
Language Image in National Minority Language Television Idents. TG4 (Teilifís na Gaeilge, Ireland) and Whakaata Māori (Māori Television, New Zealand)

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Abstract. Born of community and political action, Teilifís na Gaeilge (TG4) began in 1996, and Whakaata Māori/ Māori Television Service (MTS) in 2004. Despite obvious differences between the two broadcasting environments, both stations attempt to reclaim a national (but minority) language (Ó Ruairc 1996; Moring 2007) and compete with other broadcasters (Horrocks and Perry 2004) to attract an audience (Smith and Abel 2008) by an appeal to identity (Cormack 2000; 2007; Delap 2007). This paper investigates idents from TG4 and MTS. What image or brand have the language and culture in these mini-advertisements? Thornley's (2004) discussion of "transculturation" is useful in examining the often inventive approach taken to elements of the dominant culture. Indeed, the motto '*Súil eile*' [another perspective] is the criterion for many TG4 projects, and there is a clear awareness of multiple audiences in the MTS logline, '*mā mātou, mā rātou, mā koutou, mā tātou*' [just for us, for them, for all of you, for all of us]. In the symbiotic relationship between a minority station and other larger stations in terms of the depiction/creation of local and national identity, language is used as another marketing tool. TG4 and MTS idents respond to and celebrate current sociolinguistic changes (Romaine 2006; Ó Tuathaigh 2008), making them visible.

Key Words. Irish language, television, Māori, image, nation, tradition, reinvention, branding.

Resumen. Teilifís na Gaeilge (TG4) y Whakaata Māori/Servicio de Televisión Maorí (MTS) entraron en servicio en 1996 y 2004 respectivamente, gracias a la movilización política y comunitaria. A pesar de evidentes diferencias entre los dos entornos de radiodifusión, ambas cadenas se proponen recuperar una lengua nacional, aunque minoritaria (Ó Ruairc 1996; Moring 2007) y competir con otros organismos de radiodifusión (Horrocks y Perry 2004) para atraer a la audiencia (Smith and Abel 2008) apelando a la identidad (Cormack 2000; 2007; Delap 2007). El artículo analiza los indicativos de TG4 y MTS. ¿Qué imagen o marca tienen la lengua y la cultura en esos mini-anuncios? El análisis que hace Thornley (2004) de la "transculturación" resulta útil para examinar la aproximación a menudo ingeniosa que se hace de los elementos de la cultura dominante. El eslogan '*Súil eile*' [otra perspectiva] es el criterio que prevalece en la mayoría de proyectos de TG4, y existe una clara conciencia de la existencia de audiencias mixtas en el lema de MTS, '*mā mātou, mā rātou, mā koutou, mā tātou*' [sólo para nosotros, para ellos, para todos vosotros, para todos nosotros]. En la relación simbiótica entre una cadena minoritaria y otras cadenas más grandes en términos de la representación/creación de la identidad local y nacional, la lengua se utiliza como una herramienta más de marketing. Los indicativos de TG4 y MTS responden a los cambios sociolingüísticos del momento (Romaine 2006; Ó Tuathaigh 2008), celebrándolos y haciéndolos visibles.

Palabras clave. lengua irlandesa, televisión, maorí, imagen, nación, tradición, reinvenición, etiquetar.

National television plays a key role in exploring central beliefs and versions of official and popular culture. The language used in broadcasting has huge symbolic importance. Negotiation between the national status of an official minority language (such as Irish in Ireland or te reo Māori in New Zealand) and the reality of its daily use yields a rich creative harvest for any television station which chooses to engage intelligently with this cultural nexus. TG4 and MTS idents respond to and celebrate current sociolinguistic changes (Romaine 2006; Ó Tuathaigh 2008), making them visible. Perhaps the most striking feature of the stations is their refusal to operate merely as oppositional voices to majority language media. Through a “non-dogmatic cultural ecology ... [and] continuity” they avoid reactionary binarism in favour of a more autonomous world view, celebrating “the validity and value of minority identities” (Mac Póilin 1996: 158).

Born of community and political action, *Teilifís na Gaeilge* (TG4) began in 1996, and *Whakaata Māori* (MTS) of New Zealand in 2004. Despite obvious differences between the two broadcasting environments, both stations attempt to reclaim a national (but minority) language and compete with other broadcasters to attract an audience by appealing to a sense of identity. This paper investigates idents from TG4 and MTS, and the image or brand of the language and culture portrayed in these mini-advertisements. Thornley’s discussion of “transculturation” is a useful way to regard such “reinvent[ion] and use [of] products and ideologies transmitted by a dominant culture” (2004: 61).

Both MTS and TG4 are keenly aware of their position in the broadcasting environment of their respective countries, and actively study the schedules of other channels when deciding where to place programmes (Mather 2007; Ní Ógáin 2008; Ó Gallchóir 2008). The emphasis by both television stations on the local is partially a recuperative strategy, to reassert the continuity of tradition after attempted erasure (and significant break in continuity) by colonising cultures. However, the focus on particularity or “myth of authenticity” (Graham 2001: 71) may result in the fossilisation or fetishisation of the old at the expense of the new, creating a privileged hierarchy of the voice of ‘the people’, where some natives are more authentic than others.

