Scots and Welsh: Theatrical Translation and Theatrical Languages

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Introduction

The starting point of this article lies in certain propositions concerning the theatrical metalanguage available to drama in Scots and Welsh. In talking of this theatrical metalanguage, the authors incorporate the observation of Patrice Pavis when he notes that

> the text is much more than a series of words : grafted on to it are ideological, ethnological and cultural dimensions. Culture is so omnipresent that we no longer know where to start investigating it.[1]

In short, the authors accept as an experimental hypothesis the view that any language will embody and express cultural assumptions, ideologies and specific understandings and meanings which relate to the histories and identity of the community which uses and speaks the language.

In the context of this Antigone project, the authors recognise the importance in both Scotland and Wales of the concept of 'rule' or 'law' in *logos* cultures. This is based on two factors. One is the impact of Old Testament inflected Christianity which has had particular influence in such *logos*-focused cultures as Calvinist, Baptist and Methodist Protestantism, and their philosophical and ethical derivatives. The second is the operation of rules of bilinguality including both style- and code-shifting, style-drifting and dialect-switching, particularly as practised by Scots between English and Scots.[2] In the context, then, of the texts under examination, Pavis' comment that 'text is much more than a series of words' carries particular meaning. A number of 'ideological, ethnological and cultural dimensions' are 'grafted on to' this version of Antigone. These include the nature of rule and order, and the related issue of the natures of hierarchical authority and of the family relationship, which may support or subvert that order.

A further dimension for Scots is what has been called the 'democratic intellect'[3] and the constant questioning of hierarchy. Such questioning in a Scottish context arises in a community which places emphasis on debate and egalitarianism, an egalitarianism which, in one of its most prominent examples, has produced an established church with no hierarchies of bishops or even absolute pre-eminence in the councils of the Kirk of ordained ministers. In cultures such as those of Scotland or Wales, the emphasis is on exploring and understanding the role of the word as expression of order and as potential for disorder. Here, the very act of language choice and register choice implies cultural and political choice: Katja Lenz has said of the use of Scots, as might equally be said of the use of Welsh:

> The decision to write a play in Scots is still a political step. With some authors, the choice of Scots is clearly a statement of national and cultural politics. In less radical cases, Scots serves to transmit a feeling of specifically Scottish identity.[4]

The significance and signification of words, and their order and ordering, in the cultural understandings, values and beliefs of Scotland and Wales embody and express the 'omnipresent' nature of 'Culture' in Pavis' terms.

Context

This article considers these issues in the light of a key experimental phase within a long-term work in progress in which Ian Brown and Ceri Sherlock, and more recently John Ramage, have been engaged, a practical theatrical translation project exploring the potential of modern Scots and Welsh to accommodate versions of Greek dramatic myth. The initiative for the project arose from Brown's rendering of the text of *The Bacchae* in Standard English for Sherlock's 1991 Cardiff Festival production, *Bacchai*. Their experience of working on translation of Greek tragedy into English led to their investigating the rendition of Greek tragedy in their first languages, Scots and Welsh. The example on which the exploration is based is a version of *Antigone* written in Scots by Brown which Sherlock has been seeking to translate into Welsh. John Ramage joined Brown and Sherlock in the experimental phase of their investigation in June, 1996. Then, Brown and Sherlock in collaboration with Ramage undertook two practical week-end workshops, one with Scots-speaking actors in Edinburgh and one with Welsh-speaking actors in Cardiff. As a result, all three have extended their hypotheses and, in particular, developed further suggestions about the nature of the Scots and Welsh as performance languages and as languages *per se*.

Already, Brown and Sherlock have discussed the process of translation and textual exploration with a particular focus on the problems of translating Greek myth into modern Scots and of translating from Scots directly into Welsh. In '*Antigone* : a Scots/Welsh experience of mythic and theatrical translation',[5] they examine two specific aspects of the nature of translation. The first was the nature of the process in which myth, specifically Greek myth, may be translated into another culture. The authors argued that the process usually called 'adaptation' is actually one of transposition of a significant mythic structure from one cultural frame to another in a way analogous to the translation of spoken text from one language to another. The second aspect was the ways in which the languages under consideration are capable, or not, of dealing with the material of the Antigone play as written by Brown within a Scots cultural frame. Finally, that paper proceeded to consider the broader nature of the Scots and Welsh languages and to raise some tentative hypotheses about modern Scots and Welsh as languages. In particular, they argued that contemporary Scots retains a vitality and range of registers which allows it to find theatrical expression in a wide variety of modes, while Welsh has become, in its literary functioning and lack of significant performance tradition, limited in its range of registers.

