

History, Ideology and Performance in Ian Brown's *Mary and A Great Reckonin'*

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Ian Brown has, of course, written several plays on historical themes. In addition, and perhaps unusually for a playwright, he has also produced substantial critical writing on the uses of history on stage. At an early stage in his 1991 thesis, for example, Brown discusses the near impossibility of theatre as documentary history. In an analysis of the work of Peter Cheeseman at the Victoria Theatre, Stoke-on-Trent in the sixties, seventies and eighties, Brown cites the inevitable selectivity of the process of culling history directly from recorded historical sources. This is the case whether they are those of established historians or alternative histories to which those generally denied a voice on grounds such as class, race or gender contribute.¹ Brown points out that whatever the source, the unavoidable process of ideological bias or auteurism must inevitably intrude upon the finished product. For all that, Brown as dramatist does not adopt an orthodox postmodernist position on history as something to be either ignored or fabulated into nostalgic pastiche for the sake of a present, ephemeral experience. Instead, he seeks to reappraise our accounts of history through a series of non-naturalistic tropes, intended to expose ideological imperatives in the semiotics of historical iconography.

Brown's *Mary* (1977)² employs a succession of *verfremdung* techniques to create a continual distancing effect on his audience. Citing Peter Nichols' *The National Health* (1970) among his influences, Brown states the intention of dislocating audience expectations through a series of parodic turns, never allowing his audience to settle with the comfortable mythologies of Mary, Queen of Scots. Nichols's turns of music hall and television soap opera parody continually distance his audience from the potentially too empathetic events on the contemporary public hospital ward portrayed in his play. Another contemporary example is Henry Livings' *The Little Mrs Foster Show* (1966),³ where the metanarrative of a sentimental television docu-drama overlays a story of the decline of late British imperial aspirations in contemporary Africa. Although Brown may not have been able to see all such work, it is clear that these represent a particular mode of the late sixties.

Brown's theatrical tale is, however, more ambitious, taking, on as it does, a historical moment already heavily ideologically inscribed by historians, as well as television and filmmakers. In challenging assumptions about one of the most mythologised figures of Scottish history, Brown's intentions and methodologies seem to mirror those of Joan Littlewood in *Oh What A Lovely War* (1963). In this, he allows no single preconceived narrational strand to emerge from an oft-told tale, and thereby forces a contemporary retelling of a settled and hegemonic tale of the culture. Indeed, Brown acknowledges as another influence on this dramaturgical method, John Spurling's *Macrune's Guevara* (1969), a piece which simultaneously explores the process of mythologising the revolutionary hero and deconstructs that modern myth.

Brown's 'Mary' is reified, becoming a continually contested resource, used by her aristocratic compatriots for the winning of ideological and material wars. The play opens with a brief reiteration of the chronological facts of her life not by Mary herself, but by the actor playing Lord Darnley, who comments '... some people have said I'm a gay queen. And some people have said I'm a romantic queen'. (scene 1, p 221).⁴ The camp playing acts as a dislocation device, a trope to which Brown resorts in frequent scenes throughout the piece. In this distancing, and often very funny, device, scenes are written in parodic versions of such theatrical modes as Shakespearean blank verse, Noel Coward comedy, melodrama, variety, pantomime and kailyard. Further in these theatricalised scenes, the roles of leading figures like Mary are played by other characters from the play. In this way, the theatrical shaping of versions of Mary is highlighted, as is the way in which leading characters such as Moray or Knox shape their versions of 'Mary' to meet their political and

ideological ends, just as later historians were to do. This opening scene where Darnley plays Mary is the first instance of Mary's multifarious use by other historical figures as a historiographical justification of various forms of state and ideological apparatus.