As public service broadcasters, TG4 and MTS are required to speak to the country as a whole. Despite the proliferation of satellite options, viewers in Ireland and New Zealand still turn to national channels for a perspective on and of their home place. According to Caughie, distance from the imaginary collectivity may provide a truer picture (1992: 36), and the composition of such a picture is in part the task of these alternative indigenous television stations. The motto ‘*Súil eile*’ (another perspective) is the criterion for many TG4 projects. It is clear from the MTS logline, ‘*mā mātou, mā rātou, mā koutou, mā tātou*’ (just for us, for them, for all of you, for all of us), that they are aware of possible divisions in the audience/s.

Language and State

Unlike the Irish language which is a central feature of the education system in Ireland, te reo Māori has not been widely available in New Zealand schools. So whilst a significant proportion of Irish people may be assumed to have at least a passive knowledge of their first official national language, this is not the case for viewers of MTS in New Zealand.¹ The distinction between a minority and a minoritised language is emphasized by Arana et al. (2007). They believe that in a state of unequal relations, the submerged language retains a greater power in terms of identity politics (152). In this way, a minoritised language is much more than merely a language. “[We’re] not simply dealing with languages – we’re dealing with ourselves, our culture and our people” (Reeves 2008).

Another language provides a different filter through which to observe the affairs of the world. This is a reclamation of the centre. The centre is not necessarily a place of political sway and economic might – but rather a state of mind. Belief and confidence is integral to the success of minority language broadcasting endeavours, coupled with a sensitive approach to audiences whose link to their ancestral language has been weakened through colonisation and its aftermath. The process of reacquainting self with this heritage is complex

1. According to the 2006 Census, English is spoken by 95.9% of people in New Zealand. The second most-widely spoken language is Māori (4.1%, 157,110 people).

and gradual. A television service which represents or reconstitutes a minority national language enters a realm of deep history and cultural memory.

Ireland and New Zealand have given official status to their respective indigenous languages (in 1922 and 1987 respectively). Although most citizens do not commonly use their language, Irish and te reo Māori are important to a sense of national or group identity. The apparent gulf between ideal and practice is explained by the function of language as an identity marker – it differentiates us from our large anglophone neighbours and contributes to our cultural specificity. It is also a mark of respect for the legacy of our ancestors, and their way of seeing the world. The language for most citizens has symbolic rather than functional value.

Minority Language Media

Stephen Harold Riggins sees the clear aim of ethnic minority media as “the peaceful preservation of the linguistic and cultural identity of a population that political and economic factors have put in a threatened position” (1992: 287). Regina Uí Chollatáin goes further, remarking that in the case of minority language media, they not only safeguard the language, but also provide a space in which ideas about the media in general may be developed. They are “uirlisi atógála” [tools for rebuilding] (2008: 19). Minority Language Media is an emergent academic field, comprising print, internet and radio and television broadcasting in languages which are not widely used in their catchment area (Cormack 2005). The question of what is a minority language is vexed- but here taken to mean a language which is surrounded by a more numerically (and often politically) powerful language environment. Common challenges faced by media outlets in such a situation include funding, availability of fluent speakers with the requisite technical skills, identifying and reaching an audience, and linguistic issues such as the creation of new terminology, provision of subtitling or dubbing, and the treatment of dialects.

Perhaps the most important contribution Minority Language Television can make to the health and development of a language and its associated culture is a demonstration of belief in and respect for the language “muineach ...

creideann muide ann” [confident ... we believe in it] (Ó Raighne 2008). Horomia sees MTS as a highly significant development in Māori identity and pride: “We are no longer defined by a past of loss and pain. We are defined by ... broadcasters. A means by which Māori can have a conversation with ourselves about who we are and where we are going” (Horomia 2008). In a similar manner, TG4 is proof that the Irish language can engage creatively with contemporary life. “[Tá sé] léirithe ag TG4 gur féidir úsaid a bhaint as an teanga, go bhfuil maitheas ins an teanga, agus an tábhacht atá lenár gcultúr agus lenár n-oidhreacht fhéin” [TG4 have shown that the language can be used, that there’s good in it; and the importance of our culture and heritage] (Ó Gallchóir 2007). Preservation may be an initial aim of broadcasters in an environment of sociolinguistic threat – but this should soon come to grips with definition, redefinition and exploration of what exactly it is that they are trying to preserve if the venture is to have any real purpose.

