

Blood Red Roses: John McGrath and Lukacsian Realism

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It was one of John McGrath's distinctive talents to have caught the tenor of his times, to have recognized some of the most important cultural and political debates in circulation, and to have articulated a clear and complex position in relation to them. This has been true of all his work, whether in theatre, film or television, and as a director and filmmaker as well as a writer. His work appears of a piece, which is not to say that it is identical; indeed, McGrath was always attuned to the specific demands of each of the media he worked in, and wrote about those demands eloquently and with an awareness of the historical as well as aesthetic conjuncture. If I may begin with a broad generalization, McGrath has become identified with a resolutely anti-Naturalist theatre tradition, one that has its roots in the popular (conceived in political as well as aesthetic terms). 'Anti-Naturalism', though it is an inelegant phrase, has also characterized much of his work for television (and this includes his writing about TV drama), again for ideological reasons as well as formal ones. However, this does not mean that his work on screen resembles his work on stage at the level of dramatic method; indeed, much of it (from the early *Z Cars* to the text under discussion here, *Blood Red Roses*) is much more recognizably illusionist (though not Naturalistic, in the sense McGrath would use the term) than his work for the theatre. I want to argue in this essay that there is no contradiction here, since one of the unifying factors behind his work has been the need to discover and explore what one might call (though not without some anxiety, given the problems attached to the term) a practical realism, appropriate to the medium and to the times. I want to explore what this means in relation to McGrath's television adaptation of his stage play, *Blood Red Roses*, which was shown in three parts in November 1985 on Channel 4 with simultaneous release in re-edited form in the cinema. It is the longer television version, with its distinctive narrative structure that follows the conventions of the drama mini-series, that I am mostly concerned with here. However, to pursue questions about realism requires a certain definition of terms and a consideration of the traditions, in which McGrath's work can be located.

McGrath was often seen as a 'Brechtian' practitioner in the rather loose sense that the term is often used of post-war political theatre in the UK. However, if the cap fitted, it did so rather uneasily. McGrath himself was always slightly dismissive about his debt to Brecht, preferring to locate his main influences elsewhere, especially with Joan Littlewood. The parallels between McGrath and Brecht are nonetheless obvious: both explored the potential of theatre as an urgent ideological intervention into wider political and historical debates; both were committed to an idea of popular theatre, re-locating the theatrical event as a popular celebration (Brecht's championing of the boxing-match, McGrath's love of the Ceilidh); and both explored a pluralistic approach to theatrical form, borrowing from, and including in the single event, a variety of techniques and strategies. However, despite the similarity in their cultural politics, McGrath's work (in whatever medium) does not always look or feel like Brecht's, and this is partly because McGrath was much more alive to the possibilities of emotional engagement, openly acknowledged and exploited for

political purposes. In particular, McGrath was open to the use of identification, especially in his plays of the 1980s (*Swings and Roundabouts* and *Blood Red Roses* are clear examples) and in some of his work for television, within an approach that was still resolutely anti-naturalistic and committed to an understanding of the individual in relation to his/her political and cultural context.

It is in Brecht's attitude to realism that we find the closest connection between them. Brecht wrote about realism in a number of contexts, but his clearest statement comes in the form of an essay submitted to, though not published in, a German-language review, *Das Wort*, written during his period of European exile in the late-1930s. The essay is a direct challenge to the theoretical positions of George Lukács, the Hungarian Marxist critic and activist. For Lukács, the great realist novels provided the only true model for a historically aware realism that could fully engage with and represent the complexities of a given society. Brecht took issue with the prescriptive nature of Lukács's arguments, pointing out that not all cultural forms (and especially not the theatre) could be malformed to fit the requirements of the realist novel. His conclusion was that realism could only be adequately understood if it was defined in political, and not 'formalist', terms. Realism was primarily an ideological strategy, concerned with 'laying bare society's causal networks/showing up the dominant viewpoint as the viewpoint of the dominators':¹

