

Documentary, 'makey-up' storytelling and new modes of writing for the Scottish stage.

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Introduction

Telling stories is something that children are warned against from an early age: stories are lies, inventions, 'makey-up' versions of reality. (The origin and import of that idea will become clearer below.) Stories too are the stuff of theatre, both fictional and rooted in fact. In the particular practices that constitute documentary theatre, the expectation is that these stories will not be fabricated, under pressure to live up to a responsibility for truth-telling. Alan Filewod identifies in the work of Erwin Piscator two principles that, 'provide the common ground for all subsequent developments of documentary: it is a genre of performance that presents actuality on the stage and in the process authenticates that actuality, and it speaks to a specifically defined audience for whom it has special significance' (1987, p. 16). Filewod emphasises this specificity of audience as a distinctive feature of documentary in theatre: in the mass media, the goal of documentary is to reach as wide an audience as possible.

A further condition of documentary theatre is that somehow these authentic accounts have also to be made theatrical, an equally compelling requirement of performability. This sense of performability is crucial in the selection of material. It may mean that experiences that have yet to be voiced or to be voiced sufficiently coherently, however powerful in themselves, will not be represented. The active decision to remain silent, for example, is represented only rarely in documentary performance. It also means that the makers of documentary performance have to ensure that the material speaks to its spectators in ways that are engaging and that would not have been available to them in another form or medium. While Peter Weiss attempted to codify the practices of documentary theatre in his seminal, 'The Material and the Models: A Political and Aesthetic Definition of Documentary Theatre' which appeared in English in 1971, the responses to these conditions of documentary theatre in practice have produced wide variations in different contexts and across different

periods. Broadly, in form they can be characterized by the re-presentation of a variety of historical documents, statistics and facts, interspersed with dramatic scenes, and linked through a principle of montage rather than a narrative arc. Frequently the emphasis is on documenting experience rather than fact (Filewod 1987, p. 17). Derek Paget (1987) coined the term 'verbatim theatre' as a subset of documentary theatre in England which relied on recordings of interviews with real people which were then shaped into theatrical performance. In the United States, these practices have been categorised as 'ethnodramas' (Saldaña 2005). In the following, I trace the lineage of contemporary documentary practices in Scotland, to identify how in this specific context these wide-spread conditions have been articulated.

While before 1973 history and contemporary political and social issues had long been rich reservoirs for topics for Scottish dramatists (Brown 1996; Archibald 2011), it was the production of *The Cheviot, The Stag and the Black, Black Oil* in that year that initiated what was to become a sustained contemporary tradition of documentary 'writing' for the stage in Scotland. John Tiffany, for example, identifies that production as the earliest inspiration for his own later documentary work (2010, pp. ix-x). The tradition which it initiated can be traced through the subsequent work of 7:84 (Scotland) under John McGrath and the work of a whole range of writers produced by Wildcat. Since the turn of this century, it has been articulated in works as diverse as Nicola McCartney's *Lifeboat* (2002); Gregory Burke's *Black Watch* (2006); Duncan McLean's adaptation of *Aalst* (2007) and his *Long Gone Lonesome* (2009); Alastair Beaton's *Caledonia* (2010); National Theatre of Scotland's *Enquirer* (2012); Cora Bisset and David Greig's *Glasgow Girls*, (2012) and the work of Glasgow's Articulate company that, according to its website, seeks to 'contribute to contemporary theatre making by stretching and furthering documentary theatre techniques' (online). Thus, documentary is not a static form. With discussions of specific productions, of 7:84 or McGrath aside, however, documentary theatre as a living tradition of Scottish theatre-making has been remarkably uncharted in critical discussions, another example of what Ian Brown (2011) calls 'Creative Amnesia', matched by critical neglect. In the context of a conference marking fifty years of playwriting in Scotland documentary theatre practice stretches the conception of what constitutes 'writing' performance far beyond the literary product of the solo process of

the playwright (Filewod 1987, p. ix). That, after all had been the goal of the great Haggis Hunt identified by Jan McDonald: the discovery of a great literary drama produced by a single genius, so that Scots might ask once again, 'Whaur's your Wullie Shakespeare noo?'¹ There is no small irony in that McGrath himself rejected that very same idea of the Romantic artist in isolation (1981c, p. 84), while stoking his personal antipathy to McDonald.

