

V
2015



STUDI IRLANDESI
A JOURNAL OF IRISH STUDIES

UNIVERSITÀ DEGLI STUDI DI FIRENZE

DIPARTIMENTO DI LINGUE, LETTERATURE E STUDI INTERCULTURALI

BIBLIOTECA DI STUDI DI FILOLOGIA MODERNA: COLLANA, RIVISTE E LABORATORIO

Studi irlandesi.
A Journal of Irish Studies
5

General Editor
Fiorenzo Fantaccini

Journal Manager
Arianna Antonielli

FIRENZE UNIVERSITY PRESS

2015

Studi irlandesi. A Journal of Irish Studies. -
n. 5, 2015
ISSN 2239-3978
ISBN 978-88-6655-791-3 (online)
DOI: <http://dx.doi.org/10.13128/SIJIS-2239-3978-5>

Direttore Responsabile: Beatrice Töttössy
Registrazione al Tribunale di Firenze: N. 5819 del 21/02/2011
CC 2012 Firenze University Press

La rivista è pubblicata on-line ad accesso aperto al seguente
indirizzo: www.fupress.com/bsfm-sijis

The products of the Publishing Committee of Biblioteca di Studi di Filologia Moderna: Collana, Riviste e Laboratorio (<<http://www.lilsu.unifi.it/vp-82-laboratorio-editoriale-open-access-ricerca-formazione-e-produzione-dal-2006.html>>) are published with financial support from the Department of Languages, Literatures and Intercultural Studies of the University of Florence, and in accordance with the agreement, dated February 10th 2009 (updated February 19th 2015), between the Department, the Open Access Publishing Workshop and Firenze University Press. The Workshop promotes the development of OA publishing and its application in teaching and career advice for undergraduates, graduates, and PhD students in the area of foreign languages and literatures, as well as providing training and planning services. The Workshop's publishing team are responsible for the editorial workflow of all the volumes and journals published in the Biblioteca di Studi di Filologia Moderna series. *Sijis* employs the double-blind peer review process. For further information please visit the journal homepage (<www.fupress.com/bsfm-sijis>).

Editing e composizione: Laboratorio editoriale Open Access (<laboa@lilsu.unifi.it>) con A. Antonielli (journal manager) e S. Grassi (review editor), F. Chelucci, E. Fantoni, F. Poggi, V. Roselli. Elaborazione grafica: Journal Manager. Cover idea and design: Marco Vanchetti.

We gratefully record that this issue has been sponsored by Efacis (<www.efacis.org>):



La presente opera è rilasciata nei termini della licenza Creative Commons Attribuzione - Non commerciale - Non opere derivate 3.0 Italia, il cui testo integrale è disponibile alla pagina web: <<http://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-nc-nd/3.0/it/legalcode>>

CC 2015 Firenze University Press
Università degli Studi di Firenze
Firenze University Press
Borgo Albizi, 28, 50122 Firenze, Italy
www.fupress.com

General Editor

Fiorenzo Fantaccini, Università degli Studi di Firenze

Journal Manager

Arianna Antonielli, Università degli Studi di Firenze

Review Editor

Samuele Grassi, Università degli Studi di Firenze

Advisory Board

Donatella Abbate Badin, Università degli Studi di Torino

Rosangela Barone, Istituto Italiano di Cultura, Dublin; Trinity College Dublin

Zied Ben Amor, Université de Sousse

Melita Cataldi, Università degli Studi di Torino

Richard Allen Cave, University of London

Manuela Ceretta, Università degli Studi di Torino

Carla De Petris, Università degli Studi di Roma III

Emma Donoghue, romanziera e storica della letteratura / novelist and literary historian

Brian Friel, drammaturgo / playwright

Giulio Giorello, Università degli Studi di Milano

Rosa Gonzales, Universitat de Barcelona

Klaus P.S. Jochum, Universität Bamberg

Jennifer Johnston, romanziera / novelist

Thomas Kinsella, poeta / poet

W.J. McCormack, Dublin, Ireland

Frank McGuinness, University College Dublin, drammaturgo / playwright

Sylvie Mikowski, Université de Reims Champagne-Ardenne

Rareș Moldovan, Universitatea Babeș-Bolyai, Cluj-Napoca

Eiléan Ní Chuilleanáin, Trinity College Dublin, poeta / poet

Francesca Romana Paci, Università degli Studi del Piemonte Orientale

Donatella Pallotti, Università degli Studi di Firenze

Paola Pugliatti, Università degli Studi di Firenze

Anne Saddlemyer, University of Toronto, Canada

Gino Scatasta, Università degli Studi di Bologna

Hedwig Schwall, Katholieke Universiteit Leuven, Leuven Centre for Irish Studies (LCIS)

Giuseppe Serpillo, Università degli Studi di Sassari

Frank Sewell, University of Ulster, Coleraine

Colin Smythe, Gerrards Cross, editore / publisher

Editorial Board

Andrea Binelli, Università degli Studi di Trento

Gaja Cenciarelli, Roma, scrittrice e traduttrice / novelist and translator

Arianna Gremigni, Università degli Studi di Firenze

Fabio Luppi, Università di Roma III

Concetta Mazzullo, Catania

Riccardo Michelucci, Firenze, storico e giornalista / historian and journalist

Valentina Milli, Università degli Studi di Firenze

Monica Randaccio, Università degli Studi di Trieste

Loredana Salis, Università degli Studi di Sassari

Giovanna Tallone, Milano

Indice / Contents

Ringraziamenti / Acknowledgements 9

From the Frontiers of Writing: Pol/Ir/ish Intertexts edited by Fiorenzo Fantaccini, Luigi Marinelli

<i>Introduction</i> Fiorenzo Fantaccini, Luigi Marinelli	13
<i>The Politics of Comparison: Romance at the Edges of Europe</i> Katarzyna Bartoszyńska	19
<i>The Era of Tadeusz Pawlikowski and Irish Theatre</i> Barry Keane	37
<i>Visions and Revisions: Seamus Heaney, 'Foreign' Poetry, and The Problem of Assimilation</i> Magdalena Kay	49
<i>"Secure the Bastion of Sensation": Seamus Heaney's and Czesław Miłosz's Poetry of the Everyday</i> Tomasz Bilczewski	65
<i>Wicked Female Characters in Roddy Doyle's "The Pram": Revisiting Celtic and Polish Myths in the Context of Twenty-First Century Ireland</i> Burcu Gülüm Tekin	85
<i>Irish Language Teaching in Poland: A Reflection</i> Danielle McCormack	97
<i>Irish-Polish Cultural Interrelations in Practice: Interviews with Chris Binchy, Piotr Czerwiński, Dermot Bolger, and Anna Wolf</i> Joanna Kosmalska, Joanna Rostek	103

Jan Parandowski	131
<i>Jan Parandowski and James Joyce</i>	133
Fiorenzo Fantaccini	
<i>Meeting with Joyce</i>	135
Jan Parandowski	

Miscellanea

<i>Reclaiming the Body and the Spirit in Oscar Wilde's Salomé</i>	145
David Cregan	
Exchange Place by Ciaran Carson or a sense of déjà vu	157
Elisabeth Delattre	
<i>The Politics of Catholic versus Protestant and Understandings of Personal Affairs in Restoration Ireland</i>	171
Danielle McCormack	
<i>The Lie of the Land: Irish Modernism in a Nativist Ireland</i>	183
Shahriyar Mansouri	

Writings

<i>Water and its (Dis)Contents</i>	209
William Wall	

Voices

<i>Mary Dorcey: The Poet's Gaze and Scalpel</i>	225
Maria Micaela Coppola	
<i>Five Poems and a Short Story</i>	237
Mary Dorcey	
Libri ricevuti / Books Received	253
Recensioni / Reviews	255
Autori / Contributors	273

Ringraziamenti / Acknowledgements

Esprimiamo la nostra gratitudine alla University of Washington Press e a Puja Boyd, la Intellectual Property Manager della casa editrice, per aver concesso il permesso di ristampare la testimonianza di Jan Parandowski, apparsa in *Portraits of the Artist in Exile. Recollections of James Joyce by Europeans*, ed. by Willard Potts, © 1979, University of Washington Press; grazie anche a Katie e Geoffrey Potts che hanno acconsentito con entusiasmo a riprodurre la traduzione delle memorie di Parandowski su Joyce ad opera del padre Willard.

Vogliamo ringraziare anche la Cork University Press, Amanda Tuckerand e M.E. Casey per il consenso a pubblicare una versione riveduta del saggio di Katarzyna Bartoszyńska, “The Politics of Comparison: Romance at the Edges of Europe”, apparso nel volume a cura di Amanda Tuckerand, M.E. Casey, *Where Motley is Worn. Transnational Irish Literatures*, Cork, Cork UP, 2014.

Uno speciale ringraziamento a Mary Dorcey per l’intervista rilasciata a Maria Micaela Coppola e a Carla de Petris e per il permesso di tradurre il racconto e le poesie pubblicate nella sezione “Voices”; a Chris Binchy, Dermot Bolger, Piotr Czerwiński e Anna Wolf per aver concesso le interviste condotte da Joanna Rostek e Joanna Kosmalka; a Conci Mazzullo per le foto che illustrano il saggio di William Wall.

La nostra gratitudine va anche al Comitato Scientifico di *Studi irlandesi. A Journal of Irish Studies* per i consigli e gli utili commenti nel corso della produzione di questo quinto numero; agli studenti del LabOA/Laboratorio editoriale Open Access del Dipartimento di Lingue, Letterature e Studi Interculturali dell’Università di Firenze per il loro serio impegno nel corso del workflow editoriale; e ad Arianna Gremigni, Donatella Abbate Badin e Loredana Salis, sempre pronte a offrire il loro sostegno e le loro competenze professionali.

Un grazie di cuore, infine, a John Denton, nostro prezioso consigliere linguistico, e a Marco Vanchetti, nostro grafico d’eccezione.

We would like to express our deep gratitude to University of Washington Press, and Puja Boyd, the publishers’ Intellectual Property Manager, for permission to reproduce the Selection by Jan Parandowski, from *Portraits of the*

Artist in Exile. Recollections of James Joyce by Europeans, ed. by Willard Potts, © 1979, University of Washington Press, and also to Katie and Geoffrey Potts for agreeing to reproduce their father's translation of Parandowski memories of Joyce and for supporting this project.

We would also like to extend our thanks to Cork University Press and to the Amanda Tucker and M.E. Casey for permission to reproduce a revised version of Katarzyna Bartoszyńska's essay "The Politics of Comparison: Romance at the Edges of Europe", previously published in Tucker and Amanda, Casey M.E., eds, *Where Motley is Worn. Transnational Irish Literatures*, Cork, Cork UP, 2014.

Special thanks go to Mary Dorcey for the interview and for granting permission to translate the poems and the story published in the section "Voices", to Chris Binchy, Dermot Bolger, Piotr Czerwiński and Anna Wolf for agreeing to be interviewed by Joanna Rostek and Joanna Kosmalska, and to Conci Mazzullo for the photos illustrating William Wall's essay.

Our gratitude also goes to the Editorial Board of *Studi irlandesi. A Journal of Irish Studies* for their advice and comments during the production of this fifth issue, to the students of the LabOA/Open Access Publishing Workshop of the Department of Languages, Literatures and Intercultural Studies, University of Florence for their valuable cooperation in the editorial workflow; to Arianna Gremigni, Donatella Abbsate Badin and Loredana Salis, who are always ready to offer their support and professional help.

We warmly acknowledge our gratitude to John Denton, our invaluable consultant in linguistic matters, and to Marco Vanchetti our graphic designer 'extraordinaire'.

Fiorenzo Fantaccini, Arianna Antonielli, Samuele Grassi

From the Frontiers of Writing:
Pol/Ir/ish Intertexts

edited by

Fiorenzo Fantaccini, Luigi Marinelli

Introduction

Fiorenzo Fantaccini, Luigi Marinelli

Università degli Studi di Firenze (<fiorenzo.fantaccini@unifi.it>)
Sapienza - Università di Roma (<luigi.marinelli@uniroma1.it>)

The Poles as the Irish of the East.
F. Jameson, "A Businessman in Love" (2006)

The concept of 'identity' and its cultural, political, sociological, artistic and literary corollaries has become essential for a deeper understanding of "minor" cultures (or those considered as such).

In this sense *Irishness* and *Polishness* (*polskość*) are terms with very similar connotations and to some extent they are even interchangeable: Poland can be considered to be a kind of island positioned between the two great Russian and German 'oceans', because often in its history it has suffered 'floods' and 'storms' from both sides. One of the most remarkable differences is that Poland has proudly kept its linguistic identity throughout the ages, whereas Irish culture has been forced to find its expression almost exclusively in the language of the Other. There is no doubt, however, that the Irish linguistic situation, together with its 'dark sides' (of which Brian Friel's *Translations* is a dramatic and powerful manifestation), has produced unpredictable and remarkable outcomes. As a consequence, whereas some of the most outstanding 'English' writers of the last two centuries are in fact 'Irish', even as migrants 'Polish' writers have been able to break down the 'wall' which divided them from their Western counterparts only by accepting the challenge of translation and/or self-translation, or even changing their language (but not their cultural identity), as in the case of Joseph Conrad. Indeed, internal and international migrations are features that the two literary and artistic cultures share.

One of the clear signs of this complex phenomenon is the translation proposed by two great poets and great friends, Stanisław Barańczak and Seamus Heaney, of Jan Kochanowski's *Treny* (*Laments*, 1994), the absolute masterpiece of Renaissance Polish poetry, that the Nobel Laureate Czesław Miłosz (whose role in this tradition of exchanges and literary affinities is pivotal) paradoxically defines as "Bringing a great poet back to life" (Miłosz 1996). Furthermore in his *History of Polish Literature* (1983 [1969]), which was written for an American audience when Miłosz taught Slavic Literatures at Berkeley, the poet-professor, missed no opportunity to highlight analogies

and concordances between Polish and Irish literature, as in the case of the Enlightenment writer Ignacy Krasicki – who is the author of the very first Polish, and Slavonic *tout court*, romance, *Mikotaja Doświadczyńskiego przypadki* (1776, *The Adventures of Mr. Nicholas Wisdom*; cf. Bartoszyńska 2013), whose debt to Jonathan Swift Miłosz deems indisputable. And to the author of *Gulliver's Travels*, the forerunner of all twentieth-century utopias and dystopias, Miłosz would dedicate his poetical letter “Do Jonathana Swifta” (To Jonathan Swift), with which his 1953 collection *Światło dzienne* (Daylight) opens. In this poem the author draws a parallel between his own condition as wandering exile in hostile lands and that of Gulliver himself: “Zwiedziłem ziemie Brobdingnagu / I nie minąłem wysp Laputy. / Poznałem także plemię Jahu, / Co wielbi własne ekskrementy, / Żyjący w niewolniczym strachu / Donosielski ród wyklęty.” (I visited the land of Brobdingnag / and have not missed the Laputa islands. / I also met the Yahoo tribe / crazy about its own excrements / people enslaved by terror, / the cursed race of spies).

In Miłosz's *History of Polish Literature*, Ireland comes to the fore again when he discusses Bolesław Leśmian, one of the greatest poets of the early twentieth century, whose role of creator of myths can be compared to that of William Butler Yeats (349); Miłosz affirms that the two poets, William Butler Yeats and Leśmian, who were born around the same time, coped with the same problem of agnosticism, a subject which could be explored in the future (350). Miłosz also comments on the importance of the first translations from Joyce by Józef Czechowicz, the late-avantgard young poet of the 1930s, along with his translations from Mandel'stam and T.S. Eliot. Clearly, when considering these four authors, we might recall that the influence of Dante can be traced in the works of all of them, and that Dante is a strong presence in both Irish and Polish poetical traditions, especially in the twentieth century: in particular we might reflect on Seamus Heaney's Dantism, absorbed through the peculiar *lecturae Dantis* of Mandel'stam and Miłosz.

Moreover, Czesław Miłosz would devote a whole chapter of his *Ogród nauk* (1979; *Garden of Knowledge*) to Yeats, trying his hand at translating “The Tower”. With reference to the complex issues of identity, affinities and differences between the two literary traditions, Miłosz writes:

Yeats was the poet of that strongly poetical country, Ireland, which is a bit like my Lithuania in this perspective. And Yeats was Irish like Swift and Berkeley the philosopher, like Edmund Burke the well-known patron of the conservatives, like Oscar Wilde and many others: he wrote in English, and even lacked a connection with Celtic culture so drenched in Irish Catholicism, because his family was Protestant and his ancestors were Protestant too. Nevertheless the Irish independentist movement recognized him as its own poetical voice. Analogies end here, because none of us of Lithuanian origin but writing in Polish, will ever be considered a Lithuanian writer. (201)

The political theme of independence is obviously central to the debate about the affinities and reciprocal historical sympathies between the Poles and the Irish. We will recall, on the one hand, Marx and Engels's deep interest in the 'Irish question' and in the 'Polish question' (cf. Franzinetti 2007); on the other hand, it is worth noting that over the last 25 years in both countries a post-colonial approach towards the interpretation of the political and cultural history of the two countries has flourished. Aleksander Fiut, one of the most outstanding Polish scholars who have taken up the cause of post-colonialism, is also the author of a seminal essay on Miłosz, in which he draws a parallel between the life and works of the Polish Nobel Laureate and Swift's Gulliver (Fiut 2014, 17-28).

The contributions collected in this monographic section of *Studi irlandesi. A Journal of Irish Studies* intend to develop this analysis of consonances and affinities. This is only the start of a more extended study that will be published in future issues, but it already serves to highlight the fertility of the cultural relationship between Ireland and Poland.

Magdalena Kay's and Tomasz Bilczewski's contributions focus on Seamus Heaney's relationship with contemporary Polish poetry. Kay's essay considers the unusual position of Irish and Polish cultures and how this situation relates to the construction of lyric subjects that appear unassimilable to dominant postcolonial literary-critical paradigms. Her analysis of the Eastern European influences informing Seamus Heaney's volume *The Haw Lantern* (1987) reveals the cultural pressures brought to bear upon a well-known poet whose work challenges dominant assumptions about the proper idiom of the Anglo-American lyric. Bilczewski's contribution delves into Heaney's intellectual and artistic dialogue with Czesław Miłosz and Polish poetry, situating Heaney's poetics of the everyday in relation to the work of Miłosz. Although Heaney expressed the view that Polish poetry provided a lesson in the poet's ethical responsibility, he also found in it, and precisely in Miłosz's example, a testimony to the amazement experienced at the sight of seemingly insignificant objects and trivial phenomena.

Katarzyna Bartoszyńska offers a comparative reading of the early novel – and the ways in which it has been described – in Polish and Irish literature. Arguing that both traditions 'fail' to develop realism because they cleave uncritically to romance, she examines the generic hybridity of Lady Morgan's *The Wild Irish Girl* (1809) and Maria Wirtemberska's *Malwina, czyli domyślność serca* (1816; *Malvina, or the Heart's Intuition*). Reading Polish and Irish literature alongside each other allows us to see that neither is the anomaly it is often taken to be in literary criticism. This approach also invites reflection on the issue of how we make sense of the relationship between literary works and the socio-political contexts they emerge from.

Two contributions explore the topic of the ways in which Ireland's multicultural phenomenon has deeply influenced the country's literary scene.

Roddy Doyle comes to the fore among contemporary Irish writers dealing with these issues. Doyle has published short stories about race in *Metro Éireann*, an online multicultural weekly newspaper. Burcu Gülüm Tekin's essay examines Doyle's story "The Pram" (from *The Deportees and Other Stories*, 2007), which is set in the context of multicultural twenty-first century Dublin, and which investigates the negative attitude towards migrants in Ireland. The story contains various references to Celtic and Polish mythological female figures (in particular, the Old Hag of Beara and Boginka), and draws parallels between them and the protagonist Alina, a Polish migrant; so depicting both the obstacles that a female outsider may experience in Ireland and the subsequent transformation she undergoes as a result of the racism she encounters there.

The interviews with practitioners of Polish-Irish intercultural relations conducted by Joanna Kosmalska and Joanna Rostek, give voice to two Ireland-based Poles and two Irishmen who, in different ways, have reacted to and represented the new Polish presence in Ireland: Chris Binchy and Piotr Czerwiński have focused on the experiences of Polish labour migrants in Dublin in their respective novels *Open-handed* (2008) and *Przebiegum życia* (2009); Dermot Bolger has explored, *inter alia*, the historical parallels between Polish and Irish histories of migration in his play *The Townlands of Brazil* (2006); Anna Wolf recounts her experiences as the artistic director and producer of the Dublin-based Polish Theatre Ireland (PTI).

In his essay, Barry Keane discusses the work of Tadeusz Pawlikowski, arguably Poland's greatest theatre director of the *fin de siècle*, who brought many western plays to partitioned Poland; he assesses both Tadeusz Pawlikowski's contribution to Irish theatre and the reception and legacy of his productions of plays by Oscar Wilde, George Bernard Shaw and John Millington Synge, which were staged in Cracow and Lwów. By means of a detailed analysis of contemporary reviews and reports, Keane shows how there was a growing conviction amongst Polish critics that Irish dramatists would soon make an impressive impact on the culture of the age.

Danielle McCormack's essay reflects on the significance of Irish language teaching outside of Ireland and the challenges which Irish teachers face abroad. With a focus on the significance of Irish teaching in Poland, she opens up debate about the proper contextualization of Irish language programmes within Irish Studies courses, making recommendations about future directions for Irish language teaching outside Ireland and suggesting that a professional network is established for Irish teachers.

Our journey across/from the 'frontiers of writings' concludes with the reprint of an interesting account of the meeting between Jan Parandowski and James Joyce that took place in Paris in 1937. The importance of Parandowski's recollections lie in the subject of their conversation: the structure of the *Odyssey* and its complex relationship with *Ulysses*. The final part is most-

ly about the *Work in Progress* Joyce was trying to complete at the time, and shows that Joyce feared “a catastrophe”, a failure of all his efforts “to liberate” all languages from their “servile, contemptible role”; Paradowski shared Joyce’s doubts, and considered *Work in Progress* only “a genial caprice” (141).

We cannot but agree with Magdalena Kay when she remarks on the “necessity of comparatism across the margins of Europe [which] remains powerful and potentially inspirational” (62). The eight contributions included in this collection make a strong case for this viewpoint; they also suggest that margins can be disrupted and become a new throbbing inclusive ‘centre’, opening new perspectives and posing new questions.

Works Cited

- Bartoszyńska Katarzyna (2013), “Persuasive Ironies: Utopian Readings of Swift and Krasicki”, *Comparative Literature Studies*, 50, 4, 2013, 618-642.
- Fiut Aleksander (2014), “Guliwer XX wieku” (A 20th-Century Gulliver), in Tomasz Bilczewski, Luigi Marinelli, Monika Woźniak (eds), *Rodzinny świat Czesława Miłosza* (The Domestic World of Czesław Miłosz), Kraków, WUJ, 17-28.
- Franzineti Guido (2007), “Irish and Eastern European Questions”, in Sabine Rutar (ed.), *Beyond the Balkans: Towards and Inclusive History of Southeastern Europe*, Zurich-Berlin-Frankfurt, Lit Verlag, 67-96.
- Kochanowski Jan (1994), *Laments*, trans. by Seamus Heaney and Stanisław Barańczak, London, Faber.
- Krasicky Ignacy (1776), *Mikołaja Doświadczynskiego przypadki* (The Adventures of Mr. Nicholas Wisdom), Michał Gröll, Warszawa.
- Miłosz Czesław (1953), *Światło dzienne* (Daylight), Paryż, Instytut Literacki.
- (1979), *Ogród nauk* (The Garden of Knowledge), Paryż, Kultura.
- (1983 [1969]), *History of Polish Literature*, Berkeley-Los Angeles, University of California Press.
- (1996), “Bringing a Great Poet Back to Life”, *The New York Review of Books*, 15 February, <<http://www.nybooks.com/articles/archives/1996/feb/15/bringing-a-great-poet-back-to-life/>> (06/2015).

The Politics of Comparison: Romance at the Edges of Europe*

Katarzyna Bartoszyńska

Monmouth College (<katarzyna.bartoszynska@gmail.com>)

Abstract:

This piece offers a comparative reading of the early novel – and the ways in which it has been described – in Polish and Irish literature. Contesting accounts that both traditions ‘fail’ to develop realism because they cleave uncritically to romance, it examines the generic hybridity of Lady Morgan’s *The Wild Irish Girl* and Maria Wirtemberska’s *Malwina, czyli domyślność serca* (*Malwina, or the Heart’s Intuition*). Reading Polish and Irish literature alongside each other allows us to see that neither is the anomaly it often appears to be in literary criticism. It also re-opens the questions of how we make sense of the relationship between literary works and the socio-political contexts they emerge from.

Keywords: comparative studies, Ireland, novel, Poland, romance

Irish Studies has long had an implicitly comparative dimension, often seeing its cultural output in relation to, and in terms set by, that of its nearest neighbour, Great Britain. Recent years have seen an increased interest in different forms of comparison; in examining Irish writing alongside that of other cultures, be they other colonies, other islands, or other predominantly Catholic nations. New geographical coordinates have the potential to highlight aspects of the tradition that have heretofore received less attention. In particular, Poland has emerged as a fruitful point of comparison, perhaps inspired in part by the massive influx of Polish immigrants to Ireland in the Celtic Tiger years. Poland has a similar status as a largely Catholic, agrarian European nation that suffered intense historical trauma in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, and recovered independence after the First World War.

* An earlier version of this essay appeared in Tucker, Casey (eds), 2014, 141-157. My warmest thanks to the editors of the volume and to Cork UP for the permission to reprint it here.

There are also distinct resemblances between the literary trajectories of the two countries as well: strong traditions of poetry and national theatre, for instance, and an explosion of post/modernist fiction in the twentieth century.

This piece approaches the Poland-Ireland comparison from a somewhat atypical angle, taking as a starting point a feature that is often considered to be a flaw in both traditions: their lack of realist fiction in the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries. I focus specifically on the early novel, examining how a comparison between the literary works of both places illuminates the ways in which their reception has linked aesthetic form to historical circumstances. In particular, I examine the romantic elements of nineteenth-century novels from Poland and Ireland, and critical responses to them. Simultaneously, I consider how such a comparison is constructed; both its benefits, and the assumptions that ground it, as a way of questioning the nature of comparative studies and how they function in practice. Although a comparison between Poland and Ireland serves to contest the apparent anomalousness of certain features of the nineteenth-century Irish novel (particularly its apparent inability to produce realist works), it also risks reinforcing the sense of these traditions as peripheral in damaging ways.

Irish literary criticism has a long-standing sense of shame or inadequacy about the nineteenth-century Irish novel. As Joe Cleary writes, “Studies of the nineteenth century Irish novel have long been conditioned by the search for the Irish *Middlemarch* and by the attempt to explain why there is not one” (2007, 48). David Lloyd clarifies that this is not simply a sense of inadequacy in comparison with England – it is not only that Irish literature produced no *Middlemarch*, he writes, “it also produced no *Père Goriot* or *Sentimental Education*, no *Effi Briest*, no *Moby Dick*, no *War and Peace*, *Crime and Punishment* or *Fathers and Sons*” (2005, 230). The implied criticism is clear: Irish literature contains no masterpieces of realism, which is considered to be the most important trend of nineteenth-century writing.

The idea that realism is a natural or obvious outgrowth of any novelistic tradition is not unique to Irish critics; it is a notion arguably as old as the novel itself. Alongside the development of modern prose fiction, we find the rise of a literary criticism that trumpets the view that the novel is a genre that emerges out of the death of the comparatively more crude and simplistic romance¹. There is a political dimension to these arguments. Socio-historical accounts of the novel’s development have linked the rise of realism to the emergence of a strong (Protestant) middle class and the emergence of capitalism². Moreover, in the early nineteenth century, romance was not only considered an older form of writing; it also developed a strong association with

¹ For a wealth of eighteenth-century examples of this kind of argument, see Nixon 2009.

² The standard version of this account is to be found in Watt 1957.

the exotic and the pre-modern. Writing in 1824, for instance, Walter Scott explained that a romance was:

‘a fictitious narrative in prose or verse; the interest of which turns upon marvelous and uncommon incidents;’ being thus opposed to the kindred form of the *Novel*, which [...] we would rather define as ‘a fictitious narrative, differing from the romance, because the events are accommodated to the ordinary train of human events, and the modern state of society’. (in Leerssen 1997, 39)

Realistic fiction is not only associated with everyday occurrences in such an account, but also with modern society, thus implicitly aligning the romantic or marvelous with less developed cultures.

This view persists, to a surprising extent, even today, as recent critiques by Nicholas Paige and Srinivas Aravamudan make clear (Paige 2011; Aravamudan 2012). In “The Rise of Fictionality”, Catherine Gallagher writes that “[p]lausible stories are thus the real test for the progress of fictional sophistication in a culture” (2006, 339), and ponders “what it was about early modernity in the first capitalist nation that propagated not just *realist* fiction but *realist fiction*” (245). There is a problematic slippage in such accounts, from a correlation between the development of capitalist society and that of the realist novel (and an understandable interest in the dynamics underlying such a correlation), to a sense that realist fiction is a sign that a given culture has achieved ‘sophistication’. This paradigm has implications for theories of the novel’s developments in ‘minor’ or ‘peripheral’ European traditions as well. In Franco Moretti’s “Conjectures on World Literature” (2013), for instance, we find an account of realist fiction developing in the ‘centre’ and being imported, with difficulty, into the ‘periphery’. Though it is accurate to note that realism became the dominant mode of fiction in many places during the nineteenth century, the sense of an opposition between the ‘romantic’ and the ‘novelistic’ is overstated³, and often has a dangerously teleological slant that dismisses ‘romance’ as a crude and outmoded form of writing.

In his classic *Remembrance and the Imagination*, Joep Leerssen explores the romance-realism dichotomy and its applications to Irish fiction, noting that “the early novel in Ireland appears uncomfortably hybrid if viewed against the background of this genre distinction” (1997, 39). The problem, he argues, is that what is specifically Irish about nineteenth-century Ireland is increasingly seen as its picturesque but antiquated Gaelic roots: the more

³ Margaret Cohen (1999) has compellingly demonstrated the way that many writers who were considered forefathers of realism continued to rely on strategies associated with romance, even as they seemed to distance themselves from them. Michael McKeon (2002) also describes the continual links between romance and the novel. Sarah Tindal Kareem’s (2014) recent book also does much to destabilize this dichotomy.

modern, cosmopolitan side is essentially indistinguishable from England. In other words, to write an 'Irish' novel in the nineteenth century would have required utilizing archaic materials, which are fundamentally incompatible with the conventions of the novel, be it realistic or historical, as a form, thus making the 'Irish novel' as such impossible.

This is a fairly typical account of nineteenth-century Irish writing. Ireland, it is suggested, presents a unique problem for novelists, because its particularities are only appropriate for romance, and cannot be accommodated in the realist mode⁴. The result is that authors are forced to compromise between the two, producing bizarre, unbalanced texts. Thus, for example, Leerssen writes that Lady Morgan "found herself unable to write a historical or realistic novel, and her failure becomes paradigmatic for the century as a whole" (1997, 51). Considered from a perspective that sees the development of the novel as tending towards realism, these novels are perceived as flawed, struggling to strike an impossible balance, and this problem is generalized to encompass the majority of nineteenth-century Irish writing. As Jacqueline Belanger and James Murphy have both pointed out, however, the blame for this is perhaps more rightly attributed to critics who will not consider a novel 'Irish' unless it explicitly announces itself as such, precisely by including these kinds of archaic materials⁵.

This is where a comparative perspective is of clear value, as a way of questioning assumptions about what constitutes 'Irish' material, as well as teleologies of the novel's rise. Accordingly, in an effort to ameliorate this image of a failed nineteenth-century tradition, Joe Cleary suggests that the problem is that Irish writing is typically read in relation to that of its nearest neighbour, Britain, and that it might instead be more fruitful to compare it to other "colonial and agrarian peripheries, such as South America or Eastern Europe, which may in fact offer closer parallels to the Irish situation" (2007, 58). Cleary suggests that Irish fiction will appear less anomalous when compared to that of places with similar historical experiences, with the result that the works of its authors will come to seem more typical

⁴ One sees a similar idea in Terry Eagleton's account of the Anglo-Irish novel: "[t]he realist novel is the form *par excellence* of settlement and stability, gathering individual lives into an integrated whole; and social conditions in Ireland hardly lent themselves to any such sanguine reconciliation" (1995, 147).

⁵ Murphy focuses specifically on scholarship pertaining to later nineteenth-century works, writing that "It is as if novels which do not overtly deal with Irish identity must be read as dealing with it in a covert fashion or not read at all. The approach betrays a secret anxiety about Irish fiction written during the Victorian age, that much of it was not truly Irish at all, but merely the product of an assimilation to British culture" (2011, 5). Jacqueline Belanger points out that works that *do* fit the criteria of realism are dismissed as "English" (2005, 15).

of their time period, and therefore, more respectable. Indeed, in a recent essay on comparative history, Peter Baldwin suggests that this is precisely the benefit that comparative studies can offer. “Comparative history”, he writes, “serves primarily to separate the important from the incidental and thus to point the way towards causal explanations” (2004, 18). By examining two environments with distinct similarities, he suggests, we are better able to track which events play a meaningful causal role by determining whether they produced the same effects in both.

Polish literature indeed proves itself a rich site of comparison with Irish writing, particularly in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. It offers a similar trajectory of Romantic nationalism with a martyrological bent, a tradition of the poet as national bard, an impressively robust national theatre, and a notable lack of realist masterpieces⁶. In fact, comparisons between Poland and Ireland were apparently a commonplace in the nineteenth century, as Ireland struggled against Great Britain, and the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth experienced Partition at the hands of the Prussian, Russian, and Austrian Empires (Murphy 2011, 1-2; Earls 2008). Looking more closely at early works of the novelistic tradition in both places allows us to examine and evaluate some of these critical claims about the links between culture and history with greater specificity. We indeed find similar patterns of representation, but the comparative perspective allows us to reassess their broader function and how they fit into larger claims about the development of the novel in both places.

In what follows, I look at two early works from the Irish and Polish novelistic traditions, Lady Morgan’s *The Wild Irish Girl* and Maria Wirtemberska’s *Malwina, czyli domysłność serca* (*Malvina, or the Heart’s Intuition*), considering how we make sense of the similarities between them. On a superficial level, the resemblances between these novels seem to support the view that political struggles generate generic hybridity and render straightforward realism impossible, but a closer look reveals that such accounts rely on anachronistic assumptions about the status of romance. What is more, they have a tendency to collapse different aspects of the works into one large cluster rather than considering them separately, conflating very different narrative concerns into an undifferentiated collection of features seemingly opposed to realism. A perspective that privileges realism has a tendency to see anything outside its confines as aberrational or irrelevant: it does not ask what purpose these features serve. As the realism-focused storyline of the novel’s development

⁶ The strongest candidate, Bolesław Prus’ *Lalka* (*The Doll*, 1890) does not fit uncontroversially into the category of realism. Fredric Jameson, in an essay that opens with a reference to “the heroic stereotype of the Poles as the Irish of the East”, argues that historical conditions leave a void in the text, “an open wound left by Poland’s subalternity” (2006, 436, 439).

gradually gives way, however, new perspectives on early nineteenth-century texts open up, allowing for a re-evaluation of their complexity, and a more nuanced sense of what they seek to do.

The Wild Irish Girl by Lady Morgan (Sydney Owenson) is emblematic of the kinds of problems that Leerssen perceives in nineteenth-century fiction. In his words, “*The Wild Irish Girl* is a very uneasy blend of fictional narrative and referential discourse” (1997, 55). The novel’s plot appears to be a rather convoluted process of uniting its lovers. Horatio, the hero, is a somewhat dissipated young man who is sent to Ireland by his father, with the hope that this temporary banishment will cure him of his indolence. Aware that his family’s land was won in the Cromwellian wars, he learns that the former owners, an old Prince and his daughter, Glorvina, are still alive and living nearby. Spying on them one night, he is so mesmerized by Glorvina’s singing that he falls from his hiding place and loses consciousness. He awakens in their castle, and is nursed back to health by Glorvina herself. Aware that he would hardly be welcomed if they knew his true identity, he pretends to be an itinerant artist named Henry Mortimer. During his convalescence, he gradually falls in love with Glorvina, and the novel ends with their marriage, preceded by the revelation of his true identity, and the death of her father. Thus, it appears to be a somewhat ‘stock’ and occasionally overwrought love story, resolved in a cross-cultural marriage meant to symbolize the reconciliation of Britain and Ireland.

But the novel also has an extensive didactic element, which contributes to the sense of generic hybridity of the whole. The process of courtship is simultaneously one of education, for Horatio must not only learn to love Glorvina, he must also shed his prejudices about Ireland. During his recovery, he (and in the process, the reader) receives many lengthy lectures on Irish history and culture, which serve to correct his sense of it as a wild and barbaric place by detailing its venerable ancient roots. This educational element is bolstered by a massive array of footnotes that serves to document, or simply reaffirm, the claims of these lectures for the potentially sceptical reader. This paratext is so extensive, however, as to create the sense of an independent work alongside the main story. Thus, for instance, when the Priest complains that “in [England] it is usual to attach to that class of society in [Ireland] a ferocious disposition amounting to barbarity; but this, with other calumnies, of national indolence, and obstinate ignorance, of want of principle, and want of faith, is unfounded and illiberal”, the reader is immediately directed to a lengthy footnote:

When nature is wounded through all her dearest ties, she must turn on the hand that stabs, and endeavor to wrest the poignard from the grasp that aims at the lifepulse of her heart. And this she will do in obedience to that immutable law, which blends the instinct of self-preservation with every atom of human existence.

And for this, in less felicitous times, when oppression and sedition succeeded alternately to each other, was the name of Irishman, blended with the horrible epithet of cruel. (Owenson 1855, 81-82)

The footnote continues on for nearly an entire page, discussing Wexford, and arguing that the violence committed there can actually be attributed to the fact that the area was so thoroughly colonized by the British that all contact with Irish culture was lost. It is the British, in other words, who are barbaric and cruel, not the Irish. But this is a message for the reader alone: Horatio, it seems, can be persuaded by simple assertions, whereas Lady Morgan must supplement the Priest's arguments in order to reach a broader audience.

The extended nature of these kinds of footnotes is why a critic such as Leerssen sees the novel as unbalanced and flawed. Ina Ferris has argued that the effect is intentional, serving precisely to disrupt the standard form of the Irish tour common to British fiction of the time. In her reading, the footnotes create "a dynamic of contestation" (2002, 52), destabilizing any sense of a single authoritative perspective. Thus, what one critic sees as a failing, another perceives as an intentional technique serving a specific purpose; not an inability to conform, but a wilful decision not to.

For Leerssen, what is most worthwhile about the book are its more 'realistic' elements, the detailing of Irish life and culture. These are often found in the less polemical footnotes, such as one that explains a casual aside of Glorvina's with a fuller account of the tradition she makes reference to:

On St. Bridget's day it is usual for the young people to make a long girdle rope of straw, which they carry about to the neighbouring houses, and through it all those persons who have faith in the charm pass nine times, uttering at each time a certain form of prayer in Irish, which they thus conclude: "If I enter this thrice-blessed girdle well, may I come out of it nine times better". (Owenson 1855 [1806], 89)

This is the sort of description that one might think ought to be integrated into the text as part of its tapestry of daily life, but that, in Leerssen's view, is the kind of detail pushed out by the attachment to the romantic mode, which seemingly cannot accommodate it. The romance is mere distraction, an archaic throwback to an older form of writing. "But in the midst of all this passion", he writes, "there is also a discursive element which offers observations on Irish life and antiquity, matters of curiosity and political relevance. These discursive digressions from the fictional storyline obviously represent the novel's real interest" (1997, 55). The obviousness here is highly questionable: if it were indeed the novel's 'real' interest, why include the romance plot at all?

For Ina Ferris, the lover's plot matters because of the way it serves to articulate and explore a set of political issues, "mobilizing the old romance trope of encounter on behalf of very contemporary and civic concerns" (2002, 51).

Claire Connolly offers a similar account, noting, for instance, that “a scene that seems to enact a retreat from reality into the modes of clichéd sentimental fiction [...] is also the occasion of an explicit mention of the recent history of the 1798 rebellion” (2011, 96). In other words, these critics argue that the romantic elements of the plot are not ‘mere’ sentiment, but are doing complex work in the text, serving to encode political meanings and historical problems⁷.

While such readings are compelling and persuasive, it should be noted that they also play into a sense that romance is a form that requires validation, implicitly suggesting that it is of worth or interest primarily as an allegory of something else that is of greater importance. Rarely do we find a critical account willing to argue that romance is, quite simply, a worthwhile form that readers enjoyed, or a mode with aesthetic strengths and pleasures of its own. In other words, we remain within the orbit of a perspective that concedes a realist teleology to the novel, overlooking the persistence of romantic tropes even into the present day. This is where a more global perspective can be of service. Becoming aware of romance’s strong hold on literary traditions all over the world helps to normalize it, and question the disparaging treatment it receives in many critical histories. Rather than being the product of a specifically Irish nostalgia, we see it as a more widespread form, and one that was considered not only valid, but even noble.

In her opening to *Malwina, czyli domyślność serca* (1816 [1815]; *Malwina, or the Heart’s Intuition*), Polish author Maria Wirtemberska makes an explicit claim about the merits of romance as a form, arguing that it is an effective way to convey moral lessons. Although she acknowledges that “wiele innych gatunków pism byłyby nad romans użyteczniejszymi” (“many other literary genres might be more socially useful”), she asserts that the lessons found “pod pokrywką zabawy” (“beneath the mantle of entertainment”) of romantic works “więcej nieraz przekonywają niżeli suche morały, obnażone z pojęć ciekawość wzbudzających, a do czytania których mało kto się nawet porywa” (1816, 3; “often do more to persuade than do dry moral precepts, stripped bare of the allurements that arouse curiosity and which few feel inspired even to read”, trans. by Phillips 2001, 3). That romances are entertaining and enjoyable to readers is taken for granted: Wirtemberska feels the need to defend only their potential social benefits.

Indeed, this way of framing the romance-novel (or romantic-realistic) divide is far more in keeping with the critical debates of the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries. The problem with romances was less that they were unsophisticated than that they were potentially damaging, deluding

⁷ Elsewhere I have also discussed the tensions inherent in the novel’s seemingly simplistic efforts to resolve cross-cultural tensions with a marriage plot. See Bartoszyńska 2013.

their readers by presenting unreal situations. In her defence of the romance form, *The Progress of Romance* (1785), Clara Reeve acknowledged that they had a clear potential for harm, and that “if read indiscriminately they are at best unprofitable, frequently productive of absurdities in manners and sentiments, sometimes hurtful to good morals”, but also argued that the best examples were “truly respectable, works of genius, taste, and utility, capable of improving the manners and morals of mankind” (Reeve 1930 [1785], 7). This should remind us that aesthetic standards are historically contingent and mutable. What is at stake for these authors is demonstrating the social benefits of romance, rather than its sophistication. This realization changes the way we conceptualize the complex negotiations of these works. It suggests that what appears to be an effort to find a way to integrate details of everyday life is part of a different dynamic entirely, namely, an effort to show that prose fiction can be morally beneficial, rather than mere light entertainment. Thus, for instance, footnotes documenting the text’s claims can be seen, not as providing otherwise absent realistic detail, but as reiterating its assertions in a non-fictional mode, or anchoring the descriptions in a more established and reputable discourse. This dilemma was not limited to romance, but was a concern for authors of fiction more broadly. In other words, it was not specific claims about Ireland or Poland that required validation *per se*, but fiction itself. Realism was not necessarily equated with moral edification; as Wirtemberska’s quote demonstrates, there was a competing sense that romance could potentially be *more* effective in conveying moral lessons than more realistic works.

Indeed, it is clear from Wirtemberska’s writing that romance is in no way considered an archaic or outmoded form detached from everyday life, but a wholly respectable and even admirable mode of writing. *Malwina* opens with a Dedicatory Preface from the author in which she writes that the book “przypomni, że nie ma tego rodzaju pisma, do którego język polski nie byłby zdolnym” (1816, 3; “may serve to remind readers, as they leaf through these several pages, that there is no genre of writing of which the Polish language might not be capable”, trans. by Phillips 2001, 3). She also explains that whereas earlier romantic works attested to the mores of their own time, *Malwina* would be the first to portray the society of the present day, thus destabilizing the apparent pre/modern dichotomy between the romantic and the novelistic: although romances depicted earlier times, this does not mean they are unable to portray the present effectively. The novel offers the very sort of hybridity that is criticized by Leerssen in his account of nineteenth-century Irish writing, combining a somewhat far-fetched romantic story with lengthy digressions written in a more realistic vein. Examining the specific form of this hybridity helps us rethink assumptions made about nineteenth-century Irish writing as well, particularly the ways in which we make sense of how the different aspects of the texts work together.

Malwina is a love story complicated by a somewhat bizarre plot of mistaken identity, which is resolved by the discovery that what had appeared to be one highly erratic man is in fact two; twin brothers who were separated in their youth when one was kidnapped by gypsies. Unlike *The Wild Irish Girl*, the romance does not serve as a political allegory, but neither is it entirely gratuitous. The vagaries of the plot are underpinned by a broader philosophical question; that of the ‘knowledge of the heart’, or the nature of love. Malwina is perplexed by the apparent inconstancy of her lover, and her own shifting feelings towards him. The circuitous plot of misplaced twins not only provides intrigue, it also accounts for why her love for one man is apparently mutable, ultimately demonstrating that “serce się nigdy nie omyła” (Wirtemberska 1816, 143; “the heart never errs”, trans. by Phillips 2001, 191). Here too, in other words, the romantic elements of the plot are being mobilized towards a more complex philosophical inquiry, not unlike the kinds of deliberations found in *The Princess of Clèves*, *The Man of Feeling*, *The Sorrows of Young Werther*, and other works of the Sentimental tradition that examine the status of emotion and the dilemmas of the heart.

At the same time, the narrator does not uncritically accept tropes from romance writing. For instance, she critiques the trope of the supposedly fated chance encounters of lovers, explaining that it is in fact unsurprising that two people who are thinking of each other may be drawn to the same locations (Wirtemberska 1816, 28; trans. by Phillips 2001, 36). At other moments, the narrator is winking obtuse, pretending to be blind to the attraction the characters feel for each other: “Wtem dochodzili do batu, i na te jego słowa Malwina mimowolnie chwyciła go za rękę, jak żeby się bała, że ją chce porzucić. Ale to zapewne z przezorności było, żeby w wodę nie wpaść; ja przynajmniej tak rozumiem” (25; “They were just getting into the boat, but at these words Malwina involuntarily seized Ludomir’s hand as if afraid he was about to forsake her. But this was no doubt merely from caution, lest she fall into the water; at least that is how I understand it”, 33). Narratorial intrusions regularly question the story, debating whether Malwina has fallen in love, or requesting the reader’s indulgence for what appear to be her flaws. Often, this is prefaced with the claim that Malwina is *not* a romance heroine, but a real person. Indeed, at the most bizarre moments in the story, the ones that seem most obviously indebted to the whimsical turns of romantic fiction, we often find a comment from Malwina’s aunt, who is confused because she has never heard of such things happening in the romances she has read. In other words, the novel simultaneously revels in romance and its inherent appeal, and shows itself aware of its shortcomings or indulgences (and gently pokes fun at its fans). Using a curiously ironic narrative voice that balances precariously between satire and sentiment, Wirtemberska manages to have it both ways. But she finds a way to do so while keeping a plotline that is thoroughly romantic in nature.

Though less extensive than what we see in *The Wild Irish Girl*, *Malwina* also offers glimpses of nineteenth-century Polish life, some of which are detailed enough to seem tangential to the narrative. For example, when Malwina goes from house to house collecting money for charity, we are given surprisingly protracted accounts of the various homes she visits, which are clearly meant to offer a cross-section of society. Even more noticeable is a lengthy aside about the specificities of the Polish war-time experience:

Och, nie takie u nas wojny bywają jak po innych krajach, gdzie woła jednego mocarza wysyła w dalekie okolice płatne rotę swoje, ażeby małą, a najczęściej niepotrzebną część kraju jakiego nabyły [...] U nas wojsko z ojców, braci, synów, kochanków, przyjaciół złożone, bije się blisko nas, pod naszymi oczyma, bije się o swoją własność, o swoje schronienie, za żony, dzieci, prawa, język i byt swój! (Wirtemberska 1816, 105)

Oh, our wars were not like those of other countries, where the will of one powerful ruler might pack off his mercenaries to distant outposts in order to acquire some tiny, and often quite unnecessary, share of some other country [...] with us the army consists of our own fathers, brothers, sons, lover, friends. They fight close to home, before our very eyes. They fight for their own property, for their own place of refuge, for their own wives, children, rights, language, for their very existence! (Trans. by Phillips 2001, 140)

Though this type of detail in Irish fiction is seen as evidence that the books are written with an English readership in mind, Wirtemberska repeatedly makes clear that she is writing for Polish readers. Indeed, she even notes that some of her descriptions are therefore superfluous: “Ale na cóż mam tu powtarzać rozmowę, którą czytelnik łatwo sobie wystawi będąc Polakiem” (109; “But what is the sense of repeating a conversation which the Reader, being Polish, may easily imagine”, 144). This pushes back against the sense that the ethnographic detail in Irish writing is always auto-exotic or insistently portraying the home as Other. The detail here is not fraught with the baggage of self-commodification for a foreign audience, but rather, comes across as the author dilating on matters close to her heart, and fostering a sense of community with her readers.

Certainly, these moments demonstrate the author’s effort to think through the ways in which the novel as a form can integrate an awareness of the concerns of its contemporary moment. One of the specific challenges Wirtemberska faces is figuring out how to acknowledge the political trauma of the present in an otherwise seemingly light-hearted tale. We find a similar dynamic at work in *The Wild Irish Girl*, which vacillates from the swoons and sighs of the lovers to grim reckonings with Irish history. Although this palpable sense of suffering is seen as an obstacle to realism, it should be noted that it is not exactly ‘native’ to romance, either. Although the plotlines of romance would seem more amenable to the heightened drama of war, or

melancholic portrayals of ruin, both of these authors pause the action, or step outside the narrative frame (as in Lady Morgan's footnote on Wexford discussed earlier, or Wirtemberska's digression above) in order to give voice to the sufferings of their compatriots. To these two authors at least, then, these moments arguably do *not* naturally fit comfortably into a work of romance: the hybridity of these scenes is not a clash of realism and romance, but is of a different nature entirely.

In both works, we find two different kinds of material that initially registers as tangential or disruptive: expanded ethnographic description or detail, and discussions of historical turbulence, which shift the mood into a tragic (or melodramatic) register. The typical critical response has been to collapse these two aspects into a broader account of how these works fail to achieve realism: they cannot integrate everyday detail properly into the narrative, and political upheaval bars them from achieving normalcy or equanimity. The heterogeneity of these texts is thus used to attest to claims that their political contexts are hostile to realism. But we should be careful about how we make sense of the various kinds of hybridity that we find in these works, and how those different aspects are related to each other. It is tempting to map the *mélange* of romantic and quotidian elements onto the question of how the novel as a genre manages political turmoil. A closer investigation reveals that they are related to entirely different problematics. What is more, this perspective relies on assumptions about the status of romance that emerged in the wake of realism's ascendance, projecting certain perspectives back onto the texts. Thus, for instance, it construes romance as an archaic and comparatively unsophisticated mode. Both authors, however, use romance plots as a way to engage deeper underlying issues of their own time. It is true that both authors perceive limitations to the romantic mode, but they also seem invested in finding solutions to those shortcomings by working within the romance mode, rather than abandoning it.

It is notable, for instance, that while both novels have happy endings, neither is completely unambiguous. In *The Wild Irish Girl*, the narrative's inexorable progression towards the union of Glorvina and Horatio is suddenly forestalled, a mere 30 pages before the ending, by the revelation that she has been promised to someone else. The other man turns out, astonishingly, to be Horatio's own father. When the truth is revealed, the shock proves too much for Glorvina's father, who is much weakened by illness, and he dies, which in turn sends Glorvina spiralling into madness. The pandemonium is quickly resolved, first between Horatio and his father, and then between the young pair, but when we last see Glorvina, she is on the road to recovery, rather than the picture of a blissful bride: she is "the interesting invalid, whose flushing colour and animated eyes spoke the return of health and happiness; not indeed confirmed – but fed by sanguine hope; such hope as the heart of a mourning child could give to the object of her heart's first pas-

sion" (Owenson 1855 [1806], 203). Similarly, *Malwina*'s joyful conclusion is interrupted, on the final page, by a minor threat, when Ludomir wonders if perhaps his wife does in fact prefer his twin (who, conveniently, has married her sister). Her reassurance, a particular term uttered already at several key moments in the story, satisfies him completely, and the novel's closing lines assure us that all is now well: "To słowo [...] odtąd na zawsze moc miało serce jego zupełnie uspokoić napełniając go najprawdźszą i wygasnąć niezdolną szczęśliwością" (Wirtemberska 1816, 152; "That word [...] now for the third time – and forever after – was to have the power to reassure his heart completely, filling it with the truest happiness which nothing further could extinguish", trans. by Phillips 2001, 201). But why raise this doubt at all, when the reader was already fairly well assured that all was well? Similarly, why does *The Wild Irish Girl* need to digress into utter pandemonium and madness before the desired marriage can take place? This hesitancy about happy endings again calls into question the apparent obviousness of romance as a choice for these authors. It also demonstrates that both women clearly register the challenges romance faces, and gesture towards its limitations. But they nonetheless *do* progress to those joyful resolutions, rather than breaking with the form completely.

Literary criticism has retrospectively decreed that realism offers the best solutions to the aesthetic problems attendant to the rise of modernity, and thus assumes that nineteenth-century authors dissatisfied with romance were groping towards realism. But this is hardly a foregone conclusion. Rather than seeing Lady Morgan or Wirtemberska as having only made it part of the way towards realism, we should instead consider these works on their own terms, and try to tease out what *they* perceive as the weaknesses of romance, and how they strive to address them. Instead of assuming that both authors fall back upon romantic plots as the only option, we should take seriously the possibility that both saw that type of writing as offering the greatest pleasures to its readers, and that they valued the form and consciously chose it. By doing so, we can also become better readers of those forms, which in turn makes us better able to take seriously and appreciate other works of their time.

Ultimately, part of this process is moving outside the narrow confines of the national comparison. Because the original impetus of considering Polish and Irish works alongside each other is their socio-political resemblances, a comparative reading of two novels from Poland and Ireland will tend to focus on aspects of the text that speak to their political conditions. Because of the strong interest in considering how historical turmoil shaped aesthetic production, the emphasis will be on symptoms of suffering first and foremost. But there are other ways in which we can read the influence of their particular contexts on these works. Given the links between the romantic and the pastoral, for instance, and the fact that both Poland and Ireland were largely agrarian economies, we could also consider how rural life is represented in

both texts. It is unsurprising that the peasantry features more prominently in these novels than in, say, Goethe's *Sorrows of Young Werther*. Although Werther appreciates the simple life of the folk, he also repeatedly registers his difference from them, even when looking to bridge the gap: "Ich weiß wohl, daß wir nicht gleich sind, noch sein können; aber ich halte dafür, daß der, der nötig zu haben glaubt, vom so genannten Pöbel sich zu entfernen, um den Respekt zu erhalten, ebenso tadelhaft ist als ein Feiger, der sich vor seinem Feinde verbirgt, weil er zu unterliegen fürchtet" (Goethe 1825, 10; "I well know that we are not equal, nor can be; but I maintain that he who supposes he must keep his distance from what they call the rabble, to preserve the respect due to him, is as much to blame as a coward who hides from his enemy for fear of being beaten", trans. by Hulse 1989, 28). Or later, "Zwar weiß ich so gut als einer, wie nötig der Unterschied der Stände ist, wie viel Vorteile er mir selbst verschafft: nur soll er mir nicht eben gerade im Wege stehen, wo ich noch ein wenig Freude, einen Schimmer von Glück auf dieser Erde genießen könnte" (1825, 76; "Of course I know as well as anyone that differences of class are necessary, and that they work greatly to my own advantage: but I wish they would not place obstacles in my way when I might enjoy a little pleasure, some scrap of happiness in this world", trans. by Hulse 1989, 130). In contrast, Glorvina "will sit in a smoky cabin four hours together, to talk to the poor" and an old peasant man tells Horatio that "many a time I carried her in these arms, and taught her to bless herself in Irish" (Owenson 1855 [1806], 69-70). In *Malwina*, we similarly learn that Malwina has a strong attachment to a woman named Somorkowa, "gdyż ta wieśniaczka mlekiem ją swoim karmiła i od dzieciństwa jak własną kochała córkę" (Wirtemberska 1816, 7; "for the peasant woman had suckled her with her own milk and loved her as her own daughter since she was a little girl", trans. by Phillips 2001, 11). This is not to say that either of these two novels is a model of cross-class interactions: both texts can certainly be accused of sentimentalized portrayals of the peasantry, and the lower-class characters are clearly of a lesser status. In *The Wild Irish Girl*, the descriptions of these characters, which are delivered from Horatio's perspective, are often dripping with contempt, especially in the early portions of the text, and his father's injunctions to care for the people on the estate on the final pages partake of blatant cultural paternalism. Nonetheless, these people *are* part of the narrative in both novels, and not only do they often receive names, they also frequently step forward to speak for themselves, even if those moments are arguably presenting commodified versions of rural 'authenticity'. There is a greater visibility of rural life in these novels, in other words, which could be due to the socio-economic make-up of both Poland and Ireland, where the lack of a strong middle class made for a different kind of relationship between upper and lower classes, both of whom were dependent on agriculture.

Such a comparison could lead us even further towards a more strictly aesthetic inquiry: why not look for similarities to *Werther*, along with the differences? This could lead to considering, for instance, how the novels deal with minor characters overall, or how they deploy the epistolary form, in contrast to other authors from various parts of the world working in a similar mode. This would be a truly transnational account: moving beyond mapping formal features onto historical conditions, and considering their experiments in more strictly aesthetic terms. This is not to say that we should sever these works from their historical contexts; rather, it is to suggest that we not focus too narrowly on those contexts, so as not to lose sight of the authors' specific aims in producing these works.

A comparative reading of Polish and Irish literary history can very easily serve to both reiterate and reinforce their marginal positions vis-à-vis mainstream European writing. Finding similar conditions of political turmoil in both places, and a similar lack of realism, the answer seems clear: these exceptions prove the rule of socio-cultural explanations of realism's rise. The only redeeming aspect of this account, as James Murphy points out, is that it also paves the way for a celebration of twentieth-century Irish literature, when Irish writers become early innovators of fractured styles of post/modernism (Murphy 2011, 3) – as indeed do Polish writers such as Witold Gombrowicz, Bruno Schulz, Witkacy, or Bruno Jasioński. The literature of the nineteenth century, however, is essentially consigned to the dust-bin of history, with only the occasional meek argument suggesting that it might have value as a precursor to these more interesting later developments. Moreover, the aesthetic aspects of these texts are yoked ever more firmly to historical developments, contributing to deterministic readings that view literature as a reflection of political conditions first and foremost, without examining its formal innovations.

But rather than uncritically adopting paradigms of the novel's development emerging from other literary traditions, we can use a comparative reading of these two literatures in order to decentre those accounts, and challenge their underlying assumptions. The assertive way in which Wirtemberska celebrates romance, for instance, provides a strong counter-argument against the sense that Irish authors turned to it as mere compensation, and brings to light more widespread anxieties about fiction's social benefits, rather than its ability to create realistic portrayals. Looking at these two works alongside each other gives us a more complex sense of the specific forms of their hybridity, and the different dilemmas they were grappling with. Rather than using a comparative reading to strengthen the perception of these traditions as anomalous, in other words, we can use the similarities between them to lend force to counter-arguments proposing alternative accounts of the novel's development, and a more nuanced perception of their aesthetic goals. This comparative reading, in turn, opens onto a broader transnational perspective

on these works. A focus on the socio-political dimensions of the Irish literary tradition impels us towards comparisons to other similar contexts, but we rapidly find that many of the most rewarding insights from such research may instead emerge from a more attentive reading of the formal innovations of the works in question. This, in turn, encourages us to cast a wider net, and to seek out other texts from all over the world that share similar literary concerns. Thus, we arrive at a perspective that would situate nineteenth-century Polish and Irish writing, not only alongside works from similar socio/historical conditions, but together with other romantic or hybrid works they have a natural affinity with. Instead of considering the novels from these traditions in developmental terms, viewing these texts alongside others that dealt with similar formal challenges can help us see them as experiments in literary genre: as efforts to innovate the romance, rather than overcome it.

Works Cited

- Aravamudan Srinivas (2012), *Enlightenment Orientalism: Resisting the Rise of the Novel*, Chicago, University of Chicago Press.
- Baldwin Peter (2004), "Comparing and Generalizing: Why All History is Comparative, Yet No History is Sociology", in Deborah Cohen, Maura O'Connor (eds), *Comparison and History: Europe in Cross-National Perspective*, New York, Routledge, 1-22.
- Bartoszyńska Katarzyna (2013), "Adam Smith's Problems: Sympathy in Owenson's *Wild Irish Girl* and Edgeworth's *Ennui*", *New Hibernia Review* 17, 3, 127-144.
- Belanger Jacqueline (2005), "Introduction", in Ead. (ed.), *The Irish Novel in the Nineteenth Century: Facts and Fictions*, Dublin, Four Courts Press, 11-33.
- Casey Moira, Tucker Amanda (eds), *Where Motley is Worn: Translational Irish Literatures*, Cork, Cork UP.
- Cleary Joe (2007), *Outrageous Fortune: Culture and Capital in Modern Ireland*, Dublin, Field Day Publications.
- Cohen Margaret (1999), *The Sentimental Education of the Novel*, Princeton, Princeton UP.
- Connolly Claire (2011), *A Cultural History of the Irish Novel, 1790-1829*, Cambridge, Cambridge UP.
- Eagleton Terry (1995), *Heathcliff and the Great Hunger*, London, Verso.
- Earls Brian (2008), "'By Reason of Past History': Poland Through Irish Eyes", *Dublin Review of Books* 8, <<http://archive-ie.com/page/8737/2012-05-15/>, http://www.drb.ie/more_details/08-12-08/By_Reason_of_Past_History.aspx> (03/2015).
- Ferris Ina (2002), *The Romantic National Tale and the Question of Ireland*, Cambridge, Cambridge UP.
- Gallagher Catherine (2006), "The Rise of Fictionality", in Franco Moretti (ed.), *The Novel, vol. 1: History, Geography, and Culture*, Princeton, Princeton UP, 336-363.
- Goethe J.W. von (1825), *Die Leiden des Jungen Werther*, Leipzig, Weygandsche Buchhandlung.
- (1989), *The Sorrows of Young Werther*, trans. by Michael Hulse, Harmondsworth, Penguin.

- Jameson Fredric (2006), "A Businessman in Love", in Franco Moretti (ed.), *The Novel, vol. 2: Forms and Themes*, Princeton, Princeton UP, 436-446.
- Kareem S.T. (2014), *Eighteenth-Century Fiction and the Reinvention of Wonder*, Oxford, Oxford UP.
- Leerssen Joep (1997), *Remembrance and Imagination: Patterns in the Historical and Literary Representations of Ireland in the Nineteenth Century*, Southbend, University of Notre Dame Press.
- Lloyd David (2005), "Afterword: Hardress Cregan's Dream", in Jacqueline Belanger (ed.), *The Irish Novel in the Nineteenth Century: Facts and Fictions*, Dublin, Four Courts Press, 229-237.
- McKeon Michael (2002), *The Origins of the English Novel, 1600-1740*, Baltimore, Johns Hopkins UP.
- Moretti Franco (2013), *Distant Reading*, London, Verso.
- Murphy J.H. (2011), *Irish Novelists in the Victorian Age*, Oxford, Oxford UP.
- Nixon C.L., ed. (2009), *Novel Definitions: an Anthology of Commentary on the Novel*, Peterborough, Broadview.
- Owenson Sydney (Lady Morgan) (1855 [1806]), *The Wild Irish Girl: A National Tale*, Hartford, Silas Andrus & Son, 2 vols.
- Paige N.D. (2011), *Before Fiction: the Ancien Regime of the Novel*, Philadelphia, University of Pennsylvania Press.
- Reeve Clara (1930 [1785]), *The Progress of Romance Through Times, Countries and Manners; with Remarks on the Good and Bad Effects of it, On them Respectively, in a Course of Evening Conversations*, reproduced from the Colchester edition of 1785, New York, Facsimile Text Society.
- Watt Ian (1957), *The Rise of the Novel: Studies in Richardson, Defoe, and Fielding*, Berkeley, University of California Press.
- Wirtemberska Maria (1816), *Malwina, czyli domyślność serca*, Wirtualna Biblioteka Literatura Polskiej, Instytut Filologii Polskiej Uniwersytetu Gdańskiego, <<http://literat.ug.edu.pl/~literat/malwina/index.htm>> (03/2015).
- (2001), *Malwina, or the Heart's Intuition*, trans. and with an Introduction by Ursula Phillips, London, Polish Cultural Foundation.

The Era of Tadeusz Pawlikowski and Irish Theatre

Barry Keane

The University of Warsaw (<bkeane@uw.edu.pl>)

Abstract:

Tadeusz Pawlikowski was arguably Poland's greatest theatre director of the fin de siècle. With stints as Theatre Manager in both Kraków and Lwów municipal theatres, Pawlikowski excelled in developing ensemble casts and cultivating audiences without kowtowing to popular tastes. He was also responsible for bringing many western plays to partitioned Poland, and indeed he oversaw theatrical premieres of Oscar Wilde, George Bernard Shaw and John Millington Synge. This paper will look at the production and reception of these plays and will record how there was a growing conviction amongst Polish critics that Irish dramatists would soon make a towering impact on the age. That said, not all the productions were as successful as perhaps they should have been. When in Lwów, Pawlikowski attempted to flood the city with drama and this ambition entailed brief run-throughs and the shortening of texts in order to facilitate the learning of lines. Needless to say, there was little time for work on characterization. Consequently, it was often pointed out that performances had failed to bridge the cultural gap where a foreign piece was concerned. To this end, this paper will assess both the contribution of Tadeusz Pawlikowski to Irish theatre, and the reception and legacy of the productions which took place under his directorial guidance.

Keywords: Irish Theatre, legacy, Pawlikowski, reception, Wyspiański

Hailing from a famous aristocratic family of artists, writers and patriots, Tadeusz Pawlikowski understudied as a theatrical director in some of the great theatres of Austria and Germany. He came to prominence in the early 1890s as a theatre reviewer for the Cracow journal, *Nowa Reforma* (New Reform), which sought to showcase new trends in art and literature, and like many of his generation, Pawlikowski fell under the spell of Edward Gordon Craig, translating in the process a number of extracts from Craig's *On the Art of*

Theatre (1911), which extolled the communicative function of theatre. Pawlikowski was appointed director of the Cracow's Municipal Theatre in 1893 and there followed seven tempestuous years where he was forced to grapple with an interfering city council, which frequently left the theatre short of allocated funds, while his enemies made much of the fact that he was a married man romantically involved with an actress in the company (Webersfeld 1917, 13). Very often, Pawlikowski was forced to subsidise the running of the company out of his own pocket, and matters came to a head when the theatre entered into protracted negotiations with a belligerent theatrical agent who held the rights to many contemporary foreign dramas (Michalik 1985, 77).

It was in the context of these rather fraught and pecuniarily difficult times that in the spring of 1898 Pawlikowski reluctantly accepted for performance Stanisław Wyspiański's debut verse play *Warszawianka* (The Varsovian Anthem, 1898). However, Pawlikowski refused to give the prospective playwright a concrete date for the premiere and strung Wyspiański along with pep talks and recommendations for further rewrites (Grzymała-Siedlecki 1971, 275-278). In the autumn of 1898, an impatient and frustrated Wyspiański sent to Pawlikowski an envoy in the figure of Alfred Wysocki, an expert in Scandinavian culture who was cutting his journalistic teeth as a staff writer for the Cracow-based art and literary journal *Życie* (Life). Wysocki also failed to make any headway, and so adopted a different strategy by looking to convince the actress, Wanda Siemaszkowa, that one of the play's leading roles had been written with her in mind. Wysocki accompanied Wyspiański to the actress's apartment where the playwright in a trembling voice read through the part. Recognising that this was more than just an exercise in flattery, she agreed to take Wyspiański's part and petitioned Pawlikowski directly. Wysocki's intrigues reaped dividends when Pawlikowski committed to a date for the premiere and assigned directorial duties to Ludwik Solski. However, preparations on the play were soured somewhat by Siemaszkowa's gossipy assertions that Wyspiański had had the gumption to demand artistic control over both the manuscript and rehearsals. Whatever the truth about this matter, Pawlikowski certainly did Wyspiański a great disservice when he inappropriately staged the play together with two rather ephemeral and unimportant one-act works, particularly when he had originally planned to stage *The Varsovian Anthem* in a more suitable pairing with Maeterlinck's *Intérieur* (1894). But Solski oversaw what was hailed as a flawless production, having also commissioned Wyspiański to provide the stage design. In spite of the play's arduous road, *The Varsovian Anthem* had its premiere on 26 November 1898 and it would mark the beginning of a new era in Polish drama, which was principally dominated by the plays of Wyspiański. Unfortunately, Pawlikowski would leave Cracow soon after this production, and he would miss out on being a part of what is regarded as the golden era of Wyspiański, centred around Cracow's Municipal Theatre, that later had its most celebratory

moment with the staging in March 1901 of Wyspiański's *Wesele* (1901; *The Wedding*), a drama that would be seen to depict the inertia of a nation that had suffered for too long under the yoke of foreign rule. Much in the same way that J.M. Synge's *The Playboy of the Western World* (1907) was vilified and considered by many at the time of its premiere to have libelled the Irish nation, Wyspiański's characterisations in *The Wedding* would also become the subject of a contentious debate, particularly in relation to the absence in the play of a heroic figure around which the Polish nation could draw inspiration. Both dramatists, it seems, were destined to be misunderstood and revered by their contemporaries in equal measure.

A number of months prior to the premiere of *The Varsovian Anthem*, in June 1898, Pawlikowski had taken his Cracow theatre troupe on a visit to Lwów for a month, and their performances were met with great acclaim and enthusiasm (Grzymała-Siedlecki 1971, 298-299). There can be little doubt that this visit laid the groundwork for Pawlikowski's later move to Lwów. Despite running Cracow's Municipal Theatre for one more successful season, Pawlikowski considered the chances of re-election as slim, and so entered into an open competition for the position of manager of the fledgling Lwów Municipal Theatre, which meant running against the acting manager, Ludwik Heller. Following a highly successful public relations campaign, which garnered support from theatrical critics throughout partitioned Poland, Pawlikowski was elected to the position. The unseated Heller was much chagrined, perhaps rightly feeling that the Pawlikowski name had unduly swayed the decision of those who had cast their votes (Webersfeld 1917, 15).

From the outset, Pawlikowski looked to establish a European repertoire that would be performed alongside Polish drama. With this aim in mind, whenever a new play made an impact, Pawlikowski sent a scout at his own expense to assess its merits. He would then oversee all the steps involved in bringing the play before the theatregoers of Lwów, which included his close involvement in the translation of the manuscript, something which we shall return to later when discussing Pawlikowski's staging of Synge's *The Well of the Saints* (1905).

As the theatre manager of Lwów's Municipal Theatre, Pawlikowski would oversee productions of the plays of George Bernard Shaw and Oscar Wilde. Pawlikowski gave Shaw his first Polish premiere on Friday 27 November 1903 with the unauthorized staging of *The Devil's Disciple* (*Uczeń diabła*, 1897), only a couple of months after the play's Continental debut in Vienna's Raimund Theatre. The production came at a time when the cast was juggling as many as three plays per week, this policy being a part of Pawlikowski's plan to flood the city with drama (Krajewska 1972, 58). This ambition must obviously have entailed quick run-throughs and the shortening of texts in order to facilitate a rapid learning of the lines. There was often little time for work on characterization, which must have become glaringly evident whenever a

challenging piece came along¹. As a result, many of the plays produced at this time were described as naturalistic, a term chosen to describe instinctive and improvised performances. This approach, as it was all too often pointed out, was not enough to bridge the cultural gap where a foreign piece was concerned, and the shortfall was often exposed. And although Shaw's premiere evening passed off without any glitches, the general sentiment was that both the play and the playwright had deserved a better first outing.

The Devil's Disciple is set at the time of the American Revolution, which pitches an uncompromising life-force in the figure of Richard 'Dick' Dudgeon firstly against puritanical religiosity, and secondly against the injustice of the occupying British. It is a play that could have been readily associated with Poland's own national bondage. But whilst *The Devil's Disciple* boasted a happy and romantic ending, the prospect that the same could be true for Poland in 1903 was still a long way off. Local critics saw in the play a chaotic coming together of emotions and impressions, which ultimately unveiled the nobility of soul, the beauty of self-sacrifice, and freedom of thought, all of which together signify the aspirations of burgeoning nations. The same critics only lamented that in the actors' hands the play had descended into a farcical free-for-all, let down by the fact that some of the supporting actors had forgotten their lines. But instead of excoriating the cast for committing what is a cardinal sin, critics just mildly recommended that the minor actors needed to do better in future performances.

The Lwów premiere of Wilde's *The Importance of Being Earnest* (1895) took place on Monday, 23 October 1905, with a repeat performance on the following Wednesday. The play had been translated as a handwritten manuscript by an unknown translator who gave it the title of *Birbant*, meaning 'Reveller', which must have thrown out of kilter the very notion that Algeon was able to excuse his absences to the countryside in order to visit his invalid friend Bunbury.

The principle review of the play, which was featured in *Gazeta Lwowska* (1905; The Lwów Gazette) and penned by critic Adam Krechowiecki, reveals just how the long shadow of Wilde's fall from grace and early death continued to cast a pall over the way in which his works were perceived. For Krechowiecki, indeed, the play was like laughter through gritted teeth, and whilst acknowledging its farcical characteristics, he was much more struck by the mendaciousness which lay at the heart of the play, uttering simulta-

¹ It is important to note that at the beginning of the twentieth century, municipal theatres in cities like Warsaw, Cracow and Lwów were subsidized by the city, and very often their remit or program, as defined by the theatre manager, was to present as many plays as possible. As a consequence, this meant that theatres would very often stage up to three plays a week, which placed almost impossible demands on the actors and often impacted negatively on the quality of their performance. See Adam Grzymała-Siedlecki 1971, 153-160.

neously his disbelief that people could lie with such ease: “Who was leading who?” (“Qui trompe-t-on ici?”). The critic also accepted that the converse of this puzzlement – which obtained also for the play – was that lies are taken as truths because this is the most expedient thing to do. In turn, Krechowiecki felt that Wilde’s fall made for extra textual poignancy, and he recalled that as the curtain was falling he had seen in his mind’s eye a bloodied Wilde, undone by his own Bunburying, and trusting to the fates that things would come right in the end.

This play came at the end of Pawlikowski’s tenure as managing director of Lwów Municipal Theatre, with Heller having been handed the helm once more. For a short time, Pawlikowski was out in the cold, and forced to work as a director for hire. And it was during this period that he directed *Mrs Warren’s Profession* (1893) for Cracow’s Municipal Theatre. Pawlikowski’s Cracow production was an unqualified success. Konrad Rakowski, writing for the newspaper *Czas* (Time), greatly admired both the play and the production, but he was keen to impress upon readers that the play’s loose ends should be put down to the fact that it was not a new play, but a precursor to greater works by Shaw (1907). Two years later, Pawlikowski brought the play to Lwów, where its two performances turned out to be memorable for all the wrong reasons. At this time Pawlikowski was working once again for Lwów’s Municipal Theatre as Artistic Director, having been appointed to act as a counterweight to Heller’s humdrum competence. Indeed, as soon as Heller had taken the reins a perceived rot had set in. The most troubling issue was a crisis of discipline amongst the actors, which had given rise to a number of bloodcurdling situations on stage, where actors were sniggering at each others’ non-scripted jokes. One such episode occurred during the staging of Wyspiański’s *Varsovian Anthem*, when the actors present on stage were accepting news from a mortally wounded messenger-soldier, he was greeted with smiles and sniggers. The most unforgivable development was Heller’s heavy-handedness with manuscripts. With Jan Kasprowicz’s *Uczta Herodiady* (1905; *Herod’s Feast*), a play in poetic verse, the director did away with the poetry and put large fragments of the play to the music of German opera. It was not received well, and by the third performance the play was performing to an empty house. However, Heller’s cultural vandalism scaled new heights with the staging of Shaw’s *Candida* (1898) when he advertised the production as a comedy, which would explain why so many jokes had been ‘mis’-fired in the audience’s direction. The sudden and frequent leaps from drama to farce befuddled actors and either left audiences laughing or thinking, but seemingly not both.

