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This volume offers a selection of revised versions of the papers presented at the 7th International IDEA Conference held at Pamukkale University in Denizli, Turkey, organised by the Association of English Language and Literary Studies in Turkey. The contributions to this book offer a wide range of research from scholars on a variety of topics in English literature, including Shakespearean studies, Victorian, colonial, and postcolonial literature, poetry, and drama studies. The volume also includes a number of informative research articles on comparative and translation studies which will offer assistance to young scholars in their academic studies. In addition to acting as a guide to young academics, the book will also function as a fruitful reference book in a wide range of English literary studies.

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English Studies

Mehmet Ali Çelikel
and Baysar Taniyan

REVIEWS

New Perspectives

Edited by

Mehmet Ali Çelikel and Baysar Taniyan



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Edited by Mehmet Ali Çelikel and Baysar Taniyan

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TABLE OF CONTENTS

Preface.....	ix
Chapter One.....	1
Hercule Poirot, The Order Restorer: Agatha Christie's <i>The Murder of Roger Ackroyd</i> Arpine Mızıkyan Akfıçıcı	
Chapter Two.....	11
Looking through the Archetypal Jar: Jungian Esther Greenwood Ayşe Çiftiabaşı	
Chapter Three.....	23
From Hostility to Lasting Friendship: A Study of the Anzac and Turkish Soldier's Personal Narratives Azer Banu Kemalöglü	
Chapter Four.....	36
"Fantasy and Curious Bisyneşe": Sexual Economics in Chaucer's <i>The Merchant's Tale</i> and <i>The Shipman's Tale</i> Azime Pekşen	
Chapter Five.....	46
<i>Foe: Robinson Crusoe's</i> Writeback Bahare A'arabi	
Chapter Six.....	52
Denying the Narrator: Julian Barnes's <i>The Sense of an Ending</i> Baysar Taniyan	
Chapter Seven.....	60
How Flexible is the Moral Code of a Businessman? Anthony Trollope and <i>The Way We Live Now</i> Carla Fusco	

CHAPTER FOURTEEN

POLITICAL AND ETHICAL CONCERNS IN DAVID GREIG'S *DUNSMANE* AND JOHN MCGRATH'S *THE CHEVIOT,* *THE STAG AND THE BLACK BLACK OIL*

GÜL KURTULUŞ

David Greig and John McGrath are the two prolific and prominent playwrights of the British stage in the twentieth-century. They share a common interest in Scottish history and language as reflected in the two plays, *Dunsmane* and *The Cheviot, The Stag and The Black Black Oil*. The former becomes a medium for the representation of the tyranny, terror and the evil practiced on the weak and the oppressed, and the latter becomes a concerted set of ideas on sustaining equality in close attachment to one's language, culture and identity. Greig's play is about the aftermath of events as depicted in Shakespeare's *Macbeth*, McGrath's play is about the apparent conflict between the capitalist power and the socialist view. Both texts proclaim the end of a reign pertaining to tyranny and the establishment of a new leadership. The purpose of this paper is to analyse and discuss the possibilities of political and ethical overtones as handled by the two playwrights. As the practitioners of 'new writing' and the representatives of the bold voice in major political and environmental transformations Greig and McGrath have their rightful place among those who ascribe great importance to dysregulated identities, hindered cultural imagination and marred social consciousness. Their plays serve as the manifestoes for dissolving the void between the conflicting powers and fostering global consciousness.

David Greig's play *Dunsmane* is a product of new writing and a modern continuation of Shakespeare's *Macbeth*. Both plays deal with the history of Scotland which is changed by tyrant leaders, giving utmost importance to power, but not to morality or human lives. As Macbeth kills

the Scottish King because of his desire for power, the English army is also involved in murdering Macbeth, called "tyrant" in *Dunsmane*. In both cases, there is attack on the one controlling his country. While the play *Macbeth* does not especially refer to the issue of military occupation, *Dunsmane* employs this theme as a universal subject, and reflects the negative sides of military occupation. Although Siward, who is portrayed as a man of good will but over time gets blinded by his belief in the goodness and necessity of his actions and role in Scotland, ironically emphasizes that the English occupation is to bring peace to Scotland, he himself turns into a violent occupier towards the end. Moreover, occupying another land for the sake of money and power, just as Malcolm (the Scottish king) and Egham (the English lieutenant) does, cannot be accepted as a humanitarian intervention, which is usually performed to save the natives from a tyrannical leader and low life standards. Egham is a man of liberal thinking and material interests, who has no real interest in war other than material gain while Malcolm is a tyrannical figure, who has gained the throne through war and killing the king so he follows the same policy to keep the throne in his hands. The first signs of brutality comes up on the subject of queen because if the queen is alive there will be a great deal of people who want her reign, not Malcolm's. The thin line between helping someone and being blinded by good intentions to the degree of harming the object that is helped, and how this line was and is manipulated by those in power, are among the central themes of Greig's *Dunsmane*. The play demonstrates and explores both sides – that is, both the occupier and the occupied – and, through the characters of Siward, Egham, Malcolm and Gruach, portrays competing pictures of authority. Besides, the soldiers' feeling of dehumanization and alienation are the psychological results of military occupation in Scotland.

