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The Great Don't Know Show: David Greig's theatre and the contemporary Scottish struggle for independence.

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Ca' Foscari
Dorsoduro 3246
30123 Venezia

Relatore

Prof. Marco Fazzini

Correlatore

Prof. Nancy Campbell

Laureando

Silvia La Mura
Matricola 842813

Anno Accademico

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Introduction¹

2014 referendum for Scotland's independence: *The Great Yes, No, Don't Know Five Minute Theatre Show*

2014 is going to be the perfect year for the UK, and Scotland in particular, to reflect upon fundamental issues such as identity: what does it mean to be British? What makes you a 'Scot'? On the 18th September 2014, Scottish people will be asked to vote pro or contra the independence of Scotland. From the seats of power to universities' lecture halls and down through theatres and newspapers' headquarters, online magazines and blogs, a heated debate about the future of the Union has been spreading like fire.

History testifies how the stage has always been a privileged space for exchange and debate around contemporary hot issues, and this time is not an exception. The 1999 Scottish devolution was not an event but a process, and the world of arts greatly helped in making it possible. The 2014 referendum might be therefore regarded as the culmination, the paramount moment of this long-term and long-going process which may completely free Scotland from the "English yoke." This is the context in which the National Theatre of Scotland (NTS) enters the debate with a packed schedule of plays² that will be supporting both the "Yes" and the "No" faction. Indeed, in order to objectively inform the Scottish people and to promote with equality the different political positions, the NTS has commissioned theme scripts to Scottish playwrights who belong to both sides. The attention is focused on *The Great Yes, No, Don't Know Five Minute Theatre Show*, a still work-in-

¹ All notes and bibliographical references are as accurate as possible. However, due to the peculiar medium of some of the sources (newspapers, online magazines, radio interviews and e-books) some details were impossible to retrieve (e.g. page number). Quotations from secondary critical sources are provided in footnotes, while reference to primary texts are cited between brackets within the paragraph.

² NTS 2014 program available on the official website: <http://www.nationaltheatrescotland.com/content/>

progress piece, which will address from different perspectives, the issue of independence and the contemporary situation in Scotland. Amongst the recruits and enthusiastically championing the “Yes” side, stands David Greig, while chief representative of the “No” is director David MacLennan. In an interview to *The Stage*, NTS artistic director Laurie Samson revealed that the show “will almost be like a variety show of sketches and songs. What’s really interesting is that David Greig is very firmly on the pro-independence ticket, while David MacLennan is very firmly on the no, which was not deliberate, but I’m really pleased about.”³

According to the NTS website page dedicated to this incredible project, *The Great Yes, No, Don’t Know, Five Minute Theatre Show* will present “a series of live scenes, songs, skits, rants and dramas, as a democratic dramatic response to the theme of ‘Independence.’”⁴ As the title suggests, the show will be made up of more than two hundred mini live performances (five minute shows) all taking place during a single day in the month of June. The slogan of the Five Minute Theatre, “created by anyone, for an audience of everybody,” is indicative of the spirit of this show, namely it will be an occasion for both professionals and amateurs, to present their work and discuss their position with regards to Scottish independence on a privileged stage. In addition, the performance will be on live streaming, thus available to an international audience, and “there will be five performance hubs across Scotland, an additional five across the UK and up to five more internationally.”⁵ According to one of the coordinators, David MacLennan, this show would like to follow in the successful

³ Thom Dibdin, “National Theatre of Scotland to Explore Scottish Independence in Referendum Year,” *The Stage*, June 20, 2013, <http://www.thestage.co.uk/news/production/2013/06/national-theatre-of-scotland-to-explore-scottish-independence-in-referendum-year/>.

⁴ “The Great Yes, No, Don’t Know 5 Minute Theatre Show,” *National Theatre of Scotland*, <http://fiveminutetheatre.com/news/>

⁵ *Ibidem*.

footstep of John Mc Grath's *The Cheviot, the Stag and the Black Black Oil*, and hopefully, tour Scotland: "I hope this show will provoke, entertain and bring Scots together at this momentous moment in our shared history and whatever your view at the end of it will help you understand those who don't share it."⁶

David Greig has been politically active since the 1980s: not only has he extensively dealt, in his plays, about hot issues concerning Scotland with his history, politics and culture, but he also blogs, writes for newspapers such as "Bella Caledonia," and is often a guest in public conferences and debates about theatre as well as politics. However, as Greig himself has remarked, "any playwright who tells you they're a nationalist is either a bad playwright or a bad nationalist."⁷ We might therefore explain Greig's political commitment as the duty of the citizen and his choice of politically engaged topics for his plays as the duty of the intellectual for his fellow countrymen.

Although the interest is high, *The Great Yes, No, Don't Know Five Minute Theatre Show* is for now still a project "in-progress," not much has been revealed about it, and the call for projects' submissions has just recently closed (March 23rd). According to Samson, very important will be the use of new Medias to connect people all over Scotland and beyond, thus enabling each person to freely and easily express his/her opinion and in so doing, stirring the public debate and hopefully, getting the "Don't Know, Don't Care" group involved.

It is therefore not surprising that a Christmas treat in the form of a Tweet has come from David Greig, one of the most passionate and truly innovative contemporary Scottish playwrights. Like a modern and technological version of the once popular serial publishing

⁶ *Ibidem*.

⁷ David Greig qtd in Dan Rebellato, "Introduction," in David Greig, *Plays: One*, (London: Bloomsbury Publishing Plc, 2009).

on magazines that bestowed immortal fame on i.e. Dickens and Dostoevsky, Greig has begun “tweeting” his play⁸ on the 14th of December and it is still on-going. The title, *The Yes No Plays*, clearly suggests that the focus is on the referendum for the independence. It is a “mini kitchen-sink drama”⁹ featuring a pro-independence wife and her no-voter husband – actually Greig does not want to reveal the characters’ gender so these are simply suppositions – discussing their respective political views in relation to the upcoming referendum. The setting is probably a living-room and every situation is designed to highlight the close-mindedness and lack of purposefulness which characterise the advocates of the “No.” According to Greig, “the no side at the moment, partly because they're winning so they think they don't have to do anything, is a monolith which essentially says 'everything is fine',”¹⁰ there is no need to change the status quo, actually, there is no need to hear an alternative proposal at all:

Yes: I’ve been thinking –

No: No.

Yes: I was reading a –

No: No.

Yes: I thought –

No: No.

Yes: But –

No: No.

Yes: – No: No.

⁸ The tweets of *The Yes No Plays* are available, in chronological order, on Greig’s website: <<http://www.front-step.co.uk/the-yes-no-plays/>>. Though they are the same, I quote from Greig’s Twitter account @YesNoPlays (<https://twitter.com/search?src=typd&q=%40YesNoPlays>). You can have more information and listen to CBC’s radio version of some of Greig’s Twitter sketches at the CBC “As It Happens” radio webpage: <<http://www.cbc.ca/player/Radio/ID/2429871561/>>

⁹ Severin Carrell, “Scottish Independence Yes Vote Would Drive Change in England,” *The Guardian*, January 3, 2014, www.theguardian.com/politics/2014/jan/03/scottish-independence-yes-vote-drive-change-england.

¹⁰ *Ibidem*.

Every little change in Yes' life is commented by her husband with a single word, that is, "madness." Madness is wanting to buy a Kindle, namely wanting to exchange the old paperback version for an electronic book. Madness is adding cinnamon on porridge: "Is that what they do in 'Norway'?" implying that that is clearly not what "real" Scottish people would do. The most significant moment which exemplifies at best the current situation in Scotland according to Greig, is when the wife fails to reassure her husband while making Christmas decoration:

Yes: (sings) It's Christmastime... There's no need to be afraid...

No: No need to be afraid?

Yes: Yes.

No: Madness."

No gives voice to the no-voters' fear of risking to worsen the future of Scotland, and to voluntarily walk a path that will lead to bleak times: "dark all the time and freezing. That's what it will be like after independence." As Greig states in this Twitter play, the central problem concerns people's attitude. It is perfectly summarized in the exchange between Yes and No as they watch the News on TV: "Yes: I just want things to be better! No: I just want them not to be worse!"

The Scottish National Party (SNP) and the pro-independence voters are fascinated by the possibilities of change offered by this referendum. Despite what the outcome will be, this should be, and partly is, a galvanizing moment, in which Scottish people can truly think about what they want for themselves and for their Country. Yes-voters are energy, said Greig, and this energy is "fizzing with thoughts, fizzing with that combination of lots of different people testing ideas against each other."¹¹

Like the wife in Greig's play, Yes-voters are being extremely proactive as they want

¹¹ *Ibidem*

“things to be better.” However, the fears of the No-side are not at all unjustified. Scottish people have been enduring a lot since their merging with England sanctioned by the Act of Union and though, in more recent times, they have survived Thatcherism, this was not unharmed. Considering that the devastation brought about by the policy of the Iron Lady has been worsened by the current economic crisis, the no-voters’ worried attitude of not wanting “things to be worse,” is perfectly understandable. The current situation in Scotland is the result of centuries of sacrifices, why risk everything for the “unknown”? There is no real need to gamble away the relative security Scots have right now: “you never know” what might happen:

Yes: I was thinking we should join a gym.

No: No.

Yes: Why not?

No: Your heart.

Yes: What’s wrong with my heart.

No: You never know.

This is the reason why Greig, with *The Yes No Plays*, is trying to give voice to the No-side’s fears and prove them wrong and, in a way, to reassure them about the future. The character of the husband is caricatured in order to better display the silliness but also the danger of such a way of thinking, or rather, of not thinking:

Yes: Where's my Lesley Riddoch book.

No: I burned it.

Yes: What?

No: In the woodstove.

Yes: Why?

No: It was giving you ideas.

Yes: I can't believe you did that?

No: Lesley Riddoch Schmesly Diddoch.

Yes: Did you even read it?

No: Room's warm. Is that not enough?

With this play Greig wants to stimulate the debate around the referendum for the Independence. He is not simply supporting and representing the Yes-side but by using such easily-accessible and public means of communication as Twitter, he wants everybody to get involved in the debate, No-voters included. As Greig points out, this year Scotland has the chance to speak up, and this is what people should do, no matter which side they are on. The concrete risk is to continue being part of the UK for convenient laziness only:

Yes: (unwraps) 100 Windfarms to See Before You Die! Thanks Santa!

No: (unwraps) GPS?

Yes: It's controlled from London.

No: Thanks Santa!

The argument revolving around the referendum is definitely more complicated than what it has been discussed, adding politics, economy, international relations and so on to the picture. However, this is not the place to discuss these issues. From a purely artistic perspective, the referendum is a great occasion to deal with old, though always central, topics such as identity and nationhood, but with new creativity, from different angles and looking forward to possibly change the future. Indeed, “the energy let loose by independence would be a creative and potentially transforming force, and might unleash new thinking going well beyond that of the SNP.”¹²

¹² *Ibidem.*

With this aim in mind, as early as 2011, the NTS organised a series of free conferences and live chats moderated by and hosting some of the most prominent Scottish intellectuals. The name chosen was “Staging the Nation. A conversation about theatre,” and along with cultural commentator Paul Henderson Scott, David Greig was invited to contribute in the discussion centred on the question: what makes a Scottish play?

As it was mentioned earlier in this chapter, the referendum for the independence is pushing people, more than ever, to question what is the future they want for their Country. However, this should lead to further and deeper thoughts concerning a person’s identity and its relation to his/her own homeland. As for the Scottish people, the questions are many, i.e. do I think of myself as Scot or British? Does one exclude the other? What does it mean to be Scot? Is it even possible to clearly define what Scottishness means, with Scotland being part of the UK and in such a globalised world?

Introducing the debate, moderator Graham McLaren, argued that the debate around what makes a play Scottish has been going on for a century at least, and that:

there have been ideas since the 1930s about what would be a Scottish play. Robert Mitchell from Glasgow Unity said that after they did their first big show – a version of *The Lower Depths* – was the first time people said ‘Could that be considered Scottish? Now we know it is Russian, but it seems to be in the Scottish style.’ That is the very first time that has been recorded as an idea, about what is the identity.¹³

Reasonably enough, McLaren pointed out that it is impossible to resolve such issue as it is impossible not to say something that has already been repeated at least once in the past hundred years. This reason, however, should not prevent people from keeping the debate

¹³ Thom Dibdin, “What Makes a Play Scottish?,” *AE: All Edinburgh Theatre*, October 27, 2011, thomdibdin.co.uk/what-makes-a-play-scottish/.

going and hopefully, fuelling it with new ideas.

Greig's intervention begins with a funny and yet, insightful, anecdote: David was hiking in the Highlands with his daughter when they spotted a grey squirrel. At Greig's remark that it would be better not to feed it but, rather, to shoot it, his daughter became speechless and shocked. As he was explaining her that the grey squirrel represents a threat to the "native" red squirrel, the little girl's honest reply was: "but it is still a squirrel." According to Greig, the task of finding a definition of what a Scottish play is, is bound to fail or to be covered in ridicule. Rather than trying to single out and define it, the same way you would try to explain each element in a Highlands pine forest, it is best to focus on the environment. Like the red squirrel needs his own peculiar habitat to be able to live and be called "native," there should exist a specific context and a specific approach to an issue so that it can be truly called "Scottish." This environment is extremely vary, shifting from topic under analysis, type of staging and production, audience or the playwright's own viewpoint. Greig's premises, however, are clear: "we...as Scots have chosen literally to make the statement that our national identity is without walls."¹⁴ Deciding not to choose a definition is in itself a choice. It seems as if Scottish people have opted for the choice of not choosing or, in other words, they have chosen the world of possibilities, of potential. For a country such as Scotland with its plurality of voices, from the Gaelic-speaking minorities in the North to the Lowlanders with their strongly accented Scots, it is especially difficult to encompass these beautiful diversities with only a single definition. In his famous work *Decolonising the Mind*, Kenyan novelist Ngugi wa Thiong'o rightfully observes that:

language carries culture, and culture carries, particularly through orature and literature, the entire body of values by which we come to perceive ourselves

¹⁴Robert Crawford, *Scotland's Books. A History of Scottish Literature* (Oxford: OUP, 2009), p.699

and our place in the world...language is thus inseparable from ourselves as a community of human beings with a specific form and character, a specific history, a specific relationship to the world...To dismiss a language is to dismiss an entire culture.¹⁵

A Scotsman living in Edinburgh will surely see himself differently from someone living in the Shetlands, not to mention from a Londoner: “a little guy’s outlook is different from a big man’s.”¹⁶ It is therefore impossible and it would be terribly diminishing to speak of a Scottish identity, rather, it would be better to talk about “identities.” In his speech for the *Staging the Nation* conference, Greig remarked how Scotland and Scottish theatre should draw inspiration and find strength in recognizing its peculiar situation of marginality within the UK and in the richness of the plurality of the communities which make up Scotland. Indeed, its political and geographical marginal status allows Scotland a privileged and detached outlook on the world.

Together with this heterogeneous choir of voices comes a considerable dose of contradiction. As Greig highlights in his essay for the collection *Being Scottish*, Scots possess a strong, intrinsic ambiguity that characterises them in almost every aspects of life:

We’re known to hold to old-fashioned moral values like socialism and religion but are prone to do so with the nit-picking certainty that comes of Protestantism. We are supposedly sage and economical with resources but in fact view we yearn for safety of mediocrity. We are enterprising but only when we leave the country. We are good losers but we revel masochistically in our own humiliations. We’re unsentimental or is it morbidly pessimistic?¹⁷

¹⁵ John McLeod, *Beginning Postcolonialism* (Manchester: Manchester UP, 2000), p.18.

¹⁶ Greig qtd in Rebellato, *op. cit.*, p. xii.

¹⁷ David Greig in Thomas M. Devine and Paddy Logue, eds., *Being Scottish: Personal Reflections of Scottish Identity Today* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh UP, 2002), p.85.

Once again, and perfectly in line with the choice of not choosing, Scottish people escape even a general characterisation and, at the same time, their ambivalence is part of what makes them Scots.¹⁸

As Dan Rebellato points out in his *Introduction* to the first published collection of Greig's plays, the existence of apparently irreconcilable opposites in what is perceived to be Scottishness, is strongly linked with Scotland's "double status" both as a separate nation with its history and culture, and with very distinctive borders, and as a part of the United Kingdom, which in turn is connected to Europe and to "larger...supranational entities."¹⁹ "David has identified a genuine value in Scotland's mercurial identity and his plays seek to insist on it, intensify it, refusing the simplistic blandishments of 'Braveheart' nationalism."²⁰

The 1995 Hollywood blockbuster has been said to have played an important role in fuelling Scotland's nationalist and patriotic feelings in the years immediately preceding the vote for devolution. The same is happening now, with the movie's title popping up in articles and newspapers' headings dealing with the upcoming referendum: e.g. "Scottish Independence: Will Salmond's 'Braveheart' History Triumph?" (Nick Assinder, *International Business Times*) or "The New Breaveheart? Scotland's Salmond's Eyes Independence from the U.K." (Catherine Mayer, *Time World*). The huge impact that "Braveheart" had at the time it was released, and that it still has in the collective imagery connected to Scottish history, is undeniable. It is curious however, how this film, produced in the USA, casting actors of different nationalities, produced and interpreted by an Australian actor and filmed more in Ireland and Arizona than in Scotland, came to represent Scotland abroad. In addition, the

¹⁸ This is what G. Gregory Smith defines as Caledonian Antisyzygy. See: G. Gregory Smith, *Scottish Literature. Character and Influence* (London: MacMillan, 1919).

¹⁹ Rebellato, *op. cit.*, p. xi.

²⁰ *Idem*, pp. xi-xii.

historical inaccuracies are far too many, and not simply concerning the absence of the famous bridge in the battle of Sterling. The visual identifier, the tartan, is nothing but the exported stereotype of the ancient Scottish national identity, invented by Walter Scott only in the 19th century, which is still nowadays successfully sold to tourists.

Rebellato's brief mention of the "Braveheart nationalism" is actually very relevant. Thinking back to Gibson's movie helps in addressing the issue of identity from other perspectives, such as how a Country's identity is perceived by foreigners and how cultural and national stereotypes come into existence and spread so much so that it ceases to matter if they were completely made up or not. In his plays Greig is not looking to recover a long-lost "authentic" Scotland, especially considering the extremely difficult task of defining what "truly Scottish" really means. Like with the tartan, it is possible to argue that "familiar identities" inevitably tend to "slip into the national imagery," and from then to the "international image markets as tradable symbolic goods"²¹ and as national stereotypes.

"The stereotype is an essential component in the construction of identity," writes Isobel Lindsay, and considering the rapid social changes in modern society, identity has indeed become more fluid. Therefore stereotypes can be bent and forged with the purpose of creating or reinforcing a specific interpretation of identity.²²

An interesting example of Greig's use of stereotypes can be found in *Airport*: asked to identify himself at the check-in, a Scotsman uses the three most renowned and commercially exploited symbols of Scotland, namely "malt whiskey, the Loch Ness Monster and kilts,"²³ combined with an attempt to perform a Highland Fling, that is a typical Scottish dance.

²¹ Tim Edensor, "Reading Braveheart: Representing and Contesting Scottish Identity," *Scottish Affairs* 21 (Autumn 1997), p.4.

²² Isobel Lindsay, "The Uses and Abuses of National Stereotypes," *Scottish Affairs* 20 (Summer 1997), p.4.

²³ Rebellato, *op. cit.*, p.xv.

Another example is represented by the character of Lord Islay of Islay in *The Speculator*, who, walking by the streets of Paris with a bagpipe and answering questions with “aye,” is immediately recognised as a Scot (act I, scene 3).

This chapter wanted to give an overall introduction to the latest work by David Greig in relation to the current situation of Scotland, marking an extremely important moment for the history of this Country. Moreover, it was meant to acquaint the reader with the topic of identity which will be the central issue further discussed in the following chapters.

In my dissertation I will analyze how Greig approaches the issue of Scottish identity in plays that have been written or set in particularly critical years of the Scottish—and British—history. The timeline of events under consideration will stretch from the ancient history of Scotland with *Dunsinane*, to the 1990s (*Caledonia Dreaming*) and post-devolution Scotland (*The Speculator*), without forgetting the bleak period of Thatcherism (*Victoria* and *Outlying Island*).

As this *Introduction* has tried to point out, it is impossible to define what being Scottish means, and it is also not the purpose of my study. Each chapter simply wants to offer an insight on the multiple aspects of a multifaceted identity according to the singular voice of David Greig, and show how these reflections acquire a special meaning if considered from a historical perspective, with its long struggle for Scottish independence which might end in 2014, depending on the results of the upcoming referendum.

“Whenever I’m asked either here, or south of the border, or anywhere else in the world to define my nationality, I will say Scottish. Is it important? [...] I am Scottish because it defines me politically, culturally, emotionally.”²⁴ Let us now analyze how this statement takes form in Greig’s plays.

²⁴ David Greig in Thomas M. Devine and Paddy Logue, eds., *Being Scottish: Personal Reflections of Scottish Identity Today* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh UP, 2002), p.86.

Macbeth vs. Dunsinane: “whaur's yer Wullie Shakespeare noo?”²⁵

When in 1603 Shakespeare wrote *Macbeth*, the play was meant to celebrate the “auld enemy,” namely King James VI of Scotland who was soon to become James I of England. Not too many years before, Elisabeth I had his mother, Queen Mary of Scots, condemned for treason and sentenced to death. The same Elisabeth who refused to marry or name a heir during all her reign, was probably swallowing gall, when at the twilight of her life she was forced to choose the son of a traitor as her best, if not her only, suitable successor.

As the new Scottish ruler was finding his way from Edinburgh to London, many within the aristocracy as well as the “world of entertainment” of that time, theatre companies first in line, were eager to overlook years of heated animosity and gain the king’s favour by paying him all the homage and respects long overdue.

Shakespeare is not simply one of the greatest English writers ever existed but he was also an extremely smart businessman too. Queens and Kings did alternate on the throne and he was able to majestically celebrate them all and keep their favour until the end, when he retired as a famous playwright with a rich saving account. When James became king of England, he was ready to discuss the issue and celebrate the new ruler with his famous Scottish play, *Macbeth*. It deals with all the “hot topics” of the time, namely succession, kingship and, above all, the Union. Years before his nomination as King of England, in the *Basilikon Doron* James VI was already explaining to his heir and “dearest sonne, Henry the

²⁵ In this chapter I will employ the term “Scots” to refer to the peoples of Scotland as to better differentiate between English and Scottish characters. It must be noted, however, that in *Dunsinane*, Scottish people do not speak Scots but English or Gaelic. All quotations from Shakespeare’s *Macbeth* are taken from: William Shakespeare, *Macbeth*, ed. Kenneth Muir, The Arden Edition of the Works of William Shakespeare (London: Methuen, 1998). All quotation from Greig’s *Dunsinane* are from: David Greig, *Dunsinane* (London: Faber & Faber, 2010).

Prince,”²⁶ the vital importance of unifying the two Crowns—that of Scotland with England—to better govern the island. It had always been his most urgent desire and became the leitmotif of his politics throughout all his reign. As Francis Bacon put it in his speech to the Parliament, echoing the king’s will, England could have only flourished into the greatest monarchy in the world “having Scotland united and Ireland reduced.”²⁷ Indeed, James believed in the Union as a natural and inevitable event bound to happen in the near future, regardless of his people’s will: “these two kingdoms are so conjoined that, if we should sleep in our beds, the Union should be, though we would not.” He continues with one of his most quoted admonishments, saying that “he that doth not love a Scotsman as his brother, or the Scotsman who doth loves not an Englishman as his brother, he is a traitor to God and the king.”²⁸ For a king who blindly believed in the Divine Right Theory, the ultimately reason for the Union was, in the words of scholar Brian P. Levack, “a divine mission” inspired and guided by the Divine Providence.²⁹

This “divine mission,” however, was not supported with the same enthusiasm and passion by both Scots and Englishmen. The Union would have meant various, significant changes in several fields, from administration to trade, down to law and, of course, politics. In addition, the complicated and often tense history between the two countries did not help in smoothing the disagreements and ease the process of mergence, to which centuries of cultural and national stereotypes were added to make the integration even harder. Let us take as

²⁶ Dedication of the *Basilikon Doron* by King James VI as quoted in George W. T. Ommond, *The Early History of the Scottish Union Question* (Edinburgh & London: Oliphant Anderson & Ferrier, 1906), p. 52.

²⁷ Speech by Sir Francis Bacon delivered to the House of Commons about the Article of General Naturalization of Scottish Nation, as quoted in George W. T. Ommond, *op. cit.*, p. 81.

²⁸ Speech by James VI of Scotland and I of England as quoted in George W. T. Ommond, *op. cit.*, p. 82-3.

²⁹ Brian P. Levack, *Formation*, p.7, as quoted in Arthur F. Kinney, “Shakespeare’s Macbeth and the Question of Nationalism,” in *Literature and Nationalism*, ed. Vincent Newey and Ann Thompson (Liverpool: Liverpool UP, 1991), p. 58.

symbolic example of the English welcoming attitude towards the Scots, the speech or rather, “the torrent of abuse,”³⁰ spouted by Sir Christopher Piggott during a session at the House of Commons. In a venomous tirade against the Union, he depicted the Scots as “murderers, thieves, and rogues who had not suffered more than two of their kings to die peaceably in their beds during the last two hundred years.”³¹ Needless to say, Sir Piggott was made unable to continue his career as member of the Parliament and ended up imprisoned in the Tower for the rest of his life. It might be worth considering that what he says about the kings of Scotland echoes, though with far less lyricism, Shakespeare’s *Richard II*’s speech about the English royalty: “let us sit upon the ground/And tell sad stories of the death of kings;/How some have been deposed; some slain in war;/Some haunted by the ghosts they have deposed;/Some poison’d by their wives: some sleeping kill’d;/All murder’d” (Shakespeare Act 3, sc. 2). Anyway, it is interesting to point out that Piggott’s thoughts are nothing special but exemplary of the general attitude of almost a whole nation. In *Puzzling Shakespeare*, Leah Marcus highlights how the whole of James I’s project was foundered “on the rocks of English and Scottish prejudice [...] In England the Scots were scorned as aliens, mercilessly pilloried in plays and satires.”³² Famous is the *Satire against Scotland*, a piece that offers a particularly illuminating insight into the jovial spirit of mockery of the Englishmen in 1617, by Sir Anthony Weldon. Scotland is depicted as “too guid for those that inhabit it, and too bad for others to be at the charge of conquering it,”³³ with an air that “might be made wholesome, but for the stinking people that inhabit it,” and ground that “might be made wholesome had

³⁰ George W. T. Ommond, *op. cit.*, p. 77.

³¹ Common Journals, 13th February 1607, as quoted in George W. T. Ommond, *op. cit.*, p. 77.

³² Leah S. Marcus, *Puzzling Shakespeare* (Berkeley: California UP, 1998), p.124.

