.41). In the case of the English heritage film, this has typically rotated around conservative images of the pastoral and the country house, suggesting

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ideals of a natural, hierarchical community and historical continuity. There is, then, an intertextual relationship between the heritage and film industries, with particular images and narratives circulating through the production and presentation of heritage attractions and films.

Other popular media reconstructions of the past, such as costume dramas (Corner and Harvey 1991, p.49) capitalise on the desire to see the 'other' in the foreign country of the past. Increasingly, film and television are a 'kaleidoscope for armchair tourists' (Wollen 1991, p.191). Occasionally, the impact of media imagery may have a larger impact on certain groups. Members of the modern Wallace Clan acted as extras and fight arrangers for **Braveheart**, partly to fund the purchase of 'clanlands' to replace those taken from them centuries ago so that they may build a village where they can practice traditional farming and crafts and receive tourists. They continue to clothe themselves in costumes that were donated to them by Mel Gibson. The attempt to build up group membership, not on the grounds of descent but 'attitude', speaks of the ways in which the politics of identity and authenticity feed into, and are in turn sustained, by media forms such as **Braveheart**. Priorities cited by the group are to live how they wish, and reclaim their suppressed history and heritage (Beckett, **Independent on Sunday**, 12 May 96).

Fourthly, heritage production is becoming saturated with audio-visual presentations, son et lumiere shows, dramaturgical re-enactments, often requiring some visitor participation, and animatronic characters. As I have shown (Edensor 1997), Bannockburn Heritage Site and the Wallace Monument also attract visitors by advertising their audio-visual experiences and simulacra, altering the relationship between site and visitor by producing an 'experience'. Rather than gazing upon authentic artefacts, the contemporary tourist increasingly enjoys immersion in a mediated, staged experience.

A particular Scottish example is the recent Highland Mysteryworld in Glencoe, which combines the dramaturgical and animatronic evocation of Pictish legend and Highland faeries, with themed restaurants and shopping 'experiences'. Capitalising on sword and sorcery epics such as **Highlander**, and typical representations of the Highlands as enchanted realm, this attraction exemplifies how the tourist industry increasingly constructs attractions that emphasise the visual and the dramatic qualities associated with movies. The increasingly mediated relationship between observer and site suggests a curtailment of imaginative consumption.

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The upsurge in popular movies with a Scottish theme has transformed the selling of heritage attractions in many parts of Scotland as they repatriate and recycle the images and stories from these global media forms. But whilst commercial possibilities for the expansion of the Scottish heritage industry have been expanded, many Scots view these movie influenced productions with alarm. Pat Kane pronounces, 'Some of us feared that the future of Scotland might be as a romanticised, adventure theme park. But could we have guessed that the might of Hollywood would get behind the push so vigorously?'. The effect of this recourse to the old signs and stories of Scottishness thwarts Scotland's need for 'a complex vision of its culture and society - a representation that points the nation towards the 21st century' (*Guardian*, 18 May 95).

Here we have returned to arguments similar to those cited above: like the representations of Scotland in film; the heritage industry is replete with dominant stereotypes that curtail alternative versions and curtail imaginative reappropriation. However, Porter argues that the commodification of the past at tourist attractions and in films decentres expert versions of history. Subsequently, history enters the realm of public discourse where it is contested and appropriated. He writes, 'the past is not graven on stone tablets, but is a show, constantly being recreated, on the screen, on stage, in the mind's eye. Movie history is moving history' (*Sunday Times*, 30 July 95). His use of the term 'moving' suggests the powerful emotional charge conveyed by dramatised history as well as the ways in which the past is continually re-interpreted according to the politics of the present.

The politics of heritage is far more complicated than these pessimistic arguments allow. Samuel has shown how there has been an explosion of local subaltern forms of heritage, industrial heritage and oral history projects that critics of the heritage industry have ignored as they concentrate on theme parks and stately homes (Samuel 1995). However, the most famous heritage attractions are also frequently sites of contestation.

Besides being stops on package tours, especially symbolic landscapes and sites are important centres where identity is revealed and transmitted. Revealing the 'uniqueness of the nation's moral geography' (Smith 1991, p.16), these 'sacred centres' are the repository of common memories, myths and traditions and the sites for a range of collective and individual performances of ritual and pilgrimage. It is precisely because they are of such national significance that claims about their political importance compete with each other. As I have shown (Edensor 1997), the importance of the key sites of Bannockburn Heritage Centre and the Wallace Monument,

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which appear to embody much of the stereotypical archaic, military, masculinist heritage of Scotland are hotly debated and contested.

