

‘two kingdoms...compassed with one Sea’: Reconstructing Kingdoms and Reclaiming Histories in David Greig’s *Dunsinane*.

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At the end of Shakespeare’s *Macbeth* the titular tyrant and usurper is overthrown during the battle at Dunsinane and a new system of supposedly enlightened government is installed by the English army. Malcolm is placed on the throne by the English general, Siward and the play concludes with the suggestion that peace has been restored and all will be well in Malcolm’s new kingdom. But of course things are rarely as straightforward as this, and in David Greig’s *Dunsinane* the Scottish playwright explores the question of what happens next – what happens after Macbeth has been killed and Malcolm takes the throne? More than this, Greig revisits the Macbeth story through a Scottish lens, inviting the audience to read the events at Dunsinane against the grain of the traditional ‘history’ of Macbeth that has come down to us since Shakespeare’s time.

Commissioned by Michael Boyd for the Royal Shakespeare Company (RSC), *Dunsinane* premièred in London at the Hampstead Theatre, where it had a four-week run from 10 February to 6 March 2010. The production was directed by RSC Associate Director Roxana Silbert, and included a set design by Robert Innes Hopkins. The Scottish première of *Dunsinane* took place a year later at the Royal Lyceum, Edinburgh in a first-ever co-production between the RSC and the National Theatre of Scotland (NTS). The production has met with much praise and has hailed four and five-star reviews in the local and national press on either side of the border. But arguably the viewing contexts of the two sets of performances have been markedly different due to the (unforeseen by Greig at the time of writing) political landscape in Scotland in May 2011 that has generated new readings of and additional layers to the politics at play within Greig’s Shakespearean offshoot. Namely, the set of performances in Scotland can be read very differently from the earlier ones at the Hampstead as a result of the socio-political backdrop of the newly re-elected Alex Salmond as First Minister of Scotland and the renewed cries for Scottish independence strongly called for from the Scottish Nationalist Party (SNP). Indeed, 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 and England – between those neighbouring nations which James VI and I famously referred to as ‘two kingdoms [...] compassed with one sea’ (296).

‘Enter, Sir, the castle’ – Siward in *Macbeth* (V.vii.29)¹

Dunsinane follows the journey of Siward (played by Jonny Phillips), the English general tasked with overthrowing Macbeth and installing Malcolm (Brian Ferguson) on the Scottish throne. Siward arrives in Scotland thinking that once Malcolm is ensconced on the throne peace will naturally follow: ‘We’ll 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).² However, he soon discovers that he has been misled by the accounts Malcolm has given him of Macbeth as a tyrant whom the populace wants dead and of the extent to which the English intervention force will be welcomed by the Scots. It is clear on arrival that the prior unrest and warring factions will continue in spite of Macbeth’s overthrow. Instead of making a decision to withdraw from Scotland, Siward resolves to remain in the country and attempt to

impose a new regime. Determined to civilise the tribal Scots, he believes that 'if we persevere [...] we can make a picture of the world which everyone agrees true' (48).

Siward's efforts to bring peace to the faction-ridden kingdom appear futile as the situation begins to spiral out of control. In imposing a ruler on Scotland and trying to prop up Malcolm's fragile throne, the English army finds itself in a very unstable political landscape. Greig divides his play into four sections corresponding to the seasons, this structure enabling him to illuminate the English general's 'growing disillusionment and brutalisation in an environment that becomes more, rather than less, alien as time proceeds' (Wallace 2011:203). Focusing on Siward's ambition to bring order to the troubled realm, *Dunsinane* clearly participates in current topical debates about military intervention and its dangers.³ In particular, the play has uncomfortable parallels with contemporary events in Iraq and Afghanistan.⁴ Indeed, Greig has talked of how when he first started writing *Dunsinane* 'Britain and America had just invaded and occupied Iraq, so it seemed to me there was an element of looking at the military and looking at the idea of the overthrow of tyrant' (Royal Shakespeare Company). Although it was the Britain-American invasion of Iraq that Greig had been thinking of, by the time the play was produced at the Hampstead Afghanistan had become the war more at the forefront of people's minds. *Dunsinane* became, therefore, for many audience members an explicit reference to the ongoing Afghanistan campaign and the continued bloodshed occurring there.

That Greig's *Dunsinane* is a vehicle for examining the nature of empire control is made clear in the opening act when Macduff unfolds a map and tries to explain to Siward the internal politics of the country the English army has just 'freed'/occupied (30-31). As Macduff identifies the strongholds of the various clans and affiliations, it becomes evident that there is a serious fight for succession of the Scottish throne taking place between Malcolm (supported by the Albas) and Gruach (supported by the Morays, and played by Siobhan Redmond). Siward's belief that placing Malcolm on the throne will lead to Scotland becoming unified is therefore very naïve and misplaced. He soon learns that the 'rescued' Scots are not so easily united and he finds himself dispiritedly having to declare to his men 'we'll be in Scotland a little longer than we expected' (38).