As the story proceeds, we see these bare, uncontested chronological facts made flesh, with Mary seen as a passive victim of the powers that be in a land that is, for all the romantic nationalism which surrounds her, foreign to her. This is so because she has, of course, returned to Scotland after an early life spent in France betrothed to the Dauphin, who, after the long wait through her childhood and adolescence, his inheritance of the crown and their brief marriage, died young. In Scotland, her life is dominated by a group of Scottish landowners, prominent among them the Earls of Moray, Morton and Ruthven. Using their apparent need to pacify and control John Knox's religious zeal as a lever (in fact Knox is seen as a controllable element to this Machiavellian Protestant grouping), the clique manipulate Mary through a succession of political permutations, rendering her powerless and ripe for destruction:

Moray. Mr. Knox, it's grand te see you.

Knox. Aye, my lord, and what is it you want to say?

Moray. Just this, Mr. Knox. Preach your word. But the affairs of state and the queen's marriage are nae ony concern of yours at aw.

Knox. I must preach the right in all things, my lord Moray. I can be ruled by nane in that. I must...

Moray. Mr Knox. You can say whit you like, so long as I like. Mind wha's in power and mind your principles as best you can.

(Moray leaves.)

Knox. He's gone.

Maitland. Aye. He's gone. Best mind whit he says. It's the realities of politics.

Knox. I was just going to say –

Maitland. He wasnae listening, Mr. Knox. He wasnae listening. (scene 4, p. 232)

In this context of realpolitik, Lord Darnley is seen as a power hungry wastrel. His adulterous promiscuity, even to the extent of bedding Mary's personal maid, Mary Hamilton (who is put to death for the offence), is used as an excuse to put him, in turn, to death, so breaking a Catholic union. Her later marriage to Bothwell is also quickly quashed by violent intervention, just as her earlier association with such political and personal allies as David Rizzio was brought to a grisly end.

So much, though, for the story. Brown is less concerned with the individual entity of Mary, which had been repeatedly represented in romantic melodramas on stage and screen at the time, than her iconic significance, and its manipulation through history to a succession of variant ideological meanings. Her status as a representative of Scotland's blood and soil is challenged early on, as she comments 'I desire only peace for your land' (scene 2, p. 226, my italics). This is said at an extraordinary trial in which, despite the Earl of Huntly's already being dead, under the law of the period, he had to be tried in person for treason. Brown makes much of the absurd potential of this trial in which it is decided that the dead Huntly should be found guilty and condemned to death for his conspiracy to overthrow the Protestant hegemony. The grotesque, theatrically Jacobean excess of this toying with a corpse recalls Peter Barnes' handling of the court of Carlos II in *The Bewitched* (1974), a comparable play in its use of dark humour and parodic pastiche applied to historical events.⁵ The difference is that Mary has already been ironised as a historical figure by the opening scene, and we are rendered continually uncertain as to her identity. The difference of the myths of 'Mary' from a simple nationalist mythology is re-emphasised by her indignation at the scene enacted by and before her: 'I am the queen and they must come to me if they want to do anything in this land of theirs'. (scene 2, p. 228). It is characteristic of the underlying quirky, ironic and often sardonic

vision of this text that Mary calls France home until the end of the first act (scene 12, p. 257), and takes little interest in Scotland until she has been traduced by her nobles.

In his thesis, Brown recounts the disquiet of Miranda Bell, the actress playing Mary, at the fact that she would be the only performer playing a single character, with the other performers doubling as a multitude of characters, including Mary herself. Brown comments:

it seemed to be essential that since the play itself was about the manipulation of “Mary” and others, including Darnley “played” “her” [...] to maintain her as a dramaturgic anchor to the role-playing mayhem around her, just as there must have been a “real” personality now lost to us submerged in our projections.⁶

Brown’s metanarrational strategy was to have a single character acting as historical quasi-authentication (however that character may vary from the widely-promulgated historical picture), while the process of storytelling as ideology went on around her. Throughout the play, she is introduced through ossified ritual, emphasising the unchallengeability of her image in the contemporary world. That Brown intends to ironise this process is emphasised by the very first action and words of the play, where John Knox, of all historical figures, calls the audience to prayer for a play about the Catholic queen:

(John Knox strides forward.)

Knox. Let us pray. Bow yer heids. Come on, I'm no here te waste ma time. For whit you are about te see, may the Lord mak you truly gratefu. (scene 1, p. 221).

