Reading *The National*: Shifting Subjectivities in a Stateless Nation

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This chapter analyses the ways in which Scottish, British and European subjectivities are reproduced in The National, an openly pro-Scottish-independence newspaper launched shortly after the unsuccessful independence referendum of September 2014. The term "subjectivities" refers here to the range of "subject positions" (left-wing/right-wing, social-democratic/neoliberal etc.) which the paper makes available to its readers. While the chapter pays due attention to captions and other textual elements – analysed using tools borrowed from semiotics – its main focus is on the graphic design of the paper's front covers, most frequently dominated by a single image occupying around three quarters of the available space. These images are subdivided into various categories. The largest group, accounting for around 45% of the total number of covers, features actors mostly from the world of politics. Individual exposure here is intense, with seventeen of the actors accounting for 60% of the images in this group. The second largest group of front-cover images, accounting for around 40% of the overall total, are metaphorical in nature and work to provide the larger ideological frame of The National's journalistic output. Foucauldian discourse analysis is used here to map the discursive universe created in relation to such questions as Scottish independence and the recent UK vote to leave the EU. The clearest finding is that the plasticity of subjectivities – as opposed to the relative fixity of identities – has allowed a debate on nationhood to be simultaneously a debate on political ideologies: social democracy as an alternative to neoliberalism.

Introduction

The front cover of the first passport I ever owned displayed in capital letters the words "British Passport: United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland". In its inside pages it went on to further designate me as a "British Subject: Citizen of the United Kingdom and Colonies". My current passport has on its front cover the words "European Union: United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland", with no indication of either subjecthood or statehood, while a rather complex note on the third page includes me by implication among both "British citizens" and "British nationals". These documents thus give written form to a range of "positions" which have been made available to me at different moments in time and within different legal and political frameworks. While I am well aware of all of these designations, none of them actually corresponds to what I might call my own sense of my "national identity", which I would always state as Scottish: this tension between my "felt" nationality and my technical nationality (or more precisely statehood) is symptomatic of my membership in a "stateless nation", i.e. Scotland, a nation which currently lacks the political resources necessary – and perhaps even the will – to aspire to the status of nation-state (Law, 2001).

Along with many other academics working in this field (Foucault, 1972; Laclau & Mouffe, 2001; Hall, 1996), I will use the terms "subject position" and "subjectivity" interchangeably to refer to the kinds of "positions" outlined above. A subject position or subjectivity is different from "essentialist" conceptions of identity (D'Cruz, 2016, p. 17) in that, while the latter view identity as something "inherent" or located in the individual him/herself, subject positions are socially constructed discursive potentialities made available to us at a societal level. In the words of Bhabha:

> The move away from the singularities of 'class' or 'gender' as primary conceptual and organizational categories, has resulted in an awareness of the subject positions – of race, gender, generation, institutional location, geopolitical locale, sexual orientation – that inhabit any claim to identity in the modern world (1994, p. 1).

Since which subject position we choose to (or are obliged to) occupy at different times can vary significantly, our "identity" in that sense is always constructed, negotiated and in flux. If, for example, I need the assistance of a British Embassy somewhere, my identity in that situation is technically but also inescapably British. If I attend a football match where Scotland is playing against another national team, it is Scottish (I might even wear a kilt).

In this chapter I will look at how the conditions of possibility enabled by the "open character of every discourse" (Laclau & Mouffe, 2001, p. 113) have allowed the relationships between Scottish, British and European subjectivities to participate in an ongoing process of change in Scotland. In particular I will look at how one element of the Scottish press – the recently launched openly pro-Scottish independence newspaper *The National* – contributes, primarily through its front covers, to the construction of Scotland as what Benedict Anderson calls an "imagined community". For Anderson, a nation, far from being material and fixed, "is imagined because the members of even the smallest nation will never know most of their fellow-members, meet them, or even hear of them, yet in the minds of each lives the image of their communion" (1991, p. 6). He further argues that the most powerful enabling force in the construction of these "imagined communities" has historically been what he calls "print capitalism", which would eventually lead to the emergence of the press in its various forms and more recently to what are loosely termed "new media" (Blanken & Deuze, 2007). He has the following to say of the widely dispersed reading communities which print capitalism has enabled, which are nonetheless brought together by the relative simultaneity of the act of reading: "These fellow-readers, to whom they [other readers] were connected through print, formed, in their secular, particular, visible invisibility, the embryo of the nationally imagined community" (p. 44).

This chapter, then, examines the complex relationships and tensions between an increasingly prominent – though not yet politically dominant – "Scottish" imagined community and a still resilient but increasingly challenged "UK" counterpart, both coexisting in a shared (national and international) political space. It will analyse the particular forms this confrontation takes in the field of print capitalism, focusing on how a range of individuals are presented both as actors in their own right and as part of much larger discursive and ideological frameworks.

Profiling *The National*

The political process which led to the launch of *The National* on 24 November 2014 had been gathering pace and strength in Scotland for the best part of a decade. The key date was 5 May 2011, when the Scottish National Party (SNP) led by Alex Salmond won an outright majority in the Scottish parliament, an event which marked a fundamental change in the public understanding of Scotland as an "imagined community". Salmond immediately began negotiations with the UK

government (a Conservative/Liberal Democrat coalition led by David Cameron) to hold a referendum on Scottish independence with a view to changing the status of Scotland from stateless nation to nation-state. The referendum was held on 18 September 2014, and the result was a win by what came to be known as the "No" camp (i.e. those opposed to independence) with 55.3% of the vote. This result was much closer than most people had anticipated and, by clearly demonstrating the existence of a sizeable pro-independence constituency in Scotland, was the key factor leading to the emergence of *The National* just over two months later.