Greig highlights the ways in which Siward's attempts to bring peace to Scotland are continually thwarted by the English army's lack of understanding of the country it has occupied. He represents Siward as adrift in a foreign land and the English soldiers as an invading army with little understanding of Scotland's awkward geography and its complex clan systems. Finding itself ill-equipped to deal with the fierce guerrilla tactics of the Scots and fighting a war over unfamiliar territory, the English army is portrayed as somewhat clumsy in its efforts to tame the country.⁵ Presenting on stage what Clare Wallace has described as 'a charged encounter between cultures with apparently incommensurable differences and the unresolved ethical crisis that derives from this encounter', Greig raises important questions about whether there is a point in the process of intervention at which honourable retreat is possible (2011:199). These are questions, of course, that are also at the heart of current debates regarding the withdrawal of British and American troops from Afghanistan. The play's depiction, moreover, of Malcolm as misinforming Siward of the political situation – of neglecting to mention that Macbeth's widow is still alive and that her son and the heir to the throne has escaped – clearly resonates with current discussions in the media surrounding the issue of public (mis)information in relation to the War on Terror in the Middle East. In short, Greig can be seen to use *Dunsinane* as a vehicle through which to transform the political import of *Macbeth* and to point up the imperial orthodoxies underpinning his take on this canonical play.

He thereby provides a timely commentary on the ongoing turmoil in the Middle East as arising from military intervention in the name of peace-keeping – one that is highly critical of the morality of attempting to impose a new regime on countries which differ in culture.⁶ Gruach's line, 'Oh, how in love you are with your good intentions' perhaps best sums up the play's political standpoint (135).

'Stands Scotland where it did?' (Macduff in *Macbeth* IV.iii.164)

James C. Bulman has written of 'the radical contingency of performance – the unpredictable, often playful intersection of history, material conditions, social contexts, and reception that destabilises Shakespeare and makes theatrical meaning a participatory act' (1996:1). Bulman points here to the contextual surround of a performance that can alter the meaning and significance of a given playtext through a process of cultural re-creation. This is a particularly important aspect of Greig's Shakespearean offshoot in that Scotland's current political situation brings *Dunsinane* into a new critical perspective – one that is not so much focussed on 'reimagining history and aligning it with events elsewhere', but rather becomes the 'spectacle of one of the country's leading writers using its biggest stage as the great public forum' within which to debate the issue of Scottish independence (Scott, 2011).⁷

The Scottish première of *Dunsinane* took place at the Royal Lyceum, Edinburgh, where it had a three-week run from 13 May to 4 June 2011, followed by a short run at the Citizens' Theatre, Glasgow from 7-11 June.⁸ The immediate cultural backdrop to the co-production was Alex Salmond's overwhelming SNP victory in the Scottish elections.⁹ Winning an outright majority in the Holyrood election, Salmond was re-elected as First Minister of Scotland to head the country's first post-devolution majority government. During his formal re-election at Holyrood on 18 May, Salmond spoke the following words as part of his address to the Scottish nation:

I think we should seize the moment and act together to bring these powers back home. Let this parliament move forward as one to make Scotland better [...] 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. Whatever changes take place in our constitution, we will remain close to our neighbours. We will continue to share a landmass, a language and a wealth of experience and history with the other people of these islands. My dearest wish is to see the countries of Scotland and England stand together as equals. There is a difference between partnership and subordination. [...] The age of empires is over.¹⁰

Salmond presented an image of the Scottish nation as modern, outward-looking, and ready to embrace new opportunities. He not only called for increased powers for Scotland (which he demanded be added to the Scotland Bill, then going through Westminster) but also articulated a sense of the Scottish people as ambitious to engage in dialogue about the possibility of becoming independent from the rest of the UK. In short, Salmond forcefully renewed the SNP's cries for an independent Scotland and re-fired debates about Scottish independence on both sides of the border. In the days that followed his re-election he went on to announce that the SNP would hold a referendum on independence at some point in the second half of the new parliament's five-year term (something confirmed in the autumn of 2012 as scheduled for autumn 2014). Thus, as audiences attended performances of

Dunsinane in Scotland the independence debate had become for Scots more relevant than ever before.

Greig's playtext therefore assumed for Scottish audiences additional layers of meaning, his sequel to *Macbeth* appearing to participate in current discussions about Scotland moving into a new political era. This is not to say that for Scottish audiences the play's parallels to events in the Middle East did not resonate, but that the production gained extra layers of meaning and topicality through the powerful historic and cultural backdrop of Salmond's re-election with a clear majority. Certainly, Greig's play can be seen to recontextualise Shakespeare politically by laying claim to the Macbeth story in the name of Scotland's own cultural difference from England. In the final section of this article, I am thus going to examine the way in which Greig employs his appropriation of Shakespeare's tragedy as a means of reclaiming the story of Macbeth and of inviting the spectator to revisit Scotland's current relationship with England.

Greig opens *Dunsinane* with the moment in Shakespeare's *Macbeth* when the English soldiers camouflage themselves using the branches and leaves of Birnam forest and then advance forward to bring the 'trees' to Dunsinane.¹¹ Notably, this is something that takes place offstage in Shakespeare's playtext. The fact that Greig chooses to present this onstage signals to the audience from the outset that his version of the Macbeth story is going to present that which Shakespeare fails to – it is going to show the things that happened behind the scenes in Shakespeare and to present an alternative or revised history of Macbeth. This is further emphasised by the way Greig includes in his drama some Shakespearean characters in the form of Malcolm and Macduff but also introduces a raft of new characters such as Egham and the chorus of English soldiers. That *Dunsinane* is offering a revised history is additionally highlighted by Greig's choice of main protagonist: Siward, Northumbrian, a character who directors and dramaturgs often edit out of productions of *Macbeth*. Daniel Fischlin and Mark Fortier have commented on how Shakespearean adaptations 'radically alter the shape and significance of another work so as to invoke that work and yet be different from it' (2000:4). These words can be applied to Greig's reshaping of the Macbeth story, in that his audience encounters some elements of familiarity in terms of events and characters that feature in Shakespeare's play. At the same time, however, the spectator is introduced to new characters and invited to view the historical events at Dunsinane through a new and decidedly Scottish lens. Fischlin and Fortier go onto assert 'adaptation features a specific and explicit form of criticism: a marked change from Shakespeare's original cannot help but indicate a critical difference' (2000:8). In Greig's case this critical difference is best understood in terms of his rewriting Scottish history-become-legend so as to shift the focus from the corrupt tyrant of Shakespeare's play to English intervention in Scotland. For, whereas the English playwright wrote Scotland and focused on Scottish kings, Greig writes England and foregrounds the experience of English soldiers.