³³ Anthony Weldon as quoted in William Ferguson, *Scotland's Relations with England: A Survey to 1707* (Edinburgh: The Saltire Society, 1994), p. 100.

they wit to manure it.” A land so bare and barren, a wasteland indeed, “has Christ been betrayed in this country, as doubtless he should have been,” Judas would have found the “grace of repentance” sooner than a tree to hang himself on. As for the fauna, “the beasts be generally small, women excepted, of which sort there are no greater in the world.”³⁴ Compared to what other Englishmen had wrote before, from e.g. Camden’s *Brittania*³⁵ to Jonson and Chapman’s *Eastward Ho!*, which won them some time in prison³⁶, this passage is quite kind. Scotsmen, however, did not remain silent and answered the English vituperation with Scottish scurrility. Although more verse in the art of self-loathing rather than loathing the English, and with acute wit specialised in insulting other Scots more than their neighbours on the other side of the march,³⁷ the Scotsmen did their best to answer back. Their efforts in the field were rewarded by an act issued by James I in 1609, which punished all those writers of “pasquillis, libellis, rymis, Cockalanis, comedies and sicklyk occasionis whereby they slander maligne and revile the estait and countrey of England.”³⁸ If James I’s wish and legacy wanted to be “one worship to God; one kingdom entirely governed; one uniformity in laws,”³⁹ he was far from achieving it, and when in 1606 Shakespeare wrote *Macbeth*, the issue of the unification was still the king’s top priority.

³⁴ Anthony Weldon as quoted in George W. T. Ommond, *op. cit.*, p. 57.

³⁵ “They drank the bloud out of wounds of men slain: they establish leagues among themselves, by drinking one anothers bloud; and suppose, the great number of slaughters they commit, the more honour they winne [...] To this we adde that these [wild] Scots...had for their principall weapons, bowes and arrows.” Exemplary passage taken from William Camden, *Brittania* (1586) p. 121 As quoted in Martin Rackwitz, *Travels to Terra Incognita: The Scottish Highlands and the Hebridies in Early Modern Travellers Accounts c. 1600-1800* (Münster: Waxmann Verlag, 2007), p. 33.

³⁶ Jonson and Chapman were sentenced to prison by James I for anti-Scottish feelings apparently expressed in their play *Eastward Ho!* (1605).

³⁷ See e.g. Andrew Galloway, “The Borderlands of Satire,” in *The Anglo-Scottish Border and the Shaping of Identity 1300-1600*, ed. Mark P. Bruce and Catherine H. Terrell (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2012), p. 22.

³⁸ James I, Acts of the Parliament of Scotland, IV, 436, as quoted in William Ferguson, *op. cit.*, p. 100.

³⁹ *Ibidem*.

Recent readings of *Macbeth* have highlighted the importance of the question of the Union as a central theme in the play. In his essay “‘A Rooted Sorrow:’ Scotland’s unusable past,” Jonathan Baldo describes the play as a “masterful piece of double-speak.” The need to please a variegated audience might have influenced the playwright, however, *Macbeth* results an ambiguous play which,

while seeming to support James’s case of union, it simultaneously telegraphs to English anti-unionists the hazards of joining their nation to one whose history, a monotonous tale of violence and regicide on the least charitable estimation, might have seemed to the most virulently xenophobic among them “a tale/Told by an idiot, full of sound and fury,/Signifying nothing.” (5.5.27-28)⁴⁰

Although an almost self-declared piece that supports the new patron and his royal pro-Union propaganda, *Macbeth* is indeed filled with several anti-Scots observations. Rewriting history, creating a tailor-made genealogical tree and prophesying a long future dynasty for the king is not enough to overshadow the many negative images of Scotland which actually make up the bone structure of the play.

❖ *Scotland writes back*

It is therefore not surprising if a new generation of Scottish writers were a “wee” bothered by the fact that the “greatest Scottish play” ever written was the work of the “auld enemy,”

⁴⁰ Jonathan Baldo, “‘A Rooted Sorrow:’ Scotland’s Unusable Past,” in *Macbeth: New Critical Essays*, ed. Nick Moschovakis (New York: Routledge, 2008), p. 91.

who reinvented history to suck up to the new ruler. As David Greig confessed in an interview to the BBC⁴¹:

I think it's a very cheeky thing I've done [...]. But then to some degree for Scottish writers, it's always felt a little bit cheeky that unquestionably the greatest Scottish play was written by the great English playwright.

So there is a slight sense of answering back a little bit [...] and claiming just a little bit of history from another point of view.

In an interview with Katherine MacAlister for *The Oxford Times*, Greig further explains that

After seeing *Macbeth* in Dundee I realised I knew most of the places mentioned like Birnam Wood and Dunsinane, and that Shakespeare had never been there. So that great Scottish play was written by someone who wasn't Scottish and hadn't been to Scotland, yet he reduced the great King *Macbeth*.⁴²

Although dismissed as a cheeky motive by Greig, the act of repossessing the history of his people and of his country might be regarded as him taking a serious political stance, and this is what we witness in *Dunsinane*. Like many nations with a history of colonization, “writing back”⁴³ to the Empire has always been a necessary step for the colonized in order to retrieve their own sense of identity, acknowledge their roots and be able to properly face the colonisers with a newly achieved awareness.

Critics and reviewers agree that *Dunsinane* is one among many sequels of Shakespeare's *Macbeth*. Indeed, after the Japanese, heavy-metal musical *Macbeth*⁴⁴ and the

⁴¹ Nigel Wrench, “Writing *Macbeth* after Shakespeare,” *BBC News*, October 2, 2010, <news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/entertainment/arts_and_culture/8508803.stm>.

⁴² David Greig, David Greig on his play *Dunsinane*, interview by Katherine MacAlister, September 17, 2013, <www.oxfordtimes.co.uk/leisure/theatre/10667984.David_Greig_on_his_play_Dunsinane/>.

⁴³ Bill Ashcroft, et al. *The Empire Writes Back*. Here the expression is borrowed to convey the need for the colonized not only to physically fight but also to write back to their colonizers.

⁴⁴ Full review available at: <<http://www.metalhammer.co.uk/news/heavy-metal-macbeth/>>

Australian *Zombie Macbeth*⁴⁵, why not going back to the origins and have a real Scottish play? Nonetheless, I believe that labelling *Dunsinane* as mere sequel does not fully explain the role of this play in postcolonial terms. When Greig first started to write this pièce, his intentions were to depict what happened after the tragic, climatic moment of the death of the “usurper:” “what really was interesting was not so much the overthrow of the tyrant but just that question of what happened after you overthrow a tyrant.”⁴⁶

However, *Dunsinane* is greater than that: he takes on from the last scenes of *Macbeth* and tries to imagine a Scotland in the aftermath of the final battle, with King Macbeth dead and a new ruler on the throne appointed by the English. It is a Scotland that needs to reinvent itself while looking back to the recent events in order to understand what happened. The history under analysis is certainly not that described by Shakespeare, but rather, that preserved in the chronicles of the historians of the time, in this case, mainly Holinshed⁴⁷. Therefore, although the title, *Dunsinane*, clearly recalls his famous predecessor, it does so to question history as it has “come down to us since Shakespeare’s time”⁴⁸ and to offer the audience with a more truthful account. As Jean Rhys did when she freed Brontë’s “madwoman in the attic,”⁴⁹ and challenged the English colonisers’ Victorian perspective of *Jane Eyre* by giving voice to the shunned Creole Bertha, the same is doing Greig in this play. He is defying the stereotypes which had been forced upon the Scots and taking repossession

⁴⁵ “Macbeth re-arisen” at the White Whale Theatre (Australia). Full review at: <<http://www.australianstage.com.au/reviews/melbourne/macbeth-re-arisen-at-white-whale-theatre-2047.html>>

⁴⁶ Veronica Rodriguez and Dilek Inan, “Combining the Epic with the Everyday: David Greig’s *Dunsinane*,” *International Journal of Scottish Theatre and Screen* 5, no. 2 (2012): 56–78, p.56

⁴⁷ See: Holinshed, Raphael, *Chronicles of England, Scotland and Ireland*.

⁴⁸ Veronica Price, “‘Two Kingdoms...compassed with One Sea’: Reconstructing Kingdoms and Reclaiming Histories in David Greig’s *Dunsinane*,” *International Journal of Scottish Theatre and Screen* 5, no. 1 (2012): 19–32, p. 19.

⁴⁹ See: Sandra M. Gilbert and Susan Gubar, *The Madwoman in the Attic* (New Haven: Yale UP, 2000).

of a part of history that the “colonisers” distorted in order to legitimate their claims on Scotland.

❖ *The Scottish audience’s interpretation: a nationalistic play*

Dunsinane is a surprising first-ever joint production between the Royal Shakespeare Company (RSC) and the National Theatre of Scotland (NTS). It was first premièred in London, on the 10th of February 2010, and then in Edinburgh a year later. What is baffling about this play is that though it is set in Scotland and deal with common war history between England and Scotland, Greig never meant it to be specifically about these countries. Rather, they were supposed to portray and reflect about the American and British invasion of Iraq, which was being carried out during the month that the play was running in the theatres of London. As Greig explains, the story of Macbeth and the setting of medieval Scotland seemed perfect: “the Iraq War had just started,” and it looked “very much a story of overthrowing a tyrant without preparing for the aftermath.”⁵⁰ Indeed, the RSC director Roxana Silber staged the play as to offer clear references to “contemporary Iraq and Afghanistan.”⁵¹ In her view, the war or rather, the American “peace-restoring” mission, could be described as “men with good intentions going in and trying to coerce a culture to follow its own rules without quite understanding that foreign culture.”⁵²

Greig wanted this play to be deeply politically engaged and wished the British government leaders to come and watch the performance. “The fact that the soldiers are basically large numbers of young men and that what you're seeing is large numbers of young

⁵⁰ David Greig on his play *Dunsinane*, interview by Katherine MacAlister, *op. cit.*

⁵¹ Nigel Wrench, *op. cit.*

⁵² *Ibidem.*

men die,”⁵³ hoped to be a show that urged the London audience to rethink about the war and siding with America. The paradox of this joint “peacekeeping” mission in the Middle East is voiced by Siward, who explains he was forced to escalate the violence against the Scots in the name of peace:

Siward: This is not a war in pursuit of wealth, Egham.

Egham: What is it in pursuit of then?

Siward: Peace

[...]

Egham: Do you think burning them helps?

Siward: It shows we’re determined. (95)

Indeed, the focus of *Dunsinane* was supposed to be about “whether it's worth the loss of those young men and the tremendous responsibility of the people who decide their fate.”⁵⁴

When the play was first produced in London, it was read exactly against this precise political background. However, by the time of the Scottish première a year later, the war in Afghanistan was forgotten and the play was interpreted according to a more “local” context. May 2011 witnessed the triumphant re-election of the leader of the Scottish National Party (SNP), Alex Salmond, with his campaign for an independent and free Scotland. As Victoria Price has pointed out, from this perspective,

in reclaiming the Macbeth story and shifting the focus of Shakespeare's play away from the corrupt ruler to English intervention in Scotland, *Dunsinane* appears to call for a renegotiation of the current relationship between Scotland

⁵³ *Ibidem.*

⁵⁴ *Ibidem.*

and England –between those neighbouring nations which James VI and I famously referred to as ‘two kingdoms [...] compassed with one sea.’⁵⁵

Indeed, if *Macbeth* was written at a time in which King James I was struggling to create the Union and build his long-dreamt Great Britain, *Dunsinane* has been interpreted by the Scottish audience as a sort of “anti-*Macbeth*” and pro-independence play that supports the SNP political agenda. Whereas James advocated “one kingdom entirely governed,” now Salmond claims Scotland’s right to stand as equal to any other nation:

[...] These are exciting times for our country. We need more space for our cultural riches and for lively and intelligent discourse about the nation we are and the nation we aspire to be. [...] I think we should seize the moment and act together to bring these powers back home. [...] We see our nation emerge from the glaur of self-doubt and negativity. A change is coming, and the people are ready. They put ambition ahead of hesitation. The process is not about endings. It is about beginnings.[...] the age of empires is over.⁵⁶

Considering Salmond’s speech as the political backdrop against which the Scottish theatre-goers went to see the play, their nationalistic interpretation is clearly understandable. From this standpoint, as Robert D. Scott highlights, several scenes in *Dunsinane* acquire a more poignant meaning. “Not for nothing does Malcolm, having allowed Siward to arrange a parliament of all the sparring nobles of the realm, address his cynical manifesto directly to [...] [the Scottish audience]. Do you want this kind of Scotland? Do you want Siward’s kind?”⁵⁷ Although Malcolm’s speech is terrifying in its monstrous ambiguity, it serves the

⁵⁵ Victoria Price, *op.cit.*, p.19.

⁵⁶ Alex Salmond’s complete speech is available at Caledonian Mercury, <<http://caledonianmercury.com/2011/05/18/alex-salmonds-holyrood-address-on-being-re-elected-first-minister/0020027>>

⁵⁷ Robert D. Scott, “Macbeth Sequel Dunsinane Finds Scottish Future in Scotland’s Past,” *STV Entertainment*, May 18, 2011, <entertainment.stv.tv/onstage/250484-macbeth-sequel-dunsinane-finds-scottish-future-in-scot-

obvious purpose of making the audience reflect on which kind of nation they want to build together: the very same message Salmond conveyed in his address to the Parliament.

Greig's *Dunsinane*, therefore, serves, in the words of Joyce McMillan, as "a reminder that nation building has its problems," but it is a process that Scotland needs to undertake with an "enlightened" spirit despite the many obstacles.⁵⁸ As it is put forward throughout the play, Scotland cannot focus on resolving its internal issues so that it can stand as independent and solid nation, as long as the English occupy the country: "They're fighting us because we're here. The Scots will fight anyone who's standing in front of them" (95).

❖ *Restoring History*⁵⁹

Dunsinane imagines the story of Scotland after the killing of King Macbeth, focusing on the defeated. It is a truth sadly acknowledged, that history is made by the winners, i.e. in this case by the English, and this is also why much of the Post-colonial studies are engaged in retrieving the voices of the subalterns to rediscover and preserve that side of history which does not make it to the "official" records.

By completely reverting the story as it has been made immortal by Shakespeare, Greig restores the "truth" about this particular moment in Scottish history and finally rehabilitates the figure of Macbeth. Indeed, the beginning of the play serves to allow Gruach, namely Shakespeare's Lady Macbeth, re-baptized with her real, historical name, to illuminate the "ignorant" invaders with the truth about what they have just destroyed.

lands-past/>.

⁵⁸ Joyce McMillan, "The Play *Dunsinane* Serves as a Reminder That Nation-buildings Has Its Problems," *The Scotsman*, May 20, 2011, <<http://www.scotsman.com/news/joyce-mcmillan-the-play-dunsinane-serves-as-a-reminder-that-nation-building-has-its-problems-1-1649132>>

⁵⁹ For a more detailed analysis of what Greig restores in the history of Macbeth's reign and what is deliberately overlooked or reinvented see: Victoria Price, *op. cit.*

Gruach sits with the body of the old king.

Gruach's women sing a lament.

Siward watches.

Gruach: He was a good king. He ruled for fifteen years. Before him there were kings and kings and kings but not one of them could rule more than a year or so at most before he would be killed by some chief or other. But my king lasted fifteen years. My king was strong. (32)

Gruach: We had peace. Until you came along [...]. (34)

The very same chronicles that Shakespeare consulted and then openly decided to overlook, tells us that Macbeth was a good and tolerant king. Shakespeare's scholar David Kastan explains in "*Macbeth and the name of King*,"⁶⁰ that in Scotland "the traditional mode of transferring sovereignty [...] had been a quasi-elective system of succession within an extended royal family, consciously devised to prevent both the succession of a minor and the perpetuation of tyrannical rule." It was Kenneth III, the grandfather of Shakespeare's Duncan, who imposed the patrilineal succession and, after poisoning the noble selected as future ruler, appointed his son as king. Holinshed credits Macbeth with rightful claims to the throne by "the old laws of the realme."⁶¹ He "began to take counsel how he might usurpe the kingdome by force, having a just quarrel so to doo [...] for that Duncan did what in him lay to defraud him of all maner of title and claime, which he might in time to come, pretend unto the crowne."⁶² In addition, as Gruach reminds the audience, the previous kings were weak—Holinshed insists on Duncan being "feeble and slothful"⁶³—and it was only thanks to

⁶⁰ David S. Kastan, *Shakespeare After Theory* (New York: Routledge, 1999), p. 172-4. Note that Shakespeare condensed several generations of rule within his play so the chronology is quite subverted.

⁶¹ Holinshed, *Chronicles of England, Scotland and Ireland*, qtd. in David S. Kastan, *op. cit.*, p.173.

⁶² *Ibidem.*

⁶³ *Ibidem.*

Macbeth that peace and “ten yeares of equall justice”⁶⁴ were achieved. Therefore, “the real Macbeth was, like Richard III, the victim of a gigantic and very effective publicity campaign.”⁶⁵ Stephen Orgel explains that the war staged by Shakespeare at the opening of the play, actually represented the rebellion led by Macbeth against the usurper Duncan, “although there is no way of knowing it from Shakespeare.”

In *Dunsinane*, Siward, surprised by Gruach’s praise of Macbeth, reminds her that he was a murderer who killed her previous husband.

Siward: Your king murdered your first husband.

Gruach: Yes.

Siward: You don’t seem to mind. (32-3)

At this remark, Gruach explains that she was the one who commissioned him the murder. That of the historical Duncan was indeed a “political assassination,” and Macbeth was hailed as hero for it. However, it is only thanks to the marriage to Gruach that he finally succeeds “in realizing the claims to the kingship his kindred had put forward for nearly half a century.”⁶⁶

Though Macbeth’s claim to the throne was right, the “legitimate heir” was Gruach. Historically, and as represented and thoroughly explained in *Dunsinane*, Lady Macbeth, i.e. Gruach, was born a princess of Moray and, contrarily to Shakespeare’s version, she had children: Lulach, is her son from her previous marriage to the “Mormaor, or under-king of the province of Murray,”⁶⁷ or Moray in the play. As Macduff perfectly summarizes for Siward’s sake, Macbeth’s power “belonged to the Queen [Gruach]. The Queen is the eldest princess of

⁶⁴ Holinshed, *Chronicles of England, Scotland and Ireland*, qtd. in John R. Brown, *Focus on Macbeth* (New York: Routledge, 2013), p.193.

⁶⁵ Stephen Orgel, *The Authentic Shakespeare*, (New York: Routledge, 2002), p.163.

⁶⁶ Michael Lynch, ed., *The Oxford Companion to Scottish History* (Oxford: Oxford UP, 2001), p. 402.

⁶⁷ Andrew Lang, *A Short History of Scotland* (Hamburg: Tredition, n.d.).

Moray. It's she who holds the allegiance of the clan together and it's her power she's keeping for her son [...]. The tyrant married Gruach and he became king" (30-1). Indeed, Orgel tells us that Macbeth was reigning as "Protector or Regent" of Scotland until Lulach would have been old enough to rule. Furthermore, in opposition to the miserable and disappointing off-stage death that Shakespeare reserves for Lady Macbeth, Greig's Gruach is alive (historically she outlived her husband⁶⁸) and amazingly powerful: she is perfectly aware of where she stands.

Siward: Woman, your castle has fallen. [...] What is your place here?

Gruach: My place here is Queen. (Greig 27)

In *Dunsinane* Greig employs a very solid historical background: he re-evaluates the long reign of King Macbeth, properly explains the dynamics amongst the various clans of Scotland, and restores Gruach to her role as powerful Queen and mother. This is the starting point, from where Greig begins his speculation about what happened to the entire country after the overthrow of its king and the English invasion. As Orgel notes, "one way of looking at the action it is to say that it is about the enforced anglicization of Scotland, which Macbeth" – along with Gruach in *Dunsinane* – "is resisting."

❖ Staging Scotland

In an interview for the Herald Scotland, Greig explains the perspective he adopted when he wrote *Dunsinane*. In several scenes the Scottish play has been reversed: it "is a play about English people ... it's about an English garrison trying to survive in hostile territory." He wanted to expound on the idea of medieval Scotland as a foreign and mysterious land for

⁶⁸ Michael Lynch, *op. cit.*, p. 402.

the English. “We’re familiar with the idea of a people who are a bewildering ‘other’ to the invader. It interested me for those people to be Scottish. I could write for a Scottish audience who would be able to see the world from both points of view as the play progresses.”⁶⁹ Joyce McMillan describes it as “a ‘squaddie play’ about the plight of the English soldiers, shipped up from Kent or Essex to spend a miserable winter in a frozen and boggy northern region where most of the people hate them.”⁷⁰ With some scenes and dialogues conveying such empathy towards the invaders, “*Dunsinane* could be accused” of siding more with the invaders, and definitely “less with the invaded.”⁷¹ In regards to the choice of perspective in his play, and defending his position as Scot, Greig further clarifies that:

I wanted to write England, and to explore the position of those English soldiers as they gradually find that they have bitten off so much more than they can chew. [...] So yes, I do write about that with an English soldier’s voice. But when you see the play on stage, I think you’ll see that it’s the Scots who have the very highly-developed, delicate filigree of a civilisation, into which this invading force has marched; and that in many ways, it’s more sophisticated than that of the invaders.⁷²

Dunsinane is meant to portray the encounter of two cultures – English and Scottish – in all its violence, awkwardness and misunderstandings. In the words of Robert D. Scott, “be

⁶⁹ David Greig, David Greig pushes beyond Macbeth with Dunsinane, interview by Mark Brown, August 5, 2011. <<http://www.heraldsotland.com/arts-ents/stage-visual-arts/david-greig-pushes-beyond-macbeth-with-dunsinane-1.1099317>>

⁷⁰ Joyce McMillan, “David Greig and Dunsinane,” April 28, 2011, <<http://joycemcmillan.wordpress.com/2011/04/28/david-greig-and-dunsinane/>>

⁷¹ *Ibidem*.

⁷² *Ibidem*.

careful of assuming you know what kind of Scotland Scots do want,⁷³ as even the Scots in the play, Malcolm *in primis*, struggle to give a definition of Scotland:

Malcolm: I know. I know. It's quite ridiculous isn't it? I'm King of this Country and even I don't understand it. Sometimes I think you could be born in this country. Live in it all your life. Study it. Travel the length and breadth of it. and still – if someone asked you – to describe it – all you'd be able to say about it without fear of contradiction is – “It's cold.” (29)

In this section I am going to analyze the representations of Scotland and the Scots, according to the English invaders and the Scottish collaborationists. Greig's play “pronounces the opposite so as to show that Scotland is too complex, tribal and territorially distinctive ever to be understood by the English.”⁷⁴ Indeed, a year in the North is definitely not enough to start getting rid of all the hideous stereotypes about the Scots they had to suffer when they first arrived.

❖ *Representing Scotland*

The chorus of the English army, which opens the play, genuinely expresses the ingenuity and the ignorance of these common people turned into soldiers to fight for a cause they barely understand and in a country they know nothing about:

We stood on the Essex shore a mess of shingle,
Some of us new and eager for a fight and others
Not so sure but all of us both knowing and not knowing

⁷³Robert D. Scott, *op. cit.*

⁷⁴Quoted in Veronica Rodriguez and Dilek Inan, *op. cit.*, p. 66.

What lay ahead of us.

Scotland.

Scotland. Where we would install a king. (9)

It is clear from this passage that, though they do not know “what lay ahead,” they are thrilled to test themselves in the battlefield. The young soldiers’ encounter with Scotland is not one of the best, their first impression being that of “a wild place” (10). As *Dunsinane* takes on from the last six scenes of *Macbeth*, the beginning is focused on the English army camouflaging itself as a forest. It is very interesting to remark that, if Shakespeare quite quickly dismisses this moment in a couple of lines – “Let every soldier hew him down a bough, / And bear’t before him: thereby shall we shadow / The numbers of our host, and make discovery / Err in report” – Greig, instead, expands the scene and transforms it into a space for understanding the “wild” Other. When the Sergeant commands the soldiers to “be a tree” (10), he wants them to almost literally transform into a forest. He does not simply want his army to stand there and hold a twig, they need to be trees. This requires them an understanding of the land they have just invaded in order to become part of it, and thus fooling the natives. The Sergeant urges them to pause and reflect: “Come on, think. What’s a forest got? [...] Close your eyes – Conjure up a wood – walk in it – look about you – what do you see? (10-11). The confused soldier obeys the order and, gradually, he starts “feeling” the wood with its sounds – the chirping of the birds and the murmuring of the wind– and noises produced by the animals.

Sergeant: [...] and what else?

[...]

— Nothing, Sir.

Sergeant: Exactly – nothing. Good. Nothing. What does nothing look like?

— Nothing.

Sergeant: No. Nothing looks like something – what?

— Darkness. (11)

After immersing himself in the smells, sounds and colours of the forest, after having taken in all of it, the soldier concludes with a single word, darkness. Scotland is forest and forest is darkness, that is what the soldiers need to become if they want to fool the Scots in their own territory. It is tree, “bog water,” and “black mud” (11) for the English, and Malcolm, as Scot, echoes their thoughts: “here we are rock, bog, forest and loch” (51).

The imagery of Scotland as a dark bog and a forest is present throughout the play. Although, as Malcolm points out, even England has forests, there is a sharp difference between those in Scotland and in England. While south of the border “lovely oak woods” lush, dappled in sun (51), with deer and boar to hunt, Scottish woods are muddy and infested with badgers.

Forest, and by extension wood, is typical of the Scottish court. After the English have seized Macbeth’s castle, they proceed with the inventory. As the stage direction tells us, “the hall is full of all the valuable objects of the castle” (40). However, much to the English’s surprise, the “war chest” is not valuable in their own sense of the term. The list compiled by the soldiers includes a “set of wooden plates,” “one tapestry showing a woodland scene,” and some silver and gold tableware. Siward’s comment, concerning the scarcity of the spoils, is remarkable: “maybe they eat off wood” (42-3). Putting aside the fact that this sentence could be interpreted as an insult, as it is spoken by the supposedly more civilized English, Siward’s use of “wood” in this context is peculiar, and seems to reinforce the association between Scotland and wood/forest as it appears to be linked in the minds of the English.

The imagery of the wood is further expanded in relation to language. Gruach refers to the English spoken by Siward as a “woodworker’s tool,” a descriptive language, “always

trying to capture the world in words” (76) and forcing its descriptions on others. As the Queen remarks, “throw words at a tree and eventually you’ll force me to see the tree just as you see it. We long since gave up believing in descriptions.” While English needs labels for each existing thing, Scots Gaelic is the thing: “our language is the forest.” (76). The image of the English in association with wood reappears during the seduction scene between Gruach and Siward. The Queen comments on his way of talking which is elegant, but for her, “to seduce a man in English – it’s like dancing in wooden shoes” (69). This time, the association with wood is symbolic of the weight of the words, meaning that they are heavy and awkward, totally unsuitable for the purpose they should serve, namely communication. As Gruach will later remark, Siward’s words “thump like a fat man on stilts” (70). Concerning the “texture of the imagery” of the forest/wood, Claire Wallace writes that it “echoes the play’s opening scene, where the soldiers disguise themselves as Birnham Wood.”⁷⁵

Continuing with the representation of the Scottish landscape through the eyes of the English, Greig takes on the same negative stereotypes, though softened, that were already present in *Macbeth*. Menteth depicts Scotland as a “sickly weal” (5.2.27) and, more in general, “Shakespeare describes Scotland’s environment as paradoxically fair and foul [...] and authentically demonic.”⁷⁶ Although Greig cancels the “thunder, lightening” and “rain” (1.1.2) that Shakespeare employs as the first description of Scotland, the country he portrays is definitely a Hell for the English. “Mother, you have not seen hills like these – never – Unless you’ve been to either Hell or Scotland – And I don’t expect you’ve been to either place” (88): this is an excerpt of a letter a young soldier is writing to his mother. Mountains are seen as frightfully steep, “so steep the green just slides off of them,” the hills “look like

⁷⁵ Claire Wallace, *The Theatre of David Greig* (New York & London: Bloomsbury Publishing Plc, 2013).

