

Ian Brown, editor, *The Edinburgh Companion to Scottish Drama* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2011); Trish Reid, *Theatre & Scotland* (Houndmills: Palgrave Macmillan, 2013)

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What might be described as the conventional wisdom about Scottish drama is summed up in the first two sentences of chapter 10 of Marshall Walker's book, *Scottish Literature since 1707* (1996): 'There is no paucity of Scottish theatrical heritage, but there is a shortage of durable Scottish plays. Drama is the genre in which Scottish writers have shown least distinction.'

It is a judgement that has been perpetuated over generations but only relatively recently has the necessary scholarship and engagement been advanced, by both academics and theatre practitioners, to interrogate the assumptions that lie behind it. Walker refers to 'the circumstances of theatrical history' and questions of suppression and censorship, the Reformation, the removal of the court to London in 1603, the Licensing Act of 1737, and concludes his introduction to the chapter by saying that despite familiar references to Allan Ramsay, John Home, Joanna Baillie, and the vitality of folk, music-hall and variety theatre, nothing much happens between Sir David Lyndsay in the sixteenth century and the 'return' of Scottish drama in the twentieth century. Most of his chapter then goes on to discuss incisively and refreshingly the achievements of J.M. Barrie, James Bridie and John McGrath but the context he sketches out is barren. As a summary, there is some brutal truth in this, but as an appraisal of the whole complex story, there is much more to be said, and much more has been discovered and made public in the decades since Walker's book appeared. The books under review are essential reading for anyone approaching that whole complex story now, in two quite different and complementary ways.

Ian Brown, in *The Edinburgh Companion to Scottish Drama*, has brought together seventeen experts in different areas of this story, and the result is a book that can be read as an unfolding historical account, chronologically, but also dropped into for the authors' exceptional individual expertise addressing different periods, authors, themes and questions. Every one of the chapters is exciting, fresh and demands revision of conventional assumptions; each opens doors and casts light on hitherto obscured figures or areas, and they are all animated by an exhilarating and infectious sense of zeal, evident both in their appetite for their subjects and in their combining of authoritative scholarship and unfailing sense of questioning speculation.

Trish Reid's little book, at just over 100 pages, develops a powerful and coherent argument, and reads more like a short series of inter-related sprightly essays than a scholarly tome, which is all to the good. In its entirety, it effectively conveys not only a sense of new perspectives on the subject, a fresh, clean and clear overview of a whole terrain, but also a sense of quickening movement through it. It is not a weighty, pondered, academic judgement upon it, tainted with regret or defensiveness, but rather a brilliant display of nimble, athletic insight, palpable engagement with theatricality as practice, as well as writing as something that prompts philosophical thought.

Movement, and encounters between different people, the representation of 'otherness', are things at the heart of both books: the sense that in writing about theatre, drama, plays, performance and performativity, the relations between what canonical authority might be and what social and political contexts and pressures might prompt, are at their keenest with reference to this genre. Perhaps this is prompted by the new contexts, social, political and technological, that have arisen since the 1990s, not only with reference to Scotland as a nation and potentially entirely imaginable state, but also to the international shift in communications and the availability of information engendered by technology. It is less possible now to categorise a history of theatre and drama as a canon of great plays

written by significant writers, published and available in books. In the twenty-first century, public performances are means of engaging people and issues captured by phones, broadcast through media outwith the control of mainstream ideologies. The relations between what a 'play' might be, its political value in its own moment, and what it might do to public perception of certain ideas and characters, are all changed from the more conservative priorities of text and performance.

This is conveyed by the emphasis both these books place on 'performance culture': the back cover blurb of Reid's book asserts that this aspect of culture in Scotland is 'more vital and raucous than has been previously imagined' and that the 'concise overview' the book will offer will not be a list of great plays but rather an enquiry into 'the shifting roles of theatricality in Scottish culture' and in the context of consideration of 'how the theatre of small nations can respond to global pressures'. This is a very different remit and point from which to begin, addressing not only what theatre in Scotland is and has been but also suggesting what it might become, than those which have dominated accounts of Scottish theatre up to at least the 1990s.