That this should happen in the highly ritualised context of a theatre redoubles the religious, political and ideological ironies that tell against both Knox and Mary.

All of this prepares us for the political process which will ensue throughout the rest of the play. An early interchange between Moray, Mary and the diplomat Maitland outlines the clash of ideologies at the centre of the play, as well as the sense of realpolitik which concludes it, and shows the creation of a myth of 'Mary' in process:

Maitland. I doot there’s mair trouble about religion te came, though.

Moray. Nae doot, but we’ll tak it and mak a settlement.

Maitland. Weel, you ken the nobles willnae gie their lands to the new kirk of John Knox. Even though they lands belonged te Rome, and were gied te be held in trust, they willnae return them.

Moray. The new kirk wants money te build schools and that.

Mary. To read their bibles and teach heresy.

Moray. Heresy is everywhere. Show me an idea and I’ll find you a sowel te cry it heresy in five minutes.

Mary. But heresy is heresy.

Moray. Whit’s mair important is this new kirk is upstart and ower share it’s richt. They believe each man has an equal access te God.

Maitland. Thon’s no the trouble. It’s when they act as if it was true.

Moray. Weel, this isnae a democracy, thank God.
(scene 2, pp. 227-28)

The irony that underlies the spread of a bourgeois individualist ethic through a new Protestantism is that the Protestant nobles are more corporate in their identities than those who oppose them. It is

they who voice interchangeable views about the pragmatic and endlessly adaptable form of ideology that they represent. It is they, too who formulate policy during group bonding activities, playing golf (scene 7, pp. 241-45), sporting with falcons (scene 14, pp. 261-66) and practising archery (scene 17, pp. 274-77). Each of these games is played with farcical, indeed dangerous, incompetence, demystifying the notion of wise heads in authority, and pointedly exposing the struggle beneath the façade of religious orthodoxy. Moray ultimately speaks for all in the first of these scenes when he comments 'Knox keeps the land safe for the true religion. We keep the land safe for ourselves' (scene 7, p. 243). It is surely ironic that Lennox, a Catholic noble and father of Darnley, who intrudes on each of these scenes, is more individuated than his antagonists, playing perennial outsider (albeit with a vested interest in the status quo) to the followers of the politically dominant religion.

It is part of a double ironising process that amidst these scenes, Brown carefully selects singularly inappropriate characters from the 'real' world of the play to perform his pastiche sequences. Thus, the maid plays Mary, disrupting the hierarchical expectations of class and nobility in a sequence, which renders the story of Mary's courtship by Darnley as a pantomimic send-up of pantomime itself:

Maid. I sit here by the fire, little me, little Mary, waiting for the carriage to come and take me to the ball, and my wicked sisters have taken away my invitation, sold the carriage, torn up my dress and cancelled the ball. No balls for me, they said. What shall I do?

(Moray as Knox appears through a trap.)

Moray. Hello, Mary, I am your good fairy, Knox at the window. I have heard you crying. I am a good fairy and I like to help. (scene 6, pp 239).

In the same way, later in scene, when it segues into mock-Cowdrey brittle dialogue, it is Bothwell, soon to supplant the murdered Darnley as Mary's husband, who plays Darnley himself.

Another example of this process, called by Cordelia Oliver in her Guardian review of the production, 'meaningful jump-cut' is Brown's representation of Bothwell's abduction – or is it 'alleged abduction' – of Mary. In this scene, Mary Hamilton, put to death in an earlier sequence by Mary herself, plays Mary to Ruthven's Bothwell. Here, Brown uses melodrama as an ironic distancing narrative apparatus (scene 18, pp. 271-74). In applying melodrama, a genre infrequently seen on Scottish stages at the time of Mary's being written, he comically updates the dialogic resonances, intruding into melodramatic pastiche entirely modern and knowing responses that both highlight and undercut the melodramatic mode:

Mary H. You have brought me I know not where to do I know not what.

Ruthven. To my castle in Dunbar.

Mary H. To your castle in Dunbar. And do you intend I know not what?

