

Irony and the Construction of Scottish Memory and Identity in Contemporary Plays

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The interest of Scottish playwrights in landmark historical figures and events in the building of their nation seems idiosyncratic and widespread. Paradoxically deeply rooted in their past, and yet open to modernity and novelty, their works embed constant dialogical links between text and context, and create intertwining transtextual networks. Their plays and dramatic productions remember and pay tribute to the past, but also represent constructions of national and personal identities, through confrontation and tension, through nostalgia, but without regressiveness. Scottish drama and theatre are complex, technical, referential and metadiscursive. Based on selected examples, this discussion will address both historically and contemporarily set plays and will try to show how these forms of direct figuration share the textual space with antagonistic anamorphic views and approaches. Anamorphosis is, of course, a distorted projection or perspective requiring the viewer to use special devices or occupy a specific vantage point (or both) to reconstitute the image, typically where a widescreen image is vertically expanded to fit into a storage medium with a narrower aspect range.¹ In this process in Scottish drama, authors and characters – effectively actors and spectators of their own lives and context – give vent to subjective feelings and objective criticism, to affection and condemnation, through humour, satire and self-derision, the clash and fight between the Self and the Other turning into some conflicting introspective, but observable, analysis.

History is often defined as the record of public events in the growth of a nation. It concerns the course of human affairs and can also be attributed to individual persons and things. History and theatre are, therefore, necessarily intricately bound together. For centuries, spectacular and theatrical shows have been linked to the religious and the political domains through pageants —

whether civic or not — and to the chronicles retracing or testifying facts, human deeds in time sequences. If all the elements of the definition are taken into account, whatever the genre and whatever the century, these spheres of influence must intertwine. Theatre of Scotland (not just Scottish theatre) provides many such examples, highlighting various periods, and focussing on national and international historical figures and their correlated contexts, whether directly or indirectly.

Mary Stuart is but one case in point. There are many other instances of course, but her overwhelming aura and power have long attracted playwrights. Ian Brown's *Mary* (1977) stages her surrounded by John Knox, Darnley, Moray and so on. The exposition scene (1)² briefly introduces her biography, that is to say her life or personal history, in one paragraph. Her portrayal in this speech, where she is 'performed' by the actor who will later play her husband Darnley, includes various subjective viewpoints on Her Majesty ('some people have said' is repeated thrice and opposed to what she reckons is objective and factual as 'All I can say is that I was born in 1542 [...] I died, that is to say, Mary died, in 1587'). Splitting the biographical narrative into different voices (later, in specific scenes she is played by the actors who play her maid and her lady-in-waiting) allows the intimate and the chronicle to mix. It also makes possible the distortion of the royal speech. Through role-swapping, a form of anamorphic viewpoint subverts what could have erroneously been regarded as a direct account of things past and of reality. While he is performing Mary, Darnley states he is going to play the role of the queen — or be the 'gay queen' — allowing implicit commentary on theatrical inter-changeability, but also on his true-to-life unfulfilled political longing and desire to have regnant status: 'DARNLEY ENTERS DRESSED AS MARY: I'm going to be Mary, Queen of Scots' (1). Similarly, from the paratext onwards, Liz Lochhead's *Mary Queen of Scots Got Her Head Chopped Off* (1987) — a title deriving from a playground rhyme employed in a song-like passage at the end of the playtext (141-2) — concentrates on Her Majesty and her unfortunate lot. Charismatic Queen Mary is shown confronting some of her contemporaries, including her cousin

Elizabeth, described as highly strategic and manipulative. Mary's wedding to Darnley highlights one particular moment in the life of the Scottish Queen, necessarily more national than personal because of her royal status. Irony is used throughout, with direct, debunking comments or clashing vocabulary either defusing tension, or debasing characters, or even deflating the serious historical dramatic content. In scene I, 8 (36), for example, the stage direction indicating that a 'burst of ironic music segues into —' shows how musical devices are also used to enhance and amplify biting wit.