Ian Brown's book begins with his own introduction, addressing the issues I've raised here in a chapter entitled 'A Lively Tradition and Creative Amnesia'. Allowing for suppression in the 1600s, after the removal of the court and the Whig takeover, Brown's emphasis is on revising conventional assumptions: 'by and large the Kirk, so far from suppressing all theatre, often supported it', admittedly shaping it to its own ends, to some degree, but allowing and encouraging the development of drama in schools, for example, while folk plays flourished and ceremonial dramas had their place in religious contexts. The 'performative theatrical culture of Scotland has seemed to lack playwriting stars to match Shakespeare, Congreve or Sheridan' and yet George Buchanan's plays were models for Corneille and Racine, and other Scots playwrights, minor as they may be, indicate a neglected theatrical culture in Scotland. Brown's strength here is to demonstrate forcefully that Scottish

playwriting had different roots and prominence from that of England, and there was a lot of it. For centuries, 'whether we think of folk drama, Kirk drama, street drama, rural drama, or the theatrical drama of the urban middle and upper classes, whether in Gaelic, Scots, English and even Latin, a wide range of theatrical forms was available.' An emphasis upon a 'canon' of playwrights and playwriting is in itself a misrepresentation of drama, theatre and performance in Scotland. The whole story requires much greater context, nuance, informed research and imaginative reinterpretation. Essentially, this is what these two books provide. Two provisos are given: one that in many instances, there is a tendency for Scottish theatre to see text as expendable, or at least, malleable, constantly open to revision and reapplication; the other that even in a full, packed book like *The Edinburgh Companion*, significant major playwrights cannot be dealt with in detail: John Brandane, C.P. Taylor, William Douglas Home, for example. The point is that there is more to be done. The book commences by taking us through the centuries, indicating where such work might begin, and beginning to do it.

Sarah Carpenter opens 'Scottish Drama until 1650' with the cautionary statement that scarcely any Scottish play-texts survive from before this date. Yet a number of genres of performance are named (such as farce, guising, mask, jousting and mumming) and three key organising institutions: the Kirk, the burgh and the court. The churches had regular ceremonial performances; towns and villages held pageants, holy fairs, Robin Hood summer processions and the Crying of the Fair events on festival days; at court, there were tournaments and spectacles and Buchanan's plays and translations.

*Philotes* (1603), an Italianate Renaissance comedy (foolish old men, young lovers, mistaken identities, cross-dressing), and the plays of William Alexander, testify to the familiarity of both elite and popular, European and local, theatrical traditions. Lyndsay's *Satyre of the Thrie Estaitis* (first an 'interlude' in 1540, then full performances in 1552 and again in 1554), brilliantly brought all these formal modes into play, engaging social, moral,

political and religious questions of the most serious character with vividly and immediately entertaining effect. But after the closing of the playhouses in 1642, the confluence of priorities of religious and political dogma began to stifle public performance.

This is the political situation taken up by Ian Brown himself in his chapter on 'Public and Private Performance: 1650-1800'. He notes that during this period, drama was a highly and actively controversial medium, with churches endorsing performances in schools and universities, but suspending one schoolmaster for 'acting a comoedie wherein he mad a mock of religious duties and ordinances'. In the Abbey of Holyroodhouse, in 1663, William Clark's *Marciano, or The Discovery*, was acted to 'great applause'. Ostensibly set in Italy, the political and romantic intrigues that determine the plot suggest self-conscious deflection of potential censorship, since civic unrest formed the social context in Scotland well into the 1700s. Archibald Pitcairne's *The Assembly* (1692, published 1722) satirises pedantic 'obscurantism' in sectarian politics. Brown names playwrights and plays, sketches conditions and contexts of first productions, and takes us to Allan Ramsay, whose 'importance for Edinburgh's theatrical development cannot be overstated'. David Mallet and James Thomson (in *Alfred*), Smollett, Home, Archibald Maclaren and Joanna Baillie, are all dealt with incisively.