The new paper, launched at breakneck speed, belongs to Newsquest (the UK arm of the American media company Gannett) and is published by the Herald and Times group. Initial circulation results were heady, peaking at around 60,000 in the first week (for a population of just over five million), but quickly fell back to around 15,000, eventually stabilising at just over 10,000 copies a day. This is a reasonable if not spectacular performance compared with other Scottish "quality" newspapers. *The National*'s stable-mates *The Herald* and *The Sunday Herald* have circulation figures of 28,800 and 21,000 respectively, while the Edinburgh-based *Scotsman*'s figures are 19,400: these figures, from the Audit Bureau of Circulation (February 2017), reflect the broader phenomenon of declining newspaper readership alongside the resulting "shrinking public square" (Gill, 2016, p. 23) and the correspondingly risky nature of the venture. *The National*'s political stance was clear in its opening issue where it announced itself in its strapline (and continues to do so now) as "The Newspaper that Supports an Independent Scotland". An initial one-week trial period was extended to a five-day-a-week pattern until 7 May 2016, at which point it moved to six days a week.

Among a range of unusual features, *The National* heralds its all-embracing "Scottishness" by publishing weekly columns in Scotland's two minority languages, Gàidhlig (Gaelic) and Scots, a Germanic language closely related to English but sharing a number of morphological, lexical and phonetic features with some of the Scandinavian languages (Kay, 1986). While a Gaelic column is not an entire novelty in the Scottish media – *The Scotsman* has offered one for many years, as has the *West Highland Free Press* published on the Isle of Skye – no newspaper to date has ever published in Scots, despite the fact that it is the most widely spoken language in the Scottish Lowlands (the number of speakers is usually estimated at around 1.5 million, but this figure is almost certainly too low).

Language is a powerful constructor of national subjectivities (O'Donnell, 2007; O'Donnell & Castelló, 2009), and this change in the linguistic landscape,
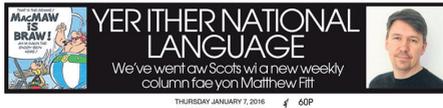
Figures 6.1 & 6.2. A *National* front page in Scots, and a second featuring Hugh MacDiarmid (1892-1978), Scotland's best known Scots-language poet. Facsimiles reproduced in accordance with the Norwegian Copyright Act.

however small, is not without importance for the range of subject positions now publicly available to those living in the country.

The second major event to affect the profile of *The National* was the referendum on the UK's continued membership in the EU promised by David Cameron in his 2015 manifesto. This referendum was held on 23 June 2016 and resulted in a victory for the "Leave" camp. In stark contrast to other parts of the UK, 62% of Scottish voters and all 32 Scottish local council areas voted to remain. David Cameron resigned immediately and was followed as Prime Minister by Theresa May. As a result of these and other changes, three of the five current Scottish political party leaders and the new British Prime Minister are women (Nicola Sturgeon, Ruth Davidson, Kezia Dugdale and Theresa May), to whom we might add Leanne Wood, leader of the Welsh Nationalist Party Plaid Cymru. In addition neither Kezia Dugdale nor Ruth Davidson make any attempt to hide or in any way downplay the fact that they are gay, while Patrick Harvie, leader of the Scottish Greens, is the UK's only openly bisexual politician. This undoubtedly changing gender landscape has had clearly visible effects on newspaper coverage of issues such as gender inequality, gender violence, gender stereotyping and so on, with the corresponding changes in the range of available public subjectivities which such political readjustments always bring.

Analysing *The National*

In this chapter I will concentrate almost exclusively on the front covers of the paper. There are several reasons for this choice of focus. Due to economic constraints *The National* operates on an extremely tight budget with a skeleton staff. As a result it relies heavily on agency copy, including a significant portion of its sports coverage for instance, its specifically "national" identity as a paper being carried by a limited range of "home-grown" features:

- A small number of high-profile columnists and bloggers: award-winning journalist Lesley Riddoch, founder of the Radical Independence Campaign Cat Boyd, and "The Wee Ginger Dug" [sic] (pseudonym of blogger Paul Cavanagh).

- Above all the very unusual make-up of its front covers where *The National* relies heavily on image rather than text, every image taking up around three quarters of the space available. This particular front-page style was pioneered by Richard Walker, former editor of the *Sunday Herald*, who took over as editor of *The National* on its launch. One of his *Sunday Herald* covers had in fact been among the most commented-on front pages throughout the UK in 2011, when an injunction was granted prohibiting the naming of footballer Ryan Giggs in England and Wales in relation to an alleged extramarital affair: the injunction was without force in Scotland which has its own legal system, as a result of which the story was freely covered there.

Figures 6.3 & 6.4. Front-cover designs in the *Sunday Herald* and *The National*. Facsimiles reproduced in accordance with the Norwegian Copyright Act.
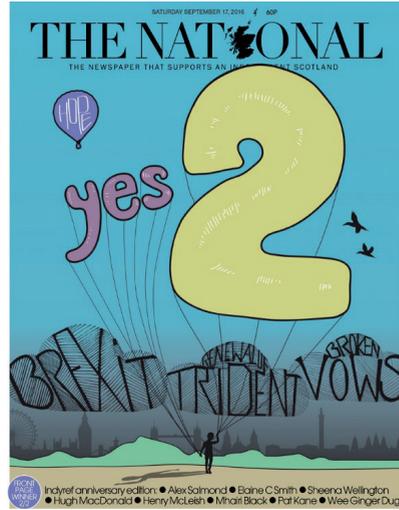
Figures 6.5 & 6.6. Two prize-winning front covers. Facsimiles reproduced in accordance with the Norwegian Copyright Act.

The great importance *The National* gives to its front covers was clear from issue 1 (shown above). This combined a metaphor of the Fourth Estate "watchdog" function of the press ("we have our eye on you") with the social issue of child poverty. On 8 May 2015 it published no fewer than three different covers related to the Scottish parliamentary elections the day before (the third appears as Figure 6.46 below), while on 17 September 2016 it published two different covers, these having been selected from designs sent in by readers (in the first immediately above, the thistle is a long-standing emblem of Scotland, while the "2" in the second refers to "indyref2", an abbreviation widely used to refer to the possibility of a second independence referendum).