Ruthven. I'm sure I don't know what you mean.

Mary H. Oh, come my lord. You must have had women in your power ere now.

Ruthven. Certainly there's the wife.

[...]

Mary H. Think you I would be here, kidnapped or no, thought I not you were free?

Ruthven. We're going to get divorced.

Mary H. I've heard that one before. (scene 18, p. 272)

In employing his distancing practice, Brown cites such noted proponents as Shaw and Brecht, whose subversions work by dislocation as is well documented.⁷ But in using specifically popular forms

(melodrama, movies and pantomime among them) his formal choices indicate a rejection of realism which accords with Jameson's views on the decline of the totalising realist narrative in the modernist and postmodernist epoch:

It is in the context of the gradual reification of realism in late capitalism that romance once again comes to be felt as the place of narrative heterogeneity and of freedom from that reality principal to which a now realistic representation is the hostage. Romance once again seems to offer the possibility of sensing other historical rhythms and of demonic transformations of a real now unshakably set in place. [...] On this view, the oral tales of tribal society, the fairy tales that are the irrepressible voice of the underclasses of the great systems of domination, adventure stories and melodrama, and the popular or mass culture of our own time are all syllables and broken fragments of some single immense story.⁸

In opposing the contemporary historical inheritance of bourgeois ideology in storytelling, Brown eschews an Adornoesque embrace of avante garde radicalism and finds instead a liberation in popular forms of narrative. It is, therefore, a further irony that the play's first performance was before the, arguably, comfortably middle class audience of the Royal Lyceum Theatre, Edinburgh, where outside of panto time audiences would generally expect to see forms of canonical theatre art. In this context, the frequent changes of formal apparatus into popular forms might be expected to free audiences from the ideological expectations loaded onto realism, uncovering latent historical structures beneath a rigidly observed and ideologically well-rehearsed hegemonic narrative.

The questionableness of unmediated realism (if such an entity could exist) as a form is highlighted at the opening of the second act, where Lennox appears in a painter's overalls stained with red, as an 'Artistic Embellisher and History Enlivening Operative' (scene 13, p. 260). Here, the role of tartan sentimentalism and sensationalism as part, in effect, of a kind of mimetic Scottish tourist industry is explored. Such exploration is also found, for example, in the scene where Knox, Lennox, Moray and Mary Hamilton from the realist play perform a kailyard version of Mary's alliance with the Hamiltons and escape from Loch Leven Castle which opens:

(Lennox is sitting in a chair, dressed as an old woman. He is knitting. Knox enters, dressed also as an old woman. Lennox puts down his knitting.)

Lennox. Oh dearie me, is it yersel, Jeannie Knox?

Knox Aye, it's me, Aggie Lennox.

Lennox. Sic a ding ye gied ma pair pulsing hert. Hirpling in there the like of an oossie puddock.

Knox. Aye, hinnie. It's a dour lift aboon us baith and a queer eldritch nicht the nicht. ... it's gey eerie the nicht, a nicht for bogles and whigmaleeries.

(Mary Hamilton enters as Mary.)

Mary
H. Is everything ready, my women?

Lennox. It's a cauld and oonchancie way the ravens wheech roon the tooer though.

Mary
H. Yes. I think so. ... (scene 23, pp. 282)

Brown debunks the realist narrative once again through popular forms, which are in their turn satirised, creating not so much history as a metanarrational exploration of the history 'industry'.

When, earlier, her usurpation proceeded, Moray commented 'Buchanan'll write history for us' (scene 19, p. 276).

The fragmentation of identity that occurs in Mary the character, metaphorised by the multiplicity of characters who 'play' her, foreshadows her final, inevitable reduction to the status of pure signified, as a cardboard cut out of herself. This, now more significant than the woman, is lowered on to the stage at the end of the play as Mary in character utters her final speech:

Mary. [...] And the Scots call me whore, the English danger, and the Catholics they already call me a martyr. They call me all these things and I am no-one. (scene 24, p. 288)

Called by Morton in the same scene a 'a figment of the imagination', Mary has become a non-person, a manifestation of ideological need in troubled times.

