INTRODUCTION

Can Scotland and the “Celtic fringe” be considered as English colonies? Is their experience and literature comparable to that of overseas postcolonial countries? Can international postcolonial theory help us to understand the Scottish predicament? Is Scottish political and cultural nationalism similar to anticolonial resistance overseas? Or are such comparisons no more than Scottish patriotic victimology, attempting to mask complicity in the British Empire and justify initiatives to secede from the United Kingdom? Caught between nationalist rhetoric, an ever-expanding academic “theory industry,” and more skeptical perspectives which doubt the value of Scottish and “Celtic” postcolonialisms, these questions have been heatedly debated in recent years. On an international level, the transformation of postcolonial studies from a small academic margin into an increasingly popular, respected, and institutionalized part of the academic mainstream has been ongoing since the 1980s and, despite recurrent theoretical (self-)questioning, the field still remains a trendy academic growth sector. Historically, postcolonialism has close connections to questions of political autonomy, emancipation movements, and nation-building. Hence, debates about extending postcolonial approaches to Scottish studies were to some extent fueled by recent political developments: the devolution process of the late 1990s which gave Scotland its own “regional” parliament within the United Kingdom while pan-British “national” affairs remained with the Parliament in London; the 2007 and 2011 elections which made the Scottish National Party (SNP) the governing power in the Edinburgh Parliament; and the run-up to the 2014 referendum on whether Scotland should become a sovereign nation-state of its own, with full independence from the United Kingdom. When that referendum resulted in a “no” vote, some might have wondered whether nationalist—and postcolonial—questions should now be considered unviable, dated, and discredited: Did not this referendum result confirm an overall satisfaction with being part of Britain, a “sameness” and identification with the English (and other Britons), rather than a sense of being a marginalized Other or an internal colony? These are valid questions, but in reality these issues are much more complex.

Even after the 2014 referendum, the question of Scottish autonomy remained on the agenda. Political campaigning for more powers continued, even if the campaign was supposed to take place within the British state for the time being. Moreover, many refused to give up on independence as a long-term goal. Activism remained vigorous, and the pro-independence Scottish
National Party quadrupled its membership within six months after the 2014 plebiscite. Other pro-independence parties likewise experienced a growth in membership. Desires for stronger representation of Scottish interests within the Union, and for an end of pan-British austerity politics, led to a huge SNP success in the 2015 elections for the British Parliament, when the party gained 50 additional seats and came to represent fifty-six out of fifty-nine Scottish constituencies. The SNP also won the election for the Scottish Parliament in May 2016. The “Brexit” referendum in June 2016 brought a renewed sense of urgency: Although most Scots voted to remain in the European Union, an English-dominated pan-British majority voted to come out. The threat of Scotland being taken out of Europe against its will seemed to underline the difficulties of safeguarding Scotland’s interests within the United Kingdom. Suddenly, “indyref2” became a very real possibility, even in the short term, as politicians and grassroots started preparing for a new campaign.

Moreover, postcolonialism cannot be reduced to questions of political autonomy. Cultural concerns are at least equally important, and also pertain in situations where separate statehood is not (presently) on the agenda. One major concern of anti- and postcolonial writing is to criticize the cultural hierarchies set up by the colonizer, discard the sense of cultural inferiority which the colonial system had instilled in the colonized, and develop new ethnic or national cultural confidence. While this is sometimes connected to a quest for political autonomy, it does not have to be: instead, it can also remain limited to the cultural sphere, or pursue sociopolitical goals through a different framework, for instance by pushing for reform within a given state, or by focusing on transnational forms of organization. Strands of postcolonialism which focus on the cultural empowerment of the margins afford various connections to modern Scottish culture, whose energy, achievement, and renewed self-assurance has been widely noted, for instance in the “second Scottish literary renaissance” of the late twentieth century (the first having been launched by Hugh MacDiarmid in the 1920s). This is another reason why various critics have asked whether Scottish studies should take a postcolonial turn.

But although a postcolonial debate already exists in Scottish studies, it is still widely ignored in the international “mainstream” of postcolonial studies which tends to focus on other regions such as Africa, South Asia, or the Caribbean, and does not usually include Scotland in its comparative purview. Thus, the dialogue between Scottish and international postcolonial studies is still relatively one-sided. Moreover, even among Scottish studies specialists, postcolonial inquiry has so far often been somewhat unsystematized. For instance, it has often been limited to specific authors or periods. There is still a marked preference for twentieth- and twenty-first-century literature, without systematic exploration of earlier texts and situations which these modern developments are built on or react against. Lack of historicization might also be one of the reasons why the international postcolonial mainstream is still reluctant to engage with Scottish issues: looking for a “colonized” within a
United Kingdom that has become globally infamous as a colonizer might at first seem counterintuitive. Hence, postcolonial scholars with other regional specializations who approach Scottish issues for the first time, and mainly from a comparatist angle, might need more historical and cultural background information on Scotland in order to understand why Scottish claims to colonial or postcolonial status have been made. There seems to be a need for a more historically oriented study of Scottish (post)colonial discourse which not only tries to provide new insights for Scottish studies specialists (e.g., via detailed analyses of individual texts) but also provides enough background information and surveys to function as an introduction to Scottish postcolonialism for readers who are hitherto unfamiliar with the field. This book aims to facilitate a more intense dialogue between Scottish and postcolonial studies by providing entry points for scholars and students, and perhaps even some general readers, who are approaching these intersections from different directions. Readers who are new to Scottish studies but may already have a background in postcolonial or critical ethnic studies regarding other cultural contexts, such as Afro-Caribbean, South Asian, Chicano, or Native American studies, are provided with sufficient introductory information to make Scottish texts and debates intelligible and meaningful to them. Readers who approach this dialogue from the side of Scottish studies but are relatively new to international postcolonial thought receive pointers to key postcolonial concepts, authors, and texts which provide initial orientation as a basis for further explorations. While this book is thus mainly an introductory survey, even specialist scholars in the (as yet relatively small) field of postcolonial Scottish studies, or in related areas like nineteenth-century literature about the Scottish Highlands, may find that it gives them some new insights, for example into critically neglected authors or into the ways in which texts and tropes already well-known in a more specialized context can be brought into a wider purview through comparison with other national or historical contexts.

Thus, this book tries to chart important foundations of Scottish postcolonial writing by examining how cultural marginalization and resistance are negotiated in anglophone Scottish writing from the first centuries of the dynastic (1603) and political (1707) Union with England. These early texts give crucial insights into the sense of internal hierarchy which was built into pan-British national identity constructs from the beginning, and which contemporary “postcolonial” Scottish literature and criticism writes against. These modern political and cultural debates can only be understood against the background of earlier discursive traditions and social experiences. Furthermore, this book highlights that postcolonial approaches pertain not only to Scottish-English relations, but also to ethno-cultural divisions within Scotland, especially those between the anglophone Lowlands and the traditionally Gaelic-speaking Highlands. The present study focuses on these internal divisions to show the complexity of the Scottish postcolonial question, and to illuminate some of the wider issues which also pertain to Scottish
postcolonialism in general. Constructions of the Gaels between ethnic oth-
ering and national integration are central to the “internal colonialism” debate. 
They also play a crucial role in the evolution of colonial and postcolonial 
moments in Scottish-English relations.

But before engaging with those issues in detail, it may be helpful to give 
a brief introductory outline of some basic conceptual, theoretical, historical, 
and disciplinary issues.

Colonialism, Postcolonialism, and Postcolonial Studies: 
Basic Concepts and Themes

Generally, colonialism is understood as a process by which one country 
imposes its dominance on a territory which was previously not part of its 
domain, and often is not even a direct neighbor but lies at considerable geo-
graphical distance. Geographical distance can also entail a sense of great 
cultural difference between colonizers and colonized. Moreover, colonial-
ism often maintains a very strong sense of hierarchy between the colonizer 
country’s “home” population and the inhabitants of the colony. Colonial 
domination can work on the political, economic, demographic, and cultural 
levels, and a range of “typical” manifestations have been identified for each 
of these. Not all of them necessarily appear together in the same place or 
time, but usually at least some of them are combined.

Politically, colonization can involve the annexation of territories that were 
previously under different control (either the indigenous population’s or 
another foreign power’s), and the subjection of the annexed lands and popu-
lations to the colonizer’s political, legal, and administrative authority. This 
can take direct or indirect forms. For instance, French colonialism is often 
associated with a very direct imposition of French authority and administra-
tive structures on its overseas dependencies. British colonialism, by contrast, 
is often associated with more indirect forms of control: local political, legal, 
or administrative structures, and often also local elites, were nominally kept 
in place, but only under the ultimate authority and control of the colonizer, 
with the option of more direct interference if local mediating structures and 
personnel did not deliver the desired results. It is also assumed that colonial-
ism, with its strong intercultural hierarchies and frequent dismissal of the 
value of local lives, entailed particularly strong clashes of interest between 
the rulers (colonizers and partly also their local intermediaries) and the ruled 
(the mass of the colonized population). These strong clashes of interest often 
necessitated considerable violence, for instance in the form of military subju-
gation or particularly strict policing.

