

venues and experimental theatres, but nevertheless more Black male actors walked the stage and a good number of plays by Black male playwrights were being produced by the end of the 1960s (p. 217). Even though a “number of women played crucial infrastructural roles during these early years” (p. 218), the work of Black women in the theatre remained largely invisible in the early postwar decades and Black women’s plays only began to be written and staged in the 1980s, “as a result of their demand for a voice” (Croft 1993: 85).

As Victoria Sams has argued, narratives of postwar immigration have tended to construct immigrants as an alien and unwelcome presence, swamping and flooding the country, despite tentative attempts to welcome migrants as harbingers of a new multicultural Britain (2014: 16-17). These competing narratives were behind the activity of emerging London-based Black and Asian companies such as Temba (1972), Tara Arts (1977), The Black Theatre Co-operative (1979), and Talawa (1986). The 1970s and 1980s thus proved to be prolific decades for Black theatre in Britain, despite setbacks and difficulties in securing funding. Black theatre in Britain has struggled to be recognized and for many years remained a largely under-researched and neglected area of contemporary British theatre. Only recently have Black and Asian British theatres begun to be the object of more sustained critical inquiry, thanks to the work of critics and scholars based in Britain and beyond¹. Since Susan Croft published her pioneering survey of Black women dramatists in 1993, the role of women in the development of Black and Asian theatres has gradually begun to emerge, positioned between intersecting postcolonial, postmodern and feminist discourses (Griffin 2003: 3).

In this article I intend to discuss the work for the theatre of Black British women of African and Caribbean parentage in the context of the 1980s identity politics, when theatre proved to be a

¹ On the history of Black and Asian British drama and theatre see Godiwala (2006), Fuchs and Davies (2006), Chambers (2011), Brewer *et al.* (2015). Griffin (2003) is a detailed survey and examination of plays by Black and Asian women dramatists, whereas Sams (2014) offers a fascinating perusal of Black and Asian plays and performances, as part of a broader exploration of the impact of immigration on contemporary British theatre.

powerful medium in conveying the changing modalities of Black British identities, “constituted within, not outside representation” (Hall 1990: 222). Theatre and drama became crucial sites of cultural negotiation, embodying the complexity of the “new ethnicities” that were being shaped and debated in the 1980s, by challenging the invisibility of Black experiences and cultural productions, while also aiming to reflect diverse subject positions.

2. Black theatres in Britain and 1980s identity politics

1976 saw the publication of Naseem Khan’s *The Arts Britain Ignores: The Arts of Ethnic Minorities in Britain*, a comprehensive and detailed report on the state of so-called ethnic minorities’ arts. Khan’s work had been commissioned by the Arts Council, and by bringing “a lot of creative work out of the closet [...] challenged funding systems to define their attitude and response” (2012: 9). Khan’s work revealed the range and extent of Black and minority ethnic theatres, while pointing to the problems they constantly faced, such as racism and limited opportunities to work in the theatre, along with a lack of funding and institutional support. By drawing attention to the marginalization of Black arts from the cultural circuit, the report encouraged the government to improve the funding of Black and minority ethnic theatre and encourage a greater institutionalization of multicultural policies.

The term Black was then used as a collective term and referenced the common experience of racism and marginalization of minority communities. As Suzanne Scafe has recently argued, Black designated an “imagined community” comprising Caribbean, African and South Asian experience in Britain, and was used as “an aesthetic signifier of difference”, indicating also a culturally united front against mounting racism in the white population of Britain (2015: 214). In 2003, in her full-length study of contemporary Black and Asian women playwrights in Britain, Gabriele Griffin suggested that “the homogenizing term ‘Black’ can no longer easily be used” to represent the different ways in which Black and Asian influences have shaped contemporary British culture (2003: 10-11). In a similar analysis to that offered by Griffin, Gail Low and Marion Wynne Davies note that the more restricted use of the term ‘Black British’ is the result of the “fracturing of political alliances across cultural

and ethnic groups” in Britain which began to be apparent in the 1990s (2006: 4).

However, in the 1980s the term conveyed the convergence of various postcolonial formations towards a shared identity and in the realm of theatre it came to identify new and diverse groups which “by their existence and presence” exerted both “explicit and implicit pressures upon existing groups” (Verma 1996: 56). According to Jatinder Verma, founder of Tara Arts², even though theatre companies were characterized by their individual ethnicities, their shared common objectives could be summed up as follows: “(a) independence from white control; (b) opposition to the mainstream – perceived as white and racist; (c) the presentation of ‘Black’ work [...] and (d) the assertion of the right to public funds on a par with white companies” (Verma 1996: 56). Verma’s tentative manifesto reveals, on the one hand, the oppositional nature of Black and Asian theatres in Britain in the 1970s and 1980s, seeking to address racism and discrimination, while on the other, it points to the need for emerging organizations to gain access to funding and institutional support. Starting from a common terrain of exclusion and marginalization, these emerging companies gave rise to the Black Theatre Forum in 1985, a collective of several African, Caribbean and Asian theatre companies that were active in London in the 1980s and throughout the 1990s. The institutional support they received from the Greater London Council was crucial at this stage. Alda Terracciano has pointed out how, thanks to a concerted period of activity over a number of years, the Forum succeeded in introducing “mainstream British audiences to non-European art forms from a unique black British perspective” (2006: 27) and managed to create a multicultural and multiracial arena, where Black theatre aesthetics and politics could be explored.

The development of Black theatre was also sustained by the commissioning of new writing and dedicated support schemes launched by theatres, such as the Tricycle and the Royal Court Theatre in London, which managed to attract aspiring writers. With their interest in bi-cultural writers these theatres tried to put this “new Britain” on the cultural map seeking out stories from

² Tara Arts was the first South Asian theatre company in Britain, founded in 1977.

the “unmapped and emergent areas of the new communities” and inviting writers to act as cultural translators, as Hanif Kureishi pointed out when reflecting on his early work for the Royal Court Theatre (1992: xv-xvi). In an overview of his short-lived career as a playwright in the early 1980s provocatively entitled “I could have been a playwright”, Caryl Phillips argued, however, that as the decade came to be increasingly dominated by market forces and by the myth of enterprise culture championed by Thatcher, government subsidy was progressively withdrawn from theatres (Phillips 2006). As a consequence, many budding playwrights, including bi-cultural authors like Phillips himself, Jackie Kay and Hanif Kureishi, who were writing for the theatre in the 1980s and were drawn to the possibilities of embodying on stage their plural cultural identities, soon turned to fiction or to writing for films³. In the context of the emerging women’s theatres access to subsidy provided an initial boost, and the progressive withdrawal of funding that Phillips laments was a major factor in undermining their activities.

If the 1980s were crucial years in shaping multicultural Britain, it is interesting to look at the intersection between the transformations of the British theatre scene and the development of postcolonial theatre⁴. Helen Thomas sees Black theatre in the 1980s as

³ Bernardine Evaristo, a prominent Black British writer of novels and fiction whose role in the development of Black women’s theatre in Britain will be discussed later on in this article, also started her career as an actress and a playwright, writing experimental plays that would later influence and shape the style and nature of her fiction. On Evaristo’s writing see the monographs by Toplu (2011) and Gendusa (2014), which persuasively discuss Evaristo’s fictional works, only briefly mentioning her early career in the theatre.