When the MLM source is a national television station with a public service remit, as is the case with TG4 and MTS, there is an extra layer of responsibilities and relationships. Although the core audience are figured as a minority of national importance (Watson, 2003: 63), there is often tension between the image of the language (and its speakers) and the image of the nation. In New Zealand and Ireland, the indigenous minoritised language appears very different to citizens depending on their own ability/fluency, and on their sense of national and cultural identity. Unlike widely-spoken world languages, the te reo Māori and Irish are rarely considered transparent. Whether ‘normalised’ as a fact of life (which carries the danger of minimising real inequalities and discrepancies between lipservice and community language), or reified as valuable in itself (which may lead to lacklustre translations of tired cultural material to the screen, as it is assumed that the audience watch for the language and not for the content), a national minority language in the context of a mediascape dominated by a majority language is problematic both for producers and for viewers. A television station broadcasting in this language engages, willingly or not, with these ideological issues. MTS and TG4 operate in cultural environments with histories of language shift and (de-)colonization, so that

they have a double focus. “Maori possess a dual identity not available to other New Zealanders: they are both members of an iwi and citizens of the state” (Smith and Abel 2008: 52). This is also the position of the bilingual person, belonging between two modes of speaking and being.

Who owns the culture?

The native tradition is available to interpretation and appropriation by various bodies. Máirín Nic Eoin, in a study of Irish language literature, notes the tendency for non-‘native’ institutions to take a pick-and-mix approach, highlighting aspects of the tradition that fit with the majority ethos, whilst denying others, “... an mórghaol go ndéanfaí comhshamlú roghnach ar ghnéithe den chultúr mionlaigh ... fad is a dhéantar neamhshuim de réimsí dioscúrsacha eile” [the great risk of arbitrarily selecting certain aspects of the minority culture whilst ignoring other discursive areas] (2005:35). Until the advent of MTS, the image of Māori people in the New Zealand media was mainly negative – only on TVNZ’s *Police 10-7* and the News could any significant coverage of Māori issues or people be seen – and this almost exclusively in Pākehā-oriented terms (Oliver 2007). There was little or no attempt to delve into the reasons for actions or protests – and there was no engagement with daily life and culture – except for major national events or culturally-fossilised rituals. These were safe set pieces for a national audience to watch at a distance, with no interest in getting involved.

In an article about the effect of MTS on the reconstruction of national identity in New Zealand, Smith and Abel note that “Māori culture has a significant symbolic value on the global market, a value that the ... government utilizes for its own ends” (Smith and Abel 2008: 44). MTS is explicit about its national role, stating in its Annual Report (2006), “We have purposely positioned Māori Television as ‘the face of Aotearoa New Zealand’”. What ideologies animate this face? The mosaic-style cover image on the 2007 Annual Report recognises diversity. What role might a television station play in the process of cultural or critical reawakening? The revival of Māori language and culture is now becoming linked, for better or worse, to a general national identity (as opposed to a more ethnic identity

of previous generations). Horomia recognises the need for all New Zealanders to co-operate, and sees MTS as the meeting point: “The survival of the reo and Māori identity is now an experiment in interdependence. Māori broadcasting is the platform on which our interdependence is negotiated” (Horomia 2008). MTS audience figures indicate that two thirds of their viewers are non-Maori, which demonstrates the ‘window’ function of the station, providing an insight into a world not familiar to the general audience. However, this is problematic in that it reveals that a low proportion of what might have been assumed to be the core audience is watching.

Whilst minority or regional stations demonstrate – or perhaps create – “proliferación, sobreposición e hibridación de los espacios de comunicación” (Risquete 2000: 111), variety in content is not a foregone conclusion. The task of extricating the self (or image of the self) from colonial ‘niches’ and stereotypes is not straightforward. Do we in fact want to be fully extricated? When production companies make material based on or akin to Anglo-American formats, is the indigenous culture being traduced? The pressure to represent a minority group – “oppressive authenticity” (Sissons 2005: 39) – and challenges specific to a culture previously misrepresented on screen are strongly evident in the New Zealand setting. Nic Eoin remarks that minoritised cultures find themselves in a “suíomh ‘idir chultúir’” [intercultural setting], so that their greatest obstacles are an excessive search for roots and/or a definite destination (2005:15). The solution appears to be to embrace the present, imperfect as it is. We must accept mixing and cultural cross-pollination as a means of telling contemporary stories. It is fruitful, although risky, to engage with existing (even if partial or inaccurate) work in the quest to create new indigenous images. The mixing process can be messy, and Wallace refers to the gathering of multiple histories as “a dynamic phenomenon, a juggling act” (Wallace 2007).

Reworking imported programme formats

At the moment, the greatest ‘threat’ to the specificity of local culture appears to be the ubiquity and market strength of American cultural product. This is particularly pressing in English-speaking countries, where the media flow is not delayed by translation, so that the

language of the media influences the language of daily life more than vice versa. Whilst it is the right of media producers to make these images, it is the responsibility of regulators to ensure there is not an absolute monopoly. Through an intelligent use of media, the local can enter into a mature conversation with the global, and draw its own conclusions.