For Time flows on, and if it did not it would be a poor look-out for those who have no golden tables to sit at. Methods wear out, stimuli fail. New problems loom up and demand new techniques. Reality alters; to represent it the means of representation must alter too.²

Realism was also inextricably connected to the popular, which Brecht also defines in political, rather than formal, terms. 'The words Popularity and Realism therefore are natural companions.... "Popular" means intelligible to the broad masses, taking over their own forms of expression and enriching them/adopting and consolidating their standpoint...'.³

It seems to me that this attitude towards the ideological significance of cultural practice informed all of McGrath's work, even though he was more interested than Brecht in the actual forms of popular culture. But it produces certain ironies, for in order to construct a realism for television – and exploit the narrative possibilities of the drama series for a mass audience – McGrath adopted, in the case of *Blood Red Roses*, an approach to narrative that can be best analysed using some of the terminology of Brecht's opponent, George Lukács. There is not the scope here to do justice to the range of Lukács' theory (any more than Brecht's) but it is important to note that his analysis of the nineteenth century novel was subtle and complex. Lukács theorized the relationship between the personal and the social and between the 'intensive totality' of fictional narrative and the 'extensive totality' of the social world in the novel, in ways that have relevance to the contemporary drama series. It is certainly possible to argue that, whilst the single television drama may be rooted in the aesthetics of the stage play, the drama series, as it has developed since the 1970s, can be aligned with the novel for certain purposes. This is especially true of the potential of the series format to create narratives that connect personal stories to their historical contexts, much as the realist novel does. To explore these, and other, issues, we must turn to the text.

Blood Red Roses was first staged in 1980 by 7:84 (Scotland), and toured nationally (in Scotland, that is). It is the story of Bessie McGuigan (née Gordon), a born fighter and industrial militant, and her family. The play takes the form of a 'saga'; that is, it is a contemporary tale told within the structure of a traditional story, beginning with the return of a soldier (Bessie's father, Sandy) from the Korean War. The narrative follows Sandy and Bessie from the Highlands to East Kilbride, and parallels Bessie's growth from adolescence to adulthood (which is also her development from instinctive rebel to ideologically aware political activist) with the history of post-war Scotland. This history includes women's growing resistance to male hegemony and the struggles of the Scottish working-class to resist the increasing rapaciousness of global capitalism. Bessie marries Alex McGuigan, a communist shop steward, has two children, and becomes a shop steward herself, successfully organizing international resistance to the activities of her employer (a local firm that becomes a small part of a multi-national company). The play also explores the double-oppression facing working-class women, who are formidable organizers in the workplace yet are expected to fulfill traditional female domestic roles in the home. Bessie's triumph is short-lived, and the factory is closed down as the chill winds of recession begin to bite. Bessie is unable to get a job, and Alex leaves her for another, more conventional, woman. The play ends with a historical pessimism but personal optimism; the working-class have just voted in a Tory Government committed to the reversing of the hard-won victories of the post-war years, yet Bessie is pregnant with her third child (by a man, no longer on the scene, who is much younger than her). In his introduction to the published text, McGrath noted ruefully that the militancy celebrated in the play was 'distinctly out of fashion' in an era dominated by the growing Thatcherite hegemony, but that 'it seemed important... to take a longer look at one of these militants, and at the whole question of what "fighting" means in the age of the multiple warhead'.⁴

In adapting the play for television in the mid-1980s, McGrath was able to take advantage of the political and institutional space opened up by the arrival of Channel 4 in 1982. Having no production arm of its own, the Channel actively promoted independent producers, and McGrath formed Freeway Films in 1982 partly at the suggestion of the first Head of Channel 4, Jeremy Isaacs. McGrath was able to be both writer and director of the adaptation, and the outcome was a three-part mini-series, each episode of one hour's duration, re-edited into a 150-minute version for the cinema. Channel 4 provided most of the financial backing for the project, with top-up funds coming from Lorimar, the same company that produced *Dallas*.