Economically, colonialism can involve the establishment of small trading 
outposts in remote regions in order to facilitate the export of the colonizer’s 
homemade commodities in exchange for “exotic” goods. It can also involve
the establishment of more extensive territorial control in order to secure the flow of the desired commodities and enforce a monopoly to the exclusion of local and international competitors. Perhaps especially in the latter context, there is a strong sense of power imbalance, and the benefits of the exchange seem to lie rather one-sidedly with the colonizer. For instance, there can be a forcible reorientation of the colony’s economy towards a limited range of raw materials for export to the “mother country” (e.g., England) where they are processed and mainly also consumed, whereas local manufactures and even some sectors of local agriculture (even basic foodstuffs) are discouraged so that those products need to be imported at high prices from the colonizer, who thus makes greater profits while the majority of the local population ends up more impoverished than it might have been without this colonial trade. Here, too, colonial systems are often considered to be even more exploitative than other forms of rule, such as precolonial ones or the ones which are practiced within the mother country itself.

Demographically, colonialism can involve considerable movements of population, often across vast geographical and cultural distances. For instance, people from the mother country moved to colonial dependencies, either temporarily or permanently. Sometimes, this happened in smaller numbers to fulfill key positions in “controlling” a labor force which was still largely indigenous, as in British India. Elsewhere, more extensive resettlement was used to rid the mother country of “superfluous” population (criminals or paupers) that might be more profitably settled elsewhere, to stabilize the colonizer’s control against the competing interests of indigenous populations or other colonial powers, or to replace local forms of production that were not sufficiently profitable to the colonizer with more lucrative systems imported from the mother country, as happened when certain Native American or Aboriginal Australian hunter-gatherer economies were replaced with European farming systems and imported European farmers. Resettlement can be voluntary, as with some of the European “pioneer” farmers who hoped for better life chances, or enforced, as with deported British criminals, Native Americans resettled on “reservations,” or the millions of enslaved Africans shipped to the New World as a colonial labor force. Often enough, colonial demographic displacements grew to the dimension of genocide through loss of land (entailing poverty and starvation), outrageously bad travel conditions (as on the Middle Passage), imported diseases, and outright slaughter. The hierarchization of different population groups was often shored up by the construction of supposedly innate “racial” biological distinctions between them which placed these groups in a “natural” hierarchy and justified the maltreatment of the “lower” orders on this “racial” ladder.

Colonialism also involves the construction of cultural hierarchies: the colonizer’s language(s) and cultural forms are claimed to be superior, while those of the colonized are systematically devalued and discriminated against. Sometimes this can be a mere corollary of material hierarchies: the dominant
power imposes the terms of interaction, and colonizers who were too lazy to learn the colony’s language(s) had the means to pressure locals to learn the colonizers’ language(s) instead. Here as well, the highly unequal terms of colonial culture contact become obvious. Cultural hierarchies can also help to legitimate and stabilize material hierarchies. The claim that one culture is worth more than the other can boost the colonizer’s sense of supremacy and assuage potential pangs of guilt about the treatment of the colonized, thus deflecting the risk of anticolonial critique within the colonizer’s own ranks. If the colonizer manages to instill his ideas of cultural hierarchies among the colonized, the latter can come to believe in their own inferiority, which can reduce the risk of resistance: such colonized subjects may either conceive the ambition to imitate the colonizer and voluntarily discard their own culture, or at least resign themselves to their subordinate status even if imitating the colonizer is beyond their wishes or means (e.g., because they cannot afford a European education). Hierarchies between different population groups can also be shored up by exaggerating the extent of the cultural differences that lie between them: colonial ideologies often construct colonizer and colonized as exact opposites, setting up a binary distinction between self and “Other”; and such claims of absolute cultural distinctness are used to legitimate social distinctions, similar to the way that claims of “racial” distinctions are used. Postcolonial scholarship refers to these and related processes as “othering,” often spelling the constructed “Other” with a capital letter.

Colonial ideas of hierarchy are not just imposed on cultural products (e.g., by saying that British literature is better than Indian literature); they are also constructed directly through cultural products, by what is said within individual texts and visual artworks. For instance, when a great number of novels, history books, and works of art portray people from certain ethnic groups as inferior and the colonial project as a glorious civilizing mission which will ultimately benefit all, people brought up with these cultural products may come to accept colonial hierarchies as natural and justified. This is where the notion of “colonial discourse” comes in—another central term in the postcolonial studies repertoire. Just as colonialism is associated with specific social phenomena, colonial discourse is associated with a range of specific representation patterns which are used to establish or justify colonial power imbalances and hegemonies. These include the devaluation of “native” history and indigenous sociopolitical forms as inferior, chaotic, and barbaric: “natives” are either claimed to be incapable of ruling themselves (“primitive tribal structures”), or the achievements of non-European self-rule are grudgingly acknowledged (e.g., because the size, complexity, and long-standing stability of Asian empires was too evident to deny) but still pronounced to be inferior to Western forms because local states and laws were allegedly more cruel and tyrannous than “enlightened” modern European systems of law and order. Local economic traditions were also deemed inferior to the colonizer’s, for example on account of “inefficiency.” Colonized people’s intellectual,
cultural, and moral abilities were likewise frequently ranked as inferior. Local languages, oratures, and literatures were devalued as crude and unpolished; local science was deemed unscientific; local education systems left people “uneducated”; and local moral sensibilities were supposedly corrupted or at least underdeveloped by the imperfections of the barbaric sociocultural systems which nurtured them. Local people’s discursive authority, that is, their right to tell their own (hi)story, comment on the colonial encounter from their own perspective, and speak about the world with insight, good judgment, and authority, was denied, since the colonizers claimed all discursive authority for themselves.

A classic study of colonial discourse strategies can be found in Edward W. Said’s book *Orientalism.* His critical analysis of Western representations of “the Orient” shows how “the West” and “the East” were constructed as binary opposites, how Westerners set themselves up as the best authorities for speaking about the East rather than letting the East speak for itself, how this shored up Western notions of superiority, and how it legitimized imperialist projects. Said’s findings also illuminate more general principles of imperialist ideology which have been at work in other parts of the world as well. For example, the colonizers’ arrogation of the right to speak about and for their Others without respecting the Others’ own voices can also be discerned in white European discourse about black Africans or Native Americans. Said’s work has thus been treated as a major founding text of the entire field of colonial discourse analysis, which often looks at similar ideological strategies employed across different regions.

Nonetheless, colonial discourse does not only consist of open devaluation: there is often also an element of attraction, exoticist fascination with the cultural “Other,” expressed by Orientalists, tourists, travel writers, and so on. It is also possible to portray the Other not as ignoble savages but as noble savages, for instance by romanticizing the “primitive” as a site of moral innocence and other “simple virtues.” But even here, the patronizing, condescending implications of colonial discourse are evident: for example, innocence and “simple virtues” are deemed the result of ignorance, intellectual simplicity, and social backwardness. Attraction to the Other can also take the forms of erotic interest, personal sympathy, or friendship for certain individuals, or even a genuine recognition and espousal of certain “native” cultural features as equal or superior to the colonizer’s own. After all, some colonizers were so attracted by the colonized that they “went native.” Other colonizers often regarded this as unsettling, a dangerous destabilization of colonial certainties and hierarchies. The mixture of repulsion and attraction which characterized colonial discourse could create considerable unease.

The responses of the colonized to the colonial encounter can likewise entail an ambivalent mixture of attraction and repulsion. On the one hand, colonial inequalities and violence can create anger and resistance. On the other hand, colonial education caused many colonized people to internalize
the colonizer’s ideologies and develop a sense of inferiority or self-hatred, a “cultural cringe” which made them devalue their own traditions, and a desire to imitate the colonizer. A classical examination of colonial psychology can, for instance, be found in Frantz Fanon’s case studies of black Caribbean and African sensibilities affected by French colonialism. But here as well, imitation can also destabilize colonial hierarchies. It is a two-edged sword: on the one hand, colonial ideologies want colonized people to imitate (mimic) the colonizer as an act of assimilation which marks their subjugation, facilitates the functioning of colonial society, and “advances civilization.” On the other hand, mimicry can have a subversive dimension. First, imitation requires close scrutiny of the model, and if the colonized scrutinize the colonizer too intensely, they might discern flaws in his logic, contradictions in his social system, or weaknesses in his culture, all of which might call the superiority of the colonizer into question. Second, imitation can be too successful: a complete erasure of cultural difference between colonizer and colonized would again threaten the colonizer’s superiority. Third, mimicry can also have a dimension of mockery: imitation can be used for parody, which likewise threatens authority. For all these reasons, mimicry can also make the colonizer uneasy; and the colonized can sometimes use it (consciously or unconsciously) to undermine the colonial hierarchy.