In many Scottish plays, a detracting, demeaning verbal picture of Scotland echoes disparaging discourses either held by the English Other or self-inflicted by Scottish self-damaging and embarrassed Selves. Slang and irony express this ambivalent viewpoint deprecating Scotland — its place, people and customs. Yet, their effects appear to be catching as they also affect their abusers through *double entendre*. In David Greig's *Dunsinane* (2010) from a distant outside reference point (necessarily understated as English and 'civilised') the country is regarded as forlorn and said to be an 'arsehole' (72). It is said to be abandoned even by its Creator: 'God never meant people to live this far north, you know' (40). Paradoxically and unfortunately, its English counterpart is amorously described by Malcolm King of Scots as its perfect inverted image, its positive film negative, dear, perhaps ironically, to his royal heart: 'I was raised in England — in those lovely oak woods where everything is sun-dappled and the forests are full of wild boar and deer and the tables always full of beer and ham —but here we are rock, bog, forest and loch.' (51) In the same way, the depiction of Scotland by the choric figure, La Corbie, in *Mary Queen of Scots...* (77) would be off-putting to any foreign visitor:

It's a peatbog, it's a daurk forest.

It's a cauldron o lye, a saltpan or a coal mine.

If you're gey lucky it's a bonny, bricht bere meadow or a park o kye.

Or mibbe...it's a field of stanes.

Henry Adam's insisting on the country's degenerate state and people throughout his *The Return of the Ginger Step-Kid 'Stand Up, Haggis!' The Last of the McSporrans* (2013)³ is in no way any more inviting.

In many of these Scottish contemporary playtexts, then, manipulated, manipulative language(s) and genre(s) provide ironic and satirical tools and screens that serve political purposes. Lochhead chooses the (fairy) tale mode: *Mary Queen of Scots*... starts with 'Once upon a time there were twa queens on the wan green island, and the wan green island was split intae twa kingdoms'. She then turns to abrupt commentary: 'But no equal kingdom, naebody in their richt mind would insist on that' (78). These lines reveal the disruption existing between sugary political discourse and brutal reality. They unveil the painful truth and fact. Theatre is illusion, but also stages and voices the denunciation of what is unfair and to be condemned. In David Harrower's *Dark Earth* (2003), a certain nostalgia centred on the figure of James VII and II is mocked and ridiculed, turning the exiled hero and his adventurous peregrinations into some anti-heroic manoeuvres and failures, regarded as symptomatic of the Scots and grossly generalised.⁴ Similarly, Gregory Burke, in a talk at the Traverse Theatre,⁵ joked about Scotland being nationally proud of Culloden, a formidable defeat! This would certainly be *prima facie* evidence of an oppressed minority if the art and rhetoric of satire and caricature were not mastered self-derisively by self-respecting Scottish authors.

History-based drama has always been very much appreciated by Scottish playwrights and audiences. Although reviewers' opinions were very mixed, Rona Munro's trilogy, entitled *The James Plays* (2014),⁶ shows people's continuing interest⁶ in the genre. In interviews, the author acknowledged that her motivation also derived from the absence of a set of Scottish theatrical histories somehow analogous to Shakespeare's English ones.⁷ Yet, period plays with their historically contextualised fables and diegeses including precise facts and public events are not the