Moving from urban theatre to rural and archipelagic areas, Michael Newton discusses 'Folk Drama in Gaelic Scotland', beginning with the proposition that oral stories, poems and songs in Gaelic often employ voices and dialogues; animals speak and sing, personae are mutable, drama and dance are mutually enabling, there is a profound relation between life, death and the cycle of seasons, tidal returning. All these are embedded in the culture and all its representations in performance. This reminds us that there is a different way of reading literature than the 'words on the page' tradition of critical appraisal.

Barbara Bell takes on the subject of 'The National Drama and the Nineteenth Century'. Joanna Baillie's original plays, the many adaptations of Walter Scott's novels, Charles Bass's play version of Burns's poem, 'Tam o' Shanter', are all covered here, and prompt the curiosity. A season of such plays in production now, in the twenty-first century, might well have an effect similar to 7:84's 'Clydebuilt' season back in the 1980s. These are dramas that have their distinctive historical moment, but that gives them an added novelty in today's Scotland, both as entertainment and as works from which we might learn new things.

'Twentieth-Century Popular Theatre' by Paul Maloney picks up on the relation between so-called 'high' and 'popular' theatrical forms. Music hall, variety theatre, pantomime, were all popular and commercially successful forms, but this is not merely a story about commercial exploitation. In theatre more than any other form of literature, popular appeal is something the most serious drama neglects at its peril, and in the 1930s, especially, politically engaged, vigorously serious plays drew upon such popular forms to help get the message across. Unity Theatre and the plays that 7:84 revived in the 1980s, especially those by Joe Corrie, Robert McLeish and Ena Lamont Stewart, led straight to the methods and modes of 7:84 itself and its offshoot, Wildcat. Unity closed in 1951, *The Cheviot, the Stag and the Black, Black Oil* toured in 1973: maybe in the twenty years between these events the self-confidence and national and international authority of Scottish drama had grown incrementally, to the degree that where the class-based dramas of the 1940s had firm locations in Glasgow, tenements and miners' communities, *The Cheviot*, no less class-based, was telling a story with national and international provenance and impact.

Randall Stevenson, in 'Drama, Language and Late Twentieth-Century Literary Revival' complements the attention given to popular work by considering the linguistic distinctions of theatre in this period. Playwrights such as Donald Campbell, Roddy McMillan, Robert McLellan, R.S. Silver, Robert Kemp, Stewart Conn, Hector MacMillan, Bill Bryden, through to Liz Lochhead and James Kelman, all wrote plays that addressed flashpoints of

historical significance, and used various forms of the Scots language distinctively, drawing on popular traditions while self-consciously structuring their scripts for dramatic effect. Their work, in Kelman's diagnosis as Stevenson describes it, is hypersensitive to the desperate ambiguity of the situations they describe: 'Multiplicities of words and registers [...] do not facilitate renegotiation or inversion of the social hierarchy. Instead, they consolidate entrapment within it.'

David Archibald's chapter, 'History in Contemporary Scottish Theatre', looks at late twentieth and early twenty-first century work, but particularly plays which engage historical, rather than contemporary, locations. This is crucially contextualised at the end of the twentieth and the beginning of the twenty-first centuries, when Frances Fukuyama published a widely-read and influential essay, 'The End of History' (1989). Archibald takes us into a recognisably recent world, discussing playwrights such as David Greig, David Harrower, Gregory Burke, Nicola McCartney, Rona Munro, Chris Dolan and others, and pointedly citing Ian Brown's judgement that the 'concern with history shown by contemporary Scottish playwrights is absolutely rooted in their concern with the present and developing state of their nation'.

In 'Translated Drama in Scotland', John Corbett considers the international context through plays that have been translated by Scottish writers for performance and with specific relevance in Scotland. He begins with John Burel's *Pamphilus* (1590), based on a Latin text from the early twelfth century that had been a school text throughout Europe. There is a long tradition, then, but the major work Corbett looks at here is by Lochhead, Edwin Morgan, John Byrne, Robert David MacDonald, Peter Arnott and Rona Munro, translating plays by Moliere, Racine, Gogol, Brecht, Genet, Lorca and many others. In other words, while the Scottish playwrights are post-Second World War, the playwrights whose works they have translated come from various European languages and across centuries.