Immediately on his return to Lwów, Pawlikowski looked to recalibrate the mission of the theatre by surrounding himself with those of a similar progressive outlook. One such figure was Alfred Wysocki who had left Cracow following the closure of the journal *Życie* (Life) to take up a journalistic career

as theatrical reviewer for *Gazeta Lwowska*. Intrigued by the fact that Wysocki knew Ibsen personally, Pawlikowski wined and dined with the journalist one evening in a top restaurant, which ended in the early hours of the morning (Wysocki 1974, 221). Relations quickly moved on from a social to a professional basis, and Wysocki went on to translate for the Lwów Theatre: Ibsen, Bjornson, and most notably for our story, Synge's *The Well of the Saints*, which had had its Abbey premiere just three years earlier in 1905. Wysocki would translate the title *The Well of the Saints* as *Cudowne źródło* (The Miraculous Spring).

The Well of the Saints was staged on Friday, 11 November 1908, as the second play in a double bill with Wyspiański's *Sędziowie* (1907; The Judges), which was a vengeful tale of ethnic conflict between a Jewish and Huculski family that had actually taken place near Lwów in the early 19th century. It was an episode involving murder, infanticide and other unspeakable crimes. Whatever the remoteness of the plays to one another, the staging of the two playwrights together was clearly a signalling of their comparable stature in their respective national theatres. The plays were performed on Wednesday and Friday, alternating with Giacomo Puccini's *Madame Butterfly*, which was performed on Thursday and Saturday. The theatre review column of the Lwów newspaper *Gazeta Narodowa* (1908; The National Gazette) spoke highly of Synge's play. Although the unsigned review provides little more than a summary of the play, it did show a clear understanding of the poetic theme at the heart of the play, wherein "... lepsza jest czasem ślepotą" (sometimes blindness is best)². Wysocki also wrote a review of the evening's theatrical fare, although he made no mention of his own particular involvement in the production (Wysocki 1908). Indeed, his review devoted more space to Wyspiański's play, although it did emphasise that both plays depicted reality as a point of departure from the unpleasantness of life for a flight into the world of the imagination. However, the reviewer had his doubts about the play's loose treatment of religious beliefs, and was particularly troubled by the idea that Martin Doul could be so removed from a state of blessedness and yet be deemed worthy of having God's grace bestowed upon him a second time. Understandably, given the play's success in Cracow, it was inevitable that Pawlikowski would look to bring Shaw's *Mrs Warren's Profession* (1893) to Lwów, but the reception the play enjoyed in the city was decidedly different to that which it had received in Cracow. Perhaps unbeknownst to Pawlikowski who had been absent from Lwów for the *Candida* production, in contrast to other theatrical centres like Warsaw and Cracow, the Lwów theatergoing public and critics had been nurturing an antipathy towards Shaw for some time. The premiere performance of *Mrs Warren's Profession* took place on 17 February 1909, and it seems that problems began with the

² All translations from Polish are by the author.

cast, who took a burlesque approach to their roles. Ferdinand Feldman, who played Crofts, the business partner to Mrs Warren, a Madame of continental brothels, conceived his character as a coarse, larger-than-life pimp. Indeed, everything the play offered grated on the sensibilities of sections of the audience, who were in any case generally disgruntled about what they regarded as Pawlikowski's hitherto decadent French-leaning repertoire (Wysocki 1953, 145). During the play's second performance, some people in the audience became agitated when in the third act Mrs. Warren and Crofts paid the pastor a visit to his home, and were then guided by him towards the church. This trampling over sacred ground proved too much for a schoolteacher, a certain Michalski: sitting in the front row, he stood up and demanded that the curtain be brought down on a play that was an offence to the most basic notions of human decency (Kumor 1971, 135-136; Keane 2013, 124-125). Others in the rows immediately behind Michalski soon joined him in facing down the stage. By the time the police had arrived, agitators and defenders were squaring up to each other in isolated pockets of the theatre. The police somehow managed to restore order and remove Michalski from the premises. As a gesture of solidarity, some of his supporters followed him out of the theatre.

On reassuming his post in 1913 as head of the Cracow Municipal Theatre, which had recently been renamed as Teatr im. Juliusza Słowackiego (The Juliusz Słowacki Theatre), Pawlikowski actively sought to stage dramas that were making an impact on the world stage, and tried to balance high-end drama with more popular offerings suited to the tastes of Cracow's notoriously difficult-to-please audiences, who were drifting in large numbers towards the newly opened picture houses (Michalik 1985, 361). In what was a tough winter season for Pawlikowski, he showed his faith in *The Well of the Saints* by staging it again. He was also happy to risk staging Shaw once more, but this time he plumbed for *Pygmalion* (1913).

Pawlikowski's *Pygmalion* was an unlicensed production. Whilst the official licensed translator, Florian Sobieniowski, was working on his translation of the play in the winter of 1913-1914, on behalf of Warsaw's Polish Theatre, the march was rudely stolen on him by an unknown rival in Cracow, Ryszard Ordyński, who was a highly acclaimed Polish theatrical director working at the time in the Berlin's Deutches Theater. Despite his being an acquaintance of Shaw, the evidence suggests that Ordyński undertook the translation without the playwright's knowledge (Ordyński 1956, 261-262). Ordyński had studied librarianship in London in 1908, and, as part of the wider student program, he had also undertaken volunteer work in poorer areas such as Whitechapel, which would by and large involve participating in public library gatherings where over tea and biscuits people enthusiastically asked the foreign students about social, political and cultural issues in their home countries (Ordyński 1956, 262-263).

When in 1911 Ordyński took Max Reinhardt's pantomime play *Sumurun* (1910) to London's Colosseum Theatre, Ordyński had the opportunity to

meet and talk to Shaw in person at an informal gathering of writers and cast which had been organised by Granville Barker. Initially, Ordyński served as an interpreter between Reinhardt and Shaw, with the Irish playwright jesting that Reinhardt could quite conceivably knock him off his perch in terms of potential box-office receipts. Having paid the compliment, however, Shaw proceeded to talk of the need for a dramatic work to be more than a crowd-pleaser, and for it to tackle social issues and reverberate beyond the immediacy of the performance and the theatre itself. Ordyński remained in London for several weeks as a guest of Barker's, and found himself being invited to Shaw's house, where Mrs Shaw served meat meals for this non-vegetarian Polish guest. Back in Germany, Reinhardt handed Ordyński the directorial reins for Shaw's *Misalliance* (1910), and Ordyński took this opportunity to travel back to London to discuss some of the work's many difficult aspects, and hoping to secure permission from Shaw to make cuts which would aid clarification. Shaw politely listened to Ordyński argue passionately that non-English productions of the play needed interpretative room. However, when Ordyński actually took his pencil out and showed where he wanted to make the cuts, Shaw, always smiling, responded by pointing out the problems which would arise from such excisions. Once Shaw had given his opinion on the matter, he told Ordyński that he was free to do whatever he liked with the play, remarking that he had long made peace with the fact that foreign productions were always going to take liberties. But Ordyński realized that he had asked Shaw and been rebuffed. Had he not asked for Shaw's blessing, he may have been free to pursue his plans with a clear conscience. It is for this reason, I believe, that Ordyński did not mention *Pygmalion* to Shaw when he travelled to meet Shaw in London in October 1913, in order to seek the playwright's advice once again for the Deutsches Theatre's upcoming production of *Androcles and the Lion* (1912) with respect of the costumes and the stage design (Ordyński 1956, 359-360).

Basing his work on Trebitsch's German translation, Ordyński produced a shortened version of *Pygmalion* and then sought to have it staged in Cracow's Juliusz Słowacki Theatre, which, as mentioned earlier, was once again under the directorship of Tadeusz Pawlikowski. Ordyński's unpublished manuscript has been preserved in the archive of the theatre and a very interesting instruction from the translator is provided on the page with the list of characters: "Liza w akcie pierwszym i drugim mówi gwarą ordynarną uliczną. Przedstawicielka tej roli musi przeprowadzić ten dżalekt konsekwentnie, zwłaszcza w tonie i przedłużeniu i skracaniu samogłosek bardzo dosadnie" (Eliza in the first and second act speaks the dialect of a street merchant. The actress playing this role must be consistent with this dialect, especially in tone and the exaggerated extension and shortening of vowels). On reading the manuscript, one immediately notices that Eliza's Polish before the transformation is not incorrect, and as such her accent and speech do not signify an impoverished

background. In fact, her disadvantaged state is more discernible by Higgins' allusions to the unpleasant high-pitched sounds that she makes: "I nie jęzz nam nad uszami..." (Ms n. 1750, 8; Don't be screeching in our ears...). With the emphasis less on phonetics and place, and more on the tempestuous relationship between Higgins and Eliza, a crucial interpolation is to be found at the very end of the Polish manuscript, where it is made clear that Eliza will remain with Higgins, and that her decision to stay is very much his triumph.

Pygmalion proved to be the hit of the season, with critics applauding both the production and the play itself³. It is clear, though, that the acquisition of correct speech and accent was less foregrounded than the notion that kindness and good breeding can work their magic on any disadvantaged person. Mirroring the perspicacity of an alert German reviewer, who had pointed out the similarity of the play to Tobias Smollett's adventures with a sixteen-year old beggar girl in chapter 87 of his novel *The Adventures of Peregrine Pickle* (1751), one Polish reviewer thought that the play must have been inspired in part by Sardou's *Madame Sans-Gêne* (1891), which told the story of a laundress who marries a soldier, who is himself subsequently elevated by Napoleon to the rank of Duke of Danzig (Unnamed reviewer 1914). However, the heroine's newly found fortune and position does not smooth out her rough edges, and she continues to behave in a raucous manner at court, thus earning herself the name of Madame Sans-Gêne, meaning Mrs No Embarrassment. It is an important observation, particularly given the fact that English critics would gleefully speculate that Shaw had agreed to have the play staged in Germany as a pall of plagiarism hung over the play with respect to Smollett. Of course, Shaw provided himself with an inimitable defense: "Do not scorn to be derivative" (Holroyd 1998, 441). The performances of Leonard Bończa-Stępiński playing Higgins and Irena Solska playing Eliza were hailed as career-topping turns, with the same reviewer stating: "Nie mogę sobie wyobrazić lepszych wykonawców tych dwu ról" (I couldn't imagine better performers of these two roles). The Cracow premiere of *The Well of the Saints* took place a week later on Saturday, 31 January 1914, with two more performances the following week. Once again, the play served as a support performance, but this time it strangely followed an adapted Latin work by the late Polish Renaissance dramatist, Szymon Szymonowicz, entitled *Castus Joseph* (1587). Pawlikowski either must have felt that Synge's play would not enjoy success in its own right or he was simply wedded to the idea of presenting the play as part of a double bill, but either way the critics would disagree

³ As Konrad Rakowski wrote, "*Pygmalion* Shaw'a na sobotniem przedstawieniu po swych europejskich sukcesach, zdobył sobie i publiczność krakowską i powodzenie w repertuarze ma zapewnione" (1914, 4; "The Saturday performance of Shaw's *Pygmalion*, following its European triumphs, won over Cracow's theatregoing public and its success in the repertoire is assured").

with his judgment. A review published in *Gazeta Poniedziałkowa* (The Monday Gazette), and signed with the initials Z.R., provided a brief summary of the play and was complimentary about the production (1914). In turn, the reviewer for *Czas* (Pr., 1914) lamented the fact that Synge's play had not been given an evening all to itself, and particularly because the evening had been brimming with quality and burdened by quantity, with one other critic recalling that the audience had been too exhausted given the lateness to really enjoy the play. In relation to the play itself, the reviewer thought that Synge's work was highly evocative of Maeterlinck's play, *The Miracle of St. Anthony* (1904), recently blacklisted by the Vatican. Aside from a short summary of the play, the reviewer also showed a great understanding of its underlying themes: "... a gdy przeszedłszy całe piekło życia, znowu oślepli i zbliżyli się do siebie we wspólnej doli, która im ich brzydotę zaślониła. Nie chcą już za nic w świecę drugiego cudu [...]" (having gone through the hell of life, and blind once again, they reunite in their shared pain, a blindness which hides their ugliness from one another. Not for the entire world do they wish for another miracle [...]). Indeed, for the reviewer, Synge's play was filled with intelligent ironies, which in turn had many delicate things to say about the human condition. Great praise was bestowed upon the actors Antoni Siemaszko and Zofia Czaplińska, who had played Martin and Mary Doul, and who had been fully committed to portraying the delirious delight of expectation, only to be matched by the anguish of the blind couple's thwarted dreams. Warm words were reserved in turn for the way in which the actors had portrayed the abject fear that the Douls had at the prospect of their sight being restored a second time. The reviewer ended by complimenting both the stage design and the choreography of the collective scenes, whilst also applauding Pawlikowski for having brought to the public's attention the "... z talentem oryginalnego poety" (talent of a [highly] original poet). But once again, as something of a parting rebuke, it was reiterated that both plays should have been staged on their own (Flach 1914, 118; see also Poskuta-Włodek 2001, 54).

Pawlikowski died the following year, having left a hitherto unparalleled legacy in both theatrical management and mentorship. We may only regret that Pawlikowski did not give more support to Irish-themed drama, such as the plays of Synge. Certainly, Pawlikowski's unpreparedness to stage other works by the 'Irish Wyspiański' is puzzling, particularly when the reviews for *The Well of the Saints* had been universally positive, and had hailed a kindred bond of sorts between the respective literary traditions of Ireland and Poland. But perhaps his determination to stage as many plays as possible from one week and month to the next meant that Pawlikowski did not always give consideration to one dramatist or tradition over another, and that Synge was in fact fortunate to have been staged at all, and what is more, to have been allowed to make a brief but memorable contribution to Polish theatrical tradition.

Works Cited

- Craig E.G. (1911), *On the Art of Theatre*, London, William Heinemann.
- Flach Józef (1914), "Literatura i Sztuka" (Literature and Art), *Dziennik Poznański* 8, 117-119.
- Grzymała-Siedlecki Adam (1971), *Tadeusz Pawlikowski i jego krakowscy aktorzy* (Tadeusz Pawlikowski and his Cracovian Actors), Kraków, Wydawnictwo Literackie.
- Holroyd Michael (1998), *Bernard Shaw. The One-Volume Definitive Edition*, London, Vintage.
- Keane Barry (2013), "Taking Sides and Affixing Blame", *SHAW. The Annual of Bernard Shaw Studies* 33, 122-134.
- Krajewska Wanda (1972), *Recepcja literatury angielskiej w Polsce w okresie modernizmu (1887-1918)* (The Reception of English Literature in Poland during the Modernist Period [1887-1918]), Warszawa, Wydawnictwo Polskiej Akademii Nauk.
- Krechowiecki Adam (1905), "Z teatru. *Birbant*. Trywialna komedia w 4 aktach Oskara Wilde'a" (From the Theatre. *On The Importance of Being Earnest*. A Trivial Comedy in 4 Acts by Oscar Wilde), *Gazeta Lwowska* 244, 4-5.
- Kumor Stanisława (1971), *Polskie debiuty Bernarda Shaw* (The Polish Debuts of Bernard Shaw), Warszawa, Wydawnictwo Uniwersytetu Warszawskiego.
- Michalik Jan (1985), *Dzieje teatru w Krakowie w latach 1893-1915. Teatr Miejski* (The History of Theatre in Cracow in the Years 1893-1915. The Municipal Theatre), vol. 5, Kraków, Wydawnictwo Literackie.
- Ordyński Ryszard (1956), *Z mojej włóczęgi* (My Vagabond Years), Kraków, Wydawnictwo Literackie.
- Poskuta-Włodek Danuta (2001), *Trzy dekady z dziejów sceny. Teatr im. Juliusza Słowackiego w Krakowie w latach 1914-1945* (Three Decades of the Juliusz Słowacki Theatre in Cracow. The Years 1914-1945), Kraków, Teatr im. Juliusza Słowackiego w Krakowie.
- Rakowski Konrad (1907), "Z teatru. *Profesja pani Warren*, komedia w 4 aktach Bernarda Shawa" (From the Theatre. *The Profession of Mrs Warren*, a Comedy in 4 Acts by Bernard Shaw), *Czas* 230, 1.
- (1914), "Z teatru miejskiego w Krakowie. *Pygmalion*. Komedia w 5 aktach Bernarda Shaw'a" (From the Municipal Theatre in Cracow. *Pygmalion*. A Comedy in 5 Acts by Bernard Shaw), *Czas* 18, 4.
- Unnamed reviewer (1908), "Ruch artystyczno-literacki. Z teatru. *Cudowne źródło*, legenda irlandzka w 3 aktach J.M. Synge'a" (The Art-Literary Movement. From the Theatre. *The Well of the Saints*, an Irish legend in 3 acts, by J.M. Synge), *Gazeta Narodowa* 262, 3.
- Unnamed reviewer (1914), "Z teatru. *Pygmalion*. Komedia w 5 aktach Bernarda Shaw'a. Z oryginału przełożył Ryszard Ordyński" (From the Theatre. *Pygmalion*. A Comedy in 5 Acts by Bernard Shaw. Translated from the Original by Ryszard Ordyński), Loose-leaf, The Juliusz Słowacki Theatre Archive.
- Webersfeld Edward (1917), *Teatr Miejski we Lwowie za dyrekcji Ludwika Hellera 1906-1918* (The Municipal Theatre in Lwów under the Management of Ludwik Heller 1906-1918), Lwów, Drukarnia W. A. Szyjkowskiego.

- W. Pr. (1914), "Teatr Miejski" (The Municipal Theatre), *Czas* 26, 4.
- Wysocki Alfred (1908), "Z teatru. *Cudowne źródło* J. M. Synge'a" (From the Theatre. J.M. Synge's *The Well of the Saints*), *Gazeta Lwowska* 262, 4.
- (1953), "Tadeusza Pawlikowskiego czasy lwowskie" (Tadeusz Pawlikowski and his Time in Lwów), *Pamiętnik Teatralny* 1, 5, 153-160.
- (1974), *Sprzed pół wieku* (Looking Back on Half a Century), Warszawa, Wydawnictwo Literackie.
- Z.R. (1914), "*Castus Joseph* Szymonowicza" (Castus Joseph by Szymonowicz), *Gazeta Poniedziałkowa* 5, 3.

Visions and Revisions: Seamus Heaney, ‘Foreign’ Poetry, and The Problem of Assimilation

Magdalena Kay

University of Victoria (<magdakay@uvic.ca>)

Abstract:

This essay considers the unusual position of Irish and Polish cultures and how it correlates to the construction of lyric subjects that appear unassimilable to dominant postcolonial literary-critical paradigms. Translation and assimilation become crucial concepts when understood in relation to attempts to take inspiration from foreign sources, especially when such attempts do not accord with typical patterns of influence. These concepts, however, only reveal their utility when they are grounded. The problem of assimilation is here considered in reference to debates over the Eastern European influences behind Seamus Heaney’s volume *The Haw Lantern*, which reveal the cultural pressures brought to bear upon a well-known poet whose work challenges dominant assumptions about the proper idiom of the Anglo-American lyric.

Keywords: comparatism, Ireland, margins, poetry, Poland

Czesław Miłosz, the great Polish poet and spokesman for the twentieth-century’s ills, famously insisted that there are two Europes: on the one hand, “members of the family [who are] quarrelsome but respectable”, and on the other, “poor relations” (1988, 2). The former is considered the ‘better’ Europe; the second is considered ‘worse’. Oddly, however, the passionate defence of “poor relations”, which we call postcolonial studies, often ignores the anomalous position of Europe’s margins, such as Miłosz’s Poland. Granted, these margins are not easy to theorize. Neither is the status of another “poor relation” on the other side of the continent: not only is Ireland self-divided but the extent of its decolonization is up for debate. These countries are quintessentially liminal, if one can allow this oxymoronic construction: located in the culturally central continent of Europe, they are in a peripheral relation to that continent.

These concepts of centre and periphery, colonizer and colonized, have been interrogated so extensively in the past few decades that there is little point in re-treading this theoretical ground. Yet there still remains a sense that comparative projects must be founded on the basis of recognized, recognizable similarity, that they must proceed amongst members of the same nuclear family, as it were. This remains true almost three decades after James Clifford famously noted the problematic character of novelty and difference in the twentieth century: "One no longer leaves home confident of finding the radically new [...] Difference is encountered in the adjoining neighborhood, [and] the familiar turns up at the ends of the earth" (1988, 14). Comparatists must bear in mind that similitude and difference themselves are not necessarily defined by nationality; likewise, many kinds of difference may require an act of cultural translation. The difficulty of 'translating' experience and intention within a divided culture such as that of Ireland is a major theme of post-independence writing.

Recent Polish literature also reveals that the locality of culture may not be unified. We must be careful of our terms in identifying patterns of influence, because the cultural discourse of identity often reproduces the confining matrix of identification that it strives to subvert. The effort to separate inside from outside, periphery from centre, is especially challenging in a country whose canonical writers are often *émigrés* and exiles. In order to compare two formerly colonized countries like Ireland and Poland, we must attend to the possibility of mobile and transnational influence and to the possibility of writing against one's own tradition. At the same time, the sort of trans-nationality that obtains here is one bounded by a particular type of historico-cultural experience. It is the experience of countries that have long been politically peripheral, yet in many ways, symbolically central. Now that postcolonial studies have waxed and waned in popularity, perhaps one can indulge in a bit of provocation by pointing out the limitations of the post-colonial label itself.

The postcolonial identity of Ireland and Poland should not be conceptualized as a solid structure but a process of self-imagination. Their national self-images have been formed in response to political upheavals and to the experience of subjugation, not absolutely; meanwhile, the problem with any experience-centred knowledge claim is that it may carry with it the assumption of a whole, stable subject. Yet the Irish historical experience since colonization is one of fracture and instability. Different portions of the population experience history, and conceive of their nationality, in different ways; this may be said of any country, yet the postcolonial label depends upon a conceptualization of boundaries that unify those within as well as exclude those outside them, so that the postcolonial subject becomes itself a fantasy of coherence. Yet subjects can also be formed across civilizational and linguistic borders, through acts of translation that are mappable but often unforeseeable.

Meanwhile, twenty-first-century postcolonial (or perhaps we should say post-postcolonial) studies continue to interrogate and often dismantle the field's foundational demarcations. In 2004, David Chioni Moore asked if it was possible to theorize a silence in the field, which appeared reluctant to consider the post-Soviet as postcolonial; his analysis usefully examined the difficulties inherent in such a project, yet ultimately awakened a desire for it (2005, 514-538). More recently, Neil Lazarus has decried the reliance on three worlds theory and the north-south optic (*pace* Robert Young) to ground the field, as these conceptualizations do not fit the situation of post-Soviet Eastern Europe, nor are truly necessary for understanding colonialism (Lazarus 2012, 120-21). Likewise, the monolithic concept of 'the West' (versus 'the rest') needs nuanced dismantling: as Eastern Europeans have always known, one cannot metonymically associate the many countries of Europe with the colonizing West any more than one can associate Ireland or Scotland, at the far geographic west of Europe, with imperial power.

Polish critics have also considered the viability of using postcolonial discourse to describe their historic-cultural situation, with mixed results. Well aware that this discourse was fashioned in the Anglo-American academy, they are often quick to highlight the ways in which their own history does not fit the main postcolonial paradigm¹. This paradigm can usefully inspire us to stretch or modify it, and to speak of countries such as Ireland and Poland in the same breath, but it may also obscure other parallels – cultural, literary, religious – that can and must be made between the two countries. It can, in the Polish context, force a critical view of Soviet Communism, and focus attention upon the paradigm shift that took place after the Iron Curtain fell; but is this enough? Perhaps it is. The Irish case for postcolonial status is less novel than the Polish, as Ireland's experience more closely fits the model of settler colonialism, and numerous scholars (Stan Smith, David Lloyd, even Edward Said) have considered its viability. As contemporary Irish literature shows us, however, civil discord can result from this very issue, as the degree to which Northern Ireland can be considered colonial or postcolonial (after the Good Friday Agreement) continues to fuel contention. Perhaps the historical experience of Eastern European nations and the historical experience of Ireland can indeed be spoken of with reference to colonialism, yet the benefits of asserting postcolonial status may also seem dubious. At best, such shared status will allow literary and cultural comparisons to proceed more confidently, which would indeed be a benefit.

¹ See, for example, the work of Hanna Gosk, Dariusz Skórczewski, Ewa Thompson, Myroslav Shkandrij, German Ritz, Andrzej Nowak, and Włodzimierz Bolecki, who acridly remarks that postcolonial studies work from stereotypes of minority groups (Bolecki 2007, 8).

There may also be more precise ways in which literature from the so-called margins of Europe can be studied comparatively. They must involve a critical look at what we desire to extract, and the voices we expect to hear issuing, from those margins. Nowhere is this more apparent than in the domain of literary influence, a seemingly private matter that is often taken for a public, even ideological, one. The problem of positionality can be seen as the potential for comparison, but we must also reckon with the difficulty of expanding a field thought to be stable. Seamus Heaney, Ireland's most famous contemporary poet, is well aware of the fact that his own poems have been criticized for depicting the sort of modest, earthy, family-bound farm life that metropolitan consumers wanted to hear described by Irish writers. Heaney points up the extent to which the geographical and cultural 'margin' is seen as the bearer of a certain type of socio-political value. Writers from the margins are called upon to express themselves in ways that make political and cultural sense to others, and this involves the assumption of literary influences that also make sense. One may choose a condition of glorious nonconformity, but then one runs the risk of untranslatability and of claims that the foreign influence or the work itself is actually unassimilable.

There must be a way in which writers from the 'worse' parts of the world, as Miłosz dubs it, can refuse to be either a packaged commodity or an unreachable other insisting on its irreducibility to any system of value. Perhaps one way to do so is to recalibrate the concept of the margin itself, which has become conceptually over-fetishized. Perhaps Heaney can show us a way that the influence of Europe's other margin can result in a sense of liberation, of being, albeit perversely, untethered, given new expressive scope. A significant amount of creative and intellectual potential is opened up when we move away from the turf wars being fought over the ontological and political status of 'margins' and, instead, attend to voices that beg us not to place them too firmly in any one locality. The lyric need not be viewed as a genre necessarily and permanently rooted in a geophysical locale, but as one allowing for a transnational flow of influence and, at times, seeking deracination. The poet of such a lyric has to carefully negotiate distances – the distance between present and past, between individual and collective, and between local and cosmopolitan. The appropriate balance will find a midpoint that invalidates the irreducibility of these dichotomies.

Our conceptual labels for such transnational balancing acts often euphemize the very real problems that a writer encounters in her or his effort to mediate recognizable subject positions. The fact is, certain subjects are more welcome in literary and scholarly milieux than others, no matter how well we may speak of them theoretically. The mixed reception accorded to Heaney's volume *The Haw Lantern* (1987) illuminates the pressures and counter-pressures brought to bear upon an individual writer who chooses to employ a new poetic idiom and takes on a dubious type of transnational influence. The problem appears to

be that the lyric subject here appears unassimilable – and assimilation remains a major goal of critical commentary and literary reviewing.

Certain reactions to the volume are surprisingly negative: “What has happened to Heaney? It is as though James Joyce let him off the hook when he told him at the end of *Station Island* ‘to fill the elements with signatures on your own frequency’” (Allen 1988, 109)². Written well after Heaney’s famous ‘bog poems’ of *Wintering Out* (1972) and *North* (1975), the volume’s consideration of history appears abstract and sometimes riddling, less centred upon one imagistic field than the much-praised *Field Work* (1979), while its predecessor and successor volumes – *Station Island* (1984) and *Seeing Things* (1991) – share a thematic focus on the insubstantial world of vision and abstract thought. This is where Heaney takes on possibly unassimilable influences and dares to express a new relation to the act of writing itself.

Allen’s words may be blunt but the opinion they express is common: those who view this volume as a glitch in Heaney’s developmental arc are far more numerous than those who laud its achievement. It explores a new relation to abstraction, a quality one would hardly associate with the early Heaney but which is often associated with contemporary poetry from Eastern Europe. So-called parable poems were commonly written during the Communist period to outwit the censor’s eye, until a particular style of allegorical, riddling, rather abstract poem came to be associated with Eastern European writing as a whole. A need to insist upon the division between truth and falsity, and between right and wrong, lends urgency to this poetry, which invests the communicative act with a gravity and necessity often missing from verse composed in more peaceful countries. At its worst, such poetry can be accused of ponderousness; at its best, it can offer a powerful and empowering mode that is very different from the grounded, empirical mode of writing most common in English-language verse. As Heaney’s poems allow themselves to play with concepts and states of mind, so this new mode enters his work, and is never entirely left behind. This is why *The Haw Lantern* must be seen as an opening – a ‘clearance’, perhaps – allowing new light to penetrate the density of Heaney’s poetry. He describes the novelty of this new mode of writing in visual terms: while the young poet identifies with a chestnut tree planted in the year of his birth, what happens later is different: “[...] all of a sudden, a couple of years ago, I began to think of the space where the

² Dennis O’Driscoll, meanwhile, focuses on the difference of Heaney’s own “frequency” from that of some salient Eastern European poets. His “general eschewal of irony or satire, traditional tools of the public poet”, separates him from poets such as Zbigniew Herbert or Miroslav Holub, while Heaney’s language has too much “density” to approach the “bare aesthetic” of poets such as Vasko Popa (2009, 59-60). This opinion, however, does not account for Heaney’s dramatic aeration of his typical “density” in *The Haw Lantern* or for the unusual type of irony present in these poems, which show that irony need not be conflated with satire.

tree had been or would have been [... and], in a way that I find hard to define, I began to identify with that space just as years before I had identified with the young tree" (1988, 3-4). This 'new place' is, to Heaney, 'all idea', an 'imagined realm' generated out of a concrete experience yet distinct from it. The way this place is defined will prove quite contentious.

This volume represents Heaney's fullest attempt to "aerate" (1988, 37) the linguistic texture of English-language poetry, thus rebelling against the concrete experiential paradigm dominating twentieth-century verse in English. The *daemonia* inspiring this attempt are the Eastern European poets Zbigniew Herbert, Czesław Miłosz, Miroslav Holub, and Osip Mandelstam. They represent a distinct group of influences that are radically different from that of Heaney's earlier exemplars, such as William Wordsworth, Patrick Kavanagh, and Ted Hughes³. These foreign poets allow him to pursue a highly complex relation to the abstract noun, which is usually associated with empty space and immateriality. Since this relation is in such stark contrast to the early work by which Heaney earned his fame, it is often glossed over as a blessedly short-lived setback to a happily rooted, placed, phenomenologically coherent developmental narrative. Yeats is also a figure who stands silent guard over Heaney's middle volumes, when the imperative to find images and symbols to express "our predicament"⁴ becomes crucial, and this Yeats is well matched by the Eastern Europeans. Surprisingly, however, Heaney does not attempt to place Miłosz's autobiographical work beside Wordsworth's influential *Prelude*, though Miłosz's Lithuanian forests and rivers are as stubbornly present in his work as Wordsworth's lakes and hills, and his young naturalist (a term frequently used in his translated work) is certainly as concerned with the development of his poetic faculties as Wordsworth's poet, and as troubled at the disjunction between Christian morality and biological amorality as the young Heaney. The relevance of folk custom, in particular, to so-called rational (a term always held in abeyance by Miłosz) ethics is particularly apposite to Heaney's work. Why, then, does Heaney's 1980s work represent such a rupture? Part of the reason is that Heaney himself dichotomizes these poetic mentors, implying that their influences are mutually unassimilable or untranslatable. Such a view, however, is belied by the poetry itself.

Alphabets, the original working title of *The Haw Lantern*, emphasizes its exploration of different approaches toward writing (see Brandes in O'Donoghue 2009, 19-36): the summoning and evacuation of physical

³ My book, *In Gratitude for All the Gifts: Seamus Heaney and Eastern Europe* (2012), considers the influence of Eastern European poets upon Heaney in detail and considers the cultural and political values associated with Eastern European poetry during this period as well as Heaney's particular interest in this poetry. This essay's focus is, necessarily, much narrower.

⁴ Bernard O'Donoghue aptly points out that this often-quoted phrase is Heaney's equivalent to Yeats's "befitting emblems of adversity" (2009, 9).

presence in “Clearances” (Heaney 1987, 31-32), the use of concrete allegory to explore an immaterial state characterized by absence (“From the Frontier of Writing”, “The Spoonbait”, “The Haw Lantern”), and the use of abstract parable, which dominates the volume (“Parable Island”, “From the Republic of Conscience”, “From the Land of the Unspoken”, and others). Writing in these different alphabets proves to be a challenging exercise, but one that Heaney sees as ‘necessary’. Later, he looks back on the seventies and eighties as a time of excessive self-abnegation:

What I was longing for was not quite stability but an active escape from the quicksand of relativism [...] for years I was bowed to the desk like some monk bowed over his prie-dieu, some dutiful contemplative pivoting his understanding in an attempt to bear his portion of the weight of the world, knowing himself incapable of heroic virtue or redemptive effect [...] Attending insufficiently to the diamond absolutes. (Heaney 1998, 452-458)

The monastic image effectively metaphorizes a psychological state Heaney seeks to escape. His “diamond absolutes” hearken back to the heroes of *North’s* “Exposure” (1975, 32-33) – Ovid, Osip Mandelstam, the Biblical David – and the longed-for “active escape” (Heaney 1998, 452) from relativism summons Czesław Miłosz via “Away from it All” (Heaney 1985, 16-17) a figure who analyzes his own precarious balance between contemplation and active participation in history (16), and speaks out against the perils of relativist thinking. Active escape from relativism is, of course, not the same as active participation in history (whose goals and triumphs are often relative), and what Heaney reveals in this passage from his Nobel acceptance speech in 1995 is his longing for a transcendent rather than a participatory condition, for the ‘absolute’ ideal that Miłosz seeks and justifies throughout his life, and his erstwhile doubt that he could reach it. In other words – contrary to virtually every opinion on the topic – Heaney is asking the Eastern Europeans to show him an active, salvational escape from relativism, so that he may glimpse the “diamond absolutes” proclaimed in their poetry, ‘not’ to demonstrate how active participation in history may take place in poems. “The Haw Lantern” imagines a universal and absolute test of conscience, metaphorized through a hawthorn twig’s “blood-prick that you wish would test and clear you, / its pecked-at ripeness that scans you, then moves on” (from *The Haw Lantern* 1987, 7). It assesses the individual, whose flinch externalizes his fear of judgment. The inevitability of failing this test, however, is universal. The poem’s claims upon us should not be diminished by a strictly local reading, even while critics such as William Scammell decries the poem’s very symbolic, abstract quality: “With ‘bonded pith and stone’ and ‘the blood-prick’ [...] the preacher mounts the lectern [...] When symbol usurps fact or fails to mesh with the literal, disbelief raises a basilisk eye” (1987, 42-44). The symbol, however, self-consciously exits the factual domain and undoes itself in

the process. It destabilizes its symbolic heft and even its status as metaphysical emblem, as Vendler reads it (1988, 68-69). It taunts the gazer – object of the haw lantern’s test – to confront his own desire for purity: in the words of another poem, “Who wanted the soul to ring true / And plain as a galvanized bucket / And would kick it to test it?” (“Two Quick Notes”, Heaney 1987, 16). One answer is unstated yet crucial: the reader or listener wants to believe in the equivalence of the object world and the world of spirit, so that the soul can indeed ring true to its metaphorical equivalent. Poem after poem wishes for an absolute ideal to ring true to a culpable, imperfect speaker. Meanwhile, Heaney’s focus on objects in earlier volumes has metamorphosed into a focus on the object’s inability to fully contain the metaphorical resonance that constitutes the true subject of the poem.

The manner in which Heaney responds to the diverse influences of the Eastern European poets here is by no means straightforward. Jay Parini’s criticism that *The Haw Lantern* suffers from “the oracular mode Heaney has cultivated to some degree in recent years”, and his concomitant belief that “the less ambitious his undertaking and more narrow the focus of the poem, the wider the implications of what he writes are likely to be” (1988, 71), belies the real source of critical dissatisfaction: namely, Heaney’s attempt to write in what he sees as an Eastern European style, which involves an “oracular mode” and a broad focus. The strongest pieces here, however, surely maintain as tight a focus as any of his early work. Neil Corcoran even sees the untranslatability of Eastern European “cultural freight” as a benefit: “A wily neutrality [...] seems to be one of the impulses behind his recent interest in parable poetry and in the relative invisibility, the lack of specific ‘cultural freight’, on offer in poetry in translation” (1989, 45). The “wily” quality of parable becomes more straightforward if we consider his parable poems as risky acts of cultural comparatism. These acts lead certain critics, such as Gerald Dawe, to question whether Heaney’s “imaginative contexts” (2007, 248) are plausible. Such questioning is not surprising. *The Haw Lantern* takes a large step away from the British and American territory that is familiar to Heaney. The volume compels its readers to recognize that “imaginative contexts” may, in fact, be borrowed from other cultures even while specific “freight” may remain untranslatable. Their exotic distance may be illusory if we consider their vital role in stimulating meditations and metaphorizations that are inspirational for Heaney.

Heaney’s critics are, however, to some extent encouraged by the poet himself, who concedes that the subject-matter of *The Haw Lantern* could not sustain him forever: “My unconscious, and indeed my aesthetic sense was saying [in 1991] that this subject was now exhausted [...] and] you couldn’t go on about it artistically” (Heaney in Murphy 2000, 89). ‘Going on’ in the moral-political vein would be ponderous and dangerously Romantic – not in the manner of Wordsworth but in the manner of Messianic nationalism, which has poisoned the soil of Ireland as well as of Eastern Europe. It would create

a modern martyrology about the Troubles that would threaten to dam the living stream of history; Yeats, another exemplary presence, knew how hearts with one purpose alone become dehumanized by their single-mindedness. Yet is this really what Heaney ‘does’ in *The Haw Lantern*? Let us take a poem ostensibly about the Troubles, “From the Frontier of Writing”, as an example.

“Everything is pure interrogation” (l. 7) after the initial shock of stopping at a roadblock, until “it happens again”:

And suddenly you’re through, arraigned yet freed,
as if you’d passed from behind a waterfall
on the black current of a tarmac road

past armour-plated vehicles, out between
the posted soldiers flowing and receding
like tree shadows into the polished windscreen. (Heaney 1987, 6)

It is simplistic and reductive to call this ‘a Troubles poem’. A secondary layer of meaning is revealed by its analogies, both successful and thwarted: the poem’s tercets are neither in *terza rima* nor blank verse, nor are they slant-rhymed, as are many of the volume’s poems. Its final image is analogical to that of “A Daylight Art”: “Happy the man [...] / whose nights are dreamless; / whose deep-sunk panoramas rise and pass / like daylight through the rod’s eye or the nib’s eye” (Heaney 1987, 9). Indeed, several poems of this volume echo each other. In this case, soldiers become shadows flowing like the waterfall of the preceding stanza, in contrast with the “deep-sunk panoramas” of the happy man who always practiced the right art, whose visions rise and recede “like daylight” through the pen of the “arraigned yet freed” writer or through the rod of the (Yeatsian?) fisherman. Both poems start in history and end in a dematerialized moment of transcendence just this side of mystical vision. Their changes correspond to a shift in pitch and diction, as the chatty “you’re through, [...] you’d passed” traverses the slow assonance of “posted soldiers flowing” into liquid shapelessness, the very image of structure turning into its opposite. This may be as close to an inversion of the self-inwoven simile (see Ricks 1984, 34, 51-58) as we can find in Heaney’s work.

Critiques of *The Haw Lantern* turn on the opposition of abstraction to concreteness as well as the question of proper influences. Michael Allen thinks Heaney’s parables reveal the desiccation of his youthful creativity and invoke a “trendy aesthetic morality” that produces “slight” poems (1988, 109-110), implying that the concrete and autobiographical is the proper home of poetry. Heaney’s aim, meanwhile, is opposite to this: in the winter of 1979, he calls for poetry to “connect the prose and the passion, the world of sensibility with the world of telegrams and anger. Connect the literary action with an original justifying vision and with the political contingencies of the times.

The usual response to Forster's imperative now seems to be something like a shrug of the debilitated poetic shoulders" (1981, 646; the article was originally a 1979 conference presentation). The struggle for the right of poetry to link vision with "contingencies of the times" is a struggle against debilitation of intent, of narrowness and cynical apathy.

Heaney is taking on the influence of poets who engage both worlds through a focus on the spirit, what Derek Walcott calls "the terrain of the abstract noun" (1996, 147). His "trendy aesthetic morality" reveals his participation in a mid-century fashion for Eastern European writing (see Heaney in Brandes 1988, 10), but he insists that the influence goes much deeper than this: "When I read, even in translation, the poetry of the Poles, I find sub-cultural recognitions in myself which are never called up or extended by English poetry" (see Heaney in Brandes 1988, 10). They have to do with the groundedness of Eastern European poets' moral examinations, which are rooted in their socio-political realities, in Catholicism, and in the "truth-seeking dimension of poetry", which demands fuller exposition than the current practice of "dwelling upon a privileged moment of insight or joy" allows (see Heaney in Brandes 1988, 10).

Heaney struggles to define the language of the parable poems, jumping from neologism to anecdote, because he would only feel completely confident inhabiting this kind of language in *Seeing Things* (1991). This broadly acclaimed volume is inversely grounded (with its roots in the air, as it were) in Heaney's parable poems of *The Haw Lantern*. Its prototype poem, "Parable Island", drops an ironic wink at its own effort:

[...] you can't be sure that parable is not
at work already retrospectively,
since all their early manuscripts are full

of stylized eye-shapes and recurrent glosses
in which those old revisionists derive
the word *island* from roots in *eye* and *land*. (Heaney 1987, 11)

This does not readily summon the Eastern European poets who are the ostensible sources of such "pseudo-translation" (Heaney in Brandes 1988, 18). Instead of addressing politics seriously, the poem gently mocks the very triumphal etymologizing that marked Heaney's early toponymic poems. Instead of the "hill of clear water" tenderly described in "Anahorish" (Heaney 1972, 16) or the recalcitrant phoneme of "Broagh" (Heaney 1972, 27) that created a linguistic community of its own, we see an obdurate nation of people who "yield to nobody in their belief / that the country is an island" (1987, 10). They glory in their false etymologies and mythologies, thinking that "some day" – but not now – they will "mine the ore of truth" (1987, 10). Retrospective parable, indeed: the poem is not a sustained meta-commentary on

Ireland (Smith 2005, 19) but a parody. “Those old revisionists” (1987, 11) are not to be trusted, and their absurd etymologies are merely subjects of fun. The effect is a poem both riddling and parodic, mocking its own anthropology because it is empty at its centre.

Empty centres abound in *The Haw Lantern*. They are not, however, indicative of an evisceration of significance or a waning of belief in immanent meaning – just the contrary. They serve as ideals, while their representational function has been whittled down to a minimum. Thus they cannot simply be viewed as effects of epiphany, as Edna Longley implies, dubbing these moments “sublimated deracinations” and intimating that they seem forced, as evidenced by the declarations that accompany them (“clearances that suddenly stood open” or, *pace* Eliot, “the light opened in silence”) (Longley 1988, 79). She clearly prefers more grounded verse. These visions, however, do not always deracinate, but anchor the concrete moment in a system of abstract ideals that are as real as earthly phenomena:

The arrow whose migration is its mark
Leaves a whispered breath in every socket.
The great test over, while the gut’s still humming,
This time it travels out of all knowing
Perfectly aimed towards the vacant centre. (Heaney 1987, 22)

These lines, ending the brief “In Memoriam: Robert Fitzgerald”, echo the more celebrated “Clearances” (Heaney 1987, 24-32) sonnets upon the death of Heaney’s mother, which move from utterly specific, concrete memory to the sense (not quite assertion) that “The space we stood around had been emptied / Into us to keep” (Heaney 1987, 31). Fitzgerald, translator from the Greek, remains unnamed because the actual man is the “vacant centre” toward which this evocation aims itself. These lines do not describe an epiphany: the arrow travels “out of all knowing”. The gods do not make themselves manifest. We do not achieve knowledge or recognition, but something different from both – pure, evacuated vision. We see what we cannot know. Odysseus’ test becomes a metaphysical lesson rather than a simple act of revenge in Heaney’s description, so that the poem’s elegiac function is instrumentalized to serve its true interest in evoking a “perfection” that we can only know through vacancy. It is echoed by “The Pitchfork” in *Seeing Things*. Again, an object is aimed toward a vacant space, yet the viewer learns a further necessity in the later poem:

[... he] has learned at last to follow that simple lead
Past its own aim, out to an other side
Where perfection – or nearness to it – is imagined
Not in the aiming but the opening hand. (Heaney 1991b, 23)

This is fundamentally the same speaker as in the earlier poem, only he has been led further toward the “other side” of knowledge. The qualities of this “other side” are opposite to the young Heaney’s world of spades and butter-churns and tinsmith’s scoops. It is not merely death and “The Pitchfork” is not an elegy. Whereas *The Haw Lantern* sometimes uses the occasion of death to contemplate this realm, *Seeing Things* often disposes of the elegiac occasion altogether. The “other side” is one where “perfection” is re-imagined in terms of dematerialization, not substance. It awakens Heaney’s impulse, present for many years before *The Haw Lantern* (see “Exposure” in *North*, 1975), to explore the *via negativa*, the apophatic. For Heaney, the issue is metaphorizing the apophatic as a mode of knowledge. To be metaphorized, it must summon the concrete in order to evacuate it⁵. Yet Heaney is less interested in absence *per se* than in an exploration of ideals, in states that are beyond knowledge or types of perfection that defy the empirical imagination.

John Desmond attempts to show that Heaney’s aesthetic is based upon a belief in “a transcendent metaphysical order that is the ultimate source of meaning in his work” (2009, 2-3), which has its roots in his reading of Yeats and Miłosz. The word “metaphysical”, used frequently by these poets’ Polish critics, is used less frequently in English, and Desmond’s reclamation of the term is welcome, even while Heaney keeps his feet firmly on the ground in his expository work and never allows himself to write the philosophically discursive essays that Miłosz does or to construct an elaborate Yeatsian theosophy. Nor does he speak of good and evil as unabashedly as the Manichean Miłosz. The metaphysical is, however, an important realm for Heaney, one that must be recognized in order for poetry to get off the ground. The immateriality at the heart of *The Haw Lantern* summons certain orders of thought – the metaphysical, and value – the ethical.

Heaney’s poetry, however, still maintains a phenomenological basis, and this is why his ontological and ethical allegories are slightly undercut by an ironic voice that recognizes their unverifiability: “Our unspoken assumptions have the force / of revelation” (“From the Land of the Unspoken”, 1987, 19). This is why, in “From the Frontier of Writing” (Heaney 1987, 6), Heaney must see the invisible in terms of the visible. This is why both visible and invisible realms are meticulously delineated in poems such as “Clearances” sonnets 7 and 8, in which the death of the poet’s mother and the felling of a chestnut tree cause “clearances” and “nowheres” to suddenly stand open (Heaney 1987, 31-32). They allow us to see the invisible, with absolute precision, as a gap in the concrete world. Such poems can only be called epiphanies in a loose

⁵ Helen Vendler captures the difficulty of analyzing this stage of Heaney’s writing when she notes that it is difficult to trope “the invisible” when it is not seen in religious terms as God or heaven (1996, 38).

sense of the word because they remain guided by phenomenology more than epistemology⁶. Heaney does not show us what the act of clearance allows us to know. He can only gesture toward what it allows us to see.

Time after time in both *The Haw Lantern* and *Seeing Things*, physical objects are lifted into the air, either rising into the ether or falling back down to earth: trees, pitchforks, settle beds, and bicycle wheels are lifted out of their obdurate physicality and turned light as feathers. A hint of ‘nonsensical’ humor often accompanies the metamorphosis, yet there are far-reaching conclusions to be drawn from such acts of “clearance”, aeration, and re-vision, as in “The Settle Bed”:

[...] whatever is given

Can always be reimagined, however four-square,
Plank-thick, hull-stupid and out of its time
It happens to be. You are free as the lookout. (Heaney 1991b, 29)

If *Seeing Things* enters ‘the marvellous’ unapologetically, earlier poems pave its way, with their awkwardness and humour offering an apology for their bizarre transfigurations. The visionary realm, though, is always available to us, the poet affirms. This poem offers a parable more concrete than those of *The Haw Lantern*, yet it helps to retrospectively explain the technique inaugurated by the previous volume: summoning the visionary realm will always entail an awkward reimagining, even if the object in question is not “hull-stupid”, while the act’s deliberateness will push it beyond the awkward and into the numinous. This may serve as a counter-example to Yeats’s work. The spirit world is not summoned through oneiric visions but through conscious scrutiny of “plank-thick” phenomena. Such phenomena are also frequently summoned in the work of the Eastern European poets who inspire Heaney.

Stan Smith holds that Heaney starts to retreat from his previous “density of metaphor” in *The Haw Lantern*, opting instead for the “cooler” procedure of simile, which neatly sets apart tenor and vehicle (Smith in Allen 1997, 241). A glance at *The Haw Lantern*, however, proves that most poems are still built around a central metaphor. “Density”, though, is a word well chosen, because as several poems question, query, or spread out their central

⁶ For a counter-opinion, see Jonathan Allison’s “Seamus Heaney and the Romantic Image”, in which he offers three various definitions of epiphany – by Ashton Nichols, Northrop Frye, and Meyer Howard Abrams. They are all, to him, applicable to Heaney’s work, even though Nichols’ secular definition differs considerably from Frye and Abrams’ definitions, which employ religious language (“the oracular”, “revelation”). Allison does not find these views incompatible, nor does he ascertain exactly what is revealed, or what message the oracle carries down to the poet at such moments, though his comparison of definitions is quite useful. See Nichols 1987, 12-28; Allison 1998, 184-201.

metaphors (such as “From the Frontier of Writing”, discussed above), their figurations become acutely self-conscious. They do not indicate a Romantic desire to overcome the dualism of spirit and object. Instead, such metaphors call attention to their own inorganicism, their constructedness. This is the least visible but most pervasive effect of Eastern European poetry upon Heaney’s work. It is a form of irony, albeit a subtle one, and is capable of creating a modicum of imagistic awkwardness: “[...] we say / The soul may be compared / Unto a spoonbait” (Heaney 1987, 21). Such irony registers a distance toward the object, whether or not it is introduced by a simile; it highlights the work of the poet’s mind upon the substance of the poem.

The task of *The Haw Lantern* is to avoid the single-mindedness that may result from attention to a merely uninspired reality, but also to eschew the grandiosity of the vatic register. Heaney tries to assimilate a different, indeed “foreign”, mode of writing by inscribing an awareness of difficulty, even strain, into his work, at the same time as he asserts the essential translatability of an Eastern European idiom. Translatability may signal potential assimilability, but also, importantly, may not. One mode of writing may be translated into another without fully naturalizing its idiom. Moreover, it is dangerous to view either assimilability or naturalization as indices of quality or literary success – Heaney’s achievement should not be judged by his ability to efface all traces of foreignness from the very foreign idiom of Eastern European writing. Nor should it be judged by our scholarly ability to justify it in the first place: the poetry, always comes first, its claims upon us not homologous to the claims of theoretical arguments which may or may not justify its conceptual bases. Perhaps seemingly unassimilable modes of writing do not need theoretical benediction, as it were, but can remain important and influential for each other while resisting full assimilation. In this exceptional volume Heaney shows himself to be an awkward visionary, a self-conscious celebrant of the *via negativa* who seeks perfection in a “vacant centre” (Heaney 1987, 22), dematerialized and ideal. Its beauties cannot finally be explained in historic-political terms even while the possibility and even necessity of comparatism across the margins of Europe remains powerful and potentially inspirational.

Works Cited

- Allen Michael (1988), “Holding Course”, *The Irish Review* 3, 108-118.
 Allison Jonathan (1996), “Seamus Heaney’s Yeats”, *Yeats: An Annual of Critical and Textual Studies* 14, 19-47.
 — (1998), “Seamus Heaney and the Romantic Image”, *The Sewanee Review* 106, 2, 184-201.
 Andrews Elmer (1992), *Seamus Heaney: A Collection of Critical Essays*, London, Macmillan.
 Bolecki Włodzimierz (2007), “Myśli różne o postkolonializmie. Wstęp do tekstów nie napisanych” (Various Thoughts on Postcolonialism. An Introduction to Unwritten Texts), *Teksty Drugie* 4, 6-14.

- Brandes Rand (1988), "Interview with Seamus Heaney 15 April 1988", *Salmagundi* 80, 4-21.
- (2009), "Seamus Heaney's Working Titles: From 'Advancements of Learning' to 'Midnight Anvil'", in Bernard O'Donoghue (ed.), *The Cambridge Companion to Seamus Heaney*, Cambridge, Cambridge UP, 19-36.
- Brown Terence (1988), "The Witnessing Eye", *Poetry Ireland Review* 21, 59-62.
- Clifford James (1988), *The Predicament of Culture: Twentieth-Century Ethnography, Literature, and Art*, Cambridge, Harvard UP.
- Corcoran Neil (1986), *Seamus Heaney*, London, Faber and Faber.
- (1989), "Heaney's Joyce, Eliot's Yeats", *Agenda* 27, 1, 37-47.
- , ed. (1992), *The Chosen Ground: Essays on the Contemporary Poetry of Northern Ireland*, Bridgend, Seren Books.
- Dawe Gerald (1987), "Reviews of Ciaran Carson, *The Irish for No*, Seamus Heaney, *The Haw Lantern*, and Paul Muldoon, *Meeting the British*", *The Linenhall Review* 4, 3, 24-25.
- (2007), *The Proper Word: Collected Criticism: Ireland, Poetry and Politics*, Omaha, Creighton UP.
- Desmond John (2009), *Gravity and Grace: Seamus Heaney and the Force of Light*, Waco, Baylor UP.
- Foster J.W. (2009), *Between Shadows: Modern Irish Writing and Culture*, Dublin, Irish Academic Press.
- Heaney Seamus (1972), *Wintering Out*, London, Faber and Faber.
- (1975), *North*, London, Faber and Faber.
- (1979), *Field Work*, London, Faber and Faber.
- (1981), "Current Unstated Assumptions about Poetry", *Critical Inquiry* 7, 4, 645-651.
- (1984), *Station Island*, London, Faber and Faber.
- (1987), *The Haw Lantern*, London, Faber and Faber.
- (1988), *The Government of the Tongue: Selected Prose, 1978-1987*, London, Faber and Faber.
- (1989), "Poets' Round Table: 'A Common Language'", *PN Review* 15, 4, 39-47.
- (1991a), "A Poet's Europe", in European Festival of Poetry, *A Poet's Europe: European Poetry Festival (13th-1991)*, Leuven, Europese Vereniging ter Bevordering van de Poëzie, 156-161.
- (1991b), *Seeing Things*, London, Faber and Faber.
- (1998), "Crediting Poetry", in Id., *Opened Ground: Poems 1966-1996*, London, Faber and Faber, 445-467.
- Kay Magdalena (2012), *In Gratitude for All the Gifts: Seamus Heaney and Eastern Europe*, Toronto, University of Toronto Press.
- Longley Edna (1988), "Putting on the International Style", *The Irish Review* 5, 75-81.
- Miłosz Czesław (1988), *Native Realm: A Search for Self-Definition*, trans. by Catherine Leach, Berkeley, University of California Press.
- Moore D.C. (2005), "Is The Post - in postcolonial the Post in 'Post-Soviet'? Toward a Global Postcolonial Critique", in Gaurav Desai, Supriya Nair (eds), *Postcolonialism*, New Brunswick, Rutgers UP, 514-538.
- Murphy Mike (2000), "Interview with Seamus Heaney", in Clíodhna Ni Anluain (ed.), *Reading the Future: Irish Writers in Conversation with Mike Murphy*, Dublin, The Lilliput Press, 81-97.

- Nichols Ashton (1987), *The Poetics of Epiphany: Nineteenth-Century Origins of the Modern Literary Moment*, Tuscaloosa, University of Alabama Press.
- O'Donoghue Bernard (2009), *The Cambridge Companion to Seamus Heaney*, Cambridge, Cambridge UP.
- O'Driscoll Dennis (2009), "Heaney in Public", in Bernard O'Donoghue (ed.), *The Cambridge Companion to Seamus Heaney*, Cambridge, Cambridge UP, 56-72.
- O'Leary Timothy (2008), "Governing the Tongue: Heaney among the Philosophers", *Textual Practice* 22, 4, 657-677.
- Parini Jay (1988), "The 'Co-opted and Obliterated Echo': On Heaney's 'Clearances'", *Salmagundi* 80, 71-75.
- Ricks Christopher (2002 [1984]), *The Force of Poetry*, Oxford, Oxford UP.
- Scammell William (1987), "The Singing Robes of Art", *Poetry Review* 77, 3, 42-44.
- Smith Stan (1997), "The Distance Between: Seamus Heaney", in Michael Allen (ed.), *Seamus Heaney*, Basingstoke, Macmillan Press Ltd., 223-251.
- (2005), *Irish Poetry and the Construction of Modern Identity*, Dublin, Irish Academic Press.
- Stallworthy John (1982), "The Poet as Archaeologist: W.B. Yeats and Seamus Heaney", *The Review of English Studies* 33, 130, 158-174.
- Vendler Helen (1988), "On Three Poems by Seamus Heaney", *Salmagundi* 80, 66-70.
- (1996), "Seamus Heaney's Invisibles", *Harvard Review* 10, 37-47.
- Walcott Derek (1996), *Conversations with Derek Walcott*, ed. by William Baer, Jackson, University Press of Mississippi.

“Secure the Bastion of Sensation”: Seamus Heaney’s and Czesław Miłosz’s Poetry of the Everyday¹

Tomasz Bilczewski

Jagiellonian University (<t.bilczewski@uj.edu.pl>)
Translated by Agnieszka Marczyk and Tomasz Bilczewski

Abstract:

This essay attempts to situate Seamus Heaney’s poetics of the everyday in relation to the work of Czesław Miłosz, who for many years served as one of his sources of inspiration. Although Heaney frequently treated Polish poetry as a lesson in the poet’s ethical responsibility, he also found in it, thanks to translations, a testimony to amazement at seemingly trite objects and trivial phenomena. A comparative analysis of selected poems confronts Miłosz’s and Heaney’s poetry of the everyday with the long tradition of literary epiphanies, paying particular attention to the Romantic and Modernist moments, and to both poets’ turn towards the Dutch masters.

Keywords: Dutch painting, epiphany, poetics of the everyday, Polish-Irish literary relations, translation

1. *Translation: the road not taken*

Today, despite geographical distance, a certain sense of kinship connects Poland and Ireland – realms separated by hundreds of miles of land and sea.

¹This is a modified version of an essay published in *Komparatystyka i interpretacja. Nowoczesne badania porównawcze wobec translatoologii* (Comparison and Interpretation. Modern Comparative Research Methods for the Fields of Translation), Kraków, Universitas 2010. Its translation into English has been prepared as part of the project “Comparative Literature and National Literature: Interpretations, Representations, Translations” (National Program for the Development of the Humanities), 2014-2018.

This kinship does not simply result from the awareness of a characteristic interweaving of public life and religious traditions in both countries, or from their painful history of colonial subjugation. It is also not just an outcome of the intense experience of modernization brought by the last two decades. In the case of the Green Island, this experience transformed the grim image of the forsaken homeland of Joyce's *Dubliners* into a myth of a promised land that attracts thousands of youth. In Poland's case, it changed the image of a country enslaved by totalitarianism into an icon of young democracies and successful political transformations. The special kinship between Poland and Ireland also stems from the cultural contacts that were revitalized in the early 1990s – and in this context, the modern poetry of both countries has played a crucially important role (Jarniewicz 2007; Kay 2012). For it is quite significant that – to use Stanisław Barańczak's words about Seamus Heaney – “despite a language barrier, in the person of Ireland's greatest living poet our poetry has one of its most insightful readers in the West; what's more, it has exerted significant influence over his works” (1994, 18). Barańczak's opinion is directly confirmed by the Irish Nobel Laureate's collection of essays entitled *The Government of the Tongue* (published in the late 80s), where we find penetrating readings of the works of Zbigniew Herbert (“Atlas of Civilization”) and Czesław Miłosz (“The Impact of Translation”) (Heaney 1988)². In his essay on Miłosz, a slightly altered version of an article initially published in the *Yale Review*, Heaney describes his path toward a deeper understanding of the culture that nurtured him and his poetry.

I am reminded of Stephen Dedalus's enigmatic declaration that the shortest way to Tara was via Holyhead, implying that departure from Ireland and an inspection of the country from the outside was the surest way of getting to the core of the Irish experience. I wonder if we might not nowadays affirm, analogously, that the shortest way to Whitby, the monastery where Caedmon sang the first Anglo-Saxon verses, is via Warsaw and Prague. To put it more directly, contemporary English poetry has become aware of the insular and eccentric nature of English experience in all the literal and extended meanings of those adjectives. (Heaney 1986, 8)

For Heaney, the path that took him through the geography of Central Europe to the core of Irishness – as if this core could be revealed more fully only by means of a certain displacement – had both collective and individual components; it was a search for both poetry's place in the community and

² It is worth mentioning that Miłosz was also interested in Heaney's poetry – something that can be gleaned, for example, from his commentary about the poem “In memoriam M.K.H.” included in *A Book of Luminous Things*: “All poetry of Seamus Heaney is rooted in his native Ireland, in his country childhood, country labors, and Catholic rites” (Miłosz 1996, 183).

the ethical sources of Heaney's own writing. This path led him through the experience of translation, but not simply in the elementary, 'philological' sense of this concept, which equates translation with movement between source and target linguistic realms. While remaining outside the bounds of Polish, Heaney treated translations as peculiar questions flowing out from within his own native tradition – questions that are especially valuable because they are, paradoxically, external to this tradition to some extent. They are simultaneously one's own and someone else's.

The language barrier also led to the immersion of Heaney's reading of East Central European literature in that aspect of translation which some theorists refer to as cultural translation (Asad 1986, 141-164; Damrosch 2003, 326-330; Bassnett and Lefevere 1990, 3-13; Staten 2005, 111-126). The Irish poet tried to compensate for that which is ultimately inaccessible – even in the deepest recesses of the English language – by ceaseless exploration of the Central European context, and by attempts to situate this context in relation to the specificity of Irish culture. Precisely this intimate relationship with the context supported, and later illuminated, the richness of meanings that escape interlingual transfer; it also made it possible for Heaney to co-author, along with Stanisław Barańczak, an excellent translation of Jan Kochanowski's *Laments* (1994). This is how he described his contextual explorations in "The Impact of Translation", evoking his encounter with Miłosz's "Incantation" (2003, 239):

It counted for much that this poem was written by somebody who resisted the Nazi occupation of Poland and broke from the ranks of the People's Republic after the war and paid for the principle and pain of all that with a lifetime of exile and self-scrutiny. The poem, in fact, is a bonus accruing to a life lived in the aftermath of right and hurtful decisions. (Heaney 1986, 3)

For Heaney, the experience of poets whose works resisted the intellectual and emotional emptiness of totalitarianism was tantamount to the defence of human dignity. It was the right measure of poetic diction, a specific test of credibility, which, in Western literary circles, had been replaced by "a permissive, centrally heated, grant-aided pluralism of fashions and schools, a highly amplified language of praise which becomes the language of promotion and marketing" (Heaney 1986, 7). He made the most talented self-reflective writers into *ironists and dandies*, casting jealous glances at that otherworld where the risk of writing and creative independence was charged with suffering.

As Heaney saw, the aesthetic sensibility of Central European artists was shaped by trials where the stakes were not the more or less capricious recognition granted by elites but rather their own fate; and it seems that for him this sensibility – by means of translation – restored balance to poetry in the world of "non-defeat and non-invasion since 1066":

[...] there was a road not taken in poetry in English in this century, a road traveled once by the young Auden and the middle-aged Muir. [...] Consequently we are all the more susceptible to translations which arrive like messages from those holding their own much, much farther down that road not taken by us – because, happily, it was a road not open to us. (Heaney 1986, 14)

The authenticity of experience and the credibility of language were thus phenomena which Heaney sought – through the mediation of translation – in both Miłosz’s and Herbert’s volumes of verse. He made these into a pillar of his own program of ethical poetry, which carried the burden of both demanding responsibility and crystalline diction of moral authority. His search was a type of calling out from the depths of modernity for the restoration of the romantic primacy of poetry; it was a distrust of the conveniences of modernization and the lethargy of the postmodern era:

We who live and have our being in English know [...] that our recent history of consumerist freedom and eerie nuclear security seems less authentic to us than the tragically tested lives of those who live beyond the pale of all this fiddle. Which is why the note sounded by translated poetry from that world beyond is so credible, desolating, and resuscitative. (Heaney 1986, 14)

The path of ethical credibility, which Heaney followed in the footsteps of Eastern European poets, did not end with the symbolic and historical fall of the Berlin Wall. But one can easily notice that after 1989, the Irishman’s poetic work became more courageous in taking roads he had travelled only rarely before. What I have in mind here is primarily Heaney’s turn toward the poetry of the everyday, where one of the most important signposts derived from his readings of Miłosz, who, in the 1990s, reinforced his interest in the extraordinariness of ordinary objects. Thereby, loosely speaking, the centre of gravity of Heaney’s poetry also shifted slightly from poetic diction characteristic of the inheritance bequeathed by Yeats – with responsibilities toward history and collective memory – to the language of things that characterizes Joyce’s *Epiphanies*.

2. *The Heartland of the Ordinary*

Heaney’s “The Journey Back”, which opens the first part of the 1991 volume *Seeing Things*, introduces the clash of duty and the everyday:

Larkin’s shade surprised me. He quoted Dante:

“Daylight was going and the umber air
Soothing every creature on the earth,
Freeing them from their labours everywhere.

I alone was girding myself to face
 The ordeal of my journey and my duty
 And not a thing had changed, as rush-hour buses
 Bore the drained and laden through the city.
 I might have been a wise king setting out
 Under the Christmas lights – except that

It felt more like the forewarned journey back
 Into the heartland of the ordinary.
 Still my old self. Ready to knock one back.

A nine-to-five man who had seen poetry". (Heaney 1991, 134)

It opens with a rather strange vision on a busy city street: Philip Larkin's shade recites lines from the second canto of Dante's *Inferno*. This is odd because the lines do not suit him at all. Larkin, who never left England and used to say that he never read foreign poetry, speaks the language of *The Divine Comedy* to talk about a sleepless watch and the poet's duty; and he evokes the cultural background implicit in the *topos* of a journey. This includes something that was close to Heaney – the romantic tradition of visionary creation combined with the duty of a tireless *homo viator*, who is always ready to go. But after the lofty register of the opening lines there appears a contrasting image, a return to the urban here and now, to a peak-time busy street and the characteristic red of the jamming buses. The pathos of the first lines is softened by the ordinariness of subsequently shown difficulties and concerns. Softened but also threatened: "Odi profanum vulgus et arceo" – the distant echo of Horace's words resounds here as if in lyrical suspense between the visionary's duty and the experience of pressing ordinariness. The romantic readiness to embark on a journey turns out to be readiness to take a step back, to oscillate between the lofty world of poetry and the land of unlimited commonness. Illumination is given not so much to the prophet and the chosen one, but to the clerk: "a nine-to-five man who had seen poetry". Instead of leading toward successive peaks of initiation, the Larkin figure simply leads the reader onto the street, among "ordinary" people.

We will find many traces of voyage in Miłosz's works from the 1990s as well. This arises, above all, from the characteristically Polish cultural experience of exile followed by a return journey to the source, to the mythical land of childhood and lost innocence. Besides lofty elegiac tones, here one can glimpse – in the few scant verses of "A Meadow", for example – a turn toward extraordinary simplicity:

It was a riverside meadow, lush, from before the day harvest,
 On an immaculate day in the sun of June.
 I searched for it, found it, recognized it.
 Grasses and flowers grew there familiar in my childhood.

With half-closed eyelids I absorbed luminescence.
 And the scent garnered me, all knowing ceased.
 Suddenly I felt I was disappearing and weeping with joy. (Miłosz 2003, 597)

An image of a meadow, an emblem of lost happiness, preserved in memory for years, comes alive in a sudden moment of retrieval and recognition that takes on the character of a special illumination – the flawless *luminescence* of a June day. The cycle of searching ends, there is a return to the beginning, and the intellect gives way to emotion (“all knowledge ceased”); the “I” dissolves in sensual fulfillment, and the subject is purified by tears. The uniqueness of the poem is determined, above all, by the context – for it is only in the company of the erudite texts of *Facing the River* (Miłosz 1995) that the simple image of this poem gains its significance. Something similar also happens for Heaney, who, in poems composed in his final decade, moved more and more frequently from intellectual journeys into the distant past (the realm of “The Tollund Man” [1975], for example) toward the land of the ordinary. In the poem “A Sofa in the Forties” (from the *The Spirit Level*), an old kitchen sofa is, on the one hand, something that “held out as itself, [...] earthbound for sure”, while on the other, it turns out to be a vehicle of time, “potentially heavenbound” (Heaney 1996a, 10). “The carved, curved ends, / Black leatherette and ornate gauntness” turn into a train carriage, which enters “history and ignorance / Under the wireless shelf” (Heaney 1996a, 12). At the same time, as is often the case for Heaney, a forties sofa, together with other objects, is a depository of memory, a witness to the formation of identity, a personal history surprisingly interwoven with the history of the Holocaust, and a return to childhood.

Heaney also gestures toward childhood in the sonnet “Fosterling” (Morzowski 1997, 7-32):

“That heavy greenness fostered by water”

At school I loved one picture’s heavy greenness –
 Horizons rigged with windmills’ arms and sails.
 The millhouses’ still outlines. Their in-placeness
 Still more in place when mirrored in canals.
 I can’t remember never having known
 The immanent hydraulics of a land
 Of *glar* and *glit* and floods of *dailigone*.
 My silting hope. My lowlands of the mind.

Heaviness of being. And poetry
 Sluggish in the doldrums of what happens.
 Me waiting until I was nearly fifty
 To credit marvels. Like the tree-clock of tin cans
 The tinkers made. So long for air to brighten,
 Time to be dazzled and the heart to lighten. (Heaney 1991, 50)

In the opening lines one is struck by the stability and stillness of the landscape, with "windmills' arms" on the horizon that sets a limit for the sense of sight. The ubiquitous stability of the image, perceptible thanks to the persistence of things in their rightful place ("their in-placeness"), is magnified by reflections in water surfaces, as if canals constituted one of the frameworks for correctly situating the individual elements of a landscape engulfed by "heavy greenness". Besides the surface which yields to sensory perception, to the authority of the eye, there is also an underground realm that rules this land, pulling it into its depths, into mud and slime: *glit* and *glar*. These words, deriving from the Ulster dialect, gain something like double significance here: they not only describe the observed world's way of being, its physicality, but they also become a specific mental landscape, overlaying the perspective of the "lowlands of the mind", rendered in translation through an image of the Netherlands. In this octave, the static nature of the landscape thus combines with the stasis of the mind; the laws of inertia and order, together with the limiting function of the horizon, describe the appearance of the world of objects, and simultaneously determine the world of language, the means of poetic expression (through the regularity of rhyme, for instance).

The heaviness of being and the heaviness of speaking – rendered through the metaphor of a boggy land – coexist in a sphere of mutual relations: language lags behind events and gets bogged down (something perfectly emphasized by the adjective "sluggish") in the stillness of what is happening. The vision sketched out in the octave has a parallel reflection – as if in the water's surface – in the opening lines of the sextet. Here, however, both the break-down of a certain regularity of the iambic rhythm and the movement that breaks into the various layers of poetic imagery unveil another plane of the poem – a plane of illumination, of openness to miracles. This is associated with a shift in the temporal perspective: the youth's way of seeing matures to finally suddenly become transformed after nearly fifty years. The wandering tinkers and their marvellous tree-clock of tin cans enter into the persistence of objects, into the heavy greenness. The semantics of the final couplet detaches it from the rest of the sonnet. The subject seems to leave the boggy land behind, carried on the wings of illumination; and this is accompanied by the liberation of words from the order of rules (the already mentioned rhythmical irregularity), and openness to what is unique and unrepeatable. The artistic construction itself, deeply rooted in tradition, thus becomes an attempt to express the experienced openness to reality and simultaneous intensification of consciousness.

Something similar was also the case for Miłosz, as we can glimpse in his poem "Blacksmith Shop":

I liked the bellows operated by rope.
A hand or foot pedal – I don't remember which.

But that blowing, and the blazing of the fire!
 And a piece of iron in the fire, held there by tongs,
 Red, softened for the anvil,
 Beaten with a hammer, bent into a horseshoe,
 Thrown in a bucket of water, sizzle, steam.

And horses hitched to be shod,
 Tossing their manes; and in the grass by the river
 Plowshares, sledge runners, harrows waiting for repair

At the entrance, my bare feet on the dirt floor,
 Here, gusts of heat; at my back, white clouds.
 I stare and stare. It seems I was called for this:
 To glorify things just because they are. (Miłosz 2003, 503)

In this poetic praise of vital energy and everyday work, there appears a sensibility similar to that of a child, who is looking carefully, standing bare-foot at the entrance to the shop. Following the law of first impressions, his senses pull out individual objects from his surroundings. The prosaic activity of shodding a horse engenders a poetry of reality, which can be read with the senses: touch (“bare feet”), sight (“red piece of iron”), and hearing (“hammer beats, sizzle, steam”). This synesthetic spectacle awakens the observer’s awareness as he views the extraordinariness of ordinary work, standing at the threshold, from where he can see gusts of heat and the coolness of clouds, as well as the horses, vibrant with life and tossing their manes; each element is important and the tiniest of details is significant: plowshares and sledge runners waiting by the river for a meeting with fire and hammer strikes. Here, the senses open something Heaney calls “the music of what happens” in his poem “Song” from *Field Work* (Heaney 1979, 56), something that lives thanks to the power of words in “the mud-flowers of dialect” and in “the immortelles of perfect pitch”, something that awakens in – so to speak – the glorification of things just because they are – an act to which Miłosz was called.

Striving to preserve contact with concrete tangible matter in its diversity and miraculous nature and sharpening the senses to the point where they can perceive the wonder of individual things – such are the characteristic qualities of both “Fosterling” and “A Meadow”.

3. *The flash of epiphany and the art of contemplated ordinariness*

The lines we just discussed turn our attention toward literary epiphanies. The Greek term *epiphaneia*, which signified an unexpected appearance or marvelous form in classical literature, initially had secular connotations. But as early as the fourth century B.C.E., this term gained a sacred dimen-

sion and became tied to the moment of a deity's revelation. The Greco-Roman world of polytheistic beliefs was full of epiphanic initiations since the realm of the gods was believed to be situated somewhere close by, almost at hand. Great gods visited mortals by taking on recognizable forms because an epiphany in the fullness of a deity's majesty would be devastating to humans – Semele tragically learned this when she wished to encounter Zeus directly. And Dionysus, who was saved from the ashes of her body, often appeared to humans as a girl, lion, bull, or panther.