Also evident from the outset of *Dunsinane* is a combining of the old with the modern. In the Scottish production the set comprised a slate-lined stage representing both the stone flags of Dunsinane castle and the rocky ground of eleventh-century Scotland. Located stage-right, a large Iona cross was on display at the top of a flight of granite steps. This medieval scene was contrasted with the very modern language of the play. Rather than replicating Shakespeare's seventeenth-century verse as spoken in *Macbeth*, Greig's playtext employs modern language that is direct and unpoetic, although very often beautiful in its descriptions of the Scottish landscape. A further contrast was to be found in the soundscape of the play, which included not

only the very contemporary language of the English soldiers, but also the Gaelic spoken by Gruach and her women and a musical score featuring both traditional Gaelic songs and a folk-rock band. The production's merging together of old and new, medieval and modern appeared to suggest that Scotland's future can somehow be found in its past.¹² Indeed, this is a play set notably before the unification of Britain.

One of the key dramaturgical strategies Greig employs in order to reclaim the story of what happened at Dunsinane is to revisit the characters of Macbeth and Lady Macbeth and to challenge the ways in which Shakespeare presents them. Macbeth, for instance, is never referred to by name in *Dunsinane*; he is only ever mentioned as 'the tyrant'.¹³ This highlights to the spectator the traditional image of Macbeth that has come down to us from Shakespeare's tragedy. Greig complicates this traditional view of Macbeth by having Gruach assert: 'He was a good king...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). Her words illuminate the historical partisanship of Shakespeare's depiction of the Scottish king and, by extension, of traditional English-authored accounts of Macbeth. Greig in his play shows how history tends to be written by the victors and how it is the historical narrative that becomes privileged which is the 'official' one.¹⁴ What we learn from the English playwright is that Macbeth was a disastrous monarch and a murderer. Greig reminds us that the story of Macbeth's life is not as simple as that. Macbeth was in fact on the throne for seventeen years (rather than, as Shakespeare's text implies, a brief period of time). For him to have experienced a long reign at a time when the country was beset by warring clans with differing claims to the throne and when rulers tended to occupy the seat of power for less than a decade, suggests that Macbeth must have been fairly successful as a leader. It must also be remembered that Shakespeare was writing during a period when James was seeking to unite England and Scotland. *Macbeth* can therefore be seen to flatter the heir to Elizabeth's throne at a time when notions of forging an empire called 'Britain' were being experimented with and when it was in Shakespeare's interest to manipulate his source material so as to convey an image of Scotland as finding an accommodation with England.¹⁵ In *Dunsinane*, the Scottish playwright can consequently be seen to open up a space in which to construct an alternative and arguably more historically accurate story of Macbeth than the one that has come to be traditionally articulated since Shakespeare.¹⁶

Greig himself has commented that by 'Playing with some of those concepts and characters, and claiming just a little bit of history from another point of view', he is essentially 'answering back' to Shakespeare.¹⁷ As Wallace has pointed out, though, by staging an encounter between cultures characterised by uneven and asymmetrical relations of power and 'mutual misunderstanding', the Scottish playwright not only writes back to Shakespeare, but also writes beyond him (2011:202). *Dunsinane* enters what Wallace refers to as a 'contact zone between Scottishness and Englishness, while simultaneously alluding to contemporary zones of conflict in the Middle East' (2011:201). As such, Greig can be seen to turn to the past in order to comment on the here and now of the contemporary political climate both within and without Scotland's borders.¹⁸ In 1996 Ian Brown explored how many Scottish dramatists have been 'plugged into history', noting that, although the treatment of history in Scottish theatre before 1970 'may have been generally backward-looking', since then 'its developing use' has been concerned 'with the "now" of Scotland, its society, identity and future' (1996:97-98). He goes on to assert: 'The concern with history shown by contemporary Scottish playwrights is absolutely

rooted in their concern with the present and developing state of their nation' (1996:98). Greig can certainly be said to be following in the footsteps, for example, of Hector MacMillan and John McGrath, who have registered in their plays an awareness of how history can be adapted and manipulated for particular political agendas.¹⁹ Brown says of MacMillan's dramaturgy – with reference to *The Rising* (1973) and *The Royal Visit* (1974) – he 'revisits history in order to reveal what is hidden within it, and, through questioning the ways in which it has been hidden, to examine the nature of contemporary power, political propaganda and manipulation of opinion' (1996:88). John McGrath, meanwhile, in *The Cheviot, the Stag and the Black, Black Oil* (1973) and other plays engaging with history – for example, *Little Red Hen* (1975) and *Joe's Drum* (1979) – visits the past in order to examine political myth and ultimately to 'reconstruct historical myths as motive for future action' (Brown 1996:91). Both playwrights exemplify, then, how history can be reinterpreted and combined with contemporary comment in order to intervene politically in the present. Above all their plays operate to question notions of the 'facts of history' – something that Greig, too, seeks to interrogate and challenge in *Dunsinane*.