Then the chapters focus on individual writers or groups of writers more specifically.

R.D.S. Jack writes on J.M. Barrie, tracing his dramatic apprenticeship to its end in 1900 with the Ibsen-like *The Wedding Guest* (1900), then negotiating the modes of light comedy with serious intent in such plays as *Walker, London* (1892), *Quality Street* (1902) *The Admirable Crichton* (1902), *Peter Pan* (1904), *What Every Woman Knows* (1908), *Dear Brutus* (1917) and *Mary Rose* (1920). Jack meticulously traces Barrie's playwriting career, writing works emphatically for theatrical performance, rather than merely to be read. His career as a novelist is vital for understanding his career as a playwright, though: the tragic arc of the story told in the novels *Sentimental Tommy* (1896) and *Tommy and Grizel* (1900) comes to a deeply unsettling resolution. Conventional and dated as he may seem now, Barrie was considered radical in his time: why? Reassessment is required, not only of the kind Jack supplies here but in new professional productions.

Donald Smith, in 'The Mid-Century Dramatists', looks in detail at plays by Joe Corrie, Robert McLellan, Alexander Reid, Robert McLeish, Ena Lamont Stewart, Benedick Scott, Roddy McMillan, George Munro, Robert Kemp, Douglas Young and Sydney Goodsir Smith. He concludes with 'the pre-eminent mid-century Scottish playwright', James Bridie. Gerard Carruthers then concentrates on Bridie's work, skilful and brilliantly sly in his creation of plays that would be successful on the London stage but that would simultaneously help bring about a situation in which, as he himself says, 'every city in Scotland will have a theatre of its own to make a kirk or a mill of without control from London'. The key plays are discussed: *The Sunlight Sonata* (1928), *The Anatomist* (1930, Bridie's first major success), *Tobias and the Angel* (also 1930), *A Sleeping Clergyman* (1931), *Marriage is No Joke* (1934), *Mr Bolfry* (1943), *Dr Angelus* (1947), *Daphne Laureola* (1949), *The Queen's Comedy* (1950) and *The Baikie Charivari* (1952). Each is radically different in character and subject, and listing that small canon of a single author again emphasises how much in need we are now of a revival that would reintroduce a season of a sampling of them, an immersion in their strengths, to

bring about a more comprehensive reappraisal in practice, to complement the reappraisal these books under review are making, in critical evaluation.

Anne Varty writes on 'Poets in the Theatre', namely Joan Ure, Jackie Kay, Stewart Conn and Edwin Morgan. These poets – Ure is the exception, less familiar as a playwright, much less familiar as a poet – are not primarily pre-eminent in the theatre, yet their plays are distinctive and strong, intellectually and emotionally challenging in all the right ways. Ure's *Something for Ophelia* (1971) was prompted by a staging of *Hamlet* at the Edinburgh Festival, and the feminist emphasis was taken forward by Liz Lochhead. From *Chiaroscuro* (1987) to *The Maw Broon Dialogues* (2009), Kay brought keen questions to conventional representations of sexual identities in the fraught political and religious context of late twentieth-century Scotland. Conn's work is discussed through the contrasting pairs of plays, *I Didn't Always Live Here* (1967) and *Play Donkey* (1977), both with present-day settings, and *The Burning* (1971), set at the court of James VI, and *Thistlewood* (1975), centred on the Peterloo massacre of 1820. Morgan's early plays in translation, his dialogue or multi-vocal poems, and his 1992 translation of Edmond de Rostand's *Cyrano de Bergerac* (1897) are considered, then the two key plays of his later years are more deeply analysed: *A.D.: A Trilogy of Plays on the Life of Christ* (2000) and *The Play of Gilgamesh* (2005).