The National's front-cover images are, with very few exceptions, accompanied by a caption or captions, thereby combining the dynamic axis of narrative and the static axis of image. Kress and Van Leeuwen emphasise how both of these can work together:

> Both language and visual communication express meanings belonging to and structured by cultures in the one society; the semiotic processes, though not the semiotic means, are broadly similar; and this results in a considerable degree of congruence between the two (2006, p. 19).

Meyrowitz gives a more detailed explanation of the functioning of the caption. The impact of a "representational symbol" such as a photograph

or image, he argues, derives from the fact that "the photograph is understood in one act of seeing: it is perceived in a gestalt" (1985, p. 96). However, the lack of linguistic elements which makes this immediate impact possible can also result in the meaning of the image being unclear, or even ambiguous, as a consequence of which "people often rely on a picture's verbal caption to determine the picture's specific meaning" (p. 98). The force of the caption in the overall generation of meaning was very clear in the course of this research since many of the images encountered would have defied successful interpretation without recourse to the accompanying text.

Two forms of semiotic analysis are mobilised to deal with the visual elements of *The National*'s front covers. The first originated in the writings of Swiss linguist Ferdinand de Saussure and would reach its peak mainly in the nineteen-sixties and seventies in the work of Roland Barthes (1957, 1988) and Umberto Eco (1978): in this study it takes the form of a broadly structuralist approach to the images analysed, taking into account features such as composition, colour palette, relative size and position, proxemics (how close the actors depicted are to each other), haptics (whether they touch each other in any way), and hexis (their general bodily disposition).

The rather different form of semiotics developed by American polymath Charles Sanders Peirce is also used, in particular his classification of signs into three:

- *Icons* in one way or another resemble, in however stylised a manner, the object they represent: representations of individuals in this study all fall into this category.
- *Indexes* represent by indirect association – for example smoke, while not being fire or representing fire in any iconic way, is universally understood as an "index" of fire. The relatively few "news" images catalogued here – floods, ruined buildings and the like – fall under this category and are not analysed in particular detail.
- The relationship between *symbols* and what they represent is purely a matter of convention (red for danger, green for "go" and so on) – all metaphorical representations included in the data set are part of this group.

This typology has been extremely useful for classifying the different kinds of representations, thus allowing a more fine-grained analysis.

Reading the Numbers

At the time of writing (16 September 2017, two days before the third anniversary of the Scottish independence referendum), the paper had just published its eight-hundred-and-fiftieth edition. Quantitative data on the corresponding front covers has been gathered using spreadsheet software. For the purpose of analysis these covers are broken down into the following three sets (there is a certain amount of double counting since hybrid iconic/metaphorical and individual/group images, of which there are 90, have been entered under both categories):

- Set 1 includes all 585 *iconic* front-cover images featuring one or more individuals, further broken down as follows (from greater to smaller exposure):
  - Subset 1 includes 236 covers featuring 17 individuals appearing 5 or more times
  - Subset 2 includes 145 covers featuring 120 individuals appearing between 1 and 4 times
    - This gives a subtotal of 381 covers featuring 137 single individuals
  - Subset 3 includes 98 images featuring 2 or 3 individuals
  - Subset 4 includes 106 images of larger groups of any size
- Set 2 includes 43 covers with *indexical* images
- Set 3 includes 316 covers with *symbolic/metaphorical* images

The following "headline" conclusions can be drawn at this point:

- Iconic representations of single individuals and metaphorical images are by far the two largest groups, accounting jointly for around two-thirds of front covers
- Groups are the second largest category, accounting for around one quarter of front covers
- Indexical ("news") images constitute a very small percentage of front cover images (5%)

If we look more closely at what we might call the "elite" group – i.e. those whose images appear five or more times – this list is as follows:

|	
Nicola Sturgeon, current Scottish First Minister	59
Theresa May, current UK Conservative Prime Minister	39
Jeremy Corbyn, current UK Labour Party Leader	19

David Cameron, former UK Prime Minister	17
Kezia Dugdale, current Scottish Labour Party Leader	12
Ruth Davidson, current Scottish Conservative Party leader	11
Alistair Carmichael, current UK Liberal Democrat MP	11
Donald Trump, current US President	8
Alex Salmond, former SNP First Minister	8
Jim Murphy, former UK Labour Party MP	8
Boris Johnson, current UK Conservative Foreign Minister	6
David Mundell, current UK Conservative MP	7
George Osborne, former UK Conservative Chancellor/current MP	7
Andy Murray, current leading Scottish/British tennis player	6
Ian Duncan Smith, former UK Secretary of State/current MP	6
Tony Blair, former UK Labour Party Leader	6
David Davis, current UK Secretary of State for exiting the EU	5

Of these only Andy Murray does not come from the world of politics. Of the remaining 117 individuals in the "four-or-fewer-appearances" group only 14 appear more than once, accounting for a total of 30 covers, and five are now deceased. The remaining 68 consist mostly of (not necessarily minor) politicians, a medley of more or less well-known media or sporting celebrities, a couple of academics and even, on one occasion, the Queen... There are also 35 individuals who were presented "anonymously", these appearing mostly as tokens of a specific type (doctor, fisherman, immigrant and so on), where the type is of more interest to the overall discourse of the newspaper than any particular individual, to the extent that several appear only from the neck down: in fact the usefulness of such anonymous exposure resides specifically in its ability to address broader issues, where an anonymous student might "represent" problems in the educational sector, for example, or a fisherman difficulties in that industry. Of all the representations these come closest to what we might, with Barthes, call a "degree zero" presentation, one which "has a generic form; it is a category" (2010, p. 54).