⁴ Interestingly, in his introduction to *Post-Colonial English Drama*, Bruce King does not include a chapter on Britain, but tentatively suggests that a survey of postcolonial-English drama might also include the new multicultural theatre of Britain (1995: 1). Mary Karen Dahl’s work engages with the connection between Black British and postcolonial theatres. The author claims that when she started looking for voices speaking directly “from the postcolonial space”, she found a significant body of work based not only in the former colonies, “but in the heart of empire itself” (1995: 35). Dahl argues that the label ‘postcolonial’ theatre is appropriate in the context of Britain, as the term points to “the history of imperial policies that first granted then withdrew [black people’s] right to freely settle at the empire’s center” (1995: 52). A similar perspective is offered by Awan Amkpa, in his recent comparative account of Black British and Nigerian theatres, when he defends the use of the term postcolonial with reference to Black British theatres

successfully addressing “questions of black identity and subjectivity in the postcolonial world”, portraying “central concerns with the experience and consequences of migration, displacement, alienation and racial tension” (2015: 27); whereas Ponnuswami points to the danger of demarcating “the post-colonial from the multicultural too strictly, as playwrights of the 1980s and 1990s depict a vastly polymorphous black Britain” (2015: 83). When discussing aspects of Black British theatre of Caribbean and African heritage in her essay “The Importance of Oral Tradition to Black Theatre”, Valerie Small posed a series of questions on the nature and specificity of Black theatre, wondering to what extent it may be shaped by white models and may possibly compete with them. Small underlines that Black theatre in Britain thrives on the revival of “oral traditions buried in the depths of the race memory” (2005: 10), such as popular myths and ancient stories, the art of storytelling and the linguistic pluralism of dialects and *patois*. She places Black British theatre in a postcolonial framework and aesthetics, on the basis of its engagement with non-Western traditions, as it strives to transfer onto the British stage both African and Caribbean cultural influences.

3. Black women's drama and theatre in the 1980s

Black women's theatre particularly resonates with postcolonial aesthetics in terms of both its subject matter and in the ways it merges different theatrical modes and traditions. On the one hand, Black women's theatre in the 1980s addressed questions of identity politics and participated in the struggle for visibility and the ongoing debate on representation and self-representation, thus revealing a marked “oppositional” attitude towards white theatre (Goddard 2007: 1). Even though the relationship with existing white women's theatre was controversial, a dialogue was established that began to draw attention to the work of Black female playwrights. Women's groups came “under pressure to address the issue of representing black women's experience” (Croft 1993: 86), and therefore tentatively introduced multiracial policies which led to the production, among others, of Jenny McLeod's *Island Life* by Monstrous Regiment in 1988,

because of their “oppositional nature” that can fragment “fundamentalist concepts of nation, identity and community” (2004: 185-86).

a play set in an old people's home that investigated the relationship between aging women of diverse cultural and ethnic backgrounds. As Michelene Wandor suggests, the development of women's theatre in Britain has been marked by a history of marginalization and long-standing bias against women in theatre, of which the struggles of Black women's companies in the 1980s is further testimony:

Theatre lags far behind the novel and poetry in being prepared to accept women giving voice, for reasons that are related to long-standing gender taboos on public speaking which relate back to the strictures on women in politics and religion. (2003: 134)

When looking at new trajectories in women's theatre in the 1980s Susan Bassnett did not engage at length with the work of Black or Asian women in the theatre, but claimed that women's theatre was becoming increasingly international, and arguably reflected the diverse composition of women's theatre in that period: “A new phenomenon is increasingly apparent in contemporary British women's theatre: from relatively parochial origins, there is an increased internationalism, that reflects major changes in the culture of the British Isles” (2000: 73)⁵. Along with (white) women's theatres, Black theatre companies also started to show an interest in women's writing which resulted in the staging of Black women's plays: the Black Theatre Cooperative staged Jacqueline Rudet's *Money to Live* in 1984, and Temba produced Trish Cooke's *Back Street Mammy* in 1989. As Goddard notices, some institutional theatres were supportive of women's work: the Royal Court Theatre in London, for instance, was the venue that staged Black British women on a more regular basis (2007: 23), and also offered opportunities to young Black women writers through writing workshops (Croft 1993: 85).

The growth of Black women's theatre in the 1980s was also significantly shaped by the community work and grassroots activism that fed into the setting up of art and writing workshops designed to challenge the exclusion of Black women from mainstream circuits. A powerful example of the exploration of women's creativity

⁵ Bassnett's interest in the international dimension of women's theatre echoes Bruce King's perspective on Black and Asian writings, which sees these works as contributing to the internationalization of English literature (King 2004).

crossing the boundaries of visual art, literature and performance is offered by the collection *Passions: Discourses of Blackwomen's Creativity* (1990), edited by visual artist and writer Maud Sulter. The collection comprises several contributions by Black women artists and writers and includes short extracts, working papers and reflections by writers who animated the 1980s theatre scene, such as Jackie Kay and Bernardine Evaristo who were both key figures in Black women's theatre, thanks to their work for the company Theatre of Black Women.

A wide range of issues characterised Black women's playwriting in the 1980s and through the mid-1990s and it is possible to trace multiple trajectories in the plays that were written and staged in this period. Kadija George points out that plays offered an "effortless depiction of characters devoid of stereotypical images and typecast roles" (2005: 8); and Griffin suggests that the main features and concerns of these Black women's work revolved around "questions of female agency, [...] mother-daughter relationships, female friendship, domestic violence and last but not least, female experience of migration" (2006: 12). Black women's plays in the 1980s tended to examine the effects of migration and history on women's lives, to explore the female body and sexuality, elaborate on memory and nostalgia, and to work on the tension between 'home' and 'back home', often challenging archetypal images of Black womanhood. Many Black British women playwrights wrote in the realistic, issue-based traditions of contemporary British theatre. Griffin has noted that the use of realism responded to the writers' search for "recognition" within the tradition of British drama that has favoured the conventions of realism (2006: 19). However, as they also attempted to reconceptualize the stage as a diaspora space (Griffin 2003: 8-9) by presenting narratives of fractured subjectivities, they also tended to disrupt the conventional structures of realism and to introduce alternative modes and techniques, drawing on poetry, music and dance (Goddard 2007: 52).