The Judaeo-Christian tradition significantly enriched the epiphanic experience. This was accomplished, above all, through the mystery of God's *kenosis*, realized through the willingness to take on a human body and enter human history – something Sha'ul experienced in his dramatically tense encounter with Christ. The power of this meeting led to *metanoia*, and the extraordinary event on the road to Damascus turned out to be the beginning of a great mission. Much later, in his *Confessions*, St. Augustine repeatedly wrote about the clarity of mind that accompanies an epiphany, about contemplating the moment, and the ability to see an invisible dimension of things through their visible forms. The experience of epiphany, moreover, nurtured the Christian mystical tradition, inherently tied to the Mosaic symbolism of a flame which burns without destroying, and which – as in Pascal's *Mémorial* (1654) – leads to a great transformation. It was precisely this tradition that was later evoked by such great visionaries of Romanticism as Johann Wolfgang von Goethe, William Blake, William Wordsworth, or, in the Polish context, Adam Mickiewicz and Juliusz Słowacki (Fiut 1998, 43-44). The history of the Greek *epiphaneia* thus unifies within itself – cumulating, as it were – the richness of the Judaeo-Christian tradition and *traditio pagana*. Its multidimensionality ultimately fully revealed itself in modern literature in the works of Marcel Proust, Joseph Conrad, and T.S. Eliot, and especially in the aesthetic theories of Heaney's eminent compatriot, James Joyce. The rich epiphanic tradition led Joyce through theology toward the thought of Thomas Aquinas and his deliberations about the beauty of an artwork as the coexistence of three principles: *proportio*, *integritas*, and *claritas*. Thomist categories were at the core of Joyce's doctrine, but whoever seeks fidelity to St. Thomas here is bound to be mistaken since Joyce interpreted these concepts in such a way that they took on an entirely new life (Nycz 1996, 20-38; Nycz 2001, 153-185; Eco 1998; Błoński 1998).

But let me return to Heaney and to his beloved "heartland of the ordinary", evoked in "The Journey Back". Many stanzas of Heaney's poetry breathe the breeze of epiphany in the same way a wanderer from the poem "Postscript" – travelling the backroads of County Clare along the Flaggy Shore – breathes in the gusts of wind "as big soft buffetings come at the car sideways / And catch the heart off guard and blow it open". This breeze simultaneously awakens the senses, which, in turn, assist in noticing the ex-

traordinariness of the image. Yet the observed phenomena are fleeting – they appear only “through a hurry”, which offers no chance to “park and capture the view more thoroughly” (Heaney 1996b, 82). The poem bears witness to what is elusive, transient, emerging only once.

The shimmering of the world, immobilized through words, also appears in Miłosz’s poem “Gift”:

A day so happy.
 Fog lifted early. I worked in the garden.
 Hummingbirds were stopping over honeysuckle flowers.
 There was no thing on earth I wanted to possess.
 I knew no one worth my envying him.
 Whatever evil I had suffered, I forgot.
 To think that once I was the same man did not embarrass me.
 In my body I felt no pain.
 When straightening up, I saw the blue sea and sails.

Berkeley, 1971 (Miłosz 2003, 277)

Here, the poet strives to faithfully translate the language of feelings, external sensations, and visual perceptions into poetic signs. He attempts to use language to photograph nature, which creates a landscape of experienced fulfillment, of ecstasy that dissolves the body’s imperfections and the baggage of memory – similarly to what happens in states of elation described by mystics. Even though “language loses when it tries to cope / With clusters of molecules” (Miłosz 2003, 606), with the ephemerality of the moment, that very moment attempts to persist in language, even if only partly and incompletely, against the laws of representation. As Jan Błoński emphasized, through their commitment to *mimesis*, Miłosz’s poems create a sense of a nearly religious concentration, they bring up that special concern and gratitude hidden in the attitude described by the Latin term *pietas* (Błoński 1998, 215-222). Heaney also remained faithful in his service to “imitation” (Heart 1987, 6-7). Yet his poems feed on the bare being of objects less frequently. Rather, they are alive with the whole background suggested by an object’s presence. As Helen Vendler pointed out, Heaney’s writing technique was closer to re-imagining experiences and things than to recording sudden epiphanies; his epiphanies are more at home with the mind than the body (Vendler 1998, 149-151).

Let us take a look at “Mint”:

It looked like a clump of small dusty nettles
 Growing wild at the gable of the house
 Beyond where we dumped our refuse and old bottles:
 Unverdant ever, almost beneath notice.

But, to be fair, it also spelled promise
 And newness in the back yard of our life
 As if something callow yet tenacious
 Sauntered in green alleys and grew rife.

The snip of scissor blades, the light of Sunday
 Mornings when the mint was cut and loved:
 My last things will be first things slipping from me.
 Yet let all things go free that have survived.

Let the smells of mint go heady and defenceless
 Like inmates liberated in that yard.
 Like the disregarded ones we turned against
 Because we'd failed them by our disregard. (Heaney 1996a, 9)

The plant evoked by the poem's title, like Miłosz's "meadow", is an object of revelation, but it is not the exclusive centre of attention. It is, as it were, the first stage of epiphanic initiation into the language of reality: a riverside landscape points toward the sought and longed for landscapes of childhood, while the plant, growing somewhere "in the back yard of our life" makes consciousness come alive and allows for the discovery of the presence of another person. Here, concrete objects act like Proust's madeleine – once encountered they lead one toward finding, or perhaps recognizing, life that "concealed" itself behind them. They become signs pointing to other epiphanies, and the poet's creative path and his earlier experiences turn out to be increasingly important. The poem is not just a record of a moment of wonder – Miłosz's "meadow" was sought while Heaney's "mint" initiates extended reflection.

In a book on modern Polish poetry, Arent van Nieuwerkerken analyzes dialogue and epiphany as two modes of experiencing metaphysicality. The Dutch Slavist argues that Miłosz evoked both of them. And "Mint" invites us to consider whether this could also apply to Heaney. Nieuwerkerken notices that Heaney's work is characterized by a plain style (which has a very long tradition in English literature) and the ability to subject oneself to the discipline of precise observation (van Nieuwerkerken 1998, 300-308; Hart 1987, 1-17). This discipline makes epiphany a means of arriving at a vision of reality through skillful observation of the world – through a certain "methodical mysticism" which Heaney describes in *The Government of the Tongue* when he comments on Elizabeth Bishop's poem "At the Fishhouses" (van Nieuwerkerken 1998, 304). It seems that we are dealing with a similar kind of observation in his "Mint", where the "art of contemplated ordinariness" (van Nieuwerkerken 1998, 304) encounters the ability to open itself up to the "language" of things. The mint plant, which is simultaneously a figure of exclusion and

omission as well as recognition and reaffirmation, gradually appears out of a heap of rubbish, and in the final verses it is transformed into an analogy of human life. The art of focus and attentive presence pulls out a shard of reality and makes it into a lesson in existence. Like Miłosz, Heaney evoked different modes of searching for metaphysicality in his poetry, and this led Nieuwerkerken to propose the category of “a modified version of the poetics of epiphany”, or, to put it differently – a mixed type of metaphysical poetry (van Nieuwerkerken 1998, 305).

For both poets, the unveiling of the extraordinariness of the ordinary was accompanied by a search for new possibilities of poetic expression. Heaney followed the path of deeply penetrating the treasures of language: he used the etymologies of words to bring out their dormant meanings, evoked the Old English tradition of alliterative poetry, and played with preserved word formation patterns (kennings) (Hart 1987, 204-231; Molino 1993, 180-201). Miłosz, on the other hand, consistently strove for “a more spacious form / that would be free from the claims of poetry or prose”, as he put it in “Ars poetica” (Miłosz 2003, 240). For many years, the epiphanic dimension of their poetry was counterbalanced by a bitter diagnosis of the world. In Heaney’s works we can see this, for example, in texts connected with the Ulster conflict, or, to put it more broadly, in texts that contemplate matter in the context of its annihilation and transience (Vendler 1998, 136-154). Miłosz’s poetry, on the other hand, contains Manichean elements. This diagnosis, however, did not stand in the way of the Irish poet’s praise of the “blessed be down-to-earth” (Heaney 1991, 14); it also did not overwhelm Miłosz’s vision of *apokatastasis* – a rebirth in eternity that allows for the transposition of the profane into the realm of the sacred. In opening themselves to the epiphany of ordinary things, both poets clearly spoke about gifts and gratitude:

Where I have dipped to drink again, to be
Faithful to the admonishment on her cup,
Remember the Giver fading off the lip. (Heaney 1979, 16)

[...] All this
Is here eternally, just because once it was.
Splendor (certainly incomprehensible)
Touches a cracked wall, a refuse heap,
The floor of an inn, jerkins of the rustics,
A broom, and two fish bleeding on a board.
Rejoice! Give thanks! [...] (Miłosz 2003, 606)

In fact, gratitude was one of the most characteristic shared aspects of their works – even at the moment when the physical distance separating them became insurmountable. We know this from a note about the circumstances in which Heaney found out about the passing of his Polish poet-friend:

I was in our back garden, in sunlight, among flowers, when the call came. There was a fullness about the morning that was Californian. An unshadowedness that recalled his poem "Gift", written in Berkeley when he was 60: "A day so happy. / Fog lifted early; I worked in the garden. / Hummingbirds were stopping over honeysuckle flowers [...]" Thanksgiving and admiration were in the air [...]. (Heaney 2004)

Both the art of observation and the attempts to give voice to things clearly point toward the experience of fullness that is hidden somewhere under the lining of the visible world. They thus point toward the metaphysics of presence. And this orientation persists, as it were, against despair and doubts, against the concerns and suffering of *The Land of Ulro* (1984). As much as they try to capture the shimmering of the world, to preserve its beauty and stamp the fragility of existence in language, Miłosz's and Heaney's epiphanies are rooted in the tradition of romantic spirituality. For they are not accompanied by the conviction (which Charles Taylor observed in his analysis of modernist epiphanies) that the moment of illumination – as in Leśmian's poetry, for example – gives rise to something that gains its meaning at the moment of its emergence, something legitimized by the very process of representation. Rather, for Miłosz and Heaney, at the basis of epiphany there is the fundamentally Platonic conviction that by noticing the eternal in the transient one is bearing witness to something that already exists. For both poets, the poetics of the everyday which raises the status of seemingly trivial and marginal trifles, actually belongs to the landscape of modernist art and literature, which puts the object in the forefront but which is simultaneously a basically romantic odyssey of the spirit that consists – as Abrams observed (Abrams 1973, 143-169) – in embarking on a circuitous journey that leads through the signs of the world to a primordial spiritual source (Hart 1987, 13).

4. *Dutch Painting*

In striving to preserve the extraordinariness of images, Miłosz's and Heaney's literary epiphanies cast jealous glances toward painting. This reflects not only echoes of Lessing's *Laocoon* or the two poets' long-standing discussion stemming from Horace's *ut pictura poesis*, but also, and above all, especially for Miłosz, it arises from admiration for the Dutch masters: "We are not so badly off, if we can / Admire Dutch Painting" (Miłosz 2003, 606). Even though various types of objects, including those of everyday use, appeared in painting as far back as ancient Greece and Rome (it is said that the legendary grapes painted by Zeuxis attracted passing birds), it is no accident that Miłosz focuses his attention on the Netherlands. For it was here, toward the end of the sixteenth century, that the first large-format paintings devoted to objects emerged. In his *Four Elements: Earth. A Fruit and the Market with the Flight into Egypt in the Background* (1569), Joachim Beuckelaer, who was

one of the precursors of this type of painting, situated the *storia* representing the Holy Family's journey in the image's distant background. Instead, the eye is drawn to full-grown cabbages, cauliflowers, artichokes, grapes, and apples that seem to spill out from the painting. This is a clear turn toward the exclusive reign later granted to objects in the realm of still lifes. "A jar, a tin plate, a half-peeled lemon, / Walnuts, a loaf of bread, last – and so strongly / It is hard not to believe in their lastingness" ("Realism", Miłosz 2003, 606). As in Willem Kalf's paintings, shiny and matte surfaces border on one another and on the intense red of a steaming lobster, fine silverware contrasts with the softness of a Persian rug, testifying to the wealth of local guilds, which were responsible for the lavishness of *pronkstilleven*. This Dutch specialty is only a step away from crossing the boundary of illusionism of the *trompe l'oeil* type, a boundary in the face of which language – which "loses when it tries to cope / With clusters of molecules" – seems completely helpless (cf. Vendler 1998, 140-143).

In more or less obvious ways, the painting of the second half of the nineteenth century and the entire twentieth century drew on the Dutch masters in its path toward the ennoblement of junk and castoffs. This was the case in Cezanne's and Van Gogh's objects, Coubert's autumn staffage, Marcel Duchamp's provocative props, as well as in the newest, multimedia, vanitative readings of still lifes by Sam Taylor Wood ("A Little Death", 2002) or the contemporary *trompe l'oeil* sculptor Gavin Turk ("Bag 9", 2001) (Stoddard, Sturgis 2005). The adventures of objects in European literature started much later than their vicissitudes in the world of painting – they received full appreciation only from the modernists (Gillespie 1986, 255-266). Objects appear in a revelatory aura in Walter Benjamin's writing, in Virginia Woolf's "moments of being", Ezra Pound's "image", Conrad's "moments of vision", Proust's involuntary memory turns, and fragments of Hugo von Hoffmannsthal's *The Lord Chandos Letter* (1995), which was particularly characteristic for the whole modernist formation³. Joyce's *Epiphanies* is equally representative. It takes visionary traditions that were close to Heaney – formed by writers like Henry Vaughn, George Herbert, Gerard Manley Hopkins, and Patrick Kavanagh, along with Shelley's famous "moments" and Wordsworth's "spots of time" – and brings them into the secularized space of the new epiphanic experience, self-sufficient and cut-off from the sphere of transcendence. The path that initially seems to bring Heaney toward Joyce's visionariness actually leads him toward the tradition of romantic images, whose credibility is secured by the presence that hides behind them – a presence that guarantees meaning and depth of seeing (Kermode 1957). Miłosz travelled a similar path, even though in Polish poetry

³ It is worth noting that Miłosz's equivalent of these terms is simply *epifania*, "epiphany", while Heaney, especially in *Seeing Things*, creates his own terms: "lightnings", which, along with "settings", "crossings" and "squerings" constitute the second half of this volume.

– unlike in English – the ennoblement of the ordinary was only initiated by Norwid (Nycz 2001, 88-114). Time and again, and perhaps most emphatically in *A Book of Luminous Things*, Miłosz described himself as a seeker of those privileged moments “when we intuitively grasp a deeper, more essential reality hidden in things or persons” (Miłosz 1996, 4). In this context, he intentionally evoked both Judaeo-Christian and polytheistic ancient epiphanies, and discussed D.H. Lawrence as the author of both “Maximus” and a poem about the taste of an apple. Besides foreign poets, he also mentioned Adam Mickiewicz’s *Master Thaddeus* (1885) which he read as “a continuation of the revelation of perceived details”: finally, he drew connections between the Japanese haiku and Miron Białoszewski’s “poem-perceptions”, which register the suddenness and brevity of “perceived moments” (Miłosz 1994, 17-22).

Heaney, especially in *Seeing Things*, where he clearly turns toward “the heartland of the ordinary”, emphasizes the process of observation and the sense of sight as he never did before. In many poems, extended descriptive parts suddenly turn seeing into vision, which – to use Neil Corcoran’s expression – is a type of “secular spirituality” or “displaced sacramentalism” where the more or less distinct sense of transcendence takes place without religious language or doctrine (Corcoran 1998, 163; Vendler 1998, 137). The picturesqueness of these poems, enhanced by references to Rembrandt, Matthews Lawless, and Edward McGuire, is sometimes reminiscent of scenes painted in the spirit of Dutch realism – as in the poem “A Basket of Chestnuts”, where the basket and the chestnuts long for paintbrush strokes and the permanence of pigments (“And I wish they could be painted, known for what / Pigment might see beyond them, what the reach / Of senses despairs of as it fails to reach it, / Especially the thwarted sense of touch”) (Heaney 1991, 24). The heritage of the Dutch masters, so valuable for Miłosz in his attachment to the sensuality of details, was to become intimately familiar to Heaney precisely through his Polish friend. During his final years, he often expressed his deep knowledge of Miłosz’s poems, especially those that suggest the glorification of things because “they are” and the contemplation of the word “is”. In Heaney’s words, these poems “opened to big vistas and small domesticities”, they “sometimes have the head-on exclamatory innocence of child art (‘O happiness! To see an iris’), sometimes the panoramic sweep of synoptic historical meditation” (Heaney 2004). Heaney frequently emphasized his own and Miłosz’s search for a child-like, innocent, and simplistically naive sensitivity (Heaney 2002). For Miłosz, the path toward child-like sensitivity, which is one of the ways of returning to the source described by the romantics, simultaneously belonged to a larger journey:

How strange life is! How incomprehensible! As if I returned from it as from a long journey and tried to remember where I had been and what I had done. I can’t quite manage it, and the most difficult part is trying to see myself here. [...]. (Miłosz 2003, 672)

Heaney embraced a similar perspective. The thematic range of *Seeing Things* is rather broad: the volume opens with “The Golden Bough”, a translation of the sixth book of the *Aeneid*, and closes with a translation of the third canto of Dante’s *Inferno*. These two poems – which emphasize the rootedness of *The Divine Comedy* in Virgil’s epic (shedding light on the figure of the guide through the underworld) – belong to Heaney’s long-standing dialogue with Dante, which includes, for example, the volumes *Field Work* (1979) and *Station Island* (1984). But through a network of intertextual references the two poems also point to T.S. Eliot’s *Waste Land* (and it is worth adding that toward the end of his life Miłosz reminded his readers of both this poem and Yeats’s *The Tower*) (Yeats 2004; Eliot 2004). This gesture clearly situates Heaney in the tradition of Eliot’s classicism. Like Miłosz, Heaney entered this framework through the act of translation, which became one of the most fundamental practices and important themes of poetic reflection in *Seeing Things* (1991). It took on a variety of forms: from the most obvious attempts to transfer older literature into the realm of the contemporary English language (something described directly in many poems), all the way to the transposition of the language of things and the record of their “pellucid clarity” (Corcoran 1998, 165). Translation seemed to be part of a larger project, which Heaney described in a parting text dedicated to Miłosz: “Miłosz would have deeply understood and utterly agreed with John Keats’s contention that the use of a world of pain and troubles was to school the intelligence and make it a soul” (Heaney 2004). By referring to Keats’s famous 1819 letter (Keats 2001, 473), the Irish poet inadvertently evoked the well-known image of *The vale of Soul-making* – a valley where this arduous process of “formation” takes place. By the same token, he evoked the romantic tradition of a spiritual journey, in which both he and Miłosz participated.

The intellectual and artistic dialogue with Miłosz and Polish poetry, which Heaney initiated in the late 1960s, helps us gain some understanding of the roots of the closeness which today connects the inhabitants of the Green Island and the country once concealed behind the Iron Curtain. During one of his visits to Cracow, Heaney spoke about his sense of being at home in Poland:

And this feeling is natural enough, since there exists a certain sympathetic understanding between the Poles and the Irish. Both countries are to some extent the invention of Romantic poets and musicians. In both countries, the preservation of cultural memory and the ideal of national independence were mutually fortifying projects. And also in both, the Catholic Church has had a deeply influential role in moulding the national psyche. (Heaney 2005, 2)

The power of translation which created a realm where two literary traditions could meet – a realm that still remains open to us today – invites readers into a space where they, like Heaney in his encounter with Miłosz’s poetry, can view their own native culture from a broader perspective, where they can feel “renewed, transfigured, in another pattern” (Heaney 2005, 1).

Works Cited

- Abrams M.H. (1973), "Circuitous Journey: Pilgrims and Prodigals", in Id., *Natural Supernaturalism. Tradition and Revolution in Romantic Literature*, New York, Norton and Company, 143-196.
- Asad Talal (1986), "The Concept of Cultural Translation in British Social Anthropology", in James Clifford, G.E. Marcus (eds), *Writing Culture: The Poetics and Politics of Ethnography*, Berkeley-Los Angeles, California UP, 141-164.
- Barańczak Stanisław (1994), "Wstęp: 'muzyka tego, co się dzieje'" (Introduction. 'The Music of What Happens'), in Seamus Heaney, *44 wiersze (44 Poems)* trans. by Stanisław Barańczak, Kraków, Znak, 5-17.
- Bassnett Susan, Lefevere André (1990), "Introduction: Proust's Grandmother and the Thousand and One Nights: The 'Cultural Turn' in Translation Studies", in Id., *Translation, History and Culture*, New York, Pinter, 3-13.
- Błoński Jan (1998), *Miłosz jak świat (Miłosz as the World)*, Kraków, Znak.
- Corcoran Neil (1998), *The Poetry of Seamus Heaney. A Critical Study*, London, Faber and Faber.
- Damrosch David (2003), "Comparative Literature?," *PMLA* 118, 2, 326-330.
- Eco Umberto (1998), *Poetyki Joyce'a (Joyce's Poetics)*, trans. by Marek Kośnik, Warszawa, Wydawnictwo KR.
- Eliot T.S. (2004), *Ziemia jałowa / The Waste Land*, trans. by Czesław Miłosz, Kraków, Wydawnictwo Literackie.
- Fiut Aleksander (1998), *Moment wieczny. Poezja Czesława Miłosza (Eternal Moment. Czesław Miłosz's Poetry)*, Kraków, Wydawnictwo Literackie.
- Gillespie Gerard (1986), "Epiphany: Notes on the Applicability of a Modernist Term", in János Riesz, Peter Boerner, Bernhardt Scholz (eds), *Sensus Communis. Contemporary Trends in Comparative Literature / Panorama de la situation actuelle en Littérature Comparée. Festschrift für Henry Remak*, Tübingen, Günther Narr, 255-266.
- Hart Henry (1987), "Seamus Heaney's Poetry of Meditation: *Door into the Dark*", *Twentieth Century Literature* 33, 1, 1-18.
- (1989), "Poetymologies in Seamus Heaney's *Wintering Out*", *Twentieth Century Literature* 35, 2, 204-231.
- Heaney Seamus (1975), *North*, London, Faber and Faber.
- (1979), *Field Work*, London, Faber and Faber.
- Heaney Seamus, Kinahan Frank (1982), "Artists on Art. An Interview with Seamus Heaney", *Critical Inquiry* 8, 3, 405-414.
- Heaney Seamus (1984), *Station Island*, London, Faber and Faber.
- (1986), "The Impact of Translation", *The Yale Review* 76, 1, 1-14.
- (1988), *The Government of the Tongue*, London, Faber and Faber.
- (1991), *Seeing Things*, London, Faber and Faber.
- (1994), *44 wiersze (44 Poems)*, trans. by Stanisław Barańczak, Kraków, Znak (bilingual edition).
- (1996a), *The Spirit Level*, New York, Farrar, Straus and Giroux.
- (1996b), *Zawierzyć poezji (Crediting Poetry)*, ed. by Stanisław Barańczak, Kraków, Znak.

- (2002), “Secular and Millennial Miłosz”, in Id., *Finders Keepers: Selected Prose 1971-2001*, New York, Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 444-450.
- (2004), “In Gratitude for All the Gifts”, *The Guardian*, 11 September.
- (2005), “In Another Pattern”, Jagiellonian University, Conferral of Honorary Degree, 12 May 2005, unpublished manuscript.
- Ingelbien Raphaël (1999), “Mapping the Misreadings. Ted Hughes, Seamus Heaney, and Nationhood”, *Contemporary Literature*, 40, 4, 627-658.
- Jarniewicz Jerzy (2002), *The Bottomless Centre: the Uses of History in the Poetry of Seamus Heaney*, Łódź, WUŁ.
- (2007), “The Way Via Warsaw: Seamus Heaney and Post-War Polish Poets”, in B.C. Ashby, D.H. Jason (eds), *Seamus Heaney. Poet, Critic, Translator*, New York, Palgrave Macmillan, 103-120.
- Joyce James (1956), *Epiphanies*, Buffalo, Lockwood Memorial Library, University of Buffalo.
- Kay Magdalena (2012), *In Gratitude for All the Gifts. Seamus Heaney and Eastern Europe*, Toronto, Buffalo, London, Toronto UP.
- Keats John (2001), *The Major Works*, ed. by Elizabeth Cook, Oxford, Oxford UP.
- Kermode Frank (1957), *Romantic Image*, London, Routledge and Kegan Paul.
- Kochanowski Jan (1995), *Laments*, trans. by Stanisław Barańczak and Seamus Heaney, New York, The Noonday Press.
- Lloyd David (1985), “‘Pap for the Dispossessed’. Seamus Heaney and the Politics of Identity”, *Boundary 2*, 13, 2-3, 319-342.
- Mickiewicz Adam (1834), *Pan Tadeusz*, Paryż, Wydanie Alexandra Jełowickiego.
- (1885), *Master Thaddeus*, trans. by Maude Ashurst Biggs, London, Trübner and Company.
- Miłosz Czesław (1984), *The Land of Ulro*, trans. by Louis Iribarne, New York, Farrar, Straus and Giroux.
- (1994), *Wypisy z ksiąg użytecznych* (A Book of Luminous Things), Kraków, Znak.
- (1995), *Facing the River: New Poems*, trans. by Robert Hass, Manchester, Carcanet.
- (1996), *A Book of Luminous Things*, San Diego, New York, London, Harcourt Brace and Company.
- (2003), *New and Collected Poems 1931-2001*, New York, Ecco.
- Modrzewski Stanisław (1997), “Seamusa Heaney’a wiersze o poezji” (Seamus Heaney’s Poems on Poetry), in David Malcolm, Olga Kubińska (eds), *Eseje o poezji Seamusa Heaney’a* (Essays on Seamus Heaney’s Poetry), Gdańsk, Uniwersytetu Gdanskiego, 7-32.
- Molino M.R. (1993), “Flying by the Nets of Language and Nationality: Seamus Heaney, the ‘English’ Language, and Ulster’s Troubles”, *Modern Philology* 91, 2, 180-201.
- Moloney K.M. (1991), “Heaney’s Love to Ireland”, *Twentieth Century Literature* 37, 3, 273-288.
- Nycz Ryszard (1996), “Poetyka epifanii a modernizm (Od Norwida do Leśmiana)” (The Poetics of Epiphany and Modernism [from Norwid to Lesmian]), *Teksty Drugie* 4, 20-38.
- (2001), *Literatura jako trop rzeczywistości. Poetyka epifanii w nowoczesnej literaturze polskiej* (Literature as a Trope of Reality. The Poetics of Epiphany in Modern Polish Literature), Kraków, Universitas.

- Reece S.C. (1992), "Seamus Heaney's Search for True North", *Pacific Coast Philology*, 27, 1-2, 93-101.
- Staten Henry (2005), "Tracking the 'Native Informant': Cultural Translation as the Horizon of Literary Translation", in Sandra Berman, Michael Wood (eds), *Nation, Language, and the Ethics of Translation*, Princeton, Princeton UP, 111-126.
- Stoddard Sheena, Sturgis Alexander (2005), *The Stuff of Life. A National Gallery Touring Exhibition in Partnership with Bristol Museums & Art Gallery and the Laing Art Gallery, New Castle upon Tyne*, London, National Gallery.
- van Nieukerken Arent (1998), *Ironiczny konceptyzm. Nowoczesna polska poezja metafizyczna w kontekście anglosaskiego modernizmu* (Ironic Conceptism. Modern Polish Metaphysical Poetry in the Context of Anglo-Saxon Modernism), Kraków, Universitas.
- Vendler Helen (1998), *Seamus Heaney*, Cambridge, Harvard UP.
- von Hoffmannsthal Hugo (1902), "Ein Brief", *Der Tag*, 489, 18 Oktober, Teil 1; 491, 19 Oktober, Teil 2.
- (1995), *The Lord Chandos Letter*, trans. by Michael Hofmann, London, Syrens.
- Yeats W.B. (2004), *Odjazd do Bizancjum. Wieża / Sailing to Byzantium. The Tower*, trans. by Czesław Miłosz, Kraków, Wydawnictwo Literackie.

Wicked Female Characters in Roddy Doyle's "The Pram": Revisiting Celtic and Polish Myths in the Context of Twenty-First Century Ireland

Burcu Gülüm Tekin

University of Granada (<gulumtekin@gmail.com>)

Abstract:

"The Pram" is the only horror story in Roddy Doyle's collection *The Departees and Other Stories* (2007). It is also unique in terms of its approach to Ireland's multicultural scene in the twenty-first century. Doyle turns the other side of the coin and introduces a migrant caretaker (Alina), who loses her mind due to her employees' (the O'Reilly family) ill-treatment. As a reaction to their scornful attitude, Alina becomes a murderer. Set in the context of twenty-first century Dublin, "The Pram" contains various references to Celtic and Polish mythological female figures (in particular, the Old Hag of Beara and Boginka), which strengthen the thrilling, mythical elements in the plot. This paper aims to examine the characters' negative attitude towards migrants in Ireland in the light of the racist discourse present in the story. Also, I will focus on the story's female characters and discuss the handicaps of being a female migrant in Ireland. The parallels between the mythical female figures and the protagonist Alina will be another point to be analyzed. The argument of this paper is that Doyle does not always portray the positive outcomes of a multicultural society. On the contrary, he conveys the perspective of the incoming migrant. "The Pram" stages the obstacles that a female outsider may experience in Ireland and her subsequent transformation as a result of the racism she encounters there.

Keywords: ethnicity, migration, motherhood, multiculturalism, Polish myths

Ireland shifted from being a mono-ethnic community to a multi-ethnic country in the early 1990s. Following the country's entry into the European Union in 1973, the Irish economy developed significantly. This economic

shift led to a demographic boom and newcomers were attracted by the roar of the “Celtic Tiger”, a phase which lasted until the first years of the twenty-first century. Ireland was now a home that various residents from all over the world would share. As Margaret Spillane states, “Ireland now has three Polish language newspapers, a Nigerian theatre company, Brazilian food shops, and Filipino restaurants” (2008, 146). The country’s transformation was not limited solely to the social sphere. As Marisol Morales Ladrón puts it, this vast inward mobility could also be observed at the cultural level: “[...] [T]he negotiation of a cultural site within which the diversity of immigrants and the Irish find their place has opened the ground for the emergence of what has been termed the ‘new Irish’ [...]” (2010, 165). In this sense, the new face of Ireland has represented a cultural celebration.

The reflection of Ireland’s multicultural phenomenon was immediately felt within the country’s literary scene. Contemporary writers such as Dermot Bolger (*The Journey Home*, 1990), Cauvery Madhavan (*Paddy Indian*, 2001) and Hugo Hamilton (*The Speckled People*, 2003) offer an overview in their work of Celtic Tiger Ireland by focusing on the new ethnographic landscape of the country. In an interview with Jody Allen-Randolph, Hamilton describes the country’s social scene clearly: “I think we’re headed into this global mixture of identities and openness, but at the same time we’ve lost our footing, too. It’s hard for me to know whether this is good or not” (Allen-Randolph 2010, 21). Roddy Doyle comes to the fore among these contemporary writers as he often writes about this “global mixture” in Ireland, publishing monthly short stories in *Metro Éireann*, an online newspaper that appeals to the immigrant community in Ireland. As Doyle puts it “[t]he whole idea was to embrace the new changes in Ireland creatively, rather than see them as statistics” (Allen-Randolph 2010, 147).

Indeed, there is heightened interest in recent years in the study of how immigration has affected contemporary Irish literature, as reflected, for instance, in the collection of essays *Literary Visions of Multicultural Ireland: The Immigrant in Contemporary Irish Literature*, edited by Pilar Villar-Argáiz (2013). Likewise, Sinéad Moynihan’s work *Other People’s Diasporas: Negotiating Race in Contemporary Irish and American Culture* (2013) deals with the reflection of multiculturalism both on the cultural and literary levels. My study follows the lead set by these pioneering studies, in my interest in examining how Roddy Doyle’s work reflects Ireland’s multicultural reality in the twenty-first century.

Doyle’s short story collection *The Deportees and Other Stories* (2007) addresses to the multicultural phenomenon in Ireland. In its foreword, Doyle describes the Celtic Tiger as follows: “[i]t happened, I think, sometime in the mid-90s. I went to bed in one country and woke up in a different one” (2007, xi). This “different country” with its new residents springs to multicultural life in eight stories of the collection. The first story “Guess Who is

Coming for the Dinner” is about an Irish father’s prejudiced attitude against his daughter’s male Nigerian friend. In the second story “The Deportees”, we are introduced to Jimmy Rabitte, who was a teenager in Doyle’s first novel *The Commitments* (1987), and who has since formed a multicultural band. “New Boy” is a story of an African boy who is having adaptation problems at his new school in Dublin. The stories “57% Irish” and “Home to Harlem” are humorous tales of graduate researchers: in the former an Irish doctorate student tries to conduct an “Irishness” test on immigrants, while in the latter a black student from Ireland analyses the influence of the Harlem Renaissance movement on Irish literature. “Black Hoodie” focuses on a Nigerian woman accused of shoplifting and an Irish man wearing a black coat. The last story in the collection, “I Understand”, tells of an illegal immigrant who is fleeing the threats of drug dealers¹. In contrast, “The Pram”, which this paper takes its cue from, is the only horror story in the collection².

Doyle’s stories have been criticised for being unreal in their highly optimistic portrayal of the multicultural phenomenon in Ireland. In her study “Strangers in a Strange Land?: The New Irish Multicultural Fiction”, Amanda Tucker argues that Doyle’s popularity stems from the fact that his stories “ease cultural anxieties surrounding recent inward migration” (2013, 55). However, “The Pram” challenges this fact as Doyle puts forward a rather different setting when compared to the other peacefully resolved stories while undermining the intercultural relations between the Irish and the new Irish through his use of the disempowered migrant’s point of view. “The Pram” is narrated from the third person singular point of view and it is the predominant point of view of the migrant protagonist. In this way, the writer is directing readers’ attention and sympathies to the immigrant character. Set in the context of twenty-first century Dublin, the plot is about a Polish childminder (Alina) who loses her mind and kills her boss (Mrs. O’Reilly) due to the scornful treatment she receives from her employers, the O’Reilly family. The story opens with Alina’s love and motivation for her job as nanny to O’Reilly’s baby boy (Cillian). She is also responsible for the baby’s two sisters, Ocean and Saibhreas. At first, “[the sisters] were polite and they ate

¹ Sympathy with the migrant is observed more explicitly in the short story “I Understand”, where Doyle adopts the voice of the migrant. This fictional ventriloquism is highly subversive as it “decentralizes white Irish perspectives” (Villar-Argáiz 2013, 71) and asks Irish readers “to look at the Irish context differently, to move outside their comfort zone to a place where whiteness and Irishness are neither central nor normative” (Reddy 2007, 23).

² Doyle’s second short story collection *Bullfighting* (2011) deals with the middle age crisis of men. While, one of the short stories in the collection, “Slave”, successfully represents the figurative multicultural encounter of the native (an Irish man) and the migrant (a rat). For a comprehensive analysis see the recent study of Pilar Villar-Argáiz and B.G. Tekin (2014).

with good manners and apologised when they did not eat all that was on their plate” (Doyle 2007, 156). However, these “good manners” will not last long.

As the story continues, the reader is introduced to Alina’s unbearable working conditions as the O’Reilly family reacts to her encounter with a young Lithuanian biochemist. The encounter and the development of their love affair are depicted as follows:

One morning, she pushed past a handsome man who sat on the sea wall eating a large sandwich. [...] He was a biochemist from Lithuania but he was working in Dublin for a builder, constructing an extension to a very large house on her street. They met every morning, in the shelter. Always, he brought the flask. Sometimes, she brought cake. She watched through the portholes as they kissed. She told him she was being watched. He touched her breast; his hand was inside her coat. (Doyle 2007, 157-158)

Doyle prepares us for the mysterious details of Alina’s story as the narrator informs us that she “did not see the mother or the father but, sometimes, she thought she was being watched” (2007, 157). In her article, “Reading the Ghost Story: Roddy Doyle’s *The Deportees and Other Stories*”, Molly Ferguson employs Freud’s theory of “The Uncanny” in her analysis of “The Pram”. According to Ferguson, the plot is an embodiment of a ghost story in the sense that Alina takes revenge for the O’Reillys’ scornful attitude by frightening their daughters through her poignant articulation of the horrifying mythical Polish figure of Boginka. Ferguson underlines the function of such stories as follows: “[ghost stories] give voice to people at the bottom of the social hierarchy, disrupting the continuity of the powerful” (2009, 54). Likewise, Alina’s evolution from an ineffectual maid to an empowered woman is structured through her articulation of a ghost story. The first sign of Alina’s growing anger is indicated following the two daughters’ disclosure of Alina’s love affair.

– We want to go along the seafront, said Ocean.

– No, said Alina. – It is too windy today, I think.

– You were *late*, said Saibhreas.

– Very well, said Alina. – We go.

The biochemist waved his flask as she approached. Alina walked straight past him. She did not look at him. She did not look at the little girls as they strode past.

[...]

That night, quite late, the mother came home. The girls came out of their bedroom.

– Guess what, O’Reilly, [the daughters] said, together. – Alina has a boyfriend.

(Doyle 2007, 159)

The daughters’ sneaky behaviour can be accepted as the primary wicked act of the narrative. It would be beneficial to concentrate here on what is perhaps the most prominent wicked female character of the story, Mrs. O’Reilly.

Mrs. O'Reilly is presented as a very dominant businesswoman who has next to no time to spend with her children. As the narrator points out, "[E]veryone called her by her surname. She insisted upon this practice. It terrifies her clients, she told Alina. It was intriguing; it was sexy" (Doyle 2007, 158). Although Alina is attentive to the tasks she is given, Mrs. O'Reilly never misses the opportunity to reproach her. For instance, she constantly warns her not to "scrape the sides" (155) of the baby's pram. Besides which, Alina is not allowed to take the initiative: "She had walked for two hours, every morning. She had been ordered to do this. [S]he had been told which route to take" (155). Even her language use is restricted by Mrs. O'Reilly: "she had been instructed never to use her own language" (157). She is not allowed to talk Polish with the baby because "[Mrs. O'Reilly doesn't] want Cillian confused" (157). Ferguson indicates that "Cillian's hypothetical confusion might not only be linguistic, but perhaps he might also be confused about who his mother is if he hears Alina speak more often than her" (2009, 56). Ferguson also points out that "as a white female immigrant, Alina looks enough like her employers to not immediately *appear* foreign, yet that characteristic also makes her a disturbing double figure for the actual mother in the house" (56). Adrienne Rich claims "[p]owerless women have always used mothering as a channel – narrow but deep – for their own human will to power [...]" (1995, 38). Likewise Alina gets strength from 'mothering' Cillian. Although Alina fills in for the absence of the mother figure at home, she cannot ingratiate herself with Mrs. O'Reilly. On top of this, she is exposed to the racist discourse of her boss and often called a "Polish peasant" (Doyle 2007, 176), "Polish cailín" (169), or "[a] fucking nightmare" (176). As Jarmila Mildorf notes, "insults confer a certain identity on the person insulted and thus ultimately contribute to the construction of social group" (2005, 109). Unfortunately, Alina's forced displacement and her work as a nanny automatically define her status in Ireland. Since she pays Alina's salary and feels superior to her as she is the native, Mrs. O'Reilly feels justified in acting as Alina's mistress and tyrannizes over her. Thus, Alina has to cope with the social status quo and handicaps attached to being a female migrant by telling the horrifying myth of Boginka at the risk of losing her job and even her mind.

Racist or generally discriminative discourse is a common device employed in ghost stories. That is to say, evil fully enjoys power and control while the good figure is underestimated and forced to be an outcast by evil. In her review of "The Pram", Margaret Spillane discusses the dichotomy between Mrs. O'Reilly and Alina as follows:

What makes O'Reilly a monster? In Doyle shorthand: she has a profession, a husband and children to neglect, and an immigrant nanny to abuse. Perhaps Doyle intended his juxtaposition of grotesqueries – O'Reilly, with her womanhood denatured by economic power, and the nanny Alina, the long-suffering erasure – to recall to readers' minds fairy tales of wicked witches and kind-hearted maidens. (Spillane 2008, 150)

Doyle creates a modern pessimistic fairy tale of twenty-first century Dublin in which Mrs. O'Reilly is a dark representative of the new Irish woman. He identifies her as "a Tiger phenomenon" and underlines that "she has an inflated notion of herself" (interview with Tekin 2013, 115). She is presented as a dominant businesswoman who has no time to spend with her children, and is thus compelled to bring up her spoiled daughters with the help of her maid. She does not have any relation with the prototype woman shaped by the 1937 Irish Constitution; indeed, she is the opposite of the traditional iconographic image of Irish motherhood, "the angel in the house"³. Unlike this traditional mother figure, Mrs. O'Reilly's only concern is her own business. Furthermore, she is often away from home, bringing up her spoiled daughters with the help of her maid. The following lines exemplify Mrs. O'Reilly's imperfect maternity:

– I pay you to keep [Cillian] awake, she'd told Alina, once. – In this country, Alina, the babies sleep at night. Because the mummies have to get up in the morning to work, to pay the bloody childminders. (Doyle 2007, 166-167)

Labelled as a "bloody childminder", Alina is gradually forced to be an outcast. Doyle reveals the social gap between the maid and the boss through Mrs. O'Reilly's scornful gestures. For instance, following Mrs. O'Reilly's question as to whether she "[is] fucking [that] guy?" (Doyle 2007, 160), Alina looks up at O'Reilly and O'Reilly smiles down at her. Mrs. O'Reilly even degrades Alina by swearing at her: "[f]uck away, girl" (160). As a female migrant, Alina suffers not only the verbal abuse inflicted on her by Mrs. O'Reilly but also the sexual harassment of Mr. O'Reilly. Following the disclosure of Alina's affair with the biochemist, she becomes the embodiment of threat for Mrs. O'Reilly. She maintains her degrading attitude by limiting Alina's private life, stating that she cannot have sex "while [she is] working. Not here, on the property. And not with Mister O'Reilly" (160). As for Mr. O'Reilly, Alina signifies "the fresh prey". At one of the dinner scenes in the story, the narrator states that Alina "felt something, under the table, brush against her leg. Mr O'Reilly's foot" (169). In another scene, Mr. O'Reilly "looked at Alina's breast, beneath her Skinni Fit T-shirt, and thought how much he'd like to see them when she returned after a good walk in the wind and rain" (176). These examples prove Molly Ferguson's claim that Alina "experiences the trapped feeling of being fixed in the gaze of the host" (2009, 58). As a displaced, migrant female surrounded by cruel host figures, Alina's individuality is also entrapped and diminished.

³ Lentin offers an in-depth analysis of how the 1937 Irish Constitution is gendered and underlines "the word 'father' is nowhere to be found" (1998, 11-12), while the role of women and mothers are mentioned on several occasions.

Let alone being counted as a person sharing the family home, Alina is not even considered an individual. Her “bedroom in the attic” (Doyle 2007, 156) can be taken as a reference to the classical works where “the outcast” or “the mad woman” is kept. For instance, in Charlotte Brontë’s famous novel *Jane Eyre* (1847), Mr. Rochester accuses his wife of being mad and confines her the attic. Likewise, in the short story “The Yellow Wallpaper” (1892) by Charlotte Perkins Gilman, we read about the life of a depressed woman who is doomed to spend her days upstairs by her husband. As in these classic examples, personal privacy is out of the question in Alina’s case: her bedroom door has no lock (Doyle 2007, 160), and when she asserts her right to have “[a] private affair” with reference to her encounter with the biochemist, Mrs. O’Reilly strictly states that “[n]othing can be [her] private affair [while she’s] working [there]” (160). Offering a pioneering in-depth analysis of various classical works from a feminist point of view, Sandra M. Gilbert and Susan Gubar highlight the act of forgetting in the case of *Jane Eyre*. They state that “Brontë’s orphaned Jane Eyre seems to have lost (or symbolically ‘forgotten’) her family heritage” (Gilbert and Gubar 2000, 59). In *Hegel’s Theory of Madness* (1995), Daniel Berthold-Bond underlines the fact that forgetting and madness go hand in hand: “Forgetfulness is the act of nostalgia seeking to heal the wounds of suffered by spirit on its path of evolution by recovering its lost innocence” (90). Furthermore, the manifestation of forgetfulness occurs as “the falling apart of the ordinary causal and temporal connections of rational thought” (90). Similarly to Jane Eyre, Alina seems to lack family bonds. Furthermore, she makes efforts to – as Berthold-Bond calls it – “heal her wounds” through revisiting her culture’s folkloric horror story. Yet even she is influenced by Boginki’s story and forgets the boundaries of reality and goes mad like *Jane Eyre*’s Mrs. Rochester. She also meets Freud’s definition of the mad person as “neurotic”. Freud presents the neurotic as a self who “turns away from reality because he finds it unbearable” (1995, 301). Alina’s neurosis is the manifestation of a newcomer trying to elude her migrant identity crisis caused by the unwelcoming native.

The peak point of Alina’s unfortunate victory, the murder of Mrs. O’Reilly, is also enabled through the nanny’s madness. Gradually, Doyle prepares us for her terrible revenge. At first, as the narrator states, she “was going to murder the little girls” (Doyle 2007, 160). However, Alina’s plan changes to a more grotesque one:

She would, however, frighten them. She would terrify them. She would plant nightmares that would lurk, prowl, rub their evil backs against the soft walls of their minds, all their lives, until they were two old ladies, lying side by side on their one big deathbed. She would – she knew the phrase – scare them shitless. (Doyle 2007, 160)

Deprived of the possibility of creating her own space in a foreign home, Alina gains power only through telling the horror story of her own culture

as revenge for the native family's scornful attitude. As shown in the paragraph above, it is also crucial to note that Doyle employs free indirect discourse to reveal how Alina feels. He enables us to know the emotions of the migrant worker, accomplishing sympathy towards the character of Alina through these revelations. In this way, the predominant point of view – which is the challenging situation of a migrant – is provided throughout the story. That is why the murder of Mrs. O'Reilly appears to be the victory of the disempowered newcomer.

Alina's transformation from an ineffectual maid to an empowered woman is envisioned through her articulation of a ghost story about the Polish mythological figure 'Boginka'⁴. Theresa Bane provides a definition of Boginki as "a vampiric demon [...] found near riverbanks. Rather nymphlike in appearance [...] Boginki attack mothers with newborn children, stealing the babies to eat" (2012, 84). According to Micheal Ostling the 'Boginka' is a figure who avenges herself "on the living by stealing any infant children not yet protected by baptism" (2011, 203). This little kidnapper goddess of the rivers is reawakened in Alina's retelling of the story. As Alina informs O'Reilly's daughters, this "old and wicked lady" from her country "lived in a dark forest", and every night she "pushed the pram to the village" and "chose a baby" to steal it (Doyle 2007, 161). Following vain chasing attempts, the villagers decided to cut down the trees of the dark forest in order to find her and rescue their daughters. Thus, this kidnapper nymph had to "[move] to another place" where to find "new babies and new little girls" (165). The parallelism between the migrant protagonist and the Polish mythological figure is apparent. Through Alina, Doyle engenders a modern Boginka who is far away from her native land and has the urge to be a mother but is only able to push the prams of others. Resonating as Boginka, Alina walks with the pram of Cillian every day, and nurses a baby who is not hers. She sees various "mothers and other young women like herself" who push modern prams and "she envies them" (Doyle 2007, 157). Her first opportunity to be a real mother is hindered by the O'Reilly family because they do not approve of her relationship with the biochemist. With little hope of being a mother, Alina expands the myth of Boginka to scare the O'Reilly daughters.

In order to frighten the O'Reilly daughters, Alina emphasizes that Boginka "took only - the girls" (162). She also emphasizes that Boginka steals the girls for "their skin" (165). The reference to stealing the young girls' skin can be read as a symbol of the urge for rejuvenation. The negative attributes of Boginka, such as her old age and wickedness, echo a Celtic mythological figure: the Old Hag of Beara (Caileach Bhéarra), the goddess of prosperity

⁴ The word "Bog" means God in Polish and the plural form of Boginka (Boginki) signifies "the little goddesses" (Bane 2012, 84).

in Celtic folklore, later re-imagined as the bringer of death in Irish-Catholic mythology (McCoy 1995, 211). Unlike the Old Hag of Beara, who can recover her splendour and youthful beauty through her sexual encounter with the rightful king of Ireland, the possibility of the fulfilment of Alina's womanly desires is precluded.

This reference to this Polish myth takes on a mystical meaning as gothic elements gradually gain predominance in the narrative when the daughters claim that Cillian's pram moved by itself (Doyle 2007, 168). As Alina tells her horrifying story to the girls, we learn that it is "dark outside", that "a crow perched on the chimneypot cawed down the chimney; its sharp beak seemed very close" and that the "wind continued to shriek and groan" (164-165). Such an inscrutable, creepy atmosphere integrates the drama of the story, to the extent that the pram appears haunted not only for the girls, but additionally for Alina herself: "The little girls screamed. And so did Alina. She had not touched the wheel. The pram had moved before her foot had reached it" (166). Alina eventually believes the folklore tale that she is telling and the narrative records her gradual descent into madness in her blind credence that the pram is really haunted. Influenced by this myth of Boginka, Alina confuses the boundaries of reality and fiction, and becomes a neurotic self who, in Freud's words, "turns away from reality because he finds it unbearable" (1995, 301). Doyle skilfully amalgamates the myth of Boginki and Alina's progression into madness, allowing "The Pram" to maintain its creepy tone and conclude with a horrible ending. Mrs. O'Reilly fires Alina because of her "hardcore" storytelling (Doyle 2007, 170) which even causes her daughters to pee themselves. She is on the phone cancelling the following day's meeting when Alina kills her. The murder of Mrs. O'Reilly is depicted as follows:

O'Reilly brought the phone down from her ear at the same time that Alina brought the poker down on O'Reilly's head. The poker was decorative, and heavy. It had never been used, until now. The first blow was sufficient. O'Reilly collapsed with not much noise, and her blood joined the urine on the rug. (Doyle 2007, 176)

The "poker" and the "blow" imply various meanings. The adjective "heavy" and "not used before" suggest Alina's ponderous revenge. The poker has not been used before, suggesting that it has been waiting for Alina's act of vengeance. On the other hand, O'Reilly's fall does not make much of a sound; that is to say, overthrowing O'Reilly is not an action that involves much noise as her power is rather superficial.

Alina's unexpected poker blow is also a symbol of Doyle's rigid criticism of racist discourse against migrants in his native land. Specifically, Alina stages the obstacles of a female outsider in Ireland and is the embodiment of the eventual transformation as a result of O'Reilly's scornful attitude. As Fer-

guson notes, this character “regains control only as a monster, and Doyle’s metatextual ghost story is implied as a cautionary tale for readers who may underestimate the effects of alienation on the migrant worker” (2009, 58). The effects of this alienation become all the more obvious in the new multicultural face of Ireland when contrasted with the way such workers were treated in the past. In Roddy Doyle’s autobiographical book, where he records the words of his parents, we learn that they used to perceive their maids not as servants but rather as friends. As Doyle’s mother Ita puts it, “We were conscious of who they were, not *what* they were” (2003, 37). Unappreciated for who she is, Alina helplessly takes sanctuary in her folklore. She transforms herself into a modern Boginki and escapes with the pram where the baby is sleeping. As the narrator states “[t]hey found her in the sludge. She was standing up to her thighs in the ooze and seaweed. She was trying to push the pram still deeper into the mud” (2007, 178). In the end, the pram can be read as a symbol of Alina’s vain efforts to bury the horrible memories she has been through in Ireland. The sludge or the bog (which means ‘soft’ in Gaelic and thus serves a traditional meaning) suggests the immigrant’s victimization within the fossilized notion of the native. Furthermore, it is a decomposed ground in contrast to solid land. As a result of its slippery and absorbent nature, the bog suggests instability. In Alina’s case, it represents her failure as an immigrant to establish a secure environment in Ireland for herself.

In this sense, the last image we get of Alina is of a woman whose mind has gone completely blank. The use of indirect speech at the beginning gradually disappears throughout the story as we stop having access to Alina’s mind. At this stage in the narrative we, as readers, have lost all sense of sympathetic identification with her. The narrative progressively becomes more mysterious, to the extent that, at the moment of O’Reilly’s murder, we are not allowed to hear the Polish migrant’s thoughts. This fact increases the suspense, as we do not know what to expect, and thus the murder takes us by surprise. Thus “The Pram” presents Doyle’s portrayal of the other side of the coin. For him, Ireland does not always provide positives outcomes for outsiders, while he also highlights the presence of racist discourse in the country. His idea coincides with that of Declan Kiberd, who comments “racism of the most ugly kind undeniably exists in Irish society: and the presence of ever-growing numbers of refugees and migrants from overseas has brought it to the surface” (2001, 51). Despite having hopes at first, Alina is forced to leave them aside, taking refuge in her native folklore. But she cannot find a way out, loses her mind and turns into a killer. Undoubtedly, this unique ghost story from *The Deportees* collection provides a dystopian look at a multicultural country with its national values still intensely present.

Works Cited

- Allen Randolph Jody (2010), *Close to the Next Moment: Interviews from a Changing Ireland*, Manchester, Carcanet.
- Bane Theresa (2012), *Encyclopaedia of Demons in World Religions and Cultures*, Jefferson, McFarland & Company.
- Berthold-Bond Daniel (1995), *Hegel's Theory of Madness*, New York, State University of New York Press.
- Bolger Dermot (1990), *The Journey Home*, London, Vicking.
- Brontë Charlotte (1847), *Jane Eyre*, London, Smith Elder & Company.
- Doyle Roddy (1987), *The Commitments*, Dublin, King Farouk.
- (2003), *Rory & Ita*, London, Vintage.
- (2007), "The Pram", in *The Deportees and Other Stories*, London, Penguin, 154-178.
- (2011), *Bullfighting*, London, Jonathan Cape.
- Ferguson M.E. (2009), "Reading the Ghost Story: Roddy Doyle's *The Deportees and Other Stories*", *The Canadian Journal of Irish Studies* 35, 2, 52-60.
- Fodor Nandor, Gaynor Frank (1950), *Freud: Dictionary of Psychoanalysis*, Westport, Greenwood.
- Freud Sigmund (1995), *The Freud Reader*, ed. by Peter Gay, New York, WW Norton & Company.
- Gilbert S.M., Gubar Susan (2000 [1979]), *The Madwoman in the Attic: The Woman Writer and the Nineteenth-Century Literary Imagination*, Yale, Yale UP.
- Hamilton Hugo (2003), *The Speckled People*, London, Fourth Estate.
- Kiberd Declan, Longley Edna (2001), *Multi-Culturalism: The View from the Two Irelands*, Cork, Cork UP.
- Kiberd Declan (2005), *The Irish Writer and the World*, Cambridge, Cambridge UP.
- Ladrón Morales Marisol (2010), "Roddy Doyle and the Literature of the (post-)Celtic Tiger", in L.M. González Arias, Marisol Morales Ladrón, Asier Altuna-García de Salazar, "The New Irish: Towards a Multicultural Literature in Ireland?", in David Clark, Rubén Jarazo Álvarez (eds), *In the Wake of the Tiger: Irish Studies in the Twentieth-First Century*, Oleiros, Netbiblo, 157-182.
- Lentin Ronit (1998), "'Irishness', the 1937 Constitution, and Citizenship: A Gender and Ethnicity View", *Irish Journal of Sociology* 8, 5-24.
- Madhavan Cauvery (2001), *Paddy Indian*, London, Black Amber Books.
- McCoy Edain (1995), *Celtic Myth & Magick: Harness the Power of the Gods and Goddesses*, St. Paul, Llewellyn Publications.
- Mildorf Jarmila (2005), "Words that Strike and Words that Comfort: Discursive Dynamics of Verbal Abuse in Roddy Doyle's *The Woman Who Walked Into Doors*", *Journal of Gender Studies* 14, 2, 107-122.
- Moynihan Sinéad (2013), *Other People's Diasporas: Negotiating Race in Contemporary Irish and American Culture*, Syracuse, Syracuse UP.
- Ostling Michael (2011), *Between the Devil and the Host: Imagining Witchcraft in Early Modern Poland*, Oxford, Oxford UP.
- Reddy M.T. (2007), "Reading and Writing Race in Ireland: Roddy Doyle and *Metro Éireann*", in Wanda Balzano, Anne Mulhall, Moynagh Sullivan (eds), *Irish Postmodernisms and Popular Culture: The Politics of Multiculturalism*, New York, Palgrave Macmillan, 15-25.

- Rich Adrienne (1995), *Of Woman Born: Motherhood as Experience and Institution*, New York, Norton.
- Spillane Margaret (2008), "Fiction in Review" (Review of the short stories in *The Deportees* Collection), *The Yale Review* 96, 2, 145-151.
- Tekin B.G. (2014), "An Interview with Roddy Doyle", *Estudios Irlandeses* 9, 107-120.
- Tucker Amanda (2013), "Strangers in a Strange Land: The New Irish Multicultural Fiction", in Pilar Villar-Argáiz (ed.), *Literary Visions of Multicultural Ireland: The Immigrant in Contemporary Irish Literature*, Manchester, Manchester UP, 50-63.
- Villar-Argáiz Pilar, ed. (2013), "A Nation of Others': The Immigrant in Contemporary Irish Poetry", *Literary Visions of Multicultural Ireland: The Immigrant in Contemporary Irish Literature*, Manchester, Manchester UP, 64-78.
- Villar-Argáiz Pilar, Tekin B.G. (2014), "The 'Others' of the Celtic Tiger: Intercultural Encounters in Roddy Doyle's Short Fiction", *Revista Canaria de Estudios Ingleses* 68, 157-171.

Irish Language Teaching in Poland: A Reflection

Danielle McCormack

Adam Mickiewicz University, Poznań (<dmccormack@wa.amu.edu.pl>)

Abstract:

This essay is a reflection on the significance of Irish language teaching outside of Ireland and the challenges which Irish teachers abroad face. With a focus on the significance of Irish teaching in Poland, it opens up debate about the proper contextualisation of Irish language programmes within Irish Studies courses. It also makes recommendations about future directions for Irish language teaching outside of Ireland and suggests the establishment of a professional network for Irish teachers.

Keywords: Irish language, Irish-Polish relations, Irish studies programmes, language education, university teaching

In Poland, the Irish language is taught at the John Paul II Catholic University of Lublin and at Adam Mickiewicz University, Poznań. These universities are just two of several throughout Europe and North America to provide instruction in the Irish language, often under the patronage of the An Ghaeilge Thar Lear (Irish Abroad Scheme), which provides subsidies to universities outside Ireland to teach the modern language to students. In the academic year 2014-2015, nineteen third-level institutions in Europe and North America received money under the scheme, while considerable funding was granted to the Fulbright Commission and to the Ireland Canada University Foundation (Department of Arts 2015).

Since 2004, Ireland and Poland have developed strong links, as the former, with the United Kingdom and Sweden, were the only European Union states to allow unlimited immigration by nationals of the EU Accession States. Of these accession states, Poland was the principal sending country to the established EU members (Kahanec, Zimmermann 2009, 7). According to the 2006 Census of Ireland, there were 63,276 Poles living in the Republic of Ireland, dispersed throughout the country. By the time of the 2011 Census this figure had almost doubled to 122,585. The 2011 Census also recorded that 8,928 Polish nationals were born in Ireland (CSO 2012, 18; 37).

Polish influence is very strong in Ireland. The Polish language is commonly heard there, while there are Polish shops and a lively cultural effort. The Polska Éire Festival, held in late March 2015, was a nationwide festival of Polish culture, and its links with Ireland. The Irish Polish Society, a voluntary group whose history extends back to 1979, organises a range of cultural and educational events to promote cultural understanding between Ireland and Poland. The Polish Social and Cultural Association (POSK) is directed primarily towards Poles in Ireland, and exists “to preserve the bond among Polish people living in Ireland, to promote Polish culture, art, and native tradition, and to cultivate and develop national identity”. Among its services are a Polish library and Polish language classes (POSK Website). There are also numerous Polish schools throughout Dublin and the rest of the country which offer some schooling through Polish to the children of Polish speakers. Thus, there are several organisations which both maintain the distinctiveness of Polish culture in Ireland, and seek to share it with those of other origins living there.

This cultural exchange is largely one-directional, as the Irish presence in Poland is very small. The Irish-Polish Cultural Foundation, based in Poznań, supports events related to Irish culture, most notably during the week around St. Patrick’s Day. Nonetheless, the cultural exchange between Ireland and Poland occurs almost entirely in an Irish context, leaving little possibility to explore issues of integration and mutual perceptions as they might develop in Poland. Irish language instruction in Poland goes some way towards redressing this imbalance, albeit in a formal academic setting. It allows students to sample an important aspect of Irish culture and society while simultaneously broadening their linguistic competence. Should graduates of Irish language programmes decide to move to Ireland, their background in the language can provide them with increased employment and social opportunities as they make use of their broader linguistic skills in the process of integration. Clearly, proficiency in English is essential to integration in Ireland but familiarity with the Irish language can enrich immigrants’ ability to socialise and network.

A number of methodological issues arise with regard to the teaching of Irish in Poland, and these concerns are not limited to a Polish context. In contrast with languages such as English, Irish is taught far less frequently, and is something of a niche interest. Consequently, Irish teachers suffer from a lack of a support network and literature in which the methodology of teaching Irish to adults in an international context is reflected upon and developed. Irish teachers abroad also suffer from a lack of choice with regard to textbooks, as there is little material available that is suitable for adults. This leads to the formulation and compilation of materials by teachers themselves, but the lack of a forum in which to share, disseminate, and criticise such materials poses a significant weakness. It also means that a spirit of collegiality

and co-operation is missing from the endeavour to teach Irish abroad, and demonstrate its potential as an international language. Moreover, a possible wealth of resources is left untapped as materials which have been developed by individual teachers goes unshared and unrecognised.

At Adam Mickiewicz University in Poznań, Irish language courses are offered within the Department of Celtic Languages and Literatures, which itself is located within the Faculty of English. English students may elect to pursue a 'Celtic specialisation' within their English degree, and so they follow courses offered by the department as well as courses with other English students. The BA Celtic programme lasts three years, and students may also undertake an MA degree, which lasts two years. Undergraduate students begin studying Irish in their second year, and complete a total of 240 hours of instruction prior to graduation. Examination is by means of a written test and a compulsory oral assessment. They also take some courses on Irish literature, history, and culture. Irish is the second language within the Celtic Department, as students focus on study of the Welsh language and complementary courses related to Welsh culture. MA students have a total of 150 hours of Irish language instruction.

Students of Celtic and Irish language courses in Poznań impress with their respect for Irish culture and their enthusiasm for the language. In my experience they are ambitious and strive to constantly improve their proficiency in Irish. They take the initiative in organising student events that promote the language among the wider student body. Teaching Irish in Poznań is a positive experience for teachers who can benefit from an atmosphere of collaborative learning with their students at both BA and MA level.

The fact that Irish language courses are often available within the context of English or Celtic studies programmes is a matter of some concern. Irish is a means of communication which can be taught in terms of grammar and syntactical structures. However, it is also the bearer and product of complex historical processes and political debates. The Irish language has been subject to the processes of Irish history, ultimately falling foul of them. Meanwhile its literature offers a representation of the effects of such processes on the populace. In the modern period, the revival of the Irish language was strongly associated with the nationalist movement and the Irish language occupies an important place in Irish national identity. The language itself has evolved greatly throughout the modern period and it has a considerable variety and richness of dialects, with which any serious student of Irish should have some familiarity.

The language is often politicised in both the Republic of Ireland and Northern Ireland, and it is imperative that students are given the opportunity to explore government policy and public attitudes towards the language, and the debates in which it can become embroiled. The intermittent ridicule of the Irish language by certain Northern Irish Unionist politicians involves

it in populist politics and xenophobia. In the Republic of Ireland, matters concerning the Irish language can be a source of embarrassment to the government, such as the resignation of the former Irish Language Commissioner, Seán Ó Cuirreáin. In December 2013, Ó Cuirreáin stated that he was resigning from his position due to the failure of the government to implement the provisions of the Official Languages Act, which was enacted in order to ensure a certain minimum of public services through Irish and to promote the expansion of such services, by means of language schemes (Ó Caollaí 2013).

Students of Irish deserve to have access to courses on Irish politics, socio-linguistics, history, and culture in order to gain a fuller understanding of the context in which Irish is spoken and to grasp the complexities that accompany study of the language. As people with an undoubted enthusiasm for the language, they have a right to be provided with an education such that they can develop informed opinions about the language, and contribute to debates about its place in the Irish public service, educational system, and status in the European Union. It is inappropriate for Irish language courses abroad to be offered within programmes that lack a strong focus on Irish studies, or which provide too broad a complement of courses in areas such as Anglophone studies or Celtic studies. Such generalist programmes impede the ability of students to obtain an in-depth and meaningful knowledge of a coherent area of inter-related subjects.

General Irish studies programmes which allow for in-depth exploration of the literature, history, and socio-linguistics of the language present the ideal context for Irish language instruction. Irish cannot and should not be divorced from the study of Anglophone cultures, or of other Celtic languages and cultures. However, it is vital that it forms part of a programme that systematically builds the student's understanding of Irish culture and society. Stand-alone Irish studies programmes offer the best way forward to ensure that students receive a broad formation beyond linguistic competence and to ensure that they can relate their language skills to the culture to which it belongs.

In order to strengthen the vitality of Irish teaching in Poland and other countries, Irish teachers might consider establishing a professional network through which they can share materials, reflections, and ideas. This can only lead to the enrichment of Irish teaching abroad. A further possibility could be the establishment of annual meetings to discuss developments both in Irish teaching abroad and in the teaching of Irish to adults generally. This could ideally be supported by the Irish Abroad Scheme, but could also be achieved by teachers acting independently.

The matter of teaching Irish in the context of Irish Studies programmes is a far more ambitious aim, which would require the support of university management and efforts to gauge the extent of student demand for such programmes. An initial way forward would be to engage with academics in the

area of Anglo-Irish literature, who would be key to such an endeavour. The impetus for such programmes would also need to extend to Irish historians and minority language linguists.

From the perspective of Irish-Polish relations, such contextualisation of Irish courses could also contribute to mutual understanding between the two countries in which Irish is taught, as graduates of Irish studies courses gain employment in the cultural industries or public service and play a crucial role in nourishing the developing and maturing links between the two nations.

Works Cited

- Central Statistics Office [CSO] (2012), *Profile 6: Migration and Diversity*, Dublin, Stationery Office, <<http://www.cso.ie/en/media/csoie/census/documents/census2011profile6/Profile,6,Migration,and,Diversity,entire,doc.pdf>> (04/2015).
- Department of Arts (2015), *Scéimeanna Tacaíochta Gaeilge* (Heritage and the Gaeltacht, AHG), <<http://www.ahg.gov.ie/ie/AnGhaeilge/ScéimeannaTacaíochtaGaeilge/CursaiTriuLeibhealGaeilgeinOllscoileannaTharLear/Institi%C3%BAid%C3%AD%20Tr%C3%AD%C3%BA%20Leibh%C3%A9al%20thar%20lear.pdf>> (04/2015).
- Irish Polish Society Website, <www.irishpolishsociety.ie> (04/2015).
- Kahanec Martin, Zimmermann K.F. (2009), “Migration in an Enlarged EU: A Challenging Solution?”, *European Economy: Economic Papers* 363, March, <http://ec.europa.eu/economy_finance/publications/publication_summary14305_en.htm> (05/2015).
- Ó Caollaí Éanna (2013), “Commissioner Resigns over Government Failures on Irish”, *The Irish Times*, 5 December, <<http://www.irishtimes.com/news/ireland/irish-news/commissioner-resigns-over-government-failures-on-irish-1.1616978>> (05/2015).
- POSK Website, <<http://en.poskdublin.org/p/about-us.html>> (05/2015).
- The Polska Éire Festival, <<http://polskaeire2015.com/>> (05/2015).

Irish-Polish Cultural Interrelations in Practice: Interviews with Chris Binchy, Piotr Czerwiński, Dermot Bolger, and Anna Wolf

Joanna Kosmalska

University of Łódź (<jkosmalska@uni.lodz.pl>)

Joanna Rostek

University of Passau (<rostek@uni-passau.de>)

Abstract:

The following interviews with practitioners of Polish-Irish intercultural relations give voice to two Ireland-based Poles and two Irishmen who, in different ways, have reacted to and represented the new Polish presence in Ireland. Chris Binchy and Piotr Czerwiński have focused on the experiences of Polish labour migrants in Dublin in their respective novels *Open-handed* (2008) and *Przebiegum życia* (2009). Dermot Bolger explored, among other things, the historical parallels between Polish and Irish histories of migration in his play *The Townlands of Brazil* (2006). Anna Wolf is the artistic director and producer of the Dublin-based Polish Theatre Ireland (PTI).

Keywords: Dublin, migrant culture, migrant literature, migration from Poland, Polish-Irish intercultural relations

1. *"You Have to Think Outside of the Box": Interview with Chris Binchy and Piotr Czerwiński*

Chris Binchy (*1970) and Piotr Czerwiński (*1972) seem to have several things in common: they are writers, they live in Dublin, they can look back on an unusual employment history, and they have published four novels each. In addition, they have devoted one of their novels to the depiction of Polish and other East European labour migrants who struggle in the Irish capital during the Celtic-Tiger years.

Binchy worked as an embassy researcher, painter, hotel manager, and even trained as a sushi chef. His first novel, *The Very Man*, appeared in 2003 and was shortlisted for the Hughes & Hughes / Sunday Independent Irish Novel of the Year Award. *People Like Us* was published in 2004 and was followed by *Open-handed* (2008). Focusing on five characters – two Irish and three from Eastern Europe – *Open-handed* explores “the Celtic Tiger’s underbelly of alcohol, drugs, prostitution, corruption and money laundering” (Schrage-Früh 2011, 356). Binchy’s latest novel is *Five Days Apart* (2010).

Czerwiński is a Polish journalist, columnist, and writer. Having worked for a number of Polish newspapers and magazines, he made his literary debut in 2005 with the novel *Pokalanie* (*Desecration*). His second novel, *Przebiegum życia* (a neologism punning on the Latin word *Curriculum Vitae* which could be translated into English as *Conductum Lifae*), appeared in 2009 and was inspired by Czerwiński’s own migration to Ireland in the mid-2000s. Relating the story of two mediocres Polish labour migrants, the book has been noted for being written in ‘Ponglish’ – a colloquial pidgin language which mixes Polish with English and features invented words and expressions. Czerwiński’s third novel, *Międzynaród* (2011; *Internation*), is a parody of a dystopia and again takes up the topic of emigration. It envisages a future where Poland is a global superpower and a promised land for English people, who move to Poland as labour migrants. Czerwiński’s most recent novel is *Pigułka wolności* (2012; *The Freedom Pill*).

JR: What is the first question you would expect in an interview on Polish-Irish cultural interrelations?

PC: Let me ask you back: are there any “Polish-Irish cultural relations”? I honestly suspect that any person, on both sides of this barricade (and it is a barricade sometimes, indeed, in a very metaphorical sense), would be astonished to find that there are any. I would be, at any rate. Although I do know that such contacts have been made, but they are rudimental, in my humble opinion, considering the scale of Polish migration to this part of the world.

JR: So what about intellectual contributions to Irish culture made by Poles – can you discern any?

PC: There have been a few cases, yes. Polish actors playing alongside the Irish. Polish painters, Polish musicians. One Polish writer who came up with a novel written in ‘Ponglish’...

CB: I’m aware of a few Polish journalists and the Polish theatre. I also know there are some Polish writers living here. Regarding your initial question, I would expect to be asked to comment on the impact of Polish migration in Ireland and on how, in general terms, Poles are perceived here.

JR: How then would you describe the Polish impact on contemporary Ireland and the stereotypical perception of a Polish migrant?

CB: I think the presence of mostly young Polish people and families is seen as a good thing, particularly in rural areas. There are probably a few more people at Mass. Polish migrants are probably the most familiar to Irish people, and they seem to have slotted in quickly and painlessly. I'm not sure if that's because the people involved are similar to Irish people, or if they're just good at adapting. As for the stereotypical perception, I'd say it's hardworking, reliable, cheaper than Irish alternatives, good-looking (primarily women), easy to get on with. I'm sure there are more negative attitudes out there, maybe in terms of taking work when young Irish people are emigrating or undercutting Irish workers or going on the dole. I haven't come across much of that, though.

PC: I think Poles have had an influence on Ireland in nearly all domains. They (we?) have shaped quite an important part of Ireland's history, and this won't get wiped out, it will stay with Ireland forever. What is more, they (we?) have built quite a large part of Ireland – in a very literal sense. But the stereotypical perception of Polish migrants is the same as the stereotypical perception of a Polish migrant anywhere. This is why they have Polish jokes in Chicago. One crucial rule applies to the entire history of any (e)migration from anywhere to anywhere – it is the salt of the earth that flows in the biggest waves. This is the saddest part. These people often have no idea that they are 'mobile ambassadors' of their countries and cultures, and that they are partly responsible for creating stereotypes. Sometimes they don't even know what a stereotype is. But this is changing now in Ireland. The salt has melted; it has gone to Norway or Belgium, or the Netherlands, so that we now constitute a much more cultured society here. The locals have finally understood that we really do have all those master's degrees and that we did not buy them online. And that we are not drunks and burglars, all of us. We can speak languages. We don't come from a place where polar bears roam the streets, and where there is no electricity. And so on. Sometimes I have the impression that certain people imagine Poland that way. They go to Warsaw then, usually on a stag night or so, they see the skyscrapers, come back, and never say a word more on the issue.

JR: According to the Irish National Census of 2011, Poles form the largest national minority in Ireland. If they disappeared from the country overnight, what would the Irish miss most?

PC: Polish beer – it's almost two per cent stronger than the Irish! I see the Irish buy our beer all the time, whereas I don't remember the last time I saw a Polish person buying Polish beer. But what do I know, I don't go to the off-licence very often. On a serious note though, I think that Ireland would

lose a lot. The Polish community is really contributing to the Irish economy and many other areas. But whether many people would actually *miss* that or not – that’s another question.

CB: Stereotypically, the Irish would miss good service, reliable workers, reasonable rates in the trades. There would be jokes about the gene pool taking a hit, about future generations being a little uglier. Fewer people at Mass, I guess. Lots of personal relationships would be broken. People would be missed.

JR: Both of you have just mentioned economic contributions made by Polish migrants. The challenges of labour migration moreover form an important theme in Open-handed and Przebiegum zycia. Would you say that economic issues are the determining factor in public debates on migration – from Poland and elsewhere?

CB: Primarily, maybe. But if you look at Ireland over the last twenty years or so, a lot of the old stereotypical markers of Irish identity – Catholic, rural, nationalist, anti-British – have changed very quickly. The church has lost a huge amount of esteem and influence, and our relationship with Britain has improved substantially. Major inward migration began in the late 1990s, and the media started using the term ‘new Irish’ to describe those migrant communities well before, I think, the general population thought of them in those terms. In discussions about what it means to be Irish now – and there will be a lot of them leading up to the General Election in 2016 – migration will be a core aspect.

PC: For me, economic concerns are luckily not the determining issue. The Irish have their own history of migration, which is strong enough to make them stay away from mixing local economic problems with the subject of ethnic and national minorities. That’s what I like about them. After all, blaming foreigners for a crisis would ring too many bells, wouldn’t it? The Irish experience of migration is at the core of their attitude to foreigners, which especially nowadays, in times of economic recessions and seeking scapegoats, is extremely precious.

CB: I would agree that to some degree, the Irish can sympathise more with migrants due to their own history of mass emigration. That sympathy, though, is extended more to certain nationalities than to others. Poles, Latvians, and Lithuanians, Western Europeans and Anglophone white people have few issues, I’d say. Filipinos and Chinese seem to be well-regarded. Others get very little leeway – Nigerians (in Ireland most black people are assumed to be Nigerian) and Roma are regarded with deep suspicion. Non-Irish people claiming social welfare entitlements are often seen as taking advantage. “We worked when we went abroad”, is a phrase that I’ve heard some Irish say in this context, which is not 100% accurate.

JR: Open-handed features newcomers from Poland, but also migrants from other countries. What was your motivation, Chris, to write a novel in which migration to Ireland would play a crucial role?