Whether any individual or group appears in the news is the result of a complex set of factors, and changes in political fortunes can result in sudden falls from grace (David Cameron, George Osborne, Jim Murphy) or equally sudden increases in exposure (Theresa May, Donald Trump). However, the quantitative element of this study makes it clear that things are in reality much more complex than this, and that there is no direct relationship between political "weight" and exposure, a point I return to below.

Reading the Visuals

Individual exposure: the bad and the ugly. Visual representations will be classified by extent of variation from Barthes's "degree zero": such a presentation would typically show the individual(s) concerned looking straight ahead, in the middle of the frame, and with little else in terms of posture, dress code and so on to attract particular attention (other than perhaps a smile). As he puts it elsewhere (though with reference to food), they offer a "no frills" representation (2010, p. 85):
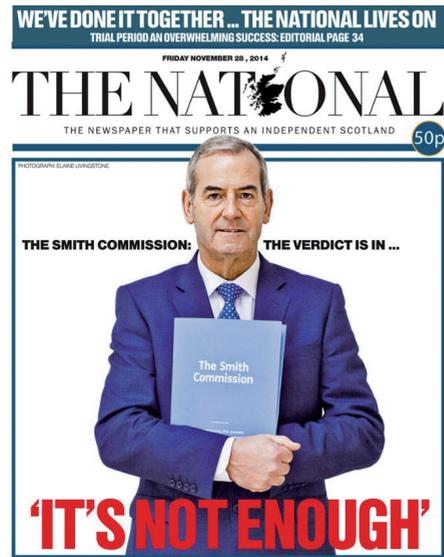
Figures 6.7 & 6.8. Nicola Sturgeon/John Swinney and Robert Smith (AKA Lord Smith of Kelvin) at "degree zero". Facsimiles reproduced in accordance with the Norwegian Copyright Act.

As we will see later, any positive deviation from degree zero is carried almost entirely by Nicola Sturgeon (with a little help from Andy Murray), the vast bulk of all other front-cover images deviating to the negative. I will focus on these first. A particularly useful tool is the so-called "rule of thirds" according to which the "power points" of an image are not in the centre but at the intersection points of horizontal and vertical lines dividing the image into equal ninths (Krages, 2005, p. 9). According to this rule, for example, the image of Nicola Sturgeon on the next page (her first individual appearance in *The National*) would be more balanced than the second of Theresa May, who appears boxed in and dominated by the caption.

Numerous other examples of this technique in operation, particularly in its negative variant, can be found, but simpler techniques are also much in evidence.

Figures 6.9 & 6.10. The rule of thirds applied to Nicola Sturgeon and Theresa May. Facsimiles reproduced in accordance with the Norwegian Copyright Act.

Immediately below is the third image to appear in *The National* (chronologically speaking) and featuring Jim Murphy, then leader of the Scottish Labour party and one of the most high-profile representatives of the "No" camp during the referendum. As can be seen, the slightest change in the direction of his gaze is enough to move his representation from neutral to decidedly "shifty", while a perplexed-looking Jeremy Corbyn peering over his glasses looks like someone out of his depth:

Figures 6.11 & 6.12. Jim Murphy and Jeremy Corbyn avoid the camera's gaze. Facsimiles reproduced in accordance with the Norwegian Copyright Act.

Other downgrading techniques include posterising the individual concerned, showing him/her in black and white, showing only a fragment, or moving them to the side and/or bottom where they are overshadowed by their surroundings, or, even worse, showing them from the rear, as in the following images of David Cameron:

Figures 6.13 & 6.16. David Cameron in various negative guises. Facsimiles reproduced in accordance with the Norwegian Copyright Act.

Individuals presented as "out of touch" can appear as spacemen/women (David Cameron and Kezia Dugdale below):

Figures 6.17 & 6.18. David Cameron and Kezia Dugdale on another planet. Facsimiles reproduced in accordance with the Norwegian Copyright Act.

Appearing as a Martian or Frankenstein's monster offer other options – the latter clearly based on Boris Karlov's monster though totally lacking in its "redemptive" possibilities (Eco, 2011, pp. 271/295):

Figures 6.19 & 6.20. Anti-independence politicians Michael Gove and Alistair Carmichael in monster mode. Facsimiles reproduced in accordance with the Norwegian Copyright Act.

As we slide further down the negative slope only part of the individual in question might be shown. Below we see Boris Johnson almost literally as a "half-wit" while half of a snooping Theresa May disappears behind a hedge:

Figures 6.21 & 6.22. Boris Johnson and Theresa May only half there. Facsimiles reproduced in accordance with the Norwegian Copyright Act.

Perhaps the ultimate indignity is to appear merely as a silhouette, as in these images of Kezia Dugdale:

Figures 6.23 & 6.24. Kezia Dugdale as a shadow of her former self. Facsimiles reproduced in accordance with the Norwegian Copyright Act.

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Or perhaps not. The ultimate indignity may be to have your identity hijacked by a character from popular culture, the images below showing Theresa May as Cruella de Vil and Alistair Carmichael as The Terminator:

Figures 6.25 & 6.26. Theresa May and Alistair Carmichael in pop-culture alter egos. Facsimiles reproduced in accordance with the Norwegian Copyright Act.

Occasionally historical figures are also appropriated. A recent cover (14 September 2017) featured Theresa May as no less a personage than King Henry VIII.

An unusual but undoubtedly interesting feature of *The National*'s coverage is what I will call multiple exposure, where Computer-Generated Imagery (CGI) is used to make the same individual appear a number of times in the same image. There are five of these, the second image below presenting what can be seen as "a supra-*mise en-abyme*" (Mavor, 2013, p. 350), a representational technique where a main image contains smaller representations of itself within it:

The ideological burden of such representation seems very clear: the more times an individual is reproduced in the same image the more negative the overall representation is.