Language and "order"

Whatever these differences, however, the order and ordering of words, in the cultural understandings, values and beliefs of Scotland and Wales, as has been noted earlier, embody and express the 'omnipresent' nature of 'Culture' in Pavis' terms. In these societies, such key concepts as those of 'rule' or 'law' are imbued by 'order' in at least two dimensions of meaning. One concerns the philosophical and social implications of the orderliness and disorderliness of language. The other is the recurrent need to establish and re-establish order, both as social and linguistic construct and linguistic signification, when both meaning and political authority are bound in specific language choices. In such

a world, order remains transient because human nature is seen as embodying original sin and, so, must defy the order of the word, the *logos*, which 'was in the beginning' and 'was God'[6]. Thus, human nature becomes opposed to, and yet part of, humane rationality and rationalism. A further disruption of order arises from the conflict of the hegemonic versus the subversive power of language politics. Such cultural dialectics, omnipresent in a dramatic text which is 'much more than a series of words', may be seen to be further embedded in complex issues of authority when these are confounded or confused by the effects of filial or sibling ties and their impact on hierarchical duty.

Such themes recur in many literatures, but they are a fundamental theme of Greek tragedy while the concept of the family (*clann* means 'children' in Gaelic), its loyalties and conflicts, is particularly fraught in the literature of the Germano-Celtic culture of Scotland. The central cultural importance of these themes in Scotland is highlighted, for example, in Scott's Waverley novels, in which the search for a newly imagined harmonisation of a post-Jacobite society is sought, in Hogg's *The Confessions of a Justified Sinner*, directly in Stevenson's *The Master of Ballantrae* and symbolically in his *Kidnapped*, *Treasure Island* and *Dr Jekyll and Mr Hyde* and in Lewis Grassic Gibbon's *A Scots Quair*. The expression of the conflict of family and social duty are particularly important in Scotland. This is because, there, the integration of public and private power and democratic egalitarianism have been key cultural issues as a result of the fact that political power has been alienated through the processes and effects of the 1707 parliamentary union. In Scotland, as in a different way in Wales, society has been governed at a remove, as an imperialistic, centralising political entity has sought, with varying degrees of success from time to time and place to place, to hegemonise it. The translation of the Antigone myth into Scots brings such concerns to the dramatic foreground.

In this version, Brown focuses on the relationships of the family of Oedipus and Jocasta. The play opens with an argument between Polynices and Etiocles in which their sibling rivalry is highlighted, as is the representation of Etiocles as a moralistic reprover of the more louche Polynices. Antigone enters in on this squabble which is clearly going to lead to Polynices' attack on Thebes and seeks a familial resolution which avoids conflict. For this Etiocles reproves her and leaves, telling Polynices to go. As Antigone tries to talk of the warmth of a family love which she feels is now lost, Polynices observes 'Thon hard-nebbit Etiocles is oor king. He kens whit's richt an whit disnae dae.' In the next scene, Etiocles has clearly identified with Creon as the preserver of order who will rid the city of the corruption represented by Oedipus and Creon's own sister, Jocasta. That scene closes with the exchange:

> **Creon.** A weel-ordert society. It's a braw thing.
> **Etiocles.** It's fowk are the trouble, corruptin, chyngin.

In eight more scenes, the tragedy unfolds, seen through the conflict of the humane, but naïve, desire for accommodation and love expressed by Antigone and the desire for 'rule' at all costs expressed by Creon. The children's Nurse offers a troubled, compassionate, but worldly-wise, view of life in families and the authority of those in power, specifically of men.

Antigone's relationship with Haemon is crucial in this version. She at one time, knowing that her disobedience of the law has doomed her, offers herself in a last gesture of love. He rejects her, bound as he is to his father's rigid view of propriety and order. His stance

is reinforced by his learning from Antigone her new discovery that Ismene is pregnant by one of Polynices' generals. He repudiates Antigone in scene 6:

> **Haemon.**   Yer sister's a slut. Mebbe yer bluid is corrupt.
>
> **Antigone.** Haemon.
>
> **Haemon.**   Oh aye. Haemon.
>
> **Antigone.** Haemon. A cannae tell ony sowel. A cannae poor oot whit A've din tae ony sowel that'll hear me an see. Fir Ismene, drawn in noo an sma, is wrappit in hersel an she stumbled on whit she fund an disnae ken whit it is, bit she his it. An noo A've lost whit A wantit acause ye dinnae see whit A want. A dinnae ken masel.
>
> **Haemon.**   A'll mebbe see ye.

When Creon interrogates Antigone because he cannot understand why Haemon has fallen out with her, Antigone is tempted by the thought of Haemon and having his children, as is Creon by the idea of seeing his grandchildren through their politic marriage. As Creon attempts his 'reconstruction plan', he pushes Antigone to say why she and Haemon have fallen out. When, in this, he slights Jocasta, Antigone blurts out her defiance and guilt and she is condemned. The final scene sees Creon alone, Haemon and Antigone dead, banishing Ismene:

> **Nurse.** A wish A could come wi ye. There's naehin fir me tae dae.
>
> **Ismene.** At least we hae oorsels. A've ma bairn.
>
> **Teiresias.** Thon's somehin mebbe. They've got order an ye've got a bairn. Ye'll be the only yin wi their wean roon this toon.