The English commander Siward's humanitarian character and positive approach to the English occupation of Scotland does not minimize the effect of violence that they perform there, which reminds of Britain's and America's presence in Iraq and Afghanistan. These occupations were called humanitarian interventions at the beginning, but throughout many years the British and American soldiers tyrannized both the military and civil people in these lands, because the initial goal turned into a profit oriented struggle. Berthold Schoene affirms that the play "problematises Britain's recent military role in Iraq and Afghanistan. As Greig's play demonstrates, it is a fine line between humanitarian intervention and neo-imperialist terror, with the latter inevitably prompting nationalist resistance which annihilates all hope for neighbourly conviviality in the

near future'.¹ This statement expresses the fact that there is no neighbourhood, but a strong enmity between England and Scotland because of the occupation. While Siward says, "It's in England's interest to have peace in Scotland",² apparently all the ways used in this occupation are bloody and power oriented, which shows that there is no confidence in the idea of living together in peace. Besides, the Scottish queen Gruach declines Siward's claim about peace in Scotland, and she firmly states, "We had peace. Until you came along. Go home. Don't waste any more of your English lives here. Go home before you're driven home".³ Gruach tells that Siward is just deceiving himself or misunderstanding the whole situation, because Siward with the English army is the one who has broken up the peace in Scotland. No peace can come out of chaos and force, imposed on another land without a good reason. Because, the actual reason is to form a new kingdom under the control of England, "to install Malcolm as king so as to secure England's northern border",⁴ which are the ambitions of an imperialist power.

Although she is a fallen queen, Gruach tries to keep her authority over her people safe and to resist against the English. She uses the advantages of being a woman to counteract and to make the English soldiers break their own rules, so their resistance against her is also broken. She does not even hesitate to use her sexual charm and feminine privileges apart from her natural right to keep the crown in her family through her son, the legal heir. Although she tries to keep her image as a delicate but ruined and captured queen, in the end her actual intention and evil actions to get rid of the English are revealed. Even before the arrival of the English, Gruach has been the kind of a woman who would not hesitate to use her charm as a woman to get what she wants. She is also a very manipulative woman; she has even managed to convince her husband to kill the previous king to take the throne. When Siward asks her about that, she admits that she has been the one who asked her husband to kill the king and that he has done almost everything she has asked for so calmly that even Siward is surprised.

¹ Berthold Schoene, "Scottish Theatre as World Theatre: the Plays of David Greig",

<http://www.napier.ac.uk/randkt/rkteentres/claw/ESSE%20Conference%202012/Titles-Abstracts-Papers/Pages/BertholdSchoene.aspx> (Accessed March 27, 2013), 5.

² David Greig, Dunsinane, (London: Faber and Faber, 2010), 34.

³ David Greig, Dunsinane, 34.

⁴ Ibid., 33.

Later when Siward asks her to convince her son to renounce his claim to the throne, she refuses saying "My son is the king, it's not a matter which he has a choice. My son is my son. My son is the son of his father. My son's father is dead. My son is the king".⁵ And indeed, she insists on living as a queen rather than a 'captured' queen. When her room has been emptied and her women have been taken away, she asks Siward to bring her belongings and women back. Siward cannot refuse her demands because "she may no longer be queen, but she is still a woman-and this is still her house and we are her guests in it".⁶ Although Gruach pretends to be in grievance, she is still as affective and authoritative on her people as she has been before. When Siward tries to assure Malcolm that she is not supported by her chiefs anymore and she is not a threat to the English, Malcolm points out that "they're flies in her web. Nothing is spoken in Scotland without her knowing about it" (49). That is why Malcolm calls her a spider. Still, both Malcolm and Siward are aware that Gruach is "the only person in Scotland with the power to settle the quarrel".⁷

Gruach is not only the most powerful and affective person in Scotland, she is also a mother. She even compromises her country's rules to make sure that her son is safe wherever he is. She probably wants her son to be alive and safe because he is too young to be a king, but he is still the only legal heir so seems to be the only chance for her to keep the throne and rule. She makes an agreement with Egham to let him make trade in her country in return for his assurance that her son will be kept safe by English:

Egham: I want safe passage to market for my men to buy and sell goods.

I want my convoys unmolessted.

Gruach: What do you offer me in return?

Egham: What do you want?

Gruach: Would you betray your own side?

Egham: It depends on what do you mean by 'betray'.

Gruach: Malcolm's men are looking for my son.

I want him taken to safety with my people in Glen Lyon.⁸

In fact she again uses her authority over the Scottish people to do so by assuring Egham that they will not molest him when he is making trade. After assuring that her son will be safe, she again returns to work for her

⁵ Ibid., 34.

⁶ Ibid., 47.

⁷ Ibid., 49.

⁸ Ibid., 54.

son, has been killed, he only asks "Where's the wound?" and "Can it be a mistake?"¹² and then he moves on. As the general of an army at war, he clearly understands that he has no time for mourning. In another scene, his belief in the war he has led his army to fight is indicated clearly in the questions he addresses Malcolm, who has deceived Siward about the situation in Scotland. "You told me the tyrant had lost the support of the chiefs,"¹³ Siward starts his demand for clarification, and goes on to question Malcolm's promise that the English army "[was] likely to see a swift and general acceptance of [Malcolm's] rule and the chance to establish a new and peaceful order".¹⁴ As is clearly indicated in his speech, Siward believed that he was acting according to the public will in Scotland, and that his actions were in the interest of the Scottish people. However, his discovery of the real situation and his realization that he has been deceived by Malcolm does not stop him from carrying on his duties as the commander of the English army. Even after he has found out about the rivalry between the clans and claims against Malcolm's rule, Siward does not listen to what the people of Scotland want, and although his army causes destruction in the country, he continues to support the military occupation of Scotland in the name of humanitarian intervention and claims: "I have to clear away the past now. I have to uproot now and clear away all past claims and — That way there is a chance that we can establish a fair peace in Scotland in which every clan can flourish... New government can't be built on top of old wounds".¹⁵ He does not understand that, just like the tyrant, his army has installed a king on the throne by murder, and that the presence of his army as an occupying force in Scotland will not contribute to the settlement of disputes and to the establishment of stability and peace.