Individual exposure: the good. Only two individuals (Nicola Sturgeon and Andy Murray) enjoy consistently positive exposure from *The National*. Images of the First Minister mostly comply with the "rule of thirds", which has the advantage of allowing space for a caption without disturbing that compositional arrangement. Rather than attempting to glorify or glamorise her in any way, the emphasis
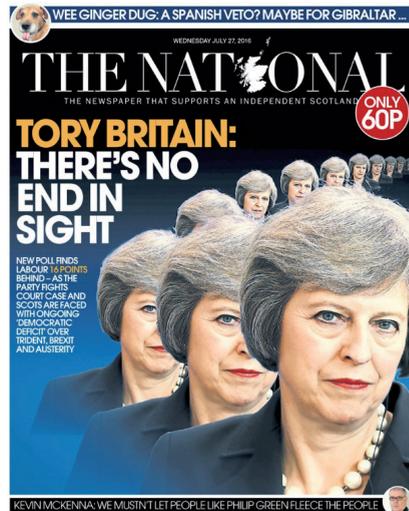
Figures 6.27 & 6.28. Theresa May ad infinitum… Facsimiles reproduced in accordance with the Norwegian Copyright Act.

tends to be on a woman getting on with the job, an emphasis consistently underpinned by her businesslike but generally workaday dress code. Such representations can very exceptionally border on the aggressive, their unorthodox and slightly chaotic composition suggesting that things are about to get "shaken up":

Figures 6.29 & 6.30. Nicola Sturgeon plays good cop/bad cop. Facsimiles reproduced in accordance with the Norwegian Copyright Act.

A small but growing number of images show her in mid-close-up from the side addressing an obviously present but out-of-shot audience. In terms of the proxemics, we might usefully contrast this with the presentation of David Cameron in a similar style of shot:


Figures 6.31 & 6.32. Nicola Sturgeon, David Cameron and the poetics of space. Facsimiles reproduced in accordance with the Norwegian Copyright Act.

There are only two "mythologising" images, the first appearing the day after the first anniversary of the referendum (19 September 2015) and the second on the day of the following year's Scottish parliamentary elections (5 May 2016): one in black and white urging support for independence, and showing a very young Nicola Sturgeon waving a saltire – a white Saint Andrew's cross on a blue background, one of Scotland's two unofficial "national" flags – and the other in yellowish tones stressing *The National*'s view of the way forward for Scotland (this image is also available on a tee-shirt which can be purchased from the paper's online shop):
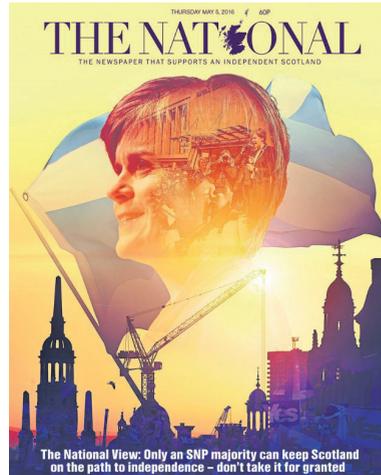
Figures 6.33 & 6.34. Nicola Sturgeon: nation and myth. Facsimiles reproduced in accordance with the Norwegian Copyright Act.

Both images have a distinctly "retro" and even "propaganda-like" feel while the image on the left below – another interesting *mise en abyme* – has echoes of the "Motherland is Calling" Soviet poster of 1941, one of the most famous Soviet posters of the time (Bonnell, 1999, p. 265):

Figures 6.35 & 6.36. Propaganda-style images (copy of the Родина-Мать poster kindly supplied by the Hoover Institution Archive, Poster Collection, Poster RU/SU 2317.23R). Facsimiles reproduced in accordance with the Norwegian Copyright Act.

These few exceptions notwithstanding, the overriding representation is what we might loosely call "realist" in that there is relatively little that departs from a rather old-style popular photographic representation which "eliminates accident or any appearance that dissolves the real by temporalizing it" (Bourdieu, 1990, p. 76).

Small Group Exposure. The slightly greater number of actors present in small-group exposure enables additional semiotic resources to be mobilised highlighting, for example, that individuals are somehow "in the same boat" or on opposite sides of an argument:


Figures 6.37 & 6.38. Theresa May sinking with Boris Johnson vs. squaring up to Nicola Sturgeon. Facsimiles reproduced in accordance with the Norwegian Copyright Act.

At times proxemics, hexis and gesture combine, as when Ed Miliband appears to be intimidated by a rather threatening Cameron, while the empty space between Sturgeon and Murphy in the second image stresses their ideological distance, her relaxed attitude also contrasting strongly with his more defensive posture:

Figures 6.39 & 6.40. Nicola Sturgeon and Jim Murphy miles apart. Facsimiles reproduced in accordance with the Norwegian Copyright Act.

As regards haptics, we might usefully contrast Sturgeon's rather formal handshake with Cameron with *The National*'s presentation of her meeting with EU President Jean-Claude Juncker:

Figures 6.41 & 6.42. David Cameron, Nicola Sturgeon and Jean-Claude Juncker: a handshake vs. a warm embrace. Facsimiles reproduced in accordance with the Norwegian Copyright Act.

Images featuring three actors can suggest more complex power relationships, often enhanced through the use of CGI as illustrated below:

Figures 6.43 & 6.44. Anti-independence politicians (Blair, Murphy and Osborne) as zombies vs. a serene Nicola Sturgeon surveying Miliband and Osborne. Facsimiles reproduced in accordance with the Norwegian Copyright Act.

Where some level of individual identification is needed for larger groups, the technique of composite presentation is almost invariably used whereby smaller separate images of each of the individuals involved are presented. The numbers can vary from four or five through several dozen to numbers so large they are impossible to count. There are 19 cases of this type: the second image below shows Nicola Sturgeon surrounded by all the SNP Members of (the UK) Parliament elected on 8 May 2015:

Figures 6.45 & 6.46. Individuals bound by a common purpose. Facsimiles reproduced in accordance with the Norwegian Copyright Act.