only and exclusive dramatic means and vehicles of national records. Reflection on the land's past, present and future may also trigger off elements diluted in less specific stories and from anamorphic readings. Modern and contemporary revisited 'histories' offer some contemplation on the Scottish nation before and after the Union. Their key topics often emerge as being the traditional and conventional union and disunion or order and disorder themes, but their treatment of such notions is distinct. The classical tragic generic frame is often subverted and perverted, humour, irony as well as derision pervading and restructuring dramatic plots. Whether direct or indirect references to events, they feed on correlated facts, figures and symbols. For instance, Alistair Beaton's *Caledonia* (2010) is based on the disastrous 1698 Darien expedition. In her introduction to it in her collection, *Contemporary Scottish Plays*, Trish Reid recalled: 'When *Caledonia* opened in Edinburgh in August 2010 questions of Scotland's fitness in managing its own affairs were also on the agenda, as the Scottish National Party gained in the polls, partly by promising a referendum on Scottish independence' (xi). She summed up and defined the play as 'a story of greed, folly and mass delusion. In that respect it is a very modern tale. But it is also a darkly tragic and fitfully heroic tale of its time' (5). These last two sentences characterise how contemporary Scottish playtexts question and problematise history and myth and offer modern parallels. In Ian Brown's *Beatrice* (1989), the Cathar heroine Beatrice de Planissoles reflects on her own life, on politics and religion at a period when the Inquisition was active, on life and death, on human nature and on what it is like to be a woman. Yet, decontextualised, these issues show striking modernity and universality.

Despite their own particular story-lines, the understated theme that seems to be shared by many Scottish plays is the construction of the Self, the construction of Scottish identity, and the concept of 'self and identity' necessarily goes along with that of otherness, of alterity. The notion of 'Self and Other' leads to an exploration into the problem of personal identity, to humankind's relationship to a wide variety of discourses. In the Scottish context, the idea unavoidably develops through the opposition with the Other (in cliché, the English). In *Dunsinane*, the manichean vision

underlying the confrontation is introduced and then distorted. The English are the Scots' enemies and conversely, but the author also emphasises the division of the Scottish people through the clan system. The chiefs of the clans clash and plot, according to the benefits envisaged for and by their own members. The English soldiers can become their allies if the end justifies the means, and if strategies can be profitable. Fragmentation and treachery, however, show that the crucible of Scottish society can be sheer enigma. In another time and other place, David Harrower's Jacobites, or Jacobite-fans, face the same problems in *Dark Earth*. The Scottish people is not ideally one; how could it possibly be? The idea is not new; it was developed in Robert Wedderburn's *The Complaynt of Scotland* (c. 1550), for example. Here, Dame Scotia delivers some advice and a warning in favour of unity and against unnatural alliances ('quhou the affligit lady same scotia makis ane exortatione til hyr thre sonis, quhilk is the conclusion of this beuk', Chap. XX). Similarly, Sir Walter Scott's *Halidon Hill: A Dramatic Sketch from Scottish History* (Scott 1822, 40-1) stages chiefs constantly discussing their privileges. One of them, Swinton, reckons this attitude jeopardises the Scottish nation and people: 'These open bickerings / Dishearten all our host. If that your Grace,/ With these great Earls and Lords, must needs debate, / Let the closed tent conceal your disagreement; / Else 'twill be said, ill fares it with the flock, / If shepherds wrangle, when the wolf is nigh.' (40-41). In most Scottish plays, the 'nation' is given as both one and diverse, one and many, paradoxically proving or testifying the country's strength and weakness at the same time. Henry Adam in *The People Next Door* (2003) and Matthew Zajac in *The Tailor of Inverness* (2008), among many others, refer to the multicultural nature of contemporary Scotland. David Harrower and Henry Adam also set some of their dramas in conflicting rural and urban Scottish contexts. Other plays enhance the contrast between the isles and the mainland. Ian Brown's observation about Henry Adam's *Among Broken Hearts* (2000) — quoted by Trish Reid (Reid 2011, 192) — can be recalled and applied more widely: '[it] problematises the clash of cultures within traditional Scotland'. In this case, the 'Other' turns out to be someone supposedly identical to the self, and the 'self and the other' can thus merge and

recreate some form of crisis decentring or recentring the binary classification and division into a 'self as An/other' combination.