Siward's idea of war is reminiscent of Kipling's oxymoronic term "savage wars of peace"¹⁶ which he uses to describe imperialist wars that he believes are fought to serve the inferior people of the world as far as civilization is concerned. He tells Gruach that "it's in England's interest to have peace in Scotland"¹⁷ and disregards Gruach's reminder that there was peace in Scotland prior to the arrival of the English. By extension, Siward's logic can also be connected to neo-imperialist rhetoric that

¹² *Ibid.*, 26.

¹³ *Ibid.*, 27.

¹⁴ *Ibid.*, 28.

¹⁵ *Ibid.*, 33.

¹⁶ "The savage wars of peace" (l. 82). From "The White Man's Burden" by R. Kipling.

¹⁷ David Greig, Dunsinane, 34.

primary aim to keep her place safe as a queen. She manages to seduce Siward and then proposes him reminding that if he marries her he can be the king of Scotland. Although Siward does not reply right away, he cannot deny that he has been emotionally and sexually captured by Gruach. The morning after the night he and Gruach spend together, he admits that he has been 'captured' by her sexuality asking "which of us is really the conqueror here and which of us the conquered?"⁹

Gruach suddenly forgets that she has proposed Siward to marry her and capture the throne when Siward brings out the idea that Malcolm and Gruach should get married so Malcolm would be the king without question and Gruach will stay as the queen as she wanted, and they both accept. Later, it turns out that Gruach has a plan to gather the English soldiers together in one place for the wedding and let her soldiers and people attack them, and Siward finally realizes that it has been a mistake to trust her from the beginning, and things start to get more and more violent. It is already revealed that Gruach has magic powers by which she is able to contact her soldiers, to give them orders, and keep them afoot. Her spell is so powerful that it can even control the weather, and brings storm and snow to the land, which causes the war to stop. Her son confesses this when he is found and captured by the English. Macduff translates Gruach's son's words: "My mother's women are witches. They cast spells. They use plants to make spells which we drink to give us secret powers... My mother has spells that will bring down this castle's walls. Tomorrow there will be a storm and my mother will bring it. Snow will come and she will bring it".¹⁰ So, it is very meaningful when Siward explains how a destructive woman Gruach is, he resembles her to winter when "a black cloud" appears and "sucks the life out the ground and leaves it frozen and hopeless".¹¹ Although Gruach seems to be a fallen queen, she is the most powerful character in Dunsinane. She legally holds the right and power to continue ruling the country, but her ways to re-grab the power are so complicated and wicked that she ends up in a violent war with Siward and the English. Throughout the play, she tries to use her femininity, her magical powers instead of legal requirements that she and her family still holds.

Another leader figure, the English general in Scotland, Siward has a serious sense of responsibility. He loses a son in Scotland, he has an affair with Gruach, but he never lets his emotions take precedence over his duties and responsibilities. When Macduff tells Siward that Osborn, his

⁹ *Ibid.*, 77.

¹⁰ *Ibid.*, 121 - 2.

¹¹ *Ibid.*, 135.

shot them, but instead he burned them alive, which shows what a military occupation can do to a good-intentioned man, and also shows the fact that this occupation in Scotland has nothing to do with humanitarian intervention just like Britain's and America's military occupations in Iraq and Afghanistan, but these occupations in far lands must have been more troublesome and destructive for both sides due to the precise differences between languages and cultures.

Being the leader of English forces in Scotland, Siward is supposed to have a strong authority. This fact is true until his encounter with Gruach, the queen of Scotland. His weakness towards Gruach makes him lose his authority because "The bed/The tapestries/The women/ It's not what I'm used to".²³ Siward, because he has some feelings for Gruach, loses the control of his emotions and actions, thus his authority. Siward calls Gruach an enemy who is "captivating" him (69).²⁴ In another scene, Siward cannot help asking Gruach: "You smiling and your women laughing at me. Which of us is really the conqueror here and which of us the conquered?"²⁵ Siward implies that he has now become the slave of Gruach because he cannot control his feelings for her. Gruach offers to marry Siward so that Scotland will be united but they cannot get married and Gruach turns out to use Siward for her cause. He becomes devastated after seeing Gruach's betrayal and considers giving up all: "Maybe Egham is right. Maybe I should go home".²⁶ The most striking example of his lost authority is revealed by the boy soldier: "Siward -- not if you were to see him- more like a beggar-/ A monk in his black robes and hood and me beside him".²⁷ The soldier likens him to a monk in black because he is grieving for his lost son and is vengeful because of Gruach's betrayal. Despite his emotional discouragement, Siward tries to recover his lost authority every now and then. When Gruach proposes to marry him, he has his heart and authority to think of; therefore he becomes quite excited and proud. He cannot do anything but accept the offer. When Egham talks about leaving everything and go back, Siward tells him of: "You sound like you would prefer us to be defeated".²⁸ Siward proves that he is still a committed leader, who tries to recover his authority. His efforts will be of no use once he understands he cannot face all these hardships. Siward simply loses his faith and authority.

²³ *Ibid.*, 66.

²⁴ *Ibid.*, 69.

²⁵ *Ibid.*, 77.

²⁶ *Ibid.*, 120.

²⁷ *Ibid.*, 128.