Another, related concept which highlights the ambivalence of colonial discourse between attraction and repulsion, and between binary Othering and the destabilization of cultural boundaries, is hybridity. There are different ways in which this concept has been used. One usage is rooted in biological contexts, for instance regarding the cross-breeding of plants and animals. Here, the hybrid is understood as a mixture between two usually distinct life forms. This understanding of hybridity also informs racist discourse about human “races” and “miscegenation” (the result of erotic attraction to the supposedly repulsive Other, discussed above). Similar essentialism which assumes innate distinctions can be found in texts about “culture clashes,” for instance between “East” and “West.” Although the idea of a culture clash is ostensibly not based on racial biology but on cultural difference, it assumes an innate essentialism and almost insurmountable differences which are similar to racial essentialism, and discourse on “culture clash” often has an underlying racist dimension. It assumes the purity and separateness of “races” or cultures as the norm, while implying that hybridity is, or at least should be, a mere exception. Such kinds of ethno-cultural essentialism often feature in colonial discourse, but also in certain kinds of popular discourse today, ascribing supposedly innate characteristics to human groups which mark them as insurmountably different, inferior or superior, morally good or morally evil, thus justifying imperialist or neo-imperialist projects, restrictive border regimes, and unequal social systems that privilege certain social groups over others. However, hybridity can also be more than a supposed exception which confirms the essentialist norm of (usually) insurmountable
differences: it blurs binary distinctions between “races” or cultures in a way that highlights the general constructedness and artificiality of essentialist “racial” and cultural categories. It thus helps to destabilize these categories and the social (e.g., colonial) hierarchies they underpin. Like mimicry, hybridity is another manifestation of ambivalence which can subvert colonial discourse, Othering, and power relations. This non-essentialist, subversive dimension of hybridity is foregrounded in postcolonial scholarship.7

Where colonial subjects deploy the subversive potential of mimicry and hybridity intentionally, this leads us from colonial to anticolonial texts. As the name implies, anticolonial writing aims to contest colonial hegemonies. Here too, various typical patterns of representation have evolved. These include a direct critique of colonial political, economic, and social inequalities, as well as practical initiatives to overthrow them, for instance through political resistance. But these direct measures are also complemented and supported by more discourse-centered resistance strategies, such as questioning the colonizer’s authority to narrate the story of the colonized, asserting the colonized’s own discursive authority, rewriting history from the perspective of the colonized, “writing back” to colonial literature by again retelling stories from the viewpoint of the margins, and vindicating indigenous traditions. There can also be attempts to revive indigenous cultures that were damaged by colonialism. Sometimes, this takes relatively conservative, reconstructionist, “nativist” forms; but it can also involve a conscious embrace of cultural fusion, for instance between “tradition” and “modernity,” or between local and international influences.

“Postcolonialism” likewise has different meanings, some of them focusing more on the material and social sphere, and others focusing more on discourse and culture. For instance, used in a sociohistorical sense, based on the literal meaning of “post” as “after,” the term “postcolonialism” can be used to mean “after colonialism.” Here the term can, for instance, refer to postindependence efforts of a newly created nation state to give itself viable political structures or decolonize and improve its economic infrastructure. Literary and cultural historians might also use the term historically, to refer to postindependence writing, for instance. Here as well, the “post” in “postcolonialism” is understood in a strictly temporary sense of “pastness,” as “after.” But there is also a looser usage of the term which relies on a desire to transcend colonialism, to leave it behind and make it a thing of the past. As this does not happen overnight, vestiges of the colonial inheritance often linger for a considerable time after formal independence, so that many efforts at transcending it also take place in the postindependence period. But they do not begin there: these efforts already begin while colonialism still exists, and tend to play an important role in bringing independence about. In this usage, “postcolonialism” as a movement and as a set of resistant strategies of representation can be synonymous with “anticolonialism.” Anticolonial and postcolonial strategies are often very similar and contest colonial hegemonies
in similar ways. Sometimes, they articulate counter-perspectives which take the side of the colonized rather than the colonizer’s, while not questioning the binarism between colonized and colonizer as such. At other times, they attack the binarism itself, for instance by consciously deploying hybridity as a resistance strategy to deconstruct these distinctions. Some scholars express the distinction between different usages of “postcolonialism” by spelling the term without a hyphen when it is used in this looser, discourse-based trans-historical sense as “anti-,” and a desire to transcend which starts already in colonial times, and spelling it with a hyphen when using it in the stricter historical sense of “after” colonialism, that is, “postindependence.” This useful distinction is also followed in the present study. I also sometimes use the bracketed form “(post)colonialism” as a convenient shorthand for “colonialism and/or postcolonialism.”

Postcolonial studies likewise comprises a wide range of different approaches. For instance, a social science approach might focus on the postindependence period, analyzing post-colonial nation-building policies or economic reforms. In literary and cultural studies, the term “post-colonial” is also sometimes used in a historical sense, for instance to discuss period distinctions between pre- and postindependence literary history, or to chart cultural initiatives to support postindependence nation-building. But generally, the field of postcolonial literary and cultural studies is much wider and also takes in the colonial period. This not only comprises the study of anticolonial cultural resistance, but also the critical analysis of pro-colonial texts, or more ambivalent colonial representations which stand somewhere in between resistance and collusion. Colonial discourse analysis is an important subfield of postcolonial studies.

Like postcolonial literature or postcolonial cultural activism, postcolonial scholarship can sometime take a nativist counter-perspective without substantially questioning binarisms between colonizer and colonized, but most postcolonial scholarship arguably favors a more deconstructive approach. That is, it favors a non-essentialist understanding of human cultural, “racial,” and national groupings which recognizes that these group categories are not based on innate features, but are products of social construction which are underwritten by specific institutions and textual practices. This deconstructive approach also underlies the strong interest of postcolonial studies in hybridity as a phenomenon which subverts essentialist categories and boundaries.8

The frequently skeptical attitude of postcolonial scholars toward essentialist constructions of social group categories can also lead to a critique of post-colonial nation-states, their claims of national unity, and the fiction that they represent their entire population. Such skepticism towards the nation-state can, for instance, be found in the postcolonial subfield of subaltern studies, which has transferred Antonio Gramsci’s concept of the subaltern, which originally referred to lower-class populations, for instance in Italy, to (post)colonial contexts. While this transfer initially emerged in studies on
South Asia, concepts of subalternity have also been applied to other parts of the colonial and post-colonial world, for instance concerning the special marginality of tribal/indigenous, lower-class, female, and/or LGBT populations within colonial and postcolonial hierarchies, and their relationships to anti- and post-colonial nationalism. Spivak’s gender-related discussions of subalternity also offer connections to the concept of “double colonization,” which has also been applied to the double marginalization of “native” women in terms of both ethnicity/nationality and gender.

The interest of postcolonial studies in deconstructing ideas of national or ethnic homogeneity, whether due to internal inequalities or due to cultural hybridity, is also reflected in the field’s enormous interest in themes of migration and diaspora. To some extent, these interests were always part of postcolonial studies, but currently they are a particularly prominent concern in postcolonial scholarship. Experiences of migration and diaspora almost invariably entail an intense concern with cultural hybridity, as well as the need to engage with contemporary ethno-racial hierarchies and exclusion mechanisms which have survived long beyond the colonial period and still characterize the way in which many nation-states, in the West and elsewhere, deal with migrants and diasporic minorities in their midst. Hence, many strategies of anti- and postcolonial criticism can also be applied to the critique of discrimination and cultural essentialism in scenarios which are not (or no longer) “colonial” in the strict, formal sense.

Another contemporary trend in postcolonial studies, which is partly related to the boom in migration and diaspora studies, is the increasing shift of semantic preference from “postcolonial” to “cosmopolitan” or “transcultural.” Again, this shift recognizes that phenomena of culture contact or hybridity are not exclusively restricted to colonial contexts, but can also pertain to other contexts, for example contemporary migrations or life in multicultural global mega-cities. Postcolonial studies recognizes that many of its insights can also be adapted to these new phenomena, but reflects the extension of its purview beyond colonial contexts by a change in terminology which likewise moves away from an exclusively “colonial” reference point.

Recent postcolonial criticism has also shown a marked interest in ecocriticism, which extends the field’s interest in conquest, hierarchies, and othering between humans to hierarchies between humans and other—or “Other(ed)”—life forms, to human discourse about the “conquest” of nature, and to the critique of those constructions in favor of more sustainable forms of human-human and human-nonhuman coexistence. Another recent growth sector in postcolonial scholarship is trauma studies. Again, these can either refer to the traumas induced by colonialism or anticolonial wars of independence, or to traumas induced by more recent social phenomena, such as post-colonial civil wars or modern racist violence.

As this overview shows, postcolonial literary and cultural studies are often characterized by a very strong thematic interest in the relationship between
language, cultural representation, power imbalances, and violence, as well as the critique of those unequal and violent structures. Nonetheless, the engagement of postcolonial studies with these themes often focuses on particular regions of the world, namely those which were on the receiving end of modern European colonial overseas expansion. For instance, this includes former British colonies in South Asia, Africa, and the Caribbean. Former British “settler colonies” like Australia, Canada, or New Zealand are also often included, although there has been some controversy about whether the white people who dominated those societies had any right to claim (post)colonial status. First, their degree of marginality vis-à-vis the British mother country was less pronounced than the marginality of predominantly nonwhite colonial societies like India, Kenya, Nigeria, Trinidad, and so on—a difference still reflected in the fact that former settler colonies tend to be ranked among the “First World” countries whereas many other former colonies are part of the “Third World.” Second, the (post)colonized status of white Australians, Canadians, or New Zealanders is arguably compromised by their role in the colonization and ongoing marginalization of their countries’ nonwhite indigenous populations. Despite these problems, the inclusion of these countries under the postcolonial studies umbrella has been strongly advocated and is widely accepted.