CB: In retrospect, I think the book came out of the atmosphere in Dublin in the mid-2000s, a feeling that everybody was entitled to be loaded (and that you were a moron if you weren't), and that in their pursuit of that goal, people became blinkered to the impact of their behaviour on the people around them and on themselves. As signs began to appear that things were going wrong, that behaviour became more frenzied, and joyless, and disconnected. I had worked in bars and restaurants and hotels, and had seen the beginning of that environment, and how people in the service industry were invisible to many of the customers they served. By the time I left that business, the vast majority of the people working in it were non-Irish.

I had worked in America at a time when there were thousands of young Irish people everywhere you went. You would hear the accent, and see people you knew or recognised or didn't want to see at all. Sometimes it was comforting, and sometimes it felt oppressive. When I was writing the book, I lived in an area where there were a lot of newly-arrived Polish people, and I thought it must feel vaguely the same for them. Living close to your compatriots had potential benefits, but if you were trying to escape something, to start something new for yourself, it had its downside, too.

*JR: Piotr, you were part of this large group of Poles who came to Dublin in the mid-2000s. I would assume that writing *Przebiegum życia* was fuelled by your personal experience.*

PC: All it took was to see what was going on. You just had to see it to believe it, because it was pure madness. Even though I am, at least theoretically, 'one of them', I must admit that opening the labour market for the Polish was in some respects quite an incautious decision. Whoever made it, did not realize what kind of Pandora's Box they were opening! On a serious note though, if you had seen it, been there, the first thing that would have come to your mind would be the same thought that struck me: "Maaan, you just *must* write a book about this mess...". That's why I didn't have to do any research for my novel. Being here, with my eyes and ears open, was absolutely enough.

*JR: How did you research for *Open-handed*, Chris?*

CB: My wife had a Polish grandfather, and she has extended family over there. One of her cousins came to live in Ireland around the time I was writing this book. I talked to her about her reasons for leaving, why she came to Ireland, what she thought when she arrived, what she liked about it, what

she didn't. I went to Warsaw twice in 2006 and 2007 and met other family members. I went out with them, went to parties and bars and houses. I asked people how they felt about emigrating, what they thought of the people who had left, if they were considering leaving themselves, etc. I tried to find books that were reflective of the contemporary atmosphere in Poland, or how it felt to be Polish. People kept referring me to Witold Gombrowicz – perhaps because he was an emigrant himself – particularly to his *Ferdydurke* (1937/1938) and the diaries. I read them. I think I know what they meant. My book is different though. I read various blogs and websites written by Polish emigrants living here.

JR: It struck me that although in both Open-handed and Przebiegum życia, Polish characters are depicted as hardworking and motivated, ultimately, most of them do not succeed in forging a happy existence in Ireland. What are the implications of their 'failure'?

CB: Nobody in the book is having a great time, Irish characters included. The Irish property manager Sylvester is starting from a position of comparative wealth and power and influence, and is still totally out of his depth at the end. His partner and chauffeur Dessie sees that he's being exploited by Sylvester, but can't seem to move on. Marcin, the newly-arrived Polish migrant, is too timid and obedient, and gets himself trapped in a crappy job where drinking is practically a necessity. His buddy Artur, by contrast, is not as academically bright as Marcin, but sharper, more perceptive, pushier, takes less shit. He sees his night porter job in a hotel as a cul-de-sac and immediately moves on. He works hard on building sites, his English improves, he gets on well with the gaffers, and starts moving up the ladder.

When I worked abroad, it was hard to predict who would sink and who would swim. It's a very specific skill – being able to do a job in a foreign country, while quickly seeing how the system works, how colleagues relate to each other, managing jokes and the social end of things. I wanted to reflect that. Seeing how well Artur manages things makes Marcin feel even more of a messer. How people get on in the book is more a matter of individual character than nationality.

PC: I wouldn't say that most of the characters in my novel do not succeed. But the fact is that the plot of the book is situated in Dublin in 2007. Back then, if you were a 40-year-old Polish MA degree holder with fifteen years of professional experience, you were simply crossed out as a human being. None of those 23-year-old 'managers' with pierced tongues and virtually no education comparable to yours would have even thought of hiring you. They needed servants, not experts. It has all changed now, but we had to go a long and thorny way to see these changes.

JR: Chris, your novel features migrants from several countries. Did you have scruples about or difficulties with assuming the voice of a different group and 'speaking for them'?

CB: The Polish characters in the book were characters first, Polish second. The same idea applied to the Romanians and the Czechs. While I tried to get some sort of insight into what motivated Polish people to emigrate to Ireland, how they felt about life here and life there, and what they thought they would do in the future, primarily I wrote the characters as individuals in specific circumstances with universal challenges, dilemmas, desires. I did try to incorporate some initial responses to Dublin that I'd heard from Polish people who'd come here, refer to some of the perceptions of the place that seemed to be common. But I did not in any way want to talk for the Polish population of Ireland.

In more practical terms, I tried to keep the language of the non-Irish characters neutral when they were thinking or talking to each other, to untether it from any particular type of English. One of the editors who worked on *Open-handed* – who was English herself – pointed out a couple of occasions where she thought the Polish characters began to sound Irish in their interior lives, using phrases or expressions that I didn't know were not in general use. I thought it was slightly funny that as the book went on, the Polish people began to pick up Irish accents, but I cut it back anyway.

JR: Piotr, let us shed some light on your personal history of migration to Ireland. Can you tell us something about your decision to leave Poland and come to Dublin in the mid-2000s?

PC: Maybe I should start by stating that I am not a migrant – I am an 'expat'. That is how the English describe themselves when they settle down abroad, to differentiate themselves from cheap labour folk from Eastern Europe, don't they? Well, in that case, I will not give them the satisfaction of being inferior to them. I am an expat, too!

Regarding my moving to Ireland, I guess that my history is slightly different from that of a vast majority of other Poles who came here. First of all, I didn't *have* to go, I *wanted* to. I am probably the only Pole who brought his own savings to Ireland. I had just given up a career in journalism; after twelve years in the mass media I was tired and burnt out. Back then, in 2005/2006, the crisis in the mass media job market was just beginning: short term contracts, self-employment, reductions, pay cuts – all that suddenly became popular in what was once an élite group, at least employment-wise. I escaped from that carousel shortly before it started running too fast. I had had no permanent job for about two years, although I had very well-paid casual ones, so I had no existential problems. I had moreover just taken up serious writing – the one with a capital "W". My debut novel, *Pokalanie* (2005), about the generation of Poles born in the 1970s, had just hit the bookstores and was quite a success. I had suddenly become a public person, albeit tem-

porarily and only on a local scale. I didn't enjoy that, incidentally. On the whole, I wanted fresh air, a new life. Anything new, as far away as possible from the world I had been living in for so many years. Far away from the rat race – and believe me, they call it a rat race for a reason.

English was the only foreign language I could speak relatively well without any sense of shame, so the choice was obvious when they opened the job market in Western Europe for Eastern Europeans. England was a no-go area at that time. The terrorist attacks on the London tube had just occurred. There was double taxation, and the locals' attitude to Poles left a lot to be desired (as it does to this day, to be honest). Ireland seemed different, so I came to Ireland. I put on my best suit, my best coat, and carried an umbrella with a wooden handle. You see, my story is a bit different. I even spent all my Polish savings here...

JR: What was your initial experience of living in Ireland?

PC: Upon arrival, I realised that I was automatically put into a particular category, just because of the colour of my passport. I told people I was Polish and they laughed. I told them I was a writer and they pissed their pants laughing. It was interesting. Happens to me to this day, every now and then. I don't have a Polish accent; some say I sound like "a South African who spent too much time in America". For many Irish, I was a 'Polack', one of those who came here to do everything the Irish didn't feel like doing. I could feel it every day, on every corner. I hadn't taken that into consideration, it was very humiliating. I have to admit that I didn't like that Ireland – it's hard to like someone when you have to kneel before them. But I like the Ireland that we have now. It's poorer, but it's finally Irish, the way I had always imagined it. People are normal again. Now they are the Irish I always wanted to meet and live among. It's good, despite the price Ireland had to pay to wake up from the prosperity craze. But again, for me, that wasn't Ireland back then – that was a bad dream, in a way.

JR: If you were Irish...

PC: ... I would easily get a decent job. I would quickly get promoted. Seriously. No joke here. I don't refer to any particular situation. It's just a general rule and there is no sense denying that. Good for them, at least they respect themselves. I wish Poles had such an attitude in Poland.

JR: What knowledge of Ireland did you have before it opened up its labour market to new EU members in 2004?

PC: Theoretical, to put it straight. Plus, of course, everything that came in the media during the 1980s, about the Troubles etc. But that's a different story. I am a huge fan of Robert Emmet, he reminds me of our Polish 'errant knights'. It is funny sometimes, because I often get to speak to Irish people and

when I tell them about my interest in Robert Emmet's story, they just smile at me bluntly, because they have no clue who Emmet was. Sometimes I make jokes and tell them it was a missing member of U2, who made it in the property business and fled to the States when it collapsed. People love that story.

JR: Your mentioning of Robert Emmet in connection with the Polish struggle for independence in the nineteenth century raises the question of the role of national history for both countries.

PC: Our histories are similar. We both had oppressive neighbours whom we struggled with for centuries. We both had poverty, we had pride, a strong will, the skill to survive and persist...

JR: What about religion?

PC: ... and we had religion.

CB: I would agree that superficially there are certain overlaps in the two countries' histories, having long, troubled relationships with invading neighbours. But Ireland's history has been dominated by Britain for a thousand years – nobody else has really been involved. We're out on the periphery. Poland's situation seems much more complex, having been in all ways at the centre of Europe, a lot starker and more brutal, buffeted on all sides by countries of varying degrees of hostility.

There has been bitterness, intense violence, mistrust and misunderstanding in the relationship between Ireland and Britain, but also a lot of affection, familiarity, shared interest, common understanding and so on. People have hopped back and forth across the Irish Sea for hundreds of years, sometimes regarding the two places as one country, sometimes not. Practically everybody in Ireland has relatives living in Britain, and did even when things were bad. Irish identity was so firmly rooted in opposition to the British 'other' that it's not entirely clear how we see ourselves now that issues between the two countries are mostly resolved.

Regarding the importance of Catholicism, it was a core part of Irish nationalist identity, one of the markers that made us different to the British, at the core of people's lives, whether they wanted it or not. It's hard to convey how central it was to Irish life (especially in rural areas), or how quickly the church went from this absolutely dominant position of influence to one of absolute decline. This was brought about most significantly by a long history of widespread child abuse and cover-ups that began to emerge in the 1990s and has kept emerging. It was hard for people to take moral guidance from an institution whose own appalling behaviour was repeatedly exposed. At the same time, there was a generation of young people who emigrated, but then – maybe for the first time in Irish history – came back as the economy began to do well. For a

lot of them, I think, their religious practice would have faded away while abroad, and they didn't resume it when they came home. Among people I know, friends and family, there are only a couple who would go to Mass on a regular basis.

At the same time, the church is still heavily involved in education (over 90% of primary schools are run by Catholic boards) and would be seen as the default setting for weddings and funerals. People who are not believers themselves will still get their children christened just because it'll keep older family members happy, will facilitate school attendance, etc. Catholicism is ubiquitous in Irish life and there doesn't seem to be any great urgency to change that, despite the fact that very significant numbers of people don't practice it and would profess horror at the Church's behaviour over the last forty years.

JR: Would you say that the Irish and Poles share a common sense of humour?

PC: Naah. Poles have no sense of humour. Just joking!

CB: I don't know enough about Polish humour to be able to comment. I think there's maybe an overlap in terms of dryness, a darkness, something understated and black. The humour in the Polish books I've read reminded me of certain Irish authors – Flann O'Brien, James Joyce, Samuel Beckett. In my limited personal experience, I've found it easy to get on with Polish people, to have enjoyable and lively conversations, and that seems to be common enough. That's always been in English, though. I'm sure there's plenty I'm missing.

JR: Having talked about the similarities between the two countries as regards history, religion, and humour, maybe we can take a brief look at the differences – from a migrant's view. Piotr, what do you appreciate most about your life in Ireland and what do you miss most about Poland?

PC: I enjoy the peace and quiet over here. Even the capital is so rural. Compared to Warsaw, I feel as if I lived in a bubble, sealed and safe. Perfect solitude, a perfect state for a writer.

The Poland I miss is 'my' Poland of the 1990s; it's a feeling of having lost something that I often experience in moments of weakness. I no longer have any ambitions when it comes to my so-called professional career, but I care about my writing, the process of creation, I demand more and more from myself. But sometimes the practical adult wakes up in me, and tells me that I was an idiot to have given up everything I had back there. I have a day job here in Ireland which has nothing to do with my profession as a journalist or writer. I have lost contact with Poland. I have no Poland any more. The one I had is only in my brain. It no longer exists in the real world.

JR: What was your most poignant experience in terms of Irish-Polish (inter-cultural) relations?

PC: I think there has never been a moment which I could describe as poignant in any sense, regarding any field. I wish there has been one, though! In general, I wish I had more in common with the Irish. I don't know any Irish writers, artists, poets, or musicians. I am afraid I will never know them, because I am just a Polack. Here we go again: I am one of those who came here to do everything they didn't feel like doing. In the bloody best suit and coat. And the stupid umbrella...

JR: Does living in a foreign language affect you?

PC: Frankly, it doesn't affect me at all, I find it quite a natural state. I actually think I spoke this language much better before I left Poland. As a journalist, I used English vocabulary that was much more complicated. Now I just repeat standard phrases. Had I not started reading my favourite English-language classics in the original, I would have ended up pretty badly I think. I wonder sometimes why hardly anybody among the so-called native speakers has at least a vague idea of how to use the apostrophe. And if I ever meet a local who knows the difference between 'their', 'there' and 'they're' in writing, I will buy him a crate of beer. I mean it!

JR: What are your personal views of the Polish community in Ireland?

PC: It's a huge population, like a relatively large town. You have all kinds of people in a relatively large town, from priests to hookers. I think this explains it all. In general, I am against nationalities. I always say that there are no nationalities, there are only personalities. Nationalities are an antiquated invention. There are simply good people who happened to have come over here from Poland, or wherever else. There are also bad people, stupid people, and wise ones. And so on.

CB: As mentioned before, I think Poles have managed to fit into Irish society with no great difficulty. They may have had an advantage by being mostly Catholic and white and from a country with a vaguely similar history. From what I see, most Polish people seem to manage the superficial aspects of Irish public interaction – the smiling, informality, jokiness, laid-backness, slagging, etc. – pretty well.

I'm not sure that this necessarily means that Polish people are integrated, though. Ireland has no real history of immigration, in the last 400 years at least, and there's no easy route for people from outside to become quickly and deeply absorbed into the community. A lot of Irish people, I think, have friends they've known forever and then a second division of people they know and like but are not especially close to. It can be hard to get beyond that barrier. As Polish people choose to stay here, become part of the scene, get married, have children, etc., that's more likely to happen. Also, younger Irish people seem more open to me,

more used to dealing with people from different cultures. The barriers may not be as high for them.

JR: This interview with an Irishman and a Pole living in Ireland is conducted by a Pole living in Germany, and will be published in an Italian journal dedicated to Irish literature and culture. Let us thus conclude on a European note: do you think that migration from Poland and other countries to Ireland is affecting Polish and Irish perceptions of Europe?

CB: Over the last ten years I suppose the Irish perception of Europe expanded about 500 miles to the east. A lot of people came here from countries that were very unfamiliar to most of the Irish population, and in time Ryanair started flying to those places, and Irish people went to them. They became familiar. That's about it.

PC: I doubt anyone gives Europe a thought. 'Europe' for many is a term which stands for money donations. For some it brings back good memories, for some it must sound like a curse. It depends. As regards Polish-Irish cultural interrelations in particular, if we could only skip the stereotypes and see one another as individuals with individual values, our life on this island would be much more pleasant. As for culture, I deeply hope that all it takes is to believe that Poles in Ireland may stand for more than just the user-friendly cheap workforce, 'the hardworking folk', and all that. These descriptions are often accurate, but they don't tell you much about us. You have to think outside of the box, my Irish friends. We all have to. Even if this requires battling complexes – be it of superiority or inferiority.

Works Cited

- Binchy Chris (2004), *People Like Us*, London, Macmillan.
 — (2009 [2008]), *Open-handed*, London, Penguin.
 — (2009 [2003]), *The Very Man*, London, Macmillan.
 — (2010), *Five Days Apart*, New York, Harper Collins.
 Czerwiński Piotr (2005), *Pokalenie* (Desecration), Warszawa, Świat Książki.
 — (2009), *Piotr Czerwiński. Wirtualna Strona Pisarza* (Piotr Czerwiński. The Author's Virtual Site), <www.piotrczerwinski.com> (05/2015).
 — (2011), *Międzynaród* (Internation), Warszawa, Świat Książki.
 — (2012), *Pigułka wolności* (The Freedom Pill), Warszawa, Wielka Litera.
 — (2009), *Przebiegum życiae* (Conductum Līfae), Warszawa, Świat Książki.
 Rostek Joanna (2013), "Migration, Capital, Space: Econotopic Constellations in Recent Literature about Polish Migrants in Ireland", in Katrin Röder, Ilse Wischer (eds), *Anglistentag 2012. Proceedings*, Trier, WVT, 47-60, <www.wvttrier.de> (05/2012).
 Schrage-Früh Michaela (2011), "Land of the Luas'. Dublin's 'Fast City' in Recent Irish Writing", in Joachim Frenk, Lena Steveker (eds), *Anglistentag 2010. Proceedings*, Trier, WVT, 351-360, <www.wvttrier.de> (05/2010).

2. “*It Is Important Not to Steal Their Lives*”: Interview with Dermot Bolger¹

In his play *The Townlands of Brazil* (2006), Dermot Bolger (*1959), one of the most acclaimed contemporary writers in Ireland, tells the story of an Irish girl, Eileen, forced to emigrate to England when she finds herself pregnant and out of wedlock in the 1960s, and contrasts it with the story of Monika, a Polish immigrant, who works in today’s Ireland to support her daughter. By drawing parallels between the experiences of the two young women, the playwright outlines a set of poignant observations on the similarities between Polish and Irish histories of migration. *The Townlands of Brazil* was first staged at the Axis Arts Centre, Ballymun, Dublin in 2006. The play was then performed in the Polish Theatre in Wrocław in 2008. The following year, it was published by New Island as part of *The Ballymun Trilogy*.

JK: What would you say was the most significant change that Ireland has undergone since the 1990s?

DB: Talking about the start of the 1990s, Ireland was just beginning to find its feet economically. Initially, it was not really much of a multi-cultural society, and not a very obvious place for migrants to seek work. When we started to achieve prosperity, the biggest change has simply been that we had this huge influx of people coming into Ireland. It happened for two reasons. One was that there was physical work here because of the property boom. I’ve even written a poem about that experience, which is called “Travel Light”. It alludes to the story of the army of foreign workmen who built the underground Port Tunnel that linked Dublin Port to the motorway. The title refers to the name of the bag that my own father carried with him when leaving home to work as a sailor on the ships that transported the same goods that would pass through that Port Tunnel. The other reason was a loophole in the Good Friday Agreement, which was a vital part of the Peace Process in Northern Ireland, and like all good complex agreements, the final text was a bit of a fudge. One of the agreement provisions was that anybody born on the island of Ireland was entitled to an Irish passport. The intent was that anyone born in Northern Ireland was automatically entitled to citizenship in the Irish Republic, but one unintended consequence was that, when word of this agreement got out, many women from Africa and elsewhere came to Ireland to have their babies here, in search of a better life for them. These new arrivals could claim citizenship for their child, and then apply for citizenship

¹ The interview is a part of the research project no. DEC-2011/01/B/HS2/05120, which is run at the University of Łódź with financial assistance from the National Science Centre, Poland: <www.emigracja.uni.lodz.pl> (05/2015).

themselves as parents of the Irish baby. Therefore, you had these two very different movements of people into Ireland. One was an influx of often highly skilled workers from Eastern European countries, which had recently joined the EU or were on the cusp of doing so, with qualifications that addressed particular needs in the Irish economy at that time. These workers – from countries like Poland – sometimes wished to stay here or sometimes wanted to earn a certain amount of money before returning home or moving elsewhere. Then the second group consisted of people whose children were born here or who came seeking political asylum, and who hoped to settle in Ireland and make new lives for themselves and their families in the long term.

JK: How well has Irish society coped with the influx of immigrants?

DB: It is too early to say how the Irish people have coped with the influx of immigrants because it always takes a generation to grow up before you see how things truly pan out. For the moment, I think, they have actually coped reasonably well, to be honest with you. Because emigration was such a central part in the life of almost all Irish families, many people could recognise facets of the journeys of their own families in the newcomers. Maybe, that's why Irish people have in general been understanding and welcoming. It's also true that it is easier for the society to accept an influx of immigrants when the country is prosperous and, at the time, Ireland reached virtually full employment and had little awareness of the economic crash about to occur. Therefore, immigration never fermented into a big issue.

JK: Has the economic crisis changed this positive attitude towards newcomers?

DB: Some Irish people can possess two differing attitudes to migrants at the same time. One slightly cautious attitude, which relates to migrants in general on a depersonalised basis while, at the same time, the same person can feel a very different, more welcoming, attitude when it relates to newcomers, whom they know and like, on an individual basis. Unlike in the UK and on the continent, no right-wing party has emerged that tries to blame Ireland's economic disaster upon migrants, although there are undoubtedly individuals who feel resentment in a time when there are fewer jobs and who feel – wrongly in most cases – that sometimes foreigners get certain jobs quicker than Irish people because, out of desperation, they are willing to work for less. But this attitude does not pervade on a large scale. On the personal level, I don't think that Irish people feel any wave of anger towards immigrants, because nobody would be stupid enough to blame the foreign workers who are employed in restaurants or who built apartments, for the crash that occurred within the Irish economy. I haven't noticed any more resentment towards immigrants now than ten years ago, and especially not towards Polish

people who are probably the most popular of all the newcomers, in that both nations have a lot of similarities and links. I think that Polish people have integrated well in Irish society and have gradually become a part of their local communities. That knitting-in process wasn't a collective thing that happened overnight. It happened more through thousands of little interactions in small communities on a daily basis as people on both sides came to know and understand each other.

JK: Why do you think Polish people stayed in Ireland despite the crisis?

DB: Home is a very peculiar concept. It isn't necessarily a physical place, but it is more a state of mind. I know country people who have lived in Dublin for fifty years, but they still are talking about going home when they visit their birthplace in Roscommon for a weekend. But at the same time, their real home is in Dublin. At a certain stage, you get married and have children in whatever new place you find yourself in. Suddenly, your children go to school there and make friends. If you're a Pole in Dublin, then one night you go to bed and people in your dream speak English, not Polish, and likewise if you're an Irish person who has started a new life in Australia, then one day you discover that the bedrock landscape of your dreams is the streets of Perth or Sydney, not the streets of Galway or Cork, where you spent your childhood. Gradually, you realise that you feel more comfortable in this new country than you feel in your birth place. You've made an investment in the local community and developed a sense of belonging here. That is a huge psychological step. It can be very hard to go to a new country, but it can be even harder to go back to your old country that you think you still understand, without realising that it can change in your absence so that you do not truly belong in either place.

JK: Have you yourself ever lived and worked away from home?

DB: Ironically, I am the one of the very few writers of my generation who never lived abroad. When I was young, I made a terrible error of being a practical poet. If you are one, you simply do things. At the age of eighteen, when I was a factory worker in Finglas, I started a publishing company called Raven Art Press. I wanted to publish my contemporaries, the emerging generation of Irish writers. At that time, people used to think that the biggest division was between Irish writers who lived in the country and those who lived in the city. They saw an enormous difference between the country and urban world. I never agreed with them. The biggest division was between Irish writers who stayed in the country and those who left. I remember editing an anthology years ago, called *Ireland in Exile*, with the writings of Colum McCann, Eamonn Wall, Harry Clifton and Joseph O'Connor, basically a whole

generation of writers who had emigrated. They wrote about Irish experience abroad and I deliberately made a point of excluding all writers living in Ireland in it. In my twenties, I became so caught up in the business of running this publishing house and providing the forum for other writers that I have never actually had time to think about leaving the country. However, because I have had a huge number of family members who live abroad, I've always felt strong connections with the experience of emigration.

JK: What was it like for your relatives to move to a foreign country?

DB: My mother was from a family of eleven and my father was from a family of seven. With the exception of two uncles, everybody else emigrated. They all went mainly to England. They left Ireland because there was no work, and they were seeking a better life for themselves. Most of them planned to go only temporarily, just to make money, hoping to come back to Ireland after a year or two. But then they met someone there, often another Irish person, fell in love, and ended up getting married and having children. I have very few Irish born cousins but loads who have Coventry, Leicester, Wolverhampton and London accents. The reason why I possess a Dublin accent is that my father worked as a sailor. He 'emigrated' twice a week for forty-four years. Basically, the primary memory of my father, when I was growing up, was that of a registered envelope with pound banknotes coming in the post every Friday. Eighty per cent of Irish children born between 1931 and 1941 had to emigrate. From any group of forty pupils in a village classroom in 1950, only eight could expect to live as adults in Ireland. The others left to the unspoken relief of government ministers, who knew that emigration was a safety valve on social unrest, sluicing away the disaffected and allowing the government not to tackle fundamental problems within the Irish State. They left to the gain of successive Ministers for Finance, who were able to factor emigrants' remittances as an invisible export into their budgets. All those ten-shilling notes sent home from Birmingham and Manchester counted for more than loose change. At a time of low economic output, emigrants were subsidising the Irish economy up to the equivalent of over nine hundred and fifty million Euro every year in today's money. Therefore, it was a huge cultural change for Ireland to move from being a society which people left to becoming one into which people arrived. Ireland's population began to drastically rise again but this time it was a totally different and more varied type of population. It was people coming here looking for work. They were like replicas of my Irish uncles and aunts who had been forced to leave in previous generations.

JK: In your book, The Ballymun Trilogy, you talk about the issues of migration and portray a couple of Polish characters. What was the inspiration for the plays?

DB: The book is a trilogy of plays about a suburb of Dublin called Ballymun that was essentially a greenfield site in the 1960s, but later it was turned into a high-rise suburb of tower blocks, a housing experiment that went badly wrong. At the end of the twentieth century, it started to be knocked down and a new, better-planned suburb was built in its place – a process which has been generally successful but very slow to be completed. I wanted to tell the story of the area in three different plays. The first play, *From These Green Heights* goes back to the 1960s when the towers had been erected because of a housing crisis in 1963, when Dublin Corporation were forced to evacuate and condemn many old tenements, following four deaths caused by collapsing buildings. Housing waiting lists doubled, with some families forced to sleep on the street. Already in Europe high-rise schemes were being abandoned for becoming ‘vertical slums’ whose inhabitants were socially isolated. This did not deter the Irish Government from deciding that a prefabricated high-rise scheme represented “an exciting alternative to the squalor of Dublin’s tenements”. The original name for the towers – *Ard Glas* (Green Heights) – reflected official optimism. Impressive plans included an ultra-modern shopping centre and thirty-six acres of public gardens and play areas. The initial leases were handed out almost as a reward to model tenants. The flats were large and had central heating. What they lacked was a thermostat. Tenants baked or froze, unable to turn their own heating on or off. Almost from the start, the lifts malfunctioned, with young families facing an ordeal to simply descend from their flats. Once on the ground floor, there was nowhere to go. It was three years before the first shop was built. Indeed all the promised facilities were similarly absent. People had simply been taken from close knit city communities and dumped amid the tower blocks and fields. At the time that towers were built, there was a small, rural community in the area. The rural locals were terrified of all these Dubliners from the inner city coming out. The newcomers were different, and therefore local people were a bit apprehensive about them, in the same way as Dublin people felt a bit of initial uncertainty about the Polish and other immigrants, who began to arrive in Dublin forty years after the towers were built.

When I set down to write the second play, *The Townlands of Brazil*, my intention was to tell the story of my father’s and uncles’ generation, who all emigrated. But then I looked at most of the workers who were knocking down the old towers and building the new homes in Ballymun. Many of them were foreign migrant workers. I thought it would be interesting, as so much as an outsider could, to write about the lives of these Poles and other Eastern Europeans, who had come to seek work in Ireland. They followed the work in exactly the same way as my uncles and aunts had followed the work fifty years previously. I made it a point that no character in the second act of *The Townlands of Brazil* should be Irish; that everybody would be a foreigner. I was anxious to tell the stories because, as I make it clear in my

programme notes to *The Townlands of Brazil*, the only person who will ever be able to write a proper play about the Polish experience in Ireland will be a Polish writer. My play is like an intermediate, stopgap measure. It is an Irish person trying to imagine these contemporary emigrant lives that echo the history of his own family.

The last play, *The Consequences of Lightning*, talks about the future of Ballymun. It is centred around the death of an old man, one of the first people who moved into the Ballymun tower blocks. When his wife died, he drank heavily, unable to cope with his grief. One of his sons, ashamed of that, built himself a life as a very successful businessman and broke off all contacts with his father. Particularly after his younger brother, who was a junk, died in Ballymun. A Jesuit priest gradually affects a reconciliation between the father and son. It was almost like trying to bring to an end all the old wounds of Ballymun, all the great family tragedies. It is a play about letting go of the past and embracing the future.

JK: What audience were you aiming The Townlands of Brazil towards?

DB: The Ballymun Trilogy was a unique project. When Ballymun was built in the 1960s, it was supposed to be a paradise, but it gradually became synonymous with the urban depravation. My ambition was to tell the history of the place that hasn't been told in drama before, but also to tell it primarily to the audience who didn't necessarily go to the theatre regularly or who in many cases had never been in a theatre before. We brought in a non-theatre audience, who might have been sceptical about drama, by holding benefit nights in support of the local school, GAA Club, and Housing Association. These organisations sold tickets and received part of the box office takings. It was very much an experiment in building a new audience from local people. They weren't the standard middle-class theatre-goers. Eventually, people from the outside area were also beginning to come. Ballymun had a bad reputation, so it took a while to break down this prejudice and to get outsiders to visit Axis Arts Centre. I think that a lot of them came to see *The Townlands of Brazil* because they were fascinated by the Polish people around them but didn't quite know how to see into their lives. Finally, I wanted the emigrant workers, living in Ballymun and all over the city, to know that someone was trying to tell their story, probably in that very imperfect way which any outsider will do, but that at least the attempt was made. We wrote the programme note in Irish and in Polish. It didn't seem right to have an Irish woman playing the role of Monika so we brought over an actress from Poland, Julia Krynke, who drew a lot of media attention. *The Polish Herald* – a sixteen-page supplement stapled in the middle of the leading Irish newspaper *The Evening Herald* – and some websites wrote about the event. I couldn't give you the figures for how many Polish viewers we had

each night, because we didn't stop people on the way to the theatre to ask what nationality they were. But we did see faces coming in that we hadn't seen before. It was quite an interesting audience that was very different from the other Ballymun plays.

In 2008, we decided to use the play to forge links with Poland and so we brought *The Townlands of Brazil* over to the Polish Theatre in Wrocław. In turn, the Polish Theatre brought over a one-man show, *The Leash*, to Axis Arts Centre. It was staged in Polish and we had subtitles on it.

JK: Have you tried to play with language to mirror the way Polish immigrants speak?

DB: I tried not to put words or phrases in the mouth of Polish characters that they wouldn't necessarily say. At the same time, I didn't want them to speak Pidgin English. The level of English among Poles in Ireland is exceptionally high. What's distinctive about their language is that they speak in a more precise way, probably because they are anxious to be understood. When you use your mother tongue, you take it for granted that everyone understands you. You may use certain nuances and you believe that your listeners have the cultural framework to understand what you're actually saying. Whereas, when you speak in a foreign language, you cannot take it for certain that the person will understand you, so you speak in a more precise and careful manner. I don't know, however, just how many false notes I have hit in *The Townlands of Brazil* although I am sure that a Polish person would notice them very quickly.

JK: Were your Polish characters based on real people?

DB: None of my characters have ever been based on one true person. I talked to people, but I was very careful not to get too close to anyone personally when researching a novel or a play. I would be very cautious of sitting down and interviewing any Polish person and then transporting all they have said onto paper. It is important not to steal their lives. My characters are rather an amalgam of many Poles that I have met and different stories from different places. For example, I spoke to many men working on building sites here. Some of them were from Poland. They worked long hours on official building sites and then extra hours for cash in the evening, often coming home at midnight, and they would be up at six next morning, getting a bus or a Luas into Tallaght and working for the next eight-hour shift before going on doing casual work again. They were relatively young men who had no ties to homeland, except maybe for emotional bonds, and were planning to settle down here. And then there were people who had families at home and never intended to stay here. They simply tried to build a deposit on a better life back in Poland.

JK: Do Irish and Polish people have anything else in common?

DB: On the long list of Irish heroes, there are figures from mythology like Cúchulainn, but there is also a name of a Polish goal keeper, Jan Tomaszewski. In 1973, Poland kicked England out of the World Cup in Wembley, and they did this by Tomaszewski making an extraordinary string of saves. At the time, Ireland was a really unsuccessful football nation. We hadn't won a match in years. The game in Wembley was on a Wednesday, and the Polish team have arranged to play a friendly match in Dublin on the following Sunday. They arrived in Ireland on Friday like national heroes. They were brought on Irish television and were serenaded with Polish folk songs. Then, I think, they just got drunk for two days and so Ireland beat them one-nil at the weekend. The Irish fell in love with Poland at that moment because they had beaten England and then lost to Ireland. After that, the massive succession of friendlies was organised where the Polish and the Irish teams were forever playing each other. These links were forged long before the wave of Polish emigration to Ireland began. Apart from the sporting links, there were the religious links, and a great interest in Solidarity. Poland was very much on the news and in the consciousness of people at that time. Due to this awareness of their history when Polish people came to Ireland, they received a greater welcome and were able to integrate a lot easier than maybe other newcomers.

JK: What differences do you see between the Polish and Irish nations?

DB: Well, obviously there is the difference of the history. I've always had an interest in Poland and a hopefully relatively informed layman's knowledge of the country, in a sense that I tried to keep up to date with what was happening there. I had followed the Solidarity movement and the gradual struggle for a truly democratic state in the 1980s. Maybe I'm wrong, but I suspect that the older generation of Poles still feel trauma, arising from the fact that they were behind the Iron Curtain for so long. Like in many countries (including Ireland, but in a different way), there may be things that people still feel uncomfortable talking about to their children and grandchildren. To survive in an oppressive society, one occasionally had to do or say things to survive that seemed like the only option at the time, but taken out of the context twenty-five years later, can look bad. Every society that emerges into an independent state exists, for some period of time later, in a state of collective amnesia. But if you grew up under a repressive or puppet regime, I suspect that you learned very quickly that reticence was very important, that your own words could be taken out of context and used as weapons against you. Therefore, you become very careful and don't express yourself openly at times so that nobody knows what you are feeling. There would be certain, very slight, parallels with the Ireland where the mind-set was very controlled by the church. The consequences of speaking out were in no way as severe

as behind the Iron Curtain, but if you worked in the public service, teaching, broadcasting or other areas like this, you always knew that words could have economic consequences for you and your family. As a result, many people developed a similar reticence in keeping their real thoughts to themselves.

I don't think that young Irish or Polish people now would feel any need for such restraint in expressing their opinions or living their lives. The gap that existed thirty years ago between life in the two countries has now completely narrowed, and young Irish and Polish people would have a lot in common, although both obviously remain rooted in their national narratives. Even though this may not be visible or immediate to an outsider, it is always there.

JK: What is the image of an Irishman among Polish immigrants?

DB: That I don't know. The Irish for a very long time had an image of themselves as the nation of lovable rogues. We played traditional music all around the world and we had 'craic' as we call it. When we had no money, we felt that the world loved us. I think that some Poles, working for the Irish, may have had a different experience of us, though – as also happened with Irish workers in Britain in the 1950s, very often most cases of migrants being exploited here came within their own communities, especially in things like the restaurant trade. But when a relationship becomes that of employer and employee, it can sour any relationship. Then many Irish investors unwisely purchased vast numbers of apartments in Eastern European countries, which not only helped to cause the crash in Ireland – with many of them made bankrupt – but must have driven property prices well beyond the reach of local people in these countries, which can only have caused resentment.

JK: Do any of your other works refer to Polish culture?

DB: In the book *Night and Day*, which was my portrait of South Dublin, one poem, "On the 7am Luas to Tallaght", is translated into Polish. And at the moment, I am writing a novel with a band of workers from Eastern Europe in it, some of whom are Polish.

Works Cited

- Bolger Dermot (1993), *Ireland in Exile: Irish Writers Abroad*, Dublin, New Island Books.
- (2006), *The Townlands of Brazil*, Dir. Ray Yeates, Dublin, Axis Arts Centre.
- (2008), "On the 7am Luas to Tallaght" – "Siódma rano w tramwaju do Tallaght", trans. by Justyna and Cathal McCabe, in Dermot Bolger, *Night & Day. Twenty Four Hours in the Life of Dublin City*, Dublin, New Island, 18-21.
- (2008), "Travel Light", in Id., *External Affairs*, <http://www.dermotbolger.com/externalaffairs_travellight.htm> (02/2015).
- (2010), *The Ballymun Trilogy*, Dublin, New Island.
- Porczyk Bartosz (2008), *The Leash*, dir. Natalia Korczakowska, Dublin, Axis Arts Centre.

3. *“Polish Theatre Ireland Is a Place Where the Two Cultures Meet”: Interview with Anna Wolf*²

Anna Wolf (*1983) was born in Bydgoszcz. After graduating in Theatre Studies in 2007, she moved to Dublin where she started to work in a monitoring services company and signed up for a Public Relations course with the European Institute of Communications. Anna has been fascinated by the theatre since she was a little girl, so a couple of months after her arrival, she embarked on setting up a professional theatre group in Dublin.

JK: How did the idea of Polish Theatre Ireland come about?

AW: In February 2008, I met an Irishwoman, Helen McNulty, in the Focus Theatre office where we were supposed to work together. Eventually, I didn't get the job at the theatre, but the meeting brought about the idea of setting up a Polish-Irish theatre group. Helen came up with the name and we wrote the *Mission Statement* together³. She took on the responsibilities of the producer and I became the artistic director. Our intent was to create a space where Polish and Irish artists would be able to conceive something original and flourish artistically. We wanted the two cultures to coexist on the stage. It soon became clear that we were actually dealing with two very different cultures. During the rehearsals for our first play in 2010, the Irish, who don't really have any theatre superstitions, laughed at our rituals. They couldn't understand, for example, why we would stomp on a script that had accidentally fallen to the floor or why we would give one another a kick for good luck before the performance. But then they quickly adopted our traditions and secretly trampled on their script pages if they had been dropped.

JK: When did the other members join the theatre?

AW: Half a year after my arrival in Dublin, I came across Kasia Lech on Facebook, with whom I currently manage the theatre. With time we found our other members. One of them was Agata Kaputa, a graduate from the prestigious PWST National Academy of Theatre Arts in Kraków, who later recorded and edited the voiceover for our first production. Then everyone would bring their friends. This was how Oscar Menandi, a Polish actor of Congolese origin, joined the crew. When he was five, his parents left their home country

² The interview was translated by Aleksandra Kumycz. It forms part of the research project no. DEC-2011/01/B/HS2/05120, which is run at the University of Łódź with financial assistance from the National Science Centre, Poland: <www.emigracja.uni.lodz.pl> (05/2015).

³ The text of the *Mission Statement* is available online at: <polishtheatre.wordpress.com/about-us/mission-statement/> (05/2015).

because of the war and the whole family settled down in Poland. A while later, Alicja Ayres joined in. She was a Polish actress living in Dublin at that time and performing at the Abbey Theatre. Our group grew larger every day. Konrad Kania began to compose music for our productions. In February 2010, we started to cooperate with an Irish actor, John Currivan, and that's how our theatre company was formed.

JK: Your first production premiered in autumn 2010 – Radosław Paczocha's Scent of Chocolate. The play tells the story of a family disintegration after the mother decides to emigrate. The woman leaves her homeland, seemingly in order to raise money for her son's rehabilitation, but in fact she wants to start a new life. Her daughter is forced to step into the mother's shoes and take care of her handicapped brother and her father, who has chosen to withdraw into 'inner emigration'. Why did you select this particular play?

AW: I first heard *Scent of Chocolate* on Polish Radio Three during their Christmas broadcast. It was so engrossing that I turned to the Polish Theatre in Poznań with a request for contact details to the author of the script. Then I called Radosław Paczocha to ask for his permission to stage the play and, when he gave me the green light, we got down to work enthusiastically. We settled on two language versions, which we staged in turns. One day the play was performed in Polish and the next day in English. It attracted a lot of people, who were queuing in front of the theatre. Even though we brought in some extra chairs, there still wasn't enough space for everybody. After the opening night, we organised a meeting with Radosław Paczocha, during which a number of migrant viewers said that it was a great pleasure for them to be able to watch a play in Polish. However, it turned out that the English nights were even more popular. Apart from Irish people, who made up about forty percent of the audience, Poles were buying tickets, too, because some of them couldn't come when the Polish version was on. As a result, we received more bookings for the English show from the very beginning. Encouraged by our success, we returned to the stage in December and enjoyed unabated popularity. When we staged the play for the third time as part of a charity event in 2012, the theatre was again filled to the rim. We had two hundred people each night.

JK: Did your next project, Chesslugh Mewash, gain as much popularity as Scent of Chocolate?

AW: Like with *Scent of Chocolate*, we had the premiere of our second production in September, but a year later, in 2011. The title, *Chesslugh Mewash*, is a phonetic spelling of the name of the famous Polish poet, Czesław Miłosz, who was awarded the Nobel Prize in 1980. The play is based on his poems from the 1960s when he was an emigrant in Paris. The project received

three very different reviews: one bad, one average and one good. I think that it wasn't fully understood. Perhaps, it's because we used a wide spectrum of languages. We intertwined poems in Polish and English with their translations in Lithuanian, French, Slovak, and even Irish. We wanted to prove that Miłosz's poems embody universal truths, even though reality has changed over the last fifty years. Our world has become multicultural and obsessed with online communication, but our search for identity is not much different from the poet's errands. We came up with a story of six characters and turned Miłosz's poems into dialogues. Interwoven motifs, nationalities, and languages symbolise the difficulties we presently face when looking for our own 'self'. We staged the play at the Dublin Fringe Festival.

JK: What followed after Chesslugh Mewash?

*AW: After Chesslugh Mewash, we organised staged readings of plays by Polish and Lithuanian contemporary playwrights. The project was called Freedom LTD and we worked on it in cooperation with the local amateur Lithuanian theatre, Alternayva Alternatyvai. We selected four dramas: two Lithuanian plays – *The Girl Who Feared God* by Gintaras Grajauskas and *The Interpreter* by Laima Vince – and two Polish works – Radosław Paczocha's *Be Like Kazimierz Deyna* and *Foreign Bodies* by Julia Holewińska, for which the author received the Gdynia Playwright Award in 2010. We chose the plays because of the topics they tackled. We wanted to capture Poland and Lithuania in their fight for freedom and then ask whether we actually live up to and make full use of our liberation. Do we exercise the right to be free or do we put shackles on our minds? *Foreign Bodies* tries to answer these questions. The play takes place both at the times of communism and at present. It tells the story of a man, called Adam, who was an active member of the Solidarity movement under communist rule in Poland. As he has always wanted to be a woman, he decides to have sex reassignment surgery after the country regains its independence in 1989 and changes his name to Eve. His decision makes everybody turn away from him. The play is based on an article Julia Holewińska read in a Polish daily, *Gazeta Wyborcza*. The character's sexual transformation is a metaphor for the changes Poland has undergone. We've regained political freedom, but can we enjoy social freedom? The same question is posed in Radosław Paczocha's play, *Be Like Kazimierz Deyna*. The drama depicts the Polish road to independence from the perspective of a national football team fan. The father of the protagonist, who is obsessed with the successful footballer, Kazimierz Deyna, wants to turn his son into a top scorer at all costs. But despite the boy's best efforts, neither his dad nor a professional football coach succeed in turning him into Deyna's 'successor'. As a result, the boy embarks on a quest to find his own idea for life. John Curivan, enthralled by the humour of the play, tried to talk me into staging it in Dublin and passing him the baton of the director.*

But coming back to *Freedom LTD*, we flew the playwrights over to Ireland and organised a two-day festival in the Submarine Bar in Crumlin, on the outskirts of Dublin. The plays were read by Irish and Polish actors. After each reading, we held a discussion. They were chaired, first by Gavin Kostick, the Literary Officer of Fishamble, one of the most important Irish contemporary theatre companies, and then by Willie White, the Chief Executive of the Dublin Theatre Festival. I was proud that we managed to organise such a significant and interesting meeting.

JK: Then you decided to stage Delta Phase. The play tells a story of three friends, or rather hooligans, chavs, who decide to have some fun on a Saturday evening. Drunk and doped, they lose touch with reality and end up committing a brutal murder. When did you start preparing for the production?

AW: I started the preparations in August 2012 with booking the theatre and translating Radosław Paczocha's text into English, actually into Irish English, in order to illustrate that the play was originally written in slang. As a result, *Delta Phase* turned out to be a mixture of strong Polish, Dublin, North-Dublin and Mullingar accents. It took me two and a half months to render the whole text. I wanted to tease as much Polishness out of it as I could. I didn't want the audience to have any doubts that they were dealing with Polish, not Irish or English, hooligans. Unfortunately, we didn't manage to prepare a bilingual project, as we had done with *Scent of Chocolate*, because the Polish actors were snowed under with work at their drama schools and couldn't find the time for rehearsing. That's why we staged *Delta Phase* solely in English, which pleased the scriptwriter, but in my opinion deterred a lot of our Polish audience. There were evenings when we had an entirely Irish audience.

JK: After Radosław Paczocha, you turned to Julia Holewińska's plays.

AW: Yes, the production of *Foreign Bodies* by Julia Holewińska turned out to be our great media and artistic success. We got a chance to stage it in the Project Arts Centre, the largest theatre centre in Dublin. As the play refers to the events from the past and combines them with current affairs, the Irish audience received a dose of knowledge about the fall of the communist regime and the rise of capitalism in Poland. The next play we worked on, *Bubble Revolution*, was especially dear to us because it told the story of our generation. The generation of people who are now in their thirties. A lot of them decided to emigrate to the British Isles after 2004. Not unlike the main character, we have only a vague memory of communism. This time, the play was staged both in Ireland and Great Britain.

JK: What audiences have you been aiming your plays at?

AW: Our initial idea was to start a theatre that would bring Irish and Polish audiences together, but of course, we don't aim our projects at any specific nationalities. I'd say we perform for Dubliners. Our audiences comprise a multicultural mix of actors, artistic directors, critics, and people from the streets who, at least for the time being, are usually Polish or Irish. One of our goals is to promote contemporary Polish culture among the locals; therefore, I've subscribed to *Dialog*, a Polish monthly which publishes brand-new dramatic texts, to be up to date with our modern playwriting. I always do my best to choose texts that somehow relate to the Irish context. Even though I usually go for drama, I'm also open to prose and poetic texts that could be adapted for the stage. On the other hand, our aim is also to familiarise Polish immigrants with the local theatre, its language, actors, and critics. Polish Theatre Ireland is a place where the two cultures meet.

JK: Since we touched upon the topic of nationalities, what do you think of Irish people?

AW: I think they are friendly, optimistic, and helpful. I remember when I first went to Kilkenny. Lost in thought, I stood in the street, and suddenly an Irishwoman approached me and offered to help me find a job. She led me to a nearby supermarket, gave me an application form and went on to explain how to fill it in. Nobody would approach me like that in Poland! I also think that the Irish live on a day-to-day basis. They don't worry about tomorrow and they don't make far-reaching plans. In Poland, it's the other way round. We live on our dreams and we plan everything in hope of a better future. That's why here, in Ireland, people have their apartments made over only every now and then; whereas every time I visit Poland, I hear the noise of drilling, because of someone redoing their flat. It's partly due to our financial situation, but it's also a consequence of our mentality. Unlike us, the Irish are more relaxed. They don't look for problems where there aren't any. It was one of the reasons why I came here. In Poland, I felt under constant pressure to get married, to start a family, to take out a bank loan for a flat. I don't feel that here. And from the perspective of a person running a theatre company, I admire the Irish people's interest in the theatre. During the Dublin Theatre Festival, all tickets were sold out even though they were quite expensive.

JK: And what do Irish people think of Poles?

AW: They regard us as a very hardworking nation and they feel that we're similar to them. We became quite popular here during the Euro Championship in 2012. Irish football fans, who visited Poland, kept repeating on the radio and TV that they were impressed by how well things were organised and by the atmosphere of the whole event. To make the most of these enthusiastic attitudes, the authorities of the city of Poznań set up a photo exhibition in Dublin that displayed photographs of Irish football fans in Polish stadiums.

JK: What differences can you see between the ways theatres are run in Poland and in Ireland?

AW: The Polish and Irish systems are very different. In Poland, the play is run as long as it is popular, sometimes even for ten years. Most actors work full time and are paid a monthly salary. In Ireland, they rarely have a permanent job, and only celebrities can make a living from acting. The other actors work on a contract basis, so they have to have regular day jobs. The audience is perceived as customers and the play as a product. The show is run for three weeks straight, and then it's taken down. The memory of it fades away and the only sign that it had taken place remains in the archives. Not without reason, they call a show here a theatre 'production'. In Poland, there is greater artistic freedom, more time for brainstorming and rehearsing. Here, you have to follow a strict timeframe, imposed on you by the market. The rehearsals have to be covered out of the play's budget so they can't last longer than a month or two. After that, you run out of money.

JK: Since you mention money, where does your theatre get funding from?

AW: We're sponsored mainly by the Polish Embassy and the Consulate in Dublin. Additionally, we raise some money over the Internet and during special donation events. The Polish Social and Cultural Association provides us with a room for rehearsals free-of-charge. Every year, we also apply for subsidies from the Arts Council and the Irish Ministry for Culture, with no success so far. But we'll keep trying until they notice us.

JK: How do you promote your projects?

AW: We use a whole spectrum of channels. From the very beginning, I've done a lot of campaigning via social media, such as Twitter and Facebook. What's interesting, they seem to spread the word more efficiently than our website (<<https://polishtheatre.wordpress.com>>). We also use traditional methods, such as flyers and posters that are distributed throughout the city. Additionally, I spend a lot of time promoting the theatre in Polish and Irish media. Articles about Polish Theatre Ireland have been published in *Polska Gazeta* – a Polish weekly published in Dublin – and *The Irish Times*, among others. Our members, Kasia Lech and Alicja Ayres, were interviewed for a lengthy feature entitled "Please Don't Cast Me as a Prostitute – Again", which was published in the largest-selling weekly, *The Sunday Times*. In the interview, they argue that they are fed up with being offered the roles of cleaners, builders, and prostitutes all the time. Even though this stereotype doesn't come out of nowhere – on arrival, most migrant women from Poland found employment in hotels and men on building sites – they claim that being cast in the same roles over and over again only reiterates prejudices regarding foreigners that no longer hold true. The actors don't mind taking the part of a cleaner, but they'd rather impersonate an Irish or, let's say, a German character, not always a Polish one. They conclude that Irish producers should acknowledge that Ireland has turned into a multicultural country with a myriad of languages. From all green, it has changed into a multi-coloured island.

JK: Do you have plans to return to Poland?

AW: Poland will always be my homeland, the place where I was born. Even though I left, I consider myself a patriot. We don't have to fight any regime at present, so our patriotism manifests itself rather in our affection for culture. That's why I promote Polish culture among the Irish and among migrants. In Ireland, I met people who inspired me to start a theatre company and they constantly support me in my endeavours. Although I miss my family, whom I left behind in Poland, I can't imagine going back. Currently, I live in Rome, from where I manage Polish Theatre Ireland, and I'm working on a new play, *The Passengers*, which I'm co-writing with an Irish playwright, Rory O'Sullivan. The play explores various dimensions of (e)migration and depicts it from different perspectives. It has been inspired by real life stories and presents the journey of three characters, including an Irishman and a Pole, who are trying to find their place in the ever-changing world of today⁴.

Works Cited

- Grajauskas Gintaras (2012), *The Girl Who Feared God*, trans. by Laima Vince, dir. Vincent O'Reilly, Dublin, Polish Theatre Ireland and Alternayva Alternatyvai.
- Holewińska Julia (2012), *Foreign Bodies*, trans. by Arthur Zapałowski, dir. Kasia Lech, Dublin, Polish Theatre Ireland and Alternayva Alternatyvai.
- (2013), *Bubble Revolution*, trans. by Arthur Zapałowski, dir. John Currivan, Dublin, Polish Theatre Ireland.
- Paczocha Radosław (2011), *Scent of Chocolate*, trans., adapted and dir. by Anna Wolf, Dublin, Polish Theatre Ireland.
- (2012), *Be Like Kazimierz Deyna*, trans. by Anna Wolf, dir. John Currivan, Dublin, Polish Theatre Ireland and Alternayva Alternatyvai.
- (2012), *Delta Phase*, trans. by Anna Wolf and John Currivan, dir. Lianne O'Shea and John Currivan, Dublin, Polish Theatre Ireland.
- Shortall Eithne (2012), "Please Don't Cast Me as a Prostitute – Again", *The Sunday Times*, 18 November, <<http://www.thesundaytimes.co.uk/sto/news/ireland/article1164193.ece>> (02/2015).
- Vince Laima (2012), *The Interpreter*, dir. Laima Prokofjevienė, Dublin, Polish Theatre Ireland and Alternayva Alternatyvai.
- Wolf Anna (2010), *Chesssugh Mewash* (2010), dir. Anna Wolf and John Currivan, Dublin, Polish Theatre Ireland.
- (2012), *Freedom LTD*, dir. Kasia Lech, Laima Prokofjevienė, John Currivan, Vincent O'Reilly, Dublin, Polish Theatre Ireland and Alternayva Alternatyvai.

⁴ *The Passengers* premiered in April 2015 at the New Theatre in Dublin and directed by Emilia Sadowska.

Jan Parandowski

Jan Parandowski and James Joyce

Fiorenzo Fantaccini

Università degli Studi di Firenze (<ffantaccini@unifi.it>)

“A philologist indulgent toward human excesses” (Miłosz 1981, 202), this is how Czesław Miłosz defines Jan Parandowski (1895-1978), a distinguished writer and translator who was the president of the Polish Pen Club from 1933 to the year of his death. In spite of being a very active member of the international literary community, Parandowski was intellectually remote from the avant-gardist concerns of most of his European and North-American contemporaries; he is considered a ‘classicist’ for his passion for antiquity and his books inspired by Greek, Roman and Italian themes (*Eros na Olimpie* 1924, *Eros on the Olympus*; *Dysk Olimpijski* 1933, *The Olympic Discus*; *Godzina śródziemnomorska* 1949, *A Mediterranean Hour*). Throughout the course of his life he translated works by Julius Caesar, Einhard, Longus, Teofilatte Simokatto, Homer, as well as Romain Rolland, H.G. Wells, Th. Gautier, A. Chekhov, H. de Montherlant, C. Farrère etc. (Lichański 1997, 15). Parandowski believed “in the continuity and unity of Western European culture surviving all the tragedies of History and in Poland’s integral role in that continuity and unity” (Corliss 1973, 65), and this was the focus of interest of most of his works. Parandowski’s idea was that the Mediterranean was the centre of European civilization and art, the hotbed of creativity in which Poland also participated. His idea is thoroughly expressed in *Trzy Znaki Zodiaku* (1939; *Three Signs of the Zodiac*), a collection of stories sketching the lives and times of historical figures such as Ptolemy, Cicero, Dante, Diderot, but also Jan Kochanowski and Joseph Conrad, all of them drawing creative energy from and belonging to a common Mediterranean cultural heritage. An exception to this non-fictional approach was his most popular achievement, his only novel as such, *Niebo w płomieniach* (1936; *Sky in Flames*), in which he convincingly explores a young boy’s religious crisis and rebellion against the world of adults and the Catholic Church against the background of pre-World War I Poland and his first love affair. Yet Parandowski is now mostly remembered for *Król życia* (1930; *King of Life*), his fictionalized re-creation of Oscar Wilde’s life which has been and still is enormously popular in Poland (in 2008 a radio play based on Parandowski’s book was broadcast to much acclaim), for his popularization of the *Iliad* (*Wojna trojańska* 1927; *The Trojan War*) and the *Odyssey* (*Przygody Odyseusza* 1935; *Ulysses’s Adventures*) for young people, and for his accurate unabridged prose version of the *Odyssey*, a “gift” for “post-war Polish generations” (Miłosz 1981, 202). Homer and his works – the *Odyssey* in particular – were

central to Parandowski's cultural cosmogony, a trait that he shared with James Joyce. Parandowski met Joyce in 1937, during a PEN conference in Paris, but his recollections were published only in 1946 in a Swedish journal¹. Despite Joyce's reticence to comment on *Ulysses* after its publication, their conversation, made smoother by several glasses of Orvieto wine, focused on the structure of the *Odyssey* and the complex "way the fable unfolds". Joyce revealed that he was fascinated by Homer's "plan" and that in his novel he "followed it faithfully down to the tiniest detail" (139), with its irregularities in time and place, and its mixing of incidents and stories. As Willard Potts notices, if these traits are pervasive to *Ulysses*, they "are even more prominent in *Finnegans Wake*, suggesting that Homer's work provided a model for the latter as well as for the former" (Parandowski 1979, 154). And the final part of that "memorable conversation" (141) is mostly about the *Work in Progress* Joyce was trying to complete at the time, and shows that despite his usual self-confidence Joyce feared "a catastrophe", a book wreck, a failure of his efforts "to liberate all sounds of rustling, breaking, arguing, shouting, cracking, whistling, creaking, gurgling – from their servile, contemptible role" and to look "for definitions of the undefined", feelings that Parandowski shared, judging Joyce's endeavour "a genial caprice" and "a gigantic charade" (141). Luckily they were both wrong: two years later *Finnegans Wake* was published, celebrating "the great myth of everyday life".

Works Cited

- Corliss F.J. (1973), "Jan Parandowski", *The Modern Language Journal* 57, 1-2.
- Lichański J.Z. (1997), *Jan Parandowski – tłumacz i teoretyk literatury*, in *Przekład literacki. Teoria – Historia – Współczesność* (J.P. – translator and literary theorist, in *Literary Translation. Theory – History – Contemporaneity*), ed. by A. Nowicka-Jeżowa, D. Knysz-Tomaszewska, Warszawa, PWN, 13-25.
- Miłosz Czesław (1981), *Native Realm: A Search for Self-definition*, trans. by C.S. Leach, University of California Press, Berkeley-Los Angeles-London.
- Parandowski Jan (1946), "Möte med James Joyce", trans. by Marika Stiernstedt, *BLM. Bonniers Litterära Magasin* 10, 851-853.
- (1957), "Begegnung mit Joyce", trans. by Leo Koszella, *Deutsche Rundschau* LXXXIII, 279-284.
- (1959), "Spotkanie z Joycem", in Id., *Dziela wybrane 3*, Cytelnik, Warszawa, 468-477.
- (1960), "Il mio incontro con Joyce", trans. by Alessandro Koltowski, *L'Europa letteraria* 3, 67-75.
- (1979), "Meeting with Joyce", trans. by Willard Potts, in W. Potts (ed.), *Portraits of the Artist in Exile. Recollections of James Joyce by Europeans*, Washington, University of Washington Press, 153-162.

¹ They were subsequently translated into German (1957), Polish (1959) and Italian (1960); it was not until 1979 that they appeared in English in the collection *Portraits of the Artist in Exile. Recollections of James Joyce by Europeans*, edited by Willard Potts, and published by University of Washington Press.

Meeting with Joyce*

Jan Parandowski

NOT MANY NATIONS HAVE ENJOYED the privilege of a translation of Joyce's *Ulysses*. But whenever a translation of this remarkable work has appeared, it has been an exciting and controversial event. I lived through such a time in the fall of 1946, toward the end of my sojourn in Sweden. The translation was published [in Stockholm] by Bonnier, who also publish *BLM*, one of the outstanding periodicals, or rather magazines, worthy of the name 'literary'. The editorial board of Bonnier asked me if I would be willing to write a few pages on *Ulysses* or Joyce. It was at that time that I recalled my only meeting with this remarkable Irishman and, our conversation, which was as striking as any that I have ever had with a contemporary writer – a recollection somewhat obscured by time, like an old photograph, and for that reason all the more intriguing. I wrote up our conversation in French, which was translated into Swedish by Marika Stiernstedt, a distinguished writer whose name is well known in Poland both as an author and as a great friend of Polish literature. Today, while putting my papers in order, I discovered the record of our conversation. I thought that, although a translator of *Ulysses* will not soon be found among us, Polish readers, who generally are well acquainted with Joyce's short stories and *A Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man*, know enough about the man himself that I might share with them my recollections¹.

It was in 1937 – in Paris. Joyce came to a plenary meeting of the P.E.N Congress, being held in the Jovet Theatre. On the stage were the president's table and a lectern. As Joyce mounted the stairs to the stage, he wavered at every step and would have fallen had someone not helped him at the last moment.

"He is nearly blind", someone near me whispered.

* Selection by Jan Parandowski, from Potts, Willard, *Portraits of the Artist in Exile*. © 1979, Seattle, University of Washington Press. Reprinted with permission. The text also reprints Willard Pott's notes with bibliographical integrations by the editors. Our sincere gratitude to University of Washington Press for permission to reprint Parandowski's essay in Willard Potts's translation and to Katie and Geoffrey Potts for their encouragement and support.

¹ A Polish translation of *Ulysses* was published in 1969. The Polish reception of Joyce is discussed by Piątkowska 1971 and by Lewicki, Gerauld 1971.

Joyce used our congress as an opportunity to denounce the censors' attacks on *Ulysses*. Since he himself could not read his report, he gave it, if I am not mistaken, to one of the Irish delegates, and, taking a seat at the corner of the president's table, accompanied the reading of the report with a rhythmic tapping of his fingers on the red cloth. The fortunes of his book were being recounted.

An edition of a thousand numbered copies was published in Paris by Shakespeare and Company (this name struck me as a bit of pretentious symbolism). In the fall of the same year an edition of two thousand was published in London by a company with, it seems to me, an equally peculiar name – the Egoist Press. Five hundred copies from this edition were sent to America where the New York postal authorities burned all except a single copy, kept for the Post Office archives. The same fate met the third edition – five hundred numbered copies – which was burnt by order of the customs authorities. The “Nausicaa” episode had thoroughly incensed the guardians of morality. But Joyce reserved most of his outrage for the “abridged” version of the book, which had been published without his permission and for which he received not a cent².

The American delegation listened with embarrassment, while Marinetti was exuberant, though a bit earlier he had sat there ill-humored when the distinguished historian Guglielmo Ferrero spoke of the burning of his books by the Fascists³. When his paper had been read, Joyce picked it up, put it in his pocket, and left the stage, groping his way into the darkened auditorium.

² The published version of this speech (Joyce 1959, 274-75) differs somewhat from Parandowski's recollection of it. The “abridged” edition of *Ulysses* was that pirated by Samuel Roth in 1926-1927.

³ Filippo Tommaso Marinetti, who founded the Futurist movement in Italy, was an enthusiastic supporter of Mussolini. Ferrero, an outspoken anti-Fascist, had fled Italy and taken refuge in Switzerland. Joyce's anger at this eruption of politics into the meeting surfaced a few days later when Nancy Cunard made the mistake of sending him a questionnaire asking his opinions on the Spanish Civil War: He telephoned to say, “I am James Joyce. I have received your questionnaire. ‘Are you going to answer it?’ she asked. ‘No! I won't answer it because it is politics. Now politics are getting into everything. The other night I agreed to let myself be taken to one of the dinners of the P.E.N. Club. The charter of the P.E.N. states that politics shall never be discussed there. But what happened? One person made a speech, referring to one angle of politics, someone else brought up a conflicting argument, a third read a paper on more politics. I wanted the P.E.N. to take an interest in the pirating of *Ulysses* in the United States, but this was brushed aside. It was politics all the way’. He concluded by saying he was sending her the script of his remarks at the P.E.N. meeting and commanded, ‘Print that, Miss Cunard!’” (Ellmann 1959, 717). Joyce had reason to feel a special sympathy for Ferrero, whose *Young Europe* he had read with admiration thirty years earlier, finding in it the inspiration for “The Two Gallants” as well as interesting discussions of the Irish, Jews, and other subjects that concerned him. He even identified himself, half jokingly, with Ferrero (see Joyce 1966, 133, 159, 212). But all this apparently was forgotten in the face of his aversion to politics and his concern over the rights of authors.

Since I was sitting on the aisle in the second row, I hurried to give him my hand and direct him to a vacant seat. However, he whispered that he wanted to leave and leaned on my arm. I asked if he had someone there with him. He waved his hand toward the door and quickened his steps with the élan of a boy who was about to skip school. We passed through the door and out to the street, where he turned to me abruptly:

“I can tell from your accent that you are not French. What are you? I can't figure it out”. He spoke these last words with a kind of nervous impatience, but when I satisfied his curiosity by giving my name and identifying my country, he received the information with complete indifference. He asked with some concern, however, if I didn't wish to return to the meeting. Naturally, I preferred his unexpected company. We walked along silently for several minutes. In my wish to break this silence, I could find nothing better than to ask this nearly blind man if he had noticed that on the stage had been some of the scenery for Giraudoux's *Electra*, which was currently playing there.

“No, and I will tell you right now, Giraudoux interests me very little”.

“And yet he is a master of French prose”.

“It's too bad that he doesn't write in verse. He would have been able to unmask himself more easily. Giraudoux belongs to the school of poets whose day has passed, the so-called rhetoricians, and waits in vain for his Du Bellay and his Ronsard to come to life again. Never have I come upon a writer who was such a brilliant bore”.

Clearly, the creator of *Ulysses* could not admire the creator of *Elpenor*⁴. However, both of us happened to be already thinking of Homer, and immediately we began discussing the *Odyssey*. When I told him that I read it almost every day, he responded with an appreciative murmur and then said quickly:

“You, too, certainly have noticed that I have leaned extravagantly on this work?”

Before I could reply, Joyce led me into a little restaurant, which, unfortunately, I would be unable to locate now.

“They serve a more or less true Orvieto⁵ here”, he said.

He must have gone there often because a wicker-covered bottle along with a plate of crackers appeared immediately on the table. Joyce raised the small glass to his impaired eyes, which glittered light blue through the thick lenses of his glasses. We talked a while about the city of Orvieto, its cathedral, its quiet as though woven of the sound of church bells.

⁴ But Giraudoux apparently admired Joyce. He sent him a copy of *Elpenor*, a Homeric parody published in 1919, inscribing it: “A James Joyce *moi qui depuis si longtemps voulais offrir un hommage, en hommage, Jean Giraudoux*” (see Connolly 1955, 24). In 1940 Giraudoux helped Joyce in his struggle to escape France.

⁵ An Italian white wine.

“Certain of the rocks there give a bell sound if you strike them”.

“You have noticed this”, he said happily, as though I’d flattered him.

We stayed on the topic of Italy for a long time. He spoke affectionately of it. He had spent some of his happiest years there. I got the impression that his wife was Italian and their children had Italian names. In the midst of his rambling reminiscences, he shifted from French to Italian, the latter language sounding more natural in the mouth of this elderly tenor. He became silent, then returned to French and the *Odyssey*. His erudition amazed me. He knew not only the chief works on philology, archeology, and history, but also the minor treatises that contained something out of the ordinary. But best of all, he knew the *Odyssey* itself. He expounded upon many facets and features of the work, including the smallest details, fragments to which the glow of genius adhered, as a tiny rainbow does to morning dew. He derived extraordinary meanings from otherwise commonplace words. I listened to him in blissful delight.

“It is strange that you have retained such appreciation for a book that has provided a springboard for your own work”, I said.

“Why?”

“Because usually after finishing a long work one has become surfeited with it and feels perhaps distaste or aversion for the sources that have provided material for it”.

“Possibly, but that didn’t happen with me. I worked on *Ulysses* eight [sic] years; however, it is essentially the product of my whole life”.

He ordered a second bottle of wine and, when it appeared on the table, became lively and talkative.

“You say that you read *Ulysses* in French. It is not a bad translation, I myself supervised it, but only the English original is really authentic”.

“As always”.

“But even more so in this instance. Ah, how wonderful that was to get up early in the morning, around five o’clock, and enter the misty regions of my emerging epic, as Dante once entered his *selva oscura selva selvaggia*⁶. Words crackled in my head and a multitude of images crowded around, like those shades at the entrance to the Underworld when Ulysses stood there awaiting the spirit of Tiresias. I wrote the greater part of the book during the war. There was fighting on all fronts, empires fell, kings went into exile, the old order was collapsing with a crash; and I had, as I sat down to work, the conviction that in the midst of all these ruins I was building something for the most distant future”.

He spoke these haughty words quietly and naturally as if referring to a banal, self-evident truth.

⁶ “Dark, wild forest” – from the opening of the *Divine Comedy*. If Joyce got up at five to write *Ulysses*, that contradicted his usual practice, which was to go to bed late and rise late.

“Yes. I created the epic of our era, and the spirit of Homer was always beside me, to sustain and encourage me. I believe that this was the first time he did such a thing, since he could hardly have been concerned with all those feeble imitations that every second generation feels duty-bound to produce. Poets allow themselves to be drawn to epic poetry as if to the scaffold – out of bravado, devotion, or cowardice”. Joyce lifted his glass close to his eyes and held it there awhile, as if to observe the golden flecks playing in the miraculous juice of the Umbrian earth.

“Much is said about my debt to Homer. It is simple. I took from the *Odyssey* the general outline, the ‘plan’ in the architectural sense, or maybe more exactly, the way the fable unfolds, and I followed it faithfully, down to the tiniest detail”.

“That is exactly what astonishes me the most”.

“Astonishes?” Joyce exclaimed. “Then perhaps I completely misunderstood when I heard you say that you revere the *Odyssey*. Its construction is incomparable, and one must be a German ass to detect in it the work of several authors. It is a unique work, at once fairy tale and cosmos. Such a thing cannot be done a second time; therefore, I took Homer’s work and placed in its framework my nice little people, with their bodies and souls. Their bodies – *Ulysses* is more an epic of the body than of the human spirit”.

“That is perhaps all too apparent”.

He waved me off impatiently.

“Always the same complaint; for too long were the stars studied and man’s insides neglected. An eclipse of the sun could be predicted many centuries before anyone knew which way the blood circulated in our bodies”.

Then in support of his argument, he quoted a long passage out of Saint Augustine. Unfortunately, I can neither remember this quotation nor find it in Augustine’s writings. At the time I expressed mild surprise that he should have read such an author.

“You will understand when I tell you that I was raised by Jesuits. And so far as the human body is concerned, I studied medicine in Paris⁷. In my heart Paris is the second city after Dublin. Dublin! I transformed it into a whole world of adventure in my *Ulysses*. My book wanders through my city as Homer’s did through the Mediterranean, from bed to bed, through streets, offices, cafes, restaurants, bordellos, and like his book, mine has its dead and its sorceresses”.

A charming smile appeared on his thin, straight lips.

“I believe that on the basis of my book it will be possible to reconstruct Dublin a thousand years from now just as it was at the beginning of the twentieth century”⁸.

⁷ In 1902 Joyce attended a few medical classes, first in Dublin and then in Paris.

⁸ This echoes his remark to Budgen: “I want to give a picture of Dublin so complete that if the city one day suddenly disappeared from the earth it could be reconstructed out of my book” (Budgen 1960 [1934], 67).

I was astonished at this, since *Ulysses* gives no exact description either of the streets or the buildings; those which Leopold Bloom encounters along his way are hardly even named.

"Then you depend upon the commentators", I said, "on those patient scholars, to reconstruct Dublin on the basis of your book, just as Troy is being reconstructed today, and just as fantastically".

But he was no longer listening to me. After a while he suddenly told me to recite a Polish poem. Surprised, I could come up with nothing for a minute.

"Well", he said impatiently, "you must know something by heart".

Either because he wanted to encourage me or because he felt the need to enter into a foreign rhythm, he himself began to recite. It was a page from Flaubert's *Herodias* – "the dance of Salome". His delivery of the passage sounded splendid; he recited it vigorously with his full voice and broke it off shortly and sharply, the way Flaubert always concludes his long, swollen sentences.

I asked him whether he experienced the same effect that I did when reading the last sentence of *Herodias*, which describes the school children carrying the head of John the Baptist, "Et comme elle était très lourde, ils la portaient alternativement"⁹. "Admirable", he exclaimed. Then he repeated the sentence. And the way he did it! In his harsh rhythm there really was all the pain of carrying a heavy burden.

Finally I reached into my memory. I recited several of the *Crimean Sonnets*, a fragment from *Pan Tadeusz*, and several verses from *King Spirit*¹⁰. He rested his high forehead on the palms of his hands, leaning his ear in my direction and listening intently. When I stopped he remained silent for a while; then he asked me about the meaning of certain of the expressions that had stuck in his memory. He repeated them several times, trying to pronounce them accurately.

"What a mystery human speech is! So many varieties! What divine harmony amidst dissonances. Perhaps you have heard that I am writing something..."

"Work in Progress".

"Yes. It doesn't have a title yet. The few fragments which I have published have been enough to convince many critics that I have finally lost my mind, which by the way they have been predicting faithfully for many years. And perhaps it is madness to grind up words in order to extract their substance, or to graft one onto another, to create crossbreeds, and unknown variants, to open up unsuspected possibilities for these words, to marry sounds which were not usually joined before, although they were meant for one another, to

⁹ "And because it was very heavy, they took turns carrying it". This same sentence provided Joyce with one of the 'boners' that he had a penchant for collecting. He said: "*Alternativement* is wrong since there are *three* bearers" (Ellmann 1959, 506)

¹⁰ *King Spirit* and *Pan Tadeusz* are nationalistic epic poems, the former by Juliusz Slowacki (1809-1841), the latter by Adam Mickiewicz (1798-1855), who also wrote the *Crimean Sonnets*, a sonnet sequence.

allow water to speak like water, birds to chirp in the words of birds, to liberate all sounds of rustling, breaking, arguing, shouting, cracking, whistling, creaking, gurgling – from their servile, contemptible role and to attach them to the feelers of expressions which grope for definitions of the undefined. I took literally Gautier's dictum, 'The inexpressible does not exist'. With this hash of sounds I am building the great myth of everyday life".

After a while he added, "Perhaps it will end in failure, be a wreck or 'catastrophe' such as Virginia Woolf believed *Ulysses* was; and perhaps in the years to come this work of mine will remain solitary and abandoned, like a temple without believers"¹¹.

He did not finish his distant reflections. And I could not come up with anything that would prompt him to continue. I knew several fragments of "Work in Progress" which Louis Gillet had shown to me, and had claimed to be very interesting. Up to this moment, however, up to this memorable conversation, I had almost decided that this work was the product of a madman, although I am always very cautious about making such judgments in literature. All that I could recall of the work was an astonishing mumble, as though coming from the tower of Babel, where the words entwined themselves in some kind of fantastic linguistic sodomy. I saddened at the thought of the exhausting, obstinate toil that Joyce put into his book, which had no other chance than to be regarded by both his contemporaries and posterity as a genial caprice. And in fact, with the death of its creator, *Finnegans Wake*, as it is now called, lost the only reader capable of enjoying it in the clear light of comprehension and not just in the fog of conjecture.

What writer has not been tempted to confuse the harmony of language, to mix up its laws, to liberate it from boundaries imposed upon it by timid and ignorant ancestors? Must the three persons of the pronoun and the three degrees of an adjective suffice? Can inflexible parts of speech never enjoy inflection? The Futurists have been breaking their heads on this issue; others are content to reject punctuation, which once was also a great innovation. In *Ulysses* there are thirty well-packed pages without punctuation. But the polyglot Joyce, with his great passion for sounds that were meant to unify heaven and earth in innumerable variations among races and people, surrendered to more powerful temptations. For years on end he dwelt amidst rocks and reefs, like a shipwrecked man, but illumined by the wisdom of time because he was a great poet. His last work seems to me a wrecked ship, incapable of delivering its cargo to anyone. This gigantic charade contradicts divine and human laws of language – language as a means of communication between people who are locked up in their thoughts and dreams.