⁷⁶ Mary Floyd-Wilson, “English Epicures and Scottish Witches,” *Shakespeare Quarterly* 57, no. 2 (Summer 2006): 131–161, p. 132.

the backs of beasts [...] lying down [like] a sick cow,” and the grass fields resemble a “heap” of “twisted beasts:” as the boy comments, Scotland makes “a punishment of every day” (88-9).

Although Greig’s Scotland maintains a certain ambiguity and eludes definition, it is always portrayed with negative expressions. The chorus of the English army that opens the second part of the play cannot find proper words to describe the land, as the same words, spoken by the English or the Scots, can bear different meanings:

All through summer – or what they call summer –
Siward had us marching over land – or what they
Call land – from house to house – to eat food –
Or what they call food – with the chiefs of every clan. [...]
I don’t know if you’ve heard of this but Scotland is cold!
You’ve not felt coldness until you’ve felt the coldness
Of the air here [...]
When you’d think in this next village surely there’ll be
A fire [...] no,
Every time just cold damp air [...]. (39)

As Malcom remarks to Siward, nothing can be said with certainty about Scotland but the fact that it is cold. Greig changes Shakespeare’s dark and demonic Scotland into a country which is obscure in its mysteriousness and indecipherability. The chorus continues by confessing that “we [the soldiers] began to wonder what sort of country this is:” everything that in England has a name and a fixed shape that make it recognizable, in Scotland turns out to possess a fluid nature which renders it ungraspable. “Everything that in England was normal [...] In Scotland – that thing would turn out to be made of water – That is what you

learn here – nothing is solid” (39), and water, in all its forms, is an enemy. The mountain trails are “narrow and wet” (88), where you would expect a beach there is only the “black waters” of the “freezing lakes” (89), and everything is either bog or rock that “whichever way you walk you hurt yourself” (40). The only season in which Scotland fixes into a shape is winter: “the rivers freeze and the black lakes freeze and the great watery bogs.” The earth is covered in ice, which is “no good for fighting,” but you can finally walk on “solid ground” (128). After almost a year has gone by, three seasons have passed, it is winter at last, and the English soldier, despite the biting cold, is finally able to find beauty in the Scottish frozen wasteland. It is a brief moment but charged with deep lyricism, that after many “foul” descriptions, finally celebrates the “fair” side of this country.

It is a beautiful winter day, with “no mist in the air – No rain – no grey – no wet” (128), and all Scotland is “a place of white against blue – Blue sky against white mountains – bright blue against white birch bark – And the white diagonal cross against blue field which is their flag – A flag they seem to fly from every castle now” (129). It seems as if the Boy Soldier has found another meaning behind the colours of the cross of St. Andrew: as Scotland in winter is entirely made of blue and white, so must be their national flag. However, as the play reaches its end, white becomes the dominant colour, until the very last scene, in which “everything has disappeared,” and the Boy Soldier is completely swallowed in the whiteness of the snow.

In this section we have analyzed the English army’s encounter with Scotland. The focus was on the landscape, felt as a Hell and hated for its being only bog, water and forest. Since Greig’s perspective is that of the invaders, he retains some of the negative stereotypes which are present in Shakespeare’s *Macbeth*. However, he portrays the soldiers’ attitude towards the land as a process of growth, in the sense that, after a year of warfare in Scotland,

the English army, represented by the Boy Soldier, is finally able to start appreciating the beauty of the country they have been despising for default, and destroying in the name of peace.

❖ *Representing the Scots: the nobles*

As we have seen so far, the inspiration for *Dunsinane* was drawn out of the current events which were occupying center stage in the political scene of 2010 and 2011. In an interview for the Herald Scotland, Greig explains that he wanted to describe the invaders' point of view and actions for what they truly was, namely occupation of a country. "We think," remarks Greig, "Why do those people in Afghanistan shoot our lovely soldiers who are trying to help them? [...] Who are these bastards who want to blow up our boys?' It's impossible to imagine, unless you can really force yourself to make the imaginative leap of thinking." This is indeed the aim of *Dunsinane*, i.e. trying to image "how would I feel if, walking around my village, were Muslim, Afghan soldiers, who were extremely powerful and unbelievably well-armed and in tanks. How would I feel about that?' Without any question of who's the government or what, I just don't think you would like it."⁷⁷

In the light of Greig's words, let us analyze the English's mission in Scotland, and "unravel zones of incomprehension and misunderstanding between Scottishness and Englishness."⁷⁸ From the exchanges between Gruach and Siward we get to understand their respective thoughts on the situation and the fighting which is going on. As Gruach clearly remarks, "there is a war in this country but it's a war between Malcolm and me. I have no interest in England" (63). From her comments throughout the play, it is clear that Scottish

⁷⁷ David Greig pushes beyond Macbeth with *Dunsinane*, interview by Mark Brown, *op. cit.*

⁷⁸ Claire Wallace, *op. cit.*

issues should be resolved by the Scots alone, and that the English's "help" is regarded as nothing more than a deliberate invasion of the country, and a heavy political interference in its internal affairs. Indeed, while Siward compares his army to falcons, Gruach mocks him by describing the soldiers as cuckoo birds, "making your home in another bird's nest" (65). Several times she tries to make him understand her perspective, and, by extension, the Scots' thoughts about this "peace-keeping mission." She feels humiliated, for the Queen and all the clans loyal to her family, a weak king like Malcolm, who needs to borrow another country's army, is unacceptable: "if I were you [Siward] I would be at home guarding my own land. Not fighting on behalf of some other man's land. A man too weak and corrupt to hold his own land himself" (34). After the last admonishment, "there is a dance of leaving –Siward. Try to learn the steps" (78), when Gruach faces Siward at the end of the play, there is no more space for mild suggestions, and Siward is forced to re-evaluates his behavior:

Siward: I want to settle things between us. [...] I made a mistake

Gruach: A mistake? You invaded my country. You humiliated me in front of my people. You killed my son. Did you not know you were doing that?

Siward: Everything I did, I did because I thought that doing it was for the best.

(132)

Gruach: Oh, how in love you are with your good intentions. (135)

Siward is a soldier and the orders are to lead the English army into Scotland and "to install Malcolm as king." As he explains, "my job is to build a new kingdom – not to settle old grudges. So I have to clear away the past now. I have to uproot now and clear away all past claims and – that way there is a chance that we can establish a fair peace in Scotland" (33). Siward invades a country without having a single clue about its past, its real current situation and things work there. In his disarming ingenuity, he believes he is fighting for a

just cause and that everything will be settle in a short time: “we will set a new king in Dunsinane and then summer will come and then a harvest and by next spring it’ll be as if there never was a fight here” (24). It will turn out he was completely wrong. Let us analyze what Siward learn about Scottish people from his interaction with Malcolm and his supporters, and Gruach, who embody two different “types” of Scotland. I will focus on the language, essentially the English spoken by the Scots (Malcolm and the chiefs), which is perceived to possess an uncomfortably subtle and double nature that the English of the English soldiers apparently lacks.

Scottish English is perceived as an ambiguous and misleading idiom, if the words are not chosen carefully they can lead you to a condemnation for high treason. Immediately after the victory in the seize of Dunsinane castle, Siward discovers that the Queen is alive and that, judging by the degree of ferocious resistance encountered in the Scots, the English army was not impatiently expected as liberator. He was told that “the tyrant had lost the support of the chiefs and that he had no son and his queen had died of madness and so there would be no resistance to you but [...] a general acceptance of your rule” (27-8). Siward is confused by all the lies he has been told, but, when he confronts Malcolm, he explains to him that what he thinks are lies might be the Scottish way of talking. Indeed, he is reproached “for being so literal-minded in a wonderfully circuitous speech.”⁷⁹

In Scotland to call me a liar is really unacceptable [...] that would – essentially – demand a violent response [...] and so usually the way we manage this sort of thing in Scotland is by being careful not only not to tell lies – but also to be very very careful about the way we hear and understand words. (28)

Malcolm makes it clear that “if a person in Scotland says ‘it seems a person has died’ we tend to hear that word ‘seems’ – ‘seems’ – and of course that word makes a difference.” Scots are

⁷⁹ Claire Wallace, *op. cit.*

not able to go straight to the point and to use unequivocal speech, “it’s silly” and “it means that every discussion is fraught” (28). Indeed, every word spoken by a Scot bears a double meaning and it is subject to multiple interpretations.

Malcolm’s speech to the chiefs gathered in the Parliament, delivered in English, might be regarded as the perfect example of this duplicity. He addresses them with insults, offending the country and its people, even if he does not “mean anything insulting by saying this – unless truth is insulting” (80). Malcolm goes on prefiguring what kind of king he will be, and that can be summarized in one word: a dictator. In this scene, he is not that different from Shakespeare’s Malcolm: though in *Macbeth* the long and detailed list of his vices to Macduff is later dismissed as a joke to test Macduff’s loyalty, in *Dunsinane*, the interpretation of Malcolm’s manifesto is up to the chiefs to decide. Siward’s comment proves that he still has not learn how communication works in Scotland:

Siward: He’s not made himself popular.

Macduff: It’s fine. Most of the chiefs don’t speak English. The ones that do know he’s joking.

Siward: Why would he joke about his own kingship?

Macduff: So we understand he’s telling the truth.

Siward: What is it – a joke or the truth?

Macduff: Both (81)

Like Macduff in *Macbeth*, Siward is left with an unsettling and uneasy feeling concerning the scene he has just witnessed. Even after the chiefs have spoken, with regards to their allegiances in supporting, or not, Malcolm, Siward keeps interpreting their speeches through his English mindset. Again, commenting the scene with Macduff, he completely misunderstands:

Siward: 'There can be no peace as long as the Queen remains in Dunsinane.'

It's unequivocal.

Macduff: It all depends on the definitions of the words.

Siward: Which words?

Macduff: 'Peace,' 'Queen,' 'remain' and 'Dunsinane.' (82)

Egham seems the only English to have a grasp on what Malcolm considers to be the essence of the Scots' way of talking. While discussing a possible retreat from the country and the political implication it would mean, Egham tries to convince Siward that victory and defeat are only a matter of perception.

Siward: You sound like you would prefer us to be defeated.

Egham: Who said 'defeated'? I didn't say 'defeated.' Did you say 'defeated'? I didn't say 'defeated.' I said 'leave.'

Siward: 'Defeated' – 'leave' – what's the difference?

Egham: All the difference. (95)

As Egham explains, "winning isn't a fact" but "a decision we make" (95), with the right words, the situation could be made to look favourable to the English or, at least, "I [Egham] could be persuaded" (96).

The English arrived in Scotland without knowing anything about the country and its people but full of arrogance about the value of their mission, and of their "good" intentions. Much of their misunderstanding and their inability to properly communicate with the Scots, derives from the huge difference in the language they speak. It is not simply a matter of English vs. Scottish English or Gaelic, but it concerns the worldview that each language has at its core.

Indeed, in the light of Egham's speech it appears that the main difference is not between Scots and English, but rather, it is a distinction between "simple" men with "wooden language" and whose world is either black or white, and "complex" characters, mostly belonging to the world of politics or trade, who speak through an infinite number of shades of grey.

At the end of the play, Siward finally realizes that it is not the English spoken in general by the Scots, but that of Malcolm, and of the likes of him, which is misleading and "full of traps" (52). Indeed, Siward will come to agree with Gruach on at least one thing: Malcom can be no king. "No. You're not a king, Malcolm. You're not a king in Scotland. You're not a king in Dunsinane. You're not even a king in this room. Kings rule" (112).

Siward might be English but in his being a soldier, a man of war, he seems more similar to the "wild" Scots than to Malcolm. Indeed, after an exhausting year of fighting in Scotland, though still without understanding the country that much, Siward has finally come to realize Malcolm's true colours and the futility of the English intervention. In his last speech to Malcolm, before killing Lulach and being "kindly" cast away from the court, Siward describes himself with reference to the natural elements typical of the Scottish landscape: "I only have bone and flesh and mud and bog and metal" (112). In his insistence "on understanding this country" (89), his choice of words seems to be hinting at the fact that Scotland has changed him, finally becoming a part of himself as much as his own "bone and flesh" and his armour, "metal."

From this perspective, the play's ending acquires a new layer of meaning, as he passes from being affected by the Scottish landscape, its "mud and bog," to being completely swallowed by nature. After having resigned and left Egham in charge, Siward starts a tiring and desperate search for the Queen, whose surrendering represented, in his mind, the last

hope for a Scotland united by peace. He bring her the corpse of her son, whom he refers to as “king” at last, so that he could be taken to Iona, where all the kings are buried, and have a proper, funeral ceremony. However, he finds Gruach so fierce and determined to fight that he is unable to find an agreement. Siward is left full of regrets and of feelings of betrayal, with his good intentions transformed into a void cause at the service of politics and not people. Too tired to fight anymore, in the final scene, his body seems to disappear and melt in the whiteness of Scotland.

❖ *Representing the Scots: the soldiers*

The worst stereotypes of and attitude towards the Scots and everything that is Scottish are provided by the common people enlisted in the English army. Their low, crass, tavern-level comments are illuminating with regards to how the average Englishman responded to the encounter with Scotland.

As a first consideration, it must be said that the majority of the soldiers appear to have been forced to fight, and this reinforces and sharpens the resentment and hate towards the country and its people. Egham, for instance, “was supposed to be monk,” however, his father “insisted – fight – there’s a war in Scotland – go and win us some land and a manor house” (42). Most of them simply want to be at home with their wives, families, minding the land under the sun, others instead are too young that they can only be used as cannon fodder. The soldiers’ reluctance to join the army in the first place explains the reason why the stereotypes against the Scots get more venomous than the regular, since they are “stuck in this arsehole of a country” (72).

As they struggle to keep themselves warm in the biting cold of the Highlands, the soldiers “play guess” in trying to understand how a normal person can survive in such climate. While doing the inventory of the treasure found in the castle, Egham comes up with some interesting theories. First of all, “Scots *are* hairy.” Men are “not supposed to attempt to deduce God’s intentions but [...] if God had meant people to live this far north, he would have given us [the English] fur” (40). This theory alone does not satisfy Egham, who goes on speculating about “other kind[s] of heat” they must marshal inside (41). The second things that comes to his mind is “grudge:” “that’s what it is. [...] their grudge keeps them warm. [...] their dislike of us is keeping those bastards warm. [...] they hate us and all we do is make the hairy ungrateful treacherous bastards more comfortable” (41).

Scots are seen as ungrateful people who refuse to accept the English’s kindness. According to the soldiers, they have left warm, beautiful England to come all the way north, in such inhospitable territory, to free its people from tyranny, and all they get is “stones and shitty water and food’s shit” (59). As the English discuss what will be served for dinner, they complain about everything that the Scottish soil produces:

- We’re not exactly starving.
- Not if you count eating shit.
- It’s not shit – that’s not right – it’s just weird.
- Horse food.
- Oats
- Cow tonight, though. You can’t go wrong with cow. [...] Pretty much just roast the thing. What can go wrong with that?

— There'll be something. It won't be cow, it'll be Scottish cow and it'll taste of shitty water. There's bound to be something. Or it'll have bits. [...] There's too much bits of stone in them. (57)

However, the most sophisticated stereotype present in *Dunsinane* is that of Gruach as a witch. Greig maintains Shakespeare's witch-like nature of Lady Macbeth and transforms it in a legend so powerful that it spreads even south of the march. The Queen is described as "preparing a drink over a cauldron," while her women sing. The Boy Soldier, who is keeping watch, associates this scene with the creepy stories revolving around Gruach that circulate in England and inquires about their truthfulness. The Queen is said to be a witch who eats babies and can make potions that turn people into birds. Indeed, she is the first to spread those stories around. The Boy Soldier tells her that "they say that your husband would [...] murder people and when he'd murder them, he'd [...] subdue their wives" and bring the children to Gruach to eat (60). It is interesting to notice that the boy does not seem intimidated but rather curious about this infamous Queen. Gruach does not feel offended and, actually, she makes fun of the young boy's credulity:

Gruach: Don't you eat baby meat in England?

Boy Soldier: No – not in Kent, anyway.

Gruach: You should try it. [...] it's delicious. Very tender. (60)

The same stereotype is repeated and further enriched by Lulach, who uses the fact that his mother is a witch to threaten the English soldiers: "My mother's women are witches. They cast spells. They use plants to make spells which we drink to give us secret powers" (122). Depending on the potions, those who drink it can be made invulnerable to wounds from arrows and swords, turn them invisible, "cause dreams to make the English soldiers sicken," destroy walls and even "make the blood run so hot it burns you" (122). In addition, like the

weird sisters of *Macbeth*, Gruach and her women can manipulate the weather, and conjure mist, snow and rain storms.

Although the English general attitude towards the Scots is far then worse, soldiers show their appreciation for the local female beauties. Though they are no poets, from the same mouths that spout insults to everything in Scotland, words of celebration of the Hen Girl's charm come out. It is worth noticing that we are told nothing of the Scots' reaction to the English invasion, apart from that of the Hen Girl. The only woman the soldiers admire is also the only representative of the Scots who we clearly see in action, not fighting for a king or a queen, but for her country's sake, as she is freeing the prisoners and exhorting them to counter-attack: "All of you – rise and fight – fight the invader. Fight" (118). More in general, as the Boy Soldier writes in a letter to his mother, at the sight of an English the common people of Scotland, the peasants, "back down" and "cast their eyes down – they mumble and hold their breath – as you should for a soldier" (128).

Throughout the play, the English army does not make any effort to try to understand the Scots and mend the stereotypes that separate the two peoples. As Malcolm explains,

There are pattern of loyalty between us – there are alliances – there are friends who say they're friends but work against us and others who say they're enemies but quietly help us – there are networks of obligations between us – there are marriages and births between us – there are narrowly balanced feuds between us – feuds that only need the smallest breath of the wrong word spoken to tip them into war – there are patterns between us. (108)

It is in this "delicate filigree," that the English soldiers are destroying with no regards. It must be remembered, though, that the soldiers are mainly ignorant peasants from the lowest classes. It is already difficult for them to understand their own situation, let alone trying to

put themselves into their “enemies” shoes. However, in their own simple way, they have realized that life is hard no matter where you are, and that “the point of life is to survive.” In the view Egham is trying to teach to the Boy Soldier, “you just have to get through as much of life alive as you possibly can [...]. Stay alive and be comfortable. These are the purposes of life. And they’re also the two things that are hardest to do when you’re spending your summer fighting a fucking war in Scotland” (43).

Ding Dong! The Witch is Dead: towards the possibility of a devolution

8th April 2013 was and will pass down in history as a memorable day for many people, especially in Scotland. Announced over the tune of the famous Wizard of Oz's song "Ding Dong! The witch is dead" on the anti-Thatcher side, and celebrated with English punk rock band Notsensibles's lyrics of "I'm in love with Margaret Thatcher" on the pro-Thatcher side, the news of the Iron Lady's death immediately spread in all of the UK and the world.

The degree of hypocrisy that was necessary to deal with such controversial figure in death, as much as it was required in life, was astonishing, with celebratory hymns and eulogies written, Tweeted, posted or, more traditionally, released to the press, by many MPs seconds after the announcement of her death was made public. I will not offer an analysis of Thatcher's government and her legacy, it is not in my competence and it is best left as an almost unlimited source of debate for future generations of historians to come. I will focus instead on the reception of this piece of news by Scottish people, and especially of anti-Thatcherites and Labour Party supporters, as it shows how the common people's portrayal of the Iron Lady is often aligned with that of several dictators, both of the Left and the Right. I am interested in highlighting this disturbing parallelism, as it is drawn by the Scots, because it is reflected in Greig's particular choice of historical moments which made up the three act of the play I am going to deal with in this chapter, namely the Scottish epic *Victoria*. As a matter of fact, *Victoria* is set in three, very specific, historical moments, that have shaken and reshaped the course of events from Washington to London, Berlin to Buenos Aires, down to the smallest villages in the northernmost of Scotland. The first part is set in 1936, when the National Socialist ideas were beginning to spread and poison entire generations all over the

world. The second part takes place in 1974, as “embryonic Thatcherism”⁸⁰ was growing into full form and strength, while the final part of the play is set in 1996, in the aftermath of the Thatcher’s rule, and it depicts the clash and almost defeat of the environmental policies supporters against the capitalistic logic of environment exploitation and destruction. I am not interested in *Victoria* for its plot line. Other scholars, e.g. Claire Wallace, have already provided plenty of comments on that, but I want to focus on the historical background which Greig so specifically indicates in the stage directions. The plot develops along a timeline that starts with embryo Nazism, unfolds during the years preceding Thatcher's Premiership, and ends in post Thatcherism. Indeed, it brings together two political leaders, who always unnamed in the background of the story, are to be found together in recent newspapers and magazines’ articles, not to mention in various satirical TV shows.

Greig was, by his own admission, not a supporter of the Iron Lady’s policy or an admirer of how her legacy had transformed the UK: “the Britain I grew up in [...] has been torn up by successive Westminster governments [...] and seems determined to live in a low-tax, high-inequality, American-style future. I don’t want to live in America. I don’t want to live in Thatcherland.”⁸¹ However, by illustrating the associations between Thatcher and other dictators of the WWII as they were reported in several newspapers, and by linking them to Greig’s play in his dealing with these particularly controversial historical moments, I absolutely do not want to imply that Greig agrees with this connection. I simply want to observe that it is curious that “his most Scottish of works to date,”⁸² as Claire Wallace has labelled it, is centred on the years of Thatcherism and these are introduced at length by a first

⁸⁰ Claire Wallace, *The Theatre of David Greig* (New York & London: Bloomsbury Publishing Plc, 2013), p. 80.

⁸¹ David Greig, Scotland and England: what future for the Union?, August 28, 2011, www.theguardian.com/culture/2011/aug/28/scottish-independence-snp-iain-banks.

⁸² Claire Wallace, *op. cit.*, p. 74.

act dealing with Nazi doctrines. The historical periods under analysis will be further discussed by making references to another of Greig's Scottish plays, namely *Outlying Islands*.

As soon as the news of Thatcher's death was released to the public, the response was characterized by strongly mixed feelings. Apart from the Conservatives' more or less spontaneous eulogies, the general reaction of the common people was that of deeply felt joy. "Death parties" were held throughout the United Kingdom, literally united in the celebration of Thatcher's departure. The *Daily Mail* reports with condemning tones about the funeral parties which took place in the major cities, e.g. Bristol, Glasgow, Liverpool but also London, that proved to be "disgraceful scenes" of inappropriate merrymaking unleashed after "30 years of loathing"⁸³ of the Baroness. Leaving aside the moral judgment expressed by all the British major newspapers concerning these "death parties," it is relevant to notice that people all over the UK felt the need to celebrate. In Scotland in particular, where the "collateral effects" of Thatcher's politics of austerity had the worst consequences, people gathered together and went all out with the celebrations: dusting off the old vinyls playing Elvis Costello's famous anti-Thatcher song "Tramp the dirt down,"⁸⁴ and popping champagne bottles and booze, Scots were rejoicing for the definitive "end of an era."⁸⁵

Although several anti-Thatcher representatives condemned the celebrations, it is undeniable that many outstanding personalities and political leaders of the opposition have

⁸³ James Chapman, et. al. "The Flames of Hatred: 30 Years of Loathing for Baroness Thatcher Explodes in Celebrations of Her Death. Will Funeral Now Be Targeted?," *Daily Mail*, September 4, 2013, www.dailymail.co.uk/news/article-2306165/Margaret-Thatcher-death-parties-The-Lefts-sick-celebration-Brixtons-streets.html.

⁸⁴ Both admiration and visceral hate have inspired many songs about Margaret Thatcher. For more information see Graeme McIver, "So Long, the Musical Legacy of Margaret Thatcher," *The Point Issue N.5*, Autumn 2013, www.thepointhowever.org/index.php/culture/167-so-long-the-musical-legacy-of-margaret-thatcher.

⁸⁵ Ben Rankin, "Margaret Thatcher Dead: Durham Miners to Hold Funeral Party and 'Celebrate End of an Era'," *Mirror*, September 4, 2012, www.mirror.co.uk/news/uk-news/margaret-thatcher-dead-durham-miners-1820941#ixzz2tgTMuT5M.

publicly declared their satisfaction and feeling that divine retribution was finally brought about. Scottish comedian Frankie Boyle with his dark humour commented that "Finally, I get to wear my black suit and tap shoes together,"⁸⁶ while general secretary of the Durham Miners' Association, David Hopper, stated that her death was a "great day" for coal miners.⁸⁷ MP George Galloway in a Twitter message quoted Costello's song and declared on *BBC Sunday Politics* that it would be hypocritical to speak of Mrs Thatcher differently only because she is dead.⁸⁸ Robert Florence, one of the creator of the Scottish comedy sketch show "Burnistoun," tweeted: "I wish there was a Margaret Thatcher statue in Glasgow. I'd like to be seen on the news toppling it and hitting it with my shoes."⁸⁹ Florence was beat to the punch by theatre producer Paul Kelleher, who, as early as 2002, decided to give his contribution to the inauguration of Mrs Thatcher's statue, by beheading the two-tons of marble with a cricket bat.⁹⁰ Mark Mardell, correspondent for the *BBC News*, with gracious sarcasm, perorated the cause that Mrs Thatcher's statue, like the Venus of Milo, "should remain headless" as riddle for future semiologists, so that they can have fun mistaking it for a statue of Stalin, thus "prov[ing] that the Iron Lady and the Man of Steel were the same historical person," and so restoring it "complete with moustache."⁹¹

⁸⁶ "Thatcher's Death Provokes Party in Glasgow and Celebrations Elsewhere," *Herald Scotland*, August 4, 2013, <http://www.heraldsotland.com/news/home-news/thatchers-death-provokes-celebrations-by-some.1365427934>.

⁸⁷ Ben Ranking, *op.cit.*

⁸⁸ George Galloway's interview for the *BBC Sunday Politics* is available on Youtube at <http://youtu.be/AzRi-H1bLyBY>

⁸⁹ "Thatcher's Death Provokes Party in Glasgow and Celebrations Elsewhere," *Herald Scotland*, August 4, 2013, <http://www.heraldsotland.com/news/home-news/thatchers-death-provokes-celebrations-by-some.1365427934>.

⁹⁰ David Millward and Sean O'Neill, "Man Beheaded Statue of Thatcher 'to Save Son from Capitalism'," *The Telegraph*, May 7, 2002, <http://www.telegraph.co.uk/news/uknews/1399370/Man-be-headed-statue-of-Thatcher-to-save-son-from-capitalism.html>.