Comparative postcolonial approaches cross not only “racial” and geographical boundaries, but language boundaries as well: former French colonies in Africa or the Caribbean, or former Spanish colonies in the Caribbean or continental Latin America, are also frequently listed as central areas of postcolonial inquiry. Some understandings of “postcolonial studies” not only refer to cultural products from those regions which reflect on such core “postcolonial themes” as colonialism, anticolonialism, hierarchy, cultural difference, or hybridity, but extend the label “postcolonial” to any cultural product which comes from a country that was formally colonized, whether it engages with those themes or not. This regional understanding of postcolonialism also means that postcolonial scholarly engagements with migrants and diasporics often focus particularly on those that are rooted in former colonies, perhaps especially if they face ongoing problems of “race”-based othering and discrimination, as is the case with black and Asian British people, for instance. There is often an uneasy oscillation between a regional and a thematic understanding of the term “postcolonialism.” The difference between these two usages is not always made explicit, which can cause complications because they can lead to vastly diverging conclusions about the transferability of postcolonial methods to other contexts. Regional understandings of postcolonialism tie the application of postcolonial patterns of textual analysis to regions of the world that were once subjected to European overseas colonialism, and to migrants and diasporics that hail from those regions. A thematic understanding of postcolonialism, by contrast, begs the question whether postcolonialism’s thematic interests in the construction and deconstruction of ethno-cultural hierarchies, culture contact, and so on,
should really only be limited to formal (ex-)colonies, or whether these themes can also be found elsewhere, so that the analytical tools developed by post-colonial studies can also be usefully adapted to other regional frameworks, such as Scotland. Some implications of this question will be discussed in the following section.

**How Do Scotland and the “Celtic Fringe” Fit into the (Post)Colonial Framework? Connections, Ambiguities, and Limitations**

Scotland is not the only country which has been suggested for inclusion in an expanded postcolonial canon. A whole range of “new postcolonialisms,” as these extensions of postcolonial studies may be called, have been proposed, especially with regard to (largely white) ethnic minorities and marginalized small nations within Europe itself. These include non-Germans in the Habsburg Empire and non-Russians in the tsarist Russian Empire or (post-) Soviet eastern Europe. Habsburg, Russian, and Soviet imperialism are atypical from a standard postcolonial perspective because these imperialisms did not happen far away overseas, but among neighboring countries, regions, and peoples. There have also been postcolonial discussions of the Jewish diaspora. The new postcolonialisms also include the internal “fringe” regions of the British Isles and the English mainstream’s cultural Others in Ireland, Scotland, and Wales. Again, these were atypical “colonies” because they were not officially labeled as such but were often considered integral parts of the mother country, for instance due to greater geographic, cultural, and “racial” proximity. They were also atypical because their quasi-colonial experience started long before the modern period, in the Middle Ages or earlier. If it is so atypical, who do people try to include Scotland in the postcolonial canon at all? Is postcolonialism now no more than a trendy academic bandwagon which Scottish studies scholars are trying to jump onto in order to give a fashionable theoretical and international air to their work? Not necessarily. There are arguably some real parallels. Partly, the parallels which have been proposed are open to debate, but are at least worth mentioning. Other parallels are more consensually accepted. This section will sketch a few central points in Scottish, Gaelic, and “Celtic” social and cultural history, compare these to the checklist of “typical” colonial and postcolonial patterns given above, and discuss parallels and differences between Scottish and overseas (post)colonial experiences.

First, it is important to clarify how Scotland, Gaeldom, and Celticity relate to each other. Some use the term “Celtic fringe” to encompass all regions within the British Isles with a non-English ethnic or national identity and, arguably, a certain history of discursive, political, or economic marginalization by English hegemony, sometimes irrespective of how marginalized such territories are today, and irrespective of whether the inhabitants still speak
Celtic languages. In this sense, the term “Celtic fringe” would also include anglophone Lowland Scotland and even its industrial Central Belt, as well as industrial and comparatively anglicized South Wales. Others argue that these industrialized, urbanized, and anglophone areas are “metropolitan” enough to preclude the labeling of these entire countries as either “Celtic” or “fringe.” It is thus argued that the label “Celtic fringe” should only be applied to parts of those countries which are indeed Celtic-speaking, economically disadvantaged, and/or marginalized on account of rurality.21 It could also be argued that, even before industrialization, Scotland was economically or politically far less marginalized than Wales or Ireland. Nonetheless, some degree of marginality has even pertained at a pan-Scottish level, for instance in political relations between Scotland and England. However, a particularly marginalized part of Scotland can indeed be found on its internal “Celtic fringe,” in the traditionally Gaelic-speaking, largely rural, and often economically disadvantaged Highlands and Western Isles.22 The Gaels were long considered as a separate ethnic group within Scotland, set apart not only by their language and their geographical concentration on the mountains and islands, but also by different political, legal, administrative, and economic structures, as well as distinct cultural traditions, for instance regarding literary conventions, dress, music, and partly also spiritual beliefs. This “Celtic” people was often denigrated by anglophone Lowland Scots in terms which resemble colonial discourse. At times, Celts were even considered as racially distinct from Britain’s Anglo-Saxon mainstream, despite their geographical and cultural proximity and despite their shared whiteness. Again, this shows that sameness and otherness are a matter of discursive and social construction, and that even a not-so-distant margin can be considered as radically “other”—different enough to appear comparable to overseas colonized subjects.

But the connection between Celticity and what might be called colonial discourse far predates the foundation of the Scottish state, and goes back to Greek and Roman writers of classical antiquity. It is here that the first recorded uses of the category “Celt” appeared. The labels *Keltoi*, *Celtae*, and related terms were applied to various “barbarian” peoples who usually lived to the northwest of the Greek or Roman “centers” of “civilization.” Many of these peoples lived in Continental Europe rather than the British Isles. Even the question of whether they were at least united by mutually related Celtic languages is uncertain. Greek and Roman writers often constructed the relationship between “barbarians” and their own cultures in terms of binary oppositions and civilizational hierarchies, using many strategies of textual representation which reappear in modern colonial discourse. There were also concepts of “civilizing missions,” for instance in relation to cultural romanization in conquered imperial provinces. The label “Celtic” was presumably imposed from the outside as a blanket label for a range of peoples whose main commonality was that they were northwestern barbarian Others to some Mediterranean center. As such, the concept of Celticity is from the
outset intimately related to cultural power imbalances, problems of discursive authority, and “colonial discourse.”

When the Roman Empire collapsed, the blanket category “Celtic” likewise fell out of use. In northern Britain, other ancient “colonial discourse” patterns also became rarer. Post-Roman and early medieval political and cultural relationships between different ethno-political groups often seemed too equivocal and devoid of clear lasting hegemonies to evolve such patterns. And the Gaels, who now emerged as one of the identifiable ethnic groups of Scotland and Ireland, were still far from being a margin; instead, they were very much a mainstream. The Gaels were one of the two “founding peoples” of the Scottish kingdom which emerged in the ninth century. The other founding people were the Picts, another presumably Celtic-speaking people, while anglophone population groups only achieved prominence in the later history of the country. Even in the High Middle Ages, Gaelic was at the heart of the Scottish kingdom: the royal dynasty traced its ancestry back to Ireland and used Gaelic at court, and the language was also widespread among the general population—although there were parts of Lowland Scotland where Scots, rather than Gaelic, was prevalent. Gradually, however, the balance of intra-Scottish political, economic, and cultural power relations tipped toward the Scots-speaking population. Scottish Gaels, like other Celtic-speaking populations in Wales and Ireland, now experienced increasing marginalization from internally and externally expansive Scottish and English states.

At some point, the slowly retreating Scottish Gaelic language started to be imagined mainly as the tongue of the mountainous Highlands and the islands in the west, though sociolinguistic realities of its spread were more complex. The region was also associated with wildness and more primitive ways of life. The dichotomy which then emerged between “civilized Scots-speaking Lowlands” and “wild Gaelic-speaking Highlands” (which often tacitly includes the islands off the west coast) is epitomized in the concept of “the Highland line”—a concept which summarizes the idea that the line which can be drawn on a map between Highlands and Lowlands is congruous with the sociolinguistic line between Gaelic-speaking and non-Gaelic-speaking communities, and with the cultural demarcation between “barbarism” and “civilization.” With the reemergence of more stable hegemonies and stronger states, classical antiquity’s “colonial discourse” patterns and the concept of the “Celtic” northwestern barbarian likewise experienced a revival and came to be used in English or Lowland-Scottish representations of Celtic-speaking margins. Precisely how this was done will be explored and documented in further detail in the subsequent chapters of this book. For the present, a few introductory remarks will hopefully suffice.