BRAVEHEART AND TOURIST PROMOTION IN STIRLING

Entrepreneurs and politicians have fully attempted to capitalise on the success of **Braveheart** by intensively marketing Stirling's association with Wallace. As a marketing tool, the film has proved opportune in attracting tourists and raising the town's profile. The Loch Lomond, Trossachs and Stirling Tourist Board estimate that the film's success has brought in millions of extra tourist pounds in 1996. The director stated, '**Braveheart** has given us the ideal opportunity to relaunch Stirling as one of Britain's finest heritage towns' (**Stirling Observer**, 20 September 96). In recognition of this economic potential, the national government gave £100,000 to the tourist board to boost their foreign advertising budget in France and Germany (**Scotsman**, 12 September 1995). The board produced an advertisement which reads, 'Where the Highlands met the Lowlands, step into the echoes of Rob Roy, Robert the Bruce and William Wallace - **Braveheart** Country'. In addition, they designed an advert for international transmission in cinemas before the showing of **Braveheart**. Combining scenes from the film with aerial views of the Wallace Monument and local scenery, the advert ends with the exhortation to 'experience the very heart of Scotland: Stirling is **Braveheart** Country'. Likewise, included in the video of the film is a promotional leaflet which runs over these themes.

Hundreds of thousands of visitors have been drawn to Stirling which subsequently received the accolade of 'Best of the Best' tourist place from the Scottish tourist industry (**Scotsman**, 16 October 1996). Tellingly, the popularity of the Wallace Monument has increased dramatically with the release of the film **Braveheart**. In 1994, it attracted 55,000 paying visitors. In 1995, fuelled by the film's September release, the annual total was 80,000. 1996 proved to be a bumper season with over 150,000 visitors.

To consolidate the town's association with Wallace, the British premiere of **Braveheart** was held in Stirling together with a spectacular reception party costing £700,000, which besides Hollywood glitterati, drew thousands of locals and tourists who came to view the attendant fireworks display and sound and light show centring on the Wallace Monument. This association will be further strengthened this year, the seven-hundredth anniversary of the Battle of Stirling Bridge. An exhibition, 'Scotland's Liberator', on the life and legend of the hero, which ingeniously features the numerous ways in which

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Wallace has been used and represented in national life, is currently installed in the Smith Art Gallery and Museum, and has averaged around 2000 visitors a week. The five month programme culminated in a commemoration on 11 September and a dramatic re-enactment of the battle on the two following days. On the same day, a new statue of Wallace, modelled on Mel Gibson, was unveiled to complement four other stone Wallaces in and around the town. To capitalise on its symbolic significance, the Scottish devolution referendum was held on this date. Around these central productions, other efforts to enhance the town's image for shoppers and tourists by broadening the seasonal entertainment, organising special events with a medieval theme and opening a new shopping centre, aim to capitalise on the boost that **Braveheart** has given the town. In addition there are private services such as **Braveheart** banquets run by one of the town's hotels.

BATTLES OVER BRAVEHEART

I have highlighted the economic boost that **Braveheart** has given to the tourist industry in Stirling, and now want to concentrate on responses to the film by politicians and journalists which fuelled a heated and complex debate in the national press. This will serve to illustrate my contention that rather than being passively consumed as reactionary set of images and narratives, popular films can feed into serious political debate. The issues of identity and nationhood are particularly important to Scotland at present and I argue that the rich response to **Braveheart** and the issues raised through the working out of political positions indicate the problems of sustaining national identities and progressive forms of nationalism.

Celebrating Braveheart

Although Mel Gibson disingenuously denied that the film had any political content but was merely a good story (**Scotsman**, 2 September 1995), the Scottish National Party was quick to exploit the metaphorical themes of the film. Party leader Alex Salmond claimed that 'the message is relevant today in that it is the Scots who are fighting for their independence the same way they are at the moment' (**Glasgow Herald**, 2 October 1995). Then he skilfully compared the political project of Wallace with that of contemporary nationalism to invest the film with current relevance in order to re-enchant collective action and ideals. He argued that Wallace's

idea of the 'common weal', the common good, is a Scottish spirit that has lasted for centuries; it is that spirit that the modern civic nationalism of

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Scotland retains.
(**Observer**, 10 September 1995, p.6)