Tom Maguire writes on 'Women Playwrights from the 1970s and 1980s': Rona Munro, Sharman Macdonald, Ann Marie Di Mambro, Sue Glover, whose appearance in the early 1980s was seen 'as heralding the possibility of a "school of women playwrights"', Marcella Evaristi, Catherine Lucy Czerkawska, Aileen Ritchie and others. The playwrights most associated with the Traverse Theatre from 1985-97 are the subject of Steve Cramer's essay: Peter Arnott, Jo Clifford (formerly John), Chris Hannan, David Harrower, David Greig and Stephen Greenhorn.

Liz Lochhead gets a chapter to herself by Ksenija Horvat, tracking her first publications as a poet who develops personae, voices, dialogues, different perspectives crossing the views and interpretations of others, in her poems, then makes the transition into writing plays in which these different identities and 'others' can meet and confront each other in embodied form, unenclosed by lyrical definitions. Like Morgan, Lochhead's translations and adaptations are essential parts of her work: *Blood and Ice* (1982, a retelling of the Frankenstein story) and *Dracula* (1985) prefigure *Mary Queen of Scots Got Her Head Chopped Off* (1987) and lead to *Perfect Days* (1998), *Britannia Rules* (1998) and *Good Things* (2006). Her version of Moliere's *Tartuffe* is relocated to a small Scottish town in the 1920s, and her version of Euripides's *Medea* (2000) brings out the sense of Medea's isolation partly through language: she is English, surrounded by a mainstream society of Scots, whose prejudice against her very speech patterns may partly be the trigger of violence.

Trish Reid delivers a chapter on 'Post-Devolutionary Drama'. Henry Adam's *The People Next Door* (2003) is 'a satirical, often hilarious, examination of how paranoia about terrorism in the aftermath of 9/11 not only encourages excessive and counterproductive responses from the authorities, but warps relationships with neighbours and friends.' Gregory Burke's *Black Watch* (2006) is probably the most internationally famous play of this era. Both may be read as complementary, one with a western or global remit of concern, the other sharing that but taking a specific focus, and looking at it both historically and in terms of contemporary, gender-specific, politicised, outwardly-projected, self-consciously constructed identities, a form of 'Scottishness' sent out into an increasingly militarised world. Anthony Neilson, in his play *Relocated* (2008), Reid says, makes it 'difficult for audiences to distinguish between fantasy and reality or indeed develop a clear sense of the basis on which its characters are drawn.' This leads her to a crucial conclusion: 'by engaging with other discourses of identity like class, gender, ethnicity, globalisation and multiculturalism' the plays of this period 'insist that, if we are to take seriously the notion of post-devolutionary

Scotland developing a “new non-threatening nationalism”, one that can accommodate both the nation’s internal plurality and its ambition towards international engagement, we must carefully consider how these positive ambitions are culturally animated and not simply take them for granted.’

The book ends with David Hutchison’s essay on ‘The Experience and Contexts of Drama in Scotland’. He sums up an essential quality of all drama like this: ‘Liveness is of the essence of the theatrical experience.’ The problem about that, he points out, is that since the days of the music hall, screen media has contested the attractiveness of liveness: the music hall’s ‘largely working-class audience abandoned liveness for the spectacle and exoticism of recorded images’. The boom in cinema-going between the wars, the establishment of radio, the infiltration of television and now online technology, all these mechanisations of spectacle are easily understood to be in competition with liveness, especially when the ground rules for engagement are commercial priorities. But, Hutchison reminds us, the opportunities made possible through screen and sound media for rejuvenating, reinventing, representing (in both senses), plays and literary works of various kinds, and for informed critical engagement with them, is vast. Examples abound: John Purser, Stewart Conn, Iain Crichton Smith, wrote memorable plays for radio; Gerda Stevenson’s radio version of Walter Scott’s great novel *The Heart of Midlothian* is the best quick way to get a sense of that huge, complex novel because Stevenson deeply understands its language, historical moment, lasting significance and, complementarily, both the literary-philosophical and the dramatic-theatrical values inherent to its narrative structure. Meanwhile television ‘plays’ like John Byrne’s *Tutti Frutti* or the television adaptations of literary fiction by George Mackay Brown, Lewis Grassie Gibbon, George Douglas Brown and Robert Louis Stevenson, that were familiar in the 1970s and 1980s, remain to be rediscovered and learned from in the twenty-first century. Hutchison concludes, though, that ‘important as radio, television and film are for the understanding and experience of Scottish drama in the twenty-first century, live theatre remains crucial to its existence and success. Performance, live communication, performativity in actual, staged

production, demands a particular kind of respect: 'The writer is important, but is one of a team whose efforts combine, sometimes in a workmanlike fashion, sometimes even in a dull fashion, but sometimes to magical and mesmerising effect.'