Large Group Exposure. Images of larger groups can be subdivided into the following classes:

- *Groups* are made up of individuals who share some kind of permanent (e.g. family) or short-term project-oriented (e.g. protestors) or otherwise institutional identity (e.g. members of the House of Lords), where that group identity is more important than their individual identity. These groups, of which there are 40 examples, go from the small (families) to the very large (the 300 Lords). Their ideological significance varies but is always clear, particularly in the case of the House of Lords, routinely presented by *The National* as a site of unjustified privilege.

- *Crowds*, which appear on 43 occasions, are large groups of people – ranging from perhaps a dozen to many thousands – where individual exposure is all but impossible. They are mostly either festive (e.g. celebrating Catalonia's national day or sporting victories) or in mourning as the result of mass shootings or other atrocities, though there is an increasing number of "crowds" of refugees. Crowds are not automatically incompatible either with a degree of individual exposure, or with a direct challenge to their status as "anonymous" (the second image below refers to David Cameron's description of immigrants as a "swarm"):

Figures 6.47 & 6.48. The comfort and loneliness of the crowd. Facsimiles reproduced in accordance with the Norwegian Copyright Act.

A number of *The National*'s covers produced in the run-up to and after the 2014 independence referendum combined (anonymous) individual exposure with a supporting crowd. Below on the left is a largely unidentifiable crowd of independence supporters and on the right a similar crowd in close-up with one individual in particular standing out:

Figures 6.49 & 6.50. A question of perspective. Facsimiles reproduced in accordance with the Norwegian Copyright Act.

The latter was not, however, my first encounter with (variations of) this particular image. It had appeared on the inside pages of *The National* on 30 June 2016, and I had already come across two very slightly different versions of it in a study of how the Catalan press covered the Scottish referendum in 2014 (Castelló et al., 2015). These versions accompanied articles appearing in the Spanish-language *La Vanguardia*'s International Section on 18 September 2014 and in the Catalan-language daily *Ara* on 19 September 2014. Very similar images then appeared again twice in the Scottish press on the first anniversary of the referendum, in the *Sunday Herald* on 13 September 2015 and in *Scotland on Sunday* on the same date. This is a striking example of dispersion across national boundaries (I return to the concept of "dispersion" below).

There is a small but useful academic debate on whether, in such cases, we are dealing with a *crowd*, a *mob* or *the people* (Beasley-Murray, 2002). However, these competing discourses are best seen as part of "a complex rhetorical

strategy of social reference" (Bhabha, 1994, p. 145) where "working people" can be represented as "something more than a favoured mob [or] a desperate and unruly crowd" (Unger, 2004, p. 53). For *The National,* crowds are always this "something more": they stand against aggression and injustice and demand solidarity: even when no-one is picked out for individual attention, these shots have an important framing function as visual expressions of elements of *The National*'s worldview which also feature in many of the individualised presentations.

Reading the Symbolic

The term "symbolic representation" refers to cases where meaning is expressed mainly metaphorically (though also occasionally metonymically) by means of images. The two images immediately below exemplify the differences between iconic, indexical and symbolic representation. On the left is an indexical expression of war in Syria (ruins are not war, but point towards war). On the right we see a hybrid form combining iconic representation of John McDonnell (UK Labour Shadow Chancellor) with a metaphorical expression of the crisis affecting that party in the form of a house on the verge of collapse:

Figures 6.51 & 6.52. The destruction of Syria vs. the collapse of the British Labour Party. Facsimiles reproduced in accordance with the Norwegian Copyright Act.

At this point I will turn to Foucauldian discourse analysis in order to grasp the more complex dynamics of symbolic representation. This approach, based on the work of French theorist Michel Foucault, differs from both of the broadly structuralist frames used so far with their detailed analysis of the inner mechanics of specific (visual or linguistic) texts. This difference lies primarily in the fact that Foucault had no interest in any specific text of any kind as an object of study in itself. As he puts it in *The Archaeology of Knowledge*, his kind of analysis "leaves the final placing of the text in dotted outline" (1972, p. 84).

Foucault talks not of texts but of "discourses" – for example discourses of national identity such as the ones we are focusing on here – and of "discursive formations" which arise out of the coming together of discourses on the same broad topic but spread across a wide range of fields: for example, discourses of national identity can emerge in relation to hard news (the case here), sport (very common), advertising, television drama, literature, poetry, music and so on, each of these with its own distinct vocabulary and style. Discursive formations are therefore "systems of dispersion" (p. 41) – they have no single identifiable author and are made up of "statements" emerging from a wide range of "surfaces of emergence" (p. 45). They do not present what Barthes might call a "unary" message (2000, p. 41), being on the contrary "a space of multiple dissensions; a set of different oppositions whose levels and roles must be described" (Foucault, 1972, p. 173).

Importantly for this project, "archaeology", as Foucault called his approach at the time, does not limit itself simply to the study of expressive forms, but "also reveals relations between discursive formations and non-discursive domains (institutions, political events, economic practices and processes) … it seeks to define specific forms of articulation" (pp. 179-80). Such an approach lends itself productively to the analysis of *The National* being undertaken here, as this newspaper combines its own range of expressive modalities to engage in ideological conflict originating in broader Scottish, UK, EU and even international institutional frames.

Critical Metaphor Analysis (CMA) is also used here as a complementary analytical tool. This approach explicitly challenges the Classical Greek view of metaphor as decorative or ornamental, and stresses instead "its role in the development of ideology in areas such as politics and religion where influencing judgements is a central goal" (Charteris-Black, 2004, p. 8). "Vehicle" and "source domain" are the terms used in CMA for the concrete element which conveys in more tangible terms the abstract concept which the metaphor aims

to express, known as the "target domain" (Charteris-Black, 2004). Thus in Shakespeare's well-known phrase "If music be the food of love, play on", "food" and "music" are the tangible/audible vehicles for the abstract concept "love", which they simultaneously express and bring closer to the reader's/listener's experience. Though the number of vehicles used by *The National* is large, certain patterns and repetitions can be identified. There are numerous flags (mainly saltires and EU flags), eight images deploy submarines or missiles, the target being defence spending, while another ten show maps of Scotland with varying meanings. Some of the numerous metaphors of imprisonment and entrapment (walls, barbed wire, padlocks, shackles, clamps, nooses and so on) are very striking, and range from the grim to the beautiful:

Figures 6.53 & 6.54. I want to break free... Facsimiles reproduced in accordance with the Norwegian Copyright Act.