Writing in *Scotland on Sunday* in response to *Enquirer*, Andrew Eaton-Lewis both demonstrates ignorance of the history and form of documentary theatre in Scotland and expresses a rejection of its appeal:

I mostly hate documentary theatre. I've long thought, actually, that it is evidence of a crisis of confidence in theatre, of an art-form desperately trying to justify its existence in an age where people seem to like Reality TV more than drama.

The rise of Reality TV made drama look somehow old-fashioned and, worse, fake. Why watch something made up when you can watch something "real"?

Faced with this, many theatre-makers panicked, and tried to prove their authenticity by engaging conspicuously and self-consciously with the "real" world, rather than hold their nerve ... (2012, online)

This caustic dismissal is perhaps singular in its virulence. Nonetheless it expresses a sentiment that is widely shared within Scotland and beyond. It highlights too the ethical tension that documentary theatre makers have to address, between creative theatre-making and fidelity to the real (Bottoms 2006; Hammond and Steward 2008, for example). Luckhurst (2010) identifies this responsibility faced by actors playing real people as a form of 'ethical stress'. This is not to suggest that this tradition of documentary has been a purely Scottish one (McGrath 1981c, 49 ff; Filewod 1987), nor indeed a uniquely theatrical tradition in Scotland, demonstrated historically in the documentary films of John Grierson and in the work of the Scottish Documentary

Institute today. I argue here, however, that it has had a distinctive (if not unique) articulation in Scottish theatre, not least of all due to a series of continuities which together constitute a living tradition. I am using 'Scottish here, not in any sense of an essentialist nationalist or ethnic identity, but rather to refer to a recognizably distinct public sphere, that 'specifically defined audience' identified by Filewod above. I am going to trace the lineage of this tradition by comparing three specific documentary productions: *The Cheviot...*, *Black Watch*, and *Enquirer*.

A Living Tradition

One important aspect of documentary theatre in Scotland has been its roots in forms of widespread popular performance. As John Tiffany describes it,

Fuelled by variety, visual art, music and a deep love of storytelling, Scotland's artists have created a form of theatre that is as significant and vital as its written drama. It features narration, song, movement, stand-up comedy, film, politics and, above all, an urgent need to connect with its audience ... It is a distinct form of theatre of which Scotland can be very proud. (2010, p. ix)

These characteristics might be traced in any number of Scottish (and other) plays. Randall Stevenson (2005) has for example traced them back to the production of *Ane Satyre of The Thrie Estaits* in 1554. In a more contemporary context, Femi Folorunso noted that 'In nearly every modern Scottish play, recognisable bits and pieces of music-hall aesthetics can be found' (1996, p. 176). Ian Brown (2005a) likewise identifies the crucial role of the performer (rather than the playwright) as a distinguishing feature of Scottish popular theatre. Thus, popular forms might be regarded as the soil in which documentary has grown.

This is not a fanciful metaphor, since in practical terms, for example, *The Cheviot* benefitted from the presence of performers, John Bett, Alex Norton and Bill Patterson, all of whom had performed together in The Citizens' Theatre for Youth and in *The Great Northern Welly Boot Show*, developing and honing the skills that would