Stage, film and TV versions occupied similar positions within the institutional structures of their respective industries. On stage, *Blood Red Roses* played to a variety of audiences, many of them working-class, in venues that were some way from the main centres of theatrical and cultural power. McGrath wanted the film version to have a long shelf-life (especially in Scotland), preferably to be followed by discussion (itself a challenge to dominant cinema viewing practices). The irony of Lorimar's involvement in both screen versions was not lost on McGrath (although he insisted that, having approved the script, Lorimar did not interfere), since he intended *Blood Red Roses* to be an ideological antidote to the politics and narrative structure of the mini-series: 'I wanted to challenge the content and values of the mini-series format which is usually a portrayal of somebody's rise to power and fame; a confirmation of the ideology of the right'.⁵

In narrative terms, the series follows the main events of the stage play, but continues beyond them. In revisiting the story five years further on, McGrath was able to acknowledge the politics of a changing historical situation, in which Thatcherism was even more entrenched than five years previously. We witness the birth of Bessie's third daughter, the heavy defeat of the Labour Party in the 1983 General Election and Sandy's illness and eventual death from a stroke. One innovation is that the central narrative is placed within a flashback structure, with the main events narrated by Bessie in voice-over from Sandy's funeral. Sandy's death also provides a kind of closure of the historical narrative as well as the personal one (although the ending of the screen version is much more optimistic than this suggests, and I will return to it). Overall, the TV series does what most televised versions of plays do, which is to 'open up' the narrative, showing what is talked about or represented metonymically on stage. However, many of the central events – for example, the departure of Bessie's mother, the move to East Kilbride, the first meeting of Bessie and Alex, the birth of the first two children – are common to both versions; indeed, much of the dialogue from the stage version is repeated in the screen one. But beyond this, the dramatic method is significantly different.

Theatrically, the play consists of short scenes, punctuated by traditional folk-song, and introduced by an 'announcer', who places each episode in its immediate political and historical moment. It also makes considerable use of monologues, particularly by Bessie herself and her father, Sandy, that serve several functions. Characters explain and explore themselves, often laying bare the contradictions of their emotional and political situations. It is in the monologues that the metaphorical resonance of the story is most explicit, especially in those delivered by Sandy, whose growing awareness of the contradictions of his life as a soldier allows him to draw parallels between different kinds of 'fighter' and to internationalise the struggles in which they are all engaged. These monologues are absent from the TV version, although they have a residual presence in Bessie's voice-over, and there is no real screen equivalent to such an obviously theatrical strategy.

In contrast, the screen *Blood Red Roses*, like nearly all television drama, does not stray far from the constraints of illusionism. That is, it obeys the laws of spatial and temporal consistency and plausibility (these things can happen in the real world), characterization (people are 'believable' and identifiable human beings) and environment (it uses actual locations). It maintains, in short, a coherent fictional world that, with the exception of Bessie's voice-over, is never ruptured or rendered problematic in the way that the stage play is. But this does not mean that the series is 'Naturalist'. McGrath wrote on several occasions about his hostility to Naturalism, on television and on the stage, but his critique was on ideological as much as methodological grounds. Naturalism on television is 'a way of writing about the world which circumscribes the area you're allowed to write about.... Such an approach excludes the intrusion of history: it erects a closed, charmed circle of emotional relationships without reference to anything happening outside'.⁶ Clearly, however illusionist *Blood Red Roses* may be, it is not Naturalism in this sense, since the purpose of its depiction of character and environment is to open the personal narratives of Bessie, her family and all those with whom she comes into contact, out into the history of a nation at moments of crisis and change. The episodic structure of the play gives each event a gestic significance, lifting it from its immediate context and offering it up for social analysis. These key scenes maintain their gestic

importance in the series, but are inserted into a narrative that emphasizes a continuous struggle that is more visibly present on the screen. In all its versions, *Blood Red Roses* is an 'epic', not in the strictly Brechtian sense, but because it is not 'rounded off' into a single, uni-focused drama cutting a swathe through post-war history, telling its story through short, detailed scenes, chronologically ordered (with the exception of the flash-forwards to Sandy's funeral), and often years apart. The cumulative weight of the events, as well as their specific political significance, gives the story its historical resonance; we are watching the story of a nation, not only an individual, the story of post-war capital told from the point of view of those who suffered under it.