The structure of the play comprises scenes interspersed with anonymous choruses which comment on the action in scenes and describe the continuing action between them. There are also four laments by named characters, one of which opens the play and another of which closes it. The first stanza (of three) of the lament opening the play involves the whole cast, setting the politico-moral frame:

> It's no easy tae greet when ye hae grat aw yer tears
> An there's muckle tae mourn
> Yer mither deein in selfshame an fear
> Stabbin stabbin a sword tae her loins
> Atonin fir a crime she didnae want
> She didnae ken
> The bluid rins like the watters breakin
> An she deed

The closing two (of five) stanzas in the final lament, involving Nurse, Ismene and Teiresias closes the circle:

> The hunt fir peace an rule
> His destroyt peace
>
> It isnae easy tae greet when ye've grat aw yer tears

An hae muckle tae mourn.

The play has, then, reworked the Antigone myth to explore family love and loyalty and its betrayal by the demands of 'rule' and 'order' within a larger socio-political context. Emotional integrity is seen as risking social disorder: commitment to 'order', emotional desolation.

Antigone provides a particular opportunity for the exploration of such themes within a Scots language version of the myth, one with the added potential for exploring those issues in a context in which the politics of power and autonomy of women become a consideration within the prevailing power relationships and hierarchies. As Lenz has proposed, the very use of the language implicates the exploration of themes of political authority and ideologies of power. The history of Scots as a contemporary language is one based on a continuing resistance to the hegemonising influence of its sister language English, an influence which has existed since at least 1603. The survival of Scots as both a spoken and literary language, and one which has even in recent years been used as a language of academic discourse,[7] is in itself the result of processes of assertion of cultural and, indeed, national identity which are not our concern here. They, nonetheless, underlie important aspects of the dialectic of twentieth century literature in the British Isles. The act of writing in Scots, as Lenz has said, is not itself neutral: the 'decision to write a play in Scots is still a political step. With some authors, the choice of Scots is clearly a statement of national and cultural politics'.[8]

Shifting order and dramatic register in Scots

Quite apart from such a consideration is the phenomenon that the levels of meaning available to the writer in Scots are distinct from and often wider in range than those available to the monoglot English writer. This is simply because the modern Scots writer has the option of writing in one or all of Modern Scots varieties, Standard English or, in A. J. Aitken's terminology, Scottish Standard English.[9] Brown has discussed the 'vitality' allowed Scots not only by their 'bilinguality, but also the capacity many Scots have to operate interlingually' when often in a variety of contexts, 'they drop in and out of the language...'[10] The use of language by Scots to assert their Scottishness even when using Standard English through the device described by Aitken as 'overt scotticism' is well documented. Many writers in Scots explore the ways in which Scots, as a language long sensitised to the use of register and code-switch to mark cultural and ideological points, embodies in its usage a capacity to move between the public and private, the authoritative and informal. This marks with subtlety and fluidity shifts in hierarchical authority and a flexibility of order in language. This, in turn, allows a frequent use of ironic modes and embeds a conditionality of authority in the order of language itself. Bill Findlay has written on several occasions of such techniques in regard to translation.[11]

This fluency and ease of transition from register to register in Scots and between Scots and various forms of English is very much part of the Scots language experience. Meantime, despite the hegemonic authority of Standard English or Scottish Standard English, Modern Scots has retained a function and capacity in dealing with important religious and political matters, even if such usage has been more prevalent in domestic contexts. The ease of transition from register to register enabled Brown in the process of writing his version of *Antigone* to deal with the themes of his play in a way which allowed large scale questions of political power and personal duty to be explored and yet to present these issues within a more intimate and domestic frame. The opening of the first

scene of the play may give some sense of this as Etiocles and Polynices argue about the alternation of their power and Etiocles' decision, backed by Creon, to renege on the system of alternation:

> **Etiocles.** I dinnae ken whit fir ye dinnae just tak whit ye've got an gan.
>
> **Polynices.** Ye've taen aw ma richts an ye ask whit fir I dinnae let ye haud them.
>
> **Etiocles.** Ye're docent, Polynices, docent. Ye've hid yer fun. Ye cannae hae yer ain wey aw the time.
>
> **Polynices.** Wis it or wis it no agreed that we should rule this city year aroon? Wis it no a fair an fixed agreement?
>
> **Etiocles.** Aye it wis. Last time ye took yer place on the throne, ye hoored an ye drank an ye diced an ye left me nae siller tae rule wi when I cam back. I've ruled weel this year. Creon an me, we've decidit it wid be unwise, impoleetic, tae let ye return.
>
> **Polynices.** That is clean conter oor faither's wishes.
>
> **Etiocles.** Oor faither is deid. He did some guid fir the lan when he wis here an a lot that wisnae that guid.
>
> **Polynices.** He wis oor faither.
>
> **Etiocles.** He wis a man, an no mickle waur nor maist, bit he wis nae help tae the lan in the end.

In considering the theatrical metalanguage of Scots, Sherlock developed a hypothesis that Brown's playtext used the Scots in a more paradigmatic way than his English rendering in the 1991 Dalier Sylw *Bacchai*[12] on which they had collaborated and that, moreover, Brown's playtext was in fact a performance text whose full weight could only be realised with vocal and gestural articulation, an oral text whose playing requires an aural reading.