Some of the key issues concerning the development of Black women's theatre in the 1980s are presented in the plays included in the collection edited by Kadija George and published in 1993, *Six Plays by Black and Asian Women Writers*. This was the first collection in Britain to be exclusively devoted to women playwrights of Caribbean, African and Asian parentage. This collection provides

an interesting cross-section of writings in terms of themes and styles and had a clear pioneering function in showcasing play texts that had largely been confined to experimental, fringe venues and hardly ever circulated in print. It features *A Hero's Welcome*, a play by Winsome Pinnock, one of the leading Black playwrights of the day whose work expands the tradition of "black social realism" in the theatre (Goddard 2011) and particularly addresses Black women's experience of migration and their negotiation of identity and belonging in Britain. Pinnock has produced numerous plays and has become a leading presence on the Black theatre scene. *A Hero's Welcome* premiered at the Royal Court Theatre Upstairs in 1989. A predominantly realistic mode inflects the play which depicts characters who, each in their own way, help to expose the myth and reality of the involvement of Caribbean soldiers in World War II. The play offers a bitter reflection on the post-war "come to England" campaign, its impact on Caribbean life and the ensuing post-war migration towards the "Motherland" seen especially through Len, the central character and hero of the title, who returns home after being stationed in England during the War. In shaping this character, Pinnock uses a mixture of standard and Creole English, reinforcing the double cultural and geographical dimension of her work and juxtaposing two worlds, England and the Caribbean.

Also included in *Six Plays* is *Leonora's Dance* by Zindika, a play for five female characters, originally written as a TV script, which offers an investigation of intergenerational clashes and focuses on a fraught mother-daughter relationship. The play centres on the character of Leonora, a woman of mixed-race parentage and a gifted dancer, whose growing alienation is the result of her difficulty in relating to the space she inhabits; an alienation which gradually leads her to develop a serious nervous condition. Leonora uneasily shares her dwellings with her Jamaican niece Daphine and her Chinese lodger Melisa, who both contribute to the author's distressing depiction of multicultural Britain as an alienated space. When Leonora's Jamaican mother Frieda comes to visit, trying to help her daughter by offering to take her back to Jamaica, Leonora is confronted with her divided loyalties. *Leonora's Dance* also investigates Black culture and heritage through the theme of motherhood, as well as through the presence of the 'in-house' spirit Medusa, whom Frieda tries to challenge by resorting to her own knowledge of magic and

sorcery, a legacy of her African origins. The element of magic and the evocation of spirits on stage also serve to counterpoint the predominant realism of the play and its setting.

In her introduction to the *Six Plays*, George points out that the increased visibility of Black and Asian women in theatre and related arts in Britain was also achieved thanks to the increasing interest shown in their works by educational institutions and the BBC, which supported writer-in-residence schemes. This, along with the support offered by regional and London-based theatre companies, opened up possibilities for new women writers. While optimistically registering successes and achievements, George remarked that showcasing Black and Asian writers' work was still not enough and the challenge remained one of "moving from this fledgling position to fully staged productions" (2005: 7).

4. Theatre of Black Women (1982-1988)

The growth of playwriting was sustained and complemented by the setting up of Black women's groups and companies, such as Munirah, Imani Faith and Theatre of Black Women (Croft 1993: 84-85). Theatre of Black Women (1982-1988) is regarded as Britain's first Black women's group and marks an interesting phase in the development of Black women's theatre. The company was crucial in affirming the presence of Black women on the British theatre scene and its members were committed to nurturing new writers, running workshops and touring extensively. It was set up by drama graduates from Rose Bruford College, Bernardine Evaristo, Patricia St. Hilaire and Paulette Randall who intended "to counteract the notorious lack of representation of Black women in all areas and levels of theatre" (Evaristo 2013: n.p.). The founders of the company intended to address "black and feminist concerns", engaging in debates about the historical exclusion of Black women from the women's movement (Goodman 1996: 132). Evaristo argues that as drama graduates, they had challenged the widespread bias on the part of theatre departments against admitting Black students into their programmes, on the grounds of the limited working opportunities for them (Evaristo 2013: n.p.). The three founding members aimed to transfer to the stage their anger at the lack of work opportunities for actresses of colour and

sought to highlight the poor choice of roles available to them – mostly restricted to nurses, cleaners, prostitutes or prisoners. To this end, they group devised and commissioned new plays that "would draw on the experiences and struggles of black women" and ultimately project "positive and encouraging images of black women as individuals" (Unfinished Histories 2016: n.p.).

Evaristo and Hilaire created the first two shows of the company, *Silhouette* and *Pyeyucca*, with the aim of exploring self-image and Black history⁶. *Silhouette* addresses mixed-race identity and Black women's internalization of white racist values. In these early shows the writers experimented with aesthetic forms that would allow a deeper and more intimate exploration of Black female identity and its contradictions and complexities. They were hugely influenced by the style of African-American playwright Ntozake Shange, whose choreopoem *for colored girls who have considered suicide / when the rainbow is enuf* had received its London premiere in 1980, presented by a Black American company. Evaristo describes it as a "ground-breaking production with its seven female characters placed centre stage and speaking through rich, imagistic, intimate monologues" (Evaristo 2013: n.p.). *For colored girls* also offered a viable model for the fledgling theatre company of Black women who were "desperate to find and create theatre that spoke from and about us" and did not want to follow in the tradition of the British theatre, nor conform to the models provided by African or Caribbean theatres "with their male bias" (Evaristo 2013: n.p.).

Silhouette (1983) explores the encounter between a mixed-race woman and an enslaved woman on a Caribbean plantation 200 years earlier. The play was characterised by a mixture of dramatic poetry, visual symbolism, fragmentation, movement and music and offered a "kind of poetry-theatre" (Evaristo 2013: n.p.), which was also adopted in *Chiaroscuro* (1986) by Jackie Kay, the third play produced by the company and one of the first plays to focus on Black lesbian experience. *Chiaroscuro* was first presented at the Soho Poly in London in 1986. It revolves around the exploration

⁶ With the exception of the play *Chiaroscuro* by Jackie Kay, first published in the collection *Lesbian Plays 1* edited by Jill Davis in 1987 and later included in *The Methuen Drama Book of Plays by Black British Writers* edited by Lynette Goddard (2011), all the company's plays are unpublished. Extracts from *Pyeyucca* are included in Sulter (1990: 175-6).

of history and cultural heritage by Beth, Yomi, Opal and Aisha, four female characters of diverse backgrounds and makes use of a mixture of ritual, story-telling and poetic language to explore the characters' racial and sexual identity. The play also presents more naturalistic scenes tracing the relationship between two of the four female characters, but on the whole relies on hybrid dramatic forms and a heavily stylized *mise en scene*, where just a few props and a bare setting acquire a symbolic value and add a ritualistic dimension to the play (Kay 2011: 63). The characters' investigation of their ancestry and identity is at the heart of the play, as suggested by the alliterative opening line uttered by Aisha "This is how we got to where we were" (p. 63). These words invite the characters to delve into their respective histories through a compelling exploration of their names and lineage, producing narratives that help them strengthen their sense of identity in the face of the racism and exclusion they have suffered in Britain, where they have often been verbally abused: "They all liked those sweet insults like.. [...] Nuts oh hazelnuts. Cadbury's take them and they cover them in chocolate[...]. These were the white kids' songs" (p. 65).

In some of the more stylized and choreographed moments the characters focus on their sexuality and evoke the discrimination they suffered as lesbians: "What do they do [...] these les-bi-ans? It is easy to imagine what men do – but women, women. The thought turns the national stomach, stomach" (p. 83). At the end, the somewhat circular movement of the play brings the characters back to the initial ritual of naming, which is now informed by their mutual acceptance and understanding.