How can we talk about this relationship between personal and historical narratives in *Blood Red Roses*? Often in television drama history is simply a backdrop to the more important stories of the central character(s), but this is not the case here. McGrath places the narrative amongst the working-class, following them not, by and large, in the domestic setting (like a great deal of post-war social realism that is indebted to the Naturalist stage tradition) but in the workplace. Bessie and her co-workers are forced to respond to the increasingly remote activities of international capitalism (and this is a major factor in Bessie's radicalization). The factory she starts work in on leaving school is eventually bought by a larger company, which is swallowed up by a multi-national. These developments become a source of dramatic tension; at the end of episode one, when it becomes clear that the firm has been taken over and jobs are under threat, Bessie leaves the viewer with the question 'Who are these people and what are they planning to do to us?'. Much of episodes two and three is taken up with answering this question, which includes the story of Bessie's attempts to play capitalism at its own game and mobilize international trade union support to prevent closures and redundancies. This is paralleled by the development of technology and the media, which are here viewed as adjuncts to the increasingly repressive activities of capital. In one telling shot, Bessie looks out across the heads of a strike meeting she is addressing to a bank of telephoto lenses, trained on her by a national media mobilized against the working-class. And developments in information systems are used by employers to blacklist Bessie throughout Glasgow.

The story of Bessie is a clear example of one that is narrated in the sense that Lukács used the term. In the course of a comparison between the ways in which the novelists Zola and Tolstoy depict a horse race, Lukács draws a distinction between 'description' and 'narration'. Description, which is the method of Zola and of the Naturalist school of writers, is the representation of social reality by the accumulation of data, collected and transcribed by the writer, and then juxtaposed with the personal story of the central character. Narration, by contrast, is the method of Tolstoy and other realist writers of the nineteenth century, and represents social reality by seeing it from the point of view of a character, the protagonist, who acts as the structuring presence at the heart of the narrative. As Lukács observed, 'In Zola the race is described from the point of view of an observer; in Tolstoy it is narrated from the standpoint of a participant'.⁷ In other words, narration requires that the novelist embeds his/her character in the events represented, creating a point of view on them. The choice of description or narration is not a neutral one for the writer, since the ideological consequences of each are different. As Lukács constantly argued, the descriptive method could only describe social problems as 'facts', their origins remaining unexamined; narration, in contrast, allows the reader access to

problems through the experience of the participants, especially that of the central character(s). The question of point of view, as constructed through the actions of the protagonist, is key to this view of narrative - and to *Blood Red Roses*.

Although *Blood Red Roses* is about more than one individual, it has an undisputed protagonist in Bessie Gordon/McGuigan. But what kind of protagonist is she, and how is she connected to history? The central events of the play parallel the actions of a multi-national company, ITT, in Scotland in the late 1970s. Bessie is based on a woman who led the successful opposition to ITT's closure plans, but was later victimized when the company eventually got its way. 'When the fuss had died down... the multi-national closed down the factory, sacked everybody and simply went away. They made it clear that the reason for the close-down was the woman who had fought them. She not only lost her job – she became a local villain instead of a heroine.'⁸ However, the series is not a thinly disguised biography, and does not aim for the direct fidelity to historical fact that a drama-documentary might require. Its relationship to history is more complex, and Bessie is actually an amalgam of different militants McGrath encountered, as well as having conscious echoes of archetypal Celtic fighting women. In fact, Bessie is a typical character, and her typicality is rooted in McGrath's view of contemporary working-class political culture: it is also demanded by the series' realist fictional form. The idea of typicality is central to Lukács's conception of character in the realist novel.