²⁸ *Ibid.*, 95.

justifies wars by arguing that they are fought to bring peace and stability — examples to this are found in the Gulf Wars, the ongoing war in Afghanistan, and the military interventions in Libya, as well as the lack of similar action against the current government of Syria. Although a man of good intentions, Siward's main problem is that he cannot understand the dynamics of Scotland and its conflicting clans; he is headstrong, and follows whatever he believes to be the right path, disregarding everything else. His headstrong attitude is what leads his cause to a dead end over time. At one point, Egham protests over Siward's burning people alive, and Siward explains that "If we make a threat we have to follow it through".¹⁸ He believes in his cause so much that he fails to understand his surroundings and in return his actions bring more destruction and harm. He explains to Egham that he has to be ruthless in his pursuit of peace, and does not understand it when Egham explains that the Scottish are fighting the English simply because they are an invading force in their country. In his ruthless pursuit, Siward is also criticized by Malcolm who thinks that the war is "progressing too strongly",¹⁹ but he fails to give an ear to the warnings he receives. Because he is involved too much in his pursuit, he cannot have the clear vision of those who, like Egham, keep a distance from the conflict. Lost in the pursuit he strongly believes, Siward loses control and cannot see the outcomes of his actions.

Interestingly, though, Siward is the most humanitarian leader among others, namely Egham, Malcolm and Gruach, who can listen to his feelings and think more humanely. To exemplify, Siward states, "Each boy who dies on whatever side, I feel it",²⁰ which shows that Siward cares about the pain on the Scottish side as well, and he tries to do his best to kill less people and to protect the queen. However, Emily Linnemann says, "In *Dunsinane*, we watch the destruction of a country through the good intentions of another great man",²¹ which refers to Siward's misunderstanding and transformation during the occupation, because he becomes more imperialistic, cruel as he cannot get any power, resolution and order. When Egham asks him about the Scottish men, Siward coldly says, he "burned them"²² alive, because they did not tell him the place that Gruach's son who was the rightful heir to the throne was hiding. Siward could have just

¹⁸ *Ibid.*, 94.

¹⁹ *Ibid.*, 106.

²⁰ *Ibid.*, 64.

²¹ Emily Linnemann, "A Mistaken Understanding": Dunsinane and New Writing at the RSC," (The Journal of Shakespeare and Appropriation, 2010), <http://www.borrowers.uga.edu/7159/foc>, Accessed March 27, 2013.

²² David Greig, Dunsinane, 93.

Siward, upon understanding Gruach's betrayal to his affections, becomes quite a tyrant to make sure he wins: "That's the world my power's in and that's the world I'll fight in, and that's the world in which I'll win".²⁹ The reason for his sudden change in behaviours and manners is revealed in these lines:

How calmly she walked towards them - these blood. Covered men-And whether their coming came of witchcraft or of treachery Or some combination of the two- as the great hall filled Up With fire and blood one thought filled the room like smoke. She knew- she knew- she knew³⁰

The fact that Gruach betrays him causes his tyranny and Siward blames it on Gruach: "She is ruthless. So we have to be ruthless".³¹ By saying that, Siward means that his tyranny comes from the growing feeling of vengeance. Siward firstly burns the Scottish soldiers alive in the hen they are hiding because they did not tell who the son of Gruach is (92-93). Secondly, he kills the son of Gruach without showing him any mercy: "*Siward finishes him off. The Scottish Boy dies*".³² His tyranny, on the whole, is the outcome of Gruach's betrayal and his understanding of the unending war in Scotland over the right to rule.

Siward till the end of the play is portrayed as a well-mannered, just and a committed leader. His leadership qualities even enable him to consider the well-being of his soldiers. When Siward learns the intentions of Gruach, he loses his authority over his life and his soldiers. Gruach promises to marry him but they do not because Scottish clan leaders want Gruach to marry Malcolm to secure a long lasting peace. Besides, Gruach's soldiers kill the soldiers of Siward, which marks the end of Siward's good qualities. After these events and the fact that his son, Osborn, dies in the war, Siward becomes a tyrant, killing the Scottish soldiers and the son of Gruach without mercy. Siward tries to find the answer to his troubles with being a tyrant, from which he turns in the end, giving up on everything and he "*turns and walks away/He walks into the snow/ He disappears*".³³ The unending fight in Scotland and Scotland, on the whole, becomes a weight he cannot endure, making him the "foreign loser".

²⁹ Ibid., 112.

³⁰ Ibid., 87.

³¹ Ibid., 95.

³² Ibid., 123.

³³ Ibid., 138.

The greedy and corrupted characters such as Malcolm and Egham play active roles in the course of occupation as they make war for the sake of power and money no matter how many people die in both sides. If both the Scottish King Malcolm and the English lieutenant Egham had thought the best interests of both sides without war, violence and profit like Siward at the beginning, the goal of the occupation would be called humanitarian intervention rather than military occupation. However, these leaders are driven by the sense of controlling through destruction of whatever blocks their way to achieve their interests. Egham betrays his brothers by allying with Gruach for money, and Malcolm loses himself in the material gifts and pleasures, brought to him by the Scottish clan leaders. This echoes European countries as well as America's interest in the oil reserves in the Middle East, which encouraged them to attack the countries there. As such, Egham fights in Scotland to gain some profits as he is following his father's order, "There's a war in Scotland -go and win us some land and a manor house. Fifteen sacks of barley".³⁴ There is no care in these words about what a war makes to people, soldiers and countries, and the only concern is money although money or property, gained through an unjust war is bloody and contaminated, which shows that the play also interrogates the morality of humankind. Egham represents the material interest inherent in imperialist and neo-imperialist wars of peace. He has no interest in the ongoing war other than the material gain that may be derived from it. He explains to Boy Soldier that he never meant to fight, but became a soldier because of his father:

I was supposed to be a monk
But my father insisted - fight -
There's a war in Scotland - go and
win us some land and a manor house.
Fifteen sacks of barley.³⁵

Egham, seems to inherit his father's material interests, although he frequently protests over the conditions of war, and acts accordingly. At one point he explains the purpose of life as follows:

Stay alive and be comfortable.
Those are the purposes of life.
And they're also the two things that
are hardest to do when you spend

³⁴ Ibid., 42.