There is a valuable section of 'Further Reading' and appropriately useful editorial apparatus in notes and, especially thankfully, an index.

By contrast, Trish Reid's book is tiny, yet it covers vast areas of interest and never drops its attention for a moment.

It is published in a series of books entitled 'Theatre &'. Others include such titles as *Theatre &... Museums, Sexuality, Nation, the Visual, Politics, Ireland, History*. The preface by the series editors, Jen Harvie and Dan Rebellato, begins: 'The theatre is everywhere, from entertainment districts to the fringes, from the rituals of government to the ceremony of the courtroom, from the spectacle of the sporting arena to the theatres of war. Across these many forms stretches a theatrical continuum through which cultures both assert and question themselves.'

This is promising: a big context and an intrinsic openness to it are givens. I recollect, many years ago, the shock of seeing court proceedings at first-hand, when I was taking a group of German students studying English as a foreign language to the public gallery of a local town court in Kent. All the professionals working there in front of us knew precisely what performance was, while the people we saw in the dock were not performing in the same way at all. This is one reason why court-room and trial scenes are so intrinsically dramatic, from the *Satyre of the Thrie Estaitis* to Brecht's *Caucasian Chalk Circle*, to Reginald Rose's *Twelve Angry Men*.

Reid's 'Foreword' presents herself as witness: it is an autobiographical account of her childhood initiation into the theatre world. 'I was, quite literally, a rehearsal room baby', she tells us: 'I have vivid memories of travelling between gigs in 7:84 and Wildcat tour vans whilst various inebriates sang songs about losing people at sea.' This immediacy in the account, and experience in the field ('quite literally' indeed!) gives the book an air of authenticity and authority in its confident address to its subject, but more than that, it infuses the writing with a sense of purpose and drive not common in scholarly writing.

While this book is informed by serious scholarship and has all the editorial apparatus you would wish for, it is sprightly, insights breaking out on every page, movement carrying the reader quickly across the terrain in an exhilarating, completely invigorating trip. Nothing flags or slows, while depth of thought and balanced judgements are ever-present. These qualities are rare enough anywhere.

Reid's experiences authenticate her judgements: 'when I began my career I had a template for theatre. It should be accessible, it should inspire feeling and it should employ any and all performance skills in doing so.' But then, she tells us, what she found when she moved to London was 'a foreign theatrical landscape': straight dramas, comedies, musicals were staged for different audiences, though all were overwhelmingly middle class. Any company trying to cross-fertilise performance skills were described as 'experimental': 'Realism was the order of the day.' TV in this respect was a model, and for most of Reid's own generation, theatre was quite irrelevant, something for the old, the posh or the academic. Things have changed since then, of course: companies then termed experimental are now regulars at the establishment West End or South Bank theatres. All this experience of theatre conventions, radical innovations or conservative priorities, give Reid a practical understanding of her subject, as well as the scholarly understanding she brings to it as an academic.

The introduction addresses questions of 'histories and myths'. History has delivered a 'globalised' world in which distinctions of nationality seem to look increasingly moribund. Yet Reid knows from experience, as well as from such seminal studies as David McCrone's *Understanding Scotland* (2001), that this itself is a political gambit, a form of persuasion, a kind of courtroom performance on a world stage. Evidently, small nations, like small ships, might show, and even turn against, tidal movements, more nimbly than big ones. The specific political, religious, constitutional history of Scotland has affected its performance culture in distinctive ways. This has its liabilities. Quoting Tom Nairn, Reid notes that Scottish popular culture may be seen as a type of state apparatus that, 'far from reflecting popular grievance, is employed to control the thought processes of the masses'. This is even more relevant since Reid's book was published, in the context of debate about the so-called 'impartiality' of the BBC in their coverage of issues before and after the independence referendum of 18 September 2014.