Homi Bhabha has referred to the 'double time of the nation' (1990) and Tom Nairn has described nationalism as 'janus-faced' (1977) in capturing the simultaneous evocation of historical events and figures, and an optimistic invocation of future glory. Of course, this swivelling movement establishes a link between that which has been achieved and that which is to be attained. Here the SNP's need to root identity in the actions and principles which typify national myth is generated by the imperative to establish precedent and re-inscribe the nation with exemplary adventures that can inform progress. Thus out of a long continuous history marked by passages of autonomy and oppression, the present state of affairs merely presages the realisation of the nation; its eventual coming into efflorescence, as prefigured in earlier triumphs. Whilst an appeal to the militaristic characteristics of Wallace's campaign could be seen as crude and triumphalist, the appeal to his supposed concern for civil rights, equity and self-determination fit snugly into contemporary political discourse.

More specifically, others argued that the film addressed wider political and historical issues. Allan Massie cites the Whig historian G.M.Trevelyan as articulating the popular view that Wallace introduced the 'new idea and tradition' of 'democratic patriotism' into the world (Massie, **Sunday Times**, 17 September 1995). Indeed the potency of this common-sense notion informed many responses to **Braveheart**.

Besides this appeal to rational political objectives clothed in the language of modern democracy, the SNP combined this rational approach with what Salmond called 'the real power in the emotional appeal' of **Braveheart** (**The Herald**, 11 September 1995). This is exemplified in the rather rabble-rousing parallel he draws by identifying the SNP with the cause of Wallace:

At the Battle of Stirling Bridge I would have been on Wallace's side and at least (Michael) Forsyth would know he wanted to be on the other side. But Labour would have been in a quandary. I can safely say Wallace wouldn't have been in favour of devolution.
(**Sunday Times**, 3 September 1995)

In order to capitalise on this emotional and political charge, the Party distributed leaflets outside cinemas in Scotland in the form of reply-paid postcards. On one side was an image of Mel Gibson as Wallace and

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'BRAVEHEART' in large capitals, along with a text, culminating in the words:

TODAY ITS NOT JUST BRAVEHEARTS WHO CHOOSE
INDEPENDENCE - IT'S ALSO WISEHEADS - AND THEY USE THE
BALLOT BOX

On the other side is the slogan

YOU'VE SEEN THE MOVIE...NOW FACE THE REALITY

The 'head and heart' campaign which the SNP mobilised to cash in on the popularity of the movie had immediate results in opinion polls which recorded a dramatic rise of eight points in those intending to vote for the party, and according to Salmond applications for membership were almost 60 a day (**The Herald**, 11 September 1995). Even if this contains a pinch of hyperbole, it seems to indicate the powerful impact of the film on Scottish audiences.

The SNP's belief that **Braveheart** possessed a symbolic significance for nationalists was widely argued in the media. Recognising that a nationalism bereft of cultural and historical appeal might seem instrumental and sterile, some commentators acknowledged that the film provided Scots with 'a powerful creation myth which will surely help to focus our national sense of identity' (Brian Pendreigh, **Scotsman**, 4 September 1995) and highlighted a significant historical episode which fostered 'an understanding of the heroic nature of at least one part of our past and a new enthusiasm for the future of our nation' (Mike Russell, **Scotsman**, 20 September 1995). Such arguments appear to tacitly recognise the need for effectively mobilised nationalisms to have recourse to a set of foundational myths that locate identity historically.

Most common were those who highlighted the 'wider truths' of the film which hinted at contemporary inequality and the corruption of a self-serving class of Scots. Mike Russell, Chief Executive of the SNP, wrote that the motivation which led Wallace to undertake such a campaign, his choice to embark on a quest for autonomy and freedom, was a positive choice that stresses the importance of independence. For the 'lack of equality and respect between the institutions of Scotland and England' along with the 'thoughtlessness that familiarity, political superiority and dependence have bred' at Westminster are relevant political analogies that he claims the film arouses.