The tendency to see the Gaels as an internal barbarian Other within an otherwise civilized, progressive, and anglophone-dominated Scottish nation-state began in the late medieval period, reached its heyday between the early
modern era and the late nineteenth century, but partly even survived into the present. This positioning of the Gaels as an internally marginalized Other within Scotland is mirrored on a larger scale by the internally marginalized position of Scotland as a whole in relation to its more powerful English neighbor. This also becomes more palpable in the early modern period, after the dynastic Union of 1603 which placed these still separate, but unequal states under the same monarch. From now on, British monarchs would often be swayed to privilege English interests over the often conflicting, but less powerful interests of their Scottish subjects. In 1707, the Union of Parliaments completely merged the two states into a single pan-British state. However, neither one of these two political Unions was an act of formal colonial conquest. Scotland was never formally an English colony, but officially an equal partner in a merger of states. Moreover, Scotland is geographically and culturally very close to its English quasi-colonizer, and there has often been a sense of racial proximity as well, albeit with exceptions. In all these respects, distances and hierarchies between Britain and its former overseas colonies have seemed much greater than the inequalities between Scotland and England. Scotland was not only an alien, peripheral Other to its English fellow Britons, but also a part of the national “Self”: otherness was complemented by a sense of sameness. This is not only true for Scottish-English relations, but also for Gaeldom in relation to anglophone Britons. This distinguishes the Scottish/Gaelic experience from that of indigenous populations in overseas (post)colonies who were often portrayed as completely “other.” Sameness and proximity to the British mainstream also allowed “internally colonized” Scots, even Gaelic-speaking ones, to transform themselves into colonizers by playing important roles in the overseas empire, alongside their English compatriots. In the eyes of some, this overshadows the Scots’ “internally colonized” position within Britain. However, it must be borne in mind that even overseas colonized subjects were sometimes given active roles as colonizers (though merely “assistant” ones, since the higher-ranking positions open to Scots were usually barred to nonwhite overseas colonized subjects), to aid in the subjugation of other overseas colonial populations. Moreover, even the otherness of nonwhite colonized subjects was not always thought to be insurmountable: after all, the fiction of a civilizing mission implied the possibility that they, too, could at least acquire some degree of sameness, if not immediately, then at least in future.

Critics of postcolonial approaches in Scottish studies might also cite the fact that Scotland’s integration into an English-dominated British state and the anglicization of Scottish culture were largely accomplished by Scotland’s own elites rather than being coercively imposed from outside. This does not seem to conform to the more direct and brutal domination which is typically associated with overseas colonialism. While this is indeed a very important caveat, it must also be borne in mind that even overseas colonialism often combined direct rule and violent coercion with more indirect and subtle
forms of control. As noted above, British colonialism is especially well known for the extent to which it relied on indirect rule. If we recall that indirect rule, the cooperation of local intermediaries, and voluntary self-anglicizations of ambitious colonized subjects were also features of British overseas colonialism, the difference between the latter and “internal colonialism” in Scotland might appear to be a difference in degree rather than a difference in kind. Moreover, more direct forms of subjugation and coercion were not entirely absent in the Scottish context either, as the following chapters will show. In the Highlands in particular, political subjugation under central state authority and the introduction of capitalism had a stronger element of external imposition and often took more violent forms. Here especially, comparisons with overseas colonialism do not seem entirely far-fetched. In addition to the more classical paradigms of (post)colonial studies, Highland history and its textual representation may also afford connections with the more recent subfield of postcolonial trauma studies, for instance regarding the government’s punitive measures in the Highlands after the mid-eighteenth-century rebellion.

The Highland economy also took more obviously “colonial” forms than the economy of the Lowlands. The latter remained relatively diversified even after the Union with England and later even became a major center of industrialization and international commerce. In the Highlands, we have a more typically “colonial” scenario: reliance on only a small range of products, mainly raw materials for export, and accordingly a great vulnerability to agricultural misfortunes and price fluctuations. Poverty in the Highlands was often greater, and living standards were lower than in the Lowlands.

There were also initiatives to implant small contingents of Lowland settlers in the Highlands in order to aid the establishment of modern capitalist “civilization” in the region. There was also large-scale dispossession and enforced displacement of Highland farmers from their lands, the so-called Highland Clearances. Often these were cataclysmic experiences which might afford further connections to postcolonial trauma studies. The various agricultural and infrastructural “improvement” projects to “tame” and “modernize” the Highland landscape, and the various literary responses to those projects, can also be studied through an ecocritical lens. Some of the displaced clearance victims were resettled on less desirable tracts of Highland territory (arguably similar to the less desirable lands often used for “Indian reservations” in North America), where they were vulnerable to further exploitation. Others went to the industrial centers of the Lowlands. Yet others were forcibly or (more or less) voluntarily relocated to the “New World,” sometimes in so-called coffin ships which were hardly seaworthy so that migrants risked their lives by traveling in them, and which were so tightly packed and unhygienic that some observers were tempted to compare them to the slave ships of the Middle Passage. If they made it, however, even Gaelic migrants from Scotland had the chance to transform themselves from “intra-British colonized” to
overseas colonizers of nonwhite indigenous populations and repeat the dispossessions, denigrations, and discrimination they had experienced at home in a different context abroad. Again, this change of roles has justly been cited as a caveat which limits the applicability of the label “colonized” to the Scots. However, the mainstream of international postcolonial studies has already long accepted the application of the labels “colonized” and “postcolonial” to the white people who dominated British “settler colonies” like Australia, Canada, or New Zealand, although it has rightly been doubted whether these people had any right to claim colonized status in light of the fact that whiteness still gave them access to a great deal of privilege and power compared to the much more marginalized nonwhite populations in their own countries (whom they often actively helped to suppress) and in other parts of the world. If we accept white Canadians or New Zealanders (many of whom actually came from Gaelic Scotland) as “(post)colonized,” then why not accept the application of the same label to Gaelic Scots at home?

In addition to these political and economic ambiguities, there are also cultural ambiguities which are important to the discussion of whether Scotland, or at least its Gaels, can be considered as internally colonized within an anglocentric Britain. As already noted, Scots were not only England’s Other, but also a fellow British “Same”: the sense of cultural difference was less pronounced than in overseas contexts. Especially the Scots-speaking Lowlands were often considered as an anglophone sister country to England, though perhaps a slightly more rustic and unpolished one. Also, anglicization in Scotland—particularly in the Scots-speaking areas where the change to Standard English was relatively easy to accomplish—was often voluntary and self-imposed, rather than being imposed through direct English pressure. Nonetheless, a sense of linguistic and cultural hierarchy pertained even here, and probably exerted indirect pressure on ambitious Scots to anglicize their accents, habits, and tastes. But again, this does not entirely preclude comparisons with overseas colonies because similar processes of self-anglicization by career-oriented “natives” appeared there, too. In the Gaidhealtachd, the sense of difference from, and inferiority to, Britain’s anglocentric mainstream again appeared greater than in anglophone, Lowland Scotland. Here, the pressures for anglicization were even greater, and could also take a more direct form, for instance in anti-Gaelic legislation.

The devaluation of local languages is not the only colonial discourse pattern that is relevant to Scotland. “Ignoble” forms of primitivism were also identified in Scotland’s pre-Union history, which was seen as backward and unprogressive, thus justifying the Union as a kind of civilizing mission which opened the way for Scotland’s progress. Even more backwardness was projected onto Highland history to justify the region’s more energetic integration into the modern central state, first the Scottish and then the British one. There were also dismissals of Highland orature and literature, spiritual beliefs, clothing, and music. External initiatives to bring “civilization” to
Gaels included the introduction of an anglocentric school system, religious missions, and an eighteenth-century ban on Highland dress.

As in overseas colonial discourse, not all local features were seen as ignoble; there were also idealizations of “noble savagery.” English or anglicized Scottish elites developed a romantic taste for Robert Burns’s Scots poems as an attractive specimen of the simple charms of Lowland rusticity; and kilted Highlanders were romanticized as primitive warrior heroes (and useful, exploitable cannon fodder) or objectified as fascinatingly exotic and wild hypermasculine sex symbols.

Although colonial discourse patterns were applied to both Lowlands and Highlands, the overseas colonial connection is particularly strong in the latter. Celtic and non-European “barbarians” were often discussed in a parallel manner, so much so that various scholars have used the terms “Celticism” and “Highlandism” in analogy to “Orientalism,” in deliberate allusion to Said’s work, thus underlining the connections between “Celts” and colonial discourse.

If we regard the entirety of Scotland as an internal colony within the borders of the British state, Scotland’s own internal Gaelic margin can be termed “doubly” or “multiply” colonized. In international postcolonial studies, the concept of double or multiple colonization refers to various particularly disadvantaged segments of a colony’s population, such as women or indigenous populations within white settler colonies. In analogy to the latter, the concept might also be applied to the Gaelic minority within an already marginalized Scotland. For instance, as Michael Newton has aptly put it, Lowlanders often “passed on to the Highlanders the derision they felt coming from the English,” and “anti-Gaelic prejudices of the Lowland elite can be seen as projections upon the Highlands of what they rejected in themselves in their efforts to become respectable and . . . ‘civilised’ in the eyes of the European ‘elite’”—including the English elite, which was often the dominant reference point in the British framework. To some extent, Gaeldom can also be viewed through the lens of subaltern studies, since people from this ethno-linguistic minority (and especially from its monoglot, non-English-speaking, and partly also illiterate lower classes) were not only particularly disadvantaged in political and economic terms, but also in terms of representation, as these voices were often completely devalued and silenced, not only by the colonizer but also by their own local elites.