If Kay's play focused on the exploration of sexual and racial identity, in the company's final show, the monologue *The Cripple* (1987), written and directed by Ruth Harris, the focus shifted to issues of racial identity and disability. The play was based on the real-life experiences of a disabled woman and like *Chiaroscuro* raised the interrelated questions of social exclusion, violence, and single parenthood, which were arguably the main themes the company chose to confront during its short and intense life.

By way of conclusion, it could be argued that despite the difficulties they faced in having their plays published and produced and in sustaining careers as playwrights and theatre practitioners in the 1980s, the work of women in theatre was crucial in shaping

Black British arts and culture, and in challenging the widespread bias against the "Arts that Britain ignores".

A newer 2005 edition of *Six Plays by Black and Asian Women Playwrights* includes an essay by Deirdre Osborne entitled "A Recent Look at Black Women Playwrights" in which she discusses a "new crop" of women playwrights who were continuing "the legacy of Winsome Pinnock, Trish Cooke and Zindika", writers who had made their debut in the 1980s and helped to sustain the growth of Black women's theatre (2005: 19). Osborne emphasizes the still predominant male inflection of Black theatre and the relatively small number of Black women directors staging the work of Black writers, but on the whole ends her overview on a positive note saying that by the early 2000s the "sustained visibility and developing assurance of Black British drama is becoming increasingly apparent in ways not previously seen" (2005: 19). In recollecting the experience of Theatre of Black Women in 2013, Bernardine Evaristo pointed out how the company's intense activity encouraged its members to explore "identities, cultures and stories that placed the periphery in the centre – on [their] own terms" (Evaristo 2013: n.p.), thus marking a significant stage of embodiment in postcolonial British theatre (Dahl 1995). The company eventually disbanded in 1988, primarily due to a lack of adequate funding, and its founders continued their careers separately either as writers or theatre directors.

This survey of Black British women's drama and theatre in the 1980s intends to act as a reminder of women's struggle to carve out their cultural identities in contemporary post-imperial Britain as both playwrights and theatre practitioners. In a controversial decade such as the 1980s, they significantly contributed to what Alison Donnell in her companion to contemporary Black British culture, has appropriately defined as "the shift in terms of identification and representation from the black presence in Britain to the black dimension of Britain" (2001: xiii).

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Embodied Otherness and Hybridity: David Greig's *The Bacchae* and the Reprise of Ancient Greek Tragedy

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Abstract

David Greig's appropriation of Euripides' *Bacchae* (2007) resorts to the universality of ancient myth both to pose national questions and transcend them through the representation of transnational and transcultural issues. Dionysus, born in Thebes but exiled to Persia, and, on his return, unrecognised by his family and compatriots, is an insider turned outsider, a deracinated, ex-centric figure who threatens the institutionalised repressive society represented by his cousin Pentheus, the prince regent of Thebes. The article will examine Dionysos' literal and symbolic 'embodiment' of the concepts of otherness and hybridity in relation to class, race, and gender, highlighting their relevance to the Scottish historical-cultural context as well as to current world political issues. His demotic voice and native/exotic, transgender identity, combined with his advocacy of a gnoseology based on instinct and experience rather than abstract thought, evoke an ethics of identity and a vision of man that defy fundamentalist ideas. By the same token, the final violence he performs is meant to make us aware of the danger deriving from the non-recognition of the Other both outside and inside us.

Keywords: Scottish theatre, postcolonialism, otherness, hybridity.

1. Introduction

Within and without Scotland, David Greig is nowadays recognised as one of the most important and representative voices in the contemporary theatrical scenario. His plays have been produced, acclaimed and often awarded prestigious prizes, across Europe and the United States, as well as in Canada, Australia, Brazil, Korea, Syria, Lebanon, and Egypt. Not only because of the global

distribution of his wide-ranging output¹ but also, and primarily, owing to his recurring concerns, Greig, despite being included among those British playwrights contributing to the so-called *new writing*², or despite working with the cutting-edge, Glasgow-based Suspect Culture Theatre Company and the National Theatre of Scotland, has all the credentials for being regarded as an international writer and world-literature exponent. More specifically, Greig, like the Scottish playwrights David Harrower and Chris Hannan, is at the forefront of that *new wave* in Scottish theatre that emerged in the 1990s, developing especially after the opening of the devolved Scottish Parliament in Edinburgh in 1999. This theatre, though “informed by an artistic vision that is distinctly Scottish”, has “largely moved beyond the self-conscious Scottishness of the earlier dramatic tradition” (Zenziger 1996: 125), engaging with the ethical, political and ideological issues of an increasingly global culture and economy, and with questions – such as the relationship between individual identity and place, national roots and transnational routes, sameness and otherness – which continue to emerge in current postcolonial studies³.

Greig’s concern with national belonging in a world whose geographical and political boundaries are constantly called into question under the impact of migration processes is intimately related to his own personal history. Born in Edinburgh, raised in Nigeria, and educated at Bristol University, though working in Scotland since 1990, in an interview, echoing Theodor Adorno’s definition of ethics⁴, he admitted that part of his moral philosophy is *not to feel at home in his home*, and take advantage of that sense

of internal exile which he often feels: “[My] experience of being Scottish is one of being intensely and viscerally attached to a place in which I am perceived as a stranger” (Brown 2013: 228) – a condition that, as will be shown, he projects onto the character of Dionysos in *The Bacchae*. Without perceiving any contradiction in it, Greig can at the same time state that “[sometimes national identity] is uncomfortable. [...]. But it’s nice to have one” (Greig 2007b: 2) and, in his writing, advocate the idea that identity (individual, cultural and national), being always in the process of changing and developing, eschews fixed definitions. By the same token, on the one hand he can partly sympathise with the resurgence of national sentiment in Scotland yet, on the other, endorse a transnational or supranational British identity integrated in Europe, which rests on a shared ground of universal human and humanistic values counteracting the devastating cultural and moral implications of the UK’s prospective exit from the European Union following the results of the referendum held in June 2016.

Precisely because of his being aware of the elusiveness of individual, cultural and national identities, Greig’s theatre deliberately problematises notions of *essential* Scottishness or other national belongings by privileging dramatic situations in which characters are displaced, marginalised or living on the edge, in *contact zones* where identity is determined by its relatedness to other identities near or around it. As has been observed, “Greig’s plays stage a transnational space, a contact zone where characters with different national, ethnic, class or religious backgrounds negotiate their positions, perspectives and identities” (Müller and Wallace 2011: 2). The permeability of the geo-cultural borders he stages intends to allude to the central, albeit often overlooked, role of communication among and across different people – a role that theatre, in his view, is able to accomplish. At the same time, though, it conjures an ideal of transcultural dialogue and even hybridisation that can hardly be realised in contemporary society. Hence, as the analysis of *The Bacchae* will prove, Greig’s interest in the figures of the traveller and the exile, paradigmatically embody the dynamic tension between the domestic and the foreign, inward-and outwardness, rootedness and movement, the knowledge of the other and the attraction of home and homeland.