'Typicality', however, is a term that requires careful and precise definition. It is not, in McGrath's or Lukács's terms, synonymous with the 'average'. This is an ideologically loaded term, and one that is much used in the discussion of Naturalism. 'Average' implies a statistical norm, and an average character is one who complies with a generally understood and agreed sense of 'plausible' and sociologically defensible behaviour, with all the attendant difficulties that these terms suggest. Bessie, though clearly a 'credible' character, is not average, and typicality requires a character to be inside history in a more complex sense. As Lukács argued:

The "centre" figure need not represent an "average man" but is rather the product of a particular social and personal environment. The problem is to find a central figure in whose life all the important extremes in the world of the novel converge and around whom a complete world with all its vital contradictions can be organized.⁹

Lukács is linking typicality here to both the internal coherence of the text, and, more importantly, to its ability to represent the dynamics of social and political change. A typical character is one who grants the reader/audience access to the forces of history at a given moment, whose situation enables the writer (and, by extension, the film-maker) to connect the personal to the social, and relate changes in one area of society to those happening in another within a single narrative. Bessie McGuigan is typical, then, not because she is an 'average' working-class woman (if such a fearsome militant had been an average figure, female or male, then post-war history would have been very different) but because her history and actions allow us a particular - and privileged - view of post-war history.

At nearly every point, the development of Bessie's personal narrative parallels that of Scotland to reveal a society in transition. The population drift from the Highlands to the expanding New Towns of the Lowlands, which, driven by brute economic

realities, accelerated in the post-war years, is represented in the plight of Bessie and Sandy. Having returned from the war with a miserly disability pension and no economic prospects, father and daughter are forced to leave their Highland home (having been deserted by Bessie's mother). The cultural trauma of this move is surprising (to a non-Scots audience) and permeates much of the early part of the narrative. The Gordons are transported to what they experience as an alien country. On arrival at Glasgow, they set out to walk to East Kilbride, not realizing that being 'near Glasgow' does not mean that it is a few streets from the station. The derogatory 'chuechter' (Highlander) rings in their ears, and is echoed in Bessie's treatment at school in her new home town (in a scene that is not in the stage play, Bessie confronts a P.E. teacher, who attempts to victimize her because of her origins).

The changing character of Scottish society in the post-war period permeates the texture of the series, often unremarked by the characters, but clearly present for the viewer. East Kilbride functions as a metonym, standing in for the transformation of the post-war urban landscape in the name of re-development. As Bessie grows up, the town grows with her, its changing landscape intruding, both aurally and visually, into her personal story. Later, after being stigmatized by her role in the strike, and finding temporary employment by changing her name, Bessie finds herself working in a factory with Asian women. Their ethnic origins are not commented upon; indeed, they are represented in ways that emphasise their similarity to the many (white) working-class women Bessie has encountered in other workplaces.

At other points in the narrative, the events that shape Bessie's life are juxtaposed with wider historical ones. This is particularly true of the births of Bessie and Alex's children; the first occurs on the night of Harold McMillan's re-election in 1959, the second coincides with the 1964 Labour victory and the third child arrives on the eve of the 1983 General Election, which saw Margaret Thatcher returned to power with a massive majority. The juxtaposition is often humorous: at the birth of their first child, Alex rushes into the maternity ward to greet wife and baby with the words 'It's Harold Macmillan for another five years!', to which Bessie replies 'It's Janey McGuigan for life'. Bringing personal and political events into alignment in this way, produces two complementary effects. On the one hand, a key event in Bessie's life is placed not in the expected emotional/psychological context (although emotion is certainly present in the scene) but rather in its historical/political one, and this is a pattern that runs across the series, embracing not only births but also other key events, including Sandy's death (he dies as he is watching scenes of the miners' confrontation with the police during the doomed 1984 strike). On the other, the way that these events are represented raises questions about the limitations of particular political and social positions. At Janey's birth, it is Bessie's mother that she longs for. Alex's response is inadequate: holding his new baby in his arms, he can only say 'We're gonna need you to get rid o' these Tories'. He cannot kiss his wife, and Bessie, as so often in the series, sees the connection between the political and the personal, confiding to the midwife that 'What's politics for if he couldna do that?'