Sherlock's perception that Scots in the theatre has such a specific dynamic may be seen to accord with aspects of the recent history of Scots. These aspects relate to Scots' present semantic and syntactical natures. These, arguably, have been developed with structures and rhythms derived from the language's primary use in modern times in oral contexts. Further, the vitality of its dialectal range may arise from the absence of an agreed modern standard form of the language. Meanwhile, its dominant rhetorical modes may be derived from the Scottish tradition of democratic and quasi-democratic debate seen variously, for example, in the flyting form in literature and the egalitarian forms of Kirk government already referred to. A further dimension of contemporary Scots is that, despite the process of hegemonisation referred to, it is still used in a variety of contexts throughout most of the social hierarchy, even if in some Standard English contexts in such attenuated forms as that A. J. Aitken identified as the 'overt scotticism'.[13] (Even if overt scotticisms were to be considered a form of interference, however, and this is debatable, Brown has recently argued that Scots, in attempting to write, and speak, Standard English, suffer a different and general interference from Scots language and that this is at least one reason for the prevalence of Scottish Standard English as the educated usage in Scotland.[14]) Both the oral tradition in modern Scots and its availability for use throughout the social hierarchy, then, suited Brown's goal of finding a language for theatre with the scope and range capable of replacing a Greek world-view with a Scots one.

The Edinburgh workshop: theatrical rhythms, linguistic structures, cultural co-ordinates

The Edinburgh workshop with Ramage explored the hypothesis that the theatrical rhythms of Scots and the ways in which Scots linguistic structures allow swift transition from one register to another would permit a new embodiment of Greek mythic material in a contemporary Scots context. The process involved over two days the investigation and rehearsal of two scenes and a chorus, including the whole of the scene of which an excerpt is cited above. Sherlock observed in this workshop that the Scots version of *Antigone* had a number of clear and immediate transpositional referents which made the text both playable and contextually valid as *mise en scène*. It seemed to demonstrate Loren Kruger's hypothesis that:

> The reception of a particular translation as appropriate depends on the extent to which the situation of enunciation of the source text, the translator, and the target discourse can be said to correspond: this appropriateness is thus reflected in the apparent invisibility of the appropriation. The meaning of the translated text arises not so much out of what we can *take from* it, as what one *does* to it.[15]

The capacity of Scots to embody at once both hierarchical authority and direct debate, familial intimacy and political discussion, seemed to facilitate such transposition and reception. The following dialogue is one example. In it the Nurse discloses to Antigone and Ismene the fate of Polynices' body. She simultaneously reveals the intimacy of her relationship to Oedipus' children and the power relationship of the state to which the speakers are bound and from which they seek release. The swift and sometimes subtle movement between registers, particularly within the first and between the first and second of her speeches, and the occasional interpenetration of registers allows also the expression of longing for an alternative order and the recognition of the pain implied by the existing order:

> **Nurse.** Aye,weel. A dinnae like sic crack. The past is best forgot. See whaur it brocht yer brithers. Thae wee weans that ran roon ma knees an pued at ma ain side. Lyin there, the baith o them. Yin in honour wi the lan greetin he's deid. The ither wi his ain personal bodygaird tae mak siccar he disnae get ony honour fae onyyin.
>
> **Antigone.** Is that whit he's din?
>
> **Nurse.** A ayewis telt Polynices he'd get hissel inte trouble. "Ye cannae ayewis be lauchin," A says tae him. Ye're a lovely laddie noo, but ye'll soon be gettin wee pleuchs roon places ye dinnae want tae see them. No that he ever listened tae me. It's a pity he didnae. Mebbe he widnae be whaur he is noo gin he hid.
>
> **Ismene.** We cannae aye be lookin ahint us, Nan.
>
> **Nurse.** Naw, bit that's no caw tae be ayewis runnin an no stop. Ye're different, Ismene. Ye've a heid on ye.
>
> **Ismene.** Better tae hae a heid nor a hert.
>
> **Nurse.** Thon's no a very gentle thing tae sey.
>
> **Antigone.** Yer hert wid break gin ye hid yin these deys, Nurse. A'm gaun in. Are ye comin?

Sherlock hypothesised that Brown, here and elsewhere, had clearly, in the transposition of the myth, effected, in Patrice Pavis' terminology, 'macrotextual translation'[16], that is, had

already set in motion the re-framing of the myth's cultural, political and linguistic co-ordinates. Ramage, as director and performer, concurred. A dramaturgical analysis and cultural substitution had been effected, This, as Pavis underlines, is a necessary prerequisite of archaic or classical texts.