⁹¹ Mark Mardell, "Hitler, Tutors and Thatcher," *BBC News*, August 7, 2002, http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/uk_news/politics/2115828.stm.

However, the most angered and suffered response was that of the lower classes, especially the miners, which had been the most battered by Thatcher's government. Her decision to close several industries, pits and the shipbuilding factories, essentially targeting the core of the Scottish economy of that time, destroyed many communities to the point of no recovery. *The Mirror* reports ex-miner and supporter of the 1984 strike Alan Cummings's comment on the death parties: "She has wrecked thousands and thousands of lives so, no, it's not in poor taste. We can understand why people are happy and rejoicing that she has gone because they remember these communities have never recovered."⁹² Another miner, Ken Carroll, complaining that Thatcher's State funeral will be a (public) money pit, suggested, quite effectively and more in "theme," that "they should drop her down the shaft of the last pit that's open, or put tonnes of coal in her coffin."⁹³ Thatcher's drastic, economic measures made her extremely unpopular and, according to the people, largely contributed to increase the gap not only between the rich and the poor, but also between Scotland and England. Her continued attacks, especially during the mid 80s, on the Scots as "subsidy junkies," once again turned the issue of an independent Scotland into a hot topic to be discussed with urgency. In the words of ex-miner Gordon Wain, "she killed the union."⁹⁴

According to several newspapers, many "death parties" were organised and fuelled by working-class people, especially mothers, who went as far as comparing the ex-Prime Minister to dictators such as Hitler and Stalin. The case of drama teacher Romany Blythe went quite round the world, as she publicly defended her public invitation to take part in the celebrations, as the normal response anyone would have for the death of a tyrant. She added

⁹² Ben Rankin, *op. cit.*.

⁹³ Paul Routledge, "Margaret Thatcher Dead: Yorkshire Pit Village Destroyed by Former Prime Minister Celebrates," *Mirror*, September 4, 2013, <http://www.mirror.co.uk/news/uk-news/margaret-thatcher-dead-yorkshire-pit-1819380#ixzz2v7lzVcN1>.

⁹⁴ Paul Routledge, *op.cit.*

that dancing at Thatcher's funeral was as appropriate as dancing in rejoice for Hitler's death,⁹⁵ and her statement was echoed by other participants, from the UK to Argentina.⁹⁶

As a matter of fact, already during the years she was in power, Thatcher was the object of harsh satire that often linked her politics to that of Hitler. As for the arts, her portrait in Westminster was vandalised with a "Hitler moustache,"⁹⁷ while the best source of satirical amusement was provided by theatre and TV comedians. One TV show in particular offered an outrageous portrait of Mrs Thatcher as transvestite, cigar-smoking disciple of Hitler. The series in question is the famous and extremely long-running puppet show "Spitting Image,"⁹⁸ which made the Iron Lady its favourite political target. In an episode of the first season, Mrs Thatcher and an elderly Hitler – still alive and well, disguised as creepy gramps with a strong German accent – discuss the problems on her agenda. The episode opens with Herr Jeremy von Wilcox (Hitler), gassing the flower pots on his terrace because, as he explains, "some of my insects were living without permission." Mrs Thatcher, his lovely "little Frau Fuhrer," has come to seek advice about how to deal with the miners and the unemployed: "It's the Yorkshire miners! We're having terrible troubles with the Union." Hitler, sympathising with her situation, and mistaking the trade Union of Mineworkers with the Soviet Union, suggests her to invade it, though "not in winter!" As for the unemployed, the only actual solution is to

⁹⁵ Benedict Moore-Bridger, "Margaret Thatcher Compared to Hitler by 'Death Party' Organiser," *London Evening Standard*, November 4, 2013, www.standard.co.uk/news/uk/margaret-thatcher-compared-to-hitler-by-death-party-organiser-8568457.html.

⁹⁶ See Claudio Rameseira, editor of the Hispanic New York Blog, for Fox News Latino: "To some Argentineans, Thatcher is like Hitler is to Britain in the 1940s - a big monster. You won't find any sympathy for her at a popular level." Full article available by Brian Llenas, "Margaret Thatcher's death stirs mixed feelings in Argentina", *Fox News Latino*, April 8, 2013, <http://latino.foxnews.com/latino/politics/2013/04/08/margaret-thatcher-death-stirs-mixed-feelings-in-argentina/>

⁹⁷ Actually this happened in 1992, two years after Thatcher was forced to retire from Prime Minister. Full article: "House hunts the Hitler-moustache artist," *The Independent*, December 1, 1992, <http://www.independent.co.uk/news/uk/politics/house-hunts-the-hitlermoustache-artist-1560775.html>

⁹⁸ Spitting Image, season 1, episode 2. Available online on Youtube at http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=k2Dn-W5uCl_A

“put them into army. [...] You already have a fine army [...], build it up, especially as SS, they’re a great bunch of guys,” this latter remark misunderstood by Thatcher, as she thinks he is talking about the SAS.⁹⁹ Before parting, Hitler gives her his wisest advice: “be careful with Argentina, you never know when it might come in handy.”

Although slightly exaggerated for the sake of comic effects, this satirical sketch, like the rest of the comments and artistic retaliations mentioned earlier in this chapter, are indicative of how the Thatcher’s government was perceived by many British citizens, especially Scottish. Reinforcing this vision, in a recent interview Scottish first minister Alex Salmond defined Thatcher’s administration a “government of occupation.”¹⁰⁰ As the day of the Scottish referendum for Independence approaches, both English and Scottish leaders have been forced to re-evaluate the history of the Union. David Greig writes that “the Independence debate is asking new questions about nationhood. Patriotism has not been a major driver. The last forty years have seen the build up of a powerful civic consensus in Scotland which carefully separates electoral polity from national identity.”¹⁰¹ British Prime Minister David Cameron, however, has “made it personal,” setting out an “‘emotional [and] patriotic’ case to keep Scotland in the UK.”¹⁰² He took advantage of the public speech for the celebration of the British victories at the Sochi Olympics, to deliver a moving plea about the necessity of remaining a single and united nation. As *The Guardian* reports, “he said he

⁹⁹ UK Special Air Service, founded during the WWII, it became the pride and boast of Thatcher after the 1980 siege of the Iranian Embassy in London.

¹⁰⁰ “Interviewing Alex Salmond, the man who wants to break up Britain,” *The Economist*, January 12, 2012, <http://www.economist.com/blogs/bagehot/2012/01/independence-debate-scotland-0>

¹⁰¹ David Greig, “Why the Debate on Scottish Independence Might Be More Interesting Than You Think?,” *Bella Caledonia*, April 8, 2013, <http://bellacaledonia.org.uk/2013/08/04/why-the-debate-on-scottish-independence-might-be-more-interesting-than-you-think/>.

¹⁰² Patrick Wintour, “David Cameron Sets Out ‘Emotional, Patriotic’ Case to Keep Scotland in UK,” *The Guardian*, July 2, 2014, <http://www.theguardian.com/politics/2014/feb/07/david-cameron-scottish-independence-referendum-olympic-park>.

wanted his daughter to be able to read his favourite childhood book – HE Marshall's *Our Island Story: A History of Britain for Boys and Girls from the Romans to Queen Victoria* – which tells the ‘great, world-beating story’ of the UK.”¹⁰³ Cameron’s speech confirms the Yes-voters’ point, that those against the independence of Scotland are only looking at the past and refuse to look forward. As a matter of fact, the No-campaign “obsesses over history and [...] dwells over past glories at the expense of the current realities and difficulties” that modern Scotland has to face. Indeed, the No-side “unashamedly uses the Second World War as an example of how well the UK has worked to fight brutality and imperialism, ignoring completely the international nature of the fight against Hitler.”¹⁰⁴ Deputy first minister of Scotland Nicola Sturgeon has commented very firmly that “now we are being love-bombed, so let us celebrate the bonds of history, culture and family in all parts of the UK – but that does not mean we should be governed from London.”¹⁰⁵ Indeed, contrarily to Cameron’s statement that “centuries of history hang in the balance,”¹⁰⁶ the SNP and the Yes-campaign have often remarked how Independence will not change the past history shared as one nation. As Greig puts it, “the Union is an unhappy marriage. I think it's time we both sat down and said it out loud – it's over.”¹⁰⁷ It is impossible to think that a referendum will eradicate centuries of common history and successes, it would not be fair as Scotland always contributed to the causes of the United Kingdom, as much as any other ex-colony of the British Empire, though on a different status.

¹⁰³ Patrick Wintour, *op. cit.*.

¹⁰⁴ Natalie McGarry, “Independence Will Change Future, Not Past,” *Scotsman*, June 9, 2013, <http://www.scotsman.com/news/comment-independence-will-change-future-not-past-1-3079001>.

¹⁰⁵ Patrick Wintour, *op. cit.*

¹⁰⁶ David Cameron complete speech available at *The Spectator*, February 7, 2014, <http://blogs.spectator.co.uk/coffeehouse/2014/02/david-camersons-speech-on-scottish-independence-full-text-and-audio/>

¹⁰⁷ David Greig, Scotland and England: what future for the Union?, August 28, 2011, www.theguardian.com/culture/2011/aug/28/scottish-independence-snp-iain-banks.

In analysing *Victoria* and *Outlying Island* I will show Scotland's reaction and participation in the political decisions of the UK both during the WWII and during Thatcher's administration. Scotland has offered his men and his soil for the victory of the Allies (*Victoria* and *Outlying Islands*), and for the highest cause of defeating the Axis with its infamous Nazi ideology. However, when the time came for Scotland to stand up to England to protect herself, she did not back off (*Victoria*). Scotland bravely faced Hitler in the 1940s as much as she did with Thatcher in the 1980s: such past certainly cannot be made to disappear.

Let us start with the first historical block as it is dealt with by Greig in Part One "The Bride" of *Victoria* and in *Outlying Islands*, namely the rise to power of Hitler and the consequences of the fascist doctrines exported from Europe to Scotland. *Victoria* (2000) is set in a rural village on the coast during the autumn of 1936 while *Outlying Islands* (2002) features a small and unnamed island – certainly Scottish – North of the Atlantic ocean, and it is set in the summer months before WWII.

In his notes to *Victoria*, which can be easily applied to *Outlying Islands* too, Greig comments on the inspiration for the play:

The physical presence of history is unavoidable in towns and cities. But perhaps in smaller places, places more remote from the capitals of nations, history is refracted and revealed in a different way, its effects inscribed more subtly on the landscape [...]. Of course, in the West Highlands, the twentieth century and its effects are set against a haunting absence brought about through clearance and emigration, and set also against the presence, in the mountains and in the sea, of a much larger geological time – both of which

serve to contextualise the recent past and our dreams of the future. (*Victoria*, Author's Note)

Greig's words are voiced in the play by Victoria, as she urges her lover, Oscar, to run away with her: "What's here? [...] A scraping of land on top of rock, and...a weigh of oldness. [...] World's moving. People's moving. [...] The world is waiting for us, we've only to take our place in it" (20). The world in 1936 was indeed moving, completely in upheaval because of the new fascist doctrines which managed to find their way even in such remote villages in Scotland. In the play, David, heir of the only noble estate left, the Red House, has just returned from an extremely exciting four-year journey in Europe that completely transformed him into an enthusiastic supporter of Nazi ideology. Moreover, as introduced in the "Author's Note," David is also the heir of an uncomfortable recent past: his grandparents are responsible for taking part in the Highland clearances, and everybody in the village still remembers it very well since "half Canada's there because of the Allans" (40). Melancholically drinking alone during his stag night, David finds Gavin, Callum and Euan, local farm workers, and starts telling them about his discoveries as they would "be amazed if you'd seen what I'd seen. Truly amazed" (25). While he proudly shows Euan the swastika he has tattooed on his arm, David rambles on about the strength of Germany and the advent of a great purging fire that will cleanse the world of its degeneracy:

The forces are gathering [...] This is what I learned in Germany. An avatar has come. [...] The forces of the north, the pure, against the forces of the degenerate, the civilised, the carriers of disease. There will be a fire. A magnificent fire. Corpses will be interred and their blood will enrich the soil. Your corpse may be one of them. Mine certainly will. I want it. (29)

At first Oscar tries to dismiss David's speech as the result of some kind of disease he might have caught in Germany, suggesting either madness – “King of some mad place” – or syphilis for much “consorting with students and whores on the banks of the Rhine” (40). However, the discussion soon turns political. As Euan notes, David and the Allans in general, are and have always been the masters, “he's the owner of the land. He's to keep it for himself and his children. That's the side he's on.” For the farm workers David is not simply the noble prodigal son just come back with his head full of “Nazi nonsense,” but he is a threat to their social class: clearly, “side we're on's different” (41), and Euan and Oscar are “sick of those bastards winning” (43).

Although in a different way, David too perceives the difference in their social and moral position. Earlier in the play, while drinking at the bar, he was bitterly joking about it with Gavin: “three hundred years ago you would have admired me. Three hundred years ago I would have been admirable. You a clan and me your captain” (26). However, after having been brainwashed, he feels he is rotten inside, while the other villagers are still “uncontaminated by the ease which has eroded me.” He describes himself as the “last damaged specimen of a once admirable seed” (26), a “biological waste” (29), and the feeling of his degeneracy deepens and sharpens when he compares himself to “working men like you, Euan, [who are] the purest stock” (29). In order to purify himself, David has embraced naturism. Walking naked in the forest, he meets Shona, his maid and Gavin's girlfriend, and explains her that “clothes [...] makes me the master [...] and you the servant,” and exhorts her to take them off so that they can “be simply a man and a woman” (45). David goes on with his delirium of omnipotence, as nakedness transforms humans back into their ancient, godly forms: “we're gods. I'm Loki and you're Hildegard. Your people are descended from the Norse.[...] Those gods still live in you” (46).

David's attempts to cleanse his seed and make sure that "a mistake like me doesn't happen again" reaches the highest peaks of madness when he explains to Euan his plans concerning what we might call "do-it-yourself eugenics." Perfectly in tune with the Nazi theories and experiments to breed Aryans, David wants his heir to be of pure race by artificially inseminating his wife with Euan's sperm. As he explains the reasons behind his choice of marrying Margaret, it becomes clear that he did not marry her for love as she thinks, nor for money. Instead, she is necessary to him for the genetic makeup she will provide for the creation of a pure-breed, new generation of Allans: "she is of pure racial stock. [...] She has no health problems and the women of her family are fertile. [...] But there is a problem. [...] She is light, Euan, and I am dark. She's blood. I am pus. A poison waiting to erupt. Unfit" (58). David's obsession over his own degeneracy and the need to breed a pure-race heir as duty "towards history and my [David's] race" (58) pushes him as far as selecting Euan, as the purest-blood of his acquaintances, to be the sperm donor: "I have gathered a pot and a pipette. [...] I would like you to ejaculate into this pot" (58). The plan and method is extremely rudimentary: as David admits, "this is a technique that's been used with cattle," however, he seems "reasonably certain of success" (58). Accompanied by David's threatening words, "I chose you carefully and I've been planning for some time. I would hate to see it spoiled" (59), Euan complies to his request but also makes the decision that will completely change his life and that of his friends. He bounds and gags David and then, pressuring Oscar, convinces him to shoot the "evil fascist cunt" (62). Euan wants to test him to see if he is really only "all talk" (63) before both of them embark on a long journey to Spain, where they will fight against General Franco to bring down his fascist regime. Indeed, it is Oscar that will finally pull the trigger to prevent David's Nazi madness to spread and poison the village.

Apart from David, more or less explicit references to Nazism are rare and quite subtle. At one time, Margaret, David's fiancée from England, is amiably chitchatting with a group of women of the high bourgeoisie, while the topic of the conversation falls on one of the women's doctor. Mrs MacPhee describes him as a "lovely Jewish man who went by the name of Allbright. [...] He became involved in some form of politics and went a bit – funny" (38). Mrs MacPhee is quick to dismiss the gravity of the consequences of the spread of Nazism, and the reason might be because she is a woman from high society, more concerned about gossiping than politics. However, it is significant that the whole issue of what was happening to the Jews in that period is summarised with such a simple word, "funny," the same word that could be applied to David, who also became involved in politics "and went a bit – funny."

The first part of *Victoria* ends with the image of David's corpse hanging on a tree "from a butcher's hook," while his wife and his rich friends are gathered around in shock. The stage direction tells us that "they look but they daren't touch" (65), a sentence that perfectly summarises the spirit of a generation, and especially of certain social classes, who did nothing to prevent Hitler's rise to power, did not firmly reject Nazism – but in several occasions were fascinated by it – and simply watched unconcerned until war was declared. Nevertheless, this part also shows the opposition to fascism of the common people, of a generation of young Scots who believed that they could make a difference and be of help in the international fight against the Nazi ideology. As a matter of fact, *Victoria*, in "The Bride," offers a perfect, general overview of what the advent of Nazism meant for Scotland. Indeed, it summarises the main features of the Nazi doctrine and shows how it could completely shake the routine of even the most isolated community, by waving some of the core aspects of this ideology – such as eugenics, the purification of race, human degeneracy and naturism

– into the main plot line. With this scenario in mind, let us analyse how the UK was planning to defeat Nazi Germany during the month immediately before the official declaration of war.

In *Outlying Islands*, Greig uses bird-watching as a cover to discuss the British war strategies against the Axis. The American website WND¹⁰⁸ reports the details of the declassified documents on the chemical experiments carried on during the 1940s. The tests focused on the effects of the newly discovered deadly anthrax, which the Germans first experimented in Romania during the first World War. The 1925 Geneva protocol “for the prohibition of the use in war of asphyxiating, poisonous or other gases, and of bacteriological methods of warfare” – as the United States Office for Disarmament Affairs states on its website¹⁰⁹ – was unfortunately not enough to prevent the use of chemical weapons. Following in the footsteps of Germany and Japan – which as early as the 1930s had already set up secret labs in the remote north of China for human testing of anthrax¹¹⁰ – the UK joined forces with the USA and started its own tests.¹¹¹ Gruinard Island, not too far from mainland Scotland, was selected for the experiments with anthrax on sheep and cattle. As a matter of fact, “in 1940 the British government wanted to have an offensive BW weapon ready within six months for retaliatory purposes,”¹¹² fearing that Nazi Germany could attack the UK with chemical weapons, and such small and outlying island seemed the perfect place to test the effects of this agent.

¹⁰⁸ H.P. Albarelli Jr., “The Secret History of Anthrax,” *WND*, November 6, 2001, <http://www.wnd.com/2001/11/11567/>.

¹⁰⁹ “1925 Geneva Protocol,” *United Nations Office for Disarmament Affairs*, <http://www.un.org/disarmament/WMD/Bio/1925GenevaProtocol.shtml>.

¹¹⁰ The infamous and horrible experiments of the Unit 731 in Harbin.

¹¹¹ “The US also undertook joint research and development projects with Canada and Britain. At outposts in Scotland and Wales, for example, anthrax bomblets [...] were tested.” From Eric Croddy, *Chemical and Biological Warfare* (New York: Spring-Verlag New York Inc, 2002). p.30.

¹¹² “British Technology and the Second World War,” *Stanford.edu*, <http://cs.stanford.edu/people/eroberts/courses/ww2/projects/chemical-biological-warfare/uk.htm>.

The sub plot of *Outlying Islands* entirely revolves around the experiments of Gruinard Island, on which Greig “waves his work of fiction with a combination of ornithology, sexual awakening and political conspiracy.”¹¹³ John and Robert, two ornithologists from Cambridge University are ordered by the government to make an inventory of the bird population of a tiny unnamed island in the north of Britain, which is inhabited by nobody a part from Kirk, the owner, and his beautiful niece, Ellen, once a summer. John and Robert are genuinely enthusiastic about what seems to be the greatest opportunity of their career, since in this small scrap of land, the rare species of the fork-tail petrel has its “landfall, to breed, [after a] life spent at sea.”¹¹⁴ However, they will soon learn the truth about the reasons behind their mission. The image of the final explosion that will blow up the island at the end of the play – and which, actually we will not see on stage – is first hinted at at the beginning. The two ornithologists have just landed on shore and seek shelter in an ancient pagan chapel. They try to warm themselves up, Robert pours a bottle of paraffin on the peats but in the animated chitchat about birds, he forgets about it and lighting his cigarette lighter almost sets the chapel on fire.

An explosion [...].

John: You blew us up.

Robert: Hair and skin burned. [...] Sudden light, then a sucking of air, an engulfing roar, the sound of a flame taking but amplified [...]. I nearly killed us [...]. Shaking – raging – fear comes after – which is what must be like for a soldier – under fire [...]. (139-40)

¹¹³ “IN This Pitlochry Festival Theatre Summer Season Which, in This Reviewer’s Opinion, Has Been Far from a Vintage One, It Is Left to the Final of the Six Plays in Repertoire to Give Audiences Something to Really Get Their Teeth Into...,” *Daily Record*, August 29, 2008, <http://www.dailyrecord.co.uk/news/local-news/pitlochry-festival-theatre-summer-season-2763840>.

¹¹⁴ “Outlying Islands,” *The Age*, July 4, 2004, <http://www.theage.com.au/articles/2004/04/06/1081222460607.html?from=storyrhs>.

When Ellen joins them in the chapel, John, very significantly, sums up the accident with a single line: “it seems we were at the centre of a conflagration” (141), and indeed his words resounds with a very prophetic tone. Few moments later, while John complains about the island, Robert reproaches him by laying bare the truth about what future awaits them, thus proving that the tragedy of war, and more in general of history, reaches even the northernmost isle in Scotland: “You could be dead next year. [...] Sent off to some blinking foxhole and blinking gassed or something” (147).

Greig’s description of Ellen’s hands seems to be another significantly ominous symbol, and partly an anticipation, of the effects of the anthrax on humans. Among the various methods of contamination, skin-contact was one of the most common in the past, as anthrax can be produced naturally by livestock. If contracted through skin contact, the disease will spread first similarly to burned pimples, then blisters and within a week the skin will turn into black scabs. Greig interrupts the flow of the narration to create a brief scene where he can discuss Ellen’s claw-like hands. As she sets to light the fire, John and Robert find themselves almost flabbergasted realizing how her hand skin is damaged and quite horrible to look at.

Robert: Your hands. They’re...

[...]

Ellen: Eczema, sir. [...] It’s nothing. Makes my hands look like claws.

Robert: Your hands don’t look like claws.

Ellen: Feel like claws. When they’re looked at. (142-3)

Later, when John and Robert are alone, they talk about Ellen, and despite her beauty, it is impossible for them not to mention her hands, “which are riven with eczema, look like claws.

They do, rather” (151). The accidental paraffin explosion, together with Ellen’s spoilt and ugly skin, set the tone for their last and most unsettling discovery.

The revelatory moment comes during dinner, when a malicious Kirk, drunk with whiskey, at first teases and then completely discloses the plans of the British government to use the island as testing ground for chemical weapons. Robert explains Kirk that they are there to do “the first comprehensive survey of the island’s wildlife [...] petrels in particular,” pointing out the privilege of being able to research in such “pristine habitat [...] barely been touched by humans” (155). The ornithologists’ enthusiasm for the beautiful wilderness of such pristine nature is charged with drama as Kirk’s next comments will reveal that the island is bound to be contaminated.

Kirk: Preparations, is it? Hush-hush.

John: Preparations?

Kirk: For war. [...] This is a diamond for you ministry boys. Am I right? You can do what you like here and nobody need to know. (155)

Reminding the audience about the experiments on the livestock of Gruinard Island, Kirk lets out that the sheep will “be put to use for military purposes” (156). John and Robert take quite some time to truly understand the implications of Kirk’s words. Robert is the most concerned about this, his mind immediately speculating why the ministry might be “interested in an outlying island,” while John rejects the idea cracking jokes about the new possible strategy, to be employed by the British government to defeat the Germans, to “stuff explosive up a sheep’s arse,” and heard “a flock of living sheep bombs behind the enemy lines” (163). Going back to the chapel for another glass of whiskey after dinner, Kirk is tricked by Robert into revealing what he knows. Kirk’s only concern is about quantifying his losses so that can ask the government for compensation. He wants to seize this opportunity to get rid of a “useless

lump of rock” (167) that has “sat here a hundred years waiting for its time. Sheep and fowl hardly make the trip worth taking every summer. [...] let the military come. As long as I receive due compensation.” As he remarks, he is a “patriot, but [...] not a fool” (156) and he wants to gain the most from this deal. From official documents¹¹⁵ we learn that the British government bought Gruinard Island from its owner for the little sum of £500. In the play Kirk is obsessed with turning into money the government’s interest in his isle: “the question is, what am I to lose?” (164). Robert pretends to know about what he is talking about and urges him to tell him his complaints in detail: “I hold the rights to the grazing. Eighty sheep. If I’m to lose my flock to this...thing, that’s eighty sheep.” However, Kirk turns out to be a smart man when it comes to haggling, he knows that “this thing” will destroy his source of living for quite a long time. “And then, after. Will I be able to graze next year or will the land be poisoned? [...] I’m not asking about the sheep...I’m aware of the destruction of the sheep. I’m asking about the birds. [...] Nobody has considered the birds” (165). Once again Kirk proves himself to be insensible to environmental issues.

Robert: Mr. Kirk, this island is a sanctuary. It’s pristine [...] It must be spoiled. You’ll simply have to recommend another.

Kirk: I don’t want to recommend another. I want to recommend this one. This one is mine. [...] I’d have sold it years ago if there was ever a buyer. [...] for seven hundred pounds my niece can be married and her husband given a share of a herring-drifter. That is supporting life. (167).

If the two ornithologists are alarmed by the idea of seeing the entire island and its rare fauna disappear, Kirk can only see his “fowling rights” and annual hunting loot go to waste without compensation: “does the germ kill birds? That’s what I want to know” (165). Kirk was only

¹¹⁵ Graham S. Pearson, “Gruinard Island Returns to Civil Use,” *The ASA Newsletter*, October 1990, <http://www.asanltr.com/newsletter/01-5/articles/015c.htm>.

told that “it was the germ that causes Woolsorters,” namely the anthrax’s second name as in the past it was a disease usually associated with industrial workers or farmers. “It occurs naturally around the world in wild and domestic hoofed animals, especially cattle, sheep, goats,”¹¹⁶ and if not treated in time, it kills those who have been exposed to the livestock’s deadly spores. Kirk remembers a “Harris man [who] got it years ago. Black sores all over his arms,” and from this description Robert immediately recognizes the anthrax, something that, to common ears, “has the sound of the devil about it” (166). This realization strikes him in all its dramatic seriousness: “the ministry’s intention [...] is to bomb this island with anthrax in order to see how many living things will be wiped out. And for how long” (167). As Robert bitterly remarks, “the last wild scrap of rock and soil. And they want to make a laboratory out of it. To enculturate it with their germ.”

Like the British scientists of the 1940s, “they don’t want us to observe [...], they want us to take a census of the living dead” (169). Though the characters never mention the infamous name of Gruinard Island, they do refer to Porton Down, the really-existing British secret centre for chemical and biological warfare research.

Robert: The letter must have been from Porton Down, was it?

Kirk: That’s right, aye.

John: Porton Down?