make them such virtuoso popular theatre performers. In describing this as a living tradition, it is important to note the ways in which individual theatre makers have enacted its practices and been connected through them, in an extended genealogy of documentary theatre-makers. While undoubtedly the work of Ewan MacColl, Joan Littlewood and others had sown the seeds of such documentary practices, it is in this living lineage of performers that has continued since 1973 that an unbroken Scottish tradition can be traced. For example, David MacLennan, who stage-managed and performed in *The Cheviot* went on to co-found Wildcat with Ferelith Lean, 7:84's company manager, and David Anderson who had joined the company for *The Game's a Bogey* (1974). John Bett had written and performed his own play on the Highland Clearances, *The Cruel Wind* at Dundee (Capon 2005, p. 198); was a member of *The Cheviot* company; performed in 1975 in *Little Red Hen* (as did Bill Patterson), then later in McGrath's devolution plays and *The Silver Darlings* (1994), and in *Enquirer*. In the latter he was joined by Billy Riddoch, who joined 7:84 for *The Game's a Bogey*; appeared in more shows for the company than any other performer except Elizabeth MacLennan (MacLennan 1990, p. 60); and worked on McGrath's *Border Warfare* (1989) and *John Brown's Body* (1990) for Wildcat. John Haswell directed Donald Campbell's *Victorian Values* (1986) for 7:84 (Scotland) and has subsequently developed and worked on documentary plays such as *It Was Herd Wark, But* (1987) for Shetland Youth Theatre and *Ignition* (2013) based on car stories collected from the people of Shetland for National Theatre of Scotland. Myra McFadyen cut her teeth performing with Wildcat and was a key supporting actor in *Glasgow Girls*. The almost continuous remounting of *Black Watch* has also become a proving ground for younger Scottish actors, training them in the arts of popular theatre in a way that makes good the deficit identified by McGrath some twenty years earlier in *The Bone Won't Break*.

Even where the individuals haven't been connected directly by working together, the development of shared practices has been supported by higher education courses that over the last three decades in particular have engaged with Scottish theatre more broadly and documentary theatre in particular. There are optional courses for students in documentary theatre and space and place on the University of Glasgow's Theatre Studies degree. I was introduced to Scottish theatre on the then

MA in English Literature programme with Randall Stevenson, Olga Taxidou and Roger Savage at the University of Edinburgh in the mid 1980s. Nicola McCartney now runs a postgraduate programme in Playwriting at the University. Queen Margaret University in Edinburgh offers degrees in Drama and Performance, Acting for Stage and Screen and Theatre and Film. Ros Steen's influence on Scottish theatre as voice coach is evidence too of the work of academics and students at what is now The Royal Conservatoire of Scotland. Steen worked on *Black Watch*, by which point she had already collaborated with John Tiffany for a decade. Tiffany himself studied at Glasgow University and he acknowledged quite openly that his ideas for *Black Watch* were directly inspired by *The Cheviot*. Nicola McCartney likewise studied at Glasgow, has collaborated with Steen and, according to Stephen Greenhorn also was encouraged and commissioned by John McGrath (Brown 2005, p. 111). She in turn is one of a number of writers who act as mentors for new writers under the auspices of the Playwrights' Studio Scotland.

Why Documentary Performance?

There is a question to be answered, of course, as to why documentary performance has emerged as it has done. Steve Bottoms's discussion of British documentary theatre in the early part of this century notes David Hare's contention that it offers up a dose of "authentic," "red-blooded" realism, a shot in the arm to help counteract the implicitly inauthentic and effete "art for art's sake" promoted by London's "metropolitan elite" (as if Hare himself were not a part of that elite)' (2006, p. 57). This sums up what appears to be a pervasive anxiety in contemporary Anglophone theatre that the difficulties of contemporary society cannot be adequately represented through fictional means (despite ample evidence to the contrary). There is an accompanying distrust of the theatrical as somehow inauthentic and therefore not serviceable in the representation of reality. This is an odd variation on a much older anxiety about mimetic representation that can be traced back to Plato. Erickson summarizes this earlier concern neatly, 'mimesis or imitation has always been a vexed issue because in the past the enemies of theatre confused the self-conscious use of mimetic illusion or make-believe with lying about reality' (2009, p. 21). There is, of course, no small contradiction in the impulse towards forms of documentary in a

retreat from the dangers of theatrical illusion which nonetheless creates the appearance of the 'real' at the expense of the theatrical. Bottoms critiques Hare's position and argues for a theatrical self-referentiality within documentary plays 'if they are to acknowledge their dual and thus ambiguous status as both "document" and "play"' (2006, p. 57). In this, he is being consistent with Aristotle's emphasis on *poiesis* over *mimesis*. Performability requires theatre's necessary artfulness of representation to overcome the limitations of mere surface reproduction.