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According to other writers, **Braveheart** raised awareness about how Scottish nobles had consistently betrayed the aspirations of their countryfolk. Lesley Riddoch argued that a class analysis reveals the way the elite, what she terms 'our Uncle Toms', had sold out the interests of the ordinary Scots

the overwhelming lesson of history, and the clear message of **Braveheart** is that one individual cannot triumph while the so-called professional classes divide their loyalties between themselves and the collective interests they're supposed to serve.
(*Scotsman*, 15 September 1995)

Using the 13th century nobles portrayed in **Braveheart** as an example, she links these persistent betrayals by an aristocratic 'parcel of rogues' to the contemporary betrayals in the name of 'enlightened self interest' and the tragic 'prospect of history repeating itself'. This theme is echoed by Pendreigh who remarks that '**Braveheart** does an excellent job in conveying the duplicity of the Scottish nobility, including Bruce, as they seek to promote their own interests' (*Scotsman* 8 September 1995). Likewise, Russell accuses the 'deceitful' and treacherous 'nobility of being mean-spirited' and cites the overcoming of these narrow interests as essential in the ultimate achievement of Scottish independence (*Scotsman*, 20 September 1995).

In addition to these sentiments, the economic value of the film and the representation of Scotland on a world stage is seen as a source of prestige. Indeed, Michael Forsyth, Secretary of State for Scotland when the film was released, primarily used the film to project an image of himself as touting for business for Scotland (*Guardian*, 11 September 1995), keen to capitalise on the image of Scotland and its potential as a stage-set for Hollywood fantasy. The content of the film is irrelevant but its economic potential is not. However, as I show below, when confronted with some of the claims of the SNP, Forsyth has not been averse to denying the contemporary relevance of the film. Others also recognise the economic arguments of projecting a powerful image abroad. As a member of the Wallace clan writes in a letter to the **Sunday Times**, 'A romantic international view can be a good thing and we should not knock the tartan out of Scotland; it has the potential to create many well-paid jobs' (*Sunday Times*, 14 June 1996).

Cultural nationalists assert that cultural identity cannot be forsaken for a purely political instrumental rationality and that the heart as well as the head has to be stimulated. In a different vein, as O'Shea avers in his discussion of the popular consumption of films, political projects need 'affective

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investment as well as a rational acceptance' (O'Shea 1996, p.264). Thus **Braveheart** has tapped directly into these transcendent desires for emotional identification with aspects of the nation which connote struggle, heroism and tradition.

Widely reported in the press was the request of Ally McCoist, the Scottish international footballer, for a special showing of **Braveheart** before the crucial European Championship qualifying match with Finland to induce patriotic feeling and spur the team on to victory. Whether apocryphal or not, the story evinces the ways in which popular cultural forms and practices are used to express nationalist sentiment, and sometimes operate in an intertextual way so as to reinforce each other. The episode conjures up the war-cry, 'Remember Bannockburn', which resonates at matches against the 'auld enemy' and thereby testifies to the emotional significance of twinning sporting and celluloid narratives of national(ist) achievement.

I have discussed elsewhere the ways in which Bannockburn Heritage Site and the Wallace Monument are (contested) sites of national significance which nationalist pilgrims visit to pay homage to the mythical heroes of Bruce and Wallace (Edensor 1997). The former is the site for the annual nationalist Bannockburn Rally where nationalists assemble after a march from Stirling. At the 1996 rally, like the football fans who followed the Scottish team in the recent European football championships, it was curious to note how the dress of many of the participants had seemingly been influenced by **Braveheart**. Rather than donning the immaculate 'white heather' garb of jacket, kilt, sporran and shiny shoes, more in evidence were the rough leather jerkins, flowing locks and tartan tunics favoured by Wallace's followers in **Braveheart**. Whether this is considered more authentic, less anglicised, stereotypical and more proletarian or not, such display shows how movie iconography may be reclaimed or repatriated by those making symbolic statements about their origins and identity.

Criticising Braveheart

Despite the celebration of **Braveheart** by many patriotic Scots, there were many dissenting voices in the media about the morality of the film and its suitability as a political vehicle and as emblematic of Scottish identity. It is noteworthy that the arguments advanced by commentators like Nairn and McArthur about the regressive and stereotypical representations of Scottishness in popular film find their echo in critiques of **Braveheart**. The familiar fears about the obsession with tartanry and Highland tales resurface, for instance, in Audrey Gillan's eloquent comment:

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Braveheart has encouraged Scotland's lack of knowledge about itself. Greedy for confirmation as a romantically wild nation, our gluttony for feeding on myth and heathery legend reaches worrying proportions when it affects the entire socio consciousness of a nation.
(**Scotland on Sunday**, 16 September 1995)

Widespread concern was directed towards the strengthening nexus between the heritage industry and the media. As the place-marketers leapt onto the **Braveheart** bandwagon, fears about the impact of these attempts to recycle the images of the film for tourists led to lamentations about the production of a hyper-real, post-industrial Scotland:

Sadly, the tourist industry is about the only industry thriving in this wee country today as Scotland gradually moves towards becoming a theme park for wide-eyed romantics.
(Miller 1995)

Sections of the nationalist movement stress the importance of presenting a modern, European and progressive image. The persistence of tartan, militaristic and mystico-romantic representations of Scotland disturbs them and they conceive it as a barrier to political progress. Several responses to **Braveheart** highlight this disaffection from what they envisage as anachronistic themes of Scottishness. The preoccupation with the motifs of the film was considered by several commentators to be at the expense of rational political debate. As a letter writer to the **Sunday Times** recorded, 'the SNP should stick to economics, social policies, international policies and its proposals for an independent Scotland. It should forget trying to stir up long dead emotions' (**Sunday Times**, 15 September 1996)

A major source of discontent about the film was what was perceived as the anti-English sentiment, even hatred, which was believed to encourage a version of patriotism that blamed others for Scotland's own failings. The typical nationalist strategy of constructing a mythical foe against which the nation can be contrasted is apt to be charged with exclusivist desires. According to Gillan, the recourse to demonising the English is a nationalism which has 'at the back of its consciousness ... imperialist bogeys, redcoats, poll-taxers, and goals by Bobby Charlton' (**Scotland on Sunday**, 16 September 1995). The rather homophobic motif running through the film embodied in the character of the Prince of Wales was identified by MacAskill who asserted that 'every Englishman is either completely evil or homosexual, and speaks with a Home Counties accent'. In contradistinction, 'Scots are all kindly, rough hewn souls, mixing courage and humour'. He

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argues that 'Salmond should be ashamed that his party has benefited from tawdry emotionalism and racism' (**Scotsman**, 12 September 1995). Massie attests that **Braveheart** panders to popular stereotypes that the English are 'arrogant', less community-minded than Scots, and snobbish, 'old and pointless resentments' that will be rekindled and 'inflame the feelings of animosity which already exist' (**Sunday Times**, 17 September 1995)

Besides fretting about the portrayal of the English and the anachronistic sense of identity that this reproduces, the claiming of a 13th century warrior by the nationalist cause was seen as inappropriate and irrelevant by some writers. Scottish Secretary Michael Forsyth asserted, 'I think we have to fight the battles of the 21st century, not the 14th century' (**Stirling Observer**, 1 September 1995). Later he said that Wallace was a 'loser and a failure' and an example of how Scots tended to celebrate failure. This defeatism, he concluded, signified something about the 'contemporary Scottish ethos', particularly its neglect of celebrating successful figures. Forsyth cited Adam Smith as a 'more suitable role model' (**Guardian**, 27 April 1996). Rather than venerating the attributes of losers, Forsyth recommended that the most estimable qualities of Scots were epitomised by their 'self-sufficiency, education, thriftiness and wealth creation' (**Sunday Times** 21 July 1996).

Likewise, Massie insists that Wallace is an 'impossibly remote' figure and that 'the wars of independence are not only a long time ago, but irrelevant to modern Scotland'. His argument is whether an ancient military figure serves as a suitable national hero:

does it really serve us well to identify as our national hero a man who, however brave and honourable he may have been, has his hands red with English blood?"

(**Scotland on Sunday**, 3 September 1995)

Indeed, Massie then broadens his discussion by offering a list of other Scots who ought to be celebrated with the same fervour as that accorded to Wallace, most notably those who perished in military conflict to uphold 'democracy and civilisation' commemorated by the national War Memorial in Edinburgh Castle. There is a move here to reclaim the unionist tradition of highlighting those Scots who prospered and made fortunes in the era of empire, and the familiar Victorian litany of heroic inventors and explorers, notably David Livingstone, who Massie considers to be the foremost personality in the extinction of slavery. In a similar vein, historian Richard Finlay argues that the benefit derived from empire 'goes against the grain of

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much of Scottish history that tends to represent Scotland as victim' (**Sunday Times**, 21 July 1996).

This raises the whole question of the nationalist appropriation of heroes. For Wallace himself was claimed as an exemplary figure by a *unionist* history at the time the memorial dedicated to him was erected at the end of the nineteenth century, while on the second floor of the Wallace Monument the characters cited by Massie feature prominently.