Robert: That’s the project. Porton Down. (166)

The existence of the military research centre of Porton Down was only admitted in the 1960s, and its mention in a play set twenty years earlier, I believe, serves for the audience to connect the reality-inspired, though fictional events on stage to the historical events of the WWII and Gruinard Island.

¹¹⁶ “Anthrax (malignant Edema, Woolsorters’ Disease),” *New York State Department of Health*, October 2011, https://www.health.ny.gov/diseases/communicable/anthrax/fact_sheet.htm.

In his ingenuity, Robert thinks that by simply killing Kirk, the government will forget its plans for the island, but, as it will turn out at the end of the play, he will be proven wrong: ignoring Kirk's murder and Robert suicide, they will carry on with their experiments. Promptly after a month of research, the governmental ship arrives at the island to fetch the ornithologists. The Captain wants to know about their findings, "the ministry chaps are eager to see what you've got. Whether the island is suitable for the project. I have to say, it looks ideal to me." And with John's blessing to the project, "I think it will be suitable, sir. Pristine. A diamond" (230), the ship sets sail for the mainland, carrying with it John and Ellen, the only islander left. As they prepare to leave, one might hear the echo of Robert's word about the war: if fighting might be natural, the same cannot be said of carnage. "War. Is it natural? Two men fight, two birds fight, that's natural enough. But do you ever see a thousand or million birds flock together to attack a million others? Birds kill, but you never see them massacre. War and God. Perhaps they are peculiarly human inventions" (159).

Gruinard Island was subject of annual inspection until 1979, when the Porton Down team of scientists declared that decontamination was finally feasible. To urge the British government to take quick action with regards of the island's future, at the beginning of the 1980s, the terrorist group Dark Harvest left buckets of contaminated soil outside the facilities of Porton Down and some were also sent to Prime Minister Margaret Thatcher. According to their statement, "they were returning the 'seeds of death' to their source. The group claimed that microbiologists from two universities landed on Gruinard Island, and with the assistance of locals had removed 300 pounds of contaminated soil,"¹¹⁷ threatening to leave other buckets at "appropriate places"¹¹⁸ if the government would have continued to refuse not to take action.

¹¹⁷ W. Seth Carus, *Bioterrorism and Biocrimes: The Illicit Use of Biological Agents Since 1900*, Center for Counterproliferation Research. National Defense University (Amsterdam: Fredonia Books, 2002). p.58.

¹¹⁸ *Ibidem*.

As a matter of fact, the soil tested resulted a match to the island's soil, and "the British government subsequently agreed to decontaminate Gruinard Island, although it is not known if the decision to eliminate the contamination resulted from the publicity engendered by 'Dark Harvest.'"¹¹⁹

When in 2007 the devolved Scottish Parliament gathered to discuss the imminent new elections and political agenda, Colin Fox, Lothian leader of the Scottish Socialist Party (SSP), with reference to the possibility of an independent Scotland, argued against the three major points given by the British pro-Unionists, namely that the union provides Scotland with stability, security and economic prosperity.¹²⁰ As many before and after him, he defined Scotland as England's "guinea pig," or rather, "as a kind of Gruinard island to try out their [the Tories'] political anthrax – the poll tax, with all its accompanying problems." As for the security provided by England to Scotland, Fox laments a militarism that people reject:

we have the Faslane nuclear weapons base and Scottish regiments fighting wars under UK direction and Scotland is an arms manufacturing base. Who protects the world from Britain? We threaten the world with nuclear annihilation and we have troops in Afghanistan and involved in the illegal occupation of Iraq. [...] It is our shame that Scotland is implicated in such threats and slaughter.

Fox's appeal to the Parliament echoes the campaign that Greig is carrying out through his plays. Apparently, it has been since the aftermath of the WWII that the same topics have been discussed over and over by Scotland and offered to the public's scrutiny through theatre.

¹¹⁹ *Ibidem*.

¹²⁰ "Official Report. Plenary, 22 Mar 2007," *The Scottish Parliament. Pàrlamaid Na h-Alba*, March 22, 2007, <http://www.scottish.parliament.uk/parliamentarybusiness/28862.aspx?r=4718&mode=html>.

Fox's speech further comments on the supposedly economic advantages that the union with England provides Scotland with, and recalls the workers' protests during Thatcher's administration: "economic prosperity [...] tell that to the men of Calton in east Glasgow, [...] to the children who live in absolutely poverty [...] to the 800.000 people in Scotland who are low paid." Furthermore, he prophesied that "the issue of independence will return with a vengeance if David Cameron wins the next Westminster election." And indeed it has.

Fox's words delivered to the plenary session of the Scottish Parliament represents a perfect bridge between the horror of the past, namely Gruinard Island, repeating itself, though on a different level, and the unbearable years of Thatcherism, and the future, with its hope for an independent Scotland, finally able to choose where she stands. I will now analyse the consequences of the Thatcher's administration as they emerge from Greig's play *Victoria* and how the "Thatcher effect"¹²¹ contributed in channelling the Scots' dissatisfaction into support for the rising SNP.

Thomas Devine, in his famous book *The Scottish Nation 1700-2000*, notes that in the 1970s, "the SNP argued that there was a way out of the spiral of decline if an independent Scotland took control of the enormous oil resources now becoming available in the North Sea."¹²² The discovery of the black gold in the North Atlantic and the subsequent environmental exploitation are at the centre of the second and third part of *Victoria*. Euan belongs to the post-war generation who, especially in the 1960s, has emigrated to the US looking for employment and a chance for a better future. He has just come back to Scotland as rich and successful music producer and tries to describe to his parents the unbelievable advancements of America compared to Scotland: "You should see America. [...] In Glasgow

¹²¹ Stephen Maxwell, "Social Justice and the SNP," in *The Modern SNP: From Protest to Power*, ed. Gerry Hassan (Edinburgh: Edinburgh UP, 2009). p.123.

¹²² Thomas M. Devine, *The Scottish Nation 1700-2000*, quoted in the Background Materials for David Greig, *Victoria* (London: Methuen, 2000).

there's rubbish lying in the streets, strikes everywhere – folk sat on their arses all day moaning like janitors. We're a nation of bloody janitors. None of that in America. Scotland is nowhere. Nowhere in any league" (74).

Later in the play, Euan's long time friend Norrie takes him for a night walk in the hills. They discuss his achievements in America but secretly, Norrie is waiting for the right moment to ask him for a job. Again, Euan stresses his disappointment in the Scottish society, where "everyone sits around on their arse waiting" (92). He is proud to feel American and be part of its productive world: "see, in America people don't look at things and say...I don't know...there's rain, or there's a sunset, or there's a person who's crying. [...] In America they've trained themselves to see the opening" (92). Here Euan offers a few-line summary of the Western economic opportunism that makes the world's capital moving, and which was shamelessly advertised by the British Tories. "So they say, there's rain, I'll sell umbrellas. Or there's a sunset, I'll take a photo for a calendar, there's a person crying, I'll sell them a hanky. They move into the opening" (92). Seeing his own opening, Norrie begs him for a job, however, despite Euan's enthusiasm and celebration of the capitalistic system and of hardworking people in general, he refuses to help an old friend. In a world dominated by a heartless meritocracy, there is no place for sentimentalism:

Euan: For fuck's sake, Norrie. [...] Don't ask me for a job. You're my friend [...].

Norrie: I'm asking because you're my friend.

Euan: If I have job I advertise it, Norrie. Apply. [...] if you're the right person you get the job. [...] I make money, Norrie. I can't pull folk up with me.
[...]

Euan: [...] we punish success in this country and it boils me up, man. I own a Ferrari. You buy a Ferrari because you want to drive fast, alone or with a pretty girl in the bucket seat beside you, skirt riding round her lips. If you want to take the whole fucking village along for the ride you buy a fucking bus. I'm into Ferraris, Norrie. That's all I'm saying. Respect that, man. You know... wave at me as I drive past. (93-4)

Euan praises successful men and their entrepreneurship, he openly despises the vast group of unemployed, blaming them for their own misery, but at the same time, he needs them to remain financially inferior to him in order to please his ego. Euan represents all the values that Margaret Thatcher glorified in her politics, including her admiration and ideological marriage with the US. His lack of empathy towards all the workers laid off in Glasgow and his indignation towards the Scottish garbage society of complaining lazy people closely resembles, if not paraphrases, the ex Prime Minister's attitude.

For the thirtieth anniversary of her election in 1979, Thatcher decided to celebrate with a visit to Glasgow, where she was urged by Margaret Curran, Minister of the Scottish Parliament (MSP) of that time, to apologize to Scotland, and Glasgow in particular, for “wreak[ing] havoc on our city. [...] This is the woman that closed down our shipyards and steel mills, believed that unemployment is a price worth paying, and then told us that she knew best.”¹²³ Proving herself to be the Iron Lady till the very end, Thatcher “refused to apologize and [...] claimed the country was in ‘self-denial’ about its addiction to ‘public subsidy.’”¹²⁴ Euan’s “country of janitors” does not differ that much from Thatcher’s

¹²³ Graham Stewart, “Should Mrs Thatcher Apologise to Scotland?,” *BBC Radio Scotland*, April 5, 2009, http://www.bbc.co.uk/blogs/grahamstewart/2009/05/should_mrs_thatcher_apologise.shtml.

¹²⁴ “Mrs Thatcher: I Won’t Say Sorry to Scotland for Job Cuts and Poll Tax,” *Daily Record*, April 27, 2009, <http://www.dailyrecord.co.uk/news/uk-world-news/mrs-thatcher-wont-say-sorry-1020079>.

Conservatives' "beloved myth" of a "country of subsidy junkie."¹²⁵ Furthermore, he literally exemplifies Thatcher's most quoted lines, that "there is no such thing as society," and that there are only "individual men and women and there are families."¹²⁶

In *Victoria*, the event that is going to entirely change the lives of the Scottish community is the crash of a helicopter which was carrying geology experts of an American oil company. The whole team of researchers dies except for Victoria, who is rescued by Euan and will team up with him to exploit the resources of the village territory.

Apart from Vicky, the only other thing that survived both the crash and the explosion, is "an expensive attaché case" (96), that one of the volunteers in the rescue mission found in the bog. Like the famous Pandora's box, "a very dangerous Pandora's box" indeed (100), the volunteers' curiosity cannot be restrained, and after much speculation about the case, they crack it open and discover all the secret documents of the researches conducted by the American oil company. As a matter of fact, a part of their speculations turns out to be right:

Maggie: I've a feeling it's oil.

[...]

Bryce: There's oil men hanging round in Inverness right enough.

Callum: There's that many of them. They're all over. Donald up at Garve's saying they're looking round here.

Bryce: Looking for oil?

Callum: Scouting- prospecting – they're looking for places to build the rigs.

[...]

¹²⁵ "Leaders: Myth of Scotland as Subsidy Junkie of the UK Is Scotched," *The Scotsman*, February 13, 2012, <http://www.scotsman.com/news/politics/top-stories/leaders-myth-of-scotland-as-subsidy-junkie-of-the-uk-is-scotched-1-2113605>.

¹²⁶ Margaret Thatcher, "Interview for Woman's Own ('no Such Thing as Society')," *Margaret Thatcher Foundation*, September 23, 1987, <http://www.margaretthatcher.org/document/106689>.

Maggie: There's a fair kind of money in oil. That's one thing you can be sure of. (98)

Maggie is right when it comes both to the plot and what happened for real. The oil in the North Sea and the North Atlantic was discovered around the 1960s in Scotland, which was soon to become “the EU’s largest petroleum producer.”¹²⁷ The 2013 USA International Business Publication concerning Scotland’s mining sector reports that “the oil related industries are a major source of employment and income in these regions” (6% of the local population), with Aberdeen being “the centre of the North Sea oil industry,” Shetland and Orkney the major excavation sites, and Grangemouth “the centre of Scotland’s petrochemical industry.”¹²⁸

In the play, the characters’ discovery that their village possess an unbelievable richness represents the “opening.” However, the scale of the entrepreneurial venture largely differs depending on the character. The simple villagers, rooted in their community and attached to their land, go as far as dreaming of turning their home into Bed & Breakfasts and exploiting the helicopter crash site for disaster tourism. Interviewed by a journalist about the repercussions that such a tragedy might have on the village, Callum, openly smiling, replies that “it might help with the tourists” (111). The Highlands have always offered breathtaking, almost pristine, natural sceneries but no nature-enthusiast tourist of the time would have adventured as far as the northernmost areas of Scotland. Callum’s smile seems to hint at the long-awaited satisfaction of many villagers of finally being able to attract tourists, though not for the beauty of the landscape but rather as the site of a tragic event.

¹²⁷ *Scotland Mineral & Mining Sector Investment and Business Guide* (Washington: International Business Publications, 2013). p.96.

¹²⁸ *Ibidem*.

Together with his wife Maggie, Callum is excited by the prospects of “hav[ing] Americans drinking bourbon in our pub. Rigs in the loch. Helicopters,” and the possibility of opening the B&B they have always wanted to run, thus securing the best future for his family.

Callum: We’ll be like sheiks.

Maggie: Swanning round in Rollsies.

Callum: Our little Billy – he’ll be an oil man.

Maggie: A lawyer.

Callum: A doctor.

[...]

Callum: We should start doing B and B, Maggie.

Maggie: I’ve always said we should do B and B.

Callum: But now. We could make a feature of the hole. That could be part of the attraction. We could advertise ourselves that way. (124-5)

In opposition to Maggie and Callum’s ingenuous daydreaming about the future, both contented with the prospect of opening a small B&B, Euan has monstrously huge plans. With the help of Vicky, he wants to get his hands on the secret documents left by the Americans to scoop the competition of the other oil companies who were investigating the area. The preservation of the environment for touristic purposes does not provide money, but its exploitation and destruction does. As Euan will later explain, “Look around you – sea and rock. In the seventies I made money from the sea. Used the deep water to build rigs in. Now I make money from rock. I use what’s there” (134). With the help of Vicky and taking advantage of Norrie’s desperation, he will create an empire exploiting the natural resources of the territory.

“If the Americans are coming we should be thinking – what’s the opening? What do they need? They’ve found oil – what do they need? I’ve been racking my brains for it” (103). Always looking for an “opening,” Euan can rely on Vicky, who is the oil company’s geologist: “I know what they need. [...] The company. I know. I know” (109). However, first he needs to steal the secret reports that are guarded by the sheriff. Exploiting Norrie’s need for money, he convinces him to steal the precious briefcase from the safe in exchange for two thousand pounds and a patronizing encouragement: “This is good, Norrie. This is movement” (114). However, Euan also needs a capital to invest, and apparently, embezzling the insurance company is the best and quickest way to have “ready money.” As he explains, he has “insured Connolly against injury. The guy’s my income. Only I need some ready money now. I need to move fast on something. I’ve seen an opportunity” (115). Connolly is the music star he is managing, and in order for him to find inspiration in a peaceful environment, Euan has brought him to his hometown. Exaggerating the flirtation between Connolly and Norrie’s wife Eilish, he sets a jealous Norrie against the singer: “I’m not asking to kill him.[...] Shoot his hand, only his right hand. His left hand’s no fucking use to me. His left hand you don’t get paid. His right hand” (115). Furthermore, Euan need him “to get caught. Norrie – you have a motive. Get yourself drunk. Do it. And hand yourself in to Gordie. Any judge in the country understands jealousy. By the time I’ve painted Connolly for the skirtchaser he is, you’ll be out with six months max” (116). Driven by despair, Norrie will carry out the task and by 1996, year in which *Victoria’s* last part is set, we find a Euan at the head of a rich empire, the only owner of a whole quarry.

Euan’s aim is clearly that of becoming a tycoon, no matter to what or at whose expense. Contrarily to Maggie and Callum, he will not offer a service, and will definitely not create sustainable jobs for the community. At the end of *Victoria’s* second part, he is the one

winning the ancient and noble estate of the Red House that was put to auction by the last heir, Jimmy. Throughout all this section, the city council has been trying to buy the house to transform it into a college. As Oscar illustrates to Jimmy and his mother, Margaret, “it’s for adults, for working men and women from the islands who – want to learn. Because people have to leave to be educated further and perhaps this way some will be able to stay” (70). Such a small community cannot “afford the market rate” but are willing to “offer reasonably” so that the people can “have a place that belonged to them” (71). Lady Margaret’s comment should exemplify the family attitude towards the deal they are offered: “I suppose if we say no, you’re proposing to take it from us anyway. Like they did in Russia” (70). She is horrified by the idea of seeing her estate being taken over by the very same people who once were working for her family. Like Euan, though more for the residual pride of the last heir of a once glorious and wealthy noble family than as strategic move, helping the community is not in her interests. Lady Margaret also refuses to sell the house to Connolly. Although he is rich and famous, a rising star in the music industry, he seems to be not obsequious enough: “Lord A, I would love to see that [...] It’s been a pleasure to meet you, Lady M” (96). The pride still running in the Allan family prevents Lady Margaret to accept the council’s offer and help the community, nor she can degrade the family name by selling the house to the first new-rich, hippy popstar who comes knocking at her door. In the end Jimmy will sell to Euan, who prospects a “real” prosperity for the community, as compared to that envisioned by the council in behalf of the whole village.

Jimmy: Are you interested in some form of commercial gain?

Euan: I am interested in developing the loch.

Jimmy: Is that a commercial proposition?

Euan: Very commercial.

Jimmy: Does it confer any advantage to the community?

Euan: Money always does. Bring money in. It makes a place work.

Jimmy: I'll accept the offer, Euan. The highest bidder, everyone had the same chance. I think that's the fairest way. One moves with the times. Not against them. (123)

Part three offers an evaluation of the costs of this "prosperity." Vicky has turned insane, according to Euan, who is now ashamed of her. Their daughter, Victoria, is still in a rebellious phase with nuances of madness, while his endearing parental feelings pushes Euan to comfort her with supporting and caring words of encouragement:

Euan: Have you decided what you want to do?

Victoria: I'm trying.

Euan: Why are you telling me you're trying? I see no direction, i see stabbing movements, back and forth. Try this, try that...this word 'try' comes back to me. I don't like it. try is attempt. Attempt says to me 'failure.' (144)

They discuss Victoria's decision to study psychology for her desire not to be a psychologist, but rather, "to – understand people" (144). Euan, both as father and as businessman, is extremely disappointed in his daughter. He offers her a crash course on what she should learn at university. Taking some money out of his wallet, he explains: "All you need to understand people, is to understand this [money]. You have too much money. No hunger. Full stomach. That's psychology" (145).

Euan deals with his family as he deals with business. However, if Vicky has gone mad, he in turn has become a haunted man. With his father Oscar dead, who used to play the Jiminy Cricket role of conscience, Euan needs to affirm his beliefs more passionately than usual. Standing at the grave, he can see Oscar's ghost and with what seems to be the scream

of a madman, wanting to destroy his last human feelings, he urges his father to leave him alone: “I own this place. I own the fucking sea and the fucking mountain and the forest. This place is mine. So don’t...don’t...come back” (149). However, “Oscar *doesn’t move*” (150).

Furthermore, Euan did not bring to the community the prosperity he promised. Callum and his wife never opened a B&B and with Callum dead, Maggie took on drinking while counting on her son to economically support the two of them. Billy never made it to college but remained in the village to work as mechanic. Ironically for a small town that was built on an oilfield and was meant to prosper because of it, the villagers strive to make a living and do not even have money to pay for petrol: “we’ve no money for petrol. We need what’s left for food” reminds Billy to his mother (155). Norrie never went to America with Eilish but we find him, alone and embittered, working as a security guard for the quarry.

Not only did Euan impoverished an already modest community, but he destroyed the entire landscape, transforming the mountains into huge granite quarries, which are at the centre of a heated negotiation between his industry and the villagers along with the Green protesters. At the beginning of the third part Euan discusses his work with Kirsty, his new public relations manager, who will help him win the appeal to the council for the acquisition of the rights to expand his quarry. He states his case to Kirsty by saying that “if you look down there. What is it they’re defending? A scraping of land on top of rock. [...] This landscape has been created by sheep and clearances. Now they say it’s beautiful and they want to preserve it.” He continues with an aesthetic declaration that echoes the love-poems to modern industrialization by the Futurists: “quarrying’s beautiful. [...] Families stop their cars to watch the granite pouring on to the ships. I think a line of pylons across a moor is just as elegant as the flight of bird, or whatever” (133).

The whole of Euan's image conveys "hardness" and disdain for other people's opinions. As Kirsty points out, "rock is a hard image, explosive are destructive. The image is warfare against nature. You project hardness in these pictures" (161). His PR manager is trying to soften his public image, but the task seems to be more difficult than expected, with Euan always defensive and complaining that "it's the same old fight – people like me, who create money, and people like them, who want to take it from me" (162). As a matter of fact, Euan is right: it really is "the same old fight," the only thing to have changed is the social classes who fight. If in the first part there were a declining noble class against the peasants, now we see the big industry triumphing over the working class. In addition, if Euan's words might echoes those of Margaret – both of the Lady of the play and of the real life Baroness – Billy's speech carries the same pain and desire for justice which animated old Euan in the first part, and probably all the miners on strike in the 1980s. Billy tells Victoria that "you people always win," reminding her that it all "depends where you stand. [...] When he [her father, Euan] stopped building the rigs. And my father was struggling with the rent. He stopped the tenancy. From our house you can see the mountain. My mother likes the view. [...] But your father wants it quarried" (148) while Euan complains that "All I know's there's a fight coming. And I'm sick of those bastard winning," referring to the rich and noble fascist "bastards with claret and silky drawers" (143).

Greig gave the play the structure of an epic cycle not only focusing on three generations of characters related to each other by blood ties, but also linked through time by the same sufferings and struggles. At the end of *Victoria*, in order to win his appeal, Euan will trade the rights to exploit the mountains' resources for his father's old idea of building a college for the village people, a plan he strongly opposed in the past, when building a training centre by the loch was an obstacle to Euan's new oil enterprise. Representing the Southerland

Granite Association at the council meeting, Kirsty explains that the training centre is “an initiative [that] will do justice to the memory of his father, whose life was dedicated to increasing opportunity for all, and to the community in which he himself was brought up” (171). The money for the centre and the scholarships will come from the second quarry, if the council approves the project. As a matter of fact, the committee will buy the idea, as Kirsty puts it (172), and with her words a grim future for Scotland is foreshadowed at the end of the play. It is interesting to notice that, once again, Euan has delayed the possibility of real prosperity and improvement of the living conditions for his community in order to succeed in his business. Oscar’s training centre could have been built a generation in advance and the only reason it might be built now is to bribe the council to allow his industries to expand even more. In addition, it is made clear from the beginning of part three, that the raw materials that Euan extracts from nature are not to put to service to the village. The aggregates are to be shipped out to “England, to build motorways. Berlin. New York. Bilbao. All over the world” (133), but not to Scotland. Devine explains that

the SNP oil campaign began in 1971 and brilliantly exploited the contrast between, on the one hand, the fabulous wealth found off Scotland’s coasts and, on the other, the fact that by then the Scots had the worst unemployment rate in western Europe and were yoked to a British state that stumbled from crisis to crisis. Oil also gave the nationalistic argument a new credibility by demonstrating that an independent Scotland might indeed survive out of its own resources.¹²⁹

This statement is highly debatable. As Greig has warned several times in *Victoria*, it all depends on where you stand: “if we were governed right, it’d be used right” (103), Oscar

¹²⁹ Thomas M. Devine, *The Scottish Nation 1700-2000*, quoted in the Background Materials for David Greig, *Victoria* (London: Methuen, 2000).

remarks about the discovery of the oil. Indeed, Euan is a Scotsman, and yet, he disregards the interest of his community and behaves as the stereotype of the perfect Thatcher-supporter, Conservative, English businessman. Nevertheless, with the powerful slogan of “It’s Scotland’s Oil!” the SNP was able to attract a noteworthy group of supporters and force people to seriously consider devolution as a valid response to Scotland’s decline, and even the “supreme irony”¹³⁰ of the failure of 1978 Scotland Act for a devolved parliament did not dampen the SNP’s nationalistic enthusiasm. However, it was certainly a setback since

a measure designed principally to appease Scottish nationalist sentiment had become associated with the poor economic performance of a British government. Just when confidence in Britain was at his lowest points in post-war history, Scottish home rule was thwarted because it was not seen as an alternative to British decline but was associated with it.¹³¹

The SNP needed Margaret Thatcher to bring back into Parliament the cause for a devolved, if not completely independent Scotland. During the 1980s, and essentially throughout Thatcher’s administration, Scotland identity began to be shaped in opposition to everything that Thatcher’s England stood for. Her complete insensitivity towards “Scottish distinctiveness,”¹³² combined with her campaign for the “de-industrialisation of Scotland”¹³³ and the imposition of the infamous poll tax, made her extremely unpopular. “The offence caused to Scotland’s sense of moral identity strengthened the SNP’s commitment to social democracy,”¹³⁴ and the party soon became the voice of a country’s discontent. To “Mrs.

¹³⁰ James Mitchell, “Scotland in the Union, 1945-95: The Changing Nature of the Union State,” in *Scotland in the 20th Century*, ed. Thomas M. Devine (Edinburgh: Edinburgh UP, 1996). p.97.

¹³¹ *Ibidem*.

¹³² *Idem*, p.98

¹³³ *Ibidem*.

¹³⁴ Stephen Maxwell, *op.cit.* p.123.

Thatcher's denial of social solidarity and even social compassion,"¹³⁵ not to mention her entire administration, the SNP opposed a strong fight. The party exhorted the Scots not to pay the poll tax, the Scottish people replaced Thatcher's hymn to Victorian values and her measures threatening the Welfare State with real solidarity, especially to the let-off miners and the working class on strike, and against her privatization rush and anti-EU policy, the SNP embraced "the European market through its 'Independence in Europe' policy,"¹³⁶ modelled on the economic achievements of Ireland. If in the 1970s Scotland was reluctant to the idea of joining the European Union, with Thatcher on power and her anti-EU agenda, the party actively "became one of the most pro-European in the 1980s."¹³⁷ Indeed, by modifying their manifesto, "the SNP were beginning to sound relevant, modern and international."¹³⁸

In the next chapter I will focus on how the SNP was able to channel Scotland's voices of complaint, dissatisfaction and, in general, of opposition, into support and real votes for the party, thus winning the 2011 election and bringing the topic of independence back to table.

There are four ages, in history. Each age is a decline of the previous. In the first age everything that needs to be done, is done, all men are good. In the second age, men discover motivation, reward and punishment. And have become corrupted. In the third age, disunity prevails, difference emerges, and catastrophe begins. In the last age, the age in which we're living, evil has become triumphant. Civilisation recedes. [...] women go with worthless men, blood ties disintegrate, commerce governs all meaning, in due course time

¹³⁵ *Ibidem.*

¹³⁶ *Ibidem.*

¹³⁷ James Mitchell, *op.cit.* p.99

¹³⁸ *Ibidem.*

itself falls towards destruction. Then there is rebirth, and the cycle begins again. (101-2)

Concluding with Jimmy's words in *Victoria* quoted above, let us now analyse what he prophesied to be the fourth epoch of renovation, and which, according to our timeline, corresponds to the 1997 Referendum for a devolved Scottish Parliament.