A more particular reason for the turn to documentary in Scotland might come from consideration of the original context at which *The Cheviot* was performed, albeit as a reading. That event was as part of *Scottish International's* conference, *What Kind of Scotland?* which as well as debates and presentations also included plays by Archie Hind and Joan Ure. Such a programme demonstrates the extent to which theatre was then and remains a critical part of the Scottish public sphere. In a sense, all subsequent Scottish documentary theatre has been an attempt to answer the question, 'What kind of society do we live in/ do we want?' By turning directly to the documented experiences of Scots themselves, then, documentary theatre is both inventing and searching for an authentic indigenous response. The force by which the question has demanded an answer has been amplified frequently by a specific crisis, whether that be the prospect of untold wealth being generated by the discovery of Scottish oil; the role of the military, following the Iraq campaign and the amalgamation of Scottish regiments; or the function of the press, following the phone-hacking scandal. In a sense, then, this is a Scottish tradition of theatre, precisely because it has turned to Scottish people to provide the evidence on which its audience might judge or consider its own answer to the kind of Scotland in which it would live. This taps into the capacities of documentary theatre then as 'a remarkably democratic medium' (Hammond and Steward 2008, p. 12). As Ros Wynne-Jones whose interview is played within *Enquirer* writes, 'by proxy, through theatre and not journalism, those people finally get a decent hearing' (2012, online).

This is not, however, a simple mirror up to the nation. As Weiss (1971) had argued, documentary is above all else a polemic form. McGrath too emphasised that directness was a fundamental characteristic of his popular theatre: 'A working class

audience likes to know what you are trying to do or say to it' (1981c). Nevertheless, in a letter to the then Drama Director of the SAC to secure funding for *The Cheviot...*, he explained, 'The play is intended to help people to a greater awareness of their situation and their potential: how they achieve that potential is their affair not ours (cited MacLennan 1990, p. 46). In a similar vein, John Tiffany wrote in relation to *Enquirer*, 'It isn't our job to provide answers to every question we might ask, but it is perhaps our job to ask them, to ask them at the right time and to follow through on that questioning by putting curiosity into action' (2012a). These are not anodyne reproductions of the real; they are engaged investigations of lived experience from the point of view of those affected. In the words of Lord Bon Accord in *Border Warfare*, they are:

A healthy mix of prejudice and fact

No wobbly high-wire, balancing act. (McGrath 1996, p. 8)

an approach picked up in the publicity for *Enquirer* which described it as 'a mixture of fact, anecdote and passionate opinion.' Three particular attributes characterize these kinds of investigations: a commitment to the use of specific research methodologies; a collaborative approach to dramaturgy; and a specific engagement with the site of performance.

Research methodologies

The principal characteristic of documentary is the use of research in the generation of the content and focus of the productions, where theatre makers have employed the research methodologies of the historian, the ethnographer and the journalist. The overall approach is to collect stories as the basis of the performance and to re-present these in dramatic scenes, song and direct re-telling, for example. According to John Bett, John McGrath came to *The Cheviot* company with a structure, 'Then we were sent away to research various bits and pieces' (Capon 2005, p. 198) and from collective discussion, improvisation and trial-and-error, McGrath would then create the script. Interestingly, Bett was able to draw on his own childhood experience on Skye in contributing to the script, an early example of what

would now be described as autoethnography (Capon 2005, p. 198). John Tiffany describes the genesis of *Blackwatch* in similar terms:

When I joined the company in April 2005, Greg had discovered some fascinating stories with real dramatic potential, so we decided to programme the piece in our inaugural year as a ‘highly physical piece of political theatre’. I told Greg not to go away and write a fictional drama set in Iraq, but that instead we should try and tell the ‘real’ stories of the soldiers in their own words. (2010, p. x)

So, Burke was commissioned to carry out interviews with Black Watch soldiers which became the core part of the performance text.