Although primarily anglophone countries do not need to translate the language of American product, they may carry out a cultural translation. This is seen where US formats are reworked in local form, as on MTS where *Pimp My Ride* becomes *Meke My Waka*. The use of an alternative language strengthens this cultural translation. *The West Wing* begets *The Running Mate*. The specificity of Irish political intrigue as opposed to the world-scale issues of the US presidency was presented on this 4-part bilingual comedy drama series on TG4 in 2007 – and proved equally compelling. As Patrick Kavanagh said “Homer ... made the Iliad from such/ A local row. Gods make their own importance” (“Epic”, 1951). We are making our own importance, “ag fí ar dtodhchaí as ár ndúchas” [weaving our future out of our past], in the words of poet Cathal Ó Searcaigh, through interaction, through creative conversation (“Trasnú”, 2001). Often the appropriation of majority culture by a minority takes the form of pastiche – humour is an effective means of vaulting stereotypes.² Local identity is now expressed through a choice of global symbols. This is evident in the work of MC Muipéid, an Irish-language rapper who draws inspiration from the well of American black artists. ‘Glocalisation’ is the term used to describe the local interpretation or reversioning of imported cultural products. (Although often this is a direct homage, sometimes it is ironic. *The Flight of the Conchords* demonstrates the key element which endears this appropriation to the local audience- self-deprecating humour.) Playing with cultural markers such as language, custom and place is a sign that the culture is alive. Tracey McIntosh (2007) regards the reinvention of language by young urban Maori people as proof that they still consider their parents’ culture important. When

2. Such humour is seen in the juxtaposition of *Ros na Rún* and *Nip/Tuck* in TG4 advertising: “Na Drámaí is fearr. The Best Irish and American dramas together ar TG4” (www.tg4.ie).

there is room to change and interact, there is room for possibility. Identity is not a static quality, but needs to be continually remade, using the available cultural tools, even if they appear to be inadequate to the task ...

TG4 and MTS rework traditional images by creating a distinctive brand and ethos which acknowledges the established stations and national discourses, whilst surpassing them.³ In both countries the image of the language – except amongst the people who were involved in using it or working to revitalize it – was generally quite boring. Associated with old ways, irrelevant traditions and difficult grammar and turns of idiom, it presented a rebarbative aspect to the well-intentioned learner. The idea of such a mode of communication being translated to the populist medium of television was anathema to many critics. In the early days, MTS and TG4 had to contend with hostility to the project – the very idea of using as a living language this object of yesteryear and backwardness. In both cases, the stations managed to surprise the critics with ingenuity of visual style and content (Hourihane 2000). The capacity of the language to express non-hegemonic and sometimes racy ideas was a breath of fresh air in the broadcasting landscape in both countries, posing a challenge to existing national stations.⁴ The unexpected, and creative, use of multiple cultural strands is to be celebrated. Neither TG4 nor MTS is set up to be a museum or archive – but a contemporary medium for public entertainment and information which happens to function through a minority language. Bhaba’s comment on the function of tradition in minority group communications is useful to consider when regarding the visually inventive reclamation of culture seen on MTS and TG4:

3. “‘Súil eile’ means to give stories a different slant than would be expected” (Publicis 2008: 5).

4. Russell differentiates the more adventurous image of TG4 from the often conservative RTÉ, “You’d put a TG4 sticker on your car – but you’d never imagine putting on an RTÉ one! People feel it’s part of them, part of Irish identity – not just another station” (2008).

‘The right’ to signify from the periphery of authorised power and privilege does not depend on the persistence of tradition; it is resourced by the power of tradition to be reinscribed through the conditions of contingency and contradictoriness that attend upon the lives of those who are ‘in the minority’ (1994: 2).

The television stations’ emphasis on modernity does not preclude an engagement with tradition – in fact, the rich cultural heritage of their respective languages is drawn upon as an identifying marker in distinguishing MTS and TG4 from other national broadcasters.

On television language is given visual form, becoming an element of branding. This visual form has two aspects – literal visibility (i.e. subtitling, credits, written traces of the language within programmes, and in promos and idents) and metaphoric visibility (i.e. personality of presenters, ‘atmosphere’, style of graphics). This metaphoric aspect conveys to us the image of the language. The image of a language comes from several sources- the status of its speakers, or the group that is associated with the language; the belief in its capacity for use in different social domains (technical, artistic, familial, public); and the value it is seen to have (symbolic, pragmatic). This image is subject to change, often – but not exclusively – in tandem with the decline or persistence of the language itself. Media broadcasters are powerful conduits for language image and influence practice, especially in situations where (as with MTS and TG4) they provide many citizens with their only possibility for a sustained encounter with te reo or Irish as a living language. On screen, the language is not only made visible and audible to a broader range of people, but it is also modified by editorial choices as to presenters, dialect, subtitling and new lexical items. The image of a language on television is the result of a collection of decisions by independent production companies, commissioning editors, marketing teams and the general public, all of whom operate in shared cultural spaces. As TG4 designer Diarmuid Russell has it, “we’re trying to encourage something living ... part of the future as well as our past” (2008).