¹¹ Virginia Woolf, who was both attracted and repelled by *Ulysses*, called it a "misfire", "diffuse", "pretentious", and "underbred" (Woolf 1954, 46-49, 349).

Such, more or less, was the burden of my silence, from which I could not rouse myself. Joyce was whistling thoughtfully some sort of tune that I did not recognize. I asked, "What is that you are whistling?"

"Oh, it's one of those old, old ballads from the music hall; it ends: 'Isn't it the truth I've told you, / Lots of fun at Finnegan's wake'".

He repeated the last verse again. I didn't know at the time that it contained more or less the hidden source and the very title of his curious work.

Joyce appeared exhausted. He paid, we left, and I called a taxi for him. He held out his hand to me and said:

"If you should wish to record our conversation (I always reckon with such a possibility), please do not publish it while I am alive. It would be indiscreet. After my death it won't do any harm; it will become part of the scholarship business, which will probably never let me out of its grip. Goodbye".

I never saw him again... I kept my word, and, in now writing down this recollection of that distant meeting, it seems to me that I am adding a small contribution to a gigantic commentary which is growing up around the man and his work.

TRANSLATED BY WILLARD POTTS

Works Cited

- Budgen Frank (1960 [1934]), *James Joyce and the Making of Ulysses*, Bloomington, Indiana UP.
- Connolly T. E. (1955), *The Personal Library of James Joyce: A Descriptive Bibliography*, Buffalo, University of Buffalo Studies.
- Ćwiąkała-Piątkowska Jadwiga (1971), "Joyce in Poland", *James Joyce Quarterly* 9, 93-98.
- Ellmann Richard (1959), *James Joyce*, New York, Oxford UP.
- Joyce James (1959), *The Critical Writings of James Joyce*, ed. by Ellsworth Mason and Richard Ellmann, New York, Viking.
- Joyce James (1966), *Letters of James Joyce*, vol. II, ed. by Richard Ellmann, New York, Viking.
- Lewicki Zbigniew, Daniel Gerould (1971), "Ulysses in Gdańsk", *James Joyce Quarterly* 9, 99-116.
- Woolf Virginia (1954), *A Writer's Diary, Being Extracts from the Diary of Virginia Woolf*, New York, Harcourt Brace.

Miscellanea

Reclaiming the Body and the Spirit in Oscar Wilde's *Salomé*

David Cregan

Villanova University (<david.cregan@villanova.edu>)

Abstract:

This paper explores Irish identity through a recent production of Oscar Wilde's play *Salomé*. The title character has been historically constructed as an object of sexuality and a paradigm of evil. *Salomé* is the opposite of the other principal character in the play *Iokanaan*, or John the Baptist, whose chaste spirituality sets him as a paradigm of the holy. Yet, clearly, in Wilde's play these two characters are drawn towards each other and, in fact, both are destined to die simply because of who they are. It is this very binary of the sexual and the spiritual, the evil versus the holy, that is embedded in Irish and Western ideas around what is good and what is bad in human experience. This paper explores, through performance as research, an integration of the corporeal and spiritual in a search for the integration of the fullness of identity that values all aspects of the human condition.

Keywords: gender, history, Oscar Wilde, sexuality, theatre

In Irish culture, society, philosophy and theology the Western binary of the body and the spirit have dominated the conversation around the existential qualities of the human condition. The body, and consequently sexuality, have been consigned to the carnal and are, oftentimes, categorized as the antithesis of the spiritual. Consequently, in the Irish cultural context and, as I will argue, the discourse of Irish Studies, sexuality has been inferred as an obstacle to spiritual enlightenment, and its passions a temptation that pulls in the opposite direction of enlightenment. In the social order of contemporary Ireland, Oscar Wilde has become a symbol of a liberated Irish sense of sexual liberation. Wilde's play *Salomé* (1893) is unusual in the canon of his infamous social satires, and offers a performance of Irish identity that is more historically rooted in the ancient culture of Ireland. Through this paper

I will explore how the theatre, so important in Irish cultural studies, offers a unique opportunity to recapture a type of Irish identity that wholeheartedly rejects the prudery of colonial propriety in favor of a more ancient sensuality that integrates the sexual and the spiritual. I will do so by incorporating reflections on a production of *Salomé* that I directed, succinctly applying the theories listed in this paper.

Incorporating theatrical practice through play production into traditional epistemologies of academic research allows for theory to become practice through theatrical technique and design aesthetic. In my own production of *Salomé*, produced by Villanova Theatre in the Spring of 2013, I used theories of gender and sexual identity to uncover and explore the questions Oscar Wilde asks about subjectivity. While I will detail some of the directorial technique I used with actors later in the paper, it is important to begin a discussion of theatre practice as research by describing its impact on design. In order to open up a world that creates animosity between the spiritual and the corporeal, the set of my production was entirely open to the back wall of the theatre, never hiding the work of the theatre from the performance of the production. The establishment of this exposed space created the open context in which systems of thought are symbolically freed from a seemingly seamless historical world. The cultural discourse on sexual and spiritual identity works systematically to normalize the distance between right and wrong, good and bad that allows the individual to see the sexual and the spiritual as opposite. The deconstructive quality of the set in my production of *Salomé* advances a gender identity research methodology that seeks to establish a new space to explore new ideas.

In his article “Origins and Legacies of Irish Prudery: Sexuality and Social Control in Modern Ireland”, Tom Inglis addresses the sensitive issue of sexuality and Irishness from a historical perspective; he writes:

The history of the body and corporeal remains a relatively hidden area of research. Most of the recent grand histories, have avoided dealing with the cultural context of cultural constructs of sexuality directly but have focused instead on such issues as censorship, the multifaceted role of the Catholic church, fertility control, and more recently, the sex-abuse scandals involving the Catholic church. (2005, 9)

With its intellectual, historical and phenomenological practices, the theatre offers a unique opportunity to engage with historical realities as they exist ideologically and, through the live presence of the actors’ body representing the past in the present. In this sense, the theatre allows what is hidden in the annals of traditional histories to become visible now, thus providing people and societies the opportunity to integrate the past with the present like no other human activity. Through live performance the theatre creates an opportunity to engage historical silences such as the ideas of Irish sexuality in culture in order to examine how these ideas have become sedimented in

contemporary times. When watching a historical character on stage grapple with contemporary tensions, the past uniquely informs the present so that new awarenesses and possibilities may begin to emerge.

Few other historical characters, fictional or otherwise, have been vilified as purely sexual, and thus evil, as Salomé. In Wilde's play, Salomé is torn between the material power of state and the spiritual attraction to Iokanaan, or John the Baptist. In this paper I investigate the complex process of re-routing of the sexual towards the spiritual in an analysis of *Salomé* that explores the connection between physical and spiritual desire. This endeavor seems radically important for the new Ireland as the binary of the spiritual and the sexual has become so distant that, at least in academic writing, they remain staunchly separate. This curiosity was central to the process of the production of the play that I directed¹. The production rehearsal process involved the implementation of feminist theories of the body through production techniques of physical theatre, in particular the techniques of Jacques Lecoq (2000). Through the production and design process I sought to re-route the binary of the sexual and the spiritual in search of a paradigm of praxis that asserts Salomé's sexuality as integrated into her spiritual consciousness and to illuminate that her only currency, material or spiritual, in the world of this play is her body. I will assert that in the end she chooses to spend that currency on the spiritual rather than the carnal.

Oscar Wilde wrote *Salomé* in French in 1891. Three years later, his lover, Lord Alfred Douglas published the first English translation. The play is written in one Act and tells the story of the daughter of Herodias and the step-daughter of the Herod Antipas, Tetrarch of Judea before and during the birth of Jesus of Nazareth. The play takes the liberty of articulating the under-articulated life of the biblical character of Salomé who, much to her step-father's horror, requests the head of the great Jewish prophet Iokanaan, better known as John the Baptist.

Wilde builds on the historical portrayal of Salomé as young, beautiful, extremely sexual and self-absorbed. Salomé is aware of her sexual power and uses it to advance her desires for attention and material prosperity. As the seductive Salomé flees the confines of the palace, she declares:

I'm not staying. I can't. Why is the tetrarch always looking at me with those mole's eyes under those flickering eyelids? ... It's bizarre, my mother's husband looking at me like that. I don't know what it could mean... Actually, yes, I do know. (2001 [1893], 15)²

¹ *Salomé*, dir. David Cregan, Vasey Theatre, Villanova University, Spring 2013.

² Wilde (2001 [1893]); subsequent quotations will be taken from this edition.

Salomé is willful and narcissistic, but the audiences' first experience of her is nuanced by the image of a young woman escaping from a world that she experiences as oppressive and harassed, despite its luxury and privilege.

In this moment of absconding, Wilde represents the tension between sexual seductiveness as liberatory and as restrictive. Salomé's sexual power gives her freedom from the historical servitude that was the reality of women in the ancient world. Sex is her currency, if you will, a commodity that allows her to make choices in a world in which even women of high birth are pawns in the hands of a more powerful and dominant patriarchy.

In her seminal book *The Feminist Spectator as Critic*, Jill Dolan describes the latent meaning in theatrical representations of female sexuality:

Sexuality, however, is a tangible currency in the representational exchange. Sexuality is at base the expression of affectional preference, while gender is based on sex-class. But sexuality, in Western culture, is as rigidly constructed and prescribed as gender. While it is crucial not to conflate sexuality with gender, expressions of sexuality further illustrate the operation of gender codes and constructs the representation of the female body. (1988, 63)

Dolan provides a context for the evaluation of representation in performance that invites an interpretation of the hyper-sexualized artistic representations of Salomé as prescribed and regulatory, but also as a form of agency as a currency within gender constructions. If this representational context is applied to *Salomé* we can interpret the title character as more than a vindictive seductress, simply bent on punishing men for their assaulting desires, but perhaps as a woman using the only currency she has access to in this historical context to purchase for herself a modicum of self-determination.

Immediately after fleeing the lust of Herod and the palace Salomé continues:

How nice and fresh the air is here! You can breath here. Back in there are Jerusalem Jews tearing each other apart over their ridiculous ceremonies, and swilling barbarians dumping their wine on the tiles, and Smyrna Greeks with their painted eyes and rouged cheeks and corkscrew curls, and subtle Egyptians who don't say a word with their jade fingernails and their dusty mantles, and hulking Romans with animal impulses and raunchy language. Oh, I detest those Romans! Such rank plebeians, lording it over everyone else. (13)

This monologue illustrates what Dolan describes as Salomé's gendered position, as she rails against the list of religious and cultural contexts which confine and oppress her as a woman: Jews, Greeks, Egyptians, and Romans. Salomé's sexual currency is withheld from this broad group of political and religious constituencies and so while she is gendered by her sexuality she takes possession of masculine desire as she decides where she wants to spend this precious commodity.

How then does this historical re-representation of a biblical figure impact Irish identity? On the surface this question might be answered by making associations between Oscar Wilde's own sexual history, something I will return to later in the paper. And yet, the character of Salomé offers a unique opportunity to make connections between Western history generally, and Irish history specifically. Irish drama is haunted by Cathleen Ni Houlihan, or the female representation of Ireland, otherwise known as Hibernia. This representation is at times courageous and provocative and at other times oppressed and dominated by the political whims of men. Consider then that Salomé is, in fact, a representation of Ireland searching for a kind of freedom from the oppression of the politics of men; or that she is a representation of a feminine restlessness that may well be associated with contemporary Irish women, if not the nation at large. Wilde searches biblical history with an attention to spiritual longing, but is there an Irish spiritual history that is less prudish, one that integrates the fullness of the spiritual and the sexual? Through the production that I directed I was able to direct actors to interpret the scenes with a fresh approach to the ancient ideas represented in the play. For example, when blocking the scene between Ikonannan and Salomé I suggested that the actors play it as an unrequited love scene in which both are fascinated by the other but also intimidated and apprehensive. A more traditional direction would establish the two characters as enemies, thus pitting the spiritual Ikonannan against the sexualized Salomé. This antagonistic scene would reinforce the stereotypes of the fallen women and the holy man, allowing each to remain in their own opposite corner. By allowing the two to be attracted to one another a new idea emerges and the audience is offered a more complex, and what I would argue more accurate, version of real human experience as it is pulled between these binaries. Thus theory becomes praxis.

The answer to this Irish historical inquiry is, yes. In her article "The Power of Display: Sheela na gigs and Folklore Customs", Starr Goode describes the ancient Irish representation of Sheela na gig, a goddess, much like Salomé, associated with female sexuality:

Whatever the original purposes of the Sheela na gigs, over the years many folk customs have become associated with the figures. The debate about their meaning started in the 19th century when Antiquarians were stirred by a passion for things of the past. Puzzled by these strange images, they began to question why carvings of nude females in brazen sexual display of themselves appeared on medieval churches throughout the islands of Ireland and Britain. In the popular belief of country people, Sheelas were employed to help with fertility, to heal, and to bring good luck. These later rural traditions expanded on the Sheela's first use as a guardian rooted in the apotropaic display of her naked sex. (2013)

Goode's historical research offers a female goddess whose sexuality in Ireland was associated with power and healing. By drawing the connection

between a pre-colonial version of female agency and *Salomé* we connect a representation of Irish womanhood as both sexual and spiritual. By where did the divide between the sexual and the spiritual take root in Ireland?

Tom Inglis, in his aforementioned article, describes the purpose of his research thus:

The central argument of this article is that while sexual desire and pleasure are obviously rooted in the body and soul of the individual, they are also central to social order and social control. Over the last fifty years we have moved in Ireland from a Catholic culture of self-abnegation in which sexual desire and desire were repressed, to a culture of consumption and self-indulgence in which the fulfillment of pleasures and desires is emphasized. (2005, 11)

In Wilde's *Salomé* we see a theatrical representation of this type of moral dualistic economy that separates the sexual from the spiritual in the characters of *Salomé* and *Iokanaan*. He is the abstinent spiritual male character, and *Salomé* is the hyper-sexualized and self-indulged woman of the world. And yet, these two characters are oddly attracted to one another, a subject I will engage later.

Inglis suggests that this type of divide between sexuality and morality has its roots in the powerful Victorian influence on Irish mores: the same influences that punished Wilde himself, who was writing in this very era. He writes: "Victorians were accustomed to thinking about sex in terms of sexual emotions. Sex was about dark primeval forces, anarchic and explosive instincts that knew no values, possessed no morality, and had no sense of good and evil" (Inglis 2005, 13). This Victorian sexual discourse positioned sexuality as destructive and base, and the spiritual as enlightened. The very synergy of Wilde's *Salomé* is about driving these two forces that the Victorians separated together.

How does the character of *Salomé* reconfigure colonial constrictions of Irish female sexuality for contemporary audiences? Let us return for a moment to Dolan's theory that sexuality is, as she describes it "at base the expression of affectional preference". In other words, the performance of sexuality is not simply an embodied expression of social constructionism, but also holds within its repertoire of semiotic knowledges the agency implied by the application of 'preference'. *Salomé*'s departure from the strictly governed cultural etiquette of the palace can be understood as an attempt to reconfigure the expectations that are oppressing her in the burgeoning world of her awareness of her sexual currency. Therefore, the steps of the palace are a liminal space, as *Salomé* exerts a preferential option for self-determinacy.

What is so fascinating about this project from the point of view of research is that in production of a play such as *Salomé*, where in the live contemporary performance one encounters the historiographic reality of culturally imposed notions of feminine gender constructions juxtaposed with mod-

ern experiences of female agency, there is no difference between the written word and the methodology applied to its analysis. In other words, concept, directorial perspective, design, and staging allows the theoretical perspective of feminisms to be tested in order to demonstrate if theories work. Performance as research offers alternative ways of testing gender methodologies of representations of sexuality through physical exploration, sound, and ensemble movement.

My own practice as research begins with script analysis, and includes uncovering the big idea of the play and tracing the trajectories and objectives of characters. Through this process the essential energies of the play begin to morph from traditional western epistemologies which favor language and the intellect, into embodied imperatives through the actor drive the language from the page to the stage. The necessary methodology for the application of a feminist epistemology requires the balance between social construction and sexual currency, as described by Dolan. The alternative application would be to ignore modern gender developments and create a two dimensional, patriarchal production of *Salomé* that locks the title character into an objectified sexual simplicity that supports historical misogyny by representing the woman as sexual and, subsequently, sin. This not only would betray contemporary epistemologies, but would not serve the text as written by Oscar Wilde. Performance as research affords a new way of knowing, that, potentially, frees the historical character of *Salomé* from its reductive and politicized gender maligning and offering this story from the perspective of the woman rather than that of the man.

The production re-routes established gender identities and ontologies, particularly in the relationship between *Salomé* and *Iokanaan*. While the men of the place bore *Salomé*, it is the voice of *Iokanaan* that breaks through her malaise and captures her attention:

Iokanaan Who is this woman who is looking at me? I don't what her looking at me. Why is she looking at me with those golden eyes under those golden eyelids? I don't know who she is. Nor do I want to know. Tell her to get away. It's not her I want to talk to.

Salomé I'm *Salomé*, Herodias's daughter, princess of Judea.

Iokanaan Begone! Babylon's daughter! Don't come near the Lord's elect, Your mother has stocked the earth with the wine of her wickedness, and the uproar of her sins is ringing in God's ears.

Salomé Speak again *Iokanaan*. Your voice intoxicates me... Yes, speak again. Speak again, *Iokanaan*, and tell me what I have to do. (23-24)

Salomé's arrogance and stubbornness softens with the simple articulation "and tell me what I have to do". *Iokanaan*'s voice, a voice that speaks a different story than that of the palace or of society, intoxicates her, stimulating a new longing.



1 - Photo by Paola Noguerras

The initial exchanges between Salomé and Iokanaan are fraught with the tension of the collision of the spiritual and the sexual. Salomé identifies something that she would like to spend her sexual currency on, and yet, the Prophet is chaste and focused on the mystical above the carnal. Iokanaan speaks a vertical language that connects heaven and earth, a language that Salomé is attracted to. But the only language she has been taught is the horizontal language of earthly desires involving politics, of state and of gender. Salomé proceeds to try to possess this new horizon she experiences in Iokanaan through seduction, her singular commodity. In Dolan's language, Iokanaan is her "affectional preference". In this choice, Salomé's sexuality in the play represents her agency as she attempts to transcend a gender regime that has dominated her.

How then does the director move from the ideological and intellectual assertions of gender studies into a readable objective or intention for the actor and for production? Taking my cue from Wilde's play, the body is the *a priori* or first witness. It is through the body that one experiences the regulatory regimes of gender construction, and it is through the body that one finds subjective expressions, or "affectional preferences" on which we spend our choices. Based on the assumption that every human person is corporeal and spiritual, a method of integration is necessary to accomplish unity for this ontological assumption. For my purposes, I applied the methodologies of Jacques Lecoq by beginning with the body and integrating breath. The integration of breath to the physical work – or what I like to describe as the dramaturgy of the body in which the actor researches the history of their experience physically in order to articulate character and ensemble in every possible way – was not just for rehearsal, but a performance application. Lecoq's imperative to begin with silence was our starting place as the entire cast gathered behind the set, but vis-

ible to the audiences, discovering a neutral physicality. From there an inhale, followed by a resonant hum was practiced as the actors as ensemble entered the stage. I used ancient *Mizrahi* chant to historicize the production, and we opened the play with a traditional *Torah* blessing, acknowledging the scriptural roots of the play. In a circle formation on stage the actors worked on *complicité* with one another, found silence together, inhaled as one and breathed into the opening of the play.

Our process began with the body and used breath to awaken an individual and collective sense of the more ethereal nature of our lives and our theatrical interactions. Breath and movement throughout was established on the foundations of ritual and meditation. These same discovered ensemble experiences became the root of character building and blocking. Throughout, my directorial vision was to rescue Salomé from the historical prison of the purely sexual and to rescue Iokanaan from the juxtapositional prison of the purely spiritual, re-routing Western ideologies that separate the two and create conditions under which people oftentimes feel as though they must choose between physical or spiritual fulfillment.

The dynamic between Iokanaan and Salomé is central to the plot, and central to the re-routing of sex towards the spiritual, and *vice versa*. If Salomé is simply carnal she is sinful, if Iokanaan is simply spiritual he is virtuous – both prevalent and dominant assumptions in the biblical world in which this piece is set. The ending of this story is iconic and has been told over and over again in temples and in performance. My work in gender studies compelled me to use the theatrical laboratory to destabilize cultural constructions and assumptions, and I did so by allowing Salomé to experience and translate her desire to the spiritual as well as allowing Iokanaan to feel drawn towards physical attraction to Salomé: in this sense, both dimensional historical characters are allowed to be fully human and spiritual at the same time.

Through theatrical practice the director can both represent and challenge social norms. Through my production I continually sought to reject the divisions that make contemporary individuals feel that they are either spiritual or sexual. In his article “Toward a Positive spirituality of the Body”, Thomas Ryan writes: “In a dualistic worldview, one’s body and one’s spirit are in a forced marriage, and the sooner the spirit can get out of the marriage, the better. When that I one’s world view, one’s body is more foe than friend” (2004, 22). While this approach may have been relevant to the political agenda of Victorian politics as it influenced Irish ideas and practices, it is no longer relevant in contemporary Irish culture. In this sense, Wilde’s integrative desires in *Salomé* are visionary as he explores the attraction between these two characters as an analogy to these two integrated parts of every human experience.

This play articulates the basic human desire to connect with the world as we know and the worlds that we sense exist beyond this one. Salomé’s objective throughout is to make “affectional choices” that satisfy the fullness of her

desires. In my interpretation, from the moment she flees the palace she is trying to lift herself above the politics of the world. Her aspirations are for a great and powerful love. Men cannot give her this. As I strove to let the body be the first witness, I kept asking how I could give the actor the experience of rising up. Salomé is condemned in history and in the play to the tragedy of murder, but for one moment I wanted her to feel the freedom of choice, the freedom the gravity of expectation, and to take her place with the things of heaven.

But what of these tensions in contemporary Irish culture? Inglis eloquently describes the radical overturning of prudery in twentieth-century Ireland and its subsequent replacement in contemporary culture with a self-indulgent consumerism. A consumer perspective on sexuality helps to create an even further distance from a culturally integrated sense of Irish identity. It instead opts for the use of the sexual as a marketing practice and thus keeping it confined to an anti-holistic approach the fullness of human experience.

A conversation around Wilde and his intention in writing *Salomé* has the historiographic potential to begin a conversation in contemporary Ireland where a middle ground is explored and the fullness of human experience may unite again to reveal a true Irishness. Ultimately, Salomé is punished for her desire and Iokanaan is beheaded for his chastity. The tragedy of the play allows the audience to witness the consequences of life when these essential energies of human experience are placed in opposition to one another. As Ireland reinvents itself, there is an opportunity to find that liminal space, the in-between, in order to remedy its historical and current social practices that divide rather than unite the human person. Wilde issues a warning to all who come to see to choose integration, to accept all of what it means to be human, and to aspire to a unity of identity that forever unites the sacred and the secular.

Works Cited

- Dolan Jill (1988), *The Feminist Spectator as Critic*, Ann Arbor, The University of Michigan Press.
- Goode Starr (2013), "The Power of Display: Sheela na gigs and Folklore Customs", *About Place Journal* II, 2, <<http://aboutplacejournal.org/earth-spirit-society/starr-goode-ii-ii/>> (05/2014).
- Inglis Tom (2005), "Origins and Legacies of Irish Prudery: Sexuality and Social Control in Modern Ireland", *Eire-Ireland* 40, 3-4, 9-37.
- Lecoq Jacques (2000), *The Moving Body: Teaching Creative Theatre*, trans. by David Bradby, New York, Routledge.
- Ryan Thomas (2004), "Towards a Positive Spirituality of the Body", in Id. (ed.), *Reclaiming the Body in Christian Spirituality*, New York, Paulist Press, 21-56.
- Wilde Oscar (2001 [1893]), *Salomé: A Tragedy in One Act*, trans. by Joseph Donohue, Charlottesville, University of Virginia Press.



2 - Photo by Paola Nogueras



3 - Photo by Paola Nogueras



4 - Photo by Paola Noguerras



5 - Photo by Paola Noguerras

Exchange Place by Ciaran Carson or a sense of *déjà vu*

Elisabeth Delattre

Centre for Irish Studies, University of Lille
(delattre.elisabeth@wanadoo.fr)

Abstract:

In his novel *Exchange Place* published in 2012, Ciaran Carson draws upon the motif of the quest in order to weave an intricate web of threads that irresistibly attracts the reader into a world of make believe, which is perhaps the only one worth experiencing. This article will argue that in this work temporality is envisaged as composed of disjointed fragments that are so many anachronisms revealed through analogies, resemblances and correspondences.

Keywords: Carson, dream, fugue, intertextuality, memory

Everything returns in a circle. Everything
has been done before. It is the same pattern.
The same music surrounds us.

Peter Ackroyd (1992), *English Music*, 131

1. *Introduction*

“Trompe-l’œil” (Payne 2013) or “grateful digressions” (O’Brien 2012) or still “literary thriller”, these the terms by which critics have tried to define *Exchange Place*¹, Ciaran Carson’s prose work published in 2012. According to John Banville, as can be read on the back cover, the book is “gloriously

¹ Hereafter references to this work will be in parentheses.

uncategorisable”, “a wonderful intellectual romp”, and quite a few writers such as Robbe-Grillet, Queneau and Perec as well as Hammett and Chandler could have seen connections with their own works. It will also be seen as a ‘fugue’ in the Latin meaning of *fugere* or may echo Louis McNeice’s “incorrigibly plural” world. As Carson wrote in an early prose work, *Last Night’s Fun*, published in 1996 and subtitled “a book about music, food and time”: “Everything is analogue, and looks like something else. Everything is *déjà vu*” (142). In this work, an account of the phrase “Exchange Place”, in which the real fuses with the imaginary, was put in the following terms:

We are in Sam’s workshop at 1 Exchange Place, Belfast. Exchange Place is, in Belfast’s parlance, an ‘entry’: a narrow lane between two streets; a backwater and a shortcut, a deviation from the beaten path. Exchange Place *is* an entry: we talk and breathe in an exhalation, a many-layered scent of shellac, beeswax, raw and boiled linseed oil, tallow, almond oil, aromatic blackwood shavings, nitric acid and ammonia. [...] And this is not to speak of the unspeakable archaeological layers of things strewn and assembled on every available surface in the workshop. (Carson 1996, 50-51)

In more ways than one, this passage could be seen as emblematic of *Exchange Place* published sixteen years later. As we shall see, *Exchange Place* is a complex work because it is a direct successor of Borges, Sebald, and Calvino, among others. Drawing from Walter Benjamin, Carson practices the literary method of montage, with extracts from the former’s *The Arcades’ Projects*, Patrick Modiano’s *La Petite Bijou* and *Rue des boutiques obscures*, or Jean Cocteau’s *Round the World Again in 80 Days*², or even his own work, notwithstanding quotations from the Bible, Shakespeare’s *Hamlet*, Montaigne, John Donne, etc. *Exchange Place* could also be defined as a recast of an unpublished novel entitled $X+Y=K$, which is summarized in these terms: “Common to all three sections was a fascination with memory, paranormal phenomena, surveillance, questions of identity, and the bombing campaign conducted by the Provisional IRA in Belfast in the latter decades of the twentieth century” (163). Ultimately, this rejection of a chronological logic, this taste for *bricolage* are but attempts on the part of the writer to reproduce the exact movements of a memory estranged from a linear time and recreate through the medium of language a world in which the reader might find a new ‘reality’ both akin to and estranged from what is felt as the one lived in, or thought to be so.

² First published as a series of personal travel reports, illustrated with photographs, by Jean Cocteau in the newspaper *Paris-Soir* between 1 August and 3 March 1936 then collected under the title *Mon premier voyage: Le Tour du monde en quatre-vingt jours* by the Gallimard Editions in 1937.

2. “Point / Counterpoint”

In an article published under the title “Strange Architecture” in the journal *Irish University Review* in 2013, Colin Graham makes a detailed study of the structure of Carson’s *Until Before After*, which he sees as emblematic of Carson’s use of numbers. Indeed, the same could also be said of the rest of Carson’s *œuvre*. As always, the structure and form of the book follow a strict and regular pattern, “a template” as he acknowledged, which allows for more freedom in the writing and practically unlimited digressions that are also proper to the musical form of the fugue as developed by Johann Sebastian Bach: “The repeated or mirrored or inverted themes of *Contrapunctus XIV* intertwining, unfolding, recapitulating, as they had always done” (8). The frequent passages referring to Bach’s unfinished *Contrapunctus XIV*, interpreted by the legendary Canadian pianist Glenn Gould, testify to this fundamental characteristic and wish for transcendence. In this view, *Exchange Place* is akin to a musical score by means of which the writer aims at reproducing through language, or languages, the world, or worlds the reader will be invited to wander through and perhaps live a new experience and enrich his or her own outlook. This state of ‘fugue’ is also to be heard in the Latin *fugere*, “that temporary amnesia in which one loses control of oneself and takes on a life as another before coming to oneself again months or years later” (8). It becomes a leitmotiv and the key to the *dénouement* of the plot in the last chapter but one as it is revealed to the main protagonist, John Kilfeather, by the painter John Bourne.

This form of composition implies a series of well-defined rules, without which the enterprise would inevitably founder. The 41 chapters preceded by an “Introduction” are each five pages long, so that the titles appear on alternate pages. This makes for a contrapuntal rhythm akin to Bach’s work, or to Aldous Huxley’s novel *Point Counterpoint*, published in 1928, whose different plots mixing in the counterpoint technique evoke Carson’s work; there might be also a reference to the “flicker-book” mentioned in another prose work, *Fishing for Amber*:

For the illusion of the flicker-book is made possible by the optical phenomena known as persistence of vision and the *phi* phenomenon. The first of these causes the brain to retain images cast upon the retina of the eye for a fraction of a second [...] while the latter creates apparent movements between images when they succeed each other rapidly, by linking up the memories. (Carson 1999, 342)

The titles of the chapters are at times in French and refer to famous quotations such as Rimbaud’s “*Je est un autre*” (141), or Montaigne’s “*because it was he*” (136). This famous phrase (“*parce que c’était lui, parce que c’était moi*”) is contained in Montaigne’s *Essais, livre 1, chapitre XVIII*, “*De l’amitié*”, in which he writes about his short-lived friendship with Etienne de la Boétie.

Elsewhere one finds “*Les Structures Sonores*” (121), a reference to new acoustic instruments, the sound qualities getting precedence over the plastic qualities, invented by the French Baschet brothers in the 1950s and used by Jean Cocteau in his film *Orphée* (1950).

Quite significantly, 41 was the coded number of John Sebastian Bach who considered it as his signature: if A=1, B=2, C=3, therefore B.A.C.H.=14 and J.S.B.A.C.H.=41. We may therefore see the fugue-type of composition as the basis of Carson’s work. Furthermore, we learn at the very beginning of the book that the address of the main character, John Kilfeather is “41, Elsinore Gardens” (vii) in Belfast, the reference to the imaginary setting for Shakespeare’s *Hamlet*, indicating that this place is not likely to exist. However, the code number given for Belfast (“BT15 3FB”) is that of Ciaran Carson’s personal address, which may also be a way of playing with the reader who is not supposed to be acquainted with it, barring exceptions... The number “41” will recur when Kilpatrick, who is Kilfeather’s alter ego, finds himself in front of 41 rue du Sentier, which is known as the garment district in Paris.

Clothes are another element which pervades the book, each character being defined by the way he is dressed, as Gordon, the so-called spy met by chance by Kilpatrick remarks: “*Le style c’est l’homme*. Though I believe the phrase originally referred to literary style, as if we clothe ourselves in language, which I guess we do after a fashion. Or disguise ourselves, for that matter” (113). The attic where his missing friend John Harland had been painting Kilfeather’s portrait is situated at 14 Exchange Place, 14 being the reverse of 41. Of course, this use of numbers goes farther than a mere game with the reader. One might see *Exchange Place* as a field of experimental writing, linking past and present forms of language composition, still in a process of creation, perhaps still unfinished as was the case with *Contrapunctus XIV*, “echoes overlaying other echoes” (157).

3. “*The Library of Babel*”

As Elmer Kennedy-Andrews pointed out, there are many similarities between Carson’s and Borges’ worlds, since elements like “labyrinths, libraries, mirrors, doubles, games” (2009, 245) recur in their respective works. The insertion within the narrative of extracts from novels, or reports by other writers and thinkers, which is characteristic of *Exchange Place*, has been linked by Carson himself to Borges’ practice, as he explained in an interview:

I sometimes insert into a book whole paragraphs taken verbatim from some erudite source; but I have the illusion that I am writing these words myself, or that they become different because I am writing them, or that they become different because they’re now in a different context, a different milieu. Like Borges’ Pierre Ménard, who rewrites *Don Quixote* word for word, except now it is completely different because the times are different. (Kennedy-Andrews 2009, 23)

Indeed, in this short story entitled “Pierre Ménard, Author of the *Quixote*”, which is part of Borges’ *Fictions*, the very same text coming from a French Decadent aesthete and from a retired Spanish soldier takes on a completely different sense, the former gaining in richness from the intervening changes in history and culture. Moreover, as Pierre Macherey puts it, in an article entitled “Borges and the fictive narrative”: “Each book remains deeply different from itself since it implies an indefinite repertoire of ‘bifurcations’”. Thus, the narrative exists only by unfolding from the inside, since it seems to be in relation to and part of a dissymmetrical relationship. In other words, “every narrative, even in the moment of utterance, is the revelation of a self-contradictory reprise” (2006, 279).

Strictly speaking, no event is repeatable in all respects, nor is each repeated segment of the text quite the same since its new location puts it in a different context which necessarily changes its meaning. This technique – which might be defined as intertextuality in the wide sense of the term, as it includes mere literary echoes, quotations, acknowledged or not, parody and pastiche –, goes as far as collage, very close to plagiarizing. This gives a new dimension to Carson’s work whose layered structure evokes a series of palimpsests. If this notion of intertextuality was introduced by Julia Kristeva in *Sémeiotikè* published in 1969, a great number of contemporary writers have used in their books what already existed while subverting or adapting it. In this view, no text can be read independently from the experience the reader has of other texts. Anyone is prone to creating fiction and tends to abolish the frontiers between dream and reality, fact and fiction. Borges and Carson turn to using uncanny, uncommonly haunting stories and narratives under the fallacious cover of erudition and research. The uncertain liminal space or “epistemological hesitation” (McHale 1987, 74) that is the norm in narration gives rise to strangeness and fantasy. This mixture of genres, digressions, going back in time, may finally be compared to the meanderings of an oral tale, similar to Salman Rushdie’s technique in *Midnight’s Children* (1981):

An oral narrative does not go from the beginning to the middle to the end of the tale. It goes in great swoops, it goes in spirals or in loops, it every so often reiterates something that happened earlier to remind you, and then takes you off again, sometimes summarises itself, it frequently digresses off into something that the story teller appears just to have thought of then it comes back to the main thrust of the narrative. (Ashcroft 1989, 183)

Furthermore, Carson’s use of the Internet, and more particularly the research engine, Google, has led him to define a new way of extending Borges’ famous “Library of Babel”. Thus Carson’s text becomes at times virtual, provisional, and endlessly proliferating, yet within the constraints of some rules predetermined by the writer himself who remains in control of his narration. Nevertheless, the narrator of *Exchange Place* states at one time that he has no

Facebook Account and that he rarely uses emails; thereby he distances himself from these new media of communication which rest upon virtual, non-human contacts and with the disappearance or oblivion of the real. There may also be an underlying distrust of these means of communication which have recently been assimilated to spying and surveillance, terms which are abhorred by the writer who knows the difficulties of living in a city haunted by helicopters and other MI5 or 6 spies during the period of the Troubles and most probably after...

4. “*The Garden of Forking Paths*”

The main characteristic of the book is thus the existence of parallel worlds or Chinese-box worlds. The recursive structures of *Exchange Place* raise the spectre of a somewhat vertiginous or mind-boggling “infinite regress”, “bifurcation and circularity” (McHale 1987, 113), which are the hallmark of Carson’s *œuvre* and are also to be found in Borges. We are presented with a fictitious theory of the narrative and the obsessive idea that gives the image of the book its form is that of necessity and multiplication. As the text of *Exchange Place* proceeds, the various narrative levels – with Kilfeather and Kilpatrick as the main protagonists, plus the narrator (i.e. author?) – begin to lose their initial clarity of definition in the reader’s mind. They finally break down and merge into a single, auto-biographical figure as it were, embodied in the omnipresent use of the first name of John (or its French equivalent “Jean”). The so-called revelations at the end of the book show how misleading the various threads were, even the identities of the characters prove to be false, though the reader had been warned, not without irony, that “there was more to everything than met the eye” (165).

If the self-referential character of the narration is foregrounded by the extracts from the Book of Revelations in the last chapter but one, the textual presence of Borges is to be found in the name of Kilpatrick. In his short story, “The Theme of the Traitor and the Hero”, the main character, Fergus Kilpatrick is described as a conspirator who is reported as having perished in a theatre and whose murderer will never be found by the police. As in *Shamrock Tea*, another work of fiction published by Carson in 2001, there is a fantastic element in *Exchange Place* that, in Brian McHale’s analysis of postmodernist fiction, may be seen as involving “a face-to-face confrontation between the possible (the ‘real’) and the impossible, the normal and the paranormal. Another world penetrates or encroaches upon our world [...], or some representative of our world penetrates an outpost of the other world, the world next door” (75). This is what Kilfeather does at the end of the book, by entering the mirror, after some necessary preparation with the help of a few drugs concocted by an individual named Browne, aka Bourne, aka Harland: “When the time was right, Kilfeather stepped up to the mirror,

extending his hands like a swimmer about to take the plunge, and as his fingers reached the dark glass it parted the liquid mercury to swallow him bit by bit until he vanished down a deep dark well” (204).

The metafictional dimension of the book helps us, according to Patricia Waugh, “to understand how the reality we live in day by day is similarly constructed, similarly ‘written’” (1984, 18). All the fragments of novels, stories and narratives that pervade the book are there to remind the reader of the “*inter-textual* existence” (47) of the book. Indeed, to put it in sociological terms, “[c]ontemporary reality, in particular, is continually being reappraised and resynthesized. It is no longer experienced as an ordered and fixed hierarchy, but as a web of interrelating, multiple realities” (51). In many ways, *Exchange Place* could be seen as a metafictional thriller mixed with some element of the detective story. The main character is looking for a missing friend who has disappeared without notice, and the reader is invited to take part in the search, although not without difficulties, as there is a danger of getting lost in the maze of the narration, comparable to that of the streets of Belfast and above all of Paris. As Patricia Waugh has demonstrated, “the existential boundary situations that recur frequently in the thriller are experienced vicariously by the reader, who is thus allowed to play through the uncertainties of his or her own existence” (84-85). As with Modiano’s novels, the narrator’s subject of the investigation is himself, without there ever been “a solution, or a resolution to the puzzle”, which is “the way it is in life” (2012, 63).

In Borges’ short story, “The Garden of Forking Paths”, Stephen Albert, the narrator’s interlocutor, defined the work as “a huge riddle or parable whose subject is time” (Borges 1998 [1944], 289). The remaking of the garden in the work of an author named Ts’ui Pên, was accounted for by the fact that “his ancestor did not believe in a uniform and absolute time”. On the contrary, “he believed in an infinite series of times, a growing, dizzying web of divergent, convergent and parallel times. That fabric of times that approach one another, fork, are sniped off, or are simply unknown for centuries, contains all possibilities” (290). In a similar way, indeed, the question of time is paramount in the whole of Carson’s *œuvre* and is parodied in the Heraclitean concept according to which one cannot step in the same river twice, for other waters and yet other waters go ever flowing on. It might be added that not only the object of experience but also the experiencing object is in a constant flux. Time is, paradoxically, subject to repetition within irreversible change. The repetitive aspect of time is taken one step further and seen as a refutation of Heraclitean unidirectionality, as in Nietzsche’s, Borges’ or Carson’s concepts of “circular time”. That’s why the book starts and ends with the same sentences: “It begins or began with a missing notebook, an inexpensive Muji 16 notebook with buff card covers and faint-rules pages. On the inside cover is written, If found, please return to John Kilfeather, 41 Elsinore Gardens, Belfast BT15 3FB, Northern Ireland, United Kingdom, The World” (vii, 204-5).

Paradoxically, this meandering of Carson's narration is but a means to regain a lost paradisiacal world which may never have existed but which the writer endlessly pursues, and which he hopes to find in language or languages. His work therefore tends to be de-territorialized, emblematised by the 'situation' Kilfeather finds himself in, i.e. having to leave his Belfast lodgings temporarily after a bomb scare caused by the Provisional IRA, in reality a "fake" alert initiated by a mysterious "Other Side" (194). Carson's so-called "art of getting lost" (Kennedy-Andrews 2009, 227) may be another means of finding an anchor in some reality, possibly different from what we experience as ordinary human beings and which does not result in an aimless and fruitless quest.

5. "Through the Looking Glass"

The omnipresence of Belfast in Carson's *œuvre*, together with his obsession with urban places has also led him to find analogies with other cities, which is what Kilpatrick reflects upon remembering his first visit outside Ireland: "Manchester struck him as a Belfast constructed on a larger scale" (53). In a recurring way, Kilpatrick will imagine himself in his native city when walking on the streets of Paris: "Kilpatrick continued on slowly down Passage des Panoramas, blind to Passage des Panoramas. In his mind's eye he was in North Street Arcade" (44). In a similar way, in Carson's autobiographical novel *The Star Factory* published in 1997, the narrator was fond of looking, as a young boy, at a book of photographs of Paris dating from the late 1940s and was wont to compare, for example, the Eglise Notre Dame de la Croix in the Ménilmontant area in Paris with The Church of the Holy Redeemer, called Clonard, the district where he spent his youth. In the same novel, *Odd Man Out* – a 1947 British film noir set in an unnamed Northern Irish city directed by Carol Reed, with James Mason playing the role of a fugitive named Johnny McQueen –, induced him to find similarities with the current events:

If *Odd Man Out* suggests that Belfast is a universal city, I cannot help but see bits of Belfast everywhere. Berlin, Warsaw, Tallinn, New York, to name some, have Belfast aspects; and recently, in Paris for the first time, I picked up this book of photographs that I want to explore, since its various *grisailles* remind me of Belfast, or rather, a remembered light, since the bulk of the images date from the period 1947-51. (Carson 1997, 153)

Quite significantly, several extracts from the same film are to be found in *Exchange Place*, providing further echoes from previous works by Carson, a process which might be defined as "autotextuality", i.e. every relation a text entertains with previous texts by the author or his own life, according to Gérard Genette's classification in *Palimpsests* (1982). This is also the case with two other films dating from the 1950s, which marked the writer's

childhood and youth, and were likewise evoked in *The Star Factory: The Incredible Shrinking Man* – a 1957 science fiction film adapted from the novel *The Shrinking Man* by its author Richard Matheson –, and *Orphée*, which he had first seen in the early 1970s and saw again in 1997 in the Film theatre at Queen’s University:

It is one instance of Cocteau’s magical handling of space that mirrors are portals to the underworld, and the poet’s attic is approached by way of a trapdoor, or a ladder to the attic window. The ground-level garage houses a Rolls Royce Charonmobile whose radio transmits enigmatic messages from down below: ‘*l’oiseau chante avec ses doigts*’ (the bird sings with its fingers), for instance reminding us of the winged emblem that surmounts the Acropolis portico of the Rolls-Royce radiator. (Carson 1997, 266)

Indeed, the cinema has played a major role in Carson’s development as a writer, by enabling him to enter another world and live an imaginary experience, but also to try, like Alice, to go over to the other side of the mirror and attempt to catch the reflection of those elusive images in order to discover another truth. More generally it may be said that, by dint of being faced with an unstable or intolerable reality – as experienced by the writer during the Troubles –, the human being comes to find in these images reflected on the screen a reality that has become the only one that can be put up with. To some extent, the representation of Belfast becomes dream-like, to be compared with Walter Benjamin’s project as regards Paris, as Kilpatrick experiences in turn when reading his notes: “images and phrases intertwining in a vast fugal architecture, echoing rooms and galleries of language” (33).

Ciaran Carson’s fascination with mirrors is a recurring theme in *Exchange Place* and seems to have come directly from Cocteau’s movie, *Orphée*. In *Exchange Place*, the narrator, i.e. John Kilfeather, will experience the very same adventure:

I looked into the mirror remembering Cocteau’s film *Orphée*, which I had first seen with John Harland, remembering how in that film, mirrors are portals to the Underworld, and I thought of how I might glide through the mirror in the attic to a world where I might meet Harland once again, for all that he had been dead for many years. (170)

The background to Cocteau’s work, that of the ravages and destructions of the Second World War, is similar to that of Belfast as evoked by the narrator of *The Star Factory*: “The dereliction of this landscape is familiar to me from fairly recent hulks of bombed-out factories in Belfast” (Carson 1997, 267). The narrator of Carson’s novel keeps “wandering its roofless arcades, looking out of glassless windows, squatting by a heap of rubble bricks, contemplating their baroque, accidental architecture, imagining [himself] to

be of toy-soldier size in order to crawl into its fractured interstices” (Carson 1997, 267). The regular recurrence of a flash of lightning, as an emblem of the bomb explosions which had punctuated Belfast’s recent history, echoes throughout Carson’s writing as a form of ‘provisional’, precarious representation.

More generally, such geographical places as Paris or Belfast, or street names, according to Philippe Hamon, refer to “stable semantic entities [...], anchoring points [...] that] allow for the economy of a descriptive text, and ensure a global effect of real which transcends even any decoding of detail”³. In this context, language is to be compared to an old city with its inextricable network of lanes and squares, its sectors which reach back to the past, its reclaimed and rebuilt neighbourhoods, and its periphery that continually encroaches upon the suburbs. John Kilfeather/Kilpatrick’s quest for a missing notebook and a vanished painter called either John Harland or John Bourne, whose work has similarities with the Irish-born British artist Francis Bacon is in many ways to be compared to that of the narrator for a missing person in Modiano’s *Rue des boutiques obscures* or to the traveller Marco Polo in *Invisible Cities* by Italo Calvino. In this work dating from 1972, Marco Polo tells the emperor Kublai Khan about a journey he made through dreamed cities, imaginary or imaginable, for “cities like dreams are made of desires, fears, even if the thread of their discourse is secret, their rules are absurd, their perspectives deceitful; and everything conceals something else” (Calvino 1997, 44).

As in G.W. Sebald’s novel, *Austerlitz*, published in 2001, in which the eponymous character decides to confront the limits of his memory and engages in an exploration of his past, although he is not prepared for the blow and magnitude of the entire truth, the narrator’s quest is hampered by a deceitful memory symbolized by “the deteriorating mirror” (159) in the artist’s studio. As another intertextual instance, this image was already included in *The Twelfth of Never*, a collection of sonnets published by Carson in 1998. In the sonnet “The Horse’s Mouth”, an elf had told a ghost story to the narrator:

I got that story from the Pooka, who appeared
To me last night. He stepped out from the wardrobe door,
Shimmering in its deteriorating mirror,
Shivering the fringes of his ectoplasmic beard. (Carson 1998, 64)⁴

In *Exchange Place*, memory is seen as processed by the *hippocampus* of the human brain, or the seahorse whose habitat is the coral reefs and this leads the narrator to conclude in an urban vein:

³ Hamon 1982, 137. “Des entités sémantiques stables [...], des points d’ancrage [...] permettent l’économie d’un texte descriptif, et assurent un effet de réel global qui transcende même tout décodage de détail” (translation is mine).

⁴ Reproduced in *Collected Poems* (2008, 402).

I sometimes like to think of human consciousness as one of the underwater cities whose fabric is accumulated from the skeletons of its builders: a necropolis which teems with life. Here are massive blocks and towers of stone, hanging gardens of the most varied hues, purple, emerald and amethyst, which undulate and flicker in the transparent water. (159-160)

The elegiac mood of the whole book – the “overwhelming nostalgia” (180) experienced by the narrator, standing in the vestibule of 14 Exchange Place – ties in with the traditional heuristics of narrative, the novel resorting to the archaic motif of the quest already mentioned. As is the case with Patrick Modiano’s novels, the narrator starts in search of his own identity, the presence or loss of a notebook serving as a form of anchoring into what remains a blurred environment. From the start of the book, the narrator refers Modiano’s work, more particularly his novel *Rue des boutiques obscures*, with which he finds some forms of analogy: “Though they all seemed to be versions of each other, he was attracted by their fugue-like repetition of themes and imagery, their evocation of a noir Paris in which the protagonists were endlessly in search of their identities” (13-14). Interestingly, Modiano will not be able to attend – as guest of honour – an evening at the British Council, where Kilpatrick had been invited, maybe reflecting the well-known discretion of the 2014 Nobel Prize winner for literature. Coincidentally, Patrick Modiano’s novel, *L’Herbe des nuits* published in 2012, starts with this same theme, as the narrator mentions a black notebook full of notes which serve as reference points, a way of translating events as accurately as possible, with the constant help of a dictionary.

In all cases, the quest motif is too insistent to be anything but ironical and consequently the task of writing is caught in an echo chamber of its own making. This is why, in chapter 5 entitled “Pilot Light”, the narrator will reflect on the meaning of this expression in another language, thus suggesting a word with *double entendre* such as “*minuterie*” (22), which gives rise to variations on the word “*veilleuse*” (23), “*mettre en veilleuse*”, “*veille*”, “*homme de veille*” (23). This epistemological uncertainty goes even further since the French translation for “night watchman” is “*veilleur de nuit*” rather than “*homme de veille*”. When the energy of creation has become exhausted, only re-creation, in the two meanings of the term, subsists.

By resorting to imaginary, absent or dead characters, Carson’s writing may thus be redefined as a prosopopeia that deprives literature of any dialectical capacity. Its pragmatic effect lies almost exclusively in its ability to arouse infinite echoes, just like John Kilfeather upon hearing a melody played by a Roma fiddler encountered along his endless walking through Belfast, who embarks upon a seemingly never-ending sentence of seventeen lines (a possible reference to the haiku?): “the melody that haunts itself in its own ever-changing repetitions, intertwining, unfolding, recapitulating, speaking of Transylvania in the loops and spirals of the melody, lingering for all its quickness

[...]” (28). This triggers off a process of stylistic identification in the reader which folds the canon back upon itself and indeed forecloses the history of literary forms. Yet, appropriating and reconfiguring the past may also afford us some purchase on a meaningless present and writing is always apocryphal, as when the final “explanation” is given at the end of the book: “The Other Side have planted another alter in Belfast, a John Kilfeather who is masquerading as you, unbeknownst to himself” (194). Indeed, the reader is never told about the identities of “the Other Side” and is reduced to making hypotheses.

Moving beyond the grand-narrative of aesthetic progress may have laid bare the deceptiveness of originality, and the protagonist feels like a ghost: “Barely a soul takes me under their notice” (28). However, it has not exorcised the desire for the writer to achieve incarnation, to steal the right Promethean fire. If anything, it has made it more urgent, as the concluding chapter of *Exchange Place* testifies. Under a heavy rain storm, punctuated by flashes of lightning, Kilfeather emerges from the mirror, like Alice through the looking glass, and uncannily recovers both his former identity and his missing notebook:

Again a flash of lightning: he needed to write. He looked in the briefcase and found a pen. Nice vintage Waterman, marbled celluloid. He unscrewed the cap and began to write. The pen suited his hand well, it could have been his own pen, and it wrote first time, the writing both familiar and foreign. He kept on writing. The writing kept on, words appearing from nowhere. (205)

6. Conclusion

In Carson’s book, the law of the newness that sustained literary modernity has been overthrown by the melancholy, Borgesian conviction that everything has been said – “everything happening as if déjà vu” (172). As with Edgar Poe, Carson’s narrative contains within itself several ‘versions’, which are as many diverging directions for the reader. The meaning of the story or stories rather, is not what was expected at first and besides, it does not result from a possible choice among several interpretations. Each particular narrative evokes the idea of the labyrinth but one only gets a reflection that can just be read. The real narrative is determined only by the absence of all the narratives among which it might have been chosen. The nostalgic parody that forecloses the concept of originality encloses us in a dizzying hall of mirrors.

Works Cited

- Ackroyd Peter (1992), *English Music*, Harmondsworth, Penguin.
 Ashcroft Bill, Griffiths Gareth, Tiffin Helen (1989), *Theory and Practice in Post-Colonial Literatures*, London & New York, Routledge.

- Barthes Roland, Bersani Leo, Hamon Philippe, Riffaterre Michael, Watt Ian, édité par (1982), *Littérature et Réalité*, Paris, Seuil.
- Borges J.L. (1998 [1944]), *Collected Fictions*, trans. by Andrew Hurley, Allen Lane, Penguin.
- Calvino Italo (1997 [1974]), *Invisible Cities*, trans. by William Weaver, London, Vintage Books (orig. ed. 1972).
- Carson Ciaran (1997 [1996]), *Last Night's Fun*, London, Pimlico.
- (1998 [1997]), *The Star Factory*, London, Granta Books.
- (1998), *The Twelfth of Never*, Loughcrew, Gallery Press.
- (2000 [1999]), *Fishing for Amber*, London, Granta Books.
- (2001), *Shamrock Tea*, London, Granta.
- (2008), *Collected Poems*, Loughcrew, Gallery Press.
- (2010), *Until Before After*, Winston-Salem, Wake Forest UP.
- (2012), *Exchange Place*, Belfast, Blackstaff Press.
- Genette Gérard (1982), *Palimpsestes*, Paris, Seuil.
- Graham Colin (2013), “‘Strange architecture’: Ciaran Carson’s *Until Before After*”, *Irish University Review* 43, 2, 381-397.
- Hamon Philippe (1982 [1973]), “Un discours contraint”, in Roland Barthes *et al.*, *Littérature et Réalité*, Paris, Seuil, 118-181.
- Huxley Aldous (1928), *Point Counterpoint*, London, Chatto & Windus.
- Kennedy-Andrews Elmer, ed. (2009), *Ciaran Carson: Critical Essays*, Dublin, Four Courts Press.
- Kristeva Julia (1969), *Sémeiotikè. Recherches pour une sémanalyse*, Paris, Seuil.
- Macherey Pierre (2006), “Borges and the fictive narrative”, in Id., *A Theory of Literary Production*, New York, Routledge Classics, 278-287.
- McHale Brian (1987), *Postmodernist Fiction*, London & New York, Routledge.
- Modiano Patrick (2012), *L’Herbe des nuits*, Paris, Gallimard/Folio.
- O’Brien Sean (2012), “Grateful digressions”, *Times Literary Supplement*, 14 December.
- Payne Keith (2013), “Trompe l’oeil”, *Dublin Review of Books*, <www.drbr.ie/essays/Trompe-l’oeil> (05/2015).
- Rushdie Salman (1981), *Midnight’s Children*, London, Jonathan Cape.
- Sebald G.W. (2002 [2001]), *Austerlitz*, trans. by Anthea Bell, London & New York, Penguin.
- Waugh Patricia (1984), *Metafiction. The Theory and Practice of Self-conscious Fiction*, London & New York, Methuen.

The Politics of Catholic versus Protestant and Understandings of Personal Affairs in Restoration Ireland

Danielle McCormack

Adam Mickiewicz University, Poznań (<dmccormack@wa.amu.edu.pl>)

Abstract:

Between 1641 and 1652, Ireland was ravaged by war and monarchy was replaced by the Cromwellian Commonwealth and Protectorate regimes. The armies of Oliver Cromwell conquered Ireland and Catholic landowners were dispossessed and transplanted. The restoration of the Stuarts in 1660 opened up the prospect that these changes might be undone. Catholics set the tone for debate in the 1660s, challenging Protestant dominance. Catholic assertiveness led to panic throughout the Protestant colonies, and the interpretation of domestic strife and personal tragedy in the context of competition between Catholic and Protestant. This article will recreate the climate of mistrust which obtained within the community before moving to a unique analysis of the impact which this could have on the family.

Keywords: Early modern Ireland, marriage, political history, sectarianism, Stuart restoration

On 29 May 1660, the Stuart monarchy was officially restored in Ireland, Scotland and England, following eleven years of Interregnum. Throughout the Interregnum, the monarch, Charles II, who had been crowned king of the three kingdoms by the Scots in 1649, had been in exile on the European continent. Officially, the Stuart restoration marked a return to the *status quo ante* and the obliteration of the constitutional changes that had been wrought during the 1650s by the Cromwellian Commonwealth and Protectorate regimes. In reality, the wars and conflicts of the 1640s and 1650s had left an indelible mark on the political fabric of each of the three kingdoms and the restoration period was characterised by memory of bloodshed and debate which mirrored and recalled the acrimony of previous decades. A monarch who carried the

baggage of long exile, association with Catholic princes on the European continent, and a host of followers and associates seeking to be rewarded would add a complicating dimension in this period of supposed reconciliation and healing. Politically, the 1660s was characterised by fierce competition between Protestants and Catholics over the nature of the settlement. Debate centred on the suitability of each group for power and was informed by interpretation of past actions, with particular attention focused on the 1641 rebellion and supposed Catholic untrustworthiness. This article is a recreation of the climate of fear and distrust in which Irish denizens lived in the restoration period. It discusses the contours of political debate but also demonstrates that politics became manifest in the household. Distrust between Catholic and Protestant was expressed in intimate settings and, by means of a case study of marital breakdown in County Fermanagh in Ulster, this article will demonstrate that the discourse of Catholic versus Protestant could be used by spouses against one another to precipitate the termination of their relationship.

In 1641, a rebellion of Catholic lords and gentlemen in Ulster had unleashed popular resentment against British plantation in the kingdom and a massacre of Protestant settlers there occurred. Violence spread into north Leinster and the breakdown in the relationship between the traditional Old English Catholic *élites* and the Dublin government precipitated the establishment of the Catholic Confederation of Kilkenny in 1642. This body was established for Catholic mutual self-defence. It controlled much of the kingdom and waged war against Irish Protestants and royalists until it was eventually dissolved in January 1649 in favour of an alliance with the royalists. The defeat of this Confederate and royalist alliance by the armies of Oliver Cromwell by 1652 led to major changes to the socio-political fabric of the kingdom.

The rebellion and massacres of 1641 caused Irish Catholics to come to personify the 'popish' threat to the security of England and of Protestantism. With the outbreak of the English civil wars, suppression of the Irish rebellion came to be a cause of contention between king and parliament. The latter sought to wrest authority for the waging of war in Ireland from the former. The absence of King Charles I in Scotland allowed parliament to assert control and thus take over the suppression of Irish rebellion. This enabled it to consolidate its position as an effective government in England (Armstrong 2005, 45-46). Ireland was conquered by the armies of Oliver Cromwell by 1652. The administrative basis for the mass confiscation of Catholic and royalist property that followed, was provided by the Adventurers Act of 1642 and the Act for the Settlement of Ireland of 1652. The 1652 Act exempted all those Catholics involved in the initial stages of the 1641 rebellion from pardon in respect of life and estate. Also exempted from pardon were any Roman Catholic priests who had been involved with the rebellion in any way, certain named noblemen, anyone who had killed a civilian, and any who did not give up their arms within twenty-eight days of publication of the act.

The universalising character of the 1652 Act for the Settlement of Ireland led to a massive process of land transfer which was implemented by the Cromwellian regime. Those Irish Catholics who were deemed 'deserving' were allocated smaller plots of land west of the River Shannon, in Connacht and County Clare. By 1659, Ireland was largely settled on the Protestant interest. Kevin McKenny's analysis of the land transfers of the middle of the seventeenth century indicates that, in 1641, 1,756 Catholics possessed 66% of all land in Ireland. By c.1675, 1,353 Catholics held just 29%. Thus, the Catholic share of property not only decreased, but the scale of Catholic holdings and, consequently, the social power associated with them, declined significantly too (McKenny 2008, 40).

Following the death of Oliver Cromwell, he was succeeded by his son, Richard, as Lord Protector. However, in April of 1659, the English army expelled Richard Cromwell. The 'rump' parliament was recalled, which was then expelled in October. For Irish Protestants, this meant the end of the lord deputyship that had been conducted by Oliver Cromwell's son, Henry. The rapidity with which Henry's administration – which had favoured pre-1641 Protestant settlers – could fall and be replaced by a radical regime, was a cause for alarm. The crumbling of the army regime in England that succeeded the Cromwellian protectorate was anticipated by officers of the army in Ireland, who took the initiative and seized Dublin Castle in a bloodless coup on 13 December 1659. Ireland was then governed by a council of state from Dublin, which impeached republican leaders. In February of 1660, the Long Parliament was reinstated in England, and in Ireland, a Convention was held. It was this exclusively Protestant representative body that shaped the Irish aspect of Charles II's restoration and it represented a determination to ensure that the Cromwellian land settlement would not be threatened by the king's return (Clarke 1999, 19-20; 42-43).

Despite the best efforts of agents of the Irish Convention, the return of Stuart monarchy ushered in a period in which the validity of the land transfer and of Protestant political and social dominance could be questioned and challenged. Charles' ascent to the throne immediately restored to Ireland its position as a separate kingdom. Initially, Catholics greeted the Stuart restoration with enthusiasm. Some assumed that restoration of monarchy would automatically result in Catholic restoration to property and to positions of political and social prestige. In the heady days of 1660 and 1661, some Catholics turned up at their former properties demanding entry (British Library, Hardwicke Papers, Add. Mss 35851, vol. 503, fo. 66). Certain of these had decrees of restoration signed by the king, which caused frictions with the Dublin government. Charles II had committed to ensuring the satisfaction of certain of his Irish Catholic followers. Moreover, to grant favour to certain Irish Catholics was a means by which to create a loyal constituency interspersed among Protestant landowners who owed their position to Cromwell. Charles was amenable to Catholic representations for restitution but he was also constrained by his reliance upon advisors *in situ* who were

determined to maintain the Cromwellian settlement. The king's perceived favour for Catholics rankled with the Protestants of Ireland who wished for the king to show himself fully aligned with the Protestant interest. A court of claims, which sat in Dublin in 1663 to settle the matter of Catholic restoration to property, returned to Catholics about one third of the land that they had held in 1641 (Harris 2006, 53). By 1665, with the passing of the Act of Explanation which attempted to clarify issues arising from the 1662 Act of Settlement, Ireland had come through a tortuous political process in which the restoration land settlement was largely fixed.

Nonetheless, Charles' facilitation of Catholic arguments against a restoration settlement based upon the Protestant interest forced Protestants to engage in debate and to justify their position. It is evident that Catholics had the discursive advantage, as they were able to refute the changes of the 1650s as both illegal and immoral. The jolt that this gave to Protestants meant that they had to defend and justify their position, leading to the consolidation of the notion of two groups in the kingdom: the Irish Catholics versus the English, or occasionally, British, Protestants.

A discourse that centred on the importance of forgetting past animosities prevailed in official circles. James Butler, duke of Ormond, was appointed by the king as lord lieutenant of the kingdom. He returned to Ireland in July 1662. The Irish House of Lords wrote to Charles that "Never did Kingdom conceive a greater Hope of a Lieutenant, that he will prove a Repairer of all our Breaches, and a Restorer of our former Peace and Tranquillity"¹. Upon giving up the sword to Ormond, the lord justice, Roger Boyle, earl of Orrery, spoke of former conflict as a temporary aberration and asked that the lord lieutenant "bee pleased therefore to pass by what wee did when wee were not our selves, and to acc[o]mpt of what wee now doe when wee are our selves" (British Library, Sloane Mss. 1008, fo. 186).

However, this was the kingdom in which hatred was least likely to be forgotten or concealed. Even the personnel of the 1660s administration had been deeply involved in the recent conflicts. Ormond had served as lord deputy throughout the tumults of the 1640s and had accompanied Charles II into exile. He had been a staunch representative of King Charles I and had spent the 1640s as leader of the royalist effort and in attempts to reach a compromise with the Catholic Confederation of Kilkenny. Orrery had supported the invasion of Oliver Cromwell, later serving as Lord President of the Council of Scotland between 1655-1656 on behalf of the Protectorate regime. He was also deeply involved in the offer of the crown to Oliver Cromwell (Little 2000, 51). Debates about a restoration settlement were conducted on the

¹ "The House of Lords to the King" (Dec. 1661), in Irish Parliamentary Records, 1634-1800 (1779-1800), *Journals of the House of Lords of the Kingdom of Ireland* (Dublin) i, 283.

understanding that justification of past actions was integral to both the Protestant and Catholic cases. However, Catholic versus Protestant competition and the bitterness of the two parties towards one another was not confined to the realms of high politics. Mutual distrust permeated society at all levels, even into the most intimate realm of the family and home.

The rebellion and massacres had been the subjects of considerable propaganda against Irish Catholics throughout the 1640s. Of particular note was Sir John Temple's 1646 *The Irish Rebellion*, which recounted in gruesome detail versions of the cruelties and indignities suffered by Protestants in Ulster in the winter of 1641. The inculcation of notions of the horror of these events was important to encourage British Protestants to contribute to the cause of conquering Ireland and to justify intervention there. These occurrences were regarded by Protestants in Ireland and Britain as the ultimate evidence of the untrustworthiness of Irish Catholics.

Although these events were horrific in their extent and brutality, they were not represented as surprising in the 1660s. The aforementioned earl of Orrery, who emerged as a major Protestant spokesman in the restoration period wrote:

[T]he late unparallel'd Massacres, though far greater in number than any upon record of Story, yet had no newer cause or Occasion then that of the Roman Citizens of the lesser Asia, that of the French in Scicily, that of the Danes in England, and the frequent ones of the European colonies in the Indies. (Boyle 1662a, 6)

Black propaganda concerning the massacres and rebellion was the heir to the colonial and anti-Gaelic thought that had underpinned Tudor intervention in Ireland in the sixteenth century. Irish Catholics of Irish Gaelic origin, were already understood by English colonial writers as barbarous. Notions of Gaelic inferiority had been cultivated and disseminated by authors such as Fynes Moryson, Barnaby Rich and Edmund Spenser. Rich had written of the idea that Irish culture and barbarism were closely linked:

Custome is a Metall amongst them, that standeth which way soever it bee bent; Checke them for their uncleanliness, and they plead Custome: reprehend them for their Idolatry, they say thus did our Fathers before us: and I think it bee Custome that draweth them so often into rebellion, because they would do as their fathers have done before them. (Rich 1610, 27)

However, the crucial change that had taken place in colonial works between the period of the Tudor conquest at the start of the seventeenth century and that of Cromwell fifty years later, was the increasing importance of religion in characterisations of the Irish. This allowed the other Irish group of Catholics, who were ethnically of Anglo-Norman descent, to be included in derisory propaganda. Religion became increasingly important in anti-Irish

propaganda due to concern with the rising power of France and imaginings of Irish Catholics as agents of international popery.

Protestants in Ireland in the 1660s lived in a climate of distrust and fear for their lives. Confessionalised political and economic competition permeated their mentality and could even shape the way in which they understood personal problems. The discourse of Protestant versus Catholic that was carried on by politicians in the Irish House of Commons and in Whitehall manifested itself among all sectors of society. South Ulster was an area of particular tension between Protestants and Catholics. Counties Cavan, Fermanagh, and Monaghan had witnessed large-scale British immigration in the early seventeenth century. These areas also bore deep wounds from the period of rebellion and massacre in the early 1640s. At the time of the restoration, news from south Ulster indicated that tensions between Protestants and Catholics, and between government agents and Catholics were particularly high. The lord justice, the earl of Mountrath, reported that a Catholic priest arrested while conducting mass in County Cavan was rescued by his congregants, who also disarmed and beat the arresting soldiers (National Archives, State Papers, Ireland 63, 304, fo. 71). Members of the House of Commons also heard that the dispersal of a mass in Killeevan, County Monaghan, descended into violence.

By 1665, the time of the case study, the matter of the land and political settlement had not been fully resolved. Nonetheless, the government had come through its greatest crisis of stability of the 1660s, having passed the Act of Settlement in 1662 and weathered the storm that accompanied the sitting of the court of claims in Dublin in 1663. Nonetheless, Irish politics continued to be dominated by rhetoric that made use of past animosities to justify contemporary positions. In the mid-1660s, the most contentious issues were the Irish Remonstrance; an uncertain international situation with the Anglo-Dutch war and outbreak of war with France in 1666; and the outbreak of toriyism.

The Irish Remonstrance was a document drafted by the royalist Catholic Sir Richard Bellings in order to further a formula by which Irish Catholics could assert that their confessional position was compatible with loyalty to the Stuart monarchy. Signatories to the Remonstrance promised to maintain allegiance to the king regardless of any sentence passed against him by the pope. A convocation of the Roman Catholic clergy was held in June 1666, while the activity of Catholic priests was reported on in 1664 (National Library of Ireland, Lane Papers, Ms. 8643, 7).

Meanwhile, war between England and France led to official fears of Ireland being invaded by the French and assisted by Catholic there, seeking to improve their position. In 1666, the king was moved to express such fears to the lord lieutenant, who responded that he thought that certain of the Irish would be in favour of a French invasion. Elsewhere, however, he wrote that "the French will not find that conjunction of Irish w[hi]ch they may be made to believe, some I am confident will serve against them" (Bodleian Library,

Carte Papers 48, fo. 395). The possibility of Irish Catholic support for foreign invasion is difficult to quantify. However, it was certainly a matter that was much-discussed and that served to escalate the Protestant sense of insecurity.

Fears of Irish Catholic violence were furthered by the fact that certain former landowners had taken to toryism, meaning that they engaged in raiding on the peripheries of their former properties. Toryism could present a problem of law and order to the government and was a particular nuisance in north Connacht and in Ulster in 1666 and 1667. Furthermore, in the case of some tories, their activity could escalate into one of small-scale rebellion. This was the case with regard to the toryism of Dudley Costello and Edmund Nangle, who challenged the government's authority throughout 1666 and issued the 'Catholic Declaration', which condemned the restoration land settlement (The National Archives, State Papers, Ireland 63, 320, fo. 71).

Among the papers of the secretary to the lord lieutenant, Sir George Lane, is a deposition made by one John Flacke, a gentleman farmer in Mullaghmore in County Fermanagh. Flacke had made his way to the assizes in County Tyrone on 3 March 1665 (New Style) in order to offer the government his personal insight into the relationship between Catholics and Protestants in his locality. In his deposition, he alleged that certain Irish Catholics were not only plotting against the regime, but that his life was in particular danger. His observations and suspicions were compounded by the reported speech of his wife, who, as a convert to Catholicism, had confirmed his fears for both his own safety and that of the kingdom.

Flacke deposed that he lived among many Irish inhabitants in his parish and that he had observed that there were lately "more frequent Masses & fastings then formerly" (National Library of Ireland, Lane Papers, Ms. 8643, fo. 8). The retrospectively imposed idea that frequent masses and fasts had been the preamble to the 1641 rebellion had gained great currency and was often used in the period as an indicator that rebellion was being planned by Catholics. In the summer of 1661, the Irish House of Commons had discussed the supposed keeping of fasts among the Irish, as the sign of imminent rebellion².

Flacke continued that his neighbours in Mullaghmore were "very much discounted that Philip Mac Emeric Mac James Oge & Tirlagh Mac Caffery have been sent up unto Dublin" Philip Mac Henry Mac James Ó Maguire and Tirlagh Mac Caffery were both then being interrogated by a committee of the Irish privy council. Mac Caffery had informed the government that, while in the woods in the Barony of Lurg, he had come across the parish priest of Magheraculmony, Cormuck O'Cassedy, who informed him that there was to be a general rising of the Irish against the Protestants. Mac Caffery also in-

² Irish Parliamentary Records, 1634-1800 (1779-1800), *Journal of the House of Commons of the Kingdom of Ireland* (Dublin), i, 430.

formed the authorities that Mac Enerie Maguire was present with the priest, all which the latter denied. This matter was considered a serious one by the council in Dublin and they wrote to the lord lieutenant of the plans of the Irish in Fermanagh “for raising some publique disturbance”³.

Flacke also claimed that “one Knogher [Conchúbhair] O Conner who came lately out of France or Spain said he would have this Examin[an]ts life” (National Library of Ireland, Lane Papers, Ms. 8643, fo. 8). In the 1640s, the return of Irishmen who had been serving in armies on the European continent had been crucial to Catholic military strength and had enabled the Catholic Confederation of Kilkenny to wage war effectively and control most of the kingdom. Thus, this was a reference both to fear of returning emigrés and to fear of Irish Catholic collusion with European Catholic powers. There is evidence that the exchanges reported on were conducted in the Irish language and that the deponent could speak Irish. The word ‘Pet’, used in the document, is a rendering of ‘peitirne’, which means a strong, robust, child. Thus, Flacke was making very strong allegations that serious violence against Protestants, including against children, was intended.

Flacke also raised the issue of his personal relationship with his wife in this deposition. He informed the assizes that his wife had “turn’d Papist, by the perversion of the Popish Priests, who doe swarm in that part of the Country” (National Library of Ireland, Lane Papers, Ms. 8643, fo. 8). Flacke’s reference to the ‘perversion’ of Catholic priests was a standard one, but he was also calling up than black propaganda. He was referring to the supposed ability of Catholic priests to inculcate in Irish Catholics a blind loyalty, which they put to evil uses. Orrery wrote that Roman Catholicism not only taught disobedience and regicide, but provided the very “Instrument of [Catholics’] Iniquity” (Boyle 1662a, 23: 7) by providing a hierarchy of priests to channel and direct that disobedience. Further, this reference had the effect of consigning his wife to imbecility, as a blind follower of Catholicism and as its agent.

Flacke and his wife evidently argued over the threats that had been made against him and Flacke deposed that “aftr much importunity, she [his wife] said, that when you heare of any shipping that are come into Castle Doe then fly away, & shift for your selfe” (National Library of Ireland, Lane Papers, Ms. 8643, fo. 8). Flacke conflated his fear for his personal safety with concern for the security of the kingdom and in doing so, attempted to add greater and broader import to his personal problems. In this way, he could attract official attention to them.

³ “The examination of Coll Mc Caufrey of Lisnaroge in ye Countie of Fermanagh labourer” (31 Dec., 1664), National Archives, State Papers 63, 319, f. 30, 1. “Further Examination of Coll Mc Caufrey” (10 Feb., 1665), National Archives, State Papers 63, 319, fo. 30, 3. “Examination of Philip Mc James Oge” (Dublin, 10 Feb., 1664 [1665]), National Archives, State Papers 63, 319, fo. 30, 4.

The insight into his relationship with his wife that he provided holds much of interest. Clearly, the couple did not have a good relationship, and the use which Flacke's wife made of the fear of a plot to hasten her husband's departure is telling. According to the deposition, she also said "that many of the Irish yt have been absent out of ye Country many yeeres, have within this week last past or thereabouts appear'd furnish'd with Armes, & other weapons fitt for to doe mischeife & they are very bold & domineering & threatening ye British, all which this examin[an]t hath observ'd & daily doe observe of them" (National Library of Ireland, Lane Papers, Ms. 8643, fo. 8).

It is clear that the Flacke's marriage had broken down. They had not married as Catholic and Protestant. The wife's conversion to Catholicism brought her into different society and moreover, the members of her social circle regarded Flacke with particular hostility. The deposition is notable for Flacke's lack of inhibition with regard to his loss of patriarchal authority in the household. Rather, he conflated the loss of domestic harmony with a loss of order in the kingdom. The language he utilised was directly informed by political discourse nurtured since the 1640s and revived with debate of the restoration settlement. It indicates that the demarcations between the political and personal sphere were unclear and that the worldview of Ireland's denizens – in which inter-denominational rivalry was dominant – pervaded all aspects of life. Conversely, with regard to Flacke's wife, her conversion to Catholicism and utilisation of the matter of potential Catholic rebellion against him can be read as an attempt to defy her spouse. It would seem that she equated Catholic defiance of the Protestant monopoly of land and power with her defiance of her husband.