³⁵ Ibid., 42.

material exploitation on the other. By placing these two characters in opposition to each other, Greig manages to reveal the conflicts of the "savage wars of peace" as Kipling called them and, by setting the events in the eleventh century Scotland, he makes it possible for the reader to arrive at an objective conclusion that is free from the bonds of class, nationhood, and so on. However, in this retrospective conclusion the reader finds a message for today, as well as for all time, and this message is that the line between military occupation and humanitarian intervention is very thin, very easy to go past and manipulate, and that people should realize this fact and beware the dangers of the imperialist ideal that survives to this day.

Dunsinane points out the psychological effects of military occupation such as the sense of dehumanization and alienation. Regarding to that, Linnemann expresses, "It is a play that subtly highlights the various trials and tragedies that a military occupation can bring to its generals, soldiers and citizens".⁴⁰ Apart from Seward's transition, we see a lot of cruelties and sufferings on the side of soldiers since this occupation causes them to be cold-blooded killers. To exemplify, after cutting the throat of a Scottish soldier, an English soldier wonders why this Scottish boy did not just surrender, but other soldier says, "he knew we'd kill him either way".⁴¹ This shows the very violent attitude of the English soldiers. Although the Scottish soldiers do not have strong weapons unlike the English ones, there is no mercy for them. They will be killed even if they just leave themselves to the fate that England chooses for them, which again shows the ill treatment of military occupation. In another case, a soldier says, "it would be good if there was one here now".⁴² He refers to the Scottish women, and he regrets killing all of them since he cannot rape anyone to satisfy his sexual desire. This is a reference to the grim reality of the occupation in terms of women. Another soldier tries to hit a kid's face in the mouth, because if he can, then he will touch the hen girl,⁴³ again showing how the soldiers play with human lives as now they are the ones who got the control over the land, because they are the occupiers. However, the hen girl's shooting an English soldier and committing suicide show her resistance and her abhorrence of the idea that any bloody English soldier touches her. On the other hand, the English soldiers are filled with despair and alienation because of the distance from their

⁴⁰ Linnemann, "A Mistaken Understanding": Dunsinane and New Writing at the RSC," 9.

⁴¹ David Greig, Dunsinane, 15.

⁴² Ibid., 20.

⁴³ Ibid., 73.

your summer fighting a fucking war in Scotland.³⁶

His want for monetary gain and physical comfort are his only drives, unlike Seward who believes in what he does. If Seward represents the blinding amount of goodwill and confidence that ruins the actions of those whose intentions are essentially good, then Egham, his double, represents another type of neo-imperialist, the one that joins the army for his own gain, and his intentions are essentially self-centred. "The Scots think we're here to subdue them. It's our job to prove them wrong", Seward warns Egham, and goes on: "We'll take no women and no gold and we'll take not one beast more than we need. We will make them to trust us".³⁷ However, Seward's ideals clash with Egham's desires and, since Egham has no respect for the cause of bringing peace to Scotland, Seward's orders cannot prevent him from stealing and betraying for his own interests. He explains this to Gruach, saying: "Seward wants peace. / But I want money",³⁸ and makes it clear that his real interest lies in money, not in doing good. However, thanks to his lack of engagement, he understands the conflict better than Seward, and is the first to protest over Seward's ruthless treatment of people.

Similarly, Malcolm utters his aims about the fate of Scotland and its people by saying, "I will periodically and arbitrarily commit acts of violence against some or other of you- in order that I can maintain a more general order in the country. I will not dispose my mind to the improvement of the country or to the conditions of its ordinary people".³⁹ Here, Malcolm clearly states that he will use his power as he wishes, which is exactly the mentality of a military occupier who immediately assumes that the land is his own land, and there is no claim on the other side because the English power is superior to theirs and they have to accept that. These kinds of leaders or soldiers in a war can just accelerate the tension, chaos, as they gain profit out of conflicts, so they just conduct a violent military occupation in Scotland.

Given their drives and intentions, the headstrong English general and his materialist lieutenant are not only in opposition, but are also complementary to each other. As characters with conflicting intentions, they represent the two conflicting ends of imperialist and neo-imperialist wars: humanitarian intervention on one hand and military occupation and

³⁶ Ibid., 43.

³⁷ Ibid., 44.

³⁸ Ibid., 53.

³⁹ Ibid., 80.

instruct the ones after her "to take up arms and torment England again and again and again until the end of time".⁴⁶ This signifies that a previous military occupation can bring an eternal enmity between two neighbors. Greig's *Dunsinane* perfectly reflects the course and result of military occupation, and the impossibility of any humanitarian aid by imperial powers.

The second playwright under discussion, John McGrath is English by origin but has strong Scottish ties and interest due to his Scottish wife. McGrath is a socialist writer writing for a socio-political cause, specifically for the heightening of the awareness of his audience about the effects of capitalism on Scottish history and people, and having a short time to finish writing his play, McGrath decides to present the play to public audiences as an ongoing process. His aim, as he explains in his foreword to the play, is to collect public opinion, especially from people who have experienced the events or the immediate effects of the events that he writes about, and to receive suggestions from experts and the like. In keeping with his aim to say what people of Scotland want to say, he presents his raw material to his audience as a work in progress and, in a way, lets the audience play a role in the creation of the play. Instead of speaking for the people of Scotland, he listens to them before writing about and for them. For example, he writes about the Clearances, the forced displacement of people from the Scottish Highlands in the 18th and 19th centuries as a result of enclosures, and about the oil boom and their effects on Scottish people; in order to draw a clear and truthful picture, he does more than just consulting history books, and listens to living history, to the people of Scotland.