Analysis of branding on TG4 and MTS

Anderson points out that “[i]t is sometimes difficult to distinguish a text or a visual image from the political act of presuming to speak for, or represent, a group of people” (2003: 44). Viewers are far from passive, and are capable of taking their own meaning from what is seen and heard on screen. They create their own interpretation through context and experience. The analysis which follows here is my interpretation of multi-layered and culturally-resonant texts, and is not exhaustive. Screen images result from the combination of many elements – pictures (framing, angle, juxtaposition) and sound (music, dialect, lexical choice) not to mention the conditions of recording. Duncan Petrie, writing about European Cinema, points to the potential power of such images:

The creation of images is a complex process of making visible, of forcing and audience to look, to question and to reassess the nature of the world around them ... can help us to recognise the complexities of identity, including processes of transformation and change ... a realm of the imaginary where not only are old identities interrogated, deconstructed and in some cases discarded, but new identities, new images and new social possibilities are being created and played out (1992: 3).

In a reading of RTÉ idents, Connolly claims that the imaginative and image-making power of television is centred in its discursive framing, made up of ephemera – “station idents, logos, lead-ins and trailers, as well as other aspects of scheduling, continuity and branding” (Connolly, 2000). Here we examine logo, promo and ident.

Logo



MTS transpose traditional natural symbols into slick modern graphics. The koru

(unfurling fern) is transformed into a central feature of their logo – made orange (the MTS colour – in contrast to both the New Zealand flag (blue, white and red) and the Mana Motuhake Māori flag of black, white and red (sometimes with green). It is no tentative frond, but a squidgy shiny cylinder, like toothpaste squeezed from a tube. The shape and form are traditional, the surface is CGI-new.



TG4 modified its logo in 1999, to reflect its new name – it used to be Teilifís na Gaeilge (TnaG) – maintaining continuity with the G (the central element, standing for the language itself) (Ó Coileáin 2008; Ó Raighne 2008). Seán Cathal Ó Coileáin, creative director at TG4, remarks on the rich resource afforded by old traditions to the design process. “Seanchas/dúchas na tíre mar tobar dúinne mar designers ... iontach tábhachtach go bhfuil tobar dá leithéid again” [old stories/ heritage of the country as a well for us as designers ... extremely important that we have such a pool to draw from] (2008). The MTS logo is given great prominence in promotional idents, as static end shots (of 1-2 seconds duration) rest on the vibrant letters, whereas TG4 (now in its 13th year and more confident of broad audience recognition) can afford to be less obtrusive, using transparency and pale colours. Both logos highlight the central purpose of their station by emphasising a particular letter – MTS revolves around the regeneration and continuity of Māori culture [‘O’], and TG4 puts the Irish language (‘an Ghaeilge’) back into the public sphere [‘G’].

promo

“Being a challenger brand is as much about state of mind as it is about state of market” (Publicis 2008: 9). Indeed, both TG4 and MTS play with their minority image, drawing attention to the limitations they face in order to mock them. In this way, they evade a head-on attack on majority broadcasts in favour of amusing and subtle self-awareness. This self-

deprecatory humour is a central feature of both indigenous cultures, and it is strange that it has not generally been seen on national screens. (Neither TVNZ or RTÉ have been known for their success in homegrown comedy). One illustration of the flexible approach is the TG4 marketing campaign for English language dramas. Here characters from *Ros na Rún* [Irish soap opera] and *Cold Case* [American crime series] met in an interrogation room, where the suspect ‘Daniel’ (as well as the audience) is astounded as his questioners switch to Irish.⁵

Similarly, MTS exploit Anglophone drama in their ads for the sports panel programme *Code*. American drama series set in hospitals (*Grey’s Anatomy*, *ER*) as well as the local *Shortland Street* were broadcast by other New Zealand stations in the same timeslot as the MTS sports round-up. ‘Tired of Wednesday night medical dramas...?’ goes the voice-over, as *Code*’s presenters, dressed in surgical garb, strike ridiculous poses on a hospital set. Another promo for this programme mocked the low budget which made it impossible for the station to show live coverage of the various sporting events discussed on the programme. This shortcoming is turned to the advantage of *Code*, as focus is placed on the intelligent analysis provided by the panellists in an informal environment.

ident

Station idents are a shorthand means of ascertaining the ethos of the station. In these 10-second sequences (bookending commercial breaks), an atmosphere is evoked, through visual and audio cues.⁶ Usually there are no words spoken. This is significant. We create an image of a language by not using it – by stepping back or by entering into it – and going beyond or beneath/below the level of words.

5. In fact, John Finn, the second-generation Irish-American actor in *Cold Case* who features in this promo, had spent summer holidays in Oideas Gael learning Irish to reconnect with his roots (Ó Raighne, 2008).

