

## Editorial

The theme of this issue of *IJOSTS* is *Alternative Identities*. Just as recent critical debate has focused on the concept that there is no simple essentialist way of defining a Scottish identity, so we recognise that it is futile to pursue any concept of a single identity for Scottish theatre and screen. The multiplicity of identities that make up Scottish theatre and screen enfold, enrich and sometimes contradict one another. This issue recognises this as each of its constituent articles addresses a different aspect of the complexity of the nature of Scotland's theatrical culture. This is particularly so, given the potential of different languages in Scotland's culture to inflect the meaning and significance of the plays making use of those languages.

Sarah Carpenter offers a lively discussion of alternative identities, the parallels and differences between two great sixteenth-century playwrights, George Buchanan and David Lindsay. Their lifetimes overlapped to a large extent and their drama questioned the nature of good and godly government. Carpenter does us a service as she reminds us of the way in which Buchanan's writing in Latin, much praised by his contemporaries for its style, allowed the topics of his plays to have an influence across Europe in a way that Lindsay's Scots-language drama could perhaps not. Nonetheless, we are reminded of the powerful impact of Lindsay's plays on the wider society of the Scotland of its time. Lindsay's use of Scots has meant that his play has been revived over the last seventy years and widely appreciated for its theatrical power, but it is also important that we recognise the parallel importance of Buchanan's drama. Carpenter brings to the front of our mind the quality of his work, sometimes obscured for the modern reader by a need for an up-to-date and widely available translation of its Latin text and the perceived difficulty – challenged by Jamie Reid Baxter's practical research – that it is difficult to stage.

Issues of language are approached from another angle in the article by Ian Brown and Sim Innes on the use of Gaelic songs and poems in John McGrath's

seminal text, *The Cheviot, the Stag and the Black Black Oil*. Where the background to Carpenter's article is the differing languages available to Scottish playwrights in the sixteenth century, Brown and Innes address the ways in which a modern Scottish playtext makes use of Gaelic in a predominately English-language text. They explore the ways in which the use of Gaelic texts in the script of *The Cheviot* allows for an engagement with the history and values of Gaelic-speaking Scotland. It also investigates ways in which the difficulty sometimes experienced in fully grasping that history and those alternative values of the Gàidhealtachd may lead to use being made of them which, while effective dramatically, may miss something of the point of the original Gaelic texts and contexts, their *alternative identities*.

Verónica Rodríguez and Dilek Inan bring to their discussion of David Greig's *Dunsinane*, as appropriate, a close discussion of the play text. They also, importantly, develop readings of recent studies of a play which, while premièred only as recently as 2010, has already attracted substantial critical discussion. They are able, drawing on these readings and their own reading of the play, to offer a fresh perspective to the alternative worldviews – alternative identities – that Greig embodies in his play. The complexity in this case is not of language, but of the ways in which what seems the same language in the speech of those of different cultures means different things and embodies different values. The elusiveness of meaning and the invader's difficulty in understanding the culture he (in this case) seeks to subdue marks failures in grasping the identities of the 'other', a point Rodriguez and Inan make with care and lucidity.

John Riddell's article marks alternative identities in quite another way. The first three articles express this theme through their discussion of the work of playwrights and the language and meaning embedded in their playtexts. Riddell's article, however, reminds us of the significance of alternative institutions. The Close Theatre in Glasgow was, from 1965 to 1973, the studio theatre of the Citizens' Theatre and, as Riddell shows clearly, the antecedent to today's Tron Theatre. He provides us with a lucid and well-researched history of the Close Theatre and the controversies that surrounded its foundation and operation. Here, the Close's 'alternative' identity marked its role as an 'alternative theatre' to the mainstream in

Glasgow. Arguably, the Close was never quite as experimental as the Traverse that avowedly inspired it, but Riddell reminds us of its importance. He also provides in his appendices a number of useful source documents to help us understand more fully the controversies that from time to time surrounded the Close's operation and artistic role.

Finally, the forum article in this issue reports on an international experiment in September 2012 by the Scottish Society of Playwrights. The translation workshop, *Translating Text: Transforming Potential* marked a new initiative in developing the international links of contemporary Scottish theatre, offering them alternative identities. The forum article provides first-hand accounts by the playwrights and translators involved of their experience of the workshop as artists and its impact on them as theatre writers. Here, the alternative made available was that derived from the transforming process of attempted translation. The word we use here, 'attempted', is one we use advisedly. It is clear from the reports provided that, while the experience of translation enriches, it also confuses and raises issues of meaning and choice. We are reminded that the identity of a play may change in meaning from time to time, but it must always change as it moves from one language to another.