In order to appeal more to his audience, and to keep in touch with a history that has been preserved, though in part, thanks to the kind of traditional gatherings called *ceilidhs*, McGrath decides to give his work the form of this traditional entertainment. The play is fraught with songs and dance. The audience comes in accompanied by fiddle tunes; the company makes the audience sing along with them by holding up song-sheets; and in the end, the audience joins the dances of the company and the show turns into a true *ceilidh* through which Scottish history is retold, and through which the hierarchies of the theatre, among actors and director as well as among actors and the audience, are broken down. Another unusual aspect of the show, and also another means of breaking down these hierarchies, is the stage used by the company. Most of the time, the play is not presented in proper theatre space, but rather on what McGrath

⁴⁶ *Ibid.*, 136.

homelands and their witnessing violence, blood all the time. Moreover, the harsh conditions of Scotland's landscape and nature affect their psychologies negatively, which also increases their hatred towards the Scottish people. Boy soldier says, "Stones and shitty water and the food's shit. You wonder why we're here".⁴⁴ Eventually, military occupation begins to seem unreasonable to them as they can get nothing, but cold, hateful eyes and blood everywhere. The Hen Girl's suicide becomes a symbol of political resistance of Scottish nation against English invasion. Her body becomes the incarnation of the land and Scottish nationality and the soldier's desire to rape her can be interpreted, as the English desire to conquer Scotland and penetrate their culture against their will.

In *Dunsinane* the theme of national resistance is handled not only as a conscious protest of Scottish people against the invasion of their country but as an unconscious desire to ostracize the soldiers and get rid of the English presence in Scotland, which has penetrated into the social behaviour of Scottish people ranging from the little children to the women and men. One of the English soldiers explains:

"From clan to clan we'd march day on day
And in every place we'd get sharp glances
And we'd smile back- you know- for the children,
Offer out our hands to them with nuts or something
But always the children leaving out hands alone and
Then always one child hiding behind some woman
And the woman's eyes burning at us".⁴⁵

It is possible to observe the national resistance of the local people against welcoming the soldiers as their saviour from the dictator or believing their so-called "good" intentions. Besides, at many points, they blame the Scottish people since they resist to them and prolong the course of occupation without peace, but it is quite ironic that the English soldiers cannot think that these people also are emotionally connected to their lands despite the fractions such as Moray and Alba within their country. Thus, the play *Dunsinane* touches on the issue of neo-imperialism in our postmodern world by taking the essence of his play from a Renaissance play Shakespeare's *Macbeth*. There is the emphasis that humanity will never give up his claim for more power by persecuting less powerful ones. Besides, there will always be resistance in the opposite side, which makes violence, death inevitable. The Scottish Gruach declares that she will

⁴⁴ *Ibid.*, 59.

⁴⁵ *Ibid.*, 39.

calls a "pop-up book" made of cardboard. Although they have had performances in halls, I think this pop-up book suits their project better, since it creates a sense of equality that is impossible to attain in a hall that is divided into stage and numbered seats. Such is the form of new writing employed by McGrath in contemporary British drama.

McGrath in the foreword to the play further discusses the theatre's potentials of contributing to a social change by means of describing things with truth. As Salman Rushdie argues in his essay "Imaginary Homelands," McGrath's writing, though descriptive rather than necessarily argumentative or critical, becomes an instrument of political change.⁴⁷ By describing a reality that is incompatible with the official version of reality, McGrath transforms the act of describing into a political act and, by involving the audience as well as his actors in the creation of his play, creates something that is truly social and communal, and that retells story, in the old Scottish bard's words, "with truth".

As John McGrath explains in the foreword to *The Cheviot, The Stag and The Black Black Oil* Scottish Highlands has been exposed to the capitalist system's exploitations and that changed landscape of the area and the people's way of life. He says "The realities are created by the actions of a feudal system leaping red in tooth and claw into imperialist capitalist system, becoming more repressive, more violent as it does so".⁴⁸ It can be seen that the rise of capitalism affects the natural life in a negative way more and more. So it can be said that John McGrath and his group came together and share the same aim, which is to create social awareness in the local people about how the capitalist power is gradually destroying their culture and values. McGrath explains the affect of the play on the audience saying: "nearly all go away heightened in their awareness of what has been, and is being done to the people of Highlands, in the process capitalism".⁴⁹ The play is a success in terms of achieving its aim and making people conscious about the changes brought about by the foreign forces.

The Scottish history can be seen as an important actor in the play, since the play talks about the three important stages in Scottish history, which can also be understood from the title. While *The Cheviot* represents the expulsion of the highland farmers from the land, which eventually put them in a position in which they find themselves serving the colonial powers, *The*

⁴⁷ Salman Rushdie, *Imaginary Homelands: Essays and Criticism* 1981-1991. (USA: Penguin, 1992).

⁴⁸ John McGrath, *The Cheviot, the Stag and the Black Black Oil*. (London: Eyre Methuen Ltd, 1993).

⁴⁹ John McGrath, *The Cheviot, the Stag and the Black Black Oil*, vi.