Reid tracks back through history, crossing several hundred years, generously indicating various more extensive books and critical sources to which we are referred for further information (including Ian Brown's book, reviewed above). By covering so much ground so quickly, though, Reid has the advantage of arriving at key turning points very quickly. Thus, the essential moment of John McGrath's *The Cheviot, the Stag and the Black, Black Oil* in 1973 is acknowledged and given its due. This is not perfunctory, however, but insightful: McGrath's play is a 'self-consciously jolly dramatisation of Scottish history' and its comedy is a radical intervention in itself. The conventional tendency to lament and mourn for the lost greatness of the past is overturned at a stroke, for the play looks back only to come forward again and look ahead with keener eyes. Humour, as after all, may be aggressive, and may be the essence of an attack. As the American poet Edward Dorn reminds us, 'You can't attack anything with sadness.' McGrath drew on popular performance culture for the comedy components of *The Cheviot*, but self-consciously rejected certain elements of popular comedy that were pervasive in the 1970s: pre-eminently the 'comedy' of racism and sexism.

So while challenging establishment versions of history, McGrath was replacing them with 'a people's history that would reveal the mechanisms through which workers had been oppressed' – including the accepted establishment targets of ethnic minorities, working class people, Gaelic-speaking people and women.

Reid carries through her reading of these innovative practices to the contemporary scene, discussing the establishment of the National Theatre of Scotland, at first widely praised for being a 'theatre without walls', capable of touring and addressing audiences of all sorts throughout the nation, and considering the phenomenal international success of NTS's production of Gregory Burke's *Black Watch*. However, she notes acutely that where *The Cheviot* criticised establishment conventions, *Black Watch*, to a large extent, relied upon them: it is constructed upon 'a narrative of working-class male solidarity achieved through regional and generational commitment to military service within the context of the British Empire.' The martial tradition it portrays 'is neither fully interrogated nor problematised. On the contrary, Burke conjures Scotland's mythic past in support of the notion of this martial tradition as inherently Scottish' and never fully acknowledges the extent to which Scotland's Highland regiments 'were implicated in the imperial project and its attendant crimes'. Thus, Reid provides an incisive close reading in the context of a confident overview.

'Performing Scottishness' begins with a similarly sharp perception, that generally, and in very specific instances, the performance of 'Scottishness' has conventionally been a performance of masculinity, reinforcing, rather than resisting, the patriarchy. From there, Reid turns to the phenomenon of what has usually pejoratively been termed, 'tartanry' and its theatrical embodiment in the entertainer Harry Lauder. Hugh MacDiarmid's attacks upon 'Lauderism' in the 1920s, Reid judges, were not surprising, given the ease with which his jaunty jocularly was performed and the extent of the applause it quickly gathered internationally. It may be that the popular 'Scottishness' performed by Lauder and others, including writers of the 'Kailyard' school, involved more nuance and cleverness than a

wholesale denigration of it allowed, but even so, the inaccuracies and misdirections it encouraged in any general sense of what Scotland was, is or could be, extends from the nineteenth century to *Braveheart* and beyond. Tartan maintained its association with both confident imperial exhibitionism (as in the pride shown by wearers of the Black Watch tartan) and also subversion (MacDiarmid himself wore the kilt regularly on public occasions, working an implicit as well as explicit anti-Lauderism). This too carries through, as the institutional US annual 'Tartan Day' festivities are predominantly conservative, while the punk fashion designer Vivienne Westwood in the 1970s used it as 'rebel cloth' and Alexander McQueen in the 1990s presented a collection provocatively entitled 'Highland Rape'. Reid notes that this invoked the vulnerability of the Highland way of life and the barbarity of its detractors and victimisers. This was performance of another kind: self-consciously politicising commercial product in a social world: theatre without walls, indeed.