History contextualises plots but it also concretises the cement that unifies and solidifies the nation and the people. History and memory provide the necessary foundations to stabilise the national group and to allow it to envisage and build a future. In most Scottish contemporary plays, viewpoints are complex. As in painting, there are several possible lines of perspective within and 'without' the dramatic composition: Scottish national pride is tinged with clear-sightedness, awareness and affection. Paradoxes subvert simplistic (bipartite) manichean visions of underlying medieval moralities. The metamorphosis of genres and of their laws is constantly at work. Some facing of one's history head-on prevents false escapes, and dealing with it anamorphically enables one to turn domestic tragedy into educative satire self-commented upon: even destructive experiences can be constructive after all. In *Artist Man Mother Woman* (2012), Morna Pearson investigates lethal and perverse unions. She revisits the master/servant relationship through a rather naïve and harassed art teacher in his forties wishing to cut the cord, vainly trying to free himself from a preying, overpowering mother. But does the play not allegorise unnatural unions leading to stifling and painful existences, to domineering/dominated couples refiguring master/servant or slave duos? Does it not efficiently disfigure a sweet-and-sour comedy style to reshape it into what the seventeenth century called domestic tragedy (and conversely)?

The construction of a new Scottish theatrical identity and genres is a ceaseless process, going through a never-ending refashioning of matter and mettle. A straightforward approach through the satiric style of the stand-up show is attempted through Henry Adam's *The Return of the Ginger Step-Kid 'Stand Up, Haggis!' The Last of the McSporrans* (2013). Self-derision as self-inflicted treatment against any possible 'big-headedness' is derived from clear-eyed lucidity mingled with the ability to laugh at anything or even at everything and everyone, including oneself and painful events.

One of the many examples of Adam's self-reflexive biting tongue is his character's apparent debunking his own work and Self:

I've promised my management, so let's just pause here and have a wee minute's silence for all the great gags I'd have done if I hadn't been such a craven coward and sold my soul for my own little hedonistic place in the hierarchy. You don't know how funny and relevant this show could have been if I hadn't sold you all out. (3)

Liz Lochhead's introductory pages to *Mary Queen of Scots...* and the playtexts already mentioned in this study show that this self-effacing self-satirising gift is one that Scottish playwrights share and enjoy. At this stage of this article, one may wonder whether this device exemplifies the controversial issue of transcendence of the ego. In a paper on Sartre published online ('The Self, the Other, the Self as An/other: A Reading of Early Sartre' 1998) Beata Stawarska observes: 'I therefore begin by demonstrating that the *Transcendence of the Ego* perpetuates the Cartesian tradition where the self is defined primarily in terms of thinking — that is, self-consciousness and immanence.' Yet, one has to admit that Sartre develops the notion of transcendence in radical opposition to that of immanence, of a uniform and homogenous sameness. His idea of identity and its 'othering' can be explained thus:

One can see why Sartre is often described as a Cartesian dualist but this is imprecise. Whatever dualism pervades his thought is one of spontaneity/inertia. His is not a 'two substance' ontology like the thinking thing and the extended thing (mind and matter) of Descartes. Only the in-itself is conceivable as substance or 'thing'. The for-itself is a no-thing, the internal negation of things. The principle of identity holds only for being-in-itself. The for-itself is an exception to this rule. Accordingly, time

with all of its paradoxes is a function of the for-itself's nihilating or 'othering' the in-itself. The past is related to the future as in-itself to for-itself and as facticity to possibility, with the present, like 'situation' in general, being an ambiguous mixture of both (Flynn 2013).

Sartre acknowledged the ambiguity of human beings and human reality combining characteristics that theoretically should not be. Concretely, facticity and transcendence open the scope of our human longed-for and necessary freedom:

Being-in-itself [*en soi*] and being-for-itself [*pour soi*] have mutually exclusive characteristics and yet we (human reality) are entities that combine both, which is the ontological root of our ambiguity. The in-itself is solid, self-identical, passive and inert. It simply 'is'. The for-itself is fluid, non-self-identical, and dynamic. It is the internal negation or 'nihilation' of the in-itself, on which it depends. Viewed more concretely, this duality is cast as 'facticity' and 'transcendence'. The 'givens' of our situation such as our language, our environment, our previous choices and our very selves in their function as in-itself constitute our facticity. As conscious individuals, we transcend (surpass) this facticity in what constitutes our 'situation'. In other words, we are always beings 'in situation', but the precise mixture of transcendence and facticity that forms any situation remains indeterminable, at least while we are engaged in it. Hence Sartre concludes that we are always 'more' than our situation and that this is the ontological foundation of our freedom. We are 'condemned' to be free, in his hyperbolic phrase (Flynn 2013).