6. Idents are short (5- to 10-second) sequences used on screen before and after advertising breaks. They often represent, or provide an insight into the ethos of the television station. Sometimes they are used in conjunction with a voice-over to announce forthcoming programmes.

The traditional analytic categories of *mise en scène* and cinematography are used to examine a selection of 2008 idents from each station. Visual grammar depends on codes and practices to create meaning, as “apparently trivial technical features of media such as camera angles, editing, and the pace with which information is presented are actually part of the content” (Riggins 1992: 287). From *mise en scène* and cinematography, meaning can be extrapolated. The connotations are culture-specific. Whilst the aesthetic choices made by the creative teams at MTS and TG4 are not identical, they are comparable in their use of traditional images and customs in creating a brand image for their respective stations. Even though the idents are computer-generated and therefore both of these elements are in fact virtual (i.e. there is no set, not camera to be set up in a particular corner), the designer makes similar creative decisions to a traditional director. That these are realized through technology as opposed to physical action is immaterial. These idents, or ‘discursive shifters’, link traditional and contemporary reference points, acting, as Connolly has it, as a presenter or a host, allowing the viewer access to “another place and another time” (2003). Camera movement draws us closer to this other world, away from daily ‘reality’.

TG4 idents (These animations may be seen on www.tg4.ie/bearla/crut/ide1.asp)

The TG4 idents evoke a sense of *dúchas* [heritage], mystery and tension. People do not feature in them, partly to avoid viewer fatigue and partly to give space to the imagination. Sound is spare – atmos (naturalistic background sounds to match the picture) and a brief ‘theme’ melody. The camera is stationary, and movement takes place within the frame. This is the visual realisation of the promise made by the station’s tagline for the launch of the Autumn 2008 season ‘Fan go bhfeice tú’ [wait and see]. If the audience remains faithful and watches carefully, they will be rewarded with the sight of unexpected and unusual things.

The two idents discussed here come from a 2008-9 series of six inspired by goddesses of Celtic Ireland. There is an implicit link to the power of the past, conveyed through contemporary digital effects. A constant layer

is the TG4 brand, evoked through a transparent logo on a pale white rectangular background. This logo operates on a separate plane to the rest of the visuals. It hinges open, like a door, towards the viewer, moving from a central position to an angle on the left, where it remains unobtrusively for the duration of the ident. The ‘4’ of TG4 in the logo is square-shaped prominent, reminding us that this is the fourth national channel. At the end of these idents, the TG4 signature flute melody can be heard. Apart from this minor coda (5 notes in quick succession, the last held to fade) and faint atmos, there is no other sound. Usually these idents are used to signify the shift between programme and ads – a fulcrum.

‘**Fuinneog Sí**’ [Fairy Window]⁷ (10 seconds)



Here the shot is head-on, and the action travels from left to right and towards the viewer. We see many old glass panels in the window, with different designs, and degrees of transparency. Outside, beyond the window, is a mackerel sky, bright but cloudy. Either a pale twilight sun or a supernatural light glows behind the ‘4’ of ‘TG4’ logo. Outside are fields and hills, a typical Irish rural landscape, with a miserable little bush to the left. The lines of the window panes and interior surfaces form horizontal and vertical fretwork echoing the 4 of TG4. The only slightly diagonal line in the picture is a vector to the left, in the centre of the ‘4’, which enables us to see the bush more clearly.

7. It should be pointed out that the Sí are not such fairies as are found in Victorian children’s tales—they are a significant Otherworldly force who deserve the respect of mortals. They mingle with the human world at liminal times (twilight, birth/death, Oíche Shamhna [Hallowe’en]) and places (certain hills, rivers).

Inside is a kitchen (or workshop – there is a sign just outside in the upper left corner) where daily objects and tools lie in light and shade. The attention of the viewer is thus divided between the internal, homely place and the external mysterious place. Our gaze, drawn out through the many panes, is distracted by the objects on the windowsill – some transparent, some forming silhouettes – vase, candle, wrought wires, lightbulb. All of these things signify areas of human endeavour, craft and invention.

We cannot see clearly out through the window – the full picture is not available to us. We are trying to see through multiple layers – glass, space, ordinary and natural objects, light. This is the frame for the unexpected action. There is a gentle breeze, and the small bush proves to have been harbouring bright butterflies – or the *Slua Sí* [Fairy Host] – they flutter up and come towards us, accompanied by the TG4 jingle/ signature tune/ melody.