A similar approach is described by Tiffany for creating *Enquirer* ‘We quickly agreed on how to do it. Make journalists themselves speak as opposed to us creating a fictional newspaper story’, continuing, ‘We asked Paul Flynn, Deborah Orr and Ruth Wishart to each interview 15 people from within the newspaper industry, from tabloid journalists to broadsheet editors and everyone in between, including journalists who work in digital media’ (2012a, online). Ruth Wishart draws attention too to the imperative behind such a research approach that can be seen consistently in documentary theatre:

Because of the way in which this was done, because all of the words spoken were actually spoken by our interviewees, at some point, there was no sense of people having a *make-up* [my emphasis] go at journalism. I mean these are journalists talking about journalism. (2012, online).

As a journalist, Wishart stresses unselfconsciously a mistrust of the make-up: the very stuff that makes theatrical performance exciting and engaging. Her professional concern connects too with one expressed by Hammond and Steward, writing about verbatim theatre:

[The] claim to veracity on the part of the theatre maker, however hazy

or implicit, changes everything. Immediately, we approach the play not just as a play but also as an accurate source of information. We trust and expect that we are not being lied to. When this claim is made, the dramatist must abide by some sort of ethical code if their work is to be taken seriously. (2008, p. 10)

The issue, here, however, is not the extent to which documentary plays are true, it is to establish the conditions under which *as theatre* they can be accepted as true. This has to go beyond a goal to reach the acme of mimesis, to achieve verisimilitude. While verisimilitude can be traced in the citation of sources such as documents and interviews, or in the recreation of verbatim interviews, and in some instances to the specific recreation of the mannerisms of the original subjects in verbatim performances, much of the appeal of documentary lies in a theatricality of performance modes that resist verisimilitude.

Collaborative Dramaturgy

This concern with theatricality can be traced in part to a second characteristic of documentary: the engagement of a collaborative process of production. The research process is often carried out by the performers who will later stage the play, a form of 'collective creation' (Filewod 1987, pp. 17-18). Further, the business of writing a script has been carried out alongside the range of production processes, rather than in advance of or in isolation from them. This has relied on a specific approach to collaborative dramaturgy that again has been shared with other forms of theatre making in contemporary Scotland and beyond. It was both a feature of the political theatre culture from which 7:84 emerged in both its English and Scottish forms, as well as alternative practices within wider theatrical culture at the time (McGrath 1981c, 44ff.; Hare and Stafford-Clark 2008). In contemporary Scottish theatre too it has been a feature of the work of companies like Communicado, Suspect Culture and Pachamama Productions, for example. Playwrights' Studio ran a workshop on the role of collaboration in contemporary performance practice during the Edinburgh Festival Fringe in the summer of 2013. Indeed collaboration has been a hallmark of National Theatre of Scotland's production schedules, (including its

Auteurs Project). Collaborative dramaturgy is a serious business of necessary experimentation in the making process, putting play into playwriting. This is particularly important since as Carol Martin has noted, 'What makes documentary theatre provocative is the way in which it strategically deploys the appearance of truth, while inventing its own particular truth through elaborate aesthetic devices' (2006, p. 10). It is precisely because performers, musicians, designers, directors and writers create the performance of documentary theatre together, that these aesthetic devices which are at the heart of the performances' theatricality work.

The first 7:84 (Scotland) company were clearly committed to working as a collective, though their cooperation was predicated on a fairly distinct demarcation of roles. Although McGrath had had a clear map of the performance in his head for some fifteen years prior to the performance (MacLennan 1990, p. 44), the work was developed through workshops with the company, based on their compiling and sifting through reams of documents to find material that could be dramatised, sung or otherwise performed. In his essay, 'The Year of the Cheviot' which prefaced the published version of the play, McGrath stressed his aversion to 'group-writing ... This wasn't to be a free-for-all, utopian fantasy' (1981, p. viii). At the same time, he 'wanted everybody in the company to be intimately involved in the actual process of creating it' (1981, p. viii). What clearly emerges from his account, and others involved at the time (MacLennan 1990; NLS 2010), is a distinction between McGrath's work as writer of the script, and the development of the performance, a distinction between solo playwriting and collective dramaturgy concerned with the making of performance.