In act one, Siward provides an interesting account of what he sees as his role in Scotland: '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' (33). This idea of 'clear[ing] away' and 'uproot[ing]' the past is arguably exactly what Shakespeare has done to the historical Macbeth. And the same is also true for his queen. In Shakespeare's play, for example, she is denied her own name and referred to simply as Lady Macbeth. Greig's play restores to the Queen her name, Gruach. And in *Dunsinane* she remains alive after her husband's overthrow, rather than killing herself as in the English playwright's version of the story. Indeed, although it is not known exactly when the historical Gruach died, what we do know is that she survived her husband's defeat and went on to see her son, Lulach ascend the throne.²⁰ This leads me to my next point: this Lady Macbeth has suckled a child, the son from her previous marriage to Gillacomgain. Accordingly, Greig depicts her as maternal in scenes where she attempts to secure protection for Lulach from Egham and also when she mourns the tragic loss of her child in the final act of the play. In this way, all that Shakespeare tells us about the Queen is questioned. This is especially apparent when Gruach holds out her open but spotless hands to Siward so that he can read her palms. In an implicit reference back to Shakespeare's text and its frequent allusions to Lady Macbeth's bloodied hands, Greig has Siward confirm that all he can see there is 'White. / Snow.' (68).

Siward's confrontation with Malcolm regarding the inaccurate information he has been given about Macbeth's widow is particularly illuminating and is, I think, worth quoting in full here:

Siward	You told me she was dead.
Malcolm	Did I?
Siward	You told me she went mad and died.
Malcolm	Mmm.
Siward	You told me the tyrant had lost the support of the chiefs and he had no son and his queen had died of madness and so there would be no resistance to you but on the other hand we were likely to see a swift and general acceptance of your rule and the chance to establish a new and peaceful order. That's what you said.
Malcolm	Yes.
Siward	Well – she's not dead.
Malcolm	So it would seem.

Siward	Not even sick.
Malcolm	No.
Siward	You lied to me. (27-28)

All the things that Malcolm has told Siward and which turn out to be untrue are the very same untruths that Shakespeare provides us with in his version of the Macbeth story. Exposing these inaccuracies, Greig's text operates to trouble *Macbeth's* narrative authenticity and to expose the way in which 'literary culture participates in the construction of a seemingly palatable (commodifiable) narrative that is also a form of sentimental, historical amnesia' (Fischlin and Fortier, 2000:15). *Dunsinane* in this context becomes a site for authoritative national self-expression with the Scottish playwright firmly reclaiming the history of Macbeth and Gruach.

In particular, *Dunsinane* functions to reveal the ways in which Gruach has become displaced from and within Scottish history. This displacement is evident from the opening scene where we first learn who Gruach is: when Siward asks her 'what work do you do here in Dunsinane', Gruach replies, 'My place here is Queen' (27). This exchange is followed by an immediate scene change to the exchange cited above with Malcolm sitting on Gruach's throne in the Great Hall. The juxtaposition of Gruach not being recognised in her own castle with Malcolm sitting on the Scottish throne signals clearly the displacement of the first named queen in Scottish history from the 'official' historical memory. In an attempt to remedy this Greig adapts Shakespeare's play to the demands of the current historical and political moment by revealing Gruach's true position within Scottish history, and does so in a way that uniquely empowers the female figure. For example, he foregrounds her lineage to make clear that Gruach is a princess in her own right with a strong claim to the Scottish throne – as Gruach points out, 'I was never not Queen' (30, 84). Greig further empowers the Scottish queen by portraying her as fiercely loyal to her country, wily and intelligent, a woman who inspires great loyalty from her supporters, and as running circles around the English soldiers. That Gruach, for instance, is more than a match for Siward is made explicit at the end of act two when she escapes during the wedding feast. In this scene, the English army is taken unawares and left baffled by how Gruach has managed to rally men to her aid. Yet we see Gruach earlier send out a call for help right under Siward's nose: after the parliament meeting she explains to Siward that her women are singing a wedding song which 'calls out to the relatives of the bride', 'says she needs attendants' and 'asks them to come. In great number' (85). By depicting a strong and able woman who does not conform to the misogynistic stereotypes typically attributed to Lady Macbeth, Greig decentres Shakespeare; reconfiguring the gender politics at work in Shakespeare's tragedy, he in turn contests the traditions of value by which the canonical English playwright has commonly been appropriated.

Greig can consequently be seen to employ his sequel to *Macbeth* as a means of dismantling the stereotypes and myths that have come to surround Lady Macbeth – to challenge, for example, the myths of her as having spurred her husband on to murder Duncan (for which there is no historical evidence) and as lacking any maternal tendencies, this latter construction of Gruach being one which she interestingly repositions and projects onto Siward in the final act where she says of his good intentions: 'Look at you clinging onto them even now. / Like dead babies at your breast' (135).²¹ Indeed, one of the striking dramaturgical aspects of *Dunsinane* is that it is constructed in such a way as to show us the myth-making process at work. Thus we see Gruach's women heating some wine over a cauldron and singing in Gaelic. Observing the scene, the Boy Soldier asks Gruach: 'Is it true that you eat babies?' Incredulous, she responds 'Babies...They say the Scots eat babies?'