A particular aspect of this process may be seen in the development of the script between an earlier 1969 version and that worked on in the nineties. This development relates to the often difficult issue of the presentation in modern terms of choruses based on or derived from the original Greek convention and has been discussed in more detail in the article by Brown and Sherlock already referred to.[17] There, Brown and Sherlock refer to the fact that

> As he approached writing the play, Brown chose to write in both of his languages, Scots and English, using the former for the scenes and the latter for the reflective choruses and laments. This decision to use Scots for the dramatic dialogue was in part inspired by the developing interest in dramatic work in that language which was to motivate so many Scots playwrights in the Scottish theatrical renaissance of the last twenty-five years. It was, however, inspired at a profounder level by Brown's conviction that Scots was the appropriate language to express and explore the dialectic of the cultural conflicts his text would embody. In short, the recreated myths were about Scottish experience and, as a writer, he found that the only means he could achieve the precision and intensity of dramatic expression and direct personal experience he wished to convey was in Scots.[18]

The different decision made in the revision process of 1992 onwards clearly demonstrates one of the ways in which choices made concerning the use of Scots are ideologically, culturally and politically charged. It also demonstrates how the choices made have changed in the intervening period, because of the ways in which, as Pavis had said, 'Culture is so omnipresent'.[19] Brown and Sherlock observe:

> The fact that the laments and choruses were in the 1969 version written in English illustrates the general perception held, at least then, that that language might be more apt for the expression of more reflective and emotionally dispassionate material, a view which would support Manfred Gorlach's disputed theory of *diglossia* in the use in Scotland of Scots and English. In the event, when the play was revised in 1992, Brown put the choruses and laments into Scots, recognising that in fact the Scots language was capable of the levels of reflection and dispassion he had been educated in the fifties and sixties to think impossible.[20]

The workshop also tested the translation myth of 'open text' as propounded by Jean-Marie Déprats.[21] Brown's practice seemed to confirm Sherlock's hypothesis that any reading, any translation or transposition of theatre text cannot avoid significant and free interpretation. In a different, but related, context, Jacques Derrida expresses the hermeneutic conundrum thus:

> what remains *untranslatable* is at the bottom the only thing *to*

translate, the only thing *translatable*. What must be translated of that which is translatable can only be the untranslatable.[22]

Further, what was discovered in Brown's transposition of the Antigone myth into Scots was that, more than English, Scots functioned as a gestural language and therefore one which fitted the dramaturgical imperative of the project. As Antoine Vitez notes,

because it is a work in itself, a translation already contains its *mise en scène ...*translation or *mise en scène*: the activity is the same; it is the art of selection among the hierarchy of signs.[23]

The Cardiff workshop: the effects of restriction of language and literary revivalism

In the Cardiff workshop, Sherlock with a company of Welsh actors, attempted to replicate the linguistic and dramatic effects to be achieved in the theatrical translation in Scots. They found that the range of effects achievable in Scots appeared not to be available in Welsh. Their discovery was that the Scots language implied a quite different social and moral system from that of the Welsh in such a way as to make it very difficult to translate the Scots *Antigone* of Brown into Welsh. Specifically, in translating the text into Welsh, what Sherlock discovered was that it was impossible to achieve in Welsh the fluidity of change of register and sense of hierarchical metatext of the Scots version. Further, the language of theatre was one in which the possibility of direct political debate was missing. The effect was as if in Welsh a cultural inscape of democracy was missing. Such an observation, when related to the social history of Welsh, is perhaps understandable. Although, as with Scots, the Welsh language tradition has been maintained, particularly in oral usage, two specific key differences between the Welsh and the Scottish situation set the larger cultural problem in context.

The first of these differences is that the use of Welsh has been more thoroughly proscribed and suppressed among those who hold authority and power in Welsh political society, at least until the present and the establishment of the National Assembly of Wales. Previously, even when a Welsh speaker such as David Lloyd George might achieve power, such a person would only use English (or at one historical period French) in authoritative contexts. Although, since the establishment of the National Assembly, the political discourse has taken a significant turn and is now bilingual, this history may explain the lack of a range of hierarchical registers in Welsh. The one exception to the abandonment hitherto of Welsh in authoritative contexts is in the chapel where the non-conformist tradition has retained in certain areas Welsh-medium worship and apparent control of Welsh language and life. The fact, however, that religious worship is the means of sustaining such Welsh speaking, given the tropes and typical structures of religious discourse and forms of worship, has led to a formalisation of the language and a restriction of its cultural, literary and hierarchical referents.

The second key difference lies in the development of literary language such as is conventionally used for classic Welsh in theatre. This is heavily influenced by the work of such figures in the middle of the twentieth century as the dramatist, Saunders Lewis, and the poet and academic, W. J. Gruffydd, whose 1950 translation of *Antigone* is seen by many as definitive. Both playwright and poet had an explicit agenda in their work of translation, returning Welsh literature to the *aruchel* (princely or chivalric) world of the Welsh early mediaeval poets and their antecedents, the *Gogynfeirdd*. Theirs is an implicit

historicism, datedness, that dogs and grounds the traditional mode of 'poetic' translation in the Welsh language, traditionally a kind of 'High' Welsh invented, and it might be said perfected, by Lewis. Certainly, their work attempts to exchange one metatext for another, one political context for another, but it is a context which has little or no resonance either in the political hierarchy or theatrical tradition of the current 'culture in common', to use Raymond Williams' phrase, of Wales.[24]