Scotland Pre and Post Devolution: *Caledonia Dreaming* and *The Speculator*

In “Continuity and Change”¹³⁹ Richard Finlay rightly observe that the Depression made the Scots nationalists. According to him, as early as the 1940s the government was threatening Scots with taking away what Thatcher’s Tories will later define as Scotland’s main addiction, namely governmental subsidy. The reaction of the Scots, led by the SNP, was not long in coming and separatists voices started to be dusted off. The Conservatives painted an ominous and apocalyptic future for Scotland, stating that separation would only “make the situation worse.”¹⁴⁰ As Finlay observes, “Put bluntly, the Scots were told that things were bad at the moment, a drift to Scottish nationalism would pull the nation into the abyss of economic catastrophe.”¹⁴¹ These threats became a sort of Leitmotiv of the British government, especially in the 1980s during Thatcher’s administration, when Scotland was being destroyed by the recession, and supporting the Union against devolution was at the core of the Conservatives’ political agenda.

As David Pattie remarks, “national consciousness, of a kind,” forcefully sprang again “in the 1980s and 90s almost by default.”¹⁴² The majority of Scots were against Thatcherism, and since Thatcherism identified itself with the Union, by extension they started to reject the Union as well. Promoted by the SNP as the cure for Thatcherism, if not for all evils, devolution became a key work to understand the British history and politics of that time.

¹³⁹ Richard J. Finlay, “Continuity and Change: Scottish Politics 1900-45,” in Thomas M. Devine, ed., *Scotland in the 20th Century* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh UP, 1996), p.79.

¹⁴⁰ *Ibidem*.

¹⁴¹ *Ibidem*.

¹⁴² David Pattie, “‘Who’s Scotland?’: David Greig, Identity and Scottish Nationhood,” in Claire Wallace, ed., *The Theatre of David Greig* (New York & London: Bloomsbury Publishing Plc, 2013).

When Mrs. Thatcher was elected in 1979, her attitude towards the possibility of devolution for Scotland was still not fossilized in a firm opposition. Nonetheless, it soon became clear that devolution was standing in the way of “the set of beliefs which became known as Thatcherism.”¹⁴³ Her opposition to Scottish autonomy was a refrain in her interviews and public speeches, especially those delivered in Scotland. Her motivations swindling from passionate appeal to remain a united nation sharing the same past and heritage – not to mention that Scotland’s oil “was keeping her in business”¹⁴⁴ – to complaints about the real impossibility to allow devolution since so far proposals have been “utterly inadequate and superficial.”¹⁴⁵ Famous is her remark that “at least the Nationalists have the honesty to say that they want to break up the United Kingdom. Labour say they don’t, but their policies say they would.”¹⁴⁶ In her speeches Thatcher often reminds people that it was only a year before she came into power that Scotland was allowed to hold a referendum on this matter, and if the 1978 Scotland Act did not pass there must have been a reason. As she explained in an interview for the Scottish TV, “people talk about devolution without actually working out precisely what it means, precisely what it would forego, what you would gain and what you would lose.”¹⁴⁷ To this statement, the interviewer Colin MacKay observed that “if 80% say: ‘We want devolution!’ and a substantial proportion are asked specifically ‘Do you want a legislative devolved Assembly?’ After all, they did see how it was being built up in the 1970s as it went through the Parliament, so they got a fairly good idea of what it would

¹⁴³ Colin Pilkington, *Devolution in Britain Today* (Manchester: Manchester UP, 2002), p.65.

¹⁴⁴ Christopher Harvie, *No Gods and Precious Few Heroes: Twentieth Century Scotland* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh UP, 2000), p.165.

¹⁴⁵ Margaret Thatcher, “Speech to Scottish Conservative Conference,” *Margaret Thatcher Foundation*, May 13, 1988, <http://www.margaretthatcher.org/document/107240>.

¹⁴⁶ *Ibidem*.

¹⁴⁷ Margaret Thatcher, “TV Interview for Scottish TV,” *Margaret Thatcher Foundation*, September 4, 1986, <http://www.margaretthatcher.org/document/106467>

be like.”¹⁴⁸ Despite the choruses of voices screaming “devolution,” from common people to many politicians, Mrs. Thatcher never allowed for another referendum to be held: as she stated in her speech to the Scottish Conservatives in Perth in 1988, “As long as I am Leader of this Party, we shall defend the Union and reject legislative devolution unequivocally.”¹⁴⁹

The unpopularity of her measures was rapidly reflected in the election results. Colin Pilkington notes how the Scottish Conservative Party gradually began to lose at first support from the people, and then members as well, starting from the general election of 1979, and reaching the peak in 1987, when “the unpopularity of Thatcher government was such that six out of every seven constituencies elected an anti-Conservative MP.” Even after the end of her mandate, “with John Major every bit as much a unionist as Margaret Thatcher, Tory support continued to slip away and people began to talk of the ‘nightmare scenario’ when no Conservatives at all would be elected for Scotland: an event that duly came about in 1997.”¹⁵⁰

In 1997, after all the “sleaze” scandals involving many Conservative MPs and the “Black Friday” that cost Thatcher’s heir, John Major, the people’s favour, Tony Blair was elected Prime Minister for the Labour Party, the first in almost two decades. Devolution was on Blair’s New Labour political agenda: as early as 1996 he started to lay the foundations for the new referendum on Scottish autonomy. The BBC Radio Scotland reports Blair’s comments on devolution, which he regarded as a huge improvement to the UK government since it would have proved “that there is a better way that Britain can be governed. That we can bring power closer to people, closer to the people’s priorities and that we can give Scotland the ability to be a proud nation within the United Kingdom.”¹⁵¹ Truth to his political

¹⁴⁸ *Ibidem*.

¹⁴⁹ Margaret Thatcher, “Speech to Scottish Conservative Conference,” *Margaret Thatcher Foundation*, May 13, 1988, <http://www.margaretthatcher.org/document/107240>.

¹⁵⁰ Colin Pilkington, *op.cit.*, p.66.

¹⁵¹ “Blair Joins Scottish Devolution Campaign Trail,” *BBC Politics 97*, September 1997,

program, on September 11. 1997 the referendum was held and this time home rule was achieved. The Royal Assent was bestowed in November 1998 and by May 1999 the Scottish parliament was finally restored to power. As Brian Taylor, political editor for the BBC Scotland, commented, “the exasperation was tangible. In a sense, we had waited since 1707 for a verdict.”¹⁵²

It is worth pausing for a moment to consider Mrs. Thatcher’s speech against the 1997 referendum for a devolved Scottish parliament and Tony Blair’s reaction to the upcoming 2014 referendum for independence. In an article for the *Scotsman*, appeared on the eve of the 1997 referendum, Margaret Thatcher concentrated all the arguments against devolution that she has always proclaimed, insisting that it is just “airy talk,”¹⁵³ that no real benefit but more public spending will result out of a devolved parliament and that “devolution proposals [...] represent a negation of our shared history and an abdication of our joint future. Scottish voters can do no greater service to their country than to reject them.”¹⁵⁴ Echoing Mrs. Thatcher’s words, Tony Blair in 2010 revealed that “devolution was a ‘dangerous game to play’ as it risked encouraging separatist sentiment,”¹⁵⁵ and the current campaign for an independent Scotland has proved him right. In his address to the Press Gallery in Westminster in 2012, Blair openly declared his support to the No-campaign, and stated his satisfaction in

<http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/special/politics97/news/09/0908/scotland.shtml>

¹⁵² Brian Taylor, “Scotland Decided - The Referendum,” *BBC Scotland*, September 11, 1997, <http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/special/politics97/devolution/scotland/briefing/scotbrief2.shtml>.

¹⁵³ Margaret Thatcher, “Article for the Scotsman,” *Margaret Thatcher Foundation*, September 9, 1997, <http://www.margaretthatcher.org/document/108373>

¹⁵⁴ *Ibidem*.

¹⁵⁵ Simon Johnson, “Tony Blair Brands Scottish Devolution a ‘Dangerous Game’,” *Telegraph*, September 1, 2010, <http://www.telegraph.co.uk/news/politics/tony-blair/7976054/Tony-Blair-brands-Scottish-devolution-a-dangerous-game.html>

being able “to play a part in it.”¹⁵⁶ Interesting is the SNP’s response to this statement, which welcome it as an “early Christmas gift.”¹⁵⁷ Kenneth Gibson, SNP MSP, observed that it was Blair’s decision to join the USA in “an illegal, immoral war in Iraq” that triggered and boosted once again the debate for independence, thus proving that certainly history does repeat itself. As Gibson explains, it was the same when Mrs. Thatcher visited Scotland “in the final stages of the Scottish Parliament referendum in 1997, urging Scots to vote ‘No’ [that] was a big boost to the ‘Yes’ campaign” and “made it clear that devolution was essential.”¹⁵⁸ And speaking of how history repeats itself, from Thatcher and Blair’s pro-Union speeches it might be possible to perceive an echo of the current British Prime Minister Cameron’s address to Scotland to remain in the Union, delivered in occasion of the Olympic Games, which I mentioned in the previous chapter.

Enthusiastic support to the Yes-campaign and the SNP came also from famous public figures, among which Sean Connery might be said to be the most active. Apparently, the Scottish actor has a powerful grip on Scots’ imagination, thus making him the perfect Yes-campaign spokesperson. As a matter of fact, he is “the dream come true,”¹⁵⁹ as “for so many Scots [he is] the man who most symbolizes their national aspirations.”¹⁶⁰ Connery fought alongside Scotland Forward and the SNP for many years, and in occasion of the 1997 referendum, he addressed Scotland “quoting the Declaration of Arbroath (1320) – ‘it is not

¹⁵⁶ David Maddox, “Scottish Independence: Tony Blair Joins ‘No’ Campaign and Defends Devolution,” *Scotsman*, December 18, 2012, <http://www.scotsman.com/news/politics/top-stories/scottish-independence-tony-blair-joins-no-campaign-and-defends-devolution-1-2697713>.

¹⁵⁷ *Ibidem*.

¹⁵⁸ *Ibidem*.

¹⁵⁹ Raymond Ross, “The Sean Connery of Your Dreams,” *Tes Connect*, June 20, 1997, <http://tes.co.uk/article.aspx?storycode=55974>.

¹⁶⁰ Peter Lathan, “The Edinburgh Fringe. Reviws 9,” *The British Theatre Guide*, 1999, <http://www.britishtheatreguide.info/otherresources/fringe/fringe99-09.htm>.

for glory, it is not for riches, neither is it for honour, but it is for liberty alone that we fight.”¹⁶¹ Connery’s encouragements to his fellow Scots made the front-page of several newspapers of the time, e.g. the *Daily Record* “Yesh! Yesh!” headline or the “Stand Up for Scotland Says Sean Connery” cover of the *Sun*.¹⁶² The same Connery is doing now for the upcoming referendum. In a recent interview for the *Sun* he declared that it “is too good an opportunity to miss,”¹⁶³ since “independence would galvanise the film and creative industries, creating jobs in Scotland,” thus bringing “renewed focus on Scottish culture, heritage and creative excellence.”¹⁶⁴

Sean Connery is the invisible gravitational force towards which all the characters of David Greig’s *Caledonia Dreaming* (1997) are pulled. It is interesting to notice that, apart from the ending, he never appears on stage, albeit he is “the man who is made to epitomize the smooth, sophisticated ‘can do’ Scotland that these characters variously seek.”¹⁶⁵ The play was “written and rehearsed hastily just before the devolution referendum”¹⁶⁶ and is supposed to be “an allegory of the aspirations of a nation.”¹⁶⁷ Indeed, the fact that Connery is sought by everybody but cannot be reached is symbolic of the very essence of dreams and well represents Scotland on the eve of the referendum for devolution. “For, as the title suggests” – and as the subtitle, *An Edinburgh Fantasy*, emphasizes – this is a play about dreams. The

¹⁶¹ Hugh Bochel et al., eds., *Scotland Decides: The Devolution Issue and the 1997 Referendum* (New York: Routledge, 2000).

¹⁶² *Ibidem*.

¹⁶³ Sam Webb, “Now Former Bond Star Connery Urges Scots to Break Away from Britain in Independence Referendum,” *Daily Mail*, March 2, 2014, <http://dailymail.co.uk/news/article-2571452/Now-former-Bond-star-Connery-urges-Scots-to-break-away-from-Britain-in-independence-referendum.html#ixzz2vBHMOq00>.

¹⁶⁴ *Ibidem*.

¹⁶⁵ Raymond Ross, *op. cit.*

¹⁶⁶ Charles Snodgrass, “Staging Scottishness: The Dramatization of Scotland in Sott’s *Rob Roy* and the New Scottish Parliament,” in *Culture, Nation and the New Scottish Parliament*, ed. Caroline McCracken-Flesher (Cranbury, NJ: Associated University Presses, 2007), p.189.

¹⁶⁷ Peter Lathan, *op.cit.*

dreams of people dissatisfied with their lot in the present and looking for something better,”¹⁶⁸ and Sean Connery, depicted by Greig as a sort of “Scottish messiah,”¹⁶⁹ embodies “an ideal of Scottish achievements for the characters throughout the play, despite their class, racial and national identity.”¹⁷⁰

In the summer of 1997, six characters come together in Edinburgh to try to meet Sean Connery, as they believe that such important encounter will open the doors to personal achievements. Stuart is a member of the European Parliament (EMP) whose dream is to bring the Olympics to Edinburgh and have Sean Connery as the spokesperson for the Opening ceremony: “dreams need symbols” (30) and the Scottish actor is perfect with a voice that “contain dignity, and honour. And history” (54). Lauren is an English woman who works as a call-girl so that she can quickly save money to buy herself a nice house in the countryside. Darren, a boy from a poor family from Oxgangs, looks up to Sean Connery as his sensei, a sort of lifestyle teacher, and would like to be his personal assistant. Eppie, a bored and unsatisfied middleclass woman, lives in the past, thinking about her adolescent sweetheart who is nobody but the young and still unknown Sean. Lawrence is an angry taxi driver with problems at home with his wife and Jerry works as doorman at the Caledonian Hotel where Connery is expected. He dreams of becoming a singer and is convinced by his colleagues to record a tape and slip it into the actor’s pockets. It is interesting to notice that none of their dreams has to do with politics, the Yes-Yes campaign or the referendum in general. Only Eppie dully and briefly comments on British politics while playing cards: “This country’s going to the dogs. All our politicians want to be Scandinavian. They’ve no balls. What we need is a dictator. Labour camps. That’d wake us all up” (9). In addition, early in the play

¹⁶⁸ *Ibidem*.

¹⁶⁹ Claire Wallace, “Olympian Heights: Caledonia Dreaming,” in Claire Wallace, ed., *The Theatre of David Greig* (New York & London: Bloomsbury Publishing Plc, 2013).

¹⁷⁰ *Ibidem*.

Stuart is inside a cab and noticing that “there’s a demonstration,” instructs the taxi driver to “go a wee bit further. I don’t want to get egg on my suit” (16).

As Claire Wallace points out, “Greig’s approach to politics is markedly elliptical. Major political questions appear only tangentially in six titled sketches described by Greig on his website as ‘wound ‘choruses’ which reflect on the devolutionary issues at the time the play was written.”¹⁷¹ These choruses are named after major political issues that make reference to the devolution referendum, or a simply symbolic of everyday life in Scotland: “Camera Obscura” watching over and commenting the lives of the Edinburgh citizens like a Big Brother, the “Yes Yes Campaign,” almost rapping the need to say “yes yes” to everything for once, the “Scottish Conservatives” gathered to watch a football match. The “West Lothian Question” chorus is symbolically set in Lothian Road, the place where people go looking for a fight, while “Self Determination” sits at a bar and laments his inability to be the master of his own life, though “in myself. I’m determined” (63). The last chorus is “The Heart of a Midlothian,” represented by “jakies drinking” (71) and remembering the old fights and riots and confessing that now they can only spit in despise and protest.

In “Who’s Scotland?: David Greig, Identity and Scottish Nationhood”¹⁷² David Pattie discusses the context in which *Caledonia Dreaming* came to be written. He observes how Thatcherism had urged Scotland to start posing questions about its future as a nation: “as a set of inflexible ideas, it [Thatcherism] was useful, albeit unintentionally; it provided a fixed point, against which debates around national identity could develop. It gave us something to define ourselves against [...] Thatcherism was what we were against, but what were we for?”¹⁷³ *Caledonia Dreaming* does not offer an answer to such a crucial question, however, it

¹⁷¹ *Ibidem*.

¹⁷² David Pattie, “‘Who’s Scotland?’: David Greig, Identity and Scottish Nationhood,” in Claire Wallace, ed., *The Theatre of David Greig* (New York & London: Bloomsbury Publishing Plc, 2013).

¹⁷³ *Ibidem*.

investigates “the bundle of fears, wishes and hopes that lay behind the question.”¹⁷⁴ The play is probably not one of Greig’s most successful creations, though he himself has declared that “it’s some of the best writing I have ever done.”¹⁷⁵ However, it is an interesting sketch of the lives of Edinburgh citizens few days before the 1997 referendum.

Considering the historical moment in which the play is set and also performed, the most striking features, as I mentioned earlier, is that no character cares the slightest about the referendum or politics. Even Stuart, the EMP, is too obsessed with his dream of bringing the Olympic Games to Scotland to think of anything else, like, e.g. working to establish an independent nation first (and the referendum would be the first, huge step towards it). There is not a single character who is able to look above his/her miserable life; indeed, they are all caught up in their little everyday lives, problems or complaints to have a proper, less narrow, perspective on what is going on in Scotland. Critics like Wallace or Pattie, and theatre reviewers in general, are all too ready in highlighting how *Caledonia Dreaming* is an allegory of the 1997 political scene, but I quite disagree. It is not an allegory but rather a truthful portrait of Scotland in the 1990s and, interestingly enough, it closely resembles Scotland’s current situation. According to newspapers’ surveys, a noteworthy number of Scots are unconcerned or is still uncertain about the future he/she sees for Scotland. As I was writing in my Introduction, many of the Yes-campaign’s efforts are being directed towards this groups of people, those still undecided or unconcerned with regards to this issue. The same can be said for the 1997 referendum, which was won by the “Yes-Yes” side without such a large majority, only a 60.4%, making it a “success of sort.”¹⁷⁶ As Stuart in the play bitterly remarks, “some people don’t take the trouble [to vote]” (11).

¹⁷⁴ *Ibidem*.

¹⁷⁵ “Caledonia Dreaming,” *David Greig Website*, n.d., <http://www.front-step.co.uk/caledonia-dreaming/>.

¹⁷⁶ Colin Pilkington, *op.cit.*, p.96.

Indeed, the characters do not dream about independence or “liberty,” to quote Connery’s speech, because they are too busy being miserable, angry, scared and repressed. They all wish for relief from their condition, but the cure is not in their country’s freedom. The “Heart of a Midlothian” chorus reminds the audience that “for some time now apart from a wee riot in Wester Hailes 1993 the Edinburgh mob have rioted only in their private lives” (71). The chorus continues with a tone that seems to mourn over a past in which Scots were still able to resist and fight back: “We don’t riot now. Maybe we should. Instead we gob. In the heart of the city. In front of the courts. In front of the cathedral. Edinburgh folk pass by and have a quite gob. [...] Because every gobbet of saliva that lands on this secret heart is a little personal riot” (72). It is a country whose pride and fighting spirit have disappeared, and slowly drags itself forward, but to a future that is still rather unclear. And it is a people who have lost the ability to dream big, to dare imagine a better tomorrow because too often disappointed. When Jerry discusses professional singing with the other hotel staff members, he reveals them his insecurities: “I don’t know. I don’t want to go to London. I’d feel stupid just being here. Me. London. Not a chance” (42). It is the staff chorus to encourage him to try because “you’ve got to have a dream,” and as Jerry agrees, “If you don’t have a dream. How you gonna have a dream come true?” (42). However, after much flattery and compliments, as Jerry manages to survive a random beating in the street (Lothian Road) and comes back with a demo of his songs, the same chorus discourages him from meeting Sean Connery and bothering him with his impossible dreams: “I didn’t know you were serious, [...] Are you sure it’s wise Jerry? [...] Might. We said might. [...] Maybe you should leave it. so as you’re not disappointed. Two disappointments in one night. That would upset anybody” (60). The scene ends in bitter irony, as Jerry the doorman cries out his frustration, “defeated” by voices

that were only pretending to support him for the sake of “being nice” (64): “the doors I open. I let people in. when’s someone going to open a fucking door for me!” (60).

The saddest scene is probably the confrontation between Lauren and Stuart. At the beginning of the play Lauren was talking with a colleague about what she wished she could have in that moment, namely “some time off. Some new clothes. Shoes off. A video. Some chips,” and then, when she will have earned enough money, she dreams of buying a house, “paid outright. Mine” (39). However, when Stuart offers her seven thousand pounds to help him destroy the credibility of his rival in the campaign for the Olympics, he encourages her to take the money so that he can win and she “can live [her] dreams. A holiday. A new car. The deposit on a house” (56). Interestingly, without knowing it, Stuart mentions exactly what Lauren confessed to desire: time off, that is a holiday, and a house. Yet, her pride has been wounded and so she rejects his offer: “What makes you think I have such inexpensive dreams?” (56).

The “Self Determination” chorus reinforces this idea of Scotland as the land where dreams rarely come true, most of the times because people either do not have the strength to stand up for what they want or do not have real dreams at all. A nameless man at a bar lend his voice to this chorus, remembering his childhood in East Kilbride, where “our flat was on the seventh floor and in the afternoons I would stand on the balcony and daydream about being in a glider and flying over all of Scotland” (63). Now the man is stuck in an Edinburgh where he does not want to live, wishing he could go back to his hometown. He is engaged to a woman who wants to start a family, have children, and he goes along with the flow, unsure of what to do, but hoping that if he ever had a son, he would be able to grow up daydreaming on a balcony in East Kilbride like he used to do as a boy. Interesting enough, his two sisters

were able to be successful by leaving Scotland and moving to England and the United Arab Emirates. As Stuart points out,

look at that. [...] Waste. Utter waste. Those kids waiting for something to happen. That's what we're dealing with. Inertia. [...] what I'm saying is the potential in this city if we took some initiative, you know, it's huge, the potential. An absolutely huge potential. But people have got to believe. Take action. We need visionaries. (15-6)

The Scotland portrayed by Greig in *Caledonia Dreaming* is wonderful only from afar or as seen by tourists and non natives. The play opens with a hymn to the breathtaking beauty of Edinburgh delivered by an overexcited helicopter pilot: "Can't get enough of this view [...]. Some cities lay themselves out for you as if [...] they'd been planned so you should see them from half a mile up. [...] God made us knowing one day we'd fly helicopters and he gave us the gift of appreciating the beauty of seeing ourselves from a high place" (4). Later in the play a group of tourists approaches Darren, in the foyer of the Caledonian Hotel, to convey their enthusiasm for the marvels that Edinburgh offers: "We thinks Scotland's beautiful. We're only here for a week. It's too short. [...] Scotland, to me, is mist and empty places. I'll hold that image in my heart. Me too. Barren places in the rain. We enjoyed your country. It's been a special visit for us. You're a very lucky young man to live here" (61). Ironically, the encouragement to fight "against colonialism" comes from outside, as the tourists tell Darren that they "hope you guys win your freedom. Peacefully. I hope. The Irish are so violent" (61). In addition to them, when asked, Lauren tells people how much she likes living in Edinburgh, however, as prostitute, she is used to pander to her clients' opinions, and we have several examples in her scenes with Stuart. The general idea that the play seems to convey is that Scotland, and Edinburgh in particular, are fantastic places, full of beauty and

potential that are wasting away. The same can be said of the Scots. The main characters are disillusioned and disappointed in their lives and in their country, including dreamers and visionaries such as Darren and Stuart, and some of them turn their disenchantment into violence.

When Stuart first tries to convince Lauren to help him get compromising photos of her with one of her clients, who is also Stuart's rival in politics, he uses sweet words that depicts a glorious Edinburgh under the spotlight, a people united to cheer on the athletes for the Olympics. However, after her refusal, and several drinks later, Stuart begins to stalk Lauren in the streets, humiliating both himself and the prostitute. He shouts that "she's a whore," and then starts throwing money at her, begging her to accept it: "Why not? What do you want? Don't tell me you want this. [...] Don't tell me you look around you at this life of piss you have and actually want it?" (74). He insults her, her lifestyle and her choices in life, and when she tells him that he cannot buy her what she really desires, namely a house and a family, he goes as far as proposing to her. Stuart cannot understand marriage in terms of falling in love and starting a family together, but can only see it as a convenient arrangement: "I can give you that. [...] You're a beautiful woman. You could be my secretary. You could be my wife. [...] I can pay. I can have you if I want. You cost fifty quid" (74-5). As later the Edinburgh mob will tell the audience, there are several types of violence, and not always they implies the use of brute, physical force, and what Stuart is doing to Laurence can rightfully be included in the category.

Lawrence, the taxi driver, represents another example. He has a peculiar personality, between the angry and the desperate for human contact. It is worth noticing that Lawrence never speaks in the play, and the reason might be because his rage, desperation and frustration is so overwhelming that cannot be expressed into words. This does not mean that

Lawrence cannot properly talk, actually it is quite the contrary. When he is driving Stuart, they discuss the EMP's mission and the possible slogan for the Olympics, and Stuart is notably impressed by his creativity and tries to recruit him: "What a slogan. Edinburgh. Dream City. Did you make that up yourself. You write poetry? Edinburgh: Dream City- that is poetry. [...] I could use you on my team. An ideas man" (16).

We get to know about him, and we might guess his discourses, by his passengers' reaction. With Darren, he complains about women at first, and then about his family, seeking advice from the boy:

Sorry? ... Women ... huh yeah. They're mad. No you're right. Mysterious yes. That's a good word for it. [...] No I don't. No ties no obligations. [...] Sometimes I don't like my family either ... My dad. Of course I like him. I mean. Yes. I'm sure your son likes you. Maybe he just doesn't say things. [...] No I'm not embarrassed I'm ... I want to talk it's just ... Oh well. I'm sure it'll get better. (30)

Lawrence is looking for an answer to his problems by discussing them with his clients, establishing ephemeral contacts with strangers who sit on the back of his cab for very short journeys. More or less willingly, they try to offer some advice, however, such serious questions cannot have brief and light-hearted answers. As Darren cannot help to confess, "I'm sorry. I don't know. Sons, dads it's a very hard question. Ehm. You should build model ships together" (30).

When Jerry hops in, Lawrence has already reached his boiling point. Jerry suggests him a shorter route to his destination and asks him to slow down; to his requests Lawrence starts screaming: "... Ok I'm not telling you how to do your job I'm just ... Ok All right. You're shouting. You don't need to shout" (34). As Lawrence tells him about his misfortunes,

namely the problems with his wife and at work, he begins driving absentmindedly, thus provoking Jerry's hysterical fit: "I'm sorry to hear about your wife but ... Ok but ... I'm sure you'll get another job but ... Watch the! STOP THE CAB! STOP THE FUCKING CAB! [...] YOU MIGHT HAVE NO REASON TO LIVE PAL BUT I DO" (34). Lawrence's refusal to open the doors urges Jerry to calm down and pay attention to his problems. In a faint moment of empathy Jerry tells a weeping Lawrence that he understands, that he "get[s] that too. I get that feeling where you can't talk. That feeling folk see you but do they see you? [...] Smile, though your heart is breaking ... Smile, even though your faking" (35). Jerry cheers him up by doing what he does best, singing, quite appropriately, Charlie Chaplain's famous song "Smile," one of the soundtracks of his movie "Modern Times," highlighting the idea that people feel alienated in the 1930s as much as they do in the 1990s.