‘Warrior Woman’ (10 seconds)



This shot is also static and head-on. We see four circular washing machine doors in a launderette, echoing the four sections on the TG4 website at the time of broadcast, and a young woman, newspaper in hand, watching the washing go around.⁸ She slouches in a chair with her back to us in the centre foreground – which maintains an air of mystery, as well as avoiding revealing the actor’s face. High in the upper right corner a light flickers, and above the washing machines rest bags and baskets. This is a mundane place, and the colours are grey and wan. Reflections of bicycles and pedestrians passing outside the window/ door

8. This clockwise motion may be a reference to Neolithic spiral symbols, as seen in *Brú na Bóinne/ Newgrange*.

to the right evoke an unremarkable outside urban space. The young woman holds our attention. Wearing jeans, and a red bandana around her short dark hair, she has a tattoo on her bare back. She is almost transparent. But this is not the only signal that she is no ordinary person. Coming from her shoulder blades are metal angular wings, like articulated limbs of an arthropod. As she stands and moves gracefully to open the third door (the number three is auspicious in traditional tales), the wings begin to unfold, revealing many angles and sharp blades. This is a warrior queen.⁹

Here, the juxtaposition of lethal power with quotidian household tasks is less humorous than unsettling. In fact, the series of idents succeeds in holding the viewer’s attention and leading them half-way into the Other World. An atmosphere of respect is created, and even the key melody at the end serves to link the sense of awareness and awakening memories to the offerings of the television station. It is something of a jolt to enter the commercial break after such an experience.

The aesthetic choices of the TG4 designers have resulted in a richly layered space where old and new interact, where boundaries are crossed or become fluid. Great significance is given to the interplay between light and dark. In ‘Warrior Woman’, there is a nod to the power struggle between the human person and larger forces/ the machine (an old motif of legends and an equally relevant extrapolation in an age of technology), and ‘Fuinneog Sí’ entices the viewer to risk going beyond the familiar to an experience with other beings of ambiguous intent. The message of ‘Fuinneog Sí’ is to wait and see, to dare to interact, to be open to the unexpected. The subtext of ‘Warrior Woman’ is that a hybrid of human and otherworldly being may be graceful and self-assured, operating almost unnoticed in a normal environment. Both idents may be read as (re)defining Irish culture, and by extension its televisual advocate TG4, as something paradoxically ineffable yet everyday, something which persists strongly (albeit in unexpected forms) in contemporary circumstances, and something powerful, worthy of closer attention.

9. At no stage is the identity of the goddess made explicit – my guess would be that this might be the Morrigan.

MTS idents

The MTS idents here analysed come from a selection of 2008 promos and idents broadcast on the then four-year-old channel. All present the station logo (its name, with the tagline underneath) as a central feature – indeed, the word ‘Māori’ (of Māori Television) is portrayed as a character or characters. The letters are anthropomorphised into little beings, demonstrating the centrality of this Māoriness to a sense of identity. The ‘o’ of Māori is drawn in the form of a koru [unfurling fern], an ancient symbol of regrowth and new life. By putting this at the centre of the logo, respect is shown for origin and tradition; and by its execution in chunky digital form, its place in contemporary life asserted. In each promo, the koru ‘o’ is the central pivot of the action.

As each ident depicts a character or characters going about various activities (other idents show people fishing,¹⁰ skateboarding or watching television), the sound is generally created to be naturalistic. We hear voices singing or speaking (rarely clearly enough to make out the words), atmos and musical sequences with traditional Māori instruments.¹¹ The sound matches the picture, and is different for each ident. However, it should be pointed out that MTS have another series of (shorter and less entertaining) idents which merely show the station’s name to the accompaniment of a set jingle (lively rhythmic intro, followed by 4 instrumental notes and a choral ending).

The overwhelming mood in the rugby-themed idents is one of pride and strength, whereas the cookery ident appeals to a less serious side. (Providing food and showing hospitality to guests is a central feature of Māori culture, and cookery programmes on MTS (*Kai Time on the Road*, *Pio*) following the food from nature to the table have proved very popular.) This ident, featuring a frying pan, also adverts to current public health fears in New Zealand about the overconsumption by Māori and Pacific Island people of fried foods.

10. This is another culturally important activity and central to the Foreshore and Seabed controversy from 2003 onwards, where Crown and iwi clashed over customary fishing rights and access.

11. See www.carving.co.nz/puoro.html for an overview of these instruments

The virtual settings of these idents strike a balance between daily life and special occasions, implying that te reo Māori is equal to any situation, and equally at home in various locations. The importance of the human being comes across strongly, as the station personifies its image using the word Māori.¹² In this way, MTS claims to represent not only its core target audience, but also humanity in general, as ‘Māori’ means ‘ordinary’. However, although it is not spelt out, in the idents screened so far, there is a strong implication that these amusing orange characters are all male. The position of Māori woman in many iwi [tribes] is strong, and it remains to be seen whether this will be reflected to a greater extent in the animated screen images representing the Māori Television Service.