Amused by both the innocence and foreign ignorance of the young soldier, Gruach decides to tease him by playing along with the blatantly untrue images of her that are circulating amongst the English soldiers: 'Don't you eat baby meat in England?' To this the Boy Soldier innocently replies: 'No – not in Kent, anyway' (59-60). Laughing at the naiveté of the Boy Soldier, audiences are by extension invited to laugh at the traditional image of Lady Macbeth as an unnatural fiend who would dash out her baby's brains. The popular notion of Lady Macbeth as the 'fourth' witch of Shakespeare's play is also mocked when Greig has Gruach gently tease the Boy Soldier further by telling him that if he were to drink the contents of the cauldron he would turn into a bird (61). This is then used to underscore the ease with which cultural incomprehension can lead to untruths becoming 'facts' or historical 'memories', with the Boy Soldier warning Siward not to swallow the wine because 'that drink is a curse. It'll turn you into a bird' (65).²² Importantly, Greig has Gruach answer back to Shakespeare and his construction of her: 'I'm bored of being a witch...I'm bored of being stuck in this room' (66). Here she draws attention to the way she has become 'stuck' within and confined to the stereotype of the transgressive woman as put forward by Shakespeare, with authors and directors regularly continuing to perpetuate such an image of Lady Macbeth. As Gruach later points out to the spectator: 'I am not a witch but I am the Queen of Scotland' (70).

Just as *Dunsinane* explores how myths and stories are created, so the play also subjects national stereotyping to scrutiny. Throughout *Dunsinane* there are continual references to the cold and rough landscape of Scotland ('here we are rock, bog, forest and loch' [51]) as well as to the 'ungrateful' and 'treacherous' nature of the Scots whose 'grudges keep them warm' (41).²³ The images of a barren Scotland where nothing grows other than deceit and deception are contrasted with descriptions of a luxurious England with its 'lovely oak woods where everything is sun-dappled and the forests are full of wild boar and deer and the tables always full of beer and ham' (51). Audiences, then, are confronted with the national stereotyping that can often take place when people are faced with something from another culture they are unfamiliar with or do not fully understand. Notably the frequent allusions to Scotland's inhospitable terrain and to the grudge-bearing nature of the Scots meant that in Scotland the play was in many ways funnier – certainly when I attended a showing at the Citizens' Theatre the audience dutifully chuckled along to the English soldiers' stereotyping of Scotland as incomprehensible. But set alongside moments when the English soldiers also articulate absurd stereotypes about royalty ('I think we'd know him [Lulach] because he'd have the sort of soft hands you get if you've spent your life touching leather and swan...We will know him by his silken hair' [97-98]), the national stereotypes become dismantled and inverted in so far as it is the English soldiers' inability to comprehend the country and its culture that becomes highlighted.²⁴ In this way, *Dunsinane* serves to stress the notion of Scotland as a separate nation with its own distinct culture and highly developed customs and codes. That Greig employs a Shakespearean offshoot in the service of this is no accident since, as Fischlin and Fortier argue:

[...] Shakespeare functions as a relay by which an essential Englishness is disseminated. Shakespeare, as a sign of imperial culture, is instrumental in glossing over cultural difference, even as his use in colonial contexts paradoxically promotes a recognition that there are differences to be glossed over. Adaptation as a stage and textual practice, then, is tied to the business of producing nation. (Fischlin and Fortier, 2000:11)

Dunsinane illustrates how in transforming and reshaping the Macbeth story Greig is able to expose the orthodoxies (such as imperialism) that conventionally operate

within Shakespeare and to undermine the way in which the English playwright's cultural power functions to 'gloss over cultural difference' such as that between England and Scotland.

In drawing attention to how the past is often used in the service of national myth-making and stereotyping, *Dunsinane* poses important questions about the playwright's own role in using, recreating, reinterpreting and adapting history. For, just as Shakespeare had an agenda in adapting historical material so as to flatter the new monarch, so Greig appears to have a political agenda in his act of combining historical recreation with contemporary comment. Although in many ways Greig presents his play as historically corrective, the 'facts' of history in his playtext are nevertheless equally as skewed as in Shakespeare, with Greig clearly using history for his own purposes. It is no accident, for example, that he chooses to present the events at Dunsinane in terms of an English invasion of Scotland. Here Greig neglects to signal how Siward was not in fact Anglo-Saxon; rather he is believed to have been of Scandinavian origin. Additionally, Malcolm's relationship with Siward is more complex than Greig lets on. Siward is thought to have been Malcolm's uncle (i.e. Malcolm is his sister's son, an especially close relationship, *sweostorsunu*, in Germanic cultures of the time) and Malcolm, it is important to remember, was both Scottish and the eldest son of Duncan I, whom Macbeth had murdered. Malcolm, in other words, was bringing in his uncle from the North to help him avenge his father's death and reclaim the throne.²⁵ The political situation was thus much more complicated than *Dunsinane* suggests and Malcolm's move to (re)take the throne constituted more than an invasion of Scotland by England; the way Greig employs the Siward connection is, in other words, ahistorical.²⁶ What is more, far from being an ineffectual monarch as depicted in *Dunsinane*, Malcolm Canmore was, like Macbeth, a very successful ruler - one who occupied the Scottish seat of power for 35 years, from 1058 to 1093. Malcolm's long reign importantly generated a period of stability for Scotland. The Scottish kingdom under Malcolm's reign became more clearly defined territorially than it had been before 1050, and Malcolm additionally established a lineage which would rule Scotland without interruption for two centuries until the childless death of Alexander III in 1286 led to turmoil before the coronation in 1306 and ultimate victory of Robert the Bruce.²⁷