For *Black Watch*, the performance was created by Tiffany from Burke's script derived from his interviews, in collaboration with Frantic Assembly's Steven Hoggett who choreographed the ten-strong cast. Tiffany explains how this was the first project he had ever undertaken where he entered the rehearsal room without a script and how the piece came together with contributions from the whole creative team and stage manager (2010, pp. x-xi). Music was provided by Davey Anderson (himself a writer and director) who adapted the Black Watch regiment's traditional songs. The production's total theatre approach was developed through the other

design elements in a set designed by Laura Hopkins and Jessica Brettle's costume design, with lighting design by Colin Grenfell, and sound by Gareth Fry. Leo Warner and Mark Grimmer were Video Designers for Fifty Nine Productions Ltd. Ben Brantley's *New York Times* review states that, 'Other narrative forms ... could tell the story that is told here ... But none could summon and deploy the array of artistic tools that is used with such mastery and immediacy' (2007, online).

For *Enquirer*, a fundamental task was to edit down the fifty hours or so of interviews into a coherent portrait of a profession in crisis. That editing was the principal responsibility of Vicky Featherstone and John Tiffany as directors, but they also brought in Andrew O'Hagan to co-edit a text that included material from forty-three different interviewees. The site-specific nature of the production meant that here too the shaping of the performance was crucially dependent on the design elements that divided up the office space and directed the audience's engagement within it. A note in the production's digital programme from Featherstone and Tiffany, expresses thanks, 'To the actors and our creative and production teams who all started on the 2nd April in an empty space with a view of the Clyde, with no script and piles of transcripts. Your interrogation and fearlessness is remarkable'. (The show opened on 26 April).

Documentary theatre's impact is most effective when it brings together all the design elements symbiotically as part of the development of the work. Sometimes it also requires working on the fly, changing and adapting as circumstances change across the production run (McGrath 1981a; NLS 2010). Its pleasures and the source of its efficacy must be sonic and visual, not merely narrative or verbal. There is work yet to be done on the musicology of Scottish documentary, particularly in the role, for example, of female performers like Dolina MacLennan, Terry Neason, Elaine C. Smith and Myra McFadyen, each of whom played a significant part as singers in documentary productions. McGrath (1981c) of course had earlier identified the importance of music as one of his characteristics of popular theatre, picking out, for example, the power of Terry Neason to wrest the audience's attention in a working-men's club in Glenrothes during the tour of *The Game's a Bogey* through the power of her voice (1981c, p. 74).

A Good Night Out pays less attention to the importance of design overall, though it was clearly an important part of *The Cheviot*. John Byrne had designed a giant pop-up book as the scenery, with set changes enacted by turning the pages. While costuming was largely emblematic, rather than naturalistic, with performers having to change between roles, these had a strong visual impact, summarizing the key social functions of and differentiating between individual characters. For example, when John Bett played Lord Krask and Elizabeth MacLennan Lady Phosphate, the use of tartan in his tam o' shanter and kilt and in her hunting coat demonstrated effectively the bastardization of the Highland traditions that had gone along with the appropriation of the land for hunting.

Costume performed a similar visual function in *Black Watch*. The writer figure is dressed casually but in a way that marks him out from the soldiers in the pub; they in turn are marked out as different from their service roles when they appear in desert combats. One of the most memorable sequences in the performance is when Cammy narrates the history of the Black Watch while walking down a red carpet, his costume being changed to fit each historical phase by the other actors. Tiffany's production note in the text makes clear precisely the effect that he hopes this will create: 'They resemble a squad assembling and disassembling a military canon' (2010, p. 30). Thus, the dehumanizing repetition of military routines and rituals that erases individual identity is expressed succinctly in this sequence. The mis-en-scene is flexible as in *The Cheviot* though the design choices have a more significant impact. Thus, the normality of the pub is shattered by gunfire and a lighting change, with the pool table surface splitting open to allow Fraz and Kenzie to emerge to enter as if back in Iraq. Given the facility of a fixed venue, the productions of *Black Watch* have also been able to use a full range of lighting effects to create mood and atmosphere alongside the digital screens that presented the wider context through a range of multimedia effects. The result was what Ben Brantley, described as 'a river of sensation' (2007, online).