Restoration Ireland was a place dominated by memory of conflict drawn along confessional lines. High political discourse was conducted on the understanding that interpretation of past events was crucial to the achievement of present aims. Argumentation about the past was furthered in pamphlet literature too but, importantly, in discussion at all levels of society. The matter of Catholic inclusion within or challenge to the political nation and the land settlement exercised an extremely strong grip on the imaginations of Ireland's denizens. It was of such potency that understandings of political affairs and personal affairs were conceived of in similar terms. The case of John Flacke and his wife indicates that personal matters could be conflated with wider politics and that, significantly, the language of Protestant versus Catholic could be used by parties in order to further their personal agendas.

Works Cited

Manuscript Sources

Bodleian Library (Oxford), Carte Papers 48, fo. 395, "Ormond to Clarendon" (Dublin, 9 Jun., 1666).

- British Library (London), Hardwicke Papers, Additional Manuscripts 35851, vol. 503, f. 66, "Answer of ye Comm[ission]ers from Ireland, to ye Irish their Objections against ye Body of ye Bill" (1661).
- British Library (London), Sloane Manuscripts 1008, fo. 186, "Orrery's Speech on giving up the Sword to the Lord Lieutenant" (1662).
- National Archives (Surrey), State Papers, Ireland 63, 304, fo. 71, "Mountrath and William Bury to Secretary Nicholas" (Dublin, 24 Oct., 1660).
- National Archives (Surrey), State Papers, Ireland 63, 319, fo. 30, 1, "The examination of Coll Mc Caufrey of Lisnaroge in ye Countie of Fermanagh labourer" (31 Dec., 1664).
- National Archives (Surrey), State Papers, Ireland 63, 319, fo. 30, 3, "Further Examination of Coll Mc Caufrey" (10 Feb., 1665).
- National Archives (Surrey), State Papers, Ireland 63, 319, fo. 30, 4, "Examination of Philip Mc James Oge" (Dublin, 10 Feb., 1664 [1665]).
- National Archives (Surrey), State Papers, Ireland 63, 320, fo. 71, "The Catholic Declaration" (25 Mar., 1666).
- National Library of Ireland (Dublin), Lane Papers, Manuscript 8643, Folder 7, "Lord Conway and Killulta and Edward Rawdon to the lord deputy" (Lisburne, 9 Jul., 1664).
- National Library of Ireland (Dublin), Lane Papers, Manuscript 8643, fo. 8, "The Examination of John Flacke of Mullachmore in the County of Fermanach gent taken before... S[i]r Jerome Alexander, Lord Judge of the Assize (Strabane, Co. Tyrone, 3 Mar., 1665).

Printed Sources

- Armstrong Robert (2005), *Protestant War: The 'British' of Ireland and the Wars of the Three Kingdoms*, Manchester, Manchester UP.
- Boyle Roger, Earl of Orrery (1662a), *[an] Answer to a Scandalous Letter Lately Printed and Subscribed. by Peter Welsh, Procurator for the Sec. And Reg. Popish Priests of Ireland Intituled, a Letter Desiring a Just and Merciful Regard of the Roman Catholicks of Ireland, Given About the End of Octob. 1660. To the Then Marquess, Now Duke of Ormond, and the Second Time Lord Lieutenant of That Kingdom. By the Right Honourable the Earl of Orrery, One of the Lords Justices of the Kingdom of Ireland, and L. President of the Province of Munster, &c. Being a Full Discovery of the Treachery of the Irish Rebels since the Beginning of the Rebellion There, Necessary to Be Considered by All Adventureres and Other Persons Estatic in That Kingdom*, printed by J.C., Dublin.
- (1662b), *The Irish Colours Displayed in a Reply of an English Protestant to a Late Letter of an Irish Roman Catholic: Both Address'd to His Grace the Duke of Ormond*, London.
- Clarke Aidan (1999), *Prelude to Restoration in Ireland: The End of the Commonwealth, 1659-1660*, Cambridge, Cambridge UP.
- Harris T.J. (2006), "Politics, Religion and Community in Later Stuart Ireland", in Robert Armstrong, Tadhg Ó hAnnracháin (eds), *Community in Early Modern Ireland*, Dublin, Four Courts Press, 51-68.

- Irish Parliamentary Records, 1613-1780 (1763-1781), *Journal of the House of Commons of the Kingdom of Ireland*, Dublin, 23 vols.
- Irish Parliamentary Records, 1634-1800 (1779-1800), *Journals of the House of Lords of the Kingdom of Ireland*, Dublin, 8 vols.
- Little Patrick (2000), "The First Unionists? Irish Protestant Attitudes to Union with England, 1653-9", *Irish Historical Studies*, 32, 125, 44-58.
- McKenny Kevin (2008), "The Restoration Land Settlement in Ireland: A Statistical Interpretation", in Coleman Dennehy (ed.), *Restoration Ireland: Always Settling and Never Settled*, Aldershot, Ashgate, 35-52.
- Rich Barnaby (1610), *A Nevv Description of Ireland Vvherein Is Described the Disposition of the Irish Whereunto They Are Inclined. No Lesse Admirable to Be Perused Then Credible to Be Beleued: Neither Unprofitable nor Vnpleasant to Bee Read and Vnderstood, by Those Worthy Cittizens of London That Be Now Undertakers in Ireland*, printed at London for Thomas Adams, London.
- Temple John (1646), *The history of the general rebellion in Ireland. Raised upon the three and twentieth day of October, 1641. Together with the Barbarous Cruelties and Bloody Massacres which ensued thereupon. Published in the year 1646, by Sir John Temple, Knight, Master of the Rolls, and one of His Majesty's most Honourable Privy Council within the Kingdom of Ireland. The seventh edition. To which is added, Sir Henry Tichborne's history of the siege of Drogheda, in the Year 1641. As also, the whole tryal of Connor Lord Macguire, with the perfect Copies of the Indictment, and all the Evidences against him. Together with the Pope's Bull to the Confederate Catholicks in Ireland*, printed by Phineas and George Bagnell, in Castle-Street, Cork.

The Lie of the Land: Irish Modernism in a Nativist Ireland

Shahriyar Mansouri

Shahid Beheshti University (<s_mansouri@sbu.ac.ir>)

Abstract:

In *Waiting for Godot* (1953) Beckett draws upon a non-temporal stasis that has paralyzed the nation over the past decades, and demystifies such a paralysis by structuring the play around not only a fixed milieu and an unnamable saviour but also a widespread unwillingness in appreciating the urgency of this dominant spirit of stasis. I argue the roots of such severe pessimism, formlessness, and radical stasis as dominant elements in the works of Irish moderns can be found in a dichotomous perception of modernism and its emergence and development in post-independence Ireland. The rise of the State and their neoconservative politics of formation appear as internal forces that obstructed a proper appreciation of Irish modernism inside and outside Ireland. By exploring the roots of modernism in post-independence Ireland, and the conflict between modernism and the rise of a neo-colonial State, this essay examines a critical and ideological reticence within the nation which considers Irish modernism as a sub-category of the movement rather than an independent variety, precluding a reading of Irish moderns in at once a national and international context.

Keywords: Irish modernism, negative dialectic, postcolonial identity, Samuel Beckett, Yeatsian hero

In reading Samuel Beckett's barren depiction of humanity and modernism, scholars suggest that such "uproarious pessimism", formlessness, and radical stasis are rooted in an Irish perception of modernism and its emergence and development in a post-independence Ireland (*Waiting for Beckett*, 1993) (see Esslin 1986, 194; see also Moorjani, Veit 2004, 265). As Martin Esslin suggests, in *Waiting for Godot* (1953) Beckett draws upon a non-temporal stasis that has paralyzed the nation over the past decades, and demystifies

such a paralysis by structuring the play around not only a fixed milieu and an unnamable saviour, but also a widespread unwillingness in appreciating this dominant spirit of stasis. While *Waiting for* the nation to revisit and reflect on the duality of static nativism and modernism, non-conformist critics such as Flann O'Brien, especially in his *The Hard Life* and *An Béal Bocht*, and Beckett portrayed modernism as it was perceived by the Irish under the nationalist manifesto, namely, an inherent duality for the nationalists and the nativist State (see Boyce 1995, 325-330). Modernism in Ireland was being admired for the very same reason it was being detested, namely, a spirit of change and resistance. In other words, while modernism was at once disdained for its British roots, and an embedded spirit of resistance and defiance which, as Jonathan Bolton notes, could endanger the State's "politics of chastity", it was also admired by critics for its dialectics of self-criticism, allowing for the nation to not just relive but question the sacred domains of Irish life and Life in Ireland (2010, 165)¹.

Beckett's detailed, albeit drastically isolated, illustration of unfulfilled formations and unredeemed pessimisms, of an endemic silence caused by a "lingual 'block'"², and of incessant engagement with an unnecessary *wait* also invites a historical and political look back at an Irish reading of modernism in an 'anti-nativist' Ireland. The result is a nation-wide binary of modernism as a catalyst, radicalizing the ideological and political perception of Irish identity in the 1920s and onwards³, and the conflict between the inherently nativist oppositional movements that emerged in the 1920s, and especially the 1930s, as a response to the State's neocolonial politics of oppression⁴, confinement, and wide scale censorship of media and thought⁵.

According to Fredric Jameson, discussing modernism in Ireland in the postmodern era is clearly itself an exemplar of retrospection: engaging with a concept, the foundation of which is either regarded as miscalculation or discarded as antiquarian intellectualism (see Jameson 1990, 43-45). This essay explores the narrative of modernism and modern Irish identity in post-in-

¹ On Irish life and life in Ireland see Kiberd 1996, 32-55. See also Kiberd 1984, 11-25.

² Pozzo: "Have you not done tormenting me with your accursed time! It's abominable! When! When! One day, is that not enough for you, one day he went dumb, one day I went blind, one day we'll go deaf, one day we were born, one day we shall die, [...]" see Beckett 2006 [1956], 82.

³ On the emergence of this duality as a threat to Irish identity and culture concept see Peter Berresford Ellis 1989.

⁴ On the State's reinforcement of neocolonial structure of formation see Boyce 1995, 339-374. Also see Smith 2001, 111-130.

⁵ For instance, the Censorship of Publications Act 1929 under Éamon de Valera's administration at once crippled Irish novelists and a more inclusive distribution of modern Irish thought.

dependence Ireland by engaging with the connection between such a multifaceted binary of radicalism, rooted in Irish modernism and advocated by Irish moderns, and an anachronistic backwardness dominant in the nativist State's politics of formation.

As Brendan Kennelly argues, while Beckett and his like-minded contemporaries left Ireland, as it was becoming a place unappreciative of their thought and presence, they "took Ireland in [their] pocket" (*Waiting for Beckett*, 1993) or wrote on their heart, dedicating their writing to the motherland and its tribulations of the trilogy of revivalism, traditionalism and modernism⁶; and to critique an oppressive static nativism that resisted a proper and timely emergence of modern Irishness (*Waiting for Beckett*, 1993)⁷. For modern Irish writers modernism is defined only retrospectively, that is by reflecting on the history of the movement in an anti-modern Ireland, and on the history of their nation in flux, that is from colonial to anti-colonial to nationalist, and eventually to modern republicanism. Although modern Irish writers engage with Theodor Adorno's conception of identity, and thus think in contradiction simply to detach themselves from the social subjectivism imposed by the State's neocolonial architecture of containment, they externalize the thought in a fashion which resembles an internal sense of conservatism, if not hesitance (Adorno 1973, 145).

The divide, that is between a modern appreciation of Irish identity and an intra-community Otherness informed by the State's nativist norms⁸, obliges not just the author but also their characters to create a set of self-generated norms to protect the psychological border between the intruding societal norms and the individuals' state of selfhood and independence. The more supported and psychologically well-reasoned the border, that is by isolating and detaching themselves from becoming a part of society's politics of territorialisation and division, the stronger the chance for the character to understand the inner reality behind his society. The modern Irish protagonist, in this respect, needs to listen to a tape, as did *Krapp*, or should reflect on memories that had formed his life as in Beckett's "The Expelled", *Malone Dies*, *Murphy*, and in Seamus Deane's *Reading in the Dark* (1997). In these narratives, I argue, protagonists engage in an unconscious re-examination

⁶ Joyce's famous reference to Ireland: "When I die, Dublin will be written on my heart".

⁷ In his conclusion to *Modernism and the Celtic Revival*, Gregory Castle identifies notes revivalism as an actual milieu necessary for the emergence of Irish modernism. According to Castle, "to varying degrees, . . . revivalism contributed to the formation of Irish modernism by exploiting a specific relation between the traditional and the modern, a relation determined by the technologies of anthropology and ethnography coming to bear on the traditional folkways and texts of the Irish peasantry". See Castle 2001, 249.

⁸ On fascism and the emergence of a neocolonial Irish subject see Cronin 2004, 5-25. Also see Coackley and Gallagher 2010, 132-155.

of the past, struggling to synchronize an anachronistic sense of modernity against a backdrop of a predominantly conservative, nativist history via an idiosyncratic critical discourse that, as Gerry Smyth argues, is modern and rooted in “gender and individual subjectivity” (1997, 18)⁹. These characters either critique the significance of the nationalist ethos or denounce it all together, introducing it as an impasse. Declan Kiberd defines this intentional to and fro, and celebration of retrospective tendency imposed by a ruling State as “internal colonialism”, a force which is intrinsically at odds with a candid portrayal of developing modernism in a postcolonial nation (2005, 163).

Kiberd’s conception of ‘internal colonialism’, I suggest, can be read in light of Giorgio Agamben’s reading of power relations in a destituent State (see Agamben 2014). Agamben claims that the politics of power and control in a neocolonial State is informed by its interest in maintaining a purely vague and blurred line between anomy and anarchy on the one hand, and progression and retrospection, especially vis-à-vis its appreciation of modernism, on the other. The modern Irish narratives that emerged in the wake of independence, as Jameson notes, stand as “socio-symbolic messages” from a national unconscious that reject the postist State by providing a stark portrayal of a form of Irishness which is at once modern and critically resistant to nativist *telos* of formation (Jameson 1981, 141). The resulting narratives, I argue, discuss postcolonial visions that oscillate between a bygone colonial culture and thought, and a culture of stasis that delayed a timely utilization and maturation of modernism in a postist Ireland¹⁰.

Irish modernism has been perceived as a radical movement that is at once delayed and ambivalent in its nationalist context. For it has been misconstrued by scholars as a postist appreciation of the present that only lies in the past¹¹. In other words, the belated modernism in Ireland has triggered a neoconservative mentality that, as Jürgen Habermas suggests, defies the currency and progressiveness of modern thought, and translates the present as the past in prospect (see Habermas 1996, 38-55). Modernism, therefore, emerges as a temporal vagueness in the works of Irish moderns on a national scale: from George Moore’s confessional memoir that narrates how such a resistant nation-wide ambivalence made him leave Ireland for London and Paris, to Patrick McCabe’s *The Butcher Boy* (1992), illustrating a contradictoriness that has dominated the life of youths in a reformatory, semi-modernized, post-

⁹ In the Adornian definition, modernity and modernism are inseparable and interchangeable complementary concepts. See Adorno and Horkheimer 2002.

¹⁰ On understanding the superfluity of ‘recreation and despair’ in the post-colonial literature see Walcott 1995, 371.

¹¹ For instance see Declan Kiberd’s discussion of Irish moderns’ response to the Irish language movement in the 1960s as a delayed answer; and the 60s as a delayed answer to modernism in Ireland. See Kiberd 2005, 14-20.

independence Ireland¹². While Moore's *Confessions of a Young Man* is more informed by a Yeatsian search for a great man with outstanding features during Irish revivalism, McCabe's narrative represents the age of containment during de Valera's nativist vision of Ireland, in which political vagaries and socio-economic inconsistencies were regarded as political normality during decolonization¹³. As a revivalist vision of an Irish Ireland was altered by the State, the very values that defined Irishness too rapidly changed into what personified Francie in McCabe's *The Butcher Boy*: a rebel, perturbed by social inconsistencies and parochial abnormalities. Francie's actions, therefore, are labelled as erratic, and his perception of society as in the form of other boys vaguely represents a sense of unity demanded by conformist society. McCabe's subtle depiction of Ireland in the 1920s and 1930s, reflects a generation of idiosyncratic non-conformists whose most dominant objectives are not self-formation and social integration, but rather questioning the politics of confinement, and what lays the foundation of Irish nationalism, namely, Nation, Family, Church, and a belated recognition of modernity. This critical discourse emerged as a meta-critical discussion that later in the 1920s and onwards, not only enabled the moderns to voice their disgruntlement with the State's politics of *submission or marginalia* but started a backfire, especially on resistant voices, as critics such as Eimar O'Duffy (*The Wasted Island*, 1920; *The Lion and the Fox*, 1922; *King Goshawk and the Birds*, 1926) engaged in a fierce critique of revolutionaries and at once statist.

As Howard Booth and Nigel Rigby argue, the critical reticence to acknowledge the Irish moderns as modernist authors is rooted in the nation's immediate Deleuzian *desire* for labelling and then territorializing such literary figures as national or others¹⁴. By distancing not just their style but also their understanding of literature as a concept that stands beyond the limitations of national and individual consciousness, Irish moderns such as Beckett and Flann O'Brien emerged as some of the earliest examples who were regarded as both national and modern, the dialectical works of whom explored concepts such as narrativising the nation's plight of deformation induced by political abnormalities. In this respect, Irish modernism, a question of both chronological veracity and critical authenticity (see Booth, Rigby 2000), arises as a vaguely categorized "variety of Irish nationalis[m]" that plagued the nation before and well after the 1920s during socio-political struggles, becoming yet

¹² On the conflict between a resistant nativism and modern non-conformism see Mansouri 2013, 131-172.

¹³ On political inwardness, and socio-cultural politics of containment in the 1920s and 1930s see O'Driscoll 2008, 280-298. See also Nelson 2012, 231-250.

¹⁴ On the Deleuzian concept of territorialization and deterritorialization see Deleuze and Guattari 1977.

another misconstrued element of possession and discussion between Unionists, nationalists, and revivalists (Maley 1996, 34). In other words, as Irish nationalism has been seen as more of a “bundle of sentiments than a logical arrays of fact”, modernism would then emerge as an Adornian non-identarian form of expressing the same bundle of sentiments, rather than a radically dialectical discourse; moreover, the nativist government, as Boyce suggests, was doubted to have been “controlled by Unionist and Freemasons”, rather than the freedom-seeking Irish (1995, 342).

As Gregory Castle claims, Irish modernism has been perceived as a subcategory of an inherently European radical movement, follows it in every step and “shadows all features, and peculiarities”, and eventually incorporates an embedded equivocality in understanding the movement (2006, 120; see also 2001, 120-129). For in its Marxian specificity, as Marshall Berman suggests, “modernity [as a socio-historical experience] is either embraced with a blind and uncritical enthusiasm, or else condemned with a new-Olympian remoteness and contempt” (1982, 24); this is an undecided polarity that emerges as a notable quality of twenty first-century modernism¹⁵. However, I suggest that the multifacetedness and at once contradictoriness of concepts such as modernism, Irish nationalism and modern Irishness transcends the internationalism of modernism, which according to Booth and Rigby has been marginalizing the Irish moderns. I contend that such a labyrinthine nature of modernism in Ireland should be regarded as a dynamic impetus that introduces the roots of a belated form of Irish modernism to be not just in the Irish wars but an atavistic vision of the state.

According to Terry Eagleton, nationalism and modernism as non-identical twins emerge and mature in a nation that is politically conservative and socially traditionalist. It is modernism, however, that distinguishes its radically anti-bourgeois aesthetic, “anti-historicist consciousness”, and conventionally anti-traditionalist objectives from the State’s retrospectively progressive nativism, forming an irreconcilable dichotomy that is prevalent in both pre- and post- independence Ireland (1996, 308)¹⁶. In this regard, while British modernism initially emerges as an apolitical movement with most limited tendencies towards radical politics¹⁷, I argue, Irish modernism, albeit am-

¹⁵ While the twentieth-century modernism was received with mixed, ambivalent perceptions as either a destructive force or a path towards formation and economical florescence, the movement in nineteenth century carried a more positive tone leading towards an almost global excitement. See Berman 1982, 20-36.

¹⁶ According to George Boyce, nationalism is a modern, European form of identity that recently has become a cultural identity as well, affecting “members of a group who either have or have had a distinct or relatively autonomous existence, and who have shared a recognized common way of life”. See Boyce 1995, 18.

¹⁷ On modernism as an apolitical movement in Britain see Linehan 2012, 103-122.

biguously, clings to its political ethos of resistance and independence from its early stages of formation, manifesting itself in the form of anti-revivalist, anti-bourgeois Irish identity, and symbolizing a non-identarian Irishness that surfaces in the oeuvre of modern, non-conformist critics such as Synge, Joyce, Beckett, and Stuart¹⁸. This dichotomy can be understood by studying the history behind the movement and its materialization in a modernized yet still agrarian, pre-independence Ireland, where rural modernization precedes the neighbouring metropolitan nations.

According to Jameson, when discussing the rise of modernity in socio-historical form in Ireland and its later radical literary manifestations, we should look for a perpetual interplay of “contingency and theory”, otherwise the outcome will degrade to sheer hypothesis and inaccurate historical artifacts, tarnished with personal and subversive readings of political movements and history (2007, ix-x). With respect to modernity and Ireland, this theoretical interplay will eventually lead us back to a point crucial in the formation and emergence of a modern Ireland: the history of the land, the text(s) as well as the theory in question, namely, modernism, that itself was in the formation (see Jameson 2007, ix). In other words, this will be a history that is rife with colonial industrialization and intellectual alienation, an anachronistic history in a nation which at once is a pioneer in accepting modernity – if not a mature modern mentality – even before the onset of modernization in its European neighbours, and yet essentially traditionalist as it staunchly believes in its cultural heritage of Celts and Gaels. As Eagleton claims, modernity, and the concomitant radical mentality, emerges from within nations and cultures that are still inherently traditionalist, or when perception of traditionalism has been subsumed by an ultra-rightist consciousness under the guise of nativist Irishness or “modernist nationalism” (1996, 306). The result, I argue, is a form of a State-sponsored neo-conservative Irishness that emerges during and especially after the 1920s civil wars, which not only oppresses self-referential reformations, as realized by Kate O’Brien’s Helen Archer in *The Land of Spices* (1941) and the oppressive society in Patrick McCabe’s *The Butcher Boy* (1992), but also the actualization of modern Irishness.

Colonial Ireland, eclipsed by British Imperialism, rather involuntarily grasps the unceremonious incongruity of industrial modernization, and em-

¹⁸ As Castle, Eagleton and Lloyd pointed in their discussion of Irish modernism and its belligerence towards revivalism, Irish Revivalism is to be regarded as a non-avant-garde, non-modern movement, the sort which treats and introduces modernism in an Ibsenite fashion, crushing progressiveness and future through a limiting prism known as the past. In addition, the most radical literary figure it produced was Sean O’Casey whose plays, according to Williams, are a mere Irish interpretation of what Brecht had offered under the rubric of social Expressionism. See Williams 1987.

braces the related social and economic perturbations especially in the labour market. While the change towards British capitalist economy is revealed as constructive and beneficial to the majorly agrarian Ireland, it did not change the State's appreciation of modernity and modernization. Therefore, the result envisioned by the postist State remained intact: while an unhurried urbanization of the land was indirectly approved, an intellectual radicalization of the nation vis-à-vis perception of history and traditionalism stayed as impenetrable boundaries protected by the Constitution¹⁹. The result, I argue, emerges as a Beckettian treatment of stasis, a never-ending *wait* for a silence to break (Beckett 1958, 407), an unyielding "archaic avant-garde", as Eagleton suggests, which allows for modernism to be introduced and construed insofar as it is done through a nativist lens (1996, 282), forming "an ancient nation" trying to "meet the demands of modern life", as George Boyce claims (1995, 356),

The silence, speak of the silence before going into it, was I there already, I don't know, at every instant I'm there, listen to me speaking of it, I knew it would come, I emerge from it to speak of it, I stay in it to speak of it, if it's I who speak, and it's not, I act as if it were, sometimes I act as if it were, but at length, was I ever there at length, a long way. (Beckett 1958, 407)

This nativist definition of Irish modernism embraced Celtic culture and formed the consciousness that eventually emerged as the State's retrospective ethos, rather than modernism proper or at least a developing, progressive modernism. Therefore, the very contradictory national definition of modernism in Ireland emerges as what Jahan Ramazani describes as a "translocal" concept, namely, a notion which is neither locally rootless nor globally rooted (2009, xii-xiii). In other words, the conservative discourse of Irish nativism not only limits the externalization of modern aesthetics in literature and art by individuals, creating a Beckettian *vacuum* of silence and subservience, but emerges as a systematic "dialogic intersection" which detaches any form of modern Irish identity from the binary of nation-space, banishing it to non-national marginalia (2009, xiii). Irish modernism altered by the State's nativist vision of the nation appears as not just a belated, timeless and dichotomous form of modernism but an archaicizing variety, defying the ideological and

¹⁹ As Perry Anderson notes, modern self-development under capitalist manifesto reveals to be an equivocal form of becoming. For "capitalism-in Marx's unforgettable phrase of the Manifesto, tears down every ancestral confinement and feudal restriction, social immobility and claustral tradition, in an immense clearing operation of cultural and customary debris across the globe. To that process corresponds a tremendous emancipation of the possibility and sensibility of the individual self, now increasingly released from the fixed social status and rigid role-hierarchy of the pre-capitalist past, with its narrow morality and cramped imaginative range". See Anderson 1984.

socio-cultural changes necessary for proper cultivation of modern thought, as if they were sub-categories of a colonizing momentum.

The elements that originally marked the perception of modernism in Ireland as dichotomous and belated, I argue, can be found in nationalists' emphasis on forming a native Irish industrialism to "overcome the idiocy of rural life" and a colonial atavism that had dominated the nation on the one hand, and critiquing the Britishness embedded in the modern industrialism on the other; the latter being advocated by the revivalists' historical revolt against the British materialist and capitalist ethos (Cleary, Connolly 2005, 18)²⁰. The other influential element would be the conservatism of Irish revivalists in keeping their Celtic language as a national heritage. As Boyce suggests, "the language of Irish politics, and especially of Irish nationalist politics, was a conservative one, searching for precedents, seeking to find a justification for their political behavior in Ireland's past" (1995, 20)²¹. In fact, even Republican parties such as Fianna Fáil made it clear that they identify themselves with the historical principles of Celts and Gaels, and thus made tremendous efforts "to preserve the Irish language and make it again the spoken language of the people" (353). Such internal resistance against social legitimization of a modern hegemony, by sustaining the native language and culture, are symptomatic of a form of modernism that is at the threshold of brutal eruption in a traditionalist nation, which, according to Perry Anderson, regards its past as usable and classic, with "a still indeterminate technical present, and a still unpredictable political future" (1984, 105).

Such an anachronistic temporality of change in Ireland formed the very foundation of revolutionaries and political figures who were to decide on the fate of modernism in a nativist Ireland. The decisions, thus, were inherently

²⁰ "Many factors have been referred to as being the cause for the Irish to fight for national liberation and self-determination, but, in essence, as Connolly contended, the Irish fight for freedom is a fight against Capitalism, a fight for a more equal and prosperous society, namely Socialism. Thus in Ireland, Capitalism and its higher form, Imperialism, provokes the oppressed majority, namely the working class, to rebel and destroy the system which puts profit before people. Therefore, not only does Capitalism cause armed conflict between Capitalist countries, it also causes rebellion against itself, thus confirming our previous contention that within it, Capitalism contains the seed of its own destruction within a given society. This ultimately implies that Socialism defined as production for use and not for profit is the only assurance for an end to human conflict and the establishment of world peace". See the manifesto on The Irish Republican Socialist Movement website: <<http://irms.org/history/capitalism.html>> (04/2015).

²¹ Throughout the history of Irish nationalism, faces emerge and fade, trying to convince their doubting audience of non-nationalists or anti-nationalist using a politicized, convincing language, which appears as a blend of Hiberno-English and an intentional use of Celtic terminology. For instance, Henry Grattan's efforts in presenting the Irish protestants as the defenders of "the ancient liberties". See Boyce 1995, 20-22.

ativistic, or at least incongruous with the progressive temporality of modernism²². For Francis H. Stuart's character H in *Black List, Section H*, for instance, such an oppressive divide, be it to support independence from the empire or the separatist forces of within, appeals only to "mediocre minds" that can just survive in "restricted" societies, and "tight-knit communities" (1971, 72). Although it was the "enthusiasm for the Republican cause" that brought H and his wife Iseult closer and defined them as a family, H's negative dialectical perception of freedom would not allow him to support a war-oriented divide between the Irish, be they modern, nativist or postist (73).

Despite the State's and rebels' war-oriented conception of independence, unity and rejection of fascism, as H recounts, neither of the groups were aware of the fact that through ideological and political "subdivisions" they were facing the risk of losing not just the nation's confidence but also further splitting the Irish over their radical understanding of modernism and atavistic nativism (74). Such divisions provided non-conformist idealists such as H with "a climate in which [they] could breathe more easily", and "cast doubt on traditional values and judgments" (74). In other words, it was through the rise of modernism in Ireland and the concomitant conflict between the State and the masses that modern critics like H could distinguish between themselves and their ethos of formation and the other anti-colonial opposition groups such as revivalists, conservative Nationalists, and other minor political parties such as communists, socialists and Workers' Marxists²³.

If there arose heteronomous radical tendencies or movements that claimed rights beyond nativist Irishness, the state as in the form of the United Irishmen, Irish Volunteers, Free State or even Fianna Fáil would handle it at once by referring to their bygone Celtic heritage, and then by criticizing and isolating the conceptualization of such abstract non-Celtic, non-nationalist thought. In other words, as Boyce suggests, "nationalism in Ireland has been reared less on the rights of man than on historical wrongs" (1995, 20).

The nativist blend of Irish industrialism, language, and oppressive thought makes Irish modernism not only belated but also retrospective, for the nativist perception was to substitute the rapturous and unsettling nature of modernism with the static nativist agenda. The result will be producing a neoconservative modern thought with the tendency to replace anything

²² While both Anderson and Berman argue that such an anachronistic perception of modern temporality was the reason underlying the emergence of an agrarian, radical proletariat in the years between the chaos of the first world war and the beginning of the second, Sicari, in his reading of Kafka's *Metamorphosis*, sees "backward looking and anachronistic" nostalgia as forces that will lead individuals and nations towards finding their lost roots. See Anderson, 1984, 105-106; also see Berman 1982, 20-35. On modernist humanism, see Sicari 2011, 7-11.

²³ On political parties in Ireland, see Gallagher 1985.

modern with the spiritual conservatism of Irish nationalism, or as Eagleton suggests, “a political movement with modernizing base and a Janus-faced superstructure, ambiguously forward-looking and elegiac” (1996, 287). In other words, the rebelliousness of modernism was to be replaced with a nativist definition of liberation, promised by the Irish revolutionary mentality. Such unsteadiness in formation and liberation of a ‘new Ireland’, for instance, has produced protagonists who mature often too soon yet lack the essential experience and knowledge, individuals whose sense of adulthood would prevent them from apprenticeships and/or rites of passage. The sudden shift from childhood to maturity is often textually imperceptible, as was intended by the author, yet contextually quite poignant and sensible.

During his numerous and meticulous revisions, Stuart excised almost ninety pages, or five chapters of *Black List, Section H* that engaged with H’s formative years as a socially ignorant child growing up with his Unionist parents in County Meath²⁴. By removing these chapters, referred to as ‘Boyhood’ in the earlier drafts, Stuart shifts the emphasis from boyhood to H’s rebellious formation, introducing H as a child at an age known for critical vulnerabilities of dependence, sudden psychological shifts²⁵, and immature decisions. Writing a critical Pro-Home Rule letter to an Irish newspaper and critiquing his cousins, H began his narrative of resistance, placing his sudden rise to maturation as the sixth chapter in the draft and the first chapter in the actual published novel. By erasing H’s childhood, Stuart challenges the conventional dialectics of the Bildungsroman, and simultaneously redirects the focus of the narrative from being fixated on a traceable yet unreachable past, embodied by H’s ‘Boyhood’, to the radical currency of life in Ireland, a concept that can be planned, controlled and advised.

Childhood is a critical period during which the child either follows or defies the Deleuzian framework of “daddy-mommy, and me” set by his family, society and the State (Deleuze 1977, 111). For instance, it is this modern description of childhood, to defy and subvert the State’s architecture of repression, which informs Flann O’Brien’s characterization of Tracy in *At Swim-Two-Birds* (1939), a rebellious character whose creation, I argue, is a long due tribute to the marginalized ‘street children’ in the Post-Rising Ireland of 1916-1919. While Stuart authoritatively excises H’s childhood from his own narrative and presents him as a child with politically mature understanding of Irish identity, O’Brien’s Tracy, after suffering from various forms of psychosocial exile, finds a way to circumnavigate the nation’s intolerance vis-à-vis childhood and children’s rite of formation. In other words, while Stuart’s

²⁴ On revisions of *Black List, Section H*, see Kiely 2007.

²⁵ On children’s sudden psychological shifts [from absolute ‘love’ to absolute ‘hate’], see Freud 2005, 28-29.

H suddenly finds himself set on a pattern of psycho-social maturation and thus endeavours to act accordingly by finding interests in politics and cultural matters, O'Brien's Tracy tries to find a cure for childhood in Ireland by "chang[ing] the monotonous and unimaginative process by which children are born young"; as for Tracy, "many social problems of contemporary interest could be readily resolved if issue could be born already matured, teathed, reared, educated, and ready to essay those competitive plums which make the Civil Service and the Banks so attractive to the younger bread-winners of to-day" (O'Brien 1998, 54).

Tracy's subjective critique is directed at the State's intolerant politics of formation whereby children are marginalized as minors incapable of critical understanding, and at the same time at Irish children's botched rite of passage, resulting in minor characters whose mature understanding of Irish life counterbalances the conventional dialectics of the Bildungsroman in Ireland. Founded on the negative dialectics as externalized by characters such as Tracy and H, this critique highlights the failures of the State's politics of formation which, as Bolton notes, "hinges on the assumption that protagonists were blighted by their environment"; and identifies the (neo-) conservatism of the State and the 'pious' nationalist statesmen at the core of post-independence Irish society as the very source that "threatens to devour its young" (2010, 22).

The modern radicalism and rebelliousness inserted into the protagonist's *becoming* lacks a certain phase of maturation, as it emerges as an internally incomplete foundation decorated with a coarse façade just to survive the temporal dynamics of post-revolution and post-independence Ireland. What I am more interested in discussing here is to understand the relationship between such an anachronistic sense of maturation of modernism in an intrinsically nativist, insular history of Ireland, a "history", notes a character in William Trevor's *Beyond the Pale* which is "unfinished in this island, long since it has come to a stop in Surrey" (1983, 703). In other words, while the Eagletonian definition of Irish modernism focuses on a (post-) colonial reading of the movement, I wish to trace and assess notions of radical Irishness and belatedness in an inherently nativist Irish modernism by drawing on a Habermasian reading of Irish modernism. By marking these concepts as products of colonial deferment, both internal and external, and by reconsidering the broken chain of ongoingness in the interplay between contingency and theory, namely, Irish history on the one hand, and the nativist and modernist theorem on the other, the link between modernism and Irish nativism emerges as a broken continuum that according to Castle has led to an ambiguous perception and delayed emergence of modernism in postist Ireland (see Castle 2001, 172-207).

According to Joseph Cleary and Claire Connolly, the modern mentality can be "ascribed to an inventory of inaugural ruptures" that defies not only the nativist *chronocentric* perception of nationhood but also the subjective, society-oriented definition of an object (2005, 3). This is what Adorno and

Max Horkheimer introduce in *Dialectic of Enlightenment* (1947) as one of the founding elements that subjectively demarcates the object and thus reduces it of its core features, namely, the ones that make *it*, say a nation or an individual, a unique entity in itself (see Adorno, Horkheimer 2002, xvi, 11). Modernism in Ireland, however, as a movement has been regarded as both an outsider and insider by a nation that thinks “outside [is] bad weather” while “inside [is] fire”, where the former demarcates the nation or the individual, and removes *it* from its core national values, and the latter limits the perception of the outside (Deane 1997, 19). In addition to such a dichotomy, I argue, modernism in Ireland has outlived another internal binary, being despised and celebrated by postist nationalists. On the one hand, modernism was critiqued by nationalists for being an un-Irish movement that came from ‘the outside’ by way of colonization or war, and led to termination of the constituents of Celtic Ireland; on the other, it emerged as the very same radical impetus that led the Irish to ‘think in contradiction’ and thus first revolt against the Empire and help shape the revivalist ethos, and then to stand against the very consciousness of revivalism, and shape and join the Joycean Anti-Irishness or Stuart’s *Faillandia*, namely, his “beloved and hated land” (Stuart 1985, 11).

My contention is that the belatedness inherent in the rise of modernism in Ireland, coincided with the socio-political ramifications of wars and an eventual neocolonial State, had transformed Irish modernism into a dialectical discourse that not only critiqued the external and colonial stimuli but provoked internal conflicts and socio-political divisions²⁶. For instance, in *Black List, Section H*, Stuart depicts such a dichotomous division through H as he recounts the divide that had appeared between the nativist, agrarian State and the Irish who have already experienced modernism in small towns and counties before being overshadowed and thus marginalized by the big cities²⁷. The latter group appears as rebels who adhere to the revolutionary merit of modernism find independent formation in non-identitarianism, and in challenging authority, and thus are in danger of containment or deletion from the national memory. As H’s narrative reveals, not only does the tension between the modern youth and the oppressive State further split the nation into various pro- and anti- groups, but it also provides the youth with a vague and biased definition of modern Irishness. The result, H reveals, is a political double standard which glorifies the past by commemorating the

²⁶ According to Thomas Sowell, modernism as an ego-centered movement rich with individuals’ will as its reservoir will be transformed into a group/class-led consciousness that interprets one’s will as an economic determiner. See Sowell 1963, 119-125.

²⁷ On the presence of modernism in small towns and counties in Ireland in 1920s see Cronin and O’Connor 1993. Also see Keown and Taaffe 2010, 103-107.

revolution, independence and international recognition on the one hand, and treats not just modernism but also modern critics as at once inseparable and redundant parts of the nation's present on the other:

Although he was still far from coming to understand the necessity for what had happened to them, he did begin to see the silence that he had entered as the deep divide between the past and what was still to come. Whatever it was that was at the other end there was no way of telling. It might be a howl of final despair or the profound silence might be broken by certain words that he didn't yet know how to listen for. (1971, 425)

Britain, as the nation's most influential neighbour, emerges as a force that has imbued Irishness with at once nationalism and modernism, the source behind internal conflicts as well as radicalization of an agrarian Ireland. It was also the Britishness of Irish modernism that triggered inherently oppositional nationalist responses, hence delaying the nation-wide acknowledgement of Irish modernism by flagging the movement as a variation of British mentality that would lead the nation towards a pampered bourgeoisie. In addition, historic instances as stark as the great famine and Ireland being regarded by the modern world as an anonymous metrocolony rather than a modern metropolitan nation, not only further damaged the nation's perception of anything modern and thus inherently British but also the general definition of modernism and modern Irish identity²⁸. "Uneven industrialization, sectarian division" worked in tandem with an apparent air of contradiction and separation amongst the opponents and proponents of an 'Irish-Ireland' and a modern Irishness, and led the nation to openly embrace the deferral of the concept of modernism proper (Boyce 1995, 120)²⁹. Nevertheless, this dominant air of ambivalence and contradiction supplied the necessary instability and negativity that became the very essence of resistance required for the formation or emergence of radical Irish modernism. This ambivalence in receiving nativist Irishness or shifting towards modern identity can be seen in Nuala O'Faolain's memoir, *Are You Somebody?* (1996), which recounts a gradual shift towards modern Irish identity: "whatever the people they came from had lived by just fell away in their generation. But they didn't have other

²⁸ As Proinsias MacAonghusa, Ireland's vice-chairman of Labour Party, claims, "The 'Irish, properly so called' were... trained from their infancy in a hereditary hatred and abhorrence of the English" name and culture (quoted in Boyce 1995, 128).

²⁹ According to Boyce, "Irish republicanism was an ideology riddled with contradictions: sectarian hatred existed beside the idea of the common name of Irishman; humanitarian philosophy had as its companion racial violence; social grievances and radical thinking were to be found along with notions of national independence" (*Nationalism in Ireland*, 131). Irish nationalism itself, in this regard, becomes a division which intends to re-unify the apparent religious and ideological schisms. See Boyce 1995, 120-155.

values to replace what they had lost” (13). The Irish, as depicted by O’Faolain, were to face a sudden wave of what I shall call *unbecoming*, that is to lose one’s appreciation of the present and experience their rite of passage only through retrospection, a condition most suitable for the neoconservative parties to exploit to advocate their backward ideology.

Irish modernism in its embryonic stage, exhibits a fundamental uniqueness that separates it from its European variants. My argument corresponds with Cleary’s and Connolly’s: Irish modernism did not follow the conventional path of becoming, namely, industrialization, intellectual radicalization and maturation. Rather, the Irish as a colonial sub-culture have already been familiarized with the concept of modernity in its colonial sense a while before industrialization could be established in agrarian Ireland. In other words, “modernization via colonization preceded modernization via industrialization” (Cleary, Connolly 2005, 7). The apparent anomaly in the sequence of modernization is what makes the crux of my second argument: Irish modernism, an incomplete project. While modernism, without doubt, has been an essence of radical Irishness and the revolutions of not only the 1920s but also of past centuries – starting from 1780 when the Irish Parliament claimed independence, a mature presence of modernism in Ireland appears as an incomplete Habermasian project, the sort which culminated its progressive manifestation up until the 1950s-60s, moving slowly towards a quasi-capitalist economy, becoming dependent on the “material structures” of modernity (Eagleton 1996, 284)³⁰. My contention is that, while modernism has conventionally been regarded as a movement that existed until the final years of the Second World War, I suggest it was during the very same period that nation’s perception of modernism and modern Irishness embraced the inevitability of development and maturation³¹.

What the nation experienced under the umbrella term of modern Irishness and modernity, remained the same, namely, extravagant poverty, gradual removal of Celtic culture and language, and a culture of stasis that lasted up until the late 1950s. Whereas to their far and immediate neighbours, mo-

³⁰ I understand that my argument sounds inherently Habermasian and thus debatable for Foucauldian scholars who perceive modernity as a process that cannot be “accumulated”, but rather as an “ethos” or a “philosophical life” that has revealed the limitations of modernism in its socio-cultural form. Yet, I still regard the process of modernization as well as continuation of modernism in Ireland, considering the flood of anti-nationalist critiques that surfaced in the late 1960s and the early 1970s, as Habermasian and ongoing. See Foucault 1997, 319.

³¹ Perry Anderson’s critique of Marshall Berman’s *All that is Solid Melts into Air* (1982) argues that modernist art “died” as an aftermath of the Second World War, during which notable figures in both literature and art emerged, albeit in a symbolic fashion that imitates the first three decades of the twentieth century. See Perry Anderson 1984, 107-108.

ernity meant progressive industrialization, “domestic innovation, national aggrandizement and even global pre-eminence” (Cleary, Connolly 2005, 9). In addition, before the economic breakthrough of the 1950s, for the Irish the only gift of modernity was a widespread socio-political mistrust and intellectual scepticism with respect to not only the inherent internationalism of modernism, which caused further isolation of the nation, but also the national and economic shrewdness of their nativist State. The result was a nation-wide divide, an epidemic sense of detachment from the nativist ethos of the State, and a silent shift towards Stirnerite dialectic of individualism, and a tendency to identify with the European standards that, as Joyce’s friend Thomas Kettle suggests, “if Ireland is to become a new Ireland she must first become European” (Kearney 1991, 77; see also Joyce 1969, 62-63).

In *A Star Called Henry* (2000), Roddy Doyle’s revisionist novel of national and individual formation, this divide is introduced as the duality of modern Irish identity and the nativist politics of formation, which further led the nation into the Kiberdian definition of internal colonization and othering. As the narrative unfolds, Henry’s prodigy, Ivan, and his fellow rebels are shown to have turned into a quasi-anarchic body of military force. Not only have they turned against their ex-comrades, such as Henry who symbolically mentored Ivan through his rite of formation, but they began a series of anti-national attacks against the Dáil, namely, the very cause that meant to unite revolutionaries and oppositional forces. Ivan’s self-referential radicalism, compared to Henry’s modern and critical upbringing, I suggest, can be read as an ironic critique of a sense of non-belonging and detachment which emerged in the wake of the Civil Wars, the conflict between the appreciation of modern Irish identity and a neoconservative State. Ivan’s radical non-belonging, I argue, embodies the very voice that in Doyle’s narrative tends to reveal a widespread, yet hidden anomalous pair, namely a psychological self-exile and the State’s fascination with political control, stasis, and their politics of chastity, where the latter became the reason behind Ireland’s archaic modernity³².

“Times have changed”, notes John Dillon in his speech, drawing the nationalist revolutionaries’ attention towards the fact that their effort towards an all *Éire-Ireland* is no longer uniquely uncontended; therefore, “the methods of carrying on the struggle for the liberty of Ireland must be changed in accordance with the times” (Boyce 1995, 263). This sudden Deleuzian turn in the nativists’ ambitions, reevaluating the relevance of historicizing the national heritage in a time of dire socio-cultural change³³, I suggest can be read

³² As Michael Hopkins explains, in the mid and late 1930s military radicals became the very force that not only betrayed the Dáil by calling Fenians as traitors, but also engaged in advocating socialism in an Ireland which was damaged from both within and without. See Hopkins 2004, 70-98.

³³ On Deleuze’s analysis of the relevance of the State see Deleuze 2004, 19-22.

as a rising horizon for a new appreciation of modern Irishness in Ireland. This, in other words, became the rising horizon for modernity in Ireland when neither the State nor the nation were interested in a Yeatsian Parnellite hero³⁴.

For while a Habermasian reading regards modernism as a “forward orientation” and anticipation of a “contingent future”, an indulgence in “contemporariness”, and a subjective recreation of the past, Yeatsian or even de Valerian nativism has revised the definition only to reflect a deformed perception of modernism (Habermas 1996, 40). This, in other words, is the shift that further distanced the youth and their modern perception of Irishness from the nativist ethos propagated by the nationalist opposition groups, even Sinn Féin³⁵.

According to Eagleton, the youth saw dominant nativist modernity as only a mere bourgeois abstraction of modern identity, a shift to an archaic, restrictive self-consciousness that seeks and defines Irish identity in national isolation and minimal approval of other cultures. Shrouded in an ingratiating discourse, the State’s neoconservatism redirected the national literature to alleviate and, as John Eglinton claims, “exalt an Irishman’s notion of the excellence and importance” by keeping the nation unaware of the significance of Irish nativism as a psycho-social colonial force (2000 [1906], 73)³⁶. As this sense of backwardness in the name of nationalism grew stronger during the 1920s, so did the process of maturing the nation’s perception of modern Irish identity and modernism, moving towards an anti-bourgeois, non-abstract appreciation of modern Irishness. In *Black List, Section H*, Stuart illustrates this radical socio-cultural awakening through H’s dialectical discourse. Stuart’s H finds “liv[ing] by established categories” normalized by the State as nothing but a “horrible” sub-reality, which forces critics like himself to either engage in self-cancellation, censoring their rebellious identity, or “make friends with those from whom [they] hadn’t to hide any part of [themselves]” simply to prevent a self-induced exile to marginalia (1971, 13-14). H’s non-conformism in defying the State’s structure of normalization, in this respect, can be read as a resistant Deleuzian minor literature, which criticizes the totalitarianism of not just an anomalous divide caused by rebels’ politics of division but the State’s politics of provincialism and marginalization, which tend to contain “anyone whose behaviour collides with the popular faith of the time and place” (100).

³⁴ On the Yeatsian ‘figure’ as a failed project see Boyce 1995, 339 and Kiberd 2005, 163.

³⁵ George A. Birmingham’s account of Sinn Fein radical introduces them as “wild creatures whom intelligent Englishmen have agreed to consider mad though undeniably clever”. See Birmingham 2000 [1907], 77.

³⁶ Non-conformists and radical intellectuals such as John Eglinton and George Birmingham regarded the Irish revivalist nationalism at one and the same time as a cure and a plague, imposed by the Anglo-Irish rather than the “hinterland Irishmen”, that emerged in the 1910s and the 1920s. See Eglinton 2000 [1906], 70-71.

According to Boyce, while Irish nationalism was revealed to be “paradoxical, self-contradictory”, guided by an “internal logic” of ambiguity, backwardness and traditionalism, modernism emerged as a concept, founded on individual’s sense of formation, albeit asocial and ego-centric (1995, 375). As both Eagleton and Boyce suggest, modernist and nationalist movements in Ireland are to be regarded as radical internal responses to colonization that rose from within and dominated the nation (see Boyce 1995, 375-377; see also Eagleton 1996, 338-340). In this regard, while nationalism rises as a pseudo-unifying military force, sworn to build an Irish Ireland and gain independence by shedding any trace of Britishness, modernism emerges as a catalyst that highlights inefficiencies of the former cause. Modernism, hence, emerges as the intellectual voice, though late in its awakening, that helps the Irish have a better understanding of their still colonial status quo in an independent Ireland. This is a voice that was about underlining the flaws of an internal, metropolitan-centered mode of colonization, the sort which caused an uneven and underdeveloped form of modernization throughout the nation; and the sort which was still profiting by hitting different territories and manipulating certain radical groups, that eventually led to further fragmentation and sectarian isolation than unification.

Stuart critiques such an ambivalent postist dichotomy in *Black List*, Section H as H is shown sympathizing with rebels in subverting not just the Empire but also the conservative State, while finding himself trapped in an ideological othering vis-à-vis rebel’s chaos-oriented politics of resistance. At the same time, however, H’s dialectical idealism, manifested in his non-traditionalism and anti-conservative principles of formation, separates him from the nationalist revolutionaries, thus leaving him in an ideological exile, if not oblivion, caused by the divide. For Stuart’s modern protagonist, these internal exiles and otherings resonate with a Kiberdian critique of Irish formation, namely, becoming “the nursery of nationality” by reversing the Irish subject’s perception of belonging to a nation (Kiberd 1996, 2). The result is the formation of a duality which Kiberd claims as “white-on-black negatives” whereby the subject finds himself at once othered by his fellow modern critics and the nativist State, the latter being the cause which meant to lead the subject to achieve his *telos* of self-formation in a liberated, postcolonial Ireland (3).

For critics like Stuart’s H, this dualistic division was “considered a rejection of [their] personal” modern world “by those who inhabited better, more imaginatively conceived ones of their own” (1971, 57). In other words, the socio-political divide between modern critics such as H and the nativist Free Staters not only displaced H and the like-minded non-conformists, further relocating them to socio-political marginalia, but transvalued the original ideals of forming a prosperous modern Ireland into ideological elements that partitioned the Irish from one another, forming parties such as the Irregulars, Pro-Treatyites, Unionists, conservative Nationalists, and moderns who were

banished to psychological and external exile. As H recounts, each side was so “deeply involved in outward areas of existence” and following their ideals that “they had no way of truly assessing [t]his kind of inward-turned attention”, namely, saving the nation from an impending internal divide (57-58).

My argument is that it was the dialectical, intrinsically critical discourse of modernism that allowed the nation to identify the reemergence of a structure of colonialism in Ireland, albeit this time it was scrupulously practiced by the State. Such revelatory efforts provoked a planned backlash from the other side in the binary of formation in Ireland, namely, the nativist State as they introduced modernism as a subordinate and inherently British intellectual parade originally initiated by the Anglo-Irish³⁷. As Deane argues in *Reading in the Dark*, highlighting a stasis that loomed over the nation during the 1940s up to the 1960s, the Habermasian Irish modernism reminded the ambitious Irish that “reformation” in its martial, communist or nativist variety is nothing but “history” revisited (1997, 99). Therefore, walking in the path of the IRA, Clann na Poblachta (The Republican Party), or even the reformist parties with conservative inclinations such as Fine Gael, not only would not help the nation to fulfill its socio-cultural demands in the twentieth century, but lead the Irish to “get caught between this world and the next”, namely, an inward-looking nativist Ireland and a modern Ireland (210). Such a politically confrontational treatment of the rise of modernism in Ireland, results in a socio-cultural paralysis that incessantly reappears in Beckett’s prose and dramatic works. Malone, an undefeated, cacophonous raconteur in *Malone Dies* (1956), for instance, is affected by the same duality of paralysis, namely, to yield to the quiet or to cultivate the inner urge and live “beyond the grave” by telling more stories and exiting the stasis (Beckett 1958, 236).

What modern characters have in common, nonetheless, is a psyche that is plagued by a culture of paralysis, which neither entices nor dispels progress. In this respect, the sense of modern Irishness as fully explored in the works of Irish moderns, emerges as a variation of Irishness that is still imbued with equivocation and doubt; it blames the State for its atavism and regards the very idea of nationalism as an impasse that has hampered Irish modernism proper. The result is a form of ‘I-ness’ that is “faced into the future looking backwards”, as O’Faolain claims in her memoir (1996, 108). This ambivalent geographical perception of modernism and time manifests itself in the form of “significant digression” in George Moore’s autobiographical works, and later becomes the essence of Beckettian characterization, or emerges as a figurative vagueness in perceiving the concept of time in Deane’s memories of the partitioned (North) Ireland (Schleifer 1980, 64). The modern Irish protagonist’s sense of selfhood,

³⁷ On the clash of modernism and the State see Miller 2008, 130-165.

in this regard, is shaped not only by a collective mistrust towards the State as fully expressed in Liam O’Flaherty’s *The Informer* (1925) but also by a radical understanding of modernism in Ireland, which introduces the movement as a vague and anachronistic frenzy of contradictory mentality.

Works Cited

- Adorno T.W. (1973 [1966]), *Negative Dialectics (Negative Dialektik)*, trans. by E.B. Ashton, London, Routledge & Kegan Paul.
- Horkheimer Max (2002 [1944, 1947]), *Dialectic of Enlightenment: Cultural Memory in the present* (Dialektik der Aufklärung), trans. by Robert Hullot-Kentor, Redwood City, Stanford UP.
- Agamben Giorgio (2014), “For a Theory of Destituent Power”, *XPONOΣ*, <<http://www.chronosmag.eu/index.php/g-agamben-for-a-theory-of-destituent-power.html>> (04/2015).
- Anderson Perry (1984), “Modernity and Revolution”, *New Left Review* 1, 144. <<http://newleftreview.org/I/144/perry-anderson-modernity-and-revolution>> (04/2015).
- Beckett Samuel (1956) *Waiting for Godot*, London, Faber and Faber.
- (1958), *Three Novels by Samuel Beckett: Molloy, Malone Dies and The Unnamable*, New York, Grove Press.
- (2010 [1934]), *More Pricks than Kicks*, London, Faber and Faber.
- Berman Marshall (1982), *All that is Solid Melts into Air*, London, Verso.
- Berresford Ellis Peter (1989), “Revisionism in Irish Historical Writing: The New Anti-Nationalist School of Historians”, *Irish Democrat*, <<http://www.irishdemocrat.co.uk/bookshop/publications/revisionism/>> (04/2015).
- Birmingham A.G. (2000 [1907]), “The Literary Movement in Ireland”, in David Pierce (ed.), *The Irish Writing in the Twentieth Century. A Reader*, Cork, Cork UP, 77-83.
- Bolton Jonathan (2010), *Blighted Beginnings: Coming of Age in Independent Ireland*, Lewisburg, Bucknell UP.
- Booth H.J., Rigby Nigel, eds (2000), *Modernism and Empire*, Manchester, Manchester UP.
- Boyce George (1995), *Nationalism in Ireland*, London, Routledge.
- Castle Gregory (2001), *Modernism and the Celtic Revival*, Cambridge, Cambridge UP.
- (2006), *Reading the Modernist Bildungsroman*, Tallahassee, University Press of Florida.
- Cleary Joe, Claire Connolly, eds (2005), *The Cambridge Companion to Modern Irish Culture*, Cambridge, Cambridge UP.
- Coackley John, Michael Gallagher (2010), *Politics in the Republic of Ireland*, 5th edition, New York, Routledge; Abingdon, PSI Press.
- Cronin Michael, O’Connor Barbara, eds (1993), *Tourism in Ireland: A Critical Analysis*, Cork, Cork UP.
- (2004), “The Blueshirts in the Irish Free State, 1932-1935: The Nature of Socialist Republican and Governmental Opposition”, in Tim Kirk, Anthony McElligott (eds), *Opposing Fascism: Community, Authority and Resistance in Europe*, Cambridge, Cambridge UP, 5-25.

- Deane Seamus (1997), *Reading in the Dark*, London, Vintage.
- Deleuze Gilles (2004 [2002]), "Instincts and Institutions" (*Instincts et Institutions*), in David Lapoujade (ed.), *Desert Islands and Other Texts 1953-1974*, trans. by Michael Taormina, New York, Semiotext(e), 19-22.
- Guattari Felix (1977 [1972]), *Anti-Oedipus: Capitalism and Schizophrenia Vol. 1 (L'anti-Oedipe. Capitalism et Schizofrenie)*, trans. by Robert Hurley, Mark Seem, H.R. Lane, London, Athlone Press.
- Doyle Roddy (2000), *A Star Called Henry*, London, Vintage.
- Eagleton Terry, Jameson Fredric, Said E.W. (1990), *Nationalism, Colonialism and Literature*, Minneapolis, University of Minnesota Press.
- (1996), *Heathcliff and the Great Hunger: Studies in Irish Culture*, New York, Verso.
- Eglinton John (2000 [1906]), "The De-Davisization of Irish Literature", in David Pierce (ed.), *The Irish Writing in the Twentieth Century. A Reader*, Cork, Cork UP, 70-71.
- Esslin Martin (1986), "The Theater of Stasis – Beckett's Late Plays", in P.A. McCarthy, ed., *Critical Essays on Samuel Beckett*, Boston, G.K. Hall, 192-198.
- Foster R.F. (1982), *Modern Ireland 1600-1972*, London, Penguin.
- Foucault Michel (1988 [1982]), *Technologies of the Self (Les Techniques de Soi)*, ed. by L.H. Martin, Huck Gutman, P.H. Hutton, Amherst, University of Massachusetts.
- (1997 [1994]), *Ethics: Subjectivity and Truth*, in *The Essential Works of Foucault 1954-1984, Vol. 1 (Dits et écrits, 1954-1988)*, ed. by Paul Rabinow, trans. by Robert Hurley and others, London, The New Press.
- Freud Sigmund (2005 [1915]), *The Unconscious (Das Unbewußte)*, trans. by Graham Frankland, with an introduction by Mark Cousin, London, Penguin Modern Classics.
- Gallagher Michael (1985), *Political Parties in the Republic of Ireland*, Manchester, Manchester UP.
- Gonzalez G.A., Nelson E.S., eds (1997), *Modern Irish Writers: A Bio-Critical Sourcebook*, London, Aldwych.
- Habermas Jürgen (1974 [1971]), *Theory and Practice (Theorie und Praxis)*, trans. by John Viertel, London, Heinemann.
- (1981), "Modernity: An Unfinished Project", in Maurizio Passerin D'Entrevésand, Seyla Behhabib, eds (1996), *Habermas and the Unfinished Project of Modernity*, Cambridge, Polity Press.
- Hopkins Michael (2004), *Green Against Green – the Irish Civil War*, Dublin, Gill & MacMillan.
- Hyde Douglas (1892), "The Necessity for De-Anglicizing Ireland", in David Pierce, ed. (2000), *Irish Writing in the Twentieth Century. A Reader*, Cork, Cork UP, 2-12.
- Jameson Frederic (1981), *The Political Unconscious: Narrative as a Socially Symbolic Act*, Ithaca, Cornell UP.
- (1990), "Modernism and Imperialism", in Terry Eagleton, Fredric Jameson, E.W. Said, *Nationalism, Colonialism and Literature*, Minneapolis, University of Minnesota Press, 43-66.
- (1998), *The Cultural Turn: Selected Writings on the Postmodern, 1983-1998*, London, Verso.

- (2002), *A Singular Modernity: Essay on the Ontology of Present*, London, Verso.
- (2007), *The Modernist Papers*, London, Verso.
- Joyce James (1969), *Dubliners: Text, Criticism, and Notes*, ed. by Robert Scholes, Arthur Walton Litz, New York, Viking.
- (2008 [1914]), *Dubliners*, Project Gutenberg, <<http://self.gutenberg.org/articles/Dubliners>>, (04/2015).
- Kearney Richard (1991), *Migration: The Irish at Home and Abroad*, Dublin, Wolfhound Press.
- (1997), *Postnationalist Ireland: Politics, Culture, Philosophy*, London, Routledge.
- Keogh Dermot (1995), *Twentieth Century Ireland: Nation and the State*, New York, St. Martin's Press.
- Keown Edwina, Carol Taafe, eds (2010), *Irish Modernism: Origins, Contexts, Publics*, Bern, Peter Lang.
- Kiberd Declan (1984), "Inventing Irelands", *The Crane Bag* 8, 1, 11-25.
- (1996), *Inventing Ireland: The Literature of the Modern Nation*, London, Jonathan Cape.
- (2005), *The Irish Writer and the World*, Cambridge, Cambridge UP.
- Kiely Kevin (2007), *Francis Stuart: Artist and Outcast*, Dublin, Liffey Press.
- Linehan Thomas (2012), *Modernism and British Socialism*, London, Palgrave MacMillan.
- Lloyd David (1992), *Nationalism and Minor Literature: James Clarence Mangan and the Emergence of Irish Cultural Nationalism*, Oakland, University of California Press.
- (1993), *Anomalous States. Irish Writing and the Post-Colonial Moment*, Durham, Duke UP.
- Maley Willy (1996), "Varieties of Nationalism: Post-revisionist Irish Studies", *Irish Studies Review* 4, 15, 33-37.
- Mansouri Shahriyar (2013), "Decolonizing Anarchic Formations and the State's Politics of Isolationism in Patrick McCabe's *The Butcher Boy*", *Journal of Irish and Scottish Studies* 7, 1, 131-172.
- McCourt Frank (1999), *Angela's Ashes*, London, Flamingo.
- Miller A.J. (2008), *Modernism and the Crisis of Sovereignty*, New York, Routledge.
- Moorjani Angela, Veit Carola, eds (2004 [2001]), *Samuel Beckett: Endlessness in the Year 2000 / Samuel Beckett: Fin sans fin en l'an 2000*, Amsterdam-New York, Rodopi.
- Nelson Bruce (2012), *Irish Nationalists and the Making of the Irish Race*, Princeton UP.
- O'Brien Flann (1998 [1939]), *At Swim-Two-Birds*, Dublin, Dalkey Archives.
- O'Driscoll Dennis (2008), *Stepping Stones: Interviews with Seamus Heaney*, London, Faber and Faber.
- O'Faolain Nuala (1996), *Are You Somebody? A Memoir*, Dublin, New Island.
- Pierce David, ed. (2000), *Irish Writing in the Twentieth Century. A Reader*, Cork, Cork UP.
- Potter Rachel, David Trotter (2004), "Low Modernism: Introduction", *Critical Quarterly* 46, 4, iii-iv.
- Ramazani Jahan (2009), *A Transnational Poetics*, Chicago and London, University of Chicago Press.

- Schleifer Ronald (1980), *The Genres of the Irish Literary Revival*, Norman, Pilgrim Books.
- Sicari Stephen (2011), *Modernist Humanism and the Men of 1914: Joyce Lewis, Pound, and Eliot*, Columbia, University of South Carolina Press.
- Smith J.M. (2001), "Remembering Ireland's Architecture of Containment: 'Telling' Stories in *The Butcher Boy* and *States of Fear*", *Eire-Ireland: Journal of Irish Studies* 36, 3-4, 111-130.
- Smyth Gerry (1997), *The Novel and the Nation: Studies in the New Irish Fiction*, London, Pluto.
- Sowell Thomas (1963), "Karl Marx and the Freedom of the Individual", *Ethics* 73, 2, 119-125.
- Stirner Max (1995 [1844]), *The Ego and Its Own (Der Einzige und sein Eigentum)*, ed. by David Leopold, Cambridge, Cambridge UP.
- Stuart Francis (1971), *Black List, Section H*, Carbondale, Southern Illinois UP.
- (1982), "A Minority Report", *Irish University Review* 12, 1, 17-22.
- (1985), *Faillandia*, Finglas, Raven Art Press.
- Trevor William (1981), "Beyond the Pale", in Id. (1983), *The Stories of William Trevor*, Harmondsworth, Penguin, 691-711.
- Wade Allen, ed. (1954), *The Letters of W.B. Yeats*, London, Rupert Hart-Davis.
- Waiting for Beckett: A Portrait of Samuel Beckett*, dir. and prod. by John Reilly, Melisa Shaw-Smith. Interviews with Edward Albee, Linda Ben-Zvi, John Calder, Martin Esslin, Raymond Federman, S.E. Gontarski, Israel Horovitz, Bill Irwin, Brendan Kennelly, Steve Martin, and Alan Schneider, DVD, Global Village, New York 1993.
- Walcott Derek (1974), "The Muse of History", in Bill Ashcroft *et al.*, eds (1995), *The Post-Colonial Studies Reader*, London, Routledge, 370-374.
- Williams Raymond (1987), *Drama from Ibsen to Brecht*, London, Hogarth Press.

Writings

Water and its (Dis)Contents

*William Wall**
([<williamwall@gmx.com>](mailto:williamwall@gmx.com))

1. *The watery hazes*



1 - Achill

It's a foggy morning in Ireland as I begin this essay. The newspapers report weather warnings from the Meteorological Service as though fog were not an essential ingredient of winter here, not to mention part of our mythology and, some say, our personalities. The rose bushes outside my window, the bony birch and the watery hazel, the leaves on the lawn, the naked beeches are all shades of old gold. The ground is damp and soft underfoot because we have just come out of a prolonged period of gales and heavy rain. Everything outside my front door feels slightly damp. Even the air is, as we say, 'close'. It is a soft morning in that age old Irish euphemism.

The newspapers also report, a little breathlessly, the threat to our peace, the possibility of democracy in peril in this little republic, of revolution even. One TD for the right-wing Fine Gael Party¹, has declared that the country is

^{*} I wish to express deep gratitude and appreciation to my friend Conci Mazzullo, whose work (from her photo-sequence "The Warp and Weft of Water") illustrates this article. References to all quoted authors and texts are listed at the end of the essay.

¹ As I write, the Irish government is composed of two parties: Fine Gael (FG), a kind of *Democrazia Cristiana* lite, though with historical links to fascism; and the Irish Labour Party (ILP).

facing an “ISIS situation” – not from Islamic State extremists but from the rival left-wing Sinn Féin party and the socialist TD Paul Murphy. The citizenry has lost faith in the government, it is said, and the decision to set up a company to charge for water is the tipping point. The government and the commentariat are shocked that such a minor variation in the neoliberal governance to which we have become accustomed should produce so powerful a derangement in governmentality. People, they say, are increasingly likely to take action, less amenable to logical argument, less reasonable. People are, in fact, angry and all the commentators agree that the government failed to explain to people that they must do as they are told. Consequently, should democracy collapse in Ireland, the politicians will be to blame for not using the right kind of public relations mechanism. The people, it seems is like a child and cannot be expected to understand these matters, while the government is a teacher who must take the trouble to lead it out of ignorance. That the media are, in the main, the loudspeakers of the government, faithfully reproducing government press-releases, sound-bites and general propaganda is not in question and plays no part in the putative collapse of what passes for democracy nowadays.

But why water?

Why not various other more brutal governmental strategies for finding the money to pay the unconscionable debts of failed banks and failed bankers? Why not emigration, particularly the haemorrhage of young people, always a sound bet where angst and the Irish psyche are concerned, and a painful subject for many, including the present writer. Why not cuts to health, education, care of the elderly, disability services, wages? Why not mass unemployment, still stubbornly high at 12% and only that low because the annual exodus of 80,000 people (against a total population of 4.6 million) relieves the pressure a little? Why not the increasing precarity of all work? Why not the disappearance of public ownership in a vast and shameful sell-off of everything from the telecommunications system to the national airline and the increasing reliance on private companies to provide public healthcare? Why not the stultifying hegemony of bourgeois prejudice and self-justification that passes for our independent media? Why water?

It is a truism that Irish literature, and by extension the Irish psyche, is permeated by a sense of place, but I would suggest that it is permeated to a far deeper level by water, although H₂O, being a relatively simple and almost ubiquitous element, is far less productive of scholarly exegesis, than, say, Joyce’s Dublin. So let me take you on a short voyage over the fast-running streams of the Irish psyche. We will travel light and, as Shakespeare says, “with windlasses and assays of bias, by indirections find directions out”. We will discover water in all its natural forms.

When Irish people meet, the first and safest topic of conversation, one around which a near universal consensus exists, is the weather: if literature bears any relationship to life as it is lived on this planet, Irish literature should

mention water in all its forms, from rivers and seas to the mist that occludes all distance and gives rise to our famous “soft day”.

2. *The Mist Becoming Rain*

If the ancient *Lebor Gabála Éirenn* (The Book of Invasions of Ireland), which dates to at least the 11th century, is to be believed (and why not?) the Tuatha Dé Danaan or People of the Goddess Danu attempted to defeat a group of invading Milesians by raising a storm to drive their ships away. Storms in Ireland always involve rain of course. Unfortunately for the Tuatha Dé Danaan, the enemy poet Amergin spoke a verse that calmed the sea and the Milesians landed anyway and went on to defeat the locals. The Tuatha Dé Danaan went underground and became the *Sí* or fairies who at least until the advent of electric light still troubled country people, souring milk out of spite and playing unfortunate tricks on those unlearned enough to cross them. Along the way, we poets lost our military usefulness as we lost our power to affect the weather and nowadays we have to content ourselves with the pathetic fallacy which is poor compensation indeed, and is almost never called for by the armed forces.

Water figures in other mythologies too. In one of the great myths of the Fiannaíocht Cycle (fragments are extant from the 7th century), for example, Fionn Mac Cumhaill had the power of healing wounds by offering water from his cupped hands. When his enemy Diarmaid was gored in a boar-hunt he repeatedly brought water to him only to spill it at the last minute. He relented in the end, but it was too late. Fionn himself received his wisdom and magical powers by catching a special salmon, usually called the Salmon of Knowledge, on behalf of his druid master, and accidentally tasting it. He caught the salmon in the River Boyne, a river of immense significance in Irish mythology and history.

We should not be surprised at this watery myth-making. The country is, after all, as *The Comic History of Ireland* (1955) has it, an island surrounded by water. It is the first landmass that greets the great Atlantic frontal systems that sweep down from Greenland and the Arctic and its western mountains form the barrier upon which much of the moisture must condense. Unsurprisingly, therefore, water plays its part, not only in the early myths, but in Irish poetry and prose from the earliest times to the present, though the part it plays varies from the magical to the brutally physical, from a cause of misery to an object of sensual admiration. In Frank O'Connor's beautiful translations of Irish poetry, *Kings, Lords And Commons*, we encounter it on every second or third page. Here an 8th century poet laments a “Storm At Sea”:

Tempest on the plain of Lir
Bursts its barriers far and near,

And upon the rising tide
 Wind and noisy winter ride –
 Winter throws a shining spear.

An anonymous monk or scribe notes that “Heavy waters in confusion / Beat the wide world’s strand” (“Winter”); another that “The curlew cannot sleep at all / His voice is shrill above the deep / Reverberations of the storm; / Between the streams he will not sleep” (“Grania”) and so on through the dark ages, which, we are told, were not so dark in Ireland, and into the age of the Normans who built their castles on riverbanks and overlooking harbours. Rivers, in particular are important to the Normans for commerce and for transport, but also for pleasure. In “The Land of Cockayne”, a mediaeval poem in Hiberno-English dialect, nuns take to a boat on a hot day and a monk, seeing them pass:

Hi makith ham nakid forto plai,
 And lepith dune in-to the brimme
 And doth ham sleilich forto swimme.

Edmund Spenser in his *A View Of The Present State of Ireland* (1633) is very prolix on the matter of waters, rivers and harbours:

Suer it is yett a most bewtifull and sweete Country as any is under heaven, seamed thoroughout with many godlie rivers, replenished with all sortes of fishe most abundantlie; sprinkled with verie many sweete Ilandes and goodlie lakes, like litle inland seas, that will carrie even shippes uppon their waters...

Later, after the defeat of the Gaelic way of life, which was also in many ways the defeat of the Hiberno-Norman way of life since they were according to some historians *Hiberniores Hibernis ipsis*, and the decay of the Bardic system, we have the dispossessed poets of the seventeenth century lamenting their condition by reference to water again:

I have thought long this wild wet night that brought no rest
 Though I have no gold to watch, or horned kine, or sheep
 A storm that made the wave cry out has stirred my breast... (“A Sleepless Night”)

This is the Kerry poet Aogán Ó Rathaille and the storm here stands for the great tempest of history that swept away his hereditary patrons, the chieftains of Munster: “The heart within my breast tonight is wild with grief / Because, of all the haughty men who ruled this place, / ... None lives”. In O’Connor’s translation of Brian Merriman’s mock heroic poem *Cúirt An Mhean Oíche*, a strangely modern mock-trial, in which a man is tried as a representative of all men for failing to please the sexual desires of Irish women represented by a series of female witnesses, we hear that “There are men working in rain and sleet / Out of their

minds with the troubles they meet ...” Ó Rathaille and Merriman could be said to represent the last fling of the great Gaelic traditions of poetry, even though both were influenced by themes and forms from elsewhere, Merriman in particular, it has been argued, by European writing (candidates vary from Voltaire and Rousseau to the *Roman de la Rose* and the *Chanson de la Malmariée*). However, Merriman composed (it was preserved orally) his one and only surviving poem in 1781 and Thomas Moore had been born two years earlier and between the two the gulf is so great as to be almost an ocean. Literature in Ireland, in the main, would be in English from Moore until the late nineteenth century revival of the language, and that is not to undervalue the beauty of the folksong tradition in Irish.

Nevertheless, the English speaking poets were watery too. Moore cautioned “Silent, O Moyle be the roar of thy waters” and celebrated the Vale of Avoca with the words: “There is not in this wide world a valley so sweet / As that vale in whose bosom the bright waters meet”. Later, James Clarence Mangan, that *poète maudit par excellence* – alcoholic, opium addict, paranoid and possibly bipolar, translator, forger, poet – who died at 46 of cholera, utters the following invocation to his muse:

ROLL forth, my song, like the rushing river,
That sweeps along to the mighty sea;
God will inspire me while I deliver
My soul of thee! (“The Nameless One”)

But now the English Romantics have brought us water as a convenient metaphor for revolution, among other things, and Irish writers are not immune to fashion. The nationalist poet of the mid 19th century known as Speranza (Lady Jane Francesca Wilde, Oscar’s mother) foresaw the coming of revolutionary “hosts of men / Strong in their manhood... Swift as rushing torrents down a mountain glen” (“The Dawn”). The poem is remarkable for the quantity of weather and water tropes: lowering clouds; “the glorious Dawn upstreaming”; “purple mists”; ordinary mists; tempests; an ocean; streams of various kinds, including that mentioned above of men; crimson clouds; a golden shower; a golden dawn and quite a lot of wind of various strengths – a day’s weather for a typical Irish day, in other words.

By the time we come to the poets of the Celtic Twilight, water has been tamed and infused with the kind of ineffable sadness that only a group of writers with occasional recourse to the French and Italian Rivas could feel. The triumph of the “soft day” perhaps. Yeats, for example, writes of an old pensioner who sheltered “from the rain / Under a broken tree” (“The Lamentation of The Old Pensioner”); “The dews drop slowly and dreams gather” (“The Valley of The Black Pig”); and “All that’s beautiful drifts away / Like the waters” (“The Old Men Admiring Themselves In The Water”). Later he would find the storm’s voice fiercer, and the stone in the stream a trouble,

a kind of fanaticism, and he would call on “A blast of wind, O a marching wind” (“Three Marching Songs”) to blow for the brief and risible excrecence of fascism in Ireland.