David Greig’s adaptation of Euripides’ *Bacchae* premiered at the King’s Theatre in Edinburgh, in August 2007, in a co-production

¹ Greig’s copious and eclectic production includes, in addition to *The Bacchae: Europe* (1996), *Caledonia Dreaming* (1997), *Mainstream* (1998), *The Speculator* (1999), *Victoria* (2000), *Outlying Islands* (2002), *San Diego* (2003), *The American Pilot* (2005), *Oedipus the Visionary* (2005), *Pyrenees* (2005), *Damascus* (2007), *Dunsinane* (2010), *The Strange Undoing of Prudencia Hart* (2011), and the adaptation of Aeschylus’ *The Suppliant Women* (2016).

² A rather elusive phrase originally used to refer to various trends of writing in post-war prose and poetry, and in the Cool-Britannia years (1980s and 1990s), mostly associated with provocative, experimental theatrical forms, such as *in-yer-face* theatre. See Sierz 2011, pp. 27–28.

³ See, among others, Wilson, Şandru and Lawson Welsh 2010.

⁴ According to Adorno’s famous aphorism, “Today [...] it is part of morality not to be at home in one’s home” (1978: 39).

between the National Theatre of Scotland and the Edinburgh International Festival. By resorting to the universality of ancient myth, the play achieves the double purpose of confronting questions concerning specifically Scottish society and of transcending national boundaries through the representation of transcultural ethical and political issues. The Greek hypotext elicits reflections about what it means to be human, the values of tolerance and respect, the acceptance and celebration of difference – all aspects that acquire a particular significance in a post-devolutionary Scotland still aspiring to political independence, as well as in the wider scenario of European and world contexts lacerated by false myths of national integrity, and by the violence of physical and psychological walls erected to repulse the Other.

Euripides presents Dionysus as a demigod born in Thebes who, rejected by his family, chooses exile to Persia, until he returns to his homeland accompanied by a group of wild foreign women worshippers (the Maenads or Bacchae), in order to demand recognition as a new god in Thebes. However, the prince regent of the city, Pentheus, and his subjects, except for the women driven mad by Dionysus (Dionysos⁵ in Greig's version), oppose the new cult through repressive methods until the prince falls victim to Dionysus' revengeful stratagem, agrees to spy on the Bacchae's rites and is in the end brutally dismembered by the deranged female band, which even includes his mother Agave. Significantly enough, in the *exodos*, Dionysus travels towards other cities and communities to demand recognition, while his mother and grandfather must leave their home against their will: if the god, being an insider turned outsider, challenges the essentialist polarisation of Self and Other by relativising these conditions, the other exiles suggest the risk of idealising the diasporic status as providing a privileged epistemological experience thanks to *translation* and "dislocation" (Suleri 1992: 5). In other words, Greig's cosmopolitan ideal is rather utopian, and, in many respects, tinged with disenchantment. Homelessness, he suggests, is often experienced as a predicament rather than an opportunity, to adapt Rushdie's words, to "straddle two cultures", while the

⁵ When referring to Greig's text, this spelling, instead of "Dionysus", will be used.

risk of falling "between two stools" is always at hand (see Rushdie 1991: 5).

Why and how can Greig's *The Bacchae* be read through the lens of postcolonial theories? The answer involves both general, contextual and specific, textual discourses: I will start from mentioning the latter ones, which will be analysed in sections 4 and 4.1 of the article. Dionysos' body language, in combination with his female acolytes, is the pivot around which the whole semiotics and semantics of the tragedy revolve, and its meanings – conveyed by his half-exotic, highly sexualised, ex-centric demeanour – emerge as particularly relevant to postcolonial issues, namely identity, sameness/otherness, gender, power ideology and difference. Significantly enough, in the 2007 stage performance, Dionysos, played by a stunning Alan Cumming, spoke with a strong working-class Glaswegian accent, totally contrasting with Pentheus' anglicised Scots: he is the deracinated Scot threatening a repressive and conservative Scottish (or British, for that matter) society based on essentialist values of class, race and gender; he is, moreover, a figure of otherness, hybridity and release against the absolute principles and fundamentalist ideas endorsed by his cousin. By the same token, the final violence Dionysos performs is meant to make us aware of the danger deriving from the non-recognition and rejection of the Other.

However, before focusing on these textual aspects, the question whether Scottish history and literature are eligible for inclusion in postcolonial discourse – still a rather contentious territory – is worth considering.

2. Is there a *Postcolonial Scottish Theatre*?⁶

Sociologist Michael Hecter defined Northern Ireland, Wales and Scotland as the "Celtic fringes" or "internal colonies" in the UK, thus suggesting interesting, however contestable, links between

⁶ The question evokes T. S. Eliot's famous review article published in the *Athenaeum*, on 1 August 1919, provocatively asking "Was There a Scottish Literature?", since, according to the poet, from the seventeenth century onwards, Scottish literature has lacked the continuity of a national language and therefore of an organic tradition.

these countries and the *peripheries* of the British Empire⁷. In fact, contrary to 16th- and 17th-century Ireland, Scotland was never a settler colony of England. Moreover, if the prefix 'post' is intended in the historical sense, as signalling a condition following the independence of the country from foreign political rule, then Scotland, contrary to the present Republic of Ireland, cannot be recognised as holding post-colonial status. On the other hand, in their seminal text *The Empire Writes Back* (1989), Ashcroft, Griffiths and Tiffin dissociate the "Celtic fringes" from postcoloniality, despite admitting that they were the "first victims of English expansion" (p. 33). Critic Michael Gardiner has expressed a similar view, arguing that "Scotland is not in any sense post-colonial, but suffers from economic and cultural inequalities which can in part be articulated as part of a historical process on a national level" (Gardiner 1996: 36). This "historical process" includes, for instance, the Anglicisation and decentralisation of the Scottish political establishment following the 1603 and 1707 Acts of Union, the consequent cultural and linguistic marginalisation of Scots and Gaelic, and the 18th- and 19th-century Highland Clearances – the latter resulting in a phenomenon of mass migration towards England, Ireland, Canada, America or Australia. However, within the same historical process one must necessarily envisage the Scottish contribution to the building of the British Empire, from the Ulster Plantation to the West Indies, Central America, India and Africa.

Clearly, for political and cultural reasons, the whole issue of whether or not Scottish literature is qualified to enter postcolonial discourse is doomed to remain controversial⁸, because it is part of a wider argument concerning national cultural formations within the UK and Scotland's reacquisition of an independent nation-state – as proved by the devolutionary projects (rejected in 1979 but successful twenty years later), the 2014 failed Scottish independence referendum and the possibility of a new one to reject the pro-Brexit vote of the majority of English people. In favour of political

⁷ See Michael Hechter 1975. For a recent re-elaboration of Hecter's theory see Stroh 2007; on Irish, Scottish and Welsh literatures as regional literatures see Angeletti, 2009.