In contrast, the visual design elements of *Enquirer* seemed to be restricted to present a convincing interior of a contemporary newspaper office. A certain verisimilitude was achieved through the creation of the everyday detritus of a busy

office environment with used coffee cups and trays, abandoned amongst piles of papers, computers and television screens displaying the twenty-four hour news channels that threaten the future of the print media. Stacks of newspapers served as door stops and were placed around the space, a visual reminder of the weight of information contained in newspapers, archaic in relation to the digital equipment and the spectator's own smartphones and home computers. Davey Anderson again provided music, but the emphasis here was largely on a verbatim rendition of the original interviews, even where these sometimes felt like a splicing together of different sources.

The Sites of Performance

A further characteristic of these productions has been their engagement with the site of performance as a crucial part of their performance strategy in engaging with a specific audience.² Brack (2012) suggests that the opening up of theatrical and dramatic spaces was a key component of much Scottish theatre from the late 1980s onwards, a movement given added impulse by the 2006 inaugural production of *Home* by the National Theatre of Scotland. However, concerns with the site of performance can be traced back to the 1970s and *The Cheviot ...*. Following the reading in Edinburgh in March 1973, the first performance proper of *The Cheviot ...* was in Aberdeen, at the start of an extensive tour that took in the Highlands and Islands. While a few of the venues were arts centres or had fixed tiered seating, more often performances were staged in village halls that facilitated the dancing that followed the shows. These had been booked in advance by Chris Martin and David MacLennan in person by visiting well before the play toured (McGrath 1981a). This was the people's story being brought back to the people in places that belonged to them, were part of their community. According to John Bett, 'We were talking about the oil, which was on their doorstep, so it was a very powerful emotive evening for them ... I guess I hadn't realized the possibility of that kind of response. The immediacy and pertinence to people's lives' (Capon 2005, p. 201). He notes too that the performances were adapted to mention local landlords and or changes in immediate circumstances.

The first production of *Black Watch* was at the 2006 Edinburgh Fringe at the former Drill Hall of the University of Edinburgh's Officer Training Corps in Forrest Road. It was intended as a kind of anti-Tattoo, taking place half a mile from the Castle Esplanade where the official Tattoo takes place. *Enquirer* was presented initially in April and May 2012 as a site-specific performance in a disused office space at The Hub at Pacific Quay, part of Glasgow's Digital Media Quarter. In a promenade performance, the audience followed a day-in-the-life of a newspaper through a space in which the company has recreated the interior of a contemporary newspaper office, right down to its discarded coffee cups, piles of paper and mismatched chairs. Director John Tiffany was keen to emphasise the connection between the site and the performance experience, characteristic of all three productions:

Sometimes, as with *Enquirer*, the reality of the material finds a match in the environment where it will be spoken. Glasgow is a character in this piece: on all sides, it wraps itself around the long glass office where *Enquirer* unfolds for the audience. They see, as the light goes down, a city that has known the glory and the price of reality (2012b, online).

Site becomes the performance in a public place where what is staged is 'a public event about matters of public concern' (McGrath 1981c, p. 83). The answer to 'What kind of Scotland?' is being played out in this space and at this time between these people, and the imagined national community is made tangible in this experience of place invoked by the performance. These create moments of what Jill Dolan has termed 'utopian performatives':

small but profound moments in which performance calls the attention of the audience in a way that lifts everyone slightly above the present, into a hopeful feeling of what the world might be like if every moment of our lives were as emotionally voluminous, generous, aesthetically striking, and intersubjectively intense. (2005, p. 5)

What is generated is a 'we-feeling', a sense of a unifying and inclusive Scottishness that celebrates the values of the performance and extends to embrace each of the spectators in a common group identity.