Stag section of the title represents the reshaping of the Scottish culture. As it comes to *The Black Black Oil* part, it reflects the recent past when the American invasion of oil fields in Aberdeen took place. McGrath gathers some stories from all corners of Scotland, that clearly explicate how the Gaelic language had been suppressed, how the Dukes of Sutherland were hated for what they did when they discovered there was more profit in sheep than in people how their factors burnt the houses, drove the people to the sea-coast, herded them into boats for Canada. The realities of Highland life are very different and these are revealed in great detail to the audience. Giving people historical facts of Scotland in an entertaining and thought-provoking way, McGrath reflects the condition that Scottish society lives in and makes the public aware of what is going on around them and give them the self-confidence to think that they have the ability to unite again. The play simply has supported the idea that the highlands in Scotland were exploited by the wealthy and capitalist people without thinking about the residents of the highlands and by just giving importance to what the highlands might function as an economic platform. The play begins with the period when singing in the Gaelic language was forbidden. One of the first elements of the political propaganda occurs with the song named "These are my mountains" which clearly give the message to the capitalist people that the real owners of the highland are "coming home" (McGrath, 2) because they believe that the pleasures all the places in the world can maintain are less than those that the highlands could do. A play with socialist concern and anti-capitalist messages, *The Cheviot, The Stag and the Black Black Oil* is as much concerned with the destruction of Scottish culture and the Scottish people's loss of identity as the economic relationships that cause these cultural problems. During the Clearances economic interests of the ruling class deprive people of their land; the English law alienates Scottish people from their own language, music, clothing, etc; when oil is found off the shores of Scotland people are once more made slaves to capitalism and lose their dignity, resources, and sense of identity through their strife to survive in a capitalist economy. As is typical of colonialist and/or capitalist rhetoric throughout history, this is all done in the name of bringing civilization, correcting the people, doing something for the benefit of all, etc. This rhetoric is frequently satirized and parodied:

Your barbarous customs, though they may be old
To civilized people hold horrors untold —
What value a culture that cannot be sold
The price of a culture is counted in gold.⁵⁰

⁵⁰ *Ibid.*, 8.

The song sung by Loch and Sellar indicates that these exploiters value nothing but money and deem everything that stands against them barbarous. In order to make profit the exploiters are ready to destroy anything and the Scottish culture and people are no exception. As the Old Man explains: "The technological innovation was there... The money was there. Unfortunately, the people were there, too. But the law of capitalism had to be obeyed."⁵¹ In order to make room for the profitable Cheviot sheep, soldiers are sent, houses are burnt, people are forced to migrate. People like Sellar can get away with doing anything they need for their own benefit because of inadequate lawyers, judges, and lack of judiciousness.

The play is successful in bringing in characters, who successfully represent and embody the capitalist mind. The characters Loch and Sellar are the investors or more precisely 'the stags' who only care about things for their value. The poem they recite together is the greatest example of how much deep the capitalist thinking has been carved into their minds. The inclusion of such characters clearly shows that they function as the antagonists of the play and they are presented as such on purpose by McGrath as part of his propaganda, which is the mind of a capitalist, which thinks no more than the value of things and who think that everything has its price. *The Cheviot, The Stag and the Black Black Oil* is based on the injustice, inequalities and pains which were inflicted upon the Highlanders by the British Empire and the Scottish ruling, upper class. As a Young Highlander says "The women were great at making it all seem fine. But it was no easy time to be alive in ... and the people were not too pleased about it."⁵² The Young Highlander talks about the importance of the cheviot sheep in contrast to the mankind. In order to make more space for the sheep, the people were cleared off the land, which causes too much chaos, problems and cruelties in Scotland. The Highlanders were left starving, dying and migrating from their own lands. Loch confirms this cruel attitude with these words: "His lordship will have to remove these people at considerable extent."⁵³ Clearly, the landlords push the Highlanders into misery deliberately and voluntarily. Justice never comes as it is also corrupted by the ruling class, since they have all the control in their hands, but no desire to provide the people with necessary dignity. In relation to that, Minister says, "some of you here today are so far from the fold, have so far neglected the dignity of your womanhood, that you have

⁵¹ Ibid., 14.

⁵² Ibid., 3.

⁵³ Ibid., 7.

risen up to curse your masters, and violate the laws of the land".⁵⁴ It is ironic to see Mr Sellar who has left an old woman of 94 burns inside the house as she cannot move and she has no right to live any more. As opposed to that Minister accuses the women of violation of the laws although they are just protesting against inhuman and despotic attitudes of the higher class. Reader says, "Donald Sage, Kildonan, Sutherland. The whole inhabitants of Kildonan parish, nearly 2000 souls, were utterly rooted and burnt down,"⁵⁵ reporting how many people died and how they died. The Industrial Revolution, the settlements of oil platforms and the Cheviot sheep for textile cause many violations of the rights of the Highlanders and corrupt the sense of justice in the country.

The play elaborates on the topic of exploitation of the resources in the Highlands through the new chaotic, capitalist wave in the Highlands which consumes living people, too. People constitute an important part of source of power and the ruling class along with the British imperial aims highly decreases the proportion of the population. The lands, which have been used for agriculture many years, now turn into waste lands because of livestock. Fish is another important resource and some greedy lords are very interested in fishing out of profits. Natural resources are means of gaining money and regarding that Loch says, "the coast of Sutherland abounds with many different kinds of fish..."⁵⁶ referring to the existence of many natural harbours to be used as fishing stations.