The dramatic, linguistic and political context of the Welsh workshop

Further, because in Wales the canon of text theatre is small, its tradition haphazard, interrupted and underdeveloped, it is difficult to suggest any linear theatre tradition. Arguably, it is in any case a futile exercise to try and root it in a developmental collection of Welsh dramatic texts. In the Welsh language, it is the bardic tradition that gave birth to the performative. Indeed, even if one wanted to argue a line of development, even though refracted by the watchful and distrusting eye of Welsh religious modes, the range of examples to be considered might make it clear how difficult it is to make an argument for a single developmental process. Such an argument would have to accommodate *Y Gododdin*, *Canu Llywarch Hen a Heledd*, *Y Cyfarwydd*, *Tri Brenin Gwlen*, *Anterliwtiau Twm o'r Nant*, the mystic religious tradition which flowers in startling often disturbing poetic hymns, the work of Kitchener Davies, D. T. Davies, J. O. Francis, Saunders Lewis, John Gwilym Jones, Gwenlyn Parry, Wil Sam, Gareth Miles, William Owen Roberts, Sion Eirian and Michael Povey. In the twentieth century, Welsh language text theatre in Wales became the poor nephew of radio and television, somehow the more respectable, academic and Reithian mediators of dramatic culture. Wilbert Lloyd Roberts, founder director of Theatr Cymru (the Welsh language national theatre), emphasised the negative relationship between television and textual theatre *passim*. It is clear that in Wales, as elsewhere, theatre is more than words, actors and mediation, re-emphasising Pavis' point that 'the text is much more than a series of words: grafted onto it are ideological, ethnological and cultural dimensions'.[25]

In the Scots situation the *mise en jeu*, the context of the theatrical imperative of presentation (to use Patrice Pavis' helpful paradigm),[26] is present, ready and active. In the Welsh language theatre it is not. At the time of writing, there is only one building based producing house that creates two productions a year. All the other companies are peripatetic, indeed nomadic, preferring regular though occasional production *en tournée* rather than a fixed performance tabernacle. The diasporic nature of the Welsh language, in pockets scattered across the principality, is partly the reason. More fundamentally, as Professor Gwyn Alf Williams has argued,[27] it may be the inherent distrust of institution, the paranoia of a peninsular people driven to the coastland and the mountains. Williams would also argue that, apart from a geographic and mythic entity, Wales did not exist, and it had certainly had neither coherent political nor linguistic hegemony, until the establishment of the National Assembly for Wales. Interestingly, the Antigone Project and workshop pre-dated its establishment. It may be that the outcome might be different in the future once the Assembly is fully established. Roger Owen, in his comprehensive survey of Welsh language theatre has recently commented:

> Ar un olwg, mae'n bosibl y bydd dylanwad y Cynulliad yn ysgogi'r
> Cymry i chwennych theatr a fydd yn gyfrwng trafod a dathlu eu
> cenedligrwydd, ac y creeir sefydliadau cenedlaethol pwrpasol at y
> diben hwnnw ... Mae'n bosibl hefyd y bydd dylanwad y Cynulliad yn
> annog arbrofi drachefn ym maes y theatr.

*(It is possible, in one way, to imagine that the influence of the Assembly
will motivate the Welsh to desire a theatre that will be a conduit to
discuss and celebrate their sense of nationhood, and that it might
create specific institutions towards that purpose ... it is possible too
that the Assembly's influence will encourage experimentation once
again in theatrical form and content.)*[28]

In many ways, just as Scots has established its own tradition and modern identity, the
Wales of Welsh language communities has emerged from its identity crisis - exclusivity,
normative nonconformity, British governance, aspirational middle-classness, sexual taboo
and *parchusrwydd* (acceptability) - and has started to acknowledge what it really is in
order to propel itself into what it must become. The establishment of a new political
order in Wales has accelerated and is indeed a part of this new emergent confidence.
Theatre is necessarily indicative of this maelstrom. Welsh language Wales is emerging as a
classic post-modern society, one which epitomises Jean Baudrillard's worst fears, as a
society which has gone beyond the 'history barrier'.[29] Its antecedents are a realisation of
the present and its focus fixed upon the future, a society in which not all the past is
relevant. Reshaping the political formula has re-scripted history and re-constructed
tradition.