Joyce was not above a nice bit of watery twilight himself. In *Chamber Music* the late romantic Joyce hears “the noise of waters / Making moan” all day and “the winds cry to the waters’ / Monotone”. The most famous image in *Dubliners* is of water, albeit mostly in crystalline form:

Yes, the newspapers were right: snow was general all over Ireland. It was falling on every part of the dark central plain, on the treeless hills, falling softly upon the Bog of Allen and, farther westward, softly falling into the dark mutinous Shannon waves. It was falling, too, upon every part of the lonely churchyard on the hill where Michael Furey lay buried. (“The Dead”)

But in *Ulysses*, Buck Mulligan regards water with contempt compared to tea: “When I makes tea I makes tea, as old mother Grogan said. And when I makes water I makes water”. To ‘make water’, of course, also means ‘to urinate’. And for Stephen Dedalus the sea is unromantically “snotgreen, bluesilver, rust”. Yet he stands on “the top of the Howth tram alone crying to the rain: Naked women! naked women!”. And water retains its erotic charge for Molly Bloom, daydreaming of men and masturbating in her dark bed after her beauty sleep, thinking “that rain was lovely”.



2 - Horizon

In the next generation, Austin Clarke was reminded of a woman, though not Molly Bloom, when “the watery hazes of the hazel / Brought her into my mind” (“The Lost Heifer”) but we have the author’s own word for it that the woman in question was the traditional feminine personification of Ire-

land and therefore still political. In that regard, following the trail from A to B and from B to C we can conclude that, for Clarke, water = Ireland. It is often hard to demur, especially in November. “The Lost Heifer” is, in fact, more about water than it is about either women or Ireland, and indeed Seán Lucy calls it a “strange little weather vision”:

When the black herds of the rain were grazing,
 In the gap of the pure cold wind
 And the watery hazes of the hazel
 Brought her into my mind,
 I thought of the last honey by the water
 That no hive can find.

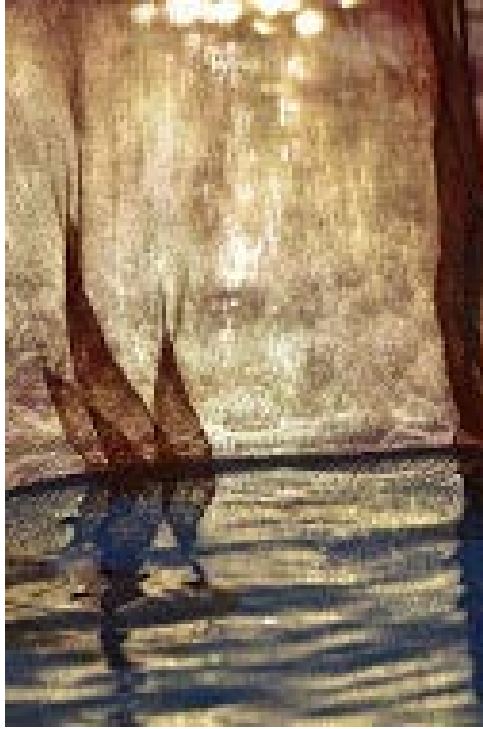
Brightness was drenching through the branches
 When she wandered again,
 Turning silver out of dark grasses
 Where the skylark had lain,
 And her voice coming softly over the meadow
 Was the mist becoming rain.

Elizabeth Bowen’s Irish novels and stories hold much water and weather. In *The Heat of The Day*, for example, “[t]he river traced the boundary of the lands: at the Mount Morris side, it has a margin of water-meadow into which the demesne woods, dark at their base with laurels, ran down in a series of promontories”.

Things change, of course, and in Beckett’s *Endgame* it pointedly hasn’t rained.

But water makes a comeback among contemporary writers. The lakes of Lovely Leitrim are central to the late John McGahern’s beautiful melancholy last novel *That They May Face The Rising Sun*: “Easter morning came clear. There was no wind on the lake. There was also a great stillness. When the bells rang out for Mass, the strokes trembling on the water, they had the entire Easter world to themselves”. Colm Tóibín’s *The Blackwater Lightship* is clearly set by water, as is John Banville’s *The Sea*, in which the sea itself is an extended metaphor, if not a character in its own right whose reaction to Morden, the protagonist, is a great swell like “another of the great world’s shrugs of indifference”. John Montague, who was Beckett’s friend, has “swirls of black rain and fog” (“A Lost Tradition”) to dog the historical steps of O’Neill and O’Donnell in their great march south to Kinsale and destruction. And in Derek Mahon’s “Achill” “A rain-shower darkens the schist for a minute or so / Then it drifts away and the sloe-black patches disperse”. We might say that Montague and Mahon reinstate the punitive and immiserating effect of water lost at Twilight. We are back to the hard rain of O Rathaille. Nuala Ní Dhomhnaill’s “Ebbtide” expresses the reversion: “I said, / the tide

will have to turn / and cover this waste of sand / pour over limpets on rocks / over wrack drying waterless / (ribbons like withered vellum)". And her prophetic mermaid speaks to us from "a bottomless well".



3 - Sails

We know from the Meteorological Service, that on the west coast of Ireland, where Achill Island lies, it rains on 225 days a year on average, whereas the east and south coasts get a mere 150. Appropriately, the dividing line is traced by Ireland's longest river which effectively divides the island in two unequal parts. To be precise, the island is divided by a waterway that starts at the Atlantic, at the Shannon estuary and goes northwards to connect with the River Erne via the Lough Allen Canal and Erne Waterway and emerge on the northwest coast at the long sandy estuary of Ballyshannon. As it happens, it also divides the part of the country that gets 225 days of rain a year (the province of Connacht for the most part) from the rest of us. The Shannon, understandably, figures strongly in mythology and also in literature. In *Cúirt An Mbean Oíche* (The Midnight Court), for example, the poet has one of the characters take the Shannon water as a symbol of the extent of another character's jealousy:

Do you think you mad bitch you might be able
To drink the Shannon dry or to drain it?²

And draining the Shannon is an old saying for a useless task similar to the expression pissing against the wind. Even though the Shannon is Ireland's longest river I don't know of any traditional song in which it is a protagonist unless we count the execrable Irish-American nonsense of James I. Russell's "Where The Shannon River Flows" ("where the fairies and the blarney will never never die"), made famous by John McCormack and Bing Crosby and consequently part at least of the parlour-song tradition. On the other hand, its northern sister the Erne has several beautiful songs including "Buachaill Ón Éirne" ("The Boy from the Erne"), and it figures in the haunting and fragmentary "An Mhaighdean Mhara" ("The Mermaid") which has in its refrain the line "Siúd chugaibh Mary Chinidh 's í 'ndiaidh an Éirne 'shnámh" ("Here comes Mary Chinidh after swimming across the Erne"). Corkery argued, in "The Hidden Ireland", that the Irish poetic tradition turned to song with the suppression of the bardic schools, and whether or not that argument is valid, there is a great reservoir of poetry in the sung tradition.

Other rivers have their songs. The River Lee, which flows through Cork has several, as has the Liffey. And Dublin is blest with one in which its Royal Canal figures prominently – the haunting prison song "The Old Triangle" from Brendan Behan's play *The Quare Fellow* (although it must be said that Behan himself never claimed authorship of the song):

A hungry feeling
Came o'er me stealing
And the mice were squealing
In my prison cell
And that auld triangle went jingle-jangle
All along the banks of the Royal Canal.

The poet Patrick Kavanagh is commemorated by a statue of himself seated on a bench beside Dublin's other canal. It was his wish – "O commemorate me where there is water, / Canal water preferably, so stilly / Greeny at the heart of summer" ("Lines Written on A Seat On The Grand Canal, Dublin"). The name Dublin derives from the Irish *dubh linn* and means "black pool" and the Irish word for Cork, the city where I live, is Corcaigh, which means 'of the marsh'. It is not just the writers who are haunted and tormented by water, of course, but the variety and depth of water in literature reflects the reality of people's lives. Nevertheless, it is important not to become misty-

² The translation here is my own.

eyed about it. Wind, tide and wave, tempest and thunderstorm, river and lake and ocean – water is above all a force of nature to be lived with.



4 - Camden Town

3. *The Banks of My Own Lovely Lee*

The watery City of Cork is built on the estuarine landscape of the River Lee, the houses initially constructed on marshy islands before the wealthy merchants moved uphill to Montenotte and downriver to Tivoli (the aspirations of the merchant class tended towards The Grand Tour). Most of the city's streets were once rivers, covered at various times by the city corporation. Cork used to be called the Venice of The North, but Bologna is a better comparison – another city of covered waterways. Nowadays there remain two visible branches of the river that hold the old, low-lying historical centre, the 'flat of the city', in their watery embrace, but underneath everything is the susurrus of running water and rising tide. The city floods from the sea at certain times of the year, when the wind is south-easterly and there are spring tides. Gales push the flowing tide up-river and hold it in when the ebb starts and sometimes it is high tide for several days. Cork is the second largest natural harbour in the world – Sydney being the first – and there is a difference between low tide and high of 3-4 metres. A deep atmospheric depression can easily add another metre to that. Then shops and homes in the flat of the city put sandbags against their doors and lift anything that

might be damaged out of the way. The City Council and the Meteorological Service issue warnings. We often come in for the remnants of hurricanes which sweep off the east coast of America and cross the Atlantic. In 1986 the tail-end of Hurricane Charley created havoc. When the storm abated I drove down to see my parents in the little harbour village of Whitegate and found that the sea-wall had been laid flat along its entire length. My parent's house was a very old one and the floors were uneven and a lake of salt water had settled in the centre. I found them seated by the fire in their hats and coats and the water lapping at the legs of their chairs.

Only once in living memory did Cork City flood from the landward side. An unprecedented rainfall in the mountain catchment area of the River Lee led to dangerous pressure on the hydroelectric dam at Iniscarra, which is also Cork City's main reservoir. Eventually the power company, fearing for the structural integrity of the dam, opened the sluices and the result was a disastrous flood. Directly in the path of the water was the County Hall, Cork's first modernist structure, containing the County Library which stored its specialist book collections in the basement (below water level). Beyond that was the university's Glucksman Gallery, which stored the exhibitions it had taken down in the basement (below water level). A hotel was almost completely destroyed. It had an underground car-park (below water level) and on the night of the flood there was a display of high-cost motor cars which had to be evacuated in a hurry. Beyond that again was the still-inhabited flat of the city, The Marsh and the main shopping streets. Homes and businesses were flooded.

Is it surprising, in a country so beset by water and so obsessed by it, that often feels itself drowning in water while simultaneously being on a relatively fragile piece of land surrounded by it, that the decision to tax it or even privatise it would seem like a gross injustice, a sin against nature, the theft of a birthright?

4. *The politics of water*

After the biggest anti-water charge protest to date (October 2014), for which turnout estimates vary from 50,000 to 150,000, the socialist journalist Eamonn McCann asked the simple questions: "Why Water? Why Now?" His conclusions were interesting. "The people", he suggested, "have been pushed too far". And although he conceded that the immediate *casus belli* was water, it was, he argued, more complex. There were the memories of other marches, other struggles, and the example of Northern Ireland's Civil Rights marches and a more recent mass non-payment movement which prevented the introduction of the same kind of charges there. And then there was water itself. "Water is elemental", McCann wrote. "Delivering water to homes is the most essential public service of all".



5 - Steps

The idea of having to pay for a substance so natural that it falls from the sky and without which we'd die sparks a particular anger. The people are being corralled into a captive market. Being told under threat of retaliation to pay what could soon develop into a private operation for this privilege incites outrage.

The exact intensity of this outrage is a constant preoccupation of the media: how big are the marches? to what extent are they manipulated by “sinister fringe elements”? to what extent are ordinary people disaffected with politics as practised until now? who leads the marches? how ‘political’ are they? Journalists constantly seek out The Good Protestor, a saintly personage who can tell them that she has never protested before, that she is not a member of any political party (especially leftwing parties) and is, in essence, not political. The Good Protestors tell the journalists that they have been pushed too far; that their wages have been cut; that their standard of living has fallen; that their children have emigrated because they couldn't find work; that their communities are suffering; that they resent shouldering the cost of

paying international bondholders; that the elites prosper at the expense of the ordinary person. What they say, in other words, is highly political, but because none of them talks about crises of overproduction and immiseration or the falling rate of profit they can be safely regarded as honest and good citizens (non-ideological) and therefore some kind of measure of the extent to which “the water-charge crisis” has extended into the voting population. But it’s not hard to detect the political content and only our deliberately obtuse commentariat is capable of ignoring it. For behind the general and particular hardships and angers of the protestors is one widely-held if not universally accepted principle: they believe in a state which is *for* its citizens in a way that the neoliberal state can never be. This is a profound divergence from everything that our recent politics has tried to achieve by way of ‘common sense’. In this hegemonic ‘common sense’ formulation, citizens are to be customers of the state which sells us various services that cannot be monetised by corporations; to be a citizen is merely to be a customer with a loyalty card. The protestors reject this conception of their place in the world. For them the state is a social entity established and maintained on behalf of its people, not the other way round. It may seem like a trivial distinction, but it is a tenacious ideology, and profoundly opposite to the state as defined by Friedman, or Thatcher and Reagan, whose belief in the ‘small state’ was espoused in Ireland by successive parties especially the late and unlamented Progressive Democrats.

Political it may be, this belief in the state *for* the people, but the media presents the protestors responses to questions, their declared beliefs about politics, as something like the plaintive cry of a seabird, melancholy but meaningless by comparison with the great international discourses of Crisis, Recession, Sovereign Debt, Default, The IMF, The ECB and Angela Merkel. And this too angers the marchers. They feel that the media is not *for* them either. They sense that hegemony that Gramsci described so well, the rule of the elite through the dominant common sense, aided by the subaltern intellectuals of economics, politics and the media.

Thus, while the subject of water *qua* water resonates strongly with the protestors it is also no more than the symbol of other disaffections, discontentments and dissonances. And behind everything is a general feeling that the state has got away from us over many years, that we don’t really have a democracy anymore, if we had one, that the wealthy elites and the corporations have quietly taken control of something we thought belonged to us, that we’re living in something close to an oligopoly in which what passes for politics plays a merely instrumental role, or is a kind of acting out of some pathological self-obsession. It is entirely appropriate that water should be the metaphor, or perhaps more correctly, the synecdoche of this long-standing discontent. For water is a shape-shifter, ever and life affirming, in logical terms both an accident and an essence: in a land of water only a fool would put a price on it.

Works Cited

The essay includes quotations from: <<http://www.rabble.ie/2014/11/20/ireland-facing-isis-situation-over-water-charge-protests>> (05/2015); Shakespeare's *Hamlet* (I, 1, 65-66); E.J. Delaney, J.M. Feehan, *The Comic History of Ireland*, Cork, Mercier, 1955; *Lebor Gabála Éirenn*, original text ed. and trans. by Robert Alexander Stewart Macalister, London, Irish Text Society, 1938-1956, 5 vols; *Kings, Lords, & Commons: an Anthology from the Irish* [1959], trans. by Frank O'Connor, Dublin, Gill and Macmillan, 1970; *The Kildare Poems*, ed. by A.M. Lucas, Dublin, The Columba Press, 1995; Edmund Spenser, *A View of the Present State of Ireland* [1633], Hoboken, Wiley-Blackwell, 1997; Thomas Moore, *Moore's Irish Melodies*, London, Longman's Green, 1866; *The Collected Works of James Clarence Mangan. Vol. 4: Poems 1848-1912*, Dublin, Irish Academic Press, 1999; Lady Francesca Wilde, *Poems by Speranza (Lady Wilde)*, Glasgow, Cameron and Ferguson, 1871; W.B. Yeats, *The Collected Poems*, 2nd rev. ed. by R.J. Finneran, New York, Scribner, 1996; James Joyce, *Collected Works*, Minerva, Classics Kindle edition, 2013; James Joyce, *Poems and Exile*, London, Penguin, 1992; Arthur Clarke, *Collected Poems*, ed. by R. Dardis Clarke, Manchester, Carcanet, 2008; Elizabeth Bowen, *The Heat of the Day* [1948], Harmondsworth, Penguin, 1962; Samuel Beckett, *Endgame* [1957], London, Faber, 2011; John McGahern, *That They May Face the Rising Sun*, London, Faber, 2001; Colm Tóibín, *The Blackwater Lightship*, London, Picador, 1999; John Banville, *The Sea*, London, Picador, 2005; John Montague, *The Rough Field*, Loughcrew, Gallery Press, 1972; Derek Mahon, *Selected Poems*, Loughcrew, Gallery Press, 1991; NualeaNi Dhomhnaill, *Selected Poems/Rogha Danta*, trans. by Michael Hartnett, Dublin, Raven Arts Press, 1986; Brian Merriman, *Cúirt An Mhean Oíche*, Liam P. Ó Murchú, Baile Átha Cliath, An Clóchomhar Tta, 1982; Brian Merriman, *The Midnight Court*, trans. by Frank O'Connor, Dublin, O'Brien Press 1989; Brendan Behan, *The Quare Fellow* (1954), New York, Grove Press, 1956; Patrick Kavanagh, *Collected Poems*, London, Penguin, 2005; Daniel Corkery, *The Hidden Ireland: A Study of Gaelic Munster in the Eighteenth Century* [1924], Dublin, Gill & MacMillan, 1983; Seán Lucy, "The Poetry of Austin Clarke", *The Canadian Journal of Irish Studies* 9, 1, Jun., 1983, pp. 5-21; Eamonn MacCann, "Why water, why now? Ireland takes to the streets", *The Irish Times*, 1 Nov 2014.

Voices

Mary Dorcey: The Poet's Gaze and Scalpel

Maria Micaela Coppola

Università degli Studi di Trento (<mariamicaela.coppola@unitn.it>)

Abstract:

Precision, vividness and colour characterise Mary Dorcey's representations of individual and yet universal human experiences, such as love, loss, or grief. These are used like a surgeon's scalpel: to frame, look inside, and closely observe sections of the individual's body, and life. As we can see from the selection of poetic and prose texts presented here (alongside their translations into Italian), Dorcey cuts the skin of common definitions of private places and feelings (home, love, and grief). She looks at them from uncommon perspectives, bears witness to them, and gains insight from them. These and other issues are discussed in the interview, which is a revised version of a conversation that took place in Bologna (Italy) in November 2014.

Keywords: Dorcey, grief, home, Irishness, love

In general most artists would agree that the lens that sharpens perception most is the one of sorrow and regret. Because when you're happy, you are absorbed in it. If you are looking back at a happy experience, it's a little more blurred. But [when people] tell you about some deep injury, loss and grief, they discover a surgical precision, a vividness, and colour. I think that pain is an instrument to be used, like a surgeon's scalpel: it makes the best cut, and it opens a wider door to something, a window into a deeper element of emotion and experience.

(Mary Dorcey, "Interview" below)

Paraphrasing Dorcey's above-quoted image, we can say that not only language but also sorrow and pain are the poet's most effective tools: like a scalpel in the hands of a surgeon they are used to frame, look inside, and closely observe sections of the individual's body, and life. As we can see from

the selection of poetic and prose texts presented here, Dorcey cuts the skin of common definitions of private places and feelings – home, love (and loss of love), and grief –, looks at them from uncommon perspectives, and bears witness to them through poems and narratives, thus gaining insight from them.

“A surgical precision, vividness and colour”: according to Mary Dorcey, these are the qualities of the poet’s gaze, which enable her / him to observe, report and transform individual and yet universal human experiences, such as love, loss, or grief. Mary Dorcey’s gaze into human feelings and the domestic and private sphere is always revealing of unexpected dimensions, including linguistic ones. We can say that precision, vividness and colour also describe Mary Dorcey’s poetic language. At once narrative-based and pictorial, frank and displacing, exact and rich in nuances (Coppola 2000 and 2013; Poloczek 2011; Quinn 1992), Dorcey’s writing is deeply Irish, in the sense that it displays all the resonances and melodies that – as the poet claims in the interview – characterise the Irish use of language. For instance, ancient and widely-used words like “soul, beauty, joy, ardour” in Dorcey’s mother tongue – and in her poem “Mother Tongue” (2012, 22) – are tasty and scented, soothing and vivacious, like swallows they fly home and “embellish the light”.

Moreover, from Dorcey’s personal and ‘surgical’ viewpoint, even the words used to indicate ordinary objects acquire surprising meanings: the shoes the beloved wore to “walk free of me” (“In Your Shoes” 2001, 75) are connoted neither as male nor female, and neither is the poetic subject’s lover. This is a typical strategy in Mary Dorcey’s love poems: sometimes the lover’s gender is indicated or hinted at with clues only; some poems celebrate love in universal terms, as gender is never stated; and in other poems love is described as at once explicitly and universally lesbian. Dorcey’s subtle manipulation of gender and language stirs readers to follow the poet’s gaze and re-trace their own reading process, to question accepted definitions of love, and, in Dorcey’s words from the interview, to explore “what is central to human love” and see if there is “anything common to all love that escapes gender, race, and age”.

As a consequence, seemingly transparent concepts behind words such as ‘love’ or ‘home’ display multiple layers of meaning. In “The Lift Home” (Walsh ed. 1993) the centrality of the domestic realm is explicitly stated in the title of the short story, whose subject matter is apparently unambiguous. As a matter of fact, the plot focuses on a monotonous and uneventful routine: twice a week a fine and gentle man gives a lift to a respectable mother and wife. He drives her safely from the club she works at and regularly goes to (to escape from his home and family) her home, back to her children. Dorcey enters her character’s car and observes this innocent and unsurprising couple from within, as they amiably chat or as he kisses her goodbye. Like a surgeon she cuts and looks into the car, into their homes, and into their routine, and compels readers to see through them: who is ‘innocent’ and respectable in this story? can prostitution be domestic and, as a consequence, respectable? is

this a 'safe' lift home? and what is Home and what is Love? Dorcey's scalpel draws attention to these issues, and readers are required to respond to them.

Similarly, in "Deliberately Personal" (1991, 22-23), Dorcey addresses her audience directly and urges us to look into apparently safe homes and relationships from a novel perspective. Displacing readers' expectations, she takes idyllic familiar pictures – framing a mother carrying out her domestic routine, or a child and her loving uncle on a festive occasion – and makes them explode, one by one: private and familiar places (a bathroom, a car, our neighbours' or our own homes) are in fact scenes of ordinary domestic violence, which we can no longer observe as remote and isolated. The poet urges her readers to see otherwise: to look at violence against women as a socio-cultural product; to consider perpetrators, victims, and witnesses of violence as part of our family and community, and move into "the spotlight", and share the poet's own "raw / and deliberately / personal" (vv. 10-12) perspective.

"The lens that sharpens perception most is the one of sorrow and regret" (229): in Dorcey's view, the poet's vivid and colourful language and his/her drive to communicate are mostly ignited by loss and sorrow. As exemplified by the title of Dorcey's novel – *Biography of Desire* (1997) – the act of writing one's life and the act of longing for someone who is lost are closely related: waiting for the arrival of the beloved or waiting for the right decision, the two woman protagonists fill in the space that separates them (physically more than emotionally) by writing and reading a diary, which establishes a connection between them and sharpens their understanding of loss and love.

This connection between loss, sorrow and the creative process is particularly evident in the so-called mother-daughter poems, where pain is transformed into the poet's scalpel, which "makes the best cut, and [...] opens a wider door to something, a window into a deeper element of emotion and experience" (229). Mary Dorcey has published a series of poems that explore the relationship between a care-giving daughter and a mother whose cognitive abilities are progressively declining. This aging woman talks to the poetic subject "across a ghost filled continent"; she is so far away (in many ways, not only physically) that her words are incomprehensible (just "breath whitening the air"). She is standing alone on the doorstep, and her only connection with the poet and her world are the vanishing "tracks / in the snow / that led / to your life" ("Snow" 2001, 36). In this context, pain triggers the poetic narrative, and is the tool through which the poet (and readers) can re-trace the lost tracks, and grasp the meaning of human suffering.

As Dorcey reminds us in these poems and in the interview below, this is the function of the poet – to bear witness to "this commonplace and / unreported suffering", to "the / damage and indignities, / piled day by day, onto / the wreckage of self" ("Grist to the Mill" 2001, 8-9), so that others can see them too:

One of the functions of writing and writers – if writing and writers have a function – is to look where most of us are afraid to look, to look and report, because all of us, in our ordinary life, are afraid to speak directly about pain, about the dark and difficult things. But an artist has to look and record. And by looking and recording [...] human beings feel these things and revive, and recover. It's a conquest over suffering.

Once reported, grief and sorrow are no longer the useless scars of irreparable losses. From this point of view, the poet is able to make use of the ultimate irreparable loss too, and to put it at readers' disposal. "Fledgling" (2012, 53) provides an excruciating representation of death. However, in this poem the dying mother is portrayed as a tender "small bird testing the air" (53), and the moment when she passes away corresponds to her finally fledgling.

When reading Mary Dorcey's poems and stories, we can look at pain and grief, even death, but also love and desire from uncommon perspectives, daring to question taken-for-granted interpretations and gaining deep comprehension and insight.

A Conversation With Mary Dorcey

Maria Micaela Coppola

Università degli Studi di Trento (<mariamicaela.coppola@unitn.it>)

Carla de Petris

Università degli Studi Roma 3 (<carla.depetris@uniroma3.it>)

Approach and questions of the following interview were planned and agreed upon by Maria Micaela Coppola and Carla de Petris. The actual interview with Mary Dorcey was conducted by Coppola on 24 November 2014 in Bologna (Italy), who also edited the first complete draft. This was revised by Carla de Petris, and then submitted to Mary Dorcey for final revision and approval.

We would like to express our gratitude to Mary Dorcey for her kind and generous friendship.

Preface:

Ireland has under gone a prolonged revolution over the last thirty years, socially, economically and politically. Especially in the lives of women and gay people the change has been stupendous. The country is scarcely recognisable as the one I grew up in. But the landscape is largely the same, and the love of language, stories, music, and laughter.

Mary Dorcey (March 2015)

MMC, CdeP: In which sense could you be defined as an Irish writer? Which aspects of your poetry would you identify as typically Irish?

MD: I don't think my writing has anything particularly Irish in its subject matter. But the way I use the English language, my vocabulary, my phrasing probably reveals my Irish heritage. This last applies to most of our writers. For example, I taught for many years at Trinity College Dublin and at UCD, and there was an exercise I liked to set my students: I would ask them to read brief extracts from maybe ten stories and identify which were Irish and which not. This was interesting because many writers who would think of themselves as culturally neutral could be easily identified as Irish by their language to anyone who knows the vernacular, the idiom. I can't tell you what that is, it's very hard to define. It's a richer English: it's more

melodic, more narrative-based, it uses more metaphors, and it's more ornamental than Anglo-English.

MMC, CdeP: As an artist you have been labelled in many ways: woman, feminist, lesbian, but also cosmopolitan, international, and, of course Irish. Similarly, your fiction and poetry fall into different interpretative categories and cannot be described satisfactorily by referring to one category only. What do you think of these labels? And what is your attitude towards them?

MD: We would all like to be considered universal, international. Writers and artists, creative people of all kinds – none of us wants to be defined by one element of our identity. Because after all, art intends to explode conventional boundaries not re-enforce them. We all hope to transcend the social conditions that shaped us. But nevertheless, it is impossible to escape labels completely. People need to see you through a lens of some sort.

For instance, I am defined as an Irish writer outside Ireland. But I remember when I was more or less banished from Ireland in the Eighties. When my first book came out, *Kindling* (1982), the Irish thought it was scandalous, all they could see was the lesbian content. And a lot of gay people (and some feminist and left wing women) were also angry with me for what they thought was switching over: I was expected to be a militant, out there, fighting for the cause, making speeches, and they could not understand why I would want to “wash my dirty linen in public”, as they said. So *Kindling* – and most of my work – was published in England first (I was living in London at the time). But at every reading in England, people hardly noticed the lesbian content because they were so struck by the ‘Irishisms’ – the Hiberno-English phrases and vocabulary.

This is still the case beyond these shores. For instance, I was lucky to be, from early on – the late Eighties – one of the few women who was included in Irish Studies courses in the United States, and that was possible because they responded to traditional elements of the writing while recognising that I was subverting it. They see me first as Irish, then as a woman, and last of all as lesbian.

At the time I first began to publish poetry, I was already notorious at home because I was also active politically. I had been campaigning for a decade for Women's Rights and Gay Rights. The establishment was afraid of me. And a lot of lesbians and gay people were also frightened because they were closeted at the time, and I was the only one who wasn't. It was a seismic event in Ireland, but every sexual issue at the time was. It could seem as though gay people were the only people who had a sex life in Ireland. Nobody else would talk about it at all!

At that time, in some circles my sexuality was the only centre of interest. But now in my own country many more readers know me, some exclusively, as the woman who writes about the mother-daughter relationship. The woman who writes about grief. The woman who writes about love. The gender of the love object is no longer what interests them.

MMC, CdeP: Speaking about the richness of the poetic language, many Irish poets consider Irish language as a rich expressive instrument that was denied to them by History, when they could write in British English only (we are thinking in particular of Eavan Boland's "Mise Éire", or of John Montague, and also of Seamus Heaney): what is your standpoint regarding Irish language and Irish poetry? And can you speak Irish?

MD: My mother spoke Irish. She lived for years in the Donegal Gaeltacht as a child. Her great wish was that her five children would speak it, so she talked to us every day for a short while in Irish. My two elder brothers learned it well and used it in later life. But her enthusiasm must have flagged by the time I came along. Her attention was pre-occupied by my father's illness and early death.

But I have always had the sound of the language on my ear, as it were. I remember the poetry and songs she sang. I have been told quite often that my language has sometimes a strong echo of Irish in it and I do think it influenced the rhythms I use in my poetry, and maybe the sentence structure too. But then the Hiberno-English was the common language here in that period – everyone's usage was shaded by Irish with a great many words and phrases taken directly from the language and certainly the way of composing narrative. What the English view as florid and allusive! But now American English is taking over.

MMC, CdeP: Which Irish writers have influenced you? And who are the Irish women writers in your personal canon as an artist and as a reader?

MD: That's a difficult question, because the writers who influence you are those you read in adolescence. And there were very few Irish writers available then and almost no women. I started reading voraciously at a young age. My mother, my sister, and I, and my eldest brother, who was already at university – we all liked books in my house. I started with the French, the English, and the Russian classics, the great nineteenth-century and eighteenth-century writers. Jane Austen and George Eliot were the first writers I was conscious of as being women writers. Very few Irish women writers were in print (so many Irish writers of both sexes were banned, and weren't widely read). Elizabeth Bowen was hardly known in Ireland. Kate O'Brien was banned and also out of print. She belonged to my mother's generation. She was lesbian (that would have been known within a small circle), and she wrote about a lesbian relationship (*As Music and Splendour*, 1958). She was one of the writers my mother recommended to me. The extraordinary thing is – I don't know what my mother knew – but she also urged me to read Willa Cather, who was also out of print at that time, and two Irish late-nineteenth-century women writers, Somerville & Ross¹, who

¹ Pseudonyms of Edith Anna Enone Somerville (1858-1949), and Violet Florence Martin (1862-1915).

wrote satirical novels. They were Protestants, they were cousins, and they were also lovers. I discovered this much later, but my mother must have known – it was something that would have been whispered about by the people of their own generation. But whether my mother recommended these three writers because she guessed how important they would become for me or just because they were her personal favourites, I don't know.

MMC, CdeP: Can you say something about the influences that formed your political and cultural awareness as you were growing up?

MD: My mother's generation was born before Independence in Ireland, under British rule, and it was actually a more liberal period for women. My grandmother's generation were the suffragettes of Ireland, and my grandmother was fervently political and loved the arts. She knew the writers, painters, artists and politically involved activists of her day who formed a very strong community from the nineteenth century up until the 1930s in Ireland. My mother would have been influenced by this. As it happens, I was born on the same day as my grandmother, and was always told I was extremely like her. My grandmother was a firebrand, as we say. So through my mother and grandmother I learned of that generation of women activists and artists. Many Irish women of my age wouldn't even have heard of them because as soon as we achieved Independence, all the strong women who had been involved in the struggle, feminists, and Republicans, were forgotten, written out of history, and it seemed as if all the revolutionaries had been male.

But to answer your question: were there any Irish women writers who influenced me when I was growing up? I have to say I was reading almost exclusively American and English modern writers at that time. But the two Irish women authors to make an impression were Elisabeth Bowen and Mary Lavin. These two were, I think, the only ones available in bookshops then. Lavin was born in America and Bowen lived in London, was Protestant, and upper class. A brilliant writer. A wonderful writer. One of the best writers of the twentieth century, and famous in her day. I was intrigued by her lifestyle: she moved all over abroad, she lived in France, she lived on her money, she moved from one beautiful house to another that belonged to friends of hers, and she was always given a beautiful room where she could write. Because of this it was easy to imagine as a young woman that an upper class background was essential in order to become a writer. Many of the men were also upper middle class, but certainly women writers up to that point had to come from a wealthy home. So they were a world apart. They influenced me only in the way in which a dream might be an influence, but not in the sense that for a minute I thought I could be like them. Almost all the twentieth century women writers I read as an adolescent were English: Katherine Mansfield, Virginia Woolf, Jean Rhys, and Margaret Drabble.

But the first Irish woman writer who gave me hope that it was possible to make a life as a writer was Edna O'Brien. I was a young schoolgirl when her first book came out. It was scandalous because she wrote about women's sexual lives. Irish women had never had sex before, not on the page at least! She was dismissed for years by the literary establishment, because she wrote only about women; her central characters are always women, and so it was regarded as trivial by the so-called 'intelligentsia'. She was, is, a marvellous writer; at her best she as good as anybody writing in Ireland, before her or since, and she is only now being fully recognized. Also, she lived an independent life; she supported herself by her writing, lived and published in England, and she is still writing in her eighties. She was striking to me because she was a Catholic, she came from a more or less poor background, and she hadn't been to university. I remember reading a review of her first book: *The Country Girls* (1960) and thinking, "Oh, this is something different". In one place she describes a young woman walking down a country road, and passing a tree she loves, she loves the leaf and blossom on the tree, but she doesn't know the name of it. And that alerted me, it pricked my ears: it was the first time I read something in 'high' literature where the narrator wasn't authoritative. I realized you could make your protagonist or narrator ignorant, and let them speak in their own voice. Whereas English literature is largely realistic, with a few exceptions, and uses omniscient narration: the voice telling the story is an educated voice and knows everything about their characters and poses as a reliable, objective observer.

Of course people had done this long before O'Brien: Virginia Woolf, James Joyce, and Beckett, etc. But I didn't think of Beckett and Joyce as Irish, I saw them as internationalists. I read them along with French writers of that period, and the English writers like Virginia Woolf and Katherine Mansfield. And I discovered when I was about fifteen (and later still Jean Genet, Jean Paul Sartre, Simone de Beauvoir), Djuna Barnes, Gertrude Stein, and the artists of the Left Bank. The Modernists. If I have to choose people who influenced me in the broadest sense, not in any direct way, I would say the Modernists, because they wrote without assuming authority and about interior life.

MMC, CdeP: Your writing is very pictorial, do you agree? And can you tell us something about your creative process?

MD: I think my mental process starts, in fiction at least, with a series of pictures: I have a film running through my head, then I have to set it to music, and last of all I transcribe it into words. This is a spontaneous process, it's not programmatic, it's just the way my mind works. My impression is (and many writers say this) that poems are born from one central image. It's as if somebody sent you a metaphor, one image, in the post, and they say to you: this is a poem, but I am only sending you one line of it – find out the rest. You sense

the poem is already written, because you can feel it in this one line, but you have no idea what the beginning and the end is. You are given this one sentence and you have to decode the rest of the poem from it. Everything is held in that one image: the tone, the mood, the atmosphere, the subject matter are already set, and you have to discover them. You could also see it like a jigsaw: as kids we used to test ourselves by not looking at the picture, beforehand, to make it more difficult by not knowing the final design. Writing a poem is like that, as you put it together, sometimes you feel as if you are remembering rather than creating. So in a way it is a hazardous process, spontaneous and also extremely deliberate, which is the difficult part to explain.

MMC, CdeP: Love and longing are core themes in your work. In particular, in some poems you describe love as at once clearly lesbian and unequivocally universal. Can you tell us how you have shaped your poetic language of love and desire?

MD: I've always written poems and stories, as soon as I learned to write I began. And I remember making up poems before I could read and annoying all my family by repeating them over and over. I used to scribble away, not thinking of publication, letting it come out automatically. But when I first began to do it in a disciplined way, with the idea of publishing (not until I was thirty), I found myself writing love poems – I think most of us start this way – and the first thing that struck me was that if I were heterosexual, it would be a simple love poem to some boy, and readers would admire it or not but that's all they would see – a universal love poem that they could identify with. They wouldn't see a message in it or a big statement. But when I wrote a romantic love poem, I found the reader noticed the gender used before anything else. And that presented a problem. At one level I wanted this to be clear, since there were times when it was important for me to show that I was talking about two women. But very often it wasn't significant. I wanted to explore the question of what is central to human love. Is there anything common to all love that escapes gender, race, and age?

So as a young woman beginning to write about my romantic life, which was of course a lesbian life (to others extraordinary, but not to me), I asked myself this last question: is it always necessary for the reader to know the gender of the lovers? The other question was how I could convey romance, deep feeling or eroticism between women that was free from all the distorted associations most people have? Could I find a language that conveys eroticism as I knew it, in a manner which is true to our lives? That is not pornographic or puritanical. Neither timid nor pornographic. That was very difficult. And it's still a challenge, you know.

MMC, CdeP: Another key theme is that of loss and pain, seen as the starting points for narratives and poetry (i.e. the novel Biography of Desire, but also the 'mother-daughter poems'). Why are loss and pain so strictly connected to writ-

ing and the creative process? Or, as you write in "The Sweet Eternal Now" (The River that Carries Me 1995, 63-68), "why do we measure happiness / by the pain of its absence / and hesitate to claim it / until it's lost? / What is it about joy / that make us circumspect / when we find it easy / to share grief?"

MD: It's a good question. In general most artists would agree that the lens that sharpens perception most is the one of sorrow and regret. Because when you're happy, you are absorbed in it. If you are looking back at a happy experience, it's a little more blurred. But I'm still amazed at how well most people express the things that have really pained them. When they tell you about some deep injury, loss and grief, they discover a surgical precision, a vividness, and colour. I think that pain is an instrument to be used, like a surgeon's scalpel: it makes the best cut, and it opens a wider door to something, a window into a deeper element of emotion and experience.

This is the case in what people broadly call 'the mother poems' for instance. I don't want to say these poems are 'about my mother', because they are about someone like my mother. She was, as she liked to say herself, only a metaphor. I was very lucky with my mother: she was a friend, and she was an intelligent and truthful person. She wasn't the perfect mother, she wasn't an angel, and we had huge conflicts when I was a teenager. But she was a compassionate and a funny person. It became very important to me to write about a relationship of this kind between mother and daughter because it is so little described in world literature. Good mothers have been written out of literature and history. And loving daughters equally. Of course, I know so many daughters who have a crushing relationship with their mother. Especially in Ireland (and perhaps in Italy?), where women were so repressed, and the mothers of my generation had such hard lives: no contraception, no divorce, no work outside the home – virtually existing as slaves, domestic and sexual slaves. My mother was fortunate because she had imagination. And she read books. That was the only escape for women of that period: they could turn to books and discover another world. So I felt that some writer needed to put on record a strong and communicative relationship because if we have no model of mothers and daughters who actually talk to each other and change with each other, how can the world change? The mother-daughter poems, like "Grist to the Mill" (Dorcey 2001, 8-9) or "Trying on for Size" (Dorcey 1991, 25-27) came from this realization.

But it's important for me to make clear that while the poetry often deals with grief, I had in fact a tremendously happy childhood and relationship with my mother. We would have been laughing – "that family heirloom, gallows humour", as I say in one poem ("My Grandmother's Voice", Dorcey 1995, 87-89) – making black jokes even when things were hard. And she would have hated me to be tragic. She would hate me to be presenting her as a huge problem. She didn't believe that you should let your spirits sink too

much: you could talk of pain, but not wallow in it. So I hope I am not doing that. I hope that when I write about sorrow, it moves the listener and opens their hearts. Even people who might have a lot of anger with their mother, sometimes are touched, and can see it differently. Because the pain, the surgeon's scalpel, opens something, brings them into a larger view and they see the wider connections.

MMC, CdeP: Is this the role of the poet – to record pain and loss, to bear witness to “this commonplace and/unreported suffering” and to “the / damage and indignities, / piled day by day, onto / the wreckage of self” (“Grist to the Mill”, Like Joy in Season, Like Sorrow, 2001, 8-9) and put it to use, so others can see and understand?

MD: One of the functions of writing and writers – if writing and writers have a function – is to look where most of us are afraid to look, to look and report, because all of us, in our ordinary life, are afraid to speak directly about pain, about the dark and difficult things. But an artist has to look and record. And by looking and recording, in that act of saying “this is bearable”, human beings feel these things and revive, and recover. It's a conquest over suffering.

Five Poems and a Short Story*

Mary Dorcey

Translated by Carla de Petris
(with the exception of “Deliberately Personal”,
translated by Maria Micaela Coppola)

“Mother Tongue”

(in *Perhaps the Heart is Constant After All*,
2012, 22)

Listen –
after long winter –
like swallows to the nest
they fly home, the old words –
the first loved of youth. They
soothe the evening air, embellish
the light. I savour the scent and taste
of each one as it lands on my tongue:
soul –
beauty –
joy –
ardour.

“Lingua madre”

Ascolta –
dopo il lungo inverno –
come rondini al nido
tornano a casa, le vecchie parole –
amate per prime in gioventù.
Accarezzano l’aria della sera, abbelliscono
la luce. Ne gusto il profumo e il gusto
di ciascuna che mi approda sulla lingua:
anima –
bellezza –
gioia –
ardore.

“In Your Shoes”

(in *Like Joy in Season, Like Sorrow*, 2001, 75)

When you were gone
I found a pair of shoes

you had left behind
under the bed.

I put them on, wanting
to know how they felt.

The leather was worn
and intimate,

loose across the instep.
I walked to the window

“Al posto tuo”

Quando te ne eri andata
ho ritrovato un paio di scarpe

che avevi lasciato
sotto il letto.

Me le sono infilate per sapere
come calzavano.

La fodera dentro era consunta
e intima,

slabbrata al bordo.
Ho camminato fino alla finestra

* Published here for the first time in Italian translation.

and then to the door.
My heel slipped free

but the toes pinched.
I wanted to see how

it felt in your shoes –
constrained or easy.

I wanted to see
how it felt to be you –

when you wore them and
walked free of me.

e poi fino alla porta.
I talloni mi scivolavano fuori

ma gli alluci ci stavano stretti.
Volevo vedere come era

stare al posto tuo –
se scomoda o non.

Volevo vedere che effetto faceva
essere te –

con quelle indosso
quando te ne andavi via da me.

“Deliberately Personal”

(in *Moving into the Space Cleared by Our Mothers*, 1991, 22 -23)

Who is the woman
who drove the children to school
made the beds and washed the dishes –
who hovered the wall to wall carpet –
before slitting her throat at the bathro-
om mirror?

Who is the man
who drove his favourite niece to the party
in her flowered pink frock –
in her ribbons and bows;
who raped her on the back seat –
on the way back –
Why not? he said
look how she was dressed?
and besides –
hadn't she been doing it for years
with her father?

Who are these people –
where do they come from?
What kind of man –
what kind of woman?
Where do they live –
who lives next door to them?
How come none of us
ever knows them?

“Deliberatamente personale”

Chi è la donna
che portò i figli a scuola
fece i letti e lavò i piatti –
che pulì il tappeto da un muro all'altro –
prima di tagliarsi la gola allo specchio
del bagno?

Chi è l'uomo
che portò la nipote preferita alla festa
nel suo vestitino rosa a fiori –
i suoi lacci e fiocchi;
che la stuprò sui sedili di dietro –
sulla via del ritorno –
Perché no? disse
hai visto com'era vestita?
e poi –
non l'ha forse fatto per anni
con suo padre?

Chi sono queste persone. –
da dove vengono?
Che tipo di uomo –
che tipo di donna?
Dove vivono –
chi vive vicino a loro?
Com'è che nessuno di noi
li conosce mai?

And how is it;
 wherever it happens –
 he doesn't belong to us?
 How is it he's always
 somebody else's
 brother, father, husband?

Why is it
 whoever she is
 she's never more
 than a name in the papers –
 some vagrant, friendless
 unnatural woman?

And who are you
 come to that?
 All of you
 out there
 out of the spotlight –
 out for a night's entertainment,
 smiles upturned so politely;
 asking me
 why I have to be –
 so raw
 and deliberately
 personal?

“Snow”

(in *Like Joy in Season, Like Sorrow*, 2001,
 36-37)

You call to me
 now,
 across a ghost filled
 continent.
 I see your breath
 whitening
 the air.
 You are calling
 goodbye.
 You are too far off
 for me to hear
 distinctly
 but I see
 that you are
 waving –

E com'è;
 ovunque accada –
 lui non fa parte di noi?
 Com'è che lui è sempre
 il fratello, padre, marito
 di qualcun altro?

Perché
 chiunque ella sia
 non è mai più
 di un nome sui giornali –
 una sperduta, solitaria
 innaturale donna?

E chi siete voi
 se per questo?
 Tutti voi
 là fuori
 fuori in quadratura –
 fuori per una notte di divertimento,
 sorrisi rovesciati così gentilmente;
 mi chiedete
 perché devo essere –
 così cruda
 e deliberatamente
 personale?

“Neve”

Mi lanci un richiamo
 ora
 attraverso un continente
 popolato di fantasmi.
 Vedo il tuo fiato
 imbiancare
 l'aria.
 Mi stai
 salutando.
 Sei troppo lontana
 perché ti possa sentire
 distintamente,
 ma vedo
 che mi fai
 un gesto di saluto –

your hand
raised.

You will stand
alone
on the granite step,
the sea
at your feet,
the door thrown
open behind you –
all the beloved dead
gathered
at your shoulder.

You will stand there
waving,
your hand raised,
waving goodbye –
until you have
gone
from sight
completely.
And even the tracks
in the snow,
that led
to your life,
have vanished.

“Fledgling”

(in *Perhaps the Heart is Constant After*
All, 2012, 53)

How proud I was –
how well you did it.
Staunch as a soldier
on parade.
No rehearsal –
first time off.
All new to us both.
Your old body
white sheathed
on the bed,
eyes shut,
mouth wide, your
tongue like a
fledging’s furred.
A small bird
testing the air for
a morsel of death.

con la mano
in alto.

Te ne starai
sola
sulla soglia di pietra,
il mare
ai tuoi piedi,
dietro
la porta aperta –
tutti i cari defunti
raccolti
alle tue spalle.

Te ne rimarrai lì
salutando
colla mano in alto,
dirai addio –
finché non
sarai scomparsa
alla mia vista
del tutto.
E presto le tracce
sulla neve,
che portavano
alla tua vita,
saranno cancellate.

“Uccellino al primo volo”

Come sono stata orgogliosa –
come sei stata brava.
Gagliarda come un soldato
in parata.
Niente prove –
la prima perfetta.
Tutto nuovo per entrambe.
Il tuo vecchio corpo
inguainato di bianco
sul letto,
gli occhi chiusi,
la bocca aperta,
la lingua rannicchiata come
un uccellino al primo volo.
Un uccellino che
annusa l’aria in cerca di
un granello di morte.

“Un passaggio a casa”

Translated by Carla de Petris

Era meticoloso e prudente: stendeva sempre un fazzoletto pulito di lino bianco sulle ginocchia prima di iniziare. Lei si domandava chi li lavasse. La cameriera o sua moglie? Li metteva con tutto il resto? O li bolliva a parte? In ogni caso erano sempre immacolati. Quando avevano finito, ripiegava in quattro il fazzoletto, si lisciava i vestiti e si rassettava con la stessa aria scrupolosa e metodica con cui riponeva la penna stilografica nella tasca interna della giacca, dopo aver firmato un assegno. L'aveva accompagnata a casa in macchina per più di tre mesi nelle notte buie e umide d'inverno. La lasciava all'angolo di Firbank Road, due traverse prima della sua. Le prestava il suo ombrello per ripararsi i capelli se pioveva. Sebbene lei non facesse quasi più caso al tempo. Nella lucente Vauxhall blu scuro, con la radio accesa e il riscaldamento a tutto andare, erano isolati dal mondo esterno.

Era iniziato per caso. In passato, prima che arrivassero a quel patto, lei non era mai stata sicura di riuscire a trovare chi le desse un passaggio a casa. Andava con Paulo il cuoco se lui era dell'umore giusto oppure si faceva dare uno strappo dal vecchio Brian, il portiere, ma questo significava star su fino alle quattro del mattino. Poi una sera si erano ammalati tutti e due e lei non sapeva più cosa fare. Stava aspettando un taxi per strada quando il signor Conway si offrì di riaccomparla a casa. Era quasi di strada, disse. Proprio nessun problema. Viveva nella parte nord della città come lui.

Per la precisione, era a più di cinque miglia da casa sua, come lei scoprì più tardi. Ma non gliene importava, né quella notte né in seguito, del tempo in più o della benzina. Era più importante avere il piacere della compagnia di una signora.

Era un gentiluomo. La prima sera l'accompagnò fino alla porta di casa e le augurò la buonanotte senza nemmeno toccarle il ginocchio. E lo stesso la sera seguente. La terza le diede un piccolo bacio sulla guancia. Il quarto giorno le comprò una scatola di cioccolatini al latte e disse, “qualcosa per i bambini” quando gliela porse. Fu quella sera che le raccontò la storia della sua vita. La graduale e banalissima discesa nel disinganno, come la chiamava. Parlò della sua esperienza e dei suoi sentimenti in modo strano, quasi distaccato come se stesse raccontando una segreta allusione ironica di quelle che non lo facevano ridere. Era un alto funzionario del Ministero dei Lavori Pubblici. Lei non sapeva cosa volesse dire. Le veniva in mente l'immagine di un lungo tavolone, con oggetti di ogni tipo come in una vendita di beneficenza di

lavori artigianali. Invece lui le spiegò che aveva a che fare con il territorio e con i monumenti nazionali. Le assicurò che prendeva un congruo stipendio. Ben al di sopra dei famigerati trenta pezzi d'argento. Le parlò della sua famiglia, di sua moglie invalida, si fa per dire, una diabetica alcolizzata. Aveva da tempo smesso di lottare per farla curare. Erano i figli, naturalmente, che ne soffrivano. A lui non importava più. Era immune. Se non fosse stato che quella malattia aveva reso impossibile da molti anni una vita normale. Una normale vita matrimoniale, cioè. Normale per un uomo, se capiva ciò che voleva dire. E lei lo capiva. Sapeva anche troppo bene quanto fosse rara una vita normale. Quanto fosse facile lasciarsi andare.

Lei aveva fatto parte del corpo di ballo del teatro Gaiety. Per almeno nove anni era stata una "Gaiety Girl". Le sue gambe ne erano ancora la prova. Riusciva a reggere ancora bene la vecchia routine. Nel club, a volte, all'inizio della serata, prima dell'arrivo dei clienti, faceva gli esercizi per intrattenere il resto del personale, reggendosi al bancone mentre slanciava in alto le gambe. Continua, urlavano mentre applaudivano e battevano ritmicamente le mani. Era un motivo di orgoglio per lei riuscirci come ai bei tempi: i suoi giorni di gloria, come li chiamavano gli altri.

Il signor Conway non aveva mai visto il suo spettacolo, naturalmente, poiché non arrivava mai prima delle undici. E non aveva mai fatto nessuna osservazione sulle sue gambe. Non era un tipo "attratto dalle gambe", ma ammirava i suoi capelli; i riccioli biondi (ora aiutati dalla tintura) che le arrivavano alle spalle, i suoi luminosi occhi azzurri e il petto; la sua figura di donna, come diceva lui di solito. Prima e dopo, seduto nell'oscurità della macchina parcheggiata, appoggiava la testa sul petto di lei e le chiedeva di accarezzargli la fronte. A volte, durante questi momenti, mormorava qualche parola. Una volta aveva pianto.

Era venuto al club per sei mesi prima di offrirle il passaggio. Due volte la settimana, il martedì e il giovedì, sempre prima di mezzanotte. Ci si poteva rimettere l'orologio. Sedeva sempre al tavolo d'angolo e ordinava un filetto o il pollo alla Kiev. Il signor Conway chiede di te al tavolo dieci, dicevano gli altri e lei andava a portargli il suo champagne. Le offriva il primo bicchiere, appena stappata la bottiglia. Lei lo apprezzava. Gli altri che bevevano brandy tutta la sera non offrivano al personale altro che un bicchiere di rosso della casa. Generoso e beneducato, ecco com'era. Si capiva subito. E solo. Aveva una faccia da prete, pensava, severa e di alti principi per via di quegli zigomi pallidi e stretti o di quella bocca all'in giù? Sembrava fosse fuori posto in quella cornice – musica romantica, lume di candela, tovaglie rosse. Non che ci fosse nessun motivo per cui un uomo rispettabile non potesse entrare per un drink, un pasto tranquillo e magari un paio di balli se una delle ragazze più giovani voleva fargli una cortesia. Alcuni addirittura portavano le mogli. Era quel tipo di locale, il Paradiso. Vecchio stile. Il migliore della strada, nel suo genere. Attirava il cliente maturo che apprezzava le maniere tradizio-

nali – giacca e cravatta – niente ragazze non accompagnate, niente ubriaconi, o almeno non a livello di schiamazzi. Aveva voluto che lo servisse lei sin dall'inizio, disse, per i suoi movimenti aggraziati. Ah, è l'allenamento che la mantiene così, disse quando seppe della sua carriera in teatro.

Beh, i suoi giorni da ballerina erano finiti. I suoi giorni alla ribalta. Era una moglie abbandonata ora, con tre bambini da mantenere. Era sorprendente quanto avevano in comune, disse il signor Conway una volta, a pensarci bene. Entrambi sposati solo di nome. Entrambi educavano i propri figli più o meno da soli. Eccetto che i suoi erano quasi adulti, mentre quelli di lei erano ancora sotto i dieci anni. Sapeva che era preoccupata di lasciare i bambini di notte, sebbene la nonna ci andasse dopo le dieci. Ma era meglio così, affermò lei e lui era d'accordo, piuttosto che lasciarli soli durante il giorno senza nessuno che li accompagnasse a scuola o li andasse a riprendere, o farsi la cena o il tè da soli. E poi, disse lei, una volta addormentati come potevano sentire la sua mancanza? Lui affermò che una madre si preoccupa troppo. Disse che i ragazzi avrebbero superato l'asma e che i giudizi degli insegnanti non volevano dire un gran che a quell'età. Le diceva questo per consolarla. Era sempre stato carino sull'argomento figli.

Dopo la prima sera nacque una muta intesa tra loro. “La sua carrozza l'attende, Madame”, diceva la signora O'..., la direttrice, con una strizzatina d'occhio quando alle due meno cinque il signor Conway portava l'automobile lì fuori. Lui le apriva lo sportello e la faceva accomodare, ricordandole sempre di allacciare la cintura di sicurezza. Era tutto per lei poter contare su quel passaggio, sapere esattamente a che ora sarebbe stata a casa. Significava poter pianificare la sua giornata; era la prima volta che poteva organizzarsi in maniera adeguata. Già alle tre poteva essere a letto, certe notti. E alzarsi prima dei ragazzi la mattina. E non svegliarsi, come al solito, con loro che la chiamavano giù dalla cucina. Oppure con Sandra, la più piccola, che saliva barcollando le scale con una tazza di caffè in mano per farla decidere a svegliarsi. E continuò così per alcune settimane, il martedì e il giovedì accompagnata fino alla porta. Niente di più di qualche chiacchiera e di un bacio o due.

Quando una sera, la settimana prima di Natale, lui aveva voluto prolungare la loro conversazione, si era preoccupato di fermare la macchina vicino alla strada di lei, proprio davanti all'hotel Castle Court e di parcheggiarla vicino al marciapiede, ben nascosta dagli alberi che sporgevano oltre la recinzione. Abbastanza vicino al parcheggio da beneficiare del flusso di traffico e della presenza di altre macchine in sosta, in modo da non destare l'attenzione dei passanti. Aveva bevuto più del solito quella sera. Lo spirito delle feste, aveva detto. E anche lei. Aveva provato a rimanere sul vino bianco, ma bisognava accettare tutto quello che veniva offerto. Le fece la sua proposta in maniera più che gentile. Le ricordò ancora una volta quanto fosse solo. La sua situazione anormale che sarebbe stato un peso per ogni uomo. Ogni uomo normale. Un piccolo servizio era tutto quello di cui aveva bisogno.

Un servizio per il quale sarebbe stato molto riconoscente. E grato se capiva quel che voleva dire. Lei capiva. Non ci fu bisogno di dire altro. E benché venisse da un uomo della sua riservatezza, non la sorprese. Sembrava essere la naturale conseguenza della sua gentilezza verso di lei, del passaggio a casa, della scatola di cioccolatini, del bacio sulla guancia. Più tardi, quella sera, le fece scivolare dentro la borsetta una banconota piegata e quando lei protestò, lui insistette. Qualcosa per i bambini, disse ancora. Quando l'ebbe in mano, si accorse che le aveva dato una banconota da dieci sterline. Non ci poteva credere. Due volte la settimana, per mezz'ora. Era quanto guadagnava in una notte al club. Significava poter ricominciare fin dalla prossima settimana a pagare la bolletta del telefono e poter comprare a Jason gli scarpini da calcio nuovi.

Aveva iniziato con dieci sterline e ora erano dodici, sebbene non facesse nulla di più di quanto aveva fatto all'inizio. Tranne che il tempo che passavano conversando era aumentato. Ed era una conversazione di cui lui aveva un gran bisogno. L'opportunità di esprimersi liberamente. Esternare i piccoli problemi quotidiani e le frustrazioni. Parlare con lei dal momento che non aveva altri con cui parlare, dal momento che sua moglie era incapace di qualsiasi discorso razionale. Era questo il motivo per cui lui veniva, dopo tutto. La ragione del passaggio a casa fin dall'inizio. Un orecchio comprensivo, come aveva detto la prima sera. Una spalla su cui piangere, sorridente con il suo sorriso grave e triste. Ci era voluto un po' ad abituarsi, naturalmente. A superare ogni imbarazzo. La prima volta, appena rientrata a casa, era andata diretta al bagno, si era lavata il viso e le mani e si era sciacquata la bocca. Ma molto presto capì di essersi adattata. Aveva imparato a chiudere la mente di colpo come un rubinetto. O a lasciare che si occupasse di dettagli pratici: il programma per la settimana o cosa mettersi per l'incontro genitori-insegnanti. Si poteva permettere, per la prima volta, di comperare qualcosa di carino. La sorprende il fatto di sentirsi orgogliosa a volte. Sentiva di aiutarlo a sopportare una tensione che altrimenti sarebbe stata intollerabile. Per quanto ne sapeva, diceva tra sé, stava aiutando la sua famiglia. Lui aveva bisogno di un certo servizio e lei glielo faceva. Lo faceva e sapeva come farlo. Come dargli piacere e giustificare la generosità dei soldi che le dava.

Per alcuni aspetti era più facile che con suo marito. Non che non fosse innamorata di Gerry i primi tempi, prima che cominciasse a bere. Anzi, erano stati pazzi l'uno dell'altra per i primi anni. E forse proprio questa era stata la ragione. Anche adesso, qualche volta, ripensando alle cose che avevano fatto e detto al culmine della passione, si sentiva arrossire. Per il piacere che aveva provato. Poiché a volte aveva chiesto qualcosa per soddisfare se stessa. E poi non sapeva se lui l'aveva fatto per far piacere a lei o a sé. Benché sposati e nell'intimità delle pareti domestiche rimaneva un residuo di colpa e di imbarazzo. Era come servirsi l'ultimo pezzo di torta da un piatto. Lo si prendeva, ma poi, non appena finito, ci si sentiva subito a disagio.

Con il signor Conway era tutto abbastanza semplice. Lui teneva gli occhi chiusi per tutto il tempo e rimaneva seduto quasi senza muoversi, a parte passarle le dita tra i capelli, giocarci e alla fine afferrarle il capo con tutte e due le mani. Tanto che doveva pettinarsi prima di entrare in casa. Una volta, per sbaglio, le aveva schiacciato il viso sul volante facendole un occhio nero. La sera dopo le aveva portato un fascio di dodici rose rosse. Le aveva tenute sul sedile posteriore dell'auto per non attirare l'attenzione gliele aveva date soltanto quando erano già ben lontani dal club.

Allora, come è andata oggi? chiedeva non appena lei entrava in macchina. Le piaceva questo di lui. Affidabile e ben educato. Niente male, grazie, rispondeva, tutto considerato. Il ritorno a casa aveva ormai un ritmo regolare. Avevano il loro itinerario stabilito e i loro argomenti di conversazione. Per la maggior parte del tempo parlava lui e lei ascoltava. Ma ogni tanto un suo modo di esprimersi metteva le cose in prospettiva, gettava nuova luce su entrambi. Allora lui le diceva, Lei è una donna fuori del comune. Mentre tornava a casa in macchina nel cuore della notte per le strade semideserte, le piaceva la loro conversazione, il fremito regolare del motore, la musica notturna della radio, il calore del riscaldamento sulle gambe che erano stanche di muoversi per ore tra i tavoli. Le piaceva ascoltare i racconti di un altro genere di vita. Era confortante sapere che anche quelli che avevano tutte le fortune possibili, avevano i loro problemi. Pensava che in un certo senso fossero ormai amici. Era così che le altre ragazze lo chiamavano – il tuo amico signor Conway. Per questo, quando arrivò la primavera, il mese di maggio la stagione delle Prime Comunioni, fu a lui che pensò per primo. O almeno fu Molly, la capocameriera del club a suggerirglielo. Si trovavano nella toilette delle signore alle due meno dieci di un martedì. Si stava rifacendo il trucco, ripassando cipria e rossetto per essere pronta per il ritorno a casa. Stava dicendo a Molly che la più piccola, Sandra, avrebbe fatto la Comunione il 25, fra tre settimane, e lei non aveva comprato nemmeno la metà di quello che serviva. Non c'era proprio nulla da spiegare a Molly sulle Comunioni. Ne aveva comunicati tre dei suoi in quattro anni. Per non parlare della Cresima. Convennero che ogni anno era peggiore del precedente. Ogni anno sembra giungere senza preavviso, proprio quando pensavi di essere venuta fuori da Natale e da Pasqua. Quest'anno in effetti era più ricca degli anni precedenti, grazie al signor Conway. Ma non lo disse a Molly. Le raccontò che il problema era che le suore volevano girare un filmino. Il che significava che tutti dovevano sembrare appena usciti da una fotografia di moda. Molly lo sapeva perfettamente. Non c'era nessuno che largheggiava come le suore. Ma di certo loro come potevano saperlo. Quanto le serviva? Beh, il fatto era che si era spezzata un dente davanti l'estate prima. Avrebbe voluto farlo sistemare dal momento che doveva comparire in un filmino. Ci sarebbero volute quasi trenta sterline. Per non parlare di tutto il resto che doveva fare. Perché non chiedi al tuo amico signor Conway? disse Molly. Sembra abbastanza generoso. Sono sicura che ti farebbe un prestito

di qualche scellino, se glielo chiedessi in maniera carina. No, lei aveva paura dei prestiti, disse. Non si sarebbe indebitata, qualsiasi cosa fosse successa. Ne aveva visti troppi prendere quella strada.

Anche il più piccolo prestito ti può mettere su una brutta china. Beh, è solo che lui è l'unico che conosciamo ad avere i soldi, disse Molly. E quando uscì dalla porta disse voltando la testa verso di lei – Pensaci!

E lei ci pensò. Nei giorni seguenti non pensò ad altro: da quella sera ogni volta, mentre tornavano verso casa, quando affrontavano i loro argomenti abituali, lei era distratta, seguiva solo a metà poiché era in dubbio se tirar fuori l'argomento oppure no. Si chiedeva se ci fosse modo di sondarlo. Non voleva chiedere, anche se lui era ricco. Non voleva avere obblighi. Preferiva mantenere i loro rapporti com'erano – tutto chiaro ed impersonale. Ricordava che una volta le aveva mostrato la foto di una delle sue figlie, Clare, il giorno della Cresima davanti alla Chiesa di Maria Immacolata. In piedi, che sorrideva a suo padre – tutto orgoglioso. Fu una bella giornata, disse lui, se non fosse stato per sua moglie, che sembrava un marinaio ubriaco con il trucco che le si andava sciogliendo. Certamente, questo voleva dire che avrebbe capito quanto fosse importante che in occasioni come queste tutto fosse perfetto?

Nella sua mente lei aveva diviso il viaggio in quattro parti, sebbene non di uguale lunghezza. Le prime tre erano assorbite dai discorsi sul club, sul lavoro e sulla famiglia. L'ultimo era il tempo che trascorrevano fuori del Castle Court. Cominciavano sempre con il club. Era stata una serata buona o una fiacca? Gli era piaciuta la cena, la musica? Aveva ballato? Lui conosceva tutte le cameriere per nome: Anne, Molly, Liz e Julie e Barbara che mettevano i dischi e intrattenevano i clienti soli. Non riesco mai a distinguerle, diceva, il che era ben strano perché non si assomigliano affatto. Una bruna, l'altra bionda. A lei piacevano molto tutte e due. Erano simpatiche. Le piaceva sedersi con loro all'inizio della serata, ascoltare le loro battute, dividere un drink e una sigaretta. Erano troppo giovani per lavorare a quell'ora, diceva il signor Conway. E non lo facevano per i soldi. Beh, lei non lo sapeva. Una era studentessa e l'altra lavorava in un negozio di scarpe. Lo facevano più che altro, per divertimento, immaginava. Gli uomini impazzivano, ma loro mantenevano le distanze. Le aveva viste con qualcuno a volte, ma niente di serio. Erano una coppia strana, pensava il signor Conway, che saltellava sempre sulla pista ballo, incurante degli altri. E lei era d'accordo, erano fuori del comune, sempre sorridenti, sempre insieme. Però, non le fanno un po' di invidia, chiese lei, avere qualcuno su cui si possa contare completamente, qualcuno al quale si possa dire proprio tutto? Ah, beh, erano ancora giovani. Avevano tutta la vita davanti.

Quando svoltava sul lungomare era il momento di parlare dell'ufficio. Aveva molti screzi con i colleghi perché, come diceva, non era tipo da sopportare volentieri gli idioti. Parassiti, diceva con disprezzo, ipocriti, tutti occhiate e sottintesi. E una volta, quando lei gli chiese delle sue prospettive future, lui sorrise e disse oh, da noi si va avanti a gomitate – non è sempre così nel

pubblico impiego? Le ultime due miglia prima di Castle Court erano dedicate alla famiglia. Gli piaceva parlare dei ragazzi più grandi, Robert e Peter, tutti e due all'Università ed entrambi nella squadra di rugby del college. E di Clare, il cervello della famiglia e anche la più carina. Era il più giovane, Paul, che gli dava le preoccupazioni più serie. Sempre nei guai. Uno spendaccione come sua madre. E allora lei gli ricordava di Jason che soffriva di asma perché quello che importava di più era la loro salute, giusto? E lui era d'accordo. Era vero, presumeva, se ci si pensava bene. E molto presto un'altra serata era finita e lei non aveva ancora detto niente.

Giovedì notte, l'ultima volta che l'avrebbe visto prima di domenica, arrivò tardi. Non era mai successo prima. Per più di un'ora era stata nel terrore che non sarebbe venuto affatto. Finalmente arrivò dopo mezzanotte, ma lei era così occupata che non poté raggiungerlo.

Quando arrivò con la macchina alle due meno cinque, stava piovendo. Passò su una pozzanghera davanti a lei in attesa e la fanghiglia le inzaccò le calze. Le calze nuove che aveva messo per l'occasione. Non appena salì in macchina vicino a lui, il cuore le si arrestò. Vide subito che era di cattivo umore. Le lunghe labbra pallide erano serrate. Le chiese come era andata senza alzare lo sguardo e non fece caso che indossava quella camicia di *satìn* bianco che gli piaceva tanto. Doveva farlo sfogare, riuscire a tirargli fuori il motivo della sua collera o si poteva scordare dell'intera faccenda. Due sere prima aveva deciso di chiederglielo. Ma non un prestito. Aveva pensato di fare in un altro modo. Aveva deciso la frase esatta da dire, le parole esatte che avrebbero reso il concetto senza rischio di fraintendimenti o di imbarazzo. Ma ogni volta i suoi nervi avevano ceduto all'ultimo minuto. Se non glielo diceva stasera non l'avrebbe detto più.

Iniziò con la signora O'..., la direttrice che aveva la risata pronta – facendo credere di essere astemia quando tutti sapevano che non poteva fare a meno della fiaschetta di cognac che teneva sotto la cassa. Ma lui sorrise appena e non fece commenti. Provò con tutti i soliti argomenti: il club, l'ufficio – successo niente di strano o di sensazionale, ma lui niente, non mostrava nessun interesse. Quando voltarono sul lungomare lei gli chiese perché era arrivato tardi. Ci siete mancato, disse. Ma lui sospirò e rispose con riluttanza, affari di famiglia. Era la famiglia, allora, che lo preoccupava, vero? Gli chiese notizie di ciascuno a turno senza successo fino a che non arrivò a Paul. Ah, era lui. La sua faccia era più pallida che mai, quasi grigia. Quel buono a nulla, disse in maniera sprezzante. Cosa aveva fatto? Chiese lei. Oh proprio niente – è soltanto stato minacciato di espulsione dalla migliore scuola del paese. E per che cosa? Per una femmina! Qualche piccola sguadrina rimorchiata in una sala da ballo! Lei disse che era terribile, per calmarlo, che era colpa dell'età. Non ne vuol sapere di mettere la testa a posto? Chissà, disse, ma sia che lo faccia o meno me ne lavo le mani di lui. E a quel punto lei si accorse che erano arrivati al Castle Court.

Aveva smesso di piovere. Ma grasse gocce lente cadevano ancora dagli alberi bagnati sopra l'auto e scorrevano lungo il tetto e i finestrini. Spense le luci e il motore. Ma invece di togliersi gli occhiali e riporli con attenzione in verticale sul cruscotto come faceva sempre, rimase immobile guardando fisso davanti a sé, con una strana espressione distante negli occhi. Cosa c'era che non andava? Era preoccupato soltanto per Paul? Di colpo si girò verso di lei e le chiese improvvisamente di Michelle e Sandra. Lei fu sorpresa. Non aveva mai fatto domande così personali. La rendeva nervosa e come una stupida disse: Le avevo detto che Sandra fa la Comunione sabato? Ah! e lui sorrise per la prima volta. Una bella età, incorrotta. Bisogna approfittarne finché dura. Beh, non è facile come una volta, replicò lei. E i ragazzi oggi si eccitano così tanto che ti si spezza il cuore a deluderli. Non aveva intenzione di dire ancora niente. Voleva aspettare fino alla fine della serata, quando avrebbero completato l'intera procedura. Ma la sua comprensione e il sollievo di essere stata capace di parlarne dopo tutte quelle settimane di ansia silenziosa, lo aveva fatto venir fuori. E hanno ragione, rispose lui solennemente. – E' un giorno speciale. Un giorno da ricordare. Forse se glielo diceva ora... forse era la occasione giusta. Se avesse elencato nei dettagli tutte le spese, perché un uomo non ha idea di quanto costi? Forse avrebbe dovuto dire che non erano solo per Sandra i soldi di cui aveva bisogno? L'avrebbe allora considerata superficiale ed egoista? Poteva un uomo capire che una madre deve essere sempre in forma per il bene dei suoi figli? Come faceva lui a sapere quanto fosse penoso vederli venir su che ti criticavano sempre? Dopo tutti gli anni di lavoro e di ansia, per non far loro mancare niente, accorgersi che ti guardano con freddezza. Imbarazzati per colpa tua. Come l'altro giorno quando si stava provando la camicetta che aveva fatto pulire per la Comunione ed era entrata Michelle, l'aveva fissata e aveva detto – Non ti metterai mica quel vecchiume un'altra volta, vero? Sembri una vecchia con quella! E fu proprio quello a convincerla. Da quel momento fu determinata. Non voleva che i suoi figli la guardassero con disprezzo. Vergognandosi di lei. L'avrebbe capito lui?

Vede... iniziò con esitazione, non è solo per i bambini che bisogna fare spese... per come vanno le cose oggi a scuola, l'aspetto dei genitori conta quanto il resto... A chi lo dice, fece con disprezzo. Ecco cos'è diventato il mondo. Anche la scuola è diventata un circo come tutto il resto. Quando ero bambino io, eravamo felici con mezza corona. Ora mi dicono che vanno di casa in casa e non sono soddisfatti, se non hanno fatto venti sterline! Lei sprofondò nel sedile, per timore di quello che aveva scatenato. La voce di lui continuò rapida e precisa: i filmi, pare siano l'ultima trovata... se fosse per me indosserebbero tutti l'uniforme scolastica. Bisogna mettere un freno a questo esibizionismo. Naturalmente, la colpa è delle madri... agghindarli come piccoli indossatori e indossatrici. Ma poi... fece una pausa e soggognò, come fa una donna a resistere all'occasione di sperperare denaro? La guardò e scosse la testa più con tristezza che con rabbia. Ma si sta facendo troppo tardi, aggiunse, non la devo trattenerne, vero? e si tolse gli occhiali e reclinò il sedile.

Accese una sigaretta e la aspirò profondamente. Era molto parsimonioso con il fumo. Gli piaceva solo in certi momenti della giornata, disse, dopo cena, a colazione e cose del genere. Ne offrì una anche a lei che rifiutò. Non aveva ancora perso la speranza di fargli quella richiesta e pensava che non sarebbe stato carino con una sigaretta in mano. Stava parlando di rugby, la sua voce di nuovo rilassata e amabile, di un certo *try* realizzato contro il Blackrock College sabato scorso. È fantastico, disse sebbene non volesse dir nulla per lei. La sua attenzione fu catturata solo dalla stranezza dell'espressione. Se era soltanto un *try*, un tentativo, perché tutta quell'eccitazione? E se era un punteggio vero proprio, perché chiamarlo *try*, tentativo? Tra un attimo avrebbe detto, beh, il tempo è gentiluomo. Avrebbe ripiegato il fazzoletto e avviato il motore. Prima controllò lo specchietto laterale, sempre meticoloso per quanto riguardava la procedura. La sua faccia era rivolta altrove, il che rendeva tutto più semplice.