Clearly, whilst contemporary narratives about Wallace tend to be contained within a framework of nationalist independence, as I have inferred in my examination of the semiotics of Bannockburn Heritage Site and the Wallace Monument (Edensor 1997), this has not always been the predominant narrative. As Nairn asserts, during the era of Romantic nationalism at the end of the nineteenth century, 'British national and imperial identity chimed quite nicely with a strand of Scottish national identity, reinforced by Protestantism, Unionism and militarism' (Nairn 1977, p.209). While there was a strong patriotic impulse in celebrating Wallace, this did not contradict the celebration of Britishness. At the ceremony to lay the foundation stone of the Wallace Monument in 1861, Wallace was eulogised as a proto-British figure. At the inauguration of the campaign to erect the Wallace Monument, the Earl of Elgin declared:

if the Scottish people have been able to form an intimate union [with the English] without sacrificing one jot of their neutral independence and liberty - these great results are due to the glorious struggle which was commenced on the plain of Stirling and consummated on that of Bannockburn
(quoted by Morton 1993, p.215).

A more marginal critical view was that Wallace's struggle against oppression ought to be identified as a class struggle, an aspect **Braveheart** did not depict. Capitalising on the popular belief amongst Scots that Wallace is a particularly exemplary hero because of his lowly origins, historian J.Mackay averred that 'there is a far better argument that what he did was more Marxist than Scottish nationalist. He was a man of the people. But his struggle was a struggle against the Anglo-Norman aristocracy' (**Sunday Times**, 21 July 1995).

A rather different concern with historical realism is manifest in responses that were worried about the film's historical accuracy and reflected an authentic Scottishness by relaying an accurate history. Miller points out the

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innumerable 'howlers' of the film, reserving particular opprobrium for the Highland appearance of the lowlander Wallace, his (Mel Gibson's) Glaswegian accent, the unrealistic portrayal of Edinburgh as a collection of cottages rather than a fortress town, the playing of uilleann pipes on the soundtrack as the Highland bagpipes are played on screen, and above all, the suggestion that Wallace was the progenitor of the English throne through his liaison with the future queen of England. What is rather more noteworthy here is the implication that the effeminate princely husband of the target of Wallace's affections is inadequate to the manly task fulfilled by the Scottish epitome of masculinity. As Charlotte O'Sullivan notes, 'siring turns out to be the supreme patriotic act' (**Observer**, 16 June 1996, p.18).

The first lover of Wallace, the elfin Murron, apparently has no basis in documented evidence. Other writers directed particular outrage to the absence of a bridge in the scenes of the Battle of Stirling Bridge, the mythical capture of York and the inauthentic shortness of Mel Gibson in contrast to the towering height of Wallace. Even Colin McArthur contends that the film makes no attempt to capture the complicated feudal politics of medieval Scotland (McArthur 1995).

Despite these fulminations about authenticity, it is useful to consider Rosenstone's reminder that 'films which have been truest to the past have tended to be visually and dramatically inert' (1995, p.7). Moreover, as some nationalists maintain, the wider truths raised by the film transcend the concerns of period detail. The conventions of realism which typify many historical films, motivated by the pretension that 'the screen can be an unmediated window onto the past', are ineffective according to Rosenstone. Instead, he commends what he terms the 'postmodern history film' which creates multiple meaning, plays with the past, questions the knowledge on which History is constructed and yet recognises the impossibility of banishing the past (1995, p.12). Whilst the simultaneous occurrences on screen of image, sound and language often convey contrasting messages and disrupt the flow of meaning, they can convey a fuller, more sensual and emotional sense of the past than an arid discourse. Effectively, for a film to appeal to the emotions it may be emotional authenticity rather than historical accuracy in surface design that satisfies audiences, for the former may more closely relate to the emotional needs and desires of the present.

CONCLUSION

It is commonly assumed that global cultural forms increasingly suffocate local and national cultural production, and consequently, the resources available to the formation of situated identities are reduced to homogenised, disembedded products circulating around the global economy as part of 'mediascapes' and 'ideoscapes' (Appadurai 1990). Accordingly, pessimistic cultural commentators view Hollywood films as imperialistic commodities which decentre local identities and interpellate audiences in predictable ways. They argue that formulaic conventions of character development, plot, rhythms and images stifle imaginations and stimulate limited fantasies. Of course, this kind of argument chimes with earlier moral panics about the impact of popular culture and Americanisation.