The mixture of attraction and repulsion which often characterizes colonial encounters can also be seen in Scottish people’s reactions to single or double “internal colonial” hierarchies. Inferiorization and anglocentrism caused Lowland and Highland Scottish resentment, but there were also internalizations of such ideologies, resulting in cultural cringes and a desire to imitate the “colonizer” through self-anglicization. But here as well, mimicry and hybridity can also have a subversive dimension. Highland writers, for instance, could seize the English language and anglophone literary genres to
express Gaelic perspectives through a new medium and create an “anticolonial” counter-discourse. Issues of hybridity are perhaps especially evident in contexts of migration. Postcolonial insights into migrant sensibilities, diasporic identities, and the relations between diasporic minorities and their host society’s mainstream can also illuminate the experiences and textual productions of the many Scottish writers from Highland backgrounds who had moved to the Lowlands or England and wrote for predominantly anglophone audiences. The same applies to Scottish Lowland writers who had moved to England and/or tried to capture the English literary market. Intra-British marginalization also played an important part in overseas migration, transformed “internally colonized” populations into global colonizers, and helped to create an international Scottish diaspora which is already a major focus of interest in contemporary Scottish studies scholarship. Postcolonial theories of diaspora culture can make further useful contributions to this lively field.

Critiques of Scotland’s or the Gaidhealtachd’s “internally colonized” status were not only articulated in anglophone writings by hybridized Highlanders, but also in other areas of Scottish literature and culture, both Highland and Lowland. Direct critiques of the Scottish-English Union, of the subjugation of the Highlands, and of economic marginalization were complemented by vindications of local history and culture, writing back to the colonizer’s literature, and nativist attempts at cultural revival.

If there were so many shared features between representations of Scotland and its Gaels on the one hand and overseas (post)colonial discourse on the other, why is Scotland so often overlooked by the international mainstream of postcolonial studies? First, some postcolonialists still rely too much on a concept of colonialism which assumes very clear dichotomies, hierarchies, differences, and culture clashes. For those scholars, the strong ambiguities of the Scottish case seem to preclude Scotland’s inclusion in the remit of postcolonial studies. However, a more nuanced understanding of colonial and imperial sociocultural realities often dismantles simplistic dichotomies between colonized and colonizer, even in overseas contexts, so that Scotland’s ambiguities may be less atypical than some may have supposed. In this light, Scotland’s ambiguities do not really preclude postcolonial readings: rather, they tie in to postcolonialism’s ever-increasing interest in deconstructing binarisms, even in overseas (post)colonial situations. Scotland’s internal cultural complexities and inequalities, as well as its Janus-faced position between margin and periphery within the United Kingdom and its empire, are highly pertinent subjects for postcolonial investigation.

A second reason why postcolonial scholars often neglect Scotland may simply be that the first systematic theories about literary negotiations of cultural encounters and hierarchies were developed with an eye to formally (post)colonial contexts, so that it may merely not occur to certain scholars to look for similar discourse patterns elsewhere. Third, and relatedly, there
is the aforementioned ambiguity between regional and thematic understandings of postcolonial studies. Postcolonial scholars have often been reluctant to accept Scotland into the (post)colonial fold because they understood postcolonial studies primarily in regional rather than thematic terms, focusing on areas outside Europe which were once formally colonized, a description which Scotland does not fit. Scotland’s many thematic and ideological parallels to (post)colonial contexts were thus overlooked. For instance, some postcolonialists are perfectly prepared to regard any aspect of Trinidadian or Canadian literature as postcolonial because it comes from a former official colony, while being unwilling to accept Scottish anti-hegemonic nationalist literature as postcolonial because it comes from the “wrong region” of the world, one that was never officially a colony. Making the problem of the field’s dual regional/thematic orientation more explicit might increase awareness of the blind spots which have limited comparative postcolonial studies so far, and may open the path for the inclusion of hitherto neglected regions which can yield fruitful material for thematic comparison. The recent shift in various scholars’ terminological preference from “postcolonial studies” to “transcultural studies” might aid this development because dropping the label “postcolonial” bypasses the aforementioned terminological debate about the suitability of “(post)colonial” labels in a Scotland which was never officially an English colony, while a field rechristened from “postcolonial” to “transcultural” studies still retains key postcolonial thematic preoccupations like cultural multiplicity and inequality which are also major themes in Scottish studies.

Comparative investigations of ethnic othering and marginalization not only offer important benefits for the field of postcolonial studies, but for Scottish studies as well. International postcolonial scholarship has developed a plethora of tools for analyzing phenomena which are also central in Scottish studies, such as multi- and transculturalism, the (re)construction of national identities, and correlations between social and cultural power imbalances. Comparative postcolonialism also highlights the complex interconnections between Scottish writing and other “peripheral” discourses further afield.

Skeptics might also ask whether the ever-expanding field of postcolonial studies undermines its own credibility by declaring its theories applicable to more and more different contexts, until its claims become so universal that all specificity and hermeneutic value is lost. But the same might be asked of any comparative approach. There must always be a balance between generalization and comparison on the one hand, and specificity and difference on the other. As long as this is borne in mind, postcolonial Scottish studies promises to be a valid approach that can yield many useful insights into both international parallels and local specificities.

So much for the general arguments that can be cited in favor of postcolonial Scottish, Gaelic, and “Celtic fringe” studies, and for the limitations and ambiguities which need to be borne in mind. In the next section, I will give
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brief pointers to previous scholarly work in this field, identify gaps which the present study is trying to fill, and give some general explanations on its approach.

Postcolonial Scottish Studies and the Rationale of This Book

For a long time, “Celtic fringe postcolonialism” mainly focused on Ireland, while Scotland and Wales remained relatively neglected. Postcolonial approaches to Scottish studies that were more sustained and explicit only emerged belatedly in the 1990s, mainly in the form of isolated essays or themed journal issues. The first few books with expressly postcolonial titles appeared only in the last few years, and even these have not yet provided a sufficient systematic introduction, especially with regard to the large field of anglophone writing. Scottish Literature and Postcolonial Literature (2011), edited by Michael Gardiner, Graeme Macdonald, and Niall O’Gallagher, and Within and Without Empire: Scotland across the (Post)Colonial Borderline (2013), edited by Carla Sassi and Theo van Heijnsbergen, cover both Gaelic and anglophone texts and contain very helpful analyses, but as multiauthored essay collections they throw spotlights on individual case studies rather than providing systematic contextualization and a continuous narrative. They are thus more useful to Scottish studies specialists than as general introductions to Scottish postcolonialism for those who are unfamiliar with Scottish frameworks and thus need more contextualization and systematization than coedited volumes can offer.

Moreover, the volume by Gardiner et al. focuses largely on the twentieth and twenty-first century, whereas many earlier sociohistorical and literary phenomena to which recent postcolonial Scottish literature and criticism responds are not elucidated. Readers who are not specialists in Scottish studies and approach the field from a comparative perspective might find it helpful to read studies of recent Scottish cultural phenomena alongside an introduction to earlier (post)colonially relevant developments in Scottish society and culture. The present study focuses precisely on those earlier frameworks, thus filling a gap within postcolonial Scottish studies itself. This widening of historical scope also aims to strengthen the position of postcolonial Scottish studies as a whole, as an equally important subfield of “Celtic fringe” postcolonialism alongside the hitherto more established Irish branch. Hence, this book also contributes to filling a gap in “Celtic fringe” postcolonialism. A third gap concerns the relationship between “Celtic fringe” and other postcolonialisms: so far, postcolonial approaches to Scottish, Welsh, and to some extent also Irish culture remain largely confined to the respective regional studies, without much attention from the international postcolonial mainstream. Partly, this one-sidedness might be attributable to a lack of introductory studies which provide sufficient background information to be
accessible to international postcolonialists who are relatively unfamiliar with “Celtic fringe” contexts. This book aims to provide such an introduction. To maximize accessibility, this book works within a wide historical, theoretical, and generic framework, combining introductory overviews on sociocultural and discursive developments with more detailed case studies of selected literary and nonliterary texts. These case studies combine lesser-known works like William Sharp’s *Green Fire* with highly canonical texts like Walter Scott’s *Waverley*. Although this book is mainly conceptualized as an introduction, it also hopes to offer some new insights to more specialized readers, for instance by opening up new ways of reading Scottish authors (e.g., in chapters 2 and 6) who, though well-known and important, have been somewhat neglected by modern literary criticism.