Community, culture and the performative

In a text-suspicious theatrical context the creation of theatre pieces that mirror, reflect
and foretell present and future happenings is the obvious and necessary mode of
expression. Filial and family relations as in *Antigone*, with the consequence of
environmental and community pollution, the total disregard of practice and tradition
(which could result in the overthrow of order, governance and stability) and the threat of
chaos are the narratives of the moment and import. As, however, neither the *mise en jeu*
nor the political metalanguage of the Scots *Antigone* is as yet either present or
transposable, it is not surprising that Sherlock and his team of actors encountered
difficulty with the experiment. Certainly, the post Romantic psychological interpretation
of the characters and situation continues to offer attraction; in certain ways this supplies
the primary impetus of many translations and performance texts of the Antigone
myths.[30] The dramatic transposition of theatre text translating, however, needs to take
into account non-verbal and cultural context.[31] It may be that it is necessary to
acknowledge that both in its cultural categories, and contextually in performance, this is a
sleight of hand, a simple displacement of one set of values, priorities and psychology with
another. These need to be different, more accessible to the audience than those of the
source text, say in the context of cosmology, theology and political hierarchy. Raymond
Williams explains this phenomenon thus,

> the process of communication is in fact the process of community:
> offering the reception and comparison of new meanings, leading to
> the tensions and achievements of growth and change.[32]

The fundamental of theatre in Wales is that it comes from the performative in a
community context. In fact it may be that in this is the strength of the Welsh tradition, its
resonance and connectivity. Professor Mike Pearson has recently explored this whole
area in his essay on a poetics of performance, 'Special Worlds, Secret Maps'.[33] Here, he
suggests that there is a danger sometimes that a search for community takes place in

inappropriate places and that the search for a tradition of Welsh theatre may develop a simulacrum, an apparent tradition which never truly existed. Pearson argues that the theatrical context in Wales is better defined as performative, the tradition of poetry, story-telling, recitation, singing, oratory, preaching, choirs and even of political hyperbole. He suggests that Welsh theatre needs to rediscover this present, but overlooked, context, if it is to realign the process of theatrical communication.

Such a hypothesis would help at least partly explain why, as distinct from the Scottish, the Welsh context has obstacles to a free transposition. It seems to render this act of translation difficult in a shifting transitional culture, one in the process of setting up new registers and co-ordinates of voice, nuance and value. Passing Baudrillard's 'history barrier' must occasionally, it may be suggested, mute the significance of certain texts, certain ideas and indeed familiar paradigms; they are, and must be, superseded by others. The Scots situation allows filtration of Greek theatrical text through Western philosophical and Christian eyes, placed in a Scots theatrical context, so as in some ways to short circuit this cultural slippage or, at the very least, hold some meaning for its discrete audience. This may underlie the surge of productions of Scottish versions of Greek tragedies, including, in 2000 alone, Theatre Babel's productions of David Greig's *Oedipus*, Tom McGrath's *Electra* and Liz Lochhead's *Medea*, and the Royal Lyceum Theatre's production of Edwin Morgan's *Phaedra*.[34]

The production of Brown's text, which has both a clear *mise en jeu* and implicit political dialectic and social metalanguage, is a possible step in Scotland, but not in Wales. What is possible for Welsh theatre workers, as for other theatre workers in Scotland, is the challenging and discarding of the past, the discovery of the present and the appropriation of another *Antigone* for the future. Work on the project so far suggests that the work in Welsh allows only the latter possibility; work in Scots both.

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Endnotes.

[1] Patrice Pavis (trans. Leon Kruger), *Theatre at the Crossroads of Culture* (London: Routledge, 1992) p. 155.

[2] This is an area written about influentially by A. J. Aitken who coined the concept with respect to Scots, see particularly Adam J. Aitken, 'Scots and English in Scotland', in Peter Trudgill (ed), *Language in the British Isles* (Cambridge: Cambridge Unversity Press, 1984) pp. 517-32

[3] This term was probably first used in this context by George Davie in his *The Democratic Intellect: Scotland and her universities in the nineteenth century* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 1961), but his pioneering work has informed much thinking about the nature of Scottish intellectual discourse since. The ramifications of Davie's ideas may be seen to have had an effect, for example, on the development of the work of Andrew Hook on the role of Scottish thought in the development of that of the United States: see, for

example, Hook's *Scotland and America: A Study of Cultural Relations 1750-1835* (Edinburgh: Blackie, 1975) and his recent *From Goosecreek to Gandercleugh; Studies in Scottish-American Literary and Cultural History* (Tuckwell Press: East Linton, 1999).

[4] Katja Lenz, *Die schottische Sprache im modernen Drama* (Heidelberg: Universitätsverlag C. Winter, 1999) p. 352.

[5] In Lynne Bowker, Michael Cronin, Dorothy Kenny and Jennifer Pearson (eds), *Unity in Diversity? Current Trends in Translation Studies* (Manchester: St Jerome Press, 1998), pp. 25-37.

[6] *John*, 1.1

[7] For example, as the language in which Alasdair Allan's 1998 PhD thesis for Aberdeen University is written: *New Founs or Auld Larochs? Leid Hainin an Leid Plannin for Scots* (unpublished).

[8] Katja Lenz, *Die schottische Sprache im modernen Drama* (Heidelberg: Universitätsverlag C. Winter, 1999) p. 352

[9] Adam J. Aitken, 'Scottish accents and dialects' in Peter Trudgill (ed) *Language in the British Isles* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1984) p. 102ff.

[10] Ian Brown, 'Problems of Defining "Standard" Scots: Some Linguistic and Theatrical Aspects' *Zeitschrift fur Anglistik und Amerikanistik* XLIII, no 4 (Winter 1995) p. 295.