⁸ In addition to those already mentioned, other important contributions to the debate on Scottish literature and postcolonialism include Schoene 1995; Connell 2003; Macdonald 2006; and Lehner 2007.

independence yet despising fundamentalist nationalism, David Greig sees no discrepancy between his endorsement of the YES campaign in the 2014 referendum and his being an 'internationalist': "I would like Scotland to be an independent country. But, to me, that's not in contradiction with a sense that the entire world is my society: it's my world, it's my country" (see Rodríguez 2016: 91).

From the Eighties to the present, Scottish theatre has lent its stage to a contemporary context of cultural and political impetus (see Brown and Ramage 2001). In November 1997, after the success of the devolution referendum, David Greig and David Harrower declared that the stage could become a "site of cultural transformation", because "Scotland has voted to redefine itself as a nation", which involves the need to "exchange ideas and aspirations, confront enduring myths, expose injustices", and "the quality, accessibility, and immediacy of Scottish theatre make it one of the best arenas in which these dialogues can take place" (Harrower and Greig 1997: 15). *The Bacchae* certainly satisfies this need, not least because it confronts the transcultural "enduring myth" of human tolerance and approval of diversity, as well as "exposing the injustices" and the risks of a conservative community that cannot "exchange ideas" and dialogue with the Other.

So, to return to the title question, "Is there a Postcolonial Scottish Theatre?", the Scottish stage has often held the mirror to its contentious cultural and political history, foregrounding questions that the theoretical tools generated by postcolonialism help us to approach and investigate fully. While Scotland's status in history cannot, by any means, be compared to that of the colonies of the British Empire, the comparative critical models adopted in postcolonial and world-literature studies can be useful in identifying analogies between experiences of deterritorialisation, marginalisation, diaspora and inferiorisation beyond geographical, national and cultural borders (see for example Gardiner, Macdonald, and O'Gallagher 2011). Greig's theatre, with its emphasis on inter-/trans-national concerns, shows us the way to recognise these bonds.

3. *Writing back?* Scottish theatre and the Classical Tradition

Greig's *The Bacchae*, like many other twentieth-century and contemporary translations or rewritings of ancient Greek and

Latin tragedy⁹, resulted from an act of *writing back* to the classical tradition, to appropriate, that is, an illustrious antecedent in order to rework, refigure and recast it from a new perspective. In line with postcolonial rewriting or writing back, this adaptation, rather than translation¹⁰, of Euripides' tragedy allows a contrapuntal reading of the hypotext that highlights its hermeneutic potential and brings to the surface latent meanings, in this case also relevant to contemporary society. However, unlike postcolonial reprises, the Scottish author's reuse of the Dionysus myth reveals no intention to subvert the ideological and political discourse embedded in the original text. Essentially, Greig shows us that if Euripides' tragedy can still captivate a present-day audience, and even raise issues engaging postcolonial critics and theorists, it is because myth, in A. S. Byatt's words, "derives force from its endless repeatability" (Byatt 2001: 132), from it being, as Kwame Anthony Appiah observed, a "travelling tale" crossing different contexts and addressing different target-audiences (Appiah 2005: 256).

The "endless repeatability" of myth is proved by the explosion of stage performances of classical texts in contemporary Britain:

Greek tragedy has proved magnetic to writers and directors searching for new ways in which to pose questions to contemporary society and to push back the boundaries of theatre. The mythical, dysfunctional, conflicted world portrayed in the archetypal plays of Aeschylus, Sophocles, and Euripides has become one of the most important cultural and aesthetic prisms through which the real, dysfunctional, conflicted world of the late twentieth- and early twenty-first centuries has refracted its own image. (Hall 2004: 2)

More specifically in Scotland, where theatrical production, since at least WW2, has seen numerous examples of foreign drama in translation (see Findlay 1996, Hardwick 2002, and Corbett 2011), playwrights' engagement with classical theatre has acquired a peculiar

⁹ Even limiting it to Scotland, the list of examples would be too long to report. Among the most successful Scottish theatrical transpositions are: Ian Brown's *Antigone*, after Sophocles (1969) and *The Bacchae* (1971); the trilogy, and triple bill, of Tom McGrath's *Electra*, Liz Lochhead's *Medea* and Greig's *Oedipus Tyrannos* (2000); Edwin Morgan's *Phaedra* (2000); and Lochhead's *Thebans* (2003).

¹⁰ For terminological elucidations see Genette 1997; Hardwick 2003; Young 2008; and Sanders 2006.

political meaning, particularly after devolution, as if the authority of that tradition could contribute to the country's reconfiguring of its own identity. Focusing on the deployment of Scots in some of these revisionist dramas, John Corbett has underlined how

the shift in the nature of the "classical" adaptations of drama into Scots in the years following Scottish devolution is consonant with a repositioning of Scotland, from an internally colonised nation on the periphery of European civilisation, to a reinstated nation, once more in control of its own, but still troubled destiny. [...] The millennium was marked by classicising translations that represent the nation-state as wracked by sexual tension, jealousy, ethnic prejudices and ultra-violence. (Corbett 2011: 99)

Corbett's final statement, about Scottish dramatists' remediation of Greek tragedy as a means to confront sexual, ethical and political questions concerning both individual and national identities, is particularly cogent in relation to *The Bacchae*.

After Ian Brown's 1971 *The Bacchae* and his revision of the same, under the title *Bacchai*, for the Welsh company Dalier Sylw at the 1991 Cardiff Festival, Greig devises his own version of Euripides' tragedy, based on the literal translation from the Greek by Ian Ruffell and directed by John Tiffany. "My lines", admitted Greig, "may differ from the original in direct literal meaning, but that is less important to me than that I honour the original effect. Drama is an experience in the gut and heart. That is what I try to restore to old or foreign plays" (Greig 2011: 10). In fact, he rather faithfully reproduces the narrative gist and the formal architecture of the original text (e.g. prologue, six episodes, *stasima*, *paradoi*, *exodos*), but actualises the language by removing many references to Greek mythology and deploying explicitation or addition strategies to underscore certain themes – in the performance even more so than in the published text, as proven by the choice of having black actresses play the part of the Maenads and sing soul, gospel and R&B songs, as well as of turning Dionysos into a camp rock-star, thus giving prominence to the mythemes of otherness and ex-centricity respectively.

4. *The Bacchae*: Staging and Embodying Identity

In Euripides' tragedy, in a crucial scene in which Dionysus and Pentheus confront each other, the former says to his cousin: "Thou

knowest not what end thou seekest, nor/ What deed thou doest, nor what man thou art!"; to which Pentheus replies: "Agavê's son, and on the father's part/ Echion's, hight Pentheus!" (Euripides 1906: n.p.). In his version, Greig translates the original message into metatheatrical language: "You have no idea/ Of the part you're playing in this/ Tragedy", says Dionysos, and Pentheus retorts rather arrogantly, "I am Pentheus. My part is/ Prince and yours is prisoner" (Greig 2007a: 32). Despite this variation, both verbal exchanges challenge the audience/readers to face up to the difficulty of defining who we are, or, more generally, what it means to be human. Echoing the ancient Greek maxim *gnothi seauton* ("know thyself"), written above the oracle in Delphi, this is one of those passages of the tragedy which warns us of the danger of simplistically reducing individual identity to a question of origins and social role-playing. In the horrific ending, when Pentheus reveals his identity to his mother – "Mother, Mother [...] I'm Pentheus, your son, Mother" (Greig 2007a: 68) – and yet fails to stop her from murdering him, clearly his identification as the child of a royal family and as the ruler of Thebes is of no use to him. Thus, one of the most enduring messages of the play is that who we are cannot coincide with where we come from or with a name only. An important implication is that this truth applies not only to one's Self but also to the knowledge and recognition of the Other. If Pentheus, in other words, does not really know himself, how can he possibly know and, consequently, accept the otherness incarnated by Dionysus?