This volume also aims to promote a more interdisciplinary approach, combining postcolonial readings of literature in the narrow sense with discussions of primary texts from many other fields, including political, legal, and administrative documents, writings by missionaries and educators, historiography, journalism, letters, ethnography, and anthropology. Thus, it expands on previous work in postcolonial Scottish studies which largely focuses on literature. This breadth of scope within a single study is a necessary step toward overcoming previous limitations and argumentative deadlocks. So far, most attempts to establish Scottish themes as a subfield of international postcolonial studies have worked on a smaller scale. Acceptance of these initiatives was sometimes hampered by the widespread assumption that the general framework of Scottish social and ideological history could never possibly warrant inclusion in colonial or postcolonial categories, and that small-scale Scottish postcolonial case studies must be taking their sources out of context. This again suggests a need for a more wide-ranging single-volume introduction which demonstrates that the examples analyzed by previous Scottish postcolonial scholarship were not isolated exceptions, but form part of a general matrix of colonial and postcolonial themes which surface in Scottish culture again and again. While it is still impossible to give a complete picture of all the relevant issues, this book surveys the most important themes and developments over three centuries and combines these with a representative selection of case studies. This hopefully provides a more solid basis for discussing the advantages and pitfalls of incorporating this particular British “fringe” into the postcolonial field.

This book charts the ways in which Scotland’s anglophone mainstream constructed and reconstructed its image of the Gaelic margins in the light of two simultaneous developments: the emergence of the modern nation-state with its drive for internal homogenization, and the rise of overseas colonialism which brought British people into contact with a wide range of external cultural Others and entailed intense debates over ethnic differences and hierarchies, civilizing missions, hybridity, progress and regression, expropriation, exploitation, and resistance. Although the earliest manifestations of these
developments can be traced back to the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries, a more noticeable impact of modern nation-state-building and colonialism on Gaelic sociocultural realities and their representation in anglophone mainstream discourse becomes evident from the early seventeenth century onwards. Key dates include the dynastic Union between Scotland and England in 1603, legal acts from 1609 and 1616 which aimed to weaken the Scottish Gaelic language and culture through anglicizing education, and the intensification of imperial efforts marked by colonial settlements in Northern Ireland (1609 onwards) and North America (e.g., Jamestown, Virginia 1607; Plymouth, Massachusetts 1620). Thus, this book’s main chapters set in around the year 1600. They trace the changing fortunes of Gaeldom in mainstream representations until around 1900—a time which can be regarded as a high point in European certainties about the ethnic nation-state, in Union-British patriotic self-satisfaction, and in imperial overseas expansion. The twentieth century increasingly unsettled ideals of national homogeneity, the unionist consensus, and the frontiers of the disintegrating colonial empires. This also set radically new parameters for the treatment of colonial and postcolonial themes in Scottish literature. These post-1900 shifts cannot be covered within the scope of this one book and, moreover, have already received slightly more attention from previous scholarship in postcolonial Scottish studies. Hence, the year 1900 forms a natural end point for the survey provided in this volume.

To some extent, the discursive trends outlined here with regard to anglophone Scottish writing reflect wider British developments that can also be observed in writing from England—for instance concerning romanticism. Hence, some of the issues discussed in this volume can also provide an entry point to English “colonial discourse” about Scotland and its Gaels. But there are also important differences between anglophone discourses in the two countries, for example when they represent rival patriotism. English texts and their complex interrelations with anglophone Scottish discourse likewise deserve further postcolonial investigation. However, it is impossible to do these complexities justice within a single introductory study. Thus, it has been decided to focus the present inquiry mainly on Scottish authors, with occasional brief cross-referencing to relevant English texts and issues.

Although this book includes a considerable amount of sociohistorical information (e.g., on political debates or economic development), this should not be understood as an attempt to determine whether Scottish realities can “objectively” be labeled as “colonial.” Neither are these discussions primarily intended as a political intervention in the debates on further devolution, Scottish independence, and greater regional autonomy for the Highlands. Rather, the main purpose of the sociohistorical discussions in this book is to provide background information on key issues around which debates about Scottish and Gaelic marginality and/or coloniality regularly revolve. The sociohistorical sections of this volume chart issues which might be read as (post)colonial
or already have been read as (post)colonial to facilitate the understanding of a wider critical debate and of the primary sources that negotiate these realities on the cultural level. The labels “colonial” and “postcolonial” are here mainly used as categories of discourse analysis, and of literary and cultural studies. The main question in this book is how Scotland, its Gaidhealtachd, and their relation to the English and British state have been represented, for instance in literary texts which claim that the Gaels are comparable to colonized peoples overseas. Whether these representations are historically accurate is not my prime concern, even where I hint at possible answers to this question. At times, I also list more than one possible interpretation of the same historical circumstance—again, ways of seeing and traditions of representation are more central to this book than a quest for “objective fact.” This ties into Peter Hulme’s understanding of the postcolonial as “a descriptive, not an evaluative, term”—an approach which can be extended from the postcolonial to the colonial. Colonial discourse analysis and postcolonial studies have evolved a wealth of conceptual tools which elucidate the relationship between language, cultural representation, and power imbalances in situations of culture contact. Many of these tools can also be applied to intercultural power asymmetries in contexts which are not colonial in the traditional sense—for instance, concerning the relation between majority and minority cultures within the same nation-state, as in the Scottish/British case. That is, the present study assumes the existence of social and cultural power imbalances which have often been textualized in ways that resemble the textualization of overseas colonial kinds of power imbalance. These textual parallels do not necessarily require that Scottish realities always conform to overseas colonial patterns as well (e.g., in terms of economic statistics). This is why I use the term “colonial imagination”: it signals that Scotland and its Gaelic margin have often been textualized, represented, and imagined in colonial terms, even where the realities of Scotland’s political or economic predicament also showed considerable differences from overseas colonial contexts. This colonial imagination is responsible for the frequent representation of Scotland through colonial discourse tropes, and often even through direct comparisons to overseas colonies. Thus, I use the term “colonial imagination” to refer to the application of colonial and anticolonial representation patterns to Scotland in creative writing, but also in other genres, between 1600 and 1900. I also use “colonial imagination” to refer to modern Scottish writers and Scottish studies academics who have been drawn to (post)colonial comparisons, again despite the likewise existing differences from overseas (post)colonial patterns.

The concept of the “Celtic” is a particularly interesting instance of the colonial imagination. It implies imagined commonalities between many different “barbarian” Others over vast temporal and spatial distances, from the ancient Roman Empire to the modern British nation-state and its own imperial ventures overseas. One of the themes of this book is how various
modern texts about Scotland and its Gaels refer back to ancient Roman writings about “Celtic barbarians,” thus imagining connections between Roman imperial civilizing missions and modern British efforts to assimilate its internal Others to form a more homogeneous nation state. At the same time, it shows how images of Scotland and the “Celtic” world functioned as precedents and models for the representation of the British Empire’s overseas colonies. In turn, discourse on overseas colonized peoples also influenced the representation of Scots and “Celts,” both by themselves and by others. This book demonstrates various instances of such “transperipheral” comparisons in colonial discourse. On this basis, it argues that Scotland and the “Celtic fringe” should not be seen as a mere marginal note to postcolonial studies, but as a highly central part of the field because they form a nodal point where different kinds of (post)colonialism intersect: not only do they form a bridge between premodern and modern (post)colonial discourse, but they also offer reference points for studying the connection between “internal” and “external” colonialism, and the relationship between textualizations of Europe’s internal minorities and marginalized small nations on the one hand and the representation of European overseas colonialism on the other.

Paradigms of postcolonial theory which are especially relevant to this study of Scottish representations include internal colonialism within the borders of a given state, as well as double or multiple colonization of particularly disadvantaged segments of a colony’s population. Other postcolonial paradigms which are central to the present study include contests for discursive authority, negative and positive stereotypes of otherness (such as “barbarism” versus “noble savagery”), civilizational hierarchies, “civilizing missions,” cultural cringes, and writing back. Equally central are essentialist constructs of cultural or national authenticity, as well as contrary manifestations of ambivalence and hybridity which partly reflect the “success” of assimilation projects, but partly also expose the internal instability of colonial discourse by questioning essentialist categories and concepts of otherness. In addition, it is shown how hybrid textual practices (such as anglophone travel writing by Gaelic authors) can be deliberately used for anticolonial counter-representations, criticising the colonizer on his own linguistic and generic turf.

Before embarking on a more detailed overview of the following chapters, it might be useful to add some further clarifications on this book’s use of terminology. Wherever essentialist categories and dichotomies, or cultural hierarchizations, are mentioned here, they are not intended as descriptions of actually existing sociocultural realities, but as descriptions of the attempt made by colonial discourse to construct such essences, dichotomies, and hierarchies. For instance, “race” and other problematic terms like “savage,” “barbarian,” or “civilization” are often cited in this study as important components of the colonial discourse it analyzes. Naturally, these citations should not be taken to imply that I endorse these concepts myself. To emphasize
critical distance, I often put these terms into quotation marks. However, to increase typographic simplicity and readability, I have not used quotation marks throughout, but omitted them where the danger of misunderstanding seemed smallest. For instance, in phrases like “notions of barbarism and civilization,” the term “notions” seems signal enough that I am merely summarizing others’ ideas, rather than expressing my own, so I have not put “barbarism” and “civilization” in quotation marks. However, phrases like “the ‘barbarians’ of the Highlands” might, without quotation marks, be misread to imply that I myself consider the Highlanders as culturally inferior; hence I have retained the inverted commas in such contexts. While the terms listed above come from colonial discourse and are concepts which I entirely reject myself, I sometimes also use quotation marks for terms from contemporary colloquial or academic usage which I do not entirely reject but where I recognize that they are at least partially problematic and contested. Such terms include “Celtic,” “Celtic fringe,” “periphery,” “center,” “metropolis,” “mainstream,” and “internal colonialism.” At times, these concepts are merely cited as part of other people’s positions, but at times I also recognize their usefulness myself, for instance as convenient shorthands in the absence of better terms (e.g., with “Celtic fringe” as a blanket label for Scotland, Ireland, and Wales as the non-English parts of the British Isles, although the respective extent of their “Celticness” or “fringeness” is debatable), or as concepts which have at least some analytical validity despite their limitations (as with “internal colonialism”). The concepts are thus used, but their limitations and contested status are often highlighted by quotation marks, though readability has again required that quotation marks are not used in every instance.