Other vehicles include blackboards, schoolboys/girls or lecture theatres for education (five examples) and flowers or candles for mourning (ten examples, the topic however being in most cases terrorism). We should beware of assuming that the same vehicle will always refer to the same topic or be part of the same discourse: as Lakoff and Johnson argue, "metaphor, by virtue of giving coherent structure to a range of our experiences, creates similarities *of a new kind*" (1981, p.151, their emphasis). Take for example the two images below using an abacus as the vehicle:

Figures 6.55 & 6.56. Danny Alexander and George Osborne fail their maths exam. Facsimiles reproduced in accordance with the Norwegian Copyright Act.

The captions clearly inform us that in the first case – featuring then Chief Secretary to the Treasury Danny Alexander – the target is financial dishonesty, whereas in the second, featuring George Osborne, the target is economic naivety and incompetence, thereby creating novel similarities between concepts not normally regarded as overlapping.

A detailed examination of all of the metaphors mobilised is not possible, but the sample provided should make it clear that while semiotics is a valuable tool for the analysis of individual images, something different is required at the level we are dealing with here. This was a conclusion reached several decades ago by Barthes when he moved from his structuralist to his poststructuralist phase, particularly with the publication of *Mythologies*. For Barthes myth is fundamentally ideological in nature – it is, as he puts it, an essential element of the "passage from the real to the ideological" (2009, p. 168) – and it is at this point that myth and discourse at least partially merge.

Reading the Discursive

Given the scale of the dataset, in order to keep the analysis manageable I will focus here on a small selection of the captions accompanying individual images of Nicola Sturgeon, always bearing in mind that they operate within a much

broader frame of other captions and metaphoric visuals which reproduce the same discourses as those itemised below (the discourses mobilised are shown in italics):

- 12 February 2015
  LEADING WITH THE LEFT
  Sturgeon offers olive branch to English progressives as she unveils alternative to austerity
  UNITY/PROSPERITY
- 7 April 2015
  STURGEON DEMANDS THE TRUTH
  Carmichael must question the whole approach to politics after saying memo leak is just 'one of those things'
  HONESTY
- 10 October 2015
  EQUALITY: THE TIME IS NOW
  'I don't want my niece's generation to still be fighting these battles. I want us to actually try to win these battles for the next generation of women'
  EQUALITY
- 20 April 2016
  WE'LL SPEND AN EXTRA £500M [MILLION] ON THE NHS [NATIONAL HEALTH SERVICE]
  CARE
- 25 June 2016
  INDEYREF2 [a second independence referendum]: WE'RE READY
  'I am proud of Scotland and how we voted yesterday. We proved that we are a modern, outward-looking and inclusive country and we said clearly that we do not want to leave the European Union. I am determined to do what it takes to make sure these aspirations are realised' NICOLA STURGEON
  OPENNESS/PROGRESSIVENESS
- 18 August 2016
  YOU ARE NOT JUST BARGAINING CHIPS
  Sturgeon meets EU nationals [living in Scotland] and demands a guarantee from Theresa May that they can stay in Scotland

INCLUSION/JUSTICE

- 24 August 2016

YOU CAN'T OFFER US SECURITY
Sturgeon says Downing Street's [i.e. Theresa May's] silence is 'increasingly negligent' and confirms indyref2 still 'highly likely' as Scotland's Brexit bill predicted to hit £11.2bn
SECURITY
The National, in fact, through its individual exposure and broader visual and textual frame generates a Manichean universe divided along the following lines

Care	Negligence
Competence	Inequality
Equality	Incompetence
Dependence	Independence
Honesty	Dishonesty
Humanity	Inhumanity
Justice	Injustice
Legality	Illegality
Openness	Closedness
Progressiveness	Regressiveness
Prosperity	Poverty
Security	Insecurity
Solidarity	Insolidarity
Stability	Instability
Unity	Disunity

The first column designates the discursive universe of *The National* itself and those who share its worldview, in particular Nicola Sturgeon and the SNP more generally: the stuff of dreams but also of discipline and hard work. The second column is its anti-universe, the stuff of nightmares, a number of which actually appear on the front covers of *The National*, the second image below in particular mobilising a very long-standing conflation of shadow and dread in Western culture (Stoichita, 1997 – see in particular the *Égoïste* advertisement reproduced on page 36 and the stills from *The Cabinet of Dr Caligari* and *Nosferatu, a Symphony of Horror* reproduced on page 151):

Figures 6.57 & 6.58. The stuff of nightmares. Facsimiles reproduced in accordance with the Norwegian Copyright Act.

Despite the diversity of images and metaphors, this Manichean universe structures *The National*'s discursive output from top to bottom and from side to side, and so far has remained entirely consistent throughout the paper's relatively short existence. While the negative axis of this matrix is the politics of austerity, the positive side is not simply independence – i.e. statehood – but a symbiotic fusion of independence and social democracy. The longest caption to date appeared on 11 November 2016, a few days after the US elections, and exceptionally taking up more than half the page. It read, quoting Nicola Sturgeon:

> There is more of an obligation on us now than there perhaps has been on our generation before and this is the time for all of us, no matter how difficult, no matter how controversial and unpopular it may be in certain quarters, to be beacons of hope for those values we all hold so dear.