The first produced play for adults of Brown's after Mary to deal with a historical topic in a comparably metatheatrical way is *A Great Reckonin* (2000).⁹ In the meantime, his chapter, 'Plugged into History: the Sense of the Past in Scottish Theatre', in *Scottish Theatre since the Seventies*,¹⁰ shows that, while he has not changed the critical stance of his 1991 thesis, he has applied it more generally to contemporary Scottish playwrights. In this process, he offers an original taxonomic matrix for the use of history on stage. This he follows up in his chapter, written with Barbara Bell, 'A Duty to History: History and Cultural Identities in Scottish Theatre', in *A Theatre that Matters*.¹¹ Clearly his critical thinking in this period was developing alongside his practice as a playwright.

In *A Great Reckonin*, Brown is also concerned with matters of ideology, representation, and history, though in this later play his rhetorical strategy is less concerned with generic shifts. Here, he addresses more specifically the capacity of art and artists to retell history through the unconscious ideological nuances of their culture. Economic necessities figure high on the agenda of the artists represented in the play, but their inability to recognise historical and ideological causalities beneath their representation lead once again to the creation of historical myth. For all that, the creation of a play, another metanarrative device, uncovers, almost by accident, a hidden history to controvert the accepted historical narratives of our time concerning James I.

The play opens with a group of actors, the Royal Company of Guisers, arrive in Perth in February 1437, at the beginning of Lent, having been delayed on their journey by the irresponsible and buffoonish Shug Welsh, the leader of the troupe. The custom that no theatre may be performed over Lent impedes their plans for commercial gain by performing in front of the court. As it transpires, these plans are in any case irrelevant since they arrive in time to discover that their King and royal patron, James I, has been assassinated.

The actors do not repine, but instead convince Shug that a play devised along the plot-line of the King's life and violent demise might serve a commercial purpose. To this end, they convince Andra, the King's butler to reiterate the major events of his life, taking them on a guided tour of the town, and creating a performed version of James' reign which assists in both mythologising the man and demystifying his context. As the piece proceeds, the capacity of art to select spectacle over a broader view of events is explored. The audience sees the company recreate such historical or quasi-historical tales as those of the Fair Maid of Perth, the long captivity and ransom of James by England's Henries IV and V, and the Battle of the North Inch, clan trial-by-combat organised by James' father, Robert III.

Brown's purpose, however, seems to be as much a contemporary commentary on art as one on historical process. Shug is, in many respects, a very contemporary character, embodying as he does a concern with the role of the artist which did not manifest itself in this form in Britain until the arrival of the Romantics. Shug's egregious egotism is such that he makes the special and visionary claims for the artist which have really only manifested themselves over the past two hundred years. Explaining a fracas with the ferrymen on the Forth which caused the party to be delayed, he comments: 'A got a wee bit cairried awa. A gie ye that. A live life to the full. A'm an artist. A've got artistic temperament'. (p. 6). He reiterates this special claim to favour after an altercation with Andra, in which he is denied alcohol and rich foods on the, surely overwhelming, grounds of both Lenten abstention and the King's death. (p. 10).

Up to this point, Shug's behaviour amounts to a mild satiric rebuke to the special claims for the artist heard so often in the contemporary theatre. But as events proceed, the limitations of Shug's claims as an artist enforce limitations on our perceptions of the monarch and his claims to authority. Duv, a gay actor whose conflicts with Shug escalate throughout the play, points to an insufficiency in Shug's performance as the King:

- Duv.** When we was eatin and drinkin the noo, ye says ye'll still guise the King.
Shug. Aye. Aye. Whit's wrang wi' that?
Duv. Weel, they says he wis a big laddie an A'll certainly gie ya that, but it's a bummer he wis a braw musician, fir ye'll maun hae that in the play.
Shug. Weel, Ah could edit that bit oot. A can dae whit A want. A'm an artist. An a dinnae like something, A can hae some artistic temperament until A get ma ain way. Onywey, A'm leader o this troupe. A can match the script tae suit ma talents. (p. 34)

Brown problematises the issue of representation and history, and Shug's legacy becomes one of questionable value. Here, there is surely an echo of the role of Lennox as artistic embellisher and history enlivening operative at the opening of the second act of *Mary*.