Mi stavo chiedendo... inziò, mi stavo chiedendo... il cuore le batteva più forte, la mano giocherellava con le perle della collana, mi chiedevo... se non ci fosse qualcos'altro... La sua voce era calma ed uniforme e già c'era un tono nuovo – che sottintendeva qualcos'altro. Era attrazione? Civetteria?... sì, era questo, si sentiva che stava civettando con lui. Niente, abbassò gli occhi e li sollevò di nuovo. Le veniva da ridere. Pensò a Sandra. A come voleva che fosse vestita dopodomani, a quanto desiderava vederla sorridere a sua madre, orgogliosa di lei. Non posso fare altro per lei? Sembrava scioccato. Non aveva ancora capito, ma aveva colto molto bene il cambiamento di tono. Lei era così pratica di solito che l'aveva spaventato, come se l'avesse baciato. Che significa...? le chiese prudente quanto lo era stato lei. Toccava ora a lei fissare il parabrezza rigato di pioggia. Mentre stava così, pensando alla prossima frase da dire, notò due giovani donne in piedi sotto un lampione all'entrata del parcheggio dell'albergo. Sotto il bianco fascio di luce sembravano due figure su un palcoscenico, isolate dalla pallida oscurità che le circondava. Stavano una di fronte all'altra, guardandosi intensamente negli occhi. Una era bruna, l'altra bionda. Mentre le guardava, la bruna tese una mano e la posò sulla spalla dell'altra. Rimasero per un momento perfettamente immobili. Come giovani amanti, pensò e sorrise per l'assurdità della frase. Indossavano vestiti vivaci e alla moda, gonne corte e T-shirt molto aderenti. Per un istante qualcosa in loro le sembrò familiare. Cos'era? – i loro vestiti, il taglio di capelli, il modo di fare, la concentrazione incantata l'una per l'altra? Una strana coppia, pensò. E allora si rese conto... Julie e Barbara naturalmente... ecco chi erano! Avrebbe dovuto riconoscerle subito... Mi stava chiedendo se c'era qualcos'altro che mi avrebbe fatto piacere... La voce precisa del signor Conway irruppe nei suoi pensieri, voleva dire che... lo guardò, la sua faccia era china, ma lei vedeva che teneva ancora in mano il fazzoletto bianco, come se fosse incerto se rimetterlo in tasca oppure no. Perché... se per caso con questo intendesse che... continuò esitando, misurando le parole con cura. Mentre parlava

un improvviso grido di rabbia giunse dalla strada. Con un rapido scatto di paura gli occhi di lei si volsero verso le giovani donne che stava guardando prima. E vide che erano ora una nelle braccia dell'altra, abbracciate. E dietro di loro, che correva vicino alle automobili parcheggiate, c'era un uomo con una giacca di pelle nera che urlava e agitava qualcosa per aria. Non appena le due ragazze lo videro, se la diedero a gambe voltandosi indietro, scappando con una fretta quasi meccanica. L'uomo le inseguì sbandando goffamente da una parte all'altra, urlando ancora più forte e brandendo ciò che ora poteva vedere e cioè una bottiglia. Le ragazze correvano sotto gli alberi verso la loro macchina. Vide quelle due ragazze, disse al signor Conway, che corrono verso di noi... Dove? chiese lui, e con nonchalance iniziò a pulire gli occhiali con un angolo del fazzoletto... quali ragazze? Sono Julie e Barbara... Sono inseguite da un uomo... Cosa? disse lui... quelle due... qui?... a quest'ora? Sciocchezze! si rimise gli occhiali.

Le ragazze erano arrivate quasi alla loro altezza ora, si precipitarono in avanti mano nella mano, la bruna quasi trascinando l'altra. È così, disse lei, ne sono sicura... L'uomo le seguiva ancora, ma era troppo malfermo sulle gambe per raggiungerle. Il signor Conway accese i fari. Le ragazze barcollarono accorate per un momento. Lei si voltò per aprire lo sportello ma nell'agitazione non riusciva a trovare la maniglia. Le ragazze li avevano raggiunti. Urtarono contro il cofano. Le sentì ridere sommessamente. Vuoi venire, Cristo... una di loro disse all'altra, spingendola e proseguirono barcollando. Mentre passavano vicino al finestrino lei le vide bene nella luce dell'auto, illuminate completamente – i loro giovani volti pallidi con un fard rosso come il rossetto, i loro occhi neri, quasi pesti di mascara e ombretto. Non le aveva mai viste prima in vita sua. Come aveva potuto pensare di conoscerle? Cosa l'aveva indotta a credere che fossero Julie e Barbara? Erano passate oltre ormai. La voce dell'uomo echeggiava dietro l'automobile: Vi ammazzerò cazzo... se io... cazzo... E poi passò oltre anche lui, sbandando nell'oscurità.

“Non si può far niente?” implorò il signor Conway. “Non le possiamo lasciare nelle mani di quell'uomo...”

“Per l'amor del cielo!” disse “Ma che crede che potrei fare io?”

“Ma potrebbero essere assalite... violentate... tutto...”

“Violentate?” lui ripeté, incredulo. E con suo grande stupore scoppiò in una risata aspra, una risata volgare del tutto diversa dal solito. “Violentate, quelle due” disse “sarebbe da ridere!”

“Perché?” chiese lei a disagio.

“Per amor del cielo” disse, “non vede che sono passeggiatrici... nient'altro che comuni prostitute! Mi creda è meglio lasciar quella gente cuocer nel suo brodo”.

Lei sedeva sbalordita, fissando senza espressione la strada davanti a sé, ormai deserta. Poi aggiunse incerta, “Anche se così fosse... non possiamo starcene qui e lasciare che...”

“Per amor di Dio, benedetta donna” scoppiò esasperato – “Mi dice come si può violentare una puttana?”

Le parole sembrarono colpirla come un pugno. Quasi indietreggiò, senza capire. Non riusciva ad afferrarne il senso. Le ripeteva nella mente, sentendosi ottusa e sciocca. Cosa c'era che non andava? Perché si era sentita così preoccupata per quelle due? Aveva ragione lui, pensò. Non vale la pena di immischiarsi.

Mi stia a sentire... la sua voce era di nuovo gentile ed educata, è meglio che la accompagni fino a casa... solo per questa volta? Non è sicuro lasciarla andare da sola con tipi come questi in giro? Avviò il motore e uscì dal parcheggio, infilando la strada prima che lei potesse rispondere. Percorsero in silenzio tutta Fairbank Avenue. Svoltò su Parkgrove ed un momento dopo su Grace Heights.

Fermò la macchina all'angolo, con il motore ancora acceso. Lei prese un pettine dalla borsa per sistemarsi i capelli. A proposito... cosa stava per chiedermi prima?

Oh... niente disse lei, niente che non possa aspettare. Ripose il pettine nella borsa e la chiuse. Si sentì dire in un tono triste e ferito: Erano solo ragazze, però. Ragazze? – esclamò, e poi rise di nuovo. Guardi, si fidi di me – quei tipi là nascono femmine fatte!

Lei aprì lo sportello e scese. Il freddo umido della notte le ferì il volto. Improvvisamente voleva allontanarsi da lui. Voleva essere sola con le figlie a casa sua. Sola con questo nuovo sentimento che la sorprende. Uno sconcertante, oscuro senso di colpa. E vergogna.

Un momento solo, disse lui, lei sentì che le toccava il gomito, non ha dimenticato qualcosa? Guardando in basso vide che le offriva una fruscante banconota da venti sterline. Erano sempre banconote nuove quelle che le dava. Le andava a prendere in banca apposta. Lo considerava ormai un segno della sua delicatezza. Esitò. Poi la prese. Scoprì allora che erano due banconote, non una.

Qualcosa per la Comunione, disse sorridendo con il suo sorriso stanco e serio.

Works Cited

- Coppola Maria Micaela (2000), “Mary Dorcey: il linguaggio del desiderio”, *DWF* 3, 47, 90-96.
 — (2013), “Mary Dorcey. Il respiro della storia”, *Poesia. Mensile internazionale di cultura poetica* 286, 2-17.
 Dorcey Mary (1982), *Kindling*, London, Onlywomen Press.
 — (1989), *A Noise from the Woodshed*, London, Onlywomen Press.
 — (1991), *Moving into the Space Cleared by Our Mothers*, Galway, Salmon, 25-27.
 — (1993), “The Lift Home”, in Caroline Walsh (ed.), *Virgins and Hyacinths*, Dublin, Attic Press, 73-91.

- (1995), *The River that Carries Me*, Galway, Salmon Poetry.
- (1997), *Biography of Desire*, Dublin, Poolbeg Publishing.
- (2001), *Like Joy in Season, Like Sorrow*, Cliffs of Moher, Salmon Poetry.
- (2012), *Perhaps the Heart is Constant After All*, Cliffs of Moher, Salmon Poetry.
- O'Brien Edna (1960), *The Country Girls*, London, Hutchinson & Co.
- O'Brien Kate (1958), *As Music and Splendour*, London, Heinemann.
- Poloczek Katarzyna (2011), "Women's Power to Be Loud: The Authority of the Discourse and Authority of the Text in Mary Dorsey's Irish Lesbian Poetic Manifesto in *Come Quietly or the Neighbours Will Hear*", *Text Matters* 1, 1, 153-169.
- Quinn Antoinette (1992), "Speaking the Unspoken: the Poetry of Mary Dorsey", *Colby Quarterly* 8, 4, 227-238.

Libri ricevuti / Books received

Richard Ambrosini, John McCourt, Enrico Terrinoni, and Serenella Zanotti, eds, *Outside influences: essays in honour of Franca Ruggieri*, Mantua, Universitas, 2014, pp. 356. NPG: ISBN 978-88-97683-73-5.

Samuel Beckett, *Mercier e Camier*, a cura di Chiara Montini, Torino, Einaudi, 2015, pp. 156. €18. ISBN 978-88-0613-589-8.

Samuel Beckett, *Teatro*, a cura di Paolo Bertinetti, Torino, Einaudi, 2014, pp. 400. €14. ISBN 978-88-0622-136-2

Ciaran Carson, *Exchange Place, Belfast*, traduzione di Eleonora Ottaviani, Bracciano, Del Vecchio, 2013, pp. 250. €14. ISBN 978-88-6110-061-9.

Ciaran Carson, *Prima lingua*, cura e traduzione di Marco Federici Solari e Lorenzo Flabbi, Bracciano, Del Vecchio, 2013, pp. 211. €13. ISBN 978-88-6110-018-3.

Andrea Ceccherelli, Gabriella Elina Imposti, Monica Perotto (a cura di), *Autotraduzione e Riscrittura*, Bologna, Bononia UP, 2013, pp. 487. €30. ISBN 978-88-7395-867-3.

Michael D. Higgins, *Il tradimento e altre poesie*, traduzione e cura di Enrico Terrinoni, con una postfazione di Giulio Giorello, Bracciano, Del Vecchio Editore, 2014, pp. 191. €15. ISBN 978-88-6110-107-4.

Valentina Milli, «*Truth is an odd number*». *La narrativa di Flann O'Brien e il fantastico*, Firenze, Firenze UP, 2014, pp. 272. Open access: <http://www.fupress.com/archivio/pdf/2979_7020.pdf>. e-ISBN: 978-88-6655-745-6.

Lorenzo Orlandini, *The relentless body. L'impossibile elisione del corpo in Samuel Beckett e la noluntas schopenhaueriana*, Firenze, Firenze UP, 2014, pp. 208. Open access: <http://www.fupress.com/archivio/pdf/2792_6928.pdf>. e-ISBN: 978-88-6655-685-5.

Fabrizio Pasanisi, *L'isola che scompare. Viaggio nell'Irlanda di Joyce e Yeats*, Roma, Nutrimenti, 2014, 237. €18. ISBN 978-88-6594-356-4.

Joanna Rostek, Dirk Uffelmann (eds), *Contemporary Polish Migrant Culture and Literature in Germany, Ireland, and the UK*, Frankfurt am Main, Peter Lang, 2011, pp. 311. €51,95. ISBN 978-36-3158-773-7.

Teocrito, Bione, Ovidio, Ronsard, Shakespeare, La Fontaine, Shelley, Yeats, *Adone. Variazioni sul mito*, a cura di Alessandro Grilli, Venezia, Marsilio, 2014, pp. 241. €9. ISBN 978-88-317-1733-5.

The Letters of Samuel Beckett 1957-1965, ed. by George Craig, Martha Dow Fehsenfeld, Dan Gunn and Lois More Overbeck, Cambridge, Cambridge UP, 2014, pp. 771. £30. ISBN 978-0- 521-86795-5.

William Wall, *Le notizie sono*, a cura di Adele D'Arcangelo, Faenza, Mobydick, 2012, pp. 94. €13. ISBN 978-88-8178-499-8.

Robert Anthony Welch, *The Cold of May Day Monday. An Approach to Irish Literary History*, Oxford, Oxford UP, 2014, pp. 331. £19,99. ISBN 978-01-9968-684-1.

William Butler Yeats, *L'opera poetica (vol. I – 1889–1899)*, nella versione di Carlo Franzini, Ro, Book Editore, 2014, pp. 238. €14. ISBN 978-88-7232-716-6.

William Butler Yeats, *Verso Bisanzio. Poesie*, a cura di Dario Calimani, Venezia, Marsilio, 2014, pp. 224. €17. ISBN 978-88-3171-929-2.

Emanuela Zirzotti, *Incontrando l'antichità. Seamus Heaney e i classici greci e latini*, Roma, Aracne, 2014, pp. 220. €15. ISBN 978-88-548-7416.

Recensioni / Reviews

Sabine Egger and John McDonagh (eds), *Polish-Irish Encounters in the Old and New Europe*, Oxford-Bern-Berlin-Bruxelles-Frankfurt am Mein-New York-Wien, Peter Lang, 2011, pp. xvii+304. ISBN 978-3-0343-0253-1.

Sabine Egger and John McDonagh's volume was born out of an academic conversation on the topic of migration to Ireland. The papers published here were presented at the interdisciplinary conference, *Polish-Irish Encounters in the Old and New Europe*, held at Mary Immaculate College in Limerick in 2008, a time in which migration to Ireland, as they point out in their "Introduction", was at its climax. The majority of these migrants were coming from Poland and other Eastern European countries. These mostly Polish workers "meant a first experience of multiculturalism for a largely monocultural Ireland" (ix-x). Therefore, the aim of this volume is to stimulate a wider debate on the impact that Polish immigration had on Ireland. The editors' wish is to provide a more encompassing picture of the encounter between two countries that have common cultural traits: "both are Catholic countries in which religion is closely linked with national identity; both had a history of occupation by bigger neighbours; both experienced mass emigration to America" (ix).

The volume is divided into four parts. Part I and II – titled respectively "Strands and Connections in Nineteenth- and Twentieth-Century History" and "Poland and Ireland in Literature and Photography" – include essays that have a literary and historical viewpoint, while Part III and IV comprise contributions with a more 'scientific' approach. For instance, Part III, whose self-explanatory title is "Educational and Linguistic Encounters", is concerned with educational systems and language acquisition. And Part IV, "Polish Migrants or the New Irish? Concepts of Identity", contains papers that look at Polish-Irish relations from an anthropological point of view.

The collection begins with three essays that take into account the main characteristics that Ireland and Poland have in common, i.e., their aforementioned past made of mass emigration to the United States, their strong Catholic identity, and their history of invasion. John Belchem's "Patterns of Mobility: Irish and Polish Migration in Comparative Historical Perspective" delineates a comparison between these two migrating communities, and their coming to terms with their new American lives. Belchem explains

that, although to Americans Irish and Polish migrants were so similar as to be “lumped together into ethnonational categories, Irish, Italian, Polish” (7), their strategies of assimilation have followed opposite paths. Whereas the Irish have sought ethnic networking and integration, the Poles have aimed at ethnic isolationism and inbreeding.

The second contribution “Religion and Rebellion: The Catholic Church in Ireland and Poland from 1848 to 1867”, by Róisín Healy, describes how, during the 19th century, the Catholic Church strongly interlocked with politics and nationalist movements both in Ireland and Poland. And the third essay by Paul Macnamara, “Sean Lester and Polish Foreign Policy in the Free City of Danzig, 1934-1937”, is an account of the unfortunate struggle, in the years preceding the 1939 invasion of Poland by Germany, that the Irish diplomat Sean Lester faced in order to defend the relatively new, independent and democratic state of Danzig. Concluding Part I is an analysis by Jonathan Murphy (“‘Common Resolutions to Common Problems?’ Drawing Parallels between Irish and Polish Experiences with Frontier Issues in the Twentieth Century”) of another, and probably less evident, similarity between these two countries, that is the excruciating process that has led up to the definition of their national borders.

The first two essays of Part II, respectively by John Merchant and Robert Looby, deal with the changing fortunes of Irish playwrights in Poland. In his “Universal Identities and Local Realities: Young Poland’s (Mis)readings of Synge”, Merchant gives an account of the ways in which Synge’s work was rather misunderstood by the Young Poland cultural movement. Similarly, Looby’s essay concentrates on the reception of Irish Drama in post-war Poland, and depicts an extremely variable and varied picture, mainly influenced by politics and Communist censorship.

Of the following two essays is Joanna Rostek’s contribution very interesting, “From A Polish in Dublin to Polish Dublin: Retracing Changing Migratory Patterns in Two Recent ‘Dublin Novels’ by Polish Migrants”. Rostek navigates the reader through the work of Polish writers Iwona Słabuszewska-Krauze and Magdalena Orzeł. Their novels offer a chance to see Ireland through the eyes of Polish (female) migrants, who “comment on the unreliability of public transportation, the incomprehensibly early closing hours and the Irish imperturbability in the face of unpredictable and horribly horizontal rain” (126). These characters experience a certain disappointment when facing Irish reality, and relate of a Polish inferiority complex towards European countries that has created this mythological idea of Ireland. Therefore, what comes out of Słabuszewska-Krauze’s and Orzeł’s novels can be interpreted as a “re-adjustment” (127) of an idealised image of Ireland. And maybe a fresh insight on its “monocultural” nature too.

Patrick Nugent’s “Ireland’s Symbolic Landscapes: A Polish Perspective” closes this second part with a discussion on the photographic images archived on Fotoirlandia.com, a website featuring the work of Polish photographers

that, as Nugent argues, “allows the ‘natives’ to view the familiar anew through the eyes of ‘newcomers’ in an engaging, evocative and original manner” (131). More than anything else, his discussion brings to light the highly symbolic content of the pictures taken by Polish photographers.

Part III, Educational and Linguistic Encounters, begins with a compelling paper by Bartolomiej Walczak titled “School, Family and EU-migration: Sociological and Educational Implications”. The paper, that starts as a debate on the alleged detrimental effects migrating parents would inflict on their children when leaving them behind, ends with a quite astonishing conclusion. After having carried out research in Polish schools, among teachers who have students from migrating families, Walczak found out that although data show that educators have a crucial role in children’s socialisation processes, “[w]hat is alarming [...] is that 40.6 per cent of students from migratory families looking for help from their class tutors did not receive it. And 55.8 per cent of students state that they did not receive any support from their teachers when approaching them” (165). Therefore, these children are not only deserted by their parents, but also by their teachers.

While Liliana Kalinowska’s essay provides a historical analysis of early childhood educational systems both in Ireland and in Poland, Ewelina Debaene and Romana Kopečková focus their investigation on adult learners of Polish in Ireland, and relate a positive impression. On the other hand, Joanna Baumgart and Fiona Farr give a less rosy account of Irish secondary education. In their “Polish Teenagers’ Integration into Irish Secondary Schools: Language, Culture and Support Systems”, they highlight the widespread unpreparedness shown by Irish teachers in secondary schools, with regard to cultural difference and integration strategies. This deficiency, generally disregarded by teachers, leads to an increased feeling of foreignness in Polish teenage students. The last contribution in Part III, “‘Adult Children’ of Emigrant and their Migration Experience”, is by Rozalia Ligus. “Adult children” are adults who are affected by negative experiences they had in their childhood. Ligus’ is a stimulating study of the biographical accounts that some of them gave as children of lifelong migrating parents.

The last section of the collection looks at the matter of Polish-Irish relations from an anthropological stance. Part IV begins with Tomasz Kamusella’s “Immigrants, Migrants or New Irish?”. His analysis places the migration of Polish people in the wider context of the EU economy, and gives a sensible overview of the migrants’ expectations once they move to another European country. Similarly, Nanette Schupper’s essay, “An Initial Report on the Integration of Polish Migrants to Ireland: The Issues of Language and Deskill-ing”, provides a portrait of Polish migrants in the new Irish economy. Not surprisingly, Polish migrants are overrepresented in low-skilled job sectors notwithstanding their average high level of education, and this “indicates that there is no equality in the Irish labour market at present” (263).

The last two essays in the collection deal with cosmopolitanism. Kinga Olszewska relates the positive outcome of two cultural projects that were inspired by cosmopolitan ideals. One is ArtPolonia, a cultural organisation based in Dublin, and the other is the Aughnacloy Truagh European Studies Schools Project, an initiative that involved six primary schools in different Irish counties, from 1997 to 1999. According to Olszewska, these initiatives “contribute to a better understanding of the dynamics of communities created by means other than those of common political or cultural identity” (276). Simon Warren’s essay, “Against Cosmopolitanism? A Theoretical Exploration of the Tensions between Irish-Speaking and Post-Nationalist Multicultural Ireland”, ends Part IV and the collection. His is a careful reflection that entwines cosmopolitanism and the use of English as the global vernacular, and suggests that ideals informing multicultural practices of inclusion, might eventually lead to exclusion.

Polish-Irish Encounters in the Old and New Europe really provides a wide overview of the historical, cultural and linguistic relationship between Ireland and Poland. And it does so at a time of profound cultural change for Ireland. The prime merit of this volume is its presenting Ireland from an external point of view, and exposing its provinciality and cultural self-centredness in an unembellished fashion. It is an interesting change of perspective, to finally have the East looking at the West, and an important addition to Irish Cultural Studies, even though it is just a starting point. However, being an overview, this volume leaves the reader with a few questions, which is probably the intent of its editors, to provoke the readers’ curiosity about the presence of Polish and Eastern European people, not just in Ireland but in the rest of Europe too. After reading this collection there is no doubt that, notwithstanding the significance of migration flows from Eastern towards Western Europe, these countries and their people are still greatly underrepresented in the European context of Cultural Studies.

Arianna Gremigni

David Worthington, *British and Irish Experiences and Impressions of Central Europe, c. 1560-1688*, Farnham-Burlington, Ashgate, 2012, pp. xviii+232. ISBN 978-0-7546-6342-3.

Since 2012 David Worthington has been the Head of the Centre for History at the University of Highlands and Islands. Much of his research has been revolving around the presence of British and Irish people in Europe, particularly in Central Europe. His first monograph, published in 2003, was *Scots in Habsburg Service, 1618-1648*. Then, in 2009, he edited the volume *British and Irish Emigrants and Exiles in Europe, 1603-1688*. Therefore, *British and Irish Experiences and Impressions of Central Europe, c. 1560-1688* can be seen as the natural continuation of his work.

The book draws on an impressive and extremely varied amount of sources – including journals, letters, and diaries – and shows how, in the period covered by Worthington’s research, British and Irish people were more closely linked to Central Europe than Rome. The fact that British and Irish connections to Central Europe have so far lacked proper acknowledgment, being overshadowed by more fashionable Grand Tour memories, and the fact that Worthington begins his investigation by trying to define and locate “Central Europe”, bespeaks the historiographic relevance of this book. After concluding that a clear definition of sixteenth- and seventeenth-century Central Europe is impracticable, Worthington cleverly and accurately maps out the relations existing between British and Irish emigrants and exiles to Central Europe and “seeks to offer a transnational perspective on the now established ‘New British and Irish histories’” (2).

Following the “Introduction”, Worthington’s exploration is organised in five chapters, preceded by an “Explanation of Terminology”, which is fundamental to help the reader navigate through an early modern geography made of shifting borders and shifting political influences. The tables with place names and dates are also helpful, while the ancient maps which complement the chapters seems to serve a purely aesthetic function. However, the book includes some interesting engravings. Finally, following the last chapter is a brief “Conclusion”, which connects the period taken into consideration for this book with some future developments.

The first chapter, “Commentators and Comparisons” relates the accounts of upper-class Irish and British travellers, who travelled beyond Western European regions to the lands of the Austrian Habsburgs and to Poland-Lithuania. The reader will find the conclusion of this first chapter of a certain significance, “[t]he British and Irish view of those times [...] was of a central Europe that seemed less exotic than that which writers further west have imagined since the Enlightenment period” (44). Worthington begins showing the importance of British and Irish activity in Central Europe, which was at least equivalent to that in Western Europe, and which will be detailed further in the following chapters. Moreover, it is here that Worthington introduces the influential European branch of the Scottish family of the Leslies, who at that time were at the centre of an English-speaking circle in the Austrian-Hasburg lands, and who are a constant presence throughout the book.

The second chapter, “Court and Crown”, assesses the extent of both Tudor and Stuart diplomatic endeavours in the region. These, Worthington claims, sprang from a certain antagonism with France, and had to do with an aspiration to bring Christendom together. Most of all, the chapter stresses the significance of these diplomatic relations with the Imperial court, which at various times were supported by the Leslie circle, pointing out that not only were they a precious source of information but, as shown in the following chapters, also affected British and Irish domestic affairs, and later Brit-

ish foreign policy. This line of thought is confirmed in Chapter 3: “Cavaliers and Christendom” provides a portrayal of the British and Irish officers and soldiers whose fight alongside the Hasburgs and Poland, before, during and after the Thirty Years’ War, helped “Christendom” resist the Ottoman Empire. In the last two chapters, “Calvinists, the ‘Curious’ and Commerce” and “Catholic Colleges and Clergy”, Worthington is more concerned with religious aspects. These final chapters probably represent the most interesting part of the book. In these Worthington manages to highlight the dissimilarities characterizing the experiences that these different and often opposed people, i.e. the English, the Scots, the Irish and Welsh had in central Europe.

What one can assess in reading Worthington’s portrayal of the British and Irish presence in early modern central Europe, is that he analysed an extensive amount of sources from various archives in Austria, Poland, Belgium and Czech Republic. Apart from proving his impressive linguistic skills, this bulk of evidence was fundamental in providing the backbone of his research, which is nothing less than meticulous. However, even though never obscure, the thematic arrangement of this information does make the narrative somewhat erratic, and, at times, it seems to be organized as a list of facts and examples that can be difficult for the common reader to follow.

This of course does not diminish the value of Worthington’s work. In fact, since as far as the early modern period is concerned, not much is known about the interactions of British and Irish people with other European cultures, and even less is known about their interactions with people residing east of France, this book represents an important piece of scholarly achievement. Worthington’s monograph is a step forward in our understanding of the role that English, Scottish, Irish and Welsh people had abroad at that time, and also of the reasons that brought them there. Accordingly, *British and Irish Experiences and Impressions of Central Europe* provides a good deal of insight into the topic of early modern migration from the British Isles, and even though it leaves substantial issues open to debate, it begins to tackle the question of the inherent differences that characterized British and Irish people of that time from a transnational point of view. That is, it gives an overview of the ways in which they perceived themselves in a foreign land, as opposed to the motherland; or it tries to explain what informed their ideas of ethnic, cultural and national identity, once they were displaced, at a time in which nations were rather cloudy entities.

Arianna Gremigni

Riccardo Capoferro, *Leggere Swift*, Roma, Carocci, 2013 (“Bussole”), pp. 126. ISBN 978-88-430-6959-0.

Chi non ricorda il “large pair of bellows with a long slender muzzle of ivory” (Swift, *Gulliver’s Travels* 1726) che il “great physician” della Academy

of Lagado sperimenta sul malcapitato cane per testare la nuova cura contro i disturbi dell'intestino? La povera bestiola sodomizzata viene immolata sull'altare della scienza, mentre Gulliver se ne va guardandosi bene dal sottoporsi al trattamento per la sua "small fit of cholick". Qualche mese dopo l'uscita dei *Gulliver's Travels* la scena fa cortocircuito nell'immaginazione di William Hogarth al punto da suggerirgli un episodio del tutto assente dal testo swiftiano: una punizione rabelaisiana per la profanazione urinaria arrecata dall' "uomo montagna" al palazzo reale di Mildendo sotto forma di purga tramite una *fire engine*, alquanto 'anacronistica' visto che i lillipuziani di Jonathan Swift conoscono solo arco e frecce (<<http://www.metmuseum.org/collection/the-collection-online/search/392597>>). Al Gulliver esaltatore invaghito della civiltà di Lilliput (allegoricamente l'Inghilterra) non può che prescriversi la cura omeopatica per liberarsi dell'aria in eccesso del suo 'entusiasmo', per giunta applicata con tutta la violenza di cui è capace una delle famose invenzioni dei Moderni, le armi da fuoco, tanto per meglio rivelare il reale sottotesto di crudeltà del mondo contemporaneo. A poco più di sessant'anni, l'oggetto carnevalesco riemerge in una caricatura altrettanto famosa di William Dent in occasione del processo di *impeachment* a Warren Hastings, governatore e, secondo l'opposizione, "torturatore" dell'India (1788). Qui è appunto il capo dell'opposizione Whig, Charles James Fox, a manovrare il "pair of bellows" che ha assunto il sembiante della vera *mastermind* del processo, l'occhialuto Edmund Burke, ed è inserito nel posteriore del mattatore Richard Brinsley Sheridan a 'ispirarne' il "long-winded speech [...] harmonized with sublime and beautiful inflation" (<http://www.britishmuseum.org/research/collection_online/collection_object_details.aspx?objectId=1634873&partId=1&people=23883&peopleA=23883-1-9&page=1>) per la performance politica più importante del secolo.

Non appaia sconveniente sottolineare come nel fecondo immaginario satirico dei caricaturisti settecenteschi e pur da posizioni ideologiche diverse – Hogarth solidale con Swift, Dent opposto a Burke – sia questo oggetto, metà presidio medico ippocratico, metà strumento di tortura, il *trait d'union* tra le due più grandi figure di irlandesi del secolo. Per meglio dire, di anglo-irlandesi. Dagli importanti studi di David Berman sulla "Irish philosophy" fino alla monumentale biografia di Burke scritta da uno dei maggiori studiosi swiftiani contemporanei, F.P. Lock, emerge quasi un passaggio di testimone tra Swift e Burke – quest'ultimo nato a Dublino pochi mesi dopo la pubblicazione di *Modest Proposal* (1729) – e di certo la condivisione del medesimo contesto culturale, quello delle dispute linguistico-religiose svoltesi all'interno della Church of Ireland a inizi del secolo, all'insegna di un lockianesimo anti-razionalista tanto in religione quanto in politica.

Ed è qui che il mantice, da cui si produce *air* e *wind*, che, proseguendo con la tipica associazione di idee lockiana, diventano facilmente *breath* e *spirit*, e andando ancora più oltre verso associazioni di idee complesse e modi mis-

ti, *rhetoric* e *enthusiam*, catalizza quasi come un eliotiano correlativo oggettivo la comune battaglia contro la modernità, che si basa su un'impostazione filosofica, linguistica, religiosa e politica comune ai due intellettuali. Battaglia contro il 'materialismo' a un tempo scienziista e puritano, contro la riduzione della creatività umana, intellettuale e artistica, e della fede nella parola incarnata a mera "mechanical operation" (*Mechanical Operation of the Spirit* 1704). Come ben illustrato da Capoferro nel paragrafo dedicato alla "meccanizzazione dello spirito" (66-73), è nelle satire giovanili di Swift (*Tale of a Tub* 1704, *Battle of the Books* 1704 e appunto *Mechanical Operation of the Spirit*) che si inaugura quella linea critica dell'episteme moderna, con le sue articolazioni di epistemologia empirista, radicalismo religioso, politica degli affari e della guerra, che sul filo dell'interpretazione di Raymond Williams condurrà per l'appunto a partire da Burke attraverso Coleridge, Carlyle, J.S. Mill, Newman e Arnold alla contestazione del meccanicismo e dell'industrialismo, alla critica del consumismo, alla rifondazione ottocentesca dell'umanesimo e al conservatorismo liberale, per un verso; alla variante morrisiana del socialismo britannico, per l'altro. Tutto parte dalle pagine dedicate da Locke nel III libro dell'*Essay Concerning Human Understanding* (1689) a parole come *spirit* o *infinite* o *vacuum*, a quelle idee, insomma, per nulla chiare e distinte. Deisti quali l'irlandese John Toland si appellano all'autorità di Locke per ridurre tutti i dogmi a pure emissioni di fiato, suoni senza senso, cose di cui non si può parlare e dunque sarebbe meglio tacere. A tale radicalizzazione della linguistica lockiana la linea moderata dei prelati irlandesi contrappone un argomento ancora più lockiano, quasi anticipatore del secondo Wittgenstein: proprio perché se ne parla, pur se a pressappoco, tali parole sono adeguate a comunicare l'idea di qualcosa che è di per sé inconoscibile. Nello scetticismo della ragione e nel valore eucaristico della parola si può riscoprire il modello dell'eloquenza degli Antichi, modello gnoseologico e etico ancor prima che retorico; e quando il mondo moderno scandagliato con un tale strumento ideologico restituisce da tutti gli angoli l'immagine opposta, quella aberrante dell'orgoglioso e sfrenato capriccio individuale che strappa il legame con la tradizione e aspira alla rivoluzione, alla scrittura letteraria così come all'oratoria politica non resta che contrattaccare con una pragmatica comunicativa dell'eccesso, del *wit* e del pugno nello stomaco del lettore o dello spettatore. Così per Swift come per Burke.

Bene fa Capoferro a dedicare un'ampia sezione del pur limitato spazio consentito dalla collana delle "Bussole" ai profondi rapporti tra letteratura e storia, a insistere, in funzione non unicamente didattica, sulla validità metodologica di non svincolare un testo dal suo contesto d'origine, a pena di perderne le implicazioni ideologiche, intellettuali e umane, e a ricondurre il senso di un'opera di "natura intimamente politica" (7) come quella di Swift alla formazione dell'autore, alle esperienze culturali e alle convenzioni letterarie precedenti e contemporanee, in una parola al *landscape* di riferimento,

come recita il titolo del lavoro di Carole Fabricant, che ne ha riscoperto il legame con l'Irlanda. Naturalmente, non solo nel paesaggio e tra le dispute irlandesi, si comprende la mente creativa di Swift, anzi: prima di tutto la conoscenza degli autori e dei generi classici e poi il rapporto con i grandi mentori inglesi Temple e Harley, così come con gli amici dello Scriblerus Club (Harley stesso, Pope, Boling-broke, Gay), il confronto con l'intelligenza londinese del giornalismo e del dibattito culturale, maschile e femminile, amica e nemica (Addison, Steele, Mainwaring, Delarivière Manley) e con i grandi del potere politico del tempo, da Queen Anne a Marlborough e Godolphin fino a Walpole, si incastonano perfettamente nella descrizione del contesto culturale, che Capoferro conduce con magistrale capacità di sintesi e di esaustività e che gli consente di pervenire non solo a un'invidiabile visione d'insieme della complessa figura di Swift, ma anche a elaborare interpretazioni originali della sua innovatività. Come quando, ad esempio, sulla base di un'approfondita consuetudine con la letteratura di viaggio empirista e sulla scorta dell'immenso lavoro sul romanzo moderno svolto da McKeon, può giungere a affermare che rispetto all'uso della "retorica empirica" praticato dalla letteratura di viaggio precedente incluso il *Robinson Crusoe*, "mai prima [dei *Gulliver's Travels*] era stata messa a punto una tale miscela: a un massimo di apparente precisione descrittiva [...] si accompagna un massimo di improbabilità per quanto riguarda gli oggetti rappresentati. [...] una lingua che pur rispondendo ai parametri codificati dalla Royal Society innervasse una vasta gamma di rappresentazioni distanti dal mondo dell'esperienza, derivate per altro dall'immaginario premoderno che il sapere empirico tendeva a demistificare" (85-86). Questa, a detta di Capoferro, la cifra del particolare 'fantastico' inaugurato dai *Viaggi*, diverso bensì dall'accezione ristretta todoroviana più adeguata al gotico, ma, in quanto matrice della successiva letteratura di fantascienza e del sovrannaturale, ben più plausibile.

Ci sia però consentito insistere sull'irlandesità e sul parallelo con Burke per ripercorrere alcune delle pennellate con cui Capoferro dipinge la figura di Swift e che trovano riscontro anche nella vasta corrispondenza. "I *Viaggi di Gulliver* sembrerebbero esprimere, anche in questo caso [la figura di Lord Munodi], un viluppo di desideri e delusioni: un sentimento che non è solo di indignazione, ma anche di nostalgia" (84): il sentimento, maturato negli anni della composizione dei *Viaggi*, non solo o non tanto del proverbiale profeta in patria quanto dell'esiliato con i postumi dell'euforia da impegno politico e da frequentazione delle stanze del potere, da cui è stato tenuto sostanzialmente fuori nella posizione subalterna dell'utile servo, del colto propagandista politico, quasi quanto i bersagliati *hackwriters* di Grub Street. La stessa subalternità in qualche modo lasciata intuire dal caricaturista di Burke, quando attribuisce i ruoli nell'applicazione del "clistere politico" (Robert Sayer 1757, <<http://www.metmuseum.org/collection/the-collection-online/search/396543?=&imgno=0&tabname=object-information>>): il ruolo primario del manovra-

tore dello strumento, all'inglese Fox, mentre i parlamentari anglo-irlandesi, l'uno il filosofo dell'estetica, l'altro il fine dicitore, sono in posizione subalterna, manovrati l'uno a fare il lavoro più sporco, l'altro pura marionetta ventriloqua. È il destino e la dimensione esistenziale dell'Anglo-Irish, che anche in Irlanda è uno spaesato, un alieno in una terra non sentita come propria, in mezzo a un popolo allo stesso tempo difeso e disprezzato: le pagine che Capoferro dedica all'atteggiamento filo-irlandese di Swift e alla sua intuizione del parallelismo tra progetto espansionistico coloniale britannico e processo di depauperamento e sfruttamento delle risorse irlandesi raccontano una storia di forte ambivalenza, compatimento misto a repulsione, una storia interpretata in modi controversi e altalenanti da storici e critici. Ancora una volta è la lingua a fare la differenza per Swift e ne segna la condanna, ancor più di Burke, che al suo *Irish Brogue* rimase pervicacemente legato tutta la vita e mai avrebbe usato i termini né adottato il tono semiserio che Swift riserva alla lingua madre:

It is true, that in the city-part of London, the trading people have an affected manner of pronouncing; and so, in my time, had many ladies and coxcombs at Court. It is likewise true, that there is an odd provincial cant in most counties of England, sometimes not very pleasing to the ear; and the Scotch cadence, as well as expression, are offensive enough. But none of these defects derive contempt to the speaker; whereas, what we call the Irish Brogue is no sooner discovered that it makes the deliverer, in the last degree, ridiculous and despised; and from such a mouth, an Englishman expects nothing but bulls, blunders, and follies. Neither does it avail whether the censure be reasonable or not, since the fact is always so. And, what is yet worse, it is too well known that the bad consequence of this opinion affects those among us who are not the least liable to such reproaches, further than the misfortune of being born in Ireland, although of English parents, and whose education hath been chiefly in that kingdom. (*On Barbarous Denominations in Ireland*, 1728)

D'altronde, la radicalità dell'ironia di Swift non fa prigionieri, non salva niente e nessuno. Come ben rileva Capoferro a più riprese – dalla posizione solo apparentemente positiva di Martin nel *Tale of a Tub* (1704, 63-64) alla *unreliability* di tutte le figure di narratore (50, 86-87, 105) fino alla “parziale inaffidabilità della *persona*” che parla di sé nelle poesie (111-115) – la scrittura creativa di Swift non dà tregua ad alcun essenzialismo.

Daniele Niedda

Mary O'Donnell, *Where they Lie*, Dublin, New Island Books, 2014, pp. 224. ISBN 978-1-84840-342-0

Mary O'Donnell's fourth novel, *Where they Lie*, represents in many ways a form of both continuity and novelty in her fiction. Taking into account

challenging topics often related to the female experience, Mary O'Donnell has deliberately tried to focus on neglected subjects, not only sexuality and maternity, but also infertility in stories from her 1991 collection *Strong Pagans*, and her 1992 novel *The Light Makers*, and menopause in the 2008 collection *Storm over Belfast*, as well as difficult acceptance of motherhood and suicidal tendencies in *The Elysium Testament* (1999). All this is part of her programmatic intention to write in order to disclose what is hidden, and unveiling lies is often at the heart of her fiction.

In *Where they Lie* the novelty is in the lie to be unveiled, as the novel deals with the challenging and disturbing topic of the “Disappeared” during the Troubles in Northern Ireland, those men and women kidnapped mostly by Republican paramilitaries because believed to be informers, killed and buried somewhere in the country. In real life, these are the sixteen victims who disappeared between the early 1970s and the late 1980s. Only nine bodies have been found and investigation is still being carried out by the Independent Commission for the Recovery of Victims’ Remains. *Where they Lie* is not a historical novel about the Disappeared, rather a novel on those who have survived, on loss, on the impact of the past and History on the present. Interestingly, *Where they Lie* was published in May 2014, more or less at the same time when Gerry Adams was being questioned in relation to the disappearance of Jean McConville, a mother of ten children kidnapped in 1972 whose body was found in 2003. Jean McConville is obliquely present at the opening of the novel in the protagonist’s memories. In a recent article in *The New Yorker* entitled “Where the Bodies Are Buried”, Patrick Radden Keefe reconstructs the circumstances related to her disappearance, saying that “Jean McConville had just taken a bath when the intruders knocked on the door”. At the opening of the novel Gerda McAllister, the protagonist, recalls the same detail when relating the dramatic experience: “*Could they not smell the bath-oils? Was it not evident that I had just come from the bathroom, clean and powdered, all ready for a night at Pine Trees?*” (2). Thus fiction and History intertwine, not unlike the overlapping of memory, past and present, graphically rendered by passages in italics.

The title plays intertextually with Shelley’s “Ode to the West Wind” – “The winged seeds, where they lie cold and low” (l. 7) – and on the ambiguity of the verb “to lie”, as it refers to the hiding place of the bodies of the victims, twin brothers Sam and Harry Jebb, but also to the lies that surround their disappearance. A lot still remains unsaid and these webs of lies underlie the narrative. Lying also implies the open sexuality of the four main characters, each of them trying in his/her own way to come to terms with trauma and sorrow. The subject is still unresolved for many families whose lives are literally haunted by the ghosts of those who remain lost because their bodies remain unfound. Mary O'Donnell carried extensive research while working on the novel, yet *Where they Lie* is a work of fiction, the characters are fic-

tional, and occasional references to real names of some of the Disappeared are functional to the narrative.

Thus the real Disappeared are not there, and the Disappeared in this case are the brothers Sam and Harry, violently abducted from the house in Co. Tyrone, called *Pine Trees*, by “four men and two women... All wore balaclavas” (p. 1). They remain ghosts, truly lost in life as well as in narrative, as their disembodied bodies remain at the centre of the memories, nightmares and talks of family and friends.

Four main characters mourn them, Gerda McAllister, a journalist and witness to the crime, who was with the boys at the moment of abduction; their sister Alison, obsessed both with the desire of a child and with her own Protestantism; her husband Gideon, Gerda’s brother; and Gerda’s former lover, Niall, a teacher of the Irish language from Dublin, whose perspective as a Southerner focuses on the distance of the Republic from what was happening in the North. The relationships between North and South are interspersed in the novel through Gerda’s sarcastic observations and Gideon’s silent commentaries, yet Mary O’Donnell does not play on mutual prejudice and misunderstanding, but sheds light on the difficulty of personal relationships.

From this point of view it is interesting to notice that the novel develops out of the title story of O’Donnell’s 2008 collection *Storm over Belfast* in a case of direct intertextuality, as the story provides most of the novel’s first chapter. The two characters have different names in the story but central episodes remain unaltered. The novel contextualizes the female protagonist’s depression in Gerda’s attempt to come off medication and to overcome trauma. The electric storm which is a subtext in the story is briefly retrieved at the end of Chapter One, when “Over the mountain, an electrical storm was breaking” (15). The novel takes up this *fil rouge* occasionally using references to storms in relation to Gerda (23), compared to a storm when invading other people’s lives, but on the other hand a victim of the storm of violence that has changed her life.

The interdependence between novel and story highlights Mary O’Donnell’s aesthetic principle when writing short fiction, since she said that the “ending created a silence in which the reader begins to imagine that story and its character beyond the final sentence”. This is what literally takes place in *Where they Lie*, spinning off “beyond the final sentence”. Moreover, in a way *Where they Lie* reproduces in novel form the organisation of a collection of short stories, as each chapter in turn focuses on one of the different characters and constantly switching perspectives.

Gerda is obsessed and persecuted by mysterious and disturbing phone calls, in which someone called Cox keeps telling her he has information about where to find the bodies, where they lie. Passages of the telephone conversations are usually italicized, which is a textual marker, an interesting textual choice in a novel about lies, creating a distance between past and present, truth and lies. This graphic device also gives rise to doubts about the reli-

ability of what is being told, so that on some occasions it is not clear who is speaking, the voices of Gerda and Cox are undistinguishable, on others the impression is that Gerda is dreaming, or that Cox is only a product of her imagination. Gerda paradoxically feels free to speak about her trauma with Cox's disembodied voice, materializing when she accepts to meet him hoping to obtain the information he promises.

The choice of names is interesting, starting with the mysterious Cox, a name which is not a name or a nickname and therefore appropriate for someone who may not exist. His voice is persuasive, coaxing, so to speak, so that their verbal relationship is nearly erotic. As a colloquial abbreviation of coxswain, Cox is someone who steers the boat of Gerda's needs, a puppeteer, who finally directs Gerda, Alison and Gideon to the nightmarish landscape where he claims the bodies are to be found. Gerda recalls the protagonist of Andersen's "Snow Queen", a fairy tale that haunts the subtext of the novel also with the presence of the Icelandic researcher Sigga. The splinters of the evil mirror of the fairy tale seem to have somehow entered the hearts of various characters, not only the violent intruders who abducted the boys, but also Alison with her acrimony towards Gerda and her religious obsessions, Gideon in his incapacity to understand his wife and his divided loyalties between Gerda's and Alison's needs; and Gerda herself, in whom the splinter has gone deep and changed her life and her heart forever.

The language and discourse of Protestantism is a subtext and permeates the novel in the various versions of "The Lord's Prayer" and Alison's desire to be "clean", as well as Gerda's two 16th-century versions of the prayer she looks at every now and then as a magic object. Likewise, the U2 song "Mothers of the Disappeared" Gerda obsessively plays and listens to is a further subtext that reiterates and enlarges the trauma to the universal dimension of South American dictatorships, at the same time providing a ready-made text capable of communicating what cannot easily be expressed.

The novel remains literally open with the final words "Then the door opened" (223). This can be a sign of continuity which at the same time reminds the reader that certain wounds too are still open. The door that is opening on the last page metaphorically suggests that the story remains open leaving room to the splinters and fragments of the past.

Giovanna Tallone

Eugenio F. Biagini, *Storia dell'Irlanda dal 1845 a oggi*, Società editrice il Mulino, Bologna 2014, pp. 242. € 18. ISBN 978-88-15-25065-0

Da molti decenni in Italia non compariva una storia d'Irlanda nella nostra lingua e di autore italiano. Infatti l'unica recente storia dell'isola in italiano era la traduzione (Bompiani, Milano 2001) della divulgativa *Storia*

dell'Irlanda del giornalista inglese Robert Kee. Il volume del professor Eugenio Biagini, docente all'Università di Cambridge, dedicato all'Irlanda contemporanea dalla Grande Carestia ad oggi, colma quindi una grave lacuna nella nostra storiografia.

L'opera di Biagini si sviluppa in ordine cronologico, con alcune sovrapposizioni, e dedicando gli ultimi due capitoli, che si occupano dell'ultimo quarantennio, rispettivamente all'Irlanda del Nord e alla Repubblica.

L'introduzione (7-18) cerca di individuare gli elementi portanti della storia irlandese precedenti alla Grande Carestia del 1845, e in essa si rivela il taglio interpretativo dell'autore: una storia d'Irlanda in prevalenza economica e sociale, con grande attenzione prestata ai ceti sociali e alle confessioni religiose e con meno importanza attribuita alle ideologie politiche e alle loro evoluzioni, ma da una prospettiva che nel dibattito storiografico irlandese si presenterebbe come visione decisamente inglese (non sorprendentemente, dal momento che l'autore insegna a Cambridge) e 'revisionista'. Infatti si glissa sulla conquista anglo-normanna dell'isola nel dodicesimo secolo, solo completata nel diciassettesimo secolo dai Tudor, e come nel resto del volume non si affronta la possibile natura del legame tra Irlanda e Inghilterra mantenuto fino a tempi relativamente recenti, cioè il legame tra una colonia e lo Stato che la ha conquistata. Una originaria esperienza medioevale di conquista e di gestione coloniale che, secondo altri studi, diede però una impronta determinante al formarsi del primo impero britannico tra sedicesimo e diciassettesimo secolo. Non viene dato particolare risalto alla nascita dell'indipendentismo repubblicano irlandese nell'ultimo decennio del diciottesimo secolo, con il movimento degli Irlandesi Uniti, quale radice – a torto o a ragione, e certo con forti elementi di discontinuità nei due secoli successivi – di una delle due ideologie politiche (essendo l'altra l'unionismo) che hanno fino all'inizio del nostro ventunesimo secolo determinato la storia dell'isola perlomeno dal punto di vista della coscienza politica di massa. Riguardo al fallimento dei tentativi insurrezionali di quei primi repubblicani irlandesi il Biagini fa correttamente notare, contro la vulgata nazionalista irlandese tradizionale, che le milizie che li repressero per conto di Londra erano organizzate dalla Chiesa e dalla borghesia cattoliche dell'isola.

Il primo dei capitoli (19-42), dedicato alla Grande Carestia quale "episodio centrale" o fondante nella formazione dell'Irlanda contemporanea, è forse il più approfondito riguardo alla descrizione e alla spiegazione degli eventi, e il più esplicito nella presentazione e nella discussione delle correnti storiografiche in conflitto. È anche il più efficace nel presentare la molteplicità e complessità delle cause e concause della tragedia, le non univoche origini delle inadeguate risposte alla crisi da parte del governo britannico, e in particolare del fatale mutamento del 1847 nella politica di soccorso governativo alla popolazione vittima della carestia, che fece sì che l'idea di un genocidio volontario da parte del governo 'inglese' si inserisse nell'immaginario nazionalista irlandese. Il governo di Londra, a quel punto guidato da John Russell

e senza una maggioranza sicura, venne spinto a prendere misure inadeguate e che anzi favorivano la mortalità in Irlanda, secondo il Biagini, non solo perché animato da una ideologia rigidamente liberista, ma per non perdere ogni sostegno elettorale in Inghilterra e in Irlanda: “In ultima analisi, gli interessi dei contribuenti borghesi [...] – che erano quelli sul cui voto si eleggeva una maggioranza in Parlamento - trionfarono sui bisogni delle masse contadine ed operaie” (36).

Alla “ricostruzione” dopo la Carestia è dedicato il secondo capitolo (43-66), pur sempre con qualche sovrapposizione tra eventi e fenomeni precedenti e successivi. Esso si occupa della ristrutturazione della proprietà e del possesso agricoli come conseguenza della Carestia, e dei mutamenti da essa provocati nella demografia e nel costume. Descrive anche il processo di nuova industrializzazione sviluppatosi principalmente a Belfast, in cui alla tradizionale industria tessile si aggiunsero “la cantieristica navale e l’industria meccanica” (47), e come esso contribuì ad allontanare economicamente e mentalmente il nord-est dell’isola, a maggioranza protestante, ancor di più dal resto del paese, ancora del tutto rurale se si eccettuano alcune industrie di trasformazione alimentare a Dublino e sulla costa orientale. Alla disamina dell’amministrazione dell’isola e del sistema elettorale e delle sue modifiche è dedicato il terzo paragrafo del capitolo, mentre il seguente si occupa dei ‘revival’ religiosi protestanti e della ‘rivoluzione devozionale’ cattolica e della irreggimentazione centralista e ultramontana della Chiesa guidate dall’arcivescovo di Dublino e poi cardinale Paul Cullen. Biagini passa poi alla rinascita del repubblicanesimo indipendentista, nella forma prima della Giovane Irlanda di Thomas Davis, e nei tentativi di rivolta del 1848-49 organizzati da esponenti di quel movimento, che produssero in seguito la fondazione dell’organizzazione insurrezionale segreta dei Feniani (‘guerrieri’), la *Irish Republican Brotherhood*. Nella scelta degli studi al riguardo si evidenziano le impostazioni di fondo di Biagini, che attinge alla versione di R.V. Comerford (*The Fenians in Context*, Wolfhound Press, Dublin 1985) che li presentava come *aspiring wannabes* piccolo borghesi, in cerca di relazioni “sociali e ricreative”, mentre ignora del tutto la documentatissima e più recente opera di Owen McGee (*The IRB*, Four Courts Press, Dublin 2005). L’ultimo paragrafo del capitolo descrive i tentativi insurrezionali degli stessi Feniani negli anni Sessanta del diciannovesimo secolo, e gli effetti che comunque, nella sconfitta, essi produssero sulle iniziative legislative del governo britannico: il *Disestablishment*, o abolizione dello status di Chiesa di Stato della Chiesa anglicana in Irlanda (1869), e il primo tentativo di riforma agraria nel 1870.

Un capitolo certo interessante per il lettore italiano, in questa epoca di migrazioni globali, è il terzo (67-83), che si occupa della emigrazione e della diaspora irlandesi, con una attenta descrizione del fenomeno nelle sue diverse destinazioni, gli Stati Uniti d’America o invece la Gran Bretagna e le colonie dell’impero britannico, e nei suoi sviluppi locali.

Il quarto capitolo, chiamato “La ‘questione irlandese’, 1867-1923” (85-116), è forse il più ambizioso, ma il meno soddisfacente nei dettagli. Dalla crisi economica della seconda metà degli anni Settanta, che riaccese nell’Irlanda rurale il terrore della carestia, si passa alla creazione dello *Home Rule Party* e della *Land League* di C.S. Parnell e di Michael Davitt, con l’unione di azione politica parlamentare e di tattica rivoluzionaria sul terreno. Il Parnell “ferocemente anti-britannico” descritto da Biagini sembra un malato di mente, pieno di “rancore”, e un vero pozzo di iniquità, per giunta subdolissimo: “finalmente poteva fare il martire senza esporsi alle conseguenze di una strategia rivoluzionaria che era in totale contrasto con i suoi interessi di classe” (91): quale irlandese, sembra chiedersi l’autore, potrebbe mai essere “anti-britannico”, e perché mai? Vengono presentati i vani tentativi di W.E. Gladstone di concedere una qualche forma di autonomia (*Home Rule*) all’Irlanda, il loro fallimento, e, in maggiore dettaglio, i vari *Land Purchase Bill* che tra 1885 e 1903 permisero di effettuare una sostanziale riforma agraria nell’isola. Il tentativo di *Home Rule* del governo Asquith, appoggiato da John Redmond, il dirigente del partito parlamentare irlandese, fallisce secondo Biagini non solo per la guerra mondiale sopravvenuta, ma per la presenza del “nazionalismo militante”, che a questo punto l’autore viene retrospettivamente a descrivere nei suoi sviluppi dagli anni Ottanta, con l’erompere del cosiddetto ‘Rinascimento Gaelico’ e la fondazione di nuove associazioni, quali la *Gaelic Athletic Association*, la *Gaelic League* e poi il *Sinn Féin* di Arthur Griffith. Nella descrizione degli eventi seguenti, e in particolare della Rivolta di Pasqua del 1916, l’autore tradisce un palese paternalismo, tipico della storiografia inglese sull’Irlanda. Dopo avere fornito una breve sintesi della guerra d’indipendenza del 1919-21, riguardo all’inizio della guerra civile nel sud tra sostenitori e oppositori del trattato con il Regno Unito nel 1922 - in un’isola ormai di fatto divisa tra Sei Contee e Stato Libero d’Irlanda - il Biagini dà bizzarramente spazio agli alquanto dubbi studi del compianto Peter Hart riguardo a supposte ‘pulizie etniche’ contro i protestanti di Cork (1998 e 2003), che avrebbero comunque avuto poca rilevanza in quella situazione e in quella parte del paese. Un errore fattuale ripetuto più volte nel volume è che la fondazione del Partito Laburista irlandese (basato sui sindacati, come quello inglese) sia avvenuta nel 1912: in realtà di quell’anno è la mozione del congresso nazionale dei sindacati che ne ammetteva in linea teorica la costituzione, la quale avvenne solo nel 1918.

Il quinto capitolo (117-141), che va dagli anni Venti al 1945, è una sintesi molto più valida, descrivendo gli stentati inizi dello *Irish Free State* (dal 1937 la *Éire* di Éamon De Valera) e delle sei contee dell’Irlanda del Nord rimaste nel Regno Unito, con i loro fallimenti sociali, culturali ed economici, indicando con precisione tutti gli eventi salienti: “Se il nord era un mezzo fallimento, il sud non stava molto meglio” (127).

Altrettanto interessante nella sua sintesi il sesto capitolo (143-165), intitolato “Inseguendo il progresso, 1946-1972”, che segue lo sviluppo delle due

entità statali o parastatali dell'Irlanda fino alla nuova esplosione armata della questione irlandese all'inizio degli anni Settanta. Al solito, la preminenza è data agli aspetti economici, sociali e di classe, con approfondimento degli aspetti culturali sull'asse liberalismo/oscurantismo; approfondimento che può sembrare oggi di moda e in sintonia con i vani temi del dibattito corrente, ma che è giustificato dall'estrema collocazione nel senso dell'oscurantismo tanto della Repubblica irlandese dichiarata nel 1948 (e prima del *Free State* e della *Éire*) nel sud, quanto della provincia autonoma dell'Irlanda del Nord in quei decenni. Il potere temporale clericale imposto senza quasi resistenze allo Stato irlandese è ben descritto (inclusa la *Mother and Child controversy* del 1951, e il famoso boicottaggio di Fethard-on-Sea del 1957), così come le omologhe espressioni di bigottismo nell'Irlanda del Nord.

Il settimo capitolo, "Guerra e pace in Irlanda del Nord, 1972-2013" (167-189), e l'ottavo, "Verso una Repubblica liberale, 1972-2013" (191-215), trattano parallelamente delle due parti dell'isola fino ai giorni nostri. Nel primo dei due, notevole la menzione dell'opera dei servizi segreti britannici quale decisiva nel condurre l'Esercito Repubblicano Irlandese (e la sua espressione politica, il *Sinn Féin*) prima alla tregua e poi al disarmo; nel secondo, come dal boom della Tigre Celtica si sia passati alle angustie della crisi finanziaria, e come comunque lo Stato e la popolazione abbiano retto il colpo.

Un glossarietto dei partiti politici (219-222) e la bibliografia (225-235) completano il volume, che è nel suo insieme necessario e interessante.

Carlo Maria Pellizzi

Autori / Contributors

Katarzyna Bartoszyńska (<katarzyna.bartoszynska@gmail.com>) spent several years working at the Program of Cultures, Civilizations and Ideas at Bilkent University, Ankara (Turkey). This fall she will join the English Department at Monmouth College, Illinois. Her research has appeared in *New Hibernia Review* and *19th Century Contexts*. She is currently at work on a book that uses a comparative reading of literary history in Poland and Ireland as an entry point into an examination of comparative studies and ways of understanding the rise of the novel in different parts of the world. An article related to this research, on Jonathan Swift's *Gulliver's Travels* and Ignacy Krasicki's *Adventures of Mr Nicholas Wisdom*, appeared in *Comparative Literature Studies*.

Tomasz Bilczewski (<t.bilczewski@uj.edu.pl>) is an Assistant Professor and the director of the Centre for Advanced Studies in the Humanities at the Jagiellonian University, Krakow. He is the author of *Komparatystyka i interpretacja. Nowoczesne badania porównawcze wobec translatoologii* (Comparative Literature and Interpretation: Modern CompLit and Translation Studies, 2010), the editor of *Niewspółmierność. Perspektywy nowoczesnej komparatystyki*, (Incommensurability. Perspectives on Modern Comparative Literature, 2010), and co-editor (with Luigi Marinelli and Monika Woźniak) of *Rodzinny świat Czesława Miłosza* (The Family World of Czesław Miłosz, 2014). He has received the Prime Minister's Award for best doctoral dissertations in Poland (2009), and is a recipient of the *Polityka* and Ministry of Science scholarships for outstanding young scholars (2010 and 2014 respectively). His academic interests include comparative literature, literary theory, translation studies, and Polish and English poetry.

Maria Micaela Coppola (<mariamicaela.coppola@unitn.it>) is Senior Lecturer in English literature at the Department of Psychology and Cognitive Science of the University of Trento (Italy). She has published widely on contemporary women's literature, literary canons, and feminist theories. Her latest volume is *'The Impossible burden of sisterhood'. Donne, femminilità e femminismi in 'Spare Rib. A Women's Liberation Magazine'* (2012) and her current research focuses on narrative medicine. She is a co-founder and a Member of the Executive Board of the Interdepartmental Centre for Interdisciplinary Gender Studies, University of Trento.

David Cregan (<david.cregan@villanova.edu>) is the Chair of the Theatre Department and an Associate Professor at Villanova University. He received his doctorate from the Samuel Beckett School of Drama at Trinity College, Dublin. His research is largely in the area of gender and identity through performance studies and contemporary Irish theatre. He is the author of *Frank McGuinness's Dramaturgy of Difference and the Irish Theatre* (2011), and the editor of *Deviant Acts: Essays on Queer Performance* a collection of essays focusing on a variety of alternative performances happening in contemporary Ireland (2009). He is also a stage director and an actor.

Carla de Petris (<carla.depetris@uniroma3.it>) is Associate Professor of English at the University of Roma 3. Besides having edited and translated Joyce's *Exiles* into Italian (1992), she has edited two volumes of *Joyce Studies in Italy* (1988, 1991), and has introduced many Irish writers to the Italian reading public through articles, essays, interviews and translations. She has edited two collections of essays on Irish literature and culture, *The Cracked Looking Glass: Contributions to the Study of Irish Literature* (1999) and *Continente Irlanda* (2001). She has translated plays by Brian Friel and Jennifer Johnston, and the poetry of Seamus Heaney, John Montague, *Eiléan Ní Chuilleanáin*, Mary Dorcey and Desmond O'Grady. At present she is working on the translation of a selection of George Egerton's short stories.

Elisabeth Delattre (<delattre.elisabeth@wanadoo.fr>) is the author of a PhD thesis on the work of the novelist J.G. Farrell and of articles on Farrell, Derek Mahon, Michael Longley, Nuala O'Faolain and Ciaran Carson published in peer-reviewed works and journals such as *Etudes Irlandaises*, *Estudios Irlandeses* or *Irish Studies Review*. She is a research associate with the Centre for Irish Studies, the CECILLE Centre of the University of Lille3 <<http://cecille.recherche.univ-lille3/auteur/delattre-e>>.

Mary Dorcey, born in County Dublin (Ireland), is a poet, short story writer and novelist. To date, she has published five volumes of poems, a novel – *Biography of Desire* (1997) – and a short-story collection, *A Noise from the Woodshed* (1989) which was awarded the Rooney Prize for Literature in 1990). Dorcey has won major awards from the Council of Ireland (1990, 1995, 1999, 2005, and 2008). Her work has been widely anthologized and translated (into Italian, Spanish, Dutch, and Japanese). She has given talks and readings internationally, and has been a Research Associate at Trinity College Dublin and writer in residence at the Centre for Gender and Women's Studies. Dorcey has lived in the United States, England, France, Spain, and Japan, and she currently resides in County Wicklow, Ireland.

Magdalena Kay (<magdakay@uvic.ca>) is Associate Professor of English at the University of Victoria. Her research focuses upon contemporary

poetry in Britain and Ireland, as well as comparisons of poetry from Ireland and Poland. She holds a Ph.D. in Comparative Literature from the University of California, Berkeley, and a B.A. in English from Harvard University. She has written two books: *In Gratitude for All the Gifts: Seamus Heaney and Eastern Europe* (2012), and *Knowing One's Place in Contemporary Irish and Polish Poetry: Zagajewski, Mahon, Heaney, Hartwig*, (2013). She is currently writing a book about contemporary British poetry.

Barry Keane (bkeane@uw.edu.pl) holds a Ph.D. in Polish Literature from Trinity College, Dublin, and has recently completed a post-doctoral degree with SALIS at Dublin City University. He is presently an Associate Professor of Translation and Comparative Studies at the University of Social Sciences and Humanities, Warsaw, and an Adjunct Professor of Translation Studies at The University of Warsaw. He is the author of books on the Polish Renaissance poet Jan Kochanowski (1999), the modernist Skamander Poets (2004), and the Polish Baroque poetess, Anna Stanisławska (2013). He has also written widely on the staging of Irish drama in Poland.

Joanna Kosmalska (<jkosmalska@uni.lodz.pl>) graduated in English from the University of Łódź, having studied at University College Dublin in Ireland and Flensburg Universität in Germany. In 2008-2009 she carried out research on teaching English to immigrant pupils in primary schools in Dublin greater area, which laid the groundwork for an EU funded postgraduate teacher training programme that she ran at her home university (<www.anglista.uni.lodz.pl>). She is a research-and-teaching fellow at the University of Łódź, a translator, an editor of *DeKadentzja* literary journal and the initiator and deputy coordinator of the *Polish (E)migration Literature in Ireland and Great Britain since 2004* project (<www.emigracja.uni.lodz.pl>).

Shahriyar Mansouri (<s_mansouri@sbu.ac.ir>) received his PhD from the University of Glasgow. He specializes in the twentieth-century Irish novel, with additional interests in theory of the novel, historical fiction, biopolitics, and a Deleuzian reading of (post-) nationalist identity. He has presented and published papers on Irish identity and culture in post-independence Ireland, and on authors such as Samuel Beckett, Francis Stuart, Jim Phelan, Roddy Doyle, and Edna O'Brien. Shahriyar is Assistant Professor of English Literature at Shahid Beheshti University, Tehran, and IASIL regional Bibliography Representative for Iran.

Luigi Marinelli (<luigi.marinelli@uniroma1.it>) is Chair Professor in Slavistics (Polish Language and Literature) at the University of Rome "La Sapienza". He is a member of the Polish Academy of Sciences (PAN - Warsaw) and the Polish Academy of Arts and Sciences (PAU - Cracow). In 2007 he was awarded the "Gloria Artis" golden medal, the highest Polish cultural award, for his dis-

tinguished contributions to Polish culture. He has written extensively on slavomance interrelations, especially Polish-Italian relations, with special regard to the Baroque period (see his studies on M. Sep Szarzyński, Sz. Zimorowicz, J.A. Morsztyn, and particularly the 2 vols. critical edition of *Adon* [1993], the anonymous seventeenth-century version of *L'Adone* by G.B. Marino, and the monograph *Polski Adon. O retoryce i poetyce przekładu*, 1997). He has also investigated 18th century Polish culture and writers (Krasicki, Książnin, Bohomolec), as well as 19th and 20th century literary movements and writers (Mickiewicz, Sienkiewicz, Futurism, Jasiński, Schulz, Gombrowicz, Miłosz, Herbert, Wat, Kantor etc.). His interests are focused on “European” and “national canons”; translation studies; “minor” and “dominant” cultures and literatures; intercultural, gender and post-colonial studies; literature and music. He is the general editor of a new *History of Polish Literature*, published by Einaudi in 2004, translated into Polish in 2009 in a revised and enlarged edition by Ossolineum, Wrocław.

Concetta Mazzullo (<conci.mazzullo@yahoo.it>), is a graduate in Modern Languages from the University of Catania, and was awarded a PhD from Trinity College Dublin with a dissertation on “*At Swim-Two-Birds* and the Construction of an Alternative Heroic Canon”. She teaches at the “Lombardo Radice” Liceo Linguistico in Catania. She is a member of IASIL, and has delivered papers and published articles on Flann O’Brien’s use of *Buile Suibhne* and *Compert Con Culain* and on Conál Creedon. She has also developed an interest in photography and is currently organizing her second exhibition called “AcquaAria”. She is proud that her images accompany William Wall’s essay.

Danielle McCormack (<dmccormack@wa.amu.edu.pl>) is Assistant Professor at the Department of Celtic Languages and Literatures, The Faculty of English, Adam Mickiewicz University, Poznań. She completed her PhD at the European University Institute, and also holds degrees from Trinity College Dublin and the University of Edinburgh. Her research interests include Early Modern Britain and Ireland, Irish history, history of political ideas and gender history.

Jan Parandowski (1895-1978) was a Polish novelist, essayist and translator. He studied classical antiquity, philology, and archeology. He translated the *Odyssey*, as well as works by Longus, Julius Caesar, Ronsard, Rolland, H.G. Wells, and Einhard’s *Vita Karoli Magni*. He is the author of essays on Petrarch, Rousseau and Wilde, and of several books inspired by Greek or Italian themes (*Eros na Olimpie*, Eros on the Olympus, 1924; *Dysk Olimpijski*, The Olympic Discus, 1933; *Godzina śródziemnomorska*, A Mediterranean Hour, 1949). From 1933 until his death Parandowski was president of the Polish PEN writers’ organization. In 1962 he became the vice president of International PEN.

Joanna Rostek (<rostek@uni-passau.de>) is a Lecturer and post-doc researcher in English Literature and Culture at the University of Passau, Germany. She was a visiting scholar at universities in Scotland, Poland, and the USA. She has published several articles and co-edited an essay collection on Polish migrant literature and culture in Germany, Ireland, and the UK. She is currently working on a book about female contributions to economic discourse in Britain around 1800. Her further research interests include women's and gender studies, the interrelations between economics and literature as well as literary and cultural theory.

Burcu Gülüm Tekin (<gulumtekin@gmail.com>) graduated in English at the University of Istanbul, Turkey (Department of American Culture and Literature) and later obtained an MA diploma at the University of Granada, Spain (Department of English Language and Literature) with an MA Thesis on the representation of female characters in James Joyce's work. She is currently writing a PhD dissertation at the University of Granada on Roddy Doyle's portrayal of women, especially mothers. She has presented papers related to Doyle's work at various conferences. Her interview with Doyle appeared in volume 9 of *Estudios Irlandeses* (2014). She has a publication forthcoming in the volume entitled *Words of Crisis/Crisis of Words* (Cambridge Scholars Publishing).

William Wall (<williamwall@gmx.com>) is an Irish writer. He has written four novels, three collections of poetry and one of short fiction. His work has won and been shortlisted for many prizes, including The Man Booker Prize and the Virginia Faulkner Award. His work has been translated into many languages. He has appeared at numerous festivals in Italy including Pordenone Legge, Festival Internazionale di Poesia di Genova and he has been a fellow of The Liguria Centre for the Arts & Humanities. His poetry has been translated into Italian as *Le notizie sono* (MobyDick Editore). His short stories have appeared at www.inkroci.com. He translates from Italian. For more information see: <www.williamwall.net>.

Opere pubblicate

*I titoli qui elencati sono stati proposti alla Firenze University Press dal
Coordinamento editoriale del Dipartimento di Lingue, Letterature e Studi Interculturali
e prodotti dal suo Laboratorio editoriale Open Access*

Volumi

- Stefania Pavan, *Lezioni di poesia. Iosif Brodskij e la cultura classica: il mito, la letteratura, la filosofia*, 2006 (Biblioteca di Studi di Filologia Moderna; 1)
- Rita Svandrlík (a cura di), *Elfriede Jelinek. Una prosa altra, un altro teatro*, 2008 (Biblioteca di Studi di Filologia Moderna; 2)
- Ornella De Zordo (a cura di), *Saggi di anglistica e americanistica. Temi e prospettive di ricerca*, 2008 (Strumenti per la didattica e la ricerca; 66)
- Fiorenzo Fantaccini, *W. B. Yeats e la cultura italiana*, 2009 (Biblioteca di Studi di Filologia Moderna; 3)
- Arianna Antonielli, *William Blake e William Butler Yeats. Sistemi simbolici e costruzioni poetiche*, 2009 (Biblioteca di Studi di Filologia Moderna; 4)
- Marco Di Manno, *Tra sensi e spirito. La concezione della musica e la rappresentazione del musicista nella letteratura tedesca alle soglie del Romanticismo*, 2009 (Biblioteca di Studi di Filologia Moderna; 5)
- Maria Chiara Mocali, *Testo. Dialogo. Traduzione. Per una analisi del tedesco tra codici e varietà*, 2009 (Biblioteca di Studi di Filologia Moderna; 6)
- Ornella De Zordo (a cura di), *Saggi di anglistica e americanistica. Ricerche in corso*, 2009 (Strumenti per la didattica e la ricerca; 95)
- Stefania Pavan (a cura di), *Gli anni Sessanta a Leningrado. Luci e ombre di una Belle Époque*, 2009 (Biblioteca di Studi di Filologia Moderna; 7)
- Roberta Carnevale, *Il corpo nell'opera di Georg Büchner. Büchner e i filosofi materialisti dell'Illuminismo francese*, 2009 (Biblioteca di Studi di Filologia Moderna; 8)
- Mario Materassi, *Go Southwest, Old Man. Note di un viaggio letterario, e non*, 2009 (Biblioteca di Studi di Filologia Moderna; 9)
- Ornella De Zordo, Fiorenzo Fantaccini, *altri canoni / canoni altri. pluralismo e studi letterari*, 2011 (Biblioteca di Studi di Filologia Moderna; 10)
- Claudia Vitale, *Das literarische Gesicht im Werk Heinrich von Kleists und Franz Kafkas*, 2011 (Biblioteca di Studi di Filologia Moderna; 11)
- Mattia Di Taranto, *L'arte del libro in Germania fra Otto e Novecento: Editoria bibliofila, arti figurative e avanguardia letteraria negli anni della Jahrhundertwende*, 2011 (Biblioteca di Studi di Filologia Moderna; 12)
- Vania Fattorini (a cura di), *Caroline Schlegel-Schelling: «Ero seduta qui a scrivere»*. Lettere, 2012 (Biblioteca di Studi di Filologia Moderna; 13)
- Anne Tamm, *Scalar Verb Classes. Scalarity, Thematic Roles, and Arguments in the Estonian Aspectual Lexicon*, 2012 (Biblioteca di Studi di Filologia Moderna; 14)
- Beatrice Tóttösy (a cura di), *Fonti di Weltliteratur. Ungheria*, 2012 (Strumenti per la didattica e la ricerca; 143)
- Beatrice Tóttösy, *Ungheria 1945-2002. La dimensione letteraria*, 2012 (Biblioteca di Studi di Filologia Moderna; 15)
- Diana Battisti, *Estetica della dissonanza e filosofia del doppio: Carlo Dossi e Jean Paul*, 2012 (Biblioteca di Studi di Filologia Moderna; 16)
- Fiorenzo Fantaccini, Ornella De Zordo (a cura di), *Saggi di anglistica e americanistica. Percorsi di ricerca*, 2012 (Strumenti per la didattica e la ricerca; 144)

- Martha L. Canfield (a cura di), *Perù frontiera del mondo. Eielson e Vargas Llosa: dalle radici all'impegno cosmopolita = Perú frontera del mundo. Eielson y Vargas Llosa: de las raíces al compromiso cosmopolita*, 2013 (Biblioteca di Studi di Filologia Moderna; 17)
- Gaetano Prampolini, Annamaria Pinazzi (eds), *The Shade of the Saguaro / La sombra del saguaro : essays on the Literary Cultures of the American Southwest / Ensayos sobre las culturas literarias del suroeste norteamericano*, 2013 (Biblioteca di Studi di Filologia Moderna; 18)
- Ioana Both, Ayşe Saraçgil, Angela Tarantino (a cura di), *Storia, identità e canoni letterari*, 2013 (Strumenti per la didattica e la ricerca; 152)
- Valentina Vannucci, *Lecture anticanoniche della biofiction, dentro e fuori la metafinzione*, 2014 (Biblioteca di Studi di Filologia Moderna; 19)
- Serena Alcione, *Wackenroder e Reichardt. Musica e letteratura nel primo Romanticismo tedesco*, 2014 (Biblioteca di Studi di Filologia Moderna; 20)
- Lorenzo Orlandini, *The relentless body. L'impossibile elisione del corpo in Samuel Beckett e la noluntas schopenhaueriana*, 2014 (Biblioteca di Studi di Filologia Moderna; 21)
- Carolina Gepponi, *Un carteggio di Margherita Guidacci*, 2014 (Biblioteca di Studi di Filologia Moderna; 22)
- Valentina Milli, «*Truth is an odd number*». *La narrativa di Flann O'Brien e il fantastico*, 2014 (Biblioteca di Studi di Filologia Moderna; 23)
- Diego Salvadori, *Il giardino riflesso. L'erbario di Luigi Meneghello*, 2015 (Biblioteca di Studi di Filologia Moderna; 24)
- Sabrina Ballestracci, Serena Grazzini (a cura di), *Punti di vista - Punti di contatto. Stud di letteratura e linguistica tedesca*, 2015 (Biblioteca di Studi di Filologia Moderna; 25)

Riviste

- «Journal of Early Modern Studies», ISSN: 2279-7149
- «LEA – Lingue e Letterature d'Oriente e d'Occidente», ISSN: 1824-484x
- «Studi Irlandesi. A Journal of Irish Studies», ISSN: 2239-3978