Throughout *The Bacchae*, both in the original and in Greig's version, Pentheus' authoritative knowledge – intellectual and rational – is opposed to Dionysus', as well as Tiresias', wisdom, a kind of knowing that goes beyond external material facts, family or cultural roots, and is based on values transcending social, gender, political and geographical boundaries. "The god you mock is beyond you [...] Beyond the reach even of your/ Intellectual rhetoric", says Tiresias to Pentheus, that is, beyond his sphere of influence as a man in authority, "clever and persuasive [but not] wise" (Greig 2007a: 17). Significantly, Dionysos does not appear as a god but as a handsome orientalised man ("I've crossed Arabia and lingered/ In the Levant", p. 9) in a Maenad's costume, thus totally upsetting Pentheus' need to identify him according to his value system and essentialist categorisations – more than once he wonders

"whoever he may be" or really is (pp. 15-16), and impatiently asks him "Where on earth do you come from?" (p. 24). Although he was actually born in Thebes, partly from the same family as Pentheus¹¹, he claims to come from the East, together with his Bacchantes. This knowledge is enough for Pentheus to identify him as inferior to the Greeks: "Foreigners, hah,/ That's no surprise, foreigners/ Have no self-control. Greek men, though, Greek men know better" (Greig 2007a: 28), he says, thus construing an image of the oriental Other that confirms the Western stereotypes dismantled by Edward Said in *Orientalism* (1978). Pentheus refers to "Greek men", but not women, to underline their strong *animus*, in Jungian terms, their masculinity, rationality, and poise, and, on the other hand, he implicitly associates Asians with the antonyms of these qualities. He will never be able to understand Dionysos, because his identity consists of being in-between, challenging exclusivist logics and either/or discourses with his disturbing slipperiness: he is half-god, half-man; native and stranger; Self and Other; Western and Eastern; male and female, *animus* and *anima*; man and animal (when he metamorphoses into a bull to escape from imprisonment). He is quintessential otherness, because he exists on the edge where extremes meet and his identity cannot be pinned down to fixed, clear-cut definitions.

When Pentheus tells Dionysos that foreigners lack self-control and only Greeks bear knowledge, he illuminatingly replies: "Or maybe foreigners just know/ the truth – that every man must lose/ His self-control sometimes" (Greig 2007a: 28). Of course, literally these words refer to the Dionysian spirit as opposed to Pentheus' Apollonian philosophy, but, figuratively, they can be read as alluding to the ethical and ontological duty of each human being at some moment of their life to abandon the perspective of the Self and assume that of the Other, or to transgress the boundaries of the ego through dialogue and contact with the unfamiliar, so as to be able to face the fear of the different. Dionysos embodies such possibilities because he is a Greek gone native in the East, after suffering exile and displacement:

¹¹ According to the myth, Dionysus' mother was Semele – Agave's sister (therefore, Pentheus' aunt) – who was made pregnant by Zeus, but, when she asked to see him, the God incinerated her with a thunderbolt. So, Dionysus was snatched from her body and sewn into Zeus' thigh, where he was incubated.

Thebes, I've been away revealing
 Myself in foreign places,
 [...]
 I've crossed Arabia and lingered
 In the Levant. I've been everywhere
 And everywhere I've been they've seen
 Me for who I am – a new god. (Greig 2007a: 8-9)

Paradoxically, it is not in that “everywhere” that Dionysos felt ostracised but in his own home, nation and culture, which first banished him and, when he returns, are once more unable to recognise and accept him¹². His peculiar predicament, therefore, complicates the problem of a cultural community that shuts the door on what is foreign, for fear that it might challenge its presumed integrity and produce social insecurity. In fact, Dionysos is both native and a foreigner because essentially he is a transnational figure of mobility, a cosmopolitan traveller moving between cultures but who, at some point, would like to return home and be accepted for who he is, “a new god”, whose identity necessarily combines roots and routes, the local and the global, thus preserving, not annihilating, difference. The inability of the Theban community to re-integrate its temporary migrant in his new condition may signify that, for Greig, the cosmopolitan ideal and the concept of transnational spaces are utopian rather than realisable projects, since conservative notions of ethnicity, religion, family and nation often hinder them. Indeed, Agave's and Kadmos' final self-imposed exile from Thebes, “to find a home as refugees –/ Strangers – amongst barbarians” (Greig 2007a: 86), reinforces the sense of disenchantment with those possibilities. As Müller and Wallace observe:

While the setting and constellation of figures of Greig's work suggest a transnational condition, the development of character and conflict in the plays nevertheless emphasise the pitfalls of such a condition [...] *Transnation* is everywhere and nowhere to be found in Greig's work. It is an ideal place where the conflicts in the plays could find their harmonious solution. (2011: 13; my italics)

¹² For a thorough discussion on the concept of displacement see Israel 2000.

Indeed, one might see a link between the figure of Dionysos and Bill Ashcroft's idea of “transnation”, defined as “the fluid, migrating *outside* of the state that begins *within* the nation”, a space “in which binaries of centre and periphery, national self and other are dissolved” (Ashcroft 2010: 73). By the same token, Dionysos exemplifies Stuart Hall's concept of cultural identity as “a matter of ‘becoming’ as well as of ‘being’”, belonging “to the future as much as to the past”, not “an essence but a *positioning*” (Hall 1990: 225-226). Dionysos attempts to export his *newness*, his idea of a fluid, travelling self into his native community, which, however, is not prepared to embrace it.

Moreover, the god's hybrid sexuality is a strong challenge to the Theban establishment. “Man? Woman? – It was a close-run thing./ I chose man. What do you think?” (Greig 2007a: 7), says Dionysos addressing the audience in his first speech, thus asserting, from the very beginning, his distance from Pentheus' masculine, or patriarchal, system of values – the androgynous mind defies one that refutes its *anima*. Clearly, the play suggests a fascinating link between an individual's recognition and respect for ethnic, cultural otherness and the acceptance of the Other inside him/her: again the implied message is that we can know what's other from us only if we deeply know ourselves, confronting and coming to terms with our inner tensions. Pentheus' fierce resistance to Dionysos' hybridity – “Don't touch me/ [...] don't infect me”, he tells his grandfather, who, unlike him, becomes one of the god's followers – suggests anxiety about the Other, which he can dominate only by imposing his authority and imprisoning him. Hence Dionysos' violent response: “take his mind”, he asks the Maenads, “open it [...] / Bring out his feminine side” (Greig 2007a: 56), and, staging a “transvestite mission” (p. 61), whereby he convinces Pentheus to dress up as a woman to see the Bacchant's rituals, the god forces him to recognise that the Dionysian – or indeed anything that he believed *other* from his social and psychic world – is, in fact, around and within him. Interestingly enough, in Pentheus' mental frame women and foreigners are juxtaposed as the inferior Other (irrational, emotional, uncivilised) to be kept under control by Greek men, who “only know better” (p. 28). As head of a community based on rigid hierarchical relationships

and unable to integrate difference, he will pay the penalty for all his subjects and face a horrible denouement.