'Practices: popular and political' brings together aspects of performance in the actions of people, physically, actually, with aspects of political contextualisation. This refreshes one's sense of the human choices individuals make in theatrical actions and the political priorities and pressures that help move these, either by pressing them in certain ways and directions, or by enforcing currents and preferences that may be resisted and acted against. Reid discusses the influence of the church and discusses the *Satyre* in this context, predating but leading up to the Reformation. She moves from there to nineteenth and early twentieth-century music hall traditions, and into urban working class theatre, especially of the 1940s, and from there to early twenty-first century plays written with popular venues in mind. David Greig's *The Strange Undoing of Prudencia Hart* (2011), for example, 'reaches back beyond music hall and variety to utilise older popular forms. Drawing, via Walter Scott's *Minstrelsy of the Scottish Border* (1802), on the conventions of medieval border ballads – including their rhyme, meter and supernatural themes – *Prudencia Hart* is performed by a small group of actor-musicians in pubs, howfs and function rooms and not in traditional theatre spaces.'

'Engagements: national and international' takes a similar method of sweeping overview and detailed analysis of particular works, here focusing on translations by Morgan and Lochhead. Reid's method is to bring together in dynamic interaction descriptions of the priorities and forces, the dynamics that run through and determine theatrical conventions, in the awareness that they might become ossified or sludgy were they not necessarily enacted in lively performance of one kind or another. The international provenance brought to Scottish theatres by productions of plays translated from a vast repertoire – from Peter Brook's *Mahabharata* (performed at Glasgow's Tramway, 1985) to Robert Kemp's and Liz Lochhead's versions of Moliere (respectively, *Let Wives Tak Tent* in 1948 and *Miseryguts* in 2002) – ensures a breadth of material and a culture that is constantly relativising and enriching itself. By contrast, the Edinburgh International Festival, in its vast commercial success, has been described by David Hutchison, summing up a consensus opinion, thus: its 'contribution to Scottish theatre has been disappointing'. If its aims are to reflect 'international culture to audiences in Scotland' and to provide 'an international showcase for Scottish culture' it has been criticised for almost totally failing to fulfil the latter remit. Reid argues convincingly that while there is some truth in the criticism, there is more to be said. Performances and revivals of the *Satyre* in the 1940s, 50s, 60s, 70s and 80s till 1991, and commissions for plays by Scottish playwrights since at least the 1990s, are evidence of a national and international two-way exchange. The point perhaps is that, as with the NTS, the story is continuing, and changing all the time.

'Identities: fixed and fluid' takes the story further with extensive reference to twenty-first century plays, by authors such as Anthony Neilson, Gregory Burke, Ann Marie De Mambro, David Harrower, Sharman Macdonald, Sue Glover, Rona Munro and Matthew Zajac. David Greig's *Dunsinane* (2010), a revision and extension of *Macbeth* (that quintessentially English play), was, Reid tells us, 'read differently north of the border' from how it was interpreted by metropolitan London critics. This is almost inevitable, given the

increasing self-consciousness of differences in cultural history and political priorities between Scotland and England. Towards the end of the play, Gruach, Macbeth's widow, tells Siward, in charge of the occupying army: 'There is a dance of leaving. Try to learn the steps.'

The 'Conclusion' marks clearly the danger both these books have sensitised us to: that essentialist definitions of Scottishness 'do not stand up to close scrutiny, and work to freeze the culture rather than allowing scope for variation and development.' One exemplary operation from the early 1990s, Suspect Culture, actor/director Graham Eatough, playwright David Greig, composer/ musician Nick Powell and designer Ian Scott, 'created a series of works in collaboration with artists in Scotland and continental Europe that established them as Scotland's leading company in this area'.

The beat goes on. Theatre, drama, performance, plays, hold a crucial place in a whole culture of dynamic representation and argument. These two books are evidence and affirmation of the value their subject embodies. Reid's book concludes, before a rich 'Further Reading' section and, again thankfully, an index, with this: 'Contemporary Scottish theatre makers remain conscious that processes of seeming cultural disintegration – such as the weakening of the Union – can be crucial in enabling dramatic diversification.'

For many of the authors of all the works mentioned here, I would imagine, guarantee of the latter would be worth the cost of the former.