For Bessie, the appropriate political response is one that recognizes that politics must be lived, not simply debated, and that it must encompass all aspects of her life, including her identity as a woman. There is a strong, practical feminist consciousness in both Bessie and *Blood Red Roses*, which the series format allows

McGrath to develop across the narrative, embracing several strands of the plot. It is clearest when Bessie is combining her role as activist and mother. In one key scene, Bessie is attempting to organize international resistance to attempts to lay off workers in her factory by 'phone from her living-room. A difficult conversation with a Portuguese trade unionist is juxtaposed with domestic chaos. The scene is humorous yet we are aware of the seriousness of the call both to Bessie and the activist who is risking a great deal in contacting her (this sequence is set before the restoration of democracy in Portugal). Alex, who we are reminded is a militant unionist, can offer no support because he is inept at handling his children and dealing with basic household chores (it is Sandy who takes control). The dilemma for Bessie is laid bare, and the scene ends with a confrontation. Bessie has been told that Alex is having an affair, which he denies (though we later find it to be true). Bessie acknowledges that she has been unable to fulfill her 'feminine' duties, but the onus for resolving this is placed with Alex, who is confronted with his inability to share responsibility for home and family. This is not only a personal failing, but also the limitation of a certain kind of traditional (male) political activism, which is radical in the workplace but conservative in the home. This is made evident elsewhere in the narrative, where Bessie and her female co-workers reluctantly return to work, having kept the picket line going in a difficult strike, under pressure from the men, who 'have responsibilities, apparently'. And the hostility directed at Bessie after the factory is eventually closed is at its fiercest when voiced by a male shop steward. However, *Blood Red Roses* is careful not to be anti-men, and avoids a crude male/female opposition. Sandy learns how to help bring up his grandchildren, and Alex is portrayed sympathetically as a man who is a victim of his own inability to change (a state of affairs of which he is aware). In a later sequence, when Bessie is fighting to retain her job secured under her maiden name, it is Alex who argues on her behalf and offers emotional and practical support. In short, Alex's politics are not invalidated by his inability to overcome his cultural and ideological formation, but, in stopping at the front door, they are seen to be crucially limited.

Blood Red Roses is women-centred in other ways as well. The series places Bessie alongside other women, in particular her mother, her Aunt Ella and best friend and cousin, Catriona. It is Catriona, who dies in episode two of cancer, with whom Bessie is systematically juxtaposed. Catriona is vulnerable and timid, unable to voice her needs or fight for them. Much of Bessie's anger against injustice is fuelled by her determination that others should not suffer as she did. 'Everything I've done in the rest of my life has been in memory of Catriona' she says in voice over at her funeral 'So that no other girl would get as little from life as her'.

At the beginning of this essay I argued that McGrath was not afraid to use identification. Given the centrality of Bessie to the narrative and the series' illusionist form, identification is clearly an issue in *Blood Red Roses*. However, identification here is not simply a result of either Naturalist habit or a by-product of the form, but rather a central political strategy. It is hard, I would argue, for any member of the television audience to stay with the series and not identify with Bessie McGuigan. Of course, identification is a complex and problematic process and nearly always involves more than emotional empathy (although that is certainly present in all versions of the text). It is more a question of how the series uses Bessie to construct a point of view on the events it represents and offers a perspective from which to interpret them. In one sense, *Blood Red Roses* uses viewer identification with Bessie