4.1. Conflicting Identities: Ideology of Power versus Liberty

The Bacchae is a narrative of political and ideological repression. Faced with the unknown embodied by the Bacchantes, Pentheus can only respond despotically: "Some I'll sell/ Off as slaves in other cities/ And some I'll keep to work the loom/ In servile domesticity" (Greig 2007a: 32). The authoritarian prince rules a city that, though named Thebes in the play text, could represent any society undermined by its own intolerance and narrow-mindedness. If, on the one hand, the stage performance further highlights the conflict between Pentheus and Dionysos through language differences (Tony Curran's educated accent versus Alan Cumming's working-class Glaswegian), on the other hand, to identify their contrast as one between England and Scotland would be quite *outré*. In fact, Pentheus is rather meant to personify the myth, or rather mystique, of Scottish masculinity, the *hard man* image, often simplistically associated with Scottish national identity from the eighteenth century onwards.

By subverting this image, Dionysos becomes the mouthpiece of the author's questioning of any idea of essential Scottishness. At the same time, he would seem to suggest that a crucial problem to be faced in contemporary Scotland is the degree of respect for and recognition of gender, class and racial *minority* groups within it, perhaps a more urgent issue than Scottish political independence itself. Greig appropriates and reconfigures Euripides' searing portrait of wildness in the ghastly representation of Pentheus' death by resorting to the extreme physical language of *in-yer-face* theatre: thus he manages to show the dangerousness and imploding effects of an ideology of power that is blind to the needs of the marginalised and subaltern. The words with which Dionysos addresses the Thebans at the end are illuminating in this sense:

If you had all been wiser here
And learned to recognise the Scream
And welcome him willingly – or
Unwillingly – into your lives
You would not have had to know pain.

*You and me – us – we could have been
A happy family but no –* (Greig 2007a: 86; my italics)

Here Dionysos bespeaks an idea of togetherness encompassing Self and Other, which strongly contrasts with Pentheus' obtuse binary thinking, for instance when he says: "I'll not have Bakkhos here in Thebes/ It's very simple. Him or me" (Greig 2007a: 50). This kind of exclusive argumentation entails denying the individual, social and political liberty expressed by the term "Scream", a free translation of Bromius, one of the god's key names, meaning the Roarer and conveying the force of the release from the restraints of selfhood and authoritarianism.

However, Dionysos' fierce revenge for suffering a double rejection at home is by no means portrayed as a wise reaction. By responding to violence with further violence he duplicates the repressiveness of his victimisers; and the outcome of this chain of inhuman acts is perpetual exile everywhere and "Nothing", since "tomorrow's/ Hopes have turned into today's black/ Emptiness" (Greig 2007a: 83), a despairing Agave confesses. As Greig has observed, "The play rails against fundamentalism. It says you must recognise all the gods. [...] The gods simply represent all the parts of being human" (see Burnet 2016). This message of tolerance is embedded in Euripides' tragedy, but Greig emphasises it by having the final Chorus repeat more than once "No – you can't choose the gods that you worship/ No – you just have to worship them all", and by closing the play with a deliberate hyperbole to condemn despotism and all forms of chauvinism: "Yes. Yes. Yes. Yes" (Greig 2007a: 88).

Conclusion

In 2007 Greig staged a play engaging the readers/spectators with political, social and ethical issues that can undoubtedly be connected to Scotland's contentious past, the dramatic changes recorded in its history and the recent resurgence of a national sentiment expressing the desire for complete emancipation from Westminster. However, as I have attempted to show, Greig's concerns here, as everywhere in his output, cross geo-cultural borders to suggest connections among different societies and to fight insularity. Moreover, his handling of individual and national identities, and his celebration of

difference, transcultural empathy and dialogue make an important contribution to postcolonial and world-literature studies. For the Scottish playwright, therefore, the theatrical space can become a *locus* in which Scotland's, the UK's and the whole world's, ideological extremisms or coercive measures are denounced as menaces to the universal values of humanity.

Indeed, in *The Bacchae* Greig deploys metatheatrical strategies in order to draw attention to the crucial role of drama and performance in contemporary society. *In primis*, Dionysos defines himself as a "theatrical god", while Pentheus refers to him just as a "Bakchic actor from abroad" reciting a part in his own play: "I'm in charge./ I'm writing/ The script" (Greig 2007a: 29), the ruler says. Moreover, the scene in which Pentheus is ready to gaze at the bacchanalia stresses the voyeuristic sensorial experience inherent in all theatrical representations: it is the concrete materiality of drama and the actual *embodiment* on stage of the complexities of human nature that determine the experiential, and therefore uniquely powerful, nature of theatre. Whether this experience occurs *in yer face* or through Brechtian *Verfremdungseffekt* techniques, the impact of *watching bodies* perform our feelings, emotions, and ideologies is oftentimes overpowering. It is so even for Dionysos gazing at the bloody and catastrophic ending that he has provoked:

This scene is hard to watch. This grief.
It brings no joy to me to see
A mother weeping for her boy.
A grandfather destroyed. A house –
A great city – spoiled for ever.
Knew the ending when I wrote
The script, but still – *to see it – here*
In front of me, played out for real,
It's cruel. (Greig 2007a: 83-84; my italics)

Here Greig empowers his protagonist's voice to convey the force and consequence of "presently experienced dramatic actions", to borrow Raymond Williams's words (Williams 1966: 18). *De facto* both in the text and performance of *The Bacchae*, Dionysos' voice and body speak directly to the audience calling attention to questions that involve the global community, thus creating a common ground of transnational and transcultural concerns. Once Greig admitted

that perhaps "theatre is very unlikely to produce political change", but then he poignantly added: "it depends on what 'political change' means. What theatre can do, I think, is build communities" (see Rodríguez 2016: 90).

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iv) Films, video, TV series, movies

Information and data to be provided and order: *film title* (in italics), Dir. (followed by a full stop), production and distribution company, country, year. For TV series or series in general, "episode title/season" in rounded letters between double quotation marks, *series title* in italics; episode writer/screenwriter should be listed as well as the director.

Examples:

- (L')*Auberge Rouge*, Dir. Jean Epstein. Pathé-Consortium-Cinéma, France, 1923.
- Borderline*, Dir. Kenneth Macpherson. The Pool Group, Great Britain, 1930.
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