Greig's construction of a historical narrative within *Dunsinane*, then, reveals how his engagement with and employment of history operates to focus the past as an incentive for present political action. Through his playtext's emphasis on an English invasion of Scotland, he can be seen to adapt history so as to invite his audience to share a particular view on the historical relationship between Scotland and England and, by extension, on the present political moment in Scotland. Here his recent views on the Scottish independence debate are particularly relevant. Although over the years Greig has been vocal about his often uneasy relationship with Scottish national identity, in an interview for the *Observer* last August he made clear his national and cultural allegiances when discussing Scotland's union with England:²⁸

So there comes a moment when we turn and look at each other – England and Scotland – and realise we just want different things. No matter how hard I try, I can no longer rationalise voting for parties that can never give my community what it wants [...] Of course, as an independent country Scotland would make mistakes, it would do stupid things, be crass and ugly at times. I just think it would be those things less often and we would be able to right them more quickly [...] at the moment I expect I will vote for independence. I think a majority of Scots will too. Perhaps not independence red in tooth and claw. Perhaps independence 'lite'. But I don't think there's any going back.

The Union is an unhappy marriage. I think it's time we both sat down and said it out loud – it's over. (Greig, 2011)

Known for 'habitually distanc[ing] himself from simplistic national allegiances', it is interesting that when asked about the future of the Union, Greig clearly came out in support of an independent Scotland (Wallace, 2011:200). In the light of this, Greig can be read in his playtext as adapting the events at Dunsinane to suit a particular political standpoint and to invite us to reflect on the importance of the present moment in terms of determining Scotland's future political landscape.

Dunsinane repositions *Macbeth* in relation to Scotland's current political situation so that strikingly Malcolm's address to the gathered clan chiefs in the parliament scene appears to be directed specifically to us in the audience:

If you make me king I promise you one thing only – total honesty. In that spirit I offer you the following. I will govern entirely in the interests of me...I will not dispose my mind to the improvement of the country or to the conditions of its ordinary people...As far as foreign powers are concerned I will submit to any humiliation in order to keep the friendship of England. (80)

As Malcolm presents his questionable manifesto, the allusions to Anglo-American friendships that have come under scrutiny in relation to the wars in Iraq and Afghanistan are loud and clear. But set alongside Salmond's speech to Holyrood on 18 May, another layer to Malcolm's address is manifested with the spectator appearing to be asked whether s/he wants a Scottish republic or wishes the country to remain as part of the UK. Interestingly, as Malcolm puts to us the question of whether we want his model of kingship for Scotland or would prefer Siward's kind of government, the playwright reminds us that in the recent elections not everyone who voted SNP necessarily wants independence.²⁹ This is something which Tory MSP Annabel Goldie was quick to point out on hearing Salmond's re-election speech:

He may have a majority of seats in this parliament – but he does not have a majority of votes from Scotland. He may want separation, most people in Scotland do not. The only mandate he has from the election is to be a devolved government in the Scottish Parliament' (Black, 2011).

Greig's play reminds us that it is never safe to assume that you know what Scots want, a notion perfectly captured by Malcolm when he dryly comments:

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).

What *Dunsinane* asserts as clear, though, is that a renegotiation of the relationship between Scotland and its neighbour is needed since modern Scotland is a nation no longer willing to be defined by England.

Promising Siward that 'You'll go home in the end. / Beaten and humiliated', Gruach in the final act of the play goes onto declare that Scotland will 'torment England again and again and again until the end of time' (136). These lines articulate a strong message to Westminster that Scotland will continue to trouble England until such a time as the Scots are empowered to make decisions about their country for themselves. In the play's closing moments, moreover, Siward and the Boy Soldier

walk off into the snow and the final image the audience is left with is that of the footprints which they leave behind – marks that will become covered up by further snow-fall and will disappear so that a blanket of fresh snow will be available for new (Scottish) footprints. Greig thus provides a much more promising ending for Scotland than in *Macbeth* through his suggestion of new footsteps and new beginnings for the Scottish people.

Dunsinane, then, operates on several levels. It articulates the apparent futility of attempting to impose peace on another nation and warns of the impact such actions can have on both the landscape and its inhabitants. As Macduff puts it, war ‘shadows the landscape like a hawk and whatever name it sees it swoops down and claws it away’; his words here pointing to how military intervention can cast a shadow on the site(s) where it is played out, leaving a mark on, and changing the memories and associations of all that it touches (120). In particular, the playtext illuminates the difficulties of navigating the complex codes and mores of different cultures and nations, which in turn can hinder even the most well-intentioned attempts at peace-keeping operations. But, given the current backdrop of the growing prospect of Scottish independence and Scotland’s raised profile on the international stage, *Dunsinane* above all taps into current discussions about the governance of the Scottish nation today. By emphasising how Scotland has its own distinctive culture and traditions, the play sends a strong message about the need for Westminster to further recognise Scotland’s difference from England. To this end, the Shakespearean offshoot serves to demand space in which to consider and debate the various options open to the people of Scotland – a nation ready to take new steps and move in a different direction. Although, whether these new steps are in the direction of a separate kingdom and self-governance or towards an increase in devolved powers from Westminster is still to be learned.