It is then Lauren's turn to ride in Lawrence's taxi and offer him some insightful advice: "You're the expert in your own life. Well the only thing I'd say Lawrence is ... as a woman. Sometimes people attack each other when really they want to defend themselves. [...] Lower you guard Lawrence. Talk to her ... If you can talk to me Lawrence, you can talk to her" (43). She is the most supportive of the characters, especially if compared to Eppie's snobbish and insensitive remark: "Oh dear. A taxi driver with domestic difficulties. How unbearably dreary" (71).

From Stuart's verbal violence on Lauren, to Lawrence's desperation and repressed anger ready to burst out and invest people, violence escalates and culminates in Edinburgh nameless, faceless and angry mob, which wanders around the streets looking for unfortunate passer-bys on whom to release their frustration. Greig offers a portrait of a Scotland that was robbed of his confidence and pride, and is searching for an identity that has been lost during centuries of failed battles. A Scotland that is wandering aimlessly in uncertain times, where

society has been building its system of values more and more on nothingness. Faced with such deep identity crisis, communication is made impossible, as also the identity a person had created and linked to a specific mode of communication is shattered. We have an example in Lawrence's behavior and it is taken to the extreme by the Edinburgh mob.

A group of men approaches Jerry on the street and mocks and beat him apparently because his "skins is the wrong colour" (48). While they are punching Jerry, they are in the mood for some cheap philosophizing on the naturalness of violence:

Man: What is violence? Why does it happen?

2: Society's falling apart [...]. (48)

[...]

4: Bryony. Violence? Poverty, unemployment ... is it inevitable?

They go on discussing how "violence happens in many different forms," and how the cycle of violence repeats itself in any kind of situation, from domestic violence, "Men hit women. Parents hit children," to war or political violence, "governments do violence to people. Not always physical. Sometimes by destroying people's lives in other ways" (49). There are many reasons why people resort to violence, as the men explain, "Sometimes you do just want to kick someone in the head," or because the aggressor "[ha]s got a terrible temper. He was showing off. He's unhappy with himself" (49). There is also the possibility that "he's racists" and that "he just does hate black people," though most probably this will be simply an excuse, "for effect," since in Scotland it seems to be the same as "saying 'Oi! Shorty!'" (49).

One of the men notes how he "love[s] to see the expression on their face. The shock when the punch connects. I love it. The moment they understand. Communication" (49). Though curled up on the ground and covered in blood, Jerry seems to understand this too: "What a funny thing to say. 'your skin's the wrong colour.' I mean. I've been hit before.

Normally it's ... get back to the jungle. Or black bastard. But he said 'Your skin's the wrong colour' as though he was genuinely confused. As though he really wanted to tell me something" (48). As a matter of fact, this behaviour masks what seems to be the real reason behind such violence, namely a desperate need to communicate. Lauren puts this need into words, from her own experience, when she says that her clients sometimes just pay her to listen to their troubles: "people need someone to talk to. And so I listen. Sometimes they don't really want to do any more than that" (53).

Scotland, or at least Edinburgh, seems to be depicted as a wild and violent place. There are scenes which portray solidarity and compassion, e.g. when Lawrence's clients comfort him or when Lauren talks with a discouraged Jerry to cheer him up, but generally, it is anger, disappointment, desperation and violence that come across to the audience. As Stuart describes it, Scotland is indeed an ambiguous and undecipherable country: "modern – yet old. Urban – yet rural. Friendly – yet canny. Strong – yet compassionate. Who is it. Who's Scotland. That's the question we need to answer" (41). Yet, despite its ambiguity, the most remarked trait appears to be "ugliness." On several occasions Stuart observes how Scots are "pissed. Heads down. Fighting. They don't want to see beauty. They want to see ugliness" (52), or how Scots "believe that it's our destiny to fail. I find that attitude disgusting. I find that attitude repulsive" (31). Again, while discussing his political strategy with his team, Stuart remarks about the old labour and its voters, the "dream spoilers" and "the ones who say we can't. You show them a beautiful thing and they show you something ugly" (40). Furthermore, he despises people like Irvine Welsh, who "has made himself wealthy on our ugliness" (41).

Even Darren, the real dreamer of the group, acknowledges the truth of this sad reality. Rehearsing his speech for when he will be able to finally meet Sean Connery, he tells of how

he feels out of place in Scotland. He is not like the rest of the Scots, he has skills and the attitude to succeed. Setting Connery as his role model, he has struggled to be an educated gentleman like the actor, at ease with women, thankful to people, servants included, and learned about wine and literature, from Tolstoy to Shakespeare. The only thing he is asking is a chance to prove himself: “I hold myself together, even in my present situation [...]. Which is not easy when people around me spit, and swear. And they talk about stupid things and let their mouths hang open like they’re half asleep” (66). Furthermore, towards the end of the play, angered by Eppie’s comment of the value of money (“you don’t need money. Trust me. You’re better off without it”), Darren shouts at her his frustration: “D’you think I’m a fucking numpty? D’you think I say stuff for laugh? D’you think I don’t know my jacket is fucked? You may’ve only just met me. But I live in this life” (86).

So far I have analysed scenes and characters in the play to show which was, according to Greig, the atmosphere, the feelings and the everyday life in the Scottish capital on the eve of the crucial 1997 referendum. I extensively noted how *Caledonia Dreaming* portrays a people that, apart from Darren, have either no great dream or slightly crazy visions, e.g. bringing the Olympics to Scotland. I shall focus now on the choruses of the play which, as pointed out earlier in this chapter, offer the only explicit references to the political unrest of that time, though, as Wallace observes, “these issues are treated with Greig’s characteristic dialectical, irony infused, method bringing opposing impressions together to create a complex and unstable picture.”¹⁷⁷

The first chorus, “Camera Obscura,” is only introductory, as it describes the city of Edinburgh by pausing on single scenes, e.g. a topless student sunbathing, a robbery, etc... . With the “Yes Yes Campaign” begins the exploration of the hot issues at stake with the referendum. The chorus displays an awfully optimistic attitude but the seriousness of their

¹⁷⁷ Claire Wallace, *op.cit.*

commitment is diminished by the tone of their propaganda, which sounds like a bad rap song: “we’re the Yes Yes Campaign. We want people to say Yes. [...] My mum says yes when I ask her for the car. Yes. Yes. She says. Yes. And I say. Yes! [...] My dad, when he’s on the phone to his brother in Aberdeen. Say’s ... ‘Aye.’ ‘Aye.’ Which isn’t what he says to me. To me he says. Yes” (16-8). The end of the chorus however shows a certain sensibility towards the political “Yes Yes” Scots are asked to consider: “We demand new questions. Questions whose answer is ... Yes Yes. Just to hold that word in my mouth for once. Yes. Would make it worth the wait. That’s what we want. And we’ll stay here till we get it” (18).

The chorus of the “Scottish Conservatives” discusses the dramatic defeats of their party along with the defeats of their football team, the Hibernian FC, playing with words that would perfectly suit both politics and sport:

How could you lose that? I think we’ll come back. We’re a second half team.
When everything falls apart. Yu look for something to hold onto. Something to
conserve. [...] The job in 84 (*Team Names*). The hope of a job 85 (*Team
Names*). The hope of the hope of a job 86 (*Team Names*). [...] I lost my way
sometime around 1992 (*Team Names*). (33-4)

Like with the “Yes Yes Campaign,” the Conservatives mix serious and dramatic historical events with sport, thus making it almost impossible for the audience to take them seriously. However, again the ending provides some useful insights into the political panorama of the 1990s: “Things get away from you. You lose things. Things are taken from you. The trick is to hang on to some small thing. (*Hibs team names*) because it’s not the thing but the hanging on that saves you” (34).

The “The West Lothian Question” chorus, embodied by some man from England, tries to answer this long-discussed issue with another question: “Why’s it always raining in

Harthill? That's the West Lothian Question" (47), "thus bypassing the political conundrum altogether."¹⁷⁸ This "controversial, but tedious, debate"¹⁷⁹ which has been going on since 1977, has become tiring indeed, especially because it cannot find an answer that satisfies all the countries that made up the UK. The Englishman remarks that it is "God's revenge on cunts" (47), and reminiscences of an afternoon in Bathgate (West Lothian) playing with his Scottish cousin, who, after that time, never saw him again. The ending once again provides an interesting reflection on the political issue of the West Lothian, as it seems to suggest that instead of focusing on the differences, people should focus on what they have in common: "Whenever I pass folk on the street. And I think – what we have I got in common with you. I can't help but ask myself. Maybe we're related" (47). This chorus is particularly interesting as it is significantly undetermined about the message it should convey, thus perfectly describing the political impasse on this issue. The West Lothian Question refers to the debate involving Scotland, Ulster and Wales over the right for these countries to vote on issues concerning only England. With its ambiguity the chorus is prophetic since the two major answers to the West Lothian Question, offered in the twenty-first century, will be indeed distinctively opposite. On the one hand, there is the proposal for the abolishment of the devolved bodies, namely the Scottish Parliament, and the National Assembly for Wales and the Northern Ireland Assembly, on the other hand, especially in recent years, complete independence from England has become a concrete possibility. In the words of the chorus, this dilemma is represented by the fact that he and his cousin went separate ways, and yet, he still wanders if they might have stayed together and worked out their differences, instead of the Englishman despising people from the North and harshly insulting them.

¹⁷⁸ *Ibidem.*

¹⁷⁹ *Ibidem.*

“Self Determination” chorus, as I previously mentioned, mocks the serious resolution of centuries of pleas for self-government and, above all, for self-determination. Indeed, it is not simply a matter of being able to achieve an independent government or, at least, a devolved parliament, but Scotland needs the ability to determine itself. This means that major changes in institutions should go hand in hand with reforms in society, thus stirring the crucial debate around which kind of society should be built. The inability of the man of the chorus to arrange his life as he wants, is indicative of what was, and still is, going on in Scottish society: centuries of discussions on this issue have not produced a valid answer on which Scots agree. As the chorus in the end proclaims, though he seems to be unresponsive, “in myself. I’m determined” (63).

“The Heart of Midlothian” chorus instead, offers a brief lesson on Scottish history. As it says, it is “not football. And not Walter Scott” (71), the real history of the Heart is connected with the gory events of ancient Edinburgh. The Heart of a Midlothian is literally a heart-shaped mosaic set in the cobbles of the Royal Mile, where once towered Tolbooth prison. It was the place for public executions and served also as tax collection office of the city council. Not surprisingly, the Heart of Midlothian stood for almost everything the poor and the working class people hated. The custom of spitting on the Heart is “not because people in this town are dirty people” (71), but it represented people’s disdain for Edinburgh’s cruel administration. The “Camera Obscura” chorus, probably unfamiliar with Scottish history, explains such custom as a sign of good luck, however, for the natives it is a gesture symbolic of their disapproval, whose origins hark back as far as the 15th century. “The Heart of Midlothian” chorus remembers the huge riots and intense protests over a period of time that spans over a century, from the 18th to the 19th century covering almost the entire Hanoverian reign, and whose peaks were reached in 1736 with the Porteus riots, in 1780 with the Gordon

“anti-Popery” uprisings, in 1811 with the Tron riots, which saw the lower classes against the wealthier, and finally in 1837, with the beginning of the Chartist protests. After that time, “apart from a wee riot in Wester Hailes 1993” (71) the Edinburgh mob, the fearsome “King mob,” as they proclaimed themselves after the Gordon riots, stopped to fight. What almost all these riots have in common is the basic struggle of the poor against the rich, the raising of taxes and inequality. It is an interesting choice of dates since during the Hanoverian rule Scotland is mostly remembered for Jacobite rebellions. The chorus seems to highlight the common denominator of Scottish fights throughout history, from 1736 (but also before) with the Hanover to the 1980s with the Conservatives, and which still continues into more recent times. The riots are symbolically represented and, in a way, simplified, through the struggle between poor people and bankers, with bitter remarks about the futility of such fights as the bankers always win: “making money off people. Forming governments to help them make money off people. Cooking up schemes to make even more money off people. [...] Oh they’re canny little bankers. [...] Fucking Bankers” (72). Like the fights stay the same, even the basic reaction remains as it has always been. Though Scots does not rebel anymore, they keep up the old custom of spitting on the Heart of Midlothian, “this sacred heart” that has become covered in spit.

As observed by other critics, e.g. Wallace or Pattie, the choruses approaches the hot topics of 1997 politics in a very peculiar way, mixing the serious with the humorous and adding a good dose of irony, thus trying to engage the audience with the important, yet old, political issues of that time, but always while having fun. Stuart’s speeches on the marvels of the Olympic Games could also be taken as the perfect example of Greig’s ambivalent style. Furthermore, albeit not specifically related to the referendum, but rather drenched in a nationalistic and visionary spirit, they could be applied to the topic of Scottish independence,

and Scottish nationalism, as well. Although Stuart almost completely disregard human feelings and compassion, is ready to insult the mob, “people feel more comfortable with idiots in charge. That’s democracy” (22-3), and has no particular sense of priority, namely he is totally unconcerned if the humongous costs of his Olympic dreams will have to be shouldered by people, or that the same money could be spend for education like his rival suggests, many of his speeches are almost moving for their enthusiasm and ingenuity.

The play opens with Stuart’s admiration for his ambitious project, words that are definitely suitable for a Scotland Forward campaign and certainly better than those spoken by the “Yes Yes Campaign” chorus: “there is nothing. No thing sopping us. There is no limit except ourselves. So I’m saying we should stop teaching the three R’s in this country and start teaching the three I’s ... Imagination Inspiration and the most important I of all ... I can. I can” (6). Later in the play, he discusses his political strategy again, with a rhetoric worthy of the referendum campaign: “Dreams need symbols. They need flesh. This is a battle of good and evil. Evil is symbolised by McKenzie. [...] That’s old labour. The dream spoilers. The ones who say we can’t. [...] We have the flesh of the nightmare. Now we need to put flesh on the dream” (40). Imagining the opening ceremony for the Olympics he describes an epic representation of Scotland’s crucial historical moments: “A dance representation of the clearances. The Scottish diaspora. Returning from the four corners of the globe” (40) and a celebration of a new, modern, united Scotland with a poem read by the man who embodies a dignified, though indefinite, ideal of Scottishness, that is Sean Connery. He refines his project to something even greater, as he explains to Lauren:

The crowd. (**He makes a crowd noise.**) [...] A hush. A spotlight on a man in the middle of the park. He’s playing the harp. Suddenly ... highland dancers appear. [...] the music builds [...] a massed pipe band play ‘Flower of Scotland’

[...] the crowd are dazzled. [...] (**He makes the noise of a cheer**) and suddenly ... there are thousand highland dancers. And a thousand bagpipers. And down from the sky come flowers ... Hundreds of thousands of flowers ... the Flowers of Scotland! Each one representing the people who're coming home. From the clearances, Culloden, the war, all the people who've went to London or America or Newfoundland ...D'you see ...The flower of Scotland is coming home [...]. (53-4)

As Dan Rebellato notices, “despite Scotland’s dour, crabbit reputation, there is a tremendous affirmation, an evocation of a better world, even a sense of utopia.”¹⁸⁰ At the end of the play, in a scene between the real and the dream-like, we find Stuart in the stadium giving instruction to the helicopter pilot to drop a waterfall of petals, like he had planned to do for the opening ceremony. Rebellato writes that in this “heart-swelling” scene there is “something that transcends the absurdity of the aspiration and affirms aspiration itself, in a way that reaches out to the utopian in all of us.”¹⁸¹

Stuart drops flower petals.

What a sight. Look at that. That’s gorgeous man. That’s one in a million. Look at them floating away there. Look at them disappear. OK Scottie. That’s us. That’s us away. (90)

The ending of the play does not offer a real closure to the various plot lines: Eppie remains the same as she was at the beginning, through the taxi radio we learn that Lawrence has left his cab and disappeared nowhere, Lauren and Jerry have found each other, though Jerry did not make it in the show business, Darren is given enough money to leave Scotland and become a pilot (his number two dream after being Connery’s PA) and Stuart is

¹⁸⁰ Rebellato, *op.cit.* p. xxii.

¹⁸¹ *Ibidem.*

completely lost in his Olympic fantasy. Immediately before, in the only choral scene of the play, all characters gathered on the Heart of Midlothian. Lauren is running away from Stuart who, right on the Heart, will humiliate her by throwing money and insults at her. Eppie brings a disappointed Darren on the Heart for a therapeutic session of spitting, “Don’t sulk. Shoulders back. Anger Darren. Gather up your anger. Gather up a great big gob and spit. I assure you. It’s therapeutic” (76). Stuart starts crying, rolling in the spits in his Armani suit and he is reproached by a soldier-like Eppie to man up and “have some backbone,” as he is sitting and “weep[ing] when we should be spitting” (77). Offering everybody some brandy from her never-empty bottle, Eppie urges Darren and an angry Lauren to spit: “go on girl. Get it out of you. [...] Everything you hate, you visualise it. And then you spit” (79). As the characters all finally come together, they are rewarded with a flashing image of Sean Connery passing them on the street in his limousine. By the end of the day Connery has completely transcended his humanity and has turned into an ideal. The characters quickly catch a glimpse of his face when he stops for a second to check if this strange group, weeping and spitting, was fine. The characters’ voices describe the scene by completing each other sentences, though, what they describe is different for each of them. We do not see the actor but what he means for each of them, a faint reflection of their inner self.

Eppie: He looked familiar

Lauren: He looked welcoming

Darren: He looked like my dad

Stuart: He looked like he was in charge

Jerry: He didn’t need to speak (83)

Wallace describes this choral scene as an “epiphany”¹⁸² as the actor, “like a returning god, [...] show[s] the country the image of its own, best, most familiar and most comforting self.”¹⁸³ Indeed, this encounter is not much a revelation about the characters’ future, or whether their wishes will come true or not, but rather, it provides them with a brief moment of self-recognition, though they might not be aware of that. “Ultimately, what is important is not what Connery can give the country; what is important is the aspiration he represents.”¹⁸⁴

Caledonia Dreaming is therefore a play that focuses on one day in the life of a group of Edinburgh citizens. The characters are representative of the various social strata of society, from the politician to the foreign call-girl, down to the bored middle-class and the hopeless youth that live in Edinburgh slums, so that the audience can be given a more complete picture of how life was lived in the 1990s and how events affected people differently, depending on their place in society. Though the play is supposed to engage in the political issues surrounding the 1997 referendum for a devolved Scottish parliament, Greig chooses to approach the subject in an a rather indirect way, making full use of the ironic and ambiguous style he is famous for. The hot issues of the referendum are dealt in the choruses, while the main plot is focused on the everyday life of six characters who have absolutely nothing to do with referendum campaigns on both sides. The reasons behind the choice of this approach might be because Greig wanted to be able to engage the audience while having fun, since the political issues on the spotlight in 1997 were unfortunately nothing new. *Miscere utile dulci* was probably a valid solution, especially to involve also young people in the referendum debate. As I mentioned at the beginning of the chapter and in my Introduction, the risk of failing for the Yes Campaign was considerable. Over the 1997 referendum was still hanging

¹⁸² Claire Wallace, *op.cit.*

¹⁸³ David Pattie, *op.cit.*

¹⁸⁴ *Ibidem.*

the unsatisfactory results of the 1979 vote and the serious concern for the non-voters is still now considerably high. As a matter of fact, the Yes Campaign, in the past as in the present days, has more to fear from the non-voters rather than from the campaign of the opposition.

“Tourism, new-found positivism, self-deprecation and pessimism, parliamentary dilemmas, mixed identities and historically embedded acts of resistance – each gesture towards political realities of 1997 – also have continued to be a feature of Scottish national politics and culture post-devolution.”¹⁸⁵ Let us now analyze Greig’s play *The Speculator*, which marks the official inauguration of the new Scottish parliament in 1999.

The Speculator was part of a joint project between Scotland and Catalonia called Caledonia/Catalonia. “To mark the opening of Scotland’s new parliament the Edinburgh International Festival and the Grec Festival [...] have each commissioned a play from a leading playwright of the other’s nation,”¹⁸⁶ one was David Greig, the other was Lluïsa Cunillé with *The Meeting*.

BBC Scotland’s political editor Brian Taylor comments on this festival and on the newly achieved devolved power of the Scottish parliament in relation to Catalonia’s autonomy, posing some interesting questions:

this may be said to pose two questions for us, in Scotland and Britain. One, will Scots – perhaps including some Nationalists – be contented with Catalonia-style autonomy? Will the demand for independence recede to some extent? Two, could “multiple choice” federalism – regions with a different range of powers – be made to fit England within the UK? Could the Spanish

¹⁸⁵ Claire Wallace, *op.cit.*

¹⁸⁶ “Introduction,” in David Greig and Lluïsa Cunillé, *The Speculator - The Meeting* (London: Methuen Drama, 1999).

system, suitably adapted, answer or at least address the West Lothian Question? ¹⁸⁷

The expectations at the time were great, devolution was felt to be the long-awaited achievement that would allow Scotland to flourish, and Taylor's questions are representative of the galvanised atmosphere surrounding the opening of the Scottish parliament. Interesting to notice, Greig's approach to the topic in *The Speculator* is even more elliptical than in *Caledonia Dreaming*. Indeed, the play is set in France, in the Enlightened Paris of 1720 and focuses on "embryonic economic theory and [on] a world just opening to the possibilities and risks of globalization."¹⁸⁸ The play was inspired by Greig's reading of James Buchanan's *Frozen Desire: The Meaning of Money* (1997) and his subsequent fascination with the extremely ambiguous figure of visionary Scottish economist John Law. The plot is centred on three main characters, Lord Isle, a young Lord of a small Scottish Island, Pierre Marivaux, a famous playwright, and John Law, the Scottish speculator of the title. Though the material for this play was heavily drawn from real events, as Greig explains in "A Note on the Text," it "is not intended to be a true historical record [...]. I have simplified things, collapsed time, invented entire scenarios, and imposed numerous anachronism on the play."¹⁸⁹ The main events of the plot, however, remain the same. As Greig points out, Law had honestly been for some years one of, if not the richest and most powerful man in Europe, "probably the richest man in the world, and arguably the richest man in history."¹⁹⁰ His Mississippi scheme was a precursor of modern capitalism. Rejected by Scotland, Law moved to France where he was able to convince the entire country that gold was outdated and the future was the banknote,

¹⁸⁷ *Ibidem*.

¹⁸⁸ Claire Wallace, "'The Veins and Arteries of Commerce': The Speculator," in Claire Wallace, ed., *op. Cit.*

¹⁸⁹ "A Note on the Text," in David Greig and Lluïsa Cunillé, *The Speculator - The Meeting* (London: Methuen Drama, 1999).

¹⁹⁰ *Ibidem*.

stating that money only had value as a means of exchange. As Wallace explains, Law “pioneered the Mississippi Company, a monopoly that controlled trade and development in the French territories of Louisiana and Canada. [...] On the basis of grossly inflated future profits, the value of shares in the company soared astronomically,”¹⁹¹ so much so that in 1719 he “offered to pay off the national debt of 1.5 billion livres by issuing”¹⁹² additional shares. However, his “scheme spectacularly collapsed under pressure from Law’s opponents who wanted to cash in their stocks and from counter-speculation,”¹⁹³ becoming the first, most disastrous economic bubble burst in Europe.

Lord Isle’s character is completely Greig’s invention, though he was a real historical figure, the founder of the Royal Bank of Scotland. In the play he is portrayed as a very young and extremely naive boy, and the audience is taught about his fictitious love life rather than about his financial accomplishments. Sent to France to complete his education, probably according to the long tradition of the Grand Tour for young aristocrats, reminding at times an ingénue Don Quixote, he will spend his money on an old tavern woman, Adelaide, to whom he will swear true love. Finally, the third main character is the artist, the playwright Pierre Marivaux. Married to Colombe for her money, he is in love with Silvia who works as actress for the Italian Company.

The theme of speculation is the leitmotif of the play, not simply referred to Law’s profession and addiction to gambling, but also in relation to Lord Isle and Marivaux’s private lives. As Wallace rightfully observes, “Speculation [...] is a dynamic force that animates the play and also underwrites the various economies of desire at work within it: the desire for

¹⁹¹ Claire Wallace, *op. cit.*

¹⁹² James Narron and David Skeie, “Crisis Chronicles: The Mississippi Bubble of 1720 and the European Debt Crisis,” *Federal Reserve Bank*, January 10, 2014, <http://libertystreeteconomics.newyorkfed.org/2014/01/crisis-chronicles-the-mississippi-bubble-of-1720-and-the-european-debt-crisis.html>.

¹⁹³ Claire Wallace, *op.cit.*

profits in America, the desire for a lover, and the desire for success. And each economy is subject to the impulses of supply and demand.”¹⁹⁴ Leaving the play’s economic thread aside, in line with *Caledonia Dreaming*’s main focus on dreams, I will analyze *The Speculator*’s leitmotif of gambling and speculation as a metaphor for the dreams and hopes of people who, in the play’s Paris of 1720 as in the real Scotland of 1999, were imagining a great future of possibilities and success. Indeed, “the tension between the old and the new, between looking back and looking forward, underpins Greig’s diegesis and opens up a dramatic parallel with the political speculations of 1999,” notes Adrienne Scullion who goes on explaining that “contextualised within the summer of 1999, Greig’s play challenges a new Scotland to grasp a new kind of future.”¹⁹⁵ Like many of Greig’s plays, the main issues are dealt with a notable dose of ambiguity, in this case swindling between the admiration for the visionary potential of dreams and the admonitory tone of a cautionary tale, as the play ends with the dramatic collapse of the characters’ fantasies and projects, as they were based more on dreams than on solid reality. The same can be said of the characters, especially of John Law, portrayed by Greig as an eccentric figure who unites in himself both the “genius so far ahead of his time that his ideas are incomprehensible to his contemporaries,” and the “misguided extremist who is increasingly detached from any reality outside the borders of his speculative financial scheme.”¹⁹⁶ However, the power of gambling, speculation and dreams seems to be more prominent and definitely more fascinating.

All the main characters see the world through the thick lenses of their expectations and desires, regardless of their nature, economical or love-related. Their faith in their imagined worlds is so strong that “they force it into existence” (85). As it emerges from a

¹⁹⁴ *Ibidem*.

¹⁹⁵ Adrienne Scullion, “Devolution and Drama: Imagining the Possible,” in Berthold Schoene-Harwood, ed., *The Edinburgh Companion to Contemporary Scottish Literature* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh UP, 2007), p.69.

¹⁹⁶ Claire Wallace, *op.cit.*

conversation between the two playwrights, Marivaux and Dufresny, the characters are all speculators.

Dufresny: [...] We are not – playwrights – really we’re gamblers.

Marivaux: Not gamblers. Speculators.

Dufresny: What’s the difference?