The accompanying article foregrounded a number of social issues – most centrally racism and misogyny – with no mention of independence whatsoever. The paper's most striking cover to date – a special wraparound cover featuring an artwork by Scotland's most prominent living artist Peter Howson – again foregrounded not independence (though it is implicit in the Union Jack in the background) but the theme of austerity, of which poverty was clearly a motif:

Figures 6.59. Peter Howson's dramatic depiction of Scotland under UK rule. Facsimile reproduced in accordance with the Norwegian Copyright Act.

The Manichean nature of this universe explains many (perhaps all) of the apparent conundrums in *The National*'s coverage. For example, it explains why Ruth Davidson, the current leader of Scotland's second-largest political party, did not appear in her own right on any front cover until 12 September 2016 (issue 508). While the unexpectedly good showing by her party in the snap general election held in the UK in 2017 has to some extent reversed this trend – she has now appeared on 11 front covers – images of her remain invariably negative or trivialising and her tally of front covers continues to appear paltry compared with Nicola Sturgeon's 59 appearances:

Figures 6.60 & 6.61. Ruth Davidson – irrelevant bit player in Tory in-fighting or disappearing into the background. Facsimiles reproduced in accordance with the Norwegian Copyright Act.

In short, while the *tactical* importance of individual exposure for ideological reasons is abundantly clear, the *strategic* construction of reality in play can only be achieved if that exposure is placed within its broader discursive environment. And this applies not only to individual exposure but also, for example, to the extraordinary group exposure enjoyed by the Australian Brain family who featured in eight front covers in *The National* between 12 May 2015 and 21 September 2016. They had been ordered by the British Home Office to leave the UK despite having already lived in Scotland for six years, having now become an integral part of the local community, and much was made of the fact that their son was now a fluent Gaelic speaker. On 20 September 2016 the family were finally granted leave to stay, a development which triggered front-page coverage in *The National* the following day under the headline "VICTORY!"

Shifting Subjectivities

The (for many completely unexpected) result of the UK referendum of 23 June 2016 to remain in or leave the EU has thrown the UK political scene – and the identities/subjectivities it nourishes or attempts to stifle – into considerable turmoil. The result has been particularly complex for Scotland since, as mentioned earlier, *all* its local council areas voted to remain in the EU but are now in a position where an exit from the European Union, which will take Scotland with it, seems inevitable. This is despite the fact that the country's majority support for continuing membership in the EU has always been clear, and so has *The National*'s – on 23 June 2016 it broke from its own tradition and used a front-cover strapline (for that day only) announcing it as *The Newspaper that Supports Scotland in Europe*: since then, stretching well into 2017, many headlines and metaphoric images – e.g. entwined saltires/EU flags, handshakes also in the colours of both flags – have stressed a new ideological alignment between Scotland and the EU which attempts to bypass the rest of the UK.

Predictably, the position adopted by the SNP and by *The National* both before and after the EU referendum received much criticism (not to mention scorn) from opponents, mainly on the grounds that it was incoherent and therefore flawed: it was not logically possible, they argued, to be simultaneously *against* union with the rest of the UK (the SNP's position during the 2014

independence referendum) and *for* union with Europe (its current position on the EU). The following brief extract from a letter to the Editor published in *The Herald* on 15 June 2016 – a week before the EU referendum – gives a flavour of this coverage:

> THE SNP's attitude towards the in/out EU referendum is now beyond parody.
>
> Here is a party who wanted (and held) an in/out UK referendum, labelled this as Scotland's "one opportunity", now hint that a rerun may be only a few years away, and yet don't want us even to hold a vote on continued EU membership ("Legitimacy warning over EU poll" The Herald, June 10).
>
> They warn about the risks and dangers of leaving the EU, having spent most of 2014 dismissing warnings against leaving the UK as "scaremongering".

The critics of this position have, however, failed to understand neither *The National*'s nor the SNP's position on these matters: they have, on the contrary, viewed it as an opportunity to engage in the "space of dissension" opened up by the EU referendum to counter the discourses of independence and corresponding subjectivities which the paper and the party promote. Such a strategy necessarily involves a struggle over what the ultimate goal of this discourse is. An overt discourse of independence is, as mentioned earlier, while certainly present (clustering in particular around election and referendum dates), not among the most frequently articulated within *The National* and the SNP's discursive frame. Their favoured discourses are those given on the left-hand side of the list presented earlier, where independence is seen not as an end in itself, but as a *means* to achieve the political objectives which those discourses express. If membership in the EU is more likely to lead to such an outcome, as the SNP and *The National* argue, then that is logically preferable to a continuation within the UK where these objectives are much less likely to be achieved. And so the circle, however unlikely it might seem, is effectively squared. Subjectivity, being socially constructed rather than inherent in nature, can also be deployed strategically.

Rather than *The National*'s stance being internally contradictory, the two sides of the debate simply occupy antagonistic spaces within that particular discursive formation. In terms of national and political subjectivities and statehoods these processes are of course extremely complex: my current EU/UK passport for example – in its UK dimension always a statement of "technical" affiliation rather than cultural belonging – is already becoming obsolete, while

my sense of Scottish (stateless) nationhood remains, like that of many other Scots, very much alive. Both *The National* and the SNP have become important players in the debate regarding a possible future Scotland outside the UK but still as a member of the EU (ironically, having two Irish grandparents I could yet apply for Irish citizenship and thus technically regain the "EU" element of my identity). Such a scenario may not yet be a possibility, let alone ever a reality, but for *The National* the dream is still worth dreaming.

Conclusion

This chapter has argued, using *The National* as a case study, that essentialist understandings of national identity represent a significant obstacle to a workable understanding of how this concept operates and is mobilised in contemporary societies. It calls for a social constructionist approach where such identities are seen as constructs which can be put into play as elements of political and ideological strategies through the use of visual, linguistic and other (e.g. news hierarchy) discourses. This requires a clear understanding of the difference between topic and theme as understood within this broader discursive frame: the topic of much of *The National*'s output may be independence, but its central theme is the quest for a society organised along social democratic lines in opposition to an increasingly challenged neoliberal hegemony.

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