McGrath gives a lot of space to English invasion of Scotland and cultural exchange in the play. English invasion comes together with the Industrial Revolution to Scotland, which leads many changes in the country. There is reference to the unity of England and Scotland, which brings changes such as capitalism and different ways of producing to the country in the Old Man's words, "There is no doubt that a change had to come to the Highlands: the population was growing too fast for the old, in efficient methods of agriculture to keep everyone fed... This coincided with something else: English and Scottish capital was growing powerful and needed to expand."⁵⁷ Immigration and capital's gaining importance are explained in a critical way since the play is a cry for socialism, equality and the well-being of all citizens. Apparently, technological development comes to the country; however, it does not serve the humankind but destruct the humankind as it is in the hands of the

⁵⁴ Ibid., 13.

⁵⁵ Ibid., 16.

⁵⁶ Ibid., 7.

⁵⁷ Ibid., 14.

capitalists. Sellar describes the Highlanders as "a century behind", besides, during the trial of Mr. Sellar, Judge says, "Therefore, I would ask you (to jury) to ignore all the charges except two. One of these concerns the destruction of barns. In this case, Mr. Sellar has ignored a custom of the country."⁵⁸ Customs are being violated, changed by the new laws, and the judges does not suggest any penalty for that since this does not violate the law of the country, and the disappearance of customs, even Gaelic language does not matter too much to the higher class. Regarding that Sturdy Highlander says, "... the red Indians were reduced to the same estate as after our fathers after Culloden, defeated, hunted, treated like the scum of the earth their culture polluted and torn out with slow deliberation and their land no longer their own."⁶⁰ Sturdy Highlander affirms the negative effects of the English invasion, which destructs the native culture and land with its own rules as it does with the Red Indians without pity.

As for the expansionist policy of England, use of the Indian characters to reflect the importance of India as a colony ruled under the control of Anglo Saxons. The Indian Lord Selkirk describes the expansionist policy of Britain in his own way: "The people of the glens have become a redundant population. I favour their going where they have better prospect of happiness and prosperity so long as they are not lost to Britain."⁶¹ Lord Selkirk articulates on Britain's haste and greed for lands and the impossibility of happiness and wealth if the place is the colony of Britain. Gent also says about the first Duke of Sutherland, "he tamed the torrent, fertilized the sand, / And joined a province to its parent land,"⁶² who acts with British rules and expectations that requires the oppression of the Scottish people as they are not viewed as valuable as Anglo-Saxons.

The issue of imperialism is handled with references to the British imperialism along with some of their harsh impositions. Scotland has a long, painful history with the imperial power of Britain. The effects of imperialism could be the intensity of the migration in the country, factories, the production of raw materials such as wool and unemployment because of machines. Sturdy Highlander voices the violent actions of the imperialist power as he says, "The highland exploitation chain-reacted around the world; in Australia the aborigines were hunted like animal, all over Africa, black men were massacred and brought to heel. In America the plains were emptied of men and buffalo, and the seeds of the next

⁵⁸ *Ibid.*, 16.

⁵⁹ *Ibid.*, 19.

⁶⁰ *Ibid.*, 29.

⁶¹ *Ibid.*, 23.

⁶² *Ibid.*, 20.

century's imperialist power were firmly planted."⁶³ Britain regards itself the superior power among the others, a view which gains it the title 'Great Britain' and the British Empire. Thus, it imperializes the lands and people because of this ideology. Queen Victoria is given voice to reveal the attitude of the imperialist England: "Though wide is our empire / Balmoral is best / Yes these are our mountains / and we are impressed."⁶⁴

McGrath draws the audience's attention to the cruelties done by the government officers to the sheep and the people there as well. The sheep were left to death by the people coming from every corner of Europe and the people who stood against this cruelty and suffering was done cruelty by the police. The striking phenomenon is the fact that the ones who suffered most by this cruelty were women who were killed without mercy. McGrath by including these facts calls the Scottish to stand against the usurpers of the Highlands together. The last part of the play is concerned with the discovery of oil off the shores of Scotland, the arrival of multinational corporations, and the local capitalists' alliance with them. Capitalist oil industry is, for the most part, represented by the humorous stereotype of a Texas businessman who is exploiting the natural resources of Scotland and giving the people nothing but corruption, poverty and pollution. Although times have changed the capitalist mentality and rhetoric remained the same. The outcomes will be even worse than the outcomes of the Clearances if no measures are taken against this capitalist exploitation.

In conclusion, John McGrath narrates the audience the story of Scottish Highlands being usurped by the wealthy capitalist people. Those people do it step by step and they reach their aim, driving people out of their lands, exterminating the Cheviot sheep and turning the highlands into a black oil trade centre. McGrath calls the Scottish people to come together and stand against this unfair treatment as one. David Greig and John McGrath, the two prolific playwrights of the contemporary British drama voice their concerns for political and ethical practices in our world with innovative techniques and become great practitioners of 'new writing.' In *Dunsinane* and *The Cheviot, The Stag and the Black Black Oil* the dramatists have taken a step to defy the well-made plays of the predecessors. They create a modern structure, free of stereotypical patterns of character and plot-line formulations, in which conventional surface coherence and appearance of harmony, as well as time have lost their significance. Both plays are particularly related with the questions of

⁶³ *Ibid.*, 2.

⁶⁴ *Ibid.*, 38.

globalization and internationalization and more precisely how they impact at the level of the local and locale. The events of the last decade grip the imagination of the two leading Scottish playwrights, who draw the audience's attention to the cruelties done by the oppressors in neo-imperialist era. Greig and McGrath deliver the same message via their plays that despite the neo-imperialist attitude no matter how hard the invader tries to subdue the national identity of the target country there is still hope for the people to survive this international system by resisting and protesting it even when it means risking their lives for their nation.

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