Marivaux: Gamblers stake blind. Speculators imagine a possibility and have the courage to force it into existence. (85)

In order for their world to exist, its foundations must be kept on an imaginary level only. Indeed, it requires an absolute faith. Let us start with Law’s economic fantasy. Law is the bigger speculator and the greatest dreamer, as his vision affects the entire world’s economic relations. He is able to sell France the idea of infinite wealth and prosperity through investments in America, almost literally the land of possibilities, and that this prosperity can only be achieved by introducing paper money and getting rid of gold and silver coins, whose weight, both literally and metaphorically, keeps the world’s economy down. As Law warns the Prince de Conti, “the coin in your pockets will drown you” (37). Later in the play, while Law is thrashing Islay at dice, he discusses with the young lord the need to be visionaries to embrace the future: “[...] I couldn’t save the Scots from themselves. They’ve put their imagination in chains. Not like us. Not like you and me, Islay” (28). He goes on explaining that with his scheme he has achieved something more valuable than money, namely the potential to have anything he desires: “I don’t need Paris, Islay. I’m a rich man. It’s not physically possible to be richer than me. I control the assets of a quarter of the world. I can satisfy any desire it’s possible to imagine. There’s no end to me, Islay. No night, no day, no possible, no impossible. I’m limitless” (29). Law wants to encourage people to elevate themselves and be like him, by making them believe in his scheme. The need for faith as

essential to his plan is reiterated in another scene in which Law explains his project to his lover, Catherine. As a matter of fact, there is not enough money to back the investments and the French colonies in America are still not much productive, actually, “just now there’s nothing, marsh – disease – waste. One ship of miserable tobacco a year. America, in reality, has no value” (43). The key word here is reality, in its being the exact opposite of dreams. “While America is barren, while it’s blank, each person is able to fabricate a future in the image of their dreams. A future of gold, a future of trade, a future of land ... The more valuable their dream, the more they value the share” (44). As Law explains to Catherine, his scheme is based on a vision, therefore “proof is our enemy. The more real America becomes the less they will desire it. The less they desire it the less they will speculate, the less the currency circulates. [...] without speculation, Catherine, we freeze. We die” (44).

Such hazardous game of speculation will soon crumble showing all the fallacies of a plan based on nothing real. Law alone cannot fight against the contagious germ of disbelief: as he will explain to Dufresny, who has come to discuss the play with his patron, “people are afflicted with the disease of doubt,” and this is why he needs “a parable, to help them believe” (70). The “parable” staged by the playwrights will have no success, mirroring the faith of their sponsor. John Law, throughout the play idolised by the people, sanctified by his servant Philippe, and hailed as the saviour of economy, has failed to perform the miracle. The Prince of Conti is the first to scratch Law’s miraculous aura: “They’ve come to see paper turned into metal – an act of transubstantiation. From the Scottish messiah. [...] Let the people have America, Banker. I still keep France” (37). Philippe has never seen his master, but has idolised his genius and cannot accept any description that refers to him as not a semi-god. When talking with Belgian Comte de Horne, he gets upset hearing that Law is simply “a poxy Scot” (48), and “an ordinary bloke” (49) and that the whole scheme is a scam. “I value

him. I've imagined him. He's my whole world. I want to kill myself" (63) says Philippe pointing a gun to himself, though too disappointed to have the will-power to actually kill himself. As St Antoine will say at the end of the play, "you [Law] devalued" (115).

When a huge and angry crowd protests at the gate of Law's residence, Law is so caught up in his fantasy that he cannot see nor hear them screaming. During Law and Dufresny's meeting to discuss the play he has commissioned, shouts can be heard from inside. Dufresny's career is at stake, he needs Law's patronage and money, so he describes the raging crowd as admirers, gathered there to express "their enthusiasm," commenting that "with this force behind you, sir, you can't fail" (70). Not even after a window is shattered and missiles start to be thrown against the house, Law realises that he is the cause of people's protests, and is ready to admit he has failed: "Mr Dufresny. I understood that your plays had met with mixed success. But it seems that your public are more hostile than you imagined" (71). Only when the lynching crowd will break into his house and an official decree stating that his system has collapse, Law will be forced to come to terms with reality. In the words of his lover, Catherine, "This is what happens when you let people deal in dreams. Ordinary life – there are failures and successes. Gentle curves. Dreams explode. Chaos" (111).

In the last moments of the seize of Law's residence, Law and Catherine find refuge in a dark room, enlightened only by a candle. Standing in the darkness, Law delivers a monologue that summarises his life and which foreshadow the epilogue of Marivaux's parallel plot line. Representing the world of arts, Marivaux, like John Law, is a kind of speculator. His life, as depicted in the play, seems to be like one of the scripts he writes and in which he is both the narrator/creator and the actor/audience in it. Marivaux is married to Colombe, a plain but extremely rich French woman, and to escape the boredom of such unhappy union, he has began an affair with Silvia, a young actress working for the Italian

Company. What his marriage to Colombe lacks is not love or happiness, considering that Marivaux seems to be rather uninterested in them. As a matter of fact, his relationship with Silvia does not supply him with either physical satisfaction or real love. Marivaux and Silvia play the game of creative speculation fuelled by the playwright's sexual frustration that pushes him to build worlds for the two of them to be together and have sex. He fantasises about flaunting his illicit relationship to the *crème de la crème* of the Parisian society, he wants to make a scandal before eloping, as if his life was a melodrama: "I want to take you to Venice. I want to leave the city under a cloak of scandal. A carriage in the night. Through the countryside into the dawn" (48). He finds delight in daydreaming about a romanticised life made of work as writer at night and as gardener, gambler or gondolier during the day. As Wallace observes, "Silvia withholds herself from him, forcing him instead to tell her stories of their love, thus exacerbating his desire to possess her."¹⁹⁷ Like Law recounts in his monologue at the end of the play, Marivaux too fell in love with the abstract idea of love and passion. "[T]he woman was married [...] and under no circumstances could she reveal her true identity. In the dark room we made love. We told stories to each other. Night after night in the shuttered house we told conjured words together. She was, unseen, limitless. She was all women. Our love was all love" (113) remembers Law in his final monologue. However, once he saw the woman, though she was beautiful, he lost interest, "I had lost all desire for her. She disgusted me" (113). The same will happen to the playwright and the actress: "By forcing Marivaux to narrate his desire for her, Silvia keeps their relationship in the realm of imagination, where it is boundless. When, encouraged by Colombe in disguise, she finally consummates the relationship, her power over Marivaux dwindles and he returns to his wife."¹⁹⁸ He will go as far as asking Law to lend him a carriage so that he can elope with

¹⁹⁷ Claire Wallace, *op.cit.*

¹⁹⁸ *Ibidem.*

Silvia, but when the time comes to escape, Marivaux cannot do it. To Silvia's encouragements he can only reply with pathetic stump sentences: "I can't" (114), "I don't want to," "I'm afraid," "I'm sorry" (115). Although Marivaux has been fantasizing about this moment for a very long time, and though he was complaining to Colombe how much "Paris is ... limiting my imagination" (76), Marivaux is too scared "to force [his speculations] into existence" (85). Albeit the outcome, that is his miserable failure, is the same as that of John Law, Marivaux fails for the opposite reason. If Law's visionary power of speculation was almost limitless, Marivaux is too confined to his mean and petty environment to succeed in his game of speculation. The banker and the artist are poles apart and yet, they both fail. In between, Lord Islay with his youthful and sometimes ill-considered enthusiasm, tempered by Adelaide's experience, will be the successful one.

Islay was sent by his family on an educational trip to Europe but decides to stop in Paris and give up his wealth and respectability as a member of the Scottish aristocracy, betting everything he possesses on ex-nun widower notably older than him. He is "bursting with youthful optimism and ardour,"¹⁹⁹ and cannot see the gap between him, rich lord of a Scottish island, and Adelaide, the old tavern woman he has decided to marry. He literally invest everything on her, "commit[ting himself] to an unknown, unscripted future in America."²⁰⁰ He dresses her in silk and buys her luxurious accessories she would have never dared to dream of, only to prove her that he has serious intentions and believes in a future together.

Adelaide: You barely know me. And you've thrown away – all your money.

Islay: Yes.

¹⁹⁹ Claire Wallace, *op.cit.*

²⁰⁰ *Ibidem.*

Adelaide: You could have travelled – your future could have been – so much money, Islay.

Islay: You're my future. (73)

Islay successfully gamble his future in both economical and sentimental terms, partly excused by his young age, and partly guided by a common sense that seems to have abandoned the businessmen and people of Paris, that is, knowing when to stop and leave the game. At the end of his first meeting with Law, where he was asked to play some Scottish tunes, he is taken aback when Law asks him how much he would like to be paid for having provided “a temporary refuge. A pleasure” (31). Islay, briefly astonished, decided to catch the opportunity and goes home with his pockets heavier with five thousand pounds. Law's lover, Catherine, pays him and warns him never to come back. Islay proves himself to be just a simple man, quite naive, who is fortunately immune from the gambling and speculating craze, and coolly replies to Catherine: “Right – no problem – lucky break – don't tempt fate” (31).

This attitude, in the end, will make him a winner. Not only he will win the heart of Adelaide but together they will leave Paris for the US. Indeed, what Adelaide wanted the most was America, the limitless dream offered to her by St Antoine, who gives her a taste of America's galvanising freedom by letting her drive his Harley Davidson (one of the major anachronism of the play), symbol of the liberty to move to better places and reinvent oneself.

St Antoine sits beside a Harley-Davidson. Smoking a roll-up. (79)

Adelaide: No. I can't have it. I don't want to know a feeling if i can never have it. It's not for me.

St Antoine: Everything is for you. You're alive. What type of thinking is that? Telling you what you deserve. Putting a wall around your imagination. Look at it. Imagine yourself sitting on it. Imagine yourself in America.

[...]

St Antoine: [...] Your memory becomes powder and scatters in the wind. All your life, all your pain is blowing out across the prairie and there's only you naked. A child. Mississippi is yours. (81).

For her sake, Islay, at first frightened, will leave everything and embark on a new adventure in the land of infinite possibilities. It is interesting to notice that Islay and Adelaide are the only characters in the play who actually want to go to America. The Country, advertised and sold by anyone in every little street and corner of Paris, like John Law warns, is fascinating for its mysterious potential. Nobody wants to see the grim reality behind the charming patina of the American dream, only Islay and Adelaide are brave enough to go there and see for themselves and, hopefully, make the dream come true.

In the background of the play there are the choruses of the prostitutes and beggars of Paris and the enigmatic figure of St. Antoine working as the more realistic counterpart to the world of excesses, dreams and speculations of the main characters. The chorus of "Beggars and Whores" (7) opens the play warning a newcomer about the traps he is likely to fall victim in the city: "First Lesson – you're a child. Believe nothing. The city will appear to you, as lightly as a dream, full of strangeness and desire making promises. But in the morning you'll find yourself awakened in the belly of hell" (7). As they tell the stranger, "we've been here a while, we know the ropes" (7), and as the representatives of the lower strata of society, they have become immune to the alluring call, or rather shouts, of all the bankers and brokers who are crammed in rue Quincampoix, they are "alchemist" and "will take your gold and turn it

into paper take your daughter and turn her into a whore,” so it is better to “give nothing, [and] take nothing” (8). They see beyond their fake promises and the dreamy worlds they paint: “The streets are paved in shit and vomit rot and piss. Rats the size of dogs. And dogs the size of rats” (7). Their last and best advice is to leave Paris as soon as possible, before falling victim of the speculating craze: “Now – leave immediately, my friend, take our advice – go home, before the fever of Paris, speculation, takes you, turns you, and claims you. The way it’s claimed us” (8).

The chorus of “Beggars and Whores” (65) appears again at the beginning of the second act. This time they are witnessing and commenting the execution of the Comte de Horn, “in chains, beside the wheel” (65). They are waiting to be shipped to America to work in the French colonies. They, “the aristocracy of the street” (66) will soon become “the ducs and comtes of Mississippi” (67), thanks to John Law, “who has turned the world upside down” (67), crushing the aristocracy, frozen in their world of benefits due to titles and blood, and raising the business middle class to real power. The chorus ironically denounces the cruel system created by Law’s capitalistic ideas, which cannot tolerate unemployment and unproductiveness: as the chorus phrases it, Law has “recognised the true value of our worthlessness. Knowing that we would not be misses he’s asked us to be colonists” (67), they are on their way to Le Havre “with iron jewellery,” where the gentlemanly captain has “promised to chain me to a bunk, in case I fall out. During the Atlantic swells America. America. America. The beautiful” (66).

As we have seen, the dream world of the main characters crashes against the brutal reality as it is laid bare by the chorus of beggars and prostitutes of Paris. To this chorus the voice of St Antoine is added, speaking on behalf of those common people who really believes in Law’s vision and in the potential America has to offer. However, though this character is

depicted as apostle of Law's gospel, he is presented through an extremely ambivalent scene that should alert the audience about the speculation fever that has spread in Paris. In this scene the setting is rue Quincampoix, the "bankers street" since the 16th century and the place where the real John Law founded his Banque Générale. In "a blizzard of paper" (15) and among shouting and intense haggling talk, we find St Antoine sitting still and selling hopes. As Wallace observes, "he is the only one without a stall; what he offers is intangible,"²⁰¹ while brokers around him sell everything, from mothers and daughters to paintings and tobacco. The name St Antoine is highly symbolic: it was the name of a French merchant ship which sailing from the Middle East, brought to Marseille the black plague in 1720. The dealers' background chitchat refers to this event, with overlapping questions and remarks:

Dealer 2: Where are you from?

[...]

Dealer 2: Marseille is it?

[...]

St Antoine: I can help. I got the keys. Here, in my pocket.

Dealer 3: You buying.

St Antoine: I got the keys to all your wildest desire.

Dealer 3: Buy now. You wait. You lose.

Dealer 2: You a bit green?

St Antoine: I got the keys to America.

Dealer 3: I promise you. Buy now.

St Antoine: Infinite America.

Dealer 3: Buy. You'll thank me.

Dealer 2: You a bit poxy?

²⁰¹ Claire Wallace, *op.cit.*

[...]

Dealer 2: You plaguey – you bubonic? (15-6)

In this scene, St Antoine is advertising the almost unlimited potential of America, enthusiastically supported, though involuntary as he is selling his own products, by Dealer 3, who almost function as the second voice in a duet. The second dealer's sentences, however, cast an alarming shadow on the generally cheerful, and full of expectations, lines spoken by St Antoine. His talk about the black plague seems to stand as warning metaphor of the negative side effects of a system, but also of lives, built on dreams and which require continue speculation to keep them alive. In this respect, this scene foreshadows the fall of Law's dream of paper money and inflated speculation on the French colonies in America, and at what will be St Antoine's final disappointment in the face of the collective delusion of Law's project.

At the end of the play, in St Antoine's last scene, he has come to Law's residence to seek justice, or rather, to have his faith restored in America and everything it represents: "You've made me nothing. You've made me a liar. Reverse it. Proclaim it. Decree it" (115). In a short passage that bears a strange evangelic echo of the three temptations of Christ, St Antoine urges John Law to use his power to save himself and thus, the whole situation.

St Antoine: You are John Law. You are the speculator.

[...]

Law: You and I are not enough. Against this ocean of disbelief.

St Antoine: [...] Go out on the balcony. Tell them. Show yourself. Save yourself. (116)

Despite being the speculator, Law refuses to intervene and retreats in a disarming passivity, along with St Antoine, before Catherine attempts to shoot him.

In conclusion, *The Speculator* focuses on “a moment of transnational crisis,” where Greig tries to depict “a proto-modern Scottish identity in the process of formation on the international stage.”²⁰² Each character and chorus gives voice to a specific social class with its respective vision of the present and the future, from Law’s middle class entrepreneurialism to the underclass of beggars and whores. Midway we find Islay who, with his open-minded youth, is able to embrace the world of possibilities embodied in America and really create a new and possibly better future for himself and Adelaide. As Adrienne Scullion remarks, “Greig’s post-devolution thesis appears to be that what matters is the possibilities afforded by an aspirational future bold enough to confront and progress away from the assumptions and prejudices of the past.”²⁰³ The whole play can be interpreted as “a metaphor for a new Scotland – ‘an awful small place’ perhaps (Greig 1999:13 – I.iii), but one pushing at the edges and distinguished by an outward-looking, internationalist dynamic.”²⁰⁴ As I already mentioned in the previous chapters, Greig’s political views tend to be in line with those of the SNP. In this play he even anticipates of a few years some of the basic ideas expressed by SNP leader Alex Salmond in his speech to the Scottish parliament in occasion of his re-election in 2011, in which he advocates a multicultural Scotland belonging “to all who choose to call it home.”²⁰⁵ Like for the issue concerning Scottish independence, Greig’s play divided the audience and was able to “polaris[e] critics along national lines. While the Scots praised it as ‘stunningly original’ and ‘as absorbing as it is visionary,’ reviewers visiting from London (The Guardian’s Michael Billington excepted) growingly called it ‘ponderous, pretentious

²⁰² Pamela McQueen, “Giving Voice to the Global Citizen in *The Speculator* by David Greig,” *International Journal of Scottish Theatre and Screen* 6, no. 1 (2013), p. 83.

²⁰³ Adrienne Scullion, *op.cit.*, p.71.

²⁰⁴ *Ibidem.*

²⁰⁵ Alex Salmond’s complete speech is available at Caledonian Mercury, <<http://caledonianmercury.com/2011/05/18/alex-salmonds-holyrood-address-on-being-re-elected-first-minister/0020027>>

and shambolic' and 'disastrously dull.'"²⁰⁶ Nonetheless, despite the critics' various and different opinions on *The Speculator*, it is undeniable, as Greig observes, that his "plays resonate very strongly with the belief that we can become more than we feel that we are."²⁰⁷

The Speculator paints several scenarios of how Scotland's future can be according to people's ability to believe, their power of imagination and their project's actual feasibility. Although even Islay is portrayed with ambivalence in his attitude towards his own country, as in the case of his first meeting with John Law and their conversation on Scotland: "the advantage of being Scottish is that there's always somewhere better to go to" (13), so "Why do you want to go back, Mr Law? [...] You'd need to be fucked up to want to go back to Edinburgh" (29), Greig clearly favours Islay and his attitude open to new challenges. The question for the audience about Scotland's future, however, remains valid and unanswered: "So. Mr Speculator. How do we change the world? What story do we force into existence?" (85).

²⁰⁶ Brian Logan, "'It's Easier to Bring a Belgian Play to London Than a Scottish One'," *The Guardian*, April 26, 2000, <http://www.theguardian.com/culture/2000/apr/26/artsfeatures1>.

²⁰⁷ *Ibidem*.

Conclusions

I began my dissertation by introducing the debate around Scottish independence and discussing the galvanised attitude with which the 2014 referendum is being greeted, at least by the pro independence side. Years, if not centuries, of struggles, riots, complaints and more or less successful referendums, aided by a brilliant political strategy and diplomacy waved in recent years by the SNP, have led to the actual situation. In few months Scots will be asked to vote, and this time there will be no excuse in the case of another disappointing outcome like that of the 1979 referendum.

Each of the previous chapters focused on a particular historical moment that represented Scots tense relations with England and their struggle to be, once again, an independent country. The theatre of David Greig, in the plays I have analysed, delves into these particularly thorny historical and political issues, with a grace and irony that do not allow for a direct confrontation, favouring a more elliptical approach. In this way, he is always able to offer his audience a pièce that is enjoyable and pleasant, lightened with some humor and, at the same time, engaged on a deeper level with significant issues relevant to the understanding of the past and present of Scotland, and aiming to develop a sense of awareness concerning the future and one's own idea of Scottishness and identity.

In my analysis of *Dunsinane* I brought together and confronted two historical landmarks that are almost at the opposite endings of the Scottish history timeline, namely king Macbeth reign and SNP leader Alex Salmond's election. Fundamental in this comparison was the analysis of the audience's reception both when it was first performed in London and when staged in Edinburgh. Greig wanted to denounce the British and US joint

intervention in Afghanistan and Iraq by using medieval Scotland as a safe cover history, and as such it was read by the English audience. However, quite ironically, when the production moved to Scotland, coinciding with the SNP triumph at the election, people in Edinburgh read the play as a reminder of the oppressive English yoke that for centuries has enslaved Scotland and as an exhortation to fight, with renewed energy, for an independent Scotland alongside the SNP. *Dunsinane*, though it was supposed to deal with the war in the Middle East, it came to be charged with nationalist and somehow separatist sentiments, thus totally misinterpreting the author's aim and hailing the play as a sort of politically engaged pièce.

With *Victoria* (part I) and *Outlying Islands* the playwright has helped us jump few centuries and approached the situation in Scotland during the Second World War. In these two plays Greig depicts the impact of history, and Nazi doctrines in the specific, on remote locations in Scotland, so isolated that they remain nameless. The accurate and very precise historical background seems to ask the audience to rethink about moments in history that tend to be forgotten – i.e. Gruinard Island chemical bombing – or which are easily manipulated to suit the political agenda of the politician on duty. The debate around the Scottish independence has touched with fear upon the issue of whether and how the separation will affect the shared past with England. As the Yes-supporters observe, and Greig among them, this should not even be a problem. Scotland's independence will not wipe out centuries of sufferings, achievements, victories and wars fought together, among which the WWII seems to be often exploited by the No-voters, or at least this is how it is perceived by the opposition. Furthermore, it is impossible to question Scotland's sacrifices as part of the United Kingdom, especially when it comes to those historical moments in which the North was used as testing ground for military weapons and for human experimentation.

I used the episode of Gruinard Island as a bridge connecting the bleak years of WWII with the dramatic decade of Thatcher's administration, as people's protests and campaigns for the island's decontamination dragged on for a long time, and the eco-terrorists' retaliations aimed to affect the Tories in power and Thatcher in person in the 1980s. With the second and third part of *Victoria* Greig explores, though rather in the subplot if not in the background, how Thatcher's doctrine completely shook and destroyed the delicate balance of cities and towns, even remote villages, with its neo-liberal policy crushing the economic stillness of small and rural communities, bringing more money to those already wealthy, impoverishing the already poor and in some cases, increasing the unemployment rate, thus stirring up violent strikes, riots and protests. However, on a brighter side, the disastrous management of Scotland during Thatcher's administration was essential for reviving a stronger nationalist spirit within the Scots, and for providing the necessary boost to the Scottish National Party to become the representative of the separatist aspirations of the entire country. Despite the failure of 1979 referendum for devolution, the SNP has continued its struggle becoming the largest political party in Scotland, and decades of fights have finally rewarded them with two triumphant victories in a row, in the general elections of both 2007 and 2011, and now betting everything on the upcoming referendum of 2014 for an independent Scotland.

Essential achievement in this campaign led by the SNP was the victory in the referendum for a devolved Scottish parliament held in 1997 thanks to the support and encouragement of Tony Blair's New Labour. The atmosphere of expectations, fear of failure and uncertainty for the future is the subject of Greig's play *Caledonia Dreaming*, hastily written few months before the referendum. As almost always in his plays, Greig's approach to the political issue he wants to deal with is extremely elliptical. The various characters follow their plotline, which has very little to do with politics and definitely nothing to do with the

upcoming referendum. Each character belongs to a different stratus of society, and yet they are all too busy with their lives and miseries to be able to look at the “greater picture” of what is going on, politically, in their country. Be it the call girl or the EMP, the bored middle-class woman or the young boy from the poorest suburb of Edinburgh, they are all either too scared to dream, and unable to look beyond the tomorrow, or too unrealistic with plans for the future that they will never be able to realize. The only explicit reference to Scotland Forward and the Yes campaign, the Conservatives’ contra-independence position, and the still unresolved issues, such as the West Lothian Question, are dealt with in the choruses which mark the sequence of the play’s scenes. More than an allegory, *Caledonia Dreaming* seems to be a quite truthful portrait of a Scotland who would love to dream and start planning for a better future, but is too scared and has somehow lost the enthusiasm after years of failures and disappointments. The brief and collective epiphany that the characters have at the end of the play suggests hope for the future, namely for a positive result in the referendum.

As a matter of fact, the Yes voters were victorious and in 1999 the Scottish parliament was officially founded. To mark this occasion, in a joint project with the autonomous Spanish region of Catalonia, Greig was commissioned a play that was going to be premiered at the Barcelona Grec Festival and subsequently in Edinburgh. Quite surprisingly, *The Speculator* is an even more elliptical and politically subliminal play than *Caledonia Dreaming*. Set in the Enlightened Paris of 1720, it deals with the thorny historical figure of John Law, and his visionary, though disastrous in the end, Mississippi scheme that brought France’s economy to its knees. Rather than focusing on the main plot revolving around economic speculation, I decided to follow the parallel thread which deals with the power of dreams in pushing people to envisage a bright future and how it supports them in their struggle for achievement. Read as a metaphor and, in some ways as a cautionary tale, of 1990s post-devolution Scotland, *The*

Speculator is a play that wants to urge people to take action, be pro-active and contribute in the creation of a new and stronger country, while at the same time, it admonishes the Scots about the importance of not rushing and slowly building solid foundations for a Scotland that wants and needs to resist eventual future crises. Although this seems to be Greig's position, throughout the whole play several questions are posed to the audience to stimulate the debate around what to do now that Scotland has finally achieved autonomy, which will be the next steps, and in which direction the country wants to go.

By selecting these plays I wanted to retrace the most symbolical events in Scottish and British history that have led up to this moment, the 2014 referendum, which might change the future of an entire new nation, and contribute for real in the realization of the break-up of Britain. I put the plays in a historical perspective, using the upcoming referendum as point of reference for my analysis, painting a historical continuum which focuses entirely on Scotland's long-going struggle for autonomy and independence. From the English peace-keeping mission turned into permanent settlement and oppression depicted in *Dunsinane*, to James I's Act of Union, the fight has shifted away from the battlefields to enter the government and parliament's halls. The change is also reflected in Greig's plays, less explicitly, extremely subliminally and only lightly touching upon Scotland's hottest political issues. Greg's piece for *The Great Yes, No, Don't Know Five Minute Theatre Show* is scheduled for this June, and it probably represents the ending point of this continuum, the final exhortation to his fellow Scots to take action and win back the power Scotland once had:

The Great Yes, No, Don't Know, Five Minute Theatre Show will be an extraordinary celebration of democratic and creative spirit in Scotland. Over one tremendous day in June we'll bring together hundreds of plays, sketches, songs, polemics and poems made by groups around the country as well

soliciting input from some of Scotland's best writing and performing talents. [...] At this key moment in the nation's history it's a way for the Scotland to speak to itself – not in formal political tones – but in a relaxed, rambunctious, celebratory and personal way; and crucially, it's a chance for everyone to contribute, not just a political or artistic elite. It's going to be a special event and whether you find yourself listening to a song from Skye at four in the morning, watching a show in a live hub, or enjoying a laugh in the comfort of your own home with a dram beside you, it's bound to be full of memorable moments.²⁰⁸

Now we can only wait and see how Scotland will decide on her future on September, 18.

²⁰⁸ David Greig's comment on "The Great Yes, No, Don't Know 5 Minute Theatre Show," *National Theatre of Scotland*, n.d., fiveminutetheatre.com.

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