Whilst I am not concerned with the evaluation of these global cultural forms themselves, the reception of **Braveheart** certainly questions assumptions about their passive consumption. Appadurai has pointed to the complex relationship between the local and the global, particularly focusing on the translation and appropriation of global culture in local settings, the indigenisation of products, and their 'repatriation' into 'heterogeneous dialogues of national sovereignty, free enterprise, fundamentalism etc' (1990, p.307). Global culture is consumed in varied historical and political contexts, and by differently situated actors. Readings of **Braveheart** are partly shaped by the geographical location, political viewpoint and economic perspective of the viewer. Thus nationalist, Tory, socialist and foreign interpretations of the film diverge. Besides these diverse interpretations, films increasingly inform discourses and representations generated by the heritage industry and constitute an effective economic resource for place-marketers. **Braveheart** is an excellent example of how an international movie is fed into marketing campaigns (of Scotland and Stirling), to successfully achieve a high profile on the global tourist market.

Above all, **Braveheart**, as a contested cultural form, reveals many of the complexities in the sustenance of contemporary national identities in general, and Scottish identity in particular. Nations are continually in the process of construction. The imperative to gather together a set of symbols and histories that inscribe the nation as an 'imagined community' is an ongoing and competitive process. Old symbols fade into disuse, are reinvigorated, are appropriated by different causes and reinterpreted, and new symbols are invented, claimed and circulated.

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As far as Scottish identity is concerned, the historical weight of romantic stereotypes around kailyard, Highland tartanalia, militarism, and the re-circulation of these images and themes in the heritage and film industries, presents a distinctive set of problems. At a popular level, there is a somewhat non-reflexive consumption of cultural products and practices associated with these tropes; a celebration and claiming of tartan, kilts and military heroes. These aspects of popular culture produce groans of dismay from some political commentators who believe that such expressions of Scottish popular identity reflect a reified regime of popular signification. For instance, Nairn argues that they have produced a deformed national identity which he lambasts as 'cultural sub nationalism' (1977, p.156). Indeed, they lie heavy on desires to rebuild and reconstitute a 'progressive' Scottishness. Apparently, in the absence of any more appropriate cultural resources, Scots seek recourse in productions such as **Braveheart**, which serve to reinforce archaic, negative versions of Scottishness.

In a globalising world, the rapid change generated by economic, social and cultural dynamics creates uncertainty. Processes of time-space compression and disembedding, and the proliferation of free-floating images and narratives apparently turns the terra firma of the nation into terra incognito. According to Robins, 'the driving imperative is to salvage centred, bounded and coherent identities - placed identities for placeless times' (Robins 1991, p.41). Such constructions proffer a sense of continuity, construct demonised others to which national subjects are compared and contrasted, and tend to emphasise archaic national symbols. Critics of **Braveheart** point to the vilification of the English, the romantic attachment to sentimental myth, and the inaptitude of using a medieval warrior as a contemporary national(ist) symbol. Moreover, some fear that these can be strengthened by their appropriation by the heritage industry.

Yet although the tropes and themes of **Braveheart** can be recovered by a recursive nationalism, as we have seen, this is not the only way in which they can be read. Indeed, motifs of 'independence', 'freedom', equality' and 'democracy' are reclaimed to re-enchant contemporary political narratives, and themes. Images from the film stand as emotional and cognitive resources which feed into political debate and inspire nationalists.

An analysis of responses to **Braveheart** also reveals the tension between political and cultural forms of nationalism. The SNP's development of their 'head and heart' campaign testifies to the need to appeal to an emotional sense of attachment as well as the more 'objective' economic and political arguments. Herein lies the problem of nationalisms which are encumbered by

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cultural baggage which appears anachronistic but retains popular appeal. Nationalist strategies which encourage the nation to loose its historical moorings and set sail for the future deny notions of a shared past, and the need for people to locate themselves in time and space. Some nationalist responses to **Braveheart** recognise the efficacy of foundation myths, notions of historical continuity, and a set of shared symbols and myths in sustaining a sense of belonging. But as we have seen, such romantic renditions are ripe for ridicule.

Finally, the foregoing discussion has also highlighted the importance of authenticity to contemporary constructions of cultural identity. Contesting conceptions of the 'authentic' come into play around **Braveheart**: critics accuse the film of lacking historical accuracy and visual verisimilitude whilst celebrants stress that the authenticity of the historical themes, their relevance to the story of the nation, outweighs the pedantic claims of historical realism.

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