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¹ All quotations for *Macbeth* are taken from: Shakespeare, W. 2001. *Macbeth*. Muir, K. ed. London: Thomson Learning.

² All quotations from *Dunsinane* are taken from: Greig, D. 2010. *Dunsinane*. London: Faber and Faber.

³ Greig had previously written about the wars against Afghanistan and Iraq in *The American Pilot* (2005) and explored relations between the West and the Arab world in *Damascus* (2007). He continued his examination of such relations in *Miniskirts of Kabul*, directed by Nicholas Kent; this was staged as part of *Great Game: Afghanistan*, a cycle of eighteen short plays about Afghanistan at Tricycle Theatre, London in the Spring season of 2009.

⁴ More recently, the play can also be seen to have some parallels to events taking place in West Africa.

⁵ This apparent clumsiness is something theatre critic Mark Fisher has also commented on in his review of the play.

⁶ There is, of course, a long tradition of playwrights reworking Shakespeare’s characters and stories as a way of engaging in contemporary debates – for example, John Lacy’s *Sauny the Scot* (1667, published 1698), Barbara Garson’s *MacBird* (1966), Aimé Césaire’s *Une Tempête* (1969), Edward Bond’s *Lear* (1971), Joan Ure’s two companion pieces *Something In It For Cordelia* and *Something In It For Ophelia* (1971), Philip Osment’s *This Island’s Mine* (1987), The Women’s Theatre Group and Elaine Feinstein’s *Lear’s Daughters* (1987), Djanet Sears’ *Harlem Duet* (1997) and Deborah Levy’s *Macbeth - False Memories* (2000), to name but a few.

⁷ Since he began writing for theatre in the early nineties, David Greig has established himself as one of Scotland’s most accomplished and prolific contemporary playwrights. His work includes historical plays, translations and adaptations, work for the radio and children’s plays, as well as collaborations with Suspect Culture – the experimental theatre company he co-founded in 1993 and which was based in Glasgow until the conclusion of its projects in 2009.

⁸ The performance I attended was the matinee showing at the Citizens’ Theatre on 11 June 2011.

⁹ In the 5 May election the SNP won 69 of the 129 Scottish Parliament seats – the most the party has ever held at either a Holyrood or Westminster election. It was the fourth general election since the devolved Scottish parliament was established in 1999.

¹⁰ The 'powers' needing to be brought 'back home' is a reference to the six areas which Salmond highlighted as being 'aspect[s] of our national life controlled by Westminster': borrowing powers, corporation tax, the Crown Estate, excise duties, digital broadcasting, and opportunities to shape European policy. For the full address, see: Macdonell, H. 'Alex Salmond's Holyrood address on being re-elected First Minister.' [online]. *Caledonian Mercury*, 18 May 2011. Available from: <http://politics.caledonianmercury.com/2011/05/18/alex-salmond%E2%80%99s-holyrood-address-on-being-re-elected-first-minister/> [Accessed 9 August 2011].

¹¹ Clare Wallace has astutely commented that 'The play's title explicitly hails *Macbeth* and the location of its concluding action. The transpositional citation is noteworthy in the way it alters the focus of the source text, directing us away from Shakespeare's tyrant to the site of his demise, suggesting the precedence of place over personage' (2011: 200).

¹² The idea of finding Scotland's future in its past is something which Robert Dawson Scott has also picked up on in his review of the play. See: 'Macbeth sequel *Dunsinane* finds Scottish future in Scotland's past.' [online]. *STV*, 18 May 2011. Available from: <http://entertainment.stv.tv/onstage/250484-macbeth-sequel-dunsinane-finds-scottish-future-in-scotlands-past/> [Accessed 13 June 2011].

¹³ See, for instance, pages 25 and 27.

¹⁴ Cf. David Archibald's discussion of the privileging of historical narratives in relation to Gregory Burke's *Black Watch* (2006) in: 'We're just big bullies...' Gregory Burke's *Black Watch*. *The Drouth* 26 (2008), pp. 8-13. Of Burke's modern-day squaddie story based on interviews with former members of the Highland regiment who served in Iraq, Archibald argues that the narrative presented is a 'more acceptable, easily consumable' version of the history of the Highland regiment; one which glosses over some less consumable moments in its past and therefore makes for more 'comfortable viewing' and invites the spectator to become 'entangle[d] with the celebration of empire' (9, 12, 13).

¹⁵ Shakespeare's main source for the *Macbeth* story was Raphael Holinshed's *Chronicles of England, Scotland and Ireland* (1587). For an insightful discussion of Shakespeare, King James and the Union of Crowns see Rhodes, N., 'Wrapped in the strong arms of the Union: Shakespeare and King James' in Maley, W. and Murphy, A. (eds.), *Shakespeare and Scotland* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2004), pp. 37-52. See also Kinney, A., 'Shakespeare's *Macbeth* and the Question of Nationalism' in Newey, V. and Thompson, A. (eds.), *Literature and Nationalism* (Liverpool: Liverpool University Press, 1991), pp. 56-75 and Lee, M., *The 'Inevitable' Union: And Other Essays on Early Modern Scotland* (East Linton: Tuckwell, 2003).