Of course, all three plays have had an afterlife that altered the specific significance they had in those original performance spaces. *The Cheviot*'s initial tour was followed by another, then runs at The Citizens, in Ayrshire and at the Lyceum in Edinburgh. In between it had been filmed for television, for BBC's *Play for Today* series. *Black Watch* was re-mounted in 2007 for a Scottish tour and performances in Los Angeles, New York and Sydney. It has since been re-mounted in 2008, 2010, 2011 and 2012 to places as diverse as Salford and Seoul. The latest production in 2013 played at Glasgow's SECC, before touring to three other places outside Scotland. One might, for example, accuse NTS of turning *Black Watch* into the kind of McTheatre more usually associated with the mega-musical (Rebellato 2004). A DVD and a radio version of the play have also been presented. *Enquirer* too was mounted outside of Scotland in October 2012, transferring to Mother at The Trampery in Clerkenwell, London and then Belfast's Lesley Buildings as part of the Belfast Festival. It was adapted for radio, broadcast on Friday 12 November on BBC Radio 4. It is not clear what the relationship is between such re-mounts, transfers and adaptations and the potency of the engagement with the original performance sites. The capacity of these productions to stand in for Scotland in other places and to other peoples, suggests, nonetheless, that they equally retain some power despite their dislocation.

A Broken Tradition: *Enquirer*

While the discussion to this point has suggested that all three productions belong to the same tradition, *Enquirer* stands apart from the other two in key respects. Both *The Cheviot* and *Black Watch* are theatrically inventive and avoid any attempt at verisimilitude. *Enquirer*, by contrast, in its attempt to create an authentic rather than a theatrical setting and the verbatim representation of its interviewees resists overt markers of theatricality in its performance modes, the requirement for actors to play multiple roles notwithstanding. This is despite the fact that the directors were engaged

with directly constructing the performance from the transcripts of the interviews. It seems counterintuitive to suggest that in the absence of a writer functioning as writer (Andrew O'Hagan was co-editor), the co-directors were unable to bring an inventive theatrical sensibility to the production: yet this is precisely the outcome of that process. It appears that in using the verbatim form, Tiffany and Featherstone had disregarded the traditions of Scottish popular theatre in order to promote a particular ethic of the real that had been generated from other cultural concerns. The response to these concerns was to develop text as generated by research (rather than a writer's imagination) that set the parameters of the performance and governed its theatricality. This primacy given to extra-theatrical text inhibited the inventive theatrical possibilities of the kind of collaborative dramaturgy in the other two performances. The assumption that such a performance is somehow authenticated by its origins is undercut by its performance modes which constitute a theatre of illusion. It demonstrates also that notwithstanding the characteristics set out above, making Scottish documentary theatre is not a mechanical process susceptible to a formula that can be relied on for success: appoint made by McGrath in *A Good Night Out* and reiterated in *The Bone Won't Break*.

Conclusion

While the characteristics of documentary theatre outlined above cannot be said to be uniquely Scottish, they constitute a recognizably Scottish approach to writing for the contemporary stage. These productions were researched in Scotland, constructed collaboratively by theatre-makers living in Scotland; and performed (at least initially) to Scottish audiences in Scottish spaces. Yet, their success as documentary theatre and their status as Scottish forms of performance is conditional too on the extent to which they draw on the very same set of characteristics with which I began, Folorunso's 'music-hall aesthetics', what McGrath termed popular theatre. It is a given that stage documentary should be good theatre first and foremost, something which *Enquirer* neglected in importing an approach that was not fully rooted within a wider context of Scottish performance. Only in the adept deployment of Scottish popular forms of performance has the theatrical been put into the documentary theatre as a living form. Otherwise, as *Enquirer* demonstrated, however

true they may be, the stories that they present will lose the very power that comes from being 'makey-up'.

Endnote.

¹ Colley (1999, p. 12) refers to the origins of this question as a possibly apocryphal story about the occasion of the first performance on the London stage of John Home's *Douglas* in 1757 when it was supposedly shouted out by a Scottish member of the audience.

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