In order that the relating of the King's life be commercially viable, the actors must devise a play which concentrates on spectacle, rather than the quotidian business of the everyday administration of the state, and the set pieces that are devised are certainly theatrically viable. In practice, for example, this provided one of the highlights of the play's original production in Perth, a spectacular set piece toward the end of the first act. In this, the ghosts of those killed at the Battle of the North Inch return in a multi-voiced narration of Clan Chattan's fate against the Mackays. Each of twenty-two voices relates his fate, ending each fragment with 'A did ma duty an died'. (pp. 27-29) The audience might be sent to their gin and tonics with this spectacle still fresh, but Brown mediates its conventionality with a reductive metanarrative commentary from the actors before the intermission:

- Shug.** It's got awthing, blood, deith, atrocities.
Duv. Soons like Dundee.
Shug. It's great. But it's an awfy big cast.
Phemy. A hell o a costly cast. Goes to rack.
Eck. Did A do fine?
Duv. (*Links arms with Eck.*) Aye son, ye did fine. (*Duv goes to rack.*)
Jinty. Fir cryin' oot lood, Andra, whit has this tae dae wi the life o the deid King James the First? *Goes to rack.*
Andra. D'ye no see? *Turns to Shug who remains.* It has awthing tae dae wi't. This is the warlt he wis brocht up in.

Shug. An? (p. 29)

Shug's lack of contextual sensitivity and his mistress the actress Jinty's inability to comprehend causalities are indicative of how the needs of the culture for spectacle will create an inevitable selectivity in the recreation of history. Meanwhile, the actress Phemy reduces history bathetically to the need to keep costs down and profits up. Each in their way prefigures the ideological selectivity of a coming bourgeois culture.

The contending needs of the historian (represented here by Andra) and the performer, each in their way defending an ideological myth, is reiterated in the next scene. The performers comment on the just-performed sequence in which the young James is sent away from Scotland for his own protection, his father Robert having seen James' elder brother Rothesay's demise at the hands of a rival faction. Here, the clash of historical evidence and spectacle is made clear:

Phemy James got captured by English pirates led by Hugh o the Fen, took tae London tae the coort o Henry the Fowerth an held tae ransom, a prisoner for a wheen a years.

Jinty. An pair Robert died, they says o grief, when he heard the news.

Duv. Aye, that'll be richt!

Jinty. Onyweys roon, the boy wis took in March an his paw wis deid by April the fowerth.

Phemy. An his uncle, Duke Murdoch o Albany, wis left in chaarge o the lan an the fowk. An he didnae rush fir tae fund the ransom tae release James back tae his gratefu fowk.

Shug. A ken. No a bad wee story, though. We jist need tae see hoo we can work it aw into a play we can guise. A mean it's got awthing, pirates, high treason an sex.

Duv. Wha says onything about sex?

Phemy. Has it no got any sex?

Andra. Weel, there's true love.

Phemy. I dinnae ken about true love. A can mebbe dae wioot true love, but A wouldnae mind a bit o sex. (pp. 32-33)

Brown simultaneously presents and questions conventional stage spectacle, showing the capacity of theatre to both preserve and distort its subject matter to ideological ends. Sex is a necessary economic factor, as much as the cost-driven pragmatism that sees James represented as being crowned in Perth, instead of Scone. This is because, whatever the historical fact, it is cheaper for a theatre company in Perth to set the performance of the coronation in Perth itself rather than incur the expense of moving the few miles to Scone (p. 43). Just as the climactic assassination of James occurs because of his raising of taxes from the nobility and cutting their profits on duty and land (p. 46), so his memory is ironically preserved by a group of actors unconsciously keen to keep in place the economic status quo. Brown's constant cutting between the play itself and the performers' accounts of it serves to shift the audience's perspective from the story to the underlying economic issues. This is another means of highlighting and simultaneously undermining the historically specific forces that shape the ideological processes of mythic formation.