¹⁶ As such, *Dunsinane* can be seen as part of a wider project to reclaim the 'real' *Macbeth* from Shakespeare's play. I am thinking here, for example, of historian Fiona Watson's *Macbeth: The True Story*, which seeks to provide a more accurate portrayal of *Macbeth*'s life and legend. Notably, this book was published in the same month as the RSC's staging in London of *Dunsinane*. More generally, both Watson's *Macbeth: The True Story* and Greig's *Dunsinane* contribute to an ongoing examination of Scottishness, Englishness and Britishness.

¹⁷ Alluding to how *Macbeth* is often surreptitiously referred to as 'The Scottish Play', Greig has commented: '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' (Wrench, 2010).

¹⁸ Greig also deals with aspects of Scottish history and cultural identities in some of his earlier plays, including *The Speculator* (1999), *Victoria* (2000) and *Outlying Islands* (2002).

¹⁹ In a chapter exploring how the past has been represented in Scottish theatre since the 1970s, David Archibald has interestingly argued that 'it is possible to discern a tendency in Scottish theatre since the 1990s moving away from both plays and the past. Newer, younger writers with a political bent appear less inclined to visit the past as part of their political interventions and are more likely to engage with present-day politics' (2011:94). He attributes this decline in part to 'the increase in debates over Scotland's relationship within the Union' and also to a 'postmodern and/or postdramatic shift away from narrative in favour of devised collaborative projects' (2011:88, 89-90). He goes on to point out, though, in recent years 'it is possible to detect a new re-engagement with history in Scottish culture' (2011:94). Archibald cites David Harrower's *Blackbird* (2005), Rona Munro's *The Last Witch* (2009), Douglas Maxwell's *The Ballad of James II* (2007), Gregory Burke's *Black Watch* (2006), Alistair Beaton's *Caledonia* (2010) among others as evidence of such a re-engagement with history in Scottish theatre.

²⁰ Lulach's was a very short reign from August 1057 until March 1058, when he was killed by Malcolm.

²¹ Here Gruach directly confronts the myth of her as a source of death and destruction and relocates the image so that it comes to rest on the shoulders of Siward, who in occupying Scotland and refusing to 'Go home' has 'spread [his] intentions around like mess' (133, 131).

²² Cf. Lulach's mocking of his tormentors as he regurgitates the myths perpetuated by the English army of Gruach's casting spells (121-122).

²³ See also Egham's argument that 'if God had meant people to live this far north he would have given us fur...of course the Scots are hairy', and the Boy Soldier's references to 'what they call summer...land...food' (40, 39).

²⁴ Wallace connects with this idea when she asserts, 'Racial stereotypes are undercut by the Scots' political acuity and sophistication, Siward's simultaneous sensitivity and intransigence, and his soldiers'

naïve superstitions.’ In this way binary oppositions between self and other, centre and periphery, right and wrong become fractured and destabilised through the course of the play (2011:209).

²⁵ Siward, Earl of Northumbria played a significant role in English politics during the reigns of Cnut, Harthacnut and Edward the Confessor. For more on the archival fragments pertaining to Siward’s life, see: Aird, W. M. 2004-2012. ‘Siward, earl of Northumbria (d. 1055), *magnate*.’ [online]. *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*. Available from: <http://oxforddnb.com/view/article/25652?docPos=3> [Accessed 1 September 2011].

²⁶ Both Shakespeare and Greig interestingly depict Malcolm as an adult at the time of his father’s murder. But in fact, Malcolm was still a child and, for the seventeen years of Macbeth’s reign, is believed to have been in exile at the court of either Edward the Confessor or Thorfinn Sigurdsson, Earl of Orkney. Similarly both playwrights collapse two related historical battles into one. Archival documents from the period suggest that it was in 1054 that Siward led an army into Scotland, defeating Macbeth on 27 July at Dunsinane Hill, the site of an Iron Age castle used into late medieval times as a royal residence. This victory put Malcolm in possession of Scotland south of the Tay, but Macbeth – although defeated – managed to escape. It was not until three years later on 15 August 1057 that Malcolm (and notably not Siward, who in fact died at York in 1055 and never saw the final defeat of Macbeth) slew Macbeth at Lumphanan, in what is now Aberdeenshire. Macbeth’s stepson Lulach then ascended the throne and was accepted as King by some of the Scots until Malcolm ambushed and killed him near Rynie in Strathbogie in March of 1058, at which point Malcolm succeeded to the throne.

²⁷ With his first wife Ingibjorg, widow or daughter of Earl Thorfinn of Orkney, Malcolm had three sons, including Duncan II who succeeded his father as King of Scots. Through his second marriage to Margaret, great-niece of Edward the Confessor, Malcolm had eight children, six sons (three of whom in turn succeeded him as king) and two daughters.

²⁸ Born in Edinburgh in 1969, brought up in Nigeria and educated in an American Baptist school and subsequently at Bristol University, it is perhaps not surprising that Greig has a complex relationship with Scotland. During an interview in *Performing Arts Journal* in 2007, for example, Greig commented: ‘[My] experience of being Scottish is one of being intensely and viscerally attached to a place in which I am perceived as a stranger’ (Greig quoted in Svich, 2007:55).

²⁹ Scott has also pointed out that the parliament scene functions to remind audiences ‘be careful of assuming you know what kind of Scotland Scots do want’.

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