As the foppish or foolish (in the theatrical sense of the terms) spokesman of Scotland, Adam's Haggis McSporrán expresses his irrepressible self-consciousness and longing for freedom. One of the descendants of the Erasmian fool or philosopher, he echoes the Sartrean 'condemned to be free'. Oxymoronic and paradoxical, this anti-deterministic deterministic acknowledgement of free-will includes the liberty of self-criticism and condemnation that self-derision allows. Changing viewpoints as well as using metadramatic and metatheatrical references and embeddings create a distance and a space for judgement within which backbiting finds a comfortable location and enough room to expose arguments and comments. The device permits both the characters and playwrights to denounce without Inquisitorial burning-at-the-stake or censure, and to lampoon with a certain acid affection, creating a bitter-sweet or sweet-and-sour dramatic cuisine. The old theatrical association of didactic and entertaining components, of laughter and education, partake in the building of the personal and national selves, if not Self.

As said earlier, in some plays, direct figuration of historical persons turned into personae in their contexts draws on the dramatic and theatrical process; in others, anamorphic symbolic figuration and even disfiguration amplify the possible scope of debate. The example chosen for the final part of this study is one of the latest writings by Henry Adam. This author has always used domestic—local and regional/national—and international history in his plays, and as Trish Reid notes: 'Shifting perspectives characterise Adam's work' (Reid 2011, 194). Henry Adam's *The Return of the Ginger Step-Kid 'Stand Up, Haggis!' The Last of the McSporrans* (2013) encompasses direct and indirect representations of what being Scottish means — at least to the dramatist. The play starts with well-known emblems and clichés about Scotland supposed to identify and contextualise the speaker. The 'Flower of Scotland' tune introduces the character, his 'Haggis McSporrán' name, red hair and tartan clothes, and so on and so forth, portraying the metonymic stereotype tourists may expect. Yet, far from funny images, the speaker's self-presentation to the audience reveals some bitter down-to-earth vision of reality and a form of apparently un-biased introspection. The distorted

hint at Sigmund supposedly mistaken with Siegfried is certainly not fortuitous:

But like I told the man, 'You're kidding nobody, Sigmund'

Well, that's what I wanted to say, but I ended up saying 'Siegfried', which probably made me look like more of a prick than I already did, in his jam-jar eyes. (11)

Easy humour is defeated by irony and by caustic remarks that are self-inflicted and reflexive. They comment upon the commentator himself, upon his function and the people he is supposed to represent in an over-generalised approach to Scotland. The cliché is given as a model and then deflated, discredited and exploded.

The lights come up on Haggis McSporran, a psychotic, tartan-clad, teuchter, weirdo, currently touring the country with his stand up show, 'The return of the Ginger Step-Kid'.

HAGGIS. Universal. That's a good word. When I first started out in comedy they didn't think my brand of humour was 'universal'. I said to them 'You take me to the furthest corner of Ursa Minor and find me the more humourless, Presbyterian alien you can get your hands on and let me tell him the story of Jock Bissett's teeth. I think I may surprise you.'

(1)

The distorting romanticised vision of the land embedded in the repeated adjective 'Jacobite' ('Jacobite Country'), used sarcastically, allegedly referring to historical events, is here debunked by hints at alcohol and drug-addiction, violence and unemployment, depression and despair, all plagues

striking the speaker-spokesman's version of Scotland. The landscape is painted in dark tones and its delineating lines of perspective are as broken as the 'Scotsman' that is the target's bull's eye. Sardonic, Haggis reckons:

That's another shitty thing about being Scottish. Standing up for yourself in a job interview situation can be equated to a seventy pound woman lifting a one and a half ton truck off a baby's head with one finger.