Chapter Overview

The general developments outlined in this study can be subdivided into three roughly chronological phases and discursive strands. The assimilationist, progressivist, and “Enlightened” mindset which accompanied the establishment and consolidation of the modern nation-state from the early modern period until about the second half of the eighteenth century tended to see the Gaels mainly in negative terms, as an internal barbarian Other whose culture was inferior to that of the Scottish Lowlands or England. Accordingly, the “improvement” of the Gaels through assimilation was considered desirable. Moreover, it was usually deemed possible—the Enlightenment especially showed an emphatic belief in the potential of education. These two factors—the desirability and possibility of “improvement”—are the main issues around which the distinction of discourse phases revolves.

In the next phase, which mainly began during the second half of the eighteenth century and continued into the first half of the nineteenth, the mainstream’s opinion of Gaeldom became more positive—Scotland’s Highlanders
mutated from “ignoble” into “noble savages.” This romantic idealization of cultural difference occurred when the conquest and transformation of the “barbarian” Other was already far advanced, that is, after the possibility of transformation was proven. But the desirability of this transformation was no longer as certain as it had seemed to Enlightenment progressivists.

The third phase is dominated by racial determinism and started with a return to more anti-Gaelic attitudes, with hostility culminating in the mid-nineteenth century. Anti-Gaelic racists would agree with Enlightenment beliefs that there was a universal hierarchy of human cultural achievement, that the superiority of the center in all respects was obvious, and that it would be desirable if all other cultures could transform themselves in the center’s image. However, the possibility of such transformations was now questioned: many racists believed that the hierarchy of cultures was fixed in humanity’s biological makeup. In the later decades of the nineteenth century, racial determinism was also reinterpreted in the service of pro-Gaelic discourse.

These three phases of shifting perspectives on the Highlands are, of course, chronologically not entirely separate: they often coexist, sometimes even within the work of the same author. Nonetheless, the respective overall popularity of Enlightened progressivism, romanticism, and racism varies over time. To reflect these broad shifts, and for conceptual clarity, I have assigned two chapters to each of the three patterns. Chapters 1 and 2 are largely concerned with ideologies of progress, assimilation, and Enlightenment. Chapters 3 and 4 focus on romanticism and “noble savagery,” but also on ways in which these conceptual developments can be reconciled with earlier, progressivist notions which endorsed “progress” and “civilizing missions.” Chapters 5 and 6 examine the relation between Highlandism (or Celticism) and biologistic racism.

Chapter 1 charts the growing marginalization of Gaeldom, first in the independent early modern Scottish state and then, after the 1707 Union with England, in the British state. Both states pursued a course of internal homogenization which entailed political and administrative centralization; the transformation of residual pockets of feudalism and other premodern forms of economic organization into fully integrated divisions of the new capitalist economy; the assimilation of speakers of “inferior dialects” like Scots and “inferior” languages like Gaelic to anglocentric linguistic norms; and further cultural unification in the fields of religion and education. These projects often used considerable pressure and violence, but were considered legitimate means to advance the “civilizing mission” of uplifting primitive “savages” or “barbarians” into a superior, progressive modernity. Such intra-national “civilizing missions” were frequently compared to similar projects pursued simultaneously in Europe’s overseas colonies, for instance in North America. “Colonial discourse” from antiquity (especially the Roman Empire) was rediscovered as a model for seventeenth- and eighteenth-century British approaches to internal and external “barbarian Others.” This chapter surveys
key sociohistorical and cultural aspects of these developments, and illustrates
the pervasiveness of colonial comparisons through a wide range of brief
examples from various genres: political and legal documents; historiography;
pamphlets; reports by missionaries, educators and administrators; journal-
ism; letters; and poetry.

Chapter 2 follows with a much more detailed reading of two particu-
lar sample texts: Martin Martin’s *A Description of the Western Islands of
Scotland* and *A Late Voyage to St. Kilda*. Like many of the texts surveyed in
the previous chapter, these two pieces of travel writing endorse the assimila-
tionist drive of the new capitalist nation-state and discuss the Gaelic world
in comparison to other colonial formations. However, Martin’s works are
particularly interesting because, unlike many of the other texts, they were
written by an author who was a Gael himself, albeit a strongly hybridized
one who was well-integrated into the anglophone mainstream. In his writ-
ings, more straightforward colonial discourse paradigms are complicated
by potentially subversive elements such as an uneasy oscillation between
“inside” and “outside” identifications, othering and “same-ing,” or denigra-
tion and vindication. Martin’s ambiguous position as a hybridized “native
intellectual” parallels phenomena which are frequently observed in overseas
(post)colonial contexts. As he relocated from the Gaelic Hebrides to largely
anglophone metropolitan environments, he is also relevant to the currently
very strong interest of postcolonial studies in migrant and diasporic identities
and in diasporic minority writing addressing mainstream readerships.

Chapter 3 charts the growing importance of the concept of the “noble sav-
age” in representations of Scotland and its Gaels in the late eighteenth and
early nineteenth century. Again, this is contextualized in relation to key socio-
historical and cultural developments of the time. The different variants of the
“noble savage” trope in Gaelic contexts are also discussed in relation to the
colonial logic and the permutations of “noble savagery” in overseas colonial
contexts. This includes not only a discussion of Gaels as another “colonized”
population, but also their transformation into overseas colonizers who were
themselves complicit in the subjugation and exploitation of non-European
peoples. Analogous to chapter 1, chapter 3 surveys a wide range of examples
from poetry and literary criticism, letters, fashion, royal pageantry, historiog-
raphy, ethnography, tourism, and travel writing.

Chapter 4 provides another close reading of an exemplary and highly influ-
ential literary text: Walter Scott’s novel *Waverley*. As a non-Gaelic author,
Scott projects the perspective of a partly sympathetic outsider. Despite his
outside position, there is again ambivalence between nativist vindications
of difference and elements of colonial discourse. There is also a synthesis
between the two main strands of colonial discourse discussed in the preced-
ing three chapters, namely a denigration of “ignoble savagery” in favor of
progressivism and modernization on the one hand, and on the other hand a
romantic idealization of “noble savagery” which emphasizes the downsides of
“progress,” though the latter is often pronounced inevitable. To some extent, Scott endorses and capitalizes on the romantic fashion for noble savagery, but he also ironicizes it, ultimately tending rather towards earlier notions of Enlightenment progressivism—now tempered with a degree of respect for the margins’ cultural past which promises a more benign and successful national synthesis on both the pan-Scottish and pan-British levels.

Chapter 5 traces the shift from such integrationism to a reassertion of insurmountable ethnic differences through biologicist race theories. This particular strand of colonial discourse emerged in the late eighteenth century, but only reached its heyday in the Victorian period. Previously, Celticist texts had often provided models for the textual representation of overseas colonial encounters. Now it was the other way round: racialist theories, originally developed mainly with regard to nonwhite overseas colonized subjects, were transferred to the white European mainstream’s internal Others such as the “Celtic fringe.” An allegedly immutable Gaelic racial otherness and inferiority was cited to justify expropriation, extermination, or expulsion. A survey of key sociohistorical developments which led to this ideological shift is combined with discussions of sample texts from historiography, journalism, and especially anthropology, the focal text being Robert Knox’s *The Races of Men*.

Chapter 6 demonstrates that racial categories even permeated texts which aimed to defend and rehabilitate the Gaels or the “Celtic race” as a whole. This is illustrated by a close reading of *Green Fire*—another novel by a non-Gaelic anglophone author, William Sharp, alias “Fiona Macleod”—and of two anthropological essays which were published by a key organization of the Gaelic revival, the Gaelic Society of Inverness: J. Macgregor’s “Celts and Teutons” and L. Macbean’s “The Mission of the Celt.” The latter two also provide further illustration of the Gaels’ ambivalent position as both “internally colonized” and overseas colonizers, as the authors redefine the Celts from an inferior subject race into a fellow master race destined to rule Britain’s global empire shoulder to shoulder with their Anglo-Saxon compatriots.

The conclusion provides an outlook on the rise of more radically anticolonial or postcolonial voices in Scotland, a trend which is mainly observable since the early twentieth century but also had some early manifestations in the nineteenth. This final chapter also summarizes key theoretical points which can be drawn from the analyses in the preceding chapters, and discusses their wider implications for contemporary and future developments in Scottish and international postcolonial studies.