For all of his rejection, however, of a totalising historical narrative, on the grounds of the inability of storytellers to distance themselves from an all-encompassing ideology, Brown still sees value in a de-centred history. In the account of Henry V's encounter with at the siege of Melun while at war in France, Shakespeare's myth of the noble warrior king is debunked by Brown's post-colonial historical narrative. Henry forces his hostage, James, into the field of battle so that Scots who are legally

defending the castle with their French allies will be formally in arms against their king. The consequence manufactured by a Machiavellian Henry V is that, as he says:

Under the laws of chivalry, I have offered the governor of this castle the right to surrender to me. If he does so this day, I will spare all his soldiers' lives and those of any others inside the castle walls, save of course any that are in rebellion against their king. (p. 39).

The heroic Henry is seen setting up a legal fiction in order to allow him to commit a war crime.

In both *Mary* and *A Great Reckonin* Brown recognises the partisanship of all historical narrative, but does not reject it. So much post-modern discourse, with its play upon history as fabulous invention, too enslaved to grand narrative to be of use in anything but an analysis of the paranoias of the present, is, as Jameson has pointed out, a symptom of an unconscious lack:

Such fabulations - not unexpectedly cheered on by a whole generation of ideologues complacently but with relish announcing the death of the referent, if not the end of history itself - also clearly enough show signs of that release and euphoria of the postmodern [...] Here the making up of history is a substitute for the real kind [...] Fabulation - or if you prefer, mythomania and outright tall tales - is no doubt the symptom of social and historical impotence, of the blocking of possibilities that leaves little option but the imaginary.¹²

Brown, in exploring non-naturalistic and metanarrational languages, however, demonstrates the possibility, as well as the problematic process, of the recovery of a 'real' history, however tenuously such data should be approached. In doing so, he also, and not incidentally, recovers the possibility of identifying ideological praxis within the process of retelling.

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Endnotes.

¹ Ian Brown, *History As Theatrical Metaphor* (unpublished PhD thesis, Crewe & Alsager College Of Higher Education, 1991), pp. 11-15.

² Ian Brown, *History As Theatrical Metaphor* (unpublished PhD thesis, Crewe & Alsager College Of Higher Education, 1991), pp. 220-288.

³ Henry Livings, *The Little Mrs Foster Show* (London: Methuen, 1969).

⁴ Page references for *Mary* refer to the version contained within Ian Brown, *History As Theatrical Metaphor* (unpublished PhD thesis, Crewe & Alsager College Of Higher Education, 1991).

⁵ Peter Barnes, *Collected Plays* (London: Heinemann, 1981), pp. 183-338.

⁶ Ian Brown, *History As Theatrical Metaphor* (unpublished PhD thesis, Crewe & Alsager College Of Higher Education, 1991), p. 76.

⁷ Ian Brown, *History As Theatrical Metaphor* (unpublished PhD thesis, Crewe & Alsager College Of Higher Education, 1991), pp. 46-50.

⁸ Frederic Jameson, *The Political Unconscious: Narrative As A Socially Symbolic Act* (London: Routledge, 1981), pp. 104-5.

⁹ Ian Brown, *A Great Reckonin* (unpublished manuscript, 2000).

¹⁰ Ian Brown, 'Plugged into History: the sense of the Past in Scottish Theatre' in Randall Stevenson and Gavin Wallace (eds) *Scottish Theatre since the Seventies* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 1996), pp. 84-99.

¹¹ Ian Brown and Barbara Bell, 'A Duty to History: Contemporary Approaches to History and Cultural Identities in Scottish Theatre' in Valentina Poggi and Margaret Rose (eds) *A Theatre that Matters* (Milan: Edizioni Unicopli, 2000), pp. 19-40.

¹² Frederic Jameson, *Postmodernism: Or, The Cultural Logic Of Late Capitalism* (London: Verso, 1991), pp. 368-69.