[11] For example, in: 'Translating Tremblay into Scots', *Theatre Research International*, 17:2 (Summer 1992) pp. 138-45; (with Martin Bowman) 'Québécois into Scots: Translating Michel Tremblay', *Scottish Language*, 13 (1994) pp. 61-81; 'Translating into Dialect' in David Johnston (ed) *Stages in Translation: Essays and Interviews on Translating for the Stage* (Bath: Absolute Classics, 1996) pp. 199-217; 'Silesian into Scots: Gerhart Hauptmann's *The Weavers*', *Modern Drama*, XLI : 1 (Spring 1998) pp. 90-104; 'Translating Standard into Dialect: Missing the Target?' in Carole-Anne Upton (ed) *Moving Target: Theatre Translation and Cultural Relocation* (Manchester: St. Jerome Publishing, 2000) pp. 35-46.

[12] Discussed in detail in Brown and Sherlock, see note 5.

[13] Adam J. Aitken, *passim.*

[14] Ian Brown, 'Underlying factors in Scottish writing of Standard English: a theatrical perspective', paper presented at the Conference of the Association for the Study of Languages of Scotland and Ulster, Aberdeen University, August 1-3, 1997.

[15] Loren Kruger, *Translating (for) the Theatre: The Appropriation, Mise en Scène and Reception of Theatre Texts* (Ann Arbor: University Microfilms International, 1986) 1,54.

[16] Patrice Pavis (trans. Leon Kruger), *Theatre at the Crossroads of Culture* (London: Routledge, 1992) p. 139.

[17] Ian Brown and Ceri Sherlock, '*Antigone* : a Scots/Welsh experience of mythic and

theatrical translation', in Lynne Bowker, Michael Cronin, Dorothy Kenny and Jennifer Pearson (eds), *Unity in Diversity? Current Trends in Translation Studies* (Manchester: St Jerome Press, 1998), pp. 25-37.

[18] Ian Brown and Ceri Sherlock, '*Antigone* : a Scots/Welsh experience of mythic and theatrical translation', in Lynne Bowker, Michael Cronin, Dorothy Kenny and Jennifer Pearson (eds), *Unity in Diversity? Current Trends in Translation Studies* (Manchester: St Jerome Press, 1998), p. 28

[19] Patrice Pavis (trans. Leon Kruger), *Theatre at the Crossroads of Culture* (London: Routledge, 1992) p. 155.

[20] Brown and Sherlock, '*Antigone* : a Scots/Welsh experience of mythic and theatrical translation', in Lynne Bowker, Michael Cronin, Dorothy Kenny and Jennifer Pearson (eds), *Unity in Diversity? Current Trends in Translation Studies* (Manchester: St Jerome Press, 1998), p28

[21] Jean-Marie Déprats, 'Le verbe, instrument du jeu Shakespearean', *Theatre en Europe 7*, p. 72.

[22] Jacques Derrida, *Acts of Literature* (transl. and ed.) Derek Attridge (London: Routledge, 1992) pp. 257-8.

[23] Quoted by Patrice Pavis (trans. Leon Kruger), *Theatre at the Crossroads of Culture* (London: Routledge, 1992) p. 146.

[24] Raymond Williams, *Culture and Society: 1780-1950* (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1958) p. 335.

[25] Patrice Pavis (trans. Leon Kruger), *Theatre at the Crossroads of Culture* (London: Routledge, 1992) p. 155.

[26] Patrice Pavis (trans. Leon Kruger), *Theatre at the Crossroads of Culture* (London: Routledge, 1992) p. 148.

[27] Gwyn Alf Williams, *When Was Wales?* (n.e) (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1991), *passim*. See also David Dunkerley and Andrew Thompson (eds), *Wales Today* (Cardiff: University of Wales Press, 1999)

[28] Roger Owen, *Y Ddefod Golledig?; Theatr, Cymdeithas a Chymreictod yn y Gymru Gymraeg*
  1945 - 1990 [The Lost Ritual?: Theatre, Society and Welshness in Welsh-speaking Wales] (Unpublished PhD thesis, University of Wales, Aberystwyth, 1999) p. 372.

[29] Jean Baudrillard (trans. Chris Turner), *The Illusion of the End* (Cambridge: Polity Press, 1994) p. 13.

[30] George Steiner, *Antigones* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1984) *passim*.

[31] See Ortrun Zuber-Skerrit (ed), *The Languages of Theatre* (Oxford: Pergamon Press, 1980).

[32] Raymond Williams, *The Long Revolution* (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1961) p. 55.

[33] Mike Pearson, 'Special Worlds, Secret Maps: a poetics of performance' in Anna-Marie Taylor (ed.), *Staging Wales: Welsh Theatre 1979 - 1997* (Cardiff: University of Wales Press, 1997) pp. 85-99. See also Ceri Sherlock 'Y Perfformiadol' ['The Performative'] in *Barn* (August 2000) pp. 84-93.

[34] This surge of productions is complemented by that of Tag Theatre Company, also in 2000, of Sarah Wood's *Antigone*.