to dislocate expected responses. By placing even the most personal events, such as births and deaths, in their historical context, the series directs us to political, rather than psychological, interpretations. At another level, the series was conceived with an acute awareness of the immediate context of reception. Made in 1985, at the height of Thatcherite triumphalism and in the aftermath of the defeat of the miners, *Blood Red Roses* was offered against the grain of the prevailing political climate. In particular, it articulates a counter to the dominant view of industrial militants (and the role of the mass media in perpetrating this view is acknowledged by the series in the way Bessie is demonized by the press). In asking us to view events from the standpoint of a protagonist who would, in other circumstances, be a popular hate-figure for many viewers, McGrath was using a familiar dramatic tool for his explicit political purposes.

In conclusion, *Blood Red Roses* is committed to what Raymond Williams, with reference to Lukács, calls the 'classical realist project':

Showing a man or woman making an effort to live a much fuller life and encountering the objective limits of a particular social order, and depicting the creative contradiction between the impulse towards another life, seen not as an individual but as a general aspiration, and the structural constraints of a society.¹⁰

Here, it seems as though the social order is victorious. Bessie acts against the forces that have tried to dismantle the institutional and ideological resistance of the working-class, aware that it is the latter that is the most damaging; 'Working people don't see themselves as part of a class any more' she laments towards the end of the last episode, and what concerns her the most about an unsuccessful vote to take strike action in defence of her job is that more than half the workforce abstained. It is to McGrath's credit, however, that the 'creative contradiction' is not allowed have a pessimistic outcome. The final sequence of the series sees Bessie, her eldest daughter and new baby, joining a Nicaraguan solidarity march. The protest is a collective celebration, and the camera sweeps across a mass of union banners, taking in marchers of all ages and colours. It is also accompanied by the haunting pipe music of Chilean exiles, Inti Illimani, a reminder of resistance in the face of oppression. As Judith Williamson noted, 'It is the memory of the cost of that battle which gives the banners their meaning: a memory which the film has supplied'.¹¹ *Blood Red Roses*, in all its versions, stands as a testament, 'a profoundly moving record of a real history which must be remembered and made visible, not to convince others but because memory is necessary to keep going for those whose history it is'.¹² Williamson's comment stands as a judgment on all McGrath's work.

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Endnotes

- ¹ Bertolt Brecht, 'The Popular and the Realistic' in John Willet (trans) *Brecht on Theatre* (London: Eyre Methuen, 1964), p.109.
- ² Bertolt Brecht, 'The Popular and the Realistic' in John Willet (trans) *Brecht on Theatre* (London: Eyre Methuen, 1964), p.110.
- ³ Bertolt Brecht, 'The Popular and the Realistic' in John Willet (trans) *Brecht on Theatre* (London: Eyre Methuen, 1964), pp 107-8
- ⁴ John McGrath, 'Introductory Notes', in *Two Plays for the Eighties: Blood Red Roses & Swings and Roundabouts*(Aberdeen: Aberdeen People's Press, 1981), p. 5.
- ⁵Quoted in interview by Lizzie Francke, in 'Bessie' in *City Limits*, October 16-23, 1986,p. 32.
- ⁶John McGrath, 'Blood Red Roses' in *Sight and Sound* , November, 1986, p. 361.
- ⁷ George Lukacs, 'Narrate or Describe?' in *Writer and Critic* (London: Merlin, 1978), p. 111.
- ⁸ John McGrath, quoted in Christopher Kenworthy 'When battling Bessie took on the giants', *TV Times*, 5th December, 1986.
- ⁹ George Lukacs, 'Narrate or Describe?', in *Writer and Critic* (London: Merlin, 1978), p. 142.
- ¹⁰ Raymond Williams, *Politics and Letters: Interviews with 'New Left Review'* (London: NLB, 1979), p. 221.
- ¹¹ Judith Williamson, 'Permanent Revolution', *New Society*, 17 October, 1986, n.p.
- ¹²Judith Williamson, 'Permanent Revolution', *New Society*, 17 October, 1986, n.p.