[he mimes the effort. He might let the truck slip off his finger and onto the baby and look suitably despondent]

Yes, being assertive really can be that difficult for the sober Scot.

'Lucky we're never sober, then, eh?' (1)

The references to the Jacobites and to meant-to-be representative twentieth-century films encompass several centuries of Scottish history that depress the speaker as being years of decadence : 'Uch, we get what we deserve. If *Hamish MacBeth* and *Trainspotting* are all we are we deserve to die' (p. 1). In his mind, only a surge of national pride asserting some wish and quest for independence and freedom can stop and perhaps compensate for the fall: 'Aye, being assertive, quite hard for the sober Scot. But I did it. I stood up. The stand-up stood up. A defining moment in my previously cringe-worthy life.' (1)

The stand-up genre is used by Henry Adam as a weapon and as a political declaration of personal and collective (national) pride, self-assertion, resistance and opposition. At the time of the author's writing the text, the referendum was a year and a half ahead, and it was one of the key topics, if not concerns, of the *Hunting the Haggis* conference held in Edinburgh in 2013 to celebrate the fiftieth anniversary of the Traverse Theatre and the fortieth of the Scottish Society of Playwrights. The referential network cannot be fortuitous. The genre allows Henry Adam to 'soldier on' as he puts

it (16), keeping the idea that Scots are fighters, warriors, something which mainly turned against them in past wars when, wearing kilts and playing bagpipes, they were sent by the English into deadly front lines: 'Yeah, we love fighting up our way. We'll fight anybody, us. You can see why whenever the boys in Whitehall want to invade another country they ask us if we want a go first?' (3) Henry Adam jeers at this form of 'good natured fighting' (3) and at himself supposedly used by the media to discourage people from voting SNP: 'I love being on TV. [...] I don't even listen to all those bitter c... people...saying I'm only on because I'm being ruthlessly promoted by MI5 to discredit the Scottish nation and stop people voting SNP.' (3) References to the defeat of Crazy Horse and to Culloden, among many others, seem to sound as a warning that survival is at stake. Haggis the speaker is individualised and allegorised as the last of the McSporrans — said to be 'a deracinated fop'— recalling Fenimore Cooper's 'Last of the Mohicans'. Correlated to such landmarks, but understated, remain English colonialism, imperialism, insidiously winning the battle though internationalised so-called culture, mixed marriages and teenagers wearing tops labelled ENGLISH. The text is interspersed with historical milestones that seem lost in an ocean of supposedly gibbering comments on Google and on the media, as well as hints at contemporary 'culture'. Yet, the metadiscourse is clear: through his crude and incisive direct address to the audience, chronicler-of-his-time Haggis delivers messages and warnings. Brigadoon is but a myth; reality has to be faced; Amerindians ended up in reservations, didn't they?

Like other authors mentioned in the first part of this study, Henry Adam admits that Scots have had a hand in their historic and cultural 'decadence', and he reckons that it is high time for them to react, assert their identity, and free themselves from the Other's predominance, and from a form of colonialism. The then-looming September 2014 referendum is a counterpoint to this, of course. Nevertheless, for Haggis McSporrans, affirming one's Scottishness does not necessarily mean hating the English (efforts have to be made on both sides): 'I like English people. I beat myself up constantly over the fact that we're here in 2013 and I'm still up on stage

doing this tired old Scotland/England schtick. I'm trying to change, to become a good person, see the good in other people, especially English people.' (12) Greig's *Dunsinane* distils the same sort of discourse through Malcolm, the Scottish king. Yet, Adam's Haggis adds: 'At least that's what I tell myself. And I'm sure with Lizzie's help, and this psychiatrist she's making me see's help, I'll make it. That some day I'll be able to hear an English accent without worrying about my house being set on fire.' (12) Inverting roles and the fixed ideas related to them, as well as changing viewpoints, offer the opportunity to deliver contradictory argumentations and counter any simplistic black and white oppositions. Haggis acknowledges that he 'likes nothing better than watching "Eastenders" in bed on BBC3 while drinking warm milky cocoa. The last of a proud warrior race drowning in cappuccino and warm, milky bullshit. A sad end to a glorious tribe.' (16) He also confesses, sardonically, that the McSporrans depend on welfare and English assistance:

That would be ironic, eh? If the McSporrans only continued because of English assistance. That would look a bit ungrateful in light of some of the things we've said over the centuries, all of which are no doubt recorded for posterity, to make us look more like bams than we already are. (17)

Adam praises what he calls 'improvisational comedy' (13) as a risky but necessary theatrical experience: 'Am I going to tell jokes? No, I don't tell jokes. I'm a comedian. I tell truths. Who called me a liar? Being a comic in a time of genocide. Tough flipping gig. You should try it.' (14) Like professional fools in the Renaissance, authors and actors have always voiced creeds and warnings. Like the theatre of Scotland, Adam's and Haggis's textual references encompass centuries of history — of culture and of the media, including theatre, and of the growth of the Scottish nation. Yet, plays by Scottish authors are not only self-centred. They also focus on

other interests and on the Other's concerns and interests, societal trends and worries, on the world's issues, whether eternal or contemporary, such as transfusion (Dogstar Theatre's controversial *Factor 9*, 2014), global warming and nuclear power, euthanasia, child abuse and so many other topics dramatised and produced these past years. Building a dramatic and theatrical Scottish identity is a melting-pot experiment and experience. It involves the nation's languages, dialects, geolects, sociolects and idiolects, as well as traditional artistic genres (musicals and pantomime for example) that all deeply root the rhizoming and sprouting or shooting young plants. Poetry and ballads are never far away: the typical ceilidh-play and its related intertwining and transtextual forms structure David Greig's *The Undoing of Prudencia Hart* (2011) and Kieran Hurley's *Rantín* (2013). Scottish theatre proves creatively that its roots are strong and its fruits inspired and inspiring. As this article began by suggesting, Scottish playwrights' idiosyncratic and widespread interest in the building and representation of their nation is deeply rooted in their past, and yet open to modernity and novelty in constant dialogical links between text and context, dramatic form and theatrical meaning.

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Endnotes.

¹ <https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Anamorphosis> (accessed 17 December 2015).

² Author's typescript, with permission.

³ Unpublished, text communicated by the author, 5 April 2013, quoted with author's permission.

⁴ François Coppée's *Les Jacobites*, performed at the Paris Théâtre de l'Odéon in 1885 was more lyrical. The reviews condemned so much exaltation, so it seems in Jules Lemaître, *Impressions de Théâtre, Onzième série*, Paris, 1920, <http://obvil.paris-sorbonne.fr/corpus/critique/lemaitre_impressions-11/body-10>.

⁵ 'Encounters', Traverse Theatre, August 2003.

⁶ 'The trilogy premiered at Edinburgh International Festival and was then directed by National Theatre of Scotland artistic director Laurie Sansom in a co-production with EIF and the National Theatre of Great Britain. For Rona Munro, 'the 15th century has innate theatrical potential: big events being played out in the lives of a small group of individuals; kings wrestling with what kingship means; enough historical record to create a framework but still leave room for the imagination. "The biggest thing I wanted to do was make it contemporary," she says. "To shake the idea that history was a far off time with funny people who didn't talk like us or think like us. What excites me about history is that these were people just like us.'" (Susan Mansfield, 'Three Kings of Scotland', Edinburgh Festival blog).

⁷ Susan Mansfield, 'Three Kings of Scotland', Edinburgh Festival blog: "Watching a recent staging of Shakespeare's history plays, Rona Munro became convinced of one thing. "I realised how much our general understanding of English

history comes from these plays,” she says. “We don’t have a Scottish equivalent and that is a huge loss. So I thought I’d have a bash.” : http://www.eif.co.uk/blog/2014/three-kings-scotland#.VORGQb_SqAc.