‘Rugby 1’¹³ (10 seconds)



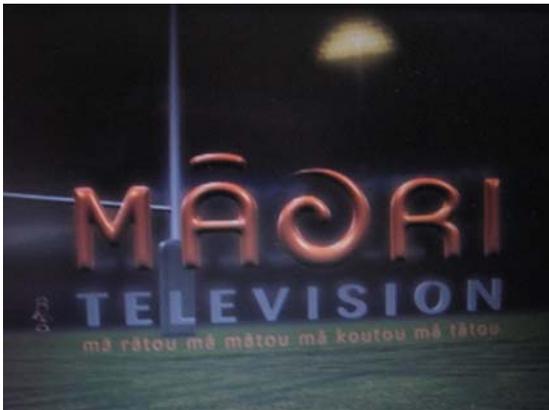
Language is integral to the Māori sense of identity. Here the characters are literally made of their language. The letters of the word ‘Māori’ form rugby players, whose bright orange hue contrasts with the dark ground and paler rose sky. It is sunrise or twilight, a

12. As the Māori proverb (featured prominently on the wall of MTS studios in Auckland) has it, ‘He aha te mea nui o te ao? He tāngata, he tāngata, he tāngata.’ [What is the most important thing in the world? It is people, it is people, it is people.]

13. I did not have access to the actual names of these idents, and so have labelled them myself for the purposes of this paper.

a liminal time, and a time for preparation. The group of players draw strength from each other as they perform a haka facing the camera.¹⁴ The viewer is put in the position of adversary – but also attracted to the group, as the privileged view afforded of their performance allows an insight into the atmosphere of the event. Initially presented with a close up, the camera appears to crab out as the haka begins, revealing the players' formation and strong position in relation to earth and sky¹⁵ (or perhaps staying at a safer distance!). Voices chant the haka, and a traditional instrument is heard, coming to a climax with a deep wind instrument. At the end, the letters fly upwards, reconstituting themselves into one beneath a moving cloudscape. The team is unified – we are all 'Māori' (Television).

'Rugby 2' (10 seconds)



Here the setting is an enormous stadium on a wet night. The sky is ominous, the seating raked at extreme angles, and the ground wet. The koru 'o' is centre-frame, slightly elongated to represent a rugby ball. A lone orange figure (again, made up of the letters 'Māori') runs into shot to take a penalty. Quiet anticipation gives way to a roar of appreciation from the crowd, as the ball goes over the bar to the sound of the referee's whistle, landing squarely in the middle of the waiting logo. With this score, 'Māori

14. The haka is the term for a traditional Māori dance and chant, usually performed when meeting outsiders (as the All Blacks team do at the beginning of international rugby matches). For more information, see www.haka.co.nz/haka.php.

15. In Māori cosmology, earth and sky (Papatuanuku and Rangi) are the original progenitors of all life, and form the context for all human action – which must respect them.

Television' is complete. In New Zealand, rugby is the most popular sport to be played and watched. Many Māori and Pacific Islander people play on the highly-regarded national team. By linking the brand image of Māori Television to the national obsession that is rugby, the creative designers here appeal to the broader nation, as well as firmly insisting on the central position of the Māori force within it.

'Cookery' (5 seconds)



This ident was chosen for its inventive camera angle and movement. It opens with a side-on medium close-up, moving swiftly to a bird's eye view of the chef. The hyper-real sound effects of food frying seem incongruous in the laboratory-white setting. A figure made of orange letters, and wearing a jaunty white chef's hat on the 'R' of its head, is frying the koru 'o' in a pan, flipping it and catching it again. There is a reflection of the character in the shiny 'ground' – a nice use of the possibilities afforded by digital animation – shown from a high angle.

Conclusion

Both MTS and TG4 create engaging idents with animation and digital design to draw the viewer towards the channel. The brand image of both deploys elements from traditional culture and – particularly with MTS – links it to existing representations of the nation. In both cases, the viewer is made strongly aware that this is an alternative channel. These idents are more than simply wallpaper and require interpretative work.¹⁶ TG4 and MTS are aware of the pressure of

16. The MTS idents are open to deeper reading by people more culturally au fait with te ao Māori than this author.

English-language media and choose to tread a different path. They interact with their environment in intelligent and entertaining ways, not hamstrung by tradition, but able to draw from its unique features and combine them with elements from the majority culture. This process of transculturation is visually effected by 'tradigital' graphic hybrids. Cruikshank's metaphor, "the taiaha of new technologies/ used skilfully in brown hands" (2003), sums up the marriage of iconic images and new graphic technology.

The inventive visual approach of MTS and TG4 to elements of their respective traditional cultures bodes well also for the creative treatment of their languages on screen. However, if the use of the language as a means of differentiation from other broadcasters is to be more than a gimmick, the broadcasters must provide further spaces which respect the

features of the language and its speakers which do not lend themselves to Anglo-American forms and formats. Romaine believes that "the main value for many small languages in the future may well be symbolic and cultural rather than practical ... [they will] become primary vehicles for the articulation of identity" (1996: 465), and if this is the case, then the work of MTS and TG4 takes on an even greater importance. Language exists through image, and the minority language proves a new and unexpected context for old images – both from native and imported culture. The idents of TG4 and MTS bear witness to an active intelligence, merging elements from different places and times. This opens a new space for the reconstruction and exploration of identity, for disagreement, for reconsidering, for new life ...
kia ora.

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